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Wednesday, August 05, 2026



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IMPORTANT INSIGHTS

India Becomes Effectively Free from Left-Wing Extremism After Six Decades Through an Integrated Security, Development and Welfare Strategy

Recent Developments:

- India became effectively free from **Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)/Naxalism** on **31 March 2026**, marking a major milestone in India's internal security after nearly six decades of insurgency.
- The achievement followed a **Whole-of-Government** approach based on the three pillars of **Vishwaas, Nirman and Jan Kalyan**, integrating security operations with development and welfare interventions.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** subsequently informed Parliament that **no district remained affected by Naxalism**, reflecting the sharp decline in violence and extremist influence.

About Left-Wing Extremism (LWE):

Meaning:

- **Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)** refers to the use of **violence and armed revolution**, inspired primarily by **Maoist ideology**, to overthrow the constitutional democratic system.
- **Naxalism** derives its name from the **Naxalbari uprising (1967)** in **Darjeeling district, West Bengal**, which marked the beginning of the movement in India.
- In **2004**, major Maoist groups merged to form the **Communist Party of India (Maoist)**, making LWE India's most significant internal security challenge for several decades.

Why LWE Expanded?

- **Poor governance, weak administrative presence and difficult terrain** created spaces where extremist groups established influence.
- **Limited road connectivity, inadequate public services, tribal deprivation, livelihood challenges and low state outreach** weakened public confidence in government institutions.
- **Weak inter-state coordination and fragmented security responses** enabled extremist networks to survive for long periods.

Evolution of India's Counter-LWE Strategy:

Earlier Approach:

- The response remained **incident-driven**, with individual States largely addressing the challenge independently.
- Lack of a **nationally coordinated strategy** reduced operational effectiveness.
- In **2009**, the Union Government officially recognised **LWE as India's gravest internal security challenge**, extending across a wider geographical area than many other insurgencies.

Policy Shift (2015):

- The **National Policy and Action Plan for LWE** replaced fragmented responses with a **structured national framework**.
- The policy integrated **security operations, development initiatives, governance reforms, intelligence sharing and welfare delivery** under one coordinated strategy.
- The framework adopted the principles of **Dialogue, Security and Coordination**, while ensuring continuous review by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.

Integrated Strategy: Vishwaas – Nirman – Jan Kalyan***Vishwaas, Restoring Public Trust:***

- **Strengthened security operations** expanded the permanent presence of the State in remote regions.
- **Improved coordination** among Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), State Police and intelligence agencies enhanced operational efficiency.
- **Structured surrender and rehabilitation policies** encouraged extremists to return to mainstream society.
- **Continuous community engagement** rebuilt confidence between tribal communities and government institutions.
- Restoration of security enabled governance institutions to function effectively in previously inaccessible regions.

Nirman, Building Infrastructure and Governance:

- Focus shifted from merely controlling violence to **creating long-term development opportunities**.
- Expansion of **road networks, digital infrastructure, banking services, schools, healthcare and skill development** integrated remote tribal regions into the national economy.
- Improved connectivity enhanced the delivery of government schemes and strengthened administrative reach.

Jan Kalyan, Welfare with Dignity:

- Welfare delivery prioritised **tribal inclusion, livelihood generation, education, healthcare and housing**.
- Surrendered cadres received **financial assistance, skill training, self-employment support and housing benefits**, facilitating social reintegration.
- Democratic institutions such as **Gram Panchayats** were strengthened through development incentives in villages freed from extremist influence.

Key Security Measures:***Technology-Enabled Counter-Insurgency:***

- **UAVs, drones, satellite imagery, Artificial Intelligence (AI), mobile-data analytics and GIS-based mapping** improved surveillance and operational planning.
- **Call-detail analysis, communication monitoring and intelligence fusion** enhanced the precision of counter-insurgency operations.

Trace, Target and Neutralise Doctrine:

- Intelligence-led operations replaced conventional area domination strategies.

- Major operations such as **Operation Black Forest, Operation Octopus, Operation Double Bull, Operation Thunderstorm, Operation Bhimbarg and Operation Chakrabandha** dismantled long-standing Maoist strongholds.
- Sustained operations significantly reduced extremist leadership, weapons and territorial influence.

Disrupting Financial Networks:

- **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** established dedicated mechanisms to dismantle Maoist financing.
- Coordinated action by **NIA, Enforcement Directorate (ED) and State agencies** targeted funding channels, assets and logistics supporting extremist organisations.
- Stronger investigation and prosecution increased legal deterrence against extremist support networks.

Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy:

Key Features:

- Immediate financial assistance for surrendered cadres.
- Monthly livelihood support during rehabilitation.
- Incentives for surrendering with weapons.
- Additional incentives for group surrenders.
- Skill development, housing assistance and self-employment support.
- Free education up to **Class XII** for children of surrendered cadres.

Significance:

- Reduced recruitment by weakening organisational morale.
- Facilitated peaceful reintegration into democratic society.
- Improved cooperation between local communities and security agencies.

Development Initiatives under Nirman:

Road Connectivity:

- More than **12,000 km** of roads were constructed in LWE-affected areas after 2014.
- Improved transport enhanced access to **markets, schools, hospitals and government services**.

Digital Connectivity:

- Installation of **over 9,600 mobile towers** substantially reduced the digital divide.
- Mobile connectivity reached nearly **96%** of villages in the most affected regions.

Financial Inclusion:

- Expansion of **bank branches, ATMs, post offices and Banking Correspondents (BCs)** strengthened last-mile financial services.
- Improved access to **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** and formal banking.

Education and Skill Development:

- Expansion of **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** improved educational access for tribal children.

- New **Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)** and **Skill Development Centres** enhanced employability among tribal youth.

Community Outreach:

- **Civic Action Programmes** promoted healthcare, community welfare and public participation.
- **Tribal Youth Exchange Programmes** strengthened national integration and awareness.

Case Study: Bastar Transformation (Chhattisgarh):

Integrated Development Model:

- Combined **security operations, infrastructure development, welfare delivery and tribal participation.**
- **Bastariya Battalion** recruited local tribal youth, improving intelligence gathering and community trust.
- Expansion of **roads and mobile connectivity** improved access to public services.
- **Shaheed Veer Gunda Dhur Seva Dera** converted selected CAPF camps into citizen service centres.
- Initiatives such as **Bastar Pandum** and **Bastar Olympics** promoted tribal identity, cultural participation and youth engagement.

Impact of the Integrated Strategy:

Security Outcomes:

- LWE-affected districts declined dramatically from earlier levels to **zero affected districts by March 2026**, according to the MHA.
- Naxal incidents and fatalities declined sharply compared with the peak years.
- Large-scale arrests, surrenders and disruption of leadership weakened extremist capabilities.

Governance Outcomes:

- Government institutions regained presence in previously inaccessible regions.
- Public confidence in democratic institutions improved.
- Delivery of welfare schemes became faster and more effective.

Socio-Economic Outcomes:

- Better connectivity expanded opportunities in education, healthcare, banking and employment.
- Tribal communities experienced greater social inclusion and participation in democratic governance.
- Development reduced the conditions that had earlier enabled extremist influence.

Challenges Ahead:

Remaining Priorities:

- Prevent ideological resurgence through continuous community engagement.
- Ensure sustainable livelihood opportunities for tribal youth.
- Strengthen implementation of **Forest Rights Act, 2006, PESA Act, 1996** and other tribal welfare legislations.
- Continue improving governance, justice delivery and public infrastructure in former LWE areas.
- Prevent extremist financing through stronger cyber and financial intelligence.

UPSC Mains Linkages:

Essay Themes:

- Security and Development are Complementary.
- Inclusive Governance as the Foundation of Internal Security.
- Winning People's Trust Beyond Military Success.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 21** – Protection of Life and Personal Liberty.
- **Article 244** – Administration of Scheduled Areas.
- **Fifth Schedule** – Administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes.
- **Article 46** – Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Tribes.

Important Legislations:

- **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA).**
- **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.**
- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA).**
- **National Investigation Agency Act, 2008.**

Committee / Institutional References:

- **D. Bandyopadhyay Committee (2006)** emphasised that **development deficits, governance gaps and tribal alienation** should be addressed alongside security measures.
- **Ministry of Home Affairs** follows the **SAMADHAN Doctrine**, which includes **Smart Leadership, Aggressive Strategy, Motivation and Training, Actionable Intelligence, Dashboard-Based KPIs, Harnessing Technology, Action Plan and No Access to Financing**, as the broader counter-LWE operational framework.

Best Institute for OAS/IAS

India Finishes Fourth at Commonwealth Games 2026 and Officially Takes Over Hosting of the Centenary 2030 Edition

Recent Developments:

- **India** concluded the **2026 Commonwealth Games** in Glasgow, Scotland, with **39 medals (13 Gold, 17 Silver and 9 Bronze)**, securing **4th position** behind **Australia, England and Canada**.
- During the closing ceremony, **India** officially received the **Commonwealth Games Flag**, marking the formal handover of hosting responsibilities for the **Centenary Commonwealth Games 2030** to **Ahmedabad**. **Neeraj Chopra** received the flag on behalf of India, while **Jaismine Lamboria** served as India's flag bearer.
- The **2030 Commonwealth Games** will be India's **second** time hosting the event after **New Delhi 2010** and will coincide with the **100th anniversary** of the Games.

India's Performance at the Commonwealth Games 2026:

Overall Performance:

- India finished with **39 medals**, comprising **13 Gold, 17 Silver and 9 Bronze**, to secure **4th place** in the overall medal standings.
- India achieved this performance despite fielding a **reduced contingent of 122 athletes**, owing to **doping-related eligibility restrictions** and the exclusion of several traditional medal-rich sports.
- Sports such as **Shooting, Wrestling, Badminton, Hockey and Table Tennis**, which had contributed **25 of India's 61 medals** at the **Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022**, were not part of the Glasgow programme.
- Although India's overall medal tally declined from **61 medals** in **2022** to **39 medals** in **2026**, the country's **medal conversion rate** improved from **29%** to **31%**, indicating greater efficiency among participating athletes.

Major Sporting Achievements:

- **Boxing** emerged as India's most successful discipline with **10 medals**, including **7 Gold and 3 Silver**, registering the highest boxing gold medal haul by any country at a single Commonwealth Games.
- India recorded its **best-ever Para Commonwealth Games campaign**, winning **7 medals**, which equalled the combined total secured in all previous editions.
- **Neeraj Chopra** returned to the Commonwealth Games after missing **Birmingham 2022** and won the **Silver Medal** in the men's **Javelin Throw**.
- **Asmita Dey** and **Harsh Singh** became **India's first-ever Commonwealth Games Gold Medallists in Judo**, marking a historic breakthrough for the sport.
- **Tejaswin Shankar** became the **first Indian** to win a Commonwealth Games medal in the **Decathlon**, securing a **Bronze Medal**.
- **Gulveer Singh** emerged as India's **only double medallist**, winning **Silver** in the men's **10,000 metres** and **Bronze** in the **5,000 metres**.
- **Mirabai Chanu** became the **first Indian weightlifter** to win **three consecutive Commonwealth Games Gold Medals**, following victories at **Gold Coast 2018, Birmingham 2022 and Glasgow 2026**.
- Indian women boxers dominated the competition by winning **five Gold Medals**, led by **Sakshi Chaudhary, Preeti Pawar, Jaismine Lamboria, Priya Ghanghas and Arundhati Choudhary**.

Factors Behind India's Performance:

Improved Medal Efficiency:

- A smaller but more competitive contingent produced a higher medal conversion rate despite participating in fewer sporting disciplines.
- Better athlete preparation, scientific coaching and targeted investment contributed to improved performance across selected events.

Growing Success in Emerging Sports:

- **Boxing, Athletics, Para Sports, Weightlifting and Judo** compensated for the absence of several traditional medal-winning disciplines.
- Greater participation of women athletes and para athletes demonstrated India's expanding sporting depth.

Need for Diversification:

- Dependence on a limited number of sports continues to remain a challenge.
- Expansion of talent identification and high-performance programmes across more Olympic and Commonwealth disciplines is necessary for sustained success.

Commonwealth Games:

About the Commonwealth Games:

- The **Commonwealth Games (CWG)** is the **second-largest multi-sport event** in the world after the **Olympic Games**.
- The Games bring together athletes from **Commonwealth Games Associations** representing sovereign nations, territories and dependencies linked to the **Commonwealth of Nations**.
- The concept was proposed by **Melville Marks Robinson**, a Canadian sports administrator and journalist.
- The idea originated from the **Inter-Empire Championships, 1911**, organised in **London** during the **Festival of Empire**.
- The inaugural edition, then known as the **British Empire Games**, was held in **Hamilton, Canada**, in **1930**.
- **Gordon Smallacombe** of Canada won the **first Gold Medal** in Commonwealth Games history in the **Triple Jump**.
- The Games have generally been organised every **four years**, except in **1942** and **1946** due to the **Second World War**.
- The event officially adopted the name **Commonwealth Games** in **1978**.

Governing Body:

- **Commonwealth Sport** (formerly the **Commonwealth Games Federation**) governs, supervises and coordinates the organisation of the Commonwealth Games and associated sporting programmes.

India and the Commonwealth Games:

India's Journey:

- India made its Commonwealth Games debut at the **1934 London Games**.
- **Rashid Anwar** won India's **first Commonwealth Games medal**, securing **Bronze** in **Wrestling**.
- **Milkha Singh** became India's **first individual Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist**, winning the **440 yards** event at the **Cardiff Games 1958**.
- India hosted the **2010 Commonwealth Games** in **New Delhi**, recording its best-ever performance with **101 medals (39 Gold, 26 Silver and 36 Bronze)** to finish **second** overall.
- **Ahmedabad** will host the **2030 Commonwealth Games**, making India only the **second nation** after **Australia** to host multiple editions in the modern era.

India's Doping Challenge:

Current Situation:

- According to the **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) 2024 Testing Figures Report**, India recorded a **3.6% positivity rate**, the highest among countries conducting more than **5,000 tests**, for the **third consecutive year**.

- Multiple **Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs)** resulted in the loss of one **Weightlifting quota**, reducing India's contingent for the Glasgow Games.

Concerns:

- Repeated doping violations affect India's international sporting credibility.
- The issue assumes greater significance as India prepares to host the **2030 Commonwealth Games** and seeks to host the **2036 Olympic Games**.
- Doping undermines fair competition, athlete welfare and the integrity of Indian sport.

Reform Measures Required:

- Strengthen the institutional capacity of the **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)**.
- Improve **intelligence-based investigations** and inter-agency coordination against organised doping networks.
- Expand athlete education on prohibited substances, nutritional supplements and therapeutic exemptions.
- Enforce stricter legal and disciplinary action against coaches, medical personnel, suppliers and trafficking networks involved in doping.

Significance of Hosting the Commonwealth Games 2030:

Strategic Importance:

- Hosting the **Centenary Commonwealth Games** will strengthen India's position as an emerging global sporting nation.
- The Games will support India's preparations for its proposed **2036 Olympic Games** bid.
- Large-scale investment in sports infrastructure, athlete development and urban transport is expected to generate long-term socio-economic benefits.
- The event provides an opportunity to showcase India's organisational capacity, cultural diversity and sporting ecosystem before the international community.

Challenges Ahead:

Key Priorities:

- Expand excellence beyond traditional medal-winning sports.
- Improve grassroots talent identification and long-term athlete development.
- Strengthen sports science, nutrition, psychology and injury management systems.
- Ensure transparent governance and accountability in sports administration.
- Eliminate doping through stronger regulation, education and enforcement.
- Increase investment in women's sports, para sports and rural sporting infrastructure.

UPSC Mains Linkages:

Essay Themes:

- **Sports as an Instrument of Nation Building.**
- **Excellence in Sports Requires Strong Institutions.**
- **Clean Sport and Good Governance as Pillars of Sporting Success.**

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Institutions:

- **Commonwealth Sport (formerly Commonwealth Games Federation)** — Governing body of the Commonwealth Games.
- **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)** — International body responsible for harmonising anti-doping rules globally.
- **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** — India's apex agency for implementing anti-doping regulations.
- **National Centre of Excellence (NCOE)** under the **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** provides elite athlete training.

Important Government Initiatives:

- **Khelo India Programme** — Grassroots talent identification and sports infrastructure development.
- **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)** — Financial, scientific and technical support for elite athletes.
- **National Sports Development Fund (NSDF)** — Mobilises public and private resources for sports development.
- **National Sports Policy 2025** aims to strengthen sports governance, athlete welfare, sports science, grassroots participation and India's emergence as a global sporting powerhouse.

NITI Aayog Report Highlights Sharp Decline in Government Schools and Rising Concerns Over Equitable Access to Education

Recent Developments:

- A recent NITI Aayog report highlighted that nearly **94,000 Government Schools** have closed across India over the past decade, averaging about **25 school closures per day**, raising concerns over equitable access to education.
- During the same period, **Government School enrolment** declined by **2.26 crore students**, while their share in total school enrolment fell from **71% (2005)** to **49.24% (2024–25)**.
- The trend has intensified concerns regarding **educational access, social equity, neighbourhood schools and effective implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009**.

School Education Framework in India:

National Education Policy (NEP), 2020:

- **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020** replaced the **National Policy on Education, 1986**, introducing a comprehensive framework covering education from **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** to higher education.
- The policy introduced the **5+3+3+4 curricular and pedagogical structure** aligned with children's developmental stages.
- While supporting **school rationalisation**, the policy clearly emphasises that the principle of **Neighbourhood Schools** should not be compromised during institutional consolidation.

- The policy also focuses on **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)** through the **NIPUN Bharat Mission**, multidisciplinary learning, experiential education and improved learning outcomes.

Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009:

- The **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009** guarantees **free and compulsory elementary education** for children aged **6–14 years** under **Article 21A** of the Constitution.
- The Act mandates **25% reservation** for children belonging to **Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)** and disadvantaged groups in private unaided schools.
- The Act prohibits **physical punishment, screening procedures during admission, capitation fees and arbitrary detention**, while prescribing norms for school infrastructure and **Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)**.

UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus):

- **UDISE+** is an online **Management Information System (MIS)** launched by the **Ministry of Education** during **2018–19** for comprehensive school-level data collection.
- The platform collects information relating to **school infrastructure, teacher availability, enrolment, learning facilities and student progression** across Government and Private Schools.
- The database serves as an important evidence base for educational planning, monitoring and policy evaluation.

Extent of Government School Closures:

School Rationalisation under NEP 2020:

- Many States have justified school closures as **part of school rationalisation**, aiming to consolidate institutions with persistently low enrolment.
- Although **NEP 2020** supports rationalisation for improving resource utilisation, it simultaneously requires preservation of the **Neighbourhood School** principle.
- The magnitude of closures suggests that administrative restructuring, alongside demographic changes and urban migration, has significantly influenced school availability.

National Trends:

- According to **UDISE+**, the number of **Government Schools** declined from **11.07 lakh (2014–15)** to **10.17 lakh (2023–24)**.
- During the same period, the number of **Private Schools** increased from **2.88 lakh** to **3.31 lakh**, indicating a gradual shift towards private schooling.
- The changing enrolment pattern reflects increasing parental preference for private education, particularly where Government Schools face infrastructure or quality-related challenges.

States Most Affected:

Madhya Pradesh:

- Around **7.37 lakh children** were identified without school records, indicating significant gaps in educational tracking.
- Nearly **11.38 lakh children** were placed under the **Drop Box** category, while **1.23 lakh children** had already dropped out of school.
- Approximately **1.55 lakh children** discontinued education due to **migration or displacement**.

- More than **3,500 Government Schools** reported **zero new admissions**, while nearly **6,500 schools** admitted fewer than **10 students**.
- State outreach initiatives, including **School Chalen Hum** and the **Home Contact Campaign**, reportedly failed to reach nearly **7.5 lakh children**.

Uttar Pradesh:

- The number of **Government Schools** declined from **1.63 lakh** to **1.38 lakh** between **2018–19** and **2019–20**, representing one of the largest annual reductions among States.

Jammu & Kashmir:

- More than **4,300 schools** were merged or closed under the rationalisation process.
- The number of schools declined from **23,167 (2020–21)** to **18,785 (2022–23)**.
- Many children now travel **4–6 kilometres** daily to attend school, weakening the **Neighbourhood School** principle envisaged under the **RTE Act**.
- Around **13,000 teacher vacancies** continue to affect classroom teaching and learning outcomes.

Impact of Government School Closures:

Educational Inequality:

- **Government Schools** remain the primary educational institutions for **Scheduled Castes (SCs)**, **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**, **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** and economically weaker sections.
- Closure of nearby schools disproportionately affects children lacking access to private education or reliable transportation.

Rise in Dropout Rates:

- Longer travel distances, poor accessibility and financial constraints contribute to higher dropout rates, particularly in rural, tribal and remote regions.
- Migration, displacement and poverty further disrupt continuity in children's education.

Gender Dimension:

- Girls are more vulnerable to discontinuing education when schools become distant because of concerns relating to **safety, mobility and household responsibilities**.
- Reduced accessibility may widen existing gender disparities in school participation.

Decline in Educational Quality:

- Consolidated schools frequently experience **teacher shortages**, requiring a single teacher to manage multiple classes.
- Such arrangements violate **RTE norms relating to Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)** and adversely affect classroom learning.

Marginalisation of Vulnerable Communities:

- Studies based on the **National Sample Survey (NSS)** indicate declining access to free education among **Muslim, SC and ST households**, increasing educational disparities.

- Reduced public educational access weakens the objective of inclusive and equitable education.

Governance and Accountability Issues:

Role of States:

- Since **Education** falls under the **Concurrent List**, State Governments are primarily responsible for school administration, recruitment and rationalisation policies.
- States determine school restructuring based on local demographic and administrative requirements.

Role of the Union Government:

- The **Right to Education Act, 2009** establishes the national legal framework guaranteeing elementary education.
- The Union Government influences State education through **financial assistance, Centrally Sponsored Schemes, NEP implementation and national policy guidelines**.
- Ensuring equitable educational access therefore requires continuous cooperation between the **Union and State Governments**.

Limitations of the Right to Education Framework:

Implementation Challenges:

- The **RTE Act** guarantees access to education but contains relatively limited enforceable provisions regarding learning quality.
- Poor and rural families often lack institutional awareness and legal capacity to effectively claim educational rights.
- **School Management Committees (SMCs)**, intended to strengthen community participation and accountability, remain weak in many regions.
- Consequently, statutory guarantees have not always translated into effective educational outcomes.

Way Forward:

Key Priorities:

- School rationalisation should balance **administrative efficiency, educational access, equity and learning outcomes**.
- The **Neighbourhood School** principle should remain central while restructuring Government Schools.
- Teacher vacancies should be filled on priority to maintain prescribed **Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)**.
- **School Management Committees (SMCs)** should be revitalised through capacity building and greater community participation.
- Monitoring of **out-of-school children**, migrant children and vulnerable groups should be strengthened through real-time data systems.
- Greater **Centre-State cooperation**, sustained public investment and improved governance are essential to realise the constitutional vision of **universal, equitable and quality education**.

UPSC Mains Linkages:

Essay Themes:

- **Quality Education as the Foundation of Inclusive Development.**
- **Education and Social Equity in India.**
- **Neighbourhood Schools and the Constitutional Promise of Equal Opportunity.**

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 21A** – Right to Free and Compulsory Education.
- **Article 45** – Early Childhood Care and Education.
- **Article 46** – Promotion of Educational Interests of Weaker Sections.
- **Article 41** – Right to Education within the State's Economic Capacity.

Important Schemes and Initiatives:

- **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** – Integrated school education programme covering pre-primary to Class XII.
- **PM SHRI Schools** – Model schools for implementing the objectives of NEP 2020.
- **NIPUN Bharat Mission** – Universal **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)** by Grade 3.
- **Vidyanjali Programme** – Community and volunteer participation for improving Government Schools.

International Linkage:

- **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4** aims to ensure **inclusive, equitable and quality education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Important Supreme Court Judgments:

- **Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka (1992)** recognised education as integral to the **Right to Life** under Article 21.
- **Unnikrishnan J.P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh (1993)** recognised the **Right to Education** up to 14 years, which subsequently led to the insertion of **Article 21A** through the **86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002**.

India's Tea Industry Faces Persistent Market Stress Amid Climate Risks, Import Pressures and Changing Consumer Demand Patterns

Recent Developments:

- India's tea market has remained in a **deflationary phase** for nearly four to five quarters as adverse weather, low-priced imports, and a shift in consumer preference towards cheaper brands and the unorganised sector have compressed profit margins of major tea companies.

- According to **Tea Board of India**, tea exports continued to remain robust, while the Board has also introduced the online **Tea Mark Licensing Portal** and strengthened **Tea Mark Certification** guidelines to improve traceability, quality assurance and export competitiveness.
- The **Tea Board of India** has also expanded quality surveillance through updated **NABL-accredited laboratories** and certification mechanisms to ensure compliance with domestic and international quality standards.

About Tea:

Tea as an Agricultural Commodity:

- **Tea** is produced from the leaves of **Camellia sinensis** and is the world's second most consumed beverage after water.
- India is the **second-largest tea producer** globally and among the leading tea-exporting countries.
- Tea cultivation supports millions of livelihoods through plantation employment, small tea growers, processing units, auctions, logistics and exports.

Tea Board of India:

- The **Tea Board of India** is a **statutory body** established under the **Tea Act, 1953** under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, with headquarters at **Kolkata**.
- The Board promotes cultivation, production, quality improvement, research, domestic marketing, exports, branding, certification and welfare of the tea sector, while also regulating the use of the **Tea Mark**.

Agro-Climatic Requirements:

- **Climate:** Tea thrives under hot, humid tropical and subtropical conditions with prolonged frost-free periods.
- **Temperature:** The optimum range is **20–30°C**, while temperatures above **35°C** or below **10°C** adversely affect plant growth and leaf quality.
- **Rainfall:** Well-distributed annual rainfall of **150–300 cm** with adequate humidity supports optimum productivity.
- **Soil:** Tea grows best in **well-drained, porous, acidic soils** that are low in calcium and rich in organic matter.

India's Tea Production Scenario:

Production Trends:

- Tea production has remained broadly resilient despite periodic fluctuations caused by climatic variability, pest attacks, ageing bushes and labour shortages.
- Production increased from **1,267.36 million kg (2016)** to **1,390.08 million kg (2019)**, declined during the pandemic to **1,257.53 million kg (2020)**, recovered to **1,393.66 million kg (2023)**, moderated in **2024**, and improved again to around **1,370 million kg in 2025**.

Regional Concentration:

- India's tea production remains geographically concentrated, making national output vulnerable to regional climatic disturbances.
- **Assam** and **West Bengal** together contribute more than **80%** of total production, while **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand** and a few North-Eastern states contribute comparatively smaller shares.

- Heatwaves, floods, erratic monsoon rainfall and landslides in Assam and North Bengal have a disproportionate impact on national production and prices.

India's Tea Trade Performance:

Exports:

- Tea exports have shown steady growth in both quantity and value, indicating improvement in India's global market presence.
- During **2024–25**, India exported about **263 million kg** of tea valued at around **₹7,818 crore**, while exports during **April–December 2025–26** exceeded **223 million kg**.
- India's share in global tea production is significantly higher than its share in global exports, indicating substantial scope for expanding export competitiveness and value addition.
- Major export destinations include the **UAE, Iraq, Russia, China, United States, Iran, United Kingdom, Germany, Saudi Arabia** and **Türkiye**, with the top twenty markets accounting for nearly **88%** of total exports.

Imports:

- Tea imports generally account for only **2–3%** of domestic production and are primarily used for blending, re-export and value addition.
- Imports increased sharply during **2024–25**, raising concerns regarding domestic price stability, quality assurance and market competition.
- Growing imports from **Nepal** and **Kenya** have intensified competitive pressure on domestic producers by lowering auction prices and increasing price volatility.

Factors Behind the Current Slowdown:

Climate Change and Weather Extremes:

- Prolonged heatwaves, irregular rainfall, floods and landslides have reduced tea yields, deteriorated leaf quality and increased pest infestations.
- Climate variability has shortened harvesting cycles, reduced production of premium-quality tea and increased irrigation and plantation management costs.

Cheap Imports and Price Competition:

- Low-priced imports from neighbouring countries have increased downward pressure on domestic auction prices.
- Since tea largely functions as a **commodity market** with relatively low brand loyalty, consumers often switch to cheaper alternatives during periods of inflation or income stress.

Consumer Behaviour:

- Consumers have increasingly shifted towards low-cost sub-brands and products supplied by the unorganised sector, reducing the pricing power of organised tea companies.
- Premiumisation strategies have achieved only limited success because tea remains a highly price-sensitive daily consumption product.

Rising Cost of Production:

- Labour wages, fertilisers, energy, transportation and plant protection costs have increased faster than tea prices, compressing profit margins.
- Restrictions on several pesticides have increased production costs by requiring costlier alternatives while ensuring higher food safety standards.

Supply Chain Disruptions:

- Temporary **LPG shortages** linked to geopolitical disruptions in **West Asia** reduced household fuel consumption, indirectly affecting tea consumption in some regions.
- Weather-related disruptions have also affected transportation, auction arrivals and timely marketing of tea.

Structural Challenges:

- Ageing tea bushes, inadequate replantation, fragmented small holdings, limited mechanisation and declining productivity continue to constrain long-term competitiveness.
- Small tea growers remain highly vulnerable to volatile auction prices and increasing input costs.

Significance of the Tea Sector:***Economic Importance:***

- Tea is one of India's major plantation crops contributing to agricultural output, export earnings and rural industrialisation.
- The sector supports extensive forward and backward linkages through packaging, logistics, warehousing, auction platforms and international trade.

Employment Generation:

- The industry provides direct and indirect employment to millions of workers, with women constituting a significant share of the plantation workforce.

Regional Development:

- Tea cultivation plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development of **Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala** and several North-Eastern states.

Foreign Exchange Earnings:

- Tea exports contribute to India's agricultural export basket and strengthen the country's presence in premium global beverage markets.

Challenges for the Tea Industry:***Economic Challenges:***

- Persistent commodity price volatility, declining profitability and market concentration increase financial risks for producers.

- Heavy dependence on a limited number of export destinations exposes India to geopolitical and demand-side shocks.

Environmental Challenges:

- Climate change, increasing frequency of extreme weather events, pest outbreaks and declining soil health threaten long-term sustainability.

Institutional Challenges:

- Limited investment in replantation, inadequate technological adoption, fragmented supply chains and insufficient branding reduce international competitiveness.

Way Forward:

Strengthening Competitiveness:

- Promote premium teas, speciality teas, **Geographical Indication (GI)** products, organic tea and value-added products to improve export realisation.
- Expand market access through diversified export destinations and stronger trade diplomacy.

Climate-Resilient Tea Cultivation:

- Encourage climate-resilient varieties, efficient irrigation, integrated pest management, soil conservation and scientific replantation programmes.
- Strengthen early warning systems and weather-based advisory services for plantation management.

Institutional and Policy Measures:

- Improve quality certification through **Tea Mark**, strengthen testing infrastructure, support digital marketing and modernise tea auctions.
- Enhance financial support for small tea growers, promote mechanisation and expand research through specialised tea research institutions.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Institutions:

- **Tea Board of India**
- **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**
- **Tea Research Association (TRA)**

Important Legislation:

- **Tea Act, 1953**

Important Concepts:

- **Tea Mark**

- Geographical Indication (GI) Tea
- Commodity Price Deflation
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

Important Current Affairs Linkages:

- Climate change and plantation agriculture.
- Agricultural export competitiveness.
- Quality certification and food safety.
- Sustainable agriculture and resilient supply chains.
- Small growers, rural livelihoods and agricultural value chains.

Andhra Pradesh Custodial Death Case Highlights Persistent Concerns Over Police Accountability, Human Rights and Criminal Justice Reforms

Recent Developments:

- The **Special Investigation Team (SIT)** arrested a suspended police inspector in connection with the alleged custodial death of **Gade Sai Krishna** in **Andhra Pradesh**, after preliminary findings indicated illegal detention, custodial violence and destruction of evidence.
- The **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** took suo motu cognisance of the incident, termed it a prima facie violation of **Article 21**, sought an Action-Taken Report from the State Police, and directed protection for the victim's family.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** reiterated that every custodial death, whether in police or judicial custody, must be reported to the **NHRC** within **24 hours**, along with mandatory post-mortem videography and magisterial inquiry as per NHRC guidelines.

About Custodial Death:

Meaning and Scope:

- **Custodial death** refers to the death of a person while under **police custody, judicial custody** or any other form of lawful detention, irrespective of whether the individual is an accused, undertrial or convicted prisoner.
- Such deaths may result from **custodial torture**, excessive use of force, negligence, denial of timely medical treatment, suicide or other suspicious circumstances, each requiring an independent legal inquiry.
- Custodial death is considered one of the gravest forms of **State excess**, as the State assumes a constitutional duty to protect the life and dignity of every individual in its custody.

Constitutional and Legal Framework:

Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 20(1):** Protects individuals from punishment beyond what is prescribed under law.
- **Article 20(3):** Protects against **self-incrimination**, making involuntary confessions obtained through coercion legally inadmissible.

- **Article 21:** Guarantees the **Right to Life and Personal Liberty**, which extends fully to persons in police and judicial custody.
- **Article 22:** Provides safeguards against arbitrary arrest by ensuring information regarding grounds of arrest, legal representation and production before a magistrate within **24 hours**.

Statutory Provisions:

- **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023** strengthens procedural safeguards relating to arrest, investigation, documentation and judicial oversight.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023** and **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), 2023** modernise criminal and evidentiary laws, reducing reliance on confession-based investigation.
- **Section 196(2) of BNSS** mandates a **Judicial Magistrate inquiry** in cases involving custodial death, disappearance or custodial rape, replacing the earlier **Section 176(1A) of CrPC**.

Magnitude of the Issue:

Custodial Death Statistics:

- Parliamentary data indicate that **11,656 custodial deaths** were recorded across India between **2016–17 and 2021–22**, with **Uttar Pradesh** reporting the highest number during that period.
- According to **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** data, **170 custodial deaths** were reported during the first **74 days of 2026**, exceeding the corresponding figure of **140** recorded in the previous year.
- **Bihar** reported the highest number of custodial deaths during this period, followed by **Rajasthan** and **Uttar Pradesh**.

Causes of Custodial Deaths:

Procedural Deficiencies:

- Non-compliance with the safeguards laid down in **D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997)**, inadequate documentation and delayed judicial inquiries weaken accountability.
- Delays in forensic examination, post-mortem reporting and magisterial investigations often reduce the effectiveness of criminal prosecution.

Weak Institutional Accountability:

- Investigations are frequently conducted by the same police establishment to which the accused officials belong, creating concerns regarding impartiality.
- Departmental proceedings and judicial inquiries often remain prolonged, reducing public confidence in accountability mechanisms.

Political and Administrative Influence:

- Political interference may compromise independent policing and discourage prompt disciplinary action against erring officials.
- Inadequate operational autonomy weakens professional policing standards.

Socio-Economic Vulnerability:

- Victims often belong to economically weaker or socially marginalised communities with limited access to legal assistance and institutional support.
- Fear of retaliation and prolonged litigation discourages families from pursuing justice.

Overdependence on Confession-Based Investigation:

- Inadequate forensic capacity, poor scientific investigation and shortage of trained personnel encourage coercive interrogation practices instead of evidence-based policing.

Concerns and Implications:***Governance and Rule of Law:***

- Custodial deaths undermine the **Rule of Law** by violating constitutional guarantees under **Articles 21 and 22**, thereby weakening public trust in criminal justice institutions.
- Failure to ensure accountability reduces confidence in democratic governance and law enforcement.

Human Rights Concerns:

- Repeated incidents attract criticism from international human rights institutions, affecting India's global human rights credentials.
- Allegations of custodial torture weaken India's moral position while advocating human rights internationally.

Criminal Justice Concerns:

- Dependence on coercive interrogation reflects deficiencies in forensic investigation, scientific policing and evidence collection.
- Frequent custodial violence creates the perception of excessive police power instead of citizen-centric policing.

Judicial Interventions:

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Important Supreme Court Judgments:

- **D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997):** Laid down mandatory arrest and detention guidelines, including arrest memo, medical examination, information to relatives and maintenance of custody records.
- **Nilabati Behera v. State of Odisha (1993):** Recognised compensation as a constitutional remedy for custodial death arising from violation of **Article 21**.
- **Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006):** Directed comprehensive police reforms, including establishment of **Police Complaints Authorities**, fixed tenure for senior officers and separation of investigation from law-and-order functions.

International Legal Framework:***International Human Rights Instruments:***

- **United Nations Charter (1945):** Promotes protection of fundamental human rights and human dignity.

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):** Prohibits torture and arbitrary deprivation of liberty while recognising the presumption of innocence.
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966:** Protects the **Right to Life** and prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
- **United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT), 1984:** India has **signed but not ratified** the Convention, making anti-torture legislation an important pending reform.
- **Nelson Mandela Rules (2015):** Prescribe internationally accepted minimum standards for the humane treatment of prisoners.

Measures Required:

Legislative Reforms:

- Enact a comprehensive **anti-torture law** in line with recommendations of the **Law Commission of India** and India's international commitments.
- Strengthen statutory safeguards relating to custodial violence, victim compensation and witness protection.

Police Reforms:

- Fully implement the **Prakash Singh** directives by ensuring independent complaint authorities, functional autonomy and separation of investigation from law-and-order responsibilities.
- Promote scientific investigation through forensic evidence, cyber tools, digital documentation and specialised training.

Technology-Based Monitoring:

- Ensure uninterrupted **CCTV surveillance** in police stations and interrogation rooms, mandatory body-worn cameras and secure digital custody records.
- Strengthen forensic documentation through videographed post-mortem examinations and electronic evidence preservation.

Judicial and Institutional Reforms:

- Establish fast-track courts for custodial violence cases and ensure time-bound judicial inquiries.
- Strengthen the oversight role of **NHRC, State Human Rights Commissions**, judicial magistrates and independent forensic experts.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Constitutional Articles:

- Article 20
- Article 21
- Article 22
- Article 32
- Article 226

Important Supreme Court Judgments:

- **D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997)**

- **Nilabati Behera v. State of Odisha (1993)**
- **Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006)**

Important Committees and Reports:

- **69th Report of the Law Commission of India**
- **273rd Report of the Law Commission of India**
- **National Police Commission**
- **Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)**

Important Institutions:

- **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)**
- **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**
- **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**

Important International Linkages:

- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**
- **United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT)**
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**
- **Nelson Mandela Rules**

UPSC Enrichment:

- **Custodial violence is frequently examined in relation to Fundamental Rights, police reforms, criminal justice system, human rights, constitutional governance and ethical public administration.**

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QUESTIONS

1. Consider the following counter-insurgency operations executed by Indian security forces in Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) affected belts:

- (1) Operation Black Forest
- (2) Operation Octopus
- (3) Operation Double Bull
- (4) Operation Thunderstorm
- (5) Operation Bhimbarg
- (6) Operation Chakrabandha

How many of the above are intelligence-led operations conducted specifically to dismantle Maoist strongholds in the Red Corridor?

- (A) Only three
- (B) Only four
- (C) Only five
- (D) All six

2. Consider the following pairs of athletes and their landmark historic achievements at the Commonwealth Games:

Athlete	Historic Achievement
1. Milkha Singh	Won India's first individual Commonwealth Games gold medal (1958).
2. Rashid Anwar	Secured India's first-ever Commonwealth Games medal (1934).
3. Asmita Dey & Harsh Singh	Scripted history as India's first-ever CWG gold medalists in Badminton (1966).
4. Gordon Smallacombe	Won the first-ever gold medal in Commonwealth Games history (1930).

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- (A) Only two pairs
- (B) Only three pairs
- (C) All four pairs
- (D) None of the pairs

3. Consider the following statements regarding the legal framework of fundamental rights to education in India:

Statement 1: Article 21A of the Constitution of India guarantees free and compulsory education to all children aged 6 to 14 years as a Fundamental Right.

Statement 2: The Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 contains statutory provisions enforcing actionable standards for learning outcomes and quality parameters alongside access guarantees.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (A) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, and Statement 2 is the correct explanation for Statement 1.
- (B) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, but Statement 2 is NOT the correct explanation for Statement 1.

- (C) Statement 1 is correct, but Statement 2 is incorrect.
(D) Statement 1 is incorrect, but Statement 2 is correct.

4. Consider the following conditions and parameters regarding the cultivation of the tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*):

- (1) Optimal growth temperatures ranging strictly between 20°C and 30°C
- (2) Annual well-distributed rainfall requirement of 150 cm to 300 cm
- (3) Slightly acidic, calcium-free soil with a porous sub-soil
- (4) Completely waterlogged, stagnant clay soils to prevent root evaporation
- (5) Sensitivity to thermal damage when ambient temperatures fall below 0°C or exceed 40°C

How many of the above conditions are ideal for commercial tea cultivation?

- (A) Only two
- (B) Only three
- (C) Only four
- (D) All five

5. Consider the following statements regarding custodial rights and police accountability in India:

- (1) In the D.K. Basu (1997) case, the Supreme Court mandated the setup of mandatory Police Complaints Authorities at state and district levels.
- (2) The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 replaced the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
- (3) Article 20(3) of the Constitution provides protection against self-incrimination.
- (4) The 69th Report of the Law Commission of India recommended enacting a dedicated Anti-Torture Law to prevent custodial violence.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (A) Only one
- (B) Only two
- (C) Only three
- (D) All four

ANSWER KEY

1 – Answer (D), 2 – Answer (B), 3 – Answer (C), 4 – Answer (B), 5 – Answer (A)



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In today's fast-changing world, staying updated with current affairs is essential for both academic success and professional growth. Awareness of national and international events not only broadens general knowledge but also sharpens critical and analytical thinking skills. It enables individuals to form well-informed opinions, which are crucial for competitive examinations, group discussions, interviews, and impactful essay writing.

Being well-informed reflects adaptability, awareness, and intellectual curiosity—qualities that are highly valued in a competitive environment. A strong grasp of contemporary issues enhances confidence, widens perspective, and prepares individuals to tackle real-world challenges effectively, ultimately opening the door to better opportunities and long-term personal and career advancement.

-  oashub19  oashub19
 OASHUB22  oashub19@gmail.com
 M5/17, Acharya Vihar Bhubaneswar 751022