EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

28-07-2026

1. SC order doesn't speak of riparian States' nod: Centre(the hindu Page no3)

Syllabus Mapping

1. GS Paper: GS Paper 2.
2. Syllabus Topics:
    1. Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.
    2. Inter-state relations and dispute redressal mechanisms.

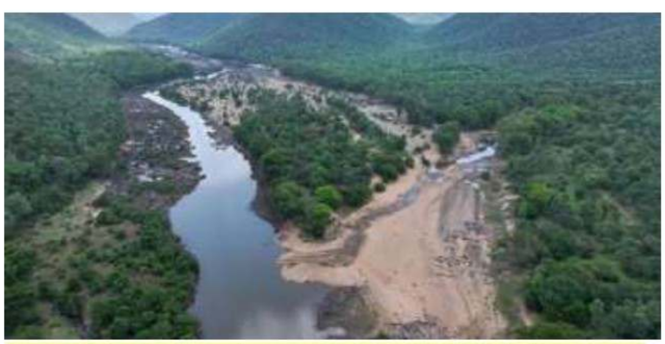
SC order doesn't speak of riparian States' nod: Centre

Union govt. says 2018 order does not say that Karnataka must get consent of other States to build any structure across Cauvery; Karnataka maintains Mekedatu project will not affect T.N.'s share

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In what could bolster Karnataka's stand on the proposed Mekedatu balancing reservoir across the Cauvery, the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti has said that a 2018 Supreme Court judgment on the Cauvery dispute does not mention that Karnataka must obtain the consent of other riparian States, to construct any structure across the river.

The statement came on Monday in response to an unstarred question in the Rajya Sabha by Pattali Makkal Katchi member Anbumani Ramadoss. He sought to know whether the Centre was aware of the February 2018 Supreme Court verdict relating to the Cauvery water dispute, which, according to the query, required the upper riparian State of Karnataka to obtain the consent of the lower riparian States, including Tamil Nadu, before constructing any structure across the river.



Karnataka is planning a dam over the Cauvery at Mekedatu to meet the drinking water needs of Bengaluru. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

In a written reply, Minister of State for Jal Shakti Raj Bhushan Choudhary said, "As per the Supreme Court judgment dated February 16, 2018, regarding the Cauvery dispute, there is no mention that Karnataka has to obtain the consent of other riparian States, namely Tamil Nadu, Kerala and the Union Territory of Puducherry, to construct any kind of structure across the river."

Karnataka has been contending that the project at Mekedatu in Bengaluru South will not affect Tamil Nadu's water share.

1. Beyond compliance, India's road to cleaner mobility(the hindu Page no 8)

Syllabus Mapping

1. GS Paper: GS Paper 3.
2. Syllabus Topics:
   1. Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
   2. Infrastructure: Energy and mobility.
   3. Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial

Beyond compliance, India's road to cleaner mobility

Kunal Shankar

The debate over India's proposed Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) III norms comes at a crucial time for the global automobile industry as it transitions from internal combustion engines (ICE) to electrified powertrains. It also highlights India's vulnerability to imported crude oil amid renewed geopolitical tensions. The framework India adopts today will influence investment, technology choices and energy security for decades.

CAFE III, compliance or transformation

The Power Ministry's July 16 draft notification marks the third iteration of CAFE III after months of industry lobbying. While some manufacturers pushed for stricter norms, others sought flexibility. The proposal attempts a compromise, but the question remains whether it prioritises compliance over transformation.

CAFE norms set annual sales-weighted average fuel-efficiency targets for manufacturers' passenger vehicle fleets rather than individual models. Introduced in the United States in 1975 after the 1973 Arab oil embargo, they aimed to reduce oil dependence and protect consumers from high fuel costs. The rules caused automakers to adopt smaller, more efficient vehicles. This also helped accelerate the rise of Japanese manufacturers.

From the 1990s, fuel-efficiency regulations gained a second purpose: reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. In the United States, the EPA's Endangerment Finding brought greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act, with later emissions standards aligned closely with CAFE rules. While technology-neutral, the rules encouraged innovation in hybrids and electric vehicles (EV). Ironically, the Obama administration's $465 million Department of Energy loan to Tesla in 2010 helped accelerate an EV industry now dominated by China.

China's experience is even more instructive. It introduced mandatory fuel-consumption standards in 2004, initially regulating individual vehicle models by weight rather than fleet averages. As car ownership surged, concerns over oil imports and urban air pollution grew. The standards tightened over time before China changed direction in 2018 with the introduction of its Dual Credit System.

Under this framework, manufacturers must meet both Corporate Average Fuel Consumption (CAFC) standards and New Energy Vehicle (NEV) credit requirements. Fuel-efficiency compliance alone is insufficient. Companies that fail to earn enough NEV credits through EV or plug-in hybrid production must purchase credits from those with surplus EV production, creating a market that rewards innovation and penalises delayed electrification. For example, in India, Maruti Suzuki could remain NEV credit-deficient by 18% despite having highly fuel-efficient ICE models if it had no EVs in its portfolio. It would need to buy credits from companies such as Tata Motors or Mahindra, which generate NEV credits through their EV portfolios. While CAFC credits can be banked, carried forward or transferred within corporate groups, NEV credits cannot be offset in the same way. The results are evident. According to the International Energy Agency's Global EV Outlook 2026, China sold more than 13 million electric cars in 2025, accounting for almost 55% of new passenger vehicle sales. Comparable figures were about 27% in the European Union, nearly 10% in the U.S. and around 4% in India.

Weak fuel efficiency norms risk keeping the country dependent on imported oil

India's own debate has centred on differences between Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra. An earlier proposal effectively carved out lighter small cars from the full stringency of CAFE III. That exemption has since been removed. The current proposal seeks to reduce average emissions from around 113 gCO_2/km to 77 gCO_2/km by FY2031-32. On paper, that appears ambitious. Yet, the headline target tells only part of the story.

The cost of flexibility

The revised framework introduces several flexibility mechanisms that, taken together, substantially reduce its effective stringency.

The first is the Carbon Neutrality Factor, which awards compliance benefits for vehicles compatible with higher ethanol blends and other fuels. Yet, the government has informed Parliament that no decision has been taken to move beyond E20 blending (20% plant-based ethanol with 80% regular petrol). Manufacturers therefore receive compliance advantages for technologies whose long-term policy trajectory remains uncertain. Ethanol is also more expensive than petrol, and has lower energy density, and therefore delivers lower mileage – a fact belatedly acknowledged by the Centre after it drew severe criticism.

The second is the use of super credits. Battery EVs, plug-in hybrids, strong hybrids and flex-fuel vehicles receive additional weight in fleet calculations. While this encourages cleaner technologies, it also means that fewer actual low-emission vehicle sales are required to offset higher-emission models. Strong hybrids, which generally rely primarily on the ICE while using electric propulsion over relatively short distances and at lower speeds, also receive super-credit benefits despite offering only partial electrification.

The third mechanism is banking and trading of compliance credits. Manufacturers outperforming their targets can accumulate credits and sell them to others. In addition, the draft allows companies to buy credits directly from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) at administratively fixed prices if deficits remain after trading. The BEE is therefore not a market exchange but effectively a seller of last resort.

In theory, this introduces efficiency into the system. In practice, it allows companies that are lagging to meet compliance requirements without upgrading their own technology. Moreover, the draft notification allows manufacturers to buy compliance credits from the BEE at ₹2,500 per gram of CO_2/km in FY2028, rising to ₹4,500 by FY2032. By comparison, the Energy Conservation Act prescribes additional penalties of ₹25,000 or ₹50,000 per vehicle depending on the extent of non-compliance. Expressed in CAFE terms, the lower penalty threshold is broadly equivalent to a little over ₹5,000 per gram of CO_2/km, implying that the proposed buyout price begins at less than half that level.

Finally, compliance is assessed over three-year blocks before shifting to two-year blocks, allowing manufacturers to average performance across multiple years rather than meeting targets annually. Therefore, delays in one year can be compensated in another.

The case of CNG

Taken together, these mechanisms significantly alter the stringency of these regulations. Which raises a fundamental question: What is the purpose of a regulation?

Regulation should shape markets rather than simply accommodate prevailing market preferences. India's own experience with compressed natural gas (CNG) illustrates the point. Once policy support aligned with regulatory certainty, manufacturers rapidly introduced CNG variants. Regulation can create markets as much as respond to them.

To put this in perspective: manufacturers' voluntary commitments already average nearly 20% EV share by 2030, with several original equipment manufacturers aiming for 30% or higher. In effect, the revised regulation attempts only half of what the industry itself has committed to. The timing also matters. India remains heavily dependent on imported crude, exposing the economy to geopolitical shocks, imported inflation and currency pressures. Strengthening fuel-efficiency standards is therefore not merely an environmental objective. It is an energy-security strategy, an industrial policy and a macroeconomic imperative.

These developments highlight the urgency and significance of revising India's CAFE norms, as they offer an opportunity to address a macroeconomic vulnerability while helping meet India's Glasgow commitment on energy efficiency.

India should seize this opportunity to position itself alongside the world's leading automotive markets in the transition to low-carbon mobility.

kunal.shankar@thehindu.co.in

1. AI's next test — reaching India's informal women worker(the hindu Page no 8)

Syllabus Mapping

1. GS Paper: GS Paper 2 & GS Paper 3.
2. Syllabus Topics:

1. Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States.
2. Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology.
3. Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Human Resources.

AI's next test — reaching India's informal women worker

S. Krishnan

Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India

Shoko Ishikawa,

Country Representative, UN Women India and part of Team UN in India

Artificial Intelligence (AI) must empower informal women workers for truly inclusive economic growth

India's journey towards Viksit Bharat by 2047 rests on whether the productivity gains unlocked by artificial intelligence (AI) are broadly shared or concentrated among those already well-served. AI is reshaping value chains across agriculture, logistics, health care and financial services. The design choices in these systems, who they are built for, whose data they train on, and whose languages they speak, will determine whether this transformation amplifies India's inclusive growth story or adds a dimension to structural inequalities.

About 82% of working women in India are in informal employment according to a 2018 ILO report, spanning agriculture, home-based production, domestic services and micro-enterprises. The gender implications of AI adoption are, above all, a question of economic inclusion. India's AI Governance Guidelines, released in November 2025, set out seven guiding principles, including fairness and equity; translating these into gender-responsive outcomes is both a governance priority and a development opportunity. As UN Women has warned, AI is already reimagining reality for billions, but it is still getting women wrong; without gender-responsive design, testing and oversight, it risks amplifying stereotypes, discrimination and digital violence instead of expanding opportunity.

In agriculture and informal work

AI holds considerable promise for Indian farmers through precision agriculture applications, real-time advisory on crop health, input optimisation and market access. With 76.9% of rural women engaged in agriculture as in Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24 reporting, women are a primary constituency. Early evidence is telling: a 2024 study of Farmer.Chat, deployed across 12 States, found that 61% of women users reported improved quality of life within 45 days, with engagement levels two to three times those of male users. While the specific design features driving this outcome require further documentation, the results suggest that when AI agricultural tools reach women, keeping in mind language, land access patterns, mobility constraints, and relevance, meaningful engagement follows. Building on this foundation, three areas merit focused attention as India scales its AI deployment.

Governance priorities

First, gender impact assessments. The India AI Governance Guidelines' principles of fairness and equity require operationalisation through proportionate gender impact assessments for AI systems affecting economic opportunity, welfare access or safety for women and girls. These should examine whether outcomes vary by sex, location, caste, disability and work status, and whether redressal mechanisms are accessible in regional languages. Where AI decisions on credit, employment or welfare cannot be explained, trust suffers disproportionately among marginalised groups. Similarly, Gender Responsive Budgeting offers a practical test for decisions on AI spend. For any significant AI investment, four questions can be applied: which women will benefit; which specific barrier (access, language, safety or capability) is being addressed; how outcomes will be measured; and which budget line will finance corrective action if results fall short.

Second, AI literacy as public infrastructure. Access to tools is a necessary but not sufficient condition for inclusion. Training programmes for women in informal work must be designed around their time constraints, literacy levels and livelihood contexts. Embedding AI literacy within Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) and Skill India, with linkages to Mission Shakti's Sakhi network, would allow trusted community infrastructure to carry new digital capability. The measure of success should be outcome-based: did this help a woman access an entitlement, navigate a platform, or move to better-paid work? Third, digital safety as a condition for economic participation. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including deepfakes, online harassment and non-consensual imagery, creates a measurable "chilling effect", discouraging women from participating fully in digital economic spaces. The IT (Amendment) Rules, 2021 require grievance mechanisms for harmful content; the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)'s proposed mandatory labelling of AI-generated synthetic content adds further protection. Effective implementation, with accessible survivor-facing remedies in regional languages, is a prerequisite for women's sustained digital participation.

The National Commission for Women's review of cyber laws provides evidence-based recommendations warranting timely inter-ministerial action.

AI prosperity for all

India has built substantial AI infrastructure in a short period: the IndiaAI Mission, the BHASHa Interface for India (BHASHINI) multilingual platform, the AI Governance Guidelines and targeted cross-sector partnerships. The India AI Impact Summit 2026 showed that these ambitions are matched by a growing ecosystem of practitioners, innovators and civil society.

The opportunity is to ensure that the productivity gains from this infrastructure reach those at the base of the economic pyramid, *viz.*, women farmers, home-based workers, self-help group members, platform participants. This requires deliberate design: in procurement standards, training programmes, safety frameworks and the measurement of success.

By 2047, the measure of India's AI success should not be aggregate indicators alone, but whether women in informal work have gained meaningful, productive access to the tools and opportunities that AI enables. That is the standard consistent with Viksit Bharat, and it is within India's reach.

1. To fix unemployment, fix the economy first(the hindu Page no 9) Syllabus Mapping
    1. GS Paper: GS Paper 3.
    2. Syllabus Topics:
1. Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

2. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

To fix unemployment, fix the economy first

The Cockroach Janta Party's movement has highlighted the political urgency for reforming the economy to create more employment for India's youth. Fixing the education system alone will not solve the unemployment problem. The basic structure of the economy must be reformed.

China and India, the only two countries in the world with populations exceeding one billion, have the greatest need for meaningful employment. If citizens are not fully employed, and incomes of masses do not rise, their economies cannot grow. China has done much better than India in this regard; the per capita income of Chinese citizens has risen roughly eight times faster than Indians' in the last 30 years.

India's leaders find themselves in the middle of conflicting trends. First, they are pushing ahead with reforms for 'ease of doing business'; diluting the rights of workers to organise; and weakening environmental protection. Second, they are promoting the wide-spread application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve 'productivity' (and other benefits) in agriculture, industry, health and education, with productivity defined, purely in economic terms, as more output with less human input. Third, they also see the need to change the pattern of growth and increase employment elasticity. Employment elasticity is the amount of meaningful employment created with each unit of GDP growth, in which India has been a laggard since the liberal market economic reforms of the 1990s.

Since India has the largest population of youth in the world, its economic growth should have the highest employment elasticity. However, the increased adoption of AI will only make it worse.

Arun Maira

Author of 'Reimagining India's Economy: The Road to a More Equitable Society'

The 'ease of doing business' must now become subordinate to the ease of living and earning for all citizens

The China model

China has invested billions to become an AI superpower and has raced to integrate the technology across a range of industries. By 2024, more than two million robots were already working in Chinese factories. And in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, Meituan, the nation's largest food delivery service, has experimented with using small autonomous robots to deliver food. But China's advances in AI have run headlong into a growing problem: anxiety over the workers who could be displaced.

China's political and economic history reveals that, despite being an authoritarian country, the Chinese government is very attentive to what people are thinking and saying on the Internet. History has taught them that another revolution will form if disenchanted and educated youth rise along with the disgruntled workers and peasants. They know they must respond.

Unemployment has been increasing in China. The unemployment rate for migrant workers rose to 5.7% in March this year, which has been the highest in nearly three years for China, while youth unemployment stood at 16.3% in April. Moreover, 70% of unemployed young people are university graduates, with older laid-off workers facing prolonged periods of joblessness.

However, Chinese courts have been swift to act. A court ruled in May that a tech company had illegally laid-off a worker after replacing him with AI software. Another ruled that, "the development of artificial intelligence technology should be applied to liberating labour, promoting employment and improving people's livelihood". And yet another ruled that "companies that benefit from technology must, at the same time, adopt social responsibilities and protect worker rights".

China's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security announced in January that it would roll out policies to address the impact of AI on jobs, including targeted support for key industries. In June, the State Council issued a plan on implementing an "employment-first" strategy for the 2026-2030 period. Party officials have proposed sweeping government interventions such as requiring employers to offer training to help workers adapt to an AI-centric job market.

The Chinese government's 'people-first' ideology has served China's economy and its people well. China's leaders have remained socialists; they have always put the needs of common citizens, and the stability of China's society, above economists' demands for deregulation of markets and prices, especially with respect to labour, food, education, health, and housing.

The road ahead for India

Indian income levels must rise rapidly – in agriculture, manufacturing, and services. The government has added 'ease of living' to 'ease of doing business' as the purpose of the reforms required for India to become 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. To make it a reality, it will have to put more teeth into its policies to increase employment and incomes, and stave off the negative impacts that AI will have on employment. Policies must require that employers take more responsibility for training their own workers; they must be restrained from laying them off.

New policies must put workers' rights ahead of capitalists' rights, as China has done. India's labour market reforms, with the four labour codes, are directed to improve 'ease of doing business', which is undoubtedly necessary. However, the 'ease of doing business' must now become subordinate to the ease of living and earning for all citizens.

India's leaders would do well to learn from China's leaders on how to navigate this moment in history. The rights of all workers must be firmly protected. While the views of financial investors must be heard, the views of workers and small-time entrepreneurs must be heard much more.

1. The next chapter for Education Ministry(the hindu Page no 10)

Syllabus Mapping

1. GS Paper: GS Paper 2.
2. Syllabus Topics:

1. Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education and Human Resources.
2. Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

The next chapter for Education Ministry

As Pralhad Joshi takes charge of the Education Ministry, several key 'reforms' remain under way, including the National Curriculum Framework, the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, the three-language formula, and new teacher-training initiatives in school education

EXPLAINER

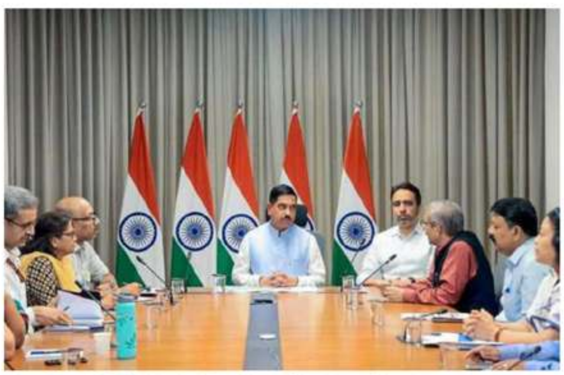
M. Kalyanaraman

The story so far:

Pralhad Joshi, the new Union Minister for Education, inherits a range of structural changes to Indian education initiated by Dharmendra Pradhan.

Mr. Pradhan's exit as Education Minister has been under a cloud, but his five-year tenure was marked by a ramping up of efforts to implement the National Education Policy 2020, which the Union Cabinet had accepted a year before he took charge. Earlier, at the Petroleum Ministry, he had made his mark on programme implementation by delivering eight crore LPG connections to poor households in three years against a four-year target.

From the National Curriculum Framework, flexible learning and multidisciplinarity, and the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill (VBSA), to PM SHRI, the three-language formula and new teacher-training initiatives in school education, his Ministry was constantly in the news for introducing "reforms." Common threads ran through them: performance evaluation and accountability, skilling-education convergence, promotion of a certain vision of Indianness, ambition undercut by implementation challenges, and a push for uniformity that critics called centralisation and a disregard for diversity. Almost all remain works-in-progress that the new Education Minister will have to carry forward.



Union Minister Pralhad Joshi took additional charge of the Ministry of Education on July 26. ANI

NEP's recommendations on foundational literacy

Through Nipun Bharat, formally launched by Mr. Pradhan's predecessor on the heels of pandemic-era learning losses, the government was finally acting on decades of evidence from surveys by voluntary organisations that India's schoolchildren were lagging far behind in reading and math, despite formally graduating year after year. It seeks to ensure every child attains foundational literacy and numeracy – a concept advocated by NEP – by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27. ASER 2024 showed a seven-percentage-point gain in numeracy since 2018, and PARAKH 2024 found Grade 3 students who benefited from the mission's first three years, outperforming Grades 6 and 9 in language and math. Yet fewer than a quarter of students nationally could read a Grade 2 text, and Grade 5 levels remained roughly where they were pre-pandemic – a sign of implementation gaps that may well necessitate a Nipun Bharat 2.0.

The push to boost teaching quality

Though standards for teachers are common in advanced nations, the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) is India's first initiative to assess and classify teachers – as proficient, expert or advanced – against uniform national standards, with career progression tied to this ladder. The National Mentoring Mission, meant to identify mentor teachers to guide others up this ladder through nomination and volunteering, is being rolled out with online sessions, but awareness among the country's one crore teachers remains low and impact assessments are yet to be formalised. NPST itself has not been rolled out, leaving teachers little incentive to engage with the mentoring sessions.

Key changes attempted in higher education

Some initiatives drew sharper controversy. The 2025 draft UGC regulations on appointing teachers, Vice-Chancellors and staff faced strong opposition – notably for giving governors a decisive say in Vice-Chancellor appointments and for removing the cap on contractual professorships. Separately, the UGC's new undergraduate and postgraduate degree rules, built around flexibility and multidisciplinarity to create a skilled workforce, have been formally in force since the 2025 academic year – but institutions across States are still barely grasping radical concepts such as a commerce student studying science, or transferring credits across colleges via the National Credit Framework.

An example of education-skilling convergence is the Swayam Plus platform, which offers over 500 industry-developed courses across 15 sectors, including emerging technologies. Some 6.5 lakh have registered for these courses. The new modules under "AI for All" have reportedly drawn one lakh registrations. Courses such as AI for Physics, AI for Chemistry, AI in Accounting, AI for Educators, and AI/ML using Python are intended to be skilling courses for professionals that are supposed to make them job ready. The key gap is that most colleges that come under State universities are often resistant to changing the idea of giving a package deal and accept flexibility in accepting credits. There is an awareness gap, too.

While the higher education initiatives appear aspirational and sound grand on paper, there is little or no funding allocation to State universities to accomplish such flexibility. The VBSA in fact has no grant giving function - a key element of the University Grants Commission that it seeks to replace.

The controversy over language policy

Mr. Pradhan also pushed to steamroll NEP adoption – particularly the three-language policy – by tying central funding for primary education schemes to compliance by States. Tamil Nadu remains a holdout, though West Bengal's new government has accepted it. In CBSE schools, Mr. Pradhan directly mandated the learning of two *Bharatiya* languages from Classes 6 to 12, prioritising Indian languages over English. Some relief has been granted to current students, but the government has held firm on this as the norm going forward – even though NEP, in the same breath as it champions Indian languages, also emphasises the learning of English and other foreign languages.

THE GIST

- Dharmendra Pradhan's exit as Education Minister has been under a cloud, but his five-year tenure was marked by a ramping up of efforts to implement the National Education Policy 2020.
- Pradhan pushed to steamroll NEP adoption — particularly the three-language policy — by tying central funding for primary education schemes to compliance by States.

1. What is India's policy on urea production?(The Hindu Page no 10) Syllabus Mapping
    1. GS Paper: GS Paper 3.
    2. Syllabus Topics:
        1. Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies. Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

What is India's policy on urea production?

What are the key changes in the National Investment Policy for Urea 2026?

A. M. Jigeesh

Amid concerns of fertilizer shortage during the ongoing kharif season due to the situation in West Asia, greater demand because of *El Niño* and complaints of over-use of chemical fertilizers such as urea, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs recently approved the National Investment Policy for Urea (NIPU)-2026.

The new policy is aimed at self-reliance in urea production, a sector which is dependent on imports. According to the Government, the policy will encourage new investments in the urea sector for setting up the gas-based urea manufacturing units in the country.

The key changes in the policy, compared to the existing policy, include the separation of fixed and variable costs for greater transparency, introduction of a viable Return on Equity (RoE) band with a floor at 12% and a ceiling at 16%, and mitigation of foreign exchange risk through conversion of fixed cost into Indian rupees after four years based on prevailing exchange rates.

How has the urea policy evolved?

The Union Government had announced such a policy for urea sector in 2012, 2013 and it was amended in October 2014 to facilitate fresh investment.

Six new urea units have been set up under the 2012 policy, which includes four set up through Joint Venture Companies (JVC) of nominated PSUs and two set up by the private companies. At present, there are 33 operational urea manufacturing units with total reassessed/installed capacity of 269.42 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT), according to the Union Fertilizers Ministry.

"There is a need to increase the indigenous production of Urea. There is a gap in the indigenous production and demand of urea in the country which is filled by the import of urea," the Government had said.

The Government amended the policy further in May 2015 for the existing 25 gas-based urea units and it led to additional production of urea by 20-25 LMT as compared to the production during 2014-15 annually.

From 225 LMT per annum during 2014-15, the current production from all these units has reached 314.07 LMT during 2023-24. "During 2025-26, 293.30 LMT of Urea was produced in the country," the Government says.

What is India's fertilizer subsidy bill?

The total fertilizers subsidy in 2025-26 is ₹ 2,17,281.10 crore. In 2024-25, it was ₹1,77,162.06 crore. Out of this, the urea subsidy alone for 2025-26 was ₹1,42,175.74 crore and for 2024-25 it was ₹1,24,319.50 crore. For phosphorus, and potassium, the subsidy component is ₹74,999.99 crore and ₹52,810 crore respectively. For promotion of organic fertilizers, the Government provided a subsidy of ₹105.37 crore and ₹32.56 crore in the last two financial years.

How is urea made available?

According to the data provided by the Government in Parliament, as on March 3, 2026, the country has the requirement of 370.84 LMT of urea for the kharif season. The availability is 432.44 LMT, out of which 381.59 LMT will be for sale under Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system where all subsidised fertilizers will be sold to buyers is made through Point of Sale (PoS) devices "installed at each retailer shop and the beneficiaries are identified through Aadhaar Card, KCC, Voter Identity Card etc". In 2024-25, the requirement was 364.01 LMT and availability was 443.83 LMT.

The Government claims that it has taken steps to promote the balanced and efficient use of fertilizers. "The Government is promoting Integrated Nutrient Management (INM), which advocates the judicious and scientific integration of organic sources, chemical fertilizers, and biological inputs for efficient and sustainable nutrient management," the Ministry said adding that the INM aims to meet the nutrient requirements of crops in an economical and environmentally sustainable manner while maintaining long-term soil fertility. It had also experimented with Nano Urea, which is yet to get popularity among farmers, apparently after controversies over its scientific efficacy and result.

THE GIST

- The Centre recently approved the National Investment Policy for Urea (NIPU)-2026, which is aimed at self-reliance in urea production, a sector which is dependent on imports.
- The Union Government had announced such a policy for urea sector in 2012, 2013 and it was amended in October 2014 to facilitate fresh investment.

1. Exam Reforms: What the Report After 2024 Leak Said(Indian express page no 9)

Syllabus Mapping

GS Paper: GS Paper 2 Syllabus Topics:

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education and Human Resources.

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

• EDUCATION

Exam reforms: What the report after 2024 leak said

The K Radhakrishnan Committee recommendations aimed to transform the National testing Agency into 'a nimble, zero-error, adaptive process'

AMAAL SHEIKH

AS THE Supreme Court on Monday heard petitions seeking changes to the conduct of the NEET examination after the 2026 paper leak controversy, the Centre informed the court that it has constituted a high-powered committee under entrepreneur Nandan Nilekani to recommend the next phase of examination reforms. The same day, the Central government introduced the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill in Lok Sabha to strengthen the anti-paper leak law.

The Centre's decision regarding the Nilekani-led committee has brought attention to an earlier reform blueprint: the K Radhakrishnan Committee report. The Committee, which was constituted in 2024 after the NEET-UG 2024 paper leak controversy, submitted a report containing 101 recommendations "with short term, medium term and long-term perspective".

The report was prepared under former ISRO Chairman Dr K Radhakrishnan and submitted to the Ministry of Education in October 2024. The report was developed after "twenty-three formal full-day physical sittings" and more than 37,000 responses received from students and parents through the MyGov portal. Its stated vision was to transform the National Testing Agency (NTA) into "a nimble, zero-error, adaptive and integrative process".

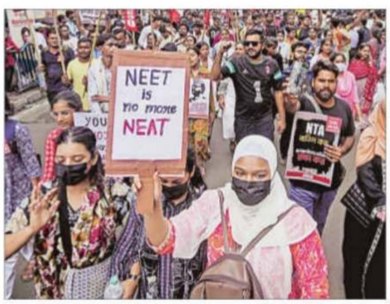
Why it was constituted

Constituted amidst "the rousing public concern on the integrity of entrance tests after reports of breaches and leakage of question paper", initially, the Ministry of Education asked the panel to recommend reforms in improving examination processes, strengthening data security, and reviewing NTA's structure and functioning.

Its mandate later expanded after directions from the Supreme Court in *Vanshika Yadav v. Union of India*. The additional terms of reference included examination security and administration, technological safeguards, policy and stakeholder engagement, international collaboration, staff training, and mental health support for students.

• STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The Union Ministry of Education constituted a high-powered steering committee in November 2024 under former ISRO chairman Dr K Radhakrishnan to monitor implementation of the committee's recommendations. The affidavit was filed before the Supreme Court in May 2026.



A protest rally against the NEET paper leak issue in Kolkata. PTI

OF THE COMMITTEE'S 101 recommendations, 60 were short-term and 35 long-term. The remaining six relate to monitoring and periodic appraisal, which the affidavit said is already in place.

COORDINATION COMMITTEES AT the state and district levels have been made functional and played a key role in conducting NEET-UG 2025 and 2026.

A MULTI-LAYER FRISKING mechanism has been introduced, with frisking by state police followed by NTA personnel at examination centres, along with installation of CCTV cameras and mobile jammers.

THE NTA SAID it has introduced data analytics to detect suspicious patterns and malpractice and is in the process of "adding Artificial Intelligence/Machine learning functionality to the Grievance Redressal System".

What it found

Instead of treating paper leaks as isolated incidents, the report argued that vulnerabilities existed across the entire examination ecosystem. It mapped weaknesses throughout what it called the "Testing Life Cycle" — from printing and transporting question papers to candidate verification, examination centre management, and grievance redressal.

The report found that the NTA had been "operating as a single window agency" despite having "conducted more than 240 examinations since its inception involving over 5.4 crore candidates". It concluded that the agency's "present capacity and internal domain expertise need to be augmented".

Replacing physical transport with digital delivery

The report's central technological recommendation was Computer-assisted Secure Pen-and-Paper Testing (CPPT), designed "to eliminate potential breaches during the printing, storage and transportation chains" of question papers.

Instead of printing papers at central presses and transporting them across the country, encrypted question papers would be transmitted electronically to secure servers at examination centres and printed there shortly before the examination. At the same time, candidates would continue writing conventional pen-and-paper tests.

By eliminating the need to transport printed question papers over long distances, the committee believed the model would significantly reduce opportunities for leaks during transit.

Secure testing

Instead of printing papers at central presses and transporting them physically, encrypted question papers would be sent electronically to secure servers at exam centres and printed there shortly before the exam.

•

The committee believed this would reduce opportunities for leaks.

DIGI-EXAM

The committee also proposed a digital authentication framework called DIGI-EXAM, modelled "on the lines of 'Digi Yatra'", to ensure "that ONLY the candidate writing the exam joins the intended programme". Instead of verifying candidates only on examination day, the system envisaged a continuous "multi-stage authentication of candidate's" across application, examination, and admission stages using Aadhar, biometrics, and AI-based analytics.

A complete overhaul

The report argued that technology alone would not solve the NTA's problems. It said the agency needed stronger institutional capacity and should reduce dependence on outsourced agencies for critical examination functions.

It recommended that the NTA's Governing Body "be recast as an empowered and accountable Apex Body" headed by a Director General "not below the rank of Additional Secretary to GoI". It also proposed creating 10 dedicated verticals within the agency, including Nation-wide Testing Centre Infrastructure, Information Security, Vigilance and Forensics, and Research and Development.

Testing centres

To reduce dependence on private vendors, the committee recommended developing "at least 1,000 SecureTesting Centres... in a phased manner, in reputed Government institutions," in accessible locations requiring power supply, seating requirements, technical support and candidate support facilities such as lockers for phones, ventilation in exam halls, help desks, and waiting areas for families of the candidates.

For remote and underserved regions, it proposed mobile testing centre buses equipped with laptops and servers that would function as fully operational examination centres for around 150 candidates.

For examinations involving very large numbers of candidates, the report recommended moving towards Multi-Session Testing spread over several days or weeks. It also described Multi-Stage Testing for NEET-UG as "a viable possibility".

Where multiple sessions are held, it stressed that score normalisation should be transparent and properly established and documented. Over the longer term, it also recommended gradually shifting towards Computer Adaptive Testing, in which question difficulty adjusts according to a candidate's performance.

Mental health

The report also placed considerable focus on student welfare to make their approach "holistic". Its recommendations included creating a dedicated mental-health cell within the NTA, tele-helplines, counselling services, and teacher sensitisation programmes. It also suggested that "a suitable oversight mechanism may be considered for Coaching Institutes", citing concerns over student stress and the financial burden placed on families.

The committee recommended equipping the NTA's Grievance Reporting and Redressal Cell with AI and machine learning-based interactive chatbots so that candidates could "receive clarifications in the language of their choice" for queries that arise during the examination process.

1. Modi's Commitment to Gen Z: State Listens, Responds, Reforms(Indian express page no 10)

Syllabus Mapping

GS Paper: GS Paper 2 Syllabus Topics:

Important aspects of governance, transparency, and accountability. Citizen participation, democratic dissent, and executive responsiveness.

Modi's commitment to Gen Z: State listens, responds, reforms

Gourav Vallabh

IN FOUR days, Prime Minister Narendra Modi translated the concerns of young Indians into a clear sequence of democratic action. On July 23, he promised fast-track courts for paper-leak cases. On July 24, after negotiations with the Centre, Sonam Wangchuk ended his 26-day hunger strike. On July 25, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned, after which protest leaders called off their 36-day Jantar Mantar sit-in. On July 26, Modi announced a high-powered task force headed by Nandan Nilekani to help make examinations trustworthy, transparent and technology-led. The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, introduced in the Lok Sabha on July 27, proposes stronger penalties, time-bound investigations and special fast-track courts. These steps show a government that listens, accepts accountability and converts public concern into durable reform.

These are not concessions extracted from a reluctant state; they reflect confident democratic leadership. In a constitutional democracy, peaceful protest is a right of the citizen. The government's response shows how that right and responsible governance can reinforce each other. By keeping channels open, negotiating with protesters and moving decisively from dialogue to action, the PM reaffirmed that the voice of India's youth has a place at the centre of governance.

The episode rebuts the claim that Indian democracy has lost the capacity for dissent or course correction. An agitation continued for weeks, forced a national conversation, brought the government to the negotiating table and produced a legislative and structural response. Indian democracy showed that dissent can lead to dialogue and reform.

An agitation continued for weeks, forced a national conversation, brought the government to the negotiating table and produced a legislative and structural response. Indian democracy showed that dissent can lead to dialogue and reform

History points towards the stakes, although parallels must be drawn with care. The JP movement gathered strength through 1974 and 1975; hours after Jayaprakash Narayan's Ramlila Maidan rally on June 25, 1975, Emergency was proclaimed. Civil liberties were suspended, the press was censored, and opposition leaders, including JP, were imprisoned. The anti-Mandal protests of 1990 arose from a different context, but they too brought turmoil and violent clashes. The movements are not equal. But the present episode offers a contrast: Instead of repression or prolonged drift, the Modi government chose engagement, accountability, legislation and institutional reform.

Modi's response is also consistent with a longer conversation with aspirational India. Since 2018, 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' has brought examination anxiety, parental pressure and time management into a regular national dialogue. The Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue invites young Indians to contribute ideas to the country's future. Together, these initiatives form a wider approach combining dialogue with expanding opportunity and stronger institutions.

The last few days reveal a defining quality of Modi's leadership: Political generosity. A secure leader can absorb criticism and place institutional interest above personal prestige. By accepting a colleague's resignation and moving from listening to action, Modi chose reconciliation over confrontation.

Nilekani's appointment makes a larger point: Public knowledge is national property. He is joined by S Somanath, Tapan Deka, V Kamakoti, Anita Karwal and Amrit Lal Meena, bringing expertise across technology, security, education and logistics. Reform must combine secure question banks, encrypted transmission, randomisation, controlled access, independent audits and strict vendor oversight, with computer-based or secure on-site printing wherever feasible. An independent examination-security board, annual audits and a national testing calendar can further strengthen the NTA.

Finally, fast-track courts will be most effective when paired with fast, specialised investigation. The proposed two-month investigation window and three-month trial framework can be backed by digital-forensics teams, experienced prosecutors, witness protection and coordination with states and high courts. These measures can ensure offences are detected, proven and punished without prolonged uncertainty for students.

A credible examination system rests on four assurances: A breach must be extraordinarily difficult, rapidly detected, transparently remedied and credibly punished. The PM's initiatives bring these into a coherent framework. Modi has spent a decade telling India's youth that they are partners in Viksit Bharat. The last four days have given that commitment institutional form: Listen, respond, correct and reform.

The writer is professor, XLRI and part-time member, EAC-PM. Views are personal

1. India, Bangladesh Must Not Just Renew Ganga Treaty. They Should Reimagine It(Indian express page no 11)

Syllabus Mappin

GS Paper: GS Paper 2 Syllabus Topics:

India and its neighborhood—relations.

Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure (sub-national diplomacy).

India, Bangladesh must not just renew Ganga Treaty. They should reimagine it

SRINIVAS CHOKKAKULA

ILLUSTRATION: C R SASIKUMAR

AS THE 30-year term of the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty between India and Bangladesh approaches its conclusion, discussions about its future are gathering momentum. Much of the public debate is about whether the treaty will be renewed or revised. But a more consequential question is, what kind of agreement will it be? The political, institutional and ecological conditions that produced the 1996 treaty are vastly different. The negotiations are likely to be about much more than water sharing at Farakka.

The 1996 treaty had a single-point agenda of water sharing, following India's decision to build the Farakka barrage. The treaty provided a flow-dependent water-sharing arrangement that includes a 50:50 pro-rata sharing when the flows at Farakka dip below a limit. Bangladesh has often expressed its dissatisfaction about not receiving its due share during the dry seasons.

The next Ganga Treaty is not likely to be restricted to this one specific transborder issue. It will transcend territories and borders, within and outside, enlarging the scope of negotiations. The negotiations will be challenging, especially given the new political realities in Bangladesh. But they can also offer new opportunities for robust water diplomacy and enduring relations between India and Bangladesh.

There are two reasons why the negotiations will have an expanded agenda.

First, politics have become more complex. The 1996 treaty, signed after decades of deliberations, reflected a particular political moment of relatively stable bilateral relations. The treaty emerged from sustained Track 1 and Track 2 engagements that built trust and goodwill. Today, the negotiations are likely to be shaped as much by domestic political dynamics as by bilateral diplomatic considerations. Dhaka will find it challenging to navigate the antagonistic sentiment towards India at home. In India, too, the federal politics surrounding Ganga water-sharing are no less complex. West Bengal's resistance prioritising its own needs and Bihar's allegations of siltation upstream of Farakka leading to floods will both pose challenges.

Second, the agenda has expanded beyond Farakka. Besides the Teesta, the recent protracted source of tension, disagreements over multiple shared rivers in the past three decades will impact the negotiations. Further, the concerns are unlikely to be just about water-resources sharing and development. The scope will expand to growing water-related risks, with greater uncertainty due to climate change. Climate change pushes the agenda beyond bilateral water allocations to regional-level responses to managing Himalayan glaciers, hydrological extremes, ecosystem resilience and shared vulnerabilities.

These changes have a few critical practical implications for the negotiations.

First, there is a need to avoid what political geographers call the "territorial trap" — the assumption that negotiations occur between the two sovereigns, represented by Delhi and Dhaka. Water diplomacy cannot be separated from internal diplomacy efforts, both in India and Bangladesh. Dhaka must figure out a way to navigate the polarised politics within. Further, posturing has its limits as a bargaining strategy. Signalling closer engagement with China in the Teesta basin may strengthen Bangladesh's negotiating position in the short term, but it also risks securitising negotiations and narrowing opportunities to explore mutual benefits. As the downstream riparian, Dhaka's long-term interests are better served through stable cooperation than through strategic posturing.

The 1996 treaty, signed after decades of deliberations, reflected a particular political moment of relatively stable bilateral relations. The treaty emerged from sustained Track 1 and Track 2 engagements that built trust and goodwill

India, too, will need to invest in some amount of federal diplomacy despite the conducive equations after the recent elections in Bihar and West Bengal. Getting the states on board will not be easy. Water is an emotive subject and can offer opportunities for the parties in opposition to mobilise resistance from within.

Second, shared rivers create indispensable interdependencies — a less acknowledged but essential characteristic of transboundary rivers. It is not a zero-sum game when water-sharing considerations accompany those of coping with collective risks. The negotiations must build on this for an enduring bilateral relationship. The interdependencies may not always be bilateral. They may transcend to become regional in character. Framing it as interdependencies shifts the focus to shared gains. Better management of floods, fisheries, inland navigation for trade, improved flood forecasting, and joint ecological restoration efforts could create benefits that extend beyond questions of water allocation.

Third, an enabling response to the first two is to invest in institutional avenues. Both India and Bangladesh will need to invest in appropriate institutional processes to channel polarised domestic politics in support of negotiations. Bilateral institutions need revisiting as well. Earlier institutional choices of the overarching Joint Rivers Commission and the Joint Committee for implementing the Ganga Treaty will not be adequate. They were conceived to implement agreements, not to manage uncertainties. The changed realities and greater uncertainties, including water availability, will need robust and resilient transborder institutions to address the enhanced scope of issues — water sharing, data collection and monitoring, dispute resolution, responding to risks, etc.

Finally, both countries will have to reinvent the political capital that made the 1996 treaty possible, and reinvest in it. The treaty negotiations can be a means to do it. Alongside Track 1 diplomacy, both countries should encourage Track 2 dialogues to generate ideas, sustain dialogue and build intellectual and political constituencies to support the dialogue. The 1996 treaty benefitted from such engagement. The Centre for Policy Research was among those at the forefront of such initiatives and contributed to developing a working draft of the treaty.

The negotiations can offer an opportunity to revisit the regional vision that India and Bangladesh jointly championed when SAARC was conceived. The institutional form may have to evolve beyond SAARC, but the underlying strategic rationale has become stronger. The next Ganga Treaty, therefore, presents an opportunity not merely to renew a bilateral water-sharing arrangement but to reimagine a regional strategic vision to address challenges of this new age of shared vulnerabilities and fragmented global economy.

The writer is president and chief executive, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. Views are personal