

Today's Prelims Topics

Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL)

Context

Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL) has been established as **India's first maritime sector-specific Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)**.

What is SMFCL?

- It is a **Mini Ratna Category-I Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE)** under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)**.
- It operates as a specialized **Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)** focused solely on meeting the **financial needs of India's maritime sector**.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Objectives:**
 - **Address financing gaps** in maritime infrastructure and logistics.
 - **Promote financial inclusion** for MSMEs, startups, and educational institutions within the sector.
 - **Support high-growth areas** such as shipbuilding, cruise tourism, and green energy.
 - Contribute to India's ambition of global maritime leadership as outlined in the **Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**.
- **Functions:** Provide short-, medium-, and long-term credit facilities to port authorities, logistics firms, and maritime entrepreneurs.
 - Fund innovative projects like green hydrogen initiatives, shipbuilding, and the digitalization of ports.
 - Act as a financial catalyst for Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects in port and allied infrastructure.
 - Collaborate with startups and research institutions to finance maritime skill development and R&D.

What Are NBFCs (Non Banking Financial Companies)?

- NBFCs are **financial institutions** that provide **bank-like services** but **do not hold a banking license**.
- They **do not accept demand deposits** (like savings accounts) but offer **loans, asset financing, and investment services**.
- **Types of NBFCs:**
 - **Based on Asset-Liability Structures:** Deposit-taking NBFCs (NBFCs-D) and non-deposit-taking NBFCs (NBFCs-ND).
 - **Based on Systemic Importance:** Among non-deposit taking NBFCs, those with asset size of **Rs 500 crore or more** are **classified as non-deposit taking systemically important NBFCs (NBFCs-ND-SI)**.

REGULATION OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS	
Type of Institution	Regulatory Authority
NBFCs registered with RBI	RBI
Housing Finance Institutions	National Housing Bank
Merchant Banking Companies, Venture Capital Funds, Stock Broking, Collective Investment Schemes (CIS)	SEBI
Nidhi Companies, Mutual Benefit Companies	Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)
Chit Fund Companies	State Government
Insurance Companies	IRDAI
Non-Banking Non-Financial Companies	Statute: Companies Act 1956 Regulator: Ministry of Corporate Affairs Enforcement Agency

Difference between Banks & NBFCs

Aspect	Bank	NBFC
Deposits	Accepts all types of deposits	Cannot accept demand deposits
Deposit insurance of DICGC	Applicable (up to Rs. 5 lakh)	Non-Applicable
Payment and Settlement system of the RBI	Supports RTGS, NEFT etc.	Not supported. Cannot issue cheques.
Foreign investment (FDI)	Up to 74%	Up to 100% (Under Automatic Route)
Cash Reserve Requirement (CRR)	Applicable	Not Applicable
Capital Adequacy Norms	Applicable	Applicable only to Deposit-taking NBFCs and Systematically Important NBFCs (CRAR - 15%)
Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)	Applicable	Applicable only to Deposit-taking NBFCs (SLR - 15%)
Established under	Banking Regulation Act, 1949	Established under Companies Act and regulated by various bodies depending on category.

Source: [Business Line](#)

Gavi

Context

The **U.S. has pulled funding from Gavi**, the global vaccine alliance, under Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., sparking global concern as it threatens childhood immunization efforts and could lead to over a million preventable deaths.

About GAVI

- **Founded in 2000**, GAVI is an **independent public-private partnership** aimed at improving access to new and underused vaccines for children in the **world's poorest countries**.
- It is **headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland**, and unites both public and private sectors to ensure **equitable vaccine access** worldwide.
- GAVI's partners include:
 - **Developing and donor country governments**
 - **World Health Organization (WHO)**
 - **UNICEF**
 - **The World Bank**
 - **Vaccine manufacturers**
 - **Research and technical agencies**
 - **Civil society organizations**
 - **Private philanthropists**
- GAVI provides:
 - **Financial aid and technical assistance** to low- and middle-income countries,
 - **Market-shaping strategies**, such as negotiating with manufacturers to **reduce vaccine prices**,
 - Support for the **introduction and delivery** of life-saving vaccines.
- The alliance merges:
 - The **technical expertise** of the global development sector with
 - The **business efficiency** of the private sector, all for a shared mission of improving global immunization.
- **Key achievements (as of 2023)**:
 - Over **1.1 billion children vaccinated**
 - Approximately **18.8 million lives saved**
- GAVI played a leading role in **COVAX**, a global initiative (2020–2023) aimed at ensuring **fair distribution of COVID-19 vaccines** across countries.

Impact of U.S. Withdrawal from Global Alliances

- **Erosion of Multilateralism and the Rules-Based Global Order**: The withdrawal weakens international cooperation and credibility of global institutions. For instance, Israel also pulled out of the UN Human Rights Council, reflecting declining faith in multilateral forums.
- **Setback to Global Climate Initiatives**: With 2024 recorded as the hottest year on record and the U.S. being the **second-largest greenhouse gas emitter** after China, its disengagement undermines collective climate action efforts.
- **Health Funding Crisis**: The U.S. plays a major financial role in global health. For example, it contributed around **15% of the WHO's total funding in 2024**. Its withdrawal could trigger significant financial shortfalls, hampering essential health programs.
- **Geopolitical Repercussions**: The absence of U.S. leadership creates a vacuum that **China may exploit**, potentially shifting influence in global institutions away from democratic values— affecting countries like **India's strategic position and decision-making power**.

Source: [ABCnews](#)

10 years of AMRUT

Context

The Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) has reached a major milestone, completing 10 years since its launch on June 25, 2025.

10 Years of AMRUT

- Launched on **June 25, 2015**, AMRUT is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** by the Government of India.
- Aims to enhance **urban infrastructure** and ensure a **better quality of life** in selected cities and towns.
- Focuses on delivering **basic civic amenities** like water supply, sewerage, urban mobility, and green spaces with an emphasis on **inclusivity and sustainability**.

Objectives of AMRUT

- **Universal Access to Water and Sewerage:** Ensure every urban household has **functional tap water and sewer connections**.
- **Improved Urban Livability:** Enhance city environments with **parks, green spaces, and non-motorized transport** systems.
- **Pollution Control:** Encourage **sustainable transport and waste management** to curb pollution.
- **Inclusive Development:** Address the needs of the **urban poor and disadvantaged sections** by ensuring access to essential services.

Key Features and Focus Areas

- **Water Supply:** Expansion and rehabilitation to achieve **universal tap water coverage**.
- **Sewerage and Septage Management:** Increase **sewer connectivity** and support **faecal sludge management**.
- **Stormwater Drainage:** Develop systems to tackle **urban flooding and waterlogging**.
- **Green Spaces and Parks:** Allocate up to **2.5% of project costs** for developing **child- and elderly-friendly parks**.
- **Non-Motorized Transport:** Build infrastructure for **walking and cycling** to reduce traffic and air pollution.

Financial Outlay and Implementation

- **Total Investment:** ₹77,640 crore approved under **State Annual Action Plans (SAAPs)**.
- **Central Assistance:** ₹35,990 crore committed by the Government of India.
- **Projects:**
 - Over **5,800 projects worth ₹82,222 crore** initiated.
 - More than **4,600 projects completed** successfully.
- **Coverage:**
 - Initially included **500 cities**, now scaled up to cover **all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** under **AMRUT 2.0**.
- **Key Achievements:**
 - Provided **134 lakh water tap connections**.
 - Installed **102 lakh sewer connections**, moving towards **universal service coverage**.

Source: [DDNews](#)

Operation Deep Manifest

Context

Under '**Operation Deep Manifest**', the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized goods of Pakistani origin valued at ₹9 crore.

About Operation Deep Manifest

- A **targeted enforcement operation** by the **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)**.
- Aimed at detecting and dismantling **illicit trade routes** used to smuggle **banned Pakistani-origin goods** into India.

Launched By

- **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)**
- Under the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)**, Ministry of Finance.

Objective

- To enforce India's **comprehensive import ban** on goods from Pakistan.
- To prevent **economic infiltration** through **third-country transshipment routes**.

Key Features

- **Container Surveillance:**
 - Intercepted **39 containers** carrying **1,115 metric tonnes** of goods falsely declared as **UAE-origin**.
- **Document Forensics:**
 - Investigated shipping records and uncovered **false declarations, container swaps, and dual-port routing** via Dubai's **Jebel Ali Port**.
- **Financial Intelligence:**
 - Traced **fund flows** linked to **Pakistani entities** and their **collaborators in the UAE**.
- **Enforcement Outcome:**
 - Arrested a **key partner** of an importing firm.
 - Launched wider **criminal and financial investigations**.

Significance

- Safeguards **national economic security** by disrupting hostile trade networks.
- Reflects India's **zero-tolerance stance** post-terror incidents.
- Demonstrates DRI's capability in leveraging **data analytics** and **AI-driven customs enforcement**.
- Acts as a **deterrent** against **third-country re-routing**, a common method to bypass trade restrictions.

Source: [DDNews](#)

Tigers outside tiger reserve Scheme

Context

The Union Environment Ministry has approved funding for the '**Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves' (TOTR)** pilot scheme, aimed at reducing human-tiger conflicts through improved monitoring and protection of tigers living outside designated reserves.

Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves (TOTR) Pilot Scheme

- Launched by the **Union Ministry of Environment** in response to increasing human-tiger conflicts across India.
- Aims to protect and manage tiger populations living **outside designated tiger reserves**.
- Total outlay: **₹88 crore till 2026–27**.
- Approved in principle by the **Executive Committee of National CAMPA** (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority).

Objectives of the Scheme

- Enhance **monitoring** through advanced technology.
- **Train forest staff** to effectively manage human-tiger conflicts.
- Collaborate with **civil society organizations and expert veterinarians**.
- **Strengthen prey base** to reduce tiger attacks on livestock.

Scope and Implementation

- **80 forest divisions** across **10 states** selected based on data identifying high-conflict zones.
- Around **30% of India's tiger population** resides outside tiger reserves.
- Implementation led by **Chief Wildlife Wardens** of states, in coordination with the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**.
- NTCA to submit revised, year-wise **financial estimates** for CAMPA's final approval.

Conflict Hotspots Identified

- **Chandrapur (Maharashtra)** – near Tadoba Tiger Reserve
- **Dudhwa and Pilibhit (Uttar Pradesh)** – sugarcane fields
- **Areas near Ranthambore (Rajasthan)**
- **Wayanad (Kerala)**

Conflict Statistics (2020–2024)

- **382 human deaths** in tiger-related incidents.
- **111 deaths in 2022 alone**, showing the urgency of conflict mitigation outside protected zones.

Institutional Framework

- Funded through **National CAMPA**, which manages money collected for **compensatory afforestation**.
- CAMPA has supported similar wildlife programs, including **Project Cheetah** and **Great Indian Bustard recovery**.
- The scheme was discussed during the **March 2025** meeting of the **National Board for Wildlife**, chaired by **PM Narendra Modi**.

Government Commitment

- **Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav**, at the India Conservation Conference, reaffirmed government focus on reducing man-animal conflict.
- Emphasised the need for a **region-specific strategy**, tailored to local ecological and social dynamics.

- Highlighted site visits to Dudhwa and Kabini as evidence of government's on-ground engagement.

Source: [IndianExpress](#)



“Special Intensive Revision” (SIR) of electoral rolls

Context

ECI has launched a Special Intensive Revision in Bihar, requiring all voters to submit forms and post-2003 entrants to provide citizenship proof.

What is Special Intensive Revision (SIR)?

- A **comprehensive, house-to-house verification** process to update and verify electoral rolls.
- Legally backed by **Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950**, and **Article 324(1)** of the Constitution.
- **Objectives**
 - **Remove ineligible or duplicate voters**, including illegal immigrants.
 - Ensure only **genuine Indian citizens aged 18+** are included in the electoral rolls.

Why It's Needed

- Large-scale **additions and deletions** over the last two decades.
- Increased **urbanisation and migration** have led to multiple voter registrations.
- Rising concerns over **illegal immigrants** and **demographic manipulation**, especially in **border states like Bihar**.

Key Features

- Applicable to **all voters**, with **stricter checks for post-2003 registrants**.
- Mandatory submission of **enumeration forms** and **proof of birth/citizenship**.

Document Requirements by Birth Year

- **Born before July 1, 1987**: Own birth document is sufficient.
- **Born between 1987 and 2004**: Personal document + **one parent's proof** of citizenship.
- **Born after 2004**: Personal document + **both parents' citizenship proofs**.
- Forms can be submitted online via the **ECINET app** or the **official ECI website**.

Significance

- Enhances the **accuracy and integrity** of electoral rolls.
- Builds **public confidence** in the electoral process.
- May serve as a **model for a nationwide voter verification** initiative.

Source: [IndianExpress](https://www.indianexpress.com)

Editorial Summary

Why India needs comprehensive school mental health programmes

Context

- India is facing a growing mental health crisis, with recent studies revealing high rates of depression, anxiety, and behavioural addictions, especially among youth.
 - Despite various policy interventions and declining suicide rates, significant treatment gaps persist.

Scope of Mental Health in India

- **Widespread Prevalence:** According to the National Mental Health Survey (2015-16), about 10.6% of India's population has faced mental health issues, with 13.7% affected at the time of the survey.
 - Recent studies show high prevalence among youth: 27% of children/adolescents experienced depression; 26% had anxiety disorders.
 - Student suicide rates are alarming, with a 32% increase from 2017 to 2022.
 - Behavioural addictions (internet, social media, gaming) are rising, affecting up to 40.7% of students in some states.
- **Diverse Issues:** Issues range from depression, anxiety, suicides to newer concerns like internet and technology addiction, sleep disturbances, and family conflicts.

How Far Has India Reached?

- **Declining Suicide Rates:** India's suicide rate declined from 19.1 (2000) to 12.9 (2019) per 100,000 persons, outpacing several developed nations.
- **Policy Interventions:** The National Mental Health Programme (since 1982), District Mental Health Programmes, and National Tele Mental Health Programme are in place.
 - New initiatives like Tele-MANAS helpline and school-based interventions are being introduced.

Gaps Persist

- **Treatment Gap:** 71% of those with psychiatric disorders remain untreated (NMHS).
- **Stigma and Awareness:** Stigma, lack of awareness, and under-recognition prevent timely diagnosis and treatment, especially for behavioural addictions.
- **Shortfall in Services:** Insufficient inclusion of mental health in school curricula.
 - Lack of adequately trained professionals in educational institutions and communities.
- **Resource Allocation:** Underinvestment in mental health services, particularly at the community and school level.

Why Do Schools Hold Strategic Importance?

- **Early Intervention:** Schools can identify, address, and prevent mental health issues early, especially among vulnerable youth.
- **Influence on Risk Factors:** Schools impact socio-emotional development, help build resilience, and can counteract risk factors like bullying and academic stress.
- **Policy Emphasis:** WHO and global mental health plans highlight schools as critical platforms for suicide prevention, awareness, and skill development.
- **Community Impact:** Schools can engage parents and communities, amplify mental health literacy, and destigmatize seeking help.

Key Strategies in Implementation and Call for Action

- **Integration of Services:** Incorporate digital mental health tools (e.g., Tele-MANAS) and establish Mental Health Advisory Boards (MHABs) in schools.
 - Embed mental health education and resilience-building in school and college curricula.
- **Capacity Building:** Train teachers, parents, ASHA, and Anganwadi workers for early identification and psychological first aid.
 - Include tele-counselling skills in psychology/social work courses.
- **Structural Reforms:** Mandate school mental health audits for accreditation from primary to higher education.
 - Form school counsellor teams led by professionals to deliver services and train stakeholders.
- **Community & Media Engagement:** Encourage regular mental health coverage in newspapers, TV, and digital platforms.
 - Run weekly programs and editorials to spread awareness and inform about treatment options.
- **Special Task Forces:** Establish district-level and national task forces focused on school and student mental health.

Role of Educational Regulatory Bodies in Mental Health

- **Mandating mental health audits** (from primary to higher education) for accreditation.
- **Integrating tele-counselling skills** into psychology and social work courses.
- **Enforcing the establishment of Mental Health Advisory Boards (MHABs)** (as per directives from the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)) in institutions.
- **Supporting the training and formation of school counsellor teams** led by mental health professionals.

Conclusion

Comprehensive, school-based mental health programmes are essential for promoting well-being, preventing illness, and reducing stigma. With strategic action and robust implementation, India can transform the mental health landscape for its youth and broader society.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

A China-led trilateral nexus as India's new challenge

Context

China recently hosted the first trilateral meeting with Pakistan and Bangladesh in Kunming, a gathering seen by some as China's effort to make Pakistan a stakeholder in the region and keep New Delhi preoccupied with immediate concerns.

Deterioration of Relations Between India and China

- **Border Tensions:** Regular standoffs and violent clashes (e.g., Galwan 2020, Doklam 2017) have soured relations, undermining trust and diplomatic engagement.
- **Trade Imbalances & Technology Rivalry:** Persistent trade deficits, bans on Chinese apps, and scrutiny of Chinese investments have added friction.
- **Geopolitical Competition:** India's alignment with Quad (US, Japan, Australia), Indo-Pacific initiatives, and deeper ties with the US have heightened Chinese suspicions.
- **Diplomatic Setbacks:** China's blocking of India's bid to designate Pakistan-based terrorists at the UN, and its stance on Jammu & Kashmir, have created further discord.
- **Recent Developments:** China's support for Pakistan after incidents like Operation Sindoor, and hosting trilateral meetings without India, highlight a hardening of positions.

How China Is Making Pakistan Its "Plus One" Against India

- **Strategic Alliance:** Since the 1962 Sino-Indian war, China has viewed Pakistan as a useful ally to "tie down" India in the region.
- **Economic and Military Support:** Over 80% of Pakistan's arms imports are from China; Pakistan owes China \$29 billion in loans; CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) is a flagship BRI project.
- **Diplomatic Shield:** China shields Pakistan in global forums, notably at the UN regarding terrorism.
- **Trilateral Engagements:** By convening trilateral meetings (with Afghanistan, Bangladesh), China elevates Pakistan's regional relevance and aims to encircle or distract India.
- **Backdoor Influence:** China leverages Pakistan's historical ties with Bangladesh and Afghanistan to foster cross-border terrorism and create security dilemmas for India.

How India's Strategy Diminished China's Regional Hold

- **Robust Military Response:** India's assertive retaliation to Pakistan-sponsored attacks (Uri, Pulwama, Pahalgam) and proactive defence of border areas (Galwan, Doklam) have raised the costs for adversaries.
- **Diplomatic Outreach:** India has used its economic and diplomatic clout to isolate Pakistan and build strategic partnerships (Quad, closer ties with ASEAN, US, Europe).
- **Regional Engagement:** India has strengthened ties with neighbours like Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Nepal by addressing economic needs, respecting political redlines, and providing developmental aid.
- **Limiting Chinese Influence:** Despite China's BRI push, India's pragmatic diplomacy and economic support have made countries like Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Nepal cautious about over-dependence on China.
- **Maintaining Redlines:** India's clear signalling—through trade, diplomatic moves, and military preparedness—has constrained China's manoeuvrability in South Asia.
- **Multi-dimensional Approach:** India combines security, economics, and soft power, offering attractive alternatives to China's approach, especially as regional countries balance ties for their own interests.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

India did well in climbing up SDG rankings, but falls short in governance

Context

India has been ranked among the top 100 countries in the Sustainable Development Report for the first time. However, there are still gaps that India needs to identify and address to ensure continued progress.

SDG Progress – Improvements and Persisting Gaps

Indicator (SDG)	Areas of Improvement	Persisting Gaps/Challenges
SDG 1: No Poverty	Significant poverty reduction; poverty almost halved from 2012 to 2023.	Outdated poverty line, lack of recent consumption data, estimation controversies.
SDG 2: Zero Hunger	Slight reduction in stunting (from 38.4% to 35.5%) and wasting (from 21% to 19.3%).	High rates of malnutrition, significant urban-rural/nutritional disparities.
SDG 7: Affordable & Clean Energy	Achieved near-universal electrification; strong growth in renewables (solar, wind).	Variation in quality and duration of supply, urban-rural access gap.
SDG 9: Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure	Rapid mobile penetration, financial inclusion via UPI/digital gateways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural-urban digital divide exposed during COVID-19, affecting education (SDG 4). Uneven educational outcomes, particularly in rural and marginalized areas.
SDG 4: Quality Education	Better infrastructure and digital access in some regions.	
SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions	Some institutional reforms.	Lagging on governance, rule of law, press freedom, and independent institutions.
Obesity (Health)	Better nutrition for urban rich; improvements in certain health metrics.	Rising obesity among the working age population, mainly in wealthier urban groups.

What Needs to Be Done?

- **Integrate Digital Tracking:** Use systems like Jan-Amrit or POSHAN Abhiyaan to monitor nutrition, absenteeism, learning outcomes, and health metrics school-wise.
- **Upgrade Primary Health Infrastructure:** Scale Kerala's Aardram model to convert more PHCs into family-centric clinics with mental health and school linkages.

- **Strengthen Local Governance:** Mandate SDG sub-committees at Panchayat and district levels, using real-time data and dashboards for transparent monitoring.
- **Health-Nutrition-Sanitation Convergence:** Connect SBM villages with health and nutrition services to address stunting and diarrheal diseases holistically.
- **Tailor Child Welfare Models:** Adopt Jharkhand's multi-agency coordination to eliminate child labour and drop-outs, linking education with social protection schemes.
- **Promote Public-Private Collaboration:** Scale POSHAN-style PPPs with NGOs, corporates, and local bodies to expand reach and innovation in SDG delivery.
- **Leverage International Guidance:** Follow UNGCNI and ILO-backed frameworks to build accountability, capacity, and reporting mechanisms at the grassroots.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

