

---

## Prelims Exam Topics

---

### SEHAT MISSION

#### Context

Union Ministers launched the ‘SEHAT Mission’ (Science Excellence for Health through Agricultural Transformation) in New Delhi.

#### Organizations Involved

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR): Under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare.
- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR): Under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

#### Aim

- The primary objective is to build a scientific framework for Healthy Food, Healthy Farms, and a Healthy India.
- It aims to create a farm-to-plate scientific chain that ensures the food grown in the country directly contributes to disease prevention and nutritional security.

#### Key Features

- **Bio-fortification of Crops:** Developing and promoting crop varieties naturally enriched with essential micronutrients like zinc and iron.
- **Promotion of Traditional Grains:** Reemphasizing the consumption of climate-resilient and nutrient-dense millets such as Kodo, Kutki, Ragi, Jowar, and Bajra.
- **Integrated Farming Systems:** Encouraging rural families to combine crop cultivation with animal husbandry, fisheries, and beekeeping to ensure diverse and balanced family nutrition.
- **Farmer Health & Safety:** Implementing scientific interventions and awareness programs to protect farmers from risks associated with pesticide exposure and hazardous chemicals.
- **Dietary Solutions for NCDs:** Researching and promoting food alternatives that can function as medicine to help prevent and manage lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and cancer.
- **‘One Health’ Approach:** Addressing the interconnected health of people, animals, and the environment through joint planning between medical and agricultural scientists.
- **Science-Based Policy Support:** Creating real-time dashboards and research databases to align agricultural policy with national nutrition strategies.

## SUPREME COURT ON RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

### Context

The Supreme Court recently observed that the question of whether schools imparting religious instruction should be treated as charitable or religious institutions is primarily a matter for the government and the Ministry of Education to examine.

### Supreme Court's observation

- The Supreme Court stated that such policy-related questions fall within the jurisdiction of the government and Ministry of Education avoiding direct judicial intervention, upholding the principle of separation of powers.
- The Court did not issue any order changing the constitutional position of religious educational institutions.
- Existing constitutional protections under Articles 19 and 30 continue to operate unless Parliament or the government introduces changes through law or policy.

### Constitutional provisions involved

- **Article 26(a):** It provides religious denominations the right to establish and maintain institutions for religious purposes and charitable purposes.
- **Article 19(1)(g):** It guarantees citizens the freedom to practice any profession or carry on any occupation, trade, or business.
- **Article 30(1):** It gives religious and linguistic minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

## SC LAUNCHES 'ONE CASE ONE DATA' AND 'SU SAHAY' CHATBOT

### Context

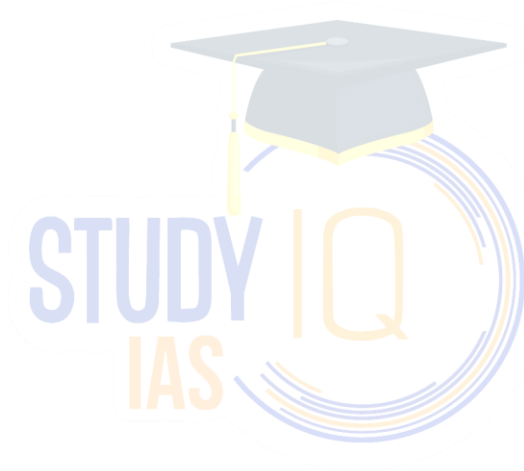
Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant announced digital initiatives namely 'one case one data' and 'Su Sahay' chatbot to improve the functioning of courts and make the judicial system more accessible for citizens.

### Key features of "One Case One Data"

- The initiative seeks to connect all courts from taluk and district courts to High Courts and the Supreme Court through a common digital system.
- Each case will have a unified digital record, reducing duplication and confusion in case-related information.
- The platform will help different courts share information more smoothly, improving administrative efficiency.
- Judges, lawyers, and litigants can access case details more quickly through an integrated system.
- Improved digital records can help in better case management and monitoring of pending cases.

### Key features of “Su Sahay” Chatbot

- Su Sahay is an artificial intelligence-powered chatbot integrated with the Supreme Court website.
- The chatbot helps users obtain information related to case status, court procedures, filing process and hearing details
- It is designed with a citizen-friendly interface to provide greater accessibility and transparency.
- The chatbot can provide instant responses, reducing dependence on manual assistance.



---

## Mains Exam Topics

---

### NEW PHASE IN INDIA–VIETNAM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

#### Context

The visit of Tô Lâm to India in 2026 marked the elevation of ties to an **Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** amid changing Indo-Pacific geopolitics.

#### Indo-Pacific Dynamics Reshaping the Bilateral Relationship

- **China's Assertiveness:** Rising tensions in the South China Sea and maritime coercion are pushing India and Vietnam towards closer strategic coordination.
  - **E.g.** Both support a rules-based Indo-Pacific order, freedom of navigation and UNCLOS-based maritime governance.
- **Shift from Economic to Security-Centric Indo-Pacific:** India's Act East Policy is evolving into a broader Indo-Pacific strategy with greater emphasis on maritime security and defence cooperation.
- **Supply Chain Securitisation:** Global efforts to reduce dependence on China-centric supply chains are increasing economic and technological cooperation between the two countries.
- **Rise of Minilateral Partnerships:** India and Vietnam are increasingly cooperating with partners like Japan, Australia and United States for Indo-Pacific stability.
- **Competition in Emerging Technologies:** Strategic competition in semiconductors, AI, rare earths and critical technologies is driving deeper collaboration.
- **ASEAN Centrality:** Both pursue independent foreign policies while supporting ASEAN's central role in regional architecture.
- **Defence Cooperation**
  - **INS Kirpan Transfer:** India transferred missile corvette **INS Kirpan** to Vietnam in 2023.
  - **BrahMos Missile Discussions:** Talks on BrahMos exports indicate movement from capacity building to capability enhancement.
  - **Training & Defence Industry Cooperation:** India provides training, Lines of Credit and cooperation in shipbuilding, maritime systems and defence technology.

#### Issues in the Relationship

- **Trade & Connectivity Gaps:** Logistics bottlenecks and weak connectivity limit full economic potential.
- **Implementation Deficit:** Many agreements face delays in execution, especially in defence-industrial cooperation.
- **Geopolitical Sensitivities:** China factor creates strategic caution in defence and security cooperation.
- **Limited Private Sector Participation:** Insufficient business-to-business and startup-level integration reduces economic depth.

- **Regulatory & Financial Hurdles:** Legal frameworks, funding constraints and export regulations affect technology cooperation

### Way Forward

- **Deepen Maritime Cooperation:** Expand naval exercises, maritime domain awareness and coast guard cooperation.
- **Strengthen Defence Industrial Ties:** Accelerate co-production and defence technology transfer projects like BrahMos.
- **Improve Connectivity:** Enhance digital, shipping and supply chain connectivity between India and Southeast Asia.
- **Expand Economic Partnership:** Increase investments in semiconductors, critical minerals, green energy and digital economy.
- **Leverage ASEAN Frameworks:** Use ASEAN-led institutions to strengthen regional cooperation and Indo-Pacific stability.
- **Promote Innovation Collaboration:** Encourage startup ecosystems, academic exchanges and emerging technology partnerships.

## INDIA'S PUSH TOWARDS E30 ETHANOL BLENDING

### Context

After achieving **20% ethanol blending (E20)** ahead of the 2030 target, discussions have emerged on moving towards **E30 (30% ethanol blending)**.

### Benefits of E30

- **Reduced Crude Oil Dependence:** Higher ethanol blending can reduce reliance on imported crude oil (India imported ~85% of its crude oil needs in 2025).
- **Energy Security:** Greater domestic fuel substitution provides resilience against geopolitical oil shocks (West Asia conflicts, OPEC supply disruptions).
- **Lower Carbon Emissions:** Ethanol blending reduces carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions from vehicles (supports India's net-zero and climate goals).
- **Farmer Income Support:** Ethanol creates an additional market for sugarcane, maize and grain farmers (sugar mills earned ₹94,000+ crore from ethanol sales during 2014–24).
- **Rural Industrial Growth:** Expansion of distilleries and biofuel infrastructure boosts rural employment and agro-processing industries.
- **Diversification of Feedstock:** Shift towards maize and second-generation ethanol may reduce overdependence on sugarcane-based ethanol.

### Challenges in Transitioning to E30

- **Water Stress:** Sugarcane-based ethanol is highly water intensive (~2,860 litres of water required per litre of ethanol), aggravating groundwater depletion in states like Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Food Security Concerns:** Use of rice and food grains for ethanol can affect food availability (government restricted rice diversion in 2023 due to lower output).
- **Climate Vulnerability:** Poor monsoons and possible El Niño conditions may reduce sugarcane and paddy output, affecting ethanol supply and food stocks.
- **Land Use & Cropping Distortion:** Large-scale maize or sugarcane expansion may alter cropping patterns and increase pressure on agricultural land.
- **Infrastructure Constraints:** E30 requires major investments in distilleries, storage and transportation systems (estimated ethanol demand: 1,700–1,800 crore litres).
- **Automobile Compatibility Issues:** Most vehicles in India are not fully E20-compliant; E30 would require further engine modifications and may reduce fuel efficiency.
- **Limited Impact on Import Bill:** Despite E20 achievement, crude oil substitution reduced India's import bill by less than 3% due to rising fuel demand.
- **Risk of New Dependency:** Without second-generation ethanol, India may replace oil dependence with dependence on water-intensive crops and food-based feedstocks.

### Way Forward

- **Promote Second-Generation (2G) Ethanol:** Use agricultural residue and non-food biomass to reduce food security and water stress concerns.
- **Shift Towards Less Water-Intensive Feedstock:** Encourage maize and alternative biofuel crops instead of excessive sugarcane dependence.
- **Strengthen Vehicle & Fuel Infrastructure:** Expand E-compatible vehicle ecosystem, storage capacity and distribution networks.
- **Balanced Energy Transition:** Combine ethanol expansion with EV adoption, green hydrogen and renewable energy for long-term energy security.

## VB-GRAM G ACT

### Context

The Government of India has announced the **Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) [VB-G RAM G] Act, 2025**, which will take effect on July 1, 2026.

### About the VB-G RAM G Act

- **Objective:** To provide a statutory guarantee of wage employment to rural households while focusing on the creation of high-quality, durable assets that contribute to the national infrastructure.

- **Core Vision:** It aligns rural employment with broader economic goals, aiming to integrate local development plans (Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans) with national priorities (PM Gati Shakti).
- **Legislative Status:** It is proposed as a replacement for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of 2005.
- **Enhanced Guarantee:** It statutorily increases the guaranteed wage employment from 100 days to 125 days per household annually.
- **Funding Structure Change:** It introduces a 60:40 Centre-State cost-sharing model for the wage bill, a significant shift from the previous 100% central funding for unskilled wages.

### Why Replace MGNREGA?

- **Changing Rural Realities:** MGNREGA was enacted in 2005; the government argues that the rural economy has transformed, requiring a modernised framework.
- **Asset Quality Concerns:** There has been criticism that MGNREGA often led to the creation of non-durable or low-utility assets. VB GRAM G aims to prioritise “productive assets” like water security and core infrastructure.
- **Labour Supply in Agriculture:** Farmers have frequently complained that MGNREGA creates labour shortages during peak farming seasons.
- **Fiscal Discipline:** Moving from an “open-ended” funding model to a “normative allocation” helps the Centre better manage fiscal outlays.

### Difference between MGNREGA and VB-GRAM G

Feature	MGNREGA	VB-GRAM G
<b>Guaranteed Workdays</b>	Legal guarantee of at least <b>100 days</b> of wage employment annually.	Increases guarantee to <b>125 days</b> of wage employment per household.
<b>Wage Funding</b>	Centre bears <b>100%</b> cost of unskilled labour wages.	Mandates <b>60:40 Centre-State</b> cost sharing for wage bills.
<b>Nature of Right</b>	<b>Justiciable Right</b> – citizens can sue if work is denied; funding is open-ended.	<b>Schematic Entitlement</b> – guarantee capped by fixed budget allocation.
<b>Budgeting Approach</b>	Based on <b>actual demand</b> for work reported by states.	Centre determines a <b>fixed annual allocation</b> regardless of demand.
<b>Operational Period</b>	Operates <b>continuously</b> year-round without seasonal pauses.	Allows suspension up to <b>60 days</b> during peak agricultural seasons.
<b>Payment Frequency</b>	Wages paid within <b>15 days</b> of work completion.	Envisages <b>weekly payments</b> to improve workers' cash flow.

### Benefits of the VB-G RAM G

- **Increased Employment Guarantee:** The statutory guarantee is raised from 100 days to 125 days per household annually, potentially increasing rural incomes.
- **Faster Wage Payments:** it envisages weekly wage payments, improving liquidity for workers compared to the 15-day cycle under MGNREGA.
- **Support for Agriculture:** The provision to pause public works for up to 60 days during peak agricultural seasons ensures farmers have access to labour when needed most.
- **Focus on Water Security:** A dedicated focus on water-related works aims to improve irrigation and drinking water availability in rural areas.
- **Technological Integration:** It mandates a comprehensive digital ecosystem, including biometric authentication and AI-enabled analytics, to curb leakages and ensure transparency.

### Associated Challenges

- **Dilution of Rights:** Critics argue that shifting from a “Justiciable Right” to a “Schematic Entitlement” with a budget cap fundamentally weakens the legal claim to work. If funds run out, work may be denied.
- **Fiscal Burden on States:** The shift to a 60:40 funding split places a massive financial burden on poorer states (like Bihar or UP) that have high demand for work but low revenue capacity.
- **Centralisation of Power:** The “Normative Allocation” model allows the Centre to determine funding limits, reducing the autonomy of States to plan based on local demand.

### Way Forward

- **Hybrid Funding Mechanism:** The government could consider a “counter-cyclical” funding window where the Centre steps in with 100% funding during declared distress years (e.g., droughts) to protect the vulnerable.
- **Strengthening State Capacities:** Poorer states must be supported with transitional grants to help them manage the sudden increase in their wage bill share.
- **Robust Social Audits:** To balance the top-down “Normative Allocation,” bottom-up social audits must be strengthened to ensure transparency and accountability at the Gram Sabha level.
- **Review of Seasonal Pause:** The 60-day pause should be flexible and decided by local Gram Sabhas.

## PROBLEM OF DIPPING FOREX AND RISING GOLD IMPORTS

### Context

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called on citizens to adopt austerity measures, urging them to cut back on gold purchases, foreign travel, and petroleum consumption.

### Measures suggested

- **Use public transport:** Increase use of metros, buses and other public systems to reduce petrol and diesel consumption.

- **Switch to electric vehicles:** Adopt EVs to reduce dependence on imported petroleum and the foreign currency spent on it.
- **Revive work-from-home:** Bring back Covid-era WFH arrangements to cut fuel demand and ease pressure on forex reserves.
- **Avoid foreign travel:** Curtail non-essential international trips to reduce outward remittances and dollar outflows.
- **Pause gold purchases:** Avoid buying gold for at least one year to reduce the import bill and dollar outflows.
- **Prioritise local goods:** Choose domestically made products over imports to reduce demand for foreign currency.

### Rationale behind the measures

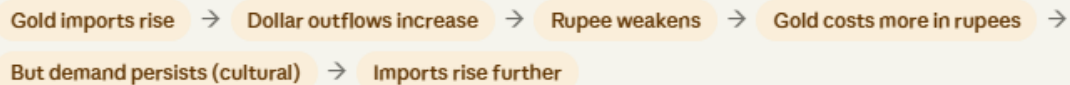
- **Forex reserves under stress:** India's foreign exchange reserves have declined to nearly \$691 billion. FII withdrawals of around ₹1.97 lakh crore between January and May 2026, combined with a rupee that has crossed 95 to the dollar, have intensified pressure on the external sector.
- **Gold: a pure dollar drain:** The annual gold import bill reached \$72 billion in 2025-26, nearly double the \$35 billion of 2022-23.
  - Every household purchase sends dollars out of the economy, widens the current account deficit, and weakens the rupee making the next gold purchase even more expensive in rupees.
- **Current Account Deficit:** According to RBI data cited in the report, India's **CAD widened to \$13.2 billion, equivalent to 1.3% of GDP, during the December quarter of 2025.**
- **Oil: 89% import dependency:** India imports 89% of its crude oil, and prices have surged from around \$70 per barrel a year ago to over \$113 now.

### Why India Demands So Much Gold

**India is one of the world's largest consumers of gold, second only to China.** Unlike most commodities, gold demand in India is not purely financial — it is deeply embedded in social, religious and cultural life, making it uniquely difficult to suppress through policy appeals alone.

- **Cultural importance:** Gold is a symbol of prosperity, status and auspiciousness across communities. Gifting gold is a social obligation at major life events.
- **Religious significance:** Gold is integral to religious rituals, temple offerings and festivals like Dhanteras and Akshaya Tritiya, which drive seasonal demand spikes.
- **Investment value:** Gold is seen as a safe-haven asset and inflation hedge, especially in rural households with limited access to formal financial instruments.

The vicious cycle gold creates



### Economic impact of the measures

- **Reduced current account deficit:** A narrower CAD reduces pressure on forex reserves and stabilises the rupee.
- **Rupee stabilisation:** Reduced dollar outflows from gold and petroleum imports would ease demand for dollars in the market, helping arrest the rupee's slide beyond the 95 mark and breaking the vicious cycle where a weak rupee makes imports costlier, which further weakens the rupee.
- **Forex reserve conservation:** A combination of reduced gold imports, lower foreign travel, and higher use of local goods would collectively slow the drawdown of **India's \$691 billion reserves**.
- **Inflationary spillover from fuel prices:** Regardless of consumption behaviour, a petrol and diesel price hike is widely expected. Since most freight in India runs on diesel, any revision will feed into grocery, transport and everyday goods prices within days

### Way forward

- **Gold Monetisation Scheme:** Industry experts have suggested strengthening the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) to reduce dependence on imported gold. The scheme aims to mobilise idle household gold and channel it into the formal economy.
- **Travel Deficit:** Invest in inbound tourism infrastructure such as airports, heritage sites, and hospitality capacity need urgent upgrades.
- **Electric Vehicles:** Mandate government EV fleet transition.
- **FII Outflows:** Deepen sovereign bond markets make Indian securities accessible to long-term foreign capital.