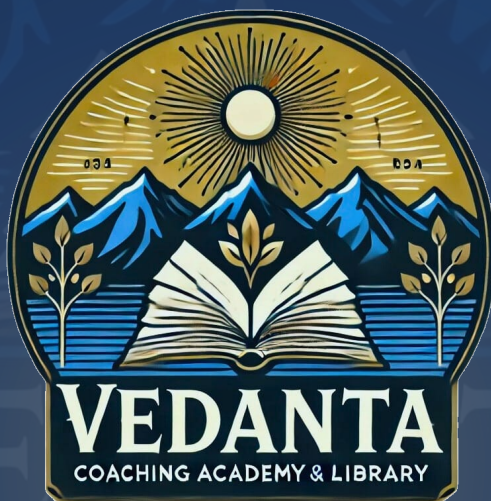




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The Hindu · Editorial & News Analysis

Current Affairs Analysis

6th July 2026

PRELIMS MCQS

MAINS QUESTIONS

MODEL ESSAYS

HPAS 2026 · UPSC Preparatory Test Series

Compiled by **Sapna Chauhan**



CONTENTS

Index

IMPORTANT ISSUES OF THE DAY

• Child sexual abuse	Page 1 · GS 2 & 3	• Citizenship	Page 6 · GS 2
• India and Japan	Page 6 · GS 2	• Hormuz to home	Page 6 · GS 3
• Asiatic lions	Page 7 · GS 3	• Gaganyaan mission	Page 12 · GS 3

01	Govt. Issues Notice to Meta on ‘Child Sexual Abuse’ Ads	Page No. 1 GS 2 & 3
02	The Right to Belong Beyond Official Documentation	Page No. 6 GS 2 Citizenship
03	Two Together: India and Japan	Page No. 6 GS 2 International Relations
04	Hormuz to Home: India’s Resilience in Uncertain Times	Page No. 6 GS 3 Economy & Energy Security
05	India Needs a Second Home for Asiatic Lions	Page No. 7 GS 3 Environment & Conservation
06	ISRO Conducts Test of Key Component for Gaganyaan Mission	Page No. 12 GS 3 Science & Technology
07	Prelims — Multiple Choice Questions	10 Questions
08	Mains — Model Answers	2 Questions
09	Essay I — Energy Security & Strategic Resilience	~900 words
10	Essay II — The Dialectic of Citizenship	~1000 words



01

PAGE NO. 1 | GS 2 & 3

Govt. Issues Notice to Meta on 'Child Sexual Abuse' Ads

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** has directed Meta, the parent body of several social media platforms, to disable advertisements and content promoting and facilitating access to child sexual exploitative and abuse material (**CSEAM**) on Instagram, according to government sources. It has also sought an explanation on the issue.
- The move came a day after the **BBC Eye** published its investigation revealing that Instagram had allegedly been running “paid adverts promoting child sexual abuse material in India” and that such advertisements linked users to channels on Telegram, where they could buy the material.
- Meta’s policy on advertisements, meanwhile, stipulates that their content must comply with community standards and must not have imagery depicting nudity and activities that are sexual or sexually suggestive.

Legal & Regulatory Framework

- According to a written reply by Mr. Vaishnaw to the Lok Sabha last year, the **IT Act, 2000** provides punishment for publishing or transmitting obscene material and material containing sexually explicit acts in electronic form.
- The Act also provides for stringent punishment for publishing or transmitting material depicting children in sexually explicit acts in electronic form.
- The **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** enforce obligations on the intermediaries, to observe due diligence.
- If they fail to observe it, they lose the exemption under law for third-party information or data or communication links hosted by them. The intermediaries are required to remove any such content within **24 hours**.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs** operates the **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal** to receive complaints against cybercrimes, with special focus on cybercrimes against children. It has also set up the **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** for such crimes.

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)

- **I4C** is a national-level coordination centre for addressing cybercrime issues.
- It is an initiative by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, approved in 2018 and dedicated to the nation in 2020. Its headquarters are in New Delhi.



- It provides a coordinated and comprehensive framework for law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to tackle cybercrimes.

02

PAGE NO. 6 | GS 2 | CITIZENSHIP

The Right to Belong Beyond Official Documentation

- On June 24, 2026, a member of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) released a startling statement. The Indian passport, the person said, is a "**travel document**" and not a "**citizenship document**". The assertion set off a minor storm. The reasonable question that followed from many was — if the passport would not do it, what document would?
- Posed this way, the MEA's statement and the questions it raises become something of a red herring.
- A passport can only be issued to a non-citizen in exceptional circumstances, where the Government of India is of the opinion that it is necessary to do so in "**public interest**". Surely, therefore, barring those cases where this power is exercised, a passport must be seen as conclusive proof of a person's citizenship.

Citizenship Under Scrutiny

- It arrives in the middle of the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**'s **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls in various States.
- It also comes in the wake of a pair of pronouncements by the **Supreme Court** of India, most recently on the validity of the SIR in Bihar and the ECI's power to scrutinise citizenship, and, before that, on the **Assam Accord**, in which the Court had much to say on how it conceives republican ideas of citizenship. Moreover, since an amendment to the Citizenship Act in **2019** (made operational in **2024**), rules of naturalisation have been rewritten along religious lines.
- Part II of the document, comprising **Articles 5 to 11**, settled the citizenship of those caught amidst the tragedies of Partition.
- **Article 11** reserved to Parliament a seemingly plenary power to legislate and "make any provision with respect to the acquisition and termination of citizenship and all other matters relating to citizenship".

From Jus Soli to Jus Sanguinis

- At its conception, India adopted the principle of **jus soli**, that is a form of citizenship predicated on residence and birth.



- The **Citizenship Act, 1955**, saw the principle as its primary governing creed. But over time, the legislature moved away from the theory.
- First, in **1985**, **Section 6A** was introduced into the Act to give effect to the **Assam Accord**, suspending the conferment of citizenship based on the dates on which people of “Indian origin” had come into India.
- Second, in **2003**, the statute was further amended to deny citizenship to persons born in India even when only one of the parents of such person was an “illegal migrant”.
- In a constitutional order where personhood comes first, the rules that determine who qualifies as a citizen must rest on more than the accident of paperwork. They must be built on what the Constitution most cherishes — the equal dignity of every person and the right of each to equal protection of the law.

03

PAGE NO. 6 | GS 2 | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Two Together: India and Japan

- India and Japan did well to ring-fence their ties from multilateral accords.
- Rapid changes in geopolitics and technological advances are forcing all countries into fresh thinking, most consequentially with regard to China.
- The U.S. appears less enthusiastic about the **Quad** grouping (with India, Japan and Australia) and is unsure of the nomenclature “Indo-Pacific” in its strategy.
- Against this backdrop, India and Japan declared a joint intent to continue with an ‘updated’ **Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)** posture, ring-fencing bilateral ties from multilateral arrangements.
- Ms. Takaichi signed at least **16 agreements** and documents, including a joint statement on energy resilience to support bilateral cooperation along the ‘**maritime energy transport value chain**’.

Maritime Security & Regional Connectivity

- The two major Asian economies have a shared interest in ensuring that the nearest energy sources in the Gulf remain accessible. They have agreed to build **naval platforms** to enhance maritime domain awareness and surveillance.
- A joint statement issued during the visit mentioned “serious concerns” about the prevailing situation in the South China and East China Seas, and Japanese officials spoke to the media frankly about the need to address the **Taiwan** issue peacefully.



- Though a planned visit to Guwahati was dropped, Ms. Takaichi underscored Japan's attention to the northeastern regions of India by connecting them with "relevant partners and regional organisations" of the Bay of Bengal region. **BIMSTEC** was mentioned as a partner organisation for Japan.
- Japan has major investments in Bangladesh and Thailand, and connecting these projects, including the **Matarbari port** in Cox's Bazar, through an 'industrial value chain' with India's northeast can boost regional prosperity and security.

04

PAGE NO. 6 | GS 3 | ECONOMY & ENERGY SECURITY

Hormuz to Home: India's Resilience in Uncertain Times

- The **Strait of Hormuz** has long been recognised as one of the world's most critical maritime routes. Nearly **a fifth of global oil consumption** passes through this narrow waterway, making it indispensable to global energy security and international trade. Any disruption here immediately reverberates across shipping, freight, insurance and commodity markets.
- This experience is just one example of India's growing ability to respond swiftly and decisively to external shocks.
- Whether during the COVID-19 pandemic, global supply chain disruptions, or recent geopolitical tensions in West Asia, India's institutional response has increasingly been characterised by coordination, agility, and strategic foresight.
- India imports nearly **90%** of its crude oil requirements, making it particularly vulnerable to disruptions in energy-producing regions. Rising crude prices, elevated freight costs and shipping delays could easily have translated into widespread inflationary pressures and economic uncertainty.

Calibrated Management & Long-Term Preparedness

- What deserves particular recognition is the manner in which the government has managed the energy challenge. Unlike in several countries where consumers experienced sharp increases in fuel prices or even supply shortages, India adopted a calibrated approach aimed at protecting households while maintaining macroeconomic stability.
- No economy today can completely insulate itself from geopolitical uncertainty. Commodity markets react instantly to conflict, shipping disruptions ripple across continents and supply chains remain deeply interconnected.
- A key learning from the Hormuz episode is that resilience is no longer built through emergency response alone. It is created through years of investment in infrastructure, diversified supply chains, institutional coordination and policy preparedness.



- Over the past decade, India has steadily expanded refining capacity, diversified crude sourcing, strengthened strategic petroleum reserves, built gas infrastructure, modernised logistics networks and accelerated the transition toward cleaner energy.

05

PAGE NO. 7 | GS 3 | ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION

India Needs a Second Home for Asiatic Lions

- India's conservation of the Asiatic lion is widely celebrated as a remarkable success story. From a population which was reduced to just a few dozen in the early 20th century, the number of Asiatic lions has increased to approx. **891** today.
- The need for a second home for Asiatic lions is rooted in decades of government-backed research.
- Multiple reports of the **Wildlife Institute of India** have consistently emphasised that a single population confined to one landscape is inherently vulnerable.
- Studies conducted since the 1980s have concluded that threats such as epidemics, forest fires, or other natural disasters could potentially wipe out the entire species if it remains geographically concentrated.

Judicial Mandate & Disease Threat

- This scientific consensus was formally acknowledged in the landmark **Supreme Court** judgment of **April 15, 2013**, which directed the translocation of Asiatic lions from Gujarat's **Gir** forest to the **Kuno National Park** in Madhya Pradesh.
- Gujarat has consistently resisted the relocation of lions outside the State, citing its success in conserving the species and raising concerns about habitat suitability elsewhere.
- The concentration of the entire global population of Asiatic lions within the **Gir** landscape makes them uniquely vulnerable to disease outbreaks.
- The 2018 outbreak of the **Canine Distemper Virus** among the population, which killed several lions and infected many others, serves as a stark reminder of this danger. Such diseases spread more rapidly in dense, socially structured populations, and their impact is amplified by the limited genetic diversity of the lions.

Project Lion & Population Data (2025)

- **Project Lion (2020)** has attempted to revive the discussion on expanding lion habitats. There have been proposals to develop alternative sites such as the **Barda Wildlife Sanctuary** within Gujarat itself.



- Total Population: **891** Asiatic lions recorded in Gujarat, a **32.2%** increase from **674** lions in 2020 (15th census).
- Population Distribution: 384 lions live inside protected forest and sanctuary areas. Lions in non-forested areas have risen from 340 in 2020 to 507 in 2025.
- **44.22%** of the lion population now resides outside traditional protected habitats.
- **Gir** National Park and adjoining sanctuaries (Gir Wildlife Sanctuary and Pania Wildlife Sanctuary) house 394 lions, forming the core population.
- **Amreli** district has the highest count with **257 lions**, while **Mityala Wildlife Sanctuary** doubled its population to 32 lions.
- **Barda Wildlife Sanctuary** near Porbandar has become a newly established lion population area, with 17 lions recorded — the first since **1879**.



Asiatic Lion *Panthera Leo Persica*

FEATURES

- › Asiatic lions are slightly smaller than African lions.
- › The most striking morphological character, always seen in Asiatic lions and rarely in African lions, is a longitudinal fold of skin running along its belly.

HABITAT

- › At present, **Gir** National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary (Gujarat) is the only abode of the Asiatic lion.

PROTECTION STATUS

- › Endangered: IUCN Red List
- › Appendix I: CITES
- › Schedule I: Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972

THREATS

- › Human-Animal Conflict
- › Poaching
- › Genetic Inbreeding
- › Diseases such as plague, canine distemper

CONSERVATION EFFORTS

- › Asiatic Lion Conservation Project
- › Project Lion
- › World Lion Day (10th August)

06

PAGE NO. 12 | GS 3 | SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ISRO Conducts Test of Key Component for Gaganyaan Mission

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully carried out the first ground test of the solid motor-based **Sub-Orbital Launch Vehicle for Experiments (SOLVE)** at its Static Test Facility at the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre** in Sriharikota.
- The **SOLVE** solid motor is a key component for conducting Gaganyaan test missions and the first ground test was carried out on **July 3**.



- The ISRO is developing a solid motor-based **SOLVE** as a test platform to carry out Integrated Parachute Tests for validation of the deceleration system of Gaganyaan's crew module under various test conditions.
- During these test missions, the crew module will be carried to an altitude of **10 km to 17 km** and separated from the vehicle. A series of **10 parachutes** will be deployed to reduce the velocity of the crew module before splashdown in the sea.

About the Gaganyaan Mission

- India's first human spaceflight programme, aiming to send a crew of 3 astronauts to **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** at **400 km** for 3 days and return them safely to Earth.
- Mission Phases: Includes unmanned test missions followed by the first manned mission expected to happen in **early 2027**.
- Significance: Gaganyaan success will place India among the elite group of nations (US, Russia, China) with human spaceflight capability.
- Crew training for Gaganyaan: Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, Group Captain Ajit Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap, and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla are India's astronauts-designate for Gaganyaan.

Key Systems

- Human-Rated Launch Vehicle (**HLVM3**): A modified version of ISRO's LVM3 rocket. It includes solid, liquid, and cryogenic stages, re-configured to meet human-rating requirements.
- The rocket is capable of launching the **Orbital Module** to a Low Earth Orbit (**400 km**) and features a **Crew Escape System (CES)** with high burn-rate solid motors to ensure crew safety during emergencies at launch or ascent.
- CES ensures safe abort in case of emergencies during launch or ascent.
- **Orbital Module (OM)**: Houses the **Crew Module (CM)** and **Service Module (SM)** with life support, avionics, and propulsion systems.
- The CM is a habitable space with an Earth-like environment, with a pressurized inner structure and unpressurized external structure. It houses crew interfaces, life support systems, and avionics, and is designed for re-entry.
- The SM supports the CM in orbit, providing thermal, propulsion, power systems, avionics, and deployment mechanisms, but remains unpressurized.



Mission Preparatory Tests

- **Integrated Air Drop Test (IADT):** Validate parachute and deceleration systems.
- **Test Vehicle Missions (TV):** Test abort and launch systems.
- **Pad Abort Test (PAT):** Check crew module safety from various altitudes.
- **Water Survival Test Facility (WSTF):** Recovery trials with Navy support.

PRELIMS PRACTICE

Multiple Choice Questions

10 Questions with Answer Key & Explanations

Q1 Consider the following statements regarding the regulation of online content in India:

- I.** The Ministry of Home Affairs operates the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal to receive complaints against cybercrimes.
- II.** Under the IT Rules 2021, intermediaries are required to remove child sexual abuse material within 24 hours.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- ☐ (A) I only
- ☐ (B) II only
- ☒ (C) Both I and II
- ☐ (D) Neither I nor II

Answer: C.

Q2 With reference to the Gaganyaan mission, consider the following statements:

- I.** The Human-Rated Launch Vehicle (HLVM3) is a modified version of ISRO's PSLV rocket.
- II.** The Crew Escape System (CES) utilizes high burn-rate solid motors to ensure safety during launch emergencies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- ☐ (A) I only
- ☒ (B) II only
- ☐ (C) Both I and II
- ☐ (D) Neither I nor II

Answer: B. HLVM3 is a modified version of ISRO's LVM3 rocket, not PSLV.

Q3 Consider the following statements regarding Asiatic Lions:

- I.** The most striking morphological character of the Asiatic lion is a longitudinal fold of skin running along its belly.
- II.** According to the IUCN Red List, the Asiatic Lion is classified as Critically Endangered.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- ☒ **A** I only
- ☐ **B** II only
- ☐ **C** Both I and II
- ☐ **D** Neither I nor II

Answer: A. The IUCN status is Endangered, not Critically Endangered.

Q4 Which of the following wildlife sanctuaries has recently become a newly established lion population area, recording its first lions since 1879?

- ☐ **A** Pania Wildlife Sanctuary
- ☐ **B** Mityala Wildlife Sanctuary
- ☒ **C** Barda Wildlife Sanctuary
- ☐ **D** Kuno National Park

Answer: C.

Q5 Consider the following statements regarding citizenship laws in India:

- I.** The Indian Constitution originally adopted the principle of jus soli, which predicates citizenship on residence and birth.
- II.** Section 6A was introduced into the Citizenship Act in 1985 to give effect to the Assam Accord.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- ☐ **A** I only
- ☐ **B** II only
- ☒ **C** Both I and II
- ☐ **D** Neither I nor II

Answer: C.

Q6 With respect to India-Japan bilateral relations, consider the following statements:

- I.** India and Japan have agreed to build naval platforms to enhance maritime domain awareness and surveillance.
- II.** Japan recognizes BIMSTEC as a partner organization to connect the Bay of Bengal region with India's northeast.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- ☐ (A) I only
- ☐ (B) II only
- ☒ (C) Both I and II
- ☐ (D) Neither I nor II

Answer: C.

Q7 In the context of ISRO's SOLVE platform, consider the following statements:

- I.** SOLVE is a liquid motor-based test platform designed for the Gaganyaan mission.
- II.** During test missions, a series of 10 parachutes will be deployed to reduce the velocity of the crew module.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- ☐ (A) I only
- ☒ (B) II only
- ☐ (C) Both I and II
- ☐ (D) Neither I nor II

Answer: B. SOLVE is a solid motor-based test platform.

Q8 The Strait of Hormuz is considered a critical maritime route because:

- ☐ (A) It handles nearly half of the world's commercial container traffic
- ☒ (B) Nearly a fifth of global oil consumption passes through this narrow waterway
- ☐ (C) It is the primary chokepoint connecting the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean
- ☐ (D) It serves as the exclusive transit route for India's natural gas exports

Answer: B.



Q9 Consider the following statements about the components of the Orbital Module in the Gaganyaan mission:

- I.** The Crew Module (CM) features an unpressurized inner structure and a pressurized external structure.
- II.** The Service Module (SM) remains unpressurized and provides thermal and propulsion support in orbit.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- ☐ (A) I only
- ☐ (B) II only
- ☐ (C) Both I and II
- ☐ (D) Neither I nor II

Answer: B. The CM has a pressurized inner structure and an unpressurized external structure.

Q10 Consider the following statements regarding the Election Commission of India (ECI) and citizenship scrutiny:

- I.** The Supreme Court upheld that the ECI may enquire into a person's citizenship for the limited purpose of deciding electoral roll eligibility.
- II.** If the ECI is unsatisfied with a person's citizenship claim, it has the absolute authority to strip them of basic constitutional rights directly.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- ☒ (A) I only
- ☐ (B) II only
- ☐ (C) Both I and II
- ☐ (D) Neither I nor II

Answer: A. The ECI must refer the case to the competent authority under the Citizenship Act; it does not directly strip rights.

ANSWER WRITING

Mains Questions

Model Structured Answers

Question 1

8 Marks · 120–150 words

Discuss the ecological necessity of establishing a second home for Asiatic lions, despite the successful conservation efforts in Gujarat.

- **Vulnerability of a Single Landscape:** The entire global population of Asiatic lions is concentrated within the Gir landscape, making them uniquely vulnerable to natural disasters like forest fires, droughts, or sudden prey decline. Studies by the Wildlife Institute of India emphasize that a single population is inherently vulnerable to single catastrophic events.
- **Threat of Disease Outbreaks:** Dense, socially structured populations with limited genetic diversity are highly susceptible to epidemics. The 2018 outbreak of the Canine Distemper Virus serves as a stark reminder of the danger disease poses to a geographically isolated species.
- **The Metapopulation Approach:** Modern conservation science advocates for distributing species across multiple habitats to reduce risk. A second population must be geographically distant enough to prevent disasters or diseases from spreading simultaneously.
- **Judicial Mandate:** The Supreme Court in 2013 recognized this ecological necessity and explicitly directed the translocation of lions to Kuno National Park to ensure the species' long-term survival.

Question 2

12 Marks · 200–250 words

Analyze the strategic importance of the India-Japan partnership in ensuring regional stability and securing the ‘maritime energy transport value chain’ within the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) framework.

- **Navigating Geopolitical Uncertainties:** Rapid changes in geopolitics, especially concerning China’s assertiveness and U.S. hesitation regarding the “Indo-Pacific” nomenclature, necessitate stronger bilateral coordination between India and Japan. The two nations have chosen to ring-fence their bilateral ties from broader multilateral shifts to ensure stability.
- **Energy Security and Value Chain:** Both major Asian economies share a critical interest in ensuring that energy sources from the Gulf remain accessible. By signing agreements on energy resilience, they aim to secure the maritime energy transport value chain from South Asia to the Indo-Pacific, especially amidst regional conflicts like the U.S.-Israel war against Iran.
- **Maritime Domain Awareness:** To protect energy-carrying vessels and maintain regional security, India and Japan have agreed to build naval platforms aimed at enhancing surveillance and maritime domain awareness.
- **Regional Connectivity and Economic Integration:** The strategic partnership extends to the Bay of Bengal, with Japan connecting its investments in Bangladesh (like the Matarbari port) and Thailand to India’s northeastern regions. Utilizing BIMSTEC as a partner organization, this industrial value chain boosts regional prosperity.
- **Addressing the China Factor:** A joint statement highlighted serious concerns regarding the South China and East China Seas, with an emphasis on peacefully addressing the Taiwan issue, further cementing the partnership’s role as a balancing force in Asia.

MAINS — PAPER PRACTICE

Model Essays

Two Full-Length Essays

ESSAY I

Ensuring Energy Security in Uncertain Times: India's Strategic Resilience

Introduction: The Vulnerability of Global Chokepoints

The global economy is intricately tied to maritime trade routes, with certain chokepoints holding disproportionate influence over international stability. The Strait of Hormuz is recognized as one of the world's most critical maritime routes. Because nearly a fifth of global oil consumption passes through this narrow waterway, it is indispensable to global energy security and international trade. Any disruption in this region immediately reverberates across shipping, freight, insurance, and commodity markets globally. For India, a nation that imports nearly 90% of its crude oil requirements, this geographical vulnerability is particularly acute. Elevated tensions in West Asia threaten to translate rapidly into rising crude prices, shipping delays, and widespread inflationary pressures. However, recent crises have demonstrated that India's institutional response is increasingly characterized by agility, strategic foresight, and comprehensive coordination.

Crisis Response and Diplomatic Agility

When global supply chains face disruption, the immediate response of the state determines the economic fallout. During recent geopolitical tensions, vessels navigating West Asia were confronted with an evolving security situation and disrupted commercial operations. India's government responded with remarkable speed and coordination. By continuously engaging with shipping companies, diplomatic channels, maritime authorities, and international partners, the state ensured the safe movement of Indian-flagged vessels. This timely intervention inspired immense confidence within the shipping industry at a time when uncertainty was peaking. Crucially, the government maintained an unwavering focus on protecting Indian crew and seafarers amidst one of the most challenging environments. This level of diplomatic and operational agility is not isolated; it reflects India's growing capability to respond swiftly and decisively to external shocks, a trait also exhibited during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Macroeconomic Management Amidst Shocks



The true test of a nation's resilience is its ability to maintain macroeconomic stability while absorbing external shocks. Despite the headwinds of global commodity volatility, India's macroeconomic fundamentals have remained remarkably strong. Unlike several other nations where consumers suffered sharp increases in fuel prices or outright supply shortages, India adopted a highly calibrated approach. This whole-of-government strategy—spearheaded by the Prime Minister—saw close coordination between Ministries, State governments, municipal authorities, and oil marketing companies. By managing retail fuel prices prudently, the government succeeded in moderating inflationary pressures, protecting households while simultaneously safeguarding the broader economy. Consequently, inflation broadly remained within the Reserve Bank of India's target band, and India continued its trajectory as the fastest-growing major economy, driven by robust domestic demand and expanding manufacturing. The RBI complemented these efforts by utilizing steady communication and vital measures such as forex swap facilities and the rationalization of taxes on foreign portfolio investors, which kept financial markets functioning smoothly and the banking system well-capitalized.

Long-Term Infrastructure and Strategic Preparedness

While emergency responses are vital, true resilience is cultivated through proactive, long-term strategic investments. A fundamental lesson drawn from crises involving the Strait of Hormuz is that economic security cannot rely on crisis management alone; it must be built through diversified supply chains and policy preparedness. Over the past decade, India has aggressively modernized its infrastructure to insulate itself from sudden geopolitical shifts. The nation has steadily expanded its refining capacity, actively diversified its crude sourcing, and strengthened its strategic petroleum reserves. Furthermore, there has been a massive push toward building domestic gas infrastructure and accelerating the transition to cleaner energy. For instance, to reduce reliance on vulnerable oil routes, the government encouraged the use of piped natural gas (PNG). This strategic pivot was made possible by sustained investments that saw India's City Gas Distribution network expand from merely 55 geographical areas in 2014 to over 300 today. Additionally, targeted support for exporters—such as liquidity facilitation and simplified customs procedures—helped businesses maintain a strong 16% merchandise export growth despite soaring freight charges and maritime disruptions.

Conclusion: Institutional Capability for a Viksit Bharat

In an interconnected world where commodity markets react instantly to conflict and shipping disruptions ripple across continents, no economy can completely isolate itself from geopolitical uncertainty. India was among the economies most fundamentally vulnerable to the energy crises originating in West Asia. Yet, its policy response has proven to be among the most effective globally, successfully preserving growth momentum while mitigating inflation. The investments made over the last decade in logistics networks and strategic reserves have become invaluable assets as external shocks continue to test the global economy. As India marches toward its vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047, it is this deeply ingrained institutional capability—combining immediate diplomatic agility with long-term infrastructure planning—that will serve as its most crucial competitive advantage.



ESSAY II

The Dialectic of Citizenship: Reconciling Administrative Exactitude with Constitutional Personhood

Introduction: The Shifting Paradigm of Civic Identity

Citizenship constitutes the foundational architecture of any democratic republic, delineating the boundaries of the political community and establishing the socio-legal contract between the sovereign state and the individual. In contemporary India, this profound constitutional identity is increasingly subjected to rigorous administrative scrutiny and bureaucratic documentation. A seminal illustration of this dichotomy manifested on June 24, 2026, when a spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) articulated that the Indian passport is functionally a “travel document” rather than a definitive “citizenship document”. Given that the state typically issues passports to non-citizens solely under exceptional circumstances governed by “public interest,” this apparatus has historically served as conclusive proof of an individual’s civic status. The systemic reclassification of foundational state documents—wherein instruments like the passport, Aadhaar, and voter ID are relegated to proving mere travel rights, residence, or prior registration, respectively—signals a profound metamorphosis in state-citizen relations. This administrative trajectory raises a fundamental constitutional conundrum: in a modern democracy, does substantive human personhood retain primacy, or is civic belonging increasingly predicated upon the vagaries of documentary exactitude?

Constitutional Foundations: The Triumph of Secular and Inclusive Belonging

To navigate this contemporary friction, a retrospective analysis of the republic’s founding principles is imperative. Part II of the Indian Constitution, encompassing Articles 5 to 11, was meticulously formulated to address the immediate demographic upheavals and human tragedies precipitated by the Partition. While Article 11 confers upon Parliament a seemingly plenary power to legislate on the acquisition and termination of citizenship, the Constituent Assembly debates reveal inherent constitutional limitations designed to prevent arbitrary legislative overreach. During these deliberations, explicit attempts were made to tether citizenship to ethno-religious identity. P.S. Deshmukh moved an amendment advocating that any person who is a Hindu or a Sikh, and not a citizen of another state, be entitled to Indian citizenship. This exclusionary vision was fiercely repudiated by the framers. Jawaharlal Nehru dismissed the amendment outright as “absurd on the face of it,” while jurist Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar emphatically argued that a state pledged to secular principles could not legally distinguish between individuals on “racial or religious” grounds. Ultimately, B.R. Ambedkar’s religiously neutral and egalitarian citizenship clause was adopted. This historical legacy underscores that while Parliament possesses the authority to stipulate the modalities of citizenship, it is constitutionally restrained from contravening the foundational tenets of secularism, equality, and non-discrimination.



Legislative Metamorphosis: The Trajectory from Jus Soli to Jus Sanguinis

At its inception, the Indian republic embraced the inclusive legal doctrine of jus soli—conferring citizenship primarily based on birth and territorial residence. The Citizenship Act of 1955 initially codified this overarching creed. However, subsequent legislative interventions have incrementally transitioned the statutory framework toward jus sanguinis, wherein citizenship is intrinsically tethered to biological descent and lineage. The first substantive departure materialized in 1985 with the insertion of Section 6A into the Citizenship Act to operationalize the Assam Accord, thereby conditioning citizenship on specific temporal cut-offs for persons of “Indian origin” migrating to India. This paradigm shift was further entrenched by the 2003 amendment, which statutorily barred individuals born within the territory of India from acquiring citizenship if even one parent was designated as an “illegal migrant”. Most recently, the 2019 amendment to the Citizenship Act, which was operationalized in 2024, fundamentally re-engineered the rules of naturalization along explicit religious lines, marking a definitive philosophical departure from the neutral framework envisaged by the Constituent Assembly.

Judicial Discourse and the Escalating Burden of Proof

The higher judiciary has played a complex, and at times polarizing, role in interpreting this legislative evolution. In October 2024, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of Section 6A, effectively endorsing a broad interpretation of parliamentary authority under Article 11. Concurrently, judicial jurisprudence, notably since the landmark *Sarbananda Sonowal vs. Union of India* (2005) judgment, has frequently characterized unregulated migration into border states like Assam as tantamount to “external aggression,” thereby significantly influencing the state’s security-centric approach to citizenship. This judicial backing of heightened administrative scrutiny was further consolidated in the May 2026 judgment, *Association for Democratic Reforms vs. Union of India*. Here, the Supreme Court validated the Election Commission of India’s (ECI) jurisdiction to execute Special Intensive Revisions (SIR) of electoral rolls, such as the exercise conducted in Bihar. Although the Court delineated a “principled” distinction between the formal adjudication of citizenship and the administrative satisfaction requisite for electoral registration, the systemic ramifications are profound. Individuals designated as “doubtful” voters are thrust into a labyrinthine bureaucratic maze, effectively shifting the absolute burden of proof from the state apparatus onto the marginalized individual.

The Ethical Imperative: Personhood Versus Bureaucratic Fiat

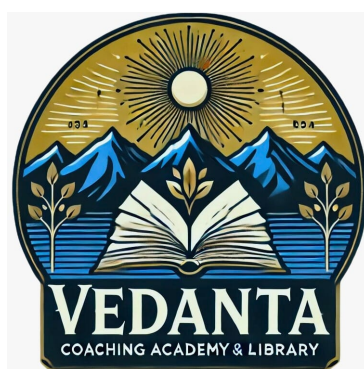
The most precarious consequence of this shifting burden is the institutionalization of civic limbo. Individuals ensnared in intensive electoral revisions frequently face the suspension of their active political rights without the requisite due process of being formally declared foreigners by a competent tribunal. As political theorist Hannah Arendt elucidated, citizenship transcends mere legal status; it is fundamentally “the right to have rights”. The Indian Constitution guarantees basic human entitlements—such as equality before the law (Article 14) and the protection of life and personal liberty (Article 21)—to “any person,” irrespective of their documentation. However, it is the explicit status of citizenship that actuates the vital political liberties enshrined in Article 19 (freedom of speech, expression, and trade) and the statutory right to



participate in the democratic process. When the threshold for evidentiary documentation becomes overwhelmingly stringent, the state inadvertently imperils the inherent dignity of the individual.

Conclusion: Synthesizing State Security with Constitutional Morality

The constitutional architecture of India was deliberately engineered to elevate the sanctity of human personhood above the rigidity of administrative procedures. While the sovereign state undeniably possesses a legitimate and compelling interest in securing its borders, regulating migration, and maintaining the sanctity of electoral rolls, these administrative imperatives must be harmonized with the doctrine of substantive equality. A democratic framework that diminishes the profound constitutional promise of belonging to an unyielding mandate of paperwork risks fundamentally alienating its own citizenry. To actualize the vision of a truly inclusive and equitable republic, India's citizenship apparatus must remain deeply anchored to the enduring constitutional morality championed by its founders: the inviolable dignity of the individual and an unwavering commitment to equitable protection under the law.



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Current Affairs Analysis · 6th July 2026

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Curated for the HPAS 2026 Batch & UPSC Preparatory Test Series