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The Hindu Analysis

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RBI Repo Hike

Chemistry Nobel

Project Cheetah

Accessible Aviation

Wildlife Recovery

Pandemic Agreement

AI & Child Safety

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Compiled by Sapna Chauhan

RBI Raises Repo Rate to 5.5%, Shifts to “Calibrated Tightening”

First hike after a 125-bps easing cycle — an imported oil shock from West Asia pushes the MPC from neutral to a hawkish stance.

WHY IN NEWS The Monetary Policy Committee raised the policy repo rate under the LAF by 25 bps to 5.5% and changed its stance from **neutral to calibrated tightening** — signalling that rate cuts are off the table in the near term.

RBI raises repo rate to 5.5% amid ‘calibrated tightening’

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday raised the policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) by 25 basis points to 5.5% and shifted its stance from neutral to calibrated tightening, signalling that rate cuts are off the table in the near term.

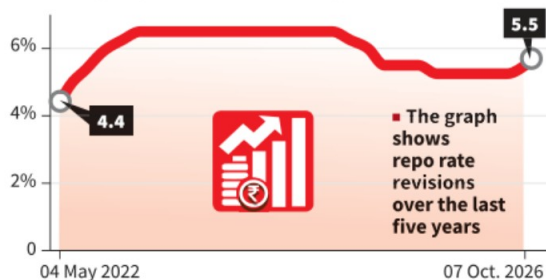
Consequently, the standing deposit facility (SDF) rate stands adjusted to 5.25%, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the bank rate to 5.75%.

The policy repo rate, which was cut to 5.25% in December 2025, had been kept on hold at the next four MPC meetings. In the easing cycle, the MPC had cut the rate by 125 basis points in phases, from 6.5% to 5.25%, before increasing it on Wednesday.

The sudden re-escalation of the West Asia conflict in September and the

Tighter grip

The shift in policy stance amid a sour global economic sentiment indicates that rate cuts are off the table in the near term, and policy action ahead can only be a rate hike or a pause



consequent hardening and volatility in global crude prices soured global economic sentiment and unsettled financial markets, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said in the Governor's statement.

"It [the shifted policy stance] underscored that given the current conditions, rate cuts are off the table in the near term and policy action ahead can only be a rate hike or a pause, depending on the

evolving conditions and the outlook," the Governor stated.

Further tightening of global financial conditions, uncertainty about fair valuation of AI stocks, and an elusive resolution of the West Asia conflict pose significant downside risks to the global economic outlook, Mr. Malhotra highlighted in his statement.

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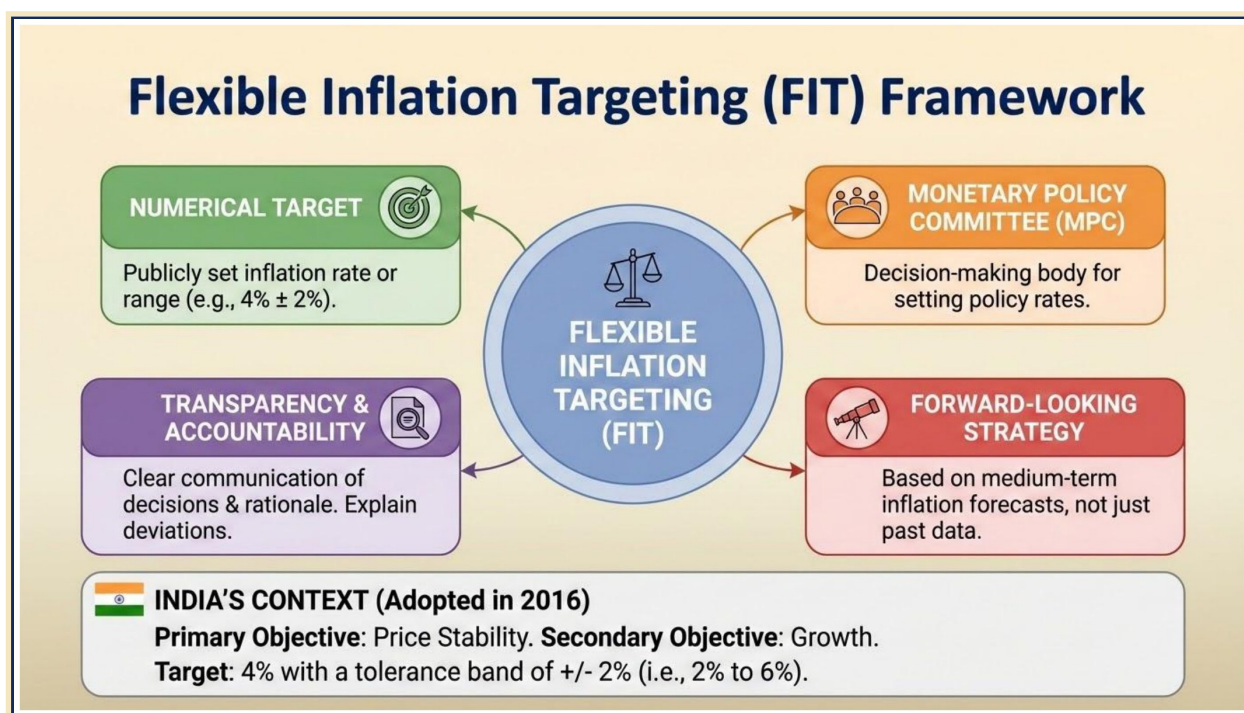
The Hindu, 8 Oct 2026, Page 1 — "RBI raises repo rate to 5.5% amid 'calibrated tightening'"

KEY ANALYSIS

- ◆ **The decision:** Repo up 25 bps to 5.5%; consequently the **SDF rate is 5.25%** and the **MSF rate and Bank Rate are 5.75%**. The repo had been held at 5.25% for four meetings after the December 2025 cut.
- ◆ **The reversal:** In the preceding easing cycle the MPC had cut rates by **125 bps** in phases (6.5% → 5.25%). Wednesday's hike is the first upward move since that cycle ended.

Monetary Policy Committee	
MPC was constituted in 2016 as a statutory body under the RBI Act to formulate monetary policy in India (on recommendation of Urjit Patel committee)	
- Composition (Chairperson + 5 Members): Quorum: 4 members. - RBI Governor - ex-officio chairperson - RBI Deputy Governor + 1 more member from RBI to be nominated by the Central Board of Directors. 3 other members are appointed by the Central Government.	
Members of MPC hold office for a period of 4 years and are not eligible for re-appointment.	
MPC is required to meet at least four times in a year.	
MPC takes decisions based on majority vote (by those who are present and voting. In case of a tie, the RBI governor will have the second or casting vote).	
The decision of the committee is binding on the RBI.	

Visual Note — Monetary Policy Committee: composition and functioning



Visual Note — Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT) framework

- ◆ **The trigger — an external supply shock:** the September re-escalation of the West Asia conflict hardened and destabilised global crude prices, souring global sentiment and unsettling financial markets (Governor Sanjay Malhotra).
- ◆ **What the stance means:** “Calibrated tightening” tells markets that the next move can only be a **hike or a pause** — never a cut — while preserving flexibility to respond to incoming data.
- ◆ **Downside risks flagged:** tighter global financial conditions, uncertainty over the fair valuation of **AI stocks**, and an elusive resolution of the West Asia conflict.
- ◆ **Why hike against a supply shock?** Monetary policy cannot lower oil prices, but it can prevent **second-round effects** — fuel costs feeding into transport, food and wages — and keep inflation expectations anchored around the 4% target. A firmer rate stance also cushions the rupee against

capital outflows.

- ◆ **The trade-off:** Costlier credit could slow investment and consumption recovery; transmission through EBLR-linked loans is quick, but deposit and MCLR repricing lags. Fiscal measures (fuel tax rationalisation, supply management) must complement the RBI.

Value Addition — The Policy Corridor & Stances

Instrument	Rate now	Position
Standing Deposit Facility (SDF)	5.25%	Floor of corridor (repo – 25 bps); collateral-free absorption, introduced April 2022
Policy Repo Rate	5.50%	Signal rate; LAF centre
MSF Rate & Bank Rate	5.75%	Ceiling of corridor (repo + 25 bps); emergency overnight borrowing

Stances decoded: *Accommodative* — ready to cut/inject liquidity; *Neutral* — can move either way; *Calibrated tightening* — cuts ruled out, hikes possible but measured (first used in Oct 2018); *Tightening* — active withdrawal of accommodation.

Statutory base: MPC under **Section 45ZB** of the RBI Act, 1934 (inserted by Finance Act, 2016). Inflation target (CPI) fixed by the Centre in consultation with RBI — **4% ± 2%**, reviewed every five years. Failure = average inflation outside 2–6% for **three consecutive quarters**; RBI must then report reasons and remedial steps to the Government.

Oil link: India imports over 85% of its crude requirement — every sustained rise in Brent widens the CAD, weakens the rupee and lifts imported inflation.

Prelims Pointers Repo hike 25 bps → **5.5%** · SDF **5.25%** · MSF/Bank Rate **5.75%** · Easing cycle total **125 bps** (6.5% → 5.25%) · Last cut: **Dec 2025** · Stance: **neutral** → **calibrated tightening** · MPC: 6 members, quorum 4, Governor's casting vote

Syllabus Link: GS 3 — Indian Economy: mobilisation of resources, growth, monetary policy, inflation management; GS 2 — statutory bodies.



Chemistry Nobel 2026: Kagan and Soai and the Science of “Mirrored” Molecules

The French-Japanese duo showed how chemical reactions can amplify tiny asymmetries in molecules — the basis of single-handed drugs.

WHY IN NEWS French chemist **Henri B. Kagan** (Université Paris-Sud) and Japanese chemist **Kenso Soai** (Tokyo University of Science) have won the **2026 Nobel Prize in Chemistry** for showing how reactions can amplify small asymmetries in **chiral molecules**.

KEY ANALYSIS

- ◆ **Chirality:** A chiral molecule exists in two mirror-image forms (enantiomers) that cannot be superimposed — like a left and a right hand.

Chemistry Nobel for French-Japanese duo who expanded 'mirrored' molecules study

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

French chemist Henri Kagan and Japanese chemist Kenso Soai were on Monday named the winners of the chemistry Nobel Prize for 2026 for their work showing how chemical reactions can amplify small asymmetries in molecules.

Their work centred on chiral molecules, which are molecules that can exist in two mirror-image forms, like a left and a right hand. Professor Kagan's work paved the way for scientists to tune chemical reactions to produce the desirable forms of drugs, agrochemicals, and fragrances. In 1986, Professor

Symmetric study

The duo's work is centred on molecules that can exist in two mirror-image forms, a property called chirality



■ **Henri B. Kagan**
Professor emeritus at the former Universite Paris-Sud, France



■ **Kenso Soai**
Professor emeritus at the Tokyo University of Science, Japan

■ Their study of chiral molecules expanded the understanding of why many molecules essential for life prefer just one of the two possible forms. The findings have been used to optimise chemical reactions as well

Kagan and his team made a landmark discovery involving catalysts — substances that influence reactions. They showed that a small imbalance in the 'handedness' of a catalyst could disproportionately bias the reaction's end products.

This finding was used to optimise chemical reactions.

Almost a decade on, Professor Soai and his colleagues showed that a chiral molecule could speed up the formation of other molecules with its own

handedness. His work expanded the understanding of why many molecules essential for life prefer just one of the two possible forms. The proteins in our bodies are made mostly of amino acids that have one of the two mirror-image arrangements.

The enzymes that catalyse chemical reactions in cells and the receptors that respond to chemical trigger signals are also chiral. As a result, the differently handed forms of a chiral drug can interact with these molecules to elicit varied responses, only one of which might be desirable. This was a challenge for chemists who had to manufacture the desirably handed form of a drug.

The Hindu, 8 Oct 2026, Page 1 — “Chemistry Nobel for French-Japanese duo who expanded ‘mirrored’ molecules study”

- ◆ **Kagan (1986) — the non-linear effect:** his team showed that a small imbalance in the “handedness” of a **catalyst** can **disproportionately bias** the end products of a reaction. This helped chemists tune reactions to produce the desired forms of drugs, agrochemicals and fragrances.
- ◆ **Soai (about a decade later) — asymmetric autocatalysis:** a chiral molecule can speed up the formation of more molecules of **its own handedness**, so a tiny initial excess snowballs into near-total dominance.
- ◆ **Why it matters for life:** it helps explain **homochirality** — why molecules essential for life prefer just one form. Proteins are built mostly from one mirror-image set of amino acids; enzymes and receptors are also chiral.
- ◆ **Why it matters for medicine:** the two forms of a chiral drug can interact differently with the body's chiral receptors — only one response may be desirable. Manufacturing the “right-handed” form efficiently was a central challenge these discoveries addressed.

Value Addition — Chirality Concepts for Prelims

Enantiomers have the same formula and almost identical physical properties, but rotate **plane-polarised light** in opposite directions and behave differently with other chiral molecules. A 50:50 mix is a **racemic mixture** (optically inactive).

History: Louis Pasteur discovered molecular handedness while separating tartaric acid crystals (1848); Lord Kelvin coined the word “chirality” (Greek *kheir* = hand).

Homochirality of life: proteins use almost exclusively **L-amino acids**; DNA/RNA use **D-sugars**.

The thalidomide warning (1950s–60s): one form of the drug relieved morning sickness, the other was linked to severe birth defects — the classic case for single-enantiomer drugs.

Related Nobels: 2001 — Knowles, Noyori & Sharpless (chirally catalysed reactions); 2021 — List & MacMillan (asymmetric organocatalysis). **India link:** chiral APIs are a high-value segment for India's generic-drug industry.

Prelims Pointers Laureates: **Henri B. Kagan** (France) & **Kenso Soai** (Japan) · Theme: **amplifying molecular asymmetry** · Kagan's catalyst discovery: **1986** · Soai: chiral molecule speeds formation of its **own handedness** · Applications: drugs, agrochemicals, fragrances

Syllabus Link: GS 3 — Science & Technology: developments and their applications in everyday life; achievements of scientists.



GS 3 ENVIRONMENT · SPECIES REINTRODUCTION

The Hindu · Page 12

Two Cheetahs Released into M.P.'s Third Conservation Site

Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve in Bundelkhand becomes the third cheetah habitat after Kuno and Gandhi Sagar.

WHY IN NEWS M.P. Chief Minister **Mohan Yadav** released two cheetahs — named **Vyom and Neera** — in the **Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve (VDTR), Sagar district**, expanding Project Cheetah to a third site.

PROJECT CHEETAH

BRINGING BACK SPEED. RESTORING NATURE.

India's ambitious wildlife conservation programme aimed at:

- Reintroducing cheetahs into Indian ecosystems
- Restoring ecological balance
- Establishing a viable cheetah population in the wild

ABOUT PROJECT CHEETAH

Launched in 2022, Project Cheetah is led by the Government of India under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in collaboration with the wildlife authorities of Madhya Pradesh.

KEY FEATURES

- Cheetahs reintroduced from Namibia (2022) and South Africa (2023).
- Home in India: Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh.
- Focus on habitat restoration, prey base development and community involvement.
- Long-term goal: Self-sustaining cheetah population in the wild.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Reintroduces an extinct species to India after more than 70 years.
- Strengthens biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.
- Promotes eco-tourism and supports local livelihoods.
- Demonstrates India's leadership in global wildlife conservation.

CURRENT STATUS (MAY 2024)

- Cheetahs have adapted well to their new habitat in Kuno.
- Birth of cubs in India – a landmark milestone (First litter born in March 2023).
- Continuous monitoring, veterinary care and habitat management underway.
- Ongoing efforts to expand habitat and ensure long-term viability.

WHY IT MATTERS

- Restores a critical apex predator to Indian grasslands.
- Helps maintain ecological balance and prevents overgrazing.
- Fosters coexistence between wildlife conservation and development.
- A proud step towards India's commitment to nature and sustainable future.

"A future where cheetahs run free and nature thrives."

Visual Note — Project Cheetah at a glance

KEY ANALYSIS

- ◆ **Three sites now:** Kuno National Park (Sheopur) → Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary (Mandsaur) → VDTR in the **Bundelkhand** region (Sagar).

INBRIEF



Two cheetahs released into M.P.'s third conservation site

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav released two cheetahs in the Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve in Sagar district on Wednesday, marking the expansion of the cheetah conservation project. He said it was a historic day for wildlife in Madhya Pradesh, adding that the cats have been named Vyom and Neera. After Kuno National Park in Sheopur district and Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary in Mandsaur, the tiger reserve in the Bundelkhand region will be the third cheetah habitat. He also released the Vulture Population Estimation 2026 report and the book *Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve*. PTI

The Hindu, 8 Oct 2026, Page 12 — “Two cheetahs released into M.P.'s third conservation site”

- ◆ **Why expansion matters:** a single site cannot hold a viable population; multiple sites spread risk (disease, conflict, prey shortage) and are the first step toward a **metapopulation** connected by dispersal corridors.
- ◆ **Concerns that persist:** mortality of translocated adults and cubs (heat, infections under radio-collars, conflict), limited prey base, cheetahs straying into villages, and the long-term question of whether fenced/managed sites can support a free-ranging population.
- ◆ **Also released:** the **Vulture Population Estimation 2026** report and the book *Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve*.
- ◆ **Ecological rationale:** cheetahs are a flagship for neglected **grassland and open-forest ecosystems**; restoring them is meant to restore these habitats, their prey and their ecological services.

Value Addition — Project Cheetah & VDTR

Project Cheetah: launched **17 September 2022**; implemented by **NTCA** with the M.P. Forest Department and the Wildlife Institute of India. 8 cheetahs from **Namibia** (2022) and 12 from **South Africa** (Feb 2023) were brought to Kuno — the world's first intercontinental large-carnivore translocation.

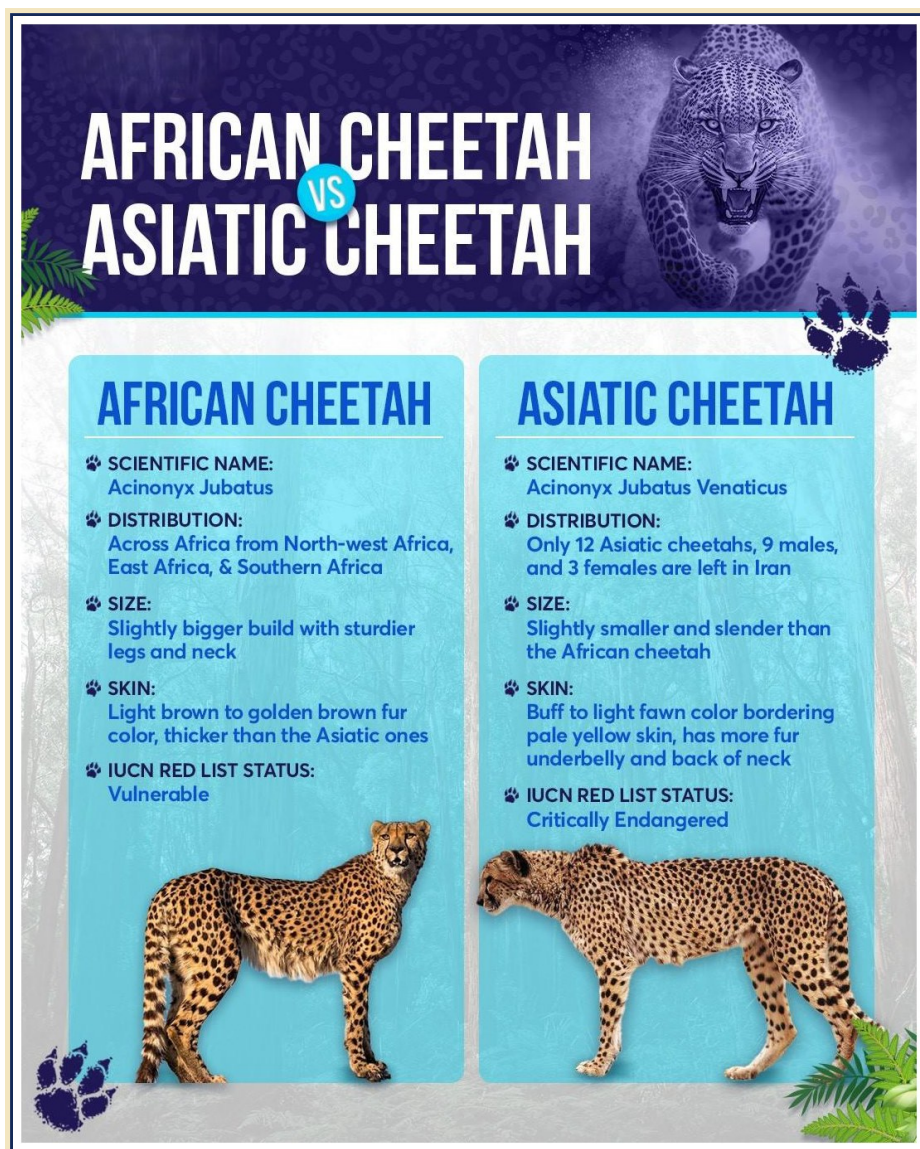
History: the cheetah was declared **extinct in India in 1952** — the only large mammal to go extinct in

independent India.

VDTR: notified in **2023** as M.P.'s 7th tiger reserve by merging the **Nauradehi** and **Rani Durgavati** wildlife sanctuaries; spans Sagar, Damoh and Narsinghpur districts. Nauradehi had long been short-listed as a cheetah site.

Gandhi Sagar WLS: lies along the **Chambal** in Mandsaur–Neemuch; received cheetahs in 2025. **Kuno NP** is named after the Kuno river, a tributary of the Chambal.

IUCN: African cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) — **Vulnerable**; Asiatic cheetah (*A. j. venaticus*, now only in Iran) — **Critically Endangered**.



Visual Note — African vs Asiatic Cheetah

Prelims Pointers Cheetahs released: **Vyom & Neera** · Site: **VDTR, Sagar** (Bundelkhand) · Earlier sites: **Kuno** (Sheopur), **Gandhi Sagar** (Mandsaur) · Report released: **Vulture Population Estimation 2026**

Syllabus Link: GS 3 — Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation; biodiversity. Prelims — protected areas, species in news.



SC Flags Accessibility Gaps in Aviation Infrastructure

Notice to MoCA, DGCA, AAI, CISF and Digi Yatra Foundation on a plea alleging “systemic failure” to make air travel accessible.

WHY IN NEWS A three-judge Bench headed by CJI Surya Kant issued notice to the **Ministry of Civil Aviation, DGCA, AAI, CISF and the Digi Yatra Foundation** on a petition by **Turab Chimthanawala**, a Mumbai-based company secretary and advocate with a benchmark disability (**Leber’s Congenital Amaurosis**).

SC flags accessibility gaps in aviation infrastructure

Court issues notice to AAI, Central Industrial Security Force, and the Digi Yatra Foundation on plea highlighting ‘systemic failure’ to implement accessibility initiatives to aid persons with disabilities

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday decided to ask the Union government why millions of passengers with disabilities continue to face humiliation, barriers, broken equipment, and digital exclusion in one of the world’s fastest-growing aviation markets.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant issued formal notice to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, the Airports Authority of India, the Central Industrial Security Force, and the Digi Yatra Foundation on a petition filed by Turab Chimthanawala, a company secretary and advocate based in Mumbai, who suffers a benchmark disability called Leber’s Congenital Amaurosis.

Advocate Ashutosh Senger, for Mr. Chimthanawala, submitted that India was at present the third largest aviation market globally, with annual passenger traffic exceeding 350



Access barrier: Silent airports fail to provide alternative modes of communication for disabled people, the plea said. SUDHAKARA JAIN

million passengers. Yet, persons with disabilities face denial of accessible aviation infrastructure and services, restricting their fundamental right to travel independently and with dignity.

“Domestic passenger traffic has consistently grown at approximately 10-12% annually over the past decade. Even based on the conservative estimate of 2.21% disability prevalence recorded in the Census of 2011, this translates to over seven million air passengers with disabilities annually... The magnitude of affected persons underscores the systemic and na-

tional scale of the accessibility failure,” Mr. Senger submitted. The petition referred to recent media reports of a wheelchair-dependent passenger who was allegedly offloaded in Delhi while connecting from a Frankfurt flight.

Systemic gaps

The plea highlighted a systemic and nationwide failure of non-implementation of accessibility initiatives across all stages of air travel. These include instances of passengers with visual disabilities routinely forced into wheelchairs or being frequently compelled to use special-

ised ambulifts even when they can safely use regular staircases. In-flight systems fail to incorporate accessibility settings, leaving visually challenged passengers unable to call cabin crew or access basic safety information on foreign scheduled air transport services.

Silent airports fail to provide accessible alternative modes of communication for persons with disabilities, including real-time audio notifications, visual alerts, or WhatsApp updates, the petition said. Besides, airline mobile applications and booking websites systematically fail to support screen readers, lack compatible payment gateways for assistive technology, and omit mandatory options to disclose disability-related assistance requirements during check-in.

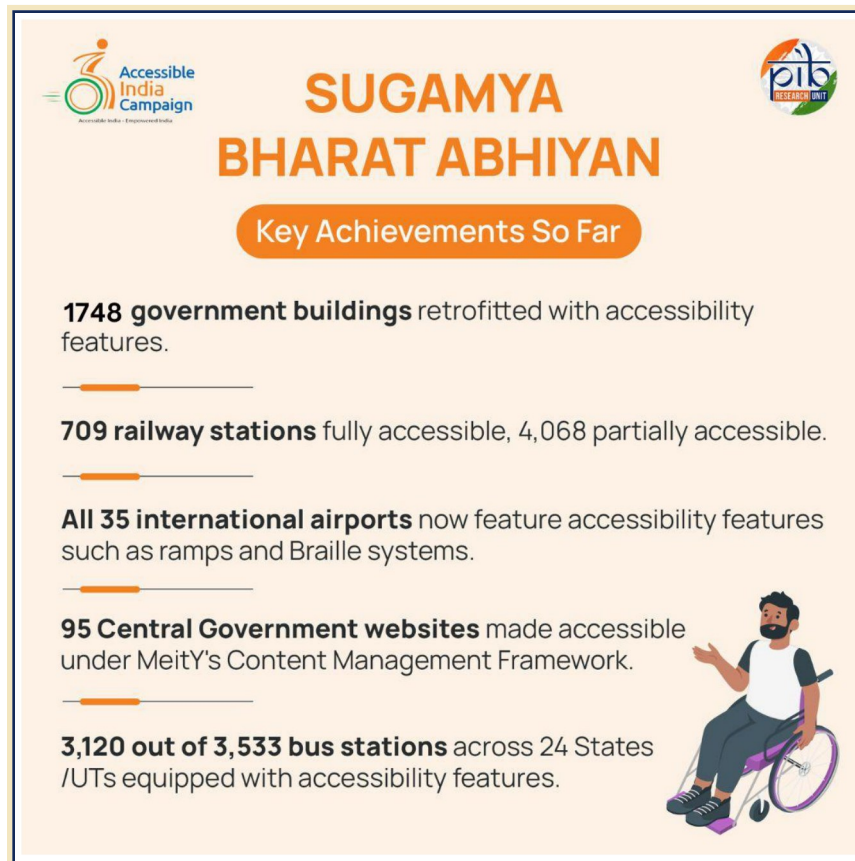
Further, airlines do not provide dedicated, clearly identifiable feedback or grievance mechanisms for reporting accessibility barriers, forcing disabled travellers into generic customer support queues, it said.

The Hindu, 8 Oct 2026, Page 12 — “SC flags accessibility gaps in aviation infrastructure”

KEY ANALYSIS

- ◆ **Scale of the issue:** India is the **third-largest aviation market** with over **350 million** annual passengers; domestic traffic has grown ~10-12% a year. At the Census 2011 disability prevalence of **2.21%**, over **seven million** air passengers with disabilities travel every year.
- ◆ **Physical barriers:** visually impaired passengers routinely forced into wheelchairs or ambulifts even when they can use regular staircases; broken equipment; reports of a wheelchair-dependent passenger being offloaded in Delhi.
- ◆ **Information barriers:** “silent airports” lack accessible alternatives — real-time audio notifications,

visual alerts, WhatsApp updates; in-flight systems lack accessibility settings, leaving blind passengers unable to call crew or access safety information.



Visual Note — Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan: key achievements

- ◆ **Digital exclusion:** airline apps and websites fail screen readers, lack compatible payment gateways for assistive technology, and omit mandatory options to declare assistance needs at check-in.
- ◆ **No grievance channel:** no dedicated, identifiable mechanism to report accessibility barriers — disabled travellers are pushed into generic customer-care queues.
- ◆ **Rights framing:** the plea frames this as denial of the **fundamental right to travel independently and with dignity** — linking Articles 14, 19(1)(d) and 21 with the RPwD Act, 2016.
- ◆ **Policy backdrop:** the **Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan** (Accessible India Campaign), launched on **3 December 2015**, gave accessibility a structured, time-bound approach across buildings, transport and ICT after the welfare-oriented PwD Act, 1995 failed to make it enforceable.

Value Addition — The Accessibility Framework

Constitution: Art. 14 (equality), 19(1)(d) (free movement), 21 (life with dignity), Art. 41 (DPSP — public assistance in case of disablement); “Relief of the disabled and unemployable” is **Entry 9, State List**.

RPwD Act, 2016: replaced the PwD Act, 1995; recognises **21 disabilities**; **benchmark disability = at least 40%**; **Sections 40–46** mandate accessibility — s.41 transport, s.42 ICT and media, s.45 time-limit for retrofitting existing buildings.

International: India ratified the **UNCPRD** in 2007; Article 9 obliges States to ensure accessibility of transport, information and communications.

Landmark cases: *Jeeja Ghosh v. Union of India* (2016) — SC awarded compensation to a passenger with cerebral palsy deplaned by an airline, holding dignity central to Article 21; *Rajive Raturi v. Union of India* (2024) — accessibility norms must be **mandatory**, not mere guidelines.

Aviation rules: DGCA's CAR Section 3, Series M, Part I governs carriage of persons with disability/reduced mobility. **Digi Yatra** — facial-recognition-based paperless boarding run by a not-for-profit foundation of AAI and airport operators.

Leber's Congenital Amaurosis: an inherited retinal disorder causing severe vision loss from infancy.

Prelims Pointers Bench headed by **CJI Surya Kant** · Notice to **MoCA, DGCA, AAI, CISF, Digi Yatra Foundation** · Disability prevalence (Census 2011): **2.21%** · Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan: **3 Dec 2015** (International Day of PwDs) under DEPwD · India: **3rd-largest** aviation market

Syllabus Link: GS 2 — Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; mechanisms, laws and institutions for their protection; role of the judiciary.



GS 3 ENVIRONMENT · SPECIES RECOVERY (EDITORIAL)

The Hindu · Page 6

From the Brink to a Comeback: Hope for India's Wildlife

Wildlife Week (October 2–8) is a moment to celebrate recovery stories — and ask what sustains them: science, money and communities.

WHY IN NEWS A **Great Indian Bustard chick** has hatched in **Kutch, Gujarat**, after a decade. Writing during Wildlife Week, Supriya Sahu and Yash Veer Bhatnagar (IUCN India) review India's species-recovery record and what it needs next.

KEY ANALYSIS

- ◆ **Global proof that recovery works:** the **Iberian lynx** grew from 62 mature individuals (2001) to **648** (2022) through habitat and prey restoration plus breeding; the **scimitar-horned oryx** returned to the wild in Chad; the **saiga** recovered in Kazakhstan.
- ◆ **National framework:** the **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH)** scheme supports recovery of **24 identified species** — e.g., great Indian bustard (Rajasthan grasslands), Sangai (Manipur wetlands), dugong (seagrass meadows), hangul (Kashmir forests).
- ◆ **Knowledge gap:** of **7,516** Indian animal species assessed for the IUCN Red List, **1,012** are threatened — but this covers only **7.2%** of documented species. India's **National Red List Roadmap** (launched at the IUCN World Conservation Congress, Abu Dhabi, 2025) targets National Red Data Books for plants and animals by **2030**.
- ◆ **India's biodiversity weight:** 2.4% of world land area, ~8% of flora and 7.5% of fauna; one of **17 megadiverse countries**; parts of **4 of 36 global hotspots**; ~28% plants and 30%+ animals endemic.
- ◆ **Success stories:** **Nilgiri tahr** (Project Nilgiri Tahr: 1,303 in 2025 → 1,364 in 2026); **vultures** (diclofenac ban; M.P. count 8,397 in 2019 → 12,981 in 2025; Jatayu Centre, Pinjore); **Asiatic lion** (674 in 2020 → 891 in 2025); **one-horned rhino** (Pobitora WLS, Assam); **clouded leopard** (Meghalaya plan, 14 priority landscapes); **dugong** (India's first Dugong Conservation Reserve, 448.34 sq km in Palk Bay; WII 2026 estimate 270 — 158 Palk Bay, 112 Gulf of Mannar); **snow leopard** (718 in 2024; women of **Kibber**, H.P., run camera traps).
- ◆ **What sustains recovery:** political commitment across successive budgets; State-level funds (e.g., Tamil Nadu's Endangered Species Conservation Fund for the mahseer, striped hyena, Madras hedgehog, lion-tailed macaque, hornbill); trained field staff; and communities as genuine partners.

Globally, the **Phoenix Species Project** (Re:wild & Bezos Earth Fund, 2026) has committed **\$200 million** for 100 of the most threatened species.

From the brink to a comeback, hope for India's wildlife

Across the world, scientists, governments and communities are bringing plants and animals back from the brink of extinction. In India, a Great Indian Bustard chick has hatched in Kutch, Gujarat, after a decade, bringing fresh hope for this critically endangered bird. In Spain and Portugal, restoring habitat and prey, breeding lynx and returning them to the wild helped the Iberian lynx grow from 62 mature individuals in 2001 to 648 in 2022. The return of the scimitar-horned oryx to the wild in Chad, Africa, and the saiga antelope's recovery in Kazakhstan offer further proof of what determined action can achieve. During Wildlife Week (October 2-8), we can celebrate these gains while asking what it will take to sustain them.

The Government of India's Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats scheme supports recovery action for 24 identified species and their habitats. States are mandated to undertake research, habitat improvement, protection and community participation. The species span India's landscapes: the great Indian bustard in Rajasthan's grasslands, the Sangai in Manipur's wetlands, the dugong in coastal seagrass meadows and the hangul in Kashmir's forests. The list is a starting point; India's National Red List Assessment can show where focused efforts are needed next.

India launched its National Red List Roadmap at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi in 2025; the aim was to produce National Red Data Books for plants and animals by 2030. India occupies just 2.4% of the world's land area, yet supports nearly 8% of its flora and 7.5% of its fauna. It is one of 17 megadiverse countries and contains parts of four of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots. Around 28% of its plants and more than 30% of its animals are found nowhere else. Of the 7,516 Indian animal species assessed for the IUCN Red List, 1,012 are threatened, which includes Vulnerable, Endangered and Critically Endangered species.

These assessments cover only 7.2% of India's documented animal species. The figure of 1,012 tells us what is known so far, not the full extent of the threat. The National Red List Assessment can help close that gap and direct recovery efforts where they are needed most.

The projects in States

In Tamil Nadu, Project Nilgiri Tahr combines population surveys, radio-collaring, habitat assessment and mapping across Tamil Nadu and Keralam to conserve the tahr, which is the State animal of Tamil Nadu. Working with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), the Advanced Institute for Wildlife Conservation, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University



Supriya Sahu

A senior administrator in the Government of Tamil Nadu, who has worked extensively on environmental policy, ecosystem restoration, wildlife and biodiversity conservation and climate action. She is a recipient of the UNEP Champions of the Earth award 2025



Yash Veer Bhatnagar

The Country Representative for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in India, and a scientist with over three decades of experience in conservation science and practice. He received the SANCTUARY Asia Wildlife Service Award in 2015

The current state of some of India's endangered species is encouraging, but sustained conservation, science and local action remain essential

(TANUVAS) and other partners, the project is strengthening the scientific understanding needed to secure the tahr's future. Surveys recorded 1,303 tahrs in 2025 and 1,364 in 2026.

Vulture conservation is an example of how sustained action through conservation breeding, safer habitats, monitoring and public awareness can help reverse a devastating decline. India's ban on the veterinary use of diclofenac, which had caused catastrophic losses in vulture populations, was a crucial step in this effort. At Pinjore, the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre, run by the Haryana Forest Department and the Bombay Natural History Society, works with white-rumped, long-billed and slender-billed vultures. Madhya Pradesh's 2025 census recorded 12,981 vultures, up from 8,397 in 2019. Tamil Nadu's Segur Plateau remains an important habitat. Tamil Nadu's raptor conservation work and synchronised surveys across Tamil Nadu, Keralam and Karnataka track these birds, which include breeding populations in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.

Long-term protection including habitat management, scientific monitoring and the help of local communities has helped the Asiatic lion in Gujarat – the population rose from 674 in 2020 to 891 in 2025, with lions occupying a wider part of Saurashtra.

Monitoring, grassland management, invasive plant control, research and translocation have helped secure and expand greater one-horned rhinoceros populations against poaching. In Assam's Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, which has an exceptionally high rhino density, working with communities on awareness, monitoring, livelihoods and conflict reduction has made rhino protection an enduring part of the landscape.

In Meghalaya, the action plan for the clouded leopard, the elusive State animal, combines habitat protection and restoration, scientific monitoring, frontline training and community participation. As the animal is dispersed across the northeast, 14 priority landscapes have been identified as understanding population connections and keeping them intact are central to its future.

Dugong conservation calls for a different approach. Tamil Nadu established India's first dugong conservation reserve across 448.34 square kilometres of the Palk Bay and its seagrass habitat. A 2026 Wildlife Institute of India assessment estimated a total of 270 dugongs, including 158 dugongs in the Palk Bay and 112 in the Gulf of Mannar, providing a baseline for measuring change. Fishermen who release dugongs caught in nets may lose valuable gear. But the government provides compensation for damaged nets and recognises their efforts.

High up in the Himalayas, science and local stewardship have helped the snow leopard. In

2024, India's first scientific population assessment estimated 718 snow leopards. In Himachal Pradesh, women from Kibber have worked with Forest Department field teams, the Snow Leopard Trust and the Nature Conservation Foundation to set camera traps, monitor population and participate in protection activities.

Political support is essential

Much depends on the commitment of State governments. Political leadership is crucial in prioritising the recovery of species, bringing government departments together and, most importantly sustaining action through successive budgets. Transferring that commitment into land use, infrastructure and livelihood decisions are what will help recovery plans being implemented. State forest teams have to turn plans into work on the ground. Recovery requires lasting cooperation with communities, scientists and national agencies. Results may take years, and setbacks require programmes to adapt. This would require clear goals, steady investment and careful monitoring.

Species that receive little public attention can struggle to attract funding. State-level funds can bring government, industry, philanthropy and scientific institutions together around local priorities. Tamil Nadu's recently established Endangered Species Conservation Fund reflects this approach, with its focus on the mahseer, striped hyena, Madras hedgehog, lion-tailed macaque and the hornbill.

There is similar commitment internationally. Launched in 2026 by Re:wild and the Bezos Earth Fund, the Phoenix Species Project has committed \$200 million to recovering 100 of the world's most threatened species, by supporting conservationists, indigenous peoples and local communities over several years. This is a lesson for India: recovery needs dependable resources for habitats, monitoring and the people doing the work.

Forest departments need scientific support close to the field and staff need to be trained in surveys, habitat assessment, conservation breeding and genetic analysis. Communities must be involved meaningfully in surveys, habitat work and ground decisions. Their knowledge can sharpen plans and their true participation can sustain them.

For India, a national picture of risk can guide priorities; States, scientists and communities can translate them into plans with mapped habitats, clear timelines and measurable outcomes. The bustard, vulture, tahr and dugong show that species recover in different ways. But their survival depends on sustained effort – to learn, to act and to stay with a species long enough for its future to change.

The Hindu, 8 Oct 2026, Page 6 (Editorial) – “From the brink to a comeback, hope for India's wildlife”

Value Addition — Species in News: Quick Table

Species	Where	IUCN	Hook
Great Indian Bustard	Rajasthan, Kutch (Gujarat)	CR	State bird of Rajasthan; power-line collisions
Nilgiri tahr	Tamil Nadu, Keralam	EN	State animal of T.N.; Eravikulam NP
Gyps vultures	Pan-India	CR	Diclofenac ban (2006); Pinjore centre
Asiatic lion	Gir, Saurashtra	EN	Single-landscape population

Greater one-horned rhino	Assam (Pobitora, Kaziranga)	VU	Pobitora: highest rhino density
Clouded leopard	North-east	VU	State animal of Meghalaya
Dugong	Palk Bay, Gulf of Mannar, A&N	VU	Only herbivorous marine mammal; seagrass grazer
Snow leopard	Himalaya (Spiti, Ladakh)	VU	SPAI 2024: 718

Wildlife Week (2–8 October) has been observed since 1952. **India's four hotspots:** Himalaya, Indo-Burma, Western Ghats–Sri Lanka, Sundaland (Nicobar Islands).

Prelims Pointers GIB chick hatched in **Kutch** after a decade · IDWH: **24** recovery species · Iberian lynx: **62 → 648** · Lions: **674 → 891** · Nilgiri tahr: **1,364** (2026) · Dugongs: **270** · Snow leopards: **718** · Dugong reserve: **448.34 sq km**, Palk Bay

Syllabus Link: GS 3 — Conservation; biodiversity; role of communities; GS 2 — government schemes. Prelims — species, protected areas, IUCN status.



GS 2 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS · GLOBAL HEALTH GOVERNANCE (EDITORIAL)

The Hindu · Page 6

India's Stakes in the Global Pandemic Agreement

At the UN High-Level Meeting on pandemics, India backed equitable access while insisting on national sovereignty — a bridge between North and South.

WHY IN NEWS At the **UN High-Level Meeting (New York, September 2026)**, India made official remarks on the **Political Declaration on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPPR)**, part of the emerging global regime built around the **WHO Pandemic Agreement (PA)**.

KEY ANALYSIS

- ◆ **The PA:** adopted by **124 member-states in 2025**, including India — **none voted against, 11 abstained**. It is a first-of-its-kind global legal regime for pandemics.
- ◆ **North-South fault lines:** can a treaty set binding targets (e.g., **One Health**) without funding for fragile health systems? Can national rules be harmonised globally? Can private manufacturers be made to share vaccines in real time at affordable prices?
- ◆ **Not yet open for ratification:** negotiations on the **Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS)** annex continue. Under PABS, manufacturers get pathogen samples and data in return for giving WHO **10%** of pandemic-related products as donation and another **10%** at affordable prices.
- ◆ **India's two-track line:** (i) **equitable access** to drugs, vaccines, therapeutics and digital public goods; (ii) **respect for national sovereignty** and the primacy of member-states. By contrast, the **U.S. rejected the Declaration**, calling PABS and WHO's role in declaring pandemics a challenge to its interests.
- ◆ **Three options for India:** partnerships on technical areas (One Health, surveillance, health workforce) and a "store" of operational solutions to sovereignty problems; leveraging groupings — the **H20 summit** under the U.K.'s G-20 leadership (end-2027), the **Global Initiative on Digital Health** launched during India's 2023 G-20 presidency, and the EU-led **Partners for Multilateralism**

(2026; co-sponsored by India); and aligning domestic PPPR regulation (access to biological material, benefit-sharing) with the equity it demands abroad.

India's stakes in the Global Pandemic Agreement

At the United Nations High Level Meeting (UN HLM), in New York in September 2026, India made official remarks on the Political Declaration on Pandemic Prevention Preparedness and Response (PPPR). The Declaration is part of the emerging global legal regime on pandemics led by the WHO-Pandemic agreement (PA).

Shaping the framework

The PA was adopted by 124 member-states in 2025, including India. No country voted against it, while 11 abstained, reflecting alignment across high-, middle- and low-income countries (HICs/LICs/LMICs). The negotiations hinged on how to balance national sovereignty with international cooperation and solidarity, exposing the fault lines between the Global North and the Global South. Key issues included whether a global treaty can set binding targets for measures such as 'One Health' without securing funding for countries with fragile health systems. Or whether national pandemic regulations can be harmonised through global frameworks. And whether private manufacturers can be required to share vaccines in real time at affordable prices.

The PA is not yet open for ratification because negotiations are still ongoing for an annex concerning the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system. PABS could help ensure that, during a pandemic, LICs and LMICs receive a fair share of vaccines, medicines and other therapeutics.

Even without ratification, the PA has created a first-of-its-kind global legal regime for the PPPR. Operationalisation requires countries such as India to balance interests of the HICs, LICs and LMICs. This will determine whether the PA will further entrench the inequities of the COVID-19 pandemic or make global health governance truly inclusive.

At the UN HLM, India succeeded in enshrining the multilateral components of the PA within the principle of national sovereignty. India reiterated its commitment to strengthen global pandemic preparedness but stressed that effective



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pandemic management requires that international coordination is demonstrated. The first is equitable access to drugs, vaccines and therapeutics and the creation of global public goods, such as digital infrastructure (which admittedly align with its own national priorities).

The second is a respect for national sovereignty and the primacy of member-states in shaping global policy interventions according to national circumstance. As a contrast, the United States rejected the Declaration, calling the PABS and WHO's role in declaring pandemics as a challenge to its national interests.

India's line

In its remarks, India has acknowledged the concerns of the Global North and the South. Both sides have upheld national sovereignty as paramount on several provisions. The African countries did not give consent to commitments to monitor the human-animal-environment interface, a key source of pandemic outbreaks, without significant funding, which was not guaranteed by the Global North. Similarly, countries in the Global North did not want binding targets with regards to technology transfer (and other similar provisions).

But as India said at the UN HLM, 'Global Solidarity must be demonstrated through action'; India must be an active player in the finalisation of the global PPPR regime. India is already actively engaged in the PABS negotiations and must lead the Global South in the post PABS context. India can consider three options. First, developing partnerships on technical areas of the PA (One Health, surveillance, health workforce strengthening) to build trust with other countries in the Global South, and a 'store' of operational solutions to tricky national sovereignty problems.

Second, leveraging its leadership role within existing global political groupings. For example, the H20 summit (a health and development G-7 and G-20 partnership) will take place under the United Kingdom's G-20 leadership at the end of 2027; pandemic preparedness is one of the core health agendas. During India's G-20 presidency in

2023, India launched the Global Initiative for Digital Health and holds considerable influence within the platform's health initiatives. Another is 'Partners for Multilateralism', which was launched in 2026 by the European Union (co-sponsors are Australia, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, India and Kenya).

Third, strengthening and aligning domestic policy and regulatory architecture around its own priorities for the PA. Global leadership always rests on domestic strengths. India must ensure that its national policies on PPPR such as regulation of access to biological material and distribution of the benefits uphold the highest standards of equity which India can then demand at the global level.

A South-South health role

An equitable global regime on PPPR is in India's interests as much as a responsibility towards the Global South. India is the pharmacy of the world, manufacturing one of the largest shares of vaccines in the world in terms of volume. Yet, it needs an equitable global vaccine distribution regime. The patents for the vaccines that India manufactures are held by global pharmaceuticals. India is also import-dependent for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs).

India needs access to the latest technology from the Global North to strengthen the manufacturing of high-grade personal protective equipment and medical devices. At the same time, India needs to lead South-South Cooperation and share its technological strength with other countries in the Global South.

India's health system has a continental scale, and as India's Health Secretary stated at the UN HLM, its interventions in digital health infrastructure, laboratories networks and One Health are valuable as global public goods. An effective PA needs an engaged India, and a strong PA will strengthen India's own pandemic management.

This article is based on a forthcoming CSEP working paper on the Pandemic Agreement

India's leadership can help bridge the divides in global pandemic governance

The Hindu, 8 Oct 2026, Page 6 (Editorial) — "India's stakes in the Global Pandemic Agreement"

- ◆ **A South-South role:** India is the "pharmacy of the world" and a major vaccine producer by volume, yet the patents for many vaccines it makes are held abroad and it depends on imports for **APIs**. It needs technology transfer from the North while sharing its own strengths with the Global South.

Value Addition — Global Pandemic Architecture

WHO Pandemic Agreement: adopted at the **78th World Health Assembly** (Geneva, May 2025) under Article 19 of the WHO Constitution. Opens for signature only after the PABS annex is adopted; enters into force after **60 ratifications**.

International Health Regulations (2005): amended in 2024 to add a new "**pandemic emergency**" alert tier above a PHEIC — the PA and IHR are complementary instruments.

One Health: an integrated approach recognising that human, animal and environmental health are interlinked — most emerging infections are zoonotic.

India's track record: Vaccine Maitri (2021); the India-South Africa TRIPS waiver proposal at the WTO (2020); CoWIN offered as a digital public good; Global Initiative on Digital Health (G-20, 2023).

Equity lesson of COVID-19: high-income countries secured early vaccine supplies while COVAX deliveries to low-income countries lagged — the core grievance PABS seeks to fix.

Prelims Pointers PA adopted: **2025**, 124 for, **0 against**, 11 abstentions · Pending: **PABS annex** · PABS share: **10% donated + 10% affordable** · UN HLM on PPPR: **Sept 2026**, New York · H20 summit: U.K. G-20, end-2027 · GIDH: India's G-20, **2023**

Syllabus Link: GS 2 — Important international institutions, agencies and fora; India and global groupings; issues relating to health.



GS 3 SCIENCE & TECH · CYBER SAFETY & CHILD RIGHTS (EDITORIAL)

The Hindu · Page 7

AI Companions and Child Safety: India's Regulatory Blind Spot

As chatbots become children's confidants, India's laws still focus on conventional cybercrime — not psychological harm from AI.

WHY IN NEWS California enacted **Senate Bill 1119 ("Adam's Law")** on 10 September 2026, mandating safeguards for AI companion chatbots. The author (IIM Rohtak) argues it should be a regulatory wake-up call for India.

KEY ANALYSIS

- ◆ **The shift:** children in distress increasingly turn to **AI chatbots** instead of parents, friends or counsellors — the apps are always available, appear empathetic and are endlessly responsive.
- ◆ **The trigger case:** a 2025 wrongful-death lawsuit in the U.S. alleges that a chatbot engaged with a 16-year-old in harmful conversations over months before his death. The litigation is ongoing, but it has ignited debate on platforms' duty of care towards children.
- ◆ **What Adam's Law requires:** crisis-detection protocols, parental controls, notifications when children disable safety settings, and **independent safety audits**.
- ◆ **India's gap:** the **IT Act, 2000**, the **DPDP Act, 2023** and **POCSO, 2012** address data, physical safety and sexual offences — but none governs the **psychological risks** of AI companions: emotional dependence, manipulation and harmful advice.
- ◆ **Why it is hard to police:** AI-related harm is insidious — it builds through thousands of innocuous-seeming exchanges shaped by product design and algorithms. Existing cybercrime investigation tools are not built to examine algorithmic behaviour or treat chat logs as evidence.
- ◆ **Constitutional anchor:** **Article 21** (life and personal liberty) and **Article 39(f)** (children to develop in conditions of freedom and dignity) must now extend to the digital space.
- ◆ **Calibrated regulation:** over-restriction could stifle innovation and burden start-ups. Suggested reforms — age-appropriate safeguards, crisis-response mechanisms, independent safety assessments and parental oversight — while respecting children's privacy and evolving autonomy. The aim is not to copy U.S. law but to build a framework suited to India's institutions.

Value Addition — Laws, Global Models & Way Forward

DPDP Act, 2023 (Section 9): a "child" is anyone below 18; **verifiable parental consent** is needed to process a child's data; tracking, behavioural monitoring and targeted advertising directed at children

are barred.

IT Act, 2000 & IT Rules, 2021: intermediary due diligence and grievance redress; safe harbour under s.79 depends on compliance. **POCSO, 2012:** covers sexual offences against children, including online.

Global models: EU AI Act — prohibits AI that exploits vulnerabilities linked to age; U.K. Online Safety Act, 2023 — duty of care for children; Australia — minimum age of 16 for social media accounts (from Dec 2025); UN CRC General Comment No. 25 (2021) — children's rights apply in the digital environment.

Way forward for India: safety-by-design and age assurance; mandatory crisis escalation to helplines such as **Tele-MANAS (14416)**; independent audits of companion apps; digital-literacy in schools; a child-safety officer and clear grievance timelines for platforms.

AI companions and child safety

Traditionally, a child in distress has usually turned to a parent, friend or a counsellor. However, in today's world, that confidant is increasingly becoming an AI chatbot. Such AI companions are quietly finding a place in children's emotional lives because, unlike parents and friends, these apps are available at all times of the day, appear empathetic, and are endlessly responsive. But who assumes responsibility when that relationship turns harmful? As AI becomes an emotional confidant for children, India's regulatory framework must confront the growing risks of AI companionship.

In April 2025 in the U.S., 16-year-old Adam Raine died by suicide. His family alleged that ChatGPT had engaged in conversations about suicide with Mr. Raine for months and had even helped him draft a farewell note; they subsequently filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against OpenAI, the parent company of ChatGPT. While the litigation remains ongoing, the case has ignited a debate about the responsibilities of technology companies towards vulnerable children.

On September 10, 2026, California enacted the Senate Bill 1119, known as 'Adam's Law'. It introduces safeguards for AI companion chatbots, including crisis-detection protocols, parental controls, notifications when children disable safety settings, and independent safety audits. The legislation is a clear signal that technological innovation cannot be at the expense of child safety.

For India, this should serve as a regulatory wake-up call. Its digital



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landscape is witnessing an unprecedented expansion of young users who are interacting with AI-powered applications. Yet the nation's digital laws remain largely targeted towards conventional forms of cybercrime. While the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, address important dimensions of digital safety, none establishes a comprehensive framework governing the psychological risks of AI companions. A chatbot's prolonged interactions with a child may raise serious concerns about emotional dependence, psychological manipulation, and exposure to harmful advice.

Unlike conventional cybercrime, AI-related psychological harm can be insidious and difficult to detect. Its effects may emerge through thousands of seemingly innocuous exchanges, shaped by product design and algorithmic responses. India's existing laws are not equipped to investigate this emerging category of harm.

The challenge, therefore, extends beyond the government; it also concerns the accountability of platforms whose products are becoming deeply embedded in children's emotional world.

Child safety is paramount

Article 21 guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, while Article 39(f) directs the state to ensure that children are given opportunities to develop in conditions of freedom and dignity. These constitutional principles acquire renewed

significance in the age of AI. Protecting children must now encompass their interactions in the digital space, not only with respect to their personal data and physical safety, but also from the risks arising from engagement with AI chatbots.

However, regulation must be calibrated. An excessively restrictive approach could stifle innovation, burden emerging enterprises, and impede the development of genuine AI progress. The objective should not be to hinder technological progress but to ensure that it takes accountability in stride. Age-appropriate safeguards, crisis-response mechanisms, independent safety assessments, and effective parental oversight are some of the reforms that can be considered. Such measures must also respect children's privacy and evolving autonomy.

California's legislative response offers India an opportunity to examine its own regulatory priorities. The objective need not be to replicate the U.S. legislation, but to develop a framework suited to India's institutional capacities and digital realities. Policymakers must also consider whether existing cybercrime investigation mechanisms are equipped to examine algorithmic behaviour, use chatbot interactions as evidence, and establish accountability whenever prolonged digital engagement result in harm.

The central question is not whether children will interact with AI; they already do. It is whether the institutions entrusted with their protection can keep pace with technologies that are transforming children's lives and childhood itself.

A chatbot's prolonged interactions with a child may raise serious concerns about emotional dependence, psychological manipulation, and exposure to harmful advice

The Hindu, 8 Oct 2026, Page 7 (Editorial) — "AI companions and child safety"

Prelims Pointers California **SB 1119** — "**Adam's Law**" (10 Sept 2026) · Safeguards: crisis detection, parental controls, alerts, independent audits · Indian laws cited: **IT Act 2000, DPDP Act**

2023, POCSO 2012 · Constitution: Art. 21, Art. 39(f)

Syllabus Link: GS 3 — Awareness in IT and computers; challenges to internal security through communication networks; GS 2 — vulnerable sections (children); GS 4 — ethics of technology.



PRACTICE ZONE

Test Yourself — 08 October 2026

MAINS ANSWER WRITING

Q1 · GS 3

15 Marks · 250 Words

The RBI's shift to a "calibrated tightening" stance in the wake of an external oil-price shock reopens the debate on whether monetary policy can effectively tame supply-side inflation. Critically examine in the context of India's Flexible Inflation Targeting framework.

बाह्य तेल-मूल्य आघात के बीच भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक द्वारा "संतुलित सख्ती" (कैलिब्रेटेड टाइटनिंग) का रुख अपनाना इस बहस को पुनः जीवित करता है कि क्या मौद्रिक नीति आपूर्ति-पक्षीय मुद्रास्फीति को प्रभावी ढंग से नियंत्रित कर सकती है। भारत के लचीले मुद्रास्फीति लक्ष्यीकरण ढाँचे के संदर्भ में आलोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए। (15 अंक, 250 शब्द)

Approach Skeleton

Introduction: Repo raised 25 bps to 5.5% after a 125-bps easing cycle; stance moved from neutral to calibrated tightening; FIT mandate of $4\% \pm 2\%$ under Section 45ZA of the RBI Act.

Case for the hike: Prevent second-round effects of costlier crude on transport, food and wages; anchor inflation expectations and protect FIT credibility; support the rupee against capital outflows as global conditions tighten; pre-empt imported inflation given 85%+ crude import dependence.

Limits of monetary policy: Rates cannot raise oil supply; transmission lags (MCLR, deposits); growth sacrifice when private capex is fragile; headline vs core divergence; risk of over-tightening if the shock fades.

Way forward: "Look through" first-round effects but act on spill-overs; data-dependent guidance; fiscal coordination (fuel tax rationalisation); supply-side buffers — strategic petroleum reserves, import diversification, energy transition.

Conclusion: FIT is flexible by design: a calibrated, communicated response protects price stability without abandoning growth — but durable resilience to oil shocks must come from energy and fiscal policy, not rates alone.

Q2 · GS 2

15 Marks · 250 Words

Despite a robust legal framework, persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in accessing air travel in India. Discuss the constitutional and statutory obligations of the State in this regard and suggest measures to make accessibility enforceable.

एक सुदृढ़ विधिक ढाँचे के बावजूद, भारत में दिव्यांगजनों को हवाई यात्रा में अब भी अनेक बाधाओं का सामना करना पड़ता है। इस संबंध में राज्य के संवैधानिक एवं वैधानिक दायित्वों की चर्चा कीजिए तथा सुगम्यता को प्रवर्तनीय बनाने हेतु उपाय सुझाइए। (15 अंक, 250 शब्द)

Approach Skeleton

Introduction: Supreme Court notice to MoCA, DGCA, AAI, CISF and Digi Yatra Foundation; India is the 3rd-largest aviation market with 350 million+ passengers, of whom an estimated 7 million+ have disabilities.

Obligations: Articles 14, 19(1)(d), 21 (dignity — Jeeja Ghosh, 2016) and 41; RPwD Act, 2016, Sections 40–46 (transport, ICT); UNCRPD Article 9; Rajive Raturi (2024) — accessibility must be mandatory; DGCA CAR on carriage of PwDs; Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan.

Gaps: Forced wheelchairs and ambulefts; “silent airports”; inaccessible in-flight systems; apps and websites failing screen readers and payment gateways; no dedicated grievance channel; weak monitoring and penalties.

Measures: Binding, audited accessibility standards with penalties; WCAG-compliant airline apps and Digi Yatra by design; accessibility officers at every airport; staff sensitisation; real-time audio-visual alerts; a single accessibility grievance portal with timelines; involve DPOs — “Nothing about us without us”.

Conclusion: Accessibility is a precondition for equal citizenship, not charity; converting guidelines into enforceable rights will make India’s aviation growth truly inclusive.

PRELIMS MCQS

Q1. With reference to the RBI’s liquidity corridor after the October 2026 policy, consider the following statements:

1. The Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate is the floor of the corridor and is placed 25 bps below the repo rate.
2. The Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate are placed 25 bps above the repo rate.
3. Banks must pledge government securities as collateral to park funds under the SDF.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):

1. It is a statutory body constituted under the RBI Act, 1934, as amended in 2016.
2. In case of a tie, the RBI Governor has a second or casting vote.
3. Members appointed by the Central Government are eligible for re-appointment for one more term.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q3. Under India’s Flexible Inflation Targeting framework, the RBI is deemed to have failed to meet the inflation target when:

- (a) CPI inflation exceeds 6% in any single month
- (b) average CPI inflation is above 6% or below 2% for any three consecutive quarters
- (c) WPI inflation exceeds 4% for two consecutive quarters
- (d) core inflation stays above 4% for a full financial year

Q4. The 2026 Nobel Prize in Chemistry concerned chiral molecules. Consider the following statements:

1. The two enantiomers of a chiral molecule are non-superimposable mirror images of each other.
2. Proteins in the human body are built predominantly from L-amino acids.
3. The two enantiomers of a chiral drug always produce identical biological effects as their chemical formula is the same.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q5. Consider the following pairs (cheetah site – location):

1. Kuno National Park – Sheopur district
2. Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary – Mandsaur district
3. Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve – Malwa region

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q6. Consider the following species and their IUCN Red List status:

1. African cheetah – Vulnerable
2. Asiatic cheetah – Critically Endangered
3. Dugong – Vulnerable
4. Nilgiri tahr – Endangered

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Q7. Which one of the following is NOT a global biodiversity hotspot extending into Indian territory?

- (a) Himalaya
- (b) Indo-Burma
- (c) Sundaland
- (d) Mountains of Central Asia

Q8. With reference to vulture conservation in India, consider the following statements:

1. Veterinary use of diclofenac was banned because it causes kidney failure in vultures feeding on treated carcasses.
2. The Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre at Pinjore is run by the Haryana Forest Department with the Bombay Natural History Society.
3. White-rumped, long-billed and slender-billed vultures are all Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q9. With reference to the WHO Pandemic Agreement, consider the following statements:

1. It was adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2025 with no country voting against it.
2. It has already entered into force after ratification by the required number of countries.
3. Its Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) annex is still under negotiation.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q10. Consider the following statements:

1. The DPDP Act, 2023 requires verifiable parental consent before processing the personal data of a child below 18 years.
2. Article 39(f), which directs the State to ensure that children develop in conditions of freedom and dignity, is enforceable by courts.
3. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 replaced the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
 (b) 2 only
 (c) 1 and 2 only
 (d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER KEY & RATIONALE

Q1 (b)	SDF 5.25% (floor) and MSF/Bank Rate 5.75% (ceiling) around a 5.5% repo. Statement 3 is wrong — the SDF's defining feature is that it is collateral-free .
Q2 (a)	MPC members hold office for four years and are not eligible for re-appointment ; hence 3 is incorrect.
Q3 (b)	The failure condition is three consecutive quarters outside the 2–6% band; the RBI must then report reasons and remedial actions to the Government.
Q4 (a)	Enantiomers interact differently with chiral enzymes and receptors — the thalidomide tragedy is the classic example. So 3 is wrong.
Q5 (b)	VDTR lies in Sagar district in the Bundelkhand region, not Malwa.
Q6 (d)	All four statuses are correct; the Asiatic cheetah survives only in Iran.
Q7 (d)	India has parts of four hotspots — Himalaya, Indo-Burma, Western Ghats–Sri Lanka and Sundaland (Nicobar Islands).
Q8 (d)	All three are correct. Diclofenac residues cause visceral gout and renal failure in Gyps vultures.
Q9 (b)	The PA is not yet open for ratification — it awaits the PABS annex; entry into force needs 60 ratifications.
Q10 (a)	Article 39(f) is a Directive Principle (Part IV) — non-justiciable under Article 37. Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

QUICK REVISION RECAP

RBI: repo 5.25% → **5.5%** (+25 bps); stance neutral → **calibrated tightening**; SDF 5.25%, MSF/Bank Rate 5.75%; trigger — West Asia re-escalation and crude volatility; risks — global financial tightening, AI-stock valuations. **Nobel (Chemistry):** **Henri Kagan** (France) and **Kenso Soai** (Japan) — amplification of molecular asymmetry; Kagan's catalyst work 1986; Soai's asymmetric autocatalysis. **Cheetahs:** **Vyom and Neera** released in **VDTR, Sagar** — third site after Kuno and

Gandhi Sagar; Vulture Population Estimation 2026 released. **Aviation accessibility:** SC notice (Bench led by CJI Surya Kant) to MoCA, DGCA, AAI, CISE, Digi Yatra Foundation; petitioner has Leber's Congenital Amaurosis; 7 million+ PwD flyers a year. **Wildlife recovery:** GIB chick in Kutch; IDWH covers 24 species; 1,012 threatened of 7,516 assessed; lions 891, tahr 1,364, dugongs 270, snow leopards 718. **Pandemic Agreement:** adopted 2025 (124-0-11), PABS annex pending, U.S. rejected the Declaration; India — equity + sovereignty. **AI companions:** California's Adam's Law (SB 1119); India's IT Act, DPDP Act and POCSSO do not cover psychological harm; Art. 21 and 39(f) as anchors.

PRELIMS TRAP-SETTERS

1. SDF ≠ Reverse Repo. Since April 2022 the **SDF** (collateral-free) is the corridor floor; the fixed-rate reverse repo is no longer the floor. **2. Bank Rate = MSF rate**, not the repo rate. **3. Stance and rate are separate decisions** — in October 2018 the RBI moved to calibrated tightening *without* a hike; this time it did both. **4. VDTR is in Bundelkhand**, not Malwa; Gandhi Sagar lies on the Chambal in Mandsaur–Neemuch. **5. Chirality was coined by Lord Kelvin**, but discovered experimentally by **Pasteur** — don't swap them. **6. The Pandemic Agreement is adopted, not in force**; the IHR amendments (2024) are a separate instrument. **7. Article 39(f) is a DPSP**, not a Fundamental Right — courts use it to interpret Article 21 but cannot enforce it directly. **8. Disability prevalence 2.21%** is from Census 2011 (2.68 crore persons), not NFHS. **9. Iberian lynx** recovered in Spain and Portugal — not an Indian species; the **saiga** is Kazakhstan's.

PLACES & PERSONS IN NEWS

Places in News

Veerangana Durgavati TR	Sagar (M.P.), Bundelkhand — third cheetah site; formed 2023 from Nauradehi + Rani Durgavati WLS
Kutch	Gujarat — Great Indian Bustard chick hatched after a decade
Pinjore	Haryana — Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre for vultures
Pobitora WLS	Assam — highest density of greater one-horned rhinos
Palk Bay	Between T.N. and Sri Lanka — India's first Dugong Conservation Reserve (448.34 sq km)
Kibber	Spiti, H.P. — women-led snow leopard monitoring with camera traps
Segur Plateau	Nilgiris, T.N. — key vulture habitat near Mudumalai TR
Abu Dhabi	Venue of IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025 — National Red List Roadmap launched

Persons in News

Sanjay Malhotra	RBI Governor; chairs the MPC
Henri B. Kagan	French chemist; 2026 Chemistry Nobel — chiral catalysis (1986)
Kenso Soai	Japanese chemist; 2026 Chemistry Nobel — asymmetric autocatalysis
Surya Kant	Chief Justice of India; headed Bench on aviation accessibility

Mohan Yadav	M.P. Chief Minister; released cheetahs Vyom and Neera
Turab Chimthanawala	Petitioner — advocate with Leber's Congenital Amaurosis
Supriya Sahu	Senior T.N. administrator; UNEP Champion of the Earth 2025
Yash Veer Bhatnagar	IUCN India Country Representative; co-author, wildlife editorial

STATIC LINKAGE — CONNECT THE NEWS TO THE SYLLABUS

News	Static concepts to revise	Paper
RBI repo hike	Monetary policy instruments (LAF, SDF, MSF, OMO, CRR/SLR); MPC under RBI Act s.45ZB; FIT target s.45ZA; imported inflation & CAD	GS 3
Chemistry Nobel	Chirality, enantiomers, racemic mixtures, catalysts & enzymes; thalidomide; pharma APIs	GS 3 / Prelims S&T
Cheetahs in VDTR	Species reintroduction & translocation; NTCA & tiger reserves; WPA 1972 Schedule I; IUCN categories	GS 3
SC on aviation access	Art. 14, 19(1)(d), 21, 41; RPwD Act 2016; UNCRPD; judicial activism & PIL; DGCA regulations	GS 2
Wildlife recovery	Megadiversity & hotspots; IDWH scheme; Red List; community conservation; vulture & diclofenac story	GS 3
Pandemic Agreement	WHO & WHA, IHR 2005, One Health, TRIPS & vaccine equity, G-20 health track, South-South cooperation	GS 2
AI companions & children	IT Act 2000, DPDP Act 2023, POCSO 2012; Art. 21 & 39(f); UNCRC; ethics of persuasive technology	GS 3 / GS 2 / GS 4

PRELIMS BYTES

Repo rate — rate at which the RBI lends overnight to banks against government securities; **Bank Rate** — long-term lending rate, now aligned with the MSF. **Basis point** = 0.01 percentage point; 25 bps = 0.25%. **EBLR** — External Benchmark Lending Rate, mandatory since October 2019 for retail and MSME floating loans, makes repo changes reach borrowers faster. **Enantiomer** — one of a pair of mirror-image molecules; **homochirality** — the use of a single “hand” by living systems. **Kuno National Park** was upgraded from a wildlife sanctuary in 2018. **Benchmark disability** — at least 40% of a specified disability, certified by a competent authority. **One Health** — joint approach to human, animal and environmental health; India's National One Health Mission brings together multiple ministries. **PHEIC** — Public Health Emergency of International Concern, declared by the WHO Director-General under the IHR. **Tele-MANAS (14416)** — India's national tele-mental-health helpline launched in 2022.

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