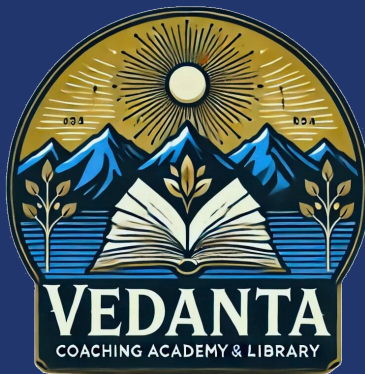




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The Hindu Analysis

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS · UPSC · HPAS/HAS

14 October 2026 · WEDNESDAY



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◆ NUMBERS OF THE DAY ◆

5.54%

Sept CPI inflation — almost a two-year high

>75%

of India's prisoners are undertrials (2022)

\$33.8 bn

India's trade surplus with the U.S. (FY26)

488 µg/m³

Delhi post-Deepavali PM2.5 average, 2025

Compiled by **Sapna Chauhan**

Read the news · Link the syllabus · Practise the answer

BIMSTEC adopts 'Delhi Declaration' on terrorism

First-ever meeting of BIMSTEC Home Ministers in New Delhi sets a regional agenda against terror, terror financing and organised crime

WHY IN NEWS India hosted the **first-ever meeting of BIMSTEC Home Ministers** on Tuesday (13 October), where the seven-member bloc adopted the "**Delhi Declaration**" to counter radicalisation and violent extremism, prevent misuse of emerging technologies for terrorist purposes, and curb terror financing.

◆ WHAT THE DELHI DECLARATION SAYS

- ▶ Signed by all seven members — **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.**
- ▶ Members "**strongly condemn terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism**", wherever, by whomsoever and for whatever purposes committed.
- ▶ Calls for curbing **terror financing** through adherence to internationally agreed **CFT and AML standards**, consistent with domestic and international law.
- ▶ Seeks effective implementation of **UN Security Council sanctions**, including those of the **1267 Sanctions Committee**; perpetrators to be brought to justice under applicable law and UNSC resolutions.
- ▶ Expressed solidarity with victims of terrorist attacks in member states and with the governments of affected states.

◆ INDIA'S FIVE-POINT AGENDA (AMIT SHAH)

- ▶ Five areas of cooperation: **(1) drug control, (2) counter-terrorism and legal cooperation, (3) repatriation of fugitive criminals, (4) cybersecurity and cybercrime investigations, (5) institutional cooperation and capacity building.**
- ▶ Called for a coordinated regional approach against **illicit financial transactions** and stronger links among law-enforcement, intelligence and border-management agencies.
- ▶ Flagged new modus operandi — **encrypted communication, social media, drones, cryptocurrency and the dark web** — and named **human trafficking and "cyber slavery"** as grave concerns; urged real-time sharing of actionable intelligence and cooperation in extradition.

◆ READING BETWEEN THE LINES

- ▶ **Bangladesh**, the current BIMSTEC chair, sent Senior Secretary **Manzur Morshed Chowdhury** rather than Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed — a signal analysts will read alongside the state of India-Bangladesh ties.
- ▶ For India, the meeting moves BIMSTEC's **security pillar** (which India leads) from summit rhetoric to ministerial-level operational cooperation, filling the vacuum left by a dormant SAARC.

VALUE ADDITION · BIMSTEC AT A GLANCE

Origin	Set up on 6 June 1997 by the Bangkok Declaration as BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand); Myanmar joined later in 1997, and Nepal and Bhutan in 2004, giving the present name.
Bridge	Five South Asian + two Southeast Asian (Myanmar, Thailand) members — links India's Neighbourhood First and Act East policies; ~1.7 billion people around the Bay of Bengal.

Institutions	Permanent Secretariat in Dhaka (2014). BIMSTEC Charter adopted at the 5th Summit, Colombo (2022), giving the grouping legal personality.
Sectors	Cooperation rationalised into seven pillars , each led by a member; India leads security (counter-terrorism, transnational crime, disaster management, energy).
Security track	Convention on Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking (2009); joint exercises such as BIMSTEC DMEx (disaster response) and MILEX.
UNSC 1267	Committee created by Resolution 1267 (1999); today the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee — imposes asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo on listed individuals/entities.

BIMSTEC adopts 'Delhi Declaration' on terrorism

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

India hosted the first-ever meeting of the Home Ministers of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) countries on Tuesday, where the regional bloc adopted a declaration to counter radicalisation, violent extremism conducive to terrorism, prevent the misuse of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes, and tackle terrorist recruitment.

Bangladesh, the chair of BIMSTEC, was represented by Manzur Morshed Chowdhury, Senior Secretary in its Home Ministry, instead of Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed, a key member in Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's Cabinet.

The "Delhi Declaration" signed by Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, also called for curb-



Diplomatic mission: Amit Shah with other delegates during the first meeting of Home Ministers of the BIMSTEC countries. PTI

ing terror financing through adherence to internationally agreed counter-terror financing and anti-money laundering standards, consistent with domestic and international laws.

The declaration said the member states "strongly condemn terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism, wherever, by whomsoever and for whatever purposes committed; reiterate our determination to prevent, combat

and eliminate terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism in a comprehensive and sustained manner, in accordance with the UN Charter and international law; and in this context, call for effective implementation of the sanctions measures of the UN Security Council, including of the 1267 Sanctions Committee".

The grouping expressed condolences and solidarity with victims of terrorist attacks in member states and their families, as well as the governments of the af-

fectured states. It called for those responsible to be brought to justice in accordance with applicable domestic and international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Areas of cooperation

Union Home Minister Amit Shah highlighted five key areas of cooperation: drug control, counter-terrorism and legal cooperation, repatriation of fugitive criminals, cybersecurity and cybercrime investigations, and institutional cooperation and capacity building. He called for a coordinated regional approach to combating illicit financial transactions and terror financing and stressed the need to strengthen cooperation among law enforcement, intelligence, and border management agencies.

"India has always believed in sovereignty and peaceful resolutions to any dispute. We are committed to cooperating to face challenges emanating from In-

ternational terrorism, organised crime and narco-trade," Mr. Shah said.

He said criminal networks run their operations beyond international borders and take advantage of regional lacunae.

"This is why regional cooperation is a must. Their strategy is changing; they are using encrypted communication, social media, drones, cryptocurrency and the dark web to recruit and propagate illegal activities. This is why real-time intelligence-sharing and cooperation is required to check these crimes. None of the member countries should shelter such criminals. We should cooperate in the extradition of such criminals," he added.

Mr. Shah flagged "human trafficking and cyber slavery" as grave concerns. "Sharing of actionable intelligence should be a priority among BIMSTEC countries," he said.

The Hindu, 14 October 2026 — Page 12

MAINS ANGLE With SAARC dormant, BIMSTEC offers India a terror-free regional platform — but its success hinges on ratifying pending conventions, real-time intelligence-sharing, and Bangladesh-Myanmar cooperation on cross-border crime.

PRELIMS POINTERS ♦ Founding members: Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand ♦ Secretariat: Dhaka ♦ India leads the Security pillar ♦ FATF: est. 1989 (G7); India a member since 2010 ♦ Delhi Declaration: all 7 members signed

SYLLABUS LINK · GS 2 — India and its neighbourhood; regional groupings; GS 3 — Linkages of organised crime with terrorism; money laundering.



GS 2 · POLITY & GOVERNANCE · THE HINDU · PAGE 7

Legal aid cuts jail time for undertrials, but help often arrives late

Data Point: reaching prisoners soon after arrest is key if free legal aid is to reduce the human and economic costs of pre-trial detention

WHY IN NEWS A study of a **legal aid programme in eight Maharashtra prisons** (2018–2023) shows that free legal aid sharply raises bail success and shortens detention — but help usually arrives only after undertrials have already spent **about 171 days** in jail.

◆ THE UNDERTRIAL PROBLEM

- ▶ India jails fewer people than most countries — **about 41 per 1,00,000** — yet **more than three-quarters** of its prisoners in 2022 were awaiting trial, placing India **fourth in the world** in the share of undertrials.
- ▶ Many are poor, poorly educated or from marginalised communities, held not because they are convicted but because they **cannot navigate the system or afford a lawyer**.
- ▶ The **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** created NALSA to give free legal services to weaker sections, but limited outreach, low awareness and uneven quality persist.

◆ WHAT THE MAHARASHTRA PROGRAMME SHOWS

- ▶ Run since 2018 by **Prayas (TISS)** and the **Fair Trial Fellowship (NLU Delhi)**, funded by the Azim Premji Foundation; it targets casual workers, abandoned women, minorities and migrants.
- ▶ Of 22,000+ undertrials assisted: typical participant is **29 years old**, nearly half studied only up to primary school, **18% women**, **57% casual wage workers**.
- ▶ **84%** of participants' bail applications succeeded vs **26%** of all applications in the same district courts (2015–2020); share granted bail jumped from **1–6% before intake to 61–92% after**.
- ▶ But timing matters: participants spent **171 days** in jail before intake and a further **115 days** on average — close to **eight months** in all. In 2018, 37% of Maharashtra's 26,898 undertrials had been held for over a year.

◆ THE COST OF DELAYED JUSTICE

- ▶ Wage loss (estimated using PLFS 2017–18) reaches up to **~₹2 lakh** for some age groups, while **over 60%** of participants earn under ₹80,000 a year; losses peak for workers in their 50s.
- ▶ After intake alone, those facing the most serious charges lose **~₹80,000** — nearly four times the **₹21,000** lost by those accused of the least severe offences — driven by longer detention, not higher earnings.
- ▶ **Key lesson:** legal aid cannot recover months already lost; identifying eligible prisoners **at or soon after arrest** would multiply its impact. Data on caste, religion, income and migration status remain patchy.

VALUE ADDITION · LEGAL AID & SPEEDY TRIAL

Article 39A	DPSP inserted by the 42nd Amendment (1976) — equal justice and free legal aid ; read with Article 21 it is now an enforceable right.
Article 22(1)	An arrested person has the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of choice.

Case law	Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar (1979) – speedy trial and free legal aid are part of Article 21; P. Ramachandra Rao v. State of Karnataka (2002) – guidelines for speedy trial (no rigid time-limits).
NALSA	Constituted under the 1987 Act (functional 1995). CJI is Patron-in-Chief ; the second senior-most SC judge is Executive Chairman. Runs Lok Adalats and the Legal Aid Defence Counsel System (2022).
BNSS §479	Replaces CrPC §436A – undertrial who has served half the maximum sentence to be released on bond; first-time offenders after one-third .
Prisons	State List (Entry 4, List II) ; Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023 offered as a template to States.

PRELIMS POINTERS ♦ India: ~41 prisoners per 1 lakh people ♦ Undertrials: >75% of prisoners (2022) ♦ LSA Act, 1987 → NALSA ♦ Bail success 84% vs 26% ♦ Speedy trial: implicit in Article 21

Legal aid cuts jail time for undertrials, but help often arrives late

Reaching prisoners soon after arrest is key if free legal aid is to reduce the human and economic costs of pre-trial detention

DATA POINT

Indulekha Guha
Trisha Chanda

India jails fewer people than most countries – about 41 for every 1,00,000 people – yet more than three-quarters of its prisoners in 2022 were awaiting trial. That places India fourth in the world in the share of undertrials in its prison population. Many of them are poor, poorly educated, or from marginalised communities and remain in jail not because they have been convicted but because they cannot navigate the system or afford a lawyer.

Free legal aid is meant to close this gap. The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 created the National Legal Services Authority to provide free legal services to weaker sections of society. But three decades on, limited outreach, low awareness and uneven quality mean that many undertrials still go without timely help.

A legal aid programme run since 2018 across eight prisons in Maharashtra offers insights into what such help can achieve. Implemented by Prayas (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) and the Fair Trial Fellowship (National Law University, Delhi), and funded by the Azim Premji Foundation, it targets those least able to secure representation: casual workers, women abandoned by their families, minorities, or migrant workers.

By analysing the records of over 22,000 undertrials assisted between 2018 and 2023, it was found that the typical participant is 29 years old, and that close to half have studied only up to primary school. Further, 18% are women and 57% are casual wage workers. By comparing their outcomes with the district court records in Maharashtra and used national labour force and time use surveys, the costs of detention were estimated. To begin with, programme participants obtain bail far more often

than the average applicant. Across 29 districts, 84% of participants' bail applications succeeded, compared with 26% of all applications in the same district courts between 2015 and 2020. Participants did better in 28 of the 29 districts. The gap persists even within categories of offence severity, so it is not simply because the programme serves people accused of minor crimes. Within the programme, bail outcomes change sharply at intake. Before intake, the share of participants granted bail ranged from about 1% to 6% across groups by gender, income, education and occupation. After intake, it ranged from 61% to 92%.

Timing, however, matters a great deal. Participants spent on average 171 days – more than five months – in jail before they entered the programme. Those released on bail spent a further 115 days in custody on average, taking the total from arrest to release to about eight months. In 2018, about 37% of Maharashtra's 26,898 undertrials had been held for more than a year (Table 1).

The cost of detention

Detention before trial is costly for people who mostly live on daily earnings. The wages participants lose in custody was estimated by matching them to similar workers in the Periodic Labour Force Survey and multiplying their daily wage by the number of days they were detained. The losses are large relative to their incomes. From arrest to release, average losses reach up to about ₹2 lakh for some age groups, while more than 60% of participants earn less than ₹80,000 a year. Losses rise with age and peak among workers in their 50s (Chart 2).

Losses also vary by group. After intake alone, those facing the most serious charges lose about ₹80,000 on average, nearly four times the ₹21,000 lost by those accused of the least severe offences. This is driven mainly by longer detention rather than higher earnings.

Graduates and regular wage workers also lose more, since their wages are higher (Chart 3).

The uncomfortable question this raises is: why do so many undertrials wait months for help that is already their right? Legal aid is usually seen as a matter of rights. These findings suggest it is also an intervention with economic returns. By helping undertrials file bail applications, coordinate with advocates, gather documents and meet release conditions, the programme appears to cut through the procedural frictions that prolong detention.

Shorter detention can ease prison overcrowding, lower public spending on prisons, and limit income losses for vulnerable households. The most actionable lesson concerns timing. Legal aid can improve outcomes after intake, but it cannot recover the months already spent in jail. Identifying eligible prisoners at or soon after arrest could substantially raise its impact. Better data would also help. Caste, religion, income and migration status are missing for much of the sample, which limits what can be said about who benefits most.

Comparing participants with similar defendants in court records would allow a rigorous evaluation of the programme's effect, and tracking people after release would show whether the gains last. As governments seek to widen access to justice, legal aid works best when it reaches undertrial prisoners early enough to prevent unnecessary detention.

Note: Programme participants are not randomly selected, so the comparisons are descriptive rather than causal. Wage and time losses are accounting estimates of the value of time spent in custody: predicted daily wages from the PLFS 2017-18 multiplied by days detained. Since undertrials differ from the general population, they should be read as upper-bound estimates. Each period is averaged over participants with valid dates for that period.

Cost of delayed justice

Data for the charts were sourced from authors' calculations using Azim Premji Foundation programme records and the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18



Table 1: Time spent in custody by programme participants (in days)

Period	Participants	Average	Maximum
Arrest to programme intake	18,093	171	1,843
Intake to release on bail	8,987	115	1,122
Arrest to release on bail	8,921	239	2,039

Durations after intake are for participants with a recorded release date

Chart 2:

Age-wise predicted wage loss of participants during their detention for the period between intake to release. After intake alone, those facing the most serious charges lose about ₹80,000 on average, nearly four times the ₹21,000 lost by those accused of the least severe offences.

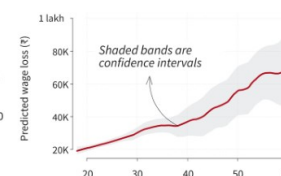
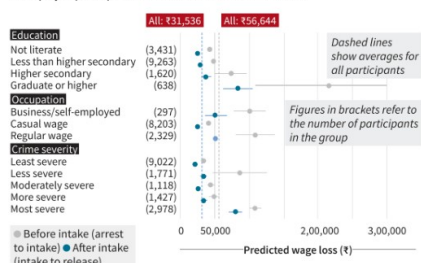


Chart 3: Predicted wage loss before and after programme intake by group. Each participant is counted once, by their most serious case. The chart excludes unemployed participants and those outside the labour force



Indulekha Guha is an Assistant Professor of Economics at Azim Premji University. Trisha Chanda is a Research Scientist in the Department of Sociology at The Ohio State University. The views expressed are personal.

The Hindu, 14 October 2026 – Page 7 (Data Point)

SYLLABUS LINK · GS 2 – Structure and functioning of the Judiciary; mechanisms for protection of vulnerable sections; GS 2 – Welfare schemes and access to justice.

GS 2 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS · THE HINDU · PAGE 6 (OP-ED)

India–U.S. ties and the hurdle of American unilateralism

Washington wants a subservient India, but New Delhi must draw the line — Rajeev Agarwal

WHY IN NEWS On **8 October**, the U.S. suspended the **Permanent Labour Certification (PERM)** programme for eight global IT companies — including **Infosys, TCS, Wipro, Cognizant and HCL** — accusing them of misusing immigration and labour-certification systems, adding to a string of irritants in bilateral ties.

◆ THE PERM TRIGGER

- ▶ PERM lets firms hire non-U.S. professionals and is a **step in an employer-sponsored green-card application**.
- ▶ Per the U.S., the companies received **2,30,000+ H-1B approvals** and **1,00,000+ labour certifications** since 2009; Indians account for **over 70%** of approved H-1B petitions annually.
- ▶ The move is part of a series of U.S. actions — including ill-treatment of and racist attacks on Indians — straining ties.

◆ TRADE: VISIBLE DISCORD

- ▶ India ran a **\$33.8 billion surplus** in bilateral trade exceeding **\$140 billion** (FY 2025-26).
- ▶ U.S. seeks access to India's **dairy and agriculture** — red lines for India; India has refused to halt **Russian oil imports** despite additional tariffs and sanctions.
- ▶ Despite a framework for an interim trade agreement (**February 2026**), talks have **“plateaued”** (Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman).

◆ DEFENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: PROMISE VS DELIVERY

- ▶ India has acquired **\$22 billion+** of U.S. hardware since 2002; a **10-year Framework for the Major Defence Partnership** was signed on **31 October 2025**; co-production of Javelin and Stryker was agreed in February 2025.
- ▶ Yet delays in **GE F404 engines** for Tejas show supply-chain risk; **INDUS-X (2023)**, **iCET (2023)** and **TRUST (13 February 2025)** have produced more declarations than outcomes; the 2008 civil nuclear deal's reactor promise remains unrealised.

◆ THE PAKISTAN FACTOR & THE WAY FORWARD

- ▶ President Trump's repeated claims of ending the conflict after **Operation Sindoor (May 2025)**, U.S. courting of Pakistan's CDF **Asim Munir**, and the Saudi–Pakistan–Türkiye **“Mecca Pact”** have deepened Indian concerns.
- ▶ The author argues ties can flourish only on **equality, respect and trust**; EAM S. Jaishankar's remark that the U.S. is **“deliberately becoming a lonelier power”** may say more than its words.

VALUE ADDITION · INDIA–U.S. STRATEGIC ARCHITECTURE

Foundational pacts	GSOMIA (2002) · LEMOA (2016) · COMCASA (2018) · BECA (2020) — information security, logistics, communications and geospatial cooperation.
Status	India named a Major Defence Partner (2016) and elevated to STA-1 (2018) for licence-free access to dual-use technology.

H-1B vs PERM	H-1B is a non-immigrant visa for specialty occupations (annual cap 65,000 + 20,000 for U.S. advanced-degree holders); PERM labour certification, run by the U.S. Department of Labor, precedes an employment-based green card.
Tech initiatives	iCET (2023) → re-cast as TRUST (2025): AI, semiconductors, quantum, critical minerals, space, defence innovation.
Strategic autonomy	India's doctrine of issue-based alignment – Quad with the U.S., energy ties with Russia, BRICS/SCO membership – is the backdrop to U.S. pressure.

India-U.S. ties and the hurdle of American unilateralism

Have ties between India and the United States reached a breaking point? Where do they go from here? These and many other questions are being intensely debated following the U.S.'s announcement on October 8 that it had suspended the Permanent Labour Certification (PERM) programme for eight global IT companies, including some Indian-headquartered companies, accusing them of misusing immigration and labour-certification systems. The Indian companies named were Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Cognizant and HCL.

The PERM programme allows tech companies to hire non-U.S. professionals to work in the U.S. and is a step in an employer-sponsored green-card application. According to the U.S. government, the companies had received more than 2,30,000 H-1B visa approvals and over 1,00,000 permanent labour certifications since 2009. Indian professionals account for more than 70% of approved H-1B petitions annually.

This episode, however, is not an isolated incident but part of a series of actions and decisions taken by the U.S. in recent years, including the ill-treatment of Indians and racist attacks against them that are placing bilateral ties under severe strain.

Trade ties, visible discord

Trade has emerged as a visible source of discord and asymmetry for three main reasons. First, India recorded a trade surplus of \$33.8 billion in bilateral trade exceeding \$140 billion in FY 2025-26. Second, the U.S. is seeking access to India's dairy and agriculture sectors in ongoing trade negotiations, which India cannot afford to concede. Third, India has refused to halt Russian oil imports despite additional U.S. tariffs and sanctions.

Despite a framework for an interim agreement on reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade



Rajeev Agarwal

A retired colonel and a strategic affairs expert. He is the author of the book, 'Between Tehran and Tel Aviv - Gaza's Story of Unending War'

Washington wants a subservient India, but New Delhi must draw the line

announced in February 2026, the strain in trade ties persists. Last week, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that trade talk negotiations had "plateaued", with little scope for give-and-take.

Defence and security cooperation has emerged as a key pillar of relations. Over the past two decades, India and the U.S. have expanded military exercises, logistics arrangements and intelligence-sharing. American weapons platforms have also become increasingly important to India's military modernisation.

Since 2002, India has acquired over \$22 billion worth of American military hardware, but meaningful co-production and technology transfer remain elusive. During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington in February 2025, the U.S. agreed to expand defence sales and co-production in India, including Javelin anti-tank guided missiles and Stryker infantry combat vehicles. The two countries subsequently signed a 10-year Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defence Partnership on October 31, 2025.

However, a strategic defence partnership of this magnitude must be assessed by what it delivers, not merely the number of agreements signed. Prolonged delays in the supply of GE F404 engines for India's Tejas fighter aircraft highlight the risks of relying on foreign suppliers for critical military components and the strategic cost of supply-chain vulnerabilities. Despite initiatives such as the India-U.S. Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X), launched in 2023, co-development and technology transfer remain an issue.

The Pakistan factor

Pakistan has always been a politically sensitive source of friction between India and the U.S., particularly since Operation Sindoor (May 2025). U.S. President Donald Trump's repeated claims that he ended the conflict have irked India, although New Delhi has refrained from direct

confrontation. The U.S.'s courting of Pakistan's top leadership, especially its Chief of Defence Forces, Asim Munir, has also been a major irritant. The signing of the Mecca Pact between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye, reportedly with Washington's blessings, has raised further security concerns for India.

High-end technology is another area in which India has often been forced to look to the U.S. – a situation that Washington has sought to exploit. Although the 2008 India-U.S. civil nuclear agreement was a historic breakthrough, its commercial promise of American-designed nuclear reactors in India remains largely unrealised. The Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), launched in 2023, was cited as an attempt to deepen cooperation in artificial intelligence, semiconductors, defence innovation, space and other advanced technologies, but much remains on paper. The India-U.S. Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology (TRUST) Initiative, signed on February 13, 2025, also raised hopes of greater technology transfer and integration. The key challenge, however, remains translating declarations into measurable outcomes.

Need for mutual respect

India-U.S. relations are entering a phase in which India's strategic restraint and efforts at accommodation are increasingly met with American pressure, unilateralism and outright disregard for India's strategic interests. Whether this is a difficult phase or a deeper structural problem remains to be seen. The relationship between the world's oldest democracy and the world's largest democracy can flourish only through equality, respect and trust, not unilateral imposition of will. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's recent observation that the U.S. is "deliberately becoming a lonelier power" may convey more than what the words suggest.

The Hindu, 14 October 2026 — Page 6 (Op-Ed)

PRELIMS POINTERS ♦ PERM suspended: 8 Oct 2026 ♦ Trade surplus: \$33.8 bn (FY26) ♦ Defence Framework: 31 Oct 2025 ♦ TRUST: 13 Feb 2025 ♦ INDUS-X & iCET: 2023 ♦ Civil nuclear deal: 2008

SYLLABUS LINK · GS 2 — Bilateral relations; effect of policies of developed countries on India's interests; Indian diaspora. GS 3 — Defence technology, indigenisation.



GS 2 HEALTH & SOCIAL JUSTICE · THE HINDU · PAGE 6 (OP-ED)

India's problem of overtreatment, overmedication

Unnecessary tests, prescriptions and procedures are part of a growing overtreatment problem — Chandrakant Lahariya

WHY IN NEWS A physician-author warns that India's health system, while more capable than ever, is increasingly tempted to **overtest, overtreat and overmedicate** — even as many others still lack essential primary care.

India's problem of overtreatment, overmedication

Modern medicine has never been more capable than it is today. Tests detect illness earlier, scans reveal invisible abnormalities, medicines prevent and treat diseases, and interventions and procedures can save lives within minutes. Yet, the same system that can do more is increasingly tempted to overtreat and overmedicate.

Overtreatment and overmedication are not simply the use of an unnecessary medicine but often a chain: a test detects an incidental abnormality, which leads to another test, a diagnosis and then a prescription that may become permanent. What begins as prevention can end in long-term medication or surgery. Then, in India, overtreatment coexists with undertreatment: unnecessary interventions are offered to some, while many others still lack essential primary care, affordable medicines and timely treatment.

Health packages and tests

The rise of overtreatment is the result of a convergence of several factors. The first driver of overtreatment is unnecessary and excessive testing – both screening and diagnostic – which creates a cascade of care. A review article in the prestigious *National Medical Journal of India* in 2016 found that routine health-check packages often include unwarranted tests that can lead to false-positive results, anxiety, further investigations, overdiagnosis and overtreatment. The truth is that the ability to test has expanded faster than our ability to decide who actually needs testing.

The second driver is the fragmentation of health and medical care. Its most visible manifestation in India is an excessive focus on specialist and super specialist care. A person with a common health problem often goes directly to a specialist or superspecialist. A person with chronic conditions may consult several specialists, each optimising one part of care without necessarily paying attention to the person's other health problems. The patient is treated in parts, while the human body does not live in specialties.

This matters particularly in older adults. A systematic review and meta-analysis of Indian studies, published in *Frontiers in Pharmacology* in 2021, reported polypharmacy in about 49% of older adults. Another study, published in *Scientific Reports* in 2025, found that roughly one-third of older adults were taking five or more prescribed medicines (polypharmacy), with potentially inappropriate medicines identified in 28.8% of cases.

These figures do not mean that everyone taking several medicines is being overtreated. They do, however, show why medication reviews



Chandrakant Lahariya

A practising physician and the author of 'Pill-Free You Don't Need Everything You Have Been Prescribed' (2026)

and deprescribing must become routine.

A third force is the transformation of health care into a marketplace. Laboratory tests, radiological investigations, procedures, supplements and monitoring devices have become products to be sold – sometimes products in search of potential customers. As a result, the boundaries between those who genuinely need these interventions and those who do not can become blurred. A linked aspect is that much of health care and medical care in India operates on a fee-for-service model, which can reward activity rather than restraint. Many patients consider a medical consultation complete only when several medicines and investigations have been prescribed.

Health insurance is a proven solution for financial protection from health-related expenses, as the cost is borne by the insurer. However, it can create both 'ex-ante' and 'ex-post' moral hazards, discouraging preventive care and encouraging hospitals and patients to favour costlier interventions. What is forgotten is that while someone else may bear the financial cost, it is the patient's body that undergoes the intervention. Paying insurance premiums for years does not mean that one must 'recover' the money by undergoing a relatively unnecessary procedure or surgery.

Fourth, patient beliefs and expectations arising from advances in medical care where people want certainty when they are worried and may feel that something tangible should follow a consultation. Reassurance can look like inaction; observation can feel inferior to a scan; lifestyle advice can appear less serious than medication. Doctors may respond to these expectations, particularly in crowded clinics where explanation requires time.

The fifth driver is the rise of 'defensive medicine', in which clinicians, fearing that they might miss a rare diagnosis, may consider ordering another test as the safer option. What is often forgotten, however, is that every test carries potential risks, both from the test itself and from the discovery of abnormalities that may never have caused harm.

Choosing wisely

India is not alone in facing this problem. Overtreatment first became widely recognised in high-income countries and is now increasingly visible across many middle-income nations. This gave rise to the global Choosing Wisely movement, which encourages people to choose health-care interventions more carefully. It is against this backdrop, between 2012 and 2023, that nearly 80 specialty societies worldwide published close to 700 recommendations identifying hundreds of tests and treatments that

clinicians and patients should question. The message is that medicine requires stronger mechanisms for self-correction. The solutions are about practising better medicine. Halting and reversing overmedicalisation requires the engagement of all stakeholders, including individuals, communities, professional societies and health policymakers.

First, India needs to rebuild stronger and functional primary care and restore the family physician as the first point of contact for most non-emergency health needs. A general physician can decide which problems require specialist expertise, reconcile multiple prescriptions and recognise when treatment can safely be reduced. Initiation of care by a general physician, followed by continuity through the referral pathway, protects patients against overmedication and excess surgeries.

Second, every medical prescription should carry a review date and, where appropriate, a possible stop date. Medicines should not become lifelong simply because nobody asks whether they are still needed. Older adults and people taking five or more medicines should periodically undergo a structured medication review assessing indication, benefit, duplication, interactions and opportunities for deprescribing.

Develop India-specific lists

Third, professional medical societies and the Indian Council of Medical Research should develop Indian lists of low-value tests, treatments and procedures – similar to Choosing Wisely – and embed these principles in medical training, accreditation and quality-improvement programmes. Hospitals should measure not only whether recommended care was provided, but also whether unnecessary care was avoided.

Fourth, before starting any test or treatment, patients should note that these four questions matter: Why do I need this? What happens if I wait? What are the possible benefits and risks? What are the alternatives? These questions can substantially improve clinical conversations and outcomes.

Fifth, payment systems and health insurance must reward outcomes, clinical reasoning and continuity of care rather than volume alone. A health-care system should not make it financially easier to order a scan than to explain thoughtfully why that scan may be unnecessary.

Medical advances will continue – and they should. However, the next stage of medical progress will come not only from discovering more tests, medicines and procedures, but also from learning when not to use them. Good medicine requires action when action helps. In an age of medical abundance, it increasingly requires something more difficult – restraint.

Unnecessary tests, prescriptions and procedures are part of the growing overtreatment problem

The Hindu, 14 October 2026 — Page 6 (Op-Ed)

◆ OVERTREATMENT IS A CHAIN

- ▶ A test detects an incidental abnormality → another test → a diagnosis → a prescription that may become permanent; what begins as prevention can end in **long-term medication or surgery**.
- ▶ In India, overtreatment **co-exists with undertreatment** – unnecessary care for some, no essential care, affordable medicines or timely treatment for many.

◆ FIVE DRIVERS

- ▶ **1. Excessive testing** (screening and diagnostic) creating a cascade of care; a 2016 *National Medical Journal of India* review found routine health-check packages include unwarranted tests.
- ▶ **2. Fragmentation of care** – excessive focus on specialists; the patient is treated in parts though the body does not live in specialties. Polypharmacy was reported in **~49% of older adults** (meta-analysis, 2021); a 2025 study found one-third take five or more medicines, with inappropriate drugs in **28.8%** of cases.
- ▶ **3. Marketisation** – tests, procedures, supplements and devices become products; a **fee-for-service** model rewards activity over restraint; insurance creates **ex-ante and ex-post moral hazard**.
- ▶ **4. Patient expectations** – reassurance looks like inaction; lifestyle advice seems less serious than medication.
- ▶ **5. Defensive medicine** – fear of missing a rare diagnosis prompts more tests, though every test carries its own risk.

◆ THE WAY FORWARD

- ▶ Rebuild **primary care and the family physician** as first point of contact, with referral-based continuity.
- ▶ Every prescription to carry a **review date** and, where apt, a stop date; structured medication reviews and **deprescribing** for people on five or more medicines.
- ▶ Professional societies and **ICMR** to develop **India-specific lists of low-value care** (like Choosing Wisely); payment systems and insurance to reward **outcomes and continuity**, not volume.

- Patients should ask four questions: *Why do I need this? What if I wait? What are the benefits and risks? What are the alternatives?*

VALUE ADDITION · KEY CONCEPTS

Choosing Wisely	Launched in 2012 by the ABIM Foundation (U.S.) ; by 2023, ~80 specialty societies had issued ~700 recommendations on tests and treatments to question.
Polypharmacy	Commonly defined as the concurrent use of five or more medicines ; risks include adverse drug events, interactions and falls in the elderly.
Deprescribing	Planned, supervised reduction or withdrawal of medicines that are no longer needed or whose harms outweigh benefits.
Moral hazard	Ex-ante : insured people take fewer precautions; ex-post : insured patients/providers use more (and costlier) care once ill.
Policy hooks	Health is a State subject (Entry 6, List II); Clinical Establishments Act, 2010 (standard treatment guidelines); NLEM 2022; Ayushman Arogya Mandirs for comprehensive primary care.

PRELIMS POINTERS ♦ Polypharmacy = 5+ medicines ♦ Choosing Wisely: 2012, ABIM Foundation ♦ Defensive medicine: test to avoid blame ♦ Health: State List ♦ ICMR: apex biomedical research body

SYLLABUS LINK · GS 2 — Issues relating to development and management of Health; GS 4 — Ethics in medical practice; GS 3 — Health insurance and financing.



GS 3 ENVIRONMENT · THE HINDU · PAGE 6 (EDITORIAL)

Sound and fiery — Green crackers do little to curb air and noise pollution

Without formalisation, enforcement and awareness, “cleaner” crackers will not clean Delhi’s winter air

WHY IN NEWS As Delhi-NCR heads into winter and Deepavali, the **Supreme Court’s latest order** permits specified **next-generation joined green crackers** while declining a total ban on fireworks — prompting questions on whether green crackers deliver.

◆ THE LEGAL TRAIL

- **Nov 2016**: SC suspended fireworks sale licences in NCR after Deepavali pushed $PM_{2.5}$ above **700 $\mu g/m^3$** ; relaxed in Sept 2017, restored for Deepavali in Oct 2017.
- **2018 — Arjun Gopal v. Union of India**: only reduced-emission and “green” crackers allowed; **joined crackers (laris) banned**; a **two-hour window** imposed.
- Latest order: specified next-gen joined green crackers allowed; total ban declined, invoking **public sentiment**.

◆ WHY GREEN CRACKERS FALL SHORT

- Crackers are not the main cause of Delhi’s winter smog (construction dust, vehicles, stubble burning, stagnant cold air are), but they cause **acute spikes**: in **2025**, Delhi’s post-Deepavali $PM_{2.5}$ average hit **488 $\mu g/m^3$** (highest since 2021), with hourly peaks of **675 $\mu g/m^3$** .

- ▶ CSIR-NEERI claims a **45–60% cut in PM_{10}** for the newer generation, but this does not reflect real-world use — **more crackers burst** erase the savings; noise is not accounted for.
- ▶ **Enforcement gaps:** CAQM says QR codes were sold to unregistered manufacturers, letting unauthorised crackers pass as certified; the explosives regulator had no testing facility in Delhi; in 2018–19 police could not tell green from conventional crackers.
- ▶ Editorial's prescription: **formalise fireworks manufacturing**, enforce regulations in practice, and spread awareness of the public-health toll.

Sound and fiery

Green crackers do little to curb air and noise pollution

As Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) head into another winter, they must brace for the return of a foe kept on a leash that is alternately loosened or tightened. In November 2016, the Supreme Court of India suspended licences for the sale of fireworks in the NCR after Deepavali celebrations pushed $PM_{2.5}$ levels above $700 \mu g/m^3$. The Court relaxed the suspension in September 2017, partly to protect existing licence holders and livelihoods, but restored the suspension for Deepavali in October. In 2018, in its judgment in *Arjun Gopal and Others vs Union of India and Others*, the Court allowed only reduced-emission and “green” crackers, banned joined firecrackers or *laris*, and imposed a two-hour window. The latest order permits specified next-generation joined green crackers, while declining a total ban on fireworks, invoking public sentiment. Fire crackers are far from the smoking gun of Delhi's air-quality crisis. Construction dust, vehicles, stubble burning and stagnant, cold air all contribute to winter pollution. But when these push the air towards “severe” levels, crackers can produce an acute spike. In 2025, the first Deepavali after the Court permitted limited use of green crackers, Delhi's post-Deepavali $PM_{2.5}$ average reached $488 \mu g/m^3$, the highest since 2021, while hourly concentrations peaked at $675 \mu g/m^3$.

There is no gainsaying that green crackers are a pyrrhic green. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI), which promoted them, says the newer generation promises a 45%-60% cut in PM_{10} . These figures, however, do not reflect real-world conditions, and when “cleaner” crackers are burst in greater numbers, the savings in particulate pollution evaporate. This is without accounting for noise pollution. There is also the difficulty of enforcement. The Commission for Air Quality Management has stated that QR codes had been sold to unregistered manufacturers – registered manufacturers reportedly sold them, allowing unauthorised firecrackers to be passed off as certified green crackers. The explosives regulator had no testing facility in Delhi. In 2018 and 2019, the police could not distinguish green crackers from conventional ones. Unless fireworks manufacturing moves into the formal sector, regulations are followed in practice, and awareness of the toll on public health spreads among those who love the sound and fury of crackers, air and noise pollution are here to stay.

The Hindu, 14 October 2026 — Page 6 (Editorial)

VALUE ADDITION · GREEN CRACKERS & REGULATORS

What they are	Eco-modified crackers developed by CSIR-NEERI (Nagpur); they avoid barium nitrate and use additives (e.g. zeolite, iron oxide) and dust suppressants to cut particulate and gaseous emissions.
Variants	SWAS — Safe Water Releaser (water vapour suppresses dust) · STAR — Safe Thermite Cracker (no potassium nitrate & sulphur) · SAFAL — Safe Minimal Aluminium.
Certification	Green logo + QR code for authenticity; licensing of explosives by PESO (Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation, under DPIIT) under the Explosives Act, 1884.

CAQM	Statutory body under the CAQM in NCR and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021 ; replaced EPCA; implements the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).
Standards	NAAQS PM _{2.5} : 60 µg/m³ (24-hr), 40 µg/m³ (annual); WHO 2021 guideline: 15 µg/m³ (24-hr). Noise: Noise Pollution (Regulation & Control) Rules, 2000 under the EP Act, 1986.

PRELIMS POINTERS ♦ Arjun Gopal case: 2018 ♦ Laris = joined crackers ♦ SWAS · STAR · SAFAL ♦ CSIR-NEERI HQ: Nagpur ♦ Delhi 2025 post-Deepavali PM_{2.5}: 488 µg/m³

SYLLABUS LINK · GS 3 — Environmental pollution and degradation; GS 2 — Role of the judiciary and statutory bodies.



GS 3 INDIAN ECONOMY · THE HINDU · PAGE 6 (EDITORIAL)

Spiralling food prices — Rural households have felt the greatest impact of rising inflation

Fuel, food and a falling rupee push CPI to an almost two-year high; the RBI ends its rate pause

WHY IN NEWS September's retail inflation rose to **5.54%** — an almost two-year high and the **fourth straight month above the RBI's 4% target** — with **rural inflation at 6.08%** and rural food inflation at **8.06%**.

♦ THE NUMBERS

- ▶ Rural food inflation rose almost two percentage points between August and September; **onion (108.09%)**, **garlic (54.62%)** and **ginger (62.85%)** drove the surge, while potato (–11.50%) and tomato (–8.62%) stayed below year-ago levels.
- ▶ Headline CPI is now just **0.46 percentage point** below the RBI's **upper tolerance limit of 6%**.
- ▶ The **MPC raised the repo rate by 25 bps to 5.50%** in October — ending a pause that followed its previous increase in February 2023; another hike in December cannot be ruled out.

♦ WHY PRICES ARE RISING

- ▶ Since the U.S.–Israeli war on Iran, **fuel, food and transport** have led inflation, compounded by a depreciating rupee.
- ▶ The **Indian crude basket (PPAC)** rose from **\$82.04/barrel in July to \$116.09 in September — up 41%**, with economy-wide effects on freight and distribution; transport services for goods inflation hit **14.73%**.
- ▶ **Core inflation** (excluding food and fuel, including precious metals) rose to **4.6%** from 4.16% — a sign price pressures are **broadening**; restaurant and accommodation services inflation at 9.36%.
- ▶ **FPIs** pulled out a record **₹3.08 trillion (\$32.73 bn)** in nine months to September; the rupee fell ~7% against the dollar. RBI's special dollar facility for OMCs eases spot pressure only temporarily.

♦ IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ The festive season will be costly for rural households already facing a **deficient monsoon, El Niño risks** and unusually high temperatures.
- ▶ With crude elevated, the rupee vulnerable and no end to the West Asia conflict in sight, **imported inflation** is likely to shape domestic prices in the months ahead.

Spiralling food prices

Rural households have felt the greatest impact of rising inflation

September's retail inflation, at 5.54%, an almost two-year high, marks the fourth consecutive month that price increases have kept headline CPI above the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 4% target. The impact has been particularly severe for rural Indians, whose inflation rate reached 6.08%. Rural food inflation rose almost two percentage points between August and September, touching 8.06%. Onion (108.09%), garlic (54.62%) and ginger (62.85%) drove the surge, even as potato (-11.50%) and tomato (-8.62%) prices remained below year-earlier levels. The festive season ahead will be expensive for rural households already facing the uncertainties of a deficient monsoon, El Niño-related risks to harvests and incomes, and unusually high temperatures. Headline CPI is now just 0.46 percentage points below the RBI's upper tolerance limit of 6%. The Monetary Policy Committee raised the repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.50% in October, ending a pause that began after its previous increase in February 2023. Another increase in December cannot be ruled out if price pressures continue to broaden. Chief among the factors driving inflation since the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran have been fuel, food and transport, compounded by a depreciating rupee.

The Indian crude basket, according to the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell, rose from \$82.04 a barrel in July to \$116.09 in September – a 41% increase – with economy-wide implications for freight, production and distribution. The RBI's special dollar facility for oil marketing companies

may ease spot-market pressure on the rupee, but only temporarily if the underlying import dependence and geopolitical risks persist. The crucial subgroup, transport services for goods, recorded inflation of 14.73% in September, up from 14.64% in August. Restaurant and accommodation services inflation has reached 9.36%, while inflation in personal care, social protection and miscellaneous goods and services, which include precious metals, has moderated to 13.75%. Core inflation, excluding food and fuel but including precious metals, rose to 4.6% in September from 4.16% in August, suggesting that price pressures are broadening. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have pulled a record ₹3.08 trillion (\$32.73 billion) out of Indian equities in the nine months ending September this year, which is almost double that of the whole of CY2025. FPIs have been net sellers in six of the past nine months as they seek safe havens, stronger dollar-denominated returns, and bond yields. Selling resumed in October, adding to pressure on the rupee, which weakened by about 7% against the dollar over the year to early October, despite RBI interventions such as direct dollar sales and attracting foreign-currency inflows. The central bank's latest steps have helped the rupee recover, but cannot resolve the underlying pressures. With crude prices elevated, the rupee vulnerable and no clear end to the West Asia conflict, imported inflation is likely to continue shaping domestic prices in the months ahead.

The Hindu, 14 October 2026 — Page 6 (Editorial)

VALUE ADDITION · INFLATION TARGETING TOOLKIT

FIT framework	RBI Act, 1934 (amended 2016): CPI target of 4% ± 2% set by the Centre in consultation with the RBI, once every five years.
MPC	Six members — three from RBI (incl. Governor) and three external; the Governor has a casting vote . Failure = inflation outside the band for three consecutive quarters ; RBI must then report reasons and remedial steps to the Centre.
CPI	Compiled by the NSO (MoSPI) ; food and beverages carry the largest weight; rural, urban and combined indices are released monthly.
Core vs headline	Core strips out volatile food and fuel to show underlying demand-side pressure; imported inflation arises from costlier imports and a weaker currency.
Supply tools	Price Stabilisation Fund (onion, pulses buffer), Operation Greens (Tomato-Onion-Potato, 2018), export curbs and stock limits — complementing monetary policy.

PRELIMS POINTERS ♦ CPI Sept: 5.54% ♦ Rural: 6.08% · Rural food: 8.06% ♦ Repo: 5.50% (+25 bps) ♦ Core: 4.6% ♦ Crude basket: \$116.09 (Sept) ♦ PPAC: under MoPNG

SYLLABUS LINK · GS 3 — Indian economy: inflation, monetary policy, mobilisation of resources; effects of liberalisation (capital flows).

Practice Zone MAINS · PRELIMS · REVISION

How to use: write each Mains answer in 7–8 minutes using the approach as a skeleton; attempt all ten MCQs before checking the key; revise the recap and trap-setters before sleeping.

MAINS ANSWER WRITING

Q1. Recent U.S. actions on trade, immigration and technology suggest that convergence of strategic interests alone cannot sustain India–U.S. relations. Critically examine. (250 words, 15 marks)

व्यापार, आप्रवासन और प्रौद्योगिकी पर अमेरिका की हालिया कार्रवाइयाँ संकेत देती हैं कि केवल रणनीतिक हितों का अभिसरण भारत–अमेरिका संबंधों को टिकाए नहीं रख सकता। समालोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए। (250 शब्द, 15 अंक)

◆ APPROACH

Intro	Cite the PERM suspension (8 Oct 2026) against Infosys, TCS, Wipro etc. as the latest irritant in a ‘comprehensive global strategic partnership’.
Convergence	Indo-Pacific/Quad, four foundational agreements, 10-year defence framework (2025), iCET → TRUST, diaspora and \$140 bn+ trade.
Friction	Tariffs and Russian oil, dairy/agri market access, H-1B/PERM curbs, delays in GE F404 and tech transfer, U.S. outreach to Pakistan after Op Sindoor.
Balance	Structural complementarities persist; friction is about terms, not direction — but asymmetry tests India’s strategic autonomy.
Way forward	Mini trade deal with safeguarded red lines, co-development over buying, diversified partners (EU, Japan, Gulf), diaspora diplomacy; conclude with ‘equality, respect, trust’.

Q2. Rising rural food inflation amid elevated crude prices and a depreciating rupee exposes the limits of monetary policy in managing supply-side shocks. Discuss. (250 words, 15 marks)

कच्चे तेल की ऊँची कीमतों और रुपये के अवमूल्यन के बीच बढ़ती ग्रामीण खाद्य मुद्रास्फीति, आपूर्ति-पक्षीय झटकों के प्रबंधन में मौद्रिक नीति की सीमाओं को उजागर करती है। चर्चा कीजिए। (250 शब्द, 15 अंक)

◆ APPROACH

Intro	Sept CPI 5.54% (rural 6.08%, rural food 8.06%); onion +108%; crude basket +41% to \$116; rupee -7%.
Why monetary policy is limited	Supply shocks (crop, crude, war) are not demand-driven; rate hikes cannot raise onion output but can hurt growth and credit.
Where it still matters	Anchoring expectations as core rises to 4.6%; second-round effects via transport/wages; stemming FPI outflows and rupee weakness — hence the 25 bps hike.
Fiscal & supply tools	Buffer stocks/PSF, Operation Greens, cold chains, excise/VAT on fuel, targeted transfers, export-import calibration.
Conclusion	Coordinated monetary–fiscal–supply response; FIT credibility depends on governments managing food supply chains.

PRELIMS MCQs

1 Consider the following statements about BIMSTEC:

1. It was established in 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.
2. Myanmar and Thailand are its only Southeast Asian members.
3. Its permanent Secretariat is in Kathmandu.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

2 The '1267 Committee' of the UN Security Council, mentioned in the Delhi Declaration, relates to sanctions against:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| (a) Nuclear proliferation by North Korea | (b) Piracy off the Horn of Africa |
| (c) Arms trafficking in the Sahel | (d) ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida |

3 With reference to free legal aid in India, consider the following:

1. Article 39A was inserted by the 44th Constitutional Amendment.
2. NALSA was constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
3. The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief of NALSA.

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 |

4 In which case did the Supreme Court first recognise the right to a speedy trial as part of Article 21?

- | | |
|--|--|
| (a) Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar | (b) A.K. Gopalan v. State of Madras |
| (c) P. Ramachandra Rao v. State of Karnataka | (d) Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala |

5 Consider the following statements:

1. The H-1B is an immigrant visa that confers permanent residence in the U.S.
2. PERM labour certification is a step in an employer-sponsored green-card application.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| (a) 1 only | (b) 2 only |
| (c) Both 1 and 2 | (d) Neither 1 nor 2 |

6 Consider the following statements:

1. The 'Choosing Wisely' movement encourages questioning of low-value tests and treatments.
2. Polypharmacy commonly refers to the concurrent use of five or more medicines.
3. 'Deprescribing' means replacing branded medicines with generic ones.

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 |

7 With reference to green crackers, consider the following:

1. They were developed by CSIR-NEERI.
2. Barium nitrate is used as their principal oxidiser.
3. Authentic green crackers carry a QR code.

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

8 Consider the following statements about the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM):

1. It is a statutory body established under an Act of Parliament passed in 2021.
2. It replaced the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

9 Under India's flexible inflation targeting framework, consider the following:

1. The inflation target is set by the Central Government in consultation with the RBI.
2. The Monetary Policy Committee has six members, with the Governor holding a casting vote.
3. Failure is declared if inflation stays outside the band for two consecutive quarters.

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

10 'Core inflation', which rose to 4.6% in September 2026, generally excludes which of the following?

- (a) Precious metals (b) Food and fuel
(c) Services (d) Housing

ANSWER KEY & RATIONALE

Q	Ans	Why
1	c	The Secretariat is in Dhaka (2014); Kathmandu hosts the SAARC Secretariat.
2	d	Created by Resolution 1267 (1999) against the Taliban; now the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.
3	b	Article 39A came through the 42nd Amendment (1976).
4	a	Hussainara Khatoon (1979) — undertrial prisoners of Bihar; P. Ramachandra Rao (2002) later gave guidelines.
5	b	H-1B is a non-immigrant , temporary work visa for specialty occupations.
6	a	Deprescribing is the supervised reduction or withdrawal of unnecessary medicines, not brand-to-generic substitution.
7	c	Green crackers are formulated without barium nitrate , a major toxic component of conventional crackers.

Q	Ans	Why
8	c	CAQM, set up first by ordinance (2020) and then the 2021 Act, replaced the SC-mandated EPCA.
9	a	Failure is defined as three consecutive quarters outside the 2–6% band.
10	b	Core inflation strips out volatile food and fuel; the article notes the measure used here still includes precious metals.

QUICK REVISION RECAP

BIMSTEC — First Home Ministers' meet, New Delhi; Delhi Declaration against terrorism (incl. cross-border), terror financing, misuse of emerging tech; Amit Shah's five areas; Bangladesh (chair) sent a Senior Secretary.

Legal aid — India ~41 prisoners/lakh, >75% undertrials (4th highest); Maharashtra programme — bail success 84% vs 26%, but 171 days lost before intake; early intervention is key.

India–U.S. — PERM suspended for 8 IT firms; \$33.8 bn surplus; trade talks 'plateaued'; defence framework (2025) vs F404 delays; Pakistan factor; 'lonelier power'.

Overtreatment — Five drivers — testing, fragmentation, marketisation, patient expectations, defensive medicine; fix via primary care, deprescribing, India-specific low-value lists.

Green crackers — Arjun Gopal (2018); 2025 post-Deepavali PM_{2.5} 488 µg/m³; NEERI's 45–60% PM₁₀ claim vs real world; QR-code misuse; formalise the industry.

Inflation — CPI 5.54%, rural 6.08%, rural food 8.06%; crude basket +41%; core 4.6%; repo +25 bps to 5.50%; record FPI outflows, rupee -7%.

PRELIMS TRAP-SETTERS

BIMSTEC vs SAARC — Secretariats — BIMSTEC: **Dhaka**; SAARC: **Kathmandu**. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Maldives are in SAARC but **not** in BIMSTEC.

Founders — BIMSTEC's four founders exclude Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan — do not count Myanmar among them.

42nd vs 44th — Article 39A came via the **42nd** Amendment; the 44th Amendment removed property as a fundamental right.

CrPC → BNSS — Old §436A now sits in **BNSS §479** — with a softer one-third rule for first-time offenders.

H-1B ≠ green card — H-1B is temporary/non-immigrant; PERM → I-140 → green card is the permanent route.

CAATSA — A U.S. sanctions law (2017), **not** one of the four India–U.S. foundational agreements.

Green ≠ zero — Green crackers **reduce**, not eliminate, emissions; noise is not addressed by PM claims.

Core inflation — Excludes food and fuel — **not** precious metals, which pushed the Indian measure up.

CONNECT THE DOTS · STATIC LINKAGE

Today's story	Static anchor	Probable question angle
BIMSTEC	Regional groupings: SAARC (1985), BBIN, Mekong–Ganga Cooperation (2000), IORA (1997)	Can BIMSTEC substitute for a stalled SAARC in India's neighbourhood policy?
Legal aid	Articles 14, 21, 22(1), 39A; LSA Act 1987; Lok Adalats; BNSS 2023	Undertrial crisis and access to justice for the poor

Today's story	Static anchor	Probable question angle
India–U.S.	Strategic autonomy; Quad; foundational agreements; 2008 civil nuclear deal	Asymmetric partnerships and India's multi-alignment
Overtreatment	Article 47 (public health); NHP 2017; Clinical Establishments Act 2010; AMR	Ethics of medical practice; primary health care reform
Green crackers	Article 21 (clean air); Article 25 (religious practice) vs public health; EP Act 1986	Balancing festivity, livelihoods and the right to clean air
Inflation	RBI Act §45ZA–45ZN; MPC; CPI vs WPI; Price Stabilisation Fund	Supply shocks, imported inflation and limits of monetary policy

PRELIMS BYTES

Bangkok Declaration (1997) — Founding document of BIMSTEC; distinct from the 1967 Bangkok Declaration that created ASEAN.

Article 47 — DPSP — State to raise nutrition, standard of living and improve public health; also directs prohibition of injurious intoxicants.

WPI vs CPI — WPI (Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT) tracks wholesale goods only; CPI (NSO) includes services and is the RBI's target measure.

Repo rate — Rate at which RBI lends to banks against government securities; the MPC's main policy instrument under the LAF.

PESO — Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation, headquartered in Nagpur; administers the Explosives Act, 1884 and the Petroleum Act, 1934.

Lok Adalat — Statutory status under the LSA Act, 1987; its award is deemed a civil-court decree and no appeal lies against it.

PLACES & PERSONS IN NEWS

Bay of Bengal — World's largest bay; the geographic anchor of BIMSTEC, bordered by India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Dhaka — Seat of the BIMSTEC Secretariat; Bangladesh is the current BIMSTEC chair.

Delhi-NCR — Winter smog hotspot; post-Deepavali 2025 PM_{2.5} average of 488 µg/m³.

Maharashtra — Eight prisons covered by the Prayas–Fair Trial Fellowship legal aid programme.

Manzur Morshed Chowdhury — Senior Secretary, Bangladesh Home Ministry; represented the chair at the BIMSTEC meet.

Tarique Rahman — Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

Asim Munir — Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces, courted by Washington.

S. Jaishankar — External Affairs Minister — called the U.S. a “deliberately lonelier power”.

Chandrakant Lahariya — Physician, author of *Pill-Free* (2026); wrote on overtreatment.

◆ *Consistency compounds — revise today's six stories before sleeping* ◆