



**BY FAILING TO PREPARE, YOU
ARE PREPARING TO FAIL.**

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Important Issues of the Day

- **SC status – Page No.1 , GS 2**
- **Corruption Perceptions Index – Page No.6 , Prelims**
- **Cowardly bully – Page No. 6, GS 2**
- **Corporate Social Responsibility – Page No.7 , GS 3**
- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves – Prelims**

SC status only for Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs: top court

Conversion to any other religion will lead to complete loss of Scheduled Caste status, regardless of birth, says Supreme Court Bench as it invokes Clause 3 of Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday held in a judgment that a person professing any religion other than Hinduism, Buddhism, or Sikhism should not be considered a member of a Schedule Caste community.


The court concluded that conversion to any other religion would result in “immediate and complete loss of Scheduled Caste status from the moment of conversion, regardless of birth”.

A Bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Manmohan invoked Clause 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, which mandates that “no person who professes a religion different

Identity question

The top court said that a person professing a religion other than those mentioned in Clause 3 cannot be part of a scheduled caste

- Clause 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, mandates that ‘no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste’
- The Sikh religion was added to the ambit of Clause 3 in 1956
- The provision was further amended in 1990 to include persons professing Buddhism
- The top court observed that the bar in Clause 3 is ‘categorical and absolute’



from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste”. The Sikh religion was added to the ambit of Clause 3 in 1956. The provision was further amended in 1990 to include persons professing Buddhism.

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3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 is categorical and absolute,” Justice Mishra, who authored the judgment, interpreted the 1950 Order.

The court was hearing an appeal filed by Chinthada Anand, who was born a Hindu-Madiga (Scheduled

Caste) but converted to Christianity to become a pastor.

Mr. Anand had filed a case under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 after he alleged that he had suffered repeated attacks and caste slurs.

The Andhra Pradesh High Court, in a decision in April last year, quashed the criminal proceedings on the ground that Mr. Anand could no longer claim protection under the 1989 Act as he professed Christianity and had been a pastor for about a decade. The High Court was of the view that the caste system was not recognised in Christianity.

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- **The top court said a convert who did not profess any of the three religions in Clause 3 of the 1950 Order could not claim any “statutory benefit, protection, reservation or entitlement” of a Scheduled Caste (SC) member.**
- **Justice Mishra said the bar admitted no exception. A person cannot simultaneously profess and practice a religion other than the ones specified in Clause 3 and claim membership of a Scheduled Caste at the same time, the court said.**

Consider the following statements regarding 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam':

- 1. Provisions will come into effect from the 18th Lok Sabha.**
- 2. This will be in force for 15 years after becoming an Act.**
- 3. There are provisions for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes Women within the quota reserved for the Scheduled Castes.**

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

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Deepening global corruption as a pointer for India

Page No.6 , GS 2

The Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 (CPI) published by Transparency International delivers an unmistakable message. Corruption is not receding. It is deepening in ways that erode democratic accountability and hollow out public institutions. For the first time in over a decade, the global average score has dropped to 42 out of 100, with 122 of 182 countries scoring below 50. Only five countries now score above 80, compared with 12 a decade ago. The direction is clear and troubling. Where oversight weakens and civic freedoms narrow, corruption perceptions worsen.

What the data show

India's position must be assessed within this global decline. With a score of 39 and a rank of 91 out of 182 countries in the 2025 index, India remains in the lower half of the table. Over the past decade, India's score has fluctuated narrowly between 38 and 41. In 2014, it stood at 38. A decade later, it remains broadly similar. For a country that has emerged as the world's fourth-largest economy and aspires to achieve developed nation status by 2047, this stagnation is revealing. While the economic scale has expanded dramatically over time, the governance perception has not kept pace.

Global comparisons sharpen the picture. China scores 42. Sri Lanka stands close to India's level, while Bangladesh and Pakistan score lower. India performs better than some of its neighbours, yet it trails several upper-middle-income democracies and many East Asian and European countries that once operated at comparable development levels. Those countries strengthened institutional independence, transparency frameworks and regulatory predictability over time. Their CPI trajectories reflect sustained reform.

Why does India's CPI score matter? First, the index measures perceived public sector integrity rather than recorded incidents. It draws on 13 independent data sources that assess public procurement, regulatory enforcement, judicial effectiveness and institutional safeguards. A score of 39 signals persistent weaknesses in



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Transparency must become a national priority as governance credibility is now a competitive economic variable

transparency, oversight and accountability. Perceptions influence investment decisions, sovereign risk assessments and long-term capital allocation. Governance credibility has now become a competitive economic variable.

Second, corruption carries measurable economic costs. It increases transaction uncertainty, raises compliance expenses and diverts entrepreneurial energy toward navigating rent-seeking systems rather than creating value. These distortions reduce productivity and discourage investment. A widely cited global estimate suggests that corruption costs at least 5% of global GDP annually, equivalent to more than \$2.6 trillion in lost output each year. This figure includes bribes, illicit financial flows and inefficiencies in public spending. While precise quantification varies across studies, the scale of the drag is undeniable.

For developing economies such as India, the impact is significant. Research linked to multilateral institutions suggests that corruption may cost India roughly 0.5% of GDP annually in direct terms, with broader estimates placing total losses between 1% and 1.5% of GDP once indirect growth effects are included. At current output levels, this represents tens of billions of dollars each year. These are resources that could finance infrastructure, health, education or industrial upgrading.

Hurdles in compliance architecture

A third structural concern lies in the complexity of India's compliance architecture. A recent report indicates that entrepreneurs operate under the shadow of 26,134 imprisonment provisions embedded across India's business regulations. The scale of the burden becomes clearer at the industry level. Even as the Union Budget 2026-27 proposes the Biopharma Strategy for Healthcare Advancement through Knowledge, Technology and Innovation (SHAKTI) initiative with an allocation of ₹10,000 crore over five years, a pharmaceutical start-up with a single manufacturing unit is required to navigate 998 separate compliance obligations before commencing operations, with nearly 49% bearing potential criminal liability. Such extensive

criminalisation within regulatory frameworks not only raises the cost of doing business but also expands discretionary power in ways that can inadvertently create conditions for rent seeking.

Encouraging trends

Yet, the picture is not uniformly bleak, as there are also positive counter-currents. India's digital public infrastructure has reduced leakages in certain welfare schemes through direct benefit transfers linked to bank accounts and digital identity. The Reserve Bank of India's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI), with March 2018 as the base, has been tracking the extent of digitisation of payments across the country since January 1, 2021. The index for September 2025 stands at 516.76 as against 493.22 for March 2025. The Goods and Services Tax network has increased formalisation and traceability in indirect taxation.

E-procurement portals and digital payment systems have reduced opportunities for some forms of rent seeking. These reforms demonstrate that institutional design and the use of technology can reduce discretion. Corruption, therefore, is not merely a moral or legal problem. It is an economic constraint and a strategic vulnerability. It weakens fiscal efficiency, undermines regulatory credibility and reduces social trust. For a country that envisions becoming a \$10 trillion- economy within the next decade, governance quality cannot remain static. Rapid economic expansion without parallel institutional strengthening creates an imbalance.

The 2025 Index should be read as a benchmark rather than a verdict. India possesses strong constitutional foundations, competitive elections, a capable judiciary and growing digital capacity. Even modest but sustained improvements in transparency, judicial efficiency, regulatory simplification and institutional independence could materially improve perceptions over time. Countries that climbed the CPI rankings did so through cumulative reform, not episodic crackdowns.

India's economic ascent has been decisive. Its governance evolution must now match that ambition with equal resolve.

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"Rule of Law Index" is released by which of the following?

(a) Amnesty International

(b) International Court of Justice

(c) The office of UN Commissioner for Human Rights

(d) World Justice Project

Mains Question

Corruption continues to undermine governance and public trust in India despite multiple institutional and legal mechanisms. Critically examine the causes of corruption and suggest effective measures to curb it.

भारत में अनेक संस्थागत और कानूनी व्यवस्थाओं के बावजूद भ्रष्टाचार शासन और जनविश्वास को कमजोर करता रहा है। भ्रष्टाचार के कारणों का समालोचनात्मक विश्लेषण करते हुए इसे रोकने के प्रभावी उपाय सुझाए।

Strategic Petroleum Reserves



- **The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas informed the Rajya Sabha that India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs) are currently at only 64% capacity.**
- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves are massive stockpiles of crude oil stored in underground rock caverns. They serve as a specialized insurance policy to protect the nation against unplanned supply disruptions caused by geopolitical wars, natural disasters, or global price shocks.**
- **The concept was mooted after the 1973 oil crisis.**
- **Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL), the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) managing them, was created in 2004 under the Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB).**

- **India's broader Energy Security Strategy and its commitment as an Associate Member of the International Energy Agency (IEA), which recommends maintaining a 90-day reserve of net oil imports.**

Located In (Phase-I):

- **Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.**
- **Mangaluru, Karnataka.**
- **Padur, Karnataka.**

Phase-II expansion is planned for Chandikhol, Odisha, and further expansion in Padur.

Protects India—the world's third-largest oil consumer—which imports over 88% of its crude requirement.

Prevents sudden spikes in petrol and diesel prices at the pump, which can trigger inflation across the entire supply chain.

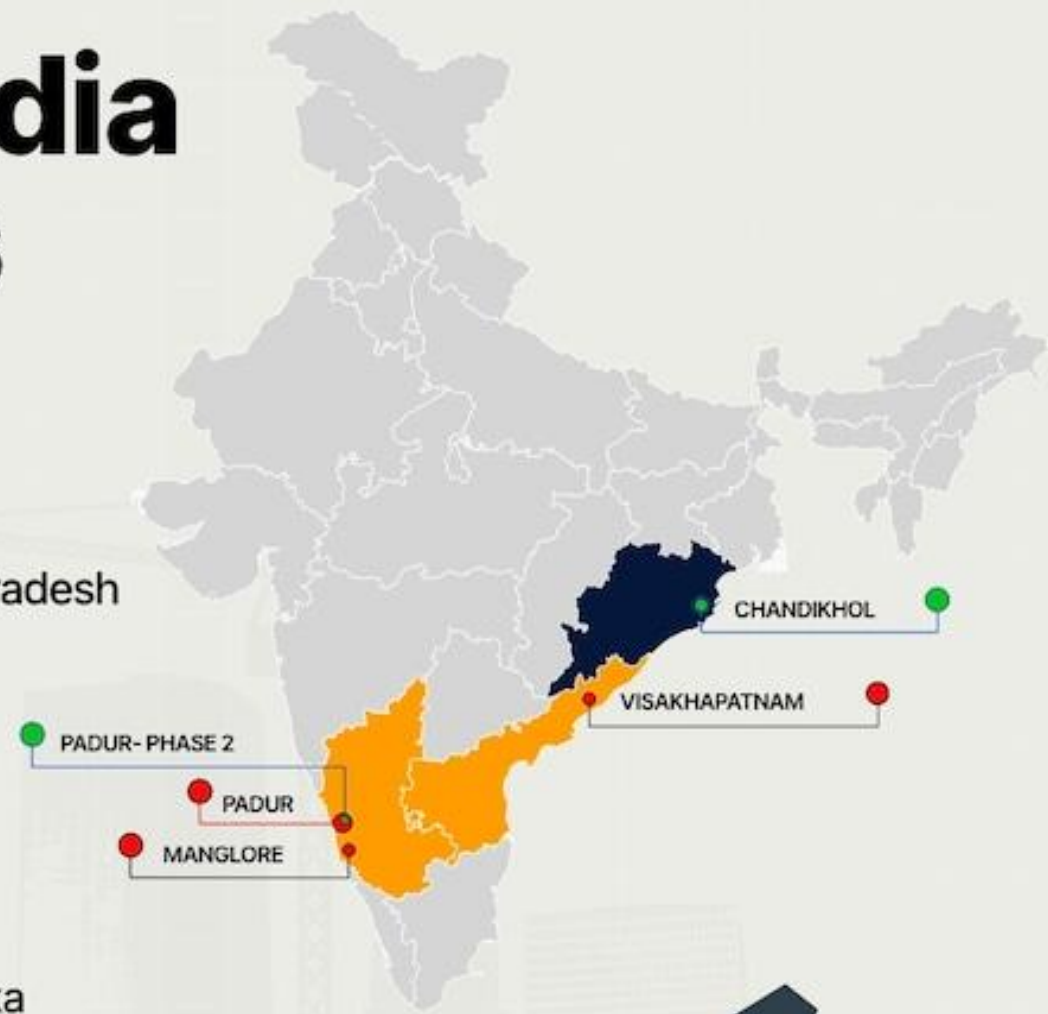
Where India stores its crude oil

Existing Sites:

- Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh
- Mangalore, Karnataka
- Padur, Karnataka

Upcoming Sites:

- Chandikhol, Odisha
- Padur (Extension), Karnataka



Mains Question

India's growing energy demand requires a transition toward alternative and renewable energy sources. Discuss the potential of alternative energy in ensuring India's energy security.

भारत की बढ़ती ऊर्जा आवश्यकताओं को देखते हुए वैकल्पिक और नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा स्रोतों की ओर संक्रमण आवश्यक हो गया है। भारत की ऊर्जा सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करने में वैकल्पिक ऊर्जा की संभावनाओं पर चर्चा कीजिए।

The judicial push for environmental CSR

India emerged as a pioneer for mandating profit-sharing for social good through the Companies Act, 2013 – a visionary move to channel corporate earnings for crucial societal objectives. However, the environment remains largely neglected, often sidelined by prevailing corporate priorities. Despite India's commitment to net-zero emissions by 2070 at COP26, and escalating climate challenges from air pollution, water scarcity, and poor waste management, ecological needs continue to be underrepresented in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding.

However, recent Supreme Court observations have reframed environmental spending – not as mere discretionary charity, but as a constitutional mandate. By invoking Article 51A (g), the judiciary underscored that the right to conduct business is inseparably linked to the responsibility to restore our planet. The neglect of the habitats of the Great Indian Bustard by energy firms catalysed the Court to issue this mandate.

Skewed funding

An analysis of CSR data exposes a lopsided spending pattern that favours human-centric development at the expense of the environment. Over the past seven years, funds have been overwhelmingly allocated to social sectors, with education receiving approximately 38%, healthcare 22%, and rural development 10%. Conversely, the environment averaged between 7%-9%, creating an unbalanced ledger that critically underfunds vital sustainability projects. This disparity suggests that corporations view environmental crises as distant threats compared to immediate social needs. Yet, there are commendable exceptions that prove large-scale restoration is possible.

Mahindra's 'Project Hariyali' has planted almost 25 million trees, focusing on survival rates



Mohan Chandra Pargaen

Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Telangana and adviser to SCCL

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rather than just sapling counts; ITC's forestry program spans 1.3 million acres, integrating livelihoods with conservation; the Tata Group leads water conservation through massive watershed management; Coca-Cola and Hindustan Unilever have undertaken circular waste management projects; and JSW has advanced mangrove restoration. These initiatives demonstrate that prioritising the environment yields significant, and measurable impact. Nevertheless, most companies still pursue 'quick wins' such as one-off awareness drives, and sidestep the arduous processes of forest restoration and natural resource recovery.

Challenges of restoration

Much needed environmental restoration, including afforestation, has been neglected in India as is evidenced in the country's report on the Bonn Challenge (a global, voluntary effort to restore 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2030). While the nation aims to restore 26 million hectares by 2030, private companies have contributed a negligible 2% to the 9.8 million hectares restored so far.

There is a massive 'restoration gap' between the damage caused by industrial activity and the investment made to fix it. Companies prefer social projects such as environmental awareness campaigns, renewable energy, or basic green initiatives. These give quick visibility, clear results, and facilitate easy reporting. In contrast, land-based projects such as forest restoration with tree planting, habitat recovery, water conservation, and waste management take a long time. In addition, they also require expert skills in tree-growing, soil health, and biodiversity checks – skills that most CSR partners don't have. Corporations often support initiatives such as the recently popular Miyawaki plantations, which offer rapid growth and look

excellent in annual reports, but often compromise native ecology and biodiversity. The situation is worsened by an urban bias in the selection of the target area; a lack of practical policies for degraded lands; and poor collaboration with forest departments and other organisations.

Need for reimagining strategy

The current judicial push demands an urgent transition to a 'ecosystem recovery' strategy. This requires reimagining corporate accountability, and replacing conventional auditing with time-bound restoration initiatives and their ecological assessments.

Indicators of success should be tangible ecological services such as soil carbon sequestration, water retention, and biodiversity recovery. To achieve this, India must prioritise degraded and remote forest lands lacking resources through appropriate restoration initiatives. Further, the country needs to build alliances between forest departments, universities, conservation NGOs and joint forest management committees. These partnerships can establish dedicated restoration units under scientific supervision, giving due regard to native species and ecology. Furthermore, the challenge of long-term financing for landscape-scale projects and restoration challenges can be solved by establishing a restoration trust or an escrow fund. This would guarantee continuity and provide the long-term security necessary for real ecological impact.

Corporate governance in India must evolve from being shareholder-centric to ecosystem-centric, with directors acting as fiduciaries for the environment and moving past the ease of basic compliance. When the health of our planet is treated as a mandatory, non-negotiable part of business strategy, the country moves toward a future where sustainable development becomes a lived reality.

- **India emerged as a pioneer for mandating profit-sharing for social good through the Companies Act, 2013 — a visionary move to channel corporate earnings for crucial societal objectives. However, the environment remains largely neglected, often sidelined by prevailing corporate priorities.**
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- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) integrates social and environmental considerations into business operations.**
- **In India, the CSR framework is established by Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, which mandates eligible companies to contribute towards societal development.**
- **Eligibility Criteria for CSR: The CSR law applies to companies that meet any of the following criteria: a net worth of ₹500 crore or more, an annual turnover of ₹1,000 crore or more, or a net profit of ₹5 crore or more in the previous financial year.**
- **CSR Spend Requirement: Eligible companies must allocate at least 2% of their average net profit from the previous 3 years towards CSR activities.**

Mains Question

Corporate activities play a significant role in environmental degradation as well as environmental protection. Critically examine the role of the corporate sector in promoting sustainable development in India.

कॉरपोरेट गतिविधियाँ पर्यावरणीय क्षरण के साथ-साथ पर्यावरण संरक्षण में भी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाती हैं। भारत में सतत विकास को बढ़ावा देने में कॉरपोरेट क्षेत्र की भूमिका का समालोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए।

Cowardly bully

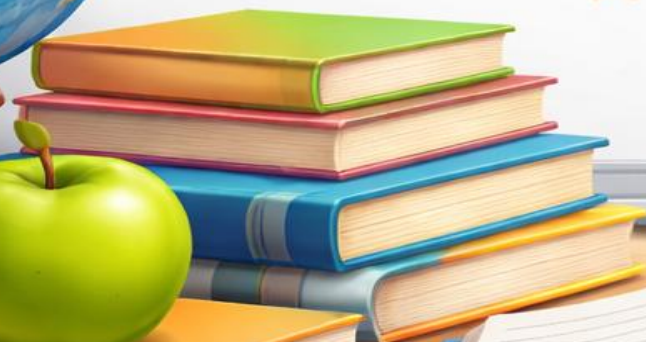
Trump should end the war and ask Israel to leave Iran alone

Donald Trump's decision to postpone attacks on Iran's power plants, 36 hours after issuing a 48-hour ultimatum to Tehran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, is the clearest sign yet that the war is not going according to his plan. Over the past week, Mr. Trump has declared victory, claiming that U.S. and Israeli strikes had destroyed Iran's defence capabilities. Yet, Iran continues to launch missiles at Persian Gulf countries and Israel, while maintaining control over the Strait of Hormuz, which prevents Mr. Trump from extricating himself from a conflict whose economic costs are mounting globally. Since the war began on February 28, Iran has largely ignored Mr. Trump's threats, responding to escalation with counter-escalation. When the U.S. bombed Kharg Island, Iran struck American bases in the region. When Israel targeted South Pars, Iran hit energy facilities across Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Israel. After the Natanz nuclear facility was struck, Tehran targeted Dimona, the Israeli town hosting its nuclear facilities. When Mr. Trump threatened strikes on Iran's power plants, Tehran warned of attacks on Gulf and Israeli energy assets and U.S. financial interests, forcing him to make a U-turn.

Before the war began, the U.S. and Israel had set ambitious objectives: force Tehran to shut down its nuclear programme and ship out the highly enriched uranium, cut off Iran's support for non-state militias in West Asia and dismantle its missile capabilities. Twenty-five days later, one of Mr. Trump's key priorities is to open the Strait of Hormuz, which was closed only after the war broke out. He does not have easy options to do so – he has to either talk to Tehran and make a deal or authorise a ground operation; reports suggest the U.S. has already despatched thousands of marines. Yet, Mr. Trump's U-turn on strikes on power plants indicates that he may be seriously weighing talks. Iran has dismissed Mr. Trump's claims that negotiations are underway. But President Masoud Pezeshkian has outlined conditions for ending the war: guarantees against future aggression; reparations for infrastructure damage; and recognition of Iran's 'legitimate rights' (which can be interpreted as sanctions relief). Mr. Trump, whose administration has already eased some sanctions on Iran's oil, could be looking for a deal, and Tehran could reciprocate if common ground is found. But for any diplomatic effort to progress, Mr. Trump must first rein in his ally Israel, which continues to pound Iran and Lebanon like an unhinged bully. The military path that he has embraced is showing clear limits. The least damaging way out for Mr. Trump is to strike a deal with Iran and get out of this war.

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Thank You!



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