

DISCIPLINE



Important Issues of the Day

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Centre working with ‘full sensitivity’ for all communities: Murmu

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Saying that the Union government is working towards social justice, President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday asked MPs to stand as one on issues of national security, Viksit Bharat (developed India) and the campaign for swadeshi.

In her address to a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament, the President invoked Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Babasaheb Ambedkar, and leaders such as Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Deendayal Upadhyaya, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee to note that “amid different opinions and diverse viewpoints, there has been unanimity about nothing being greater than the nation”.

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dia by 2047.

Amid unease over certain sections of the University Grants Commission’s regulations to promote equity in higher education institutions, the President said the government was working with “full sensitivity” for all – for Dalits, Backward Classes, the marginalised, and tribal communities.

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OPPOSITION PROTEST

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- **She said that the government was accelerating the “reform express” for achieving a developed India by 2047.**

Article 86

- **It provides that the President may address either House of Parliament or both Houses assembled together, and for that purpose require the attendance of members.**
- **Since the commencement of the IC, there has not been any occasion when the President has addressed either House or both Houses assembled together, under the provision of this article.**

Article 87

- **It provides for the 'special address' by the President.**
- **Clause (1) of the Art 87 provides that:**
- **At the commencement of 1st session after each general election to House of the People and**
- **At the commencement of the 1st session of each year,**
- **the President shall address both Houses of Parliament assembled together. Such an Address is called 'special address' and it is also an annual feature.**
- **Under this article, the President's address to both the houses assembled together is a constitutional obligation i.e., mandatory.**

Contents of the Presidential Address

- **It is a statement of policy of the Government and is drafted by the Government which is responsible for its contents.**
- **It contains a review of various activities and achievements of the Government during the previous year and sets the broad governance agenda for the coming year.**
- **Article 87(1) originally required the President to address both Houses of Parliament at the commencement of 'every session'.**
- **The First Amendment to the Constitution in 1951 changed this position and made the President's address once a year.**

Motion of Thanks

- **The address of the president, which corresponds to the ‘speech from the Throne in Britain’, is discussed in both the Houses of Parliament on a motion called the ‘Motion of Thanks’.**
- **Clause (2) of Art 87 of the IC requires that provision shall be made by the rules regulating the procedure of either House for allotment of time for discussion of matters referred to in the President’s Address.**
- **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the House make provisions for discussion of the Address.**
- **The Motion of Thanks must be passed in the House (with a simple majority i.e. majority of members present and voting), otherwise it amounts to the defeat of the government.**
- **It is one of the ways through which the Lok Sabha can express a lack of confidence in the government of the day.**

Consider the following statements:

- **The President of India can summon a session of the Parliament at such a place as he/she thinks fit.**
- **The Constitution of India provides for three sessions of the Parliament in a year, but it is not mandatory to conduct all three sessions.**
- **There is no minimum number of days that the Parliament is required to meet in a year.**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Mature and pragmatic

India did well to negotiate a fair deal with the European Union

The free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union (EU) is significant not just on account of the sizes of the economies involved, but also because it showcases Indian negotiators' skill and maturity when dealing with a powerful counterparty. India has managed to negotiate favourable terms in each of the previous eight FTAs of the last four years or so, but those were with much smaller economies or groupings. For context, the other eight FTAs together accounted for about 16% of India's total trade in 2024-25, while the EU itself accounted for nearly 12%. Under the latest deal, the EU will drop tariffs on 99.5% of the items that India exports, with most going down to zero immediately upon implementation. India has given tariff concessions on 97.5% of Europe's exports. Both sides did well to address issues that were previously intractable. India ensured that strategic agricultural sectors and dairy were excluded from the deal. The EU too managed to exclude several of its sensitive agricultural sectors. What stood out was how the two sides arrived at a workable solution on automobiles. It had been disagreements over auto and auto parts that had derailed negotiations in 2013. The quota-based system now arrived at not only protects India's domestic manufacturers at the lower end of the price band, but also provides a big opportunity for Europe's luxury carmakers. Similarly, the quota-based wine tariffs not only give French winemakers an opportunity – a fervent demand on their part – but also provide protections to India's burgeoning domestic industry. Such a ma-

...makers an opportunity – a fervent demand on their part – but also provide protections to India's burgeoning domestic industry. Such a mature and pragmatic approach to persistent hindrances is the way large economies must negotiate with each other. This is further illustrated by the mobility, defence, and technology agreements that were signed separately.

That said, there are some concerns. India could not negotiate any concessions under the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). At the moment, this tariff applies to only six products, but is designed to include all industrial goods in some years. The upside is that CBAM applies to all countries equally, and India has done well to negotiate a deal wherein any concession granted to a third country would automatically apply to it as well. Second, if India is to attract foreign investors looking to take advantage of a cheaper export route to Europe, it will have to quickly implement reforms that encourage large-scale manufacturing. Finally, with the FTA document to be translated into 27 European languages before it can be cleared by each country and finally the European Parliament, actual implementation will likely take a while. India must push for as speedy a clearing process as possible. Otherwise, the gains so painstakingly bargained for will be too late to offset the U.S. tariff pain.

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- **For context, the other eight FTAs together accounted for about 16% of India's total trade in 2024-25, while the EU itself accounted for nearly 12%.**
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- **Second, if India is to attract foreign investors looking to take advantage of a cheaper export route to Europe, it will have to quickly implement reforms that encourage large-scale manufacturing.**
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A “closed economy” is an economy in which

(a) the money supply is fully controlled

(b) deficit financing takes place

(c) only exports take place

(d) neither exports nor imports take place

Mains Question

*“Export-led growth has long been advocated as a pathway for accelerating economic development. In the context of India, critically examine the relevance, opportunities, and limitations of an export-led growth strategy in the post-pandemic global economic order.”
(250 words | 15 marks)*

*“निर्यात-आधारित विकास को लंबे समय से आर्थिक विकास को तीव्र करने का एक मार्ग माना गया है। भारत के संदर्भ में, महामारी के बाद की वैश्विक आर्थिक व्यवस्था में निर्यात-आधारित विकास रणनीति की प्रासंगिकता, संभावनाओं और सीमाओं का समालोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए।”
(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)*

India, the beautiful — but first, India the functional

Page No. 8, GS 2,3

India is a land of astonishing contrasts. It offers snow-capped peaks and sun-drenched beaches, ancient temples and cutting-edge tech parks, spiritual retreats and bustling bazaars. Yet, despite this kaleidoscope of experiences, India welcomed just 5.6 million foreign tourist arrivals till August 2025 – a modest figure for a country of 1.4 billion. Singapore, with a population smaller than Delhi's, drew 11.6 million by August 2025. Thailand earned over \$60 billion from tourism; India made barely a third of that.

These numbers are not just statistical curiosities. They reflect a deeper malaise in India's tourism strategy – one that demands urgent attention if we are to unlock the sector's full potential. Tourism is not merely about showcasing monuments or selling sunsets; it is about creating experiences that are seamless, safe, and memorable. And on that front, India has work to do.

Three main problems

India's problems can be summarised in three "I"s: image, infrastructure and 'India itself'. Let us analyse each. First, image: the perception of the country abroad. India's 'Incredible India' campaign is evocative, but branding alone cannot overcome the weight of negative headlines. Concerns about safety, especially for women, with many foreigners considering India to be unsafe for women travelling alone; scams; sanitation; and bureaucratic hassles often shape the global imagination more than our cultural richness. Tourists want to feel welcome, not wary. Singapore and Thailand have succeeded not just by being clean or affordable, but by being consistent in their messaging as safe, efficient, and, especially in Thailand's case, fun.

India's vastness makes a single narrative difficult, but that does not mean marketing the country is impossible. We must segment our appeal – Spiritual India, Adventure India, Luxury India – and market each with clarity and conviction to different audiences abroad. It is time for 'Incredible Indias', in the plural, to be sold to the world. The Buddhist circuit, the Ramayana circuit, even the cricketing circuit should all be marketed to appropriate foreign constituencies.

Infrastructure is the second problem area. The tourist experience begins the moment one lands. Airports, immigration counters, taxis, Wi-Fi – these are first impressions. A luxury hotel means little if the road outside is potholed and the signage indecipherable. Last-mile connectivity to remote destinations remains a challenge. Clean public toilets, reliable internet, and well-maintained heritage sites are foundational. Paradoxically, while India can be a budget



Shashi Tharoor

MP (Congress) for Thiruvananthapuram (Lok Sabha), an award-winning author, a former Minister of State for Human Rights Resources Development, and a former Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology

Until India addresses the fundamentals – image, infrastructure, and experience – it will remain a tantalising idea rather than a top-tier destination

destination, mid-range and luxury travel often comes at a premium, making the country less competitive than its Southeast Asian neighbours.

Then comes 'India itself'. The sheer scale can overwhelm the uninitiated. Crowds, noise, and a service culture that is not always tourist-friendly can cause frustration. Scammers, touts, beggars and sexual harassers exist, and they erode trust. The hospitality sector reportedly faces a 40% shortfall in trained staff, and many graduates prefer the predictability of office jobs to the unpredictability of guest relations. We need vocational training, multilingual guides, and a professional workforce that sees tourism not as a fallback, but as a calling.

Immigration, too, must evolve. While e-visas have helped, India still ranks behind many Asian countries on ease-of-travel indexes. A 'Visa on Arrival for the World' policy may sound ambitious, but it is worth exploring – though I am certain that would require a major transformation in the attitude of the Home Ministry. Stories of foreigners turned away at Indian airports because of past criticisms of the country do disproportionate damage. India is a large and confident nation; it can absorb dissent without rejecting the dissenter. We need to train immigration officers to be friendly and welcoming to foreigners. And as a nation, Indians need to accept criticism of policies as part of democratic discourse.

Fixing the deficit

Fixing India's tourism deficit therefore requires a multi-pronged strategy that addresses both perception and reality. First, rebrand and relaunch. Let us move beyond generic campaigns and build targeted narratives. Promote well-defined circuits – the Golden Triangle, the Himalayan trail, the coastal belt – with impeccable infrastructure and safety. Invest in digital storytelling: immersive virtual tours, influencer partnerships, and user-generated content that showcases India's magic through authentic lenses. If I were to write India's tourism tagline, I would say, 'Incredible Indias: Experience the Infinite'. 'Not just a place to visit, but a world to inhabit – spiritually, culturally, and emotionally.'

Second, build infrastructure that matches ambition. Encourage public-private partnerships to adopt and maintain heritage sites. Scale up the 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme for companies to renovate and maintain sites everywhere in India. Improve roads, rail, and sustainable transport to lesser-known gems. Launch a nationwide 'Clean Tourism' campaign with clean restrooms, signage, and waste management at every major destination. Make museums more digital, more interactive, less dusty and worn.

Third, prioritise safety and training. Expand the tourist police force, especially by hiring and training large numbers of women; ensure multilingual support; and crack down on scams and harassment. Create centralised apps for verified guides and transport. Invest in skill development – not just for five-star hotels, but for homestays, eco-lodges, and local artisans.

Fourth, streamline the visa process. Make e-visas faster, simpler, and more intuitive. Offer long-term multi-entry visas for frequent travellers. Reciprocity is the usual rule, but India can identify countries whose nationals are unlikely to pose any immigration risk, and make an exception to that rule. It is important to remove bureaucratic hurdles that deter rather than protect.

Fifth, promote sustainability and authenticity. Today's global traveller seeks eco-tourism and meaningful experiences. India must balance growth with preservation. That means regulating footfalls at fragile sites, promoting community-based tourism, and ensuring that development does not come at the cost of cultural or environmental degradation.

Economic opportunity, strategic imperative

Tourism must be a national priority. A World Tourism Organisation report notes investment on tourism creates multiple times more jobs than the same amounts spent on manufacturing. As automation reshapes industry, the differential will only increase. Tourism offers employment not just to more people, but particularly to the unskilled and semi-skilled – precisely the demographic that needs to be uplifted. In a region where youth unemployment can fuel unrest (as we have seen in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal), tourism is not just an economic opportunity; it is a strategic imperative. This is why it deserves to be supported by the government as a vital industry, with tax breaks and policy support.

The hospitality industry is a curator of India's image in the eyes of the world. It is a shame that the otherwise rightly hailed GST reforms have left the hospitality industry behind. The denial of input tax credit across the full range of hotels' revenue sources ironically means that they were better off at 12% GST than they now are at 5%. This must be fixed.

India has the history of Egypt, the natural beauty of New Zealand, and the cultural depth of a continent. But until we address the fundamentals – image, infrastructure, and experience – we will remain a tantalising idea rather than a top-tier destination.

India doesn't need to reinvent itself. It needs to refine itself. The world is waiting. Let us give it a reason to come – and to stay.

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Mains Question

“Tourism has the potential to emerge as a key driver of inclusive and sustainable economic growth in India. Examine India’s tourism potential and discuss the major constraints that need to be addressed to fully harness it.”

(250 words | 15 marks)

“पर्यटन में भारत में समावेशी एवं सतत आर्थिक विकास का एक प्रमुख चालक बनने की क्षमता है। भारत की पर्यटन क्षमता का परीक्षण कीजिए तथा उन प्रमुख बाधाओं पर चर्चा कीजिए जिन्हें इसकी पूर्ण संभावनाओं को साकार करने हेतु दूर किया जाना आवश्यक है।”

(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)

66% sanitation workers in Central govt. from SC, ST, OBC groups: DoPT report

The report shows that among all Group A posts in Union Ministries and departments, 14.2% were held by SCs, 6.54% by STs, and 19.14% by OBCs; the report provides no data on EWS employees

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

More than 66% of the Group C *safai karmacharis* (sanitation workers) employed in the Union government come from the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC), show data on reservation in the annual report for 2024-25 from the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

The report, released last week, showed that 14.2% of the Group A posts in the Union Ministries and departments were held by SCs, 6.54% by STs, and 19.14% by OBCs. DoPT regulations on direct recruitment to all groups of posts in the Union government require reserving 15% of seats for SCs, 7.5% for STs, 27% for OBCs, and 10% for Economically Weaker Sections.

The data in the 2024-25 report on the representation of SC, ST, and OBC employees in the Union government showed that in Group C (excluding sanitation

Taking count

The Personnel Ministry, in its latest report, has published the representation of SCs, STs and OBCs in the posts and services of the Union government, as per data received from 80 Ministries and departments



Group	Total no. of employees	SC	ST	OBC
A	1,19,178	16,920 (14.2%)	7,793 (6.54%)	22,807 (19.14%)
B	3,64,307	59,006 (16.20%)	27,789 (7.63%)	79,952 (21.95%)
C (excluding sanitation workers)	27,27,930	4,56,925 (16.75%)	2,43,872 (8.94%)	7,44,527 (27.29%)
C (sanitation workers)	40,737	14,971 (36.75%)	3,331 (8.18%)	8,614 (21.15%)
Total	32,52,152	5,47,822 (16.84%)	2,82,785 (8.7%)	8,55,900 (26.32%)

tion workers) posts, 16.75% were SCs, 8.94% STs, and 27.29% OBCs. In Group B posts, SCs comprised 16.2%, STs 7.63%, and OBCs 21.95%.

Overall, among the 32.52 lakh Union government employees across 80 Ministries and departments that the latest report accounted for, the representation of SCs was at 16.84%, STs 8.7%, and OBCs 26.32%. However, the report does not provide any data on the

representation of EWS employees.

The DoPT said that this data was for Central government employees as of January 1, 2024.

Data gap

This is the first time since its 2018-19 annual report that the DoPT has put out data on the representation of SCs, STs, and OBCs across most of its Ministries and departments.

In annual reports from

2019, the DoPT has been accounting for partial data on Union government employees, showing representation figures for a total of 19-20 lakh employees.

The DoPT said that this shortfall had been occurring because not all Ministries and Departments were able to provide the data in time.

Trend shift

Compared with the representation figures from 2018-19 for Union government employees, the last time when over 32 lakh employees were accounted for across 78 Ministries and Departments, the overall representation of SC staffers went down from 17.49% to 16.84%, that of ST staffers went up slightly from 8.47% to 8.94%, and that of OBC staffers saw the highest increase from 21.57% to 26.32%.

Across Groups A, B, and C, the highest increase in representation was seen among OBCs from the figures from 2018-19, while the representation of SC and ST groups remained the same.

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- **The data in the 2024-25 report on the representation of SC, ST, and OBC employees in the Union government showed that in Group C (excluding sanitation workers) posts, 16.75% were SCs, 8.94% STs, and 27.29% OBCs. In Group B posts, SCs comprised 16.2%, STs 7.63%, and OBCs 21.95%.**

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Pygmy Hog



- **India's Pygmy hog is rapidly declining due to loss and degradation of tall grassland habitats, even though it plays a critical role in maintaining grassland ecosystem health.**
- **Smallest and rarest wild pig species in the world**
- **One of the few mammals that builds its own nest with a roof**
- **Functions as an indicator species, reflecting grassland health**
- **Prefers undisturbed tall grasslands with early succession riverine vegetation**
- **Habitat includes dense tall grasses mixed with herbs, shrubs and young trees**
- **Present distribution restricted to**
- **Manas National Park**
- **Orang National Park**

Ecological Role

- **Forages by digging soil using its snout**
- **Feeds on roots, tubers, fruits, termites, earthworms and eggs**
- **Improves soil aeration and fertility**
- **Aids seed dispersal, supporting grassland regeneration**

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered**
- **Listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**
- **Estimated wild population is very small, confined to Assam**

Wings India 2026



- **India's rapidly expanding civil aviation sector will be showcased at Wings India 2026, Asia's largest civil aviation event, scheduled from 28 to 31 January 2026 at Begumpet Airport, Hyderabad.**
- **Asia's largest civil aviation event**
- **Organised as a global platform for Connectivity, Manufacturing, Services, Innovation and Sustainability**
- **Inaugurated by Rammohan Naidu Kinjarapu, Union Minister of Civil Aviation**
- **"Indian Aviation: Paving the Future from Design to Deployment, Manufacturing to Maintenance, Inclusivity to Innovation and Safety to Sustainability"**

India's Aviation Growth Story

- **India among the fastest growing aviation markets globally**
- **Passenger traffic has grown multi fold in the last decade**
- **Record aircraft orders place India among the largest future aircraft markets**
- **Rapid expansion of airport infrastructure Greenfield airports, Modernised terminals and Regional connectivity under UDAN**

Thank You!

