CURRENT AFFAIRS

UPSC CSE 2026

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES

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India-Russia friendship remains steady like the pole star, says PM
- **Indian PM** appreciated **Putin** for taking the **India–Russia relationship** to **"new heights" over the past quarter of a century**. He laid out an **expansive canvas of energy and trade collaborations** between the two countries **stretching to 2030**. He called for a **peaceful solution to Russia's war with Ukraine**.
- He highlighted the **"sustainability and certainty"** of **India–Russia ties**. **Indian and Russian governments** signed **two agreements** to **enhance mobility of Indian semi-skilled and skilled workers to Russia**.

IndiGo cancels over 1,000 flights, gets exemption from new night duty rules
- The **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** granted **IndiGo** exemptions from **night duty restrictions**, including the **cap on two landings**, until **February 10**.
- The airline admitted to the **government** that it **underestimated increased crew requirements**, despite the **court order issued in April 2025** on **new duty hours**.
- IndiGo acknowledged **"planning gaps"** in its operations for the rules that **came into effect on November 1**.

Govt. to streamline its public communications framework
- The **Union government** has begun a **sweeping revamp of its information network**, covering **human resources reorganisation** and **strengthening technological infrastructure**.
- The aim is to ensure **real-time media response mechanisms** and **data-driven campaign planning** for a **streamlined public communications framework**, according to **government officials**.
- **Cadre restructuring** involves **changing the number of posts**, **creating new ones or abolishing old ones**, **modifying roles and responsibilities**, and **improving promotion avenues**.

Unified outreach plan
The government is likely to execute the following moves in the near future, according to sources

- More intake of Indian Information Service officials to cater to rising number of departments and functions
- Restructuring of IIS cadre
- A Board on media communications, which could also oversee decisions on transfers and postings
- Creation of posts at more than 40 Embassies to strengthen communications mechanism overseas

A growing shadow over digital constitutionalism
- The **central government revoked its order** mandating installation of **'Sanchar Saathi'**, a **government app**, on mobile phones from **2026**, within **48 hours**, following concerns over **ambiguous data collection, lack of consent, surveillance and unlimited data storage**.

Context of Cybercrime and Surveillance
- **Cybercrimes increased** from **15.9 lakh cases in 2023** to **20.4 lakh in 2024**.
- **Digital constitutionalism** signifies the extension of **constitutional principles** such as **liberty, dignity, equality, non-arbitrariness, accountability and rule of law** into the **digital space**.
- These values are threatened in a world dominated by **data collection, artificial intelligence (AI) and surveillance technologies**.
- Surveillance has become **silent and constant**, using **metadata gathering, location tracing, biometric identification, behavioural modelling and predictive analytics**.
- Such surveillance can **chill free speech**, **discourage dissent**, and **disrupt democracies**.
- People begin **self-censorship** when aware of being **under observation**.

Datafication and Erosion of Consent
- **Datafication has entered every sector**.
- **Banks** rely on **behavioural analytics**.
- **Hospitals and insurance agencies** depend on **digital medical records**.
- **Education** is delivered through **online platforms**.
- **Social media** constantly **profiles users**.
- These developments create **efficiency**, but reduce **personal control over information**.
- **Consent** has become a routine **"click-through" process**, not a genuine voluntary choice.
- **Purpose limitation** is often ignored.
- **Privacy loss** now reflects the **gradual erasure of control over identity and decision-making**.

Surveillance Technologies and Global Concerns
- Surveillance technologies are embedded in **public places**.

- **Closed circuit cameras, biometric scanners and digital identifiers** constantly monitor people.
- **Facial recognition** has been **prohibited or severely limited** in some **U.S. cities** due to **racial discrimination, surveillance and false identification**.
- **Misidentification** has led to **wrongful arrests abroad**. There is **no comprehensive law on surveillance**.

Need for Legal and Institutional Safeguards

- There is a need to develop **institutional protection**.
- Violations should be addressed through an **independent digital rights commission** to ensure **accountability**.
- Surveillance should be restricted except in **grave national security situations**, determined by **necessity and proportionality**.
- **Public transparency reports**, **parliamentary scrutiny**, and **judicial warrants** must be **obligatory**.
- **Risky AI devices** should be **audited and bias-tested regularly**.
- Citizens should have the **right to explanation** and the **right to appeal automated decisions**.
- **Purpose limitation, limited data collection and severe punishment for abuse** must be reinforced.
- **Digital literacy** should be treated as a form of **constitutional empowerment**.

Marked for life

- Shocked that an **acid attack victim** had not got **closure 16 years after the crime**, the **Supreme Court of India** made **oral observations** calling the delay a **"mockery of the system"**.
- The victim is associated with **Brave Souls**, an **NGO** providing **medical and legal support** to **acid attack survivors**.
- A **PIL** was filed seeking **formal recognition of acid attack survivors as persons with specified disabilities** under the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**.
- The **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** asked the **Centre** to consider bringing an **ordinance**. The **CJI ordered the Registrar-General of High Courts** to provide **numbers and details of pending trials** in **acid attack cases**.
- The Court proposed **special courts** to **exclusively conduct acid attack cases on a day-to-day basis**.
- In Laxmi vs Union of India and Ors., the Court had directed the government to ensure **treatment, aftercare and rehabilitation** for **acid attack victims**, and to examine **banning over-the-counter sale of acid**.
- Section 124 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita deals with **acid attacks and punishment**, but **trials remain long-drawn and conviction rates low**.
- As per National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, **207 acid attack incidents** were reported in **2023**, with **West Bengal (57)** highest, followed by **Uttar Pradesh (31)**.

Deal without peace

- **Trump** counts the **crisis in Congo** among the **conflicts he has helped resolve**. Fighting continues in eastern Congo between Congolese forces and the M23 rebels.
- Under the **agreement**, Rwanda wants Congo to disarm Hutu militias operating from its territory, while **Congo wants Rwanda to withdraw troops from the east**.
- The **success of the deal hinges on peace** between the **Congolese government** and **M23**.
- The crisis traces back to the **1994 Rwandan genocide**, in which about **8,00,000 people, mostly Tutsis**, were killed by **ethnic Hutu militias**. After the fall of the **genocidal regime in Kigali, thousands of Hutus fled to Congo** in the **mid-1990s**. **Rwanda claims** that some **genocidal militias continue to operate from Congolese territory**.
- **M23** is named after a **failed peace agreement of March 23, 2009**, between a **Tutsi-led rebel group** and the **Congolese government**. **M23 says it is fighting to protect the rights of Congo's Tutsi ethnic minority**.
- The **Congolese government and UN experts** allege that **Rwanda backs M23**, which Rwanda denies.
- In **2012, M23 seized much of Goma**, but withdrew after **international pressure on Rwanda**.
- **M23 resumed rebellion in 2021**, again **capturing Goma and expanding its reach**.
- Alongside **U.S.-brokered talks between Congo and Rwanda**, a **parallel dialogue between M23 and Kinshasa**, facilitated by **Qatar**, is also underway.

Chile's lesson for India's coal conundrum

- Despite gains in **renewable energy**, **India dropped 13 places to 23rd** in the **Climate Change Performance Index** released during **COP30 in Brazil in 2025**, mainly due to **lack of progress in phasing out coal**.

India's Coal–Renewables Scenario

- **Coal** makes up **over half** of India's total energy use.
- **Renewables (solar, wind, hydro, nuclear)** remain a **minority share**.
- India **doubled clean energy capacity during 2021–25**.
- **Renewables account for half of installed power capacity**, but only **one-fifth of electricity generation in 2024**.

- **Coal contributed 75% of electricity generation in 2024**. India is **increasing domestic coal production**.

Chile's Experience

- **Coal's share in Chile's electricity generation** fell from **43.6% to 17.5% (2016–24)**.
- **Renewables make up over 60%** of Chile's power mix.
- Introduction of a **2014 carbon tax of $5 per tonne**. **Stringent emission standards** raised coal plant costs by **30%**.
- **Competitive auctions** boosted wind and solar. **Energy storage systems** stabilised the grid.
- Commitment to **phase out all coal by 2040**.
- Chile had **fewer coal plants**, **smaller dependent workforce**, and **swift market reforms**.
- **Alternative industries**, especially renewables, absorbed **displaced workers and capital**.

India's Transition Challenges

- India has **far deeper coal dependence**. **Limited economic alternatives** in coal regions.
- **Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal** face **social risks from abrupt closures**.

Why Coal Phaseout Matters

- Coal phaseout is a **"no regrets" policy**.
- By **2100**, climate change could reduce **India's GDP by 3%–10%**.
- A **1 GW increase in coal-fired capacity** is linked to a **14% rise in infant mortality** near plant sites.

Steps to be taken

- Emphasis on **removing oldest and most polluting plants**. **Cancellation** of new coal approvals.
- Replacement with **firm renewable power backed by storage**.
- Need for **clear timelines** for plant retirements and closures.
- **TERI** suggests **complete coal phaseout by 2050** to meet **net zero goals**.
- Transition involves **incremental scaling down**, **efficiency improvements**, and **decommissioning**.
- Address **limitations of renewables** and expand **electrification of transport, industry and households**.
- Reform **markets and regulation** to **disincentivise coal** through **carbon pricing**, **removal of coal subsidies**, **clean dispatch rules**, and **renewable-favouring power contracts**.
- Provide **support for workers** through **reskilling and alternative livelihoods**.
- Establish a **dedicated transition fund**, such as the proposed **Green Energy Transition India Fund**.
- Use a **blended model of public and private capital**.
- **Government support** for **community welfare and workforce reskilling**.
- **Private investment** to lead **clean energy infrastructure expansion**.
- Strategic use of the **District Mineral Foundation corpus** for **entrepreneurship and economic diversification** in **coal-dependent regions**.

Path paved to link India's skill base with Russia's demand for labourers

- **India and Russia** signed **two agreements** to **enhance mobility of Indian semi-skilled and skilled workers to Russia**, with India planning to increasingly utilise its **"semi-skilled workers" strength**.
- At the **23rd India–Russia annual summit**, a pact was signed on **"Temporary labour activity of citizens of one state in the territory of the other state"**.
- A second agreement was signed on **"Cooperation in combating irregular migration"**.
- The mobility agreements will provide a **framework for employment of Indian workers in Russia** and ensure they **do not face difficulties faced by Indians fraudulently lured by agents**.
- **India and Russia** also signed agreements on **media and academic collaboration**.
- **Russia** earlier launched an **Arabic edition**, and its **Indian version** will be the **second international foray**. Both countries committed to **regular bilateral consultations on Arctic-related issues**. **India's scientific interest in the Arctic** predates Independence, linked to the **Svalbard Treaty (1920)** signed by the British government.
  - The **Svalbard Treaty** grants **Norway sovereignty** while allowing **citizens and companies of 48 signatory nations** equal rights for **non-military commercial and scientific activities**.
- **India and Russia** committed to **broadening cooperation in nuclear energy**, including **fuel cycle and lifecycle support** for operating the **Kudankulam nuclear power plant**.
  - Both sides agreed to **accelerate technical and commercial discussions on VVER (Vodo-Vodyanoi Energetichesky Reaktor) nuclear reactors** for **design, research, and joint development**.
- The two countries welcomed the **enhanced partnership between the Indian Space Research Organisation and Roscosmos**.
- They agreed to continue consultations on **interoperability of national payment systems**, **financial messaging systems**, and **central bank digital currency platforms** to ensure **uninterrupted bilateral trade**.

- Experts said **trade in national currencies** would reduce **dependence on the U.S. dollar** and help address **India's widening trade deficit with Russia**.
- The joint statement underlined the importance of an **open, inclusive, transparent and non-discriminatory multilateral trade system** with the **World Trade Organization at its core**.
- Both sides emphasised **addressing tariff and non-tariff barriers**, **removing logistics bottlenecks**, **promoting connectivity**, **ensuring smooth payment mechanisms**, **insurance and reinsurance solutions**, and **business-to-business interaction** to achieve the **revised bilateral trade target of $100 billion by 2030**.