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Page 01: GS III : Indian Economy/ Preliminary Examination

India’s external sector demonstrated strong resilience as merchandise exports expanded by 19.6% year-on-year to **$44.2 billion**. Despite regional conflicts in West Asia, strategic rerouting of shipping corridors and market diversification served as key catalysts for trade recovery.

Merchandise exports surge by 20% as India diversifies trade

India’s exports to West Asia recovered in July after re-routing shipping lines, says official; exports to several countries including China, Kenya doing well, he adds; trade deficit, however, widens as service exports grow slower than imports

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Despite the ongoing turmoil in West Asia, India’s merchandise exports saw a growth of nearly 20% in July this year, faster than that of imports, official data released on Thursday show.

Notably, exports to West Asia itself have recovered, with July’s exports to the region nearly 9% higher than the same period last year.

According to Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, this has been achieved by routing India’s trade through different ports and shipping lines.

India’s merchandise exports stood at $44.2 billion in July, up 19.6% over its level in the same period last year. According to Mr. Agrawal, this was achieved through continued diversification of export destinations. Merchandise imports, meanwhile, grew a relatively slower 17.5% in July to $76.2 billion.

“If you look at destination countries, we are now doing well in countries where we typically did not earlier, such as China, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Austria, Malaysia, and several other countries,” Mr. Agrawal said at a press conference. “Even in Africa, in Kenya and the South African Customs Union region, there has been an increase in exports in the first four months of this financial year,” the Commerce Secretary noted. “Tanzania has also been a very strong silver lining where 130% growth in exports has been seen.”

India’s exports to China grew 65% to $2.2 billion in July, albeit on a low base. Over the course of April-July this year, exports to China grew 36%.

However, India’s trade deficit still widened to $15 billion in July from $11.4 billion in the corresponding period last year as services imports grew faster than services exports. The data show that services exports grew 6.4% in July to $35.9 billion while imports grew 9.5% to $18.9 billion.

The growth in services exports is in keeping with the subdued export order growth sentiments expressed by service exporters surveyed in the HSBC India Services PMI report for the month.

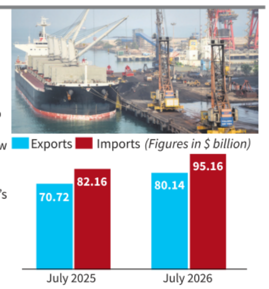
The ongoing war in West Asia hit India’s exports to the region in March and April, with exports contracting nearly 57% in March and 27% in April.

Since then, however, exports to the region have recovered, and stood at $5.7 billion in July 2026, up 8.8% over July last year.

“Some of the ports in Oman that are outside the Strait of Hormuz have been doing well and more cargo has been flowing through them. Even two ports in the UAE – Fujairah and Khor Fakkan – are seeing more traffic,” Mr. Agrawal explained.

Soaring trade

India’s total exports for July 2026 grew 13.31% from July 2025, while imports grew by 15.83% in the same period. The chart shows India’s total exports and imports in July 2026 compared to the year-ago period



Key Findings & Analytical Insights

- **Strategic Maritime Adaptation:** Exporters bypassed vulnerable maritime chokepoints—such as the Strait of Hormuz—by shifting freight traffic to alternative ports outside the strait (e.g., ports in Oman, as well as Fujairah and Khor Fakkan in the UAE).
- **Geographic Diversification:** India expanded its export footprint across non-traditional and high-growth destinations:
  - **Asia-Pacific:** Significant expansion in China (+65% in July to $2.2 billion), Vietnam, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, and Taiwan.
  - **Africa & Europe:** Substantial momentum in Tanzania (+130%), Kenya, the SACU region, and Austria.
- **Trade Deficit Dilemma:** Despite merchandise import growth (17.5%) lagging behind export growth (19.6%), the overall monthly trade deficit widened to **$15 billion**. This widening was driven by a slowdown in services export growth (6.4%) relative to services import growth (9.5%), reflecting muted global demand in the service sector.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC GS-III)

- **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP 2023–28):** Focuses on market diversification, promoting 'Districts as Export Hubs', and expanding non-traditional trade destinations.

- **Chokepoints & Supply Chain Vulnerability:** Highlights India's exposure to critical sea lines of communication (SLOCs) like the Strait of Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb, underscoring the need for robust multimodal logistics networks.
- **Current Account Deficit (CAD) Dynamics:** Emphasizes how a sluggish service trade surplus combined with structural merchandise deficits impacts the overall CAD and currency stability.

Conclusion

India's agility in rerouting maritime traffic and diversifying export markets highlights growing trade resilience amid global shocks. However, sustaining long-term external balance will require revitalizing service exports, enhancing domestic manufacturing competitiveness, and accelerating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with emerging economies.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: Which of the following would most directly contribute to export market diversification?

A. Concentrating exports in a single large market.

B. Developing trade relationships with multiple geographical regions and product markets.

C. Increasing dependence on imported intermediate goods.

D. Restricting exports to traditional trading partners.

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "India's external sector resilience increasingly depends on diversification rather than dependence on a few traditional markets." Discuss.**(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

Page 03 :GS II & III : Governance & Science and Tech / Preliminary Examination

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc, Bengaluru) SPIRE Lab, in collaboration with ARTPARK and Google, have launched **SraVaani**, an open-source multilingual Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) model. Released under an MIT license on Hugging Face, SraVaani covers 65 Indian languages and dialects, significantly expanding AI accessibility beyond major languages.

AI speech recognition model trained on 65 Indian languages and dialects released

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Researchers at Indian Institute of Science (IISc)'s SPIRE Lab, in collaboration with ARTPARK and Google, have released SraVaani, the first multilingual Indian speech recognition model trained on 65 Indian languages and dialects, including over 40 languages that today's speech recognition systems do not officially support.

Designed to take speech AI beyond scheduled languages, SraVaani extends automatic speech recognition to several regional and non-scheduled Indian languages that remain underserved by existing speech technology. The model is freely and publicly available on Hugging Face under a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) licence.

The IISc team's SraVaani model covers 20 scheduled languages and 45 regional languages and dialects. FILE PHOTO

While most speech AI systems work effectively in only a handful of dominant languages, leaving many of the languages and dialects spoken across India without reliable speech-to-text capabilities, SraVaani addresses this gap.

It covers 20 scheduled languages and 45 regional languages and dialects, potentially opening speech AI capabilities to around 25 crore people as per the 2011 Census, whose languages are not properly handled by current systems.

The model supports languages such as Garo, Angika, Chakma, Kokborok, Tulu, Bundeli and Bajjika.

Results on several of these languages are particularly strong, including a 9.5% word error rate on Garo, compared with 69.4% for the next-best system evaluated.

"At IISc, research has always been in service to the nation, and SraVaani, serving more than 60 Indian languages, is a contribution towards that," said Govindan Rangarajan, Director, IISc.

Key Highlights & Significance

- **Broad Coverage:** Models 20 Scheduled languages and 45 non-scheduled regional languages/dialects (e.g., Garo, Angika, Kokborok, Tulu, Bundeli).
- **Bridging Digital Divide:** Extends voice AI capabilities to ~25 crore underserved citizens (2011 Census).
- **High Technical Accuracy:** Achieves significant performance gains on low-resource languages; for instance, reducing the Word Error Rate (WER) on Garo to 9.5% (versus 69.4% in competing models).
- **Open Source Democratization:** Allows researchers, startups, and developers to build localized governance tools, educational applications, and assistive technology for rural populations.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Relevance)

- **Constitutional Framework (Eighth Schedule):**

- Recognizes 22 official scheduled languages (Articles 344(1) and 351).
- SraVaani highlights the policy need to digitally empower the non-scheduled languages (spurred by Article 29 to protect linguistic minority interests).

- **National AI Strategy & Digital Governance:**
  - Aligns with the **Bhashini Initiative** (National Language Translation Mission under MeitY) aimed at overcoming language barriers using local language AI.
  - Advances **Digital India** goals by ensuring inclusive access to public services via voice-based interfaces for non-literate populations.

- **Socio-Economic Dimensions:**
  - Facilitates last-mile delivery in agrarian, health, and financial inclusion services via voice technology.
  - Preserves endangered dialects and indigenous oral cultures across Northeastern and tribal belts.

Conclusion

SraVaani exemplifies how open-source indigenous innovation can bridge India's deep linguistic divide. By bringing 45 non-scheduled and regional dialects into the AI ecosystem, it serves as a critical step toward democratization of technology, supporting inclusive digital governance and cultural preservation.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) refers to:

A. Conversion of written text into speech.

B. Conversion of human speech into machine-readable text.

C. Translation of one written language into another.

D. Generation of images from spoken commands.

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "Language accessibility is an essential component of digital inclusion." Examine the role of multilingual AI in improving last-mile delivery of public services in India.**(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

Page 07 : GS II : Social Justice / Preliminary Examination

A nationwide shortage of essential platinum-based chemotherapy drugs—**Cisplatin** and **Carboplatin**—has exposed structural vulnerabilities in India's pharmaceutical supply chain. Highlights from recent disruptions show how external geopolitical tensions and domestic price rigidities directly threaten health equity and patient survival.

Key Causes of the Shortage

- **Raw Material Cost Inflation:** Global prices for platinum (the core Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient/API) doubled, driving production costs beyond permissible retail limits.
- **Geopolitical & Transit Bottlenecks:** Conflicts and maritime routing disruptions in West Asia severely choked primary raw material import channels.
- **Regulatory Price Rigidities:** Fixed ceiling rates under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO) made generic manufacturing financially unviable, forcing producers to halt output until the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) invoked special powers to raise ceiling prices by 50%.

Why vital chemotherapy drugs are in short supply in India

Prices for platinum — core raw material used in cisplatin and carboplatin — have more than doubled, making old price-controlled manufacturing rates financially unviable; additionally, shipping constraints through West Asia have restricted raw material imports from global suppliers; despite a govt. move to raise price caps, the shortage persists

The Hindu Bureau

India is facing a critical nationwide shortage of two key chemotherapy drugs – cisplatin and carboplatin – driven by soaring global platinum raw material costs, West Asia shipping route disruptions, and domestic price caps. While government hospitals in several States have managed to stabilise supplies, private hospitals in many parts are still facing a crunch. For patients, this has meant interruptions or delays in life-saving treatment. In response, the government last month raised temporarily ceiling rates for the two drugs by 50%, to help restart halted domestic manufacturing lines.

Cisplatin is a chemotherapeutic agent used in the treatment of solid tumours as well as certain blood cancers. Carboplatin is a second generation platinum compound that is also used to treat solid tumours. Both are among the most widely used chemotherapy drugs in India and are indispensable in the treatment of several cancers, including ovarian, head and neck, lung, gall bladder, urinary bladder, breast and testicular cancers.

Prices for platinum – the core raw material used in cisplatin and carboplatin – more than doubled, making old price-controlled manufacturing rates financially unviable for companies. Additionally, geopolitical conflicts and shipping constraints through West Asia have restricted raw material imports from primary global suppliers. This resulted in several generic makers temporarily slowing or stopping production of these drugs, says Sayoni Bhanja, consultant, medical oncology at HCG Cancer Centre, Kolkata.

Impact on hospitals, patients

At the Cancer Institute (WIA), Adyar, in Chennai, Kalpana Balakrishnan, chief executive officer and medical director, said that the shortage has been ongoing for nearly seven months due to the war and has had significant impacts. "The cheapest drug, cisplatin, a first-generation platinum drug, is not available. Carboplatin and oxaliplatin, which are second and third generation platinum drugs, are considerably more expensive."

Sujith Kumar Mullapally, senior consultant - medical oncology, Apollo Proton Cancer Centre, Chennai said that the hospital has not received cisplatin and carboplatin from its regular companies for a long time now and was depending on companies which are Indian generic companies. He added that they have managed up until now with available stocks. Significant efforts have been made to inform the necessary authorities through medical oncology forums, he added.

In Karnataka, some hospitals reported that they have stocks sufficient for only six to eight weeks. Amit Rauthan, head of medical oncology, immunotherapy and precision medicine at Manipal Hospital, Old Airport Road, Bengaluru, said cisplatin and carboplatin are also critical in treating childhood cancers such as neuroblastoma, hepatoblastoma, germ cell tumours and retinoblastoma, and that their therapeutic role cannot be easily replaced by alternative medicines.

Vijay Kumar Srinivasalu, senior consultant in medical oncology at Sakra World Hospital, Bengaluru, said platinum-based chemotherapy continues to be the backbone of treatment for several solid tumours despite advances in targeted therapies and immunotherapy. Treatment delays or substitution with less effective regimens could compromise outcomes, particularly in curative-intent cancers. This is especially significant in concurrent chemoradiation for cervical and head and neck cancers, where weekly cisplatin plays a vital role in enhancing the effectiveness of radiation therapy, he noted.

For patients, this has meant delays and interruptions in treatment, additional stress, as well as increased costs.

The immediate fallout, said, Sandeep Nayak, chairman of oncology, MACS-Renova Oncology Institute, KIMS Hospital, Bengaluru lands directly on cancer patients: while alternative treatment regimens exist, they are generally less effective, non-standard, and can carry higher costs or different toxicity profiles. Bhawna Sirohi, medical oncologist and medical director of Vedanta Medical Research Foundation, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, said for patients this may mean a compromise on curative cancer treatment.

The government sector seems to be doing better in several States.

At the Regional Cancer Centre, Kerala in Thiruvananthapuram, treatment was not disrupted as the hospital had adequate stock of platinum-based drugs to tide over a few months, said director, R Rejnishkumar. " Now that the government has revised the prices, our purchase process is going forward and I am told that we will get new stock soon," Dr. Rejnish said.

The Karnataka government-run Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology in Bengaluru has said it currently has adequate stocks and multiple procurement channels to ensure continuity of care. "We have annual tenders in place and procure medicines through the Central Medical Store as well as the Kidwai Cancer Drug Foundation (KCDF). We also have multiple vendors, and non-governmental organisations support us by supplying these drugs," said KMIO director (in charge), R. Krishnappa.

At the Delhi State Cancer Institute, both cisplatin and carboplatin injections are currently available, said Pragya Shukla, head of clinical oncology.

Sources in the T.N. government said that cisplatin was in the essential drugs list of the Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation and hence, its supply was ensured. However, carboplatin, a speciality drug, was unavailable for bulk purchases but hospitals were managing through local purchases.

In Telangana, however, the Mehdi Nawaz Jung Institute of Oncology and Regional Cancer Centre in Hyderabad, the State's largest and only government tertiary cancer care hospital, has been grappling with a shortage of both cisplatin and carboplatin for the past two months, with supplies falling well short of its monthly requirement. Sadashivudu Gundeti, Director of MNJ Institute of Oncology, said the institute requires thousands of vials of the two chemotherapy drugs every month but is currently able to procure only a few hundred vials.

On June 12, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) invoked special clauses to raise the price cap of cisplatin from ₹7.26 to ₹10.89 per ml., and carboplatin from ₹60.49 rupees to ₹90.74 per mL, citing public interest.

Long-term strategies

With more than 1.5 million new cancer cases diagnosed annually in India, Smitha Saldanha, consultant in medical oncology at HCG Cancer Hospital, K.R. Road, Bengaluru, said uninterrupted access to essential oncology medicines must be treated as a national healthcare priority.

While describing the recent revision of ceiling prices as a useful short-term measure, Dr. Srinivasalu said India requires a long-term oncology drug security framework, including strategic reserves of essential cancer medicines, diversified domestic manufacturing, stronger active pharmaceutical ingredient supply chains, centralised procurement and an early-warning system for anticipated shortages.

A Union Health Ministry official said the government has taken all steps to ensure that the supply chain stays stable.

(With inputs from Afshan Yasmeen in Bengaluru, Shrabana Chatterjee in Kolkata, Serena Josephine M. in Chennai, C. Maya in Thiruvananthapuram, Bindu Shajan Perappadan in Delhi and Siddharth Kumar Singh in Hyderabad.)

(health@thehindu.co.in)

On June 12, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) invoked special clauses to raise the price cap of cisplatin and carboplatin

Critically low: While government hospitals in several States have managed to stabilise supplies, private hospitals in many parts are still facing a crunch. For patients, this has meant interruptions or delays in life-saving treatment. GETTY IMAGES

THE GIST

- Cisplatin is a chemotherapeutic agent used in the treatment of solid tumours as well as certain blood cancers. Carboplatin is a second generation platinum compound that is also used to treat solid tumours. Both are among the most widely used chemotherapy drugs in India and are indispensable in the treatment of several cancers
- India is facing a critical nationwide shortage of the two key chemotherapy drugs driven by soaring global platinum raw material costs, West Asia shipping route disruptions, and domestic price caps. For patients, this has meant delays and interruptions in treatment, additional stress, as well as increased costs
- India requires a long-term oncology drug security framework, including strategic reserves of essential cancer medicines, diversified domestic manufacturing, stronger active pharmaceutical ingredient supply chains, centralised procurement and an early-warning system for anticipated shortages, says doctor

Public Health & Social Impact

- **Compromised Care & Treatment Delays:** Cisplatin and Carboplatin are core first- and second-line therapies for solid tumors, pediatric cancers, and cervical/head-and-neck radiation regimens. Delays or substitution with inferior alternatives lower curative outcomes.
- **Asymmetric Supply Shock:** Government hospitals cushioned the crisis through centralized procurement and long-term tenders, whereas private healthcare centers faced severe stock depletion.

Related Static Dimensions

1. Health, Governance & Policy

- **Right to Life & Health (Article 21):** Ensuring uninterrupted access to essential, life-saving medicines is a fundamental duty of the welfare state.

- **Drug Price Regulation:** The **NPPA** regulates prices under **DPCO, 2013** (empowered by the Essential Commodities Act, 1955). It balances consumer affordability via the **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** against manufacturing sustainability.

2. Economy & Supply Chain Security

- **API & External Dependency:** India's high dependency on global suppliers for Key Starting Materials (KSMs) and bulk drug raw materials creates acute supply-chain fragility during global shocks.
- **Pharma Industrial Policy:** Need to align initiatives like the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI)** scheme specifically toward critical, low-margin oncology APIs.

Conclusion & Way Forward

While temporary price revisions offer immediate relief, long-term resilience requires a **National Oncology Drug Security Framework**. India must build **strategic drug reserves** for essential NLEM anti-cancer medicines, implement **real-time supply-tracking early warning systems**, and incentivize **domestic API manufacturing** to decouple critical healthcare from global geopolitical shocks.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: Which of the following best describes pharmaceutical supply-chain resilience?

A. Dependence on the cheapest available foreign supplier.

B. Ability of the pharmaceutical system to anticipate, absorb and recover from disruptions while maintaining essential medicine availability.

C. Complete elimination of pharmaceutical imports.

D. Maintaining maximum inventory of every pharmaceutical product.

Ans:B)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question:"Access to essential medicines is an important component of the right to health." Examine the challenges faced by India in ensuring uninterrupted availability of life-saving medicines.**(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

Page 08 : GS III : Indian Economy / Preliminary Examination

India's headline retail inflation (CPI) reached a 19-month high of 4.45% in July, staying above the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 4% target for the second straight month. Driven primarily by supply-side disruptions in food and energy, the rise coincides with signs of slowing domestic economic momentum.

Key Analytical Takeaways

- **Rural-Food Inflation Divergence:** Price pressures remain unevenly distributed. Food inflation pushed rural inflation up to 5.79%, driven by steep spikes in kitchen staples like garlic (35.36%), onion (22.54%), and ginger (83.62%).
- **Sticky Service & Input Costs:** Rising transport costs (4.43%) and goods transport services (7.77%) reflect persistent input pressures. High restaurant service inflation (7.75%) highlights delayed operational cost recovery from preceding months.
- **External & Geopolitical Vulnerabilities:** Rupee depreciation (~1.6%), elevated precious metals prices (gold +32.98%, silver +109.84%), and supply risks surrounding Russian crude shipping hubs (e.g., Novorossiysk) heighten risks of imported inflation.
- **Growth-Inflation Trade-off:** With the HSBC Composite PMI slowing from 57.1 to 54.3, the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) faces a balancing act. Holding the repo rate at 5.25% reflects a prolonged "pause" strategy to avoid dampening growth while tackling supply shocks.

Related Static Dimensions

- **Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT):** Statutory framework under **Section 45ZA of the RBI Act, 1934**, mandating a target CPI inflation of **4% with a ±2% tolerance band** (2%–6%).
- **Headline vs. Core Inflation:** Headline CPI measures the overall consumer basket, whereas Core Inflation excludes volatile components (food and fuel) to measure underlying demand dynamics.
- **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):** A 6-member statutory body under Section 45ZB responsible for determining the policy repo rate.
- **Imported Inflation:** Price level increases caused by rising costs of imported raw materials, depreciating currency, or global logistics premiums.

A predictable rise

Inflation will remain high in the foreseeable future

A rise in India's July retail inflation was a foregone conclusion, but its modest increase, at 4.45%, up from 4.38% in June, is still the highest in 19 months, since December 2024. This is the second consecutive month that retail inflation has stayed above the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s 4% target, even while remaining comfortably within its 2%-6% tolerance range. Predictably, it has again been driven by food, fuel and transport, even as core inflation, excluding precious metals, has remained below 3%. What is telling is the extent of rural, food-led inflation, which rose from 5.45% in June to 5.79% in July, while urban food inflation decreased marginally from 5.09% to 5.05%. Staples such as onion (22.54%), garlic (35.36%) and ginger (83.62%) fuelled the rise, even as potato (-16.56%) and tomato (-4.59%) moderated. Transport, however, continues to have a wider impact, pointing to elevated input-cost pressures. Transport inflation quickened to 4.43% in July from 4.31% in June, while the crucial subdivision, transport services for goods, rose from 7.70% to 7.77%. Despite the July 1 cut in commercial LPG prices of about ₹183, food and beverage serving services inflation quickened to 7.75% in July, indicating that restaurants are yet to recoup revenues and margins lost following the steep operating costs from March through May. Commercial LPG was cut by a further ₹202 on August 1, but this is unlikely to immediately bring down menu prices.

The monsoon remains a concern, with parts of western, central and southern India remaining rain-deficient. Precious metals inflation, particularly gold (32.98%) and silver (109.84%), moderated, but remains extraordinarily high. Crude prices were relatively stable during the July CPI reference period, but began rising again in August. More worryingly, Ukraine-related disruptions around Russia's Black Sea export infrastructure, particularly Novorossiysk, could raise freight and risk premiums for Russian crude. Russia supplied nearly half of India's crude imports in June, making such disruptions relevant to India's landed energy costs. The rupee also depreciated by about 1.6% between the June 15 and July 15 CPI reference dates, further amplifying imported inflation. In the background, there are signs of weakening economic momentum, with the HSBC composite PMI showing a sharp fall from 57.1 in June to 54.3 in July, its weakest expansion since March 2022. While the PMI is a high-frequency indicator and need not reflect a long-term trend, it is nevertheless worth taking note of. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee, which held the repo rate at 5.25% for the fourth consecutive meeting in August, is therefore likely to remain on hold through the second quarter of FY27, as it weighs persistent supply-side inflation against weakening economic momentum.

Conclusion

Managing supply-driven inflation requires a dual approach: targeted supply-side fiscal interventions (such as logistical streamlining and strategic food buffer releases) alongside prudent monetary calibration by the RBI to keep medium-term inflation expectations anchored without derailing domestic recovery.

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: Imported inflation has become an important macroeconomic risk for India. Discuss its major transmission channels and suggest measures to reduce India's vulnerability.**(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

Page 10 : GS II : Indian Polity / Preliminary Examination

The Supreme Court's judgment in **Vihaan Kumar v. State of Haryana (2025)** reinforces constitutional safeguards against arbitrary state power. It emphasizes that personal liberty is paramount and that procedural compliance is a strict constitutional prerequisite rather than a mere administrative formality.

The constitutional limits on arrest

The Supreme Court has reinforced safeguards against arbitrary arrest, holding that an arrested person must be informed of the grounds of arrest; constitutional protections under Articles 21, 22, along with judicial guidelines, seek to balance the state's power to arrest with the individual's right to personal liberty and dignity

LETTER & SPIRIT

C.B.P. Srivastava

The constitutionality of arrest in India needs to be examined to reinforce democratic values and ensure that the authority of the state and the liberty of the citizen are properly balanced. Recently, the Supreme Court, in *Vihaan Kumar v. State of Haryana* (2025), held that every arrested person must be properly and meaningfully informed of the grounds for his arrest. Failure to provide information shall amount to a violation of Article 22(1) of the Constitution and Section 50 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Section 47 of the BNSS, 2023).

Sometimes, communication is conducted with the arrested person's relatives, which appears to be a formality. Considering this, the verdict says that communicating the details of the arrest to relatives or providing ambiguous records does not satisfy the constitutional requirements.

Therefore, the arrested person must be directly informed of the grounds of arrest in a manner that enables him to understand them. This would be in line with the Constitutional philosophy of putting a check on any possible arbitrary exercise of power.

Legal safeguards

The court has opined that if the initial arrest was unconstitutional, subsequent remand orders would also be deemed illegal. Moreover, to fulfil the requirements of Article 22(2) and Section 57 of the CrPC (Section 58 of the BNSS, 2023), the arrest memo must contain the time of arrest. These constitutional and legal provisions say that the police must present the arrested person to a local magistrate within 24 hours, excluding the travel time.

The court also condemned degrading treatment in custody, affirming the right to dignity under Article 21, and directed the state to amend its procedures to prevent future violations. Thus, this judgment sets a strong precedent for safeguarding personal liberty and procedural fairness in India's criminal justice system.

Arrest is different from detention. While detention is a temporary hold for investigation and the person is not charged with any offence, arrest is a formal police custody with a probable cause of commission of an offence. Article 22 deals with both arrest and detention. In non-cognisable offences such as simple hurt, defamation, etc., a warrant is needed for arrest, whereas in cognisable offences such as murder, rape, etc., arrest is without a warrant.

Court's guidelines on arrest

In *Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar* (2014), the Supreme Court laid down guidelines for arrests to prevent the misuse of criminal laws. The law should not be used as a tool to harass someone. Considering this, it is obvious that allowing criminal prosecution to continue based on frivolous and false allegations would amount to an abuse of legal process and would also be detrimental to the concept of natural justice, which is perhaps the most significant form of justice enshrined in the Constitution.

In the guidelines, the court said that arrests should be an exception in cases where the punishment is less than seven years. The police must determine whether an arrest is necessary under Section 41 of the CrPC (Section 35 of the BNSS). Thus, routine arrests cannot be made merely because the power to arrest has been given to the police. The necessity must be justified.

It is well known that personal freedom is a major part of the Constitution. Unnecessary arrests hurt a person's reputation and would be detrimental to personal liberty.

Constitutionality of arrest, detention

Article 22 protects against arrest and detention to ensure freedom of person, and hence has a direct link with the concept of personal liberty under Article 21. Article 22 provides important procedural safeguards for a person who is arrested, including the right to be informed and the right to consult and be defended by his lawyer as soon as possible, and finally the right to be presented before the nearest magistrate within 24 hours.

The Article also deals with the concept of preventive detention where these procedural safeguards do not apply. The definition of preventive detention in India is inspired by a British law, Regulation 14-B of the Defence of the Realm Act, 1914, which says that all detentions that are not punitive may be considered preventive. The detention may continue for three months, and if the period expires, an Advisory Board shall permit the extension of the period.

Thus, Article 22 protects a person from being arrested or detained, signifying the protection of his liberty against any arbitrary action by the state. However, the provision of arrest and detention exemplifies the exercise of the state's authority.

Personal liberty in the Constitution is founded in the principle of natural justice, which is enshrined in the entire constitutional scheme. Further, the Golden Triangle of India's Constitution as explained by the Supreme Court in *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978) suggests that Article 21 is related to Articles 14 and 19. Of the two, Article 14 is an antithesis to arbitrariness and the substantive natural justice emanates from it, whereas Article 19(1) incorporates procedural natural justice. Therefore, any arbitrary exercise of the power of arrest or detention would amount to a violation of the Golden Triangle. This has been the reason why the framers of the Constitution ensured that a delicate balance between authority and liberty is maintained and vibrant democracy in India is sustained.

(C.B.P. Srivastava is president, Centre for Applied Research in Governance, Delhi)

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THE GIST

Constitutional and legal safeguards require the police to record the time of arrest and produce the arrested person before a magistrate within 24 hours.

Supreme Court guidelines, including those in *Arnesh Kumar*, stress that arrest should not be routine and must be justified by the necessity of the case.

Key Takeaways & Judicial Analysis

- **Direct & Meaningful Communication:** The court held that under Article 22(1), an arrested person must be informed of the grounds of arrest directly and meaningfully. Informing relatives, vague entries in case diaries, or mere arrest memos do not satisfy this requirement.
- **Vitiation of Subsequent Custody:** If the initial arrest violates constitutional safeguards, all subsequent remand orders become illegal.
- **Mandatory Time Records:** The arrest memo must record the exact time of arrest to verify compliance with Article 22(2) and Section 58 of BNSS, 2023 (formerly Section 57, CrPC), requiring production before a magistrate within 24 hours.
- **Right to Custodial Dignity:** The judgment condemned inhumane treatment—such as chaining an accused to a hospital bed—reaffirming that custodial dignity is an integral part of Article 21.

- **Deterrence Against Arbitrary Arrests:** Building on Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar (2014), the Court reiterated that arrest should be an exception rather than a routine response, especially for offenses punishable by less than seven years imprisonment.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Perspective)

- **Constitutional Framework:**
  - **Article 21:** Guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, including fair trial and human dignity.
  - **Article 22:** Provides protections against arrest and detention (including the right to know grounds, consult a lawyer, and magistrate production within 24 hours).
  - **Golden Triangle (Articles 14, 19, & 21):** Established in Maneka Gandhi (1978), ensuring that laws restricting personal liberty must satisfy checks against arbitrariness (Art. 14) and procedural fairness (Art. 19).
- **Statutory Rules:**
  - **BNSS, 2023 Provisions:** Section 47 (Duty to inform grounds of arrest) and Section 35 (Conditions for arrest without warrant).
- **Preventive Detention Limits:** Article 22(3)–(7) permits detention without trial for up to 3 months unless extended by an Advisory Board, showing the delicate constitutional balance between public order and individual liberty.

Conclusion

This landmark ruling shifts the burden squarely onto law enforcement to prove strict compliance with procedural rights. By invalidating arrests made without explicit communication of grounds, the judiciary reinforces the Rule of Law and maintains the delicate balance between the authority of the state and the fundamental liberties of citizens.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: Which of the following best captures the relationship between Articles 14, 19 and 21 after Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India?

A. They operate independently and cannot be invoked together.

B. Restrictions on personal liberty must satisfy requirements of non-arbitrariness and procedural fairness.

C. Article 21 applies only to citizens.

D. Article 14 deals exclusively with reservation.

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "Personal liberty cannot be made subordinate to administrative convenience." Discuss in the context of constitutional safeguards against arbitrary arrest.**(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

Page : 08 : Editorial Analysis

Europe's AI rules may become India's opportunity

The Government of India has recently indicated that it is considering a standalone legislation to govern Artificial Intelligence (AI). However, the pressure on the AI supply chain is already felt due to the European Union (EU)'s AI Act which was entered into force in August 2024 and became applicable on August 2, 2026. The Act has adopted a risk-based approach to artificial intelligence ("AI") regulation – prohibiting certain AI systems, regulating high-risk ones, and imposing lighter checks for limited-risk use cases.

While most Indian firms are likely aware that the Act applies when their AI systems produce results in Europe, there is a more consequential story that goes beyond a compliance checklist.

A post-approval issue

The Act was drafted with a particular picture in mind, and that picture does not match how India's technology industry actually works. This mismatch, more than the law's long reach, is what Indian companies should be watching. The Act assumes that software, once built and approved, is sold as a finished product. India's technology industry has never worked that way. The devil lies in the legal consequences when an AI is updated post-approval.

Before a 'high-risk' AI system, used for sensitive decisions such as hiring or education, can enter the European market, it must clear a 'conformity assessment' under Article 43: proof that it meets the law's standards on testing, documentation and human oversight. For most such systems the provider assesses itself against the Act's criteria and signs its own declaration; only a narrow set, mainly certain biometric tools, must be checked by an independent body. Either way, once the box is ticked, the system can run undisturbed. However, if the system is "substantially modified", the process must be repeated. A substantial modification is a change not contemplated at the time of the original assessment, one that affects its compliance or alters its intended purpose.

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India could build an industry around the paperwork and proof required under the European Union's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act

In June 2026, the EU gave final approval to a package easing its own timelines, pushing the compliance deadline for these standalone high-risk AI systems to December 2027 and to August 2, 2028 for high-risk AI-embedded in regulated products. It retained a grandfathering clause under which systems already on the market before this date are exempted from the Act's obligations until substantially modified. A foreseen change examined during the original conformity assessment does not trigger a fresh one, while an unanticipated change likely does.

This distinction is not just a technicality. It would likely favour business models built on predictable product road maps. Providers of standardised AI products can assess planned upgrades during the initial assessment. Businesses that rely on bespoke services, offering competitive adaptability to individual client needs, may find it harder to demonstrate that future changes fall within the scope of the original assessment.

Unplanned improvement and regulation

India's technology industry, from the large IT services firms to the global capability centres in Bengaluru and Hyderabad, runs on exactly this kind of responsive adaptation. The Act also tethers liability to firms that substantially modify someone else's high-risk system. Such firms may be treated as the provider of the modified system, inheriting every one of the original maker's obligations. Thus, for an industry whose very promise is improvement on demand, an unplanned improvement that changes an AI system's intended purpose may trigger a fresh regulatory exercise.

Yet, the Act also presents an opportunity. High-risk compliance is operationalised through paperwork and proof. Most providers will be permitted to carry out that conformity assessment themselves, but they will do so against harmonised technical standards still being drafted. The underlying work – governance measures, technical documentation, testing regimes – has to be done in volume. The scale of this obligation is likely to generate demand for quality legal and technical professionals, which India can provide. Indian professional services firms have supported clients across data protection, financial regulation and technical assurance. They can provide regulatory capability for the Act too.

Tap the trade agreement

A longer-term vision extends beyond compliance services. The Act creates a pathway for conformity assessment bodies established in third countries to be recognised and perform the functions of notified bodies, where the EU has concluded an appropriate agreement, and those bodies satisfy the requirements. This recognition is a question for treaty negotiation, and India has just signed a treaty capable of carrying it.

The India-EU Free Trade Agreement that was concluded in January includes standing machinery and regulatory cooperation provisions. If India can secure institutional arrangements as part of its partnership with the EU, it could become not just a supplier of AI compliance services but also a participant in the EU's conformity assessment ecosystem. Going ahead, it would provide the legal gateway through which qualified Indian conformity assessment bodies could eventually perform functions recognised under the Act. Europe has written itself a mountain of compliances and India has the capacity to do it. There is a version of this where the rules India fears become the work it sells. Which version arrives is still being decided, and not for much longer.

GS Paper II: Science and Tech

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions: "Digital trade is increasingly governed by regulatory standards rather than tariffs alone." Examine its implications for India's services exports.(**10Marks, 150 Words)**

Context : The European Union's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act adopts a stringent, risk-based regulatory regime that imposes compliance duties on high-risk AI deployments. As India prepares standalone national AI legislation, the extra-territorial reach of the EU AI Act presents dual dynamics: significant operational friction for India's agile software services sector and a multi-billion-dollar market opportunity for domestic legal, compliance, and auditing services.

Core Conflict: EU Regulatory Model vs. Indian Tech Delivery

- **Static Model Assumption:** The EU AI Act assumes software follows a static, product-like life cycle with fixed pre-market conformity assessments (Article 43).
- **Dynamic Reality of Indian Tech Industry:** Indian IT services and Global Capability Centres (GCCs) operate on continuous, responsive modification ("agile improvement on demand").
- **Substantial Modification Trap:** Any unanticipated post-approval modification or change in intended purpose forces a fresh conformity assessment, shifting heavy provider-level liabilities onto service providers.

Key Opportunities for India

- **Compliance Services Market:** Carrying out technical documentation, human-oversight logging, data-governance validation, and adversarial testing under EU technical standards creates massive demand for Indian tech and legal professionals.
- **Institutional Trade Synergy:** The India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) framework provides a pathway to negotiate mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) for third-country conformity assessment bodies.
- **Global Hub Potential:** Securing legal recognition under EU treaties can transform Indian audit bodies into certified "Notified Bodies" for European AI clearance.

Related Static Dimensions

Governance & Bilateral Relations

- **Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction ("Brussels Effect"):** Similar to GDPR, EU regulations setting de-facto global standards for market access.
- **India-EU FTA & Regulatory Cooperation:** Leveraging trade agreements for institutional mechanisms, market access in services, and technical barriers to trade (TBT).

Science & Technology & Economy

- **National AI Strategy:** Interplay between foreign compliance laws and India's domestic regulatory framework (MeitY directives and the IndiaAI Mission).
- **Service Sector Export Shift:** Evolution of India's IT service export model from traditional software maintenance to high-value regulatory tech (RegTech) and algorithmic auditing.

Way Forward

- **Standardize RegTech Capabilities:** Develop domestic standards for technical auditing aligned with international baselines.
- **Proactive FTA Negotiations:** Utilize the regulatory cooperation chapter of the India-EU FTA to gain recognition for Indian Conformity Assessment Bodies.
- **Balanced Domestic AI Law:** Ensure India's prospective AI legislation avoids rigid post-market re-certification hurdles, safeguarding agile IT workflows while maintaining ethical guardrails.

Conclusion

The EU AI Act challenges India's traditional IT development model, but it also creates an opportunity. By coupling domestic skill building in regulatory tech with strategic trade diplomacy under the India-EU FTA, India can transition from being a compliant exporter to an essential international partner in global AI governance.