

**23 July 2025**

## **1. Supreme Court Upholds Delimitation Commission's Mandate for J&K, Paves Way for Assembly Elections, Source: The Hindu**

**Context:** A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court today delivered its verdict on a batch of petitions challenging the constitutionality of the Delimitation Commission set up for Jammu and Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. The petitioners had argued that the exercise was invalid without a nationwide census and delimitation process.



### **Significance:**

- The Court, in a unanimous verdict, upheld the government's action, stating that the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, provided a clear legal framework for a region-specific delimitation.
- This judgment effectively removes the final legal hurdle for conducting the first Assembly elections in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir since 2018.
- It is a landmark decision that will reshape the political landscape of the region, potentially restoring a democratically elected government.
- The ruling also affirms the Parliament's power to create special provisions for UTs.

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**Analysis:**

- This verdict is a major political and legal victory for the central government's policy on Jammu and Kashmir.
- For the people of J&K, it signifies the imminent return of representative governance, which is crucial for addressing local grievances and development aspirations.
- However, the implementation will be challenging. Mainstream political parties in the valley, while likely to participate, have expressed concerns about the redrawing of constituencies, alleging it is aimed at altering demographic and political influence.
- The successful and peaceful conduct of elections will be the true test of the policy's success and will be closely watched by the international community.
- Security arrangements will be paramount to ensure a high voter turnout and a free and fair electoral process.

**UPSC Syllabus:**

**GS-2:** Judiciary, Federalism, Functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures.

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## **2. Government Releases Draft 'Framework for Responsible AI Development and Regulation', Source: PIB, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology<sup>1</sup>**

**Context:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) today released a draft 'Framework for Responsible AI Development and Regulation' for public consultation. This framework is India's first comprehensive attempt to legislate on Artificial Intelligence, aiming to foster innovation while establishing clear ethical guardrails and accountability mechanisms.



# The Framework for Responsible AI

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### **Significance:**

- As AI increasingly permeates every sector, this framework is a crucial policy intervention to ensure that AI development is safe, transparent, and aligned with constitutional values.
- It signals India's intent to move beyond just promoting AI and to actively shape its trajectory.
- The framework aims to build public trust in AI systems, protect citizens from potential harms like algorithmic bias and data misuse, and provide legal certainty for businesses and startups operating in the AI space.
- It positions India alongside the EU and other major economies that are actively working to regulate this transformative technology.

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**Analysis:**

- The Indian framework reportedly adopts a risk-based approach, similar to the EU's AI Act, imposing stricter regulations on 'high-risk' AI applications (e.g., in healthcare, law enforcement, critical infrastructure) while allowing for light-touch regulation for low-risk applications.
- Key principles highlighted in the draft include fairness, accountability, transparency, safety, and privacy-by-design.
- A significant proposal is the creation of 'regulatory sandboxes' to allow startups to test their AI models in a controlled environment without facing immediate regulatory burdens.
- The consultation process will see intense debate on the definition of 'high-risk', the extent of government oversight, and the right balance between preventing harm and not stifling innovation in India's booming tech sector.

**UPSC Syllabus:**

**GS-3:** Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology, and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

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### **3. Extreme Monsoon Rainfall Triggers Catastrophic Floods in Himalayan States**

**Source: The Hindu**

**Context:** A series of extreme rainfall events over the past 72 hours has led to devastating flash floods and landslides across parts of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert, with reports of major rivers flowing above the danger mark, bridges being washed away, and national highways blocked at multiple locations, stranding thousands of tourists and pilgrims.



#### **Significance:**

- This event is a tragic and stark reminder of the heightened vulnerability of the fragile Himalayan ecosystem to the impacts of climate change.
- Scientists are linking the increased frequency and intensity of such events to warmer temperatures, which allow the atmosphere to hold more moisture, leading to short, intense cloudbursts.
- The disaster underscores the urgent need for a fundamental reassessment of development models in the region.

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**Analysis:**

- This is not just a natural disaster; it is exacerbated by anthropogenic factors.
- A CAG report from 2024 had already warned about the perils of unregulated construction along riverbeds, rampant deforestation for infrastructure projects, and the questionable viability of certain hydropower projects in para-glacial zones.
- The disaster exposes the failure to implement the recommendations of expert committees on establishing a 'carrying capacity' for hill towns and pilgrimage sites.
- It brings into sharp focus the conflict between short-term economic development and long-term ecological sustainability.
- The government's response will be tested not just on rescue and relief, but on its willingness to enact and enforce stricter environmental regulations for all future infrastructure development in the Indian Himalayan Region.

**UPSC Syllabus:**

**GS-3:** Disaster and disaster management; **GS-1:** Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, tsunamis, Volcanic activity, cyclones, etc., geographical features and their location-changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps) and flora and fauna, and the effects of such changes.

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#### **4. Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) Prototype Completes Maiden Flight, Source: PIB (Ministry of Defence)**

**Context:** India's quest for a 5th-generation stealth fighter jet achieved a historic milestone today as the prototype of the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) completed its maiden flight. The flight, which lasted for about 25 minutes, was conducted by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) at an Air Force base in Bengaluru.



#### **Significance:**

- The successful flight marks a monumental leap in India's indigenous aerospace and defence capabilities.
- The AMCA is designed to be a twin-engine, stealth aircraft with super-cruise capabilities, advanced avionics, and superior firepower.
- This achievement places India in an elite group of nations with the ability to design and develop 5th-generation combat aircraft. It is a critical step towards achieving self-reliance in defence, reducing dependence on foreign suppliers, and bolstering the Indian Air Force's combat readiness in a challenging neighbourhood.

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**Analysis:**

- While the first flight is a tremendous success, the journey to full operational induction is still long and complex.
- Key challenges include the final development and integration of its advanced engine (being co-developed with a foreign partner), perfecting the low-observability (stealth) characteristics, and weaponizing the platform.
- The project will test the synergy between DRDO, HAL, and private sector players involved in supplying critical components.
- The lessons learned from the protracted development cycle of the LCA Tejas have been crucial in streamlining the AMCA project.
- Its timely development is vital for maintaining a qualitative edge and credible deterrence in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

**UPSC Syllabus:**

**GS-3:** Science and Technology - Indigenization of technology and developing new technology; Security challenges and their management.

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## 5. New Maritime Security Strategy 'SAGAR-2030' Unveiled

**Source: The Hindu**

**Context:** The Union Defence Minister, in the presence of the Chief of Naval Staff, today unveiled 'SAGAR-2030', India's new comprehensive maritime security strategy. The doctrine updates India's strategic vision for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the wider Indo-Pacific, emphasizing a more proactive and integrated approach to maritime challenges.



### Significance:

- The 'SAGAR-2030' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) strategy is a direct response to the evolving geopolitical and security landscape in the IOR.
- It formally articulates India's role as a 'net security provider' and moves beyond just anti-piracy and HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) operations.
- The new doctrine prioritizes countering non-traditional threats like illegal fishing, maritime terrorism, and narcotics trafficking, alongside traditional naval deterrence.
- A key feature is the emphasis on strengthening cooperative frameworks like the Information Fusion Centre-IOR (IFC-IOR) and expanding maritime domain awareness through collaboration with Quad partners and friendly littoral states.

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**Analysis:**

- The strategy is a clear signal of India's intent to counter China's expanding naval footprint in the Indian Ocean.
- By focusing on building capacity among smaller littoral states and promoting a rules-based maritime order, India is offering a collaborative alternative to China's power-centric approach.
- The document likely details plans for enhancing the Navy's expeditionary capabilities, acquiring more unmanned underwater vehicles, and integrating space-based assets for surveillance.
- The success of SAGAR-2030 will depend on sustained funding for naval modernization, effective diplomatic engagement with IOR nations, and seamless inter-agency coordination between the Navy, Coast Guard, and other maritime law enforcement agencies.

**UPSC Syllabus:**

**GS-3:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; **GS-2:** India and its neighborhood-relations.

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## **6. National Nutrition Survey 2025 Rings Alarm Bells on Urban Malnutrition**

**Source: Hindustan Times**

**Context:** The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare today released the key findings of the National Nutrition Survey 2025. While the report indicates marginal improvements in reducing stunting and wasting in some rural pockets, it highlights a deeply concerning new trend: the rapid rise of the "double burden of malnutrition" in urban areas, particularly among the urban poor.



### **Significance:**

- The report challenges the conventional understanding that malnutrition is primarily a rural problem.
- The "double burden" refers to the co-existence of undernutrition (stunting, wasting) and overnutrition (obesity, diet-related non-communicable diseases like diabetes) within the same communities, and sometimes even within the same households.
- This trend poses a complex public health challenge for India's rapidly urbanizing landscape.
- It indicates a systemic failure in ensuring access to nutritious, safe, and affordable food for the urban poor, who are increasingly reliant on inexpensive, highly processed foods.

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**Analysis:**

- The survey's findings necessitate a significant policy pivot.
- Schemes like the Poshan Abhiyaan and the PDS (Public Distribution System) must be re-engineered to address the specific needs of urban populations.
- This includes tackling the lack of access to diverse food groups and the aggressive marketing of unhealthy foods.
- The report calls for strengthening urban primary healthcare centers, promoting urban farming, and launching massive public awareness campaigns about healthy diets.
- Failure to address this double burden will lead to a generation of citizens with poor health outcomes and place an unsustainable strain on the public healthcare system due to a surge in non-communicable diseases.

**UPSC Syllabus:**

**GS-2:** Issues relating to poverty and hunger; Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

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## **7. NITI Aayog Progress Report on National Logistics Policy Shows 1.5% GDP Saving Source: PIB (NITI Aayog)**

**Context:** NITI Aayog today released its first comprehensive three-year progress report on the National Logistics Policy (NLP), launched in 2022. The report highlights significant achievements, stating that concerted efforts under the policy have led to a reduction in India's logistics costs from an estimated 14% of GDP to 12.5%, creating substantial economic savings.



**Significance:** This data is a crucial indicator of India's improving economic efficiency and competitiveness. High logistics costs have long been a major impediment to the growth of India's manufacturing sector. The reduction, attributed to the NLP, demonstrates the success of an integrated, technology-driven approach to logistics. Key initiatives like the Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP), PM Gati-Shakti National Master Plan, and the digitization of transport-related documents have played a vital role in streamlining supply chains, reducing turnaround times at ports, and improving last-mile connectivity.

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**Analysis:** The 1.5 percentage point reduction is a commendable achievement, translating into billions of dollars in annual savings for the economy. The report likely details improvements in specific metrics like shipping turnaround times, road transport efficiency, and warehousing capacity. However, the analysis would also point to remaining challenges. Disparities in logistics infrastructure between states, the need for further skilling of the logistics workforce, and the high cost of fuel continue to be areas of concern. The next phase of the NLP will need to focus on deepening the integration of multimodal transport (road, rail, waterways) and leveraging technologies like AI and IoT for predictive logistics to bring costs closer to the global benchmark of 8-9% of GDP.

**UPSC Syllabus:**

**GS-3:** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways, etc.; Indian Economy and issues relating to planning.

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## 8. 'Sacred Ensembles of the Deccan Sultanates' Inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List, Source: Hindustan Times

**Context:** The UNESCO World Heritage Committee, in its session in Paris, has inscribed the 'Sacred Ensembles of the Deccan Sultanates' on its prestigious World Heritage List. The successful nomination includes a serial cluster of monuments from the Bahmani, Adil Shahi, and Qutb Shahi dynasties, spread across Karnataka, Telangana, and Maharashtra.



### Significance:

- This inscription accords global recognition to the unique and syncretic architectural legacy of the Deccan Sultanates, which has often been overshadowed by Mughal and Vijayanagara architecture.
- It brings international attention to monuments like the Bidar Fort, Gol Gumbaz (Bijapur), and the Charminar-Golconda complex (Hyderabad), celebrating their distinct blend of Persian, Turkish, and indigenous Indian artistic styles.
- The UNESCO tag is expected to significantly boost tourism, promote conservation efforts, and foster academic research into this crucial period of Indian history.

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**Analysis:**

- The success of this serial nomination is a testament to the collaborative efforts of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and multiple state governments.
- Unlike single-monument sites, a serial nomination requires a complex and cohesive narrative that justifies the 'Outstanding Universal Value' of the entire cluster.
- The nomination file highlighted the unique water management systems, military architecture, and the secular and religious syncretism reflected in the art and architecture of these Sultanates.
- The challenge now will be to manage the expected increase in tourist footfall sustainably.
- This will require the implementation of integrated site management plans, strict conservation protocols, and the development of community-centric tourism models to ensure the long-term preservation of these heritage treasures.

**UPSC Syllabus:**

**GS-1:** Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature, and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

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## **9. Phase-III of Single-Use Plastic Ban Comes into Force; Industry Seeks More Time** **Source: The Economic Times**

**Context:** The third and most stringent phase of the nationwide ban on single-use plastics (SUP) came into effect today. This phase extends the ban to multi-layered packaging and small plastic sachets (below 50ml), which constitute a significant portion of plastic waste and are notoriously difficult to recycle.



### **Significance:**

- This is a critical step in India's fight against plastic pollution.
- Small sachets and multi-layered packaging, used for products ranging from shampoo to chips, are a major source of litter that clogs drains, pollutes water bodies, and breaks down into harmful microplastics.
- The ban forces Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies and other manufacturers to innovate and transition towards more sustainable packaging alternatives, aligning with the principles of a circular economy and the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework.

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**Analysis:**

- While environmentally significant, the implementation of Phase-III presents formidable challenges.
- The FMCG industry has argued that viable, cost-effective, and scalable alternatives for products requiring a high barrier against moisture and air are not yet widely available.
- This could lead to price increases for consumers and supply chain disruptions for small businesses.
- The success of the ban will depend on three key factors: the government's ability to enforce it rigorously at the manufacturing level; the availability and affordability of alternatives like compostable materials, paper, or glass; and a massive public awareness campaign to encourage a shift in consumer behavior.
- The government will need to support MSMEs in making this transition through subsidies or technological support to avoid economic disruption.

**UPSC Syllabus:**

**GS-3:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

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## **10. Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal Delivers Final Award; Odisha Expresses Dissatisfaction, Source: The Hindu**

**Context:** The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal, constituted in 2018 under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, today delivered its final award on the sharing of the river's waters between Odisha and Chhattisgarh. The Tribunal has allocated specific shares of water to each state based on a lean year scenario and has mandated the formation of a permanent Mahanadi River Management Board.



### **Significance:**

- The verdict aims to put an end to a long-standing and often acrimonious dispute between the two states.
- The conflict primarily revolved around Chhattisgarh's construction of barrages and industrial projects in the upper catchment area, which Odisha claimed was severely impacting water flow downstream, affecting its agriculture, ecology (at the Bhitarkanika sanctuary), and drinking water supply.
- The Tribunal's award provides a legal framework for water sharing and joint management, which is crucial for cooperative federalism.

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**Analysis:**

- The initial reaction from Odisha suggests dissatisfaction with the quantum of water allocated, with the government stating it will study the detailed report before deciding on a legal challenge in the Supreme Court.
- The core of the analysis lies in the Tribunal's methodology—whether it prioritized existing agricultural use, industrial needs, or ecological flow requirements.
- The mandate to set up a Management Board is a positive step towards institutionalizing conflict resolution, but its effectiveness will depend on the cooperation of both state governments.
- This verdict once again highlights the growing complexity of inter-state water disputes in an era of climate change and increasing water demand, underscoring the need for a more robust and efficient legal framework for water governance in India.

**UPSC Syllabus:**

**GS-2:** Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inter-State relations.