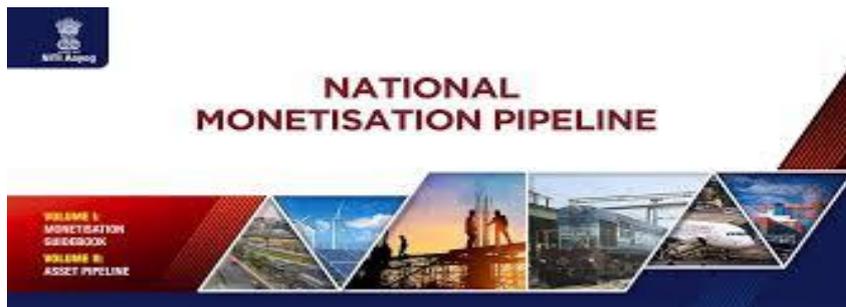


UPSC Prelims Exam Based On Current Affairs Analysis – 19 August 2025

1. NITI Aayog's Mid-Term Appraisal of National Infrastructure Pipeline Flags Delays in Private Sector Funding

Source: The Hindu

Context: NITI Aayog today published its mid-term appraisal report on the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), a ₹111 lakh crore infrastructure development program launched in 2019. The report acknowledges significant progress in public-funded projects, especially in the roads and railways sectors. However, it raises a red flag regarding the slow pace of private investment, which is falling short of the targeted 22% share in the overall NIP funding.



Significance:

- The NIP is the backbone of India's ambition to become a \$5 trillion economy.
- Its success is critical for improving logistics efficiency, creating jobs, and enhancing the quality of life for citizens.
- The report's findings are a crucial reality check, highlighting the need for urgent policy interventions to de-bottleneck private sector participation.
- The government's capital expenditure has been the primary driver of infrastructure growth, but this is not fiscally sustainable in the long run.
- Attracting private capital is essential for completing the pipeline on schedule.



Analysis:

- The report attributes the sluggish private investment to several factors, including high-interest rates, delays in regulatory and environmental clearances, and contractual disputes.
- To revive private interest, the report recommends strengthening Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models, creating a more robust dispute resolution mechanism, and deepening the corporate bond market to facilitate long-term financing.
- The success of asset monetization programs, like the one for highways and airports, will also be key to recycling capital back into new projects.
- The appraisal serves as a strategic guide for the government to refine its approach and make infrastructure financing more attractive and viable for private players.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.; Investment models.

2. India Pushes for 'Global South' Development Agenda at BRICS+ Summit in Cape Town

Source: The Indian Express

Context: At the 17th BRICS Summit, now expanded to 'BRICS+', being held in Cape Town, South Africa, the Indian Prime Minister made a strong pitch for a development-centric agenda focused on the needs of the Global South. India's intervention called for concrete action on key areas such as reform of multilateral development banks, transfer of climate-friendly technologies, and the creation of a BRICS-led framework for digital public infrastructure (DPI) to promote financial inclusion and good governance.



19 Aug 2025



Significance:

- India's stance positions it as a leading voice and a "bridge" between the developed world and the developing nations of the Global South.
- By championing issues like DPI, where India has demonstrated global leadership with platforms like UPI and Aadhaar, it offers a constructive, technology-driven development model.
- This approach seeks to steer the BRICS+ narrative away from being purely anti-West and towards becoming a proactive bloc that provides solutions for global challenges, enhancing India's diplomatic influence and soft power.

Analysis:

- India's diplomatic challenge within the expanded BRICS+ is to navigate the diverse and sometimes conflicting interests of its members, particularly the growing strategic assertiveness of China.
- While championing the Global South, India must also ensure that the forum is not used to create a polarized world order.
- The proposal for a DPI framework is a strategic move, as it offers a tangible, non-controversial area for collaboration that leverages Indian strengths.
- The success of this agenda will depend on India's ability to build consensus among the diverse members and translate the summit's declarations into concrete, funded projects on the ground.



19 Aug 2025

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Important International institutions, agencies, and fora - their structure, mandate.

3. Phase-3 Trial Results of Indigenous Dengue Vaccine Show 83% Efficacy; Commercial Launch Expected in 2026

Source: Economic Times

Context: An Indian pharmaceutical major, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), has announced highly encouraging results from the Phase-3 clinical trials of their tetravalent dengue vaccine. The trials, conducted across 20 sites in India involving over 10,000 participants, demonstrated an overall efficacy of 83.7% in preventing symptomatic dengue infection. The company has stated it will now apply for regulatory approval from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).



Significance:



19 Aug 2025

- This is a monumental breakthrough for public health in India and other tropical countries where dengue is a major seasonal epidemic, putting immense pressure on healthcare systems.
- An effective and affordable indigenous vaccine would be a game-changer in controlling the disease, reducing hospitalizations, and preventing deaths.
- It reinforces India's reputation as the "pharmacy of the world" and showcases the country's growing capabilities in indigenous research and development of complex vaccines.

Analysis:

- The key challenges ahead include scaling up production to meet the massive demand and ensuring equitable distribution through the public health system.
- The pricing of the vaccine will be a critical factor in its accessibility.
- The government will need to develop a clear strategy for its inclusion in the national immunization program, likely prioritizing high-incidence states initially.
- Another technical challenge is that the vaccine must be effective against all four serotypes of the dengue virus to avoid the risk of antibody-dependent enhancement, a phenomenon that can make subsequent infections more severe.
- The detailed trial data will be scrutinized globally to assess its safety and long-term efficacy.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2: Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

GS Paper 3: Achievements of Indians in science & technology.



19 Aug 2025

4. 55th GST Council Meeting: States Raise Concerns Over End of Compensation Period; Rate Rationalization Deferred

Source: Economic Times

Context: The 55th meeting of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council concluded today with heated discussions on the fiscal health of states. Several states raised concerns about their revenue growth after the guaranteed compensation period ended in 2022 and the subsequent tapering of central support. The much-anticipated agenda of rate rationalization, aimed at moving from a multi-slab structure to a three-slab system, was once again deferred due to a lack of consensus.



Significance:

- The meeting highlights the growing fault lines in fiscal federalism in the post-compensation era. States are now fully exposed to the buoyancy of their own GST collections, and many are struggling to meet their revenue targets.
- The inability to reach a consensus on rate rationalization indicates the political sensitivity of raising taxes on certain goods, which could be inflationary.
- The health of the GST regime is central to India's indirect tax system and macroeconomic stability.



Analysis:

- The core issue is the divergence in the economic performance of states. Manufacturing and consumption-heavy states have healthier GST growth, while others are lagging.
- The demand for a new mechanism to support states with revenue shortfalls reflects these underlying economic disparities.
- The deferral of rate rationalization, while politically expedient in the short term, prolongs the structural complexities of the current GST system, such as the inverted duty structure.
- The Council's future meetings will need to address these fundamental issues of revenue adequacy for states and structural simplification to ensure the long-term success and stability of the GST regime.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.

GS Paper 3: Government Budgeting.

5. Unprecedented Urban Flooding in Lucknow; Experts Blame Climate Change and Unplanned Urbanization

Source: The Indian Express

Context: The city of Lucknow is grappling with severe urban flooding after receiving over 250mm of rainfall in 12 hours, a record for the city. Major parts of the city are submerged, transport has been crippled, and rescue operations are underway by NDRF teams. This event follows similar incidents in other tier-2 cities like Jaipur and Nagpur earlier this monsoon season.



19 Aug 2025



Significance:

- This incident underscores the increasing vulnerability of Indian cities, including those not traditionally considered prone to flooding, to extreme weather events driven by climate change.
- It exposes the critical gaps in urban planning and disaster preparedness.
- The failure of drainage systems, encroachment on wetlands and floodplains, and the increasing concretization of urban landscapes are amplifying the impact of heavy rainfall, turning them into man-made disasters.

Analysis:

- This is a wake-up call for urban planners and policymakers.
- The traditional, century-old drainage systems in most Indian cities are inadequate to handle the high-intensity, short-duration rainfall events that are becoming the new normal.
- A paradigm shift is needed from conventional grey infrastructure (concrete drains) to a more integrated approach that includes blue-green infrastructure, such as preserving urban water bodies, creating sponge parks, and promoting permeable pavements.
- Updating urban drainage master plans, using modern topographical data, and strictly enforcing regulations against encroachment are no longer optional.



19 Aug 2025

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 1: Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.

GS Paper 3: Disaster and disaster management.

6. UGC Notifies New Guidelines for 'Academic Bank of Credits', Mandates Full Implementation by All Universities by 2026

Source: Business Standard

Context: The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued new, comprehensive guidelines for the mandatory implementation of the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) system across all higher education institutions (HEIs) in India. The guidelines set a firm deadline of the 2026 academic session for all universities to fully integrate their curriculum and examination systems with the ABC portal, which allows students to store and transfer credits earned from different institutions.



Significance:



19 Aug 2025

- This move is a major push towards realizing the vision of a flexible, multidisciplinary education system as envisaged in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

- The ABC system empowers students by giving them the freedom to design their own learning paths, choose courses from different institutions, and have multiple entry and exit points in their academic programs.
- It marks a shift from a rigid, one-size-fits-all university system to a student-centric model.

Analysis:

- The primary challenge lies in the operational implementation of this ambitious reform. It requires a massive exercise in standardizing credit frameworks across thousands of diverse HEIs.
- Many state universities and affiliated colleges lack the technological infrastructure and administrative capacity to integrate with the ABC platform seamlessly.
- There are also concerns about maintaining academic rigor and quality control when students are sourcing credits from multiple institutions.
- The UGC will need to play a strong regulatory role in accrediting courses and institutions for credit transfer, ensuring that the flexibility offered by the ABC does not lead to a dilution of academic standards.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education, Human Resources.



7. India and Sri Lanka Launch Joint Feasibility Study for Land Connectivity Bridge

Source: Hindustan Times

Context: As a follow-up to the high-level talks held earlier this year, the governments of India and Sri Lanka have officially launched a joint technical feasibility study for establishing land connectivity between the two countries. The study will explore the alignment, cost, and economic viability of a bridge and tunnel network connecting Dhanushkodi in Tamil Nadu with Talaimannar in Sri Lanka.



Significance:

- This initiative represents a potential paradigm shift in the India-Sri Lanka relationship, moving from maritime connectivity to direct land-based trade and transit.
- If realized, the bridge would be a massive boost for economic integration, tourism, and people-to-people ties.

- For India, it is a key component of its 'Neighborhood First' policy and a strategic move to deepen its engagement in the Indian Ocean region.
- For Sri Lanka, it offers the prospect of better access to the vast Indian market, potentially transforming its economic fortunes.



Prashikshan IAS
— REDEFINING EDUCATION VIA ACADEMY —

PRELIMS NEWS

19 Aug 2025

Analysis:

- The project is fraught with immense technical, financial, and environmental challenges. The Palk Strait is a shallow but ecologically sensitive marine ecosystem.
- The financial cost will be astronomical, requiring innovative funding models, possibly involving international development banks.
- There are also political sensitivities in both countries that need to be carefully managed. The feasibility study will be the first crucial step to address these issues scientifically.
- The success of the project will depend not just on its technical viability but on the sustained political will from both sides to see this transformative vision through to completion.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 2: India and its Neighborhood- Relations; Bilateral groupings and agreements.

8. CBDC-Retail Pilot Expanded to 500 Cities; RBI Cites Positive Feedback on Offline Functionality

Source: Economic Times

Context: The Reserve Bank of India has announced a major expansion of its Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) or 'e-Rupee' retail pilot program. The pilot, which was previously limited to a few major cities, will now be extended to 500 cities and towns

across the country. The RBI's announcement highlighted the successful testing of the e-Rupee's offline functionality, which allows for transactions to be made in areas with limited or no internet connectivity.



Prashikshan IAS
— REDEFINING EDUCATION VIA ACADEMY —

PRELIMS NEWS

19 Aug 2025



Significance:

- This expansion signals the RBI's growing confidence in the CBDC project and is a significant step towards a potential nationwide rollout.
- The focus on offline functionality is particularly crucial for a country like India, where internet penetration is still uneven, especially in rural areas.
- An offline CBDC can be a powerful tool for financial inclusion, providing a resilient and accessible digital payment option for all segments of the population.
- It also provides a public-sector alternative to private mobile wallets.

Analysis:

- Despite the expansion, challenges to widespread adoption remain.
- The key is to build a compelling use case for the public to switch from the highly successful and convenient UPI system to the e-Rupee.
- The RBI will need to work with banks and fintech companies to create innovative features and incentives for using the CBDC.

- Issues of data privacy and cybersecurity will also need to be continuously addressed to build public trust.
- The current pilot phase is a crucial learning period for the RBI to understand user behavior and refine the technological architecture before a full-scale launch.



UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth; Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers.

9. Defence Acquisition Council Approves Project to Develop Indigenous 6th Generation Fighter Jet

Source: PIB

Context: The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by the Raksha Mantri, has granted the 'Acceptance of Necessity' (AoN) for the design and development of an indigenous sixth-generation fighter aircraft, the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) Mk2. The project, to be spearheaded by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and DRDO, will focus on developing cutting-edge technologies like stealth, directed energy weapons, and advanced AI-piloting assistance.



Significance:

- This is a visionary step towards securing India's long-term air superiority and achieving self-reliance in critical defence technologies.

- While the Tejas and the AMCA Mk1 (5th gen) programs are maturing, this approval signals a commitment to leapfrog to the next generation of aerial warfare technology.
- A successful indigenous sixth-generation program would place India in a very exclusive global club and drastically reduce its dependence on foreign suppliers for high-end military hardware.



Prashikshan IAS
— REDEFINING EDUCATION VIA ACADEMY —

PRELIMS NEWS

19 Aug 2025

Analysis:

- The project is extraordinarily ambitious and will be a long, capital-intensive journey.
- Developing technologies like an advanced fighter jet engine, superior stealth materials, and combat drones that can team up with the manned aircraft will be the biggest challenges.
- It will require a robust partnership between DRDO labs, public sector undertakings like HAL, and, crucially, the private sector.
- The government will need to ensure sustained funding and create a mission-mode ecosystem to prevent the project from facing the kind of delays that have plagued previous indigenous defence programs.
- The AoN is the first step; consistent execution will be the key to its success.

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

GS Paper 3: Indigenization of technology and developing new technology; Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

10. ASI Unearths Extensive Pre-Mauryan Urban Settlement Near Vaishali, Bihar

Source: The Hindu

Context: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has announced a significant discovery near the ancient city of Vaishali in Bihar. Excavations have revealed a well-planned urban settlement with ring wells, brick structures, and a diverse range of pottery, which has been dated through carbon dating to circa 700-600 BCE, predating the Mauryan empire. The findings suggest a sophisticated level of urban life in the Gangetic plains earlier than previously established.



Prashikshan IAS
— PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED VIA ACADEMY —

PRELIMS NEWS

19 Aug 2025



Significance:

- This discovery could potentially push back the timeline of the "second urbanization" in India and provide new insights into the socio-economic conditions of the Mahajanapada period, particularly the Vajji confederacy, of which Vaishali was the capital.
- The layout of the settlement and the nature of the artifacts can help historians and archaeologists better understand the transition from rural to urban societies in ancient India.
- It enriches our understanding of India's ancient past and provides tangible evidence of the advanced civilizational state that existed even before the rise of the great Mauryan empire.

Analysis:

- The next steps for the ASI will be to conduct a more extensive, horizontal excavation of the site to understand its full extent and layout.

- The analysis of faunal and floral remains will provide clues about the diet and environment of the inhabitants.
- Such discoveries are crucial for reconstructing India's ancient history, which often has to rely more on literary texts than archaeological evidence.
- The proper preservation of the site and the scientific analysis of the artifacts will be key to unlocking the full historical value of this important finding.



Prashikshan IAS
— REDEFINING EDUCATION VIA ACADEMY —

PRELIMS NEWS

19 Aug 2025

UPSC Syllabus Correlation:

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