

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS IN ENGLISH

SPECIAL FOR UPSC & GPSC EXAMINATION

DATE : 01-07-25



The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

Tuesday, 01 July, 2025

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The Civil Registration System (CRS) 2009 report reveals that Bihar has consistently underperformed in birth registration, with figures lagging far behind the national average. This issue gains renewed significance amid the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar, which mandates documentation of birth details.

Bihar has consistently fallen behind in registering births, report shows

Though registrations rose from 3.7% in 2000 to 16.9% in 2005, they were way behind national average of 56.2% and 62.5%, respectively; report comes amid voter roll revision in the State that has stipulated norms to establish a child's date of birth

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

According to the 2009 Civil Registration System (CRS) report compiled by the Registrar-General of India (RGI), the level of registration of births in Bihar in 2000 stood at 3.7% compared with the national average of 56.2% the same year. The total number of births registered across the country in 2000 was 1,29,46,823.

For those born in 2004 and 2005, the level of registration in the State was 11.5% and 16.9%, respectively. The countrywide registration was 60.4% in 2004 and 62.5% in 2005. The total registered births in 2004 and 2005 were 1,57,77,612 and 1,63,94,625, respectively.

The 2009 report said that "in order to quantify the impact of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which are performing abysmally poor for the last so many years, the level of registration for the country excluding these two States have been worked out", which rose to



A cute statistic: Medical institutions are to report incidents of births and deaths within 21 days of the event's occurrence. AP

78.3% in 2005.

"On comparison of estimated and registered births, it is found that there is significant gap in estimated and registered births in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh," the report said.

Revision for election

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, which is currently going on in Bihar, stipulates that those born in India after December 2, 2004 would have to provide any of 11 documents, which include

try amended the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 in 2023 that mandated digital birth certificates for those born after October 1, 2023 for admissions in schools, colleges and for updating electoral rolls.

However, periodic CRS reports show that not all births are registered. On March 17, the RGI office cautioned private and government hospitals to report incidents of births and deaths within 21 days after it was found that many medical institutions were flouting the law adding that nearly 10% births were not getting registered.

CRS and SRS

"To get an idea as to the coverage of civil registration in the country, the data generated from the Civil Registration System (CRS) has been compared with corresponding estimates thrown up by the Sample Registration System (SRS)," the 2009 report said.

While the CRS is the actual numbers, the SRS is the largest demographic survey in the country man-

dated to provide annual estimates of fertility and mortality indicators at the State and national level.

The EC's move to conduct the SIR has invited criticism from Opposition parties terming it as a move to bring the National Register of Citizens (NRC) through the backdoor.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi said the government should furnish the data on total number of illegal migrants in the country.

"How is the BLO (Booth Level Officer) going to scrutinise the documents? Why should people pay penalty for government not keeping a check on illegal migrants.. We want to know the criteria that was followed during the SIR in 2003," Mr. Owaisi said.

In 2022, as many as 2,54,39,164 births were registered. In 2022, Bihar was among 14 States where 50%-80% births were registered in the stipulated 21-day period. The State registered 71% births within the prescribed limit of 21-days.

Key Findings:

- In 2000, Bihar's birth registration stood at 3.7%, versus 56.2% nationally.
- By 2005, Bihar improved to 16.9%, still far below the national average of 62.5%.
- The CRS observed a significant gap between estimated and registered births in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh.
- In 2022, Bihar registered 71% of births within 21 days, yet it still falls into the 50–80% compliance bracket.

Recent Developments:

- As per the amended Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 (2023), digital birth certificates are now mandatory for school admissions and electoral updates for births after October 1, 2023.
- The Election Commission's SIR exercise requires proof of date and place of birth for those born after December 2, 2004, raising concerns about exclusion and accessibility in low-registration regions.
- Critics, including political leaders, argue that such documentation could be a proxy for citizenship verification similar to NRC, risking disenfranchisement of legitimate residents.

Challenges in Bihar's Registration System:

1. **Weak Institutional Enforcement:** Hospitals often fail to report births within the mandated 21-day window, despite clear legal obligations.
2. **Administrative Apathy:** Lack of robust follow-up mechanisms, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas, limits compliance.
3. **Low Awareness:** Families, particularly in marginalised communities, remain unaware of the importance and legal utility of birth registration.
4. **Infrastructural Deficits:** Shortage of trained personnel, digital systems, and coordination between local bodies and registration offices.

Implications:

- **Democratic Rights:** Inadequate birth registration may lead to denial of voting rights due to inability to prove age and citizenship.
- **Social Welfare Access:** Birth certificates are critical for accessing education, health services, and government schemes.
- **Data Reliability:** Poor CRS compliance undermines the accuracy of demographic planning and public policy targeting.

Way Forward:

1. **Strengthen Enforcement:** Penalize institutions that do not report births within 21 days and incentivize compliance.
2. **Digital Integration:** Ensure real-time linkage of medical institutions with CRS platforms.
3. **Awareness Campaigns:** Use ASHA workers, panchayats, and media to promote registration awareness.
4. **Simplify Documentation:** Streamline processes especially in rural belts to reduce dependency on multiple ID proofs.
5. **Safeguard Rights:** Ensure that documentation requirements for electoral inclusion do not lead to arbitrary exclusions or suspicion-based verification.

Conclusion:

The persistent gaps in birth registration in Bihar reflect deeper structural and institutional deficiencies. While recent legal reforms and technological interventions offer an opportunity to improve civil registration, the state must prioritize inclusive implementation, administrative accountability, and citizen awareness to ensure that no individual's legal identity and rights are denied due to systemic lapses.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Critically examine the role of the Civil Registration System (CRS) in ensuring inclusive governance. What challenges do states like Bihar face in implementing it effectively? **(250 Words)**

Page 04: GS 3 : Science & Technology

In response to lessons from Operation Sindoor, where satellite-based surveillance significantly enhanced military preparedness, the Government of India has fast-tracked the launch of 52 precision surveillance satellites. This marks a major leap in India's space-based defence capabilities.

India fast-tracks 52 satellites for precision surveillance following Operation Sindoor

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

After defence forces realised the need for more precision surveillance during Operation Sindoor, the Union government has ordered the fast-tracking of the launch of 52 dedicated surveillance satellites, enhancing round-the-clock monitoring of coastline and land borders.

In October last year, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Cabinet Committee approved \$3.2 billion for the SBS-III programme to develop next-generation satellites over the next decade. Under the programme, ISRO will manufacture and launch the first 21 satellites, while private companies will handle the remaining 31. The Defence

ISRO will make and launch the first 21 satellites, while private companies will handle the remaining 31

Space Agency (DSA) will oversee the operation of the newly launched satellite system.

"We have asked the private companies and ISRO for early launch of satellites. We are expecting first set of satellites to be launched by 2026," said a senior official. The official added that the new satellites will be using artificial intelligence (AI) to make smarter decisions and improve overall performance and efficiency in space.

During Operation Sin-

door, satellite-based surveillance helped Indian defence forces to act swiftly by offering accurate intelligence, including the trajectory and movement of drones and missiles. India's satellites, like the Cartosat and RISAT, helped defence forces to track enemy mobilisation, confirm strike impact, and maintain real-time situational awareness, which prevented any major damage to the country's military assets.

After the successful implementation of SBS-III, India will become more self-reliant and reduce its dependence on other countries. It will help focus more clearly and accurately on the Pakistan and China border and the Indian Ocean Region.

Key Highlights:

- The initiative is part of the SBS-III (Space-Based Surveillance-III) programme, approved at \$3.2 billion by the Cabinet Committee led by PM Modi in October 2024.
- ISRO will develop and launch the first 21 satellites; private companies will handle the remaining 31.
- The system will be operated by the Defence Space Agency (DSA).
- Satellites will leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) for smarter decision-making and real-time threat detection.
- First set of launches is expected by 2026.

Strategic Significance:

1. Enhanced Border Surveillance:

- Continuous monitoring of land borders (especially with Pakistan and China) and maritime domain.
- Improves India's ability to detect and pre-empt enemy troop movements, drone incursions, and missile launches.

2. Operational Readiness:

- Real-time data ensures rapid response, accurate target acquisition, and precision strikes.
- During Operation Sindoor, satellites like Cartosat and RISAT enabled real-time situational awareness.

3. Self-Reliance and Strategic Autonomy:

- Reduces dependence on foreign intelligence systems.
- Aligns with the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision in defence and space.

4. Dual-use Capability:

- Can be used in disaster management, environmental monitoring, and internal security during peacetime.
- AI integration improves data analytics, resource allocation, and strategic planning.

Challenges and Considerations:

1. Cybersecurity Concerns:

- Military satellites are susceptible to cyber warfare, jamming, and electronic espionage.
- Requires robust protocols for secure transmission and data encryption.

2. Private Sector Role:

- Delegating satellite development to private players needs clear regulatory frameworks, IPR clarity, and technology sharing protocols.

3. Space Debris and Orbital Congestion:

- 52 new satellites may contribute to low-earth orbit (LEO) traffic, increasing risk of collisions.

4. Global Geopolitical Sensitivities:

- Aggressive surveillance capabilities may be perceived as a threat by neighbors and global powers, leading to space militarization concerns.

Way Forward:

- **Institutional Strengthening:** Empower the Defence Space Agency with legal backing and operational autonomy.
- **Public-Private Synergy:** Streamline PPP models to ensure timely delivery, innovation, and accountability.

- **AI-Ethics in Warfare:** Develop guidelines on the ethical use of AI in satellite surveillance and defence applications.
- **International Diplomacy:** Ensure compliance with international space norms to prevent geopolitical friction.

Conclusion:

India's decision to fast-track 52 surveillance satellites post-Operation Sindoor is a decisive step toward military modernization, strategic self-reliance, and technological preparedness. In an era of hybrid threats and precision warfare, space-based intelligence will be a cornerstone of national security. However, this must be balanced with cyber resilience, ethical AI usage, and international cooperation to ensure sustainable and secure space governance.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: India's growing defence space capabilities risk contributing to global space militarisation. Examine this statement in the context of international space law and India's strategic needs. **(250 words)**

In the backdrop of ongoing tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met with Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun on the sidelines of the SCO Defence Ministers' Conclave in Qingdao, China (June 26, 2025). The discussion revived the long-stalled talks on boundary delimitation, signalling a cautious diplomatic thaw.

China says border dispute with India complicated, ready for delimitation talks

Press Trust of India
BEIJING

China on Monday said the boundary dispute with India was complicated and would take time to settle but at the same time, it expressed its readiness to hold discussions on the delimitation of the border and keep it peaceful.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, in his meeting with Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun in Qingdao on June 26, proposed that India and China should solve the "complex issues" under a structured roadmap comprising steps to de-escalate tensions along the frontiers and rejuvenate the existing mechanism to demarcate the borders.

Mr. Singh and Mr. Dong



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with his Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun.

held bilateral talks on the sidelines of a conclave of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the Chinese port city of Qingdao.

Asked for China's reaction to Mr. Singh's remarks, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said, "What I can tell you is that

China and India have established the Special Representatives (SRs) mechanism on the boundary question and reached the Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the China-India Boundary Question".

"China stands ready to maintain communication with India on issues, including delimitation negotiation and border management, jointly keep the border areas peaceful and tranquil, and promote cross-border exchange and cooperation," she said.

Questioned about the prolonged delay in resolving the border issue, Ms. Mao said, "The boundary question is complicated, and it takes time to settle it".

Key Developments:

- India proposed a structured roadmap to resolve border tensions and revitalize the mechanism for border demarcation.

- China responded by acknowledging that the boundary question is “complicated” and would take time to resolve.
- Beijing expressed readiness to hold delimitation discussions under the Special Representatives (SRs) mechanism, while ensuring peace and stability in border areas.
- The meeting reflects a diplomatic attempt to restore dialogue and military disengagement after the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes.

Significance of the Delimitation Talks:

1. Historical Context:

- The India–China boundary dispute spans the western sector (Aksai Chin), middle sector (Himachal–Uttarakhand), and eastern sector (Arunachal Pradesh).
- Despite the 1993, 1996, and 2005 border agreements, the dispute remains unresolved due to differing perceptions of the LAC.

2. Special Representatives Mechanism:

- Established in 2003, this mechanism aims to frame political parameters and guiding principles.
- The 2005 agreement laid the groundwork for a final settlement but progress has been slow.

3. Recent Strain:

- Since the Galwan clash of 2020, border tensions have escalated.
- Several Corps Commander-level talks have occurred, but de-escalation remains partial.

4. SCO as a Platform:

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) provides a neutral multilateral forum for regional cooperation and conflict resolution.
- The meeting in Qingdao reflects a calibrated use of regional diplomacy by both countries.

Implications for India:

1. Security and Strategic Autonomy:

- Sustained border uncertainty stretches India’s military resources and requires continued high alert along the LAC.
- India must balance diplomatic engagement with strategic preparedness.

2. Geopolitical Calculations:

- China's overtures may be linked to its desire to counterbalance India’s growing proximity to the West and Indo-Pacific groupings like QUAD.
- India must weigh engagement with China alongside its Act East and Neighbourhood First policies.

3. Economic and Regional Connectivity:

- Stability on borders can potentially enhance cross-border trade, tourism, and regional integration in the Himalayan belt.

Challenges and Roadblocks:

- **Mutual Distrust:** Incidents like Galwan have deepened mistrust and undermined confidence-building measures.
- **Differing Strategic Objectives:** China's strategic infrastructure build-up near the LAC contrasts with India's push for status quo.
- **Opaque Intentions:** China's stated commitment to peace often conflicts with assertive behaviour on the ground.
- **Delimitation Complexity:** Lack of a mutually accepted LAC map makes delimitation negotiations technically and politically difficult.

Way Forward:

1. Reinvigorate SR Mechanism with clear timelines and defined objectives.
2. Ensure simultaneous progress on de-escalation and delimitation through structured dialogue.
3. Strengthen infrastructure and surveillance in border areas to deter unilateral changes.
4. Promote people-to-people and trade ties in peaceful border zones to foster goodwill.
5. Engage multilaterally (SCO, BRICS) while securing bilateral transparency in communications.

Conclusion:

The India–China border dispute remains one of the most complex and sensitive issues in Asian geopolitics. While China's willingness to resume delimitation talks offers a diplomatic opening, India must tread cautiously, ensuring its sovereignty, strategic interests, and regional balance are upheld. Lasting peace will require mutual respect, transparency, and a sustained commitment to dialogue.

UPSCMainsPractice Question

Ques: Analyze the significance of the Special Representatives (SRs) mechanism in the India–China boundary negotiations. What are its achievements and limitations? (250 Words)

In 2024, India made significant additions to its biodiversity inventory, with 683 new species added to fauna and 433 taxa to flora. These discoveries highlight India's ecological richness and the role of scientific institutions in documenting biological diversity.

683 species added to India's fauna, 433 taxa to its flora during 2024

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

India added 683 new species to its fauna in the year 2024, which included 459 new species and 224 species new records. The country also added 433 taxa of flora during the same period, which included 410 species and 23 infra-specific taxa of plants.

The details of new discoveries and new records were released by Union Minister for Environment Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav in Kolkata on Monday.

The maximum number of new discoveries of fauna in 2024 was recorded from Kerala – with 101 species (80 new species and 21 new records) – followed by Karnataka – 82 (68 new species and 14 new records). Tamil Nadu recorded 63 discoveries with 50 new species and 13 new records.

In the east and north-east, Arunachal Pradesh



New entrants: (clockwise from top left) *Hylarana chozhai*; *Coelogyne tripurensis*; *Anguiculus dicaprioi*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

recorded 72 animal discoveries (42 new species and 30 new records), Meghalaya 42 new discoveries (25 new species and 17 new records) and West Bengal 56 new discoveries (25 new species and 31 new records). Andaman and Nicobar Islands, another biological hotspot in the country, recorded 43 new discoveries of fauna from

the region, which included 14 new discoveries of fauna and 29 new records.

In terms of plant discoveries, the highest number of flora discovered were from Kerala (58), followed by Maharashtra (45) and Uttarakhand (40). The new plant discoveries for 2024 record 154 angiosperms, 4 pteridophytes, 15 bryophytes, 63 lichens, 156 fun-

gi, 32 algae and 9 microbes. The hotspot regions such as Western Ghats and North-Eastern regions have contributed 35% of total discoveries. India has recorded and documented 56,177 species of plants – angiosperms, gymnosperms, pteridophytes, bryophytes, lichens, fungi, and algae etc.

The significant faunal discoveries for the year 2024 include two new genus and 37 species of reptiles and five new species of amphibians. The significant discovery of reptiles included *Dravidoseps gouensis*, belonging to the new genus, and *Anguiculus dicaprioi* is a member of Colubridae family, named after Hollywood star, Leonardo Di Caprio.

In terms of flora, the significant discoveries include important orchid species such as *Bulbophyllum gopalianum*, *Coelogyne tripurensis*, *Gastrodia indica* and *Gastrodia sikimensis*.

Key Highlights:

- **Faunal Additions (2024):**

- Total: 683 species (459 new + 224 new records).
- Highest contributions from: Kerala (101), Karnataka (82), Arunachal Pradesh (72).
- Notable discoveries:
 - New reptile genus *Dravidoseps gouensis*.

- Snake species *Anguiculus dicaprio* named after Leonardo DiCaprio.
- 37 new species of reptiles, 5 amphibians.
- **Floral Additions (2024):**
 - Total: 433 taxa (410 species + 23 infra-specific taxa).
 - Highest plant discoveries: Kerala (58), Maharashtra (45), Uttarakhand (40).
 - Significant groups:
 - Angiosperms (154), Fungi (156), Lichens (63), Algae (32), Microbes (9).
 - Noteworthy orchids: *Coelogyne tripurensis*, *Gastrodia indica*, *Bulbophyllum gopalianum*.
- **Hotspot Contribution:**
 - Western Ghats and Northeast India contributed over 35% of total biodiversity discoveries.

Significance of These Discoveries:

1. Biodiversity Documentation & Taxonomy:

- Critical for conservation planning, ecological research, and environmental impact assessments.
- Enhances understanding of evolutionary biology, species behavior, and genetic diversity.

2. India's Global Biodiversity Role:

- As one of the 17 mega-biodiverse countries, India's documentation efforts support its global commitments under CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity) and SDGs (especially SDG 15 – Life on Land).

3. Conservation Value of Hotspots:

- Reinforces the ecological importance of Western Ghats, North-East, and Andaman-Nicobar Islands.
- Calls for enhanced protection measures in these ecologically sensitive zones.

4. Public Awareness and Eco-tourism:

- Naming species like *Anguiculus dicaprio* can generate public interest and support for conservation.
- New species discovery helps promote nature-based tourism and local livelihoods in biodiversity-rich areas.

Challenges and Concerns:

- **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation:** Ongoing development pressures in biodiversity-rich areas can endanger newly discovered species before they're understood.
- **Climate Change:** Alters ecological balances, threatening endemic and newly discovered flora and fauna.
- **Lack of Taxonomists and Funding:** Scientific exploration and species classification need more trained personnel and financial support.

Way Forward:

1. Strengthen Scientific Institutions like ZSI, BSI, and State Biodiversity Boards for field surveys and taxonomy.
2. Integrate New Discoveries into Conservation Policy, including IUCN Red List assessments.
3. Promote Community-Based Conservation, especially in hotspots.
4. Increase Awareness & Education about lesser-known biodiversity components like fungi, lichens, microbes.

Conclusion:

India's addition of over 1,100 new species and taxa in 2024 reflects not only the country's rich natural heritage, but also the need for continued investment in biodiversity documentation and conservation. With climate change and anthropogenic pressures rising, timely identification and protection of species is essential for ecological stability and sustainable development.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: With reference to the biodiversity documentation in India, consider the following statements:

1. In 2024, India added more than 600 species to its faunal records.
2. Kerala contributed the highest number of both faunal and floral discoveries in 2024.
3. The species *Anguiculus dicaprio* belongs to the orchid family.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (A) 1 and 2 only
(B) 2 and 3 only
(C) 1 only
(D) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : A)

On June 25, 2025, Italian luxury brand Prada unveiled a line of footwear inspired by Kolhapuri chappals — a traditional Indian Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged product — at its Milan fashion show. This has sparked fresh debate over cultural misappropriation, the scope of GI protection, and India's preparedness to defend its cultural assets globally.

Can a G.I. tag prevent cultural misappropriation?

How many Indian products are registered as GI-tagged goods? Do 'international' GI rights exist?

Kartikey Singh

The story so far:

On June 25, at its Spring/Summer 2026 menswear show in Milan, Italian luxury brand Prada unveiled footwear inspired by India's Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged Kolhapuri chappals, sparking accusations of 'cultural misappropriation'.

What is a geographical indication?

It is a form of 'intellectual property' that identifies goods as originating from a specific country, region or locality, where their distinctive qualities, characteristics, or reputation are essentially linked to that 'place of origin'. In India, there are currently 658 registered GI-tagged goods, including Chanderi sarees (Madhya Pradesh), Madhubani painting (Bihar), Pashmina shawls (J&K), Kancheepuram silk (Tamil Nadu), and Darjeeling tea

(West Bengal). Importantly, GIs serve as a powerful marketing tool, driving rural development, boosting exports, enhancing consumer confidence, and preserving 'cultural knowledge' of local communities, farmers and indigenous groups. Unlike trademarks, which are owned by enterprises, GIs are public property belonging to the producers of the concerned goods and cannot be assigned, transmitted or licenced.

The legal protection of GIs stem from international instruments like the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property (1883), and later gained a clearer definition under the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement, 1995. India, as a TRIPS signatory, enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, which came into force in 2003. The Act provides for GI registration, enforcement of rights, prohibition of unauthorised use

and penalties for infringement.

How can infringement be tackled?

The registered proprietor or authorised users may initiate infringement action when an unauthorised user misleads the public about the origin of goods, causes unfair competition or passing off, or falsely represents goods as originating from a GI-registered region. However, it is important to note that GI rights are primarily 'territorial' and consequently limited to the country (or region) where protection is granted. At present, no automatic 'world' or 'international' GI right exists. Nevertheless, several mechanisms exist for cross-border protection. GIs can be protected internationally by first securing recognition in the country of origin, as many jurisdictions require this as a precondition and then obtaining protection directly in the jurisdiction concerned.

Is this the first such case?

Indian traditional products have time and again suffered exploitation by global corporations. In 1997, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) controversially granted a patent to Ricetec Inc., a Texas-based company, for novel "lines and grains" of Basmati rice. After significant Indian legal efforts, the USPTO disallowed the patent holder from using the name "Basmati". Similar challenges arose with 'turmeric' when the University of Mississippi medical centre was granted a patent in 1995 for turmeric's wound-healing properties — a use long known in Indian traditional medicine. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research contested the claim, leading to the revocation of the patent. Likewise, the European Patent Office in 2000 revoked a patent granted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a multinational firm W.R. Grace, for neem-based antifungal formulations, as the therapeutic use of neem was already part of Indian knowledge systems. To prevent such cases in the future, one could start by expanding the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library to include wider traditional grassroots expressions. Making a 'searchable database' would allow brands to conduct due diligence and searches to identify right holder communities for collaboration.

Kartikey Singh is a lawyer based in New Delhi. With inputs from Janhvi Singh.

THE GIST

Geographical indication is a form of 'intellectual property' that identifies goods as originating from a specific country, region or locality, where their distinctive qualities, characteristics, or reputation are essentially linked to that 'place of origin'.

India, as a TRIPS signatory, enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, which came into force in 2003.

Indian traditional products have time and again suffered exploitation by global corporations.

What is a Geographical Indication (GI)?

- A Geographical Indication (GI) is a form of intellectual property that denotes products originating from a specific geographical region, where the quality, reputation, or characteristics of the product are essentially linked to its place of origin.
- India has 658 registered GI-tagged products (as of 2024), such as:
 - Darjeeling Tea, Madhubani Paintings, Pashmina Shawls, Kancheepuram Silk, Kolhapuri Chappals, etc.
- Unlike trademarks (privately owned), GIs are community-owned, cannot be transferred or licensed, and are meant to preserve cultural identity.

Legal Protection Framework:

- **Global Level:**
 - Rooted in the Paris Convention (1883) and TRIPS Agreement (1995).

- No universal GI protection exists — protection is territorial and must be individually secured in each country.
- **India's Law:**
 - Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, in force since 2003.
 - Empowers local producers or registered associations to initiate infringement action, prohibit misuse, and seek damages.

Cultural Misappropriation vs. Cultural Appreciation:

- Misappropriation refers to the unauthorised use of cultural expressions without credit, benefit sharing, or understanding of context — often for profit.
- Prada's usage of Kolhapuri design may lack consent or collaboration with artisan communities, triggering ethical concerns.
- **This reflects a broader pattern seen in previous instances involving:**
 - Basmati rice (1997 – Ricetec patent case)
 - Turmeric's healing properties (1995 – University of Mississippi)
 - Neem antifungal patent (2000 – W.R. Grace case)

Challenges in Preventing Cultural Misappropriation:

1. **Territorial Limitation of GI Rights:**
 - GI protection is valid only within registered jurisdictions.
 - Prada's product, marketed outside India, does not necessarily violate Indian law, unless protected in Italy/EU.
2. **Lack of International Coordination:**
 - No global GI registry under WTO.
 - Bilateral agreements and regional systems (e.g., Lisbon Agreement) offer partial remedies.
3. **Enforcement Burden:**
 - Legal action in foreign jurisdictions is expensive and time-consuming.
 - Small producer groups lack legal and financial capacity.
4. **Traditional Knowledge Exclusion:**
 - Many grassroots expressions are undocumented and hence vulnerable to misappropriation.

Way Forward:

1. **Expand the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL):**
 - Include artisanal crafts, textiles, and cultural expressions along with Ayurveda and folk medicine.
 - Create a searchable global platform for brands to verify and seek community collaboration.

2. International Recognition:

- Push for mutual recognition of GIs through bilateral trade agreements.
- Leverage WIPO and WTO forums for an international GI registry.

3. Promote Ethical Collaborations:

- Encourage brands to engage in fair-trade models, profit-sharing, and co-branding with traditional artisan groups.

4. Strengthen Domestic Enforcement:

- Facilitate legal aid for GI holder communities.
- Enable collective licensing mechanisms through producer cooperatives.

Conclusion:

While GI tags serve as powerful tools for protecting India's cultural and economic interests, they remain legally inadequate to counter global cultural misappropriation without multilateral cooperation and robust documentation of traditional knowledge. India must move beyond symbolic registration and adopt a strategic, legal, and diplomatic approach to ensure that its cultural heritage is respected, protected, and fairly compensated in the global marketplace.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the economic and cultural significance of GI-tagged goods for rural artisans and indigenous communities in India. What steps are needed to enhance their protection and value in global markets? **(250 words)**

Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

In a perilous world, India must read the tea leaves well

India's foreign policy is currently facing an existential crisis. The second term of the Trump administration, which had previously been welcomed by India, has upset India's carefully crafted foreign policy. The recent India-Pakistan conflict should also be viewed as a 'wake-up call'. As details of the extent of China's military connections to Pakistan and of equipment transfer tumble out, India must take notice.

Next to the China-Pakistan nexus in the region, it is India's approach to events in West Asia and the Israel-Iran conflict that clearly need a relook. India has tried, not very successfully, to sit on the fence as far as the current Israel-Iran war is concerned, but it probably needs to think through what is best in its interest. The stakes have become higher with the United States involving itself directly in the Israel-Iran conflict, which saw it using, for the first time, its GBU-57 bunker buster bomb to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz and another embedded nuclear site. Neutrality is no longer an option, and despite the announcement of a ceasefire, the possibility of an all-out war is a distinct possibility.

A term that is no longer taboo

With the use of the GBU-57 precision guided bombs, the conflict in West Asia has clearly attained a new dimension. The dreaded 'N word' is no longer taboo. Hence, the question that India needs to answer is whether it can continue to keep up its stance of neutrality. The situation is turning increasingly complex and it is no longer a mere wake-up call for India and countries across the globe. The threat has become all too real.

It may be too far-fetched to assert that a neutral India is 'friendless' in the world of today. A look at the state of affairs that concerns India would suggest, however, that this could well become the case – and that it could continue for quite some time in the future. India's professed leadership of the Global South and its patronage of nations across West Asia brought it no dividends during the recent India-Pakistan conflict. Instead, India has since been reminded – if this was needed – that it confronts two hostile nuclear powers in its neighbourhood, both of whom would have no moral compunctions in utilising nuclear weapons, if the opportunity arose. Hence, India cannot, any longer, afford to believe that its current policies are bearing fruit. A correct reading of 'the tea leaves' as they exist at present is essential for India's present and its future.

Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' (MAGA) policies are today adversely impacting India at levels other than just trade and economics. The U.S. President's claims to have effected a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, following the short India-Pakistan conflict in May – something that India contradicts, but which



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A changing world does not seem to favour India's long-held policy prescriptions; it would be wise for New Delhi to prepare for eventualities of every kind

Pakistan's 'Maximum Leader' Field Marshal Asim Munir, has publicly endorsed – sets India on a collision course with the U.S. President and his Administration. Mr. Trump's lunch for Field Marshal Munir and the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose not to respond to Mr. Trump's invitation to visit Washington (while returning from the G-7 meeting in Canada), is again likely to be played up by elements in the U.S. and across the world who favour Pakistan against India.

The Israel-Iran conflict is yet another situation in which India finds itself as an 'outlier'. 'Neutrality', in the compelling circumstances of today, is out of sync with reality as also the situation on the ground. India's tilt towards Israel in recent times, it would appear, has become something of an albatross around India's neck. India's Iran policy today has few takers beyond India's borders. Its policy of maintaining an equidistance between Israel and Iran has proved to be of little use in so far as extolling the virtues of non-alignment are concerned.

Admittedly, we live in perilous times. Today's situation does not seem to favour India's long-held policy prescriptions. Israel's premeditated attack on Iran's nuclear sites – aided by the U.S. dropping bunker buster bombs – has seen little condemnation across the world. Iran, which needed a strong voice of support like that of India's to counter the narrative of Israel, the U.S. and the West, will find little comfort in India's 'calls for restraint' on all sides. India's support and voice, based on its moral strength, would have mattered were it seen to support the victim of the attack, rather than maintain an equidistance between Israel and Iran.

It is true that in today's world, it is fashionable to denigrate consensus in favour of 'might'. For instance, at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in May, the emphasis seemed to be on the criticality of 'hard power' as against 'soft power', with dialogue taking a back seat. The stage was set by the U.S. Secretary of Defence, Pete Hegseth, who declared that a 'free and open Indo-Pacific' was a sine qua non for peace in the region, and that China's 'calls for hegemony' in Asia were untenable. He reminded the Singapore audience that 'any unilateral attempt to change the status-quo in the South China Sea and the First Island Chain by force or coercion is unacceptable'. This disturbed the normally placid atmosphere seen at the Shangri-La Dialogue, and produced a strong repartee from the Chinese delegate present. Subsequently, a Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman warned that the 'US must never play with fire on the Taiwan question'.

What India needs to do

Hence, it would be wise in the circumstances for India to prepare for future eventualities of every kind. To start with, there needs to be a detailed

study of the growing China-Pakistan military connection as the India-Pakistan conflict in May this year has merely hit the 'pause button'. More importantly, India must try and better understand how deeply China's military capabilities have been meshed with those of Pakistan, the critical role being played today by Chinese weaponry in Pakistan's defence plans, and how Pakistan has managed to integrate Chinese systems with its own defence plans and procedures, including its claims of being able to lock on to hostile targets to counter an attack. Additionally, India needs more details regarding the numbers of J-10Cs and JF-17 fighters in Pakistan's inventory.

As a part of its preparations for a future conflict, India would also do well to examine whether it has the necessary wherewithal for conflicts of longer durations. The United Kingdom, for instance, recently undertook an in-depth study of its defence capabilities which helped highlight areas of critical weakness, including that of ammunition stockpiles, the need to set up a new National Armament System, and a new Cyber and Electromagnetic Command to oversee networks and electronic warfare. For India to prepare for a two front war, it should, apart from learning lessons from the Russia-Ukraine war, refine its policies on many such aspects as well. Undoubtedly, Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be a national priority. Aspects such as electro-magnetic manoeuvres to neutralise drones, loitering munitions and glide bombs that dominate the skies today in periods of conflict, should again have high priority.

China's white paper

While India remains preoccupied with Pakistan, it would also do well to read the fine print in China's recently published white paper on "National Security in the 'New Era'". This has a clear enunciation of Chinese strategic thinking today and mentions that 'development and security are like two wings of one body'. The white paper reads like a 'testament' on the importance of maintaining scientific and technological security at all times, and the importance of ensuring maintainability of supply chains. It also has a mention of the situation prevalent in the areas neighbouring China, underscoring the fact that these pose threats to China's borders.

To conclude, it might bear mentioning that if China intends to reinforce its strategic objectives in Asia, specially in South Asia, the criticality of its alliance with Pakistan to encircle India must not be underestimated. Also at a time, when the 'N word' is being openly bandied about, India must reckon with the fact that China has more than a 3:1 advantage over India in terms of deploying nuclear warheads, and an almost 5:1 advantage if the nuclear warheads of China and Pakistan are combined.

Paper 02 International Relations

UPSC Mains Practice Question: India aspires to lead the Global South, yet its current foreign policy responses reflect strategic indecision. Analyze this contradiction with reference to recent conflicts and India's global positioning. (250 words)

Context :

India finds itself navigating a rapidly shifting global order. The resurgence of great power rivalries, intensifying conflicts such as the Israel–Iran war, a more assertive China–Pakistan nexus, and the rise of nuclear brinkmanship demand a recalibrated foreign and security policy. The article highlights the inadequacies of neutrality and warns of the dangers of misreading the geopolitical landscape.

Key Strategic Developments:

1. China–Pakistan Military Nexus:

- Deepening integration of Chinese weapons and technology into Pakistan's defence systems.
- Joint capabilities, including J-10C and JF-17 fighters and missile systems, raise the risk of two-front confrontation.

2. Neutrality in the Israel–Iran Conflict:

- India's attempt to maintain equidistance has rendered it a passive player with diminishing strategic influence.
- Use of GBU-57 'bunker buster' bombs by the U.S. in Iran underscores the nuclear dimension of present conflicts.

3. Global Power Realignments:

- Trump administration's tilt toward Pakistan and hosting of Field Marshal Munir is seen as diplomatic alienation for India.
- India's leadership claim in the Global South lacks meaningful dividends in recent conflicts.

4. Hard Power vs Soft Power:

- International fora such as Shangri-La Dialogue are now increasingly focused on military might.
- China and the U.S. both project coercive influence, pushing India to reconsider its soft power-centric diplomacy.

Challenges for India's Foreign and Security Policy:

1. Policy of Non-Alignment in Crisis:

- Neutrality is increasingly unsustainable in conflicts involving allies and adversaries alike.
- India risks becoming strategically isolated unless it articulates a firmer stance.

2. Nuclear Posturing:

- China enjoys a 3:1 edge in nuclear warheads over India; 5:1 if Pakistan is included.
- Revival of the "N-word" in global discourse (nuclear threats) demands military preparedness and deterrence planning.

3. Defence Preparedness:

- India must assess its capacity for prolonged conflicts, including:
 - Ammunition stockpiles

- Electronic warfare capabilities
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven warfare
- Loitering munitions and glide bombs
- Cyber and electromagnetic warfare command

4. **Technological Sovereignty:**

- China's recent white paper emphasises scientific and technological security, supply chain resilience, and regional stability — all areas India must emulate.

Way Forward for India:

1. **Recalibrate Strategic Alliances:**

- Go beyond symbolic neutrality; engage actively in shaping outcomes in West Asia and Indo-Pacific.
- Deepen ties with QUAD, ASEAN, and African nations under India's Global South vision.

2. **Modernise Defence Doctrine:**

- Conduct a comprehensive defence audit similar to the UK.
- Prioritise AI, cybersecurity, hypersonic weapons, and electromagnetic dominance.

3. **Improve Intelligence & Surveillance:**

- Establish stronger networks to monitor the China-Pakistan military cooperation.
- Prepare for coordinated military action on two fronts.

4. **Policy of Assertive Diplomacy:**

- India must adopt smart assertiveness, projecting strength without overt alignment.
- Need to speak from a position of moral clarity where justified, such as opposing pre-emptive strikes violating sovereignty (e.g., in Iran).

Conclusion:

India's strategic landscape is fraught with nuclear overhang, hybrid warfare, and shifting alliances. The traditional comfort of neutrality and soft power diplomacy is increasingly out of sync with hardening global realities. The time is ripe for India to "read the tea leaves well", reassess its threat perceptions, and prepare for a more unpredictable, multipolar world where strategic ambiguity may no longer be an option.
