

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS IN ENGLISH

**SPECIAL FOR UPSC & GPSC EXAMINATION**

**DATE : 01-11-25**



## **The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE**

**Saturday, 01 Nov , 2025**

### **Edition : International Table of Contents**

|                                                                                         |                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Page 01</b><br><b>Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations / Prelims</b>            | <b>India, U.S. sign pact to enhance defence ties</b>                                                        |
| <b>Page 06</b><br><b>Syllabus : GS 1 : Social issues / Prelims</b>                      | <b>Consent is all</b><br><b>There must be an intolerance of sexual violence, with support for survivors</b> |
| <b>Page 07</b><br><b>Syllabus : GS 3 : Agriculture / Prelims</b>                        | <b>From reaping riches to facing challenges, horticulture switch leaves ryots in a fix</b>                  |
| <b>Page 11</b><br><b>Syllabus : GS 3 : Indian Economy / Prelims</b>                     | <b>'H1 fiscal deficit stands at 36.5% of full-year goal'</b>                                                |
| <b>Page 12</b><br><b>Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations / Prelims</b>            | <b>Xi takes centre stage at APEC meet, promises to defend global free trade</b>                             |
| <b>Page 06 : Editorial Analysis</b><br><b>Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations</b> | <b>Trump drops a bomb, on U.S. nuclear weapons testing</b>                                                  |

## Page 01 : GS 2 : International Relations / Prelims

India and the United States recently signed a 10-year "Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defence Partnership" during the 12th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) in Kuala Lumpur. The agreement marks a new phase in bilateral defence cooperation, aiming to enhance peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, a theatre increasingly central to global geopolitics.

## India, U.S. sign pact to enhance defence ties

The framework charts ties across all the defence domains – land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace

The India-U.S. partnership will ensure an open, rules-bound Indo-Pacific region, Singh says on X

Hegseth says coordination is being stepped up, and defence ties have never been stronger

Saurabh Trivedi  
NEW DELHI

India and the United States have unveiled a 10-year defence framework, marking a new phase in their strategic cooperation aimed at "advancing peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific".

The "Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defence Partnership" was signed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth on the sidelines of the 12th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Friday. The development came amid strained ties due to Washington's slapping of 50% tariffs on Indian goods.

According to the Ministry of Defence, both sides appreciated the continuing momentum in bilateral defence cooperation and



Sealing the deal: Rajnath Singh and Pete Hegseth shake hands after signing a 10-year defence partnership framework in Kuala Lumpur on Friday. ANI

reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the partnership.

### Progress review

They reviewed ongoing defence engagements, addressed emerging challenges, and discussed progress in defence indus-

try and technology collaborations, the Ministry said.

Mr. Singh posted on X: "Defence will remain the major pillar of our bilateral relations. Our partnership is critical for ensuring a free, open, and rules-bound Indo-Pacific region."

Building on the 2013 Joint Principles for Defence Cooperation and the 2016 recognition of India as a Major Defence Partner (MDP), the new framework charts a 10-year road map to deepen collaboration across all defence domains – land, maritime, air,

space, and cyberspace, a senior Defence Ministry official said.

The framework focuses on maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific, enhancing interoperability, and strengthening maritime security to ensure the free flow of commerce. It also seeks to expand cooperation with like-minded partners through mechanisms such as the Quad, prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and bolster defence industrial innovation through advanced technology partnerships, the official said.

Both sides had already launched the COMPACT initiative (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology) to drive transformative changes in key areas of defence cooperation.

The new framework underscores a shared intent to respond jointly to com-

mon security threats, deter conflict, and uphold the sovereignty and autonomy of regional partners, while laying the foundation for collective peace and prosperity in the region.

### 'Priority partner'

The U.S. Secretary of War on Friday reiterated that India remains a priority partner for Washington in defence cooperation.

In a post, Mr. Hegseth stated that the framework advances the bilateral defence partnership, a cornerstone for regional stability and deterrence. "We're enhancing our coordination, info sharing, and tech cooperation. Our defence ties have never been stronger," he wrote.

The defence framework is expected to give unified policy direction to transform and expand the partnership between the two countries over the next decade, the Ministry added.

The Ministry further said that India and the U.S. continue to expand their defence relationship through regular military exercises, intelligence sharing, industrial collaboration, and joint mechanisms for strategic coordination with regional and global partners.

The meeting on Friday included delegation-level discussions followed by one-on-one interaction between the two leaders.

In May this year, Mr. Singh and Mr. Hegseth held a telephonic conversation to review ongoing and upcoming initiatives aimed at strengthening defence cooperation. During that exchange, Mr. Hegseth had invited Mr. Singh to visit the U.S. for in-person discussions to advance bilateral defence ties. Mr. Singh's planned visit in August was, however, postponed amid tariff-related developments.

## Key Analysis

### 1. Strategic Context

The pact comes at a time when geopolitical tensions in the Indo-Pacific are intensifying, particularly with China's assertive posturing in the South China Sea and along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Despite trade frictions — including Washington's imposition of 50% tariffs on Indian goods — both nations have reaffirmed defence cooperation as a core pillar of their strategic partnership.

### 2. Key Features of the Framework

- Duration: 10 years (2025–2035).
- Scope: Cooperation across all five domains — land, maritime, air, space, and cyberspace.
- Objectives:
  - Promote a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.
  - Strengthen interoperability and maritime security.

- Prevent WMD proliferation and expand defence innovation.
- Enhance technology partnerships and defence industrial collaboration through the COMPACT initiative.
- The framework builds upon the 2013 Joint Principles for Defence Cooperation and the 2016 recognition of India as a Major Defence Partner (MDP).

### **3. Strategic Significance**

- **For India:**
  - Access to advanced U.S. technologies and co-development opportunities under the “Make in India–Make for the World” framework.
  - Strengthening its defence industrial base and capabilities in areas such as AI, drones, and cyber warfare.
  - Reinforcement of India’s role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- **For the U.S.:**
  - Consolidating India’s role as a counterbalance to China in the Indo-Pacific.
  - Deepening strategic trust through information sharing, logistics cooperation, and joint military exercises.
  - Enhancing the credibility of U.S.-led alliances such as the Quad (India, U.S., Japan, Australia).

### **4. Challenges and Constraints**

- Tariff and trade disputes could impact trust and policy coordination.
- Technology transfer limitations due to U.S. export control laws.
- India’s strategic autonomy and non-alignment orientation could limit operational integration.
- Regional sensitivities — balancing ties with Russia and managing China’s reaction.

### **Conclusion**

The new 10-year India–U.S. defence framework reflects a long-term strategic convergence between the world’s largest democracies. It institutionalizes cooperation across emerging domains like space and cyber, while reaffirming their shared commitment to an open, secure, and rules-based Indo-Pacific. However, the true success of this framework will depend on mutual trust, technological synergy, and policy continuity amid evolving global dynamics. If effectively implemented, it can serve as a cornerstone for a stable Indo-Pacific and strengthen India’s position as a key global strategic player.

**UPSC Prelims Practice Question**

**Ques:** Consider the following statements regarding the India–U.S. 10-year Defence Framework (2025–2035):

1. It was signed during the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) in Kuala Lumpur.
2. It covers cooperation across land, maritime, air, space, and cyberspace domains.
3. It replaces the 2008 Civil Nuclear Agreement between the two countries.
4. It builds upon India's recognition as a Major Defence Partner by the U.S. in 2016.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

- (A) 1, 2, and 4 only  
(B) 1 and 3 only  
(C) 2 and 4 only  
(D) 1, 2, 3, and 4

**Ans: a)**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques:** Examine how the India–U.S. defence partnership contributes to India's vision of becoming a "net security provider" in the Indian Ocean Region. **(150 Words)**

## Page 06 : GS 1 : Social issues / Prelims

The recent passage of France's landmark law defining rape as any non-consensual sexual act marks a historic milestone in the global fight against sexual violence. The law reinforces the principle that "force is the crime" — establishing consent as the central pillar of sexual autonomy and justice. This reform, inspired by the courage of survivor Gisèle Pelicot, symbolizes not only a victory for women's rights in France but also a global call to strengthen laws and attitudes against sexual violence.

### Key Analysis

#### 1. Significance of France's Legal Reform

- The French law redefines rape through the lens of consent rather than coercion, ensuring that lack of consent itself constitutes the offence.
- It emerged after decades of advocacy and a high-profile case where Gisèle Pelicot exposed systemic failures in protecting victims of marital and organized sexual violence.
- The law sets a progressive international precedent, aligning France with other nations such as Sweden and Spain that have adopted "consent-based" rape definitions.

#### 2. Lessons for India

- In India, despite comprehensive legal reforms post-Nirbhaya (2013), conviction rates for rape remain low — around 27–28% (NCRB, 2018–2022).
- Societal stigma and victim-blaming attitudes continue to deter survivors from reporting crimes.
- Section 129 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (new criminal code) recognises "criminal force," yet the judicial and investigative processes still often fail to centre the principle of consent and dignity of survivors.
- Public discourse frequently reflects patriarchal bias, with statements from leaders blaming victims rather than addressing structural misogyny.

### Consent is all

There must be an intolerance of sexual violence, with support for survivors

**S**ometimes, the most manifest gains are won after the most Herculean of battles. For France to establish that "force is the crime" to establish that the use of force without consent causing injury, rape, fear or annoyance is a criminal act, took years; extraordinary courage from one woman, and an uprising where other women stood in solidarity with her. France has adopted a law that defines rape as any non-consensual sexual act, a milestone for the women in the country, but overall, a strike against sexual violence. The law was passed in response to urgent calls from society to infuse consent into the law, and make sure that the law protects sexual autonomy, particularly with reference to women. Last year, Gisèle Pelicot fought her toughest battle when she took the stand in court, in a case accusing her husband of drugging and allowing her to be raped by several men, some complete strangers. In December last year, the court granted 51 convictions in the case, but it was more significant in how it became a watershed moment to establish consent as a pillar of law. It has been well established that survivors of sexual violence have an arduous journey bringing their case to a court of law, and many women from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds, indeed do not have that privilege. There is a great deal of stigma, and worse, judgement of the survivors in cases of rape, as recent public statements in India by leaders blaming the women have painfully underlined again, and again. Even when a case of rape enters the trial stage, the chances of securing a conviction are not encouraging. According to the NCRB's data, conviction rates for rape were between 27%-28% from 2018 to 2022. And this, despite the fact that Section 129 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita recognises "criminal force".

To establish sexual autonomy as the cornerstone of the judicial process, while a first step, is scarcely all. Preventing sexual violence will also involve shaping community views on gender roles, dismantling rigid patriarchal codes with a measure of law, but also awareness programmes that begin early, and orienting the police force to these principles, besides funneling resources into assisting survivors cope with the trauma. The road ahead is long and arduous; for the journey of the survivors to be eased, governments should start with a complete intolerance for sexual violence, and a commitment to stand by survivors, employing empathy in the investigation and trial processes. To do any less, would be an injustice that would interrupt the momentum of the women's 'Arab Spring' Pelicot had set in motion.

### 3. The Way Forward: From Law to Social Transformation

- Legal recognition of sexual autonomy must be supported by sustained reforms in policing, investigation, and trial procedures — emphasizing empathy and sensitivity.
- Awareness and education programmes starting early in schools can reshape gender norms and dismantle patriarchal attitudes.
- Community engagement and survivor support systems — such as trauma counselling, safe spaces, and financial aid — are essential for rehabilitation.
- The State must cultivate zero tolerance for sexual violence, not just in policy but in social and institutional behavior.

### Conclusion

The French reform is a watershed in the global movement for consent-based justice — affirming that sexual relations without consent are inherently violent and criminal. For India, the lesson is clear: laws alone cannot ensure justice unless society, institutions, and individuals internalize the principle of consent and equality. The fight against sexual violence demands legal robustness, social empathy, and moral courage — only then can survivors truly find justice and dignity.

#### UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques:** Consider the following statements:

1. France has recently passed a law that defines rape as any non-consensual sexual act.
2. India's Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita includes a section recognising "criminal force."
3. Conviction rates for rape in India have consistently remained above 60% in the last five years.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

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

**Ans: b)**

#### UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** How can education and community engagement help dismantle patriarchal attitudes and promote gender equality in India?

The Rajampeta region in Annamayya district, Andhra Pradesh, once known for its rain-fed groundnut and pulse cultivation, has witnessed a remarkable transformation into a horticultural hub. Driven by favorable agro-climatic conditions, improved irrigation, and aspirational farmers (including Gulf returnees and professionals), the region became a model for horticultural diversification. However, changing climatic patterns, rising input costs, and weak marketing mechanisms now threaten this success story.



A woman farmer selling banana and papaya on the Chennai Mumbai National Highway at Anantharajapeta in Rayasaseema district. Good road connectivity and easy transport to urban markets has boosted economic prospects of the region. (A. K. MAMUNIA)

## From reaping riches to facing challenges, horticulture switch leaves ryots in a fix

The growth story of horticultural crop cultivation in the Rajampeta region of Annamayya district inspired many professionals, including those from the software industry, to take up farming. The semi-arid Rayasaseema climate, red sandy loam soils, and ancient tank-based irrigation systems helped farmers — who once relied on rain-fed crops like groundnut and pulses — gradually shift to fruit-bearing trees and vegetables. However, drastic weather changes, recurring crop diseases, and a lack of marketing facilities and government support have left many in distress.

**K. Umashankar** dives deep into the region's changing agricultural dynamics and its drawbacks

In 2014, Masthan Usha Shaik, 63, arrived at the Dubai International Airport to finally return home after a two-decade-long stint as a truck driver in the UAE. Mr. Shaik, who had saved a considerable amount during his stay in the UAE, was brimming with excitement as he imagined his life as a steel merchant in his hometown, Rajampeta — a prominent trade centre in Annamayya district of Andhra Pradesh.

However, his prolonged stay at the Dubai Airport due to a flight delay altered the course of his plans. With his flight to Chennai delayed by three hours, Mr. Shaik found himself wandering through the terminal until he arrived at a popular juice bar. He noticed a young couple sipping on a papaya smoothie, which tempted him to order one. After enjoying it, he immediately ordered a second. Mr. Shaik soon struck up a conversation with the bar attendant, who introduced himself as Rasool, 32, and mentioned he was from Chitvel — just 25 km from Basha's hometown.

During their conversation, Mr. Shaik learned that the papaya used was imported from Rayawada Kodur, a town located between Rajampeta and Chitvel in Andhra Pradesh. Piqued by interest, he arrived in Chennai with a new business module focused on papaya cultivation. Within weeks, the would-be steel trader had purchased a three-acre plot in Penagalar mandal.

Today, a decade later, Mr. Shaik's two daughters are settled in Dubai, where their husbands run four juice bars and trade in export-quality fruit pulp across the UAE. "I am not the only Masthan Usha Shaik from Rajampeta who tasted success. There are hundreds like me who returned from the Gulf and are earning a decent living through horticulture," said Mr. Shaik.

The Rajampeta division in Annamayya district had witnessed a remarkable growth in the cultivation of fruits and vegetables over the past four decades. From barely a hundred horticulture farmers in the 1980s to a few thousand by the late 1990s, the region today boasts nearly 40,000 horticulture farmers — a twentyfold increase in just three decades.

The picturesque Rajampeta region is surrounded by the Palakonda (Seshachalam), Nallamala, and Lankamala hill ranges. Forested hills including the SV National Park and Penna SRI Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Wildlife Sanctuary — act as natural protective barriers. This unique geography, coupled with diverse soils, irrigation methods, and climatic conditions, has today shaped the region's horticultural identity.

**Horticultural revolution**  
The farmers who had once relied on rain-fed crops like groundnut and pulses, gradually shifted to fruit-bearing trees and vegetables. Horticulture flourished here due to the semi-arid Rayasaseema climate, red sandy loam soils, and ancient tank-based irrigation systems dating back to the Chola and Vijayanagara dynasties.

"This dynamic transformation from traditional farming to a vibrant horticultural economy is unique to Rajampeta," said Carls Venkat (45), a software engineer who manages a five-acre banana plantation near Anantharajapeta village.

According to the scientists at the Dr. Y.S.R. Horticultural University in Anantharajapeta, the

**RE**  
The typical Rayasaseema dryness is now coupled with sudden cloudbursts and flash floods, which disrupt soil conditions.

**KALLAKURU**  
Farmer from Anantharajapeta

horticultural revolution in Rayasaseema began from Rajampeta division, especially after the establishment of fruit nurseries and training centres by the State Horticulture Department, promoting grafted mango varieties such as Banganapalli, Neelum, Totapuri, and Alphonso.

They noted that prior to the 1980s, horticulture was limited to backyard orchards and small vegetable gardens near tanks and streams. Mango and banana crops were scattered across Nandalluru, Obulavaripalle, and Penagalar mandals and depended almost entirely on rainfall, with little irrigation support.

However, between 1980 and 2000, the cultivation of horticultural crops expanded rapidly with the introduction of borewell irrigation and micro-irrigation schemes. In the 1990s, the Cheyyaru and Ganjaneru river basins became a boon for farmers, who began experimenting with mango orchards. Around the same time, the Gulf returnees, flush with Dharam and Dinars, took to banana and papaya cultivation across the alluvial plains near Rajampeta and Obulavaripalle.

In 2002, following the reorganisation of Rajampeta division under the newly formed Annamayya district, horticulture received renewed government focus through schemes like the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) and the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), which promoted micro-irrigation, drip and sprinkler systems, and high-density crops.

Mango reigns supreme in Rajampeta, dominating large tracts of land in Penagalar, Obulavaripalle, and Pullampet mandals. These areas produce commercial varieties such as Banganapalli, Neelum, and Totapuri, which are exported to markets across India and abroad, including Southeast Asia and the Gulf.

Banana and papaya thrive in the irrigated belts of Rajampeta and Nandalluru mandals, supported by borewell and tank-fed systems. These crops significantly contribute to farmers' annual income, often rotated with seasonal vegetables. Farmers are also increasingly cultivating sweet lime, guava, and coconut, adopting mixed farming and intercropping systems that enhance sustainability and soil health.

**Growing challenges**  
Vegetable cultivation became an integral part of the regional economy, with farmers widely growing tomato, brinjal, and chilli in the Rayawada Kodur and Cheyyaru valley regions. Excellent road connectivity to the Chennai Mumbai National

Highway and easy transport to urban markets further boosted economic prospects of the region. Despite such favourable conditions, the farmers are struggling due to growing challenges like erratic weather, recurring crop diseases, and a lack of marketing facilities and government support.

"Across Penagalar, Obulavaripalle, Nandalluru, and Pullampet mandals, we have seen falling yields for the past five years," said Mallikarjuna (35), farmer from Anantharajapeta. "The typical Rayasaseema dryness is now coupled with sudden cloudbursts and flash floods, which disrupt soil conditions," he added.

Pointing to the yellowed papaya leaves, another farmer from Obulavaripalle, Raja Sekhar (42), said, "In recent years, temperatures have risen sharply during the day and dropped steeply at night. Papaya cannot tolerate such drastic changes."

The farmers also pointed out that the frequent flash floods along the Cheyyaru and Ganjaneru rivers damage root systems and erode fertile topsoil — particularly devastating for banana plantations. During the peak harvest months of June and July, when the southwest monsoon sets in, pest and fungal infestations worsen.

Mango orchards are attacked by anthracnose, powdery mildew, and fruit flies, while banana crops suffer from sigatoka leaf spot and stem weevil, they said. Farmers also feared that humidity following cyclone "Monna" will aggravate these problems, potentially forcing them to increase pesticide use.

While pointing out the hurdles in selling their crops, the farmers noted that the region produces over 3.5 lakh metric tonnes of mangoes, two lakh tonnes of bananas, and a similar quantity of papaya annually. Still, they encounter difficulties selling their produce in the market due to a lack of proper marketing facilities and government support.

Hassan, 30, a young farmer said, "Our 2.7-acre land was managed by my parents till a decade ago. After Covid, cultivation and transport costs skyrocketed. This year, our banana yield was over 70%, but prices crashed to ₹1 a kg while the same quantity sells for ₹60-70 in the open market. The middlemen are the real winners."

The farmers claimed that until five years ago, traders from the Northern States visited Rajampeta fields to purchase the produce at what local farmers called the "Minimum Decent Price", saving farmers cutting and transport costs. "However, now, we are at the mercy of the middlemen," said Ravindra (28), another young farmer from Chitvel. "Agents fix prices as they wish. It is clearly a syndicate," he alleged.

Similarly, Narasimha, 61, who grows papaya in Chitvel, said that the prices have plummeted to ₹5 a kg. "As the fruit is highly perishable, agents wait for the distress calls. We have no choice but to sell at whatever price they quote," he said.

As for mango, the government had offered a 44 subsidy on 78 per kg price after farmers protested against pulp industries' reluctance to pay more than 14 per kg. Though the district administration declared the "unofficial support price" in June, many farmers said that they are yet to receive the subsidy, according to the reports.

However, Annamayya District Horticulture Officer S.S.V. Subhashini clarified that mango, banana, and papaya crops are not covered under the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system. "The recent price fixation for mangoes was merely a government intervention to ease farmer distress," she said.

A field officer from the horticulture department in Rajampeta said that horticulture took a major hit between 2015 and 2020.

The young farmers who took up agriculture over IT jobs alleged that they did not receive the boost and growth they had hoped for. They recalled Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2014 campaign promise to set up cold storage plants and processing units in the Rayasaseema region. They said that they are reconsidering their decision. "It is better to go back to our jobs than fight a losing battle," said a local banker, adding that his son-in-law, an MS graduate from the U.S., returned to the IT sector after a failed attempt at agriculture.

They further alleged that the presence of Dr. YSR Horticultural University College at Anantharajapeta did not help them with field-level solutions. "The scientists are doing good research, but the fruits of their work never reach our farms due to lack of funding," they alleged.



## Key Analysis

### 1. The Rise of Horticultural Economy:

- Over the last four decades, Rajampeta's farmers shifted from subsistence crops to high-value fruits and vegetables such as mango, banana, papaya, and sweet lime.
- The semi-arid Rayalaseema climate, red sandy loam soils, and ancient tank-based irrigation systems favored this transition.
- Schemes like the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) and Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) further encouraged farmers to adopt micro-irrigation and high-density cropping.
- The influx of Gulf returnees with capital and improved road connectivity (especially to the Chennai–Mumbai Highway) gave a major boost to commercial horticulture.

### 2. The Emerging Crisis:

Despite the apparent prosperity, multiple challenges have emerged:

- **Climate Change:** Erratic rainfall, flash floods, and temperature fluctuations are damaging crops like papaya and banana.
- **Crop Diseases:** Mango suffers from anthracnose and powdery mildew, while banana faces Sigatoka leaf spot and stem weevil attacks.
- **Falling Prices and Middlemen Control:**
  - Banana prices dropped to ₹3 per kg and papaya to ₹5 per kg despite high production costs.
  - Middlemen and agents dictate farmgate prices due to lack of regulated markets or cooperative marketing.
- **Lack of MSP and Infrastructure:**
  - Horticultural crops are excluded from the MSP system, and farmers await subsidies or support interventions.
  - Absence of cold storage and processing units, despite political promises, exacerbates post-harvest losses.
- **Institutional Gaps:**
  - The Dr. YSR Horticultural University at Anantharajupeta has limited field-level impact due to weak funding and extension linkages.

### 3. Broader Implications:

- The Rajampeta case illustrates the vulnerability of horticultural diversification without corresponding institutional and infrastructural support.

- It raises questions about the sustainability of market-led agricultural diversification in semi-arid regions.
- The distress among educated and professional farmers indicates that agriculture remains a high-risk sector without value-chain integration and market assurance.

**Conclusion:**

The horticultural boom in Rajampeta stands as both a symbol of rural enterprise and a cautionary tale of unbalanced agricultural transformation. While diversification from traditional crops has improved incomes and created new opportunities, the absence of climate resilience, storage infrastructure, and fair marketing mechanisms has left farmers vulnerable. For sustainable horticultural growth, the government must strengthen market linkages, crop insurance, cold storage facilities, and farmer-producer organizations (FPOs), ensuring that horticulture remains a viable and resilient livelihood option rather than a temporary boom.

**UPSC Prelims Practice Question**

**Ques.** The term 'High-Density Planting' is sometimes seen in the news. It refers to:

- (a) Growing more number of plants per unit area to increase yield efficiency ✓
- (b) Cultivating multiple crops in the same field in rotation
- (c) Using genetically modified seeds
- (d) Application of fertilizers through irrigation

**Ans : a)**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques :** What are the main constraints in transport and marketing of agricultural produce in India?"  
**(250 Words)**

## Page : 10 : GS 3 : Indian Economy / Prelims

The fiscal deficit — the gap between the government's total expenditure and total receipts (excluding borrowings) — serves as a key indicator of the government's financial discipline and macroeconomic stability. As per data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), India's fiscal deficit for the first half (H1) of FY26 stood at 36.5% of the full-year target, reflecting a moderate fiscal position compared to 29% in the same period last year.

### Key Analysis:

#### 1. Key Highlights of the Data:

- Fiscal deficit during April–September 2025-26 was ₹5.73 lakh crore, against a full-year estimate of ₹15.69 lakh crore (4.4% of GDP).
- Total receipts: ₹17.3 lakh crore (49.5% of BE 2025–26).
- Total expenditure: ₹23 lakh crore (45.5% of BE).
- Tax devolution to States: Over ₹6.31 lakh crore transferred.
- The 40% increase in capital expenditure (capex) compared to the previous year widened the deficit but strengthened the investment-led growth push.

#### 2. Significance and Implications:

- The higher capex outlay aligns with the Union government's strategy of infrastructure-led growth, crowding in private investment and generating employment.
- Despite increased spending, maintaining the deficit at 36.5% of the annual goal in mid-year suggests fiscal prudence and efficient cash management.
- Robust revenue collections (both tax and non-tax) have supported fiscal stability, with GST and direct taxes performing strongly.
- However, rising global oil prices, subsidies, and interest liabilities remain potential fiscal risks for the second half of the year.

#### 3. Broader Fiscal Context:

- The fiscal deficit target of 4.4% of GDP for FY26 is part of the medium-term roadmap to bring the deficit down to below 4% by FY27, in line with the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) framework.

### 'H1 fiscal deficit stands at 36.5% of full-year goal'

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

The Centre's fiscal deficit stood at 36.5% of the full-year target at the end of the first half of FY26, according to data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) on Friday.

The fiscal deficit was 29% of the Budget Estimates (BE) of 2024-25 in the first six months of the previous financial year.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit, or gap between the government's expenditure and revenue, was ₹5,73,123 crore in the April-September period of 2025-26. The Centre estimates the fiscal deficit during 2025-26 at 4.4% of GDP, or ₹15.69 lakh crore.

The government has received ₹17.3 lakh crore, or 49.5% of the corresponding BE 2025-26, of total receipts up to September.

According to the CGA data, more than ₹6.31 lakh crore has been transferred to State governments as devolution of share of taxes by the Central government during the period. The total expenditure incurred by the Central government stood at about ₹23 lakh crore (45.5% of the corresponding BE 2025-26).

#### Spike in capex

Aditi Nayar, chief economist at Icra, said a welcome 40% spike in capital expenditure widened the Government of India's fiscal deficit to ₹5.7 lakh crore or about 37% of the BE during the first half of the fiscal from ₹4.7 lakh crore in the year-ago period.

- A balanced approach — combining growth-supportive expenditure and revenue mobilization reforms — is essential to sustain fiscal consolidation without stifling economic momentum.

**Conclusion:**

India's H1 fiscal deficit position reflects a careful balancing act between fiscal discipline and growth-oriented spending. While the rise in capital expenditure is a positive sign for long-term economic productivity, continued fiscal prudence will be crucial to meet the FY26 deficit target of 4.4% of GDP. Strengthening revenue buoyancy, rationalizing subsidies, and ensuring efficient fund utilization will help the government maintain macroeconomic stability while sustaining the momentum of economic recovery.

**UPSC Prelims Practice Question**

**Ques :** With reference to the fiscal deficit of the Government of India, consider the following statements:

1. Fiscal deficit represents the gap between total expenditure and total receipts, including borrowings.
2. A higher capital expenditure by the government can widen the fiscal deficit in the short run.
3. The Government of India aims to reduce the fiscal deficit to below 4% of GDP by FY27.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Ans: b)**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques:** Evaluate the impact of rising capital expenditure on India's fiscal health and long-term economic growth. **(150 Words)**

## Page 12 : GS 2 : International Relations/ Prelims

At the 2025 APEC summit in Gyeongju, South Korea, Chinese President Xi Jinping emerged as the key voice for global trade cooperation, positioning China as a defender of multilateralism and open markets. The U.S. absence — marked by President Donald Trump's decision to skip the summit — gave Xi a strategic opportunity to present China as a stabilizing force amid growing economic volatility and trade fragmentation.

# Xi takes centre stage at APEC meet, promises to defend global free trade

The Chinese leader asks nations to unite amid volatility, presses for supply chain stability and green energy as Trump snubs the summit; in a statement, Xi adds that his country is open for investment and will uphold the multilateral trading system

**Associated Press**

GYEONGJU

Chinese leader Xi Jinping told Asia-Pacific leaders on Friday that his country would help to defend global free trade at an annual economic regional forum snubbed by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Mr. Xi took centre stage at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit that began on Friday in Gyeongju, as Mr. Trump left the country a day earlier after reaching deals with Mr. Xi meant to ease their escalating trade war. Mr. Trump described



**All ears:** South Korean President Lee Jae Myung (L) with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Economic Leaders' Meeting on Friday. AFP

his Thursday meeting with Mr. Xi as a roaring success, saying he would cut tariffs on China, while Beijing had agreed to allow the export of rare earth elements

and start buying American soybeans.

Mr. Trump's blunt dismissal of APEC risks worsening America's reputation at a forum that

represents nearly 40% of the world's population and more than half of global goods trade.

"The more turbulent the times, the more we must work together," Mr. Xi said during APEC's opening session. "The world is undergoing a period of rapid change, with the international situation becoming increasingly complex and volatile."

Mr. Xi called for maintaining supply chain stability, in a riposte to U.S. efforts to decouple its supply chains from China. He also expressed hopes to work with other countries to expand cooperation in green

industries and clean energy.

In written remarks sent to a CEO summit held in conjunction with APEC, Mr. Xi said China was open for investment and would uphold the multilateral trading system.

"Facts have proven that whoever gains a foothold in the Chinese market will be able to seize the critical opportunity in increasingly fierce international competition," Xi wrote. "Investing in China is investing in the future."

U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent attended the summit on Mr. Trump's behalf

## Key Analysis:

### 1. Context and Significance:

- The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is a 21-member regional forum that represents nearly 40% of the world's population and over half of global trade.
- Traditionally, APEC has served as a platform for advancing free and open trade, promoting regional integration, and strengthening economic cooperation.
- This year's summit gained geopolitical importance as U.S.-China relations remain strained despite temporary trade relief measures announced earlier in the week.

## **2. China's Strategic Positioning:**

- Xi Jinping used the forum to reaffirm China's commitment to free trade, global investment, and multilateralism, signaling Beijing's intent to fill the leadership vacuum left by Washington's disengagement.
- His call to "maintain supply chain stability" directly countered U.S. policies promoting "decoupling" and "de-risking" from China.
- Xi's emphasis on green industries and clean energy cooperation aligns with China's broader agenda to project itself as a leader in sustainable global growth.
- In his remarks to the APEC CEO Summit, Xi asserted that "investing in China is investing in the future," signaling openness to foreign investors despite recent concerns over regulatory tightening and slowing domestic demand.

## **3. Implications for Global Trade and Power Dynamics:**

- Xi's proactive diplomacy underscores China's effort to reshape global economic governance in its favor, portraying itself as a reliable partner in contrast to U.S. unpredictability.
- The U.S. absence may further weaken its credibility and influence in the Indo-Pacific, a region central to its own Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) ambitions.
- For APEC members dependent on both U.S. security and Chinese markets, the summit highlighted the strategic balancing act they must continue to maintain.
- The focus on supply chain resilience and green cooperation also reflects the new global trade narrative—where geopolitics, sustainability, and technology converge.

## **Conclusion:**

The 2025 APEC summit has reinforced China's growing assertiveness in shaping global trade norms and regional economic order. Xi Jinping's pledge to defend multilateralism and open markets marks Beijing's attempt to occupy the leadership space vacated by the U.S. However, the sustainability of this vision depends on how China addresses global concerns over transparency, reciprocity, and economic coercion. For the Asia-Pacific region, the path ahead lies in striking a delicate balance between strategic autonomy and economic interdependence, ensuring that free trade remains truly free and inclusive.

**UPSC Prelims Practice Question**

**Ques :** Consider the following statements regarding the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC):

1. APEC is an intergovernmental forum established to promote free trade and economic cooperation among countries bordering the Pacific Ocean.
2. All APEC members have binding obligations like those of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
3. India is a founding member of APEC.
4. Decisions within APEC are reached by consensus and commitments are voluntary.

**Which of the above statements are correct?**

- (A) 1 and 2 only  
(B) 1 and 4 only  
(C) 2 and 3 only  
(D) 1, 2 and 4 only

**Ans: b)**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques:** China's leadership at the APEC summit reflects its growing assertiveness in shaping global trade and economic governance amid U.S. disengagement. Discuss the implications of this shift for the Asia-Pacific region. **(150 Words)**

## The case for a board of peace and sustainable security

**T**he tension between the ideals of the United Nations (UN) and the structure created to uphold them has rarely been as evident as it is today as the organisation commemorates the 80th anniversary of its founding. Designed to prevent catastrophic war, the UN Security Council (UNSC) still reacts to conflict but no longer sustains peace. Across continents, conflicts endure for years without resolution not only because they are complex but also because the international system abandons political engagement too soon. Peace agreements falter. Transitions stall. Diplomacy, rather than being an ongoing process, has become a form of crisis theatre – activated too late and withdrawn too early.

This problem is not simply about political divisions. It is about institutional design. The UN has no dedicated body to maintain political accompaniment once violence slows and mediation efforts fade. The UNSC authorises action but is structurally episodic. Peacekeeping missions stabilise ground conditions but are seldom equipped with a political strategy. The Peacebuilding Commission, though a valuable initiative, lacks the mandate and the authority to engage during active political transitions. The UN loses continuity. It loses context. It loses momentum. It forgets.

Structural reform of the UNSC is necessary and long overdue. But waiting for such reform as a precondition for all institutional innovation is a strategic mistake. Functional reform – reform that strengthens the UN's ability to act now, using powers that already exist under the Charter – is both possible and urgent. The UN General Assembly, under Article 22, has the authority to establish new subsidiary bodies to carry out its work. It has used this power before. It can use it again.

### A clearly defined space

A 'Board of Peace and Sustainable Security' would fill the institutional void that now undermines conflict resolution. It would not challenge the primacy of the UNSC in matters of international peace and security. It would not intrude into the sovereign affairs of states. It would not undertake early-warning or pre-conflict intervention – areas that raise real political concerns for many countries. Instead, it would occupy a clearly defined space: providing



**Nirupama Rao**  
is a former Foreign  
Secretary of India

structured political engagement during and after conflict, where today the UN presence dissipates.

Its tools would be political rather than coercive: reinforcing nationally-led dialogue, accompanying peace agreement implementation, coordinating regional diplomatic initiatives and ensuring that peacekeeping operations are tied to achievable political pathways rather than becoming indefinite holding missions. It would work in coordination with the UN Secretary-General and the UNSC, subsume the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and help align UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding strategies with political outcomes. It would not challenge UNSC authority, or duplicate or encroach on the Secretary-General's prerogatives under Article 99.

### Keep it representative

The credibility of such a body would depend, above all, on who sits at the table. It must be representative but not unwieldy. That means no elite club, but no open forum either. A rotating membership of about two dozen states, elected by the UN General Assembly for fixed terms, would ensure balance and renewal. Regional distribution would be formally guaranteed, with Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and West Asia each carrying weight.

Crucially, regional organisations would not be observers, but participants, reflecting the reality that peace is shaped as much in Addis Ababa, Jakarta and Brasilia as in New York. Power would not be inherited through permanent seats, nor paralysed by vetoes. The board would be built not on privilege but participation. Agenda items would be introduced only by a UN member-state, a regional organisation or the UN Secretary-General. There would be no civil society voting role, although they may have consultative participation.

The concept of sustainable security is essential here. It recognises that lasting peace cannot be maintained by security arrangements alone. Stability endures when political agreements are gradually legitimised through governance, inclusion and responsible leadership. Sustainable security is not preventive intervention by another name; it respects sovereignty and emerges from negotiated settlements implemented over time rather than imposed solutions. It links security to political reality (sustainable security combines conflict management with long-term political

stability by aligning peace efforts with governance, development and regional cooperation. It avoids the intervention risks associated with "preventive security" and reinforces nationally led approaches).

### Style of functioning

The board would not be another forum for general statements. It would be a working institution. It would stay engaged where others withdraw. It would track commitments long after the spotlight moves on. It would prevent institutional memory from dissolving between mandate renewals. It would reduce the drift that has become common in long-running UN engagements. It would give political shape to international presence when peace is young and fragile.

Its mandate would be modest in appearance but consequential in practice. It would bring a disciplined form of political accompaniment into the heart of the UN system. It would build continuity without expansionism, coordination without confrontation. It would reassure states that sovereignty is protected and reassure societies that peace will not be abandoned at the first difficulty.

UN reform has been discussed for too long in absolute terms. Either one accepts the system as it is or insists on rewriting it entirely. This is a false choice. Institutions do not survive by remaining unchanged; they survive by evolving responsibly. The 'Board of Peace and Sustainable Security' would not solve all that ails the multilateral system. But it would correct one of its most damaging weaknesses: the absence of political continuity in the journey from war to peace.

Reform does not always require new doctrine. Sometimes, it requires remembering first principles. Peace must be sustained. Political commitments must be accompanied. Diplomacy must be disciplined. Institutions must be built not for moments but for processes. The UN once understood this. It can understand it again – if it chooses to innovate where it still can. The 'BPSS' will not redistribute geopolitical power but would improve the UN's ability to manage conflict responsibly. This is where meaningful reform can begin.

*The views expressed are personal*

## GS. Paper 2 International Relations

**UPSC Mains Practice Question:** Discuss the impact of the potential U.S. withdrawal from the moratorium on nuclear testing on global arms control treaties such as the CTBT and the New START Treaty. Suggest measures to revive faith in nuclear disarmament commitments. **(150 Words)**

**Context :**

In a shocking reversal of decades-long restraint, U.S. President Donald Trump announced the resumption of nuclear weapons testing, breaking a 33-year moratorium and shaking the foundations of the global non-proliferation order. The announcement came soon after Russia's successful test of a nuclear-capable cruise missile and Trump's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping — signaling not just a policy shift but a potential reignition of the global nuclear arms race.

The move threatens to undermine key international arms control mechanisms such as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — both central to maintaining strategic stability since the Cold War era.

**Key Analysis****1. Background: Evolution of the Nuclear Testing Regime**

- Nuclear testing moratorium: Since the early 1990s, all major nuclear powers have voluntarily refrained from nuclear testing, even though the CTBT (1996) never formally entered into force due to non-ratification by countries like the U.S., China, and North Korea.
- NPT (1970): Built on a grand bargain — nuclear states would pursue disarmament while non-nuclear states would refrain from acquiring nuclear weapons.
- The New START Treaty (2010) between the U.S. and Russia further capped strategic warheads and delivery systems, contributing to global nuclear stability.

**2. U.S. Announcement: Strategic and Political Context**

- **Immediate triggers:**
  - Russia's test of a nuclear-capable cruise missile.
  - Heightened U.S.–China and U.S.–Russia tensions.
- Domestic motivation: Trump's move may also reflect a push for political signalling and deterrence rather than immediate military necessity.
- Policy shift: Signals the U.S. is reasserting nuclear dominance and may be seeking to modernize its arsenal, including low-yield tactical nuclear weapons.

**3. Implications for Global Strategic Stability****(a) Breakdown of the Non-Proliferation Architecture:**

- Resuming testing violates the spirit of the CTBT and weakens confidence in the NPT.
- Non-nuclear states may now question their restraint, arguing that nuclear powers are breaking their end of the "bargain."

- Could spark vertical proliferation (qualitative enhancement of nuclear arsenals) and horizontal proliferation (new entrants developing nukes).

**(b) Risk of a Renewed Arms Race:**

- China and Russia could justify resuming tests of advanced or tactical nuclear weapons.
- This would dismantle the informal testing taboo that has kept nuclear escalation under control for three decades.

**(c) Impact on Regional Security – South Asia and Beyond:**

- If China resumes testing, India's strategic community will feel compelled to enhance its deterrence capability, potentially leading to renewed testing.
- This could trigger a chain reaction — India → Pakistan → possible regional instability.
- Weakens extended deterrence for U.S. allies like Japan and South Korea, who may reconsider their own nuclear options.

**(d) Diplomatic Fallout:**

- The move alienates allies advocating nuclear restraint (e.g., EU, Japan).
- It damages U.S. moral authority as a global leader in arms control and non-proliferation.

**4. Environmental and Ethical Concerns**

- Nuclear tests cause severe environmental degradation — radiation, groundwater contamination, and long-term health hazards.
- Politically, the decision reflects a dangerous detachment from the historical memory of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the Cold War near-misses.

**5. The Way Forward: Need for Global Arms Control Dialogue**

- Revive multilateralism: Countries must reaffirm commitment to the CTBT and NPT frameworks.
- Trilateral dialogue: The U.S., Russia, and China must negotiate a trilateral arms control treaty post-2026 (after New START expiry).
- No-First-Use (NFU) doctrine: A global NFU commitment could reduce nuclear brinkmanship.
- Strengthen verification mechanisms under the IAEA and UN disarmament forums.
- India's stance: India, as a responsible nuclear power, can advocate for universal, non-discriminatory disarmament while maintaining credible minimum deterrence.

**Conclusion:**

The U.S. decision to resume nuclear testing marks a turning point in global nuclear politics, threatening to unravel decades of painstaking disarmament diplomacy. It undermines the non-proliferation regime, risks a new nuclear arms race, and destabilizes regional and global security.

At a time when the Doomsday Clock stands at 89 seconds to midnight, global powers must urgently rebuild consensus around disarmament and responsible deterrence. The world cannot afford a return to the nuclear brinkmanship of the Cold War — not when the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki still echo as warnings from history.

---