

DAILY **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

SPECIAL FOR UPSC & GPSC EXAMINATION

DATE : 13-12-25



The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

Saturday, 13 Dec, 2025

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India's retail inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), edged up marginally to 0.7% in November 2025 from a historic low of 0.25% in October 2025, marking the second-lowest inflation reading in the current CPI series. Despite this slight increase, inflation has moderated in seven of the first eight months of FY 2025–26, reflecting a broad-based disinflationary trend, primarily driven by a sharp contraction in food prices.

Retail inflation moves up marginally to 0.7% in Nov.

Inflation has slowed in seven of the first eight months of the financial year; decline in food prices offsets marginal acceleration in fuel inflation; prices in housing segment stay virtually unchanged

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

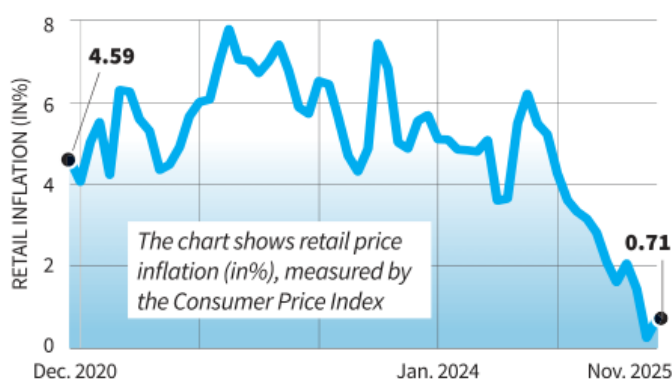
Retail inflation in India quickened marginally to 0.7% in November 2025, up from the historic low of 0.25% in October 2025, with a continued contraction in food prices offsetting a marginal acceleration in fuel inflation. November's inflation rate is the second-lowest ever recorded in the current series of the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Inflation as measured by the CPI, for which the latest data was released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Friday, has slowed in seven of the first eight months of this financial year.

The food and beverages

Marginal rise

Retail inflation in India inched up in November 2025, rising from October's **record low of 0.25%**



Source: CMIE

category saw prices contract by 2.8% in November 2025, as compared to a high base of 8.2% in November of last year, and a contraction of 3.7% in October 2025.

"The factors driving inflation downwards have been the same: base effect

and decline in prices of vegetables and pulses," Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Bank of Baroda said. "In particular, potatoes, onions and tomatoes have witnessed a decline, leading to food inflation falling by 3.9%. In the food basket, edible oils wit-

nessed sharp increases though the topline number was down to 7.9%. Mustard and coconut oil were the main drivers of inflation here."

This contraction in food prices offset the impact of a quickening in fuel inflation to 2.3% in November 2025, compared to 2% in October, and a contraction of 1.8% in November of last year. Inflation in the pan, tobacco, and intoxicants category quickened marginally in November 2025 to 3% from 2.9% in October.

The clothing and footwear category, on the other hand, saw inflation ease marginally to 1.5% from 1.7%.

Inflation in the housing category remained virtually unchanged at 2.95% in November 2025 as compared to 2.96% in October.

Key Drivers Behind the Inflation Trend

Food Price Deflation as the Anchor

- The food and beverages category contracted by 2.8%, continuing the deflationary trend seen in October.
- Major contributors were declining prices of vegetables and pulses, especially potatoes, onions, and tomatoes.
- A strong base effect (high food inflation in November last year at 8.2%) amplified the apparent moderation.
- However, edible oils remained an area of concern, with inflation at 7.9%, driven by mustard and coconut oil, highlighting supply-side vulnerabilities.

Moderate Uptick in Fuel Inflation

- Fuel and light inflation rose to 2.3%, up from 2% in October.
- This reflects gradual pass-through of energy costs and global fuel price dynamics, though levels remain relatively benign.

Core and Other Components

- Housing inflation stayed nearly unchanged at around 2.95%, indicating stability in rental and housing costs.
- Clothing and footwear inflation eased slightly, suggesting subdued demand-side pressures.
- Pan, tobacco, and intoxicants saw a marginal rise, largely influenced by taxation and administered prices.

Macroeconomic and Policy Implications

- Monetary Policy Space: Persistently low headline inflation provides the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) with greater flexibility to prioritize growth, though vigilance is required against a sudden reversal in food or fuel prices.
- Rural-Urban Dynamics: Food deflation benefits consumers, particularly the urban poor, but may adversely affect farm incomes, posing challenges for rural demand.
- Supply-Side Management: The contrast between falling vegetable prices and rising edible oil prices underscores the need for structural reforms in agricultural supply chains, import diversification, and domestic oilseed production.
- Inflation Quality: The current moderation is driven more by base effects and volatile food items rather than deep structural disinflation, warranting cautious interpretation.

Conclusion

The marginal rise in retail inflation to 0.7% in November 2025 does not alter the broader narrative of benign inflationary conditions in India. Food price deflation continues to act as the primary stabilizer, offsetting mild pressures from fuel and select non-food items. For policymakers, the challenge lies in sustaining price stability without undermining farmer incomes, while using the inflation window to support growth and address structural supply-side weaknesses. In the medium term, durable inflation control will depend less on base effects and more on productivity gains, resilient supply chains, and balanced demand revival.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: With reference to Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation in India, consider the following statements:

1. CPI inflation in November 2025 was the second-lowest since the beginning of the current CPI series.
2. A contraction in food prices was the primary factor moderating overall inflation in November 2025.
3. Fuel inflation in November 2025 remained in contractionary (negative) territory.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Retail inflation in India remained exceptionally low in November 2025 despite marginal acceleration in fuel prices. Discuss the factors responsible for this trend and examine its implications for monetary policy and economic growth. (150 Words)

Page 05 : GS 3 : Environment / Prelims

At the 7th United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) held in Nairobi, India's resolution titled "Strengthening the Global Management of Wildfires" was formally adopted. This marks a significant diplomatic and environmental achievement for India, as the proposal calls for a global shift from reactive firefighting to proactive wildfire prevention, with emphasis on early-warning systems, risk assessment, and preparedness. The move comes amid a worldwide surge in large-scale wildfires driven by climate change, land-use change, and ecological degradation.

INBRIEF**Key Features of India's Proposal**

- Paradigm Shift: From Reaction to Prevention
 - The resolution highlights the limitations of traditional firefighting-centric approaches.
 - It advocates anticipatory governance, focusing on prevention, preparedness, and resilience-building.

Early-Warning Mechanisms

- Strengthening satellite-based monitoring, climate forecasting, and real-time data sharing.
- Integration of meteorological data, vegetation stress indicators, and human activity patterns to predict fire risks.

Improved Risk Assessment

- Calls for scientific mapping of fire-prone regions, especially forests, grasslands, and peatlands.
- Emphasises vulnerability assessments considering climate change, biodiversity loss, and socio-economic factors.

Addressing Cascading Impacts

- Recognises that wildfires have multi-dimensional consequences:
 - Ecological: loss of biodiversity, forest degradation, carbon emissions.
 - Economic: damage to livelihoods, agriculture, and infrastructure.
 - Social: displacement of communities, public health impacts due to air pollution.
- Global Cooperation and Capacity Building

UNEA adopts India's proposal on wildfire management

India's push for a stronger global system to manage and prevent wildfires – centred on early-warning mechanisms and improved risk assessments – was formally adopted on Thursday at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) in Nairobi, the Environment Ministry said in a statement. India's resolution, titled "Strengthening the Global Management of Wildfires," calls for a shift from reactive firefighting to proactive prevention. Officials said these measures are essential to address what India called the "cascading ecological, economic and social impacts" of today's fires.

- Encourages international collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and support for developing countries.
- Aligns with South-South cooperation, where India positions itself as a knowledge and technology partner.

Significance for India

- Climate Leadership: Reinforces India's role as a norm-setter in global environmental governance, not just a rule-taker.
- Domestic Relevance: India frequently faces forest fires in the Himalayan states, Central India, and the Western Ghats, making global best practices directly applicable.

Alignment with National Initiatives:

- National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)
- Forest Fire Prevention & Management Scheme
- Use of ISRO satellite data and the Forest Survey of India (FSI) fire alerts
- Global South Perspective: Highlights disproportionate impacts of climate-induced disasters on developing countries.

Broader Global Context

- Increasing wildfire intensity in Australia, Canada, the Mediterranean, Amazon, and boreal forests.
- Wildfires are emerging as a major contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions, creating a feedback loop with climate change.
- UNEA's adoption signals growing recognition that wildfires are not local disasters but global environmental risks.

Conclusion

The adoption of India's wildfire management resolution at UNEA-7 represents a strategic shift in global environmental thinking, from crisis response to risk prevention. By foregrounding early warning systems, scientific risk assessment, and international cooperation, India has contributed to shaping a forward-looking and climate-resilient global framework. Going forward, the effectiveness of this resolution will depend on its translation into actionable national policies, financing mechanisms, and technological collaboration, ensuring that wildfire governance keeps pace with the accelerating risks posed by climate change.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : With reference to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), consider the following statements:

1. UNEA is the highest decision-making body on environmental matters within the United Nations system.
2. UNEA meets biennially and is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya.
3. All UN member states are members of the UNEA with equal voting rights.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) 1 and 3 only

Ans : (c)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Wildfires pose a governance challenge that cuts across climate change, biodiversity conservation, and livelihoods. Evaluate this statement with reference to India and the global context.

Page 06 : GS 3 : Indian Economy / Prelims

India's expanding network of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) reflects its growing engagement with the global trading system. According to the World Trade Organization, India has entered into 20 regional or free trade agreements, excluding recent pacts with the United Kingdom and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and ongoing negotiations with major partners such as the United States, European Union, Canada, and SACU. However, the experience with earlier FTAs indicates that trade agreements alone do not guarantee export-led growth; they must be complemented by domestic competitiveness and strategic policy support.

Mixed Outcomes of India's FTAs

Widening Trade Deficits

- India's FTAs with ASEAN, Japan, and South Korea have resulted in rising trade deficits.
- The ASEAN trade deficit expanded from about \$10 billion (2017) to nearly \$44 billion (2023).
- With Japan, imports of capital- and technology-intensive goods have outpaced India's export growth.

Structural and Policy Constraints

- Inadequate negotiation on non-tariff barriers such as standards, certification, and mutual recognition agreements.
- Weak enforcement of rules of origin, allowing third-country goods to enter via FTA partners.
- FTAs were not sufficiently aligned with India's sectoral strengths (labour-intensive manufacturing, services).
- Limited stakeholder consultations and poor domestic dissemination of FTA provisions, reducing utilisation by Indian firms.

Signs of Course Correction

- Review of Existing FTAs with ASEAN, Japan, and Korea has led to corrective measures.
- The India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) shows a more balanced outcome:
- Non-oil bilateral trade reached about \$100 billion in FY25, indicating better alignment between trade liberalisation and export capacity.
- This reflects a shift towards customised, interest-based trade agreements rather than generic tariff reduction.

FTAs for a start

Support for exports is a must for sustained gains from trade pacts

According to the World Trade Organization, India has entered into 20 regional or free trade agreements (FTA). This count excludes the most recent pacts signed with the United Kingdom in July and with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which came into effect in October. Also under way are negotiations, most notably with the United States, the European Union, Canada and the Southern African Customs Union. With India now facing American tariffs of up to 50% on key exports, there are intensive efforts to fast-track these agreements. Some reports have even suggested discussions around a re-engagement with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which India walked away from in 2019 over concerns related to farm sectors and rules of origin. However, New Delhi has not accepted accession; at most, it has explored consultative channels. Yet, trade diversification demands far more – a deep, deliberate transformation of the country's productive sectors and integration into global value chains.

Commerce Ministry data show that some earlier FTAs – with ASEAN, Japan and South Korea – have tilted the trade balance sharply against India. The trade deficit with ASEAN widened from about \$10 billion in 2017 to nearly \$44 billion by 2023. A similar pattern holds for Japan – despite India's exports rising, imports of high-value, capital-intensive goods have grown even faster. The reasons are structural and policy-driven. While FTAs opened the door, mutual recognition arrangements on quality standards, certifications, rules of origin and other non-tariff barriers were not adequately negotiated. Many FTAs were not custom-designed to reflect India's sectoral strengths, nor were consultations with industry bodies sufficiently robust. The government did too little to popularise these agreements domestically, even as partner economies made full use of the preferential margins. A review of the ASEAN, Japan and Korea FTAs has brought some course correction. This is reflected in the more balanced outcomes under the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement – non-oil trade touched about \$100 billion in FY25 (DGFT data). As India accelerates negotiations with the EU and the U.S., it must internalise these lessons. In the case of the U.S., consultations with services, seafood, engineering goods and textiles exporters must shape India's negotiating stance. With the EU, the focus must be on carbon-intensive sectors such as iron and steel and cement, especially given the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. A trade agreement is only the beginning. The arduous task of supporting India's exporters – through standards, infrastructure, technology and market intelligence – must follow if these pacts are to deliver lasting gains.

Implications for Ongoing Negotiations

United States

- Rising tariffs (up to 50%) on Indian exports have increased urgency.
- Negotiations must be shaped by sector-specific consultations, especially in:
 - Services
 - Seafood
 - Engineering goods
 - Textiles

European Union

- Focus on carbon-intensive sectors such as iron & steel and cement.
- Address challenges posed by the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) through transitional arrangements, technology cooperation, and climate finance.

RCEP Re-engagement Debate

- While India has not agreed to rejoin RCEP, exploratory consultations highlight the tension between market access and domestic sector protection, particularly agriculture and MSMEs.

Beyond FTAs: What Is Required?

- Integration into Global Value Chains (GVCs) through scale, technology, and logistics reforms.
- Export support in:
 - Quality and standards compliance
 - Trade infrastructure and logistics
 - Market intelligence and export credit
- Greater coordination between trade policy and industrial policy, including PLI schemes and skilling initiatives.

Conclusion

FTAs are a necessary but insufficient condition for India's trade transformation. Past experience shows that without addressing structural constraints, India risks import surges without commensurate export gains. As India accelerates negotiations with advanced economies, the emphasis must shift from merely signing agreements to building domestic export capacity, negotiating non-tariff disciplines, and supporting firms on the ground. Only then can FTAs translate into sustained, inclusive, and resilient trade-led growth.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: With reference to India's Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), consider the following statements:

1. India has entered into more than 20 regional or free trade agreements as per WTO records.
2. India's trade deficit with ASEAN has widened significantly after the implementation of the India-ASEAN FTA.
3. All of India's FTAs have resulted in a favourable balance of trade due to tariff liberalisation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Free Trade Agreements are only the starting point of trade integration, not the final destination. Critically examine this statement in the context of India's experience with FTAs.

Page 06 : GS 3 : Indian Economy / Prelims

The recent release of India's Quarter 2 national accounts data, showing a robust 8.2% GDP growth, coincided with a less-discussed but critical development: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) assigning India's national accounts statistics a 'C' grade, the second-lowest in its assessment framework. While headline growth figures generated optimism, the IMF's concerns regarding methodological reliability, particularly in estimating the unorganised sector, received minimal media attention. This raises important questions for economic governance, data credibility, and informed public discourse.

A critical story that a chunk of the media missed

The release of the national accounts data for Quarter 2 recently was also one that coincided with serious concerns being expressed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) about the way India calculates its data. In fact, the IMF has given India's national accounts statistics, which includes Gross Domestic Product and Gross Value Added, a C grade, which is the second lowest grade. While Q2 produced 8.2% growth – much more than expected – very few would be aware of the IMF's concerns.

This is because the media virtually ignored what the IMF had to say. Only one daily, *The Hindu*, reported it and made it a front page story ("IMF gives 'C' grade for India's national accounts statistics", November 28, 2025), but the pink papers, which should have been the most interested in this report, ignored it to a large extent. When some of these newspapers decided that it was worth publishing, they did so, but only in the inside pages, which was bizarre and perplexing.

An issue

The truth is that the IMF's grading of India's national accounts statistics is a matter of concern and a key part of that is how we calculate GDP.

India uses the formal organised sector as a proxy for calculating growth in the informal unorganised sector. But the unorganised sector, even after excluding agriculture, is still 30% of GDP. So the first question is this: do we really have a reliable and accurate way of estimating



Karan Thapar
is a television anchor

The International Monetary Fund's grading of India's national accounts statistics is a matter of concern

growth in this sizeable sector or is it just an intelligent guesstimate?

'A less than reliable method'

Pronab Sen, the former Chief Statistician, and Arun Kumar, a former professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University – the economists this writer spoke to – believe that this is "a less than reliable method".

Their concern needs explanation. When you use the organised sector as a proxy for calculating the unorganised sector, the assumption made is that they have both moved in the same direction. But when there is a crisis or an unusual development, that may not be the case. And that is exactly what happened when India went through demonetisation, the introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the COVID-19 pandemic. These events have meant that India's organised and unorganised sectors have not been in kilter. They have moved in different directions.

While the organised sector expanded on all three occasions, the unorganised sector went into decline. So, during these years, using the organised sector as a proxy for calculating the unorganised sector meant that we were overestimating the performance of the unorganised sector.

What does this mean about India's quarterly estimates? It must be remembered that what made the media euphoric was the quarterly estimate of 8.2% growth. Professor Sen's statement must be brought in at this point: "For

the quarterly GDP estimates we make a lot of assumptions. We simply don't have quarterly data for most things. Now[,] when we don't have the data you have to go by assumptions. You look at past relationships, past trends and try to do the best you can. But until we get to a situation where most of the data that we need for quarterly estimations are actually corrected physically[,] this problem is not going to get solved."

The answer is blunt

This leads to another conclusion. The concern that the IMF has expressed, and which underlies the lowly 'C' grade, is not going to be hastily resolved. There is no doubt that the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is working on updating the GDP base year and methodology of calculation and hopes to release the new series next year, probably by the end of February. But the question is this: how much improvement will we see in the way the unorganised sector is estimated? When asked if India can adequately resolve the IMF's concern, Prof. Sen's answer was short and blunt: "I don't think we can."

All this has been mentioned because we rely on the media to inform us and, usually, to help us analyse and understand. But if the media ignores critical stories, it leaves us not just uninformed but also unable to fully understand what has happened. It also means that journalists are not doing their job. That is a sorry outcome for all of us.

Core Issues Highlighted by the IMF

Methodological Weakness in GDP Estimation

- India estimates the growth of the unorganised (informal) sector—which constitutes nearly 30% of GDP (excluding agriculture)—by using the organised sector as a proxy.
- This approach assumes that both sectors move in tandem, an assumption that may hold in normal times but fails during structural shocks.

Divergence During Economic Shocks

- Events such as demonetisation (2016), GST rollout, and the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this assumed alignment.
- Evidence suggests that while the organised sector expanded or recovered faster, the unorganised sector contracted or lagged, leading to potential overestimation of GDP growth.

Quarterly Data Constraints

- As highlighted by former Chief Statistician Pronab Sen, India lacks comprehensive high-frequency (quarterly) data for many sectors.
- Consequently, quarterly GDP estimates rely heavily on assumptions, extrapolations, and past trends, reducing precision and robustness.

IMF's 'C' Grade: What It Signifies

- The grade reflects concerns over data coverage, timeliness, consistency, and reliability, not necessarily intent or integrity.
- It signals that while India's statistical system is functional, it falls short of best international practices, especially for a major economy.

Policy and Governance Implications

- Credibility of Economic Data: Reliable GDP data is crucial for monetary policy, fiscal planning, investor confidence, and global credibility.
- Limits of Base-Year Revision: While the government plans to update the GDP base year and methodology, experts remain sceptical about whether this will adequately resolve informal sector measurement gaps.

Need for Statistical Reforms:

- Strengthening enterprise surveys and labour force data
- Leveraging digital transaction data, GST analytics, and administrative databases
- Improving state-level and sector-specific high-frequency indicators

Role of the Media and Democratic Accountability

- The near-absence of this issue from mainstream media coverage highlights a broader concern about selective reporting.
- In a democracy, the media acts as an intermediary between complex data and public understanding.
- Ignoring methodological concerns while amplifying headline growth figures risks creating a one-sided narrative, undermining informed debate and accountability.

Conclusion

The IMF's 'C' grade to India's national accounts statistics underscores a structural challenge in measuring a large, diverse, and informal economy, particularly during periods of disruption. While headline GDP growth figures may appear impressive, their methodological underpinnings warrant scrutiny. For policymakers, the priority lies in deep statistical reforms, not just periodic base-year revisions. Equally, for a healthy democracy, the media must engage critically with such developments. Sustainable economic policymaking depends not only on growth outcomes, but also on the credibility, transparency, and integrity of the data that report them.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : With reference to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and national accounts statistics, consider the following statements:

1. The IMF assesses the quality of national accounts data of its member countries under its Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF).
2. A 'C' grade assigned by the IMF implies serious concerns regarding the reliability and methodological robustness of the data.
3. India estimates the unorganised sector's contribution to GDP primarily using direct, high-frequency enterprise-level data.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Critically examine the role of the media in shaping public understanding of economic data. What are the implications of selective reporting for democratic accountability and economic policymaking?

The growing incidence of urban wildlife rescues and human-animal conflicts in Bengaluru highlights a critical governance and ecological challenge confronting rapidly expanding Indian cities. Surrounded uniquely by Bannerghatta National Park (south) and the Hessarghatta Grassland Conservation Reserve (north), Bengaluru has become a live laboratory of urban-ecological interaction. Rising rescue calls, increasing injuries to wildlife, and frequent animal sightings in human settlements underscore the environmental costs of unplanned urbanisation and shrinking natural habitats.



When the urban expanse and the jungle meet
Bengaluru is among the few cities in India surrounded by two protected areas. But calls for animal rescue have increased as the expanding city is pushing out urban wildlife from their natural habitats.
writes K.C. Bheegappa

On the positive side, public awareness has improved. More people now know how to report injured wildlife, which also contributes to the rise in rescue calls.

On the negative side, the rapid pace of urbanisation, rising traffic, and pollution are pushing wildlife out of their natural spaces, and leading to more conflicts and injuries in Bengaluru.

Species rescued and released
The rescue centre has received a wide variety of animals, but the most commonly reported species are black bears and leopards. In the last year, the centre received around 1,000 black bears, and the majority of these cases are owing to minor injuries. We have responded to approximately 1,000 such cases, mostly involving spotted deer, leopards and rats. Other animals rescued include around 4,000 three-striped palm squirrels and about 1,000 common langurs (as of October 2022), said Bheegappa.

Urban wildlife
Ashwini Carls, Senior Veterinarian, Asian and Pacific Rehabilitation Centre (APARC), also said there has been a steady year-on-year rise in rescue calls, and the increase this year has been particularly significant.

Wildlife rescue
She too said a major contributor has been major road accidents. "In October alone, cars ran over by 80%, and by 14% in November compared to the previous year. In 2020, we had a total of 1,000 rescue calls, and in 2021, we had 1,500, and in 2022, we had 1,800," she said.

Wildlife rescue
Cars and four-wheeled taxis have been the leading cause of road accidents, with the majority of these cases involving spotted deer, leopards, and rats. Other animals rescued include around 4,000 three-striped palm squirrels and about 1,000 common langurs (as of October 2022), said Bheegappa.



Wildlife rescue
Bengaluru is among the few cities in India surrounded by two protected areas. But calls for animal rescue have increased as the expanding city is pushing out urban wildlife from their natural habitats.

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Core Issues Highlighted in the News

Rapid Urbanisation and Habitat Fragmentation

- Expansion of built-up areas, metro construction, roads, and real estate projects has fragmented forests, grasslands, and wetlands.
- Bengaluru's built-up area has more than doubled in three decades, while tree cover and wetlands have declined sharply.
- Nearly 87% of the city landscape is paved, intensifying ecological stress.

Rising Human–Wildlife Conflict

- Increased encounters with leopards, elephants, spotted deer, snakes, and birds.
- Bengaluru's outskirts host an estimated 80–85 leopards, making it the metro with the highest number of free-ranging big cats.
- Crop raids, property damage, injuries, and occasional human fatalities reflect governance gaps in buffer zone management.

Manja (Glass-Coated Kite String) as an Urban Threat

- A major anthropogenic hazard causing mass injuries to birds, particularly black kites.
- Seasonal cultural practices intersecting with wildlife breeding cycles have amplified mortality.

Infrastructure-Induced Wildlife Injuries

- Collisions with glass buildings, vehicles, and power lines increasingly affect migratory and resident birds.
- Urban design remains largely insensitive to ecological movement patterns.

Institutional and Regulatory Gaps

- Weak enforcement of Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) around Bannerghatta National Park.
- Absence of a Zonal Master Plan, despite ESZ notification.
- Large infrastructure projects fragment wildlife corridors, undermining landscape-level conservation.

Broader Ecological and Governance Significance

- Urban Ecology Perspective: Cities are not ecological voids but complex ecosystems supporting diverse fauna, from shrews and amphibians to large carnivores.
- Climate Change Linkages: Habitat stress, water scarcity, and rising temperatures intensify wildlife displacement.
- Biodiversity Conservation Beyond Forests: Highlights the importance of urban green spaces, wetlands, institutional campuses, and ecological corridors.
- Public Awareness as a Double-Edged Sword: Improved reporting mechanisms increase rescue numbers but also reveal the scale of ecological disruption.

Way Forward: Policy and Planning Imperatives

- Integrated Urban Planning: Incorporate biodiversity-sensitive design, wildlife corridors, and buffer zones into master plans.
- Strengthen ESZ Governance: Regular audits, strict enforcement, and community participation.
- Urban Design Reforms: Bird-safe glass, reduced night lighting, traffic calming near green zones.
- Behavioural and Cultural Interventions: Regulation of manja, public awareness on coexistence.

- Decentralisation and Decongestion: Reducing pressure on megacities through regional development.

Conclusion

The Bengaluru case illustrates a broader national challenge: India's cities are expanding faster than their ecological governance frameworks. Urbanisation, while inevitable, need not be ecologically destructive. The rising interface between humans and wildlife signals the urgent need to reimagine cities as shared habitats, not exclusively human domains. Sustainable urban futures will depend on planning that values ecosystem integrity alongside infrastructure, embedding coexistence as a core principle of development rather than an afterthought.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : How does unplanned urban expansion alter ecological landscapes? Illustrate your answer using the example of Bengaluru's interaction with surrounding protected areas. **(150 words)**

The Indian Ocean as cradle of a new blue economy

When the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was negotiated in the 1970s and early 1980s, India stood with the world's smallest and most vulnerable states. Alongside Pacific Island countries, India championed the principle that the seabed beyond national jurisdiction should be the "common heritage of mankind". It was a remarkable moment: a large developing country aligning itself with island nations, not for advantage, but for fairness.

This was not new for India. As early as the 1950s, Jawaharlal Nehru recognised the ocean's centrality to India's future, declaring: "Whichever way we turn, we are drawn to the seas. Our future security and prosperity are closely linked with the freedom and the resources of the oceans." That foresight set the stage for India's enduring role as both a maritime nation and a maritime leader. Half a century later, the ocean faces pressures unimaginable at the time of UNCLOS. Climate change is heating and acidifying the seas, sea levels are rising, and illegal and unregulated fishing is stripping marine life from the water column.

The Indian Ocean, home to one-third of humanity, is already one of the most climate-vulnerable basins on earth.

India now has both the opportunity and the responsibility to play a historic leadership role once again. This time, the task is not to draft law, but to shape practice – ensuring that the Indian Ocean becomes not a theatre of rivalry, but a laboratory of sustainability, innovation, and resilience.

The case for a Blue Ocean strategy

India's Blue Ocean Strategy should rest on three pillars: stewardship of the commons, resilience, and inclusive growth.

First, stewardship. India must continue to assert that the Indian Ocean is a shared space, not a contested one. By prioritising ecosystem restoration, biodiversity protection, and sustainable fisheries, India can set the tone for cooperative management, rather than competitive exploitation.

Second, resilience. As the climate crisis intensifies, ocean nations must focus on adaptation and preparedness. India can lead by establishing a Regional Resilience and Ocean Innovation hub – one that strengthens ocean observation networks, improves early warning systems, and transfer technology to small island developing states and African coastal nations.

Third, inclusive growth. The Indian Ocean must become a driver of prosperity for all littoral states. Green shipping, offshore renewable energy, sustainable aquaculture, and marine



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India must take the lead in promoting the guiding principle, 'From the Indian Ocean, for the World'

biotechnology offer pathways to development that are compatible with climate goals. Realising this potential, however, will require sustained investment and coordinated regional action.

It is encouraging that the financial tide is beginning to turn. At the Blue Economy and Finance Forum (BEFF) held in Monaco, in June 2025, governments, development banks and private investors highlighted a €25 billion pipeline of existing ocean investments and announced €8.7 billion in new commitments, with near-parity between public and private sources. The Finance in Common Ocean Coalition, bringing together 20 public development banks, announced annual pledges of \$7.5 billion, while the Development Bank of Latin America doubled its blue economy target to \$2.5 billion by 2030.

At COP30 in Belém, the Brazilian Presidency launched the One Ocean Partnership as part of the Belém Action Agenda, committing to mobilise \$20 billion for ocean action by 2030. These signals matter. They demonstrate that the ocean – long marginal in climate finance – is now firmly on the global agenda.

India must seize this moment to channel global financing into regional priorities. An Indian Ocean Blue Fund, seeded by India and open to contributions from development banks, philanthropy, and the private sector, could provide the institutional architecture needed to turn pledges into projects.

Security through sustainability

Much of today's discourse on the Indian Ocean is framed in terms of "Indo-Pacific strategy", naval balance, freedom of navigation, and secure sea lanes. These concerns are legitimate. But they should not obscure a more fundamental reality: ocean insecurity begins with ecosystem collapse and climate disruption.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, coral reef degradation and intensifying storm surges erode livelihoods and undermine social stability. Addressing these threats requires a shift from traditional notions of maritime security toward security through sustainability.

India's doctrine of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Mauritius in 2015, offers an important anchor, "We seek a future for the Indian Ocean that lives up to its name as a zone of peace, stability and prosperity," he said.

The Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard, working alongside civilian agencies, can deepen regional cooperation in maritime domain awareness, disaster response and ecosystem monitoring – aligning security objectives with environmental stewardship. Equally important is the story India chooses to tell. Not of rivalry, but

of responsibility. Not of dominance, but of stewardship. As External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has noted, India's approach to the Indian Ocean is "cooperative, consultative, and outcome-oriented," aimed at shared prosperity and stability.

The guiding principle should be simple and resonant: "From the Indian Ocean, for the World."

India's historic responsibility

At the Stockholm Conference in 1972, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi warned, "We do not want to impoverish the environment any more than we want to impoverish our people." That insight remains strikingly relevant.

COP30 in Belém (2025) and the G-20 Summit in Johannesburg recognised the importance of terrestrial and marine ecosystems for climate stability, sustainable development, and community resilience as well as anchoring scaling up of finance and support for developing countries, aligning with the equity dimensions of ocean action.

Momentum is building. With the outcomes of the 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in Nice, COP30 in Belém, and the entry into force of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, 2026 is shaping up to be a pivotal year for ocean governance. India's readiness to ratify the BBNJ Agreement presents an opportunity to demonstrate how the Indian Ocean region can pioneer globally relevant solutions, from green shipping corridors and blue bonds to inclusive marine technology transfer and carefully governed ocean-based carbon dioxide removal. This agenda could also serve as a defining theme for India's chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

India's history in ocean diplomacy gives it credibility. India's future in ocean leadership gives it the responsibility. The Indian Ocean, the cradle of some of the world's oldest civilisations, can now become the cradle of a new blue economy, one that marries prosperity with sustainability, and resilience with justice.

The challenge is clear: to move beyond rhetoric, to align vision with finance, and to build partnerships that endure. For the world, the message is urgent: the ocean is not a void to be filled or a frontier to be conquered. It is the foundation of life itself.

If India leads with ambition, humility, and inclusivity, the Indian Ocean can once again demonstrate what was evident during UNCLOS negotiations: that even in the most complex of arenas, cooperation can prevail over conflict, and solidarity over rivalry.

The time to act is now.

GS 3 : Indian Economy

UPSC Mains Practice Question : Maritime security in the Indian Ocean can no longer be separated from ecological sustainability. Discuss this statement in the light of climate change, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, and India's SAGAR doctrine. (250 words)

Context :

The article highlights India's evolving role in shaping the future of the Indian Ocean as a foundation for a new, sustainable Blue Economy. Drawing from India's historical leadership during the negotiations of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its principled advocacy of the ocean as the "common heritage of mankind", the piece argues that India today faces a renewed responsibility. With climate change, ocean degradation, and geopolitical contestation intensifying, the Indian Ocean—home to one-third of humanity—has become central to global sustainability, resilience, and equity debates.

Core Arguments and Analysis**1. From Legal Leadership to Practical Leadership**

- During UNCLOS, India shaped norms and principles; today, the challenge is implementation and practice.
- The Indian Ocean must not become merely a theatre of strategic rivalry, but a laboratory for sustainable governance, innovation, and cooperation.

2. Blue Economy Strategy: Three Pillars

- The article proposes a coherent Indian Blue Ocean Strategy built on:

Stewardship of the Commons

- Emphasis on ecosystem restoration, biodiversity protection, and sustainable fisheries.
- Reinforces the idea of the Indian Ocean as a shared space, countering unilateral exploitation.

Resilience

- Climate change has made the Indian Ocean one of the most vulnerable regions.
- Proposal for a Regional Resilience and Ocean Innovation Hub focusing on early-warning systems, ocean observation, and technology transfer to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and African coastal nations.

Inclusive Growth

- Blue economy sectors such as green shipping, offshore renewables, sustainable aquaculture, and marine biotechnology.
- Growth must be equitable, benefiting all littoral states, not just major powers.

3. Finance as the Missing Link

- The article underlines a crucial shift: oceans are finally entering the climate finance mainstream.
- Key global developments:
 - Blue Economy and Finance Forum (Monaco, 2025): €25 billion investment pipeline.
 - Finance in Common Ocean Coalition: \$7.5 billion annual commitments.

- COP30 (Belém): One Ocean Partnership with a \$20 billion target by 2030.

For India, this opens space for:

- An Indian Ocean Blue Fund, seeded by India and supported by development banks, philanthropy, and private capital.
- Translating global pledges into regional, actionable projects.

4. Redefining Maritime Security

- Traditional discourse focuses on naval power, sea lanes, and Indo-Pacific geopolitics.

The article reframes security as “security through sustainability”:

- Threats like Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, coral reef loss, and climate-induced disasters undermine livelihoods and social stability.
- Aligns with India’s SAGAR doctrine (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

Role of Indian Navy and Coast Guard:

- Maritime domain awareness, disaster response, ecosystem monitoring.
- Integration of environmental stewardship with strategic security.

5. Multilateral Momentum and India’s Opportunity**Upcoming and recent milestones:**

- UNOC3 (Nice)
- COP30 (Belém)
- Entry into force of the BBNJ Agreement

India’s potential leadership areas:

- Ratification and implementation of BBNJ.
- Green shipping corridors, blue bonds, marine technology transfer.
- Carefully governed ocean-based carbon dioxide removal.
- Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) could serve as a key institutional platform.

Conclusion

The article makes a compelling case that the Indian Ocean can become the cradle of a new Blue Economy, just as it once nurtured ancient civilisations. India’s historical credibility in ocean diplomacy, combined with present-day geopolitical weight, places upon it a unique responsibility to lead with ambition, inclusivity, and restraint. Moving beyond rhetoric will require aligning vision with finance, security with sustainability, and national interest with global equity. If India succeeds, the Indian Ocean can once again demonstrate that cooperation can prevail over conflict—and that prosperity need not come at the cost of the planet.