

DAILY **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

SPECIAL FOR UPSC & GPSC EXAMINATION

DATE : 28-10-25



The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE**Tuesday, 28 Oct, 2025****Edition : International Table of Contents**

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Page 01 : GS 2 : Polity and Governance

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has launched the second phase of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) 2.0 of electoral rolls in 12 States and Union Territories, including poll-bound Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, and Puducherry. The revision covers about 51 crore voters, aiming to update, verify, and standardize voter records through house-to-house enumeration.

However, Assam has been excluded due to ongoing citizenship verification under Supreme Court supervision, linked to the Citizenship Act and the NRC (National Register of Citizens) process.

EC kicks off SIR 2.0 in 12 States and U.T.s

EC says exercise will be held in poll-bound Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, and Puducherry

The commission says no SIR in Assam for now, because of separate provisions for citizenship

There is likely to be controversy in West Bengal and T.N. as ruling parties have raised concerns

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Monday kicked off the second phase of the special intensive revision of voter lists in 12 States and Union Territories, including in poll-bound Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, and Puducherry. The revision will cover 51 crore voters.

With the announcement of the second round, the voter lists of the States and Union Territories were set to be frozen from Monday midnight.

For now, there will be no SIR in Assam, scheduled to go to the polls next year, and a separate order will be issued later.

Under the Citizenship Act, there are separate provisions for citizenship in

Rolls revision

Phase 2 of the special intensive revision of electoral rolls will be held between November 2025 and February 2026 across 12 States and Union Territories, covering 51 crore voters

TIMELINE

■ Enumeration start: November 4, 2025
■ Enumeration end: December 4, 2025

■ Draft electoral rolls release: December 9, 2025
■ Final electoral rolls publication: February 7, 2026

UNION TERRITORIES: Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Puducherry

STATES: Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, T.N., U.P., Bengal

The first phase of SIR was held in Bihar. FILE PHOTO



DOCUMENT PROCESS

■ No documents are to be collected from electors during the enumeration phase

■ For electors who have not returned enumeration forms, the booth-level officer may identify a probable cause, such as death or duplication based on an enquiry from nearby electors and note the same

■ These names will be displayed on boards of all panchayat and urban local body offices

EC modifies some rules based on Bihar lesson

NEW DELHI

Certain modifications have been made to the process based on the learnings from the just-concluded process in Bihar. In a notice issued to the Chief Electoral Officers of all 12 States and Union Territories, the EC said no documents were to be collected from electors during the enumeration phase. » PAGE 4

and they have nearly completed the mapping of current electors according to the last exercise.

Voter mapping involves standardising addresses and correcting discrepancies.

In this phase of the SIR, the house-to-house enumeration will take place for a month from November 4 to December 4, and the draft rolls will be published on December 9.

Claims and objections can be raised from December 9 to January 8. Notices will be issued, and hearings and verifications will take place between December 9 and January 31. Booth-level officers will be trained, and forms will be printed between October 28 and November 3. The final electoral rolls will be published on February 7.

the poll body said.

To a question on the demands for putting off the SIR exercise in Kerala where local body elections are scheduled, Mr. Kumar said the poll notification was yet to be issued.

On the SIR in West Bengal, where the ruling Trinamool Congress has raised concerns about the exercise, the CEC said the Commission was doing its constitutional duty by carrying out the SIR, and the State government will perform its duties by giving all support and manpower needed.

Asked whether the poll body will give new EPIC cards to all voters as stated during the SIR in Bihar, Mr. Kumar said fresh voter IDs will be given to only those who have any change in their particulars.

Assam. Under the supervision of the Supreme Court, the exercise of checking citizenship is about to be completed. The June 24 SIR order was for the entire country. Under such circumstances, this would

not have applied to Assam," Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said at press conference.

The exercise will be in focus in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, where the ruling parties – the Trinamool Congress and DMK – have raised concerns. The SIR will be conducted in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep.

The first phase of the SIR was held in Bihar following which more than 68 lakh names were deleted from the electoral rolls. Most States had the last SIR of the voter lists done between 2002 and 2004.

Key Analysis for Prelims

1. What is SIR (Special Intensive Revision)?

- A comprehensive verification exercise of the electoral rolls, conducted by the Election Commission to ensure accuracy and remove discrepancies (like duplicate entries, deceased voters, or address errors).
- It includes house-to-house verification and voter mapping.

2. SIR 2.0 Coverage:

- Conducted in 12 States and UTs: Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Puducherry, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep.
- Covers about 51 crore voters.

3. Timeline:

- House-to-house verification: November 4 – December 4, 2025
- Draft rolls publication: December 9, 2025

- Claims & objections: December 9 – January 8, 2026
- Verification hearings: till January 31, 2026
- Final rolls publication: February 7, 2026

4. Assam Exemption:

- No SIR for Assam due to separate citizenship verification provisions under the Citizenship Act and the Supreme Court-monitored NRC process.

5. Past Experience (SIR 1.0):

- Conducted in Bihar, leading to deletion of over 68 lakh names from electoral rolls.

6. Voter ID Cards:

- Fresh EPICs (Electors Photo Identity Cards) will be issued only to voters with updated particulars.

Key Analysis for Mains**1. Purpose and Significance of SIR 2.0:**

- Enhances the accuracy, inclusiveness, and credibility of India's electoral rolls.
- Ensures that no bogus, duplicate, or outdated entries remain in the rolls, thus strengthening the integrity of democratic elections.

2. Governance and Administrative Dimensions:

- Reflects the ECI's proactive role in maintaining free and fair elections.
- Involves coordination between central and state agencies, including booth-level officers (BLOs), to execute large-scale data verification.

3. Challenges and Political Sensitivity:

- Political controversy expected in states like West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, where ruling parties fear misuse or bias.
- In Assam, citizenship-linked complexities make voter verification a highly sensitive issue.

4. Technological and Procedural Reforms:

- Focus on voter mapping, address standardization, and digital records improves transparency.
- The integration of data verification systems with Aadhaar (while respecting privacy) is part of ECI's modernization efforts.

5. Implications for Electoral Reforms:

- A crucial step toward clean electoral rolls, a key demand in electoral reforms.
- Can help reduce bogus voting, impersonation, and inflated rolls, ensuring that electoral outcomes truly reflect public will.

Conclusion

- SIR 2.0 is a nation-wide, data-driven electoral roll verification exercise launched by the ECI in 12 States and UTs to ensure accurate, up-to-date voter lists. Assam remains excluded due to citizenship provisions.
- The initiative underlines the ECI's constitutional mandate (Article 324) to conduct free and fair elections and maintain credible voter rolls. However, it also exposes political sensitivities, administrative challenges, and regional disparities in electoral data management.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Consider the following statements about the Special Intensive Revision (SIR):

1. It is conducted by the Election Commission to update and verify electoral rolls.
2. The 2025 SIR 2.0 includes all Indian states and Union Territories.
3. Assam has been excluded due to separate provisions under the Citizenship Act.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Ans : a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: The credibility of electoral democracy depends on the integrity of the voter list. Discuss the significance of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in ensuring free and fair elections in India. **(150 Words)**

Page 04 : GS 2 : International Relations / Prelims

At the 20th East Asia Summit (EAS) held in Kuala Lumpur, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar reiterated India's position on global conflicts, expressing support for the U.S.-proposed Gaza peace plan and calling for an early resolution of the Ukraine war.

Jaishankar highlighted how prolonged conflicts threaten global food and energy security, disrupt trade, and create geopolitical instability, thereby affecting the Global South, including India. He also emphasized India's role in ensuring resilient supply chains and deepening maritime cooperation with ASEAN countries under the framework of Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific Vision.

India welcomes Gaza peace plan, wishes for early end to Ukraine war: Jaishankar

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India recognises that enduring conflicts have the potential to disrupt food security and threaten energy flows, and, therefore, it welcomes the Gaza peace initiative by U.S. President Donald Trump and wishes for an early end to the conflict in Ukraine, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Monday.

Speaking at the 20th East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Jaishankar spoke in favour of deepening maritime connections in the ASEAN region. "We are also witnessing conflicts that have significant repercussions, near and far. Deep human suffering



Global stage: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at the 20th East Asia Summit, in Kuala Lumpur on Monday. ANI

apart, they undermine food security, threaten energy flows and disrupt trade. India, therefore, welcomes the Gaza peace plan. We also seek an early end to the conflict in Ukraine," he said.

Earlier, Mr. Jaishankar

met Secretary of State Marco Rubio as India-U.S. relations continue to remain uneasy after Mr. Trump imposed penalty tariffs on India for buying Russian crude.

Mr. Jaishankar, on his part, did not specifically

refer to the challenges that India is facing because of Mr. Trump's campaign to cut down Russian energy exports but pointed at "reliability of supply chains and access to markets" as an area of "growing concerns". "Energy trade is increasingly constricted, with resulting market distortions. Principles are applied selectively and what is preached is not necessarily practised," he said, supporting "adjustments" and "resilient solutions".

"Multipolarity is not just here to stay but to grow. All these warrant serious global conversations," he said. He expressed India's commitment to enhancing maritime cooperation in the ASEAN region.

Key Analysis for Prelims

1. 20th East Asia Summit (EAS):

- Held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2025).
- Forum of ASEAN + 8 (India, U.S., China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Russia).
- Discusses regional security, economic growth, and political stability in the Indo-Pacific.

2. India's Position:

- Supports Gaza Peace Initiative announced by U.S. President Donald Trump.
- Calls for early end to the Ukraine conflict to restore stability in food and energy supply chains.

3. Major Themes in Jaishankar's Speech:

- Global conflicts impact food security, energy flows, and supply chains.
- Need for resilient, non-discriminatory global trade practices.
- India advocates for multipolarity and collective solutions to global challenges.

4. India-ASEAN Focus:

- Deepening maritime connectivity and cooperation in the ASEAN region.
- Aligned with India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and Act East Policy.

5. India-U.S. Relations Context:

- Jaishankar met U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.
- Relations uneasy after U.S. imposed penalty tariffs on India for buying Russian crude oil despite Western sanctions.

Key Analysis for Mains**1. India's Balanced Diplomatic Approach**

- India maintains strategic autonomy, supporting peace initiatives while avoiding alignment with any bloc.
- On both Gaza and Ukraine, India calls for dialogue and diplomacy, not confrontation.

2. Energy and Food Security Dimensions

- Conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza have global spillover effects — affecting grain exports, fertilizer supply, and energy prices.
- India's statement reflects its concern for developing economies that are highly dependent on stable global markets.

3. Geopolitical Balancing:

- India's engagement in EAS signals its continued commitment to ASEAN centrality and rules-based Indo-Pacific order.
- Balances relations with U.S., Russia, and Middle Eastern nations, reflecting multi-alignment rather than neutrality.

4. Economic and Strategic Implications:

- U.S. tariffs on Indian crude imports from Russia underline economic coercion concerns.

- India advocates for resilient supply chains, diversified energy partnerships, and non-discriminatory trade policies.

5. Multipolar World Order:

- Jaishankar's remark that "multipolarity is not just here to stay but to grow" reinforces India's long-term vision of a polycentric global order, where no single power dominates, and nations pursue issue-based partnerships.

Conclusion

- The 20th East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur saw India reaffirming its stance on global peace, welcoming the Gaza peace plan, and urging an early resolution to the Ukraine conflict.
- India's position reflects its consistent non-aligned, peace-oriented, and multipolar worldview, balancing national interests with global stability. It also underlines India's Act East and Indo-Pacific engagement, and its efforts to protect global supply chains amid ongoing geopolitical volatility.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: The "Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)" launched by India focuses primarily on:

- (a) Maritime security and connectivity
- (b) Humanitarian aid delivery
- (c) Export promotion for ASEAN countries
- (d) Fisheries development

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: India's Act East Policy is evolving into a strategic Indo-Pacific engagement." Critically analyze this transformation with reference to recent diplomatic interactions at ASEAN forums.

Page 07 : GS 3 : Science and Tech / Prelims

Every year, a list identifying the world's top 2% of scientists — compiled by Stanford University's Prof. John Ioannidis using Elsevier's Scopus database — generates excitement and prestige across the global academic community. The 2025 list included 6,239 Indian scientists, sparking institutional celebrations across the country. However, deeper scrutiny reveals that the list's methodology may not accurately represent *scientific quality or impact*, as it relies heavily on citation-based metrics that are vulnerable to distortion and misuse.

Stanford/Elsevier's rank list: why all that glitters is not gold

Scientists are often evaluated by the number of citations they have garnered. However, there has been a naïve assumption that scientists always cite only good-quality papers, which in turn has fed the notion that a paper's citation number is indicative of its impact. But this needn't always be true

Swaminathan S

Stanford University professor John Ioannidis recently published the latest version of the list of the world's top 2% of scientists. Its release every year causes much excitement among scientists and their institutions. And every year for a few weeks after, hardly a day passes without multiple announcements of the presence of Indian scientists on this list by many institutions, from well-known to obscure, on various media platforms. They tout the honour as recognition of their scientific excellence; indeed, many of these institutes even claim the achievement wouldn't have been possible without their role in creating and sustaining an enabling research environment.

The 2025 list was published in September and ranked around 2.3 lakh scientists worldwide — themselves filtered out of a pool of 2.2 crore. This supposedly scaled fraction, which included several Nobel laureates, also counted 6,239 scientists from India. This number has been steadily increasing over the last few years.

Link to quality
The top 10 scientists from India in the 2025 list have been ranked 288 to 952 and are: with Mathayam Engineering College (Tamil Nadu), University of Petroleum and Energy Studies (Uttarakhand), Tatyasaheb Kore Institute of Engineering & Technology (Punjab), Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (Uttar Pradesh), Shiv University, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (Karnataka), Sreevals School of Engineering (Tamil Nadu), Government Degree College Pudukottai (Tamil Nadu), and S.V. National Institute of Technology (Gujarat).

This picture was more or less the same in 2024, when the top 10 Indian scientists were ranked 63 to 158 and lesser-known institutions dominated.

Curiously, six of the seven science Nobel laureates on the list ranked 1,373 to 28,752 — far below the lowest ranked (top 10) Indian scientists. Indeed, to say that it is pretty astounding that even the lowest Indian scientist (top 10) performed way better on this list than all but one of the Nobel laureates is an understatement.

Whether this gap is actually linked to research quality in a meaningful way is, however, a separate question — one also dictated by the fact that the top 10 scientists are not affiliated with Indian research centres generally associated with excellent R&D. To understand this disconnect, we need to understand what scientific research is and how it is routinely evaluated in the prevailing academic ecosystem.

Standing on shoulders
Scientific research begins when scientists have a question about some observation that has caught their interest. They formulate a hypothesis and test it with experiments. Depending on the needs of each experiment, they may devise tools, interact with other scientists to get different perspectives, gather evidence, and analyse it to draw conclusions. Then they write up their findings in reports, commonly known as papers, which are reviewed by their peers and published in scientific journals. These papers bear the names of the scientists, so the scientists are also called authors.

The vast majority of scientific research today builds on the work of others. So the authors of a paper cite an older paper — like an acknowledgment that also adds one more link to the chain of knowledge — where its findings are relevant to their current work. When one paper has been cited by another paper once, it's said to have accrued one citation.

Scientists' work is often evaluated by the number of citations their papers have garnered. But there is a catch: there has been a naïve assumption for a while now that scientists always only cite good-quality papers, which in turn has fed the notion that a paper's citation number is indicative of its impact. But there is no need for this to always be true.

Evaluating science
Prof. Ioannidis prepares his list based on a global database of published research called Scopus. It is owned by Elsevier, a publishing company that is often accused of taking advantage of the "publish or perish" culture in academia to earn profits rivaling those of Google and Microsoft.

For his analysis, Prof. Ioannidis developed a composite score, called c-score, for each scientist in Scopus and ranked them in descending order of their c-scores.

The c-score gives equal weightage to multiple parameters, including the total number of citations, the h-index (a metric that links the citation number to the number of papers published by a scientist), the number of papers, the order of authors in papers, co-authorship,

and so on. The ranking also includes scientists across several different fields and sub-fields.

Comparing scientists in this way, across a breadth of enterprises, is generally considered problematic, like comparing apples to oranges.

Also, contrary to popular perception, Stanford University neither participates in the ranking process nor endorses the list. The effort is the individual initiative of Prof. Ioannidis.

Nobel Prize v. c-score
To understand why Indian scientists from little-known research centres rank above Nobel laureates on the list, the c-score is a good starting point. While Prof. Ioannidis and some others have said it provides a more comprehensive snapshot of a scientist's impact, it has serious limitations. It gives extra weight to papers where the scientist is the first, single, or last author, assuming that these positions imply major intellectual contribution, but this practice is not uniform across fields; it doesn't account for differences in citation practices between fields; it assumes the Scopus database covers all disciplines equally (it doesn't); and it ignores quantitative impact.

The final effect is for a scientist's c-score to be divorced from the actual scientific content of their work, especially in terms of its quality, validity, and contribution to science and society. Indeed, despite their other flaws, the process of identifying Nobel prize-winning scientists takes into account all that the c-score misses.

As with all metrics, the c-score can also be gamed, especially by individuals who pre-agree to cite each other's papers irrespective of the quality of their own papers or whether the citations are appropriate and warranted. This much is evident from the impossibly high levels of productivity — 12 papers per week — of many highly ranked Indian scientists. The rankings also don't account for papers that are later retracted for misconduct, such as by including a penalty in the c-score formula. Indeed, the Scopus database itself includes many dubious journals and publishers with little respect for research ethics.

Without understanding the c-score in this way, one is liable to interpret Indian scientists outranking Nobel laureates in Prof. Ioannidis' list as the former's overlooked greatness — but one shouldn't be forgiven for doing so. Like many other metrics that flatten the multi-dimensional enterprise that is scientific research into one-dimensional numbers, the c-score is fundamentally a vanity metric. Instead, researchers and their employers should focus on doing good research, and the research establishment should focus on facilitating that — rather than chasing numbers.

Swaminathan S. is retired professor, BITS Pilani - Hyderabad, and former scientist at IISER, New Delhi. ssw25@gmail.com

Key Analysis for Prelims

1. About the Stanford/Elsevier Scientist Ranking:

- Prepared by Prof. John Ioannidis, Stanford University.
- Based on data from Scopus, Elsevier's global research database.
- Ranks around 2.3 lakh scientists (out of ~2.2 crore).
- Uses a composite metric called the c-score to rank scientists.
- Stanford University does not officially endorse the list; it is Ioannidis's independent work.

2. What is the c-score?

- Composite score considering:
 - Total citations.
 - H-index (links number of papers and citations).
 - Author order (first, single, last author).
 - Co-authorship patterns.
- Ranks scientists across multiple disciplines.

3. India's Position (2025 list):

- 6,239 Indian scientists featured.
- Top Indian scientists ranked between 288 and 952 globally.
- Many from lesser-known institutions (e.g., Muthayammal Engineering College, UPES, Thapar University).

4. Criticism of Scopus & Elsevier:

- Elsevier accused of profiting from academia's "publish or perish" pressure.
- Scopus includes dubious journals and lacks equal coverage across disciplines.

5. Nobel Laureates vs. Rankings:

- Several Nobel laureates rank far lower (between 1,373–28,782), indicating disconnect between *citations* and *true scientific impact*.

Key Analysis for Mains**1. Issue of Citation-Based Evaluation:**

- The assumption that more citations = higher quality is misleading.
- Papers can be highly cited for *negative reasons* (controversy, criticism, or replication failures).
- Citation patterns vary widely across disciplines, making cross-field comparison invalid.

2. Flaws in the c-score Model:

- Overemphasis on numerical indicators creates "vanity metrics".
- Assumes author position reflects contribution (not true across all disciplines).
- Fails to penalize retracted papers or unethical publishing practices.
- Does not consider social or practical impact of research.

3. Systemic Problems in Academic Evaluation:

- "Publish or perish" culture drives quantity over quality.
- Some researchers manipulate citations via mutual citation pacts or self-citations.
- Creates distorted incentives, rewarding visibility rather than integrity or innovation.

4. Nobel Prize vs. Metrics:

- Nobel Prizes recognise depth, originality, and transformative impact, which cannot be quantified through citation counts.

- The mismatch exposes how metrics-driven evaluation can misrepresent genuine scientific contribution.

5. Policy Implications for India:

- Indian institutions must move away from metric-based recognition toward peer review, ethical research culture, and societal impact evaluation.
- Need for research governance reforms, including quality assurance, mentorship, and ethical training.

6. Ethical and Institutional Perspective:

- The pursuit of rankings and metrics can undermine scientific honesty.
- Universities celebrating mere inclusion in such lists risk institutional vanity rather than promoting genuine research excellence.

Conclusion

- The Stanford/Elsevier ranking, though globally publicized, is not an official Stanford University endorsement but a data-based list using Scopus metrics. Its c-score method combines multiple citation-related factors but fails to capture qualitative aspects of science.
- The article underscores the limitations of metric-based academic evaluation and the dangers of equating citation counts with scientific excellence. It calls for a shift toward integrity, innovation, and societal impact as true measures of research value.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques. Do you think India's research institutions should celebrate rankings like the Stanford/Elsevier list? Give reasons with policy suggestions. **(250 Words)**

India's long-standing efforts to regulate misleading medical advertisements began with the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act (DMRA), 1954, which prohibits advertisements claiming to treat 54 medical conditions such as diabetes, cancer, or sexual disorders.

- However, with the rise of Big Tech platforms — search engines, social media, video-sharing sites, and e-commerce marketplaces — this regulatory framework faces new challenges. Despite Indian laws, these global platforms continue to host and profit from misleading or illegal medical advertisements, revealing a gap in enforcement, jurisdiction, and accountability.

Big Tech's contempt for Indian public health

Since 1937, when the topic of drug regulation was first discussed in the Council of State after Sir Haroon Jaffer sought a resolution regarding the "control of the craze for medicinal drugs", the issue of advertisements of drugs claiming to have a therapeutic effect on humans has been a serious public health concern.

It took 27 years before India tackled the issue through the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act (DMRA), 1954. This law prohibits any advertisements of any drugs, whether approved or not by the regulator, for a list of 54 medical conditions. For example, the law prohibits the advertisement of any drug for the treatment of diabetes, regardless of whether its efficacy has been clinically established.

The advent of Internet-based advertising
A lot has changed since 1954, especially in the world of advertisement. The Internet and the rise of Big Tech platforms, in the nature of search engines, social media platforms, video-sharing platforms and online marketplaces for goods, have steadily eaten into the traditional avenues of advertising in print and broadcast formats. This shift has not only upended print journalism across the world which was reliant on advertisements, but also made it far tougher for governments across the world to police advertisements published on these Big Tech platforms headquartered in the United States.

In a deep dive on the advertising policies and practices of the most popular American Big Tech platforms in India, we were astonished to note that not a single one of them warns advertisers not to submit for publication, advertisements which are in violation of the DMRA. Thus, it is no surprise that all Big Tech platforms routinely publish a wide variety of misleading advertisements, especially for ayurvedic and homeopathic products. For example, a simple search for "ayurveda" + "blood pressure tablets" or "homeopathy" + "diabetes" on the most popular search engine and online market place in India will throw up a variety of advertisements on these platforms under the "sponsored" tag, indicating that they have been paid for by advertisers.

One of the most popular social media platforms features video advertisements by a notorious godman with the claim of being able to cure all kinds of diseases using ayurvedic products.

Similarly, a search of the online ad-libraries of these Big Tech platforms reveals a long list of offending advertisements, including those for cow-urine based products to treat cancers; these advertisements were supported by a charitable

programme run by the Big Tech platform. All these advertisements are in violation of the DMRA.

None of these Big Tech platforms runs similar advertisements in the United States for ayurvedic and homeopathic products. The policies of these platforms for advertisements for health-related products to be displayed to users based in the U.S. are elaborate, with some even having pre-screening mechanisms that are meant to ensure compliance with tough American laws; these laws prohibit advertisements for therapeutic claims that are not approved by the drug regulator. In the U.S., violation of American law can attract swift criminal prosecution.

Disregard for Indian law
So, what explains Big Tech's brazen disregard of Indian laws such as the DMRA?

The first reason could be the traditional contempt that American corporations, dating back to Union Carbide, have shown for the lives of Indians. It is possible that this contempt arises from systemic racism that affects the management of American corporations, wherein Indian lives are not considered to be comparable to American lives.

The second is that Big Tech has escaped serious punishment earlier for violation of another law called The Pre-Conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 (PNDS). This law prevents advertisements for products and services related to determination of the sex of the unborn foetus. A PIL was filed in 2008 by an activist before the Supreme Court of India pointing out how Big Tech platforms were in brazen violation of this law. Before the Court, Big Tech was evasive on the point of instituting proactive measures to block such advertisements, insisting that it was under an obligation to remove offending advertisements only if government or others informed them about such violations. To make a long story short, Big Tech fell back into a familiar pattern of deception, by claiming that it was the "intermediary" not the "publisher".

Under Indian law, intermediaries have qualified immunity from legal liability for content generated by their users because they are presumed to lack knowledge of each piece of content that is posted by users. But when it comes to advertisements, Big Tech knows very well that it is the "publisher" and not the "intermediary". The marketing teams of Big Tech on the ground in India actively pitch for advertisements, sign contracts with advertisers and accept payments for the purpose of displaying the advertisement on their platform. They have complete knowledge about these advertisements; hence, they are publishers and

Dinesh S. Thakur
is the author of 'The Truth Pill: The Myth of Drug Regulation in India' (Simon & Schuster)

Prashant Reddy T.
is the co-author of 'The Truth Pill: The Myth of Drug Regulation in India' (Simon & Schuster)

The rise in misleading advertisements by popular platforms is also linked to the immunity that Big Tech enjoys in India

not mere intermediaries who can claim immunity under the law.

The PIL regarding the violation of the PNDS languished for nine years before ending with the usual insipid orders for the creation of a government committee to look into the issue. Criminal prosecution was never ordered by the Court despite being the prescribed punishment under the PNDS Act. The abject failure of the Court to enforce the law by ordering criminal prosecutions, and the process which frustrates litigants who represent public interest in such cases undoubtedly emboldened Big Tech's sense of impunity in India.

The third reason is that Big Tech is aware that the U.S. government would never extradite top managerial personnel from America to face criminal prosecution in India for violating the DMRA. Big Tech's employees running Indian subsidiaries located on Indian territory cannot be prosecuted because the Indian subsidiary is a different legal entity from its parent company located in the U.S., which legally owns and operates the advertising platforms in India. Undoubtedly, this implicit immunity is what fuels Big Tech's bad behaviour in India.

The need for reforms
Tackling Big Tech's dangerous violations of the DMRA should be an urgent priority in a country such as India which self-prescribes medicines and has an inherent bias toward "nationalist" tropes.

Registering criminal complaints before courts of competent jurisdiction against the management of these platforms would be a good first step. If Big Tech declines to produce its competent managerial personnel before an Indian court to face these charges, the government will be compelled to ensure reforms that will make Big Tech answerable to Indian sovereignty.

It is perhaps time for India to take a page from the new American playbook to regulate TikTok and create new regulatory mechanisms. This is to ensure that the managerial personnel responsible for creating and enforcing content and advertising related policies in India are Indian citizens who are based in Indian territory and answerable to Indian courts. Anything short of the threat of jail time for key managerial personnel will fail to ensure that Big Tech's complies with Indian law.

Further, a failure of Big Tech to comply with these legal requirements should result in a revocation of the immunity granted to Big Tech under Indian intermediary laws from legal action for user-generated content. Big Tech cannot be allowed to enjoy these benefits under Indian law if it does not enforce relevant Indian laws to protect public health in India.

Key Analysis for Prelims

- Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954 (DMRA):**
 - Enacted to prohibit misleading advertisements of drugs claiming magical or miraculous properties.
 - Applies to all advertisements, whether the drug is approved or not.
 - Prohibits advertising for treatment of 54 diseases, including diabetes, cancer, sexual impotence, etc.
- Big Tech and Digital Advertising:**
 - Big Tech companies (Google, Meta, YouTube, Amazon, etc.) act as publishers for paid health advertisements.

- They display misleading ads on ayurvedic, homeopathic, or unverified products violating DMRA.
- Such ads are not allowed in the U.S., where platforms have strict pre-screening policies and legal compliance mechanisms.

3. **Violation of PNDT Act, 1994:**

- Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 prohibits advertisements promoting sex determination.
- Big Tech platforms were earlier found violating this law too, leading to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in 2008 before the Supreme Court.
- They avoided responsibility by claiming to be “intermediaries”, not publishers.

4. **Legal Status – Publisher vs. Intermediary:**

- Under Indian law, intermediaries (like social media platforms) have limited liability for user-generated content.
- However, in the case of paid advertisements, platforms are publishers — since they solicit, approve, and profit from the ads.

5. **Jurisdictional Loopholes:**

- Indian subsidiaries of U.S.-based Big Tech firms are legally distinct entities, preventing prosecution of parent companies.
- Extradition limitations further protect top executives in the U.S. from facing Indian courts.

Key Analysis for Mains

1. **Public Health and Digital Misleading Ads:**

- India’s public health landscape is vulnerable to misinformation, given the widespread self-medication culture and trust in traditional remedies.
- Big Tech’s failure to comply with Indian laws like DMRA undermines efforts to protect citizens from deceptive health claims.

2. **Regulatory and Legal Challenges:**

- Current laws such as DMRA and PNDT are ill-equipped for digital ecosystems.
- Enforcement mechanisms are weak — no pre-screening, poor monitoring, and delayed judicial response.
- The Supreme Court’s slow action in the PNDT case set a precedent of leniency that emboldened tech giants.

3. **Ethical and Sovereignty Concerns:**

- Big Tech’s double standards — strict compliance in the U.S., but disregard in India — raise questions of corporate racism and digital colonialism.
- It reflects the asymmetry of power between global tech corporations and developing nations’ regulatory frameworks.
-

4. Policy Reforms Suggested:

- Criminal prosecution of managerial personnel of Big Tech platforms in India.
- Revoke intermediary immunity if platforms fail to comply with Indian laws.
- Mandate that key content and ad-policy executives be Indian citizens based in India — similar to the U.S. stance on TikTok.
- Establish dedicated digital regulatory mechanisms under Indian jurisdiction for online advertisements.

5. Public Health and Information Integrity:

- Misleading advertisements can push vulnerable populations toward unsafe or ineffective medical practices, worsening public health outcomes.
- Strong digital governance is crucial to maintain trust, accountability, and consumer safety in the era of online commerce.

Conclusion

- The DMRA, 1954 and PNDT, 1994 Acts are vital to regulating medical advertisements and protecting consumers from harmful misinformation. However, Big Tech's non-compliance and lack of enforcement mechanisms have rendered these laws ineffective in the digital age.
- India must update its regulatory architecture to address Big Tech accountability, digital sovereignty, and consumer protection. Without enforceable penalties and clear legal definitions distinguishing publishers from intermediaries, public health risks will continue to grow unchecked.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : Which of the following statements about the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954 is correct?

- (a) It allows advertisements for drugs approved by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO).
- (b) It prohibits advertisements claiming to treat specific listed diseases regardless of drug approval status.
- (c) It regulates only broadcast media advertisements.
- (d) It applies only to allopathic medicines.

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: The rise of digital advertising has outpaced India's regulatory framework." Examine this statement in light of recent violations of the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954 by Big Tech companies. **(150 Words)**

India is witnessing a rapid decline of linguistic diversity. As per UNESCO, India leads the world in the number of languages and dialects at risk of extinction. Over 220 Indian languages have vanished in the last 50 years (D.G. Rao, Central Institute of Languages). Within this context, Dogri, a language native to the Jammu region, offers a stark case study.

Is the Dogri language losing resonance in India?

Is the Dogri language declining at the same rate across rural and urban landscapes in the Jammu region?

Rohan Qurashi
Heena Chaudhary

The story so far:
Human society is rapidly moving towards the extinction of its linguistic heritage. According to one report by UNESCO, India has topped the list of countries with the maximum number of dialects on the verge of extinction. According to D.G. Rao, former Director of the Central Institute of Languages, India has lost over 220 languages in the last 50 years.

Is Dogri in decline?
In recent years, growing concern has emerged over the gradual decline of the Dogri language in the Jammu region. Globalisation, migration, and the pursuit of economic opportunity often encourage speakers to prioritise widely used languages, while regional ones fade into

disuse. Political choices and a lack of active interest among native speakers further deepen this crisis. Against this backdrop, Dogri finds itself at a crossroads. Although the J&K Official Languages Bill, 2020 gave it the long-overdue recognition as one of the Union Territory's five official languages, its status on paper has not translated into meaningful presence on the ground. Unlike other regional languages that have secured space in school curricula or administrative use, Dogri remains largely absent from formal education.

Why is Dogri not being spoken?
The decline of Dogri in the Jammu region can be looked at through three critical lenses – government policy, generational perspectives, and the rural-urban divide. One of the central reasons for the decline of Dogri lies in the absence of sustained government support. Unlike Urdu, Kashmiri, and Hindi, Dogri had to wait until 2003 for constitutional recognition. This long delay meant that by the time Dogri gained official status, it had already fallen behind in terms of institutional backing and visibility. A survey conducted by the authors further underscores this policy gap. The research employed a random sampling method, selecting households at intervals of three to four units to ensure representativeness. The sample was distributed across 20 different locations in the Jammu region; 130 people filled the survey form completely. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) from the Jammu region believe that the government has failed to provide adequate policy support for Dogri. Another 43.2% felt that the language offers little relevance for employment prospects or career advancement. Additionally, the survey revealed a stark generational divide in Dogri proficiency. The oldest respondents, those aged 60

and above, displayed the strongest connection to the language, with full proficiency in speaking and an intermediate score in reading and writing. However, among respondents aged 41-60, writing proficiency dropped sharply to just 0.25%, reflecting the gradual erosion of literacy in the language. Respondents under 20 years of age show 0% proficiency in reading and writing Dogri. The survey also revealed a striking contrast between rural and urban populations in terms of Dogri language usage. Approximately 56% of respondents from rural areas actively speak Dogri, with around 15% demonstrating the ability to write it. In contrast, among urban respondents, only 45% reported speaking Dogri, and only 4% had any proficiency in writing it.

What is the way ahead?
To address India's linguistic crisis, two challenges must be addressed. First is technical – with the 2021 Census on hold, one lacks updated data on how many languages are endangered, and where urgent intervention is needed. Without this knowledge, both awareness and policy remain adrift. Secondly, one must shed the mindset that equates English alone with progress. The decolonisation of linguistics is the larger task at hand.

Rohan Qurashi is a research student at St. Stephen's College, Delhi. Heena Chaudhary is a Phd scholar.

THE GIST

Globalisation, migration, and the pursuit of economic opportunity often encourage speakers to prioritise widely used languages, while regional ones fade into disuse.

The decline of Dogri in the Jammu region can be looked at through three critical lenses – government policy, generational perspectives, and the rural-urban divide.

The survey also revealed a striking contrast between rural and urban populations in terms of Dogri language usage.

1. Is Dogri in Decline?

Yes — despite being one of the five official languages of Jammu and Kashmir (after the 2020 J&K Official Languages Bill), Dogri's real-world presence remains weak.

Reasons:

- Symbolic recognition, not functional use — minimal inclusion in schools, offices, or administration.
- Globalisation & migration have made English and Hindi more "economically rewarding."
- Political neglect and low community participation have further eroded the language's ecosystem.

2. Causes of Decline

(a) Government Policy Gaps

- Dogri received constitutional recognition only in 2003 (Eighth Schedule).
- Lack of sustained funding, curriculum inclusion, or official promotion.

- **Survey data:**
 - 48% respondents: inadequate policy support.
 - 43.2%: Dogri has no career relevance.

(b) Generational Divide

- 60+ age group: Fluent in speaking; moderate in reading/writing.
- 41–60 age group: Writing proficiency drops to 0.25%.
- Below 20: Zero reading/writing proficiency → alarming sign of break in linguistic transmission.

(c) Rural–Urban Divide

Category	Speak Dogri	Write Dogri
Rural	56%	15%
Urban	45%	4%

This indicates that rural areas are the last strongholds, but even there, literacy in Dogri is declining.

3. Broader Implications

Dogri's story reflects a larger pattern of linguistic attrition in India — where regional languages struggle against urbanisation, English-medium education, and a narrow view of “modern success.”

4. The Way Forward

- Updated Census data (pending since 2021) is essential to map endangered languages.
- Integrate Dogri in education, media, and administration to normalise its use.
- Encourage local pride and community-driven preservation (folk literature, festivals, theatre).
- Shift national mindset — English ≠ progress; linguistic diversity = cultural strength.
- Decolonisation of language policy must accompany cultural revival.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : Which of the following statements about the Dogri language is correct?

- (a) Dogri received constitutional recognition in 1950.
- (b) Dogri was recognised under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in 2003.
- (c) Dogri is one of the five official languages of Himachal Pradesh.
- (d) Dogri is widely used as the medium of instruction in Jammu's urban schools.

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: How do government policy gaps and generational shifts contribute to the erosion of regional languages such as Dogri? **(150 Words)**

A start for North-South carbon market cooperation

On September 17, 2025, the European Union (EU) and India set out a new comprehensive strategic agenda in their joint communication. Called the New Strategic EU-India Agenda, it primarily addresses five pillars on which their partnership will be enhanced: prosperity and sustainability; technology and innovation; security and defence; connectivity and global issues, and enablers across pillars. Buried in the section on clean transition is a critical line that the EU will link the Indian Carbon Market (ICM) with the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

In plain terms, carbon prices paid in India will be deducted from CBAM levies at the EU border. This is a breakthrough. It could prevent Indian exporters from being penalised twice and reward early decarbonisation. However, major barriers still plague its operationalisation. Unless addressed, they will stall this integration before it delivers real gains.

Underdeveloped Indian carbon market

India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), commonly referred to as ICM, is still an evolving architecture. Unlike the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), which has a two decade record of robust auction structure, cap-setting processes, and independent verification, India's scheme is built on fragmented foundations. Current credits are often based on intensity improvements or project-based offsets, not absolute caps on emissions, wherein the ICM is moving. The CBAM, however, requires a tonne-for-tonne accounting of embedded carbon in goods. Without legally binding caps and strong penalties for non-compliance, EU regulators will treat Indian credits as second class.

There is also no current institutional



Shashank Pandey

is a lawyer and researcher working on environmental law and climate finance

The linking of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism with the Indian carbon market is significant but there are hurdles to cross

equivalent in India to the EU's independent regulators or emissions registries that guarantee market integrity. In effect, the EU cannot "deduct" Indian carbon prices unless it is confident that the underlying system delivers environmental integrity. Bridging this institutional gap is not a technical fix. It requires a structural redesign of the ICM to mirror the compliance-grade features of the EU's ETS. Imagining this substantive pivot within the Indian our bureaucratic understanding and operation anytime soon is challenging.

CBAM also relies on a clear and stringent carbon price. In the EU's ETS, the price floats around €60 to €80 a tonne. In India, initial carbon credit prices hover in the range of €5 and €10. Unless the carbon price is comparable and enforced across covered sectors, European regulators will not deduct much, if anything, at the border.

Worse, exporters may end up facing both the Indian compliance cost and the EU's full CBAM levy. This creates political risk inside India, where industries may resist a "double burden" and they could lobby to water down India's scheme, i.e., compliance parameters under ICM. Bridging the price gap requires either targeted sectoral carbon contracts or a negotiated floor price that aligns with CBAM expectations. Both are politically difficult options to negotiate.

Fundamental nature of CBAM

Even if technical and price issues are solved, CBAM remains controversial. India and other developing countries have consistently opposed it at the WTO and international dialogues as being a unilateral and protectionist measure. Agreeing to a linkage between India's carbon market and CBAM, therefore, creates a political contradiction

that India would be legitimising a mechanism it has formally resisted.

This tension will resurface in disputes. For instance, if the EU deems India's carbon price to be "insufficient" and refuses full deductions, exporters will cry foul, and New Delhi will be forced to escalate the issue politically or legally. There is also a sovereignty issue because carbon pricing is a domestic policy tool, but CBAM effectively gives Brussels a say in whether India's measures are "good enough". For a country that guards its policy space, this could become a red line. Beyond trade law, there is a strategic risk wherein CBAM deductions will work only if India maintains a steady, transparent carbon market. Any domestic political backtracking, for example, rolling back compliance under industry pressure, would immediately expose exporters to full CBAM costs, destabilising trade flows. In short, the linkage is hostage not only to WTO legalities but also to domestic political economy and EU-India trust.

Looking at optimistic resolutions

The Indian carbon market and CBAM linkage is one of the most significant agreements under the strategy agenda by the two big global economies. If it works, it shields Indian exporters, accelerates industrial decarbonisation, and creates a model for North-South carbon market cooperation. But weak domestic architecture, misaligned carbon prices, and political contradictions may sink it. There is an underlying case to be made for more comprehensive collaboration. India can strengthen its market design, and the EU can offer clarity and technical support for a smooth transition. Otherwise, this "breakthrough" will remain on paper, while Indian exporters continue to pay at the border.

GS. Paper 2– International Relations

UPSC Mains Practice Question: The proposed linkage between India's Carbon Market and the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) offers a new model for North-South cooperation in climate governance. Discuss the potential benefits and challenges of this linkage for India. (150 Words)

Context :

The recent EU-India Strategic Agenda (September 2025) marks a landmark step in climate cooperation between the Global North and South. A key highlight of this partnership is the proposed linkage between the Indian Carbon Market (ICM) and the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

In simple terms, carbon prices paid by Indian producers under India's domestic carbon market will be deducted from CBAM levies at the EU border, preventing double taxation and rewarding early decarbonisation.

While this has the potential to integrate India into the global carbon pricing regime, major operational, institutional, and political challenges threaten to undermine its success.

Background: Understanding ICM and CBAM

- Indian Carbon Market (ICM): Introduced under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), 2023, it aims to create a domestic market where carbon emission allowances and credits can be traded. However, it is still evolving and largely project-based (offsets and intensity improvements) rather than cap-and-trade based.
- Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM): A part of the EU's Green Deal, CBAM imposes a carbon tariff on imported goods (steel, cement, aluminium, etc.) based on their embedded carbon emissions. It seeks to prevent "carbon leakage" — where industries relocate to countries with lax emission norms.

Main Issues and Challenges

1. Weak and Underdeveloped Indian Carbon Architecture

- India's market is fragmented, lacking robust cap-setting, auction, and verification mechanisms found in the EU ETS (Emissions Trading System).
- Current credits are not based on absolute emission caps, which the EU requires for credible accounting.
- Absence of an independent regulatory authority or emissions registry undermines environmental integrity — a prerequisite for EU recognition.

2. Price Disparity and "Double Burden"

- EU carbon price: €60–€80 per tonne
- Indian carbon price: €5–€10 per tonne
- The mismatch makes it unlikely that the EU will deduct full Indian carbon costs.
- This could lead to dual payment — Indian exporters paying for both ICM compliance and CBAM levies — creating domestic political resistance from industries.

3. Political and Sovereignty Concerns

- India has long opposed CBAM at WTO as a protectionist and unilateral measure. Linking ICM with CBAM now creates a contradiction — appearing to legitimise what India previously resisted.
- The EU effectively gains a say in India's carbon pricing adequacy, raising sovereignty issues.
- Disputes may arise if the EU refuses deductions on grounds of "insufficient" carbon pricing, compelling India to challenge such decisions legally or politically.

4. Institutional and Trust Deficit

- The linkage depends on mutual trust and stable domestic policy.
- Any rollback in India's compliance standards under political or industrial pressure could expose exporters to full CBAM costs, disrupting trade stability.
- Thus, the success of this linkage is hostage to both domestic governance and international coordination.

Significance and Opportunities

- Avoids Double Taxation: Indian exporters will not pay twice for carbon, maintaining competitiveness.
- Accelerates Decarbonisation: Incentivises Indian industries to adopt low-carbon technologies.
- Global Leadership: Creates a template for North–South carbon cooperation and equitable climate finance.
- Strengthens India–EU Ties: Positions India as a credible partner in global climate governance.

Way Forward

1. Institutional Strengthening of ICM

- Establish an independent Emissions Regulatory Authority.
- Introduce legally binding emission caps, robust MRV (Monitoring, Reporting, Verification) systems, and penalties for non-compliance.

2. Bridging the Carbon Price Gap

- Develop sector-specific carbon contracts or floor prices aligned with EU expectations.
- Explore carbon credit floor-pricing agreements through bilateral negotiation.

3. Legal and Diplomatic Clarity

- Build a bilateral dispute-resolution framework to avoid WTO litigation.
- Negotiate mutual recognition of carbon credits under transparent standards.

4. Technical Cooperation and Capacity Building

- The EU should provide technical and financial support to enhance India's carbon market design, verification, and compliance systems.

Conclusion

- The proposed linkage between India's Carbon Market and the EU's CBAM represents a potential breakthrough in equitable climate cooperation, bridging the North–South divide in carbon governance.
 - However, without a credible, transparent, and well-priced carbon market at home, India risks entering a partnership where the gains remain on paper while industries bear the costs.
 - A calibrated approach — combining institutional reform, carbon price alignment, and diplomatic negotiation — can transform this idea from a symbolic gesture into a model of cooperative climate federalism on the global stage.
-