



THE  HINDU

DAILY NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS



19 / 12 / 2025

Today's topics

- 1. Cutting off a rural lifeline and the Directive Principles P8 GS 2**
- 2. Temporary relief – P.No.8 GS 3**
- 3. A bold step amid an ambitious nuclear energy target P8 GS 3**
- 4. India signs trade pact with Oman for duty-free exports – P.No.1**

GS2



Today's topics

- 1. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes – Prelims Fact**
- 2. Passive Euthanasia – Prelims Fact**

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

Keystone IAS Academy, Anna Nagar West, Chennai – 40. Mobile : 7305777541 / 9894996777



Cutting off a rural lifeline and the Directive Principles

The central government has, using its majority in the Lok Sabha, pushed through a Bill to replace the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The proposed draft – an outright “*adhi kar chori* (rights theft)” Bill – seeks to change the very nature of MGNREGA, the present Act. While the Bill is a direct assault on the rights of the rural working poor, it should be seen in the framework of an attack on the Constitution of India. This is why it must go to the Standing Committee of Parliament.

Article 41 of the Constitution states: “The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work....” In the Constituent Assembly, there was a strong difference of opinion between those who were influenced by socialist ideals who wanted the right to work included as a fundamental right, and the strong capitalist lobby who opposed it. Ultimately, it was included in the Directive Principles of the Constitution. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had described this as a “novel feature”, asserting that though these Directive Principles were not justiciable, they were to be considered as “instruments of instruction” for lawmakers and as “essential for economic democracy”. Pro-socialist member K.T. Shah had then described this as “pious wishes”. Shah’s words resonate through these years of capitalist “development” in the lived experience of the unemployed and the denial of work opportunities.

The critical role of the Left

It took a five-and-a-half decade struggle by working people and dramatic political developments to ensure a policy shift that was somewhat closer to the Directive Principles, and, more specifically, the right to work. In the 2004 general election, the Bharatiya Janata Party was defeated by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance but without a majority, leading to a situation where, for the first time, the central government was dependent on the support of Left parties. Importantly, the Left parties led by the CPI(M) had fought the elections independently on their own programme and strength. MGNREGA was possible because of this political configuration. The Left parties played a critical role in the shaping of the final law adopted unanimously by Parliament in 2005.

The law is a partial recognition of the right to work and the acceptance of the responsibility of the state to ensure an increased share of national resources for the provision of work at a minimum



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wage. The law guarantees a minimum of 100 days of work throughout the year to a rural household and is universal, open to all adults (men and women) who volunteer for manual labour. Most importantly, the law is based on fulfilling the demand for work, which is not static and can increase or decrease according to the requirement of rural households. There is a deep democratic content in this. If a household has better choices for employment, it has the right to exercise that choice while retaining the fallback provided by MGNREGA. The law guarantees equal wages for men and women, with the entire wage bill to be paid by the central government.

The State governments, under the law, bear some financial responsibility of around 10% and have a say in the design of schemes and their implementation in tune with the needs of the State. Panchayats have both a right and a responsibility to identify and design projects required in the areas under their jurisdiction. This demand-driven universally applicable law was probably the first of its kind in the capitalist world.

An erasure of fundamental features

The Narendra Modi government, with its partners, the Telugu Desam Party and the Janata Dal (United) as drum beaters, scraps all these fundamental features in its draft Bill. It will no longer be demand driven, but determined by “normative financial allocations” decided by the central government. The Centre will legally have no obligation now if expenditure exceeds this allocation. The States, already in financial crisis because of the unjust denial of their share in central tax revenues, are being saddled with 40% of the cost. The Bill is highly centralised and everything – from the design of projects to digitalised audits – will be controlled by the central government. These features are a direct assault on the federal character of the Constitution.

The class bias in favour of the rural rich is blatantly displayed in the clause in the Bill which prohibits any work under the proposed law during the peak agricultural season. With increased mechanisation in agriculture, workdays have drastically reduced. The work pattern of MGNREGA shows that it is only when agricultural work is not available and when wages paid are below MGNREGA standards that workers opt for MGNREGA in the peak season.

The prohibition will reduce the bargaining capacity of rural workers, who, in the absence of MGNREGA, will be forced to accept terms and

conditions set by big landowners. This will affect women who get lower wages than men in agriculture. The law legalises Aadhaar card linkage, online digitally recorded attendance as a condition for eligibility and wage payment. This is despite ample evidence that such conditions including poor connectivity have victimised workers.

Using the acronym G Ram G, as the name of the law (Viksit Bharat-G Ram G Bill 2025), is a low-level manoeuvre to appeal to believers. But when crores of people will shout ‘G-Ram-G *murdabad*’ against the law, it may hurt sentiments and backfire on the government.

A reflection of distress

Those of us who have worked closely with MGNREGA workers know the difficult conditions in which people work. In some cases women have to lift up to 3,000 kilograms of mud a day to fulfil the productivity norm. Yet, if they make up well over 50% of MGNREGA workers in most States, it is surely a reflection of deep agrarian distress and the lack of a better alternative.

Adivasis constitute around 8.6% of the population. But among MGNREGA workers, according to last year’s figures, they are as high as 18% and Scheduled Castes make up 19%. Therefore, over two-thirds of workers belong to social categories protected by the Constitution. Any reversal of their rights is an attack on the Constitution. But even their representation in the redress/advisory councils has been eliminated in the draft law.

Since 2014, the Narendra Modi government has diluted and starved MGNREGA of funds even as it has greatly increased tax concessions and write-offs to corporates. While the number of workers increased from around two crores in the early days to over 7.7 crore workers now, the expenditures have stagnated or declined – never over 0.2% of GDP. In 2024-25, 8.9 crore workers demanded work but only 7.9 crore workers got work – 99 lakh workers were turned away. Wage arrears have mounted – sometimes up to ₹8,000 crore. On an average, households have got less than 50 days of work instead of 100 days. The farce of promising 125 days in the proposed draft rubs salt into the wound. But if people keep coming to MGNREGA sites it is because they have no alternative – such is the desperation and instability in the lives of India’s rural poor.

That lifeline, instead of being strengthened, is now being cut. The Directive Principles of the Constitution are being bulldozed. Shame on this government.

Context

Diluting MGNREGA weakens the constitutional promise of the Right to Work and signals retreat from welfare-based governance envisioned under the Directive Principles.

MGNREGA-வை நீர்த்துப்போகச் செய்வது, வேலை செய்யும் உரிமையின் அரசியலமைப்பு வாக்குறுதியை பலவீனப்படுத்துகிறது மற்றும் வழிகாட்டுதல் கோட்பாடுகளின் சீழ் கற்பனை செய்யப்பட்ட நலன் சார்ந்த நிர்வாகத்திலிருந்து பின்வாங்குவதைக் குறிக்கிறது.

UPSC CSE Syllabus GS Paper 2 : Indian Polity

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

Keystone IAS Academy, Anna Nagar West, Chennai – 40. Mobile : 7305777541 / 9894996777



Context

Union government has introduced a **Bill to replace MGNREGA**.

Article argues that the Bill **dilutes the Right to Work** and undermines **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)**, especially **Article 41**.

Constitutional & Legal Background

Article 41 (DPSP): State to make provisions for the **right to work**, within economic capacity.

DPSPs are **non-justiciable** but act as “**instruments of instruction**” (B.R. Ambedkar).

MGNREGA (2005) seen as **partial realisation of Article 41**.

Key Features of MGNREGA (Existing Law)

Demand-driven employment guarantee.

100 days of work per rural household.

Universal: open to all adults willing to do manual work.

Equal wages for men and women.

Centre bears full wage cost; States ~10%.

Decentralised: Panchayats design and implement works.

Acts as a **fallback option** during agricultural distress.

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

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Major Changes Proposed in New Bill

From demand-driven to allocation-driven

Work limited by **pre-fixed financial ceilings** set by Centre.

Centre has **no legal obligation** beyond allocation.

Increased State burden

States to bear **40% of cost**, despite fiscal stress.

Centralisation

Project design, audits, norms controlled by Centre.

Weakens **federal structure**.

Ban on work during peak agricultural season

Reduces workers' **bargaining power**.

Benefits large landowners; hurts women workers.

Mandatory Aadhaar & digital attendance

Risk of **exclusion errors**, connectivity issues.

Reduced representation

SC/ST and worker representation removed from councils.

Key Criticism

New Bill:

Weakens **Right to Work**

Undermines **DPSPs**

Erodes **federalism**

Increases vulnerability of rural poor

Viewed as prioritising **corporate concessions over welfare**.

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Among the following who are eligible to benefit from the “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act”? (2011)

- (a) Adult members of only the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe households
- (b) Adult members of below poverty line (BPL) households
- (c) Adult members of households of all backward communities
- (d) Adult members of any household

Ans: (d)

“An essential condition to eradicate poverty is to liberate the poor from the process of deprivation.” Substantiate this statement with suitable examples. **(2016)**

“Poverty alleviation programs in India remain mere showpieces until and unless they are backed up by political will.” Discuss with reference to the performance of the major poverty alleviation programmes in India. **(2015)**

Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper 2 – Indian Polity

“The proposed changes to MGNREGA mark a shift from a rights-based welfare framework to an allocation-driven model.” Critically examine this statement in the light of the Directive Principles of State Policy and India’s constitutional commitment to social justice.

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Temporary relief

The depreciation of the rupee is helping bring down trade deficit

India's remarkable merchandise trade performance in November should come as some relief for the government, but should not be the basis for any complacency. India's merchandise exports, hit by the stiff headwind of 50% tariffs by the United States, the biggest export destination, unexpectedly grew 19.4% to \$38.1 billion in November 2025. This is the highest it has been in any November in the last 10 years. Also, India's exports to the U.S. grew 22.6% to \$6.98 billion in November 2025 as compared to November 2024. This was also 10.7% higher than in October 2024. This is all certainly welcome news, but it hides an element of deeper distress that will make itself apparent in the months ahead. While exports to the U.S. recovered in November, exporters say that this is because they are absorbing the hit of the higher tariffs, hoping that they will be short-lived. The other option, of losing customers and trying to win them back later after moderation of tariffs, is seen to be harder, at least for now. However, it might soon be the only option. Indian exporters to the U.S., a large chunk of which are micro, small, and medium enterprises in labour-intensive sectors, cannot continue absorbing the tariff impact for too long. The depreciating rupee is helping offset some of the impact, but India's tariff differential with competing countries is too big to overcome. It also takes some time for supply chains to re-route. Reports are already coming in that exporters are seeing a significant drop in orders for January.

The trade deficit also shrank because India's merchandise imports fell 1.9% to \$62.7 billion in November 2025. Reducing imports is a tricky topic for India. While it is preferable to reduce import dependence in the medium term, India's domestic capabilities are not yet robust enough to shoulder the load. Falling merchandise imports, therefore, suggest slackening demand. Coming so soon after the Goods and Services Tax rate reductions, this should be monitored carefully by the government. The broad outlines of the government's Export Promotion Mission show that the government is thinking about how to alleviate the financial stress being faced by exporters. However, the detailed schemes have not been notified yet. These must be expedited. The government could also perhaps adapt some of its more successful COVID-era relief measures as well. For example, a credit guarantee scheme for exporters will do them more good than the planned moratorium on loan repayments will. Of course, these troubles will go away once the tariffs issue is resolved, which the government is saying will happen "very soon". But the decision on this lies with the mercurial U.S. President Donald Trump. As such, the most prudent way forward is to hope for the best but continue preparing for the worst.

Context

The rupee-led export boost is a short-term cushion, not a structural solution to India's trade challenges.

ரூபாய் மதிப்பு உயர்வால் ஏற்படும் ஏற்றுமதி உயர்வு என்பது இந்தியாவின் வர்த்தக சவால்களுக்கு ஒரு கட்டமைப்பு ரீதியான தீர்வாக இல்லாமல், குறுகிய கால நிவாரணமாகும்.

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GS Paper 3: Indian Economy

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

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Temporary Relief: Rupee Depreciation & Trade Deficit

Context

India's merchandise exports rose **19.4% to \$38.1 bn in Nov 2025**, highest in a decade for November.

Exports to the **U.S. grew 22.6%**, despite **50% U.S. tariffs**.

Trade deficit narrowed due to **fall in imports** and **weaker rupee**.

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

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Why exports rose despite high tariffs

Indian exporters are **absorbing tariff costs** instead of passing them on.

Aim: **retain U.S. customers** in the short term.

Depreciating rupee makes Indian goods cheaper abroad, partially offsetting tariffs.

Why this relief is temporary

Many exporters are **MSMEs in labour-intensive sectors**.

They **cannot absorb losses** for long.

India's **tariff disadvantage vs competitors** is too large.

Supply chain shifts take time.

Reports indicate **falling export orders** from January.

Trade deficit: A mixed signal

Imports fell **1.9% to \$62.7 bn.**

Helped reduce trade deficit.

But **falling imports may signal weak domestic demand**, not strength.

Raises concern post **GST rate cuts**, which were meant to boost demand.

Government response

Proposed **Export Promotion Mission** to ease exporter stress.

Details yet to be notified → **urgent implementation needed.**

Suggested measure:

Credit guarantee scheme (more effective than loan moratoriums).

Could adapt **COVID-era support measures.**

Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy

“The recent narrowing of India’s trade deficit driven by a depreciating rupee and falling imports is a temporary relief rather than a sign of structural strength.” Discuss the factors behind this trend and analyse the risks it poses to India’s export sustainability and domestic demand.

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

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A bold step amid an ambitious nuclear energy target

Human development correlates with energy consumption. In a seminal paper published in *Scientific American* in 1971, Earl Cook traced the growth in per capita energy consumption through stages, from primitive to technological man. The primitive man needed energy only for food. The energy needs for home and commerce were added at the hunting stage. When humans became agriculturists, their energy needs also arose from industry, agriculture and transportation. The energy needs for food, home, commerce, agriculture and transportation continued to increase through the industrial and technological stages. The present era belongs to digital technologies, and the digitalisation of the economy demands additional energy.

Growth rate and generation

The metric “Human Development Index (HDI)” is a fair representation of human development. It combines three important indicators, viz., per capita income, education and health. Using the correlation between HDI and per capita Final Energy Consumption (FEC), one can determine the level of energy needed to reach a specific HDI.

As a member of the G-20 grouping, India rubs shoulders with countries that have an HDI above 0.9. Estimates indicate that to reach 0.9, and considering further improvements in energy efficiency and electrification of end uses, India will need to generate about 24,000 Terra-Watt-Hours (TWh) per annum (*Curr. Sci.*, 2022, 122(5), 517-527). As a part of it, about 60% will be used as electricity, and the rest to generate hydrogen in electrolyzers. Hydrogen is needed to decarbonise sectors such as the production of steel, fertilizers and plastics. When alternative processes for producing hydrogen are developed at scale, less electricity will be needed.

The generation in 2023-24 was about 1,950 TWh, and the CAGR in the recent past has been about 4.8%. Maintaining a growth rate at about this level, it would be possible to generate 24,000



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TWh per annum in four to five decades. However, there are two complexities. First, India has to decarbonise its energy mix. Therefore, the growth in electricity generation must be accompanied by end-use electrification and a redesign of the energy mix.

The present share of electricity in the FEC is about 22% and must rise significantly. The present energy mix is one that is heavily reliant on fossil fuels, and has to be replaced by energy sources that do not emit carbon. That implies that India has to generate more using hydro, nuclear, solar and wind power.

The decarbonised energy mix

In India, hydro and wind potential in India is limited. India is densely populated and it precludes diverting large tracts of land for the deployment of solar photovoltaic. While the full potential of hydro, solar and wind must be exploited, their potential is insufficient to provide the energy level necessary to achieve an HDI above 0.9. Therefore, nuclear generation has to be ramped up. Until that is done, India will have to continue exploiting fossil fuels.

Second, solar and wind are intermittent sources. Electricity generated by photovoltaic cells or windmills is variable. Therefore, to match electricity supply with demand, it must be stored when it is in excess and augmented when generation is less than demand. Storage is expensive and providing storage to address seasonal variations in solar and wind is prohibitively expensive. To provide affordable electricity to consumers, the electricity mix must have sufficient baseload generation capacity – that is, generation that is not dependent on seasons or time of day. Nuclear power plants are base-load and must be a part of a decarbonised energy mix.

Realising this imperative, the units of the Department of Atomic Energy, in cooperation with Indian industry, have been working to harness nuclear energy in a manner so that the complete supply chain is indigenous. It is only

uranium that has to be imported as India does not have enough uranium. India has developed technology for fabricating fuel, producing heavy water, and manufacturing all the equipment that is needed to support the construction of Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs). The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited has mastered the design and operation of PHWRs of various ratings, the highest being 700 MW. Three 700 MW units are already working, and the fourth is about to be completed. Two more are in an advanced stage of construction. In 2017, the central government sanctioned the construction of 10 700 MW PHWRs and work on these units is progressing.

A regulatory body was established in the 1980s and has developed the capability and capacity to regulate nuclear power plants. The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre has developed technologies to reprocess spent nuclear fuel to recover valuable materials and handle nuclear waste. As a result of these efforts, nuclear power generation is a technically-feasible, affordable and safe option for India.

The SHANTI Bill

These successes have emboldened the central government to set a target of 100 GW of nuclear installed capacity by mid-century. Both Houses of Parliament have passed The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025. The Bill is an overarching piece of legislation and combines provisions included in the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010. It says that the existing Atomic Energy Regulatory Board “shall be deemed to have been constituted under this Act”. The Bill ensures that the prime responsibility for safety, security and safeguards lies with the licensee of the facility.

The target set for nuclear energy is ambitious. The Bill passed by Parliament is a bold step. India needs ambitious targets and bold steps to become a developed country.

Context

Nuclear energy is critical for India’s decarbonisation, energy security, and human development goals, and the SHANTI Bill provides the legal framework to scale it up responsibly.

இந்தியாவின் கார்பன் நீக்கம், எரிசக்தி பாதுகாப்பு மற்றும் மனித மேம்பாட்டு இலக்குகளுக்கு அணுசக்தி மிகவும் முக்கியமானது, மேலும் சாந்தி மசோதா அதை பொறுப்புடன் அளவிடுவதற்கான சட்ட கட்டமைப்பை வழங்குகிறது.

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GS Paper 3: Indian Economy

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

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Why energy matters for development

Human development improves as **energy consumption increases**.
Countries with high living standards use **much more energy per person**.

India wants to reach a **Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.9**, similar to developed G-20 nations.

To do this, India will need **massive amounts of energy** — far more than it produces today

How much energy will India need?

To reach HDI 0.9, India needs about **24,000 TWh of energy every year**

Today, India generates only **~1,950 TWh**

About **60% of future energy will be electricity**

The rest will be used to produce **green hydrogen** for industries like:

Steel

Fertilizers

Plastics

So India must **dramatically increase electricity generation.**

Why renewables alone are not enough

Hydro and wind potential is limited

Solar power needs large land areas, which is difficult in a densely populated country

Solar and wind are intermittent (not available all the time)

Large-scale energy storage is **very expensive**

India needs a **reliable base-load power source** — electricity available 24×7.

Why nuclear energy is essential

Nuclear power:

Produces **continuous, reliable electricity**

Is **low-carbon**

Supports **grid stability**

Complements solar and wind

Without nuclear energy, India would have to **continue using fossil fuels**, harming climate goals.

India's preparedness in nuclear technology

India has:

Indigenous technology for **PHWR reactors**

Capability to build **700 MW reactors**

Fuel fabrication, heavy water production, waste management

A functioning nuclear regulator

Experience in safe nuclear operations

Only **uranium is imported**; most of the supply chain is Indian.

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

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What is the SHANTI Bill, 2025?

The **SHANTI Bill**:

Replaces older nuclear laws

Sets a unified legal framework

Strengthens regulatory clarity

Makes the **licensee responsible for safety**

Supports India's target of **100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047**

It shows the government's confidence in India's nuclear capabilities.

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

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Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy

Why is nuclear power considered essential for India's long-term energy security despite the growth of renewable energy sources? Discuss with reference to recent legislative reforms.

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

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India signs trade pact with Oman for duty-free exports

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India and Oman signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) on Thursday, under which Oman will provide India duty-free access to 98.08% of its tariff lines, covering 99.38% of India's exports to Oman.

India, on the other hand, has offered liberalised tariffs on 77.79% of its total tariff lines, covering 94.81% of what India imports from Oman. Apart from tariff removal on merchandise exports, the deal also includes several concessions that are expected to benefit India's service sector, including in terms of mobility of workers.

The deal was signed in Muscat by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, in the presence



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tarik overseeing the signing of the FTA in Muscat on Thursday. PTI

of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

India exported \$4.06 billion worth of merchandise to Oman in 2024-25, which made up 0.93% of India's total exports that financial year. It imported \$6.5 billion worth of goods from Oman, comprising 0.91% of India's total imports.

"The CEPA will infuse the India-Oman partner-

ship in the 21st Century with renewed faith and energy," Mr. Modi said earlier in the day while speaking at the India-Oman Business Forum. "This is a blueprint for our future. It will give our trade new vigour and new trust for investments and will open the doors of new opportunities in every sector."

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 12**

Context

India–Oman CEPA strengthens trade, services, and strategic ties by offering near-total duty-free access to Indian exports and boosting labour mobility in West Asia.

இந்தியா-ஓமன் CEPA, இந்திய ஏற்றுமதிகளுக்கு கிட்டத்தட்ட மொத்த வரி இல்லாத அணுகலை வழங்குவதன் மூலமும், மேற்கு ஆசியாவில் தொழிலாளர் இயக்கத்தை அதிகரிப்பதன் மூலமும் வர்த்தகம், சேவைகள் மற்றும் மூலோபாய உறவுகளை வலுப்படுத்துகிறது..

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Key Features of the Agreement

Oman → India

Duty-free access to **98.08% of tariff lines**

Covers **99.38% of India's exports** to Oman

India → Oman

Liberalised tariffs on **77.79% of tariff lines**

Covers **94.81% of imports** from Oman

Includes **services trade, investment facilitation, and labour mobility**

Benefits Indian professionals (IT, healthcare, engineering, skilled workers)

Significance / Explanation

Makes Indian exports **cheaper and more competitive**

Boosts **services exports and worker mobility**

Supports India amid **global tariff wars and trade uncertainty**

Strengthens India's footprint in **West Asia and Indian Ocean Region**

Enhances supply chain resilience and export diversification

Strategic Importance

Oman's location near **Strait of Hormuz**

Complements India's initiatives like **IMEC (India–Middle East–Europe Corridor)**

Deepens defence, energy, and connectivity cooperation

Mains Practice Questions

GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) offer both opportunities and challenges for the Indian Economy.

The Hindu – Newspaper 19/12/2025

Keystone IAS Academy, Anna Nagar West, Chennai – 40. Mobile : 7305777541 / 9894996777



NCST to investigate murder of tribal boy on university campus

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) on Thursday announced that it would investigate the alleged murder of a minor tribal student by three of his hostel mates at the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, which claims to provide education to nearly 30,000 tribal students on its Bhubaneswar campus.

The NCST has issued notices directing the Home, School and Mass Education, and Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Departments to furnish information on the incident. In addition, the Director General of Police, the Com-

missionerate of Police for Bhubaneswar-Cuttack, and the District Collector of Khordha have been asked to submit details on developments in the case.

“The Commission has decided to investigate/inquire into the matter in pursuance of the powers conferred upon it under Article 338A of the Constitution of India. You are hereby requested to submit the facts and information on the action taken on the said allegations to the Commission within three days of receipt of this notice,” the NCST said in a letter to six offices.

The Odisha Police on Wednesday arrested eight employees of the institute for allegedly suppressing information related to the suspected killing of a Class IX student by hostellers.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) – Prelims Points

Constitutional Body under Article 338A

Formed: 2004 (by 89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003)

Separated from: National Commission for SCs & STs

Composition

Chairperson + Vice-Chairperson + 3 Members

Appointed by the President of India

Tenure: 3 years

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Functions

Safeguards rights of Scheduled Tribes

Investigates complaints related to deprivation of ST rights

Advises Centre & States on ST welfare and development

Monitors implementation of constitutional and legal safeguards

Submits **annual reports** to the President

Powers

Powers of a **civil court** while investigating matters

Can summon persons, require documents, take evidence

Reports

President places report before **Parliament**

Action Taken Reports laid before Parliament & State Legislatures

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Key Focus Areas

Forest rights

Land alienation

Displacement & rehabilitation

Education, health & livelihood of STs

Important Distinction

NCST → Article 338A

NCSC → Article 338

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SC considers passive euthanasia for 31-year-old

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked to meet the parents of a 31-year-old man lying in a comatose condition for 13 years while contemplating their plea for passive euthanasia by withdrawing artificial life support for him.

"It is a very sad report. We cannot keep this boy in this stage," Justice J.B. Pardiwala, accompanied by Justice K.V. Viswanathan, addressed the family's counsel, advocate Rashmi Nandakumar, and Additional Solicitor-General Aishwarya Bhati.

The court's comment came after perusing the report of a secondary medical board, headed by an AI-IMS team of doctors, containing 31-year-old Harish Rana's medical history.

ABOUT

- The practice of an individual deliberately ending their life; to get relief from an incurable condition/intolerable pain

ACTIVE EUTHANASIA

- An active intervention to end a person's life with substances or external force, (e.g. - by a lethal injection)

PASSIVE EUTHANASIA (PE)

- Withdrawing essential life support/treatment keeping a terminally ill person alive

ARGUMENTS FOR

- Patient's freedom of choice
- Right to die with dignity
- More humane to end the suffering
- Shortens the grief of patient's loved ones

ARGUMENTS AGAINST

- Unacceptable from moral, religious perspectives
- Euthanasia cannot be properly regulated
- Guilt-ridden patients may feel bound to give consent

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EUTHANASIA - LEGALITY IN INDIA

P RATHINAM V UNION OF INDIA (1994)

- SC challenged the constitutional validity of IPC Section 309 (penalty for attempt to suicide)

SMT. GIAN KAUR VS THE STATE OF PUNJAB (1996)

- SC overturned its 1994 judgement and held that Right to Life (Article 21) did not include the Right to Die (which must **not be mistaken with Right to Die with Dignity**)

ARUNA RAMCHANDRA SHANBAUG V UNION OF INDIA (2011)

- SC allowed PE for Aruna Shanbaug and made a distinction between 'active' and 'passive', and allowed the latter in "certain situations"

COMMON CAUSE V UNION OF INDIA & ANR. (2018)

- SC legalised Passive Euthanasia claiming it contingent upon the person having a '**living will**'
- If a person does not have a living will, his/her family members can make a plea before the HC to seek permission for PE

Recently, the SC has agreed to significantly ease the procedure for passive euthanasia by altering the existing guidelines for 'living wills' (laid down in 2018 case)