

Daily Current Affairs

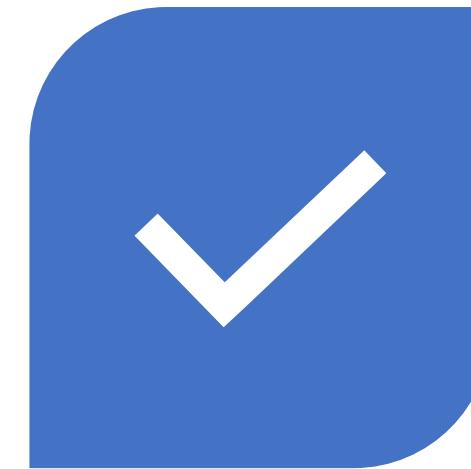




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10 MCQ QUIZ

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hours; you
need fewer
excuses
inside the
same
hours.”**



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India looks to sustain
the momentum
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'Mother of all deals': India and the EU finalise FTA

European wines, luxury cars to become cheaper as two sides conclude trade negotiations that began in 2007

T.C.A. Shepard Baghban
NEW DELHI

After almost two decades of negotiations, India and the European Union (EU) finalised a free trade agreement (FTA) on Tuesday, billed as the "mother of all deals", that will slash EU tariffs on 99.8% of Indian exports to the 27-nation bloc.

India has given tariff concessions on 97.5% of imports from the EU, with European cars and luxury cars set to become less expensive here as a result. Both sides stressed the geopolitical significance of a deal that will reduce the two together account for a third of global trade in the share of uncertainties in the world economy.

India-EU FTA talks were finalised in 2007. Following several hiccups in the partnership would "strengthen stability" at a time when India and the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen have agreed to reduce strategic dependency at a time when global trade is under threat.

"We have delivered the mother of all deals," she said. "Two giants who choose partnership, in a

true win-win. A strong message that cooperation is the best answer to global challenges."

Largest-ever FTA

Noting that it is India's largest-ever FTA, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "This historic agreement will facilitate access to the EU market for our farmers and small industries, create new opportunities in our manufacturing and strengthen cooperation in our services sector."

Both sides, however, made sure to exclude their respective sensitive sectors, such as defence, dairy, cultural and dairy sectors remain protected, while the current tariffs on beef, sugar, rice, chicken meat, milk powder, honey, beer, soft drink and tobacco are retained.

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"We have delivered the mother of all deals," she said. "Two giants who choose partnership, in a

Landmark agreement

After almost two decades of talks, the European Union and India sealed a landmark trade pact, driven by U.S. tariff pressures. The deal aims at doubling exports to India

HOW DOES IT BENEFIT INDIA?
■ Tariffs removed on 97.5% of EU imports from India, with 200-300% quota cut to 400-500%.
■ Tariffs drop from 100% to 5% on 100% of India's exports to the EU.
■ Tariffs eliminated on aircraft, aircraft and precision tools.
■ India has most immediately, and in a phased manner, eliminated 99.8% of its exports to the EU.
■ India has agreed to eliminate 99.8% of its exports to the EU.

HOW DOES IT BENEFIT EU?
■ India has agreed to eliminate 99.8% of its exports to the EU.
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WHAT THE DEAL DOESN'T INCLUDE?

■ No concessions on issues such as textiles, leather, pens, and apparel.
■ No agreement on environmental issues, such as climate change.
■ No agreement on government procurement on energy and environment.
■ No "sustainable development chapter" (repeated by India).
■ Agreement on Geographical Indications (GI) and intellectual property rights.

Bipartisan outreach: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Council President Antonio Costa, on Tuesday in New Delhi.

Then have to be translated and sent to all 27 EU member states, before it can be ratified by the European Parliament. "We do hope that we should be able to celebrate the entry into force of this deal within calendar 2022," the minister said in a statement.

This would provide certain market access, particularly for India's defence and arms and ammunition, and above this, 97.5% of India's exports to the EU will be duty-free. The remaining 2.5% of trade reductions including apparel, poultry products, processed vegetables, dairy products, among others.

Key labour intensive sectors, such as those dealing with 122.67 lakh crore (\$32 billion) of exports that are currently subjected to import duty between 4% to 200% and sports goods, toys, games and jewellery, and certain marine products.

Another 2.5% of India's exports will see duty elimination over three to five years.

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India has agreed to eliminate 99.8% of its exports to the EU. The deal aims at doubling exports to India and steel, pharmaceuticals, and various agricultural products. On services, India has agreed to open up 99.8% of its exports to the EU priorities such as professional, business, telecommunications, financial, and environmental services.

India and the EU have agreed to a few areas such as automotive and defence, but some problems, but that the two sides finally agreed to a quota-based system to both sides. India agreed to allow European cars with a price tag of up to 100,000 to be imported at lower duties of as low as 10%, from the EU, but not the other way around.

India and the EU also reached an understanding on the contentious Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). Ursula von der Leyen, added, "The agreement creates a way for carbon footprint verification and environmental certification. It also specifies that, should the EU grant CBAM to a third country, those concessions would automatically apply to India."

MORE REPORTS ON ■ PAGES 9, 11, 6, 12

Officials say document will undergo a legal scrubbing, translation before ratification by European Parliament

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MORE REPORTS ON ■ PAGES 9, 11, 6, 12

INSIDE



Not normal to abide Pak's use of terror: India

UNITED NATIONS
In a strongly worded report in the United Nations Security Council, India has said that it is not normal to tolerate Pakistan's continued use of terrorism as an instrument of policy. New Delhi hit back at Islamabad's envoy for advancing a "false and misleading narrative" of Operation Sindoor. ■ PAGE 4

Iran wants, says Trump amid naval deployment

PAKISTAN
A U.S. naval strike force was in West Asian waters on Tuesday as tensions between India and Pakistan reached a new high. The two countries are at odds over the disputed Jammu and Kashmir state and President Donald Trump said he believed India had "acted" in a "very responsible" way. The U.S. has not ruled out military intervention against Pakistan, or even its cracked-down protests. ■ PAGE 4

No discrimination under UGC's new equity rules, says Education Minister

Abhishek Lakshman

NEW DELHI
Union Education Minister Abhishek Lakshman on Tuesday sought to allay concerns over the 2026 University Grants Commission (UGC) new regulations promoting equity in higher education institutions, and stressed that the rules discriminate against "general categories".

Speaking to pressersons in Lucknow, Mr. Lakshman said the regulations had been notified under the supervision of the Supreme Court. He said "there will be no discrimination in any category" and that "no one will have the right to mislead the public about the rules of discrimination of discrimination".

His remarks came against reports of protests against the UGC regulations in cities such as Lucknow, New Delhi, and Mumbai, with demonstrations planned in the coming days, and multiple students staged a sit-in at the university's main gate and raised slogans against the new UGC, claiming the new

rules for promoting equity in higher education institutions could lead to caste conflict and disrupt academic autonomy on campuses.

Students hold demonstrations in U.P.

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'Mother of all deals': India and the EU finalise FTA

European wines, luxury cars to become cheaper as two sides conclude trade negotiations that began in 2007

Modi calls it historic pact, while EU chief says the deal will reduce strategic dependency at a time of global upheaval

Officials say document will undergo a legal scrubbing, translation before ratification by European Parliament

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

After almost two decades of negotiation, India and the European Union (EU) finalised a free trade agreement (FTA) on Tuesday, billed as the "mother of all deals", that will see the EU drop tariffs on 99.5% of Indian exports to the 27-nation bloc.

India has given tariff concessions on 97.5% of imports from the EU, with European wines and luxury cars set to become less expensive here as a result.

Beyond the economics, both sides stressed the geopolitical significance of a deal between two economies that together account for a third of global trade in the shadow of uncertainty sparked by the U.S. tariff regime.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that the partnership would "strengthen stability" at a time of global turmoil, while European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said it would reduce strategic dependency at a time when global trade is increasingly fractious.

"We have delivered the mother of all deals," she said. "Two giants who choose partnership, in a

true win-win fashion. A strong message that cooperation is the best answer to global challenges."

'Largest-ever FTA'

Noting that this is India's largest-ever FTA, Mr. Modi said: "This historic agreement will facilitate access to the European market for our farmers and small industries, create new opportunities in manufacturing, and strengthen cooperation in our services sectors."

Both sides, however, made sure to exclude their respective sensitive sectors. India's strategic agricultural and dairy sectors remain protected, while the EU will maintain its current tariffs on beef, sugar, rice, chicken meat, milk powder, honey, bananas, soft wheat, garlic, and ethanol.

India-EU FTA talks were first launched in 2007. Following several hiccups and pauses, they were resumed in 2022 with both sides agreeing to exclude issues on which agreement had been elusive.

According to Commerce Ministry officials, the language in the document will first be cleaned up over the next 10 to 15 days, following which it will undergo "legal scrubbing". It will

Landmark agreement

After almost two decades of talks, the European Union and India sealed a landmark trade pact, driven by U.S. tariff pressures. The deal aims at doubling exports to India



HOW DOES IT BENEFIT EU?

- Tariffs removed or cut on 90% of EU goods
- Wine duties cut from 150% to 20-30%; Spirits cut to 40%
- Car tariffs drop from 110% to 10% (250,000 vehicle quota)
- Tariffs eliminated on Airbus aircraft, and processed food
- 0% tax on most machinery, and pharmaceutical products

HOW DOES IT BENEFIT INDIA?

- Duty-free exports for items such as textiles, leather, gems, and spices
- A duty-free quota of 1.6 million tonnes for steel
- Easier for skilled Indian workers to work in the 27-country bloc
- Dialogue on carbon border tax; India set to be treated like other EU partners
- Phased-out tariffs on arms and ammunition, among other goods

WHAT THE DEAL DOESN'T INCLUDE?

- No concessions on items such as chicken and rice
- No agreement on government procurement on energy and raw materials
- A "sustainable development" chapter (rejected by India)
- Agreement on Geographical Indications

Source: AFT

Diplomatic outreach: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Council President António Costa, on Tuesday in New Delhi. ANI

then have to be translated and sent to all 27 EU member states, before it can be ratified by the European Parliament. "We do hope that we should be able to celebrate the entry into force of this agreement within calendar 2026 itself," said Union Minister Piyush Goyal.

According to the Commerce Ministry, India has gained tariff reductions across 97% of tariff lines, covering 99.5% of trade value. Of this, 90.7% of India's exports will see duties eliminated entirely on the first day of the deal's implementation, including labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, tea, cof-

fee, spices, sports goods, toys, gems and jewellery, and certain marine products, amongst others.

Another 2.9% of India's exports will see duty elimination over three to five years.

This would include certain marine products, processed food items, and arms and ammunition. Over and above this, 6% of India's exports will see tariff reductions including certain poultry products, preserved vegetables, bakery products, amongst others.

Key labour-intensive sectors comprising more than ₹2.87 lakh crore (\$33 billion) of exports that are currently subjected to import duty between 4% to

26% in the EU and are crucial for employment generation, will enter zero duty from entry into force of the FTA and thus gain enhanced competitiveness in the EU market," the Ministry said in a release.

Duty elimination

In particular, of the sectors that India primarily exports to the EU, the following will see duties eliminated entirely: marine products (current duties of up to 26%), chemicals (12.8% currently), plastic and rubber items (6.5%), leather footwear (17%), textiles and apparel (12% each), base metals (10%), gems and jewellery (4%), furniture and allied con-

sumer goods (10.5%), and toys and sports goods (4.7%). On services, the EU has agreed to commitments across 144 services sub sectors, including IT/ ITeS, professional services, education, and other business services.

Overall, India is offering duty elimination and reductions on 92.1% of the tariff lines, which comprises 97.5% of the EU exports to India. Within this, 49.6% of the tariff lines will see an immediate duty elimination once the agreement comes into effect.

Another 39.5% of the tariff lines will be subject to a phased elimination of tariffs over five, seven, and 10 years. An additional 3%

and steel, pharmaceuticals, and various agricultural products. On services, India has agreed to open up 102 sub sectors covering EU priorities such as professional, business, telecommunications, maritime, financial, and environmental services.

It has been learnt that negotiations over a few sectors such as automobiles and wine had caused some problems, but that the two sides finally agreed to quota based systems that were satisfactory to both sides. India agreed to allow European cars with a price tag above ₹25 lakh to be imported at lower duties of as low as 10%, from the current 110%, but subject to a quota.

India and the EU also reached a limited agreement on the contentious Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), Mr. Goyal added. The agreement creates a way for carbon footprint verifiers in India to gain accreditation. It also specifies that, should the EU give concessions under CBAM to a third country, those concessions would automatically apply to India too.

MORE REPORTS ON
» PAGES 5, 11, & 12

- India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) finalised / भारत-EU मुक्त व्यापार समझौता (FTA) अंतिम
 - Talks started in 2007; deal termed a "landmark / mother of all deals" / वार्ता 2007 से; समझौते को "ऐतिहासिक/सबसे बड़ा" बताया गया।
 - Next steps: legal scrubbing + translation + ratification (European Parliament) / अगला चरण: कानूनी जाँच + अनुवाद + यूरोपीय संसद से अनुमोदन।
- Market access & tariff cuts / बाज़ार पहुँच व शुल्क कटौती
 - EU to remove/cut tariffs on ~99.5% of Indian exports / EU भारत के ~99.5% निर्यात पर शुल्क हटाएं/घटाएंगा।
 - India gives tariff concessions on ~97.5% of imports from EU / भारत EU आयात के ~97.5% पर रियायत देगा (इससे EU wines व luxury cars सस्ते हो सकते हैं)।
 - India's Commerce Ministry version: tariff reductions across ~97% tariff lines covering ~99.5% trade value; ~90.7% exports get zero-duty from Day-1, and a small share gets phased elimination / मंत्रालय के अनुसार ~97% टैरिफ लाइनों (\approx 99.5% ट्रेड वैल्यू) में कटौती; ~90.7% निर्यात Day-1 से शून्य-शुल्क, कुछ हिस्से में चरणबद्ध छूट।

- **Sectoral impact (Industry view) / सेक्टर-वाइज असर (इंडस्ट्री दृष्टि)**
 - **Textiles/apparel**: near-zero duty access can expand India's footprint in EU import market /
टेक्सटाइल/रेडीमेड: EU में भारत का शेयर बढ़ने की संभावना।
 - **Auto**: phased tariff reduction can integrate Indian manufacturing into global value chains / ऑटो:
चरणबद्ध कटौती से ग्लोबल वैल्यू-चेन इंटीग्रेशन।
 - **Pharma**: zero/low tariff access strengthens formulations/APIs + MSMEs / फार्मा: फॉर्म्युलेशन/API को
लाभ; MSMEs को सपोर्ट।
 - **IT/Services**: cross-border services + mobility can rise / आईटी/सेवाएँ: प्रोफेशनल सेवाओं का विस्तार।
- **AI + Semiconductors angle (2nd report) / AI + सेमीकंडक्टर एंगल**
 - Deal links EU AI Office with India's National AI Mission for testing, evaluation, audit-style
cooperation / EU AI Office और National AI Mission का लिंक: टेस्टिंग-इवैल्यूएशन/ऑडिट सहयोग।
 - Focus beyond fabs: "heterogeneous integration/advanced packaging"—combining
chips/sensors in one package (high value for AI) / फेब से आगे: हेटेरोजीनस इंटीग्रेशन/एडवांस्ड पैकेजिंग—AI
के लिए हार्ड-वैल्यू हिस्सा।
 - Possible "Brussels effect" in AI rules: EU compliance norms could shape Indian AI products
(export-grade vs domestic divergence risk) / AI रेगुलेशन में "Brussels effect": EU मानक भारतीय AI को
प्रभावित कर सकते हैं (एक्सपोर्ट-ग्रेड बनाम घरेलू डाइवर्जेंस का रिस्क)।

Topic

FTA basics / FTA आधार

Tariff lines vs trade value /
टैरिफ लाइन बनाम ट्रेड वैल्यू

CBAM / कार्बन बॉर्डर टैक्स

GI (Geographical Indications)
/ भौगोलिक संकेतक

Services & mobility / सेवाएँ व
मोबिलिटी

Semicon strategy /
सेमीकंडक्टर रणनीति

Risks / जोखिम

Key facts from news / खबर के मुख्य तथ्य

India-EU FTA aims deep tariff cuts + services access / टैरिफ कटौती + सेवाओं में पहुँच

Figures quoted as % of tariff lines and % of trade value / टैरिफ लाइन्स व ट्रेड वैल्यू दोनों में %

Dialogue on carbon border tax / CBAM पर संवाद

News says GI agreement not included in package / GI समझौता पैकेज में नहीं

Commitments across many services sub-sectors / अनेक सेवा उप-क्षेत्र

Focus on integration + standards alignment / इंटीग्रेशन + मानक

Sensitive sectors excluded; sustainability chapter contested / संवेदनशील सेक्टर बाहर; स्टेनेबिलिटी विवाद

Extra exam points / अतिरिक्त परीक्षा तथ्य

FTA is an exception to WTO MFN when it covers "substantially all trade" (Goods: **GATT Art. XXIV**, Services: **GATS Art. V**) / WTO-MFN का अपवाद: GATT XXIV, GATS VI

"Tariff line" = product category at HS code level; trade value share can be higher even if tariff lines share lower / HS कोड-आधारित कैटेगरी; वैल्यू-शेयर अलग हो सकता है।

EU CBAM: transitional reporting from **Oct 2023**, financial levy from **2026**; goal = prevent carbon leakage / 2023-25 रिपोर्टिंग; 2026 से शुल्क।

GI protection is under WTO **TRIPS**; UPSC has asked GI-Act linked to WTO obligations / GI-TRIPS (WTO) से जुड़ा; UPSC PYQ मौजूद

For Prelims: distinguish Mode-1/2/3/4 (Cross-border, Consumption abroad, Commercial presence, Movement of natural persons) / GATS के 4 modes याद रखें।

"Heterogeneous integration" + conformity assessment/standards can reduce re-certification frictions / स्टैंडर्ड-अलाइनमेंट से कॉस्ट/डिले घटते हैं।

FTAs often raise questions on **data flows, labour, environment, govt procurement, ISDS**—what's in vs out is exam-relevant / डेटा-फ्लो, लेबर, एनवायरनमेंट, प्रोक्योरमेंट, ISDS—फोकस क्षेत्र।

Landmark agreement

After almost two decades of talks, the European Union and India sealed a landmark trade pact, driven by U.S. tariff pressures. The deal aims at doubling exports to India



HOW DOES IT **BENEFIT EU?**

- Tariffs removed or cut on 90% of EU goods
- Wine duties cut from 150% to 20-30%; Spirits cut to 40%
- Car tariffs drop from 110% to 10% (250,000 vehicle quota)
- Tariffs eliminated on Airbus aircraft, and processed food
- 0% tax on most machinery, and pharmaceutical products

HOW DOES IT **BENEFIT INDIA?**

- Duty-free exports for items such as textiles, leather, gems, and spices
- A duty-free quota of 1.6 million tonnes for steel
- Easier for skilled Indian workers to work in the 27-country bloc
- Dialogue on carbon border tax; India set to be treated like other EU partners
- Phased-out tariffs on arms and ammunition, among other goods

WHAT THE DEAL **DOESN'T INCLUDE?**

- No concessions on items such as chicken and rice
- No agreement on government procurement on energy and raw materials
- A "sustainable development" chapter (rejected by India)
- Agreement on Geographical Indications

Source: AFP

Diplomatic outreach: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Council President António Costa, on Tuesday in New Delhi. ANI

CHARTING THE PACT



Goals

- EU targets to double goods exports by 2032; 58% growth in last decade

- EU imports from India to accelerate from 140% growth in last decade



Key gains for India

- Zero tariffs on 90% of Indian merchandise from Day One of FTA and 93% of goods over next 7 years
- On balance 6%, tariff cuts with quotas
- Textiles, plastics, gems & jewellery, leather & footwear, base metals, furniture, toys to attract zero tariff from Day One, down from 4-26% now
- EU's average tariff rate for India to fall from 3.8% now to 0.1% finally
- Commitments on student mobility and post-study visas, concessions for 144 services
- Beef, rice, sugar, dairy and poultry excluded for Indian sensitivities



NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER

India-EU will provide stability to the world order. India-EU cooperation is for global good



Benefits for EU

- Tariffs on most cars to be cut to **30-35%** (from 66-110% at present) at launch of deal and to **10%** in next 5 years; fixed quotas to gradually rise; only cars priced above €15,000 covered

- Zero tariff on 30% of EU goods from Day One; 90% coverage finally

- Higher access for EU firms in financial and maritime services; stronger IPR protection

- Sharp tariff cuts for EU wines, spirits, beer, olive oil, processed foods and some fruits



Areas kept out/not impacted by the deal

- No India-specific exemption from EU's carbon duties
- Duty-free steel imports for India on a par with EU policy



ANTONIO COSTA
EUROPEAN COUNCIL PRESIDENT

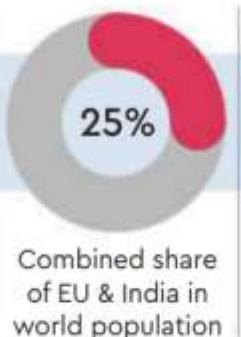
Trade pacts reinforce rules-based economic order and promote shared prosperity. Today's FTA is historic



URSULA VON DER LEYEN
EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT

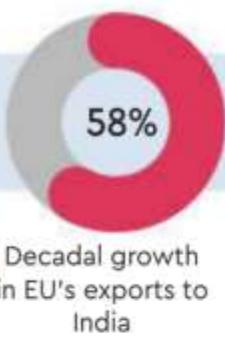
We did it. We delivered the mother of all deals. We are creating a market of two billion people

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

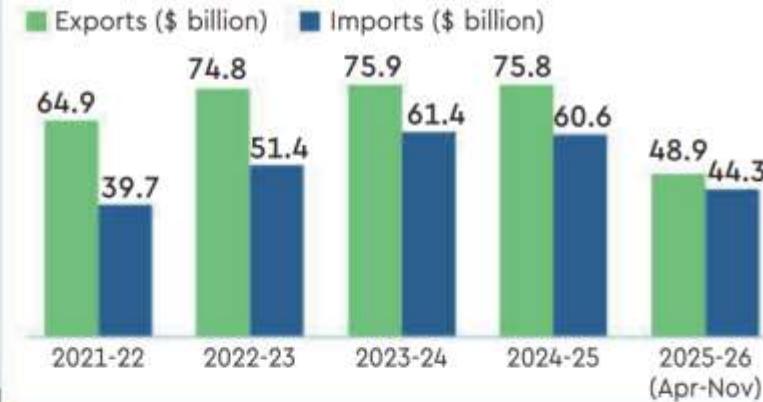


140%

Decadal growth
in EU's imports
from India



INDIA-EU MERCHANTISE TRADE



► Over the last decade, EU-India trade in services more than doubled

TOP TRADED
SERVICES



Telecom, computer
and information
services



Other business services
(professional and
management consultancy)



Transport
services

\$43 bn

Services exports to EU

\$34 bn

Services imports from EU

INVESTMENTS

(between April 2000
and September 2024)

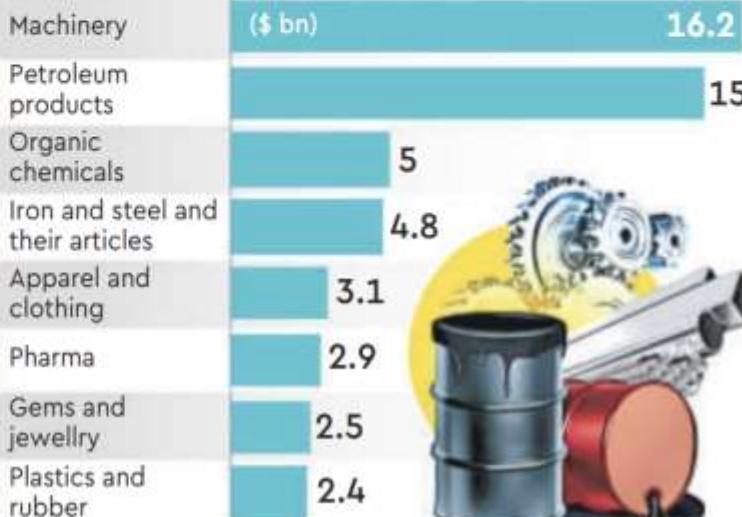
\$40.04 bn

FDI from India in the EU

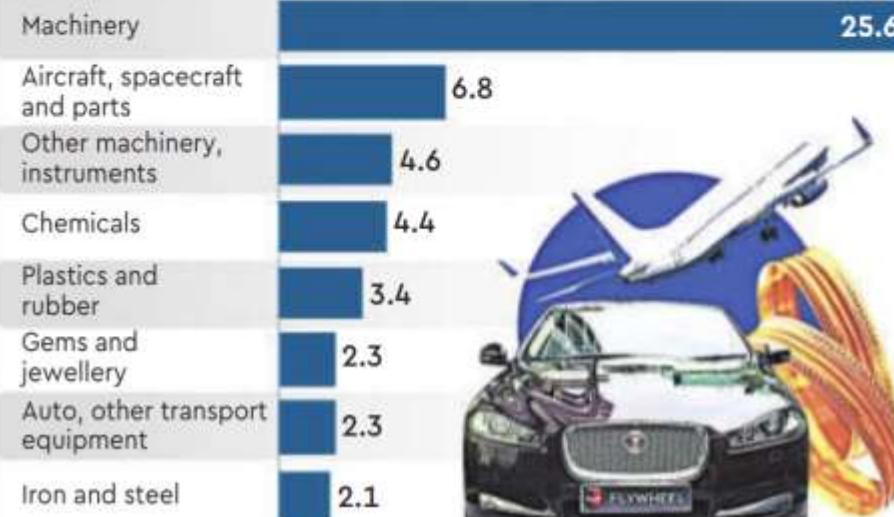
\$117.4 bn

FDI by EU in India

PRODUCT-WISE EXPORTS TO THE EU (2024-25)



IMPORTS FROM EU (2024-25)



Exam (Date)	PYQ (theme/question)	Answer
UPSC CSE Prelims GS-I (03-06-2018) (upsc.gov.in)	GI Act 1999 was enacted to comply with obligations to which organisation? / GI Act 1999 किस संगठन के दायित्व हेतु?	WTO
UPSC CSE Prelims GS-I (18-06-2017) (upsc.gov.in)	WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) statements (ratification, Bali package, entry into force) / TFA पर कथन-आधारित प्रश्न	Correct option: 1 & 2 only
UPSC CSE Prelims (07-08-2016) (upsc.gov.in)	Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) statements (Pacific Rim except China/Russia; maritime security only) / TPP कथन	Neither 1 nor 2
UPSC CDS (I) 2017 GK (05-02-2017) (upsc.gov.in)	MFN clause under WTO is based on which principle? / WTO-MFN किस सिद्धांत पर?	Non-discrimination between nations / प्राकृतिक न्यूनता
UPSC CDS (I) 2024 GK (21-04-2024) (upsc.gov.in)	RCEP: (i) ASEAN + FTA partners, (ii) India opted out / RCEP पर कथन	Both statements correct

No discrimination under UGC's new equity rules, says Education Minister

Abhinav Lakshman

NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday sought to allay concerns over the 2026 University Grants Commission regulations on promoting equity in higher education institutions, amid protests and allegations that the rules discriminate against "general category" students.

Speaking to presspersons in Rajasthan, Mr. Pradhan said the regulations had been notified under the supervision of the Supreme Court. He said "there will be no discrimination" and that "no one will have the right to misuse anything in the name of discrimination".

His remarks came against the backdrop of protests against the UGC regulations in cities such as Lucknow, Indore, and New Delhi, with more demonstrations planned in the coming days, and multiple petitions filed in the Supreme Court challenging the framework.

The new regulations, notified on January 13, define "caste-based discrimination" as discrimination on the basis of caste or tribe against those belonging to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and the Other Backward Classes. The final version drops a provision pro-



Voicing dissent: Students protest against the new UGC rules near Lucknow University on Tuesday. KSL

Students hold demonstrations in U.P.

Mayank Kumar

LUCKNOW

The University Grants Commission (UGC)'s new regulations triggered protests in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday, with a section of students demonstrating

at Lucknow University against the rules, alleging they would affect their studies and future.

The protesting students staged a sit-in at the university's main gate and raised slogans against the UGC, claiming the new

rules for promoting equity in higher education institutions could lead to caste conflict and disrupt social harmony on campuses.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 4

posed in an earlier draft to penalise false complaints.

Critics of the rules have argued that by not recognising students from the "general category" as potential victims of caste-based discrimination, the definition itself is discriminatory. They also flagged the absence of a mechan-

ism to act against complaints believed to be false.

Mr. Pradhan said, "I want to assure everyone that no one will be subject to harassment and there will be no discrimination. No one will have the right to misuse anything in the name of discrimination."

"I assure you that wha-

tever system or arrangement is made in India will be within the framework of the Constitution. No injustice, oppression, or discrimination will be committed against anyone," the Union Minister said.

PLEA IN SC
» PAGE 4

Theme	Key facts (news + policy) / मुख्य तथ्य	Exam linking points / परीक्षा एंगल
Regulation name / नाम	UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026 / UGC “इक्विटी” नियम,	GS2: Social Justice + Education governance; Prelims: UGC as statutory regulator
Institution mechanism / व्यवस्था	Mandatory Equal Opportunity Centre (EOC) + Equity Committee with representation (SC/ST/OBC/women/PwD etc.) / EOC + Equity Committee, प्रतिनिधित्व के साथ	Askable: “Which body must be set up in every HEI?”
Coverage / कवरेज	Final regulations explicitly include OBCs within caste-based discrimination scope / OBCs को scope में शामिल	Prelims trap: “only SC/ST” vs “SC/ST/OBC”
Enforcement / प्रवर्तन	Non-compliance can invite UGC action (grants/recognition related consequences) / पालन न होने पर UGC consequences	Governance: regulator power; accountability & reporting
False complaint penalty / झूठी शिकायत penalty	Draft में false complaint penalty चर्चा थी; final ख़़ाली removed / Draft में था; final ख़़ाली प्रब्लेम	Mains: balancing “protect victims” vs “prevent misuse”
Constitutional frame / संविधान	Minister: rules Constitutional framework के भीतर, discrimination नहीं / संविधान के दायरे में implementation (<u>The Times of India</u>)	Link: Art 14–18 (Equality), Art 15(4)/(5), DPSP Art 46

Aspect	Explanation
Regulation	UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026
Issuing Body	University Grants Commission
Core Issue	Reservation-related discrimination & equity framework in higher education
Nature	Regulatory framework replacing earlier equity/anti-discrimination regulations
Controversy	Alleged dilution of caste-based safeguards and focus shift to “general equity”

Year / Event	Key Development
Pre-2000	Caste discrimination in universities addressed informally
2006	Reservation expanded in Central Educational Institutions
2012	UGC (Promotion of Equity through Equity Cells) Regulations
2019	UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2019
2026	New Regulations notified → replaces 2019 framework
Trend	Shift from explicit caste focus → broader equity language

Objective

Promote Equity

Prevent Discrimination

Inclusive Campus

Grievance Redressal

Compliance

Explanation

Equal access & fair treatment for all students

Address exclusion based on social, economic, gender, disability factors

Safe & inclusive institutional environment

Structured complaint mechanism

Align HEIs with constitutional values

Provision	Details
Equity Cells	Mandatory Equity Cell in every Higher Education Institution
Coverage	Students, faculty, non-teaching staff
Discrimination Grounds	Caste, religion, gender, disability, socio-economic background
Grievance Mechanism	Time-bound inquiry & reporting
Institutional Responsibility	HEIs accountable for inclusive practices
Awareness	Sensitisation & orientation programmes

Concern	Explanation
Dilution Fear	Reduced explicit emphasis on caste-based discrimination
Social Justice	Critics say caste is still the primary axis of exclusion
Ambiguity	Broad terms may weaken enforceability
Student Opposition	Dalit & tribal student groups express concern
Policy Shift	From affirmative justice → neutral equity

Area	Suggestion
Explicit Safeguards	Re-include clear caste-based protections
Monitoring	Independent oversight of Equity Cells
Data	Mandatory reporting on caste-based grievances
Capacity Building	Training of faculty & administrators
Balance	Equity + Social Justice approach

BRUSSELS

'Keep dreaming: Rutte says Europe can't defend itself without the U.S.'



NAATO chief Mark Rutte warned on Monday Europe cannot defend itself without the United States. In the face of calls for a transatlantic alliance to stand on its own feet after terrorist attacks in Paris, "if anyone thinks hero again that the Europe can defend itself without the US — keep on dreaming. You can't," Mr. Rutte told lawmakers. AFP

CAIRO

Hamas seeks role for its police in Gaza ahead of disarmament talks



Hamas is seeking to incorporate its 10,000 police officers into a new U.S.-backed Palestinian administration for Gaza, sources said. The plan to end the west bank's influence in the interior has called for the governance of Gaza to be handed to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, a Palestinian technocratic body. Reuters

MOSCOW

Russia's military chief visits troops in east Ukraine: Defence Ministry



The Russian army's chief of staff, Valery Gerasimov, has visited troops fighting in eastern Ukraine. Russia's defence Ministry said on Wednesday that Gerasimov "inspected the combat missions conducted by formations and units of the Zapad (West) force group." The Ministry wrote on Telegram. AP

PESHAWAR

KPK Assembly to reject Pakistan's decision to join Board of Peace



The provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has unanimously passed a resolution rejecting Pakistan's decision to join the Board of Peace for peace set up by U.S. President Donald Trump. The resolution stated that joining the Board of Peace is contrary to Pakistan's historic and principled stance. EPA

Trump says Iran wants talks as U.S. strike group arrives in West Asia

President states the US has a 'big armada' near Iran, larger than the one used against Venezuela. US intelligence reports say Iran govt's position is weakening. Senator Lindsey Graham urges Republican President to end Iranian regime after talks

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
PARIS

A US naval strike force led by an aircraft carrier was in West Asian waters on Tuesday, days after Iran's move back against any strike and President Donald Trump and his team believe the Iranian regime is still willing to negotiate.

Washington has not ruled out new military intervention against Tehran over its crackdown on protesters and its move to rights groups say thousands of people killed with in a week.

A strike group led by the USS Abraham Lincoln has now arrived in West Asian



Locked and loaded: A strike group led by the USS Abraham Lincoln has arrived in West Asian waters, says US Central Command

waters, US Central Command said, without revealing specific location.

Iran's strike group this month launched the crackdown on protests accompanied by a blanket inter-

net blackout. Mr. Trump has given mixed signals on intervention, which he has said is the best way for the Iranian leadership see as the only way to bring about change.

"We have a big armada

next to Iran. Bigger than Venezuela," Mr. Trump told the Asia news site, weeks after U.S. military commander of the Latin American nation's President Nicolas Maduro.

But he added: "They want to make a deal. I think they are open to negotiations on numerous occasions. They want to talk."

After a deal, Mr. Trump does not discuss options presented to him by his national security team, or the US Central Command.

Analysts say options include strikes on military facilities, targets that analysts say against the leadership under Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a full-scale bid to bring down the system that has ruled Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution that ousted the shah.

The New York Times, meanwhile, reported that Mr. Trump has received intelligence reports "indicating that the Iranian government's position is that they will not withdraw from their hold on power 'at its weakest point' since the shah's fall."

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Trump to hike tariffs on South Korea goods to 25%

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
REUSS

South Korea's government on Tuesday field emergency measures to combat Donald Trump and he will raise tariffs on South Korean goods, including automotive and pharmaceuticals.

Mr. Trump said on Monday he would increase tariffs on the goods, accusing South Korea of not living up to its obligations in a pact struck with Washington.

South Korea's presidential office said it had not been informed of the move, which it termed "preemptive."

On Tuesday, Seoul convened a meeting to discuss ways to hush up a response.

"South Korea's Legislati-

on

on its Truth Social platform

announced that he was increasing tariff rates "because the Korean Legislature hasn't enacted our Free Trade Agreement."

South Korea's president

office said it had not been informed of the move, which it termed "preemptive."

"Our government in-

tends to convey its commitment to implementing the deal in a manner to the U.S. side, while responding in a calm and measured manner," Seoul said in a statement.

The country added it believed Washington's "tariff hike" was a "political or administrative step such as publication in the Federal Register."

South Korea has said Trade Minister Kim will travel to the United States to talk on the issue with U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Luria.

Trump's apparent

about-face comes months

after Washington and Seo-

lul agreed to a security deal, capping a period of tense negotiations.

The deal, signed in

in Seoul

last month, came

soon after Trump met his

South Korean counterpart

Lee Jae Myung in October.

TikTok settles social media addiction suit before trial

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

Video sharing app TikTok has made an eleventh-hour deal to avoid a landmark U.S. trial over claims it has lured millions of users to the app by addicting young people to social media.



The deal was made at jury selection was to begin in Los Angeles court.

Parties behind the suit — co-founders and CEO Jack Ma and Mark Zuckerberg — agreed to settle the case.

"The parties are pleased to have reached an amicable resolution to this dispute," the Social Justice Center said, noting that the terms of the settlement with TikTok are confidential.

The case focuses on allegations that a 19-year-old

user of the app was Alpha

bet and Meta, the tech

company behind

Facebook and Instagram.

Facebook and Meta have agreed to pay \$500 million to settle the case.

The case was filed in California state court in 2013, and the trial is set to begin in April.

The remaining defendants in the suit are Alpha

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The case was filed

Doomsday Clock: 85 seconds to midnight

Vasudevan Mukunth

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has moved the hands of the Doomsday Clock to 85 seconds to midnight, the closest the world has ever been to global catastrophe in its estimation. The announcement, on January 27 in Washington DC, reflects a darkening security landscape marked by eroding nuclear norms, escalating conflicts in Europe and Asia, climate and biological risks, and a fracturing international order.

The new setting moves the clock forward from its previous position of 89 seconds to midnight from a year ago.

“Last year, we warned that the world was perilously close to catastrophe and that countries needed to change course towards international cooperation and actions on the most critical existential risks,” SSB Chair and University of Chicago professor Daniel Holz said. “Unfortunately, the opposite has happened.”

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists was founded in 1945 by University of Chicago scientists who had helped develop the first atomic weapons in the Manhattan Project. The Doomsday Clock was created two years later, in 1947, as a metaphor for the



The Doomsday Clock

likelihood of a human-made global catastrophe.

The Bulletin’s foremost concern seems to be nuclear weapons. Recent rhetoric from the Trump administration regarding the potential resumption of nuclear testing and the modernisation of atomic stockpiles is already destabilising decades of deterrence strategy, fuelling an-

xiety among both allies and adversaries.

“The last remaining treaty governing nuclear weapon stockpiles between the U.S. and Russia expires next week. For the first time in over half a century, there will be nothing preventing a runaway nuclear arms race,” Mr. Holz said.

He also cited the worsening consequences of climate change, AI’s effects on mis- and dis-information, and what he called the “rise of nationalistic autocracies” – referring to the recent events in Minnesota – to support the Clock being less than a minute and half from midnight.

- What happened / क्या हुआ?

- The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved the Doomsday Clock to 85 seconds to midnight (closest ever). / Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists ने Doomsday Clock को midnight से 85 seconds पर सेट किया (अब तक सबसे नज़दीक)। Reuters
- Announcement was made on Jan 27 (Washington, DC). / घोषणा 27 जनवरी (वॉशिंगटन DC) में हुई। Reuters

- Why was it moved / आगे क्यों बढ़ाया?

- A worsening global security landscape: eroding nuclear norms + conflicts + fractured international cooperation. / वैश्विक सुरक्षा हालात बिगड़ना: न्यूक्लियर norms कमज़ोर + संघर्ष + अंतरराष्ट्रीय सहयोग में गिरावट। Reuters
- Major drivers highlighted: nuclear weapons risk, climate change, biological risks, and AI misuse (mis/disinformation, warfare). / मुख्य कारण: परमाणु जोखिम, जलवायु परिवर्तन, जैविक जोखिम, और AI का दुरुपयोग (mis/disinformation, warfare)। Reuters +1

- Nuclear angle / परमाणु एंगल

- Concern over nuclear rhetoric and potential return to nuclear testing; modernization of arsenals raises arms-race anxiety. / न्यूक्लियर टेस्टिंग की वापसी की आशंका; arsenals के आधुनिकीकरण से arms-race का डर। Reuters +1
- The report flags weak/expiring arms-control guardrails. / arms-control "गाइरेल्स" कमज़ोर/समाप्ति की ओर। Reuters +1

Theme	Key facts / मुख्य तथ्य	Extra exam points / अतिरिक्त परीक्षा तथ्य
Midnight meaning / “Midnight” अर्थ	Midnight = global catastrophe metaphor / midnight = वैश्विक तबाही का प्रतीक	Not a prediction tool; a risk-communication device / prediction नहीं, awareness tool
Who sets it / कौन सेट करता है	Bulletin + expert board moves it annually / विशेषज्ञ बोर्ड तय करता है	Factors now include nuclear + climate + bio + tech/AI (The Washington Post)
CTBT / परमाणु परीक्षण रोक	CTBT bans all nuclear test explosions ; opened for signature 1996 / CTBT सभी nuclear test explosions पर रोक; 1996 (ctbto.org)	CTBT not in force until key ratifications (Annex-2 states) / प्रमुख ratification के बिना effective नहीं (armscontrol.org)
NPT / अप्रसार संधि	NPT aims non-proliferation + peaceful use + disarmament; 5 NWS recognized / NPT के 3 pillars; 5 NWS मान्यता (Reuters)	Review Conferences every 5 years; next due 2026 / 5-year review cycle (Reuters)
New START / US–Russia arms control	Widely described as last remaining US–Russia strategic arms control treaty ; signed 2010, in force 2011 / प्रमुख US–Russia treaty (Due to expire in 2026 unless extended / 2026 में expiry (अगर extend न हो)
AI risk / AI जोखिम	Mentioned: misinformation + warfare uses + weak governance / misinfo + warfare + governance gap (Reuters)	UPSC angle: AI ethics, deepfakes, election integrity, critical infra

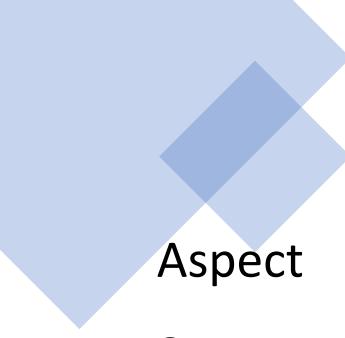


Statement-based

Doomsday Clock is a symbolic indicator of human-made global catastrophe risk. /
Doomsday Clock मानव-निर्मित वैश्विक तबाही के जोखिम का प्रतीक है।

It is set by the United Nations annually. / इसे संयुक्त राष्ट्र हर साल सेट करता है।
(a) 1 only / केवल 1 (b) 2 only / केवल 2 (c) Both / दोनों (d) Neither / कोई नहीं

Uttarakhand Uniform Civil
Code (Amendment)
Ordinance, 2026



Aspect

State

Topic

Current Context

Date of Ordinance

Enforced From

Original UCC Enforcement

One-Year Milestone



Key Points for Exam

Uttarakhand

Uniform Civil Code (UCC) – Amendment Ordinance, 2026

Uttarakhand implemented the **Uniform Civil Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026**, marking **one year of UCC enforcement** in the state

January 2026

Immediate effect upon Governor's approval

January 27, 2025

January 27, 2026 observed as "**UCC Day**" in Uttarakhand

Dimension	Details
Concept of UCC	A common set of civil laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, and succession for all citizens irrespective of religion
Constitutional Provision	Article 44 (Directive Principles of State Policy) – State shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code
Nature of Article 44	Non-justiciable but fundamental in governance
Debate Since	Constituent Assembly debates (1946–49)
Key View	Balance between individual rights, gender justice, and secularism

Case / Event

Shah Bano Case (1985)

Sarla Mudgal Case (1995)

John Vallamattom Case (2003)

Recent Trend

Key Observation

Highlighted need for uniform civil laws for gender justice

SC emphasized UCC to prevent misuse of personal laws

UCC linked with equality before law

Courts reiterating UCC as a **reformative constitutional goal**

Aspect	Explanation
Type of Law	Ordinance (Temporary law with immediate effect)
Constitutional Article Used	Article 213 – Governor's power to promulgate Ordinances
Authority	Promulgated after Governor's approval
Reason for Ordinance	To refine and strengthen implementation of UCC Act, 2024

Objective

Streamlining Procedures

Administrative Efficiency

Transparency

Penalty Alignment

Effective Enforcement

Explanation

Simplifies registration and compliance mechanisms

Reduces bureaucratic delays

Clearer procedures and accountability

Aligns penalties with **new criminal laws** (BNS, BNSS, BSA)

Removes operational gaps observed in first year

Dimension

First Indian State

Policy Experiment

Gender Justice

Secular Governance

Federal Implications

Importance

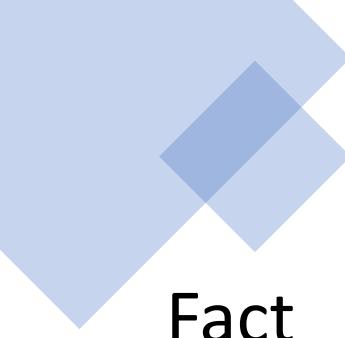
Uttarakhand is the **first state to fully implement UCC**

Acts as a **model for other states**

Promotes equality in personal laws

Strengthens constitutional secularism

Raises debate on Centre vs State role in UCC



Fact

UCC Ordinance Power



Value

Article 213

UCC Mentioned In

Article 44

First State with UCC

Uttarakhand

UCC Act Year

2024

UCC Enforcement

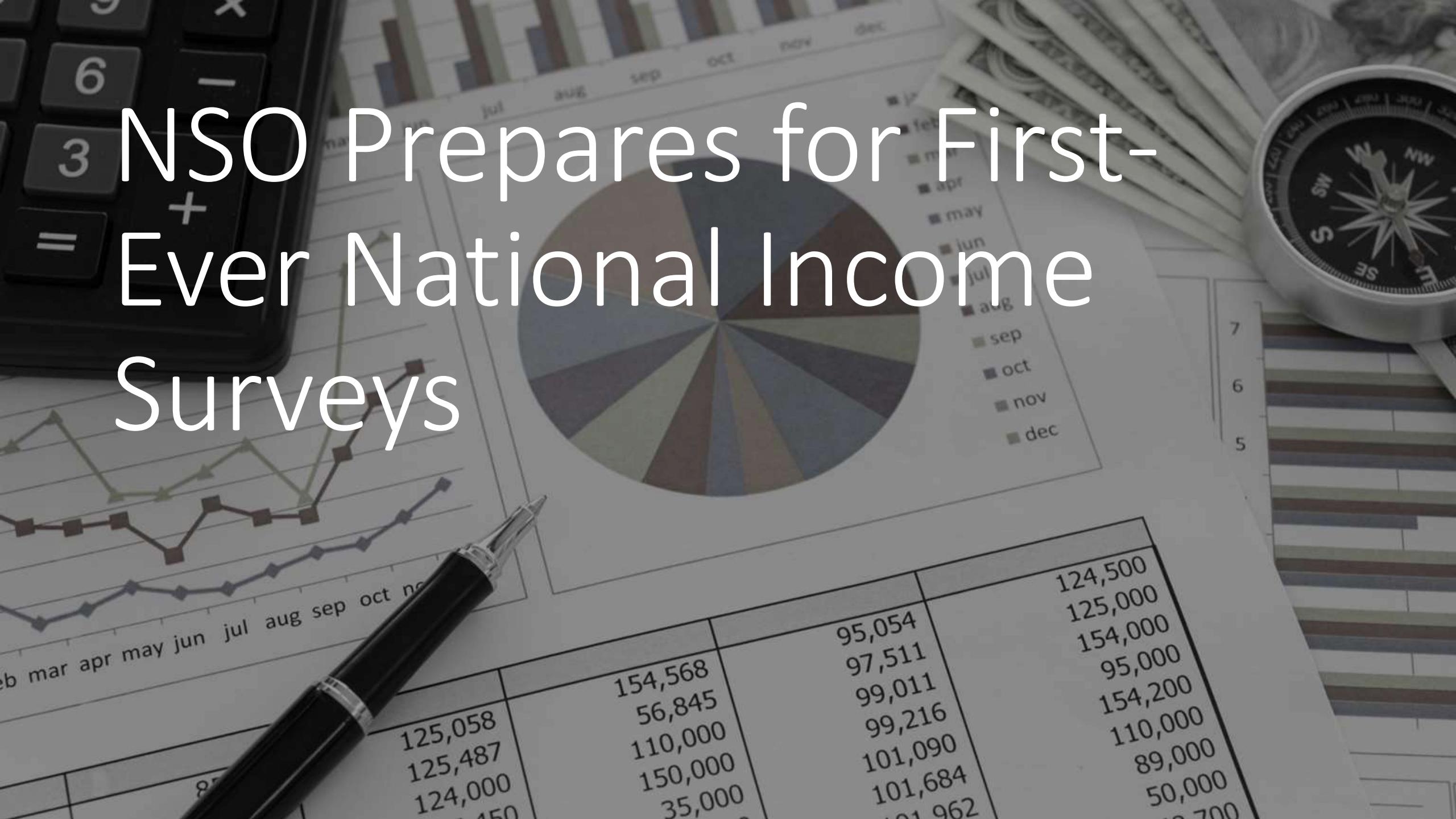
January 27, 2025

UCC Day

January 27, 2026



NSO Prepares for First-Ever National Income Surveys



Aspect	Details
Implementing Agency	National Statistics Office
Ministry	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
Current Context	NSO preparing for two landmark national surveys to fill long-standing data gaps
Date in News	January 28, 2026
Nature of Initiative	First-ever direct national income measurement surveys
Mode of Data Collection	Fully digital
Fieldwork Start	April 2026

Dimension

Data Gap

Existing Proxies

Policy Limitation

International Practice

Explanation

India lacks **direct, comprehensive household income data**

Consumption (CES), employment (PLFS), savings/investment

Inadequate income data affects **targeting, inequality analysis, and welfare design**

Many countries run **regular income surveys**

Aspect

Pre-Independence

Post-Independence

NSSO Surveys

Expert Committees

Milestone

Status

Fragmented income estimates

Focus on **National Accounts Statistics (GDP)**

Consumption & employment, **not direct income**

Repeated recommendations for **income surveys**

NHIS becomes **first pan-India household income survey**



Survey

**National Household
Income Survey (NHIS)**

**Annual Survey of
Incorporated Service
Sector Enterprises
(ASISSE)**

Description

First-of-its-kind pan-India
survey on **household
income distribution &
living conditions**

Focus on **corporate
services sector income &
performance**

Objective

Income Distribution

Inequality Measurement

Living Conditions

Policy Support

Data Integration

Explanation

Capture **income across classes & regions**

Better estimation of **income inequality**

Link income with **housing, education, health**

Evidence-based **welfare & fiscal policy**

Complement GDP, CES, PLFS data

Area	Importance
Welfare Targeting	More accurate beneficiary identification
Fiscal Policy	Better tax & subsidy design
Inequality Debate	Reliable evidence on income disparities
Economic Analysis	Improves macro & micro-level insights
Global Comparability	Aligns India with international statistical standards

National Awards for Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS)



Aspect

Initiative Name

Current Context

Date

Venue

Lead Ministry

Other Participating Ministries

Nature of Event

Details

Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS)

National Award Ceremony to honour MYGS winners

28 January 2026

New Delhi

Ministry of Panchayati Raj

Ministry of Education (School Education & Literacy), Ministry of Tribal Affairs

National-level recognition of youth engagement in grassroots democracy

Dimension

Democratic Need

Educational Gap

Governance Vision

Policy Focus

Explanation

Low youth participation in **local self-governance**

Civics often remains **theoretical**

Build **future-ready, participative citizens**

Experiential learning + democratic values

Aspect

Gram Sabha

Constitutional Basis

Panchayati Raj

Youth Engagement

Details

Foundation of local democracy

Article 243A – Powers & functions of Gram Sabha

73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992

MYGS bridges education + constitutional practice



Component

Nature

Participants

Method

Learning Outcome

Description

Simulated Gram Sabha & Gram Panchayat proceedings

School students

Role-play, debates, resolutions, decision-making

Practical understanding of **local governance**

Parameter	Data
Total Student Participation	28,000+
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas	619
Eklavya Model Residential Schools	200
Geographic Coverage	Pan-India
Nature of Activities	Simulated Gram Sabha proceedings



International Data Privacy Day

Aspect

Details

Observed On

28 January (annually)

Also Known As

Data Protection Day

Purpose

To promote **awareness about personal data protection** and digital trust

Global Context

Rising digitisation, data-driven governance, cyber risks

Dimension	Key Points
Origin	Linked to Convention 108
Year of Convention	1981 (entered into force later; anniversary observed from 2006)
First Observed As Day	28 January
Significance	Marks the world's first legally binding international treaty on data protection
Adopted By	Council of Europe

Aspect	Details
Full Name	Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data
Nature	Legally binding international treaty
Scope	Protection of individuals' personal data
Importance	Foundation of modern data protection laws globally
Upgraded Version	Convention 108+ (to address digital age challenges)

Dimension

Fundamental Right

Landmark Case

Constitutional Basis

Digital Governance

Key Points

Right to Privacy recognised by Supreme Court

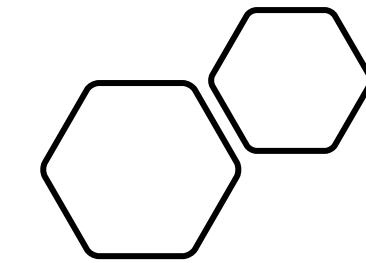
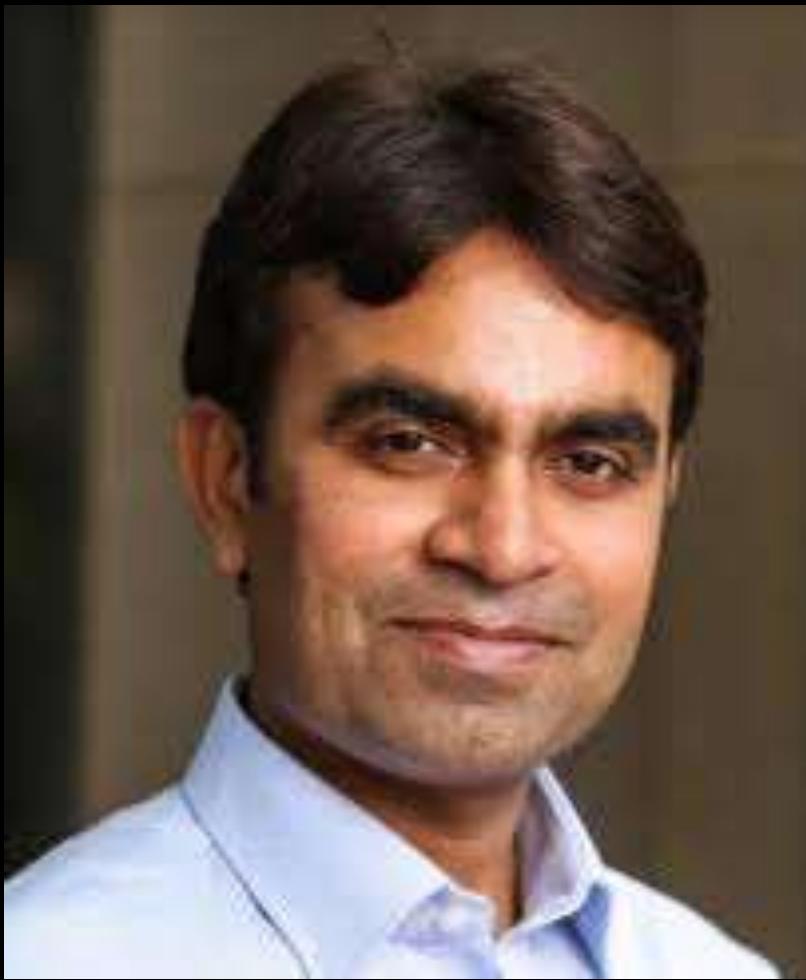
Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)

Article 21 (Right to Life & Personal Liberty)

Privacy as core of India's digital ecosystem



“Chandrakant Lahariya
wins Wiley Research
Heroes Prize”,





Aspect

Awardee

Award

Category

Date in News

Global Standing

Selection Pool

Total Awardees (2025)

Details

Chandrakant Lahariya

Wiley Research Heroes Prize 2025

Impact Beyond Academia

28 January 2026

First Indian to receive this prize

2,000+ global nominations

5 researchers worldwide

Dimension

Awarding Body

Purpose

Focus Area

Importance

Key Points

Wiley

Recognises researchers whose work creates **real-world policy & societal impact**

Translating research into **actionable policy outcomes**

Bridges gap between **academia and governance**

Professional Background of Chandrakant Lahariya

Dimension	Details
Field	Public Health & Health Policy
Roles	Researcher, academician, medical professional
International Experience	Formerly associated with World Health Organization
Core Expertise	Universal health coverage, immunisation, health systems
Work Nature	Evidence-based policy design & implementation

Nature of His Research Impact

Area	Contribution
Health Policy	Influenced national & sub-national health strategies
Programme Design	Evidence-led improvements in public health delivery
Governance	Strengthened accountability & outcome-based planning
Society	Improved health outcomes beyond academic circles

France Bans Social
Media for Children
Under 15

Aspect	Details
Country	France
Issue	Ban on social media access for children below 15 years
Date in News	28 January 2026
Nature of Step	Legislative
Target Group	Users under 15 years of age
Key Concern	Screen addiction, mental health, algorithmic harm

Aspect	Details
Lower House	National Assembly
Voting Outcome	130 votes in favour, 21 against
Current Status	Sent to French Senate for approval
Implementation Timeline	From start of 2026 school year
Initial Coverage	New user accounts first

Dimension	Explanation
Mental Health	Rising anxiety, depression, attention disorders among minors
Screen Addiction	Excessive screen time linked to behavioural issues
Algorithmic Influence	Content amplification affecting child psychology
Public Debate	Growing concern across Europe
Digital Regulation Trend	Shift from self-regulation to state intervention

Country / Region	Approach
France	Full ban for under-15s
EU (General)	GDPR age of consent: 13–16 (state choice)
India	Advisory & parental consent model
USA	COPPA (under-13 protection)

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+CURRENT AFFAIRS
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LIMITED TIME OFFER: 26th and 27th January

FOR: UPSC, STATE PCS, SSC, BANKING, RAILWAY, DEFENCE



INSTITUTE

Word of the day

Schmooze:

an informal conversation; talk idly or casually and in a friendly way

Synonyms: chat, confabulation

Usage: *We had a wonderful schmooze about the old days.*

Pronunciation:

newsth.live/schmoozepro

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /ʃmu:z/

Word of the day

Clament:

conspicuously and offensively loud; given to vehement outcry; demanding attention

Synonyms: crying, exigent, insistent, blatant, clamorous, strident, vociferous

Usage: *There is a clamant public demand for a new law to protect stray dogs.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/clamentpro

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /'klæmənt/, /'kleɪmənt/



Thank you ☺

