The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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In a significant boost to the **India–U.K. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**, India has signed a **£350 million defence deal** with the United Kingdom for the purchase of **Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM)** for the Indian Army.

The agreement coincides with the visit of **U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer** to India, marking a renewed phase in **bilateral defence, economic, and educational cooperation** under the recently concluded **India–U.K. Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**.

Additionally, the two nations signed a **£250 million collaboration** for developing **electric-powered engines for naval ships**, highlighting a shift toward **green defence technologies** and self-reliance.

India will buy U.K. missiles for £350 mn

■ The U.K. govt. says as many as 64 Indian firms have committed to invest £1.3 billion in Britain

■ Modi and Keir Starmer agree on a £250-million deal on electric-powered engines for Naval ships

■ The Universities of Lancaster and Surrey receive approval to open campuses in India

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India has signed a £350-million defence deal with the U.K. to buy missiles for the Indian army, the British government said on Thursday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his U.K. counterpart, Keir Starmer, also agreed to take forward their collaboration on electric-powered engines for Naval ships, worth an initial £250 million.

In a separate release, the U.K. government said 64 Indian companies had so far committed to invest £1.3 billion (or ₹15,430 crore) in the U.K., a sign of the growing business confidence boosted by the India-U.K. trade deal.

U.K. varsities in India
The Indian government has not shared similar data on investment commit-

ments by U.K. companies in India.

However, the U.K. government also said that the University of Lancaster and the University of Surrey had been given approval to open campuses in India to help meet booming demand from Indian students.

The missile deal paves the way for a "broader complex weapons partnership" between the U.K. and India, which is currently under negotiation between the two governments, the U.K. government said in its statement.

"The contract is set to deliver U.K.-manufactured Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM) built in Belfast to the Indian Army, delivering on the Government's Plan for Change in another significant boost for the U.K. defence industry," it said.

"A new milestone has al-

so been reached in the U.K. and India's cooperation on electric-powered engines for naval ships as both countries signed the Implementing Arrangement to advance collaboration to the next stage, worth an initial £250 million," it added.

"Nearly 7,000 brand new jobs will be created in the United Kingdom thanks to a raft of major new deals secured by the Prime Minister during his visit to India this week," the U.K. government said. "As a result, Indian investment will flow into a range

of U.K. sectors including engineering, technology and the creative industries, driving growth and creating jobs across every region of the country - from Basingstoke to Birmingham," it added.

Among the major investment announcements are

'India-U.K. ties an important pillar of global stability'

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI
Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who welcomed his U.K. counterpart Keir Starmer on Thursday, said the India-U.K. partnership was an "important pillar of global stability" in the current turbulent global scenario. Both the Prime Ministers also gave a joint call for a "two-state solution" to end the Israel-Palestine conflict. » PAGE 4

TVS Motor's plan to invest £250 million in Solihull to expand its Norton Motorcycles operations and develop next-generation electric vehicles.

"Engineering company Cyient is investing £100 million to boost innovation in semiconductors, geos-

patial tech, mobility, clean energy, and digital domains – creating 300 U.K. jobs and strengthening its long-standing presence in the country," the release said.

Muthoot Finance UK Limited, a part of the Muthoot Group, plans to invest £100 million to expand its branch network to 20 locations in the U.K. Hero Motors plans to invest £100 million in the U.K. over the next five years in its e-mobility, e-bicycles and aerospace divisions.

The Hindu has reached out to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for details on investment announcements by U.K. companies in India.

On the first day of Mr. Starmer's visit to India, Rolls-Royce CEO Tufan Erginbilgic said that his company has "deep ambitions to develop India as a home for Rolls-Royce".

Building cooperation: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer at the Raj Bhavan in Mumbai on Thursday. PTI

Key Highlights of the Visit and Agreements

1. Defence Cooperation

- **Missile Deal:**
    - Worth **£350 million (approx. ₹3,700 crore)**.
    - India to procure **Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM)** from the U.K., manufactured in Belfast.
    - Part of a larger **"Complex Weapons Partnership"** under negotiation to deepen joint defence R&D and production.
- **Naval Electric Engines:**
    - **£250 million agreement** for electric-powered ship engines under an **Implementing Arrangement**.
    - Promotes green naval technology and sustainable maritime defence cooperation.

2. Trade and Investment

- **Indian investments in the U.K.:**
    - 64 Indian firms to invest **£1.3 billion (~₹15,430 crore)**.
    - Expected to create **7,000 jobs** in the U.K. across engineering, clean energy, tech, and creative sectors.

    Major Announcements:

    - **TVS Motor** – £250 million for EVs & Norton Motorcycles in Solihull.
    - **Cyient** – £100 million for innovation in semiconductors, clean energy, and mobility.
    - **Muthoot Finance UK Ltd.** – £100 million to expand branches.
    - **Hero Motors** – £100 million for e-mobility and aerospace expansion.
- **U.K. Universities in India:**
    - **Lancaster University** and **University of Surrey** approved to open campuses in India — a major step under India's **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** promoting foreign universities' entry.

Static and Current Linkages

Static Topic	Current Relevance
India–U.K. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2021)	Framework for cooperation in defence, trade, climate, education & innovation.
Defence Industrial Corridors	Joint production of LMM and naval engines can strengthen India's indigenous capabilities under **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.
Defence Procurement Policy (DPP) 2020	Promotes foreign collaboration and technology transfer to Indian firms.
Green Defence Technologies	Electric propulsion aligns with **sustainable maritime goals** and **blue**

Static Topic	Current Relevance
	economy vision.
National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Allows top global universities to set up campuses in India.

Analytical Perspective

1. Strengthening Defence Ties

- Expands the India–U.K. security relationship beyond dialogue to **joint development and co-production**.
- Enhances **strategic interoperability** and supports India's **defence modernization**.
- Contributes to **supply chain diversification** amid global geopolitical realignments.

2. Boost to Economic Diplomacy

- Reflects **two-way investment flows**, not just trade.
- Reinforces the **India–U.K. FTA** as a platform for **mutual growth and job creation**.
- Encourages collaboration in **semiconductors, clean energy, EVs, and fintech** — key sectors of India's 2047 vision.

3. Education and Soft Power

- Opening of U.K. university campuses deepens **knowledge exchange and people-to-people ties**.
- Supports India's aspiration to become a **global education hub**.

Strategic Implications

- Strengthens **India's defence self-reliance** through co-development rather than pure import.
- Reinforces India's **maritime capabilities** in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Aligns with the **U.K.'s Indo-Pacific Tilt** policy and India's **Act East** and **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative**.

Challenges Ahead

- Ensuring **technology transfer and local manufacturing** under "Make in India."
- Balancing strategic partnerships with other defence suppliers (U.S., France, Russia).
- Monitoring **trade balance** since data on U.K. investments in India remains unclear.
- Managing **visa and mobility issues**, which remain outside the FTA framework.

Conclusion

The £350-million missile deal and £250-million naval engine collaboration mark a **new chapter in India–U.K. strategic relations**, expanding cooperation from trade and education to high-tech defence and sustainability. Together with the India–U.K. FTA, these developments embody a **modern partnership of trust, technology, and trade**, crucial for both nations' shared vision of a **secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific** and **Viksit Bharat @2047**.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: With reference to India–U.K. cooperation in naval technology, consider the following statements:

1. Both countries agreed to collaborate on electric-powered engines for naval ships.

2. The agreement is valued at an initial £250 million.

3. This initiative is part of the "One Sun One World One Grid" global energy framework.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: The recent defence and trade agreements between India and the U.K. reflect a maturing strategic partnership." Discuss the significance of these developments in the context of India's defence self-reliance and economic diplomacy. **(250 Words)**

Page 01 :Prelims

The **2025 Nobel Prize in Literature** was awarded to **LászlóKrasznahorkai**, a Hungarian novelist celebrated for his **visionary, philosophical, and stylistically complex writings**. The Swedish Academy honoured him for his "compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art."

His recognition reinforces literature's enduring ability to explore chaos, despair, and hope through art, especially from the post-communist and Central European experience.

László Krasznahorkai wins Nobel Prize in literature

Associated Press
STOCKHOLM

Hungarian writer László Krasznahorkai, whose philosophical, bleakly funny novels often unfold in single sentences, won the Nobel Prize in literature on Thursday for his "compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art".

The Nobel judges praised his "artistic gaze which is entirely free of illusion, and which sees through the fragility of the social order combined with his unwavering belief in the power of art," Steve Sem-Sandberg of the Nobel committee said at the announcement.

"László Krasznahorkai is a great epic writer in the Central European tradition that extends through [Franz] Kafka to Thomas Bernhard, and is characterised by absurdism and grotesque excess," the Nobel judges said.

Several works, including his debut, *Satantango*, and *The Melancholy of Resistance* were turned into films by Hungarian director Béla Tarr.

Mr. Krasznahorkai, 71, could not immediately be reached for his reaction. He did not speak at the announcement.

He was born in the southeastern Hungarian city of Gyula, near the border with Romania.

Political critic
Throughout the 1970s, he studied law at universities in Szeged and Budapest before shifting his focus to literature.

Mr. Krasznahorkai has been a vocal critic of autocratic Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, especially his government's lack of support for Ukraine after the Russian invasion.

But in a post on Facebook, Mr. Orbán was quick to congratulate the writer, saying: "The pride of Hungary, the first Nobel Prize winner from Gyula, László Krasznahorkai. Congratulations!"

In an interview with Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* earlier this year, Mr. Krasznahorkai expressed criticism both of Mr. Orbán's political system and the nationalism present in Hungarian society. "There is no hope left in Hungary today and it is not only because of the Orbán regime," he told the paper. "The problem is not only political, but also social." He also reflected on the fact that he has long been a contender for the Nobel Prize in literature, saying: "I don't want to lie. It would be very interesting to get that prize. But I would be very surprised if I got it."

The Booker judges praised his "extraordinary sentences, sentences of incredible length that go to incredible lengths, their tone switching from solemn to madcap to quizzical to desolate as they go their wayward way."

He also won the National Book Award for Translated Literature in the U.S. in 2019 for *Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming*.

László Krasznahorkai, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature; and some of his books on display in Stockholm. FILE PHOTOS

About the Laureate

- **Name:** LászlóKrasznahorkai
- **Nationality:** Hungarian
- **Born:** 1954, Gyula (near the Romania border)
- **Education:** Studied law at the Universities of Szeged and Budapest before turning to literature.
- **Notable Works:**
  - Satantango (1985)
  - The Melancholy of Resistance (1989)
  - Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming (2016)
  - War and War (1999)

Several of these novels were adapted into films by renowned Hungarian filmmaker BélaTarr**.**

Writing Style and Themes

- **Distinctive Style:**
  - Known for extraordinarily long sentences, sometimes extending over entire chapters.
  - His prose blends **philosophy, absurdism, and dark humor**, exploring human despair and endurance.
- **Central Themes:**
  - The **collapse of social order** and rise of authoritarianism.
  - The **search for meaning** amid chaos.
  - **Apocalyptic imagery** and critique of modernity.
  - Deep belief in the **transformative power of art**.

The Nobel Committee compared his style to **Franz Kafka** and **Thomas Bernhard**, placing him within the **Central European existentialist literary tradition**.

Political and Cultural Context

- Krasznahorkai has been a **vocal critic of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán** and the rise of **nationalist authoritarian politics** in Hungary.
- He represents a **dissenting artistic voice** in modern Eastern Europe — using literature as resistance.
- Despite his criticism, the Hungarian government publicly congratulated him, recognizing the **national pride** his Nobel brings.

His works also echo broader **European post-totalitarian anxieties**, relevant in contemporary discussions of democracy and cultural freedom.

Static and Current Linkages for UPSC

Static Concept	Connection
Nobel Prize in Literature	Established in 1901 under Alfred Nobel's will; awarded by the **Swedish Academy** for outstanding literary work "in an ideal direction."
Central European Literary Tradition	Includes Kafka, Kundera, Bernhard — often explores themes of absurdism, alienation, and state oppression.
Literature and Society	UPSC GS I syllabus highlights the role of art and literature as reflections of societal change.
Freedom of Expression	Connects with GS II topics — democracy, human rights, and cultural freedom.

AnalyticalPerspective

1. Importance of the Award

- Recognizes **literature as resistance** in an era of authoritarianism and disinformation.
- Reinforces the **power of narrative** to question power structures and moral decay.
- Symbolizes Europe's ongoing **struggle between nationalism and liberal values**.

2. India's Learning Context

- Highlights how writers can act as **moral commentators and social critics**.

- Encourages support for **regional and vernacular literature** that explores similar philosophical and social themes.

Conclusion

LászlóKrasznahorkai's Nobel Prize in Literature underscores the **enduring relevance of serious, introspective writing** in a fragmented world. His works — blending despair with the redemptive power of art — remind us that literature remains one of humanity's strongest tools to **reflect, resist, and reaffirm hope** amid political and existential crises.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following statements about LászlóKrasznahorkai is/are correct?

1. He is the first Hungarian to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

2. His novels are known for long, complex sentences and philosophical themes.

3. Some of his works have been adapted into films by Hungarian director BélaTarr.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

A. 1 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Daily News Analysis
Page 07 : GS 3 : Science and tech / Prelims

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) — when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites evolve to resist the drugs designed to kill them — is among the gravest global public health challenges of the 21st century. However, as **Dr. Abdul Ghafur** argues, AMR today is not only a **medical or scientific crisis** but also a **communication crisis**. The way we talk about AMR — with fear, statistics, and future catastrophes — has lost its power to move people. To sustain attention and inspire action, we need a **shift from fear-based to human-centered communication**.

Why we need to change the way we talk about antibiotic resistance

Antimicrobial resistance has become, above all, a communication crisis; instead of talking only about the future collapse of healthcare systems, the focus must be on the present impact on individual bodies; changing the language, bringing in positivity, biology, and human connection, can help keep AMR on the agenda

Abdul Ghafur

In 2010, India woke up to a scientific storm. A research paper published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases described a new enzyme that could make bacteria resistant to nearly all antibiotics, including our last-resort drugs. This enzyme was named New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase, or NDM. Overnight, the gene's name became a political issue. The Indian government argued it unfairly tarnished the nation's reputation, while the British researchers defended it as a standard naming practice. The media seized the story, politicians took positions, and for a short time, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) became front-page news.

This controversy, and the unbiased opinions of many who stated that AMR could push our country into a catastrophic health crisis if not urgently tackled, created a momentum that later paved the way for initiatives such as the Chennai Declaration. Those were years when strong, even frightening, predictions worked. They jolted decision-makers. They made headlines. They opened doors. But what worked in 2010 no longer works today.

For over a decade, we have repeated the same dire forecasts: 10 million deaths every year by 2050, one hundred trillion dollars lost to the global economy, a looming collapse of healthcare. These numbers, taken from the landmark report by British economist Lord Jim O'Neill, once carried weight. They reframed AMR as not just a medical problem, but also an economic and political one. Governments took notice. The G7 and G20 put AMR on their agenda. For a time, the message worked.

But repetition dulls impact. Psychologists call this habituation: the more you hear something, the less you respond. Psychologist Paul Slovic, who has studied how humans perceive risk, calls it psychic numbing: the bigger the numbers, the less we feel. A single patient's suffering moves us; 10 million deaths become an abstraction. As journalist Paul Brodeur wrote, "Statistics are human beings with the tears wiped off." In talking about AMR only in statistics and distant futures, we have wiped off the tears and lost the human connection.

Today, the media is tired of AMR stories. Policymakers are distracted by other crises. Even doctors are weary of hearing the same warnings at conferences. Among the public, AMR barely registers. This is not because resistance is less dangerous than before. If anything, the problem is worse. The real crisis is that our words no longer move people. AMR

has become, above all, a communication crisis.

Making it personal

If the language of catastrophe no longer works, what can? The answer lies in making the story personal. Instead of talking only about the future collapse of healthcare systems, we must talk about the present impact on individual bodies. The focus must shift from statistics to biology.

The human body is not just human. It is microbial. Trillions of bacteria, viruses, and fungi live in and on us, shaping our health in ways we are only beginning to understand. This community, called the microbiome, helps digest food, produces vitamins, trains immunity, and protects our skin. It even communicates with our brain, influencing mood and cognition.

Antibiotics, while life-saving, are not neutral. Even a single dose can disrupt the microbiome for months. In some cases, the balance never fully recovers. The consequences ripple through what scientists call the "axes" of communication between the gut and the rest of the body. Disturbances in the gut microbiome affect the brain, worsening anxiety or depression. They affect the lungs, increasing the risk of asthma and severe respiratory infections. They alter metabolism, raising the likelihood of obesity and diabetes. They influence the

skin, aggravating conditions like eczema or acne. They reshape the immune system, making allergies and autoimmune diseases more common. These are not distant predictions for 2050. These are impacts on us, on our children, today. For too long, we have told only the story of the bad bugs - the resistant pathogens that kill. But there is another story we must tell: the story of the good bugs. And one of the most surprising, even delightful, examples of their role comes from something as ordinary as perfume.

Why does the same perfume smell different on different people? Perfumers usually say it is because of differences in skin chemistry, in pH or moisture or oiliness. But research is showing another dimension: the microbes on our skin. Bacteria on the skin produce enzymes that interact with fragrance molecules. These enzymes break some molecules down, amplify others, and sometimes even create new scents. That is why a floral perfume may smell fresh on one person but heavy on another. Or why a woody note lingers on one wrist but fades quickly on another. It is not only the perfume; it is the partnership between fragrance molecules and bacterial enzymes on the skin.

This is a reminder that microbes are not only about disease. They are about individuality, diversity, and beauty. They shape our daily experiences in invisible

ways. Bugs are not just enemies. They are part of who we are.

So if we can tell such positive, fascinating stories about microbes, why can't we do the same for AMR? Instead of only warning that antibiotics cause resistance in society, we can say: antibiotics can harm your microbiome. Protect your good bugs - they protect you. This is not a softer message. It is a more effective one, because it connects to people's own lives. It replaces dread with responsibility. It offers hope.

Shifting the story

This is the shift we need. From resistance in hospitals to resilience in the body. From global catastrophe to personal consciousness. From fear to fragrance. From the language of war to the language of wisdom.

The good, the bad, and the ugly bugs all live with us. The question is how will we tell their story? If we continue with pessimism alone, people will turn away. If we change our language, if we bring in positivity, biology, and human connection, we can keep AMR on the agenda - not as an abstract threat, but as a living, urgent, and solvable challenge.

(Dr. Abdul Ghafur is senior consultant, infectious diseases, Apollo Hospitals, Chennai and coordinator, Chennai Declaration on AMR. dghafur@hotmail.com)

THE GIST

▼ The human body is not just human. It is microbial. Trillions of bacteria, viruses, and fungi live in and on the body, shaping health in ways that are only beginning to be understood

▼ Antibiotics, while life-saving, are not neutral. Even a single dose can disrupt the microbiome for months. In some cases, the balance never fully recovers

▼ Instead of only warning that antibiotics cause resistance in society, the message can be: antibiotics can harm your microbiome. Protect your good bugs - they protect you

Time for a shift: Students staging rally to raise awareness about antimicrobial resistance in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. FILE PHOTO

Current Context

- The debate around **NDM (New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase)** in 2010 triggered India's awareness about AMR and led to initiatives like the **Chennai Declaration (2012)**.
- Initially, dire forecasts (like "10 million deaths by 2050") helped policymakers take notice.

- But over time, such repeated warnings caused **psychic numbing** — society became desensitized to the message.
- The author suggests that AMR communication must now focus on the **present, personal, and biological impacts** — such as how antibiotics disrupt the human microbiome — instead of only future global collapse.

Static Linkages

1. What is Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)?

AMR occurs when microorganisms (bacteria, fungi, viruses, parasites) change over time and no longer respond to medicines, making infections harder to treat.

Causes:

- Overuse and misuse of antibiotics in humans and animals
- Poor infection control and hygiene
- Inadequate wastewater management
- Unregulated sale of antibiotics

Examples:

- Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)
- NDM-1 (New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase) enzyme

2. Key Global and Indian Initiatives

Level	Initiative	Description
Global	**WHO Global Action Plan on AMR (2015)**	Aims for one-health approach & responsible antimicrobial use.
	Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS)	Monitors AMR trends globally.
India	**National Action Plan on AMR (2017–2021)**	Strategy across human, animal, food, and environment sectors.
	Chennai Declaration (2012)	Multi-stakeholder roadmap by Indian doctors and policymakers.

Level	Initiative	Description
	ICMR–AMR Surveillance Network	Tracks resistance patterns across India.

Analytical Perspective

1. AMR as a Communication Crisis

- The early approach relied on fear-based messaging: "10 million deaths by 2050," "collapse of modern medicine."
- Such repetition caused desensitization among policymakers, doctors, and the public.
- Hence, AMR messaging must now become **emotionally relatable**, not just statistically alarming.

2. Shift in Communication Strategy

From	To
Fear and catastrophe	Biology and personal impact
Resistance narrative	Resilience narrative
Global crisis	Individual consciousness
Statistics	Human stories
War language ("superbugs")	Wisdom language ("good and bad bugs coexist")

3. The Role of Microbiome

- The human body hosts trillions of microbes — the **microbiome** — crucial for digestion, immunity, mood, and skin health.
- Antibiotics disrupt this delicate ecosystem, leading to side effects like allergies, obesity, anxiety, or autoimmune diseases.
- Hence, **protecting the microbiome = protecting oneself** — a message that connects AMR to daily life.

4. Policy Implications

- **Public awareness campaigns** must use relatable narratives (e.g., "Protect your good bacteria").

- **School curricula** and community programs should teach responsible antibiotic use.
- **Doctors and pharmacists** should communicate AMR risks empathetically.
- **Media storytelling** must highlight patient experiences, not just global statistics.

Conclusion

Antimicrobial Resistance remains one of the world's most urgent health challenges — but the conversation around it has stagnated. To rekindle attention, we must humanize the issue, shifting from fear to empathy, from numbers to narratives, and from resistance to resilience.Protecting antibiotics is not merely about saving drugs — it's about **preserving our invisible allies**, the beneficial microbes that sustain human life. The future of AMR action depends as much on **how we talk about**

UPSC Mains Practice Question
Ques: Antimicrobial resistance is no longer just a biological threat but a communication failure." Examine this statement in the light of India's efforts to combat AMR**. (250 Words)**

Page : 10: GS 2 : Indian Polity/ Prelims

The integrity of electoral rolls is a cornerstone of a functioning democracy. Accurate and updated rolls ensure that only eligible citizens exercise their franchise and prevent electoral fraud. Recently, the **Election Commission of India (EC)** concluded the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls in Bihar, highlighting the ongoing efforts to maintain clean voter lists ahead of elections.

What are the various electoral forms?

What is Form 6 used for in the context of electoral rolls? How can Overseas Electors register to vote? Which forms are used to raise objections or request corrections? What should citizens do to ensure their names are correctly included in the electoral rolls?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R.

The story so far:

The Election Commission (EC) has just concluded the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar. It proposes to roll it out in other States in a phased manner.

What is the current significance?
Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RP Act), deals with the preparation and revision of electoral rolls. A summary revision is carried out before each general election or by-election in any constituency. The RP Act also authorises the EC to carry out a special revision of the electoral roll at any time.

The EC, through its order dated June 24, had decided to conduct SIR for the entire country. Since the Bihar Assembly elections are due in November, the Commission issued guidelines for the SIR of the Bihar electoral roll, with July 1 as the qualifying date.

The SIR process in Bihar involved submission of enumeration forms by all registered voters, submission of any eligible documents to prove citizenship (for electors registered after 2003), publication of draft electoral rolls based on forms submitted, a period for filing claims and objections, verification and disposal of claims and objections by the Electoral Registration Officers (ERO), and publication of final roll.

The SIR process was challenged in the Supreme Court. In its interim orders, the court had directed the EC to accept Aadhaar as one of the eligible documents to be submitted along with the enumeration forms as proof of identity. The final roll for Bihar was released by the EC on September 30. The Commission proposes to complete the SIR process for the entire country in a phased manner based on the Assembly election schedules

Various forms with respect to electoral rolls as per RER

Form Number	Description
Form 6	Application to be submitted by new voters to be registered as an elector. As per section 19 of the RP Act, the qualifying dates for completion of 18 years of age, are 1st day of January, April, July and October of the year in which the electoral roll is prepared or revised.
Form 6A	Form for inclusion by an Overseas Elector. Non-Resident Indians who have shifted out of India, on account of education, employment or otherwise, can register as an elector in the constituency in which their address as per passport is located.
Form 7	Objection for proposed inclusion/deletion of name from existing roll. This form can be filed by a registered elector in a constituency in respect of any other registered elector or proposed inclusion in the roll or for deletion of applicant's own name.
Form 8	Form for shifting residence/correction of entries. This form can be filed by a registered elector for shifting of residence or correction of entries.
Form 5	Notice of publication of draft electoral roll by the ERO.
Form 9	List of applications for inclusion of names received in Form 6.
Form 10	List of applications for objection to inclusion of names received in Form 7.
Form 11	List of objections/applications for correction of entries received in Form 8.
Form 11A	List of applications for shifting of address within the constituency received in Form 8.
Form 11B	List of applications for shifting of address outside the constituency received in Form 8.

*Forms 9 to 11B are prepared and published by the ERO.

Field work: A Booth-Level Officer checks documents during the special intensive revision of the electoral roll, Araria district, Bihar, on July 8. Shashi Shekhar Kashyap

for various States.

What are the various forms?
In the present context, it is important for citizens to be aware of the various forms that deal with electoral rolls. These forms are provided in the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 (RER). A brief summary of all the important forms as per RER is provided in the Table given above. It also contains detailed guidelines for filling out the application with respect to each of these forms.

What should citizens do?
There are political arguments both for and against the SIR exercise as carried out in Bihar. However, clean electoral rolls are paramount for the conduct of free and

Citizens should ensure that they verify the published draft rolls. They should fill out the enumeration forms as required. New voters and electors who have migrated to different constituencies should fill out the relevant forms

fair elections, which is essential for our functioning democracy. The EC would hopefully devise a more spread-out schedule in future SIRs that provides adequate time for hassle-free participation by voters. The list of eligible documents is also likely to include Aadhaar as proof of identity, in

subsequent SIRs as per the Supreme Court directive.

Meanwhile, citizens should ensure that they verify the published draft rolls. They should fill out the enumeration forms as required.

New voters and electors who have migrated to different constituencies should fill out the relevant forms. Political parties and civil society groups should assist citizens, especially the most marginalised sections, throughout the process. This would ensure a clean electoral roll without compromising on the right to vote of every eligible citizen.

Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified'. He currently trains at Officers IAS academy. Views expressed are personal

THE GIST

▼

The Election Commission conducted a special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, starting with Bihar, requiring voters to submit enumeration forms and proof of identity.

▼

Citizens should verify draft rolls, submit the relevant forms if they are new voters or have migrated, and seek assistance from political parties and civil society to ensure clean electoral rolls without compromising the right to vote.

▼

Static Context

The **Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RP Act)**, particularly **Section 21**, governs the preparation and revision of electoral rolls. Electoral rolls are revised periodically through:

1. **Summary Revision** – conducted before general elections or by-elections in any constituency.
2. **Special Revision** – can be conducted anytime at the discretion of the EC.

The **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 (RER)** provide a set of forms for citizens to register, update, or challenge entries in the electoral rolls.

Key Forms under RER:

Form	Purpose
Form 6	New voter registration (inclusion of name in electoral roll)
Form 7	Objection to inclusion of a name or to report incorrect entries
Form 8	Application for correction of entries (like name, address, age)
Form 8A	For transposing (shifting) the entry when a voter moves to a different constituency
Form 6A	Registration for **Overseas Electors** (Indian citizens living abroad)

How Overseas Electors register:

- Through **Form 6A**, eligible Indian citizens living abroad can submit their application online via the **ECI portal** or through Indian embassies/consulates.

Citizen Responsibilities:

- Verify draft electoral rolls published by the EC.
- Submit **Form 6** for new registrations.
- Use **Forms 7, 8, 8A** for objections, corrections, or shifting constituencies.
- Ensure submission of valid documents proving citizenship (post-2003, documents like **Aadhaar** are accepted).

Current Context

The **SIR in Bihar** involved:

1. Submission of enumeration forms by all registered voters.
2. Verification of citizenship documents.
3. Publication of draft electoral rolls.
4. Filing of claims and objections by citizens.
5. Disposal of claims and objections by **Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)**.
6. Publication of final roll ahead of elections.

The Supreme Court allowed the use of **Aadhaar** as proof of identity during this revision. The Bihar SIR sets a precedent for phased implementation in other states in line with **Assembly election schedules**.

Significance:

- Clean electoral rolls enhance the credibility of elections.
- Marginalized citizens and migrants must be encouraged to participate to prevent disenfranchisement.
- Political parties and civil society groups play a key role in assisting citizens during the process.

Conclusion

Ensuring accurate electoral rolls is critical for **free and fair elections**, which form the bedrock of India's democracy. Citizens must proactively verify their entries, submit necessary forms, and update their details. The EC's phased SIR approach, along with Aadhaar as proof of identity, aims to streamline voter registration while safeguarding electoral integrity. Active participation by citizens, civil society, and political entities will strengthen the democratic process and ensure that every eligible voter exercises their fundamental right to vote.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques :Which of the following statements regarding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is/are correct?

1. It is carried out under Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.

2. It can be conducted at any time by the Election Commission.

3. Aadhaar can be used as proof of citizenship for voters registered after 2003.

Options:

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 2 and 3 only

c) 1 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: d)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: The Election Commission of India recently conducted a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar. Discuss the significance of SIR in ensuring free and fair elections in India. Explain the role of citizens and civil society in maintaining accurate electoral rolls. **(150 Words)**

Daily News Analysis

Page 14 :GS 2: International Relations/ Prelims

Nepal is navigating a turbulent political phase after a **Gen Z-led protest** shook the nation in early September, leading to the resignation of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli. The protests, driven by social media bans, corruption grievances, and misgovernance, highlighted the rising influence of youth activism in South Asian democracies. With **less than 150 days to the next elections**, the country faces challenges in consolidating democratic governance and ensuring political stability.

A month since the Gen Z protests, Nepal faces a tough road to democratic reform

With less than 150 days to the elections, Nepal's interim administration is struggling to find its feet after a Gen Z-led uprising shook the establishment; analysts call it hastily stitched together and lacking firm political ground; meanwhile, traditional parties sidelined by the protests are now resurfacing

NEWS ANALYSIS

Sanjeev Satgainya
KATHMANDU

Thursday marked a month since Nepal, especially the capital Kathmandu, witnessed anarchy. On September 9, a day after the youth-led protests, then Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli resigned and fled to an army barracks following the deaths of 19 young people.

The Nepali capital saw events of an unprecedented degree – the Parliament, government complex, and the Supreme Court burned till late into the night.

Since September 12, an interim Cabinet led by former Chief Justice Sushila Karki has been in place, with the mandate of holding elections on March 5. The official death toll of the two-day protests stands at 75.

The month since the protests has been uneasy, punctuated by festival holidays and rain-induced disasters. A proposed protest plan by a youth group for October 9 stirred fresh anxiety, though it was ultimately withdrawn a day before after some groups dissociated themselves.

One youth group also demanded the resignation of the chief and members of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority – Nepal's top constitutional anti-graft agency.

These youth groups, broadly dubbed under the umbrella of Gen Z, led last month's demonstrations, which were triggered by a social media ban and driven by anger at corruption and misrule. Now, they appear scattered and fragmented, which analysts say was inevitable given their structureless and leaderless nature.

However, campaigners argue that lacking formal leadership is not a flaw.

Raskshya Bam, who organised and participated in the protests, said the youth took to the streets with specific demands – ending corruption and rolling back the social media ban. "But as the situation unfolded, we are where we are today," Ms. Bam said.

Government in a bind

As anarchy descended on Kathmandu on September 9 – with overwhelmed security agencies unable to maintain law and order – the Nepal Army stepped in not only to secure the capital but also to facilitate dialogue with President Ram Chandra Poudel.

It was at Army Headquarters that youth campaigners finalised Ms. Karki's name after she won a vote on the digital platform Discord, a virtual public square for Gen Z, where they planned their protests.

Analysts describe this interim administration as hastily stitched together, backed by Gen Z but lacking solid political ground. Within hours of her oath, PM Karki dissolved the House of Representatives.

"A lack of political nature is the biggest challenge of this government," said Keshav Dahal, a writer and political commentator. "The government and political parties appear to hold each other in deep contempt, which is likely to spoil the environment for elections."

Nepal's traditional parties, consigned to the back foot after the protests, are now resurfacing.

Deposed PM Oli addressed his party members on Thursday, dismissing the current government.

"Many say we have to wait till March 5 and should demand the restoration of the House if elections do not take place," he told them, hinting at moving the Supreme Court for reinstatement of the House. "The House dissolution is unconstitutional, illegal, and undemocratic."

His remarks come amid political parties' refusal to commit to the March 5 elections. Concerns mount over whether the elections will take place as scheduled – and if they do, whether they will carry legitimacy if major parties boycott.

Gen Z campaigners say it's incumbent on everyone to work towards protecting democracy.

"The interim government needs support from all sides – citizens, civil society, intellectuals, and political parties – to conduct timely elections," said Ms. Bam. "After all, our protests did not mean – and we do not wish – to prohibit parties. They are key constituents in a multi-party democratic set-up."

As the country eyes elections, accusations and counter-accusations are flying. Last week, social media buzzed with calls to arrest Mr. Oli and Ramesh Lekhak, who was Home Minister when 19 protesters were killed.

After an initial refusal, police agreed to accept complaints filed by those injured during the protests against Mr. Oli and Mr. Lekhak, with the caveat that the case would be forwarded to a judicial commission investigating the September 8-9 incidents. But the commission, led by a former judge, on Thursday sent the case back to police, saying investigation authority lies with the state apparatus.

Meanwhile, a student wing affiliated with Mr. Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) seeks to file a treason complaint against Balendra Shah, Kathmandu Mayor, and Sudan Gurung, a self-styled Gen Z leader.

Economic costs

For a country already struggling economically, last month's protests dealt a heavy blow. The World Bank revised Nepal's growth forecast to 2.1% for fiscal year 2025-26, down from the earlier 5.4%.

In its South Asia Development Update, the multilateral agency said the September 8-9 unrest deepened political and economic uncertainty in Nepal. It warned that international tourist arrivals are likely to see a sharp drop, and weakened investor confidence could slow private investment.

Yug Pathak, writer and analyst, says the government can prove its legitimacy only by holding elections on time; otherwise, the risk of plunging Nepal into deep uncertainty and instability persists.

"It's difficult to pinpoint who was involved or how peaceful protests went awry, but the events have left Nepal at a critical juncture."

Delayed dialogue

The Election Commission (EC) has called on any group intending to contest the March 5 elections to register as a political party by November 16. Earlier this week, Ms. Karki asked the EC to launch talks with political parties.

Analysts say the government, not the EC needs to lead dialogue with political parties.

Government sources say modalities are being worked out for dialogue. "Talks will begin soon to bring parties into confidence," said a government source, declining to elaborate or give a timeline.

But time is of the essence, and analysts say the government has yet to grasp the urgency. With less than 150 days to go for polls, youth campaigners agree that the government must rise to the occasion.

"Parties must reform, the system must function, and institutions must be strengthened to lay the ground for democracy to thrive," said Ms. Bam.

Mourning their loss: Family members of protesters who died hold a candlelight vigil in front of the damaged parliament building in Kathmandu on Thursday. AFP

Static Context

- Nepal operates under a **multi-party parliamentary democracy** with a President as the ceremonial head and a Prime Minister as the executive authority.

- **Interim governments** are constitutionally mandated to conduct elections and maintain administrative continuity in case of political crises.
- Historically, Nepal has witnessed political volatility, with frequent changes in government, constitutional reforms, and transitions from monarchy to republic (2008).

Current Context

Gen Z protests and government response:

- On **September 9, 2025**, protests in Kathmandu turned violent; **19 protesters died immediately**, with the official toll rising to **75** over two days.
- Protesters, organized digitally via **Discord**, targeted social media restrictions and corruption. Parliament, government offices, and the Supreme Court complex were damaged.
- **Oli resigned** and interim Prime Minister **SushilaKarki**, former Chief Justice, was appointed by the army to oversee elections scheduled for **March 5, 2026**.

Challenges faced by the interim administration:

- Analysts describe the government as **"hastily stitched together"**, supported by Gen Z but lacking firm political legitimacy.
- Political parties, sidelined during protests, are resurfacing. Oli's party and other traditional forces are challenging the dissolution of the House and threatening to boycott elections.
- Gen Z activists remain **leaderless and fragmented**, which reduces sustained pressure on reforms but avoids hierarchical domination of the movement.

Economic and institutional impact:

- The protests have exacerbated **economic uncertainty**; the World Bank revised Nepal's growth forecast to **2.1%** from 5.4% for FY 2025–26.
- Investor confidence and tourism are expected to decline, impacting foreign exchange and development projects.
- Legal and investigative mechanisms face strain; cases against former leaders are in limbo due to overlapping authorities.

Urgency of elections and dialogue:

- The Election Commission mandates political registration by **November 16**.
- Analysts stress that the interim government must **engage parties, strengthen institutions, and ensure timely elections** to establish legitimacy and restore democratic functioning.

Implications for Democracy

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1. **Youth-led movements** are reshaping political discourse in South Asia, emphasizing accountability, digital activism, and anti-corruption demands.
2. **Interim governance** without political legitimacy risks instability, delayed reforms, and weakened economic performance.
3. **Elections on schedule** are crucial to re-establish confidence in democratic institutions and prevent further polarization.
4. Nepal's scenario highlights the **interplay between protest movements, traditional politics, and constitutional mechanisms** in fragile democracies.

Conclusion

Nepal stands at a **critical juncture** where the convergence of youth activism, political realignment, and economic uncertainty could define the trajectory of its democracy. The interim administration, supported by Gen Z, must bridge gaps with traditional parties, conduct timely elections, and strengthen institutions. Failure to do so risks prolonged instability, economic slowdown, and erosion of public trust in democratic governance. The Nepali case underscores the broader lesson for South Asian democracies: **inclusive dialogue, institutional legitimacy, and citizen engagement are indispensable for democratic consolidation.**

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: The Gen Z-led protests in Nepal highlight the growing influence of youth activism in shaping political processes. In the Indian context, discuss the role of youth movements in strengthening democracy and the challenges they pose for governance. **(150 Words)**

Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

India's mental health crisis, the cries and scars

In Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, a young couple recently ended their lives after poisoning their four-month-old son. They left behind a note wanting their home and car to be sold to repay their debts. Months earlier, the media reported that several students in Kota, Rajasthan, which is called the nation's coaching hub, had died by suicide. Treated individually as anomalies, these tragedies highlight a crisis in India – a grim national mental health crisis spanning villages, cities, classrooms, boardrooms, farms and homes.

The data from across India

According to the National Crime Records Bureau's Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (ADSI) 2023 report, there were 1,71,418 suicides in India – a rise of 0.3% from the previous year. Yet, the suicide rate per 1,00,000 population fell marginally by 0.8%, indicating that population growth had outpaced case increases. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Sikkim and Kerala reported the highest suicide rates, while Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and West Bengal accounted for more than 40% of all deaths. Cities continued to have higher suicide rates than in rural India, reflecting the pressures of urban life. Men made up 72.8% of all victims, revealing gendered economic and social stress. Family problems accounted for nearly a third (31.9%) of suicides, followed by illness (19%), substance abuse (7%), and relationship or marriage-related issues (about 10% combined).

Distress in the agrarian sector persists, with 10,786 farmer suicides, around 6.3% of the total reported in 2023, slightly lower than the previous year. Most cases were in Maharashtra and Karnataka. But there is a broader crisis – since 2014, over 1,00,000 farmers have taken their lives. Between 1995 and 2015, nearly 2,96,000 of the cases were the result of debt, crop failure, market shocks and institutional neglect. Equally invisible are homemakers and caregivers, predominantly women, who face high rates of depression, marital distress and domestic violence but do not feature in official statistics.

It was against this backdrop that one of us, on an ordinary morning, felt the weight of existence suddenly unbearable – not from illness or exhaustion, but from a numbing sense that every small act, such as brushing one's teeth to answering a message, had lost meaning. There was food in the fridge, work in progress, and no visible crisis, yet the heaviness was overwhelming. In that moment of quiet panic, reaching out to an Artificial Intelligence (AI) platform felt safer than speaking to someone.

Amal Chandra

is an author, policy analyst and columnist

Naimisha

is the founder and CEO of Youthocracy and is building Umeed, an Artificial Intelligence-powered mental health support platform

The government should prioritise mental health and counselling must become a public infrastructure

Why does technology seem more approachable than human company? It was a moment that captured a painful truth: countless Indians are confiding in algorithms because they have no one else to turn to. This is not a technological failure, but a human one.

Nearly 230 million Indians live with mental disorders, from depression and anxiety to bipolar and substance-use conditions. Yet, over four in five persons with severe illness receive no formal care due to stigma, the cost, and a severe shortage of professionals. Lifetime prevalence sits at 10.6%, with treatment gaps that range from 70% to 92%. Even as official suicide rates appear stable, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates 16.3 deaths per 1,00,000 people, highlighting India's heavy mental health burden. Behind these numbers are lives such as a young university student who jumped off a bridge after leaving behind a note that she felt "unworthy" – a word that echoes quietly in hostels, offices and unread messages, and denoting silent despair.

Gaps in the system

India's mental health system needs attention. With just 0.75 psychiatrists for 1,00,000 people, well below the WHO minimum of 1.7, and far from the ideal three, besides a similar shortage of nurses, psychologists and social workers, care is scarce. In schools and colleges, "counselling" often means a part-time teacher for thousands of students; in coaching hubs and universities, support is tokenistic and underfunded. On paper, laws appear progressive: the Mental Healthcare Act (2017) decriminalised suicide and guaranteed mental health care, while the National Suicide Prevention Strategy (2022) aimed to reduce deaths by 10%. Yet, suicides have risen.

Manodarpan, the school-based psycho-social support scheme, remains largely inactive, and despite 47 postgraduate psychiatry departments and 25 centres of excellence being sanctioned, staffing, pay and training gaps persist. Even the ₹270-crore mental health budget has been largely unspent, leaving policies as empty promises.

Today, millions of Indians turn to AI tools such as ChatGPT – not out of trust but out of loneliness. The OpenAI CEO, Sam Altman, himself has acknowledged that many young users treat the platform as a therapist or life coach, despite its lack of confidentiality, crisis intervention or privacy guarantees. This reliance reflects not technological faith but institutional collapse. AI can assist. But without regulation, it risks becoming a dangerous substitute for real, protected human care.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

India must treat mental health as an emergency, not as an afterthought. The government should prioritise mental health and establish a cross-ministerial task force that spans health, education, agriculture, and women and child welfare with independent funding and clear accountability. Within five years, the aim should be to have at least three to five mental health professionals for every 1,00,000 people, achieved through expanded training, scholarships and incentives for rural postings.

Counselling must become a public infrastructure, not a charity. Every school, college, district hospital and agrarian block should have a full-time trained counsellor or a direct link to one, funded by central budgets. It should not be left to non-governmental organisations or goodwill. Public campaigns must destigmatise help-seeking, share recovery stories, and normalise conversations about distress.

Special outreach is needed for high-risk groups such as farmers, homemakers, students, survivors of abuse, and caregivers. For farmers, counselling must go hand in hand with debt relief and livelihood support. Homemakers, often isolated, need community-based therapy networks. In coaching hubs such as Kota, mental health care must be continuous, institutional, and preventive.

On online support

At the same time, India must urgently regulate the digital mental health ecosystem. Emotional-support apps and AI tools should disclose privacy risks, carry mandatory disclaimers, embed crisis-response redirections, and provide real-time access to licensed professionals. Until robust ethical and legal frameworks exist, such tools cannot replace qualified human care.

What is at stake is not only life but also the moral and social fabric of the nation. Suicide remains the leading cause of death among India's youth aged 15-29 years and the country bears a disproportionate share of global female suicide deaths. Untreated mental illness could cost India over $1 trillion in lost GDP by 2030 – employers already lose over ₹1.1 lakh crore annually to absenteeism, attrition and burnout. Each suicide, each breakdown, is a silenced voice, a broken family, and a future cut short.

Every one of us has known the relief when someone or some system says these important words: "You matter". If India truly aspires to be modern, progressive and humane, it must prove this by saving the lives now slipping away in silence.

GS. Paper 2– Social Justice

UPSC Mains Practice Question: India is facing a growing mental health crisis affecting all sections of society, yet access to care remains insufficient. Discuss the magnitude, causes, challenges, and policy gaps in India's mental health system. Suggest measures to address this crisis. **(150 Words)**

Context :

India is facing a **grave mental health crisis**, affecting students, farmers, homemakers, urban professionals, and marginalized populations alike. From suicides in coaching hubs like Kota to farmer suicides in Maharashtra and Karnataka, and the silent suffering of homemakers and caregivers, mental distress permeates all strata of society. Mental health, long neglected in policy and public discourse, has become a national concern with significant social and economic ramifications.

Magnitude of the Crisis

According to the **National Crime Records Bureau (ADSI 2023)**, India recorded **1,71,418 suicides**, with men constituting **72.8%** of victims. Major causes include family problems (31.9%), illness (19%), substance abuse (7%), and relationship or marital issues (~10%). **Farmer suicides** numbered 10,786, while the broader agrarian crisis has claimed over **1 lakh lives since 2014**. Urban centers report higher suicide rates than rural areas, reflecting pressures of city life.

Nearly **230 million Indians** suffer from mental disorders, yet treatment gaps range from **70% to 92%**, highlighting a vast unmet need. High-risk groups include students in high-pressure academic environments, farmers facing economic stress, homemakers, caregivers, and survivors of abuse. Gendered dimensions are evident, with women disproportionately affected by depression, marital distress, and domestic violence.

Systemic and Policy Gaps

Despite progressive legislation such as the **Mental Healthcare Act (2017)**, which decriminalised suicide and guaranteed mental health care, implementation remains weak:

- **Workforce Shortages**: India has **0.75 psychiatrists and 0.12 psychologists per 1,00,000 population**, far below the WHO-recommended 3 psychiatrists per 1,00,000.
- **Infrastructure Deficits**: Counselling in schools and universities is tokenistic; primary health centers often lack essential psychotropic medicines.
- **Budgetary Underutilisation**: The allocated **₹270 crore mental health budget** remains largely unspent.
- **Fragmented Governance**: Poor inter-ministerial coordination between health, education, social welfare, and labour ministries limits coherent policy action.
- **Digital Risks**: Increasing reliance on AI platforms for emotional support reflects loneliness and institutional failure, yet these tools lack crisis intervention, confidentiality, and professional oversight.
- **Stigma**: Over 50% of Indians perceive mental illness as personal weakness, discouraging help-seeking.

Compared internationally, India's treatment gaps (70–92%) far exceed those of Australia, Canada, and the UK (40–55%), while budgetary allocation to mental health is significantly lower. Mental health services remain largely urban-centric, leaving 70% of rural populations underserved.

Current Initiatives and Their Limitations

- **District Mental Health Programme (DMHP)** covers 767 districts, offering counselling, outpatient services, and suicide prevention, yet effectiveness varies across states.
- **Manodarpan** has reached 11 crore students, providing school-based psycho-social support, but coverage is incomplete and largely preventive rather than continuous.
- **Tele MANAS**, a 24x7 helpline, has facilitated over 20 lakh tele-counselling sessions but requires deeper penetration and integration with local mental health services.

Policy Recommendations

1. **Increase Budgetary Allocation**: Raise mental health spending to at least **5% of total health expenditure** to improve infrastructure, workforce, and medicine supply.
2. **Expand Workforce**: Train and deploy **mid-level mental health providers**, ensuring **3–5 professionals per 1,00,000 population**, with incentives for rural postings.
3. **Public Counselling Infrastructure**: Establish **full-time counsellors in every school, college, district hospital, and agrarian block**, integrating services with primary health care.
4. **Digital Regulation**: AI and online mental health tools must embed **privacy safeguards, crisis redirection, and access to licensed professionals**.
5. **Targeted Support for High-Risk Groups**:
   - Farmers: Combine counselling with debt relief and livelihood programs.
   - Students: Continuous mental health support in schools, colleges, and coaching hubs.
   - Homemakers and caregivers: Community-based therapy networks.
6. **Anti-Stigma Campaigns**: Promote mental health literacy, recovery stories, and normalized conversations in workplaces, schools, and communities.
7. **Monitoring and Accountability**: Implement **cascade-based evaluation systems** to track treatment adherence, dropouts, and resource allocation.
8. **Policy Updates**: Align India's mental health diagnostic framework with **ICD-11**, covering emerging conditions like complex PTSD, prolonged grief disorder, and gaming disorder.
9. **Cross-Ministerial Coordination**: Integrate health, education, social welfare, labour, and agriculture policies to create a unified response.

Conclusion

India's mental health crisis is both a **public health and socio-economic emergency**, with consequences for life, livelihoods, and social cohesion. Suicide is the leading cause of death among youth aged 15–29, and untreated mental illness could cost India **over $1 trillion in lost GDP by 2030**. Addressing this requires **urgent, well-funded, and coordinated policy action**, integrating legal guarantees, workforce expansion, public infrastructure, digital oversight, and destigmatisation campaigns. A modern, humane India must ensure that **every citizen has access to timely mental health care**, affirming that "**You matter**."