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— Converting Possibilities into Reality —

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19 SEPTEMBER 2026

---SATURDAY----



Kolkata Topper

VAISHNA BISWAS

AIR - 367 | CSE 2025

★ OUR PROVEN LEGACY ★

OUR UPSC TOPPERS 2023



IPS LAXMAN PRATAP
RANK - 597

FORMER ASST. COMMANDANT IN BSF
CITY COLLEGE KOLKATA

OUR UPSC TOPPERS 2024



IRS SARLA JAKHER
AIR 593

CITY COLLEGE KOLKATA



IRS TANMAY
AIR 346

IIT KHARAGPUR



YOUR
DREAMS.

OUR
MISSION.

TOGETHER,
WE ACHIEVE
THE EXTRA
ORDINARY.

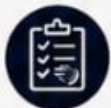


Converting Possibilities into Reality

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BOOST YOUR
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“INFORMED TODAY, EMPOWERED TOMORROW.”

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1. India's Emerging Homegrown Innovation Ecosystem

Source: The Hindu

India's Innovation Landscape: From Importer to Innovator

- India is gradually developing the three institutional foundations of an innovation economy:
 - Public research institutions.
 - Corporate R&D.
 - Deep-tech entrepreneurship.
- Technologies that were earlier largely imported are increasingly being developed domestically through collaboration among research institutions, industry and startups.
- Patent filings increased from over 1.10 lakh in 2024–25 to more than 1.43 lakh in 2025–26, registering a 30.2% rise.
- Domestic applicants now account for nearly 70% of patent filings.
- However, patent filings alone do not indicate successful innovation:
 - India had just over 2.4 lakh patents in force in 2025, compared with 5.7 million in China, 3.5 million in the US and 2.1 million in Japan.
 - This points towards challenges involving patent grants, abandonment and commercialisation.
- India spends just under 1% of GDP on R&D, compared with around 2.4% in China and 3.5% in the US.
- Thus, the central challenge is moving from higher patent activity to commercially successful, technology-driven innovation.

Three Emerging Pillars of the Ecosystem

- Public research:
 - Government-supported institutions continue to undertake long-gestation and strategically important research.
 - DRDO laboratories have demonstrated indigenous capabilities in advanced semiconductor technologies.

- Corporate R&D:
 - Private-sector R&D spending exceeded combined government R&D spending for the first time in 2024.
 - Private R&D is expected to account for around 55% of total R&D spending in 2025–26.
 - Increasing corporate investment can strengthen technology development and commercialisation.
- Deep-tech startups:
 - India's startup ecosystem is moving beyond conventional service platforms towards complex manufacturing, space technology, biotechnology and semiconductor applications.
 - More than \$2.5 billion in deep-tech commitments have been made by members of the India Deep Tech Alliance.
- The convergence of public research, corporate R&D and startups is creating an innovation pipeline from basic research to commercial applications.

Strategic Technologies and Intellectual Property

- Gallium Nitride (GaN) technology:
 - DRDO's Solid State Physics Laboratory (Delhi) and Gallium Arsenide Enabling Technology Centre (Hyderabad) developed GaN monolithic microwave integrated circuits (MMICs).
 - GaN technology is important for advanced radar, space systems, 5G/6G communications, electric-vehicle chargers and renewable-energy inverters.
 - India is among a small group of countries with this technological capability.
 - AGNIT Semiconductors, a spin-off from IISc's Centre for Nano Science and Engineering, is translating indigenous GaN technology into commercial applications.
- 6G and standards:
 - Bharat 6G Alliance members have made more than 7,700 patent filings across 5G and 6G technologies, including over 4,400 foreign filings.
 - Members also made nearly 3,000 technical contributions to 3GPP in the previous year, around 15 times the 2020 level.
 - Jio Platforms entered the top 20 international patent filers in the 2025 WIPO Patent Cooperation Treaty rankings.

- Ownership of patents and participation in global standards bodies are increasingly important because they determine who captures economic value from emerging technologies.

Deep-Tech Innovation: Space and Healthcare

- Space technology:
 - Pixxel Space is developing hyperspectral imaging technology, with six satellites in orbit and a planned constellation of 18–24 satellites.
 - Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1 launch and Agnikul Cosmos's work on reusable launch vehicles demonstrate growing private-sector capabilities in space technology.
- Healthcare:
 - ImmunoACT, incubated at IIT Bombay with Tata Memorial Centre, developed NexCAR19, India's first indigenous CAR-T cell therapy.
 - The therapy has helped reduce the cost of advanced cancer treatment substantially compared with conventional CAR-T therapies.
 - Remidio Innovative Solutions uses smartphone-enabled retinal imaging and AI to detect conditions such as diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma.
 - Support from institutions such as BIRAC helps bridge the gap between scientific research and commercial healthcare applications.
- These examples demonstrate how indigenous research can combine affordability, technological capability and commercial scalability.

Challenges and Way Forward

- India's innovation ecosystem remains incomplete despite rapid progress.
- Key challenges include:
 - Low overall R&D expenditure as a share of GDP.
 - Weak conversion of patents into commercially viable products.
 - Limited funding between patent development and the first paying customer — the "translational gap".
 - Need for greater patent-examiner capacity and faster IP processing.
 - Lack of standardised technology-transfer terms for publicly funded intellectual property.

- Need for stronger links between universities, government laboratories, industry and startups.
- India needs to increase both public and private R&D investment while strengthening mechanisms for technology transfer and commercialisation.
- Public research should generate foundational technologies, academia should nurture talent and research capabilities, and startups and industry should scale these technologies into markets.
- The emerging ecosystem indicates a gradual shift from India being primarily a services and technology-implementing economy towards one capable of generating its own intellectual property, strategic technologies and industrial capabilities.

2. Women's Leadership Gap: A Barrier to Inclusive Development

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Source: The Hindu

Global Gender Representation Gap

- UN Women's *Gender Snapshot 2026* highlights a persistent global deficit in women's representation across political, judicial, corporate and technological institutions.
- At the current pace, gender parity in national parliaments could take another 63 years.
- Equal rights and opportunities for women may take around 171 years at the present rate of progress.
- Women currently occupy only 27.4% of parliamentary seats globally.
- Women's representation in national Cabinets declined to 22.4% in 2026 from a peak of 23.3% in 2024, highlighting the fragile nature of progress.
- Women remain underrepresented in key decision-making portfolios:
 - Economy ministers: 19.5%.
 - Health ministers: 26.3%.
- Among 175 chief justices globally, only 31 are women.

Leadership Gap Across Economy and Technology

- The representation deficit extends beyond political institutions to corporate leadership and access to capital.
- Women occupy 25.1% of corporate board seats, but only 5.8% of CEOs in publicly traded companies are women.

- Female-only founding teams received only 2.3% of global venture-capital funding in 2024.
- Between 2020 and 2025, companies in 80% of countries paid female managers less per hour than male managers.
- Technology represents another major gap:
 - Women constitute only 22% of AI professionals globally.
 - Their representation in leading AI jobs falls to around 14%.
- These disparities indicate that women's underrepresentation persists across the entire leadership pipeline, from access to finance and employment to senior decision-making positions.

Women's Leadership and Development Outcomes

- The report links greater political representation of women with improved development outcomes in some contexts.
- Countries where women occupy more than 20% of parliamentary seats have recorded:
 - Immunisation rates up to 12 percentage points higher.
 - Higher survival rates among children beyond early childhood.
- Women raised gender equality issues nearly three times as often as men during the 2025 UN General Assembly General Debate.
- Greater representation can bring issues such as:
 - Healthcare and reproductive health.
 - Parental leave.
 - Care work.
 - Unpaid domestic work.
 - Social protection.into greater policy attention.
- Thus, women's leadership is not only a question of representation but also concerns whose priorities and experiences are reflected in public policy.

Structural Barriers to Women's Leadership

- UN Women attributes the persistent gap to structural factors rather than merely individual choices.

- Key barriers include:
 - Unequal laws and institutional structures.
 - Gender stereotypes and social norms.
 - Unequal access to economic resources and finance.
 - Limited opportunities to enter leadership pipelines.
 - Gender-based disparities in professional advancement.
- Underrepresentation in key portfolios such as finance, defence, technology and justice can limit women's influence over areas that shape long-term development and national priorities.
- The persistence of gaps across politics, corporate leadership, justice and technology indicates that achieving numerical representation alone is insufficient without institutional and social change.

Way Forward

- Strengthen gender-responsive laws and institutions to remove structural barriers to leadership.
- Improve women's access to political participation, education, professional opportunities and leadership positions.
- Increase access to finance and venture capital for women entrepreneurs and founders.
- Promote women's participation in STEM, AI and other emerging technology sectors.
- Strengthen measures addressing workplace discrimination and gender-based pay gaps.
- Create institutional mechanisms that support women's progression from entry-level participation to senior decision-making roles.
- Greater representation should be accompanied by meaningful participation in important portfolios and decision-making processes.
- Closing the leadership gap is therefore closely linked with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring more inclusive development.

3. Proposed M-371K Route for Ladakh: Strategic Connectivity and Infrastructure Development

Source: The Hindu

Context:

The recent proposal to introduce **Article 371(K)** (often referred to as **M 371K** or a new "Chapter K") marks a potential turning point in the governance of Ladakh, moving it toward a unique model of **asymmetric federalism**.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has recently proposed a *sui generis* (of its own kind) constitutional arrangement for the Union Territory of Ladakh. This comes after sustained demands from the **Leh Apex Body (LAB)** and the **Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA)** for safeguards following the 2019 reorganisation.

Key Features of the Proposed Article 371(K)

The proposal seeks to bridge the gap between Ladakh's current status as a UT without a legislature and its demand for Sixth Schedule/Statehood status.

- **Elected Governing Body:** Creation of a **directly elected Union Territory-level body** with legislative, executive, and financial powers.
- **Legislative Authority:** The body would likely have control over sensitive local matters, including:
 - Land rights and transfer of property.
 - Preservation of **culture and language**.
 - Management of **forests, environment, and natural resources**.
 - Recruitment and employment for local residents.
- **Constitutional Placement:** It is proposed under **Part XXI** of the Constitution, which deals with "Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions" (similar to Articles 371A to 371J).

Rationale and Significance

1. **Addressing Political Alienation:** Since 2019, Ladakh has been governed primarily by a bureaucratic setup under the Lieutenant Governor. This proposal aims to restore **democratic representation** at the UT level.
2. **Alternatives to Existing Models:** While the **Sixth Schedule** (Article 244) creates district-level autonomous councils, Article 371(K) is designed as a **UT-wide** legislative framework, making it a unique constitutional experiment in India.

3. **Ecological and Cultural Protection:** Given Ladakh's fragile high-altitude ecology and tribal-majority population (nearly 80% tribal), the provision aims to prevent demographic shifts and unregulated commercial exploitation.

Current Status and Challenges

- **Discussions:** In meetings held in **September 2026**, the Centre and Ladakh representatives reached an "in-principle understanding" on this model.
- **Drafting:** As of mid-September 2026, a detailed draft of the amendment has not yet been released. Ladakh leaders have expressed that their final acceptance depends on the **extent of executive and financial autonomy** spelled out in the draft.
- **Statehood Demand:** While the LAB and KDA are considering this proposal, they have maintained that **full statehood** remains their long-term aspiration.

Mains Relevance

The Article 371(K) proposal highlights the concept of **Asymmetric Federalism** in India—where the Union provides specialized constitutional safeguards to specific regions to accommodate diverse cultural and geographic identities while maintaining national unity.

4. Youth NEET: District-Level Employment and Human Capital Challenge

Source: The Hindu

Why in News?

- The first-ever district-level Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2025 has highlighted significant regional disparities in youth participation in employment, education and training.
- In nearly 250 districts, more than 25% of young people aged 15–29 are classified as NEET — Not in Employment, Education or Training.
- The finding points to underutilisation of India's young workforce and a potential human-capital challenge.
- The problem is particularly visible in northern and eastern India, including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and West Bengal.
- In nearly two-thirds of districts in these states, around one-fourth of the youth population falls into the NEET category.

Regional Employment Patterns

- The district-level data reveal considerable variation in labour-market outcomes across India.
- Several districts reported relatively low unemployment rates, including:
 - South 24 Parganas, West Bengal — 0.9%.
 - Araria, Bihar — 0.9%.
 - Ahmedabad, Gujarat — 1.1%.
 - Surat, Gujarat — 1.2%.
 - Bareilly and Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh — 1.2%.
 - Belagavi, Karnataka — 1.5%.
 - Palghar and Nanded, Maharashtra — 1.5%.
- The survey defines employment based on whether a person worked for at least 30 days during the reference year.
- Low unemployment, however, does not necessarily imply high-quality employment or adequate labour-force participation, making the NEET indicator important for understanding youth exclusion.

Why High Youth NEET Matters?

- NEET status represents a loss of productive human capital because young people are neither acquiring formal education and skills nor participating in employment.
- Persistent NEET status can lead to:
 - Skill deterioration and reduced employability.
 - Lower lifetime earnings.
 - Greater dependence on households.
 - Social and economic exclusion.
 - Reduced demographic-dividend gains.
- The problem can be particularly significant for young women, where social norms, unpaid care responsibilities, mobility constraints and limited access to suitable employment can restrict participation.
- District-level disparities also indicate that national averages can conceal significant local labour-market weaknesses.

- The findings underline the need to move beyond measuring unemployment alone and examine labour-force participation, quality of employment and access to education and training.

25% youths in 250 districts not in edu or jobs: Survey

In nearly 250 districts, **more than 25% youth (15-29 age group)** are neither engaged in any productive work, nor are they pursuing education or any sort of training for work, highlighting a gap in human capital utilisation, according to the first-ever district-level periodic labour force survey (PLFS) for 2025, released by the statistics ministry on Friday.

Particularly concerning in northern India, especially Bihar, UP, Haryana, Punjab and West Bengal, where nearly two-thirds of districts have around a quarter of the young population categorised as NEET.



1 in 4

youths in nearly 250 districts are **NEET** (not in employment, education or training)



A BRIGHTER TOMORROW FOR EVERY YOUNG INDIAN

LEAST JOBLESS

Districts With Lowest Unemployment Rate (%)

1	S24 Parganas (WB)	0.9
2	Araria (Bihar)	0.9
3	Ahmedabad (Guj)	1.1
4	Surat (Guj)	1.2
5	Bareilly (UP)	1.2
6	Bulandshahr (UP)	1.2
7	Banaskantha (Guj)	1.2
8	Belagavi (K'taka)	1.5
9	Palghar (Maha)	1.5
10	Nanded (Maha)	1.5

*Employment is working for 30 days during last reference year.

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2025, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation
Times of India

Policy

Priorities

- District-specific employment strategies should be developed according to local economic structures and skill requirements.
- Strengthen vocational education, apprenticeships and industry-linked training to improve the transition from education to employment.
- Expand employment opportunities in labour-intensive manufacturing, services, tourism, agriculture-linked industries and emerging sectors.
- Improve women's participation through safe transport, childcare support, flexible work opportunities and measures addressing social barriers.
- Strengthen career counselling, job-matching platforms and local employment exchanges.
- Link skilling programmes with actual local employer demand rather than focusing primarily on enrolment or certification.

- District-level PLFS data can help governments identify high-NEET regions and target employment, education and skilling interventions accordingly.

Way Forward

- India's demographic dividend depends not merely on having a large young population but on converting young people into productive human capital.
- The policy focus should therefore shift from unemployment alone towards a broader framework covering:
 - Education.
 - Skills.
 - Employment.
 - Labour-force participation.
 - Quality and productivity of work.
- Regular district-level labour-market data can enable more targeted policy interventions and improve accountability.
- Reducing the NEET population is essential for inclusive growth, higher productivity and the achievement of India's long-term development objectives.

5.A politics-inflation trade-off has not really tested this govt

Source: The Hindu

Context:

1. The 2024 Electoral "Test"

Contrary to the idea that inflation didn't test the government, the **2024 Lok Sabha results** are widely interpreted as a reflection of rural and semi-urban discontent over the cost of living.

- **The Food Inflation Factor:** In the 12 months leading to the 2019 polls, food inflation was near 0%. In contrast, the 12-month run-up to the 2024 elections saw **retail food inflation** averaging **7.88%**, with items like pulses and vegetables frequently hitting double digits.
- **The "Roti-Dal-Sabzi" Index:** High prices of staples (cereals, pulses, and vegetables) are credited with eroding the incumbent's majority, forcing a shift from a single-party majority to a coalition government.

2. Radical Supply-Side Interventions

The government's aggressive measures to shield consumers reveal how seriously they viewed the political risk of inflation.

- **Export Bans:** To prioritize domestic supply, the government imposed indefinite bans on the export of **wheat (since 2022)**, **non-basmati white rice (since 2023)**, and **onions (extended in 2024)**.
- **The Trade-off for Farmers:** While these bans helped keep urban retail prices from exploding further, they severely impacted rural incomes. Reports suggest these market-restrictive measures cost Indian farmers approximately **₹39,829 crores** in potential earnings, creating a different political headache in agrarian belts.

Key Fact

The Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT) framework mandates the RBI to maintain CPI inflation at 4% with a tolerance band of +/- 2%.

3. Monetary-Fiscal Coordination

The government and the RBI have worked in a unique "lockstep" to manage this trade-off.

- **Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT):** India has maintained one of the lowest deviations from inflation targets globally between 2021 and 2024 compared to advanced economies.
- **Extension of Targets:** In March 2026, the government formally extended the **4% inflation target** for the period until 2031, signaling a commitment to price stability over "easy money" growth, even at the cost of higher interest rates.

Comparison of Eras

The perception that the government hasn't been "tested" often stems from comparing it to the **UPA-II era (2009-2014)**, which saw double-digit headline inflation.

- **Modi 1.0 vs 2.0:** The first term (2014-2019) benefitted from a global collapse in crude oil and commodity prices. The second term (2019-2024) faced external shocks (Russia-Ukraine war, El Niño), making the recent management of inflation a much more proactive political battle

The politics-inflation trade-off did indeed test the government, not through a collapse of the macroeconomy, but through a loss of a parliamentary majority and a forced return to coalition politics as rural voters reacted to stagnant real wages and high food costs.