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# UPSC Lens Daily News Brief

*Curated Current Affairs for UPSC Preparation*

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*7 Topics | Premium Editorial Edition | For Serious UPSC Aspirants*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Today's Current Affairs at a Glance

No.	Topic	Summary	Category	UPSC Relevance
1	<b>Sabarimala Review: SC Nine-Judge Bench on Articles 25 and 26</b>	SC nine-judge bench reviews 2018 Sabarimala ruling on women's entry; examines Articles 25 & 26 interplay.	Polity & Constitution	GS-II   Fundamental Rights, Judiciary
2	<b>Rupee at Record Low; CEA Flags Macroeconomic Imperatives</b>	Rupee hits record low of 95.75/dollar; CEA identifies exchange rate stability as key macroeconomic priority.	Economy	GS-III   Monetary Policy, External Sector
3	<b>India-China-Pakistan: Operation Sindoor and Chinese Technical Support</b>	MEA flags China's on-site technical support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor; raises regional security concerns.	International Relations	GS-II & GS-III   India's Foreign Policy, Security
4	<b>NSAP Old Age Pension Erosion: Impact Assessment Report</b>	MoRD study reveals 45% real erosion in NSAP pensions since 2012; recommends CPI-indexed National Floor Pension.	Social Justice & Welfare	GS-II & GS-III   Social Security, Welfare Schemes
5	<b>States' Capex Loans Linked to Renewable Energy Adoption (SASCI Scheme)</b>	Centre links SASCI capex loans (Rs 2 lakh crore) to states' renewable energy adoption as reform conditionality.	Economy & Environment	GS-II & GS-III   Fiscal Federalism, Energy Policy
6	<b>India-UAE CEPA and Gold Import Challenge</b>	India-UAE CEPA inadvertently boosts gold bullion imports (up 25% in FY26); weakens domestic refining & widens CAD.	Economy & Trade	GS-II & GS-III   Trade Policy, CAD Management
7	<b>PCOS Renamed PMOS: Published in The Lancet</b>	PCOS globally renamed PMOS after 14-year consensus; published in The Lancet; affects 170 million women worldwide.	Science & Health	GS-III   Health, Science & Technology

## DETAILED ANALYSIS

# Topic-wise UPSC Briefing

## TOPIC 1 POLITY &amp; CONSTITUTION

## Sabarimala Review: SC Nine-Judge Bench on Articles 25 and 26

## OVERVIEW

A nine-judge Supreme Court bench headed by CJI Surya Kant is hearing petitions reviewing the 2018 Sabarimala judgment that struck down age-based restrictions on women's entry. The bench is examining the interplay between Article 25 (freedom of religion) and Article 26 (rights of religious denominations), and the limits of state-led social reform under Article 25(2)(b).

## WHY IMPORTANT FOR UPSC

- Directly involves constitutional provisions on religious freedom — Articles 25 and 26 — which are core GS-II topics
- Raises fundamental questions on the boundary between social reform and religious autonomy, relevant to polity and governance
- Nine-judge bench signals constitutional significance; SC's eventual ruling will be a landmark precedent

## STATIC CONCEPTS TO REVISE

- Articles 25, 26, 14, 15 of the Constitution
- Concept of essential religious practices
- Right to Religion vs Right to Equality jurisprudence
- Previous SC judgments: Sabarimala 2018, Shirur Mutt case, Durgah Committee case

## PRELIMS FOCUS

- Article 25(1) — freedom of conscience and free profession of religion
- Article 25(2)(b) — state power to legislate for social reform regarding Hindu institutions
- Article 26 — rights of religious denominations to manage their own affairs
- Distinction between public morality and constitutional morality

## MAINS FOCUS

- GS-II: Can state-mandated social reform override constitutionally protected religious rights? Discuss with reference to Sabarimala.
- GS-II: Examine the tension between Articles 25 and 26, and the role of the judiciary in adjudicating religious reform.

**Keywords:** *Article 25 | Article 26 | Sabarimala | Social Reform | Religious Denominations | Essential Religious Practices | CJI Surya Kant | Nine-Judge Bench | Constitutional Morality*

# Rupee at Record Low; CEA Flags Macroeconomic Imperatives

## OVERVIEW

The Indian rupee hit an all-time low of 95.75 per dollar before closing at 95.63, driven by structural shifts in the global economic order linked to the West Asia conflict. Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran identified halting further rupee depreciation as a central macroeconomic imperative for the current fiscal year, speaking at the CII Annual Business Summit 2026.

## WHY IMPORTANT FOR UPSC

- Exchange rate management and its linkage to Current Account Deficit, inflation, and external sector stability are recurring GS-III themes
- Role of CEA and mechanisms for currency stabilisation are relevant to economic governance
- West Asia conflict as an external shock affecting India's macroeconomic fundamentals is analytically important

## STATIC CONCEPTS TO REVISE

- Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA)
- Role of RBI in exchange rate management
- Current Account Deficit (CAD) and Balance of Payments
- Impact of crude oil prices on the Indian economy

## PRELIMS FOCUS

- Role of the Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) in India's economic policymaking
- Factors determining exchange rate — interest rate differentials, inflation, CAD
- CII (Confederation of Indian Industry) — nature and role

## MAINS FOCUS

- GS-III: Examine the structural vulnerabilities of the Indian rupee to external shocks. What policy tools are available to the government and RBI?
- GS-III: Analyse the impact of the West Asia conflict on India's macroeconomic stability.

**Keywords:** Rupee depreciation | CEA | V. Anantha Nageswaran | Current Account Deficit | CII | Macroeconomic stability | West Asia conflict | Exchange rate

## TOPIC 3 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

# India-China-Pakistan: Operation Sindoor and Chinese Technical Support

## OVERVIEW

India's Ministry of External Affairs called out China for providing on-site technical support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, the Indian counter-terror military offensive launched after the Pahalgam terrorist attack. China's state broadcaster CCTV aired an interview with an engineer from the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) who confirmed providing such support. India stated that nations supporting terrorist infrastructure must reflect on the reputational consequences.

## WHY IMPORTANT FOR UPSC

- India-China-Pakistan strategic triangle is a perennial IR topic in GS-II and GS-III (defence)
- Highlights the role of Chinese defence hardware (J-10CE jets) and dual-use technology in regional conflicts
- India's diplomatic signalling through MEA spokesperson is relevant to understanding foreign policy instruments

## STATIC CONCEPTS TO REVISE

- India-China relations: border disputes, strategic competition, Line of Actual Control
- India-Pakistan relations: cross-border terrorism, Indus Waters Treaty
- Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) and Chinese defence exports
- India's counter-terrorism doctrine

## PRELIMS FOCUS

- J-10CE fighter aircraft — country of origin (China), operator (Pakistan)
- AVIC — Aviation Industry Corporation of China
- Operation Sindoor — context and nature as a counter-terror operation
- MEA spokesperson role in Indian foreign policy communication

## MAINS FOCUS

- GS-II: How does China's military-technical support to Pakistan affect India's security calculus? Evaluate India's diplomatic options.
- GS-III: Assess the implications of Chinese defence technology transfers to Pakistan for regional stability in South Asia.

**Keywords:** *Operation Sindoor | China-Pakistan | AVIC | J-10CE | MEA | Counter-terrorism | India-China relations | Defence technology transfer | Pahalgam attack*

# NSAP Old Age Pension Erosion: Impact Assessment Report

## OVERVIEW

A Ministry of Rural Development-commissioned evaluation found that the Centre's contribution to old age pensions under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) has remained unchanged since 2012 at Rs 200-500 per beneficiary per month. Due to cumulative inflation of approximately 91% between 2012 and 2024, the real value has eroded by nearly 45%. The study recommends introducing a National Floor Pension (NFP) indexed to the Consumer Price Index.

## WHY IMPORTANT FOR UPSC

- NSAP is a major centrally sponsored scheme under the Ministry of Rural Development — frequently tested in Prelims
- The study raises key issues of social security adequacy, inflation indexation, and welfare state obligations relevant to GS-II and GS-III
- The NFP recommendation mirrors the National Floor Level Minimum Wage concept, a useful comparative framework

## STATIC CONCEPTS TO REVISE

- National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) — launched 1995, five sub-schemes
- IGNOAPS, IGNWPS, IGNDPS, NFBS, Annapurna Scheme
- Consumer Price Index (CPI) and inflation measurement
- Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act

## PRELIMS FOCUS

- NSAP launched in 1995 under Ministry of Rural Development
- Five schemes under NSAP: IGNOAPS, IGNWPS, IGNDPS, NFBS, Annapurna
- Current pension amounts: Rs 200 (60-79 years), Rs 500 (80+ years)
- Pension amount last revised in 2012

## MAINS FOCUS

- GS-II: Critically examine the adequacy of India's social pension programmes. Should welfare transfers be indexed to inflation?
- GS-III: Analyse the fiscal and social implications of introducing a National Floor Pension linked to CPI.

**Keywords:** NSAP | IGNOAPS | Old age pension | National Floor Pension | CPI indexation | Social security | Ministry of Rural Development | Welfare erosion

# States' Capex Loans Linked to Renewable Energy Adoption (SASCI Scheme)

## OVERVIEW

The central government has approved a policy linking states' eligibility for interest-free capital expenditure loans under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme to their adoption of renewable energy. The Union Budget 2026-27 allocated Rs 2 lakh crore as 50-year interest-free capex loans to states under SASCI, of which Rs 75,000 crore is untied and the rest is tied to reform performance. Renewable energy adoption is now one of the conditionalities for the tied component.

## WHY IMPORTANT FOR UPSC

- SASCI is a significant fiscal federalism instrument — links Centre-state fiscal transfers to reform incentives, relevant to GS-II (federalism) and GS-III (economy, energy)
- Integrating clean energy targets into fiscal architecture is a key policy innovation for India's energy transition
- Intersection of FRBM Act, state borrowing limits, and central capex support is a recurring examination area

## STATIC CONCEPTS TO REVISE

- Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI)
- Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act — 3% GSDP borrowing ceiling for states
- Centre-state fiscal relations and Finance Commission transfers
- India's renewable energy targets and National Action Plan on Climate Change

## PRELIMS FOCUS

- SASCI — 50-year interest-free loans, Rs 2 lakh crore in Budget 2026-27
- Untied component: Rs 75,000 crore; remainder tied to state reform performance
- FRBM Act — states' net borrowing ceiling at 3% of GSDP
- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy — Minister Pralhad Joshi

## MAINS FOCUS

- GS-III: How can fiscal incentives be used to accelerate India's energy transition? Examine the SASCI-renewable energy linkage.
- GS-II: Evaluate the use of conditionalities in Centre-state capital transfers as a tool for cooperative federalism.

**Keywords:** SASCI | Capex loans | Renewable energy | Fiscal federalism | FRBM Act | Interest-free loans | Clean energy | CII Summit 2026 | Pralhad Joshi

# India-UAE CEPA and Gold Import Challenge

## OVERVIEW

India's gold imports in FY26 surged nearly 25% in value to \$71.97 billion, even as import volumes fell to 721 tonnes, reflecting a sharp rise in gold prices. The India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed in February 2022, is identified as having inadvertently incentivised bullion imports over dore imports by creating a more favourable tariff structure for finished bullion, worsening India's Current Account Deficit. India has only one LBMA-accredited refinery, limiting its ability to add value domestically.

## WHY IMPORTANT FOR UPSC

- India-UAE CEPA is a landmark trade agreement frequently referenced in trade policy discussions — directly relevant to GS-II (bilateral relations) and GS-III (trade)
- Gold imports as a driver of CAD is a standard macroeconomics topic in UPSC GS-III
- The dore vs bullion distinction and domestic value addition angle offer nuanced analytical content

## STATIC CONCEPTS TO REVISE

- Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) — definition, India's CEPAs
- Current Account Deficit — components and management
- London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) and gold refining standards
- Gold dore — definition (semi-pure gold-silver alloy from mine sites)

## PRELIMS FOCUS

- India-UAE CEPA signed February 2022
- Gold dore — semi-pure alloy of gold and silver created at mine sites
- LBMA — London Bullion Market Association; India has only one LBMA-accredited refinery
- Gold import value in FY26: \$71.97 billion (25% rise over FY25)

## MAINS FOCUS

- GS-III: Examine how trade agreements can produce unintended macroeconomic consequences, with reference to India-UAE CEPA and gold imports.
- GS-III: What structural reforms are needed to reduce India's dependence on gold imports and strengthen domestic refining capacity?

**Keywords:** India-UAE CEPA | Gold imports | Current Account Deficit | Gold dore | LBMA | Bullion | Trade deficit | Refining capacity | FY26

# PCOS Renamed PMOS: Published in The Lancet

## OVERVIEW

Following 14 years of global collaboration involving clinicians, researchers, patient groups and professional societies, Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) has been renamed Poly-endocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (PMOS). The change, published in The Lancet, reflects the condition's broader impact across endocrine, metabolic and reproductive systems beyond just ovarian cysts. India was closely involved in the global consensus-building process. PMOS affects approximately one in eight women globally, or over 170 million women.

## WHY IMPORTANT FOR UPSC

- Renaming of a major global health condition published in a premier journal (The Lancet) is relevant to GS-III (science and technology, health)
- India's role in global health consensus-building through organisations like the Indian Society for Assisted Reproduction is noteworthy
- The metabolic dimension links to India's high burden of metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, and diabetes — relevant to health policy

## STATIC CONCEPTS TO REVISE

- Endocrine system — hypothalamus, pituitary, ovarian axis
- Metabolic syndrome — insulin resistance, obesity, diabetes linkages
- The Lancet — peer-reviewed medical journal
- Global health governance and WHO's role in disease classification

## PRELIMS FOCUS

- New name: Poly-endocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (PMOS); old name: PCOS
- Published in The Lancet
- Affects approximately 1 in 8 women globally; over 170 million women
- Prevalence in India: 16-19%
- Monash Centre for Health Research and Implementation — involved in renaming process

## MAINS FOCUS

- GS-III: How does accurate disease nomenclature improve public health outcomes? Discuss with reference to the PCOS-to-PMOS renaming.
- GS-II: Examine the challenges in diagnosing and treating metabolic-endocrine disorders among women in India.

**Keywords:** PMOS | PCOS | Poly-endocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome | The Lancet | Endocrine disorder | Metabolic syndrome | Women's health | Indian Society for Assisted Reproduction