

FACTOMAT.IN

# Current Affairs Monthly Digest

---

UPSC | SSC | Banking | State PSC

Total articles covered: 18

Contents: Current Affairs by Category | Essay | International Relations | Organizations | History | Arts & Culture | Geography

---

Generated on 03 May 2026 | factomat.in

## SECTION A: CURRENT AFFAIRS

---

### AWARDS & HONOURS

---

#### **Sudanese Journalists Awarded UNESCO Press Freedom Prize for War Coverage**

- UNESCO awarded press freedom prize to independent Sudanese journalists' organization
- Award recognizes commitment to accurate, lifesaving information during Sudan's civil war
- Prize highlights importance of independent media in conflict zones
- UNESCO is the UN's educational, scientific and cultural agency
- Award announced on Thursday, emphasizing press freedom as fundamental right

*Memory Trick: UNESCO Press Freedom = Unbiased News Spread Creates Open Forums for all ? Remember: UNESCO protects the 'U' in Unbiased reporting, especially in conflict zones.*

### ECONOMY

---

#### **Government Reduces Export Duty on Diesel and ATF ? Windfall Levy Adjustment 2024**

- Windfall levies on petroleum products first imposed in 2022 during Russia-Ukraine war peak
- Levies completely withdrawn in 2024 as global oil prices stabilized
- Export duty reduction applied specifically to diesel and ATF (Aviation Turbine Fuel)
- Lower export duties aim to boost refining industry competitiveness globally
- Policy reflects India's response to changing geopolitical and energy market conditions

*Memory Trick: Remember 2022-2024: WINDFALL in, then OUT. 2022 = War crisis levy imposed. 2024 = Oil stable levy withdrawn. WAR IN 2022, PEACE IN 2024.*

#### **India Plans 51,000 Crore Ship Procurement Program to Boost Maritime Capacity Amid West Asia Crisis**

- Government allocation: 51,000 crore for procurement of 62 ships
- Ship types include: container vessels, LPG carriers, crude oil tankers, and green tugs
- Reason: Geopolitical tensions disrupting West Asia maritime trade routes
- Focus on environment-friendly vessels aligns with green shipping standards
- Enhances India's maritime infrastructure and global trade resilience

*Memory Trick: 51K for 62 SHIPS: 5-1 = 4 (remember: 51 thousand crore, 62 ships) ? think '5G+ ships' as 5-1=4, adding 2 ships = 62.*

#### **FDI Inflows to Exceed \$90 Billion in FY26, Says DPIIT Secretary Bhatia**

- FDI inflows expected to exceed \$90 billion in FY26, with April February figures already at \$88 billion
- Growth driven by government reforms and progress in free trade agreements
- DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) Secretary announced the projection
- Strong economic growth and improved business environment attract foreign investors
- FDI contributes to job creation, technology transfer, and economic development

*Memory Trick: FY26 = \$90B FDI. Think '90' as 'NINE-ZERO' billion dollars flowing into India through REFORMS and TRADE DEALS.*

### **Eight States Set Fiscal Deficit at 3% of GSDP; UP Surplus, Punjab Most Indebted**

- Eight states, including UP and Bihar, maintain fiscal deficit at 3% or below GSDP
- Uttar Pradesh is revenue-surplus, indicating strong revenue collection exceeding expenditure
- Punjab and Himachal Pradesh face highest debt liabilities among Indian states
- Fiscal deficit target of 3% aligns with India's Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act framework
- State fiscal health directly impacts ability to fund education, healthcare, and infrastructure projects

*Memory Trick: 3% FIT: Fiscal deficit 3% or below = Fiscal discipline, Improved governance, Trillion rupees can be invested in development.*

### **Kevin Warsh to Lead US Federal Reserve in Mid-May as Jerome Powell Remains Influential**

- Kevin Warsh takes over as Federal Reserve Chair in mid-May
- Jerome Powell remains at the Federal Reserve despite stepping down as chair
- Fed officials are divided on monetary policy outlook and interest rate decisions
- Warsh must address internal policy disagreements while establishing leadership credibility
- Powell's continued involvement may complicate Warsh's independent policymaking authority

*Memory Trick: WARSH's Way = When Appointed, Rivals Still at Home ? Remember Warsh takes over in May but Powell stays, making the job harder!*

## **GOVERNMENT SCHEMES**

---

### **Government Launches Panchayat Advancement Index 3.0 to Strengthen Rural Governance and Data-Driven Planning**

- PAI 3.0 rollout scheduled for May 2024/2025 to assess gram panchayat performance
- Index evaluates panchayats using socio-economic indicators aligned with SDGs
- Promotes data-driven decision-making and transparent governance at village level
- Aims to enhance service delivery and accountability in rural local bodies
- Strengthens grassroots planning by measuring village-level development metrics

*Memory Trick: PAI 3.0 = Panchayat Advancement Index 3.0 ? Remember 'Pain to Progress': Village (Gram) Performance Assessment Index Improvement in Services. May launch marks milestone.*

## **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

---

### **Semipalatinsk Treaty Marks 20 Years as Central Asia's Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone**

- Semipalatinsk Treaty signed in 2006 by five Central Asian nations
- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan declared region nuclear-weapon-free
- Semipalatinsk was Soviet Union's primary nuclear weapons testing site before treaty
- Treaty marks 20 years of continuous nuclear-free status in Central Asia
- Agreement strengthens non-proliferation efforts amid rising global nuclear threats

*Memory Trick: SEMIPALATINSK = Soviet Era's Most Important Place At Large Affected To Non-Proliferation ? Signed In Kazakhstan. Remember: 5 countries, 2006 signed, 20 years celebrated (2026).*

### **South Sudan Conflict and Flooding Drive Mass Displacement and Food Insecurity Crisis**

- OCHA reported conflict and flooding driving displacement in South Sudan
- Food insecurity levels rising across the country due to instability
- South Sudan's humanitarian crisis began in 2013 with internal conflict
- Millions of civilians lack access to basic food and shelter
- Natural disasters combining with violence to worsen the crisis

*Memory Trick: OCHA reports on South Sudan's COFF crisis: Conflict, flooding, food insecurity. Remember OCHA = On Crisis Humanitarian Alerts.*

## **UN Warns Against North Korea's Nuclear and Ballistic Missile Development 'Serious Concern' for Global Security**

- North Korea continues developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles despite international sanctions
- UN political affairs chief formally raised this concern at the Security Council meeting
- Multiple UN Security Council resolutions prohibit North Korea's nuclear and missile programs
- The development threatens stability in East Asia, particularly affecting South Korea and Japan
- International sanctions regime remains in place to counter DPRK's weapons advancement

*Memory Trick: DPRK = Danger + Proliferation + Rogue + Korea ? remember North Korea as the 'problem child' of the Security Council, constantly developing banned weapons despite sanctions.*

## **Strait of Hormuz Crisis Threatens Global Economy, UN Chief Warns of Recession Risk**

- UN Secretary-General warns Hormuz crisis could push tens of millions into poverty
- Crisis threatens to trigger global recession and surge in hunger
- Strait of Hormuz is a critical chokepoint for global oil trade and shipping
- Escalating tensions have disrupted international trade flows and economic stability
- Guterres demands urgent diplomatic solutions to end the geopolitical stalemate

*Memory Trick: HORMUZ = Hub Of Risky Maritime and Urgent Zone trade ? remember it handles 25% of world's oil and connects Persian Gulf to global markets.*

## **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

---

### **DAIMON Robotics Launches Daimon-Infinity Dataset for Robot Touch Sensing Technology**

- Daimon-Infinity dataset released in April by DAIMON Robotics
- Contains over 110,000 effective sensing units in a monochromatic vision-based tactile sensor
- Supports tasks ranging from home laundry folding to industrial manufacturing
- Collaborative project involving Google DeepMind, Northwestern University, and NUS
- DAIMON Robotics founded 2.5 years ago, headquartered in Hong Kong

*Memory Trick: DAIMON = Digits AI Making Objects Navigate remember: 110K sensors per finger = robot can FEEL like humans, crucial for delicate factory & home tasks.*

### **Centaur AI Model Memorizes Patterns But Lacks True Understanding, Research Reveals**

- Centaur AI claimed to perform 160 different cognitive tasks mimicking human thinking
- New research proves the model memorizes patterns rather than understanding questions
- Debate continues: Is human mind unified or composed of separate modules?
- AI can replicate performance without achieving true comprehension or understanding
- Findings challenge claims of breakthrough in artificial general intelligence development

*Memory Trick: CAP rule: Centaur AI can Pattern-match but not comprehend. Remember: Performance Understanding in AI.*

### **Juan de Fuca Plate Splitting Beneath Pacific Northwest First Subduction Zone Fragmentation Observed**

- Juan de Fuca plate located beneath the Pacific Northwest is splitting into fragments as it sinks under North America
- Advanced seismic imaging technology enabled scientists to observe the plate fragmentation for the first time
- Plate breaks apart gradually in pieces, not all at once, similar to a slow train derailment
- Discovery explains the origin of ancient oceanic plate fragments found in geological records
- Findings will help refine scientific understanding of earthquake prediction and behavior in subduction zones

*Memory Trick: JdF splits SLOW like a derailed train: Juan de Fuca plate fragments gradually during subduction, explaining ancient plate pieces and improving earthquake understanding.*

### **AI Model Hardware Optimization: Reducing Energy Demands of Large Language Models**

- Meta's Llama latest release contains 2 trillion parameters defining the model
- Larger AI models increase capabilities but also dramatically increase energy demands and carbon footprint
- Current mitigation strategies include using smaller models or lower-precision parameters
- Hardware optimization represents an alternative path to improve AI efficiency
- Better chip design could maintain large model performance while reducing energy consumption

*Memory Trick: AI SIZE-EFFICIENCY TRADE: Scaling UP = More power DOWN (energy use). Hardware fixes = Same power, Less energy = Sustainability WIN.*

### **First FPGA Chip Gets IEEE Milestone Recognition at AMD San Jose Campus**

- IEEE Milestone plaque dedicated on 12 March 2024 at AMD San Jose campus
- FPGA technology introduced iteration to semiconductor design after manufacturing
- FPGAs used in internet routers, wireless base stations, medical scanners, and AI tools
- Reconfigurable chips eliminate need to fabricate entirely new hardware for design changes
- Technology dramatically reduced development risk and accelerated innovation in semiconductor industry

*Memory Trick: FPGA = Field-Programmable = Can be Reconfigured. Think: 'F-P-G-A can be Reprogrammed Again and Again' ? the key insight is it's rewriteable hardware, not one-time fixed design.*

### **Silicon Lottery: GPU Rental Performance Varies Significantly Among Same Models**

- Silicon lottery: phenomenon where identical GPU models show different performance levels
- First documented in 2022 by University of Wisconsin researchers studying supercomputers
- Research conducted by College of William & Mary, Jefferson Lab, and Silicon Data
- Caused by manufacturing variations during chip production processes
- Affects GPU rental pricing and cloud computing performance benchmarks significantly

*Memory Trick: SILICON LOTTERY = Identical chips, Different outcomes. Remember: Same MODEL Same PERFORMANCE. Manufacturing variations make GPUs unpredictable, like rolling dice.*

### **Anthropic's Claude Mythos Preview ? AI Model That Autonomously Finds Software Vulnerabilities**

- Claude Mythos Preview can autonomously find and weaponize software vulnerabilities into functional exploits
- Model identified flaws in critical infrastructure that thousands of expert developers failed to detect
- Anthropic limiting distribution to selected companies only, not releasing to general public
- Vulnerability affects operating systems and internet infrastructure used by millions daily
- Security community expresses concern over lack of detailed information in Anthropic's announcement

*Memory Trick: MYTHOS = Model's Yantra (Tool) That Hunts Overlooked Security flaws ? Remember: Anthropic's Claude finds what humans miss!*

## SECTION B: ENRICHMENT CONTENT

---

### ESSAY WRITING (600 WORDS)

#### India at 100: Vision 2047 and the Road Ahead

---

# India at 100: Vision 2047 and the Road Ahead

India stands at a transformative juncture in its post-independence journey. As the nation celebrates its 75th year of freedom, policymakers and visionaries are contemplating what India should become by 2047, when it completes a century of independence. Vision 2047 represents more than a distant aspiration; it embodies a comprehensive framework for sustainable development, inclusive growth, and global leadership. This vision demands rigorous examination of the pathways available and the challenges that must be overcome. Understanding the interconnected dimensions of economic, social, political, and environmental progress is crucial for charting a credible and achievable roadmap for the next quarter-century.

Economic transformation forms the cornerstone of Vision 2047. To become a developed nation, India must sustain a high growth trajectory while ensuring equitable wealth distribution. Manufacturing sector revitalization through initiatives like Make in India is essential for creating employment and reducing dependence on imports. India's service sector dominance, while commendable, must be balanced with robust industrial capacity that generates skilled employment for the vast workforce. Investment in research and development, particularly in semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology, will position India as a global innovation hub. Infrastructure development, including smart cities, renewable energy, and digital connectivity, requires substantial capital allocation and efficient execution. The transition from an agrarian to a knowledge-based economy necessitates educational reforms that align curriculum with industry requirements. Fiscal discipline and prudent monetary policy will be instrumental in maintaining macroeconomic stability while funding these ambitious initiatives. The goal of India becoming a five-trillion-dollar economy by 2047 is achievable only through sustained policy consistency and institutional strengthening.

Social and human development dimensions are equally critical for Vision 2047. Healthcare accessibility remains a significant challenge despite recent improvements. Achieving universal health coverage requires strengthening primary health infrastructure, especially in rural areas, and ensuring affordability of medicines and treatments. Education quality must improve substantially; India's learning outcomes remain below international benchmarks despite high enrollment rates. Technical and vocational training must reach rural youth to enable meaningful participation in the economy. Gender equality and women's empowerment through education, economic participation, and political representation are fundamental to unlocking India's full potential. Poverty eradication, though substantial progress has been made, demands sustained focus on skills, livelihood creation, and social safety nets. Addressing regional disparities between metropolitan and hinterland areas is essential for social cohesion and national integration. Cultural preservation alongside modernization represents another delicate balance necessary for a pluralistic society.

Environmental sustainability and climate action constitute the third pillar of Vision 2047. India's vulnerability to climate change impacts ranging from erratic monsoons to rising sea levels demands proactive adaptation and mitigation strategies. Achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 requires accelerating renewable energy adoption, phasing out coal dependence gradually, and promoting electric mobility. Water security through river conservation, groundwater management, and efficient irrigation is vital for agricultural sustainability. Circular economy principles must replace linear consumption patterns; waste management and pollution control require stringent implementation of environmental regulations. Biodiversity conservation alongside development activities presents complex trade-offs requiring careful environmental impact assessments. Engaging communities in environmental stewardship ensures behavioral change beyond mere policy mandates.

India's Vision 2047 demands holistic integration of economic prowess, social equity, and environmental stewardship. No single dimension can succeed independently; instead, synergistic development across all spheres will determine success. The roadmap requires institutional strengthening, transparent governance, and sustained political commitment transcending electoral cycles. By 2047, India must demonstrate that democratic nations can achieve inclusive and sustainable development, becoming a beacon for the Global South. This centennial vision is not merely aspirational but an imperative responsibility toward future generations.

---

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### India-ASEAN Relations in the Indo-Pacific Era

---

#### # India-ASEAN Relations in the Indo-Pacific Era

##### ## Background

India and ASEAN have shared historical, cultural, and economic ties spanning centuries. The formal engagement between India and ASEAN began with India's Look East Policy in 1991, which later transformed into the Act East Policy in 2014. This strategic shift recognized ASEAN's centrality in regional architecture and Asia-Pacific stability. India's geographical proximity to Southeast Asia, combined with shared maritime spaces and cultural affinities rooted in ancient Buddhist and Hindu civilizations, created a natural foundation for cooperation. The establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum and subsequent multilateral mechanisms provided structured platforms for dialogue. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, India gradually increased diplomatic presence and economic engagement with individual ASEAN member states and the organization collectively.

##### ## Current Status

India-ASEAN relations have matured into a comprehensive partnership encompassing political, security, economic, and cultural dimensions. In 2022, India and ASEAN elevated their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, signifying deeper commitment. Trade volumes have grown substantially, though remaining below potential, with India now serving as a significant investor in Southeast Asian infrastructure projects. Defense and security cooperation has intensified through joint military exercises, naval collaborations, and defense dialogues. India actively participates in ASEAN-led mechanisms including the East Asia Summit and ASEAN Regional Forum, positioning itself as a key stakeholder in regional architecture. However, the partnership still faces challenges including asymmetrical economic engagement and limited people-to-people connectivity compared to other regional powers.

##### ## India's Position and Interests

India views ASEAN as crucial for balancing regional power dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, countering Chinese dominance, and maintaining freedom of navigation through vital sea lanes. India seeks to strengthen ASEAN unity against external pressures while supporting ASEAN centrality in regional institutions. Economic interests include accessing ASEAN markets, securing energy supplies, and attracting investment in Indian infrastructure. Security concerns revolve around maritime piracy, terrorism, and ensuring stable supply chains through Southeast Asian waters. India also aims to enhance cultural diplomacy by reviving Buddhist heritage sites and strengthening people-to-people exchanges. Additionally, India supports ASEAN's development aspirations through technology transfer and capacity-building initiatives while promoting democratic values and human rights standards.

##### ## Implications and Way Forward

The Indo-Pacific era presents both opportunities and challenges for India-ASEAN relations. India must increase trade competitiveness and match Chinese economic engagement to deepen partnerships. Greater investment in digital infrastructure, renewable energy, and technological cooperation could accelerate mutual development. Regional stability depends on India's ability to strengthen ASEAN consensus on maritime security and uphold international law. Enhanced cultural exchanges and educational scholarships would build lasting people-to-people bonds. India should also facilitate ASEAN's internal unity while respecting its non-alignment principles. Successfully navigating these priorities positions India as an essential counterbalance in maintaining an open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific order.

---

## ORGANIZATIONS IN NEWS

### International Monetary Fund (IMF): Role and Reforms

#### INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF): ROLE AND REFORMS

##### Founding and Purpose

The International Monetary Fund was established in 1944 during the Bretton Woods Conference, alongside the World Bank. Created to promote international monetary cooperation and exchange rate stability, the IMF emerged as nations sought to rebuild their economies following World War II. The organization's founding principle was to facilitate global trade and investment by maintaining orderly foreign exchange arrangements. With headquarters in Washington, D.C., the IMF began operations in 1947 with 29 member countries and has since grown into one of the world's most influential financial institutions.

##### Structure and Membership

The IMF operates through a complex organizational structure comprising the Board of Governors, Executive Board, and Managing Director. The Board of Governors, comprising finance ministers and central bank governors from member countries, holds ultimate decision-making authority. The Executive Board handles day-to-day operations with 24 directors representing member nations and constituencies. Today, the IMF has 190 member countries, reflecting nearly complete global participation. Voting power is distributed based on quota contributions, with the United States holding the largest share, followed by Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.

##### Key Objectives and Recent Activities

The IMF's primary objectives include promoting international monetary cooperation, facilitating balanced growth of trade, and providing temporary financial assistance to members facing balance-of-payments difficulties. Currently, the organization focuses on global economic stability, addressing climate change impacts, and reducing inequality. Recent activities include extending emergency financing to nations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, managing debt sustainability concerns for developing countries, and implementing digital currency initiatives. The IMF has also advocated for higher special drawing rights allocations to enhance liquidity for emerging markets and developing nations during global crises.

##### India's Role or Relationship

India maintains a significant relationship with the IMF as a substantial member economy and borrower nation. India's quota in the IMF has increased over successive reviews, recognizing its growing economic importance. The country has successfully utilized IMF resources during balance-of-payments crises, including major drawing periods in 1981 and 1991. Currently, India focuses on participating actively in IMF policy discussions while maintaining financial independence from IMF programs. India advocates for reforms favoring emerging economies, emphasizing equitable voting power distribution and increased representation in governance structures. The nation contributes to IMF discussions on global financial architecture and development challenges.

---

## HISTORY

# Mauryan Empire: Administration, Economy and Legacy

### MAURYAN EMPIRE: ADMINISTRATION, ECONOMY AND LEGACY

#### Historical Context and Period

The Mauryan Empire emerged in 322 BCE when Chandragupta Maurya established one of ancient India's most powerful dynasties, following the collapse of the Nanda Empire. This empire flourished during the Iron Age, a period marked by significant political consolidation in the Indian subcontinent. The empire expanded rapidly across most of India, excluding the southern regions, establishing its capital at Pataliputra in present-day Bihar. The Mauryan period lasted approximately 137 years, ending around 185 BCE. This era represented a watershed moment in Indian history, transitioning from smaller regional kingdoms to a centralized, bureaucratic state. The empire's emergence coincided with the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, religions that profoundly influenced contemporary society and administration.

#### Key Figures and Events

Chandragupta Maurya founded the empire with assistance from his political advisor Kautilya, whose famous treatise Arthashastra outlined sophisticated administrative principles. Emperor Ashoka, Chandragupta's grandson, became the empire's most celebrated ruler after witnessing the horrors of the Kalinga War in 261 BCE. This transformative event prompted Ashoka to renounce violence and embrace Buddhism, subsequently spreading the religion throughout Asia. Ashoka's conversion marked a significant ideological shift, as he implemented governance based on dharma or righteous conduct rather than military conquest. His edicts, inscribed on pillars and rocks across the empire, communicated moral and administrative directives to his subjects. These edicts remain invaluable historical sources, providing insights into contemporary concerns including animal welfare, religious tolerance, and public health.

#### Significance and Legacy

The Mauryan Empire's administrative innovations established enduring governance models for subsequent Indian dynasties. Kautilya's Arthashastra became the definitive text on political economy and statecraft, emphasizing espionage networks, tax collection systems, and military organization. The empire's monetary economy, extensive trade networks, and standardized weights and measures represented remarkable economic sophistication. Ashoka's concept of welfare state governance influenced Buddhist political thought across Asia. The empire's architectural achievements, including its famous lion capital symbolizing democratic values, became iconic representations of Indian civilization. The administrative infrastructure developed during this period laid foundations for bureaucratic systems lasting centuries.

#### Contemporary Relevance for UPSC

Understanding the Mauryan Empire remains essential for UPSC aspirants preparing for history components. Ashoka's edicts represent crucial primary sources for ancient Indian history examinations. The Arthashastra's principles regarding taxation, administration, and economic policy directly relate to governance and public administration segments. Questions frequently address Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism, the Kalinga War's significance, and administrative mechanisms. The empire's economic systems, including trade and currency, feature prominently in history papers. Additionally, Mauryan art and architecture connect to cultural studies sections, while administrative structures exemplify governance models applicable to contemporary discussions about state formation and institutional development in Indian administration courses.

---

## INDIAN ARTS AND CULTURE

### Classical Dance Forms of India: An Overview

---

#### # Classical Dance Forms of India: An Overview

##### History and Origin

Indian classical dance forms are ancient art traditions with roots spanning thousands of years. They originated in temples and royal courts as spiritual and entertainment practices. The earliest references appear in Sanskrit texts like *Natyashastra*, written by Bharata Muni around 2000 years ago. Each regional dance form evolved distinctly, influenced by local culture, music, and philosophical beliefs. These dances were initially performed by devadasis in temples before becoming secular entertainment. The British colonial period nearly suppressed these traditions, but Indian freedom fighters and cultural enthusiasts revived them during the twentieth century, establishing classical dance as a prestigious art form.

##### Key Features and Regional Variations

Classical Indian dances share fundamental elements including mudras (hand gestures), rasa (emotional expressions), and rhythmic patterns synchronized with classical music. The eight primary classical forms include Bharatanatyam from Tamil Nadu, Kathak from North India, Kathakali from Kerala, Odissi from Odisha, Kuchipudi from Andhra Pradesh, Mohiniyattam from Kerala, Manipuri from Manipur, and Sattriya from Assam. Bharatanatyam emphasizes precise hand movements and facial expressions, while Kathak features rapid footwork and storytelling. Kathakali combines elaborate costumes with dramatic movements, and Odissi showcases fluid, sculptural postures. Each form employs specific drum patterns, musical instruments, and costumes reflecting regional aesthetics and cultural values.

##### UNESCO Recognition and National Importance

The Indian government has recognized these classical forms as significant cultural heritage. UNESCO acknowledges them as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. These dances are integral to India's cultural identity and diplomatic representation worldwide. They feature prominently in national celebrations and cultural festivals. Educational institutions offer formal training and degrees in classical dance forms. The government provides patronage through cultural ministries and supports performances at prestigious venues. These traditions contribute substantially to cultural tourism and national pride.

##### Current Status, Challenges and Government Initiatives

Contemporary classical dance thrives among dedicated practitioners and increasingly younger generations. However, challenges persist including limited funding, declining temple patronage, and competition from modern entertainment. Training requires long-term commitment and significant resources, deterring many students. Government initiatives include establishing dance academies, providing scholarships, and organizing national festivals. The Ministry of Culture funds performances and research. Television programs and online platforms have expanded accessibility. Despite modernization pressures, classical dance remains vibrant through dedicated artists, institutional support, and growing global appreciation. Balancing tradition preservation with contemporary relevance remains crucial for sustainable growth and transmission to future generations.

---

## GEOGRAPHY

### Western Ghats: Biodiversity Hotspot and Conservation

#### WESTERN GHATS: BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT AND CONSERVATION

##### Physical Features and Location

The Western Ghats, also known as the Sahyadri Mountains, stretch approximately 1,600 kilometers along the western coast of India, running from Gujarat in the north to Kerala in the south. This ancient mountain range forms a natural boundary between the coastal plains and the Deccan Plateau, with elevations ranging from 300 to 2,700 meters above sea level. The region experiences significant monsoon rainfall, particularly during the southwest monsoon season from June to September, creating a unique tropical and subtropical climate. The terrain is characterized by steep slopes, deep valleys, and numerous rivers that originate from these mountains. The forests here display remarkable vertical stratification, transitioning from tropical evergreen forests at lower elevations to grasslands at higher altitudes, creating distinct ecological zones with unique climatic conditions.

##### Economic and Ecological Importance

The Western Ghats possess immense ecological significance, hosting approximately 30 percent of India's plant and animal species despite covering only 5 percent of the country's land area. The region is home to over 7,000 plant species, with nearly half being endemic, meaning they exist nowhere else on Earth. The mountains provide crucial ecosystem services including water regulation, carbon sequestration, and soil conservation that benefit millions of people. The region supports diverse wildlife including endangered species like the Nilgiri tahr, lion-tailed macaque, and Asian elephant. Economically, the Western Ghats sustain livelihoods through agriculture, particularly spice plantations, coffee and tea estates, and timber resources. Additionally, the region's natural beauty supports tourism and recreation activities that generate significant revenue for local communities.

##### Environmental Concerns and Challenges

The Western Ghats face mounting environmental pressures from rapid urbanization, deforestation, and agricultural expansion. Mining activities, particularly for laterite and bauxite, destroy critical forest habitats and alter water systems. Climate change threatens species adapted to specific temperature and humidity ranges, forcing migration or extinction. Invasive species disrupt native ecosystems, competing with endemic plants and animals. Infrastructure development including roads, dams, and power projects fragments wildlife corridors, isolating populations and reducing genetic diversity. Pollution from agricultural runoff and urban settlements contaminates water sources, affecting both aquatic biodiversity and human health.

##### Related Current Affairs and Government Initiatives

In 2012, the entire Western Ghats region was recognized as a biodiversity hotspot worthy of UNESCO World Heritage status consideration. The Indian government has established several protected areas including national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel recommended strict conservation measures, though implementation remains challenging. Current initiatives focus on sustainable forestry practices, eco-tourism development, and community-based conservation programs. The government continues promoting alternative livelihoods for forest-dependent communities while strengthening enforcement against illegal activities and promoting habitat restoration projects.

---

---

## factomat.in ??? Unique Way to Prepare Current Affairs

UPSC | SSC | Banking | State PSC

April 2026 Edition | factomat.in