



**NAMAN SHARMA**  
IAS ACADEMY

# Daily

# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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**Offline Centre Location:**

SCO 173-174, Sector 17C, Chandigarh

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# 1. UIDAI to expand full-service Aadhaar centres to 473 by September: CEO

## Why in the News?

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has announced plans to expand the number of full-service Aadhaar enrolment and update centres for adults from the current 88 to 473 by September 2026. UIDAI CEO Bhuvnesh Kumar said that the move aims to improve accessibility for adults who currently have limited options compared to children, who can enrol at post offices. He also warned that parents who falsify their children's date of birth during Aadhaar enrolment may face criminal action, citing a recent High Court-ordered FIR.



## Background

- Aadhaar is a 12-digit unique identity number issued by UIDAI.
- It serves as a key identity document linked to welfare delivery, financial inclusion, and verification services.
- While children can be enrolled easily via post offices, adult enrollees currently have very few full-service centres.
- Some updates (like address) can be done online, but biometrics, name changes beyond limits, and certain corrections require physical visits.
- Due to concerns over illegal immigration, the UIDAI has recently begun issuing Aadhaar cards to adults only after conducting field verification by the district administration.
- Foreign nationals residing in India, including Overseas Citizens of India (OCI), are eligible for Aadhaar as it is not a proof of citizenship.

## Features

## Centre Expansion Goal

- Increase full-service adult Aadhaar centres from 88 to 473 by September 2026.
- Ensure at least one such centre in every two districts.

## Improved Accessibility

- Reduce the need for adults to travel across districts for enrolment or biometric updates.

## Full-Service Operations

- Enrolment
- Biometric updates
- Name/date-of-birth corrections (within UIDAI rules)

## Technology Integration

- UIDAI is working with Google to map Aadhaar centres for easier geographic navigation.

## Data Integrity Measures

- Restrictions on date-of-birth changes
  - One correction allowed through affidavit
  - Multiple DOB changes are restricted

## Field Verification for Adults

- Particularly due to immigration concerns
- Applies to NRIs, OCI cardholders, and other foreign residents

## Legal Accountability

- False DOB claims may attract criminal action
- Courts have begun directing FIRs in such cases

## Challenges

### Administrative Burden

- Field verification requires coordination with district authorities.
- This may delay genuine applications.

### Population Scale

- Even a small percentage of adult applicants translates to lakhs of citizens.

### Data Accuracy vs Flexibility

- Restricting DOB changes prevents fraud
- But genuine clerical mistakes may become difficult to correct.

### Geographic & Digital Divide

- Rural and remote residents still face access barriers
- Many still lack digital literacy to update their Aadhaar online.

### Legal & Ethical Concerns

- Criminalising DOB errors may disproportionately impact lower-income families.
- Concerns about privacy and surveillance persist in public discourse.

## Way Forward

### Balanced Verification Framework

- Strong fraud controls
- But with grievance redressal for genuine applicants

### Awareness Campaigns

- **Educate citizens about:**
  - Correct enrolment procedures
  - Limits on DOB/name changes
  - Legal consequences of falsification

### Strengthening Digital Services

- Improve secure online update mechanisms
- Reduce the need for physical visits where possible

### Citizen-Centric Approach

- **Ensure systems do not exclude:**
  - Migrants
  - Elderly
  - Persons with disabilities
  - NRIs/OCI

residents

### Conclusion

The UIDAI's plan to expand full-service Aadhaar centres marks a major step toward greater accessibility and data integrity in India's identity ecosystem. By improving physical infrastructure while tightening verification and correction rules, the initiative seeks to balance ease of enrolment with security and authenticity. However, the policy must remain citizen-centric, ensuring that safeguards against fraud do not unintentionally burden genuine applicants, especially in a country where even a small percentage represents millions of individuals.

## 2. Invasive mosquito species threatens India's 2030 malaria elimination goal

### Why in the News?

The Health Ministry's "Malaria Elimination Technical Report, 2025" has warned that the spread of the invasive mosquito species *Anopheles stephensi*, now firmly established in major Indian cities such as Delhi, poses a serious threat to India's target of eliminating malaria by 2030 and achieving zero indigenous malaria cases by 2027.



## Background

- India has achieved major success in malaria control, reducing reported cases from **11.7 lakh in 2015 to about 2.27 lakh in 2024**, alongside a 78% decline in malaria deaths.
- Despite this progress, malaria transmission persists in concentrated pockets, particularly in:
  - Odisha
  - Tripura
  - Mizoram
  - Northeastern border districts (linked to cross-border influx from Myanmar and Bangladesh)
- The country has moved into the pre-elimination phase, meaning malaria is no longer widespread but persists in localised hotspots.
- Challenges such as population movement, difficult terrain, and asymptomatic infections continue to fuel residual transmission.

## Features

### Rise of Urban Malaria

- Traditionally, malaria was largely rural.
- Now, urban malaria is rising sharply due to *Anopheles stephensi*.

### Why *Anopheles stephensi* is Dangerous

- It thrives in urban environments
- Breeds in artificial water containers:
  - tanks
  - tyres
  - storage drums
  - construction sites

### **Efficiently transmits both:**

- Plasmodium falciparum
- Plasmodium vivax

### **Expands risk to densely populated metropolitan areas, where:**

- Healthcare is fragmented
- Sanitation challenges persist
- slum clusters create persistent breeding grounds

### **Persistent High-Burden Tribal & Border Areas**

- Active surveillance continues in:
  - forest regions
  - migrant population zones
  - border districts where residual transmission remains high.

### **Surveillance Priority Areas Identified**

- Strengthening surveillance
- Enhancing vector monitoring
- Ensuring uninterrupted supply chains for diagnostics & treatment

## **Challenges**

### **Urban Vector Control Complexity**

- Container-based breeding makes elimination difficult.
- Informal settlements hinder sanitation coverage.
- 

### **Inconsistent Private-Sector Reporting**

- Under-reporting distorts the real disease burden.

### **Limited Entomological Capacity**

- Shortage of trained vector-control specialists.

### **Drug & Insecticide Resistance**

- Threatens the effectiveness of current control tools.

### **Operational Barriers in Remote Areas**

- Difficult terrain
- Low health-system penetration
- Tribal & forest populations

### **Supply-Chain Gaps**

- Occasional shortages of diagnostics and medicines.

### **Population Movement & Cross-Border Transmission**

- Especially across the Myanmar & Bangladesh borders.

## **Way Forward**

### **City-Specific Malaria Control Plans**

- Tailored interventions for metro regions

- Target container breeding & construction-site habitats

### **Strengthening Surveillance**

- Real-time data reporting
- Private-sector integration
- Case-based tracking in pre-elimination areas

### **Boost Entomological Capacity**

- Train workforce in mosquito identification & behavior
- Expand urban vector monitoring networks

### **Ensure Supply Chain Reliability**

- Zero stock-out policy for diagnostics & ACTs

### **Operational Research**

- Monitor resistance trends
- Evaluate new vector-control technologies

### **Border & Migrant Health Strategies**

- Cross-border cooperation
- Mobile diagnostic & treatment units

### **Community Behaviour Change**

- Promote safe water storage
- Regular cleaning of containers
- Public awareness on symptoms & testing

### **Conclusion**

India has achieved remarkable success in reducing malaria, but the rapid spread of *Anopheles stephensi* has fundamentally altered the malaria landscape, shifting the burden into urban centres. To stay on course for the 2027 zero-indigenous-case milestone and the 2030 elimination target, the country must re-prioritise urban surveillance, strengthen health-system response, and build entomological expertise, while sustaining gains in tribal and border regions.

## **3. Decoding air pollution concerns in Delhi-NCR**

### **Why in the News?**

Delhi-NCR continues to experience severe air pollution, with vehicular emissions being the primary contributor to PM<sub>2.5</sub> and toxic gases. Yet, public discourse and even judicial opinion often blame stubble-burning farmers in neighbouring States for worsening air quality. This has renewed debate on the Polluter Pays Principle (PPP) and its applicability to complex, transboundary pollution.



## Background

- Polluter Pays Principle (PPP): Polluters should bear the cost of environmental damage.
- Recognised in Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum vs Union of India (1996) as part of Indian law.
- Incorporated in the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.
- However, air pollution involves multiple point and non-point sources, and pollution often crosses administrative or national borders, making liability attribution difficult.
- Courts in India have largely used PPP to award compensation and environmental restoration, aligning it more with corrective justice than strict liability-based cost internalisation.

## Features

### Proportional Liability Matters

- The Standley case (ECJ, 1999) added proportionality to PPP.
- Farmers cannot be solely blamed for pollutants also caused by urban-industrial activities.

### Air Pollution is transboundary

- Influenced by regional and global atmospheric circulation.
- The landmark Trail Smelter case (1941) recognised cross-border liability.
- International treaties like:
  - CLRTAP (1979)
  - ASEAN Haze Agreement (2002)
- PM2.5 was recognised as a long-range pollutant in the 2012 Gothenburg Protocol amendment.

### Shift Towards “Government-Pays Principle”

- Judiciary focuses on government-led monitoring and mitigation.
- Victims rarely litigate individually.
- Emphasis on welfare-maximising intervention, not full cost internalisation.

### Weak Institutional Enforcement

- Authorities under environmental laws exist, but face administrative lapses.

- Courts increasingly intervene.

## Challenges

- **Attribution complexity:** Multiple sources → difficult to assign liability fairly.
- **Judicial ambiguity:** No clear valuation method for environmental damage.
- **Implementation Gaps:** Regulatory authorities lack capacity and coordination.
- **Trans-boundary dimension ignored:** Policy remains largely city-centric.
- **PPP diluted:** Government bears the clean-up burden instead of the polluters.
- Citizens' environmental duties are under-discussed.

## Way Forward

- Develop scientifically credible apportionment frameworks for pollution responsibility.
- Strengthen institutional capacity and independent monitoring.
- Enhance regional cooperation for cross-border air quality management.
- Re-align PPP so that:
  - Polluters (industrial, vehicular, construction, waste burning) internalise costs.
- Public awareness of shared environmental duties.
- Judicial policy clarity on damage valuation and liability principles.

## Conclusion

Air pollution in Delhi-NCR is a multi-source, trans-boundary phenomenon, not reducible to a single cause such as stubble burning. While Indian courts formally uphold the Polluter Pays Principle, in practice the burden has shifted to the State, creating a “government-pays principle”. A more balanced regime is needed, combining proportional liability, institutional reform, and regional cooperation to ensure genuine cost internalisation and public health protection.

## 4. Centre raises H-1B interview cancellation issue with U.S.

### Why in the News?

Thousands of scheduled H-1B visa interviews for Indian applicants in mid-December were abruptly postponed by several months by U.S. authorities. India has formally raised concerns with the U.S. Government regarding the disruption faced by affected applicants.



## Background

- H-1B visa allows U.S. companies to employ foreign professionals in speciality occupations.
- A significant proportion of H-1B holders are Indian IT and STEM professionals.
- The U.S. recently postponed scheduled interviews to allow additional scrutiny, including of social media activity and online profiles.
- Many interviews have now been shifted to May 2026, causing uncertainty.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has received several complaints and is engaging U.S. authorities to minimise disruption.

## Features

### Mass postponement

- Applicants scheduled from December 15 onwards
- Received emails informing them of delays
- Some have been pushed back by several months

### Reason cited

- More detailed vetting
- Review of social media and digital presence

### Government response

- India has flagged concerns in New Delhi and Washington DC
- MEA spokesperson stressed that visa policy is a sovereign decision, but disruptions affecting Indian nationals remain a concern.

### Impact

- Applicants face career, financial, and travel uncertainty
- Return to U.S. employment is delayed.

### Challenges

- Administrative uncertainty for professionals and employers

- Economic implications for tech workers and companies dependent on them
- Backlog expansion at U.S. missions
- Diplomatic sensitivity - balancing cooperation with raising concerns
- Perception of stricter screening particularly affecting Indian applicants

## Way Forward

- Continued India–U.S. diplomatic engagement to streamline processing
- Clearer communication and transparency from U.S. visa authorities
- Explore priority processing windows for affected applicants
- Strengthen consular support systems for Indian workers abroad
- Long-term dialogue on mobility frameworks under strategic partnerships

## Conclusion

The abrupt postponement of H-1B visa interviews has affected thousands of Indian professionals, delaying their travel and employment plans. While visa policy remains a sovereign matter, India has urged the U.S. to reduce disruptions and ensure smoother processing. The issue highlights the broader need for predictable and collaborative mobility arrangements between the two strategic partners

## 5. Centre's experts had failed to define Aravallis for over a year before SC warning

### Why in the News?

The Supreme Court (SC) recently criticised the Centre after multiple expert committees failed for over a year to arrive at a uniform technical definition of the Aravalli hill range. Only after the SC warned of contempt action did a new sub-committee submit a definition, one that critics say prioritises mineral-policy goals and mining interests over ecological protection.

### Background

- Aravalli Range: One of the world's oldest mountain systems, stretching **~700 km across Delhi–Haryana–Rajasthan–Gujarat.**
- It plays a key role in:
  - preventing desertification
  - groundwater recharge
  - biodiversity support
  - climate moderation in NCR.
- In 2024, the SC constituted a multi-agency Committee, including the Environment Ministry, Forest Survey of India (FSI), Geological Survey of India (GSI), and State Forest Departments, to evolve a uniform definition of what constitutes the Aravallis.
- Difficulties arose because:

- Not all Aravalli formations are steep hills.
- Many degraded hills and low-relief structures still serve ecological roles.
- The Forest Survey of India (2010) earlier used slope-based criteria (not height).
- Despite several meetings, experts could not agree on common criteria.



## Features

### Failure of Committees

- Three committees deliberated for over a year.
- Used satellite imagery and technical mapping.
- Still could not finalise a scientifically uniform definition.

### SC Warning Triggered Action

- On August 12, 2025, SC warned of contempt action.
- A new sub-committee was formed in August 2025.

### Shift in Approach

- Instead of defining Aravallis solely on scientific/ecological grounds, the new panel sought to “balance” ecological protection with the National Mineral Policy (2019).
- The policy emphasises mining of critical minerals for economic growth.

### Controversial Outcome

- The final definition is alleged to only protect hills above 100 metres.
- This leaves a majority of the Aravalli formations, especially low-height hills, open to mining.

### Internal Expert Disagreements

- FSI and Survey of India objected to defining hills based only on slope and elevation, noting:
  - Not all Aravalli areas are hilly.
    - Not all hilly terrain in the region belongs to the Aravalli system.
- They recommended broader morphometric criteria—but consensus never emerged.

### Mining Interests Highlighted

- The Committee report explicitly cited high potential for critical minerals in the Aravalli belt.
- Called for a framework supporting “systematic, scientific and sustainable exploitation.”

## **Challenges**

### **Ecological degradation risk**

- Large sections may now legally be open to mining and quarrying.

### **Groundwater depletion & desertification**

- The Aravallis act as a natural barrier preventing the Thar desert expansion.

### **Loss of biodiversity & climate regulation**

- Especially around NCR.

### **Policy conflict**

- Conservation vs. economic/mineral-extraction priorities.

### **Lack of scientific consensus**

- No uniform geomorphological criteria.

### **Judicial pressure indicates governance lapses**

- Delayed decision-making despite SC direction.

## **Way Forward**

### **Adopt a precautionary ecological-first definition**

- Recognise all geomorphological Aravalli formations, not only tall hills.

### **Independent scientific mapping**

- Led by neutral institutions with transparent criteria.

### **Zonal regulation**

- Strict no-mining zones in fragile and recharge-critical areas.

### **Strengthen monitoring & enforcement**

- Combat illegal mining.

### **Align mineral policy with environmental safeguards**

- Including cumulative impact assessments.

### **Community-involved conservation**

- Given livelihood dependence and eco-tourism potential.

## **Conclusion**

The Aravalli range is a critical ecological shield for North-Western India. The prolonged failure to define it scientifically-and the eventual tilt toward a mining-friendly framework- raises serious environmental governance concerns. A science-based, conservation-centric approach, backed by

judicial oversight and transparent policymaking, is essential to ensure that short-term mineral gains do not undermine long-term ecological security.

## 6. Analyse past year's terror cases and boost capabilities, says Shah

### Why in the News?

At the Anti-Terrorism Conference 2025 organised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in New Delhi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah urged Central and State security agencies to analyse all terrorist incidents from the past year-in India and globally to strengthen India's counter-terrorism preparedness, particularly against technology-enabled radicalisation and attacks.



### Background

#### Terror threats in India have evolved:

- Cross-border terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir
- Radicalisation via digital platforms
- Nexus between organised crime and terrorism

#### India has strengthened:

- NIA mandate
- UAPA framework
- multi-agency coordination
- Notable recent incidents include the April 22 Pahalgam (Baisaran Valley) terror attack, which targeted communal harmony and disrupted tourism recovery in Kashmir.

- The conference gathered senior police officials, Central agencies, legal and forensic experts, and technology specialists.

## Features

### Analyse Past Terror Case

- Agencies should study domestic and global terror incidents of the past year
- Objective: Anticipate invisible/ emerging threats and enhance response capability.

### Technology-Driven Terrorism

- Terror groups increasingly use:
  - encrypted platforms
  - AI tools
  - cross-border financial networks
- India must be future-ready.

### Databases & Tools Launched

- Updated NIA Crime Manual
- Organised Crime Network Database
- Lost/Looted & Recovered Weapon Database
- Aim: strengthen intel-led policing.

### Organised Crime–Terror Nexus

- Local crime gangs evolve into terror financing channels when leaders settle abroad.
- Urged States to use NIA-CBI-IB guidance to dismantle such networks.

### Praise for Recent Investigations

- Pahalgam & Delhi blast probes termed “outstanding examples of watertight investigation”.

### Common ATS Structure

- NIA has proposed a uniform national Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) framework.
- All States urged to adopt it quickly.

### Integrated National Tech-Data Framework

- Current systems work in silos—like “a gun without bullets”.
- Need for seamless national-level integration
- Central agencies + States
- Greater use of NATGRID.

## Challenges

- Rapid technological innovation by terror outfits
- Data fragmentation across agencies
- Cross-border safe havens for gang leaders
- Legal and jurisdictional complexities
- Need for uniform SOPs across States
- Risk of communal polarisation after attacks

## Way Forward

### Nationwide ATS standardisation

- common training, tech, intelligence and protocols

### Integrated intelligence platforms

- full operationalisation of NATGRID & inter-agency data fusion

### Advanced forensic + cyber capabilities

- AI-assisted analysis, crypto-trace, dark-web monitoring

### Strengthen terror-finance tracking

- choke extortion-terror pipelines

### Continuous case-study-based learning

- annual national review mechanism

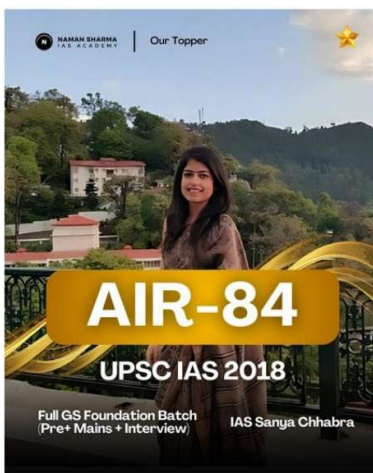
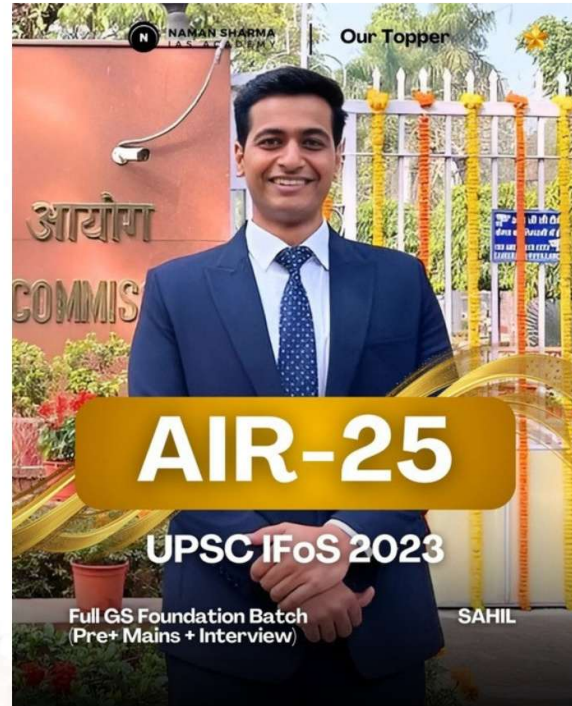
### Community-based vigilance

- counter-radicalisation via outreach programs

## Conclusion

The call to analyse all terror incidents and modernise investigative frameworks reflects India's shift toward intelligence-driven, technology-enabled counter-terrorism. With rising digital-era threats and organised crime-terror linkages, integrated data systems, uniform ATS structures, and proactive inter-agency coordination are critical to safeguarding national security while preserving social harmony.

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