

The Baby Trade Under the Guise of Surrogacy: A Deepening Crisis

Introduction & Background

India, once a global destination for commercial surrogacy due to affordable medical procedures and lax regulation, has in recent years attempted to clamp down on unethical practices. The enactment of the **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021** and the **Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021** marked a significant policy shift, banning commercial surrogacy and introducing controls over fertility treatments. Yet, a shocking 2024 incident in Secunderabad exposed the thriving underground market of baby-selling disguised as legal surrogacy and IVF, bringing to light the grim underbelly of India's fertility industry.

Relevance: GS Paper 2 – Social Justice; GS Paper 3 – Internal Security (Organised Crime)

The Secunderabad Case: Anatomy of a Scam

- A couple from Rajasthan was conned into paying ₹30 lakh for a baby, who was biologically unrelated to them—DNA tests confirmed deliberate fraud.
- Police investigations at **Universal Srushti Fertility Centre** unearthed a criminal network involving forged medical documents, unlicensed operations, and a chain of egg/sperm donors and surrogate mothers.
- The clinic ran without official approval, blatantly violating both the Surrogacy and ART Acts.
- Women—mostly from poor states—were coerced into surrogacy, not paid as promised, and in some cases abandoned after delivery.
- A woman from Odisha died while fleeing an attempted sexual assault, revealing the physical and sexual exploitation at play.
- The racket spanned multiple states, suggesting the operation was not an isolated act but a part of a **systematic, tech-enabled trafficking network**.

Governance and Social Justice Dimensions

- The incident reflects a **serious enforcement gap** in implementing the 2021 surrogacy and ART laws.
- Weak oversight by **State Appropriate Authorities** enabled unlicensed facilities to operate with impunity.
- Coordination failures between police, medical councils, and health regulators allowed exploitation to go unchecked.
- The incident exposes **systemic exploitation of poor women**, treated not as individuals with rights, but as reproductive vessels.
- Violations include the **right to dignity**, reproductive autonomy, and child protection laws.

Science, Technology & Internal Security Implications

- Misuse of ART and IVF stemmed from the absence of **real-time monitoring** of gamete usage and parental linkage.
 - The lack of safeguards like **RI Witness technology** facilitated identity manipulation and parentage fraud.
 - This case illustrates how **cutting-edge reproductive technology**, in the absence of ethical protocols, can be hijacked for child trafficking.
 - Reflects a disturbing trend of **organized crime infiltrating healthcare systems**, aided by digital loopholes.
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Societal Dimensions

- The episode demonstrates how **medical tourism** and the **commodification of childbirth** distort ethical boundaries and social norms.
 - Surrogacy, once seen as a tool for women's empowerment, turned into an exploitative practice under economic duress and without informed consent.
 - It underscores the intersection of **class, gender, and regional disparities**, with the most vulnerable bearing the heaviest burden.
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Ethics and Integrity Dimensions

- The fertility doctor, with a documented history of misconduct, was able to resume practice—exposing the absence of **long-term accountability** in medical governance.
 - Violations include breach of **informed consent**, failure of **non-maleficence**, and disregard for medical integrity.
 - Brokers, hotels, and clinics acted in collusion, indicating a widespread **erosion of ethical standards** in both public and private institutions.
 - Reducing children to commercial products strikes at the heart of **human dignity** and the sanctity of reproductive healthcare.
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Legal and Policy Aspects

- The clinic breached key provisions of the **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021**, particularly the blanket ban on commercial surrogacy.
 - It also violated the **ART Act, 2021**, which mandates licensing, donor transparency, and gamete traceability.
 - Under the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023**, criminal charges include conspiracy, human trafficking, forgery, and organized fraud (Sections 61, 316, 335, 336, 340).
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Recommendations: A Way Forward

- Establish a **real-time, Aadhaar-integrated national registry** for ART and surrogacy clinics to improve traceability and regulatory oversight.
- Make **digital gamete-tracking tools** like **RI Witness** compulsory in all fertility clinics.
- Strengthen the **State Appropriate Authorities** with greater funding, trained inspectors, and inter-state coordination protocols.
- Set up **fast-track courts** to handle ART/surrogacy violations for quicker justice.
- Create a **victim compensation mechanism** for surrogate mothers and defrauded parents.
- Promote **whistleblower protection frameworks** and enable community-based reporting within medical zones.

Conclusion

The Secunderabad surrogacy scam stands as a stark reminder that legal frameworks alone are not enough. In the absence of ethical vigilance, technological safeguards, and administrative diligence, even well-intentioned laws can be subverted. As reproductive healthcare evolves, India must adopt a **multi-pronged strategy** — combining legal reform, tech-enabled regulation, institutional strengthening, and value-based medical practice — to uphold reproductive justice and restore public confidence in the system.

Tamil Nadu's Education Model: Driving Social Mobility Through State Support

Introduction and Context

Tamil Nadu stands out for its steadfast commitment to inclusive education, leveraging policy continuity and social justice principles to uplift historically disadvantaged communities. A recent milestone reinforces this legacy—**135 students from Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Schools** have earned admission to India's premier academic institutions. This achievement is the result of deliberate governance choices that prioritize equity over exclusivity.

Relevance: GS Paper 2 – Governance, Education, Social Justice

Historical Foundations of Education-Led Inclusion

As early as the **1920s**, Tamil Nadu (then Madras Presidency) pioneered education as a tool for social engineering:

- **1920:** India's first **mid-day meal scheme** launched in Chennai.
- **1921:** Introduction of the **Communal Government Order**, reserving access to education and employment for backward communities.

These initiatives, driven by the **Justice Party**, laid the groundwork for a welfare-oriented state.

Flagship Policies Driving Access

Policy/Scheme	Objective
Expanded Mid-Day Meal	Enhance attendance and child nutrition
Free Breakfast Scheme (2022)	Address morning hunger, especially in rural households
Pudhumai Penn Thittam	Monthly ₹1,000 support to encourage girls' higher education
Illam Thedi Kalvi	Community-based learning recovery post-pandemic
Hostel & Scholarship Schemes	Financial and residential support for remote students

Recent Achievements (2025 Snapshot)

- **135 marginalized students** secured seats in **IITs, NITs, NLUs, NIFTs**, and top-tier universities.
- All **6 ST-reserved seats** at **Rajiv Gandhi National Aviation University** were secured by Tamil Nadu students.
- Students were awarded laptops and merit certificates, recognizing both talent and systemic support.

Administrative Interventions Enabling These Outcomes

- **Coaching Support:** Special entrance prep programs with mentoring.
- **Financial Relief:** Scholarships, exam fee waivers, and free transportation.
- **Basic Resources:** Free uniforms, books, and digital learning kits.
- **Nutrition & Welfare:** Residential hostels and daily meals.
- **Career Support:** Skill development and vocational training.

Educational Indicators: Evidence of Impact

- **Higher Education GER (2025):**
 - Tamil Nadu: **47%**
 - National Average: **28.4%**
- **Women's GER:**
 - Tamil Nadu: **47.3%**
 - National Average: **28.5%**

These numbers reflect not only enrolment but equitable participation across **gender and caste lines**.

Systemic Strategy, Not an Isolated Success

The success of these students is rooted in **decades of structural interventions**, not short-term schemes. Tamil Nadu's model creates a **continuum of support**—from primary education to higher education and career readiness.

Governance Philosophy

- Focus on **equity-driven access**, not merely meritocratic selection.
 - Integration of **nutrition, health, and education** to tackle multidimensional poverty.
 - The model, while rooted in Tamil Nadu's unique socio-political context, offers **replicable lessons** for other Indian states.
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Challenges and the Road Ahead

- Ensuring **academic and emotional support** through higher education years.
 - Bridging **rural-urban digital divides** and infrastructure gaps.
 - Sustaining **political and fiscal commitment** to education-heavy welfare spending.
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Conclusion

Tamil Nadu's education journey reflects a **century-long vision** of social transformation. The achievements of students from marginalized communities underscore the power of the state in engineering **real social mobility**. With the right mix of policy, political will, and public investment, education can indeed become the engine of inclusive progress.

ISRO's PSLV-C61 Failure & Strategic Pivot to BlueBird

Mission Context: PSLV-C61/EOS-09

- Launched: **May 18, 2025**
- Objective: Deploy **EOS-09 Earth Observation Satellite** in Sun-synchronous orbit.
- Rocket: **PSLV-C61**, India's most trusted launcher, with over 95% success rate.
- Outcome: **Mission failed** due to technical glitch in Stage 3, halting orbital insertion.

Relevance: GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology, Space Sector

Failure Analysis

- **Stage-wise performance** was nominal until Stage 2.
- Stage 3 experienced an anomaly, triggering mission failure.
- **Failure Analysis Committee (FAC)** formed; report submitted to PM.
- ISRO termed the issue “minor,” but the setback dents PSLV’s near-flawless reputation.

Strategic Implications

- Global clients watch ISRO’s reliability closely—any lapse impacts **commercial trust**.
- Timely corrective action is vital, especially before **high-value launches** like BlueBird.

Upcoming Mission: BlueBird Satellite Launch

- Developer: **AST SpaceMobile**, USA.
- Purpose: Global **satellite-to-smartphone** communication coverage.
- Payload: Approx. **6,500 kg**, beyond PSLV’s capacity.
- Launch Vehicle: **LVM3 (GSLV Mk-III)**—India’s most powerful rocket.
- Launch Window: Late 2025.

Broader Strategic Gains

- Reinforces **India-US space collaboration**, following missions like **NISAR**.
- Signals ISRO’s entry into **high-throughput communication satellite** domain.
- Validates LVM3’s growing role post-**Chandrayaan-3** and **Gaganyaan**.

Gaganyaan Updates: India’s First Human Space Mission

- **Uncrewed test missions**: Starting December 2025.
- **Manned mission**: Expected by early 2027.
- Progress: Human-rating completed; crew module nearing final stage.

Conclusion & Takeaways

- ISRO’s transparent review process maintains credibility despite setbacks.
- The BlueBird launch will test India’s **commercial payload capacity** and LVM3’s scalability.
- PSLV’s failure reiterates the need for **redundancy, rigorous telemetry, and stage validation**.

- India's space sector is on a transformative trajectory—from exploration to **global commercial dominance**.

Himachal on the Edge: Supreme Court Warns of Ecological Breakdown

Introduction

The Supreme Court has sounded a dire warning over the **rapid ecological degradation** in Himachal Pradesh, cautioning that if current trends continue, "**the entire state may vanish.**" This grim statement emerged during a PIL hearing against unregulated construction in green zones, spotlighting how **unchecked tourism, unplanned infrastructure, and climate change** are destabilizing the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.

Relevance: GS Paper 3 – Environment, Disaster Management, Sustainable Development

Current Ecological Crisis (2025 Monsoon Data)

- **Monsoon onset:** June 20, 2025
- **Damages** (as of August 1): ₹1,539 crore in economic losses
- **Casualties:** 94 deaths, 36 missing
- **Housing damage:** Over 1,300 houses fully or partially destroyed
- Landslides and flash floods severely impacted **Bilaspur, Mandi, Kullu, and Shimla**

Supreme Court's Environmental Concerns

1. **Climate Change Impacts**
 - Surge in **extreme weather**: cloudbursts, erratic rainfall, glacial melt
 - Himalayan region is a **climate hotspot**; ecological resilience is weakening
2. **Deforestation**
 - **Illegal logging** for hydropower, roads, and tourism infrastructure is destabilizing slopes
 - Loss of tree cover is reducing carbon sinks and wildlife habitats
3. **Hydropower Expansion**
 - Projects are disrupting **aquifers and river flow**, intensifying landslide risks
 - Local communities report structural damage and falling water tables
4. **Unregulated Urbanisation**
 - Large-scale **construction of highways, tunnels, and resorts** in sensitive zones
 - Weak or absent **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)** worsen risks
5. **Over-tourism**



- Seasonal tourist surges strain **waste management, water resources**, and roadways
- Rise in **unauthorized buildings and vehicular pollution** in eco-fragile zones

Governance and Legal Failures

- Town planning departments issued **green zone restrictions**, but enforcement remains lax
- Lack of cumulative environmental assessments for **infrastructure clusters**
- **Post-clearance monitoring mechanisms** are largely ineffective

Broader Implications

- **For Himalayan States:** Signals similar ecological threats for **Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh**
- **For National Resilience:** Shows the cost of ignoring the **carrying capacity** of ecologically sensitive zones
- **For Legal Accountability:**
 - **Article 21:** Right to life includes right to a safe environment
 - **Article 48A and 51A(g):** State and citizens have a duty to protect the environment

Way Forward

- Strictly implement **green zone protections** and ban high-impact construction
- Audit and review all hydropower projects for **compliance and community impact**
- Impose a **moratorium** on large-scale infrastructure until regional EIAs are completed
- Regulate tourist influx via **e-permits and eco-tourism norms**
- Strengthen **early warning systems** for landslides and floods
- Promote **sustainable livelihoods** to reduce over-dependence on construction and tourism
- Launch a **National Himalayan Mission** to coordinate ecological governance across states

Conclusion

The ecological tipping point in Himachal Pradesh reflects a wider Himalayan crisis—where short-term developmental ambitions are overriding long-term environmental viability. The

Supreme Court's intervention must serve as a policy wake-up call. India must urgently adopt a **climate-conscious governance framework** for its mountain regions, balancing development with sustainability.

Tariffs, Trump & Trade Tensions: India Navigates a Strategic Crossroad

Background

India-US relations have deepened over the past two decades, especially in defence, technology, and trade. However, on **August 1, 2025**, former US President **Donald Trump** announced a **25% tariff** on Indian imports, sparking the most aggressive trade action against India in recent history. The move has revived old tensions, even as both nations pursue strategic convergence elsewhere.

Relevance: GS Paper 2 – International Relations; GS Paper 3 – Economy (External Sector)

Trump's Tariff Offensive

- **Tariff scope:** 25% hike on key Indian exports — **textiles, garments, auto parts, electronics**
 - **India hit harder** than over 50 other nations; **Vietnam, China, Bangladesh** were spared similarly steep duties
 - Seen as a **strategic snub**, potentially aimed at India's geopolitical balancing act with Russia
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Sectoral Fallout

- **Apparel industry:** Risks large-scale layoffs; India may lose out to cheaper competitors
 - **Export value at stake:** Indian textile exports to the US = **\$8 billion/year**
 - **Industry response:** Calls for **interest subvention, RoDTEP extension**, and market diversification
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India's Diplomatic Response

- **MEA's stance:** Measured and forward-looking; emphasized resilience of India-US partnership
 - **Strategic tone:** Avoided escalation, focused on long-term ties and multilateral engagement
 - Reiterated India's **non-alignment** and continued cooperation with **Russia and the US**
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Pakistan Angle: Strategic Distraction

- Trump claimed Pakistan had “**massive oil reserves**” and could export to India
- Experts dismiss the claim — **Pakistan imports 85%** of its oil; exploration yields have been negligible
- Seen as **rhetorical posturing**, not a serious policy statement

Wider Implications

For India's Export Economy

- India's reliance on US markets makes it vulnerable to **policy shocks**
- Tariffs could hinder **Make in India** and **PLI-based manufacturing growth**

For Geopolitical Balancing

- India must carefully manage its ties with **QUAD partners** while maintaining energy and defence ties with Russia

For Domestic Policy

- Urgent need to:
 - Diversify exports to **EU, Africa, Southeast Asia**
 - Improve **product quality, branding, and compliance**
 - Support MSMEs facing **demand contraction**

Conclusion

The tariff crisis reflects the **volatile intersection of politics and trade** in global diplomacy. While India's response has been diplomatically restrained, the episode reveals deeper vulnerabilities in its external economic strategy. Going forward, India must:

- **Expand Free Trade Agreements** (e.g., EU, EFTA)
- **Strengthen export resilience**
- **Balance strategic autonomy** with pragmatic engagement

A calibrated response—one that protects India's core interests while avoiding provocation—is the best way to navigate an increasingly turbulent global order.

04th August 2025: Dail MCQs:

1. Question: Consider the following statements about the election of the Vice President of India:

1. The Vice President is elected by the members of both Houses of Parliament.
2. The election is held through an open ballot and proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.
3. Nominated members of both Houses can vote in the election.

How many of the above statements are correct?

a) Only one

b) Only two

c) All three

d) None

Correct Answer: (b) Only two

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct – both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members vote.
- Statement 2 is incorrect – the ballot is secret, not open.
- Statement 3 is correct – nominated members are allowed to vote in Vice President elections (unlike in Presidential elections).

2. Question

Who among the following is not eligible to be elected as Vice President of India?

- a) A citizen of India who is 40 years old
- b) A person qualified to be a member of the Rajya Sabha
- **c) A person holding an office of profit under the Government of India**
- d) A person who is a member of a political party

Correct Answer: (c)

Explanation: A Vice President candidate must not hold an office of profit under the Union or State Government. Political affiliation is not a disqualification.

3. Question

Consider the following statements regarding the removal of the Vice President of India:

1. The Vice President can be removed by a resolution passed by both Houses of Parliament.
2. The Constitution prescribes a formal impeachment procedure.
3. The Rajya Sabha must pass the resolution with an absolute majority.

Which of the above statements are correct?

a) 1 and 3 only

b) 2 only

c) 1 and 2 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: (a)

Explanation: There is no impeachment process for Vice President (unlike the President). He can be removed by a resolution passed by Rajya Sabha (absolute majority) and agreed to by Lok Sabha.

4. Question

Which of the following duties does the Vice President perform as the ex-officio Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha?

1. Deciding whether a Bill is a Money Bill

2. Presiding over joint sittings of Parliament
 3. Maintaining order and decorum in the House
 4. Deciding on disqualification of Rajya Sabha members under anti-defection law
- Select the correct answer:

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 3 and 4 only**
- c) 3 only
- d) All of the above

Correct Answer: (b)

Explanation:

- Statement 1: Speaker of Lok Sabha decides on Money Bills.
- Statement 2: Speaker presides over joint sittings.
- Statement 3: Correct – Vice President maintains order as RS Chairperson.
- Statement 4: Disqualification under anti-defection is decided by Chairman only on the advice of party whip/authority but this power is limited.

5. Question

Which of the following Vice Presidents later became President of India?

1. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan
2. Dr. Zakir Husain
3. V.V. Giri
4. R. Venkataraman

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1, 2 and 3 only
- c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- d) All of the above**

Correct Answer: (d)

Explanation: All four Vice Presidents later assumed the office of the President of India.