

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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—It's about quality—

- The government plans to amend CLNDA and the Atomic Energy Act to resolve liability issues and attract foreign investment in nuclear energy.

Plan to amend nuclear liability law may enthuse American, French firms

Announcement comes ahead of Modi's visit to Paris and Washington this week; government's U-turn a decade later spells hope for Westinghouse, Electricite de France plans, deals for new-age small reactors; experts hail the decision, but call for more clarity on the amendments proposed

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Paris and Washington from Monday, the Union government's announcement that it would amend the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damages Act (CLNDA), 2010, and the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, is likely to enthuse American and French nuclear power companies, whose projects have been deadlocked due to legal concerns for more than 15 years. However, experts who welcomed the decision, called for more clarity on the amendments.

The announcement, which marked a sharp U-turn from the government's position in 2015, was made in the Budget speech on February 1. In particular, it is meant to help progress the Electricite de France (EDF) MoU to build six EPR1650 reactors at Jaitapur in Maharashtra that was signed in 2009 (with Areva), and American Westinghouse Electric Company's (WEC)

MoU, signed in 2012, to build six AP1000 reactors at Kovvada in Andhra Pradesh.

In addition, it is expected to help India tap into new nuclear power technologies, particularly for small modular reactors (SMR), now gaining popularity in developed economies.

"For an active partnership with the private sector towards this goal, amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act will be taken up," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said in the speech, calling for "at least 100 GW" of nuclear energy by 2047, and making an outlay of ₹20,000 crore for the development of five SMRs to be operationalised in India by 2033. India has a nuclear power capacity of 6,780 MW from 22 reactors, and the only foreign operator in India is Russia's Rosatom.

High liability

Western nuclear power companies have, however, said clauses in the CLNDA are unacceptable as they



Joint effort: Rosatom, the only foreign nuclear operator in India, is involved in the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tamil Nadu.

mandate a high degree of liability for suppliers and contradict the international Convention for Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage (CSC) which focuses only on the liability of operators of the plant. The clauses were inserted in 2012, following heated debates in Parliament, where the then-opposition NDA members had accused the government of letting Western companies off from liability, citing the Union Carbide-Bhopal gas leak case that killed thousands in 1984 and the Fukushima nuclear leak in Japan in 2011.

"This law was amended by the government just to satisfy the Opposition at the time, even though it was clear that the international operators legal liability clause would create problems down the road," Shyam Saran, former Foreign Secretary, who was the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Nuclear Affairs and Climate Change at the time, told *The Hindu*, adding that the amendments now being planned must be made in consultation with international partners and ensure the liability issue was dealt with in contracts signed.

The External affairs Mi-

nistry declined to comment on what the proposed amendments would entail. Officials aware of discussions on the issue said that while the CLNDA would be amended to separate operator's liability from supplier's liability to bring it in line with the CSC, the Atomic Energy Act would liberalise investment in power projects in India.

Legal standard

"The pragmatic way out is to break the deadlock by amending the CLNDA to bring it on par with international conventions to which India itself is a party – so that there is a clear legal standard in our domestic legislation aligned with international standards and is applicable to international partners and domestic industry," said Venkatesh Verma, former Ambassador to Russia, who was part of negotiations for all India's civil nuclear agreements and led the External Affairs Ministry's Disarmament and International Security Affairs desk. With the Trump administration keen to en-

courage U.S. energy exports, for both oil and LNG, as well as nuclear power, and France and India negotiating deals for SMR projects, the issue will be on the agenda as Mr. Modi travels to France and the U.S. this week. It remains to be seen whether the government's plans to amend the laws will finally forge the breakthrough required, two decades after India signed civil nuclear deals with the U.S. and France.

Significantly, in a "Frequently Asked Questions" memorandum issued by the Ministry after the Republic Day visit to India by U.S. President Barack Obama in February 2015, the government had said that there was "no proposal to amend the Act or the Rules", and that U.S. officials had reached a "general understanding that India's CLND law is compatible with the [International] Convention for Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage (CSC)". However, the "understanding" did not result in any serious contracts for nuclear power.

Proposed Amendments to CLNDA and Atomic Energy Act

- The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA) will be amended to separate the operator's liability from the supplier's liability.
- This change will align India's legal framework with the international Convention for Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage (CSC).
- The Atomic Energy Act will be amended to allow greater private and foreign investment in nuclear power projects.

- These amendments aim to break the legal deadlock that has stalled nuclear projects with U.S. and French companies for over 15 years.
- The reforms will enable the completion of the Electricité de France (EDF) project at Jaitapur and the Westinghouse Electric Company (WEC) project at Kovvada.
- The government's move marks a reversal from its 2015 stance, when it had ruled out amending CLNDA.

Benefits of These Amendments

- The amendments will facilitate the entry of American and French nuclear power companies into India's energy sector.
- They will help India achieve its goal of at least 100 GW of nuclear energy capacity by 2047.
- Increased investment in small modular reactors (SMRs) will support India's clean energy transition.
- Resolving liability concerns will boost confidence among foreign suppliers, leading to faster project execution.
- The reforms will allow India to develop advanced nuclear technologies, enhancing energy security.
- Greater private sector participation will drive job creation and technological innovation in the nuclear sector.
- Strengthened international nuclear partnerships will improve India's geopolitical and economic standing.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Discuss the significance of the proposed amendments to the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA) and the Atomic Energy Act in facilitating India's nuclear energy expansion. **(150 Words /10 marks)**

The news explains the budget provisions for Indian Railways, focusing on infrastructure development, modernization, safety, and freight expansion.

- It also highlights concerns over execution, financial sustainability, and stalled projects.

What does the Budget offer Railways?

Knowing that the disappointing financial numbers will not be touched upon, rail watchers, industry and markets clung to one lifeline – capital expenditure. However, the much-anticipated capex push failed to materialise beyond last two years' ₹2.62 lakh crore, signalling that even the government is pausing to reassess

ECONOMIC NOTES

Sudhanshu Mani

The erstwhile Railway Budget, presented a couple of days before the Union Budget, was once a grand spectacle where the Indian Railways (IR), awaited its moment of glory. But since its merger with the general Budget in 2017, the IR has been reduced to a mere footnote. In fact, in the last Budget in July 2024 as also in the one presented on February 1, it did not even get a passing mention.

Knowing that the disappointing financial numbers of IR will not be touched upon, rail watchers, industry and markets clung to one lifeline – capital expenditure (capex). With the IR's own earnings barely covering operational costs, the government's increase in budgetary support to the IR has kept the show running. Over the last decade, a staggering ₹13 lakh crore has been pumped into modernising infrastructure – electrification has soared to 95%, track length has expanded, and rolling stock has seen record additions. And yet, the returns are underwhelming. Freight traffic is crawling at just over 2% growth, despite India's booming economy, and while passenger revenue is rising, patronage remains below pre-COVID levels. This Budget delivered more of the same accounting jugglery to keep the Operating Ratio (OR) below 100. It also did not mention any discussion on past announcements. The much-anticipated capex push failed to materialise beyond last two years' ₹2.62 lakh crore, which in real terms is a correction downwards, signalling that even the government is pausing to reassess.

Post-Budget conference

In the absence of any more signs in the Budget, one can only draw clues from the post-Budget press conference given by the Railways Minister. The Minister said that immense thrust has been given for the



Not enough: A group of workers and officers of the South Central Railway working on the electrical lines between Vijayawada and Kazipet junction in the Andhra-Telangana border area in 2024. G.N. RAO

development of infrastructure, modernisation of stations and trains, enhancement of connectivity, safety and comfort of passengers, and that construction of new railway lines, doubling and gauge conversion and addition of new rolling stock would proceed at an accelerated pace. He added that since 2014, an average of 150 km of new tracks have been laid annually as compared to the average of 113 km annually from 2009-2014. This is a positive announcement as the enhancement of rail network and elimination of saturation will help in improving mobility and connectivity.

The Minister further announced that safety-related initiatives will receive an enhanced budget allocation of ₹1,16,514 crore. While the IR has done well in grade separation work, the most pressing safety issue today is the proliferation of Kavach.

There was no mention of any increase in Kavach coverage for 2025-26. In fact, since the initial rollout of 1,465 km near Secunderabad, not a single kilometre has been added. While the Minister continued with proclamations of massive investment in Amrit Bharat station redevelopment projects, tangible outcomes are visible only at Gandhinagar, Habibganj, Byappanahalli, Cuttack, Ayodhya, and Charlapalli. A stark example of the IR's lacklustre execution is the New Delhi station – one of the busiest and most high-profile stations – whose much-hyped transformation into a world-class hub has been stuck in an endless cycle of re-tendering for nearly a decade. With all redevelopment now being carried out in an Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) mode, following the failure of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects, a key question remains: how will

these edifices be maintained when Railway expenses are outpacing earnings?

Mere spectacle

The Minister mentioned that the IR has achieved an average electrification rate of 294 Rkms per year from 2014-25 – 16 times higher than the 18 Rkms per year achieved during 2009-14 – with India slated to become the only 100% electrified and thus the “greenest” railway in the world. This raises some uncomfortable questions – has this electrification spree outpaced necessity, rendering approximately 5,000 diesel locomotives worth ₹30,000 crore idle or underutilised? Furthermore, much of the electricity powering in IR still comes from fossil-fuel-based plants.

It was declared that 200 more Vande Bharat trains would be introduced; without any mention of a timeline. There has also been no word on major pending projects such as the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor, the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail, or the conversion of Integral Coach Factory (ICF) coaches to Vande Bharat standards. Instead, we were treated to a grand proclamation, that India aims to build a 7,000-km high-speed rail network supporting speeds of 250 kmph by 2047. A vision distant and devoid of clear-cut strategy, it seems no more than a daydream than a roadmap.

The real sleight of hand, however, was the declaration that the IR is poised to become the world's second-largest freight carrier, touching 1.6 billion tonnes of cargo. Given India's size, this number in isolation is meaningless. The real questions remain: how will the IR reclaim its eroding freight share? Can it improve train speeds and comfort beyond token second-class coach additions?

For yet another year, the Budget suggests that the IR is not on track to transformation – it is merely chugging along, waiting for the next headline-grabbing announcement to arrive.

The writer is leader of the Vande Bharat project and an independent consultant.

THE GIST

The Railways Minister said that immense thrust has been given for the development of infrastructure, modernisation of stations and trains, enhancement of connectivity, and safety and comfort of passengers.

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Railway Budget: From Spectacle to a Footnote

- Before 2017, the Railway Budget was presented separately and was a major event.
- After merging with the Union Budget, Indian Railways (IR) no longer receives a distinct focus.
- The last two budgets in 2024 did not even mention IR explicitly.

Dependence on Capital Expenditure

- ▶ IR's earnings barely cover its operational costs.
- ▶ The government has invested ₹13 lakh crore in infrastructure modernization over the last decade.
- ▶ Electrification has reached 95%, track length has increased, and rolling stock has expanded.
- ▶ Despite these investments, returns remain underwhelming.
- ▶ Freight traffic is growing at only about 2%, even though the economy is expanding.
- ▶ Passenger revenue is increasing, but total patronage has not yet reached pre-COVID levels.

Post-Budget Announcements and Expansion Plans

- ▶ The Railways Minister stated that the focus remains on infrastructure development, station modernization, better connectivity, safety, and passenger comfort.
- ▶ The construction of new railway lines, doubling of tracks, and gauge conversion will continue at a faster pace.
- ▶ Since 2014, an average of 150 km of new tracks have been laid annually, compared to 113 km per year between 2009-2014.

Safety Concerns and Kavach Implementation

- ▶ The budget for safety initiatives has been increased to ₹1,16,514 crore.
- ▶ Grade separation work has improved, but expansion of Kavach, the indigenous train collision avoidance system, has stalled.
- ▶ Investments in Amrit Bharat station redevelopment are highlighted, but progress is slow.

Electrification and Sustainability Issues

- ▶ The Minister stated that electrification rates from 2014-2025 have increased significantly compared to the previous period.
- ▶ India is set to become the only 100% electrified railway system, making it the "greenest" in the world.
- ▶ However, questions remain about the necessity of rapid electrification, with around 5,000 diesel locomotives worth ₹30,000 crore lying idle or underutilized.
- ▶ Additionally, much of the electricity used by IR still comes from fossil fuels.

Vande Bharat and Other Pending Projects

- ▶ The government announced the introduction of 200 more Vande Bharat trains but provided no timeline.
- ▶ No updates were given on major projects like: Western Dedicated Freight Corridor
- ▶ Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail
- ▶ Conversion of Integral Coach Factory (ICF) coaches to Vande Bharat standards
- ▶ Instead, a distant vision of a 7,000-km high-speed rail network by 2047 was announced, without a clear strategy.

Freight and Operational Challenges

Daily News Analysis

- ▶ The government claimed that IR will become the world's second-largest freight carrier, reaching 1.6 billion tonnes of cargo.
- ▶ However, the crucial question remains:
 - How will IR regain its lost freight market share?
 - Can IR improve train speeds and passenger comfort beyond minor second-class coach additions?

Conclusion

- ▶ The budget suggests that IR is not undergoing a major transformation but is merely maintaining its operations.
- ▶ There is a continuous cycle of headline-grabbing announcements without significant execution.
- ▶ Structural issues, such as financial sustainability, project delays, and underutilized assets, remain unaddressed.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : How can Indian Railways enhance financial sustainability while balancing infrastructure expansion, freight growth, and passenger services? Suggest viable policy measures. **(250 Words /15 marks)**



Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has supported U.S. President Trump's Gaza relocation plan.

- ➔ Netanyahu emphasised the challenge of finding a host country.

Will do the job of executing Trump's Gaza plan: Israel PM

Netanyahu says the U.S. President's proposal for relocating Gazans is the first fresh idea in years; he says 'the real issue' is finding a country that will agree to take in the displaced population

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has hailed U.S. President Donald Trump's widely criticised plan to move Palestinians out of the war-battered Gaza Strip, saying Israel is willing to "do the job".

In a *Fox News* interview aired late on Saturday as the Premier was wrapping up a visit to Washington, Mr. Netanyahu defended Mr. Trump's proposal, which has sparked concern and condemnation across the Middle East [West Asia] and the world.

"I think that President Trump's proposal is the



Constant pressure: Protesters demand 'relocation for the hostages', in Tel Aviv on Friday. GETTY IMAGES

first fresh idea in years, and it has the potential to change everything in Gaza," Mr. Netanyahu said, adding that it represents a "correct approach" to the

future of the Palestinian territory.

"All Trump is saying, 'I want to open the gate and give them an option to relocate temporarily while

we rebuild the place physically,'" Mr. Netanyahu said.

Mr. Trump "never said he wants American troops to do the job. Guess what? We'll do the job," Mr. Netanyahu declared.

'Departure from old'

Mr. Netanyahu said Mr. Trump's plan was a departure from the "same old, same old, same old – we leave, Gaza becomes again occupied by these terrorists who use it as a base to attack Israel."

"I think we should pursue it," he added, cautioning that "the real issue" was finding a country that would agree to take in displaced Gazans.

U.S. President Donald Trump's Gaza Plan

- ➔ **Objective:** Proposes the relocation of over two million Palestinians from Gaza to other countries while redeveloping the region.

Daily News Analysis

- **Global Backlash:** The plan has been widely criticized, particularly in the Arab world, for violating Palestinian rights and destabilizing the region.
- **Saudi-Israel Relations:** It threatens Saudi Arabia's potential normalization of ties with Israel, as Riyadh insists on Palestinian statehood before recognition.
- **Impact on Neighboring Countries:** Egypt and Jordan could face instability if large numbers of displaced Gazans seek refuge there.
- **Saudi Response:** The Saudi Foreign Ministry quickly rejected the plan, emphasizing its opposition to forced displacement of Palestinians.
- **U.S.-Saudi Relations:** Riyadh remains reliant on U.S. security guarantees but is unlikely to follow Washington's lead without concessions.
- **Israeli Support:** Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu endorsed the plan, stating Israel is willing to "do the job" in implementing it.
- **Regional Stability:** The plan risks fueling anti-American sentiment and further destabilizing West Asia.

In News : Prelims Fact

A team of scientists from University College London has discovered how the brain suppresses instinctive fear, providing potential insights for treating fear-related disorders such as phobias, anxiety, and PTSD.

Experimental Process and Observations

- ▶ Researchers exposed 100 mice to a repeated visual threat—an expanding dark circle mimicking a swooping bird. Initially, the mice reacted instinctively by seeking shelter.
- ▶ However, when a barrier prevented them from hiding, they gradually learned that the threat was harmless and stopped responding to it after 30-50 exposures.
- ▶ Neural activity was tracked using silicon probes inserted into the mice's brains.

Role of Brain Regions in Fear Suppression

- ▶ The study identified two key brain areas involved in learning to suppress fear:
 - **Visual Cortex** – Processes visual information and helps in learning to override instinctive fear responses.
 - **Ventrolateral Geniculate Nucleus (VLGN)** – Stores memories to ignore perceived but harmless threats, playing a crucial role in fear suppression.
 - This is the first time VLGN has been linked to learning fear suppression, as previous research primarily focused on the visual cortex.

Potential Implications for Mental Health Treatments

- ▶ By understanding how the brain learns to suppress fear, researchers aim to develop targeted treatments for fear-related disorders.
- ▶ Drugs focusing on the VLGN could offer new avenues for treating anxiety and PTSD by helping individuals suppress irrational fears more effectively

In News : AERO INDIA 2025

Aero India 2025 is a biennial event that will be held at Air Force Station Yelahanka, Bengaluru, from February 10-14, 2025.

- It provides a platform for industry, research organizations, academia, MSMEs, and startups to collaborate and contribute to India's aviation sector.

Introduction

- The event is more than just an exhibition; it promotes innovation, international alliances, and technological advancements in the aerospace and defence sectors.
- This year's theme, 'The Runway to a Billion Opportunities', highlights India's commitment to self-reliance and international collaboration in defence technology.

India's Transformation in Aerospace and Defence

- Since its beginning in 1996, Aero India has evolved from a small aviation exposition into one of the most significant global defence events.
- Over the years, it has attracted leading defence manufacturers, policymakers, and industry leaders from around the world.
- The 2025 edition aims to exceed past milestones by promoting India's advancements in defence production and technology.

Participation of Global and Domestic Defence Companies

- 106 Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), including 55 foreign OEMs from 19 countries, have confirmed participation.
- Countries represented include Brazil, France, Israel, Japan, Russia, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- 16 Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) will participate, showcasing India's public sector strength in defence manufacturing.
- 35 Indian OEMs, including major companies in defence and aerospace, will present cutting-edge innovations.
- The participation of both private and public sector enterprises highlights India's growing defence ecosystem.

Key Attractions at Aero India 2025

- Showcase of Advanced Fighter Jets: For the first time, two of the world's most advanced fighter jets, the Russian Su-57 and the American F-35, will be displayed.
- These aircraft provide valuable insights into stealth technology, agility, and advanced warfare capabilities.
- India's Indigenous Fighter Jet: A model of Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) will be presented, a twin-engine fifth-generation stealth fighter under development with 75% domestic content.

Promoting Start-ups and Innovation

- The event includes 'Manthan', a platform dedicated to promoting start-ups and innovation in aerospace and defence.

- ▶ The iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) pavilion will showcase pioneering advancements from Indian start-ups.
- ▶ The Indian Pavilion will highlight Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiatives, emphasizing home-grown defence solutions.

Conclusion

- ▶ Aero India 2025 showcases India's ambition to become a global leader in defence and aerospace manufacturing.
- ▶ The event strengthens India's position in the international defence market by fostering innovation, technological advancements, and strategic partnerships. With a focus on self-reliance and global collaboration, it plays a crucial role in advancing India's defence production capabilities.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Examine the progress of defence manufacturing in India under the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative. What challenges remain in achieving self-reliance in this sector? **(150 Words /10 marks)**



Keeping a watch on the growing arc of violence

The present period is proving to be an unpredictable one for most parts of the world. Violence is raging across parts of Europe and in West Asia, while several other regions are facing internecine conflicts to varying degrees. At the risk of repetition, it can be said that the world order after 1945 has broken down irretrievably.

The prolonged war in Ukraine, alongside the wanton targeting of innocent civilians in Gaza and West Asia by the Israeli armed forces, underscore a reality, viz., that the United Nations Security Council and the International Court of Justice have become mere bystanders, if not complicit, in most events of this nature. For political philosophers who still hark back to an earlier era, it should be evident that principles enunciated by the Dutch philosopher, Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), have today become part of the 'debris of history'. There is no longer any "common moral community" governed by "eternal and immutable ideas of right and wrong". What is apparent today is a 'waste-land of morality'.

Subterranean activity

It would indeed be a gross misjudgment if countries that are in the driving seat today, specially those active in West Asia, were to believe that their current actions are likely to contribute to permanent peace. The war in Gaza and Lebanon may have given Israel, and at one stage removed the United States, an impression that 'peace is at hand' in West Asia. Also, that they had effectively undermined the Iran-led 'Axis of Resistance', and considerably reduced Tehran's influence in the region. Viewed dispassionately, current events can at best be viewed as a 'pyrrhic victory', the impact of which is uncertain. A great deal of subterranean activity is meanwhile beginning to be seen, the outcome of which is unlikely to lead to a lasting peace.

First and foremost, Islamist terrorism has hardly been blunted; nor have other major concerns which have existed for decades abated. Calls for 'global jihad' and activities by 'lone wolf' attackers can still be heard. More important, today's Islamist terrorists are being radicalised online, and have not, by any means, been contained. The belief, hence, that Islamist terrorism is no longer a serious threat would be incorrect.

Most experts hew to the view that Islamist terrorism 3.0 is still alive and threatening. It is multifaceted and decentralised, and is increasingly digitally empowered, making it an evolving threat to global security – possibly more so than in earlier decades. The weakening of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS), temporarily, should not, hence, contribute to a belief that



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Islamist terrorism had weakened irretrievably. Rather, the signs are that it is rapidly adapting to digital terrorism, spreading extremist ideologies through social media, and provisioning for an increased role through decentralised groups. In essence, it is evolving into a different avatar. Dealing with this new phase of terrorism can prove difficult. Finding the right method to deal with this problem will not be easy.

Islamist terrorism has been evolving for a long time. If 1979 is regarded as a critical turning point in the evolution of a new wave of Islamist militancy, then a quick look at its evolving dimension over the past five decades may prove useful in finding a solution. It was in 1979 that a new brand of militant Islam reared its head – in Afghanistan, it was the die-hard Sunni brand, and in Iran it was the Shia variant. Both, separately though not jointly, were seeking to bring about a general uprising throughout the Muslim world and even beyond, aimed at overthrowing infidel and pro-western regimes. Radicalisation on the Sunni side resulted in the formation of al-Qaeda and the IS (mainly in Syria), each talking of global jihad. The jihad wave waxed and waned over the years, and while al-Qaeda concentrated its activities outside of West Asia, the IS remained essentially confined to West Asia.

While jihadism has, by no means, been defeated for now, it does appear that the internal dynamics of global jihad may have altered to some extent. Sunni radicalisation has been on the upswing lately, but global jihad is no longer their clarion call. This is notwithstanding renewed calls for unity in the Arab world against the Zionist enemy. Arab states are, instead, increasingly falling back on safeguarding their national interests. This has impacted the region's political landscape, and will impact the future politics of West Asia and beyond.

A revival of terror

Meanwhile, terrorism, per se, is witnessing a revival of sorts. Both the IS and al-Qaeda are showing signs of a resurgence. The al-Qaeda has resumed training camps in Taliban-run Afghanistan, while the IS affiliate operating in Afghanistan – the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKAP) – is beginning to expand its footprint, moving further afield to hit targets beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan. Sporadic attacks in Moscow, Iran and Türkiye do reveal its newer footprints. Increasing attacks on military facilities and transport have also been reported in Pakistan, while isolated attacks have taken place in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

Sporadic terror attacks in different countries across the globe do not necessarily herald, at this point, a return to the kind of large-scale terror

attacks seen previously. Nevertheless, a succession of smaller scale terror attacks, including of late, in countries in the West, have given rise to concerns in security circles about a possible recrudescence of terror, and, on a wider scale, than what was seen in the past decade. As matters stand today, security agencies across the world do believe that a determined effort is still needed to effectively decapitate the 'terror apparatus' before it takes on a more serious dimension.

Two recent terror incidents have jolted security agencies in the U.S. out of their complacency about possible terror attacks. In January, a yet-to-be-detected explosion took place in a Tesla cyber truck, in Las Vegas outside the hotel in which then U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, was staying. The occupant of the cyber truck was found dead inside the vehicle. He was later identified as someone who had previously been with the U.S. elite Special Forces engaged in counter-terrorism abroad.

In another, and a separate, incident in New Orleans, on New Year's Day, Shamsuddin Jabbar, a 42-year-old American citizen and a military veteran who had worked as an IT specialist, drove a truck into a crowd in New Orleans, killing 14 people and injuring 35. His vehicle had a black IS flag attached to it. Jabbar was shot dead by the authorities before he could be interrogated, but an analysis of the incident suggests careful planning. The two incidents occurring side by side have given rise to fresh concerns of a revival and a resurgence of IS-style terror attacks. Both U.S. nationals, for instance, had a military background. Additional concerns relate to the advent of a new category of recruits into terror ranks. Meantime, U.S. intelligence services claim to have foiled a plot in Virginia.

Warnings that need to be heeded

Counter-terrorism experts, hence, have reason to believe that there is ample cause to be concerned. The two incidents have also revived memories of similar vehicle attacks in France and other European cities during the heyday of the IS. Hence, most counter-terrorism experts believe that the world needs to be prepared for a new wave of terror attacks. The fact that more and more information is forthcoming about a fresh wave of proselytisation by IS and al-Qaeda recruiters, employing the most modern methods, including Artificial Intelligence, is again highly disconcerting. The message that comes through loud and clear is that while matters relating to new terror methods and terror attacks are possibly still at an early stage, the warnings should not be ignored and steps need to be taken at the earliest to prevent a fresh wave of terror.

While matters relating to new terror methods and terror attacks could still be evolving, the warnings should not be ignored

GS Paper 03 : Internal Security

PYQ (UPSC CSE (M) GS-3 2021) : Analyse the complexity and intensity of terrorism, its causes, linkages and obnoxious nexus. Also suggest measures required to be taken to eradicate the menace of terrorism. (250 words/15m)

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Discuss the evolving nature of global terrorism in the digital age and its implications for international security. Suggest measures to counter this emerging threat. (150 Words /10 marks)

Context :

- Violence is increasing in Europe and West Asia, with various regions facing conflicts.
- This article explains how global conflicts and rising instability highlight the failure of international institutions

Unstable World Order

- The post-1945 world order has broken down, with institutions like the United Nations Security Council and the International Court of Justice failing to prevent conflicts.
- The prolonged war in Ukraine and attacks in West Asia highlight the powerlessness of global institutions in maintaining peace.

Ongoing Conflicts in West Asia

- The war in Gaza and Lebanon has given a false impression of peace in the region.
- There is a belief that the influence of certain regional powers has weakened, but the long-term effects of these conflicts remain uncertain.
- Underground activities are increasing, which may lead to further instability rather than lasting peace.

Resurgence of Islamist Terrorism

- Terrorism has not been eliminated; it is evolving and remains a major global concern.
- Radicalization is spreading online, making terrorist groups more decentralized and harder to track.
- Islamist terrorism has adapted to digital platforms, using social media and artificial intelligence to spread extremist ideologies.

Historical Evolution of Islamist Terrorism

- Since 1979, two main branches of Islamist militancy have developed: a Sunni version and a Shia variant.
- Sunni radicalization led to the formation of major terror groups, with global jihad as their focus.

- ▶ Over the years, their strategies have changed, with some groups focusing on regional conflicts while others operate globally. While global jihad has lost momentum, radicalization remains a concern, influencing the political landscape of West Asia and beyond.

Terrorism's New Phase

- ▶ Some major terrorist organizations are showing signs of resurgence.
- ▶ Training camps have resumed in regions controlled by extremist groups.
- ▶ Attacks are spreading to new regions, including sporadic incidents in different countries.
- ▶ The return of terrorism does not mean large-scale attacks are imminent, but smaller, frequent attacks are raising security concerns.

Recent Incidents and Security Threats

- ▶ Recent attacks in different countries indicate that terrorist groups are expanding their reach.
- ▶ There is concern over the recruitment of new individuals into terror networks, including those with military backgrounds.
- ▶ Security agencies have detected multiple threats, highlighting the urgent need for stronger counter-terrorism measures.

Future Preparedness

- ▶ Counter-terrorism experts warn that terror groups are using modern technology, including artificial intelligence, to recruit and plan attacks. While large-scale attacks have not occurred recently, the warning signs should not be ignored.
- ▶ Governments and security agencies must act early to prevent a new wave of terrorist activities.

Conclusion

- ▶ The world is becoming more unstable with ongoing conflicts and terrorism.
- ▶ International organizations are unable to stop these threats.
- ▶ Strong global teamwork and better strategies are needed to handle modern terrorism.