



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 14-04-2026

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Chagos Island

Syllabus: Prelims Bits – Mapping.

Context:

- Recently, **United Kingdom government** said that it had put on hold its deal to cede sovereignty of the Chagos Islands

About Chagos Islands



Location

- Island group located in the **central Indian Ocean**
- About 1,000 miles (1,600 km) south of the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent

Political Status

- **Overseas territory of the United Kingdom** established on November 8, 1965

Major Islands in Archipelago

- **Principal islands include:** Diego Garcia atoll, Danger Island, Egmont Islands, Eagle Islands, Nelsons Island, Peros Banhos atoll, Three Brothers Islands, Solomon Islands
- **Diego Garcia** – largest and most southerly island of the Chagos Archipelago

Physical Features (Terrain)

- Flat and low terrain; most areas do not exceed more than 2 m in elevation
- **No rivers and lakes** on the islands

Climate

- Tropical marine climate with high temperatures and elevated humidity levels
- Climate heavily moderated by trade winds blowing over the islands

Ambedkar Jayanti

Syllabus: Prelims Bits – Modern History- Important Personality

Context:

Ambedkar Jayanti is observed every year on **14 April** to commemorate the birth anniversary of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution.

- **Year 2026 marks his 135th birth anniversary** (born in 1891).
- Celebrated across India through:
 - Official tributes at Parliament
 - Educational events (debates, seminars)
 - Social justice awareness campaigns

Biography of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar



- **Born:** 14 April 1891, Mhow (Madhya Pradesh)
- **Parents:** Ramji Maloji Sakpal & Bhimabai
- **Social Background:** Mahar (Dalit community), faced caste discrimination

Education

- Columbia University
- London School of Economics
- Degrees: M.A., Ph.D., LL.D., D.Litt., Barrister-at-Law

Career Roles

- Jurist, Economist, Social Reformer, Politician
- **Key Positions:**
 - Chairman, Drafting Committee of Constitution
 - First Law Minister of India (1947–1951)
 - Labour Member, Viceroy's Executive Council

Major Contributions of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

1. Architect of the Indian Constitution

- Ensured:
 - Fundamental Rights
 - Rule of Law
 - Social Justice framework

2. Abolition of Untouchability

- Led to:
 - Article 17 (Abolition of Untouchability)
 - Legal backing through reforms like the 1955 Act

3. Affirmative Action (Reservation Policy)

- Advocated reservations in:
 - Education
 - Government jobs
 - Political representation

4. Labour Welfare Reforms

- Introduced:
 - 8-hour workday
 - Maternity benefits
 - Minimum wage principles

5. Economic Thought

- Work: *The Problem of the Rupee*
- Emphasized:
 - Monetary stability

- Planned economic development

6. Women Empowerment

- Drafted **Hindu Code Bill**:
 - Equal rights in inheritance, marriage, divorce

7. Social & Religious Reform

- Converted to Buddhism in 1956
- Inspired **Dalit Buddhist Movement**
- Promoted equality, dignity, and rationality

Important Works

- Annihilation of Caste
- The Buddha and His Dhamma
- Waiting for a Visa

Windfall Tax

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Taxation.

Context:

- Government hiked export duty (windfall tax) → diesel to Rs 55.5 per litre and aviation fuel (ATF) to Rs 42 per litre

About Windfall Tax

- **Definition:** Higher tax levied by government on specific industries when they experience unexpected and above-average profits due to global/geopolitical events outside their control
- **Meaning:**
 - “Windfall” → dramatic and unanticipated increase in profits
 - “Tax” → imposition on this sudden income growth
- **Imposition Basis:**
 - Levied when government notices sudden rise in industry revenue
 - Profits not due to expansion/investment strategy but due to favourable external factors

➤ **Nature of Profits:**

- Disproportionate profits during unexpected situations → commodity shortages, wars, pandemics, policy changes

➤ **Targeted Sectors:**

- Commonly oil, gas, mining industries
- Also includes some individual taxes (inheritance tax, lottery/game-show winnings) construed as windfall tax

Objective of Windfall Tax

➤ **Redistribution of Gains:**

- Appropriate portion of extraordinary profits exceeding normal returns for public good

➤ **Justification:**

- Profits arise due to external factors, not solely due to entity's efforts → supports redistribution

➤ **Fiscal Utility:**

- Acts as supplementary revenue stream for government

Analytical Insight

- Reflects **equity principle in taxation** → taxing unearned super-normal profits
- Balances **corporate gains vs public welfare** in crisis periods
- Raises debate on **investment disincentives vs revenue mobilization**

Kalai-II Hydro Electric Project

Syllabus: GS-3: Infrastructure – Power Projects.

Context:

- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** approved an investment of **₹14,105.83 crore** for construction of the project on the **Lohit River in Anjaw District**.

Location & River System

- Hydropower project planned on the **Lohit River (tributary of Brahmaputra River)** in **Anjaw District, Arunachal Pradesh**.

Project Type

- It is a **run-of-river with pondage project**.

Key Components

- Involves construction of **concrete gravity dam, upstream & downstream coffer dam, diversion tunnel, intake tunnel, pressure shafts, underground powerhouse complex, surge chamber, tail race tunnel, etc.**

Capacity & Generation

- Installed capacity: **1,200 MW → six units of 190 MW + one unit of 60 MW.**
- Projected annual generation: **4,852.95 million units.**

Implementation Mechanism

- Implemented through a **joint venture company** between:
 - THDC India Limited (formerly Tehri Hydro Development Corporation Limited)
 - Government of Arunachal Pradesh

Financial Support

- **Government of India support:**
 - **₹5.99 billion → for roads, bridges, and associated transmission infrastructure**
 - **₹7.5 billion → central financial assistance towards state's equity share**

Analytical Insight

- Important for **North-East hydropower development & energy security.**
- Reflects **Centre-State cooperative federalism in infrastructure financing.**
- Raises issues of **environmental impact, river ecology, and displacement** (typical in Himalayan hydropower projects).

SIR in West Bengal

Syllabus: GS-2: Indian Polity – Elections.

Context:

- SIR in West Bengal sparks political, legal, and institutional controversy, raising concerns over electoral integrity and democratic inclusion.

About Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

- Special Intensive Revision (SIR) undertaken by the Election Commission of India aimed to **clean electoral rolls by removing duplicate, migrated, and deceased voters**, while also identifying “illegal immigrants”.
- Implementation in West Bengal triggered major political, legal, and institutional controversy, raising concerns about **electoral integrity and democratic inclusion**.

Objectives and Scope of SIR

- **Purification of electoral rolls** → removal of ASDD (Absent, Shifted, Dead, Duplicate voters).
- Identification of ineligible or **illegal voters**.
- **Use of technology** (AI-based verification) for large-scale scrutiny.
- Conducted in 13 States/UTs, but most contentious in West Bengal.

Scale and Impact in West Bengal

Mass deletions and data concerns:

- Initial voters: 7.66 crore (Nov 2025) → Draft rolls reduced to ~7 crore (Dec 2025).
- Total deletions: ~90.8 lakh → Final eligible voters: 6.77 crore.

Categories of concern:

- 30 lakh “unmapped voters” (no linkage with 2002 revision).
- 1.2 crore “logical discrepancy” cases identified through AI-based scrutiny:
 - Spelling mismatches (2002 vs 2025)
 - More than six voters linked to one ancestor
 - Implausible parent-child age gaps (outside 15–45 years)
 - Grandparent-voter age gap < 40 years
 - Gender-name inconsistencies
- 60 lakh voters placed under “adjudication” → temporarily excluded.

Outcome:

- ~1.5 crore cases flagged → 60 lakh remained disputed after hearings → mass exclusion pending verification.

Judicial Intervention – Extraordinary Step

- **Role of Supreme Court of India:** termed situation as “trust deficit” between ECI and State government → ordered judicial supervision.

- Bench led by Surya Kant deployed ~700 judicial officers (WB, Odisha, Jharkhand) → took over quasi-judicial roles of EROs/AEROs.
- Results: **27 lakh names struck down** → remaining cases referred to 19 special tribunals → many voters unlikely to vote due to roll freeze.

Political Fallout

State vs Centre narrative:

- Ruling party in West Bengal alleged targeted disenfranchisement; criticised timing and scale.
- Central government supported SIR as necessary electoral cleansing.

Electoral implications:

- Became central campaign issue → raises questions on free and fair elections.

Civil society concerns:

- **Allegations of bias** → disproportionate deletion of Muslim voters (e.g., Nandigram).
- **High deletions in Muslim-majority districts:** Murshidabad, Malda, Uttar Dinajpur.
- **Gender dimension** → women voters (Matua communities) reportedly affected.
- **Democratic critique** → termed as “rewriting” rather than revision of rolls.

Key Challenges

- **Trust deficit** → breakdown of confidence between ECI and elected government.
- **Algorithmic transparency** → lack of clarity in AI-based decision-making.
- **Disenfranchisement risks** → threat to universal adult suffrage.
- **Institutional overreach** → judiciary entering executive domain → separation of powers concerns.
- **Electoral integrity vs inclusion** → balancing clean rolls with inclusive democracy.

Way Forward

- **Transparent methodology** → public disclosure of AI criteria + audit mechanisms.
- **Strengthening due process** → adequate time, documentation support, grievance redressal.
- **Independent oversight** → third-party/parliamentary scrutiny for neutrality.
- **Safeguards against bias** → periodic social audits (religion/gender neutrality).
- **Institutional coordination** → better cooperation between ECI, State, and judiciary.

Conclusion

- West Bengal SIR highlights tension between electoral integrity and democratic inclusiveness.
- Cleaning electoral rolls is essential, but scale, methodology, and timing must inspire public trust.
- Procedural fairness, transparency, and institutional credibility are as vital as electoral purification.

Solarisation as Fiscal Reform

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Fiscal Policy.

Context:

- India's States collectively spend nearly **₹2.4 lakh crore annually** on electricity subsidies, primarily for agriculture and domestic consumers.
- The Union government is repositioning solar schemes as **fiscal reform tools**, not merely clean energy initiatives.
- India's installed power capacity: **535 GW (March 2026)** → ~150 GW solar; **54% from non-fossil sources**.
- Solarisation emerging as a key instrument in **energy transition + public finance restructuring**.

Reframing Solar Policy – From Climate to Fiscal Strategy

- Schemes like PM-KUSUM and PM Surya Ghar reframed as mechanisms to:
 - Replace subsidised grid electricity with **low-cost solar power**
 - Reduce States' **recurring subsidy outgo**
- Long-term impact:
 - Potential elimination of **cross-subsidy burden** (borne by industrial/commercial users)

Key Schemes Driving the Transition

1. PM-KUSUM (Agricultural Solarisation)

- **Focus:** Solarisation of agricultural feeders + standalone solar pumps
- **Impact:**
 - Reduces dependence on **expensive grid power & diesel pumps**

- Promotes **decentralised solar generation near substations**

Case Study – Maharashtra Model

- Mukhyamantri Saur Krishi Vahini Yojana (2017):
 - Installation of **decentralised solar plants (2–10 MW)** within 5 km of agri substations
- **Outcomes:**
 - Reduction in cross-subsidy charges
 - Lower tariffs for consumers
 - Replacement of diesel pumps with solar pumps
- **MSKVY 2.0 target:** 16 GW (> CFA under PM-KUSUM ~4.5 GW)

2. PM Surya Ghar (Rooftop Solar for Households)

- **Conventional model:**
 - Demand-driven; ~35 lakh households covered
 - Poor households lack incentive due to **free/subsidised electricity**

Utility-Led Aggregation (ULA) Model

- Utility installs rooftop solar via own capital / RESCO model
- **Benefits:**
 - Zero upfront cost for consumers
 - Reduction in **State subsidy expenditure**
- **Coverage:** Assam, Odisha, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh
- **Target:**
 - 30 lakh (ULA) + 35 lakh (normal mode)
 - **~1 crore installations by March 2027**

Institutional and Policy Challenges

1. Fragmented Governance

- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy lacks administrative authority under:
 - Electricity Act, 2003
 - Energy Conservation Act, 2001

2. Domestic Manufacturing vs Cost Efficiency

- Approved List of Models and Manufacturers mandates domestic equipment

➤ Issues:

- Higher cost, limited supply
- States may prefer cheaper imports (e.g., Chinese solar cells)
- Tension between **Atmanirbhar Bharat vs affordability**

3. Behavioural and Structural Constraints

- Poor households lack economic incentive for solar adoption
- Vendors face **supply constraints & cost pressures**
- States vary in **fiscal capacity and political willingness**

Way Forward

1. Policy and Institutional Reforms

- Recognise MNRE as **“Central Government”** for renewables under Electricity Act, 2003
- Strengthen coordination: MNRE + Ministry of Power + State DISCOMs

2. Scaling Innovative Models

- Expand **ULA model** for inclusive adoption
- Replicate Maharashtra’s **decentralised solar feeder model**

3. Balancing Manufacturing and Affordability

- Rationalise ALMM norms
- Ensure **availability + affordability** of domestic equipment
- Promote **scale-up + technology upgrades**

4. Fiscal Incentivisation for States

- Link central assistance with:
 - Reduction in subsidy burden
 - Adoption of solarisation models

Conclusion

- Solar policy shift: **Climate-centric → Fiscal sustainability framework**
- Schemes like PM-KUSUM & PM Surya Ghar aim to convert **recurring subsidies into capital investment**
- Key constraints: institutional fragmentation, manufacturing limits, behavioural barriers

- If scaled effectively, solarisation can become a cornerstone of:
 - **Energy transition**
 - **Fiscal federalism reform**