

2024

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS





Daily Current Affairs from *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express* & *The Assam Tribune*

12th Mar 2025

CONTENT LIST

GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

	Topics	Syllabus	Page No:
1	More signs of overhauling the compliance framework	Governance (TH)	6
2	New immigration Bill seeks to tighten existing regulations	Polity (TH)	10
3	Dark Circles Tell Stories	Health (IE)	10

GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

	Topics	Syllabus	Page No:
4	State Budget: What lies ahead?	Economy (AT)	6

ESTD 2016

1. More signs of overhauling the compliance framework

Context: Despite efforts to fight corruption, red tape and bribery still make it hard for businesses to grow in India. The “India Business Corruption Survey 2024” shows a worrying trend: 66% of businesses admit to paying bribes, and 54% say they were forced to do so to speed up government work, get permits, follow rules, or obtain duplicate licenses. The problem is worst in sectors controlled by strict officials, such as labour, GST, income tax, pollution, provident funds, property registration, and health departments.

Key points

- **Overview:** Indian businesses struggle with compliance rules being misused for bribes and the frequent changes in compliance requirements.
- **Reforms to Boost Investment:** *Economic Impact of Corruption* - A major barrier to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). 80% of respondents see corruption as a significant deterrent. Highlights the need for a transparent and predictable regulatory system.
Slow Progress in Compliance Reforms - Government initiated reforms two years ago, but progress remains slow. Jan Vishwas Act, 2023 which decriminalized 180 provisions with imprisonment clauses.
Budget 2025 and 'Jan Vishwas 2.0' - Further decriminalization of around 100 provisions. Positive step but insufficient—over 20,000 imprisonment clauses still exist.
- **Issues:** *Complexity of Compliance* - Businesses struggle with regulatory burdens, worsened by corruption.
Corruption in Regulatory Approvals - Officials exploit compliance provisions to demand bribes.
Subjectivity in Inspections - Inspectors have unchecked power to threaten imprisonment or factory shutdowns.
Frequent Compliance Updates - 9,420 changes in the past year—an average of 36 updates per day.
- **Challenges in Setting Up a Factory:** Requires submission of hundreds of documents across 40+ government departments.
- **Need for a Digital-First Approach:** A single business identifier could simplify approvals.
 - *Digi Locker Concept* - A secure, tamper-proof repository for verified documents.
- **Fragmented Compliance Landscape:** Businesses deal with 23+ different identity numbers from Union and State authorities.
 - *Examples* - PAN, GSTIN, CIN, factory licenses, and professional tax numbers.
- **Conclusion:** A simple and well-organized compliance system under Jan Vishwas 2.0 is more than just making business easier—it's crucial for India's economic growth. The government must take strong steps to attract global investors and support Indian entrepreneurs, allowing them to grow, innovate, and create jobs without unnecessary hurdles. India is at a turning point. If the High-Level Committee for Regulatory Reforms pushes for bold changes, it can drive progress. But if it hesitates, India risks falling behind in the global economy. The path forward is clear—modernize or be left behind.

2. New immigration Bill seeks to tighten existing regulations

Context: The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, is aimed at consolidating four existing inter-linked laws, adding more teeth to the existing rules for visiting foreigners, and raising the penalties for violations. The objective of the Bill is to consolidate the existing Foreigners Act, the Passport (Entry into India) Act, the Registration of Foreigners Act, and the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act.

Key points

- **Overview:** The proposed legislation aims to streamline immigration laws, bringing them in line with modern security needs and regulatory requirements. It will replace outdated laws such as –
 - The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920
 - The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939
 - The Foreigners Act, 1946
 - The Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000
- **Key features of the bill:**
 - Stricter Penalties for Violations* - The Bill proposes hefty fines and stricter enforcement mechanisms for violations of immigration laws: Unauthorised entry into India will be penalised up to ₹5 lakh. Use of fake passports can be fined up to ₹10 lakh.
 - Clearer Regulations for Universities and Medical Institutions* - Educational institutions must register foreign students and report them to authorities. Hospitals and medical institutions admitting foreign nationals will have legal obligations to maintain records.
 - Revised Visa and Passport Rules* - Stricter requirements for obtaining Indian visas. Enhanced scrutiny of foreigners residing in India. Improved tracking mechanisms for visitors and long-term foreign residents.
 - More Power to Immigration Officers* - Greater authority to detain, investigate, and deport illegal immigrants. The power to control movements of restricted foreigners. The right to deny entry based on security risks.
 - Liability of Carriers and Transport Operators* - Airlines, shipping companies, and transport agencies must verify passenger documents before boarding. Carriers found in violation will face legal penalties.
- **Need for the New Law:** The existing laws on immigration and foreigners are outdated, dating back to the pre-Independence era (1920-1946). These laws were framed during wartime conditions and are no longer suitable for India's current security and immigration challenges.
- **Potential Challenges and Criticism:**
 - Concerns Over Human Rights and Deportation Policies* - The law could lead to stricter deportation policies, affecting long-term foreign residents and asylum seekers.
 - Impact on Universities and Medical Institutions* - Educational institutions and hospitals may find it difficult to comply with the new reporting requirements for foreign nationals.
 - Enforcement and Implementation Issues* - Effective implementation will require strong coordination between immigration officers, airlines, universities, and security agencies.
- **Conclusion:** The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025, is a major legislative reform aimed at modernizing India's immigration system, strengthening border security, and improving foreigner regulation. However, successful implementation will require careful balancing of security concerns with human rights, ensuring that legitimate travellers, students, and expatriates do not face unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles.

3. Dark Circles Tell Stories

Context: ResMed, a global health technology leader, recently revealed in its 5th Global Sleep Survey (India) that people are losing at least three nights of restorative sleep each week. The reports suggests that women experience poorer sleep quality than men. 38% of women struggle to fall asleep vs. 29% of men. 44% of menopausal women globally face sleep issues 3+ times weekly. 17% of Indian women take sick leave due to poor sleep vs. 12% of men.

Key points

- **Causes of Women's Sleep Deprivation:** *Gendered Caregiving Roles* - Women remain default caregivers for children and the elderly, even when employed. Paid work along with unpaid domestic labour (second shift). Women's careers are conditional on maintaining household duties (e.g. cooking during commutes).
Structural & Economic Barriers - Scarcity of affordable daycare centres and government-run crèches. Reliance on unreliable nannies or elderly family members for childcare. Low wages in semi-urban areas prevent access to support services.
Workplace Inequities - Short maternity leaves and regressive policies in privatized sectors. Male-dominated leadership often denies requests. Extended nighttime caregiving disrupts rest.
- **Cultural & Familial Norms:** *Unchanged gender roles* - Sons are rarely taught to share household work.
Intergenerational cycles - Daughters internalize the same burdens as their mothers.
- **Systemic Failures & Policy Gaps:** *Government Neglect* - Minimal investment in childcare infrastructure (e.g. crèches). Diversity in India complicates data collection, masking ground realities.
Impact of Neoliberal Economics - Forces women into dual roles to sustain household income. Erodes worker protections (e.g. shrinking maternity leave policies).
- **Way Forward:** *Redistribute caregiving* - Encourage shared responsibilities within families and workplaces.
Policy reforms - Expand affordable childcare infrastructure. Mandate equitable parental leave and enforce CCL approvals.
Cultural shift - Challenge patriarchal norms perpetuating women's double burden.
- **Conclusion:** Women's sleep deprivation in India is a systemic issue rooted in gendered labour, cultural norms, and policy neglect. True empowerment requires dismantling structural barriers, not empty rhetoric.

4. State Budget: What lies ahead?

Context: The Assam Budget 2025-26, presented by Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, has captured attention for its unprecedented scale, with an outlay of Rs 2.63 lakh crore, nearly double that of the previous year. It projects a vision of economic transformation, social welfare expansion, and industrial acceleration. A State Budget is more than an exercise in fiscal arithmetic – it is a statement of governance, an expression of priorities, and a test of execution.

Key points

- **Job creation:** One of the most striking claims of this budget is that the government has exceeded the one-lakh-job promise, with 1.2 lakh government jobs already created and 40,000 more planned.
- **Welfare expansion:** The Orunodoi Scheme has expanded from 24 lakh to 37.2 lakh beneficiaries, with a Rs 5,000 crore allocation.
- **Industrial expansion:** The budget's boldest economic gamble is its push for industrialisation, headlined by the Jagiroad semiconductor plant, projected to create 12,000 direct and 25,000 indirect jobs.
- **Infrastructure:** With a 1,000-km road target, Asom Mala 2.0 is a key infrastructure push. Yet, last year's claim of 13 km of paved roads per day was marred by delays and incomplete projects.
- **Healthcare:** The Rs 5,393 crore allocation prioritises rural healthcare and maternal health, with initiatives like Healthy Garden, paediatric ICU expansion, and Durgam to Sugam for specialist recruitment.
- **Education:** The Nijut Moina Scheme has expanded from 1.8 lakh to 4.3 lakh students, but fund disbursement delays and rural outreach challenges persist, limiting its impact.
- **Fiscal prudence:** With a debt-to-GSDP ratio of 24.3%, Assam fares better than Punjab (41.4%) and West Bengal (34.5%).
- **Fiscal Reforms undertaken by States:** *Fiscal Responsibility Legislations (FRLs)* - Enactment of FRBM Acts/FRLs by State government has incentivised formulation of fiscal policy strategies, creation of Medium-Term Fiscal Plans (MTFPs) and improvement in transparency.
Institutional Reforms - Setting up of State Institutions of Transformation with help of NITI Aayog by several states Assam, Gujarat and others.
Greater reliance on market-based financing - Share of market borrowings in financing of GFD increasing from 17% in 2005-06 to 79% in 2024-25.
Power Sector Reforms - UDAY scheme, fifteenth finance commission allowed an additional borrowing space of 0.5% of GSDP for States for power sector reforms.
- **Way ahead:** *Data Driven Fiscal Policy Making* - Data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence can be used for improved taxation system.
Improving fiscal data generation and dissemination processes - E.g., data on outstanding liabilities can be provided in a uniform format.
Contain DISCOM Losses - Through Initiatives aimed at enhancing productivity, reducing transmission and distribution losses, rationalising tariffs in accordance with the underlying cost of power supply, privatising generation and distribution etc.