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# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS





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**1. How Climate change is affecting India's wheat production**

**Context:** India has recorded its warmest February in 124 years this year. The India Meteorological Department has already raised an alarm for March, saying that the month will experience above normal temperatures and more than the usual number of days with heat waves. The period coincides with the beginning of India's wheat harvest season, and extreme heat poses a grave threat for the country's second-most consumed crop, after rice.

**Key points**

- **Record-Breaking Temperatures:** February 2025 was India's hottest February in 124 years, with March expected to see excessive heat waves.
- **Delayed Sowing Patterns:** Indian Ocean warming has disrupted the kharif season, delaying wheat sowing and exposing crops to early-season heat stress.
- **Frequent Marine Heat Waves:** IITM forecasts up to 250 marine heat wave days per year by the century's end, intensifying climate risks.
- **Lower Procurement Targets:** Despite a 115 million tonnes production target for 2024-2025, the government reduced procurement expectations to 30 million tonnes due to climate concerns.
- **Export Restrictions:** Wheat exports were banned in May 2022 to control domestic supply after reduced production from climate impacts and geopolitical disruptions.
- **Impact of Climate Change on Wheat Production:**
  - Reduced Yield* - Rising temperatures accelerate ripening, causing early flowering and shorter grain-filling periods, reducing yield.
  - Degraded Grain Quality* - Heat stress reduces starch content, producing harder grains with lower milling value and reduced market demand.
  - Resource Misuse* - Farmers' overuse of fertilisers, pesticides, and fungicides to counter climate stress leads to soil degradation.
  - Economic Distress* - Wheat procurement in 2024-2025 was 26.6 million tonnes, below the 34.15 million tonnes target, causing farmer income loss.
  - Threat to Food Security* - Lower wheat availability strains the Public Distribution System (PDS) and risks domestic price inflation.
- **Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies:**
  - Heat-Resilient Crop Varieties* - Developing wheat varieties with shorter growth cycles reduces exposure to peak heat periods.
  - Early Sowing Practices* - Encouraging earlier sowing in heat-vulnerable regions can prevent crops from maturing during extreme temperatures.
  - Enhanced Weather Monitoring* - Strengthening real-time advisory systems helps farmers make informed decisions on sowing and irrigation.
  - Precision Farming Techniques* - Techniques such as drip irrigation, soil sensors, and controlled fertiliser use improve efficiency.
  - Policy Support* - Expanding compensation schemes, climate-specific insurance, and credit facilities can protect farmers from climate-induced losses.
- **Conclusion:** Climate change is increasingly threatening India's wheat production, reducing yields, compromising quality, and straining farmer incomes. While immediate financial aid is crucial, long-term solutions such as climate-resilient crops, improved weather advisories, and precision farming methods are vital for sustaining wheat production and ensuring food security.

**2. New Delhi's perilous recalibration with the Taliban**

**Context:** India is deepening its engagement with the Taliban, with reports suggesting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi may permit the regime in Afghanistan to appoint a new envoy for its embassy in New Delhi. This development follows the first high-level meeting between India and the Taliban in January, where India's Foreign Secretary, Vikram Misri, met with the Taliban's acting 'Foreign Minister,' Amir Khan Muttaqi, in Dubai to discuss enhancing political and economic relations, along with providing humanitarian assistance.

**Key points**

- **Longstanding Engagement:** India's diplomatic ties with the Taliban have been strengthening over time. In June 2022, nearly a year after the Taliban regained power, New Delhi reopened its embassy in Kabul.
- **Potential Diplomatic Shift:** Accepting a Taliban-appointed diplomat in India would mark a major policy shift. This move would effectively grant legitimacy to the Taliban regime, something most nations have avoided.
- **Global Concerns Over Taliban's Governance:** The Taliban's oppressive policies, particularly against women, have led to global condemnation.
- **Human rights violations include:** 1.4 million school-age girls barred from education. Women prohibited from most jobs. Recent bans on women entering beauty parlours and national parks, further erasing their public presence. UN experts have labelled the situation as "gender apartheid."
- **India's Strategic Interests:** Despite global opposition, New Delhi sees an opportunity to expand its influence in Afghanistan. India considers engagement with the Taliban crucial for its strategic and geopolitical interests in the region.
- **China's stand:** China has taken the lead, becoming the first nation to accept a Taliban envoy and invest in Afghan infrastructure. Beijing may integrate the Taliban into its Belt and Road Initiative, expanding its regional influence.
- **Challenges:** *Terrorism Hotbed* - Afghanistan under the Taliban has become a breeding ground for terrorism.  
*India in the Crosshairs* - Dec 2023: IS attacked Indian consulate in Jalalabad (1 dead, 2 injured). According to UN Report IS seeks to recruit 'lone actors' for large-scale attacks in India.  
*Growing Security Concerns* - India is now a prime target for IS, increasing the risk of attacks at home.
- **Way ahead:** *Precondition for Engagement* - India should demand concrete action against terror groups before deepening ties with the Taliban.  
*Regional Cooperation* - The Taliban must collaborate with regional partners to eliminate Islamic State (IS) threats.  
*Longstanding Instability* - Afghanistan has faced political turmoil and terrorism for decades, making it a high-risk investment.
- **Conclusion:** India should learn from the experiences of its rivals, China and Pakistan, both of whom have faced setbacks after engaging with the Taliban and investing in Afghanistan. Given its own painful history with terrorism, New Delhi may conclude that the risks outweigh the potential benefits.

**3. A land where ambition grows minus an outbound ticket**

**Context:** The recent controversy over the sudden return of Indians who tried to enter the United States illegally—only to be handcuffed, placed on a U.S. military plane, and dropped off in Amritsar—raises many important questions. Migration is not just about policies; it is a deeply human experience, shaped by memories, hopes, and dreams. Indian migrants are now global leaders, with icons like Sundar Pichai (Google) and Satya Nadella (Microsoft) heading major companies. Rising political and physical barriers now put migration under unprecedented scrutiny.

**Key points**

- **Legal vs. Illegal Migration:** While IT engineers in Silicon Valley migrate via scholarships or work visas, many Sikh cab drivers in New York take unconventional routes. Illegal migrants are not fugitives but opportunity-seekers.
- **Economic Impact:** Indian migrants sent over \$120 billion in remittances in 2023, encouraging others to follow the same path.
- **Factors Driving Illegal Migration:** Major U.S. cities offer job opportunities, undocumented work, and hopes of future amnesty.
- **State-Wise Migration Trends:** Prosperous states like Gujarat and Punjab see high emigration due to unemployment, low agricultural returns, and social issues like drug abuse.
- **Role of Migration Agents:** Unscrupulous agents exploit people's aspirations, promising wealth abroad and charging exorbitant fees for illegal passage.
- **Changing Migration Patterns:** Migration was once dominated by young men, but now entire middle-class families risk everything for a fresh start abroad.
- **Risks & Outcomes:** Cases like the Gujarati family freezing to death at the U.S.-Canada border in 2022 highlight the desperation among even India's upper-middle class.
- **The Illusion of the American Dream:** Many find themselves trapped in a cycle of fear, uncertainty, and economic struggle. They live in constant fear of deportation and work in low-paying, exploitative jobs. Societal integration remains difficult due to racial bias and suspicion.
- **Deportation and Legal Authority:** The U.S. has the legal right to deport those who enter unlawfully. The Biden administration deported 1,100 Indians in the last fiscal year. Since October 2020, nearly 1,70,000 Indian migrants have been detained at U.S. borders, mainly from Canada and Mexico.
- **Concerns Over Deportation Practices:** Recent images of shackled and handcuffed migrants being transported in military aircraft have sparked outrage. Such treatment resembles criminal extradition rather than standard immigration enforcement.
- **Conclusion:** As the world builds barriers, India must create pathways to opportunity, prosperity, and a future where migration is a choice, not a necessity. For India to truly rise, it must become a nation where people choose to stay, not one they feel compelled to leave. India must once again be a land of hope, not because the world is shutting its doors, but because its people no longer feel the need to look elsewhere.

#### **4. The barriers faced by construction workers**

**Context:** India's construction sector faces labour shortages due to welfare access challenges, job insecurity, and poor documentation. The construction sector is one of the fastest-growing industries in India, contributing about 9% to the national GDP. It is projected to reach \$1.4 trillion by 2025 and employ around 3 crore workers by 2030. However, concerns about labour shortages have been raised, with claims that workers are reluctant to relocate due to welfare schemes that provide financial security.

##### **Key points**

- **Issues:** *Frequent Relocation and Job Insecurity* - Migrant construction workers frequently move from one site to another, leading to high job insecurity and unstable incomes. Their employment is often temporary, making it difficult to access consistent welfare benefits.  
*Difficulties in Accessing Welfare Schemes* - The Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, 1996 was created to protect workers, but many struggle to access benefits. Around 5.65 crore workers are registered under State construction boards, which have collected nearly ₹70,000 crore in cesses for worker welfare. However, 75% of this amount remains unutilised due to bureaucratic issues.  
*Documentation Barriers* - To access welfare schemes, workers need documents like identity proof, birth certificates, and residence proof. Because of their migratory nature, many workers lack permanent addresses and struggle to provide the required documents.  
*State-Specific Issues* - Each State has different rules for verification, creating inconsistencies in welfare access. Migrant workers who move from one State to another lose access to welfare schemes, as there is no system for portability.  
*Seasonal Employment and Emergency Support Issues* - Construction workers face seasonal employment challenges, such as job losses during heat waves. When construction bans are imposed due to air pollution, workers lose income but struggle to receive timely financial relief due to slow administrative processes.
- **Proposed Solutions:** *Creating a Unified Labour Identification System* - A nationwide system for worker identification, like the One Nation One Ration Card scheme, is needed. Linking BOCW registrations with UAN on e-Shram would allow workers to access welfare benefits regardless of location.  
*Improving Digital Infrastructure* - State governments should adopt digital platforms to streamline welfare schemes and reduce delays. A centralised portal can enable real-time tracking of benefits and use Aadhaar-based verification for efficiency.  
*Simplifying Documentation Requirements* - Accepting alternative forms of proof can help workers access benefits more easily. States should organise on-site registration camps to ensure workers are enrolled in welfare schemes.
- **Conclusion:** The construction sector's labour shortage is not just due to welfare schemes but also systemic barriers to employment and welfare access. Addressing these issues through better documentation processes, digital infrastructure, and skilling programs is crucial for building a stable and secure workforce.

**5. International organic Agri Horti expo inaugurated**

**Context:** Agriculture minister Atul Bora inaugurated the Government Development Schemes Expo and International Organic Agri-Horti Expo-2025 today at Maniram Dewan Trade Centre, Guwahati. Organized by Bharat Event Private Limited, the three-day event aims to bridge the gap between government welfare initiatives and the public while promoting advancements in organic agriculture and horticulture. The event will continue until March 19, with a series of workshops, panel discussions, and interactive sessions designed to enhance public understanding and industry collaboration in these crucial sectors.

**Key points**

- **Horticulture Sector:** It is a vast and diverse field that encompasses the cultivation, production, processing, and marketing of fruits, vegetables, flowers, and ornamental plants. Major types of horticulture: Pomology [Fruit cultivation and includes Viticulture (grape cultivation)]; Olericulture (cultivation of vegetables); Floriculture (cultivation of flowers and ornamental plant); Arboriculture (cultivation of trees and shrubs).
- **Status of India's Horticulture Sector:** *Production* - 355.48 million Tonnes in 2022-23, 13.1% of the gross cropped area.  
*Global Status* - India ranks 2nd in fruits and vegetable production in the world after China.  
*Exports* - India is ranked 14th in vegetables and 23rd in fruits.
- **Initiatives Undertaken for the sector:** *National Horticulture Mission (2005-06)* - Aims at holistic development of horticulture sector by ensuring forward & backward linkage through a cluster approach under Horticulture Cluster Development Programme.  
*Capital Investment Subsidy Scheme* - For construction/ expansion/ modernization of Cold Storages/Storages of Horticulture Products.  
*Commercial cultivation* - During 2022-23, 347 varieties/hybrids of 44 crops were released, and 99 varieties of horticultural crops were notified for commercial cultivation.
- **Clean Plant Programme (CPP):** Promote sustainable and eco-friendly agricultural practices and reduce dependence on imported planting materials.  
*Implementing agency* - National Horticulture Board in association with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.  
*Three Core Components* - 9 world class state-of-the-art Clean Plant Centers (CPCs) equipped with advanced diagnostic therapeutics and tissue culture labs. Certification Framework, supported by a regulatory framework under the Seeds Act 1966. Support for large-scale nurseries for the development of infrastructure.
- **Challenges:** *Low Export share* - India's share in the global horticultural market is a mere 1 %. Indian exports face food safety and standards related issues due to non-tariff trade barriers like Sanitary and phytosanitary measures.  
*Infrastructure Deficit* - Poor logistics and lack of equitable cold storage and warehousing facilities contribute to delays and wastages as Horticulture crops are highly perishable.
- **Way Forward:** Improving Value Chain Efficiency by expanding cold storage capacity; investing in better roads, railways, and transportation infrastructure to reduce post-harvest losses. Promote agricultural technologies, such as precision agriculture, hydroponics, and tissue culture, to improve productivity and efficiency. Develop and promote climate-smart agricultural practices that are resilient to changing weather patterns.