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PrepAlpine

Email: info@PrepAlpine.com

Website: PrepAlpine.com

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 02.04.2026

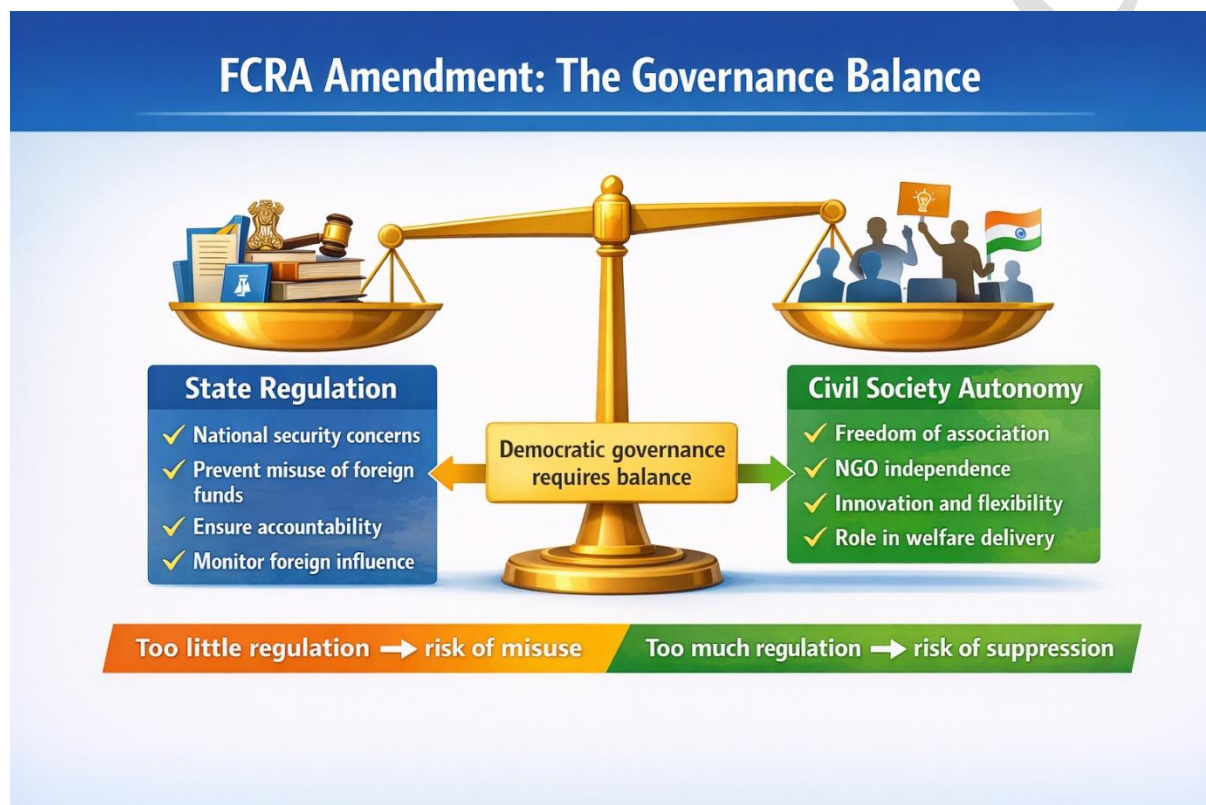
GS Paper II: Current Affairs

1. FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026 – Issues and Controversy

a. Introduction: The Core Governance Dilemma

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) has long been a key tool through which the Indian State regulates foreign funding. These funds support important sectors such as education, healthcare, social welfare, and religious activities. However, they also raise concerns about national security, foreign influence, and financial transparency.

The proposed 2026 amendment sharpens this tension. By allowing the State to take control of assets of organisations whose licences lapse or are cancelled, it raises a fundamental question: how should a democratic State balance regulation with the autonomy of civil society?



b. Understanding the FCRA Framework

The FCRA was first enacted in 1976 during a time of concern about external interference in domestic affairs. It was significantly revised in 2010, followed by further amendments to strengthen compliance.

Core Objectives

- Prevent misuse of foreign funds
- Protect national interest and public order
- Ensure transparency and accountability

Key Provisions

- Mandatory registration for receiving foreign funds
- Strict reporting and utilisation norms
- Monitoring of fund usage

Over time, the law has evolved from a basic regulatory system into a strict compliance-based regime, reflecting increasing State concern over foreign influence.

Against this background, the 2026 amendment introduces new mechanisms that expand the State's role.

c. Key Features of the 2026 Amendment

i. Creation of a Designated Authority

- Government-appointed authority to manage assets
- Applies when FCRA licence:
 - Is cancelled
 - Expires
 - Is surrendered
 - Is not renewed

ii. Control Over Assets and Funds

Authority can:

- Take control of assets
- Supervise their use
- Transfer them to other entities including government bodies

iii. Provision for Restoration

If licence is restored:

- Unused funds may be returned

iv. Special Provision for Religious Institutions

- Religious character of assets must be maintained during management

Overall, the amendment introduces a formal mechanism for State intervention in organisations dependent on foreign funding.

The government has justified these changes on specific administrative and security grounds.

d. Government's Rationale: Closing Regulatory Gaps

i. Addressing Administrative Ambiguity

- Earlier, no clear mechanism existed to handle assets after licence cancellation
- Led to:
 - Delays
 - Misuse of funds
 - Lack of accountability

ii. Ensuring Continuity and Accountability

Designated authority ensures:

- Proper utilisation of funds
- Prevention of diversion

iii. National Security Concerns

- Increased global concerns about foreign influence
- Need for tighter monitoring of funds

Thus, the amendment reflects a policy shift towards stronger State oversight. However, despite these justifications, the Bill has triggered significant controversy.

e. Sources of Controversy

i. Concerns of Civil Society

- Fear of excessive State control
- Risk to organisational independence

Asset takeover may:

- Disrupt functioning
- Create uncertainty

Possible decline in voluntary sector participation

ii. Political and Legal Concerns

- Concentration of power in executive
- Questions of proportionality and safeguards

Automatic licence cessation:

- May disrupt activities abruptly
- Limited procedural protection

iii. Minority and Regional Sensitivities

Regions like Kerala:

- Many institutions depend on foreign funds

Minority concerns:

- Possible disproportionate impact
- Link to cultural and religious rights

This adds a political and socio-cultural dimension to the debate.

f. Broader Constitutional and Governance Issues

i. Balance between Security and Freedom

- State must ensure national security
- But also protect freedom of association

ii. Role of Civil Society in Development

- NGOs supplement State capacity
- Work in underserved areas
 - Education
 - Healthcare
 - Disaster relief

iii. Transparency vs Over-Regulation

- Transparency is essential
- But excessive regulation:
 - Creates bureaucratic hurdles
 - Discourages innovation

iv. Protection of Minority Rights

- Constitutional safeguards for cultural and educational rights
- Need for sensitivity in regulation

v. Need for Predictable Governance

- Clear rules and timelines
- Certainty in decision-making

These issues show that the debate goes beyond technical regulation and touches the core of democratic governance.

g. Significance of the Debate

The controversy is not limited to one law; it reflects deeper structural questions:

- Relationship between State and civil society
- Limits of executive power
- Balance between security and liberty

Broader Implications

- Impact on democratic functioning
- Influence on civil liberties
- Effect on India's global image

Thus, the debate has national as well as international significance.

h. Way Forward: Towards a Balanced Framework

i. Transparent and Time-Bound Processes

- Clear criteria for licence renewal and cancellation
- Reduce uncertainty and arbitrariness

ii. Independent Oversight Mechanism

- Review or appeal system
- Prevent misuse of authority

iii. Differentiated Approach

Distinguish:

- Genuine welfare organisations
- Misuse-prone entities
- Avoid blanket restrictions

iv. Stakeholder Consultation

- Involve civil society and community institutions
- Improve legitimacy and implementation

v. Constitutional Anchoring

- Protect national security
- Safeguard democratic freedoms

Such a framework can ensure both regulation and trust coexist effectively.

Conclusion

The FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026 aims to strengthen regulatory control over foreign funding. However, it also raises serious concerns about the balance between State authority and civil society autonomy.

In a democracy, regulation must be accompanied by transparency, safeguards, and respect for constitutional values. The real challenge lies not in choosing between security and liberty, but in designing systems that can uphold both simultaneously.

GS Paper II: Current Affairs

2. Piped Natural Gas versus LPG in India: Understanding the Energy Transition

a. Introduction: The Shift in India's Energy Landscape

India's energy policy is gradually moving towards cleaner, more secure, and diversified fuel options. One important change is the growing use of Piped Natural Gas (PNG) alongside the continued dominance of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) in households.

This shift is not only about convenience. It is linked to larger goals such as reducing import dependence, improving energy security, and promoting environmentally cleaner fuels. However, the transition is complex because both PNG and LPG rely on very different systems of supply and infrastructure.

Piped Natural Gas (PNG) vs Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)		
Feature	PNG	LPG
Nature	Natural gas (methane-based)	Propane-butane mixture
Form	Gas (supplied via pipeline)	Liquid (stored under pressure)
Supply mode	Continuous pipeline supply	Cylinder delivery
Infrastructure	Requires pipeline network	No infrastructure needed
Convenience	No refilling, no storage	Requires booking and storage
Coverage	Mainly urban/semi-urban	Universal (rural + urban)
Environmental impact	Cleaner fuel	Relatively higher emissions
Dependence	Depends on LNG + pipelines	Mostly import-dependent

PNG = INFRASTRUCTURE-BASED CONVENIENCE **LPG = FLEXIBILITY-BASED ACCESS**

b. Understanding the Basic Fuels

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)

- LPG is a mixture of propane and butane gases
- Stored in liquid form under pressure

- Supplied through cylinders delivered to households
- Requires booking refills, needs storage space at home

Piped Natural Gas (PNG)

- Natural gas supplied directly through underground pipelines
- Provides continuous supply like water or electricity
- No need for storage or refilling

Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)

- Natural gas cooled to very low temperatures to become liquid
- Easier to transport over long distances via ships
- Converted back to gas (regasified) after reaching India

LNG is not used directly in homes, it enables supply of PNG

Thus, while LPG is a ready-to-use household fuel, PNG depends on a larger infrastructure system supported by LNG imports and pipelines.

c. How Natural Gas Reaches Households

The journey of natural gas involves multiple stages:

- Production (domestic) or import as LNG
- Regasification at terminals
- Transportation through trunk pipelines
- Distribution through city gas networks
- Supply to households as PNG

This shows that PNG availability depends heavily on infrastructure development, unlike LPG. This infrastructural difference explains why India is carefully promoting PNG rather than replacing LPG completely.

d. Why India Is Promoting Piped Natural Gas

Reducing Import Dependence

- India imports a large share of LPG
- Exposes economy to global price fluctuations
- PNG helps diversify the energy basket

Enhancing Energy Security

- LPG imports are concentrated in regions like West Asia
- Vulnerable to geopolitical tensions
- Natural gas can be sourced from multiple countries

Cleaner Energy Transition

- Natural gas burns more cleanly than LPG
- Lower emissions better for environment
- Supports India's climate commitments

Consumer Convenience

- Continuous supply
- No need to book cylinders
- No storage concerns

Thus, PNG aligns with India's goals of sustainability, security, and ease of living.

e. Substitutability between PNG and LPG

Functional Similarity

- Both fuels can be used for cooking
- Similar efficiency and usability

Practical Limitations

- PNG requires pipeline connectivity
- LPG works anywhere without infrastructure

Industrial and specific uses may still prefer LPG. Thus, PNG is a partial substitute, not a universal replacement.

f. Why LPG Became Dominant in India

Ease of Distribution

- Cylinders can be transported anywhere
- Suitable for remote and rural areas

Independence from Infrastructure

- No need for pipelines
- Flexible supply system

Strong Policy Support

- Schemes like PM Ujjwala Yojana expanded access
- Rapid increase in household adoption

As a result, LPG is deeply embedded in India's energy system.

g. Challenges in Expanding Piped Natural Gas

Infrastructure Constraints

- Limited pipeline network
- Large regions — central, eastern, northeast India remain uncovered

Last-Mile Connectivity Issues

- Difficult to lay pipelines in dense urban areas
- Challenges in informal settlements

High Initial Investment

- Pipeline projects require heavy capital
- Long gestation periods

Administrative and Regulatory Hurdles

- Land acquisition issues
- Multiple approvals and coordination problems

Dependence on Imports

- Domestic gas production is limited
- LNG imports still required

Behavioural Factors

- Consumers are familiar with LPG
- Hesitation in shifting to new system

These constraints highlight that supply availability is also a critical issue.

h. Supply Constraints and Competing Demand

Natural gas is already used in:

- Fertiliser production
- Industries
- Power generation

Limited domestic supply

- Increasing PNG connections creates competition for gas allocation
- Imports remain necessary

Thus, PNG expansion must balance multiple sectoral demands.

i. Can PNG Reduce LPG Dependence?

- PNG can reduce LPG demand in urban areas
- Helps diversify energy sources

Limitations

- Rural and remote areas will continue using LPG
- Infrastructure constraints limit rapid expansion

Thus, PNG will complement, not replace LPG in the near future.

j. Policy Direction and Strategy

- Expansion of pipeline network
- Promotion of city gas distribution systems
- Increasing PNG connections

Supporting Measures

- Competitive pricing
- Gradual and inclusive transition
- No forced replacement, focus on balanced adoption

This approach reflects a strategic shift towards diversification rather than substitution.

k. Core Insight: Diversification, Not Replacement

The key conceptual takeaway is:

- India is not eliminating LPG
- It is reducing overdependence on a single fuel

Benefits of Diversification

- Greater resilience to global shocks
- Improved energy security
- Better environmental outcomes

Thus, PNG and LPG are part of a multi-fuel strategy, not competing alternatives.

Conclusion

The shift towards Piped Natural Gas marks an important phase in India's energy transition. PNG offers advantages such as cleaner energy, convenience, and diversification. However, its expansion is limited by infrastructure gaps, supply constraints, and existing consumption patterns.

In the foreseeable future, PNG will complement LPG rather than replace it. The success of this transition will depend on sustained infrastructure investment, efficient supply management, and policies that ensure equitable access across regions.

GS Paper II: Current Affairs

3. Impact of Early Screen Exposure on Children

a. Introduction: Childhood in the Digital Age

Childhood is a crucial stage of life where the foundations of thinking, communication, emotions, and social behaviour are developed. Traditionally, children learned through direct interaction—with family members, peers, and their surroundings.

However, the rapid spread of digital devices has changed this pattern. Today, children are exposed to screens from a very early age. This raises an important concern: when screens replace real-world experiences, essential opportunities for development may be lost.

Thus, the issue is not simply about technology use, but about how it reshapes the process of growing up.

b. Natural Processes of Learning in Childhood

Children learn through active engagement with their environment.

Learning through Interaction

- Touching and exploring objects
- Observing people and surroundings
- Responding to sounds and expressions

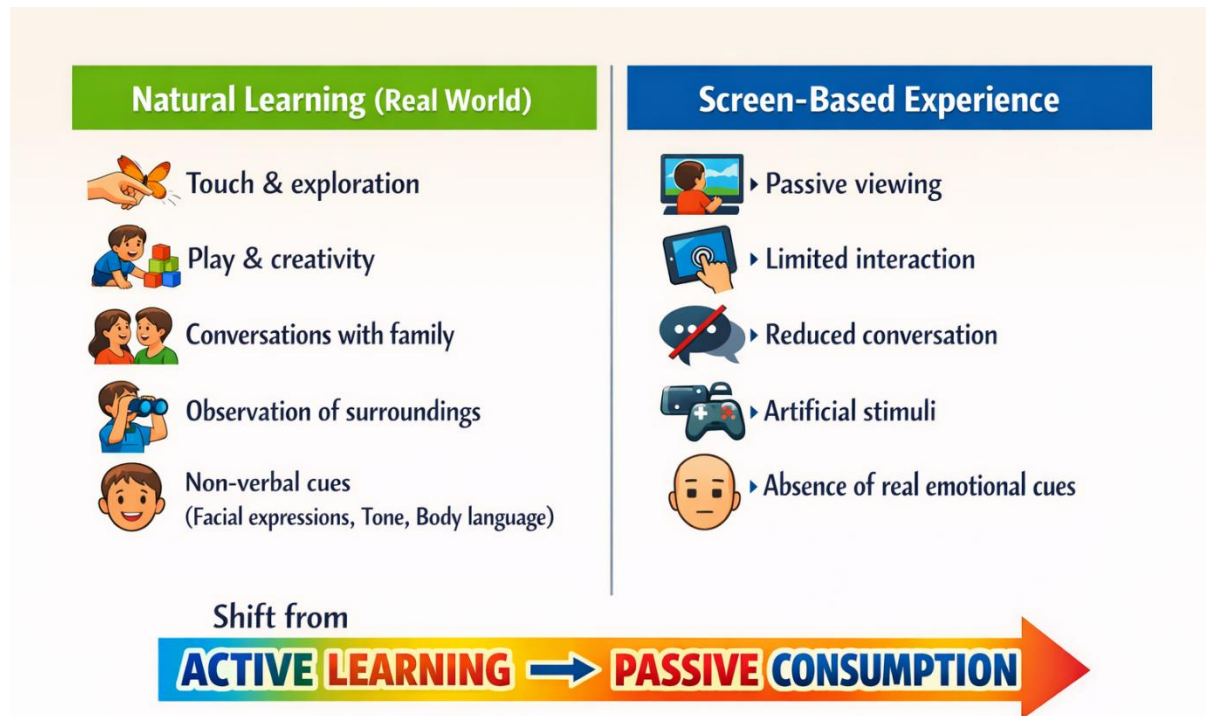
Role of Social Interaction

- Conversations help language development
- Play builds creativity and confidence
- Emotional bonding shapes behaviour

Importance of Non-Verbal Cues

- Facial expressions
- Tone of voice
- Body language

These help children understand emotions and social situations. Such experiences cannot be fully replicated by screens. Therefore, when screen exposure increases, these natural learning processes may get disrupted, leading to several developmental impacts.



c. Effects of Early Screen Exposure

i. Loss of Real-World Interaction

- Screen time replaces play and conversation
- Reduced interaction with parents and peers
- Weakens social learning foundation

ii. Impairment of Social Skills

- Limited exposure to real-life communication
- Difficulty in:
 - Eye contact
 - Understanding body language
 - Responding to emotions
- May affect relationships later in life

iii. Weak Emotional Development

- Screens used as distraction tools
- Children do not learn:
 - Patience
 - Self-control
 - Coping with frustration
- Leads to irritability, anxiety, impulsiveness

iv. Reduced Attention and Focus

- Fast-paced digital content overstimulates the brain
- Children become used to quick rewards

- Difficulty in:
 - Reading
 - Classroom learning
 - Sustained concentration

v. Long-Term Mental Health Concerns

- Social withdrawal
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety and depression

Early exposure increases long-term risk. These effects highlight that the issue is not just screen presence, but what children miss out on while using screens.

d. The Idea of Opportunity Cost in Screen Use

The key concept is opportunity cost—what is lost when time is spent on screens.

What Screens Replace

- Physical play
- Social interaction
- Creative activities

Developmental Impact

- Loss of essential experiences
- Incomplete development of skills

Even if content is harmless, the lost experiences matter. Thus, the real concern is not only screen content, but the absence of alternative learning opportunities. As children grow older, the nature of this impact evolves further, especially during adolescence.

e. Impact on Adolescents

Increased Screen Use

- Greater use of social media
- More time spent online

Psychological Effects

- Social comparison
- Reduced self-worth
- Dependence on digital validation

Behavioural Changes

- Reduced real-life interaction
- Risk of addictive usage patterns

Affects mental health and relationships.

f. Reasons for Rising Screen Exposure

Pandemic Effect

- Online education increased device use
- Reduced outdoor and social activities

Changing Lifestyles

- Busy parents
- Screens used as convenient engagement tools

Design of Digital Platforms

- Apps designed to capture attention
- Continuous engagement through notifications and rewards

Makes it difficult for children to disengage.

g. Recommended Guidelines for Screen Use

i. Age-Based Recommendations

Below 2 years:

- Avoid screen use except video calls

Age 2–5 years:

- Limited screen time
- Use under supervision

Older children:

- Regulated and balanced use
- Avoid excessive dependence

ii. Core Principle

- Moderation
- Balance between digital and real-world experiences

These guidelines aim to prevent negative outcomes not just at the individual level, but also at the societal level.

h. Broader Societal Implications

Social Consequences

- Weakening of interpersonal relationships
- Reduced community bonding

Health Consequences

- Rising mental health issues
- Increased stress and anxiety

Educational Impact

- Reduced attention span
- Lower academic performance

Family Dynamics

- Reduced meaningful family interaction
- Emotional distance within households

Ethical Responsibility

- Parents
- Educators
- Technology companies
- Policymakers

All share responsibility for balanced digital use.

These implications highlight the need for a constructive and balanced approach rather than complete rejection of technology.

i. Way Forward: Towards Balanced Digital Use

Encouraging Real-World Activities

- Outdoor play
- Creative hobbies
- Social interaction

Role of Parents

- Monitor screen usage
- Guide content consumption
- Spend quality time with children

Role Modelling

- Adults must demonstrate responsible usage
- Children imitate observed behaviour

System-Level Measures

- Safer digital environments
- Awareness campaigns on healthy usage
- Promote responsible technology design.

These steps aim to ensure that technology supports development rather than replacing essential experiences.

Conclusion

Technology is now an integral part of modern life, and its benefits in education and communication cannot be ignored. However, during early childhood, direct human interaction remains irreplaceable.

Excessive screen exposure can hinder social, emotional, and cognitive development. Therefore, the goal is not to eliminate screens but to use them wisely. A balanced approach—where digital tools complement rather than replace real-world experiences—is essential for nurturing healthy and well-rounded individuals.

Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

2. Content Length

Some sections may feel shorter or longer depending on topic relevance and news density. To fit your personal preference, you may freely resize or summarize sections using any LLM tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) at your convenience.

3. Format Flexibility

The formatting combines:

- paragraphs
- lists
- tables
- visual cues

—all optimised for retention.

If you prefer a specific style (lists → paras, paras → tables, etc.), feel free to convert using any free LLM.

4. Monthly Current Affairs Release

The complete Monthly Current Affairs Module will be released soon, optimized to a compact 100–150 pages — comprehensive yet concise, exam-ready, and revision-efficient.

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