

# PrepAlpine

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# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 21.03.2026

## GS Paper II: Current Affairs

### 1. India's Water Crisis: From Scarcity to Sustainable Governance

#### a. Introduction: The Paradox of Water in India

India presents a striking contradiction. Water occupies a sacred place in culture and tradition, yet in practice it is often mismanaged, wasted, and polluted. The crisis that India faces today is not merely one of physical shortage, but of governance, planning, and inefficient utilisation.

With rising demand from agriculture, industry, and urbanisation, combined with shrinking and uncertain supply, water has emerged as one of the most critical determinants of India's future development. The challenge, therefore, lies in reimagining water not as an abundant free resource, but as a finite and strategic asset.



#### b. Nature of the Crisis: Why India is Water-Stressed

##### Limited Natural Availability

- India supports nearly 18% of the world's population but has access to only about 4% of global freshwater resources.
- Per capita water availability has steadily declined due to population growth.
- This structural imbalance places India close to water-scarce thresholds.

##### Rising Demand Across Sectors

- Agriculture consumes nearly 80–85% of total water, often inefficiently.
- Rapid urbanisation increases demand for drinking water and sanitation.
- Industrial growth adds further pressure on limited resources.
- Over-extraction of groundwater has led to falling water tables in many regions.

##### Impact of Climate Variability

- Rainfall has become erratic and unpredictable.
- Increased frequency of extreme events such as floods and droughts.
- Spatial and temporal unevenness of rainfall complicates storage and distribution.

#### **Governance Deficit as the Core Issue**

- Inefficient irrigation methods lead to large-scale water wastage.
- Poor wastewater treatment and reuse practices.
- Weak regulation of groundwater extraction.
- Fragmented institutional framework across states and sectors.

Thus, while natural factors contribute to scarcity, governance failures amplify the crisis significantly. This brings us to the need to rethink water not merely as a resource, but as a strategic asset.

### **c. Water as a Strategic Resource**

#### **Changing Perception of Water**

- Traditionally treated as an abundant and free resource.
- Encouraged overuse, wastage, and neglect of conservation.

#### **Strategic Importance**

- Ensures food security through irrigation.
- Supports industrial and economic growth.
- Maintains ecological balance and biodiversity.
- Has implications for national and inter-state security.

#### **Policy Implications**

- Allocation must prioritise long-term sustainability.
- Pricing mechanisms should reflect scarcity.
- Conservation must be mainstreamed across sectors.

### **d. Reimagining Water Management: Key Transformative Approaches**

#### **Recognising the Role of Soil Moisture (Green Water)**

- A large share of rainfall is stored in soil as moisture rather than surface or groundwater.
- Supports rainfed agriculture, which covers a significant portion of India's farmland.
- Often ignored in policy frameworks focused on irrigation.
- Improvement strategies:
  - Organic farming and mulching to retain moisture
  - Reduced tillage to prevent evaporation
  - Protection of vegetation cover
- Acts as a natural, low-cost water storage system.

#### **Reforming Agricultural Water Use**

- Dominance of water-intensive crops like rice and sugarcane.
- Subsidies — electricity, MSP distort cropping patterns.
- Solutions:
  - Shift towards millets, pulses, and less water-intensive crops
  - Promote micro-irrigation — drip, sprinkler systems
  - Align procurement policies with sustainability
- Improves both water efficiency and nutritional security.

#### **Building a Circular Water Economy**

- Current model: extraction → use → disposal (linear).
- Leads to wastage and pollution.
- Circular model:
  - Treat wastewater as a resource
  - Reuse in agriculture, industry, and energy
- Benefits:
  - Reduces freshwater demand
  - Generates economic opportunities
  - Promotes sustainable urban systems

### **Reimagining Urban Water Systems through Sponge Cities**

- Urbanisation replaces permeable land with concrete.
- Leads to flooding during rains and water scarcity during dry periods.
- Sponge city approach:
  - Use permeable surfaces
  - Restore wetlands and lakes
  - Create green spaces and urban forests
  - Promote rainwater harvesting
- Enhances climate resilience and groundwater recharge.

While these approaches provide technical solutions, their success ultimately depends on robust governance systems.

## **e. Reforming Water Governance: The Central Pillar**

### **Need for Transparent Water Accounting**

- Lack of reliable data on water availability and usage.
- Digital monitoring systems can improve planning and accountability.

### **Rational Pricing and Equity**

- Underpricing leads to overuse and inefficiency.
- Poor households often pay more through informal sources.
- Balanced approach:
  - Rational pricing to discourage waste
  - Targeted subsidies for vulnerable groups

### **Strengthening Regulation**

- Unregulated groundwater extraction is a major concern.
- Enforcement of laws remains weak.
- Need for:
  - Strong institutional frameworks
  - Effective monitoring and penalties

### **Integrated Policy Approach**

- Water intersects with agriculture, urbanisation, environment, and climate.
- Fragmented governance leads to inefficiencies.
- Solution:
  - Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)
  - Coordination across ministries and states

## **f. Interconnected Nature of the Crisis**

### **Sectoral Interlinkages**

- Agriculture → groundwater depletion
- Urbanisation → flooding and scarcity
- Industry → pollution and overuse

#### **Environmental Linkages**

- Degradation of rivers, wetlands, and aquifers
- Loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services

#### **Climate Change Linkages**

- Intensifies variability and extreme events
- Reduces predictability of water availability

### **g. Challenges in Implementation**

#### **Political Economy Constraints**

- Resistance to water pricing reforms
- Dependence of farmers on subsidies

#### **Institutional Limitations**

- Weak capacity of local bodies
- Fragmented governance structures

#### **Behavioural and Awareness Issues**

- Low public awareness about conservation
- Cultural perception of water as a free good

#### **Urban Planning Gaps**

- Short-term expansion prioritised over sustainability
- Neglect of natural drainage systems

### **h. Towards a Sustainable Water Future**

#### **Enhancing Efficiency**

- Promote water-saving technologies across sectors
- Reduce wastage in agriculture and urban systems

#### **Scaling Up Reuse**

- Invest in wastewater treatment infrastructure
- Encourage industrial and agricultural reuse

#### **Sustainable Agriculture Transition**

- Shift cropping patterns
- Align incentives with water conservation

#### **Climate-Responsive Planning**

- Integrate water management with climate adaptation strategies
- Build resilience against extreme events

#### **Strengthening Governance**

- Data-driven decision-making

- Strong regulatory frameworks
- Accountability and transparency

These measures collectively pave the way for a more resilient and sustainable water system.

## **Conclusion**

India's water crisis is not an inevitable consequence of natural scarcity but largely a result of systemic inefficiencies and governance gaps. While physical constraints exist, the scale of the problem has been magnified by mismanagement and fragmented policies.

The future lies in transitioning from extraction to conservation, from disposal to reuse, and from fragmented approaches to integrated water governance. If managed effectively, water can become a foundation for sustainable development rather than a constraint on growth.

## **GS Paper III: Security**

### **2. Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026**

#### **a. Introduction**

India's internal security system relies heavily on Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) such as CRPF, BSF, ITBP, and CISF. Over time, however, a structural tension has developed regarding leadership positions, especially the continued dominance of Indian Police Service (IPS) officers at senior levels.

The proposed Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026 seeks to formalise this arrangement. But the issue is much larger than service rules—it raises important questions about fairness, efficiency, federal balance, and the design of India's administrative system.

#### **b. Understanding the Structural Conflict**

##### **i. Two Categories of Officers**

###### **CAPF Cadre Officers**

- Directly recruited into CAPFs
- Spend entire careers in field operations
- Possess deep domain and operational expertise

###### **IPS Officers (Deputation Officers)**

- Belong to All-India Service (Article 312)
- Serve in states but are deputed to CAPFs
- Often occupy senior leadership roles

##### **ii. Core Issue: Who Should Lead?**

- CAPF officers argue leadership should reflect experience within the force.
- IPS officers are seen as bringing administrative skills and coordination ability.
- The conflict is essentially between operational legitimacy vs administrative authority.

#### **c. Salient Features of the Proposed Bill**

##### **Reservation of Senior Posts**

- Around 50% of Inspector General (IG) posts reserved for IPS officers
- Majority of Additional Director General (ADG) posts reserved
- All top posts (Special DG and DG) reserved for IPS

#### Shift from Executive to Legal Framework

- Earlier system based on executive orders
- Bill provides statutory backing
- Aims to ensure uniformity and legal certainty



#### d. Background to the Dispute

##### Judicial Intervention

- Supreme Court directed reduction of IPS deputation up to certain levels
- Objective: improve career prospects of CAPF cadre officers

##### Service-Level Concerns

- Promotions in CAPFs often take 10–15 years for initial advancement
- Limited representation at senior levels despite operational contribution

##### Government's Position

- IPS officers ensure coordination with states
- Help maintain uniform administrative standards
- Bring experience in handling complex governance structures

#### e. Key Governance Issues

##### Career Progression and Institutional Morale

- Limited promotion opportunities for cadre officers

- Perception of structural inequality
- Leads to low morale, affecting operational efficiency

#### **Operational Experience versus Administrative Expertise**

- CAPF officers: strong field experience
- IPS officers: strong policy and administrative exposure
- Key dilemma:
  - Should leadership be ground-oriented or administratively driven?

#### **Federal Dynamics and Coordination**

- IPS officers help bridge Centre–State coordination
- Important for internal security operations
- Concern:
  - Excessive deputation may lead to over-centralisation
  - Weakens institutional autonomy of CAPFs

#### **Judicial versus Legislative Tension**

- Supreme Court aimed to limit IPS dominance
- Bill appears to institutionalise it further
- Raises question:
  - Can legislation override or dilute judicial intent?

#### **Institutional Efficiency and Continuity**

- Deputation officers often serve short tenures
- May lack deep understanding of force-specific challenges
- On the other hand:
  - Standardisation and coordination may improve

#### **Recurring Litigation and Service Disputes**

- Frequent disputes on seniority, promotion, deputation
- Government hopes codification will reduce litigation
- Risk:
  - If fairness concerns persist, disputes may continue or intensify

### **f. Constitutional and Governance Dimensions**

#### **All-India Services (Article 312)**

- Created to ensure administrative integration
- IPS plays a key role in national-level coordination

#### **Equality and Fair Opportunity**

- Constitutional guarantee of equal opportunity in public employment
- CAPF officers demand fair career progression

#### **Federalism**

- Balance between central control and institutional autonomy
- CAPFs operate under Union but interact closely with states

#### **Internal Security Implications**

- CAPFs are critical for:
  - Border security
  - Counter-insurgency

- Law and order support
- Any structural imbalance can impact national security effectiveness

### **g. Analytical Assessment**

#### **Advantages of the Bill**

- Provides legal clarity and certainty
- Reduces dependence on executive discretion
- Strengthens coordination mechanisms
- Creates a uniform administrative framework

#### **Major Concerns**

- Weakens career prospects of cadre officers
- May reduce institutional morale
- Risks over-centralisation
- Appears inconsistent with judicial intent
- Reflects broader imbalance in civil services hierarchy

Thus, the solution cannot lie in favouring one side completely, but in designing a balanced framework.

### **h. Towards a Balanced and Sustainable Framework**

#### **Ensuring Fair Representation**

- Balance between cadre officers and IPS officers
- Appointments based on merit, experience, and role requirements

#### **Improving Career Progression**

- Time-bound promotions for CAPF officers
- Greater access to senior leadership roles

#### **Domain-Based Leadership**

- Operational roles → experienced CAPF officers
- Policy/coordination roles → administrative expertise (IPS)

#### **Institutional Reforms**

- Develop a dedicated HR policy for CAPFs
- Reduce dependence on ad hoc deputation
- Strengthen internal leadership pipeline

#### **Strengthening Federal Coordination**

- Build institutional coordination mechanisms
- Reduce over-reliance on individual deputation officers

Such reforms can create a system that is both efficient and fair.

### **Conclusion**

The CAPFs versus IPS debate is not merely a service dispute—it reflects deeper questions about fairness, efficiency, and federal balance in India's administrative system.

A sustainable solution must balance institutional efficiency with equity, and central coordination with organisational autonomy. Ultimately, the effectiveness of India's internal security system depends not just on structures, but on the motivation, confidence, and professionalism of its personnel.

Ensuring merit-based leadership, fair career growth, and institutional balance will be essential for building a strong and resilient security framework.

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## 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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