

PrepAlpine

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 23.03.2026

GS Paper II: Current Affairs

1. AYUSH Systems in India: Potential, Challenges and the Path Ahead

a. Introduction

India's traditional systems of medicine, collectively known as AYUSH, have gained renewed prominence in recent years. In an era marked by rising lifestyle diseases, mental health concerns, and increasing interest in preventive healthcare, these systems offer an alternative framework rooted in holistic well-being.

However, the central challenge lies not in promoting AYUSH indiscriminately, but in ensuring that its expansion is grounded in scientific credibility, regulatory robustness, and global acceptance. The future of AYUSH depends on how effectively India can reconcile tradition with modern standards of evidence and safety.

b. Understanding the AYUSH Framework

Holistic Concept of Health

- AYUSH systems view health as a state of balance within the body and harmony with the environment.
- Disease is seen as a disturbance of this balance rather than just a biological defect.

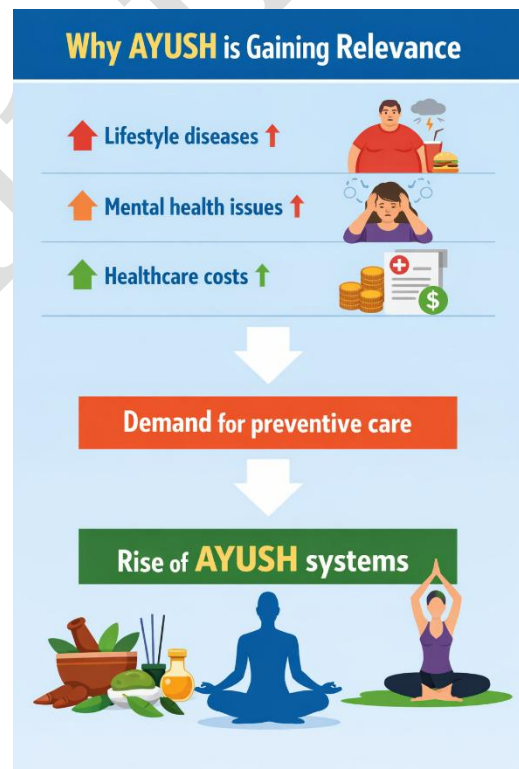
Key System-Wise Orientation

- **Ayurveda** focuses on diet, lifestyle, and maintaining internal equilibrium (doshas).
- **Yoga** emphasises physical fitness, mental clarity, and stress reduction.
- Other systems — Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy also adopt personalised and holistic approaches.

Relevance in Modern Context

- Strong focus on prevention rather than cure.
- Addresses root causes like stress, lifestyle imbalance, and poor habits.

Thus, AYUSH provides a broader understanding of health beyond symptom-based treatment.



c. Contemporary Relevance of AYUSH

Responding to Changing Health Needs

- Rise of non-communicable diseases — diabetes, hypertension.
- Increase in stress, anxiety, and mental health disorders.
- AYUSH offers preventive and lifestyle-based solutions.

Institutional and Policy Support

- Creation of a separate Ministry of AYUSH.
- Increased funding, research centres, and AYUSH hospitals.

- Integration with schemes like National Health Mission.

Global Demand and Soft Power

- Growing international interest in wellness and herbal medicine.
- Yoga has already achieved global recognition — International Yoga Day.
- AYUSH strengthens India's cultural diplomacy and economic potential.

d. Complementarity with Modern Medicine

Strengths of Modern Medicine

- Effective in emergency care and surgeries.
- Strong scientific validation and standardised treatment protocols.

Strengths of AYUSH

- Preventive healthcare and lifestyle correction.
- Chronic disease management e.g., arthritis, stress disorders.
- Focus on long-term wellness.

Need for Integration

- Combining both systems can provide holistic care.
- Reduces burden on hospitals by preventing diseases.
- Leads to patient-centric healthcare models.

Thus, integration—not competition—is the ideal approach.

e. Opportunities for Expansion

Healthcare System Strengthening

- Integrative healthcare can improve outcomes.
- Preventive focus reduces healthcare costs.

Economic Potential

- Export of herbal medicines and wellness products.
- Growth of medical tourism and wellness centres.

Rural Healthcare Access

- Affordable and locally available treatment options.
- Useful where modern healthcare infrastructure is weak.

Cultural and Strategic Value

- Promotes India's traditional knowledge systems.
- Enhances global influence through soft power.

f. Key Challenges

Lack of Robust Scientific Validation

- Limited large-scale clinical trials.
- Many treatments lack evidence-based backing.
- Reduces credibility, especially globally.

Regulatory Gaps and Quality Issues

- Inconsistent quality of products.
- Lack of uniform certification and standards.
- Safety concerns in some cases.

Conflict of Interest in Research

- Research often conducted by interested stakeholders.
- Raises questions about objectivity and reliability.

Perception and Knowledge Barriers

- Seen as unscientific by parts of medical community.
- Lack of dialogue between AYUSH and allopathy practitioners.

g. The Core Challenge: Balancing Tradition and Science

Nature of the Problem

- Blind promotion can damage credibility.
- Complete rejection leads to loss of valuable traditional knowledge.

Need for a Balanced Approach

- Test traditional practices using modern scientific methods.
- Preserve conceptual foundations while validating outcomes.
- Promote evidence-based AYUSH.

Thus, the goal is not replacement but scientific integration of tradition.

h. Way Forward

Strengthening Scientific Research

- Conduct independent and large-scale clinical trials.
- Encourage peer-reviewed publications.

Regulatory Reforms

- Standardisation of products and practices.
- Strong quality control and certification systems.

Integrative Healthcare Model

- Combine AYUSH and modern medicine at institutional level.
- Develop protocols for co-treatment.

Global Alignment

- Follow WHO and international standards.
- Enhance global acceptance of AYUSH products.

Capacity Building

- Train practitioners in interdisciplinary approaches.
- Improve education and institutional infrastructure.

Transparency and Accountability

- Publish both positive and negative research findings.

- Ensure independent oversight.

Protection of Traditional Knowledge

- Prevent biopiracy and misuse.
- Strengthen intellectual property frameworks.

Conclusion

AYUSH represents a unique opportunity for India to redefine healthcare by combining tradition with innovation. Its potential lies not only in improving public health but also in contributing to economic growth and enhancing India's global standing.

However, this potential can be realised only through a shift from belief-driven promotion to evidence-based practice. By integrating scientific rigour with respect for tradition, India can position itself as a leader in global integrative healthcare, where diverse knowledge systems coexist and strengthen one another.

GS Paper III: Economics

2. WTO Reforms and India's Stand on Plurilateral Agreements: The IFD Debate

a. Introduction

The World Trade Organization (WTO) today stands at a critical turning point. Its traditional system of multilateral decision-making—where all countries participate equally—is increasingly being challenged by newer approaches like plurilateral agreements involving only a group of willing nations. The debate over the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) agreement highlights this shift.

India's opposition to this agreement is not limited to technical trade issues. It reflects deeper concerns about fairness, sovereignty, and the future structure of global economic governance.

b. The WTO Framework: Multilateralism under Strain

Core Principle of Multilateralism

- The WTO operates on the idea that all member countries have an equal voice.
- Decisions are generally made through consensus — everyone must agree.
- This ensures inclusiveness and legitimacy.

Emerging Challenge: Plurilateralism

- Plurilateral agreements involve only a subset of countries.
- They allow faster negotiations and decision-making.
- However, they do not include all members and may bypass consensus.

Resulting Tension

- Multilateralism → fairness but slow progress.
- Plurilateralism → efficiency but risk of exclusion.

This creates a fundamental dilemma within the WTO system.

c. Understanding the Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD) Agreement

Core Objective

- To improve the investment climate in participating countries.
- Simplify procedures and reduce bureaucratic hurdles.
- Promote transparency and predictability in regulations.

Key Features

- Focus on administrative ease rather than market access.
- Does not deal with investor protection or dispute settlement.
- Aims to support developing countries in attracting investment.

Broad Support

- Supported by many WTO members, including several developing countries.
- Seen as a practical step to enhance economic growth.

d. India's Concerns: A Deeper Perspective

Preserving Multilateralism

- Plurilateral agreements weaken the consensus-based system.
- They allow decisions without participation of all members.
- This may erode trust, especially among developing countries.

Risk of Fragmentation

- Possibility of a two-tier WTO system.
- Participating countries gain advantages; others get marginalised.
- Weakens unity of global trade governance.

Strategic and Geopolitical Concerns

- Agreements may align with interests of major economic powers.
- Risk of reinforcing global power imbalances.
- Potential influence over smaller economies.

Protection of Policy Space

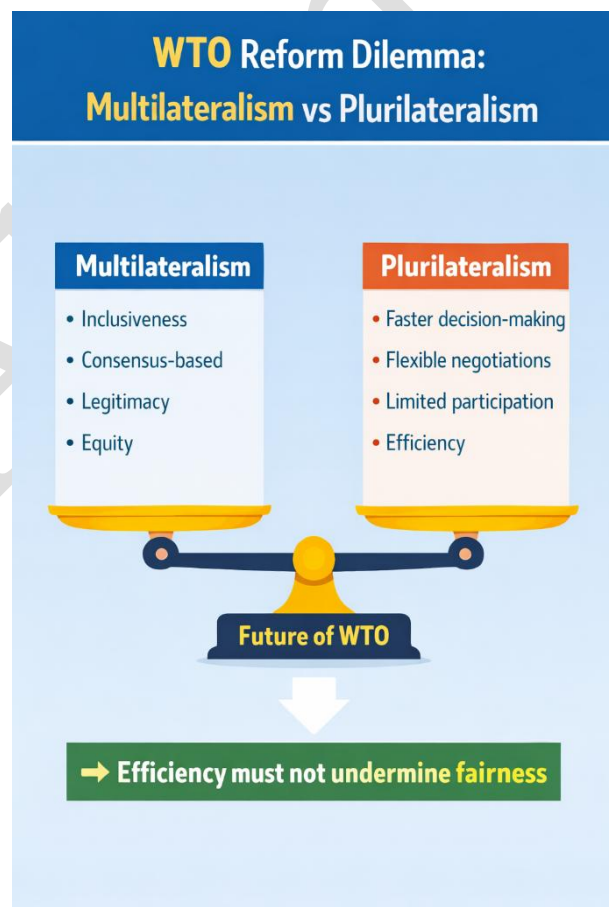
- Developing countries need flexibility for domestic policies.
- Commitments may restrict future regulatory choices.
- Even procedural rules can evolve into binding constraints.

Negotiation Strategy

- India links its stance to unresolved issues like food security.
- Uses opposition as leverage in broader WTO negotiations.

e. The Core Debate: Fairness versus Efficiency

Multilateralism



- Ensures equality, inclusiveness, and legitimacy.
- But suffers from slow decision-making.

Plurilateralism

- Enables faster agreements among willing countries.
- But risks exclusion and inequality.

Need for Balance

- Neither approach is sufficient on its own.
- A hybrid system may be required.
- Efficiency must not undermine fairness.

f. Implications for India

Positive Outcomes

- Protects interests of developing countries.
- Preserves policy autonomy.
- Reinforces India's image as a defender of multilateralism.

Potential Risks

- Risk of diplomatic isolation.
- Reduced influence in shaping new global trade rules.
- Missed opportunities in emerging investment frameworks.

Thus, India faces a strategic balancing act between caution and engagement.

g. The Larger Crisis of the WTO

Institutional Weaknesses

- Dispute settlement mechanism is weakened.
- Growing divisions between developed and developing countries.

Rise of Alternatives

- Regional and bilateral trade agreements are increasing.
- Countries are bypassing WTO for faster negotiations.

Declining Centrality

- WTO's role as the main platform for global trade governance is eroding.
- Plurilateral agreements are both a symptom and a response to this crisis.

h. Way Forward

Reforming the WTO

- Introduce flexibility without abandoning inclusiveness.
- Ensure that all members have a voice in new agreements.

Safeguards for Developing Countries

- Protect policy space and development priorities.
- Avoid creating unequal benefits among members.

India's Strategic Approach

- Move from rigid opposition to constructive engagement.
- Participate in shaping rules where beneficial.

Coalition Building

- Align with other developing countries.
- Strengthen collective bargaining power.

Focus on Core Issues

- Continue prioritising food security and agricultural subsidies.
- Ensure unresolved issues are addressed alongside new agreements.

Conclusion

India's opposition to the Investment Facilitation for Development agreement reflects a principled concern for fairness, sovereignty, and the integrity of multilateralism. While plurilateral approaches may offer efficiency, they also risk creating exclusion and imbalance.

The future of the global trading system depends on finding a middle path. A reformed WTO must combine the efficiency of flexible arrangements with the legitimacy of inclusive participation. Only then can global trade remain equitable, stable, and beneficial for all countries.

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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