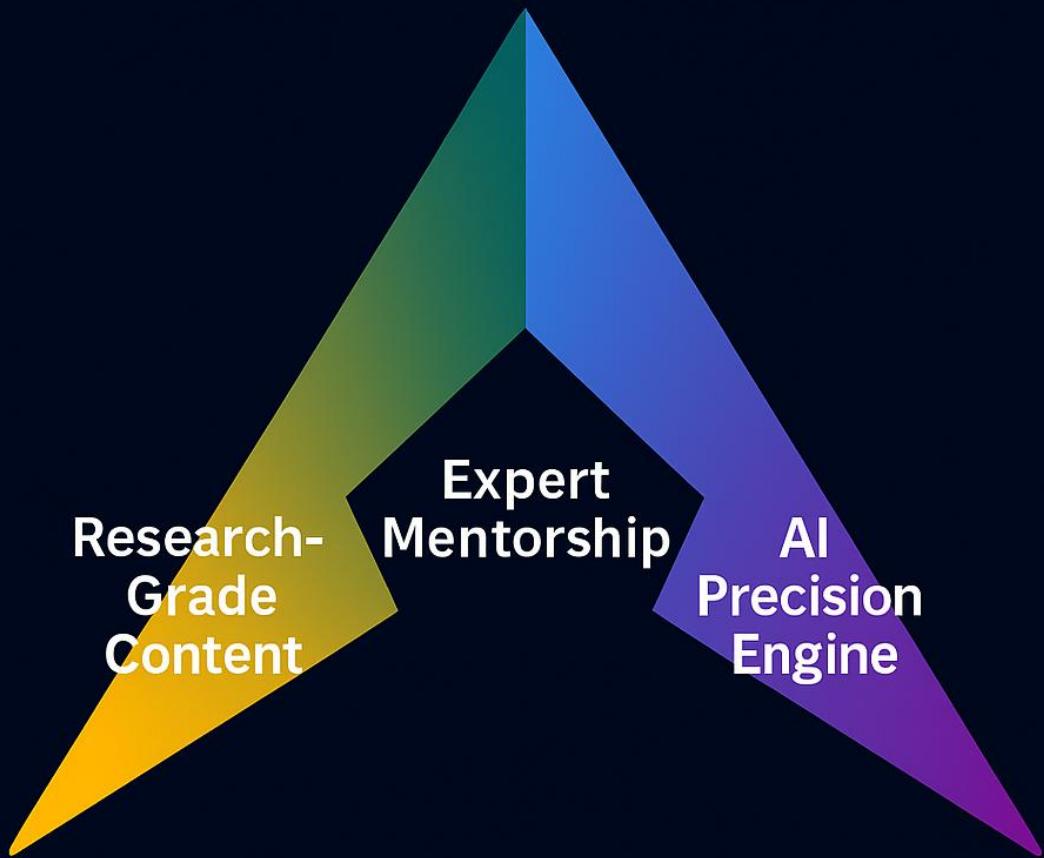


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GS Paper II: Current Affairs

1. Acid Attacks in India: A Social and Governance Challenge

a. Introduction

Acid attacks represent one of the most brutal and dehumanising forms of violence in contemporary society. Unlike many other crimes, their impact does not end with the act itself. An acid attack permanently alters the body, identity and life trajectory of the survivor. It destroys not only physical appearance, but also psychological well-being, social relationships and economic independence.

In India, acid attacks are best understood not merely as isolated criminal acts, but as a deeply rooted social and governance failure, shaped by gender inequality, weak enforcement of laws and inadequate survivor rehabilitation. Addressing this crime therefore requires legal firmness, administrative sensitivity and ethical commitment.



b. Understanding Acid Attacks

An acid attack involves the deliberate throwing of corrosive substances—such as sulphuric, nitric or hydrochloric acid—on a person with the intent to disfigure, injure or kill.

i. Nature of Harm

- Severe chemical burns leading to permanent scarring and disfigurement.
- Loss of eyesight, facial damage and long-term medical complications.

ii. Psychological and Social Impact

- Deep psychological trauma, including depression, anxiety and loss of self-worth.
- Social stigma, isolation and discrimination.

Acid attacks thus constitute an assault on human dignity and identity, not merely on bodily integrity.

c. Victims, Perpetrators and Underlying Causes

i. Who Are the Victims

The overwhelming majority of acid attack survivors in India are women and young girls.

Context of Victimisation

- Rejection of romantic or sexual advances.
- Resistance to forced marriage or domestic control.
- Assertion of personal autonomy and choice.

ii. Who Are the Perpetrators

In most cases, perpetrators are men known to the victim.

Relationship Patterns

- Former partners or rejected suitors.
- Acquaintances, neighbours or relatives.

This proximity highlights the intimate and power-driven nature of the crime.

iii. Why Acid Attacks Occur

The motivations behind acid attacks reflect deeper social pathologies.

Immediate Triggers

- Rejection or perceived insult.
- Revenge and jealousy.
- Dowry disputes and domestic conflicts.

Structural Causes

- Patriarchal norms and male entitlement.
- Belief that women must be punished for exercising autonomy.

Acid attacks thus represent an extreme form of gender-based violence rooted in inequality and power imbalance.

d. Scale and Hidden Nature of the Problem

Official crime statistics record hundreds of acid attack cases annually across India, with certain States consistently reporting higher incidence.

Under-Reporting of Cases

- Fear of social stigma and retaliation.
- Pressure from family to compromise or remain silent.
- Lack of trust in police and judicial processes.

As a result, acid attacks continue as a largely under-reported and hidden crime, with many survivors silenced even before entering the legal system.

e. Legal Framework Against Acid Attacks

India has enacted stringent provisions to deter acid attacks and support survivors.

i. Criminal Provisions

- Acid attacks attract a minimum punishment of ten years' imprisonment, extendable to life imprisonment.

- Attempted acid attacks are also criminalised with substantial prison terms.

ii. Victim Protection Measures

- Free medical treatment in all public and private hospitals.
- State-provided compensation for rehabilitation and recovery.

iii. Regulation of Acid Sale

- Mandatory identity verification for buyers.
- Record maintenance by sellers.
- Prohibition of sale to minors.

Despite this robust framework, implementation remains weak, and acid remains easily accessible in many areas.

f. Under-Reporting and Barriers to Justice

Survivors face multiple obstacles in seeking legal redress.

i. Social and Psychological Barriers

- Fear of social ostracism and victim-blaming.
- Emotional exhaustion and trauma.
- Family pressure to avoid prolonged litigation.

ii. Institutional Barriers

- Inensitive policing.
- Lengthy and intimidating legal procedures.

Justice is often denied at the very first stage, reinforcing silence and impunity.

g. Low Conviction Rates and Systemic Failures

Conviction rates in acid attack cases remain disturbingly low.

i. Investigative Failures

- Weak evidence collection.
- Delayed charge sheets.
- Poor coordination between police and prosecutors.

ii. Judicial Challenges

- Prolonged trials stretching over years.
- Repeated re-traumatisation of survivors in court.
- Inensitive questioning and victim-blaming attitudes.

These failures erode confidence in the justice system and discourage survivors from pursuing cases to conclusion.

h. Long-Term Impact on Survivors

The consequences of acid attacks are lifelong.

i. Health and Economic Impact

- Multiple surgeries and long-term medical care.
- Heavy financial burden on survivors and families.

ii. Social and Psychological Consequences

- Persistent mental health challenges.
- Loss of education and employment opportunities.
- Social exclusion and discrimination.

Even where compensation schemes exist, delays and bureaucratic hurdles often prevent timely support.

i. Lessons from International Experience

Several countries have successfully reduced acid attacks.

Effective Measures

- Strict regulation or bans on acid sales.
- Swift punishment for illegal sellers.
- Fast-track trials and survivor-centric procedures.
- Sustained public awareness campaigns.

These experiences demonstrate that strong enforcement and survivor-focused governance can sharply reduce acid violence.

j. Way Forward: A Comprehensive Response

Ending acid attacks requires coordinated action across prevention, justice and rehabilitation.

i. Prevention

- Strict regulation or prohibition of acid sale.
- Accountability of local authorities for enforcement failures.

ii. Justice Delivery

- Fast-track courts and time-bound investigations.
- Sensitisation of police, prosecutors and judges.

iii. Survivor Rehabilitation

- Guaranteed medical care and timely compensation.
- Psychological counselling and legal aid.
- Long-term support for education, employment and reintegration.

iv. Social Transformation

- Awareness campaigns challenging patriarchal attitudes.
- Zero tolerance for compromise in heinous crimes.

k. Ethical and Constitutional Perspective

Acid attacks violate the right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution.

i. Ethical Dimensions

- Assault on human dignity and bodily autonomy.
- Failure of compassion and justice.

ii. Constitutional Obligation

- Duty of the State to protect vulnerable individuals.
- Responsibility to ensure timely justice and rehabilitation.

A system that neglects survivors fails not only legally, but morally.

Conclusion

Acid attacks persist in India not due to the absence of laws, but because of weak enforcement, inadequate investigations and fragmented survivor support. Eliminating this crime requires firm implementation of existing laws, swift and sensitive justice delivery, and comprehensive rehabilitation mechanisms.

Ultimately, addressing acid attacks is about affirming human dignity, gender equality and ethical governance. A society that protects its most vulnerable and delivers timely justice moves closer to becoming truly just and humane.

GS Paper II: Current Affairs

2. Airport Privatisation in India: Concept, Rationale and Challenges

a. Introduction

Airports are no longer mere transport facilities; they are strategic economic infrastructure. They facilitate trade, tourism and business mobility, integrate regions with national and global markets, and generate significant direct and indirect employment. In India, rapid economic growth and rising incomes have led to a sharp increase in air passenger traffic, placing immense pressure on existing airport infrastructure.

The State therefore faces a dual challenge: expanding capacity and improving service quality, while operating within fiscal constraints. Airport privatisation has emerged as one policy response to this challenge, aimed at mobilising private investment and managerial efficiency without relinquishing public ownership or regulatory oversight.

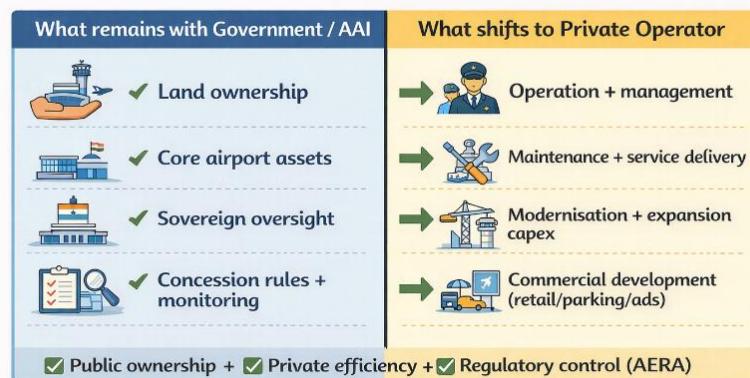
b. Understanding Airport Privatisation

Airport privatisation in India does not involve the outright sale of airports.

i. Nature of Privatisation

- Ownership of land and core airport assets remains with the government, primarily through the Airports Authority of India (AAI).
- What is transferred to private entities is the responsibility for operation, management, maintenance and future development of airports.

Airport Privatisation in India = Operations Transfer, Not Asset Sale



ii. Institutional Structure

- Privatisation is implemented through public-private partnership (PPP) models.
- The State retains regulatory and supervisory roles, while the private sector brings capital, technology and operational expertise.

The objective is to combine public accountability with private efficiency, rather than replacing one with the other.

c. Evolution of Airport Privatisation in India

India's experience with airport privatisation has been incremental.

i. Initial Phase

- Began in the early 2000s with major airports such as Delhi and Mumbai.
- AAI retained a minority stake, while private operators undertook large-scale modernisation and expansion.

ii. Expansion to New Airports

- The model was later extended to airports in non-metropolitan cities.
- A key innovation was bundling of airports, where profitable airports are grouped with less viable ones.

iii. Rationale for Bundling

- Revenue from high-traffic airports supports development of smaller airports.
- Prevents privatisation benefits from being confined only to major metropolitan centres.

Bundling thus seeks to promote balanced regional growth alongside private participation.

d. Criteria for Selecting Airports for Privatisation

Airports are chosen based on a combination of strategic and commercial factors.

i. Selection Parameters

- Current and projected passenger traffic.
- Future growth potential and investment requirements.
- Commercial viability and revenue prospects.

ii. Policy Preference

- Medium-sized airports with scope for expansion are often prioritised.
- Bundling is used to offset the risks of low-traffic airports.

This approach aims to align privatisation with both financial viability and regional connectivity goals.

e. Policy Rationale and the Monetisation Framework

Airport privatisation forms part of India's broader infrastructure monetisation strategy.

i. National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)

- Seeks to unlock value from existing public assets.
- Proceeds are reinvested into new infrastructure creation.

ii. Strategic Logic

- Privatisation does not imply loss of control.
- Mature and revenue-generating assets are leveraged to finance future development.

Airports occupy a central place in this framework due to their high demand and revenue potential.

f. Revenue Models in Airport Privatisation

Two broad revenue models are commonly used.

i. Revenue-Sharing Model

- Private operator shares a fixed percentage of airport revenue with AAI.
- Incentivises traffic growth and commercial activity.

ii. Per-Passenger Fee Model

- Operator earns a fixed amount per passenger handled.
- Provides predictable revenue streams.

iii. Implications

- Revenue models directly affect user charges.
- Poorly designed structures can increase costs for airlines and passengers.

g. Regulatory Oversight and the Role of AERA

The Airport Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) plays a central role in protecting public interest.

i. Regulatory Functions

- Regulation of user development fees, landing and parking charges.
- Setting and monitoring service quality benchmarks.

ii. Recent Reforms

- Linking tariffs with service quality outcomes.
- Penalising operators for poor passenger experience.
- Encouraging non-aeronautical revenues (retail, parking, advertising).

The aim is to reduce dependence on passenger charges and keep air travel affordable.

h. Key Concerns Associated with Airport Privatisation

i. Rising Costs for Users

- Increase in user development fees and ancillary charges.
- Higher operating costs for airlines, especially weaker carriers.
- Costs often passed on to passengers through higher airfares.

ii. Market Concentration

- A small number of private operators control multiple airports.
- Risk of monopolistic behaviour and reduced competitive pressure.

iii. Service Quality Gaps

- Persistent congestion and accessibility issues at some airports.
- Questions over whether higher charges consistently translate into better services.

i. Why Costs Tend to Rise after Privatisation

Cost escalation is driven by structural factors.

i. Investment Recovery Pressure

- Private operators make large upfront investments.
- Expectation of assured returns over concession periods.

ii. Cost Pass-Through

- Airports involve high fixed infrastructure costs.
- In the absence of strong competition, costs are passed on to users.

Weak regulation can therefore shift the financial burden from the public exchequer to passengers and airlines.

j. Affordability, Inclusion and Regional Connectivity

India's air travel penetration remains relatively low.

i. Inclusiveness Concerns

- Higher airport charges can exclude price-sensitive travellers.
- Smaller cities and regional routes are particularly vulnerable.

ii. Developmental Implications

- Reduced accessibility weakens regional connectivity.
- Dilutes the broader economic benefits of aviation-led growth.

Airport privatisation must therefore align with inclusive growth objectives.

k. The Way Forward: Making Privatisation Work

A sustainable approach requires stronger governance rather than withdrawal from privatisation.

i. Strengthening Regulation

- Predictable and transparent tariff-setting.
- Clear caps on excessive user charges.
- Strict enforcement of service quality standards.

ii. Preserving Competition

- Limiting excessive concentration under single operators.
- Encouraging participation of multiple private players.

iii. Revenue Diversification

- Greater reliance on non-aeronautical revenue streams.
- Cross-subsidisation to keep passenger charges affordable.

Above all, airports must be treated as public infrastructure with commercial potential, not merely profit-maximising enterprises.

Conclusion

Airport privatisation in India seeks to modernise infrastructure, mobilise investment and improve operational efficiency. While private participation brings valuable capital and expertise, it also poses risks related to affordability, competition and service quality.

A balanced approach—anchored in robust regulation, transparent governance and strong institutional oversight—is essential to ensure that airports remain efficient, accessible and affordable. When

aligned with public interest, airport privatisation can support India's long-term aviation growth without compromising inclusiveness or equity.

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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.

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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.

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