



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 02-02-2026**

### **Mapping Perspective**

1. Tehri Lake

### **Prelims Perspective**

2. JALAJ Livelihood Centres
3. NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme

### **Mains Perspective**

4. Menstrual Health: Fundamental Right
5. RTI isn't idle curiosity, its accountability

## **Tehri Lake**

**Syllabus:** Prelims Bits – Lakes and Dams

**Context:**

- Recently, **two paraglider pilots were rescued by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF)** after falling into **Tehri Lake** during the **Acro Festival & SIV Championship Tehri 2026**.
- Highlights the lake's growing importance as an **adventure tourism hub** and the need for **disaster preparedness** in high-altitude water bodies.

**About Tehri Lake**

- **Type:** Artificial reservoir (dam lake)
- **Location:** Tehri Garhwal town, **Uttarakhand**
- **Origin:** Formed during the construction of **Tehri Dam**
- **River:** Water diverted from the **Bhagirathi River**
- **Elevation:** ~1,700 metres above mean sea level
- **Depth:** ~262 metres
- **Length:** ~42 km



**Purpose & Significance**

- Supports:
  - **Hydroelectric power generation**

- **Drinking water supply**
- **Irrigation**
- Surrounded by **Himalayan ranges**, making it:
  - A major **tourism & water sports destination**
  - A site for **eco-tourism and adventure sports**

### Key Facts about Tehri Dam

- **Type:** Earth and rock-fill multipurpose dam
- **River:** Bhagirathi (a source stream of the Ganga)
- **Height:** ~260 metres
  - Tallest dam in India
  - Among the **tallest dams in the world**
- **Completion Year:** 2006

### Power Generation

- **Installed capacity:**
  - 1,000 MW hydropower
  - - 1,000 MW **pumped storage hydropower**
- **Strategic importance:** Grid stability and peak-load management

### Management

- Operated by **Tehri Hydro Development Corporation (THDC India Ltd.)**
- THDC is a subsidiary of **National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC Ltd.)**

### Prelims Pointers

- Tehri Dam is **not a concrete dam** → it is an **earth and rock-fill dam**.
- Bhagirathi River + Alaknanda River = **Ganga River**.
- **Pumped storage projects** are crucial for **renewable energy integration**.
- Tehri Lake is an example of **human-made reservoirs altering local geography and livelihoods**.

## **JALAJ Livelihood Centres**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Social Justice & Livelihood.**

### **Context:**

- Union Minister of **Jal Shakti** inaugurated **25 JALAJ Livelihood Centres**.
- Part of efforts under **Namami Gange Programme** to link river conservation with livelihoods.

### **About JALAJ Livelihood Centres**

- **Joint Initiative:**
  - Namami Gange Mission
  - Wildlife Institute of India (WII)
- **Operational Area:** Ganga River Basin
- **Core Aim:**
  - Integrate **river and aquatic biodiversity conservation** with **sustainable livelihoods**.
- **Model Used:**
  - **Circular Economy Model** – resource efficiency, waste minimisation, eco-friendly livelihoods.



### **Key Features**

- **Community-centric approach**
  - Promotes **community ownership** of conservation efforts.
- **Livelihood generation**
  - Training in **sustainable, nature-based livelihoods**.

- **Women empowerment**
  - **Special focus on women's participation.**
- **River–People Symbiosis**
  - Establishes **mutually reinforcing linkages** between rivers and dependent communities.
- **Cultural representation**
  - Centres reflect **local culture, traditions, and indigenous communities** of the Ganga basin.
- **Holistic Centres**
  - Function as hubs for:
    - Community well-being
    - Conservation education
    - Skill and livelihood training
- **Infrastructure & Activities**
  - Dissemination of information on **aquatic biodiversity conservation**
  - **Training facilities** for livelihood skills
  - **Sale outlets** for products made by trained beneficiaries

### Significance

- Supports **Namami Gange's ecological objectives**
- Enhances **riverine biodiversity conservation**
- Provides **dignified and sustainable livelihoods**
- Strengthens **people–centric river governance**

## **NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Social Justice – Social Security measures.**

### Context:

- The **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)** has rolled out the **NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme (NSPS)** on a **pilot basis**.

### About NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme (NSPS)

- A **new initiative by PFRDA** launched as a **Proof of Concept (PoC)** under its **Regulatory Sandbox Framework**.
- **Objective:**
  - To **integrate health-related financial benefits** with the existing **National Pension System (NPS)** framework.
- Designed to provide **financial support for both out-patient (OPD) and in-patient medical expenses**.
- Implemented for a **limited and controlled period** as a **pilot project**.
- Functions as a **sector-specific contributory pension scheme** under the **Multiple Scheme Framework (MSF)** of NPS.
- **Voluntary scheme**, open to **Indian citizens**.
- To be **launched by Pension Funds** after **prior approval from PFRDA**.
- During the PoC phase:
  - **Restricted number of subscribers** will be enrolled.
  - **Certain provisions** of the **PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under NPS) Regulations, 2015** have been **relaxed**.
- Pension Funds may collaborate with:
  - **FinTech firms**
  - **Health Service Administrators**

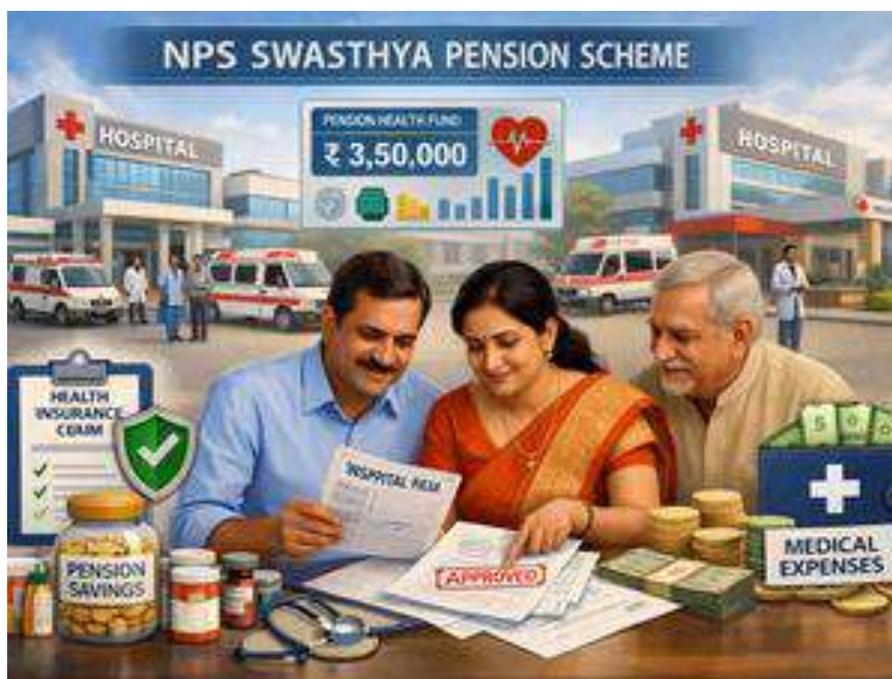
### Key Features of NSPS

#### Eligibility & Enrollment

- **Any Indian citizen** can join.
- **Mandatory requirement:**
  - Subscriber must have a **Common Scheme Account under NPS**.

#### Contributions

- Subscribers can contribute **any amount**, as per **existing NPS norms** applicable to the **non-government sector**.
- Subscribers **above 40 years of age** (excluding government subscribers):
  - Can **transfer up to 30%** of their contributions from the **Common Scheme Account** to the **Swasthya Pension Scheme**.



### Withdrawals for Medical Purposes

- **Partial withdrawals:**
  - Up to **25% of subscriber's own contributions.**
  - Allowed **only for medical expenses.**
  - **No limit on the number of withdrawals.**
  - Subject to a **minimum accumulated corpus of ₹50,000.**
- **Critical inpatient treatment:**
  - If medical expenses exceed **70% of the available corpus,**
  - Subscriber may opt for **100% premature withdrawal,** strictly for meeting such medical costs.

### Claim Settlement Mechanism & Safeguards

- Withdrawn amount is **not paid directly to the subscriber.**
- Payments are made directly to:
  - **Health Benefit Administrator (HBA),** or
  - **Third Party Administrator (TPA),** or
  - **Hospital,**  
based on **valid claims and supporting medical bills.**
- **Safeguard against misuse:**

- Any **surplus amount** remaining after medical expense settlement is:
  - **Transferred back** to the subscriber's **Common Scheme Account**.

### Significance

- First attempt to **link pension savings with healthcare financing**.
- Supports **social security, financial inclusion, and elderly healthcare preparedness**.
- Demonstrates **regulatory innovation** through the **sandbox approach**.
- Relevant for:
  - **Prelims:** Features, regulator, eligibility.

**Mains:** Social security reforms, pension-health convergence, regulatory sandbox.

## **Menstrual Health: Fundamental Right**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Judiciary – SC judgements & Fundamental Rights.**

### Context:

- The **Supreme Court of India**, in a landmark judgment, recognised **access to menstrual hygiene** as a **constitutional right**, not merely a health or welfare issue.
- Bench: **Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan**
- Guiding quote used by the Court: "A period should end a sentence – not a girl's education." (Melissa Berton)

### Nature of the Judgment

- Issued a **Continuing Mandamus**
  - Judicial mechanism where the court **keeps the matter pending** to monitor implementation.
  - Indicates **systemic governance failure** and need for sustained oversight.

### Menstrual Hygiene as a Fundamental Right



### Substantive Equality (Article 14)

- Court distinguished between:
  - **Formal equality:** Treating everyone the same.
  - **Substantive equality:** Treating unequals differently to achieve real equality.
- Key observation:
  - “Equal consideration for all may demand very unequal treatment in favour of the disadvantaged.”
- Rationale:
  - Girls missing school due to lack of menstrual facilities are **structurally disadvantaged**.
  - Biological reality gets converted into **institutional exclusion**.

### Right to Life with Dignity (Article 21)

- Menstrual hygiene brought within:
  - Right to life
  - Right to dignity

- Bodily autonomy and privacy
- Lack of MHM leads to:
  - Stigma and humiliation
  - Stereotyping
  - Forced absenteeism or dropouts
- Court held:
  - Denial of MHM facilities violates **personal liberty and dignity** of girl children.

### Menstrual Health within the Right to Education

#### Interpretation of RTE Act, 2009

#### Section 3 – “Free Education”

- “Free education” ≠ only waiver of tuition fees.
- Includes **removal of all financial barriers** preventing school attendance.
- Sanitary napkins:
  - Essential educational input, not a private expense.
- Court’s reasoning:
  - If expenditure on sanitary products causes absenteeism,  
→ State converts an **unconditional right into a conditional one.**

#### Section 19 – Norms and Standards

- Mandate for **separate toilets for boys and girls** is:
  - Not merely infrastructural
  - **Substantive constitutional requirement**
- “Barrier-free access” must include:
  - Availability of sanitary napkins
  - Hygienic disposal mechanisms
- Absence of these = **“stark constitutional failure”**

#### Key Directions Issued by the Court (Time-bound: 3 Months)

#### Free Sanitary Napkins

- Mandatory for:
  - All schools (government + private)

- Specifications:
  - **Oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins**
  - Environmental sustainability
- Mode of access:
  - Vending machines in toilets OR
  - Designated school authority

### **Safe Disposal Mechanisms**

- Covered waste bins
- Environmentally compliant disposal
- Regular cleaning and maintenance

### **Functional School Toilets**

- Gender-segregated toilets in:
  - Urban and rural areas
- Must ensure:
  - Privacy
  - Water connectivity
  - Accessibility for children with disabilities
  - Functional handwashing facilities (soap + water)

### **Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Corners**

- Facilities to include:
  - Spare innerwear
  - Extra uniforms
  - Disposable bags
- Objective:
  - Prevent girls from leaving school due to leakage/staining

### **Destigmatising Menstruation**

#### **Gender Sensitisation**

- Infrastructure alone is insufficient.
- Court stressed:

- Hostile or stigmatized environments nullify physical facilities.
- Boys must be educated on:
  - Biological reality of menstruation
  - Respect and sensitivity
- Risk identified:
  - Unsensitised boys may harass menstruating girls → discourages attendance.

### Curriculum and Teacher Training

- Directions to:
  - NCERT & SCERT
- Actions mandated:
  - Gender-responsive curriculum on puberty and menstruation
  - Training of **all teachers (male and female)** to support menstruating students

### Monitoring and Accountability

- **District Education Officers (DEOs):**
  - Annual inspections of schools
  - Mandatory **anonymous student feedback surveys**
- Purpose:
  - Ground-truthing actual availability and usability of facilities

### Constitutional Significance

- Links menstruation with:
  - Gender justice
  - Educational equity
  - Human dignity
- Reframes menstruation:
  - From a private issue → **public constitutional obligation**
- Powerful concluding message:
  - “The fault is not hers.”

**Practice Qs:**

Q. "Access to menstrual hygiene is integral to substantive equality, dignity, and the right to education." In the light of the recent Supreme Court judgment recognising menstrual hygiene as a constitutional right, critically examine how this ruling strengthens the interpretation of Articles 14 and 21 and the Right to Education Act, 2009. (250 words)

## **RTI isn't idle curiosity, its accountability**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Governance – Transparency – RTI.**

**Context:**

- The **Economic Survey 2026** underlines:
  - India's economic resilience amid global uncertainty.
  - Need for the State to act as an **enabler**, not a controller.
- However, it suggests **re-examining disclosure provisions of the RTI Act**, arguing that civic scrutiny may constrain governance efficiency.
- The editorial **disagrees**, asserting that RTI strengthens governance and economic stability.

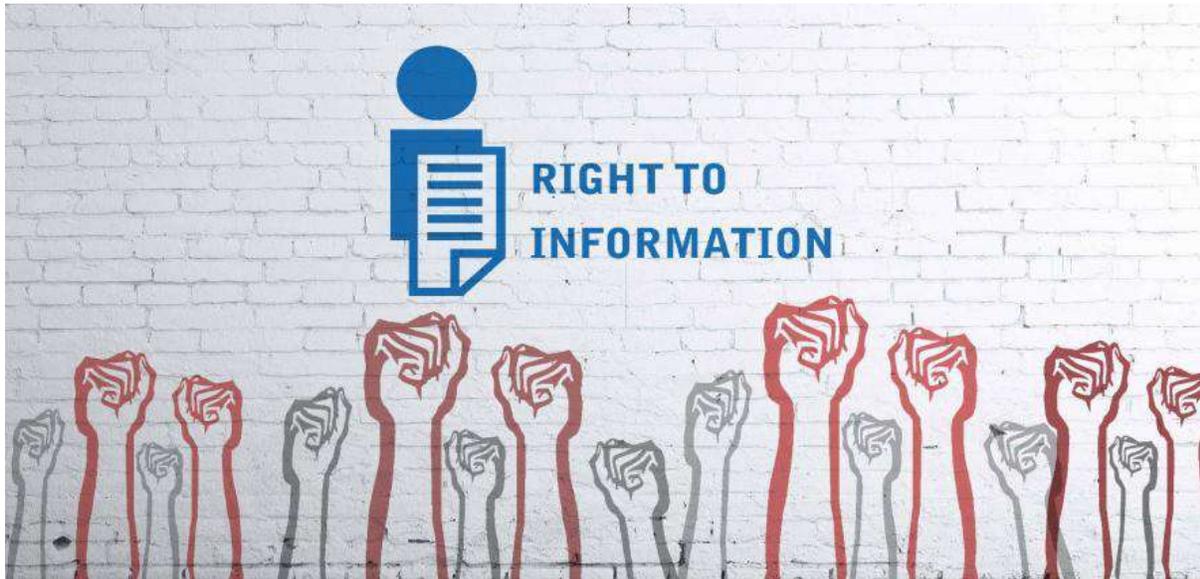
### **RTI as an Instrument of Good Governance**

- **Reduces information asymmetry** between State and citizens.
- Enhances:
  - Transparency
  - Accountability
  - Predictability in administration
- Public access to policy-related documents:
  - Explains **policy evolution**
  - Clarifies why certain options were accepted or rejected.
- A transparent bureaucracy supports:
  - Fair economic environment
  - Investor confidence
  - Rule-based governance

### **RTI and Civic Scrutiny**

- RTI fosters an **argumentative democratic ethos**:

- Keeps bureaucrats accountable.
- Encourages reasoned decision-making.
- Disclosure is **not “ideal curiosity”**, but a democratic necessity.
- Civic scrutiny complements, rather than undermines, administrative efficiency.



### Role of RTI in Exposing Scams and Irregularities

- RTI has been pivotal in uncovering:
  - **Vyapam Scam** – irregularities in recruitment and examinations.
  - **Adarsh Housing Society Scam** – misuse of public land.
- Demonstrates RTI’s role as a **governance enhancer**, not an obstruction.

### RTI and Financial Transparency

- RTI used to question the **Reserve Bank of India** during banking and loan default scandals.
- **Judicial reinforcement:**
  - **Jayantilal Mistry Case (2016)**
  - **Girish Mittal Case (2021)**
- The **Supreme Court of India** held that:
  - RBI must disclose:
    - Names of willful defaulters.
    - Details of NPAs of public sector banks.

- Strengthened **financial probity and public oversight**.

### Dilution of RTI in Recent Years

- **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023:**
  - Exempts disclosure of personal information unrelated to public interest.
  - Risk of overbroad interpretation to deny information.
- Reported instances of evasion of scrutiny:
  - Data on migrant worker deaths during COVID-19.
  - Paper leaks in competitive examinations.
  - Farmers' suicides.

### Contradiction within the Economic Survey

- Survey itself acknowledges RTI as a **“powerful tool for reform”**.
- Suggestion to re-examine RTI disclosure provisions contradicts its:
  - Governance-centric
  - Transparency-driven ethos.

### Way Forward / Conclusion

- RTI should be viewed as:
  - A **democratic safeguard**, not an administrative burden.
- Instead of dilution:
  - Strengthen implementation capacity.
  - Protect RTI from legislative and executive erosion.
- **Good governance, economic growth, and transparency are mutually reinforcing.**
- Government should uphold the **spirit of RTI**, in line with the Survey's broader governance vision.

### Practice Qs:

Q. The Right to Information Act is not a constraint on governance but an enabler of transparency, accountability, and economic stability. Critically examine this statement in the context of recent debates triggered by the Economic Survey 2026. (250 words)

02 February 2026

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