



UPSC & STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

India's Heatwave Crisis: Towards a National Cooling Doctrine

 **THE HINDU**

15 May 2026

ENVIRONMENT**SOCIAL ISSUES****GS3****GS1**

CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)**ALSO FROM THE CREATOR****BharatNotes**Free UPSC notes, MCQs, PYQ analysis. **100% Free.**bharatnotes.com →**ADVERTISE****Advertise with Ujiyari**

Reach thousands of UPSC aspirants daily.

 epicbharat@gmail.com


India's Heatwave Crisis: Towards a National Cooling Doctrine

 The Hindu

15 May 2026

GS3

GS1

 The Hindu

4 tags ▾



INTERVIEW ANGLE

"If India houses all 50 of the world's hottest cities in a single April heatwave, has reactive Heat Action Planning become structurally inadequate?"

EDITORIAL SUMMARY:

The Hindu argues that India's record-breaking heatwave of April-May 2026 – with extreme temperatures simultaneously straining health systems, power grids, and agricultural labour productivity – demands a systemic policy shift from reactive Heat Action Plans to a proactive national cooling doctrine. The remedy involves urban planning reforms (passive cooling mandates), labour law protection for outdoor workers, and long-term climate adaptation financing.

THE SCALE OF THE 2026 HEATWAVE

India experienced one of its most severe heat events in recorded history in April-May 2026:

- **Temperatures:** Multiple cities in Rajasthan, UP, Delhi, and Telangana recorded temperatures above **47 degrees Celsius** in late April 2026
- **50 hottest cities:** Weather monitoring data showed that all 50 of the world's hottest cities during the peak heatwave week were in India – an unprecedented concentration
- **Health burden:** Heat-related hospitalisations rose sharply; the elderly, outdoor labourers, and children under 5 faced the highest risk
- **Power grid stress:** Peak cooling demand surged; distribution companies in multiple states reported supply shortfalls of 8-12 per cent despite record generation
- **Agricultural disruption:** Pre-harvest wheat in parts of Punjab and Haryana was damaged by heat stress; vegetable prices in wholesale markets spiked

THE INADEQUACY OF HEAT ACTION PLANS (HAPS)

India's current approach is built around **Heat Action Plans** – first introduced in **Ahmedabad (2013)** after the 2010 heatwave killed over 1,300 people. HAPs are now mandated for cities and districts in heat-prone states.

What HAPs Do

- Early warning systems (IMD heat alert notifications)
- Cool shelter identification (schools, community centres) during peak hours
- Staggered work-hours advisories for outdoor labour
- Emergency medical protocols at district hospitals
- Public awareness campaigns

What HAPs Cannot Do

- **Address structural urban heat:** HAPs are event-response tools; they cannot reduce the **Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect** driven by impervious surfaces, loss of tree cover, and building materials
- **Protect informal workers:** Advisories for “avoid outdoor work 12-3 PM” cannot be followed by **daily-wage construction labourers, MGNREGS workers, street vendors** without income support
- **Solve grid-side cooling demand:** When the poorest urban residents cannot afford air-conditioning, they are most exposed to heat; when the wealthiest use AC at maximum, they push grid demand to the edge

ELEMENTS OF A NATIONAL COOLING DOCTRINE

The editorial calls for India to move beyond reactive HAPs toward a structural **National Cooling Doctrine** with five pillars:

1. Passive Cooling Mandates in Building Codes

- Cool roofs (reflective white paint or green roofs)
- Minimum shade provision in all new commercial construction
- Green cover ratios in urban development plans
- Mandatory shading in public spaces (bus stops, markets, pavements)

2. Labour Law Protection – Income During Heat Stops

- Extend the **Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, 1996** provisions to mandate heat-stop compensation
- Integrate heat-hazard provisions into the **Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions, 2020** (one of the Four Labour Codes)

3. Cool Shelter Network – Permanent and Subsidised

- Mandatory cool shelter designation in all census towns
- 24-hour access for homeless and daily-wage workers during heat emergencies
- Integration with **PM SVANidhi** (street vendors scheme) and **NULM** (National Urban Livelihood Mission) databases

4. Urban Heat Island Mapping

- National remote-sensing-based UHI intensity mapping for all Class-I cities (population above 1 lakh)
- Link UHI reduction targets to **Smart Cities Mission** performance metrics
- The **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** and its Urban Mission arm to be updated

5. Climate Finance for Heat Adaptation

- **National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC)** to ringfence a heat-specific allocation
 - India's **Loss and Damage** claim at COP should include heat mortality data as evidence
-

INDIA'S CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY FRAMEWORK – CONTEXT

POLICY INSTRUMENT	STATUS
National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)	Launched 2008; 8 national missions including National Mission for Sustainable Habitat
State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs)	All 36 states/UTs have SAPCCs; implementation uneven
National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)	Issues heat-wave guidelines; not legally binding
National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)	Air quality focus; could be extended to heat
Panchamrit (India's NDC targets)	Net-zero by 2070; 50% non-fossil by 2030 – but no heat-specific adaptation target

EQUITY DIMENSION – THE COOLING GAP

The heatwave of 2026 has exposed India's **cooling gap**:

- **25 per cent** of Indian urban households own an AC (estimate, 2024)
- In rural areas, AC ownership is below **5 per cent**
- Cooling devices consume approximately **8-10 per cent** of India's electricity – projected to be the **single largest electricity demand driver** by 2050 (IEA Cooling Report 2018)
- India's **Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC)** and the **UJALA scheme** (for energy-efficient ACs) are steps, but cooling remains a luxury good for the majority

The **India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)**, launched in 2019, has not received adequate funding or legislative backing despite its ambitious targets.

UPSC MAINS ANALYSIS

GS Paper 3 – Environment and Ecology, Disaster Management

Key arguments:

- Heatwaves are now classified as **natural disasters** under India's national disaster framework – but the response architecture is still siloed within the health sector

- NDMA’s heatwave guidelines (2019) provide the framework; execution at State and district level is the bottleneck
- The **Urban Heat Island effect** – driven by concretisation and loss of green cover – amplifies ambient heat by **3-5 degrees Celsius** in dense city cores
- **Climate adaptation** (HAPs, cool roofs, urban greening) is cheaper than climate response (emergency health care, grid augmentation, crop damage compensation)

GS Paper 1 – Geography / Society

- Tropical geography and India’s heat vulnerability
- Informal labour as the most heat-exposed social group

Keywords: Heat Action Plan, Urban Heat Island, India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP), NAPCC, National Mission for Sustainable Habitat, BOCW Act, Code on OSH 2020, NAFCC, NDMA, Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC), UJALA scheme, IMD heat alert.

The Hindu’s core argument is that Indian heat governance has advanced from denial to acknowledgment but is still trapped in an event-management paradigm. The real shift requires treating urban heat as a chronic infrastructure problem – as fundamental as sanitation or drinking water – rather than a seasonal emergency. A national cooling doctrine would embed heat-resilience into urban planning, labour law, and climate finance, rather than leaving HAPs as the sole line of defence against an increasingly relentless phenomenon.

PRACTICE TODAY’S QUIZ



[Take the 15 May 2026 Quiz →](#)

RELATED DAILY ARTICLES

15 May **N. Rangasamy Sworn in as Puducherry CM for Record Fifth...**

15 May **International Day of Families 2026: "Families,...**

14 May **Current Affairs Today -- May 14, 2026**

14 May **NEET-UG 2026 Cancelled: NTA Annuls Paper-Leak Exam, CBI...**

[← NEWER EDITORIAL](#)

[OLDER EDITORIAL →](#)

Wayanad's Climate Calendar: A Community Model for...

India's Hub-and-Spoke FTA Strategy: The Bilateral CEPA Route...



CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/05/hindu-heatwave-cooling-doctrine-india-2026/>

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

BharatNotes

Free UPSC study platform — subject-wise notes across all 4 GS papers, Prelims MCQs, Mains answer frameworks, PYQ analysis & progress tracking. **100% Free • No Login Required.**

[Start Preparing → bharatnotes.com](http://bharatnotes.com)

📌 OPPORTUNITY

Advertise with Ujiyari

Reach **thousands of serious UPSC & State PCS aspirants** daily through our PDFs, website, and social channels.

Ideal for: Coaching institutes • EdTech platforms • Book publishers • Exam prep apps

[✉ epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

Write to us for rates & media kit

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · ujiyari.com · bharatnotes.com