

Pramukh
इवलएकेइहा



MONTHLY

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Practice Questions (Prelims+Mains)

Preface

PRAMUKH SAMEEKSHA MAGAZINE is a holistic current affairs compilation designed to provide aspirants with a **comprehensive, integrated, and examination-oriented understanding of the most important developments** covered in *The Hindu* and *The Indian Express* from **August 1 to August 30, 2026**.

The magazine goes beyond merely summarising editorials. Each issue has been carefully analysed through the lens of the **UPSC and State PSC examination frameworks**, connecting contemporary developments with relevant **static concepts, constitutional provisions, economic principles, social issues, environmental concerns, international relations, governance, science and technology, ethics, and security dimensions**.

A key objective of **PRAMUKH SAMEEKSHA** is to create a **holistic current affairs resource** that helps aspirants understand not only *what happened*, but also **why it matters, its broader implications, and how it can be used effectively in the examination**. The compilation therefore provides multiple dimensions that can strengthen both **Prelims factual preparation and Mains analytical answer writing**.

The importance of this integrated approach is reflected in the **2025 UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination**, where **24+ questions could be linked directly or indirectly to themes covered through current affairs and their connection with static concepts**. This demonstrates the growing importance of preparing current affairs as an interconnected part of the syllabus rather than as isolated news facts.

Through this compilation, aspirants can systematically build **conceptual clarity, factual knowledge, analytical depth, and multidimensional perspectives** while developing the ability to connect current developments with the broader UPSC syllabus.

PRAMUKH SAMEEKSHA is therefore an attempt to bridge the gap between **Current Affairs and Static GS**, helping aspirants transform newspaper reading into **exam-oriented knowledge** and approach both Prelims and Mains with greater confidence and clarity.

We sincerely hope this compilation becomes a valuable part of your preparation and supports you in your journey towards **excellence in the Civil Services Examination**.

Best Wishes,

BAPS Pramukh Academy

BAPS Pramukh Academy is not merely a UPSC coaching centre — it is a sacred institution born out of the divine vision of His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj to create a spiritually rooted, **value-driven bureaucracy for Bharat**. Inspired by his profound belief that **“Nation-building is not about constructing structures, but about constructing character,”** the Academy prepares aspirants not only to succeed in India’s most prestigious civil services examinations, but to embody the **virtues of integrity, humility, empathy, and righteous leadership in public life**.

Nestled in **green, clean, and serene residential campuses**, the Academy offers a uniquely peaceful and disciplined environment that nurtures both academic excellence and moral growth. The residential facilities are thoughtfully designed to support focused preparation — with **well-equipped libraries, tech-enabled classrooms, guided study hours, nutritious meals, separate secure hostels for boys and girls, and dedicated spiritual spaces for reflection and meditation**. The ambience fosters deep concentration, self-discipline, and enabling aspirants to grow not just in **knowledge, but in character**.

In addition to its offline foundation, the Academy also runs the **‘Pramukh SAMPURN Programme’** — a fully online UPSC preparation initiative that brings the same **spirit of value-based learning to students across Bharat**. This programme ensures that aspirants from remote or **financially disadvantaged backgrounds can access high-quality, structured, and holistic civil services preparation from anywhere in the country**. Through live classes, recorded lectures, daily mentorship, practice tests, and value-enrichment sessions, the online initiative aims to democratize UPSC coaching while upholding the Academy’s commitment to **affordability, accessibility, and ethical guidance**.

Whether it is through **targeted offline batches for UPSC-CSE, GPSC (Class 1–2), and Class-3 Master programmes**, or through its online reach, **BAPS Pramukh Academy** remains steadfast in its mission: to produce not just officers, but officer-saints — servant-leaders who carry forward India’s administrative legacy with **wisdom, compassion, and unwavering moral strength**. True to Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s timeless words — **“Without character, even the most educated person is dangerous to society”** — every initiative at the Academy is a step toward building a **Viksit Bharat** through character-first leadership.

[Click for Campus Tour](#)



Table of Content

1. The State Against Its Students, Lessons to Remember.....	6
2. Strong Health Systems for All with Better Public Spending.....	8
3. Distress and Dispute: Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Should Evolve a Distress-Sharing Formula	10
4. Taxing ‘Frivolous’ Industries Will Not Fund India’s Science.....	13
5. Employment Guarantee Has Slipped into Limbo.....	15
6. Beyond America: Arab States and the Emerging Gulf Security Architecture	19
7. A Palestinian state is the foundation for regional peace.....	22
8. Before New Taxes, Making Every Rupee Count.....	27
9. Supreme Court Justice Ujjal Bhuyan	31
10. India's Gross GST collections.....	32
11. 3,000 Group A officers of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs).....	33
12. India's cotton production.....	34
13. The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL)	36
14. The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) released the first comprehensive catalogue of Indian Lepidoptera,. 37	
15. Pingali Venkayya on his 150th birth anniversary	38
16. The GI & Beyond 2.0 Summit	39
17. The Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes (VCF-SC).....	40
18. AIM-260 Joint Advanced Tactical Missile.....	42
19. Astrobase Space Technologies.....	43
20. International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (World Tribal Day) 2026.....	44
21. National Gopal Ratna Awards	45
22. Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary	47
23. UPI Lite Debate	48
24. RDI Fund Faces Conflict-of-Interest Concerns in Selection of Private Companies	50
25. Lake Mead.....	52
26. Thoti Tribe.....	53
27. Myoglobin — Latest News	54
28. Exercise Pitch Black — Latest News.....	55
29. Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary	56
30. Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) — Latest News	57
31. Hara Mangrove Forest	59
32. Loggerhead Sea Turtle	59

33. National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission	60
34. South Asian Free Trade Area	61
35. Mount Elbrus.....	61
36. Supreme Court Directives on Electoral Black Money	62
37. NITI Aayog Report on Regulatory Regime in Professional Services.....	63
38. Building a Business-Ready India: Governance & Financing Reforms.....	64
39. Rural Regional Banks (RRBs)	66
40. Thamirabarani (Porunai) River.....	66
41. Central African Republic (CAR)	67
42. Mushk Budji Aromatic Rice	68
43. Helicase & Cellular Replication	68
44. National Medical Commission (NMC).....	69
45. Sawalkote Hydroelectric Project.....	70
46. Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary.....	71
47. Glyphosate	71
48. Friends of MY Bharat Initiative	72
49. Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM)	72
50. Singhbhum Craton (Eastern India Shield)	73
51. AIKosh Platform & IndiaAI Mission	74
52. Parichha Dam & World Heritage Irrigation Structures (WHIS)	75
53. RK-251: Targeted Smart Cancer Drug	75
54. Divyastra Mk3 Jet-Powered Loitering Munition	76
55. Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM)	77
56. Christmas Island.....	78
57. AIKosh Platform & Digital Infrastructure	79
58. Parichha Dam & ICID Heritage Irrigation Structures.....	79
59. Targeted Cancer Therapeutic (RK-251 Drug).....	80
60. Divyastra Mk3 Loitering Munition	81
61. Territorial Army & Terrier Cyber Quest 2026	81
62. Physical & Regional Features of Mauritius	82
63. Industrial Chromium & Groundwater Contamination.....	83
64. Thiksey Monastery of Ladakh	83
65. Endoscopic Camera Technology	84

66. Narwhals & UKMTO Maritime Security	84
67. Cloud and AI Skilling Initiative.....	85
68. Vishwamitri River	86
69. Regenerative Agriculture	86
70. Guruvayur Temple	87
71. Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF).....	88
72. Periyar Cow	89
73. Political Clearance for Foreign Trips by Constitutional Authorities.....	89
74. Agro-Climatic Vulnerability & Sugarcane Yield Fluctuations	90
75. Domestic Sugar Market Volatility and Government Interventions	91
76. Evolution of Demographic Exercises and the Indian Census	92
77. Pest Infestations in Sugarcane (Red Rot & Top Shoot Borer).....	93
78. Census 2027, NPR Linkage, and Resident Profiling.....	94
79. Pragati Platform	95
80. Morocco & Mediterranean Drainage.....	96
81. Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026.....	96
82. Parliamentary Productivity: Monsoon Session 2026.....	99
83. ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth 2026	104
84. Key Sectors to Position India as a Global Manufacturing Hub.....	108
85. Rub' al Khali (Empty Quarter)	114
86. Kuril Islands	114
87. Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM) Scheme	115
88. National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC)	116
89. Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships and Awards	116
90. India's Exports	117
91. SraVaani	118
92. Prambanan Temple	119
93. Debt-to-GDP Ratio	120
94. Black-Necked Crane	120
95. National Shipping Board	121
96. Rash Behari Bose & Revolutionary Nationalism	122
97. Amyloid- β Probe for Alzheimer's Disease.....	123
98. ICGS Ajit.....	124

99. Mission Samriddh Gaon	124
100. Jojari River & The Luni Drainage Basin.....	125
101. Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)	127
102. Neelakurinji (Strobilanthes kunthiana)	127
103. Human Gut Microbiome	128
104. Military Combat Parachute System (MCPS)	129
105. Notification of Heatwaves and Lightning as Natural Disasters.....	130
106. Jojari River and the Luni Basin	131
107. Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill, 2026	131
108. Vaishya Tekri Excavation in Ujjain.....	132
109. Thermal Protection System (TPS) for Gaganyaan	133
110. Military Combat Parachute System (MCPS)	133

The State Against Its Students, Lessons to Remember

Source: *The Hindu* (Editorial)

GS Paper Relevance:

GS Paper II – Governance, Accountability, Fundamental Rights, Role of Civil Services, Public Institutions

GS Paper IV – Ethics in Public Administration, Empathy, Accountability, Constitutional Morality

Introduction

Student movements have historically shaped democratic reforms and exposed institutional shortcomings. The editorial draws parallels between the **1876 Surendranath Banerjee civil services agitation** and contemporary student protests over public examinations, arguing that governance should respond through dialogue, transparency, and institutional accountability rather than coercion. A democratic state gains legitimacy by addressing grievances within the constitutional framework.

Key Issues

Institutional Failure in Public Examinations

1. Repeated controversies weaken trust in recruitment and education systems.
2. **Example:** Examination irregularities and cancellations affecting lakhs of aspirants.

Criminalisation of Democratic Protest

1. Peaceful protests may be viewed as law-and-order issues instead of governance concerns.
2. **Example:** Student demonstrations facing police action rather than institutional dialogue.

Accountability Deficit

1. Public institutions often lack transparent mechanisms to fix responsibility after failures.
2. **Example:** Delayed inquiries and limited institutional reforms after examination lapses.

Historical Lessons Ignored

1. Suppression rarely resolves legitimate public grievances.
2. **Example:** Both the 1876 ICS agitation and later student movements eventually led to wider political awareness.

Need for Constitutional Engagement

1. Democracies function through dialogue, participation, and responsive institutions.
2. **Example:** Credible grievance-redress mechanisms reduce conflict and improve public trust.

Global Practices

Country	Best Practice
Finland	Transparent education governance with strong stakeholder consultation.
United Kingdom	Independent examination regulators and structured appeals.

Key Facts for Prelims

1. **Surendranath Banerjee:** Among the earliest Indian nationalists; protested the reduction of the Indian Civil Services (ICS) examination age in **1876**.
2. **Indian Civil Services (ICS):** Administrative service during British India; precursor to the present-day **All India Services**.
3. **Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), 1971:** Preventive detention law used extensively during the Emergency (1975–77); later repealed.
4. **Article 19(1)(a), 19(1)(b), 19(1)(c):** Guarantee freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and association, subject to reasonable restrictions.
5. **Article 21:** Protects the right to life and personal liberty, interpreted to include dignity and fairness.

Australia	Student grievance redress through ombudsman and university mechanisms.
Canada	Institutional dialogue and mediation before escalation.
OECD Countries	Evidence-based education reforms with accountability and transparency.

Indian Policies / Committees

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Emphasises transparency, quality, and student-centric education.
National Testing Agency (NTA)	Conducts major national entrance examinations.
Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024	Prevents paper leaks and examination malpractices through stringent penalties.
Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)	Recommended citizen-centric governance and institutional accountability.
Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)	Promotes integrity and accountability in public administration.

Way Forward

- Strengthen Examination Governance**
 - Ensure secure digital systems, independent audits, and timely grievance redress.
- Institutional Accountability**
 - Fix responsibility through transparent investigations and time-bound corrective action.
- Promote Democratic Dialogue**
 - Engage student representatives and stakeholders before disputes escalate.
- Build Public Trust**
 - Publish inquiry reports, improve communication, and ensure procedural fairness.
- Constitutional and Ethical Governance**
 - Balance public order with protection of democratic freedoms, dignity, and participation.

Conclusion

A mature democracy treats student concerns as opportunities to strengthen institutions rather than as threats to public order. Transparent governance, accountable public institutions, and constructive dialogue remain the most effective means of preserving both democratic legitimacy and citizens' trust.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

- Article 19(1)(b) of the Constitution guarantees the right to assemble peacefully and without arms.
- The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 aims to curb malpractices such as paper leaks in public examinations.
- The Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) continues to remain in force in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. "Student movements often reflect deeper institutional and governance challenges rather than merely law-and-order concerns." Discuss in the light of constitutional values, public accountability, and examination reforms in India. (250 words)

Strong Health Systems for All with Better Public Spending

Source: *The Hindu* (Editorial)

GS Paper Relevance:

GS Paper II – Health, Governance, Social Sector Development, Welfare Schemes

GS Paper III – Inclusive Growth, Human Resource Development, Public Finance

Introduction

A strong public health system is fundamental to achieving inclusive development and improving human capital. While increasing public expenditure on health is essential, equally important is ensuring efficient allocation, timely utilisation, preventive healthcare, and robust governance. The editorial argues that better health outcomes require not just higher spending but smarter spending supported by institutional reforms.

Key Issues

Inadequate Public Health Expenditure

1. India's government health spending remains lower than many emerging economies.
2. **Example:** Limited public investment increases dependence on out-of-pocket expenditure.

Poor Budget Utilisation

1. Allocated funds often remain unspent due to administrative delays and weak implementation.
2. **Example:** Delayed utilisation of funds under National Health Mission programmes.

Excessive Focus on Curative Care

1. Greater emphasis is placed on hospitals instead of preventive and primary healthcare.
2. **Example:** Rising burden of diabetes and hypertension requires stronger early detection and prevention.

Governance and Institutional Challenges

1. Weak procurement systems, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and corruption reduce service delivery.
2. **Example:** Delays in medicine procurement and infrastructure projects.

Growing Burden of Non-Communicable Diseases

1. India's epidemiological transition demands sustained investment in screening, prevention and long-term care.
2. **Example:** Increasing prevalence of cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes.

Key Facts for Prelims

1. **WHO Recommendation:** Public health expenditure should be around **5% of GDP** for achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC).
2. **National Health Policy (NHP), 2017:** Targets increasing government health expenditure to **2.5% of GDP**.
3. **Ayushman Bharat Programme:**
 - **PM-JAY** – Health insurance for economically vulnerable families.
 - **Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs)** – Strengthen comprehensive primary healthcare.
4. **Universal Health Coverage (UHC):** Ensures access to quality healthcare without financial hardship.
5. **Disease Burden in India:** Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) account for over **60% of total deaths**.

Global Practices

Country	Best Practice
United Kingdom (NHS)	Tax-funded universal healthcare with strong primary care.
Thailand	Universal Health Coverage through efficient public financing.
Brazil	Community-based primary healthcare under the Unified Health System (SUS).
Japan	Preventive healthcare and regular health screening reduce long-term costs.
Finland	Decentralised healthcare governance with strong local accountability.

Indian Policies / Committees (Simplified)

National Health Policy (NHP), 2017	Increase public health expenditure and strengthen primary healthcare.
Ayushman Bharat Mission	PM-JAY and Health & Wellness Centres.
National Health Mission (NHM)	Improve rural and urban healthcare infrastructure.
15th Finance Commission	Grants for strengthening health systems and local healthcare infrastructure.
National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD)	Screening, prevention and management of major NCDs.

Way Forward

- Increase Public Health Spending**
 - Progressively raise government health expenditure towards the National Health Policy target.
- Prioritise Primary and Preventive Care**
 - Expand Health & Wellness Centres, screening programmes and health awareness initiatives.
- Improve Budget Execution**
 - Ensure timely fund release, efficient procurement and transparent financial management.
- Strengthen Governance**
 - Enhance accountability through digital monitoring, independent audits and outcome-based budgeting.
- Focus on Non-Communicable Diseases**
 - Invest in early diagnosis, lifestyle interventions, community-based healthcare and long-term disease management.

Conclusion

Higher public expenditure alone cannot guarantee better health outcomes. India must complement increased investment with efficient governance, preventive healthcare, stronger primary health systems, and transparent implementation. Such reforms will improve health equity, reduce out-of-pocket expenditure, and accelerate progress towards Universal Health Coverage.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India's public health system:

1. The National Health Policy, 2017 aims to increase government health expenditure to 2.5% of GDP.
2. Ayushman Bharat includes both PM-JAY and Health & Wellness Centres.
3. Universal Health Coverage seeks to ensure access to quality healthcare without causing financial hardship.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 3 B. 1 and 2 only
C. 2 and 3 only D. 1 only

Answer: A

Mains Question

"Improving health outcomes requires not only higher public expenditure but also efficient governance and greater emphasis on preventive healthcare." Discuss in the context of India's health sector reforms. (250 words)

Distress and Dispute: Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Should Evolve a Distress-Sharing Formula

Source: *The Hindu* (Editorial)

GS Paper Relevance:

GS Paper II – Centre–State Relations, Federalism, Interstate River Water Disputes

GS Paper III – Water Resources, Disaster Management, Agriculture, Environment

Introduction

Towards Cooperative Water Governance in Times of Scarcity

The Cauvery water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu has resurfaced due to an erratic southwest monsoon and declining reservoir levels. Rather than recurring political confrontation during years of water stress, India needs a scientifically designed distress-sharing mechanism that balances ecological sustainability, farmers' livelihoods, and cooperative federalism.

Key Issues

Monsoon Variability and Water Scarcity

1. Deficient or uneven rainfall reduces reservoir storage, making normal water releases difficult.
2. **Example:** Weak southwest monsoon has lowered storage in Karnataka reservoirs.

Politicisation of Water Sharing

1. Water disputes often intensify during elections and political mobilisation.
2. **Example:** Calls for protests and bandh over Cauvery releases.

Distress to Farmers

1. Reduced irrigation affects agricultural production in both upstream and downstream States.
2. **Example:** Delta farmers in Tamil Nadu depend on timely Cauvery releases for cultivation.

Ecological Stress

Key Facts for Prelims

1. **River Cauvery**
 - Origin: **Talakaveri**, Brahmagiri Hills, Karnataka.
 - Flows through **Karnataka and Tamil Nadu** before entering the Bay of Bengal.
2. **States/UT in the Cauvery Basin**
 - Karnataka
 - Tamil Nadu
 - Kerala
 - Puducherry
3. **Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)**
 - Constituted under the **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956**.
4. **Supreme Court Judgment (2018)**
 - Modified the Tribunal's award and directed institutional mechanisms for implementation.
5. **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)**
 - Implements water-sharing decisions.
6. **Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC)**
 - Assists CWMA in monitoring releases and reservoir management.

1. Rivers require minimum environmental flows to sustain aquatic ecosystems.
2. **Example:** Lower releases adversely affect river ecology and downstream wetlands.

Lack of a Permanent Distress-Sharing Formula

1. Existing mechanisms primarily allocate water during normal years but face challenges during droughts.
2. **Example:** Repeated litigation before the Supreme Court whenever rainfall is deficient.

Global Practices

Country	Best Practice
Australia (Murray–Darling Basin)	Basin-wide integrated water allocation based on hydrological data.
United States (Colorado River Basin)	Interstate agreements with drought contingency plans.
Spain	River Basin Authorities manage water using scientific and participatory approaches.
Israel	Water conservation, recycling and efficient irrigation reduce conflict over scarcity.
Netherlands	Collaborative water governance involving all stakeholders.

Indian Policies / Committees

Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956	Framework for adjudicating interstate river disputes.
Article 262 of the Constitution	Parliament may provide for adjudication of inter-State river water disputes.
Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)	Oversees implementation of water-sharing arrangements.
Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC)	Monitors reservoir levels and water releases.
National Water Policy (2012)	Promotes integrated water resource management and basin-level planning.

Way Forward

1. **Adopt a Scientific Distress-Sharing Formula**
 - Water allocation during drought years should be proportionate to actual water availability.
2. **Strengthen Basin-Level Institutions**
 - Empower CWMA and CWRC with real-time data, forecasting and enforcement capabilities.
3. **Promote Water Conservation**
 - Encourage micro-irrigation, crop diversification and efficient water-use practices.
4. **Depoliticise Water Governance**
 - Decisions should be guided by hydrological evidence rather than electoral considerations.
5. **Ensure Ecological Sustainability**
 - Maintain environmental flows while balancing agricultural and drinking water needs.

Conclusion

The Cauvery dispute highlights the growing challenges of climate variability and cooperative federalism. Sustainable resolution lies not in periodic confrontation but in institutional trust, scientific water management,

and a mutually accepted distress-sharing framework that safeguards farmers, ecosystems, and interstate harmony.

Prelims MCQ

Q2. With reference to the Cauvery River dispute, consider the following statements:

1. Article 262 of the Constitution empowers Parliament to provide for adjudication of inter-State river water disputes.
2. The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) was established to implement water-sharing arrangements.
3. The Cauvery River flows through Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 3
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1 only

Answer: A

Mains Question

Q3. "Recurring interstate river water disputes in India require cooperative federalism supported by scientific water governance rather than adversarial litigation." Discuss with reference to the Cauvery river dispute. (250 words)

Student Notes

Taxing 'Frivolous' Industries Will Not Fund India's Science

Source: *The Hindu* (Opinion)

GS Paper Relevance:

GS Paper III – Science & Technology, Research & Development (R&D), Innovation, Taxation, Economic Development

Introduction

Financing Scientific Research: Beyond the Search for Easy Revenue

India's aspiration to become a global scientific and technological leader requires sustained investment in research and innovation. While proposals to levy higher taxes on so-called "frivolous industries" such as gambling, betting, entertainment, and luxury consumption appear attractive, long-term scientific progress demands stable institutional funding, efficient governance, and private-sector participation rather than dependence on uncertain tax revenues.

Key Issues

Inadequate Public Investment in R&D

1. India's research expenditure remains below the global average, affecting innovation capacity.
2. **Example:** Many public laboratories face funding and infrastructure constraints.

Dependence on Unstable Revenue Sources

1. Financing science through taxes on gambling or luxury sectors may produce volatile and unpredictable revenues.
2. **Example:** Revenues from betting or entertainment fluctuate with economic cycles and regulations.

Weak Industry Participation

1. Private sector investment in research is comparatively low in India.
2. **Example:** Advanced economies witness significantly greater industry-funded R&D.

Inefficient Research Ecosystem

1. Administrative delays, procurement hurdles and fragmented funding reduce research productivity.
2. **Example:** Scientists often face delays in equipment procurement and grant approvals.

Ethical and Policy Concerns

1. Excessive reliance on "sin taxes" may encourage governments to depend on sectors they simultaneously seek to regulate.
2. **Example:** Revenue objectives may conflict with public health or social welfare goals.

Global Practices

Key Facts for Prelims

1. Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD):

- India's GERD remains around **0.6–0.7% of GDP**, significantly lower than many developed economies.

2. Major Funding Agencies

- Department of Science & Technology (DST)
- Department of Biotechnology (DBT)
- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)
- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

3. National Research Foundation (NRF)

- Established under the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act, 2023**.
- Objective: Promote research in universities, industry, and scientific institutions.

4. Types of Research

- Basic Research
- Applied Research
- Experimental Development

Country	Best Practice
United States	Strong federal funding combined with substantial private-sector R&D investment.
South Korea	Invests over 4% of GDP in research with strong industry participation.
Israel	One of the world's highest R&D spending ratios, driven by innovation ecosystems.
Germany	Collaborative research through universities, industry and research institutes.
China	Long-term strategic investment in science, manufacturing and emerging technologies.

Indian Policies / Committees

Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act, 2023	Strengthens India's research ecosystem through public-private collaboration.
National Education Policy (NEP), 2020	Promotes multidisciplinary research and innovation.
National Research Foundation (NRF)	Supports universities and research institutions.
Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) (Proposed)	Aims to enhance research, innovation and technology-led development.
Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)	Encourages innovation and entrepreneurship.

Way Forward

- Increase Public R&D Spending**
 - Gradually raise research expenditure to at least **1–2% of GDP** over the medium term.
- Encourage Private Investment**
 - Provide tax incentives, matching grants and venture support for industry-led research.
- Reform Research Governance**
 - Simplify grant approvals, procurement rules and financial management in scientific institutions.
- Strengthen University Research**
 - Build world-class research infrastructure and promote collaboration between academia and industry.
- Ensure Stable Funding**
 - Develop predictable multi-year funding mechanisms instead of relying on uncertain sector-specific taxation.

Conclusion

Scientific advancement cannot depend on occasional or politically convenient revenue sources. India's ambition to emerge as a knowledge economy requires sustained public investment, greater private participation, institutional reforms, and a long-term commitment to research excellence. Stable financing, rather than selective taxation, is the foundation of a globally competitive scientific ecosystem.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. With reference to scientific research in India, consider the following statements:

- The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) aims to strengthen research and innovation in India.
- Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) represents the total expenditure on research activities in a country.
- CSIR functions under the Department of Science and Technology.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

(Statement 3 is incorrect. CSIR functions under the Ministry of Science & Technology, but not under the Department of Science & Technology.)

Mains Question

Q2. "Sustainable financing of scientific research requires institutional reforms and long-term public-private partnerships rather than dependence on sector-specific taxation." Discuss in the context of India's R&D ecosystem. (250 words)

Employment Guarantee Has Slipped into Limbo

Source: The Hindu — Opinion/Editorial

GS Paper Relevance:**GS Paper II:** Government Schemes, Social Justice, Rural Development**GS Paper III:** Employment, Inclusive Growth, Rural Economy, Poverty Alleviation

Introduction

From Employment Guarantee to Implementation Uncertainty

India's rural employment guarantee architecture is undergoing a major transition from MGNREGA to the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) — VB-G RAM G. However, the transition has been marked by administrative uncertainty and a sharp decline in employment generation. The central concern is not merely the change in legislation, but whether the new framework can preserve the right to work and livelihood security for vulnerable rural households.

Key Issues

1. Sharp Decline in Employment Generation

- The article highlights a substantial fall in employment during April–July 2026 compared with previous years.
- Employment generation under MGNREGA/VB-G RAM G was about 70 crore person-days during the first four months of 2026-27.
- This represents a significant decline compared with the average of the preceding two years.
- The decline was particularly severe in several States.

Key Facts for Prelims

1. MGNREGA was enacted in 2005 and provides a statutory guarantee of rural employment.
2. It guarantees up to 100 days of wage employment to eligible rural households willing to undertake unskilled manual work.
3. Section 6 of MGNREGA deals with determination of wage rates.
4. MGNREGA is a demand-driven programme.
5. Employment is generally provided within 15 days of demand; failure to provide work attracts unemployment allowance provisions.
6. The programme is implemented through Gram Panchayats and rural local bodies, with significant Centre–State coordination.
7. **MGNREGA has important secondary objectives:**
 - Creation of rural assets
 - Water conservation
 - Drought mitigation
 - Livelihood security
 - Women's participation
8. The article highlights the transition to VB-G RAM G, with uncertainty surrounding its implementation and rules.

- Concern: A rural employment programme becomes ineffective if workers cannot obtain employment when they need it.

2. Administrative Confusion During Transition

The transition from MGNREGA to VB-G RAM G created uncertainty regarding:

- Rules
- Wage payments
- Opening of works
- Administrative responsibilities
- Centre–State cost sharing
- In several areas, officials reportedly hesitated to initiate new works during the transition period.

Result: The gap between policy announcement and ground-level implementation became a major concern.

3. Vulnerability of Rural Workers

- Rural employment guarantees act as an important social safety net, particularly during:
- Agricultural lean seasons
- Droughts
- Rural unemployment
- Economic shocks
- A decline in employment opportunities can directly affect household consumption, nutrition and debt vulnerability.

4. Inter-State Variation

- The employment decline was not uniform.
- Several States recorded very large reductions, while some States experienced relatively smaller declines.
- This highlights the importance of:
- State administrative capacity
- Local demand
- Fund availability
- Timely approval of works
- Implementation quality

5. Centre–State Financing and Wage Concerns

- The new framework reportedly involves greater financial responsibilities and changes in the cost-sharing structure.
- This raises questions regarding whether poorer States will have sufficient fiscal capacity to maintain employment generation.
- At the same time, if wages do not adequately keep pace with inflation, the real purchasing power of rural workers may decline.

Global Practices

Country	Practice	Lesson for India
South Africa	Public employment programmes target vulnerable workers	Employment can function as a social protection tool

Argentina	Public employment and income-support programmes during economic crises	Counter-cyclical employment support is important
Brazil	Social protection combined with local-level implementation	Integrate employment with broader welfare systems
Ethiopia	Productive Safety Net Programme	Employment can create durable community assets
Australia	Active labour-market programmes	Combine income support with skill development
Comparative lesson:		Successful public employment programmes require predictable funding, timely payments, transparent demand registration and strong local implementation.

Indian Policies / Committees

Policy / Institution	Description
MGNREGA, 2005	Provides a statutory employment guarantee to rural households and remains one of India's largest social-protection programmes.
VB-G RAM G	The successor framework discussed in the article seeks to restructure India's rural employment guarantee architecture.
Gram Panchayats	Local governments play a crucial role in identifying works and implementing rural employment programmes.
Direct Benefit Transfer	Wages are transferred directly into workers' bank accounts, improving transparency and reducing intermediary dependence.
Social Audit	Community-based social audits are an important accountability mechanism under rural employment programmes.

Way Forward

- Ensure Continuity During Transitions**
 - No legislative or administrative transition should create a gap between workers' demand for employment and actual availability of work.
- Protect the Right to Work**
 - Employment guarantees must remain demand-driven, with clear accountability when employment is not provided within the stipulated period.
- Ensure Timely Wage Payments**
 - Delays in wage payments undermine the effectiveness of an employment guarantee and increase household financial stress.
- Strengthen Local Governance**
 - Gram Panchayats should receive adequate administrative capacity, technical support and predictable funds to execute works efficiently.
- Link Employment with Durable Assets**
 - Employment generation should simultaneously create productive assets in:
 - Water conservation
 - Irrigation
 - Rural roads
 - Land development
 - Climate-resilient infrastructure

Conclusion

India's rural employment guarantee is more than a wage-support programme; it is an instrument of social protection, rural demand management and inclusive development. The transition to a new framework should therefore be judged not merely by budgetary allocations or institutional redesign, but by one fundamental test: Can a rural worker who needs employment actually obtain it, on time and at a fair wage?

A credible employment guarantee requires continuity, predictable financing, accountable administration and strong Centre–State cooperation. The transition should strengthen—not dilute—the livelihood security of India's rural poor.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. With reference to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), consider the following statements:

1. It provides a statutory guarantee of wage employment to rural households.
2. It is primarily a demand-driven programme.
3. Social audits are an important accountability mechanism under the programme.
4. Employment under the programme is restricted only to agricultural activities.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 4 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. “The effectiveness of a rural employment guarantee depends not merely on financial allocation, but on timely implementation, predictable funding and institutional accountability.” Discuss in the context of the transition from MGNREGA to the new rural employment framework. (250 words)

Student Notes

Beyond America: Arab States and the Emerging Gulf Security Architecture

Source: The Hindu — Editorial

GS Paper Relevance

GS Paper II: International Relations, West Asia, India–Gulf Relations, Regional Security

GS Paper III: Energy Security, Maritime Security, Strategic Chokepoints

Essay: Changing World Order, Strategic Autonomy, Multipolarity

Introduction

From External Security Dependence to Regional Security Responsibility

The Persian Gulf has traditionally depended heavily on the U.S.-led security architecture, supported by American military bases, naval presence and strategic partnerships with Arab States. However, repeated conflicts involving Iran, attacks on regional military installations and disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz have exposed the limitations of this arrangement. The emerging reality suggests that Gulf States may need to gradually develop a regional security framework based on dialogue, strategic autonomy and confidence-building.

Key Issues

1. Limits of the U.S.-Centric Security Architecture

- The article argues that the traditional assumption that American military power can guarantee Gulf security is increasingly being questioned.
- Repeated regional conflicts have exposed vulnerabilities in external security guarantees.
- Example: Attacks on U.S. military installations and regional partners have demonstrated that military presence does not automatically ensure strategic stability.

2. Failure of the Iran Containment Approach

For decades, the U.S. strategy towards Iran has focused substantially on:

- Sanctions
- Military deterrence
- Diplomatic pressure

Key Facts for Prelims

1. **Persian Gulf:** Semi-enclosed sea located between the Arabian Peninsula and Iran.
2. **Strait of Hormuz:** Strategic maritime chokepoint connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea.
3. It is critically important for global energy transportation.
4. **Major Gulf energy producers include:**
 - Saudi Arabia
 - UAE
 - Qatar
 - Kuwait
 - Iraq
 - Iran
5. **GCC – Gulf Cooperation Council**
6. **Established:** 1981
7. **Members:** Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE.
8. **U.S. military presence:** The U.S. has historically maintained military facilities and strategic partnerships across the Gulf.
9. **Hormuz significance:** Any prolonged disruption can affect global oil and LNG supply chains, freight costs and inflation.

- Regional alliances
- However, Iran's regional influence and strategic capabilities have continued.
- **Lesson:** Long-term regional stability cannot depend exclusively on containment.

3. Strategic Importance of the Strait of Hormuz

- Hormuz is one of the world's most important energy chokepoints.
- Any disruption can lead to:
 - Higher crude oil prices
 - Supply-chain disruptions
 - Increased insurance and shipping costs
 - Imported inflation
 - Pressure on energy-importing countries such as India

4. Gulf States Face a Strategic Dilemma

Arab States must balance relations with:

- United States
- Iran
- China
- Russia
- Other regional powers

Their security and economic interests increasingly require strategic diversification rather than dependence on one external power.

5. Need for a Regional Security Mechanism

- The central challenge is the absence of a comprehensive Gulf-wide security framework involving both Arab States and Iran.
- A sustainable mechanism would require:
 - Confidence-building measures
 - Maritime communication
 - Non-aggression arrangements
 - Crisis-management mechanisms
 - Dialogue on energy security

Global Practices

Example	Practice	Lesson
ASEAN Confidence Building	– Southeast Asian countries use dialogue platforms to manage strategic differences despite competing interests.	Continuous dialogue can prevent disputes from escalating.
OSCE Cooperative Security	– European States developed mechanisms for transparency, communication and confidence-building.	Security can be based on cooperation rather than military deterrence alone.
African Union	The AU promotes regional approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.	Regional organisations can develop indigenous conflict-management capacity.
EU Security Cooperation	European countries have gradually developed collective mechanisms for managing shared security concerns.	Institutionalised cooperation can reduce dependence on external security providers.

ASEAN Regional Forum	It brings together major powers and regional States for dialogue on political and security issues.	Inclusive platforms can prevent strategic rivalry from becoming military confrontation.
-----------------------------	--	---

Indian Policies / Institutions

Policy / Initiative	Description
SAGAR	Security and Growth for All in the Region is India's vision for an open, inclusive and rules-based maritime order.
Act East Policy	Strengthens India's engagement with Southeast Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific.
Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)	Provides a platform for cooperation among Indian Ocean littoral countries.
Indian Navy's Maritime Security Role	India contributes to maritime security, anti-piracy operations, humanitarian assistance and protection of sea lanes.
India–Gulf Strategic Partnerships	India maintains expanding economic, energy, diaspora and security relationships with Gulf countries.

Way Forward

1. Build an Inclusive Gulf Security Framework

- Arab States and Iran should gradually develop a regional mechanism for dialogue, crisis management and confidence building.

2. Strengthen Maritime Communication

- A dedicated communication mechanism among Gulf States can reduce the risk of accidental escalation.

3. Diversify Energy Routes and Sources

- Energy-importing countries should expand:
- Strategic petroleum reserves
- Renewable energy
- LNG diversification
- Alternative shipping routes

4. Promote Regional Confidence-Building

- Regular diplomatic engagement should address:
- Maritime incidents
- Missile threats
- Military exercises

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Q. With reference to the Strait of Hormuz, consider the following statements:

1. It connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman.
2. It is located between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula.
3. It is an important maritime route for global energy transportation.
4. India is completely dependent on the Strait of Hormuz for all its crude oil imports.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 4 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: A

Mains Question

“The changing security dynamics of the Persian Gulf necessitate a shift from an externally dominated security architecture towards an inclusive regional security framework.” Discuss. What are the implications for India? (250 words)

- Shipping security
- Non-interference

5. **Encourage a Multipolar but Rules-Based Order**

- Gulf States should diversify partnerships while preserving strategic autonomy, rather than simply replacing dependence on one power with dependence on another.

Conclusion

The changing Gulf security environment does not necessarily imply the disappearance of American influence. Rather, it highlights the limits of an externally dominated security architecture. A stable Persian Gulf requires regional ownership, diplomatic engagement and credible mechanisms for crisis management.

For India, the stability of the Gulf is particularly important because of its energy security, maritime trade, diaspora interests and strategic partnership with the region. A more autonomous and cooperative Gulf security order would therefore serve not only regional stability but also India's wider strategic interests.

A Palestinian state is the foundation for regional peace

Source: The Hindu — Opinion/Editorial

GS Paper Relevance:

GS Paper II: International Relations, West Asia, Palestine Question, India's Foreign Policy

GS Paper III: Energy Security, Maritime Security, Strategic Chokepoints

Essay: Regional Peace, Two-State Solution, Changing World Order

Introduction

From the Palestine Question to a Regional Peace Framework

The Israel–Palestine conflict remains one of the most enduring sources of instability in West Asia. The editorial argues that a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian state alongside Israel provides the most credible foundation for lasting regional peace. Recent conflicts, including the post-October 7 violence, have demonstrated that military responses alone cannot eliminate the underlying political

Key Facts for Prelims

1. **Palestine Question:** Refers to the political and territorial dispute concerning Palestinian self-determination, statehood and relations with Israel.
2. **Two-State Solution:** Envisions an independent Palestinian state existing alongside the State of Israel.
3. **United Nations:** The UN has repeatedly supported negotiations towards a two-state settlement.
4. **Palestinian Authority (PA):** Established following the Oslo process and exercises limited self-government in parts of the West Bank.
5. **Oslo Accords:** Agreements beginning in the 1990s that created a framework for limited Palestinian self-rule and negotiations.
6. **West Bank:** Palestinian territory located west of the Jordan River.
7. **Gaza Strip:** Palestinian territory on the eastern Mediterranean coast.
8. **Jerusalem:** A central and highly contested issue in the Israel–Palestine conflict.
9. **Arab Peace Initiative:** Proposed in 2002, offering normalisation between Arab States and Israel in return for a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue.

dispute. A durable settlement therefore requires recognition of Palestinian self-determination, security guarantees for Israel and credible international mediation.

Key Issues

1. Two-State Solution as the Foundation of Peace

- The editorial argues that the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian state alongside Israel remains the most realistic political solution.
- A viable two-state framework could:
 - Address Palestinian aspirations for self-determination
 - Provide a political alternative to recurring violence

2. Historical Roots of the Conflict

- The conflict has deep historical roots involving:
 - Competing territorial claims
 - Palestinian displacement
 - Creation of Israel in 1948
 - Status of Jerusalem
 - Palestinian refugee question
- The persistence of these unresolved issues has repeatedly obstructed a comprehensive peace settlement.

3. Iran–Israel Rivalry and Regional Instability

- The editorial also highlights the wider regional dimension of the conflict.
- Iran's rivalry with Israel has contributed to tensions involving:
 - Hezbollah
 - Hamas
 - Regional militia networks
 - Missile and drone capabilities
 - Israeli military operations
- Thus, the Palestine issue cannot be completely separated from the broader West Asian strategic competition.

4. Humanitarian Crisis and Cycles of Violence

- The recurring military confrontations have produced severe humanitarian consequences, particularly in Gaza.
- Major concerns include:
 - and economic consequences
- Military operations may produce temporary tactical outcomes but cannot by themselves resolve the political roots of the conflict.

5. Settlements and Territorial Viability

- A major obstacle to Palestinian statehood is the question of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.
- Fragmented Palestinian territories can make it difficult to create a geographically contiguous and economically viable state.
- Therefore, any two-state settlement would need to address:
 - Natural resources

6. Role of External Mediation

- The editorial argues that external mediation remains important because direct negotiations between the parties have repeatedly failed to produce a durable settlement.
- Regional powers
- However, mediation must be accompanied by credible implementation mechanisms rather than merely diplomatic declarations.

Global Practices / Comparative Lessons

Topic	Description	Lesson
Northern Ireland Peace Process	The Good Friday Agreement demonstrates how prolonged conflict can be addressed through: Political dialogue Power-sharing Institutional guarantees External mediation	Lesson: Political accommodation can gradually replace cycles of violence.
Dayton Peace Agreement	The Bosnia peace process demonstrates the importance of international mediation and institutional guarantees in resolving deeply divided societies.	Lesson: External guarantees may be necessary where mutual trust is extremely low.
Camp David Accords	The Egypt–Israel peace process demonstrated that sustained negotiations can produce formal peace between former adversaries.	Lesson: Political leadership and security guarantees can overcome long-standing hostility.
Oslo Process	The Oslo framework established mutual recognition and limited Palestinian self-government.	Lesson: Incremental confidence-building can create institutional foundations, but unresolved core issues can undermine long-term peace.
Arab Peace Initiative	The initiative linked Arab recognition and normalisation with Israel to a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question.	Lesson: Regional diplomatic incentives can complement bilateral negotiations.

Indian Policies / Institutions

Topic	Description
India's Support for a Two-State Solution	India has traditionally supported a negotiated solution leading to a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian state living alongside Israel in peace and security.
India's Development Assistance to Palestine	India has provided development and capacity-building assistance in areas such as: Education, Healthcare, Information technology, Institutional development Human-resource development
India–Israel Strategic Partnership	India maintains extensive cooperation with Israel in: Defence, Agriculture, Water management, Technology, Innovation, Counter-terrorism
India–Arab Relations	India's deep economic and strategic relationships with Gulf and Arab countries give it a significant stake in West Asian stability.

Humanitarian Assistance	India has also provided humanitarian assistance to Palestinians during periods of crisis.
--------------------------------	---

Way Forward

1. **Revive a Credible Two-State Framework**

- International diplomacy should focus on creating the conditions for a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel.

2. **Address Core Political Issues**

- Any durable settlement must address:
 - Borders
 - Jerusalem
 - Settlements
 - Refugees
 - Security arrangements
 - Palestinian sovereignty

3. **Strengthen Palestinian Governance**

- Effective, accountable and representative Palestinian institutions are essential for successful state-building.

4. **Provide Security Guarantees**

- A sustainable settlement requires credible security arrangements for both Israelis and Palestinians.

5. **Strengthen Regional Mediation**

- Arab States, the United States, European powers and international institutions should coordinate diplomatic efforts rather than pursue fragmented initiatives.

Conclusion

The Israel–Palestine conflict demonstrates the limitations of attempting to achieve political stability through military means alone. A Palestinian state is not merely a question of territorial reorganisation; it is central to addressing Palestinian self-determination and creating a broader regional peace architecture.

For India, a peaceful and stable West Asia is crucial because of energy security, diaspora interests, trade routes and strategic partnerships. India should therefore continue its balanced approach—supporting Palestinian statehood and humanitarian concerns while maintaining constructive relations with Israel and regional partners.

A durable peace will ultimately require political compromise, mutual security, credible mediation and recognition of the legitimate aspirations of both peoples.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. With reference to the Israel–Palestine conflict, consider the following statements:

1. The two-state solution envisages an independent Palestinian state existing alongside Israel.
2. The Oslo Accords created a framework for limited Palestinian self-government.
3. The West Bank is one of the principal territories associated with the Palestinian question.
4. India has historically opposed the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 4 only

C. 2 and 3 only

D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: A. 1, 2 and 3 only

Mains Question

Q2. "A Palestinian state is the foundation for regional peace." Discuss the significance of the two-state solution in resolving the Israel–Palestine conflict. What role can India play in promoting peace and stability in West Asia? (250 words)

Student Notes

Before New Taxes, Making Every Rupee Count

Source: The Hindu — Opinion/Editorial

GS Paper Relevance:

GS Paper II: Governance, Public Finance, Accountability, State Government

GS Paper III: Fiscal Policy, Taxation, Public Expenditure, Inclusive Growth

Essay: Good Governance, Fiscal Responsibility, Welfare vs Efficiency, Outcome-Based Governance

Introduction

From Raising Revenue to Improving the Quality of Public Finance

Tamil Nadu, like many Indian States, faces growing fiscal pressures arising from high debt, revenue deficits and rising expenditure on salaries, pensions and interest payments. The editorial argues that before imposing additional taxes on citizens, the government should first examine whether existing revenue is being collected efficiently and whether public expenditure is producing measurable outcomes. The central issue is therefore not merely how much revenue the State raises or how much it spends, but how efficiently every rupee is collected and converted into public welfare.

Key Issues

1. High Fiscal Pressure on State Finances

- Tamil Nadu's fiscal position faces multiple structural pressures.
- Major expenditure commitments include:
 - Salaries
 - Pensions
 - Interest payments
 - Welfare expenditure
 - Infrastructure requirements
- The editorial does not dispute the need for public expenditure. Rather, it questions whether the State is sufficiently examining the efficiency and effectiveness of existing expenditure before seeking additional revenue.
- Core concern: Higher taxation cannot substitute indefinitely for expenditure rationalisation and better fiscal management.

2. Revenue Mobilisation Must Begin with Better Compliance

Key Facts for Prelims

1. **Revenue Deficit:** Occurs when revenue expenditure exceeds revenue receipts.
2. **Fiscal Deficit:** Represents the excess of total expenditure over total receipts excluding borrowings.
3. **Public Debt:** Accumulated borrowings of the government used to finance fiscal gaps and development expenditure.
4. **CAG:** The Comptroller and Auditor General of India audits government receipts and expenditure and reports on financial accountability.
5. **Outcome Budgeting:** Focuses on the measurable results generated by government expenditure rather than merely the amount allocated or spent.
6. **Performance-Based Budgeting:** Links allocation of resources with performance and measurable outcomes.
7. **GST:** A destination-based indirect tax administered through the Centre and States under the GST framework.
8. **Revenue Augmentation:** Measures undertaken by governments to increase revenue through improved taxation, compliance, non-tax revenue and administrative efficiency.
9. **Expenditure Reforms:** Attempts to improve the efficiency, prioritisation and effectiveness of government spending.
10. **Fiscal Responsibility:** Requires governments to maintain sustainable finances while balancing development and welfare objectives.

- The editorial highlights audit findings relating to GST irregularities and taxpayers operating outside the GST net.
- The CAG findings cited in the article point towards:
 - Tax irregularities
 - Under-assessment
 - Inadequate recovery
 - Taxpayers outside the GST network
 - Weaknesses in revenue administration
- This suggests that there may be untapped revenue potential within the existing tax system.
- Important Principle
- Before increasing tax rates, governments should first improve tax compliance, broaden the tax base and strengthen enforcement.
- This can increase revenue without placing an additional burden on compliant taxpayers.

3. CAG Findings and the Importance of Financial Accountability

- The CAG's audit observations provide an institutional mechanism for examining whether public money has been:
 - Properly collected
 - Properly allocated
 - Lawfully spent
 - Efficiently utilised
 - Supported by adequate documentation
- The editorial highlights irregularities worth substantial amounts and cases relating to GST compliance.
- However, audit findings should not simply become statistics.
- They should lead to:
 - Audit → Investigation → Recovery → Corrective Action → Institutional Reform
- Thus, financial auditing must ultimately improve governance outcomes.

4. From Expenditure-Based to Outcome-Based Budgeting

- One of the most important arguments in the editorial is the need to shift from asking:
 - “How much money was spent?”
 - to:
 - “What did that expenditure achieve?”
- For example:

Traditional Measurement	Outcome-Based Measurement
Money allocated to roads	Kilometres of usable roads created
Water-supply expenditure	Households receiving reliable water
Education expenditure	Improvement in learning outcomes
Welfare allocation	Actual beneficiaries receiving support
Healthcare spending	Improvement in health indicators

- This approach makes government expenditure more measurable, transparent and accountable.

5. Performance-Based Budgeting

- The editorial refers to the principle of performance-based budgeting, where government departments are assessed not simply by the size of their allocations but by the results they generate.
- For example:

- Allocation → Implementation → Output → Outcome → Impact
- This creates a stronger connection between public money and public welfare.
- It also helps identify:
- Low-impact expenditure

6. Welfare Should Be Efficient, Not Merely Reduced

- A critical distinction must be maintained between fiscal prudence and welfare retrenchment.
- The editorial does not advocate reducing welfare expenditure merely to control the deficit.
- Instead, it argues for:
- Periodic evaluation
- Thus, the objective should be:
- “Better welfare per rupee,” rather than simply “less welfare.”

Global Practices

United States – Performance-Based Governance	The editorial refers to the experience of Jimmy Carter and performance-oriented budgeting, where greater emphasis was placed on evaluating government programmes based on results.	Lesson for India: Budgetary systems should connect expenditure with measurable performance.
United Kingdom – Spending Reviews	The UK uses spending reviews to examine government priorities and determine whether expenditure produces desired outcomes.	Lesson: Government spending should be periodically reviewed rather than treated as automatically permanent.
New Zealand – Fiscal Transparency	New Zealand has developed strong practices relating to fiscal transparency and performance reporting.	Lesson: Clear reporting of government finances improves accountability.
OECD Countries – Outcome Budgeting	Several OECD economies increasingly use performance indicators to evaluate government programmes.	Lesson: Public expenditure should be linked to measurable outputs and outcomes.
Brazil – Social Programme Evaluation	Brazil has developed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating large social programmes.	Lesson: Welfare schemes can be protected while simultaneously improving targeting and effectiveness.

Indian Policies / Institutions

Comptroller and Auditor General of India	The CAG is a constitutional authority responsible for auditing government accounts and expenditure. Its reports help identify Financial irregularities Revenue leakages Implementation deficiencies
GST Network and Tax Administration	Technology-enabled GST administration provides opportunities for: • Data Taxpayer tracking Detection of evasion Improving compliance can increase revenue without necessarily increasing tax rates.

Outcome Budget	India has adopted outcome-oriented budgeting to connect financial allocations with measurable outputs and outcomes. This represents a shift from: Input → Expenditure towards: Input → Output → Outcome
Direct Benefit Transfer	DBT helps transfer welfare benefits directly to beneficiaries and can reduce: Leakage Duplicate beneficiaries Administrative inefficiency
Social Audit and Public Accountability	Social audits and citizen monitoring can improve transparency, particularly in welfare and rural-development programmes. They complement formal financial audits by bringing community-level accountability into governance.

Way Forward

1. Improve Revenue Collection Before Raising Tax Rates

- Governments should first focus on:
- Tax compliance
- Broadening the tax base
- Closing GST gaps
- Reducing evasion
- Improving non-tax revenue
- Using data analytics

2. Institutionalise Outcome-Based Budgeting

- Every major government programme should clearly specify:
- Input → Output → Outcome → Impact
- Budget allocations should increasingly depend on evidence of performance.

3. Strengthen CAG Follow-Up Mechanisms

- Audit observations should not remain merely in reports.
- There should be systematic:
- Departmental responses
- Corrective action
- Follow-up audits

4. Conduct Periodic Expenditure Reviews

- Governments should periodically examine whether schemes are:
- Relevant
- Efficient
- Duplicative

The central lesson of the editorial is that fiscal capacity is not merely about raising more money; it is The ultimate test of a government budget should not be how much money it raises or spends, but how much public value every rupee creates.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. With reference to outcome-based budgeting, consider the following statements:

1. It focuses on the results generated by government expenditure.
2. It seeks to establish a relationship between financial allocation and measurable outcomes.
3. It completely eliminates the role of conventional financial auditing.
4. It can help identify inefficient or low-impact government programmes.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 4 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: A. 1, 2 and 4 only

Mains Question

Q2. "Before imposing additional taxes, governments should first ensure that every rupee of existing revenue is efficiently collected and every rupee of expenditure generates measurable outcomes." Discuss in the context of fiscal management and welfare delivery in Indian States. (250 words)

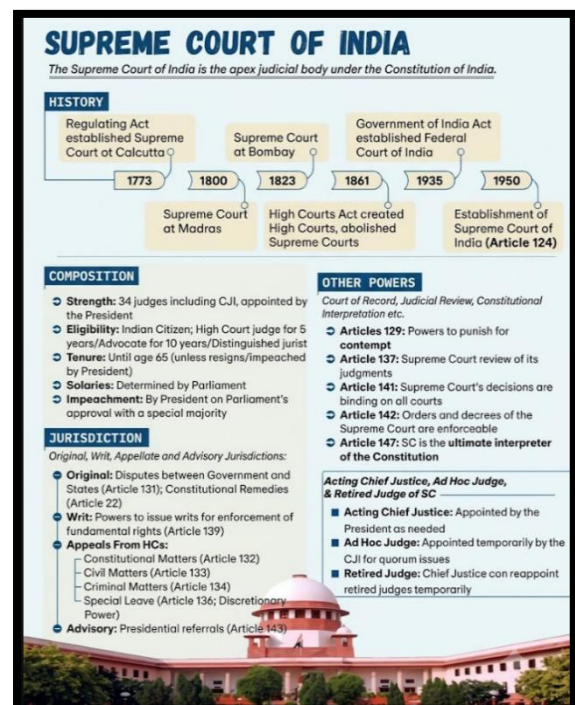
Supreme Court Justice Ujjal Bhuyan

NEWS

Supreme Court Justice Ujjal Bhuyan emphasized that unexplained Collegium recommendations reduce transparency, risk unsuitable judicial appointments, and highlighted the need for greater openness while safeguarding judicial independence.

KEY FACTS

- Supreme Court Judge **Justice Ujjal Bhuyan** raised concerns over the **opacity of the Collegium system**.
- Stated that **unexplained recommendations** may lead to **unsuitable judicial appointments**.
- Observed that the Collegium has recently **returned to secrecy** in appointment decisions.
- Noted that reasons for **elevation, transfer, rejection, or deferral** of judges are often **not disclosed**.
- Highlighted that **Collegium resolutions** are not always comparable with the **Memorandum of Procedure (MoP)**.
- Cited the **Swapnil Tripathi v. Supreme Court of India (2018)** judgment supporting open court proceedings.
- Emphasised that **transparency and public access** strengthen judicial accountability without compromising independence.



STATIC INFORMATION

Supreme Court Collegium System

- A judicial mechanism for the appointment and transfer of judges of the **Supreme Court and High Courts**.
- Evolved through the **Second Judges Case (1993)** and **Third Judges Case (1998)**.
- Supreme Court Collegium consists of the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** and the **four senior-most Supreme Court judges**.
- Recommendations are sent to the **Central Government**, which may seek reconsideration once.

Source: Supreme Court of India

Memorandum of Procedure (MoP)

1. Executive document governing the procedure for appointment and transfer of judges.
2. Prepared jointly by the **Judiciary and the Government**.
3. Operates alongside the Collegium system.

Source: Department of Justice, Government of India

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Collegium System in India:

1. The Collegium system for judicial appointments evolved through the **Second and Third Judges Cases**.
2. The **Supreme Court Collegium** consists of the Chief Justice of India and the **four senior-most Supreme Court judges**.
3. The **Constitution of India expressly provides** for the Collegium system.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

India's Gross GST collections

NEWS

India's **Gross GST collections** increased **15.4% year-on-year** to over **₹2.11 lakh crore** in **July 2026**, driven by robust imports, higher domestic consumption, and sustained economic activity.

KEY FACTS

1. Gross **GST collections** reached **₹2.11 lakh crore** in **July 2026**.
2. Collections increased **15.4%** compared to **₹1.83 lakh crore** in July 2025.
3. **Domestic GST revenues** increased **10.1%** to **₹1.44 lakh crore**.
4. **GST revenue from imports** rose **29%** to **₹66,511 crore**.

Reasons for Higher collection:

- Increased imports
 - Strong domestic consumption
 - Sustained economic resilience
5. Domestic consumption remained resilient despite global economic uncertainties.
 6. Reflects continued improvement in tax compliance and economic activity.

STATIC INFORMATION

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Goods and Services Tax (GST)	
	Launched in July 2017 After the 101th Constitutional Amendment, Act, 2016
	Comprehensive Destination-Based Indirect Tax ⊗ Imposed at every level of supply chain ⊗ Eliminates Cascading Tax Effect (Tax on Tax)
	Central Taxes Subsumed ⊗ Service Tax ⊗ Central Excise Duty ⊗ Additional Duties of Excise (Goods of Special Importance) ⊗ Excise Duty under Medicinal & Toilet Preparation (Excise Duties) Act, 1995 ⊗ Additional Duties of Customs (known as CVD) ⊗ Special Additional Duty of Customs (SAD) ⊗ Surcharges & Cesses
	State Taxes Subsumed ⊗ Central Sales Tax ⊗ Purchase Tax ⊗ Entertainment and Amusement Tax (other than those levied by local bodies) ⊗ Luxury Tax ⊗ Octroi and Entry Tax (All forms) ⊗ Taxes on lotteries, betting & gambling ⊗ Taxes on advertisements ⊗ State Cesses and Surcharges

- Introduced on **1 July 2017** as a destination-based indirect tax.
- Implemented through the **101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2016**.
- Governed under **Article 279A**, which provides for the **GST Council**.
- GST subsumed multiple Central and State indirect taxes into a unified tax regime.
- Components include **CGST, SGST, IGST, and UTGST**.

Source: Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)

GST Council

1. Constitutional body constituted under **Article 279A**.
2. Chaired by the **Union Finance Minister**.
3. Recommends GST rates, exemptions, threshold limits, and policy changes.

Prelims Practice Question

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Goods and Services Tax (GST):

1. GST is a **destination-based indirect tax** on the supply of goods and services.
2. The **GST Council** is a constitutional body established under **Article 279A** of the Constitution.
3. **Integrated GST (IGST)** is levied only on intra-State supplies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. **1 and 2 only**
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

3,000 Group A officers of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)

NEWS

Over **3,000 Group A officers** of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) have approached the Supreme Court challenging amendments to the **CAPF Act**, alleging they undermine cadre promotions and leadership opportunities.

KEY FACTS

1. Over **3,000 serving CAPF Group A officers** filed a petition in the **Supreme Court**.
2. Petition challenges the **Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Act, 2026**.
3. Petitioners include **gallantry award winners** and **women officers**.
4. Officers argue the Act:
 - Increases IPS deputation in senior CAPF posts.
 - Reduces promotion opportunities for cadre officers.
 - Violates earlier Supreme Court directions on cadre management.
5. The Act provides that:
 - **50% of Inspector General (IG) posts,**
 - **At least 67% of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) posts,**
 - **All Director General (DG), Special DG and Additional DG** posts may be filled by IPS officers on deputation.
6. Petitioners contend that **Sections 3 and 4** of the Act are **ultra vires** the Constitution.

7. The issue relates to **promotion policy, cadre management, and deputation of IPS officers in CAPFs.**

STATIC INFORMATION

Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)

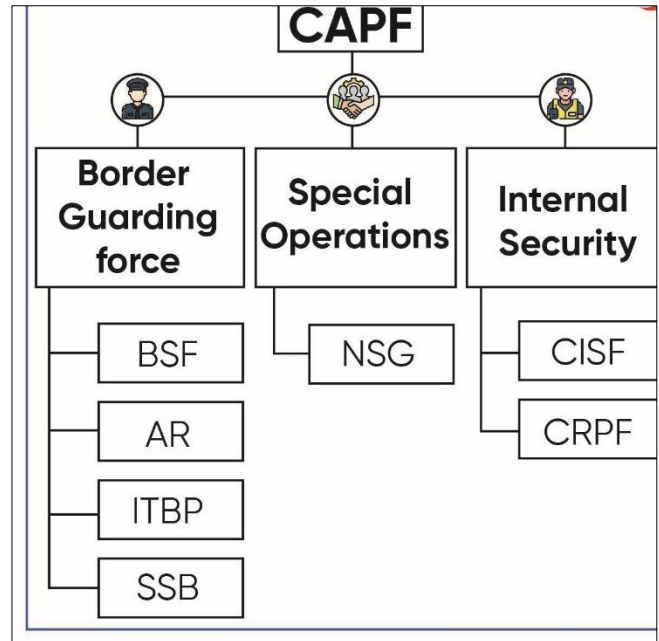
- CAPFs function under the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).**
- India has **seven CAPFs**:
 - Central Reserve Police Force (**CRPF**)
 - Border Security Force (**BSF**)
 - Central Industrial Security Force (**CISF**)
 - Indo-Tibetan Border Police (**ITBP**)
 - Sashastra Seema Bal (**SSB**)
 - Assam Rifles (under MHA with operational control of the Army)
 - National Security Guard (**NSG**)
- They perform duties related to **internal security, border guarding, counter-insurgency, industrial security, and counter-terrorism.**

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

Doctrine of Ultra Vires

- Means "**beyond the powers**".
- A law or executive action can be declared **ultra vires** if it exceeds constitutional or statutory authority.
- Courts exercise **judicial review** to strike down ultra vires actions.

Source: Constitution of India; Supreme Court of India



Prelims Practice Question

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs):

- The **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)** and the **Border Security Force (BSF)** function under the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**
- The **National Security Guard (NSG)** is one of the Central Armed Police Forces.
- The **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)** functions under the **Ministry of Defence.**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 and 2 only**
- 2 and 3 only**
- 1 only**
- 1, 2 and 3**

Correct Answer: A

India's cotton production

NEWS

India's **cotton production** is projected to decline by nearly **7 lakh bales** in the **2025–26 season**, while domestic consumption is expected to rise, tightening cotton availability for the textile industry.

KEY FACTS

1. Cotton production in **2025–26** is estimated at **290.24 lakh bales**.
2. Production is expected to decline by **nearly 7 lakh bales** from **297.24 lakh bales** in **2024–25**.
3. Estimates were released by the **Committee on Cotton Production and Consumption**.
4. Domestic cotton consumption is projected at **320 lakh bales**.
5. Consumption has increased from **about 306 lakh bales** in the previous season.
6. Large-scale and **MSME textile industries** are the major consumers of cotton.
7. Cotton exports are expected to remain **lower than the previous season**.
8. Cotton imports are likely to increase by **around 15 lakh bales**.
9. Cotton season in India begins on **1 October** each year.

STATIC INFORMATION

Cotton in India

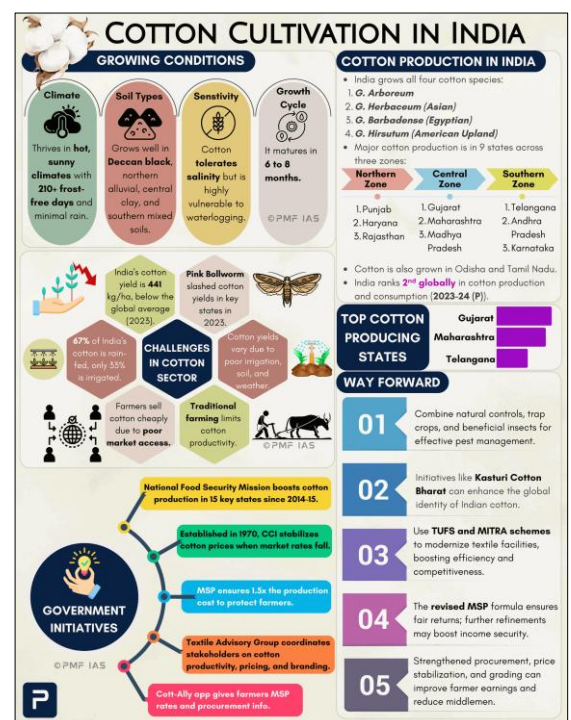
1. Cotton is a **kharif crop** requiring **high temperatures (21–30°C)**, moderate rainfall (50–100 cm), and a long frost-free period.
2. India is one of the **largest producers of cotton globally**.
3. Major cotton-producing States include **Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka**.
4. The **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)** undertakes procurement under the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** mechanism.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare; Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)

Cotton Advisory Bodies

1. The **Committee on Cotton Production and Consumption (CCPC)** estimates cotton production, consumption, exports, imports, and stock position in India.
2. It assists policymakers and the textile industry in planning and market assessment.

Source: Ministry of Textiles



Prelims Practice Question

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding cotton cultivation in India:

1. Cotton is primarily a **Kharif crop**.
 2. The **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)** procures cotton under the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** scheme.
 3. India imports more cotton than it produces every year.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL)

NEWS

The **Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL)** asked the Madhya Pradesh Government to explore alternative areas before proceeding with the proposed **compensatory notification** of the Bagdara Wildlife Sanctuary.

KEY FACTS

1. **SC-NBWL** advised Madhya Pradesh to explore **alternative areas** for compensatory notification.
2. Issue relates to the proposed **de-notification/compensatory notification** concerning **Bagdara Wildlife Sanctuary**.
3. **Bagdara Wildlife Sanctuary** is located in **Sidhi and Singrauli districts of Madhya Pradesh**.
4. Established in **1978**.
5. Covers an area of approximately **478 sq. km**.
6. Notified primarily for the conservation of the **Blackbuck**.
7. **Son River** forms the southern boundary of the sanctuary.
8. Features **natural caves and rock shelters**.
9. Dominated by **dry deciduous mixed forests**.
10. Common flora includes:
 - Teak
 - Tendu
 - Khair
 - Dhaora
 - Orchids
 - Tiger
 - Leopard (Panther)
 - Sambar
 - Chital
 - Chinkara
 - Hyena
 - Wild Boar
11. Major fauna include:
 - Blackbuck

STATIC INFORMATION

National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)

1. Statutory body constituted under the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.
2. Chaired by the **Prime Minister of India**.
3. Advises the Central Government on wildlife conservation and protected area management.
4. The **Standing Committee of NBWL** appraises proposals involving diversion of wildlife habitats and protected areas.

Source: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)

Wildlife Sanctuary

1. Declared under the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.
2. Provides legal protection to wildlife and their habitats.
3. Certain regulated human activities may be permitted, unlike National Parks, subject to legal provisions.

Source: Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972; MoEFCC

Prelims Practice Question

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Bagdara Wildlife Sanctuary:

1. It is located in the **Sidhi and Singrauli districts of Madhya Pradesh.**
2. The **Son River** forms its southern boundary.
3. It was established primarily for the conservation of the **Asiatic Lion.**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. **1 and 2 only**
B. 2 and 3 only
C. 1 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

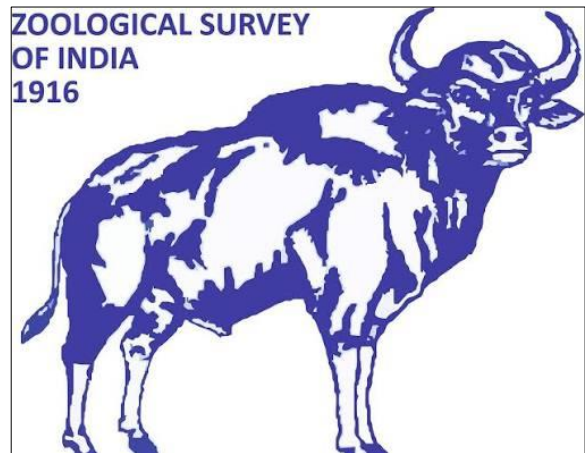
The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) released the first comprehensive catalogue of Indian Lepidoptera,

NEWS

The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) released the **first comprehensive catalogue of Indian Lepidoptera**, documenting **13,703 butterfly and moth species**, strengthening biodiversity research and conservation efforts.

KEY FACTS

1. **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** released the "**Catalogue of Lepidoptera (Butterflies and Moths) of India.**"
2. India is home to **13,703 species** of Lepidoptera.
3. India accounts for **8.25% of the world's Lepidoptera diversity.**
4. Of the total species:
 - **1,417 are butterflies**
 - **12,286 are moths**
5. The catalogue compiles **over 100 years** of taxonomic research.
6. Provides the **first fully updated, centralized inventory** of Indian butterflies and moths.
7. Lepidoptera play vital ecological roles as:
 - Pollinators
 - Herbivores
 - Detritivores
 - Food source for birds, bats, and other wildlife
8. Scientists identified and catalogued **2,205 species** of Geometridae (inchworm moths), representing **8.8% of the world's known species** in this superfamily.



STATIC INFORMATION

Lepidoptera

1. Lepidoptera is an order of insects comprising **butterflies and moths.**
2. Characterized by **scale-covered wings** and complete metamorphosis (egg-larva-pupa-adult).
3. Among the **largest insect orders**, with over **1,60,000 described species** worldwide.

4. Important for **pollination, biodiversity monitoring, and ecosystem functioning.**

Source: Zoological Survey of India (ZSI); Encyclopaedia Britannica

Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)

1. Established in **1916**.
2. Headquarters: **Kolkata**.
3. Functions under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
4. Nodal organization for **faunal exploration, taxonomy, and biodiversity research** in India.

Source: Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)



Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Lepidoptera:

1. **Lepidoptera** is the insect order that includes both **butterflies and moths**.
2. The **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** functions under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.
3. India hosts **more than 25%** of the world's Lepidoptera species.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

Pingali Venkayya on his 150th birth anniversary

NEWS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tributes to **Pingali Venkayya** on his **150th birth anniversary**, remembering his pivotal contribution to designing the Indian National Flag and inspiring national unity.

KEY FACTS

1. Prime Minister paid tributes to **Pingali Venkayya** on his **150th birth anniversary**.
2. Pingali Venkayya is remembered for his contribution to the **design of the Indian National Flag (Tiranga)**.
3. PM highlighted that the **Tricolour** symbolizes **national pride, unity, and patriotism**.
4. Tribute emphasized Venkayya's enduring legacy in **nation-building**.
5. The Prime Minister stated that the Tiranga continues to inspire citizens to serve the nation with dedication.

STATIC INFORMATION

Pingali Venkayya



1. Born on **2 August 1876** at **Bhatlapenumarru, Andhra Pradesh**.
2. Freedom fighter, educationist, and designer of the **Indian National Flag**.
3. Presented an early design of the national flag to **Mahatma Gandhi** during the **1921 All India Congress Committee session at Vijayawada**.
4. The **Constituent Assembly adopted the present National Flag on 22 July 1947**.
5. The **Flag Code of India, 2002** governs the display and use of the National Flag.

Source: Ministry of Culture; Flag Code of India, 2002

Prelims Practice Question

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Pingali Venkayya and the National Flag of India:

1. **Pingali Venkayya** is widely credited with designing the Indian National Flag.
2. The **Constituent Assembly adopted the present National Flag on 22 July 1947**.
3. The **Flag Code of India was first issued in 1950**.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. **1 and 2 only**
- B. **2 and 3 only**
- C. **1 only**
- D. **1, 2 and 3**

Correct Answer: A

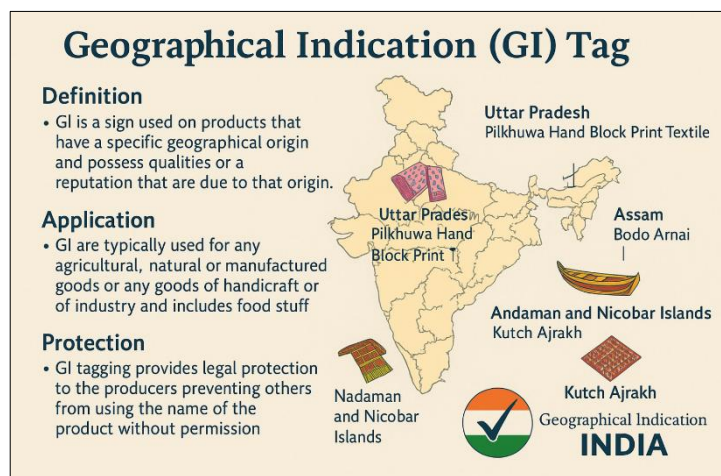
The GI & Beyond 2.0 Summit

NEWS

The **GI & Beyond 2.0 Summit** will be held in **New Delhi on 5 August 2026** to promote India's GI-tagged handloom and handicraft products and expand their global market presence.

KEY FACTS

1. **GI & Beyond 2.0 Summit** to be held on **5 August 2026**.
2. Venue: **Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi**.
3. Organized by the **Office of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Ministry of Textiles**, in collaboration with the **Handloom Export Promotion Council (HEPC)**.
4. Objective:
 - Promote **GI-tagged handloom and handicraft products**.
 - Strengthen domestic and international market access.
 - Enhance collaboration in the GI ecosystem.
5. Summit to showcase **100+ GI-registered handloom and handicraft products**.
6. Participation from:
 - Buyers from **10 countries**
 - Exporters



- MNCs
 - E-commerce platforms
 - Government officials
 - Industry experts
 - Academicians
7. **GI Certificates** will be awarded to newly authorized users.
 8. Launch of the **Digital Handloom Atlas – "A Platform, Anant Bazaar"**.
 9. **Diamond Jubilee logo of HEPC** to be unveiled.
 10. Technical sessions on:
 - GI registration
 - Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI)
 - Export promotion strategies

STATIC INFORMATION

Geographical Indication (GI)

1. A **Geographical Indication (GI)** identifies goods originating from a specific region possessing unique quality, reputation, or characteristics.
2. Protected under the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
3. GI registration is administered by the **GI Registry, Chennai** under the **Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks (CGPDTM)**.
4. Registration is **valid for 10 years** and is renewable.

Source: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)

Handloom Export Promotion Council (HEPC)

1. Established in **1965**.
2. Functions under the **Ministry of Textiles**.
3. Promotes exports of Indian handloom products and supports market development abroad.

Source: Ministry of Textiles; Handloom Export Promotion Council (HEPC)

Prelims Practice Question (Statement-wise)

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding Geographical Indications (GI) in India:

1. GI registration in India is governed by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
2. The **GI Registry** is located in **Chennai**.
3. A registered GI remains valid **permanently** and does not require renewal.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

The Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes (VCF-SC)

NEWS

The **Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes (VCF-SC)** continues to support Scheduled Caste entrepreneurs by providing concessional finance for technology-driven enterprises, fostering entrepreneurship, employment generation, and economic empowerment.

KEY FACTS

1. **Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes (VCF-SC)** was launched in **2014-15**.
2. Implemented by the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**.
3. Objective is to provide **concessional finance** to SC entrepreneurs.
4. Priority is given to:
 - Women entrepreneurs
 - Differently-abled SC entrepreneurs
5. Initial corpus of the fund: **₹200 crore**.
6. Registered as an **Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)** under **SEBI (AIF) Regulations, 2012**.
7. **SIDBI** is the Anchor Investor.
8. **IFCI Ltd.** is the Sponsor Investor.
9. Loan assistance ranges from **₹10 lakh to ₹15 crore**.
10. Funding pattern:
 - Up to **₹5 crore**: Fund supports up to **75%** of project cost.
 - Above **₹5 crore**: Fund supports up to **50%** of project cost.
11. Aims to:
 - Promote technology-based enterprises
 - Enhance financial inclusion
 - Generate employment
 - Develop SC entrepreneurship

STATIC INFORMATION

Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes (VCF-SC)

1. Central Sector Scheme launched in **2014-15**.
2. Supports **Scheduled Caste entrepreneurs** in establishing viable business ventures.
3. Focuses on **manufacturing and service sectors**, especially technology-driven enterprises.
4. Operates under the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**.
5. Implemented through **IFCI Venture Capital Funds Ltd. (IVCF)**.

Source: Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment; IFCI Venture Capital Funds Ltd.

Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)

1. Investment funds regulated under the **SEBI (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012**.
2. Classified into **Category I, II, and III** based on investment objectives and risk profile.

Source: Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

Prelims Practice Question

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Castes (VCF-SC):

1. The scheme was launched in **2014-15** by the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**.
2. The fund is registered as an **Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)** under the **SEBI (AIF) Regulations, 2012**.
3. The scheme is implemented by the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)**.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

AIM-260 Joint Advanced Tactical Missile

Australia is set to become the **first international buyer** of the **AIM-260 Joint Advanced Tactical Missile (JATM)**, developed by the **U.S. Air Force (USAF)** as a next-generation and highly classified long-range air-to-air missile.

About AIM-260 Joint Advanced Tactical Missile

1. It is a **next-generation Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM)**.
2. It is being developed by the **U.S. defence company Lockheed Martin**.
3. The missile was developed under a **top-secret Special Access Program**, and therefore detailed information about its capabilities has not been made public.
4. It is designed for **long-range interception**, particularly against high-value airborne assets and advanced fighter aircraft.

AIM-260 Joint Advanced Tactical Missile

1. The missile is estimated to be approximately **4 metres long**.
2. JATM is likely to use **dual-pulse or advanced solid-rocket propulsion**.
3. It is expected to feature:
 - **Inertial mid-course guidance**
 - **Two-way datalink**
 - **Dual-mode terminal seeker**
 - **Engagement range of at least 200 km (125 miles)**
4. It is expected to achieve **high supersonic speeds**, likely exceeding **Mach 4**, enabling rapid engagement of distant and manoeuvring targets.

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the AIM-260 Joint Advanced Tactical Missile (JATM):

1. It is a next-generation Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile.
2. It is being developed by Lockheed Martin for the United States.
3. Australia is expected to become its first international buyer.
4. It is primarily designed as a long-range surface-to-air missile for air-defence systems.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 Correct:** AIM-260 JATM is a **next-generation Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM)**.
2. **Statement 2 Correct:** It is being developed by **Lockheed Martin** for the United States.
3. **Statement 3 Correct:** **Australia** is expected to become the first international buyer of the missile.
4. **Statement 4 Incorrect:** AIM-260 is an **air-to-air missile**, not a surface-to-air missile. It is intended for long-range engagement of airborne targets.

Astrobase Space Technologies

Astrobase Space Technologies unveiled **Everest**, India's first privately developed **800 kN Full-Flow Staged Combustion (FFSC)** rocket engine, advancing reusable launch vehicle technology and indigenous private space capabilities.

KEY FACTS

1. **Everest** is an **800 kN Full-Flow Staged Combustion (FFSC)** rocket engine.
2. Developed by **Astrobase Space Technologies**, a Bengaluru-based space-tech startup.
3. It is **India's first privately developed high-thrust FFSC rocket engine**.
4. Designed for **reusable medium-lift launch vehicles**.
5. Aims to support:
 - Precision control
 - Faster turnaround
 - Lower launch costs
6. Uses **Liquid Oxygen (LOX)** and **Liquid Methane (LCH₄)** (Methalox propellant).
7. Produces about **800 kN of thrust in vacuum**.
8. FFSC technology:
 - Uses separate fuel-rich and oxygen-rich pre-burners.
 - Enables higher combustion pressure and efficiency.
 - Reduces stress on engine components.
9. **SpaceX** is currently the only company to have successfully flown an FFSC engine in an orbital rocket.

STATIC INFORMATION

Full-Flow Staged Combustion (FFSC) Engine

1. An advanced rocket engine cycle where **both fuel and oxidizer pass through separate pre-burners** before entering the main combustion chamber.
2. Offers **higher efficiency, greater thrust, and improved engine reliability**.
3. Well-suited for **reusable launch vehicles** due to lower thermal and mechanical stress.
4. Uses high chamber pressure to maximize propellant efficiency.

Source: NASA; European Space Agency (ESA)

IN-SPACE

1. **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe)** was established in **2020**.
2. Functions as an autonomous agency under the **Department of Space**.
3. Promotes and authorizes **private sector participation** in India's space activities.

Source: IN-SPACe; Department of Space

Prelims Practice Question

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Everest Rocket Engine:

1. **Everest** is India's first privately developed **Full-Flow Staged Combustion (FFSC)** rocket engine.
2. It uses **Liquid Oxygen (LOX)** and **Liquid Methane (LCH₄)** as propellants.
3. The engine has been developed by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (World Tribal Day) 2026

Ahead of the **International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (World Tribal Day) 2026**, a cultural festival celebrating indigenous heritage was organized at **Vellalar College for Women, Erode, Tamil Nadu**.

KEY FACTS

1. **World Tribal Day** is officially known as the **International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples**.
2. Observed annually on **9 August**.
3. Aim:
 - Raise awareness about indigenous peoples' rights.
 - Protect indigenous cultures and traditions.
4. Declared by the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** in **December 1994**.
5. The date commemorates the **first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations** held in **Geneva in 1982**.
6. **Theme for 2026:** *"Honouring Indigenous Midwives: Safeguarding Life and Well-being."*
7. Indigenous peoples:
 - Constitute **less than 6%** of the world's population.
 - Represent **at least 15%** of the world's extremely poor.
 - Steward **28% of the Earth's land surface**, including **11% of the world's forests**.
 - Their territories contain much of the world's remaining biodiversity.
 - Produce **50–80%** of their own food and resources through traditional systems.

Tribal Population in India ↓

India has the 2nd largest tribal population in the world after Africa

Major Tribes: Bhils (largest), Gonds, Munda, Santhals, Toto, Warli, Andamanese (smallest)

Famous Dances: Santhali (Santhal), Dhimsa (Porja), Bhagoriya (Bhils), Elelakkaradi (Irular)

Constitutional Provisions:

- **5th Schedule:** Tribes' Advisory Council in States having Scheduled areas
- **6th Schedule:** Administration of tribal areas (Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram)

ARTICLES	PROVISION FOR TRIBALS
Article 342 (1)	President's power to specify tribes as ST
Article 15(4)	Special provisions for OBCs (including STs)
Article 29	Protection of the Interests of Minorities (including STs)
Article 330	Reservation for STs in the Lok Sabha
Article 332	Reservation for STs in State Legislature
Article 243	Reservation in Panchayats
Article 275	Allocation of special funds for states for the welfare of STs with a better administration

STATIC INFORMATION

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

1. Observed annually on **9 August**.
2. Proclaimed by the **United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 49/214)** in **1994**.
3. Commemorates the first meeting of the **UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations** held in **1982**.
4. Promotes the protection of the **human rights, culture, languages, traditions, and livelihoods** of indigenous peoples.

Source: United Nations (UN)

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) – India

1. India has **75 PVTGs** across **18 States and 1 Union Territory**.
2. Identified based on:
 - Pre-agricultural technology
 - Low literacy
 - Stagnant or declining population
 - Subsistence economy
3. Welfare programmes are implemented by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**, including **PM JANMAN**.

Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Prelims Practice Question

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples:

1. It is observed every year on **9 August**.
2. The observance was proclaimed by the **United Nations General Assembly** in **1994**.
3. The day commemorates the adoption of the **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)** in **2007**.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

National Gopal Ratna Awards

Recently, the **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying**, under the **Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying**, invited nominations for the **National Gopal Ratna Awards 2026**.

About National Gopal Ratna Award

1. **National Gopal Ratna Awards (NGRA)** are among the country's **highest honours in the livestock and dairy sector**.
2. The award was established under the **Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM)** in **2021**.
3. The **Rashtriya Gokul Mission** was launched in **December 2014** to conserve and scientifically develop **indigenous bovine breeds**.
4. The award is constituted by the **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying**, under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
5. **Objective:** It aims to promote excellence among:
 - Milk-producing farmers
 - Dairy cooperatives
 - Milk Producer Companies (MPCs)
 - Dairy Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)
 - Artificial Insemination Technicians (AITs)

Award Categories

The National Gopal Ratna Awards are presented in the following categories:



1. **Best Dairy Farmer** rearing indigenous cattle/buffalo breeds listed in the registered breeds list.
2. **Best Dairy Cooperative Society (DCS) / Milk Producer Company (MPC) / Dairy Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO).**
3. **Best Artificial Insemination Technician (AIT).**

Special Award for NER and Himalayan States

1. A **Special Award for the North Eastern Region (NER) and Himalayan States** is also provided.
2. It aims to encourage and promote **dairy development activities** in these States/UTs.

Cash Prize

1. **₹5 lakh** for the **1st rank**
2. **₹3 lakh** for the **2nd rank**
3. **₹2 lakh** for the **3rd rank**
4. **₹2 lakh** for the **Special Award for NER and Himalayan Region**

The winners in the first two categories also receive a **Certificate of Merit and a memento.**

1. In the **Best Artificial Insemination Technician (AIT)** category, the award consists of a **Certificate of Merit and a memento.**

Source: PIB

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the National Gopal Ratna Awards:

1. The awards were established under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission in 2021.
2. The Rashtriya Gokul Mission was launched in December 2014 for the conservation and development of indigenous bovine breeds.
3. The awards are administered by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
4. The award is restricted only to milk-producing farmers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 Correct:** The National Gopal Ratna Awards were established under the **Rashtriya Gokul Mission in 2021.**
2. **Statement 2 Correct:** The **Rashtriya Gokul Mission** was launched in **December 2014** to conserve and scientifically develop indigenous bovine breeds.
3. **Statement 3 Correct:** The awards are constituted by the **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying**, under the **Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.**
4. **Statement 4 Incorrect:** The awards are not restricted to farmers. Categories also include **dairy cooperatives/MPCs/FPOs and Artificial Insemination Technicians.**

Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary

Recently, the **Andhra Pradesh High Court** agreed to advance the hearing of a **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** concerning the **Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary**, the **Mudasarlova drinking water reservoir**, and the surrounding natural water streams in **Visakhapatnam**.

About Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary

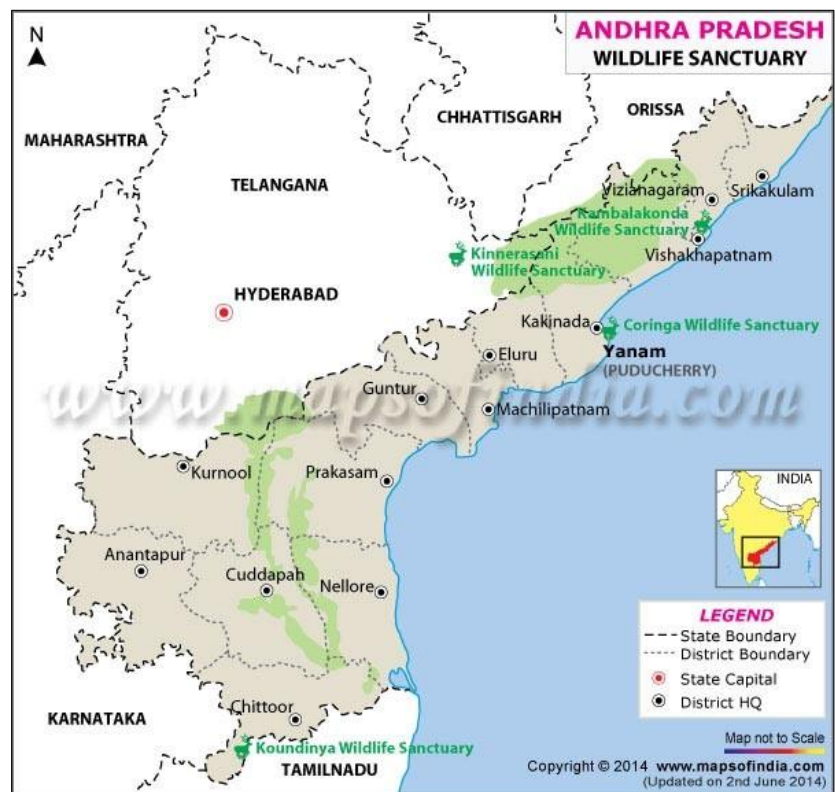
1. It is located near **Visakhapatnam city in Andhra Pradesh**.
2. Spread across the **rolling Eastern Ghats**, it covers an area of more than **70 sq. km**.
3. The sanctuary derives its name from the local hillock **Kambalakonda**.
4. **Topography:** The region has a **hilly terrain with steep slopes**.

Vegetation

1. The sanctuary is characterised by **dry evergreen forests**, a highly threatened and unique forest type found only in **Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh** in India.

Flora

1. Several plant species found in the sanctuary are representative of the **Eastern Ghats**.
2. Important species include:
 - *Abrus precatorius*
 - *Grewia tiliaefolia*
 - *Catanegum spinosum*
 - *Tetona grandis*
 - *Onithera*
3. One of the notable flowers found in the region is the **Indian screw tree**.
4. Other flowers and fruits, including **Bush plum** flowers and **Jungle berry** bunches, are also found across the landscape.



Fauna

1. The **Indian leopard** is regarded as an **indicator species** of the sanctuary.
2. Other fauna include:
 - Indian Jackal
 - Chital
 - Indian Pangolin
 - Indian Muntjac
 - Indian Leopard
 - Partridges
 - Quails

- Treepie
- Asian Paradise-flycatcher
- Chameleon
- Indian Cobra

Source: TH

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary:

1. It is located in Andhra Pradesh near Visakhapatnam.
2. It is situated in the Eastern Ghats.
3. Dry evergreen forests are an important vegetation type found in the sanctuary.
4. The Indian leopard is regarded as an indicator species of the sanctuary.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (c) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 Correct:** Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary is located near **Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh**.
2. **Statement 2 Correct:** It is spread across the **Eastern Ghats**.
3. **Statement 3 Correct:** The sanctuary contains **dry evergreen forests**, a threatened forest type.
4. **Statement 4 Correct:** The **Indian leopard** is regarded as an indicator species of the sanctuary.

UPI Lite Debate

What is the Issue?

The debate around **UPI Lite** has intensified following recent changes in the payment system, particularly regarding the applicability of **RuPay credit cards** and merchant payment transactions.

About Merchant Discount Rate (MDR)

1. **Merchant Discount Rate (MDR)** is the fee charged to merchants by banks and payment service providers for processing digital payments.
2. It generally covers:
 - Interchange fee paid to the card-issuing bank
 - Processing charges
 - Network/technology-related costs
3. For UPI transactions, the government has largely maintained a **zero-MDR framework**.

Why is UPI Lite Important?

1. Designed mainly for **small-value transactions**.
2. Enables faster payments with reduced dependence on bank-server connectivity.
3. Suitable for frequent, low-value retail payments.
4. Helps expand digital payments among users with limited connectivity.



Government's Approach

1. The government continues to support **low-cost digital payments**.
2. UPI transactions generally remain free for consumers.
3. Small merchants are also protected from additional transaction costs under the existing framework.
4. The government provides incentives to promote low-value digital payments.

Why the Debate?

1. Expansion of UPI-based payments has raised concerns regarding the **financial sustainability of payment service providers**.
2. Questions have emerged regarding:
 - Who bears the cost of digital transactions?
 - Sustainability of the zero-MDR model
 - Merchant payment charges
 - Interoperability between UPI and card-based payment systems
3. The government is examining ways to maintain **affordable digital payments while ensuring sustainability of the payment ecosystem**.

UPI Lite – Key Features

1. Intended for **small-value offline/low-connectivity transactions**.
2. Reduces the need for real-time bank-account authentication for every small payment.
3. Facilitates quicker transactions.
4. Particularly useful for everyday, low-value purchases.

UPI Lite vs Regular UPI

Feature	UPI Lite	Regular UPI
Primary purpose	Small-value payments	General digital payments
Transaction experience	Simplified	Full authentication flow
Connectivity dependence	Lower	Relatively higher
Suitable for	Everyday small payments	Small as well as large payments
Ecosystem	NPCI-enabled	NPCI-enabled

Significance

1. Promotes **financial inclusion**.
2. Encourages adoption of digital payments.
3. Supports India's **cashless economy**.
4. Helps bring low-value transactions into the formal digital payment ecosystem.

Prelims Practice Question

Q6. With reference to UPI Lite, consider the following statements:

1. UPI Lite is designed primarily to facilitate small-value digital transactions.
2. It aims to provide a simplified payment experience with reduced dependence on real-time bank-server connectivity.
3. UPI Lite is a separate payment system developed independently of the UPI ecosystem.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A. 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 – Correct:** UPI Lite is primarily intended for small-value transactions.
2. **Statement 2 – Correct:** It provides a simplified payment mechanism and can reduce dependence on real-time connectivity.
3. **Statement 3 – Incorrect:** UPI Lite operates within the broader **UPI ecosystem** rather than being an independent payment system.

RDI Fund Faces Conflict-of-Interest Concerns in Selection of Private Companies

SOURCE: Indian Express

WHAT IN NEWS

The ₹1 lakh crore RDI Fund faces conflict-of-interest concerns after selected companies were found linked to members of the investment committee overseeing funding decisions.

MAJOR KEY FACTS

1. **₹1 lakh crore RDI Scheme:** The Union Cabinet approved the Research, Development and Innovation Scheme on **1 July 2025**; it was launched on **3 November 2025**.
2. **First cohort:** The Technology Development Board (TDB) has approved **22 projects**, involving **₹2,192 crore of RDI support**, according to the latest government data.
3. **Conflict-of-interest concern:** An investigation reported investment links between **15 of the 22 selected companies and seven Investment Committee members**. The concerned members have stated that applicable conflict-of-interest safeguards and recusal procedures were followed.
4. **Two Second-Level Fund Managers:** TDB and BIRAC have been designated as Second-Level Fund Managers (SLFMs) under the scheme.



STATIC CONCEPT

1. Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme

1. Approved by Union Cabinet: **1 July 2025**
2. Corpus: **₹1 lakh crore**
3. Duration: **6 years**
4. Nodal Ministry: **Department of Science & Technology (DST)**
5. Objective: Increase **private-sector participation in R&D** and support high-risk, high-impact innovation.

2. Institutional Structure

RDI Fund → Special Purpose Fund (SPF) under ANRF → Second-Level Fund Managers → Eligible Technology Entities

1. **ANRF:** First-level custodian through the Special Purpose Fund.
2. **SLFMs:** Channel funds to eligible entities.
3. Initially designated SLFMs:
 - **Technology Development Board (TDB)**
 - **Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).**

3. Funding Mechanism

The scheme is **not limited to conventional grants**.

It envisages:

1. Long-term, low/no-interest financing
2. Equity financing, particularly for startups
3. Contributions to Deep-Tech Funds of Funds
4. Support for projects with **transformative potential**.

6. Governance & Conflict of Interest

The controversy highlights an important governance principle:

Public funding + private-sector expertise → potential conflict of interest → disclosure + recusal + independent oversight

The government framework envisages Investment Committees with experts from **financial, business and technical domains**, operating at arm's length from government.

Way Forward:

1. Mandatory conflict-of-interest declarations
2. Recusal from conflicted decisions
3. Independent technical evaluation
4. Greater transparency in selection criteria
5. Inclusion of scientists and academicians
6. Strong audit and post-sanction monitoring

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q7. With reference to the Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. The RDI Scheme has a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore and aims to increase private-sector participation in research and development.
2. The Special Purpose Fund under the Anusandhan National Research Foundation acts as the first-level custodian of the RDI Fund.
3. Technology Development Board and BIRAC have been designated as Second-Level Fund Managers under the scheme.
4. The scheme provides financial support only in the form of grants and does not permit equity financing.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only B. 1 and 3 only
C. 2 and 4 only D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: A. 1, 2 and 3 only

Lake Mead

NEWS

Lake Mead, the largest reservoir in the United States, has fallen to its **lowest water level in nearly 90 years**, highlighting the worsening water crisis in the **Colorado River Basin**.

KEY FACTS

1. **Lake Mead** is the **largest reservoir in the United States**.
2. Located on the border of **Nevada and Arizona**.
3. Formed by the construction of the **Hoover Dam** on the **Colorado River**.
4. Created in the **mid-1930s**.
5. One of the **largest man-made lakes** in the world.
6. At full capacity:
 - Length: **180 km**
 - Maximum depth: **162 m**
 - Surface area: **640 sq. km**
7. Fed mainly by **Rocky Mountain snowmelt and runoff**.
8. Supplies drinking water to **about 25 million people**.
9. Water levels have declined significantly since **1999** due to prolonged drought and rising water demand.
10. Supports wildlife including **desert bighorn sheep, mountain lions, beavers, coyotes, and bats**.



STATIC INFORMATION

Colorado River

1. Major river of **North America**, originating in the **Rocky Mountains (Colorado, USA)**.
2. Flows approximately **2,330 km** into the **Gulf of California (Mexico)**.
3. Passes through **seven U.S. states** and **two Mexican states**.
4. Forms major reservoirs including **Lake Mead** and **Lake Powell**.
5. Carved the **Grand Canyon**, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
6. Important tributaries include **Green, Gunnison, San Juan, Gila, Virgin, Dolores, and Little Colorado Rivers**.

Source: U.S. Geological Survey (USGS); Bureau of Reclamation



Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Lake Mead and the Colorado River:

1. **Lake Mead** was formed by the construction of the **Hoover Dam** on the Colorado River.
2. The **Colorado River** originates in the **Rocky Mountains** of the United States.
3. The **Colorado River** drains into the **Gulf of Mexico**.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

Thoti Tribe

NEWS

The **Thoti Tribe**, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in Telangana, is witnessing a rapid population decline, raising concerns over the preservation of its unique cultural heritage and traditional way of life.

KEY FACTS

1. **Thoti Tribe** is concentrated in **northern Telangana**.
2. Classified as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)**.
3. Traditionally served as:
 - Village messengers
 - Ballad singers
 - Folk artists
4. Known for oral storytelling of **Mahabharata** episodes.
5. Use traditional musical instruments such as:
 - **Burra**
 - **Maddeela**
 - **Harmonium**
 - **Kingri** (three-stringed fiddle)
6. Speak **Gondi** as their mother tongue.
7. Believe in the concept of **rebirth**.
8. Worship **Persapen** as their community deity along with village deities.
9. Celebrate **Nagappa Jathara** festival.
10. Thoti women are renowned for their **traditional tattoo art**, especially among Gond women.
11. Traditionally practice **endogamy**.
12. Community faces a **rapid decline in population**.



STATIC INFORMATION

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

1. Introduced by the **Government of India in 1975** (earlier called Primitive Tribal Groups).
2. Identified based on:
 - Pre-agricultural level of technology
 - Stagnant or declining population

- Extremely low literacy
- Subsistence-level economy
- 3. India has **75 PVTGs** spread across **18 States and 1 Union Territory (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)**.
- 4. The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** implements welfare programmes for PVTGs, including the **PM JANMAN** initiative.

Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Gond Tribe

1. One of India's largest tribal communities.
2. Mainly inhabits **Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha**.
3. The **Gondi language** belongs to the **Dravidian language family**.

Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs; Census of India

Prelims Practice Question

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Thoti Tribe:

1. The **Thoti Tribe** is classified as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)**.
2. They are primarily concentrated in **northern Telangana**.
3. Their mother tongue is **Santali**.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: A

Myoglobin — Latest News

Recently, scientists have engineered **lettuce and tobacco plants to produce myoglobin**.

About Myoglobin

1. Myoglobin is a small protein that accounts for approximately **2% of total muscle protein**.
2. It is found predominantly in **striated muscle tissue**, particularly skeletal and cardiac muscles.
3. It is specifically present in the **cytoplasm of cardiac myocytes** and the **sarcoplasm of oxidative skeletal muscle fibres**.
4. It consists of a **single polypeptide chain** containing one oxygen-binding site.
5. Myoglobin belongs to the **globin superfamily**, which also includes haemoglobin, and is structurally and functionally similar to haemoglobin.
6. It is composed of **amino acids, iron and other molecules** that work together to bind and store oxygen.

Functions of Myoglobin



1. **Oxygen Transport:** It facilitates the movement of oxygen from the bloodstream to muscles, where oxygen is required for energy production and movement.
2. **Indicator of Muscle Damage:** Myoglobin can serve as a sensitive biomarker of cellular damage when detected in **urine or plasma**.
3. **Oxygen Storage:** It acts as a buffer against fluctuations in intracellular oxygen concentration and functions as an **oxygen reservoir within muscles**.
4. **Enzymatic Functions:** It contributes to the breakdown of **bioactive nitric oxide to nitrate**, while nitric oxide plays a role in enhancing mitochondrial respiration.
5. **Removal of Reactive Oxygen Species:** Myoglobin can help eliminate reactive oxygen species through interactions with **fatty acids**.

Source: HT

Exercise Pitch Black — Latest News

Recently, the **Indian Air Force (IAF)** participated in the multinational exercise **Pitch Black** in Australia. The IAF stated that the mission was successfully executed, skies were “mastered,” and several partnerships were strengthened.

About Exercise Pitch Black

1. It is a **biennial multinational air exercise** hosted by the **Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)**.
2. It is the **RAAF’s flagship international flying exercise**.
3. The name ‘**Pitch Black**’ reflects the exercise’s emphasis on **night-time flying operations over large, unpopulated areas**.

2026 Edition

1. The exercise was conducted from **RAAF Bases Darwin and Tindal in the Northern Territory**, along with **RAAF Base Amberley in Queensland**.
2. It brought together air forces from across the world, providing a major platform for **interoperability and joint training**.
3. **19 nations**, including India, participated with more than **100 aircraft and 4,400+ personnel**.
4. The exercise involved complex aerial operations such as:
 - Offensive counter-air operations
 - Air defence tracking
 - Tactical coordination between different types of aircraft
 - Air combat and communication exercises
5. The **IAF contingent comprised 145 air warriors**, including:
 - IAF Garud Commandos
 - **4 Su-30 MKI**
 - **1 C-130**
 - **1 C-17** for logistical support during induction and de-induction.
6. Training alongside advanced aircraft from countries such as the **US, UK, Australia, France and other regional partners** provided exposure to:
 - Contemporary air warfare tactics
 - Electronic warfare
 - Air defence

➤ Modern network-centric operations

7. **India's previous participation:** The IAF had earlier participated in the **2018, 2022 and 2024** editions of Exercise Pitch Black.

Source: TRIB

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding Exercise Pitch Black:

1. It is a biennial multinational air exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force.
2. India has participated in the 2018, 2022 and 2024 editions of the exercise.
3. The exercise is conducted exclusively during daytime to facilitate large-scale aerial manoeuvres.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

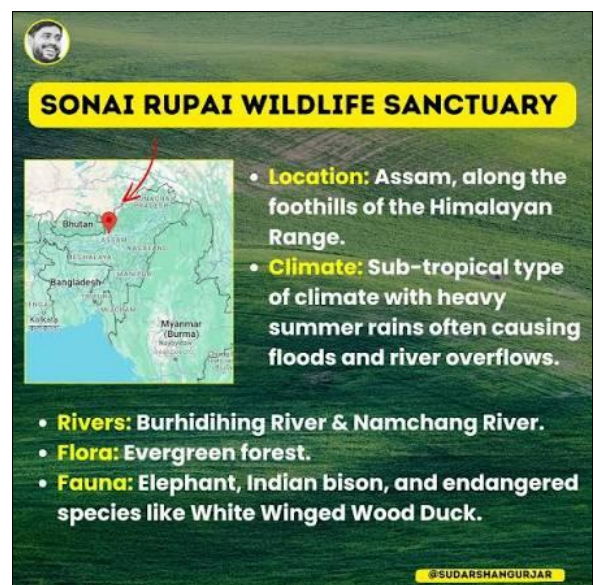
1. **Statement 1 Correct:** Exercise Pitch Black is a **biennial multinational air exercise** hosted by the **Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)**.
2. **Statement 2 Correct:** The IAF has previously participated in the **2018, 2022 and 2024 editions**.
3. **Statement 3 Incorrect:** The exercise places particular emphasis on **night-time flying**, rather than being exclusively a daytime exercise.

Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary

Recently, the **Assam Finance Minister** inaugurated the newly constructed **Kalamati Wildlife Range Office** at **Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary** in Sonitpur.

About Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary

1. It is a **protected area** located in the **northwestern part of Sonitpur district of Assam**.
2. It covers an area of about **220 sq. km**, with the core area covering approximately **175 sq. km**, extending along the **foothills of the Himalayan range**.
3. **Climate:** The sanctuary experiences a **subtropical climate**, characterised by hot and humid summers. Heavy rainfall during summer often causes **flash floods and river overflow**.
4. The **Burhidihing River** flows through the sanctuary.
5. The **Namchang River**, originating in **Arunachal Pradesh**, enters the sanctuary and joins the Burhidihing River.
6. **Flora:** The sanctuary is predominantly covered by **evergreen forests**, while grasslands are also found in the region.



Fauna

1. The major attractions of the sanctuary include the **Asian Elephant and Indian Gaur (bison)**.
2. Other animals found here include:
 - Deer
 - One-horned rhinoceros
 - Leopard
 - Tiger
 - Various species of wild cats
3. **Avifauna:** The sanctuary is home to several bird species, including the endangered **White-winged Wood Duck**.
4. Other commonly found birds include:
 - Woodpeckers
 - Hill Myna
 - Indian Roller
 - Nightjar
 - Horned Owl

Source: IT

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary:

1. It is located in Sonitpur district of Assam.
2. The sanctuary is situated along the foothills of the Himalayan range.
3. The Namchang River originates in Arunachal Pradesh and joins the Burhidihing River in the sanctuary.
4. The sanctuary is predominantly characterised by tropical thorn forests.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 Correct:** Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary is located in **Sonitpur district of Assam**.
2. **Statement 2 Correct:** It extends along the **foothills of the Himalayan range**.
3. **Statement 3 Correct:** The **Namchang River**, flowing from Arunachal Pradesh, enters the sanctuary and joins the **Burhidihing River**.
4. **Statement 4 Incorrect:** The sanctuary is primarily characterised by **evergreen forests**, with grasslands also occurring in the region.

Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)

— Latest News

The **Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)** has emerged as one of the world's largest digital public grievance redressal platforms.

About Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)

1. It is the **Government's flagship digital grievance redressal platform**.
2. It functions as a comprehensive digital ecosystem combining **technology, accountability and citizen participation** to ensure effective and accessible grievance redressal.
3. It was developed and is monitored by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions**.

Features of CPGRAMS

1. **24×7 Accessibility:** CPGRAMS is available to citizens 24×7 and provides a single portal connected to **Central Ministries, Departments, State Governments and Union Territories**.
2. **Language Inclusivity:** To make grievance redressal more accessible, CPGRAMS supports submissions in **22 Scheduled Languages**, in addition to English.
3. **One Nation–One Portal:** Integration of State grievance portals and other government platforms with CPGRAMS has created a **unified and streamlined grievance redressal ecosystem** across the country.
4. **Grievance Tracking:** Citizens can track the status of their grievance using the **unique registration ID** provided at the time of registration.
5. **Resolution within 21 Days:** Grievances received through CPGRAMS are expected to be resolved promptly, subject to a **maximum period of 21 days**.

Appealing Facility

1. CPGRAMS also provides an **appeal mechanism** for citizens who are not satisfied with the resolution provided by the Grievance Officer.
2. After closure of a grievance, if the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution, they can **provide feedback**.
3. If the rating is **"Poor"**, an option to file an appeal is enabled.
4. The petitioner can track the **status of the appeal** using the grievance registration number.

Source: PIB

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS):

1. It is the flagship digital grievance redressal platform of the Government of India.
2. It is developed and monitored by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).
3. It allows citizens to submit grievances only in English and Hindi.
4. Grievances received through CPGRAMS are required to be resolved within a maximum period of 21 days.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 Correct:** CPGRAMS is the **Government of India's** flagship digital grievance redressal platform.
2. **Statement 2 Correct:** It is developed and monitored by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)** under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
3. **Statement 3 Incorrect:** CPGRAMS supports submissions in **22 Scheduled Languages in addition to English**, making it more linguistically accessible.
4. **Statement 4 Correct:** Grievances are to be resolved promptly, subject to a **maximum period of 21 days**.

Hara Mangrove Forest

Key News:

Oil spill reported near Qeshm Island's southern coast, threatening the Hara mangrove ecosystem.

Static Information:

1. Located around Qeshm Island, near the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf.
2. Mainly composed of grey mangroves (*Avicennia marina*).
3. Recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.
4. Mangrove roots filter saline water and protect coastlines from erosion.
5. Acts as an important carbon sink.
6. Supports fish, crabs, shrimps and migratory birds.
7. Important for eco-tourism in the Persian Gulf region.



MCQ

Q1. Hara Forest is mainly made up of which species?

- A. Sal
- B. Grey mangrove (*Avicennia marina*)
- C. Teak
- D. Sundari

Answer: B. Grey mangrove (*Avicennia marina*)

Loggerhead Sea Turtle

Key News:

A 100-kg loggerhead sea turtle was rescued after being found in distress in the Arabian Sea near Mumbai.

Static Information:

1. Scientific name: *Caretta caretta*.
2. Belongs to the family Cheloniidae.

3. It is the world's second-largest extant sea turtle.
4. The leatherback sea turtle is the largest sea turtle.
5. Named for its large head and strong jaws.
6. Feeds mainly on hard-shelled marine animals such as crabs and molluscs.
7. Found in oceans worldwide, except the coldest seas.
8. IUCN Red List status: Vulnerable.
9. Average lifespan: up to 80 years or more.



MCQ

Q2. What is the IUCN status of the loggerhead sea turtle?

- A. Endangered
- B. Vulnerable
- C. Critically Endangered
- D. Least Concern

Answer: B. Vulnerable

National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

Key News

The Supreme Court expressed concern over pending cases in the NCDRC and suggested considering regional circuit benches.

Static Information:

1. Full form: National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.
2. Established in 1988.
3. Set up under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
4. It is a quasi-judicial body.
5. Functions as India's apex consumer dispute-redressal forum.
6. Provides inexpensive, speedy and summary redressal of consumer complaints.
7. Head office: New Delhi.
8. Headed by a serving or retired Supreme Court judge, or a serving or retired Chief Justice of a High Court.
9. Hears high-value consumer disputes and appeals against State Consumer Commission orders.

MCQ

Q3. The NCDRC is headquartered in:

- A. Mumbai
- B. New Delhi
- C. Chennai
- D. Kolkata

Answer: B. New Delhi

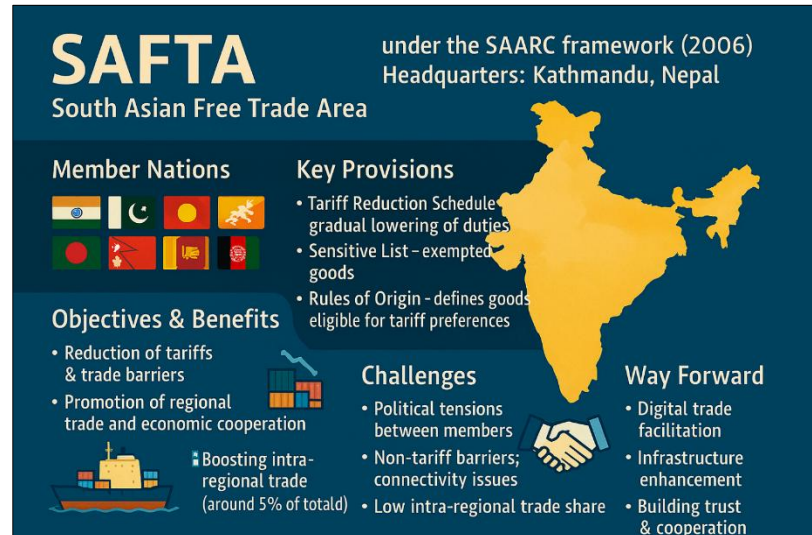
South Asian Free Trade Area

Key News

The DRI busted an alleged racket that falsely declared areca nuts as Bangladeshi goods to claim concessional customs duty under SAFTA.

Static Information:

1. Full form: South Asian Free Trade Area.
2. It is a trade agreement among SAARC member countries.
3. Came into force in 2006.
4. Replaced the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA).
5. Objective: To promote intra-regional trade and economic cooperation.
6. Seeks to reduce customs duties and other trade barriers.
7. Members: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
8. Provides special and differential treatment to Least Developed Countries.



MCQ

Q4. SAFTA came into force in:

- 1993
- 2000
- 2006
- 2015

Answer: C. 2006

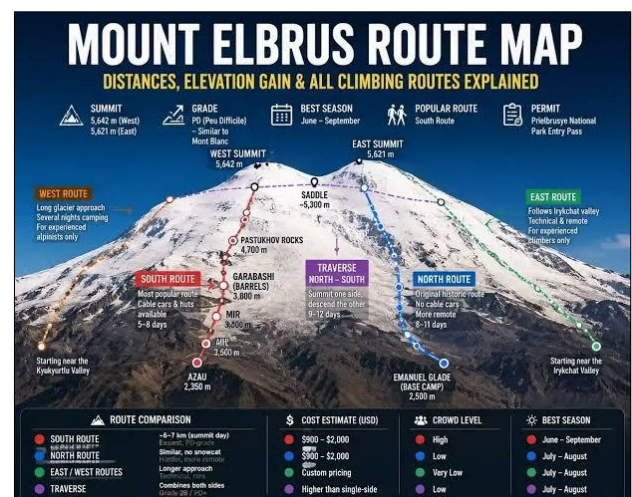
Mount Elbrus

Key News

An Andhra Pradesh police officer climbed Mount Elbrus in Russia to mark India's Independence Day.

Static Information:

1. Located in the Caucasus Mountains of southern Russia.
2. Height: 5,642 metres.
3. Highest mountain in Russia.
4. Highest peak in Europe.
5. Included in the Seven Summits, the highest mountains of each continent.



6. It is an inactive stratovolcano.
7. Has two dormant volcanic summits.
8. Its glaciers feed rivers such as the Baksan, Malka and Kuban.
9. Lies in the Caucasus region, near the conventional boundary of Europe and Asia.

MCQ

Q5. Mount Elbrus is the highest peak of:

- A. Asia
- B. Europe
- C. Africa
- D. North America

Answer: B. Europe

Supreme Court Directives on Electoral Black Money

What is the News?

The Supreme Court of India ruled that curbing the influence of black money in elections is a constitutional duty of the Election Commission of India (ECI). The Court issued key binding directives to safeguard free and fair elections:

1. **24-Hour Reporting:** Mandatory reporting of cash or asset seizures to the District Magistrate/competent court within 24 hours with prima facie justification.
2. **Investigation Timelines:** Investigating Officers must conclude election-related FIR investigations within one year and submit quarterly progress reports to the ECI.
3. **Inter-Agency Coordination:** Surveillance teams detecting undeclared cash exceeding ₹10 lakh must immediately notify the Income Tax authorities.
4. **Judicial Oversight:** High Courts must ensure speedy trials through designated courts, and criminal cases against contesting candidates cannot be withdrawn without High Court approval.

Static Concept: Constitutional & Legal Safeguards for Electoral Integrity

Article 324 (ECI) Article 326 (Suffrage) RPA, 1951 Provisions

Superintendence, direction Guarantees free choice; • Sec 123(1): Bribery as corrupt practice & control of elections money power subverts voter will • Sec 77: Candidate expenditure limits

1. **Article 324:** Vests plenary powers in the Election Commission of India for superintendence, direction, and control of all elections to Parliament and State Legislatures.
2. **Article 326 & Universal Adult Suffrage:** Establishes the right of citizens to vote. The Supreme Court has held that illicit monetary inducements distort voter autonomy and destroy the level playing field (**Article 14**).
3. **Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951:**
 - **Section 123(1):** Categorises voter bribery and financial gratification as "corrupt practices."
 - **Section 77:** Prescribes expenditure limits for individual candidates during campaigning.
4. **Landmark Judicial Precedents:**
 - *Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain (1975):* Held that free and fair elections form part of the **Basic Structure** of the Indian Constitution.
 - *ADR v. Union of India (2024):* Struck down the Electoral Bonds Scheme, establishing that political financial transparency is directly linked to the voter's Right to Information under **Article 19(1)(a)**.

Practice MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the legal and constitutional framework governing electoral finance in India:

1. Under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, both individual candidates and registered political parties are subject to statutory election expenditure caps.
2. The Supreme Court has recognized free and fair elections as an integral part of the Basic Structure of the Indian Constitution.
3. Section 123(1) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 designates bribery as an electoral corrupt practice.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect because Section 77 of the RPA, 1951 prescribes expenditure limits only for individual candidates, not an overall statutory ceiling for political parties. Statements 2 and 3 are correct (*Indira Nehru Gandhi case, 1975* and Section 123(1) RPA, 1951).

NITI Aayog Report on Regulatory Regime in Professional Services

What is the News?

NITI Aayog released a diagnostic report titled "*India's Services Sector: Insights on Regulatory Regime in Professional Services*". Key highlights include:

1. **Global Standing:** India is the world's 7th largest services exporter (4.3% global share in 2024), with its Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) in professional and management consulting rising from 0.95 (2005) to 3.0 (2024).
2. **OECD STRI Findings:** India ranks among the most restrictive regimes globally on the OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index in architectural (2nd), legal (3rd), and accounting services (4th), while engineering (38th) remains relatively liberal.
3. **Bottlenecks Identified:** Restrictions on multi-disciplinary partnerships (MDPs) and corporate firm structures under the Advocates Act, 1961 and Architects Act, 1972; overlapping regulatory jurisdictions (ICAI vs. NFRA; AYUSH vs. State bodies); and absence of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) for overseas mobility.
4. **Recommendations:** Institutionalise Continuous Professional Development (CPD), expand bilateral MRAs, permit flexible corporate entity structures, and leverage Global Capability Centres (GCCs) for high-value exports.

Cross-Border Consumption Commercial Presence of Supply Abroad Presence Natural Persons

(e.g., BPO/LPO) (e.g., Medical/Edu) (e.g., Bank Branch) (e.g., On-site CA/Lawyer)

1. **General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS):** A treaty of the World Trade Organization (WTO) entered into force in 1995 to extend the multilateral trading system to the services sector across four modes:



- **Mode 1 (Cross-Border Supply):** Service delivered from one country to another (e.g., IT services, consulting).
- **Mode 2 (Consumption Abroad):** Consumer moves to another territory to consume the service (e.g., medical tourism, overseas education).
- **Mode 3 (Commercial Presence):** A service supplier establishes a business presence abroad (e.g., foreign bank branch or hospital).
- **Mode 4 (Presence of Natural Persons):** An individual travels to another country temporarily on a professional assignment (e.g., doctors, IT professionals).

2. **Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA):** An index introduced by Béla Balassa to assess a country's export competitiveness relative to global trade.

$$RCA = \frac{\text{Country's Exports of Sector } i / \text{Country's Total Exports}}{\text{World Exports of Sector } i / \text{World Total Exports}}$$

- $RCA > 1$: Indicates a strong international comparative advantage in that sector.

Practice MCQ

Q2. With reference to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the World Trade Organization, match the following modes of supply with their correct examples:

Mode of Supply	Description / Example
1. Mode 1	A software consultant traveling to London on a client project
2. Mode 2	An international student enrolled in an Indian university
3. Mode 3	An Indian law firm providing remote legal research via email to a US client
4. Mode 4	An Indian bank establishing an operational branch in Singapore

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

Answer: (a) 2 only

Explanation:

- 1. Mode 1 is Cross-Border Supply (remote delivery via email).
- 2. Mode 2 is Consumption Abroad (foreign student traveling to study = correctly matched).
- 3. Mode 3 is Commercial Presence (setting up a physical overseas branch).
- 4. Mode 4 is Presence of Natural Persons (individual professional traveling abroad for work).

Building a Business-Ready India: Governance & Financing Reforms

What is the News?

On India's 80th Independence Day, the Government presented key progress under ease of doing business, digital compliance, and MSME access to formal credit:

1. Digital & Compliance Platforms:

- **NSWS (National Single Window System):** Integrates 686+ Central and 7,498+ State approvals across 32 Central Ministries and 34 States.

- **SPICE+ & MCA21 V3:** AI-driven company incorporation combining 10 crucial procedures into a single application.
- **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026:** Decriminalised 717 minor/technical offences across 79 Central Acts to shift toward trust-based governance.

2. Credit & Working Capital Ecosystem:

- **PMMY (Mudra):** Offers collateral-free enterprise loans up to ₹20 lakh.
- **CGTMSE:** Credit guarantee coverage for micro and small enterprises expanded up to ₹10 crore.
- **TReDS (Trade Receivables Discounting System):** Factoring platform throughput expanded to ₹3.47 lakh crore in FY26 to address delayed MSME payments.

Static Concept: MSME Financing Mechanisms & Factoring (TReDS)

TReDS Transaction Flow

1. Goods/Services Supplied

- **MSME Supplier** → Supplies goods/services to the **Corporate/Buyer**

2. Invoice Uploaded

- **Corporate/Buyer** → Invoice is uploaded on the **TReDS platform**

3. Invoice Discounting

- **Financier/Bank** → Discounts the invoice submitted through TReDS

4. Instant Payment

- **Financier/Bank** → Makes immediate payment to the **MSME Supplier** after discounting

5. Due-Date Settlement

- **Corporate/Buyer** → Settles the invoice amount with the **Financier/Bank** on the due date

1. Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS):

- An institutional mechanism set up under the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007** by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- Facilitates the discounting of trade receivables/invoices of MSMEs from corporate buyers, Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), and government departments through multiple financiers.
- **Benefit:** Converts trade credit into immediate liquid working capital for MSMEs without recourse, resolving delayed-payment bottlenecks.

2. Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE):

- Set up jointly by the Ministry of MSME and the **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)**.
- Provides credit guarantee cover to member lending institutions (MLIs) for collateral-free term loans and working capital facilities extended to MSEs.

Practice MCQ

Q3. Regarding the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) operating in India, consider the following statements:

1. TReDS is an electronic factoring platform regulated by the Reserve Bank of India.
2. It allows MSMEs to auction their unpaid trade invoices to multiple financiers to obtain quick liquidity.
3. Only individual retail consumers are eligible to act as buyers on the TReDS platform.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Statement 3 is incorrect because buyers on the platform comprise corporate entities, Government Departments, and Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), not retail consumers.

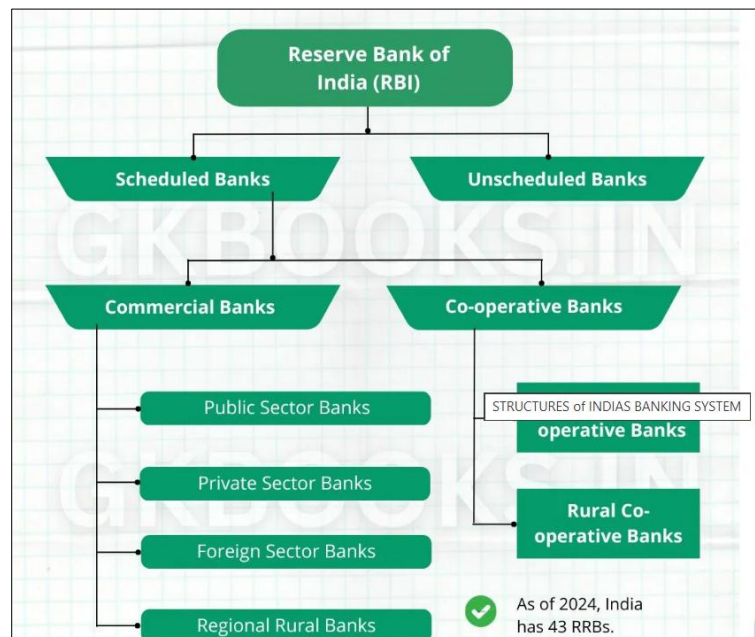
Rural Regional Banks (RRBs)

What's in the News?

The Ministry of Finance highlighted that Regional Rural Banks recorded substantial growth in rural credit disbursement during the 2025–26 financial year.

Key Facts:

- Ownership Structure:** Equity is shared in a fixed ratio of **50% (Central Government) : 15% (State Government) : 35% (Sponsor Bank)**.
- Lending Mandates:** RRBs must allocate **75%** of their Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) to Priority Sector Lending (PSL), compared to 40% for Scheduled Commercial Banks.
- Supervision:** Supervised by NABARD and regulated under RBI directives.



Static Content:

- Establishment & Genesis:** Formed following the recommendations of the **Narasimham Working Group (1975)** under the *Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976*. The first RRB, *Prathama Grameen Bank*, was launched on October 2, 1975.
- Governance:** The Board of Directors includes nominees from the Central Government, the concerned State Government, and the sponsor commercial bank.

Practice MCQ:

Q1. With reference to Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) in India, consider the following statements:

- The Central Government holds a majority equity stake of 60% in each RRB.
- The Priority Sector Lending (PSL) target for RRBs is 75% of their total outstanding advances.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b) (Equity ratio is 50:15:35 for Centre, State, and Sponsor Bank).

Thamirabarani (Porunai) River

What's in the News?

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court conferred legal personhood and the status of a deity upon the Thamirabarani River to bolster conservation efforts and prevent pollution.

Key Facts:

1. **Geography & Course:** A perennial river flowing entirely within the state of Tamil Nadu through the Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts before emptying into the **Gulf of Mannar**.
2. **Precipitation Regimes:** It is uniquely recharged by both the **Southwest Monsoon** and the **Northeast Monsoon**.
3. **Key Tributaries:** Servalar, Manimuthar, Gadanathi, Pachaiyar, and Chittar.

Static Content:

1. **Source:** Originates from the **Agastyarkoodam peak** in the Pothigai Hills of the Western Ghats.
2. **Hydrological Infrastructure:** Key dams include the Karaiyar, Manimuthar, and Gadanathi dams; notable waterfalls include Agasthiar Falls and Paanatheertham Falls.



Practice MCQ:

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Thamirabarani River:

1. It originates from the Eastern Ghats and flows across Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
2. It receives rainfall from both the Southwest and Northeast monsoons.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b) (It originates from the Western Ghats and flows entirely within Tamil Nadu).

Central African Republic (CAR)

What's in the News?

A tragic collapse at an artisanal gold mining site in the western region of the Central African Republic highlighted concerns over informal mineral extraction and safety standards.

Key Facts:

1. **Geographical Position:** A landlocked country in Central Africa, bordered by Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, and Cameroon.
2. **Capital:** Bangui.
3. **Protected Areas:** Houses the **Dzanga-Sangha National Park**, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Static Content:

1. **Drainage Systems:** The southern sector drains into the Congo Basin via the **Ubangi (Oubangui) River**, while the northern waterways drain toward the **Lake Chad Basin** via the Chari River.
2. **Topography & Resources:** Predominantly composed of savannah plateaus, with its highest point at **Mount Ngaoui** (Karre Mountains). Rich in diamonds, gold, and uranium reserves.

Practice MCQ:

Q3. Which of the following countries does NOT share a land border with the Central African Republic?

- (a) Chad
- (b) South Sudan
- (c) Gabon
- (d) Cameroon

Answer: (c) (*Gabon is separated from CAR by the Republic of the Congo and Cameroon*).

Mushk Budji Aromatic Rice

What's in the News?

Farmers in Kashmir raised concerns over falling market prices of the indigenous 'Mushk Budji' rice due to rapid crop expansion into non-traditional, unsuitable agro-climatic zones.

Key Facts:

1. **Crop Profile:** An indigenous, premium short-grain aromatic rice cultivated at high altitudes (5,000 to 7,000 feet above mean sea level) in the Kashmir Valley.
2. **Geographical Indication:** Awarded the **GI tag** in 2023.
3. **Characteristics:** Known for its light ivory colour, nutty aroma, slightly sticky texture upon cooking, and easy digestibility.

Static Content:

1. **Geographical Indication (GI) Framework:** GI status in India is governed by the *Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999*, administered under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

Practice MCQ:

Q4. With reference to 'Mushk Budji', consider the following statements:

1. It is a long-grain Basmati cultivar primarily grown in the coastal plains of peninsular India.
2. It has been granted Geographical Indication (GI) status.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b) (*It is an indigenous short-grain rice endemic to the highland valley of Kashmir*).

Helicase & Cellular Replication

What's in the News?

Researchers discovered how regulatory protein complexes (Sld3-Sld7) recognize active MCM2-7 helicase to trigger the initiation of DNA replication.

Key Facts:

1. **Enzymatic Function:** Helicases are essential motor proteins that separate double-stranded DNA into single strands to enable replication, repair, and transcription.
2. **Energy Requirement:** Driven by chemical energy derived from **Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP)** hydrolysis.
3. **Structural Formation:** Generates the **replication fork** where template strands become accessible to DNA polymerases.

Static Content:

Torsional Strain Relief: The unwinding process creates supercoiling tension upstream of the fork, which is relieved by **topoisomerase** enzymes to prevent strand breakage.

Practice MCQ:

Q5. During cellular DNA replication, what is the primary role of the enzyme 'Helicase'?

- (a) Synthesizing RNA primers on the lagging strand
- (b) Unwinding double-stranded DNA utilizing ATP energy
- (c) Joining Okazaki fragments through phosphodiester bonds
- (d) Preventing topological strain ahead of the replication fork

Answer: (b) (*Unwinds dsDNA using ATP; strain relief is performed by topoisomerase*).

National Medical Commission (NMC)

What's in the news?

The National Medical Commission has proposed establishing a Unique Identification (UID) system for medical practitioners, enabling them to practice across India without needing separate state-level licenses or registrations.

Key Facts:

1. Replaced the Medical Council of India (MCI) to serve as India's apex regulatory body for medical education and practice.
2. Consists of 33 members (Chairperson, 10 ex-officio, and 22 part-time members).
3. Governed through four autonomous boards: Under-Graduate Medical Education Board, Post-Graduate Medical Education Board, Medical Assessment and Rating Board, and Ethics and Medical Registration Board.
4. Has the authority to regulate fee guidelines for 50% of seats in private medical colleges and deemed universities.

Static Content:

1. **Status:** Statutory body constituted under the *National Medical Commission Act, 2019* (effective September 25, 2020).
2. **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
3. **Medical Advisory Council (MAC):** Serves as a consultative platform where States and Union Territories channel their views and advise the commission on maintaining standards.

Practice MCQ:

Q6. With reference to the National Medical Commission (NMC), consider the following statements:

1. It was established as a statutory body under the National Medical Commission Act, 2019.
2. It has the mandate to frame fee guidelines for all 100% seats in private medical institutions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

1. **Answer:** (a)

2. **Explanation:** Statement 1 is correct. Statement 2 is incorrect because the NMC frames guidelines for determining fees and charges for 50% of seats in private medical institutions and deemed universities, not 100%.

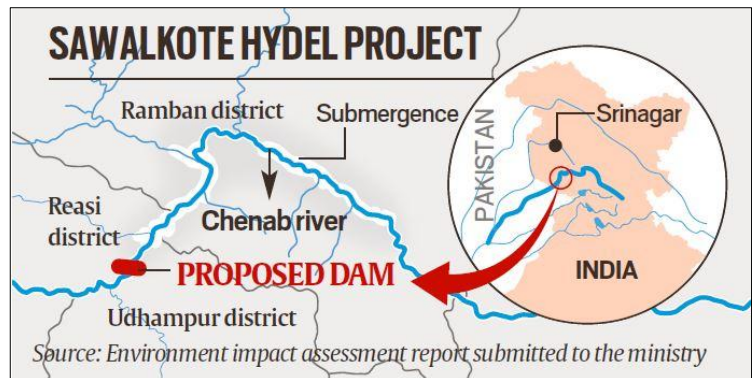
Sawalkote Hydroelectric Project

What's in the news?

Senior administrative officials from Ramban and Udhampur districts reviewed the on-ground execution progress of the 1,856 MW Sawalkote project headquartered at Tanger.

Key Facts:

1. Planned capacity of 1,856 MW, designed to generate approximately 8,000 million units of power annually.
2. Being constructed by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) across the Chenab River.
3. Positioned as a run-of-the-river facility between the upstream Baglihar project and the downstream Salal project.
4. Features a 192.5-meter concrete gravity dam, nine turbines, and an underground powerhouse.



Static Content:

1. **River System:** Chenab River (one of the western rivers allocated under the Indus Waters Treaty).
2. **Significance:** Aims to maximize India's power generation capacity within the western river basin while aiding downstream flow regulation and flood control.

Practice MCQ:

Q7. The Sawalkote Hydroelectric Project is located on which of the following rivers?

- (a) Jhelum
- (b) Chenab
- (c) Ravi
- (d) Beas

Answer: (b)

Explanation: The Sawalkote project is a run-of-the-river hydroelectric installation located on the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir.

Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary

What's in the news?

A melanistic leopard cub (black panther) was recently sighted in the vicinity of Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary in the Darjeeling hills.

Key Facts:

1. Established in 1915, making it one of India's earliest protected wildlife reserves.
2. Located in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, forming a south-eastern contiguous extension of Singalila National Park.
3. Lies across an altitude ranging from 1,500 to 2,600 metres, supporting temperate and alpine forest ecosystems.
4. Major fauna includes barking deer, Himalayan black bear, leopard cat, flying squirrel, and bird species like the tragopan.

Static Content:

Phenomenon of Melanism: Increased development of the dark pigment melanin in skin, fur, or feathers, resulting from genetic mutations or gestative temperature shifts.

Practice MCQ:

Q8. Which of the following statements regarding Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary is correct?

- (a) It is located in the Western Ghats of Kerala.
- (b) It forms a continuous ecological corridor with the Singalila National Park.
- (c) It was established post-independence under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- (d) It primarily consists of tropical mangrove vegetation.

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Darjeeling hills of West Bengal, was established in 1915, and acts as a south-east extension of Singalila National Park.

Glyphosate

What's in the news?

Environmental advocates have voiced concern regarding the illicit use of the chemical herbicide glyphosate on forest department land for pea farming in Himachal Pradesh.

Key Facts:

1. A broad-spectrum systemic herbicide used to eradicate weeds, grasses, and woody vegetation.
2. Functions by inhibiting the 5-enolpyruvylshikimate-3-phosphate (EPSP) synthase enzyme, preventing essential amino acid synthesis needed for plant growth.
3. Only impacts foliage growing above water; ineffective on submerged aquatic vegetation.
4. Tends to bind tightly to soil particles where microbes break it down, though it degrades slowly inside plant tissue.

Static Content:

Regulatory Framework: In India, glyphosate application and distribution are regulated under the *Insecticides Act, 1968*.

Practice MCQ:

Q9. Glyphosate, frequently mentioned in the news, is primarily used as a/an:

- (a) Bio-fertilizer
- (b) Chemical herbicide
- (c) Anti-retroviral drug
- (d) Food preservative

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Glyphosate is a widely used non-selective, broad-spectrum herbicide that inhibits the plant enzyme EPSP synthase.

Friends of MY Bharat Initiative

What's in the news?

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports rolled out the "Friends of MY Bharat" digital outreach program.

Key Facts:

1. Aims to engage the Indian diaspora youth, students, and professionals residing overseas in domestic nation-building and volunteering programs.
2. Offers volunteering openings across education, cultural conservation, health awareness, and disaster response.
3. Incorporates a dedicated "Know Your India" module to disseminate knowledge on Indian heritage, culture, and history.

Static Content:

Parent Platform: Built under the *Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat)* platform, which was launched in October 2023 as an autonomous digital mechanism to drive youth-led development and civic engagement.

Practice MCQ:

Q10. The 'Friends of MY Bharat' initiative has been launched by which Union Ministry?

- (a) Ministry of External Affairs
- (b) Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
- (c) Ministry of Culture
- (d) Ministry of Education

Answer: (b)

Explanation: The initiative was launched by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to connect the global Indian diaspora youth with nation-building projects via the MY Bharat platform.

Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM)

What's in News:

The central government is strengthening the tribal forest economy by scaling up value addition and market linkages under the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission.

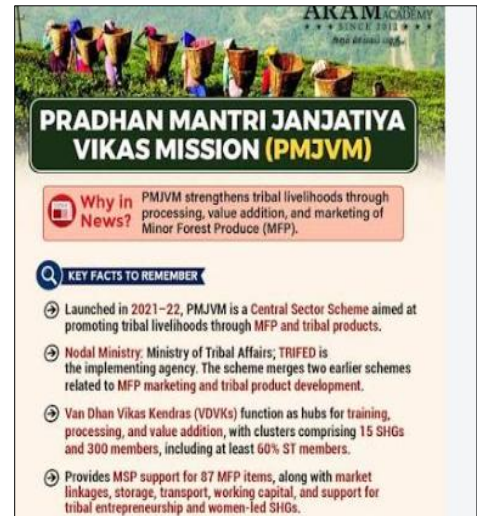
Key Facts:

1. **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

2. **Structure:** Implemented via Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs), which cluster ~15 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) comprising around 300 members.
3. **Eligibility:** At least 60% of the members in each VDVK cluster must belong to Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities.
4. **Support Provided:** Supplies cutting/sieving equipment, dryers, packaging tools, storage, and working capital via financial institutions and NSTFDC.

Static Concept :

1. **Article 244 & Fifth/Sixth Schedules:** Constitutional mechanisms ensuring tribal self-governance and economic empowerment.
2. **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:** Recognizes tribal ownership and collection rights over Minor Forest Produce (MFP).
3. **TRIFED:** Formed in 1987 under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act to facilitate tribal trade and prevent exploitation by intermediaries.



Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM), consider the following statements:

1. It is implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
2. In a Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK), at least 60% of members must belong to Scheduled Tribes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect as it is implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Statement 2 is correct.

Singhbhum Craton (Eastern India Shield)

What's in News

Researchers identified a ~3.5-billion-year-old layered rock formation within the Singhbhum Craton containing some of the earliest chemical evidence of life on Earth.

Key Facts:

1. **Location:** Eastern India (primarily across Jharkhand and Odisha), bounded by the Chhota Nagpur Plateau and the Eastern Ghats.
2. **Geology:** Represents an ancient continental crust fragment of the Gondwana supercontinent, rich in greenstone belts (sub-marine volcanic and sedimentary rocks).
3. **Global Analogs:** Geological formations share close similarities with greenstone belts in Barberton (South Africa) and the Pilbara Craton (Western Australia).

Static Concept:



1. **Cratons vs. Mobile Belts:** Cratons are stable, thick portions of the continental lithosphere that have survived cycles of merging and rifting over billions of years (Archaean/Proterozoic eons).
2. **Indian Cratonic Blocks:** Dharwar, Bastar, Singhbhum, Bundelkhand, and Aravalli cratons.

Prelims Practice Question

Q2. Consider the following pairs of Cratons and their geographic locations:

1. Singhbhum Craton — Eastern India
2. Pilbara Craton — Western Australia
3. Barberton Greenstone Belt — South Africa

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one pair
- (b) Only two pairs
- (c) All three pairs
- (d) None

Answer: (c)

Explanation: All three geological formations are correctly paired and date back to the Archaean Eon.

AIKosh Platform & IndiaAI Mission

What's in News:

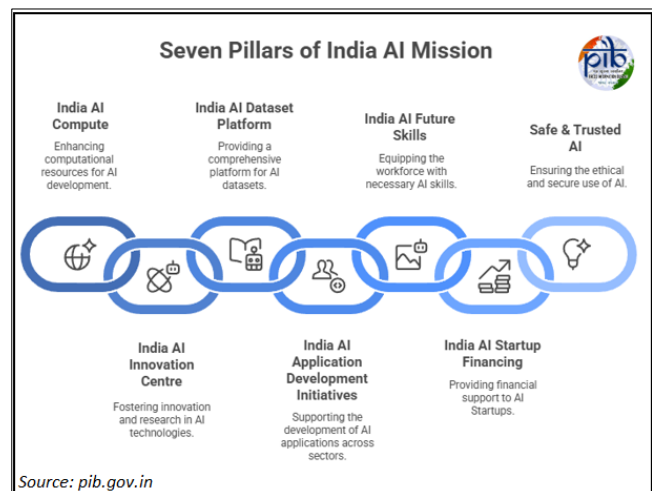
The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) organized a national stakeholder workshop to expand the AIKosh platform.

Key Facts:

1. **Purpose:** Serves as a centralized repository and sandbox for high-quality Indian datasets, pre-trained AI models, and software toolkits.
2. **Institutional Setup:** Created under the **IndiaAI Mission**, an independent division under MeitY.
3. **Pillars:** Encompasses Common Compute Infrastructure (GPU clusters), AI Datasets Platform (AIKosh), AI Innovation Centres, and Startup Financing.

Static Concept:

1. **Data as a Factor of Production:** Role of open data and digital public infrastructure (DPI) in fostering economic innovation and reducing compute entry barriers for MSMEs/startups.
2. **National Data Governance Framework Policy (NDGFP):** Rules governing access to non-personal and anonymized datasets for research.



Prelims Practice Question

Q3. Which of the following best describes the AIKosh Platform, recently seen in the news?

- (a) A unified digital currency clearing platform by the RBI
- (b) A national repository of datasets, AI models, and compute tools under the IndiaAI Mission

- (c) An ISRO portal for spatial satellite data sharing
- (d) A blockchain-based intellectual property registry

Answer: (b)

Explanation: AIKosh is the official datasets and AI sandbox platform under MeitY's IndiaAI Mission.

Parichha Dam & World Heritage Irrigation Structures (WHIS)

What's in News:

The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) recognized the colonial-era Parichha Dam as a **World Heritage Irrigation Structure (WHIS)**.

Key Facts:

1. **Location & River:** Situated on the [Betwa River](#) in Jhansi district, Uttar Pradesh (Bundelkhand region).
2. **History:** Proposed in 1855 by British engineer Captain Strachey; construction began in 1881 and became operational in 1886.
3. **Related Structures:** The nearby *Sukwa-Dukwan Weir* on the Betwa River received WHIS recognition in 2022.

Static Concept:

1. **Colonial Canal Infrastructure:** 19th-century British irrigation works (e.g., Upper Ganga Canal, Betwa Canal system) designed primarily to mitigate severe recurrent famines.
2. **ICID Criteria:** Structures must be over 100 years old, operational, and reflect historical engineering importance in agricultural water management.

Prelims Practice Question

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Parichha Dam:

1. It is constructed across the Ken River in Madhya Pradesh.
2. It has been recognized as a World Heritage Irrigation Structure by the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect because Parichha Dam is on the Betwa River in Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh. Statement 2 is correct.

RK-251: Targeted Smart Cancer Drug

What's in News:

Scientists from IASST Guwahati and IIT Guwahati developed a targeted cancer drug candidate, **RK-251**, capable of sparing healthy tissues.

Key Facts:

1. **Mechanism:** Activates selectively in environments with high **Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS)**—a hallmark of cancerous cells.
2. **Therapeutic Action:** Releases an active compound (*NBDHEX*) that inhibits survival proteins in tumor cells, demonstrating effectiveness against triple-negative breast cancer.
3. **Diagnostic Feature:** Displays targeted fluorescence upon activation, allowing visual tracking of drug delivery.

Static Concept:

1. **Targeted Drug Delivery vs. Conventional Chemotherapy:** Conventional chemotherapy damages rapidly dividing healthy cells (causing severe side effects), whereas targeted therapies exploit molecular biomarkers unique to cancer cells.

Prelims Practice Question

Q5. The compound RK-251, recently discussed in scientific developments, is primarily associated with which of the following?

- (a) Fifth-generation semiconductor fabrication
- (b) Targeted chemotherapy for cancer cells triggered by reactive oxygen species
- (c) Solid-state electrolyte for electric vehicles
- (d) Broad-spectrum agricultural bio-pesticide

Answer: (b)

Explanation: RK-251 is a smart cancer drug candidate activated selectively by high ROS levels inside cancer cells.

Divyastra Mk3 Jet-Powered Loitering Munition

What's in News:

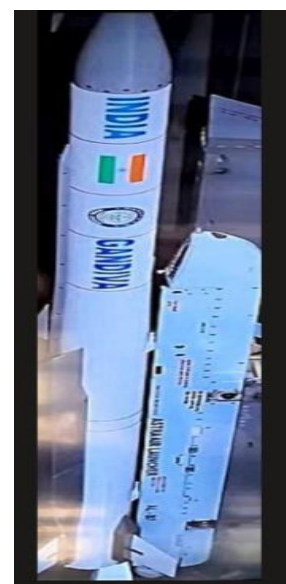
Indian defence startup Kawa UAV conducted the maiden flight test of **Divyastra Mk3**, India's first fully indigenous jet-powered loitering munition.

Key Facts:

1. **Type:** Loitering munition (suicide / kamikaze drone) with autonomous flight and AI-enabled targeting.
2. **Propulsion:** Powered by an indigenous compact micro-turbojet engine (unlike traditional piston/propeller-driven UAVs like the Shahed-136).
3. **Performance Profile:** Operational range of 300–400 km, speeds between 250–300 km/h, carrying a 15–20 kg explosive warhead.

Static Concept:

1. **Evolution of Drone Warfare:** Loitering munitions combine characteristics of cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), offering prolonged loiter time, real-time target identification, and low radar cross-section.
2. **IDEX & Make-in-India in Defence:** Initiatives fostering private defense startup integration into indigenous armed forces procurement.



Prelims Practice Question

Q6. With reference to Loitering Munitions, consider the following statements:

1. They are unmanned aerial systems that can search for targets and strike by crashing directly into them with an onboard warhead.
2. The *Divyastra Mk3* uses an internal combustion piston engine driving a propeller to maintain ultra-low speeds.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct. Statement 2 is incorrect because Divyastra Mk3 is powered by an indigenous jet propulsion engine, giving it higher operational speed compared to propeller UAVs.

Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM)

What's in News:

The central government is scaling up initiatives under the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission to strengthen the tribal and forest-based livelihood economy.

Key Facts:

1. **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs (launched in 2021–22).
2. **Implementing Architecture:** Built upon the Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) model. Each VDVK typically clusters around 15 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) comprising roughly 300 members, with a mandatory minimum of **60% Scheduled Tribe** representation.
3. **Core Goal:** Move tribal gatherers beyond selling raw produce by providing skill training, primary processing infrastructure, storage, and market linkages.

Static Concept:

1. **Minor Forest Produce (MFP):** Defined under Section 2(i) of the *Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA)*, giving forest-dwelling STs and other traditional forest dwellers the right of ownership, access to collect, use, and dispose of MFP.
2. **Constitutional Provisions:** Fifth and Sixth Schedules (Articles 244 & 275) related to the administration and welfare of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes.



Prelims Practice Question

Q7. With reference to the 'Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM)', consider the following statements:

1. It is implemented under the aegis of the Ministry of Rural Development.
2. In a Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK), at least 60% of the members must belong to Scheduled Tribe communities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Explanation: PMJVM is implemented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. The VDK model mandates at least 60% ST participation.

Christmas Island

What's in News:

SpaceX towed its Starship spacecraft to waters off Christmas Island following splashdown testing in the Indian Ocean.

Key Facts:

- Location & Sovereignty:** External territory of Australia situated in the Indian Ocean (~360 km south of Java, Indonesia).
- Geomorphology:** The island is the summit of an oceanic seamount/mountain; the highest peak is **Murray Hill** (361 m).
- Chief Settlement & Port:** Flying Fish Cove.
- Ecological Significance:** Covered by tropical rainforests (63% declared a National Park) and famous for the mass annual migration of the **Christmas Island red crab** (*Gecarcoidea natalis*).



Static Concept:

- Oceanic Islands & Guyots:** Volcanic formations rising from the ocean floor, tectonic subduction zones in the Sunda Trench region.
- Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Geopolitics:** Strategic significance of external island territories in managing maritime trade choke points (Sunda Strait and Lombok Strait).

Prelims Practice Question

Q8. Consider the following geographic features:

- It is situated in the Indian Ocean south of the Indonesian island of Java.
- It is an external territory administered by Australia.
- It is globally known for the annual mass migration of red land crabs.

Which of the following islands is described above?

- (a) Reunion Island
- (b) Christmas Island
- (c) Cocos (Keeling) Islands
- (d) Diego Garcia

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Christmas Island is an Australian territory in the eastern Indian Ocean south of Java, renowned for its red crab migration.

AIKosh Platform & Digital Infrastructure

What's in News:

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) held an industry workshop on the newly operationalized AIKosh Platform.

Key Facts:

1. **Platform Function:** Centralized national repository for datasets, AI models, shared toolkits, and an integrated development sandbox for domestic innovators and startups.
2. **Institutional Framework:** Functioning as a foundational pillar of the **IndiaAI Mission** implemented under MeitY.
3. **Strategic Objective:** Democratize high-compute access and data availability to prevent data monopolies and drive domestic AI enterprise growth.

Static Concept:

1. **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** The economic concept of non-rival, open-access public platforms (like UPI, ONDC, and IndiaAI datasets) lowering entry barriers and transaction costs for digital entrepreneurship.
2. **Factor Productivity:** Role of frontier technologies (AI, compute infrastructure) in total factor productivity (TFP) growth.

Prelims Practice Question

Q9. The 'AIKosh Platform', recently seen in the news, is primarily designed to:

- (a) Regulate international cryptocurrency transactions
- (b) Provide a unified national repository of AI-ready datasets, models, and sandboxes
- (c) Automate direct benefit transfers (DBT) to MSME bank accounts
- (d) Manage agricultural commodity derivatives on the open market

Answer: (b)

Explanation: AIKosh is India's national dataset and AI model repository created under the IndiaAI Mission.

Parichha Dam & ICID Heritage Irrigation Structures

What's in News:

The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) recognized the 19th-century Parichha Dam as a **World Heritage Irrigation Structure (WHIS)**.

Key Facts:

1. **Location:** Built on the Betwa River in Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh.
2. **Historical Timeline:** Proposed by British engineer Captain Strachey in 1855 to mitigate Bundelkhand droughts; constructed in 1881 and commissioned in 1886.
3. **ICID Criteria for WHIS:** Structures must be over 100 years old, operational or historical monuments illustrating ancient/colonial engineering excellence in agricultural water management.

Static Concept:

1. **Colonial Public Works & Famine Commissions:** Development of canal colonies and irrigation works post-1857 following recommendations of the Strachey Commission (1880) and Indian Irrigation Commission (1901–1903) to drought-proof the subcontinent.
2. **Betwa River Drainage:** Tributary of the Yamuna River originating in the Vindhya Range, integral to the Ken-Betwa River Interlinking Project.

Prelims Practice Question

Q10. With reference to the 'Parichha Dam', recently recognized as a World Heritage Irrigation Structure (WHIS), consider the following statements:

1. It is built across the Betwa River in the Bundelkhand region.
2. The World Heritage Irrigation Structure status is accorded by UNESCO.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct (Betwa River, Jhansi). Statement 2 is incorrect because the WHIS recognition is awarded by the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), not UNESCO.

Targeted Cancer Therapeutic (RK-251 Drug)

What's in News:

Researchers from IASST and IIT Guwahati developed a targeted cancer drug candidate named RK-251 as an alternative to non-specific chemotherapy.

Key Facts:

1. **Targeted Mechanism:** Exploits the high concentrations of **Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS)** unique to tumor cells.
2. **Action:** Triggers the release of the active anticancer agent **NBDHEX**, disabling survival and drug-resistance proteins in malignant cells while sparing healthy tissue.
3. **Diagnostic Property:** Emits fluorescence upon ROS-triggered activation, enabling real-time bio-imaging of therapeutic delivery.

Static Concept:

1. **Chemotherapy vs. Targeted Therapy:** Conventional chemotherapy affects rapidly dividing cells indiscriminately (causing hair loss, mucosal damage, immunosuppression). Targeted therapies specifically bind tumor-specific receptors, metabolic markers, or intracellular microenvironments.
2. **Free Radicals & Oxidative Stress:** Role of ROS in cellular signaling, DNA mutation, and carcinogenesis.

Prelims Practice Question

Q11. The drug candidate 'RK-251', recently developed by Indian researchers, is designed to function as a:

- (a) Broad-spectrum antibiotic against multi-drug resistant superbugs

- (b) Smart anticancer drug activated by high reactive oxygen species (ROS) in tumor cells
- (c) Plant-based pesticide for organic agricultural ecosystems
- (d) Monoclonal antibody for autoimmune neurological disorders

Answer: (b)

Explanation: RK-251 is a smart cancer therapeutic specifically activated in ROS-rich cancer microenvironments.

Divyastra Mk3 Loitering Munition

What's in News:

An Indian aerospace startup completed the maiden flight of Divyastra Mk3, India's first indigenously designed jet-powered loitering munition.

Key Facts:

1. **Category:** Loitering munition (also known as a *kamikaze drone* or suicide drone).
2. **Propulsion Advantage:** Powered by an indigenous miniature **jet engine** rather than conventional piston-propellers or electric motors, giving it high sprint speeds (250–300 km/h) to significantly shrink target air-defence reaction windows.
3. **Operational Range:** ~300–400 km with AI-enabled autonomous target recognition capabilities.

Static Concept:

1. **Evolution of Aerial Warfare:** Shift from traditional remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs) for reconnaissance to network-centric, autonomous loitering munitions in modern non-contact asymmetric warfare.
2. **Air Defence Systems:** Radar cross-section (RCS) management, electronic counter-measures (ECM), and Short-Range Air Defence (VSHORAD) against high-speed low-altitude drone threats.

Prelims Practice Question

Q12. With reference to 'Divyastra Mk3', recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It is an indigenous loitering munition powered by a jet engine.
2. Unlike conventional attack drones powered by internal combustion propeller engines, it utilizes a jet propulsion system for higher speed.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: ©

Explanation: Both statements are correct. Divyastra Mk3 is India's first indigenous jet-powered kamikaze drone.

Territorial Army & Terrier Cyber Quest 2026

What's in News:

The Territorial Army, in partnership with CyberPeace, launched the third edition of "Terrier Cyber Quest 2026" (TCQ 3.0), a national-level cybersecurity hackathon.



Key Facts:

The competition features three tracks: Bug Hunting (critical infrastructure vulnerability assessment), AI Kavach (threat detection via AI/ML), and Creators Challenge (countering deepfakes and disinformation).

The Territorial Army (TA) is a voluntary reserve force often referred to as the "Second Line of Defence."

TA officers maintain civilian professions while serving a few weeks annually.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Constitutional & Legal Basis: Raised under the Territorial Army Act, 1948.

Eligibility: Gainfully employed Indian citizens (men and women) aged 18–42. Regular armed forces personnel, police, and paramilitary members are not eligible.

Role: Relieves regular forces from static duties and assists civil administrations during national emergencies and disasters.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. With reference to the Territorial Army (TA) in India, consider the following statements:

1. It is open only to unemployed youth to provide short-term military employment.
2. Regular members of the state police forces and paramilitary units are eligible to join.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (A) 1 only (B) 2 only
(C) Both 1 and 2 (D) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (D)

Physical & Regional Features of Mauritius

What's in News:

India and Mauritius signed a long-term agreement for Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC) to fulfill the island nation's entire import demand for petrol, diesel, and aviation turbine fuel.

Key Facts:

1. Located off the southeast coast of Africa in the Southwest Indian Ocean.
2. Capital: Port Louis.
3. Part of the Mascarene Islands archipelago, formed by hotspot volcanism roughly 8 million years ago.
4. Major water bodies include Lake Vacoas and the Grand River South East.

Static Concept for UPSC:

1. Mascarene Plateau & Hotspot Volcanism: Formed by the Réunion hotspot.
2. Regional Geopolitics: Mauritius hosts the secretariats of both the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).

Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. Consider the following geographical features:

1. Mascarene Islands
2. Lake Vacoas
3. Grand River South East

The features mentioned above are associated with which of the following island nations?

- (A) Seychelles (B) Madagascar

(C) Mauritius (D) Maldives
Answer: (C)

Industrial Chromium & Groundwater Contamination

What's in News

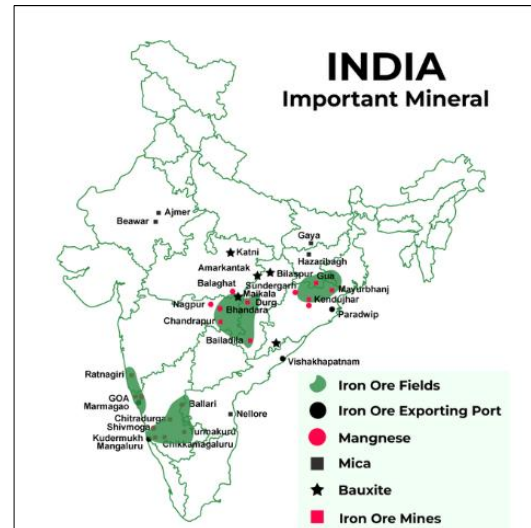
Unregulated industrial effluent disposal led to hexavalent chromium contamination in groundwater across several districts in Uttar Pradesh.

Key Facts:

1. Chromium is a lustrous, hard transition metal resistant to tarnishing and corrosion.
2. Major commercial applications include stainless steel production, chrome plating, tanning, and refractory materials.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Mineral Distribution: Chromite is the primary ore of chromium. More than 90% of India's chromite reserves are concentrated in the Sukinda Valley of Odisha.



Prelims Practice Question:

Q3. Which Indian state accounts for the vast majority of the country's chromite mineral reserves?

- (A) Jharkhand (B) Odisha
(C) Rajasthan (D) Karnataka

Answer: (B)

Thiksey Monastery of Ladakh

What's in News

High-profile diplomatic visits highlighted Thiksey Monastery as a key cultural and spiritual landmark of Ladakh.

Key Facts:

1. Founded in 1433 CE by Spon Palden Sherab under the guidance of Jangsem Sherab Zangpo.
2. Affiliated with the Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) school of Tibetan Buddhism.
3. Built as a 12-storey complex tiered along a hillside, bearing architectural resemblance to the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet.
4. Houses a prominent 15-metre statue of Maitreya Buddha and hosts the annual Gustor festival.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Gelugpa Sect: Founded by Je Tsongkhapa in the late 14th century, emphasizing strict monastic discipline (Vinaya) and scholarship. It is the lineage headed by the Dalai Lama.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q4. With reference to Thiksey Monastery, consider the following statements:

1. It belongs to the Gelugpa (Yellow Hat) sect of Tibetan Buddhism.
2. Its layered hillside architecture resembles the Potala Palace in Lhasa.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (A) 1 only (B) 2 only
(C) Both 1 and 2 (D) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (C)

Endoscopic Camera Technology

What's in News

The illicit use of miniature medical endoscopic cameras in examination malpractice brought endoscopic imaging mechanisms into focus.

Key Facts:

Employs "chip-on-tip" architecture combining miniature complementary metal-oxide-semiconductor (CMOS) or CCD image sensors with compact lenses at the insertion tip.

Illumination is delivered via integrated LEDs or optical fiber bundles.

Specialized variants include Cystoscopes (urinary tract), Laparoscopes (abdominal cavity), Gastrosopes (upper GI tract), and Arthroscopes (joints).

Static Concept for UPSC:

Total Internal Reflection (TIR): The fundamental optical principle enabling flexible fiber-optic illumination cables to transmit light inside opaque, curved tracts without significant signal attenuation.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q5. In medical endoscopes, optical fibers are widely utilized to deliver illumination to internal organs.

This relies primarily on which optical phenomenon?

- (A) Total Internal Reflection
(B) Diffuse Scattering
(C) Optical Polarization
(D) Atmospheric Refraction

Answer: (A)

Narwhals & UKMTO Maritime Security

What's in News

Research revealed that the narwhal's straight tusk maintains its structure due to opposing helical twists in its collagen fibril layers; simultaneously, UKMTO reported heightened vessel tracking across the western Indian Ocean.

Key Facts:

Narwhal (*Monodon monoceros*): Arctic toothed whale belonging to the family **Monodontidae (along with the beluga whale)**. The tusk is an elongated, erupted canine tooth primarily present in males. IUCN Status: Least Concern.

UKMTO: A Royal Navy-sponsored initiative based in Portsmouth, UK, administering the Voluntary Reporting Scheme (VRS) for commercial vessels navigating the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Arabian Sea.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA): High-risk maritime corridor frameworks established under international maritime security conventions to counter piracy and armed boarding.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q6. Consider the following pairs:

1. Narwhal — Monodontidae family
2. Beluga Whale — Monodontidae family
3. IUCN Status of Narwhal — Critically Endangered

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- (A) Only one pair
(B) Only two pairs
(C) All three pairs
(D) None

Answer: (B)

Cloud and AI Skilling Initiative

What's in News

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Cultus Education, supported by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), partnered with [Amazon Web Services \(AWS\)](#) to launch a nationwide Cloud and AI skilling initiative.

Key Facts:

- Aims to provide foundational AI and cloud literacy to 1.5 lakh learners.
- Delivers job-ready technical training to 10,000 participants via the AWS re/Start program.
- Targets youth in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities across Indian States and UTs.

Static Concept for UPSC

Skill India Mission, National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC—a PPP model under MSDE), and strategies bridging the digital divide in emerging technologies.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q7. With reference to the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), consider the following statements:

1. It is a non-profit company set up by the Ministry of Finance under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.
2. The Government of India, through the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, holds 100% equity in NSDC.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

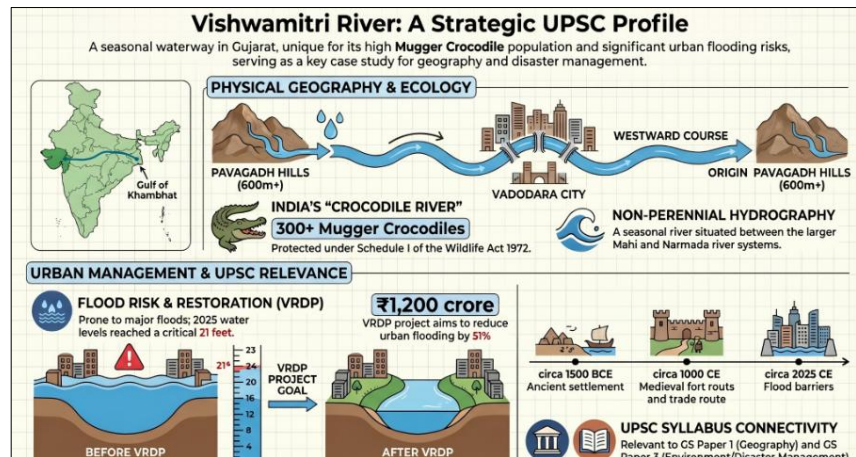
Vishwamitri River

What's in News

A fatal crocodile attack occurred near Talsat village on the outskirts of Vadodara along the Vishwamitri River.

Key Facts:

1. Originates from the western and southern slopes of the Pavagadh hills in Gujarat.
2. A non-perennial, 200 km long river that flows between the Mahi and Narmada river basins.
3. Meets tributaries Jambuva and Dhadar before discharging into the Gulf of Khambhat (Arabian Sea).
4. Hosts a large population of mugger crocodiles (*Crocodylus palustris*).



Static Concept for UPSC

Drainage patterns of Gujarat, Gulf of Khambhat river systems, and the ecology/conservation of the Mugger crocodile (IUCN: Vulnerable, Wildlife Protection Act 1972: Schedule I).

Prelims Practice Question:

Q8. Consider the following statements regarding the Vishwamitri River:

1. It is a perennial river originating from the Western Ghats.
2. It flows between the Mahi and Narmada river basins and drains into the Gulf of Khambhat.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Regenerative Agriculture

What's in News

Regenerative agriculture is gaining prominence in Indian policy as a holistic model for soil health restoration and climate resilience.

Key Facts:

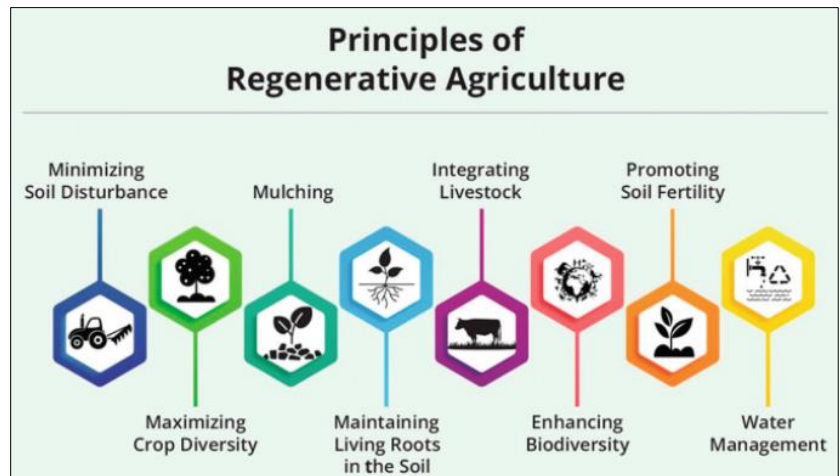
Core principles include minimizing soil tillage, maintaining permanent soil cover, encouraging crop diversity, and integrating livestock.

Incorporates traditional organic inputs (**Beejamrut, Jeevamrut, Ghanjeevamrut, Neemastra**).

Promotes agroforestry and micro-irrigation systems (drip/sprinkler).

Static Concept for UPSC

Soil organic carbon (SOC) sequestration, National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF), Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF), and sustainable agriculture practices under SDG 2.



Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Which of the following farming practices are central to the principles of Regenerative Agriculture?

1. Minimum soil disturbance and no-till farming
2. Integration of livestock with crop systems
3. Intensive application of synthetic nitrogenous fertilizers
4. Maintaining continuous living root systems and cover crops

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2, and 3 only
- (b) 1, 2, and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

Answer: (b)

Guruvayur Temple

What's in News

Guruvayur Temple recently saw a single-day record of 416 weddings solemnized on its premises.

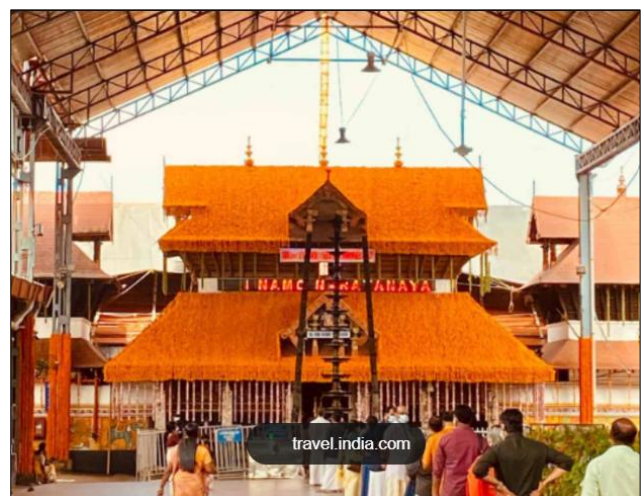
Key Facts:

Located in Thrissur district, Kerala; traditionally referred to as the "Dwarka of the South."

Dedicated to Guruvayurappan (Lord Vishnu in the form of Baby Krishna).

Built in traditional Kerala temple architecture with gabled roofs, wooden carvings, and 17th-century murals.

Noted for rituals like Thulabharam (offering weight in goods) and housing captive elephants at the nearby Punnathur Kotta sanctuary.



Static Concept for UPSC: Dravidian vs. Kerala temple architecture styles (features like Nalambalam, Namaskara Mandapam, steep pitched roofs to withstand heavy monsoon rain), and medieval South Indian history.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. With reference to the cultural and architectural traditions of temple architecture in Kerala, consider the following statements:

1. Kerala temple architecture is characterized by distinctive sloping timber roofs tiled or covered with copper sheets.
2. The term Nalambalam refers to the outer cloistered structure surrounding the sanctum sanctorum (Srikovil).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c)

Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF)

What's in News

Researchers identified specific antibody targets that offer potential pathways for targeted therapeutic treatments against CCHF.

Key Facts: ssss

Zoonotic viral disease caused by Nairovirus (Bunyaviridae family) with a case fatality rate of 10–40%.

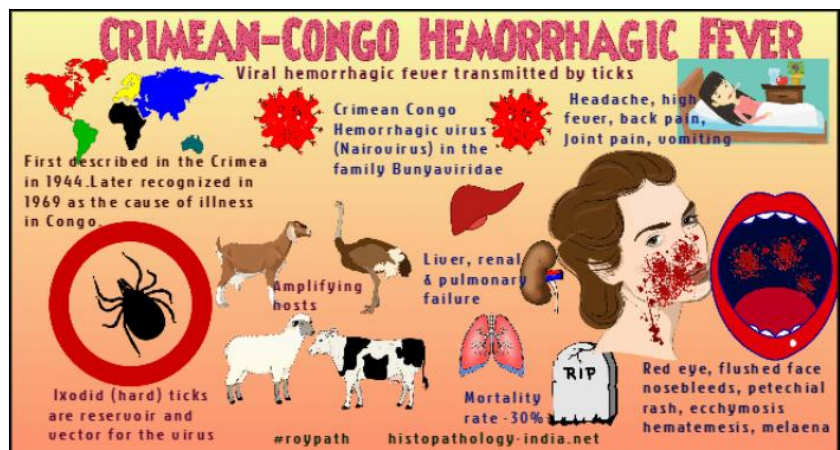
Vector: Hyalomma ticks; also transmitted through direct contact with blood/tissue of infected animals or humans.

Symptoms include sudden high fever, photophobia, jaundice, and severe hemorrhaging/bruising.

No specific vaccine exists; supportive care and Ribavirin are used for clinical management.

Static Concept for UPSC

Viral zoonoses, vector-borne diseases, monoclonal antibodies, and WHO Priority Pathogens list under the R&D Blueprint.



Prelims Practice Question:

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF):

It is caused by a protozoan parasite transmitted by mosquitoes.

It has a high fatality rate and can spread between humans via contact with infectious body fluids.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only

- (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
Answer: (b)

Periyar Cow

What's in News

The ICAR-National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR) officially registered the Periyar Cow as an indigenous cattle breed.

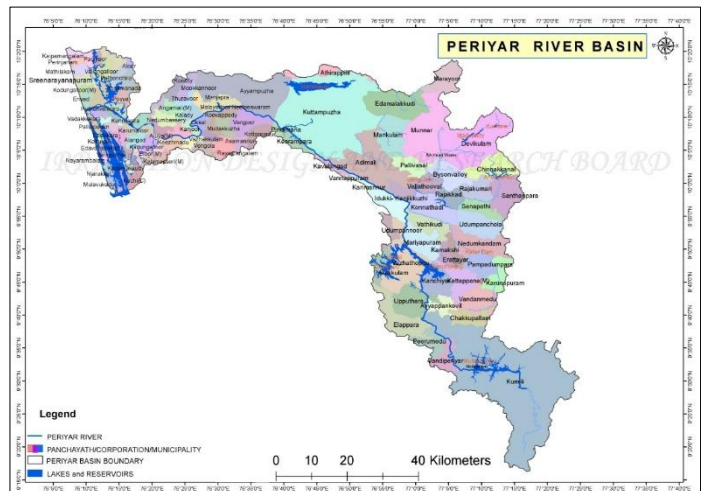
Key Facts:

Second native cattle breed from Kerala to get national recognition (the first being the Vechur cow in 1996).

Locally known as Periyar Kullan, Kuttampuzha cattle, or Andukanni.

Native to the Periyar River basin across Ernakulam and Thrissur.

Compact dwarf breed (weighing 150–200 kg) capable of thriving in semi-feral, low-input conditions; yields nutritious A2 beta-casein milk.



Static Concept for UPSC

ICAR-NBAGR registration mechanism for indigenous animal genetic resources (AnGR), conservation of local genetic diversity, and A1 vs. A2 milk protein distinctions.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q4. Consider the following pairs:

1. Vechur : Indigenous cattle breed of Kerala
2. Periyar Kullan : Indigenous cattle breed of Tamil Nadu
3. Gir : Indigenous cattle breed of Gujarat

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one pair
(b) Only two pairs
(c) All three pairs
(d) None of the pairs

Answer: (b) (Explanation: Pair 2 is incorrectly matched; Periyar Kullan is native to Kerala).

Political Clearance for Foreign Trips by Constitutional Authorities

What's in News

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy cancelled the US leg of his foreign tour after the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) denied him "clearance from political angle."

Key Facts:

1. Applications are processed via the online portal epolclearance.gov.in under the MEA's Coordination Division.
2. Chief Ministers, state ministers, and Union Territory ministers require approvals from MEA, Cabinet Secretariat, Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), and Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) clearance from MHA.
3. In April 2026, the Delhi High Court struck down an OM requiring prior political clearance for judges' visa notes verbale, upholding judicial independence.

Static Concept:

Article 246 & 7th Schedule: Foreign affairs are exclusively under the Union List (List I, Entry 10).

Federal Dynamics & Paradiplomacy: Engagement of sub-national entities in foreign relations vs. central oversight under executive guidelines.

Key Issues:

1. Friction in cooperative federalism and potential executive overreach on elected state leaders.
2. Lack of codified statutory rules, relying heavily on administrative circulars and discretion.
3. Disruption of state-level foreign investment promotion and paradiplomatic initiatives.
4. Procedural delays and lack of transparency in grounds for denial.
5. Institutional tension regarding separation of powers when applied to constitutional posts like the higher judiciary.
6. Suggestions:
7. Formulate objective, clear statutory criteria for political clearance denials.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q5. With reference to foreign visits by Indian dignitaries, consider the following statements:

1. Private foreign visits by Members of Parliament mandatorily require prior permission from the MEA.
2. Foreign affairs falls exclusively under the Union List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
3. FCRA clearance is administered by the Ministry of External Affairs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b)

Agro-Climatic Vulnerability & Sugarcane Yield Fluctuations

What's in News

Severe retail sugar price surges were triggered by sugarcane crop losses caused by excess rainfall and delayed monsoon withdrawal in key growing regions.

Key Facts:

Severe waterlogging hit prime cane-growing belts across Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Gujarat during September–October 2025.

Gross domestic production fell from an initial estimate of 343.5 lakh tonnes to 309 lakh tonnes. Low sucrose accumulation and soil stagnation severely reduced crushing recovery rates.

Static Concept:

Sugarcane Agro-Climatic Requirements: Tropical crop requiring 20°C to 35°C temperature, 75–100 cm rainfall, and well-drained loamy/alluvial soils.

Monsoon Anomalies: Impact of spatial-temporal variations and delayed withdrawal cycles on kharif and cash crops.

Key Issues:

1. Vulnerability of cash crops to shifting rainfall regimes and extreme weather events.
2. Lack of flood-tolerant and climate-resilient sugarcane cultivars.
3. Depletion of soil fertility and root rotting from prolonged field waterlogging.
4. Regional concentration of cane cultivation in water-stressed or flood-prone drainage basins.
5. Distortions in local water tables due to the water-intensive nature of sugarcane.
6. Suggestions:
7. Expand cultivation of waterlogging-tolerant and drought-resilient cane varieties.
8. Promote sub-surface drainage systems in low-lying sugar-producing basins.
9. Shift cane cultivation to ecologically suitable agro-climatic zones through crop diversification.
10. Enhance micro-irrigation systems to optimize water use and improve root strength.
11. Integrate real-time agrometeorological forecasting for pre-harvest harvest scheduling.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q6. Which of the following conditions is most suitable for sugarcane cultivation?

- (a) Cold and dry climate with annual rainfall less than 50 cm
- (b) Hot and humid climate with 75–100 cm rainfall and well-drained fertile soil
- (c) Heavy clay soil with persistent waterlogging throughout the maturation phase
- (d) Arid desert soil with high salinity and low ambient temperature

Answer: (b)

Domestic Sugar Market Volatility and Government Interventions

What's in News

Retail sugar prices escalated to Rs 55.70–65/kg, prompting central authorities to impose nationwide stock limits, export bans, and zero-duty import quotas.

Key Facts:

Sugar closing stocks reached a multi-year low of ~41 lakh tonnes.

The government permitted duty-free import of up to 10 lakh tonnes of raw sugar (slashing the standard 100% duty).

Imposed stock limits of 400 tonnes on dealers and restricted bulk users to 15 days of inventory until November 30.

Static Concept:

Essential Commodities Act & Trade Instruments: Application of stock limits, Minimum Support Price (Fair & Remunerative Price - FRP), and tariff modifications.

Supply-Demand Dynamics: Price elasticity and seasonal demand surges (festive consumption).

Key Issues:

1. Speculative hoarding and artificial scarcity by trade intermediaries.
2. Cash liquidity stress on mills leading to overselling beyond monthly domestic quotas.
3. Sharp spike in food inflation affecting the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
4. Global price parity pressures (\$552/tonne) making imports commercially competitive.
5. Disruption in domestic processing cycles and working capital constraints for mills.
6. Suggestions:
7. Implement strict digital stock auditing via centralized logistics monitoring platforms.
8. Advance the seasonal crushing schedule with state-level administrative support.
9. Rationalize buffer stock norms to handle unexpected domestic supply shortfalls.
10. Balance tariff reductions with measures to protect domestic farmers from global price dumps.
11. Strengthen mill-farmer settlement systems through direct DBT integration.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q7. In India, the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane is approved by the:

- (a) Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)
- (b) Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)
- (c) Directorate of Sugar and Vegetable Oils
- (d) Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

Answer: (b)

Evolution of Demographic Exercises and the Indian Census

What's in News

Preparations and questionnaire revisions for Census 2027 have highlighted the historical shift of demographic tracking in India from administrative enumeration to comprehensive socio-economic profiling.

Key Facts:

The modern Indian Census is conducted under the statutory provisions of the Census Act, 1948.

Census 2027 incorporates 40 questions (14 modified/new compared to Census 2011), including questions on caste.

NPR was first introduced in 2010 alongside the house-listing phase of the 2011 Census and updated in 2015.

Static Concept:

1. Historical Evolution: First non-synchronous Census in 1872 under Lord Mayo; first complete synchronous Census in 1881 under Lord Ripon (directed by W.W. Plowden).
2. Caste in Census: Comprehensive caste enumerations took place until the 1931 Census, after which only SC/ST counts were retained in independent India.

Key Issues:

1. Shifting scope from objective demographic mapping to broader socio-political categorization.
2. Longest gap between censuses in post-independence history leading to outdated public policy baselines.
3. Administrative burdens and enumerator training challenges compared to historical surveys.
4. Politicization of caste data collection and potential social divisions.

5. Maintaining longitudinal continuity and data consistency across decadal datasets.
6. Suggestions:
7. Preserve the purely statistical, non-partisan integrity of the decennial exercise.
8. Use historical benchmarking methodologies to maintain long-term longitudinal accuracy.
9. Complete full digital archiving and open-access publishing of historical census datasets.
10. Separate administrative population registers strictly from statistical census surveys.
11. Undertake public awareness initiatives regarding the historical statistical utility of the Census.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q8. The first synchronous, country-wide Census in British India was conducted in the year:

- (a) 1872
- (b) 1881
- (c) 1891
- (d) 1901

Answer: (b)

Pest Infestations in Sugarcane (Red Rot & Top Shoot Borer)

What's in News

Sugarcane crop production in major belts like Uttar Pradesh was sharply reduced due to widespread infestations of Red Rot disease and Top Borer pests affecting the dominant Co-0238 variety.

Key Facts:

1. Red Rot: Caused by the fungal pathogen *Colletotrichum falcatum*, which damages sucrose content and causes stalk decay.
2. Top Borer: *Scirpophaga excerptalis*, a major lepidopteran insect pest causing "dead heart" in growing shoots.
3. Monoculture of Co-0238 cane variety heightened genetic susceptibility to both pathogens.

Static Concept:

- Crop Pathology & Entomology: Fungal sporulation mechanisms in humid/waterlogged environments.
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM): Biological controls, crop rotation, and varietal replacement.

Key Issues:

- High genetic vulnerability arising from widespread monoculture of single elite varieties.
- Loss of juice purity and severe reduction in sucrose recovery during industrial extraction.
- Excessive and indiscriminate use of chemical fungicides leading to environmental toxicity.
- Ineffective field-level monitoring and slow reporting of early pathogen outbreaks.
- Lack of access to certified, disease-free tissue-cultured seed sets for farmers.

Suggestions:

- Accelerate varietal replacement cycles to phase out susceptible monocultures.
- Deploy Integrated Pest Management (IPM) combining pheromone traps and biocontrol agents (e.g., *Trichogramma*).
- Promote disease-free nursery raising via single-bud chip and tissue-culture methods.
- Improve farm-level field drainage to limit fungal sporulation environments.
- Train farmers in early diagnostic symptom identification and field quarantine practices.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q9. Which of the following combinations correctly matches the agricultural disease/pest with its causative agent?

- (a) Red Rot of Sugarcane — Fungus
- (b) Top Shoot Borer — Virus
- (c) Citrus Canker — Nematode
- (d) Late Blight of Potato — Bacterium

Answer: (a)

Census 2027, NPR Linkage, and Resident Profiling

What's in News:

Overlap between 8 questions in the Census 2027 enumeration schedule (e.g., parental origins, mobile numbers, identity IDs) and the National Population Register (NPR) has sparked debates over data privacy and state surveillance.

Key Facts:

- Census is governed by the Census Act, 1948, which guarantees data confidentiality (individual data cannot be used as evidence in court).
- NPR is maintained under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
- The NPR registers usual residents (residing for 6+ months or intending to reside for 6+ months), including foreign nationals.

Static Concept:

Right to Privacy: Fundamental right under Article 21 (**K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, 2017**).

Data Protection Principles: Purpose limitation, data minimization, and storage limitation under the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) framework.

Key Issues:

1. Risk of function creep by merging statistical data collection with citizenship verification databases.
2. Concerns over potential misuse of sensitive individual identifiers (Aadhaar, passport, mobile numbers).
3. Lack of public clarity on the optional nature of parental birth metadata.
4. Interoperability across departmental databases without robust, independent data audits.
5. Potential public trust deficit leading to under-reporting or inaccurate enumeration.
6. Suggestions:
7. Maintain strict legal firewalls between statistical Census databases and administrative registers (NPR/NRC).
8. Apply data minimization principles by collecting only metadata essential for statistical planning.
9. Implement end-to-end anonymization and differential privacy techniques for published data.
10. Clearly notify the optional status of sensitive parental fields on enumeration forms.
11. Establish an independent oversight body to monitor state data linkages and privacy compliance.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. With reference to the National Population Register (NPR) in India, consider the following statements:

1. It is a register containing details exclusively of Indian citizens.
2. A "usual resident" for NPR includes a person who has resided in a local area for at least six months.
3. It is prepared under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 2 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

Pragati Platform

What's in News:

The Prime Minister of India chaired the 53rd meeting of the PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation) platform.

Key Facts:

1. Launched in 2015 as a flagship multi-modal, multi-purpose platform.
2. Designed in-house by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) team with technical support from the National Informatics Centre (NIC).
3. Built as a three-tier system integrating the PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and State Chief Secretaries.
4. Combines three key technologies: Digital data management, video conferencing, and geospatial technology.
5. Projects are monitored by the Cabinet Secretariat, while schemes and public grievances are reviewed at the Ministry level under PMO oversight.

Static Concept:

E-Governance & Administrative Accountability: PRAGATI serves as an institutional model for cooperative federalism and project implementation, reducing inter-ministerial bottlenecks and monitoring the delivery of central schemes directly with state administrative heads.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. With reference to the PRAGATI platform, consider the following statements:

1. It is a three-tier institutional mechanism involving the PMO, Union Secretaries, and State Chief Secretaries.
2. It leverages GIS/geospatial technology along with real-time digital data management.
3. It is hosted and developed exclusively by NITI Aayog.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (a)

Explanation: PRAGATI was developed in-house by the PMO with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), not NITI Aayog.

Morocco & Mediterranean Drainage

What's in News:

The Minister of State for Commerce and Industry co-chaired the 7th Session of the India-Morocco Joint Commission.

Key Facts:

1. Located in the Maghreb region of Northwest Africa, bordered by Algeria to the east and Western Sahara to the south.
2. It is the only country in Africa with coastlines along both the Atlantic Ocean (west) and the Mediterranean Sea (north).
3. Capital is Rabat.
4. Highest point is Jebel Toubkal, which is also the highest peak in the Atlas Mountain range.
5. The Moulouya River is its principal river system flowing into the Mediterranean Sea.

Static Concept:

Physiography of North Africa: The Atlas Mountains (a fold mountain belt formed by African-Eurasian plate convergence) create a rain-shadow effect, dividing the Mediterranean climate along the coast from the arid Saharan interior.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. Consider the following geographic features:

1. Jebel Toubkal is the highest peak in the Atlas Mountains.
2. Morocco shares coastlines with both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.
3. The Moulouya River drains into the Atlantic Ocean.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (a)

Explanation: The Moulouya River originates in the Atlas Mountains and drains northward into the Mediterranean Sea, not the Atlantic Ocean.

Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026

GS Relevance: GS-II – Centre-State Relations, Fiscal Federalism | GS-III – Mineral Resources, Mining Sector, Infrastructure

Why in News?

Parliament has passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, aimed at bringing greater certainty, uniformity and predictability in mineral taxation.

The amendment seeks to restrict the ability of State Governments to impose taxes, cesses and other levies on mineral rights and mineral-bearing lands, subject to conditions prescribed by the Central Government.

Background: MMDR Act, 1957

The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 is the principal legislation governing the development and regulation of mines and minerals under Union control.

Constitutional Framework

1. **Article 246 + Seventh Schedule:** Distribution of legislative powers between Centre and States.
2. **Entry 54, Union List:** Regulation of mines and mineral development to the extent declared by Parliament to be expedient in public interest.
3. **Entry 23, State List:** Regulation of mines and mineral development, subject to Entry 54 of the Union List.
4. **Entry 50, State List:** Taxes on mineral rights, subject to limitations imposed by Parliament relating to mineral development.

Major vs Minor Minerals

1. Major minerals: Generally regulated under the MMDR framework with significant Central Government involvement.
2. Minor minerals: Includes building stones, gravel, ordinary clay, etc.; States have substantial regulatory powers, particularly under Section 15.

Key Provisions of the 2026 Amendment

1. **Regulation of Mineral-Bearing Lands**

The Central Government will be empowered to regulate mineral-bearing lands according to parameters prescribed by it.

2. **New Section 9D**

A new Section 9D seeks to restrict States from imposing any: Tax Cess Other levy on mineral rights or mineral-bearing lands, whether based on mineral quantity, mineral value, royalty or otherwise, except in accordance with conditions or restrictions prescribed by the Centre.

3. **Treatment of Past Levies**

Unpaid or unrecovered State levies imposed before the amendment will be treated as invalid.

However, amounts that have already been deposited or recovered will not be refunded.

Central Rule-Making Power

4. The Central Government will prescribe conditions and restrictions relating to State imposition of taxes, cesses or other levies under the amended framework.

Why Was the Amendment Needed?

1. **High and Uneven Tax Burden**

- Different State-level levies increased the cost of mineral extraction and affected the viability of some mining operations.

2. **Investment Uncertainty**

- Unpredictable and retrospective taxation created uncertainty for mining companies and investors.

3. **Inflationary Impact**

- Higher mineral extraction costs can increase the input costs of industries dependent on minerals.

4. **Lack of Fiscal Uniformity**

- Different taxation regimes across States created variations in the cost of mineral extraction.

5. **Ease of Doing Business**

- A more predictable taxation framework is intended to improve investment confidence and reduce regulatory uncertainty.

Static Facts for Prelims

MMDR Act, 1957 – Important Sections

Section	Provision
Section 4	Prospecting and mining operations under a licence or lease
Section 9	Royalty on minerals
Section 9A	Dead rent
Section 9B	District Mineral Foundation (DMF)
Section 9C	National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust
Section 10B	Auction of mining leases for notified minerals
Section 10BA	Exploration licence for specified minerals
Section 11A	Mineral concessions for coal and lignite
Section 15	Power of State Governments regarding minor minerals
The Act specifically provides for royalty under Section 9, while Sections 9B and 9C deal with the DMF and National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust respectively.	

Important Supreme Court Linkage

In its 2024 nine-judge Constitution Bench judgment, the Supreme Court held that royalty is not a tax. It also recognised that the constitutional taxing power over mineral rights flows from Entry 50 of the State List, subject to limitations imposed by Parliament.

UPSC Trap: Royalty ≠ Tax

The 2026 amendment is therefore particularly important because it deals with the relationship between State taxation powers over mineral rights and Parliament's power to impose limitations.

Significance

1. **For Centre–State Relations**

- The amendment strengthens the role of the Central Government in determining the framework within which States can impose mineral-related levies.

2. **For Fiscal Federalism**

It creates a debate between:

- Uniform national mineral taxation, and
- State fiscal autonomy.

3. **For the Mining Sector**

- Greater predictability may improve investment decisions, reduce uncertainty, and make mineral extraction more competitive.

4. **For Consumers**

- Lower and more predictable extraction costs could help moderate input costs for mineral-intensive industries.

Concerns / Challenges

1. **Reduction in State Fiscal Autonomy**

- There is a possibility of reduced fiscal autonomy for mineral-bearing States.

2. **Centre–State Balance**

- Concerns may arise regarding the balance between cooperative federalism and fiscal uniformity.
- 3. Benefits to Mineral-Bearing States**
 - There is a need to ensure that mineral-bearing States receive adequate fiscal benefits from resource extraction.
- 4. Local Participation and Benefit Sharing**
 - Centralisation should not weaken local participation or existing benefit-sharing mechanisms.
- 5. Implementation Challenges**
 - Implementation will depend significantly on the conditions and restrictions prescribed by the Central Government.

Way Forward

1. Maintain a balance between fiscal uniformity and State autonomy.
2. Ensure transparent and predictable rules for mineral taxation.
3. Strengthen benefit-sharing with mining-affected communities through mechanisms such as District Mineral Foundations.
4. Promote sustainable and responsible mineral extraction.
5. Ensure continuous consultation between Centre, States and mining stakeholders.

Prelims MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, consider the following statements:

1. Section 9 deals with royalty on minerals.
2. Section 9B provides for District Mineral Foundations.
3. Regulation of mines and mineral development is exclusively a State subject.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Explanation: Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Regulation of mines and mineral development involves both Union and State legislative domains, with Entry 54 of the Union List giving Parliament an important role.

UPSC Mains Linkage

Q2. The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 seeks to balance fiscal uniformity in the mineral sector with the constitutional principle of fiscal federalism. Discuss.

Parliamentary Productivity: Monsoon Session 2026

GS Relevance: GS-II – Parliament, Parliamentary Committees, Executive Accountability, Constitutional Governance

Why in News?

The Monsoon Session of Parliament 2026 ended with very low productivity.



According to data compiled by PRS Legislative Research, the Lok Sabha functioned for only about 15% of its scheduled time, while the Rajya Sabha functioned for around 33%.

The development highlights persistent concerns over parliamentary disruptions, declining legislative scrutiny and weakening mechanisms of executive accountability.

Key Concerns Behind Declining Parliamentary Productivity

1. Rising Political Polarisation

- Increasing political confrontation and lack of consensus-building have made disruptions a frequent parliamentary strategy.

2. Declining Role of Parliamentary Committees

- During the 18th Lok Sabha, up to the 2026 Monsoon Session, only around 21% of Bills were referred to Parliamentary Committees.
- Committee scrutiny provides an opportunity for:
 - ✓ Detailed examination
 - ✓ Expert consultation
 - ✓ Cross-party deliberation

3. Bills Passed with Limited Debate

- Of the 11 Bills passed by the Lok Sabha, nine were reportedly passed without any MP other than the concerned Minister speaking on them.
- This raises concerns about the quality of legislative deliberation.

4. Executive Dominance

- Concerns have been raised over the use of mechanisms such as Ordinances and the classification of legislation as Money Bills, which can affect the extent of scrutiny by the Rajya Sabha.

5. Limited Research Support

- Unlike systems such as the U.S. Congressional Research Service, Indian MPs have relatively limited access to institutionalised and independent legislative research support.

Impact of Declining Parliamentary Productivity

1. Hasty Legislation

- Reduced debate and scrutiny may result in laws with:
 - ✓ Drafting ambiguities
 - ✓ Unintended consequences

Static Facts for Prelims

- ✓ **Constitutional Position of Parliament**
- ✓ Article 79 – Constitution of Parliament
- ✓ Parliament consists of:
- ✓ President
- ✓ Rajya Sabha
- ✓ Lok Sabha
- ✓ **Rajya Sabha**
- ✓ Article 80 – Composition
- ✓ Maximum strength: 250 members
- ✓ Present constitutional maximum elected strength: 238 members, plus up to 12 nominated members
- ✓ Nominated members are chosen by the President for their special knowledge or practical experience in:
 - ✓ Literature
 - ✓ Science
 - ✓ Art
 - ✓ Social service
- ✓ It is a permanent House and is not subject to dissolution.
- ✓ One-third of its members retire every two years.
- ✓ **Lok Sabha**
- ✓ Article 81 – Composition
- ✓ It is the directly elected House of Parliament.
- ✓ Normal tenure: 5 years, unless dissolved earlier.
- ✓ Its tenure may be extended during a National Emergency, subject to constitutional limitations.

Important Parliamentary Terms

- ✓ **Question Hour**
- ✓ The first hour of a parliamentary sitting is traditionally devoted to questions by MPs to Ministers.
- ✓ It is an important mechanism for executive accountability.
- ✓ **Zero Hour**
- ✓ An Indian parliamentary innovation through which MPs raise matters of urgent public importance without the formal advance notice required for questions.
- ✓ Prelims Trap: Zero Hour is not mentioned in the Constitution.
- ✓ **Parliamentary Committees**
- ✓ Parliamentary Committees enable Parliament to undertake detailed and specialised scrutiny of:
 - ✓ Legislation
 - ✓ Expenditure
 - ✓ Government functioning
 - ✓ Implementation challenges

2. Weakening of Financial Accountability

- In 2023, only around 11% of budget expenditure reportedly underwent detailed parliamentary scrutiny, while more than 75% of Demands for Grants were passed without discussion.

3. Reduced Executive Accountability

- Frequent disruptions and curtailed proceedings can weaken mechanisms such as:
 - ✓ Question Hour
 - ✓ Zero Hour
 - ✓ Parliamentary debates
 - ✓ Motions and discussions
 - ✓ Committee scrutiny

4. Greater Judicial Intervention

- When legislative gaps persist, courts may sometimes intervene to protect constitutional rights.
- Example: In *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997)*, the Supreme Court issued guidelines on workplace sexual harassment in the absence of specific legislation.

Important Parliamentary Committees

1. Public Accounts Committee (PAC)
2. Estimates Committee
3. Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU)
4. Department-related Standing Committees (DRSCs)

Important Constitutional Provisions

Article	Provision
Article 79	Constitution of Parliament
Article 80	Composition of Rajya Sabha
Article 81	Composition of Lok Sabha
Article 85	Sessions, prorogation and dissolution of Parliament
Article 105	Parliamentary privileges
Article 107	Introduction and passing of Bills
Article 108	Joint sitting of Parliament
Article 109	Special procedure for Money Bills
Article 110	Definition of a Money Bill
Article 112	Annual Financial Statement (Union Budget)
Article 123	President's Ordinance-making power
Article 75(3)	Council of Ministers collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha

Parliamentary Committees: Why Important?

1. Parliamentary Committees help overcome the limitations of full-house proceedings by allowing:
2. Detailed examination of Bills
3. Expert consultation
4. Cross-party deliberation
5. Examination of government expenditure
6. Greater executive accountability
7. Public Accounts Committee (PAC)
8. The PAC examines government expenditure and the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).
9. Prelims Point: The PAC is a financial committee of Parliament.

Money Bill

1. Under Article 110, a Money Bill deals only with matters specified in the constitutional definition.
2. Key features:
3. Can be introduced only in Lok Sabha.
4. Requires the President's recommendation for introduction.
5. Rajya Sabha cannot reject or amend it.
6. Rajya Sabha must return it within 14 days.
7. The Lok Sabha Speaker certifies whether a Bill is a Money Bill.
8. UPSC Debate: Excessive use of the Money Bill route can potentially reduce the Rajya Sabha's legislative scrutiny.

Parliamentary Disruptions: Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Committee System**
 - A greater proportion of important Bills should undergo detailed committee scrutiny.
2. **Improve Parliamentary Research Support**
 - India can strengthen independent, non-partisan research support available to MPs.
3. **Ensure Adequate Sitting Days**
 - More predictable and adequate parliamentary sittings can provide greater space for legislation and debate.
4. **Promote Consensus-Building**
 - Political parties should prioritise deliberation over disruption on matters of national importance.
5. **Strengthen Question Hour**
 - Question Hour and other accountability mechanisms should be protected from unnecessary disruption.
6. **Improve Legislative Quality**
 - Pre-legislative consultation, expert inputs and committee examination can improve the quality of laws.

Balanced Perspective

1. Parliamentary disruption is not always undesirable. Protest and dissent are legitimate components of parliamentary democracy.
2. However, when disruptions systematically prevent debate, legislation, financial scrutiny and executive accountability, they undermine the core deliberative function of Parliament.
3. The objective should therefore be not a disruption-free Parliament, but a Parliament where dissent coexists with meaningful deliberation and institutional accountability.

Prelims MCQs

Q3. With reference to the Parliament of India, consider the following statements:

1. Zero Hour is explicitly mentioned in the Constitution of India.
2. Rajya Sabha is a permanent House and is not subject to dissolution.
3. The Public Accounts Committee examines reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B

Explanation: Zero Hour is a parliamentary practice and is not mentioned in the Constitution. Rajya Sabha is a permanent House, and the PAC examines CAG reports.

Mains Linkage

Q4. "Declining parliamentary productivity is not merely a procedural concern but a challenge to legislative quality, financial accountability and executive oversight." Discuss.

ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth 2026

GS Relevance: GS-II – Social Justice, Vulnerable Sections | GS-III – Employment, Skill Development, Technology

Why in News?

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has highlighted growing challenges in youth employment, including rising unemployment, high NEET rates, gender disparities, informal employment and the emerging impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on entry-level jobs.

The latest ILO assessment notes that global youth unemployment reached 12.4% in 2025, while around one-fifth of young people were neither employed nor in education or training. The ILO's broader 2026 labour-market assessment similarly identifies youth and women as groups facing persistent employment challenges.

Key Findings

1. Rising Youth Unemployment

- Global youth unemployment rose to 12.4% in 2025.
- Around 67 million young people aged 15–24 were unemployed.
- Young people remain significantly more vulnerable to unemployment than adults.
- The ILO has historically found youth unemployment to be around three times higher than adult unemployment, reflecting difficulties in entering the labour market.

2. Rising NEET Population

- NEET = Not in Employment, Education or Training.
- The NEET rate remained around 20%, meaning approximately one in five young people are outside employment, education or training.
- Prelims Link: NEET is broader than unemployment because it also includes young people who are not actively looking for work.

3. Gender Gap

- Women constitute more than two-thirds of global youth NEETs.
- The major barriers include:
 - ✓ Unpaid care work
 - ✓ Lack of affordable childcare
 - ✓ Social norms
 - ✓ Gender discrimination
 - ✓ Unequal access to employment opportunities
- The ILO's earlier youth-employment data similarly showed that about two-thirds of young NEETs globally are women.

4. AI and Youth Employment

- Around 6.1% of youth jobs are highly exposed to AI-driven task replacement.
- However, AI should not be viewed only as a job-destroying force. Its impact depends on whether technology substitutes tasks or complements workers.
- ILO research with the World Bank finds that developing countries may experience disruption before productivity gains because of digital infrastructure and skills gaps.

5. **Youth–Adult Unemployment Gap**

- The youth-to-adult unemployment ratio reached around 3.43, meaning young people are more than three times as likely to be unemployed.

6. **Informal Employment**

- In low- and lower-middle-income economies, a very large share of young workers remain in informal employment, often without adequate:
 - ✓ Social security
 - ✓ Employment protection
 - ✓ Stable income
 - ✓ Workplace benefits

Major Challenges

1. **Informality and Job Insecurity**

- Informal employment provides livelihood opportunities but often lacks adequate social protection and employment security.

2. **Experience Barrier**

- Digital recruitment and automation are contributing to unrealistic prior-experience requirements for entry-level jobs, making the transition from education to employment more difficult.

3. **Digital Divide**

- Developing economies may face a dual challenge:
 - ✓ Lower exposure to AI-driven displacement + lower ability to capture AI-driven productivity gains.
- Thus, the digital divide can become an AI productivity divide.

4. **Gender Barriers**

- Young women face additional barriers because of:
 - ✓ Care responsibilities
 - ✓ Social norms
 - ✓ Limited childcare infrastructure
 - ✓ Discrimination
 - ✓ Restricted mobility

5. **Skills Mismatch**

- Educational qualifications do not always match the skills demanded by rapidly changing labour markets.

Static Facts for Prelims

International Labour Organization — ILO

1. **Established:** 1919
2. **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland
3. Became the first specialised agency of the United Nations in 1946.
4. It is a tripartite organisation involving:

- Governments
- Employers
- Workers

5. It develops international labour standards through Conventions and Recommendations.

6. The ILO received the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1969**.

Important ILO Reports

1. World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO)
2. Global Employment Trends for Youth (GET Youth)
3. World Social Protection Report
4. World Employment and Social Trends

Important Concepts

NEET

Not in Employment, Education or Training

1. It captures young people who are neither working nor participating in education or training.

UPSC Trap:

1. **NEET ≠ Unemployment.**
2. An unemployed person generally has no job, is available for work and is seeking work, whereas NEET also includes young people who are outside the labour force.

Gig Economy

1. A labour market characterised by short-term, flexible or task-based employment, often facilitated by digital platforms.
2. Examples: Platform-based delivery, ride-hailing and freelance services.

Algorithmic Bias

1. Systematic and unfair outcomes produced by algorithms because of biased training data, design or decision-making processes.
2. It is particularly relevant in AI-based recruitment, credit assessment and automated decision-making.

SDG Linkage

1. Youth employment is closely connected with:
 - **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth**
 - Target 8.6 seeks to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET).

Other Linkages

- **SDG 4:** Quality Education
- **SDG 5:** Gender Equality
- **SDG 9:** Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- **SDG 10:** Reduced Inequalities

Indian Context: Policy Linkages

India's response to youth employment can be linked with:

1. **Skill India Mission**
 - Focuses on improving employability through skill development.
2. **PMKVY**
 - Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana provides skill training and certification.

3. National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme

- Promotes apprenticeship opportunities and industry-linked learning.

4. National Career Service

- Provides employment-related information, career counselling and job-matching services.

5. e-Shram

- Creates a national database of unorganised workers, supporting better delivery of social-security benefits.

6. Code on Social Security, 2020

- Provides a framework for social security, including provisions relevant to gig and platform workers.

Recommendations / Way Forward**1. Create More Quality Jobs**

- Promote labour-intensive sectors, emerging industries and the green economy.

2. Strengthen Apprenticeships

- Expand quality apprenticeships and industry-linked vocational education.

3. Build Future-Ready Skills

- Develop a combination of: Technical skills + Digital skills + Soft skills + Critical thinking + Creativity

4. Strengthen Public Employment Services

- Modernise employment exchanges and improve digital job matching and career counselling.

5. Promote Women's Employment

- Expand:
 - ✓ Affordable childcare
 - ✓ Safe transportation
 - ✓ Flexible work opportunities
 - ✓ Skill development
 - ✓ Gender-responsive employment policies

6. Extend Social Protection

- Make social-security systems more portable and inclusive for gig, platform and informal workers.

7. Human-Centred AI Governance

- AI-based recruitment should include:
 - ✓ Transparency
 - ✓ Human oversight
 - ✓ Bias audits
 - ✓ Data protection
 - ✓ Non-discrimination safeguards

Significance for India

1. India has a large young population, making employment generation critical for converting demographic potential into a demographic dividend.
However, demographic dividend is not automatic.
2. It requires: Education → Skills → Employment → Productivity → Higher Income → Economic Growth
If young people remain unemployed, underemployed or outside education and training, the demographic dividend can instead become a demographic burden.

Prelims MCQs

Q1. With reference to the concept of NEET, consider the following statements:

1. It refers to young people who are not in employment, education or training.
2. Every unemployed person is necessarily classified as NEET.
3. NEET includes some young people who are outside the labour force and are not actively seeking employment.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B

Explanation: NEET is broader than unemployment. It includes unemployed youth as well as young people who are neither working nor studying/training and may not be actively seeking employment.

Q2. With reference to the International Labour Organization (ILO), consider the following statements:

1. It was established in 1919.
2. It has a tripartite structure involving governments, employers and workers.
3. It became a specialised agency of the United Nations after 1969.
4. It received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 2 and 4 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: B

Explanation: The ILO was established in 1919 and became a UN specialised agency in 1946. Its tripartite structure represents governments, employers and workers. It received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969.

UPSC Mains Linkage

Q3. "Youth unemployment is increasingly becoming a structural challenge involving skills mismatch, informality, gender inequality and technological disruption." Discuss in the context of the ILO's assessment of global youth employment.

Key Sectors to Position India as a Global Manufacturing Hub

Date: 14 August 2026

Source: NITI Aayog

GS Relevance: GS-III – Indian Economy, Manufacturing, Infrastructure, Investment, Renewable Energy

Why in News?

NITI Aayog has released a report titled "Key Sectors to Position India as a Global Manufacturing Hub", identifying four sectors with high potential to drive India's manufacturing growth:

1. Chemicals
2. Telecom & Networking Equipment
3. Textiles



4. Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Manufacturing

The report focuses on strengthening domestic capabilities, reducing import dependence, improving competitiveness and integrating India more deeply into global value chains.

1. Chemicals

- Present Status
- India accounts for around 3–3.5% of the global chemicals market.
- India ranks approximately sixth globally in the chemicals sector.
- The sector has significant potential for downstream manufacturing and exports.

Key Challenges

1. Chemicals and Petrochemicals

Key Challenges

1. **70–80% import dependence** for several high-value raw materials and intermediates.
2. Dependence on imports for products/input materials such as **APIs, methanol, ethylene and propylene**.
3. High logistics costs.
4. Delays in project execution.
5. Lower competitiveness compared with major global manufacturing hubs.

Recommendations

1. Introduce **Viability Gap Funding (VGF)** and operating-expenditure support for critical downstream chemicals.
2. Develop integrated **Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemicals Investment Regions (PCPIRs)**.
3. Establish shared utilities and common effluent treatment systems.
4. Develop pipeline grids and port-linked chemical hubs.

2. Textiles

Present Status

The textile sector contributes approximately:

1. **2% of India's GDP**
2. **11% of manufacturing GVA**
3. **9% of merchandise exports**

India has a strong textile ecosystem but remains heavily dependent on cotton.

1. Around **65% of textile production** is cotton-based.

Recommendations

1. Improve MMF feedstock availability.
2. Increase cotton productivity and quality.
3. Strengthen infrastructure for MSMEs.
4. Promote technology upgradation.
5. Develop larger weaving and processing facilities.
6. Deepen trade integration through targeted **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)**.

3. Telecom & Networking Equipment

Present Status

India is:

1. The **world's second-largest telecom market**.

Key Challenges

1. Fragmented weaving and processing capacity.
2. Limited scale in manufacturing.
3. Constraints in man-made fibre (MMF) production.
4. Raw material competitiveness.
5. Market-access disadvantages for Indian exporters.

2. Home to more than **1.2 billion telecom subscribers**.
3. Telecom penetration is around **85%**.
4. Internet usage is around **75%**.

However, India continues to have low domestic localisation in several high-value technologies, particularly **4G and 5G radio access equipment**.

Key Challenges

1. Low localisation in high-value telecom equipment.
2. Dependence on established global OEMs.
3. Around **98% of telecom equipment demand** originates from private telecom service providers.
4. Domestic firms face challenges in achieving scale and technological competitiveness.

Recommendations

1. Create a localisation-linked incentive framework.
2. Promote joint ventures between global OEMs and Indian firms.
3. Encourage technology transfer.
4. Develop specialised industrial clusters.
5. Build scale economies and innovation networks.

Strategic Significance

Domestic telecom manufacturing is important for:

Digital sovereignty + National security + 5G/6G ecosystem + Export competitiveness + Reduced import dependence

4. Solar PV Manufacturing

Present Status

1. India had around **106 GW of installed solar capacity by March 2025**.
2. However, significant upstream dependence remains.

Import Dependence

1. **Polysilicon**: Nearly 100% import dependent
2. **Wafers**: More than 90% import dependent

Key Challenges

1. Weak upstream manufacturing ecosystem.
2. Limited R&D expenditure.
3. Limited access to specialised machinery and capital goods.
4. Technology gaps compared with leading global producers.

Recommendations

1. Provide long-term policy clarity.
2. Extend **ALMM** coverage to wafers.
3. Establish a dedicated Solar R&D Fund.
4. Introduce performance-linked incentives for R&D.
5. Strengthen domestic manufacturing of upstream components.

Static Facts for Prelims

NITI Aayog

1. **Full Form**: National Institution for Transforming India
2. **Established**: 2015
3. Replaced the **Planning Commission**.
4. It is the Government of India's premier public policy think tank.
5. It promotes **cooperative and competitive federalism**.
6. **Chairperson**: Prime Minister of India.

- It includes a **Governing Council** comprising Chief Ministers of States and Lieutenant Governors of Union Territories.

NITI Aayog vs Planning Commission

NITI Aayog	Planning Commission
Policy think tank	Central planning body
Emphasis on cooperative federalism	More centralised planning
No power to allocate plan funds	Played major role in plan allocation
Bottom-up approach	Largely top-down approach
Promotes competitive federalism	Less emphasis on competitive federalism

Important Manufacturing Concepts

Global Value Chains (GVCs)

- Production of a product is distributed across multiple countries, with different stages such as design, component manufacturing, assembly and marketing taking place in different locations.
- India's objective:** Move from primarily domestic production towards deeper integration into global value chains.

OEM

Original Equipment Manufacturer

- A company that manufactures products or components that may be sold under another company's brand or integrated into a larger system.

MMF

Man-Made Fibres

- Includes fibres such as **polyester, nylon and viscose**.
- MMFs are important for diversifying India's textile basket beyond cotton.

PCPIR

Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemicals Investment Region

- An integrated investment region intended to promote the petroleum, chemicals and petrochemicals ecosystem through common infrastructure and industrial clustering.

ALMM

Approved List of Models and Manufacturers

- A framework of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy for approved solar PV modules and manufacturers.
- It aims to promote quality, reliability and domestic solar manufacturing.

Policy Linkages

The report can be linked with several major government initiatives:

- Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme**
 - Promotes domestic manufacturing and scale in identified sectors.
- National Manufacturing Mission**
 - Aims to strengthen India's manufacturing ecosystem and improve competitiveness.
- PM GatiShakti**
 - Supports integrated infrastructure and logistics planning.
- National Logistics Policy**
 - Seeks to reduce logistics costs and improve India's logistics efficiency.

5. **Make in India**
 - Promotes domestic manufacturing and investment.
6. **National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell Battery Storage**
 - Relevant to India's broader clean-energy manufacturing ecosystem.
7. **Solar PV Manufacturing**
 - Linked with India's renewable-energy transition and **Atmanirbhar Bharat** objectives.

Why These Four Sectors Matter?

These sectors collectively address different dimensions of India's manufacturing challenge:

1. **Chemicals → Industrial inputs**
2. **Textiles → Employment & exports**
3. **Telecom → Digital & strategic security**
4. **Solar PV → Energy transition & green manufacturing**

Together, they can help India:

1. Reduce import dependence.
2. Create employment.
3. Increase manufacturing exports.
4. Strengthen domestic supply chains.
5. Attract global investment.
6. Integrate into global value chains.
7. Improve technological capabilities.

Major Challenges for India as a Manufacturing Hub

1. **High Logistics Costs**
 - Transportation and logistics inefficiencies reduce export competitiveness.
2. **Limited R&D**
 - Low private-sector R&D expenditure affects technological competitiveness.
3. **Import Dependence**
 - Dependence on imported critical inputs creates supply-chain vulnerabilities.
4. **MSME Fragmentation**
 - Small-scale and fragmented production limits economies of scale.
5. **Skill Gaps**
 - Advanced manufacturing requires specialised technical and digital skills.
6. **Access to Capital**
 - Long-gestation manufacturing projects often require substantial capital investment.

Way Forward

1. **Build Integrated Industrial Clusters**
 - Shared infrastructure can reduce costs and create economies of scale.
2. **Promote R&D and Technology Transfer**
 - India needs stronger industry-academia collaboration and technology partnerships.
3. **Improve Logistics**
 - Multimodal connectivity and efficient ports can reduce the cost of exporting manufactured goods.
4. **Strengthen MSMEs**
 - Provide access to finance, technology, testing facilities and common infrastructure.

5. Diversify Raw Material Sources

- Reduce excessive dependence on a single country or source for critical inputs.

6. Deepen Trade Integration

- Strategic FTAs can provide Indian manufacturers better access to global markets.

7. Focus on Quality, Not Only Scale

- Global manufacturing competitiveness requires internationally competitive quality, productivity and standards.

Prelims MCQs

Q4. Consider the following pairs:

Sector	Major Challenge
1. Chemicals	High import dependence on critical raw materials
2. Textiles	Excessive dependence on man-made fibres
3. Telecom equipment	Low localisation of high-value technologies
4. Solar PV	High upstream import dependence

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- A. 1, 3 and 4 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: A

Explanation: India's textile sector is actually heavily cotton-reliant, rather than excessively dependent on man-made fibres. The other three pairs are correctly matched.

Q5. With reference to NITI Aayog, consider the following statements:

1. It replaced the Planning Commission.
2. Its Governing Council includes Chief Ministers of States.
3. It has the same fund-allocation powers that the Planning Commission exercised.
4. It seeks to promote cooperative and competitive federalism.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 2 and 4 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: B

Explanation: NITI Aayog replaced the Planning Commission in 2015. It promotes cooperative and competitive federalism through its Governing Council. Unlike the Planning Commission, it does not have the same plan-fund allocation role.

UPSC Mains Linkage

Q6. "India's transition from a manufacturing aspirant to a global manufacturing hub requires sector-specific strategies rather than a one-size-fits-all approach." Discuss in light of NITI Aayog's identification of chemicals, textiles, telecom equipment and solar PV as high-potential sectors.

Rub' al Khali (Empty Quarter)

Oman and Saudi Arabia have signed a cross-border freight agreement that will provide an alternative overland route to maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz. The route passes through the vast Rub' al Khali, also known as the Empty Quarter.

About Rub' al Khali

1. Rub' al Khali is the world's largest continuous sand desert.
2. It covers an area of more than 650,000 sq. km.
3. It is located mainly in south-eastern Saudi Arabia.
4. The desert extends across Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
5. It is among the driest regions of the world, receiving less than 3 cm of rainfall annually.
6. Summer temperatures can rise above 50°C, while temperatures may fall sharply during the night.
7. The region has historically been inhabited by Bedouin communities.
8. Its geographical location makes it strategically important for emerging overland connectivity and trade routes in the Arabian Peninsula.



Prelims MCQ

Q1. With reference to Rub' al Khali, consider the following statements:

1. It is the world's largest continuous sand desert.
2. It extends across Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE and Yemen.
3. It receives more than 50 cm of annual rainfall.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A. 1 and 2 only

Kuril Islands

Japan has protested a visit by the Russian President to the Kuril Islands, bringing renewed attention to the long-standing territorial dispute between Russia and Japan over parts of the archipelago.

About Kuril Islands

1. The Kuril Islands form an archipelago in the **Northwestern Pacific Ocean**.
2. They lie between Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula and Japan's Hokkaido.

3. The islands separate the Pacific Ocean to the east from the Sea of Okhotsk to the west.
4. The archipelago consists of around 22 major islands, along with numerous smaller islets and rocks.
5. It covers approximately 15,600 sq. km.
6. The Kuril Islands are part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, making them highly vulnerable to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.
7. The islands are associated with stratovolcanoes, which were formed through tectonic subduction.
8. The same geological processes contributed to the formation of the Kuril Trench.
9. The islands have strategic importance because of their location between the Russian Far East and the Japanese archipelago.



Prelims MCQ

Q2. The Kuril Islands are located between:

- A. Kamchatka Peninsula and Hokkaido
- B. Sakhalin and Korean Peninsula
- C. Hokkaido and Taiwan
- D. Alaska and Kamchatka Peninsula

Answer: A. Kamchatka Peninsula and Hokkaido

Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM) Scheme

The Government has received 20 bids under the scheme for promoting manufacturing of Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPMs) in India. The initiative seeks to strengthen domestic manufacturing capacity and reduce dependence on external supply chains.

About REPM Scheme

1. The scheme aims to establish 6,000 Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MTPA) of integrated REPM manufacturing capacity in India.
2. It has a financial outlay of ₹7,280 crore.
3. The total duration of the scheme is 7 years.
4. The first 2 years are intended for facility establishment and the gestation period.
5. The subsequent 5 years involve incentive disbursement based on sales.
6. The 6,000 MTPA capacity will be allocated to five beneficiaries through global competitive bidding.
7. The scheme promotes end-to-end manufacturing, covering:
8. Rare Earth Oxides → Metals → Alloys → Finished Permanent Magnets.
9. REPMs possess high magnetic strength and stability.
10. They are important for electric vehicle motors, wind turbines, electronics, aerospace and defence systems.
11. The scheme is therefore significant for India's critical mineral security, clean-energy transition and strategic manufacturing capabilities.

Prelims MCQ

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPMs):

1. They are used in electric vehicle motors and wind turbine generators.
2. The REPM Scheme targets 6,000 MTPA integrated manufacturing capacity.
3. The scheme supports only the mining of rare earth ores and does not cover downstream manufacturing.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A. 1 and 2 only

National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC)

The Supreme Court has asked the Centre to consider establishing regional and circuit benches of the National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC) to improve access to consumer justice and expedite the disposal of pending cases.

About NCDRC

1. NCDRC is a **quasi-judicial consumer** dispute redressal body.
2. It was established in 1988 under the **Consumer Protection Act, 1986**.
3. Its headquarters is located in New Delhi.
4. It is headed by a serving or retired Judge of the Supreme Court or a serving or retired Chief Justice of a High Court.
5. It exercises jurisdiction over specified consumer complaints as well as appellate and revisional jurisdiction over decisions of State Consumer Commissions and District Consumer Commissions.
6. The Commission forms an important part of India's three-tier consumer dispute redressal mechanism.
7. The proposed regional and circuit benches could make consumer justice more accessible by reducing the geographical burden on litigants.
8. Strengthening consumer dispute resolution is also important for improving consumer confidence, accountability of service providers and ease of access to justice.

Prelims MCQ

Q4. With reference to the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC), consider the following statements:

1. It is a quasi-judicial body.
2. It is headquartered in New Delhi.
3. It was established under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
B. 2 and 3 only
C. 1 and 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: D. 1, 2 and 3

Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships and Awards



The President of India recently presented the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships and Awards for 2024 and 2025, recognising distinguished contributions to India's performing arts traditions.

About Sangeet Natak Akademi

1. The Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) was established in 1953.
2. It is the apex national institution dedicated to preserving and promoting India's intangible cultural heritage in music, dance and drama.
3. It functions as an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Culture.
4. The Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship, known as Akademi Ratna, is the highest and most prestigious honour conferred by the Akademi.
5. It recognises individuals for sustained and exceptional contributions to performing arts.
6. The Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, or Akademi Puraskar, has been conferred since 1952.
7. The awards cover areas including music, dance and theatre.
8. An Akademi Fellowship carries a purse of ₹3 lakh, while the Akademi Award carries ₹1 lakh.
9. Both honours are accompanied by a Tamrapatra and Angavastram.
10. These awards play an important role in recognising practitioners and preserving India's diverse artistic traditions.

Prelims MCQ

Q5. Consider the following statements about the Sangeet Natak Akademi:

1. It was established in 1953.
2. It functions as an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Culture.
3. Akademi Ratna is the highest honour conferred by it.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: D. 1, 2 and 3

India's Exports

India's cumulative exports of merchandise and services during April–July 2026–27 were estimated at US\$316.42 billion, compared with US\$279.63 billion during the corresponding period of 2025–26.

Key Facts

1. Total exports: US\$316.42 billion.
2. Total imports: US\$365.85 billion.
3. Merchandise exports: US\$173.78 billion.
4. Services exports: US\$142.64 billion.
5. The data indicate the continuing importance of both goods and services in India's external sector.

Major drivers of merchandise exports during July 2026 included:

1. Petroleum products

[Watch video- complete topic](#)

2. Electronic goods
3. Engineering goods
4. Organic and inorganic chemicals
5. Cotton yarn, fabrics, made-ups and handloom products

The performance of merchandise exports reflects the growing role of electronics and engineering goods, alongside traditional export sectors.

Services exports remain an important component of India's external earnings, particularly through India's globally competitive IT and business services ecosystem.

Export performance is closely linked with India's balance of payments, foreign exchange earnings, employment and integration with global value chains.

Prelims MCQ

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding India's exports during April–July 2026–27:

1. Merchandise exports were higher than services exports.
2. Electronic goods were among the major drivers of merchandise exports in July 2026.
3. India's total exports of merchandise and services exceeded US\$300 billion during the period.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: D. 1, 2 and 3

SraVaani

Researchers at IISc's SPIRE Lab, in collaboration with ARTPARK and Google, have developed SraVaani, a multilingual model designed for Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) across India's diverse linguistic landscape.

About SraVaani

SraVaani is designed to support multilingual Automatic Speech Recognition systems. It has been trained on 65 Indian languages and dialects.

Its coverage includes:

1. 20 Scheduled Languages
2. 45 regional languages and dialects

It is built on the Vaani dataset, one of the major speech datasets developed for Indian languages.

Automatic Speech Recognition technology converts spoken language into machine-readable text.

Such models can improve accessibility to digital services for people who prefer using Indian languages.

They can also support applications in education, governance, healthcare, digital assistants and public services.

The initiative is significant in the context of India's linguistic diversity and efforts to develop inclusive artificial intelligence technologies.

Development of Indian-language AI models can reduce the digital divide by making emerging technologies more accessible beyond English-speaking users.

Prelims MCQ

Q7. With reference to SraVaani, consider the following statements:

1. It is designed for Automatic Speech Recognition.
2. It covers 20 Scheduled Languages and 45 regional languages and dialects.
3. It is based on the Vaani dataset.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: D. 1, 2 and 3

Prambanan Temple

India and Indonesia have launched a landmark project to restore the Prambanan Temple, highlighting the historical and cultural connections between the two countries.

About Prambanan Temple

1. Prambanan is a major Hindu temple complex in Indonesia.
2. It was constructed during the 9th century.
3. It is considered the largest temple compound in Indonesia dedicated to Lord Shiva.
4. The temple is also known as Loro Jonggrang.
5. It is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
6. The temple complex reflects the historical spread and influence of Hindu-Buddhist cultural traditions in Southeast Asia.



Prambanan is dedicated to the Trimurti:

1. Brahma
2. Vishnu
3. Shiva

Its galleries contain Ramayana reliefs, depicting episodes from the Hindu epic through detailed stone carvings. The restoration initiative is significant not only for heritage conservation but also for strengthening India-Indonesia civilisational and cultural ties.

The temple remains an important symbol of Indonesia's multicultural historical heritage.

Prelims MCQ

Q8. Consider the following statements about Prambanan Temple:

1. It is located in Indonesia.
2. It is dedicated to the Trimurti of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.
3. It is recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
 - B. 2 and 3 only
 - C. 1 and 3 only
 - D. 1, 2 and 3
- Answer: D. 1, 2 and 3

Debt-to-GDP Ratio

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has released estimates highlighting countries with high debt-to-GDP ratios in 2026. The indicator is widely used to assess a country's fiscal position and the sustainability of its public debt.

About Debt-to-GDP Ratio

1. The debt-to-GDP ratio compares a country's public debt with the size of its economy, measured through GDP.
2. A higher ratio can indicate greater debt burdens, although its interpretation depends on factors such as economic growth, interest rates, government revenues and the composition of debt.
3. According to the IMF estimates, global debt was around 94% of world GDP in 2025.
4. Global debt is projected to approach 100% of world GDP by 2029.
5. Countries with particularly high projected debt-to-GDP ratios include:
 - Japan – 204.4%
 - Singapore – 171.9%
 - Sudan – 169.1%
6. India's debt-to-GDP ratio is estimated at 55.6% of GDP in BE 2026–27, compared with 56.1% in RE 2025–26.
7. The ratio is an important indicator for evaluating fiscal sustainability and government borrowing capacity.

Prelims MCQ

Q9. With reference to the debt-to-GDP ratio, consider the following statements:

1. It compares public debt with the size of an economy.
2. A higher debt-to-GDP ratio automatically means that a country is in sovereign default.
3. Japan has one of the world's highest debt-to-GDP ratios.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A. 1 and 3 only

Black-Necked Crane

Ladakh hosted its first-ever Black-Necked Crane Festival to promote awareness about the conservation of this distinctive high-altitude bird and highlight the importance of protecting its habitat.

About Black-Necked Crane

1. The Black-Necked Crane is the only alpine crane species among the world's 15 crane species.

2. It is associated with high-altitude wetlands, marshes and lakes.
3. Its distribution includes parts of the Tibetan Plateau, China and eastern Ladakh.
4. It is locally known as:
 - Cha thung-thung in Ladakh.
 - Thungdung karma in Arunachal Pradesh.
5. It is the State Bird of Ladakh.
6. In India, the Changthang Cold Desert Wildlife Sanctuary in Ladakh is recognised as its breeding area.
7. The species is closely associated with the high-altitude wetland ecosystems of the trans-Himalayan region.
8. Conservation of these ecosystems is important because they face pressures from habitat disturbance, climate change and human activities.
9. IUCN: Near Threatened.
10. CITES: Appendix I.
11. Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I.
12. The festival aims to strengthen public awareness and community participation in conserving this important Himalayan species.

P

BLACK NECKED CRANE

(*Grus nigricollis*) (ONLY ALPINE SPECIES OF CRANE IN THE WORLD)



Black-necked Crane was first reported from Ladakh in 1919

20-30 Years

LIFESPAN

11,500-13,500

POPULATION

HABITAT

During summers, Black-necked Cranes inhabit high-altitude lakes, wetlands, and riverine marshes, while they spend winters in fallow cultivation areas and marshes.

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Black-necked Crane breeding range includes the **Himalayan mountains**, as well as parts of **central China and northern India**. Their wintering range includes parts of southern China and Bhutan, where they descend from higher elevations.



ENDEMIC TO ASIA

Arrives in Ladakh: March End-April
Winters in Bhutan: Late Oct to March-April

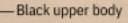
NESTS

Nests are constructed using mounds of soil and grass, frequently found on patches of land surrounded by lakes.

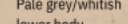




Red Crown



Black upper body



Pale grey/whitish lower body

135-139 cms

Black Tail

Weight: **5-6 KG**

Wingspan 62-64 cms

Diet: Plant roots and tubers, insects, snails, shrimp, fish, frogs, lizards, voles and waste grain.

Schedule-I of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

DANCE

The black-necked cranes engage in wonderful courting displays involving song and dance before breeding season. Both sexes are similar in size and almost identical in plumage and coloration but adult birds are over a metre tall, it is quite a sight to witness.



SPRITUALITY

In **Ladakh's Changthang Plateau**, Black-necked Cranes symbolize good luck during summer breeding. In winter, they migrate to Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, inspiring songs and festivals. In **Tibetan Buddhism**, they embody the **Sixth Dalai Lama**.

THREATS

 Conversion of Grassland to Agricultural Land.	 Overgrazing of Livestock	 Unregulated development and Tourism
 Power lines, transportation and service corridor	 Attacks from Stray Dogs	 Poaching

Prelims MCQ

Q10. Consider the following statements about the Black-Necked Crane:

1. It is the only alpine crane species in the world.
2. It is the State Bird of Ladakh.
3. It is listed in Appendix I of CITES.
4. It is classified as Critically Endangered by the IUCN.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1, 2 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 4 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: A. 1, 2 and 3 only

What's in News:

The National Shipping Board (NSB) held its first 'Sagar Samvad' and proposed a five-point roadmap to add 100 vessels to India's merchant fleet over the next five years.

Key Facts:

1. Permanent statutory advisory body established in 1959 under Section 4 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.
2. Operates under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
3. Composed of a Chairman and members, including 6 members elected by Parliament (4 from Lok Sabha, 2 from Rajya Sabha) and up to 16 nominated members representing the Central Government, ship-owners, and seamen.
4. Members hold office for a term of two years.

Static Concept:

Statutory Regulatory Framework for Shipping: India's coastal shipping and international fleet expansion are critical for reducing foreign freight outflow, advancing the Maritime India Vision 2030, and enhancing national maritime logistics efficiency.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q3. With reference to the National Shipping Board (NSB), consider the following statements:

1. It is a statutory body established under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.
2. Its members include representatives elected from both Houses of Parliament.
3. It functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (a)

Explanation: NSB functions under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, not the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Rash Behari Bose & Revolutionary Nationalism

What's in News:

Key historical profile covered in recent national commemorative retrospectives.

Key Facts:

1. Masterminded the Delhi Conspiracy Case (1912) attempting to assassinate Viceroy Lord Hardinge during the transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi.



Rash Behari Bose
(25 May 1886 – 21 January 1945)

- A Revolutionary leader was born in a small village of West Bengal.
- He is said to be the main planner of the bomb attack on Lord Hardinge.
- Played a crucial role in the Ghadar conspiracy, a conspiracy to attack British army from inside.
- Known as the Master of Disguise.
- He was the founding father of Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauz) that Subhash Chandra Bose capitalized on later.

Rash Behari Bose, The Silent Worker

2. Key leader of the 1915 Ghadar Conspiracy in northern India.
3. Escaped to Japan in 1915 under the pseudonym P. N. Tagore, where he founded the Indian Independence League in 1942.
4. Formed the first Indian National Army (INA) with Mohan Singh and Japanese Major Iwaichi Fujiwara before handing leadership over to Subhas Chandra Bose in 1943.

Static Concept:

Revolutionary Movements Abroad: The internationalization of India's freedom struggle during World Wars I and II through networks in East Asia, Europe, and North America.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q4. Who among the following founded the Indian Independence League in Tokyo and played a pivotal role in handing over the command of the Indian National Army to Subhas Chandra Bose?

- (a) Rash Behari Bose
- (b) Sachindra Nath Sanyal
- (c) Lala Har Dayal
- (d) Champakaraman Pillai

Answer: (a)

Explanation: Rash Behari Bose founded the Indian Independence League in Japan and invited Subhas Chandra Bose to take over the leadership of the INA in Southeast Asia.

Amyloid- β Probe for Alzheimer's Disease

What's in News:

Researchers developed a novel smartphone-enabled platform employing a fluorescence-responsive tiny molecule probe for cost-effective detection of the Alzheimer's disease biomarker Amyloid- β (A β).

Key Facts:

1. Alzheimer's disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder and the leading cause of dementia worldwide (accounting for 60–80% of cases).
2. Pathological hallmarks include the misfolding and extracellular aggregation of Amyloid- β (A β) peptides into neurotoxic plaques, alongside intracellular neurofibrillary tangles of hyperphosphorylated Tau protein.
3. The condition leads to severe synaptic loss, neuronal death, and progressive cognitive and behavioural impairment.

Static Concept:

Biomarkers & Point-of-Care Diagnostics: Fluorescence-based chemical probes integrated with digital imaging enable early-stage, non-invasive detection of protein misfolding disorders, addressing limitations of expensive PET scans and lumbar punctures.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q5. In the context of medical science and neurobiology, the terms 'Amyloid- β plaques' and 'Tau tangles' are characteristic pathological hallmarks of:

- (a) Parkinson's Disease

- (b) Alzheimer's Disease
- (c) Multiple Sclerosis
- (d) Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis

Answer: (b)

Explanation: The accumulation of extracellular Amyloid- β plaques and intracellular Tau protein tangles in the brain are the defining diagnostic features of Alzheimer's disease.

ICGS Ajit

What's in News:

Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) delivered the Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) ICGS Ajit to the Indian Coast Guard.

Key Facts:

1. Indigenously designed and constructed 51.43-metre Fast Patrol Vessel with a 330-tonne displacement.
2. Propelled by twin marine diesel engines driving Controllable Pitch Propellers (CPP)—a first in this class of Indian patrol vessels for enhanced fuel efficiency and maneuverability.
3. Capable of speeds over 27 knots with an operational endurance of 1,500 nautical miles.
4. Deployed for coastal patrol, EEZ surveillance, anti-smuggling, anti-piracy, and fisheries protection.

Static Concept:

Maritime Security Architecture: The Indian Coast Guard (established under the Coast Guard Act, 1978) operates under the Ministry of Defence as the designated authority for coastal security up to 200 nautical miles (India's Exclusive Economic Zone).

Prelims Practice Question:

Q6. With reference to Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs) such as ICGS Ajit in the Indian Coast Guard, consider the following statements:

1. They are primarily deployed for Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance, anti-smuggling, and fisheries protection.
2. The Indian Coast Guard functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Explanation: The Indian Coast Guard functions under the Ministry of Defence, not the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Mission Samriddh Gaon

What's in News:

The Union Minister for Rural Development launched the Mission Samriddh Gaon initiative to develop poverty-free, employment-rich model villages on a pilot basis in Madhya Pradesh (Budni block in Sehore district and Khategaon block in Dewas district).

Key Facts:**Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Rural Development.**

1. **Objective:** Establish model rural units where all families have sustained employment/livelihood access and basic infrastructure to prevent distress migration.
2. **Mechanism:** Integrated development planning across family, Gram Panchayat, and block levels.
3. **Convergence:** Coordinates existing Central and State welfare programs across health, agriculture, education, and livelihood support.
4. **Gender Focus:** Prioritizes identifying and advising women farmers to link them with economic opportunities.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Decentralized planning under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (Article 243G and the Eleventh Schedule) and the administrative framework of convergence between Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and local governance bodies.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q7. With reference to "Mission Samridh Gaon", consider the following statements:

1. It is an initiative under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
2. It follows an integrated planning framework at the family, Gram Panchayat, and block levels.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect as it is launched by the Ministry of Rural Development. Statement 2 is correct.

Joari River & The Luni Drainage Basin

What's in News:

The Supreme Court took suo motu cognizance of industrial pollution in the Joari River in Rajasthan, imposing a ban on construction within 100 meters of the river and prohibiting hazardous industries within 500 meters of the flood line.

Key Facts:

1. **Origin:** Originates from hills near Pandalu (Poondloo) village in Nagaur district, Rajasthan.
2. **Course:** Flows through Jodhpur and joins the Luni River near Balotra.
3. **Drainage Peculiarity:** It is the only right-bank tributary of the Luni River and the only tributary in the Luni network that does not originate from the Aravalli Range.
4. **Type:** Non-perennial, seasonal stream spanning approximately 83 kilometers.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Inland drainage systems of arid/semi-arid regions, the geomorphology of the Thar Desert river network, and the environmental jurisprudence surrounding the Public Trust Doctrine and suo motu powers under Article 32/142.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q8. Consider the following statements regarding the Jojari River:

1. It is a perennial tributary flowing into the Chambal river basin.
2. It is the only tributary of the Luni River that does not originate from the Aravalli Range.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect because Jojari is a seasonal tributary of the Luni River (an inland drainage system). Statement 2 is correct.

Student Notes

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)

What's in News:

SIDBI convened a high-level conclave with Heads of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) in New Delhi to expand the SIDBI-RRB MSME Co-Lending framework.

Key Facts:

1. **Establishment:** Set up on April 2, 1990, under an Act of the Indian Parliament as a wholly-owned subsidiary of IDBI; delinked from IDBI in 2000.
2. **Headquarters:** Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.
3. **Mandate:** Principal financial institution for promotion, financing, and development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
4. **Lending Mode:** Provides indirect refinancing to commercial banks, RRBs, and NBFCs, as well as direct finance for niche venture and risk capital needs.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Development Financial Institutions (DFIs) vs. Commercial Banks, statutory financial regulators, priority sector lending (PSL) mechanisms, and the credit-delivery ecosystem for the informal economy.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q9. With reference to the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), consider the following statements:

1. It is a statutory body headquartered in Mumbai.
2. It acts as the principal financial institution for the promotion and financing of the MSME sector.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect because SIDBI is headquartered in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Statement 2 is correct.

Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*)

What's in News:

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) requested the **National Green Tribunal (NGT) to direct Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka** to formulate an annual conservation action plan for Neelakurinji.

Key Facts:

1. **Botanical Characteristics:** Shrub belonging to the family Acanthaceae; exhibits a 12-year monocarpic (semelparous) flowering cycle.

2. **Habitat:** Confined to high-altitude Shola grasslands (1,340 m to 2,600 m elevation) of the Western and Eastern Ghats.
3. **Conservation Status:** Listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List due to habitat degradation from plantations and urbanization.
4. **Cultural Significance:** The Nilgiri Hills ("Blue Mountains") derive their name from its purplish-blue blooms; the indigenous Paliyan tribe historically uses its flowering cycles to calculate age.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Shola-grassland mosaic ecology, adaptations of endemic montane flora, tribal anthropology of the Nilgiris (Paliyan, Toda, Kurumba), and provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 regarding protected plant species.

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) is a specialised body for swift resolution of environmental and natural resource cases.

About

- ⦿ **Establishment:** By National Green Tribunal Act 2010
- ⦿ **Objective:** Quick resolution of environmental & natural resource cases
- ⦿ **Case Resolution:** Within 6 months
- ⦿ **Places of Sitting:** New Delhi (Principal), Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata, and Chennai

Structure

- ⦿ **Composition:** Chairperson, Judicial Members, and Expert Members
- ⦿ **Tenure:** Up to 5 years/until age 65 (no reappointment)
- ⦿ **Appointments:** Chairperson - Central Government (with the CJI's consultation)
⦿ 10-20 judicial members & 10-20 expert members - Selection Committee

Powers & Jurisdiction

- ⦿ **Jurisdiction:** Civil cases on environmental issues and rights
- ⦿ **Suo Motu Powers:** Granted since 2021
- ⦿ **Roles:** Adjudicatory, preventative, and remedial
- ⦿ **Procedures:** Follows Principles of natural justice
⦿ Not bound by the CPC, 1908 or Indian Evidence Act, 1872
- ⦿ **Principles:** Sustainable Development; Precautionary; Polluter pays
- ⦿ **Orders:** Executable as civil court decrees; offers relief and compensation (**decisions are binding**)
- ⦿ **Appeals:** Tribunal can review its decisions.
⦿ If decision fails - Appeal to the SC to be filed within 90 days

NGT deals with Civil Cases under

- ⦿ Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
- ⦿ Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977
- ⦿ Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
- ⦿ Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
- ⦿ Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- ⦿ Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
- ⦿ Biological Diversity Act, 2002

India is the third country globally (after Australia and New Zealand) and the first developing nation to establish a specialised environmental tribunal like NGT.



Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding 'Neelakurinji' (Strobilanthes kunthiana):

1. It is a semelparous plant that blooms synchronously once every 12 years.
2. It is strictly endemic to the mangrove swamps of the Sunderbans.
3. The Paliyan tribe traditionally uses its flowering intervals to estimate age.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Statement 2 is incorrect because Neelakurinji is endemic to high-altitude Shola grasslands of the Western and Eastern Ghats. Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

Human Gut Microbiome

What's in News:

Researchers initiated an extensive mapping study to evaluate how varying lifestyles, diets, and environments shape the South Asian gut microbiome.

Key Facts:

1. **Definition:** Complex ecosystem comprising trillions of bacteria, fungi, viruses, and archaea inhabiting the human gastrointestinal tract.

2. **Acquisition:** Colonization begins during birth (vaginal delivery vs. cesarean) and early feeding (breast milk), followed by continuous diversification via diet and environmental exposures.
3. **Functions:** Assists in complex carbohydrate digestion, biosynthesizes essential micronutrients (e.g., Vitamin K, B-group vitamins), maintains gut epithelial integrity, and regulates systemic immune responses.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Symbiotic biological relationships (mutualism), dysbiosis, the gut-brain-microbiome axis, metabolic regulation, and the role of microbial fermentation in producing Short-Chain Fatty Acids (SCFAs).

Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. With reference to the human gut microbiome, consider the following statements:

1. It consists exclusively of pathogenic bacteria that trigger gastrointestinal inflammation.
2. It plays an active role in the synthesis of essential vitamins and the maintenance of the intestinal mucosal barrier.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect because the microbiome comprises commensal/beneficial bacteria, viruses, fungi, and archaea. Statement 2 is correct.

Military Combat Parachute System (MCPS)

What's in News:

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully validated the Military Combat Parachute System (MCPS) from an altitude of 22,000 feet at the Nyoma drop zone in eastern Ladakh.

Key Facts:

1. **Developers:** Indigenously designed by DRDO's Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE), Agra, and the Defence Bioengineering and Electromedical Laboratory (DEBEL), Bengaluru.
2. **Operational Envelope:** Capable of deployment above 25,000 feet, with combat freefall trials verified up to 32,000 feet.
3. **Key Features:** Low descent rate, high glide ratio, enhanced maneuverability, and integration with the NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) satellite network for precise drop-zone targeting.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Indigenous defense manufacturing, high-altitude military logistics, tactical airborne operations (HALO/HAHO jumps), and the operational capabilities of NavIC (IRNSS).

Prelims Practice Question:

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Military Combat Parachute System (MCPS):

1. It has been developed indigenously by DRDO.
2. It is compatible with India's regional satellite navigation system, NavIC.



Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Both statements are correct. The MCPS is an indigenous DRDO development integrated with NavIC for high-altitude tactical descent.

Notification of Heatwaves and Lightning as Natural Disasters

What's in News:

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has included heatwaves and lightning in the list of notified natural disasters under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, making states eligible for central financial assistance.

Key Facts:

1. **Recommendation:** The decision follows the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission for the 2026-31 award period.
2. **Funding Mechanism:** States can now utilize their full State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for relief and mitigation of heatwaves and lightning.
3. **Backup Support:** The National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) acts as a backup when state funds are inadequate. Previously, states could only spend up to 10% of their SDRF on state-notified disasters.

Static Concept for UPSC:

The legal framework of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the structure and funding of the SDRF/NDRF, and the constitutional mandate of the Finance Commission (Article 280) in recommending grants-in-aid.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q4. With reference to the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), consider the following statements:

1. The NDRF is constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
2. The inclusion of new natural calamities for NDRF assistance is finalized based on the recommendations of the NITI Aayog.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct. Statement 2 is incorrect; the addition of new calamities and disaster funding guidelines follow the recommendations of the Finance Commission, not NITI Aayog.

Student Notes

Jojari River and the Luni Basin

What's in News:

The Supreme Court barred construction within 100 meters and hazardous industries within 500 meters of the Jojari River in Rajasthan to safeguard its riverine ecosystem from extreme pollution.

Key Facts:

1. **Course:** The Jojari river flows through Jodhpur and joins the Luni River near Balotra city.
2. **Drainage:** It is a critical component of the Luni inland drainage system.
3. **Judicial Action:** The Supreme Court ordered an Integrated Coordination Group to scientifically demarcate the high flood line and ecological buffer zones of the river.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Inland drainage systems of the Thar Desert, the geography of the Luni river basin (right bank vs left bank tributaries), and the environmental jurisprudence surrounding floodplain zoning.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Jojari River:

1. It is a perennial tributary flowing into the Chambal river basin.
2. It forms part of the inland drainage system and joins the Luni river.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect because the Jojari is a seasonal river and part of the Luni inland drainage system, not the Chambal basin. Statement 2 is correct.

Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill, 2026

What's in News:

[Watch video](#)

The Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill, 2026, was introduced to amend the MMDR Act, 1957, aiming to restrict states' mineral taxation powers and ensure fiscal uniformity for the mineral sector.

Key Facts:

1. **Objective:** The bill seeks to create a uniform fiscal and regulatory environment for the mining sector across the country by rationalizing the taxation powers currently exercised by individual states.
2. **Impact:** Aims to boost the Ease of Doing Business in the mineral sector, attract private investment, and streamline the auctioning of critical minerals.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Federal fiscal relations regarding mineral rights. Regulation of mines and minerals falls under Entry 54 of the Union List and Entry 23/Entry 50 of the State List, highlighting the legislative competence of Parliament to take control in the public interest.

Prelims Practice Question:**Q6. Under the Constitution of India, the power to regulate mines and mineral development:**

1. Is exclusively vested in the State Legislatures.
2. Can be taken under the control of the Union by a law enacted by Parliament in the public interest.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)**Explanation:** Statement 1 is incorrect as states' powers (Entry 23, State List) are subject to the provisions of List I (Entry 54). Statement 2 is correct; Parliament can enact laws (like the MMDR Act) bringing regulation under Union control.

Vaishya Tekri Excavation in Ujjain

What's in News:

Fresh excavations at the Vaishya Tekri mound in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, have renewed historical interest in its association with Mauryan Emperor Ashoka and the spread of Buddhism in ancient Malwa.

Key Facts:

1. **Scale:** Vaishya Tekri is one of the largest ancient mounds in India, estimated to be substantially larger than the Great Stupa at Sanchi.
2. **Historical Links:** Earlier excavations in 1938–39 yielded large bricks and punch-marked coins dating back to the Mauryan period.
3. **Foreign Accounts:** Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (7th century CE) recorded a tradition linking a site near Ujjain to Ashoka. Ancient Ujjayini was the capital of Avanti.

Static Concept for UPSC:

Mauryan Empire provincial administration (Ashoka serving as viceroy in Ujjain before becoming emperor), the evolution of Buddhist stupa architecture, and accounts of foreign travelers like Xuanzang.

Prelims Practice Question:**Q7. Consider the following pairs regarding ancient Indian history:**

1. Vaishya Tekri - Ujjain
2. Xuanzang - Visited India during Ashoka's reign

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)**Explanation:** Pair 1 is correct. Pair 2 is incorrect; Xuanzang visited India in the 7th century CE during the reign of Harsha, not Ashoka.

Thermal Protection System (TPS) for Gaganyaan

What's in News:

The ISRO Gaganyaan crew module will utilize an advanced ablative thermal protection system to shield astronauts from friction-induced temperatures reaching 1,800°C during atmospheric re-entry.

Key Facts:

1. **Mechanism:** The TPS relies on ablative materials that absorb thermal energy by deliberately sacrificing their outer layer through heat-driven chemical decomposition (pyrolysis).
2. **Heat Management:** It protects the crew by managing extreme heat through insulation, charring, outgassing, and controlled material loss.
3. **Design:** The shield is roughly 30–35 mm thick and is designed as a highly reliable single-use system.

Static Concept for UPSC:

The physics of atmospheric re-entry (aerodynamic deceleration, convection, and radiation), thermodynamics of pyrolysis, and the architecture of India's human spaceflight program (HLVM3, Crew Escape System).

Prelims Practice Question:

Q8. With reference to the Ablative Thermal Protection System used in space missions, consider the following statements:

1. It protects the spacecraft by absorbing heat and deliberately sacrificing its outer material.
2. The ablative shield relies on the process of pyrolysis to consume incoming thermal energy.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Both statements are correct. Ablative heat shields protect spacecraft by sacrificing material, which undergoes pyrolysis (heat-driven chemical decomposition) to dissipate thermal energy.

Military Combat Parachute System (MCPS)

What's in News:

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully tested the indigenously developed Military Combat Parachute System (MCPS) at an altitude of 22,000 feet at the Nyoma-Mudh Drop Zone in Ladakh.

Key Facts:

1. **Developers:** Indigenously designed by DRDO's Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE) in Agra.
2. **Capabilities:** Can be employed in HALO (High-Altitude Low Opening) and HAHO (High-Altitude High Opening) modes for the tactical insertion of special forces.
3. **Payload & Testing:** The system can accommodate payloads of 50 kg to 200 kg and has been validated in extreme high-altitude conditions (minus 15°C).

Static Concept for UPSC:

Defence indigenization under Aatmanirbhar Bharat, specialized high-altitude military logistics, and the strategic geography of Eastern Ladakh (Nyoma-Mudh region).

Prelims Practice Question:

Q9. The 'Military Combat Parachute System' (MCPS), recently tested at extreme altitudes in Ladakh, has been indigenously developed by:

- (a) Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)
- (b) Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
- (c) Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)
- (d) Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)

Answer: (c)

Explanation: The MCPS was designed and developed by DRDO's Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE) for specialized military airborne operations.

Student Notes

જાણ IAS, IPS, જેવી પદવી યાચી કરી સાચા અર્થમાં રાષ્ટ્ર સેવક
બને અને સમાજ તથા દેશની સેવા કરે.

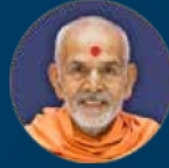
All Individuals, by pursuing titles such as IAS and IPS, truly become
'Rashtra Sevaks' and serve society and the nation.

Blessed by:



HH PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

Inspired by:



HH MAHANT SWAMI MAHARAJ



cultivating
PRAMUKHNESS

✉ interact@pramukh.academy

☎ +91 999 899 2876

🌐 www.pramukh.academy



@BAPSPramukhAcademy

Follow us on



Scan the QR Code to stay updated
on the official telegram channel