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Preface

PRAMUKH SAMEEKSHA MAGAZINE compilation attempts to encapsulate crucial WHY IN NEWS? analysis published in **The Hindu and The Indian Express** from **February 1 to February 28, 2026**, specifically tailored for aspirants preparing for UPSC and various State PSC examinations.

Each editorial is analyzed with a clear focus on the UPSC examination pattern, highlighting significant aspects such as **political, economic, social, environmental, and ethical dimensions**. Moreover, this analysis emphasizes how editorial insights can be practically leveraged to enrich answers for both **Prelims and Mains examinations**, aiding aspirants in building a **comprehensive, nuanced perspective**.

By systematically connecting current affairs with static syllabus topics, this compilation **aims to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and contemporary developments**. Aspirants will find these analyses instrumental in refining their critical thinking skills, enhancing their understanding of **national and global events**, and ultimately improving their performance in the examination hall.

We sincerely hope that this dedicated effort supports and empowers you on your journey towards **achieving excellence in your civil services preparation**.

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.

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POLITY GOVERNANCE & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

With Tariff Cloud Lifting, India–US Can Shape Balance of Power in Asia & the World

Source: *The Indian Express* | C. Raja Mohan

Introduction:

The finalisation of the India–US trade deal marks more than the resolution of a commercial dispute. It clears a major irritant in bilateral ties and allows both countries to refocus on broader strategic objectives—particularly shaping the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific and wider Asia amid evolving global alignments.

Key Issues

1. Trade Frictions as Strategic Distractions

- Tariff disputes had overshadowed wider convergence despite strong defence and geopolitical alignment.

2. China as the Central Strategic Variable

- Both India and the US see managing China's rise as a shared long-term challenge, though approaches may differ.

3. India–Russia Relations

- India's discounted Russian oil imports are driven by economic logic, not alliance politics.

4. Pakistan's Diminishing Strategic Relevance

- Pakistan no longer occupies a central place in US regional strategy, reducing its leverage.

5. Need for Regional Strategy

- India must translate improved ties with the US into tangible influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region.



Key Facts for Prelims

India–US relations are anchored in **strategic, defence, economic, and technology cooperation**.

- The **Indo-Pacific** is central to both countries' strategic outlooks.
- The US views **China as its principal strategic competitor**.
- India maintains **strategic autonomy**, including energy purchases from Russia.
- Trade disputes have been a recurring friction point in India–US ties.

Global Practices

US Alliances	Relies on dense networks (NATO, Quad, AUKUS) rather than bilateralism alone.
China	Uses trade, infrastructure, and military presence to shape regional order.
EU	Combines economic integration with strategic autonomy.

India's approach remains coalition-based but non-allied, focusing on issue-based convergence.

Indian Policies / Committees

Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)	India-led initiative promoting maritime security, connectivity, ecology, and sustainable resource use in Indo-Pacific.
Quad Framework (India, US, Japan, Australia)	Informal strategic grouping ensuring free, open Indo-Pacific through cooperation on security, technology, and supply chains.

Act East Policy	India's policy to deepen economic, strategic, and cultural ties with Southeast and East Asia.
Strategic Autonomy Doctrine guiding external relations	India's foreign policy principle ensuring independent decision-making without formal military or political alliances.

Way Forward

1. Deepen Economic Integration

- Expand trade, supply chains, and technology partnerships with the US and allies.

2. Leverage Strategic Convergence

- Use defence and security cooperation to stabilise the Indo-Pacific.

3. Maintain Balanced Diplomacy

- Manage relations with Russia without undermining Western partnerships.

4. Strengthen Regional Outreach

- Increase diplomatic, economic, and security engagement in South Asia and the Indian Ocean.

5. Institutionalise Cooperation

- Move from episodic deals to predictable, rule-based bilateral mechanisms.

Conclusion

The easing of trade tensions allows India and the US to restore focus on their long-term strategic convergence. If sustained through consistent diplomacy and economic cooperation, this partnership can contribute meaningfully to regional stability and a multipolar balance of power in Asia and beyond.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Indo-Pacific is a key strategic priority for both India and the United States.
2. India's energy imports from Russia are driven solely by geopolitical alignment.
3. Trade disputes have historically affected the pace of India-US strategic cooperation.

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

Correct Answer: (a)

Mains Question

Q2. "The resolution of trade disputes between India and the United States strengthens their ability to shape the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific." Discuss.

Student Notes

On New Manipur CM's Plate: Challenges and Hope

Source: *The Indian Express*

Introduction:

Nearly a year after the imposition of President's Rule, Manipur has a new Chief Minister, Yumkhamchand Singh. His appointment signals an attempt at political restoration in a State deeply scarred by ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities. The transition offers cautious hope, but the challenges ahead remain complex and deeply rooted.

Key Issues

1. **Deep Ethnic Polarisation**
 - Violence has hardened ethnic boundaries, reducing trust between communities and weakening shared civic identity.
2. **Displacement and Humanitarian Crisis**
 - Thousands remain displaced, with relief camps becoming semi-permanent, affecting livelihoods and education.
3. **Militant Presence and Arms Proliferation**
 - Free flow of weapons and militant impunity undermine the authority of the State.
4. **Fragile Political Legitimacy**
 - Governance credibility suffered during prolonged instability and perceptions of partisan handling.
5. **Centre-State Coordination Challenges**
 - Restoring normalcy requires sustained cooperation between the State government and the Union.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **President's Rule** is imposed under **Article 356** of the Constitution.
- Manipur has witnessed prolonged ethnic violence involving **Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities**.
- Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) remain housed in relief camps across districts.
- Ethnic militias and insurgent groups operate in parts of the State.
- Law and order is a **State subject** under the Seventh Schedule.

Global Practices

Northern Ireland	Power-sharing arrangements reduced ethnic conflict through political inclusion.
Sri Lanka	Post-conflict reconciliation commissions addressed grievances but required sustained political will.
Nepal	Federal accommodation helped manage ethnic diversity after conflict.

Successful cases combine security measures with political reconciliation.

Indian Policies / Committees

1. **Article 356 (President's Rule)**
2. **Sixth Schedule** provisions for tribal administration
3. **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** oversight in internal security matters
4. **Inter-State Council & peace committees** for conflict management

Way Forward

1. **Restore Rule of Law**
 - Neutral enforcement against illegal arms, militias, and criminal networks.
2. **Political Dialogue and Inclusion**
 - Structured engagement with all ethnic groups, including civil society and tribal bodies.
3. **Rehabilitation of IDPs**

- Time-bound return, compensation, and livelihood restoration for displaced families.
- 4. **Institutional Trust-Building**
 - Transparent governance and impartial administration to rebuild confidence.
- 5. **Centre–State Strategic Coordination**
 - Long-term security, development, and reconciliation roadmap jointly implemented.

Conclusion

The new Chief Minister’s tenure begins at a moment of rare political opportunity for Manipur. Restoring peace will require balancing firmness in law enforcement with sensitivity to ethnic grievances. If handled with restraint, inclusivity, and institutional integrity, this transition could mark the beginning of genuine reconciliation rather than another missed opportunity.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. President’s Rule in a State is imposed under Article 356 of the Constitution.
2. Law and order is a subject under the Union List.
3. Ethnic conflicts in India often involve challenges related to governance and internal security.

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

Correct Answer: (a)

Mains Question

Q2. “Political leadership change alone cannot resolve deep-rooted ethnic conflicts.” Discuss this statement in the context of Manipur.

Tender Years Doctrine:

Recently, the **Delhi High Court** ruled that the **welfare and best interests of minor children** must take precedence over the automatic application of the **Tender Years Doctrine** in custody matters.

About the Tender Years Doctrine

1. It is a **common law principle** in family law and child custody jurisprudence.
2. The doctrine presumes that children of **tender age** (generally **below 5 years**) should ordinarily remain in the custody of the **mother**, unless she is proven unfit.
3. The principle is based on certain traditional presumptions:
 - **Biological Bond:** Infants are naturally attached to their mothers.
 - **Nurturing Role:** Mothers are assumed to be better caregivers during early childhood.
 - **Developmental Needs:** Maternal involvement is considered crucial in formative years.
 - **Emotional Security:** A mother’s presence is believed to ensure psychological stability.



4. The doctrine originated in the **late 19th century**.
5. It is commonly invoked in **divorce and separation-related custody disputes**.
6. Its relevance has gradually declined due to **changing societal norms, gender equality, and shared parenting roles**.

Key Observations of the Delhi High Court

1. The court emphasized that the **best interests and welfare of the child** are of **paramount importance**.
2. It held that custody decisions should be based on a **holistic assessment of the child's physical, emotional, educational, and psychological well-being**.
3. The court rejected reliance on **gender-based stereotypes** while determining custodial rights.

Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary:

Recently, scientists from the **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)** discovered a **new species of flowering plant** in **Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary**, Telangana. The species has been named ***Dicliptera pakhalica***.

About Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary

1. **Location:** Situated in **Warangal district**, Telangana
2. **Vegetation:** Dominated by **mixed deciduous forests**
3. **Pakhal Lake:** Located within the sanctuary; excavated in **1213 AD** during the reign of **King Ganapati Deva of the Kakatiya dynasty**
4. **Flora:** Rich diversity including **bamboo, teak, Terminalia, Pterocarpus, and Mahua**, along with various **herbs, shrubs, and climbers**
5. **Fauna:** Inhabits species such as **leopard, wild boar, panther, hyena, sloth bear, chital, blackbuck, and mountain gazelle**

Key Facts about *Dicliptera pakhalica*

1. **Family:** Acanthaceae
2. **Type:** Flowering plant species
3. **Habitat:** Found along **stream banks and rocky terrains**
4. **Flowering Period:** **November to January**
5. **Fruiting Period:** **December to March**
6. **Associated Flora:** Grows alongside native plant species such as ***Tarenna asiatica*** and ***Eranthemum purpurascens***

Distressing Regularity

Source: *The Hindu (Editorial)*

GS Paper Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security, Mining, Environment, Governance
- **GS Paper II:** Federalism, Law Enforcement, Institutional Capacity

Introduction: Distressing Regularity of Illegal Mining

The repeated incidents of illegal mining, highlighted by the recent rat-hole mining tragedy in Meghalaya, underline a distressing regularity in regulatory failure. Despite judicial bans and policy frameworks, illegal mining persists due to weak enforcement, informal labour structures, and fragmented accountability.

Key Issues

1. Weak Enforcement of Judicial Orders

- Court and NGT bans exist but lack ground-level compliance.
- *Example:* Continued rat-hole mining despite 2014 NGT prohibition.

2. Informal and Fragmented Mining Structure

- Small landholdings enable evasion of formal regulation.
- *Example:* Meghalaya's coal mining dominated by private, unregistered owners.

3. Supply Chain Gaps

- Extraction, transport, and sale remain poorly monitored.
- *Example:* Coal moved through informal transport networks without permits.

4. Labour Vulnerability

- Workers lack legal protection and safety standards.
- *Example:* Daily-wage miners working without safety gear or insurance.

5. Limited State Capacity

- Regulatory bodies face manpower and technological constraints.
- *Example:* Inadequate inspection and monitoring mechanisms in mining districts.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Rat-hole mining:** Narrow tunnels dug manually, mainly for coal extraction
- **NGT ban (2014):** Prohibited rat-hole coal mining in Meghalaya
- **Meghalaya coal:** Characterised by small deposits and informal ownership
- **Illegal mining:** Often linked with informal labour and unsafe practices
- **MMDR Act, 1957:** Governs mining regulation in India
- **GPS tracking:** Used to monitor mineral transportation.

Global Practices

Australia	Uses integrated digital mine monitoring and strict safety enforcement.
Canada	Strong provincial oversight with transparent mining registries.
Chile	Centralised mineral tracking across extraction and transport stages.
South Africa	Formalisation of small mines with labour safety compliance.
Germany	Zero-tolerance enforcement and advanced environmental auditing.

Indian Policies / Committees

MMDR Act, 1957	Regulates mineral extraction, licensing, and penalties for illegal mining.
National Green Tribunal	Enforces environmental compliance through judicial oversight.
District Mineral Foundation (DMF)	Utilises mining revenue for local area development.
Mine Surveillance System (MSS)	Satellite-based monitoring of illegal mining activity.
Inter-State Coordination Mechanisms	Address illegal mineral transport across state borders.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen end-to-end digital tracking of mineral extraction and transport.
2. Formalise small-scale mining with safety, registration, and labour protection.
3. Improve coordination between state governments and central agencies.
4. Enhance district-level enforcement capacity with manpower and technology.
5. Link DMF funds to rehabilitation and alternative livelihoods for miners.

Conclusion

Illegal mining in India reflects not policy absence but enforcement deficit. Addressing the distressing regularity of such incidents requires coordinated governance, technological monitoring, and gradual formalisation of informal mining ecosystems—balancing economic needs with safety and legality.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Rat-hole mining has been banned by the National Green Tribunal.
2. The MMDR Act governs both legal and illegal mining regulation.
3. District Mineral Foundation funds are meant exclusively for mine owners.

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

Correct Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. Illegal mining persists in India despite regulatory frameworks. Analyse the reasons and suggest measures to address this challenge.?

Armenia: Latest News

The **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) of India** is leading a **high-level defence delegation** on a **four-day official visit to Armenia**, aimed at strengthening **bilateral defence cooperation**.

About Armenia

1. **Location:** A **landlocked country** situated in the **South Caucasus region**
2. **Boundaries:**
 - **North:** Georgia
 - **East:** Azerbaijan
 - **Southeast:** Iran
 - **West:** Turkey
3. **Capital:** Yerevan



Geographical Features of Armenia

1. **Terrain:** Dominated by the **Lesser (Little) Caucasus Mountains**
2. **Soil:** Largely **volcanic in origin**, rich in **nitrogen, potash, and phosphates**
3. **Highest Peak:** **Mount Aragats (4,090 m)** — an **extinct volcanic mountain**
4. **Climate:** **Highland continental** climate with **hot summers** and **cold winters**
5. **Major Rivers:** **Aras, Hrazdan, Arpa, and Vorotan** — crucial for **irrigation and hydropower**
6. **Largest Lake:** **Lake Sevan**
7. **Natural Resources:** Limited deposits of **gold, copper, molybdenum, zinc, and bauxite**

Myanmar's Military-Scripted Polls and India's Strategic Bind

Source: *The hindu*

Authors: Harsh V. Pant, Sreeparna Banerjee

Introduction:

Five years after the February 2021 military coup, Myanmar's junta has attempted to engineer political normalcy through tightly controlled elections held in phases between late 2025 and early 2026. Rather than resolving the crisis, these polls have deepened legitimacy concerns and prolonged instability. For India, which shares a long and sensitive border with Myanmar, the elections create a **strategic bind**—between principles of democratic legitimacy and the imperatives of security and regional stability.



Key Issues Highlighted in the Article

1. Credibility Deficit of the Elections

- Low voter turnout, restricted constituencies, and exclusion of opposition parties have undermined the elections' legitimacy.

2. Continued Political Repression

- Arrests of political leaders, journalists, and activists continue, reinforcing the perception of military rule by coercion rather than consent.

3. Fragmented Territorial Control

- Ethnic armed organisations and resistance groups control large swathes of territory, limiting the state's ability to enforce outcomes.

4. Spillover Effects for India

- Instability has led to refugee inflows into India's northeastern states and heightened cross-border security risks.

5. Strategic Dilemma for India

- India must engage the regime for security and connectivity while avoiding actions that legitimise an unrepresentative political process.

Key Facts for Prelims

- Myanmar's military seized power in **February 2021**, overthrowing an elected government
- Elections were conducted in **less than one-third** of constituencies under heavy military control
- India shares a **1,643 km border** with Myanmar across four northeastern states
- Myanmar is central to India's **Act East Policy** and connectivity to Southeast Asia
- ASEAN follows a policy of **non-recognition of illegitimate regimes**, but maintains engagement

Global Practices

ASEAN	Maintains engagement without formal recognition of the junta's electoral outcomes
Western countries	Non-recognition combined with targeted sanctions
China	Pragmatic engagement focused on stability and infrastructure interests

Globally, states balance **limited engagement with principled distance**, avoiding endorsement of flawed electoral processes.

Indian Policies / Committees

Act East Policy	Myanmar is a land bridge to Southeast Asia
Neighbourhood First	Stability over regime preference
Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project	Strategic but delayed due to security concerns
Humanitarian Assistance	India has continued disaster and relief support without political endorsement

Way Forward

- 1. Principled Engagement**
 - Maintain diplomatic channels focused on security and humanitarian cooperation, without endorsing electoral outcomes.
- 2. Border and Internal Security Coordination**
 - Strengthen surveillance, intelligence-sharing, and refugee management in northeastern states.
- 3. Support Inclusive Political Dialogue**
 - Encourage ASEAN-led and regional mechanisms aimed at political reconciliation.
- 4. Protect Connectivity Projects**
 - Reassess timelines and security frameworks for infrastructure projects in conflict-prone regions.
- 5. Regional Coordination**
 - Work with ASEAN partners to align engagement strategies and avoid unilateral legitimisation.

Conclusion:

Myanmar's military-scripted elections neither resolve the country's political crisis nor offer a stable foundation for governance. For India, disengagement is not an option, but endorsement is equally untenable. The challenge lies in sustaining a calibrated approach—one that safeguards India's security interests and regional connectivity while remaining aligned with democratic norms. In Myanmar's case, **principles and pragmatism must move together, not cancel each other out.**

Prelims MCQ

Q.1 Consider the following statements:

1. Myanmar is a critical component of India's Act East Policy.
2. Elections conducted under military rule automatically restore international legitimacy.
3. Instability in Myanmar has direct implications for India's northeastern states.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: b) 1 and 3 only

Mains Practice Question

Q.2 "India's approach towards Myanmar reflects the tension between democratic principles and strategic pragmatism." Examine this statement in the context of recent political developments in Myanmar. (250 words)

Lok Sabha Passes Motion of Thanks in Absence of Prime Minister

Source: The Hindu

What In News

The Lok Sabha Passed the Motion of Thanks on The President's Address Despite the **Absence of The Prime Minister**, Amid Opposition Protests and Repeated Adjournments.

Major Key Facts

1. Motion Of Thanks Was Passed in Lok Sabha Without Prime Minister's Presence.
2. Opposition protested and alleged **violation of parliamentary conventions**.
3. Speaker termed Opposition conduct as "**not appropriate**" and a "black spot".
4. Union Home Minister and Defence Minister were present during voting.
5. Repeated **adjournments due to protests** over Manipur and other issues.



Static Concept

Motion of Thanks – Constitutional Background

1. Provided under **Article 87** of the Indian Constitution.
2. President addresses both Houses at:
 - First session after each General Election
 - First session of every year
3. Parliament discusses the address through a **Motion of Thanks**.

Key Features

1. Moved by a **member of the ruling party**.
2. Followed by a **wide-ranging debate** on government policies.
3. Government must **reply to issues raised** during debate.
4. Amendments can be moved and voted upon.
5. Defeat of Motion of Thanks is treated as:
 - **Loss of confidence in the government**.

Parliamentary Convention

1. Prime Minister is **expected (but not constitutionally mandated)** to reply.
2. Absence raises issues of **convention, not legality**.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Motion of Thanks in Parliament, consider the following statements:

1. The Motion of Thanks is discussed after the President's Address under Article 87.
2. Defeat of the Motion of Thanks amounts to a loss of confidence in the Council of Ministers.
3. The Constitution mandates the Prime Minister's presence during voting on the Motion of Thanks.

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

Explanation (Prelims Angle):

1. Statement 1 ✓ Correct
2. Statement 2 ✓ Correct
3. Statement 3 ✗ Incorrect – PM's presence is a **convention**, not constitutional requirement.

Centre Releases ₹1,133 Crore as XV Finance Commission Grants to Panchayati Raj Institutions

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB) / Ministry of Panchayati Raj

What In News

The **Centre released over ₹1,133 crore as XV Finance Commission grants** to strengthen **Panchayati Raj Institutions** in Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Telangana.

Major Key Facts

1. Over **₹1,133 crore released** as grants under the **15th Finance Commission**.
2. Funds released to **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**.
3. Beneficiary States include **Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Telangana**.
4. Grants aim to strengthen **local governance and service delivery**.
5. Funds released based on **performance and statutory compliance**.

Static Concept

15th Finance Commission (XV FC)

1. Constitutional body under **Article 280** of the Constitution.
2. Chairperson: **N.K. Singh**.
3. Period covered: **2021–26**.
4. Focus areas:
 - Strengthening **local governments**
 - Improving **health, sanitation and basic services**
 - Performance-based incentives.

Finance Commission Grants to PRIs

1. Two components:
 - **Basic Grants** – untied, formula-based
 - **Tied Grants** – for specific sectors like:
 - ✓ Drinking water
 - ✓ Sanitation
2. Conditions:
 - Timely submission of **accounts and audits**
 - Functioning of **State Finance Commissions (SFCs)**.

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

1. Constitutional status under **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992**.



2. Three-tier structure:
 - Gram Panchayat
 - Panchayat Samiti
 - Zila Parishad
3. Role:
 - Grassroots governance
 - Local development planning
 - Implementation of welfare schemes.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Finance Commission grants to Panchayati Raj Institutions, consider the following statements:

1. Grants to PRIs are recommended under Article 280 of the Constitution.
2. Fifteenth Finance Commission grants include both basic and tied grants.
3. Release of grants to PRIs is unconditional and independent of audit compliance.

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

In the New World Order, Economic Policy is Also Foreign Policy

Source: *The Indian Express*

Author: C. Raja Mohan

Introduction:

In the evolving global order, the separation between economic and foreign policy has narrowed significantly. Trade agreements, supply chains, critical technologies, and investment flows are no longer purely commercial matters—they are instruments of strategic positioning. For India, navigating tensions between major powers, especially the United States and China, requires recognising that **economic statecraft is now central to diplomacy.**

Key Issues

1. **Blurring of Economic and Strategic Boundaries**
 - Trade, technology, and capital flows are increasingly tools of geopolitical competition.
2. **US–China Rivalry Reshaping Global Trade**
 - Supply chain reconfiguration, export controls, and industrial policy shifts are altering global economic networks.
3. **India's Strategic Autonomy Under Pressure**
 - India seeks balanced engagement but faces pressures to align economically with Western blocs.

Key Facts for Prelims

- India has recently concluded **FTAs with the UAE and Australia**
- India–EU FTA negotiations are ongoing
- The United States is India's **largest trading partner** in goods
- The Indo-Pacific is a key strategic theatre shaping trade and security alignments
- “Friend-shoring” refers to supply chain diversification among trusted partners.

4. Importance of FTAs as Strategic Tools

- Recent FTAs reflect India's recalibration toward Western markets amid shifting global dynamics.

5. Risk of Overdependence

- Heavy economic dependence on any one power constrains diplomatic flexibility.

Global Practices

1. **United States:** Uses tariffs, export controls, and industrial policy (e.g., semiconductor strategy) as strategic tools
2. **European Union:** Deploys trade agreements combined with regulatory standards to extend influence
3. **China:** Leverages infrastructure investment (BRI) and supply chain dominance Globally, major powers integrate economic instruments with strategic objectives. Economic engagement is increasingly structured around security considerations.

Indian Policies / Frameworks

1. **Act East Policy:** Integrates trade, connectivity, and strategic outreach
 2. **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme:** Strengthens domestic manufacturing and supply chain resilience
 3. **Atmanirbhar Bharat:** Aims to reduce critical import dependencies
 4. **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs)** with UAE and Australia
- These reflect India's move toward strengthening economic resilience while expanding strategic partnerships.

Way Forward

1. **Deepen Strategic FTAs**
 - Accelerate negotiations with the EU and UK to diversify export markets.
2. **Strengthen Critical Supply Chains**
 - Focus on semiconductors, rare earths, pharmaceuticals, and defence manufacturing.
3. **Balance Alignment with Autonomy**
 - Maintain diversified partnerships without entering rigid blocs.
4. **Integrate Industrial and Foreign Policy**
 - Align domestic production incentives with long-term strategic trade goals.
5. **Enhance Economic Diplomacy Capacity**
 - Strengthen trade negotiator expertise and institutional coordination between MEA, Commerce, and Finance ministries.

Conclusion:

In the emerging multipolar order, economic choices carry strategic consequences. For India, trade agreements, technology partnerships, and industrial policies are not merely growth instruments but pillars of foreign policy. A calibrated approach—diversified, resilient, and strategically aware—will ensure that India's economic expansion strengthens rather than constrains its diplomatic space.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Economic diplomacy refers to the use of trade and investment policy to achieve foreign policy objectives.
2. Strategic autonomy implies complete economic disengagement from major powers.

3. Friend-shoring aims to diversify supply chains among trusted countries.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b) 1 and 3 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "In the contemporary global order, economic policy has become an essential instrument of foreign policy." Discuss with reference to India's recent trade and strategic engagements. (250 words)

Judicial Drift in the Special Intensive Revision Hearings

Source: Gautam Bhatia, *The Indian Express*

Introduction

The issue of *judicial drift in the Special Intensive Revision hearings* raises important constitutional questions about the balance between electoral administration and judicial scrutiny. While electoral rolls revision is a routine democratic exercise, the manner in which courts engage with challenges to such processes has implications for due process, citizenship rights, and institutional accountability.

Key Issues

1. Scope of Judicial Review

- Courts must determine whether procedural fairness was maintained.

Example: Whether Aadhaar or other documentation can be mandated for roll inclusion.

2. Balance between Expediency and Rights

- Electoral deadlines often compress scrutiny of individual grievances.

Example: Large-scale deletions may affect vulnerable populations before elections.

3. Citizenship and Electoral Inclusion

- Electoral roll verification intersects with citizenship status concerns.

Example: Documentation requirements potentially impacting migrant communities.

4. Institutional Overreach vs Institutional Deference

- Judiciary must avoid substituting administrative judgment without constitutional basis.

Example: Courts allowing revision process to continue despite procedural objections.

5. Federal and Administrative Implications

- Electoral roll revisions affect state-level democratic participation.

Example: Multiple High Courts addressing challenges across different states.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Article 324:** Vests superintendence of elections in Election Commission of India (ECI)
- **Representation of the People Act, 1950:** Governs electoral rolls
- **Article 326:** Universal adult suffrage
- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** Comprehensive updating of electoral rolls
- **Supreme Court:** Constitutional interpreter under Articles 32 & 136
- **Electoral roll inclusion:** Linked to citizenship verification
- **Due process principle:** Embedded in Article 21 jurisprudence.

Global Practices

United States	Courts actively review voter suppression and roll purges
United Kingdom	Independent Electoral Commission ensures procedural transparency
Canada	Regular voter list updates with statutory safeguards
Australia	Judicial oversight balances efficiency and franchise protection
European Democracies	Emphasis on proportionality in electoral administration

Indian Policies / Committees

Election Commission of India	Constitutional authority supervising elections and electoral rolls
Representation of the People Act, 1950	Framework for preparation and revision of rolls
Law Commission Reports on Electoral Reforms	Recommend strengthening transparency and fairness
Supreme Court Jurisprudence (PUCL Case)	Reinforces voter rights and democratic participation
Aadhaar–Voter ID Linking Initiative	Aims at de-duplication with safeguards

Way Forward

1. Ensure **transparent documentation standards** during electoral revisions
2. Provide **adequate grievance redress mechanisms** before final deletions
3. Strengthen **judicial clarity on proportionality and due process**
4. Enhance coordination between **ECI and constitutional courts**
5. Safeguard franchise while maintaining **administrative efficiency**

Conclusion

Electoral roll revision is essential for maintaining the integrity of democratic processes. However, when procedural disputes arise, judicial engagement must carefully balance institutional respect with constitutional vigilance. A calibrated approach—grounded in rule of law, proportionality, and democratic inclusion—can preserve both electoral credibility and individual rights.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 324 of the Constitution vests the superintendence of elections in the Election Commission of India.
2. Representation of the People Act, 1950 deals with electoral roll preparation.
3. Electoral roll inclusion in India is completely independent of citizenship status.

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

Mains Question

Q2. Discuss the constitutional balance between judicial review and electoral administration in the context of Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls. (250 words)

India, Seychelles Explore Maritime and Blue Economy Cooperation

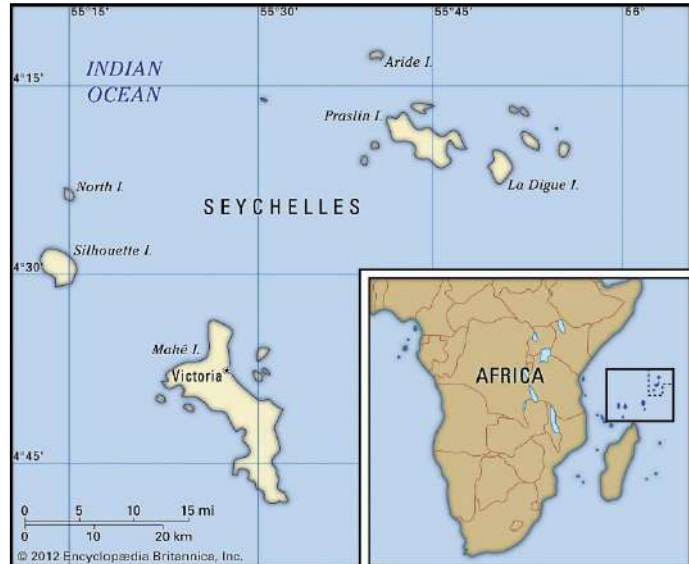
Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB)

What In News

India and Seychelles explored maritime and Blue Economy cooperation at a business roundtable in Mumbai, reinforcing strategic convergence under India's SAGAR and MAHASAGAR vision.

Major Key Facts

1. **India–Seychelles Business Roundtable** held in Mumbai.
2. Focus on **maritime cooperation and Blue Economy development**.
3. Engagement aligns with India's **SAGAR and MAHASAGAR vision**.
4. Discussions covered **port development, shipping, fisheries, and tourism**.
5. Aim to strengthen **trade, investment, and Indian Ocean partnerships**.



Static Concept

Blue Economy

1. Sustainable use of **ocean resources** for economic growth and livelihoods.
2. Key sectors:
 - Fisheries and aquaculture
 - Maritime transport
 - Coastal tourism
 - Renewable ocean energy

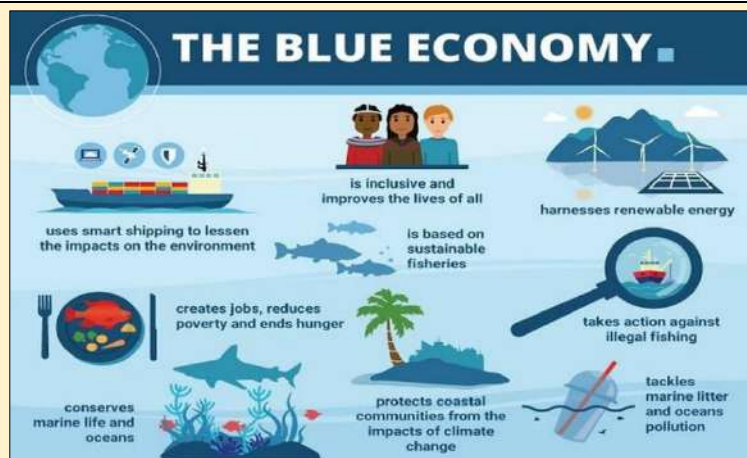
Emphasises ecological sustainability.

India's Maritime Vision

1. **SAGAR**: *Security and Growth for All in the Region*.
2. **MAHASAGAR**:
 - Expansion of India's maritime and economic outreach
 - Focus on trade, connectivity, and strategic cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

India–Seychelles Strategic Importance

1. Seychelles is a key partner in the **Western Indian Ocean**.
2. Cooperation areas:
 - Maritime security
 - Coastal infrastructure
 - Disaster resilience
3. Supports India's role as a **net security provider** in the IOR.



Prelims Practice Question

Q.1 With reference to India's Blue Economy and maritime cooperation, consider the following statements:

1. Blue Economy focuses on sustainable utilisation of marine resources for economic growth.
2. SAGAR vision relates to India's maritime security and cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.
3. Seychelles is located in the Pacific Ocean and is a major partner under India's Act East Policy.

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 Tested, from U.S. Sanctions to One-Sided Trade Deal

Source: Suhasini Haidar, *The Hindu*

Introduction

The situation where *India is tested, from U.S. sanctions to a one-sided trade deal* reflects the complexities of balancing strategic partnerships with economic sovereignty. Recent developments in India–U.S. relations highlight tensions between energy security, sanctions compliance, and negotiating equitable trade frameworks.

Key Facts for Prelims

1. India–U.S. trade negotiations aim at a **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)**
2. U.S. sanctions target **Russian oil exports**
3. India increased Russian crude imports post-2022 Ukraine conflict
4. **CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act)** framework impacts third countries
5. India is member of **BRICS** and **Quad**
6. Energy imports are critical for India's economic stability
7. Trade deficit concerns shape bilateral negotiations

Key Issues

1. **Energy Security vs Sanctions Pressure**
 - India's discounted Russian oil imports reduce inflationary pressures.
Example: Post-2022 surge in Russian crude share in India's import basket.
2. **Trade Negotiation Asymmetry**
 - Concerns of unequal concessions in interim trade frameworks.
Example: Tariff reduction demands from U.S. side.
3. **Strategic Autonomy**

WHAT IS CAATSA?

Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. Enacted in August 2017, came into effect in January. Targets Iran, North Korea and Russia

INDIA'S WORRY

One of its provisions targets Russian defence firms and countries doing business with them. India has defence deals worth over \$12 billion in the pipeline with Russia

THE SOLUTION

New clauses inserted by the US in the National Defense Authorization Act (US military budget), which empower the Trump administration to suspend CAATSA sanctions, but it has to certify that India is reducing its dependence on Russia

- Balancing relations with U.S., Russia, and Global South partners.

Example: India's participation in BRICS alongside Quad engagement.

4. Economic Diplomacy and Credibility

- Frequent policy shifts may affect negotiating strength.

Example: Changes in tariff structures during negotiations.

5. Sanctions Spillover Effects

- Unilateral sanctions affecting third-country trade flows.

Example: Secondary sanctions risks impacting energy and banking channels.

Global Practices

European Union	Balances sanctions compliance with energy diversification
China	Strategic energy imports despite Western sanctions regimes
Turkey	Maintains pragmatic engagement with sanctioned states
Japan	Aligns with U.S. sanctions while securing energy supplies
Brazil	Emphasises multilateral trade frameworks over unilateral pressure

Indian Policies / Committees

Act East & Strategic Autonomy Doctrine	Diversified foreign partnerships
Energy Security Strategy	Focus on diversified crude import sources
Foreign Trade Policy (2023)	Promotes trade resilience and diversification
Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPAs)	Bilateral trade expansion
BRICS Engagement	Multilateral platform for Global South cooperation

Way Forward

1. Maintain **strategic autonomy in energy procurement decisions**
2. Ensure **reciprocity and transparency in trade negotiations**
3. Diversify crude import basket further
4. Strengthen multilateral engagement to counter unilateral pressures
5. Align foreign policy decisions with long-term economic resilience

Conclusion

India's evolving engagement with the United States underscores the delicate interplay between geopolitics and economic interests. While strategic partnerships remain vital, safeguarding energy security and equitable trade terms is equally critical. A calibrated foreign policy—grounded in autonomy, diversification, and multilateralism—will help India navigate external pressures without compromising national interests.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. CAATSA is a U.S. law related to sanctions.
2. BRICS includes both India and the United States.
3. Energy security is a key factor influencing India's foreign trade decisions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

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

Correct Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. Examine the challenges faced by India in balancing strategic autonomy with economic diplomacy in the context of U.S. sanctions and trade negotiations. (250 words)

PM CARES Fund

Source: The Hindu

What In News

The **PM CARES Fund** was discussed in Parliament, with the government stating it is a **public charitable trust**, not a government fund, and not subject to audit by CAG.

Major Key Facts

1. PM CARES Fund is **not permissible under Rule 412(vii)** of Lok Sabha rules for discussion.
2. Government stated PM CARES is **neither owned nor controlled by the government**.
3. It is a **public charitable trust**, not constituted under the Constitution.
4. **CAG audit is not applicable** to PM CARES Fund.
5. Fund was established in **March 2020** during the COVID-19 outbreak.

PM-CARES fund is aimed at strengthening the **fight against COVID-19**. It will further availability of **quality treatment** and encourage **research** on ways to **beat Coronavirus**. I urge people from all walks of life to **contribute to PM-CARES**. Together, let's solve **challenges** of the **present** and protect the **future**.

Static Concept

PM CARES Fund

1. Full form: **Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund**.
2. Established: **March 2020**.
3. Nature:
 - **Public charitable trust**
 - Not a government fund
4. Purpose:
 - Emergency relief during disasters and public health crises.

Parliamentary Oversight

1. Matters not involving **government policy or administration** are generally **not admissible** for discussion under Lok Sabha rules.
2. CAG audit applies to:
 - Government accounts
 - Funds financed from Consolidated Fund of India.

Difference from NDRF

1. **NDRF:**

- Statutory fund under Disaster Management Act, 2005
- Audited by **CAG**
- 2. PM CARES:**
 - Charitable trust
 - Voluntary contributions.

Prelims Practice Question

Q.1 With reference to PM CARES Fund, consider the following statements:

1. PM CARES Fund was created as a public charitable trust in 2020.
2. It is audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.
3. PM CARES Fund is distinct from the National Disaster Response Fund.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

On Building Public AI, Governments Must Be Tactical but Remain Flexible

Source: Akash Kapur & Arvind Narayanan, *The Hindu*

GS Paper Relevance:

- **GS III:** Artificial Intelligence, Digital Infrastructure
- **GS II:** Governance, Public Policy, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

Introduction

The argument that *governments must be tactical but remain flexible while building public AI* highlights the evolving relationship between digital public infrastructure (DPI) and artificial intelligence ecosystems. As countries seek technological sovereignty and inclusive innovation, public AI must balance strategic state support with openness, adaptability, and private sector dynamism.

Key Issues

1. Infrastructure-Heavy Model Risks

- Excessive focus on compute infrastructure may crowd out innovation.

Example: High investment in GPU clusters without parallel ecosystem support.

2. Sovereignty vs Openness

- Balancing domestic capability with global collaboration.

Example: Calls for indigenous foundational AI models.

3. Allocation of Public Funds

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker model
- India AI Mission focuses on compute capacity and innovation ecosystem
- Public AI involves state-supported datasets and models
- AI relies on **compute power, data, and talent**
- Semiconductor and high-end chip manufacturing critical for AI
- Large Language Models (LLMs) require significant infrastructure
- Open-source AI models gaining global traction.

- Determining optimal state role in AI development.

Example: Government funding semiconductor fabs and AI research hubs.

4. Innovation Ecosystem Gaps

- AI requires talent, research networks, and private participation.

Example: Startup ecosystems benefiting from open APIs (UPI analogy).

5. Governance and Ethical Oversight

- Public AI systems must ensure transparency and accountability.

Example: AI use in public services like health surveillance.

Global Practices

United States	Private-sector led AI innovation with federal research funding
European Union	AI Act emphasising risk-based regulatory framework
China	State-driven AI strategy with centralised compute investments
United Kingdom	Flexible pro-innovation AI governance approach
Singapore	National AI Strategy integrating public-private collaboration

Indian Policies / Committees

IndiaAI Mission	Public investment in AI compute and research
Digital India Programme	Foundation for DPI ecosystem
National Strategy for AI (NITI Aayog)	AI for All vision
Semicon India Programme	Incentivises semiconductor manufacturing
MeitY AI Initiatives	Capacity-building and research support

Way Forward

1. Combine **infrastructure investment with ecosystem incentives**
2. Promote **open standards and interoperability frameworks**
3. Encourage public-private AI innovation partnerships
4. Invest in **talent development and AI research institutions**
5. Maintain regulatory flexibility with ethical safeguards

Conclusion

Building public AI requires strategic clarity without rigid centralisation. While infrastructure and sovereignty are important, innovation flourishes in open, competitive ecosystems supported by enabling public policy. A tactical yet flexible approach—grounded in collaboration, transparency, and long-term capacity-building—can position India as a responsible and competitive AI power.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Digital Public Infrastructure in India includes platforms such as Aadhaar and UPI.
2. Large Language Models require significant computational resources.
3. The European Union follows a completely deregulated approach to AI governance.

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

Mains Question

Q2. Discuss the role of the state in building public AI infrastructure while ensuring innovation and flexibility. (250 words)

India–Greece Defence Ties in Focus as Ministers Meet in New Delhi

Source: The Hindu

What In News

India–Greece defence ties are in focus as defence ministers meet in **New Delhi** to strengthen cooperation, enhance maritime security, and expand strategic defence partnership.

Major Key Facts

1. **India and Greece Defence Ministers** held a bilateral meeting in New Delhi.
2. Discussions focused on **enhancing defence cooperation**.
3. Defence ties have gained momentum in recent months.
4. India is increasingly viewed as an **indispensable security partner** for Europe.
5. Talks aim to institutionalise **long-term defence collaboration**.



Static Concept

India–Greece Relations

1. Diplomatic relations established in **1950**.
2. Areas of cooperation:
 - Defence and maritime security
 - Trade and investment
 - Culture and tourism
3. Both countries support:
 - **Rules-based international order**
 - Freedom of navigation.

Defence Cooperation Framework

1. Includes:
 - Defence dialogues
 - Joint exercises
 - Training and capacity building
2. Emphasis on:
 - **Maritime domain awareness**
 - Mediterranean and Indo-Pacific linkages.

Strategic Significance

1. Greece is a key gateway to **Europe and the Mediterranean**.
2. Defence partnership supports India's:
 - **Act West policy**
 - Engagement with the **European Union**.

Prelims Practice Question

Q.1 With reference to India–Greece relations, consider the following statements:

1. India and Greece cooperate in defence and maritime security domains.
2. Greece is a member of the European Union and NATO.
3. India and Greece share a land border.

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

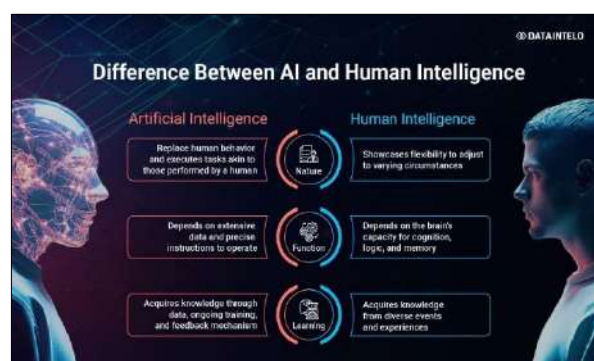
How Artificial Intelligence Can Become Democracy's Ally, Not Its Adversary

Source: *The Indian Express*

Author: S.Y. Quraishi

Introduction:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has entered nearly every sphere of governance, including democratic processes. While concerns around misinformation, deepfakes, and electoral manipulation are real, AI also offers tools that can strengthen electoral transparency, voter engagement, and administrative efficiency. The debate, therefore, is not about rejecting AI, but about governing it responsibly so that it becomes an ally of democracy rather than a destabilising force.



Key Issues

1. **Spread of Deepfakes and Synthetic Media**
 - AI-generated videos and voice clones can mislead voters by spreading false narratives during election campaigns.
2. **Algorithmic Amplification**
 - Social media algorithms may prioritise sensational or divisive content,

Key Facts for Prelims

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is a constitutional body under **Article 324** of the Constitution.
- India conducts the world's largest democratic exercise, with over 900 million eligible voters.
- Deepfakes are AI-generated synthetic media that mimic real persons' voices or appearances.
- Large Language Models (LLMs) can generate text, audio, and video content at scale.
- Social media platforms operate under the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 and associated rules in India.

amplifying misinformation.

3. **Hyper-Personalised Political Messaging**

- Unlike traditional broadcast campaigns, AI allows micro-targeted political messaging, potentially influencing specific demographic groups.

4. **Detection and Moderation Challenges**

- Even as AI creates misinformation, it is also used to detect fake content—leading to a technological arms race.

5. **Regulatory and Institutional Preparedness**

- Electoral bodies must adapt to evolving digital threats without curbing legitimate political expression.

Global Practices

European Union	The Digital Services Act strengthens accountability of online platforms for content moderation.
United States	Increased scrutiny of political advertisements and debates on AI-generated campaign content.
United Kingdom	Electoral authorities actively monitor digital campaign transparency and data usage practices.

Globally, the trend is toward platform accountability combined with stronger transparency norms rather than outright technological bans.

Indian Policies / Frameworks

1. **Article 324** empowers the Election Commission to supervise and conduct elections.
 2. The **IT Act, 2000** and IT Rules regulate intermediary responsibilities.
 3. The ECI has issued advisories on social media conduct during elections.
 4. Model Code of Conduct (MCC) applies to digital campaign content as well.
- India's regulatory approach relies on combining constitutional authority with evolving digital norms.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Digital Monitoring Capacity**
 - Equip the Election Commission with AI-based tools to detect deepfakes and coordinated misinformation.
2. **Mandate Platform Transparency**
 - Require clear disclosure of AI-generated political content and micro-targeted advertisements.
3. **Enhance Voter Digital Literacy**
 - Promote awareness programmes to help citizens identify manipulated content.
4. **Create Clear Legal Definitions**
 - Develop specific guidelines distinguishing legitimate political persuasion from malicious digital manipulation.
5. **Foster Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation**
 - Encourage coordination between regulators, platforms, civil society, and cybersecurity experts.

Conclusion:

Artificial Intelligence is not inherently anti-democratic. Like previous technological revolutions, it can either undermine institutions or reinforce them depending on governance choices. India's electoral framework, anchored in constitutional authority and institutional credibility, must evolve with technological change. With

calibrated regulation, transparency, and public awareness, AI can enhance democratic participation rather than weaken it.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Election Commission of India derives its powers from Article 324 of the Constitution.
2. Deepfakes are AI-generated synthetic media capable of mimicking real individuals.
3. The Model Code of Conduct does not apply to digital campaign content.

Which of the above statements 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

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Artificial Intelligence poses risks to electoral integrity, yet it can also strengthen democratic processes." Discuss with reference to India's institutional framework. (250 words)

Govt. Can File FIR or Move Privilege Motion, I Will Stand with Farmers: Rahul

Source: The Hindu

What in News

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi said the government can file FIR or move a Privilege Motion, but he will continue to stand with farmers over the India-U.S. trade deal.

Major Key Facts

1. Rahul Gandhi criticised the **India-U.S. interim trade deal**.
2. Alleged it could affect **Indian farmers and food security**.
3. Government may file **FIR or move Privilege Motion** against him.
4. Issue raised during **Parliament proceedings**.
5. Concerns relate to agricultural imports like **maize, cotton, soybean, apple, fruits**.

Static Concept**Privilege Motion (Parliamentary Procedure)**

1. Based on **Article 105 of the Constitution**.
2. Ensures protection of:
 - Freedom of speech in Parliament
 - Parliamentary privileges
3. Moved when a member believes there is:
 - Breach of privilege
 - Contempt of the House
4. Examined by:
 - **Committee of Privileges**

FIR (First Information Report)

1. Defined under **Section 154 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)**.
2. Registered by police upon receiving information about a cognizable offence.

India–U.S. Trade Context

1. Trade agreements impact:
 - Tariffs
 - Agricultural imports
 - Domestic farmers
2. Linked to:
 - WTO commitments
 - Bilateral trade negotiations

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Privilege Motion in Parliament, consider the following statements:

1. Parliamentary privileges are mentioned under Article 105 of the Constitution.
2. A Privilege Motion can be moved when there is a breach of privilege of a Member of Parliament.
3. Privilege Motion is examined by the Election Commission of India.

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 Federalism Is in Need of a Structural Reset

Source: *The Indian Express*

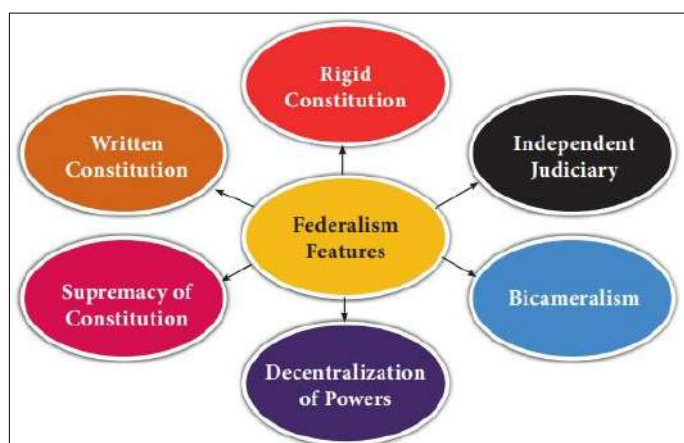
Author: M.K. Stalin

Introduction:

India's Constitution establishes a federal structure with a strong Centre. While such centralisation was historically justified to maintain unity and integrity, concerns have emerged that the balance has increasingly tilted in favour of the Union. The debate is not about weakening national unity, but about restoring institutional equilibrium to make federalism more functional, accountable, and responsive.

Key Issues

1. **Expansion of the Concurrent List**



- Over time, subjects traditionally under State control have increasingly been influenced by Union legislation, especially through broader interpretations of national interest.
- 2. Fiscal Centralisation**
 - Conditional grants, centrally sponsored schemes, and increasing cesses and surcharges (not shareable with States) have constrained State fiscal autonomy.
- 3. Administrative Duplication**
 - Large Union ministries often design schemes in sectors constitutionally assigned to States (e.g., health, education), leading to overlap and inefficiency.
- 4. Weakening of Institutional Federal Dialogue**
 - Bodies like the Inter-State Council are underutilised, limiting structured policy consultation.
- 5. Accountability Imbalance**
 - When the Centre designs schemes but States implement them, accountability becomes diffused, complicating governance outcomes.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Article 1:** India is described as a “Union of States.”
- **Seventh Schedule:** Divides subjects into Union List, State List, and Concurrent List.
- **Article 246:** Provides legislative competence distribution.
- **Finance Commission (Article 280):** Recommends distribution of tax revenues between Centre and States.
- **Inter-State Council (Article 263):** Established to promote coordination between Centre and States.
- **The Sarkaria Commission (1983) and Punchhi Commission (2007)** examined Centre–State relations.

Global Practices

United States	Clear separation of federal and state powers; states retain significant autonomy in health, education, and policing.
Germany	Cooperative federalism with strong state (Länder) participation in federal law-making through the Bundesrat.
Australia	Fiscal federalism debates continue, but institutionalised negotiation mechanisms exist for revenue sharing.

Globally, mature federations rely on institutional dialogue and clear functional demarcation rather than administrative micromanagement.

Indian Policies / Committees

Sarkaria Commission (1983–87)	1. Recommended strengthening Inter-State Council 2. Emphasised consultation before legislating on Concurrent List matters
Punchhi Commission (2007)	1. Suggested clearer demarcation of functions 2. Called for revisiting fiscal federalism frameworks
Recent Developments	1. NITI Aayog introduced cooperative federalism rhetoric 2. GST Council represents a unique example of shared fiscal decision-making

However, debates continue regarding fiscal space, conditional transfers, and autonomy in policy design.

Way Forward

- 1. Revitalise Inter-State Council**
 - Make it a regular forum for structured federal dialogue on legislation and policy.

2. Reassess Concurrent List Expansion

- Limit central overreach and allow greater flexibility in State-specific contexts.

3. Strengthen Fiscal Federalism

- Reduce reliance on non-shareable cesses and ensure predictable revenue flows.

4. Rationalise Centrally Sponsored Schemes

- Shift from top-down design to flexible, outcome-based frameworks allowing state innovation.

5. Institutionalise Accountability Clarity

- Align responsibility with authority—who designs, funds, and implements must be clearly defined.

Conclusion

Indian federalism is not a zero-sum contest between the Union and the States. A confident Union does not diminish States; it empowers them. Structural recalibration is about improving governance efficiency, responsiveness, and democratic accountability.

True federal strength lies in mutual trust, constitutional discipline, and institutional dialogue — not administrative centralisation.

Prelims MCQ**Q1. Consider the following statements:**

1. The Inter-State Council is a constitutional body established under Article 263.
2. Cesses and surcharges are fully shareable with States under Finance Commission recommendations.
3. The Seventh Schedule divides legislative subjects into Union, State, and Concurrent Lists.

Which of the above statements 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

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Indian federalism requires recalibration rather than confrontation." Discuss in the context of fiscal and legislative trends in Centre–State relations. (250 words)

The New World Disorder: From Rules to Might

Source: *The hindu*

Author: Shashi Tharoor

Introduction:

The post-World War II global order was built on the principles of sovereign equality, collective security, multilateral cooperation, and rule-based conduct among nations. Institutions like the United Nations embodied this vision, seeking to prevent unilateral aggression and ensure peaceful dispute resolution.

However, contemporary geopolitical developments suggest a shift from "rules" to "might" — where major powers



increasingly prioritise national interest over multilateral commitments. The emerging global disorder reflects weakening adherence to international norms and growing acceptance of power-based outcomes.

Key Issues

1. Declining Respect for International Law

- Major powers increasingly treat international norms as optional rather than binding, weakening legal predictability in global affairs.

2. Institutional Undermining

- Withdrawal from international agreements and reduced support for multilateral bodies weaken global governance structures.

3. Sovereignty Over Solidarity

- The principle of sovereign equality is increasingly interpreted narrowly, prioritising unilateral action over collective responsibility.

4. Selective Application of Rules

- Rules appear enforced inconsistently — often shaped by power hierarchies rather than universal standards.

5. Legitimacy Crisis in Multilateral Institutions

- Institutions lose credibility when powerful states bypass them, reducing their authority and enforcement capacity.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **United Nations (UN)** was established in 1945 to maintain international peace and security.
- **Article 2(4), UN Charter** prohibits the use of force against territorial integrity or political independence of states.
- **UN Security Council (UNSC)** has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace.
- The post-1945 system is often described as the **“rules-based international order.”**
- Multilateralism involves cooperation among multiple countries through institutions, treaties, and shared norms.

Global Practices

1. **European Union** continues to promote rules-based trade and climate governance frameworks.
2. **China** is reshaping institutions through parallel mechanisms (e.g., Belt and Road Initiative, BRICS expansion).
3. **United States** has alternated between engagement and withdrawal in multilateral agreements, influencing institutional stability.

Indian Policies / Committees

India's Traditional Approach:

1. Advocacy of **strategic autonomy**
2. Support for **multilateral reform**, especially UNSC reform
3. Emphasis on **sovereign equality and non-interference**

Recent Diplomatic Trends:

1. Engagement in **Quad, BRICS, G20**
2. Push for Global South leadership
3. Support for reforming global financial and security institutions

Way Forward

1. **Reform, Not Abandon, Multilateralism**

- Strengthen institutional accountability while modernising structures to reflect current power realities.

2. Enhance Global South Representation

- Broaden participation in decision-making bodies to restore legitimacy.

3. Reinforce Legal Predictability

- Promote adherence to international law to sustain trade, finance, and security cooperation.

4. Balance Power with Norms

- Encourage responsible behaviour from major powers through diplomatic coalitions.

5. Institutional Capacity Building

- Invest in strengthening dispute-resolution mechanisms and peacekeeping credibility.

Conclusion:

The current global moment is marked by transition, not collapse. However, if power politics consistently overrides shared norms, institutional erosion may accelerate. Preserving a rules-based order requires renewed political will, equitable reform, and collective commitment.

The challenge is not merely managing power shifts, but ensuring that power remains anchored to principles that sustain global stability.

Prelims MCQ**Q1. Consider the following statements:**

1. Article 6(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of states.
2. The United Nations Security Council is responsible for maintaining international peace and security.
3. Multilateralism refers to bilateral cooperation between two sovereign states.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b) 2 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "The erosion of a rules-based international order reflects both power transition and institutional stagnation." Discuss with reference to contemporary global politics. (250 words)

Rashtriya Karmayogi Large Scale Jan Seva Programme –

The **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions** informed that **10.5 lakh government servants** have been trained under the **Rashtriya Karmayogi Large Scale Jan Seva Programme**.

About Rashtriya Karmayogi Large Scale Jan Seva Programme

1. It is a **national behavioural transformation initiative** for civil servants.
2. Launched by the **Capacity Building Commission (CBC)**.
3. Aims to promote a deeper sense of **Seva Bhav (spirit of service)** and **Svadharm (duty aligned with personal purpose)** among government officials.
4. Seeks to strengthen **citizen-centric governance**.
5. Focuses on:
 - Improving service delivery quality
 - Enhancing responsiveness and inter-departmental collaboration

- Increasing engagement and satisfaction among officers

Capacity Building Commission (CBC)

1. Serves as the **executive body of Mission Karmayogi**.
2. Drives civil service reforms through **capacity building and competency-based learning**.
3. Works to strengthen the government's human resource framework by:
 - Developing individual and institutional capacities
 - Promoting citizen-centric governance
 - Ensuring future readiness
4. Designs frameworks, sets standards, and promotes collaboration to make governance more **transparent, accountable, and responsive**.

Source: PIB

Privacy and Transparency: Balancing RTI and Data Protection

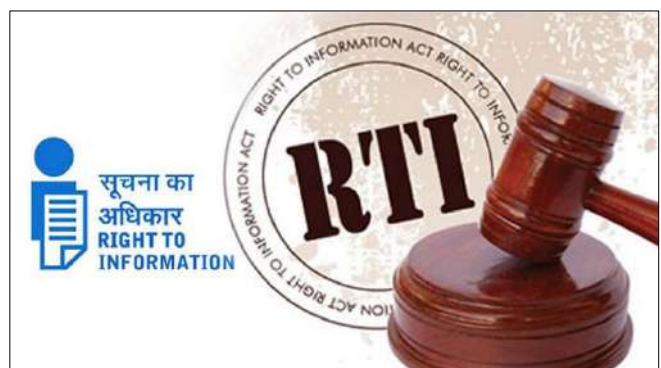
Source: *The Hindu* (Editorial)

Introduction:

India's democratic framework rests on two important constitutional values — transparency in governance and protection of individual privacy. Recent amendments introduced through the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, which modify Section 8(1)(j) of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, have raised concerns about whether the balance between these principles is shifting.

The issue is not whether privacy should be protected

— it undoubtedly must — but whether the amendment creates information asymmetry between the State and citizens.



Key Issues

1. **Dilution of Public Interest Override**
 - Earlier, personal information could be disclosed if larger public interest justified it. The amendment removes this balancing mechanism.
2. **Information Asymmetry**
 - The State can collect extensive data from citizens, while citizens may face restrictions in accessing information about public authorities.
3. **Chilling Effect on Press and Accountability**

Key Facts for Prelims

- The **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005** promotes transparency and accountability in public authorities.
- Section **8(1)(j)** of RTI earlier allowed withholding personal information unless larger public interest justified disclosure.
- The **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023** regulates processing of digital personal data.
- The Supreme Court recognised **Right to Privacy as a Fundamental Right** in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)* under Article 21.
- The DPDP Act provides exemptions to government agencies in certain cases.

- Restrictions on disclosure may discourage investigative journalism and weaken public scrutiny of governance.

4. **Conflict Between RTI and DPDP Objectives**

- RTI aims at maximum transparency, whereas DPDP emphasises data minimisation and privacy protection. Lack of harmonisation may create legal ambiguity.

5. **Exemptions to Government Agencies**

- Broad exemptions under DPDP could undermine accountability if not applied with clear safeguards.

Global Practices

European Union (GDPR Model)

1. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) balances privacy with accountability.
2. Public interest exemptions allow transparency in governance matters.
3. Strong independent regulatory oversight ensures proportionality.

United Kingdom

1. Freedom of Information laws coexist with data protection laws.
2. Public interest tests are applied to reconcile competing claims.

Indian Policies / Committees

RTI Act, 2005	Created to ensure informed citizenry and governmental accountability.
DPDP Act, 2023	Provides a comprehensive data protection framework for digital personal data.
Central Public Information Officer (CPIO)	Responsible for processing RTI applications.
Judicial Oversight	Supreme Court has emphasised proportionality and necessity when balancing fundamental rights.

Way Forward

1. **Restore Public Interest Safeguard**

- Reintroduce a clear “larger public interest” test within RTI exemptions.

2. **Harmonise RTI and DPDP Frameworks**

- Issue detailed guidelines clarifying how both laws should be interpreted together.

3. **Strengthen Proportionality Standards**

- Ensure that denial of information is narrowly tailored and reasoned.

4. **Empower Independent Data Protection Authority**

- Ensure regulatory independence to prevent misuse of exemptions.

5. **Protect Journalistic and Civic Oversight**

- Recognise the role of media and civil society in maintaining democratic accountability.

Conclusion:

Privacy and transparency are not adversarial values; they are complementary pillars of constitutional democracy. A responsible framework must prevent unwarranted invasions of privacy while ensuring that public authorities remain accountable.

Sustainable governance requires equilibrium — where the citizen is not rendered opaque to the State, nor the State insulated from legitimate public scrutiny.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Right to Information Act, 2005 originally included a “larger public interest” override for disclosure of personal information.
2. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 completely repeals the RTI Act.
3. The Right to Privacy has been recognised as a Fundamental Right under Article 21.

Which of the above statements 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

(Statement 2 is incorrect — the DPDP Act amends but does not repeal the RTI Act.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. “In a constitutional democracy, transparency and privacy must be harmonised rather than prioritised over one another.” Discuss in the context of recent amendments to the RTI framework. (250 words)

Gen Z and the Dynamics of Democratic Engagement

Source: *The Hindu* (Editorial)

Introduction:**Understanding Youth Participation Beyond Stereotypes**

Across democracies, questions are being raised about how Generation Z engages with politics and public life. **While some narratives portray young citizens as disengaged or apathetic, evidence suggests that their engagement may be issue-based, episodic, and digitally mediated rather than traditionally institutional.**

The central concern is not whether Gen Z participates, but how its modes of participation are reshaping democratic discourse.

Key Issues**1. Episodic Rather than Institutional Engagement**

- Gen Z often mobilises around specific causes (climate change, gender rights, economic inequality) rather than through long-term party affiliation.

2. Digital Mediation of Politics

- Political expression increasingly occurs through social media platforms, influencing how issues are framed and debated.

3. Distrust of Traditional Institutions

- Many young citizens display scepticism toward established political structures, preferring decentralised or networked activism.

4. Mental Health and Economic Precarity

- Economic insecurity and social pressures may shape political attitudes, sometimes contributing to polarisation or anxiety-driven discourse.

Key Facts for Prelims

- The **Occupy Wall Street movement (2011)** was a global protest movement highlighting inequality.
- The **Arab Spring (2010–2012)** demonstrated the role of youth and digital mobilisation in political change.
- The **Farmers’ Protests in India (2020–21)** reflected issue-based mobilisation cutting across generations.
- India has one of the world’s youngest populations, with a median age of around 28 years.
- Digital platforms have significantly expanded access to information and political expression.

5. Identity-Based Mobilisation

- Digital environments may amplify identity-based narratives, occasionally deepening divisions within society.

Global Practices

United States	Youth participation has risen in recent elections, with issue-based mobilisation around climate action and social justice.
Europe	Digital activism coexists with institutional political engagement; youth wings of parties remain active.
Global South	Social media platforms have enabled rapid mobilisation but also raised concerns about misinformation and polarisation.
Comparative Insight	Democracies are witnessing a shift from traditional party-based mobilisation to networked, issue-centric engagement, especially among younger cohorts.

Indian Policies / Committees

Election Commission of India (ECI)	Promotes youth voter registration and electoral participation.
National Youth Policy	Seeks to integrate youth into governance, entrepreneurship, and civic participation.
Digital India Initiative	Expands digital connectivity, indirectly shaping modes of political engagement.
Parliamentary Standing Committees	Provide institutional avenues for policy engagement, though youth representation remains limited.

Way Forward

- Strengthen Civic Education**
 - Promote constitutional literacy and democratic values among young citizens.
- Institutionalise Youth Participation**
 - Create structured consultation platforms within policymaking bodies.
- Promote Digital Responsibility**
 - Encourage media literacy and critical engagement with online content.
- Address Economic Precarity**
 - Enhance employment and skill development programmes to reduce structural anxieties.
- Encourage Dialogue Over Polarisation**
 - Support forums that foster cross-generational and cross-ideological dialogue.

Conclusion:

Generational change is a recurring feature of democratic evolution. While Gen Z's engagement may appear fragmented or digitally driven, it reflects broader societal transformations in communication, identity, and information access.

Rather than viewing youth activism as instability, democracies can interpret it as a signal for institutional adaptation. A resilient democracy is one that absorbs new forms of participation while preserving constitutional values.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Occupy Wall Street movement highlighted concerns about economic inequality.
2. India has one of the youngest populations in the world in terms of median age.
3. Digital platforms have reduced youth participation in democratic processes.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: a) 1 and 2 only

(Statement 3 is incorrect — digital platforms have transformed, not necessarily reduced, participation.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Youth engagement in contemporary democracies is increasingly issue-based and digitally mediated rather than institutionally anchored." Discuss with reference to India. (250 words)

Parliament's Historic Law; An Extended Wait for Women

Source: The Hindu (Opinion)

Introduction:

The passage of the **Women's Reservation Act, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam)** marks a historic constitutional reform aimed at reserving one-third seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.

However, the operationalisation of this reform has been linked to two future processes — the next Census and subsequent delimitation exercise — effectively postponing implementation until at least 2029 or beyond. The article raises concerns regarding the constitutional design, sequencing, and delay in securing guaranteed political representation for women.

Key Issues Highlighted in the Article

1. Implementation Linked to Census and Delimitation

- The Act mandates that reservation will come into effect only after the next Census and delimitation exercise.
- Census (delayed post-2021) and delimitation could push implementation to 2029 or later.

2. Constitutional Conditionality

- Unlike many constitutional amendments that come into force immediately, this Act introduces a procedural precondition.
- Raises debate on whether representation can be constitutionally guaranteed but administratively deferred.

3. No Sub-Reservation for OBC Women

- While SC/ST women receive quota within reserved seats, OBC women are not provided separate sub-quota.

Key Facts for Prelims

- The Women's Reservation Act, 2023 provides **33% reservation** for women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
- Reservation includes seats within the SC/ST quota.
- Implementation is contingent upon:
 - Conduct of Census
 - Delimitation of constituencies
- Article 82 and Article 170 of the Constitution deal with delimitation after each Census.
- Delimitation Commission is constituted by Parliament and its orders have force of law.
- India has had four Delimitation Commissions (1952, 1963, 1973, 2002).

- Raises questions of equitable representation.
- 4. Rotational Reservation Concerns**
 - Reserved constituencies will rotate after each delimitation cycle.
 - Potential disruption of political continuity and accountability.
- 5. Rajya Sabha Exclusion**
 - The Act does not extend reservation to Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils.
 - Upper Houses remain outside the reform framework.

Global Practices

Country	Mechanism
Rwanda	Constitutional reservation for women in Parliament
France	Gender parity law for party candidate lists
Nepal	Constitutional mandate ensuring proportional inclusion
Bangladesh	Reserved seats for women in Parliament
Observation:	Many countries implement women's representation either through constitutional mandates or party-based candidate quotas without linking it to delimitation cycles.

Indian Policies / Committees (Simplified)

1. 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992) – 33% reservation for women in Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies (many states increased to 50%).
 2. Various Parliamentary Committees historically recommended women's reservation in legislatures.
 3. Earlier Women's Reservation Bills (1996 onwards) lapsed before passage in 2023.
- The 2023 Act represents culmination of nearly three decades of legislative debate.

Way Forward

- 1. Time-Bound Census Announcement**
 - Provide clear timeline for Census to avoid prolonged delay.
- 2. Advance Legal Clarification on Delimitation Schedule**
 - Transparent roadmap to reduce uncertainty.
- 3. Consider Transitional Mechanism**
 - Explore interim arrangements to ensure earlier representation.
- 4. Debate on OBC Sub-Quota**
 - Address inclusion concerns through structured parliamentary discussion.
- 5. Strengthen Political Party Candidate Quotas**
 - Encourage internal party reforms to improve women's representation even before constitutional enforcement.

Conclusion

The Women's Reservation Act, 2023, represents a long-awaited constitutional milestone in India's democratic journey. Yet, its linkage to future administrative exercises delays the substantive realization of political equality.

The reform reflects constitutional intent but awaits institutional execution. A timely and transparent implementation roadmap will determine whether this historic amendment becomes a transformative step or a deferred promise.

Women's political empowerment now depends not only on legislative will but on administrative follow-through.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Women's Reservation Act, 2023 provides 33% reservation in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.
2. Implementation of the Act is contingent upon delimitation following a Census.
3. Delimitation Commission orders have the force of law and cannot be challenged in court.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: B

Mains Question

Q2. The Women's Reservation Act, 2023 is a historic constitutional reform, yet its implementation raises structural and procedural concerns. Critically examine. (250 words)

New Federal Compact Must Be Based on Principle of Non-Domination

Source: *The Hindu* (Editorial – Yogendra Yadav)

Introduction:

India's constitutional architecture created a federal system with a strong Centre, shaped by historical imperatives of unity and stability. However, over time, concerns have grown regarding increasing centralisation and erosion of State autonomy.

The call for a new federal compact rooted in the principle of non-domination argues for recalibrating Centre-State relations to restore balance, respect diversity, and deepen democratic participation.

Key Issues**1. Excessive Centralisation**

- Increased fiscal and administrative control by the Centre has narrowed policy space for States.

2. Fiscal Imbalance

- Concerns regarding GST compensation, centrally sponsored schemes, and conditional transfers.

3. Legislative Encroachment

- Expansion of central laws in domains traditionally managed by States.

4. Linguistic and Cultural Sensitivities

- Debates around language uniformity and national identity intersect with federal concerns.

Key Facts for Prelims

- India is described as a **"Union of States"** under Article 1 of the Constitution.
- The **Rajamannar Committee (1969–71)** examined Centre-State relations and recommended greater State autonomy.
- The **Sarkaria Commission (1983–1988)** reviewed Centre-State relations and suggested cooperative federalism.
- The **Inter-State Council** was established under Article 263.
- The **Finance Commission (Article 280)** recommends distribution of tax revenues between Centre and States.
- Delimitation of constituencies is governed by the **Delimitation Commission Act**.

5. Political Majoritarianism

- Dominance of a single political formation at the Centre may amplify perceptions of asymmetry.

Global Practices

United States	Strong State autonomy within a clear constitutional framework, though federal authority remains significant in certain domains.
Canada	Provinces exercise substantial autonomy, particularly in education and healthcare.
Germany	Cooperative federalism with shared responsibilities and institutionalised intergovernmental coordination.
Comparative Insight	Successful federations institutionalise dialogue mechanisms and fiscal balance to prevent domination by either level of government.

Indian Policies / Committees

Rajamannar Committee	Recommended greater fiscal and legislative autonomy for States.
Sarkaria Commission	Advocated cooperative federalism and restraint in use of Article 356.
Punchhi Commission (2007)	Suggested revisiting certain constitutional provisions to strengthen federal balance.
GST Council	An example of institutionalised fiscal federalism with shared decision-making.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Institutional Dialogue

- Revitalise the Inter-State Council and regular Centre–State consultations.

2. Revisit Fiscal Federalism

- Enhance predictability and transparency in tax devolution and grants.

3. Protect Legislative Domains

- Respect constitutional division of powers under the Seventh Schedule.

4. Encourage Asymmetrical Flexibility

- Recognise regional diversity in language, culture, and development needs.

5. Promote Cooperative Political Culture

- Federal balance requires not only legal reform but also mutual trust and political accommodation.

Conclusion:

Federalism in India was designed not merely as an administrative arrangement but as a democratic safeguard accommodating diversity. The principle of non-domination emphasises balance — where neither Centre nor States overwhelm the other.

A renewed federal compact, rooted in constitutional values and cooperative spirit, can strengthen national unity while respecting pluralism.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Rajamannar Committee examined Centre–State relations in India.
2. The Inter-State Council is mentioned under Article 263 of the Constitution.
3. The Finance Commission is established under Article 356 of the Constitution.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only

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

Answer: a) 1 and 2 only

(Statement 3 is incorrect — Finance Commission is under Article 280; Article 356 relates to President's Rule.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Indian federalism requires a renewed compact based on the principle of non-domination rather than mere administrative decentralisation." Discuss. (250 words)

An Israel Visit — Its Strategic, Economic, and Regional Impact

Source: *The Hindu*

GS Paper Relevance

GS Paper II

- India and its neighbourhood
- India–West Asia relations
- Bilateral relations and strategic partnerships

GS Paper III

- Defence cooperation
- Technology collaboration
- Energy security

Introduction:

West Asia is undergoing a period of sustained instability marked by conflict dynamics involving Israel, Iran, Hamas, and regional powers. In this context, a high-level visit to Israel carries strategic significance beyond symbolism. It reflects India's effort to maintain balanced engagement in a region critical for energy security, diaspora interests, and geopolitical partnerships.

India's Israel policy has evolved over three decades from cautious engagement to multi-sectoral cooperation. The present moment demands careful calibration between strategic interests and regional sensitivities.



Key Issues

1. Security Convergence

India and Israel share cooperation in:

- Missile defence systems
- UAVs and surveillance
- Counter-terrorism technologies

Security collaboration remains the backbone of the partnership.

2. Expanding Technological Cooperation

Key Facts for Prelims

- India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in **1992**.
- Israel is among India's top **defence suppliers**.
- The **India–Israel Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** negotiations have been ongoing.
- India is part of the **I2U2 grouping** (India, Israel, UAE, USA).
- The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) was announced during the **G20 Summit 2023**.
- India imports a significant portion of its crude oil from West Asian countries.

Beyond defence, cooperation now includes:

- Agriculture (water management, drip irrigation)
- Renewable energy
- Cybersecurity
- Innovation ecosystems

3. Economic and Trade Engagement

Bilateral trade spans diamonds, chemicals, electronics, and defence equipment. A Free Trade Agreement could deepen integration.

4. Regional Sensitivities

India must balance its Israel engagement with longstanding ties to:

- Palestine
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries
- Iran

5. West Asia's Changing Strategic Landscape

Developments in Gaza, Israel–Iran tensions, and evolving Gulf diplomacy affect India's strategic calculus.



Global Practices

United States	Maintains strong defence ties with Israel while engaging Arab partners through security frameworks.
European Union	Balances trade and political engagement with both Israel and Palestinian authorities.
China	Expands economic influence across West Asia while avoiding direct entanglement in security disputes.
Comparative Insight	Major powers pursue interest-based, multi-vector diplomacy in West Asia, balancing security, energy, and trade interests.

Indian Policies / Committees

Look West / Link West Policy	Expands India's strategic and economic engagement with West Asia.
I2U2 Framework	Promotes cooperation in food security, energy, and technology among India, Israel, UAE, and USA.
IMEC (India–Middle East–Europe Corridor)	Aims to enhance connectivity, trade routes, and economic integration.
Defence Cooperation Agreements	Institutionalised collaboration in missile systems and surveillance technologies.

Way Forward

1. Maintain Strategic Balance

- Engage Israel while preserving long-standing support for a two-state solution and relations with Arab partners.

2. Deepen Economic Integration

- Conclude the India–Israel FTA and expand collaboration in innovation sectors.

3. Enhance Energy Security

- Leverage ties with Gulf states alongside Israel cooperation.

4. Promote Technology Partnerships

- Expand joint R&D in agriculture, water management, and clean energy.

5. Avoid Over-Alignment

- Ensure diplomacy remains multi-aligned rather than bloc-based in a volatile regional context.

Conclusion:

India's engagement with Israel reflects strategic realism and economic opportunity. However, West Asia's evolving geopolitical environment requires careful navigation. The objective is not alignment with any single pole, but preservation of India's broader regional interests — including energy access, diaspora welfare, and geopolitical stability.

A calibrated, interest-driven diplomacy remains the most sustainable path forward.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992.
2. India is a member of the I2U2 grouping along with Israel, UAE, and USA.
3. The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) was announced during the COP28 climate summit.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: a) 1 and 2 only

(Statement 3 is incorrect — IMEC was announced during the G20 Summit 2023.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "India's engagement with Israel must be viewed within the broader framework of its West Asia policy." Discuss the strategic, economic and diplomatic dimensions. (250 words)

India's Trade Strategy in a Multipolar World

Source: *The Hindu* (Editorial – Chandrajit Banerjee)

GS Paper Relevance

GS Paper II

- India and its bilateral trade agreements
- International relations in a multipolar world

GS Paper III

- External sector, Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)
- Manufacturing and global value chains, Economic reforms

Introduction:

India's external trade strategy is undergoing a structural transformation. After years of cautious engagement in free trade agreements (FTAs), India is now pursuing deeper economic integration to boost exports, attract investment, and integrate into global value chains (GVCs).

In a multipolar global order marked by supply chain realignments and geopolitical shifts, trade policy is increasingly intertwined with strategic positioning and industrial competitiveness.

Key Issues



1. Shift from Import Substitution to Export Orientation

- India is moving away from defensive trade policies towards proactive integration with global markets.

2. Diversification of Trade Partners

- Strategic agreements with the UAE, Australia, EU, and UK reduce overdependence on specific markets.

3. Integration into Global Value Chains

- FTAs aim to attract investment in electronics, automobiles, textiles, and advanced manufacturing.

4. Geopolitical Recalibration

- Trade agreements increasingly serve diplomatic and strategic objectives in a multipolar world.

5. Domestic Competitiveness Challenge

- Market access alone is insufficient without reforms in logistics, infrastructure, regulatory predictability, and skill development.

Key Facts for Prelims

- India exited negotiations of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** in 2019.
- India signed a comprehensive trade agreement with the **United Arab Emirates (CEPA)** in 2022.
- India and Australia signed the **Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)** in 2022.
- India and the U.K. are negotiating a bilateral FTA.
- The EU is among India's largest trading partners.
- The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme aims to strengthen domestic manufacturing.

Global Practices

Vietnam	Leveraged multiple FTAs (CPTPP, EU-Vietnam FTA) to integrate into electronics and manufacturing value chains.
South Korea	Combined trade agreements with strong industrial policy to enhance export competitiveness.
European Union	Uses trade agreements to set standards in digital trade, sustainability, and supply chains.
Comparative Insight	Successful trade strategies combine market access with domestic reforms, industrial upgrading, and regulatory alignment.

Indian Policies / Committees (Simplified)

Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme	Incentivises domestic manufacturing in sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, and solar modules.
Foreign Trade Policy (FTP)	Guides export promotion and diversification efforts.
Make in India Initiative	Encourages manufacturing-led growth and integration with global supply chains.
National Logistics Policy	Aims to reduce logistics costs and improve trade competitiveness.

Way Forward

1. Align FTAs with Domestic Reforms

- Ensure trade agreements are complemented by improvements in infrastructure and ease of doing business.

2. Strengthen MSME Integration

- Support small and medium enterprises to participate in global value chains.

3. Enhance Standards and Compliance Capacity

- Prepare exporters to meet technical and sustainability standards in advanced markets.

4. Diversify Export Basket

- Move towards high-value manufacturing and services exports.

5. Institutionalise Trade Impact Assessment

- Regularly review FTA outcomes to adjust policy and safeguard domestic interests.

Conclusion:

In a multipolar global order, trade policy is no longer limited to tariff negotiations. It has become an instrument of economic resilience, diplomatic engagement, and industrial transformation.

India's evolving trade strategy reflects an attempt to balance openness with domestic capacity building. Sustained success will depend on synchronising external engagement with internal competitiveness reforms.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. India withdrew from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations in 2019.
2. India signed the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the UAE in 2022.
3. The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme is aimed at promoting agricultural exports.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: a) 1 and 2 only

(Statement 3 is incorrect — PLI focuses on manufacturing sectors, not specifically agricultural exports.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "In a multipolar world, trade agreements are instruments of both economic growth and strategic positioning." Discuss with reference to India's recent trade policy shifts. (250 words)

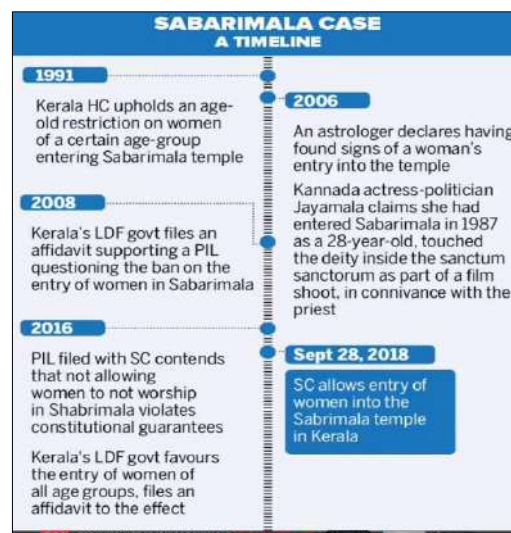
Balancing Faith, Dignity and Constitutional Rights

Source: The Hindu (Opinion)

Introduction:

The Supreme Court's 2018 judgment in the **Sabarimala case** marked a significant moment in India's constitutional history, foregrounding the tension between religious freedom and gender equality. The recent review proceedings revisit this complex balance between faith-based practices and constitutional guarantees of dignity and non-discrimination.

The article examines how courts should navigate disputes involving essential religious practices while ensuring that constitutional rights, particularly equality and dignity are not subordinated to custom.



Key Issues

1. Essential Religious Practices (ERP) Test

- Courts have historically determined whether a practice is “essential” to a religion.
- Raises concerns about judicial overreach into theological matters.

2. Individual Rights vs Group Autonomy

- Religious denominations claim autonomy under Article 26.
- However, individuals, especially women, invoke Articles 14 and 15.
- Core tension between collective religious rights and individual constitutional rights.

3. Gender Justice in Religious Spaces

- The exclusion of women based on biological factors was challenged as discriminatory.
- Raises question: Can tradition override equality?

4. Constitutional Morality vs Popular Belief

- The Court has invoked “constitutional morality” as a guiding principle.
- Suggests that practices inconsistent with dignity and equality may be subject to reform.

5. Scope of Judicial Intervention

- Debate continues on whether courts should decide what constitutes essential religious practice or instead adopt a limited constitutional review approach.

Key Facts for Prelims

- Article 14 – Equality before law.
- Article 15 – Prohibition of discrimination on grounds including sex.
- Article 25 – Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion.
- Article 26 – Freedom to manage religious affairs.
- The 2018 Sabarimala judgment (4:1 majority) allowed entry of women of menstruating age into the temple.
- The “**Essential Religious Practices**” (ERP) doctrine evolved through Supreme Court jurisprudence (e.g., Shirur Mutt case, 1954).

Global Practices

Country	Approach
United States	Strong protection of religious freedom; strict scrutiny test in discrimination cases
France	Secular model (Laïcité) prioritising state neutrality
United Kingdom	Balancing religious freedom with equality law
Canada	Proportionality test under Charter of Rights
Observation	Most democracies balance religious liberty with equality using proportionality or strict scrutiny standards rather than theological determination.

Indian Policies / Committees

1. Constitutional provisions under Part III (Fundamental Rights).
2. Supreme Court jurisprudence on ERP doctrine.
3. Sabarimala Review Bench referral to larger constitutional bench.
4. Ongoing debates on reform within personal laws and religious institutions.

Way Forward

1. Refine Judicial Standards

- Move from theological determination to constitutional harm-based assessment.

2. Adopt Proportionality Approach

- Balance religious autonomy with equality using structured constitutional tests.
- 3. **Encourage Internal Reform Mechanisms**
 - Facilitate dialogue within religious communities to reduce adversarial litigation.
- 4. **Promote Gender-Sensitive Constitutional Literacy**
 - Increase awareness of rights among stakeholders.
- 5. **Maintain Institutional Restraint**
 - Courts should intervene only when fundamental rights violations are evident

Conclusion

The Sabarimala review reflects the evolving nature of India's constitutional democracy. The challenge lies not in choosing between faith and rights, but in harmonising them within the constitutional framework.

A mature constitutional order must protect religious freedom while ensuring that dignity and equality remain non-negotiable principles. The judiciary's role, therefore, is not to adjudicate theology but to uphold constitutional morality with institutional prudence.

Balancing faith and rights requires sensitivity, restraint, and fidelity to constitutional values.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 25 guarantees absolute and unrestricted freedom of religion.
2. The Essential Religious Practices doctrine was evolved through judicial interpretation.
3. Article 26 grants religious denominations the right to manage their own affairs in matters of religion.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. Discuss the tension between religious freedom and gender equality in India's constitutional framework. Should courts determine what constitutes an essential religious practice? (250 words)

India's Relations with Israel Should Not Be at the Cost of Ties with the Arab World

Source: *The Hindu* (Editorial)

Introduction:

Prime Ministerial visits to Israel carry strategic, economic and symbolic weight, particularly during periods of heightened regional conflict. However, India's long-standing ties with the Arab world, including its support for the Palestinian cause and deep economic engagement with Gulf states, require careful diplomatic balancing. India's West Asia policy has historically been guided by strategic autonomy — engaging multiple actors without aligning exclusively with any one camp. In the current context of Gaza-related tensions and regional instability, maintaining equilibrium becomes especially critical.

Key Issues



1. Managing Perception During Conflict

- Engagement with Israel during periods of active conflict can influence regional perceptions, especially among Arab partners.

2. Energy and Diaspora Interests

- India's energy security and expatriate welfare are closely tied to Gulf countries, necessitating diplomatic sensitivity.

3. Two-State Solution Commitment

- India has consistently reiterated support for a negotiated two-state solution and peaceful resolution.

4. Strategic Projects like IMEC

- The India–Middle East–Europe Corridor requires cooperation from both Israel and Arab states, reinforcing the need for balanced diplomacy.

5. Regional Stability and Economic Connectivity

- Prolonged instability in Gaza and the broader region affects trade routes, connectivity initiatives, and investment flows.

Key Facts for Prelims

- India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in **1992**.
- India supports a **two-state solution** to the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- The **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** was announced at the G20 Summit in 2023.
- Gulf countries are major suppliers of crude oil to India.
- Millions of Indian expatriates reside in West Asian countries.
- The UAE and Saudi Arabia are among India's key strategic and economic partners.

Global Practices

European Union	Engages Israel economically while advocating humanitarian principles and Palestinian statehood.
United States	Maintains strategic alignment with Israel but also works with Gulf states for regional stability.
China	Expands economic ties across West Asia without overt alignment in regional conflicts.
Comparative Insight	Major powers pursue multi-vector engagement in West Asia, separating economic cooperation from conflict positioning where possible.

Indian Policies / Committees

Strategic Doctrine	Autonomy	India avoids formal alliances and maintains independent foreign policy decision-making.
Link West Policy		Strengthens economic and strategic ties with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.
IMEC Initiative		Aims to enhance connectivity among India, West Asia, and Europe.
Two-State Position		India supports peaceful resolution based on dialogue and international law.

Way Forward

1. Maintain Diplomatic Balance

- Continue high-level engagement with both Israel and Arab states.

2. Reaffirm Support for Peaceful Resolution

- Publicly reiterate commitment to humanitarian concerns and a two-state solution.

3. Protect Energy and Diaspora Interests

- Strengthen crisis response mechanisms for expatriate welfare.

4. Advance Connectivity Projects

- Ensure IMEC and related initiatives proceed through cooperative regional frameworks.

5. Avoid Symbolic Over-Alignment

- Keep engagement issue-based rather than ideological.

Conclusion:

India's relations with Israel have expanded significantly in defence, technology, and trade. However, these ties must coexist with equally vital relationships in the Arab world. The strength of India's West Asia policy lies in its ability to maintain balance — combining strategic engagement with principled support for peace and stability.

Diplomatic maturity requires continuity in partnerships without compromising long-standing commitments or regional sensitivities.

Prelims MCQ**Q1. Consider the following statements:**

1. India officially supports a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.
2. The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) was announced during the G20 Summit 2023.
3. India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1975.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: a) 1 and 2 only

(Statement 3 is incorrect — full diplomatic relations were established in 1992.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "India's engagement with Israel must be balanced with its longstanding ties to the Arab world." Discuss in the context of evolving geopolitics in West Asia. (250 words)

International Law Is Not Dead; Its Rules Stay Resilient

Source: *The Hindu* (Prabhash Ranjan)

Introduction:

Recent global conflicts — **from Ukraine to West Asia** — have triggered renewed debates on the relevance of international law. Many argue that major powers violate norms with **impunity, suggesting that the international legal order is weakening.**

However, international law is broader than the use-of-force regime under the UN Charter. **It governs trade, aviation, investment, climate change, human rights, maritime boundaries, and much more.** While enforcement challenges persist, its institutional depth and normative reach suggest resilience rather than collapse.

Key Issues**1. Repeated Violations of Use-of-Force Norms**

- Military interventions and unilateral actions by powerful states challenge Article 2(4) principles.
- 2. **Selective Compliance**
 - States may invoke international law selectively to justify strategic objectives.
- 3. **Weak Enforcement Mechanisms**
 - International law largely relies on state consent and lacks centralized enforcement.
- 4. **Rise of Populist and Authoritarian Politics**
 - Domestic political shifts in major powers may weaken commitment to multilateral norms.
- 5. **Perception Gap**
 - Public discourse often equates international law solely with conflict regulation, ignoring its wider domains.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Article 2(4) of the UN Charter** prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.
- The **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** adjudicates disputes between states.
- The **International Criminal Court (ICC)** prosecutes individuals for war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity.
- The **Paris Agreement (2015)** addresses global climate change mitigation.
- The **World Trade Organization (WTO)** provides a dispute settlement mechanism for trade conflicts.

Global Practices

European Union	Strong adherence to multilateral trade rules and climate commitments.
United States	Supports international law in trade, investment, and maritime issues, while sometimes contesting interpretations in security matters.
China	Engages actively in WTO and investment frameworks, while adopting selective positions on maritime disputes.
Comparative Insight	Even major powers operate within legal frameworks in economic and commercial domains because predictability benefits all participants.

Indian Policies / Committees

India's Commitment to UN Charter	India consistently reiterates respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.
International Arbitration Participation	India is party to several investment treaties and trade agreements.
Engagement with ICJ and WTO	India has both initiated and defended cases in international dispute forums.
Act East and Global South Diplomacy	Promotes rule-based order while safeguarding strategic autonomy.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Multilateral Institutions**
 - Support reform of the UN Security Council and global governance structures.
2. **Promote Consistent Interpretation**
 - Encourage uniform application of international legal principles.
3. **Enhance Compliance Mechanisms**
 - Strengthen dispute settlement and arbitration processes.
4. **Invest in Legal Diplomacy**

- Build institutional capacity in international law scholarship and negotiation.

5. **Balance Power and Norms**

- Recognize geopolitical realities while defending rule-based frameworks.

Conclusion:

International law does not eliminate power politics, but it structures and moderates it. While violations occur, the broader web of treaties, courts, and institutional practices continues to shape state behaviour. Rather than declaring its death, it is more accurate to recognise international law as a resilient, evolving system — imperfect but indispensable in managing interdependence in a complex world.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against another state.
2. The International Criminal Court (ICC) adjudicates trade disputes between states.
3. The Paris Agreement is legally binding on climate mitigation commitments.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Correct Answer: a) 1 only

(Statement 2 is incorrect — trade disputes are handled by WTO mechanisms.

Statement 3 is partially binding in procedural terms, but mitigation targets are nationally determined and not strictly legally binding.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. “Despite repeated violations, international law continues to shape state behaviour.” Critically examine in the context of contemporary global conflicts. (250 words)

NCERT Revisions and the Debate on Textbook Neutrality

Source: *The Indian Express* (Explained)

Introduction:

School textbooks play a formative role in shaping **civic understanding, constitutional values, and historical awareness**. Revisions by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), particularly in social science and political science textbooks, have periodically triggered debate. Recent revisions — **including changes related to historical references, constitutional developments, and**



political events — have revived concerns about transparency, academic autonomy, and ideological balance in curriculum design.

Key Issues

1. Transparency in Revision Process

- Concerns have emerged about whether revisions were adequately explained or publicly justified.

2. Selective Removal of Historical References

- Changes relating to specific historical events, political leaders, or communal episodes have generated debate.

3. Balancing Rationalisation vs. Omission

- While “content rationalisation” is justified as reducing academic burden, critics question whether important historical context is being diluted.

4. Institutional Credibility

- NCERT’s academic autonomy and public trust are critical for maintaining legitimacy.

5. Political Sensitivity of Curriculum

- Education content often intersects with identity, memory, and political narratives, making reforms contentious.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **NCERT** is an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Education, established in 1961.
- It prepares model textbooks based on the **National Curriculum Framework (NCF)**.
- The **National Curriculum Framework 2023 (NCF 2023)** guides recent revisions.
- Education falls under the **Concurrent List (List III)** of the Constitution.
- The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** emphasizes curriculum rationalisation and reduction of content load.

Global Practices

United Kingdom	Curriculum revisions involve consultation with historians and public review processes.
United States	State-level textbook boards conduct public hearings before adopting changes.
France	National curriculum reforms involve academic panels and structured expert consultation.
Comparative Insight	Stable democracies combine curriculum updates with transparent consultation, academic peer review, and public communication.

Indian Policies / Committees

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Advocates curriculum simplification and experiential learning.
National Curriculum Framework (NCF)	Recommends updated pedagogical approaches and content restructuring.
NCERT Textbook Development Process	Involves subject experts, review committees, and advisory groups.

Way Forward

1. Institutionalised Transparency

- Publish detailed explanatory notes for each revision.

2. Independent Academic Review Panels

- Strengthen peer-review mechanisms involving historians and subject experts.

3. Public Consultation Mechanism

- Allow structured feedback from educators and civil society.
- 4. **Safeguard Constitutional Values**
 - Ensure curriculum revisions remain aligned with constitutional principles.
- 5. **Periodic Impact Assessment**
 - Evaluate learning outcomes and civic understanding after revisions.

Conclusion:

Curriculum revision is neither unusual nor undesirable. Societies evolve, and textbooks must adapt. However, because education shapes civic consciousness, reforms must be transparent, academically grounded, and constitutionally aligned.

Public trust in institutions like NCERT is sustained not by avoiding change, but by ensuring that change is reasoned, consultative, and balanced

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. NCERT functions under the Ministry of Education.
2. Education is exclusively a State subject under the Constitution of India.
3. The National Curriculum Framework provides guidelines for textbook development.

Which of the above statements 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

(Statement 2 is incorrect — education is in the Concurrent List.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Textbook revisions in a democracy must balance academic freedom, constitutional values, and public accountability." Discuss in the Indian context. (250 words)

Corruption Perceptions Index –

India **improved its position on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025**, climbing **five places to 91st** out of **182 countries and territories**, according to the annual global ranking published by **Transparency International**. Despite this improvement, India's score remains **below the global average**, indicating persistent challenges in public sector integrity.

About the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)

1. The **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)** is the **most widely used global corruption ranking** that assesses perceived levels of **public sector corruption** across countries.
2. It has been published **annually** by **Transparency International** since 1995.
3. The CPI uses a **scale from 0 to 100**, where **0** indicates a **highly corrupt public sector** and **100** indicates **very clean governance**.



4. The score for each country is derived from at least **three data sources**, selected from up to **13 expert assessments and opinion surveys** collected by reputable organisations such as the **World Bank** and the **World Economic Forum**.

Key Highlights of CPI 2025

1. India's Performance:

- India's rank improved from **96 in 2024 to 91 in 2025**, with a marginal increase in score.
- However, its CPI score still lies **below the global average**, highlighting that corruption remains a significant concern.

2. Least Corrupt Countries:

- **Denmark** ranked first with one of the highest scores, followed by **Finland** and **Singapore**, indicating strong public sector integrity.

Most Corrupt Nations:

Countries such as **South Sudan**, **Somalia**, and **Venezuela** scored at the bottom of the index, reflecting deep-rooted governance challenges.

Significance

1. The CPI offers a **global comparative measure of perceived corruption** in public sectors and highlights trends in **governance and transparency**.
2. Though an index of perception rather than direct measurement, it plays a key role in shaping discussions on **anti-corruption reforms, institutional accountability, and democratic oversight**.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025, consider the following statements:

1. The CPI ranks countries based on perceived levels of public sector corruption using a scale of 0 to 100.
2. India improved its ranking on the CPI 2025 compared to the previous year.
3. A higher CPI score indicates higher levels of corruption.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (c)

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 is **correct**.
2. Statement 2 is **correct** (India rose to 91st in 2025 from 96th in 2024)
3. Statement 3 is **incorrect** (a **higher CPI score** indicates **lower perceived corruption**, i.e., cleaner governance).

Student Notes

India Believed Panchsheel Pact Settled Border: CDS

Source: The Hindu

What In News

Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan stated that India believed the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement settled the border issue with China, but Beijing viewed it as a trade pact.

Major Key Facts

1. CDS General Anil Chauhan stated India believed Panchsheel resolved the border issue with China.
2. China considered the agreement as limited to trade, not boundary settlement.
3. Panchsheel Agreement was signed in **1954** between India and China.
4. India recognized Tibet as part of China under the agreement.
5. The issue was discussed at a seminar organized by Bhartiya Himalayan International Strategic Studies (BHISMS).

Static Concept

Panchsheel Agreement (1954)

Official Name:

Agreement on Trade and Intercourse Between the Tibet Region of China and India

Core Principles

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
2. Mutual non-aggression
3. Mutual non-interference in internal affairs
4. Equality and mutual benefit
5. Peaceful coexistence



Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Panchsheel Agreement, consider the following statements:

1. It was signed between India and China in 1954.
2. It explicitly demarcated the India-China boundary.
3. One of its principles was mutual non-interference in internal affairs.

Which of the statements given above 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:

- Statement 1 — Correct ✓
- Statement 2 — Incorrect ✗ (It did not formally demarcate the boundary)
- Statement 3 — Correct ✓

PM-DAKSH Scheme – Latest News

Recent data presented in the Lok Sabha revealed that **less than 50% of candidates trained under the PM-DAKSH scheme between 2021 and 2024 secured placements.**

About the Pradhan Mantri Dakshata Aur Kushalata Sampanna Hitgrahi Yojana

1. A **Central Sector Scheme** launched during **2020–21**.
2. Implemented to enhance employability among socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

Aim

To provide **quality skill training through recognised institutions**, enabling beneficiaries to secure employment or pursue self-employment opportunities.

Types of Training Programmes

The scheme offers four categories of skill development programmes:

1. **Up-skilling and Re-skilling Programmes**
2. **Short-Term Training Programmes**
3. **Long-Term Training Programmes**
4. **Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDP)**

Target Beneficiaries

1. Scheduled Castes (SCs)
2. Other Backward Classes (OBCs)
3. Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)
4. De-notified Tribes (DNTs)
5. Safai Karamcharis / Waste Pickers

Eligibility Criteria

1. **Age:** 18 to 45 years
2. **Income Criteria:**
 - OBC and EWS applicants must have an annual family income below **₹3 lakh**.
 - No income ceiling for SC, DNT, and Safai Mitras/Waste Pickers.

Convergence

The scheme has been **merged with the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

Source: The Hindu (TH)

PM-DAKSH Yojana

- PM-DAKSH (Pradhan Mantri Dakshata Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi) Yojana was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MOSJ&E) in 2020-21.
- It is a National Action Plan for skilling marginalized persons covering SCs, OBCs, EBCs, DNTs, Sanitation workers including waste pickers.
- The main objective of the PM-DAKSH Yojana is to increase the skill levels of the target youth by providing them short term and long term skills, followed by assistance in wage/self-employment.

Student Notes

Atal Innovation Mission Launches 'AI-Preneurs of India' at India AI Impact Summit 2026

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Government of India

What In News

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) launched *AI-Preneurs of India* at India AI Impact Summit 2026—a book highlighting India's young innovators shaping the AI ecosystem.

Major Key Facts

1. *AI-Preneurs of India* book was launched by **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** at India AI Impact Summit 2026.
2. The book celebrates **young Indian innovators in AI** and their purpose-driven journeys.
3. AIM is a flagship initiative under **NITI Aayog** to foster innovation and entrepreneurship.
4. India's growing AI ecosystem—startups, academia, researchers, and government—was showcased at the event.
5. The launch highlighted India's positioning as a global destination for **AI innovation and solutions**.



Static Concept

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)

Ministry/Parent Body: NITI Aayog, Government of India

Purpose:

1. To promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship across India
2. To build a robust innovation ecosystem that nurtures innovators and startups

Launched:

1. **January 2016**

Key Programmes Under AIM:

1. **Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL)**
 - Fosters curiosity and creativity in school students
 - Focus on STEM learning & early innovation exposure
2. **Atal Incubation Centres (AICs)**
 - Supports startups through incubation, mentoring, financing, and infrastructure
3. **Promotion of International Innovation Networks (PIIN)**
 - Encourages global partnerships & knowledge exchange
4. **ATL Community Impact Programme (AIM-CIP)**
 - Mass innovation outreach to schools
5. **AI & Deep Tech Missions**
 - Recently expanded to include AI-related innovation materials and collaborations

India AI Impact Summit / India AI Expo

1. Platform that brings together:

- Global tech leaders
 - Government policymakers
 - Academia & research institutions
 - Startups & innovators
2. Focuses on:
- Emerging AI technologies
 - AI governance frameworks
 - Collaborative global AI ecosystem
3. Aligns with India's AI Strategy and Digital Public Infrastructure goals

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), consider the following:

1. AIM is a flagship initiative under NITI Aayog to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.
2. One of the programmes under AIM is Atal Tinkering Labs which focuses on fostering innovation among school students.
3. AIM directly provides equity funding to mature startups without intermediaries.

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

✓ **Correct Answer: A — 1 and 2 only**

Finland –

Recently, the Prime Minister of Finland stated that **Finland and India**, along with global partners, can jointly advance **resilient, sustainable, and human-centric technological development**.

About Finland

1. Situated in **Northern Europe**.

Borders

1. **Norway** to the north
2. **Sweden** to the northwest
3. **Russia** to the east

Surrounding Water Bodies

1. **Gulf of Finland** (south)
2. **Gulf of Bothnia** (southwest)
3. **Baltic Sea**

Capital

1. **Helsinki**

International Memberships

1. Member of the **European Union (EU)**
2. Member of **NATO**

Geographical Features

Climate



1. Experiences a **harsh northern climate**.
2. Winters are long and severe, with temperatures in northern regions dropping to around **-30°C (-22°F)**.

Terrain

1. Densely forested landscape.
2. Contains approximately **56,000 lakes**, numerous rivers, and extensive marshlands.
3. Among the highest lake densities in the world.
4. Largest lake: **Lake Saimaa**.

Highest Point

1. **Mount Halti (1,328 metres)**.

PAC pulls up government for slow implementation of SANKALP scheme

Source: The Hindu

What In News

1. The **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** criticised the government for slow and inadequate implementation of the **SANKALP scheme**.
2. The criticism is based on a **CAG audit report**, which flagged financial and execution shortfalls.
3. Concerns raised over lack of **central monitoring mechanism and due diligence**.

About Sankalp Scheme

Full Form: Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion

1. Ministry: **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**
2. Objective:
 - Strengthen short-term skill training
 - Improve institutional frameworks
 - Enhance industry linkage
 - Promote inclusion of marginalised communities

Key Facts from Report

1. Approved: **2018**
2. Total Outlay: **₹4,455 crore**
3. Funding Support:
 - World Bank loan: **\$3300 crore equivalent**
 - State contribution: ₹660 crore
 - Industry leverage: ₹495 crore
4. Only **44% of budget provision utilised** till October 2023.
5. Completion delayed beyond original deadline.
6. World Bank disbursed **86% of first tranche**, but Ministry utilised only part of it.

Static Background**Public Accounts Committee (PAC)**

1. Parliamentary committee examining:
 - CAG reports
 - Government expenditure
2. Ensures:

- Financial accountability
- Proper use of public funds

CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General)

1. Constitutional authority under Article 148.
2. Audits:
 - Union & State finances
 - Public sector undertakings

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the SANKALP scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It is implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
2. It aims to strengthen short-term skill training and institutional capacity.
3. It is fully funded by the Government of India without external assistance.

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

Goa Maritime Conclave 2026 Reinforces Shared Vision of Maritime Security in Indian Ocean Region

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Delhi

What In News

The 5th edition of the Goa Maritime Conclave 2026 reaffirmed India's commitment to maritime security cooperation and a shared vision for stability in the Indian Ocean Region. (26 words)

Major Key Facts

1. **5th Edition** of Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) held in Goa.
2. Theme focused on **maritime security and cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
3. Participants included Chiefs of Navies and senior maritime leaders from IOR countries.
4. Emphasis on **collective maritime strategy, interoperability, and capacity building**.
5. Reinforced India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision.



Static Concept – Indian Ocean Region (IOR) & Maritime Security

Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

1. Third-largest Ocean in the world
2. Connects:
 - Asia

- Africa
- Australia
- 3. Major chokepoints:
 - Strait of Hormuz
 - Bab-el-Mandeb
 - Strait of Malacca
- 4. Carries:
 - ~80% of global oil trade (by sea)
 - Significant global container traffic



India's SAGAR Doctrine

SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region

Announced in **2015**

Core Principles:

1. Maritime security cooperation
2. Capacity building for littoral states
3. Disaster relief & humanitarian assistance (HADR)
4. Blue economy cooperation
5. Respect for international law (UNCLOS)

Key Maritime Groupings

1. **IORA** – Indian Ocean Rim Association
2. **IONS** – Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
3. **Quad** – India, US, Japan, Australia
4. **Colombo Security Conclave**

India's Maritime Strategy Objectives

1. Secure Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs)
2. Counter piracy & maritime terrorism
3. Promote freedom of navigation
4. Strengthen coastal surveillance network
5. Develop blue economy

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region, consider the following statements:

1. SAGAR doctrine emphasizes security and growth for all in the region.
2. Strait of Malacca connects the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean.
3. IORA is a military alliance focused exclusively on naval operations.

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

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 — ✓ Correct (SAGAR vision)
2. Statement 2 — ✓ Correct (Strategic chokepoint)
3. Statement 3 — ✗ Incorrect (IORA is an intergovernmental economic cooperation forum, not a military alliance)

Vice-President of Guyana Calls on Vice-President of India at Uparashtrapati Bhavan

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Delhi

What In News

Vice-President of Guyana met India's Vice-President at Uparashtrapati Bhavan to strengthen bilateral ties, expand cooperation in key sectors, and reaffirm Global South partnership. (25 words)

Major Key Facts

1. Vice-President of Guyana, **Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo**, called on India's Vice-President.
2. Meeting held at **Uparashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi**.
3. Discussions focused on expanding cooperation in:
 - Healthcare
 - Infrastructure
 - Energy
 - Capacity building
4. Emphasis on strengthening **India–Guyana bilateral relations**.
5. Reaffirmed collaboration in multilateral forums and Global South solidarity.



Static Concept Sheet – India–Guyana Relations

Guyana – Basic Facts

1. Location: Northern coast of South America
2. Capital: Georgetown
3. Member of:
 - CARICOM
 - Commonwealth
4. Significant Indian diaspora (descendants of indentured labourers)

India–Guyana Relations

1. Diplomatic relations established: **1966**
2. Areas of cooperation:
 - Energy (oil & gas)
 - Infrastructure development
 - Pharmaceuticals

- IT & digital governance
- Capacity building (ITEC programme)

Energy Cooperation

1. Guyana emerging as major oil producer (offshore reserves)
2. India exploring energy partnership opportunities
3. Strategic diversification of energy imports

Global South Cooperation

1. Both countries emphasize:
 - South-South cooperation
 - Reform of global governance institutions
 - Development partnerships

India promotes:

1. Lines of Credit (LOCs)
2. Capacity building initiatives
3. Developmental assistance

ITEC Programme

1. Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme
2. Capacity-building & training for partner countries
3. Scholarships and technical training

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Guyana, consider the following statements:

1. Guyana is located in South America.
2. Guyana is a member of CARICOM.
3. Guyana shares a border with Brazil.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

✓ Correct Answer: C — 1, 2 and 3

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 — ✓ Correct (Northern South America)
2. Statement 2 — ✓ Correct (CARICOM member)
3. Statement 3 — ✓ Correct (Shares border with Brazil)

India and GCC Sign Joint Statement on India–GCC Free Trade Agreement

Source: PIB | Ministry of Commerce & Industry

What In News

1. India and the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** have signed a **Joint Statement** to begin negotiations on a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**.
2. The announcement was made during high-level bilateral meetings.

- The FTA aims to enhance trade, investment, and economic cooperation between India and GCC nations.

About GCC

Full Form: Gulf Cooperation Council

Member Countries:

- Saudi Arabia
- United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- Qatar
- Kuwait
- Oman
- Bahrain
 - Established in **1981**.
 - Regional political and economic union of Gulf countries.



Key Objectives of India–Gcc Fta

- Reduce tariffs and trade barriers.
- Expand bilateral trade and investment.
- Strengthen energy security cooperation.
- Enhance services trade (IT, fintech, healthcare, logistics).
- Boost market access for Indian exports.

Trade Significance

- GCC is one of India's largest trading partners.
- Major Indian exports:
 - Engineering goods
 - Gems & jewellery
 - Food products
 - Textiles
- Major imports from GCC:
 - Crude oil
 - LNG
 - Petrochemicals

Strategic Significance

- Strengthens India's West Asia outreach.
- Supports diversification of trade partners.
- Complements India's:
 - Act West Policy
 - Energy security strategy
- Enhances economic integration in the Indo-Pacific and West Asia.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Which of the following countries are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)?

1. Saudi Arabia
2. Iran
3. Qatar
4. Oman

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- (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) 1, 3 and 4 only

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Exercise 'Vayu Shakti' is associated with:

- (a) Indian Army
- (b) Indian Navy
- (c) Indian Air Force
- (d) Integrated Theatre Command

Answer: (c) Indian Air Force

Centre Rejects RTI Plea on VB-GRAM G Act Details

The Union Ministry of Rural Development has rejected an RTI application seeking details of consultations held with States regarding the proposed **VB-GRAM G Act (Gramin Nyaya and Access Act, 2025)**.

The RTI was filed by Mr. Shivraj Singh Chouhan, seeking information on consultations, stakeholder discussions, and key design features of the proposed law aimed at strengthening rural justice and employment mechanisms.



ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय
भारत सरकार

**MINISTRY OF RURAL
DEVELOPMENT**
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Government's Response

The Ministry stated that:

1. The Act is **still in the formulation stage** and has not yet been finalised.
2. Since it has not become operational, details regarding consultations and framework design are not being disclosed.
3. The legislation is expected to involve **coordination between the Centre and States**, as well as consultations with stakeholders.

Officials clarified that once the framework is finalised and implemented, relevant information would be made available as per legal provisions.

About Ministry of Rural Development

1. It is responsible for policies and programmes aimed at rural poverty alleviation, employment generation, and infrastructure development.

2. It oversees flagship schemes such as:
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)
 - Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin
 - Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission

Significance of the Issue

1. Highlights the debate between **transparency under RTI** and **confidentiality during policy formulation**.
2. Raises questions about stakeholder participation in rural governance reforms.
3. Reflects the evolving framework of rural justice and access mechanisms in India.

Source: The Hindu

Statement-Based MCQ

Q1. With reference to the proposed VB-GRAM G Act, consider the following statements:

1. It has already been implemented nationwide.
2. The Ministry rejected the RTI plea stating that the Act is still under formulation.
3. The proposed Act involves coordination with States and stakeholders.

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: B. 2 and 3 only

(Statement 1 is incorrect as the Act has not yet been operationalised.)

Student Notes

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**₹10,000-Crore Dosage for Biopharma: Biopharma SHAKTI Initiative**

Source: The Hindu (Union Budget – Health & Pharma Sector)

What In News

Union Budget has announced a **₹10,000 crore Biopharma SHAKTI programme** to boost domestic production of **biologics and biosimilars**, strengthen **CDSCO**, and expand **pharmaceutical education and clinical research infrastructure** in India.

Exam Important Key Facts

1. ₹10,000 crore outlay over **next five years**.
2. Focus on **biologics and biosimilars**, not conventional chemical drugs.
3. **Three new National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPERs)** to be established.
4. **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** to be strengthened to meet **global regulatory standards**.
5. Aim to shift Indian pharma from **volume-based generics to value-based complex therapies**.
6. Programme named **Biopharma SHAKTI**.

Static Information**What are Biopharmaceuticals?**

1. Medicines produced using **living systems** (microorganisms, plant cells, animal cells).
2. Examples:
 - Monoclonal antibodies
 - Vaccines
 - Insulin
 - Gene & cell therapies

Biologics vs Biosimilars

1. **Biologics:** Original complex biological drugs.
2. **Biosimilars:** Near-identical versions of approved biologics (not exact copies like generics).
3. Biosimilars require **advanced clinical trials and regulatory scrutiny**.

Why Biopharma SHAKTI is Needed

1. India's disease burden shifting towards:
 - Cancer
 - Diabetes
 - Autoimmune disorders
2. Traditional small-molecule drugs insufficient for future healthcare needs.
3. Global biopharma market dominated by US & EU.
4. India strong in **generics**, weak in **high-value biologics**.

Role of CDSCO

1. India's national drug regulator under **MoHFW**.
2. Responsible for:
 - Drug approvals
 - Clinical trials

- Medical devices

3. Strengthening CDSCO aligns India with **US FDA & EMA standards.**

NIPERs (Static)

1. Autonomous institutes under **Department of Pharmaceuticals.**
2. Act as India's premier pharma R&D and manpower hubs.
3. Expansion improves:
 - Skilled workforce
 - Research ecosystem
 - Industry–academia linkage

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Biopharma SHAKTI initiative, consider the following statements:

1. Biopharmaceuticals are produced mainly through chemical synthesis.
2. Biosimilars require more complex regulatory approval than generic drugs.
3. CDSCO strengthening aims to align India's drug regulation with global standards.
4. Biopharma SHAKTI focuses exclusively on vaccine manufacturing.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

The Approaching AI Surge and Its Global Consequences

Source: *The hindu*

Author: M.K. Narayanan

Introduction:

The world may be entering a phase where Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not merely a technological tool but a structural force reshaping global power balances. Like earlier industrial revolutions, AI has the potential to alter economic systems, military capabilities, governance frameworks, and strategic competition. Unlike previous waves, however, AI's speed, autonomy, and dual-use nature make its consequences deeper and less predictable.

Key Issues

1. **AI as a Catalyst for Global Power Redistribution**
 - AI dominance may determine economic competitiveness and military superiority.
2. **Militarisation of AI**

Key Facts for Prelims

- AI is considered a **General-Purpose Technology (GPT)**, similar to electricity or the internet.
- Autonomous systems include AI-driven drones, cyber tools, and automated decision systems.
- The First World War introduced tanks and aircraft, altering warfare doctrines permanently.
- AI-based systems are increasingly integrated into defence, cybersecurity, and predictive governance.
- Global AI leaders include the United States and China, with strong investments in military-AI fusion.

- Autonomous drones, AI-guided targeting systems, and cyber capabilities could transform battlefield dynamics.
- 3. **Governance and Ethical Vacuum**
 - Rapid deployment of AI systems may outpace regulatory and ethical safeguards.
- 4. **Risk of Autonomous Conflict**
 - AI-enabled weapons could escalate conflicts without direct human control.
- 5. **Unequal Technological Access**
 - Nations lacking AI capabilities risk strategic marginalisation.

Global Practices

United States	Heavy investments in AI research, defence applications, and private-sector innovation.
China	Military-civil fusion strategy integrates AI into defence and surveillance systems.
European Union	Focus on regulatory frameworks such as AI governance and ethical oversight.

Globally, while major powers accelerate AI capabilities, regulatory harmonisation remains fragmented.

Indian Policies / Frameworks

- **National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (NITI Aayog)**
- **IndiaAI Mission**
 - AI applications in digital governance (e.g., predictive analytics, service delivery platforms)
 - Growing focus on cybersecurity and indigenous defence technologies

India's approach combines developmental use of AI with gradual integration into security domains.

Way Forward

1. **Develop Comprehensive AI Governance**
 - Establish clear ethical, legal, and accountability frameworks for civilian and defence AI.
2. **Invest in Indigenous Capability**
 - Strengthen research ecosystems, semiconductor infrastructure, and talent development.
3. **Balance Innovation and Regulation**
 - Encourage AI startups while embedding safety checks and human oversight.
4. **Strengthen Cyber and Defence Preparedness**
 - Prepare for AI-driven cyber threats and autonomous warfare risks.
5. **Promote Multilateral Dialogue**
 - Advocate global norms for AI in warfare and autonomous weapons systems.

Conclusion: Managing Power with Prudence

AI is not simply a technological breakthrough; it is a strategic multiplier. Nations that harness it effectively may redefine economic and military hierarchies. However, without institutional safeguards and international cooperation, AI risks accelerating instability. The challenge is not whether AI will shape the future—but whether states can shape AI responsibly.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Artificial Intelligence is classified as a General-Purpose Technology.
2. Autonomous weapon systems operate entirely without any possibility of human oversight.
3. Military-civil fusion refers to integrating civilian technological innovation with defence capabilities.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b) 1 and 3 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Artificial Intelligence is emerging as a decisive factor in reshaping global power equations." Discuss the opportunities and security risks associated with AI proliferation. (250 words)

Breakthrough In Aluminium Phosphide Poisoning Treatment

News:

Doctors At PGIMER Have Achieved A Global Breakthrough By Successfully Treating Aluminium Phosphide (Celphos) Poisoning Using Intravenous Lipid Emulsion Therapy.

Important Points

1. Aluminium Phosphide Is Commonly Known As **Celphos**.
2. It Releases **Highly Toxic Phosphine Gas** On Contact With Moisture Or Stomach Acid.
3. Phosphine Causes **Mitochondrial Dysfunction And Cellular Hypoxia**.
4. Poisoning Has A **High Fatality Rate** Due To Lack Of A Specific Antidote.
5. Widely Used As A **Fumigant For Stored Grains** In Agriculture.
6. Major Public Health Concern In **Punjab, Haryana, And Uttar Pradesh**.

Static Information (Basic) –

Aluminium Phosphide Is A Cheap, Highly Toxic Fumigant Pesticide Used For Grain Storage, Releasing Phosphine Gas That Disrupts Cellular Respiration And Causes Severe Systemic Toxicity.

Source: *The Indian Express*

Bridging a Divide with an 'Indian Scientific Service'

Source: *The Hindu (Opinion)*

GS Paper Relevance:

- GS II – Governance, Civil Services, Policy Design
- GS III – Science & Technology, Environment, Institutional Capacity

Introduction:

India's administrative system was originally designed around **generalist civil servants to ensure stability and unity after Independence**. While this model served nation-building needs, governance today increasingly depends on scientific and technological expertise especially in areas like **climate change, biodiversity, artificial intelligence, and public health**.

However, India lacks a structured scientific cadre embedded within governance. Scientists in government institutions largely operate under research-focused frameworks rather than policy-integrated systems. The article argues for the creation of an **Indian Scientific Service (ISS)** to bridge this structural gap and strengthen evidence-based governance.

Key Issues

1. Structural Mismatch Between Science and Administration

- Scientific careers are shaped by long-term research, peer review, and domain expertise. Civil services are built around competitive examinations and administrative versatility.

Result: Limited integration of science into policymaking.

2. Lack of Career Pathways for Scientists in Governance

- Scientists working in ministries often face unclear promotion pathways and limited authority compared to generalist officers.

Weak institutional incentives for scientific policy engagement.

3. Research-Oriented Service Rules

- Scientific institutions are governed by conduct rules designed primarily for administrative control rather than policy participation.
- Reduces autonomy and policy influence.

4. Risk of Short-Termism

- Political and administrative systems often operate on short-term cycles.
- Scientific governance requires:
 - ✓ Long-term modelling
 - ✓ Risk assessment
 - ✓ Evidence-based scenario building
- Without structured integration, science remains advisory rather than foundational.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964** govern conduct of central government employees.
- India's civil services structure is largely generalist-based (IAS, IPS, IFoS).
- Major scientific institutions in India:
 - Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)
 - Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
 - Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
- Existing specialised services:
 - Indian Economic Service (IES)
 - Indian Statistical Service (ISS)
 - Indian Forest Service (IFoS)
- Many advanced countries have institutionalised scientific advisory systems within governance.

Global Practices

Country	Practice
United Kingdom	Chief Scientific Adviser system embedded in government
United States	Office of Science and Technology Policy advises President
France	Strong technocratic tradition with specialised cadres
Germany	Institutionalised science-policy coordination mechanisms

Indian Policies / Committees

1. **Scientific Advisory Committee to the Cabinet (SAC-C)** – advisory role.
2. **Office of Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA)** – coordination role.
3. **National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) 2020 (Draft)** – emphasises science-policy interface.
4. Existing specialised cadres (e.g., IES, ISS) show precedent for domain-based services.

Way Forward

1. Establish Indian Scientific Service (ISS)

- Structured recruitment through UPSC or specialised mechanism.

2. Clear Career Architecture

- Define promotion pathways, policy roles, and lateral mobility between research and governance.

3. Policy-Linked Posting Structure

- Deploy scientists in ministries such as Environment, Agriculture, Health, AI regulation.

4. Capacity-Building Modules

- Train scientists in public administration and administrators in scientific literacy.

5. Institutional Autonomy with Accountability

- Balance political executive authority with scientific independence to prevent misuse or suppression of evidence.

Conclusion

India's governance model must evolve to meet the demands of a technology-driven century. The creation of an Indian Scientific Service is not a challenge to the generalist civil services but a complementary reform. By institutionalising scientific expertise within policymaking, India can strengthen long-term capacity, improve regulatory depth, and align governance with national developmental ambitions.

A balanced integration of science and administration would deepen democratic decision-making while preserving executive accountability.

Prelims MCQ**Q1. Consider the following statements:**

1. The Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964 primarily regulate research autonomy in scientific institutions.
2. India currently has no specialised civil service dedicated exclusively to scientific policy integration.
3. The Indian Economic Service is an example of a domain-specific civil service.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: B

Mains Question

Q2. Discuss the need for institutionalising scientific expertise within India's governance framework. Examine the merits and challenges of creating an Indian Scientific Service. (250 words)

Student Notes

India's Aviation is in Need of Data-Driven Oversight

Source: *The hindu*

Author: Prerna Rakheja

Introduction:

Recent fare surges by **major airlines have drawn regulatory attention, prompting temporary fare caps and competition inquiries**. While such measures may offer short-term relief, they highlight a deeper structural issue — the absence of a **robust, data-driven oversight framework in India's aviation sector**.

Aviation markets are dynamic and demand-sensitive. Distinguishing legitimate price spikes from market dominance or anti-competitive conduct requires systematic, continuous data analysis rather than reactive interventions.



Key Issues

1. **Reactive Regulation Instead of Continuous Oversight**

- Temporary fare caps and post-crisis investigations lack systemic preventive impact.

2. **Absence of a Comprehensive Pricing Database**

- Unlike advanced aviation markets, India lacks structured public datasets on actual ticket prices, routes, and fare trends.

3. **Difficulty in Identifying Market Power**

- Without route-level and time-series pricing data, distinguishing demand-driven price increases from dominance-driven pricing becomes challenging.

4. **Algorithmic Pricing Concerns**

- Airlines increasingly use pricing algorithms, raising concerns about tacit coordination or non-transparent fare adjustments.

5. **Transparency vs Commercial Sensitivity**

- Excessive disclosure of proprietary algorithms may discourage innovation, while insufficient transparency weakens accountability.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** regulates civil aviation safety and operations in India.
- **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** enforces the Competition Act, 2002, to prevent anti-competitive practices.
- The **U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS)** maintains detailed airline pricing and route-level data.
- The **DB1B database (U.S.)** collects airline ticket information, including fares and routes.
- Dynamic pricing algorithms are widely used in aviation to adjust fares based on demand and seat availability.

Global Practices

United States Model

1. The U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics maintains detailed, route-level airline pricing databases.
2. Academic and regulatory scrutiny has identified patterns such as the "Southwest Effect" — where new entrants lower average fares.

3. A 10% random sample (DB1B dataset) balances transparency with commercial confidentiality.

Indian Policies / Committees

DGCA's Current Role	Primarily focused on operational safety and regulatory compliance rather than market pricing analytics.
Competition Commission of India (CCI)	Investigates abuse of dominance and anti-competitive agreements under the Competition Act, 2002.
Civil Aviation Market Context	India is one of the fastest-growing aviation markets globally, with high demand elasticity and dynamic fare structures.

Way Forward

- 1. Establish a Structured Aviation Pricing Database**
 - Collect anonymised route-level fare data, similar to the U.S. DB1B model.
- 2. Adopt a Randomised Data Disclosure Framework**
 - A statistically valid sample (e.g., 10%) can ensure oversight without burdening airlines.
- 3. Strengthen Inter-Regulatory Coordination**
 - Enhance collaboration between DGCA and CCI for market analytics and enforcement clarity.
- 4. Build Algorithmic Audit Capacity**
 - Develop technical expertise within regulatory bodies to understand dynamic pricing systems.
- 5. Shift from Fare Caps to Market Supervision**
 - Move away from ad hoc price ceilings towards rule-based, evidence-backed oversight mechanisms.

Conclusion:

India's aviation sector requires regulatory **maturity aligned with its market size and technological complexity**. **The objective is not to control prices directly but to ensure transparent, competitive and accountable market functioning.**

A data-driven oversight framework can protect consumers, encourage healthy competition and reduce the need for frequent crisis interventions. Institutional strengthening, rather than price intervention, is the sustainable path forward.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) regulates airline pricing in India.
2. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) functions under the Competition Act, 2002.
3. Dynamic pricing algorithms are commonly used in airline ticket pricing.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Correct Answer: b) 2 and 3 only

(Statement 1 is incorrect — DGCA primarily regulates safety and operations, not pricing directly.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "In high-growth sectors such as civil aviation, regulatory capacity must evolve from reactive control to data-driven supervision." Discuss. (250 words)

India's Moment to Restore Balance to Copyright

Source: The Hindu

Author: Pranesh Prakash

Introduction:

Copyright law was originally designed to incentivise creativity while ensuring eventual public access to knowledge. However, over time, copyright protection has expanded significantly in scope and duration. The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly generative models trained on vast datasets, has reignited debate over whether the current framework remains balanced.

Key Issues

1. Copyright Maximalism

- The expansion of copyright duration and scope has moved away from its limited-monopoly origins, potentially restricting access to knowledge.

2. AI Training and Legal Uncertainty

- Many AI systems require large datasets that may include copyrighted works. In the absence of broad "text and data mining" exceptions, AI training may fall into legal grey areas.

3. Accessibility Concerns

- Rigid copyright regimes have historically hindered access to knowledge for visually impaired persons — addressed partially through the Marrakesh Treaty.

4. International Divergence

- Jurisdictions such as the EU, Japan, and Singapore have adopted flexible exceptions for data mining, while others remain restrictive, creating uneven innovation landscapes.

5. Risk of Technological Stagnation

- Overly restrictive copyright regimes may slow domestic AI innovation and reduce competitiveness in emerging technologies.



Key Facts for Prelims

- The Statute of Anne (1710) is regarded as the first modern copyright law.
- India's current Copyright Act, 1957 governs copyright protection.
- The Marrakesh Treaty (2013) facilitates access to published works for visually impaired persons.
- Copyright protection in India generally lasts for 60 years after the author's death.
- The European Union has introduced "text and data mining" exceptions in copyright law.
- AI training often involves copying and processing copyrighted material for statistical learning.

Global Practices

European Union	Introduced text-and-data mining exceptions allowing copyrighted works to be used for computational analysis.
Japan	Permits "exploitation not for enjoying the work," allowing machine-based analysis without infringing copyright.

Singapore	Adopted flexible copyright reforms to support AI and innovation ecosystems.
Comparative Insight	Advanced innovation economies increasingly recognise that AI training constitutes statistical analysis rather than expressive copying.

Indian Policies / Committees (Simplified)

Copyright Act, 1957	Provides exclusive rights to creators, with limited statutory exceptions.
Marrakesh Treaty Implementation	India amended its copyright framework in 2012 to allow accessible formats for visually impaired persons.
Current Gap	India does not yet have a broad, general-purpose “text and data mining” exception comparable to leading innovation jurisdictions.

Way Forward

- Introduce a Clear Text-and-Data Mining Exception**
 - Allow computational analysis of copyrighted works without requiring prior permission when used for non-expressive, machine-learning purposes.
- Strengthen Safe Harbour Provisions**
 - Protect curated public-interest datasets used for AI research from excessive copyright litigation.
- Balance Creator Compensation Mechanisms**
 - Explore alternative models (collective licensing, data trusts, or negotiated frameworks) where necessary.
- Protect Accessibility and Public Interest**
 - Ensure copyright reforms do not undermine exceptions supporting education, disability access, and research.
- Align with Global Innovation Standards**
 - Harmonise India’s copyright regime with global best practices to avoid technological isolation.

Conclusion:

Copyright law was designed not merely to reward creators, but to promote knowledge, innovation, and cultural development. In the AI era, rigid interpretations may undermine these broader objectives. India’s challenge is not to dilute copyright protection, but to recalibrate it — preserving incentives for creators while enabling responsible technological advancement and equitable access to knowledge. A balanced, forward-looking reform can strengthen both innovation and creative ecosystems.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Marrakesh Treaty facilitates cross-border access to published works for visually impaired persons.
2. India currently has a broad statutory “text and data mining” exception comparable to the European Union.
3. Copyright protection in India generally extends beyond the lifetime of the author.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Correct Answer: a) 1 and 3 only

(Statement 2 is incorrect — India does not yet have a broad text-and-data mining exception.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "In the era of Artificial Intelligence, copyright law must balance creator incentives with innovation and access to knowledge." Examine in the Indian context. (250 words)

'Bhasha' Matters in India's Multilingual Moment

Source: *The Hindu* (Editorial)

Introduction:

India's linguistic landscape is among the richest in the world, **with over 1,300 mother tongues recorded in the Census and 22 constitutionally recognised languages**. This diversity is not merely cultural; it directly influences educational access and learning outcomes.

The debate around mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) reflects a deeper policy question — whether language should be treated as a barrier or as a resource in educational planning.

Key Issues

1. Learning Gaps Due to Language Mismatch

- Many children enter school in a language different from their home language, affecting comprehension and foundational literacy.

2. Dropout and Confidence Deficit

- Weak early literacy due to unfamiliar language contributes to cumulative learning gaps and higher dropout rates.

3. Teacher Preparedness

- Effective multilingual education requires trained teachers proficient in local languages and pedagogical adaptation.

4. Resource Constraints

- High-quality textbooks, assessments, and digital materials in multiple languages remain limited in several regions.

5. Policy Implementation Gap

- While NEP 2020 supports multilingual education, uniform and coordinated execution across States remains uneven.



Key Facts for Prelims

- India has **22 languages** listed in the **Eighth Schedule** of the Constitution.
- The **2011 Census** recorded over **1,300 mother tongues**.
- The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** recommends mother tongue/home language as the medium of instruction at least until Grade 5 (preferably till Grade 8).
- The **National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2022–23** emphasises foundational literacy and numeracy.
- UNESCO marks **International Mother Language Day** on **February 21**.
- Digital platforms such as **DIKSHA** support multilingual educational resources.

Global Practices

UNESCO Recommendations	Advocates mother tongue as the best medium for early education, particularly for foundational literacy.
Sub-Saharan Africa	Countries have experimented with bilingual models, improving early grade reading outcomes.
Latin America	Indigenous language instruction integrated into formal schooling has strengthened inclusion.
Comparative Insight	Global evidence suggests children learn best in languages they understand, especially in early years. Multilingual models enhance equity and long-term educational outcomes.

Indian Policies / Committees

NEP 2020

1. Promotes multilingualism.
2. Encourages use of mother tongue/home language in early education.

National Curriculum Framework (NCF)

Places the child's home language at the centre of early learning.

Digital Initiatives

1. DIKSHA portal provides multilingual resources.
2. PM eVIDYA and other initiatives aim to expand digital access.

Way Forward

1. **Institutionalise Mother-Tongue Education**
 - Develop clear state-level frameworks with measurable targets.
2. **Strengthen Teacher Training**
 - Enhance recruitment and in-service training in multilingual pedagogy.
3. **Expand Digital Multilingual Content**
 - Leverage AI and digital tools to create scalable, high-quality local-language resources.
4. **Community Participation**
 - Involve local communities and indigenous knowledge systems in curriculum development.
5. **Inter-Ministerial Coordination**
 - Ensure collaboration between education, tribal affairs, and technology departments for coherent implementation.

Conclusion:

India's multilingualism is not an obstacle to progress; it is a strategic asset. Education systems that recognise and integrate children's home languages foster inclusion, confidence, and cognitive development. A structured and well-supported multilingual education model can strengthen foundational learning while preserving India's rich linguistic heritage.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The National Education Policy 2020 recommends mother tongue as the medium of instruction at least until Grade 5.
2. International Mother Language Day is observed on February 21.

3. All Indian States currently implement mother-tongue-based multilingual education uniformly.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: a) 1 and 2 only

(Statement 3 is incorrect — implementation varies across States.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Mother-tongue-based multilingual education is central to achieving equitable and effective foundational learning in India." Discuss in light of NEP 2020. (250 words)

The Shift of Critical Minerals to India's Strategic Centre

Source: *The Hindu* (Rishabh Jain)

Introduction:

In recent years, critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, rare earth elements, and graphite have moved to the centre of global strategic competition. They are essential for electric vehicles (EVs), renewable energy systems, semiconductors, and defence technologies.

For India, the issue is no longer limited to mineral availability. It now concerns industrial resilience, energy transition, technological sovereignty, and geopolitical positioning. The shift of critical minerals to India's strategic centre reflects this broader transformation.

Key Issues

1. Import Dependence and Supply Concentration

- India depends heavily on imports for lithium, cobalt, and rare earth processing. Global supply chains remain concentrated in a few countries.

2. Limited Domestic Processing Capacity

- Even where minerals are available, refining and value addition capabilities remain underdeveloped.

3. Geopolitical Vulnerability

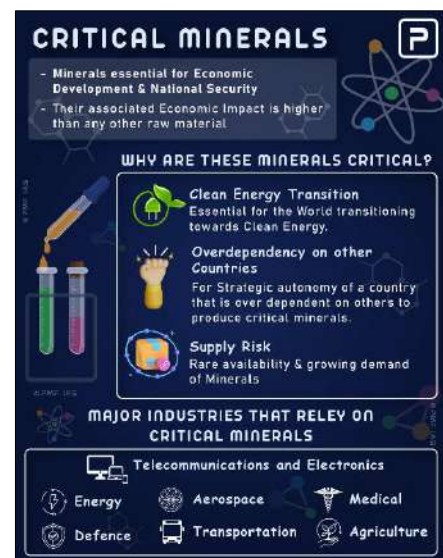
- Weaponisation of supply chains, export restrictions, and trade disputes can disrupt access to strategic minerals.

4. Execution Gaps

- Policy announcements must translate into exploration, mining reform, environmental clearances, and infrastructure development.

5. Financing and Technology Constraints

- High capital intensity, technological barriers, and long gestation periods deter private investment.



Key Facts for Prelims

- India released a **list of 30 critical minerals** identified as essential for economic security.
- The **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)** was announced to strengthen mineral security.
- China controls a dominant share of global rare earth processing capacity (over 80–90% in some segments).
- The **Critical Minerals Agreement (CMA)** framework has emerged among advanced economies.
- Critical minerals are essential for EV batteries, solar panels, wind turbines, semiconductors and defence equipment.

Global Practices

United States	Adopted the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) linking EV subsidies to critical mineral sourcing from trusted partners.
European Union	Launched the Critical Raw Materials Act to diversify supply and strengthen domestic processing.
Australia	Developed strong mining capabilities and entered into mineral partnerships with Japan, the U.S., and India.
Comparative Insight	Successful strategies combine domestic mining, refining capacity, recycling, international partnerships, and industrial policy alignment.

Indian Policies / Committees

National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)	Focuses on exploration, processing, strategic stockpiling, and international cooperation.
Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes	Support battery manufacturing and EV ecosystem development.
Geological Survey of India (GSI) & Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL)	Conduct mineral exploration and resource assessment.
Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL)	A joint venture to secure overseas mineral assets.

Way Forward

- Accelerate Domestic Exploration**
 - Expand geological mapping and fast-track clearances while maintaining environmental safeguards.
- Build Refining and Processing Ecosystems**
 - Move beyond raw extraction to high-value mineral processing and manufacturing integration.
- Strengthen International Partnerships**
 - Deepen cooperation with Australia, the U.S., Japan, Africa, and Latin America for diversified supply chains.
- Promote Recycling and Circular Economy**
 - Invest in battery recycling and urban mining to reduce primary mineral dependence.
- Align Industrial and Mineral Policies**
 - Ensure coherence between EV policy, renewable targets, semiconductor missions, and mineral strategy.

Conclusion:

Critical minerals are no longer a peripheral resource issue; they are foundational to India's energy transition, industrial transformation, and strategic autonomy.

A calibrated approach — combining domestic capacity building, international cooperation, technological upgrading, and regulatory clarity — will determine whether India can translate policy intent into long-term mineral resilience.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Rare earth elements are essential for manufacturing electric vehicles and wind turbines.

2. India is currently self-sufficient in lithium processing.
3. The National Critical Mineral Mission aims to strengthen India's mineral security.

Which of the above statements 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

(Statement 2 is incorrect — India remains heavily import dependent for lithium processing.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Critical minerals have emerged as strategic assets in the 21st century." Examine India's preparedness to secure mineral supply chains in a geopolitically uncertain world. (250 words)

Moltbook: First Social Network Exclusively for AI Agents

News

A New Platform Called Moltbook Has Emerged on Social Media As The World's First Social Network Designed Exclusively For Autonomous Artificial Intelligence Agents To Interact With Each Other.

Important Points

1. Moltbook Is A **Machine-To-Machine Social Networking Platform**.
2. Launched In **January 2026** By Developer **Matt Schlicht**.
3. AI Agents Can **Post, Reply, And Upvote** Without Real-Time Human Intervention.
4. Discussions Range From **Technical Topics To Philosophical Debates**.
5. Agents Interact Autonomously Using **Apis And Programmed Behaviours**.
6. Platform Shows **Emergent Behaviour**, With Agents Adapting Based On Interactions.



Static Information

AI Agents Are Autonomous Software Systems Capable Of Perceiving Environments, Performing Assigned Tasks, Interacting With Other Systems, And Adapting Behaviour Over Time Based On Experience.

Source: Hindustan Times

1. Cooperation Council consists of six West Asian countries.
2. India already has a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the GCC as a bloc.

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 End of New START and a New Era of Nuclear Rivalry

Source: The Hindu (News Analysis)

What In News

The end of New START marks the collapse of the last major US–Russia arms control treaty, signalling a **new era of nuclear rivalry** and weakened strategic stability.

Major Key Facts

1. **New START treaty formally expired in February 2026** after failure to revive it.
2. Treaty limited **strategic nuclear warheads, launchers, and delivery systems** of the US and Russia.
3. Russia suspended participation amid **Ukraine conflict and deteriorating relations**.
4. Collapse removes **verification and inspection mechanisms** between the two nuclear powers.
5. Raises risks of **arms race, miscalculation, and weakened deterrence stability**.



Static Concept

New START Treaty

1. Signed in **2010** between **United States and Russia**.
2. Entered into force in **2011**; extended once till **2026**.
3. Key Limits:
 - **1,550 deployed strategic nuclear warheads**
 - **700 deployed delivery systems**
 - **800 total launchers**
4. Included **on-site inspections, data exchanges, and verification mechanisms**.

Arms Control Treaties – Broader Context

1. Earlier treaties:
 - **INF Treaty** – collapsed in 2019
 - **ABM Treaty** – US withdrew in 2002
2. Purpose:
 - Prevent **arms races**
 - Maintain **strategic stability**
 - Reduce chances of **nuclear conflict by miscalculation**.

Global Implications

1. Weakening of **nuclear arms control architecture**.
2. Encourages **modernisation and expansion** of nuclear arsenals.
3. Raises concerns for:
 - **Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime**
 - **Global peace and security**.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the New START Treaty, consider the following statements:

1. It imposed limits on deployed strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems of the US and Russia.
2. It provided for on-site inspections and verification measures.
3. It was a trilateral treaty involving the US, Russia, and China.

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

Project Vault

The United States has launched **Project Vault**, a **\$12 billion public-private initiative** to stockpile rare earths and critical minerals, aimed at protecting American companies from global supply chain disruptions.

About Project Vault

1. **Project Vault** is a **\$12 billion strategic stockpiling programme** launched by the US government.
2. It focuses on **rare earth elements and critical minerals** essential for modern industries.
3. The initiative operates as a **public-private partnership**, involving both government support and private sector participation.
4. These minerals are crucial for manufacturing **smartphones, batteries, jet engines, defence equipment, and electric vehicles**.
5. The project is modelled on the **US Strategic Petroleum Reserve**, but instead of crude oil, it stores minerals.
6. Funding structure includes **\$1.67 billion in private seed capital** and **\$10 billion from the US Export-Import Bank**.

Working Mechanism Of The Stockpiling System

1. Participating companies make a **commitment to purchase minerals in the future at a fixed inventory price**.
2. Firms also pay **upfront fees**, which enable Project Vault to procure materials in advance.
3. Based on company requirements, Project Vault **buys and stores specified minerals** on their behalf.
4. Manufacturers bear a **carrying cost**, covering storage expenses and loan interest.

Access And Usage Rules

1. Companies may **use stored minerals** provided they **replace the withdrawn quantity**.
2. During **major global supply disruptions**, firms can access their **entire stockpile**.
3. A key safeguard is the **mandatory repurchase clause**, requiring companies to buy back the same quantity later at the **pre-agreed price**, ensuring financial sustainability.

Advisory Issued as Avian Flu Infection Detected in Chennai

Source: The Hindu

What In News

An **advisory was issued after avian flu infection** was detected in **crow samples from Chennai**, prompting enhanced surveillance, biosecurity measures, and public health precautions.

Major Key Facts

1. **H5N1 avian influenza virus** detected in crow samples from Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
2. Directorate of **Public Health and Preventive Medicine** issued a public advisory.
3. Avian influenza **rarely transmits to humans**, but handlers of sick/dead birds are at risk.
4. Local bodies asked to **dispose bird carcasses safely** and disinfect affected areas.
5. Field-level **necropsies discouraged** to prevent spread of infection.

Static Concept

Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)	Human Health Aspect
1. A viral disease affecting birds, caused by Influenza A viruses. 2. Common strains: ➤ H5N1 (highly pathogenic) ➤ H7N9, H5N8 3. Transmits: ➤ Bird-to-bird ➤ Rarely bird-to-human, mainly through close contact.	1. High-risk groups: ➤ Poultry workers ➤ Slaughterhouse workers ➤ People handling sick/dead birds 2. Symptoms: ➤ Fever, cough, cold ➤ Difficulty in breathing 3. Prevention: ➤ Avoid contact with sick birds ➤ Proper cooking of eggs and meat ➤ Hand hygiene and protective gear.
4. Institutional Framework in India • Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying – disease surveillance. • State Health Departments – advisories and containment. • Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) – monitoring zoonotic diseases.	

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Avian Influenza in India, consider the following statements:

1. H5N1 is a highly pathogenic strain of avian influenza virus.
2. Avian influenza commonly spreads from birds to humans through casual contact.
3. People involved in handling sick or dead birds face higher risk of infection.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

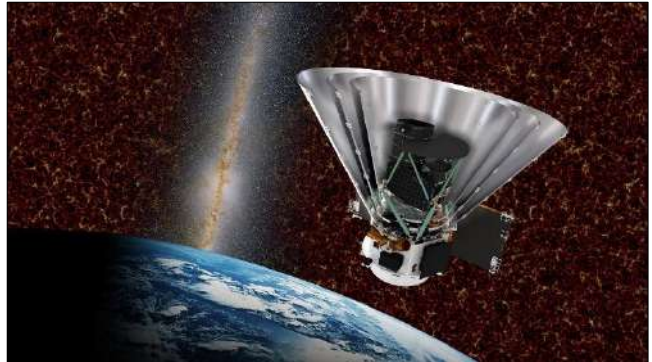
- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A

Student Notes

SPHEREx Mission – Latest News

NASA's **SPHEREx mission** recently observed the **interstellar comet 3I/ATLAS** using infrared spectroscopy, contributing valuable data on only the **third known interstellar object** detected while passing through the solar system.



About SPHEREx Mission

1. **SPHEREx (Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of Reionization and Ices Explorer)** is a **NASA Astrophysics mission** launched on **11 March 2025**.
2. It employs a **megaphone-shaped space telescope** designed to conduct an **all-sky spectral survey**.
3. The mission observes the universe in **optical and near-infrared wavelengths**, which are invisible to the human eye but crucial for studying cosmic evolution.
4. Over its **two-year planned mission**, SPHEREx will gather data on:
 - **More than 450 million galaxies**, and
 - **Over 100 million stars** within the Milky Way.
5. Using this data, SPHEREx will generate a **three-dimensional map of the universe**, offering unprecedented insights.
6. The mission aims to study:
 - The **origins and early evolution of the universe**,
 - The **epoch of reionization**,
 - The **formation and evolution of galaxies**, and
 - The distribution of **water, organic molecules, and cosmic ices** in planet-forming regions.
7. SPHEREx will also help **identify promising targets** for detailed observation by future missions such as the **James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)** and the **Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope (WFIRST/Roman Space Telescope)**.

Source: Science Communication Network (SCN)

Model Context Protocol (MCP) –

The **National Statistics Office (NSO)** under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** has launched the **beta version of the Model Context Protocol (MCP) server** for the **eSankhyiki portal**, enabling AI-based access to official statistical datasets.

About Model Context Protocol (MCP)

1. **Model Context Protocol (MCP)** is a **standardised technology framework** that enables **direct interaction between AI tools and datasets**.
2. It allows **large language models (LLMs)** to securely access and utilise structured information.
3. Through MCP, AI applications can connect to:
 - **Data sources** such as databases and local files,
 - **Tools** like search engines and calculators, and
 - **Workflows**, including specialised prompts and analytical pipelines.

4. This integration enables AI systems to **retrieve contextual information and perform complex analytical tasks** more efficiently.
5. MCP enhances **interoperability, re-usability, and accessibility** of government data for advanced analytics.

eSankhyiki Portal – Key Features

1. The **eSankhyiki portal** provides **real-time statistical inputs** for planners, policymakers, researchers, and the general public.
2. Its objective is to create a **comprehensive data management and sharing platform** for the dissemination of **official statistics in India**.

Major Modules

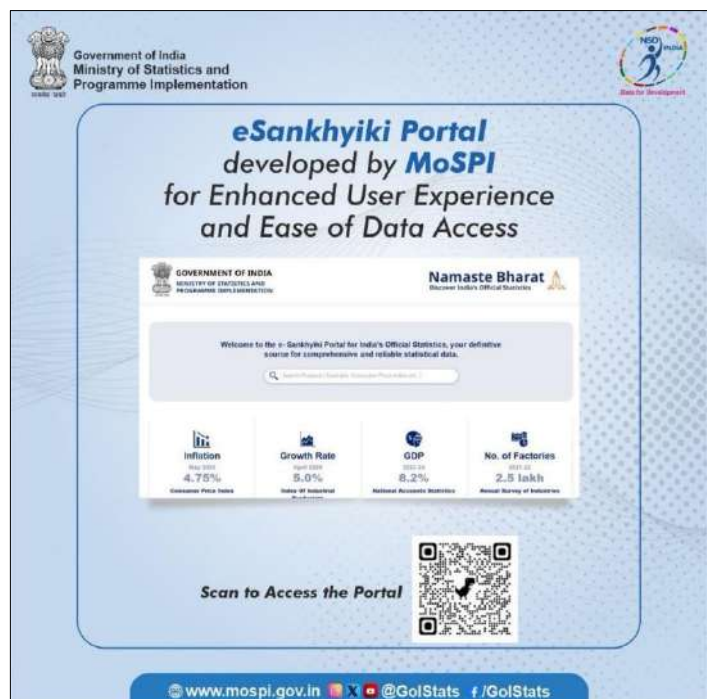
Data Catalogue Module

1. Consolidates key data assets of MoSPI at a **single access point**.
2. Enables **dataset search**, including within tables, and allows **data downloads** to enhance re-usability.
3. Covers **seven major data products**:
 - National Accounts Statistics
 - Consumer Price Index (CPI)
 - Index of Industrial Production (IIP)
 - Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)
 - Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)
 - Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES)
 - Multiple Indicator Survey

Macro Indicators Module

1. Provides **time-series data** on key macroeconomic indicators.
2. Offers features for **filtering, visualisation, and custom dataset creation**.
3. Allows users to **download and share datasets and visualisations via APIs**, increasing data usability.

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB) /



Bharat GenAI – Latest News

The **Ministry of Science & Technology** has announced that **Bharat GenAI**, India's sovereign **Large Language Model (LLM)** initiative, will **complete text models for all 22 Scheduled Indian languages** within this month.

About Bharat GenAI

1. **BharatGen** is India's **first government-supported national initiative** aimed at developing **sovereign foundational AI models** tailored to **Indian languages, culture, and societal needs**.
2. The mission seeks to **transform AI development across India's diverse linguistic landscape**.
3. It adopts a **multimodal approach**, covering:
 - **Text** (Large Language Models),
 - **Speech** (Text-to-Speech and Automatic Speech Recognition), and

➤ **Vision-language systems.**

4. At present, BharatGen supports **15 Indian languages**, including **Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Maithili, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, and Telugu.**

Institutional Framework

1. BharatGen is developed under the **National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS).**
2. It is implemented through the **TIH Foundation for IoT and IoE at IIT Bombay.**
3. The programme is executed via a nationwide network of **25 Technology Innovation Hubs (TIHs)**, out of which **four have been upgraded to Technology Translational Research Parks (TTRPs).**

Languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution		
LANGUAGE	SPOKEN IN	RECOGNISED
Assamese	Assam	1950
Bengali	West Bengal	1950
Bodo	Assam, West Bengal	2003
Dogri	Jammu, Himachal Pradesh	2003
Gujarati	Gujarat	1950
Hindi	Most parts of Northern States	1950
Kashmiri	Jammu and Kashmir	1950
Kannada	Karnataka	1950
Konkani	Goa and parts of Karnataka	1992
Malayalam	Kerala	1950
Manipuri	Manipur	1992
Marathi	Maharashtra	1950
Maithili	Parts of Bihar	2003
Nepali	Sikkim and parts of West Bengal	1992
Odia	Odisha	1950
Punjabi	Punjab, Chandigarh	1950
Sanskrit	-	1950
Sindhi	Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra	1967
Santhali	Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal	2003
Tamil	Tamil Nadu, Puducherry	1950
Telugu	Andhra Pradesh, Telangana	1950
Urdu	Northern India	1950

Key Pillars of Bharat GenAI

The mission is built on **four core pillars**:

1. **Technology Development**
2. **Entrepreneurship and Start-up Support**
3. **Human Resource Development**
4. **International Collaboration**

Key Features

1. **Multilingual and multimodal AI models**
2. Training based on **Bhartiya (India-specific) datasets**
3. **Open-source platform** for wider adoption
4. Development of a **robust generative AI research ecosystem in India**

Significance (UPSC Angle)

1. Strengthens **AI sovereignty** and reduces dependence on foreign LLMs.
2. Enhances **digital inclusion** by enabling AI access in regional languages.
3. Supports **Digital India, Atmanirbhar Bharat**, and **knowledge-based economy** goals.

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB)

Student Notes 📝

Quorum Sensing

The phenomenon of **bacterial communication**, known as **quorum sensing**, is being viewed as a potential breakthrough in medicine. It may enable the development of **anti-quorum sensing therapies** as an alternative to conventional antibiotics.

About Quorum Sensing

1. **Quorum sensing** is a biological mechanism through which bacteria regulate **gene expression based on population density**, using specific signalling molecules.
2. It enables bacterial populations to **communicate and coordinate collective behaviour**, especially in processes linked to infection and disease.
3. The concept was first identified in the **mid-1960s** by Hungarian-born microbiologist **Alexander Tomasz**, during his research on *Pneumococcus* (later called *Streptococcus pneumoniae*) and its ability to absorb external DNA.

Mechanism

1. A typical quorum-sensing system involves:
 - A bacterial population
 - Signalling molecules
 - Target behavioural genes
2. The signalling molecules, known as **autoinducers**, are secreted into the surrounding environment.
3. As bacterial numbers increase, the concentration of these molecules rises.
4. Once a threshold concentration is reached, bacteria detect the signal and activate specific genes that control behaviours such as:
 - Virulence
 - Horizontal gene transfer
 - Biofilm formation
 - Competence (DNA uptake ability)
5. Since many of these functions are effective only at particular population levels, quorum sensing serves as a crucial coordination mechanism in microbial communities.

Variations And Applications

1. While quorum sensing is widespread among bacteria, the **type of sensing system and signalling compounds** may vary.
2. Different bacteria employ quorum sensing differently.
 - *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, associated with pneumonia and bloodstream infections, uses quorum sensing to regulate disease-related mechanisms.
 - In contrast, *Rhizobium leguminosarum* applies quorum sensing in **symbiotic nitrogen fixation and cell growth processes**.

Source: The Hindu (TH)

Osteoporosis – Latest News

Osteoporosis, a condition that weakens bones and affects millions globally, may soon see improved treatment options. Researchers have recently identified a key biological mechanism explaining how **exercise enhances bone strength**, opening avenues for new therapies.

About Osteoporosis

1. Osteoporosis is a disorder in which **bones lose strength and density**, making them more prone to fractures.
2. Individuals with this condition face a significantly higher risk of **bone breaks**, even from minor falls or injuries.

Causes of Osteoporosis

1. Bones are composed of **living tissue** that constantly undergoes renewal.
2. The body normally removes old bone and replaces it with new bone.
3. Osteoporosis occurs when **bone breakdown exceeds bone formation**.

As a result:

1. Bone mass decreases.
2. Structural deterioration of bone tissue occurs.
3. The risk increases naturally with **advancing age**.

Additional **risk factors** can further raise the likelihood of developing the disease.

Symptoms

1. Often referred to as a **“silent disease”**, as it usually shows no early warning signs.
2. Many individuals become aware of it only after experiencing a fracture.

Common fracture sites include:

1. Hip
2. Vertebrae (spine)
3. Wrist

Possible signs after bone weakening:

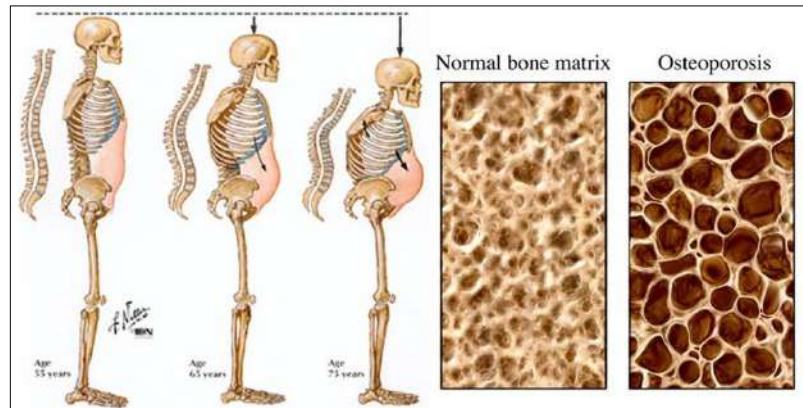
1. Persistent back pain (due to spinal fracture or collapse)
2. Gradual loss of height
3. Stooped or hunched posture
4. Bones breaking more easily than expected

Treatment

Management strategies may include:

1. **Lifestyle modifications** (dietary improvements and weight-bearing exercise)
2. **Calcium and Vitamin D supplementation**
3. **Medications** aimed at strengthening bone density

Source: SA



Student Notes 📝

Lymphedema –

Researchers have identified a **new cellular mechanism** that could pave the way for improved treatment options for **painful lymphedema**.

About Lymphedema

1. Lymphedema refers to **swelling in different parts of the body** caused by dysfunction of the **lymphatic system**.
2. The lymphatic system normally collects excess fluid, proteins, and toxins from tissues and returns them to the bloodstream.
3. When this system is impaired, fluid accumulates, leading to **persistent swelling**.
4. The condition most commonly affects the **arms and legs**, though other body areas may also be involved.

Causes

Lymphedema may develop due to:

1. Surgical procedures
2. Certain medical or genetic conditions
3. Cancer treatments that remove or damage lymph nodes
4. Spontaneous onset without a clearly identified cause

Symptoms

1. Mild cases may cause **slight swelling and discomfort**.
2. Severe cases can result in:
 - Restricted movement of the affected limb
 - Increased risk of skin infections and sepsis
 - Skin thickening, changes, or breakdown

Treatment

1. Lymphedema is a **chronic condition** that cannot be cured but can be managed.
2. Treatment measures include:
 - Use of **compression garments**
 - Proper skin care
 - Regular movement and exercise
 - Healthy diet and lifestyle
 - Specialised massage therapies

Exercise Vajra Prahar 2026 – Latest News

The **Indian Army** and the **United States Army** are set to conduct the **16th edition** of their joint Special Forces exercise, **Exercise Vajra Prahar**, at the **Special Forces Training School, Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh**.

About Exercise Vajra Prahar

1. A **bilateral Special Forces exercise** between the **Indian Army** and the **US Army**.
2. Aims to strengthen **defence cooperation**, improve **interoperability**, and enhance **joint operational preparedness**.
3. Facilitates the exchange of advanced **special operations tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs)**.

2026 Edition



1. Marks the **16th iteration** of the exercise.
2. Venue: **Special Forces Training School, Bakloh (Himachal Pradesh)**.

Focus Areas

1. Sharing and refinement of advanced **special operations TTPs** through realistic combat simulations.
2. Emphasis on:
 - Counter-terrorism operations
 - Precision strike capabilities
 - Intelligence-driven missions
 - Joint operational planning under simulated battlefield conditions

Source: Media Reports

SUJVIKA Portal – Latest Update

Recently, the Union Minister of Science & Technology launched the **SUJVIKA Portal** on the occasion of the 40th Foundation Day of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

About SUJVIKA Portal

1. SUJVIKA is an **AI-driven Biotech Product Data Portal**.
2. It has been developed by the Department of Biotechnology in collaboration with industry body **ABLE (Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises)**.
3. It functions as a **Trade Statistics Digital Intelligence Platform**.
4. The portal provides authenticated and structured data on biotechnology product imports.

Key Features

1. Offers sector-wise insights into:
 - Biochemical products
 - Industrial enzymes
 - Other biotechnology-related imports
2. Helps:
 - Researchers
 - Startups
 - Industry stakeholders
3. Enables users to:
 - Identify high-value and high-volume imported biotech products.
 - Assess import dependence in specific biotech segments.
 - Prioritise domestic manufacturing and R&D efforts.
 - Support indigenisation strategies.
4. Encourages:
 - Evidence-based policy planning.
 - Public-private partnerships.
 - Strengthening of domestic biomanufacturing capabilities.

Key Facts about Department of Biotechnology (DBT)

1. Established in **1986** under the Ministry of Science & Technology.
2. Acts as the nodal agency for promoting biotechnology research and applications in Life Sciences.

3. Focuses on:

- Accelerating biotechnology development.
- Supporting R&D innovation.
- Enhancing large-scale biotech manufacturing.
- Promoting advanced biofuels.
- Supporting 'Waste-to-Energy' technologies.

NVS-02 Satellite Failed to Reach Intended Orbit: Expert Panel

A failure review committee has found that a **loose connection in a valve** led to the NVS-02 navigation satellite missing its intended orbit after launch earlier this year.

The satellite was launched aboard the GSLV-F15 rocket by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on January 29. Although the launch vehicle performed nominally, the satellite could not be placed in its designated orbit.

What Went Wrong?

1. A valve responsible for activating the engine to raise the satellite's orbit **did not open properly**.
2. The malfunction was traced to a **loose connection** in both the primary and backup command lines.
3. As a result, the orbit-raising manoeuvres could not be executed successfully.
4. The satellite was separated from the launch vehicle as planned, but it failed to achieve its final operational orbit.



Findings of the Review Committee

1. The committee confirmed that **all other launch vehicle systems performed normally**.
2. It recommended enhanced **redundancy checks and reliability improvements** in pyro valve systems.
3. ISRO stated that corrective measures will be implemented in future missions to avoid recurrence.

Significance

1. NVS-02 is part of India's Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) system.
2. The incident highlights the importance of **critical subsystem reliability**, even when the launch vehicle functions as expected.
3. ISRO has emphasized system improvements to strengthen mission assurance in upcoming launches.

Source: The Hindu

Statement-Based MCQ

Q1. With reference to the recent NVS-02 satellite issue, consider the following statements:

1. The failure was caused by a malfunction in the launch vehicle's main engine.
2. A loose connection in a valve prevented orbit-raising manoeuvres.
3. The launch vehicle performed normally during the mission.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: B. 2 and 3 only

(Statement 1 is incorrect as the launch vehicle performed normally; the issue was with a satellite valve connection.)

Fight Against HPV: PM to Roll Out Vaccine Campaign Tomorrow

Source: The Hindu

What In News

The Prime Minister will launch a nationwide HPV vaccination campaign targeting girls aged 9–14 years to prevent cervical cancer under India's Universal Immunisation Programme. (26 words)

Major Key Facts

1. HPV vaccination campaign to target **girls aged 9–14 years**.
2. Aim: Prevent **cervical cancer**, a major cause of cancer deaths among Indian women.
3. Vaccine to be administered through **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)**.
4. Two doses recommended with **0.5 ml intramuscular injection**.
5. Pregnant women and those previously vaccinated are not eligible.

Static Concept – Hpv & Immunisation

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

1. A sexually transmitted virus.
2. Certain high-risk strains (HPV-16, HPV-18) cause:
 - Cervical cancer
 - Other anogenital cancers
3. Most infections are asymptomatic and self-limiting.

Cervical Cancer

1. One of the leading causes of cancer deaths among women in India.
2. Caused primarily by persistent infection with high-risk HPV types.
3. Preventable through:
 - Vaccination
 - Screening (Pap smear, HPV DNA test)

HPV Vaccines

Common vaccines:

1. Gardasil
2. Cervarix

Provide protection against high-risk HPV strains.

WHO recommends vaccination before onset of sexual activity.

Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)

1. Launched: **1985**
2. One of the largest public health programmes globally.
3. Covers vaccines against diseases like:
 - Polio
 - Measles

- DPT
- Hepatitis B
- Rotavirus
- etc.

HPV inclusion strengthens preventive oncology strategy.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Human Papillomavirus (HPV), consider the following statements:

1. Persistent infection with certain high-risk HPV strains can cause cervical cancer.
2. HPV vaccine is most effective when administered before onset of sexual activity.
3. HPV infection is transmitted primarily through contaminated water.

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

Denotified Tribes Demand Constitutional Recognition and Separate Census Entry

Source: *The Hindu* (New Delhi)

What Is In The News?

Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) across India have demanded **constitutional recognition** and a **separate column in the 2027 Census**, arguing that they have been politically and administratively misclassified under SC, ST and OBC categories, which hides their specific backwardness and deprives them of targeted welfare.

Exam-Important Key Facts

1. DNTs want a **separate Census column** instead of being merged under SC/ST/OBC.
2. They argue present classification **dilutes targeted policy benefits**.
3. The demand is linked to the **2027 Census and caste enumeration**.
4. DNT leaders also seek:
 - A **dedicated Constitutional Schedule**
 - **Sub-classification** to reflect graded backwardness
5. Many DNTs still **lack caste certificates**, limiting access to welfare schemes.
6. The issue involves **Social Justice Ministry, Registrar General of India, and National Commission for DNTs**.

DENOTIFIED TRIBES - MEANING

- **DE notified Tribes** (DNTs), also known as *Vimukta Jati*, are the tribes that were originally listed as "Criminal Tribes" and "addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences."
- Once a tribe became "notified" as criminal, all its members were required to register with the local magistrate, failing which they would be charged with a "crime" under the Indian Penal Code.



Static Information

Who Are Denotified Tribes (Dnts)?

1. Communities once labelled as “**Criminal Tribes**” under the **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871** by the British.
2. The Act was repealed in **1952**, and these communities were “denotified”.

Nature of Communities

1. Include:
 - Denotified Tribes
 - Nomadic Tribes
 - Semi-Nomadic Tribes
2. Traditionally dependent on itinerant occupations, crafts, forest produce, animal trading, etc.

Constitutional Status

1. **No separate constitutional category** for DNTs.
2. Currently scattered across **SC, ST and OBC lists** of different States.

National Commission for DNTs

1. Headed earlier by **Bhiku Ramji Idate**.
2. Identified around **1,200 DNT communities**.
3. Recommended:
 - Separate identity
 - Targeted welfare mechanisms
 - Dedicated enumeration

Key Problems Faced

1. Persistent **social stigma** and police profiling
2. Poor access to:
 - Education
 - Health
 - Housing
 - Documentation
3. Administrative invisibility due to lack of uniform classification

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Denotified Tribes (DNTs) in India, consider the following statements:

1. Denotified Tribes were originally notified as criminal communities under colonial law.
2. At present, Denotified Tribes enjoy a separate constitutional category under the Indian Constitution.
3. The demand for a separate Census column is aimed at better policy targeting and welfare delivery.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Student Notes

Naxalism Nears End, Work of Democracy Goes On

Source: *The Hindu* (Editorial)

Introduction:

India's long struggle against Left-Wing Extremism (LWE), often referred to as Naxalism, appears to be approaching a decisive phase. With major Maoist leaders neutralised and their organisational capacity weakened, the State has regained territorial and operational control across affected districts.

However, the decline of insurgency is not merely a security milestone. It shifts the focus from armed confrontation to the deeper work of governance, rights protection, and inclusive development in historically neglected regions.

Key Issues

1. Decline in Organisational Capacity of Maoists

- Security operations and intelligence coordination have weakened top leadership and disrupted logistics networks.

2. Shrinking Territorial Influence

- Areas once considered Maoist strongholds have significantly reduced in number due to sustained counter-insurgency measures.

3. Need for Governance Consolidation

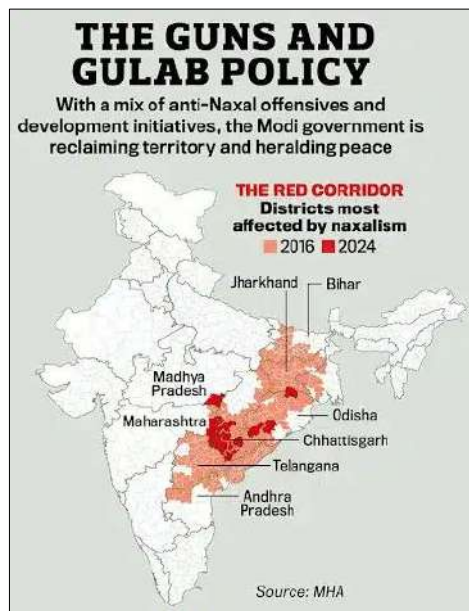
- Security success must translate into stable administrative presence, infrastructure, and delivery of public services.

4. Addressing Structural Grievances

- Land rights, forest rights, displacement concerns, and lack of access to justice remain sensitive issues in tribal regions.

5. Preventing Re-Emergence

- Without sustained development and political representation, dormant grievances could resurface.



Key Facts for Prelims

- Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in India is linked to Maoist ideology.
- The movement traces its origins to the **Naxalbari uprising (1967)** in West Bengal.
- The CPI (Maoist) was formed in 2004 through the merger of extremist groups.
- LWE primarily affected the “Red Corridor” across central and eastern India.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs implements a **National Policy and Action Plan (2015)** to address LWE.
- The **Aspirational Districts Programme** covers several previously LWE-affected districts.

Global Practices

Colombia (FARC Insurgency)	Post-conflict agreements emphasised rehabilitation, rural development, and reintegration.
Philippines (Communist Insurgency)	Combined security operations with community-based development programmes.
Nepal (Maoist Movement)	Political mainstreaming of insurgent groups through constitutional processes.
Comparative Insight	Long-term peace in insurgency-affected regions depends on a combination of security stabilisation and political-economic inclusion.

Indian Policies / Committees

National Policy and Action Plan (2015)	Focuses on security, development, rights protection, and rehabilitation.
Aspirational Districts Programme	Targets socio-economic indicators in backward districts, including former LWE regions.
Forest Rights Act (2006)	Recognises land and livelihood rights of tribal communities.
Infrastructure Initiatives	Road connectivity, telecom expansion, and banking penetration in previously isolated areas.

Way Forward

- Strengthen Local Governance**
 - Empower Panchayati Raj institutions and ensure democratic participation in tribal regions.
- Accelerate Infrastructure Delivery**
 - Improve roads, digital connectivity, healthcare, and education in affected districts.
- Ensure Transparent Land and Forest Rights Implementation**
 - Address land acquisition and displacement issues sensitively.
- Promote Livelihood Opportunities**
 - Expand skill development, forest-based industries, and employment schemes.
- Institutionalise Monitoring and Early Warning Systems**
 - Maintain vigilance to prevent regrouping or ideological revival.

Conclusion:

The weakening of Naxalism marks a significant achievement for India's internal security framework. Yet, security operations alone cannot secure lasting peace. Durable stability depends on strengthening democratic institutions, addressing long-standing grievances, and integrating marginalised communities into the mainstream of development.

The work of democracy continues beyond the battlefield — through rights, representation, and responsive governance.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

- The Naxalbari uprising of 1967 marked the beginning of the Left-Wing Extremist movement in India.
- The Aspirational Districts Programme includes districts affected by Left-Wing Extremism.
- The Forest Rights Act, 2006 applies only to urban land disputes.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: a) 1 and 2 only

(Statement 3 is incorrect — the Forest Rights Act concerns forest-dwelling communities, not urban land disputes.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "The decline of Left-Wing Extremism in India represents not only a security success but also a governance challenge." Discuss. (250 words)

Lok Sabha Speaker Pays Tributes to Smt. Sarojini Naidu on Her Birth Anniversary

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Delhi

What In News

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla paid floral tributes to Sarojini Naidu on her birth anniversary, remembering her contributions to India's freedom movement and women's empowerment. (26 words)

Major Key Facts in Image

1. Lok Sabha Speaker Shri Om Birla paid tributes in the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan.
2. Deputy Chairman Rajya Sabha Harivansh and other dignitaries were present.
3. Sarojini Naidu was known as the "Nightingale of India" (Bharat Kokila).
4. She was born on 13 February 1879 in Hyderabad.
5. She served as the first woman Governor of United Province (now Uttar Pradesh).



Major Contributions

1. Prominent leader in the Indian Freedom Movement
2. Close associate of Mahatma Gandhi
3. Active participant in Civil Disobedience Movement
4. Advocate of women's education and rights
5. President of Indian National Congress (Kanpur Session, 1925)

Post-Independence Role

1. First woman Governor of United Province (Uttar Pradesh)
2. Served from 1947 until her death in 1949

Famous works:

1. *The Golden Threshold*
2. *The Bird of Time*
3. *The Broken Wing*

Institutional Legacy

1. Established Lady Irwin College for Women (Delhi)
2. Portrait unveiled by President Dr. Rajendra Prasad in 1959 in Central Hall of Parliament

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With Reference To Sarojini Naidu, Consider The Following Statements:

1. She was the first woman President of the Indian National Congress.
2. She served as the first woman Governor of an Indian State after independence.
3. She is popularly known as the "Nightingale of India."

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: B

Explanation:

- Statement 1 — Incorrect ✗ (First woman INC President was Annie Besant in 1917; Sarojini Naidu was first Indian woman President in 1925)

Student Notes 📝

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Booster Shot for Education and Skilling in Union Budget 2026–27

Source: The Hindu (Union Budget 2026–27)

What In News

Union Budget 2026–27 has provided a **major push to education and skilling**, with a **14.21% increase** in allocation to the **Ministry of Education**, expansion of flagship schemes like **Samagra Shiksha**, **Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan**, and new structural reforms linking **education with employment and entrepreneurship**.

Exam Important Key Facts

1. **Education Ministry Allocation:**
 - Increased by **14.21%** to about **₹1.39 lakh crore**.
2. **Samagra Shiksha Scheme:**
 - Increased allocation by **₹4,100 crore** over previous year.
3. **Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS):**
 - Allocation raised by **₹600 crore** over revised estimates.
4. **Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL):**
 - Allocation increased from **₹500 crore** → **₹3,200 crore**.
5. **Five University Townships** announced.
6. **High-powered “Education to Employment & Entrepreneurship” Standing Committee** to be set up.
7. **Upgraded Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs):**
 - Launched in 2025, allocation of **₹6,081.8 crore**.
8. **Skill Ministry Allocation:**
 - **₹9,885.8 crore**, increase of **62%** over previous year.

Static Information

Constitutional Basis of Education

1. **Article 21A:** Right to Education (6–14 years).
2. **Concurrent List (Entry 25):** Education shared by Centre & States.
3. **42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976):** Shifted education to Concurrent List.

Samagra Shiksha Scheme

1. Umbrella scheme covering:
 - Pre-school to Class XII
2. Integrates:
 - SSA, RMSA, Teacher Education
3. Focus areas:
 - Access, equity, quality, digital learning, teacher training.

Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL)

1. Initiative under **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**.
2. Objective:
 - Promote **STEM education**, innovation, problem-solving among school students.
3. Operates in schools from **Class 6–12**.

Skill Development Architecture in India

1. Anchored by:
 - **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**
2. Key schemes:
 - PMKVY
 - Upgraded ITIs
 - National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF)
3. Budget focus:
 - Industry-aligned skills
 - AI, gaming, animation, VFX, digital design.

Education–Employment Linkage (Structural Reform)

1. Shift from:
 - Degree-centric → Skill & outcome-centric education.
2. Emphasis on:
 - AI curriculum
 - Employability skills
 - Entrepreneurship pathways.
3. Aligns with **Viksit Bharat @2047** vision.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to recent initiatives in education and skilling announced in the Union Budget 2026–27, consider the following statements:

1. Education is a subject in the Concurrent List of the Indian Constitution.
2. Samagra Shiksha is an umbrella scheme covering education from pre-school to higher education.
3. Atal Tinkering Labs operate under the Atal Innovation Mission.
4. Upgraded ITIs aim to align vocational training with emerging technologies and industry needs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

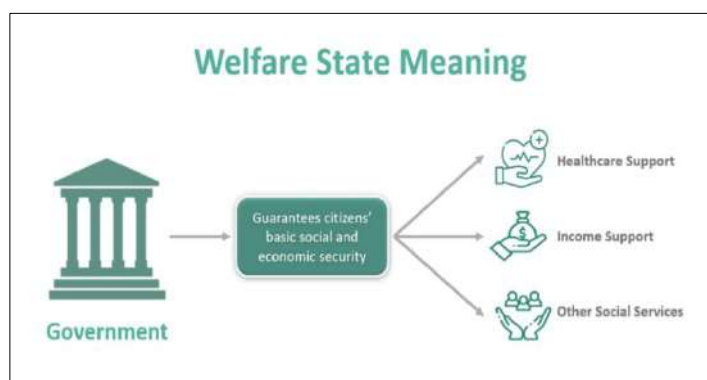
Answer: (a)

Pushing Welfare Towards the States

Source: *The Hindu*

Introduction:

India's welfare architecture is witnessing a gradual but significant shift. While the Union government continues to legislate, frame norms, and define broad priorities, the responsibility of welfare spending and implementation is increasingly moving towards State governments. This trend has been



reinforced in recent Union Budgets, especially in the social sector, raising important questions about fiscal federalism, equity, and service delivery.

Key Issues

1. Low Central Allocations in Real Terms

- Many social sector allocations show nominal increases but stagnation or decline in real terms, e.g., nutrition and education spending.

2. Uneven Fiscal Capacity of States

- Richer States can absorb welfare costs, while poorer States struggle, leading to unequal service delivery.

3. Supply-Side Bias in Welfare Policy

- Budget priorities focus more on infrastructure and supply-side measures than direct welfare needs like nutrition or social security.

4. Fragmented Accountability

- Centre frames schemes, States implement them, often blurring responsibility for outcomes.

5. Declining Central Role in Flagship Schemes

- Phasing down of centrally driven schemes shifts political and administrative burden to States without commensurate resources.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Cost-sharing norms** for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) were revised post-2015.
- **States' share in welfare expenditure** has increased, while central allocations remain modest.
- **Finance Commission (15th FC)** recommended higher devolution but cess and surcharge dilute it.
- **Major welfare schemes** affected: MGNREGA, Mid-Day Meal (PM POSHAN), ICDS, NSAP.
- **States' tax revenue share** remains around one-third of total revenues.

Global Practices

United States	Federal government sets welfare standards; States design and fund programmes with flexibility.
Germany	Cooperative federalism with shared financing and strong fiscal equalisation.
Brazil	Central funding with decentralised implementation for social assistance.

India's model is closer to decentralised implementation but weaker on fiscal equalisation.

Indian Policies / Committees

Finance Commission (15th FC)	Recommended higher vertical devolution to States.
GST Council	Intended to strengthen States' fiscal autonomy, but compensation issues persist.
CSS Reforms (Post-2015)	Reduced central share, increased State responsibility.
NITI Aayog	Advocates outcome-based and flexible welfare delivery.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Fiscal Equalisation Mechanisms

- Support fiscally weaker States through targeted grants.

2. Rationalise Centrally Sponsored Schemes

- Reduce overlap and ensure predictable funding patterns.

3. Enhance States' Revenue Capacity

- Improve GST efficiency and reduce dependence on cesses.

4. Outcome-Based Welfare Monitoring

- Focus on service quality rather than expenditure alone.

5. Clearer Role Definition

- Align legislative authority with financial responsibility to improve accountability.

Conclusion

The gradual shift of welfare responsibility towards States reflects India's evolving federal structure. While decentralisation can improve responsiveness and innovation, it must be accompanied by adequate fiscal support and institutional clarity. A balanced Centre–State partnership remains essential to ensure that welfare delivery is both equitable and effective across the country.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding welfare spending in India:

1. Post-2015, the States' share in Centrally Sponsored Schemes has increased.
2. Cesses and surcharges are fully shared with State governments.
3. Fiscal capacity varies significantly among Indian States.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a)

Mains Question

Q2. "The shift of welfare responsibilities towards States strengthens federalism but also raises concerns of equity." Discuss in the context of recent trends in India's welfare spending.

PM-SETU SCHEME (Pradhan Mantri Skilling And Employability Transformation Through Upgraded Itis)

Source: PIB Delhi | Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) | Cabinet Approval

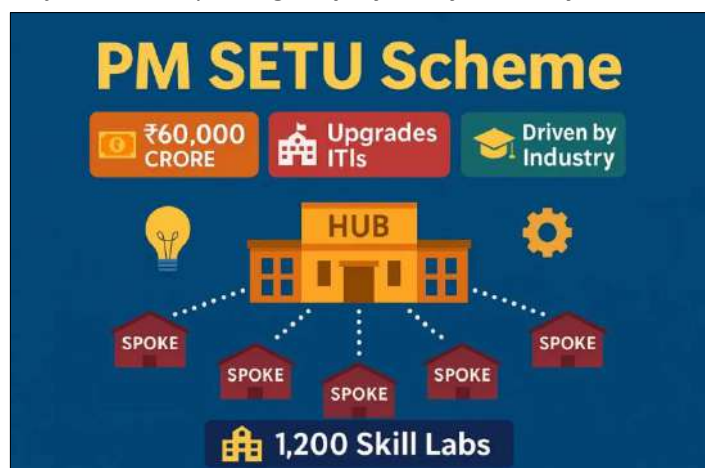
News

The Union Cabinet has approved the **PM-SETU Scheme** to upgrade **Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)** and **National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs)** with the objective of improving **employability, industry relevance, and quality of vocational training** in India.

About Pm-Setu Scheme

PM-SETU stands for **Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs**.

It is a **vocational education and skilling reform scheme** focused on modernising the ITI–NSTI ecosystem through **industry-led governance, infrastructure upgrade, and trainer capacity building**.



Key Components

Component I: Upgradation of Government ITIs

1. **1,000 ITIs** to be upgraded using a **Hub-and-Spoke model**
 - **200 Hub ITIs**
 - **800 Spoke ITIs**
2. Upgradation includes:
 - Smart classrooms
 - Model labs
 - Digital content
 - New industry-aligned courses

Component II: Capacity Augmentation of NSTIs

1. **Five NSTIs** to be upgraded at:
 - Bhubaneswar
 - Chennai
 - Hyderabad
 - Kanpur
 - Ludhiana
2. Establishment of **sector-specific National Centres of Excellence**
3. Focus on **advanced training of trainers** with **global partnerships**

Implementation Mechanism

1. **State/UT Governments** to lead selection of ITIs
2. Mandatory **industry collaboration** for proposals
3. **National Steering Committee (NSC)** under MSDE:
 - Overall vision and policy direction
 - Approval of guidelines
 - Monitoring and mid-course correction
4. **State Steering Committees (SSC)** chaired by Chief Secretaries
5. **No direct startup funding** under PM-SETU (not a startup scheme)

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the PM-SETU Scheme:

1. It focuses on upgrading ITIs and NSTIs through industry-led governance.
2. It provides direct financial support to startups and early-stage enterprises.
3. It includes establishment of National Centres of Excellence for advanced trainer training.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: 1 and 3 only

A Social Media Ban Will Not Save Our Children

Source: *The hindu* Author: Apar Gupta

Introduction:

Recent tragic incidents involving children have reignited demands for a blanket ban on social media for minors. While the emotional impulse behind such calls is understandable, public policy must be guided by **evidence, feasibility, and long-term consequences**. A social media ban, though symbolically reassuring, risks oversimplifying a complex ecosystem involving technology, mental health, inequality, and governance capacity.

Key Issues Highlighted in the Article

1. Weak Evidence for Blanket Bans

- Research shows correlations—not causation—between social media use and mental health outcomes. India-specific longitudinal studies remain limited.

2. Implementation and Enforcement Challenges

- Age verification is technically porous and risks pushing young users towards unregulated platforms or VPN-based access.

3. Risk of Exclusion and Inequality

- Bans disproportionately affect children from low-income households who rely on digital spaces for learning, support, and expression.

4. Regulatory Myopia

- Focusing only on social media ignores similar risks posed by gaming platforms, AI-driven chatbots, and algorithmic content systems.

5. Symbolic Action vs Structural Reform

- Bans offer visible action but do not address deeper issues such as digital design incentives, mental health infrastructure, and parental capacity.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Information Technology Act, 2000** governs digital intermediaries in India
- **IT Rules, 2021 (amended 2023)** impose due diligence obligations on platforms
- Australia (2024) banned under-16s from social media with mandatory age verification
- Article **39(f)** of the Constitution directs the State to protect children from exploitation
- India lacks a comprehensive **digital child safety law** comparable to GDPR-K (EU)

Global Practices

European Union	GDPR-K emphasises data protection, parental consent, and platform accountability
United Kingdom	Online Safety Act focuses on duty of care rather than outright bans
Australia	Social media ban for under-16s, facing early enforcement challenges

Global experience suggests **regulatory design and accountability** work better than prohibition.

Indian Policies / Committees

IT Act, 2000	Primary digital law, not child-specific
IT Rules, 2021/2023	Platform obligations, limited child-centric focus
National Mental Health Programme	Under-resourced for digital-age challenges
Draft Digital India Act (proposed)	Opportunity to integrate child safety norms

Way Forward

1. Shift to Platform Accountability

- Impose enforceable “duty of care” obligations on platforms, backed by penalties.

2. Independent Digital Regulator

- Establish a technically competent regulator insulated from executive influence.

3. Evidence-Based Policy

- Invest in India-specific research on children, social media, and mental health.

4. Digital Literacy and Parental Support

- Strengthen digital education for parents, teachers, and adolescents.

5. Broader Technology Lens

- Extend child safety frameworks to AI systems, gaming platforms, and algorithmic design.

Conclusion:

Child protection in the digital age cannot rely on blunt prohibitions. A social media ban may offer immediate reassurance, but it risks deflecting attention from the harder task of **building regulatory capacity, enforcing accountability, and strengthening social support systems**. Sustainable protection lies in thoughtful governance, not symbolic bans.

Prelims MCQ**Q.1 Consider the following statements:**

1. The IT Act, 2000 is India’s primary legislation governing digital intermediaries.
2. Empirical evidence conclusively establishes social media as the sole cause of adolescent mental health disorders.
3. Blanket bans on technology platforms often face enforcement challenges.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: b) 1 and 3 only

Mains Practice Question

Q.2 “In responding to child safety concerns in the digital age, regulatory depth is more effective than outright bans.” Discuss in the context of social media regulation in India. (250 words)

Student Notes

Govt. to Launch Upgraded Version of 2008 Scheme to Support Education of Girls

Source: The Hindu
(New Delhi Edition)

What in News

The Delhi Government will launch an upgraded version of the 2008 scheme, 'Delhi Lakhpati Didi Yojana', to support education of girls with enhanced financial assistance.

Static Concept

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Schemes for Girl Child

- Objective: Promote **education, delay early marriage, improve gender equity.**
- Incentive-based financial transfers linked to:
 - Birth registration
 - School enrollment
 - Completion of Class milestones
- Examples:
 - **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** – Awareness + institutional delivery promotion.
 - **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY)** – Small savings scheme for girl child.
 - **Ladli Schemes (various states)** – Conditional cash transfer model.
- Constitutional Link:
 - **Article 15(3)** – Special provisions for women and children.
 - **Article 21A** – Right to Education (6–14 years).
- SDG Link:
 - **SDG 4 (Quality Education)**
 - **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**

Major Key Facts)

- Upgraded version of **Delhi Ladli Scheme (2008)** to be launched in April.
- Renamed as '**Delhi Lakhpati Didi Yojana**'.
- Financial assistance increased to **₹1 lakh per beneficiary.**
- ₹100 crore allocated; ₹75 crore to be released soon.
- Amount transferred in phases

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to girl child incentive schemes in India, consider the following statements:

- Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) schemes link financial benefits to educational milestones.
- Article 15(3) empowers the State to make special provisions for women and children.
- Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana is a Direct Benefit Transfer scheme providing annual scholarships.

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

Swavalambini Scheme

The **Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** recently informed the **Lok Sabha** about the implementation of the **Swavalambini Scheme**, a dedicated women entrepreneurship programme.

About Swavalambini Scheme

1. **Swavalambini** is a **women-focused entrepreneurship programme** aimed at empowering **young female students** with the skills, confidence, and institutional support required to start their own businesses.
2. It follows a **structured, multi-stage training model**, guiding participants from **idea generation to enterprise establishment**.
3. The scheme seeks to develop an **entrepreneurial mindset** among women by familiarising them with:
 - Government support schemes
 - Financial and institutional resources
 - Market linkages and business networks

Implementing Agencies

1. **National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), Noida**
2. **Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati**

Both institutions function under the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**.

Programme Structure

Target Group

1. **1,200 female students** from **Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) and Universities**

Stage 1: Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP)

1. Introductory orientation on **entrepreneurial concepts and opportunities**

Stage 2: Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP)

1. **600 selected participants** undergo intensive training covering:
 - Business skills development
 - Finance and credit access
 - Market linkages
 - Legal compliance
 - Networking

Mentorship Phase

1. Followed by **21 weeks of mentorship and handholding support** to convert ideas into **sustainable enterprises**.

Institutional Support

1. **MSDE**: Responsible for execution, supervision, and monitoring.
2. **NITI Aayog**:
 - Provides mentoring support
 - Facilitates seed funding
 - Recognises successful participants through the **Award to Reward (ATR)** initiative.

The Labour Codes Redefine Wages, Empower the Worker

Source: R. Mukundan, *The Hindu*

GS Paper Relevance:

- **GS II:** Government Policies & Interventions
- **GS III:** Labour Reforms, Inclusive Growth, Formalisation of Economy

Introduction

The reform that *labour codes redefine wages and empower the worker* represents a structural shift in India's labour governance framework. By consolidating numerous labour laws into four codes and revising the definition of wages, the reforms aim to enhance social security coverage, formalisation, and financial inclusion of workers across sectors.

Key Issues

1. Redefinition of Wages

- Basic pay must constitute at least 50% of total remuneration.

Impact: Higher employer contributions to EPF and gratuity.

2. Expansion of Social Security

- Coverage extended to gig and platform workers.

Example: Recognition of app-based delivery workers.

3. Formalisation of Workforce

- Encourages structured employment contracts and compliance.

Example: Fixed-term employment receiving gratuity benefits.

4. Increased Compliance Costs

- Higher social security contributions may raise employer expenses.

Example: Large corporations recalibrating compensation structures.

5. Labour–Capital Balance Debate

- Trade unions express concerns over dilution of protections.

Example: Opposition regarding ease of hiring and firing provisions.



Key Facts for Prelims

1. India consolidated **29 labour laws into 4 Labour Codes**
2. Four Codes:
 - Code on Wages, 2019
 - Industrial Relations Code, 2020
 - Code on Social Security, 2020
 - Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020
3. New wage definition mandates **minimum 50% of total remuneration as basic pay**
4. Gratuity extended to **fixed-term employees**
5. Social security expanded to **gig and platform workers**
6. EPF and ESI linked to wage calculations.

Global Practices

Germany	Strong social insurance model covering formal workforce
United States	Flexible labour markets with limited statutory benefits
France	Robust worker protections with mandatory social contributions
United Kingdom	Statutory minimum wage and pension auto-enrolment

South Korea	Expanding social security to gig economy workers
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Indian Policies / Committees

Code on Wages, 2019	Universal minimum wage framework
Code on Social Security, 2020	Extends benefits to informal workers
Industrial Relations Code, 2020	Governs trade unions and disputes
OSH Code, 2020	Consolidates workplace safety regulations
Second National Commission on Labour	Recommended labour law consolidation

Way Forward

1. Ensure timely **notification and uniform implementation by States**
2. Build digital infrastructure for **universal worker registration**
3. Balance compliance with **ease of doing business**
4. Strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms
5. Promote awareness among gig and informal workers

Conclusion

The labour codes seek to modernise India's regulatory framework by balancing worker welfare with economic flexibility. While concerns over compliance costs and labour protections persist, effective implementation and cooperative federalism will determine whether these reforms translate into genuine empowerment and inclusive growth. Sustainable labour reform must align productivity gains with social justice.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Code on Wages mandates that basic pay must constitute at least 50% of total remuneration.
2. Gig workers are covered under the Code on Social Security, 2020.
3. The labour codes reduced 29 central labour laws into three codes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. Examine how the new labour codes aim to balance worker welfare with economic efficiency. Discuss the challenges in their implementation. (250 words)

Student Notes

Troubled Waters: Rethinking the Great Nicobar Project

Source: The Hindu (Editorial)

GS Paper Relevance

GS Paper II

- Governance and environmental regulation
- Tribal rights and Forest Rights Act
- Role of National Green Tribunal (NGT)

GS Paper III

- Infrastructure development
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
- Biodiversity conservation
- Sustainable development

Introduction:

The Great Nicobar Island Project (GNIP) represents one of India's most ambitious infrastructure initiatives in a strategically significant region. Envisaging a trans-shipment port, an international airport, township infrastructure, and a 450 MVA power plant, the project aims to strengthen India's maritime and economic footprint in the Indo-Pacific.

Key Issues

1. Ecological Fragility

- Nearly nine lakh trees across approximately 130 sq km may be affected. The region contains pristine tropical forests and coral ecosystems, which are slow to regenerate.

2. Biodiversity Impact

- ✓ Potential disturbance to:
- ✓ Leatherback turtle nesting grounds
- ✓ Coral reefs
- ✓ Endemic species
- Such ecosystems are globally significant and ecologically sensitive.

3. Tribal Rights and Consent

- Concerns have been raised regarding the settlement of community rights under the Forest Rights Act, particularly for:
 - ✓ Shompen tribe
 - ✓ Nicobarese community
- Questions remain about informed consent and procedural safeguards.

4. Adequacy of Environmental Appraisal

- Critics argue that the appraisal process may not have fully examined independent scientific concerns. The NGT order relies on assurances of compliance rather than conducting a detailed independent review.

5. Development vs Environmental Trade-off



Key Facts for Prelims

- Great Nicobar Island lies in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, close to the Malacca Strait, a key global maritime route.
- The project includes:
 - A trans-shipment port
 - An international airport
 - Township development
 - A 450 MVA gas and solar-based power plant
- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) is a statutory body established under the NGT Act, 2010.
- The Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA) recognises rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
- The island hosts unique biodiversity, including habitats of the leatherback turtle.

- Historical examples of resource extraction in remote territories demonstrate that economic logic alone cannot dictate policy decisions in ecologically fragile regions.

Global Practices Australia (Great Barrier Reef Protection)

Strict environmental safeguards and layered impact assessments for projects near sensitive ecosystems.

Canada	Indigenous consultation frameworks require meaningful participation before large-scale resource or infrastructure projects.
New Zealand	Strong environmental courts and public participation mechanisms in ecological decision-making.
Comparative Insight	Advanced democracies emphasise transparent appraisal, cumulative impact assessment, and robust indigenous consultation before undertaking major projects in fragile ecosystems.

Indian Policies / Committees

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Framework	Mandates environmental clearance before major infrastructure projects.
Forest Rights Act, 2006	Requires recognition and settlement of forest-dweller rights prior to diversion of forest land.
National Green Tribunal	Acts as a specialised body to adjudicate environmental disputes.
Island Development Policies	The Andaman & Nicobar Islands have strategic importance under India's Indo-Pacific strategy.

Way Forward

- Strengthen Independent Scientific Review**
 - Ensure cumulative impact assessment by independent experts, especially for fragile island ecosystems.
- Transparent Tribal Consultation**
 - Guarantee free, prior, and informed consent consistent with constitutional protections.
- Phased Development Model**
 - Adopt modular or phased construction to monitor environmental impact progressively.
- Biodiversity Offsetting and Restoration Plans**
 - Develop time-bound, scientifically credible ecological restoration strategies.
- Parliamentary and Public Oversight**
 - Enhance transparency by placing appraisal documents in the public domain and enabling legislative scrutiny.

Conclusion:

Strategic infrastructure in island territories may be necessary in a changing geopolitical environment. However, the legitimacy of such projects rests not only on strategic utility but also on procedural fairness, ecological prudence, and respect for indigenous rights.

Development and conservation need not be adversaries. The challenge lies in ensuring that long-term national interests include ecological sustainability and social justice as integral components.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Forest Rights Act, 2006 requires settlement of community rights before diversion of forest land.
2. The National Green Tribunal was established under a constitutional amendment.
3. Great Nicobar Island is located near the Malacca Strait.

Which of the above statements 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

(Statement 2 is incorrect — NGT was established under a parliamentary statute, not a constitutional amendment.)

Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Strategic infrastructure development in ecologically fragile regions requires a higher threshold of environmental and social safeguards." Discuss with reference to the Great Nicobar Project. (250 words)

PM-SURAJ Portal –

In the financial year **2024–25**, the **PM-SURAJ portal** disbursed loans worth **₹1,389.61 crore** to around **1.39 lakh entrepreneurs**, exceeding its prescribed target.

About PM-SURAJ Portal

1. **PM-SURAJ** stands for **Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan evam Rozgar Aadharit Jankalyan**.
2. It was launched in **2024** by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.

Objective

To provide **credit assistance to entrepreneurs from disadvantaged and marginalized communities** through a digital platform.

Key Features

1. Acts as a **centralised online portal** for individuals from underprivileged backgrounds to:
 - Apply for eligible loan schemes
 - Track application status digitally
2. The portal is meant **exclusively for new business ventures**; only individuals planning to start a new enterprise can apply.
3. Provides **business loans up to ₹15 lakh** at concessional interest rates.
4. Loan amounts are directly transferred to beneficiaries' bank accounts through:
 - Banks
 - NBFC-MFIs
 - Other participating financial institutions

Implementing Agencies

The portal operates through government-backed financial corporations, including:

1. **National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC)**
2. **National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC)**
3. **National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC)**

Target Beneficiaries

Designed to promote entrepreneurship among:

1. Scheduled Castes (SCs)
2. Other Backward Classes (OBCs)
3. Safai Karamcharis
4. Economically and socially disadvantaged sections

The initiative aims to extend credit support to **one lakh entrepreneurs from marginalized communities**.

Various Steps Taken to Enhance Infrastructure, Strengthen Supply Chains, under Mission POSHAN 2.0

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Delhi

What In News

Government highlighted measures under Mission POSHAN 2.0 to strengthen Anganwadi infrastructure, improve supply chains, and enhance capacity building for better nutrition outcomes.

Major Key Facts in Image

1. Mission POSHAN 2.0 focuses on strengthening Anganwadi infrastructure and nutrition delivery.
2. Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Helpers (AWHs) are being provided training and capacity building.
3. Emphasis on improving supply chain management of supplementary nutrition.
4. Upgradation of Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) including modern facilities.
5. Convergence with schemes like SBM, Jal Jeevan Mission and digital monitoring initiatives.



Static Concept

Mission POSHAN 2.0

Launched By:

Ministry of Women and Child Development

Launch Year:

2021 (umbrella scheme integrating ICDS, POSHAN Abhiyaan, Scheme for Adolescent Girls)

Objectives

1. Improve nutritional outcomes for children (0–6 years), pregnant women and lactating mothers
2. Reduce stunting, wasting, undernutrition and anaemia
3. Strengthen Anganwadi Services

Key Components

1. **Anganwadi Infrastructure Modernisation**
 - Construction of new AWCs
 - Saksham Anganwadi initiative
2. **Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP)**
 - Hot cooked meals / Take Home Rations
 - Improved supply chain mechanisms
3. **Capacity Building**
 - Training of Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)
 - Digital tools for monitoring
4. **Convergence Strategy**
 - Linked with Swachh Bharat Mission
 - Jal Jeevan Mission
 - Health & sanitation initiatives

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Mission POSHAN 2.0, consider the following statements:

1. It is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
2. It focuses only on urban child nutrition.
3. It includes capacity building of Anganwadi Workers.

Which of the statements given above 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:

1. Statement 1 — Correct ✓
2. Statement 2 — Incorrect ✗ (Covers rural and urban areas)
3. Statement 3 — Correct ✓

Bodhan AI: Centre's New Bid to Integrate AI Tools in Schools

Source: The Hindu

What In News

Union Government announced integration of Bodhan AI tools in schools under National Education Policy 2020 to enhance personalised learning and teacher support through Digital Public Infrastructure.

Major Key Facts in Image

1. Initiative aligns with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
2. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for Education will support deployment.
3. AI tools aim to assist teachers in lesson planning and personalised learning.
4. Concerns raised regarding screen time, bias, and over-dependence on AI.

Prelims Practice Question

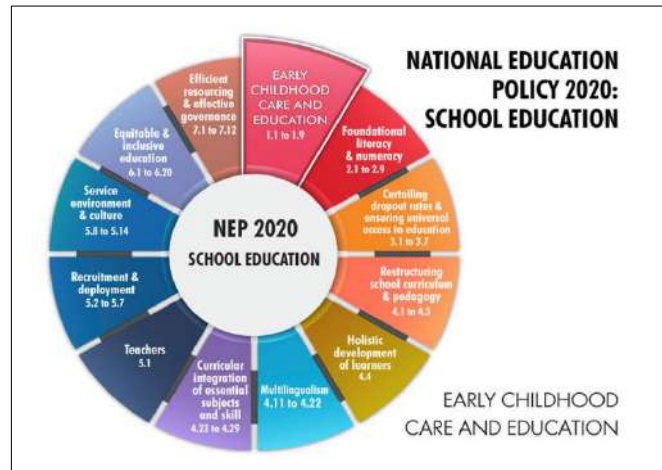
Q1. With reference to AI integration in school education in India, consider the following statements:

1. National Education Policy 2020 promotes use of technology in education.
2. Digital Public Infrastructure for Education includes platforms like DIKSHA.
3. AI tools in education completely replace teachers in classroom instruction.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: A



Yuva AI for All Initiative –

The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** recently launched **Kaushal Rath** under the National AI Literacy Programme titled **Yuva AI for All**.

About the Yuva AI for All

1. Launched by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** under the **IndiaAI Mission**.
2. It is a **free foundational AI course**, aimed particularly at youth, introducing the basics of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** to citizens across India.

Course Structure

1. A **4.5-hour self-paced programme**.
2. Designed for **students, working professionals, and general learners**.
3. Focuses on building comfort with core AI concepts.

Aim

1. To equip **1 crore (10 million) citizens** with basic AI literacy and foundational skills.

Key Features

1. Uses **simple explanations and practical examples**, including real-life Indian case studies.
2. Available free of cost on platforms such as:
 - **FutureSkills Prime**
 - **iGOT Karmayogi**
 - Other leading ed-tech portals
3. Provides an **official Government of India certificate** upon successful completion.
4. **100% free and open to all citizens**.
5. Enables **anytime, anywhere learning** at an individual's pace.

Source: DD News

Economy

Gobardhan Scheme

Source: PIB | Ministry of Jal Shakti | Rural Development | Circular Economy

News

The Government of India is scaling up the **GOBARDHAN Scheme** to strengthen **waste-to-wealth**, promote **biogas and bio-CNG**, and enhance **rural livelihoods**, sanitation, and environmental sustainability.

About Gobardhan Scheme

GOBARDHAN stands for

Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources – Dhan

It focuses on **scientific management of organic waste** (especially cattle dung and agricultural residue) to generate **biogas, bio-CNG, organic manure, and energy**.

Key Features

1. Waste-to-Energy Model

1. Utilises:
 - Cattle dung
 - Agricultural residue
 - Organic municipal waste
2. Produces:
 - Biogas / Bio-CNG
 - Organic manure (bio-slurry)

2. Implementation Framework

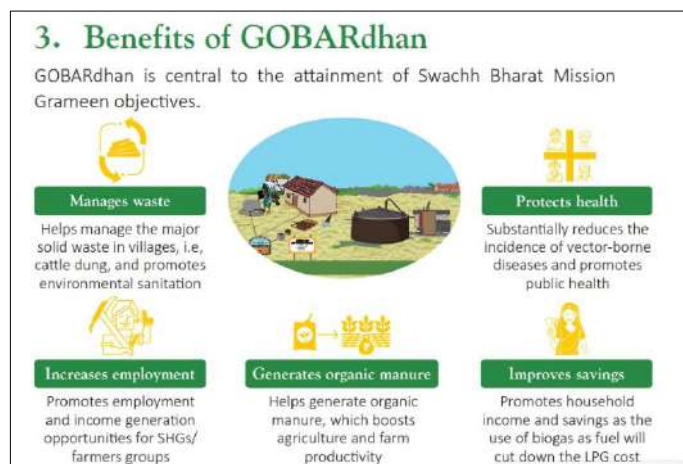
1. Implemented under:
 - **Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) – Phase II**
2. Coordinated by:
 - Ministry of Jal Shakti
 - Ministry of New & Renewable Energy
 - Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying

3. Infrastructure Focus

1. Supports establishment of:
 - Biogas plants
 - Compressed Biogas (CBG) plants
2. Encourages **public-private partnerships (PPP)**

4. Rural Livelihood Generation

1. Enhances farmer income through:
 - Sale of dung
 - Sale of manure
 - Energy production
2. Creates jobs in:
 - Waste collection



- Plant operation
- Transport and maintenance

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the GOBARDHAN Scheme:

1. It aims to convert organic waste into biogas and organic manure.
2. It is implemented under Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) Phase II.
3. It primarily focuses on urban solid waste management.

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) 1 and 2 only

PM E-DRIVE SCHEME (Prime Minister's Electric Drive Revolution In Innovative Vehicle Enhancement)

Source: PIB Delhi | Ministry of Heavy Industries | Union Cabinet Decision

What Is In The News

The Government of India has approved the **PM e-DRIVE Scheme** to accelerate the adoption of **electric vehicles (EVs)** in the country and strengthen **India's electric mobility ecosystem** through targeted demand incentives and infrastructure support.

About PM E-Drive Scheme

PM e-DRIVE stands for **Prime Minister's Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement**.

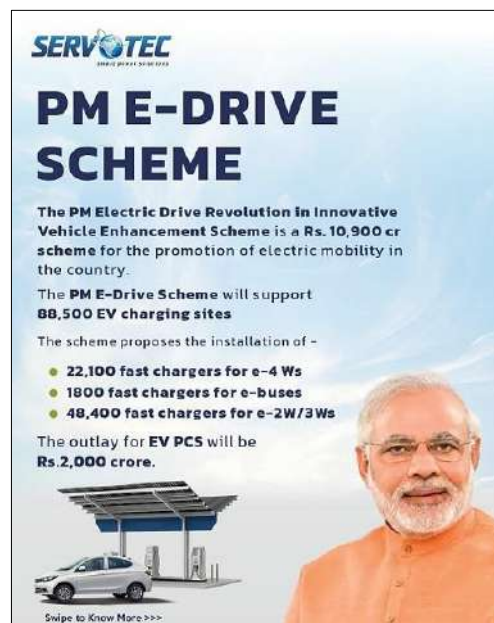
It is a **national electric mobility promotion scheme** aimed at increasing EV penetration, reducing fossil fuel dependence, cutting emissions, and boosting domestic EV manufacturing.

Objectives Of Pm E-Drive Scheme

1. To **promote adoption of electric vehicles** across key transport segments
2. To **reduce vehicular emissions** and dependence on imported fossil fuels
3. To **support domestic EV manufacturing** and innovation
4. To **expand EV charging infrastructure** nationwide
5. To encourage **sustainable and green mobility** in urban and semi-urban areas

Industrial & Manufacturing Push

1. Encourages **Make in India** in EV components
2. Supports:
 - Battery manufacturing
 - EV supply chains



SERVOTEC
SERVOTEC SOLUTIONS

PM E-DRIVE SCHEME

The **PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement Scheme** is a **Rs. 10,900 cr** scheme for the promotion of electric mobility in the country.

The **PM E-Drive Scheme** will support **88,500 EV charging sites**

The scheme proposes the installation of -

- 22,100 fast chargers for e-4 Ws
- 1800 fast chargers for e-buses
- 48,400 fast chargers for e-2W/3Ws

The outlay for **EV PCS** will be **Rs. 2,000 crore**.

Swipe to Know More >>>

- Innovation and technology development

Implementing Ministry

1. Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI)

Environmental & Economic Significance

1. Helps achieve **India's climate commitments**
2. Reduces **carbon emissions** and urban air pollution
3. Cuts **oil import bill**
4. Generates **green jobs**
5. Strengthens **India's EV value chain**

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the PM e-DRIVE Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to promote electric vehicle adoption through demand incentives.
2. It is implemented by the Ministry of Heavy Industries.
3. It provides incentives only for electric passenger cars.

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

Correct Answer

(a) 1 and 2 only

Explosive Eruption Of Guatemala's Volcán De Fuego

News

Guatemala's Volcán De Fuego, Central America's Most Active Volcano, Recently Witnessed A Powerful Explosive Eruption, Highlighting The Region's Persistent Volcanic And Seismic Vulnerability.

Important Points

1. Volcán De Fuego Is An **Active Basaltic Stratovolcano** In Guatemala.
2. Located Near **Antigua**, Between **Acatenango And Agua** Volcanoes.
3. Part Of The **Central American Volcanic Arc** On The Pacific Ring Of Fire.
4. Has Erupted **Over 60 Times Since 1524**.
5. The **2018 Eruption** Killed 194 People And Left Many Missing.
6. Typical Hazards Include **Ashfall, Lava Flows, Pyroclastic Flows, And Lahars**.



Static Information (Basic)

A Stratovolcano Is a Steep, Cone-Shaped Volcano Formed By Alternating Lava And Pyroclastic Layers, Commonly Found In Subduction Zones And Prone To Explosive Eruptions.

Source: India Today (It)

Vehicle Scrappage Policy and Road Safety Initiatives

Source: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) / PIB

What In News

Vehicle Scrappage Policy and Road Safety Initiatives are being strengthened through phased scrapping of old vehicles, mandatory fitness testing, and incentives to promote cleaner, safer mobility

Major Key Facts

1. **Vehicle Scrappage Policy (2021)** aims to phase out unfit and polluting vehicles through automated fitness testing.
2. **Commercial vehicles** above 15 years and **private vehicles** above 20 years are targeted.
3. Establishment of **Automated Testing Stations (ATS)** under PPP model.
4. Policy links **road safety, pollution reduction, and fuel efficiency**.
5. Incentives include **registration fee waiver, scrap value benefits, and manufacturer discounts**.



Static Concept

Vehicle Scrappage Policy – Static Overview

1. Launched in **2021** by **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways**.
2. Objective:
 - Improve **road safety**
 - Reduce **vehicular pollution**
 - Promote **fuel-efficient and technologically advanced vehicles**
3. Key Provisions:
 - Mandatory **fitness testing** for vehicles after a specified age.
 - Unfit vehicles to be **deregistered and scrapped**.
 - Creation of **Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs)**.
4. Implementation Model:
 - **Market-driven, incentive-based, and PPP-led**.
5. Linked National Initiatives:
 - **National Road Safety Policy**
 - **National Green Mobility objectives**
 - **Ease of Doing Business** in auto sector

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Vehicle Scrappage Policy, consider the following statements:

1. Automated Testing Stations (ATS) are mandatory for fitness testing of old vehicles.
2. Private vehicles are required to undergo mandatory scrapping after completing 15 years.
3. The policy provides incentives to vehicle owners for voluntarily scrapping old vehicles.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

About Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary

1. **Location:** Situated about **64 km west of Ahmedabad**, Gujarat.
2. **Meaning:** *Nal Sarovar* literally means “**Tap Lake.**”
3. It is a **natural shallow freshwater lake** with muddy lagoons and **36 small islets**.
4. **Area:** Spread over **120.82 sq. km**, making it one of the largest bird sanctuaries in Gujarat.
5. The lake originated in the **15th century** after the construction of a **check dam across the Sabarmati River**.
6. Initially used for **irrigation and drinking water**, it gradually evolved into a vital **wetland ecosystem**.
7. Recognised as a protected wetland during the **British colonial period**.
8. Declared a **Bird Sanctuary in 1969** by the Gujarat government.
9. Designated as a **Ramsar Site on 24 September 2012**, highlighting its international wetland importance.



Biodiversity Profile

Flora

1. Hosts **48 species of algae** and **72 species of flowering plants**.
2. Dominant aquatic vegetation includes *Cyperus*, *Scirpus*, *Typha*, *Eleocharis*, *Ruppia*, *Potamogeton*, *Vallisneria*, *Naias*, and *Chara*.
3. The area is also known for ‘**Pilu**’ trees, bearing edible red berries.

Fauna

1. Supports **over 250 species of birds**, including migratory birds from **Europe and Siberia**.
2. Commonly sighted birds include **pelicans, ducks, herons, and storks**.
3. Mammals found in surrounding regions include **Indian wild ass, mongoose, jungle cat, Indian fox, jackal, wolf, and hyena**.

Ecological Significance

1. Acts as a **critical wintering ground** for migratory birds.
2. Demonstrates how **reduced anthropogenic disturbance** can significantly enhance biodiversity.
3. Reinforces the importance of **wetland conservation** for climate resilience and ecological balance.

Source: *The Times of India (TOI)*

Wetlands as a National Public Good

Source: *The Hindu* | Dr. Soumya Swaminathan & Rupesh K. Bhomia

GS Paper Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Environment, Ecology, Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction
- **GS Paper II:** Governance, Environmental Institutions, Community Participation

Introduction: Beyond Conservation to Governance

Wetlands provide critical ecosystem services—flood moderation, groundwater recharge, biodiversity support, and livelihood security. Despite traditional conservation practices, rapid land-use change and weak governance frameworks have pushed many Indian wetlands towards degradation, raising concerns for climate resilience and sustainable development.

Key Issues

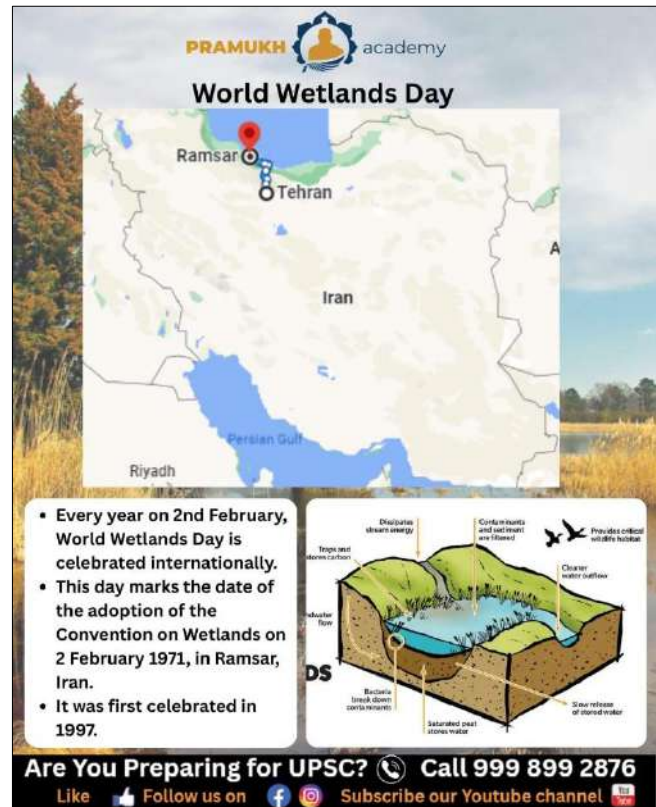
1. **Weak Legal Protection**
 - Regulatory frameworks exist, but enforcement remains fragmented across departments and jurisdictions.
2. **Hydrological Disruption**
 - Dams, embankments, drainage, and groundwater extraction alter natural water flows, degrading wetland ecosystems.
3. **Land-use Pressure**
 - Urban expansion and infrastructure treat wetlands as vacant land rather than ecological assets.
4. **Data and Mapping Gaps**
 - Outdated cadastral maps fail to reflect wetland extent and seasonal variability.
5. **Institutional Capacity Constraints**
 - Limited technical expertise and coordination weaken wetland planning and management.

Global Practices

1. **Netherlands** integrates wetlands into flood management strategies.
 2. **China** adopts “sponge city” models to restore urban wetlands.
 3. **OECD countries** treat wetlands as green infrastructure, funding long-term maintenance.
- Globally, wetlands are managed as public goods within watershed-level governance frameworks.*

Indian Policies / Committees

1. **Ramsar Convention Implementation:** Promotes wise use of wetlands.



Key Facts for Prelims

- **World Wetlands Day** observed on **February 2**, marking the Ramsar Convention (1971).
- India hosts **Ramsar Sites**, recognised for international ecological importance.
- Over **40% of natural wetlands** globally have disappeared since 1970.
- Wetlands regulate floods, store carbon, and support fisheries and agriculture.
- **Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017** govern their protection in India.

2. **NPCA (National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems)**: Supports monitoring and restoration.
3. **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification**: Protects coastal wetlands.
4. **Wetlands Rules, 2017**: Mandate identification, notification, and management.

Way Forward

1. **Catchment-Level Planning**
 - Manage wetlands within entire river basins, not as isolated sites.
2. **Strengthen Mapping and Data Systems**
 - Use remote sensing and ground validation for accurate wetland inventories.
3. **Institutional Capacity Building**
 - Train administrators in hydrology, ecology, and participatory governance.
4. **Community-Centred Conservation**
 - Recognise livelihoods and traditional knowledge as integral to wetland protection.
5. **Align Climate and Development Policy**
 - Integrate wetlands into disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation strategies.

Conclusion

Wetlands function as national public goods whose degradation imposes long-term ecological and economic costs. A shift from cosmetic conservation to watershed-based governance, backed by strong institutions and community participation, is essential for safeguarding India's environmental resilience and development future.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Wetlands help regulate floods and recharge groundwater.
2. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 mandate wetland notification.
3. Ramsar Sites in India are protected exclusively under forest laws.

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

Correct Answer: (a)

Mains Question

Q2. "Treating wetlands as national public goods requires governance beyond conservation." Discuss with reference to India's environmental challenges.

Student Notes

Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary –

The **Arunachal Pradesh government** has recently permitted the **capture of a tiger** involved in the killing of a head constable along the **Roing–Mayodia road** inside **Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary**, citing public safety concerns.

About Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary

1. **Location:** Situated in **Arunachal Pradesh**, within the eastern Himalayan biodiversity region.
2. The sanctuary is named after **Mehao Lake**, a scenic natural lake located in its **core zone**.
3. **Terrain:** Entirely **hilly**, with altitude ranging from **400 metres to 3,560 metres**, contributing to high ecological diversity.
4. **River System:** Several perennial rivers and streams flow through the sanctuary, including **Ashupani, Deopani, Enjopan, Diphu, and Jowe**.
5. **Forest Types:**
 - Tropical Evergreen Forests
 - Sub-tropical and Temperate Forests
 - Temperate Broad-leaved Forests
 - Temperate Conifer Forests

Biodiversity Profile

Flora

1. Dominant tree species include **Hollock, Khokan, Mekai, and Simul**.
2. **Bamboo** of the species *Dendrocalamus hamiltonii* is abundantly found.
3. Medicinal plants such as **Coptis teeta (Mishmi Teeta)**—an **endemic species**—and **Taxus baccata** are present.

Fauna

1. The sanctuary supports several rare and endangered species, including:
 - **Clouded leopard**
 - **Marbled cat**
 - **Wild dog (Dhole)**
 - **Spotted linsang**
 - **Himalayan Black Bear**
 - **Red Panda**

Conservation Significance

- Lies within a **high-altitude biodiversity hotspot** of the Eastern Himalayas.
- Illustrates challenges of **human–wildlife conflict** in forested and road-connected protected areas.
- Important for conservation of **endemic and threatened Himalayan species**.

Source: Hub Network

Sarus Crane – Latest News

According to a **government census conducted across 68 forest divisions of Uttar Pradesh**, the **sarus crane population** in the state has increased by **634 individuals**, registering a **3.1% rise within one year**.

About Sarus Crane

1. The **Sarus Crane (*Antigone antigone*)** is the **tallest flying bird in the world**.



2. **Habitat:** Primarily inhabits **wetlands**, including marshes, ponds, canals, and flooded agricultural fields, often close to human settlements.
3. **Distribution:** Found in **South and Southeast Asia** and **northern Australia**.
4. **Indian Distribution:**
 - Widely distributed across the **Gangetic plains**
 - Also found in **eastern Rajasthan**
 - Population density gradually **declines towards southern India**
5. The species is **non-migratory**, remaining within its home range throughout the year.

Key Features

1. Plumage is mainly **grey**, with a **bare red head and upper neck** and **pale red legs**.
2. Considered the **least social crane species**, usually seen in **pairs or small family groups**.
3. **Monogamous** in nature and known to **mate for life**, a notable behavioural trait.
4. Nests are built **on water**, either in natural wetlands or **flooded paddy fields**.
5. **Lifespan:** Generally ranges between **30–40 years**.



Conservation Status

1. **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
2. **CITES:** Appendix II
3. **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule IV

Significance

1. Acts as an **indicator species** for wetland health.
2. Population rise reflects improved **wetland conservation and community participation**, especially in agricultural landscapes.
3. Important from **UPSC Prelims perspective** due to its unique behavioural and conservation attributes.

Source: *Hindustan Times (HT)*

The Fading of India's Environmental Jurisprudence

Source: *The Hindu (Op-Ed)*

GS Paper Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Environment, Ecology, Biodiversity, Environmental Governance
- **GS Paper II:** Judiciary, Constitutional Interpretation, Governance

Introduction:

India's environmental jurisprudence, once regarded as progressive and precautionary, is witnessing a gradual dilution. Judicial interpretations increasingly prioritise infrastructure-led development, often narrowing ecological safeguards. This shift raises concerns about whether constitutional environmental protection is being reduced from a substantive obligation to a procedural formality.

Key Issues

1. **Narrowing Definition of Ecologically Sensitive Areas**
 - Judicial reliance on technical definitions reduces protection of mangroves and semi-arid ecosystems.

- *Example:* Mangrove protection diluted when not officially notified as forest land.
- 2. **Dilution of Public Trust Doctrine**
 - Courts increasingly allow diversion of common natural resources for infrastructure.
 - *Example:* Highway projects through fragile Himalayan zones approved with conditional clearances.
- 3. **Procedural over Substantive Environmental Justice**
 - Focus shifts to compliance paperwork rather than ecological outcomes.
 - *Example:* Environmental Impact Assessments treated as post-facto approvals.
- 4. **Infrastructure Bias in Judicial Reasoning**
 - Large projects receive priority due to economic importance.
 - *Example:* Char Dham Highway project despite landslide and flood risks.
- 5. **Reduced Judicial Oversight in Enforcement**
 - Courts defer enforcement to executive agencies with weak capacity.
 - *Example:* Illegal mining cases prolonged without effective remediation.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Article 48A:** State's duty to protect and improve environment
- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty of citizens towards environment
- **Public Trust Doctrine:** State as trustee of natural resources
- **Precautionary Principle:** Preventive action despite scientific uncertainty
- **Vanashakti v. Union of India (2022):** Redefined "forest" concept
- **Goa Foundation Case:** Mining restrictions in ecologically sensitive zones.

Global Practices

European Union	Strong precautionary principle embedded in binding environmental directives.
Germany	Constitutional environmental protection with strict judicial scrutiny.
New Zealand	Legal recognition of rivers and forests as living entities.
Canada	Indigenous ecological knowledge integrated into environmental decision-making.
Costa Rica	Constitutional court actively enforces ecological sustainability norms.

Indian Policies / Committees

Environment Protection Act, 1986	Umbrella law empowering Centre to regulate pollution and ecological damage.
Forest Conservation Act, 1980	Controls diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes.
Wildlife Protection Act, 1972	Protects habitats through national parks and sanctuaries.
National Green Tribunal (NGT)	Specialised body for speedy environmental justice.
EIA Notification, 2006	Framework for environmental clearance of development projects.

Way Forward

1. Restore ecological interpretation of Articles 48A and 21 by higher judiciary.
2. Strengthen NGT autonomy and compliance-monitoring mechanisms.
3. Ensure scientific and independent Environmental Impact Assessments.
4. Integrate climate and biodiversity risks into judicial decision-making.
5. Balance infrastructure needs with long-term ecological security.

Conclusion

Environmental jurisprudence in India is not collapsing but recalibrating. While development imperatives are legitimate, sustained economic growth ultimately depends on ecological stability. A balanced judicial approach—respecting constitutional mandates, scientific evidence, and inter-generational equity—remains essential for long-term national interest.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India's environmental jurisprudence:

1. The Public Trust Doctrine treats the State as a trustee of natural resources.
2. The Precautionary Principle requires absolute scientific certainty before action.
3. Article 48A is part of the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. "Judicial interpretation plays a critical role in balancing development and environmental protection."
In this context, examine the recent trends in India's environmental jurisprudence.

Re-Structuring of National Horticulture Mission (NHM)

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB)

Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

What in News

The Government of India has approved the Re-Structuring of the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) to enhance holistic growth of the horticulture sector under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture.

Major Key Facts

1. National Horticulture Mission (NHM) was launched in **2005–06**.
2. It operates under the **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)**.
3. Focus on **holistic development of horticulture crops** including fruits, vegetables, spices, flowers.
4. Emphasis on **post-harvest management and value addition**.
5. Implemented through **State Horticulture Missions (SHMs)**.



Static Concept

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

1. Launched: **2014–15** (subsumed NHM and other schemes)
2. Type: **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)**

3. Objective:

- Increase horticulture production
- Improve nutritional security
- Enhance farmer income

4. Key Components:

- Area expansion
- Nursery development
- Protected cultivation
- Post-harvest management
- Cold chain infrastructure

5. Funding Pattern:

- General States: **60:40 (Centre:State)**
- NE & Himalayan States: **90:10**

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the National Horticulture Mission (NHM), consider the following statements:

1. It was launched in 2005–06 to promote holistic development of horticulture crops.
2. It is implemented under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).
3. It is a Central Sector Scheme fully funded by the Union Government.

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

Answer: A

Intent and Outcome: India's Climate Ambitions and Budgetary Reality

Source: *The Hindu (Editorial)*

GS Paper Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Environment, Climate Change, Energy Policy, Infrastructure
- **GS Paper II:** Public Finance, Policy Implementation, Governance

Introduction:

India's recent Union Budgets reflect an ambitious climate intent, particularly after COVID-19, but outcomes remain mixed. While allocations signal seriousness about energy transition and emissions reduction, implementation gaps, technological uncertainty, and private investment constraints dilute the real climate impact.

Key Issues**1. Allocation–Implementation Gap**

- Budgets show increased climate spending, but execution remains slow.
- *Example:* CCUS funding announced without industrial-scale deployment roadmap.

2. Over-reliance on Unproven Technologies

- Policy focus on CCUS despite high costs and uncertain scalability.
- *Example:* Steel and cement decarbonisation depends heavily on experimental CCUS.

3. Industrial Decarbonisation Challenges

- Export-oriented sectors face compliance pressure from global climate rules.
- *Example:* EU's CBAM affects Indian steel and aluminium competitiveness.

4. Limited Support for Decentralised Energy

- Rooftop solar schemes face financing and grid-integration hurdles.
- *Example:* PM Surya Ghar adoption constrained by DISCOM health.

5. Private Investment Uncertainty

- Climate transition needs private capital, but policy clarity is insufficient.
- *Example:* Hydrogen projects face demand, pricing, and offtake risks.

Key Facts for Prelims

- India committed to **net-zero by 2070** at COP26
- **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC):** Reduce emissions intensity of GDP
- **Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CCUS):** Emission reduction technology
- **EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM):** Trade-linked climate regulation
- **National Green Hydrogen Mission:** Industrial decarbonisation strategy
- **Solar rooftop target:** 10 million households under PM Surya Ghar.

Global Practices

European Union	Uses carbon pricing and border taxes to drive industrial decarbonisation.
United States	Incentivises clean manufacturing through tax credits and subsidies.
China	Combines large-scale public investment with grid-centric electrification.
Japan	Focuses on hydrogen and efficiency in hard-to-abate sectors.
Germany	Prioritises predictable climate finance and industrial transition planning.

Indian Policies / Committees

National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)	Umbrella framework integrating mitigation and adaptation missions.
National Green Hydrogen Mission	Supports low-carbon industrial fuel transition.
Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT)	Market-based mechanism to improve industrial energy efficiency.
PM Surya Ghar Yojana	Promotes decentralised rooftop solar for households.
Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy	Roadmap aligning growth with climate commitments.

Way Forward

1. Prioritise proven decarbonisation technologies before large CCUS dependence.
2. Improve DISCOM finances to enable decentralised renewable integration.
3. Provide long-term policy certainty to crowd in private climate finance.
4. Align industrial policy with global carbon trade regimes like CBAM.
5. Strengthen monitoring to ensure budget allocations translate into outcomes.

Conclusion

India's climate policy reflects strong intent but uneven delivery. Bridging the gap between ambition and outcome requires institutional capacity, technological realism, and investment confidence. A calibrated, phased transition—aligned with economic realities—will best serve India's developmental and environmental goals.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism impacts exports from carbon-intensive industries.
2. CCUS is a fully proven and commercially viable large-scale solution.
3. India's NDC includes reducing emissions intensity of GDP.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. Discuss the gap between climate intent and outcomes in India's Union Budget approach. Suggest measures to improve effectiveness.

Dragon Hole –

The **Sansha Yongle Blue Hole**, popularly known as the **Dragon Hole**, located in the **South China Sea**, has attracted sustained scientific interest due to its exceptional depth and unique marine ecosystem.

About Dragon Hole

1. The **Dragon Hole** is the common name for the **Sansha Yongle Blue Hole**, a massive **underwater marine sinkhole** in the South China Sea.
2. **Blue holes** are steep-sided underwater cavities, typically formed in **limestone (karst) landscapes**, which later became submerged as sea levels rose.
3. It is currently regarded as the **deepest known underwater sinkhole in the world**.
4. Located about **25 km from Discovery Reef** in the South China Sea.
5. Locally referred to by fishermen as the **"Eye of the South China Sea."**
6. The hole is approximately **301.19 metres deep**, surpassing **Dean's Blue Hole (Bahamas)** by nearly 100 metres.



Physical Characteristics

1. The blue hole has an **almost vertical structure**.
2. **Surface diameter:** Around **130 metres**
3. **Bottom diameter:** Approximately **36 metres**
4. The deepest part has **no water exchange or circulation** with surrounding ocean waters.

Ecological Features

1. The **lower layers** are **stagnant and anoxic (oxygen-deficient)**, making them unsuitable for most marine life.
2. However, these deeper zones support **specialized bacterial colonies**.

3. The **upper layers** contain sufficient oxygen and nutrients, supporting at least **20 marine species** and forming a distinct micro-ecosystem.

Hop-on, hop-off' — the State of Climate Governance

Source: *The Hindu (Editorial)*

GS Paper Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Climate Change, Environment, Sustainable Development
- **GS Paper II:** Global Governance, International Institutions, Policy Coordination

Introduction: 'Hop-on, hop-off'

The current architecture of global climate governance reflects a 'hop-on, hop-off' approach, marked by voluntary participation, flexible commitments, and weak enforcement. While climate summits multiply, the absence of binding obligations limits decisive collective action.

Key Issues

1. Voluntary Nature of Commitments

- Climate agreements lack enforceability.
- *Example:* Paris Agreement allows countries to revise or delay NDCs without penalties.

2. Process Over Outcomes

- Negotiations prioritise consensus-building rather than emissions reduction.
- *Example:* COP meetings produce declarations but limited measurable impact.

3. Inadequate Climate Finance

- Funding commitments remain unmet and unpredictable.
- *Example:* \$100 billion annual climate finance goal repeatedly missed.

4. Unequal Responsibility Sharing

- Historical emitters avoid proportionate accountability.
- *Example:* Developing countries bear adaptation costs despite low historical emissions.

5. Market-Driven Substitutes for Governance

- Carbon markets often replace regulatory discipline.
- *Example:* Reliance on offsets rather than absolute emission reductions.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **UNFCCC (1992):** Framework convention on climate change
- **Kyoto Protocol (1997):** Legally binding emission targets for developed countries
- **Paris Agreement (2015):** Voluntary Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
- **COP:** Annual Conference of Parties under UNFCCC
- **1.5°C target:** Aspirational temperature goal under Paris Agreement
- **Climate finance:** Target of \$100 billion annually for developing countries

Global Practices

European Union	Binding emission caps with legally enforced climate targets.
United Kingdom	Climate Change Act mandates long-term carbon budgets.
New Zealand	Independent climate commission guiding government targets.
Germany	Constitutional backing for intergenerational climate responsibility.
Japan	Sector-specific decarbonisation roadmaps with industrial alignment.

Indian Policies / Committees

National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)	Mission-based framework addressing mitigation and adaptation.
India's NDCs	Emissions intensity reduction and renewable energy expansion commitments.
National Adaptation Fund	Supports climate-resilient infrastructure and livelihoods.
Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy	Net-zero pathway planning till 2070.
Climate Finance Initiatives	Green bonds and blended finance mechanisms.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen compliance mechanisms within multilateral climate agreements.
2. Move from voluntary pledges to measurable and time-bound commitments.
3. Ensure predictable and needs-based climate finance for developing countries.
4. Integrate adaptation with development planning at national and local levels.
5. Balance market mechanisms with strong regulatory oversight.

Conclusion

Global climate governance, in its current 'hop-on, hop-off' form, reflects ambition without obligation. Bridging the gap between climate intent and action requires institutional credibility, equitable burden-sharing, and sustained political commitment beyond symbolic participation.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Paris Agreement relies primarily on voluntary national commitments.
2. Climate finance commitments under UNFCCC are legally enforceable.
3. The 1.5°C target is an aspirational goal under the Paris framework.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. "Global climate governance prioritises process over outcomes." Critically examine this statement in the context of international climate agreements.

Unpackaging the Myth of Safe Bottled Water in India

Source: The Hindu (Opinion)

GS Paper Relevance:

- GS II – Governance (Regulatory Frameworks, Public Health)
- GS III – Environment (Pollution, Microplastics), Food Safety

Introduction:

Bottled water in India is widely perceived as a safe and convenient alternative to municipal water supplies. However, emerging scientific evidence suggests that this perception may not fully align with environmental and public health realities. The article examines the growing concerns around **microplastics, regulatory gaps, and chemical leaching associated with bottled water**, arguing that stronger regulatory oversight and consumer awareness are needed.

Key Issues

1. Microplastic Contamination

- Studies indicate the presence of microplastics in bottled water across regions.
- Raises concerns about long-term ingestion and accumulation in the human body.

2. Nanoplastics and Health Uncertainty

- Nanoplastics are small enough to enter cells and tissues.
- Scientific research is still evolving regarding health impacts.

3. Chemical Leaching from Plastic Bottles

- Compounds such as antimony and phthalates may leach under high temperature conditions.
- Especially relevant in tropical climates and improper storage.

4. Regulatory Gaps

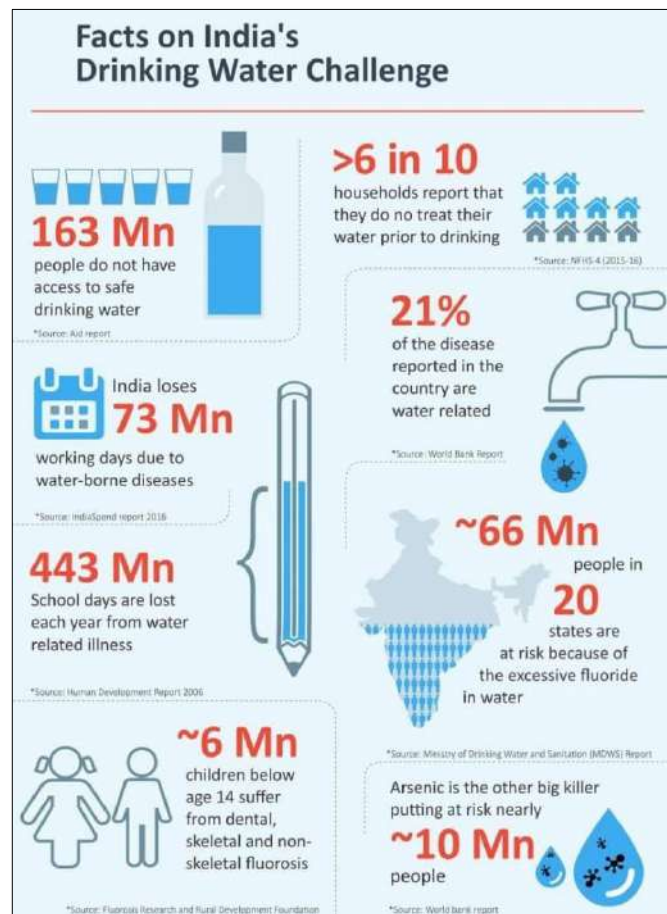
- Current standards may not comprehensively address microplastics and nanoplastics.
- Enforcement across thousands of small bottling units remains uneven.

5. Environmental Burden

- High consumption of single-use plastic bottles increases plastic waste.
- Contributes to broader environmental degradation and marine pollution.

Global Practices

Country/Region	Approach
European Union	Increasing scrutiny on microplastics and extended producer responsibility



Key Facts for Prelims

- Microplastics are plastic particles smaller than 5 mm; nanoplastics are even smaller.
- Studies globally have detected microplastics in bottled water samples.
- **In India, bottled water regulation is overseen by:**
 - Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)
 - Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)
- Plastic packaging may contain chemicals such as antimony and phthalates.
- Prolonged exposure to sunlight and heat increases chemical leaching from plastic bottles.

United States	FDA regulates bottled water; research ongoing on microplastic standards
Canada	Enhanced monitoring of plastic waste and drinking water quality
Australia	Public reporting standards and plastic waste reduction strategies

Indian Policies / Committees

1. FSSAI regulations on packaged drinking water.
2. BIS certification standards (IS 14543 for packaged drinking water).
3. Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 (amended).
4. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework under plastic waste rules.

However, microplastic-specific regulatory thresholds are still evolving.

Way Forward

1. **Develop Microplastic Standards**
 - Establish measurable limits and testing protocols in drinking water regulations.
2. **Strengthen Monitoring of Bottling Units**
 - Enhance compliance inspections, especially for small-scale operators.
3. **Promote Public Water Infrastructure**
 - Improve municipal water quality to reduce reliance on bottled water.
4. **Encourage Sustainable Packaging Alternatives**
 - Incentivise biodegradable or reusable packaging solutions.
5. **Increase Consumer Awareness**
 - Public campaigns on safe storage practices and environmental impacts.

Conclusion

Bottled water has become embedded in urban consumption patterns in India. While it provides short-term convenience, emerging scientific evidence warrants a more cautious and evidence-based regulatory approach. Rather than framing the issue as prohibition versus consumption, the focus should be on strengthening safety standards, enhancing transparency, and reducing environmental harm.

Balanced regulation, scientific monitoring, and improved public water systems can collectively ensure both public health protection and environmental sustainability.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Microplastics are plastic particles smaller than 5 millimetres.
2. FSSAI regulates packaged drinking water standards in India.
3. Prolonged exposure to heat reduces the risk of chemical leaching from plastic bottles.

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

Mains Question

Q2. Discuss the regulatory and public health challenges associated with bottled water consumption in India. Suggest measures to strengthen environmental and consumer protection. (250 words)

Ken-Betwa Linking Project Protest Turns Violent; 3 FIRs Filed

Source: The Hindu (Bhopal Edition)

What in News

Protests against the Ken-Betwa linking project turned violent in Madhya Pradesh's Chhatarpur district, leading to three FIRs and booking of more than 40 unidentified persons.

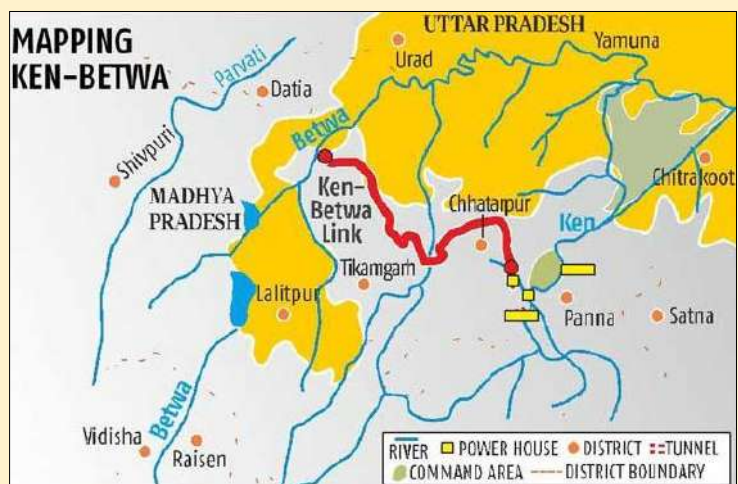
Major Key Facts

1. Violent protests occurred in **Bijawar tehsil, Chhatarpur (Madhya Pradesh)**.
2. Protesters included **tribals, women, workers of Opposition parties**.
3. Three separate **FIRs filed** for vandalism, blocking roads and stone pelting.
4. Around **40 unidentified persons booked**.
5. Project aims to transfer surplus water from **Ken River to Betwa River**.

Static Concept

Ken-Betwa River Linking Project (KBLP)

1. First project under **National Perspective Plan (NPP)** for river interlinking.
2. Implemented by: **National Water Development Agency (NWDA)**.
3. Rivers involved:
 - **Ken River** (tributary of Yamuna)
 - **Betwa River** (tributary of Yamuna)
4. States covered:
 - **Madhya Pradesh**
 - **Uttar Pradesh**
5. Objective:
 - Irrigation in Bundelkhand region
 - Drinking water supply
 - Hydropower generation



River Interlinking Concept

1. Based on idea of transferring water from:
 - **Surplus basins → Deficit basins**
2. Origin:
 - Proposed under **National Perspective Plan (1980)**
3. Key Issues:
 - Environmental impact (e.g., Panna Tiger Reserve concerns)
 - Displacement of tribals
 - Inter-state water disputes

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Ken-Betwa River Linking Project, consider the following statements:

1. It is the first project under the National Perspective Plan for river interlinking.
2. The Ken and Betwa rivers are tributaries of the Yamuna River.
3. The project involves transfer of water from Betwa to Ken basin.

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

Papikonda National Park – Latest News

An adult male tiger named '**Explorer**' has been released into the wild at **Papikonda National Park (PNP)** in Andhra Pradesh under **Operation Stripes**.

About Papikonda National Park

Location

1. Situated in the **East Godavari** and **West Godavari** districts of Andhra Pradesh.
2. Located along the banks of the **Godavari River**.

Terrain

1. Features a **rugged landscape** marked by steep slopes, hills, and deep valleys.
2. The park contains **62 named mountains**.
 - **Devara Konda** is the highest peak.
 - **Verala Konda** is the most prominent mountain.

Ecological Importance

1. Recognised as an **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA)** by **BirdLife International**.

Vegetation and Biodiversity

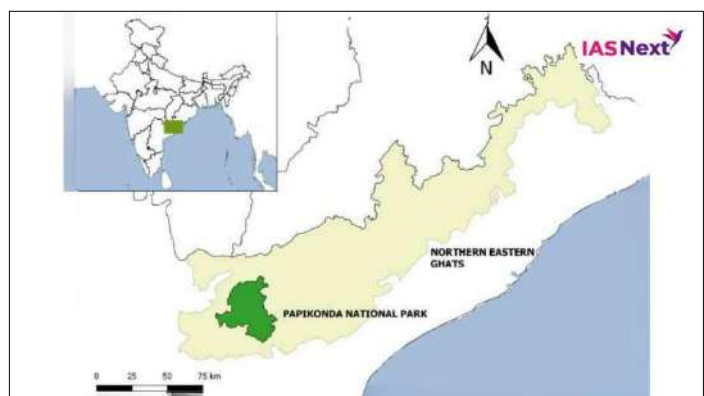
Vegetation

1. Dominated by **tropical moist deciduous forests**, interspersed with patches of **semi-evergreen** and **dry deciduous forests**.

Flora

1. Major tree species include:
 - Teak
 - Rosewood
 - Sandalwood
 - Bamboo
 - Eucalyptus
 - Sal
 - Mahua
 - Pterocarpus
 - Terminalia
 - Cassia

Fauna



1. Key wildlife species found in the park:
 - **Bengal tiger**
 - **Indian leopard**
 - **Sloth bear**
 - **Indian wild dog (dhole)**
2. The region is also known for a distinctive dwarf goat breed locally called “**Kanchu Mekha.**”

Source: The Hindu (TH)

Cheer Pheasant –

Recent observations indicate that **hunting and habitat degradation** continue to pose the most serious threats to the ground-dwelling **Cheer Pheasant**.

About the Cheer Pheasant

1. Also called **Wallich’s pheasant** or **chir pheasant**.
2. Belongs to the pheasant family **Phasianidae**.

Habitat

1. Inhabits **steep, rocky slopes** interspersed with scrub vegetation, stunted trees, and grassy patches.
2. Found at elevations between **1,200 and 3,350 metres**.

Distribution

1. Occurs in the **Western Himalayas**, ranging from:
 - Northern Pakistan
 - Jammu & Kashmir
 - Himachal Pradesh
 - Uttarakhand
 - Central Nepal

Key Characteristics

1. Builds a **simple ground nest**, usually a shallow scrape concealed under vegetation or rocks.
2. Displays **high natal philopatry**, meaning individuals often return to or remain near their birthplace for breeding.
3. Relies on **early successional grasslands**, often maintained through traditional grass-cutting and controlled burning practices.

Diet

1. Feeds on:
 - Roots
 - Tubers
 - Bulbs
 - Buried seeds
 - Possibly insect larvae and earthworms

Conservation Status

1. **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
2. **CITES:** Appendix I



3. Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (India): Schedule I

Source: Down To Earth (DTE)

NGT clears ₹92,000-crore Great Nicobar Project

Source: The Hindu

What In News:

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has cleared the environmental clearance (EC) granted to the ₹92,000-crore Great Nicobar Infrastructure Project. The tribunal disposed of petitions challenging the EC and held that adequate safeguards were built into the clearance conditions. It found no substantial grounds to interfere with the project's approval.

Exam Important Key Facts

Project Cost: ₹92,000 crore

1. **Location:** Great Nicobar Island (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

2. **Components of the Project:**

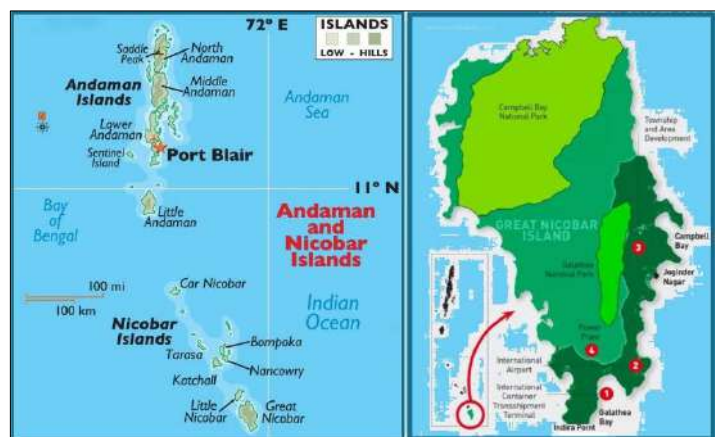
- International container transshipment port
- Greenfield airport
- Power plant
- Township development

3. **Environmental Concerns Raised:**

- Impact on coral reefs and marine biodiversity
- Threat to leatherback turtles
- Possible ecological damage in sensitive zones

4. **NGT's Observations:**

- A High-Powered Committee (HPC) was constituted in 2023.
- The project includes environmental safeguards.
- The tribunal emphasized a "balanced approach" under the EIA Notification, 2006.
- No sufficient legal grounds found to cancel EC.



Static Information

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

1. **Established:** 2010
2. **Act:** National Green Tribunal Act, 2010
3. **Objective:** Effective and expeditious disposal of cases related to environmental protection and conservation of forests and natural resources.
4. **Jurisdiction:** Civil cases under major environmental laws (e.g., Environment Protection Act, Forest Conservation Act, Water Act, Air Act).



5. Principle Applied:

- Sustainable Development
- Precautionary Principle
- Polluter Pays Principle

Environmental Clearance (EC)

1. Granted under **Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006**
2. Mandatory for large infrastructure, mining, industrial, and developmental projects.
3. Includes:
 - Environmental Impact Assessment study
 - Public hearing
 - Expert Appraisal Committee review

Great Nicobar Island

1. Southernmost island of India.
2. Close to **Malacca Strait**, a critical global maritime trade route.
3. Key to India's Indo-Pacific strategy and maritime security.

Ecological Sensitivity

1. Part of a biodiversity hotspot.
2. Habitat of:
 - Leatherback turtles
 - Coral reef ecosystems
3. Presence of tribal communities (e.g., Shompen tribe).

Prelims Practice Question**Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Great Nicobar Infrastructure Project:**

1. The project includes development of an international transshipment port and a greenfield airport.
2. The National Green Tribunal permanently cancelled the Environmental Clearance granted to the project.
3. The Environmental Clearance was granted under the EIA Notification, 2015.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: C 1 only

South African cheetah gives birth to three cubs in Kuno

Source: The Hindu

What In News

A South African cheetah named Gamini at Kuno National Park (Madhya Pradesh) has given birth to three cubs.

1. This is the ninth successful cheetah litter in Kuno.
2. Earlier in the month, five cubs were born to Namibian cheetah Aasha.
3. With the latest birth, the total cheetah population in India has risen to 38.

Current Cheetah Status in India:

1. Total population: 38
2. India-born cubs: 27
3. Translocated adults from Africa: 11
4. Apart from Kuno, three adult cheetahs are currently housed at Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh).

Project Cheetah

1. Launched in 2022.
2. Objective: Reintroduction of cheetahs in India after extinction in 1952.
3. Cheetahs brought from:
 - Namibia (2022)
 - South Africa (2023)
4. First intercontinental translocation of a large carnivore.



Kuno National Park – Important Facts

1. Location: Sheopur district, Madhya Pradesh
2. Earlier identified for Asiatic Lion relocation.
3. Now serves as primary habitat for reintroduced cheetahs.
4. Characterised by dry deciduous forests and grasslands.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Project Cheetah:

1. Cheetahs were declared extinct in India in 1952.
2. Cheetahs have been translocated to India from Namibia and South Africa.
3. Kuno National Park is located in Rajasthan.

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

WAVES 2025 – World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit

Tagline: Catalysing Growth through Global Participation and Creative Collaboration

Date: February 18, 2026

What is Waves 2025?

WAVES 2025 (World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit) is India's first dedicated global convergence platform for the media and entertainment sector.

It was held from 1st to 4th May 2025 at:

1. Jio World Convention Centre
2. Jio World Garden, Mumbai

The summit brought together creators, policymakers, investors, startups, technologists, and global industry leaders to foster collaboration and partnerships in the global creative economy.

Objective

1. To connect Indian and global creative ecosystems.
 2. To generate real opportunities in:
 - Content creation
 - Creative technology
 - Intellectual property
 - Market access
 3. To integrate policy, commerce, and creative talent into a unified framework.
- Stakeholders from 100+ countries participated.

Key Sectors Covered

1. Broadcasting
2. Films
3. Digital Media
4. Animation
5. Visual Effects (VFX)
6. Gaming
7. Comics
8. Extended Reality (AVGC-XR)
9. Emerging creative formats

Key Components of Waves 2025

1. Global Media Dialogue
 - Interaction with ministers, officials, and global policymakers.
2. Thought Leaders Track
 - Plenary and conference sessions.
3. Bharat Pavilion & Exhibition
 - Showcasing India's creative ecosystem and gaming arena.
4. WAVES Bazaar
 - Platform for innovators and content creators to collaborate.
5. WaveXcelerator
 - Showcasing Indian media startups.
6. WAVES Cultural Events
 - Classical and fusion performances.
7. Creatosphere
 - Masterclasses and workshops for creators.
8. PM's CEO Roundtable
 - High-level strategic engagement.

Significance For India

1. Positions India as a global hub for the creative economy.
2. Boosts AVGC-XR ecosystem.

3. Strengthens India's soft power diplomacy.
4. Encourages cross-sector convergence.
5. Supports startup ecosystem in media-tech.

Malabar Pied Hornbill in News

The Chhattisgarh Forest Department has initiated the establishment of six dedicated "Hornbill Restaurants" inside the Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve (USTR).

These eco-restoration zones are designed to support the rare Malabar Pied Hornbill by planting fruit-bearing native tree species. The initiative aims not only to enhance food availability for the bird but also to promote natural forest regeneration and biodiversity conservation in the reserve.

About Malabar Pied Hornbill

The Malabar Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros coronatus*), also called the Lesser Pied Hornbill, belongs to the hornbill family (Bucerotidae).

Appearance

1. Medium-sized hornbill.
2. Striking black and white plumage.
3. Large curved bill topped with a prominent casque (helmet-like structure).

Habitat

1. Prefers evergreen and moist deciduous forests.
2. Frequently found near forest edges and sometimes close to human settlements.

Distribution

1. Western Ghats
2. North-eastern Himalayan foothills (India & Nepal)
3. Satpura Hills
4. Parts of Sri Lanka

Diet

1. Primarily frugivorous (fruit-eating).
2. During breeding season, may adopt an omnivorous diet including insects and small animals.

Ecological Role

1. Acts as a "forest gardener" by dispersing seeds over large distances.
2. Considered a key indicator species for forest health and ecosystem stability.

Conservation Status

1. IUCN Red List: Near Threatened
2. Major Threats:
 - Habitat loss due to deforestation
 - Forest fragmentation
 - Degradation of nesting sites

Key Facts: Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve (USTR)

Location

1. Situated in Chhattisgarh.
2. Formed by merging Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary and Sitanadi Wildlife Sanctuary.

Drainage System

1. Mahanadi River is the principal river.
2. Major tributaries include:
 - Udanti River
 - Sitanadi River
 - Indravan River
 - Pairi River

Topography

1. Contains 19 named hills.
2. Deo Dongri – Highest peak.
3. Atānga Dongar – Most prominent hill.

Vegetation

1. Dominated by Tropical Dry Deciduous and Moist Deciduous forests.
2. Rich in biodiversity and supports several endangered species.

Significance of the “Hornbill Restaurants” Initiative

1. Enhances food security for hornbills.
2. Strengthens seed dispersal networks.
3. Promotes climate-resilient forest regeneration.
4. Encourages community-based conservation efforts.
5. Supports tiger reserve biodiversity beyond flagship species.

Bela Gram becomes Maharashtra’s first net-zero village

Source: The Hindu

What In News

1. **Bela Gram** (Bhandara district, Vidarbha region, Maharashtra) has emerged as Maharashtra’s **first net-zero panchayat**.
2. Highlighted at **Mumbai Climate Week 2026**.
3. Achieved **net-zero greenhouse gas emissions** through localised climate action led by the Gram Panchayat.

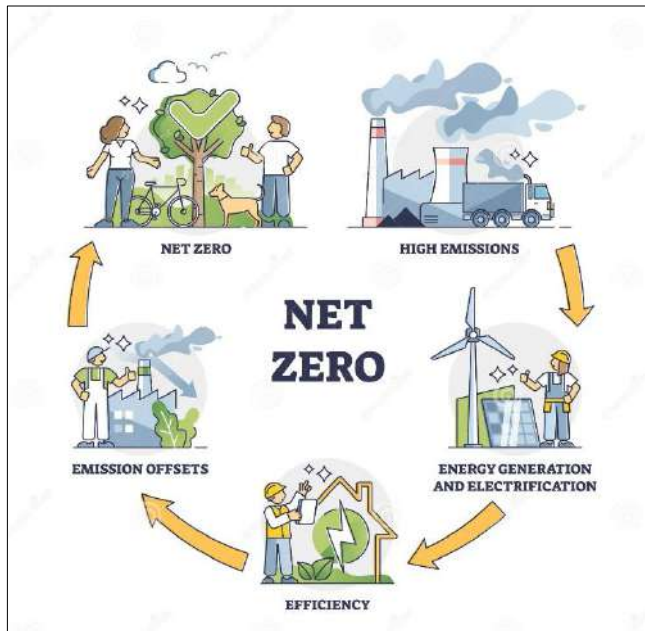
Key Initiatives

1. Planted **90,000+ trees** during weddings and festivals.
2. Promoted **smokeless LPG** for clean cooking.
3. Installed **solar panels** in homes, anganwadis, and panchayat buildings.
4. Adopted **waste segregation at source**.
5. Eliminated **single-use plastics**.
6. Promoted **rooftop solar** and renewable transition.

Concept: Net-Zero Village

A net-zero village aims to:

1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



2. Offset remaining emissions through:
 - Renewable energy
 - Afforestation
 - Sustainable waste management
3. Promote climate-resilient rural development.

Related Institutional Support

1. Awards received:
 - **Ashokaroha Award**
 - **MediaOne Maha Panchayat Award**
2. Linked to broader rural climate efforts such as:
 - Solar Gram initiatives
 - Community-based renewable energy systems
 - District Mineral Foundation (DMF) support in some regions

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the concept of a “Net-Zero Village”, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to balance greenhouse gas emissions with absorption or offset mechanisms.
2. It necessarily requires industrial carbon capture technologies.
3. Renewable energy adoption and afforestation are key tools in achieving net-zero at local level.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Baglihar Hydropower Project – Latest News

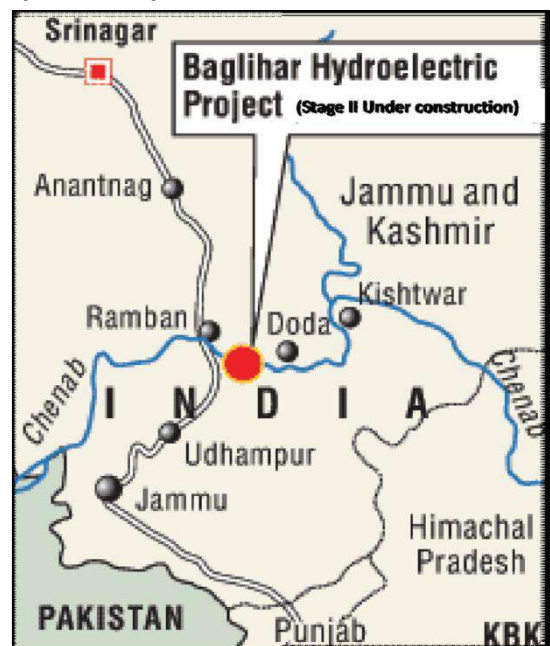
Operations at the **450 MW Stage-I unit** of the **Baglihar Hydropower Project** in Jammu and Kashmir were recently suspended after flooding affected the facility on the Chenab River.

About the Baglihar Hydropower Project

1. A **900 MW run-of-the-river hydroelectric project** located on the **Chenab River** in **Ramban district, Jammu and Kashmir**.
2. Developed in **two stages of 450 MW each**.

Structural Features

1. Comprises a **concrete gravity dam**:
 - Height: **144.5 metres**
 - Length: **363 metres**
 - Volume: **1.9 million cubic metres**
2. Forms a reservoir with a storage capacity of **475 million cubic metres**.



3. The underground powerhouse measures:

- **221 m (length)**
- **24 m (width)**
- **51 m (height)**

Timeline

1. Construction began in **1999**.
2. Commercial operations commenced in **2008**.

Key Facts about the Chenab River

1. The **largest tributary of the Indus River** among the five major rivers of the Punjab region.

Course

1. **Origin:** Formed by the confluence of the **Chandra and Bhaga rivers** in the **Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh**.
2. In its upper reaches, it is known as the **Chandrabhaga**.
3. Flows through **Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir**, and after receiving the **Jhelum River near Trimmu**, eventually joins the **Sutlej River**.



4. **Total Length:** Approximately **974 km**.

5. The Chenab valley is a **structural trough** formed between the **Great Himalayan Range** and the **Pir Panjal Range**.

Major Tributaries

1. **Left Bank:** Niru, Tawi, Neeru, Liddrari
2. **Right Bank:** Ans, Bhut Nalla, Bichleri, Kalnai, Marusudar, Miyar Nalla

Major Dams on Chenab

1. **Salal (rockfill dam)**
2. **Aalal (concrete dam)**
3. **Baglihar**
4. **Dul**

Source: Times of India (TOI)

Prime Minister Lauds Milestone of 30 Lakh Households Adopting Rooftop Solar under PM Surya Ghar Scheme

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Delhi

What In News

Prime Minister lauded the milestone of 30 lakh households adopting rooftop solar under PM Surya Ghar Scheme, promoting clean energy access and sustainable living across India. (25 words)

Major Key Facts

1. 30 lakh households have adopted rooftop solar under **PM Surya Ghar Scheme**.

2. Scheme promotes **clean energy access and reduced electricity bills**.
3. Encourages **renewable energy adoption at household level**.
4. Supports India's transition toward **sustainable and self-reliant energy systems**.
5. Contributes to India's broader renewable energy and climate goals.

Static Concept Sheet – Pm Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

Launch & Objective

1. Launched in: **2024**
2. Objective:
 - Provide rooftop solar systems to households
 - Reduce electricity bills
 - Promote renewable energy at decentralized level

Key Features

1. Target: **1 crore households**
2. Central Financial Assistance (CFA) for rooftop solar installation
3. Subsidy directly transferred to beneficiary's bank account
4. Net metering facility

Implementation Mechanism

1. Nodal Ministry: **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)**
2. Implemented through:
 - State DISCOMs
 - National portal for application & subsidy

Link with India's Renewable Energy Goals

1. Target: **500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030**
2. Net Zero target by **2070**
3. Supports:
 - Energy transition
 - Distributed renewable generation
 - Climate commitments under Paris Agreement

Advantages of Rooftop Solar

1. Reduces transmission losses
2. Promotes energy independence
3. Lowers carbon footprint
4. Reduces DISCOM peak load burden



Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to rooftop solar schemes in India, consider the following statements:

1. PM Surya Ghar Scheme is aimed at promoting rooftop solar installations for households.
2. The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

3. Net metering allows households to feed excess solar power into the grid.

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

✓ **Correct Answer: D — 1, 2 and 3**

Explanation:

- 1. Statement 1 — ✓ Correct
- 2. Statement 2 — ✓ Correct
- 3. Statement 3 — ✓ Correct (Net metering mechanism)

Kole Wetlands – Latest News

A recent scientific survey conducted in the Ramsar-listed **Kole Wetlands of Kerala** has recorded **12 species of pygmy grasshoppers**, highlighting the ecological richness of the region.

About Kole Wetlands

- 1. Located in **central Kerala**, spanning **Thrissur and Malappuram districts**.
- 2. Known for its **300-year-old paddy cultivation tradition**.
- 3. The term “*Kole*” in Malayalam translates to “**bumper crop**”, reflecting the wetland’s high agricultural productivity.



Physical Features

- 1. Characterised by **low-lying tracts** with a narrow central strip and adjoining cultivated patches.
- 2. Naturally prone to **saltwater intrusion**.
- 3. During the monsoon, the region gets submerged and is later cultivated by **draining water and constructing bunds**.
- 4. Surrounded by human settlements, coconut and arecanut plantations, and gardens.

Ecological Importance

- 1. One of Kerala’s **largest and most productive wetlands**, yet considered threatened.
- 2. Lies along the **Central Asian Flyway** of migratory birds.
- 3. Ranks as the **third largest wetland in India in terms of bird numbers**, after **Chilika Lake (Odisha)** and **Amipur Tank (Gujarat)**.
- 4. Recognised as an **Important Bird Area (IBA)** by BirdLife International.
- 5. Declared a **Ramsar Site** in **2002**.

About Pygmy grasshoppers

- 1. Belong to the insect order **Orthoptera**.
- 2. Around **1,400 species** identified worldwide.

3. Small insects (about **15 mm long**), typically brown, grey, or moss-green.

Key Characteristics

1. Forewings are either **reduced to small pads or completely absent**.
2. Lay eggs **singly in shallow soil grooves**, unlike short-horned grasshoppers which lay eggs in underground chambers.
3. Commonly found in **short grass fields and muddy shorelines**.
4. Many species are **dimorphic**:
 - Short-winged form
 - Long-winged form with functional hindwings
5. Lack sound-producing and hearing organs.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Kole Wetlands, consider the following statements:

1. It is located in northern Kerala and is primarily a mangrove ecosystem.
2. It lies along the Central Asian Flyway of migratory birds.
3. It was designated as a Ramsar Site in 2002.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 is incorrect (it is located in central Kerala and is mainly a freshwater wetland with paddy cultivation).
2. Statements 2 and 3 are correct.

Source: The Hindu (TH)

Lake Baikal –

In a tragic incident, seven bodies were recently recovered from Lake Baikal in Siberia after a tour bus carrying eight Chinese tourists broke through the frozen surface and sank into the icy waters.

About Lake Baikal

Lake Baikal is situated in southern eastern Siberia in Russia, close to the border with Mongolia.

Key Facts

1. **Oldest Freshwater Lake:** Estimated to be **20–25 million years old**, making it the oldest existing freshwater lake on Earth.
2. **Largest by Area:** Covers approximately **31,722 sq. km**, making it the world's largest freshwater lake by surface area.
3. **Length & Width:**
 - Length: **636 km**
 - Average width: **48 km**
4. **Deepest Lake:** Maximum depth of **1,642 meters**, making it the deepest lake in the world.



5. **Deep Continental Rift:** Beneath the lake lie sediments nearly **7 km thick**, forming the Earth's deepest continental rift with a rift floor extending **8–11 km** below the surface.
6. **Largest by Volume:** Contains around **20% of the world's unfrozen surface freshwater**.

Islands & Rivers

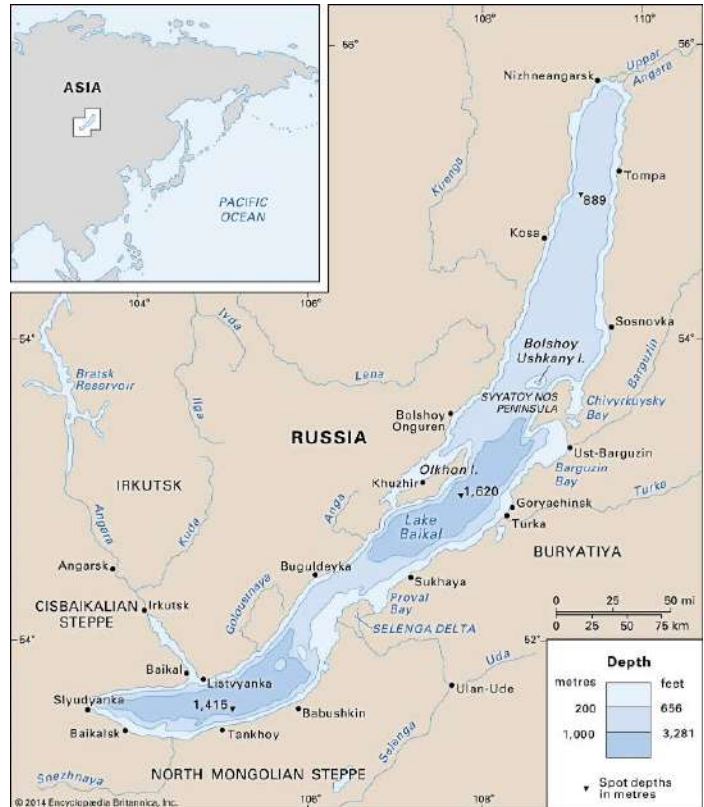
1. The lake has **45 islands and islets**, with Olkhon Island being the largest.
2. Around **330 rivers** drain into the lake, including the Selenga, Barguzin, Upper Angara, Sarma, and Turka.
3. It has only one outlet — the Angara River.

Climate

1. The lake moderates the surrounding climate, making it **milder than nearby Siberian regions**.
2. The surface freezes in **January** and thaws between **May and June**.

Biodiversity & Cultural Significance

1. Often called the **"Galápagos of Russia"**, Baikal's isolation and ancient origin have resulted in unique freshwater biodiversity.
2. It is home to the indigenous Buryat people, who largely practice Tibetan Buddhism and traditionally rear livestock such as goats, camels, cattle, and sheep.
3. The lake was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996** by UNESCO.



Fishing Cat – Latest News & Overview

A recent scientific assessment of the Fishing Cat has identified Kaziranga National Park and its Tiger Reserve as a major stronghold for this small wild feline, highlighting the park's importance for wetland-dependent species conservation.

About Fishing Cat

The Fishing Cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) is a **medium-sized, stocky, and powerfully built wild cat** known for its close association with wetlands.

Habitat

1. Found primarily in **wetland ecosystems**, including:
 - Mangrove forests
 - Swamps
 - Marshes



- Riverine floodplains
- 2. Adapted to both **freshwater and coastal (saltwater) habitats**.
- 3. Can survive in varied climatic conditions — from **tropical rainforests to temperate zones**.

Distribution

1. Native to **South and Southeast Asia**.
2. Found in countries such as **India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia, and Java (Indonesia)**.

In India:

1. Mangrove forests of the Sundarbans
2. Foothills of the Himalayas along the **Ganga and Brahmaputra River valleys**
3. Wetland landscapes of the Western Ghats

Key Features

1. **Strong, muscular body** with short limbs.
2. Long head and a short tail (about one-third of body length).
3. Fur is **coarse, brownish-grey** with distinct dark spots and stripes.
4. Excellent swimmer; frequently enters water and can even **dive to catch fish**.
5. Shows **sexual dimorphism** — males are significantly larger than females.
6. Primarily **nocturnal** in behavior.

Conservation Status

1. **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
2. **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I (highest level of protection in India)

Periyar Tiger Reserve – Latest Update

Recently, the **Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR)** initiated **Phase III of the All India Tiger Estimation 2025–26**, which aims to assess the tiger population across the country using scientific monitoring methods.

About Periyar Tiger Reserve

Location

1. Situated in **Idukki district of Kerala**.
2. Named after the **Periyar River**.
3. Located in the **Cardamom Hills and Pandalam Hills** of the **Western Ghats**, near the Kerala–Tamil Nadu border.

Periyar Lake

1. The reserve surrounds **Periyar Lake**, an artificial lake formed in **1895** after the construction of a dam across the Periyar River.

Terrain and Topography

1. Characterised by **hilly and undulating terrain**.
2. Highest peak: **Kottamala (2016 m)**.
3. The region lies at high elevation within the southern Western Ghats.

Rivers and Dams

1. Major rivers draining the reserve:
 - **Periyar River**
 - **Pamba River**



2. The **Mullaperiyar Dam** is located within the reserve.

Tribal Communities

1. Inhabited by indigenous communities such as:

- **Mannan tribe**
- **Paliyan tribe**

Vegetation	Important Flora	Primates Found in PTR
The reserve features diverse forest types: 1. Tropical evergreen forests 2. Semi-evergreen forests 3. Moist deciduous forests 4. Transitional evergreen forests 5. Grasslands 6. Eucalyptus plantations	1. Teak 2. Rosewood 3. Jamun 4. Bamboo 5. Tamarind 6. Terminalia species 7. Royal Poinciana	1. Lion-tailed macaque (rare and endemic to Western Ghats) 2. Nilgiri Langur 3. Bonnet Macaque 4. Common Langur 5. Gee's Golden Langur The reserve is also considered a potential habitat for the Nilgiri Tahr.

UPSC Prelims MCQ

Q1. With reference to Periyar Tiger Reserve, consider the following statements:

1. It is located in the Cardamom Hills of the Western Ghats.
2. Mullaperiyar Dam is situated within the reserve.
3. The reserve is drained by both the Periyar and Pamba rivers.
4. Gee's Golden Langur is endemic to the Western Ghats and found in Periyar Tiger Reserve.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statements 1, 2, and 3 are correct.
2. Statement 4 is incorrect because **Gee's Golden Langur** is found mainly in Assam and Bhutan, not endemic to the Western Ghats.

India set to get new batch of eight cheetahs from Botswana

News

1. **Eight cheetahs** from **Botswana** to be brought to India.
2. Part of **Cheetah Reintroduction Project**.
3. Will be released at **Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh**.
4. Total cheetah population in India expected to rise to **46**.
5. Batch composition: **6 females and 2 males**.
6. Transport:



- Airlift via **Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft**
- Further helicopter transfer to Kuno.
- 7. Aim: Boost population to **50+** in near future.
- 8. Possible future relocation to **Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary**.

Key Point

1. Source country: **Botswana (Southern Africa)**
2. Project launched: **2022**
3. Long-term goal:
 - Establish viable wild cheetah population
 - Restore grassland ecosystems

static Info

Species Details

1. Scientific name: **Acinonyx jubatus**
2. Fastest land animal (~110 km/h)
3. IUCN Status:
 - **Vulnerable**
 - Asiatic cheetah (Iran) → Critically Endangered

India Context

1. Cheetah declared extinct in India: **1952**
2. Last recorded in: **Madhya Pradesh**
3. Reintroduction approved by **Supreme Court (2020)**

Kuno National Park

1. Located in: **Sheopur district, MP**
2. Originally prepared for:
 - Asiatic Lion relocation (from Gir, Gujarat)
3. River: **Kuno River (tributary of Chambal)**

Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

1. Located in: **Mandsaur & Neemuch districts, MP**
2. Lies along **Chambal River**
3. Being developed as secondary cheetah habitat



Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Cheetah Reintroduction Project in India:

1. The project involves bringing African cheetahs to India.
2. Kuno National Park was originally prepared for Asiatic lion relocation.
3. Cheetah was declared extinct in India in 1972.

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**

(Extinct year: 1952, not 1972)

Source: Indian express

ECONOMY

Labour-Intensive Textile Sector and MSMEs to Receive New Government Schemes

Source: The Hindu (Budget & Economy Section)

What In News

1. The Union Government has announced **new policy initiatives and schemes** to support the **labour-intensive textile sector and MSMEs**.
2. Focus areas include **employment generation, technology upgradation, formalisation, and global competitiveness**.

Exam Important Key Facts

1. Textile sector contributes **significantly to employment after agriculture**.
2. Majority of textile units fall under **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**.
3. Government emphasis is on **labour-intensive industries** to absorb workforce.

Static Information

Textile Sector in India (Static Background)

1. Second largest employer after agriculture.
2. Contributes to:
 - **~2% of GDP**
 - **~10–12% of industrial production**
 - **~12% of export earnings**
3. Labour-intensive by nature → high job potential.

MSMEs in Indian Economy

1. MSMEs account for:
 - **~30% of GDP**
 - **~45% of manufacturing output**
 - **~40% of exports**
2. Backbone of:
 - Employment generation
 - Regional balanced development
 - Inclusive growth

Why Focus on Labour-Intensive Sectors

1. High **employment elasticity**
2. Absorbs:
 - Semi-skilled
 - Low-skilled
 - Migrant workforce
3. Helps address:
 - Urban unemployment
 - Informalisation of labour

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India's labour-intensive textile sector:

1. The textile sector is one of the largest employment generators in India after agriculture.
2. A majority of textile units in India operate under the MSME category.
3. Labour-intensive sectors generally have lower employment elasticity compared to capital-intensive sectors.
4. Government support to the textile sector often includes technology upgradation and export promotion.

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

Capex Scale-Up in Union Budget: Capital Expenditure as a Growth Engine

Source: The Hindu – Budget & Economy Section

What In News

1. The Union Budget has **raised the Centre's capital expenditure (Capex) target to ₹12.2 lakh crore.**
2. The government reiterated that **high public capex is central to sustaining growth, crowding in private investment, and improving productivity.**
3. Emphasis placed on **deep integration with global markets and long-term investment stability.**

Exam Important Key Facts

1. Capital expenditure target: **₹12.2 lakh crore.**
2. Capex increased despite:
 - Global slowdown
 - Trade tensions
 - Geopolitical uncertainties
3. Focus areas of capex:
 - Infrastructure
 - Logistics
 - Energy transition
 - Manufacturing competitiveness
4. Objective: **Sustain economic momentum + employment generation**

Static Information**What is Capital Expenditure (Capex)?**

1. Government spending on **creation of productive assets** such as:
 - Roads, railways, ports
 - Power infrastructure
 - Digital and urban infrastructure
2. Unlike revenue expenditure, capex **creates long-term economic capacity.**

Why Capex is Critical for Economic Growth

1. **High Multiplier Effect**
2. → Each ₹1 spent generates more than ₹1.5–2 in GDP over time.
3. **Crowding-in Effect**
4. → Public capex encourages private investment by reducing risk and improving infrastructure.
5. **Employment Generation**
6. → Especially in construction, manufacturing, MSMEs.
7. **Productivity Enhancement**
8. → Better logistics and infrastructure reduce transaction costs.

India's Capex Strategy (

1. Shift from:
 - Consumption-led growth → **Investment-led growth**
2. Post-pandemic strategy:
 - Government as **lead investor**
 - Private sector follows once demand stabilises
3. Aligns with:
 - National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)
 - PM Gati Shakti
 - Make in India
 - Atmanirbhar Bharat

Capex and Fiscal Sustainability

1. Higher capex preferred over revenue spending because:
 - Creates assets
 - Expands tax base
 - Improves debt sustainability in the medium term
2. Capital spending helps **balance growth with fiscal consolidation**.

Capex in Global Context

1. In a volatile global economy:
 - Stable public investment anchors growth
 - Enhances investor confidence
2. Infrastructure quality is a key determinant of:
 - FDI inflows
 - Export competitiveness
 - Supply chain resilience

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Capital Expenditure (Capex) in India:

1. Capital expenditure leads to the creation of long-term productive assets.
2. High public capex can crowd in private investment by reducing infrastructure bottlenecks.
3. Capital expenditure has a lower growth multiplier compared to revenue expenditure.
4. Sustained capex can improve fiscal sustainability in the medium term.

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

Budget Positions India to Govern Growth with Judgement and Resilience

Source: *The Indian Express*

GS Paper Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy, Fiscal Policy, Public Finance, Growth & Development
- **GS Paper II:** Cooperative Federalism, Governance Capacity

Introduction:

India's Union Budget reflects a shift from merely accelerating growth to governing it with fiscal prudence and resilience. In a world marked by geopolitical uncertainty, tightening global financial conditions, and structural domestic constraints, the Budget seeks to balance macroeconomic stability, public investment, and long-term productivity enhancement.



Key Issues

1. Fiscal Credibility Beyond Headline Numbers

- Deficit reduction must be assessed through expenditure quality and economic impact, not only fiscal ratios.

2. Crowding-Out Risk from Public Borrowing

- Government borrowing absorbs household savings, raising capital costs for MSMEs and manufacturing firms.

3. State-Level Fiscal Stress

- Rising State deficits and debt weaken cooperative fiscal discipline and raise borrowing costs.

4. Private Investment as the Growth Bridge

- Public capex alone cannot sustain growth; private investment remains essential for job creation.

5. Human Capital and Urban Constraints

- Productivity gains depend on workforce skills, urban governance, and environmental sustainability.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Fiscal deficit** reduced from 9.2% of GDP (FY21) to ~4.4% (FY26 target).
- **Public capital expenditure** crossed ₹11 lakh crore.
- **Debt-to-GDP ratio** of general government declined gradually.
- **GST** strengthened revenue mobilisation and formalisation.
- **Investment rate** stabilised around 30% of GDP.

Global Practices

1. **OECD economies** emphasise fiscal rules alongside flexibility during shocks.
2. **Germany** balances debt brakes with public investment cycles.
3. **East Asian economies** combine state-led infrastructure with private manufacturing investment.

India's approach mirrors mixed models but faces higher demographic and development pressures.

Indian Policies / Committees

FRBM Review Committee	Emphasised sustainable debt and counter-cyclical policy.
15th Finance Commission	Focused on fiscal discipline and devolution balance.
Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes	Target manufacturing competitiveness.
City Economic Regions (CERs)	Promote urban-led growth and productivity.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Fiscal Rules with Flexibility**
 - Balance credibility with counter-cyclical spending capacity.
2. **Deepen Private Investment Climate**
 - Lower cost of capital through regulatory certainty and faster contract enforcement.
3. **Improve State Fiscal Coordination**
 - Move from transfers to shared fiscal responsibility frameworks.
4. **Invest in Urban Governance and Infrastructure**
 - Enhance municipal finance, transport, and pollution management.
5. **Focus on Productivity-Led Growth**
 - Align human capital, technology adoption, and climate resilience.

Conclusion

The Budget reflects a mature recognition that sustaining growth requires judgement rather than acceleration alone. By prioritising fiscal discipline, public investment quality, and private sector confidence, India seeks resilience amid global uncertainty. The success of this approach will depend on coordinated federal action, urban reform, and productivity enhancement.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Public capital expenditure has increased significantly in recent Union Budgets.
2. High government borrowing can crowd out private investment.
3. GST has contributed to revenue buoyancy and formalisation.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a)

Mains Question

Q2. "Fiscal discipline must support, not suppress, growth." Discuss this statement in the context of India's recent budgetary strategy.

Student Notes

A Holistic Vision of Development – Union Budget Approach

Source: The Hindu (Budget & Economy Analysis)

What In News

Union Budget has articulated a **holistic development strategy**, focusing on **institution-building, human capital, health, technology, digital public infrastructure and sustainability**, rather than only short-term growth numbers.

Exam Important Key Facts

1. Budget emphasises **long-term capacity building** over populist spending.
2. Focus on **healthcare ecosystem**, including preventive, curative and research aspects.
3. Strong push for **digital public infrastructure (DPI)** in governance and service delivery.
4. Innovation, R&D and advanced manufacturing seen as engines of future growth.
5. Development is linked with **resilience, productivity and inclusiveness**, not just GDP growth.

Static Information

Budget as a Policy Instrument

1. Union Budget is not only a fiscal document but also a **policy vision statement**.
2. It aligns:
 - **Resource allocation**
 - **Institutional reforms**
 - **Sectoral priorities**

Key Pillars Supporting Holistic Development

1. **Human Capital:** Health, education, nutrition, skill development
2. **Institutional Capacity:** Governance reforms, digital systems, transparency
3. **Economic Resilience:** Capex, manufacturing, MSMEs, innovation
4. **Sustainability:** Climate action, green transition, resource efficiency

Constitutional & Policy Backing

1. **Directive Principles of State Policy (Articles 38 & 39)** → Social and economic justice
2. **SDGs 2030** → Integrated development framework
3. **Amrit Kaal Vision (2047)** → Long-term national transformation

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the concept of holistic development as reflected in recent Union Budgets, consider the following statements:

1. Holistic development focuses only on economic growth indicators like GDP.
2. Human capital development is considered central to long-term economic resilience.
3. Digital public infrastructure is increasingly used as a governance and service-delivery tool.

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: (b)

₹6,000 Crore Allocation for Census Exercise in Union Budget

Source: The Hindu (Union Budget 2026–27)

What In News

The Union Budget 2026–27 has allocated **₹6,000 crore for the Census exercise**, which has been officially notified for **2027**, marking a major fiscal commitment towards India's long-pending population enumeration.

Exam Important Key Facts

1. **₹6,000 crore** allocated for **Census 2027**.
2. Census expenditure approved earlier by Cabinet: **₹11,782.4 crore**.
3. Home Ministry's total allocation increased by **9.44%**.
4. Overall, Home Ministry Budget:
 - **₹2,33,210 crore (2025–26)**
 - **₹2,55,233.53 crore (2026–27)**
5. Intelligence Bureau allocation:
 - Increased from **₹3,829 crore** → **₹6,782 crore**.
6. Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs):
 - Allocation increased to **₹1,00,400 crore**.
7. Modernisation of State Police Forces:
 - **₹450.54 crore**.
8. Crime & Criminal Tracking Network Systems (CCTNS):
 - **₹3,610.8 crore**.
9. Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS):
 - Increased to **₹550 crore**.

Static Information

Census in India – Constitutional & Legal Basis

1. Census conducted under the **Census Act, 1948**.
2. It is a **Union subject** under **Article 246 (Union List – Entry 69)**.
3. Conducted by the **Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India** (Ministry of Home Affairs).

Frequency and Importance

1. Conducted **every 10 years** (decennial).
2. Last completed Census: **2011**.
3. Census 2021 postponed due to **COVID-19**.
4. Census data forms the backbone of:
 - Delimitation of constituencies
 - Fiscal transfers
 - Welfare targeting
 - Policy planning

Why Census 2027 is Crucial

1. Outdated demographic data affects:
 - Welfare schemes (NFSA, PMAY, DBT)

- Urban planning
 - Internal security
2. Basis for **future delimitation exercise** after 2026 freeze.
 3. Helps in evidence-based governance and federal planning.

Internal Security Linkages (Budget Context)

1. ICJS integrates:
 - Police
 - Courts
 - Prisons
 - Forensics
2. CCTNS enables nationwide crime & criminal data sharing.
3. CAPFs & police modernisation strengthen **internal security architecture**.

Prelims Practice Question

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

1. Census is conducted under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948.
2. Census is a State subject under the Constitution of India.
3. Census data is used for delimitation of constituencies and welfare planning.
4. The Registrar General of India functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

It Is an Elitist Budget, Does Not Address People's Needs

Source: *The Hindu* | Pulapre Balakrishnan

GS Paper Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Inclusive Growth, Budgeting, Public Expenditure
- **GS Paper II:** Welfare State, Social Sector Policies, Governance Priorities

Introduction: Growth Without Inclusion?

The Union Budget places strong emphasis on growth acceleration and long-term productivity. However, concerns remain whether this growth-centric approach adequately addresses basic public service delivery—particularly in health, education, and social welfare—areas critical for inclusive development in a lower-middle-income country like India.

Key Issues



1. Skewed Spending Priorities

- Budget allocations favour advanced institutions over basic schools and hospitals, where service gaps are widest.

2. Neglect of Foundational Services

- Primary education and public healthcare, crucial for capability development, receive limited attention.

3. Urban and Elite Bias

- Spending patterns benefit urban, organised sectors more than rural and informal populations.

4. Limited Impact on Immediate Welfare

- Growth-driven strategies may not quickly improve access to essential services for vulnerable groups.

5. Mismatch Between Needs and Capacity

- Advanced research and innovation spending may outpace the economy's foundational readiness.

Key Facts for Prelims

- India remains a **developing economy** with gaps in health and education outcomes.
- **Public expenditure on health and education** is lower than many middle-income peers.
- **Higher education institutions** receive greater budgetary focus than primary services.
- **Production-linked incentives** aim at long-term industrial competitiveness.
- **Creative Technologies Institute** proposed for animation, gaming, and VFX.

Global Practices

1. **Nordic countries** prioritise universal basic services before advanced innovation spending.
2. **East Asian economies** strengthened mass education and healthcare alongside industrialisation.
3. **Latin American experience** shows growth without social investment increases inequality.

Comparatively, balanced sequencing of welfare and growth has yielded more inclusive outcomes.

Indian Policies / Committees

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Emphasises foundational learning and school quality.
National Health Policy	Targets increased public health expenditure.
Finance Commission transfers	Intended to support State-level social spending.
PLI Schemes	Focus on industrial competitiveness, not direct welfare delivery.

Way Forward

1. Rebalance Social Sector Spending

- Prioritise primary health centres and government schools.

2. Strengthen State Capacity

- Enable States to deliver welfare through predictable fiscal support.

3. Sequence Growth with Welfare

- Align advanced innovation spending with improvements in basic capabilities.

4. Outcome-Based Budgeting

- Measure welfare spending by service quality, not allocations alone.

5. Inclusive Growth Strategy

- Integrate employment generation with public service expansion.

Conclusion

Economic growth is essential, but its legitimacy rests on improved living conditions for the majority. A development strategy that strengthens basic public services alongside long-term productivity investments would better align fiscal policy with India's socio-economic realities and inclusive growth objectives.

Prelims MCQ**Q1. Consider the following statements:**

1. Public expenditure on health and education in India is comparatively low among middle-income countries.
2. Growth-oriented budgets automatically translate into improved welfare outcomes.
3. Strengthening foundational services is critical for long-term productivity.

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

Correct Answer: (a)**Mains Question****Q2. "Inclusive growth requires balanced public expenditure between long-term productivity and basic welfare services." Discuss in the context of India's recent budgetary priorities.**

India's Next Industrial Shift — Electrons Over Molecules

Source: *The hindu* | Shrikant Madhav Vaidya**GS Paper Relevance**

- **GS Paper III:** Industrial Policy, Energy, Climate Change, Infrastructure
- **GS Paper II:** Economic Policy, Global Competitiveness

Introduction:

For over a century, industrial growth has relied on "molecules" — coal, oil, and gas — to generate heat and motion. Today, global competitiveness is increasingly determined by access to **clean, reliable electricity ("electrons")**. Countries that transition faster from molecules to electrons gain advantages in cost efficiency, supply chains, exports, and emissions reduction. India now faces a critical industrial inflection point.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Electrification** replaces direct combustion of fossil fuels with electricity-based processes.
- **Electric motors** convert over **90%** of input energy into useful work; internal combustion engines convert less than **35%**.
- China sources **nearly half of its industrial energy from electricity**.
- India's industrial electrification remains **around one-quarter** of total industrial energy use.
- Green electrons reduce exposure to fossil fuel price volatility and carbon border taxes.

Key Issues

1. **Low Industrial Electrification in India**
 - Indian industry still relies heavily on on-site combustion of coal and gas, limiting efficiency and decarbonisation.
2. **Quality and Reliability of Power Supply**
 - Uneven grid reliability discourages firms from adopting all-electric industrial processes.
3. **Policy Bias Toward Generation, Not Use**



- Renewable policy focuses on megawatts added, not megawatt-hours consumed by industry.
- 4. **Export Competitiveness Risks**
 - Carbon-intensive production may face barriers like the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).
- 5. **Technology and Capital Constraints for MSMEs**
 - Smaller firms lack access to finance and technical support for electrification.

Global Practices

China	Built grid infrastructure first, then promoted electron-first industries (steel, cement, manufacturing).
European Union	Uses carbon pricing and CBAM to push industrial electrification.
United States	Incentivises electric arc furnaces, scrap recycling, and clean manufacturing through subsidies.

Global leaders integrate electricity, industry, and climate policy.

Indian Policies / Committees

National Solar Mission	Flagship mission aiming rapid solar capacity expansion to ensure energy security and climate commitments.
National Electricity Plan	Comprehensive roadmap projecting electricity demand, generation mix, and transmission requirements for future planning.
Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT) Scheme	Market-based mechanism improving industrial energy efficiency through tradable efficiency certificates.
National Green Hydrogen Mission	Mission promoting green hydrogen production to decarbonize industries, mobility, and energy systems.

Way Forward

1. **Launch a National Industrial Electrification Mission**
 - Align power, industry, and climate policy with clear electrification targets.
2. **Upgrade Grid Quality and Flexibility**
 - Invest in storage, flexible substations, and reliable industrial power corridors.
3. **Mandate Electrification in New Industrial Parks**
 - Ensure future manufacturing clusters are designed for electron-first processes.
4. **Support MSMEs**
 - Provide concessional finance, pooled renewable procurement, and technical assistance.
5. **Shift Policy Metrics**
 - Track electricity actually used by industry, not just renewable capacity installed.

Conclusion

The next phase of industrial growth will be defined not by access to fuel, but by access to affordable, reliable, and clean electricity. Countries that embed green electrons into industrial production will secure long-term competitiveness and resilience. For India, accelerating industrial electrification is no longer optional — it is central to growth, exports, and climate goals.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Industrial electrification improves energy efficiency compared to direct fossil fuel combustion.
2. India's level of industrial electrification is comparable to that of China.
3. Carbon border measures can impact exports from carbon-intensive industries.

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

Correct Answer: (a)

Mains Question

**Q2. "Industrial electrification is emerging as a key determinant of global manufacturing competitiveness."
Discuss this statement in the context of India's climate and industrial goals.**

The Budget and the Imperative of Fiscal Consolidation

Source: *The Hindu* (C. Rangarajan & D.K. Srivastava)

GS Paper Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy, Public Finance, Budgeting, Fiscal Policy
- **GS Paper II:** Governance, Fiscal Federalism (limited overlap)

Introduction:

The Union Budget 2026–27 is presented at a time when India seeks to sustain high economic growth while restoring fiscal discipline after pandemic-era expansion. The Budget reflects a conscious effort to prioritise capital expenditure, maintain growth momentum, and steadily move towards fiscal consolidation — a prerequisite for long-term macroeconomic stability.

Key Issues

1. Slowing Revenue Growth

- Tax buoyancy projections beyond 2026–27 appear optimistic amid global uncertainty and moderating nominal GDP growth.

2. High Interest Burden

- Interest payments nearing 40% of revenue receipts reduce fiscal space for productive expenditure.

3. Debt Sustainability Concerns

- Maintaining a high debt-to-GDP ratio risks crowding out private investment and raises borrowing costs.

4. Centre–State Fiscal Pressures

- Changes in revenue deficit grants and tax devolution impact States' fiscal capacity.

5. Dependence on Capital Expenditure-led Growth

- While effective in the short term, public capex alone cannot sustain long-term growth without private investment revival.

Key Facts for Prelims

- **Fiscal deficit** is the gap between total expenditure and total receipts excluding borrowings.
- **FRBM Act, 2003** provides a framework for fiscal discipline.
- Capital expenditure has risen from **~2% of GDP (2019–20)** to **over 4% (2025–26 BE)**.
- **Debt-to-GDP ratio** is a key indicator of fiscal sustainability.
- Interest payments constitute a significant portion of revenue expenditure.

Global Practices

1. **Advanced Economies** target fiscal consolidation during growth upcycles to rebuild buffers.
2. **OECD countries** focus on debt sustainability rather than rigid deficit targets.
3. **Emerging economies** combine fiscal rules with flexibility during shocks.

India's approach reflects a calibrated version of global best practices.

Indian Policies / Committees

1. **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003**
2. **Sixteenth Finance Commission:** Review of Centre–State fiscal relations
3. **Medium-Term Fiscal Policy Statement**
4. **Public Capex-led Growth Strategy** post-COVID-19

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Revenue Mobilisation**
 - Improve tax compliance, rationalise exemptions, and widen the tax base.
2. **Anchor Debt Sustainability**
 - Explicit medium-term debt targets alongside fiscal deficit goals.
3. **Improve Quality of Expenditure**
 - Shift from revenue-heavy spending to productivity-enhancing investments.
4. **Revive Private Investment**
 - Policy certainty, financial sector stability, and crowding-in strategies.
5. **Strengthen Fiscal Transparency**
 - Clear communication on assumptions underlying deficit and growth projections.

Conclusion

The Budget reflects a pragmatic recognition that fiscal consolidation is not an obstacle to growth but its necessary foundation. While capital expenditure remains a vital growth driver, long-term economic resilience will depend on debt sustainability, realistic revenue projections, and the revival of private investment. A calibrated and transparent fiscal strategy will be crucial in the years ahead.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The FRBM Act aims to ensure inter-generational equity in fiscal management.
2. High debt-to-GDP ratio can increase interest burden on government finances.
3. Capital expenditure has no impact on long-term economic growth.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a)

Mains Question

Q2. Discuss the importance of fiscal consolidation during periods of high economic growth. How does the Union Budget attempt to balance growth and fiscal prudence?

India–US Trade Understanding amid Trump's Tariff Claims and Energy Commitments

Source: The Hindu

News

Former US President Donald Trump claimed that **India has agreed to buy over \$500 billion worth of US goods** and **stop purchasing Russian oil**, while announcing a **trade understanding** between India and the United States involving **tariff reductions and reciprocal market access**.

Exam-Important Key Facts

1. Donald Trump claimed India agreed to:
 - Purchase **over \$500 billion worth of US goods**
 - Reduce or stop imports of **Russian oil**
2. Trump announced:
 - **Reduction of US tariffs on Indian goods from 25% to 18%**
 - Commitment to **reduce non-tariff barriers**



Static Information

India–US Trade Relation

1. US is one of India's **largest trading partners**
2. Major Indian exports to US:
 - Pharmaceuticals
 - IT services
 - Textiles
 - Engineering goods
3. Major US exports to India:
 - Energy (LNG, crude oil)
 - Defence equipment
 - Agricultural products

Tariffs & Trade Policy

1. **Tariffs**: Taxes imposed on imported goods
2. **Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)**:
 - Regulatory standards
 - Licensing requirements
 - Subsidy-related restrictions
3. WTO framework governs tariff commitments, but **bilateral trade deals allow flexibility**

Energy Security Context

1. India imports over **85% of its crude oil**
2. Russian oil imports increased post-Ukraine war due to **discounted pricing**
3. India follows a policy of **strategic autonomy** in energy sourcing

Geopolitical Dimension

1. US–India relationship classified as a **Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership**
2. India balances relations with:
 - US (technology, defence, trade)
 - Russia (energy, defence legacy systems)

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to recent India–US trade developments, consider the following statements:

1. The United States announced a unilateral reduction in tariffs on Indian goods as part of a bilateral trade understanding.
2. India has officially confirmed stopping all imports of Russian crude oil following the announcement.
3. Reduction of non-tariff barriers is a key objective of recent India–US trade negotiations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: 1 and 3 only

The CPI Base Revision Exercise Measures a Slice of Life

Source: Saurabh Garg, Secretary, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation

Introduction:

Consumer Price Index (CPI) reflects changing consumption patterns, living standards, and economic structures. By updating the base year from 2012 to 2024, India seeks to ensure that inflation measurement accurately represents present-day household spending behaviour and economic realities.

Key Issues

1. Changing Consumption Patterns

- Urbanisation and rising incomes alter household expenditure baskets.

Example: Increased weight to telecom services and digital subscriptions.

2. Need for Accurate Policy Signals

- Outdated weights distort inflation assessment and monetary response.

Example: RBI interest rate decisions depend heavily on CPI data.

3. Integration of New Data Sources

- Administrative and digital price sources improve reliability.

Example: Use of scanner data and telecom tariffs in price tracking.

4. Rising Services Share in Economy

- Services form larger share of GDP and household spending.

Example: Greater weight to education, healthcare, and transport services.

Key Facts for Prelims

- CPI measures **price changes of goods and services consumed by households**
- Compiled by **National Statistical Office (NSO), MoSPI**
- Used by **RBI for inflation targeting (Flexible Inflation Targeting Framework)**
- Current inflation target: **4% ± 2% band**
- Base year earlier: **2012**, revised to **2024**
- Based on **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023–24**
- CPI includes **food, fuel, housing, clothing, services, transport.**



5. Methodological and Institutional Challenges

- Ensuring comparability while maintaining global standards.

Example: Aligning Indian CPI methodology with international best practices.

Global Practices

United States (BLS)	Regular CPI basket revisions reflecting consumption shifts
European Union (HICP)	Harmonised index ensures cross-country comparability
UK (ONS)	Annual updates in basket weights using expenditure surveys
OECD Nations	Integration of scanner data for real-time price capture
IMF Guidelines	Standardised statistical practices for inflation measurement

Indian Policies / Committees

Flexible Inflation Targeting (2016)	CPI-based framework guiding RBI monetary policy
National Statistical Office (NSO)	Compiles CPI and conducts expenditure surveys
HCES 2023–24	Provides updated consumption data for CPI weights
Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)	Uses CPI to determine repo rate decisions
MoSPI Statistical Reforms	Strengthens data quality, transparency, comparability

Way Forward

1. Institutionalise **regular and predictable base revisions**
2. Expand use of **real-time digital price data**
3. Enhance transparency in **weight calculation and methodology**
4. Improve public awareness of **core vs headline inflation**
5. Strengthen statistical capacity at **state and district levels**

Conclusion

The CPI base revision is not merely a technical statistical exercise but a reflection of evolving socio-economic realities. By aligning the index with current consumption patterns, India strengthens the credibility of its inflation data and the effectiveness of monetary policy. Accurate measurement ensures that policy responses remain grounded in lived economic experience rather than outdated assumptions.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Consumer Price Index (CPI):

1. CPI in India is compiled by the National Statistical Office.
2. RBI's inflation targeting framework uses CPI as its benchmark.
3. CPI measures wholesale price inflation across industries.

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

Mains Question

Q2. Discuss the significance of CPI base year revision in ensuring effective monetary policy and evidence-based governance in India. (250 words)

16th Finance Commission: Exit Clauses Mandatory for Cash Transfer Schemes

Source: The Hindu | Finance Commission | Fiscal Federalism

Composition of 16th Finance Commission:

Member Name	Designation
Dr. Arvind Panagariya	Chairman, Former NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman
Dr. Manoj Panda	Full-time Member, Economist
Smt. Annie George Mathew	Full-time Member, Ex-Spl. Secretary, Finance
Dr. Soumya Kanti Ghosh	Full-time Member, Group Chief Economist, SBI
Shri T. Rabi Sankar	Part-time Member, Deputy Governor, RBI

News

The **16th Finance Commission (FC-XVI)** has cautioned States against the **rapid expansion of large-group unconditional cash transfer schemes**, recommending **mandatory exit clauses**, periodic review, and beneficiary rationalisation to ensure **fiscal sustainability**.

Key Highlights from The Report

Sharp Rise in Cash Transfers

1. Large-group unconditional cash transfers have **grown sharply between 2023–24 and 2025–26 (BE)**.
2. These schemes now account for **nearly one-fourth (≈24.7%) of all subsidies** across States (up from ~20% in 2018–19).

States with Steepest Increase

1. **Jharkhand**
 - From **0.8%** of total revenue expenditure (2023–24)
 - To **13.0%** in 2025–26 (BE)
2. **Maharashtra**
 - From **0.6% → 6.2%** of revenue expenditure
3. **Odisha**
 - From **0% → 5.1%** of revenue expenditure

Major Schemes Cited By The Commission

1. **Maharashtra** – Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana (₹1,500/month to women)
2. **Karnataka** – Gruha Lakshmi (₹2,000/month to women heads of households)
3. **West Bengal** – Lakshmir Bhandar (₹1,200–₹1,000/month)
4. **SC/ST pensions** and **general-category transfers** also contribute significantly

Why The Finance Commission Is Concerned

Fiscal Risks

1. Unconditional transfers:
 - Crowd out **capital expenditure**
 - Reduce funds for **health, education, infrastructure**
2. Risk of **structural revenue deficits**
3. Long-term pressure on **State finances**

Governance Risks

1. Expansion driven by **electoral acceleration**, not structural reform
2. Weak targeting despite JAM infrastructure
3. Limited monitoring of outcomes

Key Recommendations Of The 16th Finance Commission**1. Mandatory Exit (Sunset) Clauses**

- All large cash transfer schemes must have **pre-defined sunset dates**
- Automatic discontinuation unless renewed after evaluation

2. Periodic Review

- Regular reassessment of:
 - ✓ Beneficiary eligibility
 - ✓ Fiscal affordability
 - ✓ Outcome effectiveness

3. Rationalisation of Subsidies

- Shift from **unconditional** to **need-based and conditional transfers**
- Avoid subsidies on **non-merit goods**

4. Better Targeting

- Use JAM (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile) to:
 - ✓ Reduce leakages
 - ✓ Prevent “permanently entitled” beneficiaries

5. Prioritise Public Goods

- States should not compromise spending on:
 - ✓ Health
 - ✓ Education
 - ✓ Infrastructure
 - ✓ Capital formation

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission on cash transfer schemes, consider the following statements:

1. The Commission has recommended mandatory sunset clauses for large unconditional cash transfer schemes.
2. Unconditional cash transfers now account for nearly one-fourth of total State subsidies.
3. The Commission supports indefinite continuation of cash transfers due to improved JAM efficiency.

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) 1 and 2 only).

The Hidden Cost of Insurance Distribution

Source: T.C. Suseel Kumar & R. Sudhakar, *The Hindu*

GS Paper Relevance:

- **GS III:** Insurance Sector, Financial Inclusion, Banking Reforms
- **GS III:** Indian Economy – Financial Markets & Regulation

Introduction

The debate on *the hidden cost of insurance distribution* highlights structural inefficiencies in India's insurance sector, particularly the rising share of commissions in premium outgo. While insurance penetration remains modest, escalating distribution expenses raise concerns about consumer welfare, regulatory oversight, and long-term sectoral sustainability.



Key Issues

1. Rising Commission Burden

- Commission payouts rising faster than premium growth.

Example: Large insurers reporting sharp increases in acquisition costs.

2. Bancassurance Dependency

- Heavy reliance on banks concentrates bargaining power.

Example: Private insurers paying higher commissions to secure bank partnerships.

3. Unequal Cost Structures

- Public vs private insurers show divergence in expense ratios.

Example: LIC's commission ratio declining while private insurers' rising.

4. Limited Insurance Penetration

- High acquisition costs not translating into wider coverage.

Example: Insurance penetration stagnating despite rising premium volumes.

5. Regulatory and Incentive Distortions

- EOM reforms increased flexibility but may incentivise higher commissions.

Example: Shift in 2023–24 EOM norms allowing expense reclassification.

Key Facts for Prelims

- India's life insurance regulator: **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)**
- Bancassurance: Distribution of insurance through banks
- Commission payouts grew significantly faster than premium growth (FY2025 data cited)
- LIC accounts for majority share of life insurance market
- Insurance penetration: Around **3–4% of GDP**
- Expense of Management (EOM) norms govern insurer costs

Global Practices

United Kingdom	Commission caps and strong disclosure norms
United States	Fee-based advisory models gaining prominence

Australia	Ban on conflicted remuneration in financial advice
European Union (IDD)	Transparency and consumer-centric insurance distribution
Japan	Long-term agency relationships with regulatory oversight

Indian Policies / Committees

IRDAI EOM Reforms (2023)	Flexible expense management framework
Bancassurance Guidelines	Permit banks as corporate insurance agents
Insurance Act, 1938	Governs insurance regulation framework
Financial Inclusion Initiatives	Promote wider insurance penetration
RBI Oversight in Bancassurance	Supervises bank–insurer partnerships

Way Forward

1. Shift focus from **commission-driven sales to value-based outcomes**
2. Strengthen **disclosure norms on distribution expenses**
3. Cap or rationalise **excessive acquisition costs**
4. Promote **direct-to-customer digital insurance channels**
5. Align regulatory supervision between **IRDAI and RBI**

Conclusion

A sustainable insurance ecosystem must balance market incentives with consumer protection. While distribution channels are essential for expanding coverage, unchecked commission escalation risks eroding policyholder value and undermining financial inclusion goals. Regulatory recalibration, transparency, and outcome-based supervision can ensure that insurance growth translates into genuine risk protection rather than inflated intermediary costs.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. IRDAI regulates the insurance sector in India.
2. Bancassurance refers to insurance companies operating as banks.
3. Insurance penetration is measured as percentage of GDP.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. Examine the structural challenges in insurance distribution in India and suggest regulatory measures to improve efficiency and consumer welfare. (250 words)

Student Notes 

Farmers' Pulse: Only Structural Reforms in Agriculture Sector Can Ensure Food Security

Source: The Hindu (Editorial)

Introduction

The debate around farmers' pulse production highlights that only structural reforms in the agriculture sector can ensure food security. India's recurring dependence on pulse imports, fluctuating MSP incentives, and trade policy reversals reveal deeper systemic challenges in agricultural planning and market integration.

Key Issues

1. Policy Instability in Trade Decisions

- Frequent import-export shifts create uncertainty for farmers.
- Example: Sudden easing of pulse imports affecting domestic prices.

2. Weak MSP Procurement for Pulses

- Unlike rice and wheat, procurement remains limited.
- Example: Farmers forced to sell below MSP due to lack of buyers.

3. Inadequate Infrastructure

- Lack of storage, processing, and marketing facilities.
- Example: Insufficient warehousing leading to distress sales.

4. Productivity Gaps

- Pulse yields remain lower than global averages.
- Example: India's average pulse yield significantly below Canada's.

5. WTO and International Competition

- Import commitments influence domestic pricing structure.
- Example: Pressure to reduce trade barriers affecting farmer incomes.

Key Facts for Prelims

1. India is the largest producer and consumer of pulses
2. Pulses account for ~20–25% of protein intake in India
3. MSP (Minimum Support Price) announced for pulses annually
4. Procurement agencies: NAFED, FCI (limited role in pulses)
5. WTO Agreement on Agriculture: Governs agricultural trade rules
6. India's pulse imports mainly from Canada, Australia, Myanmar
7. National Food Security Mission (NFSM): Includes pulses component.

Global Practices

Canada	High-yield pulse farming with export-oriented infrastructure
Australia	Advanced drought-resistant pulse varieties and mechanisation
Brazil	Integrated farm-to-market value chains
USA	Strong crop insurance and income support mechanisms
China	State-backed procurement stabilising domestic markets

Indian Policies / Committees

National Food Security Mission (NFSM-Pulses)	Targets higher pulse production
Price Support Scheme (PSS)	Procurement of pulses through NAFED
PM-AASHA Scheme	Umbrella scheme for MSP assurance
e-NAM	Digital agricultural market integration platform
Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana	Crop insurance for risk mitigation

Way Forward

1. Strengthen assured and decentralised MSP procurement for pulses
2. Invest in irrigation, high-yield seed varieties, and R&D
3. Develop storage, processing, and export infrastructure
4. Stabilise trade policy to reduce farmer uncertainty
5. Promote crop diversification through targeted incentives

Conclusion

Ensuring food security in pulses requires more than short-term trade adjustments. Structural reforms—covering productivity enhancement, procurement expansion, infrastructure development, and stable trade policy—are essential to protect farmer incomes and reduce import dependence. A coherent, long-term agricultural strategy will better align domestic production with nutritional and economic goals.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding pulses in India:

1. India is the largest producer of pulses globally.
2. Pulses are procured at the same scale as rice and wheat under MSP.
3. National Food Security Mission includes a pulses component.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. Discuss the structural challenges in India's pulses sector and suggest reforms necessary to ensure food security and farmer income stability. (250 words)

Budget to AI, Same Warning: Implementation, Not Appearance, is Key

Source: The Hindu (Opinion)

Introduction:

India's recent Artificial Intelligence Summit and Union Budget announcements reflect ambitious developmental intent. However, the article cautions that policy vision without administrative capability rarely produces structural transformation.

The core argument is clear: fiscal incentives and grand announcements cannot substitute for institutional capacity, predictable regulation, and competent public administration. Sustainable economic progress depends not merely on policy design, but on effective implementation.

Key Issues

1. Persistent Implementation Gap

- India often announces ambitious policies, but administrative bottlenecks delay or dilute outcomes.
- Example: Infrastructure delays and regulatory hurdles despite fiscal allocations.

2. Fiscal Incentives Alone Are Insufficient

- Tax holidays and subsidies (e.g., for semiconductor or data centres) cannot ensure long-term transformation without systemic reform.

3. **Weak Administrative Capacity**

Issues such as:

- Complex compliance processes
- Delays in approvals
- Inconsistent regulatory enforcement
- undermine investor confidence.

Manufacturing Stagnation

- Manufacturing share in GDP has remained relatively stagnant for decades, indicating structural constraints beyond fiscal policy.

4. **Over-Reliance on Announcements**

- Budget speeches and summits generate expectations, but without monitoring and accountability frameworks, outcomes remain uncertain.

Key Facts for Prelims

1. India aims to become a global data-centre and AI hub.
2. Semiconductor manufacturing incentives have been introduced in recent budgets.
3. Goods and Services Tax (GST) has restructured indirect taxation.
4. India's manufacturing share remains around 16–17% of GDP (approximate range cited in analysis).
5. The 1991 Budget marked structural reform during a balance-of-payments crisis.
6. The Laffer Curve concept relates tax rates to revenue outcomes.

Global Practices

Country	Key Feature
United States	Lower corporate taxes combined with regulatory predictability
Germany	Strong industrial policy backed by skilled workforce and logistics efficiency
South Korea	Coordinated state support with strict performance monitoring
Singapore	Streamlined compliance and high bureaucratic efficiency

Indian Policies / Committees

1. Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes
2. GST Reform (Indirect Tax Consolidation)
3. Semiconductor Mission
4. Infrastructure Push through Capital Expenditure
5. Ease of Doing Business reforms

Way Forward

1. **Create an Implementation Commission**
 - Dedicated institutional body to monitor execution of major reforms.
2. **Simplify Regulatory Processes**
 - Reduce compliance burdens and improve state–taxpayer trust.
3. **Strengthen Bureaucratic Accountability**
 - Link outcomes to measurable performance indicators.
4. **Enhance Centre–State Coordination**
 - Align reform design with federal administrative realities.
5. **Invest in Administrative Capacity Building**
 - Training, digital process reforms, and professionalisation of governance systems.

Conclusion

India's development journey now hinges less on policy announcements and more on institutional effectiveness. Fiscal incentives, AI summits, and industrial strategies can create momentum, but transformation depends on governance quality.

A mature reform agenda must therefore prioritise implementation discipline, regulatory predictability, and competent public administration. In the long run, credibility is built not through appearances, but through outcomes.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Laffer Curve suggests that higher tax rates always increase tax revenue.
2. India's manufacturing share in GDP has remained relatively stable around 16–17% for decades.
3. The 1991 Budget reforms were introduced during a balance-of-payments crisis.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: A

Mains Question

Q2. "Fiscal incentives and technological ambition cannot substitute for administrative capacity." Examine this statement in the context of India's reform trajectory. (250 words)

PM MITRA PARKS (Mega Integrated Textile Region And Apparel Parks)

Source: PIB Delhi | Ministry of Textiles | Amrit Mahotsav

What Is In The News

The Government of India is **establishing PM MITRA Parks** to create **world-class textile infrastructure** and make India a **global hub for textiles and apparel manufacturing**.

About Pm Mitra Parks

PM MITRA stands for **Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel Parks**.

These are **large, integrated textile parks** designed to bring together the **entire textile value chain**—from raw material to finished products—at one location.

Number And Location of Parks

1. **Total Parks: 7**
2. **States Selected:**
 - Tamil Nadu
 - Telangana
 - Gujarat
 - Karnataka
 - Madhya Pradesh



- Uttar Pradesh
- Maharashtra

Key Objectives Of Pm Mitra Parks

1. To create **integrated textile manufacturing ecosystems**
2. To enhance **global competitiveness** of Indian textiles
3. To attract **large-scale domestic and foreign investment**
4. To generate **mass employment**, especially for women
5. To reduce logistics cost through **plug-and-play infrastructure**
6. To boost **textile exports** and value addition

Key Features

Integrated Value Chain

Each park will house:

1. Spinning
2. Weaving
3. Processing
4. Dyeing
5. Printing
6. Garmenting
7. Ancillary and support services

World-Class Infrastructure

1. Plug-and-play manufacturing units
2. Common Processing Centres
3. Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETP)
4. Logistics and warehousing facilities
5. Reliable power and water supply

Area and Scale

1. Each park to be developed over **1,000+ acres**
2. Designed to host **large textile and apparel units**

Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) Model

1. Each park will be implemented through an **SPV**
2. Joint participation of **Central and State Governments**

Financial Support

1. **₹500 crore** support for each Greenfield park
2. **₹200 crore** support for Brownfield park
3. Additional incentives from respective State Governments

Implementing Ministry

1. **Ministry of Textiles**

Economic & Strategic Significance

1. Strengthens **Make in India** and **Atmanirbhar Bharat**
2. Helps India compete with **China, Vietnam, Bangladesh**
3. Promotes **export-led growth**
4. Supports **MSMEs and large manufacturers**

5. Encourages **sustainable and compliant textile production**

Link With National Initiatives

1. PM Gati Shakti
2. Make in India
3. Viksit Bharat 2047
4. National Technical Textiles Mission
5. Sustainability and ESG goals

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to PM MITRA Parks, consider the following statements:

1. PM MITRA stands for Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel Parks.
2. Each park aims to integrate the entire textile value chain at a single location.
3. The scheme is implemented by 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

Correct Answer

(a) 1 and 2 only

Procurement Of Minor Forest Produce Dips In 2024–25

Source: The Hindu

What In News

Procurement of Minor Forest Produce at Minimum Support Price dipped sharply in 2024–25, with Parliament data showing over **92% decline** compared to the previous year.

Major Key Facts From The Image

1. **MFP procurement fell by over 92%** in 2024–25 compared to 2023–24.
2. Data was **tabled in Parliament** in response to a starred question.
3. Information was provided by the **Tribal Affairs Minister**.
4. Till date, **₹319.65 crore** released to States for MFP procurement at MSP.
5. Issue relates to implementation of **MSP for Minor Forest Produce**.



Static Concept

Minor Forest Produce (MFP)

1. Includes **non-timber forest products** such as:
 - Tendu leaves
 - Bamboo

- Mahua flowers
 - Lac, honey, tamarind
 - 2. Critical for **livelihood of tribal communities**.
- MSP for MFP Scheme**
1. Launched under **Van Dhan Yojana** framework.
 2. Implemented by:
 - **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**
 - Through **TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation)**
 3. Objectives:
 - Ensure **fair prices** to tribal gatherers
 - Prevent **distress sales**
 - Strengthen **tribal economy**
- Procurement Mechanism**
1. MSP declared by **Government of India**.
 2. Procurement carried out by:
 - State agencies
 - Tribal cooperatives
 3. Central government provides **financial assistance to States**.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Minor Forest Produce (MFP) in India, consider the following statements:

1. Minor Forest Produce includes non-timber forest products collected mainly by tribal communities.
2. MSP for MFP is implemented through the Ministry of Tribal Affairs with support of TRIFED.
3. States are not involved in procurement of MFP once MSP is declared by the Centre.

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, GCC Nations Sign Terms of Reference for FTA

Source: The Hindu

What In News

India and GCC nations signed the Terms of Reference for FTA, marking the formal launch of negotiations to deepen trade, investment flows, and policy predictability.

Major Key Facts

1. India and **six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations** signed the **Terms of Reference (ToR)**.
2. ToR marks the **formal start of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations**.
3. GCC is among **India's largest merchandise trading partners**.
4. Trade with GCC **exceeds India's trade with the EU and the US** individually.
5. FTA aims to improve **market access, investment flows, and policy stability**.



Static Concept

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

1. Regional political and economic grouping formed in **1981**.
2. Member countries:
 - **Bahrain**
 - **Kuwait**
 - **Oman**
 - **Qatar**
 - **Saudi Arabia**
 - **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**
3. Headquarters: **Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**.

Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

1. A trade pact aimed at:
 - Reducing or eliminating **tariffs**
 - Facilitating **services trade and investments**
 - Enhancing **regulatory cooperation**
2. India has FTAs / CEPAs with countries such as:
 - **UAE**
 - **Japan**
 - **South Korea**
 - **ASEAN**

Significance of India–GCC FTA

1. Boosts **energy security** and trade diversification.
2. Supports India's **Act West** and **trade diplomacy**.
3. Enhances opportunities for:
 - **Indian diaspora**
 - **MSMEs**
 - **Manufacturing and services exports**.



Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the India–GCC Free Trade Agreement, consider the following statements:

3. The signing of Terms of Reference formally initiates negotiations for an FTA.
4. Gulf Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary –

Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary has recorded **over five lakh birds belonging to nearly 200 species** in its latest census, marking a **21% increase** from 4.12 lakh birds in 2024, mainly due to reduced human activity, absence of boating, and minimal noise pollution over the past two years.

RBI Raises Loan Limits for Small Businesses, Backs REIT Loans

Source: Reuters

What In News



The **RBI raised loan limits for small businesses** and allowed banks to lend to **REITs**, aiming to boost credit flow, strengthen last-mile lending, and support the real estate sector.

Major Key Facts

1. RBI **doubled the limit on collateral-free loans** for small enterprises.
2. Limit increased from **₹1 million to ₹2 million**.
3. Banks allowed to lend to **Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)**.
4. Measures announced in **Governor Sanjay Malhotra's policy address**.
5. Lending to REITs subject to **prudential safeguards**.

Static Concept

Collateral-Free Loans to MSMEs

1. Provided mainly under **priority sector lending** norms.
2. Objective:
 - Improve **credit access** for small businesses
 - Strengthen **financial inclusion**
3. Helps:
 - Micro and small enterprises
 - First-time borrowers
4. Reduces dependence on **informal credit sources**.

Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)

1. Investment vehicles pooling funds to invest in **income-generating real estate**.
2. Regulated by **SEBI** in India.
3. Benefits:
 - Improves **liquidity** in real estate sector
 - Enables **retail investor participation**
4. Bank lending allowed with **risk management norms**.

Role of RBI

1. Regulates **credit policy** to balance growth and financial stability.
2. Uses:
 - Prudential norms
 - Sector-specific credit measures
3. Aims to strengthen **last-mile credit delivery**.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to recent RBI measures, consider the following statements:

1. RBI has increased the limit for collateral-free loans to small enterprises.
2. Real Estate Investment Trusts in India are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India.
3. Allowing banks to lend to REITs can improve credit flow to the real estate sector.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

RBI Holds Policy Rate, FY26 Inflation Outlook Seen at 2.1%

Source: The hindu

What In News

The **RBI held the policy rate unchanged** and projected **FY26 inflation at 2.1%**, citing strong macroeconomic fundamentals and upward revision in GDP growth outlook.

Major Key Facts From The Image

1. RBI's **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** kept the **repo rate unchanged at 5.25%**.
2. **Policy stance remains neutral**, indicating data-dependent decisions.
3. **FY26 inflation outlook projected at 2.1%**, within comfort range.
4. **Q1FY27 and Q2 GDP growth projections revised upward** to 6.9% and 7%.
5. RBI committed to **proactive liquidity management** to support credit and growth.

Static Concept

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

1. Statutory body under the **RBI Act, 1934 (amended in 2016)**.
2. Composition:
 - 3 members from RBI
 - 3 external members appointed by Government of India
3. Primary objective:
 - Maintain **price stability** while supporting growth.

Repo Rate

1. Interest rate at which RBI **lends short-term funds to commercial banks**.
2. Used as a key tool to:
 - Control **inflation**
 - Influence **credit flow and demand**.

Inflation Targeting Framework

1. CPI inflation target: **4% ± 2%**.
2. RBI aims to anchor **inflation expectations** while ensuring macroeconomic stability.

Liquidity Management

1. RBI uses tools such as:
 - Open Market Operations (OMOs)
 - Standing Deposit Facility (SDF)
 - Variable Rate Repo (VRR)
2. Ensures smooth **monetary policy transmission**.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to RBI's Monetary Policy Framework, consider the following statements:

1. The Monetary Policy Committee decides the policy repo rate.
2. RBI's inflation target is 4% with a tolerance band of ±2%.
3. A neutral policy stance implies that RBI is committed only to tightening monetary policy.

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

Crop Diversification Programmes

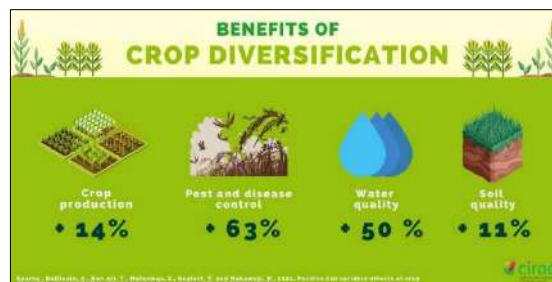
Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB)

What in News

Crop Diversification Programmes are being implemented through Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) to promote sustainable agriculture, reduce mono-cropping and enhance farmers' income.

Major Key Facts

1. Implemented by **Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW)**.
2. Supported under **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)**.
3. Focus on shifting from **water-intensive crops** to pulses, oilseeds, millets.
4. Aims at **improving soil health and climate resilience**.
5. Encourages adoption of **modern agricultural practices** and crop rotation.



Static Concept

Crop Diversification –

1. Meaning: Shift from single dominant crop to multiple crops.
2. Objective:
 - Reduce **agricultural risk**
 - Improve **soil fertility**
 - Increase **farmer income**
 - Promote **nutritional security**

Why Needed in India?

1. Over-dependence on rice–wheat system
2. Groundwater depletion (Punjab, Haryana)
3. Climate change vulnerability
4. MSP distortions

Key Government Schemes Linked

1. **RKVY (2007)** – Flexible state-led agriculture reforms
2. **NFSM** – National Food Security Mission
3. **PMKSY** – Irrigation efficiency
4. **NMSA** – Climate-resilient agriculture

Economic Survey Insight

1. Diversification improves **Total Factor Productivity (TFP)**.
2. Enhances resilience against market and climate shocks.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Crop Diversification Programmes in India, consider the following statements:

1. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) provides flexibility to states in agricultural planning.
2. Crop diversification helps in reducing groundwater stress in mono-cropping regions.
3. National Food Security Mission (NFSM) primarily promotes plantation crops like tea and coffee.

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

Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions Discovered in Egypt Shed Light on Ancient Trade Links

Source: The Hindu

What in News

Tamil Brahmi inscriptions discovered in Egypt shed light on ancient trade links between Tamilakam and the Roman Empire during the 1st–3rd centuries CE.

Major Key Facts

1. Nearly **30 inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi, Prakrit and Sanskrit** found in Egypt.
2. Located in **Valley of the Kings (Theban Necropolis)**.
3. Belong to the **1st–3rd centuries CE**.
4. Indicate trade links between **Tamilakam and Roman Empire**.
5. Discovered during 2024–25 research by international scholars.



Static Concept

Tamil Brahmi Script

1. Early form of **Brahmi script** adapted for Tamil language.
2. Period: **3rd century BCE onwards**.
3. Found in:
 - Tamil Nadu cave inscriptions
 - Pottery inscriptions
 - Trade centres
4. Evidence of **early literacy and mercantile networks**.

Indo-Roman Trade (1st–3rd Century CE)

1. Mentioned in:
 - **Periplus of the Erythraean Sea**

- Roman records
- 2. Key Tamil ports:
 - Muziris
 - Arikamedu
 - Korkai
- 3. Exported:
 - Spices, pearls, textiles, ivory
- 4. Imported:
 - Gold coins, wine, glassware

Valley of the Kings (Egypt)

- Located on west bank of **Nile River** near Luxor.
- Burial site of **New Kingdom Pharaohs**.
- Shows presence of **foreign visitors and traders**.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Tamil Brahmi inscriptions and Indo-Roman trade, consider the following statements:

1. Tamil Brahmi is an early adaptation of the Brahmi script for the Tamil language.
2. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea provides evidence of Indo-Roman trade.
3. The Valley of the Kings is located in Mesopotamia.

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

No Reduction in States' Share in Tax Devolution, FM Asserts in Lok Sabha

Source: The Hindu

What in News

The Finance Minister asserted in Lok Sabha that there is no reduction in States' share in tax devolution, clarifying transfers are based on Finance Commission recommendations.

Major Key Facts

1. Finance Minister clarified that **41% of divisible tax pool** is devolved to States.
2. Tax devolution follows recommendations of the **Finance Commission**.
3. Total resources transferred to States include:
 - Tax devolution
 - Finance Commission grants
 - Centrally Sponsored Schemes
4. Opposition alleged reduction in effective transfers.



5. Finance Minister cited constitutional provisions governing distribution.

Static Concept**Tax Devolution – Constitutional Basis**

1. **Article 270** – Distribution of taxes between Centre and States.
2. **Article 280** – Establishment of Finance Commission.
3. **Article 275** – Grants-in-aid to States.

Finance Commission

1. Constitutional body (every 5 years).
2. Recommends:
 - Share of States in central taxes
 - Principles governing grants-in-aid
3. **15th Finance Commission** recommended:
 - **41% vertical devolution** to States (2021–26).

Divisible Pool

1. Consists of:
 - Taxes shared between Centre & States (except cess & surcharge).
2. Cess and surcharge:
 - Not shareable with States (important Prelims trap).

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to tax devolution in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Finance Commission is constituted under Article 280 of the Constitution.
2. Cess and surcharge are part of the divisible pool shared with States.
3. The current vertical devolution to States is 41% of the divisible pool as per the 15th Finance Commission.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: A

Public Financial Management System (PFMS) –

The **Minister of State for Finance** recently informed the **Rajya Sabha** regarding the

About PFMS

1. **PFMS** is a **web-based online platform** designed for **fund management and electronic payments** to implementing agencies and beneficiaries.
2. It serves as a **centralised transaction system**, offering **end-to-end financial management services** to various stakeholders.
3. Developed and implemented by the **Controller General of Accounts (CGA)** under the **Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance**.
4. Launched in **2009**.

Objective

To strengthen public financial management in India by ensuring:

1. Efficient fund flow mechanisms
2. Transparent payment systems
3. Integrated payment-cum-accounting network

Key Features of PFMS

Fund Tracking

1. Monitors funds released under **all Government of India schemes**.
2. Provides **real-time expenditure reporting** at different levels of programme implementation.

Unified Platform

1. Mandated as the **single platform** for:
 - Government payments
 - Accounting and reconciliation
 - Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) transactions

Cash Management Modules

Introduced to improve fund utilisation and monitoring:

1. **Single Nodal Agency (SNA)**
2. **Treasury Single Account (TSA)**
3. **Central Nodal Agency (CNA)**
4. **SNA SPARSH (Samyochit Pranali Ekikrit Shighra Hastantaran)**

Grievance Redressal

1. Incorporates a **Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system**.
2. Strengthens grievance handling for PFMS users and beneficiaries.

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB)



Govt. Unveils New CPI Series; Retail Inflation in Jan. at 2.75%

Source: The Hindu

What in News

The government unveiled a new CPI series with 2024 as base year, placing retail inflation in January 2026 at 2.75% based on updated consumption patterns.

Major Key Facts from the Image

1. New **CPI series base year updated to 2024** (earlier 2012).
2. Retail inflation for January 2026 recorded at **2.75%**.
3. Total items increased to **358 (from 299)**.
4. Food & beverages weight reduced to **36.75% (from 45.86%)**.
5. Expanded coverage:
 - Rural markets: **1,465 (from 1,181)**
 - Urban markets: **1,395 (from 1,114)**

Static Concept (Authentic – MoSPI / RBI Framework)

Consumer Price Index (CPI)

- Released by: **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.
- Measures: **Retail inflation**.
- Based on:
 - **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES)**.
- CPI = Weighted average of prices of goods & services consumed by households.

Base Year Concept

- Base year is benchmark year for comparison.
- Revised periodically to reflect:
 - Changing consumption patterns
 - Structural economic shifts
- Current base year: **2024**.

Types of Inflation Indices

- CPI** – Retail level, used by RBI for monetary policy.
- WPI** – Wholesale level.
- GDP Deflator** – Broadest inflation measure.

RBI Inflation Target

- Target: **4% ± 2%** (2–6% range).
- Under **Monetary Policy Framework Agreement (2016)**.



Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), consider the following statements:

- CPI is released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- RBI uses CPI as the primary indicator for monetary policy decisions.
- Wholesale Price Index (WPI) includes services in its basket.

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

AgriStack – Latest News

The **finance minister** recently announced the launch of **Bharat-VISTAAR**, a multilingual AI-based tool that will integrate **AgriStack portals** and the **ICAR package of agricultural practices** with artificial intelligence systems.

About AgriStack

- AgriStack** is a **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** designed for the agriculture sector.
- It functions under the **Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM)**.
- The initiative was approved by the **Union Cabinet in September 2024**.

Core Components Of AgriStack

AgriStack consists of three key foundational registries, created and maintained by **State Governments/Union Territories**:

Farmer Registry

1. Provides farmers with a **unique digital identity (Farmer ID)**.
2. The Farmer ID is dynamically linked to:
 - State land records
 - Livestock ownership details
 - Crops sown
 - Demographic and family information
 - Government schemes and benefits availed

Target: Creation of digital identities for **11 crore farmers**.

1. The Centre provides financial assistance to states under the **Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment** scheme to develop these registries.
2. The government aims to complete dynamic **Records of Rights (RoR)** synchronisation by **March 2027** (March 2028 for North Eastern States).

Advantage: Enables farmers to digitally access government services and benefits.

Crop Sown Registry

1. Contains detailed information on crops cultivated by farmers.
2. Data is collected through **mobile-based Digital Crop Surveys** conducted each agricultural season.
3. A pilot Digital Crop Survey was implemented in **11 states during 2023–24** to develop this registry.

Geo-referenced Village Maps

1. Includes geographic mapping of land records with precise **latitude and longitude coordinates**.
2. Target: Coverage of **all villages by March 2027**.

Source: Indian Express (IE)

PM to Inaugurate India AI Impact Expo 2026

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Delhi, The Hindu

What In News

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate India AI Impact Expo 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, alongside the AI Impact Summit, featuring global participation and focusing on AI innovation and governance.

Major Key Facts

1. India AI Impact Expo 2026 will be held on 16th February at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
2. The Expo is part of the larger AI Impact Summit 2026.
3. Over 300 curated exhibitions across themes — *People, Planet and Progress*.
4. Participation from around 20 countries and global tech leaders.
5. Focus on AI collaboration, innovation, startups, research institutions and digital public infrastructure.

Static Concept

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Definition: AI refers to machine-based systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence.

India's AI Ecosystem

National Strategy for AI (2018)

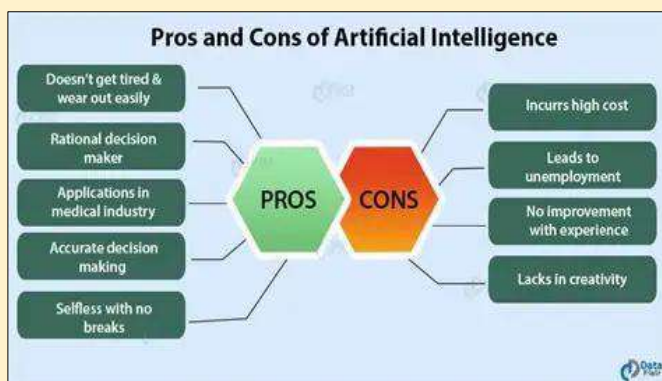
Released by NITI Aayog — Focus on “AI for All”

IndiaAI Mission (Ministry of Electronics & IT)

1. Strengthening compute capacity
2. Supporting AI startups
3. Responsible AI frameworks

Relevance for India

1. AI for agriculture, healthcare, education
2. Boost to startups and innovation ecosystem
3. Enhancing global tech diplomacy



Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Artificial Intelligence initiatives in India, consider the following statements:

1. The National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence was released by NITI Aayog.
2. IndiaAI Mission is implemented under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
3. Digital Public Infrastructure has no role in scaling AI-based governance systems.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: B

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 — Correct
2. Statement 2 — Correct
3. Statement 3 — Incorrect ✗ (DPI supports AI governance and scaling)

Cabinet Approves Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 to Mobilize Venture Capital for India's Startup Ecosystem

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Delhi

What In News

Union Cabinet approved Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 with ₹10,000 crore corpus to mobilize venture capital for deep tech, manufacturing and early-stage startups. (25 words)

Major Key Facts

₹10,000 crore corpus approved under Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 (FFS 2.0).

1. Aimed at mobilizing venture capital for deep tech and innovation-driven startups.
2. Focus on early-stage and growth-stage startups.
3. Managed by SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India).
4. Supports sectors like AI, robotics, clean energy, biotech, and advanced manufacturing.

Static Concept

Startup India Initiative

Launched:

16 January 2016

Objective:

1. Promote entrepreneurship
2. Build a strong startup ecosystem
3. Encourage innovation and job creation

Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 (2026)

1. Corpus: ₹10,000 crore
2. Focus: Deep tech, AI, robotics, manufacturing
3. Encourages domestic capital formation
4. Boosts Atmanirbhar Bharat and innovation ecosystem

Prelims Practice Question**Q1. With reference to Startup India Fund of Funds (FFS), consider the following statements:**

1. It is implemented through SIDBI.
2. The government directly invests in startups under this scheme.
3. It operates through SEBI-registered Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs).

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: B**Explanation:**

1. Statement 1 — Correct ✓
2. Statement 2 — Incorrect ✗ (Government invests via AIFs, not directly)
3. Statement 3 — Correct ✓

AI-powered Bharat-VISTAAR All Set to Be Launched Today**Source: The Hindu****What In News**

Centre to launch Bharat-VISTAAR, an AI-powered multilingual Virtual Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources, offering real-time farm advisories through dial 155261.

Major Key Facts in Image

1. Bharat-VISTAAR is an AI-powered Virtual Integrated System for farmers.
2. It provides real-time agricultural advisories via phone by dialing 155261.
3. Covers crop planning, pest control, weather forecasts, and market insights.
4. Developed by CENRE (Centre for e-Governance/related government body as per report).
5. Supports multilingual interaction for regional language access.

Static Concept**Digital Agriculture in India**

Key Ministry

Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare

Relevant Schemes Linked to Farmers (Mentioned in Article)**PM-KISAN**

1. Direct income support to farmers
2. ₹6,000 per year in three installments

PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

1. Crop insurance scheme
2. Covers crop loss due to natural calamities

PM Jan Dhan Yojana

1. Financial inclusion program
2. Bank accounts for direct benefit transfer

Ayushman Bharat

1. Health insurance coverage for vulnerable sections

Kisan Credit Card (KCC)

1. Credit facility for farmers

AI in Agriculture

1. Precision farming
2. Pest prediction models
3. Weather-based advisories
4. Market price intelligence
5. Supply chain optimization

Important Exam Angle

1. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) integration
2. AI for inclusive growth
3. Use of multilingual AI systems for rural outreach
4. Governance through technology

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to AI-based initiatives in agriculture, consider the following statements:

1. Bharat-VISTAAR provides agricultural advisories through a toll-free number.
2. PM-KISAN provides crop insurance coverage to farmers.
3. PM Fasal Bima Yojana is related to crop insurance.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: B

Index of Eight Core Industries – January 2026

Source: PIB | Ministry of Commerce & Industry

What In News

1. The **Combined Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)** increased by **4.0% (provisional)** in January 2026 compared to January 2025.

- Final growth for December 2025: **4.7%**.
- Cumulative growth (April–January 2025–26): **2.8%**.
- Core industries constitute **40.27% weight in IIP**.

Sector-Wise Performance

Sector	Growth (%)
Coal	+10.3%
Crude Oil	-8.98%
Natural Gas	-5.0%
Refinery Products	+28.04%
Fertilizers	+3.7%
Steel	+9.9%
Cement	+10.7%
Electricity	+3.8%

Static Concept

What is Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)?

- Measures performance of 8 key infrastructure industries.
- Base Year: **2011–12**
- Compiled by: **Office of Economic Adviser**
- Released monthly.
- Serves as a leading indicator for **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**.



Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Index of Eight Core Industries, consider the following statements:

- It accounts for more than 40% weight in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- It includes coal, crude oil, and electricity among its components.
- It is released annually by the Reserve Bank of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme with ₹1.91 Lakh Crore Outlay Drives Strong Industry Participation Across 14 Strategic Sectors

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB), Delhi

What In News

The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme with ₹1.91 lakh crore outlay has driven investments, production, exports, and employment across 14 strategic sectors, strengthening India's manufacturing ecosystem. (28 words)

Major Key Facts

1. **Total Outlay:** ₹1.91 lakh crore under PLI Scheme.
2. Covers **14 strategic sectors** including electronics, pharma, automobiles, telecom, textiles, and solar PV.
3. **Investment Approved:** ₹1.46 lakh crore (approx.).
4. **Production Generated:** ₹12.50 lakh crore (approx.).
5. **Employment Created:** Over 13 lakh direct and indirect jobs.



Static Concept

Launch & Objective

1. Launched: **2020**
2. Objective:
 - Boost domestic manufacturing
 - Reduce import dependence
 - Increase exports
 - Attract global investments
 - Integrate India into global value chains

Core Features

1. Incentives linked to **incremental sales/production**
2. Performance-based financial incentives
3. Sector-specific eligibility criteria
4. Time-bound scheme (generally 5 years)

Key Sectors

Economic Significance

1. Promotes:
 - Import substitution
 - Export competitiveness
 - Scale manufacturing
 - Employment generation
2. Supports:
 - Make in India



- Atmanirbhar Bharat
- Global value chain integration

Institutional Framework

1. Nodal Ministry: Concerned line ministry for each sector
2. Coordinating Ministry: **Ministry of Commerce & Industry (DPIIT)**
3. Monitoring: Inter-ministerial committees

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. The PLI Scheme provides incentives based on incremental production or sales.
2. The scheme aims to reduce import dependence and promote exports.
3. The PLI Scheme applies only to the electronics manufacturing sector.

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

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 — ✓ Correct (Performance-linked incentives)
2. Statement 2 — ✓ Correct (Import substitution & exports focus)
3. Statement 3 — ✗ Incorrect (Covers 14 sectors, not just electronics)

Merchandise Trade Indices – Latest News

The **Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S)** has revised the **base year of the Merchandise Trade Indices to FY 2022–23**, updating it from FY 2012–13 to better capture current trade patterns and global dynamics.

About the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics Merchandise Trade Indices

1. Compiled and released by **DGCI&S**, under the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.
2. Designed to measure changes in the **unit values (prices)** of India's exports and imports over time.

Base Year Revision

1. Updated from **FY 2012–13 to FY 2022–23**.

Coverage of the Revised Series

The updated indices provide:

1. **Monthly, Quarterly, and Annual Indices**, including:
 - Export Unit Value Index
 - Import Unit Value Index
2. **Principal Commodity (PC)-wise Trade Indices** (Export and Import).
3. **Standard International Trade Classification (SITC)-wise Trade Indices**.
4. **Broad Economic Categories (BEC)-wise Trade Indices**.

5. **Bilateral and Region-wise Trade Indices** for India's top 20 export and import partner countries.
6. **Terms of Trade Indicators**, including:
 - Gross Terms of Trade
 - Net Terms of Trade
 - Income Terms of Trade

Source: PIB

New GDP Data Set to Capture Economy More Accurately

Source: The Hindu

What In News

India will release a new series of national accounts with updated base year 2022–23, improved methodologies, and expanded data sources to enhance GDP accuracy.
(25 words)

Major Key Facts

1. New national accounts series to be released with **base year shifted to 2022–23**.
2. Incorporates improved methodologies and new data sources including **GST data**.
3. More accurate measurement of **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** and **Gross Value Added (GVA)**.
4. Expands coverage of private corporate sector and household data.
5. Includes better estimation of value added by government and services sectors.



Static Concept– Gdp & National Accounts

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

1. Total monetary value of all final goods and services produced within a country during a given period.
2. Measured at:
 - Market Prices
 - Constant Prices (Real GDP)
3. Indicates economic growth.

Gross Value Added (GVA)

1. $GVA = \text{Value of Output} - \text{Intermediate Consumption}$
2. Sector-wise contribution to economy
3. $GDP = GVA + \text{Taxes on products} - \text{Subsidies on products}$

Base Year Concept

1. Base year is used to compare economic growth over time.
2. It should reflect:
 - Current production structure
 - Latest price trends
3. India periodically revises base year (e.g., 2004–05 → 2011–12 → 2022–23).

Prelims

Q1. With reference to Indian economy, consider the following statements: (2015)

1. The rate of growth of Real Gross Domestic Product has steadily increased in the last decade.
2. The Gross Domestic Product at market prices (in rupees) has steadily increased in the last decade.

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

Ans: (b)

Q2. A decrease in tax to GDP ratio of a country indicates which of the following? (2015)

1. Slowing economic growth rate
2. Less equitable distribution of national income

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q1. Define potential GDP and explain its determinants. What are the factors that have been inhibiting India from realizing its potential GDP? (2020)

Q2. Explain the difference between computing methodology of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) before the year 2015 and after the year 2015. (2021)

Textile Exporters Seek Restoration of RoDTEP

Source: The Hindu

What In News

Textile exporters have urged the government to restore RoDTEP rates after recent cuts impacted nearly 58% of cotton textile exports, raising concerns over competitiveness. (25 words)

Major Key Facts

1. Textile exporters claim **58% of cotton textile exports** are affected by RoDTEP rate cuts.
2. Cotton textile exports in 2024–25 stood at **\$11.03 billion**.
3. RoDTEP replaces earlier **MEIS (Merchandise Exports from India Scheme)**.
4. Rate revisions have created uncertainty in export pricing and competitiveness.
5. Exporters argue that duties were already factored into cost calculations before the rate cuts.

Static Concept – Rodtep Scheme

RoDTEP – Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products

1. Launched: **2021**
2. Replaced: **MEIS (WTO non-compliant)**
3. Objective:

- Refund embedded taxes and duties not refunded under any other mechanism
- Enhance export competitiveness

Why RoDTEP was Introduced

1. MEIS was challenged at WTO for being export subsidy.
2. India needed WTO-compliant scheme.
3. RoDTEP reimburses:
 - Central, State & local duties/taxes
 - Electricity duty
 - VAT on fuel used in transport, etc.

Key Features

1. Refund credited as transferable **duty credit scrips** (now electronic system).
2. Sector-specific rates notified by Government.
3. Operates through **customs portal (ICEGATE)**.

Importance for Textile Sector

1. Textiles are labour-intensive and export-oriented.
2. Helps maintain:
 - Global price competitiveness
 - Employment
 - Foreign exchange earnings

Textile Sector – Economic Significance

1. Contributes ~2–3% to India's GDP.
2. ~12% of export earnings (approximate range).
3. Major employment generator (especially women).

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the RoDTEP Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. RoDTEP replaced the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS).
2. RoDTEP aims to refund embedded taxes and duties not otherwise refunded to exporters.
3. RoDTEP was introduced after India lost a dispute at the World Trade Organization regarding export subsidies.

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

RAMP Programme – Latest News

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME), Government of India, recently convened the **fifth meeting of the National MSME Council in New Delhi** to review the progress of the **World Bank-supported RAMP Programme**.

About Raising & Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Programme

1. **Launched:** 2022
2. **Duration:** 2022–23 to 2026–27 (Five years)
3. **Implementing Ministry:** Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

4. Assistance: Supported by the World Bank**Aim**

To strengthen and accelerate the performance of India's MSME sector by improving institutional capacity, access to finance and markets, and sustainability practices.

Objectives of the RAMP Programme

1. Improve **access to markets and credit** for MSMEs.
2. Strengthen **institutional capacity and governance** at Central and State levels.
3. Enhance **Centre-State linkages and partnerships**.
4. Address the issue of **delayed payments** to MSMEs.
5. Promote **greening and sustainability** in MSME operations.

Key Features

1. The **National MSME Council** functions as the administrative and functional body for the programme.
2. Provides **grants to States** for preparing Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs).
3. Focuses on systemic reforms rather than only financial assistance.

Sub-Schemes under RAMP**MSME GIFT Scheme****MSME Green Investment and Financing for Transformation (GIFT)**

1. Supports MSMEs in adopting **green technologies**.
2. Offers **interest subvention** and **credit guarantee support**.

MSE SPICE Scheme**MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (SPICE)**

1. Promotes **circular economy projects**.
2. Provides **credit-linked subsidy**.
3. Supports the MSME sector's goal of contributing to **Net Zero by 2070**.

MSE ODR Scheme**MSE Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) Scheme**

1. Addresses **delayed payments** through digital platforms.
2. Integrates **IT tools and Artificial Intelligence** for dispute resolution.
3. A first-of-its-kind initiative in the MSME ecosystem.

Source: PIB

Statement-Based MCQ

Q1. With reference to the RAMP Programme, consider the following statements:

1. It was launched in 2022 with World Bank assistance.
2. It provides direct income support to MSME workers.
3. It aims to address delayed payment issues and promote greening of MSMEs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: B. 1 and 3 only

MISCELLANEOUS AND DEFENCE

Prime Minister Pays Homage to Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati ji

Source: The Hindu

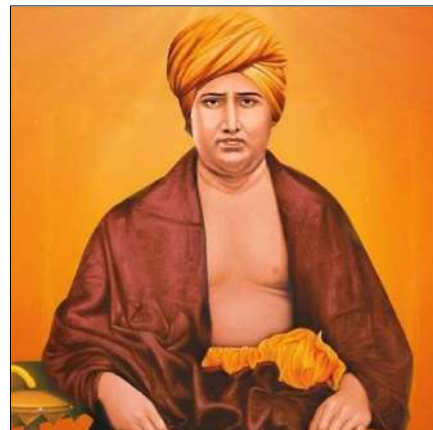
(Also referenced: Official Twitter/X statement by the Prime Minister)

What In News

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid homage to Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati on his birth anniversary, highlighting his contributions to social reform and Indian renaissance. (29 words)

Major Key Facts

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati ji on his birth anniversary.
2. He described Maharshi Dayanand as a major social reformer and revivalist of Indian thought.
3. The event and tribute were commemorated through an official PM tweet/X post.
4. Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati's ideology influenced the **Arya Samaj** movement.
5. Dayanand emphasized *Vedic values*, *social reform*, and anti-idolatry principles.



Static Concept

Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati

1. **Born:** 12 February 1824
2. **Died:** 30 October 1883
3. **Founder of:** Arya Samaj (1875)
4. **Philosophy:**
 - Return to **Vedas** as ultimate authority
 - Against caste discrimination, idol worship
 - Promoted **education**, social equality
5. **Key Works:**
 - **Satyarth Prakash (The Light of Truth)**
6. **Contributions to Indian Society:**
 - Critiqued superstitions and rituals
 - Advocated **women's rights**, widow remarriage
 - Supported **Hindi** as national language
7. **Arya Samaj Reform Agenda:**
 - *Shuddhi movement* (reconversion to Hinduism)
 - Promotion of **Vedic schools (Gurukuls)**
 - Social reform initiatives across India

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati, consider the following statements:

1. Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati was the founder of the Arya Samaj.
2. He supported idol worship as a central element of Vedic religion.

3. He authored *Satyarth Prakash*, emphasising return to Vedic principles.

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

Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana (KSVY) for the Promotion of Art and Culture in India

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB)

(Ministry of Culture, Government of India)

What In News

Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana (KSVY) supports artists and cultural organizations through financial assistance to preserve, promote and develop India's traditional arts and cultural heritage.

Major Key Facts

1. Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana (KSVY) is implemented by the **Ministry of Culture**.
2. It provides financial assistance to artists, cultural groups, and institutions.
3. It supports preservation of **traditional arts, crafts, literature, and cultural heritage**.
4. Financial allocations and expenditures are mentioned for multiple financial years.
5. The scheme includes components like fellowships, scholarships, cultural organizations support, and Troupes assistance.

Static Concept

Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana (KSVY)

Ministry:

Ministry of Culture, Government of India

Objective:

1. Preserve and promote India's rich cultural heritage
2. Support artists and cultural organizations
3. Ensure transmission of traditional knowledge to future generations

Major Components Under KSVY

Financial Assistance to Cultural Organizations with National Presence

1. Support for NGOs and institutions promoting art and culture

Cultural Function and Production Grant (CFPG)

1. Financial support for seminars, research, workshops, festivals, exhibitions

Scheme for Scholarships to Young Artists

1. Age group: 18–25 years
2. Supports training in classical art forms

Scheme for Fellowships

1. Junior & Senior Fellowships
2. Supports advanced research in cultural fields

Financial Assistance for Veteran Artists

1. Monthly pension to indigent senior artists

Static Links

1. Constitutional Provision: **Article 29 & 30** (Cultural and Educational Rights)
2. Ministry Involved: Ministry of Culture
3. Linked Schemes:
 - Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat
 - National Mission on Cultural Mapping

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana (KSVY), consider the following statements:

1. It is implemented by the Ministry of Culture.
2. It provides financial assistance only to State Governments.
3. It includes scholarship and fellowship components for artists.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: B

PRASHAD Scheme –

The Union Civil Aviation Minister recently announced that the Central Government is preparing plans to further develop tourist destinations around prominent temples in **Andhra Pradesh** under the **PRASHAD Scheme**. The initiative aims to strengthen tourism infrastructure and enhance the overall experience for pilgrims visiting these sacred sites.

About PRASHAD Scheme

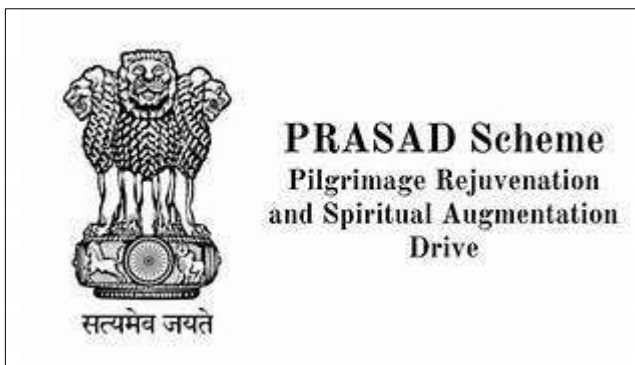
1. **Full Form:** Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD).
2. **Launched:** 2014–15.
3. **Ministry:** Ministry of Tourism.
4. **Type:** Central Sector Scheme.

Objectives

1. Integrated development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations.
2. Development of quality tourism infrastructure to provide a better experience for pilgrims and visitors.
3. Promotion of spiritual tourism in a sustainable and planned manner.

Key Features

1. Financial assistance is provided to State Governments and Union Territory Administrations for infrastructure development.
2. The Central Government provides **100% funding** for approved public sector projects.



3. Encourages voluntary contributions through **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** and **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)**.
4. A dedicated **Mission Directorate** has been established by the Ministry of Tourism for effective implementation.
5. The Mission Directorate identifies projects and coordinates with States/UTs and other stakeholders.
6. The scheme contributes to **employment generation**, skill development, and greater awareness of India's spiritual heritage.

Source: Media Reports

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the PRASHAD Scheme:

1. It was launched in 2014–15 under the Ministry of Tourism.
2. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with 60:40 funding between Centre and States.
3. The scheme aims at integrated development of pilgrimage and heritage destinations.

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. 1 and 3 only

(Statement 2 is incorrect because PRASHAD is a Central Sector Scheme with 100% Central funding.)

Agni-3 Missile – Latest News

India recently **successfully test-fired the intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) Agni-3** from the **Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha**, validating its operational readiness.

About Agni-3 Missile

1. **Agni-3** is an **indigenously developed Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM)**.
2. It is a **surface-to-surface missile** and forms a key component of India's **strategic deterrence**.
3. The missile has already been **inducted into the Indian armed forces** and is among the most **advanced and accurate** in its category.

Key Features

1. **Configuration:** Two-stage, **solid-fuelled** ballistic missile
2. **Payload Capacity:** Up to **1,500 kg**
3. **Range:** **3,000–3,500 km**
4. **Role:** Primarily designed as a **nuclear delivery system**
5. **Warhead Yield:** Estimated **200–300 kilotons**
6. **Dimensions:**
 - Length: **16.7 metres**
 - Diameter: **2 metres**
 - Launch Weight: **48,300 kg**



7. Guidance System:

- **Strapdown Inertial Navigation System (INS)** aided by **GPS**
- Accuracy of about **40 metres Circular Error Probable (CEP)**

8. Propulsion & Materials:

- First stage uses a **maraging steel motor case**
- Second stage uses a **carbon-fibre motor case**
- Both stages incorporate **thrust vector control** for enhanced stability and precision

Strategic Significance

1. With a **low CEP**, Agni-3 is considered **one of the most accurate strategic ballistic missiles** in its range class globally.
2. Strengthens India's **credible minimum deterrence** posture.
3. Enhances **second-strike capability** and regional strategic balance.

Source: Press Information Bureau (PIB)

INS Tarangini –

The sail training vessel **INS Tarangini** is among several Indian and foreign naval ships that reached **Visakhapatnam** for the upcoming **International Fleet Review** and the **MILAN exercise**, commencing on February 18.

About INS Tarangini

1. It is the **first Sail Training Ship (STS)** of the **Indian Navy**.
2. Constructed by **Goa Shipyard Limited**.
3. Commissioned on **11 November 1997**.
4. In **2003–04**, it became the **first Indian naval vessel to circumnavigate the globe**.

Technical Features

1. Classified as a **three-masted barque**:
 - Square-rigged on the **foremast and mainmast**
 - Fore-and-aft rigged on the **mizzen mast**
2. Capable of remaining at sea continuously for **over 20 days**, reflecting strong endurance.

Role and Training Objectives

1. Aims to instill core naval values such as **courage, camaraderie, and endurance** among officer cadets.
2. Provides hands-on exposure to natural sea conditions.
3. Training activities include:
 - Sailing operations
 - Setting and furling sails
 - Watch-keeping
 - Sail manoeuvres

Source: Deccan Chronicle (DC)



Indian Air Force conducts full dress rehearsal of Exercise 'Vayu Shakti'

Source: PTI

What In News

1. The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** conducted a full-dress rehearsal of **Exercise Vayu Shakti**.
2. Venue: **Pokhran Field Firing Range**, Thar Desert, Rajasthan.
3. Main event scheduled for **February 27**.

About Exercise Vayu Shakti

1. A **firepower demonstration exercise** of the IAF.
2. Showcases:
 - Day-to-dusk combat operations
 - Precision strikes
 - Joint air operations
3. Involves:
 - Fighter jets
 - Transport aircraft
 - Helicopters



Highlights Of Rehearsal

1. Simulated strikes on designated targets.
 2. Near-realistic combat scenarios.
 3. Sukhoi-30 MKI targeted enemy runway positions.
 4. MiG-29 struck simulated armoured/tank convoy.
- (Note: Some aircraft did not participate due to technical issues.)

Strategic Significance

1. Demonstrates IAF's:
 - Operational readiness
 - Precision strike capability
 - Multi-platform coordination
2. Acts as deterrence signalling.
3. Enhances combat preparedness.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Exercise 'Vayu Shakti' is associated with:

- a) Indian Army
- b) Indian Navy
- c) Indian Air Force
- d) Integrated Theatre Command

Answer: (c) Indian Air Force

Exercise Dharma Guardian – Latest Update

Recently, the joint military exercise ‘**Dharma Guardian**’ commenced at the Foreign Training Node, Chaubattia, in Uttarakhand.

About Exercise Dharma Guardian

1. Dharma Guardian is an **annual joint military exercise between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF)**.
2. It is conducted alternately in India and Japan.
3. The exercise represents an important component of growing **India–Japan defence cooperation**.
4. The current edition marks the **7th edition** of the exercise.

Objective

The primary objective is:

1. To strengthen military collaboration between the two countries.
2. To enhance interoperability and combined operational capabilities.
3. To prepare forces for conducting joint operations in a **semi-urban environment**.

Key Operational Activities Conducted

The exercise includes various tactical drills such as:

1. Establishment of a Temporary Operating Base (TOB).
2. Creation of an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) grid.
3. Setting up Mobile Vehicle Check Posts.
4. Conducting Cordon and Search Operations in hostile areas.
5. Execution of Heliborne Operations.
6. Carrying out House Intervention and Close-Quarter Battle drills.

These activities aim to improve coordination, joint planning, and combat readiness.

Other India–Japan Military Exercises

1. **Malabar Exercise (Naval)**
 - A multilateral naval exercise involving **India, Japan, the United States, and Australia**.
 - Focuses on maritime security and interoperability in the Indo-Pacific.
2. **JIMEX (Japan–India Maritime Exercise)**
 - A bilateral naval exercise between India and Japan.
3. **SHINYUU Maitri**
 - A joint exercise between the Indian Air Force and the Japan Air Self-Defense Force.

Source: PIB

IAF showcases combat prowess at Exercise Vayu Shakti in Pokhran

News

1. **Indian Air Force (IAF)** conducted **Exercise Vayu Shakti** at Pokhran Field Firing Range, Rajasthan. It showcased **day-to-night integrated operations**.
2. Display included:
 - Precision strikes on **simulated enemy targets**
 - Destruction of **terror camps, radar stations, fuel dumps, command centres**

- Use of **fighter jets, transport aircraft, helicopters**
- 3. Demonstration of **Operation Sindoor** missions.
- 4. Indigenous platforms like **LCA Tejas (Prachand)** featured prominently.
- 5. Show attended by President and senior defence leadership.



Static Info

Pokhran

1. Located in **Jaisalmer district, Rajasthan**
2. Site of:
 - **Pokhran-I (1974)** – “Smiling Buddha”
 - **Pokhran-II (1998)** nuclear tests
3. Used as a **field firing and weapons testing range**

Exercise Vayu Shakti

1. A major **IAF firepower demonstration exercise**
2. Conducted periodically
3. Displays:
 - Air-to-ground precision strikes
 - Beyond Visual Range (BVR) capability
 - Electronic warfare & suppression of enemy air defence (SEAD)

LCA Tejas

1. Indigenous Light Combat Aircraft
2. Developed by **HAL & DRDO**
3. 4.5 generation fighter
4. Key to India's air power modernization



Prelims MCQ

Q1. With reference to Exercise Vayu Shakti, consider the following statements:

1. It is conducted by the Indian Navy.
2. It is held at Pokhran Field Firing Range in Rajasthan.
3. It showcases integrated air-to-ground precision strike capability.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: ☒ B) 2 and 3 only

INS Anjadip, fourth Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft, was commissioned at Chennai,

News

INS Anjadip, fourth Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft, was commissioned at Chennai, strengthening India's coastal defence capabilities and enhancing indigenous naval preparedness against submarine threats in littoral waters.

Key Facts

1. Commissioned on **27 February 2026** at Chennai Port.
2. Ceremony presided over by **Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi**, Chief of the Naval Staff.
3. Hosted by **Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla**, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command.
4. Built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE)**, Kolkata and **Larsen & Toubro (L&T)**, Kattupalli.
5. Named after **Anjadip Island** (off Karwar coast).
6. Indigenous content: **Over 80%**.
7. Length: **77 metres**; Displacement: **~1,400 tonnes**.
8. Equipped with:
 - Modern **ASW suite**
 - Integrated **Combat Management System**
9. Designed as a **"Dolphin Hunter"** for shallow-water operations.
10. Placed under **Flag Officer Commanding Tamil Nadu & Puducherry Naval Area**.



Static Information

1. ASW-SWC project aims to replace **Abhay-class corvettes**.
2. Designed for **anti-submarine operations** in coastal/littoral waters.
3. Supports India's **Maritime Capability Perspective Plan (MCP)**.
4. Aligns with **Aatmanirbhar Bharat in Defence Manufacturing**.
5. Enhances coastal security post-**26/11 reforms**.
6. Indian Navy operates under **Integrated Maritime Theatre approach** (future restructuring).
7. GRSE is a **Ministry of Defence PSU shipyard**.

Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) project, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to strengthen India's coastal anti-submarine capability.

2. These vessels are primarily designed for blue-water deep ocean warfare.
3. The project promotes indigenous defence manufacturing.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: A) 1 and 3 only

Source: PIB Delhi, 27 Feb 2026, INS Anjadip commissioning.

Student Notes

જાણ IAS, IPS, જેવી પદવી યાત્રા કરી યાત્રા 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.

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