

Pramukh इबलददरइहव

30+ QUESTIONS IN PRELIMS



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MONTHLY **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

Practice Questions (Prelims+Mains)

Preface

PRAMUKH SAMEEKSHA MAGAZINE compilation attempts to encapsulate crucial analysis published in **The Hindu and The Indian Express** from **May 1 to May 31, 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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On May Day, a workforce in India without a floor

Source & Writer

- *The Hindu* (Opinion)
- Author: Rejimon Kuttappan

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS 2:** Welfare schemes, Labour policies
- **GS 3:** Inclusive growth, Employment, Informal sector

Introduction

India's labour force, especially in the informal sector, continues to face **low wages, weak protections, and unsafe working conditions**. The article highlights how despite reforms, workers still lack a **minimum "floor" of dignity and security**.

Key Issues

1. Absence of Effective Wage Floor

- Minimum wages exist on paper, but implementation gaps mean many workers earn below subsistence levels, especially in informal sectors.
- Example: Workers earning less than ₹20,000/month

2. Unsafe Working Conditions

- Frequent industrial accidents highlight weak enforcement of safety norms, exposing workers to life-threatening risks.
- Example: Factory accidents due to negligence

3. Large Informal Workforce

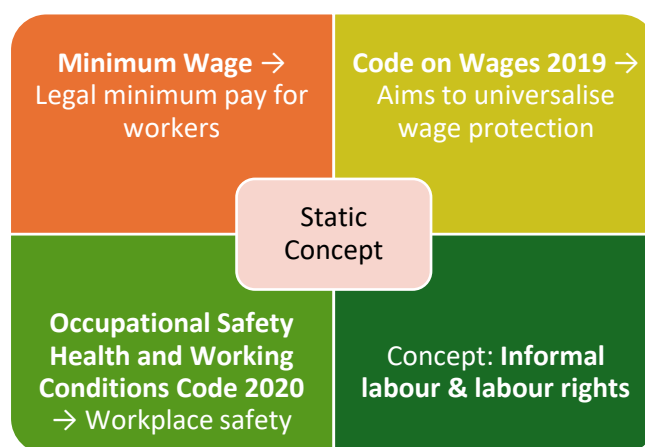
- A significant portion of workers remain outside formal protection systems, lacking job security, social benefits, and legal safeguards.
- Example: Gig and contract workers

4. Weak Enforcement of Labour Laws

- Inspections and compliance mechanisms are inadequate, allowing employers to bypass regulations without serious consequences.
- Example: Limited labour inspections

5. Gender and Wage Inequality

- Women workers often face lower wages, fewer opportunities, and additional vulnerabilities in informal employment.
- Example: Women in low-paid factory jobs



Global Practices

ILO Standards → Decent work and fair wages	
USA/UK	Minimum wage enforcement with strict penalties
Germany	Strong labour unions and protections
Nordic countries	High social security coverage

OECD	Focus on formalisation and worker welfare
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IN India – Committees / Recommendations

Second National Commission on Labour	Labour law reforms
NITI Aayog Reports	Formalisation of economy
Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)	Data-driven policy
Labour Codes (2019–2020)	Simplification of laws
Supreme Court Judgements	Worker protection emphasis

Way Forward

- Ensure Effective Wage Implementation**
 - Strengthen enforcement mechanisms so that minimum wages are actually paid, ensuring workers receive fair and adequate compensation across sectors.
- Improve Workplace Safety Standards**
 - Strictly implement safety regulations and conduct regular inspections to prevent industrial accidents and protect workers' lives and health.
- Formalise Informal Sector**
 - Encourage registration of workers and businesses to bring them under legal frameworks and extend social security benefits effectively.
- Strengthen Labour Inspections**
 - Use technology and independent monitoring systems to ensure transparency and accountability in labour law enforcement.
- Promote Social Security Coverage**
 - Expand schemes like insurance, pensions, and healthcare to cover informal and gig workers, ensuring long-term economic security.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. The Code on Wages, 2019 aims to universalise minimum wage coverage.
2. Informal workers in India are fully covered under social security laws.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. Despite labour law reforms, India's workforce continues to face issues of low wages and poor working conditions. Discuss the challenges and suggest measures to ensure dignified employment. (250 words)

India's sprint beyond the dairy red line to the Pacific

Source & Writer

- *The Hindu* (Opinion)
- Author: Ritu Srivastava

UPSC Syllabus Linkage (Brief)

- **GS 2:** International relations, Trade agreements
- **GS 3:** Economy, External sector, Agriculture (dairy sector)

Introduction

India's trade policy is evolving from cautious protectionism to **strategic engagement with global markets**. The article analyses India's Free Trade Agreement with New Zealand and how it balances domestic concerns like dairy protection with global economic integration.

Key Issues

1. Balancing Trade and Domestic Protection

- India must open markets for growth while safeguarding sensitive sectors like dairy, which supports millions of small farmers.
- Example: Concerns over dairy imports

2. Limited Market Access in Services

- While FTAs focus on goods, India's strength in services like IT and healthcare often gets limited access abroad.
- Example: Visa restrictions for professionals

3. Rules of Origin and Trade Integrity

- Weak enforcement may allow third countries to route goods through partner nations, affecting domestic industries.
- Example: Dumping through FTA partners

4. Adjustment Challenges for Farmers

- Trade liberalisation can expose small farmers to global competition, requiring support mechanisms for adaptation.
- Example: Dairy farmers facing price pressure

5. Strategic Shift to Indo-Pacific Region

- India is expanding trade ties in the Pacific to diversify markets and reduce dependence on traditional partners.
- Example: Engagement beyond ASEAN

Static Concept

- **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** → Reduces tariffs and promotes trade between countries
- India earlier stayed out of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership due to dairy concerns
- Concept: **Trade liberalisation vs domestic sector protection**

Global Practices

EU	Strong agricultural subsidies to protect farmers
USA	Combines FTAs with domestic support policies
Australia/New Zealand	Competitive dairy export systems
Japan	Protects sensitive sectors while engaging globally
WTO framework	Rules-based global trade system

IN India – Committees / Recommendations

NITI Aayog Trade Strategy	Balanced trade liberalisation
High-Level Advisory Group on Trade	Improve exports
Economic Survey	Focus on competitiveness
Agricultural Reforms Committees	Support farmers
Commerce Ministry Policies	FTA negotiations

Way Forward

1. Protect Sensitive Sectors

- Provide targeted subsidies and support to dairy farmers to help them remain competitive in the face of increasing global trade pressures.

2. Enhance Service Sector Access

- Negotiate better mobility and visa provisions to promote India's strength in services like IT, healthcare, and education globally.

3. Strengthen Trade Safeguards

- Ensure strict rules of origin and monitoring mechanisms to prevent misuse of FTAs and protect domestic industries from unfair competition.

4. Boost Export Competitiveness

- Invest in infrastructure, technology, and quality standards to improve India's ability to compete effectively in international markets.

5. Diversify Trade Partnerships

- Expand trade relations across regions like Indo-Pacific to reduce dependency and increase resilience in global supply chains.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements:

- Free Trade Agreements eliminate all trade barriers between countries.
- Rules of Origin are used to determine the source country of goods in trade agreements.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 2 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. India's trade policy is shifting towards strategic engagement while protecting domestic interests. Discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with Free Trade Agreements. (250 words)

Student Notes

India's global right linkages, costs and consequences

Source & Writer

1. *The Hindu* (Opinion)
2. Author: Salman Khurshid

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS 2:** International relations, Indian diaspora
- **GS 4:** Ethics in politics, Ideological debates
- **Essay:** Democracy, Global politics

Introduction

India's global engagement is not just about diplomacy but also about **ideological connections**. The article explores how India's perceived linkages with right-wing politics globally affect its **image, foreign relations, and democratic values**.

Key Issues

1. Ideological Linkages with Global Right

- India's association with right-wing groups globally can shape perceptions and influence diplomatic relationships.
- Example: Engagements with conservative political groups

2. Impact on Democratic Image

- Such alignments may raise concerns about India's commitment to liberal democratic values on the global stage.
- Example: Criticism in international forums

3. Diaspora as Political Instrument

- Indian diaspora networks are increasingly used for political outreach, sometimes creating both opportunities and controversies.
- Example: Overseas political mobilisations

4. Foreign Policy Complications

- Ideological positioning can complicate relations with countries having different political orientations or values.
- Example: Strained relations with liberal democracies

5. Domestic-Global Political Overlap

- Internal political narratives increasingly influence external relations, blurring the line between domestic and foreign policy.
- Example: Political messaging abroad

Static Concept

- **Soft Power** → Influence through culture, values, and diplomacy
- **Diaspora Diplomacy** → Role of Indian-origin communities abroad
- Concept: **Ideology** in **International Relations**

Global Practices

USA	Strong diaspora engagement but institutionalised diplomacy
EU	Focus on values-based diplomacy
China	Strategic, non-ideological foreign policy approach
UK	Balances diaspora and diplomacy carefully
Global norm	Separation of domestic politics and foreign policy

IN India – Committees / Recommendations

MEA Frameworks	Balanced foreign policy approach
Parliamentary Standing Committees	Oversight on foreign affairs
NITI Aayog Vision	Global engagement strategy
Diaspora Engagement Policies	Structured outreach
Think Tank Reports (ORF, IDSA)	Strategic autonomy

Way Forward

1. **Maintain Strategic Autonomy**

- India should avoid excessive ideological alignment and focus on independent decision-making based on national interest and global realities.

2. **Strengthen Democratic Credentials**

- Promote transparency, inclusiveness, and rule of law to reinforce India's image as a strong and credible democracy globally.

3. **Balance Diaspora Engagement**

- Use diaspora networks constructively while avoiding overt political mobilisation that may create diplomatic sensitivities or controversies.

4. **Separate Domestic Politics from Foreign Policy**

- Ensure that internal political narratives do not interfere with diplomatic engagements and international partnerships.

5. **Promote Value-Based Diplomacy**

- Engage globally with a focus on universal values like democracy, human rights, and cooperation to build long-term trust.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Soft power refers to the use of military strength to influence other countries.
2. Diaspora diplomacy can influence international relations.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 2 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. Ideological linkages in international relations can shape a country's global image and foreign policy outcomes. Discuss in the context of India. (250 words)

Student Notes

Learning outcomes and child health are linked

Source & Writer

- *The Hindu* (Opinion)
- Authors: Soumya Swaminathan & Drishthi Sharma

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS 2:** Health, Education, Welfare schemes
- **GS 3:** Human capital, Inclusive growth
- **Essay:** Education, Nutrition, Development

Introduction

Child development is not just about schooling; it depends equally on **nutrition, health, and early care**. The article highlights how improving **child health directly enhances learning outcomes**, making early childhood investment crucial for long-term human capital.

Key Issues

1. Fragmented Service Delivery

- Health, nutrition, and education services operate in silos, reducing effectiveness in addressing holistic child development needs.
- Example: Poor coordination between anganwadis and schools

2. Malnutrition Affecting Learning

- Undernutrition in early years directly impacts brain development, leading to poor cognitive skills and lower learning outcomes.
- Example: Stunting linked with low academic performance

3. Focus on Survival Over Learning

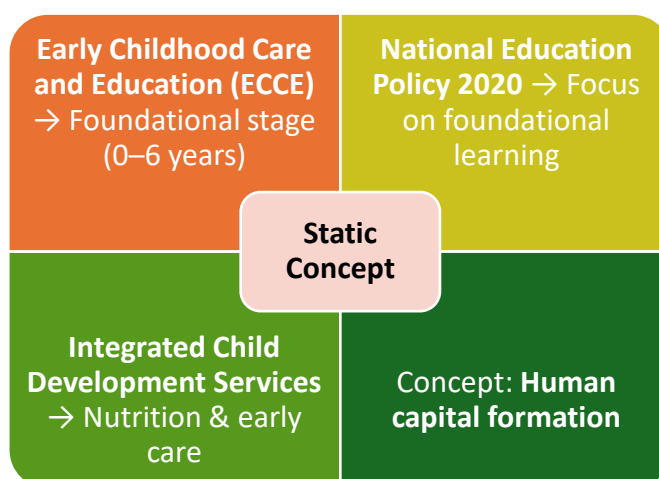
- Policies often prioritise child survival (health) over early learning, delaying cognitive development interventions.
- Example: Limited focus on pre-school education

4. Limited Support for Working Mothers

- Lack of childcare facilities reduces women's workforce participation and affects child development outcomes.
- Example: Absence of workplace crèches

5. Weak Monitoring of Outcomes

- Systems track inputs like food distribution but fail to measure actual developmental and learning outcomes effectively.
- Example: Lack of data on cognitive progress



Global Practices

Nordic countries	Integrated childcare and education systems
USA	Head Start programme for early childhood
WHO frameworks	Focus on nutrition and early stimulation

OECD nations	Strong ECCE systems
UNICEF	Holistic child development models

IN India – Committees / Recommendations

NEP 2020 (Kasturirangan Committee)	Foundational literacy focus
POSHAN Abhiyaan	Nutrition improvement
ICDS reforms	Strengthen anganwadis
NITI Aayog Reports	Human capital investment
National Health Policy 2017	Child health focus

Way Forward

- Integrate Health and Education Services**
 - Ensure coordination between anganwadis, schools, and health systems to provide holistic early childhood care and improve overall development outcomes.
- Strengthen Nutrition Programmes**
 - Improve quality and delivery of nutrition schemes to reduce stunting and enhance children's cognitive abilities and learning capacity.
- Expand Childcare Infrastructure**
 - Develop affordable childcare facilities to support working mothers and ensure better early childhood care and supervision.
- Focus on Learning Outcomes Early**
 - Introduce structured early learning programmes to build foundational skills before children enter formal schooling systems.
- Improve Data and Monitoring Systems**
 - Track not just inputs but outcomes like cognitive development and learning levels to ensure policy effectiveness.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Early childhood nutrition has no impact on cognitive development.
2. ICDS aims to provide nutrition and early childhood care services.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 2 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. Early childhood health and nutrition are critical for improving learning outcomes in India. Discuss the challenges and suggest measures for integrated child development. (250 words)

Doctors decide

Source & Writer

- *The Hindu* (Editorial)
- Writer: Not explicitly mentioned

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS 2:** Health, Governance, Rights of women
- **GS 4:** Ethics in medical decision-making
- **GS 1:** Social issues (women, minors, reproductive rights)

Introduction

The debate around abortion laws in India highlights a delicate balance between **medical advice, legal limits, and women's bodily autonomy**. Recent court observations have reignited discussion on whether decisions should be more medically driven rather than strictly legal.

Static Concept

1. **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971 (amended 2021)**
 - Allows abortion up to 20 weeks (24 weeks for special categories)
2. **Article 21** → Right to life includes reproductive choice
Supreme Court judgements have expanded **reproductive rights as part of dignity and privacy**

The **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act** provides the legal framework for abortion in India, specifying conditions, timelines, and safeguards.:

1. Gestational Limits:

- *Up to 20 weeks:* Allowed with the opinion of one Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP).
- *20–24 weeks:* Permitted for specific categories (rape survivors, minors, differently-abled women) with approval of two RMPs.
- *Beyond 24 weeks:* Allowed only in cases of severe fetal abnormalities, as certified by a State Medical Board.

2. Grounds for Abortion:

- Risk to the woman's life or serious physical/mental health issues
- Substantial fetal abnormalities
- Pregnancy due to rape
- Failure of contraception (applicable to both married and unmarried women)

3. Consent:

- Requires written consent of the woman
- Guardian consent needed if she is a minor or mentally ill

4. Confidentiality:

- Identity and details of the woman must be kept strictly confidential

5. Key Amendment:

- Extends abortion rights to unmarried women

6. Medical Board:

- State-appointed board evaluates cases of fetal abnormalities and late-term abortions (>24 weeks)

Key Issues

1. Legal vs Medical Decision Conflict

- Rigid legal limits (24 weeks) may prevent necessary abortions even when doctors consider continuation risky for mother or child.
- Example: Court cases involving late-stage pregnancies

2. Bodily Autonomy of Women

- Women's right to decide over their body can be restricted due to legal procedures, especially in sensitive cases like rape or minors.
- Example: Minor rape survivor case

3. Role of Doctors vs Courts

- Courts often intervene in abortion decisions, whereas medical experts may be better placed to assess risks and outcomes.
- Example: Judicial approval required in late-term abortions

4. Challenges in Cases of Minors

- In minor pregnancies, consent involves parents and courts, complicating timely decisions and increasing emotional and physical risks.
- Example: Parental approval delaying procedures

5. Ethical Dilemma in Late Abortions

- Balancing life of fetus vs health of mother creates moral and ethical dilemmas, especially in advanced stages of pregnancy.
- Example: 30-week pregnancy termination debate

Global Practices

UK	Abortion allowed up to 24 weeks with medical opinion
USA	State-specific laws, broader autonomy in some states
France	Recently expanded abortion rights
Canada	No strict gestational limit; medical decision-based

India – Committees / Recommendations

Law Commission	Expand reproductive rights
Supreme Court rulings	Recognise reproductive autonomy
Medical Boards	Assess late-term abortion cases
Health Ministry panels	Improve access to safe abortion
Women rights groups	Simplify legal procedures

Way Forward

1. Shift Toward Medical Decision-Based System

- Abortion decisions, especially in complex cases, should rely more on expert medical opinion rather than rigid legal timelines.

2. Expand Legal Gestational Limits Carefully

- Review and possibly extend abortion limits in exceptional cases while maintaining safeguards for ethical and medical considerations.

3. Strengthen Medical Boards

- Ensure quick, accessible, and well-equipped medical boards to handle urgent cases without forcing women into lengthy court procedures.

4. Protect Women's Autonomy

- Policies must prioritize women's consent and dignity, especially in cases involving trauma such as rape or health complications.

5. Awareness and Access to Safe Abortion

- Improve awareness, healthcare infrastructure, and accessibility so women can seek timely and safe abortion services without stigma.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding abortion laws in India:

1. The MTP Act allows abortion up to 24 weeks for all women without any conditions.
2. Medical boards are involved in approving certain late-term abortion cases.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 2 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. Abortion laws in India must balance legal safeguards with women's bodily autonomy. Discuss the challenges in current regulations and suggest reforms. (250 words)

Student Notes

Tackling takedowns

Source & Writer

- *The Hindu* (Editorial/Opinion)
- Writer: Not explicitly mentioned

UPSC Syllabus Linkage (Brief)

- **GS 2:** Fundamental Rights, Governance, Media freedom
- **GS 3:** Cyber security, Digital regulation
- **GS 4:** Ethics, Freedom vs Responsibility

Introduction

With the rise of digital platforms, regulating online content has become necessary. However, excessive use of takedown powers risks **curbing free speech and democratic values**, raising concerns about online censorship in India.

Key Issues

1. Overuse of Takedown Powers

- Government agencies increasingly use legal provisions to remove online content, sometimes going beyond reasonable restrictions on free speech.
- Example: Blocking social media posts

2. Threat to Free Expression

- Excessive censorship undermines democratic discourse and discourages independent journalism and public criticism.
- Example: Removal of dissenting content

3. Lack of Transparency

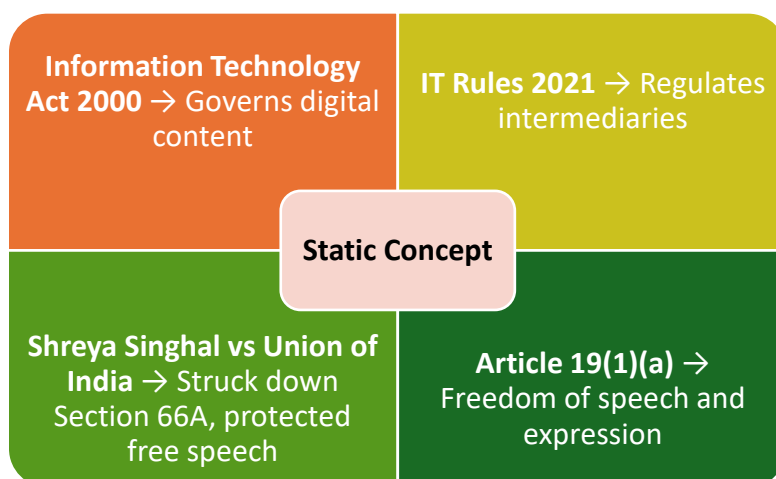
- Takedown decisions are often opaque, with limited clarity on reasons and processes, reducing accountability.
- Example: No clear explanation for content removal

4. Impact on Media and Creators

- Frequent content removals affect journalists, creators, and businesses, impacting livelihoods and innovation in the digital space.
- Example: Independent media accounts blocked

5. Legal and Constitutional Concerns

- Expanding executive powers may conflict with constitutional protections of free speech and judicial precedents.
- Example: Ignoring safeguards laid down by courts



Global Practices

EU	Digital Services Act ensures accountability and transparency
USA	Strong free speech protections under First Amendment

UK	Online Safety Act with regulatory oversight
Australia	Balanced approach to harmful content
Global trend	Judicial oversight in censorship

IN India – Committees / Recommendations

Law Commission Reports	Free speech protection
Parliamentary Committees on IT	Platform regulation
Supreme Court Judgements	Limit arbitrary censorship
MeitY Guidelines	Platform accountability
Civil society recommendations	Transparency and due process

Way Forward

- Ensure Judicial Oversight**
 - Takedown decisions should be subject to judicial review to prevent misuse and ensure protection of fundamental rights.
- Increase Transparency Mechanisms**
 - Authorities must clearly explain reasons for content removal and maintain publicly accessible records for accountability.
- Balance Regulation and Freedom**
 - Policies should carefully regulate harmful content without restricting legitimate expression and democratic debate.
- Strengthen Due Process**
 - Provide notice, hearing, and appeal mechanisms to affected users before removing content to ensure fairness.
- Promote Platform Responsibility**
 - Digital platforms should adopt fair moderation policies aligned with legal standards and respect for user rights.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Section 66A of the IT Act is still in force in India.
2. Freedom of speech under Article 19(1)(a) is subject to reasonable restrictions.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 2 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. Regulation of online content must balance free speech and state control. Discuss the challenges of content takedown mechanisms in India and suggest reforms. (250 words)

A round of elections that signals structural dominance

Source & Writer

- *The Hindu* (Editorial/Opinion)
- Writer: Asim Ali (Political researcher)

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS 2:** Indian Polity, Elections, Political parties
- **GS 4:** Ethics in governance (use of state machinery)
- **GS 1:** Indian society & political trends

Introduction

Recent election results across states show a deeper shift in Indian politics. It is not just about victories, but about how one party is building a **structural dominance** through organisation, narrative, and state capacity.

Key Issues

1. Rise of Structural Dominance

- BJP's success goes beyond elections; it has built deep organisational networks that sustain long-term political advantage.
- Example: Strong cadre + centralised leadership

2. Weakening of Opposition

- Opposition parties lack coordination, leadership, and grassroots strength, making it difficult to challenge a dominant party effectively.
- Example: Fragmented alliances in state elections

3. Use of State Machinery

- Concerns exist about administrative tools being used for electoral advantage, raising questions about fairness in democracy.
- Example: Enforcement agencies' actions during elections

4. Narrative Building and Identity Politics

- Political success is increasingly shaped by strong narratives (nationalism, identity) that influence voter perception and behaviour.
- Example: Citizenship debates in Assam and Bengal

5. Shift from Electoral to Institutional Power

- Dominance is not just electoral but extends into institutions, governance structures, and policymaking influence.
- Example: Centralised decision-making patterns

Static Concept

- **Dominant Party System** → A system where one political party consistently wins elections and shapes political discourse
- Example: Congress dominance (1950s–1970s), now BJP phase
- Key factors: organisation, ideology, leadership, electoral machinery

Global Practices

Japan (LDP)	Long-term dominant party system
South Africa (ANC)	Electoral dominance with institutional influence
USA	Strong two-party competitive system
UK	Alternating party dominance
Lesson	Strong institutions ensure checks even under dominance

IN India – Committees / Recommendations

Election Commission reforms	Strengthen autonomy
Law Commission	Electoral transparency
Second ARC	Ethical governance and neutrality
Supreme Court rulings	Free and fair elections
Electoral reforms panels	Curb misuse of power

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Democratic Institutions

- Independent institutions like Election Commission and judiciary must be empowered to ensure neutrality and maintain fairness in electoral processes.

2. Revitalise Opposition Politics

- Opposition parties should focus on grassroots organisation, leadership development, and coherent narratives to remain electorally competitive.

3. Ensure Level Playing Field

- Strict rules must prevent misuse of state machinery so that elections remain free, fair, and transparent.

4. Promote Internal Party Democracy

- Political parties should encourage internal elections and accountability to strengthen democratic values within party structures.

5. Enhance Voter Awareness

- Citizens should be encouraged to make informed choices based on governance performance rather than narratives alone.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. A dominant party system necessarily means absence of democracy.
2. Strong institutions can ensure accountability even under one-party dominance.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 2 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. The rise of a dominant party system in India reflects both organisational strength and institutional challenges. Critically examine. (250 words)

Student Notes

Weakening rupee points to challenges ahead

Source & Writer

- *The Hindu* (Editorial)
- Writer: Not explicitly mentioned

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS 3:** Indian Economy, External sector, Exchange rate
- **GS 2:** Economic governance, Policy response
- **Prelims:** Currency, BoP, CAD

Introduction

The Indian rupee has been under pressure due to global uncertainties and domestic imbalances. Its depreciation signals deeper concerns in the **current account, capital flows, and inflation dynamics** of the economy.

Key Issues

1. Persistent Rupee Depreciation

- The rupee weakening against the dollar reflects external shocks and domestic vulnerabilities, affecting imports and investor confidence.
- Example: Rupee crossing ₹95 per dollar

2. Widening Current Account Deficit (CAD)

- High import bills, especially crude oil, increase CAD, putting pressure on the rupee and external stability.
- Example: Rising oil import costs

3. Volatile Capital Flows

- Foreign portfolio investors withdrawing funds due to global uncertainty weakens the capital account and currency stability.
- Example: FPI outflows during global crises

4. Inflationary Pressures

- Depreciation increases cost of imports like fuel and fertilizers, leading to higher inflation and affecting growth.
- Example: Rising LPG and fuel prices

5. Limited Policy Space

- Balancing growth, inflation, and exchange rate stability becomes difficult for policymakers in uncertain global conditions.
- Example: RBI intervention vs interest rate hikes

Static Concept

- **Exchange Rate** → Value of one currency against another
- **Current Account Deficit (CAD)** → Excess of imports over exports
- **Capital Account** → Flow of investments (FDI, FPI)
- **Forex Reserves** → Buffer to stabilise currency
- Managed float system used by **Reserve Bank of India**

Global Practices

USA	Strong dollar due to interest rate hikes
China	Managed currency depreciation
Japan	Intervention to stabilise yen
Emerging economies	Use forex reserves actively
Lesson	Maintain strong reserves + macro stability

IN India – Committees / Recommendations

RBI Monetary Policy Framework	Inflation targeting
Economic Survey	External sector stability focus
Finance Commission	Fiscal discipline
Tarapore Committee	Capital account convertibility
NITI Aayog	Export competitiveness

Way Forward

- Strengthen Export Competitiveness**
 - Promote manufacturing, services exports, and diversify markets to reduce trade deficits and support the rupee in the long term.
- Manage Import Dependence**
 - Reduce reliance on crude oil imports through renewable energy and domestic production to improve the current account balance.
- Maintain Adequate Forex Reserves**
 - Ensure strong reserve buffers to manage currency volatility and provide confidence to investors during global uncertainties.
- Attract Stable Capital Flows**
 - Encourage long-term investments like FDI instead of volatile FPI to stabilise the capital account.
- Balanced Monetary Policy Approach**
 - RBI must carefully balance inflation control and growth while managing exchange rate volatility through calibrated interventions.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. A rise in crude oil prices can increase the Current Account Deficit of India.
2. Depreciation of currency always reduces inflation in an economy.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. Currency depreciation reflects deeper macroeconomic challenges. Discuss the causes and consequences of rupee depreciation and suggest policy measures. (250 words)

Student Notes 📝

Weakening rupee points to challenges ahead

Source & Writer

- *The Hindu* (Editorial)
- Writer: Not explicitly mentioned

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

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Way Forward

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- (b) 2 only
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- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a) 1 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. Currency depreciation reflects deeper macroeconomic challenges. Discuss the causes and consequences of rupee depreciation and suggest policy measures. (250 words)

Student Notes

To teach or to research: We must be honest about what we want from our teachers

Source & Writer

- *The Hindu* (Opinion)
- Writer: Anmol Jain

UPSC Syllabus Linkage (Brief)

- **GS 2:** Education sector, Higher education reforms
- **GS 4:** Professional ethics, Academic integrity
- **Essay & Society:** Quality education and institutional reforms

Introduction

India's higher education system expects university faculty to excel simultaneously in teaching, research, administration, and rankings. The article argues that this unrealistic expectation is weakening both classroom teaching and genuine academic research.

Key Issues

1. Unrealistic Expectations from Faculty

- Indian academia expects one person to be an excellent teacher, researcher, mentor, and administrator simultaneously, reducing overall quality.
- Example: Publish-or-perish pressure in universities

2. Decline in Classroom Teaching Quality

- Research pressure leaves little time for pedagogy, student engagement, and curriculum preparation, weakening learning outcomes.
- Example: Faculty prioritising publications over lectures

3. Quantity Over Quality in Research

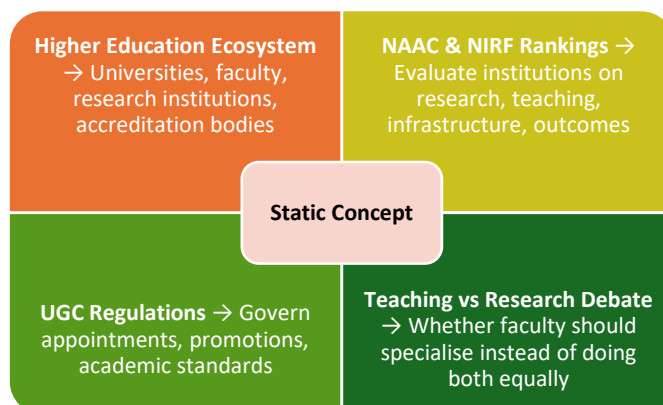
- Institutional rankings encourage publication volume instead of meaningful and original research contributions.
- Example: Rise of predatory journals

4. Flawed Incentive Structure

- Promotions and recruitment heavily depend on publication metrics, creating unhealthy academic competition.
- Example: API score-driven promotions

5. Lack of Role Specialisation

- India lacks separate teaching-focused and research-focused academic tracks common in advanced university systems.
- Example: Same workload for all faculty roles



Global Practices

USA	Separate teaching and research universities
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UK	Teaching excellence frameworks
Germany	Strong research institutes alongside universities
Australia	Flexible academic career tracks
Global trend	Role specialisation and performance-based evaluation

IN India – Committees / Recommendations

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Multidisciplinary and research-focused reforms
Kothari Commission	Improve teacher quality
Radhakrishnan Commission	Academic autonomy
UGC reforms	Better recruitment and promotion norms
National Research Foundation (NRF)	Promote quality research

Way Forward

- Create Separate Academic Career Tracks**
 - Universities should introduce distinct teaching and research tracks based on faculty strengths and institutional requirements.
- Reform Faculty Evaluation Systems**
 - Assessment should prioritise quality teaching, student engagement, and meaningful research instead of publication quantity alone.
- Strengthen Research Ecosystem**
 - Provide dedicated funding, research infrastructure, and reduced teaching loads for faculty engaged in serious academic research.
- Improve Teacher Training**
 - Faculty should receive regular pedagogical training to enhance classroom communication, curriculum design, and student mentorship.
- Reduce Ranking-Centric Pressure**
 - Higher education policy should balance global rankings with the real educational needs of students and institutions.

Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding higher education reforms in India:

1. NIRF rankings primarily evaluate institutions only on infrastructure.
2. National Education Policy 2020 aims to strengthen research culture in higher education institutions.

Which of the statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 2 only

Mains Practice Question

Q2. The pressure to simultaneously excel in teaching and research has created structural distortions in Indian higher education. Discuss with suitable reforms. (250 words)

Operation Sindoor's key lesson: Future conflicts will not resemble the past

Source: The Hindu

Writer: Syed Ata Hasnain

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 3:** Internal Security, Defence Technology, Cyber Security, Challenges to Internal Security
- **GS Paper 2:** India and its neighbourhood relations, Role of institutions in security governance
- **Essay & Interview:** National Security, Future Warfare, Strategic Preparedness

Introduction

The article argues that modern conflicts are rapidly changing in nature. Traditional wars fought only through tanks, artillery, and territorial capture are being replaced by multi-domain conflicts involving cyber warfare, drones, information campaigns, surveillance systems, artificial intelligence, and economic disruption.

Using "Operation Sindoor" as an example, the writer explains that India's future security challenges will require faster decision-making, technological integration, institutional coordination, and calibrated military responses rather than conventional war strategies alone.

Key Issues

1. Changing Nature of Warfare

- Future conflicts will involve drones, cyber tools, AI systems, and information operations instead of only traditional military battles and territorial capture.
- **Example:** Ukraine-Russia war witnessed extensive drone warfare and cyber disruptions alongside conventional combat.

2. Need for Calibrated Escalation

- Modern nuclear environments require controlled and proportionate military responses instead of uncontrolled escalation that may trigger wider conflict.
- **Example:** India's limited and measured responses after terror incidents aim to avoid uncontrolled military escalation.

3. Institutional Coordination Gaps

- Security operations increasingly require coordination among intelligence agencies, armed forces, cyber experts, financial regulators, and investigative institutions.
- **Example:** Counter-terror investigations today involve NIA, intelligence agencies, cyber cells, and financial monitoring units together.

4. Technology-Driven Security Challenges

Static Concept

What is Multi-Domain Warfare?

Multi-domain warfare refers to the integration of military operations across different domains such as:

- **Land**
- **Air**
- **Sea**
- **Cyber Space**
- **Outer Space**
- **Information & Electronic Warfare**

The objective is to achieve strategic advantage through coordinated action across all domains simultaneously.

Example:

The Russia-Ukraine conflict demonstrated the use of drones, cyberattacks, satellite intelligence, and information warfare together with conventional military operations.

- Wars are increasingly influenced by surveillance systems, drones, satellite intelligence, encrypted communication, and digital propaganda networks.
- **Example:** Terror organisations use encrypted apps and cryptocurrency channels for recruitment and financing.

5. Civilian Infrastructure as Strategic Assets

- Urban infrastructure, communication systems, markets, and digital networks have become central targets and strategic vulnerabilities during conflicts.
- **Example:** Cyberattacks on electricity grids or banking systems can disrupt normal civilian life without direct military invasion.

Global Practices

United States – Multi-Domain Operations Doctrine	The U.S. military integrates cyber, space, intelligence, and conventional warfare under unified operational commands.
Israel – Integrated Air Defence System	Israel combines surveillance, missile defence, AI-enabled intelligence, and rapid-response systems for real-time security management.
NATO – Cyber Defence Framework	NATO treats cyberattacks as major security threats and promotes joint cyber preparedness among member nations.
China – Intelligentised Warfare Strategy	China focuses on AI-driven warfare, electronic warfare, autonomous systems, and integrated information dominance.
Ukraine – Drone and Digital Warfare	Ukraine effectively used low-cost drones, satellite communication, and digital intelligence during the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Important Indian Committees / Recommendations

Kargil Review Committee (1999)	Recommended better intelligence coordination, national security reforms, and integrated defence preparedness.
Group of Ministers Report on National Security (2001)	Suggested creation of integrated defence structures and improved intelligence-sharing mechanisms.
Shekatkar Committee	Recommended military modernisation, enhanced jointness among forces, and optimisation of defence expenditure.
Naresh Chandra Task Force	Proposed stronger cyber-security structures and greater coordination between civilian and military institutions.
Defence Cyber Agency Recommendations	Focused on strengthening India's cyber defence capabilities and preparedness against digital warfare threats.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Multi-Domain Preparedness

- India must integrate cyber, intelligence, space, electronic warfare, and conventional military operations under unified strategic planning mechanisms.

2. Improve Institutional Coordination

- Real-time coordination among intelligence agencies, armed forces, cyber experts, and financial regulators should become routine practice.

3. Invest in Indigenous Defence Technology

- India should accelerate domestic development of drones, AI systems, surveillance platforms, and secure communication technologies.

4. Build Civilian Infrastructure Resilience

- Critical sectors like banking, telecom, electricity, and transport networks must develop strong cyber and disaster protection systems.

5. Develop Faster Decision-Making Systems

- Future conflicts require rapid institutional responses supported by data-driven intelligence and integrated command structures.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to “Multi-Domain Warfare”, consider the following statements:

1. It involves integration of military operations across land, sea, air, cyber, and space domains.
2. Cyber warfare and information warfare are important components of modern conflicts.
3. Multi-domain warfare is limited only to conventional military 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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. “Future conflicts are increasingly shifting from conventional battlefield wars to technology-driven multi-domain engagements.” Discuss the challenges and preparedness required for India’s national security architecture. (250 words)

Student Notes

Openness, not isolation, is the bedrock of the West

Source: The Hindu

Writer: Milinda Moragoda

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper 2: International Relations, Globalisation, India and the West, Global Governance

GS Paper 3: Science & Technology, Innovation Economy, Global Economic Trends

Essay: Globalisation vs Protectionism, Migration, Innovation and Democracy

Introduction

The article argues that the long-term strength of Western countries has historically come from openness rather than isolation. The writer highlights that immigration, global talent flows, institutional flexibility, innovation ecosystems, and international cooperation helped countries like the United States and European nations emerge as global powers.

At a time when identity politics, protectionism, and geopolitical rivalry are increasing, the article warns that excessive civilisational or exclusionary thinking may weaken innovation, economic resilience, and democratic institutions.

Key Issues

1. Rise of Identity-Based Geopolitics

- Countries are increasingly framing global politics through civilisational identity, cultural nationalism, and strategic exclusion rather than cooperation.
- **Example:** Immigration debates in Europe and the United States increasingly reflect identity-driven political narratives.

2. Innovation Depends on Global Talent

- Modern innovation ecosystems require international collaboration, skilled migration, and open research environments to remain globally competitive.
- **Example:** Silicon Valley's growth heavily depended on immigrant scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs.

3. Protectionism Can Hurt Economic Dynamism

- Restrictive immigration and isolationist policies may weaken labour markets, productivity, entrepreneurship, and long-term competitiveness.
- **Example:** Labour shortages in ageing economies create pressure on healthcare and manufacturing sectors.

4. Institutions Matter More Than Identity Narratives

- Stable institutions, rule of law, and adaptability historically made Western democracies resilient and economically successful.
- **Example:** Strong universities and independent research ecosystems attracted global talent to Western countries.

Static Concept

What is Globalisation?

Globalisation refers to the increasing interconnectedness of countries through trade, technology, migration, investment, communication, and cultural exchange.

Major Features:

- Free flow of goods and services
- Cross-border movement of capital and labour
- Technological integration
- Global supply chains
- International cooperation and institutions

Example:

Global technology firms like Microsoft, NVIDIA, and Apple depend upon international talent, global manufacturing, and worldwide research collaboration.

5. Geopolitical Rivalry is Reshaping Global Cooperation

- Strategic competition among major powers is reducing trust, increasing economic fragmentation, and weakening multilateral cooperation.
- **Example:** U.S.-China technological rivalry has intensified restrictions on semiconductor and AI-related cooperation.

Global Practices

Canada – Skilled Immigration Model	Canada actively attracts global talent through points-based immigration policies linked with labour market needs.
European Union – Free Movement Framework	EU countries encourage labour mobility, educational exchange, and economic integration among member states.
United States – Innovation Ecosystem	American universities, venture capital systems, and open research culture helped create globally dominant technology industries.
Singapore – Global Talent Strategy	Singapore combines strict governance with openness toward foreign investment and highly skilled professionals.
Australia – Migration-Led Economic Growth	Australia uses targeted migration policies to address labour shortages and sustain economic growth.

Important Indian Committees / Recommendations

Economic Advisory Council Recommendations	Emphasised innovation-led growth and integration with global value chains.
National Education Policy (NEP 2020)	Encouraged internationalisation of higher education and global academic collaboration.
NITI Aayog on Innovation Ecosystem	Recommended strengthening start-up ecosystems, digital infrastructure, and research collaboration.
Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP)	Focused on international research partnerships and knowledge-sharing networks.
High-Level Committees on Ease of Doing Business	Recommended reforms to improve investment climate and attract global industries.

Way Forward

1. Promote Balanced Globalisation

- Countries should combine national security concerns with openness toward trade, innovation, and international collaboration.

2. Strengthen Knowledge and Research Ecosystems

- Investment in universities, research institutions, and global academic partnerships can improve innovation capacity.

3. Encourage Skilled Migration and Talent Mobility

- Well-regulated migration policies can address labour shortages and improve technological competitiveness.

4. Protect Democratic Institutions

- Strong institutions, rule of law, and independent research environments remain essential for long-term economic resilience.

5. Deepen International Cooperation

- Global challenges like climate change, AI governance, and economic instability require collaborative international responses.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

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

1. Globalisation includes the movement of goods, services, capital, and labour across countries.
2. Innovation ecosystems today are increasingly dependent on international collaboration.
3. Protectionist economic policies always increase long-term economic competitiveness.

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Openness and institutional resilience have historically been major drivers of economic and technological advancement." Discuss in the context of rising protectionism and geopolitical rivalry in the contemporary world. (250 words)

Student Notes 📝

Should the abortion law be amended for minor rape victims?

Source: The Hindu

Writers: Dipika Jain and Alka Barua

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper 2: Vulnerable Sections, Women and Child Rights, Health Policies, Judiciary and Governance

GS Paper 1: Social Issues, Role of Women, Population and Associated Issues

Essay: Reproductive Rights, Bodily Autonomy, Gender Justice

Introduction

The article discusses whether India's abortion laws should be amended to better protect minor rape survivors and vulnerable women facing unwanted pregnancies. It highlights the conflict between the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, especially regarding consent, mandatory reporting, and access to safe abortion services.

The writers argue that legal delays, stigma, fear of criminal prosecution, and rigid gestational limits often make access to reproductive healthcare difficult for minors and sexual assault survivors.

Key Issues

1. Conflict Between MTP Act and POCSO Act

- Mandatory reporting under POCSO may discourage minors from seeking safe abortion services due to fear of police involvement and social stigma.
- **Example:** Minor rape survivors often avoid hospitals fearing criminal proceedings against family members or partners.

2. Rigid Gestational Limits Affect Vulnerable Women

- Delayed detection of pregnancy, trauma, and lack of awareness make many survivors cross legal abortion time limits.
- **Example:** Courts frequently receive petitions seeking permission for termination beyond 24 weeks.

3. Criminalisation Creates Fear Among Doctors

- Doctors often hesitate to perform abortions in complex cases due to fear of criminal prosecution and procedural ambiguity.
- **Example:** Medical practitioners face legal scrutiny under both POCSO and criminal law provisions.

4. Limited Access to Safe Abortion Services

- Rural areas, poor healthcare infrastructure, and social stigma continue to restrict reproductive healthcare access for women and adolescents.
- **Example:** Many districts lack trained specialists for late-stage termination procedures.

5. Need to Recognise Reproductive Autonomy

Static Concept

What is the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act?

The **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971** regulates conditions under which abortion is legally permitted in India.

Key Features:

- Abortion allowed under specified medical and humanitarian conditions
- Gestational limit increased to **24 weeks** through the MTP Amendment Act, 2021 for certain categories of women
- Recognises reproductive autonomy and privacy rights
- Requires medical opinion of registered practitioners

Related Law:

The **POCSO Act, 2012** mandates reporting of sexual offences involving minors, which sometimes creates practical difficulties for confidential abortion access.

- The article stresses that reproductive decisions should prioritise bodily autonomy, dignity, privacy, and healthcare rights of women.
- **Example:** The Supreme Court recognised reproductive choice as part of Article 21 rights.

Global Practices

Canada – Rights-Based Framework	Canada largely treats abortion as a healthcare service without criminal restrictions.
United Kingdom – Medical Access System	The UK allows abortion under regulated medical conditions with structured healthcare support.
France – Expanded Access Reforms	France has expanded gestational limits and strengthened reproductive healthcare accessibility.
Argentina – Legalisation for Women’s Rights	Argentina legalised abortion to reduce unsafe procedures and improve reproductive rights.
World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines	WHO recommends safe, accessible, stigma-free reproductive healthcare services for women and adolescents.

Important Indian Committees / Recommendations

Justice Verma Committee	Recommended stronger support systems and sensitive handling of sexual violence survivors.
National Family Health Survey (NFHS) Findings	Highlighted gaps in reproductive healthcare access and adolescent health awareness.
Law Commission of India Recommendations	Suggested reforms balancing reproductive autonomy with legal safeguards.
Parliament of India Debates on MTP Amendment Act	Focused on expanding abortion access for vulnerable categories of women.
Supreme Court of India Judgments on Reproductive Rights	Recognised reproductive autonomy, privacy, and dignity under Article 21.

Way Forward

1. **Harmonise MTP and POCSO Provisions**
 - Legal inconsistencies between mandatory reporting and confidential healthcare access should be resolved through clearer statutory guidelines.
2. **Expand Access to Safe Abortion Services**
 - Government must strengthen reproductive healthcare infrastructure, especially in rural and underserved regions.
3. **Protect Doctors Through Clear Legal Safeguards**
 - Medical practitioners require legal clarity and institutional protection while handling sensitive abortion cases involving minors.
4. **Improve Adolescent Reproductive Awareness**
 - Schools and public health systems should promote scientific reproductive health education and counselling services.
5. **Adopt a Rights-Based Healthcare Approach**
 - Policy reforms should prioritise dignity, privacy, bodily autonomy, and safe healthcare access for vulnerable women and minors.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act in India, consider the following statements:

1. The MTP Amendment Act, 2021 increased the upper gestational limit for certain categories of women to 24 weeks.
2. The POCSO Act mandates reporting of sexual offences involving minors.
3. Abortion in India is available completely on demand without any legal conditions.

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**

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. Discuss the challenges faced by minor rape survivors in accessing safe abortion services in India. Examine the need for harmonising the MTP Act and POCSO Act from a rights-based perspective. (250 words)

A watershed moment in India's defence posture

Source: The Hindu

Writer: R. K. S. Bhadauria

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper 3: Internal Security, Defence Technology, Border Security, Security Challenges and their Management

GS Paper 2: India and its neighbourhood relations

Essay: National Security, Strategic Autonomy, Defence Modernisation

Introduction

The article analyses “**Operation Sindoor**” as a major turning point in India’s national security doctrine and defence posture. It argues that India has moved from a policy of “strategic restraint” to a more assertive and calibrated response framework against cross-border terrorism and security threats.

The writer highlights the growing integration of the Indian armed forces, use of advanced technology, precision targeting capabilities, and India’s willingness to impose strategic costs on hostile actors without escalating into full-scale war.

Static Concept**What is Defence Posture?**

- Defence posture refers to a country’s overall military preparedness, strategic doctrine, deployment pattern, operational readiness, and response strategy toward external and internal security threats.

Key Components:

- Civil-military integration

Military
capability

Strategic
doctrine

Deterrence
policy

Intelligence
coordination

Defence
technology

Example:

India's shift from "strategic restraint" after terror attacks toward calibrated military responses reflects an evolving defence posture.

Key Issues

1. Shift from Strategic Restraint to Active Deterrence

- India increasingly prefers calibrated military responses instead of prolonged diplomatic restraint against cross-border terror attacks.
- **Example:** Surgical strikes and Balakot airstrikes reflected proactive deterrence strategies.

2. Growing Importance of Integrated Warfare

- Modern military operations require coordination among the Army, Navy, Air Force, intelligence agencies, and cyber systems.
- **Example:** Integrated targeting and precision operations were highlighted during Operation Sindoor.

3. Technology-Driven Military Operations

- Advanced surveillance, drones, precision-guided systems, and network-centric warfare are transforming military effectiveness.
- **Example:** Modern conflicts increasingly depend upon real-time intelligence and precision strike capability.

4. Challenge of Managing Escalation

- Military responses against nuclear-armed adversaries require calibrated decision-making to avoid uncontrolled escalation.
- **Example:** India's operations are designed to impose costs without triggering conventional war escalation.

5. Need for Indigenous Defence Capability

- Dependence on foreign defence equipment limits strategic autonomy and operational flexibility during prolonged conflicts.
- **Example:** India's push for "Atmanirbhar Bharat" in defence manufacturing aims to reduce import dependence.

Global Practices

United States – Joint Command Structure	The U.S. military uses integrated theatre commands for coordinated multi-domain operations.
Israel – Precision Warfare Doctrine	Israel emphasises rapid-response operations, intelligence integration, and precision targeting systems.
China – Military Modernisation	China heavily invests in AI-enabled warfare, cyber capability, and indigenous defence manufacturing.
NATO – Interoperability Standards	NATO countries maintain common operational standards for integrated defence coordination.

France – Strategic Autonomy Approach	France promotes domestic defence production to maintain independent strategic capability.
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Important Indian Committees / Recommendations

Kargil Review Committee	Recommended intelligence reforms, integrated defence management, and improved preparedness.
Group of Ministers Report on National Security	Suggested stronger institutional coordination among defence and intelligence agencies.
Shekatkar Committee	Focused on military modernisation, operational efficiency, and optimisation of defence expenditure.
Naresh Chandra Task Force	Recommended integrated theatre commands and stronger national security coordination mechanisms.
Chief of Defence Staff Defence Reforms	Aimed at improving jointness among armed forces and integrated military planning.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Integrated Theatre Commands

- India should accelerate joint operational structures for faster coordination among all armed forces during future conflicts.

2. Expand Indigenous Defence Manufacturing

- Domestic production of drones, missiles, electronics, and surveillance systems must become a national strategic priority.

3. Invest in Emerging Defence Technologies

- India must strengthen cyber warfare, AI systems, space capability, and electronic warfare preparedness.

4. Improve Intelligence Coordination

- Real-time intelligence sharing among military and civilian agencies should become more seamless and technology-driven.

5. Maintain Calibrated Strategic Doctrine

- India should continue balancing strong deterrence with diplomatic restraint to prevent uncontrolled regional escalation.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. With reference to India's defence modernisation, consider the following statements:

1. Integrated theatre commands aim to improve coordination among armed forces.
2. Network-centric warfare depends heavily on real-time information and communication systems.
3. Strategic restraint means immediate full-scale military retaliation in every situation.

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**

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. India's evolving defence posture reflects a transition from strategic restraint to calibrated deterrence. Discuss the drivers, opportunities, and challenges associated with this shift. (250 words)

The elephant in India's data room

Source: The Hindu

Writer: Abhishek Sharma

UPSC Syllabus

- **GS Paper 2:** Governance, transparency, accountability, e-governance, public policy, Parliament.
- **GS Paper 3:** Data governance, digital economy, technology in administration, evidence-based policymaking.

Introduction

India is producing enormous amounts of data through **welfare schemes, surveys, digital governance platforms and administrative systems**. However, weak standardisation, fragmented databases and poor coordination among ministries reduce the usefulness of this data. The article argues that India's governance challenge today is not lack of information, but lack of reliable and integrated public data systems.

Key Issues**1. Fragmented Government Databases**

- Different ministries use separate formats and definitions, making data integration difficult. For example, welfare and health databases often cannot communicate effectively.

2. Poor Quality of Administrative Data

- Errors in beneficiary records create policy distortions. The article cites deletion of fake or duplicate beneficiaries under welfare schemes like PM-KISAN.

3. Weak Evidence-Based Policymaking

- Without reliable data, governments depend on assumptions instead of measurable outcomes. This affects sectors like health, nutrition and education planning.

4. Lack of Standardisation Across States

- States and departments follow different reporting methods, creating inconsistencies in national statistics and reducing comparability of governance outcomes.

5. Limited Parliamentary Access to Reliable Data

- Parliamentary questions frequently seek basic information because publicly accessible, updated and standardised datasets are often unavailable.

Static Concept**What is Data Governance?**

Data governance refers to the framework of rules, standards, processes and institutions used to collect, store, share and use data responsibly and efficiently.

Key Features

- Standardised definitions and formats
- Data quality and verification
- Inter-ministerial coordination
- Transparency and accountability
- Secure and ethical data usage

Importance in Governance

- Improves policy design
- Reduces leakages in welfare schemes
- Enables evidence-based policymaking
- Strengthens parliamentary accountability
- Supports efficient public expenditure

Global Practices

Estonia's Digital Governance Model	Integrated national databases allow seamless delivery of public services through secure digital identity systems.
United Kingdom's Open Data Policy	Government departments regularly publish standardised datasets for transparency and public accountability.
Singapore's Smart Nation Programme	Real-time integrated databases support urban planning, healthcare delivery and efficient public administration.
OECD Statistical Standards	OECD countries follow harmonised statistical definitions and reporting standards to improve comparability and policy coordination.
European Union's Data Governance Framework	The EU promotes interoperable digital systems and common standards across member countries.

India's Committee / Institutional Recommendations

National Data Governance Framework Policy (NDGFP)	Recommends common standards, protocols and interoperable government databases.
Economic Survey Recommendations	Repeatedly stressed data-driven governance and improved statistical quality for policymaking.
NITI Aayog Vision Documents	Called for integrated digital public infrastructure and outcome-based governance systems.
Rangarajan Commission on Statistics	Recommended strengthening independence and credibility of India's statistical systems.
National Statistical Commission (NSC)	Suggested uniform standards and better coordination among ministries and states.

Way Forward

- Build Unified Public Data Platforms**
 - Government databases should use common formats and interoperable systems for easy coordination among departments.
- Improve Data Verification Mechanisms**
 - Regular audits and third-party verification can reduce duplication, leakages and inaccurate beneficiary records.
- Strengthen Statistical Institutions**
 - Institutions like NSO and NSC must receive greater autonomy, staffing and technical resources.
- Promote Open Data Access**
 - Public access to updated district-level datasets can improve transparency and strengthen parliamentary accountability.
- Encourage Evidence-Based Governance**
 - Policies should rely on measurable outcomes and real-time monitoring rather than anecdotal or political considerations.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding data governance in India:

1. Data governance includes standardisation and interoperability of government databases.
2. National Data Governance Framework Policy aims to improve coordination in public data systems.
3. Fragmented databases reduce the effectiveness of evidence-based policymaking.

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Reliable and standardised public data systems are essential for accountable governance and effective policymaking." Discuss in the context of India's digital governance framework. (250 words)

The Governor who forgot his job

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Writer: Rajeev Dhavan and Sanjay Hegde

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 2:** Governor's office, Centre-State relations, constitutional morality, parliamentary democracy.
- **Polity:** Role and powers of Governor, floor test, discretionary powers, constitutional conventions.

Introduction

The article discusses the constitutional role of Governors in government formation after elections. Referring to the post-election developments in Tamil Nadu after the victory of the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam, the article argues that Governors are expected to act neutrally and constitutionally, not politically. Delays in inviting majority parties or interference in legislative processes weaken parliamentary democracy and constitutional conventions.

Key Issues

1. Delay in Inviting Majority Party

- The article criticises delays by Governors in inviting clear majority parties to form government, creating political uncertainty and instability.

2. Misuse of Discretionary Powers

- Discretion meant for exceptional circumstances is sometimes used politically, weakening trust in constitutional offices and federal principles.

3. Threat to Parliamentary Democracy

- Artificial delays before floor tests may encourage defections and political manipulation instead of respecting the electoral mandate.

Static Concept

Governor in the Indian Constitution

The Governor is the constitutional head of a State under **Articles 153 to 162** of the Constitution.

Major Functions

- Appoints the Chief Minister
- Summons and prorogues the Assembly
- Gives assent to Bills
- Ensures constitutional governance in the State
- Acts on aid and advice of the Council of Ministers in most matters

Discretionary Powers

The Governor may exercise discretion in limited situations such as:

- Government formation in a hung Assembly
- Recommending President's Rule
- Reserving Bills for the President

Constitutional Principle

The Governor is expected to remain politically neutral and uphold constitutional morality, federalism and democratic mandate.

4. Erosion of Constitutional Conventions

- Healthy parliamentary traditions depend not only on written law but also on impartial conduct by constitutional authorities.

5. Increasing Centre-State Friction

- Perceived political bias by Governors often creates tensions between elected State governments and the Union government.

Global Practices

United Kingdom	The monarch acts strictly on constitutional convention and does not interfere in democratic government formation.
Canada	Provincial Lieutenant Governors function ceremonially and follow advice of elected governments.
Australia	Governors rarely exercise discretionary powers and maintain strict political neutrality.
Germany	Ceremonial heads of states respect legislative majority without political intervention.
Japan	Constitutional authorities operate within clearly defined democratic conventions and avoid partisan roles.

India's Committee / Commission Recommendations

Sarkaria Commission (1988)	Recommended politically neutral Governors and consultation with Chief Ministers before appointments.
Punchhi Commission (2010)	Suggested fixed tenure and limitation on discretionary misuse by Governors.
S. R. Bommai v. Union of India	Emphasised floor tests as the proper method to determine legislative majority.
Nabam Rebia Judgment (2016)	Restricted arbitrary use of Governor's powers in legislative matters.
Administrative Reforms Commission	Called for strengthening cooperative federalism and constitutional accountability.

Way Forward

1. Respect Electoral Mandate

- Governors should immediately invite parties with clear majority support to form government without unnecessary delays.

2. Limit Discretionary Misuse

- Clear constitutional guidelines should reduce scope for politically motivated interpretation of discretionary powers.

3. Strengthen Constitutional Conventions

- Healthy parliamentary democracy requires neutrality, restraint and respect for democratic traditions.

4. Ensure Transparent Decision-Making

- Governors should publicly justify exceptional constitutional actions to maintain public trust and accountability.

5. Promote Cooperative Federalism

- The Union and States must work within constitutional boundaries and avoid political confrontation through constitutional offices.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Governor in India:

1. The Governor is the constitutional head of the State.
2. Legislative majority should ordinarily be tested on the floor of the House.
3. The Governor enjoys unlimited discretionary powers under the Constitution.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Q2. "The office of the Governor is meant to preserve constitutional balance, not political advantage."
Discuss in the context of recent debates on gubernatorial discretion in India. (250 words)**

Advancing India-South Korea defence innovation ties

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Writer: Tejas Bhardwaj and Mugdha Satpute

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 2:** India's bilateral relations, strategic partnerships, international cooperation.
- **GS Paper 3:** Defence technology, indigenisation, innovation ecosystem, national security.

Introduction

India and South Korea have steadily expanded defence cooperation from traditional military exchanges to advanced technology partnerships. The article highlights the proposed Korea-India Defence Acceleration Initiative (KINDX), which aims to deepen collaboration in defence innovation, startups, research and co-development of emerging technologies. The broader objective is to strengthen strategic autonomy and defence industrial capabilities for both countries.

Key Issues**1. Limited Defence Industrial Collaboration**

- India and South Korea cooperate diplomatically, but deeper collaboration in joint defence manufacturing and innovation remains underdeveloped.

2. Need for Startup Integration

- Defence innovation increasingly depends on startups and private technology firms, yet institutional coordination remains weak.

Static Concept**Defence Innovation Ecosystem**

A defence innovation ecosystem refers to the network of:

- Governments
- Defence industries
- Startups
- Research institutions
- Armed forces

working together to develop advanced military technologies and strategic capabilities.

Key Areas

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Cybersecurity
- Drone technology
- Semiconductors
- Space technology
- Robotics and autonomous systems

3. Dependence on Foreign Defence Imports

- India still imports many advanced defence technologies, affecting long-term strategic and industrial self-reliance.

4. Lack of Structured Innovation Platforms

- The article argues for dedicated platforms like KINDX to connect governments, industries, investors and research institutions.

5. Competition in Emerging Technologies

- Rapid advances in AI, semiconductors and autonomous systems require faster collaboration to maintain technological competitiveness.

Importance for India

- Reduces import dependence
- Encourages indigenous defence manufacturing
- Strengthens strategic autonomy
- Boosts defence exports
- Enhances military preparedness

Global Practices

United States – DIU Model	The Defence Innovation Unit connects startups and private technology firms with military requirements.
Israel Defence Startup Ecosystem	Close cooperation between military institutions and startups drives rapid defence innovation.
South Korea Technology Clusters	Integrated industrial clusters support advanced manufacturing and defence research collaboration.
NATO Innovation Fund	NATO countries jointly invest in emerging defence technologies and strategic innovation.
Japan–United States Technology Cooperation	Joint defence research strengthens Indo-Pacific strategic and technological partnerships.

India's Committee / Policy Recommendations

Defence Production Policy	Encourages indigenisation and private sector participation in defence manufacturing.
Atmanirbhar Bharat Initiative	Promotes self-reliance in critical defence technologies and systems.
Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)	Supports defence startups and innovation through grants and industry partnerships.
Defense Acquisition Procedure (DAP 2020)	Provides frameworks for procurement and indigenous technology development.
Technology Development Fund (TDF)	Supports MSMEs and startups engaged in defence research and innovation.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Joint Innovation Platforms

- India and South Korea should create permanent defence innovation mechanisms connecting startups, industries, researchers and armed forces.

2. Expand Co-Development Projects

- Joint production of defence technologies can reduce import dependence and improve industrial capabilities for both countries.

3. Improve Startup Participation

- Simplified regulations and funding support can help defence startups contribute effectively to military innovation.

4. Invest in Emerging Technologies

- Both countries should prioritise AI, drones, semiconductors and cybersecurity cooperation for future security challenges.

5. Deepen Strategic Indo-Pacific Cooperation

- Defence partnerships should support broader Indo-Pacific stability, maritime security and resilient supply chains.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India–South Korea defence cooperation:

1. iDEX supports defence innovation and startup participation in India.
2. Defence innovation ecosystems include startups, industries and research institutions.
3. Strategic technology cooperation helps strengthen defence self-reliance.

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. “Emerging technologies and defence innovation partnerships are becoming central to India’s strategic autonomy.” Discuss with reference to India–South Korea defence cooperation. (250 words)

Student Space

A decentralised solution for waste crisis

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Writer: Ulka Mahajan

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 2:** Local governance, urban administration, environmental governance.
- **GS Paper 3:** Solid waste management, sustainable development, pollution control, environmental conservation.

Introduction

The article critiques the centralised approach adopted under the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026, arguing that large-scale waste processing systems often ignore local realities and create environmental and governance problems. It advocates decentralised waste management models that involve local communities, segregation at source and scientifically managed local processing systems for sustainable urban governance.

Key Issues

1. **Overdependence on Centralised Waste Systems**
 - Large waste-processing facilities often increase transportation costs, environmental risks and administrative inefficiencies for urban local bodies.
2. **Weak Community Participation**
 - Waste management policies frequently ignore local residents, informal waste workers and decentralised citizen-led initiatives.
3. **Burden on Urban Local Bodies**
 - Municipalities face financial and technical challenges in implementing complex centralised waste management systems.
4. **Environmental Damage from Landfills**
 - Poorly managed dumping sites cause groundwater contamination, methane emissions and public health problems in nearby communities.
5. **Compliance-Oriented Governance**
 - The article argues that excessive focus on procedural compliance reduces flexibility and practical innovation in waste management solutions.

Static Concept

Solid Waste Management (SWM)

Solid Waste Management refers to the collection, segregation, transportation, processing and disposal of waste in an environmentally safe manner.

Types of Waste

- Biodegradable waste
- Recyclable waste
- Hazardous waste
- Construction and demolition waste
- Electronic waste

Key Principles

- Segregation at source
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (3R Principle)
- Scientific disposal
- Community participation
- Decentralised processing

Major Challenges in India

- Poor segregation practices
- Overflowing landfills
- Weak municipal capacity
- Informal waste sector exclusion
- Air and groundwater pollution

Global Practices

Sweden Recycling Model	Sweden uses decentralised waste segregation and waste-to-energy systems with high recycling efficiency.
Japan Segregation Culture	Strict household-level waste segregation reduces landfill burden and improves recycling outcomes.

South Korea Food Waste Policy	Pay-as-you-throw systems encourage reduction and scientific processing of food waste.
Germany Circular Economy Model	Local recycling systems and producer responsibility reduce urban waste generation.
San Francisco Zero Waste Initiative	Community participation and mandatory segregation support sustainable urban waste management.

India's Committee / Policy Recommendations

Solid Waste Management Rules (2016 & 2026)	Emphasise segregation at source and scientific waste processing practices.
Swachh Bharat Mission	Promotes sanitation, waste segregation and improved municipal waste management infrastructure.
NITI Aayog Circular Economy Recommendations	Encourage recycling, reuse and sustainable resource management practices.
Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) Guidelines	The Central Pollution Control Board has issued standards for landfill management and waste processing.
Kasturirangan Committee	Highlighted sustainable urban planning and environmental infrastructure needs.

Way Forward

- Promote Decentralised Waste Processing**
 - Local composting and ward-level waste management systems can reduce landfill pressure and transportation costs.
- Strengthen Segregation at Source**
 - Households and institutions should practice mandatory segregation for effective recycling and scientific disposal.
- Integrate Informal Waste Workers**
 - Waste pickers should receive legal recognition, social security and inclusion in municipal waste systems.
- Improve Municipal Capacity**
 - Urban local bodies need better funding, technical support and trained manpower for sustainable waste management.
- Encourage Community Participation**
 - Resident welfare associations, schools and local groups should actively participate in waste reduction and recycling efforts.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding solid waste management in India:

1. Segregation at source is an important principle of solid waste management.
2. Decentralised waste management can reduce transportation and landfill burden.
3. Informal waste workers play no role in urban waste recycling systems.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Decentralised waste management systems are more sustainable and socially inclusive than highly centralised models." Examine in the context of India's urban waste crisis. (250 words)

A new phase in the India-Vietnam strategic partnership

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Writer: Harsh V. Pant and Pratinashree Basu

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

1. **GS Paper 2:** India and its neighbourhood, bilateral relations, ASEAN, Indo-Pacific strategy.
2. **GS Paper 3:** Maritime security, strategic affairs, defence cooperation, supply chain resilience.

Introduction

The article examines the growing strategic partnership between India and Vietnam amid changing Indo-Pacific geopolitics. The recent visit of Vietnamese President Tô Lâm and the elevation of ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership indicate deeper cooperation in defence, trade, technology and maritime security. The article argues that India-Vietnam ties are becoming central to balancing power and strengthening regional stability in the Indo-Pacific.

Key Issues**1. Rising Chinese Assertiveness**

- Growing tensions in the South China Sea have pushed India and Vietnam closer on defence and maritime cooperation.

2. Need for Defence Capability Building

- Vietnam seeks stronger defence modernisation through missile systems, naval cooperation and military training partnerships with India.

3. Supply Chain Vulnerabilities

- Both countries aim to reduce excessive dependence on China-centric manufacturing and supply networks.

4. Expanding Indo-Pacific Strategic Competition

- Emerging technologies, critical minerals and maritime routes are becoming major areas of geopolitical competition.

5. Gap Between Agreements and Implementation**Static Concept****Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)**

A Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is the highest level of bilateral engagement between two countries involving:

1. Defence cooperation
2. Trade and investment
3. Technology collaboration
4. Maritime security
5. Political coordination
6. Cultural and people-to-people ties

Importance in Indo-Pacific

1. Strengthens regional balance of power
2. Supports free and open sea lanes
3. Reduces overdependence on single supply chains
4. Enhances strategic autonomy of partner nations

India's Indo-Pacific Vision

India's Indo-Pacific policy focuses on:

1. ASEAN centrality
2. Maritime security
3. Connectivity
4. Rule-based international order
5. Economic resilience and strategic partnerships

- Strategic partnerships require faster execution of connectivity, defence production and trade commitments to achieve practical outcomes.

Global Practices

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) Cooperation	Countries coordinate on maritime security, resilient supply chains and Indo-Pacific stability.
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Centrality	Southeast Asian nations maintain regional balance through multilateral diplomacy and economic integration.
AUKUS Partnership	Australia, the UK and the US cooperate on advanced defence technologies and Indo-Pacific security.
European Union Connectivity Initiatives	The EU promotes diversified and secure trade and connectivity partnerships in Asia.
Japan–Vietnam Economic Cooperation	Japan has invested heavily in Vietnam’s manufacturing and infrastructure ecosystem.

India’s Committee / Policy Recommendations

Act East Policy	Strengthens India’s economic and strategic engagement with Southeast Asia.
Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)	Promotes maritime cooperation, connectivity and regional security.
SAGAR Doctrine	Focuses on maritime security and regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.
National Logistics Policy	Encourages resilient and diversified supply chains for trade and manufacturing.
Defence Indigenisation Policies	Support co-production and defence exports with strategic partners.

Way Forward

- Expand Maritime Security Cooperation**
 - India and Vietnam should strengthen naval exercises, intelligence sharing and maritime domain awareness mechanisms.
- Improve Defence Industrial Collaboration**
 - Joint defence production and technology transfer can deepen long-term strategic trust and capability building.
- Build Resilient Supply Chains**
 - Both countries should diversify manufacturing and reduce dependence on concentrated regional production hubs.
- Strengthen ASEAN-Centred Diplomacy**
 - India should continue supporting ASEAN centrality and regional multilateral institutions in the Indo-Pacific.
- Ensure Faster Project Implementation**
 - Strategic agreements should be backed by timely execution, investment facilitation and institutional coordination.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India-Vietnam relations:

1. Vietnam is an important partner in India's Act East Policy.
2. Maritime security cooperation is a major pillar of India-Vietnam relations.
3. ASEAN centrality is important in India's Indo-Pacific vision.

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "India-Vietnam relations are increasingly shaped by Indo-Pacific geopolitics and regional economic security." Discuss. (250 words)

A decentralised solution for waste crisis

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Writer: Ulka Mahajan

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 2:** Local governance, urban administration, environmental governance.
- **GS Paper 3:** Solid waste management, sustainable development, pollution control, environmental conservation.

Introduction

The article critiques the centralised approach adopted under the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, arguing that large-scale waste processing systems often ignore local realities and create environmental and governance problems. It advocates decentralised waste management models that involve local communities, segregation at source and scientifically managed local processing systems for sustainable urban governance.

Key Issues

1. **Overdependence on Centralised Waste Systems**
 - Large waste-processing facilities often increase transportation costs, environmental risks and administrative inefficiencies for urban local bodies.
2. **Weak Community Participation**
 - Waste management policies frequently ignore local residents, informal waste workers and decentralised citizen-led initiatives.

Static Concept

Solid Waste Management (SWM)

Solid Waste Management refers to the collection, segregation, transportation, processing and disposal of waste in an environmentally safe manner.

Types of Waste

- Biodegradable waste
- Recyclable waste
- Hazardous waste
- Construction and demolition waste
- Electronic waste

Key Principles

- Segregation at source
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (3R Principle)
- Scientific disposal
- Community participation
- Decentralised processing

Major Challenges in India

- Poor segregation practices
- Overflowing landfills
- Weak municipal capacity
- Informal waste sector exclusion
- Air and groundwater pollution

3. Burden on Urban Local Bodies

- Municipalities face financial and technical challenges in implementing complex centralised waste management systems.

4. Environmental Damage from Landfills

- Poorly managed dumping sites cause groundwater contamination, methane emissions and public health problems in nearby communities.

5. Compliance-Oriented Governance

- The article argues that excessive focus on procedural compliance reduces flexibility and practical innovation in waste management solutions.

Global Practices

Sweden's Recycling Model	Sweden uses decentralised waste segregation and waste-to-energy systems with high recycling efficiency.
Japan's Segregation Culture	Strict household-level waste segregation reduces landfill burden and improves recycling outcomes.
South Korea's Food Waste Policy	Pay-as-you-throw systems encourage reduction and scientific processing of food waste.
Germany's Circular Economy Model	Local recycling systems and producer responsibility reduce urban waste generation.
San Francisco's Zero Waste Initiative	Community participation and mandatory segregation support sustainable urban waste management.

India's Committee / Policy Recommendations

Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 & 2026	Emphasise segregation at source and scientific waste processing practices.
Swachh Bharat Mission	Promotes sanitation, waste segregation and improved municipal waste management infrastructure.
NITI Aayog Circular Economy Recommendations	Encourage recycling, reuse and sustainable resource management practices.
CPCB Guidelines	The Central Pollution Control Board has issued standards for landfill management and waste processing.
Kasturirangan Committee on Urbanisation	Highlighted sustainable urban planning and environmental infrastructure needs.

Way Forward

1. Promote Decentralised Waste Processing

- Local composting and ward-level waste management systems can reduce landfill pressure and transportation costs.

2. Strengthen Segregation at Source

- Households and institutions should practice mandatory segregation for effective recycling and scientific disposal.

3. Integrate Informal Waste Workers

- Waste pickers should receive legal recognition, social security and inclusion in municipal waste systems.

4. Improve Municipal Capacity

- Urban local bodies need better funding, technical support and trained manpower for sustainable waste management.

5. Encourage Community Participation

- Resident welfare associations, schools and local groups should actively participate in waste reduction and recycling efforts.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding solid waste management in India:

1. Segregation at source is an important principle of solid waste management.
2. Decentralised waste management can reduce transportation and landfill burden.
3. Informal waste workers play no role in urban waste recycling systems.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Decentralised waste management systems are more sustainable and socially inclusive than highly centralised models." Examine in the context of India's urban waste crisis. (250 words)

Student Notes

How India is governing its water resources

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Priyanka Vadrevu

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 1:** Distribution of key natural resources
- **GS Paper 2:** Government policies and interventions, cooperative federalism
- **GS Paper 3:** Water conservation, irrigation, environmental governance, sustainable development

Introduction

The article explains that India's water crisis is not only about shortage of water, but also about weak governance, uneven distribution, poor storage, and rising pressure from agriculture and urbanisation. It highlights the need for integrated and sustainable water management.

Key Issues

1. Falling Per Capita Water Availability

- India's population growth has sharply reduced per capita water availability. Example: availability declined from over 5,000 cubic metres to nearly 1,400 cubic metres annually.

2. Excessive Dependence on Groundwater

- Farmers increasingly depend on groundwater because surface irrigation remains inadequate. Punjab and Haryana face severe groundwater depletion due to water-intensive cropping patterns.

3. Fragmented Institutional Structure

- Multiple agencies handle water separately, creating coordination problems. Different departments manage irrigation, drinking water, groundwater, and urban supply independently.

4. Uneven Rainfall and Poor Storage

- India receives large rainfall annually but stores only a small fraction. Flood-prone regions and drought-prone regions coexist due to weak storage infrastructure.

5. Urban Water Stress is Increasing

- Rapid urbanisation has increased pressure on city water systems. Cities like Bengaluru and Chennai regularly experience shortages, tanker dependence, and groundwater exhaustion.

Static Concept

Water Governance in India

Water governance refers to the system through which water resources are managed, regulated, distributed, and conserved by governments, institutions, and communities.

Important Constitutional Provisions

- **Water** is a State subject under Entry 17 of the State List.
- The Union government regulates inter-State rivers under Entry 56 of the Union List.
- Local bodies also play a role through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments.

Major Institutions

- Ministry of Jal Shakti
- Central Water Commission (CWC)
- Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)
- State irrigation and water departments

Major Schemes

- Jal Jeevan Mission
- Atal Bhujal Yojana
- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)
- Namami Gange Programme

Global Practices

Israel – Efficient Irrigation	Israel uses drip irrigation and recycled wastewater extensively to improve agricultural water efficiency.
Singapore – Circular Water Economy	Singapore's NEWater programme recycles treated wastewater for industrial and domestic use.
Australia – River Basin Management	Australia follows integrated river basin management through scientific allocation and community participation.
Netherlands – Water Governance Institutions	The Netherlands uses strong local water boards for flood management and long-term planning.
South Africa – Water Rights Framework	South Africa recognises equitable access to water through legal reforms and community participation.

Important Indian Committee / Policy Recommendations

Mihir Shah Committee	Recommended integrated water management and restructuring of water governance institutions.
NITI Aayog Composite Water Management Index	Suggested data-based monitoring and ranking of States for water performance.
National Water Policy	Advocated water conservation, demand management, recycling, and basin-level planning.
Jal Shakti Ministry Initiatives	Recommended convergence of drinking water, sanitation, and groundwater management programmes.
Central Ground Water Board Recommendations	Called for scientific groundwater mapping and regulation of extraction.

Way Forward

- Promote Water Recycling**
 - Urban local bodies should increase wastewater treatment and reuse for industries, gardening, and construction activities.
- Improve Irrigation Efficiency**
 - States should encourage drip irrigation and crop diversification to reduce excessive groundwater extraction in agriculture.
- Strengthen Local Water Governance**
 - Panchayats and urban bodies must receive greater authority and financial support for water management.
- Build Scientific Data Systems**
 - Real-time monitoring of groundwater, rainfall, and usage can improve planning and policy decisions.
- Encourage Community Participation**
 - Water conservation efforts become more effective when local communities participate in planning and implementation.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding water governance in India:

1. Water is exclusively a Union List subject under the Constitution.
2. The Jal Shakti Ministry acts as the nodal authority for drinking water and sanitation.
3. The Atal Bhujal Yojana focuses on groundwater management.

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "India's water crisis is increasingly becoming a governance challenge rather than merely a hydrological problem." Discuss. Also examine the need for integrated water resource management in India. (250 words)

The 'cinematisation' of politics

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Bhuvanesh Chandar

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 1:** Indian society, youth and social change
- **GS Paper 2:** Democracy, electoral politics, representation
- **GS Paper 4:** Ethics in public life, role of media and political communication

Introduction

The article examines how modern politics is increasingly shaped by cinematic narratives, emotional messaging, and social media imagery rather than ideology or policy debates. Using the recent Tamil Nadu political developments around actor-politician Vijay and TVK, the article argues that many young voters today seek hope, symbolism, and emotional direction in politics.

Key Issues

1. Politics Becoming Narrative-Driven

- Political success increasingly depends on storytelling rather than ideological clarity. Emotional slogans and cinematic imagery often shape public opinion more effectively than policy discussions.

2. Youth Searching for Identity and Direction

- Many young voters feel disconnected from traditional politics. Cinema-style leadership creates emotional attachment and offers symbolic hope during social uncertainty.

3. Social Media Amplifies Emotional Politics

Static Concept

Politics and Popular Culture

Popular culture refers to mass entertainment forms such as cinema, television, music, and social media that influence public opinion and collective behaviour.

Cinema and Politics in India

- Cinema has historically shaped political communication in many States.
- Tamil Nadu witnessed strong film-politics links through leaders like:
 - M.G. Ramachandran
 - J. Jayalalithaa
 - M. Karunanidhi
- Political branding today increasingly relies on:
 - social media narratives
 - personality cults
 - emotional mobilisation
 - visual symbolism

Role of Youth in Electoral Politics

India has one of the world's largest youth electorates. Young voters are heavily influenced by digital media, celebrity culture, and aspirational narratives.

- Short videos, memes, and dramatic campaign visuals influence political behaviour rapidly. Viral content often replaces detailed democratic debate.
- 4. Celebrity Politics Weakens Policy Focus**
 - Public attention may shift from governance performance to personality worship. Elections become centred around image-building rather than institutional accountability.
- 5. Real Social Problems Risk Being Ignored**
 - Issues like crimes against women, unemployment, and governance failures may receive less attention when emotional political branding dominates public discourse.

Global Practices

United States – Celebrity Politics	Film stars and television personalities have successfully entered politics through mass media visibility and public branding.
Ukraine – Media-Based Political Mobilisation	Television and digital campaigns played a major role in shaping public political narratives and leadership appeal.
Italy – Personality-Centred Politics	Media ownership and celebrity influence significantly affected electoral communication and public opinion formation.
South Korea – Digital Political Campaigning	Online fan culture and youth-driven social media campaigns strongly influence political mobilisation.
Brazil – Emotional Political Messaging	Digital platforms increasingly shape elections through emotional narratives, symbolism, and polarised communication.

Important Indian Committee / Institutional Recommendations

Election Commission Recommendations	Called for stronger monitoring of social media campaigning and misinformation during elections.
Law Commission Reports	Highlighted the need for transparency in political funding and ethical electoral practices.
Parliamentary Standing Committee Discussions	Emphasised political literacy and informed democratic participation among youth.
National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Encouraged critical thinking and civic awareness to strengthen democratic engagement.
Supreme Court Observations on Free and Fair Elections	Repeatedly stressed informed voting and ethical campaign conduct as essential democratic values.

Way Forward

- 1. Strengthen Civic Education:** Schools and colleges should promote political awareness, constitutional values, and critical thinking among young citizens.
- 2. Encourage Issue-Based Politics:** Political parties must focus more on governance, jobs, education, and public welfare instead of personality-centred campaigns.
- 3. Improve Media Literacy:** Youth should be trained to identify propaganda, misinformation, and emotionally manipulative political content online.
- 4. Regulate Digital Campaign Transparency:** Election authorities should strengthen disclosure norms for online advertisements and algorithm-driven political messaging.
- 5. Promote Democratic Debate:** Universities, media platforms, and civil society groups should encourage evidence-based public discussions on policy issues.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding popular culture and politics in India:

1. Tamil Nadu has historically witnessed strong links between cinema and electoral politics.
2. Social media has reduced the influence of personality-based political campaigns.
3. Youth voters are increasingly influenced by visual and emotional political narratives.

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Modern democratic politics is increasingly shaped by media narratives, celebrity culture, and emotional mobilisation." Discuss the impact of the 'cinematisation' of politics on democratic accountability and informed citizenship in India. (250 words)

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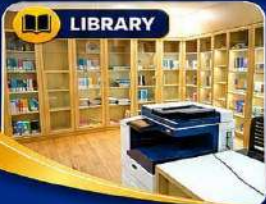
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Testing troubles

Leaks and breaches have destroyed the National Testing Agency's credibility

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Editorial

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 2:** Governance, transparency, accountability, education sector reforms
- **GS Paper 3:** Cybersecurity, internal security challenges, institutional reforms
- **Essay & Ethics:** Trust in public institutions, fairness and accountability

Introduction

The article discusses the growing credibility crisis surrounding the National Testing Agency (NTA) after repeated examination paper leaks, malpractice allegations, and administrative failures. It highlights how these incidents weaken public trust, damage students' futures, and expose weaknesses in India's examination governance system.

Key Issues

1. Repeated Paper Leaks Have Damaged Trust

- Frequent examination leaks create fear and uncertainty among students. NEET-related controversies have raised serious concerns about fairness and credibility.

2. Coaching Mafia and Organised Cheating Networks

- The article points to the involvement of coaching hubs and organised rackets that profit from leaked examination material and impersonation schemes.

3. Weak Security and Monitoring Systems

- Large-scale examinations continue to face technological and administrative loopholes despite digital systems and surveillance mechanisms.

4. Students Face Emotional and Financial Burden

- Repeated cancellations and controversies increase stress, uncertainty, and financial hardship for lakhs of aspirants preparing for competitive examinations.

5. Institutional Accountability Remains Limited

- Despite recurring failures, public confidence declines because responsibility is rarely fixed clearly on officials or institutions involved.

Static Concept

National Testing Agency (NTA)

The National Testing Agency was established in 2017 as an autonomous organisation to conduct transparent, standardised, and technology-driven entrance examinations.

Major Exams Conducted by NTA

- NEET-UG
- JEE Main
- CUET
- UGC-NET

Objectives

- Improve efficiency in entrance examinations
- Reduce burden on educational institutions
- Ensure merit-based admissions
- Use technology for secure testing

Challenges Faced

- Paper leaks
- Cyber vulnerabilities
- Impersonation and cheating networks
- Poor grievance handling
- Lack of accountability mechanisms

Global Practices

South Korea – Strict Exam Security

South Korea follows highly controlled examination systems with surveillance, restricted movement, and centralised monitoring during national exams.

China – Technology-Based Monitoring	China uses biometric verification, AI-based surveillance, and digital tracking to prevent cheating in major examinations.
United Kingdom – Independent Exam Regulation	Independent examination boards and regulators ensure transparency and accountability in assessment systems.
Singapore – Limited High-Stakes Testing	Singapore balances examinations with broader school assessments to reduce extreme pressure on single entrance tests.
Finland – Trust-Based Education System	Finland relies less on centralised high-stakes examinations and focuses more on continuous evaluation and institutional trust.

Important Indian Committee / Policy Recommendations

K. Radhakrishnan Committee	Recommended restructuring NTA operations and strengthening digital security systems for examinations.
National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Suggested transparent, competency-based, and student-friendly assessment reforms.
Parliamentary Discussions on Exam Reforms	Highlighted the need for accountability, secure digital systems, and better grievance redress mechanisms.
Cybersecurity Recommendations	Experts have recommended encryption, biometric verification, and real-time monitoring during online and offline examinations.
Education Ministry Reform Measures	Suggested multi-stage testing, hybrid exam models, and decentralised evaluation systems.

Way Forward

- Strengthen Digital Security Systems**
 - Advanced encryption, biometric checks, and AI-based monitoring should be used to prevent paper leaks and impersonation.
- Fix Institutional Accountability**
 - Officials responsible for security failures and negligence must face clear administrative and legal consequences.
- Regulate Coaching Centres Strictly**
 - Governments should monitor coaching institutes and investigate links between organised cheating networks and exam leaks.
- Improve Student Grievance Mechanisms**
 - Transparent communication and quick grievance redress systems can reduce panic and confusion during controversies.
- Reduce Dependence on Single High-Stakes Exams**
 - A diversified evaluation system with multiple testing opportunities can reduce pressure and malpractice incentives.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the National Testing Agency (NTA):

1. NTA was established to conduct standardised entrance examinations in India.
2. NEET and JEE Main are conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).
3. The K. Radhakrishnan Committee recommended reforms in examination administration.

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. Repeated paper leaks and examination irregularities have raised serious concerns about the credibility of India's testing institutions. Examine the structural challenges in India's examination system and suggest reforms to ensure transparency and fairness. (250 words)

India's labour market shows gains, but challenges persist

PLFS 2025 points to improving employment trends alongside structural gaps in skills and participation

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Phalasha Nagpal

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 2:** Welfare schemes, inclusive development
- **GS Paper 3:** Employment, human resource development, economic growth
- **Essay:** Demographic dividend, women workforce participation, youth employment

Introduction

The article analyses findings from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2025 and argues that India's labour market is showing signs of improvement through rising labour force participation and employment rates. However, deep structural issues such as low-quality jobs, gender inequality, skill gaps, and weak youth employment continue to limit inclusive economic growth.

Key Issues

- 1. Employment Growth is Improving**
 - PLFS 2025 shows rising labour force participation and falling unemployment, indicating gradual recovery in India's labour market after recent economic disruptions.
- 2. Quality of Jobs Remains a Concern**
 - Many workers continue in informal and low-paid employment without social security, especially in agriculture and casual labour sectors.
- 3. Women's Workforce Participation Faces Structural Barriers**

Static Concept

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

PLFS is conducted by the National Statistical Office to measure employment and unemployment trends in India.

Objectives

- Estimate Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)
- Measure Worker Population Ratio (WPR)
- Assess unemployment levels
- Study employment quality and sectoral trends

Important Indicators

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)

Percentage of people working or seeking work in the total population.

Worker Population Ratio (WPR)

Percentage of employed persons in the population.

Unemployment Rate (UR)

Percentage of unemployed persons among the labour force.

Major Employment Challenges in India

- Informal employment
- Low female labour force participation
- Skill mismatch
- Disguised unemployment
- Regional disparities

- Women increasingly enter workforces, but unpaid care work, safety concerns, and unequal wages continue to restrict long-term participation.
- 4. **Skill Mismatch Limits Productive Employment**
 - Higher education expansion has not fully matched industry needs, creating gaps between available jobs and employable skills among youth.
- 5. **NEET Youth Remain a Major Challenge**
 - A large number of young people remain outside employment, education, or training, risking long-term productivity losses for the economy.

Global Practices

Germany – Vocational Training Model	Germany integrates education with industry-linked apprenticeship systems to improve employability and reduce skill mismatch.
Japan – High Female Workforce Participation	Japan promotes childcare support and flexible work systems to improve women's labour participation.
Singapore – Continuous Skill Development	Singapore regularly upgrades worker skills through lifelong learning and government-supported training programmes.
Nordic Countries – Social Security Support	Countries like Sweden provide childcare, parental leave, and social protection to encourage balanced workforce participation.
South Korea – Youth Employment Policies	South Korea promotes technology-based jobs and startup support programmes for young workers.

Important Indian Committee / Policy Recommendations

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Recommended stronger vocational education and industry-oriented skill development.
Economic Survey Recommendations	Highlighted labour-intensive manufacturing and formalisation as key employment drivers.
Skill India Mission	Focused on improving employability through vocational training and certification programmes.
NITI Aayog Employment Recommendations	Suggested reforms in labour-intensive sectors and support for women-led employment growth.
Periodic Labour Force Survey Insights	Recommended better monitoring of employment quality, wages, and labour market transitions.

Way Forward

1. **Expand Labour-Intensive Manufacturing:** Sectors like textiles, food processing, and electronics can create large-scale employment for youth and semi-skilled workers.
2. **Improve Women's Workforce Participation:** Affordable childcare, workplace safety, and equal wage opportunities can help more women enter and remain in employment.
3. **Strengthen Skill Development Systems:** Training programmes must align closely with industry requirements and future technology-driven employment opportunities.
4. **Increase Formal Employment Opportunities:** Policies should encourage enterprises to provide secure jobs with social security and stable wages.
5. **Support NEET Youth Through Targeted Programmes:** Governments should expand apprenticeships, digital skills, and entrepreneurship support for disconnected youth populations.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS):

1. PLFS is conducted by the National Statistical Office.
2. Labour Force Participation Rate measures only employed persons in the population.
3. Informal employment continues to dominate India's labour market.

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. India's labour market has shown improvement in recent years, yet structural challenges continue to limit inclusive employment growth. Discuss with reference to women's participation, skill development, and informal employment. (250 words)

Vande Mataram and the challenge to multicultural nationalism

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Venkatanarayanan S.

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 1:** Modern Indian history, freedom movement
- **GS Paper 2:** Secularism, constitutional values, minority rights
- **GS Paper 4:** Ethical governance, tolerance, pluralism

Introduction

The article discusses the renewed debate surrounding the singing of *Vande Mataram* at official government events. It argues that while the song played an important role during the freedom struggle, parts of it continue to raise concerns regarding religious symbolism and compatibility with India's secular and multicultural constitutional framework.

Key Issues**1. Debate Over Religious Symbolism**

- Critics argue that certain portions of *Vande Mataram* contain imagery linked to Hindu goddess worship, creating discomfort among some minority communities.

2. Secularism Versus Cultural Nationalism

- The article highlights tensions between inclusive constitutional nationalism and religiously framed cultural nationalism in contemporary politics.

3. Historical Context Shapes Interpretation**Static Concept****Nationalism and Secularism in India**

Indian nationalism developed as a broad anti-colonial movement that attempted to unite people across religion, language, caste, and region.

Constitutional Values Related to Secularism

- **Preamble:** Justice, liberty, equality, fraternity
- **Articles 25–28:** Freedom of religion
- Equal respect for all religions by the State

About Vande Mataram

- Written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay
- Originally appeared in the novel *Anandamath*
- Became a major slogan during the freedom movement
- Only the first two stanzas are officially accepted for public functions

Difference Between National Song and National Anthem

- *Jana Gana Mana* is the National Anthem
- *Vande Mataram* is the National Song

- The song emerged during anti-colonial resistance, but its meaning today is debated differently within India's diverse democratic society.

4. **State Neutrality Becomes Important**

- Government endorsement of specific cultural symbols may raise questions regarding equal treatment of all religious communities.

5. **Multicultural Nationalism Requires Inclusion**

- India's democratic stability depends on recognising diversity and ensuring that national identity remains inclusive and pluralistic.

Global Practices

Canada – Multicultural National Identity	Canada officially promotes multiculturalism while respecting linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity.
South Africa – Inclusive National Symbols	South Africa adopted multilingual national symbols after apartheid to represent diverse communities equally.
Indonesia – Unity in Diversity	Indonesia's national philosophy promotes religious coexistence despite vast ethnic and cultural diversity.
United States – Civic Nationalism	American nationalism is largely built around constitutional values and citizenship rather than religion.
European Democracies – Protection of Minority Rights	Many European constitutions emphasise minority protections and secular governance frameworks.

Important Indian Committee / Constitutional Recommendations

Constituent Assembly Debates	Members stressed that India's national identity must remain inclusive and secular after independence.
Sarkaria Commission	Highlighted the importance of cooperative federalism and national integration while respecting diversity.
National Integration Council	Recommended measures to strengthen communal harmony and social cohesion.
Supreme Court Judgments on Secularism	The Court repeatedly described secularism as part of the Constitution's basic structure.
Minority Rights Framework	Constitutional provisions protect religious and cultural freedoms of minority communities across India.

Way Forward

1. **Promote Inclusive Nationalism**

- National symbols and public practices should strengthen unity while respecting India's religious and cultural diversity.

2. **Encourage Constitutional Values**

- Citizenship education should focus on equality, fraternity, secularism, and democratic participation.

3. **Avoid Forced Cultural Practices**

- Patriotism becomes meaningful when participation remains voluntary and respectful rather than compulsory.

4. **Strengthen Interfaith Dialogue**

- Governments and civil society groups should encourage discussions that build trust among different communities.

5. Preserve Historical Context Carefully

- Historical symbols should be understood within their original context while adapting sensitively to modern constitutional values.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Vande Mataram:

1. *Vande Mataram* was written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.
2. The song originally appeared in the novel *Anandamath*.
3. The entire song is officially mandated for all government functions in 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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. Discuss the relationship between nationalism, secularism, and multiculturalism in India. How can democratic societies balance cultural identity with constitutional inclusiveness? (250 words)

Fuel price hike points to tougher measures ahead

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Not Mentioned in Article

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper 3:** Indian Economy, Inflation, Fiscal Policy, External Sector, Energy Security, Balance of Payments
- **Prelims:** Fuel pricing, inflation, crude oil imports, current account deficit, customs duty
- **Essay & Interview:** Economic stability vs welfare burden, global oil shocks and India

Introduction

India imports nearly 85% of its crude oil requirement. Therefore, global crude oil price fluctuations directly affect inflation, fiscal stability, transport costs, and household expenditure. When crude oil prices rise internationally, governments often increase taxes, duties, or fuel prices to manage the current account deficit and protect foreign exchange reserves. However, higher fuel prices increase inflationary pressure across sectors like transport, food, manufacturing, and services.

The article discusses how rising global crude oil prices and domestic fuel price hikes indicate deeper economic stress related to external vulnerability and inflation management.

Key Issues

1. Rising Crude Oil Dependence

- India remains highly dependent on imported crude oil. For example, West Asian tensions immediately increase import bills and pressure the rupee value.

2. Inflationary Impact on Common People



- Higher fuel prices increase transport and logistics costs. Example: vegetables, milk, and daily essentials become costlier after diesel price hikes.
- 3. Pressure on Current Account Deficit**
 - Costly oil imports widen the current account deficit. Example: during global oil shocks, India's foreign exchange reserves face stress.
- 4. Government Revenue vs Public Burden**
 - Governments increase duties on fuel to earn revenue. Example: excise duty hikes help fiscal management but increase household expenditure.
- 5. Risk to Economic Growth**
 - Persistent fuel inflation affects consumption and investment. Example: industries facing higher transport and production costs reduce expansion activities.

Global Practices

Strategic Petroleum Reserves – USA	The United States maintains large emergency oil reserves to reduce sudden supply shocks during international crises.
Fuel Tax Rationalisation – European Union	Several European countries temporarily reduce fuel taxes during crude oil spikes to protect consumers.
Renewable Energy Push – China	China rapidly expands solar and electric vehicle infrastructure to reduce fossil fuel dependence.
Public Transport Investment – Japan	Japan invests heavily in efficient public transport systems to reduce fuel consumption and urban oil demand.
Energy Diversification – Germany	Germany promotes wind and green energy to reduce dependence on imported hydrocarbons.

Indian Committees / Recommendations

Kelkar Committee	Recommended rationalisation of petroleum subsidies and better fiscal discipline in fuel pricing.
Rangarajan Committee	Suggested market-linked fuel pricing mechanism to improve efficiency in the petroleum sector.
Vijay Kelkar Fiscal Reforms	Advocated reducing excessive dependence on indirect taxation including fuel taxes.
NITI Aayog Energy Roadmap	Recommended transition towards clean energy and electric mobility for long-term energy security.
Economic Survey Recommendations	Repeatedly highlighted the need to reduce oil import dependence through renewables and biofuels.

Way Forward

- 1. Expand Renewable Energy**
 - India should accelerate solar, wind, and green hydrogen projects to reduce long-term crude oil dependence and external vulnerability.
- 2. Promote Public Transport**
 - Affordable public transport and electric mobility can reduce fuel consumption and lower urban transport inflation significantly.
- 3. Rationalise Fuel Taxes**

- A balanced taxation structure should protect government revenue without imposing excessive burden on middle and lower-income households.
- 4. **Strengthen Strategic Oil Reserves**
 - India must expand strategic petroleum reserves to handle temporary global disruptions and geopolitical uncertainties effectively.
- 5. **Encourage Domestic Energy Production**
 - Greater investment in domestic exploration, ethanol blending, and biofuels can improve energy security and reduce import bills.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding fuel price hikes in India:

1. India imports a major share of its crude oil requirement.
2. Rising fuel prices can increase inflation in the economy.
3. Higher crude oil prices improve India's current account balance.

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) 1 and 2 only**

UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Q2. "Rising fuel prices are not merely an energy issue but a broader macroeconomic challenge for India."
Discuss in the context of inflation, fiscal stability, and energy security. (250 words)**

Student Notes

Oslo summit must mark India's northward turn

Source: *The Hindu*

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper 2

- India and its neighbourhood
- Bilateral and regional groupings
- International relations

GS Paper 3

- Climate change
- Energy security
- Maritime security
- Science and technology

Introduction

The Arctic region has become strategically important due to climate change, melting ice sheets, new shipping routes, energy reserves, and geopolitical competition. Countries across the world are increasing their engagement in the Arctic for economic, scientific, environmental, and security reasons.

India has been associated with Arctic research for years through its Himadri research station in Norway's Svalbard region. As the Arctic opens due to warming, India sees opportunities in maritime trade, climate research, energy cooperation, and technology partnerships with Nordic countries such as Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland.

The article argues that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Oslo summit with Nordic nations should move beyond symbolic diplomacy and become a strategic long-term partnership.

Prelims Related Facts

- **Arctic Council:** Intergovernmental forum for Arctic cooperation established in 1996.
- **Members:** Canada, Russia, USA, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland.
- **India became an Observer** in the Arctic Council in 2013.
- **Himadri Research Station:** India's Arctic research station located at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard, Norway.
- **Northern Sea Route (NSR):** Shipping route along Russia's Arctic coast connecting Europe and Asia.
- **Svalbard Treaty (1920):** Grants equal rights for commercial activities in Svalbard.



Key Issues

1. **Arctic Becoming a Geopolitical Zone**
 - Melting ice has increased global competition in the Arctic. Example: Russia, NATO countries, and China are expanding strategic activities in the region.
2. **Climate Change Directly Impacts India**
 - Arctic warming affects Indian monsoon patterns and sea-level rise. Example: irregular rainfall and extreme weather events across India.
3. **Importance of New Maritime Routes**
 - Northern Sea Route may reduce shipping time between Europe and Asia. Example: lower transport costs for Indian exports in future.
4. **Nordic Countries as Strategic Partners**

- Nordic nations possess advanced green technology and Arctic expertise. Example: cooperation in clean energy, batteries, and maritime innovation.

5. India's Limited Arctic Infrastructure

- India lacks strong Arctic logistics and shipping capacity. Example: dependence on foreign infrastructure for polar scientific and maritime operations.

Global Practices

Russia's Arctic Expansion	Russia has heavily invested in Arctic ports, icebreakers, and military infrastructure along the Northern Sea Route.
China's Polar Silk Route	China promotes Arctic connectivity under its Belt and Road Initiative through shipping, research, and energy investments.
Norway's Arctic Research Leadership	Norway focuses on climate science, fisheries management, and sustainable Arctic development through advanced polar institutions.
Canada's Indigenous Arctic Governance	Canada includes indigenous communities in Arctic policy-making and environmental protection mechanisms.
European Union Green Cooperation	EU nations promote sustainable shipping, renewable energy, and climate monitoring in Arctic regions.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations (Brief)

India's Arctic Policy (2022)	Focuses on scientific research, environmental protection, economic cooperation, maritime connectivity, and capacity building.
NITI Aayog Energy Recommendations	Recommended diversification of energy sources and green technology partnerships to strengthen energy security.
National Maritime Perspective Plan	Emphasises port-led development, maritime trade efficiency, and strategic shipping infrastructure.
Draft Blue Economy Policy	Highlights sustainable ocean governance, marine resources, and international maritime cooperation.
National Action Plan on Climate Change	Recognises the importance of climate research and adaptation mechanisms linked to global warming impacts.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Arctic Research Presence

- India should expand polar research stations, scientific missions, and climate monitoring systems for long-term Arctic engagement.

2. Build Maritime Partnerships

- Cooperation with Nordic countries in shipping, ports, and maritime technology can improve India's strategic trade capabilities.

3. Invest in Green Technologies

- India must collaborate in hydrogen energy, batteries, and clean shipping technologies to reduce future energy vulnerabilities.

4. Develop Arctic Shipping Capacity

- India should gradually build ice-class shipping expertise and logistics systems for future Arctic trade opportunities.

5. Integrate Climate and Strategic Policy

- Arctic policy must combine climate science, economic planning, and national security objectives through coordinated institutional mechanisms.

Practice Question MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Arctic region:

1. India became an Observer in the Arctic Council in 2013.
2. Himadri is India's Arctic research station located in Norway.
3. The Northern Sea Route passes through the Indian Ocean only.

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) 1 and 2 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Q2. "The Arctic is no longer a distant polar region but an emerging geopolitical and economic frontier."
Discuss India's interests in the Arctic and the significance of cooperation with Nordic countries. (250 words)**

Diversification gains

Source: *The Hindu*

UPSC Syllabus Linkage**GS Paper 3**

- Indian Economy and Planning
- External Sector and Foreign Trade
- Export Competitiveness

Introduction

Export diversification means expanding the range of products, services, and markets to reduce dependence on a few sectors or countries. Economies that diversify exports become more resilient to global shocks, supply-chain disruptions, and geopolitical tensions.

India's export structure has traditionally depended on petroleum products, engineering goods, textiles, and IT services. In recent years, India has tried to improve export competitiveness through production-linked incentives (PLI), free trade agreements, logistics reforms, and market diversification strategies. The article highlights how India's export performance in April 2026 reflects growing diversification despite global uncertainty and regional disruptions.

Key Issues**1. Export Diversification Improving Stability**

- India expanded exports across sectors and markets. Example: engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals showed stronger global demand.

Prelims Related Facts

- **Merchandise Exports:** Physical goods exported by a country.
- **Services Exports:** Exports such as IT, tourism, finance, consulting, and communication services.
- **Trade Deficit:** When imports exceed exports.
- **Current Account Deficit (CAD):** Gap between foreign exchange inflows and outflows.
- **PLI Scheme:** Production Linked Incentive scheme aimed at boosting manufacturing competitiveness.
- **FTA (Free Trade Agreement):** Agreement reducing trade barriers between countries.

2. Global Disruptions Continue to Affect Trade

- West Asian tensions and slowing imports from key regions impacted trade. Example: exports to West Asia declined despite overall export growth.

3. Rising Gold Imports Increasing Pressure

- Higher gold imports widened trade concerns. Example: gold imports surged sharply as investors shifted toward safe assets during uncertainty.

4. Services Exports Becoming a Major Strength

- India's IT and digital services continue expanding globally. Example: services exports now form a larger share of total exports.

5. Competitiveness Requires Long-Term Reform

- Cost, logistics, and quality standards remain critical challenges. Example: Indian manufacturing still faces higher logistics costs than major export economies.

Global Practices

China's Manufacturing Ecosystem	China built export strength through integrated supply chains, industrial clusters, and infrastructure-driven manufacturing growth.
South Korea's Technology Exports	South Korea focused on electronics, innovation, and high-value manufacturing to dominate global export markets.
Germany's Quality-Based Export Model	Germany became globally competitive through engineering excellence, skilled labour, and strong industrial standards.
Vietnam's FTA-Led Growth	Vietnam aggressively used free trade agreements to attract investment and expand exports to Western markets.
Singapore's Logistics Efficiency	Singapore developed world-class ports and trade infrastructure to strengthen export competitiveness.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations

P.K. Kelkar Committee on Logistics	Recommended integrated transport and logistics reforms to reduce export costs and improve trade efficiency.
NITI Aayog Export Preparedness Index	Suggested improving state-level export infrastructure, product diversification, and market access.
Economic Survey Recommendations	Highlighted the need for export diversification and deeper global value chain integration.
Foreign Trade Policy Reforms	Government recommended district-level export promotion and support for MSME exporters.
National Logistics Policy	Focused on reducing logistics costs and improving multimodal connectivity for exporters.

Way Forward

- 1. Improve Manufacturing Competitiveness:** India should reduce logistics costs, improve infrastructure, and strengthen industrial productivity to compete effectively in global markets.
- 2. Expand Export Markets:** Diversifying export destinations can reduce dependence on a few regions and improve resilience during geopolitical disruptions.
- 3. Support MSME Exporters:** Small businesses need easier credit access, simplified compliance systems, and digital trade support for global expansion.
- 4. Strengthen Quality Standards:** India must improve product quality, certification systems, and innovation capacity to compete in advanced international markets.

5. **Promote Services and Technology Exports:** IT, digital services, and knowledge sectors should receive greater policy support to sustain export-led growth.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India's export sector:

1. Export diversification reduces dependence on a few markets and products.
2. Services exports include sectors like IT and finance.
3. A rise in gold imports can widen the trade deficit.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer:

(c) 1, 2 and 3

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Export diversification is essential for building a resilient and globally competitive Indian economy." Discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with India's export strategy. (250 words)

Gender, caregiving, the law in Indian research funding

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Nabeela Siddiqui

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper 2

- Welfare policies for women
- Issues related to gender equality
- Constitutional provisions and social justice

GS Paper 3

- Science and Technology
- Research and innovation ecosystem
- Human resource development

Essay & Ethics

- Women in workforce
- Institutional discrimination
- Equality versus equity debate

Prelims Areas

- Article 15 and Article 16 of Constitution
- Maternity Benefit Act, 1961
- Equality of Opportunity
- Directive Principles of State Policy

Introduction

India's research ecosystem has expanded significantly in recent decades through higher education institutions, scientific laboratories, and public research funding. However, structural barriers continue to affect women's participation in research careers.

One major challenge is the unequal burden of caregiving responsibilities, which impacts women's academic productivity, promotions, grant access, and long-term career continuity. Although constitutional protections and labour laws support gender equality, institutional systems often fail to accommodate caregiving realities. The article examines how Indian research funding structures inadequately recognise caregiving burdens and argues for gender-sensitive reforms in academic and scientific institutions.

Key Issues

1. Caregiving Burden Reduces Research Participation

- Women researchers often face career interruptions due to caregiving duties. Example: maternity-related breaks reduce publication and grant opportunities.



2. Institutional Policies Remain Gender Neutral

- Research systems treat all researchers similarly despite unequal caregiving responsibilities. Example: fixed-age eligibility rules disadvantage women returning after career breaks.

3. Academic Productivity Metrics Are Rigid

- Promotions depend heavily on publications and grants. Example: women with caregiving gaps struggle to maintain competitive research records.

4. Limited Childcare and Support Infrastructure

- Many universities lack adequate childcare support. Example: young mothers often leave research careers due to absence of institutional assistance.

5. Underrepresentation in Senior Positions

- Women remain fewer in leadership and faculty roles. Example: senior scientific and administrative posts continue to be male dominated.

Prelims Related Facts

- **Article 15(3):** Allows the State to make special provisions for women and children.
- **Article 16:** Guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment.
- **Maternity Benefit Act, 1961:** Provides maternity leave and related protections for women employees.
- **UGC:** University Grants Commission regulates higher education standards.
- **SERB:** Science and Engineering Research Board funds scientific research in India.
- **Gender Gap in STEM:** Women remain underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics careers globally.

Global Practices

Flexible Tenure Systems – United States	Several universities pause tenure clocks for researchers during maternity or caregiving periods.
Childcare Support Grants – European Union	European institutions provide research grants that include childcare and family support expenses.
Gender Equity Policies – Australia	Australian universities follow gender equity frameworks for hiring, promotions, and leadership representation.
Re-entry Fellowships – United Kingdom	Special fellowship programs help women scientists restart research careers after career breaks.
Inclusive Research Funding – Canada	Funding agencies consider caregiving interruptions while evaluating academic productivity and eligibility.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020	Emphasises gender inclusion, equal access, and improved participation of women in higher education and research.
SERB POWER Scheme	Supports women researchers through dedicated grants and leadership opportunities in science and technology fields.
UGC Gender Inclusion Measures	Recommended safer campuses, childcare facilities, and equal academic opportunities for women scholars.
Department of Science and Technology Initiatives	Introduced Women Scientist Schemes for re-entry into scientific research after career breaks.
Justice Verma Committee Observations	Highlighted broader institutional reforms required for improving women's participation in professional spaces.

Way Forward

1. Reform Research Evaluation Systems

- Academic assessment should recognise caregiving interruptions instead of relying only on uninterrupted publication records and rigid productivity benchmarks.

2. Expand Childcare Infrastructure

- Universities and laboratories must provide affordable childcare centres and family support systems for researchers with young children.

3. Introduce Flexible Grant Eligibility

- Research grants should include age relaxation and career-break considerations for women researchers facing caregiving responsibilities.

4. Promote Women in Leadership

- Institutions should encourage greater representation of women in senior faculty, administrative, and scientific decision-making positions.

5. Build Inclusive Academic Culture

- Research institutions must create supportive work environments that reduce discrimination and encourage long-term participation of women scholars.

Practice Question**Q1. Consider the following statements:**

1. Article 15(3) permits special provisions for women and children.
2. The Maternity Benefit Act applies only to government employees.
3. SERB POWER initiative aims to support women researchers.

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) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Gender-neutral institutional policies may sometimes deepen structural inequalities." Discuss in the context of women's participation in India's research and academic ecosystem. (250 words)

Student Notes

Improving efficiency of fertilizer use in India

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Nandula Raghuram

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper 3

- Agriculture and allied sectors
- Food security
- Fertilizer subsidy
- Sustainable agriculture
- Environmental conservation

Prelims Areas

- Neem-coated urea
- Nano urea
- Green ammonia
- Soil Health Card Scheme
- PM-PRANAM Scheme
- Biofertilizers and organic farming

Introduction

Fertilizers play a critical role in improving agricultural productivity and ensuring food security. India is one of the world's largest consumers of fertilizers, especially urea, DAP, and potash. However, excessive and imbalanced fertilizer use has created problems such as soil degradation, groundwater pollution, declining soil fertility, and rising subsidy burdens.

India imports a large share of fertilizers and raw materials, making the sector vulnerable to global supply disruptions and price shocks. Sustainable nutrient management aims to maintain crop productivity while reducing environmental damage and import dependence.

The article discusses the urgent need for improving fertilizer efficiency, reducing wasteful usage, and promoting balanced and sustainable farming practices.

Key Issues

1. Excessive Fertilizer Use Damaging Soil

- Overuse of fertilizers reduces soil fertility and organic content. Example: repeated urea-heavy cultivation lowers long-term agricultural productivity.

2. Rising Import Dependence

- India imports major fertilizer inputs and raw materials. Example: global conflicts increase fertilizer prices and subsidy burdens on government finances.

3. Imbalanced Nutrient Application

- Farmers often overuse nitrogen fertilizers compared to phosphatic and potassic nutrients. Example: urea usage remains disproportionately high in rice cultivation.

4. Environmental Pollution Increasing

- Excess fertilizers pollute water bodies and release greenhouse gases. Example: nitrate contamination affects groundwater quality in farming regions.

5. Weak Adoption of Sustainable Alternatives

Prelims Related Facts

- **Urea:** Nitrogen-based fertilizer widely used in Indian agriculture.
- **DAP (Di-Ammonium Phosphate):** Major phosphatic fertilizer.
- **Neem-Coated Urea:** Reduces diversion and improves nitrogen-use efficiency.
- **PM-PRANAM Scheme:** Encourages states to reduce excessive fertilizer use.
- **Nano Urea:** Liquid fertilizer developed to improve nutrient efficiency.
- **Green Ammonia:** Ammonia produced using renewable energy sources.
- **Biofertilizers:** Microorganisms used to improve nutrient availability naturally.

- Biofertilizers and organic inputs remain underutilised. Example: many farmers still lack awareness about integrated nutrient management practices.

Global Practices

Precision Farming – United States	American farms use sensors and GPS-based fertilizer application to minimise waste and improve nutrient efficiency.
Organic Farming Expansion – European Union	Several European countries promote organic agriculture through subsidies and strict environmental standards.
Soil Testing Systems – China	China expanded large-scale soil testing and customised nutrient management programs for balanced fertilizer application.
Integrated Nutrient Management – Japan	Japan combines organic manure, compost, and chemical fertilizers to maintain long-term soil health.
Green Ammonia Research – Australia	Australia is investing heavily in green ammonia production using renewable energy sources.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations

Soil Health Card Scheme Recommendations	Promoted scientific fertilizer application based on soil nutrient assessment and balanced farming practices.
PM-PRANAM Initiative	Encourages states to reduce chemical fertilizer consumption and promote sustainable agricultural methods.
National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture	Recommended integrated nutrient management and efficient water-fertilizer use systems.
Inter-Ministerial Committee on Fertilizer Reforms	Suggested improving fertilizer-use efficiency and reducing subsidy leakages.
Economic Survey Recommendations	Highlighted the need to reduce fertilizer subsidy burdens through direct benefit reforms and balanced nutrient application.

Way Forward

- Promote Balanced Nutrient Use**
 - Farmers should adopt balanced fertilizer application based on soil testing instead of excessive dependence on nitrogen-based fertilizers.
- Expand Organic and Biofertilizer Usage**
 - Government must encourage composting, biofertilizers, and integrated nutrient management to improve long-term soil productivity.
- Strengthen Farmer Awareness**
 - Agricultural extension services should educate farmers about efficient fertilizer practices and environmental impacts of overuse.
- Invest in Green Fertilizer Technologies**
 - India should expand green ammonia and nano-fertilizer technologies to reduce import dependence and environmental damage.
- Improve Precision Agriculture**
 - Use of drones, sensors, and digital farming tools can reduce fertilizer waste and improve agricultural efficiency significantly.

Practice Question

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding fertilizer use in India:

1. Neem-coated urea improves nitrogen-use efficiency.
2. Excessive fertilizer use can degrade soil quality.
3. India is fully self-sufficient in fertilizer raw materials.

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) 1 and 2 only**

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q4. "Improving fertilizer-use efficiency is essential for sustainable agriculture and food security in India."

Discuss the major challenges and suggest suitable reforms. (250 words)

Student Notes 

Drone mania, separating hype from battlefield reality

Source: The Hindu

Writer: Manmohan Bahadur

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper 3:

- Internal Security and Defence Technology
- Science and Technology in Security
- Challenges to Border Security
- Cyber Security and Emerging Technologies

GS Paper 2:

- India's strategic and security interests in neighbourhood regions

Introduction

Drones or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) are remotely operated or autonomous flying systems used for surveillance, logistics, reconnaissance, and combat operations. Modern warfare increasingly uses drones because they reduce risks to soldiers, improve precision targeting, and provide real-time intelligence.

However, military experts argue that drones alone cannot replace conventional air power, infantry, missiles, or strategic military planning. Warfare continues to depend on integration between technology, doctrine, logistics, and trained personnel.

Key Issues from the Article

1. Overestimation of Drone Capabilities

- Public discourse often treats drones as war-winning weapons alone. Example: Social media narratives exaggerated drone effectiveness during recent India-Pakistan military tensions.

2. Need for Counter-Drone Systems

- Growing drone usage creates urgent defence vulnerabilities. Example: Integrated air defence systems were required to intercept hostile Pakistani drone incursions.

3. Blurring of Battlefield Boundaries

- Long-range drones can strike deep inside enemy territory. Example: Ukraine-style drone attacks expanded conflict zones far beyond traditional frontline areas.

4. Ethical Concerns over Autonomous Weapons

- AI-enabled drones raise moral and legal concerns. Example: Fully autonomous systems may make lethal decisions without direct human control.

5. Strategic Infrastructure Vulnerability

- Critical infrastructure faces rising drone threats. Example: Military bases, energy networks, and communication hubs increasingly require specialised aerial protection systems.

Prelims Related Facts

- UAV stands for Unmanned Aerial Vehicle.
- Kamikaze drones are also called loitering munitions.
- Israel's Iron Dome is an air defence system.
- Counter-UAS systems are used to neutralise hostile drones.
- Artificial Intelligence is increasingly integrated into autonomous weapons systems.
- India's Operation Sindoor highlighted extensive drone usage in modern conflicts.
- FPV drones use fibre-optic or radio-guided first-person control systems.

Global Practices

Israel's Integrated Air Defence

Israel combines Iron Dome, radar systems, and electronic warfare for rapid drone interception and layered defence.

Ukraine's Drone Warfare Innovation	Ukraine effectively integrated low-cost drones with battlefield intelligence and artillery coordination during the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
U.S. Counter-UAS Development	The United States is developing advanced laser weapons and AI-based systems for neutralising drone swarms.
European Drone Wall Initiative	European nations are creating integrated surveillance and interception systems to protect borders against drone intrusions.
China's Drone Manufacturing Ecosystem	China dominates commercial drone production through strong industrial supply chains and large-scale domestic manufacturing capabilities.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations (Brief)

Defence Modernisation Initiatives	India emphasises indigenous drone production under the Atmanirbhar Bharat framework for defence preparedness.
DRDO Research Programmes	DRDO is developing anti-drone technologies, electronic warfare systems, and autonomous defence platforms.
Chief of Defence Staff Reforms	Integrated theatre commands and joint operations aim to improve coordination in drone-based warfare scenarios.
Ministry of Civil Aviation Drone Rules	India introduced simplified Drone Rules 2021 to regulate civilian drone usage and encourage innovation.
National Security Discussions	Security agencies have recommended stronger protection for critical infrastructure against drone-based threats.

Way Forward

- Strengthen Counter-Drone Infrastructure:** India must deploy integrated radar, electronic warfare, and interception systems across borders, military bases, and critical infrastructure locations.
- Promote Indigenous Drone Manufacturing:** Domestic research and private-sector innovation should reduce dependence on foreign drone technologies and components.
- Develop Clear Military Doctrine:** Armed forces must integrate drone operations with conventional warfare instead of treating drones as standalone battlefield solutions.
- Build Skilled Human Resources:** Training specialised drone operators, cyber experts, and electronic warfare professionals is essential for future security preparedness.
- Create Ethical and Legal Frameworks:** India should establish clear rules regarding autonomous weapons, surveillance limits, and accountability in AI-enabled warfare systems.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding drones and modern warfare:

- Loitering munitions are a form of kamikaze drones.
- Counter-UAS systems are designed to neutralise hostile drones.
- Drones have completely replaced conventional air power in modern warfare.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Drones are transforming modern warfare, but they cannot substitute comprehensive military capability." Examine the opportunities and security challenges posed by drone technology for India. (250 words)

Preparing India for a credible digital Census

Source: The Hindu

Writer: K. Narayanan Unni

UPSC Syllabus Linkage**GS Paper 2:**

- Governance and Public Policy
- Welfare Schemes and Targeted Delivery
- Federalism and Administrative Reforms

GS Paper 3:

- Science and Technology Applications
- Digital Governance and Data Management

Introduction

A Census is the official enumeration of population conducted periodically by the government to collect demographic, economic, and social data. India conducts the Census under the Census Act, 1948. Census data is essential for policy planning, welfare delivery, delimitation of constituencies, reservation policies, and development programmes.

India is now moving toward a digital Census model using mobile devices and electronic data collection systems, which can improve speed, efficiency, and data accuracy if implemented carefully.

Key Issues**Q3. Challenges in Digital Enumeration**

- Digital surveys require strong technological preparedness and trained enumerators. Example: Poor internet connectivity in rural areas may affect real-time data collection.

Q4. Accuracy of Population Data

- Incorrect household details can distort welfare planning and representation. Example: Under-counting migrant workers affects urban policy allocation.

Q5. NRI and Migration-related Complications

- Counting overseas Indians creates methodological difficulties. Example: Kerala and Punjab have significant outward migration affecting demographic calculations.

Q6. Respondent Fatigue and Survey Complexity

- Lengthy questionnaires reduce response quality. Example: Excessive follow-up questions may lead respondents to provide inaccurate information.

Q7. Data Privacy and Security Concerns**Prelims Related Facts**

- Census in India is conducted by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner.
- The first synchronous Census in India was conducted in 1881.
- Census is conducted under the Census Act, 1948.
- India follows the de facto method of Census enumeration.
- Population Census is a Union subject under Article 246.
- Census data is important for delimitation of constituencies.
- National Population Register (NPR) is different from Census.

- Digital data collection increases risks of misuse and breaches. Example: Personal demographic information requires strong cyber protection safeguards.

Global Practices

United States Digital Census	The U.S. Census increasingly uses online self-enumeration systems combined with physical verification mechanisms.
Estonia's Digital Governance Model	Estonia integrates population databases with secure digital identity systems for efficient public administration.
Nordic Countries' Population Registers	Countries like Sweden maintain continuously updated population registers instead of relying entirely on decennial enumeration.
Canada's Mixed Census Approach	Canada combines online questionnaires with field verification for better inclusion and data reliability.
United Nations Census Guidelines	The UN recommends digital enumeration alongside strict safeguards for privacy, inclusion, and data transparency.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations (Brief)

Registrar General's Modernisation Efforts	Recommended use of handheld digital devices and real-time monitoring systems for future Census operations.
Digital India Programme	Supports integration of digital governance platforms and improved public service databases.
NITI Aayog Recommendations	Emphasised evidence-based policymaking using reliable demographic and socio-economic datasets.
Parliamentary Discussions on Data Governance	Highlighted the need for stronger privacy protections and accurate digital data collection frameworks.
Data Protection Framework Initiatives	India's evolving digital governance structure seeks safeguards against misuse of citizens' personal information.

Way Forward

- Conduct Extensive Field Testing**
 - Digital Census systems should be tested in rural, urban, tribal, and remote areas before nationwide implementation.
- Train Enumerators Properly**
 - Officials must receive practical training in technology usage, communication skills, and data verification procedures.
- Simplify Census Questionnaires**
 - Shorter and clearly worded questionnaires can reduce respondent confusion and improve data accuracy.
- Strengthen Data Security Systems**
 - Strong encryption and legal safeguards are necessary to protect citizens' personal demographic information.
- Improve Public Awareness**
 - Citizens should be informed about the importance of Census participation and confidentiality protections.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Census in India:

1. Census in India is conducted under the Census Act, 1948.
2. India primarily follows the de jure method of Census enumeration.
3. Census data is used for delimitation of constituencies.

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) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. Discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with conducting a digital Census in India. How can technology improve governance while ensuring inclusion and data credibility? (250 words)

Ladakh Seeks Belonging Through Representation

Source

The Hindu Editorial – Gitanjali J. Angmo

GS Paper Relevance
GS Paper II

- Federalism and Centre–State Relations
- Union Territories and Governance
- Decentralisation and Local Self-Government
- Sixth Schedule and Tribal Administration
- Representation and Democratic Participation

GS Paper III

- Border Area Development
- Internal Security and Strategic Regions
- Inclusive Development

Introduction
Representation as the Foundation of Democratic Integration

Democratic governance derives legitimacy not merely from administration but from meaningful political representation. The debate surrounding Ladakh's demand for constitutional safeguards reflects a broader question: how can geographically remote, strategically sensitive, and culturally distinct regions be integrated into the national mainstream while preserving their identity and ensuring adequate participation in decision-making? For Ladakh, representation is increasingly emerging as the pathway to both development and belonging.

Key Issues
1. Democratic Deficit in Governance

- Following its conversion into a Union Territory without a legislature, Ladakh lacks a directly elected legislative institution capable of shaping laws and policies.

Example: Major decisions relating to land, development and resource utilisation are primarily administered through central institutions.

2. Demand for Constitutional Safeguards

Many groups seek:

- Sixth Schedule protection
- Safeguards for tribal identity

- Protection of land ownership
 - Employment safeguards for local residents
 - The concern is preservation of Ladakh's unique socio-cultural character.
- 3. Strategic Importance vs Local Participation**
- Ladakh occupies a critical position along India's northern borders and remains central to national security.
 - However, strategic importance alone cannot substitute for local democratic participation in governance.
- 4. Developmental Challenges of High-Altitude Regions**
- Ladakh faces:
- Harsh climatic conditions
 - Sparse population
 - Difficult connectivity
 - Limited economic diversification
 - Policy interventions require local contextual understanding rather than uniform administrative approaches.
- 5. Resource Governance and Environmental Concerns**
- Issues relating to:
 - Tourism expansion
 - Renewable energy projects
 - Water resources
 - Land management
 - require greater participation of local communities to ensure sustainable development.

Key Facts for Prelims

1. **Ladakh became a Union Territory on 31 October 2019** after the enactment of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.
2. It comprises two districts:
 - **Leh**
 - **Kargil**
3. Ladakh shares borders with:
 - China (Tibet Autonomous Region/Xinjiang)
 - Pakistan-occupied territories
4. **Article 370** was abrogated in August 2019.
5. The **Sixth Schedule** provides autonomous administration for tribal areas through Autonomous District Councils.
6. Currently applicable in:
 - Assam
 - Meghalaya
 - Tripura
 - Mizoram
7. Ladakh has elected:
 - **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh**
 - **LAHDC, Kargil**

Global Practices

Greenland (Denmark)	Enjoys substantial self-governance despite strategic significance and small population.
Nunavut (Canada)	Provides indigenous communities institutional representation through devolved governance mechanisms.
Faroe Islands (Denmark)	Maintain legislative autonomy while remaining within the national constitutional framework.
Åland Islands (Finland)	Protected autonomy safeguards local culture, language and democratic participation.
Key Lesson	Strategic territories are often governed more effectively when local identity and representation are institutionally recognised.

Indian Policies / Committees

Sixth Schedule Framework

Provides:

1. Autonomous District Councils
2. Local legislative powers
3. Cultural protection
4. Land management safeguards

Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs)

Established to:

1. Facilitate local planning
2. Improve decentralised governance
3. Address regional developmental needs

However, their powers remain limited compared to a full legislature.

Punchhi Commission (2010)

Recommended:

1. Strengthening cooperative federalism
2. Greater decentralisation
3. Better accommodation of regional aspirations

Second Administrative Reforms Commission

Emphasised:

1. Citizen participation
2. Decentralised governance
3. Responsive administration in geographically diverse regions

Way Forward

1. Institutionalise Meaningful Representation

Create mechanisms that ensure local participation in decisions involving:

- Land
- Development
- Natural resources
- Employment

2. Evaluate Appropriate Constitutional Safeguards

Examine feasible models including:

- Sixth Schedule provisions
- Special administrative arrangements
- Enhanced local autonomy

3. Strengthen Local Democratic Institutions

Provide greater functional and financial powers to:

- Hill Development Councils
- Local self-governments
- Community institutions

4. Promote Inclusive Border Development

Link strategic infrastructure projects with:

- Local employment generation

- Skill development
- Social infrastructure expansion

5. Adopt Region-Specific Governance Models

- Recognise that high-altitude and border regions require differentiated policy frameworks rather than uniform administrative solutions.

6. Balance National Security and Democratic Aspirations

- Ensure that strategic considerations coexist with constitutional values of participation, accountability and representation.

Conclusion

Ladakh's demand is fundamentally not a contest between national integration and regional identity; rather, it reflects a quest for meaningful participation within the Indian democratic framework. Sustainable integration of strategically important border regions requires institutions that combine effective governance, constitutional safeguards and local representation. A democracy is strengthened when citizens feel not merely administered, but genuinely represented.

Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution:

1. It provides for Autonomous District Councils in certain tribal areas.
2. It currently applies to tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
3. Autonomous District Councils under the Sixth Schedule possess certain legislative and administrative powers.

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

Explanation:

The Sixth Schedule provides Autonomous District Councils with specified legislative, judicial and administrative powers and currently applies to tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Mains Question

Q2. "Democratic representation is as important as administrative efficiency in governing strategically sensitive border regions." Discuss in the context of Ladakh's demand for constitutional safeguards and greater political representation. (250 words)

Student Notes

Interpreting the 'rise' of the Cockroach Janta Party

Source: The Hindu

Writer: Soumyajit Bhat

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper 2:

- Democracy and Political Processes
- Role of Civil Society and Social Movements
- Social Media and Public Opinion

GS Paper 1:

- Indian Society and Social Change
- Youth Movements and Urban Politics

Essay & Ethics:

- Technology and Democracy
- Collective Action and Public Responsibility

Introduction

Modern democratic politics is increasingly shaped by digital communication platforms, social media mobilisation, and emotional public narratives. Online campaigns can rapidly create collective outrage, political identity, and protest movements.

However, digital mobilisation often lacks long-term organisational structure, ideological clarity, and institutional continuity. Political scientists therefore distinguish between temporary emotional mobilisation and sustained democratic transformation built through institutions, leadership, and social organisation.

Key Issues

1. Rise of Emotional Digital Mobilisation

- Social media creates rapid emotional solidarity among citizens. Example: Viral hashtags and memes can suddenly mobilise thousands without formal political organisation.

2. Weak Institutional Foundations

- Online movements often lack durable leadership and structure. Example: Many protest campaigns fade after initial public attention declines.

3. Fragmentation of Collective Politics

- Digital politics encourages individualised participation rather than long-term community organisation. Example: Citizens engage through posts and reactions instead of sustained activism.

4. Influence of Platform Algorithms

- 5. Algorithms prioritise emotional and sensational content. Example: Anger-driven political narratives spread faster than nuanced policy discussions on social media platforms.

6. Crisis of Traditional Political Structures

- Conventional political institutions struggle to engage younger populations. Example: Youth increasingly prefer digital activism over participation through unions or party structures.

Prelims Related Facts

- Social movements are collective efforts to bring social or political change.
- Digital platforms influence political communication and public opinion formation.
- Civil society organisations act as intermediaries between citizens and the State.
- Representative democracy depends on institutions, parties, and public participation.
- Social media algorithms often amplify emotionally charged content.
- Public sphere theory is associated with democratic discussion and citizen engagement.
- Decentralised protests are common in contemporary political mobilisation.

Global Practices

Arab Mobilisation	Spring	Social media platforms played a major role in coordinating anti-government protests across several West Asian countries.
Hong Kong Networks	Protest	Decentralised digital communication enabled rapid protest mobilisation without centralised leadership structures.
Black Lives Movement	Matter	Online campaigns in the United States transformed local incidents into large-scale global social justice mobilisation.
European Regulation	Digital	European countries increasingly regulate online platforms to reduce misinformation and algorithmic manipulation.
Taiwan's Technology Model	Civic	Taiwan uses digital participation platforms to encourage constructive democratic engagement between citizens and government institutions.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations (Brief)

Information Technology Rules	India introduced regulations to improve accountability of digital intermediaries and social media platforms.
Parliamentary Discussions on Data Governance	Committees highlighted concerns regarding misinformation, digital manipulation, and online political influence.
Election Commission Monitoring	The Election Commission increasingly monitors digital campaign practices during elections.
Data Protection Framework	India's digital governance framework aims to protect user privacy and regulate misuse of online data.
National Education Policy (NEP)	NEP promotes critical thinking and digital literacy to strengthen informed democratic participation.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Democratic Institutions

- Political participation should move beyond online outrage toward stronger local organisations, unions, student bodies, and civic associations.

2. Promote Digital Literacy

- Citizens must learn to identify misinformation, emotional manipulation, and algorithm-driven political narratives on social media platforms.

3. Encourage Constructive Public Debate

- Governments, universities, and media institutions should create spaces for informed and issue-based democratic discussions.

4. Regulate Platform Accountability

- Social media companies should ensure transparency regarding algorithms, political advertisements, and coordinated misinformation campaigns.

5. Build Long-term Civic Participation

- Youth engagement should be connected with policy discussions, local governance, and institutional democratic processes instead of temporary online activism.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Social media platforms can rapidly amplify political mobilisation through emotional narratives.

2. Decentralised digital movements always develop strong institutional structures over time.
3. Civil society organisations play an important role in democratic participation.

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) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. Discuss how digital platforms are reshaping political mobilisation and democratic participation in contemporary societies. What challenges do decentralised online movements pose for institutional democracy? (250 words)

Cyber warfare is outpacing global legal accountability

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Jyoti Singh

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper II

- International Relations
- Global institutions and international law
- Security challenges and cyber governance

GS Paper III

- Cyber Security
- Internal Security challenges
- Role of technology in security architecture

Introduction

Cyber warfare refers to the use of digital technologies to attack another country's information systems, critical infrastructure, communication networks, or defence systems. Unlike traditional warfare, cyber attacks are often anonymous, borderless, and difficult to attribute.

Modern cyber operations include:

- Data theft
- Malware attacks
- Ransomware
- Infrastructure sabotage
- Election interference
- Disinformation campaigns

International law struggles to keep pace because identifying the attacker, proving intent, and fixing state responsibility are extremely difficult in cyberspace.

Key Issues

1. Difficulty in Attribution

- Cyber attacks are routed through multiple servers and fake identities, making it difficult to identify the real attacker. Example: ransomware attacks using foreign proxy networks.

2. Weak International Legal Framework

Prelims Related Facts

- **Tallinn Manual:** Non-binding academic study on how international law applies to cyber warfare.
- **Budapest Convention:** International treaty on cybercrime adopted by the Council of Europe.
- **UN Group of Governmental Experts (UN GGE):** Works on norms for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace.
- **Critical Information Infrastructure (CII)** in India is protected under the IT Act, 2000.
- **CERT-In** is India's national cyber emergency response agency.

- Existing international laws were framed for physical warfare, not digital conflicts. Example: no universally accepted definition of “cyber aggression” currently exists.
- 3. State Responsibility Remains Unclear**
 - Countries often deny involvement in cyber operations because evidence standards are weak. This creates accountability gaps in international disputes and conflicts.
- 4. Rise of Hybrid Warfare**
 - Cyber attacks are now combined with misinformation, espionage, and economic disruption. Example: attacks targeting power grids, banking systems, or election databases.
- 5. India’s Growing Vulnerability**
 - Rapid digitalisation has expanded India’s cyber risk exposure in banking, governance, defence, and digital payments infrastructure requiring stronger cyber preparedness.

Global Practices

European Union Cybersecurity Framework	The EU has common cyber standards, data protection rules, and coordinated cyber response mechanisms among member countries.
U.S. Cyber Command	The United States has established dedicated cyber military units for offensive and defensive cyber operations.
NATO Cyber Defence Policy	NATO recognises cyber attacks as potential triggers for collective defence under Article 5 in serious situations.
Estonia’s Cyber Security Model	After the 2007 cyber attack, Estonia developed advanced digital resilience systems and cyber preparedness institutions.
Israel’s Cyber Innovation Ecosystem	Israel integrates private technology firms, defence agencies, and startups for rapid cyber innovation and security response.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations

National Cyber Security Policy, 2013	Recommended creation of secure cyber ecosystems, skilled manpower, and institutional coordination mechanisms.
Data Protection Committee (Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee)	Suggested stronger legal safeguards for personal data and digital governance accountability.
Parliamentary Standing Committee on IT	Recommended strengthening cyber forensic capacity and cyber awareness among institutions.
National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC)	Advised protection of sectors like banking, telecom, energy, and transport from cyber threats.
Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) Guidelines	Recommended mandatory reporting of cyber incidents and improved digital monitoring systems.

Way Forward

- 1. Create Global Cyber Rules**
 - Countries should develop universally accepted cyber warfare norms under the United Nations framework for accountability and conflict prevention.
- 2. Strengthen Cyber Infrastructure**
 - India must modernise cyber defence systems protecting banking, telecom, defence, transport, and power sectors from advanced attacks.
- 3. Improve Attribution Capability**

- Investment in cyber forensics and artificial intelligence can help identify attackers faster and improve legal accountability.

4. **Build Skilled Cyber Workforce**

- Universities and technical institutions should promote specialised cyber security education, ethical hacking, and digital defence training.

5. **Increase International Cooperation**

- India should actively participate in cyber intelligence sharing, joint exercises, and digital security partnerships with trusted countries.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding cyber warfare:

1. The Tallinn Manual is a legally binding international treaty on cyber warfare.
2. CERT-In is India's national cyber incident response agency.
3. Attribution of cyber attacks is often difficult due to anonymity in cyberspace.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer:

- (a) 2 and 3 only**

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Cyber warfare has emerged as a major challenge to international peace and state sovereignty, while legal accountability mechanisms remain weak." Discuss with reference to India's cyber security preparedness. (250 words)

Student Notes

How resilient is our grid system?

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: M. Kalyanaraman

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper III

- Infrastructure: Energy sector
- Electricity and power reforms
- Disaster management and critical infrastructure
- Inclusive growth and sustainable development

GS Paper II

- Governance and public service delivery
- Centre-State coordination in infrastructure sectors

Introduction

An electricity grid is an interconnected network used for generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity. A resilient grid can withstand sudden increases in demand, natural disasters, equipment failures, and cyber or technical disruptions without large-scale blackouts.

India's power sector has expanded rapidly with renewable energy integration, rising urbanisation, electric mobility, and industrial growth. However, grid resilience depends not only on generation capacity but also on transmission networks, distribution companies (DISCOMs), forecasting systems, storage capacity, and real-time demand management.

Key Issues

1. Rising Peak Electricity Demand

- India's electricity demand is increasing rapidly because of heatwaves, urbanisation, and industrial growth, stressing transmission and distribution systems during summer months.

2. Weak Distribution Infrastructure

- Many DISCOMs suffer from poor financial health and outdated infrastructure. Example: transformer failures and local outages in several Indian cities during peak demand.

3. Underreporting of Power Deficits

- Experts argue actual shortages remain hidden because several local outages and unserved demands are not officially reflected in national statistics.

4. Renewable Energy Integration Challenges

- Solar and wind power are intermittent sources requiring strong storage and balancing systems. Grid instability rises when renewable forecasting remains weak.

5. Transmission Bottlenecks

- Electricity generated in surplus regions often cannot efficiently reach deficit regions because of weak transmission corridors and delayed infrastructure upgrades.

Prelims Related Facts

- **National Load Dispatch Centre (NLDC):** Coordinates power system operations at the national level.
- **State Load Dispatch Centres (SLDCs):** Manage state-level grid operations and power balancing.
- **DISCOMs:** Distribution companies supplying electricity to consumers.
- **Peak Power Demand:** Maximum electricity demand at a particular time.
- India operates under **"One Nation, One Grid, One Frequency."**
- Renewable-rich states face grid balancing challenges due to intermittent solar and wind power.

Global Practices



Smart Grid Systems – United States	The U.S. uses digital smart grids with automated fault detection and real-time monitoring to improve electricity reliability.
Germany’s Renewable Integration Model	Germany integrates renewable energy using storage systems, flexible markets, and advanced forecasting mechanisms.
Japan’s Disaster-Resilient Grid	Japan has developed highly resilient electricity systems with underground cabling and emergency backup mechanisms after earthquake experiences.
China’s Ultra High Voltage (UHV) Corridors	China developed long-distance UHV transmission lines to transfer electricity efficiently across regions.
Nordic Power Pool	Nordic countries use integrated regional electricity markets for efficient energy balancing and cross-border supply stability.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations

Electricity Act Reforms	Recommended improving efficiency, competition, and private participation in transmission and distribution sectors.
UDAY Scheme Recommendations	Focused on financial restructuring of DISCOMs and reducing operational losses.
National Smart Grid Mission	Suggested digital monitoring, automated substations, and advanced metering infrastructure.
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy	Recommended strengthening transmission networks and improving renewable integration planning.
Integrated Resource Planning Initiatives	Advised better forecasting of electricity demand, climate impacts, and renewable capacity addition.

Way Forward

1. **Modernise Distribution Infrastructure**

- India should upgrade transformers, substations, and local distribution networks to reduce outages and improve electricity reliability during peak demand periods.

2. **Strengthen Renewable Integration**

- Battery storage systems and better forecasting tools are necessary for stable integration of solar and wind energy into the national grid.

3. **Improve DISCOM Financial Health**

- Reducing transmission losses, improving billing efficiency, and timely subsidy payments can strengthen state electricity distribution companies sustainably.

4. **Expand Transmission Corridors**

- High-capacity interstate transmission networks should be developed to efficiently move surplus electricity to deficit regions across India.

5. **Promote Smart Grid Technology**

- Real-time monitoring, smart meters, and automated grid management systems can improve operational efficiency and prevent large-scale blackouts.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India’s electricity grid system:

1. National Load Dispatch Centre coordinates grid operations at the national level.

2. Renewable energy sources like solar and wind provide uninterrupted electricity supply throughout the day.
3. DISCOMs are responsible for electricity distribution to consumers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer:

- (a) 1 and 3 only**

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "India's growing electricity demand has exposed structural weaknesses in its power distribution and grid management system." Discuss the challenges in ensuring grid resilience and suggest suitable reforms. (250 words)

Student Notes 

‘India, Nordic countries are on the same page on peace’

Source: *The Hindu*

Interviewee: Kristrún Mjöll Frostadóttir

Interviewer: Suhasini Haidar

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper II

- India and its bilateral relations
- International groupings and agreements
- India's foreign policy and diplomacy

GS Paper III

- Energy security
- Renewable energy cooperation
- Economic diplomacy and technology partnerships

Introduction

India's engagement with Nordic countries has gained strategic importance in recent years. The Nordic region includes Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. These countries are known for innovation, renewable energy leadership, climate action, advanced technology, and high human development indicators. The India-Nordic partnership focuses on:

- Green energy
- Arctic cooperation
- Trade and investment
- Innovation ecosystems
- Sustainable development
- Cultural and people-to-people ties

The article discusses how geopolitical tensions, climate concerns, and changing global power structures are reshaping India-Nordic cooperation.

Key Issues

1. Expanding India-Nordic Strategic Partnership

- India and Nordic countries are strengthening ties in renewable energy, technology, innovation, and sustainable development amid changing global geopolitical conditions.

2. Different Approaches Towards Russia

- Nordic countries strongly support Ukraine, while India follows strategic autonomy. Despite differences, both sides continue diplomatic engagement and cooperation.

3. Renewable Energy as a Major Cooperation Area

- Iceland sees India as a major partner in geothermal and green energy sectors because of India's expanding renewable energy ambitions.

4. Growing Importance of Cultural Diplomacy

- The article highlights increasing people-to-people contact, tourism, films, education, and cultural exchanges between India and Nordic countries.

5. Debate on Migration and Immigration

Prelims Related Facts

- **Nordic Countries:** Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.
- **India-Nordic Summit:** First summit held in 2018 in Stockholm, Sweden.
- Iceland is globally known for **geothermal energy** usage.
- Nordic nations rank high in the **Human Development Index (HDI)**.
- Arctic governance involves institutions like the **Arctic Council**.
- India has an observer status in the Arctic Council since 2013.

- European immigration politics are changing because of economic pressures and social concerns, affecting labour mobility and global migration policies.

Global Practices

Iceland's Geothermal Energy Model	Iceland generates most of its electricity and heating needs from renewable geothermal and hydropower sources.
Nordic Welfare Governance	Nordic countries combine economic growth with strong social welfare systems and inclusive governance practices.
Green Innovation Ecosystems	Nordic countries promote startup-led innovation in clean energy, circular economy, and climate technologies.
Sustainable Urban Planning	Cities in Nordic countries focus on low-carbon transport, waste management, and environmentally sustainable infrastructure.
Consensus-Based Diplomacy	Nordic foreign policy often prioritises dialogue, peace-building, multilateralism, and international cooperation mechanisms.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations

National Green Hydrogen Mission	Encourages global cooperation in renewable technologies and clean energy partnerships.
NITI Aayog Energy Transition Framework	Recommended international technology partnerships for achieving sustainable energy transition goals.
India's Arctic Policy, 2022	Promotes scientific research, climate cooperation, and sustainable Arctic engagement.
Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs	Suggested strengthening India's economic diplomacy and strategic partnerships with technologically advanced regions.
National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)	Encourages international collaboration in renewable energy and sustainable development initiatives.

Way Forward

- 1. Deepen Renewable Energy Cooperation**
 - India and Nordic countries should jointly develop geothermal, green hydrogen, and clean technology projects for sustainable economic growth.
- 2. Expand Innovation Partnerships**
 - Collaboration between startups, universities, and research institutions can strengthen technological advancement and industrial competitiveness.
- 3. Improve Trade and Investment Links**
 - Reducing trade barriers and promoting business exchanges can increase economic engagement between India and Nordic economies.
- 4. Strengthen Arctic Cooperation**
 - India should enhance scientific research and climate partnerships with Nordic countries in the Arctic region.
- 5. Promote Cultural and Educational Exchanges**
 - Greater student mobility, tourism, films, and cultural programmes can strengthen long-term people-to-people relations.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Nordic countries:

1. Iceland is widely known for geothermal energy production.
2. India became an observer in the Arctic Council in 2013.
3. Sweden is not a member of the Nordic group.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer:

- (a) 1 and 2 only**

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. Discuss the growing significance of India's engagement with Nordic countries in the areas of renewable energy, Arctic cooperation, and sustainable development. (250 words)

Rajya Sabha defections, constitutional questions

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Vanshaj Azad

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper II

- Parliament and State Legislatures
- Anti-defection law
- Constitutional bodies and political reforms
- Separation of powers and parliamentary democracy

GS Paper IV

- Ethics in public life
- Political accountability and constitutional morality

Introduction

The Anti-Defection Law was introduced through the **52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985** by adding the **Tenth Schedule** to the Constitution. Its main objective was to prevent political defections motivated by office, power, or personal gains.

The law disqualifies legislators if they:

- Voluntarily give up party membership, or
- Vote against party whip without permission.

Later, the **91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003** removed protection for "split" and tightened anti-defection provisions.

The article discusses constitutional questions arising from Rajya Sabha MPs joining another political party and whether such "mergers" satisfy constitutional requirements under the Tenth Schedule.

Key Issues from the Article

1. Misuse of Merger Provision

Prelims Related Facts

- **Tenth Schedule** deals with anti-defection provisions.
- Added by the **52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985**.
- **91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003** removed protection for splits by one-third legislators.
- Presiding officers (Speaker/Chairman) decide disqualification cases.
- The Supreme Court recognised judicial review in anti-defection matters in **Kihoto Hollohan case (1992)**.
- Merger provisions are covered under **Paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule**.

- Political parties may use merger clauses strategically to avoid disqualification under the anti-defection law, weakening the spirit of constitutional accountability.
- 2. Weakening of Parliamentary Opposition**
 - Frequent defections reduce the strength of opposition parties, affecting healthy parliamentary debate and democratic checks on the ruling government.
- 3. Ambiguity in Constitutional Interpretation**
 - Disputes continue regarding whether merger requires organisational party merger or only legislative party support inside Parliament.
- 4. Delay in Disqualification Decisions**
 - Presiding officers often delay decisions in defection cases, creating political uncertainty and allowing defecting legislators to continue in office.
- 5. Decline of Constitutional Morality**
 - Defections driven by political convenience undermine voter trust, party ideology, and democratic ethics within representative institutions.

Global Practices

United Kingdom	Legislators are generally free to change parties, but strong political conventions and voter accountability discourage opportunistic defections.
Germany	Party discipline exists, but constitutional emphasis remains on legislators acting according to conscience and democratic responsibility.
South Africa	South Africa earlier allowed floor crossing but later abolished it because of political instability and public criticism.
Bangladesh	Bangladesh has strict anti-defection provisions where legislators risk losing membership for voting against party directions.
Australia	Defections are legally permitted, but political consequences and electoral accountability remain strong deterrents.

Indian Committees / Recommendations (Brief)

Dinesh Goswami Committee (1990)	Recommended limiting disqualification only to votes affecting government stability such as no-confidence motions.
Law Commission 170th Report (1999)	Suggested strengthening internal democracy within political parties and reforming anti-defection provisions.
National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC)	Recommended that defecting legislators should resign and seek fresh public mandate.
Election Commission Recommendations	Suggested independent mechanisms for deciding defection disputes instead of relying solely on presiding officers.
Supreme Court Judgments	Cases like <i>Kihoto Hollohan</i> and <i>Nabam Rebia</i> stressed judicial review and neutrality in anti-defection proceedings.

Way Forward

- 1. Ensure Time-Bound Decisions**
 - Defection cases should be decided within fixed timelines to prevent prolonged political uncertainty and misuse of constitutional loopholes.
- 2. Strengthen Internal Party Democracy**

- Political parties should encourage transparent leadership selection and policy discussions to reduce factional conflicts and opportunistic defections.
- 3. **Create Independent Adjudication Mechanism**
 - An independent tribunal or Election Commission body can ensure neutral and fair decisions in anti-defection disputes.
- 4. **Clarify Constitutional Provisions**
 - Parliament should clearly define merger conditions and legislative party requirements to avoid conflicting constitutional interpretations.
- 5. **Promote Ethical Political Conduct**
 - Political leadership must prioritise constitutional morality, ideological commitment, and public trust over short-term political gains.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Anti-Defection Law:

1. The Tenth Schedule was added by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985.
2. The 91st Constitutional Amendment restored protection for splits by one-third legislators.
3. Judicial review is available in anti-defection cases.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer:

- (a) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. Discuss the objectives and limitations of the Anti-Defection Law in India. How do recent political defections raise constitutional concerns regarding parliamentary democracy? (250 words)

Student Notes

India's energy strategy needs price correction

Source: *The Hindu*

Writer: Thirumala A. Ramakrishna

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper III

- Energy security
- Infrastructure and economic development
- Inflation and fiscal management
- Environmental conservation and sustainable growth

GS Paper II

- Government policies and interventions
- International relations affecting India's economy

Introduction

Energy security means ensuring reliable, affordable, and sustainable access to energy resources. India imports nearly 85% of its crude oil requirements, making the economy highly vulnerable to global oil price shocks and geopolitical tensions.

Fuel pricing affects:

- Inflation
- Fiscal deficit
- Trade balance
- Transport costs
- Industrial production
- Household expenditure

The article argues that India's current fuel pricing and subsidy approach requires correction to balance economic stability, consumer welfare, and long-term energy transition goals.

Key Issues

1. Excessive Dependence on Crude Oil Imports

- India's high dependence on imported crude oil exposes the economy to geopolitical conflicts, shipping disruptions, and international price volatility.

2. Rising Fuel Prices and Inflation

- Higher petrol and diesel prices increase transportation and production costs, leading to food inflation and pressure on household consumption.

3. Burden on Oil Marketing Companies

- Government pressure to control retail fuel prices often reduces the financial health and profitability of public sector oil companies.

4. Delayed Energy Transition

- Continued dependence on fossil fuels slows India's transition toward renewable energy, electric mobility, and cleaner energy alternatives.

5. Fiscal and External Sector Pressure

Prelims Related Facts

- India imports around **85% of crude oil** requirements.
- **OMCs (Oil Marketing Companies)** include IOC, BPCL, and HPCL.
- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR)** are emergency crude oil storage facilities.
- India follows a system of **daily dynamic fuel pricing**.
- Brent crude oil is an important global oil price benchmark.
- The **International Energy Agency (IEA)** works on global energy security and policy coordination.

- Large oil imports widen the current account deficit and increase pressure on foreign exchange reserves during global energy crises.

Global Practices

European Diversification	Energy	European countries diversified natural gas and oil suppliers after disruptions caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
Norway's Sovereign Energy Management	Energy	Norway efficiently manages petroleum revenues through long-term sovereign wealth funds and fiscal discipline.
Germany's Renewable Energy Push		Germany invested heavily in renewable energy, reducing long-term dependence on imported fossil fuels.
Japan's Strategic Petroleum Reserves		Japan maintains large emergency oil reserves to manage supply disruptions and energy crises.
United States Shale Revolution	Shale	The U.S. reduced import dependence through domestic shale oil and gas production expansion.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations

Integrated Energy Policy Committee	Recommended diversification of energy sources and improving long-term energy security planning.
NITI Aayog Energy Transition Reports	Suggested reducing fossil fuel dependence and promoting renewable energy adoption.
Kelkar Committee on Fiscal Reforms	Highlighted the importance of rational fuel taxation and subsidy management.
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Petroleum	Recommended strengthening strategic reserves and improving domestic energy infrastructure.
National Biofuel Policy	Encouraged ethanol blending and alternative fuel development to reduce crude oil imports.

Way Forward

- Diversify Energy Sources**
 - India should reduce excessive crude oil dependence through renewable energy, biofuels, green hydrogen, and domestic energy production expansion.
- Rationalise Fuel Taxation**
 - Balanced fuel taxation can reduce inflationary pressure while protecting government revenue and maintaining consumer affordability.
- Strengthen Strategic Petroleum Reserves**
 - Expanding emergency oil reserves can protect India against global supply disruptions and geopolitical uncertainties.
- Accelerate Clean Energy Transition**
 - Faster adoption of electric vehicles, solar energy, and battery storage can improve long-term energy security.
- Improve Public Transport Systems**
 - Efficient railways and urban public transport can reduce fuel consumption and dependence on imported petroleum products.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India's energy sector:

1. India imports more than 80% of its crude oil requirements.
2. Strategic Petroleum Reserves are maintained to address emergency supply disruptions.
3. Oil Marketing Companies in India are completely privately owned.

Which of the statements given above is/is/are correct?

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

Answer:

- (a) 1 and 2 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. India's growing energy demand and dependence on imported crude oil have created serious economic and strategic vulnerabilities. Discuss the challenges and suggest measures for achieving long-term energy security. (250 words)

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Validation flaws

Source: Editorial Analysis based on *The Hindu* article

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper 2

- Election Commission of India
- Representation of People Act
- Constitutional governance and electoral reforms
- Federalism and democratic accountability

GS Paper 3

- Technology in elections and governance
- Data verification and administrative capacity

Essay Linkage

- Democracy and institutional trust
- Electoral integrity vs administrative efficiency

Introduction

India's electoral system is built on the principle of **free and fair elections**, supervised by the Election Commission under **Article 324** of the Constitution. Electoral rolls are the backbone of representative democracy because voting rights depend on accurate voter registration.

The article discusses concerns regarding the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls in Bihar and questions whether hurried verification exercises may affect voter inclusion, transparency and public trust.

Key Issues

1. Risk of Voter Exclusion

- Large-scale verification may wrongly remove genuine voters, especially migrants, women and poor citizens lacking documents. Example: rural voters facing document mismatch issues.

2. Time-bound Revision Concerns

- Conducting electoral revision close to elections reduces scope for correction and appeals. Bihar's revision exercise raised fears regarding administrative haste.

3. Constitutional Validity Debate

- Questions emerged on whether the exercise violates equality and voting rights under constitutional democratic principles and due process safeguards.

4. Gender and Social Gaps

- Women and marginalised communities often suffer more due to missing records, marriage-related migration and low documentation access.

5. Institutional Trust Deficit

- Frequent disputes over electoral rolls weaken public confidence in Election Commission neutrality and democratic legitimacy.

Prelims Related Facts

- **Article 324:** Superintendence, direction and control of elections vested in Election Commission of India.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1950:** Deals with electoral rolls and allocation of seats.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1951:** Conduct of elections and election disputes.
- **Electoral Roll:** Official list of eligible voters in a constituency.
- **Universal Adult Franchise:** Voting right for every citizen above 18 years.

Global Practices

1. **Canada** uses continuous voter registration with regular digital updates.
2. **Australia** links voter rolls with national administrative databases.
3. **United Kingdom** allows online voter verification and correction.

4. **Estonia** integrates digital identity systems with electoral databases.
5. **Germany** follows decentralised local verification with strong transparency norms.

Indian Committees / Recommendations

Goswami Committee on Electoral Reforms (1990)	Recommended transparent and regularly updated electoral rolls.
Law Commission Reports	Suggested stronger safeguards against wrongful deletion of voters.
Election Commission Reforms	Advocated technology-driven roll purification with grievance mechanisms.
National Commission to Review Constitution	Emphasised voter inclusion and institutional independence of ECI.
Second Administrative Reforms Commission	Supported digital governance and citizen-centric electoral administration.

Way Forward

1. **Transparent Verification**
 - Electoral revision should include public disclosure, local hearings and simple appeal mechanisms before deleting any voter from official rolls.
2. **Use Technology Carefully**
 - Digital verification must support inclusion, not become a barrier for poor, elderly and rural populations lacking digital literacy.
3. **Independent Social Audit**
 - Civil society observers and political parties should monitor revision exercises to improve credibility and reduce allegations of bias.
4. **Strengthen Grievance Redressal**
 - Fast correction systems, doorstep verification and multilingual assistance can reduce wrongful exclusion during electoral roll updates.
5. **Avoid Pre-election Haste**
 - Major revision exercises should be completed well before elections to ensure adequate scrutiny and correction opportunities.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding electoral rolls in India:

1. Article 324 gives the Election Commission responsibility over electoral roll management.
2. Representation of the People Act, 1950 deals with electoral rolls.
3. Electoral rolls are revised only before General Elections.

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

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Accurate electoral rolls are essential for maintaining democratic legitimacy in India." Discuss the challenges involved in electoral roll revision and suggest measures for ensuring voter inclusion and transparency. (250 words)

Contradictions within India's cow protection regime

Source: *The Hindu* Editorial / Opinion

Writer: Faizan Mustafa & Abdul Samad

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

- **GS Paper II:** Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles, Religious Freedom, Federalism
- **GS Paper III:** Livestock Economy, Rural Economy, Agriculture
- **GS Paper I:** Indian Society, Social Harmony and Communalism
- **Essay:** Tradition vs Constitutionalism, Faith and Economy

Introduction

Cow protection has been part of India's political, social and constitutional debate since Independence. Article 48 of the Directive Principles asks the State to prohibit slaughter of cows and improve animal husbandry. Different States have enacted separate laws on cattle slaughter, transport and beef consumption. The issue today is not only religious sentiment but also linked with farmers' income, livestock economy, federalism, food habits and constitutional freedoms. The article highlights contradictions between strict cow protection laws and ground realities of cattle management in India.

Key Issues

1. Political Narrative Dominates Policy

- Cow protection often becomes an emotional political issue rather than an economic livestock-management policy. Example: stricter laws introduced during election-oriented political mobilisation.

2. Farmer Burden Increasing

- Unproductive cattle create financial stress for small farmers due to fodder, healthcare and shelter costs. Example: rise in abandoned cattle damaging crops in northern States.

3. Contradiction Between Protection and Sustainability

- States promote cattle preservation but lack adequate infrastructure for old cattle care. Example: overcrowded gaushalas and stray cattle incidents on highways.

4. Buffalo Economy Expanding Faster

- Strict cow slaughter restrictions indirectly encourage buffalo rearing instead of indigenous cattle conservation. Example: buffalo meat exports and dairy economics influencing livestock choices.

5. Constitutional and Religious Debate

- Conflict continues between religious sentiments and individual dietary freedoms. Example: legal challenges citing Article 21 and freedom of personal food preferences.

Prelims Related Facts

- **Article 48** – Organisation of agriculture and animal husbandry; prohibition of slaughter of cows and milch cattle
- **Article 19(1)(g)** – Freedom to practice any profession or trade
- **Article 21** – Right to life and personal liberty
- **Mohd. Hanif Quareshi vs State of Bihar (1958)** – Supreme Court upheld restrictions on cow slaughter
- **State subject:** Animal husbandry, agriculture and cattle preservation

Global Practices



Brazil	Focuses on scientific cattle management, meat productivity and livestock traceability rather than religious regulation.
European Union	Uses strict animal welfare standards with regulated slaughterhouses and veterinary monitoring systems.
New Zealand	Promotes sustainable dairy farming with balanced livestock population and environmental norms.
Australia	Emphasises commercial livestock efficiency, breed improvement and scientific grazing management.
Netherlands	Uses technology-driven cattle monitoring and strong dairy cooperative systems for productivity enhancement.

Indian Committees / Recommendations

National Commission on Cattle (2002)	Recommended scientific cattle preservation and improvement of indigenous breeds.
Rashtriya Gokul Mission	Promotes conservation and genetic improvement of indigenous bovine breeds.
NITI Aayog Livestock Suggestions	Stressed value addition, dairy productivity and organised cattle economy.
Animal Welfare Board of India	Advocated humane treatment, shelter standards and regulation of transport/slaughter practices.
National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)	Suggested cooperative-led dairy expansion and better livestock management systems.

Way Forward

1. **Scientific Livestock Policy**

- Cow protection policies should combine animal welfare, economic sustainability and scientific livestock management instead of relying only on emotional political narratives.

2. **Support Farmers Financially**

- Governments must provide fodder subsidies, insurance and cattle-maintenance assistance to small farmers handling unproductive or abandoned cattle.

3. **Strengthen Gaushala Infrastructure**

- Modern cattle shelters with veterinary care, digital monitoring and community participation are necessary for humane and sustainable cattle preservation.

4. **Promote Breed Improvement**

- Focus should shift toward indigenous breed productivity, dairy efficiency and sustainable animal husbandry through technology and research support.

5. **Balance Rights and Sentiments**

- Policies should respect religious beliefs while protecting constitutional freedoms, federal principles and livelihoods connected with livestock trade.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding cow protection in India:

1. Article 48 of the Constitution relates to organisation of agriculture and animal husbandry.
2. Cow slaughter laws are uniform across all Indian States.

3. Animal husbandry is primarily a State subject.

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

Answer: (A) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "Cow protection in India reflects the complex intersection of constitutional values, rural economy, religious sentiment and political mobilisation." Discuss critically. (250 words)

International law, 'optional' for powerful states

Source: *The Hindu* Opinion Article

Writer: Shashi Tharoor

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper II

- International Relations
- United Nations and global institutions
- Bilateral and multilateral agreements

GS Paper III

- Internal Security
- Cyber Security and Emerging Global Threats

Essay

- Rule-based International Order
- Power Politics vs International Law
- Global Governance

Introduction

International law refers to the rules, treaties, conventions and customs that regulate relations among sovereign states. Unlike domestic law, it lacks a central enforcement authority. Compliance largely depends on state consent, diplomatic pressure, international institutions and global norms.

The article argues that while international law was created to ensure peace, stability and accountability, powerful states often violate it without facing proportionate consequences, weakening the credibility of the global rules-based order.

Key Issues

1. Selective Application of International Law

- Powerful countries frequently invoke international law against rivals while overlooking similar actions by allies or themselves, weakening faith in global institutions.
- **Example:** Different international responses to conflicts involving major powers.

Prelims Related Facts

- **UN Charter (1945):** Prohibits use of force except self-defence or Security Council authorization.
- **International Court of Justice (ICJ):** Principal judicial organ of the United Nations.
- **International Criminal Court (ICC):** Prosecutes genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- **UN Security Council (UNSC):** Five permanent members possess veto power.
- **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT):** Entered into force in 1970.
- **New START Treaty:** Arms control agreement between the United States and Russia.
- **JCPOA (Iran Nuclear Deal):** Signed in 2015 to limit Iran's nuclear programme.

2. Weak Enforcement Mechanisms

- International law lacks an effective global enforcement authority, making compliance dependent on political will rather than binding accountability.
- **Example:** Difficulty in enforcing ICJ or UN resolutions.

3. Erosion of Multilateral Institutions

- Repeated violations by influential states reduce the authority of institutions designed to preserve international peace and security.
- **Example:** Paralysis of UNSC due to veto politics.

4. Humanitarian Consequences of Conflict

- Military interventions and prolonged conflicts often create large-scale civilian suffering despite existing humanitarian law frameworks.
- **Example:** Civilian displacement and infrastructure destruction in conflict zones.

5. Growing Trust Deficit in Global Governance

- When powerful nations appear immune from accountability, smaller countries lose confidence in the rules-based international order.
- **Example:** Increasing preference for power-based rather than rule-based diplomacy.

Global Practices

European Union Model	Strong emphasis on treaty compliance, institutional oversight and peaceful dispute resolution.
International Court of Justice	Promotes judicial settlement of disputes through legal interpretation and advisory opinions.
ASEAN Approach	Encourages dialogue, consensus-building and diplomatic engagement to prevent escalation.
African Union Mechanisms	Uses mediation, peacekeeping and regional diplomacy for conflict management.
OSCE Framework	Focuses on cooperative security, confidence-building measures and conflict prevention.

Indian Committees / Policy Recommendations

National Security Advisory Board (NSAB)	Emphasises a rules-based international order and strategic autonomy.
Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs	Advocates strengthening multilateral institutions and international cooperation.
India's G20 Presidency Priorities	Promoted reform of global governance institutions and inclusive multilateralism.
Ministry of External Affairs Policy Approach	Supports peaceful dispute resolution through diplomacy and international law.
India's UN Reform Position	Calls for expansion and democratization of the UNSC to improve legitimacy and representation.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen Global Institutions

- International institutions should be empowered with greater legitimacy, resources and enforcement mechanisms to ensure consistent application of international law.

2. Reform the UN Security Council

- A more representative Security Council can improve credibility and reduce perceptions of selective decision-making in global affairs.

3. Promote Equal Accountability

- All states, irrespective of size or power, should be subject to the same legal standards and obligations.

4. Enhance Preventive Diplomacy

- Dialogue, mediation and confidence-building measures should be prioritised before disputes escalate into armed conflicts.

5. Support Rules-Based Order

- Countries must reinforce treaty commitments and multilateral cooperation to preserve global peace, stability and predictability.

Practice Question**Q1. Consider the following statements:**

1. The International Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.
2. The UN Security Council authorises the use of force only through its permanent members.
3. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty entered into force in 1970.

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

Answer: (A) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Q2. "The credibility of international law depends not merely on its existence but on its uniform application." Examine the challenges faced by the contemporary rules-based international order in an era of great-power rivalry. (250 words)

Student Notes

‘Off with their heads’ – the purge of Republican dissenters

Source: *The Hindu* Opinion Article

Writer: Anil Raman

UPSC Syllabus Linkage

GS Paper II

- Comparative Politics and Constitutions
- Democracy and Political Parties
- Governance and Accountability

GS Paper I

- Political Ideologies and Democratic Systems

GS Paper II (International Relations)

- United States Politics and its impact on global affairs

Essay

- Democracy and Dissent
- Leadership and Institutions
- Populism in Modern Politics

Introduction

Political parties in democratic systems function through internal debate, leadership accountability and ideological diversity. Healthy democracies depend not only on elections but also on institutions that allow dissent within political organizations.

The article examines the growing influence of personality-centric politics within the Republican Party in the United States and discusses how ideological conformity may be replacing internal democratic debate.

Key Issue

1. Decline of Internal Party Dissent

- Political parties become weaker when disagreement is viewed as disloyalty rather than a legitimate democratic process.
- **Example:** Republican leaders facing challenges after criticizing party leadership.

2. Rise of Personality-Centric Politics

- Strong individual leaders increasingly dominate party identity, reducing the role of institutions and collective decision-making.
- **Example:** Electoral campaigns revolving around a single political figure rather than party ideology.

3. Polarisation of Democratic Systems

- Growing ideological divisions make compromise difficult and encourage confrontational politics.
- **Example:** Increasing partisan voting patterns in the U.S. Congress.

4. Weakening Institutional Checks

- Political loyalty can sometimes overshadow institutional accountability mechanisms designed to maintain democratic balance.
- **Example:** Reluctance of elected representatives to challenge party leadership.

5. Impact on Foreign and Domestic Policy

- Leadership-driven politics can influence policy continuity and international commitments.

Prelims Related Facts

- **United States:** Presidential form of government.
- **Republican Party (GOP):** One of the two major political parties in the U.S.
- **Democratic Party:** Other major political party in the U.S.
- **Primaries:** Elections used by U.S. political parties to select candidates.
- **Congress:** Bicameral legislature consisting of the Senate and House of Representatives.
- **Separation of Powers:** Executive, Legislature and Judiciary operate independently.
- **Federal System:** Powers divided between federal and state governments.

- **Example:** Changes in foreign policy priorities following leadership transitions.

Global Practices

United Kingdom	Strong parliamentary traditions encourage debate within political parties despite party discipline.
Germany	Political parties function through internal elections and collective leadership structures.
Canada	Parliamentary committees and party forums provide channels for internal discussion.
Australia	Party caucuses play an important role in leadership accountability and policy formulation.
Nordic Countries	Consensus-building and institutional decision-making remain central to party politics.

Indian Committees / Recommendations

National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC)	Recommended strengthening democratic institutions and internal accountability.
Law Commission of India	Advocated electoral and political reforms to improve democratic functioning.
Election Commission Recommendations	Supported greater transparency and internal democracy within political parties.
Second Administrative Reforms Commission	Emphasised ethical governance and institutional accountability.
Parliamentary Committees	Regularly stress strengthening democratic processes and legislative oversight.

Way Forward

- Strengthen Internal Party Democracy**
 - Political parties should encourage debate, leadership contests and policy discussions to ensure institutional strength beyond individual leaders.
- Promote Institutional Accountability**
 - Legislatures, courts and oversight bodies must function independently regardless of political leadership or electoral popularity.
- Encourage Constructive Dissent**
 - Democracies become stronger when differing opinions are debated openly rather than treated as political disloyalty.
- Improve Political Transparency**
 - Clear decision-making processes and public accountability can reduce excessive concentration of power within political organizations.
- Build Consensus-Based Politics:** Political competition should be balanced with cooperation on national issues to maintain democratic stability and public trust.

Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the United States political system:

1. The U.S. Congress consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives.
2. The President of the United States is elected directly through a nationwide popular vote.
3. The United States follows a federal system of government.

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

Answer:

(A) 1 and 3 only

UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Q2. "Internal democracy within political parties is essential for the health of any democratic system."
Discuss in the context of the rise of personality-centric politics across contemporary democracies.
(250 words).**

Student Notes 

Revenue-deficit States may face fiscal stress: Centre flags rising financial risks

Source: *The Hindu (Economy)*

Fiscal Deficit	Revenue Deficit
- Fiscal Deficit = Total Expenditure – Total Receipts (except borrowings) - Calculated for the fiscal year - Represents additional financial resources required by the government	- Revenue Deficit = Revenue Expenditure – Revenue Receipts - Calculated for the financial year - Represents government's dissavings

Key News:

The Union Finance Ministry has warned that **revenue-deficit States** may face **significant fiscal stress** amid global uncertainties. Around **9 out of 18 States** analysed are projected to remain in **revenue deficit** in 2026–27.

1. Rising expenditure on **salaries, pensions, subsidies, and interest payments** is driving fiscal pressure.
2. States may be forced to **cut productive capital expenditure** to manage finances.
3. The situation is aggravated by external shocks like the **West Asia crisis** affecting economic stability.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **States in Deficit:** 9 out of 18 analysed
2. **Examples:** Himachal Pradesh (~–2.4%), Punjab (~–2.2%), Kerala (~–2.1%)
3. **Metric:** Revenue balance as % of GSDP
4. **Cause:** High committed expenditure (>15% of revenue receipts on interest payments)

Static Introduction

Revenue Deficit

1. Occurs when:
 - **Revenue expenditure > Revenue receipts**
2. Indicates:
 - Government is **dissaving**
3. Includes spending on:
 - Salaries, pensions, subsidies, interest

Fiscal Deficit vs Revenue Deficit

1. **Fiscal Deficit:** Total expenditure – total receipts (excluding borrowings)

2. **Revenue Deficit:** Only revenue account mismatch
3. Fiscal deficit shows **overall borrowing requirement**

FRBM Act (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003)

1. Aims to:
 - Ensure fiscal discipline
 - Limit deficits
2. States also have their own FRBM laws

Implications of Revenue Deficit

1. Reduces funds for:
 - **Capital expenditure (infrastructure, growth)**
2. Leads to:
 - Higher debt burden
 - Long-term economic inefficiency

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding fiscal indicators:

1. Revenue deficit occurs when revenue expenditure exceeds revenue receipts.
2. Fiscal deficit includes only revenue expenditure.
3. FRBM Act aims to ensure fiscal discipline in India.
4. High revenue deficit reduces funds available for capital expenditure.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Correct definition of revenue deficit.
2. Statement 2: Fiscal deficit includes **both revenue and capital expenditure**.
3. Statement 3: FRBM ensures fiscal discipline.
4. Statement 4: High revenue deficit limits **capital investment capacity**.

India's first green methanol plant to convert invasive weed into marine fuel

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News:

India is set to establish its **first green methanol plant in Kutch (Gujarat)** using the invasive species **Prosopis juliflora**. The plant will produce **green methanol as a cleaner marine fuel** for shipping.

1. The project aligns with India's push toward **green ports and decarbonisation of maritime transport**.
2. Methanol produced from biomass can significantly reduce **CO₂ and NO_x emissions**.
3. The initiative also helps tackle the ecological problem of **invasive species in the Banni grasslands**.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Location:** Kutch, Gujarat (Banni grasslands)
2. **Feedstock:** Prosopis juliflora (invasive species)
3. **Use:** Marine fuel (replacement for bunker oil)
4. **Emission Reduction:** CO₂ ↓ up to 95%, NO_x ↓ up to 80%

Static Introduction

Green Methanol

1. Produced from:
 - Biomass
 - Renewable hydrogen + captured CO₂
2. Considered a **clean alternative fuel**
3. Used in:
 - Shipping
 - Power generation

Prosopis juliflora (Vilayati Babul)

1. Introduced in India in the **1920s**
2. Highly invasive:
 - Replaces native vegetation
 - Degrades ecosystems
3. Found widely in **Kutch region**

Maritime Decarbonisation

1. International Maritime Organization (**IMO**) targets reduction in **shipping emissions**
2. Green fuels include:
 - Methanol

➤ Ammonia

➤ Hydrogen

Environmental Significance

1. Tackles:
 - Invasive species problem
 - Climate change
2. Promotes:
 - Circular economy
 - Sustainable energy transition

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding green methanol and invasive species:

1. Green methanol can be produced from biomass.
2. Prosopis juliflora is a native species of India.
3. Green methanol can reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
4. Maritime sector is exploring alternative fuels to reduce emissions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Biomass-based production possible.
2. Statement 2: It is an **invasive (non-native) species**.
3. Statement 3: Reduces emissions significantly.
4. Statement 4: Shipping sector moving toward **clean fuels**.

UPI completes 10 years: Emerges as world's largest real-time payments platform

Source: *PIB*



Key News

1. The **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** has completed **10 years**, becoming the **world's largest real-time payments system**. UPI now accounts for **~49% of global real-time digital transactions**, reflecting massive adoption.
2. Transaction volume has surged nearly **12,000 times** since its launch in 2016.
3. The platform has strengthened **financial inclusion and digital economy growth** in India.
4. It showcases India's success in building **scalable digital public infrastructure (DPI)**.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **Launch Year:** 2016 (by NPCI under RBI oversight)
2. **Annual Transactions (FY 2025–26):** ~24,161 crore
3. **Annual Value:** ₹341 lakh crore
4. **Global Share:** ~49% of real-time payments

Static

Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

1. Developed by **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**
 2. Enables:
 - Instant bank-to-bank transfers
 - Interoperable digital payments
 3. Operates under **RBI regulation**
- Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**

1. India's DPI includes:
 - **Aadhaar (identity)**
 - **UPI (payments)**
 - **DigiLocker (document storage)**
 2. Known as the **India Stack**
- Features of UPI**
1. Real-time transactions (24×7)
 2. QR code-based payments
 3. No need for bank details (uses UPI ID)
- Importance**
1. Promotes:
 - **Financial inclusion**
 - **Cashless economy**
 2. Supports:
 - **Small businesses**
 - **Digital governance**

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding UPI:

1. UPI was launched by the Reserve Bank of India.
2. UPI enables real-time bank-to-bank transactions.
3. NPCI is responsible for developing UPI.
4. UPI is part of India's Digital Public Infrastructure.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 2, 3 and 4 only

Explanation (

1. Statement 1: UPI developed by **NPCI**, not RBI (RBI regulates).
2. Statement 2: Enables **instant real-time payments**.
3. Statement 3: NPCI is the implementing body.
4. Statement 4: Core component of **India Stack (DPI)**.

**NARCL strengthens stressed
asset resolution; recovers ₹4,364
crore in FY 2025–26**

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

Key News

1. The **National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL)** has significantly strengthened India's **bad loan resolution framework**. It recovered **₹4,364 crore in FY 2025–26**, contributing to nearly **70% of cumulative recoveries**.
2. A total of **33 stressed borrower accounts** were acquired, with exposure of **₹1.65 lakh crore**.
3. The initiative is helping clean up banks' balance sheets and improve **financial stability**.
4. NARCL plays a key role in resolving **Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)** through aggregation and restructuring.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Recovery (FY 2025–26):** ₹4,364 crore
2. **Total Recovery:** ₹6,345 crore
3. **Accounts Acquired:** 33 borrowers
4. **Debt Exposure:** ₹1.65 lakh crore

Static Introduction

National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL)

1. Established in **2021** as a "bad bank"
2. Objective:
 - Acquire and resolve **stressed assets (NPAs)** from banks
3. Works with:
 - **India Debt Resolution Company Ltd (IDRCL)**

Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs)

1. Regulated by **RBI**
2. Function:
 - Buy NPAs from banks at discounted value
 - Recover dues through restructuring or liquidation

NPA Resolution Mechanisms in India

1. **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016**
2. **SARFAESI Act, 2002**
3. **Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs)**

Importance of NARCL

1. Reduces:
 - Banking sector stress
 - NPAs burden

2. Improves:

- Credit flow
- Economic growth

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding NARCL and NPAs:

1. NARCL is a government-backed "bad bank" to resolve stressed assets.
2. Asset Reconstruction Companies are regulated by RBI.
3. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) deals with resolution of stressed assets.
4. NARCL directly provides retail loans to customers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: NARCL is a **bad bank initiative**.
2. Statement 2: ARCs regulated by **RBI**.
3. Statement 3: IBC provides **resolution mechanism**.
4. Statement 4: NARCL does **not provide retail loans**.

Mission SAKSHAM – In News

The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India has recently launched **Mission SAKSHAM**, a dedicated initiative aimed at strengthening the **Urban Cooperative Banking (UCB) sector** across India.

About Mission SAKSHAM

Mission SAKSHAM (Sahakari Bank Kshamta Nirmaan) is a **sector-wide capacity-building and certification programme** designed specifically for **Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)**.

Objectives

1. Enhance **managerial and operational efficiency** of UCBs
2. Improve **compliance culture and governance standards**

3. Strengthen **institutional resilience and financial stability**
4. Promote **long-term sustainable growth of the cooperative banking sector**

Key Features

Participation

1. Targets around **1.40 lakh individuals** across the UCB ecosystem

Target Groups

1. Board members
2. Senior management
3. Risk, compliance, and audit officials
4. IT and operational staff

Training Model

1. **Blended learning approach:**
 - Physical (in-person) sessions
 - Digital modules
2. Focus on **regional language accessibility**

Collaboration

1. Implemented in coordination with:
 - **Umbrella Organisation for UCBs**
 - State and National Federations

Core Focus Areas

1. Strengthening **compliance frameworks**
2. Improving **financial health of cooperative institutions**
3. Building a **self-sustaining and resilient banking ecosystem**
4. Enhancing **systemic stability** in the financial sector

Significance

1. Crucial for reforming the **Urban Cooperative Banking sector**, which often faces governance and risk challenges
2. Supports **financial inclusion** at the grassroots level
3. Aligns with RBI's broader goal of **banking sector stability and modernization**

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding Mission SAKSHAM:

1. It is a capacity-building initiative launched by the Reserve Bank of India for Urban Cooperative Banks.
2. It focuses only on digital banking infrastructure development in rural banks.

3. It uses a blended learning model including both online and offline training.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct (RBI initiative for UCBs).
2. Statement 2 – Incorrect (it is not limited to rural banks or only digital infrastructure).
3. Statement 3 – Correct (uses blended learning approach).

Preah Vihear Temple – In News



Tensions have recently resurfaced between **Thailand and Cambodia** over the historic Preah Vihear Temple, a centuries-old temple dedicated to **Lord Shiva**, located along their disputed border.

About Preah Vihear Temple

1. Located in **Preah Vihear Province, northern Cambodia**
2. Situated dramatically atop a **cliff in the Dangrek Mountain range** along the Cambodia–Thailand border
3. Dedicated to **Lord Shiva**

Historical Background

1. Built during the **Khmer Empire (11th–12th centuries)**
2. Initially constructed by **King Suryavarman I (1002–1050 CE)**

3. Later expanded by **Suryavarman II (1113–1150 CE)**
4. Served as a religious and political center for **over 800 years**

Religious Transformation

1. Originally a **Hindu temple**
2. Later transitioned into a **Buddhist site**, while retaining Hindu architectural elements

Dispute & International Ruling

1. The temple has been a point of dispute between **Cambodia and Thailand since the 19th century**
2. **1904 Treaty**: Recognized Cambodian control
3. Thailand later contested this claim, leading to tensions

Legal Resolution

1. In **1962**, the International Court of Justice ruled in favor of **Cambodia's sovereignty over the temple**

UNESCO Status

1. Declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in **2008**

Architectural Features

1. A remarkable example of **Khmer architecture**
2. Built along an **800-meter-long north–south axis**
3. Comprises:
 - Series of sanctuaries
 - Connected by pavements and stairways

Unique Elements

1. Features **five successive gopuras (gateway towers)**
2. Unlike other temples:
 - Structures are linked by a **long linear path**
 - Built on **multi-tiered platforms**
3. Combination of **stone and wooden roofing structures**

Significance

1. Important for **India's cultural influence in Southeast Asia (Indianization)**
2. Highlights **geopolitical disputes over heritage sites**
3. Relevant for topics like:
 - **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**
 - **International boundary disputes**

➤ **Khmer civilization**

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding Preah Vihear Temple:

1. It is located on the **Cambodia–Thailand border** in the Dangrek Mountains.
2. It was originally built as a **Buddhist monastery** during the Khmer Empire.
3. The International Court of Justice awarded **sovereignty of the temple to Cambodia**.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – **Correct**
2. Statement 2 – **Incorrect** (originally a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva)
3. Statement 3 – **Correct** (ICJ ruling favored Cambodia)

GST collections hit record ₹2.43 lakh crore in April 2026

Source: The Hindu (Economy)

Key News:

India's **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** collections reached an all-time high of **₹2.43 lakh crore in April 2026**. This marks the **third consecutive year of record GST collections for April**.

1. The growth was driven mainly by **higher imports and increased compliance**, despite moderate domestic consumption.
2. Gross GST revenues saw a **~26% year-on-year increase**.
3. The data indicates **resilient tax buoyancy and improved formalisation of the economy**.

Static Introduction

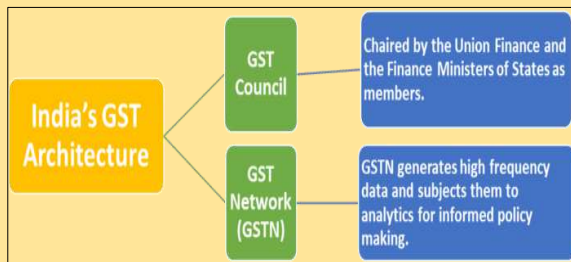
Goods and Services Tax (GST)

1. Introduced in **2017** via **101st Constitutional Amendment Act**
2. Indirect tax reform replacing:
 - VAT, Excise, Service Tax

3. Types:
➤ **CGST, SGST, IGST**

GST Council

1. Constitutional body under **Article 279A**
2. Headed by:
➤ Union Finance Minister
3. Decides:
➤ Tax rates
➤ Exemptions



Importance of GST

1. Promotes:
➤ **One Nation, One Tax**
➤ Ease of doing business
2. Enhances:
➤ Tax compliance
➤ Revenue collection

Factors Affecting GST Revenue

1. Economic growth
2. Consumption demand
3. Imports
4. Compliance and digital tracking

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding GST in India:

1. GST was introduced through the 101st Constitutional Amendment Act.
2. GST Council is established under Article 279A.
3. GST replaces multiple indirect taxes like VAT and excise duty.
4. GST is a direct tax levied on income.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Introduced by **101st Amendment (2017)**.
2. Statement 2: GST Council under **Article 279A**.
3. Statement 3: Replaced multiple indirect taxes.
4. Statement 4: GST is an **indirect tax**, not direct.

Karnataka launches India's first digital grievance portal for gig workers

Source: *The Hindu*

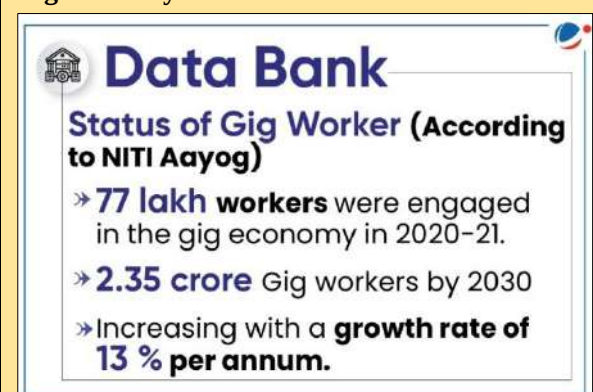
Key News:

The Karnataka government has launched a **digital grievance redressal portal for gig workers**, a first-of-its-kind initiative in India. The platform aims to act as a **bridge between gig workers and aggregator companies** (like ride-hailing and delivery platforms).

1. Workers can raise issues related to **wages, working conditions, and unfair practices**.
2. The system is integrated with **e-governance platforms** to ensure transparency and accountability.
3. It seeks to formalize dispute resolution in the **gig economy**, which largely operates without a legal framework.

Static Introduction

Gig Economy



1. Refers to:
➤ Short-term, flexible jobs
➤ Platform-based work (Uber, Swiggy, Zomato)
2. Workers are typically:
➤ Independent contractors

- Not covered by traditional labour laws

Issues Faced by Gig Workers

1. Lack of:
 - Social security
 - Job security
 - Legal protection
2. Issues:
 - Wage disputes
 - Algorithm-based control

Legal & Policy Developments

1. **Code on Social Security, 2020** recognizes gig and platform workers
2. States like Rajasthan and Karnataka are developing:
 - Welfare boards
 - Social security schemes

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding gig workers in India:

1. Gig workers are recognized under the Code on Social Security, 2020.
2. Gig workers are considered permanent employees under labour laws.
3. Gig economy is based on platform-driven short-term work.
4. Gig workers have full access to traditional social security benefits in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation Statement 1: Recognized in **Code on Social Security, 2020**.

1. Statement 2: Not permanent employees.
2. Statement 3: Gig economy = **platform-based work**.
3. Statement 4: Limited access to social security benefits.

India must strengthen public healthcare: Lessons from NSO health survey

Source: *The Hindu (Editorial)*

Key News:

The latest **National Statistical Office (NSO) health survey (80th round)** shows improved **health-seeking behaviour** and increased institutional care. **Government health insurance coverage** has expanded significantly, especially in rural areas.

1. However, **out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE)** remains high, particularly in private healthcare.
2. Public healthcare systems continue to face **capacity constraints**, pushing people toward private facilities.
3. The editorial stresses the need to **strengthen public sector healthcare infrastructure and accessibility**.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **Insurance Coverage (Rural):** Increased from ~12.9% → ~45.5%
2. **OOPE (Hospitalisation):** ~₹11,285 per case
3. **Institutional Deliveries:** Nearly universal (~95–98%)
4. **Disease Trend:** Shift from infectious to non-communicable diseases

Static Introduction

Public vs Private Healthcare in India

1. **Public Sector:**
 - Affordable but limited infrastructure
2. **Private Sector:**
 - High quality but expensive
3. India follows a **mixed healthcare model**

Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE)

1. Direct payments made by individuals for healthcare
2. High OOPE leads to:
 - **Financial distress**
 - **Poverty**

Government Initiatives

1. **Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY):**
 - Covers secondary & tertiary care
2. **Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs):**
 - Focus on primary healthcare
3. **National Health Mission (NHM)**

Key Challenges

1. Unequal access (urban vs rural)
2. Overdependence on private sector
3. Rising burden of **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**

4. Underfunding of public healthcare

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding healthcare in India:

1. Out-of-pocket expenditure refers to direct healthcare payments by individuals.
2. Public healthcare in India is the dominant provider of tertiary care.
3. Ayushman Bharat aims to provide health insurance coverage to vulnerable populations.
4. India is witnessing a shift towards non-communicable diseases.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: OOPE = direct payment by individuals.
2. Statement 2: Private sector dominates tertiary care.
3. Statement 3: PM-JAY targets vulnerable groups.
4. Statement 4: Shift toward NCDs is ongoing.

Centre notifies changes to Citizenship Rules; digital process introduced for OCI and applicants

Source: Press Trust of India (PTI) / The Hindu

Key News:

The Union Home Ministry has notified amendments to the **Citizenship Rules, 2009**, introducing a **digital application system**. The changes streamline processes for **Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders** and citizenship applicants.

key provision:

It clarifies that **minor children cannot hold passports of two countries while also being Indian citizens**.

1. The amendments aim to enhance **transparency, efficiency, and ease of application**.
2. Applications will now be processed through an **official online portal**.

Static Introduction

Citizenship in India

1. Governed by **Citizenship Act, 1955**

2. Modes of acquiring citizenship:

- Birth
- Descent
- Registration
- Naturalisation
- Incorporation of territory

Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)

1. Introduced in **2005**

2. Provides:

- Visa-free travel to India
- Certain economic and educational rights

3. Not equivalent to full citizenship:

- No voting rights
- No constitutional posts

NRI, PIO and OCI

Non-Resident Indian (NRI): An Indian citizen who ordinarily resides outside of India but holds an Indian passport. They enjoy all the benefits that are accrued to an Indian citizen subject to rules notified by the government otherwise. They do not require a visa to visit India.

Person of Indian origin (PIO): A person who or whose any of ancestors were Indian nationals and is currently a foreign citizen.

Overseas citizen of India (OCI): It is a status of permanent residency for foreign citizens of Indian origin.

Dual Citizenship in India

1. India **does not allow dual citizenship**
2. OCI is a form of **overseas residency status**, not dual citizenship

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding citizenship in India:

1. Citizenship in India is governed by the Citizenship Act, 1955.
2. India allows full dual citizenship to its citizens.
3. OCI cardholders have voting rights in India.
4. Citizenship can be acquired by naturalisation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer:

(a) 1 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Citizenship governed by **Citizenship Act, 1955**.
2. Statement 2: India does **not allow dual citizenship**.
3. Statement 3: OCI holders **cannot vote**.
4. Statement 4: Citizenship can be acquired by **naturalisation**.

CJI declares Sikkim as India's first paperless state judiciary

What is in News?

Surya Kant announced that **Sikkim has become the first state in India to achieve a fully paperless judiciary**. The announcement was made during the **National Conclave on Technology and Judiciary** in Gangtok.

1. The move integrates **digital technology in judicial processes**, replacing traditional paper-based systems with a digital ecosystem.
2. It aims to remove barriers like **distance, terrain, cost, and delays** in accessing justice.

Importance

Judicial Reforms & Digital India

1. Strengthens **e-Courts Mission Mode Project**.
2. Promotes **efficient, transparent, and faster justice delivery**.

Access to Justice (Article 39A)

1. Reduces geographical constraints, especially in **hilly regions like Sikkim**.
2. Enables litigants to access courts digitally without physical presence.

Cost & Time Efficiency

1. Cuts down travel, documentation, and administrative costs.
2. Speeds up case processing and reduces pendency.

Environmental Impact

1. Minimizes paper usage → contributes to **sustainability goals**.

Model for Other States

1. Sikkim acts as a **pilot model** for nationwide judicial digitization.

MCQ

Q. Which state has been declared as India's first paperless judiciary state?

- (a) Kerala
- (b) Sikkim
- (c) Himachal Pradesh
- (d) Uttarakhand

Correct Answer: (b) Sikkim

RBI brings over 100 tonnes of gold to India in FY26 for third consecutive year

What is in News?

Reserve Bank of India repatriated **100+ tonnes of gold to India in FY 2025–26**, marking the **third consecutive year** of such transfers. In total, RBI brought **168.06 metric tonnes (MT)** of gold to India in FY26.

1. A significant portion was earlier stored abroad with the Bank of England and the Bank for International Settlements.
2. RBI's gold reserves rose to **~880.58 MT**, with **over half now stored domestically**.
3. This move aligns with a global trend of central banks **increasing domestic gold storage** amid geopolitical uncertainties.

Importance

Forex Reserve Diversification

1. Gold acts as a **safe-haven asset** reducing reliance on US dollar-based reserves.

Geopolitical Risk Management

1. After events like the Russia Ukraine War, countries prefer **holding reserves within national borders** to avoid sanctions risk.

Monetary Stability

1. Enhances **confidence in currency and financial system stability**.

Strategic Autonomy

1. Domestic storage ensures **greater control over national assets**.

Global Trend

1. As per World Gold Council survey, many central banks are **shifting reserves domestically**.

MCQ

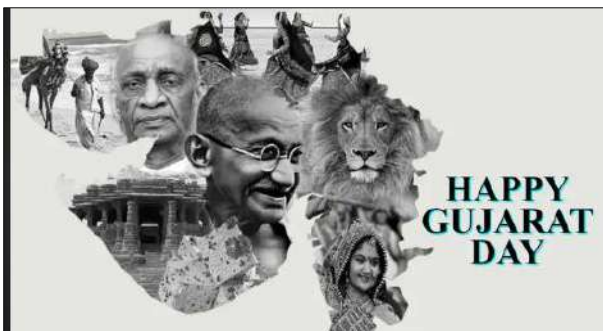
Q5. The Reserve Bank of India primarily repatriated gold from which of the following institutions?

- (a) IMF
 - (b) World Bank
 - (c) Bank of England
 - (d) Asian Development Bank
- Correct Answer: (c) Bank of England**

PM extends greetings on Maharashtra Day and Gujarat Day (1st May)

What is in News?

- Narendra Modi extended greetings to the people of **Maharashtra** and **Gujarat** on **1st May**.
- Both states celebrate their **Statehood Day (Foundation Day)** on this date.
- The day marks the creation of Maharashtra and Gujarat in **1960**, following the **bifurcation of the erstwhile Bombay State** on linguistic basis.
- The PM highlighted the **cultural richness, economic contribution, and vibrant spirit** of both states.



Importance

Linguistic Reorganization of States

- Linked to the States Reorganisation Act 1956 and later developments.
- Reflects **language-based federal restructuring**.

The Constitution of India provides a clear legal framework for the formation, admission, and

alteration of states within the Union under **Part I (Articles 1–4)**.

Core Constitutional Provisions

- Article 2 (Admission or Establishment of New States):** Empowers the Parliament of India to admit new states into the Union or establish them on terms it deems fit.
- Article 3 (Formation of New States and Alteration of Existing States):** Authorises the Parliament to:
 - Form a new state by separating territory from any state or uniting two or more states.
 - Increase or diminish the area of any state.
 - Alter the boundaries or the name of any state.
- Article 4 (Laws to provide for amendment of First and Fourth Schedules):** Specifies that laws made under Articles 2 and 3 are **not** to be considered constitutional amendments under Article 368. This means they can be passed by a **simple majority** in Parliament.

Federalism in India

- Demonstrates **cooperative federalism** and recognition of regional identities.

Economic Significance

- Maharashtra → Financial hub (Mumbai).
- Gujarat → Industrial and trade powerhouse.

Cultural Diversity

- Highlights India's **unity in diversity** through distinct regional cultures.

Important Dates for Prelims

- 1st May → Maharashtra Day & Gujarat Day (frequently asked factual question).

MCQ

Q6. Maharashtra and Gujarat were formed on which date after the bifurcation of Bombay State?

- (a) 26 January 1950
- (b) 1 May 1960
- (c) 15 August 1947
- (d) 2 October 1956

Correct Answer: (b) 1 May 1960

PM highlights transformative impact of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

What is in News?

Narendra Modi shared an article by Dharmendra Pradhan highlighting the impact of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. The scheme has **expanded LPG coverage to over 10 crore women beneficiaries**.

1. It emphasizes **clean cooking energy**, reducing household air pollution.
2. The focus has now shifted towards **sustained usage, affordability, and energy justice**.
3. Women are being positioned as **central stakeholders**, not just beneficiaries.



Importance

Women Empowerment

1. Enhances **health, dignity, and decision-making power** of rural women.

Health & Environment

1. Reduces indoor air pollution → lowers risk of diseases like COPD.
2. Promotes **clean energy transition**.

Social Justice & Inclusion

1. Targets **BPL households**, ensuring equitable access to energy.

Governance Model

1. Example of **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** and targeted subsidy.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1. SDG 3 (Health), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 7 (Clean Energy).

MCQ

Q7. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) primarily aims to:

- (a) Provide free electricity connections
- (b) Promote solar energy in rural areas

- (c) Provide LPG connections to poor households
- (d) Subsidize petrol prices

Correct Answer: (c) Provide LPG connections to poor households

Indian Navy receives indigenous stealth frigate 'Mahendragiri' under Project 17A

What is in News?

The Indian Navy received 'Mahendragiri', the **sixth and final stealth frigate** under **Project 17A**. The ship was built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL).

1. It is an **indigenously designed advanced stealth frigate** equipped with modern weapons and sensors.
2. The warship reflects India's push towards **self-reliance in defence manufacturing** under **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.
3. The vessel enhances India's **blue-water naval capability** and maritime security.

Importance

Defence Modernization

1. Strengthens Indian Navy's **combat capability and maritime dominance**.

Indigenous Capability

1. Promotes **Make in India** in defence sector.
2. Designed by **Warship Design Bureau (WDB)** of Indian Navy.

Strategic Security

1. Enhances India's ability to safeguard **sea lanes of communication (SLOCs)**.

Technological Advancement

1. Features **stealth technology, advanced radar, and weapon systems**.

Economic Impact

1. Boosts domestic shipbuilding ecosystem and generates employment.

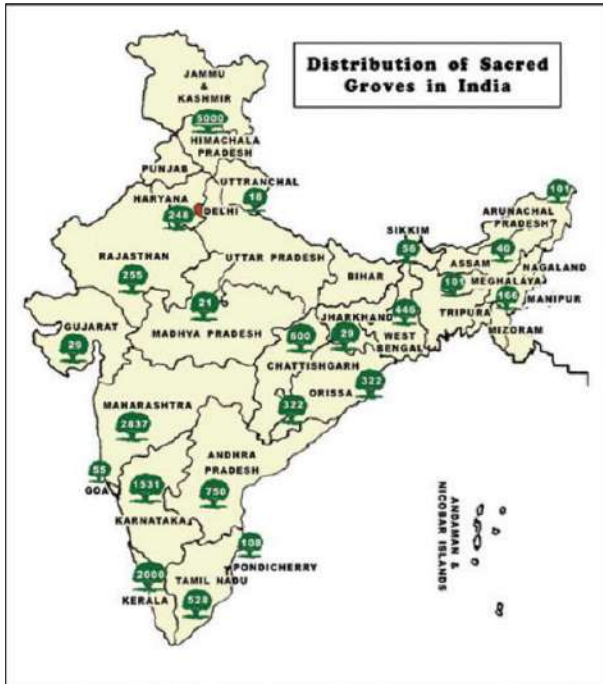
MCQ

Q8. 'Mahendragiri', recently delivered to the Indian Navy, is associated with:

- (a) Nuclear submarine
- (b) Aircraft carrier
- (c) Stealth frigate
- (d) Missile destroyer

Correct Answer: (c) Stealth frigate

Sacred Groves – In News



The Kerala State Biodiversity Board has launched a **pilot restoration programme for sacred groves**, in collaboration with local **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)**, to revive these traditional ecological conservation systems.

About Sacred Groves

Sacred groves are patches of **natural vegetation**—ranging from a few trees to large forest areas—**protected due to religious and cultural beliefs**.

Key Characteristics

1. Dedicated to **local deities or ancestral spirits**
2. Conserved by communities for generations through **customary practices**
3. Represent one of the **oldest forms of community-based conservation**

Ecological Importance

1. Act as **biodiversity hotspots**, preserving rare and endemic species
2. Serve as **gene banks** for flora and fauna
3. Help in:
 - **Groundwater recharge**
 - **Soil conservation**
 - **Microclimate regulation**

Protection Practices

1. Activities like **hunting and deforestation** are **strictly prohibited**
2. Limited sustainable use allowed, such as:
 - Collecting honey
 - Gathering fallen wood

Distribution in India

1. India has **over 1 lakh sacred groves**
2. Found across diverse regions:
 - **Western Ghats**
 - **Himalayas**
 - **Northeastern states**
 - **Central India**

Regional Names of Sacred Groves

1. **Dev Van** – Himachal Pradesh
2. **Bugyal / Dev Van** – Uttarakhand
3. **Than / Madaico** – Assam
4. **Matagudi / Devgudi / Sarna** – Chhattisgarh
5. **Jaherthan / Sarna** – Jharkhand
6. **Devarakadu** – Karnataka
7. **Kavu / Sarpa Kavu** – Kerala
8. **Kovilkadu** – Tamil Nadu
9. **Devrai / Devgudi** – Maharashtra
10. **Law Kyntang / Asong Khosi** – Meghalaya
11. **Orans** – Rajasthan
12. **Jahera / Thakuramma** – Odisha

Significance of Recent Initiative

1. Revives **traditional ecological knowledge systems**
2. Strengthens **community participation in conservation**
3. Supports **biodiversity restoration in degraded landscapes**
4. Aligns with India's goals under:
 - **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**
 - **Climate resilience strategies**

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding Sacred Groves:

1. They are protected forest patches conserved due to religious and cultural beliefs.
2. Hunting and tree cutting are generally permitted in sacred groves.
3. They act as biodiversity hotspots and help in ecological conservation.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct
2. Statement 2 – Incorrect (such activities are usually prohibited)
3. Statement 3 – Correct

Nepal raises Lipulekh issue; India reiterates its position

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News:

Nepal has reiterated its claim over the **Lipulekh, Kalapani, and Limpiyadhura regions**, citing the **Treaty of Sugauli (1816)**. India rejected Nepal's claims, stating they are **not based on historical facts or evidence**.

1. Lipulekh Pass remains a key route for the **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**.
2. Both countries have expressed willingness to resolve issues through **dialogue and diplomacy**.
3. The development comes amid ongoing efforts to **strengthen India–Nepal bilateral relations**.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Disputed Areas:** Lipulekh, Kalapani, Limpiyadhura
2. **Treaty Referenced:** Treaty of Sugauli (1816)
3. **Strategic Importance:** Tri-junction of India–Nepal–China
4. **Religious Route:** Kailash Mansarovar Yatra

Static Introduction:

Lipulekh Pass

1. Located in **Uttarakhand (India)** near the **India–Nepal–China tri-junction**
2. Important for:
 - Trade with Tibet
 - Pilgrimage route to **Kailash Mansarovar**



Treaty of Sugauli (1816)

1. Signed between:
 - British East India Company & Nepal
2. Defined:
 - Boundary between India and Nepal
3. Dispute arises over interpretation of **Kali River origin**

India–Nepal Relations

1. Based on:
 - **1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship**
2. Features:
 - Open border
 - Cultural and economic ties

Strategic Importance

1. Region lies close to:
 - China (Tibet Autonomous Region)
2. Important for:
 - Security
 - Connectivity
 - Geopolitics in Himalayas

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Lipulekh Pass and India–Nepal relations:

1. Lipulekh Pass lies near the India–Nepal–China tri-junction.
2. Treaty of Sugauli was signed in 1816 between Nepal and British East India Company.
3. Kailash Mansarovar Yatra passes through Lipulekh route.
4. India and Nepal do not share an open border.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

- 1. Statement 1: Lipulekh is at **tri-junction**.
- 2. Statement 2: Treaty signed in **1816**.
- 3. Statement 3: Used for **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra**.
- 4. Statement 4: India and Nepal have an **open border**.

Mission Drishti: World's first OptoSAR satellite launched

What is in News?

- 1. **Mission Drishti**, the world's first **OptoSAR satellite**, has been launched by SpaceX aboard a **Falcon 9 rocket**. Developed by Bengaluru-based startup GalaxEye.
- 2. It integrates **Electro-Optical (EO)** and **Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR)** sensors on a **single platform**.
- 3. This enables **all-weather, day-and-night Earth observation**.
- 4. It is also **India's largest privately developed Earth observation satellite (~190 kg)**.

Importance

Technological Breakthrough

- 1. First-ever integration of **EO + SAR sensors** → overcomes limitations of cloud cover and low visibility.

Space Sector Reforms

- 1. Highlights rise of **private players in India's space ecosystem** (post IN-SPACe reforms).

Strategic & Security Uses

- 1. Useful for **border surveillance, disaster management, and defence intelligence**.

Economic Applications

- 1. Supports agriculture, urban planning, climate monitoring, and resource mapping.

Global Leadership Potential

- 1. Positions India as a leader in **next-gen satellite technology**.

EO vs SAR – Quick Understanding

Electro-Optical (EO) Imaging

- 1. Works like a camera → captures images using visible/infrared light
 - 2. High resolution but **affected by clouds/night**
- Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR)**
- 1. Uses radar waves → **penetrates clouds, works at night**
 - 2. Slightly lower visual clarity but highly reliable

MCQ

Q2. Mission Drishti satellite is unique because it:

- (a) Uses only optical sensors
- (b) Integrates EO and SAR sensors on one platform
- (c) Is India's first communication satellite
- (d) Is a navigation satellite

Correct Answer: (b) Integrates EO and SAR sensors on one platform

Hepatitis – In News

According to the World Health Organization **Global Hepatitis Report 2026**, India continues to be among the countries with a **high burden of hepatitis-related diseases**, highlighting the need for improved prevention and treatment strategies.

About Hepatitis

Hepatitis refers to **inflammation of the liver**, primarily caused by **viral infections**, though it can also result from **non-infectious factors**.

Causes

- 1. **Viral infections** (most common cause)
- 2. **Autoimmune hepatitis** – when the body attacks its own liver cells
- 3. **Secondary causes:**
 - Certain medications
 - Toxins
 - Alcohol

Common Symptoms

- 1. Fatigue and flu-like illness
- 2. Dark urine and pale stools
- 3. Abdominal pain
- 4. Loss of appetite
- 5. Unexplained weight loss
- 6. Yellowing of skin and eyes (**jaundice**)

Types of Hepatitis

Hepatitis A

- 1. Caused by Hepatitis A Virus (HAV)

2. **Acute and short-term infection**
3. Usually transmitted through contaminated food or water

Hepatitis B

1. Caused by Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)
2. Can be **chronic**
3. Transmitted through blood and body fluids

Hepatitis C

1. Caused by Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)
2. Most common **blood-borne infection**
3. Often becomes **long-term (chronic)**

Hepatitis D

1. Caused by Hepatitis D Virus (HDV)
2. Occurs **only in people already infected with Hepatitis B**

Hepatitis E

1. Caused by Hepatitis E Virus (HEV)
2. **Waterborne disease**, linked to poor sanitation

Treatment & Prevention

1. **Vaccines available for:**
 - Hepatitis A
 - Hepatitis B
2. **No vaccines currently available for:**
 - Hepatitis C
 - Hepatitis E
3. Preventive measures:
 - Safe drinking water
 - Proper sanitation
 - Safe blood transfusion
 - Avoid sharing needles

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding Hepatitis:

1. Hepatitis D infection occurs only in individuals already infected with Hepatitis B.
2. Vaccines are available for all types of hepatitis viruses.
3. Hepatitis E is primarily transmitted through contaminated water.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct

2. Statement 2 – Incorrect (no vaccines for Hepatitis C & E)
3. Statement 3 – Correct

INS Mahendragiri – In News

The Indian Navy has recently received **INS Mahendragiri**, built at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, marking a significant addition to India's naval capabilities.

About INS Mahendragiri

1. It is the **sixth and final ship of the Nilgiri-class (Project 17A)** stealth frigates
2. Designed by the Warship Design Bureau
3. Constructed in **Mumbai at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL)**

Key Features

Propulsion

1. Uses **CODAG (Combined Diesel and Gas)** propulsion system
2. Equipped with:
 - Diesel engine
 - Gas turbine
3. Drives a **Controllable Pitch Propeller (CPP)**
4. Integrated with an **Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS)**

Armament & Combat Systems

1. Advanced suite of weapons and sensors for:
 - **Anti-surface warfare**
 - **Anti-air warfare**
 - **Anti-submarine warfare**

What is Project 17A?

Project 17A refers to a class of **modern stealth frigates** designed for **multi-mission maritime operations**.

Key Highlights

1. Designed to tackle **emerging maritime threats**
2. Incorporates **stealth technology** and advanced automation

Other Ships in the Class

1. INS Nilgiri
2. INS Himgiri
3. INS Udaygiri
4. INS Taragiri
5. INS Vindhyagiri

Advanced Systems

1. Equipped with:

- **MF-STAR active phased array radar**
- **BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles**
- **Barak-8 long-range surface-to-air missiles**

Strategic Significance

1. Strengthens **India's blue-water naval capabilities**
2. Enhances **maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**
3. Supports the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliance) initiative** in defence
4. Improves **multi-domain warfare readiness**

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding INS Mahendragiri:

1. It is part of the Nilgiri-class stealth frigates under Project 17A.
2. It has been built at Cochin Shipyard Limited.
3. It is equipped with BrahMos cruise missiles and Barak-8 surface-to-air missiles.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct
2. Statement 2 – Incorrect (built at Mazagon Dock, Mumbai)
3. Statement 3 – Correct

Allahabad HC ruling reinforces primacy of Forest Rights Act over conflicting orders

Source: The Hindu

Key News

1. The **Allahabad High Court (Lucknow Bench)** ruled that any administrative or court orders inconsistent with the **Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA)** are **null and void**.
2. The judgment came while setting aside eviction-related decisions by **District Level Committees (DLCs)** in Uttar Pradesh.

3. The Court emphasized that **forest-dwelling communities have legally recognized rights** under FRA.
4. It clarified that eviction cannot occur until the **due verification process of claims is completed**.
5. The ruling strengthens protections for **tribal and forest-dependent communities**.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Law Involved:** Forest Rights Act, 2006
2. **Court:** Allahabad High Court (Lucknow Bench)
3. **Key Principle:** FRA overrides conflicting laws/orders
4. **Authority Involved:** District Level Committee (DLC)

Static Introduction

Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006

1. Official name: **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**
2. Objective:
 - Correct historical injustice to forest dwellers
3. Recognizes rights over:
 - Land
 - Minor forest produce
 - Grazing
 - Community forest resources

Key Provisions

1. Rights recognition through:
 - Gram Sabha → Sub-Divisional Committee → District Level Committee
2. No eviction until:
 - Claims are fully verified

FRA vs Indian Forest Act, 1927

1. FRA is a **welfare legislation**
2. Overrides restrictive colonial forest laws in case of conflict

Importance of the Judgment

1. Strengthens:
 - Tribal rights
 - Legal clarity on eviction
2. Ensures:
 - Due process and protection of livelihoods

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:

1. FRA recognizes rights of forest-dwelling communities over land and forest resources.
2. Eviction of forest dwellers can take place before completion of claim verification.
3. FRA overrides conflicting provisions of earlier forest laws.
4. District Level Committee is involved in the recognition of forest rights.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: FRA recognizes forest rights.
2. Statement 2: Eviction only after **complete verification**.
3. Statement 3: Overrides conflicting laws.
4. Statement 4: DLC plays a key role in claims process.

Supreme Court includes victims of forcible acid ingestion under RPwD Act

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News:

1. The **Supreme Court of India** has ruled that survivors of **forcible acid ingestion** will be covered under the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016**.
2. Earlier, only **acid attack (external throwing)** victims were explicitly recognized under the Act.
3. The Court held that such victims will be treated as **“acid attack victims”** retrospectively from **2016**.
4. This ensures access to **disability benefits, rehabilitation, and legal protection**.
5. The Court also suggested framing a **comprehensive policy framework** for survivor support.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Court:** Supreme Court of India
2. **Law:** RPwD Act, 2016
3. **New Inclusion:** Victims of forcible acid ingestion
4. **Legal Provision:** IPC Section 326A (acid attack offences)

Static Introduction

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016

1. Replaced:
 - Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995
2. Expanded disabilities from **7 to 21 categories**
3. Ensures:
 - Equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion

Acid Attack Laws in India

1. **Section 326A IPC:**
 - Punishes acid attacks with **minimum 10 years imprisonment to life**
2. **Section 326B IPC:**
 - Punishes attempt to throw acid

Significance of the Judgment

1. Expands:
 - Scope of victim protection
2. Ensures:
 - Access to compensation and rehabilitation
3. Recognizes:
 - Severity of internal injuries from ingestion

Policy Implications

1. Need for:
 - Comprehensive rehabilitation schemes
 - Medical and psychological support
2. Strengthens:
 - Human rights framework

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding disability rights and acid attack laws:

1. RPwD Act, 2016 expanded the number of recognized disabilities.
2. Section 326A IPC deals with acid attack offences.
3. RPwD Act originally included victims of forcible acid ingestion.
4. Acid attack victims are entitled to rehabilitation and compensation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Disabilities increased from 7 to 21.
2. Statement 2: Section 326A covers acid attacks.
3. Statement 3: Forcible ingestion **not originally included**.
4. Statement 4: Victims eligible for rehabilitation and compensation.

Direct tax growth slows to 5.1% in FY26, misses revised estimates

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News:

1. India's **direct tax collections** recorded a 5-year **low growth of 5.1% in FY 2025–26**.
2. Total collections stood at **₹23.40 lakh crore**, falling short of the revised estimate of ₹24.21 lakh crore.
3. **Personal Income Tax (PIT)** growth remained weak at around **0.03%**, while corporate tax growth was moderate.
4. The slowdown is attributed to **tax relief measures, global economic challenges, and supply chain disruptions**.
5. Experts expect improved performance in future due to **strong corporate fundamentals and policy reforms**.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Total Direct Tax Collection:** ₹23.40 lakh crore
2. **Growth Rate:** 5.1% (lowest in 5 years)
3. **Revised Estimate:** ₹24.21 lakh crore
4. **PIT Growth:** ~0.03% (very low growth)

Static Introduction

Direct Taxes in India

1. Taxes levied directly on income or profits

2. Examples:

- **Income Tax**
- **Corporate Tax**

3. Collected by:

- **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)**

Direct vs Indirect Taxes

1. **Direct Tax:** Paid directly by individuals/entities
2. **Indirect Tax:** Passed on to consumers (e.g., GST)

Factors Affecting Tax Collection

1. Economic growth
2. Tax rates and exemptions
3. Compliance levels
4. Global economic conditions

Importance of Direct Taxes

1. Progressive in nature
2. Helps:
 - Reduce inequality
 - Increase government revenue
3. Crucial for:
 - Fiscal stability

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding taxation in India:

1. Direct taxes are levied on income and profits.
2. GST is a direct tax.
3. CBDT is responsible for direct tax administration.
4. Direct taxes are generally progressive in nature.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Direct taxes = income/profit-based.
2. Statement 2: GST is an **indirect tax**.
3. Statement 3: CBDT administers direct taxes.
4. Statement 4: Direct taxes are **progressive**.

GRAP Stage-I revoked across NCR as Delhi's air quality improves

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

Key News:

1. The **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)** has revoked **GRAP Stage-I** restrictions across the **National Capital Region (NCR)**.
2. The decision follows improvement in Delhi's **Air Quality Index (AQI)**, now in the 'Satisfactory to Moderate' category.
3. Favorable meteorological conditions like **rainfall and better wind patterns** contributed to the improvement.
4. Authorities will continue **monitoring air quality** and may reimpose measures if pollution levels rise.
5. GRAP remains a key framework for **air pollution control in Delhi-NCR**.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Authority:** Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)
2. **Region:** Delhi-NCR
3. **AQI Status:** Improved to 'Satisfactory/Moderate'
4. **Mechanism:** Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)

Static Introduction

Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)

1. Framework for **air pollution control in Delhi-NCR**
2. Activated based on AQI levels:
 - Moderate
 - Poor
 - Very Poor
 - Severe
3. Includes measures like:
 - Restricting construction
 - Controlling vehicular emissions

Air Quality Index (AQI)

1. Measures air pollution levels
2. Categories:
 - Good (0–50)

- Satisfactory (51–100)
- Moderate (101–200)
- Poor (201–300)
- Very Poor (301–400)
- Severe (401–500)

Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)

1. Statutory body established in **2021**
2. Jurisdiction:
 - Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan

Causes of Air Pollution in NCR

1. Vehicular emissions
2. Stubble burning
3. Construction dust
4. Industrial emissions

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding GRAP and AQI:

1. GRAP is implemented only when air quality reaches severe category.
2. AQI is used to measure air pollution levels.
3. CAQM is responsible for air quality management in Delhi-NCR.
4. 'Moderate' AQI category ranges from 101–200.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 2, 3 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: GRAP applies to **multiple AQI levels**, not only severe.
2. Statement 2: AQI measures pollution.
3. Statement 3: CAQM oversees NCR air quality.
4. Statement 4: Moderate = **101–200 AQI**.

CARICOM: Key facts and recent relevance in news

What is in News?

1. India's External Affairs Minister visited **Kingston, Jamaica**, engaging with members of the Caribbean Community.

- The visit highlights **India–CARICOM cooperation** in trade, development, and diplomacy.
- CARICOM remains an important **regional grouping in the Caribbean**.

Importance

Regional Integration Model

- One of the **oldest integration groupings in the developing world** (est. 1973).

Economic Cooperation

- Promotes **common market, trade integration, and shared economic growth**.

Foreign Policy Coordination

- Coordinates **collective diplomatic stance** among Caribbean nations.

India–CARICOM Relations

- Important for India's outreach to **Global South and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**.

Institutions & Governance

- Features institutions like the **Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ)** and **Caribbean Development Bank**.

CARICOM Region Overview



- Founded: **1973 (Treaty of Chaguaramas)**
- Headquarters: **Georgetown, Guyana**
- Members: **15 countries** (e.g., Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, Haiti)
- Associate Members: **British Overseas Territories** (e.g., Bermuda, Cayman Islands)
- Chairmanship: **Rotates every 6 months**

MCQ

Q5. CARICOM, sometimes seen in news, is a regional organization of which region?

- Southeast Asia
- Caribbean
- West Africa

(d) Central Europe

Correct Answer: (b) Caribbean

Proposal to increase ticket rates at Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP)

What is in News?

- Maharashtra Forest Department has proposed to increase annual ticket rates for Sanjay Gandhi National Park.
- SGNP is located near Borivali in Mumbai and is one of the largest national parks within city limits in the world.
- The park is ecologically and historically significant, featuring Kanheri Caves and rich biodiversity.

Importance

Urban Biodiversity Conservation

- SGNP is a rare example of a protected forest within a megacity.

Environmental Governance

- Fee revision relates to eco-tourism management and conservation funding.

Cultural-Historical Significance

- Kanheri Caves → important Buddhist learning centre (1st–10th century CE).

Biodiversity Hotspot (Local)

- Habitat of leopards, deer, macaques, butterflies, and diverse flora.

Prelims Relevance

- Frequently asked for location, features, and unique urban setting.

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Cultural-Historical Significance

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Biodiversity Hotspot (Local)

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Prelims Relevance

1. Frequently asked for location, features, and unique urban setting.

BRO's Project Deepak celebrates 66th Raising Day

What is in News?

1. Border Roads Organisation's Project Deepak celebrated its 66th Raising Day in Himachal Pradesh.
2. The project operates in strategically important Western Himalayan regions.
3. It has played a key role in infrastructure development along the India–China border.
4. Contributes to road construction, upgrading, and maintenance in difficult terrains.
5. Also supports disaster response and rescue operations, especially during natural calamities.

Importance

Strategic Infrastructure

1. Enhances border connectivity and troop mobility.

National Security

1. Crucial for maintaining defence preparedness along LAC (Line of Actual Control).

Disaster Management Role

1. Provides rapid response in landslides, floods, and emergencies.

Regional Development

1. Boosts connectivity in remote Himalayan areas, aiding local economy.

Engineering Excellence

1. Works in extreme climatic and geographical conditions.

Indian Army contingent departs for India–Cambodia joint military exercise CINBAX-II 2026

What is in News?

1. The Indian Army contingent has departed for the second edition of joint exercise CINBAX-II with Cambodia.
2. The exercise will be conducted in Phnom Penh from 4–17 May 2026.
3. It focuses on Counter-Terrorism (CT) operations in semi-urban terrain under UN Peacekeeping framework.
4. Indian contingent (~120 personnel) is led by troops from the Maratha Light Infantry Regiment.
5. Cambodian Army personnel (~160) are also participating.

Importance

Defence Cooperation

1. Strengthens bilateral military ties between India and Cambodia.

Act East Policy

1. Enhances India's engagement with Southeast Asia under Act East Policy.

Counter-Terrorism Preparedness

1. Focus on joint training, interoperability, and tactical drills.

UN Peacekeeping Role

1. Improves India's capacity in UN peacekeeping missions, where India is a major contributor.

Regional Security

1. Promotes stability in Indo-Pacific region.

MCQ

Q6. Exercise CINBAX is a joint military exercise between India and which country?

- (a) Vietnam
- (b) Cambodia
- (c) Thailand
- (d) Indonesia

Correct Answer: (b) Cambodia

Government fixes 12-week deadline for processing FDI applications

Source: *The Hindu (Economy)*

Key News

The Government of India has introduced a revised **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** for processing **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** proposals. The new framework sets a **maximum 12-week limit** for approval of FDI applications.

1. The move aims to improve **ease of doing business, transparency, and investment facilitation**.
2. Sensitive proposals requiring security clearance will continue to undergo **inter-ministerial scrutiny**.
3. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (**DPIIT**) will coordinate the process.

Major Key Data / Facts



1. **Maximum Approval Time:** 12 weeks
2. **Nodal Agency:** DPIIT
3. **Relevant Ministries:** RBI, MHA, MEA, sectoral ministries
4. **Policy Basis:** Updated Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Static Introduction

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

1. Investment by a foreign entity in:
 - Business operations/assets of another country
2. Can be through:
 - Greenfield investment
 - Mergers & acquisitions

FDI Routes in India

1. **Automatic Route:** No prior government approval required
2. **Government Route:** Approval needed from concerned ministries

Role of DPIIT

1. Department under **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**
2. Responsible for:
 - FDI policy formulation
 - Investment promotion
 - Ease of doing business reforms

Importance of FDI

1. Brings:
 - Capital inflow
 - Technology transfer
 - Employment generation
2. Enhances:
 - Industrial growth and exports

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India:

1. FDI can enter India through automatic and government approval routes.
2. DPIIT plays a role in FDI policy coordination.
3. FDI always requires prior approval from the Union Cabinet.
4. FDI contributes to technology transfer and capital inflows.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: India follows both **automatic and government routes**.
2. Statement 2: DPIIT coordinates FDI policy.
3. Statement 3: Only select cases require government approval, not all Cabinet approval.
4. Statement 4: FDI brings capital and technology.

Government raises Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane by ₹10 per quintal

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved an increase in the **Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)** of sugarcane by **₹10 per quintal** for the 2026–27 sugar season. The new FRP has been fixed at **₹365 per quintal** for a basic recovery rate of **10.25%**.

1. Farmers will receive a higher price if sugar recovery exceeds the benchmark recovery rate.
2. The decision aims to support **sugarcane farmers' incomes and rural economy**.
3. The Cabinet also approved the **Mission for Cotton Productivity** to improve cotton output and quality.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **New FRP:** ₹365/quintal
2. **Increase:** ₹10/quintal
3. **Basic Recovery Rate:** 10.25%
4. **Higher Recovery Incentive:** Additional payment for better sugar recovery

Static Introduction

Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)

1. Minimum price fixed by the **Central Government** for sugarcane procurement
2. Based on recommendations of:
 - **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**
3. Legally binding on sugar mills

Sugar Recovery Rate

1. Percentage of sugar extracted from sugarcane
2. Higher recovery = higher payment to farmers

Sugar Sector in India

1. India is among the world's largest:
 - Sugar producers
 - Sugar consumers
2. Major producing states:
 - Uttar Pradesh
 - Maharashtra
 - Karnataka

Importance of FRP

1. Ensures:
 - Income security for farmers
 - Stability in sugar sector
2. Supports:
 - Rural employment and agro-industries

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding sugarcane pricing in India:

1. Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) is fixed by the Central Government.
2. FRP recommendations are made by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
3. Sugar recovery rate influences the payment received by farmers.
4. FRP is applicable to wheat and rice procurement also.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

- Statement 1: FRP fixed by Centre.
- Statement 2: Based on **CACP** recommendations.
- Statement 3: Higher recovery rate leads to better price.
- Statement 4: Wheat/rice use **MSP**, not FRP.

Cabinet approves increase in Supreme Court judges' strength by four

Source: The Hindu

Key News

The Union Cabinet has approved increasing the sanctioned strength of **Supreme Court judges from 34 to 38 (including the Chief Justice of India)**. The move aims to address the **rising pendency of cases** in the apex court.

1. A Bill will be introduced in Parliament to amend the **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956**.
2. The proposal follows recommendations from the judiciary and concerns over delays in justice delivery.
3. Several upcoming retirements and vacancies also influenced the decision.

Static Introduction

Supreme Court of India

1. Established under **Article 124** of the Constitution
2. Highest judicial authority in India
3. Functions:
 - Constitutional interpretation
 - Judicial review
 - Protection of Fundamental Rights

Appointment of Judges

1. Judges appointed by:
 - President of India
2. Based on:
 - **Collegium System** recommendations

Pendency of Cases

1. Major challenge in Indian judiciary:
 - Shortage of judges
 - Infrastructure gaps
2. Impacts:
 - Speedy justice
 - Access to justice

Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act

1. Parliament can increase sanctioned strength under:
 - Article 124(1)
2. Strength revised multiple times since 1956

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Supreme Court of India:

1. Article 124 deals with the establishment of the Supreme Court.
2. Parliament has the power to increase the number of Supreme Court judges.
3. Supreme Court judges are appointed through the Collegium system.
4. The Constitution originally fixed the Supreme Court strength permanently.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Article 124 establishes SC.
2. Statement 2: Parliament can increase judge strength.
3. Statement 3: Collegium recommends appointments.

4. Statement 4: Strength is **not permanently fixed**; Parliament can amend it.

Cabinet approves proposal to make insult to 'Vande Mataram' a punishable offence

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News

The Union Cabinet has approved amendments to the **Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971** to criminalize insults or obstruction to the singing of 'Vande Mataram'. The amendment seeks to give the **National Song** legal protection similar to national symbols like the **National Anthem and National Flag**.

1. The proposal comes amid debates over **patriotism, constitutional values, and freedom of expression**.
2. Currently, insulting the National Anthem is punishable, but similar statutory protection for the National Song was absent.
3. The amendment will now require approval by Parliament.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **Law Involved:** Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971
2. **National Song:** Vande Mataram
3. **Author:** Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay
4. **Novel Source:** Anandamath (1882)

Static Introduction

National Song vs National Anthem

1. **National Anthem:** Jana Gana Mana
 - Written by Rabindranath Tagore
 2. **National Song:** Vande Mataram
 - Written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay
 3. Both adopted significant status in **1950**
- Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971**
1. Protects:
 - National Flag
 - Constitution of India
 - National Anthem
 2. Punishes:

- Insults and disrespect toward national symbols

Constitutional Perspective

1. Article 51A(a):

- Fundamental duty to respect national symbols
2. Debate exists between:
- Patriotism
 - Freedom of speech (Article 19)

Historical Importance of Vande Mataram

1. Played a major role in:
- Indian freedom movement
2. Became a symbol of:
- National awakening and anti-colonial struggle

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding 'Vande Mataram' and national symbols:

1. 'Vande Mataram' was written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.
2. 'Vande Mataram' appears in the novel Anandamath.
3. The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 protects the National Anthem.
4. India's Constitution explicitly declares 'Vande Mataram' as the National Anthem.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Written by **Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay**.
2. Statement 2: Appears in **Anandamath**.
3. Statement 3: Act protects National Anthem.
4. Statement 4: 'Vande Mataram' is the **National Song**, not anthem.

Government approves fifth edition of Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)

Source: The Hindu

Key News

The Union Cabinet has approved the **fifth edition of the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)**. The scheme aims to provide additional **credit support to MSMEs and other stressed sectors**, including airline companies.

1. The decision comes in response to economic disruptions arising from the **West Asia crisis and global uncertainties**.
2. The government expects the scheme to improve **liquidity, business continuity, and employment protection**.
3. The revised version seeks to stabilize sectors facing financial stress and supply-chain disruptions.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **Scheme:** Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)
2. **Target Beneficiaries:** MSMEs and selected sectors
3. **Expected Outlay:** ₹18,100 crore
4. **Credit Support Potential:** ~₹2.25 lakh crore

Static Introduction

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)

1. Launched in **2020** under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat Package**
2. Objective:
 - Provide collateral-free guaranteed loans
3. Implemented through:
 - National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC)

MSMEs in India

1. MSMEs contribute significantly to:
 - GDP
 - Employment
 - Exports
2. Often vulnerable to:
 - Economic shocks
 - Credit shortages

Credit Guarantee Mechanism

1. Government guarantees reduce:
 - Lending risk for banks
2. Encourages:
 - Credit flow to stressed businesses

Importance of the Scheme

1. Prevents:
 - Business closures
 - Job losses
2. Supports:
 - Economic recovery
 - Financial stability

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS):

1. ECLGS was launched as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat package.
2. The scheme provides collateral-free guaranteed loans.
3. ECLGS is targeted mainly at MSMEs and stressed sectors.
4. The scheme is implemented directly by the Reserve Bank of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Launched under **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.
2. Statement 2: Loans are **collateral-free**.
3. Statement 3: Focus on MSMEs and stressed sectors.
4. Statement 4: Implemented through **NCGTC and banks**, not RBI directly.

Delhi's air pollution pattern shifts: Ozone rises while NO₂ and CO decline

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News

Delhi's air quality dashboard indicates a significant rise in **ground-level ozone (O₃)** pollution, even as **nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)** and **carbon monoxide (CO)** levels have declined. The trend reflects changing pollution patterns linked to **vehicular emissions, climate conditions, and atmospheric chemistry**.

1. Experts warn that ozone pollution poses serious risks to **respiratory health**, especially during summer.
2. Declining NO₂ and CO levels suggest improvements in some emission controls, but ozone formation remains a challenge.
3. The issue highlights the complexity of **urban air pollution management** in megacities like Delhi.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **Pollutant Increasing:** Ground-level ozone (O₃)
2. **Pollutants Declining:** NO₂ and CO
3. **Major Sources:** Vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, sunlight-driven reactions
4. **Concern:** Rising summer-time ozone episodes

Static Introduction

Ground-Level Ozone (O₃)

1. A **secondary pollutant** formed by:
 - Reaction of NO_x and VOCs under sunlight
2. Harmful pollutant at lower atmosphere:
 - Causes respiratory problems

Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂)

1. Emitted mainly from:
 - Vehicles
 - Thermal power plants
2. Contributes to:
 - Smog and ozone formation

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

1. Produced from incomplete combustion of fuels
2. Reduces oxygen-carrying capacity of blood

Urban Air Pollution Challenges

1. Influenced by:
 - Vehicular emissions
 - Meteorology
 - Urban heat effects
2. Requires:
 - Integrated pollution control measures

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding air pollutants:

1. Ground-level ozone is a secondary pollutant.
2. Ozone at ground level is beneficial for human health.
3. Nitrogen dioxide contributes to ozone formation.

4. Carbon monoxide is produced due to incomplete combustion.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 3 and 4 only

Explanation

- Statement 1: Ozone is a **secondary pollutant**.
- Statement 2: Ground-level ozone is **harmful**, unlike stratospheric ozone.
- Statement 3: NO₂ participates in ozone formation.
- Statement 4: CO results from incomplete combustion.

240-million-year-old 'sand creeper' amphibian fossil discovered in Australia

What is in News?

Scientists from UNSW Sydney and the Australian Museum identified a **240-million-year-old amphibian fossil** named *Arenaerpeton supinatus*. The fossil was discovered hidden inside a **garden retaining wall** in Australia.

- It belonged to a giant prehistoric amphibian nicknamed the "**sand creeper**."
- The fossil is exceptionally preserved, even showing **rare traces of skin**.
- Researchers believe it was an ancient **river predator** resembling a giant salamander.

Importance

Paleontological Significance

- Provides insight into **Triassic-era amphibians** and vertebrate evolution.

Fossil Preservation

- Rare preservation of skin traces helps scientists study **ancient anatomy and ecology**.

Evolutionary Link

- Considered related to ancestors of the **Chinese Giant Salamander**.

Scientific Discovery

- Highlights how fossils can remain unnoticed for decades before identification.

Geological Relevance

- Fossils help reconstruct **Earth's climatic and ecological history**.

Artist Impression & Fossil Context



MCQ

Q7. *Arenaerpeton supinatus*, recently seen in news, was a:

- (a) Dinosaur
(b) Marine reptile
(c) Ancient amphibian
(d) Flying reptile

Correct Answer: (c) Ancient amphibian

NSE launches Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs) trading segment

What is in News?

National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) has launched a new trading segment for Electronic Gold Receipts. EGRs are **dematerialised securities representing ownership of physical gold**.

- The physical gold is stored in **SEBI-regulated vaults**.
- Investors can trade EGRs on stock exchanges and also convert them back into physical gold.
- The initiative aims to improve **transparency, standardization, and efficiency** in gold trading.

Importance

Financialization of Gold

- Encourages investment in **digital gold instruments** rather than physical storage.

Transparency & Regulation

1. Gold trading becomes more secure under Securities and Exchange Board of India regulations.

Formalization of Gold Market

1. Helps integrate India's large gold market into the **formal financial system**.

Investment Flexibility

1. Investors can switch between **physical and electronic gold holdings**.

Economic Significance

1. Important for India, one of the world's largest consumers of gold.

How Electronic Gold Receipts Work

1. Physical gold deposited in accredited vault
2. Gold converted into EGR units
3. EGR credited to Demat account
4. EGR traded on exchange
5. Can be redeemed back into physical gold

MCQ

Q8. Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs) primarily represent:

- (a) Gold mining shares
- (b) Ownership of physical gold in dematerialised form
- (c) Government gold bonds only
- (d) Digital currency backed by RBI

Correct Answer: (b) Ownership of physical gold in dematerialised form

Blue-green algae may become a new source of Vitamin B12**What is in News?**

Researchers reported that a species of **blue-green algae** can produce **biologically active Vitamin B12** at levels comparable to beef. The discovery could help improve **sustainable and plant-based nutrition**.

1. Vitamin B12 is generally absent in natural plant foods unless fortified.
2. The finding may provide an alternative B12 source for **vegetarians and vegans**.

Importance**Nutritional Security**

1. Could address **Vitamin B12 deficiency**, especially among vegetarian populations.

Sustainable Food Systems

1. Algae-based nutrition may reduce dependence on **animal-derived food sources**.

Public Health Relevance

1. Vitamin B12 is essential for **nerve function, DNA synthesis, and red blood cell formation**.

Biotechnology & Food Innovation

1. Demonstrates the growing role of **microbial biotechnology** in nutrition.

Climate-Friendly Alternative

1. Algae cultivation generally has lower environmental impact than livestock farming.

About Vitamin B12 (Cobalamin)

1. Water-soluble vitamin
2. Also called **Cobalamin**
3. Important for:
 - Healthy nerve cells
 - DNA synthesis
 - Red blood cell formation
4. Major natural sources:
 - Fish, meat, eggs, milk
5. Deficiency symptoms:
 - Anemia
 - Weakness
 - Numbness/tingling
 - Balance problems

MCQ

Q9. Vitamin B12 is also known as:

- (a) Calciferol
- (b) Riboflavin
- (c) Cobalamin
- (d) Niacin

Correct Answer: (c) Cobalamin

Overall crime rate declines by 6%, but cybercrime rises 17% in 2024: NCRB

Source: The Hindu

Key News:

1. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported a 6% decline in overall crime rate in India in 2024.
2. However, cybercrime cases increased by over 17%, reflecting rising digital vulnerabilities.

3. Fraud was the leading motive behind cybercrimes, followed by sexual exploitation and extortion.
4. The report also highlighted a rise in drug overdose deaths and offences against the state.
5. Suicide data showed high vulnerability among daily wage earners, unemployed persons, and agricultural workers.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. Cybercrime Cases (2024): ~1,01,928
2. Increase in Cybercrime: ~17%
3. Drug Overdose Deaths: Increased by ~50%
4. Suicide Deaths: ~1,70,746 persons

Static Introduction

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

1. Established in 1986
2. Functions under:
 - Ministry of Home Affairs
3. Publishes:
 - Crime in India Report
 - Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India (ADSI)

Cybercrime

1. Crimes involving:
 - Computers
 - Digital networks
2. Examples:
 - Online fraud
 - Identity theft
 - Cyberstalking

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023

1. Replaces:
 - Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860
2. Part of broader criminal law reforms

Key Concerns

1. Growing digital economy → higher cyber risks
2. Need for:
 - Cybersecurity infrastructure
 - Digital literacy
 - Mental health support

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding NCRB and crime trends in India:

1. NCRB functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

2. Cybercrime includes offences committed through digital networks.
3. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 replaced the Indian Penal Code.
4. NCRB publishes the 'Crime in India' report.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Explanation:

1. Statement 1: NCRB under MHA.
2. Statement 2: Cybercrime uses digital systems/networks.
3. Statement 3: BNS replaced IPC.
4. Statement 4: NCRB publishes annual crime reports.

India to host first International Big Cat Alliance Summit; 95 countries expected to participate

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News:

1. India will host the first International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Summit in June 2026.
2. Representatives from 95 countries are expected to participate in the summit.
3. The summit aims to adopt the "Delhi Declaration" on big cat conservation.
4. Focus areas include transboundary cooperation, habitat conservation, and anti-poaching measures.
5. The event reinforces India's role as a global leader in wildlife conservation diplomacy.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. Platform: International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)
2. Participating Countries: ~95
3. Big Cats Covered: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Puma, Jaguar
4. Launch Year of IBCA: 2023

Static Introduction

International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

1. Launched by India in 2023

2. Objective:
 - Conservation of seven major big cat species
 - Global cooperation and knowledge sharing

Seven Big Cats

1. Tiger
2. Lion
3. Leopard
4. Snow Leopard
5. Cheetah
6. Puma
7. Jaguar

India's Conservation Leadership

1. India hosts:
 - ~70% of world's tiger population
2. Major initiatives:
 - Project Tiger (1973)
 - Cheetah reintroduction programme

Major Threats to Big Cats

1. Habitat loss
2. Illegal wildlife trade
3. Human-wildlife conflict
4. Climate change impacts

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA):

1. IBCA was launched by India.
2. The alliance focuses on conservation of seven major big cat species.
3. Jaguar and Puma are included under IBCA.
4. India hosts the largest population of snow leopards in the world.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1: IBCA launched by India in 2023.
2. Statement 2: Covers seven big cat species.
3. Statement 3: Puma and Jaguar are included.
4. Statement 4: India does not host the largest snow leopard population globally.

Mizoram and Ladakh sign reform-linked MoUs under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0

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

Key News:

1. Mizoram and the Union Territory of Ladakh have signed **reform-linked Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)** under **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0**.
2. The agreements focus on ensuring **sustainable, transparent, and community-led rural drinking water supply systems**.
3. The reforms aim to strengthen **operation and maintenance of water infrastructure** and improve service delivery.
4. The initiative aligns with the broader vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047** and universal household tap connectivity.
5. The Ministry of Jal Shakti emphasized long-term water sustainability and public participation.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Mission:** Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0
2. **States/UT Covered:** Mizoram and Ladakh
3. **Focus Areas:** Rural drinking water, sustainability, governance reforms
4. **Ministry:** Ministry of Jal Shakti

Static Introduction

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)

1. Launched in **2019**
2. Objective:
 - Provide **Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs)** to every rural household
3. Implemented by:
 - Ministry of Jal Shakti

Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0

1. Focuses on:
 - Sustainability of water supply systems
 - Source strengthening
 - Community participation
2. Emphasizes:
 - Operation & maintenance reforms

Importance of Rural Drinking Water

1. Improves:
 - Public health
 - Women's empowerment
 - Rural livelihoods

2. Reduces:
 - Water-borne diseases

Community-Based Water Governance

1. Encourages:
 - Panchayat participation
 - Village Water & Sanitation Committees (VWSCs)
2. Supports:
 - Decentralized management

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM):

1. Jal Jeevan Mission was launched in 2019.
2. The mission aims to provide Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) in rural areas.
3. Jal Jeevan Mission is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development.
4. Community participation is an important component of the mission.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1: JJM launched in 2019.
2. Statement 2: Provides rural tap water connections.
3. Statement 3: Implemented by **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, not Rural Development.
4. Statement 4: Community participation is central to the mission.

Indopotamon alipurduarensis – In News

Scientists have recently discovered a **new species of freshwater crab**, named *Indopotamon alipurduarensis*, beneath agricultural fields in the **Dooars region of West Bengal**.

About Indopotamon alipurduarensis

1. It is a **newly identified freshwater crab species**.
2. Discovered in the **sub-Himalayan Dooars region** of West Bengal.
3. The discovery increases the number of known freshwater crab species in the genus *Indopotamon* from **12 to 13**.

Habitat & Behaviour

1. Found living in **deep underground burrows**, extending up to **1.5 meters** beneath muddy agricultural fields.
2. These crabs are:
 - Highly secretive
 - Mostly subterranean

Seasonal Activity

1. Usually remain hidden underground for most of the year
2. Emerge mainly during the **heavy monsoon season**, making sightings extremely rare

Naming Origin

1. The species name "**alipurduarensis**" is derived from **Alipurduar district** in West Bengal, where it was discovered.

Distinct Features

Appearance

1. Greyish shell bordered with **bright orange-red edges and claws**
2. Possesses a **broader and deeper carapace (shell)** compared to related species

Reproductive Characteristics

1. Male reproductive appendages (**gonopods**) are:
 - Stout
 - Abruptly narrowed at the tip
2. Female reproductive openings (**vulvae**) are:
 - Widely spaced
 - Covered by a protruding sternal plate

Significance of the Discovery

1. Highlights the **rich and underexplored biodiversity** of Northeast and Eastern India
2. Indicates the ecological importance of:
 - Wetlands
 - Agricultural ecosystems
 - Subterranean habitats
3. Adds to India's growing record of:
 - Endemic species

- Freshwater biodiversity

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Indopotamon alipurduarensis:

1. It is a newly discovered species of freshwater crab from West Bengal.
2. It was discovered in the Western Ghats region.
3. The species is known for living in deep underground burrows.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct
2. Statement 2 – Incorrect (discovered in the Dooars region of West Bengal, not Western Ghats)
3. Statement 3 – Correct

UDGAM Portal – In News

The Reserve Bank of India has informed the Supreme Court that **30 banks have now been integrated with the UDGAM Portal**, enabling users to search for and trace **unclaimed deposits** belonging to deceased or inactive account holders.

About UDGAM Portal

UDGAM Portal stands for **Unclaimed Deposits – Gateway to Access Information**.

It is an **online centralized platform** developed to help individuals identify and access **unclaimed bank deposits/accounts** across multiple banks in India.

Development & Management

1. Developed by the RBI in collaboration with:
 - Reserve Bank Information Technology Pvt Ltd (ReBIT)
 - Indian Financial Technology & Allied Services (IFTAS)

Key Features

Centralized Search Facility

1. Allows users to search unclaimed deposits/accounts across multiple banks through a **single portal**.

Bank Integration

1. Currently includes **30 banks**, covering nearly **90% of unclaimed deposits** (by value) transferred to the **DEA Fund**.

Information Access

1. Provides details regarding:
 - Individual accounts
 - Non-individual accounts
2. Also offers guidance on:
 - Claim and settlement procedures of participating banks

UDRN (Unique Depositor Reference Number)

After registration, users receive a UDRN, which:

1. Acts as a unique identifier for each unclaimed deposit/account
2. Helps maintain privacy while facilitating claims processing

Important Note

1. The portal only helps in **searching and identifying unclaimed deposits**.
2. Actual settlement/claim must be completed through the **respective bank**.

What are Unclaimed Deposits?

According to RBI norms, deposits in:

1. Savings accounts
 2. Current accounts
 3. Fixed or term deposits
- that remain **inactive or unclaimed for 10 years or more** are transferred to the:

DEA Fund

Depositor Education and Awareness Fund

1. Managed by the RBI
2. Created to:
 - Promote depositor awareness
 - Facilitate refund claims of dormant deposits

Significance of UDGAM Portal

1. Improves **financial transparency and depositor protection**
2. Helps legal heirs trace forgotten deposits
3. Strengthens **digital banking governance**
4. Supports RBI's goal of enhancing **consumer-centric banking services**

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the UD GAM Portal:

1. It has been launched by the Reserve Bank of India to help users trace unclaimed bank deposits.
2. Unclaimed deposits identified through the portal can be directly withdrawn from the portal itself.
3. Deposits remaining unclaimed for more than 10 years are transferred to the DEA Fund.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct
2. Statement 2 – Incorrect (claims must be settled through the concerned bank)
3. Statement 3 – Correct

Methane Alert and Response System (MARS) – In News

The United Nations Environment Programme under its International Methane Emissions Observatory has announced that the **Methane Alert and Response System (MARS)** will now be expanded to monitor **methane emissions from coal mines and waste facilities**, in addition to the oil and gas sector.

About Methane Alert and Response System (MARS)

Methane Alert and Response System is a **data-to-action platform** established under UNEP's International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO).

It is the **first global satellite-based system** designed to detect and notify stakeholders about major methane emissions events in near real-time.

Objectives

1. Identify major methane emission sources globally
2. Send alerts to governments and companies
3. Encourage rapid mitigation action
4. Support implementation of:
 - **Paris Agreement**

➤ **Global Methane Pledge**

How MARS Works

Detection

1. Uses satellite technology to identify:
 - Large methane leaks
 - Human-induced methane emissions

Notification

1. Relevant countries and companies are informed about detected emissions

Response

1. Stakeholders are encouraged to:
 - Investigate leaks
 - Take corrective action
 - Prevent future emissions

Tracking

1. Monitors mitigation progress and collaboration efforts globally

Launch & Development

1. Announced at **COP-27 (2022)**
2. Entered its initial operational phase in **January 2023**

International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO)

International Methane Emissions Observatory

Background

1. Launched during the **G20 Leaders' Summit in 2021**
2. Initially focused on methane emissions from the **fossil fuel industry**

Role

1. Integrates methane data from:
 - Scientific studies
 - Satellites
 - Industry reporting systems

Partnerships

1. Includes initiatives such as:
 - **Oil and Gas Methane Partnership 2.0 (OGMP 2.0)**

Why Methane Matters

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas:

1. Has significantly higher warming potential than CO₂ over the short term
2. Major sources include:
 - Fossil fuel extraction
 - Agriculture
 - Landfills and waste sites

- Coal mining

Reducing methane emissions is considered one of the **fastest ways to slow global warming**.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding the Methane Alert and Response System (MARS):

1. It is a satellite-based methane monitoring initiative under UNEP.
2. It was launched to monitor only agricultural methane emissions.
3. It supports global efforts under the Paris Agreement and Global Methane Pledge.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct
2. Statement 2 – Incorrect (initially focused on fossil fuel emissions and now expanded to coal mines and waste facilities)
3. Statement 3 – Correct

Samarth Panchayat Portal – In News

The Central Government is preparing to expand the rollout of the Samarth Panchayat Portal to more states, including **Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra**, to strengthen digital governance in rural local bodies.

About Samarth Panchayat Portal

The **Samarth Panchayat Portal** is a **unified digital governance platform** designed to empower Panchayati Raj Institutions with modern administrative and financial management tools.

Objectives

1. Improve **governance efficiency** in Panchayats
2. Enhance **financial transparency and accountability**
3. Enable Panchayats to effectively manage and monitor:
 - Revenue collection
 - Administrative services

- Local development works

Key Features

Seamless Digital Access

1. Provides easy access to:
 - Public services
 - Governance records
 - Administrative processes

Financial Management

1. Helps Panchayats monitor:
 - Taxes
 - Fees
 - Grants
 - Other revenue sources

Citizen-Centric Governance

1. Simplifies interactions between:
 - Citizens
 - Panchayat officials

Grassroots Empowerment

1. Strengthens:
 - Local governance capacity
 - Financial independence of Panchayats

Own Source Revenue (OSR) of Panchayats

Own Source Revenue (OSR) refers to income generated directly by Gram Panchayats through:

1. Local taxes
2. Service charges
3. User fees
4. Rent and lease income

Significance of OSR

Higher OSR enables Panchayats to:

1. Become more financially independent
2. Improve:
 - Water and sanitation services
 - Rural infrastructure
 - Green public spaces
3. Deliver better local services without excessive dependence on grants

Nodal Ministry

1. Ministry of Panchayati Raj

Importance of the Portal

1. Promotes **digital governance at the grassroots level**
2. Supports the vision of:
 - **Good Governance**
 - **Decentralization**
 - **Inclusive rural development**

3. Enhances transparency and accountability in local administration

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q7. Consider the following statements regarding the Samarth Panchayat Portal:

1. It is a digital governance platform aimed at strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions.
2. The portal focuses only on monitoring centrally sponsored schemes.
3. Own Source Revenue (OSR) includes revenue generated through local taxes and service charges by Panchayats.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct
2. Statement 2 – Incorrect (the portal has broader governance and financial management functions)
3. Statement 3 – Correct

Governor's primary constitutional duty is to ensure formation of a stable government: Supreme Court observations revisited

Source: *The Hindu (News Analysis)*

Key News:

The debate over the Governor's constitutional role resurfaced amid political developments in Tamil Nadu involving claims to form government. Constitutional experts and Supreme Court precedents emphasize that the **Governor's first responsibility is to facilitate formation of a stable government.**

1. The Governor must prevent a **breakdown of constitutional machinery** that could lead to **President's Rule under Article 356.**
2. Courts have repeatedly cautioned Governors against acting in a **partisan manner.**

3. The issue revives discussions on **federalism, gubernatorial discretion, and constitutional morality.**



Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Relevant Article:** Article 356 (President's Rule)
2. **Key Case:** S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994)
3. **Important Commission:** Sarkaria Commission
4. **Core Principle:** Governor must explore all possibilities for stable government formation

Static Introduction

Governor in Indian Constitution

1. Constitutional head of the State
2. Appointed by:
 - President of India
3. Articles:
 - 153–162 deal with Governor

Discretionary Powers of Governor

1. Inviting party to form government
2. Recommending President's Rule
3. Reserving Bills for President

S.R. Bommai Case (1994)

1. Landmark judgment on:
 - Federalism
 - Article 356 misuse

2. Supreme Court limited arbitrary use of President's Rule

Sarkaria Commission Recommendations

1. Governor should:
 - Be politically neutral
 - Not act as agent of Centre
2. Suggested order for inviting parties:
 - Pre-poll alliance → single largest party → post-poll coalition

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Governor and constitutional governance in India:

1. Article 356 deals with President's Rule in States.
2. S.R. Bommai case dealt with misuse of Article 356.
3. Governor is directly elected by the people of the State.
4. Sarkaria Commission recommended political neutrality for Governors.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

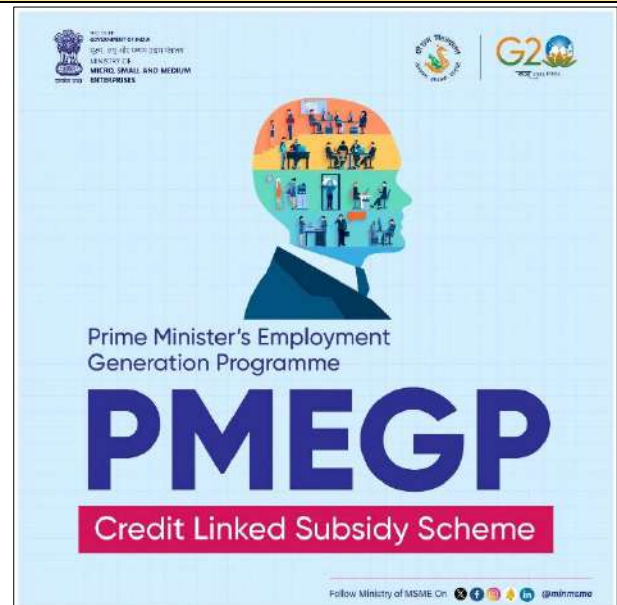
1. Statement 1: Article 356 concerns President's Rule.
2. Statement 2: S.R. Bommai restricted misuse of Article 356.
3. Statement 3: Governor is **appointed**, not elected.
4. Statement 4: Sarkaria Commission emphasized neutrality.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Important Committees on Centre-State Relations

Commission	Key Recommendation
Sarkaria Commission	Neutral Governor
Punchhi Commission	Fixed tenure, limited discretion
Administrative Reforms Commission	Strengthening cooperative federalism

Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) boosts micro-enterprises and jobs



What is in News?

Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme has facilitated the establishment of **over 4 lakh micro-enterprises**. The scheme has reportedly generated employment for **more than 36 lakh people**.

1. PMEGP is a **credit-linked subsidy scheme** aimed at promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship.
2. It is implemented by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission under the Ministry of MSME.

Importance

Employment Generation

1. Encourages **self-employment opportunities**, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

MSME Development

1. Strengthens the **micro and small enterprise ecosystem**.

Inclusive Growth

1. Supports first-generation entrepreneurs and weaker sections.

Rural Industrialization

- Promotes village industries and reduces rural migration.

Financial Inclusion

1. Uses a **credit-linked subsidy model** through institutional finance.

About PMEGP

1. Launched: **2008**
2. Ministry: **Ministry of MSME**
3. Implementing Agency: **KVIC**
4. Objective: Promote self-employment through micro-enterprises
5. Eligibility: Individuals above 18 years and eligible institutions/groups

MCQ

Q2. Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) is implemented by which organization?

- (a) NABARD
- (b) SIDBI
- (c) Khadi and Village Industries Commission
- (d) NITI Aayog

Correct Answer: (c) Khadi and Village Industries Commission

TRAI releases Draft Telecom Consumers Complaint Redressal (Fourth Amendment) Regulation, 2026



What is in News?

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India released the **Draft Telecom Consumers Complaint Redressal (Fourth Amendment) Regulation, 2026** for stakeholder consultation. The amendment seeks to modernize the complaint redressal system originally framed in **2012**.

1. It recognizes the growing use of **mobile apps, web portals, chatbots, and email-based complaint systems**.
2. The draft aims to improve the **efficiency, accessibility, transparency, and effectiveness** of telecom consumer grievance mechanisms.

Importance

Consumer Protection

1. Strengthens rights and grievance redressal mechanisms for telecom users.

Digital Governance

1. Reflects transition from traditional IVRS systems to **digital complaint platforms**.

Ease of Access

1. Focus on accessibility and convenience improves citizen-centric governance.

Telecom Sector Regulation

1. Enhances accountability of telecom service providers under TRAI oversight.

E-Governance & Digital India

1. Supports India's broader push for **technology-enabled public services**.

About TRAI



1. Established: **1997**
2. Statutory body under: **TRAI Act, 1997**
3. Regulates:
 - Telecom services
 - Tariffs
 - Consumer protection
 - Quality of service

MCQ

Q3. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was established in:

- (a) 1991
- (b) 1995
- (c) 1997
- (d) 2000

Correct Answer: (c) 1997

Great Nicobar Island project in focus amid government clarification

What is in News?

The government recently issued a clarification regarding the **Great Nicobar Island Development Project**. The project is considered strategically important for strengthening India's presence in the **Andaman Sea and Indo-Pacific region**.

1. Great Nicobar Island is the southernmost island of the Nicobar group.
2. The island is ecologically sensitive and home to the **Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve**, a UNESCO-recognized site.

Importance

Strategic Importance

1. Located near the **Malacca Strait**, one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes.
2. Enhances India's **Indo-Pacific maritime strategy**.

Environmental Significance

1. Rich tropical rainforest ecosystem with high biodiversity and endemic species.

Tribal Communities

1. Home to vulnerable indigenous tribes like the **Shompens and Nicobarese**.

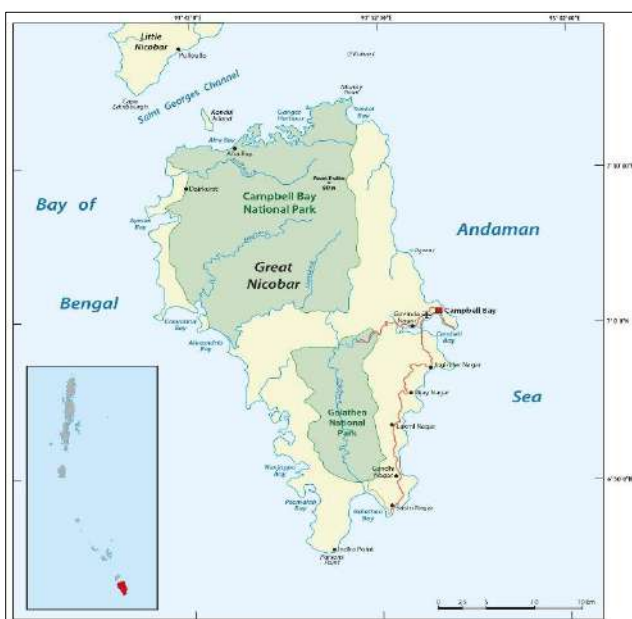
Biodiversity Hotspot

1. Habitat for species like the **Nicobar megapode, saltwater crocodile, leatherback turtle**, etc.

Disaster & Security Relevance

1. Important for naval logistics, disaster response, and regional connectivity.

About Great Nicobar Island



1. Located in: **Andaman & Nicobar Islands**

2. Separated by: **Ten Degree Channel**
3. Closest foreign landmass: **Sumatra (Indonesia)**
4. Southernmost point of India: **Indira Point**
5. Highest Peak: **Mount Thullier (642 m approx.)**
6. Dense rainforest covers most of the island

MCQ

Q4. Great Nicobar Island is separated from the Andaman Islands by which channel?

- (a) Eight Degree Channel
- (b) Nine Degree Channel
- (c) Ten Degree Channel
- (d) Duncan Passage

Correct Answer: (c) Ten Degree Channel

White-Bellied Heron habitat issue raised in Arunachal hydel project proposal

What is in News?

A proposal for the **Kali-II hydroelectric project** in Arunachal Pradesh reportedly omitted mention of the habitat of the critically endangered White-Bellied Heron. Environmental concerns were raised because the species depends on **undisturbed riverine ecosystems**.

1. The White-Bellied Heron is among the **rarest herons in the world**.

Importance

Conservation Significance

1. Listed as **Critically Endangered** by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Indicator Species

1. Presence indicates **healthy river ecosystems and good water quality**.

Hydropower vs Ecology Debate

1. Highlights conflict between **infrastructure development and biodiversity conservation**.

Himalayan Biodiversity

1. Found in ecologically fragile regions of the **Eastern Himalayas**.

Legal Protection

1. Protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.

About White-Bellied Heron

1. Scientific name: *Ardea insignis*
2. Second largest living heron species

3. Habitat: Free-flowing rivers in tropical/subtropical forests
4. Distribution: Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, Myanmar
5. Major threats:
 - Habitat loss
 - River disturbance
 - Hydropower projects
 - Agricultural expansion



MCQ

Q5. White-Bellied Heron, recently seen in news, is classified by IUCN as:

- (a) Vulnerable
- (b) Endangered
- (c) Critically Endangered
- (d) Near Threatened

Correct Answer: (c) Critically Endangered

**CSIR-CRRI and BPCL
recognized for road built using
plastic-based Geocell technology**

What is in News?

CSIR-Central Road Research Institute and [Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited](#) were recognized for constructing the “First Road Using Technical Textile Geocell Made from End-of-Life Plastics.”

1. The project received recognition from the **India Book of Records** and **Asia Book of Records**.
2. The innovation uses recycled plastic waste for infrastructure development.

Importance

Sustainable Infrastructure

1. Promotes **circular economy** by converting plastic waste into useful construction material.

Waste Management

1. Supports scientific utilization of **end-of-life plastics**.

Geotechnical Innovation

1. Geocells improve **soil stability and load-bearing capacity**.

Climate & Environmental Benefits

1. Reduces plastic pollution and lowers dependence on conventional materials.

Infrastructure Durability

1. Enhances strength and longevity of roads, slopes, and embankments.

About Geocell Technology

1. A **3D cellular confinement system** used in geotechnical engineering
2. Made of interconnected honeycomb-like polymer cells
3. Filled with soil, sand, or aggregate for reinforcement
4. Major applications:
 - Road construction
 - Slope stabilization
 - Channel protection
 - Retaining walls

MCQ

Q6. Geocell technology is primarily used for:

- (a) Satellite communication
- (b) Soil stabilization and reinforcement
- (c) Water purification
- (d) Solar energy storage

Correct Answer: (b) Soil stabilization and reinforcement

**NITI Aayog conducts SDG-5
workshop on Gender Equality
under State Support Mission**

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

Key News:

NITI Aayog, in collaboration with IIM Ahmedabad and the Government of Gujarat, organized a workshop on **Sustainable Development Goal-5 (Gender Equality)**.

1. The workshop was conducted under the **State Support Mission (SSM)** to strengthen evidence-based policymaking.
2. Discussions focused on **women's economic empowerment, district-level gender indicators, and SDG monitoring systems.**
3. Experts highlighted the importance of **data-driven governance and localized interventions** for achieving gender equality.
4. The initiative aims to accelerate India's progress toward the **2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), or Global Goals, are a **UN-adopted blueprint of 17 interconnected goals and 169 targets aiming to achieve a better, sustainable future by 2030.** Adopted in 2015, they address global challenges including poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation, urging action to ensure peace and prosperity for all.



NITI Aayog:

NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India) is the premier policy think tank of the Government of India, established on January 1, 2015, to replace the Planning Commission (By Cabinet Resolution). It promotes cooperative federalism, providing strategic policy vision and technical advice through a bottom-up approach involving state governments in economic policy

Role of NITI Aayog

1. Nodal institution for:
 - SDG monitoring in India

2. **Publishes:** SDG India Index, National Multidimensional Poverty Index, State Health Index, India Innovation Index, and the recently launched Fiscal Health Index

Promotes:

- Cooperative and competitive federalism

Gender Equality Challenges in India

1. Female labour force participation
2. Wage gap
3. Gender-based violence
4. Access to education and healthcare

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

1. SDG-5 focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment.
2. The SDGs were adopted by the United Nations in 2015.
3. NITI Aayog is responsible for SDG monitoring in India.
4. The SDGs are legally binding international treaties.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

- Statement 1: SDG-5 relates to gender equality.
- Statement 2: SDGs adopted in 2015.
- Statement 3: NITI Aayog monitors SDGs in India.
- Statement 4: SDGs are **non-binding global goals**, not treaties.

Key Gender-Related Schemes in India

Scheme	Objective
Beti Bachao Beti Padhao	Improve child sex ratio & girls' education
Mission Shakti	Women safety & empowerment
PM Matru Vandana Yojana	Maternity support
Mahila e-Haat	Women entrepreneurship

MGNREGS employment generation declines in 2025–26 despite rise in registrations: Study

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News:

A recent study has found a decline in **employment generation under MGNREGS** during 2025–26 despite an increase in registered households.

The number of **person-days generated and households completing 100 days of work** has fallen significantly.

1. Researchers estimate an average **income loss of ₹1,221 per household** due to reduced work availability.
2. The report raises concerns about the transition toward the proposed **Viksit Bharat – Guarantee of Wage Employment and Right to Work (GRAMIN)** initiative.
3. Experts emphasize the continued importance of MGNREGS for **rural livelihood security**.

1. **Article 41:** Right to work (Directive Principles)

Static Introduction

MGNREGS

1. Full form:
 - **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme/Act**
- Enacted on **2005**. It Provides, Legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment to rural households

Objectives of MGNREGS

1. Enhance:
 - Rural livelihood security
2. Reduce:
 - Distress migration
3. Create:
 - Rural assets and infrastructure

Key Features

1. Demand-driven programme
2. Rights-based approach
3. Social audit provision
4. Wage employment for unskilled labour

Major Challenges

1. Delayed wage payments

2. Insufficient budget allocation
3. Reduced employment generation
4. Administrative bottlenecks

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding MGNREGS:

1. MGNREGS provides a legal guarantee of wage employment to rural households.
2. The scheme guarantees 100 days of unskilled manual work annually.
3. MGNREGS is a supply-driven programme decided solely by State governments.
4. Social audit is an important feature of MGNREGS.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Rights-based legal guarantee exists.
2. Statement 2: Guarantees 100 days of wage employment.
3. Statement 3: It is a **demand-driven**, not supply-driven scheme.
4. Statement 4: Social audit is mandatory for transparency.

NITI Aayog report highlights structural challenges in India's school education system

What is in News?

1. NITI Aayog released a report titled **“School Education System in India: Temporal Analysis and Policy Roadmap for Quality Enhancement.”**
2. The report highlights major concerns such as:
 - High dropout rates after Class 10
 - Weak learning outcomes
 - Teacher shortages
 - Single-teacher schools
 - Fragmented school structure

3. The report uses data from **UDISE+, PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan, NAS, and ASER.**

Importance

School Education Crisis

1. India has **14.71 lakh schools** and **24.69 crore students**, making it one of the world's largest education systems.
2. Despite near-universal primary enrolment, retention and quality remain serious concerns.

Dropout & GER Concerns

1. Secondary-level dropout rate stands at **11.5%**.
2. Higher Secondary GER is only **58.4% nationally**.
3. Bihar, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Assam report very low GER.

Learning Outcome Issues

1. Only **45.8% of Grade 8 students** can solve a basic division problem.
2. Reading proficiency has declined despite increased enrolment.

Teacher & Infrastructure Deficit

1. Around **1.04 lakh schools operate with a single teacher**.
2. Many schools still lack electricity, water, and handwashing facilities.

Key Recommendations

1. Shift from pyramidal to **"Cylindrical Schooling Model"** (Grade 1–12 composite schools).
2. Focus on **foundational learning** instead of textbook completion.
3. Teacher reforms and balanced AI integration in education.

Key Issues in Indian School Education



1. Fragmented school transitions after Class 5, 8, and 10
2. Declining government school enrolment
3. Rise of low-fee private schools

4. Teacher vacancies in rural areas
5. Weak foundational literacy and numeracy

MCQ

Q3. The "Cylindrical Schooling Model" recommended by NITI Aayog aims to:

- (a) Promote online-only education
- (b) Create composite schools from Grade 1 to 12
- (c) Replace teachers with AI systems
- (d) Privatize secondary education

Correct Answer: (b) Create composite schools from Grade 1 to 12

Turkey develops 'Yildirimhan' intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)

What is in News?

1. Turkey has unveiled the prototype of the **Yildirimhan Missile**, an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile.
2. The missile is reportedly being developed to strengthen Turkey's strategic defence capability.
3. It has a claimed range of around **6,000 km** and can reportedly travel at **Mach 2.5** speeds.
4. The missile is designed for launch from a **mobile wheeled launcher**.

Importance

Strategic Deterrence

1. ICBMs are crucial for **long-range nuclear deterrence capability**.

Geopolitical Implications

1. Reflects Turkey's ambition to emerge as a stronger defence power in the region.

Missile Technology

1. Highlights advancements in **hypersonic and ballistic missile systems**.

NATO Dynamics

1. Turkey's defence expansion may influence strategic equations within NATO.

Defence Technology Awareness

1. Important for understanding categories of missiles in international security.

About ICBMs

Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) are long-range, typically nuclear-armed weapons with ranges exceeding 5,500 km (3,400 miles), designed

for strategic deterrence. They follow a ballistic trajectory that often enters space, enabling rapid delivery to nearly any global target. Major operators include the **US, Russia, China, France, India, and North Korea**

MCQ

Q4. An Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) generally has a range of:

- (a) Less than 500 km
- (b) 500–1500 km
- (c) 1500–5500 km
- (d) More than 5500 km

Correct Answer: (d) More than 5500 km

Study highlights role of Gut Microbiome in human health and disease

What is in News?

Recent studies emphasized the importance of the Gut Microbiome in regulating human health. Gut microbiome refers to trillions of microorganisms living in the digestive tract.

1. Researchers found links between gut microbiota imbalance and diseases such as **IBD, obesity, diabetes, and infections**.

Importance

Human Health & Immunity

1. Gut microbes help in **digestion, immunity, and protection against pathogens**.

Medical Research

1. Growing evidence links microbiome imbalance to **metabolic and inflammatory diseases**.

Antibiotic Resistance

1. Excessive antibiotic use can disturb gut flora and contribute to resistant infections.

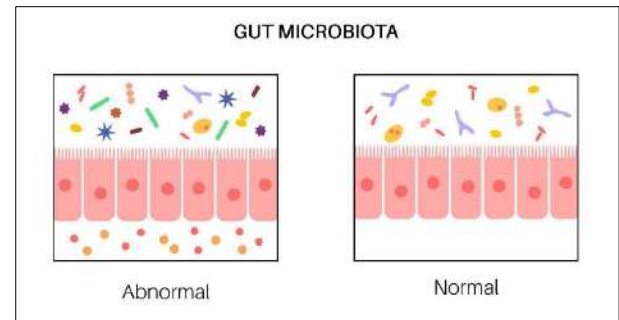
Nutrition & Public Health

1. Diet significantly affects microbial diversity and health outcomes.

Emerging Biotechnology Field

1. Microbiome research is becoming important in personalized medicine.

About Gut Microbiome



1. Includes bacteria, fungi, viruses, and other microbes
2. Helps in:
 - Digestion
 - Vitamin synthesis
 - Immune regulation
3. Influenced by diet, environment, antibiotics, and lifestyle

MCQ

Q5. The term 'Gut Microbiome' refers to:

- (a) Hormones produced in stomach
- (b) Microorganisms living in human digestive tract
- (c) Enzymes secreted by liver
- (d) Cells responsible for immunity only

Correct Answer: (b) Microorganisms living in human digestive tract

Governor's role in government formation under scrutiny amid hung Assembly debates

Source: The Hindu (Explainer)

Key News:

1. The constitutional role of Governors in inviting parties to form governments has come into focus after recent political developments in Tamil Nadu.
2. Questions have arisen regarding the Governor's **discretionary powers in hung Assemblies** and the order of inviting parties or coalitions.
3. Constitutional experts and court judgments emphasize that the Governor must ensure the formation of a **stable government enjoying majority support**.
4. The debate revives concerns over **federalism, neutrality of Governors, and misuse of discretion**.

5. Supreme Court precedents and commission recommendations provide guiding principles for such situations.

Major Key Data / Facts:

- Relevant Article:** Article 164(1)
- Key Judgment:** S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994)
- Important Commissions:** Sarkaria Commission, Punchhi Commission
- Core Issue:** Government formation in hung Assemblies

Static Introduction + Related Concepts (Authentic & UPSC-Oriented):
Article 164(1)

- Chief Minister appointed by:
 - Governor
- Other ministers appointed on advice of CM

Governor's Discretionary Powers

- Exercised mainly in:
 - Hung Assembly situations
 - Recommendation of President's Rule
- Governor must:
 - Ensure majority support on Assembly floor

Sarkaria Commission Recommendations

Suggested order of preference in hung Assembly:

- Pre-poll alliance with majority
- Single largest party with support
- Post-poll coalition with majority

Important Supreme Court Cases

- S.R. Bommai Case (1994):**
 - Floor test is the proper method to determine majority
- Rameshwar Prasad Case (2006):**
 - Criticized partisan gubernatorial actions

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Governor's role in government formation:

- Article 164(1) deals with appointment of the Chief Minister.
- Governor may exercise discretion in a hung Assembly situation.
- S.R. Bommai judgment emphasized the importance of floor tests.

4. Sarkaria Commission recommended that Governors should act in a politically partisan manner.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1, 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 4 only
- 2, 3 and 4 only
- 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

- Statement 1: Article 164(1) concerns CM appointment.
- Statement 2: Governor has discretion in hung Assemblies.
- Statement 3: Bommai case stressed floor test principle.
- Statement 4: Sarkaria Commission advocated **neutrality**, not partisanship.

Additional UPSC Value Addition
Punchhi Commission Recommendations

- Governor should:
 - Be politically detached
 - Not return to active politics immediately after tenure
- Suggested clearer guidelines on discretionary powers

Constitutional Concern

- Misuse of gubernatorial discretion may weaken:
 - Cooperative federalism
 - Democratic mandate

Private sector capital expenditure grew 67% in September 2025: CII

Source: *The Hindu (Economy)*

Key News:

- According to the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)**, private sector capital expenditure (capex) grew by **67% year-on-year** in September 2025.
- Private capex rose to **₹7.7 lakh crore**, indicating improving business confidence and investment sentiment.

- Manufacturing sectors such as **metals, chemicals, automobiles, and telecom** drove much of the investment growth.
- Industry leaders urged the government to continue reforms supporting **credit flow, infrastructure, and MSME financing**.
- The growth is viewed as a positive sign for India's long-term economic expansion and industrial capacity building.

Major Key Data / Facts:

- Private Capex Growth:** 67% YoY
- Capex Amount:** ₹7.7 lakh crore
- Key Sectors:** Metals, chemicals, automobiles, telecom
- Organisation:** Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

Static Introduction + Related Concepts (Authentic & UPSC-Oriented):

Capital Expenditure (Capex)

- Spending on:
 - Infrastructure
 - Machinery
 - Long-term productive assets
- Helps increase:
 - Production capacity
 - Economic growth

Importance of Private Capex

- Drives:
 - Industrial expansion
 - Employment generation
 - Productivity growth
- Indicates:
 - Investor confidence in economy

Public vs Private Capex

- Public Capex:** Government spending on infrastructure
- Private Capex:** Corporate investments in business expansion
- Both together stimulate:
 - Demand and growth

Role of CII

- Apex industry association representing Indian businesses
- Provides:
 - Policy suggestions
 - Industry feedback to government

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding capital expenditure (capex):

- Capital expenditure refers to spending on long-term productive assets.
- Higher private capex generally indicates improved investment confidence.
- Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is an industry association.
- Capital expenditure only includes government infrastructure spending.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1, 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 4 only
- 2, 3 and 4 only
- 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

- Statement 1: Capex creates long-term assets.
- Statement 2: Reflects investor confidence.
- Statement 3: CII is a leading industry body.
- Statement 4: Capex includes both public and private investment.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Why Private Capex Matters

Impact Area	Benefit
Employment	More jobs
Manufacturing	Capacity expansion
Exports	Higher competitiveness
GDP Growth	Demand & investment multiplier

Challenges to Private Capex

- Global uncertainty
- High borrowing costs
- Demand slowdown
- Supply chain disruptions

If you want, I can also prepare a **GS Paper-III Mains answer (Investment cycle, capex revival, and India's manufacturing growth)** with economic analysis and diagrams.

Forum of Regulators (FOR) completes 100th meeting; marks 21 years of power sector reforms

Source: PIB

Key News

1. The **Forum of Regulators (FOR)** celebrated its **100th meeting** and completed **21 years** of functioning in India's power sector.
2. The meeting reviewed progress in **electricity sector reforms, regulatory coordination, and capacity building**.
3. FOR has contributed through **technical committee reports, working groups, and regulatory guidelines**.
4. Discussions also focused on **renewable energy integration, electricity market reforms, and Net Zero goals**.
5. The event highlighted the importance of strong regulatory institutions in ensuring **efficient and sustainable power governance**.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Institution:** Forum of Regulators (FOR)
2. **Established:** 2003
3. **Milestone:** 100th meeting completed
4. **Sector:** Electricity and power regulation

Static Introduction

Forum of Regulators (FOR)

1. Statutory forum under:
 - **Electricity Act, 2003**
2. Comprises:
 - Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC)
 - State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs)

Objectives of FOR

1. Promote:
 - Coordination among regulators
 - Best practices in power sector
2. Improve:
 - Regulatory consistency
 - Consumer protection

Electricity Act, 2003

1. Landmark reform legislation for power sector
2. Introduced:
 - Competition
 - Open access
 - Independent regulation

Current Power Sector Challenges

1. Renewable energy integration

2. Financial stress of DISCOMs
3. Grid modernization
4. Energy transition and decarbonisation

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Forum of Regulators (FOR):

1. FOR was established under the Electricity Act, 2003.
2. FOR includes both Central and State electricity regulators.
3. FOR directly generates electricity for the national grid.
4. Electricity Act, 2003 introduced reforms such as open access and independent regulation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: FOR established under Electricity Act framework.
2. Statement 2: Includes CERC and SERCs.
3. Statement 3: FOR is a **regulatory coordination body**, not power producer.
4. Statement 4: Electricity Act, 2003 introduced major reforms.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Key Institutions in Power Sector

Institution	Function
CERC	Central electricity regulation
SERCs	State-level regulation
POSOCO	Grid operation
FOR	Regulatory coordination

India's Energy Transition Goals

1. Net Zero target: **2070**
2. Non-fossil fuel capacity expansion
3. Green hydrogen and renewable integration

Supreme Court examines whether schools imparting

religious education qualify as charitable institutions

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News

The Supreme Court has agreed to examine whether schools providing religious instruction can be treated as **charitable institutions** under constitutional provisions. The issue arose from a petition challenging the status and regulation of institutions imparting religious education.

1. The Court discussed the interpretation of **Article 26 and Article 30** concerning religious denominations and minority educational rights.
2. Concerns were also raised regarding **school curriculum, child protection, and institutional oversight**.
3. The case may have significant implications for the governance of minority and religious educational institutions in India.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Court:** Supreme Court of India
2. **Key Articles Involved:** Articles 26 & 30
3. **Core Issue:** Religious education and charitable institution status
4. **Concern Areas:** Regulation, curriculum, child protection

Static Introduction

Article 26

1. Grants religious denominations the right to:
 - Manage religious affairs
 - Establish institutions for religious and charitable purposes

Article 30

1. Provides minorities the right to:
 - Establish and administer educational institutions of their choice

Minority Educational Institutions

1. Protected under Constitution to preserve:
 - Language
 - Religion
 - Culture
2. Subject to:
 - Reasonable regulations by State

Constitutional Balance

1. Balancing:

- Religious freedom
- Secular education standards
- Child rights and public order

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding educational and religious rights under the Indian Constitution:

1. Article 26 grants religious denominations the right to manage religious affairs.
2. Article 30 provides minorities the right to establish educational institutions.
3. Minority educational institutions are completely exempt from all government regulations.
4. The Constitution permits reasonable restrictions on rights in the interest of public order and morality.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Article 26 protects religious denomination rights.
2. Statement 2: Article 30 protects minority educational institutions.
3. Statement 3: Such institutions are subject to **reasonable regulations**.
4. Statement 4: Restrictions allowed for public order, morality, etc.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Related Constitutional Articles

Article	Subject
Article 25	Freedom of religion
Article 26	Religious denomination rights
Article 28	Religious instruction in institutions
Article 29	Cultural and educational rights
Article 30	Minority educational institutions

Key Constitutional Principle

1. India follows:
 - **Principled secularism**
2. State may regulate institutions for:

- Educational standards
- Child safety
- Public welfare

China may stay out of India-led International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

What is in News?

1. China is unlikely to join the International Big Cat Alliance, an India-led initiative focused on the conservation of big cats.
2. IBCA aims to protect seven major big cat species:
 - Tiger
 - Lion
 - Leopard
 - Snow Leopard
 - Cheetah
 - Jaguar
 - Puma
3. The alliance was launched by Narendra Modi in 2023 during the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger.
4. Several countries have already joined or shown interest in the initiative.

Importance

Wildlife Conservation Diplomacy

1. IBCA reflects India's leadership in **global wildlife conservation efforts**.

Big Cat Conservation

1. Focuses on habitat protection, anti-poaching, research, and international cooperation.

India's Soft Power

1. Enhances India's image as a champion of biodiversity and environmental governance.

Ecological Importance

1. Big cats are apex predators and indicators of ecosystem health.

Global Environmental Governance

1. Demonstrates use of multilateral platforms for conservation collaboration.

Major Big Cats under IBCA

1. Tiger
2. Lion
3. Leopard
4. Snow Leopard
5. Jaguar
6. Puma

7. Cheetah



MCQ

Q2. International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) was launched by India primarily for the conservation of:

- (a) Marine mammals
- (b) Migratory birds
- (c) Big cat species
- (d) Endangered reptiles

Correct Answer: (c) Big cat species

VB-GRAM G to replace MGNREGA framework from July 1

Source: The Hindu

Key News:

1. The Union Government has announced that the **Viksit Bharat Gramin Rozgar Mission (VB-GRAM G)** will come into effect from **July 1**, replacing the existing MGNREGA framework.
2. All rules, schemes, notifications, and guidelines under **MGNREGA** will stand repealed from the effective date.
3. The new programme aims to introduce a **demand-based rural employment approach** aligned with local labour needs.
4. However, concerns remain regarding **fund allocation, implementation clarity, and workers' rights protections**.
5. Experts and labour groups have raised issues over transparency and continuity of employment guarantees.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **New Scheme:** Viksit Bharat Gramin Rozgar Mission (VB-GRAM G)
2. **Effective Date:** July 1

3. **Replaces:** MGNREGA framework
4. **Focus:** Demand-based rural employment model

Static Introduction

MGNREGA

1. Full form:
 - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
2. Enacted in:
 - 2005
3. Provides:
 - Legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment

Key Features of MGNREGA

1. Rights-based legislation
2. Demand-driven programme
3. Social audit mechanism
4. Focus on rural livelihood security

Concerns Regarding Transition

1. Loss of:
 - Statutory employment guarantee
 - Legal accountability
2. Issues related to:
 - Budget formula
 - Worker protections
 - Wage payment systems

Importance of Rural Employment Schemes

1. Reduce:
 - Rural distress
 - Migration
2. Support:
 - Rural consumption
 - Inclusive development

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding rural employment programmes in India:

1. MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee of wage employment.
2. MGNREGA is a demand-driven programme.
3. Social audit is associated with MGNREGA implementation.
4. Rural employment schemes have no role in reducing migration.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

(c) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: MGNREGA guarantees wage employment.
2. Statement 2: It is demand-driven.
3. Statement 3: Social audit ensures transparency.
4. Statement 4: Rural employment programmes help reduce distress migration.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Constitutional Link

1. Article 41 (DPSP):

- Right to work within State capacity

Importance of Employment Guarantee

Area	Impact
Rural Economy	Income support
Social Justice	Livelihood security
Agriculture	Seasonal employment support
Migration	Reduces distress migration

Supreme Court examines whether schools imparting religious education qualify as charitable institutions

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News:

The Supreme Court has agreed to examine whether schools providing religious instruction can be treated as **charitable institutions** under constitutional provisions. The issue arose from a petition challenging the status and regulation of institutions imparting religious education.

1. The Court discussed the interpretation of **Article 26 and Article 30** concerning religious denominations and minority educational rights.
2. Concerns were also raised regarding **school curriculum, child protection, and institutional oversight**.
3. The case may have significant implications for the governance of minority and religious educational institutions in India.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Court:** Supreme Court of India
2. **Key Articles Involved:** Articles 26 & 30
3. **Core Issue:** Religious education and charitable institution status
4. **Concern Areas:** Regulation, curriculum, child protection

Static Introduction

Article 26

1. Grants religious denominations the right to:
 - Manage religious affairs
 - Establish institutions for religious and charitable purposes

Article 30

1. Provides minorities the right to:
 - Establish and administer educational institutions of their choice

Minority Educational Institutions

1. Protected under Constitution to preserve:
 - Language
 - Religion
 - Culture
2. Subject to:
 - Reasonable regulations by State

Constitutional Balance

1. Balancing:
 - Religious freedom
 - Secular education standards
 - Child rights and public order

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding educational and religious rights under the Indian Constitution:

1. Article 26 grants religious denominations the right to manage religious affairs.
2. Article 30 provides minorities the right to establish educational institutions.
3. Minority educational institutions are completely exempt from all government regulations.
4. The Constitution permits reasonable restrictions on rights in the interest of public order and morality.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

(c) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Article 26 protects religious denomination rights.
2. Statement 2: Article 30 protects minority educational institutions.
3. Statement 3: Such institutions are subject to **reasonable regulations**.
4. Statement 4: Restrictions allowed for public order, morality, etc.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Related Constitutional Articles

Article	Subject
Article 25	Freedom of religion
Article 26	Religious denomination rights
Article 28	Religious instruction in institutions
Article 29	Cultural and educational rights
Article 30	Minority educational institutions

Key Constitutional Principle

1. India follows:
 - **Principled secularism**
2. State may regulate institutions for:
 - Educational standards
 - Child safety
 - Public welfare

India's worker population ratio rises since 2022; women's labour participation improves

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News:

1. India's **Worker Population Ratio (WPR)** has steadily increased since 2022, according to the latest **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)**.
2. The rise is driven significantly by **higher female labour force participation**, especially in rural areas.
3. Rural women continue to dominate employment in agriculture and self-employment activities.

- Despite improvement in employment indicators, concerns remain regarding **quality of jobs, youth unemployment, and informal work**.
- The data reflects important structural changes in India's labour market after the pandemic period.

Major Key Data / Facts:

- Source:** Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)
- Female Labour Participation:** Increased notably in rural India
- Youth Unemployment:** Higher among educated youth
- Major Rural Employment Type:** Self-employment/agriculture

Static Concepts
Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

- Conducted by:
 - National Statistical Office (NSO)
- Started in:
 - 2017
- Measures:
 - Employment and unemployment indicators

Key Labour Indicators

- Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):**
 - Share of population either working or seeking work
- Worker Population Ratio (WPR):**
 - Share of employed persons in total population
- Unemployment Rate (UR):**
 - Percentage of labour force without work but seeking employment

Trends in India's Labour Market

- Rising:
 - Female participation
 - Informal and self-employment
- Persistent issues:
 - Educated unemployment
 - Gender wage gap

Importance of Female Labour Participation

- Boosts:
 - Economic growth
 - Household incomes
 - Gender empowerment
- Essential for:
 - Demographic dividend realization

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:
Q1. Consider the following statements regarding labour statistics in India:

- PLFS is conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO).
- Worker Population Ratio (WPR) refers to the proportion of employed persons in the population.
- Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) includes persons seeking employment.
- India has completely eliminated informal employment.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1, 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 4 only
- 2, 3 and 4 only
- 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

- Statement 1: PLFS conducted by NSO.
- Statement 2: WPR measures employed population share.
- Statement 3: LFPR includes employed + job seekers.
- Statement 4: Informal employment remains significant in India.

Additional UPSC Value Addition
Major Employment Challenges in India

Challenge	Impact
Informal employment	Lack of social security
Educated unemployment	Skill mismatch
Female workforce gap	Lower economic participation
Underemployment	Low productivity

Important Employment Schemes

- PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
- MGNREGA
- Start-Up India
- Skill India Mission

Complaint filed before SC panel over illegal construction in Kaziranga wildlife corridors

Source: *The Indian Express*

Key News:

1. A complaint has been submitted to the **Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC)** alleging illegal constructions in wildlife corridors around **Kaziranga National Park**.
2. The complaint highlights construction activities near crucial **animal corridors connecting Kaziranga with Karbi Anglong Hills** in Assam.
3. Activists claim such developments violate previous **Supreme Court directions aimed at protecting wildlife movement and ecological connectivity**.
4. The issue raises concerns over habitat fragmentation, human-wildlife conflict, and conservation governance.
5. Authorities have stated that the matter is under examination.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Protected Area:** Kaziranga National Park (Assam)
2. **Concern:** Illegal construction in wildlife corridors
3. **Supervisory Body:** Central Empowered Committee (CEC)
4. **Key Ecological Link:** Karbi Anglong Hills – Kaziranga corridor

Static Concepts:

Kaziranga National Park

1. Located in:
 - Assam
2. UNESCO World Heritage Site
3. Famous for:
 - One-horned rhinoceros
4. Important river:
 - Brahmaputra

Wildlife Corridors

1. Natural pathways enabling:
 - Animal movement
 - Gene flow between habitats
2. Important for:
 - Reducing habitat fragmentation

Central Empowered Committee (CEC)

1. Constituted under directions of:
 - Supreme Court

2. Assists court in:

- Forest and environmental matters

Ecological Importance of Karbi Anglong

1. Functions as:

- High-ground refuge during floods in Kaziranga

2. Supports:

- Elephant and tiger movement corridors

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Kaziranga National Park and wildlife conservation:

1. Kaziranga National Park is located in Assam.
2. Kaziranga is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
3. Wildlife corridors help maintain ecological connectivity between habitats.
4. Kaziranga is globally famous for Asiatic lions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Kaziranga is in Assam.
2. Statement 2: It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
3. Statement 3: Corridors maintain ecological balance and animal movement.
4. Statement 4: Kaziranga is famous for the **one-horned rhinoceros**, not Asiatic lions.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Important Species in Kaziranga

Species	Status
One-horned Rhinoceros	Vulnerable
Bengal Tiger	Endangered
Asian Elephant	Endangered
Wild Water Buffalo	Endangered

Major Conservation Challenges

1. Floods
2. Encroachment
3. Highway-related habitat fragmentation

4. Poaching**National Quiz for Viksit Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) 2026 launched****What is in News?**

1. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports launched the **National Quiz for Viksit Vibrant Villages Programme (VVVP) 2026**.
2. The initiative is organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs under the **MY Bharat** platform.
3. Top youth participants will get an opportunity to join an **immersive border village development initiative** in June 2026.
4. The programme focuses on promoting awareness about **border village development, local culture, environmental awareness, and community participation**.

Importance**Border Area Development**

1. Encourages awareness and participation in development of **strategically important border villages**.

Vibrant Villages Programme

1. Supports the government's effort to reduce migration and improve infrastructure in border areas.

Youth Participation

1. Engages youth in nation-building and grassroots governance initiatives.

Strategic Importance

1. Border villages in states like Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Uttarakhand are crucial for security and connectivity.

Community-Centric Development

1. Promotes local culture, sustainable livelihoods, and civic participation.

About Vibrant Villages Programme

1. Centrally sponsored scheme launched in **2023**
2. Focuses on villages along the **northern border**
3. Objective:
 - Improve infrastructure
 - Promote tourism & livelihoods
 - Prevent migration from border areas
 - Strengthen border security indirectly

MCQ

Q3. Vibrant Villages Programme primarily focuses on the development of:

- (a) Coastal fishing villages
- (b) Tribal villages in central India
- (c) Border villages along India's northern frontier
- (d) Smart cities in metropolitan regions

Correct Answer: (c) Border villages along India's northern frontier

Wildlife census preparations begin in Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary**What is in News?**

1. The forest department has started preparations for a **scientific wildlife census** in Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary.
2. The census will assess the population and movement of species like **leopards, Himalayan bears, deer, and foxes**.
3. The sanctuary is an important biodiversity region in the **Kumaon Himalayas of Uttarakhand**.

Importance**Biodiversity Monitoring**

1. Wildlife censuses help in scientific conservation planning and habitat management.

Himalayan Ecosystem

1. Binsar is part of the ecologically sensitive **Central Himalayan region**.

Important Bird Area (IBA)

1. Recognized for rich avian diversity with over 200 bird species.

Conservation of Endemic Species

1. Protects Himalayan fauna such as barking deer, Himalayan black bear, leopard, and monal.

Eco-Tourism & Climate Relevance

1. Dense oak and rhododendron forests support ecological balance and sustainable tourism.

About Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary

1. Location: **Almora district, Uttarakhand**
2. Altitude: **~900–2500 m**
3. Famous viewpoint: **Zero Point**
4. Flora: Oak, rhododendron, chir pine
5. Fauna: Leopard, Himalayan bear, barking deer, monal

MCQ

Q4. Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary is located in which state?

- (a) Himachal Pradesh
- (b) Uttarakhand
- (c) Sikkim
- (d) Arunachal Pradesh

Correct Answer: (b) Uttarakhand

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in focus during Indian Ocean Dialogue

What is in News?

- The **10th Indian Ocean Dialogue** was recently organized by the Ministry of External Affairs along with the Indian Ocean Rim Association Secretariat.
- The event emphasized cooperation among countries bordering the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.
- IORA is a major regional organization promoting economic cooperation, maritime security, and blue economy initiatives.

Importance

Strategic Maritime Importance

- The Indian Ocean is vital for **global trade, energy routes, and geopolitics**.

Indo-Pacific Vision

- IORA supports India's **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** vision.

Blue Economy

- Encourages sustainable use of marine resources and fisheries management.

Maritime Security

- Focuses on piracy control, disaster management, and secure sea lanes.

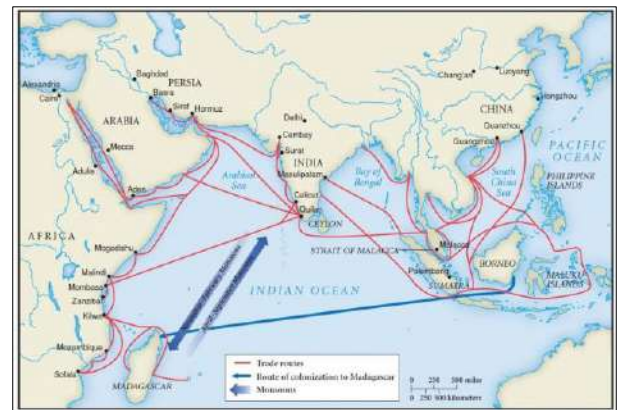
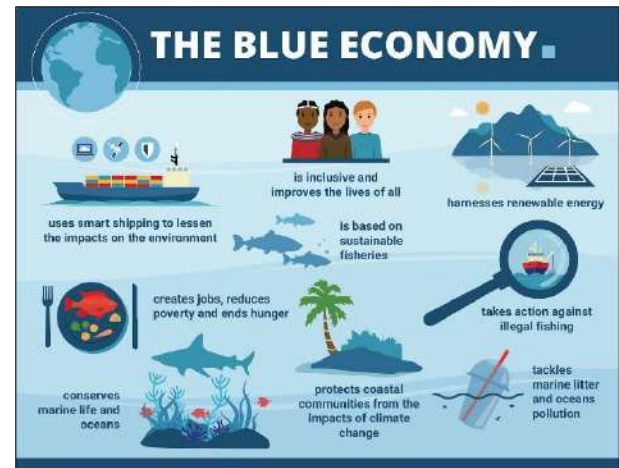
Multilateral Cooperation

- Connects countries from Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Europe.

About IORA

- Established: **1997**
- Headquarters: **Ebene, Mauritius**
- Members: **23 member states** and **12 dialogue partners**

4. Formerly known as: **Indian Ocean Rim Initiative**



Major Priority Areas

- Trade & Investment
- Maritime Safety & Security
- Fisheries Management
- Disaster Risk Management
- Blue Economy

MCQ

Q5. The headquarters of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is located in:

- (a) Jakarta, Indonesia
- (b) Colombo, Sri Lanka
- (c) Ebene, Mauritius
- (d) Nairobi, Kenya

Correct Answer: (c) Ebene, Mauritius

Wholesale Price Inflation (WPI) rises to 3.85% in April 2026

Source: **PIB**

Key News:

India's **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation** rose to **3.85% in April 2026** compared to the previous month. The increase was mainly driven by higher prices of **primary articles, fuel & power, and manufactured food products**.

1. Inflation in the **fuel and power category** witnessed a sharp rise due to increased energy prices.
2. The data reflects continuing price pressures in wholesale markets amid global supply-side uncertainties.
3. WPI trends remain important indicators for industrial costs and broader inflationary movements in the economy.



Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **WPI Inflation (April 2026):** 3.85%
2. **Base Year of WPI:** 2011–12
3. **Compiled by:** Office of Economic Adviser, DPIIT
4. **Major Contributors:** Fuel & power, primary articles, manufactured products

Static Introduction +

Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

1. Measures:
 - Price changes at wholesale level
2. Indicates:
 - Producer-side inflation
3. Published by:
 - Ministry of Commerce & Industry

Components of WPI

Component	Approx Importance
Primary Articles	Food, minerals
Fuel & Power	Energy products
Manufactured Products	Industrial goods

Difference Between WPI and CPI

WPI	CPI
Wholesale prices	Retail prices

Producer perspective	Consumer perspective
No services included	Includes services

Importance of WPI

1. Helps assess:
 - Industrial inflation
 - Supply chain pressures
 - Input cost trends

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Wholesale Price Index (WPI):

1. WPI measures price changes at the wholesale level.
2. The base year for India's WPI series is 2011–12.
3. WPI is compiled by the Reserve Bank of India.
4. Fuel and power is one of the major groups in WPI.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: WPI tracks wholesale inflation.
2. Statement 2: Base year = 2011–12.
3. Statement 3: WPI compiled by Office of Economic Adviser under DPIIT, not RBI.
4. Statement 4: Fuel & Power is a major category.

Complaint filed before SC panel over illegal construction in Kaziranga wildlife corridors

Source: *The Indian Express*

Key News:

1. A complaint has been submitted to the **Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC)** alleging illegal constructions in wildlife corridors around **Kaziranga National Park**. The complaint highlights construction activities near crucial **animal corridors** connecting **Kaziranga** with **Karbi Anglong Hills** in Assam.

2. Activists claim such developments violate previous **Supreme Court directions aimed at protecting wildlife movement and ecological connectivity.**
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Static Introduction

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2. UNESCO World Heritage Site
3. Famous for:
 - One-horned rhinoceros
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Wildlife Corridors

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(c) 2, 3 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer:

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Important Species in Kaziranga

Species	Status
One-horned Rhinoceros	Vulnerable
Bengal Tiger	Endangered
Asian Elephant	Endangered
Wild Water Buffalo	Endangered

Study finds cacti evolve into new species faster than expected

What is in News?

1. New research suggests that Cactus species may evolve more rapidly than previously believed.
2. Scientists observed surprisingly high diversification among cacti despite their slow-growing nature.
3. The findings improve understanding of adaptation and evolution in extreme desert ecosystems.

Importance

Adaptation in Extreme Environments

1. Cacti are classic examples of **xerophytic adaptations** for survival in arid climates.

Evolutionary Biology

1. Study highlights rapid speciation and ecological diversification in harsh habitats.

Water Conservation Mechanisms

1. Demonstrates specialized plant adaptations like water storage and reduced transpiration.

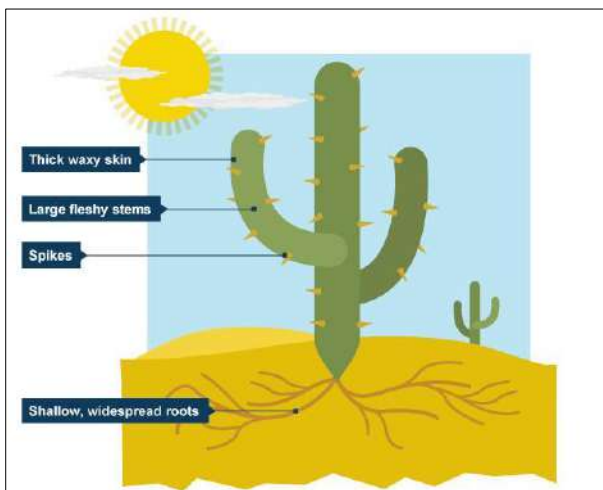
Biodiversity Studies

1. Important for understanding plant evolution in deserts of North and South America.

Ecology & Botany

1. Frequently relevant in questions on desert vegetation and plant morphology.

About Cacti



1. Belong to family: **Cactaceae**
2. Native mainly to **North & South America**
3. Adaptations include:
 - Thick fleshy stems for water storage
 - Spines instead of leaves
 - Waxy coating to reduce evaporation
 - Shallow widespread roots

Major Types

1. **Opuntia** (Prickly Pear)
2. **Columnar Cacti**

MCQ

Q3. The spines in cacti are mainly an adaptation to:

- (a) Increase photosynthesis
- (b) Attract pollinators
- (c) Reduce water loss through transpiration
- (d) Absorb moisture from air

Correct Answer: (c) Reduce water loss through transpiration

Two new spider species discovered in Nagaland

What is in News?

1. Zoological Survey of India discovered two new spider species named **Psechrus ntu** and **Psechrus phenshnyu** in Nagaland.
2. The species belong to the genus *Psechrus*, commonly known as **horizontal sheet-web spiders**.
3. They were named after local villages — **Ntu** and **Phenshnyu**.
4. Researchers also documented the occurrence of *Psechrus himalayanus* in Northeast India for the first time.

Importance

Biodiversity Discovery

1. Highlights the rich and underexplored biodiversity of **Northeast India**.

Endemic Species Research

1. Discovery of new species strengthens understanding of regional ecosystems.

Ecological Adaptations

1. Spiders show adaptations suited for humid forest ecosystems and dense vegetation.

Role of ZSI

1. Demonstrates the importance of the Zoological Survey of India in taxonomic studies.

Conservation Importance

1. Discoveries can support habitat conservation and ecological assessment.

About the Newly Discovered Spiders

1. Family: **Psechridae**
2. Known for:
 - Horizontal sheet-like webs
 - Long sensory legs
 - Dense hair structures for vibration detection
3. Habitat: Humid forest ecosystems

Whip Scorpions Also Mentioned

1. Belong to order: **Thelyphonida**
2. Ancient arachnids related to spiders and scorpions
3. Non-venomous but spray acidic fluid for defence
4. Commonly called **Vinegaroons**

MCQ

Q4. The newly discovered species Psechrus ntu and Psechrus phenshnyu belong to which group?

- (a) Beetles
- (b) Spiders
- (c) Scorpions
- (d) Butterflies

Correct Answer: (b) Spiders

Contributions to National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) rise sharply under RTI disclosure

What is in News?

1. An RTI response revealed that contributions to the National Sports Development Fund have more than doubled between **2023–24 and 2025–26**.
2. The fund supports sports infrastructure, athlete training, coaching, and international participation.
3. NSDF receives contributions from individuals, private organizations, charities, and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs).

Importance

Sports Infrastructure Development

1. Helps build and improve facilities for national and international-level athletes.

Athlete Support

1. Provides financial assistance for training, coaching, and equipment.

Public-Private Participation

1. Encourages corporate and charitable participation in sports promotion.

Talent Promotion

1. Aims to identify and support promising sportspersons.

International Competitiveness

1. Supports India's performance in global sporting events.

About National Sports Development Fund (NSDF)



1. Established: **1998**
2. Ministry: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
3. Objective: Promote excellence in sports
4. Managed by: **Council of NSDF** constituted by Central Government



Major Areas of Support

1. Athlete training
2. Coaching & sports science
3. Infrastructure development
4. Research in sports
5. International cooperation

MCQ

Q5. National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) was established in:

- (a) 1984
- (b) 1991
- (c) 1998
- (d) 2005

Correct Answer: (c) 1998

Thadou tribe in news after violence in Manipur

What is in News?

1. Three leaders of the Thadou tribe were reportedly killed in an ambush in Manipur's Kangpokpi district.
2. The incident has once again drawn attention to ethnic tensions and tribal dynamics in Manipur.
3. The Thadou are one of the major tribal communities of Northeast India.

Importance

Northeast Tribal Diversity



1. Important tribe inhabiting Manipur and adjoining Northeast regions.

Ethnic Dynamics in Manipur

1. Relevant in understanding social and political tensions involving hill and valley communities.

Cultural Anthropology

1. Belong to the broader **Kuki-Zomi tribal group**.

Geography & Society

1. Settlements are mainly in forested hill regions near the Imphal Valley.

Prelims Relevance

1. Tribal communities of Northeast India are frequently asked in UPSC exams.

About Thadou Tribe



1. Primarily found in: **Manipur** and neighboring Myanmar
2. Language family: **Tibeto-Burman**
3. Associated community: **Kuki-Mizo group**
4. Traditional occupation:
 - Cultivation
 - Animal domestication
 - Hunting & fishing
5. Practice **Jhum (shifting) cultivation**

MCQ

Q6. The Thadou tribe, recently seen in news, is primarily associated with which Indian state?

- (a) Mizo (b) Nagaland
(c) Manipur (d) Tripura

Correct Answer: (c) Manipur

India's first Human-Elephant Conflict Research Centre to be set up in Palamu Tiger Reserve

What is in News?

1. The country's first **Human-Elephant Conflict Research Centre** will be established at Palamu Tiger Reserve in Jharkhand.
2. The initiative aims to study and reduce increasing conflicts between humans and elephants.
3. Palamu Tiger Reserve is one of India's oldest tiger reserves and an important forest ecosystem of eastern India.

Importance

Human-Wildlife Conflict

1. Addresses rising conflict between humans and elephants due to habitat fragmentation and encroachment.

Tiger Reserve Significance

1. Palamu is among the **first nine tiger reserves** established under **Project Tiger (1973)**.

Wildlife Conservation

1. Important habitat for tigers, elephants, gaur, sloth bear, and leopards.

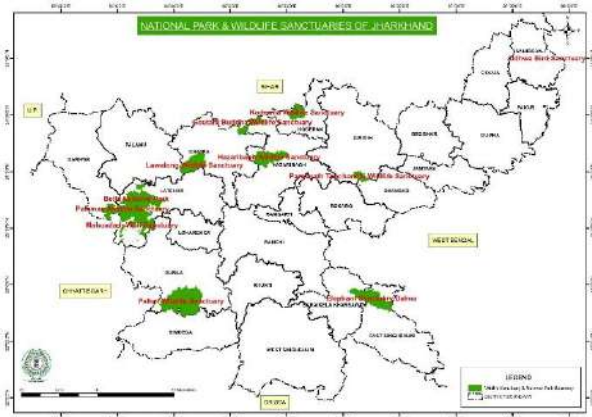
Ecological Importance

1. Located in the ecologically significant **Chotanagpur Plateau** region.

Conservation Research

1. Research-based management can improve coexistence strategies and wildlife protection.

About Palamu Tiger Reserve



1. Location: **Jharkhand**
2. Part of: **Betla National Park**
3. Rivers: North Koel, Auranga, Burha
4. Vegetation: Moist & dry deciduous forests
5. Major flora: Sal and bamboo

Important Fact

1. First tiger reserve where tiger census was done using the **pugmark method**.

MCQ

Q7. Palamu Tiger Reserve is located in which state?

- (a) Odisha (b) Chhattisgarh
(c) Jharkhand (d) West Bengal

Correct Answer: (c) Jharkhand

Wholesale Price Inflation (WPI) rises to 3.85% in April 2026

Source: PIB

Key News:

India's **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)**-based **inflation** rose to **3.85% in April 2026** compared to the previous month. The increase was mainly driven by higher prices of **primary articles, fuel & power, and manufactured food products**.

1. Inflation in the **fuel and power category** witnessed a sharp rise due to increased energy prices.
2. The data reflects continuing price pressures in wholesale markets amid global supply-side uncertainties.
3. WPI trends remain important indicators for industrial costs and broader inflationary movements in the economy.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **WPI Inflation (April 2026): 3.85%**
2. **Base Year of WPI: 2011–12**
3. **Compiled by:** Office of Economic Adviser, DPIIT
4. **Major Contributors:** Fuel & power, primary articles, manufactured products

Static Introduction

Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

1. **Measures:** Price changes at wholesale level
2. **Indicates:** Producer-side inflation
3. **Published by:** Ministry of Commerce & Industry

Components of WPI

Component	Approx Importance
Primary Articles	Food, minerals
Fuel & Power	Energy products
Manufactured Products	Industrial goods

Difference Between WPI and CPI

WHOLESALE PRICE INDEX VS CONSUMER PRICE INDEX	
WPI (Wholesale Price Index) - WPI used by a few countries to calculate inflation. - It takes wholesale prices into account. - These prices are easier to obtain because the goods traded on the wholesale market are limited. - The WPI is always calculated with a base year that is always set to 100. - The WPI is calculated by comparing prices to the base. - To calculate the inflation rate for a given year, the WPI difference is calculated at the beginning and end of the year and expressed as a percentage increase.	CPI (Consumer Price Index) - Many countries now use the CPI (Consumer Price Index) to calculate inflation rates. - Many economists argue that the CPI is the best method because it more accurately represents the "cost of living." Changes in consumer prices for specific baskets of goods are used to calculate CPI-based inflation. - The CPI considers consumer prices and retail margin. - The CPI accurately describes the real cost of living and the inflation rate.

Importance of WPI

1. Helps assess:
 - Industrial inflation
 - Supply chain pressures
 - Input cost trends

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Wholesale Price Index (WPI):

1. WPI measures price changes at the wholesale level.
2. The base year for India's WPI series is 2011–12.
3. WPI is compiled by the Reserve Bank of India.
4. Fuel and power is one of the major groups in WPI.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

- Statement 1: WPI tracks wholesale inflation.
- Statement 2: Base year = 2011–12.
- Statement 3: WPI compiled by Office of Economic Adviser under DPIIT, not RBI.
- Statement 4: Fuel & Power is a major category.

Rakchham Chitkul Wildlife Sanctuary and renewed focus on Himalayan Brown Bear conservation

Source: Indian Express (IE)

Key News:

Conservation attention has recently returned to the **Himalayan Brown Bear** after sightings of a female bear and her cubs in the **Rakchham Chitkul Wildlife Sanctuary** of Himachal Pradesh.

The sanctuary, located in the **Kinnaur district**, forms part of the ecologically sensitive **Western Himalayan region**.

- The area supports rich alpine biodiversity and serves as an important habitat for high-altitude wildlife species.
- The Himalayan Brown Bear remains one of the rarest and most threatened large mammals in the Himalayas.
- The development highlights the importance of habitat conservation and wildlife corridor protection in fragile mountain ecosystems.



Static Introduction
Rakchham Chitkul Wildlife Sanctuary

- Located in:
➤ Himachal Pradesh
- Situated in:
➤ Western Himalayas
- Important river:
➤ Baspa River passes through the sanctuary

Himalayan Brown Bear

- Scientific Name:
➤ *Ursus arctos isabellinus*
- Habitat:
➤ Alpine and sub-alpine regions of Himalayas
- Found in:
➤ India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibetan Plateau

Characteristics of Himalayan Brown Bear

- Largest mammal in high Himalayan regions
- Omnivorous diet
- Lives in high-altitude cold deserts and alpine meadows

Conservation Status

Organisation	Status
IUCN	Critically Endangered (regional population concern)

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Himalayan Brown Bear and Rakchham Chitkul Wildlife Sanctuary:

- Rakchham Chitkul Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Himachal Pradesh.
- The sanctuary lies in the Western Himalayan region.
- Himalayan Brown Bear belongs to the species *Ursus arctos isabellinus*.
- Himalayan Brown Bear is primarily found in tropical rainforests.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

- Statement 1: Sanctuary located in Himachal Pradesh.

- Statement 2: It is part of the Western Himalayas.
- Statement 3: Scientific name is *Ursus arctos isabellinus*.
- Statement 4: Species inhabits alpine/sub-alpine Himalayan ecosystems, not tropical rainforests.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Important Himalayan Species

Species	Habitat
Snow Leopard	Trans-Himalayan region
Himalayan Brown Bear	Alpine meadows
Musk Deer	Himalayan forests
Red Panda	Eastern Himalayas

Major Threats

- Habitat fragmentation
- Climate change
- Human-wildlife conflict
- Tourism pressure

Assam exports first legally approved agarwood shipment to UAE

What is in News?

- The Assam government recently shipped the first legally approved export of Agarwood chips to the United Arab Emirates.
- Agarwood (*Aquilaria malaccensis*) is one of the world's most valuable aromatic forest products.
- The export marks a major step in promoting legal and sustainable trade of agarwood from Northeast India.

Importance

Economic Importance

- Agarwood is highly valued in perfumes, incense, cosmetics, and traditional medicines.

Northeast India Biodiversity

- Naturally found in Assam, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur.

Sustainable Forest Economy

- Legal trade encourages regulated cultivation and reduces illegal exploitation.

Conservation Relevance

- Species is protected due to overexploitation and habitat pressure.

International Trade

- Important example of linking biodiversity conservation with livelihood generation.

About Agarwood



- Scientific name: *Aquilaria malaccensis*
- Family: **Thymelaeaceae**
- Also called: **Oud / Agar / Gaharu**
- Resin forms when tree is infected by a specific mold
- Used in luxury perfumes and incense

Conservation Status

- IUCN: **Critically Endangered**
- CITES: **Appendix II**

MCQ

Q3. Agarwood, recently seen in news, is primarily valued for its:

- Edible fruit
- Medicinal leaves
- Aromatic resin
- Textile fiber

Correct Answer: (c) Aromatic resin

Dhruva Space secures funding for 'Project Garud' satellite platform

What is in News?

Hyderabad-based startup Dhruva Space secured ₹105 crore under the **Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund** for **Project Garud**. Project Garud aims to strengthen India's **private satellite manufacturing capabilities**.

1. It focuses on developing a **fast-track 500 kg-class satellite platform** for scalable and high-volume production.
2. The platform is intended for applications such as:
 - Telecommunications
 - National security
 - Earth observation
 - Data-driven space services

Importance

Space Sector Privatization

1. Reflects the growing role of private startups in India's space ecosystem after sectoral reforms.

Indigenous Satellite Manufacturing

1. Promotes self-reliance in satellite production under **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

Strategic & Commercial Applications

1. Satellites can support defence, communication, weather forecasting, and remote sensing.

High-Volume Manufacturing

1. Aims to create industrial-scale production capacity for satellites in India.

New Space Economy

1. Strengthens India's participation in the global commercial space market.

About Project Garud



1. Developed by: **Dhruva Space**
2. Focus: 500 kg-class satellite platform
3. Goal: Faster production & deployment
4. Applications: Telecom, defence, Earth observation, data services
5. Expected manufacturing capacity: Hundreds of satellites annually

MCQ

Q4. Project Garud, recently seen in news, is related to:

- (a) Hypersonic missile development
- (b) Indigenous satellite manufacturing
- (c) Underwater drone technology
- (d) Quantum computing research

Correct Answer: (b) Indigenous satellite manufacturing

Lebanon and Israel resume peace talks in the U.S. as ceasefire nears expiry

What is in News?

1. Lebanon and Israel held fresh peace talks in the United States amid concerns that the current ceasefire may soon expire.
2. The discussions were held at the White House.
3. Tensions continue along the Israel–Lebanon border, particularly involving the militant group Hezbollah.
4. Recent Israeli strikes reportedly targeted areas in southern Lebanon.

Importance

West Asia Geopolitics

1. The Israel–Lebanon conflict is a key component of broader instability in West Asia.

Ceasefire Diplomacy

1. Highlights the role of international mediation and diplomacy in conflict resolution.

Hezbollah Factor

1. Hezbollah is a major non-state armed group influencing regional security dynamics.

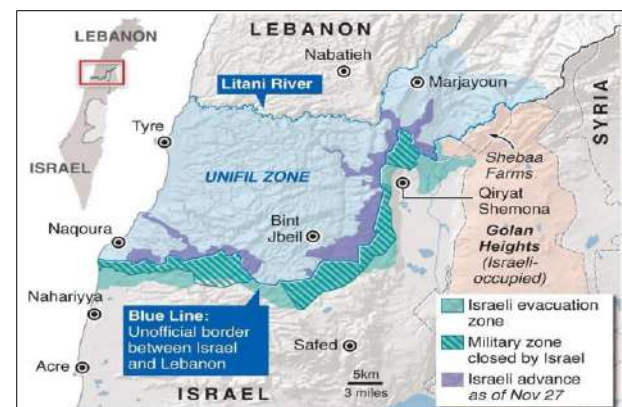
Humanitarian Concerns

1. Continued conflict has caused civilian displacement and casualties.

Strategic Importance

1. Instability in West Asia affects global energy security and international relations.

Israel–Lebanon Border Region





Key Points

1. Border region frequently witnesses military tensions
2. UN peacekeeping force: **UNIFIL** operates in southern Lebanon
3. Hezbollah backed by Iran
4. Conflict linked to wider Middle East geopolitics

MCQ

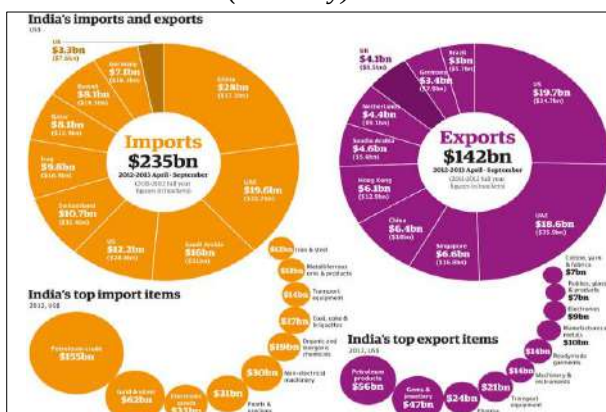
Q5. Hezbollah, often seen in news, is primarily associated with which country?

- (a) Syria
- (b) Lebanon
- (c) Jordan
- (d) Egypt

Answer: (b) Lebanon

India's merchandise exports rise to \$43.6 billion despite global trade disruptions

Source: The Hindu (Economy)



Key News:

1. India's merchandise exports increased by **14% year-on-year** to reach **\$43.6 billion in April 2026** despite disruptions caused by the West Asia crisis.
2. The growth was supported by higher export prices and diversification into newer international markets.
3. India's overall trade performance remained resilient amid global geopolitical uncertainty and supply-chain stress.
4. Services exports also recorded growth, strengthening India's external sector performance.
5. The trade deficit narrowed significantly, reflecting improving export competitiveness.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Merchandise Exports (April 2026):** \$43.6 billion
2. **Growth Rate:** ~14% YoY
3. **Services Exports:** \$37.2 billion
4. **Trade Deficit:** Reduced to about \$7.8 billion

Static Introduction:

Merchandise Exports

1. Refers to export of:
 - Physical goods/products
2. Includes:
 - Engineering goods
 - Petroleum products
 - Chemicals
 - Textiles

Services Exports

1. India is globally competitive in:
 - IT services
 - Business process outsourcing (BPO)
 - Financial and consulting services

Trade Deficit

1. Occurs when:
 - Imports exceed exports
2. Lower trade deficit improves:
 - External sector stability
 - Forex management

Importance of Exports

1. Increase:
 - Foreign exchange earnings
 - Industrial production

- Employment generation
- 2. Support:
 - GDP growth

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India's trade sector:

1. Merchandise exports refer to exports of physical goods.
2. A trade deficit occurs when imports exceed exports.
3. Services exports are an important component of India's external sector.
4. Higher exports have no impact on foreign exchange earnings.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Merchandise exports involve goods trade.
2. Statement 2: Imports greater than exports create trade deficit.
3. Statement 3: India's services exports are globally significant.
4. Statement 4: Exports directly increase foreign exchange earnings.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Types of Trade Balance

Type	Meaning
Trade Surplus	Exports > Imports
Trade Deficit	Imports > Exports

Major Export Sectors of India

1. Petroleum products
2. Engineering goods
3. Pharmaceuticals
4. IT services
5. Gems & jewellery

Challenges to Indian Exports

1. Global slowdown
2. Geopolitical tensions
3. Shipping disruptions
4. Currency volatility

Prime Minister extends greetings to the people of Sikkim on Statehood Day

Source: PIB



Key News:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended greetings to the people of **Sikkim** on the occasion of the State's **Statehood Day** celebrations.

1. The Prime Minister highlighted Sikkim's contributions in areas such as **sustainable development, organic farming, tourism, and environmental conservation**.
2. The event coincides with the celebration of **50 years of Sikkim's statehood** within the Indian Union.
3. Sikkim has emerged as a model State in terms of **cleanliness, ecological balance, and human development indicators**.
4. The government reiterated its commitment to the continued development of the Himalayan State.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Statehood Year:** 1975
2. **State:** Sikkim
3. **Capital:** Gangtok
4. **Special Achievement:** India's first fully organic State

Static Introduction

Sikkim's Integration into India

1. Became the 22nd State of India in:
 - 1975
2. Constitutional Amendment:
 - **36th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1975**

Geographic Importance of Sikkim

1. Shares borders with:

- China (Tibet)
- Nepal
- Bhutan

2. Strategic importance:

- Eastern Himalayan region

Sikkim's Environmental Achievements

1. India's first:

- Fully organic farming State

2. Known for:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Eco-tourism

Important Features

Feature	Description
Highest Peak	Kanchenjunga
Biosphere Importance	Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspot
Key Sector	Organic agriculture

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Sikkim:

1. Sikkim became a State of India in 1975.
2. The 36th Constitutional Amendment is associated with Sikkim's integration into India.
3. Sikkim is India's first fully organic State.
4. Sikkim shares an international border with Myanmar.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Sikkim became a State in 1975.
2. Statement 2: 36th Constitutional Amendment formalized statehood.
3. Statement 3: Sikkim is India's first organic State.
4. Statement 4: Sikkim does not border Myanmar.

Additional UPSC Value Addition
Why Sikkim is Important for UPSC

Area	Relevance
Geography	Himalayas & biodiversity
Environment	Organic farming model
Polity	Constitutional integration
International Relations	Border security

Key Environmental Significance

1. Part of:

- Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot

2. Rich in:

- Alpine flora and fauna

India's first satellite-tagged Ganges soft-shell turtle released in Kaziranga National Park

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News:

India's first **satellite-tagged Ganges soft-shell turtle** was released in **Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (Assam)**.

1. The initiative aims to study the turtle's **movement patterns, habitat use, nesting areas, and breeding behaviour**.
2. The release coincided with the observance of **Endangered Species Day**.
3. Scientists and conservation agencies believe satellite tracking will strengthen long-term freshwater biodiversity conservation.
4. The species plays an important ecological role in maintaining river ecosystem health.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Species:** Ganges Soft-shell Turtle (*Nilssonia gangetica*)
2. **Location:** Kaziranga National Park, Assam
3. **Conservation Tool:** Satellite tagging
4. **IUCN Status:** Endangered

Static Introduction

Ganges Soft-shell Turtle

1. Scientific Name:

- *Nilssonia gangetica*

2. Freshwater turtle species found in:

- Rivers, lakes, and reservoirs of northern India

Ecological Importance

1. Functions as:

- Scavenger species
- 2. Helps maintain:
 - River ecosystem cleanliness by feeding on decaying matter

Kaziranga National Park

1. Located in:
 - Assam
2. UNESCO World Heritage Site
3. Famous for:
 - One-horned rhinoceros
4. Situated along:
 - Brahmaputra floodplains

Satellite Tagging in Wildlife Conservation

1. Used to monitor:
 - Migration routes
 - Habitat preference
 - Breeding behaviour
2. Assists:
 - Scientific conservation planning

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Ganges Soft-shell Turtle and wildlife conservation:

1. The Ganges Soft-shell Turtle is a freshwater turtle species.
2. Satellite tagging helps scientists track animal movement and habitat use.
3. Kaziranga National Park is located in Assam.
4. The Ganges Soft-shell Turtle is primarily a marine species.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: It is a freshwater turtle.
2. Statement 2: Satellite tagging tracks wildlife movement and ecology.
3. Statement 3: Kaziranga is in Assam.
4. Statement 4: Species is not marine; it inhabits freshwater ecosystems.

Additional UPSC Value Addition
Major Threats to Freshwater Turtles

Threat	Impact
River pollution	Habitat degradation
Sand mining	Nest destruction
Illegal wildlife trade	Population decline
Dam construction	Migration disruption

Important Conservation Frameworks

1. Wildlife Protection Act, 1972
2. Ramsar Convention
3. National Wildlife Action Plan

Jaggery ('Medicinal Sugar') production and exports rise in India

What is in News?

India has witnessed significant growth in Jaggery production and exports.

1. Jaggery, often called the “**medicinal sugar**,” is gaining popularity due to increasing health awareness and demand for natural sweeteners.
2. India remains one of the world’s largest producers and consumers of jaggery.
3. Exports have increased substantially in recent years, especially to Gulf countries and other international markets.



Importance

Agro-Based Rural Economy

1. Jaggery production supports sugarcane farmers and rural cottage industries.

Health & Nutrition

1. Considered healthier than refined sugar because it contains minerals like iron, calcium, and magnesium.

Export Potential

1. Rising global demand for organic and traditional food products boosts India's agri-exports.

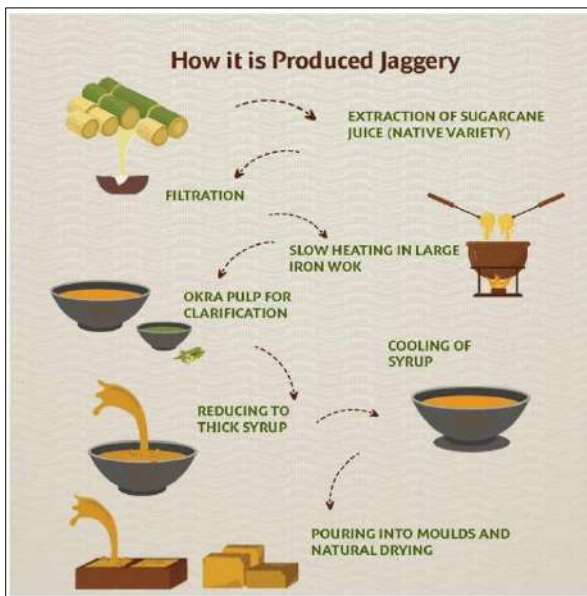
MSME & Traditional Industry

1. Processing units create employment in rural and semi-urban regions.

Sustainable Food Practices

1. Traditional sweetener with relatively less industrial processing compared to refined sugar.

About Jaggery



1. Made mainly from: **Sugarcane juice** (sometimes palm sap)
2. Common names: Gur, Bella, Vellam
3. Rich in minerals and micronutrients
4. Used in sweets, beverages, Ayurveda, and traditional medicine

Major Producing States

1. Uttar Pradesh
2. Maharashtra
3. Karnataka
4. Tamil Nadu

MCQ

Q4. Jaggery is primarily produced from:

- (a) Wheat grains
(b) Sugarcane juice
(c) Cottonseed oil
(d) Rice husk

Correct Answer: (b) Sugarcane juice

India participates in International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Council Meeting 2026

What is in News?

1. India participated in the digital telecommunications policy discussions during the International Telecommunication Union Council Meeting 2026 held in Geneva.
2. The meeting focused on global telecom governance, digital connectivity, and emerging ICT technologies.
3. India highlighted its role in expanding digital infrastructure and telecom accessibility.

Importance

Global Telecom Governance

1. ITU sets international standards for telecommunications and ICT services.

Digital Connectivity

1. Supports global efforts to bridge the digital divide and improve internet access.

Spectrum & Satellite Coordination

1. ITU allocates global radio spectrum and satellite orbital positions.

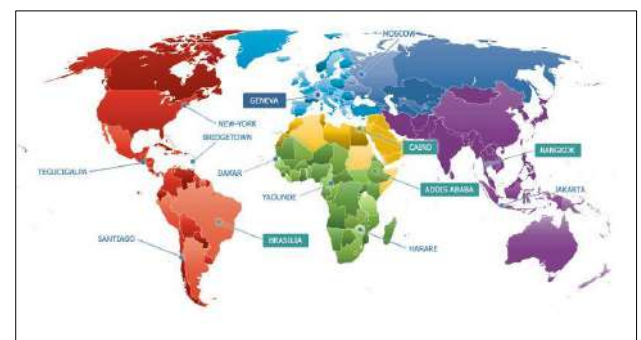
India's Digital Diplomacy

1. India plays an active role in shaping global telecom policies and digital standards.

Emerging Technologies

1. Discussions include AI, 5G/6G, cybersecurity, and digital inclusion.

About International Telecommunication Union (ITU)



1. Established: **1865** (as International Telegraph Union)
2. Became UN specialized agency: **1947**
3. Headquarters: **Geneva, Switzerland**

4. Member countries: **190+ nations**

Major Functions

1. Telecom standard setting
2. Radio spectrum allocation
3. Satellite orbit coordination
4. ICT development and digital inclusion

MCQ

Q5. The headquarters of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is located in:

- (a) Vienna
- (b) Geneva
- (c) Paris
- (d) New York

Correct Answer: (b) Geneva

Government reorganises Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) after major review

What is in News?

1. The Central Government recently carried out a major reorganization of Research and Analysis Wing after a national security review.
2. The restructuring reportedly aims to improve intelligence coordination and operational efficiency.
3. RAW is India's premier **external intelligence agency**, responsible for gathering foreign intelligence and monitoring external threats.

Importance

National Security

1. RAW plays a crucial role in protecting India from external threats such as terrorism, espionage, and cross-border smuggling.

External Intelligence

1. Responsible for intelligence gathering outside India related to strategic and geopolitical developments.

Counter-Terrorism

1. Supports anti-terror operations and monitors extremist networks.

Strategic Policy Support

1. Intelligence inputs assist government decision-making in foreign policy and security matters.

Institutional Importance

1. Functions directly under the **Prime Minister's Office (PMO)**.

About RAW



India's Counterterrorism Security Framework

India's counterterrorism architecture rests on strong laws, specialized agencies, coordinated intelligence systems, and operational forces designed to prevent, detect, and respond to terror threats.

Legal and Policy Framework

- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967:** India's primary anti-terror law that allows banning terror groups, seizing assets, and preventively detaining suspects.
- **National Investigation Agency Act, 2008:** Creates a central agency to investigate terrorism-related offences across states.
- **National Security Act, 1980:** Allows preventive detention of individuals who pose a threat to national security or public order.

Key Institutional Mechanisms

- **National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS):** Led by the National Security Advisor, it coordinates inter-agency security, strategy, and intelligence.
- **Multi-Agency Centre (MAC):** A real-time intelligence-sharing platform under the Intelligence Bureau (IB), linking central and state agencies.
- **National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO):** Provides technical intelligence on cyber threats, satellites, and signals.
- **Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA):** Integrates military intelligence across the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

Operational Forces and Response Units

- **National Security Guard (NSG):** Elite counterterror and hostage-rescue force known for rapid urban response.
- **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs):** CRPF, BSF, ITBP, and CISF support border security, internal stability, and protection of key assets.
- **Anti-Terrorism Squads (ATS):** State-level units working with central agencies on local counterterror operations and intelligence.
- **Special Forces:** Units like Para SF, MARCOS, and Garud Commandos, handle covert missions, cross-border tasks, anti-hijack operations, and high-risk strikes.

Intelligence and Surveillance Network

- **Intelligence Bureau (IB):** India's domestic intelligence agency for counterintelligence, infiltration tracking, and internal threat assessment.
- **Research and Analysis Wing (RAW):** Handles external intelligence, especially on cross-border terror networks and state-sponsored threats.
- **Cyber Security Division:** Through Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and CERT-In, it counters cyberterrorism, digital propaganda, and online radicalization.

1. Established: **1968**
2. Headquarters: **New Delhi**
3. Founder associated: **Rameshwar Nath Kao**

4. Created after lessons from the **1962 India-China War**

Functions

1. Foreign intelligence gathering
2. Counter-terrorism
3. Counter-proliferation
4. Cybersecurity monitoring
5. Strategic security assessment

MCQ

Q6. Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is primarily India's:

- (a) Internal intelligence agency
- (b) Financial intelligence agency
- (c) External intelligence agency
- (d) Cybercrime investigation agency

Correct Answer: (c) External intelligence agency

CBI launches AI-based 'ABHAY' system for verification of fake notices

What is in News?

Central Bureau of Investigation launched an AI-powered helpbot named **ABHAY** (*AI-Based Helpbot for Authentication of Your Notice*).

1. The platform helps citizens verify whether CBI notices are genuine or fake.
2. It aims to protect people from rising “**digital arrest**” and **cyber impersonation scams**.
3. Users can upload notice copies online, after which the AI system checks authenticity.

Importance

Cybercrime Prevention

1. Addresses increasing cases of online fraud and fake law-enforcement notices.

AI in Governance

1. Demonstrates use of Artificial Intelligence in public administration and citizen services.

Digital Security

1. Enhances trust in digital communication and official verification systems.

Citizen-Centric Governance

1. Provides quick and accessible verification support to the public.

E-Governance Innovation

1. Reflects integration of emerging technologies into law enforcement systems.

About ABHAY System

1. Full form: **AI-Based Helpbot for Authentication of Your Notice**
2. Developed by: **CBI**
3. Purpose: Verify authenticity of notices
4. Helps combat:
 - Digital arrest scams
 - Cyber-enabled impersonation fraud
 - Fake investigation notices

MCQ

Q7. The ABHAY system launched by CBI is primarily aimed at:

- (a) Satellite tracking
- (b) Cyber notice verification
- (c) Digital currency monitoring
- (d) Border surveillance

Correct Answer: (b) Cyber notice verification

Australia imposes strict quarantine on passengers from hantavirus-hit cruise ship

What is in News?

Australia placed passengers from a cruise ship under a **three-week quarantine** after a suspected outbreak of Hantavirus.

1. The ship had arrived in Melbourne from New Zealand.
2. Australian authorities described the response as one of the country's strongest quarantine measures since the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Health officials acted to prevent any possible transmission until the risk assessment was completed.

Importance

Emerging Zoonotic Diseases

1. Hantavirus is a rodent-borne viral disease with serious public health implications.

Global Health Security

1. Highlights the importance of quarantine and border health surveillance.

Post-COVID Preparedness

1. Countries continue to maintain strong epidemic response systems after the COVID-19 experience.

Public Health Administration

1. Demonstrates preventive healthcare measures and rapid containment strategies.

Epidemiology Relevance

1. Important example in studies of infectious disease transmission and control.

About Hantavirus

1. Caused by: **Hantaviruses**
2. Spread mainly through:
 - Contact with infected rodents
 - Inhalation of contaminated particles
3. Can cause:
 - Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)
 - Hemorrhagic Fever with Renal Syndrome (HFRS)

Symptoms

1. Fever
2. Fatigue
3. Muscle aches
4. Respiratory distress in severe cases

MCQ

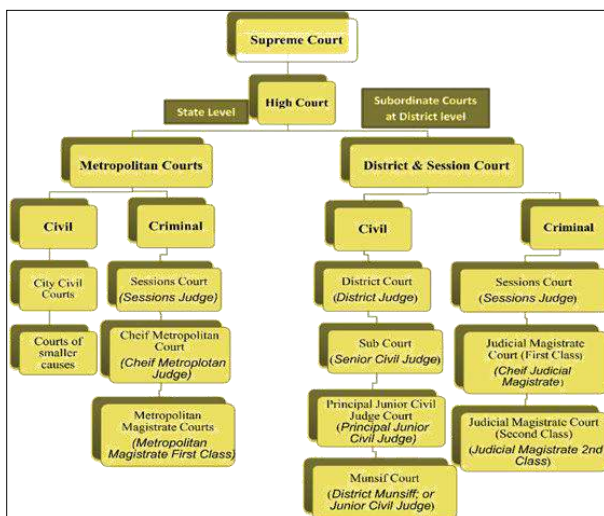
Q8. Hantavirus infection is primarily associated with transmission through:

- (a) Mosquito bites
- (b) Contaminated water only
- (c) Rodent exposure
- (d) Tick bites

Correct Answer: (c) Rodent exposure

Ordinance increases Supreme Court judge strength from 33 to 37

Source: The Hindu



Key News:

1. President Droupadi Murmu promulgated an ordinance increasing the sanctioned strength of Supreme Court judges from **33 to 37** (excluding the Chief Justice of India).
2. The move aims to address the growing **pendency of cases** and reduce judicial delays in the apex court.
3. The ordinance amends the **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956** under powers granted by **Article 123** of the Constitution.
4. The decision comes amid rising concerns over judicial backlog, which has crossed **93,000 pending cases**.
5. The ordinance will later be placed before Parliament for approval.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **New Judge Strength:** 37 judges (excluding CJI)
2. **Previous Strength:** 33 judges
3. **Pending Cases in SC:** ~93,000
4. **Constitutional Provision:** Article 123 (Ordinance-making power)

Static Introduction

Supreme Court of India

1. Established under:
 - Part V of Constitution
2. Highest judicial authority in India
3. Guardian of:
 - Constitution and Fundamental Rights

Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956

1. Determines:
 - Number of Supreme Court judges
2. Strength revised periodically due to:
 - Increasing litigation and pendency

Ordinance-Making Power (Article 123)

1. President can promulgate ordinances when:
 - Parliament is not in session
2. Ordinance has:
 - Same force as law temporarily

Judicial Pendency in India

1. Causes:
 - Vacancies
 - Rising litigation
 - Infrastructure constraints
2. Impacts:
 - Speedy justice delivery

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Supreme Court and ordinance-making power:

1. Article 123 empowers the President to promulgate ordinances when Parliament is not in session.
2. The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act determines the sanctioned strength of Supreme Court judges.
3. Ordinances have the same force as parliamentary laws for a temporary period.
4. The Chief Justice of India is included within the sanctioned strength of 37 judges mentioned in the ordinance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

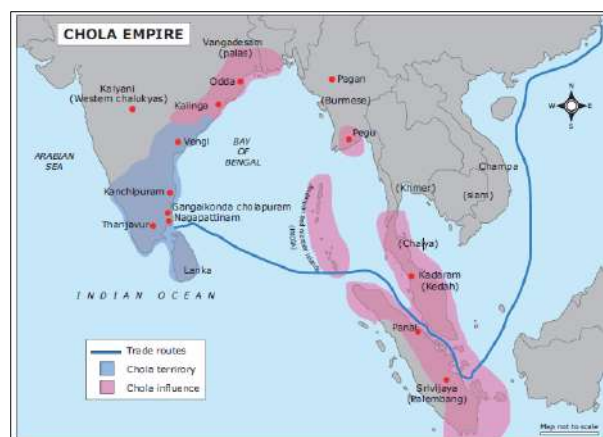
Explanation

1. Statement 1: Article 123 grants ordinance-making power.
2. Statement 2: The Act fixes SC judge strength.
3. Statement 3: Ordinances temporarily carry force of law.
4. Statement 4 : The 37 judges are **excluding the CJI**.

Additional UPSC Value Addition	
Important Constitutional Articles	
Article	Subject
Article 124	Establishment of Supreme Court
Article 123	Ordinance-making power
Article 32	Constitutional remedies

Return of Chola-era copper plates from Netherlands revives focus on repatriation of Indian antiquities

Source: *The Hindu*



Key News:

1. India has secured the return of rare **Chola-era copper plates** from the Netherlands, marking an important milestone in the repatriation of stolen cultural heritage.
2. The copper plates belonged to the **Anai Mangalam inscription set** associated with the Chola period and Buddhist institutions in Tamil Nadu.
3. Archaeologists believe the development will strengthen efforts to
4. recover more Indian antiquities housed abroad.
5. The plates provide valuable historical insights into **Chola administration, land grants, religion, and maritime connections**.
6. The repatriation reflects growing global cooperation against illicit trafficking of cultural artefacts.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Dynasty:** Chola Dynasty
2. **Country Returning Artefacts:** Netherlands
3. **Historical Importance:** Land grants and Buddhist vihara records
4. **Associated Ruler:** Rajaraja Chola I

Static Introduction

Chola Dynasty

1. Major South Indian dynasty:
 - 9th–13th century CE
2. Known for:
 - Maritime trade
 - Temple architecture
 - Administrative efficiency

Copper Plate Inscriptions

1. Used for:

- Recording royal grants and administrative orders
- 2. Important historical source for:
 - Land ownership
 - Religious patronage
 - Revenue systems

Rajaraja Chola I

1. One of the greatest Chola rulers
2. Built:
 - Brihadeeswara Temple (Thanjavur)
3. Expanded:
 - Chola naval and territorial power

Repatriation of Antiquities

1. Refers to:
 - Return of stolen or illegally exported cultural artefacts
2. Supported by:
 - UNESCO conventions and bilateral cooperation

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding Chola-era inscriptions and Indian antiquities:

1. Copper plate inscriptions were used to record royal grants and administrative details.
2. Rajaraja Chola I was associated with the Brihadeeswara Temple.
3. The Cholas were known for strong maritime activities.
4. Repatriation refers to the destruction of ancient artefacts to prevent smuggling.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Copper plates documented grants and administration.
2. Statement 2: Rajaraja Chola I built Brihadeeswara Temple.
3. Statement 3: Cholas had extensive maritime trade and naval power.
4. Statement 4 : Repatriation means return of artefacts, not destruction.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Important Features of Chola Administration

Feature	Description
Local Self-Government	Sabha and Ur systems
Revenue System	Detailed land surveys
Maritime Trade	Links with Southeast Asia
Temple Economy	Major socio-economic centres

UNESCO Convention

1. 1970 UNESCO Convention

- Prevents illicit import/export of cultural property

India's renewable energy expansion faces major storage challenge

Source: *The Indian Express*

Key News:

India's rapid renewable energy expansion has highlighted a major challenge: **energy storage capacity**.

Since solar power generation falls sharply after sunset and wind energy fluctuates with weather conditions, efficient storage systems are becoming essential for grid stability.

1. Experts note that India's current storage infrastructure remains inadequate compared to future renewable energy targets.
2. Technologies such as **Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)** and **Pumped Hydro Storage (PHS)** are being promoted as solutions.
3. The issue is crucial for India's clean energy transition and Net Zero ambitions.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **India's Renewable Energy Goal:** 500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030
2. **Current Major Storage Technologies:** BESS & Pumped Hydro Storage
3. **Projected Storage Requirement:** Massive increase expected by 2035–36
4. **Challenge:** Intermittency of solar and wind energy

Static Introduction

Renewable Energy Intermittency

1. Solar energy:
 - Available only during daytime

2. Wind energy:
 - Depends on weather conditions
3. Causes:
 - Supply fluctuations in power grid

Energy Storage Systems

Energy storage stores excess electricity for later use.

Major Types

Technology	Working Principle
Pumped Hydro Storage (PHS)	Water pumped uphill and released later
Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)	Electricity stored chemically in batteries
Flywheel Storage	Mechanical rotational energy
Thermal Storage	Heat stored and reused

Pumped Hydro Storage (PHS)

1. Most mature large-scale storage technology
2. Uses:
 - Upper and lower reservoirs
3. Helps balance:
 - Peak electricity demand

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

1. Rapidly expanding globally
2. Important for:
 - Grid balancing
 - Renewable integration
3. Common batteries:
 - Lithium-ion batteries

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding renewable energy storage systems:

1. Pumped Hydro Storage stores energy by pumping water to higher reservoirs.
2. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) store electricity chemically.
3. Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are fully stable throughout the day.
4. Energy storage systems help improve grid stability.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: PHS uses gravitational potential energy of water.
2. Statement 2: BESS stores energy chemically.
3. Statement 3 : Solar and wind are intermittent sources.
4. Statement 4: Storage systems stabilize renewable-heavy grids.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

India's Renewable Energy Targets

Target	Year
500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity	2030
Net Zero emissions	2070

Why Storage is Important

1. Reduces:
 - Grid instability
 - Renewable curtailment
2. Supports:
 - Peak demand management
 - Energy security

Challenges in Storage Expansion

1. High battery costs
2. Dependence on lithium imports
3. Environmental concerns
4. Land and infrastructure constraints

WHO declares Ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda a global public health emergency concern

Source: Reuters / WHO Reports

Key News:

The World Health Organization (WHO) has expressed serious concern over the spread of **Ebola virus disease (EVD)** in parts of **Congo (DRC) and Uganda**.

The outbreak has raised fears of wider international transmission due to increasing suspected cases and cross-border health risks.

1. Health authorities are closely monitoring the spread of the **Bundibugyo strain** of Ebola, for which approved vaccines remain limited.
2. WHO warned that weak healthcare systems and delayed detection may worsen the outbreak situation.
3. The development highlights continuing global vulnerabilities to infectious disease outbreaks and pandemic preparedness challenges.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Disease:** Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)
2. **Affected Countries:** Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda
3. **Virus Strain Mentioned:** Bundibugyo strain
4. **Concern:** Public health emergency risk and cross-border transmission

Static Introduction
Ebola Virus Disease (EVD)

1. Severe viral hemorrhagic fever caused by:
 - Ebola virus
2. Symptoms:
 - Fever
 - Internal/external bleeding
 - Weakness and organ failure

Transmission

1. Spread through:
 - Direct contact with infected bodily fluids
2. High-risk exposure:
 - Healthcare settings
 - Burial practices

Bundibugyo Strain

1. One of the strains of Ebola virus
2. First identified in:
 - Uganda
3. Limited approved vaccines compared to Zaire strain

World Health Organization (WHO)

1. Specialized agency of:
 - United Nations
2. Headquarters:
 - Geneva, Switzerland
3. Coordinates:
 - Global public health responses

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Ebola Virus Disease (EVD):

1. Ebola is a viral hemorrhagic fever.
2. Ebola spreads mainly through direct contact with infected bodily fluids.
3. The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations.
4. Ebola is primarily transmitted through mosquito bites.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

(b) 1 and 4 only

(c) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Ebola causes viral hemorrhagic fever.
2. Statement 2: Transmission occurs through infected body fluids.
3. Statement 3: WHO is a UN specialized agency.
4. Statement 4 : Ebola is not mosquito-borne.

Additional UPSC Value Addition
Important Facts About WHO

Feature	Details
Established	1948
Headquarters	Geneva
Parent Organisation	United Nations

Global Forest Goals Report 2026 launched at United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

What is in News?

The **Global Forest Goals Report 2026** was launched during the session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

The forum discussed global efforts toward **sustainable forest management and conservation**.

1. UNFF works under the United Nations Economic and Social Council framework.
2. India continues to play an active role in international forest governance discussions.

Importance
Global Forest Governance

1. UNFF promotes sustainable forest management at the international level.

Climate Change Mitigation

1. Forests are crucial carbon sinks and help combat global warming.

Biodiversity Conservation

1. Forest ecosystems support wildlife, ecological balance, and livelihoods.

International Cooperation

1. Encourages financial and technical cooperation among countries for forest protection.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1. Closely linked with SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

About United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

1. Established: **2000**
2. Parent body: **ECOSOC**
3. Headquarters: **New York, USA**
4. Objective: Promote sustainable forest management worldwide

Major Functions

1. Policy dialogue on forests
2. International cooperation
3. Technical and financial support
4. Forest conservation frameworks

MCQ

Q5. United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) functions under which UN body?

- (a) UNEP
- (b) UNESCO
- (c) ECOSOC
- (d) UNDP

Correct Answer: (c) ECOSOC

Lok Sabha Speaker reconstitutes Committee on Empowerment of Women

What is in News?

The Lok Sabha Speaker recently reconstituted the **Committee on Empowerment of Women**.

The committee examines policies, welfare measures, and issues related to women's empowerment in India.

1. It works across party lines to review government actions concerning women's rights, education, welfare, and equality.

Importance

Parliamentary Oversight

1. Ensures parliamentary scrutiny of policies affecting women.

Women Empowerment

1. Focuses on improving the status, rights, and welfare of women in India.

Accountability Mechanism

1. Reviews implementation of schemes and recommendations related to women's development.

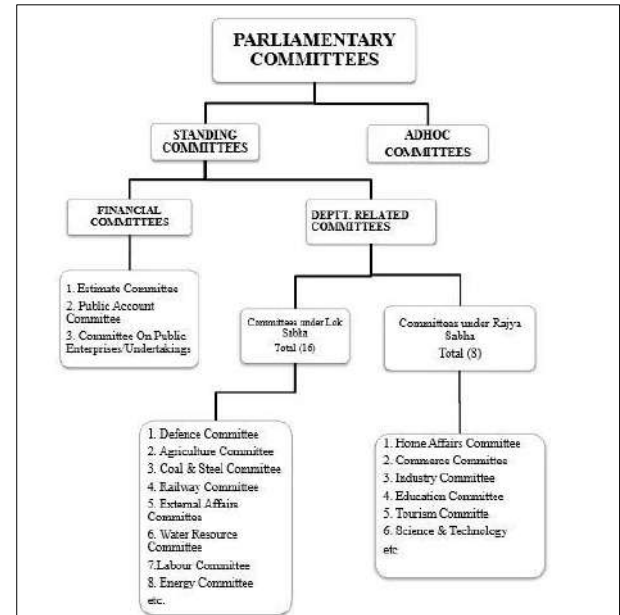
Legislative Importance

1. Strengthens democratic governance through committee-based examination.

Social Justice

1. Addresses issues related to gender equality and inclusive development.

About the Committee on Empowerment of Women



1. Constituted first time: **1997**
2. Total Members: **30**
 - 20 from Lok Sabha
 - 10 from Rajya Sabha
3. Tenure: **1 year**
4. Functions include:
 - Examining women welfare programmes
 - Reviewing reports of National Commission for Women
 - Monitoring measures for gender equality

MCQ

Q6. The Committee on Empowerment of Women in Parliament consists of how many members?

- (a) 20
- (b) 25
- (c) 30
- (d) 35

Correct Answer: (c) 30

Latvia – In News

Recently, the Prime Minister of Latvia resigned following controversy related to stray Ukrainian drones entering Latvian territory, drawing attention to regional security concerns in Eastern Europe.



About Latvia

1. Latvia is a **Baltic nation** located in **Northeastern Europe**.
2. It lies along the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea and the **Gulf of Riga**.

Borders

Neighbouring Countries

1. **Estonia** – North
2. **Lithuania** – South
3. **Belarus** – Southeast
4. **Russia** – East

Capital

1. **Riga**

International Memberships

Latvia is a member of:

1. European Union
2. North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Geographical Features

Climate

1. Predominantly **temperate continental climate**

Highest Point

1. **Gaiziņkalns** – approximately **311.6 meters** high

Major Rivers

1. **Daugava**
2. **Lielupe**
3. **Venta**
4. **Salaca**
5. **Gauja** (longest river within Latvia)

Natural Resources

Latvia possesses resources such as:

1. Limestone
2. Gypsum
3. Dolomite
4. Peat
5. Construction materials

Strategic Importance

1. Latvia occupies a key position in the **Baltic region**

2. Important in discussions related to:

- **European security**
- **Russia–Ukraine conflict**
- **NATO's eastern flank**

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q7. Consider the following statements regarding Latvia:

1. Latvia is located on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea.
2. Latvia shares borders with Russia and Belarus.
3. Latvia is a member of NATO but not of the European Union.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

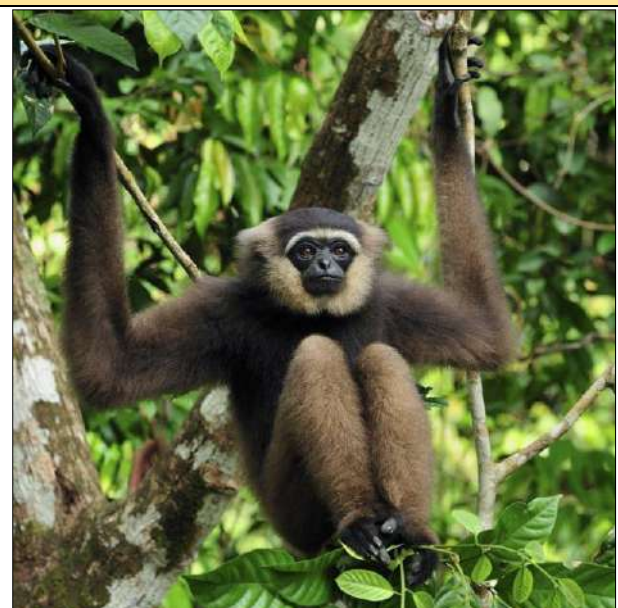
- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) 1 only

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct
2. Statement 2 – Correct
3. Statement 3 – Incorrect (Latvia is a member of both NATO and the EU)

Western Hoolock Gibbon – In News



In a first-of-its-kind conservation effort, a rare Western Hoolock Gibbon from the Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary in Assam successfully crossed specially constructed **canopy bridges** installed over a railway line passing through the sanctuary.

About Western Hoolock Gibbon

1. It is the **smallest and fastest among all ape species**.
2. India's only ape species and an important arboreal primate of Northeast India.

Habitat

1. Found in a variety of forests:
 - Moist deciduous forests
 - Evergreen forests
 - Sub-tropical and lowland forests
2. Highly **arboreal**, spending most of its life in trees.

Distribution

1. In India, it occurs mainly in the **Northeastern states**
2. Distribution is restricted:
 - South of the **Brahmaputra River**
 - East of the **Dibang River**

Outside India

1. Bangladesh
2. Myanmar

Characteristics

Arboreal Lifestyle

1. Moves through trees using **brachiation** (swinging with long arms)

Behaviour

1. **Diurnal** (active during daytime)
2. Lives in **small family groups**

Communication

1. Known for loud and melodious vocal calls used for:
 - Territory marking
 - Communication with family members

Lifespan

1. Approximately **25 years**

Threats

Major threats include:

1. **Habitat destruction**
2. Illegal logging
3. Fragmentation caused by:
 - Roads
 - Railways
 - Human encroachment

Conservation Status

1. **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
2. **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I

Significance of Canopy Bridges

1. Help arboreal species safely cross fragmented habitats
2. Reduce:

- Rail/road accidents
- Habitat isolation

3. Improve **wildlife connectivity and gene flow**

This initiative is an important example of **infrastructure-based wildlife conservation**.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q8. Consider the following statements regarding the Western Hoolock Gibbon:

1. It is the only ape species found in India.
2. It is primarily terrestrial and spends most of its time on the ground.
3. It is classified as "Endangered" under the IUCN Red List.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct
2. Statement 2 – Incorrect (it is highly arboreal)
3. Statement 3 – Correct

Captagon – In News

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), under **Operation RAGEPILL**, has recently dismantled an international drug trafficking network involved in the illegal trade of Captagon.

About Captagon

1. Captagon is a **highly addictive amphetamine-type stimulant drug**.
2. Originally developed as a **synthetic pharmaceutical compound** belonging to the **phenethylamine** family.



Composition

Captagon primarily contains **Fenethylline**, a synthetic compound made from:

1. **Amphetamine**
2. **Theophylline**

After consumption, Fenethylline breaks down in the body into stimulant substances that affect the **central nervous system**.

Historical Background

1. First manufactured in **Germany** during the **1960s–70s**
2. Initially prescribed for conditions such as:
 - Attention disorders
 - Hyperactivity
 - Narcolepsy
3. Commercial sale continued until the **1980s**, after which it was banned due to:
 - High addiction potential
 - Risk of abuse

Why is Captagon Dangerous?

1. Often referred to as **“poor man’s cocaine”**
2. Produces:
 - Increased alertness
 - Euphoria
 - Reduced fatigue

Health Risks

1. Severe addiction
2. Anxiety and aggression
3. Heart-related complications
4. Neurological and psychological disorders

Global Concern

1. Widely trafficked in parts of the:
 - **Middle East**
 - **North Africa**
2. Has reportedly become a major source of:
 - Illegal funding
 - Organized crime
 - Conflict financing in war-torn regions

Nordic Countries – In News



As part of his foreign visit, the Prime Minister is scheduled to travel to Norway for the **3rd India–Nordic Summit** and bilateral engagements with Nordic nations.

About Nordic Countries

Legal Status

1. Listed under the **UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances**
2. Illegal in most countries due to its harmful effects and abuse potential

Significance of Operation RAGEPILL

1. Highlights India’s efforts to combat:
 - International drug trafficking
 - Synthetic narcotics trade
2. Demonstrates increasing concern over:
 - Cross-border organized crime
 - Psychotropic substance abuse

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding Captagon:

1. Captagon is an amphetamine-type stimulant drug.
2. Its main active compound is Fenethylline.
3. Captagon was originally developed as an opioid painkiller.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct
2. Statement 2 – Correct
3. Statement 3 – Incorrect (it was developed as a stimulant drug, not an opioid painkiller)

The **Nordic Countries** or **Nordic Region** refer to a group of nations located in **Northern Europe**.

Member Countries

1. Denmark
2. Finland
3. Iceland
4. Norway
5. Sweden

Extended Nordic Region

The broader Nordic region also includes:

1. **Faroe Islands** and **Greenland** (autonomous territories of Denmark)
2. **Åland Islands** (autonomous region of Finland)

Nordic Region vs Scandinavia

The term **Nordic** is often confused with **Scandinavia**, but they are not exactly the same.

Scandinavia Usually Refers To:

1. Norway
2. Sweden

3. Denmark

Thus, Scandinavia is a **subset of the broader Nordic region**.

Key Facts

1. **Sweden** is the largest and most populous Nordic country
 2. **Iceland** has the smallest population
 3. **Denmark** is the smallest in area among them
- These countries consistently rank high in:

1. Education
2. Quality of life
3. Civil liberties
4. Economic competitiveness
5. Human development

Languages

North Germanic Languages

Most people speak:

1. Danish
2. Norwegian
3. Swedish
4. Faroese
5. Icelandic

Non-Germanic Languages

Also spoken:

1. Finnish
2. Greenlandic
3. Sami languages

Political Systems

1. **Denmark, Norway, and Sweden** are:
 - Constitutional monarchies
 - Parliamentary democracies
2. **Finland and Iceland** are:
 - Democratic republics

Unique Fact

1. Iceland's parliament, the **Althing**, is considered one of the **oldest parliamentary institutions in the world**.

Regional Cooperation

The Nordic nations cooperate closely through:

1. Nordic Council
2. Nordic Council of Ministers

EU & EEA Membership

1. Denmark, Sweden, and Finland are members of the:
 - European Union
2. Norway and Iceland are part of the:
 - **European Economic Area (EEA)**

Importance for India

1. Cooperation in:
 - Green technology
 - Renewable energy
 - Arctic research
 - Innovation and sustainability
2. India–Nordic Summit strengthens:
 - Economic ties
 - Climate cooperation
 - Strategic partnerships

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Nordic Countries:

1. The Nordic region includes Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.
2. Scandinavia generally refers only to Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.
3. All Nordic countries are members of the European Union.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 – Correct
2. Statement 2 – Correct
3. Statement 3 – Incorrect (Norway and Iceland are not EU members; they are part of the EEA)

Tungabhadra Dam in news over restoration and infrastructure upgrades

What is in News?

1. Tungabhadra Dam has recently been in news regarding restoration and replacement of crest gates.
2. The dam is an important multipurpose river valley project serving irrigation, hydropower generation, and flood control.
3. It is built across the Tungabhadra River, the largest tributary of the Krishna River.

Importance

Major River Valley Project

1. Important for irrigation and water supply in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Agricultural Significance

1. Supports irrigation in drought-prone regions, especially the Rayalaseema region.

Hydropower & Flood Control

1. Multipurpose dam aiding electricity generation and flood management.

Interstate Water Relevance

1. Linked to Krishna basin water management issues.

Engineering Importance

1. One of the few reservoirs built using a combination of mud and limestone.

About Tungabhadra Dam & River



Tungabhadra Dam

1. Location: **Hosapete, Ballari district, Karnataka**
2. Built across: **Tungabhadra River**
3. Height: ~49.5 m
4. Completed: **1953**
5. Joint project of: Karnataka & Andhra Pradesh

Tungabhadra River

1. Largest tributary of the **Krishna River**
2. Formed by confluence of **Tunga** and **Bhadra** rivers in Western Ghats
3. Flows through Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

MCQ

Q2. Tungabhadra River is a major tributary of which river?

- (a) Godavari
- (b) Kaveri
- (c) Krishna

(d) Narmada

Correct Answer: (c) Krishna

India and Norway elevate ties to Green Strategic Partnership

What is in News?

1. Narendra Modi held bilateral talks with Jonas Gahr Støre in Oslo.
2. Both countries agreed to elevate relations to a **Green Strategic Partnership**.
3. Discussions covered:
 - Trade and investment
 - Climate action and energy transition
 - Blue economy and ocean governance
 - Arctic cooperation
 - Renewable energy and green shipping
 - AI, digital public infrastructure, and innovation

Importance

Green Strategic Partnership

1. Strengthens cooperation in sustainability, clean energy, and climate action.

Blue Economy Cooperation

1. Focus on marine ecosystem protection, fisheries, and ocean governance.

Arctic Collaboration

1. Important for climate research, logistics, and emerging geopolitical significance of the Arctic region.

Renewable Energy & CCUS

1. Cooperation in **Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS)** and offshore wind energy.

Indo-Pacific & Multilateral Cooperation

1. Norway welcomed participation in Indo-Pacific initiatives and supported India's role in global governance reforms.

India-Norway Cooperation Areas

Key Sectors

1. Renewable Energy
2. Green Shipping
3. Blue Economy
4. Arctic Research
5. AI & Digital Public Infrastructure
6. Climate Technology

MCQ

Q3. India and Norway recently agreed to elevate their bilateral ties to which partnership?

- (a) Defence Strategic Partnership
- (b) Digital Economic Partnership
- (c) Green Strategic Partnership
- (d) Arctic Security Partnership

Correct Answer: (c) Green Strategic Partnership

Indian Railways approves ₹993 crore Arakkonam–Chengalpattu doubling project

What is in News?

- Indian Railways approved the **Arakkonam–Chengalpattu Doubling Project** worth around **₹993 crore**.
- The project covers about **68 km** in Tamil Nadu and is part of the **Chennai suburban rail network**.
- It aims to ease congestion, improve punctuality, and enhance passenger and freight movement.
- The corridor is important for transportation of commodities like:
 - Cement
 - Automobiles
 - Foodgrains
 - Iron & steel

Importance

Railway Infrastructure Modernization

- Strengthens rail connectivity and operational efficiency in a high-density corridor.

Urban Transport Improvement

- Enhances suburban rail services around Chennai, improving daily commuter mobility.

Freight & Industrial Connectivity

- Supports industrial and logistics hubs in Tamil Nadu.

Economic Development

- Improved rail infrastructure boosts trade, manufacturing, and regional growth.

Sustainable Transportation

- Railways provide an energy-efficient and environmentally friendly mode of transport.

About the Arakkonam–Chengalpattu Corridor



- State: **Tamil Nadu**
- Part of: **Southern Railway Zone**
- Connects key suburban and industrial regions around Chennai
- Doubling project expected to:
 - Reduce delays
 - Increase train frequency
 - Improve freight efficiency

MCQ

Q4. The Arakkonam–Chengalpattu railway doubling project is primarily associated with improving which city's suburban rail network?

- (a) Bengaluru
- (b) Hyderabad
- (c) Chennai
- (d) Kochi

Correct Answer: (c) Chennai

Fertiliser subsidy burden may rise sharply in FY 2026–27 amid global price pressures

Source: PTI / Department of Fertilisers

Key News:

1. India's fertiliser subsidy bill for FY 2026–27 is expected to increase by nearly **₹70,000 crore**, mainly due to rising global prices of urea and other fertilisers amid the West Asia crisis.
2. The total subsidy burden may rise to around **₹2.41 lakh crore**, compared to the current budget allocation of ₹1.71 lakh crore.
3. Despite global supply disruptions, the government stated that fertiliser availability for the upcoming kharif season remains comfortable.
4. India is diversifying import sources to ensure uninterrupted fertiliser supply and food security.
5. The issue reflects India's continued dependence on imported fertiliser inputs and global energy markets.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Expected Subsidy Increase:** ₹70,000 crore
2. **Projected Fertiliser Subsidy Bill:** ₹2.41 lakh crore
3. **Current Budget Allocation:** ₹1.71 lakh crore
4. **Current Fertiliser Stocks:** ~200.9 lakh tonnes

Static Introduction

Fertiliser Subsidy in India

1. Provided to:
 - Ensure affordable fertilisers for farmers
2. Major subsidised fertilisers:
 - Urea
 - DAP (Di-Ammonium Phosphate)
 - NPK fertilisers

Types of Fertiliser Subsidy

Type	Description
Urea Subsidy	Controlled pricing system
Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS)	Subsidy based on nutrient content

Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme

1. Introduced in:
 - 2010
2. Applies to:

- Phosphatic & Potassic (P&K) fertilisers
3. Objective:
 - Balanced nutrient usage

Why Fertiliser Prices Rise Globally

1. Natural gas price increase
2. Geopolitical conflicts
3. Supply-chain disruptions
4. Export restrictions by major producers

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding fertiliser subsidies in India:

1. Urea prices in India are largely controlled by the government.
2. Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) applies mainly to phosphatic and potassic fertilisers.
3. Rising global natural gas prices can increase fertiliser production costs.
4. India is fully self-sufficient in fertiliser raw materials.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Urea pricing remains government-controlled.
2. Statement 2: NBS covers P&K fertilisers.
3. Statement 3: Natural gas is a major fertiliser input.
4. Statement 4: India depends heavily on imports for fertiliser inputs.

Additional UPSC Value Addition

Major Fertiliser Producing/Exporting Countries

Fertiliser Input	Major Countries
Potash	Canada, Belarus
Phosphate	Morocco
Natural Gas-based Urea	Qatar, Russia

Challenges in Fertiliser Sector

1. Import dependence
2. Soil degradation due to urea overuse
3. Fiscal burden of subsidies

4. Imbalanced nutrient application

Government Initiatives

1. PM PRANAM Scheme
2. Nano Urea promotion
3. Neem-coated urea
4. Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for fertilisers

Mains Enrichment (GS Paper-III Angle)

Themes

1. Agricultural subsidies
2. Food security
3. Fiscal sustainability
4. Global commodity shocks

Way Forward

1. Promote balanced fertiliser use
2. Increase domestic production
3. Encourage organic and nano fertilisers
4. Reduce import dependence through diversification

India and Norway elevate ties to Green Strategic Partnership

Source: PIB (Prime Minister's Office)

Key News:

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral talks with Norwegian Prime Minister **Jonas Gahr Støre** during his visit to Oslo.
2. Both countries agreed to elevate India–Norway relations into a **Green Strategic Partnership**, focusing on sustainability and green growth.
3. Discussions covered areas such as **blue economy, climate action, Arctic cooperation, renewable energy, digitalisation, shipping, fisheries, and critical minerals**.
4. Norway expressed support for India's aspiration for **permanent membership in a reformed UN Security Council**.
5. The leaders also discussed expanding investments, innovation partnerships, and maritime cooperation.

Major Key Data / Facts:

1. **Partner Country:** Norway
2. **Key Partnership:** Green Strategic Partnership
3. **Focus Areas:** Blue economy, clean energy, Arctic research
4. **UNSC Support:** Norway backed India's permanent UNSC membership bid

Static Introduction

India–Norway Relations

1. Diplomatic relations established in:
 - 1947
2. Important cooperation areas:
 - Maritime economy
 - Renewable energy
 - Polar research

Green Strategic Partnership

1. Focuses on:
 - Sustainable development
 - Green technologies
 - Climate-resilient growth

Blue Economy

1. Sustainable use of:
 - Ocean resources for economic growth
2. Includes:
 - Fisheries
 - Shipping
 - Marine biotechnology
 - Offshore energy

Arctic Importance

1. Strategic due to:
 - Climate change
 - Shipping routes
 - Energy and mineral resources
2. India's Arctic Policy launched in:
 - 2022

UPSC Prelims Practice Question:

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding India–Norway relations and related concepts:

1. Norway has supported India's permanent membership in a reformed UN Security Council.
2. Blue Economy refers to the sustainable use of ocean resources.
3. India launched its Arctic Policy in 2022.
4. Norway is a member of the European Union (EU).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: Norway supports India's UNSC aspirations.
2. Statement 2: Blue Economy promotes sustainable ocean use.
3. Statement 3: India unveiled Arctic Policy in 2022.
4. Statement 4: Norway is not an EU member; it is part of the European Economic Area (EEA).

Additional UPSC Value Addition India's Arctic Policy – Key Pillars

Pillar	Focus
Science & Research	Polar studies
Climate Protection	Cryosphere monitoring
Economic Cooperation	Shipping & energy
Governance	International collaboration

Importance of Norway for India

1. Maritime technology
2. Offshore wind energy
3. Green shipping
4. Polar research cooperation

Related International Frameworks

1. Paris Climate Agreement
2. International Maritime Organization (IMO)
3. Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)

Mains Enrichment (GS Paper-II & III Angle)

Themes

1. Green diplomacy
2. Climate partnerships
3. Maritime cooperation
4. Sustainable development

Way Forward

1. Expand renewable investment partnerships
2. Deepen Arctic scientific collaboration
3. Strengthen clean shipping initiatives
4. Promote blue economy innovation

SHE-MART Initiative – Latest News

The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has initiated a nationwide roadmap for establishing **women-led rural marketing ecosystems** through the SHE-MART Initiative.



About SHE-MART Initiative

1. SHE-MART stands for **Self Help Entrepreneurs – Marketing Avenues for Rural Transformation**.
2. It is a Government of India initiative aimed at empowering **women entrepreneurs** through the creation of **community-owned retail outlets** managed by Self Help Group (SHG) federations.

Objectives

1. Strengthen market linkages for rural women entrepreneurs.
2. Improve visibility and branding of local products.
3. Strengthen SHG institutions and rural enterprise ecosystems.
4. Enable women-led enterprises to expand and scale sustainably.

Products Supported

The initiative primarily promotes **SHG-produced goods**, including:

1. Handicrafts
2. Textiles
3. Food products
4. Agricultural produce
5. Value-added processed products

Implementation

1. **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Rural Development
2. Implemented under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

Key Features of SHE-MART

Community-Owned Retail Outlets

1. Retail spaces owned and managed by women-led SHG federations, ensuring community participation and ownership.

Direct Market Access

1. Provides structured retail platforms enabling women entrepreneurs to access formal markets without intermediaries.

Economic Empowerment

1. Helps women move from income generation to enterprise ownership and participation in higher value chains.

Permanent Infrastructure

1. Establishes dedicated retail points for SHG-made goods along with value-addition support.

Social & Financial Empowerment

1. Enhances women's control over branding, markets, and sustainable income generation.

Source: DD News

MCQ

Q1. With reference to the SHE-MART Initiative, consider the following statements:

1. It is implemented under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission.
2. The initiative aims to establish community-owned retail outlets for SHG-made products.
3. It is implemented by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

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

(Statement 3 is incorrect because the initiative is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development.)

International Booker Prize – Latest News

The book “Taiwan Travelogue” by Yáng Shuāng-zǐ, translated by Lin King, has won the 2026 International Booker Prize.

About the International Booker Prize

1. An internationally recognised literary award presented **annually**.
2. Established in **2005** as the **Man Booker International Prize**.
3. Honours the best works of **translated fiction** published in English in the **United Kingdom and/or Ireland**.

Key Features

1. Celebrates both **authors and translators**.
2. Prize money of **£50,000** is equally shared between the writer and translator.
3. Shortlisted authors and translators each receive **£2,500**.
4. Encourages wider readership of high-quality translated literature from around the world.

Indian Winners of the International Booker Prize

Tomb of Sand (2022)

1. Written by Geetanjali Shree
2. Translated by Daisy Rockwell
3. First Hindi-language work to win the prize.

Heart Lamp (2025)

1. Written by Banu Mushtaq
2. Translated by Deepa Bhashti
3. First Kannada-language work to receive the award.

Source: The Hindu (TH)

MCQ

Q2. With reference to the International Booker Prize, consider the following statements:

1. It is awarded annually for translated fiction published in English.
2. The prize money is shared equally between the author and translator.
3. It was originally established as the Booker Prize in 1950.

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

(Statement 3 is incorrect. It was established in 2005 as the Man Booker International Prize.)

Trachischium lalremsangai – Latest News

Scientists have recently identified a **new species of burrowing snake**, named **Trachischium lalremsangai**, from Mizoram near the India–Myanmar border.

About Trachischium lalremsangai

1. A newly discovered species of **burrowing snake**.
2. Discovered in Murlen National Park, located within the **Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot**.
3. Named in honour of **Dr. Lalremsanga** for his contributions to **herpetology** (study of reptiles and amphibians), particularly in Northeast India.

Key Characteristics

1. Smooth, iridescent scales
2. Brown body with a white-speckled underside
3. Distinct arrangement of head scales

About Murlen National Park

Location

1. Situated in the **Champhai district of Mizoram** near the **India–Myanmar border**.
2. Lies within the **Mizo Hills**, part of the **Patkai Range**.

Altitude & Climate

1. Elevation ranges from **400 m to 1,900 m above sea level**.
2. Experiences a **subtropical climate** with heavy rainfall from May to September.

Vegetation and Biodiversity

Vegetation Types

The park supports six major vegetation categories:

1. Tropical semi-evergreen forests
2. Subtropical broadleaf forests
3. Submontane forests
4. Bamboo forests
5. Grasslands
6. Cliff vegetation

Flora

1. Home to:
 - Around **35 species of medicinal plants**
 - More than **150 orchid species**
2. Dense growth of bamboo, rhododendrons, and flowering trees.

Fauna

1. Mammals include:

- Bengal tiger
- Leopard
- Himalayan black bear
- Hoolock gibbon

2. Rich bird diversity with over 150 bird species, including:

- Mrs Hume's pheasant
- Kalij pheasant

Source: HUB

MCQ

- Q3. With reference to Trachischium lalremsangai, consider the following statements:**

1. It is a newly discovered species of burrowing snake.
2. It was discovered in Murlen National Park of Mizoram.
3. Murlen National Park lies within the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot.

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

(Statement 3 is incorrect because Murlen National Park lies within the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot.)

Ayush Anudan Portal – Latest News



The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ministry of Ayush recently launched the **Ayush Anudan Portal** to improve transparency and efficiency in grant management under the Ministry's schemes.

About Ayush Anudan Portal

1. Developed by the **Ministry of Ayush** under the **Ayush Grid Initiative**.
2. A digital platform created for the **submission, processing, approval, and monitoring of funding proposals** under various Central Sector Schemes of the Ministry.

Schemes Covered

The portal supports proposals related to:

1. Ayurgyan
2. Ayurswasthya
3. Conservation, Development and Sustainable Management of Medicinal Plants
4. International Cooperation
5. Promotion of Information, Education and Communication (IEC)

Objectives of the Portal

1. Ensure **100% transparency** in grant management.
2. Improve efficiency and accountability.
3. Provide easier digital access for applicants and institutions.

Key Features

Scheme-wise Application Management

1. Enables categorisation, processing, and monitoring of applications according to the requirements of different schemes.

Real-Time Tracking

1. Applicants and officials can track proposal status at every stage.

Integrated Digital Platform

1. Accessible through the **My Ayush Integrated Services Portal (MAISP)**, which acts as the Ministry's single-window digital platform.

NGO Darpan Integration

1. Integrated with the NGO Darpan Portal for streamlined verification and coordination.

Source: PIB

MCQ

Q4. With reference to the Ayush Anudan Portal, consider the following statements:

1. It has been developed under the Ayush Grid Initiative.
2. It is designed for digital submission and monitoring of funding proposals under Central Sector Schemes of the Ministry of Ayush.
3. It functions under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: A. 1 and 2 only

(Statement 3 is incorrect because the portal is managed by the Ministry of Ayush.)

PM SHRI Scheme – Latest News

The Ministry of Education recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of West Bengal for implementation of the **PM SHRI Schools initiative** in the state.



About PM SHRI Scheme

1. **PM SHRI** stands for **Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India**.
2. It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** launched under the guidance of the Ministry of Education.
3. The scheme aims to transform school education by developing over **14,500 model schools** across

the country in line with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020).

Administration

The schools are managed by:

1. Central Government
2. State and Union Territory Governments
3. Local bodies
4. Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS)
5. Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS)

Key Features of PM SHRI Schools

Enhanced Infrastructure

1. Modern laboratories, libraries, and art rooms.

Technology Integration

1. Smart classrooms and digital learning tools.

Holistic Learning

1. Play-based and activity-oriented learning with flexible teaching methods.

School Quality Assessment Framework (SQAF)

1. Regular evaluation to maintain quality standards.

Duration

1. Implemented for 5 years (2022–23 to 2026–27).

Funding Pattern

General States & UTs with Legislature

1. Centre–State sharing ratio: **60:40**

Northeastern & Himalayan States (including J&K)

1. Funding ratio: **90:10**

Union Territories without Legislature

1. **100% Central funding**

Source: HT

MCQ

Q5. With reference to the PM SHRI Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to develop over 14,500 model schools across India.
2. It is implemented in line with the National Education Policy 2020.
3. Union Territories without legislature receive funding in a 60:40 ratio under the scheme.

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

(Statement 3 is incorrect because Union Territories without legislature receive 100% Central funding.)

Matua Community – Latest News



Many members of the **Matua community**, who migrated from present-day Bangladesh to India during different periods, reportedly lack sufficient documentation required for citizenship applications under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

About the Matua Community

1. The Matua community is a **marginalised Hindu sect** with roots in the 19th century.
2. It has a significant socio-religious presence in the **Bengal region**, especially in **Bangladesh and West Bengal**.

Origin

1. Founded by Harichand Thakur in the 1860s.
2. Emerged as a reform movement against **caste discrimination** within Hindu society.

Religious Beliefs and Teachings

1. Followers mainly belong to the **Namashudra** community.
2. Emphasises:
 - Social equality
 - Human dignity
 - Empowerment through education and religious reform

Key Features of the Faith

1. Monotheistic in nature.
2. Does not follow elaborate Vedic rituals.
3. Singing devotional hymns is central to worship and meditation.
4. Believes salvation can be achieved through faith and devotion.

5. Rejects distinctions based on caste, creed, or class.

Sacred Text

1. **Shrishriharililamrita** is regarded as an important religious scripture of the Matua faith.

Historical Significance

1. The Partition of Bengal in 1947 led to major socio-political changes for the community.
2. Large numbers migrated to India to escape religious and political persecution, while many remained in present-day Bangladesh.
3. Today, the Matuas constitute the **second-largest Scheduled Caste population in West Bengal**.

Source: The Hindu (TH)

MCQ

Q6. With reference to the Matua Community, consider the following statements:

1. The Matua movement was founded by Harichand Thakur.
2. The community primarily belongs to the Namashudra caste group.
3. The Matua sect strongly follows elaborate Vedic rituals and caste hierarchy.

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

(Statement 3 is incorrect because the Matua faith rejects caste distinctions and does not emphasise elaborate Vedic rituals.)

National One Health Mission – Latest News

The **Fifth Meeting of the Scientific Steering Committee** of the **National One Health Mission** was recently held in New Delhi to review progress and strengthen coordination among stakeholders.

About National One Health Mission

1. Launched in **2024**.
2. Based on a **collaborative and multidisciplinary approach** integrating:
 - Human health
 - Animal health
 - Environmental health

Objective

1. To recognise the interconnectedness of these sectors and improve overall public health outcomes.
2. Aims to strengthen **pandemic preparedness**, integrated disease surveillance, and coordinated response systems.

Nodal Agency

1. Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) under the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA).

Governance Structure

The Mission follows a **two-tier governance mechanism**:

Executive Committee

1. Chaired by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
2. Principal Scientific Adviser serves as Vice-Chair.
3. Member (Health), NITI Aayog is a permanent invitee.
4. Includes Secretaries of stakeholder departments and representatives of states.

Functions

1. Provides overall policy guidance for implementation of the mission.

Scientific Steering Committee

1. Chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA).
2. Includes Secretaries/Directors General of stakeholder departments and state representatives.

Functions

1. Provides scientific direction, oversight, and guidance for the mission.

Significance of the Mission

1. Encourages integrated surveillance of zoonotic and emerging diseases.
2. Strengthens coordination among health, veterinary, and environmental sectors.
3. Enhances India's preparedness against future pandemics and public health emergencies.

Source: News on Air

MCQ

Q7. With reference to the National One Health Mission, consider the following statements:

1. It adopts an integrated approach connecting human, animal, and environmental health sectors.
2. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is the nodal agency for the mission.
3. The mission is implemented exclusively by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

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

(Statement 3 is incorrect because the mission involves multiple sectors and is not implemented exclusively by the Environment Ministry.)

Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) – Latest News

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently declared the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda a **Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)**.

About Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

1. A formal emergency declaration issued by the WHO in response to a **serious global public health threat**.
2. Represents the **highest level of global health alert** under the WHO framework.
3. Declared when a disease outbreak or health event poses a risk of **international spread** and requires coordinated global action.

Key Features

1. PHEIC declarations operate under the International Health Regulations (IHR).
2. Requires countries to respond rapidly and cooperate internationally to contain the crisis.
3. Decisions are made by the **IHR Emergency Committee**, a panel of international experts.
4. The declaration is reviewed every **three months** and extended if necessary.

5. PHEIC may also be declared for public health hazards involving:
 - Chemical agents
 - Radioactive materials
 - Other non-infectious threats

About the International Health Regulations (IHR)

1. Adopted by the World Health Assembly in **1969** to prevent the spread of diseases across borders.
2. Revised significantly after the **2002–2004 SARS outbreak**.
3. The updated **IHR (2005)** was adopted at the **58th World Health Assembly** in May 2005.
4. It is an international legal agreement involving **196 countries**.
5. WHO serves as the coordinating body for implementation of the regulations.

Significance of PHEIC

1. Enhances international coordination during health crises.
2. Facilitates information sharing, surveillance, and emergency response.
3. Helps mobilise global funding, technical expertise, and medical support.

Source: United Nations (UN)

MCQ

Q8. With reference to a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), consider the following statements:

1. It is the highest level of global health alert issued by the WHO.
2. PHEIC declarations are governed under the International Health Regulations (IHR).
3. A PHEIC can only be declared for infectious disease outbreaks.

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

(Statement 3 is incorrect because PHEIC can also be declared for chemical or radioactive public health hazards.)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired the 26th Central

Zonal Council meeting in Bastar,

NEWS

Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired the 26th Central Zonal Council meeting in Bastar, highlighting Bastar's Naxal-free status, cooperative federalism, cyber security reforms, and faster criminal justice delivery.

KEY FACTS

- 26th meeting of the **Central Zonal Council (CZC)** held in **Bastar, Chhattisgarh**
- Chaired by **Union Home Minister Amit Shah**
- Bastar region declared **Naxal-free**
- Emphasis on **Whole-of-Government Approach** against Left Wing Extremism
- Goal to bring former Naxal regions at par with national development
- Region also became **dispute-free** with no pending inter-state or Centre-state disputes
- Zonal Councils described as platforms for **dialogue and cooperative federalism**
- Meetings have significantly increased compared to 2004–2014
- States urged to fight:
 - Malnutrition
 - School dropouts
 - Adulteration
 - Crimes under POCSO
- High Courts asked to establish **special courts** for old pending cases
- Directions issued to strengthen **Cyber Helpline 1930 call centres**
- Target set for disposal of criminal cases within **three years before 2029**

Static Information

Zonal Councils

- Established under the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**
- Aim: Promote **cooperative federalism** and inter-state coordination
- Five Zonal Councils:
 - Northern
 - Southern
 - Eastern
 - Western
 - Central

- Union Home Minister acts as the **Chairman**
- Permanent committee includes Chief Secretaries of member states

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

Left Wing Extremism (LWE)

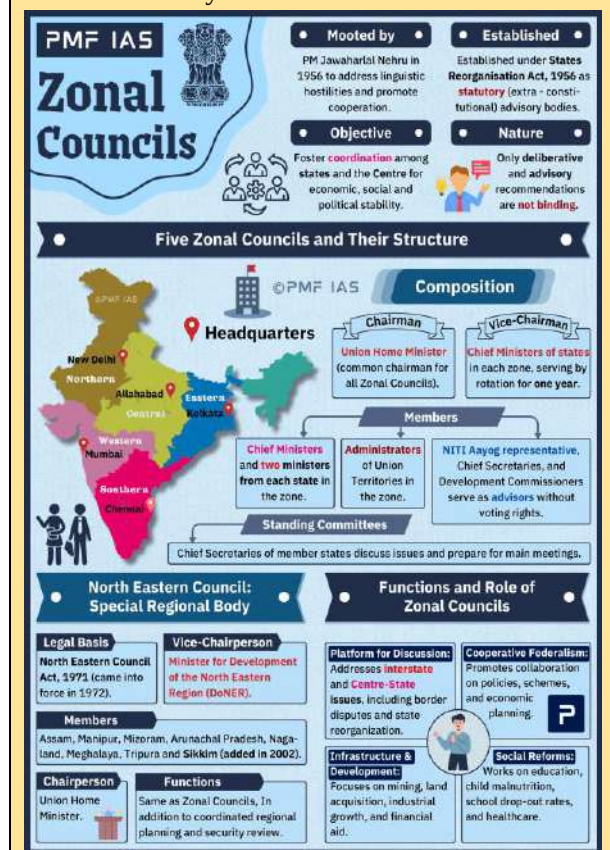
- LWE affected areas are monitored under the **Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme**
- Government implements the **National Policy and Action Plan** to address LWE

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs

Cyber Crime Helpline 1930

- National helpline for reporting cyber financial frauds
- Operated under the **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)**

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs



Prelims Practice Question

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding Zonal Councils in India:

- Zonal Councils were established under the States Reorganisation Act, 1956.
- The Prime Minister is the ex-officio Chairman of all Zonal Councils.

3. Zonal Councils are statutory bodies aimed at promoting cooperative federalism.

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: A

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Finland's Prime Minister during the 3rd India-Nordic Summit,

NEWS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Finland's Prime Minister during the 3rd India-Nordic Summit, focusing on digitalization, sustainability, trade expansion, emerging technologies, and strengthening India-Finland strategic partnership.

KEY FACTS

1. PM Narendra Modi met Finnish PM **Petteri Orpo** in Oslo
2. Meeting held on sidelines of the **3rd India-Nordic Summit**
3. India-Finland ties elevated to **Strategic Partnership**
4. Focus areas of cooperation:
 - Digitalization
 - Sustainability
 - AI and 5G/6G
 - Quantum technologies
 - Space cooperation
 - Renewable energy
 - Circular economy
 - Innovation and education
5. Both nations aim to **double bilateral trade by 2030**
6. Growing presence of technology companies in each other's markets
7. Finland appreciated contribution of Indian professionals in its technology sector
8. India and Finland to jointly host **World Circular Economic Forum 2026** in Gandhinagar, Gujarat
9. Leaders discussed:
 - India-EU Strategic Partnership

- India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
- Regional and global cooperation

Static Information

India-Nordic Summit

1. Initiative launched in **2018**
2. Brings together India and Nordic countries:
 - Denmark
 - Finland
 - Iceland
 - Norway
 - Sweden
3. Focus on:
 - Green transition
 - Innovation
 - Sustainable development
 - Arctic cooperation

Source: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)

Finland

1. Capital: Helsinki
2. Currency: Euro
3. Member of:
 - European Union
 - NATO (joined in 2023)

Source: European Union & NATO

Circular Economy

1. Economic model focused on:
 - Reuse
 - Recycling
 - Waste minimization
 - Sustainable production and consumption

Source: UNEP

Prelims Practice Question

Q10. Consider the following statements regarding the India-Nordic Summit:

1. The summit includes India and five Nordic countries.
2. Finland is a member of the European Union and NATO.
3. The India-Nordic Summit primarily focuses only on defence cooperation.

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

Exercise PRAGATI 2026: Multilateral Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise Begins at Umroi, Meghalaya

Source: PIB

Key News

1. The multinational **Exercise PRAGATI 2026** commenced at **Umroi, Meghalaya**, focusing on **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** operations.
2. The exercise brings together armed forces personnel from **India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.**
3. It aims to enhance **interoperability, coordination, and regional cooperation** in responding to natural disasters and humanitarian crises.
4. Participants will undertake joint planning, field training exercises, disaster response simulations, medical assistance operations, and search-and-rescue missions.
5. The exercise reinforces India's commitment to regional security cooperation under its **Neighbourhood First** and **Act East Policy** frameworks.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **Venue:** Umroi Military Station, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya
2. **Type of Exercise:** Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)
3. **Participating Nations:** 15 countries from South and Southeast Asia
4. **Strategic Region:** Indo-Pacific and Bay of Bengal disaster-response architecture

Static Introduction: Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)

What is HADR?

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) refers to civilian and military efforts aimed at saving

lives, reducing suffering, and restoring normalcy during natural or man-made disasters.

It includes:

1. Search and Rescue (SAR)
2. Emergency Medical Assistance
3. Relief Distribution
4. Evacuation Operations
5. Infrastructure Restoration
6. Logistics Support

Why HADR Exercises are Important?

Disaster Vulnerability in South & Southeast Asia

The region is highly vulnerable to:

1. Earthquakes
2. Cyclones
3. Tsunamis
4. Floods
5. Landslides
6. Volcanic eruptions

Benefits of Joint Exercises

1. Faster disaster response.
2. Better interoperability among armed forces.
3. Capacity building.
4. Information sharing.
5. Enhanced regional resilience.

India's Role in Regional Disaster Diplomacy

India has emerged as a **first responder** in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Major HADR Operations Conducted by India

Operation	Event
Operation Maitri (2015)	Nepal Earthquake
Operation Dost (2023)	Türkiye–Syria Earthquake
Operation Karuna (2023)	Cyclone Mocha (Myanmar)
Operation Madad	Flood relief operations
SAGAR Mission	Maritime humanitarian assistance

Neighbourhood First Policy

Objective

To strengthen relations with India's immediate neighbours through:

1. Development cooperation
2. Connectivity
3. Security partnership
4. Disaster response collaboration

Importance

1. Regional stability
2. Strategic trust-building
3. Faster crisis response

Act East Policy

Launched

1. Upgraded from Look East Policy in **2014**

Focus Areas

1. Economic connectivity
2. Strategic cooperation
3. Maritime security
4. Cultural linkages
5. ASEAN engagement

Significance for PRAGATI

Most participating countries belong to:

1. ASEAN region
2. Bay of Bengal region
3. Indo-Pacific strategic space

Disaster Management Framework in India

Constitutional Position

1. Disaster management is primarily a State subject but coordinated nationally.

Key Institution

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

1. Established under:
 - Disaster Management Act, 2005
2. Chairperson:
 - Prime Minister of India

Other Institutions

1. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)
2. National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)
3. State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs)

UPSC Value Addition

ASEAN Members Participating

1. Indonesia
2. Malaysia
3. Philippines
4. Singapore
5. Thailand
6. Vietnam
7. Cambodia
8. Laos
9. Myanmar

Importance of ASEAN

1. Regional economic integration.

2. Maritime security cooperation.
3. Disaster management collaboration.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercises:

1. HADR exercises aim to improve coordination and interoperability among participating countries during disaster situations.
2. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was established under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
3. ASEAN is a regional grouping consisting only of South Asian countries.
4. India has conducted Operation Maitri and Operation Dost as humanitarian assistance missions.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer:

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1 – Correct

HADR exercises are designed to strengthen coordination, preparedness and interoperability during disasters.

2. Statement 2 – Correct

NDMA was established under the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**.

3. Statement 3 – Incorrect

ASEAN consists of **Southeast Asian countries**, not South Asian countries.

4. Statement 4 – Correct

Operation Maitri (Nepal Earthquake) and **Operation Dost (Türkiye–Syria Earthquake)** were major Indian humanitarian relief missions.

Mains Enrichment (GS Paper II & III)

Possible UPSC Mains Question

Q2. “Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) diplomacy has emerged as an important instrument of India's regional

outreach and strategic influence.” Examine with suitable examples. (250 words)

India to Host 68th Session of Asian Productivity Organization (APO) Governing Body in New Delhi

Source: PIB

Key News

1. India will host the **68th Session of the Governing Body of the Asian Productivity Organization (APO)** in New Delhi from 20–22 May 2026.
2. Union Minister for Commerce and Industry **Piyush Goyal** will attend the inaugural session, which will bring together productivity leaders, policymakers, and experts from APO member countries.
3. The meeting will review APO’s annual performance, approve future programmes, and discuss strategies to enhance productivity, innovation, and sustainable economic growth across Asia-Pacific economies.
4. India will also confer the **APO National Awards for Productivity Advocates and Technical Experts**, recognizing contributions to productivity enhancement.
5. The event reinforces India’s growing role in promoting industrial competitiveness, innovation-led growth, and regional economic cooperation.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **Established:** 1961
2. **Headquarters:** Tokyo, Japan
3. **Current Membership:** 21 Asia-Pacific economies
4. **India’s Nodal Agency:** National Productivity Council (NPC)

Static Introduction: Asian Productivity Organization (APO)

The **Asian Productivity Organization (APO)** is an intergovernmental organization established to improve productivity and competitiveness among member economies in the Asia-Pacific region through

policy support, capacity building, research, innovation, and knowledge sharing.

India is a founding member and actively participates through the **National Productivity Council (NPC)** under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

Objectives of APO

Major Goals

1. Enhance productivity and competitiveness.
2. Promote sustainable economic growth.
3. Encourage innovation and technology adoption.
4. Strengthen human resource development.
5. Facilitate regional cooperation and knowledge exchange.

What is Productivity?

Definition

Productivity refers to the efficiency with which inputs such as labour, capital, land, and technology are converted into output.

Formula

$$\text{Productivity} = \frac{\text{Output}}{\text{Input}}$$

Higher productivity generally leads to:

1. Economic growth
2. Higher incomes
3. Improved competitiveness
4. Better standards of living

National Productivity Council (NPC)

Established

1. 1958

Ministry

1. DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry

Functions

1. Productivity training
2. Industrial consultancy
3. Capacity building
4. Quality management promotion
5. Lean manufacturing support

India and Productivity Enhancement

Government Initiatives

1. Make in India
2. PM Gati Shakti
3. National Logistics Policy
4. Startup India
5. Digital India
6. Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme

Importance

1. Improves manufacturing competitiveness.
2. Enhances export potential.
3. Supports employment generation.
4. Promotes technological modernization.

Why Productivity Matters for India?

Economic Benefits

Area	Impact
Manufacturing	Lower costs & higher efficiency
Agriculture	Improved output per hectare
Services	Better quality and competitiveness
Exports	Greater global market share
GDP Growth	Sustained long-term growth

UPSC Relevance

GS Paper III

1. Industrial Growth
2. Manufacturing Competitiveness
3. Technology & Innovation
4. Economic Development

GS Paper II

1. International Organizations
2. Regional Cooperation
3. Multilateral Economic Institutions

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Asian Productivity Organization (APO):

1. The Asian Productivity Organization is an intergovernmental organization headquartered in Tokyo, Japan.
2. India is a founding member of the APO.
3. In India, the National Productivity Council acts as the nodal institution for APO-related activities.
4. APO membership is restricted only to ASEAN countries.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. **Statement 1 – Correct**

APO is headquartered in **Tokyo, Japan.**

2. **Statement 2 – Correct**

India is one of the founding members of APO.

3. **Statement 3 – Correct**

The **National Productivity Council (NPC)** is India's nodal agency for APO programmes.

4. **Statement 4 – Incorrect**

APO membership is **not limited to ASEAN countries**; it includes multiple Asia-Pacific economies such as India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Fiji, and others.

Mains Enrichment (GS Paper III – Economy)

Possible UPSC Mains Question

Q4. “Productivity improvement is essential for achieving sustainable economic growth and global competitiveness.” Discuss the role of institutions such as the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) and National Productivity Council (NPC) in this regard. (250 words)

Core Sector Growth Slows to 1.7% in April 2026: Mixed Performance Across Eight Infrastructure Industries

Source: PIB

Key News

1. The combined output of India's **Eight Core Industries** registered a growth of **1.7% in April 2026** compared to April 2025, indicating moderation in industrial momentum.
2. Growth was supported by sectors such as **cement, steel, electricity and natural gas**, while coal, crude oil, refinery products and fertilizers recorded contraction.
3. The Eight Core Industries collectively account for **40.27% of the weight in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** and serve as a leading indicator of industrial activity.
4. The slowdown reflects uneven demand conditions and supply-side pressures in key infrastructure sectors.

- Core sector performance remains crucial for assessing the trajectory of manufacturing growth, investment activity and overall economic expansion.

Major Key Data / Facts

Core Industry	Weight in ICI (%)
Refinery Products	28.04
Electricity	19.85
Steel	17.92
Coal	10.33
Crude Oil	8.98
Natural Gas	6.88
Cement	5.37
Fertilizers	2.63

Sector-wise Growth in April 2026

- Cement:** +6.7%
- Steel:** +3.0%
- Electricity:** +1.0%
- Natural Gas:** +0.4%
- Coal:** -0.5%
- Crude Oil:** -2.8%
- Refinery Products:** -4.5%
- Fertilizers:** -4.2%

Static Introduction: Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)

The **Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)** measures the production performance of eight infrastructure sectors that form the backbone of India's industrial economy.

The index is released monthly by the **Office of Economic Adviser (OEA), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**

Which are the Eight Core Industries?

- Coal
- Crude Oil
- Natural Gas
- Refinery Products
- Fertilizers
- Steel
- Cement
- Electricity

Why is the Core Sector Important?

Economic Significance

- Supplies inputs to manufacturing industries.

- Indicates industrial demand trends.
- Reflects infrastructure development.
- Helps estimate future IIP growth.
- Influences GDP growth projections.

UPSC Fact

The Eight Core Industries together account for **40.27% weight in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).**

Difference Between ICI and IIP

Parameter	ICI	IIP
Coverage	8 Core Sectors	Entire Industrial Sector
Weight	40.27% of IIP	Comprehensive Index
Release Agency	OEA (DPIIT)	NSO
Nature	Leading Indicator	Broad Industrial Indicator

Sector-wise Importance

Coal

- Largest source of electricity generation.
- Important for thermal power plants.

Crude Oil

- Critical for energy security.
- Influences inflation and current account balance.

Natural Gas

- Used in fertilizers, power and city gas distribution.

Steel

- Backbone of infrastructure and manufacturing.

Cement

- Indicator of construction activity.

Electricity

- Reflects industrial and household demand.

Fertilizers

- Essential for agricultural productivity.

Refinery Products

- Crucial for transportation and industrial fuel demand.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI):

- The Index of Eight Core Industries is released by the Office of Economic Adviser under DPIIT.
- Refinery products carry the highest weight among the eight core industries.

3. The Eight Core Industries together account for more than 40% weight in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

4. Information Technology services are included among the Eight Core Industries.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

(b) 1 and 4 only

(c) 2, 3 and 4 only

(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. **Statement 1 – Correct**

ICI is released by the **Office of Economic Adviser (OEA), DPIIT**.

2. **Statement 2 – Correct**

Refinery Products carry the highest weight (28.04%).

3. **Statement 3 – Correct**

The eight industries account for **40.27% of IIP weight**.

4. **Statement 4 – Incorrect**

IT services are **not included** in the Eight Core Industries.

Mains Enrichment (GS Paper III – Economy & Infrastructure)

Possible UPSC Mains Question

Q6. “The performance of the Eight Core Industries acts as a barometer of India's industrial and infrastructure growth.” Discuss its significance for economic policymaking and growth assessment. (250 words)

Modified UDAN Scheme: Government Plans 100 New Airports and 200 Heliports to Strengthen Regional Air Connectivity

Source: PIB

Key News

1. Union Civil Aviation Minister **K. Ram Mohan Naidu** announced that the government plans to develop **100 new airports and 200 heliports**

under the **Modified UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme**.

2. The initiative aims to deepen regional air connectivity, improve accessibility to remote and aspirational districts, and strengthen India's aviation ecosystem.
3. The modified scheme will focus on **smaller cities, hilly regions, islands, and underserved areas**, ensuring affordable air travel.
4. The government seeks to transform India into a global aviation hub while promoting tourism, investment, trade, and employment generation.
5. The announcement reflects India's commitment to achieving inclusive infrastructure-led growth under the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **Operational Airports in India (2025–26):** More than 160 airports, heliports and water aerodromes.
2. **UDAN Launch Year:** 2016 (Operational from 2017).
3. **Target Beneficiaries:** Tier-II, Tier-III cities and remote regions.
4. **Funding Mechanism:** Viability Gap Funding (VGF) for selected regional routes.

Static Introduction: UDAN Scheme

What is UDAN?

UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) is a flagship regional connectivity scheme launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation to make air travel affordable and accessible for ordinary citizens.

The scheme seeks to connect **unserved and underserved airports** through market-based mechanisms and financial support to airlines.

Objectives of UDAN

1. Affordable air travel for common citizens.
2. Balanced regional development.
3. Connectivity to remote and difficult terrains.
4. Promotion of tourism and local economies.
5. Enhancement of economic integration.
6. Development of aviation infrastructure.

Key Features of UDAN

Viability Gap Funding (VGF)

1. Financial support provided to airlines.
2. Makes operations commercially viable on low-demand routes.

Fare Caps

1. Airfares on selected routes are regulated to remain affordable.

Regional Connectivity

1. Focus on:
 - North-East India
 - Himalayan States
 - Islands
 - Aspirational districts
 - Tribal regions

Infrastructure Development

Includes:

1. Airports
2. Heliports
3. Water aerodromes
4. Advanced landing grounds

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q7. Consider the following statements regarding the UDAN Scheme:

1. UDAN was launched to improve regional air connectivity by connecting unserved and underserved airports.
2. Viability Gap Funding (VGF) is provided under the scheme to make regional routes commercially viable.
3. The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
4. UDAN is limited only to fixed-wing aircraft operations and does not cover heliports or water aerodromes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. **Statement 1 – Correct**
2. UDAN aims to connect unserved and underserved airports across India.
3. **Statement 2 – Correct**
4. Viability Gap Funding (VGF) supports airlines operating on regional routes.
5. **Statement 3 – Correct**
6. The scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

7. Statement 4 – Incorrect

8. UDAN covers **airports, heliports and water aerodromes**, not merely fixed-wing aircraft operations.

Mains Enrichment (GS Paper III – Infrastructure)

Possible UPSC Mains Question

Q8. “Regional connectivity is a critical component of inclusive economic development.” Examine the role of the UDAN Scheme in achieving balanced regional growth in India. (250 words)

Rules for Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (VBRY) to be notified soon

Source: *The Hindu*

Key News

1. The Union Government is set to notify the rules for the **Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (VBRY)**, the new rural employment programme replacing the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** framework.
2. The Ministry of Rural Development has finalized the implementation framework after consultations with States.
3. The rules will clarify crucial aspects such as fund allocation among States, administrative structures, and financial norms.
4. Twenty-five States have already completed administrative and budgetary preparations for implementation.
5. New job cards with **facial-recognition-enabled authentication** are proposed to improve transparency and reduce leakages.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **Scheme:** Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (VBRY)
2. **Replaces:** Existing MGNREGA operational framework
3. **States Prepared:** 25 States
4. **New Feature:** Facial-recognition-based job cards

Static Introduction: Rural Employment Programmes in India

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005

1. Enacted in:
 - **2005**
2. Objective:
 - Provide **100 days of guaranteed wage employment** annually to rural households.
3. Rights-based legislation ensuring livelihood security.

Constitutional Basis

MGNREGA supports:

1. **Article 39(a)** – Adequate means of livelihood.
2. **Article 41** – Right to work, education, and public assistance.
3. **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs).**

Importance of Rural Employment Schemes

1. Reduction of rural poverty.
2. Creation of durable rural assets.
3. Prevention of distress migration.
4. Strengthening rural purchasing power.

Why Reforms Were Considered?

1. Delays in wage payments.
2. Ghost beneficiaries and leakages.
3. Need for digital monitoring.
4. Better asset creation and outcome measurement.
5. Integration with Digital India initiatives.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question (Statement-Based)

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding rural employment programmes in India:

1. MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee of wage employment to rural households.
2. The programme is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development.
3. Social audit is one of the accountability mechanisms under MGNREGA.
4. MGNREGA guarantees employment to every adult citizen of India irrespective of residence.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1: MGNREGA is a rights-based employment guarantee programme.
2. Statement 2: Implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development.
3. Statement 3: Social audit is a statutory transparency mechanism.
4. Statement 4: Employment guarantee is available only to **adult members of rural households willing to do unskilled manual work**, not to every citizen irrespective of residence.

UPSC Mains Question

Q10. “Rural employment programmes are not merely welfare schemes but instruments of livelihood security and rural asset creation.” Examine in the context of recent reforms proposed under the Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana. (250 words).

RBI Revives Market Intervention Strategy to Stabilise Rupee Amid Depreciation Pressures

Source: Reuters | Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Intervention in Foreign Exchange Market

Key News

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has reportedly resumed a familiar intervention strategy to curb excessive depreciation of the Indian rupee against the U.S. dollar.

RBI intervened in the foreign exchange market when the rupee weakened beyond a specific threshold, helping stabilize the currency.

1. The intervention followed global financial market volatility triggered by movements in the U.S. dollar and international capital flows.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **Foreign Exchange Reserves of India:** Over **US\$ 650 billion** (among the world's largest reserve holdings).
2. **Currency Management Authority:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
3. **Exchange Rate Regime:** Managed Float System.

- 4. India's Major Reserve Assets:** Foreign Currency Assets (FCA), Gold Reserves, SDRs and Reserve Tranche Position (RTP) in IMF.

Static Introduction:

What is the Foreign Exchange (Forex) Market?

The Foreign Exchange Market is a global marketplace where currencies are bought and sold. It determines the exchange rate between different currencies and facilitates international trade, investment and capital flows.

India follows a **market-determined exchange rate system with managed intervention by RBI**, commonly known as a **Managed Float Exchange Rate System**.

Exchange Rate Systems

1. Fixed Exchange Rate

- Currency value fixed against another currency or basket of currencies.
- Central bank maintains the rate through intervention.

2. Floating Exchange Rate

- Determined entirely by market forces of demand and supply.
- Limited government intervention.

3. Managed Float Exchange Rate (India)

- Exchange rate primarily determined by market forces.
- RBI intervenes occasionally to prevent excessive volatility.

Why Does RBI Intervene in Forex Markets?

Major Objectives

1. Prevent Excessive Volatility

- Avoid sudden sharp depreciation or appreciation.

2. Maintain Financial Stability

- Prevent speculative attacks on currency.

3. Control Imported Inflation

- A weaker rupee increases import costs, especially crude oil.

4. Preserve Investor Confidence

- Stable currency encourages foreign investment.

5. Ensure Orderly Market Conditions

- Smooth functioning of financial markets.

Methods Used by RBI for Currency Intervention

Direct Intervention

1. Selling US dollars from forex reserves.
2. Purchasing US dollars when required.

Indirect Intervention

1. Liquidity management measures.
2. Interest rate adjustments.
3. Open Market Operations (OMOs).
4. Forward market interventions.

What Causes Rupee Depreciation?

External Factors

1. Strengthening of U.S. Dollar.
2. Increase in U.S. interest rates.
3. Geopolitical tensions.
4. Global financial uncertainty.
5. Rising crude oil prices.

Domestic Factors

1. High current account deficit.
2. Capital outflows.
3. Inflation differentials.
4. Slower economic growth.

Impact of Rupee Depreciation

Positive Effects

Exports Become More Competitive

1. Indian goods become cheaper abroad.

Increase in Remittances

1. NRIs receive more rupees per dollar.

Negative Effects

Imported Inflation

1. Costlier imports increase inflation.

Higher Fuel Prices

1. India imports most of its crude oil.

Increased External Debt Burden

1. Foreign currency debt becomes expensive.

Capital Market Volatility

1. Foreign investors may withdraw investments.

Foreign Exchange Reserves: Importance

Functions

1. Support exchange-rate stability.
2. Meet import payment obligations.
3. Enhance investor confidence.
4. Provide cushion during external shocks.
5. Improve sovereign creditworthiness.

Composition of India's Forex Reserves

1. **Foreign Currency Assets (FCA)** – Largest component
2. **Gold Reserves**
3. **Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)**
4. **Reserve Tranche Position (RTP) with IMF**

What are SDRs?

An international reserve asset created by the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** to supplement member countries' official reserves.

SDR Basket Includes

1. U.S. Dollar
2. Euro
3. Chinese Yuan
4. Japanese Yen
5. British Pound Sterling

India's Position

India follows a **Managed Floating Exchange Rate System**, not a fixed exchange rate regime.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding foreign exchange management in India:

1. India follows a Managed Floating Exchange Rate System.
2. The Reserve Bank of India may sell foreign currency from its reserves to reduce excessive depreciation of the rupee.
3. Foreign Currency Assets constitute the largest component of India's foreign exchange reserves.
4. Under India's exchange rate system, the value of the rupee is permanently fixed against the U.S. dollar.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. **Statement 1 – Correct**
 - India follows a **Managed Float Exchange Rate System**.
2. **Statement 2 – Correct**
 - RBI can sell dollars from forex reserves to support the rupee.
3. **Statement 3 – Correct**
 - **Foreign Currency Assets (FCA)** form the largest component of India's forex reserves.
4. **Statement 4 – Incorrect**

- India does not maintain a fixed exchange rate against the U.S. dollar; the rupee's value is largely market-determined.

Mains Enrichment

Q2. “Central bank intervention in the foreign exchange market is essential for maintaining macroeconomic stability, but excessive intervention may distort market signals.” Examine in the context of India's exchange-rate management framework. (250 words)

Gaganyaan Mission: How India's Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS) Will Sustain Astronauts in Space

Source: The Hindu

Key News

The article explains the functioning of the **Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS)** that will sustain astronauts during India's **Gaganyaan Mission**. ECLSS is responsible for maintaining a habitable environment inside the crew module by regulating **oxygen supply, carbon dioxide removal, temperature, humidity, pressure, and water recycling**.

- Since space lacks a natural atmosphere and biological recycling processes, astronauts depend entirely on engineered life-support systems.
- The system continuously monitors cabin conditions and removes contaminants to ensure crew safety during orbital missions.

What is Gaganyaan?

Gaganyaan is India's first indigenous human spaceflight programme aimed at demonstrating the capability to send Indian astronauts (Gagannauts) into space and safely return them to Earth.

The programme represents a major step toward advanced space technologies, human space exploration, and future space station missions.

Objectives of Gaganyaan Mission

Primary Objectives

- Demonstrate indigenous human spaceflight capability.

- Develop life-support and crew-safety technologies.
- Validate human-rated launch systems.
- Build expertise for future long-duration missions.

Strategic Objectives

- Enhance technological self-reliance.
- Promote innovation in aerospace engineering.
- Strengthen India's global standing in space exploration.

Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS)

What is ECLSS?

The Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS) is an integrated system that creates and maintains a safe environment for astronauts inside a spacecraft.

Without ECLSS, human survival in space would be impossible because space is a vacuum with:

1. No breathable oxygen
2. Extreme temperatures
3. Harmful radiation
4. Absence of atmospheric pressure

Related Space Missions Around the World

Country/ Agency	Human Spaceflight Programme
USA	Apollo, Artemis, Commercial Crew Programme
Russia	Soyuz Programme
China	Shenzhou Programme
India	Gaganyaan
ESA	Participates through international collaborations

Difference Between Human Spaceflight and Satellite Missions

Parameter	Satellite Mission	Human Spaceflight
Human Presence	No	Yes
Life Support Required	No	Yes
Safety Standards	High	Extremely High
Recovery Mechanism	Optional	Mandatory
Environmental Control	Limited	Comprehensive

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Gaganyaan Mission and Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS):

1. The Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS) is designed to regulate oxygen, pressure, temperature and humidity inside the spacecraft.
2. Carbon dioxide removal is an essential function of ECLSS during human spaceflight missions.
3. Gaganyaan is India's first indigenous human spaceflight programme being developed by ISRO.
4. The ECLSS becomes unnecessary once a spacecraft reaches Earth orbit because astronauts can directly use oxygen from outer space.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

Statement 1 – Correct

- ECLSS regulates cabin atmosphere, pressure, temperature and humidity.

Statement 2 – Correct

- Continuous removal of carbon dioxide is necessary for astronaut survival.

Statement 3 – Correct

- Gaganyaan is India's first indigenous human spaceflight programme.

Statement 4 – Incorrect

- Outer space is a vacuum and contains no breathable atmosphere; ECLSS remains essential throughout the mission.

Sixth tiger dies of suspected Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) in Pench Tiger Reserve

What is in News?

A sixth tiger has reportedly died due to suspected Canine Distemper Virus infection in Pench Tiger Reserve.

1. The virus is commonly spread by infected domestic dogs and can affect wild carnivores.
2. Authorities are monitoring the situation closely to prevent further spread among tiger populations.
3. The incident has raised concerns regarding wildlife disease surveillance and conservation management.

Importance

1. **Wildlife Disease Threat**
 - CDV is a serious viral disease affecting carnivores such as tigers, lions, leopards, and dogs.
 - **Conservation Concerns**
 - Disease outbreaks can significantly threaten endangered species populations.
2. **Human–Wildlife Interface**
 - Spread from domestic dogs highlights risks arising from interaction between wildlife and human settlements.
3. **Protected Area Management**
 - Emphasizes the need for veterinary surveillance and ecosystem health monitoring in tiger reserves.
4. **Biodiversity Protection**
 - Important example of challenges in long-term tiger conservation efforts.

About Pench Tiger Reserve & CDV



Pench Tiger Reserve

1. Located in: **Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra**
2. Named after: **Pench River**
3. Part of Project Tiger network
4. Famous inspiration for: *The Jungle Book* landscapes

Canine Distemper Virus (CDV)

1. Viral disease affecting carnivores

2. Spread mainly through infected animals and respiratory secretions
3. Symptoms include respiratory infection, fever, weakness, and neurological disorders

MCQ

Q1. Canine Distemper Virus (CDV), recently seen in news, primarily affects:

- (a) Reptiles
- (b) Carnivorous mammals
- (c) Amphibians
- (d) Marine fishes

Answer: (b) Carnivorous mammals

India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV) postponed amid Ebola outbreak concerns

What is in News?

The proposed **India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV)** has reportedly been postponed due to concerns arising from an **Ebola virus outbreak** in parts of Africa. The summit is the highest institutional platform for engagement between India and African nations.

1. It serves as a key mechanism for strengthening political, economic, developmental, and strategic cooperation.

Importance

1. India–Africa Relations

- IAFS is the cornerstone of India's engagement with African countries.
- Reflects India's commitment to the **Global South** and South–South cooperation.

2. Strategic Importance

Africa is crucial for India's interests in:

- Energy security
- Critical minerals
- Maritime cooperation
- Trade and investment

3. Development Partnership

India supports Africa through:

- Capacity building
- Lines of Credit
- Digital public infrastructure
- Healthcare and education projects

4. Multilateral Cooperation

- Cooperation on UN reforms, climate change, sustainable development, and global governance.

5. Economic Significance

- Africa is among India's fastest-growing trade partners and an important destination for Indian investments.

About India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)

Feature	Details
Established	2008
Nature	Apex India–Africa dialogue platform
IAFS-I	2008, New Delhi
IAFS-II	2011, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)
IAFS-III	2015, New Delhi
Focus Areas	Trade, investment, technology, health, education, infrastructure, security

MCQ

Q2. The first India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) was held in:

- Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Johannesburg, South Africa
- New Delhi, India
- Nairobi, Kenya

Correct Answer: (c) New Delhi, India

Union Minister dedicates UMMID Programme for Rare Genetic Disorders

What is in News?

The Union Minister for Science & Technology recently dedicated the **UMMID Programme** to strengthen the diagnosis and management of **rare genetic disorders** in India.

UMMID is a flagship initiative aimed at providing **early diagnosis, genetic counselling, prevention, and affordable healthcare support** for families affected by inherited disorders.

- The programme supports the implementation of the **National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD)**, 2021.

Importance

- Rare Disease Management**

- India's first comprehensive national initiative focusing on **inherited genetic disorders**.

2. Early Diagnosis & Prevention

- Promotes timely screening, diagnosis, counselling, and preventive healthcare interventions.

3. Strengthening Healthcare Infrastructure

- Enhances capacity building through specialized diagnostic and counselling centres.

4. Genetic Healthcare Advancement

- Encourages integration of genomics and biotechnology into public healthcare.

5. Support to National Policy for Rare Diseases

- Creates structured care pathways and improves accessibility for patients suffering from rare diseases.

About UMMID Program

Feature	Details
Full Form	Unique Methods of Management of Inherited Disorders (UMMID)
Launched For	Rare genetic/inherited disorders
Nodal Agency	Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science & Technology
Objective	Early diagnosis, counselling, prevention & treatment support
Policy Linkage	National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD), 2021

Three Major Pillars

- NIDAN Kendras** for genetic diagnosis and counselling
- Outreach programmes in aspirational districts
- Training and capacity building of healthcare professionals

Additional UPSC Facts

- A **rare disease** affects a small percentage of the population but often requires long-term specialized treatment.
- Most rare diseases have a **genetic origin** and may appear during childhood.
- India's **National Policy for Rare Diseases (2021)** provides financial assistance for selected treatable rare diseases.

MCQ

Q3. UMMID Programme, recently seen in news, is primarily related to:

- (a) Artificial Intelligence research
- (b) Rare genetic disorders and inherited diseases
- (c) Vaccine manufacturing
- (d) Space biotechnology missions

Correct Answer: (b) Rare genetic disorders and inherited diseases

India and Ethiopia Sign Bilateral Accession Protocol Supporting Ethiopia's WTO Membership

Source: PIB

India-Ethiopia Bilateral Accession Protocol on Ethiopia's WTO Accession

Key News

1. India and Ethiopia signed a **Bilateral Accession Protocol** in Geneva to support Ethiopia's accession to the **World Trade Organization (WTO)**.
2. The agreement was concluded during the meeting of the **WTO Working Party on Ethiopia's Accession**, marking a significant step in Ethiopia's integration into the multilateral trading system.
3. India reiterated its commitment to strengthening economic cooperation with African nations and promoting an inclusive rules-based global trading order.
4. Ethiopia's accession process is expected to enhance trade predictability, market access, and investment opportunities for businesses in both countries.
5. The development aligns with India's broader engagement with Africa through trade, capacity-building, and South-South cooperation initiatives.

Major Key Data / Facts

1. **WTO Established:** 1 January 1995
2. **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland
3. **Current WTO Membership:** More than 160 member economies
4. **Ethiopia's Status:** One of the largest economies not yet a full WTO member (currently in accession process)

Static Introduction:

World Trade Organization (WTO)

What is WTO?

The **World Trade Organization (WTO)** is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. It provides a framework for negotiating trade agreements and resolving trade disputes.

The WTO emerged from the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, 1947, and became operational on **1 January 1995**.

Objectives of WTO

Major Objectives

1. Promote free and fair international trade.
2. Reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers.
3. Ensure predictability in global trade.
4. Provide a dispute settlement mechanism.
5. Facilitate trade negotiations.
6. Support economic development of developing countries.

Core Principles of WTO

Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Principle

1. Equal trading treatment for all WTO members.
2. Any trade concession granted to one member must generally be extended to others.

National Treatment Principle

1. Imported goods should be treated no less favourably than domestic goods after entering the market.

Transparency

1. Trade regulations must be publicly available and predictable.

Non-Discrimination

1. Members should avoid discriminatory trade practices.

WTO Organizational Structure

Ministerial Conference

1. Highest decision-making body.
2. Meets every two years.

General Council

1. Oversees day-to-day functioning.

Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)

1. Resolves trade disputes among members.

Trade Policy Review Body

1. Reviews trade policies of member countries.

What is WTO Accession?

Definition

WTO accession is the process through which a non-member country joins the WTO and agrees to abide by WTO rules and commitments.

Steps in Accession

1. Submission of membership application.
2. Formation of a Working Party.
3. Examination of trade policies.
4. Bilateral market-access negotiations.
5. Adoption of accession package.
6. Ratification by applicant country.

India–Africa Economic Relations

Importance of Africa for India

1. Energy security.
2. Mineral resources.
3. Expanding export markets.
4. Maritime cooperation.
5. Development partnership.

Key Initiatives

1. India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)
2. Duty-Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme
3. Lines of Credit through EXIM Bank
4. Capacity-building programmes under ITEC

About Ethiopia

Capital

1. Addis Ababa

Significance

1. Headquarters of the **African Union (AU)**
2. One of Africa's fastest-growing economies.
3. Strategic location in the Horn of Africa.

Major Sectors

1. Agriculture
2. Textiles
3. Manufacturing
4. Infrastructure
5. Services

Importance of Ethiopia Joining WTO

For Ethiopia

1. Better access to global markets.
2. Increased foreign investment.
3. Integration into global value chains.
4. Trade policy reforms.

For Global Trading System

1. Greater inclusiveness.
2. Wider market access.
3. Strengthened multilateralism.

For India

1. Improved trade opportunities.
2. Greater investment prospects.
3. Enhanced Africa engagement.

Challenges Facing WTO

Contemporary Issues

1. Dispute Settlement Crisis.
2. Rising protectionism.
3. Trade wars.
4. Agricultural subsidy disputes.
5. Digital trade governance.
6. Special and Differential Treatment debates.

UPSC Value Addition

Difference Between GATT and WTO

Feature	GATT	WTO
Started	1947	1995
Nature	Agreement	International Organization
Coverage	Goods Trade	Goods, Services & IPR
Dispute Settlement	Weak	Stronger Institutional Mechanism

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the World Trade Organization (WTO):

1. The WTO came into existence in 1995 as a successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).
2. The Ministerial Conference is the highest decision-making body of the WTO.
3. WTO accession requires negotiations between the applicant country and existing members.
4. The headquarters of the WTO is located in Vienna, Austria.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1 – Correct

WTO was established on **1 January 1995**, replacing the GATT framework.

2. Statement 2 – Correct

The **Ministerial Conference** is the WTO's highest decision-making body.

3. Statement 3 – Correct

WTO accession involves extensive bilateral and multilateral negotiations with existing members.

4. Statement 4 – Incorrect

WTO headquarters is located in **Geneva, Switzerland**, not Vienna.

Mains Enrichment (GS Paper II & III)

Q2. "The expansion of WTO membership strengthens the multilateral trading system but also raises questions regarding policy flexibility for developing economies." Discuss in the context of Ethiopia's WTO accession process. (250 words)

Lake Kariba: Rising Water Levels Bring Relief

Why in News?

After nearly a decade of irregular rainfall, prolonged droughts, and recurring heatwaves that significantly reduced water levels in Lake Kariba, fresh inflows from the upper Zambezi River have improved the reservoir's storage capacity, offering renewed optimism for hydropower generation and regional water security.

About Lake Kariba

1. Lake Kariba is situated in **Central Africa** on the border between **Zambia** and **Zimbabwe**.
2. It was created on the **Zambezi River**, approximately midway between the river's source and its mouth.
3. The lake lies around **1,300 km upstream from the Indian Ocean**.
4. It is recognized as the **world's largest artificial lake and reservoir by volume** and the **fourth-largest artificial lake by surface area**.
5. Lake Kariba stretches for more than **220 km in length** and reaches a maximum width of about **40 km**, covering nearly **5,200 sq. km**.
6. The reservoir was formed between **1958 and 1963** following the construction of the **Kariba Dam**, which inundated the Kariba Gorge.

7. The dam is a **double-arch concrete structure**, standing **128 metres high** and extending **617 metres long** along its crest.
8. It serves as a major source of **hydroelectric power** for both Zambia and Zimbabwe while also sustaining an important commercial fishing sector.
9. The lake contains **102 islands**, including notable islands such as **Chete Island** and **Spurwing Island**.
10. **Chete Island** is known for hosting one of the largest protected wetland ecosystems in the region and supports a significant population of **African Elephant**.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q3. With reference to Lake Kariba, consider the following statements:

1. It is located on the Zambezi River along the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe.
2. It is the world's largest natural freshwater lake by volume.
3. The lake was formed after the construction of the Kariba Dam.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** Lake Kariba lies on the Zambezi River between Zambia and Zimbabwe.
2. **Statement 2 is incorrect:** It is the world's largest **artificial** lake and reservoir by volume, not a natural freshwater lake.
3. **Statement 3 is correct:** The lake was created after the construction of the Kariba Dam between 1958 and 1963.

Ethiopia Signs WTO Accession Protocol with India

Why in News?

India and **Ethiopia** recently signed a bilateral accession protocol in Geneva as part of Ethiopia's

ongoing process to become a member of the **World Trade Organization**. The agreement marks an important step in strengthening trade and economic cooperation between the two countries while supporting Ethiopia's integration into the global trading system.

About Ethiopia

1. Ethiopia is a **landlocked country** located in **East Africa** and lies entirely within the tropical region.
2. **Capital City: Addis Ababa**
3. It shares international boundaries with six countries:
 - **Eritrea** (North)
 - **Djibouti** (Northeast)
 - **Somalia** (East)
 - **Kenya** (South)
 - **South Sudan** and **Sudan** (West)

Key Geographical Features

Topography

Ethiopia's landscape is characterized by five major physiographic regions:

1. Rift Valley
2. Western Highlands
3. Eastern Highlands
4. Western Lowlands
5. Eastern Lowlands

Climate

1. Most parts of the country experience a **tropical climate**, though altitude creates significant regional climatic variations.

Highest Peak

1. **Mount Ras Dejen** is the highest mountain in Ethiopia, rising to **4,533 metres** above sea level.

Major Rivers

1. **Blue Nile**
2. **Omo River**
3. **Awash River**

Important Lake

1. **Lake Tana**, located in the northwestern highlands, is the largest lake in Ethiopia and the principal source of the Blue Nile.

Natural Resources

1. Ethiopia possesses significant reserves of:
 - Gold
 - Potash
 - Natural Gas
 - Copper

- Platinum
- Other valuable mineral resources

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q4. With reference to Ethiopia, consider the following statements:

1. Ethiopia is a landlocked country located in East Africa.
2. Lake Tana is the principal source of the Blue Nile River.
3. Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest peak of Ethiopia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** Ethiopia is a landlocked country situated in East Africa.
2. **Statement 2 is correct:** Lake Tana, located in the Ethiopian Highlands, is the primary source of the Blue Nile.
3. **Statement 3 is incorrect:** Ethiopia's highest peak is **Mount Ras Dejen (4,533 m)**, not Mount Kilimanjaro. Mount Kilimanjaro is located in **Tanzania**.

Myopia: A Growing Global Vision Challenge

Why in News?

Recently, health experts highlighted **Myopia (Nearsightedness)** as a major global public health issue. According to projections, nearly half of the world's population could be affected by myopia by **2050**, making early detection and treatment increasingly important.

About Myopia

1. **Myopia**, commonly known as **nearsightedness**, is a vision disorder in which nearby objects appear clear, while distant objects look blurred.
2. It occurs when light entering the eye is focused **in front of the retina** rather than directly on it.

3. The condition is usually associated with an **elongated eyeball**, causing light rays to converge before reaching the retina.
4. The greater the elongation of the eyeball, the more severe the degree of myopia.

Causes

1. The exact cause of myopia is not fully understood.
2. Experts believe it develops due to a combination of:
 - **Genetic (hereditary) factors**
 - **Environmental influences**, such as prolonged near-work activities and limited outdoor exposure.

Progression

1. Myopia generally begins during **childhood or adolescence**.
2. It often worsens as a child grows and usually stabilizes in adulthood.
3. In some individuals, vision may improve slightly later in life.

Common Symptoms

1. Blurred vision while looking at distant objects
2. Frequent squinting
3. Eye strain and fatigue
4. Headaches
5. Reduced visual clarity affecting daily activities

Treatment and Management

1. **Spectacles (glasses)** and **contact lenses** are the most common methods to correct myopia in both children and adults.
2. **Negative (minus) powered lenses** are used to compensate for the eye's focusing error.
3. For adults, various **refractive surgeries** (such as LASIK) may provide permanent correction in suitable cases.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q5. Myopia is a condition in which:

- a) Near objects appear blurred while distant objects appear clear
- b) Both near and distant objects appear blurred
- c) Distant objects appear blurred while near objects appear clear
- d) A person cannot distinguish colours

Answer: (c) Distant objects appear blurred while near objects appear clear

Explanation:

Myopia (nearsightedness) occurs when light focuses in front of the retina, causing **distant objects to appear blurry**, whereas nearby objects can be seen clearly.

Sickle Cell Disease: AIIMS Bhopal Highlights Need for Early Screening

Why in News?

A recent study conducted by **AIIMS Bhopal** emphasized the importance of early diagnosis and advanced health screening for children affected by **Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)** to reduce complications and improve long-term health outcomes.

About Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)

1. Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is a group of **inherited blood disorders** that affect **hemoglobin**, the protein in red blood cells (RBCs) responsible for carrying oxygen throughout the body.
2. It can cause recurrent episodes of severe pain and may lead to serious, life-threatening complications.
3. **Sickle Cell Anemia** is the most common and severe form of SCD.

How Does It Affect Blood Flow?

1. Normally, red blood cells are **round, flexible, and disc-shaped**, allowing them to move easily through blood vessels.
2. In SCD, abnormal hemoglobin known as **Hemoglobin S (HbS)** causes RBCs to become **sickle-shaped (crescent-shaped)**.
3. These distorted cells are rigid and can block small blood vessels, reducing blood flow and oxygen supply to tissues.
4. Sickle cells may also stick to vessel walls, further obstructing circulation and causing pain and organ damage.

Causes

1. SCD is caused by a mutation in the **sickle cell gene**.
2. A child develops SCD only when **both parents pass on the defective gene**.

- Individuals inheriting only one sickle cell gene have **Sickle Cell Trait**. They are generally healthy but can transmit the gene to their offspring.

Symptoms

Early Symptoms

- Extreme tiredness due to anemia
- Painful swelling of hands and feet
- Jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes)

Later Complications

- Severe pain crises
- Chronic anemia
- Organ damage
- Increased susceptibility to infections

Treatment

- Bone Marrow (Stem Cell) Transplant** is currently the only established cure for SCD.
- Other treatments help manage symptoms, prevent complications, and improve quality of life.
- Gene Therapy** is emerging as a promising treatment option.
- The **United Kingdom** became the first country to approve a gene therapy treatment for Sickle Cell Disease.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q6. With reference to Sickle Cell Disease (SCD), consider the following statements:

- It is an inherited disorder that affects hemoglobin in red blood cells.
- Sickle-shaped red blood cells can obstruct blood flow in blood vessels.
- A person inheriting only one sickle cell gene always develops Sickle Cell Disease.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct:** SCD is a genetic disorder affecting hemoglobin.
- Statement 2 is correct:** Sickle-shaped RBCs can block blood vessels and reduce blood flow.
- Statement 3 is incorrect:** Individuals with only one sickle cell gene have **Sickle Cell**

Trait, not the disease itself. They are usually healthy carriers of the gene.

Public Accounts Committee (PAC): Reconstituted Committee Begins Examination of Key Subjects

Why in News?

Recently, the reconstituted **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** held its first meeting and selected various issues for detailed examination, continuing its role in ensuring financial accountability and oversight of government expenditure.

About Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

- The **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** is the **oldest parliamentary committee in India**, established in **1921** during the colonial period.
- It is one of the most important **financial committees of Parliament**.
- The committee is **reconstituted annually**.
- The **Speaker of the Lok Sabha** appoints the Chairperson from among the Lok Sabha members of the committee.
- Since **1967–68**, it has become a convention for the Chairperson to be a member of the Opposition.

Objective

- To scrutinize the **revenue and expenditure of the Government of India**.
- To ensure that public funds approved by Parliament are utilized **efficiently, economically, and legally**.
- To strengthen parliamentary control over government finances.

Functions of PAC

- Examines audit reports submitted by the **Comptroller and Auditor General of India**.
- Verifies whether money granted by Parliament has been spent for the intended purposes.
- Investigates cases of financial irregularities, wasteful expenditure, losses, and administrative inefficiencies.
- Reviews government accounts and recommends corrective measures for better financial management.

Composition

1. Total Members: 22
 - 15 members from Lok Sabha
 - 7 members from Rajya Sabha
2. **Chairperson:** A Lok Sabha Member, traditionally from the Opposition.
3. **Term:** One year.
4. **Ministers are not eligible** to become members of the committee.

Significance

1. Acts as Parliament's principal watchdog over public expenditure.
2. Enhances transparency and accountability in governance.
3. Ensures prudent utilization of taxpayers' money.
4. Strengthens financial discipline within government departments and public institutions.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Public Accounts Committee (PAC):

1. It examines audit reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).
2. It consists of 22 members, including members from both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.
3. Union Ministers can be appointed as members of the PAC.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** PAC scrutinizes the audit reports prepared by the CAG.
2. **Statement 2 is correct:** The committee consists of 22 members (15 from Lok Sabha and 7 from Rajya Sabha).
3. **Statement 3 is incorrect:** Ministers cannot be members of the Public Accounts Committee.

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB): Launches \$10 Billion Support Facility

Why in News?

Recently, the **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank** announced a **US\$10 billion fund facility** to assist member countries affected by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, aiming to strengthen economic resilience and support critical infrastructure needs.

About Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

1. The **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** is a **multilateral development bank** established in **2016**.
2. It was created to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects across Asia and other member regions.

Objectives

AIIB seeks to:

1. Promote **sustainable economic growth**
2. Enhance **regional connectivity and integration**
3. Support infrastructure development
4. Mobilize **public and private sector investment** for development projects

Headquarters

1. **Beijing, China**

Membership

1. AIIB has expanded to **111 approved member countries** across the world.
2. **India** is a **Founding Member** of the bank.
3. India is also the **second-largest shareholder** in AIIB after China.

Governance Structure

Board of Governors

1. The highest decision-making body of AIIB.
2. Comprises **one Governor and one Alternate Governor** nominated by each member country.

Board of Directors

1. A **non-resident Board of Directors** oversees the bank's management and strategic direction.
2. Responsible for:
 - Approving policies
 - Reviewing annual plans and budgets

- Supervising governance and oversight mechanisms

President

1. The bank is headed by a **President**, elected by AIIB shareholders.
2. The President serves a **five-year term** and may be re-elected once.

Significance

1. Supports infrastructure financing in developing economies.
2. Complements existing multilateral development institutions.
3. Encourages regional economic integration and sustainable development.
4. Provides an important platform for India's infrastructure and connectivity initiatives.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB):

1. AIIB is a multilateral development bank established in 2016.
2. Its headquarters is located in Beijing, China.
3. India is the largest shareholder in AIIB.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

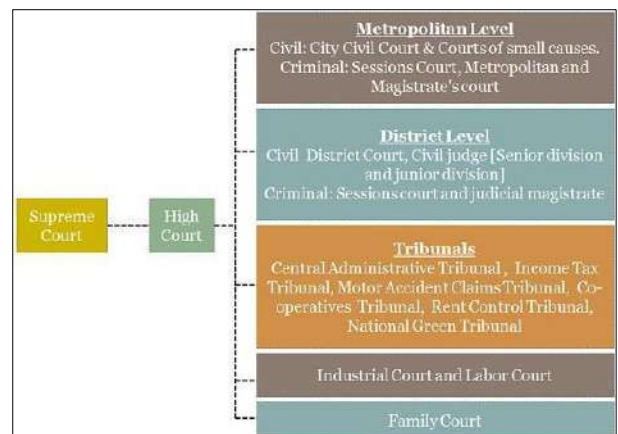
- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** AIIB was established in 2016 as a multilateral development bank.
2. **Statement 2 is correct:** Its headquarters is located in Beijing, China.
3. **Statement 3 is incorrect:** China is the largest shareholder in AIIB, while India is the **second-largest shareholder** and a founding member.

Sedition Law & Supreme Court Ruling – In News



Evolution of the law

Sedition is a cognisable, non-bailable and non-compoundable offence under Section 124A of Indian Penal Code

BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

1870: The section on sedition is introduced by the British to the IPC

The British rulers used the law to muzzle demands for freedom. For instance, Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the first person to be convicted of sedition in colonial India.

AFTER INDEPENDENCE

1948: In discussions, Indian leaders agree to drop "sedition" from the Constitution

1949: "Sedition" is no longer part of the Indian Constitution adopted on November 26 this year. However, Section 124A remains in the IPC

1951: Nehru govt brings in first amendment under Article 19(1)(a), and puts in "reasonable restrictions" on the right to free speech

1974: Indira Gandhi govt makes Section 124A a cognisable offence that authorises police to make arrests without a warrant

PRESENTLY

2019 data shows that sedition cases rose by 25% and arrests by 41% over the previous year. However, only 3% of cases led to convictions

Recently, the **Supreme Court of India** clarified that **sedition-related trials and appeals may continue only if the accused voluntarily agrees to proceed**. The clarification pertains to cases where charges have been framed under the erstwhile **Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)**, now replaced under the new criminal law framework.

Background of the Case

The clarification came while hearing a plea filed by an individual who had spent several years in prison on sedition charges.

The Court observed that:

If an accused does not wish to continue with a trial, appeal, or any other proceeding involving charges under the former Section 124A IPC, courts should not compel such proceedings and must decide the matter in accordance with law.

What Was Section 124A (Sedition)?

Section 124A of the **Indian Penal Code, 1860** dealt with the offence of **sedition**.

It penalized:

1. Bringing or attempting to bring **hatred or contempt** against the Government established by law.
2. Inciting **disaffection** toward the State.

Punishment:

1. Imprisonment for life or imprisonment up to three years, along with a fine.

Transition Under New Criminal Laws

With the enactment of the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**, Section 124A IPC has been repealed.

Instead, provisions relating to acts endangering:

1. Sovereignty
2. Unity
3. Integrity of India

are now addressed under:

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita **Section 152 of BNS**.

Earlier Supreme Court Position (2022)

In **May 2022**, the Supreme Court had:

1. Put ongoing sedition trials and investigations on hold.
2. Directed governments to refrain from registering fresh FIRs under Section 124A.
3. Asked the Union Government to re-examine the sedition provision.

This was done pending reconsideration of the constitutional validity of the sedition law.

Significance of the Recent Clarification

1. Protects the rights of accused persons during the legal transition.
2. Ensures procedural fairness in pending sedition cases.
3. Reflects judicial oversight during implementation of new criminal laws.
4. Highlights the evolving balance between:
 - National security
 - Freedom of speech and expression

IN Constitutional Connection

Article 19(1)(a)

1. Guarantees **Freedom of Speech and Expression**.

Article 19(2)

1. Permits reasonable restrictions in the interests of:
 - Sovereignty and integrity of India
 - Security of the State
 - Public order
 - Friendly relations with foreign states

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the offence of Sedition in India:

1. Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code dealt with the offence of sedition.
2. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 has completely retained Section 124A without any modification.
3. In 2022, the Supreme Court directed that fresh FIRs under Section 124A should generally not be registered until further review.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1:** Correct. Section 124A IPC defined and penalized sedition.
2. **Statement 2:** Incorrect. Section 124A was repealed under the new criminal law framework; related offences are addressed

through provisions in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

- Statement 3:** Correct. In 2022, the Supreme Court effectively paused fresh use of Section 124A pending reconsideration.

UPSC Quick Facts

- Section 124A IPC** → Sedition (repealed).
- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023** → Replaced IPC.
- Article 19(1)(a)** → Freedom of Speech and Expression.

Kedar Nath Singh v. State of Bihar (1962) → Landmark judgment that upheld sedition law but restricted its application to incitement of violence or public disorder.

Source: Supreme Court proceedings reported in *The Hindu*.

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB): Launches \$10 Billion Support Facility

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- The President serves a **five-year term** and may be re-elected once.

Significance

- Supports infrastructure financing in developing economies.
- Complements existing multilateral development institutions.
- Encourages regional economic integration and sustainable development.
- Provides an important platform for India's infrastructure and connectivity initiatives.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB):

- AIIB is a multilateral development bank established in 2016.
- Its headquarters is located in Beijing, China.
- India is the largest shareholder in AIIB.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct:** AIIB was established in 2016 as a multilateral development bank.
- Statement 2 is correct:** Its headquarters is located in Beijing, China.
- Statement 3 is incorrect:** China is the largest shareholder in AIIB, while India is the **second-largest shareholder** and a founding member.

Oreshnik Missile: Russia's Intermediate-Range Hypersonic Weapon

Why in News?

Recently, the President of **Ukraine** stated that **Russia** used the **Oreshnik hypersonic ballistic missile** during a large-scale drone and missile strike on Kyiv, highlighting the growing role of advanced missile systems in the ongoing conflict.

About Oreshnik Missile

- Oreshnik** is a Russian-made **intermediate-range hypersonic ballistic missile (IRBM)**.
- It was reportedly used for the first time in **November 2024** against the Ukrainian city of **Dnipro**.
- The missile is believed to be derived from the **RS-26 Rubezh** ballistic missile platform.
- It is capable of carrying both:
 - Conventional warheads
 - Nuclear warheads

Key Features

- Estimated length: **15–18.5 metres**
- Diameter: Approximately **1.9 metres**
- Mounted on a **mobile transporter-erector-launcher (TEL)**, enabling rapid deployment and enhanced survivability.
- Equipped with **Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs)**, allowing it to carry **6–8 warheads** and engage multiple targets simultaneously.
- Reported operational range: **Around 5,000 kilometres**.

- Capable of striking targets across much of Europe.
- Travels at approximately **Mach 10** (around ten times the speed of sound), making detection and interception highly challenging.
- Classified as a **hypersonic missile** because it can travel at speeds exceeding **Mach 5**.

Significance

- The combination of **hypersonic speed**, **long-range capability**, and **MIRV technology** enhances its strategic deterrence value.
- Its high speed significantly reduces reaction time for missile defence systems.
- The missile can be configured for both conventional and nuclear missions, increasing its operational flexibility.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Oreshnik Missile:

- It is a Russian-made intermediate-range hypersonic ballistic missile.
- It is capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads.
- It is equipped with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct:** Oreshnik is an intermediate-range hypersonic ballistic missile developed by Russia.
- Statement 2 is correct:** It can carry both conventional and nuclear payloads.
- Statement 3 is correct:** The missile is equipped with **MIRV technology**, enabling multiple warheads to strike different targets independently.

Pyrite ("Fool's Gold") Discovered in Gujarat's Lignite Deposits

Why in News?

Geologists have recently identified a rare **microscopic sunflower-shaped form of Pyrite** within the lignite coal reserves of **Gujarat**. The discovery is significant for understanding mineral formation processes in coal-bearing sedimentary environments.

About Pyrite

1. **Pyrite** is a naturally occurring **iron disulfide mineral** with the chemical formula **FeS₂**.
2. It is the **most abundant sulfide mineral** found on Earth.
3. Pyrite has a **brass-yellow colour** and a bright metallic shine, often resembling gold.
4. Its name is derived from the Greek word **“pyr” (fire)** because it produces sparks when struck against metal.
5. Due to its resemblance to gold, it is popularly known as **“Fool’s Gold.”**
6. Archaeological evidence suggests that pyrite nodules were used by prehistoric communities for fire-making.

Occurrence and Formation

1. Pyrite occurs in a wide range of geological environments, including:
 - Igneous rocks
 - Sedimentary rocks
 - Metamorphic rocks
 - Hydrothermal mineral deposits
 - Coal beds and fossil-bearing formations
2. It commonly forms in **oxygen-deficient sedimentary environments** rich in iron and sulfur.
3. Organic-rich settings such as **coal deposits and black shales** provide ideal conditions for its formation.
4. Pyrite may replace plant remains and shells, creating **pyrite fossils** or flattened structures known as **“pyrite dollars.”**
5. Weathering of pyrite often produces iron oxides such as **limonite**, resulting in rusty-colored surface zones called **gossans**, which can indicate underlying mineralization.

Major Producers

1. Historically, **Spain** was the leading producer of pyrite.
2. At present, major producers include:

- **China**
- **Italy**
- **Russia**
- **Peru**

Uses of Pyrite

1. Source of **iron and sulfur**.
2. Used in the manufacture of **sulfuric acid**, one of the most important industrial chemicals.
3. Produces **iron sulfate**, which is utilized in:
 - Nutritional supplements
 - Water treatment and flocculation
 - Lawn conditioners
 - Ink production
 - Moss control and other chemical industries
4. Iron sulfate derived from pyrite is also used in the treatment of **iron-deficiency anemia**.
5. Certain pyrite deposits contain microscopic quantities of gold and may be mined as a **gold-bearing ore**.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q6. With reference to Pyrite, consider the following statements:

1. Pyrite is an iron disulfide mineral with the chemical formula FeS₂.
2. It is popularly known as “Fool’s Gold” because of its resemblance to gold.
3. Pyrite forms only in igneous rocks.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** Pyrite is an iron disulfide mineral (FeS₂).
2. **Statement 2 is correct:** Its brass-yellow metallic appearance resembles gold, earning it the nickname “Fool’s Gold.”
3. **Statement 3 is incorrect:** Pyrite occurs in **igneous, sedimentary, metamorphic, and hydrothermal environments**, not only in igneous rocks.

BHAVYA Scheme: Centre Launches Guidelines for Industrial Park Development

Why in News?

The Central Government recently unveiled the operational guidelines for the **BHAVYA (Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana) Scheme**, a major initiative aimed at accelerating industrial growth by developing world-class industrial parks across India.

About BHAVYA Scheme

1. **BHAVYA (Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana)** is a **Central Sector Scheme** designed to create **investment-ready industrial parks** with modern infrastructure and global standards.
2. The scheme seeks to strengthen India's manufacturing ecosystem and attract domestic as well as foreign investments.

Objective

The scheme focuses on developing integrated industrial ecosystems featuring:

1. Plug-and-play industrial infrastructure
2. Multimodal logistics connectivity
3. Reliable power and utility services
4. Worker-support facilities
5. Digital governance mechanisms
6. Sustainable and environmentally friendly infrastructure

Key Targets

1. Development of **100 industrial parks** across the country.
2. Implementation period: **2026–27 to 2031–32** (Six Years).

Major Features

1. Supports flagship initiatives such as **Make in India** and **PM Gati Shakti** by promoting integrated manufacturing hubs.
2. Covers both:
 - **Greenfield Industrial Parks** (new projects)
 - **Eligible Brownfield Industrial Parks** (upgradation of existing parks)
3. Minimum land requirement:
 - **100 acres** for non-hilly states
 - **25 acres** for hilly states, Northeastern states, Union Territories, and smaller states

4. Industrial parks will be implemented through **Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs)** incorporated under the **Companies Act, 2013**.

Significance

1. Enhances India's manufacturing competitiveness.
2. Improves ease of doing business through ready-to-use infrastructure.
3. Generates employment opportunities and boosts regional industrial development.
4. Strengthens logistics efficiency and supply-chain integration.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q7. Consider the following statements regarding the BHAVYA (Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana) Scheme:

1. It is a Central Sector Scheme for developing investment-ready industrial parks.
2. The scheme provides support only for greenfield industrial parks.
3. The implementation of industrial parks will be carried out through Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs).

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

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** BHAVYA is a Central Sector Scheme for creating world-class industrial parks.
2. **Statement 2 is incorrect:** The scheme supports both **greenfield and eligible brownfield** industrial parks.
3. **Statement 3 is correct:** Projects will be implemented through **Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs)** under the Companies Act, 2013.

**Kolkata to host International
Day of Yoga 2026 Main Event;**

Theme announced as ‘Yoga for Healthy Ageing’

What is in News?

1. International Day of Yoga 2026 main event will be hosted in Kolkata.
2. The official theme for IDY 2026 has been announced as “**Yoga for Healthy Ageing**”.
3. Thousands participated in a yoga protocol and countdown event marking preparations for the International Day of Yoga.
4. Several initiatives such as **Yoga Sangam Portal**, **Yoga Park Portal**, and a new Yoga T-shirt were also unveiled.
5. Union Minister Prataprao Jadhav highlighted Khajuraho’s potential as a global yoga and wellness destination.

Importance

Global Promotion of Yoga

1. Reinforces India’s cultural diplomacy and soft power through promotion of yoga worldwide.

Healthy Ageing

1. Focuses on preventive healthcare and wellness for elderly populations.

Traditional Knowledge Systems

1. Highlights India’s heritage in holistic health practices and wellness traditions.

Public Health Importance

1. Yoga supports physical fitness, mental health, stress reduction, and lifestyle disease management.

International Recognition

1. International Day of Yoga is celebrated globally under a UN resolution initiated by India.

About International Day of Yoga

Feature	Details
Celebrated On	21 June
First Observed	2015
UN Resolution Adopted	2014
Proposed By	Narendra Modi
Theme 2026	Yoga for Healthy Ageing

Additional UPSC Facts

1. The United Nations adopted the proposal for International Day of Yoga with support from a record number of countries.
2. Yoga is associated with:
 - Physical wellbeing
 - Mental wellness
 - Preventive healthcare
 - Holistic lifestyle practices
3. The Ministry of AYUSH is the nodal ministry for promotion of Yoga in India.

MCQ

Q1. International Day of Yoga is celebrated every year on:

- (a) 5 June
- (b) 11 July
- (c) 21 June
- (d) 2 October

Correct Answer: (c) 21 June

National Health Accounts Estimates 2022–23: Government Health Expenditure Rises Sharply, Out-of-Pocket Spending Declines

Source: PIB | Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
National Health Accounts (NHA) Estimates for India 2022–23

Key News

1. The Union Health Ministry released the **National Health Accounts (NHA) Estimates 2022–23**, highlighting a significant rise in government spending on healthcare in India.
2. Government Health Expenditure (GHE) increased from **₹1.30 lakh crore in 2013–14 to ₹3.85 lakh crore in 2022–23**.
3. The share of **Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE)** in Total Health Expenditure declined substantially, indicating improved financial protection for citizens.
4. Public expenditure on primary healthcare and social security-related health spending also witnessed notable improvement.
5. The report reflects India’s gradual movement toward strengthening universal health coverage and reducing catastrophic healthcare expenditure.

Major Key Data / Facts

Indicator	Value
Government Health Expenditure as % of GDP	1.84%
Government Share in Total Health Expenditure	43.7%
Social Security Expenditure (SSE) Share in Health Spending	9.9%
Out-of-Pocket Expenditure Share	Reduced to 43.4%

Static Introduction: National Health Accounts (NHA)

What are National Health Accounts?

The **National Health Accounts (NHA)** are a systematic framework used to estimate:

1. Total health expenditure in the country.
2. Sources of healthcare financing.
3. Distribution of spending across public and private sectors.
4. Financial burden borne by households.

The estimates are prepared by the:

National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC)

under the:

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW).

What is Total Health Expenditure (THE)?

Definition

Total Health Expenditure represents the sum total of:

1. Government expenditure on health.
2. Household spending.
3. Insurance spending.
4. Corporate and NGO health spending.
5. External aid for health.

Key Health Financing Indicators

Government Health Expenditure (GHE)

Definition

Expenditure incurred by:

1. Central Government
2. State Governments
3. Local bodies

on healthcare services and public health programmes.

Importance

1. Indicates public commitment toward healthcare.
2. Supports Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE)

Definition

Direct payments made by households for healthcare services at the time of receiving care.

Formula

$$OOPE = \frac{\text{Direct household health payments}}{\text{Total Health Expenditure}} \times 100$$

Why High OOPE is a Concern?

1. Pushes families into poverty.
2. Causes catastrophic health expenditure.
3. Reduces healthcare accessibility.

Social Security Expenditure (SSE)

Includes:

1. Government-funded health insurance schemes.
2. Employee health benefits.
3. Publicly financed risk-pooling mechanisms.

Why Decline in OOPE is Significant?

Positive Outcomes

1. Better financial protection.
2. Reduced medical impoverishment.
3. Greater healthcare access.
4. Increased utilization of public healthcare services.

Factors Responsible

1. Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY
2. Expansion of public health infrastructure
3. Free medicines and diagnostics
4. Insurance coverage expansion

Ayushman Bharat Programme

Components

PM-JAY

1. Health insurance cover of:
 - ₹5 lakh per family per year
2. Target:
 - Poor and vulnerable families

Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs)

- Strengthening primary healthcare.

Primary Healthcare in India

Importance

1. First point of contact.
2. Preventive and promotive healthcare.
3. Reduces burden on tertiary hospitals.

Alma-Ata Declaration (1978)

Recognized primary healthcare as:
“Key to attaining Health for All.”

Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

WHO Definition

Ensuring all individuals receive needed health services without financial hardship.

Components

1. Access
2. Quality
3. Financial protection

Healthcare Financing Models

Model	Example
Tax-Funded	UK (NHS)
Insurance-Based	Germany
Mixed System	India
Private Dominated	USA (partly)

Challenges in India's Health Sector

Structural Challenges

1. Low public health spending.
2. Rural–urban disparities.
3. Shortage of doctors and nurses.
4. High dependence on private healthcare.

Financial Challenges

1. Catastrophic health expenditure.
2. Uneven insurance coverage.

WHO Recommendation

WHO recommends countries spend around:

5% of GDP on public health

for achieving strong universal healthcare systems.

India's public health expenditure remains below this benchmark.

UPSC Value Addition

Difference Between GHE and OOPE

Parameter	GHE	OOPE
Paid by	Government	Households
Nature	Public spending	Private direct spending
Objective	Public healthcare delivery	Individual healthcare payments

Catastrophic Health Expenditure

Occurs when:

1. Healthcare expenses exceed a significant share of household income,
2. leading to:
3. Poverty
4. Debt
5. Reduced consumption

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding health financing indicators in India:

1. National Health Accounts (NHA) estimates are released by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
2. Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) refers to direct healthcare payments made by households.
3. A decline in OOPE generally indicates improved financial protection in healthcare.
4. Universal Health Coverage (UHC) means healthcare services should be provided entirely free of cost to all citizens.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. Statement 1 – Correct

NHA estimates are released under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

2. Statement 2 – Correct

OOPE refers to direct household spending on healthcare.

3. Statement 3 – Correct

Lower OOPE indicates better healthcare financing and protection.

4. Statement 4 – Incorrect

Universal Health Coverage means access to healthcare **without financial hardship**, not necessarily fully free healthcare for all.

Mains Enrichment (GS Paper II – Health & Social Sector)

Q3. “Reducing Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) is central to achieving Universal Health Coverage in India.” Discuss in the light of recent National Health Accounts estimates. (250 words)

Keywords for Value Addition

1. Universal Health Coverage (UHC)
2. Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE)
3. Government Health Expenditure (GHE)
4. Ayushman Bharat
5. Financial Risk Protection
6. Catastrophic Health Expenditure
7. Public Health Financing

8. Health Equity
9. Primary Healthcare
10. Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG-3)

Technical Advisory Committee Recommends New Base Year (2022–23) for All-India Industrial Production Index

Source: PIB | Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

Report of the Technical Advisory Committee on Base Year Revision of All-India Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

Key News

1. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) constituted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has recommended revising the base year of the **All-India Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** from **2011–12 to 2022–23**.
2. The revision aims to better capture structural changes in India's economy, emerging industries, technological advancements, and changing consumption patterns.
3. The committee proposed updating the item basket and sectoral weights to reflect the contemporary industrial structure more accurately.
4. The revised series is expected to improve the measurement of industrial growth and provide more reliable economic indicators for policymaking.
5. Base year revision is a routine statistical exercise undertaken to maintain the relevance and accuracy of macroeconomic indicators.

Major Key Data / Facts

Current Sectoral Weights in IIP (2011–12 Series)

Sector	Weight (%)
Manufacturing	77.63
Mining	14.37
Electricity	7.99

Use-Based Classification Weights

1. Primary Goods
2. Capital Goods
3. Intermediate Goods
4. Infrastructure/Construction Goods
5. Consumer Durables

6. Consumer Non-Durables

Released By: National Statistical Office (NSO)

Static Introduction: Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

What is IIP?

The **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** is a composite indicator that measures the short-term changes in the volume of industrial production in India.

It reflects the performance of:

1. Mining
2. Manufacturing
3. Electricity sectors

The IIP is one of the most important indicators used to assess industrial growth and overall economic activity.

Who Releases IIP?

Released by: National Statistical Office (NSO)

under:

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)

Frequency

1. Monthly

What is a Base Year?

Definition

A base year is the reference year against which economic indicators are compared and calculated.

Purpose

1. Standardizes comparison.
2. Removes price distortions.
3. Reflects structural economic changes.

Why is Base Year Revision Necessary?

Economic Transformation

Over time:

1. New industries emerge.
2. Consumption patterns change.
3. Technology evolves.
4. Relative importance of sectors changes.

Statistical Accuracy

Old base years may:

1. Overestimate outdated sectors.
2. Underrepresent modern industries.

Objectives of Revising IIP Base Year

Major Objectives

1. Better representation of industrial structure.

2. Inclusion of emerging industries.
3. Improved sectoral coverage.
4. Alignment with international statistical standards.
5. Enhanced policy formulation.

Important Components of IIP

Mining Sector

Includes:

1. Coal
2. Crude oil
3. Natural gas
4. Metallic minerals

Manufacturing Sector

Largest component of IIP.

Includes:

1. Textiles
2. Chemicals
3. Automobiles
4. Electronics
5. Pharmaceuticals
6. Machinery

Electricity Sector

Measures electricity generation growth.

Use-Based Classification of IIP

Category	Meaning
Primary Goods	Basic industrial inputs
Capital Goods	Machinery and equipment
Intermediate Goods	Inputs for further production
Infrastructure Goods	Construction-related goods
Consumer Durables	Long-lasting consumer goods
Consumer Non-Durables	Daily-use items

Difference Between IIP and GDP

Parameter	IIP	GDP
Scope	Industrial production only	Entire economy
Frequency	Monthly	Quarterly/Annual
Nature	Volume index	Value-based indicator
Coverage	Industry sector	Agriculture + Industry + Services

Why IIP is Important?

Economic Importance

1. Measures industrial growth.
2. Helps monetary policy decisions.
3. Indicates business cycle trends.
4. Assists investment planning.
5. Influences financial markets.

Policy Importance

Used by:

1. RBI
2. Ministry of Finance
3. NITI Aayog
4. Economists and investors

Challenges in IIP Compilation

Structural Issues

1. Informal sector coverage gaps.
2. Data collection delays.
3. Rapid technological change.

Statistical Challenges

1. Outdated product basket.
2. Sectoral underrepresentation.
3. Weight distortions.

Base Year Revisions in India

Indicator	Current Base Year
GDP	2011–12
IIP	2011–12 (proposed revision to 2022–23)
CPI	2012
WPI	2011–12

UPSC Value Addition

National Statistical Office (NSO)

Formed in:

1. 2019

By Merger of:

1. Central Statistics Office (CSO)
2. National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)

Functions

1. National income estimates.
2. Industrial statistics.
3. Surveys and data dissemination.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Index of Industrial Production (IIP):

1. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) measures changes in the volume of industrial production in the economy.

2. The National Statistical Office (NSO) releases the IIP on a monthly basis.
3. Manufacturing carries the highest weight in the IIP.
4. The IIP includes agriculture, industry and services sectors.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

1. **Statement 1 – Correct**
IIP measures the volume changes in industrial production.
2. **Statement 2 – Correct**
NSO releases the IIP monthly.
3. **Statement 3 – Correct**
Manufacturing has the largest weight in the index.
4. **Statement 4 – Incorrect**
IIP covers only industrial sectors — mining, manufacturing and electricity — not agriculture and services.

Mains Enrichment (GS Paper III – Economy)

Q5. “Periodic revision of the base year of macroeconomic indicators is essential for maintaining the relevance and credibility of economic statistics.” Discuss in the context of the proposed revision of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). (250 words)

Government to launch PM-AJAY Portal and Mobile App for digitized implementation of welfare schemes

What is in News?

1. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment announced the launch of the **PM-AJAY Portal** and **PM-AJAY Mobile App**.
2. The initiative aims to fully digitize the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana scheme.
3. The portal and app will support monitoring, reporting, geo-tagging, beneficiary tracking, and real-time governance across multiple scheme components.

4. It will cover areas such as:
 - Adarsh Gram development
 - Grant-in-Aid (GIA) livelihood projects
 - Hostels in educational institutions

Importance

Digital Governance

1. Promotes technology-driven implementation and monitoring of welfare schemes.

Scheduled Caste Welfare

1. PM-AJAY focuses on socio-economic development of Scheduled Caste (SC) communities.

Transparency & Accountability

1. Real-time dashboards, geo-tagging, and digital reporting improve transparency in scheme execution.

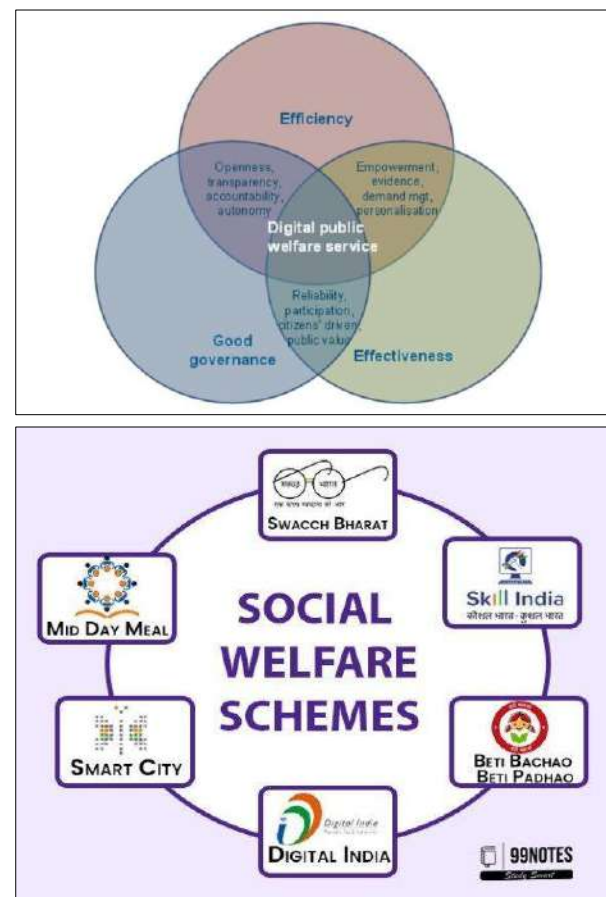
Inclusive Development

1. Supports livelihood generation, village development, and educational infrastructure.

Ease of Administration

1. Mobile-based access enhances field-level monitoring and faster service delivery.

About PM-AJAY Scheme



Feature	Details
Full Form	Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana
Ministry	Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Objective	Socio-economic upliftment of SC communities
Key Components	Adarsh Gram, Grant-in-Aid, Hostels
Digital Features	Geo-tagging, dashboards, beneficiary tracking

Additional UPSC Facts

Major Components of PM-AJAY

- Adarsh Gram Scheme**
 - Development of SC-majority villages through measurable socio-economic indicators.
- Grant-in-Aid (GIA)**
 - Financial support for livelihood and income-generating activities.
- Hostel Component**
 - Construction and maintenance of hostels for SC students.

Key Governance Features

- GIS-based monitoring
- Real-time reporting
- Mobile inspections
- Integration with existing government portals

MCQ

Q6. PM-AJAY Scheme is primarily aimed at the socio-economic upliftment of:

- Minority communities
- Scheduled Tribes
- Scheduled Castes
- Senior citizens

Correct Answer: (c) Scheduled Castes

MeitY launches 'Investors Support Portal' under India Semiconductor Mission

What is in News?

- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology launched the **Investors Support Portal** under the India Semiconductor Mission.

- The portal aims to provide support and facilitation for investors interested in India's semiconductor and electronics manufacturing ecosystem.
- It will act as a **single-window platform** for information, approvals, and coordination among stakeholders.
- The initiative supports India's goal of becoming a major global hub for semiconductor manufacturing and design.

Importance

Semiconductor Self-Reliance

- Reduces India's dependence on imported semiconductor chips.

Strategic Technology Sector

- Semiconductors are critical for:
 - Electronics
 - Telecommunications
 - Defence systems
 - AI and advanced computing
 - Electric vehicles

Ease of Doing Business

- Single-window portal improves investor facilitation and industrial coordination.

Atmanirbhar Bharat

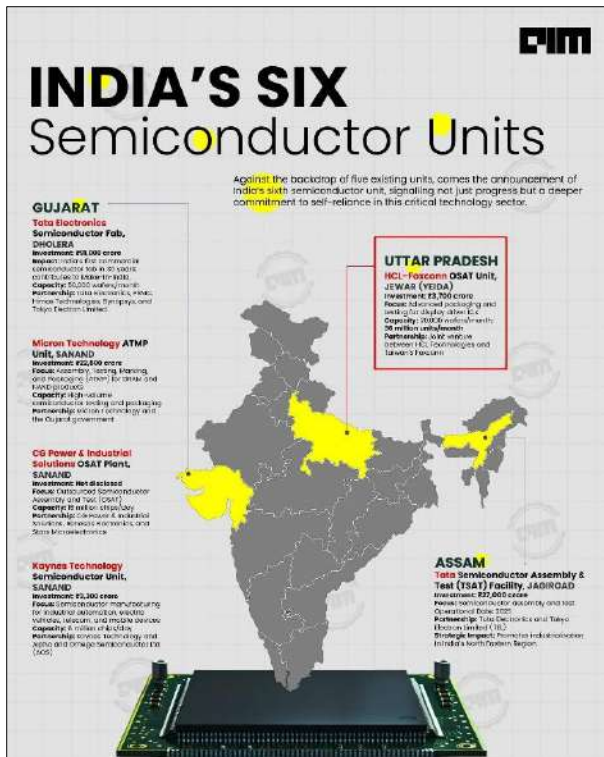
- Supports domestic manufacturing and technological sovereignty.

Supply Chain Security

- Semiconductor shortages globally highlighted the importance of resilient chip supply chains.

About India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)

Feature	Details
Launch Year	2021
Nodal Ministry	Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
Objective	Develop semiconductor & display manufacturing ecosystem
Key Focus	Fabrication units, chip design, packaging & testing



Functions of Investors Support Portal

1. Investor facilitation
2. Information access
3. Coordination with ministries & states
4. Faster approvals and support services

Additional UPSC Facts

1. Semiconductors are materials with electrical conductivity between conductors and insulators.
2. Silicon is the most widely used semiconductor material.
3. India has also launched initiatives for:
 - Chip design ecosystem
 - Display fabrication
 - Compound semiconductors
 - Semiconductor talent development

MCQ

Q7. India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) is primarily aimed at promoting:

- (a) Agricultural biotechnology
- (b) Domestic semiconductor and chip manufacturing
- (c) Nuclear reactor production
- (d) Space tourism infrastructure

Correct Answer: (b) Domestic semiconductor and chip manufacturing

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) Completes 10 Years: Transforming India's Insolvency Resolution Framework

Source: PIB | Ministry of Corporate Affairs
10 Years of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016

Key News

1. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016 has completed a decade, emerging as India's flagship reform for resolving corporate distress and improving credit discipline.
2. Since its implementation, the IBC framework has facilitated the realization of over **₹4 lakh crore for creditors** through resolution processes.
3. The Code replaced the fragmented insolvency regime with a time-bound and creditor-driven mechanism for resolving stressed assets.
4. IBC has significantly improved India's ranking in global ease of doing business parameters related to insolvency resolution and recovery.
5. The reform has strengthened confidence among lenders, investors, and financial institutions while improving capital allocation efficiency.

Major Key Data / Facts

Important Institutional Architecture

1. **IBC Enacted:** 2016
2. **Regulator:** Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)
3. **Adjudicating Authority (Companies):** National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)
4. **Adjudicating Authority (Individuals & Partnership Firms):** Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT)

Timeline for Resolution

1. Original timeline: **180 days**
2. Extendable up to **330 days** including litigation period.

Static Introduction: Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016

What is IBC?

The **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016** is a comprehensive legislation that consolidates and amends laws relating to insolvency resolution of:

1. Companies

2. Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs)
3. Partnership Firms
4. Individuals

The Code seeks to maximize asset value, balance stakeholder interests, and promote entrepreneurship through a time-bound resolution mechanism.

Why Was IBC Introduced?

Before 2016, India had multiple fragmented laws such as:

1. Sick Industrial Companies Act (SICA), 1985
2. Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act (RDDBFI), 1993
3. SARFAESI Act, 2002
4. Companies Act provisions

These mechanisms suffered from:

1. Delays
2. Multiple forums
3. Poor recovery rates
4. Rising Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)

Objectives of IBC

Major Objectives

1. Time-bound insolvency resolution.
2. Maximization of asset value.
3. Promotion of entrepreneurship.
4. Better credit culture.
5. Balancing interests of stakeholders.
6. Improving ease of doing business.

Key Features of IBC

Creditor-in-Control Model

1. Control shifts from management to creditors during insolvency proceedings.

Time-Bound Resolution

1. Resolution process must be completed within prescribed timelines.

Moratorium

1. Legal proceedings against the debtor are stayed during the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).

Insolvency Professionals (IPs)

1. Manage the affairs of distressed companies during resolution.

Institutional Framework of IBC

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) Established

1. October 2016

Functions

1. Regulates insolvency professionals.

2. Oversees insolvency professional agencies.
3. Regulates information utilities.

National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)

Jurisdiction

1. Corporate insolvency cases.
2. Company-related disputes.

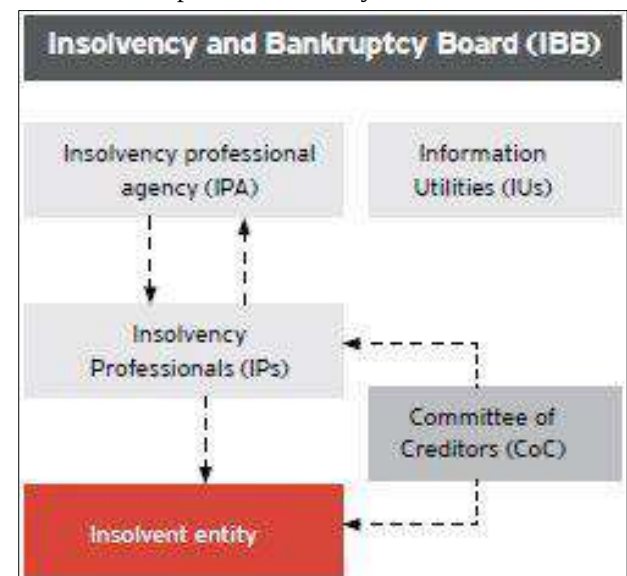
Appellate Authority

1. National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT)

Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT)

Jurisdiction

1. Individual insolvency.
2. Partnership firm insolvency.



Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) Process Flow

1. Default occurs.
2. Application filed before NCLT.
3. Moratorium imposed.
4. Interim Resolution Professional appointed.
5. Committee of Creditors (CoC) formed.
6. Resolution plan evaluated.
7. Resolution or liquidation.

Committee of Creditors (CoC)

Composition

Primarily:

1. Financial creditors

Functions

1. Approves resolution plans.
2. Supervises insolvency process.
3. Takes key commercial decisions.

What is a Moratorium?

Meaning

Temporary suspension of:

1. Recovery actions
2. Lawsuits
3. Enforcement proceedings against the debtor during CIRP.

Objective

To preserve asset value and ensure orderly resolution.

IBC and NPAs

Connection with Banking Sector

The IBC has become one of the most important mechanisms for:

1. Reducing Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)
2. Improving credit recovery
3. Strengthening banking sector balance sheets

Important Amendments in IBC

Homebuyers as Financial Creditors

1. Recognized under the Code.

Pre-Packaged Insolvency Resolution Process (PPIRP)

1. Introduced for MSMEs.

Cross-Border Insolvency Discussions

1. Based on UNCITRAL Model Law principles.

Challenges in IBC Implementation

Operational Challenges

1. NCLT backlog.
2. Delays due to litigation.
3. Capacity constraints.

Structural Issues

1. Haircuts faced by creditors.
2. Resolution delays beyond statutory timelines.
3. Limited success in some sectors.

Global Best Practice: UNCITRAL Model Law

Developed By

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)

Objective

1. Facilitate cross-border insolvency cooperation.
2. Protect creditor interests.
3. Improve international investment climate.

UPSC Value Addition

Difference Between Insolvency and Bankruptcy

Insolvency	Bankruptcy
------------	------------

Financial inability to repay debts	Legal declaration of insolvency
Financial condition	Legal status
Can be resolved	May lead to liquidation

Ease of Doing Business Relevance

IBC improved:

1. Credit availability
2. Investor confidence
3. Business exit mechanisms
4. Financial sector stability

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016:

1. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) is the regulator under the IBC framework.
2. The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) serves as the adjudicating authority for corporate insolvency cases.
3. During the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP), a moratorium is imposed on recovery and legal proceedings against the debtor.
4. Under the IBC, the management of the corporate debtor always continues to remain with the existing promoters throughout the insolvency process.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only

Explanation

Statement 1 – Correct

IBBI is the statutory regulator established under the IBC.

Statement 2 – Correct

NCLT adjudicates corporate insolvency matters.

Statement 3 – Correct

A moratorium is imposed during CIRP to preserve the debtor's assets.

Statement 4 – Incorrect

Under the **creditor-in-control model**, management is generally transferred to the Resolution Professional under the supervision of the Committee of Creditors.

Mains Enrichment (GS Paper III – Economy)

Q2. “The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016 has fundamentally altered India’s credit culture and stressed asset resolution framework. Evaluate its achievements and challenges after a decade of implementation.” (250 words)

NHAI Finalizes Highway Monetization Pipeline for FY 2026–27

Why in News?

Recently, the **National Highways Authority of India** finalized a tentative list of National Highway projects for monetization during **FY 2026–27**. The initiative is aimed at generating resources for further highway development and supporting infrastructure expansion across the country.

About Highway Monetization

1. Highway monetization refers to the process of generating revenue from operational highway assets by granting private entities the right to operate and maintain them for a specified period.
2. The funds raised are utilized for developing new road and highway infrastructure projects.
3. It forms an important component of the Government's **Asset Monetization Programme**.

About NHAI

1. NHAI is a statutory body established under the **National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988**.
2. It functions under the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways**.
3. Responsible for the development, maintenance, and management of National Highways in India.

Key Monetization Models

Toll-Operate-Transfer (TOT)

1. Existing operational highway assets are leased to private investors for a fixed concession period.
2. Investors collect toll revenue and maintain the highway.

3. NHAI receives an upfront payment.

Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT)

1. A pooled investment vehicle that allows investors to invest in operational infrastructure assets.
2. Generates long-term returns through revenue earned from toll collections.

Significance

1. Mobilizes private capital for infrastructure development.
2. Provides funds for constructing new highways without increasing fiscal burden.
3. Improves efficiency in operation and maintenance of road assets.
4. Supports the Government's infrastructure-led growth strategy.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI):

1. NHAI was established under the National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988.
2. It functions under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
3. The Toll-Operate-Transfer (TOT) model involves monetization of operational highway assets.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** NHAI was established through the NHAI Act, 1988.
2. **Statement 2 is correct:** It operates under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
3. **Statement 3 is correct:** Under the TOT model, operational highway assets are monetized by leasing them to private investors for toll collection and maintenance.

Nirbhay Raho Initiative: Training Rural Leaders for Women's Safety

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** conducted a **Training of Trainers (ToT) Programme** under the '**Nirbhay Raho**' Initiative to strengthen women's safety and security in rural areas. The programme aims to empower elected women representatives and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across India through capacity building and awareness.

About Nirbhay Raho Initiative

1. **Nirbhay Raho** is an initiative of the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** aimed at promoting **women's safety, dignity, and empowerment in rural India**.
2. It focuses on creating safe and inclusive communities through awareness, leadership development, and institutional support.
3. The initiative seeks to strengthen the role of **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** in addressing gender-based issues at the grassroots level.

Key Objectives

1. Enhance awareness regarding women's rights and safety.
2. Build the capacity of elected Panchayat representatives.
3. Promote gender-sensitive governance at the village level.
4. Strengthen community-based mechanisms for preventing violence against women.
5. Encourage greater participation of women in local governance.

Key Features

1. Training and capacity-building programmes for Panchayat representatives.
2. Focus on elected women representatives (EWRs).
3. Promotion of community awareness and gender equality.
4. Development of local leadership for addressing safety concerns.
5. Collaboration with training institutions and state governments.

Significance

1. Supports women's empowerment in rural India.
2. Strengthens grassroots democracy and inclusive governance.
3. Enhances the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions.
4. Contributes to achieving gender justice and social development goals.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the 'Nirbhay Raho' Initiative:

1. It is an initiative of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
2. It focuses on strengthening women's safety and empowerment in rural areas.
3. It is implemented exclusively in urban local bodies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** The initiative is being implemented by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
2. **Statement 2 is correct:** Its primary objective is to promote women's safety, dignity, and empowerment in rural areas.
3. **Statement 3 is incorrect:** The initiative focuses on **rural areas and Panchayati Raj Institutions**, not urban local bodies.

Siddaramaiah resigns as Karnataka Chief Minister; D.K. Shivakumar likely successor

What is in News?

1. Siddaramaiah resigned as the Chief Minister of Karnataka, paving the way for a leadership transition in the state.
2. He indicated that Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar would likely succeed him.

- The development follows prolonged speculation regarding a power-sharing arrangement within the ruling party.
- The new government formation is expected to be finalized after consultations with the party leadership.

Importance

State Politics

- Represents a major political transition in one of India's economically significant states.

Federal Governance

- Highlights the role of party leadership and constitutional procedures in state government formation.

Constitutional Process

- The Chief Minister submits resignation to the Governor, who oversees the transition until a new government is formed.

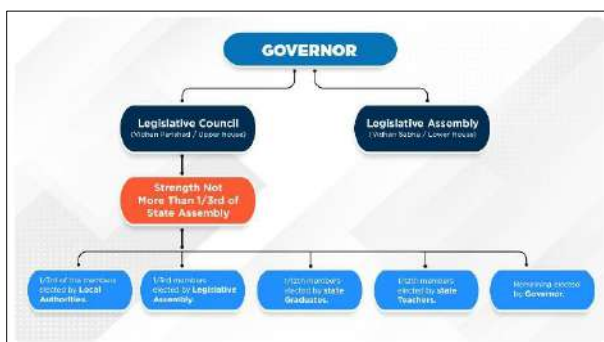
Karnataka's Political Significance

- Karnataka is a key state in southern India with major influence in national politics, technology, and industry.

Governance Continuity

- Smooth transfer of power ensures administrative stability and continuity of government policies.

About the Chief Minister in India



Aspect	Chief Minister	Governor
Nature	Real executive head	Constitutional/nominal head
Appointment	Appointed by Governor, must have majority support in Assembly	Appointed by the President of India
Accountability	Responsible to the Legislative Assembly	Not responsible to the State Legislature; responsible to the President
Executive Power	Exercises real executive power through the Council	Executive power vested in Governor but exercised on advice of CM
Term	No fixed term; holds office till he/she commands majority	5-year term (can be removed earlier by President)
Discretionary Powers	No discretionary powers; bound by collective decisions	Limited discretionary powers (e.g., reservation of bills, President's Rule recommendation)

Feature	Details
Constitutional Position	Head of State Government
Appointment	By the Governor
Collective Responsibility	To the Legislative Assembly
Article	Article 164 of the Constitution
Role	Real executive authority in the State

Additional UPSC Facts

- The **Governor** appoints the Chief Minister.
- The Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the State Legislative Assembly.
- Karnataka's legislature meets at the **Vidhana Soudha** in Bengaluru.
- Leadership changes within ruling parties do not require fresh elections if the new leader commands majority support in the Assembly.

MCQ

Q5. Under the Indian Constitution, the Chief Minister of a state is appointed by the:

- President of India
- Chief Justice of the High Court
- Governor of the State
- State Election Commission

Correct Answer: (c) Governor of the State

Babesiosis Outbreak in Asiatic Lions – In News

Recently, **eight Asiatic lion cubs** died in the **Gir-Somnath** and **Amreli** districts of **Gujarat**, with

veterinary authorities suspecting **Babesia infection (Babesiosis)** as the cause. The Forest Department has intensified surveillance, established containment measures, and launched large-scale tick-control operations in and around affected areas.

About Babesiosis

Babesiosis is a **tick-borne parasitic disease** caused by protozoan parasites of the genus **Babesia**.

Transmission

1. Spread primarily through **infected ticks**
2. Can infect:
 - Wild animals
 - Domestic animals
 - Humans (rarely)

Symptoms of Babesia Infection

In affected animals, symptoms may include:

1. Fever
2. Weakness and lethargy
3. Coughing
4. Nasal discharge
5. Loss of appetite
6. Anemia and reduced immunity

Young animals, especially cubs, are more vulnerable to severe infection.

Impact on Asiatic Lions

Officials fear the disease could spread rapidly because of:

1. Open forest habitats
2. Close movement of lion populations
3. Presence of tick vectors
4. Interaction among wildlife in adjoining areas

As a precaution, lions within the affected zone have been isolated and are under constant veterinary monitoring.

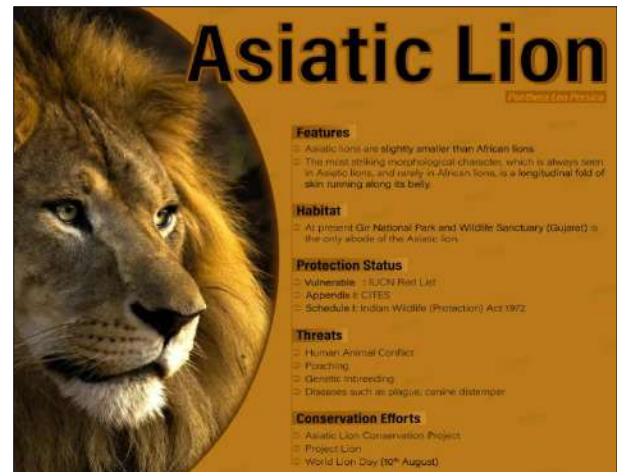
Containment Measures

Authorities have undertaken:

1. Large-scale **tick-control operations**
2. Isolation of lions within the affected zone
3. Collection of biological samples for laboratory testing
4. Enhanced surveillance by veterinary teams
5. Emergency preparedness at the **Sasan Lion Hospital**

About Asiatic Lion

Asiatic Lion



Distribution

1. Found naturally only in and around:
 - Gir National Park and the greater Gir landscape of Gujarat

Conservation Status

1. **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
2. **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I

Population

1. Gujarat's latest lion census recorded a population of over **800 Asiatic lions**, making disease outbreaks a major conservation concern.

Why This Matters

1. Disease outbreaks can threaten small and geographically concentrated wildlife populations.
2. Highlights the importance of:
 - Wildlife disease surveillance
 - Veterinary infrastructure
 - One Health approach (linking animal, human, and environmental health)

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Babesiosis:

1. Babesiosis is a parasitic disease transmitted mainly through ticks.
2. It can affect both wild and domestic animals.
3. Babesia is a bacterial pathogen responsible for the disease.

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 only

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1:** Correct. Babesiosis is primarily a tick-borne disease.
2. **Statement 2:** Correct. It affects a wide range of animal species.
3. **Statement 3:** Incorrect. Babesia is a **protozoan parasite**, not a bacterium.

Source: The Hindu.

NFHS-6 Findings on Maternal & Child Health – In News

The latest findings from the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6)** indicate significant improvements in **maternal and child health indicators** across India. The survey highlights increased institutional deliveries, better antenatal care coverage, and declining levels of stunting and severe wasting among children.

Key Highlights of NFHS-6

Institutional Deliveries

1. Institutional births increased from **88.6%** (NFHS-5) to **91.1%** (NFHS-6).
2. Nearly **9 out of 10 Indian babies** are now born in hospitals or healthcare facilities.

Maternal Healthcare

1. Women receiving **four or more antenatal check-ups** increased significantly.
2. Consumption of **Iron-Folic Acid (IFA) tablets** during pregnancy has improved.
3. Greater access to maternal healthcare services has contributed to safer pregnancies and childbirth.

Child Health Indicators

Stunting (Under 5 Years)

1. Reduced from **35.5%** to **33.7%**.
2. Indicates improvement in long-term nutritional status.

Underweight Children

1. Declined from **32.1%** to **31.8%**.

Severe Wasting

1. Dropped from **7.8%** to **5.3%**, reflecting better nutrition and healthcare interventions.

Child Mortality

1. Under-five mortality rate continues to show improvement compared to previous survey rounds.

Area of Concern: Rising Caesarean Deliveries

Caesarean Section (C-Section) Births

1. Increased from **21.5%** to **27.2%** nationally.
2. In several states and private healthcare facilities, C-section rates are significantly higher.

WHO Benchmark

1. The World Health Organization recommends that Caesarean section rates generally should not exceed **10–15%** at the population level.

Immunization Progress

India has recorded improvements in child vaccination coverage:

1. Full immunization coverage increased substantially.
2. Higher uptake of:
 - Measles-containing vaccines
 - Pentavalent vaccines
 - Routine childhood immunization services

This reflects the success of national initiatives such as:

1. Mission Indradhanush
2. Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)

About NFHS

National Family Health Survey

Conducted By

1. Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
2. Implemented by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)

Purpose

Provides nationally representative data on:

1. Population
2. Health
3. Nutrition
4. Family welfare
5. Maternal and child health indicators

Significance

1. Reflects progress toward:
 - **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**
 - **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)**
2. Helps policymakers identify:
 - Nutritional gaps
 - Maternal health challenges
 - Regional disparities in healthcare access

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6):

1. NFHS is conducted under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and implemented by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS).
2. NFHS-6 indicates an increase in institutional deliveries in India.
3. NFHS-6 reports a decline in Caesarean section deliveries compared to NFHS-5.

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 only

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1:** Correct.
2. **Statement 2:** Correct. Institutional deliveries have increased.
3. **Statement 3:** Incorrect. Caesarean section deliveries have increased, not declined.

Source: NFHS-6 findings reported in *The Hindu*.

India's Balance of Payments (BoP) – In News

Top 10 Ports by Export Volume in 2025



Recent data released by the Reserve Bank of India shows that India's **Balance of Payments (BoP)** recorded a **deficit of about \$30.8 billion in 2025–26**,

reflecting a sharp rise in foreign exchange outflows due to trade and investment-related payments.

What is Balance of Payments (BoP)?

The **Balance of Payments (BoP)** is a systematic record of all economic transactions between a country and the rest of the world during a specific period.

It consists of:

Current Account

Records transactions related to:

1. Export and import of goods
2. Services trade
3. Remittances
4. Income flows

Capital Account / Financial Account

Records:

1. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
2. Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)
3. External borrowings
4. Other capital flows

Key Findings from RBI Data

BoP Deficit

1. India recorded a **BoP deficit of around \$30.8 billion in 2025–26**.
2. This is significantly higher than previous years.

Merchandise Trade Deficit

1. Imports continued to exceed exports.
2. Large imports of:
 - Crude oil
 - Gold
 - Electronics
 - Industrial inputs

contributed to the widening trade gap.

Capital Outflows

1. Increased outward investment by Indian firms and investors.
2. Higher payments abroad led to pressure on foreign exchange reserves.

Why is the Government Concerned?

A persistent BoP deficit can:

1. Increase pressure on the **Indian Rupee**
 2. Reduce foreign exchange reserves
 3. Raise external sector vulnerabilities
 4. Increase dependence on foreign capital inflows
- However, moderate deficits can often be financed through:

1. FDI inflows

2. Portfolio investments
3. External financing

Current Account Deficit (CAD)

The **Current Account Deficit (CAD)** occurs when: Value of imports of goods and services exceeds exports and net receipts.

Major Reasons for India's CAD

1. High crude oil imports
2. Gold imports
3. Electronics imports
4. Global economic uncertainties affecting exports

RBI's Role

The RBI manages external sector stability by:

1. Monitoring foreign exchange reserves
2. Managing currency volatility
3. Regulating foreign exchange markets
4. Ensuring adequate liquidity in the economy

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q3. Consider the following statements regarding the Balance of Payments (BoP):

1. The Balance of Payments records all economic transactions between residents of a country and the rest of the world.
2. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is recorded in the Current Account of the BoP.
3. A Current Account Deficit occurs when imports exceed exports and net receipts.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

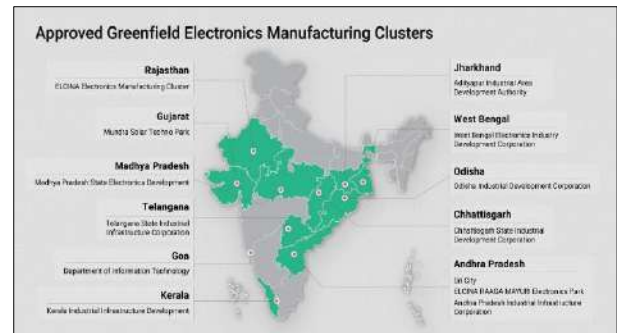
Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1:** Correct.
2. **Statement 2:** Incorrect. FDI is recorded under the **Capital/Financial Account**, not the Current Account.
3. **Statement 3:** Correct.

Source: RBI data reported in *The Hindu*.

**Invest India Facilitates \$6.1
Billion Investment Projects – In
News**



According to **Invest India**, the national investment promotion and facilitation agency, it facilitated **60 investment projects worth over USD 6.1 billion during FY 2025–26**, which are expected to generate **more than 31,000 jobs** across the country. The achievement highlights growing global confidence in India's manufacturing and industrial ecosystem.

About Invest India

Invest India is the **National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency** of India.

Established

1. Set up in **2009** under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

Role

1. Facilitates domestic and foreign investments.
2. Assists investors throughout the project lifecycle.
3. Acts as a bridge between:
 - Investors
 - Central Government
 - State Governments

Key Highlights of FY 2025–26

Investment Facilitated

1. Over **USD 6.1 billion** across 60 projects.

Employment Generation

1. Expected to create **31,000+ jobs**.

Major Investor Regions

1. **Europe** accounted for approximately **42%** of total investments.
2. Strong investor participation from:
 - United States
 - Japan
 - Emerging markets

Key Sectors Attracting Investments

Major investments flowed into:

1. Electronics & Semiconductors
2. Renewable Energy

3. Electric Vehicles (EVs)
4. Food Processing
5. Pharmaceuticals
6. Chemicals
7. Critical Minerals
8. Infrastructure

Fast-Growing Areas

1. High-value manufacturing
2. Clean energy technologies
3. Advanced electronics

State-wise Investment Trends

Leading States

1. Gujarat
2. Madhya Pradesh
3. Maharashtra
4. Andhra Pradesh

Emerging Destinations

1. Assam
2. Bihar
3. Sikkim

These states are increasingly attracting investments beyond traditional industrial hubs.

Related Government Initiatives

1. Make in India
2. Production Linked Incentive Scheme
3. National Industrial Corridor Programme
4. PM Gati Shakti

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Invest India:

1. Invest India is the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India.
2. It functions under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
3. Its primary role is to regulate stock markets and foreign exchange transactions.

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 only

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1:** Correct.

2. **Statement 2:** Correct.

3. **Statement 3:** Incorrect. Invest India facilitates investments; regulation of stock markets and foreign exchange is handled by agencies such as SEBI and RBI.

Source: Invest India Press Release.

Export Promotion Mission (EPM) – In News



Union Minister for Commerce & Industry **Piyush Goyal** recently chaired a high-level review meeting on the **Plan of Action to achieve India's ambitious USD 2 Trillion Export Target by 2030–31**. The meeting focused on strengthening exports through the **Export Promotion Mission (EPM)**, enhancing MSME competitiveness, and improving logistics and certification infrastructure.

India's Export Target: 2030–31

India aims to achieve:

1. **USD 1 Trillion Merchandise Exports**
 2. **USD 1 Trillion Services Exports**
- by **2030–31**, taking total exports to **USD 2 Trillion**.

What is Export Promotion Mission (EPM)?

Export Promotion Mission is a comprehensive initiative aimed at boosting India's export competitiveness through coordinated support for exporters, MSMEs, agriculture, logistics, and manufacturing sectors.

Key Pillars of Export Strategy

Market Expansion

1. Identifying new export destinations.
2. Diversifying export markets beyond traditional regions.

Product Competitiveness

1. Enhancing quality standards.
2. Promoting value-added exports.

Trade Facilitation

1. Reducing logistics costs.
2. Simplifying export procedures.
3. Improving ease of doing business.

Special Focus Areas**MSMEs**

1. Improving access to:
 - Finance
 - Technology
 - Market linkages
2. Strengthening integration into global value chains.

Agriculture Exports

1. Expanding agri-export opportunities.
2. Improving storage and cold-chain infrastructure.

Manufacturing Sector

1. Boosting high-value exports from:
 - Electronics
 - Engineering goods
 - Pharmaceuticals
 - Chemicals

Logistics & Warehousing Reforms

The government emphasized:

1. Modern warehousing infrastructure.
2. Efficient logistics networks.
3. Better testing and certification facilities.
4. Reduced turnaround time for exports.

These measures are expected to improve India's global competitiveness.

Key Initiatives Supporting Exports**PM Gati Shakti**

1. Integrated infrastructure planning.
2. Improved multimodal connectivity.

Districts as Export Hubs

1. Promotes district-specific export products.
2. Encourages local manufacturing and branding.

National Logistics Policy

1. Aims to reduce logistics costs and improve efficiency.

Significance**Economic Growth**

1. Higher exports contribute directly to GDP growth.

Employment Generation

1. Export-oriented sectors create large-scale jobs.

Foreign Exchange Earnings

1. Strengthens India's external sector.

Global Supply Chains

1. Enhances India's position as a manufacturing and services hub.

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ**Q5. Consider the following statements regarding India's Export Promotion Mission (EPM):**

1. It aims to support India's goal of achieving USD 2 trillion exports by 2030–31.
2. The mission focuses only on merchandise exports and excludes services exports.
3. Strengthening MSMEs, logistics infrastructure, and market diversification are among its objectives.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1:** Correct. EPM supports the USD 2 trillion export target.
2. **Statement 2:** Incorrect. The target includes both merchandise and services exports.
3. **Statement 3:** Correct. MSMEs, logistics, and market expansion are key focus areas.

Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

India–Kenya Joint Trade Committee (JTC) Meeting – In News

The **10th India–Kenya Joint Trade Committee (JTC) Meeting** was recently held in **Nairobi, Kenya**, aimed at strengthening bilateral trade, investment, and economic cooperation. The meeting highlighted India's growing role as a key economic partner for Kenya, with bilateral trade reaching **USD 4.31 billion** in 2025–26.

About India–Kenya Joint Trade Committee (JTC)

The **Joint Trade Committee (JTC)** serves as the principal institutional mechanism for promoting trade

and commercial cooperation between India and Kenya.



Objectives

1. Enhance bilateral trade and investment.
2. Identify new areas of economic cooperation.
3. Resolve trade-related issues.
4. Promote business-to-business partnerships.

Key Highlights of the 10th JTC Meeting

Bilateral Trade

1. India–Kenya trade reached **USD 4.31 billion in 2025–26**.
2. India emerged as one of Kenya's leading trading partners.

Priority Sectors Identified

Both countries explored cooperation in:

1. Engineering goods
2. Automobiles and auto components
3. Pharmaceuticals
4. Textiles
5. Agriculture and food processing
6. Renewable energy
7. Digital technologies

Renewable Energy Cooperation

India expressed willingness to support Kenya's:

1. Solar energy projects
2. Wind energy initiatives
3. Clean energy transition

This aligns with broader India–Africa cooperation in sustainable development.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

Both nations discussed collaboration in:

1. UPI-based payment systems
2. Digital financial inclusion
3. E-governance solutions
4. Digital public infrastructure development

India's experience with:

1. UPI
 2. Aadhaar
 3. Digital service delivery
- was highlighted as a potential model for cooperation.

Capacity Building & Skill Development

India offered support through:

1. Technical training programmes
 2. Capacity-building initiatives
 3. Skill development partnerships
 4. Educational exchanges
- under various India–Africa cooperation frameworks.

India–Kenya Business Forum

Alongside the JTC meeting, an **India–Kenya Joint Business Forum** brought together:

1. Government officials
2. Industry leaders
3. Business associations
4. Investors

to explore new investment opportunities and strengthen commercial ties.

Importance of Kenya for India

Kenya is:

1. One of India's most important partners in East Africa.
2. A gateway to the:
 - East African Community (EAC)
 - African markets

Strategic Importance

1. Maritime connectivity through the Indian Ocean.
2. Growing cooperation in:
 - Trade
 - Defence
 - Healthcare
 - Technology
 - Renewable energy

Quick Facts About Kenya

1. **Capital:** Nairobi
2. **Currency:** Kenyan Shilling
3. **Neighbouring Countries:** Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania
4. **Major Water Body:** Indian Ocean
5. **Highest Peak:** Mount Kenya

UPSC Prelims Practice MCQ

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding India–Kenya relations:

1. The Joint Trade Committee (JTC) is an institutional mechanism to promote bilateral trade and economic cooperation between India and Kenya.
2. Kenya is located in East Africa and has a coastline along the Indian Ocean.
3. Kenya is a member of the European Union.

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 only

Correct Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1:** Correct. JTC promotes bilateral trade and economic cooperation.
2. **Statement 2:** Correct. Kenya is an East African nation with an Indian Ocean coastline.
3. **Statement 3:** Incorrect. Kenya is not a member of the European Union.

UPSC Quick Facts

1. **10th JTC Venue:** Nairobi, Kenya
2. **Bilateral Trade (2025–26):** USD 4.31 Billion
3. **Key Areas:** Trade, Renewable Energy, Digital Public Infrastructure, Skill Development
4. **India's Strengths Shared:** UPI, DPI, Capacity Building
5. **Strategic Region:** East Africa & Indian Ocean

Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry / PIB.

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