



CURRENT *EDGE*

CSE (Pre.) 2025

CURRENT *EDGE*

Monthly Magazine

JANUARY 2025

Class | Workbooks | Test Series | k-Snippet 365+

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CURRENT EDGE

THE STATE HINDU

One-Stop Current Affairs Prelims 2025



The Real Day-Nigh

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Source

- ★ Newspapers (The Hindu, Indian Express.. etc)
- * Yojana Magazine
- **★ PIB (Press Information Bureau)**
- **★** Science Reporter (SR)
- **★** Down to Earth (DTE).

13-Workbooks & Live Discussion

Memory Retention guide to prepare Current Affairs better.

Comprehensive Coverage

PRELIMS CURRENT EDGE

Subject

- **★** Economy
- **★** Polity
- **★** Geography/Environment
- **★ History/Art & Culture**
- **★** Government Schemes
- **★** International Organisations/Misc.

23-Tests & Model Answers

"Current Affairs Workbooks to get CURRENT EDGE"

20+ Marks in Prelims 2024

From Current Edge

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Sample Videos

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• Class Time: 05:00 PM

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MONTHLY MAGAZINE – JANUARY 2025

S.No.	S.No. Topics			
Quotes	s of the Day			
What the Others Say				
OPINIC	OPINION – 50 Word Editorials			
Picture of the Day				
Keywo	rd of the Day			
Facts	of the Day			
History	/, Art & Culture			
1	Sree Narayana Guru			
2	Harappan Script			
3	Kumbh Mela			
4	Iron Age in Tamil Nadu – New evidence			
Polity	& Governance			
1	Dissent in Indian judiciary			
2	Delimitation challenges			
3	Khel Ratna Awards			
4	Sedition Law – Section 152 of BNS as Proxy			
5	New selection process for next Chief Election			
	Commissioner			
6	Amendment to Rule 93(2) of Conduct of Election Rules,			
	1961			
7	RG Kar rape case conviction			
8	Need for distinguished jurists as judges			
9	SC suggested appointing retired HC judges on 'ad hoc'			
	basis			
10	Grey birthday for Election Commission of India			
11	Waqf panel: 10 Opposition MPs suspended			
12	Awards given on Republic Day			
13	Birthright Citizenship: US vs India			
14	De-notified Tribes – Impacts of classification			
Society	y & Social Justice			
1	Concerns over establishment of wildlife sanctuaries in			
	Nicobar			
2	UGC draft regulations and concerns			
3	Right to food and struggle with PSD			
4	Maternal Mortality Rate in Kerala			
5	UNESCO Report: "Engaging Men and Boys: A Report			
	on Pathways to Gender Equality in India"			
6	Drone Didi scheme			
7	India ranked 25th overall in the QS World Future Skills			
	Index 2025			
8	Health in India's Viksit Bharat Vision 2047			
9	Challenges in Education system			
10	Poverty estimation issues			
11	Tamil Nadu banned Rhodamine B			
12	Governors as Chancellors – Challenges			
	ř			

13	Thailand became largest Asian country to legalize		
	same-sex marriage		
14	Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024		
Interna	ational Relations		
1	Trump and Panama treaty		
2	China building world's largest dam on Tsangpo		
3	India-US atomic energy cooperation		
4	India-Taliban talks		
5	Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) and Indian Diaspora		
6	US withdrawn from Paris Agreement		
7	Trump 2.0 and Delhi's challenges		
8	Drill, baby, drill Slogan		
9	Trump's anti-immigration agenda		
10	Neutral Expert's decision on Indus Water Treaty		
11	China's export control on critical minerals		
12	India-Indonesia ties		
Econo	my & Agriculture		
1	India's eight core infrastructure sectors grew by 4.3%		
	in November 2024		
2	Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded Rs 4,285		
	crore in first three trading days of 2025		
3	CII suggest 7-point agenda for employment generation		
4 Farmer's demand for legal guarantee for MSP			
	analysis		
5	Money trends for 2025		
6	India's growth slowdown		
7	Draft rules for data protection – Concerns remain		
8	India's start-up ecosystem		
9	New US AI export rule exclude India		
10	Eighth Pay Commission		
11	India's real growth rate and forecast		
12	Need for agricultural reforms		
13	SVAMITVA Scheme		
14	WEF meeting at Davos		
15	7 imperatives to build a viksit agri economy by 2047		
16	Status of Smart City Mission		
17	Understanding Budget terms		
18	Are Indians being over-taxed?		
Science & Technology			
1	Wi-Fi connectivity in flights		
2	HMPV outbreak		
3	Drinking and cancer risk		
4	Small Language Models (SLMs)		
4			
5	Genome India Project		
	Genome India Project Semi-Dirac fermion - A new type of particle discovered		
5	-		

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9	Unusual black hole discovered
10	China's nuclear fusion breakthrough
11	ISRO's 100 th launch
12	DeepSeek: Opportunities before India
13	DeepSeek: India lags behind
Geogra	aphy & Environment
1	Maps in News: Ukraine halts transit of Russia's gas into
	Europe, ends its supply dominance
2	Maps in News: Did Rajaji tiger walks 500 km to
	Jammu?
3	Maps in News: PM to open Key Z-Morh Tunnel Today
4	Maps in News: Centre's wildlife panel clear oil gas
	exploratory drilling in Assam sanctuary
5	Maps in News: Rajasthan river-link lifeline could
	submerge 37 sq km in tiger reserve
6	Map in News: Teesta Hydel Projects
7	Map in News: Gulf of Mexico
8	Winter storm in US

9	River linking Project		
10	Breaching 1.5-degree Celsius and beyond		
11	2024 as warmest year for India		
12	Greenland's crystal blue lakes turned brown		
Interna	al Security		
1	Day in History: January 15th celebrated as Army Day		
2	China has unveiled two new 6th generation stealth		
	fighter jets		
3	Maoist attacks on security forces in Chhattisgarh		
4	Al in military		
5	India-Bangladesh border fencing issues		
6	INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, INS Vaghsheer commissioned		
7	Mahakumbh stampede		
Ethics	Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude		
1	Ethics News of the Day: Death of journalist Mukesh		
	Chandrakar		
2	Ethics News of the Day: Animal welfare, people's		
	safety: Issues of in use of elephants in ceremonies		



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Quotes of the Day

January 2025

1 'Good resolutions are simply checks that men draw on a bank where they have no account' – OSCAR WILDE 2 'Never ruin an apology with an excuse' – BENJAMIN FRANKLIN 3 'Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly' – MARTIN KUTHER KING JR 4 'Coffee is a ritual that unites people' – CHARLES BUKOWSKI 5 'Economy does not consist in saving the coal, but in using the time while it burns' – RALPH WALDO EMERSON 6 'Awards are like applause, and every actor likes to hear applause' – RALPH FIENNES 7 'The universe is not only stranger than we imagine, it is stranger than we can imagine' – ARTHUR EDDINGTON 8 'An animal's eyes have the power to speak a great language' – MARTIN BUBER 9 'Age has no reality except in the physical world' – GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ 10 'Where words fail, Music speaks' – HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN 11 'Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter' – MARTIN LUTHER KING JR 12 'Preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known' – CARL SAGAN 13 'Last year's words belong to last year's language, and next year's words await another voice' – T S ELIOT	SI No	Quotes
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What the Others Say

January 2025

SI No	What the Others Say			
1	'Given the wave of interruptions the education system has faced ever since the pandemic,			
•	it is all the more important to get things firmly back on track. Ensuring that school children			
	receive their books promptly can lay the foundation for a strong academic year ahead.' –			
	THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH			
2	'Rewriting, rather than simply removing offensive language or storylines, confronts			
	problematic texts. By changing the perspective of a novel, marginalised figures can be			
	turned into the heroes of their own lives, to paraphrase the opening line of David			
	Copperfield' – THE GUARDIAN			
3	'The pandemic demonstrated the urgency of working together on global health, but also			
	how often countries fell short, prioritising national interests. The world's divides are likely			
	to yawn wider in 2025. But an escalatory spiral must not be regarded as either desirable			
	or inevitable' – THE GUARDIAN			
4	'Our industries, both formal and informal, must undergo a radical transformation in how			
	they approach worker's rights including workplace safety and decent wages. It is			
	imperative that the government introduces stronger mechanisms for worker			
	representation'- THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH			
5	'In Nepal, where guardians often scrutinise young people's lives, the internet offers them			
	the freedom rarely available offline. The young can be whoever they want build a			
	community or find love. Yet the internet's accessibility makes it vulnerable to being in ways			
-	that could harm them' – THE GUARDIAN			
6	'While some leave country due to persecution, the vast majority are economic migrants, many hailing from relatively prosperous parts of Punjab. Victims have said economic			
	hardship made them opt for illegal migration, while others are inspired by compatriots who			
	made it 'big' in Europe'- DAWN, PAKISTAN			
7	'Disinformation becomes a potent political weapon, making voters believe falsehoods			
-	while distrusting – Even hating – Those who don't. Politicians who refuse to align with			
	[Elon Musk's] agenda can be discarde, as he bets his followers will support whichever			
	candidate he endorses'– THE GUARDIAN			
8	'While the vulnerability of under-five children to cold-related viral diseases is well			
	documented, it is disheartening that many parents across the country remain unaware of			
	the risks Many mothers, for example, lack knowledge of administering oral rehydration			
	solution (ORS) correctly'- THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH			
9	Whether in terms of investment, trade or supply chain integration, the highly			
	complementary economies of China and the US require mutual dependence and			
	coexistence, with significant potential for collaboration in the tech sector. These cannot			
40	simply be 'blocked' by a Pentagon mandate.'– GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA			
10	'Nepalis were caught unaware by the 2015 earthquake; awareness programmes gained			
	momentum in the aftermath. Predictably, complacency has crept in with the passage of			
	time. Not only has reconstruction of earthquake-resilient houses slowed, even basic			
11	safety measures are ignored'— THE KATHMANDU POST 'E governance is the future. It is also not a novel idea. Our state's stumbling progress.			
"1	'E-governance is the future. It is also not a novel idea. Our state's stumbling progress towards it underlines that the country needs proven experts leading all IT-related affairs			
	instead of retired military personnel or professional paper-pushers drawn from the nation's			
	burgeoning bureaucracy.'— DAWN, PAKISTAN			
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12	'While the majority of Americans still support capital punishment, for the first time young Americans oppose it – with support falling slightly among young Republicans too. That should give heart to abolitionists in the US and globally.'– THE GUARDIAN
13	'The country's businesses are already grappling with the fallout of the previous regime's corruption and financial irregularities, which left behind a huge debt for us and fragile banking system. The additional menace of criminal gangs is only making things worse'—THE DAILY STAR, BANGLADESH
14	'The time for careful deliberation has long passed – what is needed now is swift action to ensure that Pakistan's missing persons are either produced before the courts or their fate explained to their families. Anything less would represent a continued failure of justice'– DAWN, PAKISTAN
15	'China's rise does pose a challenge to US national security and its place in the world. But hammering China with tariffs is not the solution. A real trade war with China would only make it more difficult to deal with the world's existential challenges. And it would undercut the world economy'— THE WASHINGTON POST
16	'The federal government's ability to regulate immigration, a basic function of any nation, is broken Instead of an immigration policy calibrated to the needs of the country, both Americans and immigrants are being let down by a set of outdated laws.'- THE NEW YORK TIMES
17	'Now the 'tech industrial complex' highlighted by Mr Biden and run by Mr Trump's new friends work at an even more intimate level, determining what voters see. At stake may ultimately be the question of who shall rule the people or America's new aristocrats' – THE GUARDIAN
18	'Ultimately, Gaza should become part of an independent Palestinian state. In the best of words, this ceasefire will be beginning of this essential change'— THE WASHINGTON POST
19	'Narrow world views may dictate the Trump administration's foreign policy. This is why, though his speech yesterday was almost statesmanlike in some respects, many will continue watching Mr Trump to see whether he has really changed'— DAWN, PAKISTAN
20	'South Korea can be rightly proud of its progress. But the events of recent weeks demonstrate that there is further to go – and that politicians must be as committed to democracy as those they are supposed to serve' – THE GUARDIAN
21	'Bleak as the outlook undoubtedly is, the West must not abandon the battered and bruised prodemocracy movement in Belarus to its fate' – THE GUARDIAN
22	'Underlying disillusionment and anger in Korea remains a strong sense of the bloody cost paid for democracy and the need to defend it.'– THE GUARDIAN
23	'The US is following Europe's lead, where the far right has practically declared war on migrants. People from across the globe who seek to reach American shores must now accept the new reality: Mr Trump has pulled the welcome mat' – DAWN, PAKISTAN
24	'DeepSeek's R1 highlights a broader debate over the future of AI; Should it remain locked behind proprietary walls, controlled by a few big corporations, or be 'open sourced' to foster global innovation?'— THE GUARDIAN
25	'Donald Trump is violating a 2022 law that passed with strong bipartisan support to protect the inspector generals' independence'– THE WASHINGTON POST
26	'Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – due to meet Donald Trump as soon as next week – has spurned plans for 'the day' in Gaza, largely because he has sought to defer such a day'– THE GUARDIAN

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OPINION – 50 Word Editorials

January 2025

OPINIONS - 50 WORD EDITORIALS



Shashi Tharoor on sorry state of India's parliamentary proceedings: Details three specific issues plaguing India's Parliament:

1) disruptive precedents set by previous oppositions, intensified acrimony between government and opposition, and public's diminished expectations from MPs. He notes the BJP's shift from disruption to condemnation, the decline in civility, and MPs being judged more on local political weight than parliamentary performance. Tharoor warns

that treating Parliament as a rubber stamp severely damages India's democracy – The sorry state of India's parliamentary proceedings, The Hindu $\underline{\text{Link}}$

OPINIONS - 50 WORD EDITORIALS



Himanshu, an associate professor at JNU criticizes the overreliance on cash transfers in Indian politics, citing examples from Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and PM-KISAN. He argues these schemes, while politically successful, lack evidence of effectively addressing issues like women's empowerment or agrarian distress. The author warns that such transfers strain government finances, potentially reducing spending on crucial sectors like health and education, and calls for a more nuanced approach to welfare policies – Quick-fi populism, no panacea Link



Jasmine Shah, an AAP leader defends Delhi's Mahila Samman Yojna, a Rs 1,000 monthly cash transfer to women, citing its potential to empower marginalized groups. He references a study showing Delhi's free bus rides increased women's employment by 24%. Shah argues AAP's Delhi Model balances transfers with investments in education, health, and infrastructure, maintaining a budget surplus and reducing debt-to-GDP from 7% to 4%, while criticizing corporate tax cuts as true "freebies".

OPINIONS - 50 WORD EDITORIALS



Faizan Mustafa on UGC draft regulations 2025: Argues for more flexibility in selecting university Vice-Chancellors (VCs) in India. He welcomes new UGC regulations allowing non-professors to apply for VC positions, suggesting that distinguished individuals from various fields should be eligible. Mustafa advocates for greater university autonomy in choosing VCs, proposing a search committee with more university nominees. He emphasizes the need for humble leaders and student-centric universities, criticizing the current government-dominated selection process – Let's trust out Universities, Indian Express Link



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Picture of the Day

January 2025

Picture of the Day: IE – Army officers unveil Shivaji statue near Ladakh lake, local leaders raise concerns $\underline{\text{Link}}$

Why in News? The Indian Army's installation of a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on the banks of Pangong Tso lake in Ladakh has sparked debate and criticism from local leaders and some army veterans.

Key Points

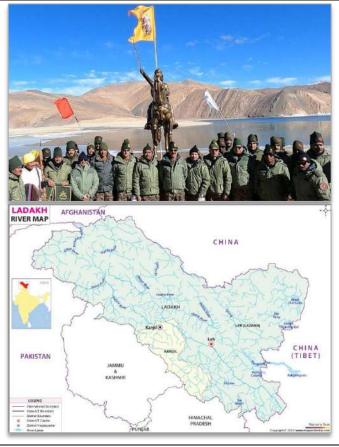
- 1) Statue unveiled on December 26, 2024, at 14,300 feet altitude
- 2) Inaugurated by Lt Gen Hitesh Bhalla, GOC Fire and Fury Corps
- 3) Installed by Maratha Light Infantry unit

Concerns Raised

- 1) Lack of local consultation
- Questionable relevance to Ladakh's culture and environment (Termed as 'cultural imposition')
- 3) Potential impact on sensitive ecology

Army's Perspective

- 1) Celebrates "unwavering spirit" of Shivaji
- 2) Unit-level initiative, not headquarters directive
- 3) Aimed at boosting troop morale
- 4) Part of cultural symbolism in sensitive areas



Picture of the Day: IE - Ahead of Maha Kumbh

Why in News? The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 is set to take place in Prayagraj from January 13 to February 26, 2025, with an estimated 40-45 crore devotees expected to attend.

Location: Held at Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, at the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati rivers.

Frequency: Occurs every 12 years in Prayagraj, rotating among four locations (Haridwar, Ujjain, Nashik, and Prayagraj) every three years.

Ahead Of Maha Kumbh

People arrive for the Maha Kumbh Mela, to be held from January 13 to February 26, in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj Wednesday. P

Key Rituals:

- 2) Shahi Snan (Royal Bath): The most important ritual, believed to wash away sins
- 3) Ganga Aarti: Evening ritual performed on riverbanks with lamps
- 4) Kalpavas: A period of spiritual discipline and austerity
- 5) Deep Daan: Floating of lit earthen lamps on the river



Picture of the Day: TH - Modwerth Festival of Toda Tribe in Nilgiris

Event: **Modwerth festival** celebration and annual planning gathering

Location: Muthanad 'mund' (hamlet) in **Udhagamandalam, Nilgiris** (Ooty, Tamil Nadu)

Participants: Members of the **Toda tribe**

Cultural Elements:

- 1) Traditional white attire with distinctive black and red patterns
- 2) Gathering near their sacred conical temple structure
- 3) Community assembly for both religious and planning purposes

Tribal festival



Revelry time: Members of the Toda tribe in the Nilgiris gather around a 'moonbo' (head) temple in the Muthanad 'mund' (hamlet) in Udhagamandalam on Sunday to celebrate the Modwerth festival and discuss plans for the year ahead. M. SATHYAMOORTHY

Picture of the Day: TH - Olive Ridley Turtles

Why in News? Two Olive Ridley turtles were spotted swimming in sync in the Bay of Bengal off Odisha coast, signalling the upcoming mass nesting season.

Factsheet: Olive Ridley Turtles

- 1) **Physical Characteristics:** Smallest sea turtle species, measuring 60-70 cm in length; Weight: 35-45 kg
- 2) Distribution & Habitat:
 - a) Found in warm waters of Pacific,
 Atlantic and Indian oceans
 - b) World's largest rookery: Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, Odisha
 - c) Major mass nesting sites in India:
 - i) Gahirmatha Beach
 - ii) Rushikulya Beach
 - iii) Devi River mouth
- 3) **Arribada Phenomenon:** Mass synchronized nesting where thousands of females nest simultaneously; Occurs during February-March in Odisha; Only Olive Ridley and Kemp's Ridley turtles exhibit this behaviour.
- 4) Conservation Status:
 - a) IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
 - b) Wildlife Protection Act 1972: Schedule I
 - c) CITES: Appendix I

Nature's rhythms



In sync: A pair of Olive Ridley turtles seen in the waters of the Bay of Bengal off Odisha coast ahead of their mass nesting. BISWARANJAN ROUT

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Picture of the Day: Digital Tree Aadhaar Programme

Digital Tree Aadhaar Programme

- 1) The Jammu and Kashmir government launched the "Digital Tree Aadhaar" programme to conserve the iconic Chinar trees.
- 2) Purpose: To create a comprehensive database for the conservation of Chinar trees, which are facing threats due to rapid urbanization.
- 3) Technology Used:
 - a) Geographical Information System (GIS)
 - b) QR codes
 - c) Geo-tagging
- 4) Implementation
 - Each Chinar tree is geo-tagged and equipped with a QR code
 - QR-based digital plates are affixed to surveyed trees using specialized spring-enabled metal
 - The metal attachment accommodates tree growth for over 50 years without embedding into the bark
- 5) Status: As of January 2025, approximately 28,560 Chinar trees have been geo-tagged over the past four years.
- 6) The project is funded under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) scheme.



GEO-TAGGING CHINAR TREES

Workers install QR code-based Geographical Information System plates on Chinar trees to create a comprehensive database under the Digital Tree Aadhaar programme aimed at conserving the trees facing threats due to rapid urbanisation, in Srinagar on Thursday. $P\Pi$

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

An Aadhaar card for a tree



Workers install a plate with a QR code on a Chinar tree at the Nishat Bagh on the banks of the Dal take in Srinagar. Under the "Digital Tirer Aadhaar" conservation initiative, Chinar trees, which are a cultural symbol of Janmus and Kashmir and are facing threats due to unbanisation, are being provided with unquie identification codes. Scanning the QR code will give a person information about the tree's geographical location, health, and growing patterns. IRRIAN NISSON.



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Session 04	22-Feb	Environment
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Session 08	29-Mar	CSAT

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Keyword of the Day

January 2025

Keyword of the Day: Badge Engineering

IE - Badge engineering: Different cars, same look Link

Definition: Badge engineering refers to the sharing of a platform or an entire vehicle by different car manufacturers, with at least one of them not needing to design or engineer a new model from scratch.

THE TOYOTA-MARUTI SUZUKI TWINS

TOYOTA GLANZA is essentially a rebadged Maruti Suzuki Baleno, Toyota Taisor is the Suzuki Fronx, and the Toyota Rumion is the Suzuki Ertiga's twin.

GRAND VITARA and Hyryder were developed jointly; Maruti Suzuki did most of the design work, and the companies leveraged their respective strengths in the two powertrains mild hybrid tech (Maruti Suzuki) and strong hybrid (Toyota). Both models are manufactured at Toyota's plant in Bidadi, Karnataka.

HYCROSS-INVICTO and Hyryder-Grand Vitara are almost exactly the same car, unmistakably twins in appearance.

Keyword of the Day: Twigstats

TH - Twigstats: New tool reveals hi-res genetic view of people's ancestors Link

Why in News? An international collaboration has developed Twigstats, a new tool that provides a more precise and high-resolution view of individual-level ancestry, including revisiting the ancestry of population groups in the western frontiers of the Roman Empire in the first millennium AD.



Keyword of the Day: Russell-Einstein Manifesto Link

Great anniversaries of peace initiatives, a role for India 🗪 🖜

It is high time India did something for peace as there are no Russells, Einsteins and Rotblats to warn the world anymore

Updated - January 17, 2025 12:37 am IST



Why in News? The year 2025 marks significant anniversaries of peace initiatives, including the 80th anniversary of the first nuclear weapon test and the 70th anniversary of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, prompting reflection on India's role in global peace efforts.

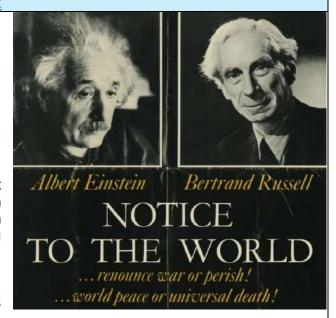
Key Historical Events:

- 1) 1945: First nuclear weapon test conducted by the US as part of the Manhattan Project
- 2) 1955: Russell-Einstein Manifesto issued, calling for nuclear disarmament
- 3) 1955: Indian National Congress passes the Avadi Resolution, advocating for prohibition of nuclear weapons

Current Nuclear Landscape:

- 1) Nine countries possess nuclear weapons, including India
- 2) As of 2024, approximately 12,100 nuclear warheads exist globally
- 3) Russia has revised its nuclear doctrine, declaring arms control "a thing of the past"
- 4) Increased tensions in various global theatres, including Israel-Palestine and NATO-Russia relations





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India's Role and Potential:

- 1) Historical initiatives: Rajiv Gandhi's 1988 "Action Plan for a Nuclear Weapons Free and Non-Violent World Order"
- 2) Current need: India should take a leading role in organizing a conference on preventing mass annihilation
- 3) Proposal: Develop a new Action Plan for global peace and nuclear disarmament

Challenges and Concerns:

- 1) Lack of prominent scientific voices warning about nuclear dangers
- 2) Risk of non-state actors acquiring nuclear capabilities through cyber and Al pathways
- 3) Ongoing nuclear proliferation and modernization efforts by nuclear states

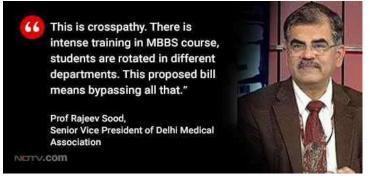
Call to Action:

- 1) India must go beyond mediating between conflicting parties
- 2) Focus on saving humanity from the threat of nuclear annihilation
- 3) Utilize the anniversary year to launch new peace initiatives

Keyword of the Day: Crosspathy Link

Why in News? Maharashtra Food & Drugs Administration recently allowed homeopathic practitioners who completed a certificate course in modern pharmacology to prescribe allopathic medications.

Crosspathy: Crosspathy occurs when a practitioner of one system of medicine (e.g. Ayurveda, homeopathy, allopathy) prescribes or uses treatments from another system. For example:



- An Ayurvedic doctor prescribing allopathic (modern) medicines
- A homeopathic doctor using Ayurvedic treatments
- An allopathic (modern medicine) doctor prescribing homeopathic remedies

Crosspathy is generally not permitted in India, with some exceptions.

Recent directive by Maharashtra Food & Drugs Administration

- 1) Issued in December 2024 to clarify a 2014 amendment to the Maharashtra Medical Council Act
- 2) Aims to ensure chemists accept allopathic prescriptions from qualified homeopathic practitioners

Why is this directive controversial?

- 1) Challenged by Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Bombay High Court
- 2) Concerns raised:
 - a) Concerns about patient safety if homeopaths practice allopathy without full medical training
 - b) May dilute general practice system in India
 - c) Viewed as promoting 'crosspathy', which is banned by Supreme Court

Government Rationale: To address shortage of doctors, especially in rural areas; Utilize AYUSH practitioners to fill gaps in healthcare workforce;



Keyword of the Day: Sachetisation

IE – Sachetisation: SEBI's plan to spur MF investments among lower-income investors Link

Why in News? SEBI has floated a consultation paper proposing small ticket Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) of Rs 250 to promote financial inclusion through "sachetisation" of mutual fund investments.

Proposal Details:

- 1) Small ticket SIP of Rs 250 per month
- 2) Targeted towards new mutual fund investors from low-income groups
- Maximum of three Rs 250 SIP plans per investor eligible for discounted rates
- 4) 5-year commitment (60 investments) recommended, but premature withdrawal allowed

Rationale:

- Enable small periodic investments in mutual funds
- 2) Empower underserved sections of the economy
- 3) Expand mutual fund footprint to remote locations
- 4) Increase participation from "bottom of the pyramid"

Implementation Strategy:

- 1) Discounted rates from industry intermediaries
- 2) Reimbursement of certain costs from Investor Education and Awareness Fund
- 3) Restricted to NACH and UPI auto pay modes
- 4) Incentives for distributors and platforms

Expected Impact:

- 1) Deepen India's equity market
- 2) Increase domestic investment flows
- 3) Provide cushion against foreign investor volatility
- 4) Gradual progression of new investors beyond small ticket SIPs

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'SACHETISATION' OF MFs

- ➤ Some fund houses already offer SIPs with small-ticket sizes
- Sebi has proposed SIPs for ticket size as low as Rs 250... and to popularise them, it has proposed to subsidise the costs for market intermediaries
- Such SIPs can be offered in any scheme except debt, and sectoral & thematic, small & mid-cap funds
 - To limit the subsidy, the number of SIPs per PAN card will be restricted to three



SEBI

- Releases consultation paper on sachetisation of mutual fund investments
- Proposal aims to promote financial inclusion and systematic savings among small investors
- Sachetised mutual fund scheme to allow small ticket SIPs starting at ₹250
- SEBI, along with mutual fund industry, proposes small ticket SIPs to expand retail participation
- MF industry AUM has surged from ₹10 lk cr in 2014 to ₹68.08 lk cr in Nov 2024
- Unique mutual fund investors have grown from 1.7 cr in 2018 to 5.18 cr in Nov 2024
- SEBI to cap discounted rate benefit to first three small ticket SIPs per investor

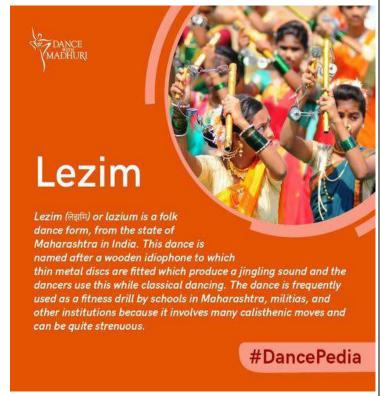


Keyword of the Day: Lezim

Why in News? The makers of the film 'Chhaava' have decided to remove a controversial Lezim dance scene featuring Vicky Kaushal as Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj after objections from political leaders and concerns over historical accuracy.

About Lezim

- Lezim is a traditional folk dance from Maharashtra, also known as lazium or lezium
- The dance is named after the musical instrument used - a wooden stick with jingling cymbals attached
- 3) Originated in 1986, it evolved from a sport played by men during Chhatrapati Shivaji's rule to build strength and muscles
- Performed primarily during the Ganesh festival and other celebrations in Maharashtra
- 5) Involves vigorous physical movements, making it both a dance and an exercise form
- 6) Typically performed by a group of at least 12 male dancers
- 7) Dancers wear traditional costumes: white kurta, pajama, colorful belt, and turban
- 8) The dance includes various movements like stepping, hopping, squatting, and bending, synchronized to the rhythm of the cymbals
- 9) Often used as a fitness drill in schools and institutions due to its strenuous nature
- 10) Has three main types: military lezim, talathekya, and samanyajananna





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Facts of the Day

January 2025

Case Study: IE - Six years after quota for women, what has changed at IITs? Link

Why in News? A supernumerary quota of 20% for women was implemented at Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) in 2018, leading to significant changes in campus demographics and culture over the past six years.

Key Developments

- 1) Increasing Enrolment: Data from 21 of 23 IITs shows a steady rise in women's enrolment. For example:
 - a) IIT-Kanpur: 133% increase from 908 women in 2017 to 2,124 in 2024
 - b) IIT-Roorkee: 76.36% increase from 1,489 in 2019-20 to 2.626 in 2024

2) Infrastructure Changes:

- a) More hostels and washrooms for female students
- b) Enhanced security measures, including cameras and women guards
- c) Improved access to sports facilities for women

3) Cultural Shift:

- a) Gender sensitization workshops made mandatory
- b) Changes in teaching approaches to accommodate diverse perspectives
- c) Formation of women's sports teams

IIT	YEAR		FEMALE STUDENTS (UG+PG) IN%
Delhi	2017	2,878	21%
	2024*	3.381	24%

WOMEN IN IITs: A GRADUAL SHIFT

		STUDENTS	(UG+PG)IN%
Delhi	2017	2,878	21%
Denn	2024*	3,381	24%
Bombay	2017	2,790	20.40%
Donnbay	2024	3,361	20.60%
Kharagpur	2017-18	3,340	17.60%
Miaragpur	2024-25**	4,167	22.90%
Kanpur	2017-18	6,420	14.10%
Kanpui	2024-25	9,525	22.36%
Roorkee	2019-20***	7,959	18.70%
ROOFKEE	2024-25	10,866	24.16%
Maduas	2017-18	2,365	17.84%
Madras	2024-25	3,073	21.24%
C 1	2017-18	1,661	17.57%
Guwahati	2024-25	2,269	23.10%

^{*} Only 1st Semester numbers given in PG

Source: Data obtained through RTI

Challenges Remain

- 1) Persistent stereotypes and mentorship gaps
- 2) Infrastructure struggling to keep pace with growing numbers
- 3) Concerns about isolation in some departments

The increasing presence of women at IITs aligns with the broader trend of rising female enrolment in higher education, with women now comprising around 48% of total higher education enrolment in India.

Fact of the Day: IE - Income disparity reduced in FY23; top 10% still holds large share of national income Link

Why in News? Income inequality in India has reduced in 2022-23 after worsening in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a working paper by the People Research on India's Consumer Economy (PRICE).

Key Findings of the PRICE Report

- 1) Gini Index Trends:
 - a) Improved from 0.463 post-independence to 0.367 in 2015-16
 - b) Worsened to 0.506 by 2020-21 due to the Covid-19 pandemic

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^{**} Information available until 11.11.2024

^{***} The starting year for which the institute shared details



- c) Improved again to 0.410 in 2022-23
- 2) Income Distribution:
 - a) Bottom 50%: Increased from 15.84% (2020-21) to 22.82% (2022-23)
 - b) Middle 40%: Rose to 46.6% in 2022-23 from 43.9% earlier
 - c) Top 10%: Decreased from 38.6% (2020-21) to 30.6% (2022-23)
 - d) Top 1%: Peaked at 9.0% (2020-21), declined to 7.3% (2022-23)

Despite improvements, the top 10% still holds a significant portion of national income.

Facts of the Day: IE – India suffered economic losses of over ₹1L cr in natural catastrophes in 2023 Link

Why in News? India suffered economic losses of over Rs 1 lakh crore (\$12 billion) due to natural catastrophes in 2023, according to a report by Swiss Re.

Key Points

- 1) Losses in 2023 were well above the previous 10-year (2013-2022) average of \$8 billion.
- 2) Major events contributing to losses:
 - a) Floods in northern India and Sikkim
 - b) Tropical Cyclone Biparjoy (June 2023)
 - c) Tropical Cyclone Michaung (December 2023)



- 3) Floods account for 63% of total annual economic losses in India over the last two decades.
- 4) Most exposed states: Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.
- 5) Major urban centers at risk: Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Chennai, and Delhi NCR.
- 6) Underinsurance is a major issue, with protection gaps above 90% in India.

Way Forward: Swiss Re suggests a three-step process for resilience building

- 1) Granular hotspot identification
- 2) Accurate risk assessment using advanced models
- 3) Designing appropriate re-insurance programs

Facts of the Day: IE — Investments in renewables to quadruple to ₹19 lakh crore between FY25 & FY30 Link

Why in News? CRISIL Intelligence has released a report projecting a quadruple increase in investments in renewable energy generation from Rs 5.1 lakh crore to Rs 18.8 lakh crore between FY25 and FY30.

Investment Projections

- 1) Total green investments in the power sector expected to reach Rs 21 lakh crore between FY25 and FY30.
- 2) Rs 19 lakh crore specifically for renewable generation.
- 3) Additional Rs 10 lakh crore projected for decarbonizing automotive, oil and gas, steel, and cement sectors.

SPOTLIGHT: 2022 PYQ

Do you think India will meet 50 percent of its energy needs from renewable energy by 2030? Justify your answer. How will the shift of subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables help achieve the above objectives? Explain. (150 Words, 15 Marks)

Renewable Capacity Targets

- 1) Current renewable capacity: 162 GW (98 GW solar, 48 GW wind)
- 2) India's target: 500 GW renewable capacity by 2030
- 3) MNRE estimate: Rs 30 lakh crore needed to meet the 2030 target



Corporate Commitments: NTPC Ltd: 60 GW renewable capacity by 2032; Adani Power Ltd: 50 GW by 2030; SJVN Ltd, Tata Power Co Ltd, and JSW Energy Ltd: 25 GW, 23 GW, and 20 GW respectively

Fact of the Day: Health of States Link

Why in News? NITI Aayog has released the Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025 report, assessing the fiscal performance of 18 major Indian states.

Overall Improvement:

- 1) State debt-to-GDP ratio decreased from 31% in 2021 to 28.5% in 2024
- 2) States maintained fiscal discipline, with gross fiscal deficit within 3% of GDP during 2021-22 to 2023-24

State-wise Variation:

- 1) Top performers: Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Jharkhand, Gujarat
- 2) Struggling states: Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala, Haryana
- 3) Debt-to-GSDP ratio ranges from 16.3% (Odisha) to 46.6% (Punjab)

Concerns and Challenges

- 1) State debt remains above FRBM review committee recommendations
- 2) Loss-making power distribution companies
- 3) Growing inclination for "freebies"
- 4) Realization of guarantees
- 5) High Risk States: West Bengal and Punjab face increasing debt-to-GSDP ratios, raising debt sustainability concerns

Way Forward

- 1) Develop detailed roadmaps for debt reduction, especially for highly indebted states
- 2) Implement targeted interventions and reforms to address varying fiscal performances
- 3) Promote best practices identified through the Fiscal Health Index
- 4) Consider time-bound debt reduction plans for states with high debt levels



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SOURCE: ASER(RURAL) 2024

Facts of the Day: ASER 2024: Sharp gains in reading & math learning levels in schools across states since Covid slump $\underline{\text{Link}}$

Why in News? The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 reveals significant improvements in reading and arithmetic levels among children aged 6-14 years across Indian states, with government schools leading the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic slump.

Reading and Arithmetic Skills

- 1) Class 3 Reading Levels:
 - a) Government schools: 23.4% can read Class 2 textbook (highest in 20 years)
 - b) Overall (government and private): 27.1% (up from 20.5% in 2022)
- 2) Class 3 Arithmetic Skills: Overall: 33.7% can do at least subtraction (up from 25.9% in 2022)
- 3) State-wise Improvements:
 - a) Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh showed 10+ percentage point increase in reading levels since 2022
 - b) Bihar: 8 percentage point jump in Class 3 reading levels (20.1% in 2024)
 - c) Uttar Pradesh: 15 percentage point increase in government school reading levels (27.9% in 2024)

Enrolment Trends

1) Government School Enrolment:

- a) 2018: 65.6%
- b) 2022: 72.9% (pandemic-induced spike)
- c) 2024: 66.8% (returning to pre-pandemic levels)
- 2) Overall School Enrolment (Ages 6-14): 2024: 98.1% (slight decrease from 98.4% in 2022)
- 3) **Pre-school Enrolment (Ages 3-5):** Significant increase, especially among 5-year-olds (71.4% in 2024, up from 58.5% in 2018)

Digital Literacy

- 1) First-time inclusion in ASER survey
- 2) Focus on 14-16 year olds
- 3) Gender gap: 85.5% boys vs 79.4% girls report knowing how to use a smartphone

Implications and Initiatives

- 1) Primary sections show highest gains, aligning with government initiatives like Nipun Bharat Mission
- 2) Recovery trends indicate effectiveness of state and central government education programs
- 3) Increased pre-school enrolment supports NEP's focus on early childhood education

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Assessing reading levels The table shows the percentage of children in Classes 3 and 5 able to read a Class 2 text in government schools Class 3: % children reading at Class 2 level 2018 20.9 2022 16.3 2024 23.4 Class 5: % reading at Class 2 level 2018 44.2 2022 38.5 2024 44.8



History, Art & Culture

January 2025



Pinarayi Vijayan on Sree Narayana Guru: He was not a proponent of Sanatana Dharma

Sree Narayana once said, 'It's been a few years now since we abandoned caste distinctions.' It would be blasphemous to discredit his legacy by equating him to divisiveness

IE The Ideas Page; By Pinarayi Vijayan Syllabus: Pre/Mains – History, Art & Culture Link

Why in News? Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan addressed the Sivagiri pilgrimage, emphasizing that Sree Narayana Guru was not a proponent of Sanatana Dharma, countering recent efforts to portray him as such.

Recent Controversies

 Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan argues that Sree Narayana Guru was not a proponent of Sanatana Dharma

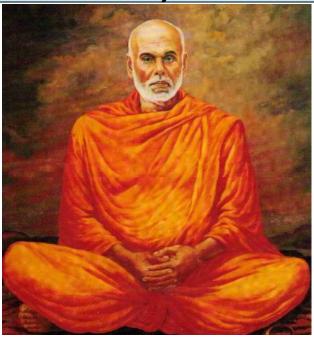
2) Guru's philosophy:

- a) Advocated a humanistic worldview transcending religion
- b) Proclaimed "man has only one caste, one religion, and one god"
- c) Focused on love without distinction of caste or religion

3) Critique of Sanatana Dharma:

- a) Vijayan equates Sanatana Dharma with varnashrama (caste system)
- b) Argues that the Guru's teachings challenged and transcended varnashrama
- c) Views attempts to associate the Guru with Sanatana Dharma as blasphemous

Factsheet: Sree Narayana Guru



Early Life and Background

- 1) Born on August 22, 1856, in Chempazhanthi near Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala
- Came from an Ezhava family, a backward community facing social injustice in casteridden Kerala society

Roles and Contributions

- 1) Hindu saint, philosopher, and social reformer
- 2) Led a reform movement against the caste system in Kerala
- 3) Founded the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam in 1903 to promote his mission

Key Teachings and Philosophy

- 1) Promoted the slogan "One Caste, One Religion, One God for All"
- 2) Advocated for universal brotherhood and equality of all humans
- Emphasized education, cleanliness, devotion to God, organization, and agriculture

Social Reforms

1) Consecrated temples open to all castes, challenging caste-based norms

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Re-Defining UPSC Preparation

- 2) Established schools for children from lower castes
- 3) Fought against untouchability and caste discrimination

Spiritual and Philosophical Works

- 1) Wrote over 62 books in Sanskrit, Malayalam, and Tamil
- 2) Notable works include "Atmopadeshashadhakam" and "Darshanamala"
- 3) Translated texts like Thirukural, Ishavasya Upanishad, and Ozhivil Odukkam

Institutions and Legacy

- 1) Founded the Advaita Ashram in Aluva in 1913, dedicated to the principle of universal brotherhood
- 2) Established Sanskrit schools and promoted education for poor and orphaned children
- 3) His ideas continue to inspire social reform and equality in India

SPOTLIGHT: PRACTICE QUESTION

The poems titled "Not Many, But One" is associated with

- (a) Shankaradeva
- (b) Periyar
- (c) Ayyankali
- (d) Sree Narayana Guru

News / Explained / Explained History / Explained: Why is it so difficult to decipher th Harappan writing system?



Explained: Why is it so difficult to decipher the Harappan writing system?

In the case of the Indus script, scholars have struggled to solve many of these subproblems.

IE Explained; By Adrija Roy Chowdhury Syllabus: Pre/Mains – History, Art and Culture Link

Why in News? The Tamil Nadu government has offered a \$1 million prize for deciphering the Indus Valley script, announced by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on January 5, 2025.

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2. M-304 A

Key Challenges in Deciphering IVC Script

- Lack of Multilingual Inscriptions: No inscriptions containing both Harappan script and known languages have been discovered.
 - a) Absence of a "Rosetta Stone" equivalent for comparative analysis.
- 2) **Unknown Language:** The Indus script falls into the most challenging category: unknown script writing an unknown language.
 - a) Scholars struggle to allocate phonetic sounds to symbols without knowing the underlying language.
- 3) **Limited Archaeological Evidence:** Only about 3,500 seals have been identified, with an average of five characters per seal.
 - a) Insufficient material for comprehensive analysis.
 - b) Many Harappan sites remain undiscovered or underexplored.





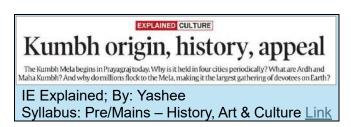
SPOTLIGHT: 2011 PYQ

Regarding the Indus Valley Civilization, consider the following statements:

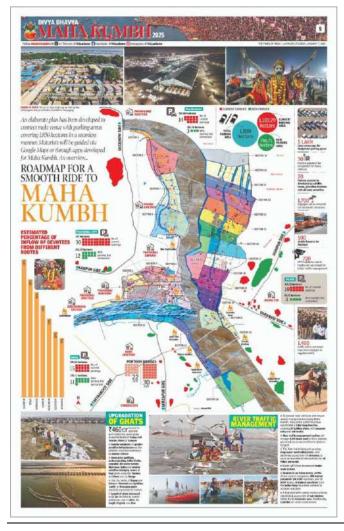
- 1) It was predominantly a secular civilization and the religious element, though present, did not dominate the scene.
- 2) During this period, cotton was used for manufacturing textiles in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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



Why in News? The Maha Kumbh Mela, a major Hindu pilgrimage festival held every 12 years, begins on January 13, 2025, in Prayagraj.

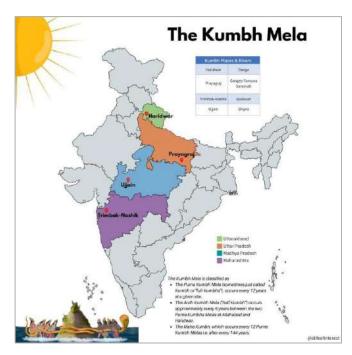


Kumbh Mela Overview

- Held in four cities periodically: Haridwar, Prayagraj, Ujjain, and Nashik-Trimbakeshwar
- 2) Occurs every 12 years at each location, based on astrological calculations
- Ardh Kumbh held every 6 years in Prayagraj and Haridwar
- 4) One of the largest religious gatherings in the world

Mythological Origins

- 1) Stems from the churning of the cosmic ocean (Samudra Manthan)
- 2) Amrita (elixir of immortality) spilled at four locations while being carried by Jayant
- These locations became the sites for Kumbh Mela



Historical Debate

- 1) Exact origins contested by scholars
- 2) Some trace it to ancient texts like Vedas and Puranas
- Others argue it originated in the 12th century CE or later
- 4) Possibly evolved from older bathing festivals like Magh Mela

Astrological Significance

- Timing based on positions of Jupiter, Sun, and Moon
- 2) Each location has specific astrological configurations:
 - a) Haridwar: Jupiter in Aquarius, Sun in Aries, Moon in Sagittarius



- b) Prayag: Jupiter in Taurus, Sun and Moon in Capricorn
- c) Nashik and Trimbakeshwar: Jupiter in Leo, Sun and Moon in Cancer

Pilgrimage Activities

- 1) Ritual bathing in sacred rivers to wash away sins
- 2) Gathering of sadhus and holy men
- 3) Religious discourses and spiritual guidance
- 4) Donations and acts of charity
- 5) Commercial activities in mela markets

Cultural and Historical Importance

- 1) Unites diverse groups of Hindus
- 2) Preserves and transmits religious traditions
- 3) Played a role in spreading nationalist ideas during independence movement
- 4) Continues to be a major cultural and spiritual event in modern India

SPOTLIGHT: 2020 PYQ

With reference to the religious history of India, consider the following statements:

- 1) Sthaviravadins belong to Mahayana Buddhism
- 2) Lokottaravadin sect was an offshoot of the Mahasanghika sect of Buddhism
- The deification of Buddha by Mahasanghikas fostered Mahayana Buddhism

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

#Prepare all related keywords from above PYQ

News / India / A new study says Iron Age began hundreds of years earlier – in Tamil Nadu. Why this is important

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A new study says Iron Age began hundreds of years earlier – in Tamil Nadu. Why this is important

Unveiling the findings, CM Stalin says, 'History of Indian subcontinent must begin here (in Tamil Nadu)'

IE Express Network; By: Arun Janardhanan Syllabus: Pre/Mains – History, Art & Culture <u>Link</u> Why in News? A new study has found evidence that the use of iron in Tamil Nadu dates back to 3345 BCE, challenging longheld assumptions about the origins of the Iron Age.



Key Findings:

- Iron technology in Tamil Nadu dates back to 3345 BCE, nearly 2000 years earlier than previously thought
- 2) Evidence based on radiometric dating from multiple international laboratories
- Samples from archaeological sites like Sivagalai, Adichanallur, Mayiladumparai, and Kilnamandi
- 4) Earliest recorded evidence of iron technology globally

Archaeological Evidence

- Three types of iron-smelting furnaces identified at Kodumanal, Chettipalayam, and Perungalur
- 2) Kodumanal's circular furnaces reached temperatures of 1,300°C
- Demonstrates advanced understanding of pyro-technology



Significance/Expert Opinion

- 1) Discovery termed a turning point in Indian archaeology
- 2) Positions Tamil Nadu as a pioneering hub of early metallurgy
- 3) Challenges the belief that Iron Age in India emerged between 1500-2000 BCE
- 4) Implications for understanding Harappan sites and iron use in the subcontinent
- 5) Calls for interdisciplinary studies on Iron Age Civilization of South India
- 6) Alters understanding of global cultural trajectories

Tamil Nadu CM announced museums at Keeladi and Gangaikondacholapuram. Aims to

preserve and promote Tamil Nadu's archaeological heritage.

SPOTLIGHT: 2023 PYQ

With reference to ancient South India, Korkai, Poompuhar and Muchiri were well known as

- (a) capital cities
- (b) ports
- (c) centres of iron-and-steel making
- (d) shrines of Jain Tirthankaras



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Polity & Governance

January 2025

The nature of dissent in the Indian judiciary

The dissents of the U.S. Supreme Court are largely based on the political inclination of judges, who are direct appointees of the President, confirmed by the Senate. Indian judicial dissents have, however, varied from political, to social to purely intellectual disagreements

TH Text & Context: By Shivani Vij Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance <u>Link</u>

Why in News? The nature of dissent in the Indian judiciary is being examined, highlighting its importance in a democracy and comparing it with dissent in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Types of Judicial Dissent in India Political Dissent

 Unlike U.S. judges, Indian judges are not political appointees, leading to less politically motivated dissents.

2) Examples:

a) ADM Jabalpur (1976): Justice H.R. Khanna's dissent upheld fundamental rights during emergency.

b) P.V. Narasimha Rao (1998): Dissenting opinion on parliamentary privilege and immunity from prosecution.

Social Dissent

- Reflects different social understandings of legal issues.
- 2) Examples:
 - a) Shayara Bano (2017): Dissent on the constitutionality of triple talaq.
 - Aishat Shifa (2022): Separate opinions on hijab ban in schools, stemming from different interpretations of secularism.

Intellectual Dissent

- 1) Based on differing interpretations of constitutional text.
- Example: Lalta Prasad Vaish (2024): Justice B.V. Nagarathna's dissent on the interpretation of "intoxicating liquor" in the context of industrial alcohol taxation.

Aspect	Indian Judiciary	US Judiciary
Structure	Integrated judiciary with a single system of courts for both federal and state laws	Federal judiciary with separate federal and state court systems
Highest Court	Supreme Court of India	Supreme Court of the United States
Appointment of Judges	Selected through a collegium of senior judges	Nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate
Term of Office	Retire at a fixed age (65 for Supreme Court, 62 for High Courts)	Lifetime appointments for federal judges
Political Influence	Judges are not political appointees	Judges are often seen as having political leanings based on the appointing president
Removal Process	Impeachment by Parliament	Impeachment by House and conviction by Senate
Judicial Review	Power to review and strike down laws, but scope is more limited	Strong tradition of judicial review with wider scope

Tackling delimitation by reversing population control •••••

It is too simplistic a solution that is being put forth by some politicians in the southern States

TH Editorial; By: S. Irudaya Rajan, M.A. Kalam Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance Link

Why in News? Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu express concerns over potential loss of parliamentary seats due to proposed delimitation exercise.

Current Edge: January 2025



Proposed Responses by State Leaders

- Andhra Pradesh considering law to make only those with more than two children eligible for local body elections
- 2) Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister jokingly suggests aiming for 16 children per family

Challenges in Reversing Fertility Decline

- 1) Low fertility attainment is difficult to reverse through intervention
- 2) Attempts to incentivize higher fertility have been ineffective in other countries
- 3) China's one-child policy led to unintended consequences, including marriage market problems and dependency burden
- 4) Pro-natal population policies may not be effective, as seen in Japan and South Korea

Alternative Approaches to Political Representation

- 1) Population counts alone may not be appropriate for determining political representation
- Weighing population counts with characteristics like education could be considered
- 3) Migration could address regional population imbalances in the short term

Impact on Women and State Support

- 1) Encouraging higher fertility rates may be challenging for women
- 2) State support for additional children and compensation for women's reproductive engagement needed
- 3) Sustainable population maintenance should consider women's personal costs

The solution lies not in reversing fertility trends but in revising count-based political representation in the delimitation exercise, considering factors beyond mere population numbers.

Delimitation and Its Legal Framework

Delimitation is the process of redrawing boundaries of electoral constituencies based on population changes. In India, this process is governed by specific legal provisions:

- 1) **The Delimitation Commission** is established under the Delimitation Act, 2002
- 2) **Article 82** of the Constitution mandates readjustment of allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha to states and the division of each

- state into territorial constituencies after every census.
- 3) **Article 170** provides for similar readjustment for state legislative assemblies.

However, the **84th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2002** froze the delimitation process until 2026, based on the 2001 census.

The Current Issue

The core issue revolves around the potential redistribution of parliamentary seats following the next delimitation exercise, expected after 2026:

- Population Imbalance: Southern states have successfully implemented population control measures, leading to slower population growth compared to northern states.
- Potential Loss of Representation: Due to their lower population share, southern states fear losing parliamentary seats to more populous northern states.
- 3) Perceived Unfairness: Southern states argue that they are being "penalized" for effectively controlling their population, while states with higher population growth may gain more political representation.
- 4) Impact on Federal Balance: There are concerns that this shift could alter the balance of power in the Lok Sabha, potentially affecting the federal structure and fiscal allocations.

Proposed Solutions

- Rajya Sabha Reforms: Suggestions include reforming the Rajya Sabha to provide equal representation to all states, irrespective of population.
- 2) Alternative Criteria: Proposals to consider factors beyond population, such as education levels or development indices, in determining seat allocation.
- Fiscal Federalism: Addressing concerns through changes in revenue sharing and fiscal autonomy for states.
- Constitutional Amendments: Potential amendments to freeze the current seat allocation or introduce new criteria for delimitation.

Current Edge: January 2025

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SPOTLIGHT - 2012 PYQ

With reference to the Delimitation Commission consider the following statements:

- 1) The orders of the Delimitation Commission cannot be challenged in a Court of Law.
- 2) When the orders of the Delimitation Commission are laid before the Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assembly, they cannot effect any modification in the orders.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1) 1 only
- 2) 2 only
- 3) Both 1 and 2
- 4) Neither 1 nor 2

SPOTLIGHT - 2024 PYQ

How many Delimitation Commissions have been constituted by the Government of India till December 2023?

- 1) One
- 2) Two
- 3) Three
- 4) Four

Factsheet: Delimitation Commission

- 1) Established under the **Delimitation Commission Act, 2002** (Statutory body)
- 2) Mandated by **Article 82 and Article 170** of the Constitution
- 3) Composition
 - a) Appointed by the President of India
 - b) Members include:
 - i) A retired Supreme Court judge (Chairperson)
 - ii) Chief Election Commissioner
 - iii) State Election Commissioners

4) Key Functions

- a) Determine number and boundaries of constituencies
- b) Identify seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
- c) Ensure equal population across constituencies, as far as practicable
- 5) Important Features
 - a) Works independently without executive influence
 - Neither the Lok Sabha nor the State Legislative Assemblies have the power to modify the orders of the Delimitation Commission when they are presented
 - c) Orders have the force of law and cannot be challenged in court

d) Delimitation Commissions established in 1952, 1963, 1973, and 2002

News / Sports / Sport Others / Gukesh, Manu Bhaker among four athletes to be awarded Khe Ratna

Gukesh, Manu Bhaker among four athletes to be awarded Khel Ratna

In addition to Manu Bhaker and Gukesh, Indian men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh and para-athlete Praveen Kumar are the other two names nominated for the award

IE Sports

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance, Sports Link

Why in News? Four exceptional athletes, Manu Bhaker, D Gukesh, Harmanpreet Singh, and Praveen Kumar, have been nominated for the prestigious Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award, India's highest sporting honour.

The Ministry of Sports announced the nomination.

Arjuna Award and Dronacharya Award Recipients are also announced.

The awards will be presented by the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 17, 2025.

Manu Bhaker



Sport: Shooting (Pistol)

Historic double-medal win at the Paris Olympics (bronze in 10m air pistol individual and 10m air pistol mixed team). Became the only Indian athlete since independence to win 2 medals at a single Olympic Games.



D Gukesh



Sport: Chess

Became the youngest ever World Chess Champion after defeating Ding Liren. Won the Candidates Tournament in 2024, securing a spot in the World Chess Championship. He also led the Indian chess team to a gold medal at the Budapest Olympiad.

Harmanpreet Singh



Sport: Hockey (Captain, Indian Men's Team)

Led the Indian hockey team to a second consecutive bronze medal at the Paris Olympics.

Praveen Kumar



Sport: Para-Athletics (High Jump - T64 classification)

Crowned T64 champion at the Paris Paralympics.

Factsheet: Indian National Sports Awards 2025

Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award

- 1) Highest sporting honour of India.
- 2) Presented Annually By: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
- Awarded For: Spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sportsperson over a period of four1 years at the international level.
- 4) Prize: A medallion, a certificate, and a substantial cash prize.

Arjuna Award

- 1) The second-highest sporting honour of India.
- 2) Instituted In: 1961
- 3) Presented Annually By: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
- 4) Awarded For: Consistent outstanding performance for four years at the international level and for qualities of leadership, sportsmanship, and a sense of discipline.
- 5) Prize: A bronze statuette of Arjuna, a certificate, a ceremonial dress, and a substantial cash prize.
- 6) Recipients (2025): Awarded to 39 sportspersons in various categories

Dronacharya Award

- Honours outstanding coaches in sports and games.
- 2) Instituted In: 1985
- 3) Presented Annually By: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
- Awarded For: Coaches who have produced medal winners at prestigious international events.
- 5) Prize: A bronze statuette of Dronacharya, a certificate, a ceremonial dress, and a substantial cash prize.



Section 152 of BNS should not become a proxy for sedition

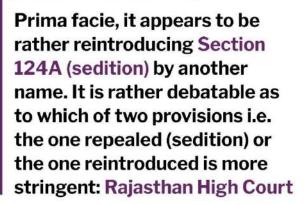


The lack of a statutory requirement to establish a causal linkage between the speech and its actual consequence before depriving the accused of personal liberty renders Section 152 amenable to abuse

TH Editorial; By Pushkar Anand, Shivang Tripati Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance Link

Why in News? The Rajasthan High Court, in Tejender Pal Singh v. State of Rajasthan (2024), cautioned against using Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) as a tool to stifle legitimate dissent.

Section 152 BNS



- sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India," making it susceptible to expansive interpretation.
- Low Threshold for Offense: The term "knowingly" in Section 152 lowers the threshold for commission of the offense, especially in the context of social media.
- 3) Potential for Abuse: The lack of a statutory requirement to establish a causal link between speech and its actual consequence before depriving the accused of personal liberty makes Section 152 prone to misuse.

The Supreme Court should craft guidelines for enforcement authorities, demarcating the boundaries for terms used under Section 152 BNS.

News / India / In a first, selection process for next Chief Election Commissioner casts wider net

2 Premium

23 DEC

In a first, selection process for next Chief Election Commissioner casts wider net

As per new law, panel of five to be sent to committee of PM, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Minister

IE Frontpage; By Damini Nath

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance Link

Background

- In 2022, the Supreme Court suspended pending criminal trials and court proceedings under Section 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- The union Home minister verbally proclaimed that 'sedition' would be repealed as an offence.
- Section 152 of the BNS criminalizes acts exciting secession, armed rebellion, subversive activities, and endangering India's sovereignty, unity, and integrity.

The LawGist Supreme Court to Hear Pleas over Chief Election **Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners** Act, 2023 **ELECTION COMMISSION (CONDITIONS OF** CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER AND OTHER ELECTION SERVICE OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS **ASPECT** COMMISSIONERS (APPOINTMENT, CONDITIONS OF AND TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS) ACT, SERVICE AND TERM OF OFFICE) ACT, 2023 1991 APPOINTMENT Appointment process not specified in the 1991 Act, appointments were made by the Presidem PROCESS ELIGIBILITY No specific eligibility criteria outlined in the 1993 CRITERIA TENURE No fixed tenure specified in the 1991 Act. SALARY AND Salaries of CEC and ECs equivalent to that of a Supreme Court judge under the 1991 Act. BENEFITS Removal process not detailed in the 1991 Act; issumed to follow constitutional provisions. PROCESS SEARCH COMMITTEE

Key Issues with Section 152

1) Vague Definition: The provision does not define what constitutes "endangering the

Why in News? For the first time, a wider selection process will be used to appoint the next Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) as



per the Chief Election Commissioner And Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service And Term of Office) Act, 2023.

New Selection Procedure

- 1) A Search Committee chaired by the Law Minister will prepare a panel of five names.
- The Selection Committee, comprising the Prime Minister, a Cabinet minister, and the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, will make the final selection.
- 3) The committee can choose from the panel or consider candidates from outside.

Concerns regarding the New Selection Process

- 1) Possibility of reversing previous decisions if government changes after elections.
- 2) Vulnerability to political influence due to exclusion of the Chief Justice of India from the selection committee. (Petition pending in SC)
- 3) Risk of appointing outsiders who may lack experience in election management.
- Departure from the tradition of promoting the senior-most Election Commissioner, which could affect institutional memory and continuity.

SPOTLIGHT: 2017 PYQ

To enhance the quality of democracy in India the Election Commission of India has proposed electoral reforms in 2016. What are the suggested reforms and how far are they significant to make democracy successful? (200 Words, 12.5 Marks)

Resisting transparency, eroding public trust ••••••

The amendment to Rule 93(2) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, to restrict public access to election-related records, has no place in a democracy

TH Opinion; By: Anjali Bhardwaj, Amrita Johri Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance Link

Why in News? The Central government has amended Rule 93(2) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, to restrict public access to election-related records, raising concerns about transparency in the electoral process.

Background: The amendment came shortly after the Punjab and Haryana High Court directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to provide information under Rule 93(2).

Concerns

- Restricted Public Access: The amendment narrows the scope of people's right to information by limiting access to only "papers as specified in these rules relating to the election".
- Potential Information Blackout: Records such as Form 17C, video recordings, and CCTV footage may become inaccessible to the public, hindering transparency in the electoral process.
- Impediment to Fraud Detection: The restriction could potentially hamper efforts to detect and prevent election fraud, as demonstrated by the Chandigarh mayor elections incident.
- 4) ECI's Role Questioned: The Election Commission of India's involvement in consulting on the amendment has raised concerns, given its responsibility to ensure free and fair elections.
- 5) **Timing of the Amendment:** The change came shortly after a High Court directive to provide information under the original Rule 93(2), raising questions about the motivation behind the amendment.
- 6) Voter Turnout Discrepancies: Political parties have expressed doubts about the integrity of the electoral process, particularly regarding unexplained differences in voter turnout figures.
- 7) Delayed Information Release: In the 2024 general elections, there were delays in releasing voter turnout figures in absolute numbers, prompting demands for greater transparency.
- 8) Legal Challenges: The amendment has already faced opposition, with a challenge reaching the Supreme Court, indicating concerns about its constitutional validity.
- Erosion of Public Trust: The move is seen as potentially eroding public trust in the electoral process, which is crucial for a healthy democracy.

The amendment has sparked a debate on the balance between electoral integrity and public



transparency, with critics arguing that such restrictions have no place in a democracy.

News / Explained / Explained Law / Mitigating circumstances: Why RG Kar rape case convict was not given death penalty

Mitigating circumstances: Why RG Kar rape case convict was not given death penalty

The understanding of mitigating and aggravating circumstances has evolved over the years, and new factors have been added to the list through several decisions.

IE Explained; By: Ajoy Sinha Karpuram Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity, Social Justice <u>Link</u>

Why in News? A sessions court in Kolkata sentenced Sanjoy Roy, convicted of rape and murder of a doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, to life imprisonment instead of death penalty, sparking discussions on mitigating circumstances in capital punishment cases.

STATE TO SEEK DEATH IN HC

> 'Shocked that court didn't find case to be rarest of rare', says Mamata as she dubs convict Sanjay Roy a 'monster' and vows to seek capital punishment in HC

punishment in HC

This is CBI's failure, say parents of RG Kar victim, adding, 'there are HC and SC... we will be waiting for justice

> Roy not lone perpetrator, say doctor colleagues of RG Kar victim, vow to continue stir till 'other influential people' involved are arrested

> 'No gratitude, no grievances,' says Roy's mother. Sister calls for

further probe to track down 'real culprits'

Legality of death penalty in India:

- Death penalty is legal in India for certain serious offenses like murder, terrorism related offences, rape and murder etc.
- Upheld as constitutional by Supreme Court in multiple cases
- Reserved only for "rarest of rare" cases as per Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab (1980)
- 4) Life imprisonment is the rule, death penalty is the exception

"Rarest of Rare" Doctrine:

- Established in Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab (1980)
- Death penalty to be imposed only in exceptional cases that shock society's conscience
- Courts must weigh aggravating and mitigating factors

- Must consider possibility of reformation of the accused
- 5) Life imprisonment should be "unquestionably foreclosed" to impose death penalty

What are Aggravating Circumstances? Factors that could tilt a court's decision towards imposing the death penalty, includes:

- Pre-planned, brutal, or exceptionally depraved manner of crime
- Heinous nature of offense shocking society's conscience
- 3) Vulnerability of victim (child, elderly, etc.)
- 4) Murder of public officials on duty
- 5) Repeat offenses or criminal history
- 6) Terrorist acts or mass casualties

What are Mitigating Circumstances? Factors that could tilt a case away from the death penalty, includes:

- 1) Young or old age of accused
- 2) Mental illness or intellectual disability
- 3) Lack of prior criminal record
- 4) Possibility of reformation and rehabilitation
- 5) Acting under duress or undue influence
- 6) Socio-economic background and childhood experiences
- 7) Genuine remorse shown by accused

Why RG Kar rape case convict not given death penalty?

- Court found case did not meet "rarest of rare" threshold
- 2) Possibility of reformation not ruled out by prosecution
- Life imprisonment deemed appropriate punishment
- 4) Judge cited need to balance justice with human dignity
- Lack of evidence of larger conspiracy or multiple culprits
- Court aimed to uphold judicial integrity over public sentiment

SPOTLIGHT: 2014 PYQ

Instances of President's delay in commuting death sentences has come under public debate as denial of justice. Should there be a time limit specified for the President to accept/reject such petitions? Analyse. (200 Words, 12.5 Marks)

Current Edge: January 2025



We need distinguished jurists as judges •••••••

By drawing upon the expertise of our sharpest academic minds, India will be able to enhance the quality of the judiciary's output

TH Opinion; By: Kumar Ritwik Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance <u>Link</u>

Why in News? The Indian judiciary faces a significant crisis of backlogs and vacancies, with 371 out of 1,122 sanctioned posts in High Courts remaining vacant as of January 1, 2025.

Current Situation

- 1) High vacancy rate: 33% of sanctioned posts in High Courts are vacant
- 2) Allahabad High Court functioning at only 50% of total sanctioned strength
- 3) Approximately 60 lakh cases pending across all High Courts
- 4) Increasing backlogs and case filings outpacing appointments and retirements

Proposed Solution: Appointment of distinguished jurists as judges in High Courts and the Supreme Court

Arguments in Support

- 1) **Constitutional Feasibility:** Article 124(3)(c) allows appointment of 'distinguished jurists' as Supreme Court judges (currently unutilized)
- International Precedents: Countries allowing appointment of jurists/law professors as judges include United States, Poland, Spain, Italy etc.
- 3) Benefits:
 - a) Introduce specialized knowledge and research-based critical thinking
 - b) Provide unique insights into complex socioeconomic and socio-legal cases
 - c) Bridge gap between academia and legal practice
 - d) Enhance quality of judiciary's output

Challenges

- 1) Lack of courtroom experience and procedural knowledge
- 2) Understanding limits of judicial power
- 3) Potential resistance from status quo within the institution
- Need for adequate training in procedural knowhow and courtroom experience for academic appointee

Alongside this reform, systemic changes like improving infrastructure, expediting judicial appointments through the collegium system, and increasing judge strength are critical to resolving India's justice delivery crisis comprehensively.

News / Explained / Explained Law / Why Supreme Court suggested appointing retired High Court judges on 'ad hoc' basis

Why Supreme Court suggested appointing retired High Court judges on 'ad hoc' basis

The Supreme Court, as well as some earlier Law Commissions, have previously batted for such appointments and laid down detailed guidelines for it.

IE Explained; By: Ajoy Sinha Karpuram Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance <u>Link</u>

Why in News? The Supreme Court suggested temporarily appointing retired judges on an ad hoc basis to address the growing backlog of pending criminal cases before several High Courts.

Constitutional Provision: Article 224A allows the Chief Justice of a High Court to request retired HC judges to perform duties again, with the President's permission.

Appointment Process

- Chief Justice forwards the retired judge's name to the state's Chief minister
- Recommendation passes through Union Law Minister, CJI, and Prime Minister
- 3) President gives final approval
- Supreme Court collegium must also be consulted as per 2021 ruling



'SIMPLIFY PROCESS'

- > SC says process for ad hoc appointment of judges cumbersome, wants simpler procedure to attract lawyers
- > Such appointments will be effective in reducing pendency if these judges are allowed to decide cases in fields of expertise, SC says
- ➤ Last year, the court activated a 'dormant' constitutional provision to pave way for appointment of retired HC judges as ad hoc judges for a short period

Guidelines for Appointment

- Ad hoc judges can be appointed when recommendations are made for less than 20% of vacancies
- 2) High Court should have over 20% vacancies and more than 10% of pending cases over 5 years old
- 3) Appointments generally for 2-3 years, with 2-5 ad hoc judges per High Court

Historical Instances

- Only three recorded instances of ad hoc judge appointments under Article 224A:
 - a) Justice Suraj Bhan (Madhya Pradesh HC, 1972)
 - b) Justice P. Venugopal (Madras HC, 1982)
 - c) Justice O P Srivastava (Allahabad HC, 2007)

Significance

- 1) Addresses pending cases and judicial vacancies
- Utilizes experienced retired judges to tackle case backlog

A grey birthday for the Election Commission of India

The sanctity of electoral rolls is the foundation of India's electoral democracy; the Election Commission of India has nothing to celebrate on the anniversary of its founding day

TH Editorial; By: Praveen Chakravarty
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance Link

Why in News? The Election Commission of India (ECI) celebrates its 75th anniversary on January 25, 2025, amidst concerns about electoral roll manipulation in the recent Maharashtra State elections.

Historical Context

- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar introduced the constitutional provision for the ECI in June 1949
- 2) He emphasized the importance of independent elections and avoiding executive interference
- 3) The ECI was established to preserve India's electoral sanctity

Maharashtra Election Controversy

- 1) Voter Enrollment Discrepancy
 - ECI enrolled 9.7 crore voters for the 2024
 Maharashtra State election
 - b) This exceeds the estimated adult population of 9.54 crore by 16 lakh
 - 48 lakh new voters were registered in just six months between Lok Sabha and State elections

2) Voting Pattern Anomalies

- a) BJP-led alliance gained 72 lakh more votes in the State election compared to Lok Sabha
- b) Only 24 lakh voters shifted from the Congress-led alliance
- c) The remaining 48 lakh votes align with the number of newly enrolled voters

Concerns and Implications

- Potential manipulation of electoral rolls through mass inclusion of voters
- 2) Questions about the legitimacy of newly enrolled voters and their voting patterns
- Lack of transparency and clarification from the ECI regarding these issues

Proposed Solution

- 1) Use Aadhaar for de-duplication and biometric verification of electoral rolls
- Implement a backup process for those whose biometric verifications fail



3) Ensure no eligible citizen is denied their right to vote

The sanctity of electoral rolls is crucial for India's electoral democracy. The ECI must address concerns and implement measures to strengthen the integrity of the electoral process.

News / India / Waqf panel: 10 Oppositin MPs suspended for protesting

Waqf panel: 10 Oppositin MPs suspended for protesting

Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq was set to make a representation to the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill on the concerns of the Muslim community in Jammu and Kashmir.

IE Frontpage;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance Link

Why in News? Ten Opposition MPs were suspended from the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill following a ruckus over scheduling of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

Key Developments:

- 1) Suspension Details:
 - a) 10 Opposition MPs suspended for one day by committee chairman Jagdambika Pal
 - b) Suspended MPs from TMC, Congress, DMK, SP, Shiv Sena (UBT), and AIMIM

2) Reasons for Suspension:

- a) Ruckus over scheduling of clause-byclause consideration of the Bill
- b) Opposition accused chairman of partisan conduct and taking orders from government
- c) Chairman accused Opposition of disrupting the meeting

3) Opposition's Concerns:

- a) Inadequate time to raise objections to the Bill
- b) Clash with constituency programs due to rescheduling
- c) Allegations of predetermined roadmap for JPC

Factsheet: Waqf Panel

The Waqf panel, officially known as the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill.

Powers of the Committee

- 1) Examine and review proposed amendments to the Waqf Act, 1995
- 2) Conduct hearings and receive testimonies from stakeholders and experts
- 3) Deliberate on the provisions of the bill and suggest modifications
- 4) Prepare and submit a report to Parliament with recommendations

Composition and Appointment

- Members are appointed by Parliament, representing both ruling and opposition parties
- The panel includes representatives from various political parties and independent experts
- 3) The chairman is typically a member of the ruling party, appointed by the government

Suspension of Members: The suspension of committee members is governed by parliamentary rules and procedures:

- The committee chairman has the authority to suspend members for disorderly conduct
- 2) Suspension motions can be moved by committee members and voted upon
- Suspended members are barred from participating in committee proceedings for the specified period

News / Explained / Republic Day 2025: What are the different awards given on January 26?

Republic Day 2025: What are the different awards given on January 26?

Republic Day 2025 Awards: The Centre on Saturday announced 942 service medals, including 95 for gallantry, for personnel of various central and state police forces on the eve of India's 76th Republic Day.

IE Explained;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance Link

Why in News? The Government of India announced various awards and medals on the eve of the 76th Republic Day, including civilian honours, service medals, and gallantry awards.





Civilian Awards Bharat Ratna

- 1) Highest civilian award of India, instituted in 1954
- Awarded for exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour
- 3) Maximum of three awards can be given in a particular year (Exceptions possible as in 2024)
- 4) As of 2025, 53 individuals have been awarded the Bharat Ratna.

Padma Awards

- 1) Instituted in 1954, announced annually on Republic Day
- 2) Three categories: Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri
- 3) Padma Vibhushan: For exceptional and distinguished service
- 4) Padma Bhushan: For distinguished service of high order
- 5) Padma Shri: For distinguished service in any field
- 6) Given in various fields including art, social work, public affairs, science, medicine, literature, sports, etc.
- 7) 139 Padma Awards announced for 2025, including 7 Padma Vibhushan, 19 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri.

Service Medals President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM)

- Awarded for special distinguished record in service
- 2) 101 PSMs announced for 2025

Medal for Meritorious Service (MSM)

- Awarded for valuable service characterized by resource and devotion to duty
- 2) 746 MSMs announced for 2025

Gallantry Awards Wartime Gallantry Awards

- Highest honours: Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra, and Vir Chakra
- Awarded for acts of bravery in the face of the enemy

Peacetime Gallantry Awards

- Highest honours: Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra, and Shaurya Chakra
- 2) Can be awarded to armed forces, paramilitary forces, police, or civilians

Police Gallantry Medals

- President's Medal for Gallantry: For rare conspicuous acts of gallant courage
- Police Medal for Gallantry: For acts of bravery and courage in the line of duty
- 3) 95 gallantry medals announced for 2025

Civilian Gallantry Awards Jeevan Raksha Padak Awards

- Three categories: Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak, Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak, and Jeevan Raksha Padak
- 2) Recognizes civilians for acts of bravery and saving lives
- 3) 49 awardees announced for 2025, including 6 posthumous awards

News / Explained / Explained Global / Explained: The birthright citizenship debate in the US

Explained: The birthright citizenship debate in the US

Here is a look at the history of birthright citizenship in the US, how it has evolved over the years, and if India automatically grants citizenship to those born on its soil

IE Explained; By: Ajoy Sinha Karpuram Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity, International Relations Link

Why in News? A federal judge temporarily blocked President Donald Trump's executive order aimed at curtailing birthright citizenship in the United States.

US: Historical Context

- 1) 1776: US independence; citizenship governed by individual state laws
- 2) 1788: US Constitution recognizes "natural born citizens" concept
- 3) 1857: Dred Scott v. Sandford ruling denies citizenship to slaves and their descendants



4) 1866: 14th Amendment passed, granting citizenship to all born on US soil

Key Legal Interpretations

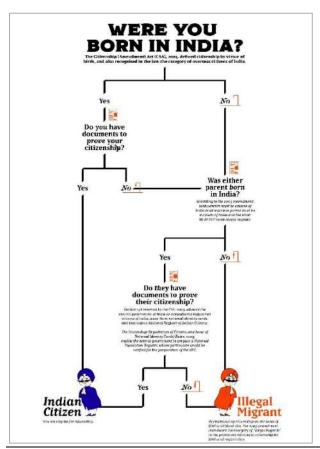
- United States v. Wong Kim Ark (1898): SCOTUS affirmed birthright citizenship for children born in the US, regardless of parents' citizenship
- 2) Plyler v. Doe (1982): SCOTUS reaffirmed citizenship rights for children of undocumented immigrants

Current Scenario

- 1) Trump's executive order challenges longstanding interpretation of 14th Amendment
- 2) Four Democratic-led states filed a lawsuit against the order
- Debate continues on the interpretation of "subject to the jurisdiction" clause in the 14th Amendment

Birthright Citizenship in India

- Initially recognized in the Constitution (Article
 5)
- 2) Citizenship Act, 1955: Provided birthright citizenship with few exceptions
- 3) 1986 Amendment: Ended automatic birthright citizenship; required at least one parent to be an Indian citizen
- 4) 2003 Amendment: Further restricted citizenship if one parent was an illegal imigrant



The impact of classifying denotified tribes | Explained

How many denotified, semi-nomadic, and nomadic tribes have been comprehensively categorised by the Anthropological Survey of India and Tribal Research Institutes? What will be the impact on SC, ST and OBC reservations? How many communities were classified for the first time ever?

TH Text & Context; By Abhinay Lakshman Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity & Governance Link

Why in News? The Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) and Tribal Research Institutes (TRI) have comprehensively categorized 268 denotified, semi-nomadic, and nomadic tribes for the first time, recommending the inclusion of 179 communities in SC, ST, and OBC lists.

DENOTIFIED TRIBES - MEANING

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





Background

- 1) Criminal Tribes Act of 1924 repealed in August 1949
- 2) Successive commissions attempted classification:
 - a) First Backward Classes Commission (Kaka Kalelkar)
 - b) Lokur Committee (1965)
 - c) Mandal Commission (1980)
 - d) Renke Commission (2008)
 - e) Idate Commission (2017)
- 3) Idate Commission identified 1,200+ denotified, semi-nomadic, and nomadic tribes
- 4) 267 communities remained unclassified

Recent Developments

- 1) Special Committee formed in February 2019
- 2) AnSI and TRIs began classification work in February 2020
- 3) Report submitted in August 2023
- 4) Findings:
 - a) 179 communities recommended for SC, ST. OBC inclusion
 - b) 85 communities classified for the first time
 - c) 63 previously unclassified communities "not traceable"



Significance

- 1) Addresses long-standing issue of incomplete classification
- 2) Enables better organization and representation of these communities
- 3) Facilitates access to welfare schemes and benefits

Challenges and Debates

- 1) Political impact: Demands for separate classification for denotified tribes
- 2) Two perspectives within the Development and Welfare Board:
 - a) Complete classification for immediate benefits
 - b) Create a separate constitutional schedule for denotified tribes
- 3) Potential impact on existing SC, ST, and OBC reservations

Way Forward

1) Special Committee scrutinizing recommendations

- 2) Final report to be prepared for government action
- 3) State governments may initiate inclusion processes based on recommendations

SPOTLIGHT: 2019 PYQ

Consider the following statements about Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India:

- 1) PVTGs reside in 18 States and one Union Territory.
- 2) A stagnant or declining population is one of the criteria for determining PVTG status.
- 3) There are 95 PVTGs officially notified in the country so far.
- 4) Irular and Konda Reddi tribes are included in the list of PVTGs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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



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Society & Social Justice

January 2025

Empower the guardians of the earth, do not rob them

A unilateral decision to establish three wildlife sanctuaries in the southern Nicobar will deprive the indigenous peoples of their ancestral territories and lifeways

TH Text & Context: By Ajay Saini, Manish Chandi

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society, Environment Link

Why in News? The Andaman and Nicobar administration unilaterally established three wildlife sanctuaries in the southern Nicobar Islands, disregarding indigenous communities' rights and traditions.

Government Actions

- Designated Meroë, Menchal, and parts of Little Nicobar as wildlife sanctuaries in October 2022.
- 2) Made the decision without consulting or informing the approximately 1,200 southern Nicobarese inhabitants.
- Issued public notices and orders asserting no claims or objections were received regarding the land and marine areas.

Implications and Concerns

- 1) Deprives indigenous peoples of ancestral territories and traditional resource management systems.
- Threatens the spiritual and cultural significance of islands like Meroë and Menchal for the Nicobarese.
- 3) Coincides with criticism over a ₹72,000-crore mega project on Great Nicobar, risking extensive environmental damage.
- 4) May prevent indigenous islanders from returning to their pre-tsunami homelands.
- 5) Reflects a global trend of governments violating indigenous peoples' rights under the guise of conservation or development.
- 6) Disregards indigenous wisdom and stewardship, which has historically protected biodiversity in these areas.

Keyword: Conservation Colonialism

Definition: Conservation colonialism refers to the practice of imposing conservation policies and protected areas on indigenous

lands without consent, often resulting in the displacement and disenfranchisement of local communities under the guise of environmental protection.

Examples:

Tanzania: In June 2022, Maasai people in Loliondo were forcefully evicted to make space for tourism and wildlife hunting.

United States: The establishment of early national parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite involved the displacement of Indigenous peoples.

SPOTLIGHT: 2016 PYQ

Rehabilitation of human settlements is one of the important environmental impacts which always attracts controversy while planning major projects. Discuss the measures suggested for mitigation of this impact while proposing major developmental projects. (200 Words, 12.5 Marks)

News / Education / UGC eases hiring contract teachers, opens VC post to nonacademics too

A Premium

UGC eases hiring contract teachers, opens VC post to non-academics too

The 2018 University Grants Commission regulations had limited contract teacher appointments to 10 per cent of an institution's total faculty positions. The new draft regulations have also removed the cap on such appointments.

IE Frontpage: By Abhinaya Harigovind, Ritika Chopra

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society & Social Justice Link

Why in News? The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued new draft regulations that significantly overhaul the appointment process for Vice-Chancellors and contract teachers in higher education institutions.



Vice-Chancellor Appointments

- Governors/Chancellors given broader powers to appoint Vice-Chancellors
- 2) Chancellor/Visitor to constitute 3-member Search-cum-Selection Committee
- V-C candidates no longer restricted to academics; can include industry experts and public sector veterans

Contract Teacher Hiring

- 1) Removed 10% cap on contract teacher appointments
- 2) Aims to give institutions flexibility to fill faculty vacancies

Academic Performance Evaluation

- 1) Discontinued Academic Performance Indicators (API) system
- 2) Adopts qualitative approach based on "notable contributions" across 9 categories
- 3) Categories include teaching in Indian languages, research in Indian Knowledge Systems, and startup experience

SPOTLIGHT: 2018 PYQ

With reference to the University Grants Commission (UGC), which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1) The UGC is a statutory body set up by an Act of Parliament.
- 2) It is responsible for determining and maintaining standards of higher education in India.
- 3) It also provides recognition to universities in India.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Factsheet: University Grants Commission (UGC)

- 1) Established: 1956 by an Act of Parliament
- 2) Type: Statutory body of the Government of India
- Purpose: Coordination, determination and maintenance of standards in higher education
- 4) Key Functions:
 - a) Providing recognition to universities in India

- b) Disbursing funds to recognized universities and colleges
- c) Advising the government on higher education policy
- d) Promoting and coordinating university education
- e) Maintaining standards of teaching, examination and research

Bureaucratic hurdles are a reason why a substantial number of households have found themselves removed from PDS rolls in parts of north, central and east India

TH Editorial; By Ananye Krishna, Shailendra Kumar

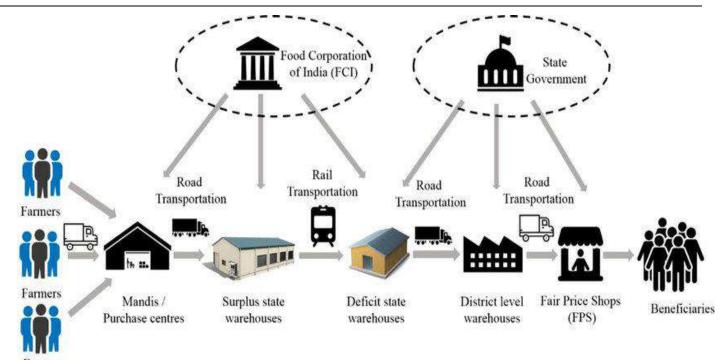
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society & Social Justice Link

Why in News? Recent reports highlight a substantial number of households being removed from PDS rolls in parts of north, central, and east India, particularly affecting states like Jharkhand, Odisha, and Bihar.

Key Issues with Public Distribution System (PDS)

- Enrolment and Access Problems: Many households, especially from marginalized communities like Musahars in Bihar, lack active ration cards or have incomplete family member listings.
 - a) Biometric verification at fair price shops (FPS) has led to loss of ration access for many.
- 2) **Corruption and Malpractices:** FPS dealers reportedly distribute only 4kg of low-quality rice per person instead of the entitled 5kg for Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.
 - a) Wheat distribution is often neglected.
- Bureaucratic Hurdles: Excessive documentation requirements, including caste, income, and residence certificates, despite lacking legal basis in the National Food Security Act or PDS control order.
 - a) Online application systems create barriers for those lacking resources or knowledge to navigate digital processes.
- 4) **Exploitation by Middlemen:** Unscrupulous individuals charge hefty sums (over ₹3,000) to assist in ration card applications, often disappearing after payment.





- 5) **Delay in Service Delivery:** Despite the 30-day mandate for ration card issuance, applications often remain pending for 4-18 months.
- 6) Right to Food Compromised: 24 years after the right to food was recognized as a fundamental right, bureaucratic red tape continues to hinder access to basic subsistence means.

Way Forward

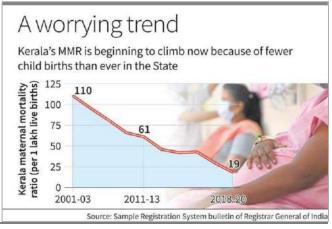
- 1) Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs, and Public Distribution Recommendations:
 - a) Develop mobile applications for offline transaction recording in areas with poor internet connectivity.
 - b) Utilize blockchain and IoT technologies for real-time monitoring and Al-based analytics to detect pilferage.
 - c) Increase margins for Fair Price Shop owners to enhance operational efficiency.
- 2) Shanta Kumar Committee recommendations:
 - a) Consider reducing PDS coverage from 67% to 40% of the population.
 - b) Gradually introduce DBT, starting from urban areas and grain-surplus states.
- 3) **Learn from Chhattisgarh's model** of including pulses, gram, jaggery, sugar, and iodized salt in PDS offerings.
- 4) **Implement GPS-based tracking** for PDS grain transportation, as successfully done in states like Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu.

- 5) **Invest in modern storage facilities** and temperature-controlled silos to minimize storage losses.
- Promote social audits and involve Self-Help Groups, cooperatives, and NGOs in PDS monitoring.
- Establish mobile PDS units for serving populations in remote and disaster-affected areas.

Declining fertility levels push up Kerala's maternal mortality ratio

TH Frontpage; By: C. Maya Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society & Social Justice Link

Why in News? Kerala's maternal mortality ratio (MMR), currently the lowest in India at 19 per one lakh live births, is showing an unexpected increase due to declining fertility rates.



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Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)

- 1) MMR is the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births during a given time period.
- 2) It reflects the risk of maternal death relative to the number of live births.
- Maternal deaths include deaths of women during pregnancy or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy from causes related to or aggravated by the pregnancy.

MMR Formula

(Number of maternal deaths / Number of live births) x 100,000

Why MMR is Increasing in Kerala?

- 1) **Declining birth rates:** Kerala's annual live births have decreased from 5-5.5 lakh to an all-time low of 3,93,231, causing the denominator in the MMR calculation to shrink.
- 2) Low fertility rates: Kerala's total fertility rate (TFR) has dropped to 1.46, well below the replacement level of 2.1, resulting in fewer childbirths.
- 3) **Demographic shift:** The proportion of women in the reproductive age group (15-49 years) is declining, further contributing to the decrease in births.
- 4) Changing societal attitudes: Many couples are choosing to have only one child or no children at all, impacting overall birth rates.
- 5) **Migration effects:** A significant number of people in the reproductive age group are moving abroad for education or work, potentially reducing births in Kerala.
- 6) **Delayed childbearing:** Higher age at marriage and postponed pregnancies are leading to increased pregnancy-related morbidities, which may indirectly affect MMR.
- 7) Limited control over demographic factors: While medical causes of maternal mortality have been successfully addressed, the current increase in MMR is largely due to demographic changes beyond immediate control.

SPOTLIGHT: PRACTICE MCQ

Which of the following factors can potentially lead to an increase in the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)?

- 1) Improved healthcare facilities
- 2) Declining fertility rates
- 3) Increased institutional deliveries
- 4) Higher proportion of elderly population

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Transforming 'men'-talities, redefining masculinity

A UNESCO initiative with the goal of changing the way men engage with gender issues is making progress

TH Editorial; By: Time Curtis, Ravi Verma Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society, Social Justice Link

Why in News? UNESCO and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) have presented a report titled "Engaging Men and Boys: A Report on Pathways to Gender Equality in India" as part of the Transforming MENtalities initiative.

Background

- 1) Nearly one in three women worldwide has experienced violence at the hands of men.
- Traditional notions of masculinity based on strength, aggression, and control continue to perpetuate harmful gender norms.
- These entrenched ideas harm women and limit men's lives, trapping them in cycles of suppressed emotions and aggressive behaviours.

Pathways to Gender Equality

- Engaging Men and Boys: The initiative aims to shift how men engage with gender issues, challenging rigid stereotypes of masculinity and fostering positive, supportive roles for men as champions of gender equality.
- 2) Pioneering Programs: A report titled "Engaging Men and Boys: A Report on Pathways to Gender Equality in India" documents 10 innovative programs across the country. These programs:
 - a) Encourage critical dialogues questioning traditional gender norms
 - b) Reshape concepts of masculinity
 - c) Foster inclusive attitudes through education and community-driven actions
- 3) Specific Interventions:
 - a) Mardon Wali Baat: Uses storytelling and social media to foster conversations on positive masculinities with young men on campuses and in communities.

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- b) Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS): Employs interactive classroom activities to help adolescent boys recognize the harm in toxic masculinity and adopt more equitable gender attitudes.
- c) **Dekh Rekh and Hamari Shaadi:**Encourage men's active participation in family nutrition and planning, addressing gender bias through everyday actions.
- 4) **Role Models:** The initiatives emphasize the importance of positive male role models who:
 - a) Actively participate in household and caregiving responsibilities
 - b) Reject violence as a solution
 - c) Practice empathy and embrace vulnerability
- 5) **Public Figures:** Notable public figures can help normalize gender equality. For instance, Virat Kohli recently sparked a national conversation on shared parenting by publicly committing to paternity leave.

Case Study: Kerala's gender-neutral school textbooks

- 1) The Kerala State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) revised textbooks for classes 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 in 2024.
- 2) The new textbooks feature gender-neutral images and content, such as:
 - a) Men participating in household chores like grating coconut in the kitchen
 - b) Fathers preparing snacks for their children
 - Women engaged in traditionally maledominated activities
- 3) The textbooks also include diverse representations, including:
 - a) People with disabilities
 - b) Individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds.
- 4) The initiative extends beyond textbooks to include:
 - a) Gender-neutral uniforms in some staterun schools
 - b) Discussions on transitioning to coeducational settings
 - Ensuring 50% female representation in textbook writing committees
 - d) Including transgender representation in the curriculum committee

Sasha's Favourite Snack

Father was busy in the kitchen.

"Sasha, your favourite snack is ready." He said.

"Amma, shall I take some of it to school?" Sasha asked.

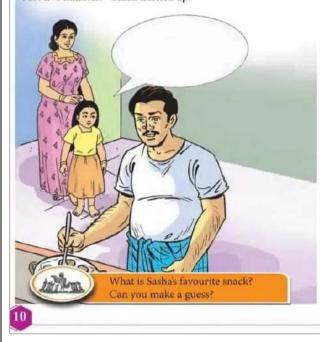
"Sure dear, go and get ready." Mother said.

She went to the washroom, humming a tune.

"Sasha, aren't you ready yet?" It was Naveen, her friend.

He was waiting at the gate.

"Just five minutes!" Sasha hurried up.



Farmers call on Tamil Nadu's new women drone pilots to spray their fields in minutes

The State's first batch of women trained under the Central scheme have been deployed to help farmers spray fertilizer and pesticides, and water fields; drone's heavy weight is a challenge

TH Frontpage; By: S Prasad

Syllabus: Pre/Mains - Society, Social Justice

Link

Why in News? Tamil Nadu's first batch of women trained under the Central government's Namo Drone Didi scheme have been deployed to help farmers spray fertilizer and pesticides, and water fields using drones.

Factsheet: Namo Drone Didi scheme

- 1) Type: Central Sector Scheme
- 2) Implementing Ministry: Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
- 3) Objectives:
 - a) Empower women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with drone technology

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- b) Provide agricultural services to farmers
- c) Generate additional income for SHGs
- d) Promote use of drones in agriculture

4) Key Features:

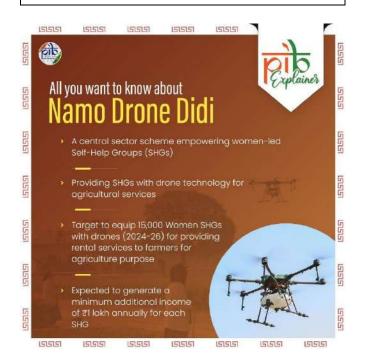
- a) Target: Provide drones to 14,500 selected Women SHGs from 2024-25 to 2025-2026
- b) Financial Assistance: 80% of drone cost as subsidy up to Rs. 8 lakhs per SHG
- Loan Facility: Available from Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) for remaining cost
- d) Interest Rate: 3% per annum on AIF loan
- e) Training: 15-day comprehensive training for drone operation and agricultural applications

5) Eligibility:

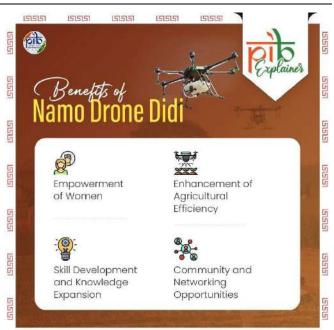
- a) Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under DAY-NRLM (Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission)
- b) Selected based on agricultural demand in the area

6) Benefits:

- Additional income potential of Rs. 1 lakh per year for each SHG
- b) Rental services for farmers (application of liquid fertilizers and pesticides)
- c) Improved agricultural productivity and efficiency
- d) Reduced operational costs for farmers



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News / Explained / Explained Economics / India prepared for jobs of the future, but serious gaps in skills: What QS rankings say

W Premium

India prepared for jobs of the future, but serious gaps in skills: What QS rankings gaps in skills: What QS rankings Say

QS Rankings India Jobs: India ranked 25th across all indicators, making the country a "future skills contender" according to the QS World Future Skills Index 2025.

IE Economy; By: Soumyarendra Barik Syllabus: Pre/Mains — Social Justice, Economy

Why in News? India ranked 25th overall in the QS World Future Skills Index 2025, making it a "future skills contender" according to the report.

Key Findings of the Report

- 1) Overall Ranking: 25th across all indicators
- 2) **Future of Work:** Ranked 2nd, behind only the United States
- 3) **Skills Fit:** Ranked last among top 30 countries with a score of 59.1
- 4) **Economic Transformation:** Ranked 40th with a score of 58.3
- Academic Readiness: Ranked 26th with a score of 89.9

Challenges Before India

 Skills Gap: Critical gap in workforce's ability to meet demands of a changing economic landscape.



- Higher Education Alignment: Education system struggling to keep pace with evolving employer needs.
- 3) **Innovation in Sustainability:** Scored only 15.6 out of 100 in future-oriented innovation and sustainability.
- Economic Transformation: Gaps in investment and innovation capacity pose challenges for long-term growth.

Recommendations

- Curriculum Enhancement: Universities must prioritize embedding creativity, problemsolving, and entrepreneurial thinking into curricula.
- Industry Collaboration: Foster stronger collaborations with industry to better align education with workforce demands.
- 3) **Continuous Reskilling:** Government and higher education institutions should focus on continuous and lifelong reskilling programs.
- 4) **Economic Alignment:** Align economic momentum with robust higher education reforms and skills development.

For a Viksit Bharat, focus on health

India's digital strengths must be used to bridge gap between primary care and publicly funded health insurance programmes that support secondary and tertiary hospital care

IE The Editorial Page; By: K Srinath Reddy Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Social Justice Link

Why in News? Article highlights the critical importance of focusing on health and leveraging India's digital strengths to achieve the vision of a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047.

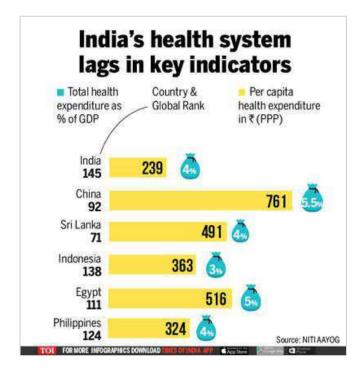
Vision for India's Health System

- 1) Develop a robust health system by 2025 to support India's goal of becoming an economically developed nation by 2047.
- 2) Implement primary healthcare-led universal health coverage (UHC) as the foundation for health system development.
- Focus on health promotion, disease prevention, and efficient delivery of diagnostic and therapeutic services.



Challenges before Health System

- Rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health disorders, accounting for two-thirds of all deaths.
- Increasing threat of zoonotic diseases and climate change impacts on health.
- 3) Shortage of highly skilled doctors and need for a multi-layered, multi-skilled health workforce.
- 4) Disparate data systems lacking integration and real-time surveillance capabilities.
- 5) Disconnects between public and private healthcare facilities in embracing digital health initiatives.



Way Forward

- 1) Increase public financing for health across central and state budgets.
- 2) Train technology-enabled frontline health workers and allied health professionals to address workforce shortages.
- Implement the Ayushman Bharat mission's components, including digital health technology.

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- 4) Develop integrated data systems for timely, representative, and accurate health information.
- 5) Utilize big data analytics for infectious disease surveillance and patient care.
- 6) Adopt a "One Health" approach, integrating microbial surveillance across wildlife, veterinary populations, and human communities.
- Bridge disconnects between public and private healthcare facilities through digital health initiatives.
- 8) Enable digital crowdsourcing of surveillance data and community reporting of program implementation issues.

SPOTLIGHT: 2015 PYQ

The public health system has limitation in providing universal health coverage. Do you think that private sector can help in bridging the gap? What other viable alternatives do you suggest? (200 Words, 12.5 Marks)

Opinion by J S Rajput

How quality of higher education is tied to primary education

Could one even talk about BHU, AMU, Vishwa Bharati or Jamia Malia Islamia without referring to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Rabindranath Tagore or Zakir Husain?

IE The Editorial Page; By: J S Rajput Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Social Justice Link

Why in News? The University Grants Commission (UGC) has proposed a draft regulation suggesting an amended framework for recruiting vice-chancellors, sparking discussions on the quality of higher education leadership in India.

STATE OF INDIA'S EDUCATION It has to improve higher education Gross Enrolment Ratio, emphasise research and increase skilling EDUCATION IN 2047 Accounting for India's demographic bulge 300-350 million* Sudents in schools, from 265 mn currenty 100-120 mn* Sudents in schools, from 265 mn currenty 2-2-2 Schools required, from 4,000-4; from 4,000-4; from 4,000-4; from 265 mn currenty 100-120 mn* Schools required, from 4,000-4; from 4,000-4; from 2,000-4; from 2,000-4;

Challenges in Indian Education System

- 1) Rapid expansion led to dilution in quality and loss of institutional credibility.
- Post-independence deficit in qualified and competent manpower posed challenges in meeting constitutional directives.
- Lack of punctuality and discipline in primary education affects the overall quality of the education system.
- Insufficient attention has been paid to developing leadership at various levels of the education system.
- Political bickering often overshadows serious discussions on education, national security, health care, and hunger.

Way Forward

- Quality of higher education institutions is directly influenced by the quality of elementary education.
- 2) Prioritize the quality of elementary education to improve higher education institutions.
- 3) Promote a culture of punctuality, respect for hard work, and devotion to nation-building from the primary school level.
- 4) Draw inspiration from great academics and scholars who transformed institutions to inspire future leaders.
- Utilize platforms like CABE for serious discussions on national education issues and resolving challenges.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to prepare leaders at every stage of educational institutions, from primary schools to universities.

SPOTLIGHT: 2021 PYQ

Examine the key challenges in ensuring quality education in India. Suggest measures to address these challenges. (150 Words, 10 Marks)

Is poverty being underestimated in India?

TH Opinion; By: Samreen Wani Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Social Justice <u>Link</u>

Why in News? The government released a factsheet on the 2023-24 Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES), recording a decline in poverty in urban and rural areas.



Evolution of Poverty Definition

- 1) **1970s-2005**: Stable definition based on minimum calorie diet expenditure
- Post-2005: Methodological changes and new committees
 - a) Tendulkar Committee: NSSO experimented with different recall periods for consumption expenditure
 - i) Uniform Reference Period (URP): 30day recall for all items
 - ii) Mixed Reference Period (MRP): 30 days for food, 365 days for other goods
 - iii) Modified Mixed Reference Period (MMRP): 7 days for food, 30 and 365 days for others
 - b) Rangarajan Committee: Incorporated three components to construct the poverty line:
 - i) Expenditure on food
 - ii) Expenditure on essential non-food items
 - iii) Other expenditures
 - iv) Not adopted by Government
- Recent years: Diversification of poverty measures
 - a) Shift to multidimensional poverty index (MPI) for a broader perspective
 - b) NITI Aayog adopted 12-indicator MPI, compared to UNDP's 10-indicator approach

Current Poverty Estimation Debate

- Drastic reduction claimed in poverty levels over two decades
- 2) Reasons cited: High GDP growth, increased public expenditure, improved delivery systems
- 3) National Food Security Act covers nearly 80 crore people
- 4) Estimates vary: Rangarajan's 10% (2022-23) vs. Foundation for Agrarian Studies' 25% (2022-23)

Methodological Concerns

- 1) Divergence between NSSO and National Accounts data
- Changes in recall periods affecting comparability
- 3) New NSSO methodology: Three-sitting approach for better data reporting
- 4) Need for new poverty line aligned with current methodology

ESTIMATING THE POOR IN INDIA

Economists disagree on the number of poor in India largely because the country has not settled on any one definition of poverty. The poverty estimation effort started in India during colonial times and continues till date with the following attempts made by individuals and committees

1901

DADABHAI NAOROJI measured poverty on the cost of a subsistence diet

NATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE in 1938 and the BOMBAY PLAN in 1944 suggested a poverty line estimation based on living standards

1962

THE PLANNING COMMISSION'S

WORKING GROUP

pegged the national minimum consumption expenditure for a household of five persons at not less than Rs 100 per month, or Rs 20 per capita per month, at 1960–61 prices, while putting the corresponding urban figure at Rs 125

197

Y.K. ALAGH COMMITTEE

of the Planning Commission first defined an official poverty line for India, basing it on calorie intake. It defined poor as someone who consumed less than 2.100 calories in urban areas and 2.400 calories in rural areas

1993

D.T. LAKDAWALA EXPERT GROUP

of the Planning Commission upheld the Alagh Committee definition but refined it for each state

2005

SURESH TENDULKAR COMMITTEE

of the Planning Commission discarded the calorie parameter and adopted a combination of nutrition, health, education, transport and electricity to create a poverty line. It set Rs 27 for rural areas and Rs 33 for urban areas as daily reference limit to count the poor at 21.5% of the population

2012

C. RANGARAJAN COMMITTEE

of the Planning Commission made Rs 32 per day in rural areas and Rs 47 per day in urban areas at 2011–12 prices as reference points to measure poverty, putting the estimated poor in India at 29.5% of the population. Its recommendations have not yet been accepted by the government

2021

NITI Aayog

published a baseline report on multidimensional poverty index based on Survey 4 of the National Family Health Survey, 2015–16. It measured poverty on the three dimensions of health, education and standard of living, giving them equal weight. It calculated 25.01% of the population to be multidimensionally poor, with 32.75% of the rural population and 8.81% of urban population falling under this definition

Rural-Urban Poverty Dynamics

- 1) Narrowing rural-urban consumption gap
- 2) Rural areas showing improved consumption patterns
- 3) 2011 Census definition of rural areas outdated, affecting accuracy
- Need for updated statistical base and new Census

Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Debate

- 1) UNDP's 10 indicators vs. India's 12 indicators
- 2) Criticism of indicator selection and potential for perpetually low estimates
- Lack of income vulnerability measurement in current MPI



Way Forward

- 1) Need for consensus on poverty estimation methodology
- 2) Importance of a single, clear-cut poverty line
- 3) Consideration of income vulnerability in poverty measures
- Regular updates to poverty estimation methods to reflect changing consumption patterns

The hidden dangers of Rhodamine B: a global and local perspective •

Rhodamine B is a synthetic dye known for its bright pink hue, commonly utilised in industries such as textiles, paper, and leather; however, its use in consumable products is fraught with health risks

TH Science; By: Monisha Madhumita Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Social Justice Link

Why in News? Tamil Nadu banned the production and sale of cotton candy in February 2024 after detecting Rhodamine B in samples collected from local vendors.

Rhodamine B Overview

- 1) Synthetic dye known for its bright pink color
- Commonly used in textiles, paper, and leather industries
- 3) Also utilized in scientific research due to fluorescent properties

Health Risks

- 1) Can cause DNA damage, leading to mutations and potential cancerous growths
- 2) Animal studies show tumor development in organs like liver and bladder
- 3) Potential carcinogenic effects and skin sensitization risks



Global Regulations

- United States: FDA banned use in food products and recently prohibited all foodrelated applications
- European Union: Classified as a substance of very high concern, restricted in cosmetics and consumer goods

HARMFUL COLOURS FOUND IN FOOD

Rhodamine B: It is used as an industrial dye. Because of its low cost, Rhodamine B is often used for food colouring — an illegal practice by all means. It has been classified as a potential carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). Its prolonged use in food can lead to liver dysfunction or cancer

Sunset Yellow: It is a synthetic dye used in food, drugs, and cosmetics. If consumed alone or in combination with other dyes, Sunset Yellow can cause allergic or pseudo-allergic reactions and severe reactions among asthma and urticaria patients



Carmoisine: A synthetic food dye, it is also called Food Red. IARC classifies it as a category 3 carcinogen. Its prolonged consumption can affect liver, kidneys and trigger behavioural changes among children, besides triggering skin rashes, and respiratory allergies

Tartrazine: A yellow, nitrous derivative compound, it is used as a synthetic food colouring chemical. Prolonged intake can cause angioedema, eczema, bronchitis, and headaches. It affects the thyroid gland and hormones

Indian Perspective

- Illegal use in food items to enhance visual appeal
- 2) Several states have taken action:
 - a) Tamil Nadu: Banned cotton candy production and sale (February 2024)
 - b) Karnataka: Prohibited use in street foods like Gobi Manchurian (March 2024)
 - c) Puducherry: Banned sale of cotton candy containing Rhodamine B
 - d) Himachal Pradesh: Instituted one-year ban on production, sale, and storage of cotton candy (May 2024)

Expert Opinions

- 1) Potential carcinogenic risks due to chemical components
- 2) Increased susceptibility in children, elderly, and immunocompromised individuals
- Long-term exposure may lead to chronic allergic reactions and skin pigmentation changes



Way Forward: Revamp Food Safety Ecosystem

- 1) Need for proactive funding and independent research by FSSAI
- 2) Importance of rapid scientific reviews and proactive policy implementation
- 3) Necessity for public education on food standards and safe food additives

The case of Rhodamine B highlights the need for prioritizing health over aesthetics in food products and emphasizes the collective responsibility of governments, industries, and consumers in ensuring food safety.

Should Governors be Chancellors of State universities?

The Governor's role as Chancellor of State universities has become politicised, undermining university autonomy and causing governance issues, especially in States with Opposition-led governments; various reform models have been proposed to reduce political interference and improve university administration

TH Text & Context; By: K. Ashok Vardhan Shetty Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Polity, Social Justice Link

Why in News? The role of Governors as Chancellors of State universities has become a subject of intense debate due to its politicization and impact on university autonomy, especially in Opposition-ruled states.

Historical Context

- British colonial legacy: Governors appointed as Chancellors of universities in 1857 to maintain direct control
- 2) **Post-Independence:** Model adopted without reassessment of its relevance in a democratic and federal context
- 3) **1947-1967:** Governors remained ceremonial figures due to Congress dominance
- 4) **Post-1967:** Governors became political instruments of the Central government, leading to clashes with State governments

Current Issues

- 1) **Dual authority system:** State governments fund universities, but Governors wield substantial power without accountability
- Administrative paralysis: Disagreements between Governors and State governments cause delays in appointments and decisionmaking

- Lack of expertise: Many Governors lack academic qualifications or experience to guide educational institutions effectively
- 4) Compromise of federalism: Central appointees controlling State institutions undermines federal principles
- Political interference: Some Governors prioritize the Centre's political agenda over university autonomy

Reform Proposals

- Rajamannar Committee (1969-71): Governor should act on State government's advice in university matters
- Sarkaria Commission (1983-88): Governors should consult Chief Ministers while retaining independent judgment
- 3) National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2000-02): Advocated for political neutrality and clearer definition of Chancellor's functions
- M.M. Punchhi Commission (2007-10): Recommended appointing eminent academics or experts as Chancellors

Alternative Models

- Governor as Ceremonial Chancellor: Removes discretionary powers, mandating action on State Council of Ministers' advice
- Chief Minister as Chancellor: Adopted by West Bengal and Punjab (pending Presidential assent)
- 3) **State-appointed Chancellor:** Implemented in Telangana, proposed in Kerala (pending Presidential assent)
- 4) Chancellor elected by University Bodies: Empowers university bodies and alumni to elect a ceremonial Chancellor
- 5) Chancellor appointed by University's Executive Council: Following transparent selection processes

Opinion by Ruth Vanita

On LGBTQIA+ rights, why India lags behind its Asian neighbours like Thailand

Thailand is now the largest Asian country to have legalised same-sex marriage.

But in India, the Supreme Court has left it to Parliament.

IE Opinion; By: Ruth Vanita

Syllabus: Pre/Mains - Society, Social Justice

Link



Why in News? Thailand has become the largest Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage, highlighting India's lag in LGBTQIA+ rights compared to some Asian neighbours.

Current Status of Same-sex marriage in India:

- The Supreme Court refused to protect samesex marriage rights in 2023 and turned down a review petition in 2025
- Same-sex couples in India lack legal recognition and associated rights, such as medical decision-making, inheritance, and insurance benefits
- Indians married to same-sex spouses abroad face legal ambiguity, recognized as married in some countries but single in India

Progress in Other Asian Countries:

- 1) **Thailand:** Legalized same-sex marriage in 2024 with overwhelming support in both houses of parliament
- 2) **Taiwan:** First Asian country to legalize samesex marriage in 2019, with adoption rights granted in 2023
- Nepal: Began temporarily registering samesex marriages in 2023 following a Supreme Court interim order

Historical Context in India:

- Same-sex marriages by Hindu rites have occurred since at least 1987
- 2) These unions have been prevalent among non-English speaking, low-income women from various backgrounds
- The Supreme Court acknowledged that samesex marriage is part of Indian culture and society

Challenges and Considerations:

- 1) The Supreme Court left the decision to legalize same-sex marriage to Parliament
- India's recognition of diverse marriage practices for minorities contrasts with its stance on same-sex marriage
- Religious and cultural factors: Hinduism and Buddhism historically have not treated homosexuality as a serious crime

News / Explained / ASER 2024: With increasing preschool enrollment, road ahead for early

ASER 2024: With increasing preschool enrollment, road ahead for early childhood education

The 2024 ASER survey reached 6,49,491 children in 17,997 villages across 605 rural districts. Dr Rukmini Banerjee, CEO of the NGO Pratham that carries out the survey, explains its key findings.

IE Explained; By Rukmini Banerji Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Society, Social Justice Link

Why in News? The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024 for rural India, conducted by NGO Pratham, has been released, surveying 649,491 children across 605 rural districts.

Key Findings of ASER 2024

- 1) Early Childhood Education:
 - a) Preschool enrolment increased between 2018 and 2024
 - b) 77.4% of rural 3-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education programs

2) Learning Levels:

- a) Improved reading and arithmetic levels for children in all grades, especially in Classes 1-3
- b) Significant increases from ASER 2022 report

3) Digital Literacy:

- a) Over 90% of rural adolescents have smartphone access
- b) 80.1% of boys and 78.6% of girls (ages 14-16) can browse for information online
- c) Some gender gaps in digital skills, with southern states showing more equality

Implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

- 1) Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN):
 - a) NEP prioritizes universal FLN by end of Class 3 (age 8) by 2026-27
 - b) NIPUN Bharat initiative launched in 2021
 - c) 83% of schools received government directives on FLN activities
 - d) 78% of schools have at least one FLN-trained teacher
 - e) 75% received relevant learning materials
- 2) Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):



- a) NEP recommends Class 1 enrolment at age six
- b) Focus on preparing children for three years before formal schooling
- c) Emphasis on cognitive and social readiness for school

Challenges

- Data Collection: Lack of comprehensive and continuous data on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
- 2) Budget Allocation:
 - a) Insufficient long-term budget commitment for ECCE teacher recruitment and training
 - b) Inadequate resources for prioritizing early childhood education in Anganwadis
- 3) **State-specific Approaches:** Varied approaches across states leading to inconsistent implementation of ECCE

Way Forward

- Improve Data Collection: Implement more comprehensive and continuous data collection efforts for ECCE
- 2) Increase Budget Allocation:
 - a) Develop long-term budget commitments for recruiting and training ECCE teachers

- b) Allocate additional resources to prioritize early childhood education in Anganwadis
- 3) Tailor State-specific Strategies:
 - a) Develop and implement state-specific approaches to ECCE based on local needs and resources
 - b) Examples: Himachal Pradesh and Punjab shifting towards pre-primary classes in schools, Rajasthan increasing enrolment in both Anganwadis and private LKG/UKG classes
- 4) Strengthen Anganwadi System:
 - a) Enhance early childhood education component within Anganwadis
 - b) Provide specialized training for Anganwadi workers
- Address Gender Gaps: Implement targeted interventions to reduce gender gaps in digital literacy and skills

SPOTLIGHT: 2020 PYQ

National Education Policy 2020 is in conformity with the Sustainable Development Goal-4 (2030). It intends to restructure and reorient education system in India. Critically examine the statement. (15 Marks)



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International Relations

January 2025

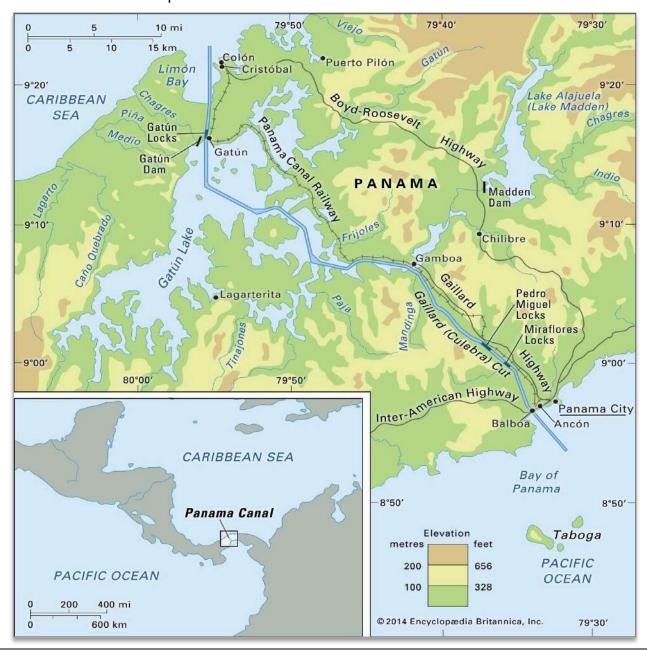


Why in News? Donald Trump recently threatened to retake the Panama Canal due to increased transit fees and perceived Chinese

influence, sparking a response from Panama's president.

Background on the Panama Canal

- Panama Canal is a crucial 80-kilometer artificial waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans,
- 2) Facilitates 6% of global maritime trade and significantly reduces shipping time and costs.
- 3) Historical Control: The U.S. completed construction of the canal in 1914 and controlled it until December 31, 1999.





Treaties Governing the Canal Transfer

Torrijos-Carter Treaties (1977): These treaties paved the way for the transfer of the canal to Panama.

- 1) Panama Canal Treaty: Abolished the Panama Canal Zone and transferred full control of the canal to Panama on December 31, 1999.
- 2) Permanent Neutrality Treaty: Declared the canal neutral and open to all nations' vessels. It also granted the U.S. the right to defend the canal's neutrality and priority passage during military emergencies.

Reasons for Current Tensions

- Increased Transit Fees: A severe drought in 2023 impacted the canal's water levels, leading the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) to reduce the number of ships allowed
 - to cross by 36%, resulting in higher transit fees for vessels, particularly those from the U.S.
- Growing Chinese Influence: Panama joined China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2017, leading to increased Chinese investment in the region.

News / Explained / Why China is building the world's largest dam on the Tsangpo, how India may be impacted

W Premium

Why China is building the world's largest dam on the Tsangpo, how India may be impacted

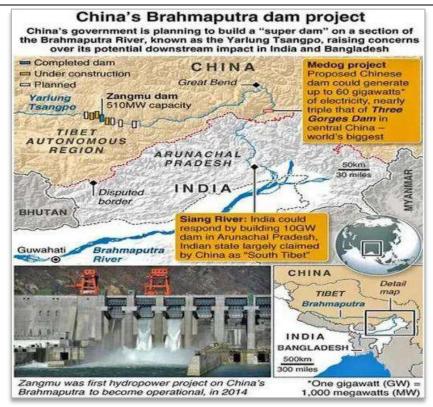
What is the mega Yarlung Tsangpo project planned by China? What does Beijing hope to accomplish by building the world's largest hydropower dam, and how could India be impacted? Experts weigh in.

IE Explained; Rishika Singh Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations, Geography <u>Link</u>

Why in News? China has approved the construction of the world's largest hydropower project (60,000 MW capacity) on the Yarlung Tsangpo river in Tibet.

Kev Details

1) **Location:** At the "Great Bend" where the river makes a U-turn in Medog county before entering India's Arunachal Pradesh.



- Scale: Three times the capacity of China's Three Gorges Dam, currently the world's largest hydro project
- Timeline: Mentioned in China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), with recent developments indicating advanced planning stage

China's Stated Objectives

- 1) Move away from conventional energy sources
- 2) Achieve net carbon neutrality by 2060
- 3) Utilize the river's steep descent and high flow rate for ideal hydroelectricity generation

Concerns for India

- Potential impact on water flow to India, the lower riparian state
- 2) Interruption of silt flow crucial for agriculture
- Changes in river flow affecting local biodiversity
- Risks associated with large dam in earthquakeprone area
- 5) Strategic concerns as the dam can be used as a 'water bomb'

Way Forward

- India needs to raise concerns more forcefully with China
- Challenge Chinese claims about project's lack of negative impacts
- 3) Pursue honest dialogue to potentially dissuade China from undertaking the project
- Make water issues a major part of India-China engagement



NEWS / OPINION / COLUMNS / C Raja Mohan writes: India, US and the atomic second wind

W Opinion by C. Raja Mohan

C Raja Mohan writes: India, US and the atomic second wind

The enduring convergence of objective interests between Delhi and Washington and the long record of political commitment for deeper cooperation in advanced technologies does not mean it will automatically continue under Trump. Sustaining India-US high-tech cooperation demands continuing efforts.

IE Frontpage: By C Raja Mohan

Syllabus: Pre/Mains - International Relations

Link

Why in News? US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's visit to India on January 8, 2025, marks his last foreign visit in the Biden administration, highlighting key developments in US-India relations.

Key Developments Strengthened Bilateral Ties

- Biden administration's commitment to elevating the US-India relationship
- 2) Efforts to prevent crises from derailing the strategic partnership

Advanced Technology Cooperation

- 1) Launch of the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) in January 2023
- 2) Focus on AI, semiconductors, space, and biotechnology collaboration
- Involvement of industry, start-ups, and research communities from both countries

Policy Shifts

- 1) Lifting of restrictions on civilian space cooperation with India
- 2) Ongoing work to remove key Indian atomic energy centres from US blacklists
- Need for India to modify its Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010

Future Prospects

- 1) Potential for continued cooperation under the incoming Trump administration
- 2) Shared goals of reclaiming US technological leadership and rebooting advanced manufacturing
- 3) Ongoing diplomatic efforts to ensure smooth transition in high-tech cooperation

Opinion by Sujan R Chinoy

India-Taliban talks — realism in Acting West

The Taliban is here to stay and with India capitalising on traditional friendship, there is scope for Afghanistan to figure even more prominently in Delhi's "Act West" policy

IE The Editorial Page: By Sujan Chinoy Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations Link



Why in News? Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met with Taliban's acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Dubai on January 8, 2025, marking a significant elevation in the level of dialogue between India and the Taliban regime.

This marks the highest-level engagement between India and the Taliban since their takeover in 2021.

While not officially recognizing the Taliban government, India is adopting a cautious yet gradual approach to engagement.

Why India's shift in stance towards Taliban?

- 1) Geopolitical considerations:
 - a) Pakistan-Taliban tensions: Pakistan conducted airstrikes in Afghanistan's Paktika province on December 24, 2024, targeting Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants.
 - b) **Iran's diminished role:** Iran is preoccupied with internal and external conflicts, reducing its focus on Afghanistan.
 - c) **Russia's reorientation:** Russia is caught in its war with Ukraine, shifting its priorities away from Afghanistan.
 - d) **China's growing influence:** China has established diplomatic ties with the Taliban

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Re-Defining UPSC Preparation

and is pursuing development projects in Afghanistan.

2) Strategic interests:

- a) Protecting past investments: India aims to safeguard its infrastructure investments in Afghanistan.
- b) **Counterterrorism:** Engaging with the Taliban allows India to address security concerns regarding terrorist groups operating from Afghan soil.
- c) **Regional influence:** India seeks to maintain its strategic presence and counterbalance other powers in the region.

3) Pragmatic considerations:

- a) **Humanitarian aid:** India wants to continue providing assistance to the Afghan people.
- b) **Economic opportunities:** Discussions on trade via Chabahar port indicate potential economic benefits.
- 4) International trends: Over 30 countries have accepted envoys from the Taliban, influencing India's stance.

PM Modi calls for documenting history of Indian diaspora

Addressing Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas event in Bhubaneswar, the PM lauds the journey of Persons of Indian Origin and highlights their remarkable achievements; he highlights country's global role

TH Frontpage; By Satyasundar Barik Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations Link

Why in News? Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention in Bhubaneswar on January 9, 2025, calling for documenting the history of the Indian diaspora.

Factsheet: Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

What it is?

- 1) Officially known as Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Day.
- 2) Marks the contribution of the Overseas Indian community towards the development of India.

When it is celebrated?

- 1) Formerly: Every year on January 9th.
- 2) Since 2015: Every two years (biennially).
- 3) Celebrated on a theme relevant to the Indian diaspora.

 2025 Theme: Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat

Why is it celebrated on January 9th? Commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai on January 9, 1915.

Purpose

- Acknowledge the contributions of Overseas Indians to India's growth.
- 2) Connect the Indian diaspora with their roots.
- 3) Provide a platform for the diaspora to share their experiences and expertise.
- 4) Facilitate networking among the diaspora and with India.
- 5) Address issues and concerns of the diaspora.

Organized by: Ministry of External Affairs



SPOTLIGHT: 2023 PYQ

Indian diaspora has scaled new heights in the West. Describe its economic and political benefits for India. (150 Words, 10 Marks)



News / Explained / Explained Global / Why Donald Trump's Paris Agreement pullout could have worse consequences than in 2017

Why Donald Trump's Paris Agreement pullout could have worse consequences than in 2017

During his inauguration speech, Trump promised to reverse some of the climate-friendly energy policies of the last few years, and reiterated his commitment to extracting more oil and gas to meet America's energy requirements.

IE Explained; By: Amitabh Sinha

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations

Link

Why in News? Donald Trump signed an executive order withdrawing the US from the Paris Agreement again on his first day back in office as President.

Details of Trump's Paris Agreement withdrawal

- 1) Ordered immediate revocation of all US climate finance commitments
- 2) Promised to reverse climate-friendly energy policies
- Reiterated commitment to extracting more oil and gas for US energy needs



Reasons behind Trump's withdrawal from Paris Agreement

- 1) **Economic concerns:** Agreement costing US \$3 trillion in lost GDP and 6.5 million jobs.
- 2) **Perceived unfairness:** Put US at a "permanent disadvantage" as other countries like China can pollute without consequence.
- Energy independence: Trump prioritise fossil fuel production. Promised to "drill, baby, drill," indicating the sift.
- 4) **Scepticism of climate change:** Trump has previously called climate change a "hoax"
- 5) **Opposition to international commitments:** Trump's "America First" policy stance is

- reflected in his desire to avoid what he sees as burdensome international agreements.
- 6) **Renegotiation attempt:** Trum expressed openness to renegotiating the agreement or creating a new one.

Potential Global Implications of US Withdrawal from Paris Agreement

- Undermining global climate efforts: US is currently the world's second-largest greenhouse gas emitter.
 - a) Withdrawal weakens collective global effort to combat climate change.
- 2) **Diplomatic repercussions:** Likely to erode America's standing in the world and diminish its global influence.
 - a) Hand China and the European Union a competitive edge in shaping international climate policy.
- 3) **Disruption of climate finance:** Leave developing nations without vital support for mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- 4) **Potential domino effect:** Might encourage other nations to reconsider their commitments.
- 5) **Economic implications:** Potential to slow the growth of clean energy industries worldwide.
- 6) **Increased climate vulnerability:** Unfair burden on Global South countries.

Trump's WHO withdrawal

Why in News? President Donald Trump has signed an executive order to withdraw the United States from the World Health Organization (WHO) on his first day back in office.

Reasons for Withdrawal

- 1) Mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2) Failure to adopt urgently needed reforms
- 3) Inability to demonstrate independence from political influence of member states
- 4) Unfairly onerous financial contributions demanded from the United States

Trump specifically highlighted the disparity in funding, noting that the US paid \$500 million to the WHO, while China, with a much larger population, contributed only \$39 million.

Potential Implications

Weakening global defences against infectious diseases



- 2) Undermining decades of progress in fighting diseases like AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis
- 3) Diminishing US influence in global health policy
- 4) Potential loss of access to vital global health data for US agencies like the CDC.

The withdrawal process typically takes one year, and the US is obligated to pay its assessed contributions for the current fiscal year. However, Trump's order calls for immediate cessation of payments, which may face legal challenges.

Opinion by Editorial

Express View on India and Trump 2.0: Delhi's challenges

Given India's past trade policy issues with Trump, it must prepare for increased pressure from the US for greater access to its markets and other related matters

IE The Editorial Page Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations Link

Why in News? Donald Trump has returned to the White House as the 47th President of the United States, signalling potential shifts in US policies that could impact India-US relations.

What are the key challenges for India under Trump 2.0?

- 1) Trade and Market Access
 - a) Trump likely to adopt a systematic approach to addressing US trade challenges
 - b) India must prepare for increased pressure for greater market access
 - c) Potential for tariffs against trading partners, including India
 - d) Need for a new strategic approach to trade negotiations with the US

2) Immigration and Visas

- a) Possible crackdown on illegal immigration affecting Indians
- b) Potential changes to H-1B visa program impacting Indian tech professionals
- India may need to address deportation of illegal immigrants

3) Foreign Policy and Strategic Relations

- a) Shift in US approach to great power politics
- b) Potential changes in US relations with China and Russia affecting India's strategic interests

 Opportunity for India to position itself as an alternative to China for US companies

What are the potential opportunities for India?

- 1) Deepening of defence cooperation
- Possible reduction in US involvement in India's internal affairs
- 3) Opportunities in manufacturing if US pursues decoupling from China
- 4) Potential for collaboration in high-tech sectors like AI, space, and defence

What should be India's approach?

- Develop a more creative and flexible approach to trade negotiations
- 2) Temper ideological rhetoric that dismisses ties with the US
- 3) Prepare for potential immigration challenges and deportations
- 4) Capitalize on opportunities to strengthen strategic partnership with the US
- 5) Focus on transactions that enhance India's comprehensive national power
- Leverage warm personal rapport between PM Modi and President Trump

News / Explained / Explained Global / 'Drill, baby, drill': Slogan's history, why Trump uses it

'Drill, baby, drill': Slogan's history, why Trump uses it so often

Trump's slogan has become synonymous with with his plan to boost fossil fuel production and reverse climate policies and regulations

IE Explained; By: Alind Chauhan Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations Link

Why in News? Donald Trump inaugurated as 47th US President on January 22, 2025, reiterating "drill, baby, drill" slogan and signing executive orders to boost fossil fuel production.

What is the "drill, baby, drill" slogan?

- 1) Coined in 2008 by Michael Steele to promote US independence from Middle Eastern oil
- 2) Used during John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign
- Associated with Sarah Palin, McCain's VP pick and climate sceptic

Current Edge: January 2025





Trump's key energy policies

- Declared "national energy emergency" to boost oil and gas production
- 2) Rolled back restrictions on oil and gas expansion in Alaska
- 3) Lifted pause on LNG export facility approvals
- 4) Suspended offshore wind leasing pending review
- 5) Revoked Biden's executive order on electric vehicle sales targets

US current energy production status

- 1) Largest oil producer globally, with 13.2 million barrels per day in 2024
- 2) Net exporter of fossil fuels
- 3) Leading global LNG exporter

Impact on climate policies

- 1) Reversal of climate regulations and policies
- 2) Potential increase in fossil fuel production and consumption
- 3) Possible setback for renewable energy initiatives

Opinion by Editorial

Express View on Trump's antiimmigration agenda: There will be costs for both India and the US

Indian workers form one of the largest groups of H-1B visa holders and would be vulnerable as conditions change rapidly in Trump's America.

IE The Editorial Page

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations Link

Why in News? Former US President Donald Trump, upon returning to the White House in 2025, signed executive orders implementing strict anti-immigration measures as a top priority.

What are the main components of Trump's immigration policy?

- Ending birthright citizenship for children born in the US to non-citizens
- 2) Suspending the Refugee Admissions program
- Reviving plans to build a wall on the US-Mexico border
- 4) Mobilizing US military to secure borders
- 5) Expanding immigration detention centres

Challenges before Trump

- Logistical difficulties in securing borders and expanding detention facilities
- 2) Legal and constitutional questions, especially regarding birthright citizenship
- 3) Several states suing to stop the birthright citizenship order

What are the potential impacts of these policies?

On immigrants:

- 1) Millions face risk of deportation, including refugees and undocumented workers
- 2) 20,407 "undocumented" Indians at risk of removal or detention
- 3) H-1B visa holders, including many Indians, vulnerable to policy changes

On the US economy:

- 1) Foreign-born workers comprise 18% of US labour force
- 2) GDP growth could be reduced by \$30-110 billion in 2025
- 3) Innovation leadership in technology and biomedical research may be affected

How might this affect India-US relations?

- 1) Concerns for the 1.47% of US population comprising Indian Americans
- 2) Potential impact on H-1B visa holders, a significant group from India
- Possible diplomatic tensions over treatment of Indian immigrants



News / Explained / Why Neutral Expert's decision on Indus Waters Treaty is a win for India

Why Neutral Expert's decision on Indus Waters Treaty is a win for India

The IWT was signed by India and Pakistan on September 19, 1960 to determine the distribution of the waters of the Indus and its tributaries.

IE Explained; By: Harikishan Sharma Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations Link

Why in News? The Neutral Expert appointed by the World Bank under the Indus Waters Treaty has ruled that he is competent to adjudicate on differences between India and Pakistan regarding two hydroelectric projects in Jammu and Kashmir.

About Indus Water Treaty

- 1) Signed between India and Pakistan on September 19, 1960 (Brokered by World Bank)
- 2) Determines distribution of waters from the Indus River System
- 3) India controls three "Eastern Rivers" (Beas, Ravi, Sutlei)
- 4) Pakistan controls three "Western Rivers" (Indus, Chenab, Jhelum)

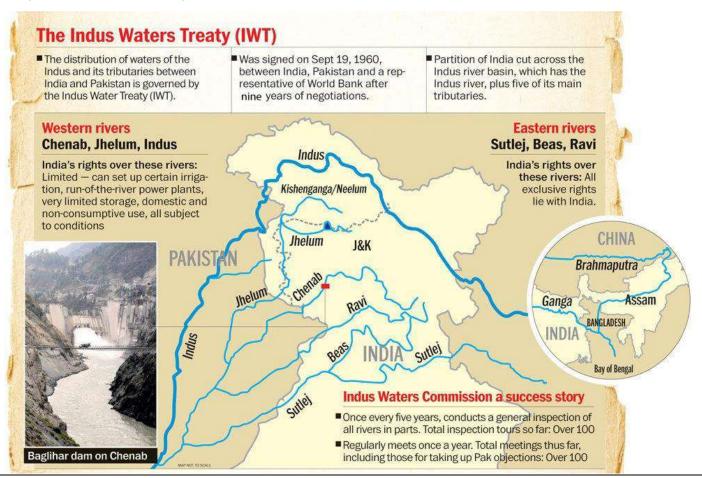
5) Allocates roughly 30% of water to India and 70% to Pakistan

INDUS WATERS TREATY: POINTS OF DIFFERENCE Here's what the Neutral Commissioner will now decide upon Whether the pondage provided in the two dams' designs meet restrictions imposed by the IWT. Whether the intakes for the turbines provided in the design are in accordance with the IWT. Whether the designs of the gated spillways of each plant are in accordance with the IWT.

Current Dispute

- 1) Pakistan objects to design features of two hydroelectric projects in Jammu and Kashmir:
 - a) Kishenganga HEP on Kishenganga (Jhelum tributary)
 - b) Ratle HEP on Chenab
- Pakistan alleges these projects violate the IWT, despite being "run-of-the-river" projects
- India filed request for matter to be referred to a Neutral Expert
- 4) Pakistan sought adjudication by Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)

Neutral Expert's Decision



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- 1) Ruled that he is "competent" to adjudicate on differences between India and Pakistan
- 2) Found that all seven questions referred fall within his competence under the Treaty
- Decided to proceed to render a decision on the merits of the "Points of Difference"

Significance

- 1) Vindicates India's long-held position on the dispute
- 2) Allows the Neutral Expert to examine the technical objections raised by Pakistan
- Supports India's argument that the matter should be resolved through Treaty-consistent mechanisms
- 4) Contrasts with Pakistan's attempt to involve the PCA, which India has boycotted
- 5) May influence future interpretations and implementations of the Indus Waters Treaty

SPOTLIGHT: 2021 PYQ

With reference to the Indus river system, of the following four rivers, three of them pour into one of them which joins the Indus directly. Among the following, which one is such a river that joins the Indus direct?

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

SPOTLIGHT: 2016 PYQ

Present an account of the Indus Water Treaty and examine its ecological, economic and political implications in the context of changing bilateral relations. (200 Words, 12.5 Marks)

HOME / OPINION / COMMENT

China's moves must recast India's critical minerals push



India's critical minerals development plans face challenges; a way out may be to adopt the semiconductor fabrication model

TH Editorial; By Rakshith Shetty, Pranay Kotasthane

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations, Economy <u>Link</u>

Why in News? China expanded its export control list on January 2, 2025, restricting access to critical minerals for 28 U.S. entities.

About China's Export Controls

- 1) **Targeted minerals:** China has banned or restricted exports of gallium, germanium, antimony, and rare earth elements to the U.S., citing national security concerns.
- Dual-use technologies: The restrictions cover "dual-use" items with both civilian and military applications, including technologies for battery components and critical mineral processing.
- Regulatory framework: China updated its Dual-Use Export Control List, effective December 1, 2024, introducing a unified control system and stricter oversight of hightech sectors.
- Specific U.S. targeting: Unlike previous restrictions, these controls explicitly target the United States, marking a significant escalation in the ongoing trade war.
- 5) **Potential expansion:** There are indications that China may extend restrictions to other strategic minerals like tungsten and magnesium, as well as technologies related to lithium-ion batteries.

Lessons for India's Critical Mineral Strategy

- Diversification of supply chains: India should prioritize diversifying its sources of critical minerals to reduce dependence on any single country, especially China.
- 2) Domestic exploration and production:
 Accelerate efforts to explore and exploit
 domestic reserves of critical minerals. India
 has significant untapped potential, with only
 about 20% of its geological wealth explored to
 date.
- 3) International partnerships: Strengthen strategic partnerships with resource-rich countries and participate in global initiatives like the Mineral Security Partnership (MSP) to secure access to critical minerals.
- 4) Recycling and circular economy: Develop a robust circular economy for critical minerals, focusing on advanced e-waste recycling technologies and creating a national database of end-of-life products containing these minerals.
- Policy framework: Implement a comprehensive national policy framework for critical minerals, defining vision, objectives, and priorities across ministries and stakeholders.





A mineral is labeled as a Critical Mineral when the risk of shortage in its supply and associated impact on the economy is relatively higher than the other raw materials.

The lack of availability of Critical Minerals or concentration of existence, extraction, or processing of the minerals in limited locations may lead to supply chain vulnerability and disruption.





Lithium, Graphite, Cobalt, Titanium, and rare earth elements are

essential for advancement in many sectors, including high-tech electronics, telecommunications, transport, and defence.

 They are vital to powering the transition to a lowcarbon economy, and the renewable energy technologies required to meet the 'Net Zero' commitments of many countries, including India.

India's dependence on imports

 India fully depends on imports for the supply of Lithium, Cobalt, Nickel, and at least 7 other critical minerals.

 China is a major source of India's imports of Lithium, Cobalt, Nickel, Germanium, Rhenium, and Beryllium.

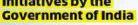
International Cooperation



- Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL), set up in 2019, and **Australia's Critical Mineral Office** signed an MoU in 2022.
- KABIL signed an MoU with CAMYEN for strategic investment in Argentina in 2022.
- KABIL signed an MoU with ENAMI for the exploration of Lithium in Chile in 2023
- India and the United States on October 4. 2024, signed an MoU to expand and diversify Critical Minerals supply chains.
- India joined the US-led Mineral Security Partnership and Mineral Security Finance Network.

SOURCE: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON IDENTIFICATION OF CRITICAL MINERALS, MINISTRY OF MINES INFORMATION PROVIDED BY GOI TO LOK SABHA ON

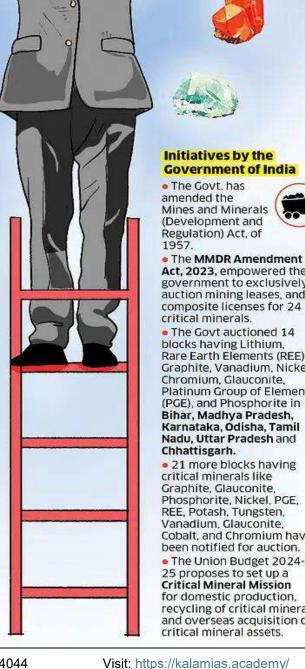
DH ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN



Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, of



- Act, 2023, empowered the government to exclusively auction mining leases, and composite licenses for 24
- The Govt auctioned 14 blocks having Lithium, Rare Earth Elements (REE), Graphite, Vanadium, Nickel, Chromium, Glauconite, Platinum Group of Elements (PGE), and Phosphorite in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and
- 21 more blocks having critical minerals like Graphite, Glauconite, Phosphorite, Nickel, PGE, REE, Potash, Tungsten, Vanadium, Glauconite, Cobalt, and Chromium have been notified for auction.
- The Union Budget 2024-25 proposes to set up a Critical Mineral Mission for domestic production, recycling of critical minerals, and overseas acquisition of critical mineral assets.





- 6) Investment in processing capabilities: Develop domestic refining and processing capabilities to reduce reliance on imports of refined materials.
- Research and development: Invest in R&D for alternative materials and technologies to reduce dependence on specific critical minerals.
- 8) **Skill development:** Address the skill gap in the critical minerals sector through specialized courses and vocational training programs.
- Sustainable mining practices: Develop and implement environmentally friendly mining techniques tailored to India's unique ecological context.
- 10) **Strategic stockpiling:** Consider building strategic reserves of critical minerals to buffer against supply disruptions and price volatility.
- 11) Regulatory reforms: Streamline regulations and provide incentives to attract private sector investment in critical mineral exploration and production.
- 12) **International cooperation:** Engage in knowledge sharing and technology transfer with countries advanced in critical mineral exploration and processing.

SPOTLIGHT: 2012 PYQ

Recently, there has been a concern over the short supply of a group of elements called 'rare earth metals'. Why?

- 1) China, which is the largest producer of these elements, has imposed some restrictions on their export.
- Other than China, Australia, Canada and Chile, these elements are not found in any country.
- Rare earth metals are essential for the manufacture of various kinds of electronic items and there is a growing demand for these elements.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

News / Explained / From Sukarno to Prabowo Subianto: The evolution of India-Indonesia tie

From Sukarno to Prabowo Subianto: The evolution of India-Indonesia ties

Indonesian President Sukarno was the chief guest at the first Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi in 1950. With President Prabowo Subianto invited as the guest this year, here is a look at the highs and lows of India-Indonesia ties.

IE Explained; By: Arjun Sengupta Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations Link

Why in News? India and Indonesia signed pacts on maritime security, health, traditional medicine, culture, and digital cooperation as Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto in New Delhi on January 25, 2025.

Historical Context

- Shared colonial experience and post-colonial goals fostered strong ties in the late 1940s and 1950s
- 2) India supported Indonesian independence during the National Revolution (1945-49)
- 3) Sukarno was chief guest at India's first Republic Day celebrations in 1950
- 4) Treaty of Friendship signed in 1951, aiming for "perpetual peace and unalterable friendship"

Periods of Fluctuation

- 1) 1960s: Relations deteriorated as Indonesia aligned with China and Pakistan
- 2) 1965 India-Pakistan War: Indonesia supported Pakistan, leading to strained ties
- 1970s-80s: Gradual improvement under Suharto's leadership, but limited progress

Modern Era Developments

- 1) 1990s: Relations improved with India's "Look East" policy
- 2014: Modi government introduced "Act East" policy, further strengthening ties
- 3) Bilateral trade increased from \$4.3 billion in 2005-06 to \$29.40 billion in 2023-24
- Indonesia is India's second-largest trading partner in ASEAN

Current Status and Future Prospects

- 1) Regular high-level visits between leaders since 2000
- 2) Cooperation in political, security, defense, commercial, and cultural fields
- Potential for further growth in trade, connectivity, maritime security, and defense cooperation
- 4) Recent agreements aim to enhance bilateral relations across various sectors





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Economy and Agriculture

January 2025

Core sectors' output grew at fourmonth high pace of 4.3% in November

The Commerce and Industry Ministry also revised upwards October's growth number for core sectors from 3.1% estimated earlier, to 3.7%.

TH Business; By Vikas Dhoot

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy Link

Why in News? India's eight core infrastructure sectors grew by 4.3% in November 2024, marking a four-month high.

Sector Performance

- 1) Cement: Led growth with 13% surge, sharpest rise in over a year
- 2) Crude oil and natural gas: Remained in contraction, but showed improvement
- 3) Electricity, steel, fertilizers, refinery products, and coal: Showed positive growth

Expert Opinions

- 1) Increased infrastructure activity reflected in government capex spending
- 2) Festival demand likely to boost Index of Industrial Production (IIP) growth
- 3) Fading impact of heavy rainfall in earlier months contributing to improvement

Factsheet: Core Sectors

Core sectors refer to eight key infrastructure industries that are considered crucial for the country's economic growth and development. These sectors are:

- 5) Cement
- 6) Coal
- 7) Crude oil
- 8) Electricity
- 9) Fertilizers
- 10) Natural gas
- 11) Refinery products
- 12) Steel

These eight core sectors are significant because:

13) They constitute about 40% of the overall industrial production in India.

- 14) Their performance is measured by the Index of Core Industries (ICI), which is an important economic indicator.
- 15) Changes in the production levels of these core sectors often have a ripple effect on other industries and the broader economy.

Factsheet: Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

IIP is a composite indicator that measures changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products in India over a specified period.

- 16) Released by: National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
- 17) Base Year: 2011-12
- 18) Frequency: Monthly
- 19) Release Date: 12th of every month (or previous working day if 12th is a holiday)

Sectors Covered

- 20) Manufacturing (77.63% weightage)
- 21) Mining (14.37% weightage)
- 22) Electricity (7.99% weightage)

Eight core industries represent 40% of the weight in IIP

News / Business / Foreign investors net sell Rs 4,285 crore from equities in first 3 days of 2025

Foreign investors net sell Rs 4,285 crore from equities in first 3 days of 2025

In the debt market (general limit) also, foreign investors sold Rs 1,111 crore on a net basis between January 1 and 3, the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL) data showed.

IE Economy

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy Link

Why in News? Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded Rs 4,285 crore worth of domestic equities on a net basis in the first three trading days of 2025.



Why FPIs leaving India?

- 1) **Strong Dollar:** The strengthening of the US dollar has made investments in emerging markets like India less attractive.
- Higher US Bond Yields: Attractive returns from US bonds are drawing investors away from Indian markets.
- 3) Caution Before Q3 Results: FPIs are exercising caution ahead of the release of third-quarter corporate results in India.
- 4) Valuation Concerns: There are concerns about the high valuations of Indian stocks, making them less appealing to foreign investors.
- 5) **Economic Growth Concerns:** Belowexpected domestic GDP growth in the second quarter of fiscal 2025 (5.4%) has contributed to investor wariness.
- 6) **Weak Corporate Earnings:** Underwhelming performance of Indian companies has led to reduced investor confidence.

The trend is expected to continue as long as the dollar remains strong, and US bonds offer attractive yields.

IE Economy: CII suggests seven-point agenda for the upcoming FY26 budget
Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy Link

Why in News? The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has proposed a seven-point agenda for the upcoming FY26 budget to boost employment generation in India.

7-point Agenda for Employment Generation

- Integrated National Employment Policy: Subsume various schemes under a unified policy and utilize National Career Service as a single portal.
- 2) Support for Labor-Intensive Sectors: Introduce new income tax provisions to encourage employment.
- 3) **International Mobility Authority:** Establish under Ministry of External Affairs to facilitate overseas employment opportunities.
- Increase Female Workforce Participation: Construct dormitories, formalize care economy, establish creches in industrial clusters.
- 5) **Labour Code Implementation:** Roll out labour codes ensuring social security for gig and platform workers.

- Rural Internship Program: Launch internships in government offices for collegeeducated rural youth.
- Productivity Enhancement: Set up expert committee to study and recommend measures to improve India's Incremental Capital Output Ratio.

Factsheet: Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

Non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led organization

Founded in 1895

Headquarters: New Delhi, India

Key Functions

- 1) Advocacy for industry-friendly policies
- 2) Promotion of international trade and investment
- 3) Enhancing competitiveness of Indian industry
- 4) Facilitating industry-government partnerships

Membership

- Over 9,000 members from private and public sectors
- 2) Includes SMEs and MNCs
- Represents diverse sectors of Indian industry

SPOTLIGHT: 2017 PYQ

With reference to 'Quality Council of India (QCI)', consider the following statements:

- QCI was set up jointly by the Government of India and the Indian Industry.
- Chairman of QCI is appointed by the Prime Minister on the recommendations of the industry to the Government.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Current Edge: January 2025





Yogendra Yadav writes: Farmers' demand for a legal guarantee for MSP is the bare minimum

The government officially declares MSP for 23 crops every year. The TV-watching public believes that the government has done a great favour to the farmers. In reality, the government does precious little to ensure that farmers get this "minimum" price.

IE The Ideas Page: By Kavita Kuruganti, Kirankumar Vissa, Yogendra Yadav Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy & Agriculture Link

Why in News? Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal is on the 43rd day of an indefinite fast demanding a legally guaranteed Minimum Support Price (MSP) for farmers.

Current Situation

- The government declares MSP for 23 crops annually but does little to ensure farmers receive this minimum price.
- 2) Farmers often sell crops below the official MSP, resulting in significant income losses.
- 3) The government's draft "National Framework for Agricultural Marketing" for the next decade does not mention MSP.

Arguments against legalising MSP

- 1) **Financial Burden:** Full implementation could cost up to Rs 2,00,710 crore for top 15 crops at farmers' demanded rates.
 - a) Represents 4.2% of Union budget, or about 0.6% of GDP
- 2) **Market Distortions:** May discourage crop diversification by incentivizing only MSP crops.
 - a) Could lead to overproduction of certain crops, creating storage and disposal issues.
- Regional Disparities: Benefits may be skewed towards regions with better infrastructure and market access.
 - a) Small and marginal farmers in remote areas might still struggle to benefit.
- Impact on Exports: Higher domestic prices may make Indian agricultural exports less competitive globally.
 - a) Could potentially violate WTO agreements on agricultural subsidies.
- 5) **Private Sector Discouragement:** Legal MSP might deter private traders and companies from agricultural markets.
 - a) Could reduce competition and innovation in the agricultural sector.

 Environmental Concerns: Potential overuse of water and fertilizers for high-yielding varieties.

Arguments in Support of Legalizing MSP

- Income Security for Farmers: Protecting farmers from market volatility. Could potentially lift millions of farmers out of poverty and debt cycles.
- 2) **Reduction in Farmer Suicides:** India reported 5,563 farmer suicides in 2021.
 - a) Reduces exploitation by middlemen and large agribusinesses.
- 3) **Food Security:** Helps maintain buffer stocks for national food security.
- Rural Economic Boost: May reduce ruralurban migration by making agriculture more attractive.
- 5) **Price Stability:** Legal MSP could act as a price floor, reducing extreme price fluctuations.
 - a) Benefits consumers by ensuring steady food supply at reasonable prices.
- 6) Crop Planning and Diversification: Government can use MSP to incentivize cultivation of needed crops.
 - a) Could promote balanced agricultural growth and nutrition security.
- Investment in Agriculture: Assured returns may encourage farmers to invest in modern farming techniques.
- 8) **Social Justice:** Addresses historical neglect of the agricultural sector.

Way Forward

- 1) Swaminathan Committee Recommendation: Set MSP at least 50% above the weighted average cost of production, using C2+ 50% formula.
- Price Deficiency Payment System (PDPS): Compensate farmers with the difference between market price and MSP when market prices fall below MSP.
- Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture: Use MSP to promote millets and other nutritious cereals in the Public Distribution System.
- 4) **Economic Survey 2022-23:** Diversify MSP into animal husbandry, fisheries, fruits, and vegetables.
- Form commodity based FPOs like Small Cotton Farmers' Estates to combine decentralized production with centralized services.



SPOTLIGHT: 2020 PYQ

Consider the following statements:

- 1) In the case of all cereals, pulses and oilseeds, the procurement at Minimum Support Price (MSP) is unlimited in any State/UT of
- 2) In the case of cereals and pulses, the MSP is fixed in any State/UT at a level to which the market price will never rise.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

SPOTLIGHT: 2018 PYQ

What do you mean by Minimum Support Price (MSP)? How will MSP rescue the farmers from the low-income trap? (150 Words, 10 Marks)

Top 10 trends of 2024: Your money, your leaders, your world

Big election year, hype around AI, a fading China and more — Prannoy Roy and Ruchir Sharma decode the top 10 economic trends of 2024

IE Explained; By Prannoy Roy

Syllabus: Pre/Mains - Economy Link

PREDICTIONS SUMMAR

REVERSAL IN RECENT PATTERN OF US DOMINANCE: American stock market could have the first year of underperformance in a

FISCAL DEFICIT IS AMERICA'S FATAL FLAW: Politicians are not focused on cutting back; market may put more pressure

AMERICA WILL LOOK LESS **EXCEPTIONAL:** Growth rates will come off the boil rather than remain close to 3% like it's been for the last couple of years.

NEW STARS ARE GOING TO EMERGE: If something goes down, something else will come up. There are many large economies with minuscule investment weights.

CHINA IS BECOMING INVESTABLE AGAIN: Its economy may not be booming or even doing fine, but it's become so cheap that it's investable. Several 'diamonds in the rough' there.

IN INDIA, SMALL WILL NO LONGER BE BEAUTIFUL: Small and mid-cap stocks have had a great run. The performance valuation gap will narrow between the small- and mid-cap companies and the large caps.

OVERSPENDING ON AI WILL HURT BIGTECH FIRMS: They're overdoing it; returns may not be commensurate with spend on Al. Valuations may be questioned if profits don't grow as significantly.

GLOBAL TRADE WILL GROW WITHOUT AMERICA: It's already been happening, but with Donald Trump's election, it's likely to accelerate. India and others are signing more bilateral trade agreements.

PRIVATE FUNDING WILL SLOW DOWN GLOBALLY: Public funding will increase again, mainly led by the US. India is still at a nascent stage; private funding may or may not slow down.

NO MAGIC SOLUTION TO OBESITY EPIDEMIC: There are many benefits to drugs like Ozempic. But there are side effects too, and the idea that it is a magic pill will be questioned.

Decoding India's growth

The official diminution of India's projected GDP growth rate may still be an underestimation of the extent of economic slowdown. The revenue mobilisation strategy needs to be reworked to enhance taxation on wealth and profits in order to enhance capex and welfare spending

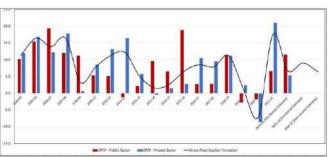
TH Text & Context: Bv Preseniit Soumyadeep Biswas Syllabus: Pre/Mains - Economy Link

Why in News? The National Statistics Office has released the first advance estimates of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2024-25, projecting a decline in real GDP growth rate to 6.4% from 8.2% in 2023-

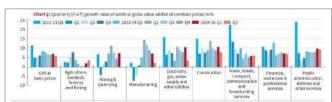
Economic Indicators

- 1) GDP Growth: Real GDP growth rate estimated at 6.4% for 2024-25, down from 8.2% in 2023-
- 2) Nominal GDP Growth: Projected at 9.7% for 2024-25, lower than the 10.5% growth rate projected in the last Union Budget.









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	Centre's not tax revenue		Centre's non-tax revenue		Capital expenditure		Revenue expenditure	
Budget estimates (BE) (*crore)	23,30,631	25,83,499	3,01,650	5,45,701	10,00,961	11,11,111	35,02,136	37,09,401
April to November (Ecrore)	14,35,755	14,43,435	2,84,365	4,27,020	5,85,645	5,13,500	20,66,522	22,27,502
% of Budget estimate (April to November)	61.6	55.0	94.3	78.3	58.5	46.2	59.0	60.1
% of Budget estimate (April to March)	90.8	But.	133.2	n.a.	94.6	Date:	99.75	n.a.

India's economic growth is slowing down due to several factors:

- 1) **Investment Slowdown:** Growth in real gross fixed capital formation has decreased from 9% in 2023-24 to 6.4% in 2024-25, indicating a significant reduction in investment.
- Elusive Private Investment: The anticipated revival of private sector investment has not materialized. Private investment growth has been lower than public investment in recent years.
- Sectoral Slowdown: Key sectors such as manufacturing, mining, power, construction, retail trade, transport, communications, finance, and real estate are showing signs of deceleration.
- 4) Revenue Shortfall: The Union Government's net tax revenues between April to November 2024 were only 56% of the budgetary target, indicating challenges in revenue mobilization.
- 5) **Fiscal Constraints:** Less than half of the budgeted capital expenditure for 2024-25 had been spent by November 2024, potentially due to revenue shortfalls.
- 6) Data Discrepancies: Academics and experts have pointed out defects in official GDP estimates, which may be underestimating the extent of the economic slowdown.
- 7) Volatile WPI: High volatility in the Wholesale Price Index has led to discrepancies in GDP estimates, affecting the accuracy of growth projections.
- 8) **Structural Issues:** Despite corporate tax cuts in 2019, there has been no significant structural break in private corporate sector investment behaviour over the past 11 years.

How the draft rules for implementing data protection falls short

Although the draft rules provide some guidance for implementing the DPDP Act, they lack detailed guidelines to help improve the lives of India's digital magnis. The government needs to seek appropriate expert advice, conduct wide consultations, and darify timelines for implementation

TH Text & Context; By: Jhalak M Kakkar, Shashank Mohan

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy, Science & Tech Link

Why in News? The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has released

draft rules for implementing the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP Act), which are open for public feedback until mid-February.

Draft Rules for Implementing the DPDP Act, 2023

- 1) Guidance for notice and consent mechanisms for data collection and processing
 - a) Users can request data access, correction, completion, updating, and erasure
 - b) Data processors must publish steps for users to exercise these rights
- 2) Procedures for intimating data breaches
- Methods for collecting parental consent for children's data
 - a) Verifiable parental consent required for children under 18
 - b) Data processors must adopt technical and organizational measures to ensure parental consent
 - Parents can provide existing user details or formal identity proof
- 4) Data localization measures
- Procedure for establishing the Data Protection Board of India



Issues with Draft Rules

- Lack of Detailed Guidelines: Insufficient operational clarity for businesses and data processors
 - a) Fails to provide specific mechanisms for implementing user rights
- Vague User Rights Procedures: No clear process for users to request data erasure or object to data processing

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- a) Lacks standards for handling search engine de-listing requests
- Inadequate Children's Data Protection: No detailed procedures for identifying children or verifying parental consent
 - a) Fails to address challenges of shared device usage in Indian families
- 4) **Rushed and Incomplete:** Despite 16-month drafting period, rules lack expert consultation and thoroughness
 - a) Fails to clarify implementation timelines for businesses
- Insufficient Operational Guidance: Restates Act provisions without providing additional clarity
 - a) Lacks practical solutions for complex scenarios in data protection

SPOTLIGHT: 2024 PYQ

Describe the context and salient features of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023. (150 Words, 10 Marks)



How India can become the world's leading startup ecosystem

Favourable policies, a thriving culture of innovation, and collaborative efforts across sectors provide the foundation for scaling startups into global enterprises.

IE The Editorial Page; By: Amitabh Kant Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy Link

Why in News? Amitabh Kant, India's G20 Sherpa and former CEO of NITI Aayog, outlines strategies for India to become the world's leading startup ecosystem.

Current Status and Growth

- 1) India is now the world's third-largest hub for innovation and entrepreneurship
- 2) Over 130,000 recognized startups, up from 400 in 2015-16
- Startup funding grew 15 times, investors increased nine-fold, and incubators rose seven-fold since 2015-16
- 4) \$12 billion raised by Indian startups in 2024, with 75% from international sources

Key Factors Driving Growth

- 1) Robust digital public infrastructure
- Government initiatives: National Quantum Mission, India Al Mission, Semiconductor Mission

- 3) Rs 1 lakh crore allocated for research and development
- Progressive policies opening up new sectors: space, geospatial technology, defense, and drones
- 5) Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) catalyzing capital pool of Rs 81,000 crore

Challenges faced by Start-ups

- Capital Gap: Deep tech startups face difficulties in securing long-term investments.
 - a) 75% of startup funding in 2024 came from international sources, indicating a lack of domestic capital.
- Sustainability and Governance Gap: Recent incidents of corporate mismanagement in startups like Byju's, Dunzo, and BharatPe have raised concerns.
- 3) **Skill Gap:** Existing skill shortages in areas such as product development, data science, and Al-ML.
 - a) Outdated curriculum in educational institutions
- 4) Innovation and Intellectual Property Gap: Significant gap in IPR royalties: India paid \$14.3 billion in 2024 while earning only \$1.5 billion.

Way Forward

- 1) Create a specialized fund of funds for deep tech startups.
- 2) Increase domestic capital sources: encourage insurance companies, pension funds, and family offices to invest in startups.
- Implement self-regulation frameworks emphasizing accountability, transparency, and ethical conduct.
- 4) Strengthen mentorship, professional boards, and sound financial management in startups.
- 5) Update curricula in educational institutions to address skill shortages.
- Foster collaboration between academia and industry to align educational programs with market needs.
- Implement programs for internships, apprenticeships, and recruitment to attract talent to startups.
- 8) Create a vibrant ideas ecosystem that rewards and protects intellectual property.
- 9) Expansion beyond metro cities: Support regional hubs in Tier II and III cities with infrastructure and educational opportunities.
- 10) Increase women's representation in leadership roles to unlock untapped talent.



Startups to play a pivotal role in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Details of Biden's Rumored Three-Tier Chip Export Curbs

Categories	Countries	Regulation in Detail
Tier 1	The U.S. and its 18 allies Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, France, French Guiana, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, U.K.	Unrestricted access to advanced U.S. AI chips Cannot deploy > 25% of processing capacity outside Tier 1 countries ≤ 7% capacity in any Tier 2 nation
Tier 2 Most countries in the world (Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Mexico, and Latin America)		Limits on computing power: a cap of about 50K GPUs in 2025-27 More power allowed with VEU
Tier 3	Belarus, China, Iran, Russia, and other embargoed nations	Complete ban on U.S. Al processor imports

SPOTLIGHT: 2022 PYQ

Discuss the role of the Startup India initiative in addressing unemployment in India. What challenges does the initiative face and how can they be addressed? (250 Words, 15 Marks)

News / Explained / Explained Sci-Tech / New US AI export rule excludes India from benefits of closest allies. What could be the impact?

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New US AI export rule excludes India from benefits of closest allies. What could be the impact?

India is in Tier 2 of the classification proposed by the Biden administration in its dying days. Implementation will depend on the incoming Donald Trump administration. Why is Nvidia angry at the rules?

IE Economy; By: Soumyarendra Barik Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy, International Relations Link

Why in News? The Biden administration has released a new regulatory framework for Al hardware exports, potentially impacting India's Al development plans.

US's New Regulatory Framework for Al Hardware Exports

- 1) Creation of three tiers of countries with specific restrictions on AI chip exports.
- 2) Tier 1 consists of 18 closest US allies with minimal restrictions.
- Tier 2 includes the majority of countries, including India, with limited computing power imports.
- 4) Tier 3 comprises countries of concern with near-total export prohibition

- The framework also includes a special provision called the General Validated End User review, which applies to India and China.
- For India, this allows the use of exported items for civilian and military purposes, excluding nuclear use.

Potential Impacts on India's Al Development Plans

- India's placement in Tier 2 may affect its plan to procure 10,000 GPUs for the IndiaAl Mission.
- Large companies building Al data centers in India could face challenges due to import restrictions.
- 3) Smaller firms are likely to remain unaffected by these regulations.

Nvidia, a major player in Al GPUs, has criticized these rules, arguing that they could undermine America's leadership in Al and weaken global competitiveness.

SPOTLIGHT PYQ: 2020 PYQ

With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following?

- 1) Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units
- 2) Create meaningful short stories and songs
- 3) Disease diagnosis
- 4) Text-to-Speech Conversion
- 5) Wireless transmission of electrical energy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2, 4 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

PM approves constitution of Eighth Pay Commission for central government employees

TH News;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy, Governance Link

Why in News? Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the constitution of the Eighth Pay Commission for central government employees on January 16, 2025, ahead of the Delhi Assembly election.

KALAM IAS Re-Defining UPSC Preparation

Timeline and Process:

- 1) Chairperson and two members to be appointed soon
- 2) Usually headed by a retired Supreme Court judge
- 3) Process initiated well ahead of the Seventh Pay Commission's term conclusion in 2026
- 4) Extensive consultations with Union and State governments and stakeholders to be held

Factsheet: Pay Commission

- Pay Commission is a central government body in India established to review and recommend changes to salary structures for government employees
- 2) Typically constituted every 10 years since India's independence in 1947
- 3) Recommendations cover central government employees, including civil servants and military personnel
- Not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution of India/Specific Statute; Established through executive orders by the central government.
- Recommendations are not binding but are generally accepted and implemented by the government
- 6) Typically headed by a retired Supreme Court judge or senior government official

About 7th Pay Commission

- 1) Constituted in February 2014 under the chairmanship of Justice Ashok Kumar Mathur
- 2) Submitted its report on November 19, 2015
- 3) Recommendations implemented from January 1, 2016
- 4) Introduced a new pay matrix replacing the previous pay bands and grade pay system
- 5) Minimum pay increased from ₹7,000 to ₹18,000 per month
- 6) Maximum pay set at ₹2,50,000 per month for Cabinet Secretary level
- 7) Introduced ACROWTH formula for calculating the annual increment:
 - a) A: Annual
 - b) C: Constant
 - c) R: Rate of growth
 - d) O: Of
 - e) W: Wage
 - f) T: Time scale
 - g) H: Horizontal movement

This formula ensures a constant rate of growth in pay progression, with annual increments calculated as a percentage of the previous year's pay.

India's real growth rate and the forecast

Over the next five years, the best that India may hope for is a steady real GDP growth rate of 6.5%

TH Editorial; By: C. Rangarajan, D.K. Srivastava Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy Link

Why in News? The First Advance Estimates (FAE) of National Accounts for 2024-25 show a real GDP growth of 6.4% and a nominal GDP growth of 9.7%, falling short of earlier projections.

Current Economic Scenario

- 1) Real GDP growth for 2024-25: 6.4%
- 2) Nominal GDP growth for 2024-25: 9.7%
- 3) First half growth: 6%, Second half expected growth: 6.7%
- 4) Manufacturing sector growth declined from 9.9% in 2023-24 to 5.3% in 2024-25

Growth Prospects for 2025-26

- 1) Realistic real GDP growth expectation: 6.5%
- Gross Fixed Capital Formation rate stabilized around 33.4%
- 3) Incremental Capital Output Ratio (ICOR) assumed to be 5.1

Factors Influencing Growth

- Domestic demand crucial due to uncertain global economy
- 2) Government investment expenditure slowdown impacting overall growth
- 3) Need for accelerated capital expenditure growth (at least 20%) in 2025-26

Medium to Long-term Outlook

- 1) Projected steady real GDP growth rate: 6.5% over the next five years
- 2) Implicit price deflator (IPD)-based inflation: about 4%
- 3) Expected nominal GDP growth: 10.5%-11%
- 4) Potential to reach developed country status in 2.5 decades with consistent growth





Ashok Gulati writes: The reform and welfare India needs

MSP framework needs a revisit. The competitive populism to give free food, power, or highly subsidised fertilisers, or pocket money in the name of Ladli Behna. is a race to the bottom

IE The Editorial Page; By: Ashok Gulati Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy & Agriculture Link

Why in News? Ashok Gulati, Distinguished Professor at ICRIER, writes about the need for agricultural reforms and welfare measures in India to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

К	HARIF CROPS	(14) R	ABI CROPS (7)		ALENDAR YEAR
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.	Paddy Jawar Bajara Ragi Maize Arhar Moong Urad	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.	Wheat Barley Gram Massur Rapesced& Mustard Safflower Torai	1. 2. 3. 4.	Copra De-husked Coconut Jute Sugar Cane (FRP)
9. 10. 11. 12. 13.	Cotton Ground Nuts Sunflower Soyabean Sesamum Nigerseed	CACP recommends MSP for 22 crops before the sowing period each year MSP derived for Toria based on MSP for Rapeseeds and Mustard and for De-husked Coconut on the Basis of MSP of Copra. Fair and Remunerative prices for Sugar is also declared			

Current Agricultural Scenario

- 1) India has transitioned from food scarcity to food surplus since the 1960s
- 2) Currently providing free wheat and rice to over 800 million people
- 3) Largest exporter of rice globally
- 4) Food Corporation of India has rice stocks three times the buffer norms

Issues with Current MSP System

- Originally introduced in 1965 for wheat and rice during food scarcity
- 2) Has expanded to include more crops due to political pressures
- 3) Open-ended procurement in some states leading to production imbalances
- Causing ecological issues: groundwater depletion, soil degradation, and greenhouse gas emissions
- 5) Inefficiencies due to regulated land market and pricing of inputs and outputs



HOW ARE MSPs DETERMINED?

The Centre fixes MSPs for every kharif and rabi cropping season based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)

 When a farmer grows a crop, he incurs costs, some of it explicit and some implicit or unpaid. The CACP considers the following costs:



12

Covers all cash and in kind expenses incurred by farmers on seeds, fertilisers,

chemicals, hired labour, fuel, irrigation, etc



Actual costs plus an imputed value of unpaid family

seeds, labour illisers, cals, hired



C2

Includes 'A2+FL' along with revenues forgone on owned land (rent) and fixed capital assets

(interest)

Proposed Reforms

- 1) Revisit the entire Minimum Support Price (MSP) framework
- 2) Free up prices of agricultural products and major inputs (fertilizers, power)
- Open up land markets, starting with land lease markets
- 4) Move towards direct cash transfers to targeted beneficiaries
- 5) Provide aggregate input subsidy support to needy farmers on a per hectare basis
- 6) Invest in:
 - a) Agricultural R&D and extension
 - b) Education and skills development
 - c) Irrigation and water management
 - d) Rural infrastructure (roads and markets)

SPOTLIGHT: 2018 PYQ

What do you mean by Minimum Support Price (MSP)? How will MSP rescue the farmers from the low-income trap? (150 Words, 10 Marks)



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News / Explained / What is the SVAMITVA scheme to issue property cards in villages, who benefits from it and how

What is the SVAMITVA scheme to issue property cards in villages, who benefits from it and how

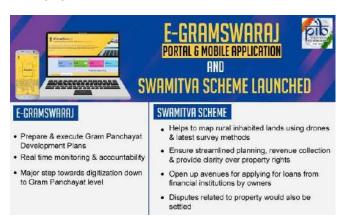
PM Modi said once property cards under the SVAMITVA scheme have been distributed in all villages, it could unlock economic activity worth over Rs 100 lakh crore. Here's what the scheme is, and how it works.

IE Explained; By: Harikishan Sharma Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy Link

Why in News? Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the distribution of property cards under the SVAMITVA scheme in all villages could unlock economic activity worth over Rs 100 lakh crore.

About SVAMITVA Scheme

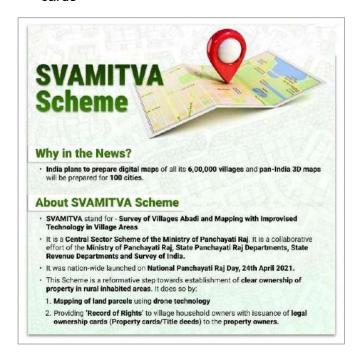
- 1) Full form: Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas
- 2) Objective: Provide 'record of rights' to village households and issue property cards
- Implementation: Survey rural properties using drones and prepare GIS-based maps for each village
- 4) Launch date: April 24, 2020 (National Panchayati Raj Day)
- 5) Property card distribution began: October 11, 2020



Implementation Process

- MoU signing between Survey of India and state governments
- 2) Establishment of Continuously Operating Reference System (CORS)
- 3) Village identification and awareness creation
- 4) Demarcation of inhabited areas and property marking
- 5) Drone-based mapping of rural areas

- 6) GIS database and village map creation
- 7) Ground verification and dispute resolution
- 8) Generation and distribution of final property cards



Benefits of SVAMITVA Property Cards

- 1) Financial asset for rural households:
 - a) Enables taking loans and accessing financial benefits
 - b) Facilitates starting small businesses in villages
- 2) Improved local governance:
 - a) Aids in property tax determination for Gram Panchayats
 - b) Increases land parcel liquidity and financial credit availability
- 3) Enhanced rural planning:
 - a) Creates accurate land records
 - b) Assists in village taxation, construction permits, and encroachment elimination

Challenges Before SVAMITVA Scheme

- Massive scale of operation covering 6.62 lakh villages in India
- 2) Technological constraints in remote or difficult terrains
- 3) Capacity building for local officials to use advanced technologies
- 4) Time-consuming dispute resolution during ground verification
- Integration of new property cards with existing land records
- 6) Ensuring legal standing of property cards across all states



- 7) Raising awareness and encouraging participation in rural areas
- 8) Addressing equity concerns for marginalized groups
- 9) Managing potential unintended consequences in local land markets
- 10) Maintaining and updating vast amounts of generated data
- 11) Keeping property records current as ownership changes occur
- 12) Ensuring long-term financial sustainability of the scheme

Progress and Future Plans

- 1) Initial pilot: Implemented in 1 lakh villages across 9 states in 2020
- 2) Current status:
 - a) Drone survey completed in over 3.17 lakh villages (92% of target)
 - b) Full saturation achieved in 6 states/UTs
 - c) 67,000 sq.km of rural Abadi land surveyed, valued at Rs.132 lakh crore
- 3) Future plans:
 - a) International Workshop on Land Governance in India (March 2025)
 - b) Participation in World Bank Land Governance Conference (May 2025)

News / Explained / Everyday Explainers / What is the World Economic Forum annual meeting, set to begin in Dayos?

What is the World Economic Forum annual meeting, set to begin in Davos?

World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2025: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw will head the Indian delegation. Why is the global meeting held, and what happens as part of it? We explain.

IE Explained;

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations Link

Why in News? The World Economic Forum (WEF) is holding its Annual Meeting from January 20 to 24, 2025, in Davos, Switzerland, with global leaders in attendance.

Event Details:

- Attendees include European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and China's Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang
- 2) Indian delegation led by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw

- 3,000 participants, including investors, business leaders, politicians, economists, and iournalists
- 4) 500 sessions discussing global issues

Factsheet: World Economic Forum (WEF)

- 1) Founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab
- 2) Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland
- 3) International organization for public-private cooperation
- 4) Mission: Improve the state of the world through stakeholder engagement
- Not-for-profit foundation; Independent and impartial; Promotes stakeholder responsibility
- 6) Engages leaders from various sectors: business, politics, academia, civil society
- 7) Primarily funded by its 1,000 member companies
- 8) Major Initiatives:
 - Reskilling Revolution: Aims to provide better education to 1 billion people by 2030
 - b) EDISON Alliance: Focuses on affordable digital access for 1 billion people by 2025
 - c) 1t.org: Goal to conserve, restore, and grow 1 trillion trees by 2030
- 9) WEF Initiatives in India:
 - a) Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution India
 - b) Moving India Network to accelerate transition to electric mobility

10) Major Reports:

- a) Global Competitiveness Report
- b) Global Risks Report
- c) Global Gender Gap Report
- d) Global Information Technology Report
- e) Global Travel and Tourism Report
- f) Energy Transition Index
- g) Global Enabling Trade Report
- h) Future of Jobs Report

SPOTLIGHT: 2019 PYQ

The Global Competitiveness Report is published by the

- (a) International Monetary Fund
- (b) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- (c) World Economic Forum
- (d) World Bank



SPOTLIGHT: 2017 PYQ

Which of the following gives 'Global Gender Gap Index' ranking to the countries of the world?

- (a) World Economic Forum
- (b) UN Human Rights Council
- (c) UN Women
- (d) World Health Organization

SPOTLIGHT: 2009 PYQ

Who among the following is the founder of World Economic Forum?

- (a) Klaus Schwab
- (b) John Kenneth Galbraith
- (c) Hobert Zoellick
- (d) Paul Krugman

Opinion by Akshita Agarwal

7 imperatives to build a viksit agri economy by 2047

India stands at a crossroads in modernising its agricultural practices. To act on these imperatives will require a strategic mix of investments, policy reforms and grassroots engagement

IE Explained; By: Akshita Agarwal Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy & Agriculture Link

Why in News? The opinion outlines seven key imperatives for modernizing India's agricultural practices to build a developed (viksit) agricultural economy by 2047,

Current Challenges before Agriculture

- Balancing food security, rural livelihoods, and sustainability
- 2) Lag in adoption of modern technology innovations
- 3) Limited penetration of Al and advanced technologies
- 4) Dominance of monoculture and excessive chemical use
- 5) High costs and limited access to robotics and automation
- 6) Underdeveloped alternative protein market
- 7) Limited use of digital twins and blockchain in agriculture
- 8) Insufficient large-scale climate-smart initiatives

7 Imperatives for Building a Viksit Agri Economy in India by 2047

 Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Agriculture: Develop vernacular AI platforms for smallholder farmers; Partner with AgTechs for

- affordable AI solutions; Disseminate AI-based advisory services through government programs;
- Regenerative Farming Practices: Implement a national regenerative farming policy; Promote private sector-led R&D for capitalefficient agro-ecology practices;
- 3) Robotics and Automation: Develop low-cost robotic solutions for small farms; Establish AgTech hubs for testing and deploying automation; Foster public-private partnerships to scale robotics innovation;
- 4) Alternative Protein Market: Collaborate with global leaders to improve production and formulation techniques; Increase public awareness of lab-grown proteins;
- Digital Twins Technology: Partner with AgTechs to pilot digital twin projects; Train researchers in digital modelling; Explore tax incentives for investing in digital twin solutions;
- 6) **Blockchain Integration:** Focus on blockchain scale-up for export crops; Improve price realization for farmers through increased transparency;
- Climate-Smart Farming Techniques: Scale up micro-irrigation technologies; Invest in climate-resilient seed varieties and bio-based crop protection; Leverage AI for localized climate advisory systems;

SPOTLIGHT: 2023 PYQ

How does e-Technology help farmers in production and marketing of agricultural produce? Explain it. (150 Words, 10 Marks)

What is the status of the Smart Cities Mission? | Explained

Why did the implementation of smart cities bypass local government and depend on Special Purpose Vehicles? What has happened to the mission in Shimla?

TH Text & Context; By Tikender Singh Panwar Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy, Governance Link

Why in News? Almost a decade after the Indian government announced the Smart Cities Mission in June 2015, the initiative has faced significant implementation challenges and failed to achieve its intended goals.

Background and Concept

1) Launched in 2015 with the aim of creating 100 smart cities as models of urban development



- 2) Based on the Internet of Things (IoT) framework, which works well in advanced countries with existing basic utilities
- 3) In India, "smart cities" primarily meant providing fundamental amenities to residents

Key Components

- Pan-city proposals: IT-enabled services like mobility and waste management
- 2) Area-Based Development (ABD):
 - a) Focused on specific zones within a city
 - b) Included retrofitting, redevelopment, and greenfield projects

3) Governance Structure:

- a) Bypassed local governments
- b) Relied on Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) registered under the Companies Act
- c) City councils were excluded from the decision-making process

Case Study: Shimla

- 1) Initially not included in the smart cities list
- 2) Added after legal challenges in the Himachal Pradesh High Court
- 3) Proposed investment: ₹2,906 crore
- 4) Actual spending: ₹707 crore (24% of the original budget)

5) Key projects:

- Retrofit project for improving pedestrian crossings, vehicular mobility, and transport corridors
- b) Redevelopment of Lower Bazar, Ganj Bazar, and Krishnanagar

6) Challenges faced:

- a) Proposed Public-Private Partnerships
 (PPP) contribution did not materialize
- b) Redevelopment projects for key areas remain unimplemented
- c) Traffic congestion worsened
- d) Non-motorized mobility neglected
- e) Funds spent on non-essential items (e.g., ₹2 crore on flowerpots)

Lessons Learned

- 1) Projects lacking meaningful urban governance and public involvement are likely to fail
- 2) Absence of ownership and accountability led to the fading of the smart city vision
- The initiative's bypass of local governments and reliance on private company-like structures proved ineffective

SPOTLIGHT: 2016 PYQ

With a brief background of quality of urban life in India, introduce the objectives and strategy of the 'Smart City Programme.' (200 Words, 12.5 Marks)

Union Budget: understanding its formulation and implications

There are three major components of the Budget — expenditure, receipts and deficit indicators. Depending on the manner in which

TH Text & Context; By Zico Dasgupta Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy Link

Why in News? Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget for the upcoming year on Saturday, February 1, 2025.

Major Components of the Budget

1) Expenditure

- a) Capital expenditure: Increases assets or reduces liabilities (e.g., constructing schools, hospitals)
- b) Revenue expenditure: Does not add to assets or reduce liabilities (e.g., wages, subsidies, interest payments)

2) Receipts

- a) Revenue receipts: Not associated with increased liabilities (taxes and non-tax sources)
- b) **Non-debt capital receipts:** Do not generate additional liabilities (e.g., loan recovery, disinvestment proceeds)
- c) **Debt-creating capital receipts:** Involve higher liabilities and future payment commitments

3) Deficit Indicators

- a) Fiscal deficit: Difference between total expenditure and sum of revenue receipts and non-debt receipts
- b) **Primary deficit:** Difference between fiscal deficit and interest payments
- c) **Revenue deficit:** Fiscal deficit minus capital expenditure

Economic Implications

1) Aggregate Demand

- a) Government expenditure generates aggregate demand
- b) Tax and non-tax revenue reduces private sector income and aggregate demand

2) Income Distribution

 a) Different components of expenditure and revenue affect various social groups differently

Re-Defining UPSC Preparation

b) Example: Employment guarantee schemes boost poor income; corporate tax concessions affect corporate incomes

Fiscal Rules and Policy

- 1) India's Fiscal Rule (N.K. Singh Committee Report)
 - a) Debt-GDP ratio (stock target)
 - b) Fiscal deficit-GDP ratio (flow target)
 - c) Revenue deficit-GDP ratio (composition target)
- 2) Policy Implications
 - a) Expenditure adjustments to meet fiscal rules at given tax ratios
 - b) Fiscal rules may cap expenditure, potentially limiting expansionary fiscal policy

Future Outlook

- Need to re-examine fiscal rules to address unemployment and low output growth rate challenges
- 2) Balance between meeting fiscal targets and stimulating economic growth

SPOTLIGHT: 2010 PYQ

In the context of governance, consider the following:

- 1) Encouraging Foreign Direct Investment inflows
- 2) Privatization of higher educational Institutions
- 3) Down-sizing of bureaucracy
- Selling/offloading the shares of Public Sector Undertakings

Which of the above can be used as measures to control the fiscal deficit in India?

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

News / Explained / Explained Economics / ExplainSpeaking: Are Indians being over taxed? Here are 5 charts on where India stands globally

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ExplainSpeaking: Are Indians being over-taxed? Here are 5 charts on where India stands globally

There is a growing sense that the Indian government has been over-taxing its citizens. But is that so? We explain.

IE Explained, By Udit Misra Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Economy Link

Why in News? Union Budget 2025-26 presentation amid debates on India's taxation policies and their impact on economic growth.

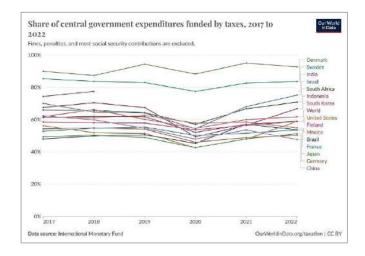


Chart 1: Central Government Expenditure Funding

- 1) 80% of expenditures funded by tax revenues
- 2) Higher dependence than Brazil (60%), Mexico (65%), and China (55%)
- 3) Key Insight: Reduces fiscal flexibility as tax cuts would require increased borrowing, potentially crowding out private investment



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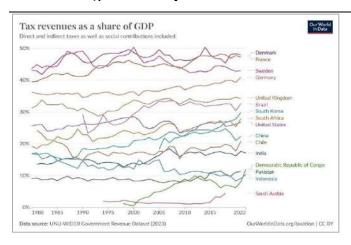


Chart 2: Tax-to-GDP Ratio

- 1) Below 20% of GDP (vs 34% OECD average)
- 2) Lower than France (45%), Germany (38%), and UK (33%)
- 3) Key Insight: Indicates limited tax base despite high dependence on existing revenues

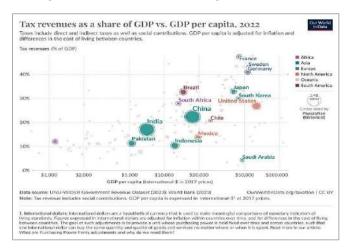


Chart 3: Tax Efficiency vs Per Capita Income

- Position: Below China but above Mexico/Indonesia in tax collection efficiency
- 2) Pattern: Richer countries collect more taxes proportionally
- 3) Key Insight: Suggests room for improvement as India's economy grows

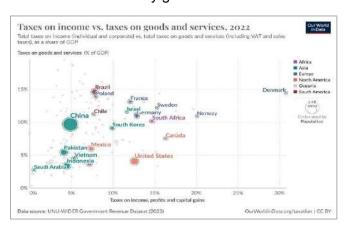


Chart 4: Tax Composition

- 1) Direct Taxes: ~7% of GDP (personal/corporate)
- 2) Indirect Taxes: ~7% of GDP (GST/excise)
- 3) Comparison: Similar to Vietnam, but developed nations collect 15-25% via direct taxes
- 4) Key Insight: Progressive taxation potential underutilized

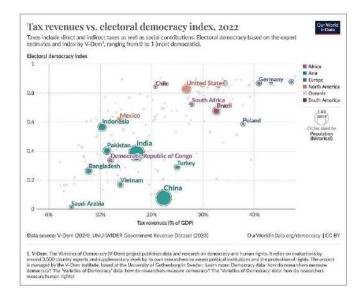


Chart 5: Democracy-Taxation Correlation

- 1) Trend: Higher electoral democracy scores correlate with higher tax revenues
- 2) Position: Behind Brazil/US but ahead of Bangladesh
- 3) Key Insight: Democratic deepening could improve tax compliance

Key Policy Takeaways

- Tax Base Expansion: Need to widen tax net through better compliance mechanisms
- 2) **Progressive Taxation:** Shift focus to direct taxes as economy matures
- 3) **Fiscal Space Creation:** Reduce expenditure reliance on taxes through alternative financing
- 4) **Growth Alignment:** Link tax reforms with GDP per capita growth targets
- 5) **Democratic Governance:** Strengthen institutions to improve taxpayer trust



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Science and Technology

January 2025

News / Explained / Explained Sci-Tech / With Air India set to offer Wi-Fi connectivity, a look at how in-flight Internet works

With Air India set to offer Wi-Fi connectivity, a look at how in-flight Internet works

Tata Group's Air India has announced the rollout of free in-flight Internet services on board domestic and international flights serviced by select aircraft in its fleet. Here is how this will work

IE Explained; By Sukalp Sharma Syllabus: Pre/Mains - Science and Technology

Why in News? Air India has recently begun offering in-flight Wi-Fi on select international routes, highlighting the growing demand for this service.

In-Flight Internet: Core Technologies Air-to-Ground (ATG):

1) Relies on a network of ground-based cellular towers.

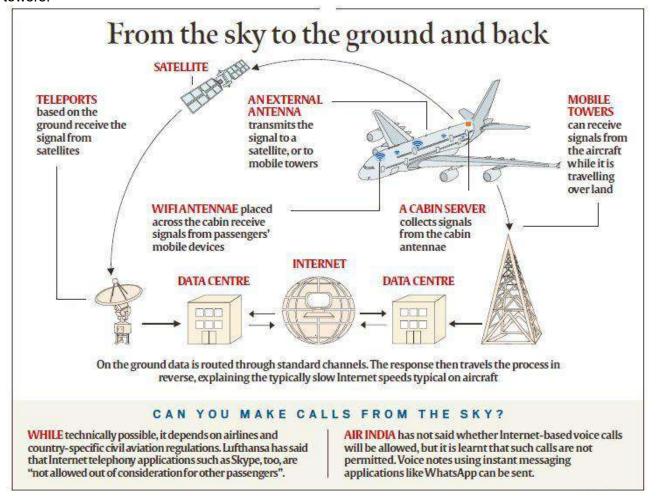
- Aircraft antenna (usually on the belly) connects to the nearest tower.
- Similar to terrestrial cellular data access.
- 4) Limitations: Coverage gaps over oceans, areas with sparse tower deserts, and infrastructure.

Satellite-Based:

- 1) Uses satellites to relay signals between aircraft and ground stations.
- 2) Antenna on top of the aircraft communicates with a satellite.
- 3) Provides wider coverage, especially over areas lacking ground infrastructure.
- 4) Increasingly popular for its broader reach.

Challenges and Considerations

- 1) Historically slower than terrestrial internet.
- 2) Significant upfront investment for airlines in installing antennae and equipment.
- 3) For passengers, often expensive data plans after initial free usage, if offered.



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Union Health Ministry monitors HMPV outbreak in China, says situation not alarming yet

Five years after the COVID pandemic, China is experiencing a surge in HMPV cases, particularly in children under 14 years of age

TH Frontpage; By Bindu Shajan Perpappadan Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Technology Link

Why in News? The Union Health Ministry is closely monitoring the alleged outbreak of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in China.

China reports a rise in respiratory illness, particularly HMPV, especially in children under 14.

India has not registered any unusual spike in winter respiratory diseases.

No HMPV cases reported in India yet, according to the Director-General of Health Services.

Factsheet: Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV)

Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a respiratory virus that causes infections similar to the flu or common cold. Discovered in 2001, it affects people of all ages but poses a higher risk to young children, older adults, and individuals with weakened immune systems.

Symptoms: Common symptoms of HMPV include:

- 1) Cough
- 2) Fever
- 3) Nasal congestion or runny nose
- 4) Shortness of breath
- 5) Sore throat
- 6) Fatigue
- 7) Wheezing

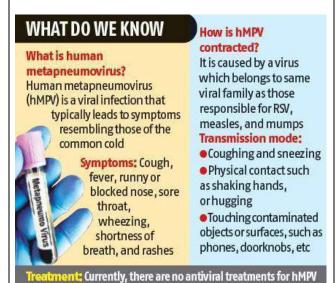
In some cases, HMPV can lead to more serious conditions such as bronchitis or pneumonia.

Transmission: HMPV spreads through:

- Respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing
- 2) Close personal contact (e.g., touching, shaking hands)

3) Touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the face

The virus typically circulates from late winter to early spring in temperate regions.



Risk Groups: Those at higher risk for severe HMPV infections include:

- 1) Children under 5 years old, especially infants
- 2) Adults over 65 years old
- 3) Individuals with weakened immune systems
- 4) People with chronic respiratory conditions (e.g., asthma, COPD)

Diagnosis: HMPV can be diagnosed through:

- 1) Nucleic acid amplification tests (NAAT)
- 2) Detection of viral antigens in respiratory secretions

Treatment: There is no specific antiviral therapy or vaccine for HMPV. Treatment is supportive and focuses on managing symptoms, which may include:

- Over-the-counter pain relievers for fever and discomfort
- 2) Plenty of fluids
- 3) Rest

Most people recover from HMPV within 7-10 days. However, severe cases may require hospitalization, especially in high-risk groups.

SPOTLIGHT - 2021 PYQ



The term 'ACE2' is talked about in the context of

- (a) genes introduced in the genetically modified plants
- (b) development of India's own satellite navigation system
- (c) radio collars for wildlife tracking
- (d) spread of viral diseases

Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme (ACE2)

ACE2 is an enzyme attached to the outer surface of cells in various organs, including the lungs, heart, kidney, and intestines.

ACE2 acts as a receptor for the SARS-CoV-2 virus, allowing it to enter human cells.

News / Explained / Explained Health / What US Surgeon General says about drinkin and cancer risk

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What US Surgeon General says about drinking and cancer risk

Growing research has shown that even one drink per day can increase the risk of certain cancers such as breast, mouth, and throat cancers.

IE Explained

Syllabus: Pre/Mains - Science & Technology

Why in News? US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has suggested adding cancer warning labels to alcoholic beverages, similar to those on cigarettes.

How does alcohol lead to cancer?

1) DNA Damage

- a) Acetaldehyde, a toxic byproduct of alcohol metabolism, can damage DNA and proteins.
- Alcohol generates reactive oxygen species (free radicals) that can damage DNA, proteins, and lipids.

2) Hormonal Effects

- a) Increases blood levels of estrogen, linked to higher breast cancer risk.
- Alters how the body metabolizes estrogen, causing estrogen levels to rise.

3) Nutrient Absorption

 a) Impairs the body's ability to break down and absorb nutrients that may help prevent cancer. b) Interferes with folate absorption, potentially leading to DNA damage.

4) Cellular Changes

- a) Makes it easier for cells in the mouth and throat to absorb harmful chemicals.
- b) Promotes inflammation and irritates tissues.

5) Carcinogen Exposure

2

- a) Leads to greater absorption of carcinogens, especially when combined with tobacco use.
- b) Some alcoholic beverages may contain carcinogenic contaminants from production processes.

What is different about small language models?

What led to the shift to small language models from large language models? What are the use cases for such models? Are they better than LLMs?

TH Text & Context; By: Poulomi Chatterjee Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Tech Link

Why in News? Big Tech firms have recently released smaller versions of their large language AI models, signalling a shift towards more efficient and specialized AI solutions.

Emergence of SLMs:

- In 2024, researchers began exploring smaller language models due to diminishing returns from scaling large models.
- Big Tech companies like Google DeepMind, OpenAl, Meta, and Anthropic Al have released compact versions alongside their flagship models.





Advantages of SLMs:

- 1) Cost-effective and suitable for specific use cases
- Require less time, compute power, and training data
- Ideal for edge computing and on-device Al applications

Applications and Use Cases:

- Specialized tasks like language translation and basic queries
- 2) On-device AI systems, such as Apple Intelligence for iPhones and iPads
- 3) Potential for widespread adoption in resourceconstrained environments like India

Limitations

- Less effective for complex tasks like coding or solving logical problems
- Not as capable as Large Language Models (LLMs) in achieving Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)

Future Outlook

- 1) Focus on building Al models that cater to specific needs and diverse populations
- Emphasis on preserving language and cultural diversity through AI initiatives

What Makes Small Language Models so Attractive?





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What is the Genome India project, why it matters

Genome India Project: The newly unveiled database showcases the genome sequences of healthy individuals from 99 ethnic populations of the country, creating a baseline map of India's genetic diversity.

IE Explained; By: Anonna Dutt Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science & Technology Link

Why in News? The Department of Biotechnology recently announced a new platform and framework for sharing its 10,000 human genome dataset, creating a baseline map of India's genetic diversity. About the Project

- 1) Approved in 2020 to capture India's genetic diversity at the genomic level
- 2) Involves sequencing genomes of healthy individuals from 99 ethnic populations
- 3) Researchers from 20 scientific institutions collaborated on the first 10,000 genomes
- 4) Aims to expand to sequencing up to 1 million genomes

Second Phase

- 1) Will focus on sequencing genomes of individuals with specific diseases
- 2) Likely to include cancers, chronic conditions, neurological diseases, and rare disorders
- 3) Enables comparison between healthy and diseased genomes

Significance

- Identifies genetic risk factors for diseases, aiding therapy and diagnostic test development
- Helps discover new genetic variants unique to Indian populations
- 3) Determines frequency of disease-causing genetic variations in different populations
- 4) Assists in identifying rare diseases and developing gene therapies
- 5) Identifies genetic variants affecting drug efficacy in specific populations

'Strange' particle found to have mass when moving in one direction, not another

A particle as it exists in the wilderness of space is slightly different from a particle that exists inside certain solids

TH Science & Technology; By: Vasudevan Mukunth

Syllabus: Pre/Mains - Science & Technology Link

Why in News? Physicists at Columbia University and Pennsylvania State University have discovered a new type of particle called a semi-Dirac fermion in the material zirconium silicon sulphide (ZrSiS).



Nature of Semi-Dirac Fermions

- Semi-Dirac fermions have mass when moving in one direction but not in a perpendicular direction
- 2) They are considered quasiparticles, behaving like single particles in certain conditions

Experimental Details

- 1) Discovered in the layered crystalline material zirconium silicon sulphide (ZrSiS)
- 2) Identified by the unique relationship between cyclotron energy and magnetic field strength (B^(2/3))

Significance in Particle Physics

- Expands the "zoo" of subatomic particles, contributing to our understanding of fundamental physics
- Demonstrates the potential of condensed matter physics to reveal exotic particles in table-top experiments



Implications and Future Research

- 1) May lead to updates in the Standard Model of particle physics
- 2) Researchers plan to continue studies to understand more about ZrSiS and explain other unusual electronic behaviors observed

SPOTLIGHT: 2017 PYQ

The terms 'Event Horizon', 'Singularity', 'String Theory' and 'Standard Model' are sometimes seen in the news in the context of:

- (a) Observation and understanding of the Universe
- (b) Study of the solar and the lunar eclipses
- (c) Placing satellites in the orbit of the Earth
- (d) Origin and evolution of living organisms on the Earth

News. / Explained / Explained Sci-Tech. / ISRO Docks SpaDeX Satellites in Space: What was done and how – and why does it matter?

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ISRO Docks SpaDeX Satellites in Space: What was done and how – and why does it matter?

ISRO Docking SpaDeX Mission Explained: The successful docking makes India the fourth country in the world — after the United States, Russia, and China — to have this capability. But there is much more to this achievement than merely entering a truly elite club. On this success rests ISRO's vision for the future of Indian space exploration.

IE Explained; By: Anonna Dutt

Syllabus: Pre/Mains - Science & Technology

<u>Link</u>

Why in News? ISRO (SpaDeX) successfully demonstrated space docking by joining two small 220-kg satellites in orbit on January 16, 2025, making India the fourth country to achieve this capability.

Mission Details: The mission involved bringing two satellites within 3 meters of each other in orbit, joining their extended rings, and locking them in space. This achievement is crucial for:

- 1) Future space station assembly and lunar missions.
- 2) Construction of heavy spacecraft beyond single launch vehicle capacity

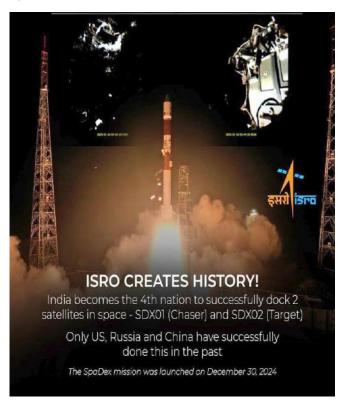
3) Realizing ISRO's vision of a space station by 2035 and human Moon mission by 2040

Technical Achievements and Future Applications: ISRO employed several innovative technologies:

- 1) Bharatiya Docking System: An indigenous androgynous mechanism
- New sensors and processors for precise measurements
- Capability to share electrical power between satellites

These advancements pave the way for:

- 1) Construction of Bharatiya Antariksh Station (Indian Space Station)
- 2) Chandrayaan-4 mission for lunar sample return
- 3) Potential human missions to the Moon



Significance: India now joins the USA, Russia, and China in space docking capability. This achievement:

- 1) Demonstrates India's growing space capabilities and technological advancements
- 2) Highlights the strategic importance of space technology in national development
- 3) Showcases indigenous innovation in line with the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiative
- 4) Illustrates India's position in global space exploration efforts



News / Explained / Explained Sci-Tech / How the Sun played a role in SpaDex success
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How the Sun played a role in SpaDex success

ISRO's maiden satellite docking: Strong or gusty winds, lightning or electrically charged atmosphere, impending or progressing cyclones or storms are all deterrents for launches.

IE Explained; By: Anjali Marar

Syllabus: Pre/Mains - Science & Technology

Link

Why in News? India successfully conducted its maiden satellite docking experiment on January 18, 2025, becoming the fourth country to achieve this feat after the US, Russia, and China.

Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) Mission Details:

- 1) Two satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), were launched on December 30, 2024
- Initially placed 20 km apart in low-Earth circular orbit
- 3) Chaser satellite approached Target satellite in strategic steps: 5 km, 1.5 km, 500 m, 225 m, 15 m, and 3 m
- 4) Final docking achieved on January 18, 2025



Role of Solar Activity:

- 1) Current solar cycle (Cycle 25) has shown strong activity since 2020
- Days leading to SpaDeX docking had fewer sunspots and magnetic structures
- Favorable solar conditions contributed to the mission's success

Space telescopes stumble on rule-breaking black hole in early universe

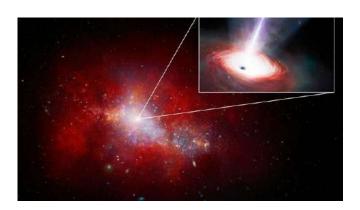
LID-568, a black hole that existed just 1.5 billion years after the Big Bang, was found feeding on a cloud of matter at almost 40-times faster than the upper limit

TH Science; By Shreejaya Karantha

Syllabus: Pre/Mains - Science & Technology

Link

Why in News? An international team of researchers using NASA's James Webb Space Telescope and Chandra X-ray observatory has discovered an unusual black hole that may provide insights into the formation and growth of supermassive black holes.



An artist's concept of a red, early-universe dwarf galaxy that hosts the black hole LID 568 at its centre. While short lived, this black hole's 'feast' could help astronomers explain how supermassive black holes grew so quickly in the early universe.

What are the key findings about this black hole?

- 1) Designated as LID-568, it is a low-mass supermassive black hole that existed just 1.5 billion years after the Big Bang.
- 2) It was feeding on surrounding matter at an exceptional rate almost 40 times greater than the theoretical upper limit (Eddington limit)
- 3) Located much farther away than other known super-Eddington black holes.

Why is this discovery significant?

- 1) May explain how supermassive black holes grew so quickly in the early universe.
- Suggests large black holes could have gained significant mass during short periods of rapid feeding.

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Re-Defining UPSC Preparation

 Could provide a convincing explanation for rapid supermassive black hole formation, regardless of initial seed mass.

Next steps for Researchers

- Conduct follow-up observations with JWST to test hypotheses about the feeding mechanism
- Examine similar galaxies and their outflows, especially those with very large fast-feeding black holes
- 3) Determine how long a black hole can accrete matter at super-Eddington rates and what percentage do so

SPOTLIGHT: 2019 PYQ

Recently, scientists observed the merger of giant 'black holes' billions of light-years away from the Earth. What is the significance of this observation?

- (a) 'Higgs boson particles' were detected.
- (b) 'Gravitational waves' were detected.
- (c) The possibility of intergalactic space travel through a 'wormhole' was confirmed.
- (d) It enabled the scientists to understand 'singularity'.

SPOTLIGHT: 2017 PYQ

The terms 'Event Horizon', 'Singularity', 'String Theory' and 'Standard Model' are sometimes seen in the news in the context of:

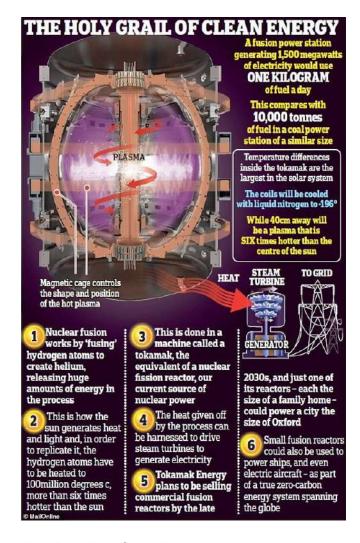
- (a) Observation and understanding of the Universe
- (b) Study of the solar and the lunar eclipses
- (c) Placing satellites in the orbit of the Earth
- (d) Origin and evolution of living organisms on the Earth

News / Explained / Explained Sci-Tech / Why China's recent nuclear fusion breakthrough is significant

Why China's recent nuclear fusion breakthrough is significant

In the last few years, fusion research has produced a string of breakthroughs. In December 2021, the United Kingdom-based JET laboratory set a new record in the amount of energy produced through fusion.

IE Explained, By Amitabh Sinha Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science and Technology Link Why in News? China's Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST) reactor-maintained plasma confinement for 1,000 seconds (17 minutes), marking a breakthrough in nuclear fusion research.



Key Details of the Breakthrough

 Reactor: EAST (Heifei, China) achieved steady-state plasma confinement using magnetic fields, a critical step for sustained fusion reactions.

2) Significance:

- a) Fusion mimics the Sun's energy process, using isotopes (deuterium/tritium) to generate zero-emission, high-energy output (1 gram ≈ 8 tonnes of coal).
- b) No long-lived radioactive waste, unlike fission reactors.

Global Progress in Fusion Energy

- 1) Recent Milestones:
 - a) UK (2021): JET lab produced 12 MW energy for 5 seconds
 - b) USA (2022): Achieved net energy gain (output > input)



2) ITER Project:

- a) International collaboration (35 nations, including India) aims to produce 500 MW fusion power by 2039
- b) India contributes to ITER's superconducting systems and diagnostics

Challenges in Fusion Technology

1) Plasma Stability Issues

- a) Extreme Temperature Requirements: Plasma must reach 100+ million°C to initiate fusion, demanding immense energy input and advanced heating systems.
- b) Magnetic Confinement Limitations: Instabilities like kink modes, ballooning modes, and tearing modes disrupt plasma confinement, causing energy loss.
- c) **Turbulence-Induced Energy Loss:**Plasma turbulence enhances particle/energy transport across magnetic fields, reducing confinement efficiency.
- d) Delicate Magnetic Field Balance: Minor disruptions in magnetic fields destabilize plasma, requiring real-time feedback systems for stabilization.
- e) **Transient Events:** Edge-localized modes (ELMs) and plasma disruptions risk reactor wall damage, complicating long-term stability.

2) Scalability Issues

- a) Technological Immaturity: Current reactors (e.g., EAST, ITER) are experimental; commercial plants (DEMO) projected post-2050.
- b) **High Energy Input vs. Output:** Sustaining net energy gain (output > input) remains unproven at grid-relevant scales.
- c) Material Durability: Reactor walls face erosion and neutron damage from highenergy particles, requiring advanced materials like tungsten or liquid lithium.
- d) Tritium Fuel Scarcity: Limited global tritium reserves (~25 kg) necessitate inreactor breeding, yet no system has achieved self-sufficiency.
- e) **Supply Chain Gaps:** Specialized components (e.g., high-temperature superconducting magnets) lack mass-production infrastructure.
- f) Regulatory Uncertainty: No global framework for fusion licensing; current fission-based rules could delay deployment.

India's Fusion Projects and Outlook

1) Key Domestic Projects

- a) ADITYA-U and SST-1 Tokamaks: Operated by the Institute for Plasma Research (IPR), these experimental reactors study plasma confinement and fusion physics.
- b) **SST-2 (Planned):** Aims to explore fusion-fission hybrid reactors for waste incineration and thorium-based energy.
- c) **DEMO Programme:** Targets a commercial fusion reactor by 2060, with grid-connected plants planned post-2050.

2) ITER Collaboration:

- a) Contributions: Delivered Cryostat (30m vacuum vessel), In-Wall Shielding, and Cooling Water Systems (1 GW heat exchange capacity).
- b) **Milestone:** Completed 50% of ITER commitments as of 2020, including cryostat components and diagnostics.
- c) Goal: Gain expertise for India's fusion roadmap through ITER's 500 MW fusion power experiments by 2039.

3) Strategic Partnerships

- a) Russia: Discussing joint thermonuclear fusion research and Northern Sea Route development.
- b) **Private Sector:** Exploring collaborations with companies like Commonwealth Fusion Systems (USA) for grid-scale fusion.

Future Outlook

- Private Sector: Companies like Helion (USA) aim for 50 MW output by 2028, while Commonwealth Fusion targets 400 MW by 2030s.
- 2) NITI Aayog recommends easing foreign investment norms to accelerate fusion tech adoption.
- Climate Impact: Success could reduce reliance on fossil fuels and accelerate net-zero goals.
- Hybrid Reactors: Prioritizing fusion-driven subcritical systems to utilize thorium and reduce nuclear waste.
- 5) Policy Push: Aligns with net-zero 2070 goals; fusion could contribute 5–10% of India's energy by 2100.



News / Explained / Explained Sci-Tech / Isro's 100th launch: why this is significant, the road ahead

Isro's 100th launch: why this is significant, the road ahead

ISRO 100th Rockets Launch, Significance: Since its formation in 1969, the space agency has developed several rockets, becoming a reliable launch partner even for satellites from other countries.

IE Explained, By Anonna Dutt

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science and Technology Link

Why in News? ISRO achieved its 100th satellite launch milestone with the successful deployment of navigation satellite NVS-02 using GSLV-F15 on January 29, 2025.

Significance of the Milestone

- Historical Context: ISRO, established in 1969, has evolved into a global launch partner, deploying 548 satellites (120 tonnes total) across 100 missions, including 433 foreign satellites.
- Technological Progress: Demonstrated indigenous cryogenic engine capability (11th flight) and reliability of vehicles like PSLV (62 launches, 2 failures) and LVM3 (7 flawless launches)
- 3) Key achievements in Rocket Development:
 - a) **PSLV:** Workhorse with 2,000 kg payload capacity to LEO.
 - b) **GSLV MkIII (LVM3):** Heaviest Indian vehicle (8,500 kg to LEO), used in Chandrayaan-2/3 and future Gaganyaan missions
- 4) Successful Scientific Missions: Chandrayaan series, Mars Orbiter, Aditya L1 (solar), and XpoSat (X-ray astronomy)



Upcoming Developments

- Next-Gen Launch Vehicle (NGLV): 30,000 kg payload capacity, reusable first stage (15–20 uses), and cost-effective design.
- Third Launch Pad: Approved at ₹3,984.86 crore for NGLV and human missions; enhances LVM3's commercial launch capacity.
- NavIC System & NVS-02: NVS-02 Second satellite in the upgraded NavIC constellation with L1 frequency (compatible with GPS devices) and indigenous atomic clock.
 - a) NavIC Advantages: Regional coverage (India + 1,500 km beyond), 20 m accuracy, better signal availability in challenging terrains.



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Opinion by B Ravindran, Krishnan Narayanan

After DeepSeek: For India, time for the AI leap

Unveiling of Chinese company's AI tool is an opportunity to work on lowcost innovation. India has the talent and resolve – it must act now

IE The Ideas Page, By B Ravindran, Krishnan Narayanan

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science and Technology Link

Why in News? The Chinese startup DeepSeek launched its advanced, low-cost Al model (R1), sparking global interest in affordable Al innovation and raising questions about India's position in the Al race.

Key Details of DeepSeek's Al Model

1) **Cost Efficiency:** Built with \$6 million (vs. billions for models like GPT-4) using 2,000 Nvidia H800 GPUs



- 2) **Performance:** Matches OpenAl's o1 in reasoning tasks (math, coding, science) and supports 128,000-token context windows
- 3) Technical Innovations:
 - a) Mixture of Experts (MoE): Activates only 37B of 671B parameters per query, reducing computational load
 - b) **Reinforcement Learning:** Enables self-verification and complex reasoning
 - c) **Open Source:** Freely accessible for modification and local deployment

Opportunities Before India

- Affordable Al Access: DeepSeek's API costs 1/10th of global models, enabling startups to build cost-effective solutions
- 2) **Local Deployment:** Models can run on Indian servers, reducing dependency on foreign infrastructure

- Sectoral Innovation: Potential in healthcare (diagnostics), agriculture (yield prediction), and education (Al tutors)
- IndiaAl Mission: Leverage 10,000+ GPUs under the national plan to develop domainspecific LLMs
- 5) Rethinking infrastructure reliance: Proved Al excellence is possible without US-controlled advanced chips, inspiring nations like India to adopt "Mangalyaan mindset" (frugal innovation)
- 6) **Market democratization:** Enabled startups (e.g., Perplexity, Replit) to bypass costly APIs, disrupting the \$200B AI services market

Challenges Before India

- Over-Reliance on Foreign Models: 90% of Indian AI startups use OpenAI/Meta models, limiting indigenous innovation
- Funding Gaps: Limited R&D spending (under 1% of GDP) vs. China's state-backed Al investments
- Talent Scarcity: Only 2.5% of engineers possess Al skills; brain drain to global tech hubs
- 4) **Data Quality:** Fragmented datasets and privacy concerns hinder AI training
- 5) **Infrastructure Costs:** High GPU prices and energy demands delay scalable AI adoption

Way Forward

- Develop Indigenous Models: Launch India's foundational LLM by 2025, tailored to local languages and needs
- Boost R&D Funding: Increase Al research grants and incentivize private-sector collaboration
- Skill Development: Integrate AI into school curricula and expand IIT/IISc seats for specialized courses
- Public-Private Partnerships: Create data trusts for startups and establish Al innovation hubs
- Ethical Frameworks: Implement regulations for data privacy, bias mitigation, and sustainable AI

DeepSeek's breakthrough underscores the urgency for India to prioritize cost-efficient Al innovation, foundational research, and collaborative ecosystems to secure a leadership role in the global Al race.



Opinion by Subimal Bhattachariee

After DeepSeek: Despite talent, on AI, India lags behind

Most AI startups in the country and enterprises rely on foreign LLMs, which limit their ability to innovate and cater to local needs

IE The Ideas Page, By Subimal Bhattacharjee Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Science and Technology Link

Why in News? DeepSeek R1, a Chinese generative AI model, disrupted global tech dominance by becoming the most downloaded app in the US within a week, highlighting shifting AI geopolitics and India's lag in foundational AI development.

Geopolitical Significance of Generative Al

1) **Strategic battleground:** Control over Al models offers economic and strategic advantages, influencing global standards in defense, healthcare, and governance.

2) US-China rivalry:

- a) **US:** Dominates via universities, tech giants, and venture capital
- b) **China:** Rapidly narrowing the gap through self-reliance goals (e.g., DeepSeek R1 launch at 10% of traditional LLM costs)
- 3) **Risks:** Smaller nations risk technological colonialism by relying on foreign AI systems

4) Need for Localized Al Models:

- a) Address linguistic diversity (India's 22+ languages) and cultural contexts
- Reduce bias and improve relevance for domestic needs (e.g., healthcare, agriculture)
- c) Create export opportunities in multilingual regions like Africa and Southeast Asia

India's Position in Al Development

1) Strengths:

- a) Thriving tech industry and vast engineering talent pool
- b) Initiatives like IndiaAl Mission (₹10,371 crore budget) and 18,000 GPUs procurement

2) Weaknesses:

- a) Reliance on foreign LLMs (limiting innovation and local customization)
- b) Infrastructure gaps: Only 10,000/18,000 GPUs operational, delayed high-performance computing projects

- c) Funding shortages: Limited deep-tech investments compared to China's \$6M DeepSeek R1 model
- d) Absence of foundational models tailored to Indian languages

Way Forward

1) Boost R&D Funding:

- a) Expand National Al Strategy with publicprivate partnerships and Al research centers
- b) Allocate ₹50,000 crore for deep-tech startups under the IndiaAl Mission

2) Infrastructure Development:

- a) Operationalize 18,000 GPUs for startups/researchers and build cloud infrastructure
- b) Adopt cost-effective models inspired by ISRO's Mangalyaan approach (e.g., algorithmic efficiency over brute-force compute)

3) Foster Innovation Culture:

- a) Launch AI hackathons, incubators, and industry-academia collaborations
- b) Promote open-source models to democratize access and reduce dependency

4) Leverage Global Partnerships:

- a) Use iCET (India-US Critical and Emerging Tech) for GPU access and tech transfers
- b) Collaborate with ASEAN/African nations to export localized AI solutions

5) Ethical and Inclusive Al:

- a) Implement Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023) to ensure privacy and reduce
- Focus on sectors like healthcare, agriculture, and education for populationscale impact

India's AI trajectory hinges on strategic investments in infrastructure, localized models, and global collaborations. By adopting a "Mangalyaan mindset" of frugal innovation, India can bridge the gap with AI superpowers while ensuring ethical and inclusive growth.

Did DeepSeek copy OpenAi's artificial intelligence technology?

1) Alleged Method: DeepSeek allegedly used OpenAl's API outputs to train its R1 model via distillation, violating OpenAl's terms



- prohibiting competitors from using its outputs.
- 2) **Evidence:** Microsoft detected unusual API activity linked to DeepSeek in 2024, prompting OpenAI to block associated accounts. However, OpenAI has not publicly shared conclusive evidence.
- Cost Efficiency: DeepSeek's R1 model reportedly cost \$5.6 million (vs. billions for GPT-4) and used 2,048 Nvidia H800 GPUs, raising suspicions about its training methods.
- 4) Market Impact: DeepSeek's rise caused Nvidia's stock to drop 17% temporarily, reflecting investor concerns about IP theft and competition.
- 5) **Ethical Debate:** While distillation is common in AI, OpenAI argues DeepSeek crossed ethical lines by replicating proprietary systems. Critics note OpenAI itself faces lawsuits over training-data copyrights.
- 6) **Geopolitical Tensions:** U.S. officials, including White House advisor David Sacks,

framed this as part of broader IP theft concerns involving Chinese firms.

SPOTLIGHT: 2023 PYQ

Introduce the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI). How does AI help clinical diagnosis? Do you perceive any threat to privacy of the individual in the use of AI in healthcare?

SPOTLIGHT: 2020 PYQ

With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following?

- Reduce energy consumption in industrial processes
- 2) Create meaningful short stories and songs
- 3) Disease diagnosis
- 4) Text-to-speech conversion



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Geography and Environment

January 2025

Maps in News: IE – Ukraine halts transit of Russia's gas into Europe, ends its supply dominance Link

Why in News? Russian natural gas exports to Europe through Ukraine stopped on January 1, 2025, as the five-year transit deal expired without renewal amid ongoing conflict between the two countries.

Key Developments

- 23) Transit Agreement Expiration: The five-year gas transit agreement between Russia and Ukraine ended on January 1, 2025, without extension
- 24) **Ukraine's**Ukraine refused to renew the transit deal, citing national security concerns amid the ongoing war with Russia
- 25) Gazprom's Response:
 Russia's Gazprom
 confirmed the cessation of
 gas supply for transit
 through Ukraine at 08:00
 Moscow time (05:00
 GMT)



26) **Impact on Gas Flow:** The halt affects gas supplies to several European countries, including Slovakia, Hungary, and Moldova

Pipeline	Route	Status	Recent News
Nord	Vyborg, Russia to	Inoperable	Danish police have closed their
Stream	Lubmin near Greifswald, Germany		investigation into the blasts that damaged the Nord Stream pipelines, concluding they
			were sabotaged.
TurkStream	From Russkaya compressor station near Anapa, Russia to Kıyıköy, Turkey via the Black Sea	Operational	In July 2024, Russian gas flows via TurkStream reached their second-highest monthly level since operations began, averaging 45.5 million cubic meters per day.
Yamal- Europe	Torzhok, Russia to Frankfurt (Oder), Germany via Belarus and Poland	Halted	Gazprom announced it will no longer use the Polish section of the Yamal-Europe pipeline, halting gas exports as of January 1, 2025.

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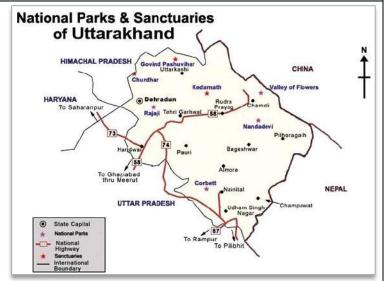
Ukraine Transit Pipeline	Russia to Europe via Ukraine	Halted	Exports of natural gas from Russia through Ukraine to various European nations have been suspended following Ukraine's decision not to extend a transit agreement that lapsed on January 1, 2025.
Gryazovets- Vyborg	Gryazovets to Vyborg via Vologda Oblast and Leningrad Oblast	Operating	Continues to operate and supply gas to Nord Stream

Maps in News: IE – Did Rajaji tiger walks 500 km to Jammu? Army has a photograph; Forest dept says seems 'photoshopped' Link

Why in News? An Army patrol photographed a tiger near the Line of Control in Jammu's Rajouri, raising questions about whether it's the same tiger that migrated from Uttarakhand's Rajaji Tiger Reserve over two years ago.

The Rajaji Tiger's Journey:

- 1) November 2022: A young male tiger left Rajaji Tiger Reserve.
- August 2023: Reached Renuka Wildlife Sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh, after passing through Haryana's Kalesar National Park.
- 3) Current Status: Missing since August 2023.



The incident highlights the challenges of tracking long-distance tiger dispersal and the need for better inter-state cooperation in tiger conservation.

Maps in News: IE - PM to open Key Z-Morh Tunnel Today Link

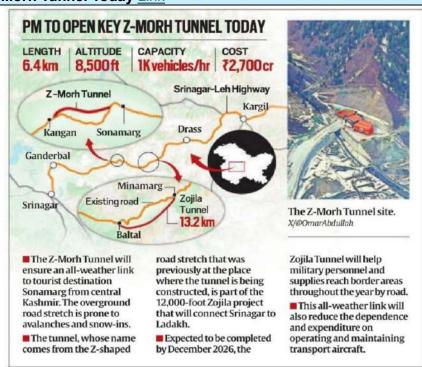
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Tunnel Specifications:

- 1) Length: 6.5 kilometers
- Type: Two-lane bi-directional road tunnel
- 3) Cost: ₹2,680 crore
- 4) Altitude: 2,637 meters (8,652 feet) above sea level
- 5) Construction time: 4 years

Strategic Importance:

- 1) Provides year-round connectivity between Srinagar and Sonamarg
- 2) Reduces travel time from 3 hours to 15 minutes
- 3) Part of larger project to connect Kashmir and Ladakh
- 4) Complements upcoming Zojila tunnel (expected completion: 2028)





Maps in News: TH – Centre's wildlife panel clear oil gas exploratory drilling in Assam sanctuary

Why in News? The National Board for Wildlife's standing committee has approved a proposal for oil and gas exploratory drilling in the eco-sensitive zone of the Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam.

Key Points

- 1) Proposal approved by NBWL standing committee chaired by Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav.
- 2) Submitted by Vedanta Group's Cairn Oil and Gas.
- 3) Site located about 13 km from the sanctuary.
- 4) Assam's chief wildlife warden recommended clearance citing "national interest".
- 5) Forest Advisory Committee of Environment Ministry granted in-principle approval.

Project Details and Assurances

- 1) Only exploratory drilling approved, not commercial extraction
- 2) Vedanta Group committed to no commercial drilling or extraction within eco-sensitive zone
- 3) Company assured no hazardous substances would be used in exploration

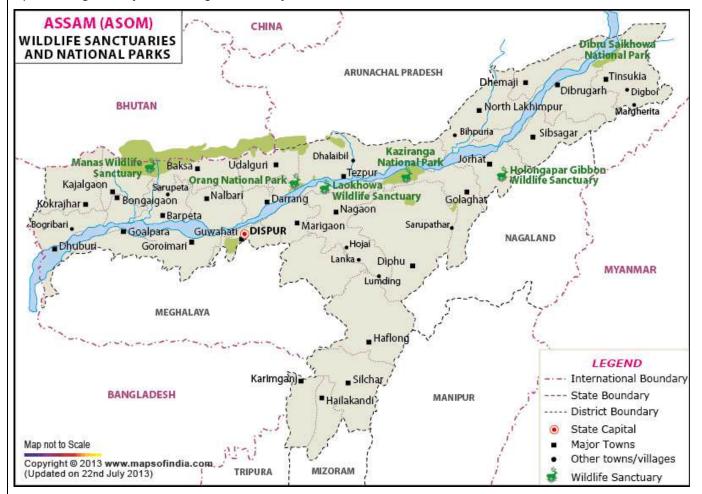
Concerns

Environmental Concerns

- 1) Sanctuary spans 20.98 sq km, with 264.92 sq km eco-sensitive zone
- 2) Home to seven primate species, including India's only ape the Hoolock gibbon
- 3) Connectivity crucial between sanctuary, Dissoi Valley Reserve Forest, and Nagaland forests
- 4) Sanctuary already under stress from human activities

Other Concerns

- 1) Site in disputed area on Assam-Nagaland border
- 2) Local Naga communities require permission for any operations
- 3) Existing railway line through sanctuary to be electrified



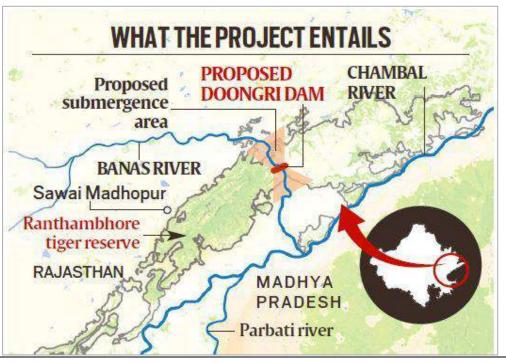
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Maps in News: IE - Rajasthan river-link lifeline could submerge 37 sq km in tiger reserve Link
Why in News? The

Why in News? The Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal-Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (PKC-ERCP) could submerge 37 sq km of the Ranthambhore tiger reserve, potentially impacting its habitat connectivity and carrying capacity.



Map in News: Teesta Hydel Projects

IE - Environment Ministry panel clears new Sikkim dam despite its own concerns $\underline{\text{Link}}$

Why in News? The Environment Ministry's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) has cleared a proposal to build a new 118.64-meter-high concrete gravity dam in Sikkim, replacing the one destroyed by a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) in October 2023.

Project Details

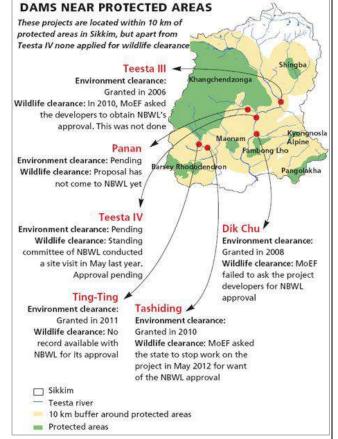
- The new dam will replace the 60-meter-high rockfill concrete dam of the 1200-MW Teesta-III hydel project.
- 2) Proposed by M/s Sikkim Urja Ltd and approved under 'expansion or modernisation' provisions.
- Spillway capacity increased from 7,000 to 19,946 cubic meters/second to handle potential flood events.
- 4) 119 glacial lakes identified in the catchment area, with 13 considered potentially dangerous.
- 5) Worst-case scenario: breach in two lakes could release 109.44 million cubic meters of water.

Criticisms and Concerns

- 1) Approval granted without a fresh public hearing, despite significant changes to the project.
- 2) Design aspects yet to be approved by Central Water Commission, Geological Survey of India, and Central Soil and Materials Research Station.
- 3) Experts question the rush to clear the project with a history of disaster.

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- 4) Concerns over the use of old flood data and the need for new calculations of peak flood levels
- 5) Calls for fresh environmental impact assessment and updated flood calculations based on recent data.





Map in News: Gulf of Mexico

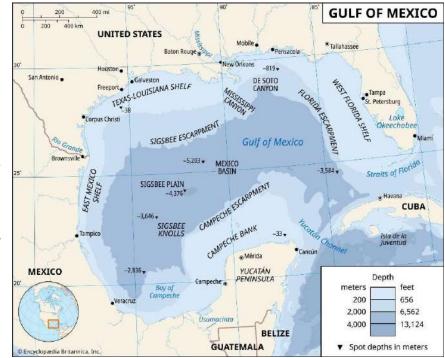
IE – Gulf of Whatnow? Trump's geographic renaming plans leave mapmakers confused Link

Why in News? On January 24, 2025, newly inaugurated U.S. President Donald Trump announced plans to rename the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America".

Key Points

- Trump's statement was part of broader comments on trade deficits and illegal immigration from Mexico.
- Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum responded sarcastically, suggesting North

America be renamed "Mexican America" based on 17th-century maps.



- 3) The Gulf of Mexico was first named on Spanish explorers' maps in the 16th century, predating the United States.
- 4) Renaming the gulf would not be a unilateral U.S. decision, and other countries are not obligated to agree.

Significance of the Gulf of Mexico

- 1) It is the world's largest gulf by surface area and the ninth-largest body of water globally.
- 2) The gulf connects to the Atlantic Ocean through the Straits of Florida and to the Caribbean Sea via the Yucatán Channel.
- 3) It hosts one of the world's most productive marine ecosystems, supporting vital biodiversity and regional economies.
- 4) The gulf's coastal wetlands cover over five million acres, providing essential habitats for numerous species.

Strategic Importance

- 1) Gulf of Mexico federal offshore oil production accounts for 14% of total U.S. crude oil production.
- 2) 48% of total U.S. petroleum refining capacity is located along the Gulf coast.
- 3) 51% of total U.S. natural gas processing plant capacity is situated in the region.

The incident reflects broader geopolitical issues, including U.S. interest in acquiring Greenland and assertions about the Panama Canal and Canada.



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News / Explained / Explained Climate / Winter storm in the US: How is the polar vortex responsible for it?

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Winter storm in the US: How is the polar vortex responsible for it?

Some 60 million people are under weather alerts across 30 states. Seven of them have declared emergencies: Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky and Arkansas

IE Explained: By Alind Chauhan Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Geography Link

Why in News? A severe winter storm has hit the United States, causing at least five deaths and affecting 60 million people across 30 states.

Key Developments:

- Seven states have declared emergencies: Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Kansas, Missouri, Kentucky, and Arkansas.
- 2) The National Weather Service warns of severe thunderstorms, possible tornadoes, and hail in some regions.
- 3) The extreme weather is attributed to the southward expansion of the polar vortex.

Polar Vortex Explained The polar vortex is a large area of low pressure and cold air over Earth's North and South Poles. When the jet stream weakens, it becomes wavier, allowing that cold air to dip southward in places while warmer air pushes northward elsewhere. Stable polar A large pressure difference helps keep a strong jet stream on a straighter path, which keeps the cold air over the Arctic Cold air contained Wavy polar vortex When the jet stream weakens, it becomes Warm air wobblier, allowing cold Arctic air to move southward SOURCES: NOAA; Scientific American PAUL HORN / InsideClimate News

 Definition: A large area of low-pressure and cold air circling Earth's polar regions.

2) Types:

- a) Tropospheric: Occurs in the lowest layer of the atmosphere (up to 15 km).
- b) Stratospheric: Found at 15-50 km high, strongest in autumn and absent in summer

Mechanism of Extreme Cold:

- 1) When the polar vortex weakens, cold Arctic air can break off and move southward.
- A strong polar vortex maintains a circular jet stream path, keeping cold air north and warm air south.
- 3) Weakening causes the jet stream to become wavy, allowing cold air to push south.

Climate Change and the Polar Vortex:

- 1) Research is ongoing to determine the precise impact of climate change on the polar vortex.
- 2) Some scientists believe faster warming at the poles weakens the polar vortex and jet stream.
- 3) Warmer temperatures may make the polar vortex more susceptible to disruption.

River interlinking, the fount of environmental disaster

The political class must note that the lofty idea of interlinking rivers overlooks the huge environmental costs and the eventual deaths of rivers and deltaic regions

TH Editorial; By C P Rajendran Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Geog

Geography

&

Why in News? Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the Ken-Betwa River Link Project on December 25, 2024, aiming to address water scarcity in the Bundelkhand region.

Ken-Betwa River Link Project

1) **Objective:** To address water scarcity in the Bundelkhand region, covering parts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

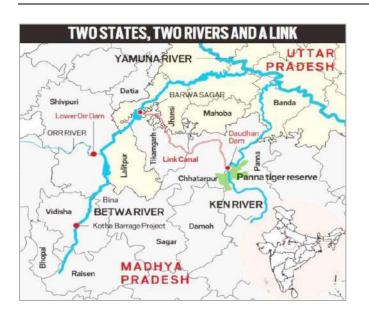
2) Key Components:

Environment Link

- a) Linking the Ken River (considered water surplus) with the Betwa river in droughtprone Bundelkhand.
- b) Construction of a dam within the Panna Tiger Reserve.
- 3) **Cost:** Approximately ₹45,000 crore.

Understanding the Polar Vortex:





River-Interlinking Project (ILR) Overview

- 1) **Historical Context:** Concept originated 130 years ago, proposed by Sir Arthur Cotton and refined by M. Visvesvaraya.
- 2) **Evolution:** Initially termed 'National Water Grid', later renamed 'River-Interlinking Project' (ILR).
- 3) **Objective:** Transfer surplus waters from the Ganga and Brahmaputra to water-deficient regions in central and southern India.
- Implementation Agency: National Water Development Agency (NWDA) established in 1982 to conduct surveys and prepare feasibility reports.
- 5) Project Scope:
 - a) 30 links identified for feasibility studies
 - b) Divided into 14 Himalayan and 16 Peninsular river links
- 6) **Estimated Cost:** ₹5.5 lakh crore, excluding social, environmental, and operational costs.

Anticipated Benefits of ILR Project

- 1) **Increased Irrigation Potential:** Additional irrigation to 35 million hectares of land.
 - a) Ken-Betwa link will provide irrigation to about 600,000 hectares annually in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- 2) Boost to Agriculture and Food Security: Projected to meet requirement of 450 million tonnes of food grains by 2050.
- 3) **Enhanced Hydropower Generation:** Potential generation of 34,000 MW of hydroelectric power.
- 4) **Flood Control:** Mitigation of floods in eastern India, particularly in Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin.

- E.g. Moderation of flood flows in rivers like Kosi and Mahanadi through large storage reservoirs.
- 5) **Drought Mitigation:** In western and southern India.
 - a) Potential relief for areas like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.
- 6) Improved Water Security:
 - a) Enhance water availability for domestic and industrial purposes.
 - b) Address critical groundwater situation by utilizing surface water.
- 7) Economic Growth and Employment: Create business opportunities worth ₹2.0 lakh crore over the next decade for EPC players.
 - a) Estimated increase in GDP growth from agriculture by 1.65 percentage points.
- 8) **Social Development:** Reduce burden on women fetching water from long distances.
 - a) Contribute to poverty alleviation (estimated 0.9 percentage point reduction in rural poverty).



Concerns and Criticisms of ILR Project

- 1) **Environmental Impact**: Potential destruction of river ecosystems and ecological niches
 - a) E.g. Ken-Betwa link project includes dam construction within Panna Tiger Reserve, raising submergence concerns.
- 2) **Threat to Deltaic Regions:** Case Study The Indus Delta, once "the richest in all Pakistan," became impoverished due to barrage construction.
- 3) **Ecological Services Overlooked:** Ignores the importance of flood waters in carrying minerals,



recharging groundwater, and sustaining biodiversity.

- a) E.g. Flood water helps balance saltwater intrusion in deltaic regions.
- Climate Change Aggravation: Unclear how the project aligns with India's commitment to mitigating human-induced climate change.
- 5) Flawed Concept of Surplus Water: Assumption of "free" surplus water in rivers is fundamentally flawed.
 - a) Simple arithmetic rationalisations like tapping 'water lost to sea' ignore ecohydrological dimensions.
- 6) High Costs: Estimated cost of ₹5.5 lakh crore excludes social, environmental, and operational costs.
- 7) Legal and Procedural Concerns: Circumvention of laws with strict terms for allowing hydroelectric power projects.
- Lack of Comprehensive Studies: Absence of interdisciplinary expertise involvement in river basin studies before initiating water transfer projects.

Way Forward

- Conduct thorough, interdisciplinary studies on river basins before initiating water transfer projects.
- 2) Preserve the natural flow of rivers to maintain deltaic ecosystems.
- 3) Factor in climate change impacts on rainfall and river flow patterns.
- 4) Develop a national water policy embracing watershed management.
- 5) Engage local citizens, hydrologists, engineers, and biologists in monitoring and planning.
- 6) Consider alternate solutions: Learn from Israel's success in water resource management.
- 7) Ensure public participation in major water infrastructure projects.
- 8) Invest in wetland restoration and conservation, rainwater harvesting and ground water recharge.

News / Explained / Explained Climate / What breaching 1.5°C warming threshold means for the Earth, in 2025 and beyond

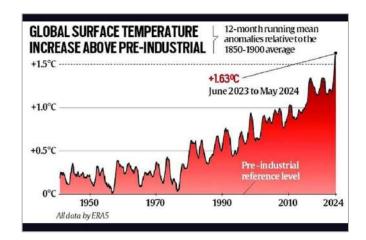
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What breaching 1.5°C warming threshold means for the Earth, in 2025 and beyond

It's official: 2024 was the first year to breach the 1.5 degree Celsius threshold. With global emissions continuing to grow, this was very much expected. The planet will only get warmer in the coming years

IE Explained; By Amitabh Sinha Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment Link

Why in News? The year 2024 has been confirmed as the first calendar year to breach the 1.5-degree Celsius global warming threshold, with an average temperature 1.6°C above pre-industrial levels.



Temperature Breach

- 1) 2024 was 1.6°C warmer than pre-industrial times (1850-1900 average)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO) concluded 2024 was 1.55°C warmer using six datasets
- 2023 was the second warmest year, at 1.45°C above pre-industrial levels

Significance

- 1) 1.5°C mark is an arbitrary threshold, but climate impacts are expected to worsen as warming increase.
- 2) This breach doesn't mean the Paris Agreement target is over, as it refers to long-term trends.
- Global emissions are still rising, making it likely this breach will become the norm within a decade.



Contributing Factors

- 1) Mild El Niño event in 2023-2024
- 2) "Unprecedented" El Niño-like systems in multiple ocean regions
- 3) Underwater volcanic eruption near Tonga in January 2022
- 4) Lower sulphur dioxide emissions from shipping in 2024 (Mechanism Form sulphate aerosols which reflect sunlight back)
- 5) Sun in its solar maximum phase during 2024

Future Outlook

- 2025 is not expected to be the warmest year but likely to be between 1.1-1.4°C above preindustrial levels.
- 2) UK Met Office forecasts 2025 could be the third warmest year after 2024 and 2023.
- 3) WMO report suggests temperatures could reach 1.9°C above pre-industrial levels before 2028.

SPOTLIGHT: 2016 PYQ

With reference to the Agreement at the UNFCCC Meeting in Paris in 2015, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- The Agreement was signed by all the member countries of the UN and it will go into effect in 2017.
- 2) The Agreement aims to limit the greenhouse gas emissions so that the rise in average global temperature by the end of this century does not exceed 2°C or even 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.
- Developed countries acknowledged their historical responsibility in global warming and committed to donate \$1000 billion a year from 2020 to help developing countries to cope with climate change.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

SPOTLIGHT: 2022 PYQ

Discuss global warming and mention its effects on the global climate. Explain the control measures to bring down the level of greenhouse gases which cause global warming, in the light of the Kyoto Protocol, 1997. (250 Words, 15 Marks)

News / Explained / Explained Climate / 2024 was the warmest year for India and the world. But why was warming lower over India?

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2024 was the warmest year for India and the world. But why was warming lower over India?

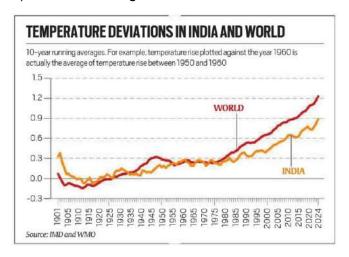
The 1.2 degree Celsius warming over India is considerably less than the 1.6 degree Celsius, or higher, that has been experienced over the global land surface. But it does not mean that the threat of climate change is less in India.

IE Explained; By: Amitabh Sinha Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment Link

Why in News? The World Meteorological Organisation declared 2024 as the warmest year on record, with global temperatures rising more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Key Points: Global vs. Indian Warming

- 1) Global average temperature: >1.5°C above pre-industrial levels
- 2) India's temperature rise: 0.65°C above 1991-2020 average
- 3) India's warming since 1901-1910: ~1.2°C



Why lower temperature rise in India?

- 1) Tropical location near the equator
- 2) Higher warming in polar regions compared to equatorial areas
- 3) Presence of aerosols and particulate matter in the atmosphere



Challenges in Comparing Data

- 1) Different baselines used for global and Indian measurements
- 2) India's data set begins from 1901, while global data uses 1850-1900 as pre-industrial baseline
- 3) Global data includes both land and ocean temperatures, while India's data is land-based

Implications and Future Steps

- 1) India's vulnerability to climate change remains high despite lower warming
- 2) Need for strengthened climate observation and impact assessment capabilities
- 3) Importance of expanding weather observation networks and computing capabilities
- 4) Critical role of IMD in disaster management, electricity generation, transportation, and tourism

SPOTLIGHT: 2017 PYQ

'Climate Change' is a global problem. How will India be affected by climate change? How Himalayan and coastal states of India are affected by climate change? (250 Words, 15 Marks)

SPOTLIGHT: 2019 PYQ

With reference to India's Desert National Park, which of the following statements are correct?

- 1) It is spread over two districts.
- 2) There is no human habitation inside the Park.
- 3) It is one of the natural habitats of Great Indian Bustard.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

News / Explained / Explained Climate / Why Greenland's crystal blue lakes have turned brown and why you chould warry

Why Greenland's crystal blue lakes have turned brown, and why you should worry

Extreme weather events transformed the Greenland lakes from carbon sinks into significant sources of carbon dioxide, with emissions rising by 350%, according to a new study. Here's how this happened.

IE Explained; By Alind Chauhan Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Environment Link

Why in News? More than 7,500 lakes in western Greenland have turned brown and begun emitting carbon due to extreme weather events in 2022, as revealed by a recent study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.





Cause of Transformation

- 1) Warmer temperatures in 2022 caused snowfall to turn into rain
- 2) Thawing of permafrost released carbon, iron, magnesium, and other elements
- 3) Record rainfall washed these elements into the lakes



Impact on Lakes

- 1) Physical, chemical, and biological properties changed within months
- 2) Water quality deteriorated, affecting taste, odor, and potentially increasing health risks
- Lakes transformed from carbon sinks to significant carbon dioxide sources, with emissions rising by 350%

Role of Atmospheric Rivers

- 1) Increase in temperatures and precipitation driven by atmospheric rivers
- 2) Climate models predict 50-290% more frequent atmospheric rivers in Greenland by the end of the 21st century

Environmental Implications

- 1) Reduced sunlight penetration affects phytoplankton, hindering carbon dioxide absorption
- Transformation of lakes from carbon sinks to carbon sources exacerbates climate change concerns

Global Context

- 1) Follows a recent study showing a temporary collapse in carbon absorption by land
- 2) Highlights the vulnerability of natural carbon sinks to extreme weather events

SPOTLIGHT: 2021 PYQ

With reference to the water on the planet Earth, consider the following statements:

- 1) The amount of water in the rivers and lakes is more than the amount of groundwater.
- The amount of water in polar ice caps and glaciers is more than the amount of groundwater.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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



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Pratibimb PYQ Mentorship Program 2025



What is Pratibimb Mentorship?

Pratibimb Mentorship Program 2025 is designed to guide and support students aiming for success in the UPSC CSE 2025. Our program adopts a strategic, outcome-focused approach, providing continuous guidance from experienced mentors and UPSC toppers. We help students identify and strengthen their foundational skills, build their knowledge base, and focus on areas for growth by making them solve PYQs.



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Internal Security

January 2025

Day in History: January 15th celebrated as Army Day

News: 77th Indian Army Day celebrations: The Indian Army is celebrating its 77th Army Day on January 15, commemorating General K.M. Cariappa taking over as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief in 1949.

Q1: Why January 15th celebrated as Army Day?

January 15th is celebrated as Army Day to commemorate the day in 1949 when General K.M. Cariappa became the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, taking over from the last British Commander-in-Chief

Q2: Who was General K.M. Cariappa and why is he important?

General K.M. Cariappa was the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. He played a crucial role in transforming the army from a colonial force to a national military, establishing new units and promoting inclusivity

Q3: Where is the main Army Day parade being held this year, and why is this location notable?



The main Army Day parade is being held in Pune this year. Pune is notable for hosting the Southern Command Headquarters and the National Defence Academy, making it a fitting location for this prestigious event.

Q4: What is the theme for Army Day 2025?

The theme for Army Day 2025 is "Samarth Bharat, Saksham Sena" (Capable India, Empowered Army), focusing on modernization, inclusivity, and public engagement

Q5: What new technologies or equipment will be showcased at this year's parade?

The parade will showcase robotic mules (Q-UGVs), drone jammer systems, all-terrain vehicles, Pinaka rockets, various radars, and different assault bridges. The robotic mules can navigate difficult terrain and extreme weather conditions.

The race for fighters: the IAF's dilemma

China has already fielded two fifth generation fighter jets becoming the only country other than the U.S. to have more than one fifth gen fighter. In comparison, the Indian Air Force is at 31 fighter squadrons, desperately awaiting new inductions and with no fifth gen fighter in the line-up for at least a decade

TH Text & Context; By Dinakar Peri Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Internal Security Link

Why in News? China has unveiled two new stealth fighter jets, highlighting the widening technological gap with the Indian Air Force (IAF).

China's Military Modernization Two new stealth fighter jets revealed:

- 1) A large delta-wing design with three engines
- 2) A smaller twin-engine design with swept wings

People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) achievements:

- Already fielded two fifth-generation fighters: J-35 and J-20
- 2) Largest aviation force in the Indo-Pacific region
- Rapidly approaching U.S. technology standards



Indian Air Force's Modernization Challenges Current status:

- 1) 31 fighter squadrons (sanctioned strength: 42)
- 2) No fifth-generation fighter in lineup for at least a decade

Modernization plans:

- 1) Ambitious acquisition of over 500 fighter jets
- Focus on indigenous design and manufacturing
- Key projects: Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) variants, Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), Twin Engine Deck Based Fighter (TEDBF)

Obstacles:

- Supply Chain and Procurement Delays: H old-up in LCA-Mk1A production due to GE Aerospace's delayed supply of F404-IN20 engines.
 - a) Procurement of 114 Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) stalled for years
- Aging Fleet and Phaseout Challenges: Two MiG-21 squadrons have had their retirement extended due to delays in LCA-Mk1A deliveries.
- Indigenous Development Timelines: LCA-Mk2 is scheduled for its first flight in October

- 2025, with R&D completion targeted for December 2027, but meeting these deadlines remains uncertain.
- 4) Technological Gap: IAF lacks a fifthgeneration fighter in its inventory, putting it at a disadvantage compared to China's PLAAF, which has already fielded two fifth-generation fighters (J-35 and J-20).
- 5) Dependency on Imported Aero-Engines: Even with plans for license manufacturing of F-414 engines and potential co-development of a 110KN engine with France, India will continue to depend on foreign suppliers for critical engine components well into the future.

SPOTLIGJHT - 2024 PYQ

Consider the following aircraft:

- 1) Rafael
- 2) MiG-29
- 3) Tejas MK-1

How many of the above are considered fifth generation fighter aircraft?

- 1) Only one
- 1) Only two
- 2) Only three
- 3) None



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Strong setback: On the Maoist attacks on security forces in Chhattisgarh

The IED blasts in Bijapur are the act of a flailing insurgency

TH Editorial

Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Internal Security Link

Why in News? Eight security personnel and a civilian driver were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast carried out by Maoists in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh on January 6, 2025.

Status of Maoist Insurgency: Declining Trend

- 1) Reduced Violence and Casualties:
 - a) Maoist-related incidents dropped by 73% from 2013 to 2024
 - b) In 2024, 296 insurgents were killed, compared to 24 security personnel and 80 civilians
- 2) Geographical Contraction:
 - Maoist influence reduced from 126 districts across 10 states in 2013 to 38 districts in 2024
 - b) As of 2021, only 25 districts were considered most affected, down from 180 in the late 2000s

Declining trend in the Maoist insurgency attributed to several factors:

- Intensified Security Operations: Security forces have stepped up their counterinsurgency efforts, particularly in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region.
 - a) These operations have resulted in significant casualties among Maoist cadres, with 296 insurgents killed in 2024 alone.
- 2) Improved Intelligence and Coordination: Better targeting of top Maoist leaders.
 - a) Better coordination between central and state forces has strengthened the anti-Maoist campaign.
- 3) **Weakening Insurgent Structure:** Loss of lower-rung cadres and increased surrenders.
 - Maoists are struggling to retain their last stronghold, particularly in the Abujmarh jungles and Bastar region.
- 4) **Development Initiatives:** Like the Road Requirement Plan-I Construction of 5422 km roads in LWE-affected areas.

- a) 2,335 mobile towers were installed in Phase-I, including 250 in Bihar.
- b) 7 new Kendriya Vidyalayas and 6 new Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas were sanctioned in the most affected districts.
- c) 627 new bank branches and 947 ATMs opened in 30 most LWE-affected districts between 2015-2019.

Challenges and Concerns with Recent Maoist Attack

- Security Lapses: Inadequate combing operations and breach of standard operating procedures (SOPs) may have contributed to the attack.
 - a) Questions arise about how a 60-70kg IED went undetected, especially if a roadopening party had sanitized the route.
- Tactical Vulnerabilities: Use of light motor vehicles for troop transport, which are more vulnerable to IED attacks.
 - a) The convoy's route choice (Kutru) was assumed to be safer, which proved to be a miscalculation.
- Persistent Threat: Maoists retain the ability to plant large IEDs and conduct ambushes, particularly targeting returning security forces.
- Operational Challenges: Difficulty in detecting IEDs planted well in advance, with grass growing over the wires.
 - a) Maoists' ability to manually trigger IEDs from nearby hiding spots, making prevention challenging.
- Impact on Anti-Maoist Operations: It may necessitate a reassessment of current strategies and tactics used by security forces.

The recent attack calls for better convoy protocols, safer travel methods, and more effective use of road-opening parties. Emphasis on regular patrols, clearing of routes, and extensive use of tracker dogs to enhance security.

SPOTLIGHT: 2020 PYQ

What are the determinants of left-wing extremism in Eastern part of India? What strategy should Government of India, civil administration and security forces adopt to counter the threat in the affected areas? (250 Words, 15 Marks)

Current Edge: January 2025



India's journey so far on the AI military bandwagon ••••••

India has begun harnessing AI's potential to strengthen its defence ecosystem, but there are still significant impediments

TH Editorial; By Adya Madhavan Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Internal Security <u>Link</u>

Why in News? India has begun integrating artificial intelligence (AI) systems into its military, with a defense budget of ₹6.21 lakh crore (\$75 billion) last year emphasizing modernization and upgrades.

Progress Made

- 1) Development of Al-powered systems like the Indrajaal autonomous drone security system.
- Attraction of foreign investments, such as Microsoft's \$3 billion commitment for data centers in Telangana.
- 3) Participation in international Al-focused joint initiatives.
- Establishment of the Defence Artificial Intelligence Council (DAIC) and Defence Al Project Agency (DAIPA).

Challenges Faced

1) Resource Constraints:

- a) Lack of digitized data for AI training
- b) High costs associated with data centers for Al systems
- c) Competing priorities, such as replacing legacy hardware

2) Policy and Implementation Issues

- a) Fragmented AI policies lacking clear implementation guidelines
- b) Insufficient military-specific AI recommendations in existing frameworks
- c) Limited public updates from Al-focused defense agencies

3) Structural Hurdles

- a) Historically siloed nature of armed forces hindering interoperability
- b) Over-reliance on public sector units for defense manufacturing

4) Strategic Alignment

- a) Inconsistent government sentiments towards military AI
- b) Cautionary stance from high-ranking officials, including comparisons to nuclear weapons

Way Forward

- 1) Develop robust frameworks for AI deployment and regulation in the military.
- Address inter-service silos to improve joint operations.
- 3) Encourage public-private partnerships and competition in defense manufacturing.
- 4) Foster international collaboration and innovation in Al adoption.

SPOTLIGHT: 2023 PYQ

Introduce the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI). How does AI help clinical diagnosis? Do you perceive any threat to privacy of the individual in the use of AI in healthcare? (250 Words, 15 Marks)

News / Explained / Explained Global / India summons envoy: Why Bangladesh has objected to fencing along the border

India summons envoy: Why Bangladesh has objected to fencing along the border

No defence structure can be constructed within 150 yards of the India-Bangladesh boundary by either side. But is wire fencing a 'defence structure'? Here is what the disagreement is all about, and what experts have to say.

IE Explained; By: Neha Banka Syllabus: Pre/Mains – International Relations, Internal Security <u>Link</u>

Why in News? India summoned Bangladesh's Acting High Commissioner over border fencing issues, following Bangladesh's objection to India's fencing activities along the international border.

Background

- 1) India and Bangladesh share a 4,096.7 km border, the largest land border India shares with any neighbor
- Recent incidents in West Bengal's Malda and Cooch Behar districts where Bangladesh objected to India's fencing activities

1975 Border Guidelines

1) No defense structure can be constructed within 150 yards of the international boundary

KALAM IAS

Re-Defining UPSC Preparation

2) India doesn't consider wire fencing as a defense structure, but Bangladesh does

Reasons for Fencing

- To curb trans-border crimes and control animal movement
- 2) Estimated 60% of trans-border crimes occur in unfenced areas

Challenges

- 1) Complex border due to Partition legacy
- Villages and houses sometimes located on or near the border
- 3) Riverine borders (over 900 km) cannot be fenced

Current Status

- 1) 3,141 km out of 4,156 km border fenced
- 2) West Bengal: 81.5% of 2,216.7 km border fenced as of 2023
- Unfenced areas due to terrain, villager objections, and ongoing negotiations

India's Stance

- 1) Fencing necessary for security
- 2) Negotiations held with Bangladesh for fencing in specific cases
- 3) Installation of "smart fencing" with surveillance technology

Bangladesh's Objections

- 1) Violation of 1975 agreement on no fencing within 150 yards of border
- 2) Inconvenience to border residents
- Concerns over India's ability to surveil their territory

SPOTLIGHT: 2020 PYQ

Analyze internal security threats and transborder crimes along Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan borders including Line of Control (LoC). Also discuss the role played by various security forces in this regard. (250 Words, 15 Marks)

SPOTLIGHT: PRACTICE MCQ

The Department of Border Management is a department under which of the following Union Ministries?

- (a) Ministry of Defence
- (b) Ministry of Home Affairs
- (c) Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways
- (d) Ministry of Environment and Forests

News / Explained / INS Surat, INS Nilgiri and INS Vaghsheer commissioned: Three cheers for Indian Navy



INS Surat, INS Nilgiri and INS Vaghsheer commissioned: Three cheers for Indian Navy

For the first time, three naval combatants were commissioned into the Indian Navy on Wednesday. What are these versatile, indigenous platforms, their strengths, and significance of these additions to the Navy?

IE Explained; By: Sushant Kulkarni Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Internal Security <u>Link</u>

Why in News? Three frontline combatants - INS Nilgiri (stealth frigate), INS Surat (stealth destroyer), and INS Vaghsheer (submarine) - were commissioned into the Indian Navy on January 16, 2025, marking the first time a destroyer, frigate, and submarine joined the Navy together.

INS Nilgiri (Project 17A Stealth Frigate)

- 1) First of seven frigates in Project 17A
- Built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited and Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers
- Multi-mission capable for blue water operations
- 4) Equipped with surface-to-surface missiles, surface-to-air missiles, and advanced guns



INS Surat (Project 15B Stealth Destroyer)

- 1) Fourth and final ship of Project 15B
- 2) India's first Al-enabled warship
- 3) Displacement of 7,400 tonnes and length of 164 meters



- 4) Equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors
- 5) Can achieve speeds over 30 knots (56 km/h)

INS Vaghsheer (Scorpene-class Submarine)

- 1) Sixth and final submarine of the Kalvari class under Project 75
- 2) Based on Scorpene design by Naval Group and Navantia
- 3) Diesel-electric transmission system
- Designed for anti-surface, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, and special operations
- 5) To be equipped with Air Independent Propulsion technology from 2026

Significance

- 1) Enhances Indian Navy's combat capabilities and strategic deterrence
- 2) Boosts India's maritime influence in the Indian Ocean Region
- 3) Showcases progress in indigenous warship construction
- 4) Demonstrates India's role as a first responder in the region

News / Explained / Mahakumbh stampede: Causes of such disasters, how they can be prevented

Mahakumbh stampede: Causes of such disasters, how they can be prevented

Mahakumbh Mela 2025 Stampede News: The NDMA, the apex body on formulating disaster mitigation policies in the country, had in 2014 published a report on crowd management at big events and prevention of stampedes. Here are its key takeaways.

IE Explained, By Deeptiman Tiwary Syllabus: Pre/Mains – Internal Security <u>Link</u>

Why in News? A stampede at Mahakumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj killed 30 and injured 60, highlighting persistent crowd-management challenges despite NDMA's 2014 guidelines on disaster prevention.



Causes of Stampedes

1) Structural Factors

- a) Weak temporary structures, narrow exits, poor barricading, and inadequate lighting.
- b) Overcrowding due to underestimation of crowd size and lack of access control.

2) Crowd Control Failures

- a) Poor coordination among stakeholders and locked exits during emergencies.
- b) Unregulated movement (e.g., Nashik 2003 stampede caused by reverse crowd flow and VIP processions).

3) Behavioural Factors

- a) Herd mentality: A few individuals climbing fences or moving recklessly trigger mass panic.
- b) Prolonged waits leading to frustration and unruly behavior.

Case Studies of Past Stampedes

Event	Deaths	Key Causes
Nashik	29	Barricade
Kumbh		pressure, VIP
(2003)		processions,
		unregulated
		ingress.
Mandhardevi	293	Narrow slippery
Yatra (2005)		paths, illegal
		vendors, poor
		infrastructure, no
		coordination.

Preventive Measures (NDMA Guidelines)

1) Demand-Supply Management

- a) Implement online registration (e.g., Vaishnodevi, Sabarimala) to regulate inflow.
- b) Use staggered entry timings and public transport scheduling to avoid peaks.

2) Infrastructure & Monitoring

 a) Design staging areas with rest facilities, hydration points, and real-time crowd tracking.



- b) Install strong railings, sectoral partitions, and emergency exits.
- 3) Behavioural Interventions
 - a) Deploy community-based crowd control instead of force.
 - b) Use public address systems for timely alerts and directions.

Role of Technology & Coordination

1) **Pre-Event:** Crowd estimation using historical data and advance registrations.

- 2) **During Event:** Deploy CCTV, watchtowers, and medical teams at choke points.
- 3) **Post-Event:** Regular audits and inter-agency drills to address gaps.

This incident underscores the need for holistic planning, infrastructure upgrades, and behavioural awareness to prevent future tragedies at mass gatherings.



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Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

January 2025

Ethics News of the Day: Death of journalist Mukesh Chandrakar Link

Why in News? Mukesh Chandrakar, a 33-year-old freelance journalist from Bijapur, Chhattisgarh, is brutally murdered. It is allegedly linked to his reporting on corruption in road construction projects, which has sparked outrage and calls for stronger protections for journalists across India.

Mukesh Chandrakar exhibited several admirable values through his work as a journalist:

- Courage: Fearlessly reported on corruption and sensitive issues in the Baster region door.
- issues in the Bastar region, despite potential risks.
- 2) **Integrity:** Exposed a ₹ 120-crore road construction scam, leading to a government inquiry.
- 3) **Dedication:** Ran a popular YouTube channel "Bastar Junction" with over 159,000 subscribers, consistently covering local issues.
- 4) **Responsibility:** Worked as a stringer for national news channels like NDTV and News 18, ensuring broader coverage of regional stories.
- 5) **Humanitarianism:** Played a crucial role in securing the release of CRPF personnel abducted by Maoists in 2021.
- 6) **Perseverance:** Continued his investigative journalism despite the challenges and dangers in conflict-prone areas.
- 7) **Commitment to truth:** Pursued stories that held powerful entities accountable, even when it put him at personal risk.

The murder of journalist Mukesh Chandrakar raises several ethical concerns:

- 1) **Freedom of press:** His killing for exposing corruption directly attacks the fundamental right to free speech and press freedom.
- 2) **Intimidation of media:** The brutal nature of the murder may instil fear in other journalists, potentially silencing critical voices.
- 3) **Abuse of power:** The alleged involvement of a contractor in the murder suggests misuse of influence to suppress unfavourable reporting.
- 4) **Corruption:** The motive behind the murder, linked to Chandrakar's reporting on a road construction scam, highlights the persistence of corruption.
- 5) **Safety of journalists:** The incident underscores the lack of adequate protection for journalists, especially those working in smaller towns and conflict-prone areas.
- 6) **Impunity:** The brazen nature of the crime raises concerns about whether perpetrators of violence against journalists face sufficient consequences.
- 7) **Right to information:** Chandrakar's murder deprives the public of crucial information about local issues and government activities.
- 8) **Justice system:** The case tests the efficiency and integrity of the legal system in protecting journalists and prosecuting their attackers.

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Ethics News of the Day: IE - Animal welfare, people's safety: Issues of in use of elephants in ceremonies Link

Why in News? A disturbed male elephant injured 24 people during a festival in Kerala, reigniting debates over animal welfare and public safety in temple ceremonies. Elephants are primarily used in temples and festivals as a part of tradition.

Ethical Issues

1) Animal cruelty:

- a) Extreme stress experienced by elephants during religious ceremonies.
- b) Visible signs of distress like repetitive motions (head bobbing and swaying)
- c) Health issues including hyperglycemia and suppressed immune responses due to stress.
- d) Lack of choice for elephants in participating in events, unlike human devotees.
- Legal concerns: Continued sourcing of elephants from the wild despite bans.
- Misuse of safeguards: Potential misuse of microchips to pass off wild-caught elephants as captivebred.
- 4) **Demand-Supply mismatch:** Due to challenges in breeding elephants in captivity.
- 5) **Threat to human life:** Domestic elephants killed 196 people in Kerala between 2011 and 2023, mostly at festivals

Way Forward

- 1) Finding a middle ground between cultural practices and animal welfare
- 2) Implementing and enforcing safety measures for both elephants and the public
 - a) Use powers under Wildlife Act amendment in 2022 which allows government to frame rules for elephant transfers.
 - b) Technology Integration: Use DNA testing to detect captive bloodlines and prevent misuse of microchips.



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