

PRATIYOGITA DARPAN

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WHERE EXCELLENCE GUIDES THE SUCCESS

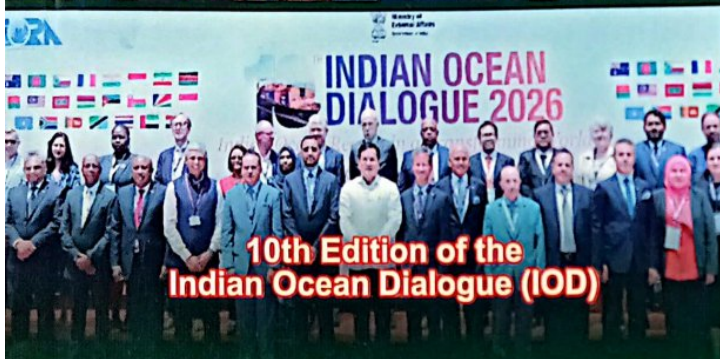
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Topper—UPSC Civil Services Exam., 2025 (16th Rank)



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FAILURE



You are Born to Succeed; Not to Fail

"Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal."

—Earl Nightingale

Tales of adventures and details of inventions assure us that men—you and we are born to succeed. In our initial efforts, we may fail, but like the story of the king and the spider we are bound to succeed in case we do not give up out of despair. Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru's inspiring words may change our whole attitude towards life—success often comes to those who dare and act. It seldom goes to the timid who are afraid of consequences. Examples are too many to cite. To succeed, one must be armed with constant eye, unlimited ambition for the goal and unsatisfied zeal of determination for success.

"Only those fall in the battlefield who mount on the horse. The child has no occasion to fall as he/she moves on knees."

The way to the Everest was full of hazards. It consumed many lives. But the mountaineer in man did not accept failure, and was successful to reach the top at last. In the words of Edwin C. Bliss—"Success doesn't mean the absence of failures; it means the attainment of ultimate objective. It means winning the war, not every battle."

And this is what exactly happened in the World War II. Germany, in the initial stage, won many battles, but Allied powers won the war. Why? The leaders of Allied powers, in spite of many reverses, pursued the ideal success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm.

So never say 'die', rise as many times as you fall and you are bound to succeed. Do remember—success is the old ABC—"ability, breaks and courage."

The freedom of Bharat was not won in a day. It had to be fought for about hundred years and innumerable valuable lives had to be

sacrificed at the altar of Goddess Freedom, let aside the pains and pangs of those, who spent many years in the prisons. For example, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru spend nearly nine years, the best part of his life, behind the prison walls. But he was always full of enthusiasm and hope and never became morose or dejected. In a press conference, he uttered these valuable words, which might be inspiring to our young readers—"Success often comes to those, who dare and act, it seldom goes to the timid who are ever afraid of consequences." Another thinker Joseph C. Pearce went a step further to say that. To lead a creative life, we must lose the fear of being wrong." As a matter of fact, perseverance and bull-dog like tenacity are the secret of success. Helen Keller was very much talking of practical life, when he said "we can do anything, we want to do if we stick to it long enough." Joseph Addison, a man of wisdom also said, "If you wish success in life, make perseverance your bosom friend; experience your wise counsellor, caution your elder brother and hope your guardian genius."

"Success is a few simple disciplines, practiced every day; while failure is a simply a few errors in judgement, repeated every day."

—Jim Rohn

During the period of your trial—the period when you are making efforts to achieve success—some may cheer you and many will jeer at you—more so, when you appear to be a failure, but you have not to fumble, but have to pursue your determined path. Better, if you remember the advice of David Broukley, "A successful man is one who can ray a firm foundation with the bricks that others throw at him." As the wise man have often said—failure is not fatal. Only failure to get back is fatal. Learn, if you can, these words of practical wisdom—"you

may be disappointed, if you fail, but you are doomed, if you don't try." (Beverly Sills). Thomas Alva Edison, the father of so many modern inventions, once said, "I have not failed, I've just found 10,000, ways that would not work." So, in short, failure and success are more a matter of ones attitude. It depends on the individual how he or she looks at them while taking strides towards the goal. Reality can be seen from many different perspectives as the Kaleidoscope's images. There is a wonderful story of a grandfather who takes his twin grandsons to a stable. They walk into a stall filled with manure. The first boy is repulsed, wanting only to get away from the sight and smell of the fresh manure. The second boy begins around happily. The grandfather asks him why he feels so happy, his response was—"with all this manure there must be a pony around somewhere." Our lives will be much different, if in the midst of our manure, we were able to look for the pony. Replace manure by failure, and see what life means to us—only looking for success in the midst of adverse conditions.

Talya was a very famous character—player of the British dramatic stage. In the beginning he badly failed on the stage—he could not utter even a word. But after a few years, he was on top as a comedian. When asked by a journalist the secret of his success, he replied—"Get up as many times, as you fall and don't let disappointment near. You will become an expert, after practising in this way."

I leave to you to ponder over the following advice and act accordingly—Those who wants to succeed, should be armed with three strong and most essential weapons, first constant eye, second unlimited ambition for the goal and third unsatisfied zeal of determination for success.





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Relevance of Pratiyogita Darpan in UPSC-CSE Prelims 2026

The Civil Services Examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) remains one of India's most prestigious and demanding competitive examinations. Every year, lakhs of aspirants compete for a limited number of positions in elite services such as the IAS, IPS, IFS and IRS. The UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination 2026, held on 24 May, 2026, once again reflected the evolving and analytical nature of the examination pattern. The paper tested not only factual knowledge but also conceptual clarity, interdisciplinary understanding and awareness of contemporary developments.

In such a dynamic examination environment, the importance of reliable and exam-oriented current affairs resources becomes undeniable. Among the publications that continued to demonstrate remarkable relevance for aspirants is Pratiyogita Darpan. Over the years, the magazine has established itself as a dependable companion for competitive examination preparation, particularly in the field of current affairs and analytical coverage of national and international developments.

A close analysis of UPSC Prelims 2026 reveals that several themes and issues appearing in the examination had already been discussed in Pratiyogita Darpan through its monthly issues, special features, current affairs sections, and digital platforms. Questions related to biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, maritime connectivity, multidimensional poverty, quantum technology, green energy initiatives and scientific missions were areas that had received sustained attention in the magazine throughout the year.

Topics such as the Western Hoolock Gibbon, mangrove ecosystem protection, India's Deep Ocean Mission, National Quantum Mission, Genome India Project and Green Hydrogen Mission were covered either directly or indirectly in the magazine and on its associated

YouTube platform well before the examination. This demonstrates the publication's ability to identify emerging themes that later become important from the UPSC perspective.

One of the major strengths of the Pratiyogita Darpan lies in its balanced and examination-focussed presentation style. In an age where aspirants are flooded with excessive information from newspapers, online portals and social media platforms, the magazine offers structured and filtered content. Rather than overwhelming students with unnecessary details, it highlights developments that carry long-term relevance for competitive examinations. This selective and focussed approach proved particularly useful for candidates who appeared in UPSC Prelims 2026.

Another important feature of the magazine is its ability to connect static subjects with current affairs. UPSC increasingly frames questions that require aspirants to apply conceptual knowledge in contemporary contexts. For instance, environmental questions in Prelims 2026 demanded not only awareness of current ecological issues but also understanding of geography, ecology and climate science. Similarly, questions related to maritime logistics and international trade required integration of geography, economy and infrastructure-related concepts. Pratiyogita Darpan consistently adopts this integrated approach, which aligns closely with the changing pattern of the examination.

The economy section of UPSC Prelims 2026 also reflected UPSC's growing emphasis on developmental and social indicators. Questions related to inequality, multidimensional poverty, welfare programmes, and inclusive growth required both conceptual understanding and awareness of recent reports and policy initiatives. The magazine had extensively discussed subjects such as the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), social sector reforms,

and government welfare schemes in its current affairs coverage. Aspirants who regularly followed these discussions were better equipped to approach such questions with confidence.

Science and technology continued to occupy a significant space in the examination. Emerging areas such as quantum computing, genomics, aviation safety systems, and private participation in the space sector featured prominently in the paper. These subjects often appear difficult for students from non-science backgrounds. However, Pratiyogita Darpan simplified many such complex topics through explanatory articles, simplified analysis and monthly updates, making them more accessible and easier to revise.

The contribution of the Pratiyogita Darpan YouTube channel also deserves recognition. In recent years, digital learning has become an important supplementary resource to traditional preparation methods. The platform provided timely discussions on current affairs, topic-wise analysis and revision-oriented sessions that helped aspirants quickly grasp important current affairs developments. Several issues discussed in these videos later appeared in some form in UPSC Prelims 2026, highlighting the growing relevance of multimedia learning in competitive examination preparation.

Equally significant was the role of the magazine's objective practice sections and model question papers. UPSC Prelims is not merely a test of information; it also evaluates judgement, elimination techniques and time management. Regular practice through multiple-choice questions published in Pratiyogita Darpan helped aspirants develop familiarity with the conceptual and analytical nature of UPSC-style questions. Many candidates found that the orientation of these practice exercises closely resembled the trend visible in the actual examination.



Nation

This Month

Smart Border Project

On May 22, 2026, the Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah, while attending the Border Security Force (BSF) Investiture Ceremony and Rustamji Memorial Lecture as the Chief Guest in New Delhi, announced to transform India's border into a 'Smart border'.

What is Smart Border Project ?

- It envisions equipping border areas with drones, radars, modern cameras, and other cutting-edge technology.
- The project will provide robust technical support to enhance border security.
- The technological support will be provided by the Union Home Ministry.
- It aims to create an impenetrable security grid along the India-Bangladesh and India-Pakistan borders, guarded by the BSF, within the next one year.

Challenges Faced by BSF in Border Security	Measures to Strengthen Border Security
● Illegal infiltration ● Narcotics smuggling ● Cattle smuggling ● Counterfeit currency ● Organized crime ● Smuggling of weapons ● Narcotics through drones	● Border security should not be an isolated responsibility, it should be a broader territorial responsibility. ● Strengthening the border security grid requires close coordination among state administration and police, CAPFs, other armed forces, NCB and intelligence agencies. ● India must adopt new strategies to address cyber threats, hybrid warfare and drone-based challenges.

Changes to Citizenship Rules Notified by Centre; Focus on OCI Registration

On April 30, 2026, the Union Home Ministry notified the changes to the Citizenship Rules, 2009, known as the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026, which introduce a slew of online initiatives for OCI cardholders, including a digital application and renunciation process.

Key Highlights :

- **Portal for OCI Registration :** All applications for OCI card registration and renunciation will now be submitted electronically through the official portal. It added that applications for registration as an OCI cardholder will be made in the designated form electronically on the online portal. All applications for card registration and OCI card renunciation will now be submitted electronically through the official portal <https://ociservices.gov.in>.
- **Renunciation of OCI :** On the declaration of renunciation of the OCI, the individual must surrender the original physical card to the nearest Indian Mission, Post, or Foreigners Regional Registration Officer. In case of cancellation of OCI status by the government, the physical card must be returned. If the card is not returned, the government can still declare it officially cancelled. For those with an e-OCI, the government can cancel digital registration in its records.
- **Electronic OCI :** Electronic OCI (e-OCI) has removed the previous requirement for applicants to submit documents in duplicate. Registered individuals may now be issued either a physical OCI card or an electronic OCI registration. The government will also maintain its official register of OCI holders digitally.

- ➔ Smart Border Project
- ➔ Changes to Citizenship Rules Notified by Centre; Focus on OCI Registration
- ➔ IMR Witness Decline of Nearly 38% in Last Ten Years : SRS
- ➔ President Droupadi Murmu Promulgates Ordinance to Increase Supreme Court Judges Strength by Four
- ➔ Supreme Court Launches 'One Case One Data' and 'Su Sahay'
- ➔ Supreme Court Brings Survivors of Forcible Acid Ingestion Under Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act
- ➔ Supreme Court Allows Euthanasia of Rabid, Dangerous Dogs
- ➔ BCCI not a Public Authority Under RTI Act : CIC
- ➔ CBI Launches ABHAY : An AI-Powered Notice Verification System
- ➔ Overall Crime Rate Drops 6%, Cybercrime Increased by 17% : NCRB
- ➔ NITI Aayog Releases Policy Report on School Education System in India
- ➔ Union Cabinet Clears Amendment to Make Insult to Vande Mataram a Punishable Offence
- ➔ Centre Asks States, UTs to Set up Ebola Surveillance
- ➔ Government Issues Comprehensive Guidance Document on Diabetes Mellitus in Children
- ➔ South Coast Railway Zone (SCoR) : India's Newest Railway Zone
- ➔ Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Flags Off Extended Srinagar-Jammu Vande Bharat Express Service
- ➔ NHAI Issues Heatwave Guidelines to Protect Highway Workers

- **Inclusion in FTIP :** OCI applicants will now have to sign a new consent form to opt in to the Fast Track Immigration Programme (FTIP) by agreeing to allow the collection of their biometric information during their OCI registration, which will be shared for future fast-track applications or used for automatic registration in the programme.
- **Grievance Redressal :** For those who wish to challenge a decision in the event of the rejection of an OCI or citizenship application, it will now be handled by an authority 'one rank higher' than the authority that made the original decision. The affected person will be allowed reasonable opportunity to present their case in all cases of revision or review before a final decision is made.
- **Changes related to Minors :** For citizenship applications involving children, the notification says that the minor child cannot at any time hold the passport of any other country while also holding the Indian passport. The Citizenship Rules, 2009, allowed a person to submit an application for the registration of the birth of his minor child born outside India to the Indian consulate in the country where the child was born, together with a declaration that the child does not hold a passport of any other country.

The OCI scheme was introduced through an amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955, in 2005. The scheme provides for the registration of Persons of Indian Origin as Overseas Citizens of India, provided they were citizens of India on or after 26th January, 1950, or were eligible to become citizens on that date. However, individuals who are or have been or whose parent, grandparent or great-grandparent was a citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh are not eligible. There are currently over 5 million Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders globally. It grants multiple entry lifelong visa for visiting India for any purpose and exempt from registration requirement. OCI card holders have parity with NRIs except in matters relating to the acquisition of agricultural or plantation properties.

IMR Witness Decline of Nearly 38% in Last Ten Years : SRS

The Sample Registration System (SRS), conducted every year by the Office of the Registrar General of India, annual estimates of Infant Mortality Rate, Birth Rate, Death Rate and other Fertility & Mortality Indicators at the National and sub-National levels.

Key Statistics for Reference Year 2024

- Birth Rate : 18.3 (per thousand population)
- Death Rate : 6.4 (per thousand population)
- Natural Growth Rate : 11.9 (per thousand population)
- Infant Mortality Rate : 24 (per thousand live births)

Facts

- **Birth Rate :** It has declined by about 13% in the last decade, from 21.0 in 2014 to 18.3 in 2024. The rate of decline in rural areas (from 22.7 in 2014 to 20.2 in 2024) was slower as compared to urban areas (from 17.4 in 2014 to 14.7 in 2024). Among States and UTs,

Bihar recorded highest Birth Rate (26.8 in 2024) and Andaman and Nicobar Islands recorded lowest Birth Rate (9.9 in 2024).

- **Death Rate :** The Death Rate for rural areas for the year 2023 & 2024 remains same at 6.8. There is a relative decrease in urban areas from 5.7 in 2023 to 5.6 in 2024. At all India level, it declined from 14.9 in 1971 to 6.4 in 2024. However, the death rate still remains above the pre-Covid level of 6 observed in 2019 and 2020. Chhattisgarh recorded the highest Death Rate of 8.4, whereas the lowest has been recorded in Chandigarh at 3.9.
- **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR):** Between 2014 and 2024, it declined from 39 to present level of 24, registering a decline of about 38%. The corresponding decline in rural areas is 43 to 27 (about 37% decline) and in urban areas from 26 to 17 (about 35% decline). Despite the decline in IMR over the last decades, one in every 42 infants die within first year of their life at the National level (irrespective of rural-urban). In 2024, the maximum IMR has been reported in Chhattisgarh (36) and the minimum in Manipur (2).

Challenges

- **Rural-Urban Gap :** The country averages in demographic indicators are dragged down substantially due to relatively worse performance in rural areas. For instance, the decline in Birth Rates between 2014 and 2024 was 11% in rural areas and 16% in urban areas. In 2024, the death rate in urban area is lower than national average, whereas, in rural area it is higher. Though the percentage decline in IMR is higher in rural areas, but it is still 10 points higher than urban area.
- **IMR still far from national goal :** Though rural and urban area both registered decline in IMR in last 10 years, it is still further away from the national target under the National Health Policy to reduce the IMR to single digit.
- **Regional Disparity :** Several southern and smaller states lead the way with better statistics in all these demographic statistics. In 2024, single digit IMR was recorded in Kerala (8), Goa (7), Sikkim (7) and Manipur (2). Chhattisgarh (36), Madhya Pradesh (35), Uttar Pradesh (35), Meghalaya (31) recorded very high IMR.

Policy Recommendation

- The uneven demographic statistics calls for equitable growth and appropriate deployment of resources particularly sound.
- Addressing the social determinants of health (SDH) is fundamental for improving demographic indicators, which requires action by all sectors and civil society. SDH such as maternal education, household wealth, sanitation and caste—are critical in improving India's Infant Mortality Rate (IMR).
- Enhancing the coverage of maternal and child health schemes, improving nutrition and sanitation through ICDS and WASH; improving the educational and awareness level of women is needed to reduce rural-urban and inter-state disparity in health outcomes.

President Droupadi Murmu Promulgates Ordinance to Increase Supreme Court Judges Strength by Four

On May 17, 2026, President Droupadi Murmu promulgated an ordinance increasing the number of judges in the Supreme Court to 37—excluding the Chief Justice of India (CJI). The ordinance is called the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026.

The ordinance amended the Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 to replace the word 'thirty-three' with 'thirty-seven'. The Parliament had last amended Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 in 2019, raising the sanctioned strength from 31 to 33, that is, excluding the Chief Justice of India.

Key Highlights :

- The current backlog of cases in Supreme Court is over 93,000 cases.
- It is threatening to reach six digits even as the court is going into summer recess or 'partial working days' in June, 2026.
- Increasing the number of judges in Supreme Court will help in tiding over the continuing crisis of pendency plaguing the court for years now, especially after the pandemic, when the facility of e-filing of cases was introduced.
- Presently, there are two judicial vacancies in Supreme Court, with three more apex judges set to retire in 2026.

Article 124(1) envisaged a Supreme Court consisting of the Chief Justice of India and 'not more than seven judges' until the 'Parliament by law prescribes a larger number'. Subsequently, Parliament enacted the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act 1956, which originally provided for the maximum number of judges (excluding the CJI) to be 10. This number was increased to 13 by the Supreme Court (Number of Judges), Amendment Act, 1960, and to 17 by another amendment to the law. In 1986, the strength of the Supreme Court judges increased from 17 to 25, excluding the CJI. Subsequently, a fresh amendment in 2009 further augmented the strength of top court judges from 25 to 30. This was followed by the previous amendment in 2019, which increased the number of judges to 33 (excluding CJI).

Supreme Court Launches 'One Case One Data' and 'Su Sahay'

On May 11, 2026, CJI Surya Kant announced the launch of a major digital initiative—'One Case One Data'—to integrate the judicial administration at every level of courts, from the taluka court to the apex court, into a unified system. It will help in the development of efficient case management system. It is aimed at creating a more comprehensive and interconnected digital database across courts.

CJI also announced the launch of 'Su Sahay', an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered assistance chatbot integrated with the Supreme Court website to facilitate easier access to justice and court-related services for

litigants. The chatbot has been developed by the National Informatics Centre in collaboration with the Supreme Court Registry.

Keeping in view the varied infrastructural requirements of different High Courts and District Courts, CJI Surya Kant recently constituted a Judicial Infrastructure Advisory Committee to ensure a unified infrastructural ecosystem on pan-India basis. The Committee will submit its report to the Chief Justice of India who shall on consideration thereof take up the matter with Government of India and the State Governments. The Committee is chaired by Justice Aravind Kumar, Judge, Supreme Court of India. Three High Judges and DG, CPWD are its members.

Supreme Court Brings Survivors of Forcible Acid Ingestion Under Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act

On May 4, 2026, the Supreme Court included persons who were forcibly administered acid within the definition of 'acid attack victims' under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. The Supreme Court Bench also ruled that survivors of forcible administration of acid in the category of 'acid attack victims' would be deemed to be operative retrospectively from the inception of the Act in 2016. The deemed recognition would aid victims of forcible acid ingestion to claim disability benefits due under the 2016 Act.

Section 43D (5) of UAPA Act 1967

It states that no person shall be granted bail for an offence under the UAPA if a court is of the opinion that "there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation against such person is prima facie true".

Why it was in News ?

On May 22, 2026, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court referred to a larger Bench the question of how Article 21 is to be applied against the statutory bar on bail under Section 43D(5) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, (UAPA) 1967. The Bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and P.B. Varale simultaneously granted interim bail of six months to two Delhi riots conspiracy accused, Tasleem Ahmed and Khalid Saifi, on 11 conditions.

Timeline Since January 2026

- Earlier, in January 2026, a coordinate Bench, consisting of Justice Kumar and Justice N.V. Anjaria, in *Gulfisha Fatima Vs. State (Govt. of NCT of Delhi)* (2026) had denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam noting that Article 21 cannot operate as a 'trump card' for seeking bail.
- The matter was referred to a larger bench in the same week where a coordinate bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan expressed 'serious reservations' on the *Gulfisha Fatima* judgement. The Bench noted that the Court was bound to follow a three-judge bench decision—*Union of India Vs. K.A. Najeeb* (2021)—which held that prolonged incarceration without trial warrants constitutional intervention. The Bench further stated that statutory conditions for bail "will melt down where there is no likelihood of trial being completed within a reasonable time and the period of incarceration already undergone has exceeded a substantial part of the prescribed sentence."

Rationale of SC Ruling

- The 2016 law recognised only victims of acid-throwing, and not forcible acid ingestion.
- The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which replaced the Indian Penal Code, accepted both the act of acid-throwing and the administration of acid as offences punishable with imprisonment from 10 years to a life sentence under Section 124 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt).

Supreme Court Allows Euthanasia of Rabid, Dangerous Dogs

On May 19, 2026, the Supreme Court, refusing to modify its November 2025 order, allowed authorities to euthanise rabid and aggressive free-ranging dogs under statutory protocols. Its November 2025 order had directed all States and Union Territories to ensure the removal of stray dogs from high-footfall public places, while clarifying that such dogs cannot be 're-released' into these institutional areas even after vaccination and sterilisation.

Key Highlights of Supreme Court Ruling :

- Stray dogs does not possess an 'indefeasible or absolute right' to occupy or remain in all categories of public spaces irrespective of their nature or use.
- Article 21 of the Constitution encompasses the right of every citizen to move freely and access public spaces without living under a constant apprehension of physical harm.
- The State cannot remain a passive spectator where preventable threats to human life continue to proliferate in the face of statutory mechanisms specifically designed to address them.

What Supreme Court Directed to States ?

- States and Union Territories to establish at least one fully functional Animal Birth Control Centre in every district, equipped with adequate veterinary infrastructure, trained personnel and surgical facilities to facilitate large-scale sterilisation and vaccination programmes.
- The Court further said the number of centres should be expanded, wherever necessary, keeping in view the population density and territorial extent of each district.

Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023

The ABC Rules 2023 was notified under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, 1960, superseding the Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules, 2001. As per the extant Rules.

- Animal Birth Control programme for the sterilization and immunization of the stray dogs are to be carried out by the respective local bodies/municipalities/Municipal Corporations and Panchayats.
- Also, the Cruelty involved for carrying out of ABC programme need to be addressed. By effective implementation of these Rules, the Animal Birth Control programme can be conducted by the local bodies which will help in reducing the stray dog population addressing the animal welfare issues.

BCCI not a Public Authority Under RTI Act : CIC

On May 18, 2026, the Chief Information Commission (CIC) held that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) does not fall within the ambit of a 'public authority' under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. The CIC observed that the cricket board continues to function as an autonomous private body and is neither 'directly nor indirectly' financed by the government.

Background

- The present CIC order arose from a 2018 CIC ruling passed by then Information Commissioner M. Sridhar Acharyulu, which had directed the BCCI to appoint Public Information Officers and put in place an RTI compliance mechanism.
- BCCI challenged this order before the Madras High Court, which remitted the matter to the CIC for fresh adjudication in light of Supreme Court judgements holding that the BCCI did not qualify as a 'public authority' under the RTI Act.

Why BCCI is not a Public Authority Under RTI Act ?

- In present CIC ruling, Information Commissioner P.R. Ramesh held that the BCCI, registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975, was neither established by the Constitution, nor created by any legislation or government order.
- BCCI is neither materially dependent upon nor sustained by government funds.
- Incidental benefits such as tax exemptions or concessions extended to the cricket body could not amount to 'substantial financing' by the State under the RTI Act.
- Statutory requirements under Section 2(h) of the RTI Act, 2005, had not been fulfilled in the case of the BCCI. CIC observed that there was no 'substantial and pervasive' government control over the board's functions, finances, administration, management or affairs.
- Furthermore, BCCI did not satisfy the requirement of being substantially financed, directly or indirectly, by funds provided by the appropriate government under Section 2(h)(d) of the Right to Information Act, 2005. BCCI's financial structure is independently sustained through media rights, sponsorships, broadcasting revenues, etc.
- BCCI's rules and regulations does not have statutory force.
- BCCI's working committee elected from amongst its members in accordance with its own Rules controls the entire affairs and management of the BCCI.

Zee Telefilms Ltd. Vs. Union of India (2005) : Supreme Court ruled that mere supervision or regulation by the state is insufficient to alter the private character of the organization. The Court observed that although the BCCI performs significant public functions in regulating cricket in India, it does not qualify as 'State' within the meaning of Article 12 of the Constitution owing to the absence of deep and pervasive governmental control over its affairs.

CBI Launches ABHAY : An AI-Powered Notice Verification System

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) recently launched ABHAY an AI-Based Helpbot for Authentication of CBI notices—a first-of-its-kind real-time notice verification system designed to protect the citizens from the growing menace of cyber fraud and digital arrest scams.

How it Functions ?

Citizens can access ABHAY at any time through CBI's official website www.cbi.gov.in. The verification process is simple. The person receiving a notice in the name of CBI must visit CBI's official website. Then, click on the ABHAY logo on the main webpage. The user must do an OTP verification process using his/her mobile number and then upload a scanned copy of the notice received. The chatbot ABHAY will give information about authenticity of the notice declaring it either as genuine or potentially fraudulent.

The 'Digital Arrest' scam operates by creating intense fear in the mind of the victim. The modus operandi begins with a fraudulent notice that appears to be issued by a legitimate law enforcement agency. The notice falsely accuses the victim of involvement in criminal activity. Once the victim is deceived into compliance, fraudsters initiate a sham legal process, keeping the victim under surveillance for days under the guise of a 'digital arrest' — a concept that has no legal existence in Indian law.

Overall Crime Rate Drops 6%, Cybercrime Increased by 17% : NCRB

According to the Crime in India 2024 report released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) on May 6, 2026, the overall crime rate in India declined in 2024 compared with 2023 but there was an increase of over 17% in cybercrime cases. A total of 1,01,928 cases were registered under cybercrimes in 2024 over 86,420 such cases in the previous year.

Key Highlights of the Report :

- During 2024, 72.6% of cybercrime cases registered were for the motive of fraud (73,987 out of 1,01,928 cases) followed by sexual exploitation with 3.1% (3,190 cases) and extortion with 2.5% (2,536 cases).
- The NCRB recorded 58.86 lakh cognisable crimes across the country in 2024, marking a 6% decline from the previous year. Of these, 35.44 lakh cases were registered under the Indian Penal Code and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and 23.41 lakh cases under special and local laws.
- There were 5,194 cases of offences 'against the state' registered in 2024 as compared to 4,873 cases in the year 2023, showing a rise of 6.6%. Out of 5,194 cases, 4,395 (84.6%) cases were registered under The Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, followed by 649 (12.5%) cases under The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

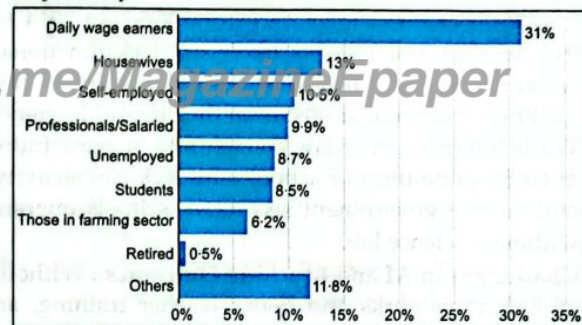
- A total of 55,698 cases were registered for crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs), showing a decrease of 3.6% over 2023. Crimes against Scheduled Tribes also showed a sharp decline of 23.1%, with a total of 9,966 cases in 2024, as compared to 12,960 cases in 2023.
- Deaths due to drug overdose saw a 50% increase in 2024 compared with the previous year. Tamil Nadu reported 313 deaths, the highest number of drug overdose deaths, followed by Punjab (106), Madhya Pradesh (90), Rajasthan (69) and Mizoram (65).

Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (ADSI) 2024

The NCRB also released the Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India (ADSI) 2024 report according to which 1,70,746 suicides were recorded in 2024.

A total of 10,546 persons involved in the farming sector (consisting of 4,633 farmers/cultivators and 5,913 agricultural labourers) died by suicide in 2024, accounting for 6.2%. Out of 4,633 farmer/cultivator suicides, a total of 4,481 were male and 152 were female.

Around 31% of the total suicides were reported among the daily wage earners. The number of unemployed people who died by suicide was 14,778 while the number of students and housewives who ended their lives stood at 14,488 and 22,113 respectively.



NITI Aayog Releases Policy Report on School Education System in India

On May 6, 2026, NITI Aayog released a policy report titled 'School Education System in India : Temporal Analysis and Policy Roadmap for Quality Enhancement,' presenting a comprehensive, decade-long analysis of India's School Education System across key parameters such as access and enrolment, infrastructure, equity and inclusion and learning outcomes.

Sources of the report : The report draws on secondary data from UDISE+ 2024-25, PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024, NAS 2017 and 2021, and ASER 2024, and is informed by the National Workshop on Quality School Education convened by NITI Aayog in February 2025.

Progress in School Education System in India

- India has the largest school system in the world, spanning 14.71 lakh schools, serving over 24.69 crore students, making it the largest system in the world.
- Substantial advancements achieved in school infrastructure, particularly in the provision of electricity, functional sanitation facilities and inclusive infra-

structure, alongside a significant expansion of the digital learning ecosystem through improved access to computers, internet connectivity and smart classrooms across schools.

- Gains in equity and inclusion have been achieved, especially in girls' participation and the improved enrolment of SC and ST students across educational stages.
- Signs of recovery has been noted in learning outcomes across grades, particularly in foundational literacy and numeracy following the pandemic, supported by sustained policy initiatives under NEP 2020, NIPUN Bharat Mission, and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.

Challenges in School Education System in India

- **High Attrition Rate in Higher Grades** : Four out of every 10 children drop out before completing higher secondary education. Changing institutions while moving up to higher grades is a major hurdle contributing towards a steep attrition rate. While the country boasts of 7.3 lakh primary schools, that number plummets to 1.64 lakh at the higher secondary level.
- **Infrastructure Deficit** : Share of schools with drinking water facilities increased from 96.5% in 2014 to 99% in 2025, but 14,505 schools still lack functional water sources, and nearly 59,829 lack hand-washing facilities, compromising student health and hygiene. While internet access saw an eightfold increase (now at 63.5%), one-third of schools still lack connectivity and 50% of government secondary schools operate without a science lab.
- **Challenges in AI and Learning Outcomes** : Without ethical frameworks and better teacher training, an over-reliance on AI could 'diminish independent thinking' in young learners. Despite high enrolment, reading proficiency in Grade 8 has dropped. In 2014, 74.7% of Grade 8 students could read a Grade 2 text; by 2024, that figure fell to 71.1%. In mathematics, only 45.8% of Grade 8 students can solve a basic division problem. Recent PARAKH 2024 findings suggest that while students are good at rote patterns, they struggle with real-world application.
- **Low Investment** : India's current 4.6% GDP allocation to education remains below the 6% target first recommended in 1964. NEP 2020 envisages public investment in education to reach 6% of GDP at the earliest.

Policy Roadmap to Improve School Education System

- Strengthening school infrastructure, undertaking governance reform and administrative capacity building, institutionalising a whole-of-society approach through State and District Task Forces on School Quality, strengthening School Management Committees, elevating teacher deployment and professional development, expanding digital and broadcast-based learning, and promoting equity and inclusion.

- The 5 academic recommendations of the report focus on transforming pedagogy, assessment and foundational learning, emphasising holistic education and student wellbeing, reimagining vocational education and skill integration, strengthening ECCE and integrating AI for pedagogical innovation.
- Converging national programmes such as PM e-Vidya, BharatNet and Gati Shakti to accelerate infrastructure rollout and enable equitable digital access across school levels.
- Invest in the creation of open, interoperable and evolvable Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in the education sector that can be used by multiple platforms.
- 'School Complexes' should be operationalised by grouping one secondary or senior-secondary school with all schools offering lower grades within a defined neighbourhood (typically within a 5-10 km radius), including nearby Anganwadis.

The Union Ministry of Education launched the School Management Committee (SMC) Guidelines 2026 on 6th May 2026 with the objective of strengthening community participation in school education. The Guidelines have been formulated to promote decentralized and participatory school governance and seek to improve the overall functioning of schools by creating a more supportive, inclusive and effective learning environment, keeping the best interests of children at the centre. The intent is also to create community ownership of schools by bringing all stakeholders together on a concurrent platform.

Union Cabinet Clears Amendment to Make Insult to Vande Mataram a Punishable Offence

On May 5, 2026, the Union Cabinet gave the green signal to amend *The Prevention of Insults To National Honour Act, 1971* to make any insult or obstruction to the singing of National Song *Vande Mataram* a punishable offence.

Section 3 of *The Prevention of Insults To National Honour Act, 1971* states that "whoever intentionally prevents the singing of the Indian National Anthem or causes disturbance to any assembly engaged in such singing shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both." At present, insults to the National Anthem Jana Gana Mana, the National Flag and the Constitution of India are mentioned in it.

- *Vande Mataram* was initially composed independently and later included in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel 'Anandamath' (published in 1882).
- It was first sung by Rabindranath Tagore at the 1896 Congress Session in Calcutta.
- *Vande Mataram* as a political slogan was first used on 7 August, 1905. At the Varanasi session of the Indian National Congress that same year, the song 'Vande Mataram' was adopted for all-India occasions.
- It was adopted as India's National Song by the Constituent Assembly in 1950.

Centre Asks States, UTs to Set up Ebola Surveillance

The Union Government has directed all States and Union Territories to strengthen surveillance, hospital preparedness and rapid response systems, following the WHO declaration of the ongoing Ebola Disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on May 17, 2026.

What the Centre has Directed ?

- Though the present risk to countries outside the affected African region remained low, however, growing international trade and travel necessitated 'adequate preparedness and response capacities at all levels of the health system'.
- States have been asked to intensify surveillance under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) for unusual clusters of fever and symptoms suggestive of Ebola Disease, particularly among individuals with recent travel history to affected regions.
- States have been instructed to identify designated isolation facilities and dedicated ambulances with infection prevention and control measures in place.
- The communication stressed the need for establishing coordination mechanisms between NIV Pune, airport and port health authorities, State Surveillance Units and District Surveillance Units for timely referral and testing of samples.

Bundibugyo Virus Strain

- The recent outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease is caused by the Bundibugyo virus strain in parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda.
- According to WHO, Bundibugyo Virus Disease (BVD) is a severe and often fatal form of Ebola disease caused by the Bundibugyo virus, one of the Orthoebolavirus species. It is a zoonotic disease, with fruit bats suspected to be the natural reservoir.
- Human infection occurs through close contact with the blood or secretions of infected wildlife, such as bats or non-human primates, and subsequently spreads from person to person through direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs, or other bodily fluids of infected individuals or contaminated surfaces or items.
- Transmission is particularly amplified in health-care settings when infection prevention and control (IPC) measures are inadequate, and during unsafe burial practices involving direct contact with the deceased.
- Early symptoms are non-specific, including fever, fatigue, muscle pain, headache and sore throat, which complicates clinical diagnosis and can delay detection. These progress to gastrointestinal symptoms, organ dysfunction and in some cases haemorrhagic manifestations.
- Case fatality rates in the past two BVD outbreaks, reported in Uganda and in DRC in 2007 and 2012, have ranged from approximately 30% to 50%.

- States been asked to reinforce infection prevention and control practices in healthcare facilities, including triage systems, isolation protocols, hand hygiene, environmental cleaning and biomedical waste management.

Government Issues Comprehensive Guidance Document on Diabetes Mellitus in Children

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released the Guidance Document on Diabetes Mellitus in Children, which establishes, for the first time, a structured and standardized national framework for the screening, diagnosis, treatment and long-term management of childhood diabetes.

Key Highlights :

- **Universal Diabetic Screening :** The Guidelines aim to ensure universal diabetes screening of all children in India from birth to 18 years. It establishes the framework which aims for of a comprehensive, free-of-cost care package at public health facilities, which covers screening, diagnostic services, lifelong insulin therapy, monitoring devices such as glucometers and test strips and regular follow-up care. It also outlines evidence-based treatment guidelines, regular monitoring schedules and protocols for preventing complications.
- **4Ts Awareness Framework :** The guideline promotes the '4Ts' awareness framework—Toilet, Thirsty, Tired and Thinner—enabling parents, teachers and caregivers to recognise early warning signs of Type 1 diabetes.
- **Reducing Financial Burden :** The approach is designed to reduce financial burden and ensure uninterrupted treatment for children diagnosed with diabetes. It also emphasizes family and caregiver empowerment, providing structured training on insulin administration, blood glucose monitoring, emergency response and daily disease management.
- **Expected Outcome :** Reduced mortality due to early detection, prevention of complications and improved quality of life for affected children. Over the long term, it will contribute to lowering healthcare costs and strengthening health system capacity for managing non-communicable diseases among children.

- According to the World Health Organisation, diabetes is a chronic disease that occurs either when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces.
- Hyperglycaemia, or raised blood sugar, is a common effect of uncontrolled diabetes and over time leads to serious damage to many of the body's systems, especially the nerves and blood vessels.
- A recent government report titled 'Children in India 2025' revealed that about one-third of Indian children aged 5-9 have elevated triglyceride levels, a red flag for metabolic disease. In some regions, more than one out of every five children is identified as pre-diabetic, and diabetes that is formally diagnosed is gradually appearing in the 10-19 age bracket.

South Coast Railway Zone (SCoR) : India's Newest Railway Zone

On April 28, 2026, Union Railways Minister Shri Ashwani Vaishnav announced in Visakhapatnam that the gazette notification for the creation of South Coast Railway Zone (SCoR) was to be issued soon, with operations commencing from June 1, 2026. SCoR is the newest and 18th zone of Indian Railways. It is headquartered in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The foundation of the zone lies in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act of 2014, which led to the formation of Telangana.

Formed by reorganising parts of South Central Railway and East Coast Railway, SCoR include the existing Guntakal, Guntur and Vijayawada divisions from SCR, along with a restructured portion of the Waltair division from ECoR, which will be renamed as the Visakhapatnam division. The Waltair division is to be split into two. One segment will go on to form the newly created Rayagada division under East Coast Railway, while the remaining portion will be integrated into South Coast Railway.

Aligning its corporate identity with administrative expansion, the Ministry of Railways officially unveiled a revised logo for Indian Railways. The updated emblem, featuring 18 stars up from the previous 17—marked the formal operationalisation of the South Coast Railway (SCoR), the nation's 18th railway zone.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav Flags Off Extended Srinagar-Jammu Vande Bharat Express Service

On April 30, 2026, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav flagged off the extended Srinagar-Jammu Vande Bharat Express service from Jammu Tawi Railway Station, bringing the country's most modern train directly to J&K's largest city and railway hub. For the first time, the people of Jammu and Kashmir are able to seamlessly travel between Jammu and Srinagar by train, reducing dependence on road transport and significantly improving accessibility.

The Srinagar-Jammu Vande Bharat Express Service, designed to operate in temperatures as low as minus 20 degrees Celsius with heated windshields, advanced heating systems and all-weather components, aims to provide a reliable, weather-proof link between the Valley and the rest of the country at precisely those moments when road travel becomes impossible or dangerous.

Following the flag-off of Srinagar-Jammu Vande Bharat Express Service, the Union Minister inspected two of the most remarkable engineering structures on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL), the Anji Bridge and the Chenab Bridge. Both structures are the backbone of the USBRL, the 272-km project through the Himalayas that made the extended Vande Bharat service possible.

Anji Khad Bridge is India's first cable-stayed railway bridge, rising 331 metres above the Anji River valley and anchored by 96 high-tensile cables.

Chenab Rail Bridge is the world's highest railway arch bridge at 359 metres above the riverbed, taller than the Eiffel Tower.

NHAI Issues Heatwave Guidelines to Protect Highway Workers

Amid rising temperatures and ongoing heatwave conditions across the country, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) rolled out comprehensive guidelines to safeguard workers and ensure uninterrupted operations on national highways. The guidelines apply to construction sites, maintenance projects and toll plazas, mandate contractors, concessionaires and toll operators.

Rescheduling Work Schedules : Work schedules to be adjusted to avoid peak heat hours. Labour-intensive activities such as asphalt laying and welding to be carried out during early mornings or late evenings. Frequent cooling breaks during extreme heat alerts.

Improving On-site Conditions : Setting up shaded rest areas with proper ventilation and uninterrupted access to safe drinking water. Provision of first-aid stations, ORS and cotton-based high-visibility safety gear for workers.

Emergency Preparedness : Patrol ambulances to be stocked with ice packs, cold water and IV fluids. Route Patrolling Units to increase surveillance to assist highway users facing heat-related distress or vehicle breakdowns due to overheating. Introducing rotational shifts and limiting outdoor duties during peak hours at toll plazas.

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➔

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➔

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World

This Month

UAE Commits US\$ 5 Billion Investment in India

PM Narendra Modi's visit to UAE on May 15, 2026, came amid rapid growth in bilateral economic engagement. India-UAE trade crossed the \$100 billion mark in the financial year 2024-25, achieving the target set under the 2022 CEPA, five years ahead of schedule. Earlier, this year, both sides agreed to raise the bilateral trade target to 200 billion dollars by 2032.

Key Highlights of the Visit :

- ➔ UAE Commits US\$ 5 Billion Investment in India
- ➔ India, Netherlands Bilateral Ties Elevated to Strategic Partnership
- ➔ India, Sweden Bilateral Ties Elevated to Strategic Partnership
- ➔ India, Norway Bilateral Ties Elevated to Green Strategic Partnership
- ➔ India, Italy Bilateral Ties Elevated to Special Strategic Partnership
- ➔ India Signs Three MoUs with Jamaica, Expands Cooperation in Key Sectors
- ➔ India Outlines Six-Point Roadmap to Boost India-Suriname Ties
- ➔ India, Trinidad and Tobago Sign Eight Agreements
- ➔ 10th Indian Ocean Dialogue
- ➔ BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting 2026
- ➔ World Migration Report 2026
- ➔ UAE Quits OPEC and OPEC+ : Implications for India and World
- ➔ Cyprus President Visits India, Ties Elevated to Strategic Partnership
- ➔ India Abstains on UNGA Resolution on ICJ Climate Opinion

- **Energy Cooperation** : The energy partnership received fresh momentum with Strategic Collaboration Agreement between Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), which aims to enhance UAE's participation in India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves to 30 million barrels, and work together to set up strategic gas reserves in India. ADNOC has also entered into agreement with IOCL on long-term LPG supplies.
- **Investment Partnership** : Announcement of US\$ 5 billion investment by UAE entities in India which includes investment of USD 3 billion by the Emirates NBD in the RBL Bank of India, USD 1 billion by the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) with the National Infrastructure & Investment Fund of India (NIIF) in priority infrastructure projects in India, and USD 1 billion by the International Holding Company in Sammaan Capital of India.
- **Defence Cooperation** : The bilateral defence cooperation was strengthened by signing of the Framework for the Strategic Defence Partnership, which provides for deepening defence industrial collaboration and cooperation on innovation and advanced technology, training, exercises, maritime security, cyber defence, secure communications and information exchange.
- **Maritime Cooperation** : MoU between Cochin Shipyard Limited and Drydocks World, Dubai on setting up Ship Repair Cluster at Vadinar. Tripartite MoU between Cochin Shipyard Limited, the Drydocks World Dubai and Centre of Excellence in Maritime & Shipbuilding (CEMS) on Skill Development in Ship Repair.
- **Technological Cooperation** : Signing of a term sheet for establishing an 8-exaflop supercomputing cluster in partnership between India's CDAC and UAE-based G-42, a move expected to significantly strengthen India's artificial intelligence capabilities.
- **Virtual Trade Corridor** : Operationalisation of the Virtual Trade Corridor using MAITRI (Master Application for International Trade and Regulatory interface). It aims to enable efficient trade flows by streamlining cargo movement and reducing transit times.

Recent Trajectory of India-UAE Relationship

- Traditionally anchored in the energy sector, India-UAE trade partnership has diversified in recent years. Non-oil trade between two countries rose nearly 20 per cent last year to reach 65 billion dollars. India's exports to the UAE crossed 36-63 billion dollars, making the Emirates India's second-largest export destination.
- From April 2000 to March 2025, the cumulative FDI from the UAE into India amounted to US\$ 25.19 billion, making UAE the seventh-largest overseas investor in India.
- In FY 2024-25, the UAE stood as the fourth largest source of crude oil, third largest source of LNG, largest supplier of LPG and second largest export destination for India's finished petroleum products. Currently, the UAE is the only country participating in India's Strategic Petroleum Reserve programme.

India, Netherlands Bilateral Ties Elevated to Strategic Partnership

PM Narendra Modi's visit to Netherlands (May 15-17, 2026) was his second official visit, after his previous visit in 2017. During the present visit, the bilateral ties between the two countries was elevated to 'Strategic Partnership' level, marking a decisive transition from trade-centric to a multi-faceted strategic partnership rooted in energy, technology and geopolitical convergence. Netherlands is one of India's largest trade destinations in Europe, with bilateral trade worth USD 27.8 billion (2024-25); and India's 4th largest investor with cumulative FDI of USD 55.6 billion.

Key Highlights of the Visit :

- **Strategic Partnership Roadmap for 2026-2030** : It outlines cooperation across political, economic, technological, defence and cultural sectors over the next five years. Both the countries signed 17 MoU/ agreements spanning semiconductors, critical minerals, migration, water management and renewable energy, deepening the strategic partnership.
- **Security and Maritime Cooperation** : Netherlands to join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and co-lead the Capacity Building and Resource Sharing pillar along with Germany and the European Union. They also agreed to explore a Strategic Roadmap on a Green and Digital Sea Corridor between India and the Netherlands. Agreements aimed at enhancing defence industry collaboration, maritime security, cyber cooperation and counterterrorism efforts were also welcomed.
- **Trade and Critical Minerals** : For expanding trade and partnership, both the sides called for early signing and implementation of India-E.U. FTA. Cooperation in critical minerals between two countries was strengthened through an MoU between Union Ministry of Mines and Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. An agreement on mutual administrative assistance in customs matters was signed.
- **Technology and Energy** : An agreement was signed between Tata Electronics and ASML to support the semi-conductor fabrication facility being developed in Dholera, Gujarat. Establishment of a Joint Working Group under the MoU on Renewable Energy and launch of the India-Netherlands Roadmap on the Development of Green Hydrogen to ensure a sustainable future. A Joint Statement of Intent was also signed between NITI Aayog and Dutch authorities for collaboration on energy transition projects.
- **Migration and Mobility** : Both sides welcomed the signing of an MoU on Migration and Mobility and agreed to strengthen cooperation to prevent irregular migration and trafficking while encouraging fair mobility of highly skilled professionals.
- **WAH Cooperation** : Underscoring the significance of cooperation in WAH (Water, Agriculture and Health), they agreed to further intensify the Strategic Partnership on Water through collaboration on large-scale water projects. Both countries signed a

Letter of Intent on technical cooperation related to the Kalpasar Project in Gujarat. LoI between ICMR and the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment aimed to strengthen healthcare cooperation. The two countries agreed to establish an Indo-Dutch Centre of Excellence for Flowers in West Tripura and an Indo-Dutch Centre of Excellence on Dairy Training in Bengaluru.

On May 17, 2026, PM Narendra Modi visited the Afsluitdijk water management structure in the Netherlands, which is a 32-kilometre-long dam and causeway, which protects large parts of the Netherlands from the North Sea while also supporting freshwater storage. Similarly, the proposed Kalpasar Project in Gujarat aims to create a large freshwater reservoir across the Gulf of Khambhat while integrating tidal power generation, irrigation and transport infrastructure.

- **Education and Cultural Cooperation** : MoU on higher education cooperation, along with an academic partnership agreement between Nalanda University and University of Groningen was also signed. Both the sides welcomed the return of Chola-era copper plates from the University of Leiden to Indian authorities and cooperation on the National Maritime Heritage Complex in Lothal, Gujarat. An agreement was signed between Leiden University Libraries and the Archaeological Survey of India to promote research and collaboration related to historical artefacts.

The historic 11th-century Chola Copper Plates, also known as Leiden Copper Plates, consist of 21 large and three small copper plates bearing the seal of Chola king Rajendra Chola I. Another set of plates, carrying the seal of Kulottunga Chola I, also contains Tamil inscriptions. It is one of the most valuable records of the Chola Empire, detailing its administration, taxation, land reforms, irrigation systems and trade practices. The inscriptions record the grant of Anaimangalam village for a Buddhist vihara established by the Srivijaya rulers of Southeast Asia.

- **Diaspora** : The Netherlands is home to the largest number of Indian origin people in mainland Europe, including around 200,000 members of the Surinami-Hindustani community. In this regard, PM Modi highlighted the liberalisation in OCI eligibility for the Surinami-Hindustani diaspora from 4th generation to 6th generation.

India, Sweden Bilateral Ties Elevated to Strategic Partnership

PM Narendra Modi's visit to Sweden (17-18 May, 2026) aimed to explore new avenues of cooperation. The visit followed the 2018 visit of PM Modi to Sweden was the first by an Indian leader to Sweden in over three decades.

Key Highlights of the Visit :

- **Strategic Partnership** : Bilateral relationship elevated to Strategic Partnership, to be guided by four pillars: Strategic Dialogue for Stability and Security; Next-Generation Economic Partnership; Emerging Technologies and Trusted Connectivity; and Shaping

Tomorrow Together—People, Planet, Health and Resilience.

- **Joint Action Plan** : The India-Sweden Joint Action Plan 2026-2030 provides a comprehensive roadmap for cooperation across political, economic, technological, security, climate and people-to-people domains.
- **Trade and Investment** : Both the countries announced the shared objective of doubling the bilateral economic exchange - trade and investment - within five years, including through the 'Make in India' and 'Made with Sweden' initiatives. They recognised the significant role of the India-Sweden Business Leaders Round Table (ISBLRT) and agreed that a bilateral summit, 'India-Sweden : Stronger Together - towards 2047', will be held in India in 2027.
- **Innovation and Technology** : India will launch an upgraded Joint Innovation Partnership 2.0 and establish an India-Sweden Joint Science and Technology Centre (ISJSTC).
- **Critical Minerals** : Both countries to encourage collaboration in advanced mining and mineral processing technologies to facilitate efficient extraction from low-grade and complex critical mineral deposits.
- **Connectivity and Mobility** : Both the countries agreed to advance talent attraction and active promotion of people-to-people exchanges, including mobility of students and researchers (Study in Sweden) and highly skilled labour (Work in Sweden), including to explore the possibility of direct and regular air links between Sweden and India.
- **Security and UN Reforms** : Both countries strongly condemned terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism. They reaffirmed strong commitment to continue taking active measures to disrupt the terror financing channels including at the UN and FATF. Sweden reiterated its support for the permanent membership for India in a reformed and expanded UN Security Council.
- **European Round Table for Industry (ERT)** : PM Narendra Modi invited European industry leaders to partner with India in areas such as telecom and digital infrastructure; AI, semiconductors, electronics and deep tech manufacturing; green transition and clean energy; infrastructure, mobility and urban transformation; and healthcare and life sciences. India-Europe CEOs Round-table will be held annually and an India Desk will be established at ERT.
- **Interaction with Swedish Business Leaders** : In his interaction with Swedish Business CEOs, PM Narendra Modi underlined the importance of combining Sweden's strengths in innovation and sustainability with India's scale, talent and growth momentum to co-create solutions for the 21st century in sectors such as clean energy, defence, semiconductors and advanced manufacturing.
- **Exchange of Special Gifts** : Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson presented PM Modi with a gift of a box

containing two replicas of hand-written epigrams by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, accompanied by a small explanatory text and a photograph of Gurudev Tagore taken in 1921 during his visit to Uppsala University. PM Modi presented Swedish PM a set of collected works of Rabindranath Tagore, along with a specially handcrafted bag from Shantiniketan with motifs that Gurudev chose to empower local artisans.

On May 17, 2026, Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden conferred upon Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi the 'Royal Order of the Polar Star, Degree Commander Grand Cross,' one of Sweden's oldest and most distinguished honours, instituted in the 18th century. The award is Sweden's highest honour conferred on foreign Heads of Government in recognition of exceptional public service and contribution towards strengthening relations with Sweden.

India, Norway Bilateral Ties Elevated to Green Strategic Partnership

PM Narendra Modi visited Norway (May 18-19, 2026) for the 3rd India-Nordic Summit and bilateral engagements. It was the first Prime Ministerial visit from India in last 43 years and the first visit of PM Narendra Modi to Norway. Both the countries marked a major upgrade in bilateral ties with the signing of 12 major agreements and initiatives.

During the visit, PM Narendra Modi was conferred the 'Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit'. The award is Norway's highest honour bestowed on foreign Heads of Government, and is conferred in recognition of the outstanding service in the interest of Norway and humankind.

Key Highlights of the Visit :

- **Green Strategic Partnership** : Bilateral relationship elevated to 'Green Strategic Partnership' reflecting a shared commitment to sustainable development, clean energy transition and green industrial growth. A Joint Statement adopted by both sides focusses on climate action, circular economy initiatives, and leveraging Norwegian technological expertise alongside India's scale and manufacturing capabilities.
- **Maritime and Security Cooperation** : Norway formally joined the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, strengthening cooperation on maritime security and reaffirming support for a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. India will also participate in Nor-Shipping 2027 with a dedicated India Pavilion aimed at boosting collaboration in the blue economy.
- **Space and Digital Partnership** : Both countries signed an agreement on the peaceful exploration and use of outer space, paving the way for deeper institutional cooperation between their space agencies and encouraging greater investment in the sector. India-Norway Digital Development Partnership launched to promote collaboration on digital public infrastructure, digital public goods and open digital ecosystems. The initiative is expected to support India's Digital India mission and facilitate DPI-led transformation in countries of the Global South in partnership with Norway.

- **Trade and Investment :** The two leaders underlined the aim of doubling the value of current trade between India and Norway by 2030. The visit induced new momentum in bilateral trade worth around USD 2-73 billion (2024), and investments by Norway's Government Pension Fund (GPF) of close to USD 28 billion in the Indian capital market. PM Modi also attended India-Norway Business and Research Summit, which witnessed the signing of number of business agreements between Indian and Norwegian companies and entities.

3rd India-Nordic Summit

- On May 19, 2026, PM Narendra Modi announced the launch of a Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership between India and the Nordic countries, aimed at strengthening cooperation in sustainability, clean energy, advanced technologies and industrial innovation.
- PM Narendra Modi highlighted that Sweden's advanced manufacturing and defence capabilities, Finland's telecom and digital technologies, and Denmark's cyber security and health-tech expertise would be linked with India's growing technological ecosystem.
- The summit brought together leaders from the five Nordic nations, including Iceland Prime Minister Kristinn Frodastottir, Norway Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, Sweden Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, Finland Prime Minister Petteri Orpo and Denmark Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.
- The leaders agreed to explore possibilities of joint India-Nordic research projects in the Arctic, and welcomed India's constructive engagement as an observer in the Arctic Council. The summit also featured discussions on renewable energy, digital transformation, sustainable economic security and strategic cooperation across sectors.
- The India-Nordic Summit process began in Stockholm in 2018 and was followed by the second summit in Copenhagen in 2022. The next India-Nordic Summit will be held in Helsinki, Finland.

India, Italy Bilateral Ties Elevated to Special Strategic Partnership

PM Narendra Modi's visit to Italy (May 19-20, 2026) took place in the backdrop of a strong momentum in bilateral ties with both sides proactively implementing the Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-2029, a comprehensive road map for cooperation in various sectors including in bilateral trade which reached USD 16.77 billion in 2025; boosting investment, which has recorded a cumulative FDI of USD 3.66 billion (April 2000-September 2025); defence and security; clean energy; innovation; science and technology; and people-to-people ties.

Key Highlights of the Visit :

- **Special Strategic Partnership :** Both the countries elevated their bilateral ties to Special Strategic partnership, providing strong momentum of high-level exchanges and excellent growth and diversification of bilateral cooperation. Both the leaders agreed to expand the Joint Strategic Action Plan (2025-29) with

Significance of PM Narendra Modi's 5-Nation Visit

From May 15-20, 2026, PM Narendra Modi paid an official visit to UAE, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy. His visit to UAE further strengthened cooperation across defense, energy security, advanced technology, and trade. His visit to Europe focussed on advancing the India-EU FTA, supply chain resilience, semiconductor manufacturing, defense co-production and clean energy.

At times, when international order is facing challenges from prolonged conflicts, geo-political rivalries and supply chain disruptions, PM Modi's five nation visit demonstrated India's emergence as a confident, pragmatic and forward-looking global power. India concluded substantive agreements across critical sectors such as energy security, advanced technology, semiconductors, defence manufacturing, artificial intelligence, green innovation, securing critical minerals supply chains and strategic connectivity, which secures securing India's economic resilience, technological advancement, energy security and geopolitical relevance in an increasingly uncertain world. It helped India secure an investment pipeline of nearly US \$ 40 billion, with several MNCs committing fresh investments and expansion plans across key sectors.

further collaboration in in trade and investment, defence and security, science and technology, research and innovation, space, energy, AI and critical technologies, education, culture and people-to-people ties. They decided to establish a Foreign Minister level mechanism to regularly review Joint Strategic Action Plan.

- **Trade and Industry :** Both the countries called for early implementation of India-EU FTA to realise the shared objective of expanding bilateral trade to Euro 20 billion by 2029. They welcomed the signing of Joint Declaration of Intent, an Industrial Roadmap for collaboration in co-design, co-development and co-production of defence products. India and Italy to move forward on the principle of Design and Develop in India and Italy and Deliver for the World.
- **Space and Technology Collaboration :** Both the countries welcomed ongoing collaboration between the Italian Space Agency and the ISRO, and efforts to strengthen commercial space collaboration. They also called for greater collaboration in the fields of AI, Semiconductors, critical minerals and other cutting-edge technologies, synergising India's talented workforce and Italy's technological prowess.
- **Culture and Tourism :** 2027 to be celebrated as the 'Year of Culture and Tourism between India and Italy'. They welcomed the signing of MoUs on cooperation on development of the National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal, Gujarat and on recruitment of nurses from India.
- **Connectivity :** India and Italy to work towards further developing the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). It is a major connectivity and economic corridor linking Europe, the Middle East and India with the potential to strengthen trade, investment and supply-chain resilience.
- **Key MoUs/Agreements :** Both the countries signed several agreements in areas including agriculture,

critical minerals, Ayurveda, science and technology, and facilitation of mobility of Indian nurses from India to Italy. Both nations also signed MoUs for curbing tax crimes, Money Laundering and Terror Financing.

During his visit to Italy, PM Narendra Modi also visited the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to strengthen India's commitment to multilateralism and global food security, where he was conferred with the prestigious Agricola Medal for 2026 by FAO at its headquarters in Rome. The award was conferred in recognition of his exceptional leadership to address food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development in India and at the global level.

India Signs Three MoUs with Jamaica, Expands Cooperation in Key Sectors

External Affairs Minister (EAM), Dr. S. Jaishankar, paid an official visit to Jamaica from 2-4 May, 2026 the first-ever bilateral visit by an External Affairs Minister of India to Jamaica. During the visit, both the sides reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and identified new avenues for cooperation.

Key Highlights of the Visit :

- **MoUs/Agreements** : Three Memoranda of Understanding were signed in the areas of health co-operation, solarisation of The Hugh Lawson Shearer Building, and broadcasting.
- **Aid and Development** : Both sides acknowledged the completion and handover of the 'Improving Rural Livelihoods' project in Kitson Town under the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, Both sides also explored the feasibility of establishing an Artisan Empowerment Hub in Jamaica to support livelihoods under the India-CARICOM development partnership framework.
- **Cooperation in Disaster Management** : India reaffirmed its support to Jamaica's recovery following Hurricane Melissa. As a gesture of support, EAM S. Jaishankar handed over 10 BHISHM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri) Cubes mobile hospital units.
- **South-South Cooperation** : India appreciated Jamaica's support for its candidature for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for 2028-29. Both sides condemned terrorism in all its forms and reiterated the need for early finalisation of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT). Both countries reaffirmed close coordination in multilateral fora, including on issues relating to the Global South, climate justice, climate finance and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

India Outlines Six-Point Roadmap to Boost India-Suriname Ties

During his official visit to Suriname from 6-7 May, 2026, EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar reviewed the full spectrum of India-Suriname relations during the 9th Joint

Commission Meeting (JCM) held in the capital city of Paramaribo, while also engaging with the Indian diaspora and paying tribute to the fallen heroes of the 1902 uprising in Marienburg as part of his three-nation Caribbean tour.

Six Point Approach to Boost Bilateral Ties

- Strengthening people-to-people ties
- Supporting Suriname's development
- Expanding defence cooperation
- Advancing development partnership projects
- Boosting trade and tourism
- Sharing India's digital and AI expertise

Other Highlights of the Visit

- **Strengthening Bilateral Relation** : Both countries agreed to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in the fields of defence and security, health, energy, trade and commerce, technology, agriculture, culture, education, sports, infrastructure and traditional systems of medicine.
- **Infrastructure and Development** : EAM offered soft loans under Lines of Credit for infrastructure and strategic sector development of Suriname. It was agreed to hold the next JCM in India. EAM handed over 'Passion Fruit Processing facility', completed with Indian grant and technical assistance, to enhance the value addition capacity of the agri-based industries.
- **Culture** : A week-long National Archives exhibition was inaugurated by EAM to showcase the history of Indian migration to Suriname and he delivered an address on 'Partnership for Progress' reflecting India-Suriname relations.

India, Trinidad and Tobago Sign Eight Agreements

External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr. S. Jaishankar paid an official visit to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) on May 8-9, 2026.

Bilateral trade between India and T&T has almost doubled in the last five years to now reach a level of 350 million dollars. Energy has emerged as a central pillar of this engagement. EAM S. Jaishankar recently said that Trinidad and Tobago is also the first country in the Caribbean region to agree to roll out India's United Payment Interface platform for seamless payments.

Key Highlights of the Visit :

- A total of 8 MoUs were signed between the two sides in the areas of tourism, solarization of T&T's Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs building, vector control, infrastructure upgrade of Nelson Island where the Indian immigrants were stayed initially, and for setting up of an Indian Chair on Ayurveda at the University of the West Indies.
- EAM S. Jaishankar handed over the first set of 2,000 laptops to select school children and inaugurated an agro-processing facility of T&T's National Agriculture Marketing and Development Corporation in Couva.

- Both sides reviewed existing agreements on pharmacopoeia, digital transformation, culture, etc. and emphasized the importance of ensuring tangible outcomes.
- They reaffirmed close coordination in regional and multilateral fora, including on issues relating to the Global South.

Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago share a special connection with India owing to the presence of Girmitya communities. These girmityas were labour migrants from India who migrated nearly a century ago on contract or agreement to work on plantations of the colonial government in different countries. Under the Indenture Labour System, a number of poor and illiterate people were sent as bonded labourers to countries like Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana, Suriname, South Africa, Ceylon, Trinidad and Tobago etc. The Indian diaspora in the Caribbean has deeply impacted local cultures, with lasting impressions on language, music, religion and cuisine. The Caribbean Girmitya countries actively retain and celebrate these impacts, preserving their heritage and deepening their multi-cultural identities.

10th Indian Ocean Dialogue

India hosted the 10th edition of the Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD-10) in New Delhi on 7–8 May, 2026 under the theme 'Indian Ocean Region in a Transforming World'. In the past, India had hosted three editions of the Dialogue, including the inaugural session in Kerala in 2014, the 6th edition in New Delhi in 2019 and the 8th edition (held virtually) in 2021.

The IOD is a 1.5 Track initiative of IORA, encouraging an open and free-flowing dialogue among representatives from academics, think tanks, policy makers, government officials and business experts of Member States and Dialogue Partners. This initiative started since 2014 and is being voluntarily hosted by Member States.

Key Highlights :

- It was organized by the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Secretariat.
- It aims to deliberate on key regional developments and emerging challenges in the Indian Ocean Region.
- IOD-10 assumed strategic significance for India as it has assumed the Chairship of IORA for the 2025-27 period.

Key Outcomes

- The Dialogue (IOD-10) underlined the importance of enhanced cooperation, collective security and sustainable development in the Indian Ocean Region, particularly in the context of evolving geopolitical and economic dynamics.
- India reiterated its commitment to a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indian Ocean region, guided by its Vision MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) and Neighbourhood First policy.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is an inter-governmental organization of 23 Member States and 12 Dialogue Partners, for regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) across six priority areas and two cross-cutting issues.

Adopted in 2011, the six priority areas of IORA are: Maritime Safety & Security, Trade & Investment Facilitation, Fisheries Management, Disaster Risk Management, Tourism & Cultural Exchanges, Academic, Science & Technology. Subsequently, two cross-cutting issues- Blue Economy and Women's Economic Empowerment- were adopted during COM meeting in Australia.

BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting 2026

India, as the chair country of BRICS, hosted the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 14-15 May, 2026. The meeting was chaired by EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar. At the conclusion of the two-day meeting, India issued a chair statement instead of a joint declaration, citing differing views among member nations on the ongoing West Asia conflict. A Memorandum of Understanding was also exchanged on holding regular consultations between the Foreign Ministries of both countries.

Reforms at the Centre of Agenda

- At the centre of India's intervention was a renewed demand for reforms in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- India argued that the UN's decision-making structures remain outdated despite expanding global responsibilities, and called for greater representation for Asia, Africa and Latin America through the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent seats.

Why Joint Declaration could not be Adopted ?

- The meeting ended without a joint statement due to differences among member countries over the situation in West Asia and the Middle East. The Iran war has intensified tensions between Iran and its Gulf neighbours.
- In the Chair's Statement issued by India, BRICS members acknowledged their differing national positions while emphasizing dialogue, diplomacy, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the protection of civilian lives and infrastructure.

World Migration Report 2026

The World Migration Report 2026, the thirteenth in the series, is the flagship publication of International Organisation for Migration (IOM), according to which nearly 304 million people were living outside their country of birth by mid-2024. International migrants made up 3.7 per cent of the world's population in 2024, a small rise from 2.9 per cent in 1990.

Remittances

- India received the highest remittances in the world in 2024. The country recorded inflows worth \$137.67 billion, becoming the first nation ever to cross the

\$100 billion mark in annual remittances. Remittances received by India increased sharply from \$83.15 billion in 2020 to \$137.67 billion in 2024.

- India has the world's largest international migrant population, with millions of Indians living and working abroad, particularly in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Saudi Arabia.
- After India, the top remittance-receiving countries in 2024 were Mexico, the Philippines, France and Pakistan. France ranked fourth on the list, although the report pointed out that much of its inflow comes from salaries earned by people who live in France but work across the border in Switzerland, rather than traditional household remittances.
- The United States remained the world's largest source of remittances in 2024, with more than \$100 billion sent abroad. Saudi Arabia followed with over \$46 billion, while Switzerland and Germany recorded outflows of around \$40 billion and nearly \$24 billion, respectively.
- SDG 10.C aim to reduce remittance transaction charges to below 3 per cent for sending \$200. However, global costs still remain much higher than the target.
- Sub-Saharan Africa continued to have the highest remittance transfer charges in 2023. South Asia recorded the lowest average cost, followed by East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Migration Corridors

- The largest migration route globally continues to be from Mexico to the United States, with around 11 million people. This is followed by migration from Afghanistan to Iran with over 3.7 million migrants, and from Syria to Türkiye with more than 3.5 million people, most of them displaced by the Syrian civil war. The migration corridor between Russia and Ukraine ranked fourth globally.
- The India-UAE corridor ranked fifth and is largely made up of migrant workers. More than eight million migrants were living in the UAE in 2024, accounting for 74 per cent of its population, with Indians forming the biggest group at over 3 million people. Meanwhile, the India-United States corridor ranked sixth worldwide and was the second-largest migration route linked to North America after the Mexico-United States corridor.
- The Bangladesh-India route ranked 11th among the world's top migration corridors, while India-Saudi Arabia stood at 14th place.
- Around 3.2 million Indian migrants were living in the United States in 2024, making them the country's second-largest foreign-born population after Mexican.
- Gulf countries such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had a much larger share of male immigrants compared to female migrants. In contrast, India had more female immigrants than male immigrants. Among Asia's top migrant-origin countries, most had a greater number of male emigrants, except for China and the Philippines, where female emigrants formed a comparatively larger share.

UAE Quits OPEC and OPEC+ : Implications for India and World

With effect from May 1, 2026, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) officially exited the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and OPEC+. The move followed a comprehensive review of national production policy, capacity, and long-term economic priorities.

Why UAE Exited ?

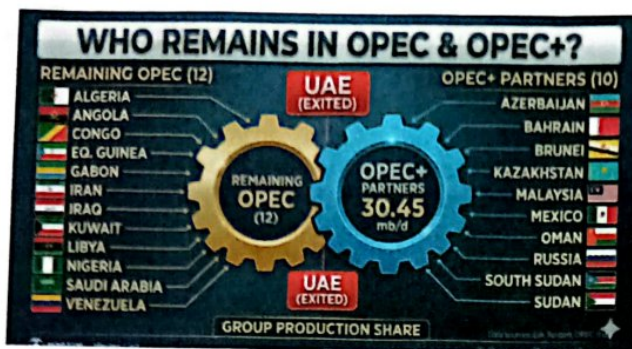
- Recent disruptions linked to Iran and instability around the Strait of Hormuz have affected oil flows, adding pressure on the UAE's export capacity. The UAE's production capacity is close to 5 million barrels per day, though OPEC+ quotas had limited output to significantly lower levels.
- At the same time, long-standing differences over production quotas and the country's ambition to raise output to 5 million barrels a day by 2027 have sharpened the need for greater flexibility.
- The UAE's non-oil economy now accounts for roughly 75 per cent of its GDP, which means Abu Dhabi no longer needs OPEC's collective price management as a fiscal lifeline the way it once did.

Impact on OPEC and OPEC+

- For OPEC, losing a key member during a period of geopolitical strain and market volatility raises questions about the group's cohesion.
- Formed in 1960, OPEC once controlled over 50% of global output. UAE, through Abu Dhabi, became the member of OPEC in 1967.
- OPEC members teamed up in 2016 with several non-OPEC producers to form OPEC+, a group led by Russia – previously one of Saudi Arabia's top rivals in the oil industry. The alliance gave the group control over around 50% of the world's total oil production in 2025, according to the International Energy Agency. The loss of the UAE means it will decline to around 45%.

Impact on India

- India imports roughly 85 per cent of its crude oil and the Gulf, led by the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. With UAE crude now priced and marketed entirely outside the OPEC reference framework, Indian refiners face a fragmented and potentially more volatile pricing signal at exactly the moment they can least afford uncertainty.
- Freed from OPEC quota constraints, the UAE is now at liberty to negotiate directly with New Delhi on its own terms. India, as one of the world's fastest-growing energy consumers, is an enormously attractive long-term partner for Abu Dhabi.
- A UAE that is free to act as an independent producer can tailor supply volumes, payment terms, and contract durations specifically to India's needs, something that was far harder to arrange when Abu Dhabi was bound by collective OPEC discipline.



Recently, Iran announced the establishment of a new regulatory body, the Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA), to oversee and manage operations in the strategically significant Strait of Hormuz. The move marks the formal creation of a dedicated authority by Iran responsible for monitoring developments and coordinating operations related to the vital shipping corridor.

Cyprus President Visits India, Ties Elevated to Strategic Partnership

Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, visited India from 20–23 May, 2026, which holds particular significance as it is taking place during the Cyprus' Presidency of the Council of the European Union. It was President Nikos Christodoulides' first visit to India in his current capacity, following historic visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Cyprus on 15–16 June 2025, which was the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Cyprus in over two decades.

Key Highlights of the Visit :

- **Strategic Partnership :** The bilateral ties between both the countries have been elevated to 'Strategic Partnership', which marks the transition of India-Cyprus relations into a results-oriented and implementation-driven phase.
- **Cyprus Question :** Cyprus and India expressed their strong commitment to the resumption of negotiations to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus Question on the basis of a bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality, in accordance with the agreed UN framework and the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.
- **Defence and Security :** An MoU was signed on establishing a Joint Working Group on counter-terrorism. Announcement of Roadmap for Defence Cooperation between India and Cyprus for 2026-2031, establishment of a Cyber Security Dialogue between India and Cyprus, Technical Arrangement was signed for the establishment of Official Coordination and Cooperation on Search and Rescue (SAR) Matters between the Larnaca Joint Rescue Coordination Center of Cyprus and the Ministry of Defence of India.
- **Trade and Connectivity :** Cyprus to join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative under the Pillar 'Trade, Connectivity and Maritime Transport', Cypriot side

to open a Cyprus Trade Center in Mumbai. Cyprus is the ninth largest source of FDI inflows to India, and the second largest in EU after Netherlands, with a cumulative FDI inflow of around US\$16 billion since 2000.

- **Education, Technology and Culture :** An MoU on cooperation in Innovation and Technology was signed, MoU between education ministries of both countries aims for cooperation in fields of higher education and research, MoU was also signed for cooperation in diplomatic trainings between two countries, establishment of consular dialogue between two countries was announced, first ever India-Cyprus Space Day was celebrated on 18 May, 2026. MoU on cultural cooperation for the years 2026-2030 was also signed.

What is Cyprus Question ?

The invasion of Cyprus by Turkey in 1974 resulted in the partitioning of the island, the North occupied by Turkey and the South by the Greek Cypriots. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus maintains a buffer zone between the two, commonly known as the 'Green Line'.

Cyprus' Role in IMEEC

Cyprus is uniquely positioned to serve as a trusted, stable, reliable bridge between India and Europe, a bridge between the European Union, the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider Middle East. In regard to India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC), Cyprus has formed a 'Friends of IMEEC' grouping within the EU.

India Abstains on UNGA Resolution on ICJ Climate Opinion

India abstained from voting on a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution calling on countries to comply with their obligations on climate change, voicing concern that the draft 'undermines' the 'sacrosanct architecture' of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

India has long maintained that climate obligations must be negotiated through the UN climate framework, which recognises the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities', under which developed countries, as the largest historical emitters, are expected to take the lead on emissions cuts and provide finance and technology support to developing nations.

Moved by Pacific island nation Vanuatu, the resolution called on all countries to comply with their obligations under international law to protect the climate system and the environment from anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. It welcomed the July 2025 unanimous advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on States' obligations on climate change. The resolution was adopted in the 193-member General Assembly on May 20, 2026 with 141 votes in favour, eight against and 28 abstentions, including by India.



Updates

National and International

ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

GNAFC	— Global Network Against Food Crises
I4C	— Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre
IFAD	— International Fund for Agricultural Development
MTFPS	— Medium Term Fiscal Policy Statement
NASSCOM	— National Association of Software and Services Companies
PaRRVA	— Past Risk and Return Verification Agency
RBIH	— Reserve Bank Innovation Hub
UAPA	— Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act
UIDAI	— Unique Identification Authority of India
UNICEF	— United Nations Children's Fund

APPOINTMENTS/ELECTIONS

Lieutenant General N.S. Raja Subramani (Retd.) Appointed as Chief of Defence Staff

Lieutenant General N.S. Raja Subramani (Retd.) was appointed as the next Chief of Defence Staff, succeeding General Anil Chauhan, who was set to complete his term as the Chief of Defence Staff on May 30, 2026 (As on May 9, 2026).

At the time of his appointment as the Chief of Defence Staff, he was serving as the Military Adviser, National Security Council Secretariat *w.e.f.* September 1, 2025. Prior to that, he was the Vice Chief of the Army Staff from July 1, 2024 to July 31, 2025 and was General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Central Command from March 2023 till June 2024. He was commissioned into the 8th Battalion of the Garhwal Rifles on December 14, 1985. He has been decorated with the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, Sena Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal.

On 24th December, 2019, the Cabinet Committee on Security decided to create the post of the Chief of Defence Staffs, who is the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and acts as the Principal Military Adviser to Raksha Mantri on all tri-services matters so as to provide impartial advice to the political leadership. He is also the secretary of the Department of Military Affairs. Former Chief of the Army Staff, (L) General Bipin Rawat was appointed as the country's first Chief of Defence Staff on 31st December, 2019.

Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan Appointed as Next Chief of Naval Staff

Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, was appointed as the next Chief of the Naval Staff,

succeeding the then Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, PVSM, AVSM, NM, who was set to retire from service on May 31, 2026 (as on May 9, 2026).

At the time of his appointment as the Chief of Naval Staff, he was serving as the FOC-in-C (Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief), Western Naval Command. Prior to that, he served as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff at Naval Headquarters. He was commissioned into the Indian Navy on July 1, 1987 and is a specialist in Communication and Electronic Warfare. He is the recipient of Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal.

Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan was appointed as the next Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command, headquartered in Mumbai (as on May 10, 2026.) At the time of his appointment, he was serving as the Vice Chief of Naval Staff.

Dinesh Trivedi Appointed as India's Next High Commissioner to Bangladesh

As on April 27, 2026, Dinesh Trivedi was appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to the People's Republic of Bangladesh. He succeeded Pranay Verma, who has been appointed as New Delhi's next Ambassador to Belgium and the European Union (EU).

A veteran politician, Trivedi has previously served as the Union Minister for Railways and Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare in the government led by (L) Manmohan Singh. He has also represented West Bengal in both the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha.

He was honoured with the Outstanding Parliamentary Award for 2016-17 and has also chaired several parliamentary forums, including the Indo-European Union Parliamentary Forum.

On May 11, 2026, Prashant Pise (1995 batch IFS officer) was appointed as the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman. On May 12, 2026, Dr. Vinod J. Bahade (2007 batch IFS officer) was appointed as the Ambassador of India to the Republic of Colombia. On May 12, 2026, C. Sugandh Rajaram (2001 batch IFS officer) was appointed as the Ambassador of India to the Republic of Peru. On May 14, 2026, Ms. Pratibha Parkar (2000 batch IFS officer) was appointed as the Ambassador of India to the Republic of Panama.

P. Kumaran Takes Charge as India's High Commissioner in London

On May 14, 2026, India's new High Commissioner to the UK, Periasamy Kumaran, formally took charge as India's new High Commissioner to the UK. He is an Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer of 1992 batch. He has previously served as Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi and as High Commissioner to Singapore prior to that. In London, he succeeded Vikram Doraiswami, who is currently India's Ambassador to China.

Rohit Jain Appointed as RBI Deputy Governor

With effect from May 3, 2026, Rohit Jain succeeded T. Rabi Sankar as the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. Prior to this appointment, he was serving as an executive director at RBI. According to a government notice, he has been appointed as the Deputy Governor for a period of three years. He was most recently in charge of banking supervision, a key role that involves overseeing the functioning and stability of banks. His appointment also makes him one of the deputy governors promoted from within the RBI, alongside S.C. Murmu, who was elevated in October 2025.

CBI Director Praveen Sood Gets One-Year Extension

On May 13, 2026, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved another one-year extension of Praveen Sood, Director, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). His extension was approved based on the recommendations of the Selection Committee, which consists of the Prime Minister (who chairs the committee), the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India.

Praveen Sood, the 1986-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, was earlier granted one-year extension in May 2025 after completion of his two-year term as the CBI chief. He was appointed as the CBI Director in May 2023.

Ali Al Zaidi Sworn in as Iraq's New PM

On May 14, 2026, Ali Al Zaidi, was sworn in as Iraq's new Prime Minister after Iraq's Parliament endorsed most of his proposed cabinet members, ending months of political deadlock. Mr. Ali Al Zaidi was assigned to form the government by President Nizar Amedi on April 27, 2026. He took over from former Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani, who continued in the post in a caretaker role following national elections in November 2025. At the age of 40, Al Zaidi is the youngest Prime Minister of Iraq.

Under Iraq's political quota system, the presidency is held by a Kurdish representative, the prime ministership by a Shia representative and the parliamentary speakership by a Sunni representative, currently held by Amidi, Zaidi and Hebat al-Halbousi, respectively.

Prasoon Joshi Appointed as Chairman of Prasar Bharati

As on May 2, 2026, the Union Ministry of Information & Broadcasting appointed noted lyricist, writer and communications expert Prasoon Joshi as the Chairman of Prasar Bharati, India's public service broadcaster. Before this appointment, Prasoon Joshi served as the Chairperson, Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), Mumbai since August 2017 where he contributed to strengthening film certification processes while engaging with stakeholders across the film industry. He is also one of the Trustees of Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts since 2016.

On May 6, 2026, Shashi Shekhar Vempati was appointed as the Chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), for a period of three years from the date of joining.

PD/July/2026/26

Other Key Appointments in News

Bharat Khara	As on May 1, 2026, he assumed charge as the Secretary, Ministry of MSME. He is a 1995-batch IAS officer of Himachal Pradesh cadre.
R. Mukundan	R. Mukundan, CEO of Tata Chemicals, recently assumed the presidency of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for 2026-27, succeeding Rajiv Memani. Suchitra K. Ella of Bharat Biotech International is now the president-designate, and Shashwat Goenka of RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group takes on the role of vice-president for the same term.
Dr. Ashok Kumar Panda	He succeeded Amarendu Prakash to assume the charge as the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) on May 9, 2026.
Ramchandra Huddar	He is the retired Karnataka High Court Judge, who has been recently appointed as the chairperson for the Admission Overseeing Committee (AOC) for professional courses in Karnataka.
Ashutosh Gowariker	He is a noted filmmaker who has been recently appointed as the Festival Director for the 57th edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), to be held in Goa.
Shreyas Iyer	He has been recently appointed as the official brand ambassador for a Formula 1-backed sim racing initiative in India, with Mumbai Falcons Racing Limited announcing his association ahead of the launch of the F1 Sim Racing India Open 2026.
Sanjay Jamuar	He has been appointed as the first as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Delhi Metro International Limited (DMIL) which has been set up by DMRC with the support of the Government to take up Metro projects as well as Operation and Maintenance (O&M) assignments in India outside Delhi and abroad.
Srikanth Velamakanni	He succeeded Sindhu Gangadharan as Chairman of Nasscom. He is the co-founder and Group CEO of Fractal. Kishor Patil (CEO and MD of KPIT Technologies) was appointed as the new Vice Chairman.
Yoweri Museveni	Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has been sworn in for a historic seventh term, extending his 40-year tenure following a landslide victory in January 2026 elections.

Anugraha Narayana Das Takes Charge as Controller General of Defence Accounts

Anugraha Narayana Das, a 1991-batch officer of the Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS), assumed charge as the Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA) with effect from May 1, 2026. He succeeded Vishvajit Sahay, who assumed the charge as Secretary (Defence Finance) in the Ministry of Defence on May 1, 2026. Vishvajit Sahay is a 1990 batch officer of the Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS). Previously, he had served in various capacities such as Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Prayagraj, Joint CGDA and Special CGDA.

Saurabh Vijay Assumes Charge as CEO of UIDAI

On May 18, 2026, Saurabh Vijay, an IAS officer of the 1998 batch of the Maharashtra cadre, assumed charge as the Chief Executive Officer of UIDAI. He was Principal Secretary (Expenditure) in the Finance Department, Government of Maharashtra, prior to joining UIDAI. Previously, he had served on central deputation in significant national and international roles, including as Director at the President's Secretariat in New Delhi and Advisor to the Executive Director for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka at World Bank in Washington D.C.



DEATHS/OBITUARIES



Olympic Medallist Gurbax Singh Grewal Passes Away

On April 24, 2026, Olympic hockey medallist Gurbax Singh Grewal passed away in Zirakpur near Chandigarh. He was 84. Born on April 1, 1942, in Lyallpur, Punjab Province of British India (now in Pakistan), Gurbax Singh Grewal was part of the historic Indian contingent at the 1968 Olympics alongside his brother Balbir Singh Grewal—marking the first time in Indian hockey history that two real brothers represented the country together at the same Olympic Games.

Beyond his playing career, Grewal served as a senior sports officer with Western Railways. After retiring from service in Mumbai, he remained actively involved in the sport's administration, serving as honorary secretary of the Mumbai Hockey Association.

Former Rajya Sabha Member Dr. Gopalrao Patil Passes Away

On April 21, 2026, Dr. Gopalrao Patil, former Rajya Sabha member and noted pediatrician, passed away in Maharashtra's Latur city. He was 94 years old. He served as a Rajya Sabha member between 1994 and 2000, and contributed to key parliamentary committees, including commerce, external affairs and railways. He was also a visionary educationist. He founded the Shiv Chhatrapati Shikshan Sanstha, which runs Rajarshi Shahu College in Latur. He pursued his medical education from Osmania University, Hyderabad and went on to become one of Latur's most respected child specialists.

Veteran Photographer Raghu Rai Passes Away at 83

On April 26, 2026, veteran photographer Raghu Rai passed away. He was 83. His photography is often described as a 'visual record' of modern India.

He captured powerful images after the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, one of the worst industrial disasters in history. He received the Padma Shri in 1972 for his powerful photography during the Bangladesh Liberation War. In 1992, he was named 'Photographer of the Year' in the US. In 2019, he won the Académie des Beaux-Arts Photography Award, one of the top international honours in photography. He was also given a Lifetime Achievement

Award in 2017 by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Textile Pioneer Vasu Shroff Passes Away

Veteran Indian businessman and UAE textile pioneer Vasu Shroff, widely known as Dubai's textile king, passed away at the age of 85. He breathed his last at his residence in Satwa on April 26, 2026.

Born in India, Shroff arrived in Sharjah from Mumbai by boat in 1960 and later moved to Dubai, where he built a lasting business legacy. He founded Regal Traders in Bur Dubai, starting with a single textile store that expanded into a network of 16 outlets and five offices across multiple countries. He is credited with playing a crucial role in shaping modern Dubai.

Golfer Vijay Kumar Passes Away

Legendary Indian professional golfer Vijay Kumar passed away on April 28, 2026, in his home town Lucknow at the age of 57. His iconic triumph at the 2002 Indian Open remains a landmark moment in Indian golf. He remains one of only nine Indian golfers to have won the Indian Open title. Vijay also represented India at the Alfred Dunhill Cup 1999 played at St. Andrews in Scotland. He was a four-time Order of Merit champion.

J. Craig Venter, Genomics Pioneer, Passes Away

On April 30, 2026, J. Craig Venter, who mapped the first draft of the human genome and helped scientists understand how genes shape our lives, passed away. He was 79.

Dr. Venter was a visionary scientific leader whose work helped define modern genomics and launch the field of synthetic biology. In 2000, Venter's private company Celera Genomics announced, along with Human Genome Project leaders, that they had decoded the 3.1 billion sub-units of DNA, the chemical 'letters' that make up the recipe of human life. Three years later, in April 2003, the project declared the genome complete. He also worked at the National Institutes of Health, where he helped develop a technique to quickly identify large swathes of human genes.



AWARDS AND HONOURS



Goldman Environmental Prize 2026

The prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize 2026 has been awarded to six grassroots environmental activists from around the world for their efforts to fight climate change and save biodiversity. Also described as the 'Green Nobel', the Goldman Prize recipients are chosen from each of the world's six primary regions. They each receive \$ 200,000 in prize money.

For the first time since the prize was created in 1989 by philanthropists Richard and Rhoda Goldman, all recipients of the award are women : Iroro Tanshi, from Nigeria; Borim Kim, from South Korea; Sarah Finch, from the United Kingdom; Theonila Roka Matbob, from Papua New Guinea; Alannah Acaq Hurley, from the United States; and Yuvelis Morales Blanco, from Colombia.

N. Alim Yusuf Wins WWF Award for Invasive Plants Detection App

N. Alim Yusuf, a researcher at the Malabar Botanical Garden and Institute for Plant Sciences (MBGIPS), Olavanna, Kozhikode, has been awarded the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) National Award for developing an AI-powered mobile application to identify invasive plant species in Kerala. He received the honour for his innovative application capable of identifying nearly 100 invasive plant species recorded in Kerala.

His application, Neophyte ID, was earlier launched at the Kerala Science Congress held in Kochi in February, 2026. Powered by the advanced machine learning model YOLOv11, the app allows users to identify whether a plant is invasive simply by capturing its image. It is available in both Malayalam and English.

Barkha Subba and Parveen Shaikh Awarded 2026 Whitley Award

Barkha Subba and Praveen Shaikh are among the six grassroots conservationists from around the world, who have been awarded the prestigious 2026 Whitley award, popularly known as 'Green Oscars.' The award honours grassroots conservationists protecting landscapes and ecology in the Global South.

Barkha Subba has been recognized for her work on conserving two lesser-known species in India—the Himalayan salamander (*Tylototriton himalayanus*), a small 'dragon-like' amphibian endemic to the hills of Darjeeling and Eastern Nepal. Parveen Shaikh has been recognised for her work conserving the Indian skimmer (*Rynchops albigollis*), a white, black-capped bird with a bright orange bill. While the salamander is in serious decline due to habitat loss and listed as a 'vulnerable' species, the skimmer is endangered.

The other four awardees are : Farwiza Farhan (Indonesia), Issah Seidu (Ghana), Marina Kameni (Cameroon), Paola Sangolquí (Ecuador) and Moreangels Mbiza (Zimbabwe).

UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2026 Awarded to the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate

On 4 May 2026, UNESCO awarded the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize to the Sudanese Journalists Syndicate during a ceremony held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Since fighting broke out in 2023 in Sudan, the Syndicate has documented 32 journalists' deaths; 556 violations against media workers, and the cessation of numerous newspapers and radio stations, making Sudan one of the most dangerous countries to be a journalist.

Created in 1997, the annual UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize is named in the honour of Guillermo Cano Isaza, a Colombian journalist who was assassinated in front of the offices of his newspaper El Espectador in Bogotá, Colombia on 17 December, 1986.

25th Florence Nightingale Awards 2026

The President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu presented the National Florence Nightingale Awards for

the year 2026 to the 15 nursing personnel, on the occasion of International Nurses Day (May 12, 2026). The National Florence Nightingale Awards were instituted in 1973 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, as a mark of recognition for the meritorious services rendered by nursing personnel to society.

These prestigious awards are presented to Registered Nurses, Midwives, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives and Lady Health Visitors serving across Central and State Governments, Union Territories and voluntary organisations.

National Panchayats Awards-2025

The Government has announced the winners of the National Panchayat Awards 2025 (Appraisal year 2023-24), with 42 Panchayats from across the country being selected for the honours. According to the Ministry, Karnataka has secured the highest number of awards with six Panchayats being selected, followed by Andhra Pradesh and Odisha with five awards each. The awards were conferred under the Incentivization of Panchayats scheme of the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan.

The awards are being conferred under two categories—the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar and the Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar.

- **Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar** : It recognizes outstanding Gram Panchayats for their performance across themes linked to Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty-free livelihoods, health, water sufficiency, sanitation, women-friendly governance and social justice. A total of 34 Gram Panchayats from 17 States and Union Territories have been selected under this category.
- **Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar** : It recognizes the best-performing Panchayats at the district, block and gram levels. Eight Panchayats have been selected under this category, including three district Panchayats, two block Panchayats and three Gram Panchayats.

Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar-2025

Award Theme/Category	Rank	Name of Awardee Panchayat
Best District Panchayat	1	Sepahijala, Tripura
	2	Ganjam, Odisha
	3	Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
Best Block Panchayat	1	Harippad (Alappuzha), Kerala
	3	Kuppam (Chittoor), Andhra Pradesh
Best Gram Panchayat	1	New Napam (Gaboru, Sonitpur), Assam
	2	Telcup (Rohtas, Rohtas), Bihar
	3	Biraharu (Saiyan, Agra), Uttar Pradesh

Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar-2025

Award Theme/Category	Rank	Name of Awardee Gram Panchayat (Block, District)
Poverty-Free & Enhanced Livelihoods Panchayat	1	Mudradi (Hebri, Udupi, Karnataka)
	2	Chemmulapalli (Khajipet, Y.S.R., Andhra Pradesh)
	3	Gyalshing Omchung (Gyalshing, Sikkim)
Healthy Panchayat	1	Kanchanbari (Kumarghat, Unakoti, Tripura)
	2	Vandse (Kundapura, Udupi, Karnataka)
	3	Niranam (Pulikeezhu, Pathanamthitta, Kerala)
	3	Potalampur (Chatrapur, Ganjam, Odisha)
Child-Friendly Panchayat	1	Itgaon (Pu) (Bhandara, Maharashtra)
	2	Halanayakanahalli (Bengaluru East, Bengaluru Urban, Karnataka)
	3	Ottor (Varkala, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala)
Water-Sufficient Panchayat	1	Khariwali (Khalapur, Raigad, Maharashtra)
	2	Madamakki (Hebri, Udupi, Karnataka)
	3	Padua (Champua, Kendujhar, Odisha)
Clean & Green Panchayat	1	Kawrthah North, Mizoram
	2	Jumamur (Kathiatoli, Nagaon, Assam)
	2	Hatibandha (Lathikata, Sundargarh, Odisha)
	3	Sardih (Bagicha, Jashpur, Chhattisgarh)
	3	Lohardi (Balh, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh)
Self-Sufficient Infrastructure in Panchayat	1	Melukavu (Erattupetta, Kottayam, Kerala)
	2	Hoogrijan (Tengakhat, Dibrugarh, Assam)
	3	Gundamala (Kotha Patnam, Prakasam, Andhra Pradesh)
	3	Sanoor (Karkal, Udupi, Karnataka)
Socially Just & Socially Secured Panchayat	1	Shansha (Lahul, Lahaul and Spiti, Himachal Pradesh)
	2	Chambharli (Khalapur, Raigad, Maharashtra)
	2	Mandar (Polosara, Ganjam, Odisha)
	3	Wagoora (B.K. Pora, Budgam, J&K)
	3	Hakladi (Kundapura, Udupi, Karnataka)
Panchayat with Good Governance	1	Srungavaram (Nathavaram, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh)
	2	Nimbale (Chandwad, Nashik, Maharashtra)
	3	Mothukupalle (Kotepally, Vikarabad, Telangana)
Women-Friendly Panchayat	1	Bokkasam Palem (Srikalahasti, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh)
	2	Jhikarhati East (Pakur, Jharkhand)
	3	Fasalwadi (Sangareddy, Sangareddy, Telangana)
	3	Baikunthapur (Hezamara, West Tripura)

International Booker Prize 2026

Taiwan Travelogue by Yáng Shuāng-zǐ, translated by Lin King, has won the International Booker Prize 2026. *Taiwan Travelogue* is the first book translated from Mandarin Chinese to win the International Booker Prize. The novel, which takes the form of a fictional translation of a rediscovered Japanese travel memoir, explores history, power, class, colonialism and love through the lens of two women's culinary tour across Japan-controlled Taiwan in the 1930s.



AGREEMENT/MoU/PACT



Uber to Set up First India Data Centre in Partnership with Adani Group

Uber has partnered with Adani Group to establish its first data centre in India, marking a significant step in the company's technology expansion strategy in the country. The upcoming data centre will strengthen its ability to build and scale global technology solutions from India. The partnership also builds on Uber's existing collaboration with the Adani Group and comes at a time when India is emerging as a major destination for artificial intelligence, cloud computing and data infrastructure investments. The partnership reflects India's growing importance as a technology and innovation hub for Uber, with the company planning to test and deploy advanced technologies from the country.

I4C and RBIH Sign MoU to Strengthen AI-Driven Detection of Mule Accounts and Cyber Financial Frauds

The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), Ministry of Home Affairs, and Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in combating cyber-enabled financial frauds and curtailing mule accounts across the banking and digital payments ecosystem. Under the MoU, I4C and RBIH will collaborate for sharing of mule account related intelligence and suspect identifiers from I4C-MHA's Suspect Registry to strengthen AI-driven fraud detection systems such as MuleHunter.ai implemented across banks. RBIH will utilise the datasets for training and enhancement of AI-driven fraud-risk assessment models, including Mule Hunter.ai.

Tata Electronics, ASML Sign MoU to Advance Chip Making Ecosystem in India

Tata Electronics Ltd. and ASML, one of the world's leading semiconductor equipment manufacturing companies, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to advance the semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem in India. Through this partnership, ASML will enable the establishment and successful ramp up of Tata Electronics' upcoming 300 mm (12 inch) semiconductor Fab in Dholera, Gujarat. This collaboration is an important step in the context of the intensifying strategic collaboration between India and The Netherlands in the field of critical technologies, such as semiconductor technology.

IndiaAI and ICMR Sign MoU to Accelerate Responsible AI Adoption in Healthcare

On May 7, 2026, IndiaAI and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to accelerate responsible AI Adoption in healthcare. The partnership marks a significant step towards advancing healthcare outcomes through the responsible and scalable application of Artificial Intelligence. The MoU establishes a structured framework for collaboration, bringing together IndiaAI's technology infrastructure and AI ecosystem capabilities with ICMR's deep domain expertise in biomedical research and public health.



Nearly 90% of UNESCO Sites Face Environmental Stress : UNESCO Report

The report 'People and nature in UNESCO-designated sites : Global and local contributions' reveals 2,260 living sites where people and nature coexist, from Dja to Greenland, shaped by climate threats, community stewardship, and indigenous knowledge.

Together, these sites cover more than 13 million square kilometres, an area larger than India and China combined, which sustains some 900 million people. They protect extraordinary biodiversity, harboring over 60% of the world's mapped animal species and their forests absorb about 15% of all carbon absorbed worldwide by forests. Yet nearly 90% face growing risks from climate change, land-use pressures and other human impacts.

The UNESCO report demonstrates that local action can have global impact. Strengthening community governance, integrating Indigenous knowledge and aligning conservation with sustainable development offer practical solutions to the intertwined crises of climate and biodiversity loss.

World Health Statistics 2026

The World Health Organisation (WHO) released the World Health Statistics 2026, which provides the most comprehensive annual assessment of global health trends available to WHO Member States and the broader international health community.

Key Highlights of the Report :

- Globally, an estimated 22.1 million excess deaths associated with the COVID-19 pandemic occurred from 2020 to 2023, roughly three times the 7.0 million deaths officially reported. Recovery since 2022 has been uneven, with persistent disparities according to region, age and sex.
- Official development assistance for health was estimated to be 30-40 per cent less in 2025 than in 2023. Sudden aid reductions risk significant disruption of essential health services, reduced access to life-saving essential medicines and vaccines.
- Too few deaths are recorded with timely, accurate and meaningful cause-of-death information, limiting the accuracy and relevance of mortality statistics for policy and planning.

- Global long-term declines continue for the infectious diseases. Between 2010 and 2024, new HIV infections fell by 40%; TB incidence rate dropped 12% since 2015. However, global malaria incidence rose 8.5% since 2015.
- Global anaemia prevalence in women of reproductive age rose slightly to 30.7% in 2023 compared with the 2012 level and overweight in children younger than 5 years has reached 5.5% in 2024.
- Progress towards UHC has slowed considerably in the SDG era. Between 2015 and 2023, the global UHC service coverage index increased only from 68 to 71.
- Global mortality rates have improved since 2000, but progress has slowed sharply across key health areas. The 2023 maternal mortality ratio is still nearly three times the target and many countries are not on track to reach child mortality goals.
- No WHO region is on track to meet the 2030 SDG target; some regions are stagnating or worsening and the COVID-19 pandemic has added further uncertainty.
- Environmental risks, such as air pollution, cause millions of preventable deaths each year 6.6 million deaths in 2021 were attributable to exposure to household and ambient air pollution from particulate matter.

Way Forward :

The report highlights following initiatives to improve health outcome :

- Strengthening civil registration and vital statistics systems, including completeness of death registration, medical certification, ICD-based coding and timely reporting, remains an urgent priority.
- Investment in interoperable digital and health information system infrastructure can generate reliable, actionable data.
- Countries and partners must have a shared responsibility to ensure sustained political commitment, adequate and predictable financing and evidence-informed decision-making.

2026 Global Report on Food Crises

The 2026 Global Report on Food Crises is a flagship publication from the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC), which is a multistakeholder initiative of humanitarian and development actors, united by a commitment to tackle the root causes of food crises and to promote sustainable solutions. It includes Food and Agriculture Office of the United Nations (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), European Union (EU), US Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank, UNICEF, UNHCR and IFAD.

Key Highlights of the Report :

- Overall, 22.9 per cent of the analysed population in 47 countries/territories – corresponding to 266 million people – experienced high levels of acute food insecurity.
- In 2025, Afghanistan, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen ranked among the largest food crises globally, in both relative and absolute terms.

- More than 80 per cent of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity lived in protracted crisis context. Conflict and insecurity were the primary drivers of acute food insecurity in countries/territories hosting more than half of the population facing high levels of acute food insecurity.
- An estimated 35.5 million children were acutely malnourished across the 23 countries/territories experiencing nutrition crises. The number of forcibly displaced people in the 46 countries/territories decreased slightly to 85.1 million in 2025.
- Famine was confirmed in two countries/territories in 2025 in parts of the Gaza Strip (Palestine) and the Sudan.

Panchayat Advancement Index 2.0

On the occasion of the National Panchayati Raj Day (observed annually on April 24, 2026), the Ministry of Panchayati Raj released the the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) 2.0 Report for the FY Year 2023-24.

Key Highlights :

- 3,635 Gram Panchayats were placed under the Front Runner category, while 1,18,824 Gram Panchayats are placed in the Performer category.
- The top-performing themes, under which GPs have shown strong outcomes, include Poverty Free and Enhanced Livelihoods in Panchayat and Healthy Panchayat.
- PAI 2.0 has recorded an exceptional national participation of 97.30 per cent, with 2,59,867 Gram Panchayats across 33 States and Union Territories submitting validated data.

PAI 2.0 evaluates each of the more than 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats across the country against 150 indicators and 230 data points spanning nine thematic areas under the Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) – covering Poverty, Health, Child Welfare, Water, Environment, Infrastructure, Social Justice, Good Governance and Women's Empowerment.

Gram Panchayats are classified into five performance categories – Achiever (A+ : 90 and above), Front Runner (A : 75 to below 90), Performer (B : 60 to below 75), Aspirant (C : 40 to below 60), and Beginner (D : below 40)

Five Indian-Origin Leaders, One Indian on TIME's 100 Most Influential People List for 2026

The 2026 TIME 100 Most Influential People lists six individuals of Indian origin made the cut, across technology, governance, medicine, food and cinema. Four are Indian Americans who crossed oceans to build new lives. One is the son of Indians born in Uganda who now governs New York City and one works in India as an actor, yet carries a cultural influence that crosses borders.

- Sundar Pichai : CEO, Google and Alphabet
- Neal Mohan : CEO, You Tube
- Zohran Mamdani : Mayor, New York
- Dr. Kiran Musunuru : Professor of cardiovascular medicine and genetics, University of Pennsylvania
- Vikas Khanna : Chef, author, humanitarian and founder of Bungalow in New York
- Ranbir Kapoor : Indian Actor



CONFERENCE/MEETINGS



11th Heads of Mission Conference

The 11th Heads of Mission (HoMs) Conference was organised by the Ministry of External Affairs from 28th April to 30th April, 2026 at the National Agricultural Science Complex, Pusa, New Delhi. The conference was centered around the theme 'Reforming Indian Diplomacy for 2047'.

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar delivered the inaugural address on 29th April, 2026. PM Narendra Modi addressed the HoMs on 30th April, 2026 and provided valuable guidance on promoting India's national interests abroad. The discussion touched upon various geopolitical developments, emerging technologies, 3Ts (Trade, Technology and Tourism), the Bharat story and future-ready diplomacy.

Kimberley Process Intersessional Meeting

The Kimberley Process (KP) Intersessional Meeting 2026 held from May 11 to May 14, 2026 in Mumbai under India's Chairship, bringing together representatives from KP Participants, Observers, industry stakeholders and civil society organisations for four days of deliberations on the future of the natural diamond sector. Held under India's Chairship theme of the 3Cs – Credibility, Compliance and Consumer Confidence – the Intersessional advanced discussions on strengthening trust, transparency and cooperation within the Kimberley Process framework.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, established under United Nations General Assembly Resolution 55/56 of 2000, is a global initiative aimed at preventing conflict diamonds from entering legitimate trade and promoting responsible sourcing across the natural diamond supply chain.



DEFENCE



EXERCISE CINBAX-II 2026

The second edition of India-Cambodia Bilateral Military Exercise CINBAX-II 2026, conducted at Techo Sen Phnom Thom Mreas Prov Royal Cambodian Air Force Training Centre (Camp Basil), Kampong Speu Province, Kingdom of Cambodia from 4 to 17 May, 2026. The exercise was conducted under the framework of Chapter VII of UN Mandate, and aligned with the current dynamics of Counter-Terrorism operations encountered by the peace keeping forces during the UN peace keeping operation. The Indian Army contingent comprised of 120 personnel, majorly from a Battalion of the Maratha Light Infantry Regiment. The Cambodian contingent comprised of 160 personnel, from Royal Cambodian Army.

INS Mahendragiri Delivered to the Indian Navy

INS Mahendragiri (Yard 12654), the sixth ship of Nilgiri-class (Project 17A) and fourth ship of the class

built at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL), was delivered to the Indian Navy on 30 April, 2026 at MDSL, Mumbai. This state-of-the-art frigate reflects a quantum leap in naval design, stealth, firepower, automation and survivability and stands as an admirable symbol of Aatmanirbharta in warship building.

INS *Mahendragiri* is the sixth P17A ship to be delivered to Indian Navy in the span of less than 17 months from the delivery of the first P17A (*Nilgiri*) by M/s MDSL on 20 December, 2024. With an indigenous content of 75%, the project has involved over 200 MSMEs at MDSL and has enabled employment generation of approximately 4,000 personnel directly and more than 10,000 personnel indirectly.

The Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) *Achal*, the latest vessel in the new-generation *Adamy*-class Fast Patrol Vessel series, was commissioned in the Indian Coast Guard at Goa Shipyard Limited on May 9, 2026. The vessel will undertake a wide spectrum of maritime operations, including coastal and offshore surveillance, interdiction, Search and Rescue (SAR), anti-smuggling operations, and marine pollution response.

DRDO and IAF Successfully Conduct Maiden Flight-trial of Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation Weapon

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully conducted the maiden flight-trial of Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA) weapon off the coast of Odisha on May 7, 2026. TARA, the modular range extension kit, is India's first indigenous glide weapon system to convert unguided warheads into precision guided weapons.

TARA has been designed and developed by Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad along with other DRDO laboratories to enhance the lethality and accuracy of a low-cost weapon to neutralise ground-based targets. It is the first glide weapon to utilise state-of-the-art low-cost systems. The development of the kit has been undertaken with Development cum Production Partners (DcPP) & other Indian industries, which have already started the production activity.

India conducted the successful flight-trial of an Advanced Agni missile with Multiple Independently Targeted Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV) system from Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha on May 8, 2026. The telemetry and tracking was carried out by multiple ground and ship-based stations. These systems tracked the entire missile trajectory from lift-off till the impact of all payloads. With this successful trial, India once again demonstrated the capability to target multiple strategic targets using a single missile system.



PLACES IN THE NEWS

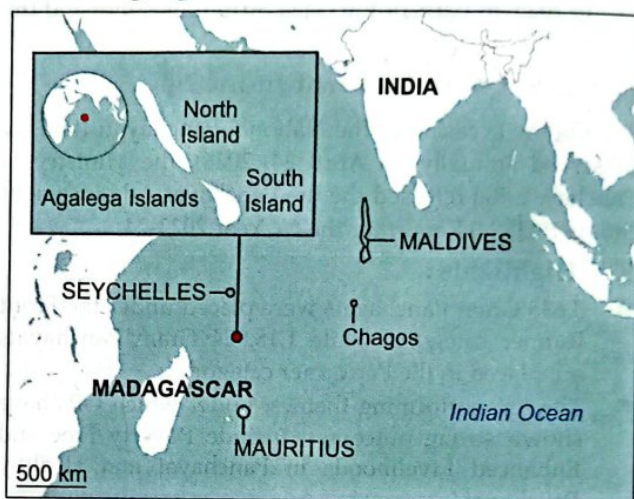


Agalega Islands

Agaléga are two outer islands of Mauritius located in the Indian Ocean, about 1000 kilometers north of Mauritius island. The northern island is long and thin,

the southern island, located across a 200-metre wide channel is short and round. The islands have a total area of 2600 hectare (about 6,400 acres) and has a population of 300. Despite their small size, they may play an important role in geopolitical competition for dominance in the Indian Ocean Region.

India and Mauritius signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the improvement of sea and air transportation facilities at Agalega Island in March 2015. In 2021, Mauritius had denied reports that it has allowed India to build a military base on the remote island of Agalega.



BOOKS & AUTHORS



- **The Bench, the Bar and the Bizarre** : Tushar Mehta (Solicitor General of India)
- **The Lawful and the Awful** : Tushar Mehta (Solicitor General of India)
- **Who Owns the Past ? How Historians [Re]Wrote India's Past & Present, 1870-2020** : Shaan Kashyap
- **The Complex** : Karan Mahajan



IMPORTANT DAYS/WEEKS/YEARS



July 2026

National

- July 1 Doctor's Day
- July 26 Kargil Vijay Day

International

- July 2 World UFO Day
- July 4 International Day of Cooperatives (First Saturday of July)
- July 11 World Population Day
- July 12 World Malala Day
- July 15 World Youth Skill Day
- July 17 World Day for International Justice
- July 28 World Hepatitis Day
- July 29 International Tiger Day



Sports World

CRICKET



India Retains Top Spot in Men's T20I Team Rankings Update

India retained its position at the top of the ICC Men's T20I rankings, showcasing their dominance in the cricketing world. India had created history by becoming the first team to successfully defend their T20 World Cup title and also win it for a record-extending third time in March 2026. With this achievement, India continues to hold the top position in the rankings, with 275 rating points. England are second with 262 points, while Australia is close behind on 258.

Also, India continued to retain the No. 1 position in the latest ICC Men's ODI Team Rankings following the annual update, released on May 11, 2026. However, their lead over New Zealand reduced from eight to five points. India's rating slipped by one point, from 119 to 118, while New Zealand gained two points, moving up to 113. Australia, the reigning ODI world champions, stayed third with an unchanged rating of 109. The biggest movement inside the top five came from South Africa, which climbed above Pakistan to move into fourth place.

India Women's Squad Announced for T20 World Cup 2026

On May 2, 2026, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the Indian women's squad for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026. The tournament is to be hosted by England, beginning on 12th June, 2026 with the final scheduled at Lord's Cricket Ground on 5th July, 2026.

The Indian squad consist of Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana (vice-captain), Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Bharti

Fulmali, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh, Shree Charani, Yastika Bhatia, Nandni Sharma, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, Kranti Gaud, Shreyanka Patil and Radha Yadav.

FOOTBALL



AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup China 2026 : North Korea Wins Record Fifth Title

China hosted the 2026 AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup (10th edition) from May 1-17, 2026. For the first time, there were 12 teams competing in the tournament, without any third-place playoff. In the finals, North Korea, also the defending champion, defeated Japan 5-1 to win their fifth title in AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup. Earlier, North Korea had won this title in 2007, 2015, 2017 and 2024. With this win in 2026, North Korea is the most successful team in the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup, having won a record five titles.

With 15 goals, North Korea's Yu Jong-hyang was the top scorer of the tournament. She was also adjudged the 'Best Player of the Tournament.' North Korea was also awarded the Fair Play award.

India qualified for the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup after a 21-year wait, with a commanding 4-0 victory against Lebanon in their final Group B fixture. Coached by Pamela Conti, the Young Tigresses advanced to the knockout stage but were eliminated after a 0-3 defeat against hosts China PR in Suzhou.

FC Barcelona Defeats Real Madrid to Win 2025-26 La Liga Title

FC Barcelona defended their La Liga title by defeating their El Clásico rivals Real Madrid 2-0. By winning the 2025-26 La Liga title, FC Barcelona secured their 29th Spanish championship on May 10, 2026. They officially sealed the trophy with three matches to spare after their El

Clásico victory. With this, Barcelona have closed the gap on Real Madrid for the most La Liga titles won. Real Madrid have 36 La Liga titles.

On April 29, 2026, FIFA approved the Afghanistan women's football team's return to international competitions after amending its Governance Regulations in coordination with the Asian Football Confederation. Operating in exile since 2021, the team became eligible compete in qualifiers and friendlies, with home matches at neutral venues due to security concerns.

TENNIS



Italian Open 2026

Jannik Sinner won the Italian Open Men's singles title in Rome after defeating Casper Ruud of Norway 6-4, 6-4 in the final. With this victory, Sinner became the first Italian man to win the tournament since Adriano Panatta in 1976. The World No. 1 also made history by becoming only the second player, after Novak Djokovic, to complete the Career Golden Masters, winning all nine ATP Masters 1000 titles. This was Sinner's 6th straight Masters 1000 title and his 10th overall.

In Women's singles, Elina Svitolina (Ukraine) defeated Coco Gauff (USA) 6-4, 6-7, 6-2. In Men's doubles, Italian duo Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori defeated Marcel Granollers (Spain) and Horacio Zeballos (Argentina). In Women's doubles, Russian duo Mirra Andreeva and Diana Shnaider defeated Cristina Bucsa (Spain) and Nicole Melichar-Martinez (USA.)

Madrid Open 2026

Marta Kostyuk captured the biggest title of her career after winning the Madrid Open 2026. The 23-year-old Ukrainian defeated world No. 8 Mirra Andreeva 6-3, 7-5 in the Women's singles final. In Men's singles, Jannik Sinner defeated

Alexander Zverev to win the title. The Men's doubles title was won by Harri Heliovaara and Henry Patten, whereas, Women's doubles title was won by Katerina Siniakova and Taylor Townsend.

Siddhant Banthia with Alexander Donski Clinch Doubles Title at Oeiras 4 2026 ATP Challenger 100 Tournament

On May 16, 2026, India's Siddhant Banthia, alongside his Bulgarian partner Alexander Donski, clinched the doubles title at the Oeiras 4 2026 ATP Challenger 100 tournament in Portugal. The unseeded Indo-Bulgarian duo defeated Portugal's Tiago Pereira and Spain's David Vega Hernandez 6-3, 6-2 in the final, sealing the victory in just one hour and three minutes. The title marked Siddhant Banthia's second ATP Challenger doubles crown of the season and third overall, all alongside Alexander Donski. This was also the fourth doubles title of Donski's career.



2026 Baoji China Masters : Shriyanshi Valishetty Wins Silver

On May 17, 2026, India's Shriyanshi Valishetty clinched the silver medal in Women's singles at the Baoji China Masters. She went down to local favourite Yuan An Qi in straight sets, 14-21, 6-21, in the summit clash of the Super 100 event at Baoji City Gymnasium, China.

Champions of 2026 Baoji China Masters :

- **Men's singles :** Sun Chao (China)
- **Women's singles :** Yuan An Qi (China)
- **Men's doubles :** Ma Shang and Shen Xuanyao (China)
- **Women's doubles :** Sumire Nakade and Miyu Takahashi (Japan)
- **Mixed doubles :** Ma Xixiang and Qin Huizhi (China)

Thailand Open 2026

The 2026 Thailand Open 2026 was held at Nimibutr Stadium in

PD/July/2026/34

Bangkok, Thailand. In Men's singles, World No. 3 Anders Antonsen (Denmark) defeated home favourite Kunlavut Vitidsarn 9-21, 24-22, 21-18 to win the title. Akane Yamaguchi (Japan) defeated Chen Yufei (China) 21-14, 21-18 to win the Women's singles title. India's challenge in the singles events ended when Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu went down in their respective quarter-finals.

World No. 4 Indian pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty went down 12-21, 23-25 to Indonesia's Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin in the Men's doubles final of the Thailand Open in Bangkok. In Women's Doubles, China's Bao Lijing and Cao Zihan clinched the Women's doubles title defeating Japan's Rin Iwanaga and Kie Nakanishi 19-21, 21-16, 21-19 in the final. The Mixed doubles title was won by Denmark's Mathias Christiansen and Alexandra Boje.

Thomas and Uber Cup 2026

Denmark hosted the 34th edition of Thomas Cup (Men's event) and 31st edition of the Uber Cup (Women's event). China won the Thomas Cup for 12th time and defended their title after defeating France. South Korea defeated defending champions China to win the Uber Cup for the third time.

India was knocked out by France after 0-3 loss in the Thomas Cup semifinals at Horsens in Denmark on May 2, 2026. Ayush Shetty suffered a heavy loss to world No. 4 Christo Popov in the opening singles, by 11-21, 9-21. Kidambi Srikanth lost in straight games to world No. 10 Alex Lanier in the second singles of the Thomas Cup semifinals by 16-21, 18-2.



Asian Under-17 Boxing Championships : India Clinches 17 Medals

On May 15, 2026, India concluded its campaign at the Asian U-17 Boxing Championships, held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. India added two gold medals and seven silver medals on the final day. With eight bronze medals already won in Under-

17 category, India's total medal tally in this category reached 17.

The U-17 girls' contingent accounted for 12 medals—two gold, six silver and four bronze—while the U-17 boys added one silver and four bronze. In girl's contingent, Rakhi (46 kg) clinched gold with a Referee Stopped Contest (RSC) victory over Rukhshonabonu Ahadova of Uzbekistan, while Navya (57 kg) secured the second gold with a 4 : 0 win against Japan's Sara Kono. In the boys' finals, Lakshay Phogat (75 kg) finished with a silver after a 0 : 5 loss to Marufjon Toshpulatov of Uzbekistan.

Earlier, in the Asian Under-15 Boxing Championships, India won a total of 27 medals, including nine gold, six silver and twelve bronze medals.



Sabastian Sawe Becomes First Athlete to Run Sub-two-Hour Marathon in Competitive Race

Sabastian Sawe made history at the London Marathon by becoming the first athlete to run a sub-two-hour marathon in a competitive race. The 31-year-old Kenyan crossed the line to win in one hour 59 minutes 30 seconds, more than one minute faster than the late Kelvin Kiptum's previous record of two hours and 35 seconds, set in 2023. He made history by becoming the first person to officially break the two-hour barrier in a competitive, record-eligible marathon race.

At the London 1908 Olympic Games - the first race at which the now-standard marathon distance of 42.195 km was run—the winner, Johnny Hayes, finished the race in 2:55:18, almost a full hour slower than Sawe's effort at the London Marathon 2026.



International Chess Federation Joins IWGA at AGM

On April 25, 2026, the International Chess Federation joined the

International World Games Association (IWGA) at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne. Its inclusion within the IWGA reflects the growing recognition of mind sports alongside traditional athletic disciplines. The decision rose the IWGA membership to 40 federations and expanded the range of sports in the World Games movement.



Archery World Cup, Shanghai : India Beat China in Shoot-off to Win Women's Recurve Team Gold

On May 10, 2026, Indian women's recurve team of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Kumkum Mohod defeated hosts China in a dramatic shoot-off to clinch the gold medal at the Archery World Cup Stage 2 in Shanghai. Earlier, India had stunned record 10-time Olympic champions South Korea in the semifinals.

Earlier, on May 9, 2026, Sahil Jadhav won a bronze medal in the men's individual compound event at the Archery World Cup 2026 Stage 2 in Shanghai, China. The 25-year-old Maharashtra archer defeated Denmark veteran player-cum-coach Martin Damsbo 147-144 in the bronze medal playoff to secure India's first medal of the ongoing tournament.

The 2026 Archery World Cup consist of five events :

Stage	Date	Location
1	7-12 April	Puebla, Mexico
2	5-10 May	Shanghai, China
3	9-14 June	Antalya, Türkiye
4	7-12 July	Madrid, Spain
Final	12-13 September	Saltillo, Mexico

World Squash Championships 2026

On May 16, 2026, at 18 years and 10 months, Amina Orfi became the youngest woman to win the women's title of the World Squash Championships. She defeated eight-time world champion Nour El

Sherbini in five sets, 6-11, 11-6, 11-9, 7-11, 14-12, in the longest women's squash match in PSA World Championship history. Orfi denied El Sherbini a record ninth world title – while simultaneously becoming the first player to hold the junior and senior world titles at the same time.

World No. 1 Mostafa Asal claimed the men's world title for the second year in a row, dismissing compatriot Youssef Ibrahim in straight sets, 11-4, 11-1, 12-10. India's campaign at the World Squash Championships ended after Veer Chotrani was knocked out in the second round in Giza, Egypt. World No. 45 Veer Chotrani lost 3-0 to world No. 1 and defending champion Mostafa Asal.

ISSF World Cup : Neeru Dhanda and Vivaan Kapoor Win Bronze in Trap Mixed Team Event

In Shooting, Indian pair of Neeru Dhanda and Vivaan Kapoor secured a bronze medal in the trap mixed team event as India concluded its campaign on a positive note at the ISSF World Cup Shotgun in Almaty, Kazakhstan on May 10, 2026.

It was the first ISSF World Cup podium finish for Neeru and Vivaan in an Olympic event, and India's second medal overall since the mixed team trap was included in the Olympic programme last year. Chinese Taipei's Kun-Pi Yang and Wan-Yu Liu clinched the gold medal, setting a world record score of 36 in the final.

ISSF Junior World Cup 2026 : India Wins 16 Medals

Indian shooters topped the ISSF Junior World Cup 2026 standings in Cairo with 16 medals : five gold, six silver and five bronze. Hemant Burman won silver in the men's 50 metre rifle 3 positions event with an impressive score of 351.7, while Kazakhstan's Oleg Noskov, who set a junior world record of 355.6, won gold. Uzbekistan's Nikita Sokolov took bronze. In the mixed trap team event, Zuhair Khan and Addya Katyal clinched bronze, marking India's first shotgun podium at the Cairo meet. Hungary won gold with a junior world record score.

The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) signed an agreement to transfer governance of shooting Para sport from the IPC to the ISSF. The move is the first formal step towards unifying Olympic and Paralympic shooting under a single global body.

Asian Weightlifting Championships : India Finishes Third in Women's, Fifth in Men's Team Standings

India secured third place in the women's team standings and fifth in the men's team standings at the Asian Weightlifting Championships 2026, which concluded on May 17, 2026, at the Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar. India hosted the Asian Weightlifting Championships for the first time in last 44 years.

The championship, organised by the Indian Weightlifting Federation, was held from May 11 to 17 and featured 172 athletes from 30 countries, including 97 men and 75 women. China topped both the women's and men's team standings. China also dominated the overall medal tally with 21 gold, 12 silver and eight bronze medals, while North Korea finished second with 18 gold, 11 silver and one bronze medal.

India ended the championship with 10 medals—one silver and nine bronze. The event also witnessed several record-breaking performances, with 27 Asian records and 25 world records set during the competition. India's Sanjana won three bronze medals in the Women's 77 kg category.

Individual honours went to Ri Suk, who was named the women's best lifter with 1013.191 ROBI points in the 63 kg category, and HE Yueji, who won the men's best lifter award with 1052.189 ROBI points in the 65 kg category.

11th Sanda World Cup : India Wins Five Medals

The Indian Wushu team delivered a strong performance at the 11th Sanda World Cup in Macau, finishing third overall.

Led by Aparna Dahiya and Shivani, the Indian team concluded its campaign with five medals, including two gold, one silver and

two bronze, to finish behind China (seven gold) and Vietnam (three gold).

Aparna Dahiya clinched the gold medal in the women's 52 kg category, defeating reigning world champion Thi Phuong Nga Ngo of Vietnam in straight sets in the final. Shivani, a head constable with the BSF, doubled India's gold tally after defeating a Russian opponent with a dominant display of Sanda skills in the women's 75 kg category.

Rory McIlroy Wins the 2026 Masters Tournament at Augusta National

Rory McIlroy, after blowing a six-shot lead through 36 holes, overcame a slow start to win his second consecutive Masters Tournament at Augusta National. McIlroy, trailing by as many as two in the final round, regained his footing around the turn and held on for a one-shot victory over Scottie Scheffler.

He successfully defended his title, finishing with a score of (-12) (276) to beat Scottie Scheffler by a single stroke. Ninety years after

Horton Smith became the first with multiple Masters titles, McIlroy's resilience allowed him to be the 19th man with more than one Green Jacket.

Aaron Rai Becomes First Englishman to Win PGA Since 1919

Aaron Rai wrote himself into the history books by winning his first major title on May 17, 2026, during the PGA Championship at Aronimink Golf Club. Rai, 31, is the first Englishman to win the PGA Championship since Jim Barnes in 1919. He also became only the second-ever Indian-origin golfer after two-time Major winner Vijay Singh to achieve the feat. He is the first non-American to lift the Wanamaker Trophy in a decade.

6th Asian Beach Games : India Secures Gold and Silver in Kabaddi

On April 27, 2026, India ended the Kabaddi competitions in the Asian Beach Games with the women's team clinching a gold

medal and the men's team settling for silver in the competitions being held in Sanya, China. The women's team defeated Sri Lanka comfortably 47-31, in the final to win the gold. The men's team went down to Iran 31-44 to settle for the silver.

India concluded its campaign at the 6th Asian Beach Games, held in Sanya, China, by securing 6 medals overall (2 gold, 1 silver, and 3 bronze) to finish 6th in the final medal tally.

Ritvik Gupta Wins Under-17 Boys National Table Tennis Title

Jammu & Kashmir achieved a historic milestone in table tennis as Ritvik Gupta clinched the Under-17 Boys National title at the UTT 87th Inter-State Junior and Youth National Table Tennis Championships, organised under the aegis of the Table Tennis Federation of India. He defeated Sarthak Arya of Odisha. With this victory, Ritvik Gupta has become the first player from Jammu and Kashmir to win a national championship title in the Under-17 Boys category.

PDarpan



TET

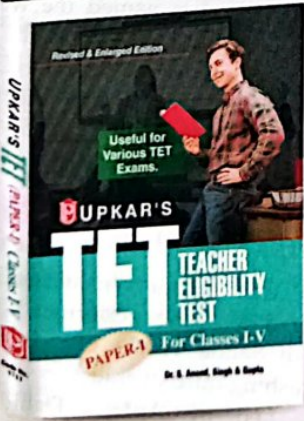
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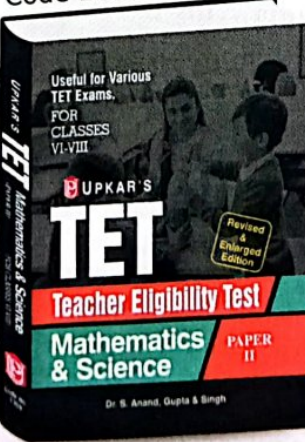


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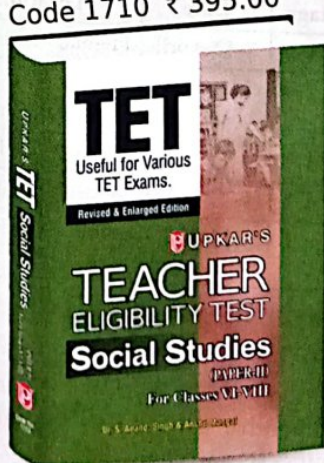


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Regional News

ANDHRA PRADESH

Product Perfection Clusters Initiated to Boost Global Brand Recognition

The Andhra Pradesh government has launched an initiative to develop Product Perfection Clusters in Amaravati, Visakhapatnam and Tirupati to elevate local manufacturing to international standards. The government will provide necessary support to industries, including MSMEs, to conform to quality control standards and create advanced logistics networks.

The products identified for global brand recognition include those from the agriculture and horticulture sectors, such as gold jewellery ornaments, solid rocket propellants, Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and cashew kernels.

CM Chandrababu Naidu Announces Incentives for Third and Fourth Children

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has announced a one-time incentive of ₹ 30,000 for the third child and ₹ 40,000 for the fourth as part of the government's endeavour to encourage population growth. The incentives are a part of the new population management policy that aims to encourage population growth.

Earlier, while presenting the draft Population Management Policy in the State Legislative Assembly on March 5, 2026, CM Naidu highlighted the sharp decline in Andhra Pradesh's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) from 3.0 in 1993 to 1.5 currently. He said the ideal fertility rate should be 2.1 to maintain demographic balance. He also warned that Andhra Pradesh could face demographic challenges similar to those seen in countries such as Japan, South Korea and Italy, where ageing populations and low birth rates have become major economic concerns. If current trends continue, he warned, nearly 23% of the state's population could become elderly by 2047.

GUJARAT

Union Government Approves the Ahmedabad-Dholera Semi High-Speed Rail Project

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi recently approved the semi high-speed double-line rail project from Sarkhej in Ahmedabad to Dholera at an estimated cost of approximately ₹ 20,667 crore. The proposed project will add approximately 134

km to the existing Indian Railways network. In addition, connectivity to nearly 284 villages will improve, benefiting an estimated 5 lakh people.

This first semi high-speed rail project of Indian Railways, based on indigenous technology and realizing the vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', will emerge as a multi-dimensional project providing rapid connectivity between Ahmedabad, Dholera SIR, the under-construction Dholera Airport and the Lothal National Maritime Heritage Complex.

KARNATAKA

Grievance Redressal Portal Operationalized for Gig Workers

The Government of Karnataka recently operationalized a specialised grievance redressal mechanism for platform-based gig workers a first of its kind in India. It has been developed by the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers' Board in collaboration with the Department of e-Governance.

Under this new initiative, gig workers can officially lodge grievances, including regarding pay, working conditions and platform-specific disputes, through the Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System (IPGRS) portal.

Grievances filed on the IPGRS will be automatically routed to the respective aggregator platform's IDRC (Internal Dispute Resolution Committee) to be addressed and settled within a strictly defined timeframe. The government will act as a central facilitator, monitoring the process to ensure a smooth and transparent flow of communication between workers and platforms.

The portal creates a formal bridge between the lakhs of gig workers in Karnataka and the technology aggregators they serve. The portal is expected to bring transparency and legal recourse for a workforce that has so far operated without a formal dispute resolution framework.

Karnataka Proposes 'Wisdom Valley' in Bengaluru Airport City

The Karnataka State Policy and Planning Commission (KSPPC) has recently proposed establishment of Wisdom Valley, a world-class Knowledge City dedicated to promoting education, research, innovation and sustainable urban development at the Bengaluru Airport City which is located near the Kempegowda International Airport.

The project seeks to create a globally recognised ecosystem for knowledge creation, dissemination and application by integrating international institutes, research centres, innovation hubs and knowledge-based industries within a single integrated urban framework.

Eva Nammava, Eva Nammava Act, 2026

Recently, the Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in the Name of Honour and Tradition (Eva Nammava, Eva Nammava) Act, 2026, came into force. It seeks to curb so-called 'honour killings' and violence arising from caste-based objections to inter-caste marriages. It was passed during the recent Budget session of the State legislature.

Key Highlights :

- Consent of parents, family, caste, or clan is not required once two adults decide to marry.
- It criminalises acts of violence, intimidation, or harassment committed against the couple and imposes various penalties for the same.
- It also provides legal support for such couples to pursue their relationship.
- It stipulates the formation of Eva Nammava Vedike, a district-level body comprising officials and experts to help solemnise inter-caste marriages.
- Establishment of special fast track courts to try cases pertaining to these crimes.



INCOIS Installs Second Coastal Flood Monitoring System in Kerala

The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), headquartered in Hyderabad, has installed a second Coastal Flood Monitoring System (CFMS) near Kollam Harbour in Kerala to enhance the accuracy of 'Kallakkadal' (swell surge) forecasts along India's southwest coast.

Kallakkadal events, which poses a significant threat to fishing communities, is a sudden and powerful swell surges, which are caused by long-period swells generated by distant storms in the southern Indian Ocean, nearly 10,000 kilometres from the Indian coastline.

Kallakkadal events are more frequent in pre-monsoon season. With periods ranging from 30 to 300 seconds, these surges can substantially elevate coastal water levels.

INCOIS is working to build a comprehensive understanding of the entire chain of processes from swell generation in the open ocean to wave transformation near the shore and the resulting coastal flooding. This integrated approach is expected to strengthen early warning systems and improve the precision of 'Kallakkadal' forecasts.

State Biodiversity Board Launches Programme to Restore Sacred Groves

The Kerala State Biodiversity Board has recently launched a pilot restoration programme for sacred groves in collaboration with the local Biodiversity Management Committees. Five sacred groves selected under the pilot project are from Ezhikkara in Ernakulam, Pattanchery in Palakkad, Villiappally in Kozhikode, Iritty in Kannur and Uduma in Kasaragod.

The major activities under the project are :

- Biodiversity assessment of sacred groves,
- Identification of endangered and invasive species,
- Establishment of 'kavu nurseries' for propagating sacred grove plant species,
- Bio-fencing using native plants, removal of invasive species and plastic waste and rejuvenation of ponds associated with sacred groves.

General Elections to State Legislative Assemblies, April 2026

On March 15, 2026, the Election Commission of India announced the schedule for the General Election to Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. Polling in the states of Assam, Kerala and Puducherry took place on 9th April, 2026.

Polling in the State of Tamil Nadu and West Bengal (Phase-I) took place on April 23, 2026, and for West Bengal (Phase-II) took place on April 29, 2026. The counting of votes for all polling States and Union Territories took place on May 4, 2026.

In Assam, the BJP-led NDA (National Democratic Alliance) returned to power for a third straight term. The BJP won 82 seats—18 more than the simple majority mark of 64—while its regional allies, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) won 10 seats each. The NDA, which won 102 seats, had 44.29% vote share. On May 12, 2026, Himanta Biswa Sarma took oath as the Chief Minister of Assam for a second consecutive term.

In Puducherry, the All India N.R. Congress-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won the second term. By winning 18 of the 30 Assembly seats, with the vote share of 38.70%, the ruling alliance gained two more seats than in 2021. Founder of the All India N.R. Congress (AINRC) and head of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the Union Territory of Puducherry, N. Rangasamy, was on May 13, 2026, sworn in as the Chief Minister of Puducherry for the fifth time.

In Tamil Nadu, the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), led by actor Joseph C. Vijay, emerged as the single largest party in the 2026 Assembly elections. It won 108 seats, falling 10 seats short of a majority in the 234-member assembly. TVK received support of five political parties, increasing its tally to 120 and formed the government in Tamil Nadu. Joseph C. Vijay was eventually sworn in as the 9th Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on May 10, 2026.

In Kerala, the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) won 102 seats of 140 Assembly seats, surpassing its previous high of 99 in 2001. The Congress won 63 seats, delivering one of its strongest performances. The Left Democratic Front (LDF) was reduced to 35 seats. The BJP-led NDA won for the first time three seats in Kerala. The LDF's defeat in Kerala marks for the first time in 50 years that no state in India has any Communist political party in power. The UDF had vote share of 46.5%. On May 18, 2026, V.D. Satheesan was sworn in as the 24th Chief Minister of Kerala.

In West Bengal, the Bharatiya Janta Party won 207 seats (out of total 293 assembly seats), becoming the the first right-wing party to be elected in the state. It ended the 15-year rule of Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress' 15-year rule in the State. The combined voter turnout of phase-I and phase-II was 92.93%. The vote share of BJP was 45.9%. On May 9, 2026, Suwendu Adhikari took oath as the first BJP and 9th Chief Minister of West Bengal.

MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra Announces AI Policy 2026

On April 29, 2026, the Maharashtra Government declared the Maharashtra AI Policy 2026, intended to boost the use of Artificial Intelligence in industries, governance and public services across the state.

Key Highlights :

- It will be implemented on the lines of the 'India AI Mission.'
- The policy targets attracting investments worth ₹ 10 thousand crore and creating more than one and a half lakh job opportunities by 2031.
- It aims to promote research, innovation and responsible governance.
- The 'Maharashtra AI Mission', established under this policy, aims to train two lakh youth and professionals in AI.
- AI cities will be developed in five innovation areas and the State AI Data Exchange and Maharashtra Advanced Centre for Artificial Intelligence Training will also be established.
- It also aims to bring MSMEs into the field of AI by providing a 20 per cent subsidy on AI implementation costs to five thousand MSMEs, along with the establishment of a central platform called the 'Maha AI Tools Hub'.
- To strengthen the start-up ecosystem, the policy proposes a dedicated 'AI Startup Venture Fund' of ₹ 500 crore. It also aims to establish 12 AI incubators across the state.

MEGHALAYA

Meghalaya Declares Khasi and Garo as Official Languages Alongside English

On 27 April, 2026, the Governor of Meghalaya brought into force a landmark linguistic reform with the promulgation of the Meghalaya Official Languages Ordinance, 2026, officially recognising Khasi and Garo as the state's official languages alongside English. On 16 April, 2026, the Meghalaya Cabinet approved the decision to include Khasi and Garo as official languages.

Key Highlights :

- English, Khasi and Garo are declared the official languages to be used for all or any official purposes of the State of Meghalaya.
- English shall continue to be used in all civil and criminal courts throughout the State, ensuring continuity in judicial proceedings.
- At the district, sub-divisional and block levels, English and Khasi shall be used in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills Division, while English and Garo shall be used in the Garo Hills Division. English shall remain the language for inter-district communication.

- Legislative business will also continue under existing law, provided that proceedings in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly shall be transacted as per the provisions of the Meghalaya State Legislature (Continuance of the English Language) Act, 1980.
- With the promulgation of the new Ordinance, the Meghalaya State Language Act, 2005 has been repealed.

UTTAR PRADESH

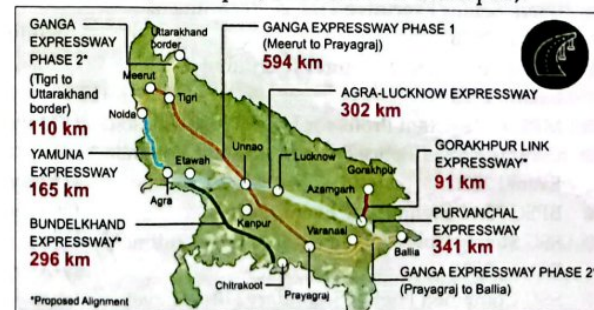
PM Narendra Modi Inaugurates 594 km Ganga Expressway

On April 29, 2026, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the 594-km long Ganga Expressway (Phase I) in Hardoi. Inaugurating the project built at an approximate cost of ₹ 36,230 crore, he said the six-lane access-controlled expressway was likely to significantly reduce travel time, making the journey from Meerut to Prayagraj possible in about 6 hours. The expressway would begin from Meerut and pass through Hapur, Bulandshahr, Amroha, Sambhal, Badaun, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Unnao, Raebareli and Pratapgarh before culminating in Prayagraj.

Features of Ganga Expressway	Details
Length	594 km
Number of Lanes	6 (provision for expansion to 8 lanes)
Maximum Speed	120 kmph
Key Feature	3.2 km-long airstrip near Shahjahan-pur for the emergency landing of Air Force aircraft
Other Features	Intelligent Traffic Management System (ITMS), CCTV surveillance, emergency call boxes, ambulances and patrolling units

Key Highlights :

- The Ganga Expressway has been shaped with the contribution of more than one lakh farmers from 12 districts.
- Integrated industrial clusters and logistics hubs are being developed at 27 locations, along the expressway. It will accelerate connectivity and will open up new initiatives for investment and employment.
- The Phase 2 of the Ganga Expressway was approved in January 2025. It will add spurs and extensions to the network, consisting of West Extension (Meerut to Uttarakhand border) and East Extension (Prayagraj to Ballia, passing through major cities like Varanasi, Mirzapur, Bhadohi and Ghazipur).



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Employment And Career News

Staff Selection Commission (SSC)

Invites online application for Combined Graduate Level Examination, 2026

Last Date to Apply : 22nd June, 2026.

Total Number of Vacancies : 12,256 approximately. Only male candidates are eligible for the vacancies, if any reported, in the Border Roads Organisations (BRO.) Reservation of posts as per norms determined by the Intending Ministries / Departments / Offices / Cadres, as per extant Government orders.

Age Limit (As on 1/08/2026) : Depending upon the posts, the limits of minimum and maximum age are 18-27 years, 20-30 years, 18-30 years

and 18-32 years. Age-relaxation conceded as per norms specified in the notification.

Educational Qualifications : For Junior Statistical Officer, Bachelor's Degree in any subject from a recognized University/Institute with at least 60% marks in Mathematics at 12th standard level or Bachelor's Degree in any subject with Statistics as one of the subjects at degree level is the minimum qualification.

For Statistical Investigator Grade-II, the minimum educational qualification is Bachelor degree in Statistics or Mathematics or Economics or Demography or Population Studies or Operation Research or Information Technology or Computer Science or Computer Engineering or Computer Technology or Computer Application or Data Science or Artificial Intelligence from

a recognized University or recognized Institute.

For Assistant Audit Officer (State Cadre) and Assistant Accounts Officer (State Cadre), Bachelor's Degree from a recognized University/Institute and proficiency in regional/state language is a minimum educational qualification.

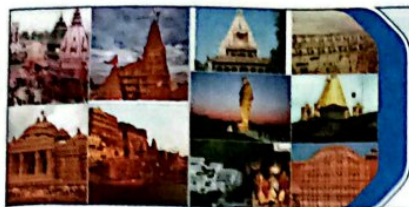
For all other posts, the minimum educational qualification is Bachelor's Degree from a recognized University or Institute in relevant discipline.

Selection Process : The Computer Based Examination will be conducted in two tiers : Tier I and Tier II. Tier-I will consist of Objective Type, Multiple choice questions. The questions will be set both in English and Hindi except for English Comprehension. Each question will carry

Continued on Page 46

FORTHCOMING COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS, 2026

● Chhattisgarh Pre. B.Ed. Entrance Exam., 2025	(11 June)	● MPPSC Assistant Professor Exam., 2026 (Phase-II)	(2 Aug.)
● BPSC AES Recruitment Exam., 2025	(11 June)	● UPSC Combined Medical Services (CMS) Recruitment Exam., 2026	(2 Aug.)
● Haryana Teacher Eligibility Test (HTET) Exam., 2025	(13-14 June)	● Indian Air Force AFCAT Recruitment Exam., II/2026	(8 Aug.)
● UPSC IES/ISS Recruitment Exam., 2026	(19-21 June)	● UPSC Civil Services (Main) Exam., 2026	(From 21 Aug.)
● NTA UGC-NET June Exam., 2026	(22-30 June)	● RPSC Statistical Officer Recruitment Exam., 2025	(30 Aug.)
● MPESB Hospital Assistant Recruitment Exam., 2026	(24 June)	● SSC Combined Graduate Level (CGL) Recruitment Exam., 2026 (Tier-I)	(Aug.-Sept.)
● Haryana Civil Services (Mains) Exam., 2026	(27-29 June)	● RPSC Assistant Prosecution Officer (APO) Recruitment Exam., 2026	(2 Sept.)
● RSSB Forester and Forest Ranger Recruitment Exam., 2026	(28 June)	● Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) September Exam., 2026	(6 Sept.)
● Bihar Police CBSC Constable Operator Recruitment Exam., 2026	(28 June)	● Madhya Pradesh State Services Main Exam., 2026	(7-12 Sept.)
● UPSSSC Pharmacist Recruitment Exam., 2026	(29 June)	● NDA & NA Exam. (II), 2026	(13 Sept.)
● RRB Junior Engineer (CBT-2) Recruitment Exam., 2025	(2 July)	● Combined Defence Service Exam. (II), 2026	(13 Sept.)
● UP Teachers Eligibility Test, 2025	(2-4 July)	● RPSC Factories & Boiler Inspector Recruitment Exam., 2025	(19 Sept.)
● Jharkhand Polytechnic Entrance Competitive Exam. 2026	(5 July)	● MPPSC Assistant Town Planner Recruitment Exam., 2026	(20 Sept.)
● BSNL Senior Executive Trainee Recruitment Exam., 2026	(5 July)	● RPSC Police Sub-Inspector/Platoon Commander Combined Recruitment Exam., 2021 (Re-Exam.)	(20 Sept.)
● Rajasthan Grade-2 Lecturer Recruitment Exam., 2025	(12-18 July)	● MPPSC State Forest Service (Main) Exam., 2026	(27 Sept.)
● MPPSC Assistant Professor Exam., 2026 (Phase-I)	(12 July)	● MPPSC Assistant District Public Prosecutor Exam., 2026	(18 Oct.)
● Central Armed Police Forces (Assistant Commandant) Exam., 2026	(19 July)	● UP Police Computer Operator Grade-A Recruitment Exam., 2025	(Oct.-Nov.)
● BPSC 72nd Preliminary Exam., 2026	(26 July)	● RPSC RAS (Pre.) Exam., 2026	(29 Nov.)
● SSC Stenographer Grade 'C' and 'D' Recruitment Exam., 2026	(July-Aug.)		
● SSC Combined Higher Secondary (10+2) Level Examination (Tier-I), 2026	(July-Sept.)		



Memorable Points

NATIONAL

- Recently, the Union Cabinet approved increase in strength of the Judges (excluding the CJI) of the Supreme Court of India from 33 to —37
 - ✎ On May 5, 2026, the Union Cabinet chaired by PM Narendra Modi approved the proposal for introducing 'The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026' in Parliament to amend 'The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956' for increasing the number of Judges of the Supreme Court of India by 4 from the present 33 to 37 (excluding the CJI).
- Who is the regional winner of the South Asia in the 2026 Cambridge Dedicated Teacher Awards ? —Soma Mandal
 - ✎ Soma Mandal, an Indian Science Teacher from Delhi, was announced as the regional winner for South Asia in the 2026 Cambridge Dedicated Teacher Awards. The International Education Group at Cambridge University Press & Assessment announced the award in recognition of her work in encouraging students to actively engage with environmental issues and take part in fight against climate change.
- Which entity recently announced the launch of Electronic Gold Receipts ? —National Stock Exchange
 - ✎ Recently, the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) announced the launch of Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs), a new segment aimed at bringing greater transparency, efficiency and formalisation of India's gold market. EGRs are dematerialised securities that represent ownership of physical gold, which is stored in SEBI accredited vaults and held electronically through depositories.
- Who has been recently appointed as the Chairperson of Central Board of Film Certification ? —Shashi Shekhar Vempati
 - ✎ The Government of India, through a notification issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting dated May 6, 2026, appointed Shri Shashi Shekhar Vempati as the Chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), for the period of three years from the date of joining. He succeeded Prasoon Joshi who recently took over as the Chairman of Prasar Bharati.
- India's first pearl farming cluster has been declared in —Hazaribagh, Jharkhand
 - ✎ Under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, Hazaribagh in Jharkhand has been officially notified as India's 1st Pearl farming cluster. It will be developed in collaboration with the Government of Jharkhand. National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) has reported that 3.02 lakh pearl were produced from Hazaribagh District of Jharkhand.
- India's first Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) tolling system has been launched in which state ? —Gujarat
 - ✎ As on May 1, 2026, the Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari announced the launch of India's first Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) barrier-less tolling system at the Chorayasi Toll Plaza on the Surat-Bharuch section of NH-48 in Gujarat. The state-of-the-art system enables seamless toll collection without requiring vehicles to stop, using advanced technologies such as Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and FASTag.
- India recently achieved a Guinness World Record for unfurling the largest Indian national flag underwater at —Radhanagar Beach
 - ✎ India recently achieved a Guinness World Record for unfurling the largest Indian national flag underwater at Radhanagar Beach in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. A team of 223 divers participated in this remarkable feat, showcasing precision, courage and national pride.
- India's first fully paperless state judiciary is —Sikkim
 - ✎ On May 1, 2026, Chief Justice of India, Surya Kant, declared Sikkim as India's first paperless judiciary state. Sikkim CM Prem Singh Tamang Golay termed it as a historic step towards building a faster, transparent and technology-driven justice system.
- Recently, who became the youngest swimmer to cross the Palk Strait ? —Ishank Singh
 - ✎ As on May 1, 2026, Ishank Singh, a seven-year-old boy from Jharkhand became the youngest swimmer to cross the Palk Strait, completing the 29-km stretch between Sri Lanka and India in a record time for his age category. He finished the swim from Talaimannar in Sri Lanka to Dhanushkodi in Tamil Nadu in 9 hours and 50 minutes. The feat was officially recognised by the Universal Records Forum. The crossing was the part of 'Mission Samandar.'
- The first person from the North East to be appointed as a full-time member of the NITI Aayog ? —Dr. Joram Aniya
 - ✎ As on May 2026, PM Narendra Modi approved the appointment of Dr. R. Balasubramaniam and Dr. Joram Aniya as full-time members of NITI Aayog. Dr. Joram Aniya, the first person from Arunachal Pradesh and the entire North East region to hold this position, is an academic, researcher and writer from Arunachal Pradesh, with more than 18 years of experience in teaching and public policy.
- India's first digital grievance redressal system for gig workers was recently launched by —Karnataka
 - ✎ The Karnataka government recently operationalized a specialised grievance redressal mechanism for platform-based gig workers—Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System (IPGRS). The mechanism—a first of its kind in India has been developed by the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers' Board in collaboration with the Department of e-Governance.

- Recently, RBI launched which mission for capacity building of urban cooperative sector ? —Mission SAKSHAM
- ✎ Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched Mission SAKSHAM for capacity building of the Urban Co-operative Banking sector. It aims to enhance managerial and operational capabilities, improve compliance culture and strengthen institutional resilience across UCBs.

INTERNATIONAL

- Recently, the United States proposed to increase the minimum wages paid to hire an employee under the H1B visa programme by —30%
 - ✎ The US administration recently proposed to increase the minimum wages paid to hire an employee under the H1B visa programme by 30 per cent over the previously fixed limits. The move is intended to help prevent foreigners from undercutting salary of US nationals.
- Who has been recently sworn in as Hungary's new Prime Minister ? —Peter Magyar
 - ✎ Peter Magyar, a centre-right politician, was sworn in as Hungary's new Prime Minister after winning a decisive victory over nationalist leader Viktor Orbán in the April 12, 2026 election. The result ended Orbán's 16 years in power and gave Magyar's Tisza Party a constitutional majority.
- The first Caribbean nation to adopt India's UPI platform is —Trinidad and Tobago
 - ✎ Trinidad and Tobago is the first country in the Caribbean region to agree to roll out India's United Payment Interface platform for seamless payments. The bilateral trade between two countries has witnessed a significant growth, almost doubling in the last five years to now reach a level of 350 million dollars. Energy has emerged as a central pillar of this engagement in a turbulent world with volatile commodity markets.
- Name the South Korea's first humanoid robot monk —Gabi
 - ✎ As on May 6, 2026, South Korea introduced its first humanoid robot monk, named Gabi. The robot monk was introduced at a Buddhist ceremony at Jogye Temple in Seoul. Gabi, the name derived from references to Siddhartha and the Korean word for mercy, is a 130-centimetre tall robot, developed on China's Unitree G1 platform.
- Who has been recently approved as the new Prime Minister by the Bulgarian Parliament ? —Rumen Radev
 - ✎ On May 8, 2026, Bulgaria's Parliament formally approved Rumen Radev as the new Prime Minister in a bid to end political instability and spur economic development in the EU member country. The chamber voted 124-70 with 36 abstentions to elect Radev, a 62-year-old former President, as Prime Minister.
- Recently, which Indian-origin Republican leader won Republican Party nomination for Ohio Governorship ? —Vivek Ramaswamy
 - ✎ In the USA, Indian-origin Republican leader Vivek Ramaswamy secured the Republican nomination for Ohio Governor with a commanding 87 per cent vote share, defeating Casey Putsch. He will face Democrat Amy Acton in November, 2026. If elected, Ramaswamy could become the third Indian American governor in US history after fellow Republicans Bobby Jindal in Louisiana and Nikki Haley in South Carolina.
- Two Indian journalists who won the 2026 Pulitzer Prize in Illustrated Reporting and Commentary are —Suparna Sharma and Anand RK
 - ✎ Anand RK and Suparna Sharma, along with Natalie Obiko Pearson, were announced as the winners in the Illustrated Reporting and Commentary category of the 2026 Pulitzer Prize for the report they produced for Bloomberg. Aniruddha Ghosal, a Hanoi-based reporter, was a winner in the International Reporting category for an investigation into the US Border Patrol's secret use of mass-surveillance tools originally created in Silicon Valley and further developed in China.
- 'Icons of India' exhibition was recently launched by —Madame Tussauds
 - ✎ The Madame Tussauds has launched a new 'Icons of India' exhibition at its London headquarters for the months of May and June, uniting the wax models of celebrities from the world of cinema and cricket. The limited-time experience includes 13 figures of leading Indian actors and cricketers.
- 2026 World Snooker Championship was won by —Wu Yize
 - ✎ Wu Yize defeated Shaun Murphy 18-17 to win the World Snooker Championship after an epic finale at the Crucible. He became the second consecutive Chinese player to conquer the Crucible. He was also the fourth consecutive first-time winner, after Luca Brecel (2023), Kyren Wilson (2024) and Zhao Xintong (2025).
- Which country topped the World Press Freedom Index 2026 ? —Norway
 - ✎ In the World Press Freedom Index 2026, Norway held the top spot for the tenth consecutive year, while Eritrea came in last for the third year in a row. India was ranked 157th in the World Press Freedom Index 2026, released by Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF), also known as *Reporters Sans Frontières*. The theme of the World Press Freedom Day 2026 (May 3) was "Shaping a Future at Peace : Promoting Press Freedom for Human Rights, Development, and Security."
- According to UNESCO's People and Nature Report 2026, nearly what percentage of UNESCO-designated sites are under significant environmental stress ? —90%
 - ✎ According to UNESCO's People and Nature Report 2026, nearly the 90% of UNESCO-designated sites are under significant environmental stress. These includes the World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves and the Global Geoparks which are considered as among the most protected and ecologically valuable on the Earth.
- What was the theme of 2026 International Day for Biological Diversity ? —Acting Locally for Global Impact
 - ✎ The theme for the 2026 International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May) was 'Acting locally for global impact', which emphasizes that halting and reversing biodiversity loss depends on community-level actions that contribute to the goals of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.



Science & Technology

Hantavirus

Hantavirus belong to the family *Hantaviridae*, within the order *Bunyvirales*. They are zoonotic viruses that naturally infect rodents and are occasionally transmitted to humans. Although many hantavirus species have been identified worldwide, only a limited number are known to cause human disease. They are typically associated with a specific rodent reservoir species, causing long-term infections.

Key Characteristics :

- Hantaviruses present in North, Central and South America are known to cause Hantavirus Cardiopulmonary Syndrome (HCPS), affecting heart and lungs. The Andes virus is part of this family and is known to cause limited human-to-human transmission among close and prolonged contacts, primarily in Argentina and Chile.
- Hantaviruses found in Europe and Asia are known to cause haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS), which primarily affects the kidneys and blood vessels. Human-to-human transmission has not been documented in this part of the world.
- Worldwide, it is estimated that from 10,000 to over 1,00,000 infections occur each year, with the largest burden in Asia and Europe. The case fatality rate of disease is between 1-15% in Asia and Europe, and up to 50% in the Americas.
- Transmission to humans occurs from contact with contaminated urine, droppings or saliva of infected rodents.
- There is no licenced specific antiviral treatment or vaccine for hantavirus infection. Care is supportive and focusses on close clinical monitoring and management of respiratory, cardiac and kidney complications.
- Preventing hantavirus infection depends primarily on reducing contacts between people and rodents.

Hantavirus Outbreak 2026

- An outbreak of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS) was first reported to the World Health Organization on May 2, 2026. The outbreak was caused by the Andes virus.
- The outbreak is related with cruise ship MV Hondius which departed from Ushuaia, Argentina, on April 1, 2026 and visited remote areas including Antarctica, South Georgia Island, Tristan da Cunha, Saint Helena and Ascension Island.
- As of 13 May, 2026, a total of 11 cases (eight confirmed, one inconclusive and two probable cases), including three deaths (two confirmed and one probable), had been reported.

In India, the Union Health Ministry has activated precautionary surveillance measures amid low Global Risk Assessment of Hantavirus cases in the country. The surveillance is being carried out in coordination with the National Centre for Disease Control, Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme, World Health Organization and other international health authorities. On May 8, 2026, Director of the ICMR's National Institute of Virology Dr. Naveen Kumar said that the two cases of Indian nationals reportedly infected with the hantavirus aboard a cruise ship, appear to be isolated ones and there was no immediate public health threat to India.

Vikram VT21

The Vikram VT21 platform has been designed and developed by DRDO's Vehicle Research Development Laboratory in collaboration with Tata Advanced Systems Limited and Bharat Forge Limited. It is an Advanced Armoured Platform in both tracked and wheeled variants, marking a key milestone in indigenous military development.

Key Highlights :

- The Vikram VT21 project constitutes development of two platforms: Advanced Armoured Platform Wheeled (AAP-Wh) and Advanced Armoured Platform-Tracked (AAP-Tr).
- Both the tracked and wheeled variants are equipped with an indigenously developed 30 mm crewless turret, along with a 7-62 mm PKT gun. The system is also configured to launch anti-tank guided missiles, enhancing its combat versatility.
- The platform combines mobility, firepower and protection features. It is powered by a high-output engine paired with automatic transmission, offering high speed and strong obstacle-crossing ability.
- It comes with STANAG level 4 and 5 protection (NATO defined standards), with modular blast and ballistic shielding. Strong power-to-weight ratio of the platforms allow it to have better speed and agility.
- The vehicle is amphibious and equipped with hydro jets, enabling it to cross water obstacles with ease and expand its operational flexibility.
- Currently, the indigenous content stands at 65%, with plans to increase it to 90%.
- It has been built to meet the evolving operational needs of the Indian Armed Forces, with capabilities suited for both Infantry Combat Vehicle and Armoured Personnel Carrier roles.

Mission Drishti

As on May 3, 2026, Mission Drishti, the world's first OptoSAR satellite developed by Bengaluru-based space startup GalaxEye was successfully launched aboard a Falcon 9 by SpaceX from Vandenberg, California.

Key Highlights :

- Mission Drishti is India's largest privately developed Earth observation satellite.
- It is the world's first OptoSAR satellite combining optical cameras and all-weather radar.
- It integrates Electro-Optical (EO) and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) sensors into a single operational platform, the first satellite globally to do so. It can capture both optical and SAR images of the same location at the same time.
- The integration of EO and SAR enables all-weather, day-and-night imaging capabilities. It also overcomes the long-standing limitations of conventional systems and enables more reliable and consistent data acquisition across diverse environmental conditions.
- The proprietary technology stack, a key innovation of Mission Drishti, enables the simultaneous synchronization of optical and SAR sensors images captured from different angles.
- It weighs 190 kilograms.
- It is a dual-use Earth observation Satellite, supporting use cases across defence, agriculture, disaster management, maritime monitoring and infrastructure planning.

Fibre Optic Drones

Fibre Optic Drones are specialized UAVs that integrate fiber optic technology to provide high-speed, reliable data transmission over vast distances. Unlike traditional wireless system, they operate on optical fiber cables which eliminates the need of problems associated with radio frequency interference and offer a much higher bandwidth. The drone transmits data through optical fiber, ensuring the highest quality and fastest data transmission, critical for industries where real-time feedback is necessary.

Why they are Game-Changer in Modern Warfare ?

- Ability to conduct real-time monitoring.
- Unlike radio signals that degrade over distance, fiber optics can maintain high data integrity, ensuring efficient communication even in remote or urban locations.
- Vast amounts of data can be transmitted without loss of quality, offering exceptional bandwidth and low latency compared to traditional wireless drones.
- They can bypass traditional communication barriers such as radio waves and electromagnetic interference.
- Unlike FPV drones or other wireless systems, fiber optic drones do not rely on radio waves that can be jammed by electronic warfare tactics.
- They can be deployed in large numbers for successful strikes and strategic missions without the risk of signal degradation.

Cerium-Magnesium Chancesite

Recently, scientists of China's Geological survey have discovered and identified the 11th new lunar mineral, named Cerium-Magnesium Chancesite.

PD/July/2026/44

Key Characteristics :

- The newly discovered material exhibits a distinctive fluorescence effect.
- The grain size ranges from roughly three to 25 micrometers—smaller than the diameter of a human hair.
- It is colourless, transparent and structurally fragile.
- Its rare earth element ratios, along with its magnesium and iron content, offers valuable clues about the processes that shaped the Moon's surface and interior.

Future Implications

- The fluorescence effect has practical applications in advanced technologies, particularly in the development of next-generation LED materials.
- Variations in its crystal structure could help researchers better understand how lunar minerals form and evolve under extreme conditions.
- The mineral's unique structure and composition could serve as a reference for synthesising new materials with tailored properties, potentially benefiting industries ranging from electronics to energy.
- The unusual crystalline structure indicate that it has been subjected to geologic processes not found on the Earth. It provides scientists with a unique opportunity to study the types of events that happen in outer space.

NESCOD : An Electricity-Free Cooling System

NESCOD, introduced by the researchers at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia, is a passive cooling technology which leverages the thermodynamic properties of endothermic dissolution.

Key Highlights :

1. Two-Stage Thermodynamic Cycle :

- ❑ **In first stage :** Dissolution cooling in which a specific salt-ammonium nitrate is dissolved in water, which is an endothermic reaction. It absorbs heat from the surrounding which lowers the temperature of the liquid.
- ❑ **In second stage :** The 3D solar generator uses sunlight to turn water in the salt solution into vapour. After vaporization, ammonium nitrate forms crystals again, recharging the system for another cooling cycle.

2. Advantages : Eliminates the need of cooling-related electricity costs. By optimizing radiative heat transfer and material efficiency, it establishes a resilient framework for sustainable registration. It is particularly useful in dry areas where water conservation is crucial. It also offers a transformative solution for food preservation and human comfort.

PCOS Renamed as PMOS

PCOS (Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome) has officially been renamed as PMOS (Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome), which better reflects the condition's complex, multi-system nature.

PCOS (Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome) has been widely used to describe one of the most common hormonal conditions affecting women of reproductive age. In this condition, the ovaries produce excess androgens (hormones that regulate masculine characteristics), leading to irregular periods, ovarian cysts, acne, weight gain and fertility difficulties.

Significance of Renaming

- The term 'PCOS' focussed mainly on the ovaries and did not adequately represent the broader nature of the condition. The renaming of PCOS to PMOS reflects the understanding that the condition is a multisystem disorder.
- PMOS highlights its multisystem nature, including metabolic features such as obesity, dysglycaemia (abnormal blood sugar level), Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia (high bad cholesterol and triglyceride levels), metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) or fatty liver, cardiovascular disease and sleep apnoea.
- The nomenclature could encourage earlier screening for obesity, diabetes, hypertension and other metabolic complications, while promoting a more multidisciplinary and preventive approach to management.
- It will improve awareness among patients and healthcare providers, encourage earlier recognition of symptoms and reduce stigma associated with infertility, weight gain, acne and hirsutism.

Atmosphere Detected Around Trans-Neptunian Object

According to a recently published study in 'Nature Astronomy,' detection of a thin atmosphere around the trans-Neptunian object (612533) 2002 XV93 has been reported. It is a rare discovery of atmosphere in trans-Neptunian object, as previously Pluto was the only known trans-Neptunian object with an atmosphere.

Trans-Neptunian objects (TNOs) are celestial bodies that orbit the Sun beyond Neptune's orbit, which is located approximately 4.3 billion kilometers. The Kuiper Belt is a doughnut-shaped region of icy objects beyond the orbit of Neptune. It is home to Pluto and most of the known dwarf planets and some comets. TNO (612533) 2002 XV93 is located in distant Kuiper Belt.

Key Highlights :

- According to long-held scientific belief, stronger gravity and volatile-rich surfaces enables TNOs such as Pluto to maintain atmosphere. However, TNO (612533) 2002 XV93 is 500 km in diameter and is much smaller than Pluto. Its weak gravity and frigid environment make it nearly impossible for gases to remain trapped around it for a longer period. Scientific calculations indicate that any atmosphere should only survive for less than 1,000 years unless constantly replenished.
- Scientists offer two explanations. First explanation is that material from deep inside 2002 XV93 object may have recently reached the surface through geological activity, releasing trapped gases into space. Second

explanation is that a comet or other impactor struck 2002 XV93, temporarily releasing gas and dust that created the observed atmosphere.

- If either of the two explanations are correct, it implies that the outer solar system is more dynamic than previously believed.

Lumira_E40I50 : India's First Germanium-Free Thermal Imaging Payload for Drones

Recently, Hyderabad-based EON Space Labs launched the Lumira_E40I50, an indigenous electro-optical and infrared imaging system designed for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions. The system can reportedly detect humans from up to 2 km and vehicles from 8 km away using onboard Edge AI capabilities.

Strategic Significance

- It is an indigenously developed infrared imaging payload for drones that eliminates the need of Germanium, which is one of the most critical materials in thermal optics.
- Most military-grade thermal cameras rely heavily on Germanium due to their excellent transmission properties in the thermal spectrum. However, China, which dominates the global Germanium supply has tightened export controls. It has led to huge surge in prices.
- India currently imports nearly all of its germanium requirements, leaving its defence sector vulnerable to geopolitical tensions and supply disruptions.

Design Principles of Lumira_E40I50

EonSpacelabs claims to have replaced germanium with chalcogenide glass—a specialised material capable of transmitting infrared radiation while being easier to manufacture domestically. Unlike conventional glass, which blocks infrared light, chalcogenide glass can function effectively in long-wave infrared imaging systems used in military drones.

Maintaining optical clarity across extreme environmental conditions is one of the most challenging aspects of airborne thermal imaging. The challenge has been addressed through a specialized 'thermalised design architecture', which compensates for temperature-induced variations.

It incorporates AI-driven target recognition which uses spatial and temporal pattern recognition to differentiate between human activity, vehicles and environmental noise with greater accuracy.

Pixxel to Launch India's First Orbital Data Centre Satellite

On May 4, 2026, Pixxel announced a strategic partnership with Sarvam to develop and build India's first orbital data centre satellite, named Pathfinder.

Key Highlights :

- Pathfinder, a 200 kg-class satellite, will host data-centre-class GPUs, the same generation of hardware as on-ground data centres that power frontier AI training and inference.

- Under the partnership, Pixxel will design, build, launch and operate the Pathfinder satellite. Sarvam will provide the AI backbone, handling both training and inference directly in orbit, with full-stack language models running on board the satellite.
- The demonstrator will also carry Pixxel's flagship hyperspectral imaging camera, making it among the first satellites in the world capable of capturing high-fidelity hyperspectral data and analysing it directly in orbit using foundation models.
- Instead of sending large volumes of raw imagery back to Earth for processing, the system can identify patterns, detect changes and generate insights in real time.
- This will significantly reduce the delay between data capture and decision-making, enabling faster responses across environmental monitoring, resource management and critical infrastructure tracking. India-built AI models will run on an India-built satellite, with both training and inference happening directly in orbit, without any dependence on foreign cloud or ground infrastructure.

AI-Enabled Systems Introduced by IMD to Provide Hyper-Local Weather Forecasts

On May 12, 2026, two advanced weather forecast products developed under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) were launched for delivering hyper-local, impact-based and AI-driven weather services across the country. The systems have been developed jointly by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF).

The Two Products Launched were :

1. The first ever Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven system by India Meteorological Department (IMD) in the form of AI-enabled 'Forecast of Monsoon Advance over Different Parts of the Country'. It will provide probabilistic forecasts of monsoon progression every Wednesday up to four weeks in advance. The product has been designed to support farmers across 16 States and more than 3,000 sub-districts through the dissemination framework of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare. It combines AI-based forecasting models, extended range prediction systems and statistical techniques to provide operationally useful forecasts for agricultural planning and preparedness.
2. High Spatial Resolution Rainfall Forecast for Uttar Pradesh has been developed as a pilot service to generate rainfall forecasts at 1-km spatial resolution up to 10 days in advance. The system uses advanced AI-driven downscaling techniques and integrates data from Automatic Rain Gauges (ARGs), Automatic Weather Stations (AWSs), Doppler Weather Radars and satellite-based rainfall datasets. It will be useful for agriculture, water resources, renewable energy, urban planning, disaster management and infrastructure sectors. It will help farmers to take more informed decisions relating to sowing, irriga-

tion, crop protection and harvest planning with far greater local precision.

Recent Advances in India's Weather Forecast

- Nearly 40 per cent improvement in forecast accuracy for severe weather events during the recent decade compared to the previous decade.
- Cyclone track, intensity and landfall forecasts for 72 hours have improved by nearly 30 to 35 per cent during the last five years.
- Seasonal forecast errors have reduced significantly.

Daraxonrasib

Recently, Revolution Medicines announced positive results from its phase III clinical trial of Daraxonrasib, that targets RAS G12 mutations (G12, G13, Q61) and wild-type RAS in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted Daraxonrasib 'Breakthrough Therapy Designation' and 'Orphan Drug Designation' for patients with previously treated metastatic pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma harbouring RAS mutations.

How it Works ?

- Daraxonrasib works by targeting a wide range of the RAS family of proteins, including KRAS, when they are in their 'on' state, signalling the cell to divide.
- Daraxonrasib binds to this active form indirectly by first binding another protein called Cyclophilin-A and locking this protein with KRAS in a nonfunctional state.
- This prevents it from having any further interactions, thus shutting off the uncontrolled cell division.
- Unlike previous drugs like sotorasib and adagrasib, which worked on single mutations, Daraxonrasib inhibits multiple RAS variants, making it useful to treat a wide variety of cancers.

The KRAS protein—the product of the KRAS gene—exists in two states, an 'off' state that suppresses cell division and an 'on' state that promotes it. KRAS in its 'on' state, drive continuous and uncontrolled cell division, leading to several types of cancers, including pancreatic, colorectal and lung cancers.

Pharman

Continued from Page 40

2 marks. There will be negative marking of 0.50 marks for each wrong answer.

Tier-II will include Paper-I, Paper-II and Paper-III. Paper-I is compulsory for all the posts. It will be mandatory for the candidates to qualify all the Sections of Paper-I separately.

Paper-II will be for only those candidates who have applied and shortlisted in Tier-I for the posts of Junior Statistical Officer (JSO) and Statistical Investigator Grade-II.

Paper-III will be for only those candidates who are shortlisted in Tier-I for the posts of Assistant Audit Officer/ Assistant Accounts Officer.

How to Apply : Applications must be submitted only in online mode at the new website of SSC Headquarter i.e., <https://ssc.gov.in> or through mySSC mobile application.

Pharman



Economic Scenario

- Top 5 States Contribute Nearly 48% of India's GDP
- Top-Ranked States in the Composite Investment-Readiness Ranking
- Union Cabinet Approves 'Cotton Productivity Mission'
- India Gets its UPI for EV Charging in the Form of 'Unified Bharat e-Charge'
- Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for Kharif Crops for Marketing Season 2026-27
- Haryana Leads in Informal Jobs Growth; Gujarat Sees Contraction : ASUSE (2023-24)
- Union Cabinet Approves Emergency Credit Guarantee Scheme 5-0
- IIP (Base Year 2011-12) Based Industrial Production Grew by 4.1% in FY 2025-26
- Geothermal Energy has 450 GW Power Potential in India
- Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects
- Centre Notifies 1% Construction Welfare Cess
- 'Women and Men in India 2025' : National Statistical Office (NSO)'s Latest Report
- Net FDI Rises in FY26 on Higher Gross Inflows; Portfolio Investment Flows Weaken
- RBI to Transfer Record ₹ 2.87 Trillion Dividend to Government for FY26
- Public Sector Banks Posted an All-Time High Net Profit of ₹ 1.98 Lakh Crore in FY 2025-26
- Government Imposes Curbs on Silver and Gold Imports After Sharp Rise in Shipments
- Government Bans Sugar Exports Till September 30, 2026
- Pride of Hills : Special Development Assistance for the Hill States Scheme
- COSOP Launched for 2026-2033
- ICMR-ICAR Launches 'SEHAT'
- Telangana Slips to Second Spot in Per Capita Income as Karnataka Takes Lead
- LEADS 2025
- India-US Framework on "Securing of Supply in the Mining and Processing of Critical Minerals and Rare Earths"

Top 5 States Contribute Nearly 48% of India's GDP

India's five largest states—Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat—contributed nearly 48 per cent of the country's GDP in FY2025, according to a white paper released by Client Associates, a private wealth management firm. The bottom 10 states together accounted for less than 3 per cent of the GDP.

Maharashtra led with a 13.3 per cent share of national GDP, followed by Tamil Nadu (9.2 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (8.7 per cent), Karnataka (8.5 per cent) and Gujarat (8.2 per cent). Tamil Nadu clocked the highest year-on-year growth of the GSDP among the top five at 16 per cent in FY2025.

India's nominal GDP crossed ₹ 340.7 lakh crore in FY2025, making it the fifth-largest economy in the world, with real GDP growth of 7.1 per cent. However, the report flags that this headline figure masks sharp state-level disparities. Maharashtra's economy is 133 times larger

than Mizoram's. Goa's per capita income is more than eight times that of Bihar.

Top-Ranked States in the Composite Investment-Readiness Ranking

In the composite investment-readiness rankings, released by Client Associates Gujarat emerged as the top-ranked state, followed by Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. Gujarat's top position was driven by a combination of factors. The Gujarat recorded one of India's lowest unemployment rates at 2.7 per cent, supported by a diversified industrial base spanning chemicals, textiles, diamonds, pharmaceuticals and petrochemicals. Gujarat's fiscal deficit stood at just 1.86 per cent of SGDP, among the lowest nationally.

On foreign direct investment, India attracted ₹ 4.22 lakh crore in FDI equity inflows in FY2025, a 14.7 per cent increase over FY2024, though Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Delhi and Tamil Nadu

Widening Wealth Gap

State	GDP FY25 (₹ Lakh Crore)	% of National GDP	GDP FY24 (₹ Lakh Crore)	Y-O-Y Growth %
Maharashtra	45.3	13.3	40.6	11.7
Tamil Nadu	31.2	9.2	26.9	16.0
Uttar Pradesh	29.8	8.7	26.4	12.7
Karnataka	28.8	8.5	25.6	12.8
Gujarat	27.9	8.2	25.6	8.9
West Bengal	18.2	5.3	16.5	9.9
Rajasthan	17.0	5.0	15.2	12.0
Telangana	16.4	4.8	14.6	12.2
Andhra Pradesh	15.9	4.7	14.2	12.0
Madhya Pradesh	15.0	4.4	13.5	11.0
Kerala	12.5	3.7	11.4	10.0
Delhi	12.2	3.6	11.1	9.2
Haryana	12.1	3.6	10.9	11.8
Bihar	9.9	2.9	8.8	13.1
Goa	1.2	0.4	1.1	13.9

Source : National Statistical Office, State GDP at current prices. FY = April-March

captured 83.3 per cent of total inflows.

The report flags a widening prosperity gap. Sikkim and Goa recorded per capita incomes of approximately ₹ 5.88 lakh and ₹ 5.86 lakh respectively, against Bihar's ₹ 69,321—a gap of more than eight times. Only 16 of 30 states exceeded the national average of ₹ 2.58 lakh.

On growth velocity, Assam led all states with a five-year nominal GDP CAGR of 17.3 per cent, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Meghalaya at around 15.3 per cent each. Uttar Pradesh recorded a five-year nominal CAGR of 15.3 per cent, which the report describes as a structural inflection rather than a cyclical bounce, driven by the NIVESH MITRA single-window portal, land record digitisation, and the state's emergence as a logistics and defence manufacturing corridor.

The report clusters states into four tiers—established anchors, high-potential performers, reform opportunities and states requiring fiscal rehabilitation with Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Jammu & Kashmir flagged for elevated debt and fiscal stress.

Union Cabinet Approves 'Cotton Productivity Mission'

The Union Cabinet on May 5, 2026 has approved ₹ 5659.22 crore for Cotton Productivity Mission (2026-27 to 2030-31) to address the bottlenecks, declining growth and quality concerns in the cotton sector of India.

Key Targets

- Increasing cotton productivity from 400 kg/hectare to 755 kg/hectare by 2031.
- Producing 49.8 million bales, each bale containing 170 kg of cotton.
- To reduce wastage loss than 2%.
- To benefit 3.2 million farmers.
- Large scale adoption of existing and latest crop production technologies through KVKs and agricultural universities.

Key feature of CPM are following:

I. This Mission is in line with the Government of India's 5-F vision of

Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign.

II. Cotton Productivity Mission focusses on the following key aspects:

- Developing high yielding, climate-resistant and pest-resistant seeds and other production/protection technologies.
- Expanding advanced cotton production technologies like High Density Planting System (HDPS), Shallow Planting (CS), Integrated Cotton Management and promoting Extra Long Staple Cotton (ELS).
- To improve cotton quality through capacity building and promote modernization of ginning and processing factories including adoption of best processing practices.
- Strengthening cotton testing infrastructure across the country with modern, standardized and accredited facilities to ensure reliable quality assessment and global benchmarking.
- To establish Indian cotton as a premium, sustainable and globally trusted product through strong branding and traceability initiatives under Kasturi Cotton India.
- Empowering farmers through digital integration of market mandis, enabling transparent pricing, direct market access and better profit realization through e-platform.
- Promote cotton waste recycling and circular economy systems to enhance resource efficiency, reduce environmental impact and generate additional value sources for the industry.
- Diversify India's fibre base, including natural fibers such as flax, ramie, sisal, milkweed, bamboo and banana, promote eco-friendly textile production and innovations, strategically integrate and promote cotton as a complement, and adapt India's textile sector to changing global demands.

III. The Mission will be implemented jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and the Ministry of Textiles.

IV. It will involve 10 institutes of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), one institute of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and 10 All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) centers operating in various State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) in major cotton-producing states.

V. Initially, the focus will be on 140 districts in 14 states through the Department of Agriculture and ICAR to disseminate technologies and establish 2,000 ginning/ processing plants.

India Gets its UPI for EV Charging in the Form of 'Unified Bharat e-Charge'

Union Heavy Industries Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy on May 12, 2026 unveiled Unified Bharat e-Charge (UBC), a national platform, described as the 'UPI for EV charging' that will allow electric vehicle users to locate, book and pay across charging networks operated by BPCL, Indian Oil, HPCL, state agencies and private charge point operators through a single interoperable interface.

Backed by the Government of India and supported by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), Unified Bharat e-Charge is designed as a 'one nation, one app' system for EV charging. Built on open protocols and developed by Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL), the platform will display real-time charger availability, ownership, power output and location, enabling users to access any participating charger regardless of who owns the station.

Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for Kharif Crops for Marketing Season 2026-27

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on May 13, 2026 approved the increase in the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for 14 Kharif Crops for Marketing Season 2026-27.

The increase in the MSP of Kharif Crops for Marketing Season



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2026-27 aims to ensure remunerative prices to the growers for their produce. The highest absolute increase in MSP over the previous year has been recommended for Sunflower Seed (₹ 622 per quintal) followed by Cotton (₹ 557 per quintal), Nigerseed (₹ 515 per quintal) and Sesamum (₹ 500 per quintal).

Haryana Leads in Informal Jobs Growth; Gujarat Sees Contraction : ASUSE (2023-24)

According to the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) for 2023-24 (October 2023-September 2024) and 2025 (January-

December), among major states employing more than 2 million workers, unincorporated non-agricultural employment in Haryana grew at the fastest pace in 2025, while Gujarat saw the sharpest contraction.

While such employment in Haryana grew 29.8 per cent to 3.1 million in 2025, Gujarat saw a

Minimum Support Prices for All Kharif Crops for Marketing Season 2026-27

(₹ per quintal)

S. No.	Crops		MSP 2026-27	Cost* KMS 2026-27	Margin over cost (%)	MSP		MS MSP Increase in 2026-27	
						2025-26	2013-14	Over 2025-26	Over 2013-14
Cereals									
1.	Paddy	Common	2441	1627	50	2369	1310	72	1131
		Grade A^	2461	—	—	2389	1345	72	1116
			— 83%						
2.	Jowar	Hybrid	4023	2682	50	3699	1500	324	2523
		Maldandi	4073	—	—	3749	1520	324	2553
		^	— 168%						
3.	Bajra		2900	1858	56	2775	1250	125	1650
4.	Ragi		5205	3470	50	4886	1500	319	3705
			— 247%						
5.	Maize		2410	1544	56	2400	1310	10	1100
			— 84%						
Pulses									
6.	Tur / Arhar		8450	5496	54	8000	4300	450	4150
			— 97%						
7.	Moong		8780	5438	61	8768	4500	12	4280
			— 95%						
8.	Urad		8200	5418	51	7800	4300	400	3900
			— 91%						
Oilseeds									
9.	Groundnut		7517	5011	50	7263	4000	254	3517
			— 88%						
10.	Sunflower Seed		8343	5562	50	7721	3700	622	4643
			— 125%						
11.	Soybean (Yellow)		5708	3805	50	5328	2560	380	3148
			— 123%						
12.	Sesamum		10346	6897	50	9846	4500	500	5846
			— 130%						
13.	Nigerseed		10052	6701	50	9537	3500	515	6552
			— 187%						
Commercial									
14.	Cotton	(Medium Staple)	8267	5511	50	7710	3700	557	4567
			— 123%						
		(Long Staple) ^	8667	—	—	8110	4000	557	4667
									— 117%

*Refers to cost which includes all paid out costs such as those incurred on account of hired human labour, bullock labour/machine labour, rent paid for leased in land, expenses incurred on use of material inputs like seeds, fertilizers, manures, irrigation charges, depreciation on implements and farm buildings, interest on working capital, diesel/electricity for operation of pump sets etc., miscellaneous expenses and imputed value of family labour.

^ Cost data are not separately compiled for Paddy (Grade A), Jowar (Maldandi) and Cotton (Long staple).

decline of 12.6 per cent to 8 million during the same period.

Uttar Pradesh, which anchors the country's informal workforce with 18.6 million workers in 2025, saw employment grow 16 per cent and added the largest absolute number of jobs among states at 2.56 million. Jharkhand (19.4 per cent), Rajasthan (15.3 per cent), and West Bengal (10.4 per cent) also posted strong employment gains, with West Bengal's 13.3 million workers making it the second-largest informal employer in the country in 2025.

Apart from Gujarat, Maharashtra the third-largest informal employer also shed workers, with employment falling 3.7 per cent to 11.7 million. Employment in Kerala (-4.95 per cent) and Odisha (-3.04 per cent) also contracted in 2025.

Among major states with more than 1 million establishments, Haryana posted the sharpest expansion in establishments at 21.8 per cent, followed by Jharkhand (19.6 per cent), Rajasthan (18.3 per cent), and Uttar Pradesh (16.6 per cent) in 2025.

At the other end of the spectrum, Gujarat—among the largest contributors to informal establishments nationally saw its establishment count fall 5.7 per cent to 4.38 million. Odisha shed 7.6 per cent of its establishments, while Chandigarh (-25 per cent) and Himachal Pradesh (-0.59 per cent) also recorded declines.

When it comes to worker productivity, measured as gross value added (GVA) per worker, the geography of winners shifts considerably. Uttarakhand saw the steepest rise among major states, with GVA per worker climbing 29 per cent to ₹ 2.09 lakh.

Delhi's informal workers are among the most productive in the

country, generating ₹ 2.49 lakh per worker annually, a jump of nearly 22 per cent over 2023-24. Arunachal Pradesh recorded the highest growth rate among all states at 36.5 per cent, though from a smaller base.

The contrast with employment-heavy states is stark. West Bengal, with 13.3 million informal workers, generates only ₹ 1.18 lakh per worker, well below the national average of ₹ 1.57 lakh. Bihar's 6.3 million workers produce ₹ 1.3 lakh each. Uttar Pradesh, despite its scale, stands at ₹ 1.26 lakh per worker, trailing the national average despite being the country's largest informal employer by a wide margin.

Among these states, Gujarat recorded a 12.3 per cent decline in GVA, making it the only state to register a decline across all three dimensions. Odisha, too, registered declines in both scale and employment.

Union Cabinet Approves Emergency Credit Guarantee Scheme 5-0

The Union Cabinet on May 5, 2026 approved the Emergency Credit Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 5-0.

The scheme aims to provide guarantee coverage by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) for the amount defaulted under the standby credit facility extended to eligible borrowers to address short-term liquidity constraints in the wake of the Middle East crisis. It provides for 100% guarantee coverage for MSMEs and 90% for non-MSMEs and the airline sector.

Key Features of the Scheme :

- **Eligible borrowers :** MSMEs and non-MSMEs with existing

working capital limits as on March 31, 2026 and scheduled passenger airlines having outstanding credit facilities, provided their accounts are standard.

- **Guarantee coverage :** 100 per cent for MSMEs and 90 per cent for non-MSMEs as well as the airline sector.
- **Guarantee Fee :** Nil.
- **Quantum of assistance :** Additional credit up to 20 per cent of working capital utilised during the fourth quarter of FY2026 (maximum ₹ 100 crore). Up to 100 per cent for airlines (maximum ₹ 1,500 crore per borrower, subject to fulfilment of certain specific conditions).
- **Loan term :**
 - ❑ **For MSME/Non-MSME** (except airline sector) : 5 years from the date of first disbursement, including 1 year moratorium.
 - ❑ **For Airline Sector :** 7 years from the date of first disbursement, including a moratorium of 2 years.

- **Tenure of Guarantee Cover :** The maximum period of guarantee cover will be co-terminus with the tenure of the loan.

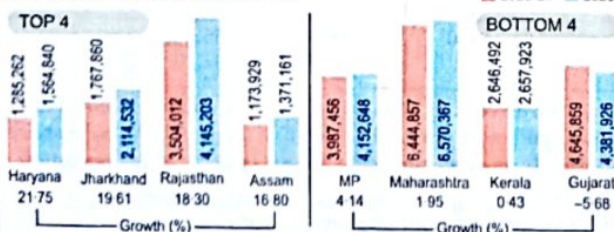
- **Scheme Period :** The Scheme will be applicable to all loans sanctioned during the period from the date of issue of these guidelines by NCGTC till March 31, 2027.

IIP (Base Year 2011-12) Based Industrial Production Grew by 4.1% in FY 2025-26

India's industrial production closed the 2011-12 base year series on

Tracking Performance

Statewise growth in number of establishments
Estimated number of establishments



Statewise growth in unincorporated non-agricultural employment
Estimated number of workers employed



a steady note, with Index of Industrial Production (IIP) growth improving only marginally to 4.1 per cent in FY26, compared to 4 per cent in FY25. From April 2026, the National Statistics Office (NSO) will transition to a new IIP series with 2022-23 as the base year.

The full-year series low was recorded in 2020-21 at -8.4 per cent, the only year of outright contraction in the dataset. The high also came the following year, 2021-22, at 11.4 per cent, largely reflecting a statistical rebound from the Covid-induced dip. Excluding these two years, the series has never exceeded 6 per cent and has rarely fallen below 3 per cent.

Trends in Use-Based Category (Y-o-Y growth in %)

	FY 25	FY 26
Primary goods	3.9	1.2
Intermediate goods	4.3	5.5
Infrastructure construction goods	6.7	9.8
Consumer non-durables	-1.5	0.1
Consumer durables	7.9	5.9
Capital goods	5.6	8.3

Source : E-Sankhyiti portal.

Sector-wise, manufacturing growth improved to 5 per cent in 2025-26 from 4.1 per cent in the previous year. Mining had been in structural decline well before Covid, posting three consecutive years of near-zero or negative growth from 2012-13 to 2014-15, and closed the series at a weak 1.4 per cent in 2025-26. Electricity growth reached its all-time high of 14.8 per cent in 2014-15 and proved to be the most resilient sector during Covid, with only a 0.5 per cent contraction in 2020-21.

Geothermal Energy has 450 GW Power Potential in India

Geothermal energy in India has a potential of 11,000 gigawatt (GW) in industrial heat applications and more than 1,500 GW for cooling demand, apart from 450 GW of electricity generation potential, according to a report released by the

Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and Project InnerSpace.

The report stated that even partial deployment could significantly reduce pressure on India's power system and diversify industry's growing energy demand.

The realisation of over 1,500 GW of cooling potential can cut electricity use by 30-40 per cent, according to the report. States including Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Telangana, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh have the greatest opportunity for geothermal deployment, the report stated, adding that it can support India's data centre growth through cooling applications.

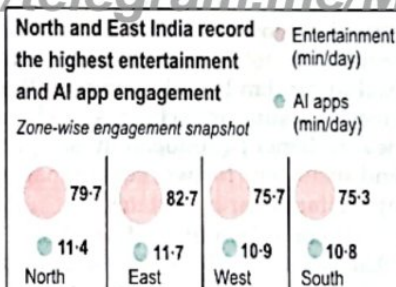
Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects

The Union Cabinet on May 13, 2026 approved a Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects with a financial outlay of ₹ 37,500 crore.

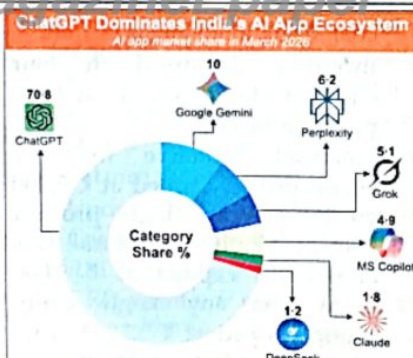
The Scheme marks a major step towards accelerating India's coal/lignite gasification programme, advancing the national target of gasifying 100 million tonnes of coal by 2030, strengthening energy security and reducing dependence on imports of key products such as LNG (more than 50% imported), urea (~20% imported), ammonia

Digital Drive in Urban India on Fast Track

According to the India Digital Behaviour Report 2025-26 by VTION and the Internet and Mobile Association of India, Indian society is now more electronic savvy. AI apps grew over 100 per cent in urban India during 2025-26, while UPI transactions touched a record level of 241.6 billion accounting for 84 per cent of retail digital payments. The study is based on data from over one lakh consented smartphones representing over 407 million urban Indians.



Source: India Digital Behaviour Report 2025-26 by VTION and the Internet and Mobile Association of India



Key Findings

120+ min/day

Young users aged 18-24 drive social media usage

47%+

Female engagement uplift in Q-commerce among 18-24 users

241.6 billion

Annual UPI transactions in FY26

100%+

AI app category growth

UPI Has Become A Mass Utility Across Income Groups

UPI and BFSI trends in FY26

241.6 billion

Annual UPI transactions

30%

Growth over FY25

84%

% Share of retail digital payments

₹314.23 lakh cr

Total annual transaction value

(~100% imported) and methanol (~80-90% imported).

In a significant move accompanying reform, the Government has also extended coal linkage tenure up to 30 years under the 'Production of Syngas leading to Coal Gasification' sub-sector in the Non-Regulated Sector (NRS) linkage auction framework, providing long-term policy certainty for investment in coal gasification projects.

Salient Features of the Scheme

- Total financial outlay of ₹ 37,500 crore to incentivize new surface coal/lignite gasification projects for production of syngas and its downstream products, targeting gasification of approximately 75 million tonnes of coal/lignite.
- Financial incentive provided at a maximum of 20% of the cost of Plant and Machinery.
- Selection through a transparent and competitive bidding process, with an evaluation framework benchmarking project cost, coal input, and syngas output.
- Incentive disbursed in four equal installments, linked to project milestones.
- Financial incentive for any single project capped at ₹ 5,000 crore; for any single product (except Synthetic Natural Gas and Urea) capped at ₹ 9,000 crore; and any single entity group capped at ₹ 12,000 crore across all projects.
- Incentive under this Scheme is in addition to, and does not restrict access to, incentives under the commercial coal mining regime or schemes of other Central/State Government ministries.
- The Scheme is technology-agnostic; adoption of indigenous technologies is encouraged.

Strategic and Economic Benefits

- **Expected Investment Mobilisation** : ₹ 2.5-3.0 lakh crore
- **Energy Security & Import Substitution** : Diversified use of coal resources and substitutes imports of LNG, urea, ammonia, ammonium nitrate, methanol, and coking coal, insulating India from global price volatility and geopolitical supply-chain

disruptions and advancing the Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India objectives.

- **Employment Generation** : The Scheme is projected to create around 50,000 (Direct + Indirect) jobs across 25 projects in coal-bearing regions.
- **Revenue to Governments** : Coal/lignite utilization is expected to generate ₹ 6,300 crore annually from 75 million tonnes of gasification envisaged under the Scheme, plus downstream revenue from GST and other levies.
- **Technology Ecosystem** : Strengthens India's domestic surface coal gasification capability by advancing indigenous technologies and minimising reliance on foreign EPC contractors.

Centre Notifies 1% Construction Welfare Cess

The Central government has notified that a 1 per cent construction worker welfare cess will be levied on total construction costs, excluding land and compensation costs, to support schemes such as health benefits, education support and insurance for workers managed by welfare boards of states.

It came into effect from May 1, 2026 when the Ministry of Labour and Employment notified it along with other notifications related to four labour codes in the Official Gazette.

The welfare boards find a place in new labour codes which have replaced the erstwhile Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996.

The old BOCW framework has been split into two labour codes. The welfare board, worker registration, 1 per cent cess, welfare fund and benefit delivery now comes under the Code on Social Security, 2020, while safety, health and working conditions at construction sites move into the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.

The cess, deducted at source from the bills paid to the contractors by the employer, has to be paid within 30 days of the completion of the project.

The challenge, however, remains in the distribution of welfare cess to hapless workers though the codes are well intentioned, experts believe.

'Women and Men in India 2025': National Statistical Office (NSO)'s Latest Report

'Women and Men in India 2025' report released by the NSO presents stark reality of Indian labour market. Key findings of the report are following :

- The national female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for those aged 15 years and above increased marginally to 40 per cent in 2025, from 33.9 per cent in 2022.
- LFPR of rural women increased from 37.5 per cent in 2022 to 45.9 per cent in 2025.
- The male LFPR stood at 79.1 per cent in 2025, up from 78 per cent in 2022.
- The gap in male LFPR and female LFPR remained nearly 40 percentage points .
- As of 2025, there is a greater concentration of women workers in agriculture in rural areas, with nearly three-fourths (72.7 per cent) of rural female workers engaged in this sector.
- Urban women are more concentrated in manufacturing, but urban female LFPR remained a meagre 27.7 per cent in 2025, just three points above 2022 levels.
- There are gender divides in wages across the regions.
- Casual labourers in non-public works are paid an average of ₹ 435 per day if they are rural men, and ₹ 305 if they are rural women, a gap of roughly 30 per cent.
- In urban areas, men earn ₹ 552, while women earn ₹ 363, a difference of around 34 per cent.
- The 'Time Use Survey 2024' revealed that women spend an average of 289 minutes per day on unpaid domestic services against men's 88 minutes.
- The report's occupation-wise hourly wage data, using the National Classification of Occupations (NCO) 2015 frame-

work, showed that women earn less than men across most categories. However, in the top-tier category of legislators, senior officials and managers, urban women fared better than men, earning ₹ 234 per hour, compared to ₹ 217 for men.

- Urban young women recorded an unemployment rate of 18.9 per cent, against 11.8 per cent for urban young men in 2025.
- Unemployment remains most pronounced among the youth population aged 15-29 years, with its severity being particularly high in urban areas.
- On the brighter side, female-headed proprietary establishments accounted for 26.2 per cent of all proprietary enterprises in the unincorporated sector in 2023-24, up from 24 per cent in 2021-22.
- Manufacturing, in particular, boasted of having the most women-led enterprises, with states like Telangana (73 per cent), Karnataka (70 per cent), and Gujarat (61 per cent) leading the table.
- Bihar saw a dramatic jump—female-headed manufacturing enterprises rose from 31.2 per cent to 63 per cent in three years.
- Additionally, women accounted for 24.7 per cent of investors in FY 2025-26, up fractionally from 24.3 per cent in the previous year.
- Female demat account holders grew 397.24 per cent between 2021 and 2025. However, women still hold just 19.8 per cent of all demat accounts.

Net FDI Rises in FY26 on Higher Gross Inflows; Portfolio Investment Flows Weaken

Net foreign direct investment (FDI) into India rose sharply to \$7.6 billion in FY26, with March 2026 being the second consecutive month of positive net inflows. Net FDI was \$959 million in FY25, as per RBI data.

The net FDI was driven by gross investment inflows rising to \$ 94.5 billion in FY26 compared to \$ 80.6 billion in FY25. Repatriation rose marginally to \$53.6 billion from \$ 51.5 billion.

However, outward direct investments by Indian companies rose to \$ 33.3 billion from \$ 28.2 billion in FY25.

During 2025-26, both gross and net foreign direct investment inflows were higher than the previous year.

However, the positive rise in net foreign direct investment was overshadowed by a steep drop in foreign investment inflows.

For the full year FY26, foreign investment flows recorded an outflow of \$ 9 billion compared to an inflow of \$ 4.5 billion in FY25.

Increased Inflows Lift Net FDI in FY26

		FY25	FY26
1.	Direct Investment into India (in \$ billion)	29.1	40.9
2.	Direct Investment by India (in \$ billion)	28.2	33.3
	Net FDI (1-2)	0.9	7.6

Source : RBI

RBI to Transfer Record ₹ 2.87 Trillion Dividend to Government for FY26

The Central Board of the RBI on May 22, 2026 approved a record surplus transfer of ₹ 2.87 trillion to the Central government for 2025-26, marking a 6.99 per cent increase over the previous year, aided by a sharp rise in the central bank's income and a significant expansion in its balance sheet.

Last year, the RBI had transferred ₹ 2.68 trillion to the government. In FY24, the central bank had paid ₹ 2.11 trillion as surplus.

- The surplus transfer for FY26 stood at ₹ 2,86,588.46 crore, reflecting robust earnings from foreign exchange operations and investments amid elevated global interest rates and currency market volatility.
- The Board also decided to transfer ₹ 1,09,379.64 crore towards the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) for FY26, compared with ₹ 44,861.70 crore in the previous year, while maintaining the CRB at 6.5 per cent of the RBI's balance sheet size.
- Under the revised Economic Capital Framework (ECF), the RBI is required to maintain the CRB within a range of 4.5 per cent to 7.5 per cent of its balance sheet.

Gross income of the RBI increased 26.42 per cent year-on-year during FY26, while expenditure before risk provisions increased 27.60 per cent. Net income before risk provisions and transfer to statutory funds stood at ₹ 3,95,972.10 crore, up from ₹ 3,13,455.77 crore in FY25.

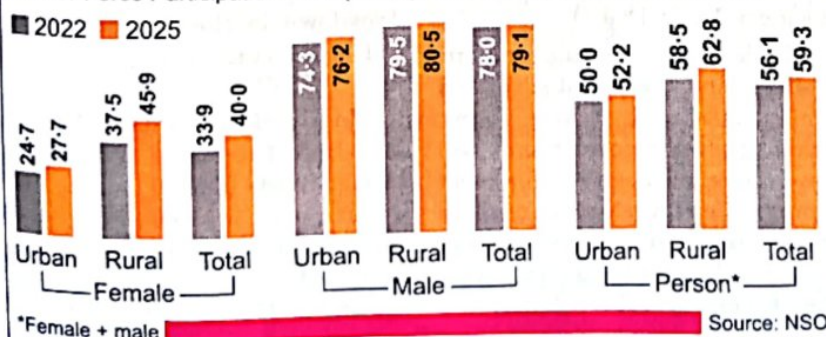
The central bank's balance sheet expanded 20.61 per cent to ₹ 91,97,121.08 crore as of March 31, 2026.

Public Sector Banks Posted an All-Time High Net Profit of ₹ 1.98 Lakh Crore in FY 2025-26

Public Sector Banks (PSBs) continued their strong financial performance during FY 2025-26,

A Stark Divide

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for those aged 15 and above (%)



reflecting sustained business growth, improved asset quality, record profitability and strong capital position. The banks' improved performance reflects their positional stance, stability and enhanced institutional capacity to meet the credit needs of the rapidly growing Indian economy.

The total business of public sector banks increased to ₹ 283.3 lakh crore as of March 31, 2026, a growth of 12.8 per cent over the previous year.

Total deposits increased by 10.6 per cent year-on-year to ₹ 156.3 lakh crore.

Gross credit advances of PSU banks grew by 15.7 per cent year-on-year to ₹ 127 lakh crore, reflecting sustained demand for credit across all sectors of the economy.

Credit growth remained broad-based in the retail, agriculture and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sectors during FY 2025-26. Credit to retail, agriculture and small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) grew by 18.1 per cent, 15.5 per cent and 18.2 per cent.

Public sector banks' asset health improved significantly during FY 2025-26, with the Gross non-performing assets ratio (non-performing assets as a percentage of a bank's total loans that remain unpaid by borrowers) declining to 1.93% and the Net NPA ratio (a key financial indicator of the banking sector that reflects the actual amount of stressed assets a bank holds after provisions) falling to 0.39% as of March 31, 2026, reflecting historically low levels of stressed assets.

Furthermore, each public sector bank maintained a Provisioning Coverage Ratio (the amount of money banks set aside from profits to cover potential losses such as bad loans) of over 90%, reflecting prudent provisioning practices, improved underwriting standards, effective risk management mechanisms, and strong balance sheet flexibility.

New outstanding loans continued to decline steadily during FY 2025-26, reducing the outstanding ratio to 0.7 per cent.

Total recoveries, including recoveries from written-off accounts, amounted to ₹ 86,971 crore, reflecting improved recovery mechanisms and improved credit discipline at public sector banks.

The improvement in asset quality, healthy credit expansion and higher earnings were the key drivers of improved profitability of public sector banks during FY 2025-26. The banks' total operating profit reached ₹ 3.21 lakh crore, while the total net profit increased by 11.1 per cent year-on-year to a historically high level of ₹ 1.98 lakh crore. Public sector banks achieved profitability for the fourth consecutive year.

The capital position of public sector banks remained strong, and the overall CRAR (Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio) increased to 16.6% as of March 31, 2026. This improvement was driven by internal accruals, retained earnings, and capital raising of ₹ 50,551 crore during FY 2025-26. CRAR across all public sector banks remained well above the regulatory requirement of 11.5%, supporting continued lending.

The operational efficiency of public sector banks also improved during the year. The Cost-to-income Ratio increased to 49.67 per cent, reflecting the results of better cost management and technology-enabled systems and digital transformation initiatives.

Government Imposes Curbs on Silver and Gold Imports After Sharp Rise in Shipments

The Government on May 16, 2026 imposed restrictions on the import of silver, according to a notification from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).

Under the revised rules, imports of silver bars, unwrought silver and semi-manufactured silver forms, including silver in powder form, will now require mandatory government approval. Certain categories of silver imports have also been made subject to Reserve Bank of India regulations. The changes have been introduced through amendments in the import

policy schedule under the ITC (HS) classification.

Earlier, the Centre raised import duty on gold and silver to 15 per cent from 6 per cent. Simultaneously, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) tightened norms for duty-free gold imports by gems and jewellery exporters under the Advance Authorisation (AA) scheme.

Under the revised framework, gold imports under AA will be capped at 100 kg per licence, while first-time applicants will face mandatory physical inspection of manufacturing facilities before approvals are granted.

Fresh authorisations will now be issued only after at least 50 per cent of export obligations under previous licences are fulfilled.

In addition, exporters importing gold duty-free will have to submit fortnightly reports, certified by chartered accountants, detailing import and export transactions. Regional authorities will also provide monthly consolidated reports to DGFT headquarters for central monitoring.

The tighter regulations come after India's gold imports surged more than 24 per cent to a record \$71.98 billion in 2025-26, despite lower import volumes. Switzerland remained the largest source of gold imports, followed by the UAE and South Africa.

Government Bans Sugar Exports Till September 30, 2026

The Government on May 13, 2026 banned sugar exports with immediate effect till September 30, 2026, in a bid to protect domestic availability and prevent a sharp drawdown in closing stocks at the end of the current sugar marketing year.

In a notification dated May 13, 2026 the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) amended the export policy for raw sugar, white sugar and refined sugar from 'restricted' to 'prohibited' till September 30, 2026, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Exports were earlier allowed under a restricted category, which meant outbound shipments required a licence. The latest order effectively stops fresh exports, except for categories specifically exempted under the notification.

Pride of Hills : Special Development Assistance for the Hill States Scheme

The Central Government has launched the 'Pride of Hills : Special Development Assistance for the Hill States' in March 2026 for the financial year 2026-27. The scheme aims to address key challenges faced by hill states, such as difficult terrain, limited connectivity, sparse population and constrained revenue sources, which often impact their fiscal strength.

The initiative, part of the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI), earmarks a total outlay of ₹ 25,000 crore for 9 hill states. Allocations for different states under the scheme are as under :

- Arunachal Pradesh : ₹ 4,900 crore
- Himachal Pradesh : ₹ 3,920 crore
- Nagaland : ₹ 3880 crore
- Uttarakhand : ₹ 3,460 crore
- Tripura : ₹ 3,450 crore
- Manipur : ₹ 2,400 crore
- Meghalaya : ₹ 2,070 crore
- Sikkim : ₹ 820 crore
- Mizoram : ₹ 100 crore

COSOP Launched for 2026-2033

The Government of India, in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), on May 12, 2026 launched a new eight-year COSOP—Country Strategic Opportunities Programme for agricultural development, spanning the period 2026-2033.

It aims to increase rural incomes, build resilience to crises and significantly expand sustainable livelihood opportunities across the country.

COSOP also aims to establish India as a knowledge-based leader in rural development, facilitating the sharing of successful models—such as inclusive rural finance, coopera-

tive governance, digital agricultural services and climate-resilient value chains—with partner countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America.

The announcement was made during the 'IFAD-India Partnership for Rural Prosperity' event held at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. COSOP 2026-2033 is in line with the Government of India's Developed India@2047 vision and focusses on two strategic priorities :

1. Enhancing the social, economic and climate-related resilience of rural communities; and
2. Strengthening knowledge systems to scale up proven development models in India and developing countries.

The newly launched strategy places special emphasis on strengthening grassroots institutions such as self-help groups, farmer producer organizations and cooperatives. These institutions serve as key platforms linking finance, technology, infrastructure and markets.

ICMR-ICAR Launches 'SEHAT'

In a significant initiative to reinforce the convergence of agriculture, nutrition and public health, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) jointly launched 'SEHAT—Science Excellence for Health through Agricultural Transformation', a national mission-mode programme designed to translate agricultural advancements into tangible health outcomes for the people of India.

The mission focusses on five priority areas of national significance, including :

1. The development and evaluation of biofortified and nutrient-dense crop varieties to address malnutrition and improve nutritional status;
2. Strengthening integrated farming systems to promote dietary diversification, enhance farm incomes, and build resilience;
3. Addressing occupational health risks among agricultural workers through targeted, evidence-based interventions;

4. Advancing agriculture-enabled strategies for the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases through the promotion of functional foods and nutritionally superior crop varieties; and
5. Strengthening One Health preparedness through integrated surveillance, diagnostics and research at the human-animal-environment interface.

The mission which will not have any separate funding, will be implemented jointly by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) bearing the expenses jointly.

The mission will also develop food-based solutions to address malnutrition, obesity, diabetes, hypertension and micronutrient deficiencies, he said and advised both research bodies to have a target-based approach rather than an unending long-term plan.

Telangana Slips to Second Spot in Per Capita Income as Karnataka Takes Lead

Telangana has lost its long-held top position in per capita income (PCI) among the major states, slipping to second place behind Karnataka, according to the latest 2025-26 advanced estimates released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). While Telangana recorded a PCI of ₹ 4.18 lakh, Karnataka moved ahead with ₹ 4.33 lakh.

Telangana recorded an annual average growth rate (AAGR) of 14 per cent and a compounding annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10 per cent during the 10 years of BRS rule. Excluding the COVID period, the state consistently maintained double-digit growth. As a result, the growth rate of PCI in Telangana was 10.93 per cent in 2023-24, which declined to 9.78 per cent in 2024-25, before a modest recovery to 10.24 per cent in 2025-26.

In contrast, Karnataka maintained stronger momentum, posting 11.24 per cent growth in 2023-24, 11.37 per cent in 2024-25, and accelerating to 12.22 per cent in 2025-26, helping it overtake Telangana.

Tamil Nadu reported a per capita income of ₹ 4.08 lakh in 2025-26, while Andhra Pradesh stood at ₹ 2.94 lakh. Maharashtra and Gujarat recorded ₹ 3.47 lakh and ₹ 3.57 lakh, respectively, reflecting steady but comparatively lower levels.

LEADS 2025

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal released the LEADS (Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) Report 2025 on May 13, 2026.

LEADS 2025 reflects the Government's continued focus on integrated and data-driven logistics reforms under the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan and National Logistics Policy. The framework supports cooperative and competitive federalism by enabling States and UTs to benchmark performance, identify gaps and prioritise targeted logistics interventions.

The seventh edition of LEADS-LEADS 2025 marks a significant evolution in the assessment of India's logistics landscape, featuring a more rigorous and refined evaluation methodology compared to previous years. LEADS 2025 also places greater emphasis on measurable and evidence-based indicators, with nearly 59% weightage assigned to objective indicators to strengthen assessment robustness and implementation tracking.

To better reflect the maturity and diverse progress of logistics ecosystems across the country, the LEADS 2025 framework has transitioned from its previous three-tier classification to a more comprehensive four-tier performance framework. The revised framework enables more nuanced assessment of logistics performance and supports targeted improvement pathways across different stages of logistics ecosystem development.

The New Four-Tier Categorization

The new four-tier categorization is as follows :

- **Exemplars** : Exemplars represent the top-performing States and Union Territories, demonstrating sustained excellence across policy, infrastructure,

service delivery and regulatory dimensions.

- ❑ **Coastal States** : Tamil Nadu
- ❑ **Landlocked States** : Uttar Pradesh
- ❑ **North-Eastern States** : Mizoram
- ❑ **Union Territories** : Delhi
- **High Performers** : High Performers comprise States and Union Territories that demonstrate strong and consistent outcomes across the majority of performance indicators.
- ❑ **Coastal States** : Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra
- ❑ **Landlocked States** : Haryana, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Bihar
- ❑ **North-Eastern States** : Tripura, Meghalaya
- ❑ **Union Territories** : Jammu & Kashmir, Puducherry
- **Accelerators** : Accelerators comprise States and Union Territories that have demonstrated notable improvement momentum and a clear reform orientation in recent years.

- ❑ **Coastal States** : Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Goa, Karnataka
- ❑ **Landlocked States** : Punjab, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh
- ❑ **North-Eastern States** : Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam
- ❑ **Union Territories** : Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Chandigarh, Ladakh, Lakshadweep
- **Growth-Seekers** : Growth Seekers represent States and Union Territories that are at a foundational stage of logistics system development and institutional strengthening.
- ❑ **Coastal States** : West Bengal
- ❑ **Landlocked States** : Rajasthan
- ❑ **North-Eastern States** : Sikkim
- ❑ **Union Territories** : Andaman & Nicobar Islands

India-US Framework on "Securing of Supply in the Mining and Processing of Critical Minerals and Rare Earths"

On May 26, 2026, India and USA concluded a Framework on "Securing of Supply in the Mining and Processing of Critical Minerals and Rare Earths". The Framework advances the vision articulated in the India-US Joint Statement issued during PM Narendra Modi's visit to Washington, D.C. in February 2025, which underlined the strategic importance of critical minerals for emerging technologies and advanced manufacturing, and recognised secure and resilient supply chains for critical minerals as a shared strategic priority of both countries.

The Framework aims for : Deepening India-US cooperation across the critical minerals and rare earths supply chain, which includes mining, processing, recycling and related investments. Strengthening resilient and diversified supply chains. Promoting collaboration in financing and effective management of critical minerals and rare earths scrap.

The Framework builds upon : US-led Pax Silica initiative, of which India became a signatory on February 20, 2026. Joint Statement on the 'India-US AI Opportunity Partnership' as a bilateral addendum to the Pax Silica Declaration. Forum on Resource Geostrategic Engagement (FORGE), launched in February 2026, which is a US-led initiative to secure global supply chains for critical minerals and rare earth elements. India and USA are also partnering under FORGE initiative.

11th QUAD Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi (May 26, 2026) : Key Highlights :

- First ever Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration (IPMSC) initiative to leverage QUAD country maritime surveillance in the Indo-Pacific.
- India will host the next edition of the QUAD-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission.
- New QUAD Critical Minerals Initiative Framework announced to leverage economic policy tools and coordinate investment to strengthen critical minerals supply chains.
- QUAD Initiative on Indo-Pacific Energy Security announced to help strengthen regional energy resilience.
- QUAD countries will work with Fiji to advance port infrastructure.
- Under the Advancing Innovations for Empowering NextGen Agriculture (AI-ENGAGE) initiative, QUAD partner countries have announced over \$6 million in awards for six international research projects.



Environment, Ecology, Biodiversity and Climate Change

Global Forest Goals Report 2026

The Global Forest Goals Report 2026, launched by the United Nations, provides up-to-date global assessment of progress towards implementing the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030 and its six Global Forest Goals. The report was launched during the opening day of twenty-first session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) at United Nations Headquarters.

Key Findings of the Report :

- Global forest area declined by more than 40 million hectares between 2015 and 2025.
- Seven of the 26 targets of UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030 are broadly met, 17 are partially achieved and two targets are off track-reversing forest loss and eradicating

extreme poverty for forest-dependent people.

- Pressures from land-use change, climate impacts, wildfires, pests and illegal activities continue to threaten forests in many regions.
- Financing for sustainable forest management remains far below estimated needs.
- Progress is uneven, with gains in protected areas, long-term forest management plans and forest-related monitoring systems.

Priority Areas for Accelerated Action :

The report highlights following priority areas for accelerated action :

- Halting deforestation and reversing forest loss.
- Closing the financing gap for sustainable forest management.
- Strengthening forest governance and law enforcement.
- Expanding restoration and resilience-building efforts.
- Enhancing cross-sectoral coordination and partnerships.

Key Messages of the Report :

- Most targets show progress, but stronger efforts are needed to meet the Global Forest Goals by 2030.
- National leadership and community-driven solutions demonstrate that progress can be accelerated when ambition is matched by action.
- Innovative financing, stronger institutions and cross-sectoral cooperation are essential to scale implementation.

India's First Satellite-Tagged Ganges Soft-Shell Turtle Released in Kaziranga

On May 15, 2026, India's first satellite-tagged Ganges soft-shell turtle was released in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve in Assam. The release of the fresh water crocodile coincided with the observation of the Endangered Species Day.

Significance of Satellite-Tagging

- It will help in understanding seasonal movement patterns, home range and identifying critical habitats like nesting and breeding.
- It will help in active management of soft-shell turtle in the Brahmaputra River basin.

About Ganges Soft-shell Turtle

- **Scientific Name :** *Nilssonia gangetica*
- **IUCN Status :** Endangered
- **Protection :** It is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- **Habitat :** In India, it is mainly found in middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River. It is also found in Indus, Brahma-

United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030

- The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was established in October 2000 through ECOSOC resolution 2000/35. It operates within the framework of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF), which provides the overarching policy and institutional framework for global forest governance under the United Nations. India holds the distinction of being a founding member of UNFF.
- Since its establishment in 2000, the Forum has set many milestones including the first UN Forest Instrument in 2007, the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN) in 2015, and adoption of the first UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 and its six Global Forest Goals in 2017.
- The UN General Assembly adopted the first-ever UN Strategic Plan for Forests for the period of 2017–2030. This Strategic Plan serves as a global framework for actions at all levels to achieve the sustainable management of all types of forests, including trees outside forests, and to combat deforestation and forest degradation. It consists of 6 Global Forests Goals and 26 associated targets.
- The 21st session of the UNFF was held from 11–15 May, 2026. According to the quadrennial programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) for the period 2025–2028, the thematic priorities for the twentieth (UNFF20) and twenty-first sessions (UNFF21) of the Forum are Global Forest Goals (GFGs) : 1, 3 and 5.
- The six Global Forest Goals are : **Goal 1 :** Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide; **Goal 2 :** Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits; **Goal 3 :** To increase the area of protected forests and other sustainably managed forests; **Goal 4 :** Mobilizing financial resources and strengthening scientific and technical cooperation; **Goal 5 :** To promote governance frameworks to implement SFM; **Goal 6 :** International cooperation at all levels for forest-related issues.

putra and Mahanadi River basins. It inhabits large rivers, lakes, canals and reservoirs. Nests are located in islands and clayey river banks.

- **Key Features :** It can be differentiated from other riverine turtles by its distinct arrowhead-shaped markings on the top of the head. This large turtle is a major river predator and helps clean up the system by feeding on dead and decaying animal matter. They breed during August and November, and feed on fish, amphibians, mollusks, insects, carrion and aquatic plants.
- **Major Threats :** Hydrologic alteration, accidental drowning in fishing nets, illegal trade and sand mining.
- **Cultural Significance :** These are often maintained in the temple ponds of Odisha where they are considered sacred.

Assam is one of the world's top priority areas in freshwater turtle conservation. Of the eight soft-shell turtles reported from India, five are known from the Kaziranga landscape. The eight soft-shell turtle's species found in India are : Indian Softshell Turtle, Indian Peacock Softshell Turtle, Leith's Softshell Turtle, Black Softshell Turtle, Indian Narrow-headed Softshell Turtle, Asian Giant Softshell Turtle, Malayan Softshell Turtle and Indian Flapshell Turtle.

MoEFCC and NBA Launch Five-Year Project to Strengthen Grassroots Biodiversity Governance in Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) have launched a landmark five-year project titled 'Strengthening Institutional Capacities for Securing Biodiversity Conservation Commitments.' The project is rooted in two significant ecological landscapes : Sathyamangalam landscape in Tamil Nadu and Garo Hills in Meghalaya.

The project is a joint initiative of the Government of India, the Global

Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with a grant of USD 4.88 million for the period 2025-2030.

Key Objectives :

- To mainstream biodiversity in local development plans to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs). The governance architecture is based on bottom-up approach, with PRIs playing a key managerial role.
- To build landscape-level multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together forest departments, revenue authorities, elected representatives and civil society to produce community-owned, funded biodiversity plans.
- To promote innovative financing mechanisms by activating Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS), CSR co-financing and green micro-enterprises that create sustainable livelihoods as direct rewards for conservation stewardship.
- Focus on knowledge management and capacity building, with a dedicated focus on advancing the economic and governance roles of women, Scheduled Castes and tribal communities.

- In Tamil Nadu, the Sathyamangalam landscape at the confluence of the Western and Eastern Ghats, encompassing the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, unites forest-fringe communities who are longstanding stewards of wildlife corridors. Their deep ecological knowledge will be channelled into GDPs, giving biodiversity conservation a prominent place in local governance.

- In Garo Hills of Meghalaya, the Nokrek Biosphere Reserve, Balpakram National Park, and Siju Wildlife Sanctuary together form a vibrant mosaic of government forests and Reserve Forests, providing an ideal setting for community-led conservation woven into Village Employment Councils (VECs), an equivalent of gram panchayats.

143 Odonata Species Recorded in the Western Ghats

The recent survey carried out by a research team headed by Professor Dr. Pankaj Koparde from MIT-World Peace University Pune, documented only about 65% of the dragonfly and damselfly species historically recorded in the Western Ghats region, pointing to a potential shortfall of nearly 35% of these ecologically critical insects.

Key Highlights :

- The survey recorded 143 Odonata species—76 dragonflies and 67 damselflies—of which 40 were endemic to the Western Ghats.
- According to IUCN Red List, 22 species were listed under the 'data deficient' category, which indicates significant gaps in scientific understanding. It highlights the need for extensive surveys across the Western Ghats to uncover the status and distribution of many lesser known Odonata species.
- The survey also documented new spatial records of several Odonata species as well as the discovery of several new taxa from the Western Ghats, namely *Macromidia donaldi donaldi* (genera incertae sedis) from Pune, *Merogomphus longistigma* (Gomphidae), and *Idionyx saffronata* from Satara and *Gynacantha khasiaca* from Raigad.
- The findings demonstrate that the diversity and degree of endemism of Odonata species are greater in the southern Western Ghats compared to the northern part of the region.

Odonata species are widely regarded as 'indicator taxa' because they depend on freshwater ecosystems for reproduction. Their presence or absence directly reflects the ecological health of water bodies. They are highly sensitive to environmental changes and the missing species are early indicators of deeper ecological stress. Threats to Odonata species are : linear infrastructure development projects, hydropower projects, forest fires, unregulated tourism, land-use changes, etc.

Curbing Sulphur Dioxide from Coal Plants can Prevent 1.24 Lakhs Death Annually : IIT Delhi

According to a study published in the 'Nature' journal which was conducted by IIT Delhi researchers, India could prevent an estimated 1,24,564 deaths every year by fully mitigating sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions from coal-fired power plants (CFPP).

Increase in SO₂ Emission : Satellite-derived estimates showed India's SO₂ emissions rose from 2.36 thousand kilotonnes per year in 2005 to 5.05 thousand kilotonnes per year in 2021, with a further increase of about 30% in 2023.

SO₂ and Particulate Matters : It is the first such comprehensive study which attempts to quantify how SO₂ from CFPPs contributes not only to ambient SO₂ levels, but also to the formation of secondary fine particulate matter, or PM2.5. The study revealed that decrease in SO₂ emissions could reduce annual PM2.5 exposure by 0.3-12 microgrammes per cubic metre and ambient SO₂ levels by 0.1-13.6 parts per billion across states.

The CFPPs emit SO₂, which reacts in the atmosphere to form secondary inorganic aerosols, including sulphate, nitrate and ammonium. These pollutants add to PM2.5, the fine particulate matter linked to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

Reduction in Mortality : The study found that complete mitigation of SO₂ emissions from CFPPs could prevent 14,777 cardiovascular deaths and 8,476 respiratory deaths annually, apart from the all-cause mortality reduction. Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were estimated to see the highest number of avoidable deaths. Chhattisgarh and Odisha were expected to see the biggest improvement in air quality because they have several coal power-based pollution hotspots.

Environmental Equity Issue : People from Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and poorer and middle-income groups are expected to see

larger air quality gains than wealthier and general category groups.

Strategies to Reduce SO₂ Emission : Implementation of SO₂ emission norms remains 'slow, localised and uneven' in India, and to fully enforce current limits could cut coal power plant-linked SO₂ and PM2.5 emissions by over 80% by 2030. India needs to strictly enforce SO₂ emission rules, expand the use of flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) systems in CFPPs and pollution-control technology in power plants and prioritise highly-polluted areas. Also, use of cleaner cooking fuels and electric vehicles, as well as decrease in stubble burning incidents are necessary.

The FGD is a technology that removes SO₂ from exhaust gases of fossil fuel power plants and industrial boilers, reducing acid rain and air pollution. A key argument against FGD installation has been that Indian coal has relatively low sulphur content, making the technology expensive. The study, however, argues that health-related monetary gains from reduced emissions are likely to outweigh the cost of installing emission-control technologies.

Prosopis Juliflora

Prosopis juliflora is a leguminous tree, highly resistant to drought and salinity. It is recognized as one of the world's 100 most dominant invasive species (IUCN, 2004). It is a Mexican-origin shrub which was first introduced by the British in the 1920s to 'green' Delhi and by the Gujarat Forest department in 1961 to halt the encroaching salt desert in the Rann.

Local Names : It is locally known as *Gando Baval* in the Kutch region, *Vilayati Keekar* in north India and *Velikathan* in Tamil Nadu. In Rajasthan, it was declared a 'Royal Plant' and is also referred to as 'wooden anthracite' due to its multi-purpose uses as excellent fuelwood.

Ecological Significance

- *Prosopis* plays a vital role in mitigating desertification caused by salinity.
- In dry lands, it improves soil fertility, controls soil erosion, and stabilizes sand dunes.

- It also aids in bioremediation by accumulating various metals and non-metals such as Fe, Mn, Cu, Zn, Cr, Ni, Cd and grows well on gypsum mine soil, coal mine overburden and fly ash landfills.

Ecological Threat

- *Prosopis* is a phreatophyte, a deep-rooted plant that absorbs water from the phreatic zone below the water table, exacerbating hydrological drought and leading to the demise of other species.
- It inhibits the germination of seeds from many plant species and reduces native plant diversity, posing a serious threat to phytodiversity.

Prosopis juliflora is to become the feedstock for India's first green methanol production plant at the Deendayal Port Authority (DPA) in Kandla, designed to fuel ocean-going ships. It is one of the best feedstocks because it is hardwood, dense, has a good energy profile, and low on acids. The IMO's 2023 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Strategy aims for net-zero emissions from international shipping by 2050.

'Lion' Species Spotlight Programme Inaugurated at Sasan, Gujarat

On May 14, 2026, the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) inaugurated the 'Lion' Species Spotlight Event at Sasan Gir, Gujarat. The programme was organised as part of the series of Pre-Summit Species Events under the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Summit 2026, originally scheduled from June 1-2, 2026, but currently postponed due to Ebola concerns.

Key Highlights :

- The 'Lion' Species Spotlight Event highlighted the global conservation status of lions and India's initiatives towards species conservation.
- Globally, lion populations have declined by more than 30 per cent due to habitat loss and degradation, while the Asiatic

lion survives as a single wild population in India's Gir landscape. Lion population in the Greater Gir Landscape has risen to an estimated 891 individuals in 2025, marking a 32 per cent increase compared to 2020.

On April 9, 2023, PM Narendra Modi launched the International Big CAT Alliance (IBCA) from Mysuru, Karnataka, to commemorate the 50 years of India's Project Tiger. The Union Cabinet approved the establishment of IBCA with its secretariat headquartered in India in 2024. IBCA serves as a global coalition dedicated to the conservation of seven iconic Big Cat species—Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma—through collaborative international action and strengthened scientific and technical cooperation. As on May 22, 2026, IBCA welcomed Saudi Arabia as its newest member. Currently, IBCA has 26 members and five observer countries.

- Asiatic lion receives the highest level of legal protection under Appendix-I of CITES and Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. 'Project Lion', launched in 2020, adopts a comprehensive landscape-based approach for the long-term conservation of Asiatic lions through habitat restoration, population management and ecological resilience.

Thematic Events Under Pre-IBCA Summit Species Series

- Asiatic Lion Conservation Programme – Gir, Gujarat
- Cheetah Conservation Programme – Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
- Leopard Conservation & International Day for Biological Diversity Event – Bhubaneswar, Odisha
- Snow Leopard Conservation Programme – Gangtok, Sikkim
- Tiger Conservation Programme – Chandrapur, Maharashtra

Continued from Page 39

UTTARAKHAND

State Government to Abolish Madrasa Board

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has recently announced to abolish the Madrasa Board in the state. All madrasas will be required to adopt the Uttarakhand Board curriculum from July 2026. The move is aimed to ensure uniform and modern education for all students. The Chief Minister has also warned that madrasas failing to implement the state board syllabus would face closure.

Under the revised system, the madrasas will be required to comply with several mandatory conditions such as appointment of qualified teachers with recognised degrees, mandatory affiliation with the State Education Council, registration with the society registrar, and maintaining financial transparency through institutional bank accounts.

The new rules also specify that neither students nor teachers may be compelled to participate in religious activities, and that institutions must ensure communal harmony. Additionally, madrasas must provide audit reports for the past three years, have access to a playground and employ trained teaching staff.

Important Environment-Related Facts in News

World Tapir Day	On April 27, 2026, the World Tapir Day was observed globally. Tapirs are large herbivorous mammals that inhabit jungle and forest regions of South America, Central America, and Southeast Asia. As large herbivores, tapirs are invariably the first species affected by human encroachment into their territory and amongst the last to return to regrowth forest. They require substantial tracts of undisturbed land to maintain a genetically diverse population. They form an important part of the ecosystem as seed dispersers and form one of the oldest surviving genera in the animal kingdom.
Caracal	Recently, the recovery of charred body of Caracal was discovered in Jaisalmer, marking the first recorded killing of the species in Rajasthan. The species, protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, had its historical habitat severely diminished, with nearly 95% already destroyed. It's population in India is fewer than 100 individuals, primarily concentrated in Rajasthan and Gujarat. They are carnivores.
Labeo kaage	Locally known as 'Kaage Meenu' or Crow Fish, it has been identified as a new species during freshwater biodiversity exploration studies in the Cauvery river basin of Karnataka by scientists from the PAGR Centre of ICAR-NBFGR, Kochi.
International Day of Plant Health	The United Nations has designated 12 May as the International Day of Plant Health to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect biodiversity and the environment and boost economic development. The 2026 theme was 'Plant Biosecurity for Food Security and Nutrition.'
Cordyceps Mushroom	A rare and high value Cordyceps mushroom has been discovered in Arunachal Pradesh's East Siang District. Cordyceps is among the world's most prized medicinal fungi, often referred to as 'Himalayan gold' in traditional ethnomedicine and pharmaceutical research. Scientists note it produces compounds such as cordycepin, adenosine, ergosterol and bioactive polysaccharides, associated with immunomodulatory, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antitumor and antidiabetic properties. Studies have also explored its potential in cancer management, metabolic disorders and tissue repair.
Melanoseris pendryi	It is a newly discovered rare, purple-petaled herb native to the alpine grasslands of the Sikkim Himalayas in India. It features uniquely hairy ventral surfaces on its lavender-purple petals—a trait not seen in other closely related species.

PRATYOGITA DARPAN



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India's total exports during FY 2025-26 is estimated at US\$ 863.14 billion registering a positive growth of 4.59 per cent. Total imports during FY 2025-26 is estimated at US\$ 964.65 billion registering a positive growth of 4.86 per cent.

Trade During FY 2025-26				
(US \$ Billion)				
		FY 2025-26	FY 2024-25	% Change in FY 2025-26 Over 2024-25
Merchandise	Exports	441.78	437.7	0.93
	Imports	774.98	721.2	7.46
	Balance of Trade	- 333.2	- 283.5	17.53
Services	Exports	421.36	387.55	8.72
	Imports	189.67	198.72	- 4.55
	Balance of Services	231.68	188.86	22.67
Total Trade (Merchandise + Services)	Exports	863.14	825.26	4.59
	Imports	964.65	919.92	4.86
	Trade Balance	- 101.52	- 94.66	7.25

Merchandise Trade

- Merchandise exports during FY 2025-26 were US\$ 441.78 billion as compared to US\$ 437.70 billion during FY 2024-25 registering a meagre growth rate of 0.93 per cent.
- Merchandise imports during FY 2025-26 were US\$ 774.98 billion as compared to US\$ 721.20 billion during FY 2024-25, registering a growth rate of 7.46 per cent.
- Merchandise trade deficit during FY 2025-26 was US\$ 333.19 billion as compared to US\$ 283.50 billion during FY 2024-25. It increased by 17.56 per cent.
- Non-petroleum and non-gems & jewellery exports in FY 2025-26 were US\$ 359.67 billion, compared to US\$ 344.50 billion in FY 2024-25. It shows a growth of 4.4 per cent.
- Non-petroleum, non-gems & jewellery (gold, silver & precious metals) imports in FY 2025-26 were US\$ 498.56 billion, compared to US\$ 454.59 billion in FY 2024-25. It shows a growth of 9.67 per cent.

Services Trade

As per the latest figures given by the RBI :

- The estimated value of service exports during FY 2025-26 is US\$ 421.36 billion as compared to US\$ 387.55 billion in FY 2024-25. It shows a growth rate of 8.72 per cent.
- The estimated value of service imports during FY 2025-26 is US\$ 189.67 billion as compared to

US\$ 198.72 billion in FY 2024-25. It shows a growth rate of (-)4.55 per cent.

- The services trade surplus for FY 2025-26 is US\$ 231.68 billion as compared to US\$ 188.84 billion in FY 2024-25. Thus, the surplus in service trade increased by 22.67 per cent.

Trade Excluding Petroleum and Gems & Jewellery During FY 2025-26			
	FY 2025-26	FY 2024-25	%
	(US\$ Billion)	(US\$ Billion)	Change in FY 2025-26 Over 2024-25
Non-petroleum exports	387.88	374.32	3.62
Non-petroleum imports	601.03	535.42	12.25
Non-petroleum & Non-Gems & Jewellery exports	359.67	344.50	4.40
Non-petroleum & Non-Gems & Jewellery imports	498.56	454.59	9.67

Note : Gems & Jewellery Imports include Gold, Silver & Pearls, precious & Semi-precious stones.

Direction of Trade

- Top 5 export destinations, in terms of change in value, exhibiting positive growth in FY 2025-26 vis-a-vis FY 2024-25 are China P Rp (36.66%), Spain (46.33%), Hong Kong (33.22%), Vietnam Soc Rep (22.78%) & Sri Lanka Dsr (21.14%).
- Top 5 import sources, in terms of change in value, exhibiting growth in FY 2025-26 vis-a-vis FY 2024-25 are China P Rp (16.03%), USA (15.95%), Hong Kong (23.32%), Peru (78.08%) & UK (36.09%).
- India's exports in 2025-26 reflected increasing geographic diversification, with strong growth across Asia, Africa and Latin America even amid global trade disruptions.
- While North America continued to dominate India's export basket with exports of \$97.7 billion accounting for 22.1 per cent of total exports, growth remained relatively moderate at 1.3 per cent year-on-year, that indicates to a mature but resilient demand base.
- North America, North-East Asia and Latin America together accounted for over 35 per cent of India's merchandise exports, which stood at \$441.78 billion in 2025-26, reflecting a gradual shift towards a more diversified and resilient global trade structure.
- Exports to East Africa increased 13.7 per cent to \$12.6 billion, accounting for 2.9 per cent of India's exports, while North Africa rose 14.8 per cent to \$8 billion with a 1.8 per cent share.
- The strongest momentum came from North-East Asia, where exports surged 21.6 per cent to \$41.6 billion, raising the region's share to 9.4 per cent of

Quick Estimates for Export of Selected Major Commodities for FY 2025-26

S. No.	Commodities	Values in US\$ Million		% Change
		Apr. 2024 Mar. 2025	Apr. 2025-Mar. 2026	
1.	Engineering Goods	116754.17	122431.30	4.86
2.	Petroleum Products	63383.44	53907.72	-14.95
3.	Electronic Goods	38556.49	47964.98	24.40
4.	Drugs & Pharmaceuticals	30468.21	31116.08	2.13
5.	Organic & Inorganic Chemicals	28705.53	28677.68	-0.10
6.	Gems & Jewellery	29818.20	28208.32	-5.40
7.	RMG of all Textiles	15989.34	15772.14	-1.36
8.	Cotton Yarn / Fabs. / made-ups, Handloom Products etc.	12056.27	11587.12	-3.89
9.	Rice	12472.47	11537.36	-7.50
10.	Marine Products	7405.00	8431.33	13.86
11.	Plastic & Linoleum	8919.69	8284.11	-7.13
12.	Meat, dairy & poultry products	5096.45	6214.79	21.94
13.	Mica, Coal & Other Ores, Minerals including processed minerals	5073.16	5737.96	13.10
14.	Man-made Yarn/Fabs./made-ups etc.	4869.50	4830.83	-0.79
15.	Leather & leather products	4370.68	4267.75	-2.36
16.	Spices	4451.97	4261.17	-4.29
17.	Ceramic products & glassware	3988.51	4032.44	1.10
18.	Fruits & Vegetables	3874.76	3931.27	1.46
19.	Cereal preparations & miscellaneous processed items	3101.97	3209.11	3.45
20.	Coffee	1805.57	2082.70	15.35
21.	Tobacco	1979.00	1949.05	-1.51
22.	Handicrafts excl. handmade carpet	1766.83	1792.41	1.45
23.	Iron Ore	2082.72	1708.33	-17.98
24.	Carpet	1541.11	1459.22	-5.31
25.	Oil seeds	1343.97	1217.72	-9.39
26.	Oil Meals	1346.80	1041.17	-22.69
27.	Tea	923.89	988.13	6.95
28.	Other cereals	271.83	445.65	63.95
29.	Cashew	338.21	379.51	12.21
30.	Jute Mfg. including Floor Covering	384.07	357.64	-6.88
	Sub-Total	413139.83	417825.01	1.13
	Grand Total	437704.58	441784.23	0.93

Notes : 1. Exports include Re-exports, 2. Grand total is inclusive of component 'other'.

Quick Estimates for Import of Selected Major Commodities for FY 2025-26

S. No.	Commodities	Values in US\$ Million		% Change
		Apr. 2024 Mar. 2025	Apr. 2025-Mar. 2026	
1.	Petroleum, Crude & products	185779.29	173945.81	-6.37
2.	Electronic goods	98650.56	116175.35	17.76
3.	Gold	58006.37	71977.48	24.09
4.	Machinery, electrical & non-electrical	53391.29	61734.70	15.63
5.	Transport equipment	34238.02	34759.54	1.52
6.	Non-ferrous metals	24788.31	28864.80	16.45
7.	Organic & Inorganic Chemicals	28418.63	27916.76	-1.77
8.	Coal, Coke & Briquettes, etc.	31093.14	27895.81	-10.28
9.	Artificial resins, plastic materials, etc.	22506.79	22755.64	1.11
10.	Iron & Steel	22636.92	21480.54	-5.11
11.	Vegetable Oil	17366.26	19488.34	12.22
12.	Pearls, precious & Semi-precious stones	17999.26	18445.00	2.48
13.	Fertilisers, Crude & manufactured	10225.63	16437.23	60.75
14.	Chemical material & products	12817.39	16057.57	25.28
15.	Metaliferous ores & other minerals	11098.85	14123.89	27.26
16.	Silver	4827.25	12050.86	149.64
17.	Medicinal & Pharmaceutical products	8916.09	9612.38	7.81
18.	Professional instrument, Optical goods, etc.	8396.92	9465.99	12.73
19.	Wood & Wood products	6971.15	6778.48	-2.76
20.	Machine tools	5649.26	6484.34	14.78
21.	Fruits & vegetables	3268.18	3823.47	16.99
22.	Pulses	5477.28	3572.89	-34.77
23.	Dyeing/tanning/colouring materials	4266.73	4286.73	0.47
24.	Textile yarn Fabric, made-up articles	2475.17	2601.95	5.12
25.	Pulp and Waste paper	2014.08	1958.79	-2.75
26.	Cotton Raw & Waste	1219.32	1888.79	54.91
27.	Project goods	1077.58	1060.24	-1.61
28.	Leather & leather products	982.03	937.96	-4.49
29.	Sulphur & Unroasted Iron Pyrites	325.55	778.45	139.12
30.	Newsprint	413.96	305.71	-26.15
	Sub-Total	685297.25	737665.47	7.64
	Grand Total	721200.22	774975.11	7.46

Notes : 1. Imports include Re-Imports, 2. Grand total is inclusive of component 'other'.

Top 20 Export Destinations Countries for FY 2025-26				
S. No.	Countries	Values in US\$ Million		%Change
		Apr. 2024-Mar. 2025	Apr. 2025-Mar. 2026	
1.	USA	86514.28	87308.87	0.92
2.	UAE	36638.02	37365.30	1.99
3.	China P Rp	14252.21	19476.59	36.66
4.	Netherland	22763.41	17504.05	-23.10
5.	UK	14549.95	13443.82	-7.60
6.	Singapore	12976.15	11868.05	-8.54
7.	Germany	10628.61	11526.15	8.44
8.	Bangladesh Pr	11485.26	10573.35	-7.94
9.	Saudi Arab	11756.65	10283.65	-12.53
10.	Hong Kong	6066.71	8081.78	33.22
11.	Italy	7727.33	7790.27	0.81
12.	Nepal	7385.98	7427.33	0.56
13.	Australia	8581.38	7284.17	-15.12
14.	France	7960.06	7102.46	-10.77
15.	Brazil	6771.01	7022.10	3.71
16.	South Africa	7462.28	7008.41	-6.08
17.	Spain	4763.75	6970.57	46.33
18.	Malaysia	7316.85	6850.04	-6.38
19.	Vietnam Soc Rep	5428.92	6665.86	22.78
20.	Belgium	6320.14	6598.64	4.41
	Sub-Total	297348.97	298151.46	0.27
	Grand Total	437704.58	441784.23	0.93

Note : 1. Grand total is inclusive of all countries.
2. The figures for March 2026 are provisional.

Top 20 Import Source Countries for FY 2025-26				
S. No.	Countries	Values in US \$ Million		% Change
		Apr. 2024-Mar. 2025	Apr. 2025-Mar. 2026	
1.	China P Rp	113447.34	131633.56	16.03
2.	UAE	63403.01	63893.14	0.77
3.	Russia	63811.44	55368.25	-13.23
4.	USA	45625.20	52900.51	15.95
5.	Saudi Arabia	30121.12	30791.50	2.23
6.	Iraq	28891.20	24562.19	-14.98
7.	Hong Kong	19729.22	24330.99	23.32
8.	Switzerland	21795.80	24271.20	11.36
9.	Singapore	21282.12	24240.48	13.90
10.	Japan	18915.34	21436.68	13.33
11.	Korea Rp	21064.21	21354.62	1.38
12.	Indonesia	22778.03	20290.39	-10.92
13.	Germany	18947.62	19431.83	2.56
14.	Thailand	14267.08	16426.96	15.14
15.	Malaysia	12538.68	14176.95	13.07
16.	Australia	15526.46	13811.36	-11.05
17.	Qatar	12463.79	12293.20	-1.37
18.	U K	8582.78	11680.65	36.09
19.	Vietnam Soc Rep	10333.95	11615.23	12.40
20.	Taiwan	10006.95	8880.90	-11.25
	Sub-Total	573531.34	603390.60	5.21
	Grand Total	721200.22	774975.11	7.46

Note : 1. Grand total is inclusive of all countries.
2. The figures for March 2026 are provisional.

India's total exports. In this region, there is a rising demand for Indian electronics, engineering goods, chemicals and industrial products. The countries in this region include China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Mongolia and Taiwan. These countries have advance manufacturing industries.

- Latin America maintained healthy expansion as exports rose 7.8 per cent to \$ 16.4 billion, contributing 3.7 per cent to India's total exports.
- Meanwhile, exports to West Africa and Other West Asia remained relatively stable around 3 per cent and 2 per cent shares, respectively.
- Smaller regions such as Central Africa and Central Asian Republic countries also posted steady double-digit growth, albeit from a lower base.
- The direction of import flow was heavily dominated by China as the top supplier, driven by electronics and machinery, followed by the UAE and the US (largely due to surging crude oil and LNG purchases).

Export Product Diversification

India's export diversification in FY2025-26 was marked by a significant widening of its product-market footprint, with Indian exporters penetrating 1,821 new principal commodities products.

- The trend highlights a gradual shift from traditional commodity-led expansion toward broader participation across high-value manufacturing, engineering, agri-processing and technology-intensive sectors.
- The strongest value contribution came from advanced engineering and industrial sectors. Ship, boat and floating structures emerged as the single largest contributor, generating \$ 57 million across 19 new markets, reflecting India's growing competitiveness in specialised maritime manufacturing.
- Similarly, nuclear reactors, industrial boilers and parts recorded a \$ 14.3 million across 13 new markets, while telecom instruments expanded into 20 new markets with exports of \$ 5.8 million, indicating increasing integration into global industrial and technology supply chains.
- Further, several emerging sectors also gained traction in new markets, including aircraft and spacecraft parts, railway transport equipment, graphite and explosives and consumer electronics, pointing toward a gradual broadening of India's advanced manufacturing export base.

Conclusion

A deeper examination of export data shows stagnation in merchandise exports over the last four years, with a negative CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) of 0.42 per cent, while total export figures have been lifted by services exports,

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India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement : New Vista Opened in Oceania

—Dr. S.S.S. Chauhan

India and New Zealand signed a landmark Free Trade Agreement on April 27, 2026, granting 100% duty-free access for 8,284 Indian exports, a \$20 billion investment commitment, and a 5,000-visa professional mobility pathway. India-New Zealand FTA, which is likely to come into force later this year, will have to be ratified by the Parliament in New Zealand and India. This is India's seventh FTA in last five years, after agreements with Mauritius, the UAE, Australia, European Free Trade Association countries, the UK, European Union and Oman. Of these, the FTAs with the UK, Oman, EU and New Zealand are yet to be implemented. Others are already operational.

India and New Zealand FTA was signed by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Investment Todd McClay. The agreement was negotiated at pace, launched on March 16, 2025, and concluded on December 22, 2025, a

span of just 9 months. India-New Zealand FTA is being described as one of India's fastest trade deals to move from negotiation to signing.

India's partnership with New Zealand is shaped by both economic realities and strong people-to-people ties. Currently, New Zealand is India's second-largest trading partner in Oceania with US\$ 1.3 billion merchandise trade (2024-25), out of which merchandise export was US\$ 711 million and services export of US\$ 634 million (2024).

Advantages to India

- New Zealand's market access offer immediate elimination of duties (zero duty) on 100% of tariff lines of New Zealand (8,284 tariff lines), from entry into force of FTA.
- New Zealand maintained tariffs around 10% in around 450 lines of key Indian exports in products including textile/apparel products, leather and headgear, ceramics, carpets, automobiles

and auto components. Additionally, the average applied tariff at 2.2% in 2025 will become zero from EIF.

- The offer extends gains to several products and sectors :

- ❑ Labour intensive sectors like Textiles and apparel receive immediate duty-free status, covering garments, home textiles, man-made fibres, handloom products and furnishings;
- ❑ The leather and footwear sector sees tariffs cut from 5 per cent to zero.
- ❑ Emerging and advanced engineering sectors like transport/ auto, pharmaceuticals, plastic & rubber, electrical & electronic machinery, mechanical machinery, chemicals and;
- ❑ Agri Products like fruits and vegetables, coffee, spices, cereals, processed foods.

- Gains from import to support domestic industries : wooden logs, coking coal, waste and scrap of ferrous, non-ferrous metals.
- Other Indian sectors with zero-duty access include light engineering goods, sports goods, chemicals, electronics, food processing, and agriculture, covering fruits and vegetables, coffee, cocoa, spices and cereals.

Gains for Agriculture, Technology Cooperation and Farmer Income Growth

- New Zealand have agreed on focussed Action Plans for kiwi fruit, apples and honey to improve productivity, quality and sectoral capabilities of these fruits growers in India.
- The cooperation includes the establishment of Centres of Excellence, improved planting material, capacity building for growers, technical support for

Key Features of India-New Zealand FTA

- The FTA eliminates duty on 100% of Indian Exports.
- A USD 20 billion investment commitment by the New Zealand in India over 15 years strengthens long-term economic and strategic cooperation.
- Through Agricultural Productivity Partnership, the FTA collaborates with farmers to boost productivity and integrate them in the global value chains.
- The FTA boosts MSMEs and Jobs through Zero-duty access for labour-intensive sectors including textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, gems & jewellery, engineering goods and processed foods.
- India has offered market access in 70-03% of the tariff lines while keeping 29-97% tariff lines in exclusion. Immediate Elimination (EIF) on 30%, Rest is phased.
- Certain products are kept in exclusion such as Dairy (milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, cheese etc.), animal products (other than sheep meat), vegetable products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds etc.), sugar, artificial honey, animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils, Arms and Ammunition, Gems and Jewellery, Copper and Articles (Cathodes, Cartridges, Rods, Bars, Coils etc.), Aluminium and articles thereof (Ingots, billets, wire bars) among others.
- 30-00% of tariff lines will have immediate duty elimination, covering wood, wool, sheep meat, leather-raw hides etc.
- 35-60% of tariffs are subject to phased elimination over 3, 5, 7 and 10 years, including petroleum oil, malt extract, vegetable oils and selected electrical and mechanical machinery, peptones etc.
- 4-37% of products face tariff reductions, such as wine, pharmaceutical drugs, polymers, aluminium, iron and steel articles etc.
- 0-06% fall under tariff rate quotas, including honey, apples, kiwi fruit and albumins including milk albumin.

orchard management, post-harvest practices, supply chains and food safety.

- Projects for premium apple cultivators and sustainable beekeeping practices will enhance production and quality standards.
- This is Paired with Market access for the selected agricultural products (Apples, Kiwifruit, Manuka Honey) from New Zealand in India.
- This access will be managed through a Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) system with Minimum Import Price and seasonal imports, ensuring consumer choice while protecting domestic farmers.
- All TRQs are linked to Agri-technology Action Plans and monitored by a Joint Agriculture Productivity Council, balancing market access with protection of sensitive domestic agricultural sectors.

Exclusion List

India has kept 29-97% of its tariff lines, representing 5 per cent of bilateral import value, outside the scope of the agreement. No duty concessions have been made in politically sensitive sectors, in order to protect domestic farmers and industries. Excluded products include :

- Dairy products : milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, butter and cheese
- Vegetable products : onions, chana, peas, corn and almonds
- Sugar and artificial honey
- Animal, vegetable, and microbial fats and oils, including edible oils
- Arms and ammunition
- Gems and jewellery
- Copper and its products
- Aluminium and aluminium articles

Advantages for New Zealand

- India has offered market access on 70-03 per cent of its tariff lines, covering 95 per cent of the total bilateral import value from New Zealand.
- New Zealand's primary export categories set to benefit include wool, wine, wood, coal and fresh fruit, particularly avocados and blueberries, cooperation frameworks under the agreement extend to horticulture,

honey, forestry, livestock, fisheries and apiculture.

- The deal also includes a dedicated New Zealand Agri-Technology Action Plan, designed to support Indian farmers with technical expertise in kiwi, apple, and honey production, according to the Commerce Ministry factsheet.

Other Features of India-New Zealand FTA

Mobility : New Zealand signed Annex on Student Mobility and Post Study Work Visa for the first time with any country. Indian students can work up to 20 hours per week while studying, even if there are policy changes in future, with extended post-study work visas (STEM Bachelor : 3 years; Master's: up to 3 years; Doctorate : up to 4 years).

Professional Pathways : A quota of 5,000 visas for skilled Indians for stay upto 3 years in the sectors of interest to India which include Indian iconic occupations (AYUSH practitioners, Yoga Instructors, Indian Chefs, and Music Teachers) and Other sectors of interest - IT, Engineering, Healthcare, Education, and Construction.

Working Holiday Visa : 1,000 young Indians annually can avail multiple entry in New Zealand for a period of 12 months.

Investment and Services : New Zealand has committed to facilitating \$20 billion in Foreign Direct Investment into India over the next 15 years. Priority investment areas are expected to include infrastructure, renewable energy, agriculture and technology.

Health & Traditional Medicine Annex : For the first time, New Zealand has signed an annex to facilitate trade in Ayurveda, yoga and other traditional medicine services with India. This landmark provision promotes the global recognition of India's AYUSH systems, supports medical value travel, encourages collaboration in wellness services, and reinforces India's position as a global hub for health, wellness, and traditional medicine services. It gives centre stage to India's AYUSH disciplines (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Sowa-Rigpa, Siddha and

Homeopathy) alongside Maori Health practices.

India's Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Sector Gains Faster Regulatory Access in New Zealand : The New Zealand government will accept Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Good Clinical Practice (GCP) inspection reports issued by comparable international regulators, including the United States Food and Drug Administration, the European Medicines Agency, and the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, eliminating duplicative inspections and lowering compliance costs.

Most-Favoured Nation Commitments : The FTA includes Most-Favoured Nation commitments across approximately 139 services sub-sectors, among them financial services, tourism, travel-related services, digital cooperation and audio-visual and creative industries, according to the Commerce Ministry factsheet.

Structured Cooperation for MSMEs : The FTA includes structured cooperation for MSMEs, providing access to trade-related information, export readiness programmes, and linkages with New Zealand's SME ecosystem, with a focus on start-ups and global value chain integration.

Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices : Annexes for expedited regulatory pathways and recognition of inspections from trusted regulators (US, EU, UK, Canada).

Intellectual Property Rights : Binding commitment by New Zealand to amend its laws within 18 months to provide EU-level protection for India's Geographical Indications (GIs).

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Financial inclusion is a pre-requisite of inclusive growth. Inclusive growth is economic growth that delivers social benefits, tackles inequalities and spreads benefits more fairly between people and places. Inclusive growth seeks to boost national wealth and well-being while reducing poverty, ensuring equity across generations and preserving economic freedoms. According to Arvind Virman, the Indian model of inclusive growth, viewed from a development economics perspective, has three pillars : (1) Market economics, (2) Empowerment and (3) Pragmatism.

Financial Inclusion is defined as the availability of affordable financial products and services to meet the needs of individuals and businesses in a responsible and sustainable way. It supports entrepreneurship, business growth, empowers women and support in managing risks which leads to strengthening of economic activities, boost in productivity and economic growth.

India's financial inclusion journey has gone a transformational shift, driven by the combination of a robust digital public infrastructure (DPI) and artificial intelligence (AI). Government of India has pioneered the area of digital public goods and soft infrastructure. This includes the development of Unique ID for all citizens/ residents (Aadhar), a Universal Payment Interface (UPI) for quick and seamless payments, DigiLocker, India Stack and health stack. The government has promoted the electronic markets like Government e-Market (GEM), for purchase of goods and services by public sector agencies, including government departments, e-National Agricultural Market (e-NAM) and Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).

The journey of financial inclusion began as an effort to expand basic banking access has evolved into a technology - driven

ecosystem focussed on providing intelligent, inclusive and real-time financial services across the country to all sections of the society. By leveraging a vast digital footprint, advanced analytics and consent-based data-sharing frameworks, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the way financial services are designed and delivered, increasing efficiency, expanding outreach, and enabling more personalized financial solutions.

This transformation of financial sector has been proved an effective tool for the advantage of underserved and 'new borrowers', including MSMEs, informal workers, rural populations and women-led enterprises, weaker section of the society. By reducing information asymmetries and transcending traditional credit assessment models, AI is facilitating access to formal finance, strengthening risk management and improving financial resilience. As India moves towards a digitally empowered economy, AI is not only accelerating financial inclusion but also transforming the financial ecosystem into one that is more responsive, secure and future-ready and inclusive.

Transformation of Financial Access Through Digital Solutions

Financial inclusion is the process of ensuring access to financial services, including timely, adequate and affordable credit, primarily for vulnerable groups and low-income groups. In India, it has transformed from a policy goal to a digital-first reality. Over the past decade, a bunch of interconnected digital platforms have transformed financial access from a policy objective to a quantifiable, technology-driven reality.

This transformation of digitally empowered financial system is based on fundamental factors that enable identity verification, seamless payments and direct benefit distribution.

These systems ensure that financial services are accessible, affordable, and efficiently available across all geographies and across all sections—particularly un-served or partially served section of the society. Together, they form the foundation of an integrated ecosystem that supports last - mile connectivity and future innovations.

Key pillars of Financial Inclusion are following :

JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan - Aadhaar - Mobile)

JAM is a fundamental combination of universal bank accounts, biometric identification and mobile connectivity. It aims to provide every citizen with a unique financial identity and a direct link to the state, ensuring that geographical distance is no longer a barrier to financial access.

- By March 2026, more than 144 crore Aadhaar numbers have been generated for secure authentication.
- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts have increased from 14.72 crore in 2015 to 58.16 crore (as of 29 April 2026) with total deposits of ₹ 3.02 lakh crore. It brought the unbanked into the formal economy.
- Mobile connectivity completes the triangle with 125.87 crore wireless telephone subscribers and 5G mobile services covering 85 per cent of the population including 99.9 per cent of districts.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

UPI, operated by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCL) is a real-time payment system that enables instant money transfers between any two bank accounts via a mobile platform. It aims to democratize digital payments by providing a low-cost,

interoperable and secure experience for both small merchants and individual users.

- The Unified Payments Interface (UPI), launched on 11 April, 2016 by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) under the regulatory oversight of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has emerged as the backbone of India's digital payments ecosystem and a critical driver of financial inclusion.
- Over a decade of operations, UPI has demonstrated extraordinary scale and momentum. Annual transaction volume expanded from just 2 crore transactions in FY 2016-17 to over 24,162 crore transactions in FY 2025-26, representing an almost 12,000-fold surge in transaction volume. Parallely, transaction value rose sharply from ₹ 0.07 lakh crore in FY 2016-17 to approximately ₹ 314 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, translating into a more than 4,000 fold increase in transaction value.
- This simultaneous expansion in both volume and value highlights UPI's deepening role in supporting high-frequency retail payments. The unprecedented scale, reliability and interoperability achieved by UPI have received global recognition, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) acknowledging it as the world's largest real-time payment system by transaction volume, underscoring India's leadership in building scalable, inclusive, and innovative digital public infrastructure.
- The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has witnessed a steady and broad-based expansion in institutional participation since its launch. The number of banks live on UPI increased from 44 banks in FY 2016-17, the first year of operations, to 703 banks by FY 2025-26. This onboarding covers public sector banks, private banks, small finance banks, payment banks, and cooperative banks, enabling UPI's deep geographic reach. Each bank functions as a

Remitter PSP (processing outgoing transactions) and/or a Beneficiary PSP (receiving funds), with NPCI monitoring performance metrics for all participants.

Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT), supported by Aadhaar authentication, changed the way subsidies and welfare payments are delivered. DBT helped remove fake beneficiaries and saved the government more than ₹ 3.48 lakh crore between 2015 and March 2023. As of March 31, 2026, the cumulative total of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) funds disbursed to citizens in India reached ₹ 51.08 lakh crore. For the single financial year of 2025-2026, total DBT outflows amounted to ₹ 7.28 lakh crore spanning 324 active government schemes. DBT plugged the seepage of public money in a big way.

The system has also helped clean up beneficiary databases. Over 5.87 crore ineligible ration card holders have been removed, and 4.23 crore duplicate or fake LPG connections have been cancelled, making the welfare system more targeted and transparent. By eliminating duplicate and fake beneficiaries, it has saved the government over ₹ 4.31 lakh crore.

Enabling AI in Finance : Policy Encouragement and Ecosystem Support

The integration of AI into financial services is supported by digital solutions, regulatory innovation, institutional initiatives and financial literacy programs. These efforts have been designed to strengthen risk management and consumer protection, while ensuring that the technology remains inclusive.

Following innovative steps have been taken to improve India's policy-driven approach to building a safe and inclusive AI-financial ecosystem:

Bhashini

- Bhashini supports 36+ languages, helps in providing services in 23+ languages.
- It supports 350+ AI Models, impacting more than 100 crore Indians.

- In February 2026, Digital India Bhashini Division (DIBD) and RBI signed a MoU to collaborate on integrating Bhashini's language AI model to enhance multilingual access to banking and financial services.
- The initiative aims to promote financial inclusion in India's diverse linguistic landscape by providing multilingual access to banking services in all 22 languages, mentioned in the VIII Schedule of Indian Constitution, thus bridging literacy and language barriers.
- The MoU provides for the deployment of the Bhashini model within the RBI ecosystem. The model utilizes linguistic datasets from the Bhashadan initiative to ensure high contextual accuracy for complex financial terminology and regulatory language.

Bhashadan collects speech, text and translations from people across India and uses them to train Artificial Intelligence systems.

- 'Banking Bhashini', a domain-specific language model for the banking industry will be developed by DIBD and RBI jointly to integrate banking terminology, regulatory guidelines and industry-specific applications.

RBI Regulatory Sandbox (RS)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced an enabling framework for Regulatory Sandbox (RS) to promote responsible innovation in the financial technology (fintech) sector, enhance efficiency and benefit consumers. The RS provides a controlled environment for testing new products/services under regulatory supervision before widespread deployment.

- The RS aims to promote responsible innovation, efficiency and benefit consumers in financial services.
- The RS enables fintech startups and banks to test solutions such as application programme interface (API) services, digital Know Your Customer (KYC) and cybersecurity products.

- The RS allows regulators to assess the benefits and risks of new technologies while ensuring financial stability and consumer protection.

MuleHunter.AI

MuleHunter.AI was launched by the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) in December 2024. It is an advanced AI-powered tool designed to identify and mitigate 'mule' bank accounts used in cybercrimes.

Mule Account

A mule account is a legitimate bank account used by criminals to receive and transfer illegally obtained money, often belonging to unsuspecting individuals lured by 'work from home' scams, romance scams, or 'easy money' promises. Acting as a money mule—knowingly or not—is a serious criminal offense that can lead to frozen accounts, ruined credit and legal action.

- Unlike traditional rule-based systems, MuleHunter.AI uses Artificial Intelligence / Machine Learning - powered tools to analyze transaction patterns in real time, detecting anomalies that indicate money laundering or illegal betting.

Mission Digital Shram Setu (MDSS)

Mission Digital Shramsetu, announced in October 2025, is a proposed national initiative to create an AI-powered ecosystem that makes technology accessible, affordable, and impactful for India's 490 million informal workers.

- The MDSS uses AI, blockchain, and immersive learning to address structural barriers such as financial insecurity, limited market access, and lack of formal skills.
- The MDSS empowers workers with digital platforms to enhance their skills and increase productivity and ensures that they are integrated into the mainstream economy with dignity thereby ensuring financial inclusion.
- The MDSS aims to transform the informal workforce into a primary driver for the Developed India 2047 vision by providing social security and tools for real-time skill verification.

AI-based Credit Scoring : Expanding Access to Formal Credit : Digital advancements and AI are reshaping India's credit ecosystem by strengthening credit assessment and expanding credit access. Traditionally, access to formal credit was limited sections of the society and the economy due to a lack of verifiable financial history, particularly for MSMEs, informal workers, weaker sections of the society and first-time borrowers. AI - powered solutions go beyond traditional credit scoring models and leverage alternative data such as digital payment transactions, GST filings, bank statements, and utility payments to assess creditworthiness. By converting digital footprints into dynamic risk profiles, AI enables faster, more accurate and cost-efficient underwriting decisions. Furthermore, AI - powered credit models have the potential to uncover the estimated credit gap of \$ 130-170 billion in economic value, reducing MSMEs' reliance on informal credit.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) refers to interoperable digital systems—such as digital identities, payment platforms and data exchange frameworks that enable secure and efficient service delivery.

Application Programming Interface (API) is a set of rules and protocols that enable different software applications to communicate and exchange data with each other.

CIBIL Score, issued by Credit Information Bureau (India) Limited (CIBIL), is a three-digit numerical summary of a user's credit profile and loan-worthiness based on past repayment behaviour and credit record.

Alternative Credit Scoring (AI-Centric Lending) : For millions of Indians without a Credit Information Bureau (India) Limited (CIBIL) score, AI serves as the new credit watchdog. Leveraging the Unified Lending Interface (ULI), AI models analyze 'digital footprints' to assess risk. The ULI is a technology-based initiative to make frictionless credit available to every Indian and to further the Government's broader vision of digital empowerment, financial inclusion and last-mile service delivery. It serves as a digital public infrastructure (DPI) in the lending

sector, integrating financial institutions and data providers through a standardized, API-based framework to support efficient and inclusive loan assessment.

- ULI enables digital access to multiple data sources, including authentication services, land records, satellite services and other financial and non-financial datasets, to assist in loan processing.
- As of December 12, 2025, 64 lenders (41 banks and 23 NBFCs) have been on boarded on the platform. These lenders are using over 136 data services across 12 different loan categories.
- ULI is being expanded to include customers of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs) to increase credit access in rural and semi-urban areas.

Account Aggregator (AA) Framework : The Account Aggregator (AA) framework is Complementing these advancements. AA has been introduced by the RBI as a financial data sharing system. The AA system enables consent-based, secure sharing of financial data across institutions, significantly reducing documentation requirements and turnaround times for loan approvals. AAs are NBFCs that facilitate the retrieval and consolidation of customer financial information. They transfer data from one financial institution to another based on an individual's instructions and consent.

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"Hard work, right strategy and self-confidence are the secrets of my success."

Monika Srivastava

Topper—UPSC Civil Services Exam., 2025 (16th Rank)

'Pratiyogita Darpan' arranged an exclusive interview with **Ms. Monika Srivastava**, who has been selected in the UPSC Civil Services Exam., 2025. She deserves high appreciation and our heartiest congratulations on her glorious success. This important, thought-provoking and highly inspiring interview is being presented here in its original form.



Success comes only to those who remain dedicated to their goals and do not give up under any circumstances.

—Monika Srivastava

PD—Achieving top slot in the UPSC Civil Services Examination is no small feat; accept our heartiest congratulations on your splendid success.

Ms. Monika—Thank you very much, Sir!

PD—Were you confident of your success in this examination and how did you react to this news?

Ms. Monika—I was filled with immense sense of satisfaction and joy when my name appeared in the final result list. For me, this success was the culmination of years of hard work, perseverance and the unwavering support of my family.

PD—What preference in services have you opted for and any particular reason for that priority?

Ms. Monika—I gave the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) the highest priority.

PD—What were your optional subject?

Ms. Monika—Economics.

PD—In how many attempts have you achieved this success?

Ms. Monika—In terms of number of attempts, this attempt was my final attempt. However, this was my first 'earnest' attempt, in which I gave the examination with complete dedication and thorough preparation. Prior to this, I was a software engineer and subsequently I was selected in the Indian Railway Traffic Service in 2023. Alongside my training in IRTS, I dedicated myself completely to my preparation in this attempt.

PD—You must have read IAS Toppers' interviews in newspapers/magazines; what inspired you the most? Any particular success story which influenced your journey to this result?

Ms. Monika—Initially, whenever I saw toppers or heard about them, I always wondered what these people do differently which enables them to achieve spectacular results. Later on, following my own preparation and final outcome, I came to realize that toppers, too, are just an ordinary aspirants.

PD—What was your strategy for UPSC-CSE Preliminary Exam.?

Ms. Monika—My biggest focus for Prelims was on Previous Year Questions (PYQs), in which I solved questions of last 12-15 years. This helped me a lot in understanding the exam pattern and important topics for exams. I also focussed on increasing the number of questions to be attempted. In this attempt, I attempted 93-94 questions. I gave special emphasis on static subjects.

PD—How did you manage to tackle the 'Negative Marking' in Prelims?

Ms. Monika—I used elimination technique and intelligent guess

work to tackle the 'negative marking' in Prelims. Firstly, I attempted those questions in which I was sure, followed by the doubtful questions.

PD—The first step is the most difficult; how to prepare? Which optional subjects to pick? What to read? How much to read? Many such questions come to your mind when you really get serious about Civil Services Examination? From where, did you get the right advice?

Ms. Monika—Initially, I relied on online resources. I watched videos of toppers sharing their strategies on YouTube and gathered information regarding standard reference books. Gradually, I formulated my own strategy and enrolled in a test series.

PD—Why did you choose Economics as an optional subject? How did you prepare for it?

Ms. Monika—My graduation subject was Computer Science Engineering, but it is not available as an optional subject in UPSC-CSE. I chose Economics as an optional in Mains because it requires an analytical approach. Although; the subject is challenging, I found it very interesting.

While preparing for Economics optional, I referred to standard books, Economic Survey and Budget. I used quotes of prominent economists in my answers.

PD—What strategy you adopted for Mains (Written)?

Ms. Monika—While preparing for Mains, following points should be kept in mind: The entire syllabus should be covered before Prelims, prepare optional notes; increase the answer writing practice after Prelims examination.

Bio-Data

Name—Monika Srivastava
Father's Name—Brijesh Kumar Srivastava
Mother's Name—Smt. Bharati Kumari Srivastava
Educational Qualifications—
10th—2010 [10/10(CGPA)]
12th—2012 (92.6%)
B.Tech.(Computer Science and Engineering)—2016, IIT Guwahati
Previous Selections—UPSC-CSE 2023 (AIR-455) selected in Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS).

PD—What special attention did you pay in answer writing ?

Ms. Monika—Answer should always be relevant to the question. Use keywords as subheadings. The introduction and conclusion should be effective. Give equal time to each question, whether it is difficult or easy. **Remember, a good answer is one that directly answers the question.**

PD—'Time Management' is a key factor while making preparations as well as in writing examination papers, be it Prelims or Mains Examination. How did you manage things ?

Ms. Monika—I used to set a time limit for each question and practiced answer writing accordingly, so that I would not leave any question unanswered in exam.

PD—How did you prepare yourself for Interview ? What were the questions asked during the Interview ?

Ms. Monika—While preparing for interview, I thoroughly analysed the Detailed Application Form (DAF). I brainstormed potential questions which could be asked based on my DAF. I also gave several mock interviews and one-on-one discussions.

In interview, I was asked questions related to my optional (Economics), my service (IRTS), personal life and hobbies (like running). I was also asked questions, related to social issues such as coaching culture and mental health. Incorporating personal experiences in my answers and having balanced opinion on issues were one of the main focus of my interview preparation.

PD—While the changing economic environment offers immense

lucrative career opportunities in various sectors, still what kept you motivated towards Civil Services ?

Ms. Monika—The desire to directly serve the society and make positive impact at grassroot level always kept me motivated to join administrative services.

PD—Is it possible to prepare for UPSC-CSE while working ?

Ms. Monika—If you can spare a significant portion of your time for preparation even after your job, it is certainly possible to prepare for this exam while working. Furthermore, with the convenience of working from home and effective time management, you can certainly prepare successfully. However, under any circumstances, complete dedication and consistency are the most essential factors.

PD—What is the importance of medium of examination for exams like CSE ?

Ms. Monika—No, language is not a barrier. You can take the exam in either Hindi or English. Hard work and right direction are more important ingredients to clear this exam.

PD—Can you recall the exact moment when you realized the importance of Civil Services ? Finally, at what point of time did you make up your mind to pursue career in Civil Services ?

Ms. Monika—The idea of joining the Civil Services had been on my mind right from the beginning, but COVID-19 proved to be turning point in my life. During that time, I observed that individuals working in administration and healthcare services were directly serving the society. Gradually, I realised that I too wanted to contribute to society and should strive to join the administrative services. My father also encouraged me and inspired me to pursue career in Civil Services.

PD—What is the secret of your success ?

Ms. Monika—Hard work, right strategy and self-confidence are the secret of my success.

PD—To whom would you like to give the credit for your success ?

Ms. Monika—My parents, family and friends.

Personal Characteristics

Favourite Person—My parents and family.

Strong Point—Dedication, Hard work and not giving up under any circumstances.

Weak Point—Nothing important.

Hobbies—Running and strength training.

PD—Any suggestion/advice you would like to give to the future aspirants.

Ms. Monika—Work hard in right direction, keep your resources limited, maintain consistency and believe in yourself.

PD—Thank you very much and wishing you all the best for your future endeavours.

PDarpan

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The AA framework allows users to aggregate their financial information (e.g., bank accounts, investments, loans, etc.) from multiple sources and share it with service providers (e.g., lenders, wealth managers) for services such as loan applications or financial planning. Registration with the AA ecosystem is completely voluntary for users. Currently, the RBI has granted registration certificates to seventeen companies to operate as account aggregators.

It meets the demand for growing market adoption in the banking, securities, insurance and pension sectors. With data sharing enabled with over 2.6 billion accounts, a total of 252.9 million users have linked their accounts to the AA framework (as of December 31, 2025). Specifically, the AA ecosystem is strengthening the digital credit infrastructure and enhancing the effectiveness of AI-based credit models.

Conclusion

As India is moving towards its Developed India 2047 vision, AI-led financial inclusion is most likely to play a key role in driving sustainable economic growth, positioning the country as a global leader in building a resilient, future-ready financial infrastructure. We hope that AI powered financial inclusion will help to attain the major goal of inclusive growth.

PDarpan

"Determination, perseverance and firm conviction are the secrets of my success."

Akshat Singhal

Topper—UPSC Civil Services Exam., 2025 (352nd Rank)

'Pratiyogita Darpan' arranged an exclusive interview with **Shri Akshat Singhal** who has been selected in the UPSC Civil Services Exam., 2025. He deserves high appreciation and our heartiest congratulations on his glorious success. This important, thought-provoking and highly inspiring interview is being presented here in its original form.



With the right strategy, dedication and discipline, success is certain.

—Akshat Singhal

PD—Achieving top slot in the UPSC Civil Services Examination is no small feat; accept our heartiest congratulations on your splendid success.

Shri Akshat—Thank you very much Sir!

PD—Were you confident of your success in this examination and how did you react to this news?

Shri Akshat—Yes, I was confident of my success in this attempt.

PD—What were your optional subject?

Shri Akshat—Anthropology.

PD—In how many attempts have you achieved this success?

Shri Akshat—I have achieved this success in my fourth attempt.

PD—What were your thoughts regarding UPSC-CSE toppers before your own success in this exam? Were you inspired by any of them?

Shri Akshat—Since my childhood, I believed that UPSC was one of the most difficult examinations and only exceptionally brilliant students could succeed in it. Furthermore, I imagined that toppers must

possess some unique ability or they studied for 18-20 hours a day.

However, when I started my preparation, I realised that UPSC-CSE preparation is inherently managerial in nature. Therefore, any student who adopts the right managerial strategy—appropriate strategic approach—for exam preparation, can achieve success.

PD—What strategy did you adopt to prepare for Prelims, Mains and Interview stages of UPSC-CSE?

Shri Akshat—As I was working, most of my resources were online sources. In addition to that, for Prelims, I relied on notes of previous selected toppers as readymade notes to save time for making my own notes.

For Mains, I focussed on answer writing. I attempted mock tests extensively and analysed PYQs.

For Interview, me and my friends appearing for interview, formed a peer group, where we used to have discussions on current affairs topics and how to answer them. It is important to work on personality, knowledge enhancement and presentation skills while preparing for interview.

One should prepare for Prelims and Mains simultaneously, with major focus on Mains as it is very important deciding factor in your selection. However, one should start Prelims-focussed preparation from December-January onwards.

PD—What was your approach towards UPSC-CSE Prelims? How did you manage to tackle the 'Negative Marking' in Prelims?

Shri Akshat—UPSC-CSE Prelims test aspirants' mindset. 30-35

questions can be answered correctly based on the knowledge. Beyond that, answering in Prelims requires intelligent guessing which requires pattern, PYQ analysis and your positive mindset. In today's time, the cut-off for UPSC-CSE Prelims is 90 to 95 marks for General category. So for those extra 30 marks, you need to do some logical guessing and PYQ analysis.

PD—The first step is the most difficult: how to prepare? Which optional subjects to pick? What to read? How much to read? Many such questions come to your mind when you really get serious about Civil Services Examination? From where, did you get the right advice?

Shri Akshat—In addition to my self-motivation to appear in Civil Services Examination, I also took advice of my mentor, Shri Himanshu Mangal IAS, from my home district and my friend Mohit Mangal, who achieved AIR 587 in UPSC-CSE 2025. Their advice helped me to plan my preparation along with my job.

PD—You achieved the desired success in this attempt; how do you visualize your previous attempts?

Shri Akshat—In my first two attempts, I was unsuccessful in the Preliminary Examination. Having reached the interview stage in my third attempt, I felt that my preparation was proceeding in the right direction. Therefore, I rectified my minor errors in this attempt and brought the process to completion.

PD—In this age of information overload, what's important and what's not especially for Prelims?

Shri Akshat—In today's era of information, availability of myriad

resources makes it difficult for an aspirant to narrow down on resources. One should stick to standard sources while preparing for Prelims, such as NCERTs, standard textbooks and PYQs.

PD—Give the basis of selecting the optional subject ?

Shri Akshat—One should choose optional subject based on their interest which can be discerned through syllabus and PYQs.

PD—What shift did you adopt in your strategy for Mains (Written) ?

Shri Akshat—In General Studies papers, understanding the demand of questions is very crucial. You can develop this niche by analysing the PYQs, brainstorming the structure of your answer and getting it checked by your peer groups, mentor or coaching. Next, answer writing practice is very important to complete your paper in stipulated time.

Bio-Data

Name—Akshat Singhal

Father's Name—Shri Dinesh Chand Singhal

Mother's Name—Smt. Rekha Singhal

Educational Qualifications—

10th—Vivekanand Sanskar Senior Secondary School, Gangapur City, Rajasthan (92%)

12th—DS Science Academy, Gangapur City, Rajasthan (94%)

B.Tech.—2015-2019, MNIT, Jaipur, Rajasthan (80%)

Previous Selection—Indian Engineering Services Examination (2019)

PD—'Time Management' is a key factor in UPSC-CSE preparations. How did you manage your preparation while continuing with your job ?

Shri Akshat—I continued my UPSC-CSE preparation while working. I would occasionally take some time off before the exam. But I did the rest of my preparation while working.

PD—How did you prepare yourself for Interview ? When and which Board did you face ? How did your interview go on, how much time it lasted and what were the questions asked during the Interview ?

Shri Akshat—I was asked questions on current issues such as India-US Trade Deal, Indigo Airline

Crisis, etc. I was also asked questions on my graduation subject (Electrical Engineering), my home state (Rajasthan) and my home district (Sri Ganganagar District).

PD—Which specific features of Civil Services kept you motivated towards it ?

Shri Akshat—I believe that career in civil services provides you with diverse opportunities and situation, where you get the chance to work across various sectors and bring about positive change. Along with the responsibility of administrative management, one also get the opportunity to engage with and work for people at grassroot level. It is precisely this nature of work and its scope that distinguishes the administrative services with other services.

PD—What is the importance of medium of examination for exams like UPSC-CSE ?

Shri Akshat—I don't think the language or medium has any impact in this. Whether you are from Hindi or English medium, UPSC-CSE judges you based on your personality, your answers and your thought process. In the age of technology and AI, disparity in content availability is also getting minimised.

Personal Characteristics

Favourite Person—My family and my uncles.

Strong Point—Self-determination and Time Management.

Weak Point—Nothing important.

Hobbies—Sports : Cricket, Badminton, Yoga and Jogging.

PD—Finally, at what point of time did you make up your mind to make career in 'Civil Services' ?

Shri Akshat—The idea of preparing for civil services first occurred to me during the tenure of my first job after college. Following my selection in the Indian Engineering Services in 2019, I thought to appear in the CSE in 2023.

PD—Did you keep in mind some time-frame for the examination preparation and number of attempts ?

Shri Akshat—Initially, I had fixed 2-3 years for UPSC-CSE preparation, however, it took few more attempts to ultimately achieved success in this exam.

PD—Does the socio-economic and demographic status of the family of an aspirant have any impact on the preparation ?

Shri Akshat—Social status holds no importance in preparation for Civil Services. Every year, people from diverse social background are clearing this exam. Proliferation of technology, ad-tech platforms and readily available online study materials has mitigated the impact of financial status to a larger extent in preparing for civil services.

PD—How do you find Pratiyogita Darpan ? Do you find it close to your expectations ?

Shri Akshat—I myself have followed the article of Pratiyogita Darpan in my civil services preparation. The content, especially articles, are crisp and to the point. The articles present the various dimensions of an issue, its reasons and possible solutions. I referred to Pratiyogita Darpan articles for value addition, especially for Mains.

PD—As a reader of Pratiyogita Darpan, do you read IAS Preparation related articles published in it and did you find these constructive ?

Shri Akshat—I read several articles, especially, those related to the environment, which enhanced my knowledge base and helped me to better articulate my thoughts, especially for the Mains Exam.

PD—What is the secret of your success ?

Shri Akshat—Determination, perseverance and firm conviction are the secrets of my success.

PD—To whom would you like to give the credit for your success ?

Shri Akshat—To my parents, my family and friends who always supported me to pursue my dream.

PD—Any suggestion/advice you would like to give to the future aspirants.

Shri Akshat—Firstly, one should be very clear about why he or she wants to join the Civil Services. The right strategy, dedication and discipline will definitely bring you success.

PD—Thank you very much and wishing you all the best for your future endeavours.



World Panorama

India and Vietnam : Building Comprehensive Partnership

—Arunoday Bajpai

The beginning of Cold War in 1945 and the end of Cold War in 1991 are the two milestones in the international politics. These events have affected India's relations with many countries. But there are few exceptions, where India's relations were not affected by the compulsions of Cold War. Vietnam is one such exception. India and Vietnam have maintained close ties during both Cold War and post-Cold War era. India has vital interests with Vietnam as well as in South-east Asia. First, India launched her Look East Policy in 1992, which aims for developing close economic and strategic ties with ASEAN countries. Vietnam is an important member of ASEAN. Second, Vietnam's strategic location at the East-West Routes in the South China Sea is vital for the security of sea lanes in the region. Both India and Vietnam share a common vision about the open and free Indo-Pacific and a rule-based order there. China and Vietnam do not have cordial relations because earlier China launched a major military aggression against Vietnam in 1979 and now both have serious maritime dispute in the South China Sea. This has spurred the close defence and maritime cooperation between India and Vietnam. Also, Vietnam appears keen to purchase India's BrahMos missile system after the first purchase by Philippines. Third, trade and economic interests are another factor. Vietnam is rich in oil and gas resources. India and Vietnam have decades-old institutional linkages in the field of oil and gas exploration. Both the countries are keen to expand the exploration and production activities.

India and Vietnam Partnership : A Brief Background

India and Vietnam share a long history of cultural ties since the days of spread of Buddhism and Hinduism in the South-East Asia. In modern time India supported the freedom of North Vietnam from the French rule in 1954. India established full diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1972 after the unification of two Vietnams. Before that India maintained Consulate-level relations with the then North Vietnam and South Vietnam. Both countries signed a Strategic Partnership in 2007, which was elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister in 2016.

Bilateral relations have developed steadily and are marked by regular high-level exchanges and multifaceted cooperation between the two countries. In 2022, India and Vietnam celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Recent interactions include visit of the Prime Minister of Vietnam to India in July-August 2024, as well PM-level interactions on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in November 2025, the SCO Summit in China in September 2025 and the BRICS Summit in Brazil in July 2025. During the visit of the Prime Minister of Vietnam to India in 2024, the two sides launched a Plan of Action for implementing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during 2024-2028. During this visit, Vietnam announced joining the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure (CDRI).

Defence and Security cooperation is one of the central pillars of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and Vietnam. This cooperation is guided by the MoU on Defence Cooperation of 2009 and the Joint Vision on Defence Cooperation of 2015. In June 2022, during the visit of India's Defence Minister to Vietnam, the two sides also agreed upon a 'Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership towards 2030'.

Economic ties have also progressed well between the two countries. In 2025-2026, India-Vietnam bilateral trade reached USD 16.4 billion, wherein, India's export to Vietnam accounted to approximately USD 6.1 billion while Vietnam's exports to India were approx. USD 10.3 billion.

India has also launched a robust development partnership in Vietnam. Since 2017, 56 Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) have been completed in 32 out of Vietnam's total 34 provinces and another 10 are currently under implementation.

The cultural ties and people to people exchanges have also enhanced over the years. At present, nearly, 8,000 Indian nationals constitute the Indian community in Vietnam. About 5,500 of them are based in and around Ho Chi Minh City with another couple of thousand living in and around Hanoi. Most of the community members are professionals employed in businesses, sectors such as IT, hotels/restaurants, mining, yoga institutions, civil aviation enterprises, schools, investments and trading in wide-ranging goods.

In brief, in last 50 years, the strategic partnership between the two countries moved forward in rapid pace due to strong strategic convergence between the two countries.

Visit of President of Vietnam

On the invitation of India, the President of Vietnam To Lam paid a three-day visit to India on 5-7 May.

2026. Besides wide-ranging discussion on various issues of mutual importance with Indian Prime Minister, To Lam also addressed the Vietnam-India Innovation Forum. He also visited Mumbai to hold interactions and exchanges with the State Government and businesses and address at the Vietnam-India Business Forum.

The two leaders issued a joint statement on 6 May, 2026 on India-Vietnam Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which, inter alia, outlines their ongoing programmers of cooperation and future contours of their strategic partnership. Some of the important points of this Joint Statement are mentioned below :

(A) Political Ties :

1. Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership : In a major development, both leaders decided to elevate their bilateral ties to the level of Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in the spirit of 'shared vision, strategic convergence, and substantive cooperation'.

2. The two sides look forward to the establishment of Strategic Diplomacy : Defence Dialogue, under 2+2 framework, in which foreign and defence ministers of two countries would participate together in bilateral consultation. So far India has established a 2+2 dialogue mechanism only with six countries : the USA, Australia, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Brazil. Vietnam would be the 7th country in this list, signifying how closer the two nations are moving in the path of strategic partnership.

3. They agreed that the Political Consultation and Strategic Dialogue; and the Joint Commission Meeting on Economic, Trade, Scientific Cooperation remain key pillars underpinning India-Vietnam relations.

4. The leaders agreed to accelerate the effective implementation of the Plan of Action between India and Vietnam for the period of 2024- 2028 and this Joint Statement.

(B) Economic Trade and Investment Partnership :

Under the economic partnership, the two sides agreed on the following points :

(1) With the focus on increasing two-way trade, investment and technological partnership. Both the countries have set up a new trade goal of 25 billion USD by 2030.

(2) Both sides will facilitate market access to each other for various products including agricultural products as well as to enhance the supply chains in sectors of mutual interest.

(3) The leaders agreed to encourage greater two-way investments to enhance economic ties mainly in the fields of high-technology, transport, manufacturing, logistics, renewable energy, smart agriculture, electric vehicles and information technology, e-commerce and the digital economy.

(4) The leaders agreed that the ongoing review of the ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) should be concluded at the earliest.

(C) Defence and Security Cooperation

In view of the strategic location of Vietnam near the East-West routes passing through the South China Sea, and rising maritime tensions in the region due to China's expansionist activities, the defence and security cooperation between the two nations becomes the key pillar of their enhanced, comprehensive strategic partnership :

(1) While appreciating the effective implementation of India-Vietnam Defence partnership Vision 2023, the two sides agreed to further strengthen their defence partnership in various areas like defence policy dialogue, joint exercises, joint research and co-production of new defence technologies, information sharing, hydrography, capacity building, defence industrial cooperation, maritime security and search and rescue operations.

(2) They further agreed to broaden collaboration in the fields of information sharing, cybersecurity, counterterrorism and combating high-tech crime, transnational crime, money laundering and online scams.

(3) They expressed satisfaction in effective implementation of various defence agreements like Memorandum of Agreement on Submarine Search and Rescue Sup-

port Mutual Logistics Support Agreement; and Letter of Intent on Strengthening Defence Industrial Cooperation.

(4) The leaders welcomed the inaugural joint hydrographic survey by the two in May 2025 off the coast of Vietnam and agreed to regularly conduct similar exercises in the future. They also appreciated the successful convening of the First India-Vietnam Cyber Policy Dialogue.

(5) For strengthening maritime security they agreed to enhance collaboration in oceanography, including areas such as ocean observing platforms, data management, ocean prediction and services. Vietnam has recently joined Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) at Gurugram, India, established by India to strengthen cooperation in Maritime Domain Awareness in the Indian Ocean Region. Vietnam has also joined India-led Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). They agreed to further strengthen synergies between IPOI and ASEAN-led similar initiative—the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).

(D) Cooperation in Critical and Emerging Technologies :

(1) The two sides agreed to facilitate greater collaboration and partnership in critical and emerging technology in areas such as areas such as Digital Public Infrastructure, 6G, Artificial Intelligence, space and nuclear technology, marine sciences, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, advanced materials and critical minerals.

(2) In view of impending climate crisis, the two sides also agreed to enhance cooperation in clean and renewable energy, as well as climate and disaster resilient technologies. Vietnam recognized the importance of India-led climate initiatives like Mission LIFE (Lifestyle for Environment), International Solar Alliance (ISA), and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). India welcomed Vietnam's interest to join the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA), which was launched by India in 2023 during the G-20 Summit held in Delhi.

(3) Both leaders underlined the importance of peaceful use of nuclear energy. On the invitation of Vietnam, India is keen to cooperate in nuclear energy sector with Vietnam.

(4) During this visit, both sides have signed an important agreement which provides for the long-standing commitment on both sides to expand bilateral cooperation in the areas of rare earth elements, among other new-age technologies.

(E) India-Vietnam Development Partnership :

Vietnam has been a member of CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) group of countries, which are less developed in comparison to other members of ASEAN. Vietnam appreciated India launched Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) under Mekong-Ganga Cooperation framework, ITEC (India Technical and Economic Cooperation) programmes, and educational scholarships. The ITEC, launched by India in 1964 is the flagship programme of India for development partnership with developing countries under the framework of south-south cooperation. India has so far implemented 66 QIPs through across 32 out of Vietnam's 34 provinces.

(F) Cultural Cooperation and People to People Exchanges :

Both the countries welcomed the signing of the Cultural Exchange Programme for the period 2026- 2030. Vietnam expressed deep appreciation for India's gesture in sending the Holy Relics of Lord Buddha to Vietnam for exposition during May-June 2025. Underlining the deep civilizational bonds between the two countries, the leaders encouraged greater exchange of Buddhist scholars, monks pilgrims and students.

(G) Regional and International Cooperation :

(1) Vietnam is a key pillar in India's Act East Policy, Vision MAHASAGAR (launched in 2025) and Indo-Pacific Vision. The leaders reaffirmed their shared vision for a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.

(2) Both the leaders reaffirmed the importance of maintaining peace, stability, security and freedom of navigation and over flight in the South China Sea. They called for

peaceful resolution of disputes in South China Sea in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), without resorting to threat or use of force. It should be noted that Vietnam and other four countries namely Taiwan, Malaysia, Brunei and Philippines have maritime disputes with China in the South China Sea and China does not recognize the principles of international law of sea in resolving these disputes.

(3) Vietnam appreciated India's consistent support for ASEAN Unity and ASEAN Centrality in the evolving regional architecture for regional peace, stability and prosperity.

(4) They unequivocally condemned terrorism in all forms and mani-

festations, including cross-border terrorism. They also called for zero tolerance of terrorism and for concerted international efforts to combat terrorism in a comprehensive and sustained manner.

Thirteen Agreements : During the visit of the President of Vietnam, total 13 agreements were signed including the agreements on cooperation in critical minerals, cultural exchange programmes, financial innovation and digital payments, Digital Technologies and IT domain, and pharmaceuticals.

Thus, the visit of President of Vietnam is historic in the sense as it expands the level of bilateral ties to Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and charts out the future pathways for effective implementation of this partnership.

India's Economic Diplomacy : Push for FTAs

In the post-Cold War globalized world, economic diplomacy has emerged as the major dimensions of foreign policy of India as well as other nations. Economic diplomacy involves the use of foreign policy tools like trade and investment partnership, technology cooperation, and aid mechanism to boost the economic prospects and foreign policy goals of a nation. The main components of India's economic diplomacy are : trade and investment partnership, technology partnership, development partnership under the framework of South-South Cooperation (SSC) and promotion, protection and mobility of Indian Diaspora working in other countries. These components not only promote India's economic development but also fulfil the other goals of foreign policy. A major change in post-Cold War economic diplomacy is that it is unhinged from the political ties among the nations. In other words, economic and political ties may not always go together and both may chart an independent course. For example, India and China have many differences on political issues largest or sometimes the largest like border or strategic policies but

still China continues to be the second trading partner of India. On the other hand, India and Russia have very close political and strategic ties since the days of Cold War, but the trade between the two has been limited in comparison to other countries.

Within this broad framework, India has been finetuning and conducting her economic diplomacy since the end of cold and the economic liberalization undertaken by India in 1991. However, for last few years, there has been a distinct push India for the negotiating and signing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with major trade and investment partners in the world. Just in last two years, India has concluded/signed Free Trade Agreements with six major partners : European Free Trade Association (EFTA), United Kingdom, Oman, European Union, the US and New Zealand. Yet, negotiations are going on for future FTAs with many partner groups and countries like Canada, Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), BIMSTEC and others. This is not the end of road. Thus, India's push for FTAs with deve-

developed nations underline not only the changing shape and maturity of Indian economy, but also proves that FTAs have emerged as the major dimensions of India's economic diplomacy in recent years.

Changing Nature of FTAs

Traditionally, FTAs have been viewed as the mechanism for trade concessions in terms of access and tariffs to a range of goods between the two countries or a group of countries. But in recent times, they encompass concession not only in trade of goods, but also involve concessions in services, promotion of investments, mobility of workers as well as various related issues. For example, FTA signed between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 2024 envisages investment in India by the members of the EFTA. Similarly, the FTA signed between India and the UK in 2025 envisages services as well as protection and mobility of workers across the two countries.

Also, now the FTAs are no more a bilateral arrangement but it has assumed multilateral dimensions as these agreements are signed between the countries and regional economic organizations. For example, India has signed FTAs with various regional organizations like the ASEAN, SAARC, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and European Union.

Why Recent Push for FTAs ?

Broadly there are three set of factors behind such push for FTAs by India :

First, the global economy is facing many headwinds and uncertainties caused mainly by three factors : the ongoing wars and conflicts, supply chain disruptions and growing trade protectionism among nations. The Ukraine war since 2022 has already affected the global energy and food supply, the Gaza conflict since 2023 and now Iran conflict (June, 2025 and February, 2026) have further marred the prospects of global supply and trade. The blockade of Hormuz Strait (Linking Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf countries) by the US and Iran has not only hampered the supply the energy resources like oil and gas but also general trade in the Persian Gulf region. Nations are using protec-

tionist policies and employing trade restrictions to realize strategic objectives. The European Union has imposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) since 1 January, 2026, which proposes to impose extra tariffs on imports in to EU, if industries producing such goods do not meet stringent environmental norms set up by the EU. In April 2025, China imposed restriction on the supply of magnets to India and other countries to realize strategic goals. It affected electronics and automobiles industries in India, where magnets are invariably used. It needs to be noted that China enjoys 90 per cent global monopoly in the processing of rare earth minerals, which are raw materials for magnets. In order to address these challenges India needs secure trade destinations and supply chains and FTAs just one of the tools to achieve this objective.

Second, The Trump administration has caused much uncertainty in the global trade than any single country in the history. Under the banner of the America First Policy the US administration has imposed unilateral tariff against many countries including India by disregarding WTO rules and her strategic ties with countries. In August 2025, it imposed 50 percent tariff against Indian goods imported in US markets. Out of this, 25 per cent tariff was imposed as a punitive measure because India was importing oil from Russia. American tariff actions affected India's export of many goods like garments, pharmaceuticals, leather goods and handicrafts to the US, which has the ripple-effect on Indian economy. India's keen desire to conclude FTAs with UK and European Union is largely motivated by hurdle posed against Indian exports by the US policies.

Third, India has declared the goal of Viksit Bharat @2047, which requires eight-fold increase in Per capita GDP at present standards to become a developed country. This means rapid growth of GDP by nearly 10 per cent for two decades. Of course, this entire GDP growth will not come from the exports, but trade important role in the economic development. Moreover, India needs the secured availability of critical technology and secured supply of

critical minerals for its rapid growth and clean energy transition. The future growth cannot occur without clean transition. In view of this India would like to strike beneficial and secured trade framework for its rapid growth. The FTAs and economic diplomacy are designed to address this situation.

India's Notable FTAs in Recent Years

(A) India-EFTA Trade Agreement :

Officially, it is known as India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA). It was signed between India and EFTA on 10 March, 2024. EFTA is a group of four countries : Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein. These countries are not the members of the European Union. This is India's first FTA with European developed countries, becoming effective from 1 October, 2025. The main provisions of this agreement are :

(1) EFTA is committed to make investment of \$100 billion in India in next 15 years. It will create nearly one million jobs in India.

(2) EFTA will provide 100 per cent market access for Indian industrial and non-agricultural products. On the other hand, India will provide concessions on 95.3 per cent of EFTA exports (excluding sensitive items like dairy, soya, and coal). It will cover 82.7 per cent of Indian tariff lines.

(3) TEPA will enhance access for Indian services through digital delivery, commercial presence and improved professional mobility.

(4) It also strengthens intellectual property rights and sustainable development.

The deal benefits manufacturing like machinery, pharmaceuticals, optical/medical devices, chemicals. In order to fast track its implementation a dedicated desk has been set up by India in February 2025 to facilitate EFTA business investments in India.

(B) India-UK FTA :

Officially known as India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the agreement between India and UK was finalized on 6 May, 2025 after three years intensive negotiations. This CETA was signed during the visit of Indian

Prime Minister to UK on 23-24 July, 2025. The India-UK CETA is one of the most comprehensive FTA signed by India so far, covering wide range of areas including Goods, Services, Rules of Origin, IPR, Government Procurement, Digital, Telecom, Financial services, Environment, Labour, among others. The important points of CETA are :

(1) 99 per cent of Indian exports to the UK will face zero tariffs. In return, 90 per cent of UK's exports to India will see phased tariff cuts.

(2) The agreement eases mobility for professionals from India like contractual service suppliers, business visitors, investors and independent professionals like yoga instructors, musicians and chefs.

(3) Under the CETA, India got concessions on work visas, recognition of professional qualifications, and exemptions from national insurance contributions for Indian nationals working temporarily in the UK.

(4) Both countries have also signed the Double Contributions Convention (DCC) which would exempt Indian workers and their employers from paying UK social security contributions in the UK for up to three years. This will reduce social security burden on Indian workers working temporarily in the UK.

The CETA would boost export of many Indian goods like textiles, marine products, leather, footwear, sports goods, toys, gems, jewelry, engineering goods, auto parts, engines, and organic chemicals stand to benefit. It is likely to boost India-UK bilateral trade from 43 billion Pounds in 2024 to 75 billion pounds by 2030.

(C) India-EU FTA :

Officially, this agreement is known as India-EU Free Trade Agreement and was concluded on 27 January, 2026 during the 16th India-EU Summit. The main points of this FTA are :

(1) Under the FTA, the EU will eliminate tariff on 99 per cent of Indian export and India will eliminate tariff on 96.6 per cent of EU export to India.

(2) The agreement also covers trade in services. In 2024, the trade in services between the two was 59.8 billion Euro, with Indian export 33

billion and import being 26 billion. India has surplus trade in services with EU.

(3) The trade agreement also provides for a predictable, secure and fair digital trade between the two sides.

(4) The deal has provisions for the effective protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights of each other.

(5) The Indo-EU FTA has provisions for Rules of Origin. It means only goods produced in India and EU member countries will have duty concessions. Goods sourced from other countries for export will not get concession.

(6) The FTA also has a chapter on Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs), under which both are required to promote each other's MSMEs and their products.

The most important point for India under this agreement is that the agricultural and dairy products have been kept out of FTA, which India was insisting to protect the interests of her farmers. India will have easy access to EU market for goods like fisheries, chemicals, textiles, footwear and pharmaceuticals. The India-EU Free trade Agreement is rightly termed as 'mother of all deals' as it covers 25 per cent of global GDP and 2 billion of global population.

Conclusion

India's economic diplomacy since her economic liberalization at home in 1991 has moved a long way to gain maturity and strength over the years. India has shifted the focus of her economic diplomacy as the domestic requirement and changing global conditions. At present, the focus is on enhancing export, attracting Foreign Direct Investment, ensuring supply of critical minerals and advanced technologies. Besides, India continues to promote her robust development partnership with the countries of global south under the framework of South-South Cooperation. In view of the growing global uncertainties and supply chain disruption due to number of factors beyond India's control, India has pushed forward FTA agreements with major trade partners to address the emerging global challenges. This shows the developing nature of

Indian economy. Hitherto, India had signed FTAs with developing countries. But with the signing of FTAs with advanced economies, Indian economy is likely to move to the higher and more advanced stage.

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Customs and Trade Facilitation : Advance rulings, electronic documentation, and faster clearance times (within 48 hours, 24 hours for perishables).

Rules of Origin (ROO) : Robust framework to prevent circumvention and ensure integrity of preferential access.

Bilateral Trade Baseline and the \$5 Billion Target : Bilateral merchandise trade between India and New Zealand stood at approximately \$ 1.3 billion in 2024-25. The agreement's stated target is to double this to \$ 5 billion within 5 years of entry into force. Over a 15-year horizon, the \$ 20 billion FDI commitment from New Zealand is intended to support supply chain development across both economies.

India's Broader FTA Strategy

The India-New Zealand FTA is the latest in a sequence of bilateral agreements pursued by India's current government. These include the UAE FTA (implemented May 2022), Australia (implemented December 2022), the United Kingdom (signed July 2025), the EFTA bloc, comprising Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, (implemented October 2025), Oman (signed December 2025) and the European Union (Concluded on January 27, 2026).

For India, the New Zealand agreement serves a dual strategic purpose : access to a high-income, low-volume Pacific market, and a commercial gateway into the wider Oceania and Pacific Island region. The agreement's scope, extending beyond tariffs into services, digital cooperation, skills mobility, cultural exchange and traditional medicine, is consistent with what economists and trade observers have described as a second-generation FTA architecture. Once ratified, businesses on both sides will need to adjust supply chains, tariff classifications and compliance frameworks to capture the new duty-free access.



GIST OF ESSENTIAL MAGAZINES

Questions from Yojana Magazine

Q. 1. India's secondary education system remains excessively examination-oriented, limiting holistic preparation for work and life. In light of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, critically examine the challenges associated with secondary education in India and suggest measures to create work-life-ready youth. (250 words)

Ans. India's secondary education system has historically focussed on examinations, marks and competitive entrance tests. While this approach has expanded academic participation, it has often neglected life skills, creativity and employability. The National Education Policy 2020 seeks to address these structural gaps by promoting holistic and multidisciplinary learning.

- One major challenge is the excessive emphasis on rote learning and board examinations. Students from Classes 9-12 face continuous pressure of coaching, assessments, and entrance preparation, leading to stress and reduced conceptual understanding. Further, the system inadequately equips learners with vocational skills, financial literacy, digital competence, and emotional resilience necessary for adulthood.
- Another concern is inequality in access. Rural students, economically weaker sections and first-generation learners often lack quality infrastructure, counselling support and exposure to emerging career pathways. The growing commercialization of education through coaching institutions also deepens social disparities.
- NEP 2020 attempts to reform this by introducing competency-based learning, flexibility in subject choices, vocational education from the school level and experiential pedagogy. However, implementation challenges persist due to shortage of trained teachers, uneven state capacity and inadequate funding.

To create life-ready youth, India must strengthen career counseling, integrate skill-based and value-based education, promote critical thinking and reduce dependence on high-stakes examinations. Greater collaboration between schools, industries and local communities can improve employability and practical exposure. Mental health support and digital inclusion must also become integral components of schooling.

Thus, secondary education should move beyond 'learning for school' towards 'learning for work and life', enabling youth to become productive, adaptable and responsible citizens.

Q. 2. "India's demographic dividend can become a liability unless supported by continuous skilling and adaptability." Discuss in the context of India's aspiration for Viksit Bharat. (150 words)

Ans. India's aspiration of becoming a developed nation under the vision of *Viksit Bharat* depends significantly on the quality of its workforce. While India possesses a large young population, the real challenge lies in transforming numerical strength into productive human capital.

- Rapid technological advancements, automation and digitisation are continuously changing the nature of work.
- Traditional skills are becoming obsolete, while industries increasingly demand job-ready workers equipped with digital, analytical and problem-solving abilities.
- Despite millions entering the workforce annually, employers often report shortages of skilled talent, reflecting a serious skill mismatch.
- In this context, continuous upskilling, reskilling and adaptability have become essential. Initiatives such as Skill India Mission, PMKVY and NEP 2020 aim to bridge this gap through vocational education and industry-oriented training.

To fully harness the demographic dividend, India must strengthen collaboration among government, industry and academia while

promoting lifelong learning and innovation-driven education.

Questions from Kurukshetra Magazine

Q.3. "Environmental sustainability cannot be achieved solely through policies and technology; it requires behavioural transformation among citizens, especially the youth." Discuss in the context of building a sustainable India under the vision of Viksit Bharat.

(250 words)

Ans. Environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and resource depletion pose serious threats to sustainable development. While policy interventions and technological innovations are important, long-term environmental sustainability ultimately depends upon societal attitudes and behavioural change, particularly among the youth.

- India's vision of *Viksit Bharat* emphasizes inclusive and sustainable development. In this context, nurturing environmentally conscious young citizens is essential. Early environmental education helps children understand ecological interdependence and develop responsible habits related to waste management, water conservation, energy efficiency and sustainable consumption. Such awareness creates future citizens who prioritize sustainability in both personal and professional life.
- Educational institutions play a crucial role by integrating experiential learning, nature-based activities, climate education and community participation into curricula.
- Families and local communities also reinforce sustainable values through everyday practices. Youth-led movements, eco-clubs and volunteer initiatives further strengthen environmental stewardship and civic responsibility.
- Innovative approaches such as storytelling, gamification and digital campaigns can make environmental learning more engaging and effective. Moreover, linking sustainability with traditional Indian values of harmony with nature can deepen social acceptance.
- However, challenges remain in the form of inadequate environmental literacy, urban

consumerism and limited institutional support in many schools. Bridging rural-urban disparities in access to environmental education is equally important.

Therefore, building a greener and more resilient India requires transforming environmental consciousness into a social culture. By empowering young minds with knowledge, values and participation opportunities, India can ensure that sustainability becomes a lived practice rather than merely a policy objective.

Q. 4. Discuss the role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in promoting inclusive climate action and sustainable rural development in India. (150 words)

Ans. Self-Help Groups have emerged as important instruments of rural development and women's empowerment in India. In the context of climate change and sustainable development, SHGs can play a transformative role in advancing inclusive climate action.

- With strong community linkages and social capital, SHGs promote collective participation in activities such as water conservation, afforestation, waste management, sustainable agriculture and biodiversity protection. Their local presence enables effective dissemination of climate awareness and adoption of eco-friendly livelihood practices.
- SHGs also strengthen climate resilience by enhancing financial inclusion, livelihood diversification and access to government schemes among vulnerable rural households, particularly women. Initiatives linked with microfinance and green enterprises further support sustainable rural economies.
- However, challenges such as limited technical capacity, inadequate institutional support and restricted market access continue to affect their effectiveness.

Therefore, strengthening SHGs through skill development, digital inclusion, financial support and convergence with climate policies can make them effective drivers of grassroots sustainability and the vision of *Viksit Bharat*.

Questions from Down to Earth Magazine

(16-30 April)

Q. 5. "Geopolitical conflicts significantly influence global energy transitions and energy security." Discuss in the context of recent global conflicts and their implications for India. (250 words)

Ans. Recent geopolitical conflicts, particularly the Russia-Ukraine War and tensions in West Asia, have exposed the vulnerability of the global energy system. Disruptions in fuel supply chains, rising crude oil prices and uncertainty in global markets have directly affected energy security and accelerated debates on energy transition.

- The crisis has highlighted the risks associated with excessive dependence on fossil fuels concentrated in politically unstable regions. Supply disruptions in oil, gas and fertilizers have contributed to inflation, trade deficits and economic stress across both developed and developing nations. For energy-importing countries like India, fluctuations in global oil prices significantly affect fiscal stability and household expenditure.
- At the same time, geopolitical instability has accelerated the shift towards renewable energy. Solar, wind, electric mobility and battery technologies are increasingly viewed not only as climate solutions but also as instruments of strategic autonomy and energy security. Falling costs of renewables and electric vehicles have further strengthened this transition.
- For India, the challenge lies in balancing developmental needs with sustainable energy goals. Initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance, National Green Hydrogen Mission and expansion of renewable capacity demonstrate efforts to reduce import dependence and strengthen long-term resilience.

However, challenges remain regarding storage technology, critical mineral supply chains and financing of green infrastructure. Therefore, India must pursue a diversified energy strategy combining renewable expansion, domestic manufacturing, strategic reserves and international cooperation.

Thus, modern wars are reshaping not only geopolitical equations but also the future

trajectory of global energy transition and sustainability.

Q. 6. "Analyze India's third set of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the 2031-35 period. How do these commitments balance the dual objectives of economic development and environmental sustainability?" (150 words)

Ans. India's recently approved third set of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) represents a strategic shift toward high-ambition climate action while navigating global supply chain strains and geopolitical conflicts. The updated commitments center on three primary quantitative targets for 2035 :

- **Emissions Reduction :** Reducing the emissions intensity of GDP by 47% from 2005 levels.
- **Clean Energy :** Achieving 60% cumulative installed power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources.
- **Carbon Sequestration :** Expanding carbon sinks to 3.5-4 billion tonnes of Carbon dioxide equivalent through enhanced forest and tree cover.

Beyond numbers, the NDCs integrate qualitative goals like 'Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)' and 'just and inclusive transitions'. By focussing on climate-resilient development and mobilizing low-cost international finance, India aims to decouple economic growth from carbon emissions. These targets reinforce India's leadership among 130 countries in the UNFCCC process, ensuring that decarbonization supports, rather than hinders, national development.

(1-15 May)

Q. 7. The modern era is characterized by an 'age of noise' where the sanctity of knowledge is under threat. Discuss the ethical challenges facing independent media in maintaining objectivity and public trust amidst the rise of information silos and Artificial Intelligence. (250 words)

Ans. The contemporary media landscape is grappling with a 'crisis of credibility' where the messenger of information is frequently perceived as tainted, biased, or untruthful. Several interconnected ethical chal-

lenges threaten the foundation of information dissemination in what is described as a 'never-before time'.

Key Ethical Challenges :

- **Erosion of Trust and Objectivity** : Media outlets struggle to remain 'neither for nor against any government', often failing to stay 'leftist nor rightist' in a polarized environment.
- **Information Silos and Bubbles** : The diversity of sources has paradoxically created 'bubbles' where individuals only absorb what supports their existing beliefs, shutting out new knowledge.
- **The Impact of AI** : Artificial Intelligence is turning the information world 'upside down' by providing news that is 'regurgitated and spit out by highly developed machines', potentially sacrificing depth for automation.
- **Impatience for Knowledge** : There is a growing public demand for 'news capsules' and 'quick digests' rather than the slow, deliberate process of ruminating over complex issues.

The Path Forward

To navigate this 'earth-moving storm', media must remain committed to development that is 'inclusive and sustainable'. This involves :

1. **Ground Reporting** : Learning from what is happening on the ground and drawing strength from the 'ingenuity of ordinary people'.
2. **Upholding Values** : Remaining firmly on the side of 'humanism, justice and equality' even when these values appear to be dissipating in a 'fog of absolute greed'.
3. **Factual Integrity** : Providing unbiased information that is 'reported from the ground' to act as a 'laboratory of development'.

By providing 'kernels of information' rather than mere noise, independent media can continue to prepare society to 'change the future' while remaining anchored in public trust.



Q.8. The recent resurgence of industrial unrest in India's major manufacturing hubs signals deeper structural shifts in the labour market. Analyze the underlying causes of this unrest with special reference to the challenges posed by the contract labour system.

(150 words)



Ans. The industrial belt of North India, particularly the Gurugram-Manesar-Noida region, has recently witnessed significant labour unrest, marking a 'return of the industrial strike'. This phenomenon is not merely a localized grievance but a reflection of stagnant pay and an increasingly unequal growth path in organized industry.

Underlying Causes of Unrest

- **Economic Distress** : Workers in the National Capital Region (NCR) often earn between 10,000-15,000 per month, which is considered below survival levels. Inflation in food, rent and fuel—exacerbated by global geopolitical tensions like the closure of the Strait of Hormuz—has severely eroded purchasing power.
- **Stagnant Wages** : Despite rising costs, wages in many sectors have not been revised for several years, leading to demands for a minimum wage closer to ₹ 20,000-26,000.
- **The Contractualization of Labour** : A major flashpoint is the reliance on the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970. This system involves a tripartite relationship between the principal employer, the contractor and the worker.

Challenges of the Contract System

- **Fragmentation of Responsibility** : The principal employer often hires contractors for core services like assembly or house-keeping. While the employer pays the contractor a composite amount, workers often face 'underpayment' as contractors cut corners to increase their own margins.
- **Statutory Violations** : Issues frequently arise regarding the non-payment of statutory dues, such as Provident Fund (PF) and Employee State Insurance (ESI) contributions.
- **Weak Enforcement** : While underpaying workers is illegal, enforcement of labour laws remains 'uneven', leaving contract workers with little job security and no direct recourse against the principal employer.

In conclusion, the labour unrest points to a need for deeper structural reforms that ensure inclusive growth, fair wage revision and stricter regulation of the contract labour system to maintain industrial peace.

Important Supreme Court Judgements

(April 2026)

1. "Breaking the Glass Ceiling in the Legal Profession : Women's Representation in Bar Associations."

Case Name and Citation : Deeksha Amrutesh Vs. State of Karnataka, Writ Petition No. 35836 of 2024.

Brief Facts :

The case originated from petitions filed by women advocates and organizations representing women lawyers in Karnataka, including the Karnataka Federation of Women Lawyers, highlighting the negligible representation of women in Bar Association leadership positions despite the growing number of women entering the legal profession. The petitioners argued that Bar Association elections were dominated by patriarchal practices, informal lobbying networks and institutional discrimination, which prevented women from effectively participating in decision-making bodies.

Initially connected to the Advocates' Association, Bengaluru, the matter expanded into a broader issue concerning gender equality within legal institutions across India. The petitioners demanded affirmative representation for women advocates in Bar Associations to ensure substantive equality and inclusive governance.

Issues for Consideration

1. Whether women advocates are entitled to equitable representation in Bar Associations ?
2. Whether reservation or minimum representation for women violates Article 14 ?
3. Whether the Supreme Court can issue directions reforming professional institutions ?
4. Whether substantive equality permits affirmative action for women ?

Legal Provisions Involved

- Article 14 : Equality before Law
- Article 15(3) : Special provisions for women
- Article 19(1)(g) : Freedom of profession
- Article 21 : Right to dignity
- Article 142 : Power to do complete justice
- Advocates Act, 1961
- Constitutional doctrine of substantive equality
- Principles relating to gender justice and institutional inclusiveness

Final Decision of the Court

The Supreme Court directed that at least 30% representation for women must be ensured in Bar Association Executive Committees and governing bodies. The Court also ordered reservation of certain key posts for women candidates. Further, the Court warned that non-compliant Bar Associations could face suspension and

judicial intervention. High Courts were directed to supervise implementation of these directions.

Reasoning of the Court

The Supreme Court held that constitutional equality is not confined to formal equality but includes substantive equality. Merely allowing women to enter the legal profession is insufficient if systemic barriers prevent them from reaching leadership positions.

The Court observed that Bar Associations are integral to the administration of justice and therefore must reflect constitutional values of inclusiveness and equality. Historical discrimination, unequal professional opportunities and patriarchal structures justified affirmative measures for women advocates.

Reference Case Laws

1. Fozia Rahman Vs. Bar Council of Delhi & Anr. (2024) : In this Special Leave to Appeal, the Supreme Court took a stern view of the lack of women in the Bar Council of Delhi. The Court observed that the 'status quo' was no longer acceptable and directed that the legal profession must reflect the gender diversity of the society it serves. This case acted as the direct precursor to the 2026 mandate, establishing that the Judiciary has the authority to intervene in Bar elections to ensure gender parity.

2. Supreme Court Bar Association Vs. B.D. Kaushik (2011) : Used to justify that the 'Right to Vote' or 'Right to Contest' in a Bar Association is a statutory right, not a fundamental one, and can be regulated by the Court to ensure the purity and inclusivity of the election process.

The Bench clarified that representation and merit are not contradictory concepts. Diversity within legal institutions strengthens democratic functioning and improves public confidence in the justice system.

The Court also invoked Article 142 to ensure complete justice and stressed that judicial directions relating to constitutional rights cannot be ignored by professional bodies.

2. "Death Penalty and Human Dignity : Supreme Court Reinforces Reformative Justice."

Case Name and Citation : Aman Singh Vs. State of Bihar, DEATH REFERENCE No. 2 of 2024 Arising Out of PS. Case No.-111 Year-2021 Thana-DARIHAT District-Rohtas.

Brief Facts :

The case originates from a brutal triple murder in village Khudrao, Rohtas district, Bihar, in July 2021. The incident was the culmination of a long-standing family land dispute. The appellants, Aman Singh and Sonal

Singh, along with their father, allegedly attacked three family members (Vijay Singh and his two sons) with swords and heavy sharp weapons. The Trial Court had imposed the death penalty, which was later confirmed by the High Court in a death reference under Section 366 CrPC (Section 407 of BNSS, 2023).

The convicts approached the Supreme Court challenging both conviction and sentence. During the proceedings, the Supreme Court examined not merely the legality of the conviction but also broader concerns relating to sentencing procedure in death penalty matters. The Court noticed that many trial courts impose capital punishment without comprehensive evaluation of mitigating circumstances, psychological assessment, social background, or possibility of reformation of the accused.

The Court therefore expanded the scope of the matter to address procedural safeguards necessary in death penalty cases across India.

Issues for Consideration

1. Whether courts must consider reformatory and mitigating circumstances before awarding death penalty?
2. Whether death sentence cases require specialized legal assistance and psychological evaluation?
3. Whether procedural safeguards in capital punishment cases are sufficient under Article 21?
4. Scope of judicial duty while balancing aggravating and mitigating circumstances in sentencing?

Legal Provisions Involved

- Article 21 : Right to Life and Personal Liberty
- Sections 302 and 34 : IPC (Sections 103 and 3(5) of BNS, 2023 respectively)
- Section 354(3) CrPC (Section 393(3) of BNSS, 2023) : Requirement of 'special reasons' for awarding the death penalty.
- Section 366 CrPC (Section 407 of BNSS, 2023) : Death Sentence Confirmation
- Constitutional principles governing fair trial and due process
- Doctrine of 'rarest of rare' cases

Final Decision of the Court

The Supreme Court stayed the execution of the death sentence pending final adjudication of the appeal. The Supreme Court's reasoning wasn't about the guilt of Aman Singh (which was largely proven by eyewitness accounts), but about the humanity of the process. The Court directed the State of Bihar to submit probation officer reports, jail conduct reports and psychological evaluation reports concerning the convicts.

Further, the Court issued nationwide directions that in all death sentence confirmation cases, Legal Services Committees must appoint dedicated legal teams consisting of experienced advocates and senior counsel. High Courts were also directed to maintain specialized panels for handling death reference matters.

Reasoning of the Court

The Supreme Court emphasized that capital punishment involves irreversible consequences and therefore requires the highest standards of procedural fairness. The Court observed that sentencing is not merely a mechanical exercise based on the gravity of crime; courts must also examine the possibility of reformation and rehabilitation of the accused.

The Bench stressed that Article 21 guarantees substantive due process even to convicted prisoners. Therefore, sentencing courts must carefully assess social background, psychological condition, conduct in prison and mitigating factors before confirming death sentences.

Reference Case Laws

1. **Bachan Singh Vs. State of Punjab (1980)** : Where the Supreme Court evolved the 'rarest of rare' doctrine and held that life imprisonment is the rule while death penalty is an exception.

2. **Manoj Vs. State of Madhya Pradesh (2022)** : Which emphasized collection of mitigating circumstances and psychological assessment before awarding capital punishment.

The Court observed that meaningful legal representation is essential in death penalty cases because the stakes involve deprivation of life itself. It noted that economically weaker convicts often lack competent legal assistance during sentencing hearings.

The judgement reflects the shift of Indian criminal jurisprudence from purely retributive punishment toward reformatory justice. The Court reaffirmed that even persons convicted of heinous crimes retain constitutional protections and human dignity under Article 21.

3. "Dowry Law cannot Become a Weapon Against the Victim : Supreme Court Protects Aggrieved Women from Counter-Prosecution."

Case Name and Citation : Rahul Gupta Vs. Station House Officer & Others, Special Leave Petition (Crl.) No. 13755 of 2025.

Brief Facts :

The case arose from matrimonial disputes between Rahul Gupta and his wife, Radhika Gupta. The wife had lodged an FIR under Section 498A IPC and Section 3 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 against her husband and his family alleging cruelty and dowry harassment.

During investigation, the wife and her family stated that dowry had been given at the time of marriage. Relying upon these statements, the husband sought registration of a separate FIR against the wife and her relatives for the offence of 'giving dowry' under Section 3 of the Dowry Prohibition Act.

The Magistrate, Sessions Court and Chhattisgarh High Court refused to direct registration of such FIR. Aggrieved, the husband approached the Supreme Court contending that Section 3 criminalizes both giving and taking dowry and therefore the wife's family should also be prosecuted.

Issues for Consideration

1. Whether a wife and her family can be prosecuted for 'giving dowry' based solely on statements made in a dowry harassment complaint?
2. Scope and protection under Section 7(3) of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961?
3. Whether prosecuting the complainant would defeat the purpose of anti-dowry legislation?
4. Whether courts should adopt purposive interpretation in social welfare legislations?

Legal Provisions Involved

- Section 3 : Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Section 7(3) : Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Section 498A : IPC (Section 85 & 86 of BNS, 2023)
- Article 14 : Equality before Law
- Article 21 : Protection of dignity and fair procedure

Final Decision of the Court

The Supreme Court dismissed the husband's petition and held that no separate FIR can be registered against the wife and her family merely on the basis of statements made in the dowry harassment complaint.

The Court clarified that Section 7(3) of the Dowry Prohibition Act grants statutory protection to the aggrieved person and such statements cannot be used to prosecute them for giving dowry.

Reasoning of the Court

1. The Supreme Court observed that the Dowry Prohibition Act is a social welfare legislation enacted to curb the evil of dowry and protect women from harassment and cruelty. The Court held that if statements made by victims are used to prosecute them, it would discourage women from reporting dowry-related offences.
2. The Court adopted a purposive interpretation of the statute and emphasized that Section 7(3) was specifically enacted to protect aggrieved persons from self-incrimination while reporting dowry demands.

Reference Case Laws

1. **Rajesh Sharma Vs. State of Uttar Pradesh (2017)** : Which discussed safeguards and balanced interpretation in matrimonial offences.
2. **Social Action Forum for Manav Adhikar Vs. Union of India (2018)** : Where the Court emphasized the social object behind anti-dowry laws and protection of women facing cruelty.

The Court clarified that prosecution for 'giving dowry' may be possible where independent evidence exists and the case is not solely based upon statements of the aggrieved woman or her family. However, in the present case, the husband attempted to use the wife's own complaint against her, which would defeat the legislative intent.

The judgement reaffirmed that courts must interpret social justice legislations in a manner that advances the remedy and suppresses the mischief sought to be prevented.

4. "The 'Neighbourhood School' Mandate : Upholding the Spirit of RTE."

Case Name and Citation : Lucknow Public School, Eldico & Anr. Vs. State of Uttar Pradesh & Ors, SPECIAL LEAVE PETITION (CIVIL) Diary No(s). 60657/2024.

Brief Facts :

The case centres on the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act). A student (Respondent No. 5) applied to the Basic Education Department, Uttar Pradesh, for admission into a pre-primary class for the academic year 2024-25 under the 25% quota reserved for weaker and disadvantaged sections.

The State Government completed the scrutiny and included the student's name in the final allotment list, which was then forwarded to Lucknow Public School, Eldico (the petitioner). However, the school refused to grant admission or allow the child to attend classes, claiming 'uncertainty' regarding the student's eligibility. The student moved the Allahabad High Court (Lucknow Bench), which directed the school to grant immediate admission. The school challenged this order before the Supreme Court *via* a Special Leave Petition (SLP).

Issues for Consideration

1. Whether a 'neighbourhood school' has the authority to unilaterally reassess a student's eligibility after the State Government has already completed the allotment process under the RTE Act?
2. Whether institutional disagreement with the State's selection can justify a delay in granting admission to a child?
3. The scope of a school's obligation as a 'duty bearer' under Article 21A of the Constitution?

Legal Provisions Involved

- Article 21A, Constitution of India : Fundamental Right to free and compulsory education for children aged 6-14.
- Section 12(1)(c), RTE Act, 2009 : Mandates 25% reservation for children from weaker/disadvantaged sections in private unaided schools.
- Rule 8, UP RTE Rules, 2011 : Prescribes a transparent admission process and makes State Government allotments binding on schools.
- Article 51A(k), Constitution of India : Fundamental duty of parents/guardians to provide educational opportunities.

Final Decision of the Court

The Supreme Court dismissed the Special Leave Petition and upheld the High Court's direction. The Court held that schools cannot sit in appeal over the State's allotment decisions. While a school may raise grievances with the competent authority, it must grant admission in the interim to ensure the child's education is not disrupted.

Reasoning of the Court

The Court's reasoning emphasizes the transformative nature of the RTE Act :

Schools as Civic Spaces : The Court noted that Section 12 of RTE Act is not merely administrative; it is an 'instrument of social engineering' designed to ensure social integration. Private schools are not isolated entities but 'neighbourhood schools' with a shared civic responsibility.

The 'Five Duty Bearers' Concept : The Bench (referring to *Dinesh Biwaji Ashtikar Vs. State of Maharashtra*, 2026) identified five duty bearers : the appropriate government, local authority, neighbourhood schools, parents and teachers. All must work in tandem to realize Article 21A.

No Re-Scrutiny Power : Once the State forwards a list after scrutiny, the school's role is ministerial (implementation). Allowing schools to 're-verify' would lead to indefinite delays, turning the fundamental right into an 'empty promise'.

Reference Case Laws

1. **Dinesh Biwaji Ashtikar Vs. State of Maharashtra (2026) :** Quoted for defining the distribution of constitutional and statutory obligations across multiple duty bearers.
2. **Society for Unaided Private Schools of Rajasthan Vs. Union of India (2012) :** The landmark case that originally upheld the constitutionality of the 25% reservation in private schools.
5. **"Supreme Court Clarifies : High Courts cannot Compel Surrender While Dismissing an Anticipatory Bail Plea in Complaint-based Litigations."**

Case Name and Citation : Om Prakash Chhawnika @ Om Prakash Chabnika Vs. The State of Jharkhand & Anr. Petition for Special Leave to Appeal (Crl.) No. 16221/2025.

Brief Facts :

The case began with a private complaint (Complaint Case No. 6181 of 2021) filed by Respondent No. 2 against the appellant, Om Prakash Chhawnika, regarding a land dispute involving two plots in Jharkhand. The offences alleged included Sections 323, 420, 467, 468, 471 and 120B of the IPC.

Fearing arrest, the appellant moved the Jharkhand High Court for anticipatory bail. The High Court rejected the application but added a specific direction : the petitioner must 'surrender' before the trial court and then seek regular bail. The appellant challenged this direction before the Supreme Court, arguing that in a private complaint where only a summons has been issued, the requirement to 'surrender' is legally flawed.

Issues for Consideration

- Whether the police have the power to arrest an accused in a private complaint case once the Magistrate has taken cognizance and issued a summons ?
- Whether a High Court, while rejecting an anticipatory bail application, has the jurisdiction to direct the accused to 'surrender' before the Trial Court ?

- The applicability of Section 87 of the CrPC (Power to issue warrant in lieu of summons) in routine complaint cases ?

Legal Provisions Involved

- **Section 200 & 202 CrPC (Section 223 and 225 of BNSS, 2023) :** Procedure for examining the complainant and conducting inquiries in private complaints.
- **Section 204 CrPC (Section 227 of BNSS, 2023) :** Issue of process (Summons Vs. Warrant).
- **Section 438 CrPC (Section 482 of BNSS, 2023) :** Provisions for Anticipatory Bail.
- **Section 87 CrPC (Section 90 of BNSS, 2023) :** Conditions under which a warrant can be issued instead of a summons.

Final Decision of the Court

The Supreme Court expunged the direction to surrender and set aside the High Court's order to that extent. The Court held that the High Court's direction was 'wholly without jurisdiction'. It clarified that if a person is only summoned, they are already legally bound to appear; forcing a 'surrender' and a subsequent 'regular bail' application creates a cycle of unnecessary litigation for an arrest that isn't even legally imminent.

Reasoning of the Court

The Court delivered a stern critique of the procedural 'culture' in Bihar and Jharkhand :

- **No Power of Arrest in Summons Cases :** The Court ruled that unless a Non-Bailable Warrant (NBW) is issued by the Magistrate, the police have no power to arrest an accused in a private complaint. Mere issuance of a summons does not create an 'apprehension of arrest' that justifies a 438 CrPC application.
- **Misuse of Section 87 :** The Court emphasized that Section 87 is an exception. A warrant can only be issued if the court records in writing that the person has absconded or will not obey the summons.
- **Police Power during Inquiry :** The Court clarified that even if a Magistrate orders a police inquiry under Section 202 CrPC, the police cannot arrest the accused during that inquiry.
- **Jurisdiction of High Courts :** A High Court can reject bail, but it cannot 'command' a surrender. Surrender is a voluntary act of submitting to custody; it cannot be an extra-legal condition imposed by a court that is refusing to exercise its own bail jurisdiction.

Reference Case Laws

1. **Satender Kumar Antil Vs. CBI (2021) :** Cited to reiterate the categories of offences and the guidelines that simplify bail procedures when the accused has cooperated with investigations.
2. **Inder Mohan Goswami Vs. State of Uttaranchal (2007) :** Reaffirmed that personal liberty is paramount and warrants should not be issued where a summons can suffice.

UPSC-CSE Prelims 2026 was Not Only a Knowledge Test; It was a Test of Mindset

—Atul Kapoor

I sincerely hope you are a keen and a regular reader of Pratiyogita Darpan and read my articles every month. And those who would have acted on the advice I shared in few of my previous months' articles would have been immensely benefitted and the mental preparation would have helped you to tackle the tough situation in Prelims 2026 effectively.

What I wrote in these articles was based on my long experience and the conviction I got to pen such words came from the evolving situation that has led to an utter confusion among candidates about the correct way to prepare for UPSC-CSE.

The way UPSC-CSE preparation has transformed in the newer environment, where the coaching experts/faculties, AI and social media influencers, have almost convinced aspirants that they have decoded the UPSC riddle, these articles was no less than a warning where I clearly mentioned that UPSC-CSE never stops evolving and Prelims is more about surviving rather than perishing under the stress.

I would like to hear back from you that how many of you were prepared to face Prelims 2026 with a battle plan?

Prelims 2026 was Tough; No Doubt about it

It is difficult to imagine UPSC Prelims without any surprise and this Prelims 2026 has been full of shocks for candidates, and even more for coaching experts, faculties and YouTubers.

I say so because Prelims 2026 was not on expected trends and more importantly, study-resources and standard books that coaching institutes recommends (most of these are coaching's own study material, notes, vlogs and videos) were of limited use.

So, the first learning for candidates—own your journey and do what it requires. Look at UPSC and try to understand UPSC's intent.

With so many changes hitting the UPSC-CSE, it has been an expectation that UPSC will continue with its new stance, with focus on recruiting the talented and the most suitable candidates for the top posts.

There is Lot of Noise Around

With so much of clutter in the UPSC preparation ecosystem, UPSC must be keenly watching developments and concentrated promises by coaching experts, faculties and YouTubers to decode the UPSC mind, efforts to uncover the exam pattern and predicting the theme/pattern and related gimmicks, which must have caught the attention of the Commission.

Result is in front of us in shape of Prelims 2026 GS Paper I.

After all, UPSC is looking for genuine talent and not the coached and prepared ones, who mock the system and try to crack it smartly.

For quite some time, UPSC's intent is clear-genuine understanding of the topic, i.e., your capacity to think around what you identify and relate. Prelims is no more a recall game; it is about how you process the idea and develop clarity around the concept.

This question paper was quite lengthy, yet it remains true that it still contained the same 100 questions. People are complaining about the paper's length and the difficulties associated with effective time management. However, everything UPSC does is executed as part of a well-thoughtout strategy; increasing the length of a question paper without proper planning is simply not possible.

Besides, who said that you must answer all 100 questions? Select only those questions that you can truly solve and feel secure.

Again, it had many multi statement-based questions, assertion-reason questions and answering such questions is not that easy.

Even, the new question formats—the relationship between statements—has been a tricky one with each

question. Not all questions follow a similar pattern. UPSC examiners have smartly played with the formation of questions and that has certainly added severity.

And the thing that UPSC rewards, conceptual clarity and linkage between static portion knowledge with the dynamic part, would have been beneficial.

For the First Time Prelims 2026 Answer Keys Released within Three Days

This is a welcome step by UPSC, a move towards transparency and genuinely it is much needed. The official provisional answer keys have provided candidates much needed clarity.

Earlier, there used to be so much of confusion and over-dependence on coaching institutes for answer keys; now that is entirely changed.

What I found amazing was Chairman of UPSC, Dr. Ajay Kumar, acknowledging in public domain that for many candidates, Prelims 2026, has been felt tough and challenging. Elaborating on the answer keys, he clarified that "Most answers are based on standard textbooks, Government websites, Government press releases, and reputed newspapers – the core sources serious aspirants rely on."

People May Call it Randomness; But it is a Balancing Effect

Everyone is criticizing UPSC for such a tough General Studies Paper I question paper, but it had a wide range of questions on some straightforward, direct and predictable themes like Buddhism and Jainism, temple architecture, classical music, fintech, CBDC, Blockchain, Rare Earth Elements, Space Technology, International Organizations, Defence, LLMs, Green Hydrogen, Deep Ocean Mission etc.

Mind it, by highlighting some of the themes here, I am not saying these were easy questions to solve. Yes, one with adequate preparation,

having keen observation, being an avid newspaper reader and well aware with the things around would have found it easier to tackle many of these questions.

I would like to clearly specify here that whatever I am sharing about the Prelims 2026 is with my view that how candidates with good preparation should have found this paper and tackled it smartly.

When I look at the Prelims 2026 paper, my eyes search for low-hanging fruits and this time Prelims 2026 has fewer number of questions that fall into this category.

What made me to label it 'tough' is the reason that approximately one out of three question I read gave me I feel of question being difficult—reason could be quizzing kind of questioning, topics/themes that may have been beyond the preparation pattern candidates usually follow, innovative way used in seeking precise information for which majority of candidates are not used to.

For years, as I write in my Prelims analysis that in first go normally candidates attempt 30-35 with ease that becomes the base as well as a confidence booster, but this may not have been the case this time.

A Lesson Not Learnt

Very recently, CSE 2023 was tough. Honestly, it was tough.

GS Paper II was even tougher. But if we take in to account the job in question, UPSC has been doing such ground-breaking steps year-after-year successfully.

Lot of questions were raised, coaching institutes talked of randomness and UPSC was blamed.

People believed nothing tougher could come again and some experts went on to say that there is a lot of pressure on UPSC.

What followed next year, Prelims 2024 GS Paper I, was relatively easier.

People gained confidence that UPSC takes a note of resentment shown for tough question papers and UPSC has changed its stance.

But, what these people forget - it is a part of the process and these ups and downs are nothing but a part of the exam and UPSC is expected to continue doing so in future as well.

CSE 2025 again was relatively easier. When coaching institutes started sensing that UPSC has been tamed, here comes Prelims 2026.

It is many steps ahead of what coaching institutes serve in name of providing quality guidance.

Time to Accept the TRUTH

The so-called current affairs analysts attempt to teach interconnections, casually they connect crops to geography, policy with polity, global events with domestic decisions, and so on—unidimensional approach surprises candidates with questions like we witnessed in Prelims 2026.

It is time to accept that the unpredictability is part of the evaluation method that UPSC has laid down. And as I talked about serious candidates, they prepare according to evolving needs and practice more. As part of preparation plan, they are contemplating more and more in the direction examiner can possibly go.

The fact is - it is all about the Exam-Plan; howsoever difficult the questions are, in spite of everything whatever the cut-off may be, we watch thousands of candidates move to the next level - Main Examination.

You are capable, you have potential to become 'IAS'; so, keep making sincere effort and soon, you will achieve what you are dreaming.

Deciphering the Prelims 2026 Constituents-wise

Prelims 2026 is much above the rote memory, it is about conceptual clarity, understanding the syllabus, extent of syllabus coverage, depth of preparation, and emotional resilience.

With CSE 2024 and CSE 2025 memories fresh, candidates equipped with tricks and much-hyped PYQs overload and YouTubers analysis walked into examination hall with confidence, but within minutes, confidence vanished, what looked like certain turned into confusion.

Questions, themes looked familiar, but working out correct answers was not that easy.

While preparing for UPSC-CSE, majority of candidates follow recent pattern that they inherited from their seniors, recent years toppers and even coaching experts where com-

mon perception has been established that Polity-Economy-Geography/environment constituents in GS syllabus had been showing collective dominance.

But these constituents had questions :

- Tweaked with updated facts linked to static information,
- Asked very specific information that candidates commonly ignore while preparing
- Applied knowledge
- Clear and precise information; clarity of concepts

This paper had lot of questions from high yield themes/topics, but it remains to be seen how many of the candidates would have taken advantage of these as for many tricky questions, factual recall didn't work.

I will start with Economy where candidates prepare from what coaching institutes suggest and books/study material at their disposal. These are not bookish questions, the emerging themes that probably people ignore found the place in Prelims GS Paper I. CBDC, tokenisation of assets, ONDC, crowdfunding, M1Xchange, drop shipping - UPSC wants to know how updated you are with fintech.

What surprised the most is share of Polity-related questions losing sheen due to a smaller number of questions and then, touch of innovation in limited number of questions present in the paper made it difficult to score.

Moreover, History, particularly ancient history and art & culture, used to be scoring opportunities, but this time that comfort vanished completely.

The recent trend leaned towards Ecology & Environment, yet the unexpectedly fewer environment-related questions threw many candidates off balance in their preparation strategies.

Adding to the challenge, questions linked with themes related to Public Administration and Ethics—rarely anticipated in the Prelims—caused further unease. Meanwhile, Science & Technology demanded not just recall but sharp conceptual application, making those questions anything but straightforward.

Is there a move by UPSC to make hard questions from the perceived easy looking subjects/

topics to bring in equilibrium? Yes, offshoot are visible, but coming years will confirm that it becomes trend or it is only aberration.

Another clear message is – one will have to prepare effectively and will have to give equal weightage to all the constituents of the syllabus.

Important Take Aways for Making an Effective Study Plan

Instead of panicking, you need a study plan that delivers. You should give due importance to NCERT textbooks. These books not only give the initial thrust; these are valuable resource for conceptual clarity. Be it history, geography, economy or polity, these books explain the concepts clearly.

The knowledge you gain not only help you comprehend the subject; these help you in building interdisciplinary connections and connect to many things that you read in newspaper daily.

As you advance, you come in contact with standard textbooks that broaden your knowledge base and horizon. Pick the right books and the updated ones, as you will have to deal with rapidly evolving themes.

Moreover, you will have to look for supplementary reading. I am talking about reading beyond syllabus. Two types of books – one, as per syllabus for each subject as per merits and the other, the books that develops the minds that UPSC is in search for.

For Integrating current affairs, you will have to latch on the RBI, Ministries Annual Reports, Budget and Economic Survey, NITI Aayog reports, Supreme Court judgements etc., as next comes the current affairs part and integration of static portion with the dynamic one.

General reading list may have books like Ramachandra Guha's *India After Gandhi*; Amartya Sen's *The Argumentative Indian*, *Imagining India* by Nandan Nilekani and so on.

The biggest mistake candidates make is preparing current affairs in silos. As I just mentioned, NCERT books are the foundation, newspaper's reading is the dynamic extension of static knowledge and gives you multidimensional clarity.

In nutshell, if you develop this kind of preparation style, by the time you approach Prelims, you will be ready to counter most of the surprises UPSC throws with Prelims.

The most important thing is integrated approach for preparing General Studies; i.e., commencing with Mains-oriented syllabus. I am reminding again, the presence of Ethics-related, Governance-related questions in Prelims GS Paper I is a clear indication.

Forget What Happened with Prelims, Make the Next Move

Prelims 2026 was difficult; it was difficult for all. But the fact is that in a competitive examination it is your relative performance that matters.

Whatever people say, soon we will see few thousand candidates getting eligibility to appear in Main Examination.

So, the best approach is to continue preparing for Mains and give attention to all the areas and things to do in priority.

You have limited time in hand and so many things to cover. Revision and above all, answer-writing practice is the one that will make the difference.

Keep Your Eyes Glued on the Next Important Date : UPSC-CSE 2027 Prelims on 23rd May, 2027

As per the UPSC Annual Calendar 2027, released on May 20, 2026, the date of notification for UPSC-CSE 2027 is scheduled for 13th January 2027 and the Preliminary examination is going to be staged on 23rd May, 2027.

Prelims continues to be a common exam for Civil Services as well as Indian Forest Services.

The Main Examination 2027 will commence from 20th August, 2027 and it is going to be a 5-days affair.

So, take some clues from the Prelims 2026, make the necessary changes in your plan and seriously indulge in UPSC preparation.

You have a long battle ahead !

Remain confident, remain optimistic and keep moving ahead.

Success will be yours !

My best wishes are with you all !

Continued from Page 8

At the same time, it is important to recognize that no single resource can guarantee success in the Civil Services Examination. UPSC preparation requires a comprehensive and disciplined strategy involving NCERT books, standard reference texts, newspapers, revision, mock tests and answer-writing practice. In this broader preparation framework, Pratiyogita Darpan serves most effectively as a supplementary resource that strengthens current affairs preparation and reinforces conceptual understanding.

Careful and selective reading of Pratiyogita Darpan is highly beneficial for civil services preparation. In fact, its wide-ranging coverage often promotes interdisciplinary understanding, which has become increasingly important in recent UPSC examinations.

The experience of UPSC Prelims 2026 once again underlined the importance of consistency, smart preparation and regular engagement with quality resources. Aspirants who systematically followed dependable sources such as Pratiyogita Darpan throughout the year were able to identify familiar themes and concepts in the examination paper. The magazine's monthly format also encouraged continuity, revision, and disciplined study habits—qualities that are essential for long-term success in the Civil Services Examination.

In conclusion, Pratiyogita Darpan once again proved its relevance in UPSC Prelims 2026. Its comprehensive coverage of current affairs, economy, environment, science and technology, governance, and government initiatives aligned closely with the evolving nature of the UPSC examination. Through its combination of analytical articles, current affairs updates, practice questions, and digital discussions, the magazine continued to provide aspirants with a reliable and effective preparation support system. While success in UPSC ultimately depends on sustained effort and a multi-dimensional strategy, Pratiyogita Darpan undoubtedly remains an important and trusted resource for serious civil services aspirants across India.

Pratiyogita Darpan

Pratiyogita Darpan

Talent Flight : A Silent Verdict on India's Research Gap

—Achal Priyadarshy

India today stands at a historic crossroads. On one hand, it is celebrated as the world's fastest-growing major economy, a digital powerhouse and an emerging geopolitical actor. Its Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are projected to contribute nearly half a trillion dollars to the economy over the next decade. Artificial Intelligence (AI), semiconductor manufacturing, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing are being promoted as the engines of India's rise. Yet beneath this optimism lies a quieter and more uncomfortable reality : India continues to lose many of its brightest minds to foreign universities, laboratories, and corporations.

The phenomenon is not merely a case of 'brain drain' in the conventional sense. It reflects something deeper, a structural inadequacy in India's research ecosystem. The migration of high-performing students, researchers, and innovators has become a silent verdict on the country's inability to nurture cutting-edge intellectual capital. India is producing talent at scale, but it is failing to convert that talent into sustained domestic innovation.

The contradiction is striking. India produces over five million graduates annually and possesses one of the world's largest pools of STEM graduates. Yet industries repeatedly report severe shortages of employable and research-oriented talent. Companies in AI, cybersecurity, biotechnology and advanced manufacturing struggle to recruit professionals capable of bridging technical expertise with strategic innovation. The challenge is not numerical scarcity; it is the absence of high-quality, research-driven, future-ready talent.

This paradox becomes even more visible in the age of Artificial Intelligence. Globally, AI competitiveness is increasingly determined

by a combination of compute infrastructure, data availability, research capability, and elite talent. The United States and China dominate because they possess integrated ecosystems where universities, corporations, venture capital and governments reinforce each other. India, despite launching the **IndiaAI Mission** in 2024, has largely focussed on infrastructure and hardware procurement while underinvesting in the more difficult but decisive pillars of research, talent retention, and innovation culture.

The consequences of this imbalance are becoming increasingly evident. In its 2025 report on 'Internationalisation of Higher Education in India', the NITI Aayog noted that outbound students outnumbered in bound students by 25 times.

India's growing 'talent flight' crisis has implications on its research ecosystem, innovation capacity and long-term economic ambitions. While India produces a vast pool of STEM graduates and aspires to become a global leader in AI, technology and research, the migration of top-performing students and professionals reveals structural weaknesses in higher education, R&D infrastructure and talent retention. To bridge the gap between academic excellence and domestic opportunities, reforms in research funding, education, industry collaboration and innovation policy are required to address the challenge.

Case Study 1 : The JEE Toppers and the Silent Exit

A revealing study conducted on Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) toppers from 1990 to 2020 offers perhaps the clearest illustration of India's research gap. Out of 31 toppers studied, 23 eventually settled abroad. More importantly, not a single topper pursued a master's degree in India.

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- This statistic is deeply symbolic. JEE toppers represent the finest segment of India's engineering talent pipeline. They gain admission into premier institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), institutions often regarded as India's academic crown jewels. If even these students, who possess access to the best available domestic opportunities, overwhelmingly choose foreign research ecosystems, it reflects a profound lack of confidence in India's higher research infrastructure.
- Their migration is not merely about higher salaries abroad. It is about research freedom, laboratory quality, interdisciplinary collaboration, global exposure, funding opportunities, and institutional culture. Universities in the United States, Europe, Singapore and increasingly China provide structured doctoral pathways, globally networked laboratories, mentorship systems and strong university-industry linkages. In contrast, many Indian institutions remain constrained by bureaucratic delays, inadequate funding, rigid academic hierarchies, and insufficient research ecosystems.
- The long-term implications are severe. When top-performing students leave permanently, India loses potential professors, patent creators, entrepreneurs, and institution-builders. The cycle becomes self-reinforcing: weak research ecosystems drive

talent away and talent flight further weakens research ecosystems.

Case Study 2 : GCCs and the Product Leadership Deficit

- India's booming GCC ecosystem offers another important case study. GCCs were initially established as a low-cost support centres for multinational corporations. However, they are now evolving into strategic innovation hubs responsible for product ownership, AI integration, cybersecurity, and digital transformation. This transition demands a completely different quality of talent.
- Industry leaders increasingly warn about shortages in niche domains such as digital product management, automation architecture, and legacy technology modernisation. The challenge is not coding ability alone. Companies require professionals who can integrate technical expertise with business strategy, regulatory understanding, global market awareness, and innovation management.
- This shortage exposes the limitations of India's education and research systems. The country has successfully created a large workforce capable of operational execution, but it has not sufficiently cultivated product thinkers, deep researchers, and innovation leaders. As GCCs attempt to move up the global value chain, the absence of advanced research-oriented talent threatens to slow India's transformation into a true technology leader.
- This problem is particularly acute in frontier sectors such as AI. While India has millions of software developers, top-tier AI researchers remain heavily concentrated in the United States and China. India contributes significantly to open-source AI development and GitHub projects, yet much of the cutting-edge foundational research continues to emerge elsewhere. The country excels at implementation but struggles in frontier innovation.

Reasons for Talent Flight

- The root cause of this crisis lie partly in the structure of Indian higher education itself. For decades, India prioritised scale over depth. Engineering education expanded rapidly, but quality assurance, research infrastructure and faculty development did not keep pace. Many institutions remain teaching-oriented rather than research-oriented. Students are trained to solve examination problems rather than pursue original inquiry.
- Moreover, research careers in India often lack financial and social incentives. Young researchers frequently face uncertain funding, limited autonomy, outdated laboratories, and slow institutional procedures. In contrast, global institutions actively compete for talent through fellowships, grants, modern infrastructure and collaborative ecosystems. The result is predictable: ambitious minds gravitate toward environments where intellectual effort receives institutional support.
- The issue is also deeply socio-economic. Studies on innovation reveal the phenomenon of 'Lost Einsteins', where talented children from underprivileged backgrounds fail to realise their potential because of structural barriers. In India, children from wealthy families are significantly more likely to become scientists, innovators, or entrepreneurs than equally talented children from poorer households. Talent discovery remains heavily unequal, and access to mentorship and research opportunities is concentrated in elite urban centres.
- Regional imbalance further intensifies the problem. Cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune and Gurugram attract skilled professionals and investments, while smaller cities and states struggle to build innovation ecosystems. This concentration creates a dual economy where islands of excellence coexist alongside vast regions

with limited research infrastructure.

- Another major factor driving talent flight is work culture and institutional rigidity. Many young professionals perceive foreign research and corporate environments as more meritocratic, flexible and innovation-friendly. Excessive hierarchy, limited academic freedom, and bureaucratic inefficiency within Indian institutions discourage creative risk-taking. Research flourishes in ecosystems that tolerate experimentation and failure; India's institutional culture often remains risk-averse and compliance-driven.
- The implications of continued talent flight extend beyond economics. Research capability increasingly determines geopolitical influence. AI, biotechnology, semiconductors, clean energy, and quantum computing are becoming instruments of national power. Countries that dominate frontier research will shape global standards, supply chains, and strategic dependencies. If India remains primarily an implementation economy while relying on external innovation, its long-term strategic autonomy may weaken.
- This is why the debate over talent flight is not merely about employment opportunities; it is fundamentally about national competitiveness.

Call to Action : A Comprehensive Transformation of its Research and Talent Ecosystem

(1) Research funding must increase substantially. India's expenditure on research and development remains below 1% of GDP, far lower than major innovation economies. Without sustained investment in laboratories, universities, and advanced research infrastructure, talent retention will remain impossible.

(2) Universities must be restructured to promote research autonomy and interdisciplinary innovation. Institutions require flexibility in hiring global faculty,

collaborating internationally, and designing cutting-edge curricula. Academic bureaucracy must give way to research-driven governance.

(3) India must create stronger university-industry linkages. Research ecosystems thrive when academia and industry interact continuously. GCCs, startups, and research institutions should collaborate on innovation clusters focused on AI, biotechnology, green energy and advanced manufacturing.

(4) Government needs an aggressive talent retention strategy. Competitive fellowships, research grants, global exchange programmes and attractive doctoral opportunities can incentivise top students to remain within India's academic system. Reverse brain-drain policies should actively attract Indian-origin researchers back to domestic institutions.

(5) School and university education must shift from rote learning toward inquiry-based learning. Creativity, problem-solving, and independent research should become central educational goals rather than examination performance alone.

(6) Government must democratise access to research opportunities. Rural and economically disadvantaged students require mentorship networks, scholarships, digital infrastructure and research exposure from an early age. A nation cannot become an innovation superpower while leaving large segments of its talent pool untapped.

(7) Finally, Government must cultivate a culture that values research as much as corporate success. Scientists, scholars and innovators should receive greater social recognition and institutional support. Societies that dominate innovation are those that celebrate intellectual ambition alongside economic achievement.

Conclusion

India's rise in the twenty-first century will ultimately depend not only on demographic advantage or market size, but on whether it can transform human potential into intellectual leadership. The silent

migration of its brightest minds is a warning that economic growth alone cannot sustain national advancement without deep investments in research, innovation and academic excellence.

The challenge before India is therefore civilisational as much as economic. If the country succeeds in building a robust research ecosystem, it can emerge not merely as the world's back office, but as a global centre of knowledge creation and technological leadership. If it fails, India risks remaining a supplier of talent to other nations' innovation systems. The verdict from India's brightest young minds is already visible. Excellence may begin in India, but too often, it is completed elsewhere.

Practice Questions for Prelims :

Q.1. Which of the following best explains the phrase 'talent abundance but innovation scarcity' in the Indian context ?

(A) India has a small population but high industrial output

(B) India produces many graduates but lacks strong research and innovation ecosystems

(C) India imports more talent than it exports

(D) India's universities focus only on humanities education

Ans. (B)

Q.2. Which of the following is a major reason behind the migration of India's top-tier talent abroad ?

(A) Lack of undergraduate engineering institutions in India

(B) Excessive industrialisation in metropolitan cities

(C) Better research ecosystems, funding and mentorship opportunities abroad

(D) Declining demand for STEM professionals in India

Ans. (C)

Practice Question for Mains

Q. Discuss how talent flight reflects structural weaknesses in India's research ecosystem. Examine its implications for India's ambitions in AI, innovation and global competitiveness. (250 words)

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which grew at a CAGR of about 8.9 per cent over the same period. This type of imbalance has serious implications not only for trade, but also for employment, industrialisation and long-term growth. Services growth is welcome, but it may not by itself generate enough jobs. Growth of exports of industrial goods generate more employment.

The prolonged stagnation in merchandise exports suggests an erosion of competitiveness in sectors such as textiles, light engineering, chemicals and leather, where India should have been gaining ground. It reflects a significant trade policy failure. In April 2015, the government said that the objective of the Foreign Trade Policy 2015-20 was to double India's share in global merchandise exports in five years. The reality is that since 2014, India's merchandise exports have grown from \$314 billion to \$441 billion, a CAGR of 2.9 per cent and India's share in global merchandise exports has remained stuck at about 1.8 per cent.

The lethargic growth of merchandise exports is especially worrying because manufacturing exports are far more employment-intensive than services exports, particularly for semi-skilled and low-skilled labour. By contrast, high-growth service sectors such as information technology and business services are skill-intensive and absorb only a relatively small, educated segment of the workforce. They cannot substitute for the broad-based employment potential of labour-intensive manufacturing exports.

Trade patterns with major partners show that India continues to run a surplus with some advanced economies, but these gains are outweighed by large and expanding deficits with key partners, particularly in Asia. India has one of the largest trade deficits with China. Imports from China have risen steadily over the years, crossing \$131 billion in FY26, while India's exports to China remain at \$19.48 billion, while imports from China increased to \$131.63 billion.

One Nation, One Standard : The Debate Over CSAT in UPSC Prelims

—Shivaji Tripathi

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The Civil Services Examination (CSE), conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), has long been revered as the 'steel frame' of the Indian administrative machinery. However, this venerated institution now finds itself at the center of a profound ideological and structural controversy. Rajya Sabha MP and former Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police, Shri Brij Lal, has recently characterized the Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT) as the 'biggest barrier to diversity', demanding either its complete abolition or a radical rationalization. His critique strikes a chord at a time when the demographic composition of India's elite bureaucracy is undergoing a quiet yet significant transformation.

The Technocratic Shift : Data and Demographics

Introduced in 2011, the CSAT, also known as General Studies Paper-II in the Preliminary stage, was intended to modernize the selection process. The objective was to pivot away from mere academic memorization toward testing logical reasoning, analytical ability, and decision-making skills. While the intent was noble, the outcome has sparked intense scrutiny. Data from recent years reveals an overwhelming dominance of candidates from technical backgrounds, particularly engineering. Statistics indicate that nearly 65% of successful candidates now hail from these streams, leaving students from humanities and social sciences at a marked disadvantage.

Shri Brij Lal's critique highlights that the CSAT has evolved from a test of basic aptitude into a high-level mathematical filter. The increasing complexity of the quantitative sections often compared to the Common Admission Test (CAT) used for MBA admissions—creates a systemic bias. Aspirants from rural

backgrounds and non-technical universities find themselves competing on a tilted playing field where their historical, sociological and administrative potential is secondary to their speed in solving permutations and combinations.

Linguistic Hegemony and the Rural-Urban Divide

Beyond the mathematical hurdle lies the formidable barrier of linguistic medium. The CSAT includes significant portions dedicated to English comprehension and logical reasoning. For candidates educated in vernacular languages, these sections are often a source of systemic exclusion. While the UPSC provides translations, critics and students alike have long complained that the Hindi and regional language translations are frequently arcane, literal to the point of absurdity, or poorly phrased.

This linguistic friction disproportionately affects candidates from rural India and the hinterlands of the Hindi heartland, where access to high-quality English-medium instruction is limited. When Shri Brij Lal argued that the CSAT hinders diversity, he was referring to the gradual erosion of the 'representative' character of the civil services. If the 'standard' for entry is calibrated primarily toward urban, English-speaking technocrats, the resulting administrative cadre may lack the deep-seated cultural and social empathy required to govern a country as complex as India.

The Qualitative Vs. Quantitative Dilemma

A central question which emerges from this debates is 'What defines a 'good' civil servant?' Is it the ability to solve complex logical puzzles within seconds, or is it a profound understanding of Indian history, constitutional law and the sociological nuances of a diverse

district? The CSAT assumes that high-speed quantitative logic is a proxy for administrative efficiency. However, seasoned administrators argue that while logical clarity is essential, the current weighting of the CSAT over-emphasizes a specific type of intelligence at the cost of emotional and social intelligence.

- The scheme of UPSC Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination was revised with effect from UPSC Civil Services Examination (CSE), 2011 on the recommendations of Prof. S.K. Khanna Committee with the notification of Civil Services Examination Rules, 2011 by the Government of India. The earlier objective type paper of optional subject (in preliminary stage) was discontinued. Vide these Rules, two papers of objective type of 200 marks each were introduced i.e., General Studies Paper-I and General Studies Paper-II.
- This scheme of Preliminary Examination continued till Civil Services Examination, 2014. However, the English language comprehension as a part of General Studies Paper-II in the scheme of Preliminary Examination was deleted in CSE, 2014.
- The Government with the notification of Rules of CSE, 2015 made the General Studies Paper-II of Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination qualifying with minimum marks of 33%.

Defenders of the CSAT often argue that a qualifying paper ensures a minimum standard of intellect across all branches of service. However, the MP's call for 'rationalisation' suggests that the 'standard' itself needs a re-definition. A truly equitable standard would be one that

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Citizen First Approach : Evaluating India's Administrative Reforms

—Neha Sansarwal

The idea of 'Citizen First Approach' represents a fundamental shift in governance from a bureaucracy-driven system to a citizen-centric service model. In a diverse and populous democracy like India, administrative reforms are crucial to ensure that governance is not only efficient but also inclusive, transparent and accountable. Rooted in the constitutional vision of a welfare state, this approach aims to prioritize the needs, rights and aspirations of citizens over rigid procedural frameworks. Over the decades, India has undertaken several administrative reforms, especially after economic liberalization, to improve public service delivery. However, the effectiveness of these reforms must be evaluated not just in terms of efficiency but also in terms of equity and accessibility, particularly in the context of recent developments.

Citizen First Approach : Concept and Significance

The Citizen First Approach emphasizes responsiveness, participation, transparency and accountability in governance. It seeks to transform citizens from passive recipients of services into active stakeholders in governance process. This approach aligns with modern governance theories such as 'New Public Management' and 'New Public Service', which advocate efficiency alongside democratic engagement.

In the Indian context, the significance of this approach has increased with rising citizen awareness, digital penetration and expectations from the state. For example, platforms like CPGRAMS (Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System) have empowered citizens to directly register complaints and track their resolution. Similarly, the growing use of social media by government departments for grievance

redressal reflects a shift toward real-time citizen engagement.

- The New Public Management (NPM) aims to improve public sector organisations' efficiency, effectiveness and service quality by adopting market-based approaches and performance-oriented management techniques.
- According to the New Public Service (NPS) approach, the primary role of public servants is to help citizens articulate and meet their shared interests rather than to control or steer society. It approaches public management from the advantage point of democratic theory, undertaking on the notion of active and involved citizenship.

Evolution of Administrative Reforms in India

India's administrative framework initially followed the Weberian model, characterized by hierarchy, rules and centralized control. While this model ensured stability and uniformity, it often led to rigidity and inefficiency. The economic crisis of 1991 marked a turning point, leading to transition from a restrictive, state-led economy to a market-oriented economy. It also led to major administrative reforms which aimed at reducing the govern-

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ment's role in business and renewed focus on improving operational efficiency, decentralization and enhancing accountability through technological interventions.

In recent years, reforms have increasingly focussed on digital governance and direct service delivery mechanisms. Initiatives like the Digital India Programme have aimed to make government services accessible online, reducing physical interface and scope for corruption. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this shift, with digital platforms becoming essential for service delivery, such as vaccination registration through CoWIN.

Major Reforms and Their Impact

One of the most significant reforms promoting the Citizen First Approach is the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, which has empowered citizens to demand transparency and hold public authorities account-

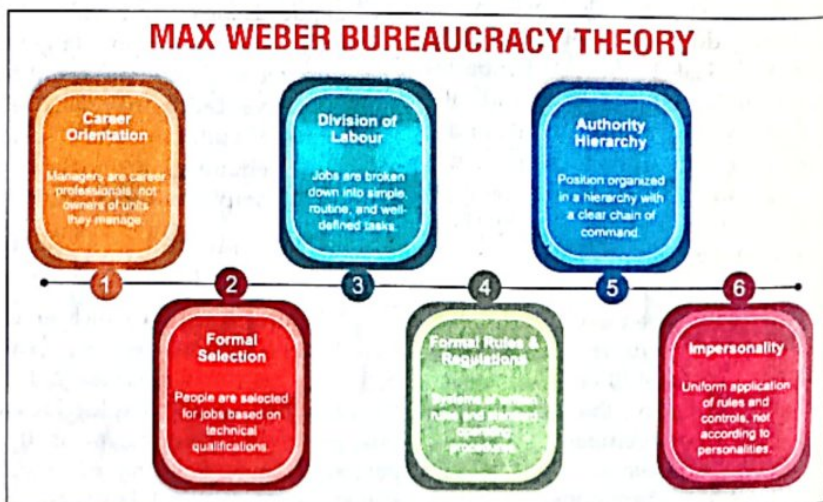


Fig. 1. Weberian Model

able. RTI has exposed corruption and inefficiencies in numerous cases, reinforcing democratic accountability. However, recent concerns such as delays in responses and vacancies in the Information Commissions have raised questions about its effectiveness.

Another major reform is the implementation of the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), which aims to transfer subsidies directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts. This targeted delivery has significantly reduced leakages and improved transparency. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, DBT played a crucial role in providing financial assistance under schemes such as the PM Garib Kalyan Yojana. However, issues such as Aadhaar authentication failures and lack of banking access in remote areas have led to exclusion of vulnerable populations, highlighting the tension between efficiency and inclusiveness.

The push for e-Governance has been a cornerstone of administrative reforms. Initiatives like DigiLocker, UMANG and online service portals have simplified access to government services. The recent rollout of faceless income tax assessments is a notable example, reducing human interface and corruption. Yet, the digital divide remains a major challenge. According to recent sur-

veys, rural areas and marginalized groups still face limited internet access and digital literacy, raising concerns about digital exclusion.

The Sevottam Model and Citizen Charters were introduced to improve service delivery standards and accountability. While these frameworks provide a structured approach to service delivery, their implementation has been inconsistent across departments, limiting their impact.

Civil services reforms, including Mission Karmayogi, aim to build capacity and improve the efficiency of government officials through continuous training. Additionally, lateral entry into civil services has been introduced to bring in domain expertise. While these steps enhance specialization, they also raise concerns about institutional integrity and transparency in appointments.

Decentralization through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments is another critical reform aimed at empowering local governments. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Panchayats played a proactive role in managing local crises, demonstrating the potential of grassroots governance. However, issues such as inadequate financial autonomy and capacity constraints continue to limit their effectiveness.

Administrative Reforms : Interface Between Technology, Rights and Accountability

A key aspect of evaluating administrative reforms is linking current developments with foundational principles. For instance, the expansion of digital governance must be examined in light of the constitutional principle of equality under Article 14. While digital platforms improve efficiency, they may exclude those without access to technology, thereby undermining inclusiveness.

Similarly, the increasing use of technology in governance raises questions about data privacy and accountability, linking to the broader debate on fundamental rights in the digital age. The enactment of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 reflects an attempt to address these concerns, but its implementation will determine its effectiveness.

Another important issue is the balance between bureaucratic neutrality and political responsiveness. Recent debates around the role of civil servants highlight the need to uphold constitutional values while ensuring effective policy implementation.

Challenges in Achieving a Citizen-First Approach

Despite significant progress, several challenges hinder the realisation of a truly citizen-centric administration. Bureaucratic inertia remains a major obstacle, with resistance to change and adherence to outdated practices slowing down reforms. The digital divide continues to exclude large sections of the population, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

Accountability mechanisms, though strengthened, often suffer from delays and inefficiencies. Though the government has implemented 10-step reforms of CPGRAMs, however, users often complain that the system acts merely as a forwarding mechanism, without resolving the underlying issue. Additionally, capacity constraints at

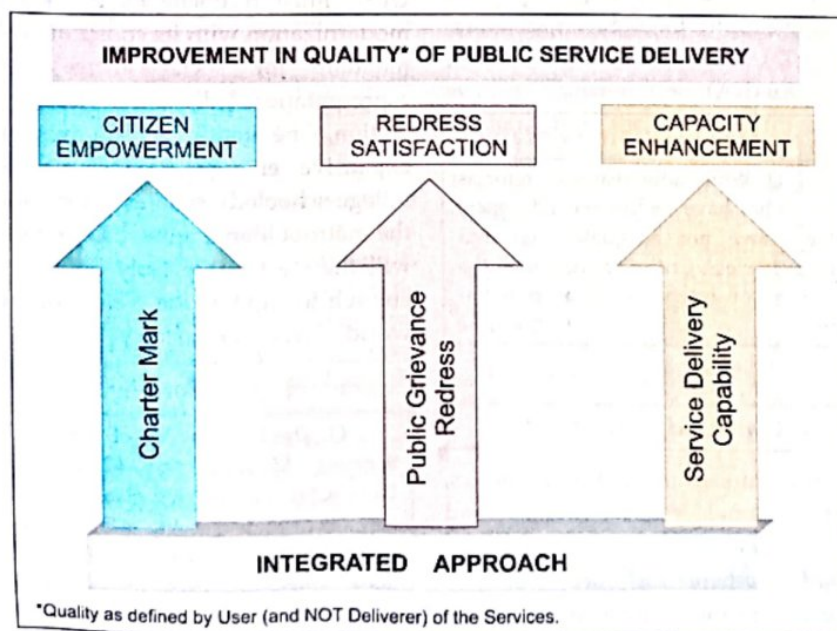


Fig. 2. Sevottam Model

the grassroots level limit the effectiveness of decentralized governance.

Another critical issue is the fragmented nature of reforms, leading to lack of coordination among different departments leading to inefficiencies. For example, overlapping schemes and a lack of data integration can create confusion and reduce the effectiveness of service delivery.

Critical Evaluation

India's administrative reforms have undoubtedly improved efficiency and transparency. Initiatives like RTI, DBT and digital governance have made the system more responsive and accountable. However, these reforms have not always translated into inclusive governance. The benefits of reforms are often unevenly distributed, with marginalized groups facing barriers to access.

Moreover, the focus on technology-driven solutions sometimes overlooks the importance of human-centric approaches, such as capacity building and community engagement. This highlights the need for a balanced approach that combines technological innovation with social inclusiveness.

Way Forward

To strengthen the Citizen First Approach, India must focus on bridging the digital divide by improving internet infrastructure and promoting digital literacy. Strengthening institutional mechanisms, such as filling vacancies in oversight bodies and enhancing their independence is crucial for ensuring accountability.

Capacity building at all levels of administration, particularly at the grassroots, is essential for the effective implementation of reforms. Encouraging participatory governance through mechanisms like social audits and citizen feedback can further enhance administrative responsiveness.

An integrated approach to reforms, with better coordination among departments and the use of data-driven decision-making, can

improve efficiency and effectiveness. Ultimately, the goal should be to create a governance system that is not only efficient but also equitable, inclusive and citizen-centric.

Conclusion

The Citizen First Approach represents a transformative vision for governance in India. While administrative reforms have made significant strides in improving efficiency and transparency, the challenge lies in ensuring that these gains are inclusive and accessible to all citizens. Achieving this requires a combination of technological innovation, institutional reforms and social inclusiveness, supported by strong political will and administrative commitment. Only then can India realize the true potential of a citizen-centric governance system.

Practice Question for Prelims :

Q.1. With reference to Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), consider the following:

1. It eliminates both inclusion and exclusion errors in welfare delivery.
2. It relies on the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, Mobile).
3. It strengthens fiscal prudence by reducing leakages.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) Only 2 and 3
(B) Only 1 and 2
(C) Only 1 and 3
(D) All of the above

Ans. (A)

Practice Question for Mains

Q. While administrative reforms in India have enhanced efficiency, they have not adequately ensured inclusiveness. Critically analyze in the context of recent governance initiatives. (250 words)

PDarpan

Continued from Page 93

tests administrative aptitude—ethics, interpersonal communication and basic numeracy—rather than specialized mathematical prowess. The current format, many argue, is an 'elite filter' masquerading as an 'aptitude test'.

Institutional Response and Parliamentary Oversight

The critique is not isolated to political rhetoric. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice, which Shri Brij Lal chairs, has formally articulated these concerns in its 160th report. The committee's recommendations are significant, urging the UPSC to reconsider the impact of the CSAT on the inclusivity of the selection process. There is a growing consensus that the commission must move toward a more holistic evaluation system that does not penalize candidates for their choice of undergraduate subjects or their medium of instruction.

Conclusion

The debate over the CSAT is, at its core, a debate about the future of the Indian state. If the gates to the civil services are narrowed by technocratic hurdles, the nation risks losing the invaluable insights of those who understand its social fabric through the lens of history, literature and the arts. Shri Brij Lal's demand for reform is a timely reminder that meritocracy is only valid when the competition is fair and the criteria are relevant to the role.

As India moves forward, the UPSC must reconcile its desire for modernization with its constitutional mandate for social justice and representational diversity. The 'One Nation, One Standard' ideal must be expansive enough to include the village-schooled scholar alongside the metropolitan engineer. Only then will the steel frame truly be strong enough to support the weight of the world's largest democracy.

Practice Question for Mains

Q. The introduction of the Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT) in UPSC-CSE Preliminary Examination has increasingly become a 'barrier to diversity' rather than a 'filter for merit'. Discuss.

(250 words)

PDarpan

Is India Moving Towards a Dominant-Party System ?

—Ajay Partap Tiwari

Introduction

Indian democracy is the world's largest democracy. The notion of democracy in India is based on the principles of equality, freedom and justice. It grants citizens the rights to vote, express themselves and participate, while maintaining unity in diversity and holding the executive accountable to the elected representatives. India's democracy is distinct from that of other countries. A multi-party system, a federal structure, an independent Election Commission, a strong and independent judiciary and an active media are the pillars that make it vibrant. However, in recent years, the debate has intensified over whether India is moving toward a dominant-party system, which may be contrary to the spirit of Indian democracy.

What is Dominant-Party System ?

A Dominant-Party System refers to a political system in which a single party remains in power for an extended period of time. It is a democratic arrangement where regular and competitive elections are held, yet the same party consistently wins. Opposition parties do exist in this system; however, they are often unable to mount an effective challenge to bring about a change in power.

It is important to note that a Dominant-Party System is not synonymous with a dictatorship, as it continues to uphold democratic processes and electoral competition. It differs from a 'one-nation, one-party system' in that it formally preserves multi-party elections and political competition. Nevertheless, the actual concentration of power often rests in the hands of a single party. Weak and unclear opposition policies, along with a strong public preference for one political party, contribute to the emergence and persistence of a Dominant-Party System.

Global Scenario in Dominant-Party System

In the current scenario, the trend of a dominant-party systems is rapidly emerging in global politics. It is no longer limited to developing countries but is also visible in developed democracies. There are many countries in the world where this system is prevalent. In Japan, the Liberal Democratic Party remained in power continuously from 1955 to 1993, despite the presence of an opposition. In South Africa, the African National Congress has been in power continuously since the end of apartheid in 1994. In Singapore, the People's Action Party has been in power since 1959. Although elections are regularly held, the opposition has not been successful in bringing about a change of power. In Mexico, the Institutional Revolutionary Party ruled from 1929 to 2000, making it a prime example of a dominant-party system.

Scenario in India

The dominant-party system in India is not a new phenomenon. After independence, when India adopted a democratic electoral system, several political parties existed, but the most influential among them was the Congress. From 1952 to 1977, the Congress dominated central politics, winning all Lok Sabha elections, until its first time defeat in 1977. At that time, as today, there was a weak opposition that repeatedly failed to bring about a change of power. The Congress existed as an important national party after independence, both at the national and state levels, which Rajni Kothari termed as the 'Congress System'. (1952-1967). Congress had been facing challenges since 1967, when Congress lost power in eight states for the first time. However, India's multi-party and federal structure prevents this trend from

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becoming completely permanent. Even today, regional parties remain strong in several states, have the potential to challenge central power and maintain political balance. After the Emergency in 1977, the dominance of the Congress began to weaken and with this, a new era of coalition politics started in India.

Current Scenario in India

An analysis of the current landscape of Indian democracy clearly reveals that, just as the Congress party's dominance remained inextricably linked to political power for a prolonged period following independence, a trend toward a dominant-party system appears to be re-emerging today. Since 2014, Indian politics has witnessed a sweeping transformation. In that year, the BJP returned to power at the Centre. Subsequently, from 2014 to the present, the party has experienced continuous expansion, consolidating its hold on central power while simultaneously extending its influence across numerous states. At present, the party governing at the Centre also holds power in 22 states. Strong leadership, a well-organized electoral machinery, the availability of ample resources, and effective political communication constitute the primary pillars on which any political party ascends to power. Much like the Congress party's dominance that prevailed in India for several decades after independence, the BJP's current ascendancy has sparked an ongoing debate about whether Indian democracy is evolving into a 'dominant-party system'. Such a system has both positive and negative facets. On

the one hand, it can foster political stability, policy continuity, and decisive leadership; on the other, it risks undermining democratic competition, placing pressure on institutions, and curtailing the role of the political opposition.

Factors Limiting Dominant-Party System in India

1. Strength of the Multi-Party System : India's federal structure and multi-party system are extremely strong, with numerous parties active at both the national and regional levels. Different parties hold power in different states, preventing any single party from establishing permanent and absolute dominance. This political diversity limits the potential for a dominant-party system.

2. Presence of a Strong Opposition : The opposition in India is not completely weak; rather, it maintains a substantial vote share and seat count. It challenges the government on many issues and influences public opinion. This competition maintains political balance and prevents one-party dominance.

3. Impact of Coalition Politics : Coalition governments are an important feature of Indian politics, especially in the states and sometimes at the Central government. Governments are formed with the cooperation of various parties, preventing power from being concentrated in the hands of a single party. This situation weakens the potential for a dominant-party system.

4. Dynamics of Electoral Competition : Electoral results in India are constantly changing, and no single party has seen permanent dominance. Public opinion shifts from time to time in favour of different political parties. This political dynamic strengthens democratic competition and prevents monopoly.

5. Strong Role of Regional Parties : Regional parties in India are extremely influential and play a decisive role in many states. These parties not only come to power at the state level but also influence national politics. Their strong presence limits the dominance of any single national party.

Factors Favouring Dominant-Party System in India

A single political party's continued dominance is considered a feature of a dominant-party system. A country typically experiences this system when the following factors are present.

1. Continuous Success of a Single Party : Despite a multi-party system, if a single political party consistently wins a majority in elections, it indicates its continued success. Its widespread presence in state elections and a higher vote share than opposition parties show that the party maintains a stable and strong lead at the national level. This situation reflects a dominant-party system.

2. Strong Leadership : The influence of personality-based politics is clearly visible in current politics. Leadership centralization and the influence of charismatic leaders have increased significantly. Elections are often presented as a 'leader versus opposition' contest rather than an ideological one. This trend limits political competition and strengthens the dominance of a single party or leader, which is considered a key characteristic of a dominant-party system.

2. Organizational Strength : A key characteristic of a dominant party is its strong cadre base, which is organized and active down to the booth level. Additionally, the abundant availability of resources makes it organizationally strong. This strong organizational structure makes its electoral machinery highly effective. As a result, it is able to garner widespread public support and maintain a consistent lead in electoral competition.

3. Weak Opposition : The opposition in India is often affected by ideological ambiguity, leadership crises, coalition instability and infighting among regional parties. Due to these weaknesses, the opposition fails to present a united and strong alternative. When the opposition is fragmented and weak, political competition becomes unbalanced and the dominance of a single party naturally increases, strengthening the dominant-party system.

4. Finance and Communication Strategy : In the context of a

dominant-party system, the extensive use of digital media, dominance on social media and control over the electoral narrative further strengthen a party's position. Similarly, inequality in election funding, resource disparity, and the ability to conduct large-scale campaigns also give it a clear advantage over other parties. The combination of these factors creates an imbalance in political competition and reinforces the dominance of one party.

Proposed Reforms

1. Strong Opposition : The strength of any democracy depends on a strong opposition, as it is the opposition that evaluates the actions of the ruling party and protects the interests of the people. Therefore, it is essential that the opposition have clear policies, ideological firmness, effective leadership and an organized coalition. Only such an opposition can maintain democratic balance and help mitigate the tendency toward a dominant-party system.

2. Independence of Institutions : Independence of the Constitutional and Statutory Institutions is the corner-stone of any democracy. Institutions such as the Election Commission, judiciary and the media play an effective role in strengthening democracy by curbing the abuse of power, ensure transparency, and protect citizens' rights. Their independence strengthens the democratic system and plays a vital role in holding the government accountable.

3. Electoral Reforms : Electoral reforms are essential in strengthening the democratic system. Ensuring transparency in election funding helps curb corruption. All political parties should have equal opportunities to ensure fair competition. Furthermore, the impartiality and independence of the media play a vital role in shaping public opinion and ensuring accountability in a democracy.

4. The Role of Citizens : An informed citizenry is the foundation of a robust democracy. Informed voters make responsible decisions, while active civic organizations highlight social problems. Together, they safeguard democratic values, increase transparency in governance, and make the government more accountable to the public.

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Dastan-e-Hormuz : Diplomatic and Military Affairs in the Persian Gulf (16th-18th Centuries)

—Vidur Sharma

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The story of Hormuz—often romanticized as *Dastan-e-Hormuz*—is not merely a tale of a port city but a grand narrative of power, trade, diplomacy and military rivalry in the Persian Gulf. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, Hormuz stood at the crossroads of empires, acting as both a commercial hub and a strategic fortress. Its history during this period reflects the shifting balance of power between regional dynasties and expanding European maritime empires.

The Strategic Importance of Hormuz

Located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, the island of Hormuz controlled access to one of the most vital maritime routes connecting the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and beyond. Whoever controlled Hormuz could regulate trade flowing between India, Persia, Arabia and Europe. This made it a coveted prize for both regional rulers and foreign powers.

Before the arrival of Europeans, Hormuz was already a thriving trade centre. Arab and Persian merchants dominated commerce, dealing in spices, silk, pearls and horses. The Kingdom of Hormuz had established itself as a semi-independent power, balancing relations with larger empires such as Persia while maintaining its own commercial autonomy.

Portuguese Arrival and Military Domination

The entry of the Portuguese into the Indian Ocean marked a turning point. Following Vasco da Gama's voyage, Portugal sought to monopolize maritime trade. In 1515, under the command of Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese finally took formal possession of Hormuz and completed its fortification, with

Hormuz becoming a key Portuguese stronghold for more than a century.

Their strategy combined military force with diplomatic manoeuvring. They allowed the local rulers to remain nominally in power but effectively controlled the administration and trade. The Portuguese built a massive fortress, turning Hormuz into a naval stronghold. From here, they enforced the *cartaz* system—a naval pass that ships had to purchase to trade safely.

The Portuguese presence transformed the nature of diplomacy in the region. Trade was no longer just a matter of negotiation among merchants; it became tied to military power. Coastal states had to negotiate with Portuguese authorities or face naval blockades and attacks.

Safavid Persia and the Challenge to Portuguese Power

The rise of the Safavid Empire in Persia introduced a formidable regional challenger. The Safavids, under Shah Abbas I, sought to

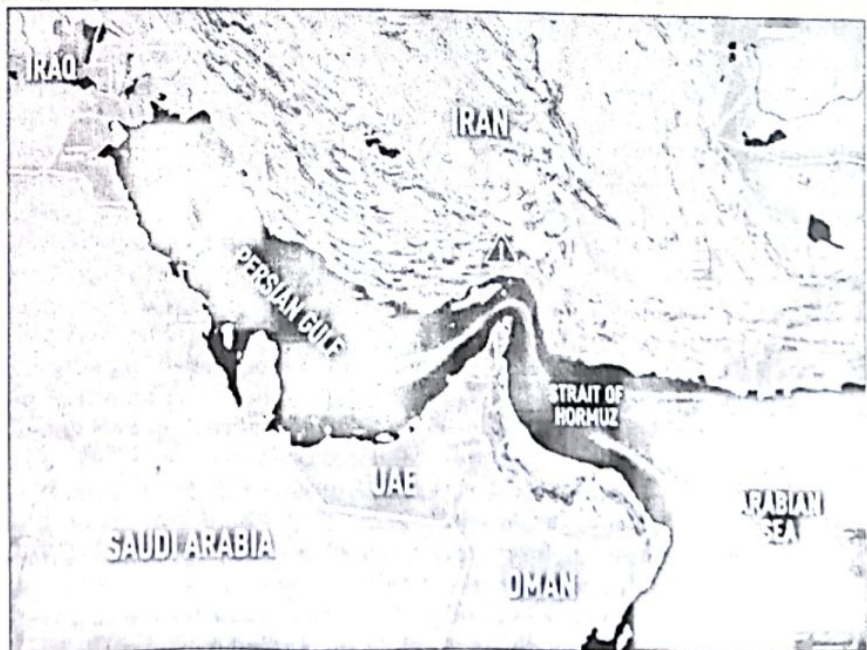
reclaim control over their maritime trade and reduce dependence on foreign powers.

Recognizing the limitations of his navy, Shah Abbas pursued a strategic alliance with the English. This partnership led to a coordinated attack on Hormuz in 1622. The joint Anglo-Persian forces successfully expelled the Portuguese, marking a major shift in regional power dynamics.

Following this victory, the Safavids transferred much of the trade to Bandar Abbas on the mainland, reducing Hormuz's importance. However, the island remained symbolically significant as a reminder of foreign domination and its eventual overthrow.

The Rise of European Rivalries

The fall of Portuguese Hormuz did not end European involvement



in the Persian Gulf. Instead, it opened the door to new competitors, particularly the English and the Dutch.

The English East India Company established trading posts and cultivated diplomatic ties with Persian rulers. Their approach differed from the Portuguese; rather than relying solely on military force, they emphasised alliances and trade agreements.

The Dutch, through the Dutch East India Company, also entered the region, competing fiercely with the English. Both powers sought to control the lucrative trade in spices and textiles, often using diplomacy backed by naval strength.

This period witnessed a complex web of alliances. Local rulers would sometimes play European powers against each other to secure better trade terms or military support. Diplomacy became a strategic tool, as important as military might.

Regional Powers and Maritime Politics

While European powers were influential, regional actors continued to play a crucial role. Oman, in particular, emerged as a significant maritime force. The Omani Yaruba dynasty expelled the Portuguese from several key ports and established control over parts of the Gulf.

Oman's naval strength allowed it to challenge both European and Persian influence. The Omanis conducted raids, controlled trade routes and asserted dominance over coastal territories. Their rise added another layer of complexity to the region's diplomatic and military landscape.

Similarly, various Arab tribes and local rulers maintained autonomy by shifting allegiances. They engaged in trade, piracy and diplomacy, navigating the competing interests of larger powers.

Trade Networks and Economic Diplomacy

Trade remained the central driver of political and military activity in Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. The region was a hub for goods such as Indian spices and textiles, Persian silk, Arabian horses and Pearls from the Gulf.

Control over these commodities meant wealth and influence. Diplomatic relations were often shaped by economic considerations. Agreements between rulers and trading companies determined tariffs, access to ports and protection of merchant vessels.

European companies, especially the English and Dutch, acted as both commercial and political entities. They negotiated treaties, maintained armed fleets and sometimes engaged in warfare to protect their interests.

Decline of Hormuz and Shifting Centers of Power

By the late 17th and early 18th centuries, Hormuz had lost much of its former glory. Several factors contributed to its decline :

1. **Shift to Bandar Abbas :** The Safavids redirected trade to mainland ports, reducing Hormuz's importance.

2. **Changing Trade Routes :** Global trade patterns evolved, with new routes and centers emerging.

3. **Political Instability :** Conflicts among regional powers disrupted commerce.

Despite its decline, Hormuz remained a symbol of strategic importance. Control of the Strait of Hormuz continued to be a key objective for regional and global powers.

Military Strategies and Naval Warfare

Naval warfare played a crucial role in the history of Hormuz. The Portuguese introduced advanced ship designs and artillery, giving them an early advantage. Their fortress at Hormuz was a testament to their military engineering.

Subsequently regional powers adapted to these technological advancements. The Safavids, with English assistance, demonstrated that alliances could overcome technological superiority. The Omanis developed their own naval capabilities, challenging European dominance.

Battles in the Gulf were not just about ships but also about controlling ports, supply lines and trade routes. Fortifications, alliances and economic blockades were all part of the broader military strategy.

Diplomacy as a Tool of Survival

In a region marked by constant competition, diplomacy was essential for survival. Smaller states and local rulers often relied on negotiation rather than confrontation. They formed alliances, paid tributes, or shifted loyalties to maintain their autonomy.

European powers also used diplomacy to expand their influence. Treaties with Persian rulers allowed them to establish trading posts and secure privileges. These agreements often included clauses on military cooperation and protection.

Diplomacy was not always peaceful; it was frequently backed by the threat of force. The combination of negotiation and military power defined the political culture of the Persian Gulf during this period.

Cultural Exchanges and Interactions

The interactions between different powers led to cultural exchanges. European presence introduced new technologies, architectural styles and administrative practices. At the same time, European traders adapted to local customs and traditions.

Hormuz itself was a cosmopolitan centre, where people from different regions and cultures interacted. This diversity contributed to its vibrancy as a cultural hub.

Legacy of Hormuz

The story of Hormuz in the 16th to 18th centuries offers valuable insights into the dynamics of global trade and power. It highlights how strategic locations can shape history and how the interplay of diplomacy and military force determines control.

The legacy of Hormuz can still be seen today in the continued importance of the Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of the world's oil supply passes. The region remains a focal point of geopolitical interest, echoing its historical significance.

Digital Vigilantism in India : Reasons, Risks and Redressal

—Neelam Kejriwal

Introduction

In today's era, information sharing has drastically improved as technology and social media platforms provide instant connectivity to everyone. With the growing use of social media platforms, we have often seen posts which reflect the victim's side of the story and attract public opinion, support and empathy and sometime public outrage as well. This is the process of Digital Vigilantism. This is where the line between freedom of speech and expression, natural justice principles and faith in institutions is becoming blurred.

Understanding Digital Vigilantism

In general terms, Vigilantism means when any person taking law enforcement or the delivery of justice into their own hands. We have law enforcement mechanisms and a judiciary for delivery of justice, yet, if the role of law enforcement or justice delivery is taken up by anyone, it is commonly referred to as Vigilantism. Digital Vigilantism is a part of it where collective online action is taken that aims at punishing or exposing certain wrongs.

Les Johnston, an Australian criminologist, defines Vigilantism as a premeditated action involving the use of force or violence by private individuals to restore social control in the event of breakdown of institutional order. This definition does not cover Digital Vigilantism as it (Digital Vigilantism) does not have premeditated action; rather, the response is original; there is no force or coercion involved, it only has online speech. It can be against either the victim or the accused, as the outcomes are unpredictable and thus digital vigilantism has emerged as a significant phenomenon, which needs to be understood from the lens of both good and evil.

Social Media Redressal : Causes and Risks

Social Media is emerging as a platform for seeking justice by individuals in cases of exploitation and harassment. This gives rise to a bigger question of whether the justice is truly served when individuals are given a voice and a platform to express themselves.

There are several incidents where the social media has become a tool for giving voice to the individuals like :

(a) **#MeToo Movement** : One of the most noteworthy movements which empowered the victims to publicly name the sexual offenders which resulted in inquiries and actions being taken. This movement raised an important question about due process of law versus granting voice to victims.

(b) **Bengaluru Mass Molestation Case, 2017** : This was an incident where women were harassed during new year's celebration and the police was forced to take action only when the videos from the event surfaced resulting in public outrage and forcing police to take action.

(c) **Sexual Harassment in Domestic Flight, 2026** : Recently, in April 2026, a woman publicly shamed an individual for sexual harassment on a domestic flight. The matter went before the Delhi High Court which noted that such acts of public shaming cause irreparable damage to the reputation of individuals.

There are numerous incidents and events where people take up social media platforms to voice the harassment or misconduct being faced by them. However, the story does not end here. Crowd justice is not always victim-based. Even without waiting for the completion of a trial, the crowd reaches a decision and publicly shames the accused, which results in creating

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pressure on justice delivery bodies and law enforcement agencies and causes damage to the reputation of individuals.

The victims often turn to social media due to delays in justice delivery or when the accused comes from an influential background, which may discourage fair justice.

Evaluating Digital Vigilantism

While discussing Digital Vigilantism, it is important to understand the reasons that have led to its emergence in the first place :

(a) **Procedural Delays** : A lot of procedural delays and backlogs result in people seeking recourse from public platforms. Social media appears to provide instant justice.

(b) **Institutional Vacuum** : The apathy within institutional frameworks, where victims of sexual harassment are often slut-shamed, subjected to insensitive questioning, often compromising the confidentiality of the victims, pushes the victims to resort to social medias to gain support.

(c) **Social Stigma** : Family pressure, societal judgment and public shaming of victims often discourages them from filing official complaints, particularly in sexual harassment cases.

While the failure of institutional justice or lack of public trust in governance is the root cause for birth of Digital Vigilantism, it is not often a substitute for the justice delivery system. Social Media Trial often subject both the victim and accused to unnecessary judgements and harassment without full knowledge of the facts.

This is against the principles of natural justice like *Audi Alteram Partem* (hear the other side) or fair and unbiased proceedings. There is no mechanism to verify the truth of the alleged misconduct and the perception is framed on the basis of one-sided narratives. Furthermore, the lack of proper technological advancement often results in anonymity of digital vigilantes, which undermines the rights of the individuals.

This highlights the classic conflict between the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression under Article 19(1)(a) and the Right to Reputation, which is protected under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

Balancing Digital Vigilantism with Justice Delivery

Digital Vigilantism was born due to failures in institutional mechanisms. The focus should be on restoring the faith of people in justice delivery by emphasizing upon the Capability Approach of Amartya Sen. This requires a consolidated efforts by the legislature, judiciary, executive and society, through the following measures:

(a) **Fast Track Courts** : In order to reduce the timeline, we need fast track courts to expedite justice delivery especially in POSH cases as these cases often attract digital vigilantism.

(b) **Aviation Protocols** : Mandatory guidelines by DGCA as per NCORD to avoid in-flight harassment cases.

(c) **Amendments in IT Rules** : There is a need for Fact Check Unit to identify fake or false news. This will help in preventing the loss of reputation of innocent individuals. There is a need to make laws to regulate the use of Artificial Intelligence in a way which is not harmful to the rights of the public.

(d) **Platform Accountability** : Social media platforms should be made accountable for all the fake content being posted without proper verification. This will increase vigilance against the fake content.

(e) **Police Sensitization and Legal Aid** : Ensuring that the police and administrative wings are more sensitive to the issues raised, and are not discouraging complaint regis-

tration by declaring the matter to be trivial. This also calls for providing legal aid and assistance to victims to get justice through institutional means.

From an ethical perspective, this raises important questions like whether justice is delivered by public exposure, whether public shaming is the right way of justice delivery when institutional mechanisms fail or is it a balanced approach by society towards being empathetic to the victim and ensuring fairness to the accused. The answers are often blurred, as the mob often overlooks the natural justice principles and go with what instinct says is right. There is a need to ensure that while the mob shows their support and empathy to the victim, there is no derogation from due process of law and the digital space is used responsibly and not as a substitution for the formal justice delivery process.

Conclusion

Digital Vigilantism is not just a problem of public shaming or media trial, it reflects a much deeper problem rooted in structural inefficiencies of the institutions. Social media and public platforms can be sources for exposing the issues but they cannot be a substitute for the formal justice delivery system. It cannot replace a fair trial and due process of law. With enhanced institutional functioning, there is a need to ensure that victims do not crowdsource justice which violates the principle of fair trial—*Audi Alteram Partem*.

Practice Question for Mains

Q. The rise of digital vigilantism is a glaring symptom of institutional failure rather than a problem of social media excess. Critically Examine.

(250 words)

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Conclusion

Dastan-e-Hormuz is a tale of ambition, struggle and adaptation. From its rise as a thriving trade centre to its capture by the Portuguese, its liberation by the Safavids

and its eventual decline, Hormuz reflects the broader currents of history in the Persian Gulf.

The period between the 16th and 18th centuries was marked by intense competition among empires, evolving trade networks and shifting alliances. Military and diplomatic worked hand in hand, shaping the destiny of the region.

Ultimately, Hormuz stands as a reminder that geography and strategy are deeply intertwined. Its story is not just about the past but also about the enduring importance of the Persian Gulf in global affairs.

Practice Question for Prelims :

Q. Why was Hormuz considered strategically important during the 16th–18th centuries ?

(A) It controlled the Silk Route in Central Asia

(B) It controlled access to the Persian Gulf maritime trade routes

(C) It was the capital of the Ottoman Empire

(D) It produced the largest amount of silk in Asia

Ans. (B)

Practice Question for Mains

Q. "The history of Hormuz reflects the struggle for control over trade routes in the Indian Ocean."

Critically Examine. (250 words)

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Drug Pricing, Patent Systems and Access to Healthcare

—Deepanita Mishra

The question of drug pricing, pharmaceutical patents and access to healthcare has become one of the most significant governance and public policy challenges in the contemporary world. Rapid advancements in medical science have produced revolutionary treatments for cancer, diabetes, rare diseases and infectious illnesses. However, the benefits of these innovations often remain inaccessible to millions because of prohibitively high prices of drugs.

For a developing country like India, the issue is particularly important because healthcare expenditure is still largely borne by households through Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE). Rising medicine prices can push vulnerable families into poverty, making healthcare not merely an economic issue but also a matter of social justice, constitutional rights and human dignity.

The debate essentially revolves around a difficult policy balance :

- Protecting innovation and intellectual property rights.
- Ensuring affordable access to life-saving medicines.
- Promoting public welfare without discouraging research and development.

This balance has once again come under international scrutiny in 2026 due to India's strong generic pharmaceutical policies and its continued emphasis on affordable healthcare.

Why Drug Pricing Matters ?

Medicines constitute a major share of healthcare expenditure in India. As per the CMIE's consumer Pyramid Household Survey, medicines accounted for 42.3% of all expenditure on health. While technological progress has improved treatment outcomes, the commercialization of healthcare has also increased medicine costs.

Drug prices are determined by several factors : Research and Development (R&D) expenditure; patent protection and market exclusivity; manufacturing and marketing costs; regulatory approvals; import dependence for raw materials; and competition from generic medicines.

Modern biologics, cancer therapies, gene-based treatments and rare disease drugs often cost several lakhs annually, making them unaffordable for average citizens.

Thus, affordable medicine pricing becomes essential for achieving :

- Universal Health Coverage (UHC)
- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-3
- Health equity and social inclusion

Pharmaceutical Patents : Purpose and Concerns

A patent grants exclusive rights to an inventor to manufacture and sell an invention for a limited duration, usually 20 years, from the date of filing the application.

In pharmaceuticals, patents are intended to reward innovation, encourage investment in risky research and promote technological advancement.

Pharmaceutical companies argue that drug discovery involves enormous financial risks and lengthy clinical trials. Patent protection allows innovators to recover investments and fund future research.

However, critics argue that patents may create monopolies that lead to excessive pricing and restricted access to essential medicines.

Evolution of India's Patent Regime

Patent Act, 1970 : Public Health-Oriented Model : India initially adopted a process patent regime, allowing domestic firms to manu-

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facture cheaper generic versions using alternative production processes. It abolished product patents protection and allowed patents only for the process of manufacturing a drug.

Impact of the 1970 Patent Regime

- Growth of India's generic pharmaceutical industry.
- Reduction in medicine prices.
- Expansion of domestic drug manufacturing.
- Affordable medicines for developing countries.

India emerged as the 'Pharmacy of the Global South' by supplying affordable generic medicines to Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

TRIPS Agreement and the Shift in Patent Policy

With the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the TRIPS Agreement (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) standardized intellectual property rules globally.

India amended its patent laws in 2005 to comply with TRIPS obligations and introduced product patents in pharmaceuticals.

Advantages of TRIPS

- Encouraged innovation and investment.
- Improved intellectual property protection.
- Enhanced global trade integration.

Criticisms of TRIPS

- Increased medicine prices.
- Reduced availability of low-cost generics.

- Strengthened monopoly powers of multinational corporations.
- Created barriers for poor countries during health emergencies.

The HIV/AIDS crisis and later the COVID-19 pandemic exposed how rigid patent systems can obstruct timely access to affordable medicines.

India's Balanced Patent Framework

India has attempted to balance innovation with public health through several legal safeguards.

Section 3(d) : Preventing 'Evergreening' : One of the most debated provisions of India's patent law is Section 3(d) of the Patents Act. It prevents pharmaceutical companies from obtaining patents for minor modifications of existing medicines unless they demonstrate significant enhancement in therapeutic efficacy.

Novartis Judgement (2013) : The Supreme Court denied patent protection to a modified cancer drug by Novartis, reinforcing India's commitment to affordable healthcare and generic competition. It is complaint with the WTO's TRIPS Agreement.

This judgement became globally significant in balancing :

- Intellectual property rights
- Public health concerns
- Affordable access to medicines

Compulsory Licensing : Public Interest over Monopoly

Compulsory Licensing allows governments to authorize production of patented medicines without the consent of the patent holder under special conditions. It is complaint with the WTO's TRIPS Agreement.

Grounds for Compulsory Licensing

- Public health emergencies
- Unaffordable medicine prices
- Insufficient supply of essential drugs.

India's use of compulsory licensing demonstrates the principle that public welfare can override monopoly rights when necessary.

Section 3(d) of the Indian Patents Act, 1970, was introduced by the Patents (Amendment) Act, 2005. It states that a mere discovery of a new form of a known substance which does not result in the enhancement of the known efficacy of that substance or the mere discovery of any new property or new use for a known substance or of the mere use of a known process, machine or apparatus is not patentable unless such known process results in a new product or employs at least one new reactant. It aims to prevent companies from extending patent terms (evergreening) on existing drugs by making minor, non-therapeutic modifications.

Section 84 of the Patents Act, 1970, deals with the Compulsory licenses. It states that at any time after the expiration of three years from the date of the grant of patent, any person interested may make an application for grant of compulsory licence on patent on any of the following grounds, namely :

- (a) that the reasonable requirements of the public with respect to the patented invention have not been satisfied, or
- (b) that the patented invention is not available to the public at a reasonably affordable price, or
- (c) that the patented invention is not worked in the territory of India.

Generic Medicines and Expanding Healthcare Access

Generic medicines are therapeutically equivalent versions of branded drugs sold at significantly lower prices. India is one of the world's largest generic medicine producers. They are crucial for expanding healthcare access in India by offering therapeutically equivalent, high-quality alternatives at substantially lower prices. Generics address the high out-of-pocket expenditure that frequently prevents low-income populations from seeking treatment.

Recent Developments in 2026

Generic Ozempic Launch : The expiry of patents for major anti-diabetic and weight-loss drugs has accelerated generic competition. For example, the patent expiry of popular weight-loss and diabetes drugs like Ozempic, Indian companies have launched affordable generic versions at 70-90% lower prices.

Similarly, patent expiry of drugs like Vildagliptin (oral anti-diabetic medication) has resulted in price reductions of nearly 50% or more.

These developments highlight how generic competition can lower healthcare expenditure, increase medicine accessibility, and improve treatment continuity for chronic illnesses.

India on the USTR Priority Watch List (2026)

- As of May 2026, India continues to remain on the Priority Watch List of the Office of the United States Trade Representative due to concerns over India's pharmaceutical patent regime. The United States and multinational drug companies have raised objections regarding Section 3(d) of the Patents Act, compulsory licensing provisions, limited data exclusivity and India's strong support for generic medicines.
- The issue directly relates to the broader debate on drug pricing and access to healthcare, as stronger patent monopolies may increase medicine prices, while generic competition helps make life-saving drugs more affordable and accessible. Thus, the debate reflects the larger global tension between protecting innovation and ensuring affordable healthcare for all.

Judicial Support for Affordable Medicines

Indian courts have increasingly emphasized public interest in patent disputes.

A notable example in 2026 involved legal disputes concerning Roche's patented drug for Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). The Delhi High Court supported early generic entry, reinforcing the judiciary's inclination toward balancing patent rights with affordable healthcare needs.

This reflects the broader Indian legal philosophy that : "Healthcare access cannot be sacrificed entirely for commercial monopoly."

Drug Price Regulation in India

India regulates the prices of essential medicines through the

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) under the Drug Price Control Order (DPCO), 2013. Medicines included in the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) 2022 are subject to price ceilings to ensure affordability and wider healthcare access. Currently, price regulation covers more than 900 formulations, including medicines used for diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. An important provision under the DPCO is Paragraph 19, which empowers the government to cap prices of even non-scheduled drugs during extraordinary situations such as public health emergencies, shortages, or inflationary pressures. This provision became particularly significant during the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting the state's role in balancing public health needs with pharmaceutical market regulation.

Access to Healthcare : Challenges and the Way Forward

Access to affordable healthcare is closely linked with the Right to Life under Article 21, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and SDG-3. Despite being a global hub for generic medicines, India continues to face challenges such as high treatment costs, limited public health expenditure, regional healthcare disparities and dependence on API imports from China.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed inequalities in global healthcare access, including vaccine nationalism, patent-related barriers and supply-chain vulnerabilities. In this context, India and South Africa proposed a temporary TRIPS waiver at the WTO to improve access to COVID-related technologies and medicines.

India's strong generic pharmaceutical industry has played a crucial role in reducing medicine costs and improving healthcare accessibility. However, balancing pharmaceutical innovation with affordable access remains a major policy challenge. Strengthening public healthcare infrastructure, promoting generic medicines, expanding insurance coverage and ensuring transparent drug pricing are essential for achieving equitable healthcare access.

Conclusion

The issue of drug pricing, pharmaceutical patents and healthcare access lies at the intersection of economics, ethics, trade and constitutional governance. While innovation is indispensable for medical advancement, healthcare systems must ensure that life-saving medicines remain accessible and affordable.

India's approach reflects an attempt to maintain a careful balance between intellectual property rights and public health priorities. Legal safeguards such as Section 3(d), compulsory licensing, price regulation and support for generic medicines demonstrate a model that seeks to protect both innovation and social welfare.

As global healthcare challenges continue to evolve, the central question remains should medicines primarily serve markets, or humanity?

The answer to this question will shape the future of global healthcare governance and determine whether medical progress becomes an instrument of inclusion or inequality.

Practice Questions for Prelims :

Q.1. With reference to Section 3(d) of the Indian Patents Act, consider the following statements :

1. It aims to prevent evergreening of pharmaceutical patents.
2. It allows patents only when enhanced therapeutic efficacy is demonstrated.
3. It was prominently upheld in the Novartis judgement.

Which of the statements given above are correct ?

- (A) Only 1 and 2
- (B) Only 2 and 3
- (C) Only 1 and 3
- (D) All of the above

Ans. (D)

Q.2. Consider the following statements regarding compulsory licensing :

1. It allows production of patented drugs without the patent holder's consent under specific conditions.
2. It can be used during public health emergencies.
3. It is completely prohibited under the TRIPS Agreement.

Which of the statements given above are correct ?

- (A) Only 1 and 2
- (B) Only 2 and 3
- (C) Only 1
- (D) All of the above

Ans. (A)

Practice Question for Mains

Q. "India's pharmaceutical patent regime reflects an attempt to balance intellectual property protection with the constitutional goal of ensuring affordable healthcare." Critically examine in the context of recent debates on drug pricing, generic medicines and global trade pressures. (250 words)

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Conclusion

The foundation of any democratic system's strength lies in a fair electoral system and public trust. Public trust brings political parties closer to power. There are hundreds of political parties at both the national and regional levels. However, it would be premature to say that India is fully moving toward a dominant-party system. The greatest strength of Indian democracy lies in its diversity and voter awareness. This is why no dominance is permanent. If the opposition manages to reorganize itself and effectively attract public support, it can also come to power. Although, there are clear signs of a dominant-party system in Indian politics, the country's social diversity, federal structure and the significant role of regional parties prevent it from becoming fully established. Furthermore, an independent media, an active judiciary and the impartiality of the Election Commission also play crucial roles in maintaining democratic balance. While a single political party may dominate for a period, democratic competition in India has always remained alive. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to understand India as a 'competitive democracy with dominant parties' rather than a pure dominant-party system.

Practice Questions for Mains

Q.1. What is a dominant-party system ? Explain its features in the Indian context. (250 words)

Q.2. "Electoral democracy in India is strong, but political competition is becoming limited." Critically Analyse. (250 words)

PDurpan

Super El-Nino and the Era of Heatwaves : Is the Planet Ready for This Climate Emergency ?

—Bipra Biswambhara

In April 2026, 95 of the world's hottest cities were located in India, according to real-time global temperature rankings. These cities were spread across the country and included not only major urban centres but also smaller towns illustrating severity and the geographical spread of the heatwaves. Unlike localized heat events, these heatwaves extended across multiple states, causing a large number of cities to record extreme temperatures. Such severe heatwave conditions, combined with the incoming Super El Niño, could create weather patterns that are unbearably hot and oppressive for large sections of the population.

What is an El Nino ?

El Nino, also known as El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO), is a climatic phenomenon that takes place in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, characterized by warming and low-pressure conditions in the eastern and central part of the Pacific Ocean. This climatic phenomenon typically occurs every two to seven years and tends to last somewhere between 9 to 12 months. In contrast, La Nina is a climatic phenomenon wherein sea surface temperatures remain below average in the eastern and central Pacific Ocean and lead to ocean surface cooling. Neutral conditions exist when neither El Nino nor La Nina are present, and sea surface temperatures remain average.

What is a Super El-Nino ?

A Super El Nino is a term used to denote a very strong El Nino where the warming of sea surface temperatures exceeds 2°C, greater than what is observed during normal El Ninos. The 2026 Super El Nino could trigger massive changes in the climatic and atmospheric conditions of the planet, a phenomenon descri-

bed by scientists as Climate Regime Shifts (CRS). CRS are abrupt and persistent transitions between stable states in the climate system.

The El Nino cycle tends to create droughts and heat across Australia, Southern and Central Africa, in India and other parts of South America. Conversely, it leads to heavy precipitation in the southern parts of the United States of America, parts of the Middle East and South-Central Asia, and suppresses the development of hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean while leading to an increased formation of Typhoons in the Pacific Ocean.

The stronger an El Nino is, the higher will be the intensity of the weather events surrounding it. Consequently, a Super El Nino could aggravate land and marine heat waves, cause droughts, wildfires in some regions and extreme rainfalls, storms and floods in others. A super El Nino in 2015 brought severe drought in Ethiopia, water supply shortages across the United States and increased incidence of hurricanes in the Central and North Pacific Ocean.

The coming super El Nino event, combined with global warming and climate change, could temporarily breach the 1.5°C average temperature rise over pre-industrial levels, which scientists have warned comes with a host of calamitous consequences.

According to the World Meteorological Organization, the year 2025 was the third warmest year on record and 2027 is likely to be the warmest year ever recorded. Scientists have warned that this could be the strongest El Nino event so far for the century, comparable to the El Nino event of 1998.

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As per the study in Nature Communications, since the 1950s, only three very strong El Ninos have been recorded : 1982-1983, 1997-1998, and the latest being in 2015-2016. The last super El Nino in 2015-2016 led to widespread coral bleaching across the world's oceans and triggered large-scale droughts in many regions. While regular El Nino events are known to generate localized changes in sea surface temperatures and surface air temperatures, super El Nino events produce effects that are widespread and global in nature, inducing climate regime shifts throughout the world. According to a report by Zero Carbon Analytics, the El Nino of 2026 is going to be the strongest one to have been observed over the last 140 years.

Oceans absorb and store a significant portion of the planet's excess heat, and El Nino events release part of this accumulated heat into the atmosphere. The released heat is carried across the planet through trade winds and planetary winds. Now, with global warming and climate change in effect, new global temperature records in 2027 are expected to surpass all previous records and 2027 is set to become the hottest year ever.

The likelihood of a Super El Nino was further amplified by a rare triplet cyclone pattern in the Pacific Ocean, which generated strong bursts of wind and pushed unusually warm water beneath the ocean surface. In some regions, sea temperatures reportedly rose nearly 7°C above average, strengthening the conditions necessary for a powerful El Nino event.

What are the Consequences of a Super El Nino Event ?

As temperatures surpass normal average temperatures, productivity drops significantly with each degree of increase in temperature. High humidity overwhelms the human body, leading to heat stress and heat strokes. Persistent high night-time temperature leads to sleep disturbance, fatigue, and reduced work capacity, affecting health, immunity and cognitive functions over time.

Crop disruptions due to droughts and floods also affect nutrition and food security, especially among the vulnerable populations. Informal workers like street vendors, drivers, and construction workers remain especially vulnerable, as they are exposed to this heat for the longest durations. At the same time, increased cooling needs could lead to a surge in the demand for electricity and increased water scarcity due to droughts.

Droughts in Africa and parts of Asia could trigger humanitarian crises, increasing the number of people at the risk of acute food insecurity and hunger. This could also lead to an increase in the ongoing geopolitical tensions, civil war for fertile land and resources and an increase in demand for energy and food prices, adding to inflationary pressures on less developed economies across the world.

Why India is Particularly Vulnerable ?

A Super El Nino of this scale in India could mean, prolonged heat waves, erratic rainfall, water scarcity in some regions while flooding in others. Such disruptions could have severe consequences for agriculture, public health, water security and the broader economy.

India has already seen prolonged spells of heat waves in 11 states in April 2026. The Indian Meteorological Department is expecting a weaker than usual monsoon this year on account of the Super El Nino event. Nearly 70% of India's annual rainfall occurs during the four monsoon months. A decline in the amount of rainfall could significantly affect water availability and lead to

crop failure. 60% of Indian farmers depend on the monsoon rains for the kharif crop cultivation. Agriculture, which contributes 18% of India's GDP, supports more than half of the country's population, and the monsoon season forms the backbone of this agricultural system.

A late and poor monsoon, along with changing snowfall trends in the Himalayas, could affect the flow of perennial rivers in the Indo-Gangetic Plains. At the same time, Tamil Nadu and coastal Andhra Pradesh may receive above normal rainfall and witness flooding during the retreating North East monsoon.

In India, heatwaves are projected to reduce GDP by nearly 2-5-4-5% by the end of the decade due to declining labour productivity, especially in the construction and agricultural sectors. It is also expected to cause a loss of 160 billion work hours annually. Widespread heat waves and droughts in India may trigger migration, especially from rural to urban areas and may put severe pressure on existing urban infrastructure, thereby exacerbating the urban heat island effect. This may create a vicious heat cycle.

Supply chain disruption, such as the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which is driving up fertilizer cost, could lead to inflation in food prices, further worsening the situation.

The strain on power grids could lead to industrial blackouts and create bottlenecks for supply-side logistics.

Initiatives Taken by the Government

State governments in India are adopting heat action plans, which are adaptation measures to protect communities from extreme heat. A good example of which is the Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan.

Heat vulnerability assessments are carried out and hotspot-based interventions are designed. Dynamic heat indices and region-specific thresholds are designed since a one-size-fits-all approach to providing impact-based heat forecast can lead to under-prediction.

The heat action plan also includes creation of cooling centres,

water distribution points, and emergency medical preparedness. India has also significantly improved its forecasting and early warning systems, including colour-coded alert systems such as yellow, orange and red, to ensure awareness of the severity of heat conditions. The National Disaster Management Authority has also issued national guidelines on heat wave management, and heat waves are now being treated as a disaster that require preparedness protocols and inter-agency coordination.

At the same time, India had launched a National Action Plan on Climate Change in 2008 with missions such as, Green India Mission, National Water Mission, Sustainable Habitat Mission and so on, that aim to improve climate resilience and conserve ecosystems. Simultaneously, India has also rapidly expanded its renewable energy capacity, especially solar power.

In the light of global warming and climate change, the effects of events such as super El Ninos and heatwaves have become intense. Therefore, attempts to mitigate the impacts of climate change and global warming are required to address the situation holistically. In this scenario, Mission LIFE, which stands for lifestyle for environment, becomes all the more important. The mission emphasizes behavioural change as part of climate action and promotes sustainable lifestyles and climate-conscious consumption patterns.

Are These Measures Enough ?

Critics believe that India's Heat-wave and El Nino Response Framework is over dependent on short-term emergency measures, such as heat action plans, which are more reactive in nature than proactive. It focuses on quick fixes such as school closures and adjusted working hours instead of long-term climate resilience planning. This is further illustrated by a lack of long-term urban planning, which has led to unplanned concretization, destruction of lakes and wetlands, and shrinking green cover. Lakes and urban forests form the essential blue-

green infrastructure which keeps the cities cool and liveable.

Poor coordination between agencies and fragmented institutional coordination also makes managing heat waves difficult. Concurrently, there is insufficient protection for the vulnerable populations such as construction workers, street vendors, migrant labourers, slum dwellers, beggars, etc, who form a large chunk of the informal workers and cannot avoid outdoor exposure.

During the making of heat action plans, government discourse often focusses on cities, neglecting rural India and agriculture, sidelining the fact of monsoon disruption. While India is employing technology such as AI mapping and satellite monitoring along with an early warning system, technology alone without structural reform cannot solve the issue, because heat monitoring is not the same as rectifying heat vulnerability.

What does India Need ?

Before we move on to discuss what the planet as a whole need, we need to discuss what can India do to endure such Super El Nino events and heat waves in the near future. India needs to build climate-resilient cities, and this can be done by, restoring its urban lakes and wetlands, expansion of urban forests, building cool roofs and the use of reflective materials in construction, enforcing climate-sensitive building designs in urban areas along with building of better public transportation systems to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

India needs to strengthen its water security by focussing on, rain-water harvesting, watershed management, micro irrigation systems, river rejuvenation and adapting sustainable agricultural water practices. Alongside, it has to protect Himalayan glaciers and river ecosystems to strengthen long-term water security.

Simultaneously, agriculture must become more climate-resilient through drought-resistant crop varieties, crop diversification, precision farming and expanded crop insurance coverage.

India also needs to develop a social security plan for the protection of informal workers that are in heat-exposed occupations such as, construction, transportation, sanitation, street vending and agriculture. The policies must incorporate social justice and labour rights perspectives when planning heat adaptation.

What does the Planet Need ?

To combat Super El Nino and heat waves, quick fixes are not the way forward. What the planet needs is a rapid transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy to allow a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and to slow down global warming and climate change. This can be achieved by sharing of greater responsibility by developed nations. This would include climate financing, technology transfer, and support for small island developing nations and vulnerable developing countries.

This has to be supplemented by investments in climate resilient infrastructure, including building of heat-resilient cities. Adaptation of climate-resistant agriculture and better food storage systems, such as cold storage and warehouse throughout the world is also of utmost importance to prevent food insecurity in the event of droughts and floods. Lifestyle changes, such as reduction of excessive consumerism, supplemented by reduction in deforestation, pollution and unsustainable urbanization, are also the need of the hour. Countries across the world have to achieve greater global cooperation through organizations such as the United Nations, World Meteorological Organization, and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to fight any potential future Super El Ninos. Such cooperation will only be possible when nations collectively recognize climate change not merely as an environmental concern, but also as a public health crisis, a food security challenge, and a geopolitical threat. Ultimately, the planet requires long-term climate governance centred on sustainability, ecological conservation, resilience and inclusive development rather than short-term emergency responses alone.

Practice Questions for Prelims :

Q.1. With reference to El Nino and Super El Nino, consider the following statements :

1. El Nino is characterized by unusually warm sea surface temperatures in the eastern and central equatorial Pacific Ocean.
2. Super El Nino events are generally associated with stronger and more widespread climatic disruptions than regular El Nino events.
3. El Nino increases hurricane activity in the Atlantic Ocean while suppressing typhoon formation in the Pacific Ocean.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) Only 1 and 2
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1
(D) All 1, 2 and 3

Ans. (A)

Q.2. Which of the following are possible consequences of a strong Super El Nino event in India ?

1. Weakening of the southwest monsoon
2. Increased frequency of heat-waves
3. Decline in agricultural productivity
4. Uniform rainfall distribution across all regions of India

Select the correct answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 and 4
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1, 2 and 3
(D) All 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans. (C)

Practice Question for Mains

Q. "Super El Nino events, when combined with global warming, can transform heatwaves from temporary climatic disturbances into long-term socio-economic and public health crises." Discuss the impact of Super El Nino-induced heatwaves on India. Also examine the adequacy of India's preparedness and suggest measures for building long-term climate resilience.

(250 words)

Nari Shakti : The New Paradigm of India's Reform Decade

—Ritu Chaturvedi

"There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved."

—Swami Vivekananda

India's development journey in the last decade has witnessed a major shift in the way women's empowerment is understood and implemented. Earlier, women-centric policies were largely viewed through the lens of welfare and protection. Today, the focus has moved towards women-led development, where women are not merely beneficiaries of government schemes but active agents of economic growth, social transformation and democratic governance.

This changing paradigm is reflected in India's policy architecture, ranging from financial inclusion and health security to political representation and entrepreneurship. The idea of Nari Shakti has now become central to India's aspiration of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Why it Matters ?

The issue of Nari Shakti is in focus due to the renewed debate around the implementation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. The Act was enacted as the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act in September 2023 and provides 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and Delhi Legislative Assembly, including sub-reservation for SC/ST women within the quota.

The Female Labour Force Participation Rate has risen to 41.7% as per PLFS 2023-24, reversing a long-standing decline, though it still remains below the global average of around 47%. Government initiatives such as PM Jan Dhan Yojana, MUDRA Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, Lakhpati Didi, Mission Shakti, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Self-Help Groups have also brought women's

empowerment to the centre of public policy discussions.

Positive Dimensions of Nari Shakti

1. Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment : One of the most important achievements of the last decade has been the expansion of women's access to formal banking. Between 2014 and 2025, more than 56 crore Jan Dhan accounts have been opened, with 56% held by women. This has enabled direct benefit transfer, savings, credit access and financial identity for millions of women.

Similarly, the MUDRA Yojana launched on April 8, 2015, has played a major role in promoting women entrepreneurship. Under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, cumulatively, more than 57.79 crore loans have been sanctioned, amounting to ₹ 40.07 lakh crore of disbursement. Two-thirds of the loans have been sanctioned to women entrepreneurs (as on April 8, 2026). Self-Help Groups have also emerged as a powerful instrument of grassroots economic mobilisation, involving nearly 10 crore women across the country.

The Lakhpati Didi initiative aims to enable 6 crore SHG women to earn a sustainable annual income of at least ₹ 1 lakh by March 2029. As on December 2025, more than 3 crore women are already Lakhpati Didis.

2. Health, Dignity and Safety : Schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana have provided LPG connections to over 10.5 crore households, reducing women's exposure to indoor air pollution and saving time spent on collecting firewood.

Schemes such as Ayushman Bharat, Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan, Janani Suraksha Yojana and Poshan Abhiyaan have improved access to healthcare, nutrition and maternal support.

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Similarly, Swachh Bharat Mission and Jal Jeevan Mission have enhanced women's dignity, safety and health by improving access to toilets and tap water.

3. Political Representation and Leadership : The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is a historic step towards increasing women's participation in law-making. Greater representation of women in legislative bodies can make policies more responsive to issues such as health, education, nutrition, safety, water, sanitation and livelihood.

Experience from Panchayati Raj Institutions shows that women representatives often focus more on community welfare and basic public services. If implemented effectively, the Act (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam) can create a strong leadership pipeline for women from local bodies to state and national politics.

4. Shift from Welfare to Women-Led Development : The biggest reform lies in the change of mindset. Women are no longer seen only as recipients of state support. They are increasingly recognised as entrepreneurs, innovators, farmers, professionals, scientists, political leaders and decision-makers. India's G20 Presidency in 2023 adopted 'Women-Led Development' as one of the core theme, giving the idea both domestic and global recognition.

India's high proportion of women in STEM education also provides a strong base for future leadership in technology, research, healthcare, defence, space and governance. India has around 43% women among STEM graduates, one

of the highest proportions globally. However, women hold less than 20% of scientists and faculty staff posts in research institutions and higher education in India, showing the challenge of the 'leaky pipeline'.

Negative Dimensions and Challenges

1. Last-Mile Delivery Gaps : Despite several schemes, many eligible women still remain outside the system due to lack of awareness, poor local capacity, documentation problems and social barriers. The challenge is no longer only policy creation but policy penetration. India must move from scheme announcement to scheme saturation, ensuring that every eligible woman receives the intended benefit.

2. Low Workforce Participation and Informal Employment : Although, female labour force participation has improved, it remains below the global average. A large number of women continue to work in the informal sector without social security, maternity benefits, equal wages, or legal protection. The gender pay gap, lack of safe transport, limited childcare facilities, and family responsibilities continue to restrict women's economic participation.

3. Unpaid Care Burden : Women perform a major share of unpaid domestic and care work. Cooking, childcare, elder care, water collection, and household responsibilities reduce their time for education, skill development, employment and leadership roles.

Without investment in care infrastructure such as crèches, elder-care support, flexible work systems, and shared household responsibility, women's empowerment will remain incomplete.

4. Proxy Representation and Tokenism : Political reservation alone does not guarantee real empowerment. At the local level, the problem of 'Sarpanch Pati' shows that elected women representatives are sometimes controlled by male relatives. Therefore, political representation must be supported by training, legal awareness, administrative capacity, mentorship and institutional protection.

5. Digital and Social Divide : Digital delivery of welfare schemes can exclude women who lack mobile phones, internet access, digital literacy, or independent control over technology. Rural women, poor women, SC/ST women, minority women, differently-abled women and women in conflict-affected areas face multiple layers of disadvantage. A one-size-fits-all approach may not work unless policies are inter-sectional and locally sensitive.

Way Forward

India must now focus on converting access into authority and participation into leadership, which can be achieved through :

- First, women-centric schemes should be simplified, converged and made easier to access.
- Second, monitoring should shift from output indicators such as number of accounts or loans to outcome indicators such as income growth, health improvement, decision-making power and asset ownership.
- Third, women representatives must be given structured training in governance, budgeting, law-making, digital tools and public administration.
- Fourth, investment in safety infrastructure, public transport, street lighting, workplace safety, and helplines must be strengthened.
- Fifth, women's digital inclusion must become a priority through mobile ownership, internet access, cyber safety and digital literacy. Finally, care work must be recognised as an economic issue and not merely a household responsibility.

Conclusion

Nari Shakti represents the new paradigm of India's reform decade. It marks a shift from welfare to empowerment, from access to leadership and from symbolic participation to institutional authority.

India has already built a strong foundation through financial inclusion, health support, sanitation, housing, education, entrepreneur-

ship, and political reform. However, the next phase must focus on effective implementation, last-mile delivery, outcome-based governance and genuine leadership opportunities.

If India succeeds in enabling women to lead in politics, economy, science, governance and society, it will not only empower half of its population but also redefine its development trajectory. Nari Shakti is therefore not a peripheral social agenda; it is central to the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Practice Question for Prelims :

Q. With reference to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, consider the following statements :

1. It provides 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and Delhi Legislative Assembly.
2. It was enacted as the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023.
3. It provides reservation for women in the Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) Only 1 and 2
- (B) Only 2 and 3
- (C) Only 1 and 3
- (D) All of the above

Ans. (B)

Practice Question for Mains

Q. "Nari Shakti marks a shift from women's welfare to women-led development in India." Discuss the role of recent policy initiatives in this transformation and examine the challenges in ensuring real empowerment beyond representation.

(250 words)

Pratyan

Corrigendum

In May 2026 edition of the Pratiyogita Darpan English magazine, the word 'Passive' must be read as 'Positive' on page 10, para 2, line 1 of the sub-heading 'Understanding Euthanasia' in the topic 'Passive Euthanasia,' which was misspelled due to typographical error.



Important Concepts in News

GEOGRAPHY

Rainbow Clouds

Reason for Discussion

Recently, in May 2026, Rainbow Clouds, scientifically known as 'Cloud Iridescence', was witnessed in Bogor in Indonesia.

Rainbow Clouds : Genesis

- Also known as cloud iridescence or irisation, Rainbow clouds usually happens in altocumulus, cirrocumulus, lenticular and cirrus clouds.
- It occurs when sunlight is diffracted by extremely small water droplets or tiny ice-crystals suspended in clouds. The clouds need to be thin enough for sunlight to pass through.
- The diffraction takes place when light bends and spreads after encountering particles similar in size to the wavelength of visible light.
- The process separates sunlight into multiple colours, creating the rainbow-like patterns visible across the clouds.
- In Indonesia, meteorologists explained that the 'rainbow cloud' was linked to a towering cumulus cloud (a tall, puffy cloud type) partly blocking the view, which made the colours look like a glowing, incomplete rainbow.

Favourable Factors

Cloud iridescence are relatively rare phenomenon. They occur when :

- Cloud is thin.
- Unusually small cloud particles.
- Clouds have lots of water droplets or ice crystals of about the same size.
- Sun rays must encounter few droplets at a time.
- Semi-transparent clouds or clouds that are just forming are the ones most likely to have iridescence.
- Position of the Sun and the observer's viewing angle are extremely important.

Key Differences Between Rainbow Cloud and Rainbow

- Rainbow clouds are result of diffraction of sunlight. They are formed when sunlight bends around tiny ice crystals or water droplets of uniform size. Rainbows are result of refraction and reflection of sunlight. They are formed when light passes through larger raindrops.
- Rainbow clouds appear very close to the Sun, whereas, Rainbows appear opposite to the Sun. Rainbow clouds are usually found within thin, high-altitude clouds. Rainbows occur when usually the Sun is low and rainfall is taking place.

- As compared to Rainbow clouds, rainbows last much longer.

Practice Question for Prelims

Q. Choose the incorrect statement :

- (A) Rainbow clouds usually happens in lower clouds.
- (B) Rainbow clouds are result of diffraction of sunlight.
- (C) Tiny ice crystals or water droplets favours the formation of rainbow clouds.
- (D) Rainbows last longer than rainbow clouds.

Ans. (A)

Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation

Reason for Discussion

New research models indicates that the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) could weaken by up to 59% by 2100, compared to the pre-industrial level.

What is AMOC ?

- The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) is a vast system of ocean currents that helps to distribute heat around the world.
- Primarily located in the Atlantic Ocean, it spans from the tropical regions to the freezing Arctic waters in Greenland.
- AMOC keeps Europe warm by transporting warm water from the tropical region to northward and cold water back southwards.
- It is a critical part of Earth's climate system. It helps regulate temperatures, weather patterns and sea-level, especially in the North Atlantic Region.

How AMOC is Formed ?

- Warm water in the Atlantic, moving from South to North, cools and become denser as it reaches Arctic. It sinks into the deep ocean. This cold-water drifts towards south as a deep-water current.
- These sinking pulls surface waters toward northern Europe from the east coast of the Americas and further south, powering a massive global conveyor belt of water that extends all the way down to the southern tip of Africa.

Why AMOC is Weakening ?

- AMOC is under threat from human-induced climate change such as warming ocean in the North, melting ice and increased rainfall which disturbs the temperature and salt balance of the North Atlantic.
- Some parts of the Atlantic are becoming less dense, meaning the water does not sink as readily, due to rising sea surface temperatures. AMOC is also being disrupted due to melting of the Greenland icesheet, which releases fresh water, lowering the salinity and making the water less inclined to sink.

- An AMOC shutdown, at the end of the last ice age, around 12,000 years ago, dumped huge amounts of fresh water into the northern ocean, plunging Europe back into ice-age-like conditions.

Impact of Weakening of AMOC

- A weaker AMOC can shift weather patterns, potentially leading to more extreme storms, changes in rainfall or winter patterns in some regions.
- It can also influence sea-level rise along coastlines, affecting communities and infrastructure.
- Weakening of AMOC may negatively impact winters in Europe, hurricane activity and rainfall patterns.

Practice Question for Mains

Q. Examine the impact of weakening of Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) on regional and global climate. Explain the factors which contribute to weakening of AMOC.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Fermented Organic Manure

Reason for Discussion

Recently, the Indian Biogas Association (IBA) has proposed 10% mandatory blending of fermented organic manure with chemical fertilizers by 2030, which has potential to save US\$2 billion in imports annually.

Fermented Organic Manure is

- Produced through the controlled biological fermentation which break downs the organic matter and releases beneficial microorganisms and rich nutrients.
- FOM are often key byproduct of biogas or Compressed Biogas (CBG) plants.
- They function as a natural, slow-release fertilizer that can be applied in solid, liquid, or phosphate-enriched forms.

Key Benefits of FOM

- Improve structure, aeration and water retention capacity of soil.
- It breaks down complex organic matter into simple, bioavailable nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (NPK). It improves the crop yield.
- Helps in robust root development which makes plant more resistant to pests and diseases.
- For India, IBA has proposed that inclusion of organic carbon as a nutrient parameter under the nutrient-based subsidy is expected to enable balanced fertilization, ensure fair subsidy mechanisms for fermented organic manure and reduce excessive dependence on chemical fertilizers.
- It will help in restoring India's declining soil health. Positioning FOM as a mainstream agricultural input is essential to achieving long-term soil regeneration and climate resilience.

Practice Question for Prelims

Q. Which of the following is/are benefits of Fermented Organic Farming ?

- (A) Improved water retention capacity of soil
- (B) Robust root development
- (C) Improvement in crop yield
- (D) All of the above

Ans. (D)

Cyborg Botany

Reason for Discussion

Researchers at several universities such as Linköping University in Sweden and MIT in USA are exploring the emerging field of Cyborg Botany, in which plants are transformed into living circuit boards.

Cyborg Botany : Key Highlights

- Cyborg plants are hybrid systems that integrate living plants with electronic components.
- The word 'cyborg' is derived from 'cybernetic organism', which in science fiction is a being with both biological and artificial (mechanical or electronic) components.
- Cyborg Botany integrates the principles of biology, engineering and material sciences.
- It is also referred as cyborgology.

How it Works ?

- Plants utilizes complex biochemical signals to constantly respond to their environment. Cyborg Botany aims to tap these signals at the source.
- Scientists explored embedding nanowires and electronic transistors directly into plant cell walls, where they can function as biosensors, picking up biochemical changes as they happen.
- Certain conductive polymers such as PEDOT, a biodegradable, electrically conductive material, can act as living wires within plant tissue, carrying signals from the plant's cells to an external device.
- It results into plant functioning as a living circuit board, sensing its own condition and transmitting that data in real time to a computer or mobile device.

Present Research

- Researchers at Linköping University in Sweden have pioneered work on growing polymer circuits inside plants.
- Scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have developed a bio-hybrid robot named Elowan, in which a plant's own electrical signals 'drive' it towards a spot with more light.

Benefits of Cyborg Botany

- The invisible biochemical process in plants produces visible symptoms which are often too late. Being able to detect these changes early is important.
- Detecting a moisture deficit or a disease signal days or weeks before the physical symptoms appear, through sensors embedded in a plant can ensure timely intervention to protect crops.

- It will help in improving yields and reduce waste, and the overuse of agrochemicals.
- It helps in environmental monitoring by detecting pollutants or ecological changes in soil and water.
- Researchers are also exploring the use of plants as biological energy sources, i.e., as 'living generators' that could in theory power the very sensors embedded within them.

Practice Question for Mains

Q. What is Cyborg Botany? Explain its functioning and its environmental benefits.

Underground Coal Gasification

Reason for Discussion

As on 28th April, 2026, the Union Ministry of Coal executed Coal Mine/Block Production and Development Agreements (CMDPAs) with successful bidders for four coal mines—marking the first-ever tranche of commercial coal mines in India to carry embedded provisions for Underground Coal Gasification (UCG).

Underground Coal Gasification : Key Highlights

- Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) refers to the *in-situ* gasification of coal.
- It is accomplished by first establishing two vertical boreholes—the injection well and the production well— which are horizontally linked within the coal seam using specialized techniques such as directional drilling.
- UCG converts coal into synthetic gas *in situ*, directly within the seam, without the need for conventional mining. The produced syngas—comprising hydrogen, carbon monoxide, methane and carbon dioxide—can be brought to surface for power generation, chemical feedstock or hydrogen production.
- UCG can unlock energy from deep, thin, or otherwise unworkable coal seams that traditional extraction methods cannot economically access.

Advantages :

- UCG eliminates the need of mining and transportation. It results in savings, especially for coals that contain a large fraction of ash.
- It reduces environmental impacts by significantly reducing the production of NO_x and SO_x, associated with surface coal processes.
- It enables the utilization of deep and thin coal seams, which are not accessible for mining and could provide an efficient carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) possibility.

Disadvantages :

- UCG is fairly capital intensive. It has been successfully practiced at only a few world-wide locations.
- The environmental impacts on aquifers situated close to UCG operation and the potential of surface subsidence are some of the other problems associated with UCG.
- Other key challenges include cavity growth control, subsurface permeability management and minimising contamination of groundwater.

Benefits of UCG in India

- The syngas produced through UCG can serve as a domestic feedstock for the manufacture of urea and ammonia, significantly reducing India's dependence on imported fertilisers and strengthening food security.
- In the chemicals and petrochemicals sector, UCG syngas can replace imported natural gas and naphtha as a base feedstock, enabling domestic production of methanol, dimethyl ether (DME) and synthetic fuels.
- Embracing frontier technologies like UCG is intended to position India at the forefront of the global energy landscape.

Practice Question for Prelims

Q. How many of the following statements are incorrect ?

- Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) produces syngas *ex-situ*.
- It significantly reduces the production of NO_x and SO_x.
- It is economical and many countries have started the UCG project.

Choose the correct option :

- (A) Only one (B) Only two
(B) Only three (C) None of these

Ans. (A)

ECONOMY

Hybrid Annuity Model

Reason for Discussion

As on April 29, 2026, the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has introduced stricter disqualification norms for Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) projects to prevent 'catastrophic failures' caused by construction defects.

Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) is

- HAM is a type of PPP model in India, used mainly for large-scale infrastructure and public welfare projects, such as highways, port terminals, sewage treatment plants, etc.
- HAM combines the features of BOT Annuity model and Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) model.
- Under HAM, the government pay 40% of the project cost during construction and the balance 60% as annuity payments over the operations period.

Key Features :

- It reduces the initial financial burden of private sector as government contributes 40% of the project cost during construction.
- The private sector is shielded from the uncertain traffic revenue as toll collection responsibility remains with the government.
- HAM ensures timely completion and better project management as the responsibility of construction, operation and maintenance lies with the private sector.
- Payments to private sector is linked to project milestones and standards of maintenance, incentivizing quality work.

MoRTH New Norms for HAM

- It has introduced stricter disqualification norms for Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM) projects to prevent 'catastrophic failures' caused by construction defects.
- The bidder with a record of catastrophic failure of any highway structure due to construction defects within the past two years from the bid due date may face disqualification in HAM project tenders. This clause applies to both ongoing and completed projects.
- During the evaluation criteria, minus 30 marks is allocated against Catastrophic Failure, which would have impacted project and quality substantially, leads to loss of lives and lasting damage to road structure requiring re-construction.

According to MoRTH, the catastrophic failures are defined as collapse of any bridge or flyover or Underpass, embankment or pavement failure causing loss of serviceability of pavement, collapse of launching girder or staging leading to loss of life during construction period, collapse inside of the tunnel or human beings trapped for more than 72 hours during construction and failure of Pavement Quality Concrete (PQC).

Practice Question for Mains

Q. What do you understand by Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM)? How it minimizes the risk exposure of private sector in infrastructure projects in India?

- It is crafted entirely from natural materials like wild cane, bamboo and wood.
- Ru-Soam reflects a sophisticated understanding of ecological balance and structural resilience.
- The resilience of these structures was notably demonstrated during the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) of October 2023, when several cane bridges withstood the impact of the event and continued to provide critical connectivity to remote areas.

Structural Features

- Soamgyang, which are two parallel canes, are tied to trees on the two ends. It ensures that the bridge remains suspended.
- A Ru-Soam consists of swinging cane loops, which are known as 'ahool.'
- The deck of the bridge is made by soamgur or bamboos.

Practice Question for Prelims

Q. Which of the following statements is correct about Ru-Soam bridges?

- (A) It is practiced by the Lepcha community in Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve.
- (B) It reflects a sophisticated understanding of ecological balance and structural resilience.
- (C) It is crafted entirely from the natural materials.
- (D) All of the above

Ans. (D)

MISCELLANEOUS

Ru-Soam Bridges

Reason for Discussion

Recently, UNESCO and the Government of Sikkim have partnered to document the engineering practices of Ru-Soam, in the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve in the state. The initiative aims to explore how these time-tested practices can inform contemporary approaches to climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction.



Key Highlights :

- Ru-Soam, also known as the Lepcha Traditional Cane Bridge, is a living symbol of indigenous engineering and heritage.
- Ru-Soam bridge-making tradition is still practiced by Lepcha community in the Dzongu Tribal Reserve within the Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve.

UPKAR'S

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Compendium

Indian Polity and Constitution

- ◆ Under which type of closure motion, only important clauses are taken up for debate and voting, skipping intervening clauses ?
—Kangaroo Closure
- ◆ The objective of the 'cut motion' in the Parliament is
—Proposal to reduce expenditure in budget
- ◆ Which constitutional amendment removed the nomination of members from the Anglo-Indian community to the Lok Sabha (Parliament) and State Legislative Assemblies ?
—The Constitution (One Hundred and Fourth Amendment) Act, 2019
- ◆ The powers, privileges and immunities of Parliament, its members and committees are provided under which article of the Constitution ?
—Article 105
- ◆ The size of the council of ministers have been restricted to 15% of membership of the Lok Sabha by
—The Constitution (Ninety-first Amendment) Act, 2003
- ◆ Article 243J of the Constitution empowers state legislature to provide for
—Maintenance and auditing of accounts by Panchayats
- ◆ Under Article 192, the Governor shall obtain the opinion of which constitutional body before taking decision on disqualification of a state legislature member under Article 191(1) ?
—Election Commission
- ◆ A High Court Judge may resign his office by writing under his hand addressed to the
—President
- ◆ The Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution is currently enforceable in how many states ?
—10 states
- ◆ Protection against double jeopardy is provided under which article of the Constitution ?
—Article 20 (2)

Indian National Movement

- ◆ Shimla was officially declared the summer capital of India in
—1864
- ◆ Barnaparichay or Bornoporichoy is a Bengali primer written by
—Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar
- ◆ 'Do or Die' slogan is associated with which movement during India's freedom struggle ?
—Quit India Movement

- ◆ What is the significance of 16th August, 1946 in India's modern history ?
—Direct Action Day called by the Muslim League
- ◆ Haji Shariatullah was the leader of which movement in East Bengal ?
—Farazi Movement
- ◆ In which year, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar established the Independent Labour Party ?
—1936
- ◆ The main objective of the Bombay Plan (1944-45) was
—Doubling per-capita income in 15 years
- ◆ The Government of India Act, 1935 was termed as 'New Charter of Bondage' by
—Jawahar Lal Nehru
- ◆ The Swadeshi Sevak Home was established by G.D. Kumar on the lines of the India House in London in
—Vancouver, Canada
- ◆ The first Famine Commission of India established during the period of Lord Lytton was chaired by
—Sir Richard Strachey

History and Culture of India

- ◆ Vakataka's only ruler to take the title of 'Samrat' and primarily mentioned in Vishnu Purana and Vayu Purana is
—Pravarasena I
- ◆ 'Harshacharita', which is considered as the first historical biography in Sanskrit, was written by
—Banabhatta
- ◆ Muhammad Ali Bin Abu Bakr Kufi translated Arabic texts into Persian, which is known as
—Chach Nama
- ◆ The Shishunaga dynasty in Magadha was succeeded by
—Nanda Dynasty
- ◆ In 1299 Malik Kafur was captured by Nusrat Khan during the invasion of
—Gujarat
- ◆ The core philosophy of the Ajeevika sect was
—Niyati
- ◆ According to Amarkosha, which type of land has been mentioned as Shadvala ?
—Grassland
- ◆ The Kailasanathar Temple in Kanchipuram, built in Dravidian style, is associated with which Pallava ruler ?
—Narasimhavarman II
- ◆ The famous dialogue between Sage Yagnavalkya and Gargi is mentioned in
—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad
- ◆ Karpuramanjari is a famous Prakrit play written by
—Rajashekhara

Economic Affairs of India

- ◆ What was India's Foreign Exchange Reserves at the week ending May 1, 2026 ?
—US\$ 690 Billion

- ◆ Recently, RBI cancelled the license of which payments bank ? —Paytm Payments Bank Limited
- ◆ Since the introduction of the auction regime in 2015, how, many mineral blocks have been auctioned (as on May 7, 2025) ? —101
- ◆ What is the financial outlay of recently approved Mission for Cotton Productivity ? —₹ 5,600 crore
- ◆ Under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme 5.0, MSMEs are provided —100% credit guarantee
- ◆ The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana was launched in which year ? —2000
- ◆ The Corporate National Pension Scheme is regulated by —PFRDA
- ◆ Name the contributory pension scheme, designed specifically for minors —NPS Vatsalya
- ◆ Between January 2025 and December 2025, the unincorporated non-agricultural sector employed about —12.81 crore workers
- ◆ Recently, the Department of Financial Services launched Viability Plan 2.0 for —Regional Rural Banks (RRB)

Geography (India and the World)

- ◆ Rift valleys and hydro-thermal vents are the result of —Divergent plate boundaries
- ◆ In which type of soil, A horizon rest directly above the C horizon —Azonal Soils
- ◆ Which region in Odisha is renowned for its paddy cultivation on highland slopes ? —Koraput
- ◆ The world's largest single uranium deposit is located at the —Olympic Dam Mine in South Australia
- ◆ The atmosphere is mainly heated by —Long-wave terrestrial radiation
- ◆ At Equator, the thickness of atmosphere is approximately —18 km
- ◆ Countries such as Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire), Ghana and Indonesia are famous producers of —Cocoa
- ◆ Area sown more than once in the same year is counted only once under the —Net Sown Area
- ◆ The compass direction of a line formed by the intersection of a planar geological feature (like a fault or a rock bed) with a horizontal plane is known as —Strike
- ◆ As per the Continental Drift Theory, the super-continent that existed before the continents drifted apart was called —Pangaea

Science & Technology

- ◆ India's first indigenous glide weapon system that converts unguided warheads into precision-guided weapons is known as —Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA)
- ◆ LISP, RUST are examples of which language ? —AI language

- ◆ Who coined the term 'Artificial Intelligence' ? —John McCarthy
- ◆ The address of a unique resource on the internet is known as —Uniform Resource Locator (URL)
- ◆ The permanent joining of two optical fiber cables to create a continuous, low-loss link for light signals is known as —Splicing of optical fibre
- ◆ Hypothalamus in human brain is responsible for —Thermoregulation
- ◆ Which software helps streamline database management by ensuring seamless data storage, monitoring, backup, recovery and reporting ? —Database software
- ◆ The smallest muscle in the human body is —Stapedius muscle
- ◆ Which chemical is used to confirm the presence of starch ? —Iodine solution
- ◆ One Fermi is equal to — 10^{-15} metre

Agriculture and Allied Sectors

- ◆ Which act mandates measures to reduce marine mammal by catch —Marine Mammal Protection Act
- ◆ The Government of India has notified Pearl cluster in —Hazaribagh, Jharkhand
- ◆ The method of growing plants with roots suspended in air and misted with a nutrient solution is known as —Aeroponics
- ◆ The 5th World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress was held at —Hua Hin, Thailand
- ◆ Heating of fruits and vegetables above 100°C , killing harmful and beneficial bacteria is known as —Sterilization
- ◆ In FY2025-26, India's seafood exports rose to a record —₹ 72,325-82 crore
- ◆ Epicotyl grafting is primarily used for grafting of which fruit ? —Mangoes
- ◆ Which component of the fertilizer is used for stimulating early growth in plants ? —Nitrogen
- ◆ Nano DAP contains nitrogen and phosphorus (w/v) respectively in what ratio ? —8 : 16
- ◆ Which insecticide works by inhibiting the enzyme acetylcholinesterase in the insect's nervous system ? —Metasystox

Environment, Biodiversity, Climate Change etc.

- ◆ Green Muffler technique is used to reduce —Noise Pollution
- ◆ Ratio of energy transfer at different trophic levels in the food chain is called as —Trophic Level Efficiency

- ◆ The species determining the ability of large number of other species to persist in a community, are called as —**Keystone Species**
- ◆ India's only floating national park is —**Keibul Lamjao National Park**
- ◆ The nodal agency of the International Big Cat Alliance is —**National Tiger Conservation Authority**
- ◆ India's first Ramsar sites are —**Chilika Lake and Keoladeo National Park**
- ◆ India's 99th Ramsar site is located in which Indian State? —**Uttar Pradesh (Aligarh District)**
- ◆ Barometer of Life is popularly known as —**IUCN Red List**
- ◆ According to the India's NDC (2031-35), what is the target to create carbon sink by 2035? —**3.5 to 4.0 billion tonnes of CO₂ eq.**
- ◆ What was the theme of the World Earth Day 2026? —**Our Power, Our Planet**

Communication and Teaching & Research Aptitude

- ◆ Which level of teaching requires a sufficiently 'open and independent' classroom environment? —**Reflective Level of Teaching**
- ◆ Learning by actively engaging in real-world, personally meaningful projects over an extended period is an example of —**Project based Learning**
- ◆ Sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational are four stages of cognitive development under which theory? —**Piaget's theory of cognitive development**
- ◆ Which research design is adopted when very less information about the research problem is available? —**Exploratory Research**
- ◆ Transmission of established knowledge, core facts and cultural/social standards from the teacher to the student is the primary focus of —**Traditional Education**
- ◆ Who coined the term 'Kinesics'? —**Ray Birdwhistell**
- ◆ The study of how humans use space and distance in communication is known as —**Proxemics**
- ◆ The encoded message is transmitted through a —**Communication Channel**
- ◆ A form of one-way communication where a single person monopolizes the conversation or delivers an extended speech to others, is known as —**Monologue**
- ◆ The facial expression of a student in a classroom is related to the which element of the communication process? —**Receiver element**

Sports and Games

- ◆ 2026 Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award has been awarded to —**Carlos Alcaraz**
- ◆ Who won the FIDE Women's Candidates 2026? —**R. Vaishali**
- ◆ 2026 Monte-Carlo Masters-Singles title was won by —**Jannik Sinner**
- ◆ Bangladesh defeated which country to win the SAFF U20 Championship 2026? —**India**
- ◆ Who won silver at the 2026 Badminton Asia Championships? —**Ayush Shetty**
- ◆ The 2026 Miami Grand Prix was won by —**Kimi Antonelli**
- ◆ Which state emerged as the overall champion at the Khelo India Tribal Games 2026? —**Karnataka**
- ◆ In cricket, an ultra-slow, high-trajectory delivery used as a deceptive slower ball to break a batter's timing, is known as —**Moonball**
- ◆ FIFA recommends a standard, professional soccer field size of —**105 meters long by 68 meters wide**
- ◆ In badminton, the name of the player who returns all those shots, which come into their end of the court is —**Bringer**

Miscellany

- ◆ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is headquartered at —**Paris, France**
- ◆ The institution of ombudsman was firstly initiated in the year 1809 by —**Sweden**
- ◆ The theme of the 4th India-Africa Forum Summit was —**IA SPIRIT : India Africa Strategic Partnership for Innovation, Resilience and Inclusive Transformation**
- ◆ The World Lupus Day is annually observed on —**May 10**
- ◆ Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan had been recently named as the next Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) of the —**Western Naval Command**
- ◆ ICGS Achal, recently commissioned by the Indian Coast Guard, is the fast patrol vessel series in —**Adamy-class**
- ◆ 20th Parallel North is a political boundary between —**Libya and Sudan**
- ◆ Drake Passage is between Cape Horn in Chile and —**South Shetland Islands of Antarctica**
- ◆ India's only active mud volcano is —**Baratang Island**
- ◆ What was India's rank in the World Press Freedom Index 2026? —**157th**

Prominent Historical Personalities of India



Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar

Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was born on 14th April, 1891 in Mhow in Madhya Pradesh.

In the year 1908, he passed the Matriculation examination from Bombay University. Four years later, he graduated in Political Science and Economics from Bombay University. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Columbia University in 1915 and 1927 respectively.



Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar

During his sojourn in London from 1920 to 1923, he also completed his thesis titled 'The Problem of the Rupee' for which he was awarded the degree of DSc. The book contained the guiding principles and recommendations which were instrumental in the formation of the Reserve Bank of India.

In April 1923, Dr. Ambedkar returned to India and started independent legal practice in the High Court of Bombay. In 1920, he had started a Marathi fortnightly, the *Mooknayak*. He founded the *Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha* in 1924 for the progress of the depressed classes. In 1927, he led the Mahad Satyagraha at the Chowdar Tank at Colaba, near Bombay, to give the untouchables the right to draw water from the public tank. During the second phase of Mahad Satyagraha in December 1927, he burnt copies of the 'Manusmriti' publicly. This marked the beginning of the anticaste and anti-priest movement. The temple entry movement launched by Dr. Ambedkar in 1930 at Kalaram temple, Nasik is another landmark in the struggle for human rights and social justice.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's pivotal role in the Poona Pact of 1932, which replaced separate electorates with reserved seats for Dalits, marked a turning point in India's fight for social justice. On August 15, 1936, he formed Independent Labour Party to safeguard the interest of the depressed classes, which mostly formed the labour population. In 1942, Dr. Ambedkar formed the All India Scheduled Castes Federation as an all-India political party to fight for the interests of the depressed classes.

In 1942, he was appointed to the Executive Council of the Governor General of India as a Labour member. In 1946, he was elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal. At the same time, he published his book, *Who were Shudras?* As Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, he played a pivotal role in Crafting the Indian Constitution, presenting a draft in 1948 that was adopted in 1949 with minimal changes. In 1952, Columbia University conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. in recognition of the work done by him in connection with the drafting of India's Constitution.

After Independence, in 1947, he was appointed as a Minister of Law and Justice in Nehru's first cabinet. But

in 1951, he resigned his ministership, expressing his differences on the Kashmir issue, India's Foreign Policy and Nehru's Policy towards the Hindu Code Bill.

On 14th October, 1956, he embraced Buddhism in a historic ceremony in Nagpur. He completed his last writing 'Buddha and His Dharma' in 1956. He died on 6th December, 1956. 6th December is observed as the 'Mahaparinirvan Diwas.' The Government of India conferred on him the nation's highest award, the *Bharat Ratna*, posthumously, in 1990 and commemorated the centenary year of his birth in 1990-91 as the Year of Social Justice.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Contribution to India's Modern Labour Legislation

- As the Labour Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council, he introduced a slew of pathbreaking labour reforms such as reduction of working hours from 12 hours to 8 hours, maternity benefit for women workers, provident fund for finers, paid leave and dearness allowance, compulsory recognition of trade unions, housing and medical facilities for workers, creation of employment exchanges, employee state insurance and many more.
- His experience as the Labour Member is reflected in Article 39 and Article 43 of the Constitution, which provides for measures intended for the welfare of the labour.
- As a chairman of the Tripartite Labour Conference held in New Delhi in 1942, he ensured that labour and management were brought face-to-face as equals. The conference marked a new phase in the relationship between industry and labour, laying the foundation for the evolution of labour policy and the formulation of key schemes.

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule

Mahatma Jyotirao 'Jyotiba' Govindrao Phule was a prominent social reformer and thinker of the nineteenth century India. He was born in Satara in Maharashtra in 1827. Jyotirao's father and uncles served as florists, so the family came to be known as 'Phule'. Originally, their title was 'Gorhay.'

In 1841, he got admission in the Scottish Mission's High School, Poona, and completed his education in 1847. During his schooling, he befriended Sadashiv Ballal Govande, a Brahmin, who remained his close friend throughout his life. He was married to Savitribai at the age of 13 years.



Mahatma Jyotiba Phule

He was greatly influenced by Thomas Paine's book 'The Rights of Man.' He was greatly influenced by his ideas, and believed that enlightenment of the women

and lower caste people was the only solution to combat the social evils.

In 1848, Phule began his work as a social reformer interested in education of low caste boys and girls, when he started a school for girls of low and untouchable castes. Since no female teacher was available, Phule asked his wife Savitribai to teach in the school. He opened two more schools for girls in 1851.

He was honoured by the Board of Education for the work he did for girls' education in 1852. Phule established a school for untouchables and a night school in 1852. By 1858, he gradually retired from the management of these schools and entered into a broader field of social reform.

He supported the movement for widow remarriage in 1860 and in 1863 established Bal Hatya Pratibandhak Griha for the prevention of infanticide. Phule and his wife Savitribai adopted one orphan child from the Home because they had no child of their own.

In 1873, he established the *Satya Shodhak Samaj* to organise the lower castes against the Hindu social order based on varna and caste system. The government appointed him a member of the Poona Municipality in 1876. He continued as a member till 1882 and fought for the cause of downtrodden.

He was also the prolific writer. In *Brahmanache Kasab* (1869) Phule has exposed the exploitation of Brahmin priests. In *Gulamgiri* (1873), he has given a historical survey of the slavery of lower castes. In 1883 he published a collection of his speeches under the title *Shetkaryaricha Asud* (The cultivator's whip-cord) where he has analysed how peasants were being exploited in those days. He advocated for rational religious thought in his book 'Sarvajani Satya Dharma'.

He was bestowed the title of *Mahatma* in 1888 by social activist Vithalrao Krishnaji Vandekar. He passed away on 28th November, 1890.

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), born in Calcutta (now Kolkata), was the youngest son of Debendranath Tagore, a prominent leader of the Brahmo Samaj. Rabindranath Tagore received his early education at home. At the age of 17 years, he was sent to England for formal schooling. Though, he joined the University College, London to study law but left a year later.

He established a school (1901) in his estate, named Santiniketan, to teach a blend of Eastern and Western philosophies, which expanded into an university, Visva-Bharati in 1921.

In 1890, Tagore moved to East Bengal (now Bangladesh), where he collected local legends and folklore. Between 1893 and 1901 he wrote seven volumes of poetry, including *Sonar Tari* (The Golden Boat) in 1894, *Khanika* in 1900 and *Nashtanir* (The Broken Nest) in 1901. This was a highly productive period in Tagore's life.

He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his collection of well-known poems *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings). Two years later he was awarded the knighthood, but he surrendered it in 1919 as a protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar. During the partition of Bengal (1905), he supported the

Swadeshi movement and composed songs such as 'Amar Sonar Bangla' (also the national anthem of Bangladesh).

At the age of 70, Tagore took up painting. He was also a composer. He composed over 2000 songs, popularly known as 'Rabindra Sangeet' which blends classical ragas, folk traditions, and spiritual themes. He also created dance dramas like Chitrangada, Shyama and Chandalika. His major plays are : Raja (1910), Dakghar (1912), Achalayatan (1912), Muktdadhara (1922), Raktakaravi (1926). He is the author of several volumes of short stories and a number of novels, such as Gora (1910), Ghare-Baire (1916), and Yogayog (1929). Besides these, he wrote musical dramas, dance dramas, essays of all types, travel diaries and two autobiographies, one in his middle years and the other shortly before his death in 1941. He passed away on August 7, 1941.

Rabindranath Tagore composed the original Bengali hymn *Bharato Bhagyo Bidhata* in 1911. It was sung for the first time on December 27, 1911, during the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. The lyrics of *Jana Gana Mana* were first published in the *Tatwabodhini Patrika* in January 1912. Its first stanza was officially adopted as India's national anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*, on January 24, 1950. The English translation was done by Rabindranath Tagore himself on February 28, 1919, in Madanapalle, a town in Andhra Pradesh's Chittoor district.

Shree Sahajanand Swami

Shree Sahajanand Swami was born on 2nd April, 1871, in small village called *Chhapaiya* near Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh to Hariprasad Pande (his father, also known as Dharmadev) and Premvati Pande (his mother, also known as Bhaktimata.) He was named Ghanshyam Pande by his parents.

At the age of 11, he embarked on his spiritual journey under the name *Nilkanth Varni*. During his seven-year journey, he mastered Astanga Yoga in span of just 9 months under the guidance of Gopal Yogi. At the age of 18 years and 4 months, Nilkanth finally arrived at Shree Ramanand Swami's Ashram in Lojpur a village near Junagadh. He obtained Vaishnavi Diksha from Ramanand Swami. He was honoured with the name of Sahajanand Swami alias Narayan Muni.

At the age of 21, Ramanand Swami appointed him as his successor of the Uddhava Sampradaya. Subsequently, Uddhava Sampradaya came to be known as Swaminarayan Sampradaya. He himself wrote a small book called *Shikshapatri* and told his devotees (satsangis) to act according to the 212 rules in the *Shikshapatri*. On 20th February, 1830 Lord Swaminarayan went to visit the British Governor of Bombay, Sir John Malcolm, in Rajkot. He presented the Governor with a *Shikshapatri*. This copy of the *Shikshapatri* is currently housed at the Bodleian Library at University of Oxford.

In establishing the temples at Ahmedabad, Bhuj, Vadtal, Dholera, Junagadh and Gadhada, he demonstrated his unique theory of *Ekeshwarvad* i.e. Monotheism. He gathered his followers and announced his departure. On June 1, 1830, he left for his heavenly abode.



Sahajanand Swami



Current Objective Questions

Trade And Industry

1. Which of the following statements is/are correct in relation to Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) ?
 - I. The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas has notified blending of synthesized hydrocarbon such as Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) with aviation turbine fuel (ATF).
 - II. SAF is produced from renewable feedstocks such as ethanol, agricultural residues, biomass, waste oils and municipal waste.

Correct code is :

(A) Only I
(B) Only II
(C) Both I and II
(D) Neither I nor II
2. Licence of which of the following bank has been cancelled by the RBI in April 2026 ?

(A) Airtel Payments Bank
(B) IDFC First Bank
(C) PayTm Payments bank
(D) Bandhan Bank
3. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the 'Gravity model' ?
 - I. 'Gravity model' is related to international trade.
 - II. Gravity model says that bilateral trade between two countries is directly proportional to their economic size.
 - III. Gravity model says that bilateral trade is inversely proportional to the distance between the trading countries.

Correct code is :

(A) Only I and II
(B) Only I and III
(C) All I, II and III
(D) None of the above
4. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 29, 2026 inaugurated the 594-km-long Ganga Expressway, a mega infrastructure project connecting :

(A) Haridwar to Varanasi
(B) Meerut to Prayagraj
(C) Haridwar to Prayagraj
(D) Ghaziabad to Varanasi
5. Which of the following is the 18th Zone of Indian Railways ?

(A) South Coast Railway Zone
(B) North Central Railway Zone
(C) South Central Railway Zone
(D) South East Central Railway Zone
6. Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) Collection in the month of April 2026 stood at all time high of :

(A) ₹ 2.15 lakh crore
(B) ₹ 2.26 lakh crore
(C) ₹ 2.43 lakh crore
(D) ₹ 2.59 lakh crore
7. Which of the following statements is/are correct in relation to FDI limit in Insurance Sector ?
 - I. FDI limit in insurance sector in India has been increased from 74% to 100% through automatic route.
 - II. FDI limit in Life Insurance Corporation of India has been kept at 20% through automatic route.

Correct code is :

(A) Only I
(B) Only II
(C) Both I and II
(D) Neither I nor II
8. Which of the following statements is/are correct ?
 - I. Flex-fuel-vehicles (FFVs) engines are engineered for any mix all the way up to 100 per cent ethanol (E100).
 - II. Ethanol blending in India over 11 years up to July 2025 had resulted in savings of over ₹ 1.4 lakh crore in foreign exchange and crude oil substitution of 245 lakh tonnes.

Correct code is :

(A) Only I
(B) Only II
(C) Both I and II
(D) Neither I nor II
9. In what way India will gain under the recently signed India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement ?
 - I. Zero-duty market access for 100% of India's exports from day one.
 - II. Labour intensive goods like textiles, footwear, engineering, gems & jewellery to benefit.
 - III. Investment commitment of US\$ 20 billion to fuel agriculture, manufacturing, infra and start-ups.
 - IV. No numerical caps on Indian students, guaranteed 20 hours work per week.

Correct code is :

(A) Only I and II
(B) Only I and III
(C) Only I, III and IV
(D) All I, II, III and IV
10. In what way New Zealand will gain under the recently signed India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement ?
 - I. Duty free access for 57% of exports from day one, increasing to 82% gradually.
 - II. Immediate tariff elimination on sheep meat, wool, coal and most forestry and wood exports.
 - III. Market access for cherries, kiwifruit, avocados, persimmons and blueberries.
 - IV. Tariff on wine reduced to 25-50% over 10 years plus most favoured nations status.

Correct code is :

(A) Only I and III
(B) Only II and IV
(C) Only I, II and III
(D) All I, II, III and IV
11. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme 5.0 ?
 - I. The scheme provides credit guarantee coverage of 100% for MSMEs and 90% for non-MSMEs as well as the

- airline sector to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC).
- II. The scheme has allocated ₹ 5,000 crore specifically for airlines.
- III. The scheme provides structured financial relief, with a maximum loan limit of ₹ 1,000 crore per borrower, and an additional ₹ 500 crore subject to an equivalent equity investment by the borrower.
- IV. The loan tenure will be up to 7 years, including a 2-year moratorium on repayment.
- Correct code is :
 (A) Only I
 (B) Only I and III
 (C) Only II, III and IV
 (D) All I, II, III and IV
12. Which of the following statements is incorrect about the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)?
 (A) PMEGP is a flagship programme of Ministry of Rural Development
 (B) Around 45% of the total Margin Money subsidy disbursed has been provided to women entrepreneurs, encouraging women-led enterprises
 (C) Approximately 54% of the beneficiaries belong to SC/ST/OBC categories, highlighting the scheme's strong focus on social inclusion
 (D) Nearly 80% of the enterprises established under PMEGP are located in rural areas, supporting rural industrialization and balanced regional development
13. Which of the following statements is incorrect about the 'Mission for Cotton Productivity'?
 (A) The Union Cabinet on May 5, 2026 has approved ₹ 5659.22 crore for Mission for Cotton Productivity (2026-27 to 2030-31)
 (B) The mission aligns with the 5F vision (Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign) of Government of India
 (C) The Mission will be solely implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
 (D) It aims to promote Kasturi Cotton Bharat brand for traceability and certification
14. Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane for Sugar Season 2026-27 (October-September) at :
 (A) ₹ 365/qlt for a basic recovery rate of 10-25%
 (B) ₹ 385/qlt for a basic recovery of 10-25%
 (C) ₹ 395/qlt for a basic recovery of 10-25%
 (D) ₹ 410/qlt for a basic recovery of 10-25%
15. Consider the following statements in relation to non-food credit growth in the FY 2025-26 :
 I. The Financial year 2025-26 ended with robust year-on-year (y-o-y) non-food credit growth of 15.9%.
 II. Credit growth in FY 2025-26 has been broad-based led by services sector, followed by personal loan segment, agriculture and allied activities and industry.
 Correct code is :
 (A) Only I
 (B) Only II
 (C) Both I and II
 (D) Neither I nor II
16. Paraquat Dichloride, a deadly herbicide is extensively used in
 I. Tea, rubber, coffee, cotton, paddy, wheat, maize, potato, grapes and apple cultivation.
 II. Weed control in canals, ponds, Lakes and waterways.
 Correct code is :
 (A) Only I
 (B) Only II
 (C) Both I and II
 (D) Neither I nor II
17. According to World Migration Report 2026, which of the following countries has received highest remittances in the year 2024 ?
 (A) India (B) Mexico
 (C) China (D) Philippines
18. Consider the following country-to country migration corridors in relation to recently released World Migration Report 2026 :
 I. Mexico-to-United States
 II. Afghanistan to Iran
 III. Syria to Turkey
 IV. Russia and Ukraine
 Which of the following is the correct sequence in decreasing order of total migration through these routes ?
 (A) I, II, III, IV (B) IV, III, II, I
 (C) I, III, II, IV (D) IV, II, III, I
19. The Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 (VB-G RAM G) has been effective from :
 (A) January 1, 2026
 (B) April 1, 2026
 (C) May 1, 2026
 (D) July 1, 2026
20. Under the shadow of Middle-East war the government on May 12, 2026 increased customs duties on :
 I. Gold and silver to 15 per cent from 6 per cent.
 II. Platinum imports to 15.4 per cent from 6.4 per cent.
 Which of the above statements is/are correct ?
 (A) Only I
 (B) Only II
 (C) Both I and II
 (D) Neither I nor II
21. High gold imports can put pressure on the economy in several ways :
 I. Widen the trade deficit.
 II. Increase pressure on the current account deficit (CAD).
 III. Lead to higher foreign exchange outflows.
 How many statements given above are correct ?
 (A) Only one
 (B) Only two
 (C) All three
 (D) None of the above
22. The Indian rupee has devaluated by nearly 11% against the US dollar over the past year. A weaker rupee means :
 I. Indians now need more rupees to buy one dollar.

- II. Transport companies pay more for diesel.
 III. Airlines pay more for aviation fuel.
 IV. Delivery companies face higher logistics costs.
 V. Prices of vegetables, groceries, cabs and flights can all rise.
- Which of the above is/are the fall out of weaker rupee ?
 (A) Only I
 (B) Only II and III
 (C) Only I, III, IV and V
 (D) All I, II, III, IV and V
23. 'Permitted unless prohibited' approach was in the news recently. It is related to :
 (A) Revamp of elementary Education
 (B) Empowerment of Women
 (C) Next generation economic reforms
 (D) Trade reforms
24. COSOP 2026-2033 is in line with the Government of India's Developed India@2047 vision and focusses on following strategic priorities :
 I. Enhancing the social, economic and climate-related resilience of rural communities.
 II. Strengthening knowledge systems to scale up proven development models in India and developing countries.
 III. Exploitation of potential of Semi Urban Areas.
- Correct code is :
 (A) Only I and II
 (B) Only II
 (C) Only II and III
 (D) All I, II and III
25. India's first Mega Greenfield Shipyard is being developed at :
 (A) Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu
 (B) Beypore, Keralam
 (C) Hangarakatta, Karnataka
 (D) Gopalpur, Odisha
26. The Kimberley Process (KP), that was in the news, is related to :
 (A) Trade of Artefacts
 (B) Diamond Trade
 (C) Human Trafficking
 (D) Illegal Trade of Extinction species of Birds
27. Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), Ministry of Home Affairs, and Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in combating :
 I. Cyber-enabled financial frauds
 II. Curtailing mule accounts across the banking and digital payments ecosystem.
- Correct code is :
 (A) Only I
 (B) Only II
 (C) Both I and II
 (D) Neither I nor II
28. Which of the following sectors of Indian economy is most likely to be affected by the hike in customs duty on platinum ?
 I. Automotive Sector
 II. Gems and Jewellery Sector
 III. Petrochemical and Refining Industry
- Correct code is :
 (A) Only I and II
 (B) Only II
 (C) Only II and III
 (D) All I, II and III
29. According to industry sources, businesses across Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka are facing significant worker shortages as many labourers of Assam and West Bengal remain hesitant about returning immediately. Which of the following is/are the reasons of this state of affairs ?
 I. Expansion of Infrastructure and industrial activity in Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh creating closer-to-home employment opportunities.
 II. Crisis in West Asia are beginning to affect sectors dependent on imported materials.
 III. Concerns over possible job losses linked to the economic effects of the West Asia conflict.
 IV. Cooking gas shortages, the approaching monsoon season in the South and rising temperatures.
- Correct code is :
 (A) Only I
 (B) Only II and III
 (C) Only II, III and IV
 (D) All I, II, III and IV
30. The government on May 13, 2026 banned sugar exports with immediate effect till :
 (A) September 30, 2026
 (B) December 31, 2026
 (C) March 31, 2026
 (D) June 30, 2026
31. Under the revised guidelines, issued by the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), gold authorisation capped at a maximum of in relation to the Advanced Authorisation (AA) Scheme.
 (A) 100 kg (B) 75 kg
 (C) 50 kg (D) 25 kg
32. The total business of public sector banks increased to how much as of March 31, 2026 ?
 (A) ₹ 279.8 lakh crore
 (B) ₹ 283.3 lakh crore
 (C) ₹ 303.4 lakh crore
 (D) ₹ 321.8 lakh crore
33. Gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio of public sector banks was.....at the end of March 2026.
 (A) 2.93% (B) 2.19%
 (C) 1.93% (D) 1.65%
34. Net Non performing assets (Net NPA) ratio was as of March 31, 2026, reflecting historically low levels of stressed assets.
 (A) 0.29% (B) 0.31%
 (C) 0.36% (D) 0.39%
35. Public Sector banks reported record profit ofin the FY 2025-26.
 (A) ₹ 3.21 lakh crore
 (B) ₹ 2.95 lakh crore
 (C) ₹ 2.84 lakh crore
 (D) ₹ 1.97 lakh crore
36. The overall Capital Adequacy Ratio [CRAR : Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio] of public sector banks increased to as of March 31, 2026.
 (A) 16.6% (B) 15.9%
 (C) 14.8% (D) 12.7%
37. Which of the following statements is/are correct in relation to a report released on May 14, 2026 by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and Project InnerSpace ?

- I. Geothermal energy in India has a potential of 11,000 gigawatt (GW) in industrial heat applications.
- II. Geothermal energy in India has a potential of more than 1,500 GW for cooling demand.
- III. Geothermal energy in India has potential of 450 GW of electricity generation.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I and II
- (B) Only I and III
- (C) Only II and III
- (D) All I, II and III

38. 'Pride of Hills : Special Development Assistance for Hill States' was launched in :

- (A) February 2026
- (B) March 2026
- (C) April 2026
- (D) May 2026

39. Which of the following initiatives has/have been announced by the Central government for orange economy ?

- I. AI Skilling Initiative in partnership with Google and YouTube through the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT).
- II. MyWAVES, a citizen creator platform on WAVES OTT.
- III. Advanced Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) and in-built satellite tuners.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I and II
- (B) Only II and III
- (C) Only I and III
- (D) All I, III and III

40. Consider the following statements in relation to UNEP Food Waste Index 2024 :

- I. India wastes 78-80 million tonnes of food annually.
- II. India ranks second globally in food waste.
- III. Per capita household food waste in India stands at 55 kg annually, lower than 73 kg in the US and 75 kg in Germany.

How many statements given above are correct ?

- (A) Only one
- (B) Only two
- (C) All three
- (D) None of the above

Answers with Hints

1. (C) The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas amended Aviation Turbine Fuel (Regulation of Marketing) Order, 2001, on April 17, 2026 to allow the blending of ethanol in jet fuel.
2. (C) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cancelled licence of PayTM Payments bank with effect from the close of business on April 24, 2026. With this, the number of payments banks shrinks to five—Airtel Payments Bank, India Post Payments Bank, Fino Payments Bank, Jio Payments Bank and NSDL Payments Bank.
3. (C)
4. (B) The expressway connects 12 key districts of Meerut, Hapur, Bulandshahr, Amroha, Sambhal, Badaun, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Unnao, Rae Bareilly, Pratapgarh and Prayagraj.
5. (A) The South Coast Railway Zone, which is slated to be India's 18th railway zone and was approved by the Union Cabinet in February 2025, is to be notified in the gazette on June 1, 2026. The new railway zone has been created in accordance with the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act and will lead to efficiency in railway operations, according to the cabinet.
6. (C) 7. (C)
8. (C) The government is set to expedite the roll-out of flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs). While a 20 per cent ethanol-petrol blend (E20) is the current mandate, FFV engines are engineered for any mix all the way up to 100 per cent ethanol (E100).
9. (D) 10. (D) 11. (D)
12. (A) The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises' flagship scheme, the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), implemented through the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), continues to play a pivotal role in promoting entrepreneurship and employment generation across the country.

13. (C) The Mission for cotton productivity will be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Ministry of Textiles, involving 10 institutes of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), one institute of Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and 10 centres of All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRPs) on Cotton operating in different State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) of major cotton growing states.

14. (A)

15. (C) The Financial year 2025-26 ended with robust year-on-year (y-o-y) non-food credit growth of 15.9%, marking a significant 497 basis points (bps) increase in growth from the corresponding period in 2025 (10.9%). Credit growth in FY 2025-26 has been broad-based led by services sector (19.0%), followed by personal loan segment (16.2%), agriculture and allied activities (15.7%), and industry (15.0%).

16. (C) Paraquat Dichloride is extensively used in tea, rubber, coffee, cotton, paddy, wheat, maize, potato, grapes and apple cultivation, besides weed control in canals, ponds and waterways. Its low cost and rapid action have made it one of the preferred non-selective herbicides in Indian agriculture. However it has severe deadly effects on the lives of humans.

17. (A) According to the report, remittance inflows into India increased sharply over the last decade, rising from nearly \$ 53 billion in 2010 to more than \$ 137 billion in 2024. The growth was driven by earnings of Indian workers and professionals in countries such as the United States, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

18. (A) The report said that the Mexico-to-United States country-to-country corridor remains the largest in the world, with around 11 million people. The second largest is Afghanistan to Iran (more than 3.7 million migrants) followed by Syria to Türkiye (over 3.5 million),

- comprising mainly refugees displaced by the Syrian civil war. The corridor between Russia and Ukraine takes up the fourth spot.
19. (D) The Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 (VB-G RAM G), effective July 1, 2026, replaces MGNREGA to provide 125 days of guaranteed annual wage employment to rural households. It focusses on rural asset creation, digital accountability, and strengthens the role of Gram Panchayats.
 20. (C) 21. (C)
 22. (D) The current pressure on the rupee is largely linked to rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia, which have pushed global crude oil prices higher. At the same time, foreign investors have also been pulling money out of India.
 23. (C) NITI Aayog Member Rajiv Gauba outlined an expansive deregulation agenda aimed at dismantling the new 'avatars' of the Licence Raj. Gauba, who heads two government panels on next-generation reforms, said the Centre would move to a principle of 'permitted unless prohibited', marking a paradigm shift from 'prohibited unless permitted' approach.
 24. (A) The Government of India, in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), launched a new eight-year COSOP—Country Strategic Opportunities Programme for agricultural development, spanning the period 2026-2033. It aims to increase rural incomes, build resilience to crises, and significantly expand sustainable livelihood opportunities across the country.
 25. (A) A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 20 April, 2026 between HD Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Engineering Co., Ltd. (HD KSOE), National Shipbuilding & Heavy Industries Park, Tamil Nadu Limited (NSHIP-TN) and Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL), for the development of India's first Mega Greenfield Shipyard at Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu.
 26. (B) The Kimberley Process (KP) Intercessional Meeting 2026 was held in Mumbai under India's Chair, from May 11 to 14, 2026, to deliberate on key issues related to the global trade in natural diamonds.
 27. (C)
 28. (D) Based on the May 13, 2026, announcement, the Indian government increased the effective import duty on platinum from 6.4% to 15.4%. The hike heavily impacts the domestic auto industry, particularly those manufacturing internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles (Diesel SUVs and Commercial Vehicles, Strong Hybrid Vehicles) and Component Suppliers; Gems and Jewellery Sector; and Petrochemical and Refining Industry (Platinum is used as a catalyst in refining petroleum products).
 29. (D) 30. (A)
 31. (A) The Advance Authorisation Scheme (AAS) is a flagship export promotion programme by India's DGFT that allows duty-free import of (gold, provided it is used specifically to manufacture jewellery for export) raw materials, components, and packaging used in export products. It exempts exporters from duties and GST to ensure local taxes are not exported, maintaining global competitiveness.
 32. (B) The total business of public sector banks increased to ₹ 283.3 lakh crore as of March 31, 2026, a growth of 12.8 per cent over the previous year.
 33. (C) Gross non-performing assets ratio (non-performing assets as a percentage of a bank's total loans that remain unpaid by borrowers) declining to 1.93% in FY 2025-26.
 34. (D) Net NPA ratio (a key financial indicator of the banking sector that reflects the actual amount of stressed assets a bank holds after provisions) falling to 0.39% as of March 31, 2026, reflecting historically low levels of stressed assets.
 35. (A) The improvement in asset quality, healthy credit expansion and higher earnings were the key drivers of improved profitability of public sector banks during FY 2025-26. The banks' total operating profit reached ₹ 3.21 lakh crore, while the total net profit increased by 11.1 per cent year-on-year to a historically high level of ₹ 1.98 lakh crore. Public sector banks achieved profitability for the fourth consecutive year.
 36. (A)
 37. (D) According to a report released by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and Project InnerSpace, the realisation of over 1,500 GW of cooling potential can cut electricity use by 30-40 per cent, according to the report. States including Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh have the greatest opportunity for geothermal deployment, the report stated, adding that it can support India's data centre growth through cooling applications.
 38. (B)
 39. (D) The Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw on March 23, 2026 launched three major initiatives, aimed at strengthening India's media, broadcasting and digital sector and promoting the creative economy. The three initiatives, namely, national AI Skilling Initiative in partnership with Google and YouTube through the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT); MyWAVES, a citizen creator platform on WAVES OTT; and the rollout of Advanced Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) and in-built satellite tuners in television sets for enhancing access to DD Free Dish services, are aimed at promoting the 'Orange Economy', strengthening public broadcasting, and building an AI skilled workforce in the media and entertainment sector.
 40. (C)

1. Rules notified under the Promotion and Regulation of Gaming Act 2025 came into effect from :
(A) December 1, 2026
(B) January 1, 2026
(C) April 1, 2026
(D) May 1, 2026
2. Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary in Aligarh is India's Ramsar wetland site.
(A) 96th (B) 97th
(C) 98th (D) 99th
3. Which of the following statements is incorrect about the Mehar Baba Competition ?
(A) Mehar Baba Competition (MBC) is an IAF initiative to encourage indigenous development of niche aviation technology
(B) The theme of MBC-3 is 'Collaborative Drone-Based Surveillance Radars'
(C) The aim of MBC-3 is to develop a proof of concept for collaborative swarm of Unmanned Aerial Systems working as an airborne radar capable of detecting, tracking and reporting aerial targets in a contested environment and provide their accurate location at a centralised monitoring station
(D) Mehar Baba Competition was launched in 2024
4. Ladakh Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on April 27 announced the creation of five new districts in the Union Territory. With this total number of district in Ladakh has become :
(A) Seven (B) Eighth
(C) Nine (D) Ten
5. Recently, P.V. Sindhu's name was in the news. Which of the following statements is incorrect about her ?
(A) P.V. Sindhu has assumed a full voting position on the Council of the Badminton World Federation (BWF)
(B) P.V. Sindhu has been awarded the Padam Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award in 2020
(C) She is the first and only Indian to become the badminton world champion
(D) She is the only the second individual from India to win two consecutive medals at the Olympic Games
6. With the development of the indigenously designed 500 megawatt Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor at Kalpakkam (T.N), India becomes second country in the world to operate a commercial-level fast breeder reactor (FBR). Which is the first country in this regard ?
(A) USA (B) France
(C) Russia (D) China
7. India has submitted its revised climate targets for 2031-2035 to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Which of the following statements are correct in this regard ?
I. India is committed to attain at least 47 per cent reduction in the emission intensity of its GDP (emission per unit of GDP) from the 2005 baseline by 2035.
II. India is committed to achieve about 60 pc cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2035 with the help of transfer of technology and low-cost international finance.
III. India has promised to create a carbon sink of 3.5 to 4.0 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through forest and tree cover by 2035 as compared to the baseline year of 2005.
Correct code is :
(A) Only I and II
(B) Only II and III
(C) Only I and III
(D) All I, II and III
8. Archaeologists have uncovered a culinary revolution from the Bronze Age South Caucasus, revealing a surprisingly diverse diet. Which of the following statements is/are correct about this discovery ?
I. The discovery depicts daily life that stretches back to around 2800-2600 BCE.
II. Ancient pottery has been found from the Kura-Araxes culture.
III. At the heart of this discovery are the well-preserved organic residues found in ceramic vessels from the Qaraçinar settlement, located in Azerbaijan.
IV. They consumed dairy products, grape-based beverages, fruits, plant oils and even millet.
Correct code is :
(A) Only I and II
(B) Only III and IV
(C) Only I, II and IV
(D) All I, II, III and IV
9. Consider the following statements in relation to recent changes made in the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) scheme :
I. The six-month continuous stay in India is no longer required for the submission of the OCI application.
II. The fee for fresh OCI cards is USD 275, payable in the equivalent local currency where the application is made.
III. Persons holding tourist, missionary, mountaineering and e-visas are not eligible to apply for OCI registration while in India.
IV. Those applying for OCI registration on the basis of marriage to an Indian citizen or an existing OCI cardholder must ensure that

the marriage has been registered and subsisted for at least five years before the date of application.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I, II and III
- (B) Only II
- (C) Only I and II
- (D) All I, II, III and IV

10. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the 'gando baval', that was in news recently ?

- I. Its scientific name is *Prosopis juliflora*.
- II. In the dry region around Deendayal Port Authority (formerly Kandla Port) in Gujarat, it is known as gando baval.
- III. It is a invasive shrub spreads rapidly, degrades land and crowds out native vegetation.
- IV. It is being recast as a resource at the heart of abio-methanol project at the port to convert waste biomass into clean fuel.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I and II
- (B) Only III and IV
- (C) Only IV
- (D) All I, II, III and IV

11. Which of the following is the World's largest yacht ?

- (A) Orient Express Corinthian
- (B) Azzam
- (C) Fulk Al Salamah
- (D) Eclipse

12. Which of the following statements is correct about the Svitzer Balder, that was in the news recently ?

- (A) It is world's first battery operated cruise
- (B) It is world's first battery-methanol harbor tug
- (C) It is world's first nuclear powered spy ship
- (D) It is world's first nuclear powered submarine

13. National Highways Authority of India rolled out India's first Multi-lane Free Flow (MLFF) tolling system at :

- (A) Chorayasi Toll plaza on Surat-Bharuch section of NH-48

(B) Judapur Dandu Toll Plaza on newly inaugurated Ganga Expressway

(C) Kiranj Toll Plaza on Delhi-Mumbai Expressway (Nuh district, Haryana) - 56 km from DND

(D) Baghpat Toll Plaza on Delhi-Dehradun Expressway

14. Which of the following statements is incorrect about the M.V. Sindhu, that was in news recently ?

(A) M.V. Sindhu sailed under the Indian flag with both the vessel's command and pilotage entrusted to women

(B) M.V. Sindhu is a modern 500-passenger cum 150-tonne cargo vessel

(C) It operates in the Andaman & Nicobar

(D) It has been built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai under the 'Make In India' initiative, this 99.75-meter vessel enhances inter-island connectivity with comfortable, high-quality travel options

15. Who among the following won the prestigious Pulitzer prize 2026 in the Illustrated Reporting and Commentary Category ?

- I. Anand RK
- II. Suparna Sharma
- III. Natalie Obiko Pearson

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I and II
- (B) Only II
- (C) Only II and III
- (D) All I, II and III

16. Which of the following pairs is/are matched correctly in relation to the recent appointments made by the central government ?

- I. Ashok Kumar Lahiri—Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog.
- II. Prasoon Joshi—Chairman of Prasar Bharati.
- III. Shashi Shekhar Vempati - Chairman of the Central Board of Film Certification.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I
- (B) Only II and III
- (C) Only I and III
- (D) All I, II and III

17. Consider the following facts in relation to the Swasth Bharat Portal :

I. It was recently launched by J.P. Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare.

II. It is envisioned as an aggregator platform that integrates existing program systems through an API-based federated architecture.

III. The portal is ABDM compliant and supports integration with ABHA, enabling seamless and secure exchange of patient health records.

IV. It is designed to develop into a comprehensive and interoperable digital health ecosystem, which will further integrate with national registries such as the Healthcare Professional Registry and Health Facility Registry

How many statements given above are correct ?

- (A) Only one (B) Only two
- (C) Only three (D) All four

18. Consider the following statements in relation to Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026, approved by the Union Cabinet :

I. Number of Judges in the Supreme Court of India can only be increased by amending the Article 124(1) of the Indian Constitution.

II. The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026 provides for an increase of 4 judges in the number of Supreme Court judges, i.e., from 33 to 37 (including the Chief Justice of India).

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I
- (B) Only II
- (C) Both I and II
- (D) Neither I nor II

19. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the 'Janani Platform' that was in news recently ?

I. Janani is a service-centric digital platform designed to

comprehensively monitor and maintain digital health records of women of reproductive age.

II. JANANI is an acronym for Journey of Antenatal, Postnatal and Newborn Integrated Care.

III. The platform creates a long-term health record by capturing key service delivery activities across the continuum of care.

IV. A key feature of Janani is the introduction of QR-coded digital Maternal and Child Health (MCH) cards.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only IV
- (B) Only I and III
- (C) Only I and III
- (D) All I, II, III and IV

20. Which of the following statements is incorrect about the 'Mission Drishti' ?

- (A) It was launched by the ISRO
- (B) Mission Drishti is the world's first OptoSAR satellite
- (C) It has been successfully launched on May 3, 2026 aboard a Falcon 9 by SpaceX from Vandenberg, California
- (D) It is the first satellite globally to integrate Electro-Optical (EO) and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) sensors into a single operational platform, enabling all-weather, day-and-night imaging capabilities

21. Central Prabhar Officer (CPO) Portal has been launched by :

- (A) Reserve Bank of India
- (B) Department of Personnel and Training
- (C) NITI Aayog
- (D) Comptroller and Auditor General of India

22. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the hantavirus, that was in news recently ?

- I. A deadly hantavirus outbreak aboard an Antarctic cruise ship.
- II. Hantavirus spreads by inhaling contaminated rodent droppings and can spread from a person but it is rare.

III. The outbreak has been linked to the cruise liner MV Hondius, which departed from Argentina for Antarctica on April 1, 2026.

IV. The Andes strain can cause Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS), a severe disease that begins with symptoms such as fatigue, fever, muscle aches, headaches and dizziness before progressing to breathing difficulties.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I and II
- (B) Only III and IV
- (C) Only I, II and IV
- (D) All I, II, III and IV

23. Consider the following statements in relation to 'TARA' that was in news recently :

- I. TARA is an acronym for Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation.
- II. TARA is India's first indigenous glide weapon system to convert unguided warheads into precision guided weapons.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

- (A) Only I
- (B) Only II
- (C) Both I and II
- (D) Neither I nor II

24. Paraquat Dichloride, one of India's most widely used herbicides, results in toin human beings.

- I. Fatal poisoning
- II. Kidney failure
- III. Lung fibrosis
- IV. Parkinson's disease

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I and II
- (B) Only III and IV
- (C) Only I and IV
- (D) All I, II, III and IV

25. Paraquat Dichloride, one of India's most widely used herbicides, has been partially banned in which state ?

- I. Uttar Pradesh
- II. Odisha
- III. Telangana
- IV. Tamil Nadu

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I and II
- (B) Only II and III
- (C) Only I and IV
- (D) All I, II, III and IV

26. Justice Arvind Kumar Committee is related to :

- (A) Modernisation of Judicial Infrastructure
- (B) Computerisation of district courts
- (C) Creation of Indian Judicial Services
- (D) Reducing the burden of pending cases in the courts

27. Government of India on May 12, 2026 launched the 'Unified Bharat e-Charge'. Which of the following statements is/are correct about it ?

- I. It is a national platform.
- II. It allow Electric Vehicle (EV) users to locate, book and pay across charging networks through a single interoperable interface.
- III. It is termed as 'UPI for EV charging'.
- IV. It has been built by the Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. and supported by the National Payments Corporation of India.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I and III
- (B) Only II and III
- (C) Only I and IV
- (D) All I, II, III and IV

28. Which of the following states has implemented the family register 'Jan Aadhaar' along with DigiLocker ?

- (A) Tamil Nadu
- (B) Kerala
- (C) Karnataka
- (D) Rajasthan

29. Which of the following states has been designated as a 'Digital Rising State' ?

- (A) Nagaland (B) Assam
- (C) Tripura (D) Sikkim

30. Which of the following states have been recognized for exceptional DigiLocker integration initiatives ?

- I. Gujarat
- II. Karnataka
- III. Kerala

- IV. Nagaland
V. Rajasthan
Correct code is :
(A) Only I, II and III
(B) Only I, III and V
(C) Only II, III and IV
(D) All I, II, III, IV and V
31. The theme of 'Kalam and Kavach 3-0' was :
(A) "Taking JAI Forward With I²"
(B) "Building Confidence among Jawans"
(C) "No target is beyond our Reach"
(D) "Digital War : Strategic Move"
32. Kalam and Kavach 3-0 aims to highlight for achieving Viksit Bharat@2047.
I. MSME participation
II. iDEX-driven innovation ecosystems
III. Defence industrial corridors
IV. Indigenous production capabilities
V. Production scalability
Correct code is :
(A) Only I, II, III and IV
(B) Only I, III, IV and V
(C) Only III
(D) All I, II, III, IV and V
33. Which of the following pairs are matched correctly in relation to thematic events organized by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), across the country to highlight India's leadership in big cat conservation and promote the objectives of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) ?
I. Asiatic Lion Conservation Programme—Gir, Gujarat
II. Cheetah Conservation Programme—Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
III. Leopard Conservation & International Day for Biological Diversity Event—Bhubaneswar, Odisha
IV. Snow Leopard Conservation Programme—Gangtok, Sikkim
V. Tiger Conservation Programme — Chandrapur, Maharashtra
- Correct code is :
(A) Only I, III, IV and V
(B) Only III, IV and V
(C) Only I, II, III and V
(D) All I, II, III, IV and V
34. Which of the following indigenous Medical Technologies was/were transferred to industry on May 11, 2026 by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) ?
I. CRISPR-Cas-based TB Detection System.
II. Development of a Cost-Effective PSP94 ELISA for Guiding Prostate Biopsy Decisions in Patients with PSA less than 20 ng/ml.
III. Nipah Point-of-Care Assay.
IV. Factor VIII Inhibitor / Coagulation Disorder Point-of-Care Diagnostic.
V. Single-Tube Multiplex Real-Time RT-PCR for Detection of Dengue, Chikungunya, and Zika Viruses.
Correct code is :
(A) Only I, II and III
(B) Only II, IV and V
(C) Only I and III
(D) All I, II, III, IV and V
35. The book 'The Bench, the Bar, and the Bizarre' and 'The Lawful and the Awful' has been written by :
(A) Justice Yeshwant Vishnu Chandrachud
(B) Tushar Mehta
(C) Kapil Sibbal
(D) Abhishek Manu Singhvi
36. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the 'SATHI', that was in the news recently ?
I. SATHI is an acronym for Sophisticated Analytical & Technical Help Institute (SATHI).
II. SATHI has been established in Banaras Hindu University (BHU).
Correct code is :
(A) Only I
(B) Only II
(C) Both I and II
(D) Neither I nor II
37. Consider the following pairs :
I. SATHI—An Institution
II. FIST—A Programme
III. ANRF—A Foundation
Which of the above pairs is/are matched correctly ?
(A) Only I and II
(B) Only II and III
(C) Only I and III
(D) All I, II and III
38. BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting 2026 was hosted by :
(A) China (B) India
(C) Brazil (D) Russia
39. Who among the following has been appointed the Chief Minister of Kerala ?
(A) V.D. Satheesan
(B) K.C. Venugopal
(C) Ramesh Chennithala
(D) Pinarayi Vijayan
40. Which of the following pairs is not matched correctly in relation to recently appointed Chief Ministers ?
(A) Assam—Sarvanand Sonowal
(B) Kerala—V.D. Satheesan
(C) Tamil Nadu—Chandrasekaran Joseph Vijay
(D) Puducherry—N. Rangasamy

Answers with Hints

1. (D)
2. (D) The designation of Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, as a Ramsar site, taking India's total to 99 and the State's tally to 12. Shekha Jheel acts as a crucial stopover on the Central Asian Flyway, providing a vital habitat for migratory birds such as the Bar-headed Goose, Painted Stork and various ducks during the winter season.
3. (D) Mehar Baba Competition, launched in 2018, is an IAF initiative to encourage indigenous development of niche aviation technology. MBC is conducted in the honour of the legendary air veteran Air Commodore Mehar Singh DSO MVC affectionately known as Mehar Baba.
4. (A) The existing two districts are Leh and Kargil. Five new districts are : Nubra, Sham, Changthang, Zaskar, Drass.

5. (B) Olympic medalist and World Champion P.V. Sindhu has assumed a full voting position on the Council of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) following her election as Chair of the BWF Athletes' Commission for 2026-29 term. She has been awarded the Padam Bhushan in 2020.
6. (C) 7. (D) 8. (D)
9. (A) Those applying for OCI registration on the basis of marriage to an Indian citizen or an existing OCI cardholder must ensure that the marriage has been registered and subsisted for at least two years before the date of application.
10. (D)
11. (A) Orient Express Corinthian, the world's largest sailing yacht, was named on April 25, 2026 in saint-Nazaire. Flying the French flag, the 220 metre sailing yacht herald a new era of travel, uniting French decorative craftsmanship with cutting edge naval innovation.
12. (B) The *Svitzer Balder* is the world's first electric-methanol TRANsverse tug, built by UZMAR for Svitzer to operate in Gothenburg, Sweden. It is designed for near-zero emissions, capable of over 90% of operations on electric power. It has been nominated for Tug of the Year at the ITS 2026 Awards.
13. (A)
14. (D) M.V. Sindhu has been built by Cochin Shipyards Ltd. With Capt. Meera Uppadhaya at the helm and Ms. Reshma Nilofer Visalakshi overseeing navigation as pilot, the vessel departed from Khidderpore Docks en route to Port Blair, signalling a meaningful advancement in women's participation in critical seafaring roles.
15. (D) Indian journalists Anand RK and Suparna Sharma along with Natalie Obiko Pearson won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for their the award-winning work titled 'trAPPed', produced for Bloomberg, which narrates the 'riveting account' of a neurologist in India who was held under a 'digital arrest' through her phone, using a blend of 'visuals and words' to underscore the 'growing global challenges of surveillance and digital scams'.
16. (D) 17. (D)
18. (D) Article 124(1) of the Constitution of India provides, inter alia, that "There shall be a Supreme Court of India consisting of the Chief Justice of India and, until Parliament by law provides for a higher number of Judges...". To increase the number of judges in the Supreme Court of India, an Act was passed in 1956, the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956. Section 2 of the Act fixed the maximum number of judges (excluding the Chief Justice of India) at 10. This Act was subsequently amended in the year 1960, 1977, 1979, 1986, 2008, and 2019. The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026 provides for an increase of 4 judges in the number of Supreme Court judges, i.e. from 33 to 37 (excluding the Chief Justice of India).
19. (D) Developed as an enhanced version of the existing RCH portal, the JANANI platform creates a long-term health record by capturing key service delivery activities across the continuum of care.
20. (A)
21. (C) NITI Aayog launched the Central Prabhari Officer (CPO) Portal, which is aimed at strengthening real-time governance, improving coordination among stakeholders and accelerating last-mile delivery under the Aspirational Districts and Blocks Programmer (ADP/ABP).
22. (D)
23. (C) Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA) system has been designed and developed by Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad along with other DRDO laboratories to enhance the lethality and accuracy of a low-cost weapon to neutralize ground-based targets. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully conducted the maiden flight-trial of TARA weapon off the coast of Odisha on May 7, 2026.
24. (D) Paraquat Dichloride, a widely used, non-selective herbicide, is facing a potential nationwide ban in India due to severe toxicity and mounting evidence of health risks, including fatal poisonings and Parkinson's disease. An expert panel has recommended a complete ban, adding to a global trend where over 70 countries have already prohibited the chemical.
25. (B) A committee comprising doctors and agricultural scientists has unanimously recommended complete prohibition on Paraquat Dichloride after examining its toxicity profile and public health impact. The recommendation comes amid growing pressure from states such as Telangana and Odisha, which have already imposed temporary restrictions and sought permanent intervention by the Centre.
26. (A) Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has announced to constitute a high-powered committee headed by Supreme Court Justice Aravind Kumar to prepare a blueprint for the modernization of courts across the country and secure a government allocation of ₹ 40 to ₹ 50 thousand crore for the purpose. The 'Judicial Infrastructure Advisory Committee' will address infrastructural deficiencies in courts through substantial financial support from the government.
27. (D)
28. (D) Rajasthan has implemented the family register 'Jan Aadhaar' along with DigiLocker, benefiting over 75 million citizens.
29. (A) Nagaland has integrated over 32 services in just one month. Nagaland has integrated both the issuer and requester models, demonstrating its excellence in digital transformation.

Continued on Page 172

General Studies-I

(Held on 24-5-2026)

1. Consider the following statements with reference to India's response to climate change :

I. India's Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS) is a crucial tool for achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.

II. India's 4th Biennial Update Report (BUR-4) submitted in December, 2024 recorded around 8% decrease in Greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 over 2019.

III. Climate-resilient development necessarily depends on quick and short-term achievement of emission reduction targets.

Which of the following relationships among the above statements is/are correct ?

- Statement I is empirically supported by statement II.
- Statement III contradicts the approach implicit in statement I.
- Statement I and statement III together establish the premise of long-term sustainability.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

2. With respect to the Western Hoolock Gibbons, which of the following statements is/are correct ?

- A Sanctuary in North-east India is home to this ape species listed as Endangered in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.
- They have specialized brachiation and can easily swing between trees.
- They possess a strong and heavy build like gorillas, yet are remarkably agile tree climbers.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

3. Which of the following best explain(s) the rationale for protecting mangrove ecosystems in the context of climate resilience ?

1. Mangroves reduce tidal energy and store freshwater, making them ideal sites for paddy cultivation in saline estuarine belts.

2. Their salt-sensitive roots filter seawater, making mangroves key to converting coastal land into freshwater aquaculture zones.

3. By withstanding tidal surges and offering biomass resources, mangroves function both as natural bio-shields and livelihood bases for rural communities.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

4. In what way(s) does the Vizhinjam International Seaport represent a structural shift in India's maritime trade and logistics policy ?

1. By functioning exclusively as a domestic cargo hub to reduce reliance on coastal shipping and eliminate the need for foreign collaborations.

2. By focussing primarily on passenger cruise tourism and heritage shipping to increase Kerala's profile as a maritime heritage destination.

3. By leveraging its natural deep draft and strategic location to reduce dependence on foreign trans-shipment ports, enhance revenue retention and reposition

India in regional maritime trade.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

5. Identify the river of the Indian sub-continent on the basis of the following information :

1. It has an antecedent drainage system.

2. It flows through three countries.

3. It originates in the Tibetan Plateau and is an important river for irrigation.

4. It does not form distributaries.

Select the answer from the following :

- (A) Brahmaputra
(B) Indus
(C) Sutlej
(D) Teesta

6. Which of the following with reference to Indian States is/are not correct ?

1. Uttar Pradesh shares its boundary with the highest number of other Indian States.

2. Rajasthan shares the longest international border among all Indian States.

3. Sikkim is the only State that shares its boundary with just one other Indian State.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

7. Which of the following statements with regard to the arrival of Amur Falcons at Doyang Lake in Nagaland each year from Mongolia is/are correct ?

1. It showcases how sustained local conservation efforts can contribute to the arrival

and protection of international migratory birds.

2. It reflects the global success of advanced tracking technologies that guide migratory birds back to their stopover sites.

3. It confirms that Amur Falcons have adapted to permanent residency in India due to favourable habitat changes.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

8. Which among the following is/are the objective(s) of the Rainfed Area Development (RAD) initiative under the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) ?

1. Encouraging monoculture in rainfed areas.
2. Increasing rice cultivation in irrigated regions.
3. Enhancing productivity and minimising climatic risks through Integrated Farming Systems (IFS).

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

9. Which of the following is/are the most significant implication(s) of obtaining Oeko-Tex certification for Eri Silk in the global textile industry ?

1. It allows Indian exporters to compete in high-end markets that prioritise chemical-free products.
2. It confirms that Eri Silk meets international safety, environmental, and quality standards, enabling its entry into premium eco-conscious markets.

Select the answer using the code given below :

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

10. Ships from which of the following countries have to cross the Strait of Hormuz to reach out to the Indian Ocean ?

1. Bahrain
2. Syria
3. Qatar
4. Egypt

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1 and 2 (B) 1 and 3
(C) 2 and 3 (D) 3 and 4

11. Tungurahua Volcano, which was declared a Global Geopark by UNESCO in 2025, is situated in which one among the following countries ?

- (A) Ecuador (B) Peru
(C) Bolivia (D) Colombia

12. With reference to Madhav National Park, which of the following statements is/are correct ?

1. It was declared a Tiger Reserve in India in 2025.
2. Sakhya Sagar, which is designated as a Ramsar Site, is situated within this National Park.
3. Its area is shared between Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

13. With reference to the climate of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which of the following statements is/are correct ?

1. The climate can be defined as a humid, tropical coastal climate.
2. It receives rainfall from both South-west monsoon and North-east monsoon.
3. Maximum precipitation is between December and May.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

14. Which of the following geographical features or phenomena is/are associated with the Peninsular Block of India ?

1. Submergence of parts of the western coast due to tectonic activity.
2. Presence of residual mountain ranges such as the Veliconda hills and Mahendragiri hills.

3. Deep, V-shaped river valleys formed by fast-flowing rivers.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

15. Consider the following statements with reference to the Sagarmala Programme of the Government of India :

- I. The Sagarmala Programme seeks to achieve port-led economic growth through cost-effective and sustainable coastal infrastructure.

- II. The success of the Sagarmala Programme is reflected in significant growth in coastal and inland waterway shipping, along with improved global port rankings.

- III. Sagarmala 2.0 aims to position India as a global maritime innovation hub aligned with Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat 2047 visions.

Which of the following relationships among the above statements is/are correct ?

1. Statement II validates the effectiveness of the strategies envisioned in statement I.
2. Statement III extends the objectives of statement I by embedding them into a future-oriented innovation framework.
3. Statement I contradicts statement III by focussing only on traditional infrastructure instead of modern innovation.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 2
(C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3

16. Consider the following statements about *Rhynchosstylis retusa* (Foxtail orchid) :

1. It is an epiphytic orchid.
2. The species is endemic to North-east India.
3. It is the State flower of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.

- Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?
 (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 3
 (C) 2 and 3 (D) Only 3
17. Which one of the following statements with regard to the Moidams, built by the Tai-Ahom kingdom and inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, is/are correct ?
1. They acted as army fortresses.
 2. They were recreation centres of the Royals and Nobles.
 3. They were burial grounds of the Royals and Nobles.
 4. They were battle drill centres of the Royals and Nobles.
- Select the answer using the code given below :
 (A) Only 1 (B) 1 and 3
 (C) Only 3 (D) 2 and 4
18. At the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) held in June, 2025 in France, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations demonstrated its leading voice on marine and ocean issues, especially on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture for resilient livelihood and 'Blue Transformation'. Which of the following combinations about the 'Four Betters' proposed by FAO for 'Blue Transformation' is correct ?
- (A) Better production, better nutrition, better environment and better ocean
 - (B) Better production, better nutrition, better environment and better life
 - (C) Better coral reefs, better nutrition, better environment and better life
 - (D) Better estuaries, better nutrition, better environment and better mangrove vegetation
19. Which of the following statements with reference to Lake Turkana is/are correct ?
1. It is the largest desert lake in the world.
 2. The lake is situated in South Sudan along the eastern fringe of the Sahara desert.
 3. The lake is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is also referred to as the 'Jade Sea'.
- Select the answer using the code given below :
 (A) Only 1
 (B) Only 1 and 3
 (C) Only 2 and 3
 (D) 1, 2 and 3
20. Which one of the following is the first Plan Vivo certified Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) project in India ?
- (A) Uttarakhand REDD + project
 - (B) ICFRE-ICIMOD Transboundary REDD+ project in North-Eastern Himalayas
 - (C) Khasi Hills Community REDD+ project
 - (D) Sikkim Mamley Kamrang Community REDD+ project
21. Which one of the following Carnatic music ragas is similar to Raga Bilawal in Hindustani music ?
- (A) Nat Bhairavi
 - (B) Kamavardhini
 - (C) Hanumatodi
 - (D) Dheera Shankarabharanam
22. The artificially fixed rupee-sterling exchange rate prescribed by the Hilton-Young Commission (1926) was adopted by the British Government for which one of the following reasons ?
- (A) Aiding the flow of remittances from India and maintaining India's creditworthiness
 - (B) Providing support to Indian importers
 - (C) Encouraging export of cotton produce from India
 - (D) Preventing depreciation of the Rupee in terms of gold
23. Consider the following statements :
- I. Pali texts contain the first definite references to coins, e.g., *kahapana*, *nikkha*, *kamsa*, and *kakanika*.
 - II. The literary evidence from pali texts is corroborated by archaeological evidence of punch-marked coins from many sites, most of them made of silver.
- The above statements have been associated with which of the following ?
1. Emergence of urban life
 2. Transition to money economy.
- Select the answer using the code given below :
 (A) Only 1
 (B) Only 2
 (C) Both 1 and 2
 (D) Neither 1 nor 2
24. Which of the following temples has/have a Nagara-style *shikhara* ?
1. Malegitti Shivalaya, Badami
 2. Huchimalligudi Temple, Aihole
 3. Dashavatara Temple, Deogarh
 4. Virupaksha Temple, Pattadakal
- Select the answer using the code given below :
 (A) 1 and 2 (B) 2 and 3
 (C) Only 3 (D) 3 and 4
25. Among the four main forms of existence of life recognized in Jainism, which one of the following is not included ?
- (A) *Deva* (gods)
 - (B) *Yaksha* (demi-gods)
 - (C) *Manushya* (humans)
 - (D) *Tiryancha* (animals and plants)
26. The *Hallisalasya* painting in the Bagh Caves represents :
- (A) A joyous folk dance
 - (B) Buddha in a meditative pose
 - (C) The depiction of Shiva and Parvati on Kailasha
 - (D) Samudramanathan (Churning of the Ocean)
27. Consider the following statements relating to the use of the place-value system in India :
1. The earliest epigraphic use of the place-value system in India is found in the Mankani plates from Gujarat (AD 595-596).
 2. In the ninth century, place-values become general in inscriptions all over India.
 3. The place-values have been found in Sanskrit inscriptions in South-east Asia as early as the seventh century.

Which of the statements given above are correct ?

- (A) Only 1 and 2
- (B) Only 1 and 3
- (C) Only 2 and 3
- (D) 1, 2 and 3

28. Consider the following statements about the archaeological findings in Harappan towns :

- I. There is wide occurrence of spindle-whorls in the houses but absence of spinning wheels.
- II. Weights and measurement scales, complete with graduations have been discovered.
- III. There are houses built in large part with baked bricks, around relatively spacious courtyards, with their own wells, bathing platforms, and large rooms.

Which of the following inferences can be drawn from the above statements ?

1. Statement I suggests that spinning was a laborious activity done at home.
2. Statement II suggests the extent of the scientific knowledge that the Harappans possessed.
3. Statement III suggests the emergence of a common property system.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 and 2
- (B) Only 2 and 3
- (C) Only 1 and 3
- (D) 1, 2 and 3

29. Which one of the following statements about the Eka Movement and Bardoli Satyagraha is correct ?

- (A) The Eka Movement was throughout supported and organized by the Congress while Bardoli Satyagraha was initially independent of Congress influence and was only in the last stages supported by the Congress.
- (B) The Eka Movement was provided leadership by the *taluqdars* of Awadh, whereas the Bardoli Satyagraha was a movement of the landless labourers.

(C) The Bardoli Satyagraha was a campaign against the enhancement of land revenue, while the Eka Movement was a protest against excessive extraction of rents.

(D) The Eka Movement was located in the Varanasi and Mirzapur districts of the present-day UP, while the Bardoli Satyagraha took place in Saurashtra.

30. Consider the following statements about the Rigvedic period :

- I. Irrigation from wells allowed agriculture to expand away from flood plains and strips on river margins into the present Punjab and Haryana plains having underground water levels reasonably close to the surface.
- II. Draught-animal power was employed to draw up water out of the wells.

Which of the following information support/supports the above statements ?

1. There is evidence in the *Rigveda* of the use of *ashma chakra* (stone pulley wheel) and *ahava* (strapped wooden pails) to draw up water.
2. Mention has been made in the *Rigveda* of the use of implements like *parashu/kulisha* (axe) and *datra/sreni* (sickle).
3. There is a history of the use of ox, even before the *Rigveda*, for ploughing the land and pulling the carts.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 and 2
- (B) 1, 2 and 3
- (C) Only 1 and 3
- (D) Only 3

31. Consider the following assertion :

In the Pleistocene period either the Yamuna once flowed into the Indus, or the Sutlej flowed into the Yamuna and one major tributary of either had shifted from the Ganga to the Indus or *vice versa*.

Which of the following is/are the basis of the above assertion ?

1. The *Nadi-Sukta* of the *Rigveda*
2. The explorations of the Sutlej and the Yamuna by Robert Bruce Foote
3. The presence of the same species of dolphins in both the Indus and the Ganga river systems.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
- (B) Only 2
- (C) 1 and 2
- (D) 3

32. What does an empty seat represent in early Buddhist iconography ?

- (A) The meditation of the Buddha
- (B) The Buddha's First Sermon
- (C) The Buddha's *Mahaparinibbana*
- (D) The Buddha's *Mahabhinishkramana*

33. Which of the following pairs of ancient and modern names of rivers is/are correctly matched ?

1. Vitasta : Chenab
2. Asikni : Jhelum
3. Parushni : Ravi
4. Yavyavati : Beas

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1 and 2
- (B) 3 and 4
- (C) Only 3
- (D) Only 4

34. Which of the following statements on the Amaravati Stupa and its relief sculpture is/are correct ?

1. It was located in the lower Krishna valley.
2. In India, it was next only to the Sanchi Stupa in size.
3. The Amaravati school of sculpture made a lasting impact on the later South Indian sculpture, and its products were carried to Sri Lanka and South-east Asia.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
- (B) Only 1 and 3
- (C) Only 2 and 3
- (D) 1, 2 and 3

35. Which of the following pairs of the king and his dynasty in early historical Tamilakam is/are not correctly matched ?

1. Senguttuvan : Chera
2. Udiyanjeral : Chola
3. Nedunjeliam : Pandya

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1 and 2 (B) Only 2
(C) 1 and 3 (D) Only 3

36. Which of the following factors contributed to the formation of the Forward Bloc by Subhas Chandra Bose in 1939 ?

1. Bose failed to win the confidence of Mahatma Gandhi.
2. The Congress Left was disunited and failed to support Bose.
3. The Communists did not support Bose in his endeavours.
4. The supporters of M.N. Roy and socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan preferred Congress unity to supporting Bose.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
(B) 1, 2 and 4
(C) 1, 3 and 4
(D) Only 2 and 4

37. Consider the following statements regarding the British policy in Awadh immediately after its annexation 1856 :

1. The *taluqdars* were dispossessed of their estates but allowed to retain their arms and forts.
2. A Summary Revenue Settlement was made in 1856 assuming that the *taluqdars* were outsiders.
3. The British believed in taking revenue directly from the peasants by removing the *taluqdars*.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) Only 2 and 3
(B) Only 1 and 3
(C) 1, 2 and 3
(D) Only 2

38. Consider the following assertion :

The genesis of political alliances based on community lay in the very nature of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, 1919.

Which of the following statements support/supports the above assertion ?

1. Reforms retained and extended the principle of separate electorates.
2. Separate electorates were supposed to counter Indian nationalism, which was growing stronger.
3. Deprived classes rallied around the favours inherent in separate electorates.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 2
(D) 1, 2 and 3

39. Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur, the famous classical singer from Karnataka, represented the :

- (A) Agra Gharana
(B) Gwalior Gharana
(C) Patiala Gharana
(D) Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana

40. In which one among the following texts does the term *kshetra-patni* ('mistress of the field') originate ?

- (A) *Rigveda*
(B) *Atharvaveda*
(C) *Ashtadhyayi*
(D) *Arthashastra*

41. Mr. X, a senior officer, was overseeing a critical vaccination programme during a pandemic. He found that a private service provider responsible for vaccine distribution was compromising on quality to make profits. Despite immense pressure to manage the issue due to vested interests, he raised his voice based on the principles of public administration which he learnt during various training programmes attended across his career. He reported the issue to the appropriate vigilance authority and halted the contract to ensure citizen welfare.

Which one among the following principles of public administration was most strongly demonstrated by Mr. X's actions ?

- (A) *Esprit de corps*
(B) Equity
(C) Accountability
(D) Delegation

42. In a multi-ethnic district where both economic competition and historical grievances frequently led to community tensions, a flashpoint has arisen with a Government decision to allocate land for a waste management facility near a tribal hamlet, sparking protests by the tribal community, which claimed that the land was sacred and critical to their cultural identity. At the same time, urban residents and local industries supported the project, citing severe solid waste challenges and health concerns due to lack of a proper disposal site. The conflict has escalated with road blockades, social media campaigns, and allegations of police excesses.

As a responsible Government official, you are tasked with resolving the situation through mediation, ensuring a sustainable outcome that balances environmental needs, tribal rights, and urban public health.

Consider the following statements with reference to the above :

1. A successful conflict resolution process must begin with acknowledging the cultural concerns of the protesting tribal community before discussing technical alternatives.
2. The Government should move ahead with the project without delay to address urban health concerns, which outweigh the sentiments of a small group.
3. Creating a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform including tribal leaders, environmental experts, and municipal representatives—to build mutual understanding and help de-escalate tensions.
4. Conducting an independent Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and sharing findings transparently with both sides to facilitate evidence-based decision-making.

Which of the statements given above would contribute to the resolution process ?

- (A) Only 1, 3 and 4
- (B) Only 2, 3 and 4
- (C) Only 1 and 2
- (D) 1, 2, 3 and 4

43. Ms. X is a mid-level civil service official working in the urban development department of a major city. Recently, she was involved in approving a contract for a public infrastructure project—a new community park. During the approval process, she received a piece of confidential information indicating that one of the shortlisted contractors had a history of poor workmanship and allegations of corruption in other cities, though nothing had been legally proven. The Head of the Department, Mr. Y, advised her not to disclose this information to the project committee or the public because it could delay the project and damage the city's reputation. However, Ms. X believed that withholding such information compromised transparency and public trust.

What amongst the following should Ms. X do now ?

1. Immediately disclose the information to the project committee and the public.
2. Recommend removing the contractor from the shortlist to protect the project's integrity.
3. Propose a 'limited disclosure' to an oversight committee, while keeping the information confidential from the public for the time being.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 and 2
- (B) Only 3
- (C) Only 2 and 3
- (D) 1, 2 and 3

44. 'X' was addressing a seminar on the meaning of the term 'law' as provided under Article 13, Part III of the Constitution of India. 'X' explained that the meaning of the term 'law' in the Constitution of India was very comprehensive. It included ordinances, orders and even rules and regulations. 'Y' pointed

out that the term 'law' in Article 13 also included custom or usage having in the territory of India the force of law, to which 'X' was not convinced.

Based on the above, select the correct conclusion from the options given below :

- (A) 'X' is correct in the interpretation of law, including the view on non-inclusion of custom.
- (B) The view of 'Y' that 'law' included custom is not correct
- (C) The views of both X' and 'Y' are correct
- (D) The view of only 'Y' is correct

45. Consider the following statements with reference to the Constitution of India :

1. There is no Article in the Constitution of India that specifies that the Constitution of India will be officially called the 'Constitution of India'.
2. There is no Article in the Constitution of India that specifies that the Indian Independence Act, 1947 and the Government of India Act, 1935 stand repealed.
3. There is no Article in the Constitution of India that mentions 26th January, 1950 as the date of the commencement of the Constitution of India.

Which one of the following conclusions based on the above statements is correct ?

- (A) All three statements are correct
- (B) There is no correct statement
- (C) There are two correct statements that include statement 3
- (D) There is only one correct statement

46. Which of the following statements with regard to the persons with disabilities in India is/are correct ?

1. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, an Act passed by the Parliament of India in 2018, mandates reservation in education and employment, places a

legal duty on Governments to ensure accessibility and non-discrimination.

2. The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan focusses on achieving universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities across three key domains—built infrastructure, transport systems and information and communication technology.
3. The National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC) is a public sector organisation set up by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs as a not-for-profit company to promote entrepreneurship among Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1 and 2
- (B) Only 2
- (C) 1 and 3
- (D) Only 1

47. Consider the following statements about the provisions pertaining to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in India :

1. Provisions regarding the administration of the Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram are given in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India.
2. Some tribes of India are entitled to exemption from paying Income Tax on certain incomes.
3. The Constitution of India provides for reservation of seats in Panchayats for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Which one of the following conclusions based on the above statements is correct ?

- (A) There are two correct statements, that include statement 2
- (B) There are two correct statements, that are statements 1 and 3
- (C) There is only one correct statement
- (D) All three statements are correct

48. Consider the following statements in respect of questions asked by the Members in the Parliament of India :

1. Unstarred questions are those to which a Member desires an oral answer in the House.
2. Starred questions are those to which a Member desires a written answer.
3. No supplementary question can be asked on an unstarred question.

Which one of the following conclusions based on the above statements is correct ?

- (A) All the three statements are correct
- (B) There are two correct statements, that include statement 2
- (C) There is only one correct statement
- (D) There is no correct statement

49. Consider the following statements about the Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of the Parliament of India :

1. Although, members of this Committee are elected from both Houses of Parliament, the Chairperson of this Committee is appointed by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
2. Twenty members are elected by the Rajya Sabha and ten members by the Lok Sabha.
3. No Minister, except for the Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, is eligible to be a member of this Committee.
4. Members are elected for a fixed term of two years from the date they enter their office.

Which one of the following conclusions based on the above statements is correct ?

- (A) There are four correct statements
- (B) There is only one correct statement, that is statement 2
- (C) There are two correct statements, that include statement 1
- (D) There is no correct statement

50. Consider the following statements about Mission Sudarshan Chakra of India :

1. It aims to enhance India's air defence, ballistic missile defence and aerial offensive capabilities.
2. This Mission is being designed to enhance rapid, precise and powerful defence responses, reinforcing India's strategic autonomy.
3. One of the aims of this Mission is to cover all public places of India by an expanded nationwide security shield by 2035.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
- (B) Only 1 and 2
- (C) Only 2 and 3
- (D) Only 1

51. Consider the following statements about river bridges connecting India with neighbouring countries :

1. 'Maitri Setu', built over Feni river, connects Ramgarh in India with Sabroom in Bangladesh.
2. Jhulaghat suspension bridge connects India with Myanmar.
3. Mechi bridge and its approaches connect Panitanki Bypass in India with Kakarvitta in Nepal.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) 1 and 2
- (B) 2 and 3
- (C) Only 1
- (D) Only 3

52. Which of the following statements about a Zero First Information Report (Zero FIR) under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 is/are correct ?

1. A Zero FIR can be lodged at a police station, even though the place of commission of a cognizable/ non-cognizable offence is outside the territorial jurisdiction of that police station.
2. The Officer-in-Charge of the police station where a Zero FIR has been lodged may,

with the permission of the competent authority, initiate a preliminary enquiry.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
- (B) Only 2 and 3
- (C) Only 1
- (D) Only 2

53. With reference to the organisations under the Government of India, consider for following details :

S. No.	Organisation	Function	Controlling Union Ministry
1.	Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB)	To coordinate between various law enforcement agencies	Ministry of Home Affairs
2.	Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO)	To investigate complex corporate frauds	Ministry of Finance
3.	Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)	To preserve values in public life and ensure the health of the national economy	Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension

In how many of the above rows are the given details correctly matched ?

- (A) 1
- (B) 2
- (C) 3
- (D) None

54. Which of the following international conventions have not been ratified by India ?

1. Employment Policy Convention.
2. Abolition of Forced Labour Convention.
3. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
4. Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.
5. Convention on Reduction of Statelessness.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 2 and 4
- (B) 1 and 2
- (C) Only 3 and 4
- (D) 3, 4 and 5

55. Consider the following statements with respect to the AI Impact Summit, 2026 held in New Delhi :

1. The Summit's intellectual framework was based on three foundational Sutras : People, Planning and Progress.
2. The Preamble of the Summit stresses Democratising AI Resources, which acknowledges the Charter for Democratic Diffusion of AI as a binding framework to support locally relevant innovation and strengthen resilient AI ecosystems while respecting national laws.
3. The New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact was structured around seven Chakras (Pillars), which included Access for Social Empowerment, AI for Science, and Secure and Trusted AI.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
(B) Only 1 and 2
(C) Only 2 and 3
(D) Only 3

56. Which of the following connectivity projects is/are a part of cooperation between India and the ASEAN member countries ?

1. Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project.
2. IMT Trilateral Highway.
3. Agartala-Akhaura Rail Line

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1 and 2 (B) 2 and 3
(C) 1 and 3 (D) Only 2

57. Match List-I with List-II and select the answer using the code given below the Lists :

List-I

(Project Supported by India)

- (a) Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project
- (b) Restoration of Stor Palace
- (c) District Hospital at Dickoya
- (d) Institute of Security and Law Enforcement Studies

List-II

(Country)

1. Maldives
2. Afghanistan
3. Bhutan
4. Sri Lanka

Codes :

- | | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| (B) | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| (C) | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| (D) | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |

58. Which of the following items of defence hardware is/are manufactured in India ?

1. Su-30 MKI Fighter Jets
2. T-90 MK-III Tanks
3. Akula Class Submarine

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1 and 2 (B) 1 and 3
(C) Only 1 (D) Only 2

59. Consider the following statements about platforms for multi-lateral co-operation :

1. The 'Colombo Process' is a regional consultative process in which member states take binding decisions by consensus.
2. The 'Abu Dhabi Dialogue' is a voluntary non-binding consultative process among Asian countries of labour origin and destination to facilitate regional cooperation on contractual labour mobility.
3. The 'Global Forum for Migration and Development', created upon the proposal of a former UN Secretary General, is a voluntary forum whose decisions are non-binding in nature.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
(B) Only 1 and 3
(C) Only 2 and 3
(D) Only 2

60. Consider the following UN organisations/agencies :

1. World Food Programme
2. United Nations Children's Fund
3. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
4. International Labour Organisation

How many of the above has/ have been awarded the Nobel Prize twice ?

- (A) 1 (B) 2
(C) 3 (D) 4

61. Match List-I with List-II and select the answer using the code given below the Lists :

List-I

(UN Peacekeeping Operation)

- (a) UNMIL
- (b) MINURCAT
- (c) MINUSTAH
- (d) UNMISSET

List-II

(Period of Operation)

1. 2007-2010
2. 2002-2005
3. 2003-2018
4. 2004-2017

Codes :

- | | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| (B) | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| (C) | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| (D) | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 |

62. Match List-I with List-II and select the answer using the code given below the Lists :

List-I

(BIMSTEC Centre/Establishment)

- (a) BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory
- (b) BIMSTEC Energy Centre
- (c) BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate
- (d) BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility

List-II,

(Location)

1. Noida
2. Bengaluru
3. Colombo
4. Thimphu

Codes :

- | | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| (B) | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| (C) | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| (D) | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

63. Which one of the following pairs is not correctly matched ?

Indian Army Headquarters Corps

- (A) 3 Corps : Dimapur
- (B) 4 Corps : Tezpur
- (C) 14 Corps : Leh
- (D) 33 Corps : Srinagar

64. Which of the following statements with respect to the Revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) is/are correct ?

1. The period of its implementation is 1st April, 2021 to 31st March, 2026.
2. The key objective of the Revamped RGSA is to develop the governance capabilities of the Panchayati Raj Institutions to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. The share of the Central funding for the Revamped RGSA is 100% for all States and Union Territories.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1 and 2 (B) Only 2
(C) 1 and 3 (D) 2 and 3

65. Which of the following countries are members of the European Union ?

1. Belarus 2. Poland
3. Germany 4. Switzerland

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1, 2 and 4
(B) Only 1 and 4
(C) 2 and 3
(D) Only 2 and 4

66. Match List-I with List-II and select the answer using the code given below the Lists :

List-I

(Interpol Notice)

- (a) Silver Notice
(b) Blue Notice
(c) Black Notice
(d) Green Notice

List-II

(Description)

1. To seek information on unidentified bodies.
2. To collect additional information about a person's identity, location, or activities in relation to a criminal investigation.
3. To provide warning about a person's criminal activities, where the person is considered to be a possible threat to public safety.
4. To identify and trace criminal assets.

Codes :

- | | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| (B) | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| (C) | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| (D) | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

67. Which of the following statements in relation to NIRANTAR (National Institute for Research and Application of Natural Resources to Transform, Adapt and Build Resilience), a platform of institutions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, is/are correct ?

1. Ecosystem Survey and Analysis is a vertical under this platform, the lead institute of which is Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata.
2. Research and Management of Ecosystem Service is a vertical under this platform, the lead institute of which is Central Zoo Authority, New Delhi.
4. Capacity Development Support is a vertical under this platform, the lead institute of which is Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
(B) Only 1 and 3
(C) Only 2
(D) Only 3

68. The Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany visited India in January, 2026. Which of the following is/are not correct in terms of outcomes of this visit ?

1. Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the All India Institute of Ayurveda and the University of Hamburg.
2. Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Youth Hockey Development between Hockey India and the German Hockey Federation.
3. Establishment of a bilateral dialogue mechanism on the Indo-Pacific.
4. Opening of an Honorary Consul of Germany in Lucknow.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 2 and 3 (B) 1 and 4
(C) 3 and 4 (D) Only 1

69. Which of the following statements about DHRUV64 is/are correct ?

1. It is the third chip fabricated under the DIR-V programme with an overall aim to enable the creation of microprocessors for India.
2. It is India's first home-grown 1.0 GHz, 64-bit dual-core microprocessor.

Select the answer using the code given below :

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

70. The Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) recently introduced a national standard to test and assess bomb disposal system. Which of the following statements with regard to this system is/are correct ?

1. The new standard is known as IS 19445 : 2025.
2. It will improve interoperability of equipment across agencies.
3. It was developed by TBRL, DRDO in collaboration with the 30th Central Scientific Research Institute, Russia.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 2
(D) Only 1

71. 'X', born in the UK, was conferred the Nobel Prize in 2025. He was a professor in an American University when this prize was announced. Identify 'X' :

- (A) Michel H. Devoret
(B) Richard Robson
(C) John Clarke
(D) Joel Mokyr

72. Which of the following statements with regard to the Grand Slam Tennis Tournaments is/are correct ?

1. The tournaments have a shared governance structure establishing the partnership among the four Grand Slam tournaments.

2. They are open for entry to all internationally ranked tennis players above the age of 14.
3. There is a limitation on the number of 'Wild Cards' a player may receive to compete in a Grand Slam Tournament.
- Select the answer using the code given below :
- (A) Only 1 and 2
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1
(D) 1, 2 and 3
73. Which one of the following pairs of semiconductor plants in India and their locations is not correctly matched ?
(A) CG Power and Industrial Solutions Pvt. Ltd. in partnership with Renesas Electronics and STARS Microelectronics —Gujarat
(B) Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Pvt. Ltd. —Assam
(C) HCL-Foxconn Joint Venture India Chip Ltd. —Madhya Pradesh
(D) SicSem Pvt. Ltd. —Odisha
74. Which of the following statements with regard to India's indigenous new high resolution weather model, the 'Bharat Forecast System', is/are correct ?
1. Its objective is to generate forecasts at the Panchayats cluster level.
2. It was developed by IIT Delhi.
- Select the answer using the code given below :
- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2
(C) Both 1 and 2
(D) Neither 1 nor 2
75. Consider the following statements with regard to the film 'Boong' :
1. The film has recently won the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Award in the Children's and Family Film category.
2. The film is directed by Lakshmi Priya Devi.
3. This is the first Indian film to win a BAFTA award in the Children's and Family Film category.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?
(A) 1, 2 and 3
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 2
(D) Only 3
76. Which of the following statements regarding the features of blockchain technology are correct ?
1. Records stored in the database may be made visible to relevant stakeholders without risk of alteration.
2. Copies of the entire database are stored on multiple computers on a network, syncing within seconds.
3. Consortium blockchain is a blend of public and private blockchains allowing selective data access.
4. Mathematical algorithms make it impossible to change or delete any data once recorded and accepted.
- Select the answer using the code given below :
- (A) 1 and 3
(B) Only 2 and 4
(C) 1, 2 and 4
(D) Only 1 and 4
77. An e-commerce revenue model where the seller has control over pricing but doesn't keep products in stock and instead transfers customer orders and shipment details to a third party supplier, who then ships the goods directly to the customer, is called :
(A) Dropshipping Model
(B) Affiliate Revenue Model
(C) Transaction Free Revenue Model
(D) Agency Revenue Model
78. Which one of the following correctly represents the three key sub-indices of the Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) ?
(A) Credit access, Insurance depth and Pension coverage
(B) Banking access, GDP contribution and Financial literacy
(C) Access, Usage and Quality
(D) Access, Affordability and Transparency
79. Which one of the following best describes the key objective of India's 'Open Network for Digital Commerce' (ONDC) initiative ?
(A) To allow government control over all digital commerce transactions
(B) To replace private e-commerce players
(C) To break the dominance of large e-commerce platforms by enabling interoperability across networks
(D) To mandate UPI-based payments for all online transactions
80. Which one of the following statements about Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Central Bank Digital Currency (Digital Rupee) is not correct ?
(A) UPI is a real-time payment system but Digital Rupee is akin to sovereign paper currency.
(B) In case of UPI, settlement for end-users happens instantly as the money gets immediately debited or credited but in case of Digital Rupee, there is no settlement as the wallet balance gets transferred to another wallet.
(C) UPI transactions are recorded by banks and reflected in bank statements but in case of Digital Rupee, no data is captured in bank statements as transactions are from one wallet to another.
(D) In both the cases (UPI and Digital Rupee), the liability lies with the users and their respective banks.
81. Which of the following statements about Real-World Assets (RWA) Tokenization are correct ?
1. Tokenization is the process of turning real world assets into digital tokens using blockchain technology.
2. Tokenization of real world assets offers 24 x 7 access, promoting financial inclusion.
3. Tokenization of real world assets will allow the access to high growth investment opportunities for individuals in India.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
- (B) Only 2 and 3
- (C) Only 1 and 2
- (D) Only 1 and 3

82. A bond whose proceeds are used only to finance or refinance a combination of both environmental and social projects is called :

- (A) Green Bond
- (B) Social Bond
- (C) Sustainability Bond
- (D) Sovereign Bond

83. Which of the following statements about M1xchange's role in Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) financing is/are correct ?

- 1. M1xchange provides collateral based loans to MSMEs.
- 2. M1xchange facilitates discounting of invoices and Bills of Exchange for MSMEs.
- 3. M1xchange functions as a credit rating agency for MSMEs.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
- (B) Only 2
- (C) Only 2 and 3
- (D) Only 1

84. Which one of the following best describes the 'Crowding Out Effect' in the context of fiscal policy ?

- (A) A situation where private investment increases due to increased Government spending
- (B) A situation where Government borrowing leads to higher interest rates, which reduces private investment
- (C) A situation where an increase in taxes leads to increased private sector investment
- (D) A situation where Government spending has no impact on aggregate demand

85. Which of the following statements about Rare Earth Elements (REEs) and Critical Minerals is/are correct ?

- 1. Modern technological innovations including Artificial

Intelligence, robotics and space exploration extensively utilise Rare Earth Elements (REEs).

- 2. China has the highest share in mining of REEs followed by India.

- 3. The Government of India launched the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) in 2025 to establish a robust framework for self-reliance in the critical mineral sector.

- 4. Rare Earth Elements are a set of 13 metallic elements.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1 and 3
- (B) Only 3
- (C) 1, 3 and 4
- (D) 1, 2 and 4

86. Which of the following statements about insurance in aviation sector is/are correct ?

- 1. 'Aviation Hull Insurance' covers the physical aircraft, including the body, engine, and on-board equipment.
- 2. Under the Montreal Convention, adopted in 1999 by over 130 countries, including India, airlines are strictly liable to pay compensation to the family/nominee of every deceased passenger without requiring the family to prove fault.

Select the answer using the code given below :

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

87. Which of the following statements about Crowdfunding is/are correct ?

- 1. Crowdfunding is solicitation of funds (small amount) from multiple investors through a web-based platform or social networking site for a specific project.
- 2. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are able to raise funds at lower cost of capital without undergoing rigorous procedures.

Select the answer using the code given below :

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

88. With reference to different Committees in India, consider the following details :

S. No.	Committee	Objective	Organisation under which it was formed
1.	R.N. Malhotra Committee	Comprehensive reforms of Insurance sector in India	Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India
2.	L.C. Gupta Committee	Preparing a roadmap for the introduction of derivatives trading in India	Securities and Exchange Board of India
3.	Urjit R. Patel Committee	Preparing a roadmap for reforming bank lending to the Housing sector	Reserve Bank of India
4.	Y.H. Malegam Committee	Preparing a roadmap for reforms in Microfinance sector in India	Reserve Bank of India

In which of the above rows are all the details correctly matched ?

- (A) Only 2
- (B) 2 and 3
- (C) 1, 3 and 4
- (D) 2 and 4

89. Consider the following statements about the Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) in India :

- 1. NBFCs cannot accept demand deposits.
- 2. All the NBFCs operating in India have to be registered with the RBI.
- 3. NBFCs form part of the payment and settlement system and can issue cheque drawn on itself.
- 4. Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) is not available to the depositors of deposit taking NBFCs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) 1 and 4 (B) 1, 2 and 3
(C) Only 4 (D) 2, 3 and 4

90. Consider the following statements about Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) :

1. MPI is calculated using Alkire-Foster methodology.
2. MPI calculated by NITI Aayog has a total of twelve indicators.
3. Maternal Health and Bank Account are common indicators in the MPI of NITI Aayog and MPI of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) Only 1 and 2
(B) 1, 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 3
(D) Only 2

91. Which of the following statements with regard to genetic medicine is/are correct ?

1. Genetic medicines correct compensate for the faulty genes responsible for disease.
2. Engineered viruses and lipid nanoparticles are used as carriers of the genetic medicine.
3. Genetic medicines alter the entire DNA sequence.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 2
(D) 1, 2 and 3

92. Which of the following statements with regard to Large Language Model (LLMs) used in machine learning is/are correct ?

1. LLMs assign probabilities to the next possible words and then pick the one with the highest probability.
2. LLMs process data through mathematical optimization to minimise prediction errors.
3. LLMs produce unbiased outputs.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 1 and 2
(C) Only 2 and 3
(D) 1, 2 and 3

93. Which of the following statements with regard to stealth technology is/are correct ?

1. Stealth objects have a very small radar cross-section and are coated with Radar Absorbing Material.
2. Stealth objects can be detected using specific frequencies.
3. Stealth objects are coated with metamaterials to increase the scattering of electromagnetic radiation.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 2
(D) 1, 2 and 3

94. Which of the following statements with regard to Black Boxes used in modern aircrafts is/are correct ?

1. They carry a beacon emitting red light pulses to facilitate underwater detection.
2. They record both the cockpit voice and flight data.
3. Their memory units are made using either stainless steel or titanium.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 2
(D) 1, 2 and 3

95. Which of the following statements with regard to Green Hydrogen is/are correct ?

1. It is decarbonized hydrogen obtained from natural gas reforming combined with carbon capture and storage (CCS).
2. It is produced using electrolysis of water with electricity generated by renewable energy.
3. National Green Hydrogen Mission of India aims for abatement of nearly 50

MMT of annual greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 2
(D) 1, 2 and 3

96. Consider the following statements with regard to involvement of private entities in India's space programme :

1. The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) is an autonomous agency formed to facilitate participation of private entities.
2. Agnikul Cosmos launched the world's first flight using 3D-printed rocket engine.
3. Skyroot Aerospace has developed liquid fuel for GSLV.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 2
(D) 1, 2 and 3

97. Which of the following statements with regard to drone swarms is/are correct ?

1. They use Terahertz band of frequency to communicate with the command centre.
2. Individual drones in the swarm can communicate with other drones in the swarm.
3. GPS Spoofing is a commonly used technique to counter drone swarm attack.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 2
(D) 1, 2 and 3

98. Which of the following statements with regard to Genome-India Project is/are correct ?

1. It is a part of the Human Genome Project.
2. The project is funded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India.

3. Its primary aim is to build a catalogue of genetic diversity of the Indian population.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 2
(D) 1, 2 and 3

99. Which of the following statements with regard to the National Quantum Mission (NQM) is/are correct ?

1. It aims at developing intermediate-scale quantum computers with 50-1000 physical qubits.
2. Its implementation includes setting up of four Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs) in academic and national R&D institutes across India.

Select the answer using the code given below :

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

100. Which of the following statements with regard to India's Deep Ocean Mission is/are correct ?

1. It was launched by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India.
2. Matsya-6000 has been designed to carry 3 people for deep sea exploration.
3. Samudrayaan is a project under this mission.

Select the answer using the code given below :

- (A) Only 1
(B) Only 2 and 3
(C) Only 1 and 2
(D) 1, 2 and 3

Answers with Hints

1. (B)

Relation 1 : This is absolutely correct. Statement II (BUR-4 data) provides real and empirical evidence that reducing emissions is possible and this data provides a practical

foundation for India's long-term Net-Zero strategy (Statement I).

Relation 2 : This is also correct. Statement I talks about a 'long-term' strategy (by 2070), while Statement III considers 'accelerated and short-term' achievement as mandatory. Therefore, the narrow perspective of Statement III contradicts the comprehensive long-term strategy of Statement I.

Relation 3 : Since, Statement III presents a flawed and narrow approach, Statements I and III together cannot establish the premise for long-term sustainability.

2. (B) Unlike gorillas, Hoolock Gibbons are very small, slender, lightweight and compactly built (lesser apes compared to great apes), rather than being heavily built or massive.
3. (D) Mangrove plants are not salt-sensitive, but rather salt-tolerant, and they do not store freshwater. On the contrary, mangrove forests protect coasts by absorbing the velocity of cyclones and intense tidal waves in coastal areas, acting as a natural bio-shield.
4. (D) Vizhinjam (located in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala) is primarily a modern, automated deep-sea cargo/trans-shipment port rather than just a maritime heritage or cruise-tourism hub. Its natural depth and strategic location enable it to reduce dependence on hubs like Colombo, Singapore and Dubai, lower costs and make India much stronger in regional maritime trade.
5. (C) The Satluj is an antecedent river that originates in the Tibetan Plateau (Rakas Tal). It flows through three countries—China (Tibet), India and Pakistan. It contributes immensely to irrigation in the arid regions of Punjab and Pakistan (particularly through the Indira Gandhi Canal and the Bhakra Nangal Project). It does not have any distributary, and it ultimately merges into the Indus in Pakistan.
6. (C) West Bengal shares the longest international border in

India (approximately 2,217 km with Bangladesh). Sikkim and Meghalaya are only two Indian states sharing border with exactly only one other Indian state, West Bengal and Assam, respectively.

7. (A) Tracking technology (such as satellite tagging) helps scientists study the migration routes of birds, rather than showing the path to the birds themselves. Amur Falcons are migratory birds that stop in India for only a few weeks on their way to Africa.
8. (D) The main objective of RAD (Rainfed Area Development) is to enhance productivity, diversify income sources and minimize climate risks in rainfed areas through Integrated Farming Systems (IFS). It is not designed to promote monoculture or paddy-dominated irrigated farming.
9. (C) Oeko-Tex certification empowers Indian exporters to compete in global and high-end markets (especially the European Union and North America) where there is a high demand for chemical-free textiles. By confirming environmental, safety and quality standards, it establishes Eri Silk in premium eco-conscious markets.
10. (B) Bahrain and Qatar are located within the Persian Gulf. The only natural sea route from the Persian Gulf to the open ocean (the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean) is through the narrow Strait of Hormuz.
11. (A)
12. (B) Madhav National Park is an integral part of the larger Ranthambhore-Kuno-Madhav tiger corridor, it does not lie in Rajasthan.
13. (B) In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, maximum precipitation (rainfall) occurs between May and December. The period from January to April is the dry season.
14. (B) Fast-flowing rivers and deep V-shaped valleys are characteristic features of the young and steep-sloped Himalayas

- (new fold mountains), rather than the old peninsular block which has gentle slopes.
15. (B) Statement I does not contradict Statement III. Improvements to traditional infrastructure serve as a foundation upon which modern technological and strategic innovations are built.
 16. (B) The foxtail orchid (*Rhynchosstylis retusa*) is an epiphytic orchid distributed widely across the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.
 17. (C) 18. (B)
 19. (B) Lake Turkana is not located in South Sudan or the Sahara Desert, but primarily in Kenya (Great Eastern African Rift Valley), and a small northern part of it extends into Ethiopia.
 20. (C) Meghalaya's 'Khasi Hills Community REDD+ Project' is India's first such project to be certified by the Plan Vivo standard. This project was launched under local community leadership to prevent deforestation (forest eradication) and to reduce carbon emissions resulting from forest degradation.
 21. (D) In the 72 Melakarta raga system of Carnatic music, the 'Dheera Shankarabharanam' raga is considered the exact equivalent of the 'Bilawal' thaata (or raga) in Hindustani classical music. However, Dheera Shankarabharanam heavily employs the characteristic vibrations and gamakas of the Carnatic style, the Bilawal raga emphasizes meend (glides) and sustained oscillations typical of the Hindustani tradition.
 22. (A) The British government's decision to artificially peg the Rupee-Sterling exchange rate at a higher level (1 shilling 6 pence), acting on the recommendations of the Hilton-Young Commission (1926), was fundamentally a colonial measure. Its primary objective was to safeguard Britain's economic interests, thereby rendering the 'Home Charges' and other remittances paid by India considerably cheaper.
 23. (C) Pali texts (such as the Jataka tales and the Vinaya Pitaka) attest to the regular use of coins like 'Kahapana' (Karshapana), 'Nikkha' (Nishka) and 'Masaka'. The silver punch-marked coins excavated during archaeological diggings materially corroborate these literary references.
 24. (B) The Huchimalligudi temple at Aihole and the Dashavatara temple at Deogarh (of the Gupta period) stand as outstanding early exemplars of the curvilinear shikhara typical of the North Indian 'Nagara style'. In stark contrast, the Malegitti Shivalaya at Badami and the Virupaksha temple at Pattadakal are constructed in the architectural tradition of the South Indian 'Dravida style' (Vimana style).
 25. (B) According to Jain philosophy, souls wandering in the worldly cycle (Samsara) incarnate into only four primary realms of existence (Chaturgati) based on their karmic accumulations:
Deva Gati : Celestial beings enjoying heavenly bliss.
Manushya Gati : Human beings, capable of karmic action and spiritual liberation (Moksha).
Tiryancha Gati : Flora and fauna, including animals, birds and insects.
Naraki Gati : Infernal beings enduring the torments of hell.
 26. (A) The Hallisailasya painting of the Bagh Caves (particularly Cave No. 4, known as 'Rangmahal'), is a magnificent and vibrant historical mural illustrating ancient Indian music, dance and cultural jubilation.
 27. (D) The oldest epigraphic and archaeological evidence of the place-value system in India is found in the Mankani inscriptions of Gujarat (595 CE). By the 9th century, its usage had become prevalent in inscriptions across the entirety of India. Furthermore, owing to Indian cultural diffusion, evidence of its application is also attested in the 7th-century Sanskrit inscriptions of Southeast Asia (such as Cambodia and Indonesia).
 28. (A)
 29. (C) The Bardoli Satyagraha (1928) was spearheaded by Sardar Patel in Gujarat against an unlawful 22% hike in land revenue arbitrarily imposed by the British government. Conversely, the 'Eka Movement' (1921-22) was mobilized by Madari Pasi against the illegal exaction of rents—exceeding the stipulated amount by 50%—by the zamindars from the peasants of Awadh (Uttar Pradesh). In Bardoli, the peasants' direct confrontation was against the administrative policies of the British government. In contrast, the primary targets of the Eka Movement were the local zamindars patronized by the British administration. The Bardoli Satyagraha was entirely predicated on Gandhian principles of non-violence and non-cooperation. On the other hand, the Eka Movement was initially Gandhian but later adopted its own distinct and militant trajectory.
 30. (C) The references to 'Ashma Chakra' (stone pulley) and 'Ahava' (bucket/pail) in the Rigveda attest to the mechanics of drawing water from wells. The history of utilizing oxen for ploughing and pulling carts, which predates the Rigvedic era, provides a logical premise that draught animals must have been employed for the heavy task of drawing voluminous amounts of water from wells. Based on the statements provided in the question, the axe and the sickle bear no direct correlation with well-irrigation.
 31. (D) According to geologists and biologists, the presence of the same unique species of blind dolphin ('*Platanista gangetica*') in both the Indus and Ganges river systems serves as the most compelling biological evidence that these two river networks were interconnected during the Pleistocene epoch, subsequently diverging due to tectonic shifts.
 32. (A) The principal characteristic of early Buddhist art (spanning roughly from the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE) was

its aniconic nature. During this period, the presence of Lord Buddha was represented through symbols rather than in direct anthropomorphic form.

Empty Seat : Symbolizes the Buddha's meditation, attainment of enlightenment (Mahabodhi), and ultimate liberation from worldly fetters.

Bodhi Tree : Symbolizes the supreme enlightenment attained by the Buddha at Bodhgaya.

Dharmachakra (Wheel of Dharma) : Symbolizes his first sermon (Dharmachakrapravartana) delivered at Sarnath.

Footprints : Symbolize the physical footprint of the Buddha on earth and the spiritual path he illuminated.

Stupa : The supreme architectural symbol of the Buddha's Mahaparinirvana (death and ultimate salvation).

33. (C) The accurate nomenclature of ancient rivers and their modern equivalents is as follows : Vitasta (Jhelum); Asikni (Chenab); Parushni (Ravi); Vipasha (Beas). Modern historians (such as F.E. Pargiter) identify the Yavyavati with the contemporary Zhob river, which flows in the Balochistan province of Pakistan.

34. (B) At its zenith, Amaravati stupa surpassed even the Sanchi Stupa in monumental scale and grandeur (the Amaravati Stupa possessed a diameter of approximately 50 meters and a height of about 27 meters, rendering it substantially larger than the main stupa at Sanchi, which has a diameter of roughly 36 meters).

35. (B) According to the historical testimonies of Sangam literature, Senguttuvan (the Red Chera) was an illustrious ruler of the 'Chera dynasty', and Nedunjelayan belonged to the 'Pandya dynasty'. 'Udiyanjeral' was the first historical sovereign of the Chera dynasty. He is also referred to as 'Udiyanjeral Athan'. He is acclaimed for having fed the warriors who participated in the epic battle of the Mahabharata.

36. (B) Despite being elected as the President at the Tripuri Congress Session of 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose failed to secure the confidence of Mahatma Gandhi. There was a conspicuous lack of unity among the leftist factions within the Congress. To avert a schism within the party, supporters of Jayaprakash Narayan (a socialist) and M.N. Roy abandoned Bose, prioritizing the unity of the Congress; consequently, Bose was ultimately compelled to resign and establish the 'Forward Bloc'.

37. (A) Immediately following Lord Dalhousie's annexation of Awadh into the British Empire in 1856, the British sought to dismantle the military might of the taluqdars by demolishing their mud and concrete fortresses and confiscating their weaponry. Subsequently, the British implemented the 'Summary Settlement' of 1856, wherein the taluqdars were treated as interlopers and ousted, facilitating a direct revenue settlement with the actual cultivators (peasants).

38. (D) Montagu - Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 extended the 'separate electorates' not only to Muslims but also to Sikhs, Christians and Anglo-Indians. The primary strategic objective of this policy was to fragment and enfeeble the burgeoning tide of Indian nationalism. Consequently, in the scramble to secure political and economic dividends, various marginalized groups commenced forging community-based alliances, thereby bolstering communalism. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (Government of India Act 1919) did not grant separate electorates to the depressed classes. However, the Act -sis of political awareness and solidarity among the depressed classes regarding their rights.

39. (D)

40. (B) 'Kshetra-patni (Goddess or Mistress of the Field) is a feminine presiding diety introduced in the agricultural hymns of Atharvaveda.

41. (C) In the context of public administration, 'accountability' means that a public servant prioritizes his or her accountability to the public. The actions taken by Mr. X in this situation clearly demonstrate the principle of accountability for the following reasons :

Moral courage and dedication : Mr. X prioritized the public interest (the quality of vaccinations) despite personal pressures and vested interests.

Procedural compliance : Instead of making an arbitrary decision himself, he reported the matter to the Vigilance Authority, which is a standard method of administrative accountability.

Citizen welfare : A public servant's primary responsibility is to the citizens they serve. Stopping the contract was a necessary step to ensure that the quality of health services was not compromised.

42. (A) Dismissing the 'sentiments of a minority' in public administration by calling them a 'minor class' is against administrative impartiality and constitutional morality. In a democratic country like India, forcibly pushing a project forward (coercion) by ignoring the rights of any class in the conflict of 'development versus rights' is not only morally wrong but can also lead to serious social unrest in the future. An effective administrative decision is one that is 'inclusive'.

43. (B) Immediately disclosing incomplete and unverified information publicly (to the public) can create chaos and is against departmental discipline. This can cause unnecessary project delays and legal complications. As a public official, a person should first utilize internal mechanisms rather than directly releasing information to the public.

44. (D) According to Article 13(3)a, the term 'law' in Article 13 includes any Ordinance, order, bye-law, rule, regulation, notification, custom or usage having in the territory of India the force of law.

45. (B) Statement 1 is false because Article 393 under Part XXII of the Constitution states that "This Constitution shall be called the 'Constitution of India.'" Statement 2 is false because Article 395 of the Indian Constitution specifically repeals these two Acts (the Indian Independence Act, 1947 and the Government of India Act, 1935). Statement 3 is false because Article 394 of the Indian Constitution clearly mentions 26 January, 1950 as the date of commencement of the Constitution.
46. (B) The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act was passed by Parliament in 2016, not 2018. The National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC) is a Company wholly owned by the Government of India. It functions under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
47. (A) Sixth Schedule contains special provisions for the administration of tribal areas in the four north-eastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. Members of Scheduled Tribes (ST) residing in specified Northeastern states and Ladakh are exempted from income tax under Section 10(26) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
48. (C) A starred question is one to which a member desires an oral answer from the Minister in the House and is required to be distinguished by him/her with an asterisk. Answer to such a question may be followed by supplementary questions by members. Unstarred questions require written answer and supplementary questions cannot follow.
49. (D) The Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes consists of 30 Members—20 elected by the Lok Sabha and 10 by the Rajya Sabha in accordance with the principle of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote. The Chairperson of the Committee is appointed by the Lok Sabha Speaker from amongst the Members of the Committee. A Minister is not eligible for election to the Committee. The term of the Committee does not exceed one year.
50. (A) Mission Sudarshan Chakra was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day address on August 15, 2025. It aims to provide security under the Sudarshan Chakra Mission by expanding, strengthening and modernizing our national security shield by 2035.
51. (D) 'Maitri Setu' is built over the Feni River, but it connects India's Sabroom (Tripura) to Bangladesh's Ramgarh. The suspension bridge of Jhulaghat is situated on the Mahakali River and connects India (Uttarakhand) to Nepal.
52. (D) Statement I is false because a Zero FIR can be registered only for cognizable offence. Statement II is false because any person can report a cognizable offence to the police orally, in writing or through electronic communication at any police station.
53. (A) The Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB) is India's nodal agency for economic intelligence under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance. Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) functions under the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
54. (*) India has not ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migratory Workers and Members of Their Families (No. 3) and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (No. 5). The Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of civilian persons in time of war was ratified by India in 1950.
55. (D) The India-AI Impact Summit 2026 had three fundamental 'threads' (core principles) – people, planet and progress. 'Planning' is not one of them. The conference emphasized 'democratization of AI resources', but the Charter for the Democratic Diffusion of AI is explicitly recognized as a voluntary and non-binding framework, not a binding framework.
56. (A) The Agartala-Akhaura railway line is not part of India-ASEAN cooperation. It is a bilateral cross-border infrastructure project exclusively between India and Bangladesh (not a member of ASEAN.) It connects Agartala (the capital of Tripura) to the Akhaura railway junction in Bangladesh, reducing travel distance between Northeast India and West Bengal.
57. (B)
58. (A) Akula-class nuclear submarines were manufactured in the Soviet Union and Russia at two primary shipyards: Sevastopol and Amur Shipbuilding Plant in Komsomolsk-on-Amur.
59. (C) Colombo Process is a Regional Consultative Process comprising of 12 Member States of Asia (countries of origin of migrant workers) and it provides an important platform for consultations on the management of overseas employment and contractual labour. The Process is non-binding and decision-making is by consensus.
60. (A) The UNHCR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize twice in 1954 for its work in aiding European refugees following World War II and in 1981 for its humanitarian assistance to refugees globally.
61. (B) 62. (C)
63. (D) The Indian Army's 33 Corps, also known as the Trishakti Corps, is headquartered in Sukna, a military cantonment near Siliguri, West Bengal. It operates under the Eastern Command of the Indian Army.
64. (B) The Revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) implementation period was from 1st April, 2022 to 31st March, 2026. The total financial outlay of revamped RGSA scheme for the period was ₹ 5911 crore in which Central

share is ₹ 3700 crore and State matching share is ₹ 2211 crore.

65. (C) Among the following options, Belarus and Switzerland are not the members of the European Union.
66. (C)
67. (B) Under the 'NIRANTAR' platform of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the lead institute for the Ecosystem Service Research and Management vertical is not the Central Zoo Authority, but the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), Dehradun, or a related forestry institute.
68. (B) During the visit of German Chancellor to India in January 2026, MoU between the All India Institute of Ayurveda and Charite University, Germany, was signed and opening of Honorary Consul of Germany in Ahmedabad was announced.
69. (C) DHRUV64 is the third chip fabricated under the DIR-V Programme with an overall aim to enable creation of Micro-processors for the future in India. It is India's first 1.0 GHz, 64-bit dual-core Microprocessor.
70. (C) Indian Standard on Bomb Disposal Systems (IS 19445 : 2025) has been developed through a consensus-based process under the Arms and Ammunition for Civilian Use Sectional Committee (PGD 28). For this purpose, the Bomb Disposal Systems Panel (PGD 28/P1) was constituted under the convenorship of TBRL, DRDO.
71. (C) John Clarke, born in 1942 in Cambridge (UK), was one of the three awardees of the Nobel Prize in Physics 2025, awarded for the discovery of macroscopic quantum mechanical tunnelling and energy quantisation in an electric circuit.
72. (A) The four Grand Slam Tournaments are open for entry to all internationally ranked tennis players with a ranking of 500 or better based on merit and without discrimination. There is no limitation as to the number of

Wild Cards a player may receive to compete in the Grand Slam Tournaments.

73. (C) HCL-Foxconn Joint Venture India Chip Limited is located in Jewar, Uttar Pradesh.
74. (A) The Bharat Forecast System (BharatFS) was developed by a team of scientists from Indian institutions like IITM-Pune, with support from the NCMRWF-Noida and the India Meteorological Department (IMD).
75. (A)
76. (C) Consortium Blockchain is semi-decentralized, governed jointly by multiple organisations for shared data management and validation. Hybrid blockchain is a blend of public and private blockchain, allowing a selective data access.
77. (A) The dropshipping model is an e-commerce business framework where the seller maintains no inventory or stock. When a customer places an order, the seller forwards it to a third-party supplier, who ships the product directly to the customer. The seller's primary profit is the margin between the retail selling price and the supplier's wholesale price, with the seller retaining control over pricing.
78. (C) The 'Financial Inclusion Index' is released by the Reserve Bank of India to measure the extent of financial inclusion. This index is constructed using three broad parameters (sub-indices) : Access, Usage and Quality.
The index is measured on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 denotes complete financial exclusion and 100 represents complete financial inclusion. As it has no base year, the index reflects cumulative progress over time. The RBI publishes this index annually in the month of July.
79. (C) The Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is a pioneering initiative by the Ministry of Commerce's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). Its primary objective is to dismantle e-commerce monopolies. By not restricting buyers and sellers to

a single application, it enhances visibility for small traders while providing consumers with greater choice and the advantages of increased competition.

80. (D) Statement (D) is not correct because the nature of liability of both systems is completely different.

Digital Rupee (₹) : This is a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) issued directly by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). It is a digital form of sovereign currency and is recorded as a direct liability on the balance sheet of the RBI, not of commercial banks.

UPI : This is an account-based electronic fund transfer network. The money in this is deposited in commercial banks. This means that the liability for this money lies with the respective commercial banks, not the central bank.

81. (A) 'Real-World Asset' (RWA) tokenization is the process in which physical assets (such as real estate or gold) are converted into digital tokens using blockchain technology, making fractional ownership possible. This system removes geographical and capital barriers by providing 24x7 access, thereby promoting financial inclusion. Additionally, tokenization makes it easier for Indian investors to access those high-growth global investment assets that were previously limited only to large institutional investors, opening up new opportunities for portfolio diversification.
82. (C)
 - Green Bond → Only for environmental projects
 - Social Bond → Only for social projects
 - Sustainability Bond → For financing/refinancing both environmental and social types of projects
 - Sovereign Bond → Bond issued by the government
83. (B) M1xchange is an RBI-approved Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) platform, aimed at providing quick working capital to Micro,

Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This platform facilitates the discounting of invoices and bills of exchange issued by MSMEs, allowing them to receive funds without waiting for the payment period to conclude.

84. (B) The 'crowding-out effect' refers to a phenomenon in fiscal policy where increased government borrowing to fund higher expenditures leads to a tightening of credit markets. As the government increases its demand for loanable funds, the cost of borrowing—interest rates—rises. Consequently, these higher rates make borrowing more expensive for private companies and individual investors, ultimately leading to a reduction or 'crowding out' of private sector investment.
85. (A) China is the world's largest producer of Rare Earth Minerals (REEs), accounting for 69% of global mined production and 90% of global refined production. It is distantly followed by USA. REEs are a group of 17 metallic elements, which includes the 15 lanthanides, and scandium and yttrium.
86. (C) 'Aviation Hull Insurance' offers coverage for the physical integrity of an aircraft, including its body (hull), engines, onboard equipment and other vital components. This policy provides protection in instances of accidents, theft, or other forms of physical damage. Furthermore, under the Montreal Convention—ratified by over 130 nations, including India—airlines are held to a 'strict liability' standard up to specified limits regarding passenger death or injury during international travel. This framework ensures that the families or nominees of affected passengers are entitled to compensation without the burden of proving airline negligence.
87. (C) Crowdfunding entails financing projects by pooling small contributions from a large number of individuals via web-based platforms or social net-

working sites. Unlike conventional business loans, many crowdfunding platforms do not require heavy collateral or a flawless credit history. MSMEs can secure working capital or project-specific funds without giving up company ownership or equity.

88. (D) **R.N. Malhotra Committee** : This committee was constituted by the Government of India to propose reforms in the insurance sector, not by the IRDAI. (However, the IRDAI was subsequently established based on the recommendations of this committee).

Urjit R. Patel Committee : Established to review the monetary policy framework, not for housing loans.

89. (A) According to the Reserve Bank of India, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) are prohibited from accepting demand deposits. Registration with the RBI is not mandatory for all NBFCs; specific entities such as Chit Funds, insurance companies, and venture capital firms, are governed by separate regulatory authorities and are exempt from RBI registration. NBFCs do not participate in the payment and settlement system and are unauthorized to issue checks in their own name. Furthermore, the deposit insurance provided by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) is exclusively available to bank depositors and does not extend to depositors of NBFCs.
90. (A) The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is calculated at both global and national levels using the Alkire-Foster method. The NITI Aayog's National MPI comprises a total of 12 indicators across three dimensions: Health, Education, and Standard of Living. While 'Maternal Health' and 'Bank Account' are additional indicators specific to India's National MPI, they are not included among the 10 indicators utilized in the UNDP's Global MPI.

91. (C) Gene therapy aims to fix a faulty gene or replace it with a healthy gene to try to cure disease or make the body better able to fight disease. However, it does not alter the entire DNA structure.

92. (B) Numerous studies over the last several years have demonstrated that LLMs exhibit biases in their responses.

93. (C) Stealth technology is specifically engineered to achieve a very small radar cross-section (RCS). They are coated with metamaterials to manipulate and absorb electromagnetic (radar) and thermal (infrared) waves. Stealth aircraft are shaped to avoid detection by high-frequency beams, microwave radar and are less stealthy to meter wave radar.

94. (B) Black Boxes use an Underwater Locator Beacon (ULB). When submerged, these beacons emit ultrasonic acoustic pulses (sound) that travel through water, allowing search teams to locate the wreckage using sonar.

95. (B) Blue Hydrogen is obtained from natural gas with applied carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies.

96. (C) Skyroot Aerospace's liquid-fueled rocket engine technology is designed for their proprietary Vikram series of small-satellite launch vehicles, not for ISRO's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV).

97. (B) To communicate with their command centres, swarm drones currently on conventional Radio Frequencies (RF), 5G cellular networks and satellite links.

98. (B) GenomeIndia, launched in 2020, is a national initiative funded by the Department of Biotechnology, which aims to build a comprehensive catalogue of genetic variations that reflect the unique diversity of the Indian population. It is not the part of global-level Human Genome Project (1990-2003).

Continued on Page 168

Forthcoming B.P.S.C. Integrated 72nd Combined (Pre.) Competitive Exam

1. Out of the 16 Mahajanapadas of the sixth century BCE, which statement is incorrect regarding the Mahajanapadas located within the geographical area of present-day Bihar?

(A) The capital of Anga Mahajanapada was Champa, which was famous for its trade and commerce

(B) The Vajji confederacy was a union of 8 clans (Confederacy), among which the Licchavis, Videhans, and Jnatikas were prominent

(C) The initial capital of Magadha Mahajanapada was Pataliputra, which was later shifted to Rajagriha for strategic security

(D) During the time of the Buddha, the Licchavi capital Vaishali was one of the oldest republics in the world

(E) Not attempted

2. During Mahatma Gandhi's historic 'Champaran Satyagraha' (1917), which of the following national or provincial leaders did not visit Champaran as an associate of Gandhiji?

(A) Dr. Rajendra Prasad

(B) J.B. Kripalani

(C) Maulana Mazharul Haque

(D) Jayaprakash Narayan

(E) Not attempted

3. Match List-I with List-II:

List-I

(Centers of the 1857 Revolt)

(a) Patna City

(b) Jagdishpur (Arrah)

(c) Gaya

(d) Rohtas

List-II

(Local leaders in Bihar)

1. Ali Karim

2. Amar Singh

3. Peer Ali

4. Babu Kunwar Singh

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

(a) (b) (c) (d)

(A) 3 4 1 2

(B) 4 3 2 1

(C) 3 1 4 2

(D) 1 4 3 2

(E) Not attempted

4. Regarding the 'Karnata Dynasty' that ruled the Mithila region of medieval Bihar, which of the following statements is incorrect?

(A) The Karnata dynasty was founded by Nanyadeva in 1097 CE

(B) The capital of this dynasty was located at Simraungadh (in the Terai of Nepal)

(C) At the time of Bakhtiyar Khaji's invasion of Bihar and Bengal, the ruler of the Karnata dynasty was Harisimha Deva

(D) The reign of the Karnata dynasty is considered the 'Golden Age of Maithili Culture'

(E) Not attempted

5. The formal establishment of the 'Bihar Socialist Party' took place in 1934 at the Anjuman Islamia Hall in Patna. Who were its first President and General Secretary respectively?

(A) J.P. Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia

(B) Acharya Narendra Deva and Jayaprakash Narayan

(C) Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and N.G. Ranga

(D) Phulan Prasad Varma and Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha

(E) Not attempted

6. During the Quit India Movement (1942), what was the main objective behind the formation of the 'Azad Dasta' by Jayaprakash Narayan (J.P.) in the Terai regions of Nepal (Rajvilas forest)?

(A) To systematically assassinate British officials

(B) To disrupt war efforts by destroying communication and transportation facilities (Guerrilla Warfare)

(C) To establish a parallel government along the lines of Chittu Pandey in Ballia

(D) To provide supplies and military assistance to Subhas Chandra Bose's Azad Hind Fauj

(E) Not attempted

7. Consider the following statements regarding the Haryanka dynasty of the Magadha Empire:

I. Apart from diplomatic matrimonial alliances, Bimbisara conquered the Anga Mahajanapada and annexed it into Magadha.

II. Ajatashatru used new military weapons named 'Rathamusala' and 'Mahashilakantaka' to defeat the Vajji confederacy.

III. The Haryanka dynasty is also known as the 'Patricide Dynasty' in Indian history.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

(A) Only I and II

(B) Only II and III

(C) Only I and III

(D) All I, II and III

(E) Not attempted

8. Two statements are given below, one labeled as Assertion (A) and the other as Reason (R):

Assertion (A): The First Buddhist Council was organized in 483 BCE in the Saptaparni Cave of Rajagriha (Rajgir).

Reason (R): Its main objective was the compilation of the Buddha's teachings into the 'Sutta Pitaka' and 'Vinaya Pitaka', which received the full royal patronage of the Magadha king Ajatashatru.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

(A) Both (A) and (R) are correct, and (R) is the correct explanation of (A)

- (C) Only II and III
(D) All I, II and III
(E) Not attempted
16. Regarding the reconstruction and naming of Patna city during the Mughal period, which grandson of Aurangzeb rebuilt Patna in 1704 CE and named it 'Azimabad' ?
(A) Muazzam (Bahadur Shah I)
(B) Azim-ush-Shan
(C) Rafi-ush-Shan
(D) Jahandar Shah
(E) Not attempted
17. Two statements are given below, one labeled as Assertion (A) and the other as Reason (R) :
Assertion (A) : In the mid-19th century (especially during the 1830s-1860s), Patna became the most prominent and organized center of the 'Wahabi Movement'.
Reason (R) : After the arrival of Syed Ahmad Barelvi in Patna and following his death, local leaders like Wilayat Ali and Enayat Ali led this Islamic revivalist movement from Patna, its ultimate objective being to overthrow British rule.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below :
(A) Both (A) and (R) are correct, and (R) is the correct explanation of (A)
(B) Both (A) and (R) are correct, but (R) is not the correct explanation of (A)
(C) (A) is correct, but (R) is incorrect
(D) (A) is incorrect, but (R) is correct
(E) Not attempted

18. Consider the following statements regarding the 'Patna Secretariat Firing' that took place on August 11, 1942, during the Quit India Movement :
I. In an attempt to hoist the national flag at the eastern gate of the Patna Secretariat building, seven brave students were martyred by police bullets.
II. The brutal order to fire on the peaceful procession of students was given by the then District Magistrate (DM) of Patna, W.G. Archer.

III. In protest against this barbarous incident, a complete Patna strike was called on August 12, 1942, which intensified the movement.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

- (A) Only I and II
(B) Only II and III
(C) Only I and III
(D) All I, II and III
(E) Not attempted
19. Regarding the important sessions of the Indian National Congress held in Bihar, which of the following statements is incorrect ?
(A) The first session of the Indian National Congress in Bihar was held in 1912 at Bankipur (Patna) under the presidency of R.N. Mudholkar
(B) In 1922, the 37th session of the Indian National Congress was organized in Gaya, presided over by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das
(C) In 1940, the 53rd session of the Indian National Congress was held at Ramgarh (in present-day Jharkhand), presided over by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
(D) It was at the Gaya session (1922) that Mahatma Gandhi presided over the Congress and passed the Swadeshi resolution
(E) Not attempted
20. Match the major newspapers/journals published in Bihar with their editors/founders :

List-I

(Newspaper)

- (a) The Bihar Herald
(b) The Searchlight
(c) The Motherland
(d) Hunkar

List-II

(Founder / Editor)

1. Guru Prasad Sen
2. Sachchidananda Sinha / Syed Hasan Imam
3. Maulana Mazharul Haque
4. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati

Select the correct answer using the codes given below :

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
(A)	2	1	4	3
(B)	1	2	3	4
(C)	1	3	2	4
(D)	3	2	1	4

(E) Not attempted

21. Consider the following statements regarding Vedic Society and Culture :

- I. During the Rigvedic period, women had the right to participate in political and social institutions like the 'Sabha' and 'Vidatha'.
II. In the Later Vedic period, the Gotra system was established and a clear decline in the status of women was observed.
III. Extensive mentions of child marriage and the Sati system are found in the Rigveda.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

- (A) Only I and II
(B) Only II and III
(C) Only I and III
(D) All I, II and III
(E) Not attempted

22. Two statements are given below, one labeled as Assertion (A) and the other as Reason (R) :

Assertion (A) : The Mauryan Emperor Ashoka appointed 'Dhamma Mahamatras' in his empire.

Reason (R) : The main objective of these officials was to propagate the philosophical principles of Buddhism in foreign lands.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below :

- (A) Both (A) and (R) are correct, and (R) is the correct explanation of (A)
(B) Both (A) and (R) are correct, but (R) is not the correct explanation of (A)
(C) (A) is correct, but (R) is incorrect
(D) (A) is incorrect, but (R) is correct
(E) Not attempted

23. Regarding ancient Indian philosophies and their core principles, which of the following pairs is not correctly matched ?

- (A) Anekantavada—Jainism
(B) Pratityasamutpada—Buddhism
(C) Advaita Vedanta—Adi Shankaracharya
(D) Madhyamaka (Shunya-vada)—Maharishi Patanjali
(E) Not attempted

24. Match the ancient Indian scholars with their famous works :

List-I

(Scholar)

- (A) Aryabhata
(B) Varahamihira
(C) Brahmagupta
(D) Sushruta

List-II

(Work)

1. Brihat Samhita
2. Khandakhadyaka
3. Aryabhatiya
4. Sushruta Samhita

Select the correct answer using the codes given below :

- | | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
|-----|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| (B) | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| (C) | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| (D) | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| (E) | Not attempted | | | |

25. Consider the following statements regarding the economy and trade of the Harappan (Indus Valley) civilization :

- The Harappan people conducted both internal and external trade, evidence of which is found in Mesopotamian (Sumerian) records in the form of the word 'Meluhha'.
- Trade was primarily conducted through metallic coins (punch-marked coins).
- Port cities like Lothal and Sutkagan Dor were major centers of maritime trade.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

- (A) Only I and II
(B) Only I and III
(C) Only II and III
(D) All I, II and III
(E) Not attempted

26. Match the various taxes collected during the Delhi Sultanate with their meanings :

List-I

(Tax)

- (a) Kharaj (b) Khums
(c) Jizya (d) Zakat

List-II

(Meaning)

- Religious protection tax levied on non-Muslims
- Religious tax collected from Muslims (2.5% of income)
- Booty captured in war
- Land revenue collected from non-Muslim peasants

Select the correct answer using the codes given below :

- | | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
|-----|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| (B) | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| (C) | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| (D) | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| (E) | Not attempted | | | |

27. Regarding the 'Ashtapradhan' administration of Chhatrapati Shivaji in the Maratha Empire, which of the following statements is incorrect ?

- (A) The 'Peshwa' was the head of the entire administration and the Prime Minister of the king
(B) The 'Amatya' or Majumdar was in charge of the state's finance and revenue
(C) The 'Sumant' or Dabir was the head of the state's religious affairs and charities
(D) The 'Chitnis' or Surnavis (Sachiv) looked after royal correspondence and decrees
(E) Not attempted

28. Regarding the provisions of the 'Cabinet Mission Plan' of 1946, which of the following statements is incorrect ?

- (A) It included three British cabinet ministers : Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps, and A.V. Alexander
(B) It explicitly accepted the Muslim League's demand for a sovereign 'Pakistan'
(C) It proposed the formation of a 'Constituent Assembly' for the creation of a new constitution for India
(D) It suggested a system of grouping the provinces of British India into three distinct groups (Group A, B, C)
(E) Not attempted

29. Consider the following pairs regarding the terminology of the medieval Sufi movement :

I. Khanqah : The residence and spiritual center of Sufi saints.

II. Sama - Gatherings of spiritual music held by Sufi saints.

III. Malfuzat : Compilation of letters written by Sufi saints.

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched ?

- (A) Only I and II
(B) Only II and III
(C) Only I and III
(D) All I, II and III
(E) Not attempted

30. Which famous historian first propounded the concept of the 'Jagirdari Crisis' regarding the decline of the Mughal Empire ?

- (A) Irfan Habib
(B) Satish Chandra
(C) Jadunath Sarkar
(D) Muzaffar Alam
(E) Not attempted

31. Consider the following statements regarding British land revenue systems :

I. In the 'Permanent Settlement' introduced by Cornwallis, Zamindars were recognized as the owners of the land and the revenue amount was fixed permanently.

II. In the 'Ryotwari System' developed by Thomas Munro and Captain Read, a direct settlement was made with the peasants (ryots).

III. The 'Mahalwari System' was primarily introduced in the regions of Bengal and Bihar.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

- (A) Only I and II
(B) Only II and III
(C) Only I and III
(D) All I, II and III
(E) Not attempted

32. Match the socio-religious reform movements of the 19th century with their founders :

List-I

(Institution)

- (a) Atmiya Sabha
(b) Satyashodhak Samaj

- (c) Tattwabodhini Sabha
(d) Ramakrishna Mission

List-II

(Founder)

1. Jyotirao Phule
2. Swami Vivekananda
3. Raja Rammohan Roy
4. Debendranath Tagore

Select the correct answer using the codes given below :

- | | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
|-----|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| (B) | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| (C) | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| (D) | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| (E) | Not attempted | | | |

33. Two statements are given below, one labeled as Assertion (A) and the other as Reason (R) :

Assertion (A) : At the Surat session of the Indian National Congress in 1907, the Congress split into the 'Moderates' and the 'Extremists'.

Reason (R) : The Moderates wanted to confine the Swadeshi and Boycott movement strictly to Bengal and limit the boycott only to British goods, whereas the Extremists wanted to spread it across the entire country and turn it into a nationwide mass movement.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below :

- (A) Both (A) and (R) are correct, and (R) is the correct explanation of (A)
(B) Both (A) and (R) are correct, but (R) is not the correct explanation of (A)
(C) (A) is correct, but (R) is incorrect
(D) (A) is incorrect, but (R) is correct
(E) Not attempted

34. Regarding the historic 'Poona Pact' of 1932, which of the following statements is true ?

(A) This agreement took place between Mahatma Gandhi and the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald

(B) Under it, the demand for 'Separate Electorates' for the Depressed Classes was accepted

(C) Under it, separate electorates for the Depressed Classes were abandoned and seats were

reserved for them in the provincial and central legislatures

(D) After this agreement, the Civil Disobedience Movement was declared completely terminated.

(E) Not attempted

35. Arrange the major committees/commissions related to the development of education in British India in their chronological order :

I. Wood's Dispatch

II. Sadler University Commission

III. Hunter Education Commission

IV. Raleigh Commission / Indian Universities Act

Select the correct code :

(A) I, III, IV, II (B) I, IV, III, II

(C) III, I, IV, II (D) I, III, II, IV

(E) Not attempted

36. Consider the Assertion (A) and Reason (R) in relation to global trade in services :

Assertion (A) : Geography matters less for services.

Reason (R) : Nature of services itself has shifted.

Correct code is :

- (A) Assertion (A) and Reason (R) both are correct and Reason (R) is the correct explanation of Assertion (A)
(B) Assertion (A) and Reason (R) both are correct, but Reason (R) is not the correct explanation of Assertion (A)
(C) Assertion (A) is correct, but Reason (R) is incorrect
(D) Assertion (A) is incorrect but Reason (R) is correct
(E) Not attempted

37. Consider the following statements :

I. The Five Eyes (FVEY) is a Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) alliance.

II. India has signed Free Trade Agreements / Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with all the members of Five Eyes alliance.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

(A) Only I

(B) Only II

(C) Both I and II

(D) Neither I nor II

(E) Not attempted

38. Consider the following statements in relation to CBDC Ration Scheme :

I. The Government of India has launched a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Digital Food Currency throughout the country.

II. Under the CBDC framework, digital coupons generated through the Reserve Bank of India are credited directly to beneficiaries as programmable digital currency (e ₹).

III. Beneficiaries redeem their entitled quantity of food-grains at Fair Price Shops (FPS) using CBDC coupon or voucher codes.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

(A) Only I and II

(B) Only II and III

(C) Only I

(D) All I, II and III

(E) Not attempted

39. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the NITI Aayog ?

I. NITI Aayog is a Statutory body.

II. Vice Chairman and Members of NITI Aayog are appointed by the President of India on the recommendation of the Union Cabinet.

Correct code is :

(A) Only I

(B) Only II

(C) Both I and II

(D) Neither I nor II

(E) Not attempted

40. Consider the Assertion (A) and Reason (R) given below and choose the correct code :

Assertion (A) : Estimates suggest that 60-70 per cent of CSR spending by large listed companies is routed through their own trusts, foundations, or implementing agencies.

Reason (R) : Thousands of corporate foundations/trusts have been created in the last decade alone in India.

Correct code is :

- (A) Assertion (A) and Reason (R) both are correct and Reason (R) is the correct explanation of Assertion (A)
- (B) Assertion (A) and Reason (R) both are correct, but Reason (R) is not the correct explanation of Assertion (A)
- (C) Assertion (A) is correct, but Reason (R) is incorrect
- (D) Assertion (A) is incorrect, but Reason (R) is correct
- (E) Not attempted

41. Consider the given Assertion (A) and Reason (R) and choose the correct code given below :

Assertion (A) : India relegated to 6th place behind the US, China, Germany, Japan and the UK in terms of nominal GDP in 2026.

Reason (R) : India's rupee fell from about 83 per dollar in 2024 to 93 in 2026.

Correct code is :

- (A) Assertion (A) and Reason (R) both are correct and Reason (R) is the correct explanation of Assertion (A)
- (B) Assertion (A) and Reason (R) both are correct, but Reason (R) is not the correct explanation of Assertion (A)
- (C) Assertion (A) is correct, but Reason (R) is incorrect
- (D) Assertion (A) is incorrect, but Reason (R) is correct
- (E) Not attempted

42. Consider the following statements in relation to the Securities Markets Code 2025 :

- I. Depositories are now recognized as a market infrastructure institution (MII).
- II. Depository participant (DP) is the member of the depository.
- III. Securities must be issued and held in dematerialized form.

How many statements given above are correct ?

- (A) Only one
- (B) Only two
- (C) All three
- (D) None of the above
- (E) Not attempted

43. Match the List-I (Programmes) and List-II (Year of Commencement) and choose the correct code given below :

List-I

- (a) National Food for Work Programme
- (b) National Rural Employment Programme
- (c) Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme
- (d) Jawahar Rozgar Yojana

List-II

- 1. 1980
- 2. 1983
- 3. 1989
- 4. 2004

Correct code is :

- | | (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) |
|-----|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| (A) | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| (B) | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| (C) | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| (D) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (E) | Not attempted | | | |

44. Which of the following programmes / schemes is not directly associated with the elementary education ?

- (A) Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan
- (B) Operation Blackboard
- (C) PM-POSHAN
- (D) DIKSHA
- (E) Not attempted

45. The Financial year 2025-26 ended with robust year-on-year (y-o-y) non-food credit growth of 15.9%, marking a significant 497 basis points (bps) increase in growth from the corresponding period in 2025 (10.9%). Which of the following factors has/have given boost to credit growth of this order ?

- I. Low-interest rate environment.
- II. Government aided Capex cycle supported by timely structural reforms.
- III. Private investments are crowding-in and boosting domestic credit demand.
- IV. Reinstating confidence among corporate as well as individual borrowers on Indian economy.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I and II
- (B) Only III and IV
- (C) Only IV
- (D) All I, II, III and IV
- (E) Not attempted

46. The revised GSVA framework (Base year 2022-23) relies more heavily on administrative and survey data, including :

- I. Goods and services tax
- II. Public Financial Management System
- III. Annual Survey of Industries
- IV. Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE)
- V. Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)
- VI. Household Consumption Expenditure Survey

Correct code is :

- (A) Only IV, V and VI
- (B) Only I and II
- (C) Only III, IV, V and VI
- (D) All I, II, III, IV, V and VI
- (E) Not attempted

47. Consider the following statements in relation to Multidimensional Poverty Index :

- I. The global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), an international measure of acute multidimensional poverty, has been developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative with UNDP support.
- II. It complements traditional monetary poverty measures by capturing the acute deprivations in health, education and living standards that a person faces simultaneously.
- III. The MPI assesses poverty at the national/state level.
- IV. If a person is deprived in a half or more of ten (weighted) indicators, the global MPI identifies them as 'MPI poor'.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

- (A) Only I and II
- (B) Only I and III
- (C) Only I and IV
- (D) Only II and III
- (E) Not attempted

48. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the effective revenue deficit ?

- I. Effective revenue deficit is a fiscal indicator.

- II. Effective revenue deficit was introduced in Union Budget of 2014-15.
- III. Effective revenue deficit is defined as the difference between the revenue deficit and grants for creation of capital assets.
- Correct code is :
- (A) Only I
(B) Only I and III
(C) Only II
(D) All I, II and III
(E) Not attempted
49. Which of the following is the correct measure of 'M3', as used by the RBI ?
- (A) Currency in Circulation + Bankers' Deposits with the RBI + 'Other' Deposits with RBI
(B) Currency with the Public + Demand Deposits with the Banking System + 'Other' Deposits with the RBI
(C) Currency with the Public + Demand Deposits with the Banking System + 'Other' Deposits with the RBI + Time Liabilities Portion of Savings Deposits with the Banking System + Certificates of Deposit issued by Banks + Term Deposits of residents with a contractual maturity of up to and including one year with the Banking System (excluding CDs)
(D) C+ Term Deposits of residents with a contractual maturity of over one year with the Banking System + Call/Term borrowings from 'Non-depository Financial Corporations by the Banking System
(E) Not attempted
50. Which of the following constitutes the current account ?
- I. Balance of trade
II. Special Drawing Rights
III. Balance of invisibles
IV. Foreign assets
- Correct code is :
- (A) Only I and III
(B) Only I, III and IV
(C) Only I and II
(D) All I, II, III and IV
(E) Not attempted
51. Which among the following statements is correct ?
- (A) The area of Bihar is 94,163 square kilometre
(B) The area of Bihar is 2.86% of India's total area
(C) Bihar is India's 13th largest state by area
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
52. Which among the following statements is correct ?
- (A) Mechi River is a trans-boundary river, which originates in Mahabharat range of Nepal
(B) It joins Mahananda River in Kishanganj District
(C) The beneficiary districts of Kosi Mechi Intra-State Link Project are Araria, Purnea, Kishanganj and Katihar
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
53. The State of Bihar has which of the following topography ?
- (A) The Sub-Himalayan Foot-hills
(B) The Indo Gangetic Plain
(C) The Southern Plateau Region
(D) All of the above
(E) Not attempted
54. In relation to the climate of Bihar, which of the following statements is correct ?
- (A) Absence of maritime influence
(B) Dominant role of orographic feature
(C) About 86% of the precipitation is received during the south-west monsoon season
(D) All of the above
(E) Not attempted
55. Consider the following pairs :
- I. Piedmont Swamp Soil : West Champaran District
II. Terai Soil : Border of Nepal
III. Gangetic Alluvium : Plain of Bihar
- How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?
- (A) Only one
(B) Only two
(C) All three
(D) None of the above
(E) Not attempted
56. Which of the following national parks is located in Terai Region of India ?
- (A) Dudhwa National Park
(B) Valmiki National Park
(C) Kaziranga National Park
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
57. Consider the following pairs
- I. Medicine Line : USA and Canada
II. 20th Parallel North : Egypt and Sudan
III. 22nd Parallel North : Libya and Sudan
IV. 17th Parallel : North and South Vietnam
- How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?
- (A) Only one (B) Only two
(C) Only three (D) All four
(E) Not attempted
58. Drake Passage connects :
- (A) Mediterranean Sea with the Atlantic Ocean
(B) North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean
(C) Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean
(D) Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean
(E) Not attempted
59. The Southeast Asian maritime geopolitics is significantly influenced by which of the following geographical features ?
- (A) Strait of Malacca
(B) Sunda Strait
(C) Lombok Strait
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
60. 'Law Kyntang' in Meghalaya refers to :
- (A) Marriage ceremony
(B) Sacred groves
(C) Tribal festival
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
61. Consider the following pairs :
- I. Dahiyaar : Bundelkhand
II. Deepa : Bastar
III. Kumari : Western Ghats
IV. Vinga : Odisha
- How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?
- (A) Only one (B) Only two
(C) Only three (D) All four
(E) Not attempted

62. Consider the following pairs :

S. No.	National Park	Flagship Species	IUCN Status
I.	Bhitarkarnika	Saltwater Crocodile	Endangered
II.	Dachigam	Hangul	Critically Endangered
III.	Keibul Lamzao	Sangai	Endangered
IV.	Manas	Assam Roof Turtle	Critically Endangered

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?

- (A) Only one (B) Only two
(C) Only three (D) All four
(E) Not attempted

63. Which of the following is correct about the Chambal River ?

- (A) It is the left-bank tributary of Yamuna
(B) It originates in the Vindhyan range
(C) It flows through Kuno National Park
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted

64. India's only active mud volcano is :

- (A) Narcondam Island
(B) Barren Island
(C) Baratang Island
(D) New Moore Island
(E) Not attempted

65. As compared to the Western Himalayas, the Eastern Himalayas receive/have :

- (A) Higher rainfall
(B) Steeper slopes
(C) Higher biodiversity
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted

66. Which of the following statements is correct ?

- (A) Bihar is the principal holder of pyrites resources in India
(B) Bihar possess nearly 94% of pyrites resources in India
(C) Limestone is the only major mineral produced in Bihar
(D) All of the above
(E) Not attempted

67. Which of the following statements is correct ?

- (A) Areas having drought condition for more than 40% of the years under consideration represent 'chronically drought affected areas'

(B) Meteorological drought occurs if annual rainfall is less than 75% of the normal

(C) If rainfall deficit is between 50% and 25%, it is classified as severe drought

- (D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted

68. Which of the following statements are correct about the agricultural cropping pattern in Bihar ?

- (A) Rice-wheat cropping system occupies more than 70% of the gross cropped area
(B) Pulses occupy around 7 per cent of the gross cropped area
(C) Jute is cultivated in Zone II Agro-climatic region of Bihar
(D) All of the above
(E) Not attempted

69. The South Atlantic Anomaly refers to :

- (A) Weakening of ocean currents' strength in the South Atlantic Ocean
(B) Anomaly in sea surface temperature
(C) Weak spot in the Earth's magnetic field
(D) Rapid density increase in sea water
(E) Not attempted

70. 'Basket of Eggs' topography is associated with :

- (A) Winds
(B) Glaciers
(C) Groundwater
(D) Rejuvenated River
(E) Not attempted

71. Which of the following entries were transferred from the State List to the Concurrent List by the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976 of the Constitution ?

- (A) Weights and Measures
(B) Education
(C) Forests
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted

72. The Instrument of Instructions from the Government of India Act, 1935, was incorporated in which part of the Indian Constitution ?

- (A) Part III
(B) Part IV
(C) Part IVA

(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted

73. Which Constitutional Amendment Act facilitated the appointment of same person as the governor of more than one state ?

- (A) The Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951
(B) The Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956
(C) The Constitution (Eleventh Amendment) Act, 1961
(D) The Constitution (Twenty-seventh Amendment) Act, 1971
(E) Not attempted

74. The Advocate General of the state :

- (A) Enjoys the same privileges and immunities as the member of state legislature
(B) Has the right to speak in state legislature
(C) Has the right to vote in the state legislature
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted

75. Adjournment *Sine die* refers to :

- (A) It terminates a sitting of the House for specified period
(B) It terminates the sitting of the House for indefinite period
(C) The power of adjournment *sine die* lies with the President of India
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted

76. Which Article of the Constitution disqualifies a person for being chosen as member of the Parliament if the person is so disqualified under any law made by the Parliament ?

- (A) Article 102 (B) Article 103
(C) Article 105 (D) Article 106
(E) Not attempted

77. Rajya Sabha has equal power with the Lok Sabha regarding the introduction and passage in which of the following bills ?

- (A) Constitutional Amendment Bill
(B) Ordinary Bill
(C) Money Bill
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted

78. Which of the following statements is correct about the Preamble of the Constitution ?

- (A) Preamble is an integral part of the Constitution
(B) Parliamentary power to amend the Preamble has no limitation
(C) In Berubari Union case, Supreme Court ruled that Preamble is not a part of the Constitution
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
79. The Second Schedule of the Constitution does not contain the provision of salaries and allowances of which of the following posts?
(A) Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
(B) Judges of the High Court
(C) Governor of the State
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
80. Which parliamentary committee was established under the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1919?
(A) Estimates Committee
(B) Public Accounts Committee
(C) Committee on Public Undertakings
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
81. Recently, the MSME Technology Centre was inaugurated in which district of Bihar?
(A) Patna
(B) Bhagalpur
(C) Gaya
(D) Bihar Sharif
(E) Not attempted
82. Which state has recently declared 'tidal flooding' as state-specific disaster?
(A) Gujarat (B) Odisha
(C) Kerala (D) Goa
(E) Not attempted
83. The Manipuri film 'Boong' became the first-ever Indian film to win in which category of 79th British Academy Film Awards?
(A) Best Film not in the English Language
(B) Best Limited Drama
(C) Best Single Documentary
(D) Best Children's & Family Film
(E) Not attempted
84. Which of the following is correct about the World Press Freedom Index 2026?
(A) India has slipped by six places to the 157th place among 180 countries
(B) India is now placed under 'very serious' category
(C) Syria climbed 36 places in the ranking
(D) All of the above
(E) Not attempted
85. What was the theme of the International Language Mother Day 2026?
(A) Languages Matter
(B) Multilingual Education is a pillar of learning and inter-generational learning
(C) Youth voices on multilingual education
(D) Multilingual education – a necessity to transform education
(E) Not attempted
86. Bihar's second tiger reserve is being established in :
(A) Rohtas (B) Kaimur
(C) Darbhanga (D) Buxar
(E) Not attempted
87. The Bihar Cabinet recently approved the Sone River water sharing agreement with which state?
(A) Uttar Pradesh
(B) Madhya Pradesh
(C) Jharkhand
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
88. The Artemis II crew members named the Orion spacecraft as :
(A) Integrity
(B) Invincibility
(C) Inspiration
(D) Ixion
(E) Not attempted
89. Which of the following cities of Chhattisgarh hosted the first edition of the Khelo India Tribal Games 2026?
(A) Raipur
(B) Jagdalpur
(C) Surguja
(D) All of the above
(E) Not attempted
90. The Centre for Southeast Asian Studies was recently inaugurated at :
(A) South Asian University, New Delhi
(B) Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
(C) Nalanda University, Nalanda, Bihar
(D) None of the above
(E) Not attempted
91. The official mascots of the India's first fully digital Census 2027 are :
(A) Pragati
(B) Vikas
(C) Udai
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
92. During the India AI Impact Summit 2026, Bihar Government signed an MoU with which of the following companies to establish AI Centre of Excellence in collaboration with IIT Patna?
(A) Tiger Analytics
(B) Open AI
(C) Meta
(D) Alphabet Inc.
(E) Not attempted
93. Which of the following is correct about Bihar's Mukhyamantri Mahila Rozgar Yojana?
(A) One woman from every family to receive financial support of ₹ 10,000 to start her chosen livelihood activity
(B) Additional financial support of up to ₹ 2 lakh after six months, based on assessment and performance
(C) Youth, Employment and Skill Development Department is the nodal agency of the scheme
(D) More than one of the above
(E) Not attempted
94. Consider the following pairs :
G.I. Products Year of Designation
- | | |
|------------------------|-------|
| I. Madhubani Paintings | —2007 |
| II. Khatwa | —2016 |
| III. Zardalu Mango | —2018 |
| IV. Bhagalpuri Silk | —2013 |
- How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?
(A) Only one (B) Only two
(C) Only three (D) All four
(E) Not attempted

95. Which of the following are correct in relation with the Export Preparedness Index 2024 ?
 (A) Bihar was categorized as 'Aspirer' state
 (B) Bihar's score in the index was 46-31
 (C) Among larger states, Bihar was ranked 16th
 (D) All of the above
 (E) Not attempted
96. Consider the following statements in relation to the Terai Arc Landscape ?
 (A) In India, it is spread across Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand
 (B) It is an 810 km stretch between the River Yamuna and River Bhagmati
 (C) It comprises of total 13 protected areas spread across India and Nepal
 (D) All of the above
 (E) Not attempted
97. Consider the following statements :
 (A) The 2026 edition of the Raisina Dialogue was its 11th edition
 (B) It was jointly organized by India and Finland
 (C) The theme of the 11th edition was centred on 'Samskara – Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement'
 (D) More than one of the above
 (E) Not attempted
98. As per the World Urbanization Prospects 2025, which is the world's most populous city ?
 (A) Dhaka (B) Tokyo
 (C) Jakarta (D) Shanghai
 (E) Not attempted
99. 'Icons of India' exhibition, which was recently in news, was launched by :
 (A) Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
 (B) Ministry of Culture
 (C) Madame Tussauds
 (D) None of the above
 (E) Not attempted
100. 'Mission Drishti', which was recently in news, is :
 (A) World's first OptoSAR satellite
 (B) Largest EOS built by a private Indian company
 (C) It was launched by ISRO
 (D) More than one of the above
 (E) Not attempted
101. Consider the following pairs :
 I. Dinesh Trivedi : High Commissioner to Bangladesh
 II. Vikram Doraiswami : Ambassador to China
 III. Periasamy Kumaran : High Commissioner to United Kingdom
 IV. Deepak Mittal : Ambassador to UAE
 How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?
 (A) Only one (B) Only two
 (C) Only three (D) All four
 (E) Not attempted
102. Which state has been recently declared as India's first paperless judiciary state ?
 (A) Kerala
 (B) Andhra Pradesh
 (C) Sikkim
 (D) Himachal Pradesh
 (E) Not attempted
103. Consider the following pairs :
 I. Samling Choling Monastery : Sikkim
 II. Samten Yongcha Monastery : Arunachal Pradesh
 III. Namgyal Monastery : Ladakh
 IV. Lamayuru Monastery : Himachal Pradesh
 How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?
 (A) Only one (B) Only two
 (C) Only three (D) All four
 (E) Not attempted
104. Consider the following pairs of defence exercises :
 I. CINBAX-II : India and Cambodia
 II. DUSTLIK : India and Uzbekistan
 III. EKVURIN : India and Mauritius
 IV. Bold Kurukshetra : India and Japan
 How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?
 (A) Only one (B) Only two
 (C) Only three (D) All four
 (E) Not attempted
105. Recently, which country exited from OPEC with effect from May 1, 2026 ?
 (A) Saudi Arabia
 (B) Oman
 (C) UAE
 (D) None of the above
 (E) Not attempted
106. A person stands on a sensitive electronic scale. If the person inhales deeply, the reading of the scale :
 (A) Increases
 (B) Decreases
 (C) Remains the same
 (D) First increases then decreases
 (E) Not attempted
107. An object is placed 10 cm in front of a concave mirror of radius of curvature 30 cm. The magnification produced by the mirror is :
 (A) 2 (B) 3
 (C) 1.5 (D) 5
 (E) Not attempted
108. Which of the following physical quantities does not change when a light wave travels from air into a glass slab ?
 (A) Velocity
 (B) Wavelength
 (C) Frequency
 (D) Amplitude
 (E) Not attempted
109. A charged particle is moving through a uniform magnetic field. Which of the following physical quantities of the particle will remain constant ?
 (A) Velocity
 (B) Momentum
 (C) Kinetic Energy
 (D) Acceleration
 (E) Not attempted
110. According to Newton's Second Law of Motion, the rate of change of momentum of an object is proportional to :
 (A) The displacement of the object
 (B) The applied unbalanced force in the direction of force
 (C) The square of the velocity
 (D) The total work done on the object
 (E) Not attempted

111. A bullet of mass 20 g is fired from a gun with a velocity of 150 m/s. If the recoil velocity of the gun is 1.5 m/s, the mass of the gun is :
 (A) 1 kg (B) 2 kg
 (C) 2.5 kg (D) 3 kg
 (E) Not attempted
112. When an object is falling freely from a certain height towards the ground, its total mechanical energy (the sum of Potential and Kinetic energy) :
 (A) Increases continuously
 (B) Decreases continuously
 (C) Remains constant at all points
 (D) First increases and then decreases
 (E) Not attempted
113. Which of the following is the most abundant element in the Earth's crust ?
 (A) Silicon
 (B) Oxygen
 (C) Aluminium
 (D) Iron
 (E) Not attempted
114. What is the number of moles in 44 grams of Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) ?
 (A) 0.5 mole (B) 1 mole
 (C) 2 moles (D) 1.5 moles
 (E) Not attempted
115. Which gas is known as 'Laughing Gas', often used in dentistry and minor surgeries ?
 (A) Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)
 (B) Nitric oxide (NO)
 (C) Nitrous oxide (N_2O)
 (D) Nitrogen pentoxide (N_2O_5)
 (E) Not attempted
116. A solution contains 20 g of common salt in 180 g of water. What is the concentration in terms of mass by mass percentage of the solution ?
 (A) 10% (B) 11.1%
 (C) 9% (D) 20%
 (E) Not attempted
117. The process used to separate a mixture of two miscible liquids that have a sufficient difference in their boiling points (more than 25 K) is :
 (A) Fractional Distillation
 (B) Simple Distillation
 (C) Centrifugation
 (D) Sublimation
 (E) Not attempted
118. How many atoms are present in one molecule of Glucose ($\text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6$) ?
 (A) 12 (B) 6
 (C) 24 (D) 48
 (E) Not attempted
119. In the context of human blood, which component is responsible for the process of blood clotting (Coagulation) ?
 (A) Erythrocytes
 (B) Leucocytes
 (C) Thrombocytes
 (D) Plasma
 (E) Not attempted
120. Which of the following cell organelles is known as the 'Suicidal Bag' of the cell ?
 (A) Mitochondria
 (B) Ribosomes
 (C) Lysosomes
 (D) Golgi Apparatus
 (E) Not attempted
121. Which of the following diseases is caused by a Vitamin B3 (Niacin) deficiency and is characterized by the '3 Ds' (Dermatitis, Diarrhea and Dementia) ?
 (A) Scurvy (B) Pellagra
 (C) Beri-beri (D) Rickets
 (E) Not attempted
122. Which part of the human brain is responsible for maintaining body balance, posture and equilibrium ?
 (A) Cerebrum
 (B) Medulla Oblongata
 (C) Cerebellum
 (D) Hypothalamus
 (E) Not attempted
123. Which of the following plant hormones is primarily responsible for the ripening of fruits ?
 (A) Auxin
 (B) Cytokinin
 (C) Ethylene
 (D) Abscissic Acid
 (E) Not attempted
124. The 'Corpus Luteum' is a temporary endocrine structure in the human body that is responsible for the secretion of which hormone ?
 (A) Progesterone
 (B) Testosterone
 (C) Melatonin
 (D) Growth Hormone
 (E) Not attempted
125. The 'Pacemaker' of the human heart, which initiates the electrical impulse to trigger a heartbeat, is known as the :
 (A) AV Node (Atrioventricular Node)
 (B) SA Node (Sinoatrial Node)
 (C) Purkinje Fibers
 (D) Bundle of His
 (E) Not attempted
126. Which of the following is an example of 'Ex-situ' conservation of biodiversity ?
 (A) National Parks
 (B) Wildlife Sanctuaries
 (C) Seed Banks
 (D) Biosphere Reserves
 (E) Not attempted
127. The concept of 'Biodiversity Hotspots' was first introduced by :
 (A) Norman Myers
 (B) E.P. Odum
 (C) James Lovelock
 (D) Rachel Carson
 (E) Not attempted
128. Eutrophication of a water body is primarily caused by the excessive presence of which two nutrients ?
 (A) Carbon and Iron
 (B) Nitrogen and Phosphorus
 (C) Sulfur and Potassium
 (D) Magnesium and Calcium
 (E) Not attempted
129. The 'Kyoto Protocol' specifically focusses on the reduction of which of the following ?
 (A) Plastic Waste
 (B) Greenhouse Gases
 (C) Hazardous Chemicals
 (D) Nuclear Radiation
 (E) Not attempted
130. 'Biomagnification' refers to the increase in the concentration of a toxicant at successive trophic levels. This is commonly seen with :
 (A) Biodegradable plastics
 (B) DDT and Mercury
 (C) Water vapor
 (D) Carbon dioxide
 (E) Not attempted

131. In an ecological pyramid, which of the following is ALWAYS upright and can never be inverted ?
 (A) Pyramid of Biomass in a forest
 (B) Pyramid of Numbers in a grassland
 (C) Pyramid of Energy
 (D) Pyramid of Biomass in a pond
 (E) Not attempted
132. Which of the following is the correct sequence of 'Energy Flow' in an ecosystem ?
 (A) Consumers → Producers → Decomposers
 (B) Producers → Consumers → Decomposers
 (C) Decomposers → Consumers → Producers
 (D) Producers → Decomposers → Consumers
 (E) Not attempted
133. The 'Kyoto Protocol', an international treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, is associated with which of the following ?
 (A) Biodiversity Conservation
 (B) Climate Change
 (C) Ozone Layer Depletion
 (D) Hazardous Waste Management
 (E) Not attempted
134. In the context of biodiversity conservation, what does the term 'Endemism' refer to ?
 (A) Species found all over the globe
 (B) Species that are extinct in the wild
 (C) Species restricted to a particular geographical area
 (D) Species that migrate seasonally
 (E) Not attempted
135. Which of the following is considered a 'Biotic' component of an environment ?
 (A) Sunlight
 (B) Fungi
 (C) Soil pH
 (D) Atmospheric pressure
 (E) Not attempted
136. Under the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act, 2006, a 'Gram Katchahry' is headed by whom ?
 (A) Mukhiya
 (B) Sarpanch
 (C) Ward Commissioner
 (D) Block Development Officer (BDO)
 (E) Not attempted
137. How many members are elected from Bihar to the Rajya Sabha ?
 (A) 40 (B) 16
 (C) 22 (D) 25
 (E) Not attempted
138. How many seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) in the Bihar Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) ?
 (A) 38 (B) 40
 (C) 2 (D) 45
 (E) Not attempted
139. Who was the first Governor of Bihar after India's independence ?
 (A) Jairamdas Daulatram
 (B) Madhav Shrihari Aney
 (C) R.R. Diwakar
 (D) Zakir Hussain
 (E) Not attempted
140. Under which Article do the constitutional provisions regarding the Special Grant for Bihar (or any state) fall ?
 (A) Article 275
 (B) Article 280
 (C) Article 371
 (D) Article 370
 (E) Not attempted
141. Which of the following pairs of numbers are co-primes ?
 (A) 34 and 35 (B) 17 and 170
 (C) 12 and 18 (D) 7 and 14
 (E) Not attempted
142. What is the wrong number in the given series ?
 100800, 14400, 2400, 480, 240, 40
 (A) 40 (B) 240
 (C) 14400 (D) 2400
 (E) Not attempted
143. What will be the H.C.F. of 3.6, 0.54 and 1.08 ?
 (A) 1.8 (B) 0.018
 (C) 0.18 (D) 18
 (E) Not attempted
144. Value of $0.5\bar{4} + 0.2\bar{3} = ?$
 (A) $\frac{771}{99}$ (B) $\frac{771}{900}$
 (C) $\frac{771}{999}$ (D) $\frac{771}{990}$
 (E) Not attempted
145. $\frac{17.28 \div x}{3.6 \times 0.2} = 2$, value of $x = ?$
 (A) 12 (B) 10
 (C) 13 (D) 15
 (E) Not attempted
146. The average of a number and its reciprocal is 1. What is the average of its square, cube and fourth power ?
 (A) 2 (B) 1.33
 (C) 2.7 (D) 1
 (E) Not attempted
147. The ratio of two numbers is 8 : 3. On adding 5 to both numbers, the ratio becomes 5 : 2. Which is the smaller number of the two ?
 (A) 50 (B) 13
 (C) 15 (D) 45
 (E) Not attempted
148. $236 : 4936 :: 724 : ?$
 (A) 49416 (B) 7416
 (C) 49164 (D) 49464
 (E) Not attempted
149. Choose the odd pair :
 (A) Lion-Roar
 (B) Snake-Hiss
 (C) Bees-Hum
 (D) Frog-Bleat
 (E) Not attempted
150. In a certain, 'CLOCK' is written as 'XOLXP'. How will 'LOTUS' be written in that same code ?
 (A) OGLFH (B) OLGFH
 (C) LOGFH (D) OLGHF
 (E) Not attempted

Answers with Hints

- (C) The initial capital of Magadha was Rajagriha (Girivraja). Later, Udayin (son of Ajatashatru) shifted the capital to Pataliputra.
- (D) Jayaprakash Narayan was not associated with Champaran Satyagraha; he rose to prominence during the Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movements.
- (A) During the Revolt of 1857, a bookseller named 'Peer Ali' led the uprising in Patna in July 1857. Kunwar Singh led in Jagdishpur, Ali Karim in Gaya, and Kunwar Singh's brother

- Amar Singh led the guerrilla warfare from the hills of Rohtas and Kaimur.
4. (C) At the time of Bakhtiyar Khalji's invasion (around 1203-04 CE), the ruler of the Karnata dynasty was 'Narasimha Deva', not Harisimha Deva. Harisimha Deva was the last great ruler of this dynasty, who fled to Nepal during Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's invasion of Tirhut (1324 CE).
 5. (B) 'Bihar Socialist Party' was formally established on May 17, 1934. 'Acharya Narendra Deva' was elected as its first President and 'Jayaprakash Narayan' (J.P. Narayan) as its first General Secretary.
 6. (B)
 7. (D) Bimbisara defeated the ruler of Anga, Brahmadatta, and annexed it into Magadha. Ajatashatru conquered the Vajji confederacy with the help of the diplomacy of his minister Vassakara and the use of Rathamusala (a tank-like chariot) and Mahashilakantaka (a stone-throwing engine). Both Ajatashatru and his son Udayin murdered their respective fathers, hence it is called the patricide dynasty.
 8. (A) Immediately after the Mahaparinirvana of the Buddha, the first council was held under the presidency of Mahakassapa with the patronage of Ajatashatru, so that the teachings of the Buddha (Sutta Pitaka) and the rules of the monastic order (Vinaya Pitaka) could be compiled and preserved.
 9. (D) According to Megasthenes' 'Indica', the municipal administration of Pataliputra was managed by a council of 30 members, which was divided into 6 committees of 5 members each. These included the first (industrial arts), second (care of foreigners), third (registration of births and deaths), fourth (trade and commerce), fifth (inspection of manufactured goods), and sixth (collection of taxes) committees.
 10. (A)
 11. (D) Sher Shah Suri (Farid Khan) reformed the land revenue system by issuing 'Pattas' to peasants and having them execute 'Qabuliyats' agreeing to pay taxes to the state. According to the 'Tarikh-i-Daudi', understanding the strategic importance of Patna, he made it the provincial capital. The construction of the octagonal tomb at Sasaram began during his own lifetime.
 12. (D) All three phases of the peasant movement in Bihar are true. The Munger Kisan Sabha (1922-23) was an initial effort. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati gave it the form of a massive movement by establishing the Provincial Kisan Sabha in 1929. The Barahiya Taal (Munger) movement was led by Karyanand Sharma for the restoration of Bakasht land (land seized from peasants).
 13. (A)
 14. (C) Firdausi Silsilah greatest Sufi saint was Hazrat Makhdum Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri, whose Dargah (tomb) is located in present-day Bihar Sharif and who is renowned for his correspondence (Maktubat).
 15. (D) On April 30, 1908, Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki attempted to assassinate the District Judge of Muzaffarpur, Kingsford. The family of Pringle Kennedy (who was a Congress supporter) tragically died. Chaki committed suicide near Samastipur, and Khudiram Bose became one of the youngest revolutionaries to be martyred.
 16. (B) Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb had appointed his beloved grandson 'Azim-ush-Shan' as the Subahdar of Bihar in 1702 CE. In 1704 CE, Azim-ush-Shan spent 10 million (1 crore) rupees on the development of Patna city and renamed it 'Azimabad' after himself.
 17. (A) The Wahabi movement was originally a Muslim reformist movement, which later turned anti-British. Patna was its main center (headquarters), from where Enayat Ali and Wilayat Ali of the Sadiqpur family directed campaigns against the British across the North-West Frontier region.
 18. (D)
 19. (D) Mahatma Gandhi presided over the Congress only once in his entire lifetime, at the 'Belgaum Session' (Karnataka) in 1924, not the Gaya session. At the Gaya session (1922), a dispute arose regarding entry into the legislative councils, following which C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru formed the 'Swaraj Party'.
 20. (B) **The Bihar Herald** (1875) : First English newspaper of Bihar founded by Guru Prasad Sen. It served as an intellectual voice for the early educated class.
The Searchlight (1918) : Prominent nationalist English weekly (later daily) launched by Sachchidananda Sinha and Hasan Imam. It actively criticized British policies.
The Motherland (1921) : Nationalist journal born during the Non-Cooperation Movement published by Mazharul Haque from Patna's Sadaqat Ashram. It propagated communal harmony and anti-colonial resistance.
Hunkar (1942) : Weekly Hindi journal founded by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. It served as the official mouthpiece of the All India Kisan Sabha to voice peasant grievances.
 21. (A) The position of women during the Rigvedic period was respectable; they attended the Sabha and Vidatha, and no evidence of child marriage or the Sati system is found.
 22. (C) Ashoka appointed 'Dhamma Mahamatras' according to the 5th Rock Edict (Assertion A is true). However, their objective was not to propagate Buddhism, but rather to enforce Ashoka's 'Dhamma' (which was a secular moral code of conduct) and carry out welfare activities in society (Reason R is incorrect).
 23. (D) The founder of 'Shunyavada' (Madhyamaka philosophy) was the famous Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna, not Maharishi Patanjali. Maharishi Patanjali was the founder of 'Yoga philosophy'. Pratityasamutpada (the theory of dependent origi-

nation) is the core of Buddhism, and Anekantavada (pluralism) is the prominent philosophical principle of Jainism.

24. (A)
25. (B) Coins were not prevalent in the Harappan civilization; the entire trade and exchange was based on the barter system.
26. (A)
27. (C) In Shivaji's Ashtapradhan, the 'Sumant' (Dabir) was the Foreign Minister who supervised matters of war and peace with other states. The officer in charge of religious affairs and charities was called 'Panditrao'.
28. (B) The Cabinet Mission completely rejected the Muslim League's demand for a separate independent 'Pakistan', considering it impractical and administratively unjustified. Instead, it proposed a loose federal structure (Loose Federation) accompanied by a three-tier grouping of the provinces.
29. (A) The compilation of conversations/ discourses of Sufi saints is called 'Malfuzat'. The compilation of letters written by Sufi saints is called 'Maktubat', such as the Maktubat of Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri.
30. (B) The renowned medieval historian Prof. Satish Chandra, in his book 'Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court', first presented the concept of the 'Jagirdari Crisis' (the increasing number of Mansabdars and the shortage of fertile Jagirs to assign them) to explain the Mughal decline. Irfan Habib considered it an agrarian crisis.
31. (A) The 'Mahalwari System' (started by Holt Mackenzie) was introduced in the North-Western Provinces (Agra-Oudh), Central Provinces, and Punjab, where the settlement was made with the entire village or Mahal. The 'Permanent Settlement' was applicable in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa.
32. (A)
33. (A) Ideological differences emerged between Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai (Extremists) and Pherozeshah Mehta, Gokhale (Moderates) regarding the methodology and scope (Bengal only Vs. all of India) of the Swadeshi movement born after the partition of Bengal (1905), which became the cause of the 1907 Surat split.
34. (C) In September 1932, Gandhiji undertook a fast unto death in Yerwada Jail against the British PM's 'Communal Award'. As a result, the Poona Pact was signed between B.R. Ambedkar and upper-caste Hindus (led by Madan Mohan Malaviya). Under this, separate electorates for Dalits were abandoned, but their reserved seats were increased from 71 to 147.
35. (A) The correct chronological order is : 'Wood's Despatch' in 1854 (the Magna Carta of Indian education), 'Hunter Commission' in 1882 (emphasis on primary and secondary education), 'aileigh Commission' in 1902 (for universities during Curzon's time) and the 'Sadler Commission' in 1917-19 (to study the problems of Calcutta University).
36. (A) A study featured in the latest World Economic Outlook, of the International Monetary Fund, which shows that geography matters less for services. Two forces are driving this change. modern services like information technology, finance, and business services have taken the lead, which are easier to deliver across borders without physical proximity. Second, technology has changed what can be traded. Digital platforms, cloud computing, and remote work have made many services tradable.
37. (A) The Five Eyes (FVEY) is a Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) alliance comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. India had signed FTA/ CETA with Australia (2022), UK (2025) and New Zealand (2026).
38. (B) The Government of India has launched a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Digital Food Currency pilot in Gujarat. The pilot is expected expanded to the Union Territories of Chandigarh, Puducherry and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu.
39. (D) NITI Aayog is a policy think-tank and an advisory body of the Central government.
40. (A) India is the first country to mandate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) under the Companies Act, 2013. Companies with a net worth of ₹ 500 crore+ or revenue over ₹ 1000 crore or net profit over ₹ 5 crore must spend 2% of their average net profits on approved social activities like education, health, and rural development. The progress in CSR spending in India suggests that corporate sector still not ready to share their profit for the welfare of the society, Instead of they have created their own trusts and foundations which help to route the CSR spending.
41. (A) India's recent slip to the 6th largest economy, as per nominal GDP in US dollars, is primarily due to rupee depreciation against the dollar.
42. (C) According to the Securities Markets Code, 2025 (SMC), a depository, long treated as an intermediary under the Depositories Act, 1996, is now recognised as a Market Infrastructure Institution (MII). At the same time, the depository participant (DP), earlier an agent of the depository, is recast as its member. Subject to limited grandfathering, Securities must now be issued and held in dematerialised form. Two depositories, established under the Depository Act 1996, NSDL and CDSL are working in India.
43. (A)
44. (D) DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) is a national digital platform designed to provide quality educational resources for teachers, student, and parents across India, featuring QR-coded textbooks and multilingual content.
45. (D) 46. (D)
47. (A) The MPI assesses poverty at the individual level. If a person is deprived in a third or more of

- ten (weighted) indicators, the global MPI identifies them as 'MPI poor'. The extent or intensity of their poverty is also measured through the percentage of deprivations they are experiencing.
48. (B) Fiscal indicator of effective revenue deficit was introduced in Union Budget of 2011-12 to segregate the grants-in-aid which were used to finance current expenditure and those used to create capital assets. Section 2(aa) of amended FRBM Act (May 2012) defined 'effective revenue deficit' as the difference between the revenue deficit and grants for creation of capital assets.
 49. (D)
 50. (A) Under current account of the BoP, transactions are classified into merchandise (exports and imports) and invisibles. Invisible transactions are further classified into three categories, namely (a) Services-travel, transportation, insurance, Government not included elsewhere (GNIE) and miscellaneous (such as, communication, construction, financial, software, news agency, royalties, management and business services); (b) Income; and (c) Transfers (grants, gifts, remittances, etc.) which do not have any quid pro quo.
 51. (D) Bihar, which is the 13th largest state of India, has land area of 94,163 square kilometre. It comprises 2.86% of total land area of India.
 52. (D) The Kosi Mechi Intra-State Link Project envisages diversion of part of surplus water of Kosi River for extending irrigation to Mahananda basin lying in Bihar by way of remodelling of existing Eastern Kosi Main Canal (EKMC). The Link Project will provide 2,10,516 hectares additional annual irrigation in Kharif season in Araria, Purnea, Kishanganj and Katihar districts of Bihar.
 53. (D) The Sub-Himalayan foot hills region lies in the northern part of the state. The Gangetic plain of Bihar is divided into north and south by the Ganga River. To the further south of Bihar plains lie the plateau region which consists of Kaimur plateau in the west and Chhota Nagpur plateau in the east.
 54. (D) 55. (C)
 56. (D) The Kaziranga National Park is located in the Brahmaputra River floodplain in Assam, characterized by distinct alluvial grasslands and tropical forest composition.
 57. (B) 20th Parallel North : Libya and Sudan; 22nd Parallel North : Egypt and Sudan.
 58. (D) Drake Passage is a deep waterway (about 1000 km wide), connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans between Cape Horn (in South America) and the South Shetland Islands, located about 160 km north of the Antarctic Peninsula.
 59. (D) Southeast Asia's maritime geopolitics are defined by critical, narrow bottlenecks that facilitate over 25% of global trade and crucial energy shipments to East Asia. The Strait of Malacca is the most significant choke point, while the Lombok and Sunda Straits serve as vital alternatives, with the South China Sea acting as the central artery.
 60. (B) The general term for sacred groves in the Khasi Hills is 'Khlaw Kyntang' or 'Law Kyntang' or 'Law Lyngdoh' while in the Jaintia Hills it is called 'Khloo Blai'.
 61. (D) 62. (D)
 63. (B) River Chambal, which is the right-bank tributary of Yamuna, flows through Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary. The National Chambal Sanctuary is located on the Chambal River at the tri-junction of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Kuno River, tributary of Chambal River, flows through the Kuno National Park.
 64. (C) Located 150 km north of Port Blair, Baratang Island is India's only active mud volcano. Active mud volcanoes are not classified as true 'active volcanoes' (igneous volcanoes) primarily because they do not produce lava and are not driven by subterranean magma activity.
 65. (D) As compared to the Western Himalayas, the Eastern Himalayas receive higher rainfall, have steeper slope, boasts higher biodiversity and is recognized as biodiversity hotspot in India.
 66. (D)
 67. (D) Meteorological drought occurs if annual rainfall is less than 75% of the normal. If rainfall deficit is between 50% and 25%, it is classified as 'moderate drought', and 'severe drought' when it is more than 50%.
 68. (D) In Bihar, jute is primarily cultivated in the North-Eastern districts, which fall under the Agro-climatic Zone II (Northern East). Purnea, Katihar, Saharsa, Supaul, Madhepura, Khagaria, Araria and Kishanganj districts of Bihar fall under the Agro-climatic Zone II (Northern East).
 69. (C) The South Atlantic Anomaly (SAA) is a 'dent' or weak spot in Earth's magnetic field, spanning from South America to Africa, where the inner Van Allen radiation belt dips down to 200 km above Earth's surface.
 70. (B) 'Basket of Egg' topography refers to cluster of drumlins—smooth, elongated, teardrop-shaped hills formed by glacial ice-appearing as an elongated 'half-drowned eggs' in large swarms.
 71. (D) The Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976 transferred five subjects from the State List to the Concurrent List: Education, Forests, Weights and Measures, Protection of wild animals and birds and administration of justice.
 72. (B) The Instrument of Instructions from the Government of India Act 1935 was incorporated into the Indian Constitution as the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), located in Part IV (Articles 36 to 51).
 73. (B) The Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956, amended Article 153 of the Constitution to allow same person to be appointed as the Governor of more than one state, simultaneously.

74. (D) The Advocate General of the State has the right to speak and participate in the state legislature (both houses) and its committees, enjoying all privileges of a member, but cannot vote.
75. (B) Adjournment *sine die* means terminating a sitting of Parliament for an indefinite period i.e., without naming a day for reassembly. The power of adjournment *sine die* lies with the presiding officer of the House.
76. (A) Article 102(e) of the Constitution disqualifies a person for being chosen as member of the Parliament if the person is so disqualified under any law made by the Parliament.
77. (D) The Rajya Sabha holds equal power with the Lok Sabha regarding the introduction and passage of Constitutional Amendment Bills (Article 368), Ordinary Bills (non-money) and Financial Bills (Category B) that do not solely contain Article 110 matters.
78. (D) Though in *Berubari Union case* (1960), the Supreme Court had held that Preamble was not part of the Constitution but in the *Kesavananda Bharati case*, it held that Preamble is part of the Constitution, and Parliament can amend it without altering the 'basic structure' of the Constitution.
79. (D)
80. (B) The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) was established in 1921 under the provisions of the Government of India Act 1919. Currently, it consists of 22 members (15 from the Lok Sabha and 7 from the Rajya Sabha). The committee examines the annual audit reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).
81. (A) Recently, the MSME Technology Centre was inaugurated in Bihta, Patna. The extension centres were also inaugurated in Muzaffarpur, Munger, Rohtas and Darbhanga. These initiatives will provide opportunities to youth for receiving training in advanced, industry-oriented domains.
82. (C) Kerala became the first state in India to declare tidal flooding (also known as 'sunny day flooding' or 'nuisance flooding') as the state-specific disaster. The sunny day flooding occurs when the sea level rises above the local threshold during high tides.
83. (D) Manipuri film *Boong*, produced by Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment, won the prestigious award for Best Children's & Family Film, at the 79th British Academy Film Awards, popularly known as the BAFTAs.
84. (D) In the World Press Freedom Index 2026, Norway holds the top spot for the tenth consecutive year, while Eritrea comes in last for the third year in a row. Post-Assad Syria has seen the biggest improvement, climbing 36 places in the ranking. India's rank slipped by six places to the 157th place among 180 countries.
85. (C)
86. (B) The Bihar Government has approved to develop Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary as the second Tiger Reserve of the State. Valmiki Tiger Reserve in West Champaran District is Bihar's first and only tiger reserve, located along the India-Nepal border.
87. (C) On January 13, 2026, the Bihar Cabinet cleared the decks for the construction of the Indrapuri reservoir project following an agreement reached between Bihar and Jharkhand for resolving the Sone River water-sharing dispute.
88. (A) The Artemis II crew members named their Orion spacecraft *Integrity*. The name was announced on September 24, 2025.
89. (D) The inaugural Khelo India Tribal Games, which started on March 25, 2026, and ran until April 3, 2026, was hosted in three cities of Chhattisgarh : Raipur, Jagdalpur and Surguja.
90. (C) On March 31, 2026, the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies was inaugurated at the Nalanda University by Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, Shri P. Kumaran. The establishment of the Centre was announced by PM Narendra Modi during the 22nd ASEAN-India Summit held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2025.
91. (D) Pragati and Vikas are the official mascots India's first fully digital Census 2027, symbolizing progress (Pragati - female enumerator) and development (Vikas - male enumerator), representing equal gender participation.
92. (A) During the India AI Impact Summit, 2026, Tiger Analytics signed an MoU with Bihar Government to establish one of India's largest Artificial Intelligence Centres of Excellence (AI CoE) in Bihar. It will be developed in collaboration with IIT Patna as knowledge partner.
93. (D) The Mukhya Mantri Mahila Rozgar Yojana will be implemented with the help of the Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society, popularly known as Jeevika, under the Department of Rural Development. Members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), or Jeevika Didis, will be the major beneficiaries of this scheme.
94. (D)
95. (D) As per the NITI Aayog's Export Preparedness Index 2024, Bihar was ranked 16th among the larger states. The overall ranking of Bihar was 19th among all States and UTs.
96. (D) The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) is spread across the Indian states of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and the low-lying hills of Nepal. In total, the landscape has 13 Protected Areas, nine in India and four in Nepal, covering a total area of 49,500 km², of which 30,000 km² lies in India.
97. (D) The 11th edition of the Raisina Dialogue was jointly organized by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and the Union Ministry of External Affairs. Finland's President Alexander Stubb was the Chief Guest of the event.

98. (C) As per the World Urbanization Prospects 2025, Jakarta (Indonesia) is the world's most populous city, with nearly 42 million residents, followed by Dhaka (Bangladesh) with almost 40 million, and Tokyo (Japan) with 33 million. Cairo (Egypt) is the only non-Asian city among the top ten.
99. (C) The Madame Tussauds launched the 'Icons of India' exhibition at its London headquarters, uniting the wax models of celebrities from the world of cinema and cricket, in May and June, 2026. The exhibition celebrated the cultural ties between India and UK, highlighting the global appeal of Indian cinema and cricket.
100. (D) Indian space start-up GalaxEye launched Mission Drishti, the world's first Opto SAR satellite, aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket from California in the United States. Weighing 190 kilograms, Mission Drishti is the largest Earth observation satellite ever built by a private Indian company.
101. (D)
102. (C) On May 1, 2026, CJI Surya Kant declared Sikkim as India's first paperless judiciary state, during the inauguration ceremony of the Conclave on Technology and Judicial Education, held in Gangtok.
103. (B) Lamayuru or Yuru Monastery is a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Lamayouro village of Leh district in Ladakh. Namgyal Monastery, also known as the 'Dalai Lama's Temple', is the personal monastery of the 14th Dalai Lama, located in McLeod Ganj, Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh.
104. (B) The 14th edition of the Joint Military Exercise EKUVERIN between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) was conducted from 2 to 15 December, 2025. The 14th edition of Exercise Bold Kurukshetra 2025, a joint military exercise between the Indian Army and the Singapore Armed Forces, took place from July 27 to August 4, 2025, at Jodhpur, Rajasthan.
105. (C) With effect from May 1, 2026, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) exited from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and the broader OPEC+ alliance, which reflects the country's aim to enhance flexibility in responding to global market dynamics.
106. (A) When you inhale, you take in a mass of air (approx. 1.29 g/L). Additionally, the chest expands, slightly shifting the center of gravity and increasing the downward force momentarily.
107. (B) Given : $u = -10$ cm, $R = 30$ cm $\Rightarrow f = R/2 = -15$ cm (for concave).
Using Mirror Formula : $1/f = 1/v + 1/u$
 $1/-15 = 1/v + 1/-10 \Rightarrow 1/v = 1/10 - 1/15 = 3 - 2/30 = 1/30$
 $v = 30$ cm.
Magnification $m = -v/u = -30/-10 = 3$.
108. (C) Frequency is a characteristic of the source. When light changes medium, its speed and wavelength change proportionally $\left(f = \frac{v}{\lambda}\right)$, but frequency remains constant.
109. (C) The magnetic force $[F = q(v \times B)]$ always acts perpendicular to the direction of motion (velocity). Since, the force is perpendicular to displacement, the work done by the magnetic field is zero. According to the Work-Energy Theorem, if no work is done, the kinetic energy (and speed) remains constant, although the direction (velocity) changes.
110. (B) Newton's Second Law defines force quantitatively ($F = dp/dt$). For an object with constant mass, this simplifies to $F = ma$. It establishes that force is required to change the state of motion (momentum) of a body.
111. (B) Law of Conservation of Momentum : $m_1v_1 + m_2v_2 = 0$ (Initial momentum was zero).
 $(0.02 \text{ kg} \times 150 \text{ m/s}) + (M \times -1.5 \text{ m/s}) = 0$
 $3 = 1.5M \Rightarrow M = 3 / 1.5 = 2 \text{ kg}$.
112. (C) This is based on the Law of Conservation of Energy. As the object falls, its Potential Energy ($PE = mgh$) decreases because the height decreases, but its Kinetic Energy ($KE = 1/2 mv^2$) increases as its velocity increases. At any point during the fall, the loss in PE is exactly equal to the gain in KE, keeping the total mechanical energy constant (ignoring air resistance).
113. (B) Oxygen makes up about 46.6% of the Earth's crust by weight, followed by Silicon (~27.7%) and Aluminum (~8.1%). Note that Iron is the most abundant element in the Earth as a whole, but Oxygen leads in the crust.
114. (B) Atomic mass of C = 12, O = 16.
Molar mass of $\text{CO}_2 = 12 + (16 \times 2) = 12 + 32 = 44 \text{ g/mol}$.
Number of moles = Given Mass/Molar Mass = $44/44 = 1$ mole.
115. (C) Nitrous oxide provides analgesic and anesthetic effects. It is a colorless, non-flammable gas with a slightly sweet odor.
116. (A) Mass of Solute (Salt) = 20 g
Mass of Solvent (Water) = 180 g
Total Mass of Solution = $20 + 180 = 200 \text{ g}$
Concentration = $(\text{Mass of Solute} / \text{Total Mass}) \times 100 = (20 / 200) \times 100 = 10\%$.
117. (B) Simple distillation is used when boiling points differ significantly. If the difference is less than 25 K, Fractional Distillation is required (e.g., separating components of petroleum or air).
118. (C) Carbon atoms = 6
Hydrogen atoms = 12
Oxygen atoms = 6
Total atoms = $6 + 12 + 6 = 24$ atoms.
119. (C) Platelets release coagulation factors that lead to the formation of a fibrin clot at the site of an injury. Vitamin K is also essential for this process.
120. (C) Lysosomes contain digestive enzymes. If a cell is damaged, the lysosome may burst and its enzymes digest the entire cell, hence the name.

121. (B) Pellagra occurs due to low levels of Niacin. Scurvy is Vitamin C deficiency, and Beri-beri is Vitamin B1 (Thiamine) deficiency.
122. (C) The cerebellum (part of the hindbrain) coordinates voluntary movements and maintains posture. The Cerebrum handles intelligence and the Hypothalamus regulates body temperature and hunger.
123. (C) Ethylene is a gaseous plant hormone that promotes fruit ripening. Auxins are for cell elongation and Absciscic acid is often called the 'stress hormone' as it promotes dormancy.
124. (A) After ovulation, the ruptured follicle transforms into the Corpus Luteum, which secretes high levels of Progesterone to prepare the uterine lining for a potential pregnancy.
125. (B) The SA Node is located in the right atrium and is called the natural pacemaker because it generates the regular electrical impulses that set the rhythm for the entire heart.
126. (C) Ex-situ conservation happens outside the natural habitat (e.g., Zoos, Botanical Gardens, Seed Banks). In-situ conservation happens within the natural habitat (e.g., National Parks).
127. (A) Introduced in 1988, hotspots are regions with high species richness and high endemism that are under significant threat.
128. (B) Excess nutrients (often from fertilizers) cause algal blooms, which deplete oxygen in the water, leading to the death of aquatic life.
129. (B) Adopted in 1997, it set binding emission reduction targets for developed countries to combat global warming.
130. (B) These substances are not metabolized or excreted and thus accumulate in higher concentrations as they move up the food chain.
131. (C) According to Lindeman's 10% Law, only 10% of energy is transferred to the next level; the rest is lost as heat. Therefore, energy always decreases as you move up.
132. (B) Energy enters the system via producers (plants) through photosynthesis, moves to consumers (herbivores/carnivores), and finally to decomposers. Note that energy flow is always unidirectional.
133. (B) Adopted in 1997, it focusses on reducing CO₂ and other GHG emissions. For Ozone depletion, the relevant treaty is the Montreal Protocol.
134. (C) An endemic species is one that is unique to a defined geographic location, such as an island or a specific country (e.g., the Sangai deer is endemic to Manipur).
135. (B) Biotic components are living organisms (Plants, animals, bacteria, fungi). Sunlight, soil, and pressure are 'Abiotic' (non-living) factors.
136. (B) The Sarpanch is the head of the Gram Panchayat, which deals with local judicial and dispute resolution matters at the village level.
137. (B) Bihar sends 16 members to the Rajya Sabha and 40 members to the Lok Sabha.
138. (A) Out of 243 seats in the Bihar Vidhan Sabha, 38 are reserved for SC and 2 are reserved for ST (Manihari and Katoria).
139. (A) Jairamdas Daulatram served as the first Governor of Bihar from 15 August, 1947 to 11 January, 1948.
140. (A) Article 275 enables Parliament to provide statutory grants-in-aid from the Consolidated Fund of India to specific states requiring financial assistance. Unlike the general tax-sharing of Article 280, these grants are targeted at state-specific developmental needs or tribal welfare.
141. (A)
142. (B) Pattern is :
- $$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
 & & & & 120 & & \\
 100800 & 14400 & 2400 & 480 & \boxed{240} & 40 & \\
 \uparrow & \uparrow & \uparrow & \uparrow & \uparrow & \uparrow & \\
 \times \frac{1}{7} & \times \frac{1}{6} & \times \frac{1}{5} & \times \frac{1}{4} & \times \frac{1}{3} & &
 \end{array}$$
143. (C) Here,
- $$\begin{aligned}
 &\text{H.C.F. of } \frac{360}{100}, \frac{54}{100} \text{ and } \frac{108}{100} \\
 &= \frac{\text{H.C.F. of } (360, 54, 108)}{\text{L.C.M. of } (100, 100, 100)} \\
 &= \frac{18}{100} = 0.18
 \end{aligned}$$
144. (D) $?$ = $0.54 + 0.23$
- $$\begin{aligned}
 &= \frac{54}{99} + \frac{21}{90} \\
 &= \frac{54 \times 90 + 21 \times 99}{99 \times 90} \\
 &= \frac{6939}{8910} = \frac{771}{990}
 \end{aligned}$$
145. (A) $\frac{17.28 \div x}{3.6 \times 0.2} = 2$
- $$\begin{aligned}
 17.28 \div x &= 3.6 \times 0.2 \times 2 \\
 x &= \frac{17.28}{1.44} = 12
 \end{aligned}$$
146. (D) Let the number be x , then as per question,
- $$\begin{aligned}
 x + \frac{1}{x} &= 1 \\
 \frac{x^2 - 2x + 1}{2} &= 0 \\
 (x - 1)^2 &= 0 \\
 x &= 1 \\
 \therefore \text{Reqd. average} &= \frac{x^2 + x^3 + x^4}{3} \\
 &= \frac{1^2 + 1^3 + 1^4}{3} \\
 &= \frac{1 + 1 + 1}{3} = \frac{3}{3} = 1
 \end{aligned}$$
147. (D) Let the two numbers be $8x$ and $3x$, respectively, then as per question,
- $$\begin{aligned}
 \frac{8x + 5}{3x + 5} &= \frac{5}{2} \\
 16x + 10 &= 15x + 25 \\
 x &= 15 \\
 \therefore \text{Reqd. smaller number} &= 3x \\
 &= 3 \times 15 = 45
 \end{aligned}$$
148. (A) As, $2^2 = 4, 3^2 = 9, 6^2 = 36$
Same as, $7^2 = 49, 2^2 = 4, 4^2 = 16$
149. (D) Frogs don't bleat, they always croak.
150. (B) As, Same as,
- | | |
|--|--|
| C $\xrightarrow{\text{Opposite Letter}}$ X | L $\xrightarrow{\text{Opposite Letter}}$ O |
| L $\xrightarrow{\quad}$ O | O $\xrightarrow{\quad}$ L |
| O $\xrightarrow{\quad}$ L | T $\xrightarrow{\quad}$ G |
| C $\xrightarrow{\quad}$ X | U $\xrightarrow{\quad}$ F |
| K $\xrightarrow{\quad}$ P | S $\xrightarrow{\quad}$ H |

Test Your Knowledge

Answers with Hints

1. (A) Project Deepak of Border Roads Organisation, raised on May 4, 1961, celebrated its 66th raising day on May 4, 2026.
2. (A) Chief Minister of Delhi is appointed by the President of India, while the Chief Minister of J&K is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor of J&K.
3. (C)
4. (C) The Supreme Court of India, recently in the case of Chinthada Anand Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh (March 2026) has decided a complex and constitutional question of who is entitled to be recognised as a scheduled caste in case of conversion.
5. (C)
6. (D) Preah Vihear temple located atop 525 m cliff (Dangrek mountains on Cambodia-Thailand border) was initially dedicated to Lord Shiva, later became a Buddhist site.
7. (B) Yashoda and Krishna is the costliest painting of Raja Ravi Verma, which was sold for a record breaking ₹ 167.20 crore at a Saffronart spring line auction in Mumbai.
8. (B) Hussain Sagar is in Hyderabad (Telangana).
9. (B) AICTE on April 17, 2026 launched the third edition of its flagship AICTE-VAANI (Vibrant Advocacy for Advancement and Nurturing of Indian Languages) Scheme.
10. (D)
11. (B) Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh on April 18, 2026 laid the foundation stone for India's first Petroglyph Conservation Park at Sindhu Ghat, Leh. The aim is to conserve centuries old petroglyphs (rock carving) that represent early human life, trade routes, belief systems and ecological history.
12. (A) It is a T-shaped stepper reservoir measuring about 14.7 meters in length.
13. (D) Jagadguru Basaveshwara was born in Bagewadi (Karnataka) in 1131 AD. He served as the Prime Minister in the court of Kalachuri King at Kalyana. He is known as the founder of the Lingayat sect.
14. (C) 15. (D)
16. (B) On 28th January, 2026, the Ministry of Jal Shakti inaugurated 25 JALAJ Livelihood Centres at different locations in the Ganga Basin. The aim is to integrate river conservation with sustainable livelihood in the Ganga Basin.
17. (A) Countries suffering from the demographic winter are those where total fertility rates decline below 2.1—the replacement level. China, Japan, South Korea and Germany etc. are in the grip of demographic winter.
18. (C) 19. (D) 20. (D) 21. (A)
22. (B) Netherlands on May 17, 2026 handed back the 11th century Anaimangalam 21 copper plates to India. These plates are among the important artefacts of Tamil heritage. These plates, belonging to the times of Rajaraja Chola I, weight approximately 30 kg and are bound together by a bronze ring bearing the royal seal of the Chola Dynasty.
23. (C) Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on May 16, 2026 announced incentives to the married couples. The incentives of ₹ 30000 for the birth of third child and ₹ 40000 for a fourth, as part of efforts to reverse the state's declining population trend.
24. (B) PM Narendra Modi accompanied by the PM of the Netherlands, H.E. Rob Jetten visited the iconic Dutch water management structure, the Afsluitdijk Dam on May 17, 2026. The Afsluitdijk, a 32 km long Dam and causeway, is a global benchmark in flood control and land reclamation, protecting large parts of the Netherlands from the North Sea while enabling freshwater storage.
25. (C) Concept of Fundamental Rights was adopted from the Constitution of the USA, while the concept of the Directive Principles of State Policy has its roots in the Constitution of Ireland.
26. (A) Third Schedule of the Constitution of India has the forms of oaths of Affirmation and Secrecy for the Minister for the Union/State a candidate for election to Parliament/Legislative Assemblies, Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts, Comptroller and Auditor General of India.
27. (B) 28. (D)
29. (B) Estimates Committee was first created in 1950. It consists 30 members, all from the Lok Sabha. The members of the Estimates committee are elected by the Lok Sabha by the methods of single transferable vote system of proportional representation system.
30. (D)
31. (A) A vector quantity is a physical quantity that requires both a magnitude (size or numerical value) and a direction. Speed is a scalar quantity because it has only the numerical value.
32. (A) 33. (B) 34. (D)
35. (C) Highest possible pH value is for Aqueous Salt Solution (14) followed by Sodium Carbonate Solution (9), Sodium Chloride Solution (7) and Ammonium Chloride Solution (6).
36. (A) Francium is the most unstable metal in the air. Because it is highly radioactive element its longest-lived isotope is Francium-223 has a half the life of only 22 minutes.
37. (B) Bacterial Blight of Rice is a water-borne disease.
38. (C) Holstein-Friesian Cow given 6000-10000 litres of milk over a typical 0-365 days lactation cycle. Lactation period of Sahiwal Cow is 300 days. Frieswal Cow has an average lactation cycle of 326 days. Karan-Swiss has a lactation period of 305 days.
39. (B) Plasma membrane grows around the particle as pseudopodia.
40. (B) Squamous tissue is an epithelial tissue.

"Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them."
—Lady Bird Johnson

A nation is often judged not by the height of its buildings or the strength of its economy, but by how it treats its most vulnerable people. Among the most neglected and invisible members of society are 'nowhere children'—children who belong nowhere, who are not fully accepted by family, community, or the system. They are the street children sleeping under flyovers, the orphaned child without support, the child abandoned due to poverty, disability, or social stigma, and the child forced into labour instead of school. These children grow up without security, affection, identity and often, without hope.



Diksha Sinha

The question is simple yet deeply painful : who cares for nowhere children ? This issue is not limited to one country or one class of people. It is a global humanitarian concern. In India, where family values are deeply respected, it is heartbreaking that thousands of children still live without protection or belonging. They survive on railway platforms, bus stands, construction sites, and city streets. Some are victims of trafficking, some are runaways escaping abuse and some are simply forgotten by a system too busy to notice them.

Nowhere children are not born unwanted; they are made invisible by circumstances. Poverty is one of the biggest reasons. Families struggling to survive often see children as an economic burden rather than a blessing. In rural and urban poor households, children are pushed into labour, begging, or domestic work. Some are left at orphanages, and others are abandoned completely.

Broken families also contribute to this tragedy. Domestic violence, alcoholism, separation and abuse force many children to run away from home. A child who leaves home for safety often finds greater danger outside. Without education or support, such children become easy targets for exploitation, crime and addiction.

Another reason is social discrimination. Children born with disabilities, children from marginalized communities, or girls in some conservative families may face neglect and rejection. Society sometimes decides their worth before they even get a chance to prove themselves.

Migration is another growing challenge. Families moving from villages to cities in search of work often live in unstable conditions. Children in such families frequently drop out of school and lose access to health-care and education. Slowly, they disappear and become children of nowhere.

The government plays a major role in caring for such children. India has several laws and schemes designed for child welfare. The Juvenile Justice Act, the Child

Protection Services Scheme and the Right to Education Act are important steps toward protecting vulnerable children. Government-run shelter homes, adoption systems, and child helplines such as Childline 1098 provide rescue and support.

One real-life example is of an eight-year-old boy from Kota, Rajasthan, who bravely called Childline 1098 to stop the child marriage of his classmate. The girl wanted to continue her education instead of being forced into marriage. Because of his courage and quick action by officials, not only her marriage but also another underage marriage at the same venue was stopped. This shows how awareness and timely help can save childhood itself.

Another example comes from Childline's rescue work at railway stations, where many runaway children are found alone and frightened. In one case, a nine-year-old boy was found at a railway station after running away from home. With patience, counselling, and support from the Childline team and Railway Protection Force, he was safely reunited with his family and later returned to school. This proves that one caring hand can change the direction of a child's life.

The Government of India has also strengthened child protection through Childline 1098, a 24-hour toll-free emergency helpline for children in need of care and protection. It responds to more than 1.5 million calls every year across hundreds of districts in India, showing how serious the issue is and how necessary quick intervention can be.

According to a recent report, nearly 44,902 children were rescued from exploitation in India between April 2024 and March 2025, and almost 90% of them were rescued from child labour. This shocking number reminds us that child protection is not just a social issue but a national emergency. It also reminds us that behind every number is a child waiting for safety, dignity and a second chance at life.

However, laws alone are not enough. Implementation remains weak. Many shelter homes are overcrowded and poorly managed. Corruption, lack of trained staff, and insufficient monitoring often turn safe spaces into unsafe ones. Children rescued from one form of neglect should not suffer another within institutions meant to protect them.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have become lifelines for many nowhere children. Organizations like CRY, Save the Children, Salaam Baalak Trust, and SOS Children's Villages work tirelessly to provide food, education, counseling, and rehabilitation. They help children return to school, reunite with families whenever possible, and rebuild confidence.

These organizations often reach places where government systems fail. They work directly on streets, in slums, and in remote villages. Their work reminds us that compassion can be organized and made powerful.

But the responsibility cannot rest only with governments and NGOs. Society itself must take care. Every citizen has a role. We often ignore children begging at traffic signals or selling flowers at railway stations. We feel sympathy for a moment and then move on. But caring means more than feeling sad; it means acting responsibly.

Teachers can identify signs of abuse or neglect in students. Neighbours can report child labour or violence. Employers can refuse to support systems that exploit children. Media can raise awareness without sensationalizing pain. Religious institutions and community groups can create support networks. Even small acts of attention can prevent a child from slipping into complete abandonment.

Families must also rethink their values. Children need love more than luxury. Emotional neglect can be as damaging as physical abandonment. Parents should create safe spaces where children feel heard and protected. A child should never feel that the street is safer than home.

Education is perhaps the strongest answer to this problem. A child with access to school gains not only knowledge but identity, routine, and dignity. Schools can become places of belonging. Midday meals, free uniforms, scholarships, and bridge education programs help bring vulnerable children back into learning spaces. Education breaks the cycle of poverty and gives children the power to imagine a future.

Mental health support is equally important. Many nowhere children carry deep trauma from abuse, hunger, rejection, and violence. Counselling and emotional care are often ignored in child welfare discussions. Healing the mind is as necessary as feeding the body.

Technology can also help. Digital tracking systems for missing children, stronger adoption monitoring and faster rescue coordination can improve outcomes. Social media, when used responsibly, can raise awareness and mobilize support for child welfare causes.

Yet, beyond policy and programmes lies a moral question: do we truly see these children as our own responsibility? Mahatma Gandhi once said that the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members. If children are the future of a nation, nowhere children are the test of its conscience. They are not charity cases; they are citizens with rights, dreams, and potential.

Many successful individuals today were once children without support. Given one chance, one mentor, one school, or one safe home, lives can change completely. The difference between a lost child and a leader is often not talent, but opportunity.

The question "Who cares for nowhere children?" should have only one answer: We All Do. A civilised society cannot allow children to belong nowhere. Every child deserves a name, a home, an education, and the assurance that someone cares. We must move from sympathy to responsibility, from awareness to action. The child at the traffic signal, the girl working in silence, the boy sleeping at the station—they are not strangers. They are part of our shared humanity.

"Every child deserves a champion—an adult who will never give up on them."
—Rita Pierson

This quote perfectly reminds us that nowhere children do not need pity; they need protection, opportunity and someone who refuses to let them be forgotten.

No child should grow up feeling invisible. No child should be forced to survive without love or protection. Caring for nowhere children is not just social service; it is national duty.

Because when a child belongs nowhere, society itself has failed. And when society chooses to care, hope begins.

Continued from Page 147

99. (C) The National Quantum Mission (NQM) aims to develop intermediate-scale quantum computers with 20-50 physical qubits (3 years), 50-100 physical qubits (5 years) and 50-1000 physical qubits (8 years) across platforms like superconducting and photonic technologies to advance computational capabilities. As part of this mission, four Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs) have been set up, bringing together 14 Technical Groups.
100. (B) India's Deep Ocean Mission was launched by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) in 2021. India's first manned submersible vehicle 'MATSYA 6000' is being developed as part of the Samudrayaan Project under Deep Ocean Mission, capable of transporting three individuals to depths of up to 6,000 meters beneath the ocean surface.

ESSAY COMPETITION

Topic : Words are But Pictures of Our Thoughts

Last Date : July 25, 2026

Cash Prizes : 1st : ₹ 1,500/- ; 2nd : ₹ 1,200/- ; 3rd : ₹ 1,000/-

DEBATE COMPETITION

Topic : 'Might is Right' is the Order of Present Day Geopolitics

Last Date : July 25, 2026

Cash Prizes : ₹ 1,500/- (Each in favour/against)

Rules and Regulations :

- Duly signed hand written entries on Essay/Debate in maximum limit of 1500 words with relevant details must be sent by e-mails or by ordinary post.
- Only one entry on Essay/Debate will be accepted from one participant.
- Entries must be submitted with declaration mentioning "This is my original work and is unpublished elsewhere" and should have complete name, address, mobile no., passport size photograph alongwith bank account details/IFSC code.
- Prize money will be awarded through cheques alongwith certificates from Pratiyogita Darpan. The awarded entries will be published in the forthcoming issue of Pratiyogita Darpan.

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Debate Contest



Casteism in India has Evolved into a Modern Political and Economic Tool within the Democratic Setup

In Favour

—Sandip J. Sharma

The Indian democratic experience is often celebrated for its scale, diversity and resilience. Yet, beneath its constitutional ideals of equality, liberty and fraternity lies a deeply embedded social structure — caste. While many expected caste to wither away under the forces of modernization, industrialization and democratic governance, the reality has been strikingly different. Rather than disappearing, caste has adapted itself to new institutional contexts. It has transformed from a rigid social hierarchy into a dynamic political and economic instrument. Thus, the proposition that casteism in India has evolved into a modern political and economic tool within the democratic setup is not only valid but also essential to understanding the functioning of Indian democracy.

Historically, caste operated as a system of social stratification that governed occupation, social interactions and marriage. It was localized, hierarchical, and largely immutable. However, the onset of colonial rule introduced new administrative practices such as census enumeration and legal categorization, which began the process of politicizing caste identities.

In a democratic framework where numbers matter, caste groups became natural units of political mobilization. Political parties quickly recognized the utility of caste as a tool for electoral success. Candidate selection, coalition-building and campaign strategies began to revolve around caste arithmetic. Electoral constituencies are often analyzed through the lens of caste composition, and voting patterns frequently reflect caste affiliations.



Sandip J. Sharma

The concept of 'vote banks' exemplifies this transformation. Caste groups are mobilized as cohesive voting blocs, with political parties appealing to their shared identities and interests. This is particularly evident in several Indian states, where political formations have emerged by consolidating specific caste groups. The rise of backward caste politics and the assertion of historically marginalized communities demonstrate how caste has been instrumentalized within the democratic process.

Importantly, this politicization of caste has had a democratizing effect. It has enabled previously marginalized groups to gain representation and voice in governance. Leaders from disadvantaged backgrounds have risen to positions of power, challenging traditional elites and reshaping the political landscape. In this sense, caste has functioned as a vehicle of political empowerment, facilitating a more inclusive distribution of power.

However, this empowerment is mediated through identity-based mobilization rather than purely ideological or programmatic politics. Electoral competition often prioritizes caste considerations over policy debates, leading to the fragmentation of the political discourse.

Beyond politics, caste has also evolved into a significant economic tool. In contemporary India, access to economic opportunities is often influenced by caste networks and affiliations. Traditional occupational linkages, though weakened, continue to persist in modified forms. Informal sectors, in particular, exhibit strong caste-based clustering, where social trust and shared identity facilitate economic transactions.

Caste networks often function as systems of social capital, providing support in the form of credit, employment opportunities and business connections. In small and medium enterprises, these networks

play a crucial role in reducing transaction costs and ensuring reliability. Thus, caste has adapted to the demands of a market economy, serving as an enabling mechanism for economic coordination.

The demand for inclusion in reserved categories by various communities highlights the perceived economic value of caste identity. Movements advocating for reservation benefits underscore how caste has become a means of negotiating access to state resources. In this context, caste operates as a strategic tool within the economic domain, influencing life chances and social mobility.

Caste-based associations and organizations also contribute to economic advancement. These groups often provide scholarships, financial assistance, and networking opportunities to their members. By pooling resources and fostering solidarity, they enhance the economic resilience of their communities. Such collective action reflects the adaptive capacity of caste in a modern context.

The intersection of caste and capitalism presents an intriguing dynamic. Contrary to the expectation that market forces would erode traditional identities, caste has persisted and even thrived in certain economic contexts. Business communities often rely on caste-based trust networks for partnerships and transactions. These networks, built on shared norms and mutual obligations, facilitate cooperation in environments where formal institutions may be weak.

At the same time, caste influences labour markets. Occupational segregation, though less rigid than in the past, continues to exist. Certain jobs and industries are dominated by specific caste groups, reflecting both historical legacies and contemporary realities. Discrimination, though often subtle, can affect hiring practices, wages and working conditions.

The role of media and public discourse in reinforcing caste as a tool cannot be ignored. Social media has further amplified this trend, providing platforms for caste-based mobilization and advocacy. Digital spaces have become arenas where caste identities are asserted, negotiated, and sometimes contested.

While acknowledging the functional transformation of caste, it is essential to critically examine its implications. The use of caste as a political and economic tool often leads to identity-based polarization. Electoral strategies centered on caste can undermine the development of issue-based politics, affecting governance and policy outcomes. Similarly, economic reliance on caste networks may perpetuate exclusion and limit social mobility for those outside these networks.

Moreover, the persistence of caste-based discrimination and violence indicates that the social dimensions of caste remain deeply entrenched. The evolution of caste into a modern tool does not negate its oppressive aspects. Instead, it coexists with them, creating a complex interplay between progress and persistence.

From a theoretical standpoint, the transformation of caste can be understood through the interaction of traditional social structures with modern institutions. Democracy, by empowering individuals and groups, encourages the mobilization of identities. In a diverse society, caste provides a readily available framework for such mobilization. Political actors, operating within a competitive environment, utilize caste as a means to aggregate interests and secure electoral success.

Similarly, in the economic sphere, individuals leverage existing social networks to navigate uncertainties and maximize opportunities. Caste, with its deep-rooted connections, serves as an effective mechanism for collective action and mutual support. Thus, its persistence is not merely a relic of the past, but a rational adaptation to contemporary conditions.

The Indian experience demonstrates that modernization does not necessarily lead to the erosion of traditional identities. Instead, these

identities often adapt and find new expressions within modern frameworks. Caste, in this sense, exemplifies resilience and transformation.

In conclusion, the proposition that casteism in India has evolved into a modern political and economic tool within the democratic setup is both empirically grounded and analytically robust. However, this transformation is accompanied by significant challenges. The instrumental use of caste can reinforce divisions, hinder social cohesion, and complicate governance. Therefore, while recognizing its role as a tool, it is imperative to strive towards a system where opportunities are determined by merit and capability rather than identity.

The ultimate goal of Indian democracy must be to transcend the limitations of caste while ensuring justice and inclusion. Until such a transformation is achieved, caste will continue to operate as a powerful and pervasive tool within the political and economic landscape of the nation.

In Against

—K. Vijay

"Democracy is not about the domination of the majority, but the protection of the marginalized."

—Jawaharlal Nehru

This statement that, "casteism in India has evolved into modern political and economic tool within the democratic setup" appears convincing at first glance. Certainly, caste influences elections, reservations and social mobilization. However, reducing caste based political participation entirely to manipulation or opportunism oversimplifies Indian democracy and ignores historical realities.

India did not create caste through democracy. Caste inequalities existed for centuries before independence. Democracy merely provided marginalized communities a platform to express long-suppressed voices. Therefore, caste based political assertion should not automatically be interpreted as casteism. In many cases, it represents social

justice, representation and democratic inclusion.

For centuries, oppressed communities remained excluded from education, administration, temples, land ownership and decision-making structures. Political participation after independence gave these groups constitutional visibility. Leaders from marginalized communities emerged not because democracy encouraged caste hatred, but because democracy finally allowed equal political participation.

Reservation policy is often criticized as caste-based politics. Yet reservations were introduced not for charity, but for justice. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar viewed reservation as temporary safeguards necessary for creating equal opportunities in an unequal society. Even today, social and educational backwardness continues among several communities. Therefore, policies based caste realities cannot automatically be dismissed as political tools.

Critics often argue that political parties use caste arithmetic during elections. While this is partially true, democracy everywhere functions through social coalitions. In many countries, politics is influenced by race, ethnicity, language, religion or class. Indian democracy reflects its own social realities. Representation of different communities is not necessarily harmful if it strengthens inclusiveness.

Moreover, caste-based political mobilization has significantly democratized power structures in India. Before independence and during the early decades after it, political and administrative power remained concentrated among socially dominant groups. The rise of backward caste and Dalit leadership challenged this imbalance and made governance more representative.

Several social justice movements improved the condition of marginalized communities. In Tamil Nadu, the self-respect movement questioned social hierarchy and expanded educational access. In states Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, backward caste politics enabled communities previously excluded from power to gain political voice. Therefore, caste-based mobilization cannot be viewed only negatively.

Continued on Page 178



K. Vijay

Concentric Quiz

Special on Wildlife and Environment

1. Which of the following statements are correct about India's updated NDC (2031-35) ?

- I. To reduce Emissions Intensity of its GDP by 47% by 2035 from 2005 level.
- II. To achieve 60% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2035.
- III. To create Carbon Sink of 3.5 to 4.0 billion tonnes of CO₂ eq. by 2035 from 2005 level.

Choose the correct option :

- (A) Only I and II
- (B) Only I
- (C) Only II and III
- (D) All I, II and III

2. Which of the following statements is incorrect about Sheikha Jheel ?

- (A) It is India's 99th Ramsar site
- (B) It is natural wetland complex
- (C) Birdlife International has designated it as Important Bird and Biodiversity Area
- (D) It is located in Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh

3. Which of the following is not correctly matched ?

Wildlife Species IUCN Status

- (A) Pygmy Hog —Critically Endangered
- (B) Saltwater crocodile —Endangered
- (C) Malabar Civet —Critically Endangered
- (D) Pink-headed Duck—Extinct

4. Which of the following are statutory bodies under the Wildlife (Protection) Act and its subsequent amendments ?

- I. Wildlife Crime Control Bureau
- II. Central Zoo Authority
- III. National Board of Wildlife
- IV. State Board of Wildlife

Choose the correct option :

- (A) Only II and III
- (B) Only II, III and IV
- (C) Only III and IV
- (D) All I, II, III and IV

5. Consider the following statements in relation with the National Green Tribunal ?

- I. It was established in 2010.
- II. It is vested with the power of civil court.
- III. It is guided by the principles of natural justice.
- IV. It is empowered to regulate its own procedure.

How many of the above statements are correct ?

- (A) Only one
- (B) Only two
- (C) Only three
- (D) All four

6. Consider the following statements in relation to Schedule V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 :

- I. Species which have been classified as Vermin are placed under it.
- II. Common crow, fruit bats, mice and rats are listed under it.

Which of the above statements are correct ?

- (A) Only I
- (B) Only II
- (C) Both I and II
- (D) Neither I nor II

7. Which of the following statements is incorrect about the Great Himalayan National Park ?

- (A) It is located in the Western Himalayan Temperate Forests ecoregion
- (B) It is part of Birdlife International's Western Himalaya Endemic Bird Area
- (C) It is UNESCO World Heritage site since 2014
- (D) None of the above

8. 'They breed in northern China and eastern Russia and migrates to southern Africa to spend the winter. During their onward migration from October to December, they pass through Nagaland, Manipur and elsewhere in northeastern India, before moving through peninsular India and eventually crossing the Arabian Sea into Africa.'

Which migratory bird is described in the above passage ?

- (A) Great Hornbill
- (B) Siberian Crane
- (C) Amur Falcon
- (D) Arctic Terns

9. Elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*) is the state animal of :

- (A) Kerala
- (B) Karnataka
- (C) Jharkhand
- (D) All of the above

10. Consider the following pairs :

Species	Natural Habitat
I. Lion-tailed Macaque	— Western Ghats
II. Gharial	—Chambal River
III. Sangai	—Loktak Lake
IV. Hangul	—Ladakh

How many of the above following pairs are correctly matched ?

- (A) Only one
- (B) Only two
- (C) Only three
- (D) All four

11. Which of the following acts restrict the power of the state in respect of de-reservation of forests and use of forestland for non-forest purposes ?

- (A) Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- (B) Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- (C) The Biological Diversity Act, 2002
- (D) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980

12. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 provides for :
 (A) Protection of listed flora and fauna
 (B) Provides for hunting of animal if it threatens human life and property
 (C) Empowers the central and state governments to declare any area a wildlife sanctuary, national park or closed area
 (D) All of the above
13. Which of the following statements is incorrect ?
 (A) Whitley Awards is also known as Green Oscars
 (B) It is presented annually by the Norway-based Whitley Fund for Nature
 (C) In 2026, two Indians-Parveen Shaikh and Barkha Subba were among the six recipients of the Whitley Awards
 (D) None of the above
14. 'It is a riverine bird species known for its unique feeding behaviour of skimming the water surface by flying rapidly on long angular wings with an elongated lower mandible to catch fish. It favours slow-moving rivers with sandbars. It is listed as endangered in IUCN Red List.'
 The above paragraph describes which of the following birds ?
 (A) Indian Skimmer
 (B) Bugun Liocichla
 (C) Nicobar Megapode
 (D) Himalayan Quail
15. Which of the following pairs is incorrectly matched ?
 (A) Emperor Penguin : Endangered
 (B) Arctic fur seal : Endangered
 (C) Southern elephant seal : Least Concern
 (D) None of the above
16. Which of the following statements is incorrect ?
 (A) Red Panda is enlisted as Critically Endangered by the IUCN
 (B) It is also enlisted under the CITES Appendix I
 (C) In India, the only breeding programmes for the Red Panda in its natural distribution zone is run by the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park
 (D) None of the above
17. Which of the following species is not endemic in India ?
 (A) Prosopis juliflora
 (B) Pterocarpus santalinus
 (C) Artocarpus hirsutus
 (D) Rhododendron watti
18. Consider the following pairs :
 I. World Soil Day : December 5
 II. World Environment Day : June 5
 III. International Biological Diversity Day : May 22
 IV. International Tiger Day : August 10
 How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?
 (A) Only one (B) Only two
 (C) Only three (D) All four
19. Consider the following statements :
 I. Kaiser-i-Hind is the state butterfly of Uttar Pradesh.
 II. It is the largest butterfly in India.
 Which of the above statements are correct ?
 (A) Only I
 (B) Only II
 (C) Both I and II
 (D) Neither I nor II
20. Gahirmata Beach and Rushikulya Beach are renowned as mass nesting sites of Olive Ridley Turtle. These beaches are located in which State ?
 (A) Tamil Nadu
 (B) Andhra Pradesh
 (C) West Bengal
 (D) Odisha
21. (A) Third edition of Kalam and Kavach at Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi was organized on May 14, 2026. The event was centred around the strategic vision of Jointness, Aatmanirbharta and Innovation (JAI), along with emphasis on Indigenisation and International Collaboration (I²).
 (D) 33. (D) 34. (B) 35. (B)
32. (D) 33. (D) 34. (B) 35. (B)
36. (C) SATHI is an interdisciplinary facility set up in the BHU with the support of Department of Science & Technology, Govt of India.
37. (D) SATHI is an acronym for Sophisticated Analytical & Technical Help Institute; FIST is an acronym for Fund for Improvement of S&T Infrastructure; while ANRF is an acronym for Anusandhan National Research Foundation.
38. (B) India hosted the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting on May 14 and 15, 2026, which was chaired by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. The theme for India's BRICS Chairship this year is 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, bCo-operation and Sustainability'.
39. (A)
40. (A) Himanta Biswa Sarma is the current Chief Minister of Assam.

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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE



1. Which of the following statements is incorrect about the 'Project Deepak'?

- (A) Project Deepak was raised in 1965
- (B) It is one of the most important projects of the Border Roads Organisation
- (C) It was raised to develop critical infrastructure in border areas of Himachal Pradesh
- (D) Project Deepak has demonstrated exceptional commitment towards disaster management and humanitarian assistance

2. Which of the following statements is/are corrects?

- I. Chief Minister of Puducherry is appointed by the President of India.
- II. Chief Minister of Delhi is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor of the J&K.
- III. Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir is appointed by the President of India.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I
- (B) Only I and II
- (C) Only II and III
- (D) All I, II and III

3. Which of the following statements is/are correct in relation to the Tenure of the Prime Minister in India?

- I. The Constitution of India does not provide any fixed term limit for the Prime Minister.
- II. The Prime Minister continues in office as long as he enjoys the confidence of the House of the People (Lok Sabha).

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I
- (B) Only II
- (C) Both I and II
- (D) Neither I nor II

4. Consider the following statements in relation to a recent judgement of the Supreme

Court of India about the Scheduled Caste status :

- I. Conversion to any religion other than Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist would lead to loss of the benefits of the Scheduled Caste.
- II. The status of the SCs does not depend only upon birth but has a condition under the Constitutional framework upon religious conversion.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I
- (B) Only II
- (C) Both I and II
- (D) Neither I nor II

5. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose?

- I. He was a geopolitical pragmatist who believed that, 'freedom is not given, it is taken'.
- II. During World War II, he wanted to seek an alliance of Germany-Japan going by the dictum 'Enemy's Enemy is a friend'.

Correct code is :

- (A) Only I
- (B) Only II
- (C) Both I and II
- (D) Neither I nor II

6. Which of the following statements is incorrect about the Preah Vihear temple?

- (A) It is situated on Cambodia-Thailand border
- (B) It is a UNESCO World Heritage site
- (C) Armed Clash between the forces of Thailand and Cambodia damaged all 5 Gopuras of temple
- (D) The temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu

7. Which of the following is the costliest paintings of Raja Ravi Verma?

- (A) The Milkmaid
- (B) Yashoda and Krishna

- (C) Hamsa Damyanti
- (D) Lady in the Moonlight

8. Which of the following pairs is not matched correctly in relation to lakes and their locations?

- (A) Bellandur Lake—Karnataka
- (B) Hussain Sagar—Jammu & Kashmir
- (C) Chilika Lake—Odisha
- (D) Fateh Sagar—Rajasthan

9. VAANI Scheme was launched by the :

- (A) University Grant Commission (UGC)
- (B) All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)
- (C) National Council for Vocational Education
- (D) Prasar Bharati

10. Consider the following facts about the Dhokra Art :

- I. It is an ancient, 4000 year old metal casting craft.
- II. It had been originated from the Dhokra Damer tribes of Central and Eastern India.
- III. It is predominantly practiced in West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand.
- IV. Artifacts are made of brass and are jointless.

How many statements given above are correct?

- (A) Only one
- (B) Only two
- (C) Only three
- (D) All four

11. India's first Petroglyph Conservation Park is being set up in :

- (A) Sikkim
- (B) Ladakh
- (C) Arunachal Pradesh
- (D) Himachal Pradesh

12. Archaeological Survey of India discovered a 1500 year old stepped reservoir in :

- (A) Elephanta Island
- (B) Amarkantak
- (C) Bagh Caves
- (D) Chhota Nagpur plateau

13. Philosophy of Jagadguru Basaveshwara was based on :
- I. Arivu (True knowledge)
 - II. Ethos (Right conduct)
 - III. Anubhava (divine experience)
- Which of the above are correct ?
- (A) Only I and II
 - (B) Only I and III
 - (C) Only II and III
 - (D) All I, II and III
14. Consider the following facts about the 'Constitutional tort' :
- I. Constitutional tort is referred as a legal remedy under public law.
 - II. Under the constitutional tort the State is held liable to pay compensation for the violation of fundamental rights.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct ?
- (A) Only I
 - (B) Only II
 - (C) Both I and II
 - (D) Neither I nor II
15. End of Life vehicles are those vehicles which are ?
- I. No longer roadworthy
 - II. Invalidly registered
 - III. Failed fitness tests
 - IV. Voluntarily declared as waste by owners
- Correct code is :
- (A) Only I and II
 - (B) Only II and III
 - (C) Only I, II and III
 - (D) All I, II, III and IV
16. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the 'JALAJ Livelihood Centres' ?
- I. JALAJ Livelihood Centres have been established in different locations of Ganga and Brahmaputra Basin.
 - II. It is a joint initiative of Namami Gange Mission and the Wildlife Institute of India.
- Correct code is :
- (A) Only I
 - (B) Only II
 - (C) Both I and II
 - (D) Neither I nor II
17. The term 'Demographic Winter' refers to a :
- (A) Prolonged decline in population growth resulting from low fertility rates, ageing populations and increase in mortality rate
 - (B) Large scale migration of people from cold countries
 - (C) Shifting of population in search of better livelihoods
 - (D) Severe increase in mortality rate
18. WASH Warriors are grassroots champions from rural communities who derive initiatives in :
- I. Water
 - II. Air pollution
 - III. Sanitation
 - IV. Hygiene
- Correct code is :
- (A) Only I and III
 - (B) Only I, II and IV
 - (C) Only I, III and IV
 - (D) All I, II, III and IV
19. Odisha's Buddhist Triangle sites have been officially included in the serial nomination for inclusion in the UNESCO's World Heritage sites.
- Which of the following pairs is/are matched correctly about these sites ?
- I. Lalitagiri (Cuttack)
—Earliest Theravada Centres
 - II. Udayagiri (Jaipur)
—Mahayana and later Vajrayana establishments
 - III. Ratnagiri (Jaipur)
—Vajrayana epicentre
- Correct code is :
- (A) Only I and II
 - (B) Only II and III
 - (C) Only I and III
 - (D) All I, II and III
20. Consider the following facts about the Bagurumba Dance :
- I. It is a traditional folk dance of the Bodo Community of Assam.
 - II. Generally, it is performed as a ritual dance associated with harvest, nature worship and spiritual practices.
 - III. Bagurumba dance is prominently performed by Bodo women during the Bwisagu—the Bodo New Year and Domasi festival.
- Correct code is :
- (A) Only I and II
 - (B) Only I and III
 - (C) Only II and III
 - (D) All I, II and III
21. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 17, 2026 was conferred the "Royal Order of Polar Star, Degree Commander Grand Cross" the highest honour awarded to a Head of Government by :
- (A) Sweden's
 - (B) Norway's
 - (C) Netherlands
 - (D) Italy
22. Which of the following statements is/are correct ?
- I. Norway handed back 11th Century Anaimangalam Copper Plates to India.
 - II. 21 Anaimangalam Copper plates are considered the most significant surviving records of the Chola dynasty.
- Correct code is :
- (A) Only I
 - (B) Only II
 - (C) Both I and II
 - (D) Neither I nor II
23. Recently, which of the following States promised cash incentives for the birth of third and fourth child ?
- (A) Kerala
 - (B) Tamil Nadu
 - (C) Andhra Pradesh
 - (D) Karnataka
24. 'Afsluitdijk' Dam was in the news recently. It is located in :
- (A) Norway
 - (B) Netherlands
 - (C) Sweden
 - (D) Russia
25. Consider the following pairs in relation to certain provisions of the Constitution of India and their sources :
- I. Fundamental Rights
—United Kingdom
 - II. Judicial Review—USA
 - III. The Directive Principles of State Policy—France
 - IV. Concurrent List of Seventh Schedule—Australia
- Which of the above pairs are matched correctly ?
- (A) Only I and II
 - (B) Only II and III
 - (C) Only II and IV
 - (D) Only III and IV

26. Which of the following Schedule of Indian Constitution outlines the official forms of oaths and affirmations for key Constitutional functionaries in India ?
 (A) 3rd Schedule
 (B) 4th Schedule
 (C) 5th Schedule
 (D) 6th Schedule
27. The Council of Minister of the Union government is collectively responsible to the :
 (A) President of India
 (B) House of the People (Lok Sabha)
 (C) Parliament
 (D) Prime Minister
28. Which of the Fundamental Rights is/are not available to foreigners in India ?
 I. Article 15—Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place.
 II. Article 16—Equality of opportunity in matter of public employment.
 III. Article 19
 IV. Article 29 and Article 30 Protection of cultural/ educational rights.
 Correct code is :
 (A) Only I and II
 (B) Only II and III
 (C) Only III and IV
 (D) All I, II, III and IV
29. Which of the following parliamentary committee does not have the members from the Rajya Sabha ?
 I. Public Accounts Committee
 II. Estimates Committee
 III. Committee on Public Undertakings
 Correct code is :
 (A) Only I and II
 (B) Only II
 (C) Only I and III
 (D) None of the above
30. Which of the following states has/have bicameral Legislature in India ?
 I. Andhra Pradesh
 II. Bihar
 III. Telangana
 IV. Maharashtra
 V. Uttar Pradesh
 Correct code is :
 (A) Only II and V
 (B) Only I and III
 (C) Only II, III and IV
 (D) All I, II, III, IV and V
31. Which of the following is not a vector quantity ?
 (A) Speed
 (B) Force
 (C) Displacement
 (D) Acceleration
32. A particle is moving in a circular path of radius r . The displacement after a full circle would be :
 (A) Zero (B) πr
 (C) $2\pi r$ (D) $\frac{3}{4}\pi r$
33. The momentum of a body is equal to :
 (A) Mass $\times$ Speed
 (B) Mass $\times$ Velocity
 (C) Mass $\times$ Acceleration
 (D) $\frac{1}{2} \times$ Mass $\times$ Velocity²
34. Consider the following reactions :
 I. A strip of zinc metal is placed in copper sulphate solution.
 II. A piece of magnesium metal is placed in copper sulphate solution.
 III. A piece of iron nail is placed in copper sulphate solution.
 IV. A strip of lead is placed in a solution of copper chloride.
 Which of the above is/are displacement reactions ?
 (A) Only I, II and III
 (B) Only II, III and IV
 (C) Only I, III and IV
 (D) All I, II, III and IV
35. The highest possible pH value is for :
 (A) Sodium Chloride Solution
 (B) Sodium Carbonate Solution
 (C) Aqueous Salt Solution
 (D) Ammonium Chloride Solution
36. The most unstable metal in the air is :
 (A) Francium (B) Sodium
 (C) Caesium (D) Potassium
37. Which of the following is not a seed born diseases of crop plants ?
 (A) Ergot of Bajra
 (B) Bacterial Blight of Rice
 (C) Leaf Spot of Rice
 (D) Loose Smut of Wheat
38. Lactation period is maximum in :
 (A) Frieswal
 (B) Sahiwal
 (C) Holstein-Friesian
 (D) Karan-Swiss
39. Which of the following is not a characteristics of Phagocytosis ?
 (A) It is the intake of extra-cellular particles
 (B) Plasma membrane invaginates to take up the material
 (C) It is a nutritive and defensive process
 (D) Phagocytotic vesicles are 1 to 2 μm or more wide
40. Which of the following is not a muscular tissue ?
 (A) Striated tissue
 (B) Squamous tissue
 (C) Smooth tissue
 (D) Cardiac tissue

[For Answer See Page 166]

Continued from Page 170

Urbanization, education, economic mobility and inter caste interaction are gradually eroding traditional caste rigidities. In metropolitan cities, professional identity often matters more than caste identity.

Indeed, many positive developments have emerged because democracy enabled representation. Dalit literature backward caste leadership, social reform movements, educational expansion and grass-roots political participation strengthened democratic inclusion Panchayati Raj institutions also increased participation of marginalized groups and women in local governance.

India's democratic journey is essentially a struggle to balance equality with diversity. Caste identities continue partly because social inequalities continue. As education, economic opportunities and social mobility improve, caste divisions are likely to weaken naturally over time.

India's challenge is not merely ending caste from politics, but ending discrimination from society. Making transition from caste hierarchy toward social justice, from exclusion toward dignity and form identity conflict toward constitutional equality.

P. Darpan