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WEEKLY 17th Nov. - 23rd Nov. (2025)

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POLITY

Four Labour Codes: Implementation Status & Challenges

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Governance, Constitution, Polity, and Social Justice**
- **GS Paper III – Inclusive Growth, Employment, and Industrial Relations**
- **GS Paper II – Welfare Schemes and Government Policies**

Introduction

India has taken a major step toward **modernising the labour regulatory ecosystem** with the enforcement of four consolidated Labour Codes. These Codes merge **29 central labour laws** into a streamlined framework aimed at balancing **ease of doing business** with **protection of workers' rights**. Such rationalisation marks one of the most significant governance reforms since Independence, aligning labour standards with contemporary economic realities, technological shifts, and the rise of platform-based work.

Overview of the Four Labour Codes

1. Code on Wages, 2019

Replaces:

- Payment of Wages Act, 1936
- Minimum Wages Act, 1948
- Payment of Bonus Act, 1965
- Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

Key Provisions:

- Provides a **universal statutory right to minimum wages**, extending coverage to workers in both **organized and unorganized** sectors.
- Ensures **gender neutrality** in recruitment and wage payment, explicitly covering **transgender persons**.
- Mandates **timely wage disbursement** and prohibits unauthorized deductions for all employees, removing previous wage ceilings.

Contemporary Relevance:

- Addresses wage disparities and informal labour vulnerabilities, especially relevant in India's gig-driven economy.
- Aligns with the ILO's emphasis on **"living wages"** and decent working conditions.

2. Industrial Relations Code, 2020

Subsumes:

- Trade Union Act, 1926
- Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946
- Industrial Disputes Act, 1947

Key Provisions:

- **Fixed Term Employment (FTE):** Enables firms to hire workers for a specific duration while ensuring **complete parity** in wages and social benefits. Workers become eligible for **gratuity after one year** of service.
- **Revised Threshold for Lay-off and Closure:** Requirement for prior approval increased from **100 to 300 workers**, with states empowered to revise higher.
- **Broadened Definition of Worker:** Includes **sales promotion staff, journalists**, and supervisory roles earning up to **₹18,000/month**.

Significance:

- Provides flexibility for industries to adapt to seasonal or technological demands.
- Seeks to reduce industrial disputes through clearer definitions and harmonised procedures.
- Reflects ideas similar to those proposed by **John Dunlop's Industrial Relations System**, which emphasises coordination between state, employers, and workers.

3. Code on Social Security, 2020

Subsumes 9 Acts including:

- Employees' Compensation Act, 1923
- Maternity Benefit Act, 1961
- Employees' State Insurance Act, and others

Key Provisions:

- Extends **social security** to **gig workers, platform workers, and unorganized workforce**—a first in Indian labour policy.
- **Universal ESIC coverage**: The Employees' State Insurance scheme becomes applicable **across the country**, removing the earlier "notified area" restriction.
- Strengthens maternity benefits, disability compensation, and provident fund-related provisions.

Contemporary Significance:

- Crucial as India hosts over **7.7 million gig workers (NITI Aayog, 2022)**.
- Supports inclusive welfare as envisioned by **Amartya Sen's capability approach**, aiming to provide security and dignity to vulnerable workers.

4. Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHWC) Code, 2020

Subsumes 13 Acts including:

- Factories Act, 1948
- Mines Act, 1952
- Plantation Labour Act, 1951

Key Provisions:

- Mandatory **annual health check-ups** for workers above **40 years**, ensuring preventive healthcare.
- **Hazardous work extension clause:** Enables government to apply safety provisions to **any establishment**, even with **one worker**, if engaged in life-threatening activities.
- Consolidates safety standards across sectors such as mining, construction, factories, and transport.

Contemporary Relevance:

- Important given recent industrial accidents in chemicals, manufacturing, and mining sectors.
- Aligns with global standards under the **ILO's conventions on Occupational Safety and Health**.

Broader Significance of the Labour Codes

Economic Impact

- Simplifies compliance for firms, boosting **ease of doing business**.
- Encourages investment by reducing regulatory fragmentation.

Worker-Centric Reforms

- Enhances wage protection, safety norms, and social security.
- Integrates gig workers into the welfare net.

Administrative Efficiency

- Provides uniform definitions and consolidated rules.
- Facilitates digital compliance and reduces bureaucratic delays.

Challenges & Concerns

- Fear of labour exploitation due to flexible employment norms.
- Capacity constraints among small firms for compliance.
- States' differing rules may recreate regulatory complexity.

Conclusion

The four Labour Codes represent a **landmark reform** in India's labour governance, unifying diverse legislation into a **coherent, modern, and worker-oriented regulatory framework**. While they aim to bolster productivity and investment, their success will depend on **effective**

implementation, **state–centre coordination**, and ensuring that **worker welfare remains central**. The reform's essence lies in balancing **economic dynamism** with **social protection**, a core principle for sustainable development.

Mains Practice Question:

"Critically examine the significance of India's four Labour Codes in balancing economic efficiency with workers' rights. Highlight the key challenges that may arise during their implementation."

SC on Assent to Bills: Judicial Limits on Executive Timelines

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Polity: Separation of Powers, Constitutional Offices, Centre–State Relations**
- **GS Paper II – Judiciary: Judicial Review, President & Governor Functions**
- **GS Paper II – Federalism and Constitutional Mechanisms**

Introduction

In a significant constitutional pronouncement, a **five-judge Constitution Bench** of the Supreme Court, responding to the **16th Presidential Reference under Article 143**, held that the **judiciary cannot prescribe timelines** for the President or Governors while they exercise their constitutional functions relating to **assent to State Bills** under **Articles 200 and 201**. The ruling reverses the Court's April 2025 directions, where it had attempted to set specific time limits for executive decisions on pending Bills.

Context: Article 143 and Presidential Reference

Article 143 empowers the President to seek the Supreme Court's opinion on **questions of public importance or constitutional ambiguity**. In this case, the Union sought clarity after conflicting interpretations emerged regarding:

- Whether President/Governors must act within fixed timelines
- Whether courts could infer "deemed assent" when these timeframes were breached

The Court clarified the constitutional boundaries between **Judiciary** and **Executive** within the federal structure.

Key Takeaways from the Judgment

1. Courts Cannot Fix Timelines for Assent to Bills

The Court ruled that **no judicially mandated deadline** can apply to decisions under **Articles 200 and 201**, as such timelines **do not exist in the Constitution**.
Imposing them would amount to **judicial overreach** and violate the doctrine of **separation of powers**.

2. 'Deemed Assent' Has No Constitutional Basis

- The Court held that **assent cannot be presumed** merely because the time prescribed by a court order has lapsed.
- Introducing "deemed assent" would distort the **constitutional scheme**, which requires **affirmative executive action**.

3. President and Governors Cannot Keep Bills Pending Indefinitely

While courts cannot impose strict deadlines, the Bench emphasised that the President or Governors **cannot sit on Bills perpetually**, as this would:

- Contradict **federal principles**
- Defeat the **legislature's democratic mandate**
- Undermine **constitutional morality**

This places a **constitutional expectation**, though not a timeline, on the executive to act **within a reasonable period**.

4. Limited Judicial Review of Executive Action

The Court reaffirmed that judicial scrutiny is available **only if**:

- The decision is **malafide**
- The authority acts in a **manifestly arbitrary** or **irrelevant** manner

However, the **merits** of granting or withholding assent fall **outside judicial review**.

5. Presidential Discretion on Reserved Bills

The Court declared that the President **need not seek Supreme Court advice** every time a Bill is reserved for assent under Article 201.

- **Subjective satisfaction** of the President is constitutionally adequate.
- This maintains executive independence and avoids unnecessary judicial entanglement.

Understanding Articles 200 and 201

Article 200 (Governor's Options When a Bill Is Presented)

A Governor has four constitutionally recognised choices:

1. **Grant Assent**
2. **Withhold Assent** (absolute veto)
3. **Return the Bill** (if not a Money Bill) for reconsideration
4. **Reserve the Bill for Presidential Consideration**

Article 201 (President's Role on Reserved Bills)

When a Bill is reserved by the Governor, the President may:

- **Assent to the Bill**
- **Withhold assent**
- **Return it** for reconsideration

Notably, the Constitution prescribes no timeline for the President's decision under Article 201.

Broader Constitutional Significance

Federal Balance

The ruling preserves the delicate equilibrium between:

- State legislatures' autonomy
- Governors' constitutional roles
- Union executive authority

Judicial Boundaries: The decision reiterates the classic view articulated by **A.V. Dicey** and **Montesquieu** on separation of powers—that one branch must not encroach on the core functions of another.

Governance and Constitutional Morality: The Court stressed that though timelines cannot be judicially fixed, **constitutional morality** obligates Governors and the President to decide **without undue delay**.

Conclusion

The judgment marks a reaffirmation of the Court's commitment to the **institutional balance of the Constitution**. While recognizing the lack of explicit timelines in Articles 200 and 201, the Bench emphasised that **constitutional authorities cannot indefinitely stall democratic processes**. The ruling thus reinforces both **executive independence** and **federal accountability**, preserving the spirit of India's constitutional design.

Mains Practice Question:
"Critically analyse the Supreme Court's interpretation of Articles 200 and 201 in the 16th Presidential Reference. How does the judgment balance separation of powers with federal accountability?"

SC Strikes Down Tribunals Act Provisions: Reinforcing Judicial Independence

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Polity (Judiciary, Tribunals, Constitutional Amendments)**
- **GS Paper II – Separation of Powers, Judicial Independence, Executive Accountability**
- **GS Paper II – Statutory Bodies & Tribunalisation of Justice**

Introduction

In a major judgment reaffirming judicial independence, the Supreme Court has invalidated several provisions of the **Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021**, holding   them   unconstitutional.
These provisions—relating to **appointment criteria, tenure, and service conditions of tribunal members**—were essentially a re-enactment of clauses earlier struck down in the **Madras Bar Association (MBA) series of cases**.

The Court observed that such repeated legislative attempts undermine the Constitution and violate **separation of powers**, particularly because the executive frequently appears as a litigant before these tribunals.

Why Were These Provisions Struck Down?

The Supreme Court held that the contentious clauses were **substantially identical** to provisions of the **Tribunals Reforms Ordinance 2021**, which had already been declared unconstitutional. Reproducing unconstitutional text into a new statute was considered an attempt to bypass judicial scrutiny and undermine the Court's authority.

Major Constitutional Concerns

- Over-concentration of power in the executive over tribunal appointments
- Threats to judicial independence
- Erosion of institutional autonomy
- Violation of Article 14's guarantee of equality and non-arbitrariness

This aligns with principles articulated by thinkers like **Montesquieu**, whose doctrine of separation of powers remains foundational to modern constitutional democracies.

Key Provisions Struck Down by the Supreme Court

1. Minimum Age Requirement of 50 Years

- The Court struck down the clause mandating that only individuals **50 years or older** could be appointed as tribunal members.
- Held to be **arbitrary**, discriminatory, and violative of **Article 14**, as it excluded competent, younger advocates and experts.

2. Four-Year Tenure

- The Act had introduced a **four-year tenure** for tribunal chairpersons and members.
- The Court reinstated the earlier directive of a **minimum five-year tenure**, essential to ensure **security of tenure**, independence, and continuity.

3. Repeated Directions for a National Tribunals Commission

- The Supreme Court reiterated its earlier order directing the Centre to constitute a **National Tribunals Commission (NTC)** within **four months**.
- The NTC is envisioned as an **independent authority** tasked with:
  o Overseeing tribunal appointments
  o Ensuring administrative autonomy
  o Managing finances and infrastructure
  o Strengthening tribunal independence

This move is inspired by global best practices that separate judicial administration from executive control.

Why Independence of Tribunals Matters

Tribunals adjudicate matters in which the executive is often one of the parties.
Hence, allowing the executive disproportionate control over:

- appointments,
- tenure,
- salaries, and
- service conditions,
  poses a **direct conflict of interest**.

The Supreme Court emphasised that tribunal independence is integral to the **basic structure doctrine** and essential for maintaining **public confidence** in quasi-judicial bodies.

About Tribunals in India

1. Constitutional Basis

The **42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976)** inserted **Part XIV-A** into the Constitution, creating space for tribunalisation.

- **Article 323-A**: Empowers Parliament to create **Administrative Tribunals**, especially for service matters.
- **Article 323-B**: Allows legislatures to constitute tribunals for subjects like taxation, labour, land reforms, and industrial disputes.

2. Purpose of Tribunals

- Provide **speedy**, **specialised**, and **technical adjudication**.

- Reduce case burden on regular courts.
- Address disputes requiring domain expertise.

However, over-centralisation under the executive has long been criticised in numerous judgments, including *Rojer Mathew v. South Indian Bank* and the *MBA trilogy*.

Significance of the Judgment

1. **Upholding Separation of Powers:** The ruling strengthens constitutional boundaries and prevents executive overreach.
2. **Enhancing Judicial Independence:** By ensuring secure tenure and fair appointment processes, the decision protects adjudicatory integrity.
3. **Ensuring Compliance with Judicial Directions:** The Court noted repeated legislative attempts to override earlier judgments, calling for a structured, transparent tribunal system.
4. **Moving Toward Institutional Reform:** The direction to set up a National Tribunals Commission could transform the functioning of India's tribunal ecosystem.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's decision to strike down parts of the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021 reaffirms the core constitutional values of **judicial independence**, **separation of powers**, and **institutional checks and balances**. By insisting on tenure security, eliminating arbitrary eligibility conditions, and calling for an independent Tribunal Commission, the Court seeks to ensure that tribunals function as **credible, impartial, and efficient adjudicatory bodies**essential for modern governance.

Mains Practice Question:

"The Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021 has been repeatedly criticised for undermining judicial independence. Analyse the Supreme Court's recent judgment striking down its provisions and discuss the need for an independent National Tribunals Commission."

SC Warns Telangana Speaker on Delay in Defection Cases

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Polity (Parliament & State Legislatures, Anti-Defection Law, Judiciary)**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Accountability, Constitutional Offices)**

Introduction

In *Padi Kaushik Reddy vs State of Telangana*, the Supreme Court issued a stern warning to the Telangana Legislative Assembly Speaker for the prolonged delay in deciding a pending disqualification petition under the **Tenth Schedule** of the Constitution. The Court reiterated that when acting under the Anti-Defection Law, the Speaker functions as a **tribunal** and does **not enjoy absolute constitutional immunity**—meaning his decisions and delays are subject to judicial scrutiny.

Understanding the Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law)

Inserted through the **52nd Constitutional Amendment (1985)**, the Tenth Schedule provides mechanisms to disqualify legislators who:

- **Voluntarily give up membership** of the party on whose ticket they were elected.
- **Vote against party directions** or abstain despite issued whips, without prior permission.
- **Join a political party after the first six months**, in the case of **nominated members**.
- **Join any party after election**, if they are **independent members**.

Exception: Party Merger

A merger is legally valid only if **two-thirds of the legislators** of a party agree to merge with another political formation.

Significance of the Anti-Defection Framework

- Acts as a **deterrent against political opportunism**, corruption, and coercion.
- Maintains **stability of governments** and prevents "Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram" style floor-crossing.
- Strengthens voter trust by ensuring **predictability in legislative behaviour**.
- Preserves the integrity of the **mandate** given by the electorate.

Role of the Speaker in Disqualification Cases

- The **Speaker or Presiding Officer** adjudicates petitions regarding disqualification.
- However, allegations of **political bias and tactical delay** have often arisen because Speakers typically belong to the ruling party.
- The judiciary has repeatedly expressed concern about strategic inaction affecting legislative morality and stability.

Supreme Court's Observations in the Present Case

Speaker Not Constitutionally Immune

The Court emphasised that when deciding under the Tenth Schedule, the Speaker functions as a **quasi-judicial tribunal**, and therefore:

- His conduct is **reviewable by courts**
- Delays cannot be shielded under legislative privileges or immunities

This flows from earlier jurisprudence but has been reinforced in the present case due to excessive delay.

Key Supreme Court Judgments on Anti-Defection Law

1. Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu (1992)

- Upheld the validity of the Tenth Schedule.
- Stated that Speaker's decisions are subject to **judicial review**, but only after the final decision is made.

2. Sadiq Ali v. Election Commission (1971)

- Although predating the Tenth Schedule, it laid down the **three-test formula** for identifying the "real" political party:
  - Party Constitution
  - Aims and Objectives
  - Legislative support

3. Rajendra Singh Rana v. Swami Prasad Maurya (2007)

- Asserted that the Speaker **cannot indefinitely postpone** disqualification decisions.

4. Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. Speaker, Manipur (2020)

- Recommended a **three-month ideal timeline** for deciding disqualification cases, except in extraordinary circumstances.

These judgments collectively seek to prevent misuse of the office of the Speaker to engineer political outcomes.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's warning to the Telangana Speaker reflects growing judicial impatience with delays in disqualification proceedings. Timely adjudication is essential for preserving the **sanctity of the Tenth Schedule**, upholding democratic morality, and preventing political manipulation through prolonged inaction.
The Court's intervention reinforces the principle that constitutional offices must be exercised with **neutrality, urgency, and accountability**.

Mains Practice Question:
"Critically examine the role of the Speaker under the Tenth Schedule. Should India consider transferring disqualification powers to an independent authority?"

16th Finance Commission (2026–31): Mandate & Constitutional Role

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Polity (Centre–State Relations, Finance Commission)**
- **GS Paper III – Fiscal Federalism**

Introduction

The **16th Finance Commission**, headed by **Arvind Panagariya**, has submitted its recommendations for 2026–2031 to the President. Its report plays a key role in shaping fiscal federalism for the upcoming five years.

Constitutional Basis

- Constituted under **Article 280(1)**.
- Advises on **distribution of tax proceeds**, **grants-in-aid** under Article 275, and measures to augment **local bodies' resources**.

Terms of Reference

- Vertical and horizontal devolution.
- Criteria for grants to states.
- Financial strengthening of **Panchayats and Municipalities**, drawing from State Finance Commission recommendations.

Conclusion

The 16th FC's recommendations will determine the nature of **cooperative federalism**, fiscal discipline, and equitable resource allocation for the next half-decade.

Mains Practice Question:
"Analyse how the Finance Commission strengthens fiscal federalism in India, with reference to the mandate of the 16th Finance Commission

GOVERNANCE

SC Directs Uniform National Policy on Organ Transplantation

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Governance, Health Sector, Judicial Interventions**
- **GS Paper II – Statutory Bodies (NOTTO, SOTTO), Public Service Delivery**
- **GS Paper II – Vulnerable Sections (Ethics, Organ Donation, Medical Regulation)**

Introduction

The Supreme Court has directed the Union Government to formulate a **Uniform National Organ Transplantation Policy**, expressing concern over the lack of a centralised database and uneven practices across states. The Court observed that the existing fragmented system—varying allocation procedures, inadequate state-level bodies, and gaps in donor-recipient tracking—has slowed down life-saving transplants and created inequities.

Organ transplantation involves surgically replacing a damaged or failing organ with a healthy one from a donor, and is governed by a sensitive ethical, legal, and medical framework. The Court's intervention seeks to improve fairness, transparency, and efficiency in this critical public health domain.

Key Directives Issued by the Supreme Court

1. National Uniform Policy on Organ Allocation

- The Court ordered the Centre to draft a **model, standardised policy** to eliminate disparities between states.
- The revised criteria must address **gender and caste biases**, ensure equitable organ distribution, and promote uniformity in waiting lists and prioritisation mechanisms.

2. Establishment of State Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisations (SOTOs)

- Several regions—**Manipur, Nagaland, Lakshadweep, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands**—still lack SOTOs.
- The Court directed the Central Government to set up these bodies under the **National Organ Transplantation Programme (NOTP)**, in consultation with the respective states/UTs.

3. Welfare Framework for Live Donors

- Recognising vulnerabilities of live donors, the Court mandated guidelines ensuring:
  - Comprehensive **post-donation health care**
  - Monitoring and protection from **commercial exploitation**
  - Ethical oversight during consent and evaluation
    These are essential to uphold dignity and prevent coercion or organ trafficking.

4. Reform of Death Registration Forms

- Death certificates must include a mandatory field asking whether the family was offered the **option of organ donation**.
- This change, recommended in consultation with **NOTTO**, aims to strengthen **cadaveric (deceased) organ donation**, a vital yet underutilised pathway in India.

Organ Transplantation Framework in India

1. Legal Architecture

The process is governed by the **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994**, amended in **2011** to expand definitions, strengthen penalties, and promote transparency.

2. National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO)

- Apex body under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**
- Responsibilities include:
    - Maintaining national registries
    - Coordinating organ procurement and allocation
    - Standardising procedures and ethical norms
    - Supporting state-level SOTOs and regional ROTOs

3. National Organ Transplant Programme (NOTP)

- A centrally sponsored scheme to improve infrastructure for:
    - Organ retrieval and preservation
    - Awareness campaigns
    - Capacity-building of hospitals and professionals
- Focuses especially on improving **deceased donor organ retrieval**, which remains low in India compared to global standards.

Why the Court's Intervention Matters

1. **Ensuring Equity and Transparency:** A unified national system will reduce arbitrary variations and ensure that allocation is based solely on medical urgency and ethical norms.
2. **Strengthening Deceased Donation:** Streamlining procedures and modifying death registration forms may significantly boost organ availability.
3. **Protecting Live Donors:** India has historically relied heavily on live donors; enhanced guidelines will prevent exploitation and improve donor safety.
4. **Improving Data Reliability:** A centralised database will enable real-time tracking, reduce duplication, and provide accurate analytics for policymaking.
5. **Reducing State-Level Disparities:** By ensuring every state has a functional SOTO, the Court's directive strengthens national healthcare equity.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's directive marks a transformative moment for India's organ transplantation ecosystem. By mandating a **uniform national policy**, strengthening state-level institutions, and prioritising ethical safeguards for donors and recipients, the judgment seeks to build a transparent, equitable, and efficient transplant system. Ensuring streamlined processes and robust regulatory oversight will ultimately help save thousands of lives each year and move India closer to global standards in organ donation and transplantation.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the significance of the Supreme Court's recent direction to establish a uniform national organ transplantation policy. How can reforms in regulatory systems enhance equity and efficiency in organ donation in India?"

Dark Patterns in E-Commerce: Emerging Regulatory Concerns

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Governance, Consumer Protection**
- **GS Paper III – Digital Economy, ICT Regulation**

Context

26 major e-commerce platforms have declared compliance with the **Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023**.

About Dark Patterns

- User-interface tactics that manipulate consumers into unintended actions such as:
    - **False urgency**
    - **Basket sneaking**
    - Hidden charges

- Prohibited under guidelines issued by the **Department of Consumer Affairs**.

Conclusion

Compliance marks an important step in strengthening digital consumer rights and ethical online business practices.

Mains Practice Question:

"What are Dark Patterns? Examine their implications for consumer protection and discuss regulatory measures to curb them."

NITI Aayog's Water Budgeting for Aspirational Blocks

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Water Resources, IWRM, Agriculture**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (NITI Aayog, Policy Interventions)**

About Water Budgeting

Water budgeting is an integrated assessment tool that quantifies:

- **Water availability** from all sources
- **Patterns of water use** across sectors
- **Seasonal or regional shortages and surpluses**

It helps governments identify **demand–supply gaps**, prioritise water conservation, and strengthen **Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)**.
It is also a core component of the **Atal Bhujal Yojana**, which focuses on community-led groundwater management.

Conclusion

NITI Aayog's emphasis on water budgeting provides a scientific basis for planning water security in vulnerable blocks of the country.

Mains Practice Question:

"Explain the significance of water budgeting in ensuring water security in rural India. How does it support Integrated Water Resource Management?"

Protected Area Permit (PAP): Calls for Policy Review

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Governance, Internal Security (Border Regions)**
- **GS Paper I – Northeast India, Administrative Systems**

About PAP

A **Protected Area Permit** is mandatory for foreign nationals visiting sensitive areas near India's international borders.

- **Legal Basis:** Governed by **Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958**.
- **Areas Covered:** Includes regions between the **Inner Line** and India's border—such as **Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur**, etc.
- **Related Concept: Inner Line Permit (ILP)**: Required for Indian citizens entering protected tribal or sensitive areas; issued by the state government.

Conclusion

The demand for review highlights the balance between national security and promoting tourism and connectivity in the Northeast.

Mains Practice Question:

"Discuss the relevance of the Protected Area Permit system in the context of national security and development in the Northeastern states."

National Water Awards 2024: Maharashtra Tops the Ranking

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Governance (Water Governance, Institutional Initiatives)**
- **GS Paper III – Environment & Resources (Water Conservation, SDGs)**

Introduction

The Ministry of Jal Shakti has announced the winners of the **6th National Water Awards (2024)**. Maharashtra secured the **1st position**, followed by **Gujarat and Haryana**, for demonstrating exemplary water conservation, community engagement, and sustainable water management practices.

About National Water Awards

- Instituted by the **Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation**, Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- Objective is to **promote public awareness**, recognise best practices, and encourage **replicable models** of water stewardship across sectors.

Award Categories

Presented across **10 categories**, including:

- Best State
- Best District
- Best Village Panchayat
- Best Urban Local Body
- Best School/College
- Best Industry
- Best Institution
- Best Water User Association
- Best Civil Society
- Best Individual

Conclusion

The awards help create a competitive spirit among states and institutions, strengthen community participation, and align water governance with **SDG-6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)**.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss how award-based policy tools like the National Water Awards can strengthen community-led water governance in India."

Earth System Sciences Council (ESSC): A Unified Governance Model

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Disaster Management, Climate Science, Governance Innovations**

Introduction

The Ministry of Earth Sciences has constituted the **Earth System Sciences Council (ESSC)** to improve synergy across its research institutions.

About ESSC

Purpose: Unifies governance across five autonomous institutes for enhanced collaboration in climate science, oceanography, atmospheric research, and disaster forecasting.

Governance: Chaired by the **Union Minister**; institutes maintain autonomy but follow coordinated oversight.

Significance

- Breaks institutional silos
- Improves climate services
- Enhances public outreach and disaster preparedness

Conclusion

ESSC provides a coordinated platform essential for **integrated climate risk management and scientific policymaking**.

Mains Practice Question:
"Evaluate the significance of institutional integration in enhancing India's climate and disaster governance capacity."

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India–Africa Forum Summit: A Decade Later

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – International Relations (India–Africa Engagement, South–South Cooperation)**
- **GS Paper II – Global Institutions, Diplomacy, Geopolitics**
- **GS Paper III – Economy (Trade, Investment, Development Partnerships)**

Introduction

The year 2025 marks **ten years since the third India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)** held in 2015. The prolonged absence of a fourth summit has revived deliberations about the evolving nature of India–Africa engagement and the need to recalibrate strategies for a rapidly transforming continent. With IAFS held earlier in **2008, 2011, and 2015**, the framework has historically focused on **development cooperation, capacity building, and political partnership**—but both regions have witnessed major changes since then.

Opportunities in India–Africa Relations

1. Expanding Trade & Market Integration

- The **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**—the world's largest free trade zone—offers India access to a **single African market**, enabling Indian firms to scale production and diversify supply chains.
- India is already **Africa's third-largest trading partner**, with bilateral trade surpassing **USD 100 billion**, indicating strong commercial foundations.

2. Africa's Economic Dynamism

- Africa has consistently been among the **fastest-growing global regions** over the past decade.
- Rising incomes, a growing middle class, and a **youthful demographic** create opportunities for India in:
    - Manufacturing
    - Pharmaceuticals
    - ICT
    - Renewable energy
    - Agriculture and food processing
- Africa's demographic dividend aligns with India's expertise in skill development.

3. Soft Power and Development Diplomacy

India's engagement model is built on **capacity building rather than extractive investment**, differentiating it from other major powers. Key initiatives include:

- **ITEC programmes** providing training to African professionals
- **Pan-African e-Network** fostering tele-education and telemedicine
- Establishment of Indian institutions such as **IIT campuses**
  The focus on education and health builds long-term goodwill and sustainable partnerships.

4. Voice for the Global South

- India has consistently supported enhanced **African representation in global governance**, including pushing for the **African Union's membership in the G20**.
- This strengthens India's leadership in **South–South Cooperation**, builds institutional legitimacy, and expands diplomatic coalitions in multilateral forums.

5. Technology & Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

- India's digital governance models—like **UPI, Aadhaar, DigiLocker**—are highly relevant for African nations seeking to bypass conventional infrastructural constraints.
- Digital Public Infrastructure can accelerate financial inclusion, e-governance, and innovation in Africa.

Challenges in India–Africa Engagement

1. Competition from China and Debt Risks

- China's large-scale investments, Belt and Road Projects (BRI), and rapid execution speed pose significant strategic competition.
- Concerns of **debt dependency** reduce fiscal space for African governments and complicate India's entry into certain sectors.

2. Implementation Delays & Bureaucratic Hurdles

- India's development projects often suffer from:
  - Slow fund disbursement
  - Administrative bottlenecks
  - Inadequate on-ground coordination
    This delays completion timelines and weakens India's comparative advantage.

3. Geopolitical Instability & Security Challenges

- Several African nations have witnessed **military coups, internal conflicts, and fluctuating political regimes**, affecting project stability.
- Maritime insecurity in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**—such as piracy and maritime terrorism—threatens India's trade, energy supply routes, and naval interests.

Broader Context: Kampala Principles and Cooperative Ethics

India's Africa engagement aligns with the **Kampala Principles**, which promote:

- Country-led partnerships
- Mutual accountability
- Sustainable financing
- Respect for sovereignty
  These principles enhance India's credibility as a development partner distinct from exploitative models.

Conclusion

A decade after the last IAFS, India–Africa relations stand at a critical juncture. While new opportunities—spanning trade, technology, demographic complementarity, and global governance—are rapidly expanding, the relationship also faces structural challenges driven by geopolitical competition, political instability, and delayed project execution. India's future strategy must combine **swift implementation, deeper political engagement, and technology-driven cooperation** while strengthening Africa's agency in global decision-making.

Mains Practice Question:
"A decade after the last India–Africa Forum Summit, assess the emerging opportunities and persistent challenges shaping India–Africa relations."

India Re-Elected to Codex Executive Committee (Asia)

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – International Organisations (FAO, WHO), Food Standards**
- **GS Paper III – Food Security & Public Health**

Introduction

India has been re-elected to the **Codex Executive Committee** for the Asia region during the **48th Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) session**.

About Codex Alimentarius Commission

- Established in **1963** by **FAO** and **WHO**.
- Develops **international food standards**, ensuring consumer safety and fair trade.

Membership

- **189 members** (188 countries + EU).
- Meets annually, alternating between **Rome** and **Geneva**.

Significance for India

- Strengthens India's influence in shaping global food standards.
- Supports India's regulatory reforms, export competitiveness, and food safety capacity.

Conclusion

India's re-election reinforces its leadership role in global food governance and enhances credibility in international trade negotiations.

Mains Practice Question:

"Discuss the importance of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in global food safety. How does India's participation benefit its domestic and export markets?"

UNSC Adopts US-Backed Gaza Peace Plan

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper II – International Relations (UNSC, West Asia, Peacekeeping)**

Introduction

The UN Security Council has approved a **US-backed Gaza Peace Plan** aimed at ending the Israel–Hamas conflict through a structured, internationally supported roadmap.

Key Elements of the Plan

1. **Immediate Ceasefire:** Internationally monitored cessation of hostilities to stabilise conditions in Gaza.
2. **Hostage–Prisoner Exchange:** Mutual release of hostages held by Hamas and detainees in Israeli custody.
3. **Humanitarian Relief:** Scaling up medical supplies, food aid, shelters, and essential services.
4. **Governance Reforms:** Restructuring Palestinian governance mechanisms to enhance accountability.
5. **International Stabilisation Force:** Deployment of a multilateral mechanism to maintain security during the transition phase.

Mediation Support

- Brokered primarily by the **United States**, with Qatar and Egypt acting as key intermediaries.

Conclusion

The plan represents one of the most comprehensive diplomatic efforts in recent years to de-escalate tensions and rebuild Gaza.

Mains Practice Question:

"Analyse the significance of the recently approved Gaza Peace Plan by the UNSC. What challenges remain in ensuring its successful implementation?"

UAE's Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP)

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – IR & International Agreements**
- **GS Paper III – Environment (Climate Negotiations)**

About the UAE JTWP

The **Just Transition Work Programme** under the UNFCCC aims to support a climate transition that is **equitable, inclusive**, and focused on **job creation and resilience**.

Background

- Initiated during **COP27 (2022)**.
- Operationalised as the **UAE-led JTWP** at **COP28 (2023)**.
- Includes **two annual dialogues and one ministerial meeting** to guide global actions.

Conclusion

The programme strengthens the global vision of a transition that does not adversely affect workers or deepen inequality.

Mains Practice Question:
"Explain the concept of a 'Just Transition' in global climate negotiations and assess the role of JTWP under the UNFCCC."

India–US Structured LPG Supply Deal

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Energy Security, Infrastructure, Trade**
- **GS Paper II – India–US Relations**

Introduction

India has signed its **first long-term structured LPG import agreement with the United States**, committing to source **2.2 million tonnes per annum (MTPA)** in 2026. This represents roughly **one-tenth of India's total LPG requirement**, marking a significant diversification of energy imports and strengthening bilateral energy ties.

Understanding LPG

1. Composition: LPG typically comprises **50–60% propane** and **40–50% butane**, with ratios adjusted depending on climatic conditions and supply logistics.

2. Demand, Production & Imports

- Domestic production: **~12.8 million tonnes** (~35%)
- Imports: **~21 million tonnes** (~65%)
- Major sources: **Qatar (largest), UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia**
- Over **90% of India's LPG consumption** is attributed to household usage, driven by schemes such as **PM Ujjwala Yojana**.

Significance of the India–US LPG Deal

- Enhances **energy diversification** and reduces dependence on West Asian suppliers.
- Strengthens India–US strategic energy cooperation under the **Strategic Energy Partnership**.
- Supports India's transition to **cleaner household fuels**, reducing biomass dependence.

Conclusion

The structured LPG import arrangement with the US reinforces India's energy security architecture, broadens supply sources, and aligns with the long-term goal of universal clean cooking energy access.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the significance of long-term LPG import diversification for India's energy security and household energy transition."

Senkaku Islands: Renewed Tensions in the East China Sea

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – International Relations (India–Japan, China's Maritime Assertiveness)**
- **GS Paper I – Geography (Location-based Questions)**

Introduction

A recent passage of **China Coast Guard vessels** through waters surrounding the **Japan-administered Senkaku Islands** has reignited long-standing maritime tensions between Japan and China.
The islands remain a focal point in East China Sea geopolitics due to their strategic location, fishing rights, and potential hydrocarbon reserves.

About the Senkaku Islands

- **Location:** Situated in the **East China Sea**, forming part of Japan's **Okinawa Prefecture**.
- **Chinese Name:** Known as **Diaoyu Islands** in China.

- **Strategic Value:**
  - Overlaps with key shipping lanes
  - Rich fisheries
  - Believed to hold natural gas deposits
- The sovereignty dispute contributes to broader regional tensions involving freedom of navigation and military posturing.

Conclusion

The Senkaku dispute continues to be a flashpoint in East Asia, shaping regional security dynamics and testing crisis-management mechanisms between Japan and China.

Mains Practice Question:

"Discuss the strategic significance of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and their role in shaping East China Sea geopolitics."

INTERNAL SECURITY & DEFENCE

Rise of White-Collar Terrorism in India

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Internal Security: Terrorism, Radicalisation, Cyber Threats**
- **GS Paper II – Governance, Role of State Agencies, Law & Order Machinery**

Introduction

The recent terror incident in Delhi has highlighted a **new and worrying shift in India's internal security landscape**—the emergence of *white-collar terrorism*.
Unlike traditional recruitment patterns that targeted socially or economically vulnerable individuals, this new trend involves **educated professionals— doctors, engineers, researchers, IT specialists—leveraging their expertise, institutional legitimacy, and access to resources to facilitate extremist operations**.

This development poses complex challenges for intelligence agencies, as these individuals blend seamlessly into professional ecosystems and possess high technical proficiency.

Understanding White-Collar Terrorism

White-collar terrorism refers to the **use of professional skills, academic credentials, and organisational access by educated individuals to pursue extremist goals**.
Their legitimacy masks their radicalisation, making detection far more difficult compared to conventional militant networks.

How It Differs from Traditional Radicalisation

- Traditional extremist recruitment drew heavily from **unemployment, marginalisation, and socio-economic vulnerability**.
- White-collar extremists emerge from **privileged, educated, and professionally stable backgrounds**, demonstrating that radicalisation is **not restricted to economic hardship**.

Why White-Collar Terrorism Is Emerging: Theoretical Insights

1. Relative Deprivation Theory

- Radicalisation may arise not merely from poverty but from a **perceived imbalance between expectations and achievements**.
- Educated individuals may feel ideological or identity-based deprivation and become vulnerable to extremist narratives.

2. Social Identity Theory

- Individuals may substitute their professional identity with a **larger ideological 'higher-purpose' identity**.
- Collective grievances—political, religious, or ideological—provide psychological belonging and meaning.

3. Rise of Advanced Digital Platforms

- Extremist groups increasingly rely on
  - encrypted communication
  - crypto-funding channels

- o deep-web forums
  - o technologically insulated ecosystems
- Educated professionals with technical skills become **valuable strategic assets** in these digital operations.

Other Emerging Forms of Terrorism

1. Lone-Wolf Terrorism

- Individuals radicalised online acting independently without direct command.
- Example: **Christchurch attack (New Zealand)**.

2. Suicide Terrorism

- Attackers act as human bombs with the certainty of death.
- Example: **2019 Pulwama attack**.

3. Sleeper Cells

- Trained operatives who live inconspicuously and await activation.

4. Over-Ground Workers (OGWs)

- Non-combatant facilitators providing logistics, shelter, intelligence, and financial support.

India's Counter-Terrorism Strategy

1. Institutional and Operational Mechanisms

- **National Investigation Agency (NIA)**
- **Intelligence Bureau (IB)**
- **National Security Guard (NSG)**
- State Anti-Terror Squads (ATS)

2. Legal Framework

- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA)** remains the backbone of India's counter-terror laws.
- Enables designation of individuals and organisations as terrorists.

3. Countering Terror Financing

- **Terror Funding and Fake Currency Cell (TFFC)** under NIA
- **Combating Financing of Terrorism (CFT) Cell** at the Ministry of Home Affairs
- Financial tracking through banks, FIUs, and international cooperation

4. Strategic and Retaliatory Measures

- **Surgical Strikes (2016)** to dismantle cross-border infrastructure
- **Operation Sindoor (2025)** signalling proactive counter-terror posture

Conclusion

The rise of white-collar terrorism represents a **qualitative shift in India's security landscape**, blending technological sophistication, professional legitimacy, and ideological radicalisation.
India must strengthen **predictive intelligence, counter-radicalisation frameworks, digital monitoring capabilities, and inter-agency coordination** to effectively respond to this new threat.
This transformation underscores that terrorism is no longer confined to socio-economic vulnerability—it now emerges from **high-skilled, deeply networked professional spheres**.

Mains Practice Question:
"The emergence of white-collar terrorism marks a qualitative shift in India's internal security challenges. Analyse the factors driving this trend and suggest suitable counter-measures."

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Cloudflare Outage & Bot Mitigation Systems

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Cyber Security, ICT, Emerging Technologies**

Introduction

A widespread internet outage triggered by a latent bug in Cloudflare's **bot mitigation system** disrupted major platforms, highlighting growing cyber vulnerabilities.

What is a Bot Mitigation System?

A framework used to:

- Block **malicious bots** attempting data theft, spam, credential stuffing, or DDoS attacks.
- Allow **good bots** (e.g., search engine crawlers) to operate unhindered.

Techniques Used

- IP reputation checks
- Behavioural analytics
- CAPTCHA validation
- Machine learning–based anomaly detection

Significance

Such disruptions underscore the complexity of large-scale cyber infrastructures and the need for robust fail-safes as digital dependence expands globally.

Conclusion

Bot mitigation remains central to safeguarding digital ecosystems, but system-level bugs can cause cascading failures, requiring enhanced resilience strategies.

Mains Practice Question:
"Explain the role of bot mitigation systems in cyber security. How do failures in such systems impact global digital infrastructure?"

Sagar Kavach: Coastal Security Exercise

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Internal Security, Maritime Security**

About Sagar Kavach

Sagar Kavach is a **biannual coastal security exercise** led by the Indian Coast Guard. Conducted along the **Maharashtra and Goa coastline**, it aims to assess preparedness in maritime security, identify gaps, and enhance coordination among state and central agencies.

Objectives

- Strengthen multi-layered coastal security.
- Prevent intrusions or attacks on critical coastal infrastructure.
- Improve inter-agency synergy among marine police, Navy, Customs, and coastal authorities.

Conclusion

The exercise is crucial for enhancing vigilance across India's long and vulnerable coastline.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the importance of multi-agency coordination in strengthening India's coastal security architecture."

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) – RSO Status

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Internal Security, Maritime Security**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Police Forces & CAPFs)**

About the Recognition

The **CISF** has been designated as a **Recognised Security Organisation (RSO)** under the **ISPS Code**, making it responsible for overseeing seaport security.

About CISF

- Established under the **CISF Act, 1968**, under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- Headed by a **DG-rank IPS officer**.
- Provides security to airports, metros, government buildings, nuclear and space establishments, VIPs, monuments, and industrial units.

About ISPS Code

An international framework under IMO to ensure safety at **ports and maritime facilities**, implemented via the **SOLAS Convention**.

Conclusion

The RSO status enhances India's maritime security capacities and global compliance.

Mains Practice Question:

"Evaluate the role of CAPFs in safeguarding India's critical infrastructure with reference to the functioning of the CISF."

Javelin Missile System & Excalibur Artillery Munitions

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Defence Technology, Internal Security**
- **GS Paper II – India–US Relations**

Background

The United States has approved the sale of **Javelin anti-tank missile systems** and **Excalibur precision-guided artillery rounds** to India amounting to **$93 million**.

About Javelin (FGM-148)

- Developed jointly by **Lockheed Martin** and **Raytheon**.
- Man-portable, **fire-and-forget** anti-tank guided missile.
- Employs **top-attack and direct-attack modes**, effective against armour, fortified bunkers, and caves.

About Excalibur Artillery Munition

- Developed by **Raytheon Missiles & Defense**.
- A **155 mm precision-guided round** capable of long-range accuracy.
- Reduces collateral damage and logistical requirements.

Conclusion

The acquisition enhances India's capability for precision operations and strengthens defence cooperation with the United States.

Mains Practice Question:

"Evaluate how precision-guided munitions like Javelin and Excalibur strengthen India's defence preparedness in modern warfare."

UN Cybercrime Treaty: India Evaluates Ratification

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – International Institutions, Cyber Governance**
- **GS Paper III – Cybersecurity, Internal Security**

Introduction

The Supreme Court has urged the Union government to decide on ratifying the **United Nations Convention Against Cybercrime**, a comprehensive global framework adopted in 2024.

About the UN Cybercrime Treaty

Key Features

- First universal, legally binding instrument for handling **electronic evidence**.
- Criminalises cyber-dependent crimes and offences such as:
  - Child sexual abuse online
  - Online fraud
  - Dissemination of intimate images
- Secretariat: **UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**.

Conclusion

Ratification would harmonise India's cybersecurity system with global standards, strengthening law enforcement and cross-border digital cooperation.

Mains Practice Question:
"Critically examine the significance of the UN Cybercrime Treaty for India's cybersecurity landscape."

Ajeya Warrior–25: India–UK Joint Military Training

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Security, Defence Cooperation**
- **GS Paper II – IR (India–UK Relations)**

Introduction

The eighth edition of the **Ajeya Warrior** joint military exercise between India and the UK has begun in Rajasthan.

Key Features

- Biennial exercise since **2011**.
- Conducted under a **UN mandate**, focusing on **counter-terrorism in semi-urban terrain**.
- Enhances interoperability, tactical coordination, and joint readiness.

Conclusion

The exercise strengthens defence partnership and improves India's operational readiness for hybrid and urban conflict scenarios.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the role of bilateral military exercises in advancing India's defence diplomacy, with reference to Ajeya Warrior."

ECONOMY

National Framework on Fisheries & Aquaculture Traceability (2025)

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Economy (Fisheries), Food Safety, Technology**

About the Framework

India has launched its first **national digital traceability framework** for fisheries and aquaculture under the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY)**, a sub-scheme of PM Matsya Sampada Yojana.

Objectives

- Ensure **food safety**, sustainability, and quality certification.
- Enable end-to-end tracking using technologies such as **blockchain, IoT, QR codes, and GPS**.
- Integrate fragmented practices into a unified digital system.

Conclusion

The framework enhances India's capacity to meet global export standards and strengthens supply chain transparency.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the significance of digital traceability in fisheries for ensuring food safety, market access, and sustainability."

Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO): Role & Powers

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Economy (Corporate Governance)**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Regulatory Bodies)**

About SFIO

The **Serious Fraud Investigation Office**, headquartered in **New Delhi**, is a multidisciplinary agency responsible for investigating **complex corporate frauds**.

Key Features

- Granted **statutory status** under the **Companies Act, 2013**.
- Operates under the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**.
- Headed by a **Director** of Joint Secretary rank.
- Once a case is assigned to SFIO, **no other agency** may conduct parallel investigations.
- Recently introduced digital safeguards to prevent misuse of summons and notices.

Conclusion

SFIO strengthens India's corporate governance framework and ensures accountability in large-scale financial frauds.

Mains Practice Question:
"Examine the role of the SFIO in strengthening corporate governance and discuss the challenges involved in combating financial frauds in India."

UPI–TIPS Cross-Border Interlinkage

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – International Relations (Global Payments Cooperation)**
- **GS Paper III – Economy & Digital Payments**

About UPI–TIPS Linkage

The RBI's proposal to interlink **India's UPI** with the **TARGET Instant Payment Settlement (TIPS)** system of the Euro Area aims to enable faster, cheaper, and more transparent **cross-border payments**.

Significance

- Promotes seamless remittances between India and Eurozone countries.
- Aligns with the **G20 Roadmap** to reform global cross-border payment systems.
- Benefits migrants, businesses, and financial institutions across jurisdictions.

Conclusion

The initiative strengthens India's presence in the global digital payments architecture.

Mains Practice Question:

"Examine the significance of linking India's UPI system with global instant payment platforms for enhancing cross-border financial integration."

UNICEF's SOWC 2025: Ending Child Poverty

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Social Justice (Poverty, Welfare Schemes, Children's Rights)**
- **GS Paper II – International Organisations (UNICEF Reports)**
- **GS Paper III – Inclusive Growth, Human Development Indicators**

Introduction

UNICEF has released the **State of the World's Children (SoWC) 2025** report titled **"Ending Child Poverty – Our Shared Imperative."** Based on data from more than **130 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)**, the report provides one of the most comprehensive assessments of **multidimensional child poverty**, evaluating deprivation across six essential dimensions—**education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation, and water**.
The findings reiterate the urgency of prioritizing children in global development strategies, especially amid mounting global crises.

Key Findings of the SoWC 2025 Report

1. High Levels of Monetary Poverty

- Over **19% of children worldwide** live in **extreme monetary poverty**, surviving on **less than US$3 per day**.
- Economic shocks, inflation, and stagnant wages disproportionately impact children, making them the most vulnerable demographic group.

2. Multidimensional Deprivations

- More than **1 in 5 children** in LMICs suffer **severe deprivation in at least two critical areas** necessary for their wellbeing.
- In India, approximately **206 million children** experience **at least one deprivation**, while **62 million** face **multiple deprivations** simultaneously.
- **Sanitation deprivation** is the most widespread, significantly increasing exposure to infections, malnutrition, and stunting.

3. Regional Inequalities

- The highest levels of multidimensional child poverty are concentrated in:
  - **Sub-Saharan Africa**
  - **South Asia**
- These regions face entrenched structural challenges, including rapid population growth, weak infrastructure, and persistent inequalities.

4. Aggravating Global Trends

UNICEF identifies several global forces compounding child poverty, such as:

- **Conflicts and protracted wars**
- **Climate and environmental crises** (floods, droughts, heatwaves)
- **Demographic pressures**
- **Mounting national debt** restricting social spending
- **Technological divides** limiting access to digital services
- **Sharp cuts in Official Development Assistance (ODA)**

These challenges resonate with Amartya Sen's **Capability Approach**, which emphasises that deprivation extends beyond income to include lack of opportunities and access.

Impact of Child Poverty

Consequences for Children

- Malnutrition, stunting, and weakened immunity
- Lower school attendance and poor learning outcomes
- Cognitive delays, emotional stress, depression, and anxiety
- Reduced employment prospects and social mobility in adulthood

Consequences for Society

- A less skilled workforce leading to **reduced productivity**
- Higher public health burdens
- Increased risks of **crime, violence, and extremism**
- Intergenerational transmission of poverty

UNICEF warns that ignoring child poverty undermines long-term economic stability and threatens progress toward the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Five Policy Pillars for Ending Child Poverty

1. Elevating Child Poverty as a National Priority

- Governments must recognise child poverty as a central policy challenge.
- Requires coordinated multi-sectoral action and adequate budget allocation.

2. Child-Sensitive Economic Policies

- Integrating children's needs into **budgeting**, taxation, public expenditure, and macroeconomic planning.
- Ensures fiscal policies do not disproportionately harm vulnerable families.

3. Expansion of Social Protection

- Providing **cash support**, nutrition supplements, and family assistance programmes.
- Countries like **Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa** demonstrate the success of targeted cash transfers in reducing deprivation.

4. Universal Access to Essential Public Services

- Improving availability and affordability of **healthcare, education, nutrition services, drinking water, sanitation, and dignified housing**.

5. Strengthening Economic Security for Families

- Promoting **decent work**, enforcing **minimum wages**, supporting **formalisation of employment**, and expanding **social security coverage** for parents and caregivers.

These pillars align with global frameworks such as the **UNCRC (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)** and SDG targets on poverty reduction.

Conclusion

The SoWC 2025 report is a stark reminder that **child poverty remains one of the world's most pressing developmental challenges**. Despite economic growth in several regions, millions of children continue to face overlapping deprivations that threaten their health, learning, and future productivity. Ending child poverty requires **political commitment, stronger social protection systems, equitable public services, and child-focused economic planning**. Prioritising children today is essential for building more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous societies.

Mains Practice Question:
"Multidimensional child poverty poses a major barrier to inclusive development. Analyse the key findings of UNICEF's SoWC 2025 report and suggest policy measures to address child deprivation in India."

Indian Shipping Vessels – Removal of SLP Rules

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Infrastructure (Ports & Shipping), Economy**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Ease of Doing Business)**

Context

The Centre has abolished **Sign-On, Sign-Off & Shore Leave Pass (SLP)** requirements for ships operating solely in Indian waters.

Rationale

- Earlier, seafarers had to visit immigration offices every **10 days** for SLP issuance or extension, causing delays and operational disruption.

Other Measures Promoting Indian Shipping

- **Right of First Refusal (ROFR)** for Indian vessels
- **Subsidy support** for Indian shipping companies
- **Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy**

Conclusion

Removing SLP norms strengthens maritime efficiency and supports the growth of India's coastal shipping sector.

Mains Practice Question:
"Evaluate the impact of recent reforms on India's shipping sector, with special reference to SLP rule removal."

UN DESA's World Urbanisation Prospects 2025

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper I – Urbanisation, Demography**
- **GS Paper II – UN Reports & Social Development**

Key Highlights

- Cities accommodate **45% of the global population**, now estimated at **8.2 billion**.
- Number of **megacities** has risen from **8 in 1975** to **33 in 2025** (population >10 million).
- **Jakarta** is the world's most populous city, followed by **Dhaka, Tokyo, and New Delhi**.

India-Specific Findings

- **44%** of India's population lives in urban areas.
- India, along with 6 other countries, will contribute **over 500 million new urban residents** between 2025–2050.

Conclusion

India faces major challenges of infrastructure, housing, and urban governance as its cities expand rapidly.

Mains Practice Question:
"Urbanisation in India is accelerating rapidly. Discuss the implications of the World Urbanisation Prospects 2025 report for India's future urban planning."

Morgan Stanley's 'Goldilocks' Outlook for India

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Indian Economy, Growth & Inflation**

About the Concept

A **Goldilocks Economy** describes a situation where:

- Growth is **steady**, not overheated
- Inflation remains **moderate**
- Economy avoids both **recession** and **runaway expansion**

Morgan Stanley's India Economics Outlook (2026) predicts:

- **Real GDP growth of 6.8% in FY26**
- A balanced macroeconomic environment conducive to stable policymaking

Conclusion

A Goldilocks scenario provides room for structural reforms, financial stability, and sustained investment flows.

Mains Practice Question:
"What is a Goldilocks economy? Examine whether India's current macroeconomic fundamentals support such an outlook."

NIC-2025: Overhaul of India's Industrial Classification

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Indian Economy (Growth, Sectors, Classification of Industries)**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Data Systems, Evidence-Based Policy Making)**
- **GS Paper III – Infrastructure, Digital Economy, Green Economy**

Introduction

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released the updated **National Industrial Classification (NIC) – 2025**, a comprehensive statistical framework used across India for surveys, censuses, national accounts, and policy planning. Replacing **NIC 2008**, the new classification reflects structural changes in India's economy over the last decade—especially the rise of **digital services, renewable energy, fintech, environmental activities**, and indigenous sectors like **AYUSH** and **handloom**.

The revision aligns India's classification system with the **International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) Revision 5** of the United Nations, ensuring global comparability of economic data.

What is the National Industrial Classification (NIC)?

NIC is a standardized system used to **classify all economic activities** in India.
It forms the backbone for:

- National Sample Surveys
- Economic Census
- Employment and enterprise data
- GDP calculations
- Industrial policy formulation
- Labour market assessments

The classification was first introduced in **1962**, and the 2025 revision is the most significant update since the 2008 structure.

Key Changes in NIC 2025

1. Expanded 6-Digit Coding Structure

- NIC 2025 shifts from the old **5-digit** system to a **6-digit** coding model.
- This allows for **greater granularity**, enabling detailed tracking of emerging economic activities.
- It supports dynamic sub-classification, essential for modern digital and service-based sectors.

2. Inclusion of Indigenous and Traditional Sectors

New categories provide formal recognition to:

- **AYUSH-based healthcare services**
- **Handloom and traditional crafts**

This helps measure the economic contribution of India's distinctive cultural and health sectors more accurately.

3. Classification of Emerging and Digital Sectors

NIC 2025 represents India's expanding digital ecosystem through dedicated categories for:

- Cloud computing and data hosting
- Digital intermediation and e-commerce
- Fintech and payment platforms
- Blockchain-based services
- Web search portals and digital advertising

This reflects the rising share of the **digital economy** in India's GDP.

4. Recognition of Renewable and Green Economy Activities

With India's accelerating green transition, NIC 2025 introduces dedicated classes for:

- Renewable energy generation
- Carbon capture & storage
- Waste recycling, waste valorisation
- Environmental remediation
- Circular economy activities

These updates align with **UN SDGs** and India's climate commitments.

5. Technology-Agnostic Classification

- NIC 2025 does not differentiate activities based on production method (traditional vs. modern).
- Enables classification based on the **nature of the activity**, not the technology used.
- Supports seamless inclusion of innovations.

Salient Features of NIC 2025

1. Enhanced Intermediation Services

Recognising the growing importance of intermediaries in the modern economy, NIC 2025 creates new categories for intermediation in:

- Retail & logistics
- Power and energy trading
- Healthcare service exchange
- Educational technology platforms

2. Better Representation of India's Evolving Economy

NIC 2025 captures the transformation from material production to **platform-based, hybrid, and digital business models**.

3. Integration with Global Standards

Alignment with **ISIC Rev.5** ensures:

- Better comparability of Indian data with global datasets
- Standardisation for international economic reporting

4. Strong Focus on Climate and Sustainability

Classification includes green infrastructure, environmental consultancy, climate-tech, and sustainable agriculture services.

Significance of NIC 2025

For Policymakers

- Enables accurate measurement of sectors like digital economy, AYUSH, platform services
- Supports targeted industrial and employment policies

For Researchers

- Enhances quality of economic, labour, and productivity analyses

For Businesses: Facilitates regulatory clarity and easier global comparison for investors

For National Accounts: Provides a refined base for GDP estimation and structural transformation analysis

Conclusion

NIC 2025 represents a **major modernisation** of India's economic classification framework. By expanding sectoral detail, recognising new-age industries, integrating green and digital sectors, and aligning with global ISIC standards, the new classification will significantly improve the quality of national statistics, policy design, and economic governance. It positions India's statistical system for the demands of a fast-evolving, innovation-driven economy.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the significance of the National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2025 in the context of India's economic transformation. How will the new classification framework improve policy formulation and statistical accuracy?"

Base Effect & India's Inflation Trends

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Indian Economy (Inflation, Price Stability, Economic Indicators)**

Introduction

Economists attribute the recent decline in India's inflation rate partly to a **highly favourable base effect**, which can distort short-term interpretations of economic trends.

Understanding the Base Effect

- The **base effect** refers to how comparison with an unusually high or low reference value influences percentage-based indicators.
- It is crucial in the calculation of **CPI, WPI, GDP growth rates**, and other statistical ratios.

Why It Matters

- A low inflation reading may not necessarily reflect falling prices; it could simply be due to a **high base value** in the previous year.
- Policymakers interpret base-effect-adjusted data to avoid misjudgements in monetary or fiscal interventions.

Conclusion

While essential for interpreting inflation, reliance solely on the base effect can mask structural price pressures. Therefore, analysts supplement it with core inflation, supply trends, and global commodity movements.

Mains Practice Question:
"Explain the concept of the base effect. How does it influence the interpretation of inflation data in India?"

Trade Intelligence & Analytics Portal Launched

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Economy (Trade Policy, Exports, Technology Use)**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Digital Platforms, Ease of Doing Business)**

Introduction

The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry has unveiled the **Trade Intelligence and Analytics Portal**, a digital platform designed to modernize India's trade data ecosystem.

Key Objectives

- Provide **transparent, accessible trade intelligence**
- Equip exporters with actionable insights
- Strengthen **evidence-based policymaking**

Notable Features

- **FTA Utilization Tools** to help exporters maximise the benefits of trade agreements

- **Country-wise and commodity-wise insights** for better market targeting
- Replacement of fragmented earlier portals with a **unified digital system**
- Support for MSMEs and remote businesses through easy access to trade analytics

Conclusion

The portal strengthens India's export competitiveness, aligns with global standards, and supports strategic trade diversification.

Mains Practice Question:
"How can digital trade intelligence platforms enhance India's export performance and support MSMEs?"

SOCIETY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

Digital Violence Against Women in the AI Era

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Governance, Social Justice, Vulnerable Sections, Women Empowerment**
- **GS Paper III – Cybersecurity, ICT, and Emerging Technologies**
- **GS Paper II – International Organisations & Global Reports**

Introduction

A recent global review by **UN Women (2024)** reveals a disturbing trend: nearly **44% of women and girls worldwide remain without any form of legal protection** against digital violence. With the rapid expansion of the internet and AI-driven technologies, online abuse is escalating in both **scale** and **complexity**, creating new avenues for psychological, social, political, and economic harm. This digital epidemic highlights the urgent need for stronger governance frameworks and cross-border cooperation.

Understanding Digital Violence Against Women

Digital violence refers to a spectrum of **technology-enabled harm**, often powered or amplified by AI systems. This includes content and acts that result in **physical, sexual, emotional, reputational, economic**, or **civil-rights violations** against women and girls. Such violence is no longer limited to harassment—it spans engineered misinformation, deepfake pornography, identity theft, stalking, financial fraud, and political manipulation.

Important Insight:
● **16–58%** prevalence of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (TFVAWG) globally
● **67%** of the violence stems from misinformation and online defamation
● **73%** of women journalists report online abuse, making them one of the most at-risk groups

These numbers reflect the warnings by sociologists like **Manuel Castells**, who emphasize how digital networks amplify both empowerment and exploitation.

Drivers and Emerging Challenges Intensifying Online Violence

1. Anti-Rights and Misogynistic Actors

- Organized digital groups increasingly weaponize online spaces to silence, intimidate, or discredit women.
- Common tactics include **cyberbullying, targeted trolling, coordinated harassment**, and **threats of physical or sexual violence**.
- This environment narrows women's participation in democracy and public life—especially activists, politicians, and journalists.

2. Accelerated Growth of AI

AI systems have become key enablers of sophisticated online harm:

- Facilitates rapid spread of **targeted, tailored disinformation**.
- Explosion of **deepfake pornography**, with **90–95%** of deepfakes being non-consensual and **~90% depicting women**.
- New AI-driven tools enable **sextortion, impersonation**, and **precision doxing**, intensifying psychological harm.

These trends reflect concerns raised by thinkers like **Shoshana Zuboff**, who warn of surveillance capitalism creating asymmetries of power and vulnerability.

3. Rise of the "Manosphere"

- A growing online ecosystem promoting misogynistic ideology, resentment, and gender hostility.
- Manosphere content influences mainstream culture, reinforcing stereotypes, normalising sexism, and fuelling real-world violence.
- It especially affects adolescent boys and young men, shaping long-term gender attitudes.

4. Inadequacy of Legal Frameworks

Even advanced legislative attempts—such as:

- **UK's Online Safety Act**,
- **Mexico's Ley Olimpia**, and
- the **EU Digital Safety Act**

struggle to keep pace with rapid shifts in generative AI, cross-platform anonymity, and transboundary cybercrimes. Legal gaps emerge in areas like deepfake regulation, algorithmic accountability, platform liability, and content moderation standards.

Impacts of TFVAWG on Society

Democratic and Political Dimensions

- Women contesting elections or holding public office face targeted smear campaigns.
- Online violence creates a chilling effect, discouraging political participation.

Economic and Workplace Consequences

- Women journalists and gig-economy workers face reputational harm, job loss, or declining opportunities.
- Mental health impacts lead to productivity losses and occupational stress.

Social and Psychological Effects

- Long-term anxiety, trauma, social withdrawal, and digital invisibility.
- Families and communities also face secondary impacts due to reputational attacks.

Way Forward

1. Strengthened Global Cooperation

- Countries must coordinate to establish **common safety protocols**, regulate AI misuse, and ensure digital platforms uphold **transparent, ethics-based governance**.
- Cross-border enforcement mechanisms for cybercrimes need strengthening.

2. Empowering Survivors and Grassroots Support

- Dedicated funding for **women's rights organisations** to provide legal aid, psychological support, and crisis intervention.
- Platforms should integrate survivor-centric complaint mechanisms.

3. Prevention and Digital Literacy

- Large-scale training programs to educate women and girls on online safety, privacy, and secure digital practices.
- Campaigns to combat toxic online cultures and gender bias.

4. Using Technology for Social Good

- Tools like **Bodyguard.AI (France)** demonstrate the potential of automated filters to block online abuse in real-time.
- AI can help create safer digital ecosystems through content verification, rapid flagging mechanisms, and disinformation tracking.

Conclusion

Digital violence is emerging as one of the most significant gendered challenges of the 21st century. The rapid evolution of AI, anonymity on platforms, and inadequate legal frameworks have created an environment where women are disproportionately targeted, silenced, and harmed. Addressing this crisis requires **robust regulatory reforms**, **technological safeguards**, **social transformation**, and **international collaboration**. The goal must be to create **inclusive, secure, and rights-based digital spaces** for all.

Mains Practice Question:
"Digital violence against women is escalating due to AI advancements and inadequate legal protections. Critically analyse the emerging challenges and suggest a comprehensive policy framework to address Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls (TFVAWG)."

AGRICULTURE

Record Foodgrain Output 2024–25: Final Estimates

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Agriculture, Food Security, Cropping Patterns**
- **GS Paper III – Government Policies for Agriculture & Irrigation**
- **GS Paper III – Inclusive Growth and Rural Development**

Introduction

The Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has released the **final Crop Production Estimates for the 2024–25 agricultural year**, showcasing a historic increase across major crop categories. The figures highlight India's growing agricultural resilience, supported by favourable policy interventions, expanded irrigation, and robust procurement mechanisms.

Overview of 2024–25 Crop Production Trends

1. Consistent Growth in Cereal Grains

All of India's major staples—**rice, wheat, maize, and millets**—have shown notable growth. The rise reflects improved farm practices, expansion of micro-irrigation, and increasing adoption of climate-resilient varieties.

2. Significant Increase in Oilseeds

- Oilseed production recorded a **growth of over 8%** compared to 2023–24.
- The surge was driven primarily by higher output of **soybean and groundnut**, supported by expanding cultivation and improved seed technology.

3. Strengthened Performance in Pulses

India, being the **world's largest producer, consumer, and importer of pulses**, continues to prioritise pulse self-sufficiency. The current estimates indicate stable or rising production of **tur, urad, chana, and moong**, supported by enhanced MSP procurement and targeted initiatives.

Government Programmes Catalysing the Growth

1. MSP Procurement Assurance

- Targeted MSP procurement for pulses—especially **tur, urad, chana, and moong**—has encouraged farmers to diversify and expand cultivation.
- This has also strengthened price stability and enhanced rural incomes.

2. Self-Reliance in Pulses Mission (2025–26 to 2030–31)

A dedicated national mission aimed at:

- Achieving **self-sufficiency in pulses**,
- Reducing dependence on imports,
- Promoting productivity gains through seed improvement and better agronomic practices,
- Supporting farmers through climate-resilient crop varieties and extension support.

3. Irrigation Expansion

Programmes such as:

- **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)**
- **Micro Irrigation Fund**
  have increased reliable water access, improving yields and cropping intensity.

4. Sustainable Agriculture Measures

Under the **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**, farmers are encouraged to adopt:

- **Organic and alternative fertilisers**,
- Water-saving technologies,

- Climate-smart agricultural practices.

These interventions promote both productivity and ecological sustainability.

Conclusion

India's record foodgrain production in 2024–25 reflects a combination of **strong policy support**, improved infrastructure, and adaptive farming practices. The rise across cereals, oilseeds, and pulses enhances food security, strengthens rural economies, and helps reduce import dependencies. Moving forward, sustaining these gains will require continued investment in irrigation, climate-resilient agriculture, and market reforms that ensure farmers receive stable and remunerative returns.

Mains Practice Question:
"India's foodgrain production in 2024–25 has reached a historic high. Discuss the key drivers behind this growth and evaluate the role of government initiatives in strengthening agricultural output and self-reliance."

Revised PMFBY: New Modalities for Farmer Protection

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Agriculture (Crop Insurance, Risk Management, Farmer Welfare)**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Centrally Sponsored Schemes, Public Service Delivery)**

Introduction

The Government of India has announced a revised implementation framework for the **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)**, to be operational from **Kharif 2026**.
The updated guidelines aim to strengthen crop insurance delivery, expand risk coverage, and enhance the timely settlement of claims—ensuring greater protection for farmers facing increasing climatic and ecological risks.

Key Modifications Under the Revised PMFBY

1. Inclusion of Wild Animal Attack Losses

- **Crop damage caused by wild animals** has now been formally added as the **fifth optional add-on cover** under localised risks.
- This caters to frequent farmer requests, especially in regions experiencing rising human–wildlife conflict.

2. Restoration of Paddy Inundation Cover

- The **inundation risk for paddy**, removed from localised calamity coverage in 2018, has been reinstated.
- This reflects growing vulnerability to flash floods and extreme rainfall events.

3. State-Level Identification of Vulnerable Wildlife Zones

- States will independently notify:
    - The **list of wild animals** causing recurring damage
    - **Vulnerable districts or blocks**, based on historical occurrence and field data

4. Mandatory Reporting Through Digital Platforms

- Farmers must now report crop loss within **72 hours** via the official crop insurance app.
- Reports must include **geo-tagged photographs**, strengthening claim transparency and reducing disputes.

Overview of PMFBY Risk Coverage (As Represented in the Infographic)

i. Prevented Sowing/Planting/Germination: Covers risks arising from **deficient rainfall** or adverse weather that prevents sowing or germination.

ii. Standing Crop Protection: Protects crops from **drought, dry spells, floods, and inundation** from sowing through harvest.

iii. Post-Harvest Risk Cover: Provides protection for **up to two weeks** after harvest for field-dried crops against:

- Hailstorms
- Cyclones
- Unseasonal rains

iv. Localised Calamities: Covers losses from **hailstorms, landslides, and other local risks**.

v. Add-On Wildlife Damage Cover: Optional state-notified protection for **crop loss due to wild animal attacks**.

Exclusions

- War-related risks
- Nuclear hazards
- Malicious damage
- Preventable losses

About Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

Ministry & Launch

- Introduced in **2016** by the **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare**.
- Classified as a **Central Sector Scheme**.

Objectives

- Provide **financial support** to farmers facing crop loss or damage
- Stabilize farm incomes and ensure continued **agricultural credit flow**
- Promote **modern agricultural practices** and crop diversification

Eligibility: All **farmers, sharecroppers, and tenant farmers** cultivating notified crops in notified areas.

Premium Rates (Farmer Contribution)

- **Kharif crops:** 2%
- **Rabi crops:** 1.5%
- **Commercial & horticultural crops:** 5%

Government Premium Sharing

- **Central : State = 50 : 50**
- For **North-Eastern and Himalayan states: 90 : 10**

Conclusion

The revised modalities under PMFBY reflect an effort to align crop insurance with India's evolving climatic and ecological risks. By expanding localised coverage, reinstating crucial protections like paddy inundation, and strengthening digital reporting, the scheme aims to improve claim accuracy, reduce delays, and provide more comprehensive risk mitigation for farming households.

Mains Practice Question:
"Critically examine the significance of recent reforms introduced under PMFBY. How can strengthened risk coverage enhance resilience among India's farming communities?"

Digital Tech for Warehousing & PDS Modernisation

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Governance (Public Distribution System, Service Delivery, Digital Governance)**
- **GS Paper III – Agriculture, Food Security, Logistics & Infrastructure**

Introduction

The Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution has launched a suite of **digital solutions** aimed at modernising India's warehousing ecosystem and strengthening transparency and accountability in the **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**. The initiatives mark a significant move towards creating a **technology-enabled, integrated, and efficient food supply chain**, aligning with national logistics reforms and digital governance priorities.

Why These Digital Initiatives Matter

1. Strengthening the Logistics and Warehousing Backbone

- Helps reduce India's high logistics costs, a key bottleneck affecting agricultural competitiveness.
- Supports **scientific inventory management**, reducing storage losses and improving grain quality.

2. Enhancing PDS Transparency

- Ensures real-time digital tracking of foodgrain movement from procurement to distribution.
- Minimises leakages, diversion, and manual errors, ensuring beneficiaries receive entitlements with dignity.

3. Alignment with PM Gati Shakti

- Integrates warehousing and food supply operations with the **National Master Plan for Multi-modal Connectivity**, enabling coordinated planning across ministries.

4. Faster and Accurate Delivery

- Enables seamless data flow, optimised warehousing operations, and quicker turnaround across the public food supply chain.

Key Digital Platforms Launched

Although the note provided only names, the initiatives represent the following interventions:

1. Bhandaran 360

- A comprehensive digital warehousing ecosystem for central and state godowns.
- Likely includes warehouse mapping, online stock verification, and GPS-linked grain movement.

2. Smart EXIM

- Supports export–import activities for food-related commodities.
- Enhances real-time tracking, documentation, and customs integration for smoother cross-border logistics.

3. ANNADARPAN

- An analytics and dashboard platform enabling:
  - Data-driven decision-making
  - Monitoring of foodgrain lifting and distribution
  - Performance evaluation of states under PDS

4. ASHA Platform

- Supports automation of supply chain and foodgrain handling.
- May include RFID systems, automated gate entry, and digital consignment verification.

Collectively, these platforms bring warehouse management, logistics, procurement, and distribution into a **single digital ecosystem**.

Significance for India's Food Security Architecture

1. **Improving Efficiency:** Reduces manual paperwork, enhances productivity, and cuts operational delays.
2. **Promoting Accountability:** Digitisation ensures traceability across the supply chain, reducing corruption and diversions.
3. **Supporting Beneficiaries:** Ensures that poor households receive subsidised grains **accurately, timely, and transparently**.
4. **Building Future Readiness:** Digital warehousing will support upcoming reforms in:

- National food security
- Buffer stock management
- Climate-resilient supply chains
- E-logistics and agri-tech integration

Conclusion

The launch of these digital warehousing and PDS-monitoring platforms marks a significant step toward a **modern, transparent, and data-driven food security administration**. Combined with infrastructure reforms under **PM Gati Shakti**, these initiatives will help reduce logistics costs, improve delivery efficiency, and ensure the public distribution system remains robust, inclusive, and accountable.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss how digital interventions in warehousing and the Public Distribution System can enhance transparency and efficiency in India's food security architecture."

FAO 2025: Disasters, Agriculture & Food Security

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Disaster Management, Food Security, Agriculture, Technology in Farming**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (International Institutions, FAO)**

Introduction

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** released its 2025 flagship report titled *Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security*, underscoring how climate extremes, ecological disturbances, and increasingly frequent natural disasters are severely affecting agricultural production, livelihoods, and global nutrition.

The report also highlights **digital transformation and technology** as emerging pillars for building resilient agrifood systems.

Key Findings of the FAO Report (2025)

1. Massive Financial Losses in Agriculture

- Over **USD 3.26 trillion** in losses were recorded between **1991 and 2023** due to disasters.
- Among all categories, **cereal crops** suffered the highest damage, threatening global staple food supplies.

2. Asia as the Most Affected Region

- Asia accounts for **47% of total global agricultural losses**, largely due to:
  - High concentration of agricultural activity
  - Exposure to climate-induced hazards like **floods, storms, and cyclones**

3. Global Nutritional Impacts

- Disasters have resulted in a **reduction of approximately 320 kilocalories per person per day**, signalling a disturbing decline in caloric availability and global food security.

4. Severe Livelihood Impacts on Fisheries

- **Marine heatwaves** caused **USD 6.6 billion** in losses (1985–2022).
- Nearly **15% of global fisheries** were affected, significantly impacting communities dependent on coastal and marine livelihoods.

Role of Technology in Strengthening Agricultural Resilience

1. Digital Platforms for Agrifood System Stability

- Data-driven platforms help overcome infrastructure gaps and enable **timely, large-scale risk transfer mechanisms** such as climate insurance and parametric risk tools.

2. Shift from Reactive to Proactive Disaster Risk Reduction

- Access to **real-time, actionable information** supports proactive planning.
- Tools include:
  - Early Warning Systems
  - FAO's **Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS)**
  - Weather-based advisories and digital crop monitoring

3. Economic Advantages

- Technology-enabled advisories reduce production costs and improve decision-making.
- Example:
  - **Agrometeorological advisory services in India** helped farmers reduce wheat input costs by **USD 29.65/ha**.

India's Technological Integration in Agriculture

1. AI and IoT Applications

- **Kisan e-Mitra (AI Chatbot)** for farmer advisories
- **National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS)** using AI for early detection of infestations

2. Space-Based Agriculture Monitoring

- **FASAL Project** (Forecasting Agricultural Output using Space, Agro-Meteorology & Land Observations) supports crop forecasting and disaster preparedness.

3. Drone and Geo-Spatial Technologies

- **NaMo Drone Didi Scheme** to popularise drone-based spraying and monitoring
- **SVAMITVA Scheme** using drones for land mapping, helping formalise rural property and improve resource planning

Conclusion

The FAO report makes it clear that disasters are not simply environmental crises—they are deeply intertwined with **food security, livelihoods, and global nutrition**.
However, the rapid adoption of **AI, remote sensing, drones, and early warning systems** offers a viable pathway to transition from reactive crisis management to **anticipatory, technology-driven resilience**. For India and other agrarian economies, embedding digital tools in agriculture will be central to safeguarding future food systems.

Mains Practice Question:
"Disasters increasingly threaten global food systems, but technology offers a pathway to resilience. Discuss how digital innovations can mitigate agricultural risks in developing countries."

GEOGRAPHY AND DISASTER

Post-AR6 Climate Assessment: India's Changing Risk Profile

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper I – Geography (Climate Change, Physical Geography)**
- **GS Paper II – Governance & Social Justice (Environmental Governance, Public Policy)**
- **GS Paper III – Environment, Disaster Management, and Climate Change**

Introduction

A new scientific assessment released after the **IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)** provides an updated picture of India's changing climate. The findings highlight significant shifts in **temperature patterns**, **rainfall variability**, and the rising occurrence of **compound climate extremes**. The report stresses the need for **region-specific and evidence-based adaptation strategies** to fortify agriculture, urban systems, and public health infrastructure.

Key Insights from the Post-AR6 Climate Assessment for India

1. Observed Climate Trends in India

- **Rising temperatures** with more intense and prolonged heatwaves across the Indo-Gangetic Plains, Central India, and parts of the South.
- **Increased frequency of heavy rainfall events**, especially in Western Ghats, Northeast India, and parts of Himalayan states.
- **Erratic monsoon patterns**, including delayed onset, early withdrawal, and intra-seasonal dry spells.
- Higher instances of **compound events**, such as heatwaves followed by extreme rainfall, causing cascading impacts on ecosystems and livelihoods.

Contemporary Example: The **2024–25 extreme heatwave cycles** in northern India coupled with sudden pre-monsoon storms illustrate this compound risk pattern.

2. Projected Climate Changes for India

- Average temperatures likely to rise **1.5–2°C by mid-century** under intermediate emission pathways.
- **Monsoon rainfall variability** expected to intensify, with higher extremes and increased unpredictability.
- Coastal zones face heightened threats from **sea-level rise**, saline intrusion, and storm surges.
- The Himalayas will continue to experience **rapid glacier retreat**, raising risks of **GLOFs (Glacial Lake Outburst Floods)**.

Scholarly Context: The projections align with the warnings given by climate scientists like **Ramanathan & Gadgil**, who underline the vulnerability of South Asia due to monsoon-dependent economies.

Sector-Wise Impacts and Risks

Agriculture

- Increased heat stress reducing crop yields (wheat, pulses).
- Rising pest infestations due to altered climate patterns.
- Higher probability of crop losses from combined heat-drought events.

Urban Systems

- More frequent **urban floods** due to high-intensity rain.
- Heat island effects aggravating mortality and energy demand.
- Stress on stormwater drains, mobility, and housing infrastructure.

Public Health

- Heatwaves increasing risks of heat stroke and mortality.
- Spread of vector-borne diseases like dengue and malaria to new regions.
- Compound disasters stretching emergency and healthcare systems.

Need for Region-Specific, Data-Driven Adaptation

Why Region-Specific?

India's climatic diversity — from the Himalayas to coastal belts — demands **customised adaptation plans**, not a one-size-fits-all approach.

Priority Adaptation Strategies

- **Climate-smart agriculture** (crop diversification, heat-tolerant seeds, micro-irrigation).
- **Urban resilience planning** using real-time climate modelling for drainage, cooling, and land-use regulation.
- **Health surveillance systems** integrating climate data for early warning of disease outbreaks.
- Strengthening district-level climate action aligned with the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** and **State Action Plans (SAPCCs)**.

Global Parallel: Countries like **Japan and the Netherlands** already deploy hyper-local climate risk mapping — a model India can emulate.

Conclusion

India's post-AR6 climate findings underline the urgency of **anticipatory governance**. As climate extremes grow more frequent and interconnected, the nation must rely on **scientific evidence**, **localised planning**, and **robust institutional capacity**. Strengthening **agricultural resilience**, **urban adaptation**, and **public health preparedness** will be essential to safeguard vulnerable populations and sustain long-term development. The key lies in promoting **data-driven decision-making**, a **multi-sectoral approach**, and **proactive adaptation**.

Mains Practice Question:

"Discuss the major findings of the Post-AR6 climate change assessment for India. How can region-specific, data-driven adaptation strategies help manage compound climate risks?"

Mount Semeru Eruption: Key Geological Insights

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper I – Geography (Geophysical Phenomena)**
- **GS Paper III – Disaster Management**

About Mount Semeru

Mount Semeru, located in **East Java, Indonesia**, is the **highest and most active volcano** on Java Island. As a prominent feature of the **Pacific Ring of Fire**, it is part of one of the world's most active seismic belts. Semeru is classified as a **stratovolcano**, known for explosive eruptions and pyroclastic flows.

Contemporary Context

Indonesia has recently witnessed activity from other volcanoes as well, including **Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki** and **Mount Merapi**, highlighting continuing tectonic instability in the region.

Conclusion

Mount Semeru's eruption underscores Indonesia's vulnerability to tectonic hazards and the need for robust early warning and evacuation systems.

Mains Practice Question:

"Explain the geophysical characteristics of stratovolcanoes and assess the disaster risks associated with Indonesia's location along the Pacific Ring of Fire."

HISTORY, ART & CULTURE

Kartar Singh Sarabha: Legacy of a Ghadar Revolutionary

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper I – Modern Indian History (Freedom Struggle, Revolutionary Movements)**
- **GS Paper IV – Ethics (Values of Courage, Patriotism, Sacrifice)**

Introduction

On his death anniversary, India commemorates **Kartar Singh Sarabha**, one of the youngest and most daring revolutionaries of the early 20th century. A key architect of the **Ghadar Movement**, Sarabha remains a symbol of unyielding courage and nationalist commitment, inspiring several generations of freedom fighters—including Bhagat Singh himself.

Life and Revolutionary Journey (1896–1915)

Kartar Singh Sarabha was born in **Punjab in 1896** into a period when nationalist consciousness was growing rapidly in India and among the Indian diaspora abroad.
His exposure to racial discrimination and colonial repression during his student years in the United States pushed him towards militancy.

Key Contributions

1. Central Role in the Ghadar Party

- Joined the **Ghadar Party** as a teenager, demonstrating exceptional organisational capability.
- The **Ghadar Party**, formed in **1913 in Oregon, USA**, sought to overthrow British rule through armed insurrection.

2. Publishing the Ghadar Newspaper

- Played a vital role in publishing the **Punjabi edition of the Ghadar newspaper**, which spread revolutionary ideology among Indian immigrants and soldiers.

3. Mobilising Resistance in India

- After returning to India, Sarabha undertook the difficult task of **influencing Indian soldiers** to revolt against the British Raj.
- Established a **small-scale arms manufacturing unit in Ludhiana**, reflecting his effort to operationalise armed rebellion.

4. Martyrdom in the Lahore Conspiracy Case

- Arrested and charged with **sedition** during the **Lahore Conspiracy Case**, his trial reflected the British fear of Ghadar influences.
- Executed in **1915 at the age of 19**, he became one of the youngest martyrs of India's freedom struggle.

Values Embodied

Kartar Singh Sarabha exemplified:

- **Bravery** – Fearlessly challenged colonial authority
- **Commitment** – Dedicated his life to national liberation at a very young age
- **Sacrifice** – Accepted martyrdom with dignity
- **Patriotism & Idealism** – His actions were rooted in a vision of a free, egalitarian India

Ethical thinkers often emphasise *moral courage* as the highest virtue—Sarabha's life is a prime historical illustration of this ideal.

Conclusion

Kartar Singh Sarabha stands as a towering figure of India's revolutionary tradition.
His contributions to the Ghadar Movement, his organisational strength, and his supreme sacrifice at a young age make him an enduring symbol of **youth-led resistance and uncompromising nationalism**.
Remembering Sarabha is essential not only for honouring the past but also for appreciating the profound role of revolutionary movements in the freedom struggle.

Mains Practice Question:
"**The Ghadar Movement represents an early and significant attempt at armed rebellion against British rule. Discuss the role of Kartar Singh Sarabha in this movement and assess its impact on India's nationalist struggle.**"

PM's Call for Ending Colonial Mindset in 10 Years

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper I – Modern Indian History (Colonial Impact, Social Change)**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Reforms, Language Policy, Public Institutions)**
- **GS Paper IV – Ethics (Cultural Values, Decolonisation, National Identity)**

Introduction

The Prime Minister has urged citizens to undertake a **decade-long national commitment** to free India from the lingering influence of colonial values—an influence that took root in the 19th century, particularly following **Thomas Babington Macaulay's 1835 Minute on Education**. The call highlights the need to realign institutions, culture, and public behaviour with India's civilisational ethos, while shedding inherited structures built to serve colonial objectives rather than national aspirations.

Macaulay's Legacy and Its Impact

1. Macaulay's Minute on Education (1835)

Macaulay proposed replacing traditional Indian systems of learning with a Western-style curriculum conducted in English. This led to:

- Decline of Sanskrit, Persian, Hindi, and other classical/vernacular education traditions
- Dominance of English-medium schooling
- Promotion of British intellectual frameworks as superior to Indian knowledge systems

2. Gandhi's Critique

Mahatma Gandhi described India's pre-colonial education as a **"beautiful tree"** that the colonial state systematically uprooted. He argued that Macaulay's model disconnected Indians from their cultural heritage and replaced community-oriented learning with rigid, textbook-based instruction.

Characteristics of the Colonial Mindset in Contemporary India

1. Language Hierarchy

- English continues to dominate universities, courts, and elite employment sectors.
- Non-English speakers often face barriers to opportunity, reinforcing inequality.
- Perception of English as a marker of social prestige persists.

2. Cultural Displacement

- Western dress, food, lifestyle, etiquette, and art forms were historically positioned as "modern," creating a hierarchy of cultural value.
- Indigenous practices—Ayurveda, classical arts, folk traditions—were sidelined or labelled unscientific.

3. Colonial-Age Laws and Institutions

Many laws created for **control, extraction, and surveillance** still shape governance, such as:

- Sedition law (Section 124A)
- Indian Penal Code (1860)
- Colonial forest and policing frameworks
  These laws were not designed for a democratic society prioritizing public welfare.

4. Economic Thought and Development Models

- Colonial emphasis on centralized extraction and reliance on foreign capital contributed to large-scale impoverishment.
- Post-colonial continuation of external models reduced attention to local, community-based economies.

5. Knowledge System Alienation

- Indigenous sciences, environmental knowledge, architecture, agriculture, and medical traditions were downgraded.
- Research institutions prioritised Western paradigms, marginalising local wisdom and innovations.

Cognitive Decolonisation: Pathways Suggested

1. Policy-Level Reforms

- **National Education Policy (NEP)**: Strengthens mother-tongue education, classical Indian languages, and Indian knowledge systems.
- **Repeal/Reform of Colonial Laws**: Revision of penal codes, sedition provisions, and outdated administrative procedures.
- Revival of **traditional crafts, heritage universities, and local technologies**.

2. Cultural and Symbolic Initiatives

- Renaming of **Rajpath to Kartavya Path**, shifting focus from colonial grandeur to civic responsibility.
- Establishment of global cultural platforms such as **International Yoga Day** to celebrate Indian heritage.
- Placement of the **Sengol** in the new Parliament, signifying continuity of dharmic governance traditions.

3. Social Behaviour and Mindset Shift

- **Atmanirbhar Bharat** promotes self-reliance, indigenous innovation, and reduced dependence on imported systems.
- **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)** highlights traditional sustainable practices and environmental ethics.
- Encouraging pride in Indian languages, scientific heritage, crafts, and local governance frameworks.

Conclusion

The Prime Minister's call for a 10-year national movement emphasises that decolonisation is not merely administrative or symbolic—it is an intellectual, cultural, and behavioural transformation.
By re-centring Indian civilisational values, reforming outdated colonial institutions, and promoting confidence in indigenous strengths, India aims to build governance structures and societal attitudes rooted in its own identity rather than inherited colonial frameworks.

Mains Practice Question:

"Colonial institutions and mindsets continue to shape India's social and administrative structures. Discuss the significance of cognitive decolonisation in modern governance."

Meerut Bugle Gets GI Tag

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper I – Indian Culture (Craft Traditions)**
- **GS Paper III – Economy (GI Tags & Market Protection)**

About the Meerut Bugle

The **Meerut Bugle**, tracing its legacy to the **late 19th century**, represents a key component of India's evolving military musical traditions. Handcrafted from **high-grade brass**, it is valued for its **durability, tonal precision**, and widespread use in regimental bands, military academies, and ceremonial events.

Significance of GI Tag

- Provides **legal protection** against unauthorized use of the product's name.
- Enhances the **market value, branding**, and recognition of local artisans.
- Supports preservation of traditional craftsmanship.

Conclusion

The GI recognition supports cultural heritage and opens commercial opportunities for artisan communities.

Mains Practice Question:
"What is the significance of Geographical Indications (GI) in protecting India's cultural heritage? Illustrate with examples."

ORS Standards: FSSAI's New Directive

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Health, Nutrition, Regulatory Bodies**
- **GS Paper III – Science & Technology (Public Health Technologies)**

Context

FSSAI has asked states and UTs to stop the misuse of the term **"ORS"** by beverage manufacturers.

About ORS

- ORS is exclusively linked to **WHO-recommended formulations** used to prevent and treat **dehydration caused by acute diarrhoea**.
- Contains: **Sodium chloride, glucose (anhydrous), potassium chloride, trisodium citrate (dihydrate)**.

Functions

- **Glucose** aids sodium and water absorption.
- **Sodium & potassium** replenish electrolytes.
- **Citrate** corrects acidosis during dehydration.

Conclusion

Restricting commercial misuse protects public health and maintains the integrity of life-saving medical products.

Mains Practice Question:
"Explain the significance of ORS in public health and analyse why regulatory clarity is essential to prevent misuse of therapeutic formulations."

350th Martyrdom Year of Guru Tegh Bahadur

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper I – Indian Culture, Sikh Tradition, Religious Movements**
- **GS Paper IV – Ethics (Values, Courage, Religious Freedom)**

Introduction

The Sikh community in Maharashtra has initiated a series of year-long programmes to commemorate the **350th martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur**, the ninth Guru of Sikhism.
Known for his unwavering commitment to **religious liberty, human dignity, and moral courage**, Guru Tegh Bahadur's legacy remains foundational to India's civilizational ethos.
The commemorations aim to spread awareness of his contributions to India's spiritual and socio-political landscape.

About Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621–1675)

- Born in **1621 in Amritsar**, Punjab.
- Youngest son of **Guru Hargobind Sahib**, the sixth Sikh Guru and a pioneer of the Sikh martial tradition.
- Recognised as the **9th Sikh Guru**, he was celebrated as a **warrior-saint, philosopher, poet, and protector of the oppressed**.

Guru Tegh Bahadur combined both **spiritual authority** and **temporal leadership**, exemplifying the Sikh principle of *miri-piri* (unity of worldly responsibility and spiritual depth).

Key Contributions and Historical Role

1. Founder of Chak Nanki (later Anandpur Sahib)

- He established **Chak Nanki**, which evolved into the spiritually significant town of **Anandpur Sahib**, a centre of Sikh thought and community formation.

2. Defender of Religious Freedom: "Hind Di Chadar"

- Guru Tegh Bahadur is honoured as **"Hind Di Chadar"** (Shield of India) because he made the ultimate sacrifice defending the religious rights of Kashmiri Pandits and all communities
—representing one of history's earliest and strongest stands for **freedom of conscience**.

3. Social and Moral Reform

- Challenged **superstitions, caste barriers, untouchability**, and rigid social hierarchies.
- Advocated **dignity for all**, reaffirming Sikhism's core tenet of social equality.

4. Teachings of Universal Brotherhood

- His compositions in the **Guru Granth Sahib** highlight themes of:
    o Equality
    o Peace and detachment
    o Courage
    o Moral steadfastness
    o Compassion

His message resonated across regions, inspiring societal harmony and humane governance.

Values and Ethical Teachings

Guru Tegh Bahadur embodied and propagated timeless ethical values:

- **Valour:** His martyrdom is one of history's rare examples of **self-sacrifice to save another faith**, symbolising unparalleled courage.
- **Spiritual Wisdom:** His hymns encourage **self-reflection, detachment from materialism, and spiritual discipline**.
- **Leadership by Moral Example:** He demonstrated how spiritual leaders can uphold justice even in the face of imperial persecution.
- **Protection of Human Rights:** Long before modern notions of fundamental rights, he defended the **right to practise one's faith freely**.

Conclusion

The 350th martyrdom anniversary offers an important opportunity to revisit Guru Tegh Bahadur's exceptional contributions to India's cultural and philosophical   heritage.
His life is a timeless reminder that **freedom of conscience, moral courage, and universal brotherhood** are core to India's civilisational identity. Celebrations across Maharashtra will not only preserve his legacy but also inspire future generations to uphold constitutional values rooted in mutual respect and justice.

Mains Practice Question:
"Guru Tegh Bahadur's legacy is central to the Indian tradition of protecting religious freedom and human dignity. Discuss the historical and ethical significance of his contributions."

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

SC Orders Sustainable Mining Framework for Aravallis

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Environment, Conservation, Sustainable Development**
- **GS Paper II – Judiciary & Environmental Governance (Landmarks Judgments)**
- **GS Paper I – Geography (Indian Physiography: Aravalli Range)**

Introduction

In a crucial environmental ruling, the Supreme Court has directed the Union Government to formulate a comprehensive **Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM)** for the degraded **Aravalli Range**, one of India's oldest mountain systems. The direction came in connection with the long-standing **T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad case (1995)**, where issues related to forest conservation, ecological degradation, and environmental governance have been repeatedly addressed.

Key Highlights of the Supreme Court Judgment

1. Uniform Definition of the Aravalli Hills and Ranges

The Court accepted the criteria proposed by the **Central Empowered Committee (CEC)** to standardise how Aravalli landforms are identified:

- An **Aravalli Hill**: any landform with a **minimum elevation of 100 metres** in designated districts.
- An **Aravalli Range**: clusters of hills located within **500 metres** proximity to each other.

This uniform classification allows precise mapping and prevents manipulation of definitions to justify mining.

2. Formulation of the Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM)

- The **MoEF&CC** has been tasked with preparing the plan through the **Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)**.
- The plan must:
    - Identify areas where **mining may be permitted**.
    - Declare **ecologically fragile**, **conservation-priority**, and **restoration zones** where mining must be **completely banned**.
    - Use scientific criteria such as slope stability, groundwater vulnerability, and biodiversity value.

The MPSM is intended to integrate ecological safeguards with sustainable mining practices.

3. Moratorium on New Mining Activities

- The Court has imposed a **temporary freeze** on granting or renewing mining leases across all Aravalli states (Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, and Gujarat).
- This moratorium will continue **until the MPSM is finalised and approved**, preventing further degradation of already fragile landscapes.

The Aravalli Range: Ecological and Geographical Significance

1. Geological Background

- The Aravallis are among the **oldest fold mountains in the world (Pre-Cambrian)**.
- They extend across **Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi**, forming one of India's most critical ecological corridors.
- The highest peak is **Guru Shikhar** on **Mount Abu**.

2. Environmental Importance

- Functions as a **green barrier**, restraining the eastward movement of the **Thar Desert** and protecting the fertile **Indo-Gangetic plains**.
- Major **aquifer recharge zone**, crucial for groundwater availability across semi-arid regions.
- Acts as the **watershed** dividing the **Ganga** and **Indus** basins, draining rivers such as **Banas, Luni, and Sahibi**.
- Supports wildlife including **Indian leopards, jackals**, and other species within the **Great Green Wall of Aravalli** ecological corridor.

3. Recent Environmental Initiatives

The **MoEF&CC's Aravalli Green Wall Project** aims to:

- Restore degraded landscapes
- Combat desertification
- Increase green cover
- Enhance biodiversity and overall ecological health

This complements the Court's directions by strengthening long-term ecological security.

Significance of the Judgment

- **Strengthening Environmental Jurisprudence:** The ruling reinforces the Supreme Court's consistent stance on environmental protection, aligning with earlier decisions in the **Godavarman** line of cases.
- **Promoting Sustainable Mining:** The MPSM provides a scientific and regulatory framework to balance economic needs with environmental safety.
- **Protecting Fragile Ecosystems:** Given severe degradation from unregulated mining, the judgment helps ensure ecological restoration.
- **Federal and Multi-Stakeholder Governance:** The ruling calls for coordinated action among the Union, states, scientific bodies, and local authorities.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's directive to develop a **Management Plan for Sustainable Mining** marks a turning point in the conservation of the Aravalli Range. By mandating a uniform definition, restricting mining until scientific mapping is completed, and emphasising ecological restoration, the Court has laid

the foundation for a more balanced and sustainable model of resource governance. The ruling underscores that economic activity must respect **ecological limits**, particularly in fragile landscapes central to India's environmental security.

Mains Practice Question:

"The Aravalli Range is ecologically indispensable yet severely degraded. Evaluate the significance of the Supreme Court's recent directions on sustainable mining and their implications for environmental governance."

India Justice Report 2025: Juvenile Justice Gaps

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Governance, Social Justice, Vulnerable Sections**
- **GS Paper II – Statutory Bodies (NCPCR, SCPCR)**
- **GS Paper II – Judiciary & Criminal Justice Reforms**

Introduction

The latest edition of the **India Justice Report (IJR) 2025** has released a specialised study titled **"Juvenile Justice and Children in Conflict with Law"**, marking a decade since the implementation of the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**. The assessment highlights significant structural and functional deficits within the institutions responsible for handling cases involving **children in conflict with law (CCL)** and **children in need of care and protection (CNCP)**.

As a biennial, data-driven index, the India Justice Report evaluates the capacity of state justice systems using government-sourced datasets, giving an objective view of functioning across states and Union Territories.

Key Findings of the Report

1. Uneven Coverage of Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs)

- As of **2023–24**, there were **707 JJBs across 765 districts**.
- Only **18 states and Jammu & Kashmir** achieved full coverage with at least one JJB in every district.
- This results in delayed inquiries, case backlogs, and inconsistent access to justice for children.

2. Escalating Case Backlog

- Between **Nov 2022 and Oct 2023**, JJBs disposed of only **45%** of registered cases.
- Low disposal rates reflect inadequate staffing, insufficient judicial hours, and rising caseloads, impacting timely adjudication.

3. High Dependence on Institution-Based Custody

- Nearly **83%** of children in custodial care were held in **Observation Homes**, pointing to prolonged pending inquiries.
- Over-institutionalisation contradicts the JJ Act's emphasis on **rehabilitation, diversion, and community-based care**.

4. Shortage of Childcare Infrastructure

- **14 states** reported **no Place of Safety**, which is mandated for children involved in serious offences.
- Nationwide, the available facilities include:
  - **319 Observation Homes**
  - **41 Special Homes**
  - **40 Places of Safety**
- The shortage hampers proper segregation, counselling, and reformation.

Major Recommendations of the India Justice Report 2025

1. Build Institutional Capacity of JJBs

- Fill vacancies across essential positions such as **judicial members, social workers, superintendents**, and probation staff.
- Ensure regular training and sensitisation workshops.

2. Deploy Technology as a Force Multiplier

- Introduce unified **digital case management systems**.
- Create interoperable databases that connect **police, JJBs, Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), childcare institutions**, and legal aid authorities.

3. Improve Human Resource Training

- Structured, competency-based training for **police officers, probation officers, JJB members, legal aid lawyers**, and counsellors.

- Focus on child psychology, trauma-informed practices, and rights-based procedures.

4. Regular Independent Evaluations

- Conduct periodic third-party audits by **research institutions, academia, and civil society**, as mandated under **Section 55** of the JJ Act.
- Transparent reviews can strengthen accountability and guide course correction.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 – Key Provisions

1. Objective: Consolidates and amends laws related to:

- **Children in Conflict with Law (CCL)**
- **Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP)**

2. Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs)

- The Act mandates a **JJB in every district** to conduct inquiries into offences involving children.
- Comprises a **Principal Magistrate** and **two social workers**.

3. Monitoring Mechanism

- **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** monitors implementation at the national level.
- **State Commissions (SCPCRs)** oversee implementation in states.

4. Preliminary Assessment for Heinous Offences

- For children **above 16 years** alleged to have committed **heinous offences**, JJBs must conduct a **preliminary assessment** of:
  - Mental and physical capacity
  - Understanding of consequences
  - Circumstances of the offence
- Based on assessment, the case may be transferred to the **Children's Court**, which decides whether the child should be tried as an adult.

Broader Significance

- The findings reveal a persistent gap between **legal intent** and **ground-level implementation**.
- Over-reliance on custody and prolonged inquiries weaken rehabilitative justice.
- Shortage of trained personnel and inadequate infrastructure undermine child-centric jurisprudence.
- Technology-driven reforms and accountability mechanisms are crucial for systemic strengthening.

Conclusion

Ten years after the JJ Act's enactment, the India Justice Report shows that significant progress remains to be made in ensuring **timely, child-sensitive, and rights-based justice**. Addressing infrastructure gaps, improving institutional capacity, and prioritising diversionary and rehabilitative approaches are essential for aligning India's juvenile justice system with constitutional values and global child rights standards.

Mains Practice Question:
"Critically evaluate the gaps in the functioning of India's juvenile justice system as highlighted by the India Justice Report 2025. Suggest reforms to ensure a more child-centric justice framework."

UNFCCC COP31: Türkiye to Host, Australia to Lead

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Environment (Climate Negotiations, UNFCCC)**
- **GS Paper II – International Relations (Multilateral Institutions)**

About COP31

Türkiye has been selected as the host for the **UNFCCC COP31**, while **Australia will preside over the conference**.

About COP (Conference of the Parties)

- COP is the **supreme decision-making body** under the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.
- Held **annually**, COP meetings review implementation, assess climate action, and refine pathways to reduce emissions.
- One of its core responsibilities is reviewing **National Communications** and **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** submitted by Parties.

- **COP1** was held in **Berlin, 1995**, marking the start of formal global climate negotiations.

Conclusion

COP31 will be pivotal as nations accelerate efforts toward mid-century decarbonisation and climate finance expansion.

Mains Practice Question:

"Discuss the significance of COP meetings under the UNFCCC framework and evaluate the role of COP31 in strengthening global climate commitments."

Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Climate Change, International Mechanisms**
- **GS Paper II – IR (India–Japan Cooperation)**

About JCM

- Initiated by **Japan in 2013** to promote **low-carbon technologies** in partner countries through **bilateral crediting arrangements**.
- Supports GHG emission reductions via Japanese investments.
- Now includes **31 partner countries** with **280+ projects** globally.

India–Japan Collaboration

Focus areas include:

- Renewable energy & storage
- Green hydrogen/ammonia
- Sustainable aviation fuels
- Biogas projects
- Hard-to-abate sectors

UNFCCC Link

Works under **Paris Agreement Article 6**, enabling transparent **credit sharing** and mobilisation of climate finance.

Conclusion

The JCM represents a scalable model for climate finance aligned with equity and technology diffusion.

Mains Practice Question:

"Discuss the importance of the Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM) in promoting technology-driven global climate action, with reference to India–Japan cooperation."

Global Mutirão – A COP30 Collective Climate Mobilisation

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Environment, Climate Governance**
- **GS Paper II – International Relations (COP Negotiations)**

About Global Mutirão

Unveiled at **COP30 in Brazil**, the initiative draws inspiration from the **Brazilian Indigenous concept of "mutirão"**, meaning community-driven collective labour.

Objectives

- Present climate action as a **shared societal mission**, aligned with the **1.5°C target**.
- Mobilise **governments, businesses, cities, and civil society**.
- Accelerate finance, technology deployment, and implementation of NDCs.

Key Platform

- Uses the **Maloca digital hub** to connect local climate action with global goals and enhance inclusiveness.

Conclusion

Global Mutirão reimagines climate action as a grassroots-driven, participatory movement rather than a purely governmental process.

Mains Practice Question:
"Explain the concept of Global Mutirão launched at COP30 and assess its potential to strengthen global climate mobilisation."

Global Methane Status Report 2025

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Environment (Climate Change, Air Pollution, Methane Emissions)**
- **GS Paper II – International Agreements & Climate Governance**

Introduction

The **Global Methane Status Report 2025**, jointly published by the **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** and the **Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)**, offers a comprehensive review of global progress since the launch of the **Global Methane Pledge (GMP)**. The report underscores that methane levels continue to rise at an alarming pace despite international commitments—intensifying climate risks, harming public health, and threatening agricultural productivity.

Key Findings of the Report

1. Methane Concentrations Have Soared

- Atmospheric methane levels have **more than doubled since pre-industrial times**.
- Total global emissions reached approximately **352 million tonnes (Mt)** per year in **2020**.
- Projections indicate a **5% increase by 2030**, signalling inadequate mitigation action.

Given methane's **86 times stronger warming effect than CO_2 over a 20-year period**, this rise poses significant planetary risks.

2. Human and Agricultural Impacts

If methane emissions continue to rise at current rates, by **2030** the world will witness:

- **24,000 additional premature deaths** annually
- **2.5 million tonnes of crop losses**, hurting food security and rural livelihoods

Methane also contributes to ozone formation at ground level, exacerbating respiratory illnesses.

3. India's Methane Emissions Profile

- India is the **third-largest methane emitter worldwide**, following China and the United States.
- Emits roughly **31 million tonnes per year**.
- A major contributor in India is **stubble burning**, alongside livestock digestion, rice cultivation, and waste management.

This is critical because methane reductions can deliver **immediate climate benefits**, given its shorter atmospheric lifetime.

Understanding Methane (CH_4)

Methane is a **short-lived climate pollutant** with:

- High global warming potential
- Major sources including agriculture, fossil fuel operations, waste, and biomass burning

Because it remains in the atmosphere for only about 12 years, cutting methane offers **rapid climate cooling advantages**.

Global Initiatives to Address Methane Pollution

1. Global Methane Pledge (GMP)

- **Voluntary** commitment aiming to reduce global methane emissions by **30% from 2020 levels by 2030**.
- Launched during **COP26 (Glasgow, 2021)**.
- Jointly driven by the **CCAC** and various international partners.

- **India is not a signatory**, citing development priorities and agricultural sensitivities.

2. International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO)

- Led by **UNEP**, IMEO collects high-quality methane emissions data from satellites, industries, and independent scientific studies.
- Helps improve transparency and accuracy in reporting.

India's Domestic Efforts to Reduce Methane

Despite not joining GMP, India has introduced targeted interventions across agriculture:

1. National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)

- Encourages climate-smart practices to reduce methane emissions in agriculture.

2. Technologies for Methane Reduction in Rice Cultivation

- **System of Rice Intensification (SRI)**: Reduces waterlogging, thereby cutting methane generation.
- **Direct Seeded Rice (DSR)**: Avoids continuous standing water, lowering anaerobic conditions.
- **Crop Diversification Programmes**: Reduce reliance on paddy cultivation in water-stressed regions.

These approaches align with India's broader climate commitments under its **NDCs**.

Conclusion

The Global Methane Status Report 2025 reinforces that methane mitigation is indispensable for achieving near-term climate stability and protecting global public health. For India, significant opportunities exist in agriculture, waste management, and energy systems to reduce methane emissions without compromising development targets. Strengthening domestic initiatives while collaborating with global scientific platforms can help accelerate progress toward a more sustainable future.

Mains Practice Question:
"Methane reduction offers one of the fastest pathways to slow global warming. Analyse the key findings of the Global Methane Status Report 2025 and evaluate India's policy measures for methane mitigation."

Humpback Dolphins in Ashtamudi Lake: New Behavioural Insights

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Biodiversity, Conservation, Marine Ecology**

About Humpback Dolphins

Found in **shallow coastal waters** of Asia, Africa, and Australia.

Indian Genetic Variants

- **Indian Ocean humpback dolphin (Sousa plumbea)** – *IUCN: Endangered*
- **Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin (Sousa chinensis)** – *IUCN: Vulnerable*

Other River Dolphins in India

- **Gangetic River Dolphin** – *Endangered*
- **Indus River Dolphin** – *Endangered (small population in Punjab's Beas)*

New Insights

A recent study documented unique cooperation and interactions between wild dolphins and **traditional fishers** in **Ashtamudi Lake, Kerala**, offering insights for co-managed conservation.

Conclusion

Understanding such behaviour is key to designing community-inclusive conservation strategies.

Mains Practice Question:
"Examine the conservation challenges faced by humpback dolphins in India and the role of community participation."

Himalayan Black Bear: Rising Human–Wildlife Conflicts

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Biodiversity, Environment, Climate Change**

About the Species

- Also known as the **Asiatic Black Bear** or **Moon Bear** due to the crescent-shaped white patch on its chest.
- Typically nocturnal and solitary; lifespan **15–25 years**.
- Found in **broad-leaved and coniferous forests** across the Himalayas (India, China, Tibet, Bhutan).

Conservation Status

- **IUCN:** Vulnerable
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

Threats

- Climate change altering habitat and food availability
- Poaching for **bile extraction**
- Habitat fragmentation
- Increase in human–bear encounters

Conclusion

Rising attacks in Uttarakhand reflect ecological stress and necessitate improved habitat management and conflict mitigation.

Mains Practice Question:
"Analyse the impact of climate change on Himalayan wildlife with reference to the Himalayan Black Bear."

SC Recalls Ban on Ex-Post Facto Environmental Clearances

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Environment (EIA, Environmental Clearance, Judicial Interventions)**
- **GS Paper II – Polity & Governance (Judiciary, Precedent, Separation of Powers)**

Introduction

The Supreme Court has **recalled its earlier Vanashakti judgment**, which had categorically barred the grant of **ex-post facto environmental clearances (ECs)**.
The Court acknowledged that the earlier decision was rendered **per incuriam**—meaning it overlooked binding judicial precedents delivered by coordinate benches.
This reconsideration has major implications for environmental governance, economic viability, and legal clarity surrounding ECs.

Background: The Vanashakti Judgment

The **Vanashakti ruling** had invalidated:

- The **2017 notification**, and
- The **2021 Office Memorandum (OM)**

Both of which, in effect, recognised the possibility of granting **post-facto environmental clearance** to projects that had commenced operations without obtaining prior EC.

The judgment had held that post-facto approvals violate the very purpose of the **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** regime, which mandates prior assessment.

Why Did the Supreme Court Recall the Judgment?

1. Per Incuriam: Ignoring Binding Precedents: The CJI emphasised that the earlier ruling failed to consider several important judgments:

a. D. Swamy vs Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (2021): Held that **post-facto EC can be granted in exceptional circumstances** and is not entirely impermissible.

b. Alembic Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (2020): While discouraging post-facto ECs, the Court:

- Recognised their existence in certain cases
- Regularised several projects
- Imposed **monetary penalties**

Thus, Vanashakti contradicted existing jurisprudence by imposing a total prohibition.

2. Economic and Environmental Consequences

A blanket ban would have resulted in:

- **Demolition of completed public projects**, including infrastructure critical for development
- Higher **environmental costs**, since demolishing large structures generates:
    - Construction debris
    - Dust and particulate emissions
    - Additional emissions from reconstruction

The Court noted that environmental protection cannot be blind to **practical realities** and must ensure **proportionate and balanced outcomes**.

What Are Ex-Post Facto Environmental Clearances?

An **ex-post facto EC** authorises a project *after it has already begun operations*, rather than before construction begins.

Conflict with the EIA Framework

- The **EIA Notification (2006)** explicitly mandates **prior EC**, without which initiation of a project is illegal.
- Post-facto approvals undermine the principle of **preventive environmental oversight**.

Previous Judicial Position

- In **Common Cause v. Union of India (2017)**, the SC had held that post-facto ECs are "**alien to environmental jurisprudence**."
- However, later cases allowed exceptions for the sake of **equity, proportionality, and economic considerations**.

Environmental Clearance (EC) Framework in India

1. What Needs EC?

Projects with significant environmental impacts—mining, thermal power plants, waste-to-energy, infrastructure corridors etc.—require prior EC.

Over **39 categories** of activities are listed under the EIA Notification, 2006.

2. Categorization

- **Category A**: Appraised at the **Central level** (MoEF&CC)
- **Category B**: Evaluated at the **State/UT level**, by the **SEIAA**

3. Purpose of EC

- Assess environmental risks
- Prescribe mitigation measures
- Ensure public consultation and transparency
- Monitor compliance through periodic reporting

Implications of the Recall

1. Legal Clarity Restored: Conflicting precedents have been harmonised, ensuring consistent application of environmental law.

2. Balanced Environmental Governance: The Court reinforced the view that:

- **Prior EC remains the rule**
- **Post-facto EC is permissible only in exceptional circumstances**
- Violations cannot be allowed to become routine, but harsh remedies like demolition require careful evaluation.

3. Protection of Public Projects

Critical infrastructure projects already completed will not face immediate demolition if compliance gaps are rectifiable.

4. Strengthening Regulatory Compliance

While ex-post clearances remain possible, they must be coupled with:

- **Penalties**
- **Environmental compensation**
- **Strict monitoring**

to ensure accountability.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's recall of the Vanashakti judgment reflects a nuanced attempt to reconcile **environmental protection with developmental imperatives**.
By acknowledging judicial precedent and considering economic and ecological implications, the Court has opted for a **balanced, legally consistent, and pragmatic approach**. The ruling reinforces the principle that prior environmental clearance must remain central, yet allows flexibility in rare and exceptional cases to avoid disproportionate outcomes.

Mains Practice Question:
"Ex-post facto environmental clearances challenge the preventive nature of India's environmental laws. Critically analyse the Supreme Court's reasoning in recalling the Vanashakti judgment."

Climate Change Performance Index 2025: India's Ranking

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Environment (Climate Change, Global Indices, Mitigation Efforts)**
- **GS Paper II – International Relations (Climate Negotiations)**

Introduction

The latest **Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)** assesses climate mitigation performance across 63 countries and the European Union, representing over 90% of global GHG emissions.

About CCPI

- Published by **Germanwatch**, **NewClimate Institute**, and **Climate Action Network (CAN)**.
- Evaluates performance across **four parameters**:
    - GHG Emissions
    - Renewable Energy
    - Energy Use
    - Climate Policy

Global Findings

- Top three ranks remain unfilled, signalling that no country is yet on a pathway compatible with the **1.5°C goal**.
- Denmark, UK, and Morocco occupy the next highest positions.

India's Performance

- India ranked **23rd**, dropping from a *high performer* to a *medium performer*.
- Concerns include:
    - Lack of a **coal phase-out timeline**
    - Ongoing auctions of new coal blocks
- CCPI recommends shifting fossil fuel subsidies toward **decentralised, community-owned renewable systems**.

Conclusion

India exhibits strong potential in renewables but must accelerate coal reduction to remain aligned with its climate commitments.

Mains Practice Question:
"Evaluate India's performance in the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI). What structural challenges hinder India's transition to a low-carbon economy?"

SC's Directions for Strengthening Tiger Reserve Protection

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Environment (Biodiversity, Conservation, Protected Areas)**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Judicial Directions, Centre–State Coordination)**

Introduction

Responding to the sharp rise in **human–wildlife conflicts (HWCs)**—driven by habitat degradation, unregulated tourism, landscape fragmentation, and loss of ecological corridors—the Supreme Court has issued sweeping directives aimed at enhancing the protection of **tiger reserves** across India. The order seeks to reinforce the ecological integrity of tiger landscapes while ensuring uniformity and accountability in state-level conservation practices.

Key Directions Issued by the Supreme Court

1. Strict Limits on Tiger Safaris

- Tiger safaris may be established **only in non-forest or degraded forest areas located within buffer zones**.
- **No safaris** will be allowed in:
    - **Core/critical tiger habitats**
    - **Notified tiger corridors**
      This measure aligns with the principle that the inviolate core must remain disturbance-free.

2. Ban on Night Tourism

- All forms of night tourism in **core and critical habitats** must cease.
- The Court emphasised that nocturnal activities distress wildlife, alter movement patterns, and increase conflict risk.

3. Prohibited Commercial and Industrial Activities

Within buffer and fringe regions of tiger reserves, the Court barred:

- **Commercial mining**
- **Polluting industries**
- **Large hydroelectric projects**
- **Low-flying aircraft routes**
- **Extraction of commercial firewood**
- **Introduction of exotic species**
  These activities undermine habitat stability and fragment ecological connectivity.

4. Mandatory Notification of Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs)

- All tiger reserves must have ESZs formally notified by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, based on state submissions.
- ESZs serve as ecological buffers that regulate high-impact activities around protected areas.

5. Preparation and Revision of Tiger Conservation Plans (TCPs)

- States must prepare or update **Tiger Conservation Plans** within stipulated timelines.
- Both **core** and **buffer zones** must be notified within six months.
- TCPs must incorporate landscape-level corridor protection, prey–predator balance, and community engagement frameworks.

6. Human–Wildlife Conflict as a Natural Disaster

- States must classify HWCs as a **natural disaster**, enabling quicker relief through disaster management funds.
- This ensures rapid compensation, conflict mitigation, and support to affected communities.

7. Uniform Compensation Norms

- The Court mandated a **₹10 lakh ex-gratia** for each human fatality resulting from human–wildlife conflict, standardising relief across India.

8. Draft HWC Mitigation Guidelines

- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** must prepare draft guidelines on HWC mitigation within six months.
- These guidelines will be binding on all states once approved.

Understanding Tiger Reserves in India

Legal and Institutional Framework

- Tiger reserves are notified under **Project Tiger (1973)** and governed by the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**, a statutory body, evaluates proposals and grants final approval.

Structure of a Tiger Reserve

1. Core Area (Critical Habitat)

- Inviolable
- No tourism or commercial activity permitted
- Managed exclusively for conservation and ecological recovery

2. Buffer Area (Peripheral Habitat)

- A sustainable-use zone
- Regulated tourism
- Community-oriented eco-development activities permitted

Current Status: India has **58 tiger reserves**, forming a network of critical habitats across major forested landscapes.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's directives reinforce the ecological sanctity of tiger landscapes by addressing long-standing governance gaps in tourism regulation, habitat fragmentation, and conflict management.
By mandating ESZ notification, strengthening TCPs, standardizing compensation, and elevating HWC to the category of a natural disaster, the Court aims to safeguard both wildlife and vulnerable communities.
The judgment underscores the constitutional and ecological imperative of protecting **India's apex predator** and its habitats, a cornerstone of India's biodiversity strategy.

Mains Practice Question:
"Human–wildlife conflict has emerged as a major conservation challenge in India. Evaluate the Supreme Court's recent directives on tiger reserves and their significance for biodiversity protection and community welfare."

NMCG Approves New Research for Ganga Basin

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Environment (River Conservation, Pollution Control, Sustainable Water Resources)**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Intergovernmental Coordination, Institutional Frameworks)**
- **GS Paper I – Geography (River Systems, Hydrology)**

Introduction

The Executive Committee of the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** has sanctioned a wide range of research-based projects to strengthen **scientific river management**, marking a major shift toward data-driven rejuvenation of the Ganga. The emphasis is on integrating advanced technologies—such as digital twins, glacier monitoring, SONAR-based mapping, and geospatial databases—with hydrological planning across the entire Ganga basin.

Research Projects Approved by NMCG

The newly approved set of scientific projects is designed to enhance hydrological understanding, support real-time planning, and improve long-term river management. Major components include:

1. Monitoring Himalayan Ganga Headstream Glaciers

- Glaciers forming the headwaters of the Ganga are critical to perennial flow.
- Monitoring will improve predictions of meltwater patterns, climate impacts, and associated risks such as GLOFs.

2. Development of a Digital Twin for the Ganga

- A **Digital Twin** is a virtual real-time simulation of the physical river system.
- It integrates hydrological data, ecological indicators, infrastructure information, and climate modelling.
- Enables real-time decision-making regarding river flow, pollution load, and flood management.

3. High-Resolution SONAR-Based Riverbed Surveys

- SONAR technology provides detailed bathymetry, crucial for navigation planning, sediment management, and identifying erosion hotspots.

4. Managed Aquifer Recharge Through Paleochannels

- Paleochannels (ancient buried river courses) offer high-potential zones for groundwater recharge.
- Projects will explore storage, recharge pathways, and sustainable extraction possibilities.

5. Creation of a Historic Geospatial River Database

- A comprehensive digital archive integrating:
  - Historical maps
  - Satellite imagery
  - River morphology data
  - Land-use trends
- This will help track long-term changes in the Ganga's course, floodplain, and ecosystem.

Understanding River Basin Management (RBM)

River Basin Management refers to the **holistic management of all natural and human systems** connected to a river's waterscape—surface water, groundwater, ecosystems, institutions, and economic activities.

1. Institutional Framework

Effective RBM depends on multi-level governance structures such as:

- **National Ganga Council** (apex body)
- **NMCG**
- **State Ganga Committees**
  These institutions enable coordinated basin-wide planning.

2. Comprehensive Information Systems

A basin-wide information system includes:

- Geospatial databases
- SONAR-based bathymetry
- High-resolution remote sensing
- River health dashboards

Example: NMCG's approval of a **Geospatial River Database** for the Ganga.

3. Basin-Wide Policies and Planning

Typical interventions include:

- Identification of ecological hotspots
- Assessment of future water demand and supply
- Floodplain zoning
- Promotion of water conservation and aquifer recharge techniques

4. Stakeholder Integration

RBM requires coordination across:

- Central and state agencies
- Panchayats and municipalities
- Civil society and academic groups
- Private sector (industry, hydropower, agriculture)
  This ensures ownership and compliance across the entire basin.

5. Performance Monitoring and Indicators

Evaluation metrics include:

- Water quality indicators (BOD, COD, bacterial load)
- Pollution load mapping
- Hydrological stress zones

- River ecology and sediment dynamics
- Institutional and financial capacities
- Community participation

Example: The **Digital Twin** model will provide real-time monitoring of hydrology, pollution, and ecological hazards.

Conclusion

NMCG's adoption of science-driven tools—ranging from digital twins and glacier monitoring to paleochannel-based recharge—marks a transformative step in river governance.
These innovations will deepen hydrological understanding, support adaptive planning, and strengthen long-term sustainability of the Ganga basin.
By embedding river management within a robust institutional and data architecture, India is moving closer to achieving **integrated basin governance**, a global best practice in river rejuvenation.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the importance of scientific tools such as Digital Twin modelling, geospatial databases, and glacier monitoring in strengthening River Basin Management in India."

India's First Leopard Birth-Control Programme

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Environment, Biodiversity, Conservation**
- **GS Paper II – Governance (Wildlife Management)**

Introduction

To address the escalating human–leopard conflict, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has approved **India's first leopard population control programme** in Maharashtra. This marks a pioneering effort in wildlife conflict mitigation.

About Leopards (*Panthera pardus*)

1. Distribution & Ecology

- Found across **India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan**, except deserts and mangrove ecosystems.
- They are the **smallest among the big cats**, highly adaptable, and predominantly **nocturnal**.

2. Behaviour & Diet

- Resting usually on treetops; use ground movement mainly for travel.
- Preyed species include **chital, hog deer, wild boar**, and other small herbivores.

3. Conservation Status

- **IUCN:** Near Threatened
- **CITES:** Appendix I
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I

Significance of the Birth Control Programme

- Aims to reduce conflict in high-density regions.
- Introduces scientific, ethical wildlife management tools.
- Helps maintain ecosystem balance and protects rural communities.

Conclusion

As habitat shrinkage intensifies, India's adoption of controlled reproductive interventions reflects a new phase in **scientific and humane wildlife governance**.

Mains Practice Question:
"Human–wildlife conflict is intensifying across India. Evaluate whether scientific population control measures can serve as long-term solutions."

LeadIT: India's Industry Transition Leadership

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Climate Change, International Cooperation**

Introduction

India addressed the **LeadIT Industry Leaders' Roundtable** during COP30, reaffirming its commitment to decarbonising heavy industries.

About LeadIT

- Launched in **2019** by **India and Sweden**, supported by the **World Economic Forum**.
- Goal: Net-zero emissions in hard-to-abate industries by **2050**.

LeadIT 2.0 (2024–26)

- Focuses on just transitions, resource mobilisation, and knowledge exchange.
- Membership: **18 countries and 27 companies**.

Conclusion

LeadIT strengthens India's leadership in global industrial decarbonisation through collaborative, equitable and innovation-driven pathways.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the role of collaborative initiatives like LeadIT in accelerating global industrial decarbonisation."

National Platform for Climate & Nature Finance

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Environment: Climate Finance, Climate Change Governance**
- **GS Paper II – International Relations: Multilateral Agreements, Global Climate Institutions**

Introduction

At COP30 in Belém, Brazil, India—along with 13 other developing nations and regional blocs—announced a coordinated effort to create **national and regional platforms dedicated to climate and nature finance**. The initiative aims to strengthen institutional capacities and provide a unified system for mobilising climate investments, marking a major shift from fragmented project-based climate financing.

About the New Climate and Nature Finance Platform

1. Supported by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Readiness Programme

- The platform will be backed by the **Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme** of the **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**.
- The Readiness Programme provides:
  - Institutional strengthening
  - Governance reforms
  - Policy planning tools
  - Long-term climate action strategies

2. Purpose and Key Features: The platform is designed as a **country-driven strategic mechanism** to translate each nation's climate priorities into **investment-ready programmatic portfolios**, rather than scattered standalone projects.

Its objectives include:

- Developing **coherent climate investment pipelines** aligned with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
- Harmonising coordination among:
  - Public and private actors
  - International and domestic financial institutions
  - Multilateral banks and local communities
- Improving governance around climate finance, ensuring transparency and accountability
- Creating a **long-term systems-based approach** for climate-resilient development

3. Participating Countries and Regional Bodies: Alongside India, the initiative includes nations such as **Cambodia, Colombia**, and regional platforms like the **African Islands States Climate Commission (AISCC)**.

Why This Platform Matters for India

1. **Overcoming Fragmented Financing:** India's current climate funding landscape is dispersed across ministries, schemes, and donors, making coordination difficult.
The unified platform will streamline climate investment and reduce duplication.
2. **Accelerating NDC Implementation:** India needs substantial financing for renewable energy, adaptation projects, carbon sinks, disaster resilience, and nature-based solutions.
3. **Enhancing Private Sector Participation:** The platform will be designed to leverage private finance through risk-sharing instruments, blended finance, and project aggregation.
4. **Supporting Just and Nature-Positive Transitions:** Nature finance—biodiversity restoration, landscape regeneration, blue economy initiatives—will be integrated into climate finance planning.

About the Green Climate Fund (GCF)

1. Overview

- The **world's largest dedicated climate fund**
- Established at **COP16 in Cancun (2010)** under the UNFCCC
- Serves the **Paris Agreement (Article 9)** by supporting developing nations
- HQ: **Songdo, Incheon, South Korea**

2. Mandate

Supports developing countries in pursuing:

- **Low-emission development pathways**
- **Climate-resilient infrastructure and ecosystems**
- Ambitious **NDC targets**

3. Governance

- Managed by a **GCF Board**
- Functions under the guidance of the **UNFCCC COP**

4. Relevance for India

India has already accessed the GCF for renewable energy, disaster management, REDD+ programmes, and climate-resilient agriculture projects.

Conclusion

India's decision to establish a National Platform for Climate and Nature Finance signals a decisive move toward **systematic, high-impact climate financing**.
By aligning domestic priorities with global finance mechanisms, it strengthens India's ability to meet its **NDC commitments**, advance **nature-positive growth**, and engage the private sector in climate resilience.

Mains Practice Question:
"Climate finance in developing countries is often fragmented and insufficient. Critically examine how national platforms supported by the GCF Readiness Programme can strengthen long-term climate action."

IFCCT: Climate–Trade Forum Launched at COP30

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Multilateral Institutions, Global Governance**
- **GS Paper III – Climate Change, Trade Policy**

Introduction

At COP30, countries formally launched the **Integrated Forum on Climate Change and Trade (IFCCT)** to address rising frictions at the interface of climate commitments and global trade rules.

About IFCCT

- **Aim:** Provide a **permanent and politically supported dialogue platform** where nations can deliberate on contentious overlaps between trade policy and climate action.

- **Institutional Position:** Operates **independently** of both the WTO and the UNFCCC.
- **Structure:**
  - Co-chaired by **Brazil** and a partner developed country
  - Open to all UNFCCC parties
- **Mandate Limitations:**
  - Will **not negotiate binding treaties**
  - Will not adjudicate disputes or interpret existing trade/climate agreements
- Functions as a space for consensus-building, best-practice sharing, and addressing emerging tensions such as **CBAMs**, carbon standards, and green subsidies.

Conclusion

IFCCT reflects growing recognition that **climate policies and global trade regimes are now deeply intertwined**, requiring stable and inclusive platforms for cooperative dialogue.

Mains Practice Question:
"Climate policies increasingly intersect with global trade rules. How can platforms like IFCCT help countries navigate these emerging challenges?"

BIOTECHNOLOGY & HEALTH

India's First CRISPR Gene Therapy for Sickle Cell Disease

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Science & Technology (Biotechnology, Genetic Engineering, CRISPR)**
- **GS Paper II – Health (Public Health, Tribal Health, Government Initiatives)**
- **GS Paper I – Society (Vulnerable Communities: Tribal Populations)**

Introduction

India has launched its first **indigenous CRISPR-based gene therapy** for **Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)**, marking a breakthrough in the country's biotechnology landscape.
Named **BIRSA 101**, the therapy honours **Bhagwan Birsa Munda**, the legendary tribal freedom fighter, symbolising a commitment to addressing a disorder that disproportionately affects tribal communities.

The therapy has been developed by the **CSIR–Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB)**, positioning India among the few nations capable of developing frontier gene-editing treatments.

What Is Gene Therapy?

Gene therapy is an advanced biomedical intervention that uses **genetic material** to treat, prevent, or potentially cure disease. It works by:

- **Adding functional copies** of genes that are missing or damaged
- **Replacing defective genes** with healthy versions (therapeutic genes)
- **Editing specific regions** of DNA to correct disease-causing mutations

It represents the frontier of **precision medicine**, offering long-term or permanent solutions to genetic disorders.

Understanding CRISPR Technology

What is CRISPR?

CRISPR stands for **Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats**—a revolutionary genome-editing system adapted from bacterial immune mechanisms.

How CRISPR Works

CRISPR-based editing uses two main components:

1. **Guide RNA (gRNA)**: Custom-designed to recognise and bind to a specific DNA sequence within the genome.
2. **Cas9 Enzyme**: The "molecular scissors" that cut both strands of DNA at the targeted location, enabling insertion, deletion, or replacement of genetic segments.

This precise editing capacity has made CRISPR the preferred platform for producing next-generation genetic therapies.

About Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)

Nature of the Genetic Disorder

- SCD affects **haemoglobin**, the protein responsible for oxygen transport in red blood cells.
- A mutation in the β-globin gene causes RBCs to assume a **rigid, crescent (sickle) shape**.

Impact on Health

- Blockage of blood flow
- Severe pain crises
- Anaemia
- Organ damage
- Increased infection risk

Why It Matters for India

SCD is particularly prevalent among **Scheduled Tribe populations**, with **1 in 86 tribal births** affected. India has one of the world's largest SCD-affected populations, making indigenous therapies economically and socially transformative.

Related Development: enFnCas9 Platform

Another significant advancement involves **enFnCas9**, an **engineered high-fidelity variant** of the CRISPR-Cas9 system, offering superior precision with minimal off-target effects.

Key Highlights

- Developed by **CSIR-IGIB**
- Agreement signed with **Serum Institute of India** to scale therapies for genetic disorders
- enFnCas9 (from *Francisella novicida*) enhances accuracy, making it suitable for human therapeutic applications

This strengthens India's capability to develop affordable gene-editing treatments at scale.

Significance of India's Breakthrough

1. **Scientific Leadership:** The therapy places India among global frontrunners in CRISPR-based therapeutics.
2. **Public Health Impact:** Addresses a critical health burden affecting millions, especially tribal communities.
3. **Self-Reliance in Biotechnology:** Aligns with **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and strengthens national biotech innovation.
4. **Cost-Effective Solutions:** Indigenous development ensures therapies are **more affordable** than expensive international gene treatments.

Conclusion

The launch of **BIRSA 101**, India's first indigenous CRISPR-based therapy for Sickle Cell Disease, marks a transformative step in the nation's genetic medicine journey.
With CRISPR technologies and platforms like **enFnCas9**, India is moving toward a future where genetic disorders can be treated with precision, affordability, and scientific excellence. The development is especially significant for tribal health, signalling both technological achievement and inclusive healthcare.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the significance of India's first indigenous CRISPR-based therapy for Sickle Cell Disease. How can gene-editing technologies shape the future of precision medicine in India?"

Pharmacogenomics: Personalised Medicine Frontier

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Science & Technology (Biotechnology, Precision Medicine)**
- **GS Paper II – Health (Medical Innovation)**

About Pharmacogenomics

Pharmacogenomics combines **genetics** and **pharmacology** to study how an individual's genetic makeup affects drug response.

Purpose & Promise

- Enables personalised treatment by predicting which drugs will be:
  - Effective
  - Ineffective
  - Likely to cause adverse reactions
- Supports the principle of **"right drug, right dose, right patient."**
- Reduces severe drug toxicity and enhances safety.

Challenges

- Limited genetic datasets for diverse populations
- High cost and limited accessibility
- Need for integration into mainstream clinical practice

Conclusion

Pharmacogenomics is central to the future of precision medicine, offering safer and more effective therapies tailored to individual needs.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the role of pharmacogenomics in transforming healthcare. What challenges hinder its widespread adoption in India?"

ICAR's TnpB Genome Editing Breakthrough

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Biotechnology, Agriculture, Genome Editing**

About TnpB

- **Transposons (jumping genes)** move to new locations in the genome.
- **TnpB** is a compact protein (400–500 amino acids) that acts as **molecular scissors**, enabling targeted gene edits similar to **CRISPR–Cas9** or **Cas12a**.

Significance

- Smaller size makes it easier to deliver using **viral vectors**.
- Useful for modifying gene expression for crop improvement, disease resistance, and precision breeding.

Conclusion

ICAR's patent signals India's progress in next-generation genome editing tools beyond classical CRISPR systems.

Mains Practice Question:
"How are transposon-associated proteins like TnpB shaping the next generation of genome editing technologies?"

Global Rise of Ultra-Processed Foods

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Governance, Public Health, Welfare Policies**
- **GS Paper III – Science & Technology, Food Security, and Lifestyle Diseases**
- **GS Paper II – International Reports (Lancet, WHO)**

Introduction

A recent **Lancet global assessment** warns that the escalating consumption of **Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs)** is becoming a major driver of **obesity, diabetes, and chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** worldwide. The study highlights how UPF consumption is reshaping dietary patterns, worsening health inequalities, and imposing heavy socio-economic costs. India too is witnessing a rapid rise in UPF intake, making the issue a critical public health concern.

India's UPF Scenario: Key Findings

- **UPF consumption has surged 40-fold in India between 2006 and 2019**, indicating a drastic shift from traditional diets to industrially processed foods.

- During the same period, **obesity nearly doubled among both men and women**, signalling dietary and lifestyle transitions.
- The trend mirrors global patterns where aggressive UPF marketing, availability, and affordability drive consumption, particularly among children and urban populations.

These patterns resonate with the ideas of nutrition scholars like **Barry Popkin**, who describe such transitions as part of the "Nutrition Transition" accompanying globalization and urbanisation.

What Are Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs)?

UPFs are **highly industrially manufactured food products** that undergo multiple stages of processing and include large quantities of:

- **Added fats, sugars, and salts**
- **Artificial flavours, colours, stabilizers, and emulsifiers**
- **Preservatives and synthetic additives**

Common examples include **instant noodles, biscuits, chips, packaged snacks, sugary aerated drinks**, and fast foods engineered for **hyper-palatability**—making them addictive, energy-dense, and nutrient-poor.

Health Impacts

Regular consumption of UPFs is strongly associated with:

- **Hypertension and cardiovascular diseases**
- **Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease**
- **Type-2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome**
- **Obesity and renal disorders**
- Increased inflammation and gut microbiome imbalance

Drivers Behind the Surge in UPF Consumption

1. Aggressive and Targeted Marketing

- Corporations invest heavily in advertising, especially on **social media**, influencing children, adolescents, and low-income groups.
- Digital algorithms personalise ads, creating continuous demand.

2. High Corporate Profitability

- UPFs are inexpensive to manufacture and offer high margins due to cheap ingredients and **"hyper-palatable design"** encouraging repeat consumption.

3. Weak and Fragmented Regulatory Standards

- **Loose labelling norms**, minimal restrictions on **junk food advertising**, and unchecked sales in schools and public spaces facilitate UPF penetration.

4. Lifestyle Changes in Urban India

- Busy schedules, lack of cooking time, and wide availability of ready-to-eat foods make UPFs the default choice.
- Rapid expansion of e-commerce and food delivery apps increases accessibility.

These factors reflect broader structural shifts noted by WHO in its analysis of global dietary transitions.

Indian Government Initiatives to Curb UPF Consumption

1. **Eat Right India (FSSAI):** A nationwide movement promoting **safe, nutritious, and sustainable food choices**, encouraging reduced intake of harmful ingredients.
2. **Trans Fatty Acid (TFA) Restrictions:** FSSAI has capped TFAs at **2% of total oils and fats**, aligning with WHO's REPLACE initiative to eliminate industrial TFAs.
3. **High Taxation on Sugary Drinks:** All aerated sugary and flavoured beverages attract **40% GST**, aimed at discouraging high-sugar consumption.
4. **Revised Dietary Guidelines (2024):** The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** updated guidelines emphasising whole foods, reduced sugar intake, and minimal reliance on UPFs.

Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Control Over UPFs

1. Differential Taxation on UPFs

- Implement higher taxes on heavily processed items.
- Use revenue to subsidise fruits, vegetables, millets, and healthier alternatives.

2. Stronger Regulation of Corporate Practices

- Move beyond voluntary compliance; enforce **mandatory rules on advertising, product placement, and marketing to minors**.
- Strengthen competition oversight to limit excessive corporate influence in nutrition policymaking.

3. Front-of-Pack Warning Labels

- Clear visual warnings indicating "**High in Salt/Sugar/Fat**" to empower consumer decision-making.
- Successful models: Chile, Brazil, and Mexico.

4. Restrict UPFs in Public Institutions

- Ban sale of highly processed foods in **schools, hospitals, childcare homes, and government facilities**.
- Promote nutritious alternatives like fruits, millets, and traditional Indian snacks.

Conclusion

The Lancet's warning on UPFs underscores a pressing global health crisis. As India undergoes rapid urban and dietary transitions, unchecked consumption of ultra-processed products threatens to deepen NCD burdens and widen health inequities. The way forward lies in **balancing public health with economic interests**, strengthening regulatory oversight, promoting dietary literacy, and building healthier food systems. A proactive, multi-sectoral strategy can help mitigate the growing UPF-driven disease load.

Mains Practice Question:
"Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs) are emerging as a silent driver of obesity and lifestyle diseases. Discuss the factors behind rising UPF consumption in India and evaluate the policy measures required to address this growing public health challenge."

Naegleria fowleri: The Brain-Eating Amoeba

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Health (Disease Surveillance, Public Health)**
- **GS Paper III – Science & Technology (Microbiology)**

About the Amoeba

Naegleria fowleri is a free-living amoeba found in **warm freshwater bodies** such as lakes, rivers, hot springs, and soil. Infection leads to **Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM)**, a devastating central nervous system disease with a very high fatality rate.

Transmission

- Infection occurs when **contaminated water enters the nose**, allowing amoeba to travel to the brain.
- It **does not spread** through person-to-person contact or by drinking polluted water.

Recent Context

Karnataka issued advisories after confirmed cases in Kerala, emphasising water safety and public awareness.

Conclusion

The organism's presence in warming freshwater environments highlights rising climate-linked disease risks.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the public health implications of Naegleria fowleri infections in India and outline strategies to strengthen surveillance of emerging waterborne pathogens."

NAP-AMR 2.0: India's New Plan Against Antimicrobial Resistance

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Health, Governance, Disease Control, International Health Regulations**
- **GS Paper III – Science & Technology (Biotechnology, Public Health), Economic Impacts of Diseases**

Introduction

India has unveiled the **second phase of the National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR 2.0)** for the period **2025–2029**, marking a renewed national commitment to combating the rapidly escalating challenge of AMR. The upgraded framework builds on insights from the **first National Action Plan (2017–2021)** and is aligned closely with the **WHO Global Action Plan on AMR**, ensuring global coherence and domestic accountability.

What is NAP-AMR 2.0?

NAP-AMR 2.0 introduces a coordinated, multi-sectoral strategy involving **health, livestock, fisheries, agriculture, environment, pharmaceuticals, and the private sector**, with actionable deliverables, timelines, and budgetary provisions.

Key Pillars of NAP-AMR 2.0

1. Strengthening Ownership & Inter-Sectoral Coordination

- Clarifies responsibilities of each ministry/department.
- Establishes formal mechanisms for cross-sector collaboration, crucial for a **One Health** approach that connects human, animal, and environmental health.

2. Enhancing Laboratory and Surveillance Capacity

- Expands microbiology labs and diagnostic networks to improve detection of resistant organisms.
- Strengthens infection prevention and control systems in hospitals to reduce dependence on antibiotics.

3. Engaging Private Healthcare and Industry

- Since a major portion of healthcare in India is private, the plan mandates stronger participation from private facilities.
- Encourages pharmaceutical stewardship, rational antibiotic production, and responsible disposal of antibiotic waste.

4. Monitoring, Timelines & Budget Integration

- Each ministry has an **action matrix** with clear milestones, indicators, and financial allocations for accountability and progress tracking.

Understanding Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

AMR arises when microbes—bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites—develop the ability to **survive exposure to drugs** meant to eliminate them.

How AMR develops

- Overuse and misuse of antibiotics
- Poor infection control in hospitals
- Excessive use of antimicrobials in livestock, aquaculture, and agriculture
- Environmental contamination from pharmaceutical waste

Impact of AMR: A Multi-Dimensional Threat

1. A Major Global Health Crisis

- AMR is associated with **4.95 million deaths annually** worldwide.
- **1.27 million deaths** are directly attributable to resistant infections.

2. Escalating Healthcare Burden

- Treatment failures lead to prolonged illnesses, repeat hospital admissions, and higher medical expenses.
- Families bear catastrophic health expenditures, pushing vulnerable households into poverty.

3. Economic and Productivity Losses

- AMR reduces labour productivity due to illness and long recovery periods.
- Impacts national economic growth, global trade, and healthcare financing.

4. Worsening Treatment Delays

- Ineffective antimicrobials force clinicians to rely on second- or third-line drugs, delaying effective treatment and increasing toxicity risks.

5. Threats Beyond Human Health

- **Food production:** Resistance affects livestock and aquaculture, creating food safety risks.
- **Medical procedures:** Surgeries, chemotherapy, organ transplants, and neonatal care depend on effective antimicrobials.
- **Reversal of medical progress:** AMR threatens to undo decades of advancements in modern medicine.

Conclusion

NAP-AMR 2.0 represents India's strengthened commitment to addressing one of the most serious global health and development challenges of the 21st century. By improving coordination, enhancing surveillance, engaging the private sector, and adopting a **One Health** approach, India aims to slow the spread of resistance, safeguard public health, and protect the achievements of modern medicine.

Mains Practice Question:
"Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) poses a severe threat to global health and development. Discuss the major strategies outlined in India's National Action Plan on AMR 2.0 and evaluate their potential effectiveness."

Precision Biotherapeutics: New Era of Personalised Care

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Science & Tech (Biotechnology, Genomics)**
- **GS Paper II – Health Sector**

Introduction

The Department of Biotechnology has identified **Precision Biotherapeutics** as a priority pillar under the **BioE³ Policy**, signalling India's focus on advanced bio-innovation.

What Are Precision Biotherapeutics?

They refer to **biological therapies tailored to an individual's genetic, environmental, and lifestyle attributes**, creating highly targeted treatment pathways.

Key Technologies

- **Gene editing platforms**
- **mRNA therapeutics**
- **Monoclonal antibodies**
- **Personalised cell-based therapies**

Advantages

- Higher therapeutic efficacy
- Reduced adverse reactions
- Potential solutions for **rare diseases, cancers, autoimmune disorders**

Conclusion

Precision biotherapeutics represent a transformative paradigm toward **precision healthcare**, positioning India at the cusp of next-generation medical innovation.

Mains Practice Question:
"Explain how precision biotherapeutics can redefine healthcare delivery in India. Discuss opportunities and regulatory challenges."

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ISRO Tests CE20 Cryogenic Engine in Vacuum Mode

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper III – Science & Technology (Space Technology, Cryogenics, ISRO Achievements)**
- **GS Paper III – Indigenisation of Technology & Strategic Capabilities**

Introduction

ISRO has carried out a **boot-strap mode start test of the CE20 cryogenic engine** under simulated vacuum conditions—an achievement marking a major leap in India's cryogenic propulsion capabilities. For the first time globally, a **gas-generator cycle cryogenic engine has been initiated without any auxiliary start-up system**, enhancing **restart capability** and **mission flexibility** for future **LVM3** missions.

This advancement also eliminates the need for additional **start-up gas bottles**, which previously reduced payload capacity.

What Are Cryogenic Engines?

Cryogenic engines are used in the **upper stages of launch vehicles** and function using extremely low-temperature propellants.

Key Features

- Operate with **Liquid Hydrogen (LH2)** as fuel and **Liquid Oxygen (LOX)** as oxidiser
- Temperatures often drop below **–150°C**, the domain of **cryogenics**
- Provide much **higher specific impulse**, making them more efficient than solid or earth-storable liquid propellants

Cryogenic propulsion is critical for heavy-lift rockets as it allows larger payload placement into **GTO (Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit)**.

About CE20 Cryogenic Engine

Overview

- Developed by ISRO's **Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC)**, Valiamala, Kerala
- India's **largest cryogenic engine** currently in operation
- Powers the **C25 upper stage** of the **LVM3** launch vehicle
- Has been fully **qualified for Gaganyaan missions**

Significance of Boot-Strap Mode Test

- Demonstrates capability to **restart** in space without external systems
- Enhances versatility for missions requiring orbital manoeuvres
- Reduces dead weight, increasing payload capacity
- Critical for complex missions such as **deep-space exploration**, **interplanetary missions**, and **human spaceflight**

About LVM3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-III)

The **LVM3** is ISRO's most powerful operational rocket and the mainstay for heavy payload missions.

Key Characteristics

- Designed to launch **4,000 kg** class satellites into GTO
- Three-stage configuration:

1. S200 Solid Booster Strap-Ons

- Provide high thrust during initial launch phase
- Two large solid propellant motors

2. L110 Liquid Core Stage

- ISRO's largest liquid stage

- Powered by **twin Vikas engines**
- Recently, **Godrej Enterprises delivered the first human-rated L110 stage** for the Gaganyaan programme

3. C25 Cryogenic Upper Stage

- Powered by the **CE20 cryogenic engine**
- Crucial for high-efficiency GTO insertion

Why This Advancement Matters

1. Improved Mission Flexibility

Restart capability allows:

- Orbital adjustments
- Multi-burn manoeuvres
- Deployment of satellites in varied orbits

2. Enhanced Payload Capacity: Removing auxiliary start-up hardware saves mass, enabling higher payloads.

3. Indigenous Technological Maturity: Strengthens India's standing in global launch markets and reduces dependence on foreign cryogenic technology.

4. Boost for Human Spaceflight: CE20 and L110 upgrades directly support the **Gaganyaan** programme.

Conclusion

The successful boot-strap mode start test of the **CE20 cryogenic engine** marks a pivotal achievement for India's space programme. By eliminating auxiliary ignition hardware and enabling in-orbit restart capabilities, ISRO has significantly expanded the operational flexibility of the **LVM3**. This advancement not only strengthens strategic missions such as **Gaganyaan** but also positions India as a leading innovator in advanced cryogenic propulsion.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the significance of ISRO's boot-strap mode start test of the CE20 cryogenic engine. How will such advancements enhance India's heavy-lift and human spaceflight capabilities?"

Kodaikanal Observatory Reconstructs Solar Magnetic History

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:: GS Paper III – Space, Science & Technology, Solar Physics**

About the Observatory

- Operated by the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA)** under DST.
- Established in **1899** in the Palani Hills.
- Hosts telescopes such as **WARM**, **H-Alpha**, and the **Twin Telescope**.

Scientific Legacy

- Known for discovering the **Evershed Effect (1909)**—a radial outflow of gases in sunspot penumbrae.
- ARIES scientists have recently used century-old solar images to reconstruct historic **polar magnetic field** variations.

Conclusion

This contributes to better prediction of solar cycles, space weather impacts, and geomagnetic disturbances.

Mains Practice Question:
"Discuss the importance of long-term solar observations in understanding space weather and its impact on Earth's technological systems."

Sentinel-6B: Advancing Ocean Monitoring

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Space Technology, Climate Change**

Introduction

The **Sentinel-6B** satellite has been launched aboard a Falcon-9 rocket to enhance global ocean monitoring efforts.

About Sentinel-6B

Joint collaboration of **NASA, NOAA, and the European Space Agency**.

Objectives

- High-precision **sea-level rise measurement**
- Improved **climate modelling**
- Better **storm and flood prediction**

Conclusion

The mission deepens global understanding of climate change impacts, directly supporting international adaptation strategies.

Mains Practice Question:
"How do modern Earth-observation satellites contribute to global climate governance?"

AI as a Catalyst for Governance Reform

📌 **Syllabus Mapping:**

- **GS Paper II – Governance, Transparency, e-Governance**
- **GS Paper III – Science & Technology, AI Applications, Data Governance**

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping public administration by enabling governments to process vast datasets, generate actionable insights, and implement **evidence-driven, citizen-centric policies**.
Its integration into governance frameworks is enhancing transparency, improving service delivery, and enabling predictive decision-making.

Role of AI in Strengthening Governance

1. Evidence-Based Policymaking

- AI systems analyze large and complex datasets to identify patterns, correlations, and policy gaps.
- Helps ministries adopt **data-driven interventions** in areas like health, education, agriculture, and urban development.

2. Transparency and Accountability

- AI-enabled dashboards, automated audits, and anomaly detection systems enhance transparency in public spending, procurement, and welfare delivery.
- Reduces corruption by minimizing human discretion.

3. Efficient Public Service Delivery

- Chatbots and AI-enabled grievance redressal systems provide 24/7 citizen support.
- Automates administrative tasks such as application processing, reducing delays and improving accessibility.

4. Predictive Governance

- AI forecasting models assist in early warning for floods, droughts, disease outbreaks, and crime hotspots.
- Allows governments to shift from reactive to **anticipatory governance**.

5. Targeted Welfare and Social Protection

- AI helps identify eligible beneficiaries, reduce leakages, and monitor welfare outcomes.

- Supports real-time monitoring of schemes like PDS, pensions, and health insurance.

6. Urban Governance & Smart Cities

- Enables intelligent traffic management, pollution monitoring, waste management, and digital urban planning.
- Supports smart grids and energy-efficient systems.

7. Strengthening Regulatory Capacity

- AI tools assist regulators in detecting market abuse, financial fraud, environmental violations, and cyber risks.

Challenges and Ethical Dimensions

- Potential algorithmic bias affecting vulnerable groups
- Data privacy concerns and surveillance risks
- Need for transparent AI systems and strong accountability mechanisms
- Skill gaps in government institutions

(Thinkers like Herbert Simon highlight the importance of **bounded rationality**, and AI helps expand the decision-making capacity of governments by reducing cognitive limitations.)

Conclusion

AI offers governments an unprecedented opportunity to enhance the quality, speed, and fairness of public administration. However, its deployment must be guided by **ethical frameworks, legislative safeguards, and inclusive design principles** to ensure that governance remains transparent, accountable, and citizen-centric.

Mains Practice Question:
"**Artificial Intelligence is transforming governance from reactive administration to predictive policymaking. Discuss the opportunities and ethical challenges associated with AI in public administration.**"

NASA's ESCAPADE Mission to Mars' Magnetosphere

📌 **Syllabus Mapping: GS Paper III – Space Technology, Planetary Science**

Introduction

NASA has launched the **ESCAPADE (Escape and Plasma Acceleration and Dynamics Explorers)** twin spacecraft aboard Blue Origin's **New Glenn** rocket to deepen scientific understanding of Mars' magnetic environment.

About the ESCAPADE Mission

Objective: To examine how **solar wind interacts with Mars' fragmented magnetosphere** and contributes to **atmospheric escape**, a key process behind Mars' transition from a once-habitable planet to its current arid state.

Scientific Context: Mars does not possess a global magnetic field; instead it retains **remnant crustal magnetic fields** and weak atmospheric magnetism.

Orbit Mechanics

- Spacecraft initially placed into a **"loiter orbit"** around **Earth's Lagrange Point 2**.
- **Lagrange Points:** Positions where the gravitational forces of two large bodies (Earth–Sun) balance centripetal forces, allowing spacecraft to remain stable with reduced fuel use.

Conclusion

ESCAPADE will significantly expand understanding of Mars' atmospheric evolution and support future human and robotic missions.

Mains Practice Question:
"**Why is the study of Mars' magnetosphere critical for understanding planetary evolution and future exploration missions?**"