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Weekly EXPECTED CURRENT AFFAIRS

for

IAS EXAMINATION



From

22nd Jun to 27th Jun 2026

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1.1. SOLICITOR GENERAL OF INDIA

Context

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the reappointment of Tushar Mehta as the Solicitor-General (SG) of India for an additional three-year term. Alongside the SG, five Additional Solicitors-General (ASGs) for the Supreme Court were also reappointed for a matching tenure to ensure continuity in the Union government's legal representation before constitutional courts.



Constitutional Status & Evolution

- **Nature of Post:** Unlike the Attorney General (AG), the Solicitor General of India is a **statutory post** governed under the Law Officers (Conditions of Service) Rules.
- **Rank:** The SG acts as the second-highest-ranking law officer in the country and functions subordinate to the AG.
- **Colonial Roots:** The office originated during British rule to represent the interests of the Crown and was appointed by the Governor-General.

Appointment, Tenure & Removal Rules

- **Appointing Authority:** Appointed by the President of India on the explicit recommendation of the Prime Minister-led Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).
- **Qualifications:** Not explicitly detailed in the Constitution or statutory law; however, selection requires a senior advocate with extensive legal practice.
- **Tenure & Location:** Holds office for a **three-year term** and is eligible for reappointment. The official headquarters is located in New Delhi.
- **Exit Mechanism:** The SG can voluntarily resign by addressing a letter to the President or can be removed by the President on government advice due to misconduct, incompetence, or structural policy shifts following a general election.

Primary Legal Duties

- **Advisory & Representation:** Advises the Government of India on critical legal matters and appears in the Supreme Court or High Courts on its behalf.
- **Presidential References:** Represents the Union in the Supreme Court during constitutional references made by the President under Article 143.
- **Institutional Support:** Collaborates closely with and assists the Attorney General while coordinating with various Union ministries to streamline litigation.

Service Limitations & Prohibitions

- **Non-Binding Character:** The legal advice rendered by the SG is strictly advisory and does not bind the executive.
- **Private Practice Ban:** Barred from private practice or representing any private party against the Government of India or Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- **Holding Outside Offices:** Cannot accept outside appointments, join any Ministry/Department, or accept a role in any PSU/statutory body without formal clearance via the Department of Legal Affairs.

The Comparative Matrix: Solicitor General vs. Attorney General

Parameter	Solicitor General of India (SG)	Attorney General for India (AG)
Status	Statutory Post (Subordinate Rank)	Constitutional Post (Article 76)
Hierarchy	Second-highest law officer in the country	Highest law officer in the country
Parliamentary Rights	No right to participate in Parliamentary proceedings	Holds the right to speak and take part in Parliamentary proceedings
Primary Function	Assists the AG and coordinates specific litigation	Oversees broader national legal affairs and advises on vast constitutional issues

Historical Trivia

- **The Pioneer:** C.K. Daphtary was the first Solicitor General of India (appointed in 1950) and remains the longest-serving SG (13 years).
- **The Incumbent:** Tushar Mehta (appointed originally in 2018) holds the distinction of being the second longest-serving Solicitor General of India.

Q. With respect to the Solicitor General of India, consider the following statements:

- The Solicitor General of India is a statutory post subordinate to the Attorney General of India.
- The Solicitor General possesses the right to participate in parliamentary proceedings.
- The Solicitor General is mandated to represent the government in the Supreme Court for references made by the President under Article 143.

- I and II
- I and III
- II and III
- I, II and III

Answer: B

Explanation:

Statement I is correct: The Solicitor General is a **statutory post** established under the **Law Officers (Conditions of Service) Act, 1968**, and functions as the **second-highest-ranking law officer** subordinate to the Attorney General.

Statement II is incorrect: Unlike the Attorney General, the Solicitor General **does not have the right to participate in parliamentary proceedings.**

Statement III is correct: It is a designated duty of the Solicitor General to **represent the government in the Supreme Court** in any reference made by the President under **Article 143.**

1.2. AMENDMENTS TO THE FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION REGULATION ACT (FCRA) RULES

Context

- Recently, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has notified significant changes to the Rules of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010.
- The latest updates place stricter compliance norms on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) seeking or receiving foreign funding, standardizing the disclosure of activities and geographical scopes to enhance transparency.



Key Highlights of the Amended FCRA Rules

- **Categorization of Permitted Activities:** NGOs receiving foreign funds must stick to a legally specified list of activities grouped under five structural categories: **Educational, Economic, Religious, Social, and Cultural.** This is the first time distinct activity lists have been drawn out under each category.
- **Mandatory Comprehensive Disclosures:** NGOs are now required to explicitly disclose their exact activities, geographical outreach, websites, social media accounts, and publications. They must also declare if they or their key functionaries have released any publications (books, magazines, articles) during the year.
- **Decentralized Fee Structure:** Instead of the earlier single-fee structure for FCRA registrants, NGOs must now pay **separate fees** for each category and individual State or Union Territory they choose to operate in.
- **Broadening of 'Key Functionary':** The definition of an NGO's core management has expanded beyond traditional office-bearers and directors. It now captures trustees, partners, the *Karta* or head of a Hindu Undivided Family (HUF), governing body members, and anyone exercising managing control.
- **Restrictions on Foreign Nationals:** Associations that feature foreign nationals (excluding Persons of Indian Origin) as key functionaries will ordinarily be disqualified from obtaining registration or prior permission.
- **Tight Penalty Framework:**
 - Any basic procedural violations will attract a **minimum fine of ₹1 lakh.**
 - Specific violations (such as excess administrative spending, speculative investments, unauthorized use, or utilizing funds in unapproved States/UTs) will attract a fine of **30% of the amount misused or ₹1 lakh, whichever is higher.**

Important Information Regarding FCRA

- **What is it?** The Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) was originally enacted in 1976 during the Emergency. Its primary purpose is to regulate the acceptance and utilization of foreign contributions/hospitality by individuals or associations to ensure that such funds do not adversely affect national security, internal security, or democratic values.
- **Implementing Authority:** The Act is implemented strictly by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**, Government of India. It does *not* fall under the Ministry of Finance.
- **Validity of Registration:** Once granted, FCRA registration is valid for **5 years**. NGOs must apply for renewal within six months before the registration expires.
- **Who CANNOT Receive Foreign Funds?** Under the Act, certain entities are explicitly prohibited from accepting foreign funding. These include:
 - Candidates standing for election.
 - Journalists, columnists, cartoonists, editors, owners, printers, or publishers of a registered newspaper.
 - Judges, government servants, or employees of any corporation controlled or owned by the government.
 - Members of any Legislature (MPs and MLAs) and political parties or their office-bearers.
- **The SBI Account Mandate:** Amendments mandate that all foreign contributions must be received exclusively in a designated "FCRA Account" opened at the **State Bank of India (SBI), Main Branch, New Delhi**. No other bank account can receive these initial inflows, though NGOs can open utilization accounts in other banks later.
- **Cap on Administrative Expenses:** Through recent amendments, the portion of foreign funds that an NGO can utilize for its own administrative expenses has been slashed down to a maximum of **20%** (previously it was 50%).

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA):

1. It is administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
2. Foreign contributions can be freely transferred between registered NGOs.
3. FCRA registration is valid for five years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: B

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is correct:** The Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) is administered strictly by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**, Government of India.

- **Statement 2 is incorrect:** Following the FCRA Amendment Act of 2020, the transfer of foreign contributions from one entity to another is **completely prohibited**. Even if both NGOs are registered under the FCRA, an organization that receives a foreign contribution cannot transfer those funds to any other person or association.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** Once granted, the FCRA registration remains valid for a period of **five years**. NGOs must apply for renewal within six months prior to its expiry to keep it active.

1.3. PHASING OUT PG MEDICAL DIPLOMAS: NMC'S PUSH FOR STANDARDIZATION

Context

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has ordered the gradual discontinuation of two-year postgraduate medical diploma courses by the academic year 2026-27. Starting in 2027-28, specialist medical training across India will be exclusively conducted through three-year MD (Doctor of Medicine) and MS (Master of Surgery) degree programs.



What is the Transition Timeline?

- **Final Admissions:** The 2026-27 academic session will be the last year to admit students into traditional postgraduate diploma courses.
- **Exclusive Degree Training:** From 2027-28 onwards, medical colleges will strictly offer specialist training through MD and MS degree programs.
- **Seat Conversion:** Medical institutions are mandated to convert their existing diploma seats into equivalent degree seats.
- **Nodal Authority:** Colleges must apply for this conversion through the **Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB)**, an autonomous board under the NMC.

Why is the NMC Phasing Out Diplomas?

- **Standardization:** To create a uniform and standardized framework for postgraduate medical education across the country.
- **Quality Enhancement:** To improve the overall quality, depth, and recognition of specialist medical training.
- **Modern Alignment:** To align Indian medical qualifications with current, contemporary educational standards.
- **Resource Optimization:** To ensure better and more efficient utilization of existing infrastructure within medical colleges.

How do Diplomas and Degrees Differ?

- **Duration:** Traditional diplomas (such as those in ENT, ophthalmology, dermatology, tuberculosis, and public health) are typically **two-year** programs, whereas MD and MS degrees require **three years** of comprehensive training.

- **Historical Role:** Diplomas have traditionally provided a quicker educational route, playing a crucial role in rapidly supplying specialist doctors to smaller towns and district-level hospitals.

What is the Potential Rural Health Impact?

- **Supply Concerns:** The shift to exclusively three-year degree programs raises concerns about the future availability of medical specialists in rural areas.
- **Policy Challenge:** Health experts are evaluating whether the conversion to MD/MS will successfully elevate medical quality without simultaneously creating a deficit of specialists outside major urban centers.

Q. With respect to the regulatory framework of medical education in India, consider the following statements:

- I. The National Medical Commission (NMC) operates as a statutory body that utilizes the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) to authorize the conversion of existing medical diploma seats into degree seats.
- II. The mandated transition from two-year medical diplomas to three-year degree programmes is primarily intended to provide a quicker educational route for deploying specialists in rural health facilities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) I only
- (b) II only
- (c) Both I and II
- (d) Neither I nor II

Answer: A

Explanation:

Statement I is correct: The **National Medical Commission (NMC)** is a **statutory body** that regulates medical education through four autonomous boards. The **Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB)** specifically handles institutional assessments, course permissions, and the mandatory **conversion of diploma seats to degree seats**.

Statement II is incorrect: The transition to three-year MD/MS degree programmes is strictly aimed at **standardizing the quality** of specialist training. Historically, it was the **traditional two-year diplomas** that provided a **quicker route** to specialist training and played a crucial role in rapidly supplying doctors to smaller towns and rural district hospitals.

1.4. PASSPORT IS A TRAVEL DOCUMENT, NOT PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP

Context

- A senior official from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) recently clarified that the Indian passport is strictly a **"travel document"** and **not a "citizenship document."** This clarification emerged during the 14th Passport Seva Divas, responding to queries on whether a passport could be used to challenge exclusions from the voter list during Special Intensive Revisions (SIR) of electoral rolls.



Passport: Purpose and Legal Status

- A passport is issued under the **Passports Act, 1967**.
- It facilitates:
 - International travel.
 - Identification of the holder abroad.
 - Consular assistance from Indian missions.
- It is **not equivalent to a citizenship certificate**.

Why Passport is Not Proof of Citizenship?

- Passport issuance involves verification of identity and nationality but is not intended to conclusively establish citizenship status.
- Citizenship determination is governed by:
 - **Citizenship Act, 1955**
 - Relevant rules and government records.
- Citizenship can be established through multiple documents and legal processes, whereas a passport primarily enables travel.

About Passport Seva Divas

- **Date:** Marked annually on **June 24**.
- **E-Passports:** Currently, around **10% of Indian passport holders possess an e-passport**, which features a chip-based secure document system designed to make international travel seamless.
- **Network Coverage:** There are **545 Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs)** across India, practically covering almost every Lok Sabha constituency to ease service delivery.
- **Support Framework: One-stop centres** have been setup to support distressed Indian women in the diaspora, notably in Gulf countries and Singapore.

About e-Passports

- Embedded electronic chip storing biometric and personal data.
- Enhanced security against forgery and tampering.
- Faster immigration clearance.
- Compliant with international standards of the **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)**.

Citizenship: Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Constitutional Provisions: Articles 5–11** deal with citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution and empower Parliament to regulate citizenship matters.
- **Citizenship Act, 1955: Modes of Acquiring Citizenship:**
 - By Birth
 - By Descent
 - By Registration
 - By Naturalization
 - By Incorporation of Territory
- **Modes of Losing Citizenship:**
 - Renunciation
 - Termination
 - Deprivation

Q. With reference to the Indian Passport, consider the following statements:

1. An Indian passport is conclusive proof of Indian citizenship.
2. Passports in India are issued under the Passports Act, 1967.
3. e-Passports contain an embedded electronic chip storing the holder's data.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: A

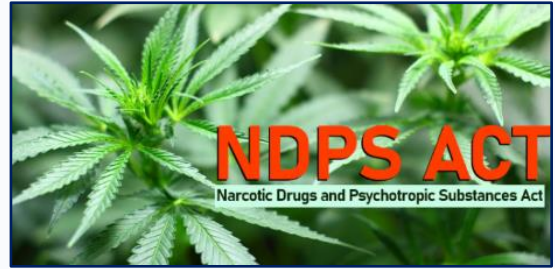
Explanation: B

- **Statement 1 is incorrect:** The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and various Indian courts (such as the Bombay High Court) have explicitly clarified that an Indian passport is primarily a **travel and transit document** to facilitate international movement. It is **not conclusive proof of citizenship**. In fact, under Section 20 of the Passports Act, 1967, the Central Government possesses the statutory authority to issue a passport or travel document to a non-citizen under specific circumstances. Consequently, the mere possession of a passport does not definitively establish absolute citizenship.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** Passports, travel documents, and emergency certificates in India are regulated and issued under the legal framework provided by the **Passports Act, 1967**.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** India's upgraded **e-Passports** feature an embedded electronic microprocessor chip (typically utilizing Radio Frequency Identification or RFID technology) alongside an antenna. This chip securely stores the passport holder's demographic particulars, digital signature, and biometric data (such as fingerprints and facial recognition) to safeguard against forgery and streamline global immigration clearance.

1.5. AMENDMENTS TO THE NDPS ACT

Context

- The Union Government has announced that the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985** will be amended to address emerging challenges in drug trafficking. The proposed amendments aim to strengthen legal provisions, improve inter-agency coordination, and adopt a technology-driven approach to dismantle drug trafficking networks rather than targeting only individual offenders.



The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985

- The **NDPS Act, 1985** is the principal legislation governing the control of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in India.
- NDPS Act, 1985 is administered by the **Ministry of Finance** (Department of Revenue).
- It prohibits the production, manufacture, possession, sale, purchase, transport, storage, consumption, import, and export of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, except for medical and scientific purposes.
- The Act also provides stringent punishments for drug-related offences and empowers enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute offenders.

Objectives of the Act

- Prevent illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs.
- Regulate the legitimate use of narcotic and psychotropic substances.
- Fulfil India's obligations under international drug control conventions.
- Combat organized drug-related crimes.

What are the Proposed Amendments?

According to the Government, the amendments will focus on:

- Closing legal loopholes exploited by drug trafficking syndicates.
- Shifting investigations from targeting individual offenders to dismantling entire drug networks.
- Greater use of **technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and data analytics** in investigations.
- Strengthening coordination among Central and State enforcement agencies.
- Enhancing international cooperation against cross-border drug trafficking.

Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)

- The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** is India's apex drug law enforcement agency.

Key Facts

- **Established:** 1986
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Legal Basis:** Constituted under the **NDPS Act, 1985**

- **Functions**

- Enforces the provisions of the NDPS Act.
- Coordinates anti-narcotics operations among Central and State agencies.
- Collects and shares intelligence on drug trafficking.
- Investigates major narcotics cases, especially those involving interstate and international syndicates.
- Coordinates with international organizations to combat transnational drug crimes.

International Conventions Related to Drug Control

India is a signatory to the three major United Nations conventions on narcotic drugs:

- **Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971**
- **United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.**
- To target drug traffickers and gangsters operating from abroad, Indian agencies will utilize **Red Corner Notices** through the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which acts as the National Central Bureau for Interpol in India.

Drug Trafficking in India

- India is geographically located between the **Golden Crescent** and the **Golden Triangle**, making it particularly vulnerable to illicit drug trafficking.
- **Golden Crescent;** The Golden Crescent comprises:
 - Afghanistan
 - Iran
 - Pakistan
- **Golden Triangle;** The Golden Triangle comprises:
 - Myanmar
 - Laos
 - Thailand

It is another major global centre for the production of **opium and synthetic drugs**.

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the institutional mechanism for drug control in India:

1. The administrative responsibility for amending the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act lies with the Ministry of Home Affairs.
2. The Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) functions under the aegis of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).
3. The Vision Document (2026-2029) advocates for an AI-enabled profiling mechanism to track cross-border land and maritime drug routes.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only

- **Statement 1 is incorrect:** As highlighted in [image_6029c3.png](#), the **Department of Revenue** (Ministry of Finance) is the nodal authority tasked with amending the NDPS Act and rules, not the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Statement 2 is correct:** The 10th apex-level meeting of NCORD was organized directly by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).
- **Statement 3 is correct:** The newly released vision document explicitly mentions utilizing AI-enabled profiling to strengthen interdiction capabilities across land, sea, and air trafficking routes.

1.6. SHIFTING SHADOWS OF NARCO-TERROR: INDIA'S EMERGING BORDER THREATS

Context

- Following the 2022 Taliban-imposed drug ban in Afghanistan, Myanmar has emerged as the primary alternative for global opium supply. The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Annual Report 2026 highlights the severe consequences of this shift, with India's eastern borders transitioning into active distribution hubs and the western frontier facing an unprecedented surge in drone-mediated smuggling.



The Eastern Infiltration (Golden Triangle Route)

- **Production Hub:** Myanmar's opium cultivation grew by 56% (2021-2023), becoming a dual supplier of opiates and methamphetamine (Yaba).
- **Primary Corridor (Manipur): National Highway 102 (NH-102)** serves as the main land entry point for narcotics into the Indian hinterland.
- **Secondary Corridor (Mizoram):** Drugs enter through **Champhai** (bordering Myanmar's Chin State) and move towards Assam's Barak Valley.
- **Key Vulnerability:** The **Free Movement Regime (FMR)** and porous borders have turned Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland into active distribution staging grounds.

The Western Infiltration (Golden Crescent Route)

- **Sustained Supply:** Despite a 93% cut in Afghan opium production, massive pre-ban stockpiles (13,200 tonnes) continue to fuel cross-border trafficking.
- **Drone Menace:** Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) smuggling from Pakistan has surged 100-fold in five years, hitting 305 incidents in 2025.

- **Vulnerable States: Punjab** is the epicentre (accounting for 58% of national seizures), followed by Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir.
- **Maritime Evasion:** Traffickers are increasingly using low-profile fishing vessels along the **Gujarat and Maharashtra** coastlines to bypass standard maritime surveillance.

About the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)

- **Establishment:** The bureau was constituted in March 1986 under the provisions of the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It operates as the apex drug law enforcement and intelligence agency under the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
- **Constitutional Mandate:** Its operational framework is rooted in **Article 47** (Directive Principles of State Policy), which directs the State to prohibit the consumption of intoxicating drugs injurious to health.
- **International Obligations:** It serves as the national contact point for coordinating with international agencies (like INTERPOL) and implements India's international obligations against illicit trafficking under various United Nations Conventions (1961, 1971, and 1988).

Geographical Location of Myanmar

- **Location:** Myanmar is situated in the western portion of mainland Southeast Asia.
- **Land Borders:** It is bordered by China to the north and northeast, Laos to the east, Thailand to the southeast, Bangladesh to the west, and India to the northwest.
- **Indian Border States:** The country shares a direct land border with four Indian states: Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram.
- **Maritime Boundaries:** Myanmar's coastline is flanked by the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea to the south and southwest.

Q. With respect to cross-border narcotics trafficking and regulatory frameworks in India, consider the following statements:

- I. The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) operates as a statutory body constituted under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.
- II. The "Golden Triangle" represents the illicit drug-producing region that encompasses Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) I only
- (b) II only
- (c) Both I and II
- (d) Neither I nor II

Answer: A

Explanation:

- **Statement I is correct:** The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** was officially constituted in March 1986 as a **statutory body** under the enabling provisions of the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985** to function as the apex enforcement and intelligence agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Statement II is incorrect:** The trans-border drug production region encompassing **Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran** is clinically designated as the **Golden Crescent**. Conversely, the **Golden Triangle** refers specifically to the geographic tri-junction region of **Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand**.

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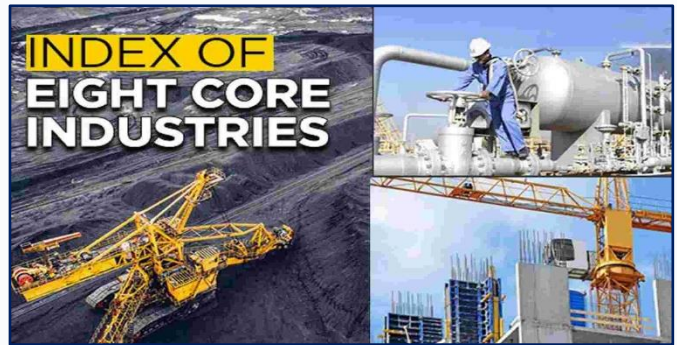


Prelims Test Series

2.1. THE EIGHT PILLARS: UNDERSTANDING INDIA'S CORE INDUSTRIES AND IIP

Context

In May 2026, the combined growth of India's eight core industrial sectors decelerated to 0.5%, marking the second-lowest growth rate in a 21-month period. This slowdown reflects broader industrial headwinds and the fallout from global geopolitical tensions affecting petroleum-based production.



The Eight Core Industries

The Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) measures the production performance of eight foundational sectors that drive India's industrial and economic growth.

- **Combined Weightage:** These eight sectors collectively account for **40.27%** of the total weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- **Base Year: 2022-23.**

Sector-Wise Weightage (Decreasing Order)

1. **Refinery Products** (28.04%)
2. **Electricity** (19.85%)
3. **Steel** (17.92%)
4. **Coal** (10.33%)
5. **Crude Oil** (8.98%)
6. **Natural Gas** (6.88%)
7. **Cement** (5.37%)
8. **Fertilizers** (2.63%)

Significance of the Eight Core Industries in India

- **Macroeconomic Barometer:** They form the absolute backbone of the industrial sector. Their collective performance acts as a reliable, leading indicator of the nation's overall economic health and industrial output.
- **Broad Economic Impact:** Growth in these foundational sectors directly supports large-scale employment, ensures national energy security, and acts as a primary catalyst for the wider manufacturing ecosystem.
- **Multiplier Effect:** Because these industries provide fundamental raw materials (such as steel, cement, and power), their performance heavily influences downstream sectors, including infrastructural development, real estate, and trade balances.

- **Policy Formulation:** Tracking the ICI enables policymakers to quickly identify production bottlenecks (e.g., in fossil fuels or agricultural inputs) and formulate targeted fiscal, monetary, and logistical interventions.

Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

The IIP is a composite economic indicator that measures short-term changes in the volume of production for a specific basket of industrial goods in India. It works in tandem with the ICI to provide a comprehensive picture of industrial development.

- **Publishing Authority:** Compiled and published by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- **Release Frequency:** Published monthly with a one-month lag.
- **Base Year: 2022-23** (Revised from the earlier 2011-12 series).
- **Sectors Covered:** It broadly tracks production volume changes across four primary sectors:
 - **Manufacturing:** ~ 76.06% (Largest weight, principal driver of IIP)
 - **Mining & Quarrying:** ~ 14.00%
 - **Electricity & Gas Supply:** ~ 7.50%
 - **Water Supply, Sewerage & Waste Management:** ~ 2.44%

Q. With respect to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and Core Industries, consider the following statements:

- I. The base year for calculating the Index of Industrial Production has been revised by the government to 2022-23.
- II. The eight core industries collectively account for more than fifty percent of the total weight of items included in the IIP.
- III. The revised IIP framework exclusively limits its tracking to mining, manufacturing, and electricity, excluding civic utilities like waste management.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) I only
- (b) I and II only
- (c) II and III only
- (d) I, II, and III

Answer: A

Explanation:

Statement I is correct: The government has officially updated the IIP base year from 2011-12 to **2022-23**, making it the latest major macroeconomic indicator to undergo a statistical overhaul.

Statement II is incorrect: The Eight Core Industries do not account for more than half; they collectively account for exactly **40.27%** of the total weight of items included in the IIP basket.

Statement III is incorrect: The revised 2026 IIP series deliberately expands its traditional scope by officially incorporating **gas supply, water supply, sewerage, and waste management activities** alongside the core categories.

2.2. REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY SCHEME (RCS) - UDAN

Context

- Recently, scheduled commercial flight operations commenced from the captive airport at Mundra under the **Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)**, connecting it to four domestic destinations to enhance affordable regional transit.



Structural Framework of UDAN

- Nodal Ministry:** Administered by the Ministry of Civil Aviation under the National Civil Aviation Policy.
- Implementing Agency:** Executed by the Airports Authority of India (AAI).
- Nature & Tenure:** A Central Sector Scheme with an operational tenure of 10 years.
- Target Segments:** Focuses on reviving unserved aerodromes (no commercial flights) and underserved aerodromes (less than one commercial flight daily).

Financial Mechanism & Incentives

- Seat Capping:** Operators must reserve a minimum of 50% of aircraft capacity for subsidized, distance-capped fares.
- Viability Gap Funding (VGF):** Provided to offset losses; shared between the Center and States in an 80:20 ratio (90:10 for North-Eastern states, hilly regions, and Union Territories).
- VGF Resource Mobilization:** Financed through a standard levy imposed per flight on major, lucrative trunk routes.
- Fiscal Concessions:** Central excise duty on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) is capped at 2% at RCS airports; States lower VAT/GST on ATF to 1% or less for 10 years.
- Operational Exemptions:** Complete waiver on landing, parking, and terminal navigation landing charges for participating airlines.

Phased Evolution

- UDAN 1.0 to 4.0:** Progressed from initial route revival to incorporating helipads (2.0), seaplanes and tourism loops (3.0), and prioritizing island and North-Eastern territorial connectivity (4.0).
- UDAN 5.0 Core:** Dismantled the previous 500 km stage-length cap and focused heavily on category-2 and category-3 aircraft.
- Krishi UDAN:** Specialized cargo-centric iteration designed to optimize agricultural logistics for perishable goods from tribal, hilly, and North-Eastern districts.

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN:

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme where the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) is shared equally between the Central Government and all States in a 50:50 ratio.
- Airline operators selected under the scheme must allocate at least 50% of the total aircraft seating capacity at capped, subsidized fares.
- The NITI Aayog serves as the designated implementing agency responsible for route allocations and bidding.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Solution

Correct Answer: (b)

- **STATEMENT 1 INCORRECT:** UDAN is a Central Sector Scheme. The VGF sharing pattern is split 80:20 for normal states and 90:10 for North-Eastern states, hilly states, and Union Territories.
- **STATEMENT 2 CORRECT:** Scheme mandates require selected operators to reserve a minimum of 50% of their seating capacity for subsidized regional connectivity flights.
- **STATEMENT 3 INCORRECT:** The Airports Authority of India (AAI) is the designated implementing agency for the scheme, not the NITI Aayog.

2.3. RBI TWEAKS PROCESS TO ONBOARD MSMES ON TReDS PLATFORM

Context

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has revised the onboarding norms for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) on the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) platform. The objective is to simplify access to invoice financing and improve liquidity for MSMEs.



Key RBI Changes

- **Relaxation in Net Worth Requirement:** MSMEs will now need a minimum net worth of ₹25 crore only if they use TReDS through a statutory auditor for accounting services.
- **Compliance Deadline:** 31 March 2028; Existing service providers have been given time until 31 March 2028 to comply with the revised net worth norms.
- **Objective:** To make invoice financing easier and address operational issues faced by MSMEs while converting receivables into cash.

What is TReDS?

- **Definition:** It is an institutional mechanism set up by the RBI to facilitate the financing/discounting of trade receivables of MSMEs from multiple financiers (including banks and non-banking financial companies).
- **Working Mechanism:** It operates as an **online electronic platform** where small businesses can auction their invoices or trade receivables to unlock stuck working capital.
- **Significance:** It addresses the critical issue of delayed payments and cash flow crunches faced by MSMEs when converting trade receivables into liquid cash

Why is TReDS Important?

- MSMEs often face delayed payments from large buyers.
- TReDS allows them to receive funds before the invoice due date.

- It reduces dependence on traditional bank loans.
- It improves cash flow and working capital management.

What is an MSME?

- An enterprise engaged in manufacturing, processing, or services and classified based on investment in plant & machinery/equipment and annual turnover.

Current MSME Classification (Revised Criteria)

Here is the data from the image structured into a clean, markdown table format for your notes:

ENTERPRISE CATEGORY	PAST INVESTMENT LIMIT	REVISED INVESTMENT LIMIT	PAST TURNOVER LIMIT	REVISED TURNOVER LIMIT
MICRO ENTERPRISE	₹1 crore	₹2.5 crore	₹5 crore	₹10 crore
SMALL ENTERPRISE	₹10 crore	₹25 crore	₹50 crore	₹100 crore
MEDIUM ENTERPRISE	₹50 crore	₹125 crore	₹250 crore	₹500 crore

(Latest enhanced classification announced by the Government of India in Union Budget 2025-26.)

Important Facts on MSMEs

- MSMEs contribute significantly to GDP, exports, and employment.
- They are regulated under the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006.
- The Ministry of MSME is the nodal ministry.
- Udyam Registration is the official registration mechanism for MSMEs.
- Classification is based on both investment and turnover criteria.

Q. With reference to the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS), consider the following statements:

1. It is regulated by the Reserve Bank of India.
2. It enables MSMEs to obtain finance against trade receivables.
3. Only banks can participate as financiers on the platform.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

- Statements 1 and 2 are correct.
- Statement 3 is incorrect because, apart from banks, NBFCs and other financial institutions can also participate as financiers on TReDS.

2.4. DECODING THE INDEX OF SERVICES PRODUCTION (ISP)

Context

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has finalized the framework for India's first-ever Index of Services Production (ISP). Designed as the services-sector equivalent to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), it will shift the measurement of services growth from survey-based sentiment (PMI) to actual statistical output.



About Index of Services Production (ISP)

Parameter	Key Details
Nodal Agency	National Statistical Office (NSO) under MoSPI
Base Year	2024-25
Release Frequency	Monthly (with a 60-day lag, released on the 29th of every month)
First Release	Scheduled for July 14, 2026 (for the month of April 2026)
Committee	Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) headed by Debjani Ghosh (NITI Aayog)
Target Sector	Over 40 service sub-sectors (Banking, Real Estate, Transport, etc.)

Core Methodology & Data Sources

Unlike the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), which relies on business sentiment surveys, the ISP is an **output-based measure** utilizing hard statistical data.

- **Primary Data Source:** The **GST Network (GSTN)** will serve as the primary source to measure production and outward supplies in formal service activities in real-time.
- **Supplementary Data:** Sector-specific administrative data from government ministries and regulatory authorities.
- **Survey Data:** MoSPI's Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises (ASISSE) will provide enterprise-level structural data.

Inflation Adjustment (Deflators)

To convert nominal output data into real output, the data must be adjusted for inflation.

- **Interim Proxy:** MoSPI will temporarily use the **Non-food Consumer Price Index (CPI)** and sub-sector specific CPI indices.

- **Long-term Plan:** The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is developing a comprehensive **Producer Price Index (PPI)** to eventually replace these proxy deflators.

Sectors Excluded from ISP

- **Informal Sector:** Initially excluded due to severe data constraints, missing nearly 33% of total services Gross Value Added (GVA).
- **GST-Exempt Sectors:** Sectors that fall outside the GST net, primarily **Health and Education** (contributing ~10% of services GVA), cannot be fully captured through the primary GSTN data.

About Industrial Production (IIP)?

The IIP is a volume-based macroeconomic indicator that measures short-term changes in the physical production of a basket of industrial goods. Like the ISP, it is compiled and published monthly by the NSO under MoSPI.

Comparison: ISP vs. IIP

	Index of Services Production (ISP)	Index of Industrial Production (IIP)
Base Year	2024-25	2022-23
Sectors Covered	Services (Banking, Trade, IT, Transport, Real Estate, etc.)	Industrial (Manufacturing, Mining, Electricity)
Indicator Type	Output-based metric of service activity	Volume-based metric of physical goods production
Primary Data Source	Digital and administrative records (heavily reliant on GSTN)	Physical quantities produced by factories and establishments

Q. With respect to the Index of Services Production (ISP), consider the following statements:

- The Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) serves as the primary data source for measuring production and outward supplies in formal service activities.
- The index comprehensively captures the entire services economy by including the informal sector and GST-exempt services like health and education.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- I only
- II only
- Both I and II
- Neither I nor II

Answer: A

Explanation:

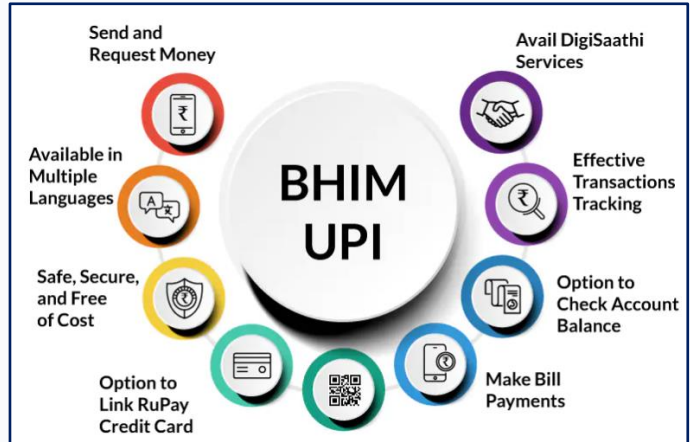
Statement I is correct: The **Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)** serves as the **primary data source** for the ISP, enabling the real-time measurement of production and outward supplies specifically within **formal service activities** using hard statistical data.

Statement II is incorrect: The ISP currently **excludes the informal sector** due to severe data constraints, which accounts for nearly 33% of the total services Gross Value Added (GVA). Additionally, it struggles to capture **GST-exempt sectors** such as **Health and Education**.

2.5. BHIM UPI TO OFFER FINANCIAL PRODUCTS

Context

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) plans to expand the scope of the **BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money) UPI** platform by offering financial products such as **credit cards, loans, investments, and insurance** through the BHIM app. This initiative aims to improve financial inclusion and provide easier access to financial services.



Key Highlights

Expansion of BHIM Services

- BHIM will move beyond digital payments to become a broader financial services platform.
- Planned offerings include:
 - Credit Cards
 - Loans
 - Investment Products
 - Insurance Services

Role of NPCI BHIM Services Ltd. (NBSL)

- NBSL, a subsidiary of NPCI, will collaborate with:
 - Banks
 - Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)
 - Insurance providers
- The objective is to distribute financial products through a unified digital platform.

About BHIM UPI

It is UPI based payment interface that allows real time fund transfers using a single identity like your mobile number or name.

Feature	Details
Full Form	Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM)
Launched	December 2016
Developed By	National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

Parent Ministry	Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
Based On	Unified Payments Interface (UPI)
Regulatory body	While MeitY handles the government framework, the underlying financial network (UPI) is regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
Is BHIM A Wallet?	BHIM is not a wallet. It is a payments application that allows users to make instant bank transfers.
In How Many Languages Is BHIM Available?	Currently it is available in 20 languages.
Does BHIM run without internet?	Yes. You can dial *99# to avail offline features of BHIM, on any mobile phone.
Countries Accepting BHIM / UPI	UPI is now live in over eight countries, including the UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Mauritius and Qatar, positioning India as a global leader in digital payments.

What is UPI?

- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is a real-time payment system developed by NPCI.
- It enables:
 - Instant bank-to-bank transfers.
 - Interoperable digital payments.
 - 24×7 fund transfers.
- Regulated by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.

Key Features

- Virtual Payment Address (VPA).
- QR-code-based payments.
- Interoperability across banks.
- Instant settlement.

Q. Consider the following statements regarding BHIM and UPI:

1. BHIM is developed and operated by the Reserve Bank of India.
2. UPI enables real-time bank-to-bank fund transfers.
3. NPCI is the organization responsible for developing UPI.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

The correct answer is **(b) 2 and 3 only**.

Detailed Explanation:

- **Statement 1 is incorrect:** BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money) was developed and is operated by the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**, not the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- **Statement 2 is correct:** The core utility of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) architecture is to enable instant, real-time, 24/7 bank-to-bank fund transfers directly through a mobile platform.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** **NPCI** is an umbrella organization for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India, and it is the primary entity responsible for designing, developing, and launching the UPI ecosystem.

2.6. FROM HOUSEHOLD TO INDIVIDUAL: OVERHAULING FOOD SECURITY ALLOCATIONS

Context

- The Union Food and Public Distribution Department has released a draft amendment to the National Food Security Act (NFSA), proposing critical changes to the foodgrain distribution structure for Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) beneficiaries. The draft is currently open for public consultation, following which a final version will be introduced in Parliament.



What are the Proposed Amendments?

The draft amendment proposes a fundamental shift in Section 3 of the NFSA, 2013, altering how foodgrains are allocated to India's poorest households.

- **Per-Capita Entitlement:** It replaces the existing fixed household quota with a per-person entitlement of **7 kg of free food grains per month**.
- **Maximum Ceiling:** The total allocation remains strictly capped at a **maximum of 35 kg per household**, regardless of whether the family size exceeds five members.
- **Nutritional Alignment:** The 7 kg quota is designed to align more closely with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines, which recommend approximately 7.5 kg of cereals per adult per month.

Rationale Behind the Amendment

- **Correcting Distribution Inequities:** The current flat-quota system causes smaller AAY households to receive a disproportionately high per-capita share, while members of larger households receive a share that often falls below the 5 kg standard entitlement of regular Priority Households.
- **Nutritional Alignment:** The proposed 7 kg per-capita quota is designed to align with the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines**, which recommend approximately 7.5 kg of cereals per adult per month.

About National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013

- **Legal Framework:** The NFSA fundamentally shifted food security in India from a welfare-based scheme to a **legally enforceable rights-based entitlement**.

- **Population Coverage:** It legally mandates coverage for **75% of the rural** and **50% of the urban** population (roughly two-thirds of India's population, calculated strictly as per **Census 2011** data).
- **Beneficiary Classification:**
 - **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY):** The category encompassing the "poorest of the poor" households.
 - **Priority Households (PHH):** The remaining eligible households, which are entitled to **5 kg of food grains per person** per month.
- **Subsidized Pricing:** Eligible beneficiaries receive food grains at highly subsidized rates (Central Issue Price): **Rice at ₹3/kg, Wheat at ₹2/kg, and Coarse grains at ₹1/kg.**
- **Maternity and Nutritional Benefits:** The Act adopts a life-cycle approach to nutrition:
 - It mandates a **maternity benefit of at least ₹6,000** for pregnant and lactating women.
 - It guarantees free nutritional meals for children through Anganwadi Centres (ICDS) and the PM POSHAN (Mid-Day Meal) Scheme.

Q. With respect to the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 and its proposed amendments, consider the following statements:

- I. The proposed amendment seeks to replace the fixed household quota for Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) beneficiaries with a per-person allocation of 7 kg, removing the maximum ceiling of 35 kg per household.
- II. The NFSA structurally shifted food security to a rights-based entitlement, legally mandating coverage for 75% of the rural and 50% of the urban population based on Census 2011 data.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) I only
- (b) II only
- (c) Both I and II
- (d) Neither I nor II

Answer: B

Explanation:

- **Statement I is incorrect:** While the draft amendment replaces the flat household quota with a per-person entitlement of 7 kg, it **strictly retains the maximum ceiling of 35 kg per household**. Therefore, an AAY family with more than five members will not receive additional foodgrains beyond this limit.
- **Statement II is correct:** The NFSA fundamentally shifted India's food security framework from a welfare-based scheme to a **legally enforceable rights-based entitlement**, calculating its coverage of **75% of the rural** and **50% of the urban population** strictly using data from **Census 2011**.

3.1. BIOCHAR: THE CARBON-NEGATIVE CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Context

The massive generation of agricultural residue and municipal solid waste in India presents a dual challenge of air pollution and soil degradation. Converting this organic waste into biochar offers a highly stable, carbon-negative solution to enhance soil fertility, build climate resilience, and generate carbon credits.



About Biochar

- **What is Biochar:** It is a highly porous, stable, and carbon-rich granular material derived from organic biomass, including agricultural residue and municipal solid waste.
- **Pyrolysis (The Production Method):** Biochar is obtained by heating organic waste at high temperatures (400°C to 600°C) inside a kiln-shaped structure under **low-oxygen or oxygen-free conditions**.
- **Carbon Sequestration Sink:** Its stable physiochemical structure breaks down extremely slowly, effectively locking carbon in the soil for 100 to 1,000 years, making it a persistent carbon dioxide removal technology.

Multi-Sectoral Applications and Benefits

1. Agriculture and Soil Health

- **Moisture Retention:** The highly porous nature of biochar increases the water-holding capacity of soils by 10% to 25%, which is critical for mitigating moisture stress in semi-arid and drought-prone regions.
- **Soil Fertility:** It aggregates soil particles, improves soil organic carbon content, and creates a suitable micro-environment that stimulates the growth of beneficial, nitrogen-fixing microorganisms.
- **Emission Abatement:** Applying biochar to agricultural fields can reduce the emissions of Nitrous Oxide (N₂O)—a highly potent greenhouse gas—by 30% to 50%.
- **Yield Enhancement:** Field trials indicate that its application can improve overall crop productivity by 10% to 30%, particularly in degraded and nutrient-depleted soils.

2. Infrastructure and Construction

- **Low-Carbon Building Material:** Integrating a small percentage of biochar into concrete significantly boosts its mechanical strength and heat resistance.
- **Embodied Carbon Reduction:** Utilizing biochar in the construction sector transforms conventional building materials into stable, long-term carbon sinks.

3. Energy Generation and Wastewater Treatment

- **Energy By-products:** The pyrolysis process utilized to create biochar simultaneously yields valuable combustible by-products—specifically **syngas** and **bio-oil**—which can be harnessed to generate electricity and offset fossil fuel dependency.
- **Pollution Control:** Biochar functions as an economical and highly effective adsorbent for treating wastewater and reducing water pollution.

Challenges of Using Biochar

- **Reduces Earthworm Activity:** Biochar can limit the movement and function of earthworms, which are naturally essential for maintaining soil health and fertility.
- **Causes Soil Compaction:** Adding too much biochar can make the soil dense and hard. This restricts the roots from growing properly and ultimately lowers crop yields.
- **Lowers Pesticide Efficiency:** Biochar tends to absorb chemicals in the soil. This makes applied pesticides less effective at protecting crops from pests and diseases.

Q. With respect to the application of biochar in agriculture, consider the following statements:

- I. The application of biochar enhances the mobility and functioning of earthworms in the soil. II. Excessive integration of biochar can lead to soil compaction, thereby restricting root growth and lowering crop yields.
- III. The highly adsorbent nature of biochar increases the protective efficiency of applied pesticides against pests and diseases.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) I only
- (b) II only
- (c) I and III only
- (d) I, II, and III

Answer: b

Explanation:

Statement I is incorrect: Biochar application actually **reduces earthworm activity**, limiting their movement and function, which are naturally essential for maintaining soil health and fertility.

Statement II is correct: Adding excessive amounts of biochar **causes soil compaction**, making the soil dense and hard. This physically **restricts root growth** and ultimately lowers overall crop yields.

Statement III is incorrect: Biochar tends to **absorb chemicals** within the soil matrix. This highly adsorbent nature actively **lowers pesticide efficiency**, making applied agrochemicals less effective at protecting crops from pests and diseases.

3.2. KARNATAKA RESUMES SAFARIS IN BANDIPUR & NAGARAHOLE TIGER RESERVES

Context

- The Karnataka Government has resumed jungle safari activities in **Bandipur** and **Nagarahole Tiger Reserves**, which had been suspended since November 2025 after repeated tiger attacks in nearby villages. The decision followed the recommendations of a technical committee that assessed the reserves as safe for tourism.



About Bandipur Tiger Reserve

- Located in **Karnataka**, Bandipur is one of the original tiger reserves established under **Project Tiger (1973)**.
- Geographically, it is an “**ecological confluence**” as the western and Eastern Ghats meet.
- It is also part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve** and lies in the **Western Ghats**, a global biodiversity hotspot.
- The reserve is famous for its healthy populations of **Bengal Tiger, Asian Elephant, Leopard, Dhole, Gaur, and Sloth Bear**.
- Major rivers flowing through the reserve include the **Kabini, Moyar, and Nugu**.

About Nagarahole Tiger Reserve

- Also located in **Karnataka**, Nagarahole (Rajiv Gandhi National Park) became a Tiger Reserve in **1999**.
- It forms a continuous wildlife landscape with **Bandipur, Mudumalai (Tamil Nadu), and Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala)**.
- The reserve is known for its moist deciduous forests and supports large populations of **tigers, elephants, leopards, gaur, and dholes**.
- The **Kabini River** is one of its major lifelines.

About Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

- The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve was established in **1986** and became the **first Biosphere Reserve in India**.
- It was included in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves in **2000**.
- It spans **Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu**, and includes important protected areas such as **Bandipur, Nagarahole, Mudumalai, Wayanad, Mukurthi National Park, and Silent Valley National Park**.

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Bandipur Tiger Reserve:

- It is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- It lies in the Western Ghats.
- It was among the original tiger reserves under Project Tiger.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

The correct answer is (d) 1, 2 and 3.

- **Statement 1 is correct:** Bandipur Tiger Reserve is an integral part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**, which was the first biosphere reserve designated in India (1986). It forms a contiguous forest patch alongside Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (Tamil Nadu), Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala), and Nagarhole Tiger Reserve (Karnataka).
- **Statement 2 is correct:** Geographically, the reserve is situated at the tri-junction of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, deeply nestled within the **Western Ghats** landscape, an internationally recognized biodiversity hotspot.
- **Statement 3 is correct:** Bandipur was established as a tiger reserve in **1973** under **Project Tiger**, making it one of the initial nine reserves chosen at the launch of the flagship conservation program.

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4.1. DECODING THE INDIAN NAVY'S HISTORIC TRIPLE COMMISSIONING

Context

The Prime Minister recently commissioned three technologically distinct, indigenously built naval warships—**INS Dunagiri**, **INS Sanshodhak**, and **INS Agray**—in Kolkata. This historic "tri-commissioning" highlights a major push toward self-reliance, with more than 75% of the components manufactured domestically through Indian shipyards and over 200 MSMEs.



The Three Vessels at a Glance

1. INS Dunagiri — The Blue-Water Stealth Frigate

- **Project Classification:** Built as an advanced stealth guided-missile frigate under **Project 17A**.
- **Stealth Capability:** Engineered with structural modifications to ensure reduced radar cross-section (RCS) and lower sensor visibility.
- **Armament & Systems:** Equipped with BrahMos surface-to-surface missiles, Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) systems, MFSTAR radar, and advanced electronic warfare suites.
- **Strategic Role:** Designed for deep-sea blue-water operations against high-intensity conventional and non-conventional threats.
- **Sister Ships:** Belongs to the same class as INS Nilgiri, Himgiri, Taragiri, Udaygiri, and Vindhyagiri.

2. INS Sanshodhak — The Hydrographic Survey Vessel

- **Project Classification:** The final ship of the **Sandhayak-class** Survey Vessels – Large (SVL).
- **Technological Payload:** Integrated with Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs), Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), and multi-beam echo sounders.
- **Strategic Role:** Tasked with underwater hydrographic mapping, measuring ocean depths, plotting navigational routes, and gathering critical oceanographic data.
- **Core Significance:** Sub-surface mapping is vital for safe submarine route planning, anti-submarine warfare environment assessment, and marine resource tracking.

3. INS Agray — The Littoral Anti-Submarine Hunter

- **Project Classification:** An Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC) belonging to the **Arnala-class**.
- **Armament Payload:** Fitted with lightweight torpedoes, indigenous anti-submarine rocket launchers, and specialized hull-mounted sonars.

- **Strategic Role:** Specifically optimized to detect, track, and neutralize enemy submarines in noisy, acoustically cluttered coastal zones and littoral waters near ports and naval bases.

Stragic Significance

- **Layered Naval Defense:** The simultaneous induction builds a multi-layered security umbrella spanning deep-sea combat (Dunagiri), hydrographic intelligence (Sanshodhak), and coastal defense (Agray).
- **Strategic De-hyphenation:** Projecting advanced naval platforms helps India frame itself as a *Vishwabandhu* (global benefactor) offering non-threatening public goods to secure the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Industrial Boost:** Complements multi-ministerial infrastructure goals like the **Sagarmala Project** and the newly announced **₹70,000 crore incentive package** designed to expand domestic shipbuilding capacity and reduce maritime logistics costs.

Q. With respect to the recently commissioned naval warships, consider the following statements:

- I. INS Dunagiri is an advanced stealth guided-missile frigate developed under Project 17A for deep-sea operations.
- II. INS Sanshodhak is an Arnala-class vessel optimized for hunting enemy submarines in shallow coastal waters.
- III. The Sandhayak-class platforms are primarily designated as large hydrographic survey vessels to map sub-surface marine terrain.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) I and II only
- (b) II and III only
- (c) I and III only
- (d) I, II and III

Answer: C

Explanation:

- **Statement I is correct:** INS Dunagiri is a stealth guided-missile frigate developed under **Project 17A**, specifically designed with signature-reduction technologies to undertake deep-sea blue-water combat operations.
- **Statement II is incorrect:** INS Sanshodhak is the final ship of the **Sandhayak-class** Survey Vessels – Large (SVL) intended for hydrographic mapping, not an anti-submarine shallow watercraft.
- **Statement III is correct:** The Sandhayak-class platforms (including INS Sanshodhak) are explicitly designated to perform hydrographic surveys, mapping water depths, navigational routes, and seabed topography.

4.2. THE SOUTH ASIAN PHENOTYPE AND SUBTYPES OF DIABETES

Context

- A landmark research paper published in the journal *Diabetologia* highlights that South Asian populations possess a distinct metabolic profile characterized by higher insulin resistance and visceral fat at a lower Body Mass Index (BMI).
- This structural variation underscores the need for precision medicine over generic global models and emphasizes the study of pancreatic endocrinology and the different typologies of diabetes for public health interventions.



Insulin: Synthesis and Functions

- **Production Site:** Insulin is a vital hormone synthesized in significant quantities exclusively by the **beta (beta) cells** located within the **islets of Langerhans** in the pancreas.
- **Etymology:** The name originates from the Latin word "*insula*", translating directly to "island," representing its isolated cellular source within the pancreas.
- **Discovery:** The hormone was successfully isolated and discovered in 1921 by Sir Frederick G. Banting, Charles H. Best, and J.J.R. Macleod.

Biological Functions

- **Glucose Regulation:** Secreted primarily in response to elevated blood glucose levels, insulin regulates glucose homeostasis by directing cells in the liver, muscles, and fat tissues to absorb glucose from the bloodstream.
- **Glycogen Storage:** It causes excess blood glucose to be converted into **glycogen**, which is subsequently stored inside the liver and skeletal muscles for future energy needs.
- **Lipid Management:** Insulin actively prevents the utilization of fat as an energy source by inhibiting the breakdown of fats.
- **Starvation Shift Mechanism:** In conditions where insulin levels are critically low or absent, cellular glucose uptake fails, forcing the human body to alter its pathway and burn **fat as an alternative energy source**.
- **Amino Acid Regulation:** The hormone also coordinates other body systems by regulating cellular amino acid uptake and protein synthesis.

Diabetes: Types and Pathophysiology

- **Mechanism:** Diabetes is a chronic disease that occurs when the pancreas can no longer produce insulin, or when the body cannot effectively utilize the insulin it produces.
- **Hyperglycaemia:** Uncontrolled diabetes results in chronically raised blood glucose levels, clinically termed **hyperglycaemia**.

- **Organ Damage:** Over the long-term, hyperglycaemia causes serious damage to the body's systems, especially the nerves and blood vessels, acting as a major cause of blindness, kidney failure, heart attacks, stroke, and lower limb amputation.

The Four Subtypes of Diabetes

Type of Diabetes	Core Pathophysiology and Etiology	Key Clinical Markers
Type 1	Autoimmune Reaction: The body's immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys the insulin-producing beta (beta) cells in the pancreas.	Previously known as insulin-dependent or juvenile-onset; linked to genetic predisposition; requires daily external insulin shots.
Type 1.5	Latent Autoimmune Diabetes in Adults (LADA): An autoimmune variation that shares characteristics but manifests later in life.	Manifests strictly during adulthood; sets in gradually, mimicking the visual and clinical timeline of Type 2 diabetes.
Type 2	Insulin Resistance: A metabolic condition where the body is stopped from using the insulin it produces properly.	Formerly called adult-onset diabetes; accounts for 90–95% of global cases; heavily driven by diet and low physical activity.
Gestational	Pregnancy-Induced Hyperglycaemia: Raised blood glucose values above normal but below full diagnostic thresholds.	Develops transiently in some individuals strictly during the course of pregnancy.

South Asian Diabetes Subtype and Physical Traits

- **The BMI Paradox:** People in the South Asian region develop diabetes at a significantly lower Body Mass Index (BMI) compared to populations in high-income nations.
- **Adipose Distribution:** Phenotypes in this geographic zone possess higher amounts of **visceral fat** paired with greater **insulin resistance**.
- **Environmental Triggers:** The acceleration of this condition is strongly linked to regional lifestyles, particularly the high intake of highly refined carbohydrates and low levels of physical activity.
- **Precision Medicine:** Due to this metabolic heterogeneity, clinical science is moving away from a one-size-fits-all paradigm toward a personalized approach based on precision medicine to account for variations in clinical characteristics, complication risks, and treatment responses.

Q. With respect to the clinical classification and typologies of diabetes, consider the following statements:

- Type 1 diabetes is driven by an autoimmune reaction where the body's immune system attacks and destroys insulin-producing cells in the pancreas.
- Type 1.5 diabetes, also known as Latent Autoimmune Diabetes in Adults (LADA), manifests during adulthood and sets in gradually like Type 2 diabetes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) I only
- (b) II only
- (c) Both I and II
- (d) Neither I nor II

Answer: C

Explanation:

- **Statement I is correct:** Type 1 diabetes is explicitly defined as an autoimmune condition where the body's own immune system mistakenly attacks and destroys the specialized insulin-producing cells (beta cells) inside the pancreas.
- **Statement II is correct:** Type 1.5 diabetes is clinically designated as Latent Autoimmune Diabetes in Adults (LADA), which develops uniquely during adulthood and shares a slow, gradual onset timeline similar to Type 2 diabetes.

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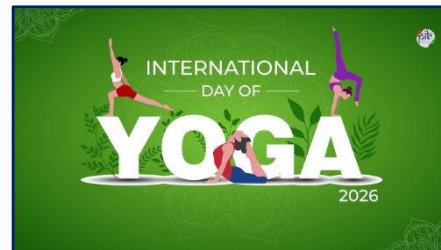
Prelims Test Series

HISTORY & CULTURE

5.1. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA 2026

Context

The Prime Minister recently led the International Day of Yoga celebrations in Kolkata, emphasizing the discipline's transition from an ancient tradition to the world's largest collective community celebration. The event highlighted the role of yoga in fostering global unity, physical vitality, and mental resilience.



Key Highlights of International Day of Yoga (IDY) 2026

- **Theme for 2026:** "Yoga for Healthy Ageing". It explicitly aligns with the **WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030)**.
- **Yoga Sangam Initiative:** A flagship national program connecting institutions through synchronized yoga sessions based on the standard **Common Yoga Protocol (CYP)**.

Governance and Institutional Framework

- **UNGA Resolution:** Adopted on December 11, 2014, under the "**Global Health and Foreign Policy**" agenda.
- **Significance of Date:** June 21 marks the **Summer Solstice** (longest day in the Northern Hemisphere), mythologically associated with the dawn of Yogic science.
- **Nodal Agency:** The **Ministry of Ayush** coordinates all IDY celebrations and policy implementations in India.
- **IDY Logo:** Features folded hands (union of consciousness) with elements representing Earth (brown leaves), Nature (green leaves), Water (blue), Fire (brightness), and the Sun (energy)

Evolution of Yoga

- **Philosophical Roots:** Yoga is one of the **six orthodox (Astika) schools** of Indian philosophy (along with Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Mimamsa, and Vedanta).
- **Etymology:** Derived from the Sanskrit root '**Yuj**', meaning to join or unite (individual consciousness with Universal Consciousness).
- **Indus Valley Origin:** The earliest historical evidence is the **Pashupati Seal** (c. 2700 B.C.), depicting figures in traditional yogic postures.
- **Classical Development:**
 - **Patanjali** systematically compiled yogic knowledge, introducing **Ashtanga Yoga** (the Eight Limbs).
 - The **Bhagavad Gita** categorizes paths to liberation into Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Karma Yoga.
- **Medieval Texts:** The **Hatha Yoga Pradipika** (15th Century CE) was authored by Yogi Swatmarama, focusing on physical preparation for higher meditation.

Strategic and Economic Initiatives

- **Countering Dominance:** India leverages Yoga and Ayurveda to strategically counterbalance China's push for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).
- **Institutional Anchoring:** The **WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine** has been established in **Jamnagar, Gujarat**.
- **Medical Value Travel (MVT):** The Ministry of AYUSH executes the **"Heal in India"** blueprint to scale India's wellness market, supported by the Ministry of Home Affairs via dedicated **E-Tourist Visas**.

Q. With respect to the International Day of Yoga and its historical evolution, consider the following statements:

- The UN General Assembly adopted the resolution to celebrate the International Day of Yoga under the "Global Health and Foreign Policy" agenda.
- Yoga is recognized as one of the heterodox (Nastika) schools of ancient Indian philosophy.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is the designated nodal agency for coordinating IDY celebrations in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- I only
- I and II only
- II and III only
- I, II, and III

Answer: a

Explanation:

Statement I is correct: In 2014, the UN General Assembly adopted an India-led resolution under the "Global Health and Foreign Policy" agenda to officially declare June 21 as the International Day of Yoga.

Statement II is incorrect: Yoga is classified as one of the six **orthodox (Astika)** schools of Indian philosophy, which accept the authority of the Vedas, alongside Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Mimamsa, and Vedanta.

Statement III is incorrect: The **Ministry of Ayush** is the apex nodal agency responsible for coordinating the International Day of Yoga celebrations and related wellness initiatives in India, not the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

5.2. RAKHIGARHI EXCAVATIONS: INSIGHTS INTO THE LARGEST INDUS VALLEY METROPOLIS

Context:

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has officially transferred human skeletal remains excavated from Rakhigarhi to the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI). This collaboration aims to conduct advanced DNA and scientific studies to understand the ancestry, environment, and lifestyle of the Indus Valley Civilization.



Location and Status

- **Geography:** Located in Hisar district, Haryana, along the dried Ghaggar-Hakra (Sarasvati) river plain.
- **Largest Settlement:** Spreading across 550 hectares, it is officially recognized as the **largest known settlement** of the Harappan Civilization, surpassing Mohenjodaro, Harappa, and Dholavira.
- **Chronology:** The site shows continuous habitation across three stages: the Early, Mature (2600–1900 BCE), and Late Harappan periods.

DNA Findings and Ancestry

- **Mound 7 Discoveries:** Excavations at this dedicated burial plot yielded 56 skeletons, including a highly preserved 4,600-year-old female skeleton.
- **Indigenous Origin:** Genomic analysis of these remains revealed a complete **absence of the "steppe pastoral" (Indo-Aryan) gene** and ancient Iranian farmer ancestry. This crucial finding refutes earlier migration theories and points to a distinct, indigenous origin for the Harappan people.

Urban Architecture and Economy

- **Town Planning:** The settlement features mud and burnt-brick houses with highly efficient drainage and sanitation systems.
- **Class Divisions:** Excavations at Mound 3 revealed an aristocratic settlement with prominent burnt-brick structures.
- **The Granary:** A prominent mud-brick granary with seven rectangular chambers and traces of decomposed grains was discovered.
- **Trade and Lapidary:** A flourishing trade economy is evident from the discovery of steatite beads, standardized weights, fish hooks, and a rich "toy culture".

Rituals and Artefacts

- **Ceremonial Practices:** Evidence of complex rituals includes the discovery of **triangular fire altars** and designated areas indicating animal sacrifices.
- **Unique Seals:** A notable discovery is a seal depicting an **alligator symbol** accompanied by five Harappan letters.

Heritage Development

- **Global Museum:** Following an MoU signed in 2022, Rakhigarhi is being developed to host the **world's largest museum** dedicated exclusively to Harappan culture.
- **Endangered Status:** In 2012, the Global Heritage Fund recognized Rakhigarhi as one of the ten most endangered heritage sites in Asia.

Q. With respect to the archaeological site of Rakhigarhi, consider the following statements:

- I. It is the largest known settlement of the Indus Valley Civilization, located in the Ghaggar-Hakra river plain.
- II. Recent DNA analysis of skeletal remains from the site confirmed the presence of the steppe pastoral gene among the Harappan people.
- III. The site features evidence of triangular fire altars and a seal depicting an alligator symbol.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) I and II only
- (b) II and III only
- (c) I and III only
- (d) I, II, and III

Answer: C

Explanation:

- **Statement I is correct:** Rakhigarhi, located in Hisar, Haryana, along the Ghaggar-Hakra river plain, is officially the **largest known settlement** of the Harappan civilization, surpassing sites like Mohenjodaro and Harappa.
- **Statement II is incorrect:** Genomic analysis of the skeletal remains revealed the **absence of the "steppe pastoral" gene** and ancient Iranian farmer ancestry, pointing to a distinct, indigenous origin rather than confirming an external migration.
- **Statement III is correct:** Archaeological excavations at the site have uncovered distinct ceremonial practices, including **triangular fire altars**, and a unique seal depicting an **alligator symbol**.

5.3. KHEER BHAWANI MELA 2026: A CONFLUENCE OF HERITAGE AND HARMONY IN KASHMIR

Context

In 2026, a record number of displaced Kashmiri Pandits gathered at the Mata Kheer Bhawani temple in Tulmulla, Ganderbal, to celebrate the Jyeshtha Ashtami festival. Facilitated by improved security conditions and welcomed by the local community, this historic pilgrimage highlights the enduring communal harmony and cultural revival in the Kashmir Valley.



The Kheer Bhawani Mela: Cultural Significance

- **Primary Deity:** The festival is dedicated to the highly revered **Mata Ragnya Devi**, locally known as Kheer Bhawani.
- **Occasion:** The annual pilgrimage is strictly observed by Kashmiri Pandits on the auspicious day of **Jyeshtha Ashtami**.

- **Scale and Symbolism:** It is recognized as one of the largest Hindu religious gatherings in the region, second only to the Amarnath Yatra. Over the decades, the mela has evolved into a prominent symbol of communal brotherhood and fraternity in Kashmir.

Architectural and Geographical Features

- **Geographical Location:** Situated in the Tulmulla village of the Ganderbal district, northeast of Srinagar.
- **The Sacred Spring (*Syendh*):** The temple premises enclose a septa-gonal (seven-sided) spring. This spring is famous for its distinct phenomenon of changing colors—displaying hues of red, pink, orange, green, blue, and white.
- **Unique Deity Placement:** A lofty chamber built on an island within the spring houses both a revered goddess idol and a Shiva linga. This amalgamation is a unique characteristic of this sacred site.
- **Patronage and Construction:**
 - The original temple was constructed by Dogra ruler **Ranbir Singh** (1830-1885).
 - The current structure and temple pond were established in the 1910s by **Maharaja Pratap Singh**, with further renovations executed by **Maharaja Hari Singh**.

Historical and Literary References

The site holds deep antiquity and is documented in several ancient and medieval texts:

- **Kalhana's Rajtarangini:** Explicitly mentions the sacred spring of "Tula Mula," noting its geographical location in a marshy area that was once engulfed by ancient floods.
- **Ain-i-Akbari:** Authored by Abu'l-Fazal during the Mughal era, it provides geographical details, describing the Tula Mula area as spanning a hundred bighas that would sink into marshlands during summer.
- **Bhrigu Samhita:** The ancient astrological text also features references to the sanctity of Kheer Bhawani.

Q. With respect to the Kheer Bhawani Mela, consider the following statements:

- I. It is an annual pilgrimage dedicated to the worship of Goddess Ragnya Devi, whose principal shrine is situated over a sacred hexagonal spring in the Kashmir Valley.
- II. The architectural construction of the current temple edifice surrounding the sacred spring was historically commissioned by the medieval Shah Miri dynasty.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a). I only
- (b) II only
- (c) Both I and II
- (d) Neither I nor II

Answer: a

Explanation:

Statement I is correct: The Kheer Bhawani Mela is a highly revered annual festival dedicated to the Vaishnavite deity **Goddess Ragnya Devi**. The principal temple at Tulmulla is uniquely constructed over a **sacred hexagonal natural spring**, which is central to the ritualistic offerings of milk and rice pudding (kheer).

Statement II is incorrect: The present architectural edifice of the Kheer Bhawani temple was not commissioned by the Shah Miri dynasty. It was historically constructed under the patronage of the **Dogra monarch Maharaja Pratap Singh** in 1912, and the surrounding infrastructure was later developed by Maharaja Hari Singh

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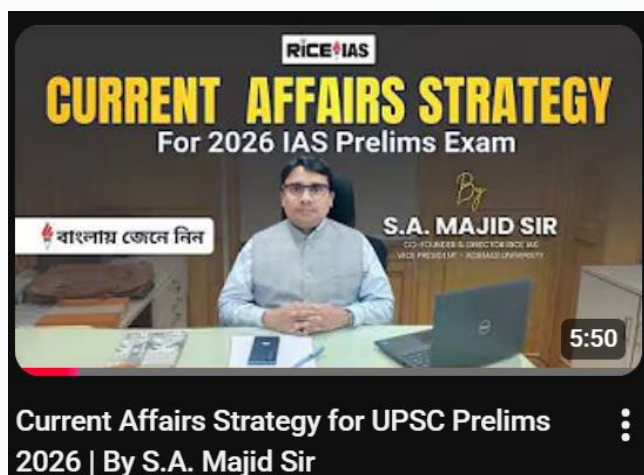
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