

#RiseWithRICE

A large, golden-brown statue of a lion with four heads, standing on a circular base, is the central background image for the top half of the poster. The lion's heads are facing the four cardinal directions.

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INDEX

1. GENERAL STUDIES 2	01
1.1. POLITY & GOVERNANCE	01
1.1.1. Youth Mobilisation and the Democratic Power of Dissent	01
1.1.2. A Critical Appraisal of the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026	04
1.2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	06
1.2.1. The Bay of Bengal as India's Shanti Anchor	06
2. GENERAL STUDIES	10
2.1. ECONOMY	10
2.1.1. Evaluating India's Draft Cafe III Norms	10
2.2. ENVIRONMENT	12
2.2.1. India's New Conservation Frontier (TOTR Initiative)	12

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Prelims Test Series

GENERAL STUDIES 2

1.1. POLITY & GOVERNANCE

1.1.1. YOUTH MOBILISATION AND THE DEMOCRATIC POWER OF DISSENT

Context

Sustained youth protests against **paper leaks and irregularities in competitive examinations** forced the government to respond and brought wider concerns of **examination integrity, youth aspirations, civil liberties, democratic dissent, institutional accountability and media independence** into focus.



Introduction

Competitive examinations are gateways to **employment and social mobility**. Repeated irregularities erode **merit and youth trust**, while peaceful, digitally enabled protests demonstrate the power of **constitutional dissent and democratic accountability**.

Why are Youth-Led Protests Significant?

1. Protection of Merit and Equal Opportunity

- **Examination integrity:** Paper leaks and malpractice undermine the credibility of competitive examinations and weaken merit-based selection.
- **Constitutional equality:** Fair examinations are closely linked to **Article 14 and Article 16**, particularly equality of opportunity in public employment.
- **Social mobility:** For millions of young Indians, competitive examinations represent an important pathway to secure employment and upward mobility.

2. Youth as Agents of Democratic Accountability

- **From beneficiaries to participants:** Youth are not merely recipients of government policies but can actively demand accountability from public institutions.
- **Common grievance:** The examination issue can unite young people across caste, religious and regional identities around a shared demand for fairness.
- **Democratic correction:** Sustained peaceful mobilisation can force governments to acknowledge institutional failures and undertake corrective measures.

3. New-Age Political Mobilisation

- **Social media mobilisation:** Digital platforms allow citizens to organise rapidly without depending entirely on political parties or traditional media.
- **Decentralised movements:** Online networks can connect otherwise fragmented individuals around a common grievance.
- **Bypassing gatekeepers:** Social media can provide visibility to public concerns that may receive inadequate attention from mainstream media.

4. Dissent as an Essential Democratic Right

- **Constitutional protection:** Peaceful protest draws legitimacy from **Articles 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(b)**, subject to reasonable restrictions.
- **Dissent ≠ anti-nationalism:** Criticism of government policies should not automatically be equated with hostility towards the Indian State.

- **Democratic accountability:** Questioning authority allows citizens to expose administrative failures and demand institutional reform.

5. Relevance of Gandhian Satyagraha

- **Non-violent resistance:** Peaceful and sustained protest reflects India's tradition of **satyagraha**, where moral pressure is used to seek justice.
- **Constitutional resistance:** Democratic protest is constructive when it seeks reform while respecting law and public order.
- **Moral legitimacy:** Non-violence can strengthen the credibility of a movement and make it difficult to dismiss genuine grievances.

6. Demonstration of Government Accountability

- **Ministerial responsibility:** Administrative failures in examination systems raise questions about political and institutional accountability.
- **Beyond resignation:** Resignation or symbolic action cannot substitute for independent investigation, fixing responsibility and systemic reform.
- **Responsive governance:** A democratic government must be capable of listening to legitimate public grievances and correcting institutional failures.

Constitutional and Democratic Dimensions

1. Right to Peaceful Protest

- **Article 19(1)(a):** Protects freedom of speech and expression.
- **Article 19(1)(b):** Protects the right to assemble peacefully and without arms.
- **Reasonable restrictions:** These freedoms are subject to restrictions relating to public order, sovereignty, security and other constitutional grounds.

2. Rule of Law and Proportionality

- **Minimum necessary force:** Police action during peaceful demonstrations must follow legality, necessity and proportionality.
- **Balanced approach:** The State has a legitimate duty to maintain public order but must not unnecessarily suppress legitimate democratic expression.
- **Constitutional morality:** State power must remain subject to fundamental rights and due process.

3. Majority Rule vs Constitutionalism

- **Electoral mandate is not unlimited:** Winning elections provides political legitimacy but does not permit governments to disregard constitutional limitations.
- **Checks and balances:** Parliament, judiciary, media, civil society and citizens collectively prevent excessive concentration of power.
- **Constitutional democracy:** Democracy requires not only majority rule but also **rights, rule of law, institutional autonomy and accountability**.

Challenges to Democratic Dissent

1. **Criminalisation of dissent:** Legitimate criticism may sometimes be portrayed as anti-national or politically motivated.
2. **Excessive use of force:** Heavy-handed policing can undermine citizens' fundamental rights and deepen public distrust.

3. **Internet restrictions:** Disruption of digital communication can affect mobilisation, information access and freedom of expression.
4. **Weak institutional checks:** Ineffective parliamentary scrutiny and institutional passivity can reduce executive accountability.
5. **Media dependence:** Political and commercial pressures may weaken independent journalism and public scrutiny.
6. **Political capture of movements:** Genuine citizen movements can be diverted by established political interests for electoral purposes.
7. **Digital misinformation:** Social media can also facilitate fake news, manipulation, polarisation and unverified claims.
8. **Youth unemployment:** Limited formal employment opportunities increase dependence on competitive examinations and intensify frustration among aspirants.

Way Forward for Strengthening Democratic Accountability

1. Reform Examination Governance

- Establish **secure, transparent and professionally managed examination systems**.
- Strengthen encryption, question-paper security, biometric authentication and technology-based monitoring.
- Conduct regular independent security audits of examination infrastructure.

2. Ensure Student-Centric Grievance Redressal

- Establish **time-bound grievance mechanisms** for examination-related complaints.
- Provide transparent procedures for cancellation, re-examination and compensation where justified.
- Reduce uncertainty and repeated disruption of students' academic and professional careers.

3. Strengthen Institutional Accountability

- Conduct independent investigations into examination malpractice.
- Fix responsibility across the administrative chain rather than limiting accountability to individual officials.
- Strengthen parliamentary and committee-level scrutiny of examination bodies.

4. Protect Peaceful Democratic Dissent

- Ensure police action follows **legality, necessity and proportionality**.
- Facilitate dialogue between governments and protest groups before conflicts escalate.
- Ensure restrictions on assemblies and internet access satisfy constitutional and judicial standards.

5. Strengthen Independent Media

- Protect journalistic independence and investigative reporting.
- Encourage fact-based reporting rather than sensationalism and partisan narratives.
- Media should act as a **watchdog of public institutions** and amplify legitimate citizen concerns.

6. Address Youth Employment Challenges

- Expand formal employment through **manufacturing, services, entrepreneurship and skill development**.
- Reduce excessive dependence on a limited number of government examinations.

- Convert India's demographic advantage into a genuine **demographic dividend**.

7. Promote Responsible Digital Democracy

- Encourage digital literacy and fact-checking.
- Prevent misinformation without unnecessarily restricting legitimate expression.
- Use social media as a channel for **citizen-government dialogue and participatory governance**.

Conclusion

Youth dissent is not a weakness but a democratic corrective. Ensuring exam integrity, peaceful protest, strong institutions and employment opportunities can convert India's demographic dividend into a democratic dividend built on trust, fairness and accountability.

Q. Youth-led movements in a democracy can act as instruments of institutional accountability and constitutional correction. Discuss in the context of protests over examination irregularities. Examine the challenges to democratic dissent and suggest measures to strengthen participatory democracy. 15 marks

1.1.2. A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE FCRA AMENDMENT BILL, 2026

Context

The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026** was re-introduced in Parliament to establish **statutory oversight** and prevent the potential misuse of **foreign funding** by **non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**.

Introduction

The **FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026** seeks to enhance **transparency, corporate governance, and accountability** in foreign contributions through a statutory **Designated Authority** and **centralised investigation approvals**. While intended to safeguard **national security**, severe **asset-forfeiture mandates** and broad **executive discretion** have sparked debates regarding **civil society autonomy**.



What is the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026?

- It is a legislative reform designed to regulate the acceptance, utilization, and asset management of **foreign contributions** by **NGOs, cultural, and religious institutions**.
- The framework establishes statutory oversight on **asset management, compliance timelines, and key functionary liabilities**.
- It aims to align foreign funding governance with **national security** and **sovereign financial interests**.

Key Provisions

- **Designated Authority (Section 16A):** Establishes a statutory authority to assume control of **foreign funds and assets** if registration is **cancelled, expired, surrendered, or not renewed**.
- **Full Asset Forfeiture:** Mandates that asset vesting applies to the **entire property**, even if created only **partially** using foreign contributions.

- **Centralised Investigation Approval:** Requires prior **Central Government clearance** before initiating any formal investigations against recipient entities.
- **Expanded "Key Functionary" Liability:** Extends personal legal liability to **directors, trustees, and office-bearers** for compliance defaults.
- **Rationalisation of Penalties:** Reduces maximum imprisonment for violations to **one year** (or a fine), down from the previous **five-year cap**.

Significance of FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026

1. **Strengthening National Security**
 - Prevents **foreign contributions** from being diverted into activities that threaten **public order, internal security, or sovereign political processes**.
2. **Improved Asset Governance**
 - The creation of a **Designated Authority** ensures that assets built via foreign grants are not commercialised or privately liquidated upon **organisation closure**.
3. **Preventing Fund Misuse**
 - **Time-bound utilization** mandates prevent the indefinite accumulation of capital and mitigate **money laundering risks**.
4. **Uniformity in Investigation**
 - **Centralised approval** protects non-profits from arbitrary **multi-agency harassment** and inconsistent state-level enforcement.
5. **Promoting Responsible Governance**
 - Expanding personal liability to **key functionaries** encourages robust **internal audits** and institutional accountability.

Challenges Associated with FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026

1. **Excessive Executive Discretion**
 - Vague cancellation grounds like "**public interest**" confer unguided power, risking targeted action against **dissenting NGOs**.
2. **Constitutional Concerns under Article 300A**
 - Permanent state vesting of **entire assets** partially built with foreign grants deprives entities of property without adequate **judicial oversight**.
3. **Chilling Effect on Civil Society**
 - Stringent compliance burdens and threats of **asset forfeiture** restrict legitimate civil society participation in **social advocacy** and **human rights work**.
4. **Discrimination Risks under Article 14**
 - Broad executive powers to grant exemptions under **Clause 16L** lack clear **intelligible differentia**, inviting constitutional challenges.
5. **Administrative Burden on Small NGOs**
 - Automated **registration lapses** and rigid timelines impose severe operational strains on **grassroots non-profits** with limited legal resources.

Way Forward

1. Institutionalise Judicial Oversight

- Establish **independent appellate tribunals** to review registration cancellation and asset-vesting orders prior to permanent state takeover.

2. Statutorily Define "Public Interest"

- Provide precise, objective legal definitions for ambiguous statutory terms to minimize **subjective executive discretion**.

3. Adopt Proportional Asset Vesting Rules

- Restrict state takeover strictly to the **proportional share** of assets generated directly through foreign contributions.

4. Safeguard Fundamental Freedoms

- Harmonise enforcement mechanisms with **Article 19(1)(c)** to preserve the fundamental **freedom of association**.

5. Differentiated Compliance Structure

- Implement a **tiered regulatory regime** that applies simplified compliance norms for **grassroots non-profits**.

6. Transparent Exemption Criteria

- Frame clear, objective criteria for granting exemptions under **Clause 16L** to ensure adherence to **Article 14** principles.

Conclusion

The **FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026** provides a structured framework to protect **national security** against unregulated foreign inflows. However, balancing regulatory rigor with **judicial oversight** and **proportional rules** remains crucial to preserve **civil society autonomy** in India's democracy.

Q. Examine the key provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026. How does it seek to balance national security imperatives with civil society autonomy? 15 Marks

1.2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1.2.1. THE BAY OF BENGAL AS INDIA'S SHANTI ANCHOR

Why is in news?

The article discusses the **Bay of Bengal as India's "SHANTI" anchor**, arguing that the Bay of Bengal should evolve from merely a maritime space into a **regional governance framework**. It highlights the Bay of Bengal's strategic importance amid intensifying **Indo-Pacific geopolitical competition**, maritime security challenges, and the need for institutional cooperation among littoral states.

Introduction

- The **Bay of Bengal** has emerged as the **geostrategic heart of the Indo-Pacific**, connecting the Indian Ocean with Southeast Asia and serving as the maritime lifeline for nearly **one-fourth of the world's population**.



- With increasing geopolitical rivalry, China's growing maritime footprint, climate-induced disasters, piracy, illegal fishing, and supply chain vulnerabilities, India is attempting to transform the Bay from a **zone of strategic competition into a zone of cooperative security** through its evolving maritime doctrine—**SHANTI (Security through Advanced Maritime Governance and Robust Integration and Trust)**.

What is SHANTI?

- **SHANTI (Security through Advanced Maritime Governance and Robust Integration and Trust)** is India's emerging maritime governance philosophy aimed at transforming the Bay of Bengal into a **cooperative maritime security community**.
- It seeks to integrate Maritime security, Economic connectivity, Disaster resilience, Blue Economy, Environmental sustainability, Institutional governance.
- Thus, SHANTI is **not merely a security doctrine but a comprehensive maritime governance framework**.

Why is the Bay of Bengal Strategically Important?

1. Gateway between the Indian and Pacific Oceans

- The Bay forms India's maritime bridge with ASEAN, Indo-Pacific, East Asia and Western Pacific

2. Maritime Trade Hub

- Nearly **90–95% of India's trade by volume** and around **70% by value** moves through the sea.
- The Bay facilitates Energy imports, LNG transportation, Global supply chains any disruption directly affects India's economy.

3. Energy Security

- Critical sea routes transport Crude oil, LNG, Fertilizers, Coal, Strategic minerals. Hence maritime security equals energy security.

4. Strategic Military Importance

- The Bay hosts India's Eastern Naval Command (Visakhapatnam), Andaman & Nicobar Command (India's only tri-service command), Access to Malacca Strait
- It enables India to monitor Chinese naval movements across the eastern Indian Ocean.

5. Centre of Indo-Pacific Competition

- Major powers are increasing their presence China, United States, Japan, Australia, France.
- The Bay has become a theatre where geopolitical competition intersects with economic connectivity.

6. Climate Vulnerability

- The Bay witnesses Cyclones, Storm surges, Coastal erosion, Sea-level rise, Flooding, Saltwater intrusion.
- Regional cooperation is essential for disaster preparedness.

Evolving pattern of India's initiative on maritime security

Phase	Maritime Vision	Objective
2015	SAGAR	Security and Growth for All in the Region

2019 onwards	Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)	Rules-based maritime cooperation
2025	MAHASAGAR	Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions
Emerging	SHANTI	Advanced Maritime Governance and Trust-based Regional Integration

Strategic Importance of SHANTI for India

- **Strengthens India's Indo-Pacific leadership**

India positions itself as a **net security provider** rather than merely a military power.

- **Counters China's Maritime Expansion**

- China's increasing naval deployments and infrastructure development under the **Maritime Silk Road** have enhanced its presence in the Bay.
- SHANTI offers a cooperative, rules-based alternative focused on partnerships instead of power projection.

- **Enhances Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)**

Improved information sharing enables:

- monitoring of shipping,
- detection of illegal activities,
- enhanced coastal security.

- **Supports Act East Policy**

The Bay serves as the maritime bridge connecting India with ASEAN and the wider Indo-Pacific.

- **Secures Critical Sea Lanes**

Protecting SLOCs ensures uninterrupted trade and energy supplies.

Potential Opportunities of SHANTI

1. Economic Integration

- SHANTI can promote regional value chains, port-led industrialization, logistics corridors, digital maritime trade.

2. Expansion of Blue Economy

- Potential sectors include Offshore wind energy, Ocean thermal energy, Aquaculture, Marine biotechnology, Cruise tourism.
- Deep-sea mining (subject to environmental safeguards)

3. BIMSTEC Revitalisation

- The Bay provides an opportunity to transform BIMSTEC into a security platform, an economic corridor, a connectivity hub.

4. Climate Leadership

- India can emerge as a leader in climate adaptation, coastal resilience, disaster management,

5. Defence Diplomacy

- Greater cooperation through MILAN naval exercise, coordinated patrols, HADR missions, coast guard cooperation, and naval training.

6. Strategic Supply Chains

- The Bay can become a resilient manufacturing and logistics hub under initiatives such as Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) linkages, Global supply chain diversification.

Challenges to SHANTI

- Strategic rivalry among major powers regarding China's expanding maritime presence and dual-use port infrastructure.
- Weak institutional capacity of regional organizations and maritime boundary disputes.
- Climate change and extreme weather events.
- Limited interoperability among regional navies.

Way Forward

- Institutionalise SHANTI through **BIMSTEC** with a dedicated maritime governance framework.
- Accelerate regional connectivity via **Sagarmala**, **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project**, and the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway**.
- Promote a sustainable Blue Economy with marine conservation, pollution control, and resilient fisheries.
- Strengthen regional disaster management with integrated early warning systems and joint response protocols.
- Uphold **UNCLOS**, freedom of navigation, and peaceful dispute resolution to reinforce a rules-based maritime order.
- Foster collaboration with **ASEAN**, **IORA**, **QUAD** partners, and other **Indo-Pacific** stakeholders while preserving strategic autonomy.

Conclusion

- The **Bay of Bengal** is no longer a peripheral maritime space but the **strategic centre of the Indo-Pacific**, where economic connectivity, geopolitical competition, climate resilience, and maritime security converge.
- India's proposed **SHANTI framework** represents an evolution from traditional naval security to **inclusive maritime governance**, integrating security, trust, sustainability, and institutional cooperation.

Q. Maritime governance is emerging as a key pillar of regional security in the Indo-Pacific. Discuss the strategic significance of India's SHANTI initiative in addressing both traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges. 15 Marks

2.1. ECONOMY

2.1.1. EVALUATING INDIA'S DRAFT CAFE III NORMS

Context

The **Ministry of Power** recently issued the **draft notification** for **Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) III norms**, setting progressive targets to lower passenger vehicle fleet emissions to **78.90 gCO₂/km** by **FY2031-32**.



Introduction

CAFE III norms aim to accelerate India's transition to **low-carbon mobility** and reduce reliance on **crude oil imports**. While the framework promotes **electric vehicles (EVs)** and **alternative fuels**, concerns persist that flexible **compliance mechanisms** may dilute actual **emission reductions**.

What are CAFE Norms?

- **CAFE norms** are mandates requiring automakers to meet predefined **average CO₂ emissions targets** across their entire vehicle fleet.
- These norms are pivotal for meeting India's **Glasgow COP26 commitments** and the **Net-Zero 2070** target.

Regulatory Mechanism

- The norms will take effect from **April 2027**, spanning a flexible five-year compliance period until **FY2032**.
- They introduce **Super Credits**, granting higher weightage to **Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs)**, **hybrids**, and **flex-fuel vehicles**.
- A **Carbon Neutrality Factor** gives compliance advantages for vehicles compatible with **ethanol-blended fuels (E20)**.
- Automakers can bank, trade, or buy **compliance credits** directly from the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**.

Significance of CAFE III Norms

1. Enhancing Energy Security

- Stricter fuel efficiency reduces India's structural dependence on **imported crude oil**.
- It shields the economy from **geopolitical shocks** and **imported inflation**.

2. Accelerating Decarbonisation

- Lowering fleet emissions significantly cuts **greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions** in the transport sector.

3. Promoting Clean Innovation

- The policy incentivises OEMs to allocate capital toward **EVs** and **strong hybrids**.

4. **Market-Based Flexibility**

- The **credit trading framework** functions as a cap-and-trade system, rewarding early adopters of **green technology**.

5. **Macroeconomic Stability**

- Reducing oil consumption curtails foreign exchange outflows, stabilizing the **current account deficit**.

Challenges Associated with CAFE III Norms

1. **Dilution Through Flexibility**

- **Super-credits** and multi-year blocks weaken effective stringency, allowing compliance without real-world **emission reductions**.

2. **Low Penalty Buyout Pricing**

- Purchasing credits from the **BEE** (₹2,500 - ₹4,500/gCO₂) is substantially cheaper than statutory penalties, weakening the **financial deterrent**.

3. **Uncertain Biofuel Trajectory**

- Granting advantages for **ethanol (E20)** ignores its lower energy density and the lack of a definitive policy beyond E20.

4. **Absence of EV Quotas**

- The policy lacks mandatory **zero-emission vehicle (ZEV)** production targets.

5. **Ambition Gap**

- The regulatory goals are arguably lower than the industry's own voluntary commitments for **EV penetration** by 2030.

Global Best Practices

1. **China – Dual Credit System**

- Combines **Corporate Average Fuel Consumption (CAFC)** standards with mandatory **New Energy Vehicle (NEV)** credit targets.

2. **United States – Clean Air Act**

- Aligns fleet efficiency rules with strict **greenhouse gas regulations**, paired with federal subsidies for **EV development**.

Way Forward

1. **Tighten Compliance**

- Phase out **super-credits** for partial electrification (hybrids) to force a genuine shift to **zero-emission vehicles**.

2. **Adopt Dual-Credit Framework**

- Introduce mandatory **New Energy Vehicle (NEV)** production quotas alongside fleet targets.

3. **Align Penalty Pricing**

- Raise the **BEE credit buyout price** to match or exceed the **Energy Conservation Act penalties**.

4. **Long-Term Biofuel Policy**

- Establish a clear trajectory for **ethanol blends** beyond E20 while addressing consumer mileage trade-offs.
- 5. **Global Testing Standards**
 - Fully transition to **real-world driving emission tests (WLTP)** to ensure verifiable reductions.
- 6. **Integrate Industrial Policy**
 - Link CAFE targets with manufacturing incentives like the **PLI scheme** to position India as a global **low-carbon manufacturing hub**.

Conclusion

While **CAFE III norms** offer a flexible transition, addressing **low penalty structures** and **credit loopholes** is vital. Implementing strict mandates alongside these norms will convert India's oil vulnerabilities into a competitive advantage in **sustainable mobility**.

***Q.** Evaluate the significance and key challenges of the proposed Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) III norms. 15 Marks*

2.2. ENVIRONMENT

2.2.1. INDIA'S NEW CONSERVATION FRONTIER (TOTR INITIATIVE)

Why is in news?

India's tiger population has increased significantly, nearly **35–40% of tigers now live outside notified Tiger Reserves**, resulting in rising instances of **human-tiger interactions**. To address this emerging challenge, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has launched the **Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves (TOTR)** programme to promote scientific conservation and human-wildlife coexistence.



Introduction

- India has emerged as the **global leader in tiger conservation**, sheltering more than **70% of the world's wild tiger population**. The success of **Project Tiger** has transformed India from a nation struggling with tiger decline into an international model for wildlife conservation.
- However, conservation success has created a new ecological challenge—the **increasing movement of tigers beyond protected forests into human-dominated landscapes**.
- This has necessitated a shift from **reserve-centric conservation to landscape-level coexistence**, leading to the launch of the **Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves (TOTR)** initiative.

India's Tiger Conservation Journey

Evolution of Project Tiger

Year	Achievement
1973	Launch of Project Tiger with 9 Tiger Reserves
2006	Tiger population estimated at 1,411

2022	Tiger population reached 3,682
Present	58 Tiger Reserves covering 84,488 sq km
Present	India holds over 70% of global wild tiger population

This demonstrates one of the world's most successful wildlife conservation programmes.

Key Issues in Tiger Conservation

- **Habitat Loss**

Due to deforestation, expansion in urbanisation, mining activity and infrastructural developmental projects tigers have facing loss of niche habitat.

- **Habitat Fragmentation**

Rapid expansion of Roads, Railways, Canals, Transmission lines connectivity projects habitats getting fragmented.

- **Human-Wildlife Conflict**

Livestock predation, Human deaths, Retaliatory killings, Crop damage are some key issues due encroachment of tiger in locality.

- **Poaching**

Activities including Illegal wildlife trade, Tiger skins, Bones, Body parts cause survival issue to the wildlife.

- **Prey Depletion**

Decline in herbivores such as Deer, Wild boar, Gaur cause competition for food resources encouraging tigers to encroachment in localities in search of food.

- **Climate Change**

Due to irregular climate activities Forest fires, Heat waves, Drought, Water scarcity wildlife survival comes at stake.

- **Governance Issues**

Weak enforcement of laws, Staff shortages, Funding gaps, Slow compensation mechanisms causing delay in implementation of conservation measures.

Need for TOTR:

The launch of the **Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves (TOTR)** programme is necessitated by several emerging challenges in India's tiger conservation landscape:

1. **Increasing Tiger Population Beyond Protected Areas**

Around **35–40% of India's tigers now live outside Tiger Reserves**, increasing interactions with human settlements.

2. **Habitat Saturation and Territorial Expansion**

Growing tiger populations have saturated core habitats, forcing dispersing tigers to move into forests, agricultural lands and villages in search of new territories.

3. **Escalating Human-Tiger Conflict**

Increased incidents of **human fatalities, livestock depredation, crop damage and retaliatory killings** threaten both conservation efforts and local livelihoods.

4. **Habitat Fragmentation**

Expansion of **roads, railways, mining, urbanisation and linear infrastructure** has fragmented forests and disrupted wildlife corridors, making tiger movement riskier.

5. **Inadequate Protection Outside Tiger Reserves**

Reserve forests and territorial forest divisions often lack **specialised staff, monitoring systems, rescue infrastructure and financial resources** available within Tiger Reserves.

6. **Delayed Compensation and Community Distrust**

Delays in compensation for livestock loss or human casualties reduce public support for conservation and may foster hostility towards wildlife.

7. **Need for Scientific Monitoring**

Conventional conservation approaches are insufficient for managing tigers in shared landscapes, necessitating **AI, GPS tracking, camera traps, drones and early warning systems**.

8. **Shift from Reactive to Proactive Conservation**

Existing mechanisms largely respond **after conflict occurs**. TOTR aims to promote **preventive, landscape-based and science-driven management**.

9. **Balancing Conservation with Development**

Rapid infrastructure development in forest landscapes requires a framework that integrates **wildlife conservation with sustainable development and land-use planning**.

10. **Ensuring Long-term Human-Wildlife Coexistence**

As tiger habitats increasingly overlap with human settlements, the focus must shift from protecting tigers **only inside reserves** to enabling **safe coexistence across shared landscapes**.

Objectives of TOTR

- **Ecological Objectives**

To Conserve dispersing tiger populations, Maintain habitat connectivity, Protect wildlife corridors, Reduce habitat fragmentation, Promote landscape-level conservation.

- **Social Objectives**

In order to Minimise human-tiger conflict, Reduce livestock losses, Build public trust, Ensure timely compensation, Encourage community participation.

- **Administrative Objectives**

To Improve preparedness, Establish early warning systems, Strengthen rapid response mechanisms, Enhance coordination among agencies

Key Features of TOTR Programme

1. Landscape-Based Conservation

Unlike Project Tiger, TOTR recognizes that:

- Tigers do not recognize administrative boundaries.
- Wildlife conservation must extend beyond reserve boundaries.
- Entire landscapes must become conservation units.

This represents a paradigm shift from **Protected Area Management** to **Landscape Ecology**.

2. Science-Based Governance

- TOTR emphasizes GIS Mapping, Camera Trap Networks, GPS-enabled monitoring, Artificial Intelligence, Drone surveillance, Predictive conflict modelling

- Technology is expected to improve Tiger movement monitoring, Early warning systems, Scientific decision-making, Conflict prediction.

3. Community Participation

TOTR recognises that conservation cannot succeed without local communities.

- Major interventions include Awareness programmes, Village participation, Community partnerships, Timely compensation, Public confidence-building
- The philosophy shifts from **People vs Tigers** to **People with Tigers**.

4. Conflict Management

Instead of reacting after conflict occurs, TOTR promotes:

- Rapid response teams
- Improved rescue infrastructure
- Communication networks
- Preparedness
- Coordinated emergency response

This marks a transition from **reactive conflict response** to **proactive conflict prevention**.

5. Constitutional and Legal Provisions

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 48A** – Protection and improvement of the environment.
- **Article 51A(g)** – Fundamental duty to protect forests and wildlife.

Legal Framework

- Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 (as amended)
- Biological Diversity Act, 2002
- Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

Challenges Ahead for TOTR

- Maintaining ecological corridors
- Balancing development and conservation
- Strengthening local institutions
- Improving compensation delivery
- Integrating AI with field management
- Sustaining long-term funding
- Building public trust

Way Forward

- **Ecological Measures**

Secure wildlife corridors, Promote landscape-level planning, Restore degraded forests, Improve prey availability.

- **Governance Measures**

Strengthen NTCA and State Forest Departments, Increase trained frontline staff, Build specialised conflict-response units, Integrate AI-based monitoring with field operations.

- **Community Measures**

Ensure prompt and transparent compensation, Expand eco-development initiatives, Promote community stewardship and awareness, Support livelihood diversification in conflict-prone areas.

- **Policy Measures**

Integrate wildlife concerns into infrastructure planning, Encourage inter-state coordination for transboundary tiger landscapes, Use pilot lessons from TOTR to refine a national coexistence strategy.

Conclusion

- The **Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves (TOTR)** initiative reflects this evolution by combining scientific monitoring, institutional preparedness, technology, and community participation to conserve tigers beyond protected areas while safeguarding human livelihoods.
- If implemented effectively, TOTR can build on the legacy of **Project Tiger** and establish a globally relevant model of **landscape-level conservation**, demonstrating that ecological resilience and sustainable development can advance together.

Q. Protected areas alone are no longer sufficient for ensuring long-term tiger conservation in India. Discuss with reference to the TOTR initiative. 10 Marks

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