

Expected
**EDITORIAL
EXPLAINED**

for

IAS Mains Examination

17th Aug *To* 22nd Aug 2026



INDEX

1. GENERAL STUDIES 2	01
1.1. POLITY & GOVERNANCE	01
1.1.1. Ai and the Future of Education: From Knowledge to Capability Transition	01
1.2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	03
1.2.1. West Asia's Changing Geopolitics: Why India Needs a Proactive Strategy	03
2. GENERAL STUDIES 3	07
2.1. ENVIRONMENT	07
2.1.1. Why India Must Shift from Plantation to Ecological Restoration	07
2.1.2. Balancing Ecology and Economy: The SC Verdict on Post-Facto Clearances	09

Scan to know more about our courses...



IAS 2-Year GS PCM



IAS 10-Month GS PCM



Degree + IAS



Prelims Test Series

1.1. POLITY & GOVERNANCE

1.1.1. AI AND THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION: FROM KNOWLEDGE TO CAPABILITY TRANSITION

Context

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the nature of work faster than traditional education systems are adapting. Earlier technological revolutions required people to acquire progressively more knowledge through schooling, higher education and professional degrees. However, AI can now retrieve, process and generate information, reducing the value of **rote knowledge accumulation**.



Introduction

Artificial Intelligence is shifting the economy from knowledge-intensive work towards judgement-intensive and adaptability-intensive work. As AI and automation increasingly perform routine cognitive and manufacturing tasks, India's education system must move from merely producing degree-holders to developing individuals capable of **critical thinking, domain expertise, creativity, problem-solving, judgement and lifelong learning**.

AI Evolution and the Changing Nature of Education and Work

1. **From automation to augmentation:** AI is no longer limited to automating repetitive physical tasks; it is increasingly assisting with coding, research, analysis, content creation and decision-support, making **human-AI collaboration** an essential workplace skill.
2. **Rise of AI agents:** The emergence of AI agents capable of planning and executing multi-step tasks may automate portions of knowledge work that were previously considered relatively specialised, particularly routine entry-level functions.
3. **Entry-level jobs under pressure:** As AI takes over routine tasks, traditional graduate-level entry positions may shrink, creating an **"experience paradox"** in which young workers find fewer opportunities to acquire the experience needed for employment.
4. **Premium on deep expertise:** AI makes easily retrievable information less valuable while increasing the importance of **domain expertise, contextual understanding and professional judgement**.
5. **Shift from knowledge accumulation to knowledge application:** Education must move beyond excessive memorisation towards the ability to **identify problems, locate relevant information, evaluate AI-generated outputs and apply knowledge appropriately**.
6. **Critical thinking becomes more important:** Since AI can generate convincing but inaccurate or biased outputs, students increasingly need **verification, reasoning, source evaluation and intellectual judgement**.

Recent Challenges for India — AI and Education

1. AI-Skill Mismatch

India faces a growing gap between **traditional educational qualifications and AI-era employability**, as graduates often lack the combination of domain expertise, digital literacy and AI-related skills demanded by emerging jobs.

2. Declining Employability of Conventional Degrees

As AI automates routine cognitive tasks, conventional degrees alone may no longer guarantee employment, making it necessary to shift from **degree-centric education to competency- and capability-based learning**.

3. Digital Divide

Unequal access to **internet connectivity, digital devices, AI tools and quality teachers** can widen existing socio-economic, rural-urban and gender inequalities in educational opportunities.

4. Faculty Preparedness

Many teachers require **continuous training and pedagogical upskilling** to integrate AI meaningfully into classrooms; otherwise, AI may simply be added to an outdated education system without improving learning outcomes.

5. AI-Enabled Academic Dishonesty

Generative AI can produce assignments, essays, code and examination responses, thereby challenging **academic integrity and conventional assessment systems** and making authentic evaluation of students increasingly difficult.

Way Forward

1. Curriculum to Capability

India should shift from **content-heavy curricula to competency-based education** that develops critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving and adaptability while preserving strong foundational knowledge.

2. Classroom to Real-World Learning

Universities should strengthen **internships, apprenticeships, research projects, laboratory exposure and industry-academia collaboration** so that students learn to apply knowledge to real-world problems.

3. Degree to Lifelong Learning

Education policy should establish a **continuum of learning** connecting formal degrees with vocational education, micro-credentials, reskilling and continuous professional development to keep workers relevant in a rapidly changing AI economy.

4. Teacher to Mentor

Teachers should increasingly function as **mentors and facilitators of inquiry**, helping students question, analyse and critically evaluate information rather than merely transmitting knowledge.

5. Examination to Application

Assessment systems should move beyond **rote memorisation and predictable questions** towards case studies, projects and open-ended problems that test reasoning, synthesis, judgement and problem-solving.

6. AI Adoption to Responsible AI

Educational institutions should promote **responsible AI use** by establishing guidelines for academic integrity, data privacy, algorithmic bias and verification of AI-generated content.

7. Digital Access to Inclusive AI Education

The government should bridge the **digital divide** through affordable connectivity, devices, digital infrastructure and teacher training so that AI-driven educational opportunities do not deepen existing inequalities.

Conclusion

The rise of AI does not make education less important; **it makes meaningful education more important**. India cannot prepare its youth for an uncertain future simply by continuously expanding the syllabus. It must cultivate individuals who can **understand deeply, learn continuously, question intelligently, adapt quickly and exercise responsible judgement**.

Q. How is Artificial Intelligence expected to transform the nature of employment in India? Discuss the need to reform the education and skill-development system to prepare India's workforce for an AI-driven economy. 15 marks

1.2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1.2.1. WEST ASIA'S CHANGING GEOPOLITICS: WHY INDIA NEEDS A PROACTIVE STRATEGY

Context

- **West Asia is witnessing a major geopolitical realignment**, marked by the intensification of the Iran–Israel conflict, changing Gulf security calculations and growing doubts over the reliability of the traditional **U.S.-led security architecture**.
- Countries such as **Saudi Arabia, UAE, Türkiye and Pakistan** are increasingly seeking greater strategic autonomy and new security partnerships.
- For India, the developments are significant because West Asia is closely linked with its **energy security, diaspora, trade, maritime routes, connectivity projects and strategic interests**.



Introduction

West Asia constitutes India's extended strategic neighbourhood, linking the country's interests in energy, trade, diaspora, connectivity and maritime security. However, the region's rapidly evolving security order and the emergence of new power alignments now require India to shift from **passive balancing to proactive regional diplomacy and bridge-building**.

Importance of West Asia for India

1. Energy Security

- West Asia remains crucial for India's **energy security**, as disruptions in the region can affect crude oil prices, inflation, the current account and overall economic stability.
- Stable relations with major energy suppliers help India **diversify risks and secure reliable energy supplies**.

2. Diaspora and Remittances

- The Gulf region hosts a large Indian diaspora whose **remittances, employment and welfare** are important for India's external-sector stability.
- Strong diplomatic relations are therefore essential for protecting the **rights, security and economic interests of Indian expatriates**.

3. Maritime and Trade Security

- The **Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Red Sea and Suez Canal** are critical maritime chokepoints for India's energy imports and merchandise trade.
- Instability in these waterways can increase **shipping costs, insurance premiums and supply-chain disruptions**.

4. Connectivity and Economic Interests

- West Asia is central to India's connectivity ambitions through **IMEC and Chabahar Port**, linking India with Europe, Central Asia and Afghanistan.
- Deeper economic engagement can strengthen India's position as a **connectivity and trade hub**.

5. Investment and Technology

- Countries such as the **UAE and Saudi Arabia** are important sources of investment for India's infrastructure, energy, technology and manufacturing sectors.
- Cooperation with Israel also provides opportunities in **defence technology, agriculture, water management and innovation**.

6. Counter-terrorism and Security

- Cooperation with West Asian countries is important for combating **terror financing, radicalisation, organised crime and transnational terrorism**.
- Intelligence and security cooperation can strengthen India's **internal and national security**.

India's Strategic Stance in West Asia

1. Strategic Autonomy

- India avoids becoming part of any rigid regional military bloc and seeks to **protect its independent decision-making**.
- This allows India to simultaneously engage with countries having competing interests, such as **Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE**.

2. Multi-Alignment

- India's approach has shifted from traditional **non-alignment towards multi-alignment**, where it develops issue-based partnerships with multiple powers.
- **I2U2, IMEC, Chabahar and India–Gulf strategic partnerships** reflect this approach.

3. Balancing Israel and Iran

- India maintains strong defence and technological relations with **Israel**, while simultaneously preserving strategic engagement with **Iran**, particularly through Chabahar.
- This demonstrates India's attempt to pursue **interest-based diplomacy rather than ideological alignment**.

4. Deepening India–Gulf Relations

- India has transformed its relationship with Gulf countries from primarily **energy and diaspora-oriented engagement to a broader strategic partnership** encompassing investment, defence, technology and infrastructure.
- The UAE and Saudi Arabia have therefore become important pillars of India's **West Asia policy**.

5. Act East–West Asia Linkage

- India's engagement with West Asia complements its **Indo-Pacific strategy**, as maritime security and connectivity extend beyond the Indian Ocean into the Red Sea and Mediterranean.
- This reflects India's vision of itself as a **net security contributor and maritime stakeholder**.

Major Challenges for India

1. Strategic Overdependence on Israel/U.S.

- Excessive dependence on one strategic camp could undermine India's **strategic autonomy**.
- U.S. policy towards West Asia can change with domestic political developments.

2. Balancing Iran and Israel

- India needs **Israel for defence, technology, agriculture, innovation** while simultaneously maintaining **Iran, Chabahar, Central Asia connectivity, energy and regional access**

3. Saudi–UAE Differences

- India has strong relations with both.
- Divergence among Gulf partners makes India's traditional balancing strategy more complicated.

4. Maritime Vulnerability

- Conflict around **Hormuz → Gulf → Bab-el-Mandeb → Red Sea → Suez** can disrupt India's trade and energy security.

5. Fragmented Regional Order

- Multiple competing power centres are emerging.
- Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and external powers have overlapping interests. This makes traditional **bilateral diplomacy insufficient**.

Way Forward: India's Strategy in West Asia

1. Adopt a Proactive Regional Strategy

- India should move from merely **balancing relationships** among competing regional powers to **actively shaping the emerging West Asian security architecture**.
- India should use its good relations with different regional actors to promote **dialogue, stability and confidence-building** rather than remaining a passive observer.

2. Strengthen India–Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership

- India should deepen cooperation with Saudi Arabia in **defence, energy, investment, infrastructure, technology and critical minerals**.

- Stronger India–Saudi relations can provide India with greater strategic leverage and enable it to contribute to **regional confidence-building and stability**.

3. Preserve Strategic Autonomy through Multi-Alignment

- India should continue simultaneously engaging **Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Türkiye, Egypt and Jordan** according to its national interests.
- India should avoid rigid military alliances and pursue **issue-based alignment**, thereby preserving its **strategic autonomy**.

4. Promote Iran–Arab Confidence-Building

- India can leverage its relatively balanced relations with both **Iran and Arab Gulf countries** to encourage dialogue and reduce regional mistrust.
- India should promote **confidence-building measures, economic cooperation and maritime-security dialogue** between competing regional actors.

5. Strengthen Maritime Security Cooperation

- India should enhance maritime cooperation with **Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman and Red Sea littoral states** to protect its trade and energy routes.
- Greater **information sharing, Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), naval exercises and anti-piracy cooperation** can improve the security of Indian shipping.

Conclusion

- **India cannot afford strategic passivity in West Asia.** Its interests in energy, diaspora, maritime trade, connectivity and national security are too deeply intertwined with the region. India should therefore pursue **proactive multi-alignment, strategic autonomy and bridge-building diplomacy**, positioning itself not as part of a regional bloc but as a **credible stabilising power capable of contributing to a more inclusive and predictable West Asian security architecture**.

Q. "India's growing strategic partnerships with Israel and the Gulf countries must be complemented by a balanced and proactive engagement with Iran, Türkiye and the wider Arab world." In the context of the changing security architecture of West Asia, critically examine the challenges before India and suggest a suitable way forward. 15 marks

Scan to know more about our courses...



IAS 2-Year GS PCM



IAS 10-Month GS PCM



Degree + IAS



Prelims Test Series

2.1. ENVIRONMENT

2.1.1. WHY INDIA MUST SHIFT FROM PLANTATION TO ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Context

The **CAG's performance audit of the Green India Mission (GIM)** highlights inadequate progress in restoring degraded forests. The findings expose a key policy gap: **tree plantation cannot substitute ecological restoration**, which requires improving **forest quality, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, water security and ecosystem resilience**.



Introduction

India's forest challenge is no longer merely about increasing the number of trees, but about restoring functional, biodiverse and resilient forest ecosystems. The recent CAG concerns over the Green India Mission highlight the gap between **quantitative plantation targets and qualitative ecological restoration**.

What is the Green India Mission (GIM)?

- The **National Mission for a Green India (GIM)** is one of the **eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**. It was designed as a long-term policy framework to strengthen India's forest ecosystems while simultaneously addressing the challenges posed by **climate change**.
- The primary objective of GIM is to **protect, restore and enhance forest and tree cover** in the country, particularly by focusing on **degraded forest landscapes and vulnerable ecosystems**. Thus, the mission goes beyond merely increasing the numerical extent of forest cover.
- An important objective of GIM is to improve the **quality and ecological health of forests**. This involves promoting healthier and more resilient ecosystems capable of providing essential services such as **soil conservation, water regulation, carbon storage and habitat protection**.
- The mission also seeks to strengthen **biodiversity conservation** by improving forest ecosystems and protecting habitats. A healthy forest is not simply an area containing trees; it is a complex ecosystem supporting **flora, fauna, microorganisms and ecological interactions**.

Key Challenges Facing India's Forest Restoration

1. **Plantation-centric approach instead of ecological restoration:** Afforestation is often measured by the number of saplings planted, whereas true restoration requires recovery of **biodiversity, soil health, water systems, natural regeneration and ecosystem resilience**.
2. **Forest cover–tree cover mismatch:** Recent assessments show that an increase in overall tree cover does not necessarily represent an expansion of natural forests. This creates a risk of **overestimating actual forest restoration and ecological gains**.
3. **Monoculture and invasive species:** Uniform plantations and invasive species such as **Prosopis juliflora** can suppress native biodiversity, reduce habitat quality and weaken ecosystem resilience, particularly in degraded landscapes such as the **Aravallis**.

4. **Continued land degradation and habitat fragmentation:** Mining, quarrying, encroachment, infrastructure expansion and urbanisation continue to degrade and fragment forest landscapes, limiting the effectiveness of plantation programmes.
5. **Weak inter-scheme convergence:** Programmes such as **Green India Mission (GIM), CAMPA and MGNREGA** often suffer from inadequate institutional coordination, resulting in fragmented implementation, duplication and inefficient utilisation of resources.
6. **Poor outcome-based monitoring:** Success is frequently assessed through **saplings planted, area covered and expenditure**, rather than long-term indicators such as survival rate, native species diversity, natural regeneration, soil carbon, groundwater recharge and biodiversity recovery.

Way Forward

A. Shift from Tree Plantation to Ecosystem Restoration

- India should move beyond **plantation targets** and focus on restoring the ecological functions of degraded forests and landscapes.
- Restoration should aim to improve **biodiversity, soil health, water regulation, carbon sequestration and ecosystem resilience**, rather than merely increasing tree numbers.

B. Adopt a Landscape-Level Approach

- Forest restoration should be planned at the level of **entire landscapes, watersheds and ecological regions**, instead of treating plantation plots as isolated units.
- Such an approach can simultaneously restore **ecological corridors, river catchments, degraded hills, wetlands, grasslands and fragmented forest patches**.

C. Prioritise Native and Ecologically Appropriate Species

- Plantation programmes should prioritise **native species suited to local soil, climate and ecological conditions**.
- The objective should be **ecological compatibility and biodiversity restoration**, rather than rapid biomass accumulation through fast-growing species.

D. Promote Natural Regeneration

- Wherever ecological conditions permit, **natural regeneration and assisted natural regeneration** should be preferred over large-scale artificial plantations.
- Natural regeneration can preserve **native species composition, genetic diversity and ecological interactions** that may be difficult to recreate through plantations.

Strengthen Convergence among Government Schemes

- Programmes such as **Green India Mission (GIM), CAMPA, MGNREGA, watershed development programmes, biodiversity conservation initiatives and tribal livelihood schemes** should be integrated.
- A **common landscape-level planning mechanism** can reduce duplication, improve resource utilisation and ensure that different schemes contribute towards common ecological objectives.

Conclusion

- **India must move from a “plantation economy” of counting saplings to an “ecological economy” of restoring ecosystems.**

- The real measure of success should not be the number of trees planted but whether forests regain their **biodiversity, carbon-storage capacity, water-regulation functions, soil health and resilience**.

Q. "Forest restoration is not synonymous with tree plantation." Discuss in the context of India's environmental governance. Examine the challenges in achieving the objectives of the Green India Mission and suggest measures for effective ecosystem restoration. **15 Marks**

2.1.2. BALANCING ECOLOGY AND ECONOMY: THE SC VERDICT ON POST-FACTO CLEARANCES

Context

The **Supreme Court** in *Vanashakti vs Union of India* firmly mandated that prior **Environmental Clearance (EC)** is a statutory prerequisite under the **EIA Notification, 2006**. The ruling invalidates administrative regularisation of legacy environmental violations while preserving the Centre's authority to enact a one-time statutory remedy.



Introduction

The Supreme Court's ruling on ex-post facto environmental approvals reinforces the preventive principle of environmental jurisprudence. By invalidating arbitrary executive regularisations and demanding strict statutory compliance, the judgment curtails the detrimental "violate first, regularise later" culture while offering a legally sound framework to resolve genuine legacy industrial defaults.

Core Findings of the Vanashakti Judgment

- Prior Clearance is Mandatory:** EC under the **EIA Notification, 2006** is a non-negotiable statutory prerequisite, not an optional formality.
- Invalidation of Executive Exemptions:** Retrospective regularisation via administrative **Office Memoranda (OM)** or defunct past notifications is legally void.
- Supremacy of Statutory Authority:** Executive orders cannot dilute environmental statutes; however, formal legislation under **Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986** can be used to address legacy violations in the public interest.

Significance of the Judgment

- Restores Rule of Law:** Eliminates administrative loopholes, ensuring commercial projects adhere strictly to environmental statutes.
- Mitigates Moral Hazard:** Dismantles the pervasive corporate culture of bypassing approvals and relying on retrospective condonation.
- Enforces Polluter Pays Principle:** Mandates rigorous scientific damage assessments and proportional financial penalties for any future regularisation of legacy defaults.
- Prevents Economic Disruption:** Avoids the blanket demolition of viable public infrastructure by leaving a statutory window open for genuine legacy cases.

Challenges in Managing Legacy Violations

1. **Defining Public Interest:** The lack of objective criteria for defining "larger public interest" risks arbitrary regularisation and corporate lobbying.
2. **Ecological Accounting:** Accurately quantifying historical environmental damage and fixing fair remediation costs remains technically complex.
3. **Institutional Capacity Constraints:** Regulatory bodies like **SPCBs** and **SEIAAs** lack the technical workforce required for rigorous post-facto compliance audits.
4. **Risk of Future Defaults:** Formulating even a one-time statutory window may create dangerous expectations of future government condonation.

Way Forward

1. **One-Time Statutory Notification:** The Centre must formulate a strictly non-renewable, time-bound notification under the **EPA, 1986** exclusively for legacy cases.
2. **Mandatory Ecological Restoration:** Impose heavy deterrent fiscal penalties and mandate strict **in-situ environmental remediation** before granting any clearance.
3. **Advanced Surveillance:** Deploy **GIS, drone mapping, and satellite imagery** to detect and halt unauthorized constructions at their inception.
4. **Streamline Clearances:** Expedite the **PARIVESH portal** appraisal processes to eliminate bureaucratic delays and encourage pre-construction compliance.

Conclusion

The *Vanashakti* judgment establishes a firm equilibrium between ecological preservation and economic pragmatism. By anchoring environmental compliance to strict statutory authority, the Supreme Court ensures that sustainable development in India is governed by the rule of law, rather than executive discretion.

Q. *What are the major challenges in the EIA process in India? How can public participation be made more effective in this process? (15 Marks, 250 Words)*

Scan to know more about our courses...



IAS 2-Year GS PCM



IAS 10-Month GS PCM



Degree + IAS



Prelims Test Series



[Click here to watch this video](#)