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GENERAL STUDIES 2

1.1. SOCIAL JUSTICE

1.1.1. BEYOND IRON PILLS: A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO ERADICATING ANAEMIA

Context



Despite sustained public health interventions, anaemia remains a pressing national crisis. To structurally eradicate this hidden hunger, the government is aggressively rolling out upgraded health frameworks and traditional medicine pilots, while public health experts push for the population-scale integration of preventive nutritional strategies.

Introduction

Addressing this widespread crisis requires the state to move beyond basic, input-driven pill distribution toward a holistic, outcome-oriented framework. This evolution demands a strategic blend of targeted dietary fortification, advanced digital healthcare tracking, and scalable preventive measures to protect vulnerable demographics and secure the nation's human capital.

Understanding Anaemia

- **Medical Definition:** A blood disorder characterized by a critical reduction in healthy red blood cells (RBCs) or haemoglobin, which fundamentally impairs the blood's capacity to transport oxygen to bodily tissues.
- **Clinical Symptoms:** It routinely manifests as chronic fatigue, pale skin, shortness of breath, dizziness, brittle nails, and cold extremities.
- **Severe Complications:** If left undiagnosed, it can lead to fatal organ damage, heart failure, and severe fetal developmental disruptions—particularly concerning fetal heart formation during the critical first 100 days of pregnancy.

Different Forms of the Disease

- **Nutritional Deficiencies: Iron-deficiency** is the most prevalent globally (linked to poor diet or severe blood loss), alongside **Vitamin-deficiency** caused by a lack of B12 or folate.
- **Inherited & Genetic:** Conditions like **Sickle Cell** (misshapen RBCs blocking blood flow), **Thalassemia** (abnormal haemoglobin leading to RBC destruction), and **Fanconi anaemia** (genetic bone marrow failure).
- **Disease-Induced:** Includes **Aplastic** (autoimmune-linked marrow failure), **Hemolytic** (rapid RBC destruction via infections), and anaemia triggered by chronic illnesses like kidney disease.

India's Anaemia Burden

- **Demographic Vulnerability:** According to NFHS-5 (2019–21) data, the disease currently afflicts 67.1% of children (6–59 months) and 57% of all women (15–49 years) in India.
- **Regional Spikes:** The burden is starkly uneven, with prevalence among pregnant women reaching critical highs in specific terrains like Ladakh (78.1%) and Bihar (63.1%).

- **Global Impact:** The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that dietary iron deficiency, combined with genetic traits, contributes to 50 million years of healthy life lost globally due to disability.

Treatment and Prevention Strategies

- **Clinical Modalities:** Standard medical responses include targeted oral supplements, aggressive dietary changes (consuming leafy greens, legumes, and red meat), and specialized blood transfusions for acute cases.
- **Double Fortified Salt (DFS):** Fortifying standard salt with both iodine and iron offers a highly cost-effective (₹14-₹20 per person annually) preventive intervention. By leveraging the existing Universal Salt Iodisation network, DFS naturally reaches 95% of households, ensuring daily dietary compliance without requiring behavioral changes.

About Anaemia Mukt Bharat (AMB)

Launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare under the National Health Mission (as part of POSHAN Abhiyaan), AMB is the government's flagship initiative designed to systematically mitigate the disease through a life-cycle approach. It originally utilized a 6x6x6 framework to target specific demographics, interventions, and institutional mechanisms before evolving to meet contemporary challenges.

Core Objectives of AMB

- **Lower Disease Prevalence:** Drastically reduce the burden among adolescents, women of reproductive age, and children.
- **Ensure Timely Management:** Promote early diagnosis through rapid screening and appropriate medical treatment.
- **Halt Intergenerational Transmission:** Prevent the transfer of deep-rooted nutritional deficits directly from an anaemic mother to her child.
- **Elevate Broader Health Metrics:** Improve overall maternal survival rates and pediatric cognitive development.

Mission Utkarsh and the 7x7x7 Upgrade

- **Mission Utkarsh:** A targeted pilot project utilizing specialized Ayurvedic interventions to elevate the nutritional baselines of approximately 95,000 adolescent girls across five socio-economically underdeveloped aspirational districts.
- **Expanded 7x7x7 Framework:** The newly upgraded AMB strategy adds **low birth weight babies (0-6 months)** as a highly vulnerable target group.
- **Diet and Digital Overhaul:** It shifts focus toward an **"Eat Right"** dietary mandate and operationalizes a digital **T4 Protocol (Test, Treat, Talk, and Track)** via integrated portals (JANANI, RBSK, U-WIN) to monitor precise patient recovery.

Significance

- **Bypasses Adherence Fatigue:** Delivering iron seamlessly through everyday food like DFS entirely eliminates the behavioral resistance patients typically show toward daily oral medication.
- **Enhances National Productivity:** Eradicating the disease actively recovers millions of productive life years (DALYs) and boosts physical stamina within the adult workforce.
- **Drives Evidence-Based Governance:** The digital T4 system transitions the state's healthcare machinery from blind resource distribution to precise, outcome-based delivery.
- **Synergizes Medical Frameworks:** Collaborative initiatives successfully blend traditional Indian Ayurvedic knowledge with modern clinical nutritional goals.

Challenges

- **Fragmented PDS Integration:** The inclusion of fortified foods in the massive Public Distribution System remains uneven, relying heavily on the varying political and financial commitments of individual State governments.
- **Diagnostic Blind Spots:** Rural healthcare systems frequently struggle to differentiate between nutritional deficiencies and inherited blood disorders, leading to ineffective treatments.
- **Supply Chain Vulnerabilities:** Guaranteeing a continuous, quality-assured supply of advanced intravenous therapies (like Ferric Carboxymaltose) to remote Primary Health Centres remains a severe logistical hurdle.
- **Low Nutritional Literacy:** General public ignorance regarding the benefits of fortified foods suppresses organic market demand.
- **Digital Connectivity Issues:** Real-time tracking of patients via national portals is often disrupted by poor rural internet access and undertrained grassroots health workers.

Way Forward

- **Mandate Uniform PDS Supply:** The Central Government must structurally incentivize states to integrate DFS universally into the PDS, guaranteeing last-mile delivery to 800 million citizens.
- **Scale Genetic Screening:** Expand mandatory primary-care testing for haemoglobinopathies to accurately separate and manage inherited blood disorders from standard nutritional deficits.
- **Ensure Zero Stock-Outs:** Streamline state-level procurement pipelines to secure an uninterrupted availability of critical oral supplements and intravenous therapies.
- **Mobilize 'Jan Chetna' Campaigns:** Launch aggressive, community-led awareness drives to educate households on the preventive power of fortified foods and the "Eat Right" dietary mandate.
- **Consolidate Digital Ecosystems:** Accelerate the integration of scattered health databases into a single, unified AMB platform for flawless execution of the T4 protocol.
- **Align with Global Health Goals:** Carefully balance all salt fortification programs with the WHO's sodium reduction guidelines to mitigate separate cardiovascular risks.

Conclusion

India possesses the scientific capacity, public infrastructure, and policy frameworks required to eradicate this hidden hunger entirely. By aggressively scaling up proven preventive interventions, leveraging traditional frameworks, and rigorously executing digitally-driven health protocols, the nation can secure its demographic dividend and set a highly replicable nutritional model for the Global South.

Q. *Analyse the multifactorial nature of anaemia in India. Evaluate how the integration of Double Fortified Salt (DFS), Mission Utkarsh, and the upgraded Anaemia Mukt Bharat framework can structurally resolve this public health crisis.* ***15 Marks***

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GENERAL STUDIES 3

2.1. ECONOMY

2.1.1. INDIA'S INDUSTRIAL GROWTH: CANARY IN COAL MINE

Introduction



India's industrial growth presents a paradox: rising core sector output coexists with energy import dependence and growing fiscal pressures. The latest performance of the Index of Eight Core Industries raises questions about whether industrial growth is broad-based and sustainable or driven by temporary demand and government expenditure.

Background: What is the Index of Eight Core Industries?

The Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) is compiled by the Office of Economic Adviser under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). It tracks the production performance of eight core industries that are fundamental to India's industrial and economic activity.

The eight core industries are:

1. Coal: Energy generation and industrial fuel.
2. Crude Oil: A primary source of energy and an input for petroleum products.
3. Natural Gas: Used as a fuel and industrial feedstock.
4. Refinery Products: Processed petroleum products used across transport, industry and other sectors.
5. Steel: Essential for construction, infrastructure and manufacturing.
6. Cement: A key input for construction and infrastructure development.
7. Fertilizers: Essential agricultural inputs that support crop productivity.
8. Electricity: A fundamental input for households, industries and economic activities.

Together, these eight industries account for 40.27% of the weight of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), making the ICI an important indicator of industrial performance and broader economic activity in India.

Understanding the Core Sector Performance

- **Headline growth:** The Index of Eight Core Industries recorded 7.9% growth in September 2026, according to the supplied editorial.
- **Coal output surge:** Coal production grew 10.7% in September despite a 1.1% contraction during April–September, suggesting a temporary rebound rather than a sustained recovery.
- **Electricity demand**: Electricity production grew 11.4%, reflecting increased power demand during the heat wave and associated coal consumption.
- **Refinery expansion:** Refinery output rose 10.3% even as domestic crude oil and natural gas production remained weak, indicating the importance of imported crude in meeting refinery demand.

- **Infrastructure-led growth**: Steel and cement remained relatively stronger sectors, supported partly by government capital expenditure.

Major Structural Challenges to Sustainable Industrial Growth

A. Energy Import Dependence

- High import vulnerability: India relies heavily on imported crude oil, exposing its economy to geopolitical disruptions and global price volatility.
- Rising import bill: Higher oil prices increase foreign exchange expenditure even without a proportionate increase in import volumes.
- External-sector pressure: An expensive oil import bill can widen the current account deficit and put downward pressure on the rupee.

B. Weak Domestic Hydrocarbon Production

- Persistent weakness in crude oil and natural gas output increases dependence on external suppliers.
- Greater refinery activity cannot, by itself, establish that domestic energy production has improved.
- Energy insecurity raises input costs for transport, manufacturing, fertilisers and other sectors.

C. Fiscal Constraints

- Competing expenditure priorities: Higher energy costs can increase pressure for subsidies or tax relief, reducing fiscal flexibility.
- Dependence on public investment: If industrial growth relies excessively on government capital expenditure, fiscal constraints may weaken its momentum.
- Limited private investment: Weak demand expectations and uncertainty may discourage businesses from expanding productive capacity.

D. Quality and Sustainability of Growth

- Low-base effects and temporary demand surges can exaggerate headline growth.
- Growth concentrated in a few core sectors may not translate into broad-based manufacturing expansion or adequate employment generation.
- Industrial output must be assessed alongside private investment, capacity utilisation, consumption and employment.

Significance for the Indian Economy

1. **Industrial development:** Core industries supply essential inputs to manufacturing, infrastructure and construction.
2. **Macroeconomic stability:** Oil-price shocks affect inflation, the current account and currency stability.
3. **Fiscal management:** Energy costs influence government expenditure and the resources available for development.

4. **Energy security:** Domestic production, diversified imports and renewable energy reduce external vulnerability.
5. **Sustainable growth:** Strong industrialisation requires productive capacity and private investment, not merely temporary output increases.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Domestic Energy Security:** Improve exploration, recovery from mature oilfields and domestic natural gas production where commercially viable.
2. **Accelerate Energy Transition:** Expand renewable energy, storage systems, grid infrastructure and energy efficiency to reduce long-term dependence on imported fossil fuels.
3. **Diversify Energy Supplies:** Strengthen strategic petroleum reserves, diversify import sources and improve resilience against geopolitical disruptions.
4. **Crowd in Private Investment:** Improve logistics, regulatory certainty, access to credit and business confidence to broaden industrial growth beyond public expenditure.
5. **Preserve Fiscal Space:** Prioritise productive capital expenditure, rationalise poorly targeted subsidies and provide targeted relief to vulnerable households during energy-price shocks.
6. **Assess Growth Beyond Headline Indicators:** Evaluate core sector performance alongside manufacturing output, private capital formation, employment generation and domestic value addition.

Conclusion

India's industrial challenge is not merely to increase production but to ensure that growth is broad-based, energy-secure and fiscally sustainable. A durable industrial recovery requires stronger domestic capacity, diversified energy sources and greater private investment.

Q. *"Growth in India's core industries does not necessarily indicate a broad-based and sustainable industrial recovery." Examine the structural challenges facing India's industrial growth, particularly in the context of energy import dependence and fiscal constraints. Suggest measures to ensure long-term industrial resilience.* ***15 Marks***

2.2. ENVIRONMENT

2.2.1. DELHI-NCR AIR POLLUTION: WHY GRAP ALONE CAN'T ENSURE SUSTAINABLE AIR QUALITY

Context



- The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) invoked Stage I of GRAP in Delhi-NCR following deterioration in air quality.
- According to CREA's October 2026 analysis, Delhi's winter air quality has shown no consistent improvement over the past four years despite successive revisions of GRAP.

Introduction

Delhi-NCR's recurring air pollution crisis reflects the interaction of persistent anthropogenic emissions, unfavourable winter meteorology and fragmented regional governance.

The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) provides an emergency mechanism to prevent further deterioration in air quality. However, its effectiveness remains constrained by its largely reactive approach, inadequate source-level emission reduction and the transboundary nature of pollution.

Background: Why Does Delhi's Air Pollution Worsen During Winter?

Delhi's winter pollution is not caused by a single source but by the accumulation of multiple emissions under unfavourable atmospheric conditions.

A. Meteorological Factors

- Temperature Inversion: A layer of warmer air traps colder, polluted air near the ground, restricting vertical dispersion.
- Low Wind Speed: Reduces horizontal dispersal, allowing pollutants to accumulate.
- Reduced Mixing Height: Limits the atmospheric volume available for dilution of pollutants.

B. Anthropogenic Factors

- Vehicular Emissions: Continuous release of particulate matter and nitrogen oxides from transport.
- Construction and Road Dust: Resuspension of particulate matter due to construction activities and traffic movement.
- Stubble Burning: Seasonal agricultural residue burning in neighbouring States contributes to regional pollution episodes.
- Industrial Emissions: Industries, thermal power plants and diesel generators contribute to the regional pollution load.
- Festive Activities: Firecrackers and open waste burning aggravate existing pollution levels.

What is the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)?

GRAP is a set of progressively stringent emergency measures implemented according to Delhi's prevailing or forecast Air Quality Index (AQI).

- First notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in January 2017, pursuant to Supreme Court directions.
- Initially implemented through the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA).
- Since 2021, implemented by the statutory Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM).
- Its directions are binding on the concerned authorities in Delhi-NCR and adjoining areas.

Four Stages of GRAP

Stage	Delhi AQI	Nature of intervention
Stage I – Poor	201–300	Dust control and enforcement of pollution norms

Stage II – Very Poor	301–400	Intensified pollution-control measures
Stage III – Severe	401–450	Restrictions on polluting vehicles and construction
Stage IV – Severe+	Above 450	Stringent restrictions on trucks and other emission-generating activities

Significance of GRAP in Pollution Management

Despite its limitations, GRAP remains an important component of India's urban environmental governance.

1. **Emergency Response**: Enables rapid interventions during severe pollution episodes to limit additional emissions.
2. **Forecast-Based Action**: Allows restrictions to be invoked based on anticipated deterioration rather than waiting for pollution to peak.
3. **Regional Coordination:** Provides a common regulatory framework across Delhi and neighbouring NCR districts.
4. **Institutional Accountability:** CAQM's statutory authority strengthens enforcement and intergovernmental coordination.
5. **Public Health Protection:** Seeks to reduce additional exposure during periods of dangerously elevated pollution.

Why Has GRAP Failed to Deliver Consistent Improvement?

1. **Reactive Rather Than Preventive Approach**
   - GRAP largely intensifies restrictions when pollution reaches or is forecast to reach critical levels.
   - It cannot independently eliminate emissions accumulated throughout the year.
2. **Temporary Restrictions, Permanent Pollution Sources**
   - Construction bans and vehicular restrictions provide temporary relief without fundamentally transforming polluting transport, industrial and energy systems.
   - Emissions can rebound once restrictions are withdrawn.
3. **Fragmented Regional Governance**
   - Delhi's pollution extends beyond its administrative boundaries, involving multiple States and local authorities.
   - Uneven enforcement weakens coordinated action across the larger airshed.
4. **Inadequate Source-Level Interventions**
   - Persistent dependence on private vehicles, fossil fuels and poorly managed construction activities sustains the baseline pollution load.
   - Seasonal enforcement cannot replace long-term infrastructure and behavioural changes.
5. **Implementation and Compliance Gaps**
   - Restrictions require effective monitoring, adequate institutional capacity and consistent action by local authorities.

- Economic disruptions can also create resistance among transport operators, construction workers and businesses.

6. **Limited Integration of Public Health**
   - Pollution-control interventions frequently focus on AQI thresholds rather than comprehensive exposure reduction.
   - Vulnerable populations, particularly children, elderly persons and outdoor workers, remain exposed even outside severe pollution episodes.

Global Best Practices: Lessons for Delhi-NCR

Global example	Relevant lesson for India
London's Ultra Low Emission Zone	Discourage high-emission vehicles through sustained emission-based regulation.
Beijing's Clean Air Action Plan	Integrate industrial restructuring, cleaner energy and regional pollution coordination.
Singapore's Electronic Road Pricing	Use demand-management instruments to discourage excessive private vehicle use.

Way Forward: From Emergency Response to Preventive Airshed Management

India must adopt a comprehensive strategy that addresses both episodic pollution and its underlying structural drivers.

1. **Shift Towards Year-Round Pollution Prevention**
   - Integrate GRAP with the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and enforce measurable annual emission-reduction targets.
   - Introduce preventive measures before the onset of winter instead of relying predominantly on emergency restrictions.
2. **Adopt Regional Airshed-Based Governance**
   - Strengthen CAQM-led coordination among Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.
   - Develop shared emission inventories, monitoring systems and coordinated regional action plans.
3. **Address Pollution at Source**
   - Transport: Expand electric public transport, last-mile connectivity and vehicle-emission compliance.
   - Agriculture: Promote economically viable alternatives to stubble burning through residue management, biomass utilisation and farmer incentives.
   - Industry: Accelerate cleaner fuels, emission-control technologies and continuous monitoring.
   - Urban Dust: Institutionalise mechanised road cleaning, construction-site compliance and scientific waste management.

4. **Strengthen Institutional Accountability**
   - Introduce independent performance audits of pollution-control measures.
   - Link local authority performance with verified emission reductions and compliance outcomes.
   - Use real-time data and forecasting to improve targeted interventions.
5. **Integrate Public Health into Air-Quality Governance**
   - Develop exposure-based health advisories for vulnerable populations.
   - Improve indoor air quality in schools and healthcare institutions.
   - Expand public communication regarding pollution risks and preventive behaviour.
6. **Establish Measurable Outcomes**

   Move beyond counting GRAP restrictions towards evaluating:
   - Annual and seasonal PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations.
   - Number of days exceeding prescribed air-quality standards.
   - Verified sector-wise emission reductions.
   - Population exposure and associated health outcomes.

Conclusion

GRAP is an essential emergency safeguard, but it cannot serve as a substitute for sustained environmental governance. Delhi-NCR must move from pollution-episode management to year-round emission prevention, supported by regional coordination, clean mobility, institutional accountability and public-health-centred planning.

The ultimate measure of success should not be how frequently GRAP is invoked, but how rarely severe pollution makes its invocation necessary.

After Reading This Article You Can Solve This UPSC Mains Model Question:

Q. *Despite increasingly stringent emergency interventions under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), Delhi-NCR continues to experience recurring episodes of severe winter air pollution. Examine the structural limitations of GRAP and suggest a comprehensive strategy for sustainable air quality management.* ***15 Marks***

2.2.2. SIANG UPPER MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT

Context



Tensions have escalated in Arunachal Pradesh's Siang belt as indigenous Adi communities oppose the proposed 11,200 MW SUMP over displacement and livelihood concerns. The ongoing pre-feasibility survey has intensified protests, while the State government justifies the project on national security grounds amid China's proposed upstream dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo.

Introduction

The Siang Upper Multipurpose Project represents the complex intersection of India's hydropower ambitions, strategic concerns over China's upstream activities, ecological vulnerability and the constitutional rights of indigenous communities.

Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP): Key Features and Historical Evolution

1. **Large-scale hydropower project:** The proposed 11,200 MW SUMP is envisaged as India's largest hydropower project on the Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh, aimed at strengthening India's hydropower generation capacity.
2. **Strategic river system:** The Siang is the Indian stretch of the Yarlung Tsangpo, which originates in Tibet, enters India through Arunachal Pradesh and subsequently becomes part of the Brahmaputra river system.
3. **1982–2013 – Initial planning and strategic concerns:** The Brahmaputra Board proposed three smaller projects on the Siang and Subansiri rivers in 1982. By 2013, concerns over China's upstream hydropower development had gained prominence in India's strategic planning.
4. **2017 – Project consolidation:** The proposed Siang Upper Stage-I and Stage-II projects were merged under a common framework, eventually evolving into the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project.
5. **December 2024 – China's hydropower expansion:** China's approval of a proposed 60,000 MW hydropower project on the lower Yarlung Tsangpo further increased India's strategic interest in SUMP, particularly concerning downstream water security and potential upstream control over river flows.

Recent Developments: Why has the controversy intensified?

1. **Local resistance:** Sections of the Adi community, youth organisations and riverbank residents have opposed the project, arguing that it threatens their ancestral land, livelihoods and cultural identity.
2. **Continuation of the Pre-Feasibility Report (PFR):** Despite local opposition, the pre-feasibility survey has continued, creating apprehensions that the project may eventually progress towards construction.
3. **Government's assurance:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has stated that the project will not be rushed beyond the feasibility stage and that it will not proceed if experts find it unfeasible.
4. **Demand for written assurances:** Local representatives remain sceptical about government assurances and have demanded a written commitment that project construction will not proceed without community acceptance.
5. **National security argument:** The State government maintains that SUMP is strategically important to counter possible risks associated with China's upstream dam, including potential changes in water flows.

Major Dimensions of the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project (SUMP)

1. **Strategic and National Security Dimension**
   - China's upstream advantage and water security: China's proposed hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo raises concerns for India, as the river enters Indian territory as the Siang and subsequently forms part of the Brahmaputra basin, creating potential upstream-downstream vulnerabilities.
   - Potential weaponisation of water: India apprehends that upstream infrastructure could influence downstream water availability through changes in the timing and volume of water releases, making hydrological infrastructure important for strategic preparedness.
2. **Environmental and Ecological Dimension**
   - Ecological fragility and biodiversity loss: The Siang basin lies in the ecologically sensitive Eastern Himalayas, where large hydropower projects may cause forest loss, habitat fragmentation and disturbance to terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity.
   - Alteration of river ecosystems: Dam construction and reservoir operations can modify natural river flows, sediment transportation, fish migration and downstream ecological processes, affecting floodplains and agricultural productivity.
3. **Socio-Cultural and Tribal Rights Dimension**
   - Displacement and livelihood insecurity: The Adi community fears the loss of ancestral settlements, agricultural land and traditional livelihood resources, particularly those dependent on agriculture, fishing and forests.
   - Threat to cultural identity: The Siang holds deep religious, cultural and social significance for indigenous communities, and its submergence could weaken traditional practices, customary institutions and intergenerational relationships.
4. **Economic and Energy Security Dimension**
   - Renewable energy and energy security: SUMP could significantly expand India's hydropower capacity by providing relatively clean and dispatchable electricity, helping balance intermittent renewable sources such as solar and wind energy.
   - Regional economic development: The project could generate employment, improve connectivity and encourage economic activities through investments in roads, transmission networks and communication infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh.
5. **Governance and Institutional Dimension**
   - Lack of public trust and inadequate consultation: The gap between government assurances and community expectations has generated distrust, highlighting the need for early and continuous engagement with indigenous communities.
   - Transparency and credibility of assessments: Project design, land requirements, submergence areas and environmental consequences must be publicly disclosed, while the pre-feasibility survey should remain an objective technical assessment rather than a procedural formality.

6. International Relations and Transboundary River Governance

- Upstream-downstream asymmetry: China's geographical position as an upstream riparian country gives it considerable influence over the Yarlung Tsangpo's flow into India, creating concerns regarding downstream water security.
- Information-sharing deficit: India needs reliable information about China's proposed dam, including its storage capacity, operational procedures, water-release schedules and potential downstream consequences.

Constitutional, Legal and Policy Framework

A. Constitutional provisions

1. **Article 21 – Right to Life:** The right to life has been judicially interpreted to include the right to a healthy environment, making environmental protection an important consideration in large infrastructure projects.
2. **Article 29 – Protection of Cultural Interests:** The provision protects the interests of sections of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture, which is relevant to safeguarding indigenous cultural identity.
3. **Article 300A – Right to Property:** No person can be deprived of property except by authority of law, making lawful acquisition and compensation essential where private property is affected.
4. **Article 48A – Environmental Protection:** The State is constitutionally obligated to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.
5. **Article 51A(g) – Fundamental Duty:** Citizens have a duty to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife.

B. Important legislative and regulatory frameworks

1. **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** It provides the overarching legal framework for environmental protection and the regulation of activities with potential environmental impacts.
2. **EIA Notification, 2006:** Applicable projects must undergo the prescribed environmental clearance process, including environmental impact assessment and public consultation requirements, subject to the relevant project category and exemptions.
3. **Forest Rights Act, 2006:** Where applicable, it recognises the individual and community forest rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
4. **Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013:** It provides a framework for fair compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement in cases of land acquisition covered by the Act.
5. **Biological Diversity Act, 2002:** It provides a framework for biodiversity conservation, sustainable use of biological resources and equitable sharing of benefits.

C. Important judicial principles

1. **Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India (1996):** The Supreme Court recognised the precautionary principle and polluter pays principle as essential components of environmental law in India.
2. **Narmada Bachao Andolan v. Union of India (2000):** The Supreme Court examined the relationship between large development projects, environmental safeguards, rehabilitation and displacement, highlighting the importance of balancing developmental objectives with affected people's interests.
3. **Samatha v. State of Andhra Pradesh (1997):** The Supreme Court emphasised the protection of tribal land interests in the context of land transfers and mining in Scheduled Areas, although its specific legal application must be distinguished from the situation in Arunachal Pradesh.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen strategic preparedness:** India should seek information on China's proposed dam and strengthen hydrological monitoring, flood forecasting and early-warning systems. SUMP's strategic necessity and feasibility must be independently assessed.
2. **Ensure tribal participation:** The government should ensure early community consultations, recognise customary rights and undertake comprehensive Social Impact Assessments, fair rehabilitation and equitable benefit-sharing.
3. **Strengthen environmental governance:** Comprehensive and cumulative impact assessments, seismic studies, environmental flow requirements and climate-resilient planning must guide project decisions.
4. **Improve governance and conflict resolution:** Institutionalised dialogue, transparent information disclosure, participatory decision-making and independent grievance-redressal mechanisms are essential to building public trust.
5. **Promote transboundary cooperation:** India should strengthen hydrological data-sharing, flood-warning mechanisms and emergency communication with China while engaging Bangladesh in sustainable Brahmaputra basin management.

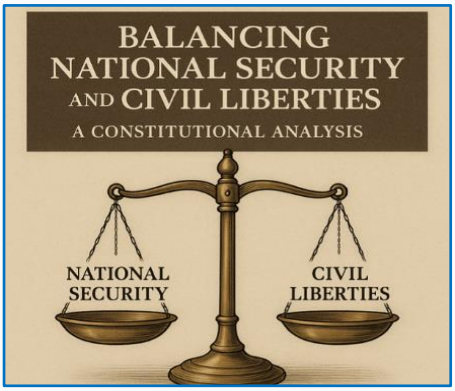
Conclusion

The Siang project must not become a choice between national security and indigenous rights. India's strategic interests will be best served through scientifically informed planning, ecological safeguards, meaningful tribal participation and cooperative transboundary water governance.

Q. *"Large hydropower projects in ecologically fragile and strategically sensitive regions often create a conflict between national security, developmental priorities and indigenous community rights." Discuss with reference to the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project in Arunachal Pradesh.* ***15 Marks,***

2.3. INTERNAL SECURITY

2.3.1. UAPA: BALANCING NATIONAL SECURITY WITH CIVIL LIBERTIES



Context

The second death anniversary of Prof. G.N. Saibaba has renewed concerns over the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), particularly its vague provisions, stringent bail conditions and prolonged incarceration without trial, raising questions about the balance between national security and constitutional liberties.

Introduction

The UAPA, 1967, is India's principal anti-terror legislation, intended to safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security. However, its expansive provisions and procedural restrictions have raised concerns over the potential transformation of a preventive security framework into a mechanism of prolonged incarceration without conviction.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

1. **Article 19(1)(a)** – Freedom of Speech and Expression: Protects freedom of expression, including peaceful political dissent, subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2).
2. **Article 21** – Right to Life and Personal Liberty: Guarantees fair procedure and speedy trial, safeguarding individuals against arbitrary and prolonged incarceration.
3. **Article 22** – Protection Against Arbitrary Arrest: Provides safeguards such as communication of grounds of arrest, access to legal counsel and production before a magistrate within 24 hours, subject to constitutional exceptions.
4. **UAPA Section 15** – Definition of Terrorist Act: Defines terrorist acts involving threats to India's security, sovereignty or public safety through specified acts and means.
5. **UAPA Section 43D(5)** – Stringent Bail Conditions: Restricts bail for offences under Chapters IV and VI if the court finds reasonable grounds to believe the accusations are prima facie true.
6. **UAPA Section 43D(2**) – Extended Investigation Period: Allows extension of the investigation-related detention period from 90 to 180 days, subject to a court's satisfaction of statutory conditions and a Public Prosecutor's report.

Major Concerns Surrounding the UAPA

A. Substantive Legal Challenges

1. **Ambiguity in statutory definitions**: Broad expressions concerning unlawful activity, membership and terrorist associations create scope for expansive interpretation.
2. **Criminalisation of association**: The distinction between ideological sympathy, passive association and active participation in unlawful activities remains a significant civil-liberties concern.
3. **Potential misuse against dissent**: Allegations of terrorism against activists, journalists and scholars raise concerns about conflating political opposition with threats to national security.

B. Procedural and Judicial Challenges

1. **Stringent bail provisions**: Section 43D(5) creates a substantial barrier to bail when accusations appear prima facie true, potentially resulting in prolonged pre-trial incarceration.
2. **Inconsistent judicial interpretation**: Differing standards of scrutiny of prosecution material create uncertainty in bail adjudication and weaken predictability in the application of law.
3. **Delayed trials**: Prolonged investigations, voluminous chargesheets and procedural delays risk converting pre-trial detention into punishment without conviction.
4. **Disproportionate human costs**: Extended incarceration can undermine health, livelihood, dignity and family life, even where an accused is subsequently acquitted.

Judicial Interpretations: Key Cases

Judgment	Principle / Significance
NIA v. Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali (2019)	Established a restrictive approach to bail scrutiny under Section 43D(5).
Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb (2021)	Constitutional courts can grant bail despite statutory restrictions when prolonged incarceration violates Article 21.
Vernon v. State of Maharashtra (2023)	Emphasised examining the material connecting the accused to alleged terrorist activities.
Arup Bhuyan v. State of Assam (2023 review)	Revisited the earlier interpretation of passive membership of a banned organisation.
G.N. Saibaba case (2024)	His acquittal after prolonged incarceration highlighted the irreversible consequences of delayed justice.

Way Forward: A Rights-Based National Security Framework

1. **Legislative Clarity**: Precisely define terrorist activities and organisational membership, distinguishing peaceful dissent from incitement to violence.
2. **Bail Reforms**: Introduce proportionality-based bail assessment and periodic judicial review to prevent indefinite pre-trial incarceration.
3. **Speedy Trials**: Establish dedicated courts, enforce procedural timelines and ensure judicial monitoring of prolonged cases.
4. **Investigative Accountability**: Strengthen independent scrutiny of evidence and prosecution sanctions to prevent arbitrary invocation of UAPA.
5. **Judicial Consistency**: Develop uniform standards for assessing prima facie accusations, evidentiary sufficiency and constitutional bail.
6. **Human Rights Safeguards**: Ensure adequate medical care, legal assistance and humane treatment of undertrials, particularly vulnerable prisoners.
7. **Institutional Oversight**: Introduce periodic parliamentary review and transparent reporting on UAPA arrests, convictions and pendency to strengthen accountability.

Conclusion

The legitimacy of a constitutional democracy lies not merely in its ability to punish terrorism, but also in its commitment to ensuring that the process of prosecution does not itself become punishment.

Q. *Stringent anti-terror laws are necessary for national security, but their application must remain consistent with constitutional guarantees of personal liberty and due process. Critically examine this statement in the context of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).* ***15 Marks***

2.3.2. INDIA'S DRUG TRAFFICKING CHALLENGE

Context



- **Operation Trident (October 2026):** A multi-agency crackdown on an international narcotics syndicate operating across the India–Myanmar–Bangladesh corridor resulted in 18 arrests.
- **Vision Document on Drug Control (2026–2029):** Sets a target of dismantling 100 major drug cartels, strengthening prosecution and eliminating drug networks by December 31, 2029.

Introduction

Drug trafficking in India has evolved from an isolated law-and-order problem into a complex transnational organised crime challenge, intersecting with border security, illicit financial flows, institutional coordination and public health.

India's strategic location between the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle makes it particularly vulnerable to international narcotics trafficking.

Background and Magnitude of the Problem

Dimension	Key Facts
Geographical vulnerability	Proximity to major opium-producing regions of Asia
Enforcement trends	In 2025, NDPS arrests increased by over 50%, while registered cases rose by nearly 53% compared with 2024
Major trafficking case	Mundra Port (2021): Approximately 3,000 kg of heroin seized
Emerging challenge	Cross-border syndicates, synthetic drugs and foreign-based cartel operators

Major Challenges in Combating Drug Trafficking

1. **Enforcement Concentrated on Lower-Level Operatives**
   - Arrests disproportionately target carriers, couriers and local distributors, while cartel financiers and masterminds remain beyond the reach of enforcement agencies.
   - Example: The 2021 Mundra heroin seizure illustrates the difficulty of prosecuting foreign-based principal suppliers.
2. **Transnational Nature of Drug Syndicates**
   - Porous borders, difficult terrain and cross-border criminal networks complicate surveillance, investigation and prosecution.
   - Limited international cooperation creates jurisdictional barriers to apprehending foreign-based operators.
3. **Inadequate Financial Investigation**
   - Drug trafficking is sustained by illicit financial networks, money laundering and concealed beneficial ownership.
   - Investigations focused primarily on physical seizures often fail to identify the ultimate financial beneficiaries.
4. **Fragmented Institutional Coordination**
   - Multiple central agencies, State police forces and border-security institutions operate across overlapping jurisdictions.
   - Inadequate intelligence sharing and inconsistent implementation weaken coordinated enforcement.
5. **Persistence of Drug Demand and Addiction**
   - Supply-side crackdowns alone cannot eliminate narcotics consumption without addressing addiction, rehabilitation and social vulnerability.
   - Example: Punjab demonstrates how persistent drug availability can translate into a long-term public health and social crisis.
6. **Weak Community Protection and Public Participation**
   - Threats against anti-drug activists and informants discourage citizens from reporting trafficking networks.
   - Alleged drug-related incidents in Punjab highlight the need for stronger witness protection and community-level accountability.

Existing Institutional and Legal Framework

- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985:** Principal legislation governing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- **Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988:** Provides for preventive detention in specified illicit-trafficking cases.

- **Narcotics Control Bureau:** Central agency responsible for coordinating drug-law enforcement.
- **NCORD:** Narco-Coordination Centre mechanism for inter-agency and Centre–State coordination.
- **PITNDPS and PMLA frameworks:** Support action against trafficking networks and their illicit financial proceeds.
- **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan:** Focuses on awareness, demand reduction and community participation.

Why Are Existing Enforcement Measures Insufficient?

1. **Arrest-Centric Approach:** Focus on apprehending carriers and local distributors rather than cartel masterminds and financiers.
2. **Misleading Success Indicators:** Rising arrests and drug seizures do not necessarily reflect declining drug availability or consumption.
3. **Adaptive Trafficking Networks:** Criminal syndicates frequently shift routes and methods, limiting the effectiveness of border interdiction.
4. **Weak Transnational Accountability:** Foreign-based suppliers and financiers often evade investigation and prosecution due to jurisdictional barriers.
5. **Neglect of Demand Reduction:** Excessive reliance on supply-side enforcement overlooks addiction treatment, rehabilitation and community-based prevention.

Global Best Practices

Global Initiative	Lessons for India
UNODC – International cooperation mechanisms	Strengthening cross-border intelligence and coordinated investigations
Financial Action Task Force (FATF)	Tracing illicit financial flows and confiscating proceeds of organised crime
Portugal's public-health-oriented drug policy	Greater emphasis on treatment, rehabilitation and harm reduction

Way Forward: Towards a Network-Centric Anti-Narcotics Strategy

India requires a shift from targeting individual offenders to dismantling the entire criminal ecosystem.

1. **Follow the Money Trail**
   - Prioritise financial intelligence, asset tracing and identification of ultimate beneficiaries.
   - Strengthen cooperation among the NCB, Enforcement Directorate, FIU-IND and State police.
2. **Strengthen International Cooperation**
   - Enhance intelligence sharing, mutual legal assistance and extradition efforts with neighbouring countries.
   - Utilise UNODC and INTERPOL mechanisms to investigate transnational syndicates.

3. **Improve Institutional Convergence**
    - Operationalise NCORD through real-time intelligence sharing and joint investigations.
    - Establish clear accountability for central and State agencies under the 2026–2029 Vision Document.
4. **Shift Towards Outcome-Based Enforcement**
    - Measure success through cartel dismantling, conviction of principal offenders, confiscation of criminal proceeds and reduction in drug availability.
    - Move beyond seizure quantities and arrest numbers as standalone indicators.
5. **Adopt a Public Health-Centred Approach**
    - Integrate prevention, evidence-based treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration with supply-side enforcement.
    - Strengthen community-based interventions, particularly in drug-affected regions such as Punjab.
6. **Strengthen Community Participation and Protection**
    - Ensure effective implementation of witness protection mechanisms.
    - Protect informants and anti-drug activists from intimidation and retaliation.

Conclusion

India's anti-narcotics strategy must evolve from a seizure-centric approach to a network-centric, intelligence-led and public health-oriented framework. Lasting success lies not merely in apprehending drug carriers but in dismantling cartels, prosecuting masterminds, disrupting illicit financial networks and reducing societal dependence on narcotics.

Q. *India's fight against narcotics trafficking requires moving beyond seizure-centric enforcement towards dismantling organised criminal networks. Examine the structural challenges in combating drug trafficking in India and suggest a comprehensive strategy to address them.* ***15 Marks***

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