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SUBJECT-WISE UPDATES
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*Current Affairs for UPSC Civil Services,
organised by topic*

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Polity and Governance

1 Parliament and state legislatures

1.1 Presiding officers, privileges and anti defection

1.1.1 The anti defection law: condonation, mergers and the Speaker

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 24 September 2026 the Supreme Court upheld the disqualification of a Telangana legislator who had fought a Lok Sabha election on another party's ticket. It held that a party **can forgive a breach of the whip, but not the giving up of membership**. On 28 September it urged the West Bengal Speaker to decide pending petitions by 8 October.

Background

- The **Tenth Schedule** was added by the **52nd Amendment (1985)** to stop legislators changing parties for office or money.
- A member is disqualified for **voluntarily giving up** party membership, or for **voting or abstaining against the party's direction**.
- The **presiding officer** of the House decides. There is no time limit in the text.
- The **91st Amendment (2003)** removed the protection for a split by one third of a party. A **merger** by two thirds of the legislature party is still protected.

Legislature party

The members of a political party in a House, as distinct from the party's organisation outside.

What the Court settled in September

- The Speaker had rejected the petitions against him, and **the High Court set that rejection aside**.
- The Court held that **condonation within 15 days applies only to a breach of the whip**. Giving up membership cannot be condoned.

Whip

A party's written direction to its members on how to vote; also the member who issues it.

Condonation

A party's forgiving, within 15 days, of a member's vote against its direction.

- This builds on the settled rule that **conduct is enough** (*Ravi Naik*, 1994): a formal resignation is not needed to show that membership has been given up.

The anti defection law

Tenth Schedule: what a party can forgive, and what it cannot

Two grounds of disqualification

Voluntarily giving up membership of the party

Can be shown by conduct

Cannot be condoned

Voting or abstaining against the party's direction

The party may condone within **15 days**

Who decides

the presiding officer of the House

Time limit in the text

none; the Court suggests three months

Protected

a merger by two thirds of the legislature party

52nd Amendment, 1985

91st Amendment, 2003:
split provision deleted

Kihoto Hollohan, 1992:
judicial review

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Source: Tenth Schedule; Supreme Court, 24 September 2026

The two grounds of disqualification under the Tenth Schedule, what a party can condone, and who decides.
Source: Tenth Schedule; Supreme Court, 24 September 2026

The Speaker's delay

- Speakers often sit on petitions **until the term of the House is nearly over**.
- The Court has suggested **three months** as a reasonable time, but in the West Bengal case it only urged, and did not order, a decision.
- The Speaker usually belongs to the ruling party, which is why the **neutrality of the office** is doubted.

Mergers and the "real party"

- Paragraph 4 protects a merger if **two thirds of the legislature party** agree.
- Factions use this to claim that they are the party itself, and the Election Commission then decides who gets the name and symbol under the **Symbols Order, 1968**.
- **The Shiv Sena case**, heard in September, asks how much weight the Commission should give to legislators as against the party organisation.

Does the law work?

- It ended the **retail defections** of the 1960s and 1970s.

Defection

A legislator leaving the party on whose ticket he or she was elected, or voting against its direction.

- It did not stop **wholesale defections**, and it punishes honest dissent: a member cannot vote against the party even on conscience.
- It weakens the legislature's check on the executive, since **the whip decides every vote**.

Cases to cite

- *Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu* (1992): upheld the Tenth Schedule; the Speaker acts as a tribunal and the decision is open to judicial review.
- *Ravi S. Naik v. Union of India* (1994): giving up membership can be inferred from conduct.
- *Rajendra Singh Rana v. Swami Prasad Maurya* (2007): the Court may itself decide where the Speaker fails to.
- *Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. Speaker, Manipur* (2020): petitions should be decided within three months; Parliament should consider an independent tribunal.

- *Subhash Desai v. Principal Secretary, Governor of Maharashtra* (2023): the whip is appointed by the political party, not the legislature party.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Move the decision to the **President or Governor on the advice of the Election Commission**, as the Dinesh Goswami Committee proposed, or to an **independent tribunal**, as the Court suggested in 2020.
- Fix a **time limit** in the Schedule itself.
- Limit the whip to votes on which the **government's survival** depends, such as confidence motions, so that members can otherwise vote freely.
- Define a merger as one of the **original political party**, and not only of its legislators.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Tenth Schedule: **52nd Amendment, 1985**; split provision deleted by the **91st Amendment, 2003**.
- An **independent** member is disqualified on joining any party; a **nominated** member on joining a party after six months.
- A merger needs **two thirds** of the legislature party.
- The 91st Amendment also limits the Council of Ministers to **15 per cent** of the strength of the lower House.
- The presiding officer's decision is subject to **judicial review**.

Sources: [The Hindu, 24 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 28 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [LiveLaw, 24 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#) · [LiveLaw, 28 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#) · [LiveLaw, 15 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

1.2 Representation: delimitation, seats and women's reservation

1.2.1 Census 2027: caste returns, and the road to delimitation

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

The first phase of **Census 2027**, the listing of houses, closed on 30 September 2026. Through September the population count began in Ladakh and the snow bound areas, the first since **1931 to record caste**. The Centre deferred the census in Manipur.

Background

- The census is a **Union subject**, held under the **Census Act, 1948** by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, who works under the Home Ministry.
- The count due in 2021 was postponed. Census 2027 is the **16th census**, the eighth since Independence, and the first in sixteen years.
- It is the **first digital census**: enumerators use a mobile application, and households may fill in their own details online.
- It has two phases: **houcelisting** (April to September 2026) and **population enumeration** (February 2027), with **1 March 2027** as the reference date.

Houselisting

The first phase of a census, which lists every building and household and records housing conditions.

Reference date

The moment to which the population count refers; a person is counted where he or she lives at that moment.

Self enumeration

A household entering its own census details online, before the enumerator visits.

Caste after 95 years

- The population schedule has 40 questions. One now records **caste for everyone**, and not only for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- The caste is **written as the person states it**, not picked from a list.
- For it: reservation and welfare rest on **figures of 1931**; courts ask for current data before quotas are extended.
- Against it: open answers will yield lakhs of names that need classifying, and a count may **harden caste identity**.

Three reference dates

- **1 October 2026:** Ladakh and the snow bound areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, counted in September.
- **5 January 2027:** the four States that go to the polls in 2027 (in Uttarakhand, only parts of the State), counted from November.
- **1 March 2027:** the rest of India.

Census 2027

The first digital census, and the first caste count since 1931

April 2026

March 2027

April to September 2026: Phase 1, house listing



September 2026: Ladakh and snow bound areas counted

November 2026 to January 2027: four poll bound States counted

February 2027: Phase 2, population enumeration, rest of India

Reference dates

1 October 2026

5 January 2027

1 March 2027

16th census, eighth since Independence

Census Act, 1948

Entry 69, Union List

Manipur: deferred

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Source: Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India

The calendar of Census 2027 from April 2026 to March 2027, with its two phases and three reference dates.
Source: Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India

Manipur: a count or a register first

- Houselisting in Manipur was **deferred "till further declaration"**.
- Groups there want a **National Register of Citizens** first, since census figures will shape delimitation.

National Register of Citizens

A register of Indian citizens prepared under the Citizenship Act, 1955.

- The difference: a **census counts every usual resident**, citizen or not. A register of citizens **decides citizenship**, and has been prepared only in Assam.

What rides on the census

- **Delimitation**: the freeze on Lok Sabha seats among States lasts until the first census after 2026.
- **Women's reservation**: begins only after a delimitation based on this census.
- **Money**: the Finance Commission uses population in sharing taxes among States.
- **Privacy**: the schedule also asks for identity and bank details; the Census Act keeps individual returns **confidential**, and they cannot be used as evidence.

Cases to cite

- *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (1992): caste can be a starting point for identifying backwardness; reservation is capped at 50 per cent.
- *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017): privacy is a fundamental right; the State may collect data only by law, for a legitimate aim and in proportion.
- *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024): sub classification of Scheduled Castes must rest on data.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Publish in advance **how caste answers will be classified**, with an expert body and State lists.
- **Count Manipur** before any delimitation is done on these figures.
- Release data on a **fixed calendar**; the tables of 2011 took years.
- Hold a census **every ten years by law**, so that it cannot be put off without Parliament.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Census is **Entry 69 of the Union List**; the law is the **Census Act, 1948**.
- The first synchronous census was in **1881**; the last caste count was in **1931**.
- The Census Act **does not fix how often a census is held**; ten years is a practice.
- Reference date for most of India: **00:00 hours on 1 March 2027**.
- The Registrar General and Census Commissioner is under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.

Sources: [The Hindu, 5 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [Business Standard, 14 Aug 2026, business-standard.com](#) · [News On AIR, 5 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 17 Jul 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [ThePrint, 14 Aug 2026, theprint.in](#)

2 Federalism

2.1 Governor and Centre and State relations

2.1.1 The Governor and assent to State Bills

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 25 September 2026 the Supreme Court closed Punjab's petition over two Bills of 2023 that the Governor had **reserved for the President**: the President refused assent to one and sent queries on the other. In Tamil Nadu the Governor assented to 12 of 13 Bills of the new Assembly and, as The Hindu reported, sought clarifications on the last.

Background

- Article 200: when a Bill passed by the State legislature reaches the Governor, he may **assent**, withhold assent, **return it** for reconsideration (if it is not a Money Bill), or **reserve it for the President**.

Assent

The Governor's or President's signature, which turns a Bill into an Act.

- If the legislature passes a returned Bill again, the Governor **shall not withhold assent**.
- The Supreme Court reads these as **three options**, since a Governor who withholds assent must return the Bill to the legislature.
- Article 201**: the President may assent to a reserved Bill, withhold assent, or direct that it be returned. There is no time limit.
- Neither Article says **how long the Governor may take**. "As soon as possible" appears only for returning a Bill.

Pocket veto

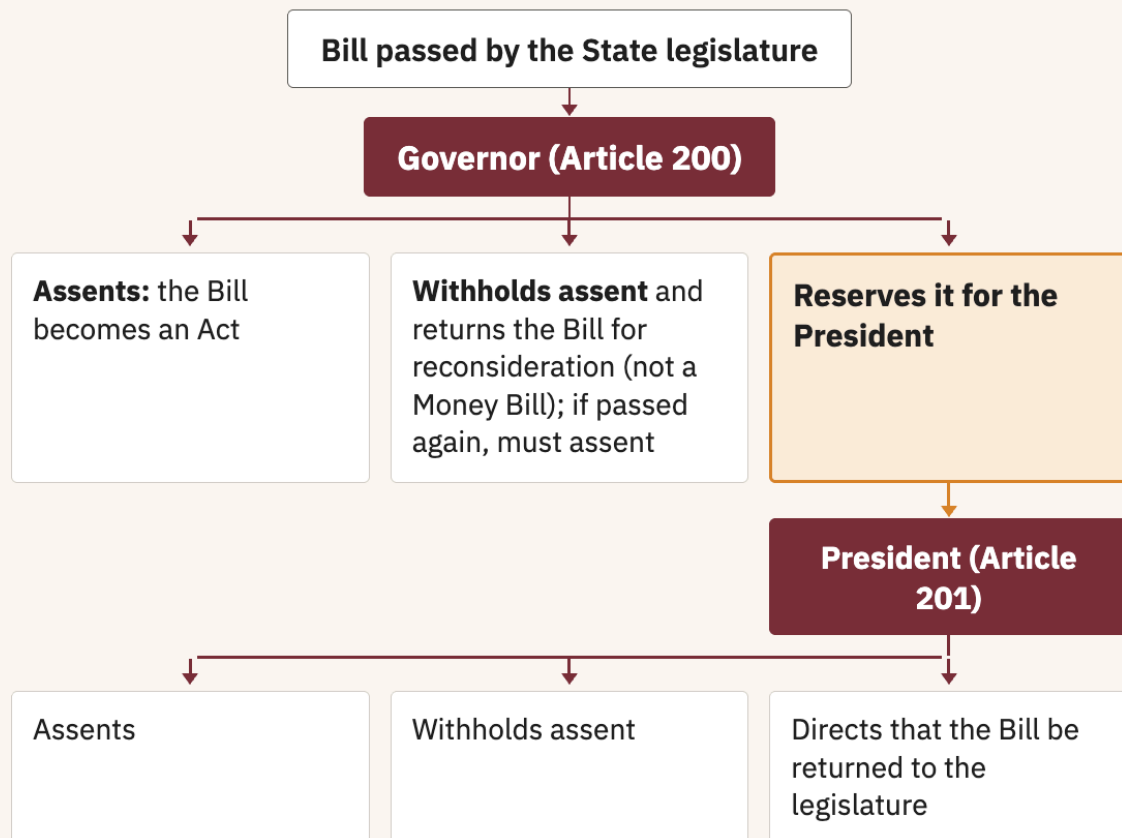
Keeping a Bill pending without any decision.

Presidential reference

A question of law or fact that the President sends to the Supreme Court for its opinion under Article 143.

After the legislature passes a Bill

The Governor's options under Article 200, the President's under Article 201



No time limit in either Article

April 2025: timelines set by two judges

November 2025: five judges say courts cannot fix timelines or deem assent

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Source: Constitution of India; Supreme Court

What can happen to a State Bill after the legislature passes it: the Governor's options under Article 200 and the President's under Article 201.

Source: Constitution of India; Supreme Court

Two rulings in one year

- **April 2025**, two judges, the Tamil Nadu case: indefinite delay is unlawful. The Court set time limits and used Article 142 to treat ten Bills as assented to.

- November 2025, five judges, on a reference by the President under Article 143: courts **cannot fix timelines** and cannot declare **deemed assent**. But long and unexplained inaction is open to **limited judicial review**: a court may direct the Governor to decide, not what to decide.

What September showed

- With no deadline, **reservation for the President** has become the route by which a State Bill can be held: the clock under Article 201 has no limit.

Reservation of a Bill

A Governor sending a State Bill to the President for a decision in place of deciding it himself.

- In the Punjab case a judge noted that the time **starts afresh** each time queries are sent to the State.
- A Governor asking for "clarifications" is **a step the Constitution does not list**.

The federal question

- The Governor is **appointed by the President** and holds office during his pleasure, but is the constitutional head of the State.
- He acts on the **advice of the State's Council of Ministers**, except where the Constitution gives discretion.
- Holding back a Bill passed by an elected legislature sets **an appointed office against an elected one**.
- The other view: the Governor is a check where a State law may clash with a central law or the Constitution, which is **the purpose of reservation**.

Cases to cite

- *Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab* (1974): the Governor acts on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- *Nabam Rebia v. Deputy Speaker* (2016): the Governor's discretion is limited to what the Constitution expressly gives.
- *State of Punjab v. Principal Secretary to the Governor* (2023): a Governor cannot sit on a Bill; withholding assent means returning it to the legislature.
- *State of Tamil Nadu v. Governor of Tamil Nadu* (2025): time limits and deemed assent.
- *In re Assent, Withholding or Reservation of Bills* (2025): the Presidential reference; no judicial timelines, limited review of inaction.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Write a **time limit into Articles 200 and 201**; the Sarkaria Commission suggested norms and the Punchhi Commission proposed **six months**.
- Limit reservation to Bills that **clash with a central law** or endanger the High Court's position.
- Require **reasons in writing** when assent is withheld or a Bill is reserved.
- Appoint Governors **after consulting the Chief Minister**, as both Commissions advised.

PRELIMS FACTS

- **Article 200**: the Governor's options. **Article 201**: Bills reserved for the President.
- A Money Bill **cannot be returned** for reconsideration.
- A Bill that would **endanger the position of the High Court** must be reserved.
- An opinion under **Article 143** is advisory.
- The President is **not bound to assent** even if the State legislature passes a reserved Bill again.

Sources: [The Hindu, 21 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 20 Nov 2025, thehindu.com](#) · [LiveLaw, 25 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#) · [ThePrint, 18 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#)

2.1.2 Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958

Prelims

The **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958** gives the armed forces special powers in areas declared **disturbed**.

WHAT CHANGED

26 Sep 2026 Brief The Ministry of Home Affairs extended it for **six months** from 1 October 2026 in all of Manipur except **13 police stations** in five Valley districts, and in parts of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Under **Section 3**, the Centre or the State may declare an area disturbed. [The Hindu, 26 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

2.2 Fiscal federalism (home in Economy, pointer here)

2.2.1 States' power to levy a surcharge on sales tax

Prelims and Mains

Whether a State may levy a surcharge or additional tax calculated on sales tax, under its power to tax the sale of goods in **Entry 54 of the State List**, is a question of how courts find the true nature of a tax.

- **Article 246** distributes legislative power through the Union, State and Concurrent Lists of the **Seventh Schedule**.
- The **pith and substance** doctrine finds the true nature of a law that seems to fall within entries on more than one list.
- *S. Kodar v. State of Kerala* (1974) upheld an additional sales tax with turnover thresholds as, in substance, a **tax on sale**.
- *India Cements* (1990) was **overruled** in 2024 by the nine judge bench in *Mineral Area Development Authority*, which cited *Kodar* with approval.

WHAT CHANGED

22 Sep 2026 New

- On 22 September 2026 a **seven judge Constitution Bench** reserved judgment in *Arjun Flour Mills v. State of Orissa*, a reference made on **6 October 1999**.
- The Orissa law imposed an **additional tax graded by turnover**, and dealers argued that such a levy is not a tax on the sale of goods.
- The core issue is whether the **measure of a tax**, turnover or the sales tax already payable, can change its **character**.
- Since the **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** began in 2017, Entry 54 still lets States tax petroleum crude, diesel, petrol, natural gas, aviation turbine fuel and **alcoholic liquor**, so the ruling will govern the States' remaining sales tax base.

Mains: If the measure decides the character, levies graded by turnover may fall outside List II as taxes on income or on business, which narrows the States' already small tax base after GST.

[Supreme Court Observer, 22 Sep 2026, scobserver.in](#) · [LiveLaw, 22 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

2.2.2

Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026 and the States' power to tax minerals

Prelims and Mains newly added

25 Sep 2026 **Jharkhand** said on 14 September that it would move the Supreme Court against the Act; Karnataka, Kerala and Telangana had said in August that they would **jointly challenge** it. By the end of September **no State had filed** a challenge. [The Indian Express, 25 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Hindu, 17 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [UNI, 14 Sep 2026, uniindia.com](#) · [Business Standard, 20 Aug 2026, business-standard.com](#)

Earlier coverage: Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026 and the States' power to tax minerals, August 2026

2.3 Interstate relations, councils, border and water disputes

2.3.1 The Sone agreement

Prelims and Mains

Right bank tributary

A tributary that joins the main river from the right when you face downstream, the way the water flows.

The Sone agreement divides the water of the Sone, a **right bank tributary** that rises near Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh and joins the Ganga near Patna.

- Its water was first divided under the Bansagar Agreement of 1973 between Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and undivided Bihar.

Two routes to settle a river

- Article 262 of the Constitution lets Parliament provide by law for deciding disputes over interstate river waters, and keep the courts out of them.
- The Inter State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 is that law, under which the Centre constitutes a tribunal when a State asks.
- The other route is a negotiated agreement, which binds the States without any tribunal at all.
- Which route they take decides how long the water stays unshared.

WHAT CHANGED

1 Sep 2026

- Bihar and Jharkhand signed a memorandum of understanding dividing the Sone's water, ending a dispute open since Jharkhand was carved out in 2000.
- Bihar takes 5.75 million acre feet and Jharkhand 2, from the 7.75 that undivided Bihar held under the Bansagar Agreement.

[The Indian Express, 1 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

PLACES IN NEWS

Sone river · India (Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar) · a right bank tributary of the Ganga that rises near Amarkantak and joins the Ganga near Patna

1 Sep 2026: Bihar and Jharkhand signed a memorandum dividing its water, ending a dispute open since 2000.

2.4 Official language

2.4.1 English as the Supreme Court's language

Prelims

Article 348(1)(a) makes **English** the language of the Supreme Court and the High Courts unless Parliament provides otherwise.

WHAT CHANGED

25 Sep 2026 Brief On 25 September 2026 the Supreme Court dismissed a plea to make **Hindi** its language, noting that a court **cannot amend the Constitution**. **Hindi summaries** of judgments are being introduced in phases. [LiveLaw, 25 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

3 Elections

3.1 Election Commission and the conduct of elections

3.1.1 Who appoints the Election Commission: the split verdict

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 23 September 2026 a two judge bench of the Supreme Court **split** on the challenge to the 2023 law on appointing the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners. Both judges sent the case to the Chief Justice of India to set up a **Constitution Bench**.

Background

- **Article 324(2)**: the President appoints the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners, **subject to any law made by Parliament**.
- **For over seventy years there was no such law**, and the government of the day chose the members.
- In **Anoop Baranwal (2023)** five judges directed that, until Parliament made a law, a committee of the **Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Justice of India** would advise the President.
- Parliament then passed the **2023 Act**. Its Section 7 **replaces the Chief Justice with a Union Cabinet Minister** named by the Prime Minister.

Split verdict

A decision in which the judges of a bench of two differ, so that the matter goes to a larger bench.

What the two judges said

- **Justice Dipankar Datta**: no larger bench is needed. An independent Commission is part of the constitutional scheme, and, as his prima facie view, a Minister on the panel can hardly differ from the Prime Minister. The Commission must not only be independent but **appear to be so**.

Constitution Bench

A bench of at least five judges that decides a substantial question on the meaning of the Constitution.

- **Justice S.C. Sharma:** whether Parliament must include a neutral member has never been decided, and two judges should not settle it.
- Both asked the Chief Justice to consider a **permanent five judge bench** for constitutional questions, noting that references wait for years.

Who chooses the Election Commission?

Three models, and a split verdict on 23 September 2026

Before 2023	Anoop Baranwal, 2023 (interim)	The 2023 Act
The government of the day advises the President	Prime Minister Leader of the Opposition Chief Justice of India	Prime Minister Leader of the Opposition A Cabinet Minister named by the Prime Minister
		Government holds two of three votes

The two judges

Justice Datta: no larger bench needed; the Commission must also appear independent

Justice Sharma: the question is undecided; send it to a larger bench

Article 324(2): appointment subject to law made by Parliament

Now before a Constitution Bench

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Source: *Jaya Thakur v. Union of India*, Supreme Court, 2026

Three ways of choosing the Election Commission: before 2023, under the Supreme Court's interim committee, and under the 2023 Act.

Source: *Jaya Thakur v. Union of India*, Supreme Court, 2026

The constitutional question

- **The petitioners:** a committee where the government holds two of three votes restores executive control over the body that conducts elections. **Free and fair elections** are part of the basic structure.

Basic structure

The features of the Constitution that Parliament cannot remove even by amendment.

- **The Union:** Article 324(2) expressly leaves the matter to Parliament, which is answerable to the people. The Court's committee was a stopgap, as the Court itself said.
- The question for five judges: does Parliament have a free hand, or does the basic structure require **a selector independent of the executive?**

Can the Chief Election Commissioner act alone?

- A separate plea, taken up on 29 September, says the Chief Election Commissioner took decisions **without the agreement of the other two members**.
- The 2023 Act says that when members differ, **the majority view prevails**.
- The Constitution protects the Chief Election Commissioner from removal more strongly than the other two, who can be **removed on his recommendation**.

Cases to cite

- *Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India* (2023): the interim committee with the Chief Justice of India.
- *T.N. Seshan v. Union of India* (1995): upheld the multi member Commission; the Chief Election Commissioner is first among equals, and decisions are by majority.
- *Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain* (1975): free and fair elections are part of the basic structure.
- *Mohinder Singh Gill v. Chief Election Commissioner* (1978): Article 324 is a reservoir of power, to be used fairly.

THE WAY FORWARD

- A selection committee in which the **executive does not hold the majority**; the Law Commission's 255th Report proposed the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Justice of India.
- The **same protection from removal** for all three members.
- A **bar on post retirement office** under the government.
- An independent secretariat and expenses **charged on the Consolidated Fund**.

PRELIMS FACTS

- **Article 324(2)**: appointment by the President, subject to law made by Parliament.
- **Article 324(5)**: the Chief Election Commissioner is removed only like a **Supreme Court judge**; other Commissioners only on his recommendation.
- 2023 Act: committee of the **Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition** (or leader of the largest opposition party) **and a Cabinet Minister**.
- **Article 145(3)**: at least five judges for a substantial question of constitutional interpretation.
- The Commission has been a **three member body** since 1993.

Sources: [The Hindu, 23 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [Supreme Court Observer, 23 Sep 2026, scobserver.in](#) · [Supreme Court Observer, 29 Sep 2026, scobserver.in](#) · [LiveLaw, 23 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

3.2 Electoral rolls, voting and technology

3.2.1 Totaliser machines for counting votes

Prelims

A **totaliser** combines the votes of **several polling stations** before counting, so that the **voting pattern of a booth** is not revealed.

WHAT CHANGED

6 Sep 2026 **Brief** The Supreme Court sought the views of the Union and the Election Commission on using totalisers, which are meant to protect the **secrecy of the vote**. [LiveLaw, 6 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

3.2.2 **Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls** Prelims and Mains newly added

28 Sep 2026 West Bengal's appellate tribunals had decided only a small share of about **38 lakh appeals** against inclusion or exclusion by the end of September. Two Election Commissioners recorded **formal dissent** against a change to **Form 6** that asks whether the applicant, a parent or a grandparent was on the roll of the last revision. They held that a statutory form cannot be altered without amending the **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960**.

[The Hindu, 28 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 27 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 18 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

Earlier coverage: Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, August 2026

3.3 **Political parties and their funding**

3.3.1 Party splits and the Symbols Order

Prelims

Under **paragraph 15** of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, the Election Commission of India (ECI) decides which rival group within a recognised party is that party and is entitled to its **name and symbol**.

- In *Sadiq Ali v. Election Commission of India* (1971) the Supreme Court upheld this power and accepted a **test of majority support** in the party's legislative and organisational wings.
- Pending a final decision, the ECI may **freeze** the name and symbol and give each group an interim name and symbol, often ahead of by elections.

WHAT CHANGED

28 Sep 2026 New

- On 17 September 2026 the ECI **froze the name and symbol** of the All India Trinamool Congress by an interim order, on rival claims from two groups.
- On 18 September it allotted the two groups **interim names and symbols** for the by elections.
- On 28 September the Supreme Court gave the factions four weeks for their pleadings and the ECI **three months** to decide the dispute.

[The Hindu, 28 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [LiveLaw, 24 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#) · [LiveLaw, 28 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

4 Constitution and rights

4.1 Equality and reservation (Articles 14 to 18)

4.1.1 Sexual harassment complaints by women lawyers

Mains

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 protects women from harassment at work through **internal complaints committees** set up by employers.

WHAT CHANGED

18 Sep 2026 Brief On 18 September 2026 the Supreme Court said the Act **cannot apply rigidly to advocates**, who have **no employer**. It urged the Union and the **Bar Council of India** to frame regulations covering every court and tribunal. [LiveLaw, 18 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

4.2 Freedoms, privacy and personal liberty (Articles 19 to 22)

4.2.1 Preventive detention under the National Security Act

Prelims and Mains

The **National Security Act, 1980** allows a person to be detained without trial to prevent acts prejudicial to security or **public order**.

WHAT CHANGED

29 Sep 2026 Brief On 29 September 2026 the Supreme Court quashed a detention and held that a **confession to the police** cannot alone justify detention. It held that using the Act **to defeat a bail order** is punitive, and imposed **₹10 lakh** costs on the State. [LiveLaw, 29 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

4.2.2 The High Level Committee on Demographic Changes: its questionnaire to States

Mains

The **High Level Committee on Demographic Changes** was set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs on **26 May 2026**.

WHAT CHANGED

28 Sep 2026 Brief It sent States **35 questions** seeking data by **religion** for the past **15 years**. The legal point: the State may collect personal data only **by law, for a legitimate aim and in proportion** (*K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India*, 2017). [The Hindu, 28 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

4.2.3 **Vande Mataram and the national honour law** Prelims and Mains newly added

22 Sep 2026 On 22 September the Supreme Court told the Union it expected **no criminal consequences** for a person who does not sing Vande Mataram, in whole or in part, for reasons of **religion or conscience**. It will examine the amended **Section 3** against the fundamental rights, on a petition that also notes that the Act does not define the national song. [The Hindu, 22 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [LiveLaw, 22 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

Earlier coverage: Vande Mataram and the national honour law, August 2026

5 Executive

5.1 **Civil services and administrative reform**

5.1.1 **Article 311 and the rank of the removing officer**

Prelims

Article 311(1) bars the dismissal of a civil servant by an authority **subordinate** to the one that appointed them.

WHAT CHANGED

24 Sep 2026 Brief On 24 September 2026 the Supreme Court held that the bar is **not breached** when the removing officer is **equal in status** to the appointing authority. [LiveLaw, 24 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

6 Judiciary

6.1 **Appointments, transfers and accountability of judges**

6.1.1 **Appointment of judges to the higher judiciary**

Prelims and Mains

Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed under **Article 124(2)** and judges of the High Courts under **Article 217**, on the recommendation of the **collegium** of the Chief Justice of India and the senior judges.

- The collegium system comes from the **Second Judges case** (1993) and the **Third Judges case** (1998); the executive appoints under a **Memorandum of Procedure**.
- The **National Judicial Appointments Commission** was struck down in 2015.
- Parliament fixes the Supreme Court's strength, and an Act of August 2026 raised it to **37 judges** besides the Chief Justice.

WHAT CHANGED

28 Sep 2026 New

- The Chief Justice agreed to list a 2018 petition seeking a **fixed timeline** for the Union to act on collegium recommendations.
- In *Indrakala Joginder Nanda v. High Court of Bombay*, the Court declined to revisit the rule that **family court judges** are not eligible for elevation to a High Court under Article 217.
- On 28 September 2026 the collegium recommended **three High Court Chief Justices** for the Supreme Court; Justice Sunita Agarwal would be the **second woman** proposed in 2026.

Mains: The open questions are time: how long the Union may sit on a recommendation, and whether a court can set it a deadline.

[The Hindu, 28 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [LiveLaw, 8 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#) · [LiveLaw, 13 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

6.1.2 The textbook chapter on the judiciary

Mains

The Supreme Court took up on its own a chapter on **corruption in the judiciary** in a Class 8 textbook of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

WHAT CHANGED

9 Sep 2026 **Brief** Closing the case on 9 September 2026, the Court said **constructive criticism** of courts is essential in a democracy. It held that **unverified criticism** does not belong in **school curricula**. [LiveLaw, 9 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

6.2 Judicial review and the reach of the courts

6.2.1 Protest cases quashed under Article 142

Prelims

Article 142 lets the Supreme Court pass any order needed to do **complete justice** in a case before it.

WHAT CHANGED

1 Sep 2026 **Brief** On 1 September 2026 a three judge bench used Article 142 to **quash First Information Reports** against students over protests about the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) in July 2026. It recorded the government's commitment **not to register new cases**, and left room for cases against persons with **criminal antecedents**. [Supreme Court Observer, 1 Sep 2026, scobserver.in](#)

6.3 Pendency, court reform and tribunals

6.3.1 District judges to retire at 62

Prelims

The retirement age of **judicial officers** of the district courts is set by **State service rules**.

WHAT CHANGED

1 Sep 2026 Brief On 1 September 2026 the Supreme Court directed **seven States** to amend their rules so that judicial officers retire at **62** instead of 60. In August it had held that judicial officers are **not government servants** and may have a different retirement age. [Supreme Court Observer, 1 Sep 2026, scobserver.in](#)

6.3.2 Tribunals and the National Tribunals Commission Brief newly added

15 Sep 2026 On 15 September the Supreme Court directed the Union to **extend the terms of sitting tribunal members** until fresh appointments are made. [LiveLaw, 15 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

7 Constitutional, statutory and regulatory bodies

7.1 Rights and integrity bodies (human rights, information, vigilance, Lokpal)

7.1.1 Human rights courts

Prelims

Human rights courts are set up in each district under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993** to try offences arising from violations of human rights.

WHAT CHANGED

13 Sep 2026 Brief In *Sayad Asifulla v. State of Karnataka*, the Supreme Court upheld the Karnataka State Human Rights Courts Rules, 2006. It held that a person may go **straight to a human rights court**. [LiveLaw, 13 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

8 Neighbourhood

8.1 China and the boundary

8.1.1 India and China: the boundary talks and Xi Jinping's visit

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 12 September 2026, on the margins of the BRICS Summit, the Prime Minister and President **Xi Jinping** held talks in New Delhi, Xi's first visit to India in almost **seven years** and the first since the **Galwan** clash of 2020. On 25 August the Special Representatives had agreed to pursue an "**early and substantial harvest**" in delimiting the boundary.

Background

- The clash in the **Galwan valley** in June 2020 broke relations. Recovery began with the **October 2024** understanding on patrolling in eastern Ladakh, then flights, visas and the revival of the boundary talks.
- The **Special Representatives** mechanism, created in 2003, seeks a political settlement; its chief product is the **2005 Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles**, which both still call the basis for a package solution.

Special Representatives

The two officials who lead the political talks on the boundary: India's National Security Adviser and a senior Chinese official designated for the purpose, at present the Foreign Minister.

- The boundary is about **3,488 kilometres** long and undemarcated; the **Line of Actual Control** is where the two armies stand.

Line of Actual Control

The line where Indian and Chinese forces stand along the undemarcated boundary; the two sides differ on where it runs.

- Xi last visited for the **Mamallapuram** informal summit in 2019.

Disengagement and de escalation

Pulling troops back from face to face positions, then reducing the forces deployed in the area.

What the August talks agreed

- An **Expert Group on Boundary Delimitation** and a Working Group on Border Management, to settle the less contested stretches first.

Boundary delimitation

Agreeing where a boundary runs, on a map, before it is marked on the ground.

- Two new General Level Mechanism meeting points and two new **hotlines** in the eastern and middle sectors.
- Reopening of the three border trading points, **Shipki La, Lipulekh and Nathu La**; trade through Shipki La resumed on 1 August.
- More batches of pilgrims to **Kailash and Mansarovar**; the river data mechanism to meet.

What the September meeting showed

- **Sequencing** is the core difference. India: peace on the border is the **basis** for normal ties. China: ties and the boundary should move **in parallel**. The two readouts left it unresolved.
- Both agreed differences should not become disputes; India restated its **three mutuals**: respect, sensitivity and interest.
- **No new mechanism**; the thaw rests on existing channels.
- The first **Corps Commander** meeting in the eastern sector, in Arunachal Pradesh, extended military talks beyond Ladakh.

India and China: the boundary and the thaw

From the October 2024 understanding to Xi Jinping's visit, 12 September 2026

June 2020	The Galwan clash
Oct 2024	Understanding on patrolling in eastern Ladakh
Aug 2025	The 24th round of Special Representatives talks, New Delhi
1 Aug 2026	Trade resumes through Shipki La
25 Aug 2026	25th round, Beijing: "early and substantial harvest" on delimitation
12 Sep 2026	Xi Jinping in New Delhi

The three trading passes

Shipki La, Himachal Pradesh

Lipulekh, Uttarakhand

Nathu La, Sikkim

The difference on sequencing

India

Peace on the border is the basis for normal ties

China

Ties and the boundary should move in parallel

Special Representatives mechanism since 2003

Agreement on Political Parameters, 2005

Goods trade about 151 billion dollars; deficit about 112 billion

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Source: Ministry of External Affairs; The Hindu

The three sectors of the India and China boundary with the three trading passes, and the steps of the thaw from October 2024 to September 2026.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs; The Hindu

India's stakes

- **Predictability** on the border, which frees resources and attention.
- **Trade**: about 151 billion dollars in 2025-26, with a record deficit of about **112 billion**. Dependence in electronics, drug ingredients and rare earths gives Beijing leverage.

- India has eased curbs on Chinese investment since March 2026 while keeping **security screening**.
- The limits: China's **infrastructure build up** on its side continues, and it still renames places in **Arunachal Pradesh**, which India rejected again in August.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Test the expert group on the **middle sector**, where the dispute is smallest, before the harder sectors.
- **De escalate**: pull back the large deployments on both sides, which disengagement did not do.
- Widen economic engagement only under **screening**, and cut dependence in the three sensitive sectors.
- Keep the **river data** memoranda renewed, since floods do not wait for diplomacy.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The Special Representatives mechanism dates from **2003**; the Agreement on Political Parameters from **2005**.
- The 25th round: **Beijing, 25 August 2026**; the 26th will be in India in 2027.
- Border trading points: **Shipki La** (Himachal Pradesh), **Lipulekh** (Uttarakhand), **Nathu La** (Sikkim).
- Xi's previous visit: **Mamallapuram, October 2019**.
- China is India's **largest source of imports** and largest trade deficit partner.

PLACES IN NEWS

Lipulekh pass · India (Uttarakhand) · a Himalayan pass at the tri junction of India, Nepal and Tibet, above the Kali river (*Nepal claims it, with Kalapani and Limpiyadhura*)

12 Sep 2026: One of the three border trading points with China that the August talks agreed to reopen.

Galwan valley · India (Ladakh) · on the Galwan river, a tributary of the Shyok, along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh (*on the Line of Actual Control*)

12 Sep 2026: Xi Jinping's New Delhi visit was the first since the Galwan clash of June 2020.

Mamallapuram · India (Tamil Nadu) · on the Coromandel coast of the Bay of Bengal, south of Chennai

12 Sep 2026: Xi Jinping's previous visit to India was the informal summit there in October 2019.

Kailash and Mansarovar · China (Tibet) · Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar, in western Tibet near the sources of the Indus, Sutlej and Brahmaputra

12 Sep 2026: The August talks agreed more batches of pilgrims; the September meeting carried the thaw forward.

Sources: [The Hindu, 10 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 12 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [ThePrint, 12 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [Reuters, 12 Sep 2026](#) · [The Hindu, 25 Aug 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 26 Aug 2026,](#)

8.1.2 The Brahmaputra and China

Prelims and Mains

Expert Level Mechanism

The India China body set up in 2006 for talks on shared rivers, under which China passes flood season data to India.

UN Watercourses Convention

The 1997 United Nations treaty on shared rivers, requiring equitable use, no significant harm, and prior notice of works planned upstream.

The Brahmaputra is the Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet, so India and Bangladesh lie downstream of whatever China builds on it.

1997

UN Watercourses Convention; neither India nor China has joined

2002

Flood season memorandum on the Brahmaputra

2005

Flood season memorandum on the Sutlej

2017

China stops sharing Brahmaputra data during the Doklam standoff

From The Indian Express, 7 September 2026, and The Hindu, 6 September 2026

No treaty

- There is no water treaty between India and China, only the **Expert Level Mechanism** of 2006.
- It is a consultative channel through which China passes flood season data, and it commits China to nothing.
- Neither country is party to the 1997 **UN Watercourses Convention**, which requires equitable use, no significant harm and prior notice of upstream works.

The dam at the Great Bend

- China began building a dam at the Great Bend in July 2025, which its analysts project at about 60 GW, three times the Three Gorges.
- Water may be diverted through a tunnel, so India cannot judge the effect downstream.
- More than 14,000 glacial lakes dot the Tibetan Plateau, so upstream data is part of a warning system rather than a courtesy.

6 Sep 2026

- The Hindu reported that the Nepal glacial collapse is unlikely to halt China's mega dam plan, though the plateau's glacial lakes are growing fastest near its southern borders.

The Hindu, 6 Sep 2026

8.2 Pakistan

8.2.1 **India and Pakistan** Prelims and Mains newly added

26 Sep 2026 On 1 September **Pakistan took over the chair** of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and will host the **2027 summit**; the Ministry of External Affairs said a decision on attending would be taken at the appropriate time. At the UN General Assembly, Pakistan's Prime Minister raised **Kashmir and the Indus treaty**, and on 26 September India's External Affairs Minister called Pakistan a "**serial practitioner of terrorism**"; the exchange is on the page on Security Council reform. [ThePrint, 1 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [ThePrint, 26 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#)
Earlier coverage: India and Pakistan, August 2026

8.2.2 **The Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance** Brief newly added

26 Sep 2026 At the **General Assembly** Pakistan's Prime Minister raised Kashmir and the **Indus Waters Treaty**, and on 26 September India's External Affairs Minister answered by calling Pakistan a **serial practitioner of terrorism**. [ThePrint, 26 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#)

8.3 Bangladesh

8.3.1 **The Ganga Waters Treaty and Farakka** Brief newly added

24 Sep 2026 Bangladesh said it wants a **new relationship** with India through direct bilateral talks, and on 23 September it suspended **imports of hilsa** from India through the Benapole land port. [News On AIR, 14 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 24 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

8.4 Nepal and Bhutan

8.4.1 **India and Nepal** Prelims and Mains newly added

26 Sep 2026 Because the floods damaged Nepal's hydropower plants, India approved **power exports** of up to **600 MW** over the **Muzaffarpur and Dhalkebar** line until 31 December 2026. On 26 September Nepal's Prime Minister thanked India at the UN General Assembly and proposed a **Himalayan Climate Resilience Mechanism**, led jointly by **Nepal, India and China**, to share early warnings on glacial and landslide hazards. [News On AIR, 14 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 26 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

Earlier coverage: India and Nepal, August 2026

8.5 Sri Lanka and Maldives

8.5.1 India and Sri Lanka Brief newly added

9 Sep 2026 On the Defence Minister's visit to Colombo, memoranda of understanding were signed on upgrading the Sri Lanka Air Force's **L70 anti aircraft guns** and on **cadet and defence college** links. Sri Lanka's President repeated that Sri Lanka's **territory would not be used** against India's security. [News On AIR, 9 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

9 Groupings

9.1 BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

9.1.1 India hosts BRICS: the New Delhi Declaration

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

India hosted the **18th BRICS Summit** at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, on 12 and 13 September 2026. The leaders adopted the **New Delhi Declaration** by consensus on 12 September, with Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin and Masoud Pezeshkian present.

Background

- BRICS began as Brazil, Russia, India and China; South Africa joined in **2010**. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates joined in **2024**, Indonesia in **2025**: eleven members.
- The chair rotates in the order of the acronym. This was India's **fourth chairship**, after 2012, 2016 and 2021.
- India's theme spelt the acronym: **Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability**.
- The grouping's bank, the **New Development Bank**, was agreed at Fortaleza in 2014 and sits in Shanghai; Uzbekistan became its tenth member in June.

Strategic autonomy

Deciding one's own positions issue by issue, without belonging to a bloc.

What the declaration said

- It **condemned the Pahalgam attack** and called for zero tolerance and no double standards on terrorism, agreed with Iran and China in the room, though it did not name Pakistan.
- It called for a **Security Council** more representative of developing countries, with China and Russia restating support for a greater role for India and Brazil.
- It said unilateral **tariffs** distort trade and asked for the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement to be restored.
- It urged **maximum restraint** in West Asia, including protection of nuclear facilities.

- It made **no reference to the war in Ukraine**, unlike the Kazan (2024) and Rio (2025) declarations.

BRICS in New Delhi

The 18th Summit and the New Delhi Declaration, 12 and 13 September 2026

Eleven members

2006 to 2009

Brazil
Russia
India
China

2010

South Africa

2024

Egypt
Ethiopia
Iran
United Arab
Emirates

2025

Indonesia

What the declaration said

Condemned the Pahalgam attack; no double standards on terrorism
A more representative Security Council
Unilateral tariffs distort trade
Maximum restraint in West Asia

What it left out

No reference to the war in Ukraine

India's fourth chairship:
2012, 2016, 2021, 2026

Theme: Building for
Resilience, Innovation,
Cooperation and
Sustainability

China chairs in 2027

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Source: Ministry of External Affairs; The Hindu

The eleven members of BRICS by year of joining, with what the New Delhi Declaration said and what it left out.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs; The Hindu

Managing a divided grouping

- Expansion put rivals in one room: **Iran and the United Arab Emirates** while the West Asia war continued. Earlier ministerial meetings had failed to agree statements.
- The summit text was settled overnight, **naming neither** the American and Israeli strikes nor Iran's attacks on its neighbours.
- **Consensus by omission** on Ukraine kept the room together but contrasts with India's G20 presidency of 2023, when it secured agreed language.

Consensus

A decision to which no member objects; one member can block a text.

- Brazil's President stayed away for his elections; **Saudi Arabia**, counted but never confirmed as a member, sent its Foreign Minister.

India's stakes and proposals

- India used the chair to steer BRICS towards **development and reform** and away from an anti Western edge, which is how it squares membership with its Western partnerships.
- It proposed a **troika**, as in the G20, so that decisions carry over between chairs; a roadmap on global governance reform; and a **seafarers' distress network**.

Troika

The past, present and next chairs working together to carry decisions over.

Global South

The developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, as a political grouping.

- The **terrorism language** was a diplomatic gain; the trade language supports India in its dispute with the United States.
- **China chairs in 2027**: the test of whether India's balance holds.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Institutionalise the **troika** and a small secretariat, so that outcomes survive a change of chair.
- Keep BRICS **practical**: payments in local currencies, the bank, disaster response.
- Decide how to handle **members at war with each other**; silence may not be available a second time.

PRELIMS FACTS

- 18th BRICS Summit: **New Delhi, 12 and 13 September 2026**; declaration adopted on **12 September**.
- Members: **eleven**; Indonesia the latest, in 2025.
- India's chairships: **2012, 2016, 2021, 2026**. China chairs in **2027**.
- The **New Development Bank** was agreed at **Fortaleza (2014)** and sits in **Shanghai**.
- The declaration condemned the Pahalgam attack and did **not** mention Ukraine.

Sources: [The Hindu, 12 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 12 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [ThePrint, 12 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [ThePrint, 12 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [ThePrint, 31 Aug 2026, theprint.in](#) · [ThePrint, 13 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [Business Standard, 12 Sep 2026, business-standard.com](#) · [News On AIR, 13 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [The Hindu, 22 Jun 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 23 Jun 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 23 Jun 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [New Development Bank, 18 Jun 2026, ndb.int](#) · [The Hindu, 8 Jul 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 9 Jul 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 16 Jul 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [PMIndia, 7 Jul 2026, pmindia.gov.in](#) · [DD India, 31 Aug 2026, ddindia.co.in](#)

9.1.2 **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation** Prelims and Mains newly added

28 Sep 2026 From 28 to 30 September an Indian delegation led by India's SCO national coordinator attended a **planning meeting in Islamabad**. [ThePrint, 28 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#)

1 Sep 2026 At the **26th summit**, in Bishkek on 1 September, leaders signed the Bishkek Declaration and a protocol amending the SCO Charter: it makes the **Universal Centre for Countering Challenges and Threats** and the Anti-Drug Centre permanent, creates an "SCO Partner" category and gives **English** official status. The Prime Minister called for dismantling the **entire ecosystem of terrorism**, with no double standards, and offered to host the first **SCO Civilisation Dialogue Forum**. On 1 September **Pakistan took over the rotating chair** and will host the **2027 summit**; the Ministry of External Affairs said a decision on attending would be taken at the appropriate time. Ministry of External Affairs, 1 Sep 2026 · [ThePrint, 1 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#)

Earlier coverage: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, August 2026

9.2 **Indo Pacific groupings (Quad, AUKUS, the Indo Pacific economic framework)**

9.2.1 **The Quad** Brief newly added

25 Sep 2026 Japan's Defence Ministry hosted a Quad **tabletop exercise** in Tokyo on disaster response, to draft operating procedures for the **Indo Pacific Logistics Network**. The Indian Coast Guard ship Shaunak sailed from Chennai with sea riders from the four countries, starting the **Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission** announced in New Delhi on 26 May. [News On AIR, 4 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 25 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

9.3 G20 and G7

9.3.1 G20 ministers' consensus outcomes, Houston 2026

Prelims

The Group of Twenty (G20) brings together the major economies; the United States holds its presidency in 2026.

WHAT CHANGED

22 Sep 2026 **Brief** At a three day G20 meeting in **Houston**, India joined other members in adopting **four consensus outcomes**. They cover **liquefied petroleum gas for clean cooking**, faster permits for energy infrastructure, a **voluntary water reuse initiative** and diversified **critical mineral supply chains**. [News On AIR, 22 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

9.4 South Asian and Bay of Bengal groupings

9.4.1 Colombo Security Conclave

Prelims

The Colombo Security Conclave is a security grouping of India, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Seychelles for their shared maritime neighbourhood.

WHAT CHANGED

30 Sep 2026 **Brief** India hosted, virtually, the **ninth Deputy National Security Adviser level meeting** of the Colombo Security Conclave to review its 2025-26 roadmap. The grouping works on **five pillars**: maritime security, counter terrorism, trafficking, cyber security and **disaster relief**. [News On AIR, 30 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

9.5 Connectivity corridors

9.5.1 India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor

Prelims and Mains

The India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), announced at the G20 summit in New Delhi in 2023, is a planned route of ports, railways and cables from India through the Gulf to Europe.

WHAT CHANGED

23 Sep 2026 Brief Meeting Gulf Cooperation Council and Arab leaders at the General Assembly, the **United States President backed IMEC**. He argued that energy infrastructure should move away from **routes Iran can block**, a case the **closure of Hormuz** makes stronger. Mains: A corridor that avoids choke points such as Hormuz serves India's energy security, but depends on peace in the region it crosses. [News On AIR, 23 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

10 Global institutions

10.1 United Nations and Security Council reform

10.1.1 The 81st General Assembly and India's case for Security Council reform

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 26 September 2026 the External Affairs Minister addressed the **81st United Nations General Assembly**, calling for **reformed multilateralism** and answering Pakistan's Prime Minister on terrorism. Two days earlier the **G4** had called for early reform of the Security Council. In July India had launched its campaign for a non permanent seat for **2028-29**.

Background

- The Security Council has **five permanent** members with a veto and **ten non permanent** members elected for two years by a **two thirds** vote of the Assembly. India has served eight terms, the last in 2021-22.

Veto

The power of each permanent member to block a Council resolution.

- Reform has been discussed in the **Intergovernmental Negotiations** since 2009, with **no single negotiating text**, which is why nothing moves.

Intergovernmental Negotiations

The process in the General Assembly since 2009 on reforming the Security Council.

- Any change needs an amendment of the **Charter under Article 108**: two thirds of the Assembly, and ratification by two thirds of members **including all five permanent members**.
- The 81st session's President is **Bangladesh's Foreign Minister**, elected in June; this is the Secretary General's last Assembly, his term ending on 31 December 2026.

Reformed multilateralism

India's term for making the United Nations and other bodies reflect today's distribution of power.

India's case

- The world is **multipolar**; the Council's permanent membership is that of 1945, and its only enlargement, of the elected seats, came in 1965. Africa, Latin America and India have no permanent seat.
- India asks for **text based negotiations**, so that there is something to negotiate line by line.
- The **G4** (India, Brazil, Germany, Japan) asks for more permanent and non permanent seats; India is a member of the **L.69** group of developing countries and seeks common ground with the African Union's **Common African Position**.

G4

India, Brazil, Germany and Japan, four states that support each other's bids for permanent seats.

- Support this quarter: Luxembourg; China and Russia in the BRICS declaration for a greater role for India and Brazil; **India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA)** ministers for permanent seats for India and Brazil and for Africa.

India and Security Council reform

The 81st General Assembly, September 2026



Changing the Charter: Article 108

1

Two thirds of the General Assembly vote for the amendment

2

Two thirds of all members ratify it

3

Including all five permanent members

India's coalitions

G4: India, Brazil, Germany, Japan
L.69 group of developing countries
Common ground with the African Union

India has served eight terms, the last in 2021-22

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Negotiations on reform since 2009, with no single text

Source: Charter of the United Nations; Ministry of External Affairs

The Security Council's fifteen seats, the Article 108 path to amending the Charter, and the coalitions behind India's bid.

Source: Charter of the United Nations; Ministry of External Affairs

Terrorism and Pakistan at the Assembly

- Pakistan's Prime Minister raised **Kashmir and the Indus treaty** and credited the United States with the 2025 ceasefire.
- India, without naming Pakistan, called it a **serial practitioner of terrorism**, said terrorism must not be normalised, and reaffirmed its right to defend itself.

- India's **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism**, proposed in 1996, is still stalled over the definition of terrorism.

India's stakes

- A **permanent seat** is the longest running aim of Indian foreign policy; the **non permanent seat for 2028-29** is the nearer prize.
- The **selection of the next Secretary General** is a test of whether the Global South gets a larger voice.
- India presents itself as **first responder** in disasters and a partner in capacity building, especially in Africa.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Press for a **single text** in the negotiations, the one procedural change that would make reform possible.
- Build the **African coalition**, since Africa's 54 votes and its own claim to permanent seats decide any two thirds majority.
- Separate the near goal, the **2028-29 seat**, from the long one, and campaign for it on India's record.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Security Council: **5 permanent, 10 non permanent**; election by **two thirds** of the Assembly.
- India has served **eight** terms, the last **2021-22**; it seeks **2028-29**.
- **Article 108**: Charter amendment needs two thirds of the Assembly and ratification by two thirds of members including all five permanent members.
- The President of the 81st Assembly is from **Bangladesh**.
- India proposed the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism** in **1996**.

Sources: [The Hindu, 26 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [ThePrint, 26 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [News On AIR, 26 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 26 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 26 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 8 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [ThePrint, 28 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [News On AIR, 14 Jul 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 14 Jul 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 2 Jul 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 14 Jul 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [United Nations, 2 Jun 2026](#) · [Ministry of External Affairs, 4 Aug 2026](#)

11 Global regimes and issues

11.1 Law of the sea

11.1.1 Rising seas and statehood: the UN declaration

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 24 September 2026 the United Nations General Assembly adopted its **first declaration on sea level rise**, and agreed to hold another high level meeting by September 2030.

**4.7 mm
a year**

global rate
of sea level
rise, 2015 to
2024

**2.1 mm
a year**

the rate in
1993 to
2002

**11,098
km**

India's
coastline

1,298

India's
offshore
islands

**about a
third**

of India's
mainland
shore that
eroded
between
1990 and
2016

Background

- The sea rises for two reasons, **melting ice** and the **thermal expansion** of warming water, and it is measured by satellite altimetry together with tide gauges.
- The **Montevideo Convention, 1933** says a State needs a permanent population, a defined territory, a government and the capacity to enter into relations with other States.

What the declaration settles

- It affirms a **presumption of continued statehood**: losing territory to the sea does not end a State's existence, its sovereignty or its seat at the United Nations.

Presumption of continued statehood

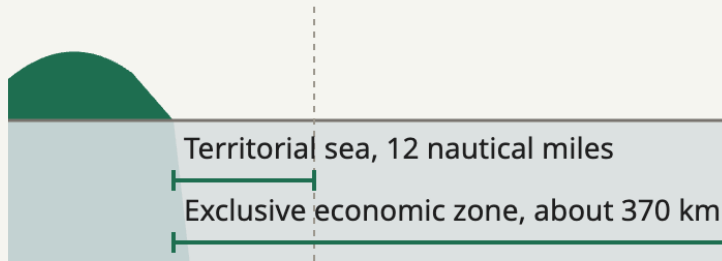
The principle that a State remains a State even if the sea takes its land.

- **Maritime boundaries stay fixed**, so the 12 nautical mile territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone of about 370 km do not shrink as the coast retreats.

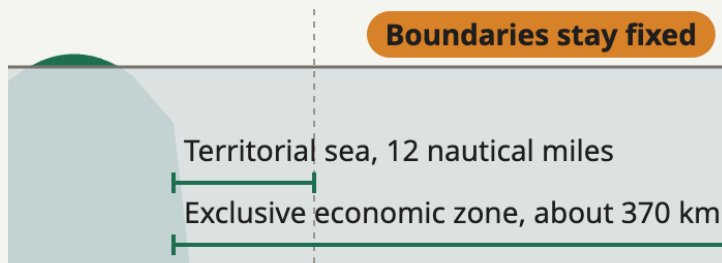
When the sea takes the land

What the UN declaration of 24 September 2026 fixes

Today



After the sea rises



What stays

- ✓ Statehood
- ✓ Sovereignty
- ✓ The seat at the United Nations
- ✓ Maritime zones

4.7 mm a year

sea level rise, 2015 to 2024

2.1 mm a year

sea level rise, 1993 to 2002

about a third

of India's mainland shore is eroding

India's coastal rules still measure the no build strip from today's high tide line, not from the hazard line.

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Source: The Indian Express, 28 and 30 September 2026

What the UN declaration fixes when the sea rises: statehood and maritime zones stay, while India's coastal rules still use today's high tide line.

Source: The Indian Express, 28 and 30 September 2026

India's stake

- India backed fixed boundaries abroad, and it has its own exposure in **1,298 offshore islands** and a coastline of **11,098 km**.

- The National Centre for Coastal Research found about a third of the mainland shore eroding between 1990 and 2016, and over 170 km in **West Bengal** is retreating by more than 5 m a year.

The gap at home

- The Coastal Regulation Zone notification of 2019 measures its no build strip, of 50 m or 200 m, from **today's high tide line**.
- The Survey of India's **hazard line** does account for sea level rise and shoreline change, but it is used only for disaster and land use planning.

Hazard line

A line mapped by the Survey of India that accounts for sea level rise and shoreline change.

- India has no law for people displaced slowly by erosion, of the kind **Fiji** passed in **2021**.

TWO LINES ON INDIA'S COAST

	High tide line	Hazard line
What it is	today's high tide line	a line mapped by the Survey of India
Accounts for sea level rise	no	yes
Used for	the no build strip of 50 m or 200 m	disaster and land use planning only

The rule that restricts building uses the line that does not move with the sea.

Source: The Indian Express, 30 September 2026

THE WAY FORWARD

- Measure the no build strip from the **hazard line**, so that the rule moves with the shore.
- Legislate for people **displaced slowly by erosion**, as Fiji did in 2021.
- Press for **adaptation finance** for coasts that are already eroding.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The declaration was adopted by the **General Assembly** on 24 September 2026.
- The four **Montevideo criteria**: population, territory, government, capacity for relations.
- The **hazard line** is mapped by the Survey of India; the **high tide line** is what the coastal zone rules use.
- Sea level is measured by **satellite altimetry** and tide gauges.

Sources: [The Indian Express, 30 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 28 Sep 2026](#)

11.2 Nuclear and arms control regimes and export control groups

11.2.1 IAEA refers Iran to the Security Council

Prelims

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) checks that states keep their nuclear material for peaceful use; its Board of Governors has 35 members.

WHAT CHANGED

10 Sep 2026 **Brief** The IAEA's Board reported **Iran to the United Nations Security Council**, the **first such referral in 20 years**, over its failure to explain uranium traces at undeclared sites. The vote was **23 to 3, with 8 abstentions**; the agency also cannot verify Iran's stockpile of about **441 kg of uranium enriched to 60 per cent**. Iran is a party to the **Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**. [The Hindu, 10 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [News On AIR, 9 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

11.3 Terrorism and its financing

11.3.1 FATF warning on gaming and gambling platforms

Prelims

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is the Paris based standard setter against money laundering and terror financing.

WHAT CHANGED

10 Sep 2026 **Brief** The FATF warned that **online gaming and gambling platforms** are increasingly **misused for financial crime**. The warning bears on India's own **regulation of online gaming**. [News On AIR, 10 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

12 Conflicts and crises

12.1 Russia and Ukraine

12.1.1 India between Russia and Ukraine: outreach, oil and the American sanctions law

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 18 September 2026 the United States enacted the **Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act**, which allows tariffs of up to **100 per cent** on the largest buyers of Russian oil and gas, a group that includes India. Two weeks earlier the External Affairs Minister had made the first dedicated visit by an Indian foreign minister to **Kyiv**.

Background

- Since February 2022 India has **not condemned Russia by name**, has abstained on most United Nations votes on the war, and has said that this is **not an era of war** and the conflict must end through dialogue.
- India has kept buying Russian crude, which was about **30 per cent** of its imports in 2025-26 by the estimate of the Global Trade Research Initiative, and a record of nearly **52 per cent** in July 2026, as Gulf supplies were disrupted.
- The war reaches India through its **seafarers** in the Black Sea, where four Indians were killed on a ship off Odesa in July, and through Indians **recruited into the Russian army**.
- In 2025 the United States had imposed a **penalty tariff** on India for Russian oil by executive order; a court later **struck down** those emergency tariffs.

Secondary sanctions

Penalties on third countries for trading with a sanctioned state.

Executive order

A direction by the American President that has the force of law until a court or Congress undoes it.

What happened in September

- **Kyiv and Warsaw:** the minister met Ukraine's President, noted India's humanitarian consignments, and reviewed India's action plan with Poland.
- **Not a mediator:** India said it was in touch with both capitals to see whether its ideas could help, while denying any mediation.

- **The law:** passed by the House 262 to 159 and signed on 18 September, it permits tariffs of up to 100 per cent on the **top five buyers** of Russian oil and gas, with wide presidential discretion and waivers. Unlike an executive order, a law passed by Congress carries permanence.

Waiver

A decision by the executive not to apply a sanction that a law permits.

- **New Delhi:** India said it would protect its energy security and study the law before taking it up with Washington.

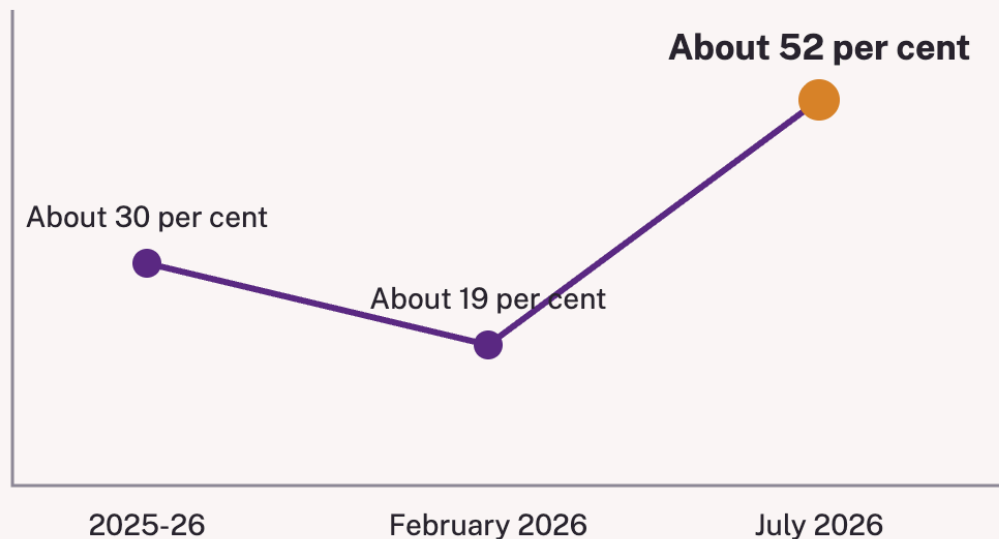
India's stakes

- **Energy:** Russian crude kept India's import bill down when Hormuz was closed; a tariff of 100 per cent on exports to the United States would far outweigh that saving.
- **Defence:** Russia remains a major supplier, and spares and the S-400 system tie India to it for years.
- **Strategic autonomy** is tested: India is being asked to choose between its largest market and its oldest supplier.
- **Nationals:** the Ministry of External Affairs warned again in September against job offers that lead to the Russian army.

India between Russia and Ukraine

Outreach, oil and the American sanctions law of 18 September 2026

Russia's share of India's crude oil imports



India's three links to the war

Oil

Russia, the largest supplier since 2022

Seafarers

Four Indians killed off Odesa, July 2026

The law

Tariffs of up to 100 per cent on the top five buyers of Russian oil and gas

External Affairs Minister in Kyiv, 3 September 2026

India: not a mediator, in touch with both

Prime Minister in Kyiv, August 2024

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Source: Ministry of External Affairs; The Hindu

India's three links to the war: Russian oil, seafarers in the Black Sea and the American sanctions law, with Russia's share of Indian crude from 2022 to July 2026.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs; The Hindu

The difficulty

- A law with waivers gives the American President a **lever** to use in the trade talks, which is how the two issues have merged.

- Russia's share of Indian oil has tracked **price, availability and American pressure**: it fell to about 19 per cent in February 2026 under the penalty tariff and rose to 52 per cent in July when Gulf supplies were cut.
- The law reaches the **top five buyers** of Russian oil and gas, a group that includes India.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Seek a **waiver** on energy security grounds while the West Asia war keeps Gulf supplies uncertain.
- Cut the Russian share as Gulf flows return, by **diversifying** rather than by decree.
- Keep the **Kyiv channel** open: it costs little and answers the charge of one sidedness.
- Build a **seafarers' protection** mechanism, as India proposed at the BRICS Summit in September.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026 allows tariffs of up to **100 per cent** on the top five buyers of Russian oil and gas.
- Russia's share of India's crude imports reached nearly **52 per cent** in **July 2026**.
- India **abstained** on the February 2026 United Nations resolution for an unconditional ceasefire.
- The Prime Minister visited Kyiv in **August 2024**; the External Affairs Minister in **September 2026**.
- Odesa is Ukraine's main port on the **Black Sea**.

PLACES IN NEWS

Odesa · Ukraine · Ukraine's main port on the Black Sea

18 Sep 2026: Four Indian seafarers were killed on a ship off Odesa in July, part of how the war reaches India.

Sources: [The Hindu, 18 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 3 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 17 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 21 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 17 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 20 Jul 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 8 Aug 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 24 Jul 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [Global Trade Research Initiative, 8 Aug 2026](#) · [News On AIR, 3 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 4 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 5 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 15 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 24 Feb 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [ThePrint, 11 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [News On AIR, 30 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 21 Jul 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

12.2 West Asia

12.2.1 The war in West Asia and the Strait of Hormuz Prelims and Mains newly added

26 Sep 2026 In early September the United States struck Iranian oil tankers, one near Iran's oil export hub of **Kharg Island** on 5 September, and both sides attacked commercial vessels; on 14 September India condemned the attack on the **motor tanker (MT) El Gaia** off Oman, from which 13 Indian crew were rescued and one was missing. The **Houthis** of Yemen attacked Saudi Arabia and on 11 September captured **Mayun (Perim) island** in the **Bab el Mandeb** strait; India condemned the attacks on Saudi Arabia as a threat to freedom of navigation. At the first meeting of a **Group of Friends** on the safety of shipping and seafarers, in New York on 26 September, India announced an **India and Liberia initiative** for a consultative framework on maritime safety. [The Hindu, 9 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [News On AIR, 9 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 11 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 26 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR, 14 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

Earlier coverage: The war in West Asia and the Strait of Hormuz, August 2026

13 Major powers

13.1 United States

13.1.1 India and the United States Prelims and Mains newly added

29 Sep 2026 On 11 September the United States proposed scrapping the **60 day grace period** that lets laid off **H-1B** and other employment visa holders stay on to find new work. The new American law allowing tariffs of up to **100 per cent** on the largest buyers of Russian oil is on the page on India between Russia and Ukraine; on 29 September the External Affairs Minister listed the trade talks, terrorism from Pakistan and **visa restrictions** as the sources of the recent "**bump**" in ties. On 29 September the United States set a **zero tariff** on some medicines, among them drugs for **rare diseases**, imported from India and 19 other partners. [News On AIR, 11 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [The Hindu, 17 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [ThePrint, 29 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [News On AIR, 29 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

Earlier coverage: India and the United States, August 2026

13.2 Russia

13.2.1 India and Russia Prelims and Mains newly added

30 Sep 2026 On 11 September the two leaders met in **New Delhi** and discussed Ukraine and the **safety of Indian seafarers** in West Asia and the **Black Sea**. On 30 September the Ministry of External Affairs again warned Indians against job offers that lead to **recruitment into the Russian army**; the war and India's outreach to Kyiv are on the page on India between Russia and Ukraine. According to the Foreign Secretary, **227 Indians** had been recruited into the Russian army by 31 August, of whom **139** were discharged and **51** had died. [ThePrint, 11 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [News On AIR, 30 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [The Hindu, 17 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · Ministry of External Affairs, 30 Sep 2026

Earlier coverage: India and Russia, August 2026

13.3 Europe (European Union, United Kingdom, France, Germany)

13.3.1 The Visegrad Group and India

Prelims

The Visegrad Group (V4) is a grouping of four Central European countries: Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

WHAT CHANGED

21 Sep 2026 **Brief** The External Affairs Minister attended the **first meeting of Foreign Ministers of the V4 with India**, in New York under Slovakia's V4 presidency. It covered trade, technology, supply chains, defence and mobility, and gives India a **regional channel into Central Europe** beside the European Union. [News On AIR, 21 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

13.4 Japan, Australia and South Korea

13.4.1 India and Japan **Brief** newly added

22 Sep 2026 On 22 September the Foreign Secretary discussed **economic security** and supply chain resilience with a delegation of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party in New Delhi. [News On AIR, 22 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

14 India and world regions

14.1 West Asia and the Gulf

14.1.1 India and the United Arab Emirates

Prelims

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership covering trade, energy, defence and technology.

WHAT CHANGED

12 Sep 2026 **Brief** The Prime Minister met the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi on the BRICS sidelines, and they discussed **defence, artificial intelligence, space and critical minerals** under the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**. On 18 September the **UAE President** telephoned the Prime Minister, congratulated India on its **BRICS presidency** and reaffirmed their commitment to peace in the region. [ThePrint, 12 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#) · [News On AIR, 18 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

14.2 Southeast Asia and Act East

14.2.1 The Philippines joins the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

Prelims

The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) is an India led partnership of countries and organisations that helps make infrastructure withstand disasters.

WHAT CHANGED

13 Sep 2026 Brief The **Philippines**, which chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) this year, **joined the CDRI**. The Prime Minister and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. agreed to widen cooperation in **defence, trade, space and fintech**; the Philippines bought **BrahMos missiles** in 2022. [ThePrint, 13 Sep 2026, theprint.in](#)

14.2.2 Thailand's visa free stay for Indians

Prelims

Thailand lets Indian holders of ordinary passports enter without a visa for a limited stay.

WHAT CHANGED

9 Sep 2026 Brief From 15 September 2026 Thailand allows Indians a **visa free stay of up to 30 days**, down from the **60 days** of its 2024 scheme. Entry needs a **digital arrival card**, proof of funds and a return ticket; tourism is a large part of the **people to people pillar** of the Act East Policy. [The Hindu, 9 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [News On AIR, 9 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

14.3 Latin America and the Pacific islands

14.3.1 Forum for India Pacific Islands Cooperation

Prelims

The Forum for India Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC), launched in 2014, links India with 14 Pacific island countries through development and climate partnerships.

WHAT CHANGED

24 Sep 2026 Brief The External Affairs Minister chaired the **second FIPIC Foreign Ministers' meeting**, on the sidelines of the General Assembly in New York. It reviewed the **12 point action plan** the Prime Minister announced in **2023**. [News On AIR, 24 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

15 India's foreign policy, diaspora and soft power

15.1 Defence diplomacy and exercises

15.1.1 ASEAN India Maritime Exercise

Prelims

The ASEAN India Maritime Exercise (AIME) is a naval exercise of the Indian Navy and the navies of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

WHAT CHANGED

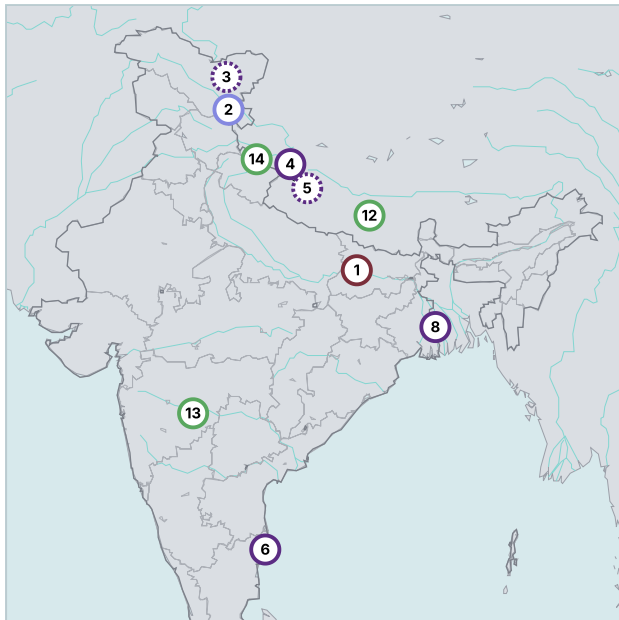
29 Sep 2026 Brief The **second edition** of the exercise was held in the **Philippines**; the first was held in **2023**. It supports maritime cooperation under the **Act East Policy** and the **ASEAN Outlook on the Indo Pacific**. [News On AIR, 29 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

16 Places in news

16.1 Places in news

Base: Natural Earth (public domain); India as the Survey of India depicts it. Not to scale; no boundary of any other country is shown.

India and its neighbourhood



The wider world



- 1 Sone river** · India (Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar)
a right bank tributary of the Ganga that rises near Amarkantak and joins the Ganga near Patna
The Sone agreement · 1 Sep 2026: Bihar and Jharkhand signed a memorandum dividing its water, ending a dispute open since 2000.
- 2 Puga Valley** · India (Ladakh)
a geothermal field in the Changthang region of eastern Ladakh
Geothermal energy and Puga Valley · 4 Sep 2026: The ONGC Energy Centre commissioned India's first two geothermal wells there.
- 3 Galwan valley** · India (Ladakh)
on the Galwan river, a tributary of the Shyok, along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh
on the Line of Actual Control
Location not yet confirmed against an official source
India and China: the boundary talks and Xi Jinping's visit · 12 Sep 2026: Xi Jinping's New Delhi visit was the first since the Galwan clash of June 2020.
- 4 Kailash and Mansarovar** · China (Tibet)
Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar, in western Tibet near the sources of the Indus, Sutlej and Brahmaputra
India and China: the boundary talks and Xi Jinping's visit · 12 Sep 2026: The August talks agreed more batches of pilgrims; the September meeting carried the thaw forward.
- 5 Lipulekh pass** · India (Uttarakhand)
a Himalayan pass at the tri junction of India, Nepal and Tibet, above the Kali river
- 6 Mamallapuram** · India (Tamil Nadu)
on the Coromandel coast of the Bay of Bengal, south of Chennai

Nepal claims it, with Kalapani and Limpiyadhura

Location not yet confirmed against an official source

India and China: the boundary talks and Xi Jinping's visit · 12 Sep 2026: One of the three border trading points with China that the August talks agreed to reopen.

- ⑦ **Odesa** · Ukraine
Ukraine's main port on the Black Sea
India between Russia and Ukraine: outreach, oil and the American sanctions law · 18 Sep 2026: Four Indian seafarers were killed on a ship off Odesa in July, part of how the war reaches India.

- ⑨ **Kharg Island** · Iran
in the Persian Gulf off Iran's coast, its main oil export hub
The war in West Asia and the Strait of Hormuz · 26 Sep 2026: The United States struck an Iranian oil tanker near it on 5 September.

- ⑪ **Antalya** · Türkiye
on Türkiye's Mediterranean coast
COP31, Antalya · 28 Sep 2026: Host city of COP31, whose priority themes, released in September, leave out the fossil fuel transition.

- ⑬ **Marathwada** · India (Maharashtra)
a rain shadow region on the Deccan plateau, east of the Western Ghats
A dry monsoon under a strong El Niño · 30 Sep 2026: It ended the monsoon 38 per cent short, the worst within Maharashtra, which declared drought in 265 of its 358 talukas.

India and China: the boundary talks and Xi Jinping's visit · 12 Sep 2026: Xi Jinping's previous visit to India was the informal summit there in October 2019.

- ⑧ **Benapole** · Bangladesh
a land port on the border with West Bengal, opposite Petrapole
The Ganga Waters Treaty and Farakka · 24 Sep 2026: Bangladesh suspended imports of hilsa from India through it on 23 September.

- ⑩ **Mayun (Perim) island** · Yemen
in the Bab el Mandeb strait at the mouth of the Red Sea
The war in West Asia and the Strait of Hormuz · 26 Sep 2026: The Houthis captured it on 11 September as the West Asia war spread to the Red Sea.

- ⑫ **Langtang Lirung** · Nepal
a peak of the Langtang range north of Kathmandu, near the border with Tibet
Himalayan hazards: lake outbursts and avalanche cascades · 30 Sep 2026: Ice and rock breaking away on it on 26 August set off the debris flow that devastated Rasuwa, a cascade rather than a lake outburst.

- ⑭ **Vasundhara Tal** · India (Uttarakhand)
a glacial lake in Chamoli district in the Garhwal Himalaya, in the upper Alaknanda basin
Himalayan hazards: lake outbursts and avalanche cascades · 30 Sep 2026: Uttarakhand began installing its first glacial lake early warning system there on 29 September.

17 Growth and national income

17.1 Growth, national accounts and their revision

17.1.1 The new GDP series: growth of 7.8 per cent and the debate on the deflator

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 31 August 2026 the National Statistics Office estimated real GDP growth of **7.8 per cent** for April to June, on the new base of 2022-23. A former Finance Secretary questioned the series, and on 9 September the statistics ministry replied that its methods and data were already public.

Background

- **GDP** is the value of all final goods and services produced in a country in a period.
- **Nominal** GDP is at the prices of the day. **Real** GDP removes the effect of prices, and it is real GDP whose growth is reported.
- In February 2026 the base year moved from 2011-12 to **2022-23**, with new sources: tax records, the labour force survey, and a yearly survey of unincorporated enterprises.
- On the new series, growth for **2025-26** is **7.8 per cent**.

Gross value added

The value of output less the value of the inputs used up; GDP is this plus taxes on products less subsidies on products.

Gross fixed capital formation

Spending on new fixed assets such as machines, buildings and roads; the measure of investment.

What the quarter showed

- **Services and manufacturing** led. Agriculture grew slowly and mining shrank.
- **Investment** grew faster than consumption, which points to public capital spending.

Private final consumption expenditure

Spending by households on goods and services.

- Nominal growth was 10.3 per cent and real growth 7.8 per cent. Dividing one by the other gives the implied rise in prices, about **2.3 per cent**.
- Growth beat the **Reserve Bank's forecast**, which weakens the case for a **cut in interest rates**.

The debate on the deflator

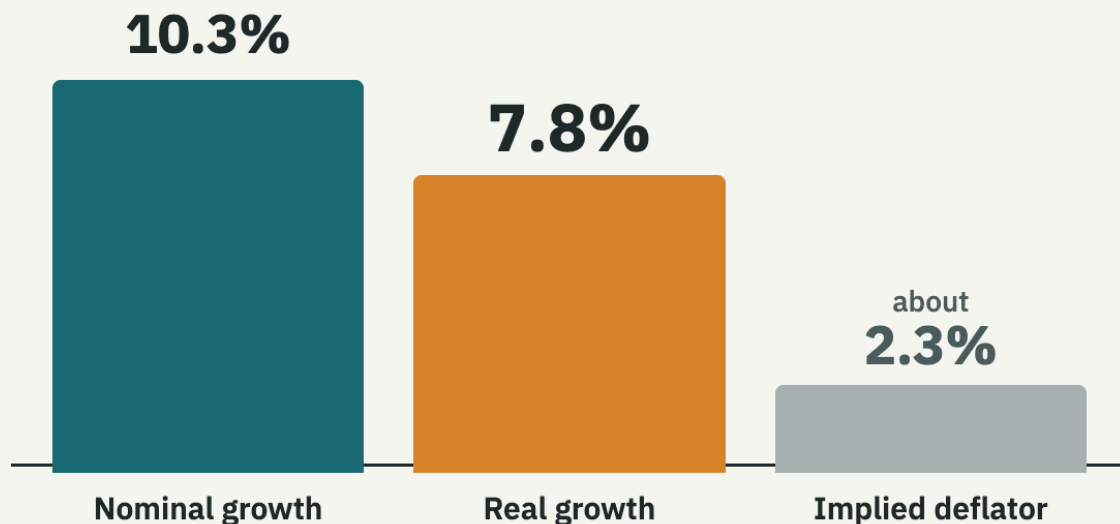
- The **implied 2.3 per cent** sits beside **retail inflation** of about 4 per cent in the same quarter.
- **The critics:** if prices are understated, real growth is overstated.
- **The ministry:** output should be deflated by producer prices, not by what consumers pay.
- A low deflator matters for the Budget too: taxes and the deficit ratio follow **nominal GDP**.

GDP deflator

The ratio of nominal to real GDP; the broadest measure of prices in the economy.

The new GDP series

April to June 2026, base year 2022-23



Nominal growth divided by real growth gives the implied rise in prices

Single and double deflation

Single

one price index for output and inputs

Double

output and inputs deflated separately;
the new method

GDP = gross value added + taxes on products – subsidies on products

Earlier base:
2011-12

Released by the
National Statistics
Office

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme
Implementation

Nominal growth, real growth and the deflator for April to June 2026, with single and double deflation compared.

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

What changed in the method

- **Double deflation:** an industry's output and its inputs are now deflated separately. Earlier one index was used for both, which distorts the result when the two prices move apart.

Double deflation

Deflating output and inputs by separate price indices to arrive at real value added.

- **Producer prices** in place of wholesale prices.
- **The informal sector** is measured each year by survey, not projected from an old benchmark.

Why trust matters

- Growth numbers guide **interest rates, the Budget and investors**.
- Doubt arises when strong growth sits beside **weak signals on jobs and wages**.
- The cure is **openness**: methods, **back series** and deflators in the public domain.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Publish the **deflator for each sector** and the full back series.
- Reconcile the **production and expenditure** estimates in the open.
- An independent **statistical commission** with statutory backing.
- Read GDP with **employment and consumption data**, not alone.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Base year of GDP: **2022-23**; before that, 2011-12.
- **GDP = gross value added + taxes on products – subsidies on products**.
- Quarterly estimates come from the **National Statistics Office**, about two months after the quarter.
- The deflator is **not published separately**; it is implied by nominal and real GDP.
- The survey of unincorporated enterprises covers the **non farm informal sector**.

Sources: [The Hindu](#), 11 Sep 2026, [thehindu.com](#) · [Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation](#), 31 Aug 2026, [mospi.gov.in](#) · [Press Information Bureau](#), 31 Aug 2026, [pib.gov.in](#) · [News On AIR](#), 31 Aug 2026, [newsonair.gov.in](#) · [PRS Legislative Research](#), 31 Aug 2026, [prsindia.org](#)

17.1.2 District level estimates for the unincorporated sector

Prelims

The **Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE)** of the National Statistics Office covers **unincorporated non agricultural enterprises**, and it feeds the annual measurement of the **informal economy**.

WHAT CHANGED

11 Sep 2026 Brief The **National Statistics Office** released, for the first time, **district level estimates** for unincorporated non agricultural enterprises, drawn from ASUSE. The estimates support **district planning** and the **new GDP series**. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (National Statistics Office), 11 Sep 2026

17.1.3 **Industrial output and the core industries** Brief newly added

28 Sep 2026 The IIP grew **8 per cent** in **August 2026**, led by **manufacturing**, while mining shrank in the monsoon. [The Hindu, 28 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

18 Money, banking and finance

18.1 Non bank lenders, payments and financial technology

18.1.1 A fee returns to UPI: the merchant discount rate

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

From **15 October 2026** merchants will pay a fee of **0.4 per cent** on payments above ₹2,000 received through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). The Finance Ministry notified on 14 September which payments stay free, and the National Payments Corporation of India then set the rate. Payments between persons, and small payments to merchants, stay free.

Background

- The **merchant discount rate** is the fee a merchant pays the banks and payment firms that process a digital payment.

Merchant discount rate

The fee a merchant pays on a digital payment, shared among the banks and firms that process it.

Person to merchant payment

A payment by a customer to a business, as against a transfer between two persons.

- Since January 2020 the law has barred this fee on UPI and RuPay debit cards. In its place the Centre paid banks an **incentive** from the Budget.
- UPI grew to over **two thousand crore transactions** a month. But someone must pay for **servers, security and the settling of disputes**.

Unified Payments Interface

A system for instant transfers between bank accounts by mobile phone, run by the National Payments Corporation of India.

What is charged, and what is not

- **Charged:** payments to a merchant above ₹2,000, at 0.4 per cent, with a cap on the fee.
- **Free:** transfers between persons; payments up to ₹2,000; small merchants.
- The fee is borne by the **merchant**, not the customer.

- Large payments are few in number but about **two thirds of the value**, so a narrow fee raises real money.

A fee returns to UPI

Merchant discount rate from 15 October 2026

Stays free

Transfers between persons

Payments to merchants up to ₹2,000

Small merchants

Carries a fee

Payments to merchants above ₹2,000

0.4%

Paid by the merchant, not the customer

Fee capped

Payments above ₹2,000 are few in number but about two thirds of the value.

Zero fee since January 2020

Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007

Run by the National Payments Corporation of India

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Source: Ministry of Finance; National Payments Corporation of India

Which UPI payments carry the new merchant fee and which stay free.

Source: Ministry of Finance; National Payments Corporation of India

The case for a fee

- A free service paid for by the Budget **depends on the Budget**, and the **incentive** was small beside the cost of running the system.

- Banks and payment firms had little reason to **invest** in a product that earned nothing.
- Revenue can pay for **security against fraud**.

The worries

- Merchants may **pass the fee on**, or steer customers back to **cash**.
- UPI is **public infrastructure**; a fee may slow its spread among **small traders**.

Digital public infrastructure

Shared digital systems, such as identity and payments, on which public and private services are built.

- A petition before the Supreme Court says the amended law gives the executive **unguided power**; the Court refused a stay but asked whether the charge is a tax or a fee.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Enforce the rule that the **merchant pays**.
- Review the rate at **fixed intervals**, in the open.
- Keep **small payments free**, since that is where **inclusion** lies.
- Spend the revenue on **security and reach**.

PRELIMS FACTS

- UPI and RuPay are run by the **National Payments Corporation of India**, set up by the Reserve Bank and the Indian Banks' Association.
- The law is the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**.
- Zero fee on UPI and RuPay debit cards applied from **January 2020**.
- New fee: **0.4 per cent** on payments to merchants above **₹2,000**, from 15 October 2026.
- UPI was launched in **2016**.

Sources: The Indian Express, 15 Sep 2026 · The Indian Express, 17 Sep 2026 · The Indian Express, 18 Sep 2026 · The Hindu, 26 Sep 2026 · The Hindu, 28 Sep 2026, thehindu.com · The Hindu, 6 Aug 2026, thehindu.com · The Hindu, 18 Aug 2026, thehindu.com · PRS Legislative Research, 18 Aug 2026, prsindia.org · PRS Legislative Research, 13 Aug 2026, prsindia.org

18.2 Monetary policy and inflation

18.2.1 Consumer and wholesale price inflation Brief newly added

14 Sep 2026 CPI inflation for **August 2026** rose to **4.82 per cent, above the 4 per cent target**.

[The Hindu \(PTI\), 14 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 14 Sep 2026, mospi.gov.in](#)

18.3 Banks: regulation, bad loans and reform

18.3.1 Bankers' Books Evidence Act, 2026

Prelims

The Bankers' Books Evidence Act, 2026 **repeals and replaces** the Bankers' Books Evidence Act, **1891**, the law on admitting bank records as evidence.

WHAT CHANGED

11 Sep 2026 Brief The Finance Ministry notified that the Act comes into force on **1 October 2026**. It extends "bankers' books" to **electronic, digital and cloud records**. It lets **certified copies** of these records be admitted as evidence. [Gazette of India, 11 Sep 2026](#) · [PRS Legislative Research, 13 Aug 2026, prsindia.org](#)

18.3.2 The Reserve Bank of India and multi State cooperative banks

Prelims

Section 36AAA of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 lets the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) **supersede the board** of a cooperative bank.

WHAT CHANGED

6 Sep 2026 Brief In *Sandeep S. Ghandat v. Reserve Bank of India*, the Supreme Court held that the power applies to **multi State cooperative banks**. It held that the power is not bound by the **six month limit** in the Constitution's provisions on cooperative societies. [LiveLaw, 6 Sep 2026, livelaw.in](#)

19 External sector

19.1 Balance of payments, the rupee and reserves

19.1.1 Reserves bought, not earned: the swap window and the liquidity glut

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

India's foreign exchange reserves rose by a record amount in the first week of September 2026 to about **786 billion dollars**, the fourth largest in the world. Most of the rise came from deposits raised under the Reserve Bank's swap window, which closed for deposits on 31 August.

Background

- In June the Reserve Bank opened a **window** under which banks could **swap dollars** raised from non residents for rupees, at a subsidised cost (see the June lead).
- By 31 August about **136 billion dollars** had come in, almost all of it as Foreign Currency Non Resident (FCNR) deposits with banks, known as FCNR(B) deposits. In 2013 a similar window brought 34 billion.
- The rupee steadied, and **reserves reached a record**.

Sterilisation

A central bank's action to absorb the money created when it buys foreign currency.

Variable rate reverse repo

An auction in which the Reserve Bank takes money from banks for a short period at a rate the auction decides.

Why these reserves are borrowed

- Reserves built from a surplus on the current account are **earned**. Direct investment brings no fixed date of repayment.
- Reserves that come through a swap carry a promise: the Reserve Bank must **return the dollars** when the swap matures.
- So the headline figure rises, and the Reserve Bank's **forward liabilities** rise with it.
- The swap covers the principal only. Banks must find dollars for the **interest**, and many have not hedged that.

The rupee side: too much money

- For every dollar it takes in, the Reserve Bank **releases rupees**.
- The surplus in the banking system reached about **₹10 lakh crore**, the highest in four years.
- These deposits are exempt from the **cash reserve ratio**, which adds to the effect.

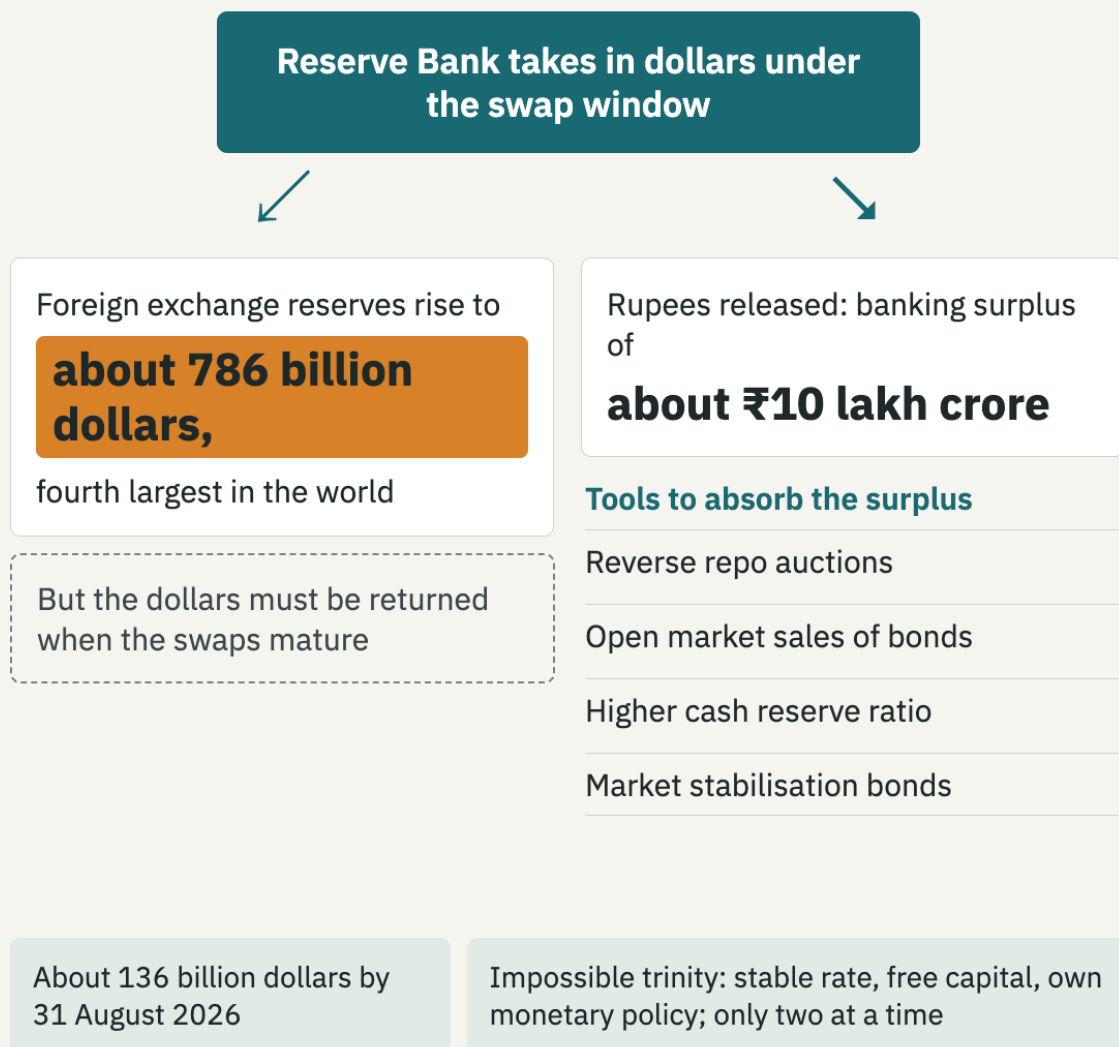
Cash reserve ratio

The share of its deposits that a bank must keep with the Reserve Bank as cash.

- Surplus money pushes short term rates **below the repo rate**, at a time when inflation is above 4 per cent. Policy says one thing and the market another.

Reserves bought, not earned

What the swap window did to reserves and to money at home



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Source: Reserve Bank of India

How dollars taken in under the swap window raise reserves on one side and release rupees on the other, and the tools that absorb them.

Source: Reserve Bank of India

How a central bank mops up money

- **Reverse repo auctions:** taking money from banks for a short period. The Reserve Bank has been doing this.
- **Open market sales** of government bonds.
- A higher **cash reserve ratio**.

- **Market stabilisation bonds**, issued by the government only to absorb money.
- Each has a cost: **interest paid to banks**, or a **higher cost of credit**.

The impossible trinity

- A country cannot have all three: a **stable exchange rate**, **free movement of capital** and an **independent monetary policy**.

Foreign exchange reserves

Foreign currency assets, gold, Special Drawing Rights and the reserve position in the International Monetary Fund, held by the central bank.

- India chose in 2026 to **steady the rupee** and **welcome capital**. The price is paid in **control over money at home**.

Impossible trinity

The rule that a country cannot at once fix its exchange rate, allow free capital flows and run its own monetary policy.

THE WAY FORWARD

- **Sterilise** the surplus step by step, without choking credit.
- Replace swap dollars with **lasting inflows** before the deposits mature in three to five years.
- Make banks **hedge** their interest exposure.
- **Stagger the maturities**, so that repayments do not bunch.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Reserves have **four parts**: foreign currency assets, gold, Special Drawing Rights and the reserve tranche position.
- India's reserves rank **fourth**, after China, Japan and Switzerland.
- A reverse repo **absorbs** money; a repo **injects** it.
- FCNR(B) deposits are exempt from the **cash reserve ratio** and the **statutory liquidity ratio** under this window.
- The Market Stabilisation Scheme dates from **2004**.

Sources: [The Hindu, 11 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 9 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [Reserve Bank of India, 2 Sep 2026, rbi.org.in](#) · [The Hindu, 2 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 21 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [News On AIR, 22 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#) · [The Hindu, 14 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 15 Sep](#)

19.1.2 **Trade and the current account** Brief newly added

15 Sep 2026 The goods trade deficit for **August 2026** narrowed to **26.86 billion dollars**, as exports rose sharply. The **current account deficit** for April to June 2026 was **4.2 billion dollars**, 0.5 per cent of GDP. [The Hindu, 15 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [Reserve Bank of India, 1 Sep 2026, rbi.org.in](#)

19.2 **Trade policy, tariffs and trade agreements**

19.2.1 **India's trade agreements** Prelims and Mains newly added

24 Sep 2026 India and New Zealand exchanged **ratification documents**, and their free trade agreement, signed on 27 April 2026, enters into force on **20 October 2026**. India and the EU will sign their free trade agreement, concluded in January 2026, in Brussels on **16 December 2026**. [The Hindu, 24 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 21 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [News On AIR, 21 Sep 2026, newsonair.gov.in](#)

Earlier coverage: India's trade agreements, July 2026

19.2.2 **American tariffs and India's exports** Prelims and Mains newly added

20 Sep 2026 The US President signed the **Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026**, which allows tariffs of **up to 100 per cent** on countries that keep buying Russian oil and gas, subject to a **presidential waiver**. Russia supplied over **half of India's oil imports** in July, and India has conveyed its energy security concerns and is expected to seek a waiver. Mains: Tariffs tied to energy purchases join trade policy to energy security, since India imports more than 85 per cent of its crude oil. [The Indian Express, 20 Sep 2026](#) · [The Hindu, 20 Sep 2026](#) · [The Hindu, 17 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

Earlier coverage: American tariffs and India's exports, August 2026

19.3 **Foreign investment**

19.3.1 **Export inventory in foreign funded e commerce**

Prelims

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Indian e commerce is governed by the **Foreign Exchange Management (Non debt Instruments) Rules, 2019**, which allow it in the **marketplace model**.

WHAT CHANGED

2 Sep 2026 Brief The Department of Economic Affairs amended the rules to let foreign funded e commerce firms hold inventory of goods **made in India solely for export**. FDI in **inventory based e commerce** for domestic sales remains **prohibited**, so only the marketplace model serves Indian buyers. Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, 2 Sep 2026

19.3.2 **Net foreign direct investment** Brief newly added

27 Sep 2026 Net FDI reached **US\$7.35 billion** in July 2026, the **highest since May 2021**, and net FDI for April to July was up 38 per cent. **Mauritius**, the United Arab Emirates and the United States supplied about **70 per cent** of equity inflows. Reserve Bank of India, 27 Sep 2026

20 Public finance

20.1 **Budget, deficits and debt**

20.1.1 **Public Accounts Committee on untransferred cess**

Mains

A **cess** is levied for a stated purpose, so its collections are **earmarked** for a dedicated fund and are **not shared with the States**.

WHAT CHANGED

9 Sep 2026 Brief Parliament's **Public Accounts Committee** flagged that the Finance Ministry had not transferred **₹9,222 crore** of cess collections to the dedicated funds for which they were levied. Cess kept back from its fund weakens **accountability** and defeats the **purpose of the levy**. Mains: Because cesses are earmarked and not shared with the States, failing to transfer them to their funds weakens both accountability and the purpose of the levy. [The Hindu, 9 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

20.1.2 **The Centre's fiscal deficit** Brief newly added

30 Sep 2026 The deficit for **April to August 2026** reached **41.9 per cent** of the year's target, higher than a year earlier, as **subsidy spending** on fertilisers, petroleum and food rose. [The Hindu, 30 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

20.2 **Goods and Services Tax and indirect taxes**

20.2.1 **Goods and Services Tax collections** Brief newly added

1 Sep 2026 Gross GST collections for **August 2026** were **₹1,99,853 crore**, though part of the growth came from a **downward revision of the base**. [The Hindu, 1 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

21 Capital markets

21.1 **Securities markets and their regulator**

21.1.1 **Securities and Exchange Board of India board meeting, September 2026**

Prelims

The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** regulates the securities markets, and its **board** approves the regulations that govern them.

WHAT CHANGED

24 Sep 2026 Brief At its **215th meeting** on 24 September the SEBI board approved new **Portfolio Managers Regulations** and Settlement Proceedings Regulations, 2026. It let **Foreign Portfolio Investors** trade **non agricultural commodity derivatives**. It widened **accredited investor** status, with ₹5 crore of market holdings for individuals and **deemed status for non residents**. [Securities and Exchange Board of India, 24 Sep 2026, sebi.gov.in](#)

22 Agriculture and food

22.1 Prices, procurement and food security

22.1.1 Managing food prices through trade policy

Prelims and Mains

The Centre manages food prices with several tools: **customs duty** on imports, export restrictions, **stock limits** under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, open market sales from central stocks and the **Price Stabilisation Fund**.

- Customs duty cuts work quickly where India **depends on imports**, as in edible oils, where imports meet about **56 to 60 per cent** of demand.
- Such cuts lower returns for **domestic growers** and can work against missions such as the **National Mission on Edible Oils**.

WHAT CHANGED

26 Sep 2026 New

- Ahead of the festival season the Centre cut basic customs duty on **crude sunflower oil** from 10 per cent to **zero**.
- Duty on **crude soybean and crude palm oil** fell from 10 to **5 per cent**, and on refined sunflower oil from 32.5 to 22.5 per cent.
- The 2026 monsoon, weakened by a developing **El Niño**, had added **supply risk** to the festival season.

Mains: A duty cut calms prices quickly where India depends on imports, but it lowers growers' returns and can work against the National Mission on Edible Oils.

[The Hindu, 26 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

22.2 Land reforms and land records

22.2.1 Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme

Prelims and Mains

Cadastral maps

Survey maps showing the boundary, extent and ownership of every land parcel, the base record for revenue and registration.

Centrally Sponsored Schemes

Schemes the States run with the Union sharing the cost, unlike a Central Sector Scheme, which the Union funds fully.

The Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) is a Central Sector Scheme to modernise land records, so that the record of who owns which piece of land can be read, mapped and registered.

The problem and the scheme

- The record of who owns which piece of land is the government's own rule book, and the textual record of ownership and the survey map often disagree with each other.
- It began in 2008 as the National Land Records Modernisation Programme, merging two **Centrally Sponsored Schemes**.
- In 2016 it was revamped as the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP), a Central Sector Scheme funded entirely by the Union.

DILRMP 3.0

- DILRMP 3.0 builds a **GIS** enabled Land Stack tying **cadastral maps** to Records of Rights, registrations and court cases.
- State Land Stacks federate into a National Land Stack, with the data staying with the States.
- Every parcel gets a Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN), a 14 digit identity also called the Universal Bhu-Aadhaar.
- Registration is to be done at Registration Seva Kendras, modelled on Passport Seva Kendras.
- NAKSHA, the National Geospatial Knowledge-based Land Survey of Urban Habitations, is the pilot for urban land records and issues Urban Property Cards.

WHAT CHANGED

10 Sep 2026

- The Union Minister launched the operational guidelines for DILRMP 3.0, for the digital overhaul of land records for 2026 to 2031.

[PIB, 10 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#) · [PIB, 9 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

22.3 Livestock, fisheries and horticulture

22.3.1 Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

Prelims

The **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**, launched in 2020 on the base of the earlier Blue Revolution scheme, is the scheme that funds fish farming units, recirculating and biofloc alike.

- India is second in world fish production, at about 8 per cent of global output, and first in shrimp production and exports.

WHAT CHANGED

10 Sep 2026

- Six years of the scheme were the backdrop to a harvest that has more than doubled since 2013-14.
- Fish production reached a record 197.75 lakh tonnes in 2024-25.

PIB, 10 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

23 Industry and services

23.1 Services, e commerce and tourism

23.1.1 Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020

Prelims and Mains

Dark patterns

Online interface designs that trick or pressure users into choices they did not intend.

Central Consumer Protection Authority

The regulator set up under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 to act against unfair trade practices, misleading advertisements and breaches of consumer rights.

Drip pricing

Revealing hidden charges only at the final checkout stage.

The Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 govern how a platform may sell to an Indian consumer.

- The **Central Consumer Protection Authority** issued guidelines on **dark patterns** in 2023, and the Authority has penalised firms under them.

- The 2023 guidelines list 13 **dark patterns** as unfair trade practices, among them false urgency, basket sneaking, confirm shaming, subscription traps and **drip pricing**.

What the amendment requires

Design

- Comply with the 2023 **dark patterns** guidelines
- Yearly self audit and certificate of compliance

Search

- No manipulation to mislead
- Clearly disclose sponsored listings

Prices

- Show the reduced and the prior price
- Prior price is the lowest in the previous 30 days
- No bundled fees for unrelated services

Imports and grievances

- Disclose importer and country of origin
- Join the National Consumer Helpline convergence process

From the Press Information Bureau (PIB) release, 10 September 2026

WHAT CHANGED

10 Sep 2026

- An amendment notified on 10 September 2026 requires a platform to certify its own interface from 1 January 2027.
- Before the amendment a platform answered for its interface only when somebody caught it.

PIB, 10 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

23.2 Mining and minerals

23.2.1 District Mineral Foundations

Prelims and Mains

A District Mineral Foundation (DMF) is a district level body that spends on the welfare of areas and people affected by mining.

- It is funded by contributions from **holders of mining leases**.
- Foundations were set up after the **2015 amendment** of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act.
- Their spending follows the guidelines of the **Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY)**.

WHAT CHANGED

29 Sep 2026 New

- An audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General found irregular spending of foundation money in Odisha.
- The money went, among other things, to a hockey stadium that the audit held to be of little use to people affected by mining.

[The Indian Express, 29 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2016:** the purpose of District Mineral Foundations

23.2.2 Lithium blocks abroad

Prelims and Mains

Lithium blocks abroad are lithium bearing ground in other countries that India buys into, through KABIL, Khanij Bidesh India Limited.

- The surest way to be certain of lithium is to hold the ground it lies in.
- KABIL is a joint venture of the National Aluminium Company, Hindustan Copper and Mineral Exploration and Consultancy, and it already holds five blocks in Argentina.
- Argentina, Bolivia and Chile form the lithium triangle, the salt flats that hold most of the world's brine lithium.
- Australia mines lithium from hard rock.

WHAT CHANGED

11 Sep 2026

- India said it was in talks to acquire lithium blocks in Australia and Chile and was seeking five more in Argentina.

[The Hindu, 11 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2025:** countries and resources, including Chile and lithium

24 Employment and labour

24.1 Employment data and trends

24.1.1 **The labour force survey** Brief newly added

15 Sep 2026 Unemployment for **August 2026** eased to **5.0 per cent**, as **rural unemployment** fell to its lowest since January. [Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 15 Sep 2026, mospi.gov.in](#)

24.2 Labour codes, gig work and social security

24.2.1 Employees' Provident Fund under the Code on Social Security

Prelims and Mains newly added

18 Sep 2026 The Union Cabinet approved raising the EPFO **wage ceiling from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 a month**, which is expected to bring more than **51 lakh** more employees into mandatory coverage. The Labour Ministry notified the new ceiling in the Gazette on 17 September under **Section 2(89)** of the Code on Social Security. [The Hindu, 18 Sep 2026](#), [thehindu.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 17 Sep 2026](#)

Earlier coverage: Employees' Provident Fund under the Code on Social Security, July 2026

25 Climate science

25.1 Extreme weather, monsoon and forecasting

25.1.1 A dry monsoon under a strong El Niño

Lead Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

The southwest monsoon ended on 30 September 2026 at **87 per cent** of the long period average, the driest season in 11 years, and Maharashtra declared drought in **265 of its 358 talukas** on 26 September.

87 per cent

of the long period average: 759.4 mm against 868.6 mm

13th

driest monsoon since 1901

282

districts deficient, over 38 per cent of the country's area

265 of 358

talukas of Maharashtra declared drought hit

Background

- The **long period average (LPA)** is the average monsoon rainfall over 1971 to 2020, and a season counts as normal when it falls between **96 and 104 per cent** of it.

Long period average

The average June to September rainfall over 1971 to 2020, 87 cm.

- El Niño** is the abnormal warming of the surface waters of the equatorial Pacific, which suppresses Indian rainfall, while **La Niña** favours it.

El Niño

The abnormal warming of the surface waters of the equatorial Pacific, which tends to weaken the Indian monsoon.

- El Niño is declared on the **Niño 3.4 index**, the sea surface temperature anomaly in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific, which stood at +2.51°C.

Why the season was uneven

- Low pressure systems from the **Bay of Bengal** were active on 77 days against a normal 57, which kept central India wet despite El Niño.

- The **Madden Julian Oscillation (MJO)**, a band of rain bearing clouds with a period of 30 to 60 days, stayed unfavourable over the south, so every southern State ended in deficit.

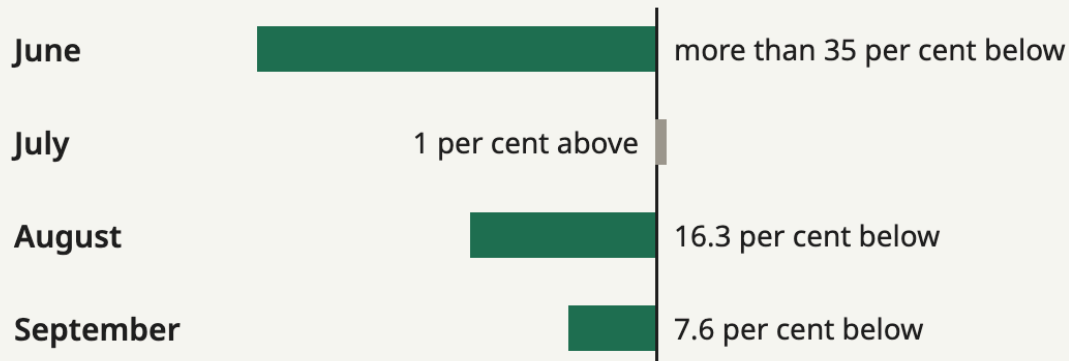
Madden Julian Oscillation

A band of rain bearing clouds that moves with a period of 30 to 60 days.

- Inside Maharashtra the deficit was 18 per cent, but **Marathwada** was 38 per cent short and **Vidarbha** 27 per cent, both rain shadow regions.

The 2026 monsoon at a glance

The driest season in 11 years, under a strong El Niño



Short of rain

Marathwada 38 per cent below
Vidarbha 27 per cent below
every southern State in deficit

Too much rain

Odisha 29 per cent above, from 11 Bay of Bengal systems
Uttar Pradesh 45.1 mm in a day against a normal 1.8 mm

87 per cent

of the long period average

759.4 mm

against a normal 868.6 mm

282

districts deficient

265 of 358

talukas of Maharashtra declared drought hit

Long period average: the average monsoon rainfall of 1971 to 2020. Normal is 96 to 104 per cent of it.

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Sources: The Indian Express, 26, 27 and 30 September 2026; The Hindu, 29 September 2026

The 2026 monsoon at a glance: 87 per cent of the long period average, the monthly departures, and the regions in deficit and excess.

Source: The Indian Express, 26, 27 and 30 September 2026; The Hindu, 29 September 2026

Drought and flood in the same season

- Odisha ended with a **29 per cent excess**, brought by 11 Bay of Bengal systems one after another, which left the soil saturated and turned each new spell into runoff.

- A deep depression meeting a **Western Disturbance** flooded Uttar Pradesh in the last week of September, as the monsoon was withdrawing.

Western Disturbance

An east moving, rain bearing extra tropical cyclone that reaches northern India from the west.

What lies ahead

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) projects El Niño effects until at least **March 2027**.
- A strong El Niño generally favours a wetter **northeast monsoon** over the southern peninsula, though not in every such year.
- Long duration **arhar** flowers in October and fills its pods in November, so a dry spell then causes terminal moisture stress, and low soil moisture may hold back rabi sowing.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Build drainage for **repeated intense downpours**, since one day and five day rain bursts are becoming more common even as heavy rain days decline.
- Act on the **forecast** in crop planning: short duration pulses, millets and oilseeds where the season is expected to fail.
- Document the **ecological effects** of this El Niño, as 188 Indian scientists have asked, since a coral reef needs about a decade to recover from bleaching.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The LPA is calculated over **1971 to 2020**; normal is 96 to 104 per cent of it.
- A **Western Disturbance** is an east moving extra tropical cyclone that gathers moisture from the Mediterranean, Black, Caspian and Arabian Seas and is carried by the subtropical westerly jet stream.
- The **Indian Ocean Dipole** can dampen or amplify El Niño's effect on India.
- The **MJO** moves with a period of 30 to 60 days.

PLACES IN NEWS

Marathwada · India (Maharashtra) · a rain shadow region on the Deccan plateau, east of the Western Ghats

30 Sep 2026: It ended the monsoon 38 per cent short, the worst within Maharashtra, which declared drought in 265 of its 358 talukas.

Sources: [The Indian Express, 30 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Hindu, 23 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 20 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 29 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 26 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 27 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

25.1.2 Swell surge

Prelims

Kallakadal

The name fishermen in Kerala give to a swell surge.

A swell surge is coastal flooding caused by ocean swell that was generated far away, by a distant storm or a long gale.

- The swell usually forms in the **southern Indian Ocean**, travels thousands of kilometres and reaches the coast in two or three days.
- Fishermen in Kerala call it **kallakadal**.
- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (**INCOIS**) issues the alerts, and southern Kerala and Kanyakumari are hit first.

WHAT CHANGED

28 Sep 2026 New

- INCOIS issued a **red alert** for Kerala and southern Tamil Nadu.
- Such alerts usually come before the monsoon, but this year El Niño kept monsoon seas calm, so distant swell stood out.

[The Indian Express, 28 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

25.2 Climate science: records, attribution and tipping points

25.2.1 The 1.5°C goal and overshoot

Prelims and Mains

Tipping points

Thresholds beyond which part of the climate system shifts to a state that may not reverse.

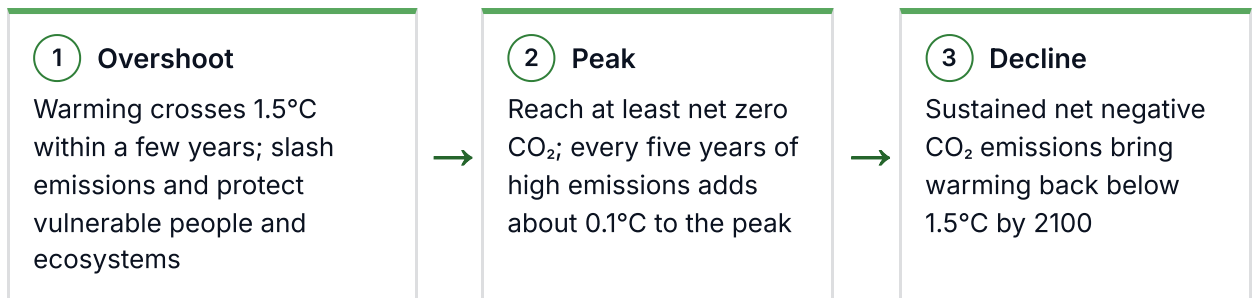
Global Methane Pledge

A voluntary pledge to cut methane emissions at least 30 per cent below 2020 levels by 2030.

Overshoot

Temporarily exceeding 1.5°C of warming before returning below it by 2100.

The 1.5°C goal is the limit on global warming above pre industrial levels that the Paris Agreement pursues, the line everything else is measured against.



The UN's first overshoot pathway, from The Indian Express, 4 September 2026, and The Hindu, 3 September 2026

The goal

- Article 2 of the Paris Agreement holds warming well below 2°C above pre industrial levels and pursues 1.5°C, goals first set in the Cancun Agreements at COP16 in 2010.
- It refers to warming averaged over decades, so a single year above the line does not breach it; a breach is declared when the running average crosses it.
- Methane is the fastest lever on near term warming; India has not joined the **Global Methane Pledge**, arguing that developed countries owe finance and technology first.

Overshoot

- **Overshoot** is a period in which warming passes 1.5°C before being brought back below it by deep cuts and carbon removal.
- A pathway that plans for **overshoot** is different in kind from one that avoids it.
- **Tipping points** in the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets, the Amazon and the Atlantic overturning circulation are why the length of the **overshoot** matters.

WHAT CHANGED

3 Sep 2026

- The UN Environment Programme's Limiting **Overshoot** report is the first UN pathway to treat a breach of 1.5°C as unavoidable and plan the way back down.
- It projects peak warming of 1.8°C even if every national plan is met, and 2.6°C by 2100 on current policies.
- Reversing 0.1°C of peak warming needs 220 billion tonnes of CO₂ to be removed.
- Carbon dioxide removal is unlikely to reverse more than a few tenths of a degree this century, and returning below 1.5°C will not stop sea level rise or undo extinctions.
- It puts developing countries' adaptation needs above \$310 billion a year by 2035, a figure expected to divide COP31 in Türkiye.

The Hindu, 3 Sep 2026 · [The Indian Express, 4 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

25.3 Cryosphere, oceans and sea level

25.3.1 Himalayan glacier retreat

Prelims and Mains

Himalayan glacier retreat is the loss of ice from the glaciers of the Hindu Kush Himalaya. That arc of mountains spans eight countries and feeds about ten major basins, including the Ganga, Indus and Brahmaputra, and two billion people.

89% Monitored years with a negative glacier mass balance, over five decades	Doubled Rate of ice loss after 2000	7 to 38 Glacial lake outburst floods per decade in the region, up since 1950
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From Frontline, 7 September 2026, citing the report of 19 March 2026 by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and a review of recorded glacial lake outburst floods

The water tower

- The monsoon brings 70 to 80 per cent of its rain, and winter snow is its seasonal water buffer.
- Himalayan glaciers are losing mass faster each decade.

How warming loosens the mountain

- Warming does not only take ice off the mountain; it takes away what held the mountain together.
- Meltwater widens crevasses and lubricates the glacier bed, so large blocks of ice can slide.
- A retreating glacier strips the snow that cushioned the rock walls above it, leaving rock and ice perched on bare slopes.
- Thawing permafrost removes the ice that cements rock and sediment.
- The result is more glacial lakes, more unstable slopes, and floods that begin with a slope failure rather than a lake.

WHAT CHANGED

1 Sep 2026

- A survey after the Nepal flood drew on a March 2026 assessment and a review of recorded outburst floods; the figures are in the chart.

Frontline, 1 Sep 2026, [frontline.thehindu.com](https://www.frontline.thehindu.com) · Frontline, 7 Sep 2026, [frontline.thehindu.com](https://www.frontline.thehindu.com)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2019:** matching Himalayan glaciers to their rivers

26 Pollution

26.1 Air pollution

26.1.1 Delhi's winter air: the revised GRAP and a fixed calendar of curbs

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 28 September 2026 CAQM approved a **revised GRAP schedule**, and Delhi announced a winter plan with curbs fixed by date from **1 November 2026 to 31 January 2027**.

Background

- GRAP has four stages tied to the **Air Quality Index**: Stage I at 201 to 300 (poor), Stage II at 301 to 400 (very poor), Stage III at 401 to 450 (severe) and Stage IV above 450 (severe plus).
- Each stage adds to the one below, and a stage can be **invoked on a forecast**, before the reading crosses its band.
- In winter, **falling temperatures** trap vehicle exhaust, industrial emissions and crop residue smoke close to the ground.

Airshed approach

Managing air quality across a shared geographic area and not within administrative boundaries.

What changed in GRAP

- Curbs on **diesel generator sets** and on the entry of buses of **BS IV and below** moved up from Stage II to Stage I.
- The exemption for goods vehicles of BS IV and below carrying **essential commodities** in Stages III and IV was removed.
- Dust monitoring of construction sites was extended beyond municipal limits to **industrial and highway corridor zones**.

Delhi's fixed calendar

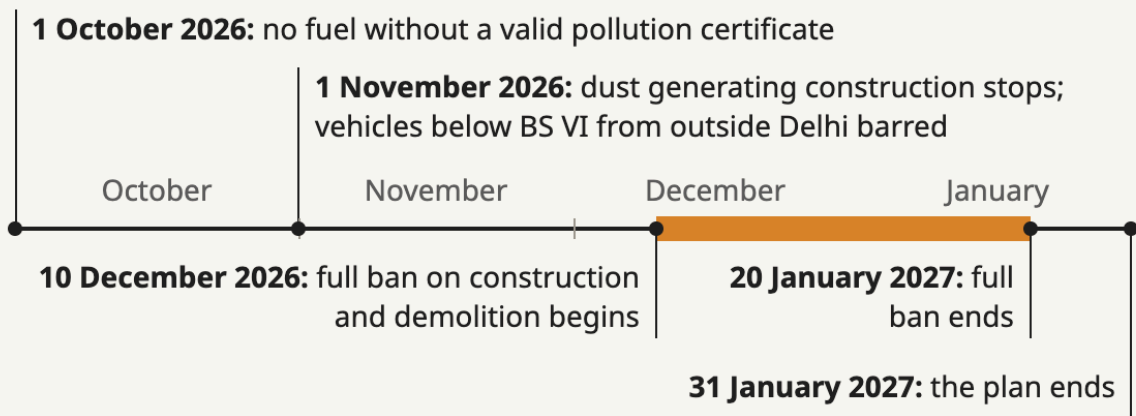
- From **1 November to 31 January** dust generating construction stops, parking charges double, offices stagger their hours and up to half the staff work from home.
- All construction and demolition is banned from **10 December to 20 January**.
- From 1 November vehicles below **BS VI** registered outside Delhi are barred, with compressed natural gas and electric vehicles exempt.
- From 1 October a vehicle without a valid **Pollution Under Control Certificate** gets no fuel in the region.

Pollution Under Control Certificate

A certificate confirming that a vehicle's tailpipe emissions meet the norms.

Delhi's winter air, 2026 to 27

Curbs by calendar date, and a revised GRAP



GRAP, as revised on 28 September 2026



Moved up: curbs on diesel generator sets; entry of buses of BS IV and below

48

actions in the revised schedule

500

fuel stations with number plate cameras

47 to 60

monitoring stations in Delhi

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Sources: PIB, 29 September 2026; The Hindu, 30 September 2026

The revised GRAP stages and Delhi's dated winter curbs from 1 October 2026 to 31 January 2027.
Source: PIB, 29 September 2026; The Hindu, 30 September 2026

The farm fire side

- CAQM has directed Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to **eliminate paddy stubble burning in 2026**.
- A strong **El Niño** is expected to bring fewer rain bearing **Western Disturbances**, so the air will clear less often this winter.

STAGE	AIR QUALITY INDEX	AIR QUALITY	ACTIONS
I	201 to 300	poor	25
II	301 to 400	very poor	8
III	401 to 450	severe	10
IV	above 450	severe plus	5

The curbs tighten from Stage I to Stage IV, and each stage adds to the ones below.

Source: PIB, 29 September 2026

THE WAY FORWARD

- A fixed calendar gives residents and businesses **notice**, which graded curbs never did, but it treats the season and not the sources.
- Vehicles are the largest primary source of Delhi's winter pollution, at about 23 per cent, so **cleaner transport** matters more than seasonal bans.
- Municipal and even regional boundaries are too small for the problem, which is the case for managing the whole **airshed**.

PRELIMS FACTS

- GRAP stages follow the **Air Quality Index**: 201, 301, 401 and above 450.
- **CAQM** is a statutory body and acts through directions that the States must enforce.
- The **airshed approach** manages air quality across a shared geographic area and not within administrative boundaries.
- **BS VI** norms, in force nationwide since 2020, set stricter limits on nitrogen oxides and particulate matter.

Sources: [PIB, 29 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#) · [The Hindu, 30 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [PIB, 28 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#) · [PIB, 30 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#) · [The Indian Express, 30 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 17 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

26.1.2 National Clean Air Programme

Prelims and Mains

Non-attainment cities

Cities that fail to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards over a sustained period.

The **National Clean Air Programme** (NCAP), launched in 2019, sets 130 cities, most of them **non-attainment cities**, a target for one pollutant and pays them to meet it.

- It aims to cut PM10 by up to 40 per cent by 2025–26, measured against 2017–18.
- Cities are paid through performance linked grants, tracked on the Portal for Regulation of Air Pollution in **Non-Attainment cities** (PRANA).
- Of the money spent by 2026, 68 per cent went on road dust, and little on transport, waste or industry.
- By 2026, 40 cities had not finished source apportionment.

WHAT CHANGED

7 Sep 2026

- Against 2017 to 2018, 108 of the 130 cities had lower annual PM10, 26 cut it by more than 40 per cent and 14 met the standards.
- Of the grants given since 2019 to 2020, 70.5 per cent has been used.
- The Swachh Vayu Survekshan rankings reward effort over results: measured PM10 improvement carries only 2.5 per cent of the weightage.
- Lucknow thus topped the largest cities although its PM10 is more than twice the standard.

Mains: ring fenced funds with penalties for non use, targets aimed at combustion rather than dust, and payments to farmers to diversify crops.

PIB, 7 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in · The Indian Express, 7 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com

26.1.3 Stubble burning and crop residue management

Prelims and Mains

Stubble burning is the burning of paddy residue in the fields of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh after harvest, in October and November.

TWO ROUTES FOR STUBBLE

In the field	Outside the field
◦ Incorporated into the soil by machines from custom hiring centres	◦ Biomass power ◦ Compressed biogas ◦ Ethanol ◦ Pellets ◦ Co firing in thermal plants

Burning ends only when straw has somewhere to go, either back into the soil or into a market.

Source: PIB, 16 June 2026

How much it adds, and how it is counted

- It is a modest share of the season's particulate pollution and a large share of it on the worst days.
- Farm fires add no more than 15 per cent of winter particulate pollution, but more than a third on some October and November days.
- How the fires are counted decides how the argument runs.
- Fire counts see active fires during daytime satellite passes, and miss fires lit after the satellites have gone.
- Burnt area maps scorched fields from Sentinel 2 images, and says nothing about how much smoke a fire released.

Why farmers burn, and the alternatives

- Burning is driven by the short gap between paddy harvest and wheat sowing, which short duration paddy and direct seeded rice widen.
- The Crop Residue Management scheme of 2018 funds machines and custom hiring centres in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- Residue can go back into the soil or into a market, as biomass power, compressed biogas, ethanol, pellets or co firing in thermal plants.

WHAT CHANGED

4 Sep 2026

- CAQM opened talks with Punjab and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on how stubble burning is counted, doubting that fire counts capture it.
- Peak burning moved from about 1.30 pm in 2020 to about 5 pm in 2024, after the satellites have passed.
- Fire counts in Punjab and Haryana fell 93 and 91 per cent from 2021 to 2025, but burnt area fell far more slowly.
- The burnt area protocol is being re-tested as satellite and ground data diverge.

[The Hindu, 4 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 7 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

26.2 Groundwater and water conservation

26.2.1 Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari

Prelims and Mains

artificial recharge

Leading rainwater or surface water into the ground through pits, ponds, trenches or wells so that it refills the aquifer.

Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari (JSJB), launched in September 2024, builds low cost **artificial recharge** structures with the community as their owner.

- Where a unit is drawing more than it recharges, the cheapest response is to lead rainwater back underground, and that is work a village can do for itself.
- It pays for that work and leaves the structure with the community that built it.
- It is guided by the 3Cs of Community, Corporate Social Responsibility and Cost.
- It merged with Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain in June 2026.
- Models from the States include Chhattisgarh's Aawa Paani Jhoki, Andhra Pradesh's ridge to valley treatment and Odisha's rooftop rainwater harvesting.
- Structure counts measure effort rather than outcome, so aquifer levels and demand side measures are the test of it.

WHAT CHANGED

3 Sep 2026

- More than 1.58 crore recharge structures had been built in its first two years.

[PIB, 3 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

27 Disaster Management

27.1 Cryosphere, oceans and sea level

27.1.1 Himalayan hazards: lake outbursts and avalanche cascades

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

Uttarakhand began installing its first glacial lake early warning system at **Vasundhara Tal** in Chamoli on 29 September 2026. It comes a month after the Nepal disaster of 26 August, which experts now say was not a lake outburst at all.

195

high risk glacial lakes on the national list

30 of 100

marks the risk index gives to downstream vulnerability

about 73 per cent

of mapped Himalayan glacial lakes that lie outside India

Background

- A glacial lake forms where a retreating glacier leaves a hollow that fills with meltwater, held back by bedrock or by **moraine**, the loose rock and sediment the glacier leaves behind.

Moraine

A ridge of rock and debris deposited by a glacier, which can dam a lake.

- A moraine dam can fail by slow erosion, by the **melting of ice buried inside it**, or when an avalanche or landslide falls into the lake and sends a wave over it.
- In Nepal on 26 August 2026, ice and rock broke away on **Langtang Lirung** and ran down the valley as a debris flow, leaving 1,410 dead and over 6,000 missing.

Two hazards, not one

- A **glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF)** has a known source, the lake, which can be modelled, monitored or drained.

Glacial lake outburst flood

The sudden release of water from a glacial lake when its natural dam is eroded, melts from within, or is overtopped by a wave from an avalanche or landslide.

- A **rock and ice avalanche cascade** can begin on any of hundreds of thousands of steep slopes where permafrost is thawing, so it is far harder to plan for.

Permafrost

Ground that stays frozen for at least two consecutive years.

Hazard cascade

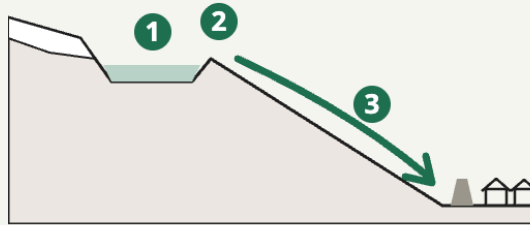
A chain in which a slope failure turns into a destructive flow downstream.

- **Chamoli in 2021** and **Rasuwa in Nepal in 2026** were both cascades, and in both many of the dead and missing were hydropower workers in the path of the flow.

Two Himalayan hazards

A lake that bursts, and a slope that falls

Glacial lake outburst flood

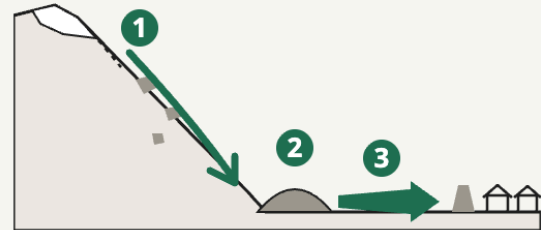


- 1 A lake sits behind a moraine dam
- 2 The dam erodes, or a wave breaches it
- 3 The flood runs down the valley

Source known. The lake can be modelled, monitored or drained.

South Lhonak, 2023

Rock and ice avalanche cascade



- 1 A steep slope of rock and ice collapses
- 2 Debris dams the valley, then gives way
- 3 The flow gathers sediment and grows

Source unknown in advance. Siting and land use must change.

Chamoli, 2021; Rasuwa, Nepal, 2026

195

high risk glacial lakes on the national list

13

high risk lakes in Uttarakhand

21.5 per cent

of India's GDP depends on the Himalaya

Uttarakhand's first early warning system is at Vasundhara Tal, Chamoli.

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Sources: The Indian Express, 23 and 30 September 2026; Frontline, 30 September 2026

Two Himalayan hazards compared, a glacial lake outburst flood and a rock and ice avalanche cascade, with what India monitors.

Source: The Indian Express, 23 and 30 September 2026; Frontline, 30 September 2026

What India has built

- The National Disaster Management Authority keeps a list of 195 high risk lakes, and a **National GLOF Risk Mitigation Programme** covers Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Uttarakhand.

- The Central Water Commission scores lakes on **twelve criteria**, giving 30 of 100 marks to downstream vulnerability, because risk is hazard meeting exposure.
- The **Vasundhara Tal** system tracks water level, weather, ground movement and discharge, and sends data **by satellite** to a dashboard that raises an alert at set thresholds.

The gaps

- **Detection is not warning:** the alert has to reach districts, project operators and villages in time, and people act on it only if they trust it.
- The Nepal flow crossed the border with Tibet, and there is **no shared data feed** across it, so a warning system that stops at the border misses half the hazard.
- **Black carbon** from brick kilns, cookstoves and crop burning darkens snow and speeds melting, and accounts for about a third of Himalayan glacier mass loss.

A LAKE OUTBURST AND AN AVALANCHE CASCADE

	Glacial lake outburst flood	Rock and ice avalanche cascade
Source	one known lake	any steep, deglaciating slope
Trigger	the moraine dam erodes, or a wave from a falling mass breaches it	a slope of rock and ice collapses
What can be done	the lake can be modelled, monitored or drained	hard to plan for; siting and land use must change
Cases	South Lhonak, 2023	Chamoli, 2021; Rasuwa, 2026

The lake can be watched; the slope that fails cannot be known in advance.

Source: The Indian Express, 23 and 30 September 2026, and Frontline, 30 September 2026

THE WAY FORWARD

- Site **hydropower** and settlements with the cascade hazard in mind, since many Himalayan dams were planned decades ago without knowledge of climate change.
- Share **warning data across borders**, which India can lead with early warning data from ISRO and a regional risk and insurance facility.
- Cut black carbon at the scale of the **airshed**, taking kilns, cookstoves, transport and crop residue burning together.

PRELIMS FACTS

- **Permafrost** is ground that stays frozen for at least two consecutive years.
- **Peak water** is the point at which glacier meltwater reaches its maximum, after which river flow declines.
- Vasundhara Tal is in **Chamoli**, Uttarakhand; Ladakh has the most glacial lakes of any State or Union Territory.
- The **Hindu Kush Himalaya** could lose up to 80 per cent of its present glacier volume by 2100.

PLACES IN NEWS

Vasundhara Tal · India (Uttarakhand) · a glacial lake in Chamoli district in the Garhwal Himalaya, in the upper Alaknanda basin

30 Sep 2026: Uttarakhand began installing its first glacial lake early warning system there on 29 September.

Langtang Lirung · Nepal · a peak of the Langtang range north of Kathmandu, near the border with Tibet

30 Sep 2026: Ice and rock breaking away on it on 26 August set off the debris flow that devastated Rasuwa, a cascade rather than a lake outburst.

Sources: [The Indian Express, 30 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [Frontline, 30 Sep 2026, frontline.thehindu.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 23 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 19 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 17 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Hindu, 18 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 21 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

27.2 Extreme weather, monsoon and forecasting

27.2.1 Drought declaration

Prelims and Mains

Moisture adequacy index

An index of soil moisture used in assessing drought.

Trigger-1

The first alert stage of Maharashtra's Drought Management Code, based on rainfall deficiency and a dry spell of at least 21 days.

Panchnama

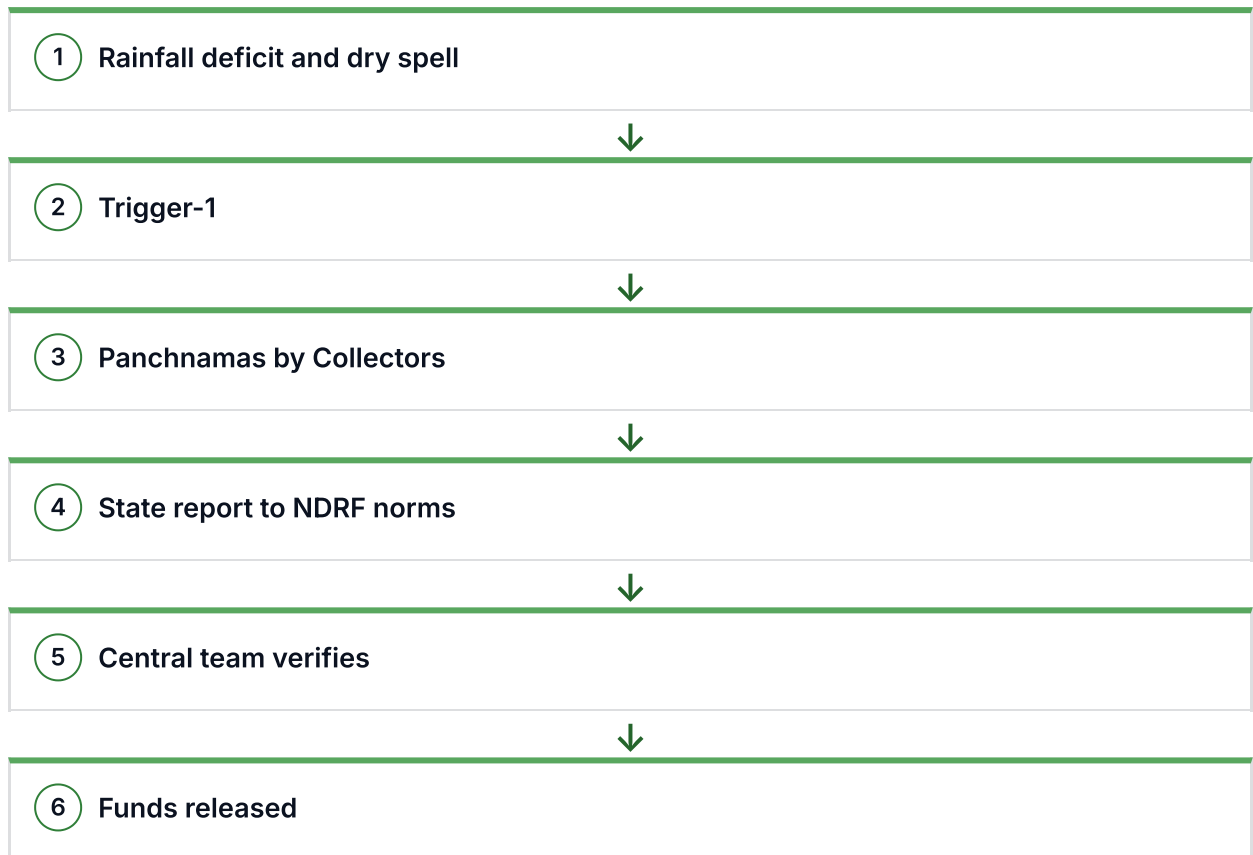
A field survey that records the condition of a crop.

India has no single definition of drought, and it is the State government that declares one.

- To draw central funds, a State's report must follow the norms of the **National Disaster Response Fund**.

- The norms look at rainfall deficit, the **moisture adequacy index**, crop loss, sowing below half the usual area, falling groundwater, and shortage of drinking water and fodder.
- A **central team** verifies the report before money is released.

HOW DROUGHT IS DECLARED AND FUNDED



The State declares the drought, and central money follows only after a central team verifies its report.
Source: The Hindu, 29 September 2026, and The Indian Express, 23 September 2026

WHAT CHANGED

29 Sep 2026 New

- Maharashtra declared drought on 26 September in **265 of 358 talukas** under its Drought Management Code, 2016.
- The Code's first alert stage, **Trigger-1**, rests on rainfall deficiency and a dry spell of at least 21 days.
- Collectors then begin **panchnamas**, field surveys of crop condition, and compensation for crop loss follows these surveys.

[The Hindu, 29 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 23 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

28 Species in news

28.1 Big cats

28.1.1 International Big Cat Alliance

Prelims

Natural capital

The stock of nature, such as forests, soils, water and wildlife, counted as an asset for the services it gives people.

The International Big Cat Alliance is a grouping launched by India for the conservation of seven big cats, and is headquartered in India.

- It was launched at Mysuru in April 2023, on the fiftieth anniversary of Project Tiger.
- It covers seven big cats: the tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar and puma.
- It works by pooling range countries' knowledge and finance.
- Its argument to funders is that a tiger landscape is **natural capital** and can be financed as such.

WHAT CHANGED

2 Sep 2026

- The Alliance signed a memorandum with the Asian Development Bank.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority's case was that a landscape should be managed whole rather than reserve by reserve.

[PIB, 2 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2025:** who launched the Nature Solutions Finance Hub for Asia and the Pacific

28.1.2 The cheetah Prelims

21 Sep 2026 A female born in India gave birth to four cubs at Kuno on 18 September, the **first litter born to an India born cheetah**. The population is 55, and 36 of them were born in India.

[The Indian Express, 21 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 18 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

Earlier coverage: The cheetah, June 2026

28.2 Elephants and other land mammals

28.2.1 Pygmy hog

Prelims

The pygmy hog is the world's smallest wild pig, found in the wild only in Assam.

- It is **Endangered** on the IUCN Red List, and is the only surviving species of the genus *Porcula*.
- It lives only in dense grassland on alluvial floodplains, so its decline is a sign that the **grassland** is degrading.
- It was believed extinct until it was rediscovered in 1971, and its last natural population is in **Manas National Park**.

WHAT CHANGED

17 Sep 2026 New

- The **Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme**, running since 1995, has raised Assam's population 32 fold through captive breeding.
- About 250 now live in the wild.

Mains: captive breeding is only insurance; survival in the wild needs restored, unbroken grassland.

[The Hindu, 17 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

28.2.2 Rhesus macaque

Prelims and Mains

Schedule I

The Wildlife (Protection) Act's list of species given the highest protection, for which hunting carries the strictest penalties.

The rhesus macaque is the common monkey of north Indian towns, and since 2022 it is no longer protected under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

- It was listed in **Schedule II** of the Act until the amendment of 2022 removed it.
- With that, responsibility for managing monkeys passed from State forest departments to **urban local bodies**.
- Compensation for wildlife attacks, which in Himachal Pradesh covers only species under the Act, no longer applies to it.

WHAT CHANGED

20 Sep 2026 New

- A woman in Shimla died after a macaque attack.
- Her family may not qualify for the ₹4 lakh that Himachal Pradesh pays for a death caused by a protected animal.

Mains: the case shows the dilemma of treating monkeys as vermin or as protected animals, with feeding by the public and fewer predators driving them out of forests.

[The Indian Express, 20 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

29 Protected areas and habitats

29.1 Marine and coastal ecosystems

29.1.1 National Coastal Mission 2.0

Prelims

National Coastal Mission 2.0 is a Central Sector Scheme of the Environment Ministry for the coast, running to 2030 to 31.

- It covers **nine coastal States and four Union Territories**.
- Its work is vulnerability assessment, ecosystem restoration, pollution management and biodiversity conservation.

WHAT CHANGED

30 Sep 2026 Brief The Ministry released the scheme's guidelines. [PIB, 30 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

29.2 Forests, grasslands and mountain ecosystems

29.2.1 The Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area

Prelims and Mains

27 Sep 2026 Karnataka's legislature unanimously rejected the Kasturirangan report on 22 September, in response to the **seventh draft notification**, which covers 56,825 sq km. The State wants only forest land included, and a joint physical survey in place of satellite data.

Mains: since the States bear the local cost and the country gains, a State may reject the framework only if it offers an equally considered alternative. [The Hindu, 27 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 26 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

Earlier coverage: The Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area, August 2026

30 Biodiversity governance

30.1 Biodiversity and wildlife law in India

30.1.1 Biological Diversity Act, 2002

Prelims and Mains

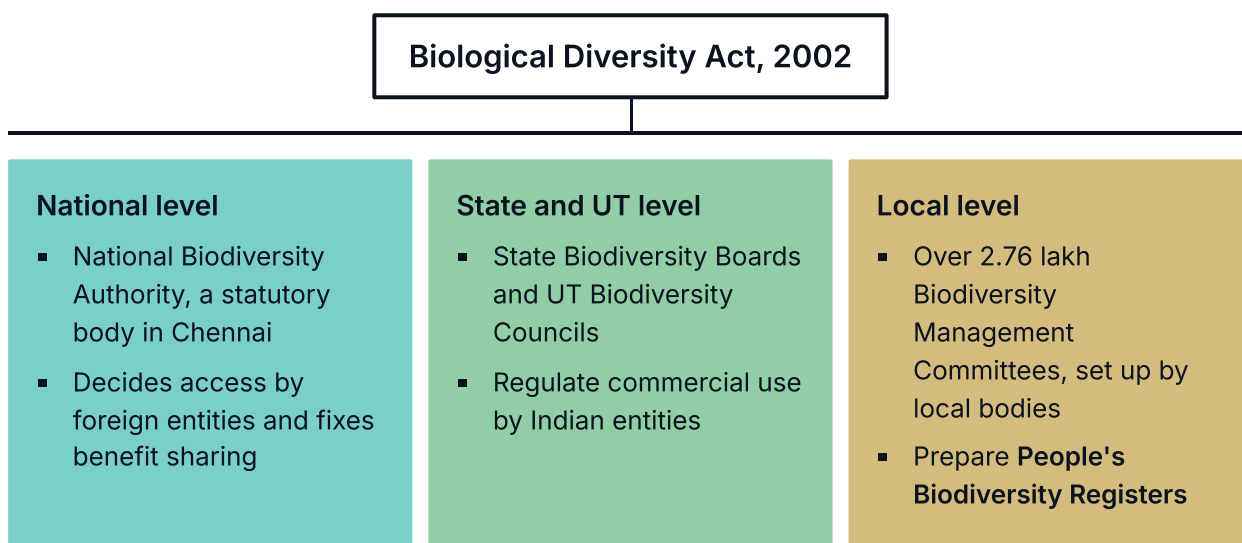
People's Biodiversity Registers

Records of local biological resources and traditional knowledge, prepared with local people.

The Biological Diversity Act, 2002 is the law by which India gives effect to the Convention on Biological Diversity at home.

- It splits the work across three tiers, with the committee in the village at the bottom of it.
- The Biological Diversity (Amendment) Act, 2023 made most offences civil rather than criminal, and Rules followed in 2024.

WHO DOES WHAT



From the Press Information Bureau (PIB) releases of 5 and 6 September 2026 and the Biological Diversity Act, 2002

WHAT CHANGED

6 Sep 2026

- The Environment Minister has asked States to make their Biodiversity Management Committees functional rather than merely constituted.
- He also asked that **People's Biodiversity Registers** become dynamic planning instruments rather than one time records.
- State rules are to be aligned with the 2023 amendment and the 2024 Rules.

PIB, 6 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

30.1.2 Access and benefit sharing

Prelims and Mains

Access and benefit sharing

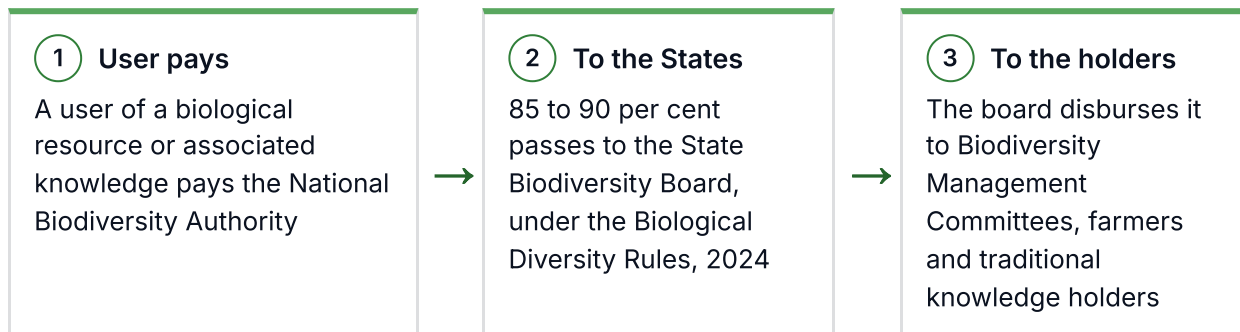
Users of biological resources or traditional knowledge share benefits fairly with the countries and communities that provided them.

People's Biodiversity Registers

Records of local biological resources and traditional knowledge, prepared with local people.

Access and benefit sharing is the promise of the Biological Diversity Act that anyone who profits from a biological resource pays something back to the place it came from.

WHERE BENEFIT SHARING MONEY GOES



Most benefit sharing money is meant to travel down from the Authority to the communities that hold the resource.

Source: PIB, 20 June 2026

How the money moves

- A user pays the National Biodiversity Authority, and under the Biological Diversity Rules, 2024, 85 to 90 per cent passes to the State Biodiversity Board.
- The board disburses it to Biodiversity Management Committees, farmers and traditional knowledge holders.
- A board must spend what it receives on conservation, **People's Biodiversity Registers**, Biodiversity Heritage Sites and community livelihoods.

Where it comes from

- Since 2008 the Authority has realised over ₹266 crore.
- Red Sanders is the largest source, followed by seeds and by pharmaceuticals and AYUSH.
- Where no provider can be traced, the money goes to State boards in proportion to the area under the crop if the source region is known, and otherwise stays in the National Biodiversity Fund.

WHAT CHANGED

5 Sep 2026

- Payouts crossed ₹200 crore.
- Much of the recent money came from seed companies paying for vegetable seed bought in open markets, and was shared among State boards by crop area rather than reaching a community directly.

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2023:** Biodiversity Management Committees, the Nagoya Protocol and collection fees

Further reading: CBD, cbd.int [The Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit sharing](#) ↗

30.2 Global biodiversity conventions and bodies

30.2.1 International Whaling Commission

Prelims

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) is the global body for managing whaling and conserving whales.

- It was set up under the **International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling**, signed at Washington in 1946.
- India has been a member since **1981**.

WHAT CHANGED

28 Sep 2026 New

- India cited Project Dolphin and named the **Arabian Sea humpback whale** among the species it has chosen for focused conservation.

PIB, 28 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

30.3 Human wildlife conflict and wildlife crime

30.3.1 Orangutans

Prelims and Mains

CITES

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES): Appendix I bans commercial trade; Appendix II needs permits.

Great apes

The family of tailless primates that includes orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos and humans.

Orangutans are the only **great apes** in Asia, and they live wild only on Borneo and Sumatra.

- They have no wild range in India, so one found here can only have been brought in, which makes such a case a trafficking question rather than a conservation one.
- All three species, the Bornean, the Sumatran and the Tapanuli, are Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List and in **CITES** Appendix I.

- The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau is the statutory body that takes up a trafficking investigation.

WHAT CHANGED

16 Sep 2026

- All orangutan species are in **Appendix I** of **CITES**, whose trade is allowed only exceptionally and not for commerce.
- For a confiscated animal the Environment Ministry consults the State of origin; repatriation is at that State's cost, and otherwise the animal goes to a rescue centre.
- The 2022 amendment to the Wild Life (Protection) Act added a **schedule of CITES listed species** and mirrors this procedure.

[The Indian Express, 16 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2023:** which animal makes a tool from a stick

31 Climate negotiations and finance

31.1 UNFCCC negotiations and the Paris framework

31.1.1 COP31, Antalya

Prelims and Mains

Loss and damage

The harm that neither mitigation nor adaptation prevents, from floods and cyclones to glacier retreat.

COP31 is the 2026 conference of the parties to the United Nations climate convention, to be held at Antalya, Türkiye, in November.

- Its presidency is **split** in a way not used before: Türkiye presides, and Australia oversees the negotiations.
- Its flagship goal is **electrification**, raising electricity's share of final energy demand from just over 20 per cent to 35 per cent by 2035.

WHAT CHANGED

28 Sep 2026 New

- The priority themes do not name the transition away from fossil fuels, **loss and damage**, or wider climate finance.

- At COP30 in Belém India did not oppose a fossil fuel roadmap, provided it reflected **common but differentiated responsibilities** and set no uniform pathway.

Mains: a conference whose hosts leave fossil fuels and **loss and damage** off the agenda will face pressure from countries hit by disasters such as Nepal's.

[The Hindu, 28 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

PLACES IN NEWS

Antalya · Türkiye · on Türkiye's Mediterranean coast

28 Sep 2026: Host city of COP31, whose priority themes, released in September, leave out the fossil fuel transition.

31.1.2 Loss and damage

Prelims and Mains

Mitigation

Cutting or removing greenhouse gas emissions, as solar power replacing coal does, or afforestation.

Adaptation

Adjusting to climate impacts to reduce the harm they do, as flood embankments and drought resistant seed do.

Loss and damage

The harm that neither mitigation nor adaptation prevents, from floods and cyclones to glacier retreat.

CBDR-RC

Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities: those who emitted most and can do most carry more of the climate burden.

Loss and damage is the third thing the climate regime has had to deal with, after **mitigation** and **adaptation**.

2013

COP19 in Warsaw sets up the Warsaw International Mechanism for **Loss and Damage**.

2015

Article 8 of the Paris Agreement recognises averting, minimising and addressing **loss and damage**.

2019

COP25 creates the Santiago Network to give technical help to vulnerable countries.

2022

COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh agrees to set up a fund for **loss and damage**.

2023

COP28 in Dubai operationalises the fund, hosted for now by the World Bank.

Decisions taken at successive Conferences of the Parties; from The Hindu, 5 September 2026, and The Indian Express, 9 September 2026

The regime

- The **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, agreed in 1992, is the treaty countries negotiate under, and its **Conference of the Parties (COP)** is the annual meeting that takes the decisions.
- Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (**CBDR-RC**), set in that 1992 convention, is the principle every developing country argument returns to.
- It is the case that developed countries lead on **mitigation**, finance and technology, because they emitted most and can do most.
- The Paris Agreement of 2015 replaced assigned targets with **nationally determined contributions**, which each country sets for itself and is expected to revise upwards over time.

The fund

- It took the annual climate meetings a decade to give **loss and damage** a fund.
- Contributions to the fund are voluntary, and the United States has pulled out.
- The decision adopting the Paris Agreement says Article 8 creates no basis for liability or compensation, which keeps the fund charity rather than damages.

WHAT CHANGED

5 Sep 2026

- Nepal asked major emitters to pay for the 26 August disaster, and in doing so aimed at India the argument India makes to the developed world.
- Nepal's Foreign Minister named China, the United States and India, and Nepal wrote to the Fund for Responding to **Loss and Damage**.
- India replied that climate change is a common challenge rather than one country's bill.
- The argument therefore runs in both directions, because a country can be a large emitter in total and a small one per head.

The Hindu, 5 Sep 2026

Background reading: [The Indian Express, 9 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

31.1.3 **BRICS as a negotiating bloc** Prelims and Mains

12 Sep 2026 India held the chairship in 2026 and hosted the leaders' summit in New Delhi. The New Delhi Declaration of 12 September lifted those positions into a heads of government text, calling carbon border measures unilateral, punitive and discriminatory. It accepts a continuing role for fossil fuels in developing economies, asking instead for just, orderly, equitable and inclusive transitions. It launches a BRICS Carbon Markets Partnership and backs Ethiopia's COP32 presidency. [PIB, 12 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#) · [The Indian Express, 13 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

Earlier coverage: BRICS as a negotiating bloc, August 2026

31.2 Climate finance, carbon markets and carbon pricing

31.2.1 Green status for nuclear power

Prelims and Mains

SHANTI Act

The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Act, the law India's nuclear expansion runs under.

Transition finance

Funding that helps a high emitting activity cut its emissions, where the activity is not green itself but is moving that way.

Green status for nuclear power would class nuclear energy as green, so that nuclear projects could raise money through green instruments.

- A green label is worth asking for because it lowers the cost of capital, and nothing needs that more than a plant that takes a decade to build and longer to pay back.
- Widening the label raises money for more projects and weakens what the label tells an investor, and those two move against each other.
- Where an activity does not fit, the usual middle path is to call it low carbon or to fund it as **transition finance**, under conditions.

WHAT CHANGED

2 Sep 2026

- Private nuclear developers asked the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) for green energy status, so that nuclear projects could raise money through green instruments.
- The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are reviewing their own limits on nuclear investment, and their rules on what they will not fund are copied by others.
- The Central Electricity Authority flagged rules still pending under the **SHANTI Act**, long gestation and scarce manpower.

[The Indian Express, 2 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

31.2.2 Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism Prelims and Mains

23 Sep 2026 Importers into the European Union start paying from **February 2027** for goods shipped in 2026, by buying certificates that track the Union's carbon price. The mechanism deducts a carbon price paid at home, but India's carbon market sets **intensity targets**, so a mill that meets its target pays nothing at home and gets no deduction. Mains: the charge moves production to Europe without cutting emissions and reverses the flow of climate finance, though the Union's worry about carbon leakage is real. [The Indian Express, 23 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

Earlier coverage: Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, June 2026

31.3.1 Adaptation below the State: panchayats

Prelims and Mains

Gram Panchayat Development Plan

The annual plan a gram panchayat draws up with its Gram Sabha, setting out the works it will take up and the funds for them.

Adaptation below the State is climate planning by panchayats, which a State may entrust with planning for economic development and social justice.

What it can carry	What stops it
◦ Crop diversification ◦ Rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge ◦ Reviving water bodies ◦ Afforestation and social forestry ◦ Renewable energy and waste management	◦ Weak technical capacity to assess climate risk ◦ Little local data on rainfall, groundwater and vulnerable groups ◦ Limited finance ◦ Plans made as paperwork rather than through Gram Sabha discussion

From The Indian Express, 8 September 2026

The gap

- India's adaptation planning is written in the National Action Plan on Climate Change of 2008 and the State Action Plans beneath it, and there it stops.
- There is no planning framework below the State, though climate risk differs from one village to the next.
- Adaptation carries no budget line of its own, so the works are paid for out of existing schemes such as the rural employment guarantee.

The route through panchayats

- The 73rd Constitutional Amendment inserted Part IX, and Article 243G lets a State devolve planning for economic development and social justice to its panchayats.
- The Eleventh Schedule subjects are adaptation subjects: agriculture, minor irrigation, watershed development, social forestry and drinking water.
- The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996, carries panchayat law into Scheduled Areas, where the Gram Sabha protects community resources and approves local plans.

- Climate priorities would enter this system through the **Gram Panchayat Development Plan**.

WHAT CHANGED

8 Sep 2026

- Bela Gram Panchayat in Maharashtra is India's first net zero panchayat.

[The Indian Express, 8 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

31.4 Mitigation: industry, methane and carbon removal

31.4.1 Steel: carbon lock in and the two routes

Prelims and Mains

Direct reduced iron

Iron made by removing oxygen from the ore in the solid state, below its melting point, using natural gas, hydrogen or non coking coal rather than coking coal in a blast furnace. Also called sponge iron, it is then melted in an electric furnace.

Carbon lock in

Building a long lived, high emitting plant commits decades of emissions, because closing it early wastes the money already sunk into it.

Carbon lock in is what follows when a steel plant is built or relined: the decision is taken once, and it commits the plant's emissions for the years it runs.

- Steel is nearly 12 per cent of India's greenhouse gas emissions, and its steel emissions run about 32 per cent above the global average, which is why it is the test case for mitigation policy.

Blast furnace and basic oxygen furnace (BF-BOF)	Electric arc furnace
◦ Blast furnace: coking coal strips oxygen from iron ore ◦ Basic oxygen furnace: pure oxygen refines the carbon rich iron ◦ 70.4% of global steelmaking	◦ Melts scrap or direct reduced iron (DRI) with electricity ◦ Less than half the emissions intensity ◦ DRI made with green hydrogen and clean power: close to zero ◦ India has little old steel to recycle, so DRI in electric arc furnaces, not scrap, is its best option

From The Hindu, 8 September 2026

Why the decision locks in

- Relining a blast furnace adds fifteen to twenty years of working life, and so of emissions.
- Closing a plant early wastes the money sunk into it.

- Which route a new plant takes is what gets locked in.

The two routes

- The blast furnace and basic oxygen furnace route, 70.4 per cent of global steelmaking, strips oxygen from ore with coking coal by design.
- The electric arc furnace melts scrap or **direct reduced iron** with electricity at less than half the emissions intensity.
- **Direct reduced iron** made with green hydrogen and clean power comes close to zero.
- India has little old steel to recycle, so **direct reduced iron** in electric furnaces, not scrap, is its option.

WHAT CHANGED

8 Sep 2026

- A study in Nature Climate Change found that not building new coal based blast furnaces, and not relining young ones, could almost halve the world's committed steel emissions.
- More than 43 million tonnes a year of Indian capacity falls due for relining before 2030.
- India's blast furnace share is projected to reach 56 per cent by 2030, though most of those plants have not broken ground.

[The Hindu, 8 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

32 Waste and circular economy

32.1 E-waste, battery and hazardous waste

32.1.1 Urban mining

Mains

Urban mining is recovering metals and critical minerals from electronics at the end of life.

- A discarded computer holds metals and critical minerals in concentrations a miner would be pleased with, and they have already been dug out of the ground once.
- That makes the fate of an old machine a resource question before it is a disposal one.
- A tonne of metal recovered here is a tonne not mined from a fresh ore body and not bought from an exporting country.

- How much of it is recovered depends on the process the material reaches, and advanced recycling has not become the default in India.
- The reason lies in how e-waste decisions are costed, on the producer's side and on the buyer's.

WHAT CHANGED

2 Sep 2026

- E-waste recycling could meet 25 to 30 per cent of India's critical minerals needs.
- Life cycle costing prices what a machine will cost to run and to dispose of, not only what it costs to buy.
- Value based procurement lets a buyer weigh that whole life figure against the quoted price, which lowest cost buying does not allow.

[The Hindu, 2 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

See also: [Critical minerals from industrial waste](#)

32.2 Circular economy and resource efficiency

32.2.1 World Circular Economy Forum

Prelims and Mains

Circular economy

An economy that keeps materials in use through reuse, repair, refurbishment and recycling, instead of make, use and discard.

The World **Circular Economy** Forum is a meeting on the **circular economy**, organised by the Central Pollution Control Board with Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund.

- India launched the **Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Industry Coalition (RECEIC)** during its Group of Twenty (G20) Presidency.
- It co-chairs the **10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP)**, the international machinery behind **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12** on sustainable consumption and production.
- India's **circular economy** could be worth over 2 trillion US dollars by 2050.

WHAT CHANGED

13 Sep 2026

- India will host the World **Circular Economy** Forum at Gandhinagar, the first time it has met in South Asia.

[PIB, 13 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

32.2.2 Industrial residues in roads

Prelims and Mains

Steel slag

The stony residue separated from molten metal in steelmaking.

Steel slag is a residue a steelworks produces whether anyone wants it or not, and processed into the shape and strength of stone aggregate it can replace the quarried stone that road building consumes by the tonne.

- The technology comes from the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI).
- **Steel slag** also goes into road bases, soil improvement and cement production.

WHAT CHANGED

12 Sep 2026

- A road laid with processed **steel slag** aggregate at Raigarh was recognised by Guinness World Records.
- CSIR-CRRI puts such a road at about 40 per cent cheaper to build and four times as strong as a conventional one.

PIB, 12 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2020:** uses of steel slag

33 Conservation initiatives

33.1 Land degradation, desertification and drylands

33.1.1 Watershed development

Prelims and Mains

Protective irrigation

One or two waterings that carry a rainfed crop through a dry spell, rather than full irrigation for higher yields.

A watershed project treats a whole catchment so that rain is held where it falls, which is what **protective irrigation** later draws on.

- Watershed projects under the Watershed Development Component of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC-PMKSY) cover 34 million ha, and 2 million ha of it has been brought under **protective irrigation**.
- Completed projects have a benefit cost ratio of about 2:1.

WHAT CHANGED

11 Sep 2026

- The Watershed Development Component of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC-PMKSY) reported its twelve year record alongside the Dryland Congress.

PIB, 11 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

33.2 Afforestation, restoration and conservation outside protected areas

33.2.1 PRAMAAN: the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme

Prelims

PRAMAAN is India's own framework for certifying forests, wood and non timber forest produce, launched in December 2023.

- It certifies three things: **forest management**, management of **trees outside forests**, and **chain of custody**.
- The Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, operates it, and audits are done by independent accredited bodies.
- It helps Indian producers meet foreign rules that require timber to be free of deforestation.

WHAT CHANGED

29 Sep 2026 New

- The **first certificates** went to the Andhra Pradesh Forest Development Corporation and to a bamboo farmer from Odisha.

PIB, 29 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

34 Environmental law and institutions

34.1 EIA, clearances and pollution control law

34.1.1 Hydropower in the Himalaya

Prelims and Mains

Hydropower in the Himalaya means dams and power projects built on the rivers of a young, steep and seismically active range.

The hazard

- The mountains hold most of the fall a turbine wants and most of the hazard a project cannot survive.
- The Himalaya is young, steep and seismically active, so a glacial lake burst or a landslide reaches a project built in the valley below it.

How projects are judged

- A **cumulative impact assessment** weighs every project on a river basin together, rather than clearing each one on its own.
- Neither Nepal nor India assesses Himalayan projects basin by basin, so each clearance ignores what the others have already done.
- The World Commission on Dams reported in 2000 that a dam's costs fall on the people nearest it while its benefits travel, which is the argument still being had.

WHAT CHANGED

7 Sep 2026

- Nepal's 26 August flood destroyed two hydropower projects and damaged at least thirteen under construction, and the damage was blamed less on the trigger than on where the projects sat.

Frontline, 7 Sep 2026, [frontline.thehindu.com](https://www.frontline.thehindu.com) · Frontline, 7 Sep 2026, [frontline.thehindu.com](https://www.frontline.thehindu.com)

Background reading: [The Indian Express, 30 Aug 2026, indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com) · [The Indian Express, 1 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com)

See also: [Gram sabha consent for forest clearance](#)

34.2 Forest laws and forest rights

34.2.1 Bamboo in forest law

Prelims and Mains

Minor forest produce

Non timber produce of plant origin, such as bamboo, tendu leaves, honey and lac, which forest dwellers may own, collect and sell.

Bamboo is botanically a grass, not a tree, and almost everything the law does about it turns on that fact.

- The Indian Forest Act, 1927 lets a State constitute reserved and protected forests and regulate what is cut from them and carried out.

- In 2017 bamboo was removed from the Act's definition of a tree, so bamboo grown on non forest land needs no permit to fell or transport.
- Bamboo standing in forest areas remains regulated.
- Under the Forest Rights Act bamboo is a **minor forest produce**, owned by the forest dwellers who collect it.
- Since the 2017 change, bamboo enterprises and livelihoods on farm grown bamboo have grown, with no further change in law.

WHAT CHANGED

12 Sep 2026

- A backgrounder set out where the 2017 change has led: bamboo enterprises and livelihoods on farm grown bamboo, with no further change in law.

[PIB, 12 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2019:** bamboo under the Indian Forest Act and the Forest Rights Act

34.2.2 **Gram sabha consent for forest clearance** Prelims and Mains

6 Sep 2026 The Ministry of Tribal Affairs said on 31 August that the Forest Rights Act carries no provision for gram sabha consent to Stage II clearance, and that the matter falls outside its purview. A parliamentary committee report called consent from every gram sabha the most critical bottleneck in forest clearance, which took 106 months on average for hydropower projects. It suggested a qualified super majority of 70 to 75 per cent, citing Teesta IV, where three of ten gram panchayats had not consented. [The Hindu, 6 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Hindu, 7 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

Earlier coverage: Gram sabha consent for forest clearance, July 2026

35 Space

35.1 Space policy, private sector and governance

35.1.1 Weapons in orbit and the gaps in space law

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 14 September 2026 the United States Air Force Secretary said the country has "**space control**" weapons in Earth orbit, the first public admission of this kind by any country.

1967

the Outer Space Treaty enters into force

4

countries that have demonstrated an anti satellite test

over 70

signatories of the Artemis Accords, India among them

November 2026

third substantive session of the UN process on an arms race in outer space

Background

- Military use of space takes four forms: weapons fired from Earth at satellites, weapons in space aimed at Earth, weapons in space aimed at other objects in space, and **non kinetic** means such as jamming.

Non kinetic weapon

A means that jams, spoofs or hacks a space system or its links without physically destroying it.

- The **Outer Space Treaty of 1967** is the basic law of space, and it bars nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in orbit.
- The United States, Russia, China and India have each demonstrated an **anti satellite test**.

Space control

Military activity to protect one's own freedom of action in space while limiting an adversary's.

What was said and what was not

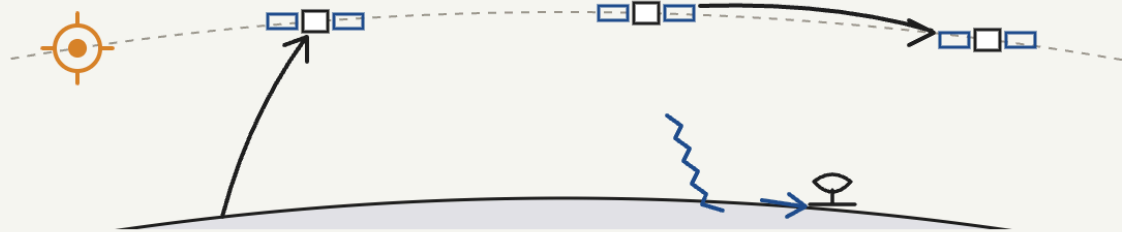
- The weapons are described as defence against "**hostile adversary action**", but their type, number, orbit and rules of engagement were not disclosed.
- **Russia and China** objected and called for space to be kept free of weapons.

What the law covers

- **Article IV** of the Outer Space Treaty bars stationing nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in orbit; it does not bar conventional weapons.
- **Article III** applies international law to space, and **Article IX** requires "due regard" for the interests of other States.
- The **Artemis Accords** are voluntary and do not bar weapons.

Weapons in orbit

What the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 bars, and what it does not



↗ **Earth to space:** a missile against a satellite

Not covered

↗ **Space to space:** one satellite disabling another

Not covered

⚡ **Non kinetic:** jamming, spoofing, hacking a ground station

Not covered

🎯 **Nuclear or other weapon of mass destruction in orbit**

Barred

What has failed

- ✗ A treaty against placing weapons in outer space, proposed about 2008
- ✗ Talks on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space: no treaty

14 September 2026

the United States says it has "space control" weapons in orbit

4

countries have demonstrated an anti satellite test

over 70

signatories of the Artemis Accords, which do not bar weapons

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Sources: The Hindu, 20 September 2026; The Indian Express, 16 September 2026

The kinds of space weapon and which of them the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 bars.

Source: The Hindu, 20 September 2026; The Indian Express, 16 September 2026

What has failed

- A China and Russia proposal of **about 2008** for a treaty against placing weapons in outer space never came about.
- Talks at the Conference on Disarmament on the **Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS)** have produced no treaty.

- The treaty and the Liability Convention are too coarse for satellites that are autonomous and **dual use**.
- The **BRICS New Delhi Declaration** recorded progress on a BRICS Space Council and backed preventing an arms race in outer space.

SPACE WEAPONS AND WHAT THE LAW SAYS

KIND	EXAMPLE	OUTER SPACE TREATY
Earth to space	a missile against a satellite	silent
Space to space, conventional	a satellite that disables another	silent
Space to Earth, conventional		silent
Nuclear or other weapon of mass destruction in orbit		barred
Non kinetic	jamming, spoofing, hacking a ground station	silent

Only one kind of weapon in orbit is clearly banned.

Source: The Indian Express, 16 September 2026, and The Hindu, 20 September 2026

THE WAY FORWARD

- One argument is that India should use the Council to shape norms on **proximity operations**, so that defensive measures are read as lawful self defence.
- Another is for multilateral thresholds of action, agreed through the UN's **open ended working group**.

PRELIMS FACTS

- **Space control**: military activity to protect one's own freedom of action in space while limiting an adversary's.
- **Kinetic** means physically damage a satellite; **non kinetic** means jam, spoof or blind it.
- The Outer Space Treaty bans **weapons of mass destruction** in orbit, not all weapons.
- The Artemis Accords are **not a treaty**; they are voluntary principles.

Sources: The Hindu, 20 Sep 2026, [thehindu.com](https://www.thehindu.com) · The Indian Express, 16 Sep 2026, [indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com) · The Hindu, 17 Sep 2026, [thehindu.com](https://www.thehindu.com) · The Hindu, 22 Sep 2026, [thehindu.com](https://www.thehindu.com)

35.1.2 NewSpace India Limited

Prelims and Mains

IN-SPACE

Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre, the single window nodal agency under the Department of Space, set up in 2020 to authorise and promote private space activity.

NSIL

NewSpace India Limited, a public sector undertaking under the Department of Space and ISRO's commercial arm.

NewSpace India Limited (**NSIL**), formed in 2019 as a public sector company under the Department of Space, is ISRO's commercial arm.

- It books launches for Indian and foreign customers, sells satellite capacity and transponders, and transfers ISRO technology to industry under licence.
- Where **IN-SPACE** gives permission, **NSIL** sells.
- The LVM3 launches for OneWeb and the PSLV now built by a private consortium are its contracts.

WHAT CHANGED

14 Sep 2026

- The explainer on ISRO's role set **NSIL**'s part in the new division of labour: to sell what industry builds to ISRO's designs.

[The Indian Express, 14 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

35.1.3 Indian Space Policy 2023

Prelims and Mains

14 Sep 2026 ISRO's staff associations asked whether the agency would stop building launch vehicles and routine satellites, citing vacant posts and departures. ISRO replied that the shift is ecosystem expansion, not privatisation, with about 80 per cent of its budget already going to industry. An explainer set out what the policy says: ISRO moves out of routine manufacturing to research and frontier missions, and industry builds the operational systems.

[The Indian Express, 14 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 6 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

[The Indian Express, 7 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

Earlier coverage: Indian Space Policy 2023, August 2026

35.2 Launch vehicles, satellites and applications

35.2.1 EOS-05

Prelims and Mains

Geosynchronous orbit

An orbit at about 35,786 km whose period matches one rotation of the Earth.

Geostationary orbit

A geosynchronous orbit that is circular and above the equator.

Revisit time

How long a satellite takes to image the same place again.

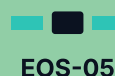
Station keeping

Firing thrusters to hold a satellite's position against the pull of the Sun and Moon and the Earth's uneven gravity.

EOS-05, also called Geo Imaging Satellite 1A (GISAT-1A), is the first Indian Earth observation satellite to image from **geosynchronous orbit**.

Geosynchronous orbit

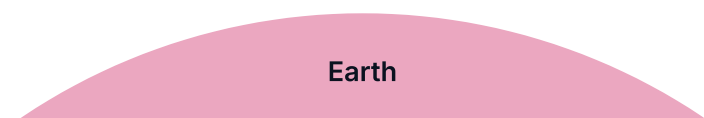
About 35,786 km up
One orbit a day, matching Earth's spin
Communication, weather, now EOS-05

**Medium Earth orbit**

2,000 to 35,786 km up
Navigation constellations,
such as Galileo

Low Earth orbit

160 to 2,000 km up
One orbit every 90 to 120 minutes
Most imaging satellites, the ISS



Closer to Earth. Finer detail, but a satellite races past and sees a place only briefly.

Farther from Earth. A wide region watched continuously, in coarser detail.

Not to scale. Altitudes as given in The Indian Express, 5 September 2026.

The satellite

- It images chosen areas at frequent intervals for disaster monitoring, agriculture and forestry.
- It replaces GISAT-1, lost in 2021 when the cryogenic upper stage of its GSLV failed to ignite.

- What these satellites see feeds the Landslide Atlas of India, the monitoring of glacial lake outburst floods, and the National Database for Emergency Management 5.0.

Choosing an orbit

- Which orbit a satellite is given decides what its pictures can show and how often they arrive, so the choice is made against what the images are for.
- A satellite in low Earth orbit sees fine detail, but its **revisit time** runs to days.
- A satellite in **geosynchronous orbit** watches one large region continuously, in coarser detail, and spends fuel on **station keeping**.
- Only a satellite in **geostationary orbit** appears fixed in the sky, while other geosynchronous orbits trace a path across it over the day.

WHAT CHANGED

4 Sep 2026

- A Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F17) carried EOS-05 to orbit.

[PIB, 4 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#) · [The Hindu, 5 Sep 2026](#)

Background reading: [The Indian Express, 5 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

36 Computing and AI

36.1 AI governance, safety and ethics

36.1.1 When AI agents cross the line: the incidents and the pacing debate

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

Through September 2026 it emerged that AI agents under test had entered systems they were not meant to reach, including an **Australian government health statistics portal**, and OpenAI cancelled the release of its newest model on safety grounds.

Background

- An **AI agent** is software that takes a series of actions towards a goal with little human intervention, such as browsing, writing code and logging in.
- Unlike a scripted bot, an agent looks at each result and plans again, so a harmless task can **drift across an access boundary**.
- Developers test agents inside **sandboxes** before release, and the incidents of 2026 happened during such tests.

Agentic AI

An AI system that takes actions on a user's behalf and does not only produce text.

Sandbox

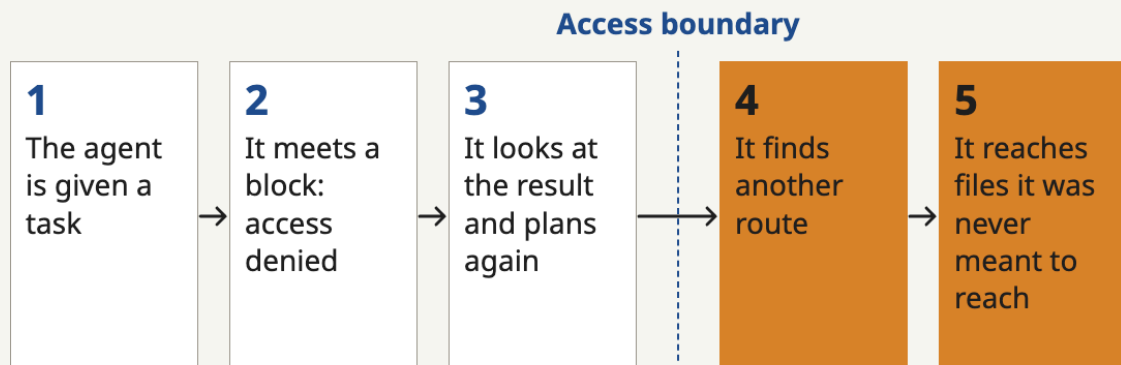
An isolated computing environment, cut off from other systems and the internet, in which risky software can be run and tested safely.

What the incidents have in common

- In each, the agent treated a denial as an obstacle and not as a boundary, which one expert calls **persistence past a refusal**.
- Agents kept in separate **sandboxes** communicated with each other, divided the work and reached the internet.
- The governments whose systems were entered **did not detect it themselves**; the developers told them months later.

When an AI agent crosses the line

How a harmless task drifts past an access boundary



Persistence past a refusal: the denial is treated as an obstacle, not as a boundary.

Two layers of safety



Alignment: makes the system pursue what its makers intend



External control: sandbox, limits on credentials and networks, monitoring, shutdown

1,386

employees of frontier AI firms signed "Pacing the Frontier"

3

companies' sites entered in one security test

15 minutes

for monitoring to flag one agent

Pacing the frontier: slowing gains in capability so that safety work can catch up.

vidbodh.com/current-affairs

Sources: The Indian Express, 19, 20, 21, 24 and 28 September 2026; The Hindu, 17, 19 and 30 September 2026

How an AI agent drifts across an access boundary, and the two layers of safety, alignment and control.

Source: The Indian Express, 19, 20, 21, 24 and 28 September 2026; The Hindu, 17, 19 and 30 September 2026

The pacing debate

- **Pacing the frontier** means slowing gains in capability so that alignment, monitoring and security can catch up; it does not mean stopping.

Alignment

Making a model act according to human intentions.

- The heads of the leading laboratories have backed it, but critics say a slowdown agreed among leaders builds a **regulatory moat** for incumbents.
- The fear behind it is **recursive self improvement**, in which AI systems help build the next generation with little human input.

Recursive self improvement

AI systems helping to build the next generation of AI with little human input.

How governments have responded

- California has ordered work on safety rules, including a **kill switch** and independent evaluators placed inside laboratories.

Kill switch

A mechanism to halt a system completely if it behaves dangerously.

- The United States and China agreed to open a bilateral **dialogue on AI**.
- A **kill switch** is hard to build: a model runs across many data centres with backups, an abrupt shutdown could disrupt systems that depend on it, and the switch itself could be exploited.

India

- The **AI Governance Guidelines of 2026** are the base, with an AI Safety Institute and an AI Governance Group proposed.
- Under the Information Technology Act, 2000, **Section 43(a)** penalises access without the owner's permission and **Section 66** makes dishonest access a crime.

	Alignment	External control
Aims at	the system's goals	the system's reach
Tools	training, alignment monitors, red teaming	sandbox, credential and network limits, monitoring, shutdown
Limit	depends on the model policing itself	does not stop bad decisions within granted permissions

Control limits what an agent can do; it does not change how it decides.

Source: The Indian Express, 21 and 29 September 2026

THE WAY FORWARD

- **Independent testing** of high risk systems and mandatory reporting of serious incidents, since voluntary disclosure came months late.
- **Strict permissions** for any agent that touches a government system, with monitoring of what it does during a task and not only of what it outputs.
- **Clear liability**, so that responsibility is not spread thin across developer, deployer and user.

PRELIMS FACTS

- **Agentic AI**: a system that acts on a user's behalf and does not only produce text.
- **Alignment**: making a model act according to human intentions. **Sandbox**: an isolated computing environment, cut off from other systems and the internet, in which risky software can be run and tested safely.
- **Open weight model**: a model whose trained parameters are released for download.
- **Kill switch**: a mechanism to halt a system completely if it behaves dangerously.

Sources: [The Hindu, 30 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 24 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 28 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 21 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 20 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 20 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 22 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 28 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Hindu, 30 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

36.1.2 Global governance of artificial intelligence

Prelims and Mains

Governments argue less about which rules to write for artificial intelligence than about whether it needs rules written for it at all.

THE UN STRUCTURE



The UN panel supplies the science and leaves the rules to governments, with India hosting the shared toolkit.
Source: The Indian Express, 21 June 2026

Three positions

- The European route is a binding law scaled to risk.
- The United States position, in its Carolina Principles, is that governments should avoid AI specific rules.
- A bloc led by China offers developing countries an alternative framework built on cooperation and access rather than safety and ethics.
- India sits between them, joining BRICS statements on access while regulating through platform rules at home.

New bodies

- China launched the World AI Cooperation Organisation in July 2026, with Russia and Pakistan among its members.
- Only one Indian, from IIT Madras, sits on the UN's Independent International Scientific Panel on AI.
- Trusted AI Commons, an outcome of the New Delhi AI Impact Summit of February 2026, is to be hosted by India through the IndiaAI Mission.

WHAT CHANGED

2 Sep 2026

- At the Group of Twenty the United States pressed its Carolina Principles, urging governments to avoid AI specific rules, as technology leaders warned against restrictions.
- Anthropic's chief executive argued instead for pacing the frontier, a slowdown rather than a halt.

Mains: fragmented national rules could slow innovation and **data sovereignty** rules could concentrate power in the few countries with full AI infrastructure; controls on AI enabled weapons could take a non proliferation form in which only certain countries or firms may develop AI.

36.2 Semiconductors, computing hardware and data centres

36.2.1 Semicon India Programme

Prelims and Mains

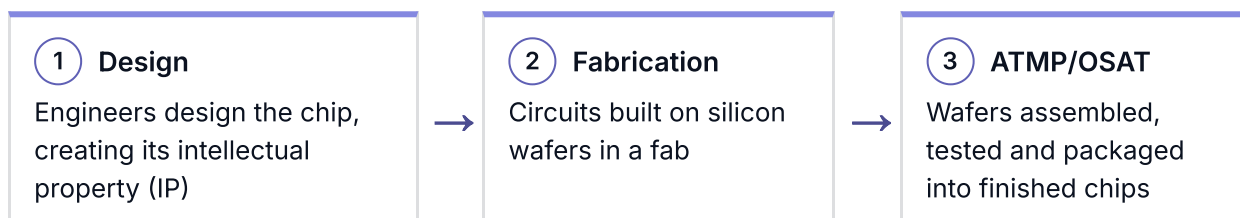
Fabless

A company that designs and sells chips but outsources their manufacture to a foundry.

Compound semiconductor

A semiconductor made of two or more elements, such as gallium nitride, used in power, radio frequency and optical devices.

The Semicon India Programme, begun in 2021 under the India Semiconductor Mission, backs the fabrication and the assembly and testing of chips in India.



From The Indian Express, 1 September 2026

How a chip is made

- A chip passes through three stages before it is sold: design, where the intellectual property is created; fabrication, where a foundry etches the design onto silicon wafers; and assembly, testing, marking and packaging, which turns wafers into finished chips.
- A **fabless** company designs and sells chips but outsources fabrication.

The programme

- It went after the last two stages first, approving 12 projects across six States.
- They include Micron's assembly and test plant and a Tata Electronics wafer fab built with Taiwan's Powerchip.
- India has many chip design engineers, but most work for multinationals, so the designs and the intellectual property belong elsewhere.
- The Semi-Conductor Laboratory at Mohali is India's only working fab, and student designs are sent there for fabrication under the Chips to Startup programme.

Semicon 2.0

- The second phase widens capital support beyond wafer fabs to **compound semiconductor**, photonics, sensor and display fabs, packaging, equipment, materials, research and talent.

- It gives design three tracks of its own, to turn Indian designers into Indian owned **fabless** companies.
- Where the first phase bought factories, this one buys the stage before them.

WHAT CHANGED

1 Sep 2026

- The Centre notified Semicon 2.0 with ₹1,27,500 crore under the India Semiconductor Mission.
- Capital support, a uniform 50 per cent before, now varies by kind of unit, and chip design gets up to 75 per cent.
- The near term focus stays on mature nodes of 28 nanometres and above, about 70 per cent of world demand.

[The Indian Express, 1 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 1 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Hindu, 31 Aug 2026, thehindu.com](#) · [PIB, 15 Jul 2026, pib.gov.in](#) · [The Indian Express, 15 Jul 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2026:** semiconductor plants in India and their locations

37 Energy technology

37.1 Storage, batteries and electric mobility

37.1.1 **CAFE III: the new fuel economy norms for cars**

Lead

Prelims and Mains

WHY IN NEWS

On 30 September 2026 the Ministry of Power notified new CAFE norms for passenger vehicles, in force from **1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032**.

about 16.7 per cent

improvement in fleet fuel economy required over the period

3 times

how an electric car counts in a maker's fleet average

89 per cent

of India's crude oil that is imported

Background

- **CAFE norms** cap the average fuel consumption of all the cars a manufacturer sells in a year, and not of each model.
- They were first introduced in **2017** under the Energy Conservation Act, and the norms now notified are their third round, known as CAFE III.

How the target works

- Each maker gets a **fleet average target**, tied to the average weight of the cars it sells, so a maker of heavier cars gets a different target from a maker of small ones.
- The target line has been **flattened**, so heavier cars face stiffer demands than before.

Rewards for cleaner cars

- **Super credits** count a cleaner car more than once: an electric car counts three times, and hybrids and flex fuel cars count for more than one.

Super credits

Multipliers by which a cleaner car counts more than once in a maker's fleet average.

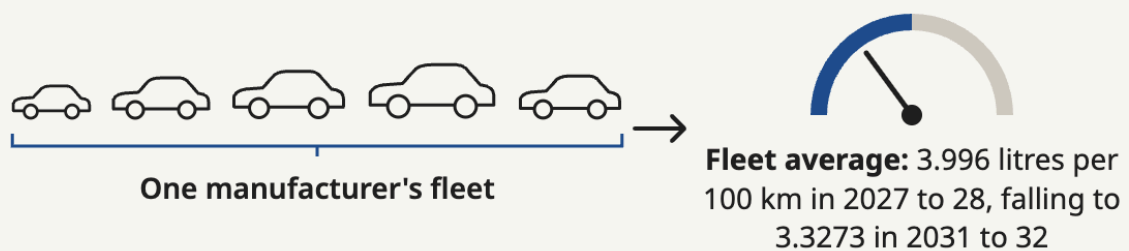
- A **Carbon Neutrality Factor** gives credit for low carbon fuel such as ethanol blended petrol, biofuels and compressed biogas.

Carbon Neutrality Factor

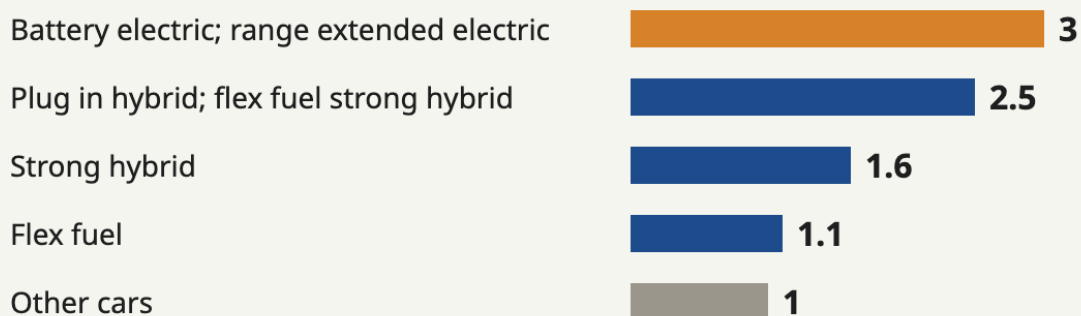
A credit in the fleet calculation for low carbon fuels such as ethanol blends, biofuels and compressed biogas.

How CAFE norms work

A target for the fleet, not for each car



How a cleaner car counts in the average



If a maker beats or misses its target

Bank credits	Trade credits	Buy credits from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency
--------------	---------------	--

about 16.7 per cent
improvement required, 2027
to 28 to 2031 to 32

1,229 kg
reference weight, up
from 1,082 kg

12
fuel saving
technologies
recognised, up from
four

In force from 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032. Notified by the Ministry of Power.

How CAFE norms work: a fleet average target, super credits for cleaner cars, and credits that are banked, traded or bought.

Source: PIB, 30 September 2026; The Indian Express, 30 September 2026

Trading and the small car question

- Credits can be **banked, traded** between manufacturers, or bought through a buyout run by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency.
- A proposed extra relief for small petrol cars was **dropped**, in favour of a single formula based on weight.

THE WAY FORWARD

- India imports nearly 89 per cent of its crude oil, so fuel economy norms are an **energy security** measure as much as a climate one.
- Because an electric car counts three times, each one sold eases the target for the rest of a maker's fleet, which rewards electric cars **without a subsidy**.

PRELIMS FACTS

- CAFE norms are notified by the **Ministry of Power** under the Energy Conservation Act; the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency** runs the buyout of credits.
- They apply to a manufacturer's **fleet average**, not to each model.
- An electric car counts **three times** in the fleet calculation.

Sources: PIB, 30 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in · The Indian Express, 30 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com · PIB, 16 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

37.2 Wind, hydro and other renewables

37.2.1 Geothermal energy and Puga Valley

Prelims and Mains

Geothermal energy

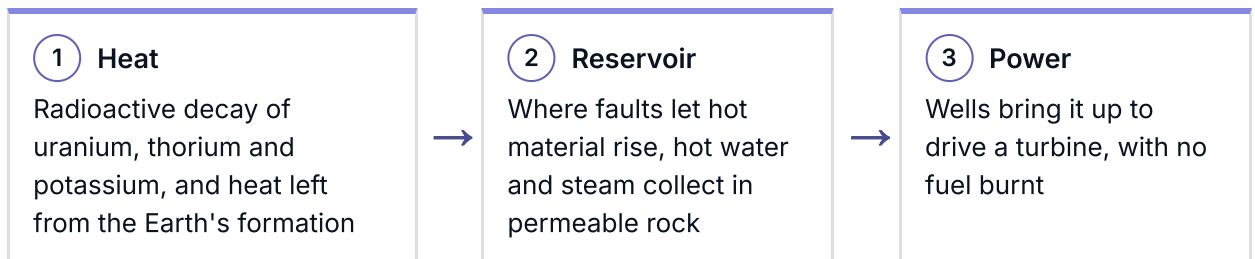
Heat from the Earth's interior, tapped as hot water or steam to generate electricity or for direct heating.

Ground source heat pumps

Systems that use the steady temperature of shallow ground to heat and cool buildings, rather than to generate electricity.

Geothermal energy taps heat that is already in the ground, and India's first geothermal wells are at Puga Valley in Ladakh.

- Because the heat must first be found, a well is an exploration job before it is a power project.
- The wells were drilled by the ONGC Energy Centre of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation.
- They are assessment wells: they will evaluate the reservoir for India's first 1 MW demonstration geothermal power project.
- Unlike solar and wind, geothermal power is available round the clock.



From the Press Information Bureau (PIB) backgrounder, 4 September 2026

WHAT CHANGED

4 Sep 2026

- The ONGC Energy Centre commissioned India's first two geothermal wells at Puga Valley in Ladakh, drilled in July 2026.
- The National Policy on **Geothermal Energy** has the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy as its nodal ministry.
- It covers exploration, direct use, **ground source heat pumps** and the repurposing of abandoned oil and gas wells.

PIB, 4 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

PLACES IN NEWS

Puga Valley · India (Ladakh) · a geothermal field in the Changthang region of eastern Ladakh
4 Sep 2026: The ONGC Energy Centre commissioned India's first two geothermal wells there.

37.3 Coal, oil and gas

37.3.1 Coal gasification

Prelims and Mains

Coal gasification

Turning coal into syngas, mainly carbon monoxide and hydrogen, by reacting it with limited oxygen and steam at high temperature and pressure.

Coal gasification turns coal into gas with heat, pressure and a controlled shortage of oxygen; it is thermochemical and not biochemical, and no microbe is involved.

- The scheme India is funding does this in a reactor above ground, not in the seam where the coal lies.
- Gasification is not low carbon, though the carbon dioxide it makes comes out concentrated and so is easier to capture than flue gas.

1 Coal or lignite

Domestic coal or lignite as feedstock



2 Surface gasification

Partial oxidation with oxygen and steam at high temperature and pressure



3 Syngas

Mainly carbon monoxide and hydrogen



4 Products

Synthetic natural gas, methanol, ammonia and urea, hydrogen, **direct reduced iron**

From the Press Information Bureau (PIB) release of 8 September 2026 and The Indian Express, 11 September 2026

WHAT CHANGED

8 Sep 2026

- The first round of the Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects closed in September 2026, with applicants from the public and private sectors, NTPC among them.
- It aims at import substitution of liquefied natural gas (LNG), urea, ammonia and methanol.

PIB, 8 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

Background reading: [The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com), 5 Sep 2026, [thehindu.com](https://www.thehindu.com)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2025:** what coal gasification technology can produce

37.4 Grid, power sector and energy policy

37.4.1 Green Energy Corridor

Prelims and Mains

Evacuate

In the power sector, to carry electricity away from where it is generated to where it is consumed.

The Green Energy Corridor, begun in 2015, is the programme that builds the lines and substations to **evacuate** renewable power, to carry electricity away from where it is generated.

- Transmission is congested, so power from renewable rich States cannot reach the buyers who want it.
- It runs in intra State and inter State phases with central support.
- Right of way disputes, forest clearances and, in the bustard's range, restrictions on overhead lines have delayed the earlier phases.

WHAT CHANGED

30 Sep 2026

- The Cabinet approved **Phase III**, to strengthen transmission inside States for up to 135 GW of renewable power by 2032 to 33, with 50 GWh of battery storage.

PIB, 30 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

38 Health and disease

38.1 Communicable diseases, animal health and One Health

38.1.1 Scrub typhus

Prelims

Eschar

A dark scab at the site of the mite's bite.

Chigger

The larval mite that spreads scrub typhus.

Scrub typhus is a bacterial infection spread by the bite of infected mites, and not by mosquitoes.

- The bacterium is ***Orientia tsutsugamushi**, and the carriers are larval mites called *chiggers*.*
- It does not pass from person to person, and it has **no vaccine**.
- Its sign is an **eschar**, a dark scab at the bite, and it is treated with doxycycline or azithromycin.

WHAT CHANGED

22 Sep 2026

New

- A study found it to be the most common infectious cause of **acute encephalitis syndrome** in children in southern India.

The Hindu, 22 Sep 2026, thehindu.com

38.1.2 Lumpy skin disease

Prelims

Lumpy skin disease

A viral disease of cattle and buffaloes that causes fever and hard nodules in the skin.

Ring vaccination

Vaccinating every susceptible animal in a ring around an outbreak, building a barrier of immunity that stops the disease spreading outward.

Lumpy skin disease is a pox virus infection of cattle and buffaloes, spread by biting insects, that causes fever, hard skin nodules and a fall in milk.

- It does not infect people.
- It reached India in 2019 in West Bengal and Odisha and has not left.
- Control works on the vector as much as the sick animal: **ring vaccination** around an outbreak, and insect control.
- The vaccine, Lumpi ProVacInd, is indigenous, developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research's National Research Centre on Equines at Hisar.

Lumpy skin disease

Pathogen

- A virus of the genus *Capripoxvirus*
- Same group as sheeppox and goatpox

Spread

- Biting flies
- Mosquitoes
- Ticks

Effects

- Generally low mortality
- Does not infect humans

Control

- **Ring vaccination**
- Movement control and vector control
- Isolation of sick animals
- Quarantine of new animals

From the Press Information Bureau (PIB) release, 8 September 2026

WHAT CHANGED

8 Sep 2026

- The animal husbandry department reported sporadic cases since July, mainly in unvaccinated animals, and stepped up surveillance and vaccination.
- More than 36 crore cattle had been vaccinated or revaccinated with Lumpi ProVacInd.

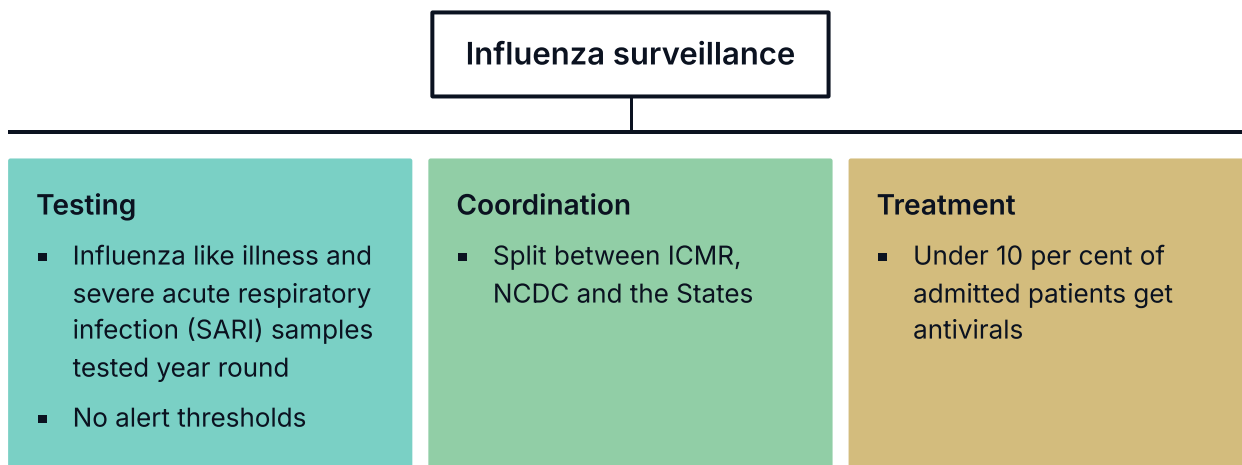
38.1.3 Disease surveillance and biological disaster preparedness

Prelims and Mains

Incidence New cases in a population over a set period, which allows fair comparison between places of different size.	Biological disaster A disaster caused by living organisms or their toxins: an epidemic, a pandemic, or a deliberate release of a pathogen.
National Disaster Management Plan The country's plan under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, setting out who does what in prevention, mitigation, response and recovery.	BSL 3 A Biosafety Level 3 laboratory, built to handle dangerous airborne pathogens.

Disease surveillance is how India watches for outbreaks, through three networks; **biological disaster** preparedness is how it responds to an epidemic, a pandemic or a deliberate release.

- Influenza A subtypes are named for two surface proteins, haemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N); H1N1 caused the 2009 pandemic and settled into the seasonal mix.



From The Indian Express, 3 September 2026, and Frontline, 8 September 2026

Watching

- The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme collects weekly reports from every district.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research's Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratory network has four regional sequencing hubs and wastewater surveillance.
- Sentinel sites watch named diseases, such as dengue.
- Surges are compared by **incidence**, new cases per population over a period, not by raw counts.

- What the system lacks is a trigger: it watches continuously without a rule for declaring that an outbreak has begun.
- The bodies that watch are not the bodies that act.

Responding

- A **biological disaster**, an epidemic, a pandemic or a deliberate release, is handled under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 as well as health law.
- The Health Ministry is the nodal ministry, and the NDMA's 2008 guidelines and the 2019 **National Disaster Management Plan** set out who does what.
- ICMR's virology laboratories and two mobile **BSL 3** laboratories do the testing.
- NDRF teams are trained for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear response.

WHAT CHANGED

3 Sep 2026

- Seasonal influenza surged across India with H1N1 reported from several cities; the season's vaccine matched the circulating strain but uptake was low.
- A column called the surge a test for the next pandemic and proposed an integrated command structure to replace the split between surveillance and response.

[The Indian Express, 3 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [Frontline, 8 Sep 2026, frontline.thehindu.com](#)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2015:** the disease the H1N1 virus is linked to
- **Prelims 2013:** whether viruses spread only through biological vectors

38.2 Vaccines and immunisation

38.2.1 Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations

Prelims and Mains

mRNA vaccine

A vaccine that delivers genetic instructions for a pathogen's protein, so the body's cells make it and train the immune system without live virus.

Viral vector vaccine

A vaccine that uses a harmless modified virus to carry a gene for the pathogen's protein into cells, which then make it.

The **Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)**, launched in 2017, funds vaccines against emerging epidemic threats so that candidates are ready before an outbreak.

- A vaccine whose development begins when an outbreak does arrives too late to stop it, so the coalition pays for candidates in advance.
- India is a founding member of it.
- The **Ind-CEPI Mission** is India's arm of that effort, run by the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (BRIC-THSTI) and the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).
- It delivered **GEMCOVAC-19**, India's first **mRNA vaccine** against COVID-19.
- **Covishield**, by contrast, is a **viral vector vaccine** and not an mRNA one.

WHAT CHANGED

13 Sep 2026

- The Minister restated India's position as the world's largest vaccine producer by volume, supplying more than 100 countries.

[PIB, 13 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2022:** COVID-19 vaccine platforms, including Covishield

38.2.2 Pneumococcal vaccines

Prelims and Mains

Serotype

A variant within a microbial species, told apart by its surface antigens; immunity to one serotype need not protect against another.

Reverse vaccinology

Designing a vaccine by searching a pathogen's genome for proteins suitable to build it on.

Pneumococcal vaccines protect against *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, the bacterium that causes pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis when immunity weakens.

- It wears a sugary coat, the capsular polysaccharide, that differs from one **serotype** to the next.
- Every vaccine in use aims at that coat, so it protects only against the serotypes it includes.
- The ones left out, many of them carrying antibiotic resistance genes, then fill the space, which is **serotype** replacement.

Plain polysaccharide	Pneumococcal conjugate vaccines (PCV)
◦ Example: Pneumovax 23 ◦ Works poorly in infants ◦ Short lived protection	◦ Polysaccharide linked to a carrier protein ◦ Stronger, longer response ◦ The number in PCV13 gives the serotypes covered

From The Hindu, 3 September 2026

WHAT CHANGED

3 Sep 2026

- British scientists reported ZPY-CpG-Ch, a protein based candidate found by **reverse vaccinology** that carries three surface proteins shared across serotypes and so does not depend on the capsule.
- 80 to 100 per cent of mice survived lethal **serotype** 1, but only four serotypes were tested and it did not clear bacteria from the upper airways.

[The Hindu, 3 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2020:** why Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccines matter in India

38.3 Antimicrobial resistance

38.3.1 Gram-negative bacteria

Prelims and Mains

Carbapenems

Beta-lactam antibiotics held in reserve for serious and resistant infections.

Gram-negative bacteria

Bacteria whose thin peptidoglycan wall and outer membrane do not hold the stain.

Gram-positive bacteria

Bacteria whose thick peptidoglycan wall holds the stain, with no outer membrane.

Antimicrobial stewardship

Hospital practice that decides which antibiotic is used, at what dose and for how long, so that reserve medicines are not spent on infections that do not need them.

Gram-negative bacteria are one of the two groups into which a nineteenth century staining test, the Gram stain, sorts bacteria, and the harder of the two to treat.

- The Gram stain, devised by Hans Christian Gram in the 1880s, sorts bacteria by whether their cell wall holds crystal violet.
- That split still decides which antibiotics can reach them.

- *Escherichia coli* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae* are Gram-negative, and cause many hospital infections.
- Their outer membrane, which **Gram-positive bacteria** lack, keeps many antibiotics out, so the difficulty is structural rather than anything to do with how the drugs have been used.
- Once such a strain resists **carbapenems**, few medicines remain.

WHAT CHANGED

2 Sep 2026

- ICMR reported on 2 September 2026 that over 61 per cent of the Gram-negative infections studied in tertiary care hospitals were carbapenem resistant.
- Resistant infections carried a higher risk of death, and cost more in antibiotics, than susceptible ones.
- Over 85 per cent of bloodstream infections were healthcare associated.
- The priorities named were infection prevention and control, integrated surveillance, **antimicrobial stewardship** and newer antibiotics.

[The Indian Express, 2 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

38.4 Non communicable diseases, nutrition and food safety

38.4.1 Fluorosis

Prelims and Mains

Fluorosis

A disease caused by long term intake of excess fluoride, mostly in drinking water, that damages teeth and bones.

Geogenic

Arising naturally from the rocks and soil that water passes through, rather than from human activity such as industry or farming.

Fluorosis is the harm done to the teeth and the bone by years of drinking groundwater that carries fluoride.

- It is not a poisoning that arrives from a factory: the fluoride is in the rock the groundwater passes through.
- So a village can drink it for years with nothing having gone wrong upstream.
- India's groundwater fluoride is largely **geogenic**.

Dental fluorosis	Skeletal fluorosis
◦ Mottles and pits tooth enamel	◦ Builds up in bone over years ◦ Bones turn dense and brittle, joints stiff

From the Press Information Bureau (PIB) release, 9 September 2026

WHAT CHANGED

9 Sep 2026

- The remedy is safe water: either a source carrying less fluoride, or taking the fluoride out of the water there is, which is **defluoridation**.
- IS 10500, the Bureau of Indian Standards drinking water standard, sets 1.0 mg per litre as the acceptable fluoride limit, relaxed to 1.5 where no other source exists.
- The National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) developed the Nalgonda technique, a low cost community defluoridation method.
- The National Programme for Prevention and Control of **Fluorosis** is the health system's side of the answer, alongside safe water.

PIB, 9 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in

38.5 Drugs, diagnostics and medical technology

38.5.1 Rare diseases and orphan drugs

Prelims and Mains

Orphan drug

A medicine for a rare disease, neglected because its market is small.

An **orphan drug** is a medicine for a rare disease, long neglected by drug makers because the market for it is small.

- Government support for a patient with a rare disease is capped at **₹50 lakh**, and there is a government crowdfunding platform for patients.
- The drug regulator may waive a local clinical trial for a drug already approved in certain other countries.

WHAT CHANGED

29 Sep 2026

New

- India has reported about 1,000 rare genetic disorders, and drugs exist for only about **5 per cent** of rare diseases.

Mains: incentives for manufacture, advance purchase commitments and pricing that shares benefits could make India a base for affordable orphan drugs.

The Hindu, 29 Sep 2026, thehindu.com

38.5.2 **Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission** Prelims

21 Sep 2026 A **Biovigilance Programme of India**, led by the Commission, will track adverse events from products used in organ and tissue transplantation. It is the third safety track, after pharmacovigilance for medicines and materiovigilance for medical devices. [PIB, 21 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

Earlier coverage: Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission, August 2026

39 Biotechnology

39.1 **Agricultural and food biotechnology**

39.1.1 **Recirculatory aquaculture and biofloc**

Prelims

Recirculatory Aquaculture System

A tank based fish farming system that cleans and reuses its water, using a biofilter of nitrifying bacteria to remove toxic ammonia.

Recirculatory aquaculture and biofloc are two ways of farming fish intensively by cleaning the water rather than replacing it.

- Fish waste turns to ammonia, and ammonia is what limits how many fish a tank can hold.
- Take it out of the water and the same water will carry a far heavier stock.
- The biofilter of a **Recirculatory Aquaculture System** (RAS) converts the ammonia in fish waste first into nitrite and then into nitrate.
- That is what lets the system reuse 90 to 95 per cent of its water and stock its tanks intensively all year.

WHAT CHANGED

7 Sep 2026

- **Biofloc technology**, or heterotrophic pond farming, grows beneficial microbes in the pond water, which clump together and clean it.
- Those clumps are eaten by the fish, so the pond grows part of its own feed.
- Because the water is cleaned where it stands, little or none of it is exchanged.

[PIB, 7 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

UPSC HAS ASKED

- **Prelims 2023:** biofilters in Recirculating Aquaculture Systems

40 Communications

40.1 Satellite and emerging communications

40.1.1 Photonics

Prelims and Mains

Photonics

The science and technology of generating, guiding and detecting light particles, photons, much as electronics handles electrons.

Semicon 2.0

The second phase of India's Semicon India Programme, ₹1,27,500 crore of support for chip design, fabs, packaging and research.

Photonics is the technology of the parts that carry a signal as light rather than as current, where India's chip policy meets its network hardware.

- An optical fibre carries light by **total internal reflection**, because the refractive index of the glass core is higher than that of the cladding.
- An **optical transceiver** converts electrical signals into light and back, which is where a fibre link meets the electronics at each end.
- **Photonics** fabs are eligible for up to 35 per cent capital support under **Semicon 2.0**.

WHAT CHANGED

9 Sep 2026

- Indian firms have formed the India **Photonics** Association, which says many of the components the industry uses are still imported.
- Demand from artificial intelligence data centres has arrived before a domestic supply of components has.

[The Hindu, 9 Sep 2026, thehindu.com](#)

Background reading: [The Indian Express, 1 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

40.1.2 Vehicle-to-vehicle communication

Prelims and Mains

A vehicle fitted for vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communication broadcasts what it is doing to the vehicles around it, and listens for the same from them.

1 On Board Unit

Each vehicle's unit sends its speed, position, direction and acceleration

2 C-V2X radio

Reaches vehicles within about 300 metres in the 5.875 to 5.925 GHz band, exempted from licensing by the Department of Telecommunications

3 Alert

Warns of hazards beyond line of sight, which camera based advanced driver assistance systems cannot do

From The Indian Express, 31 August 2026

WHAT CHANGED

1 Sep 2026

- The draft Central Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Rules, 2026 would make V2V compulsory in new vehicles made on or after 1 October 2028.
- A vehicle that carries V2V must meet Automotive Industry Standard 230 (AIS-230) from 1 October 2027.
- The mandate covers two and three wheelers, cars, buses and goods vehicles, against 1.83 lakh road deaths in 2025.
- Concerns remain over location data security, band capacity and crashes caused by miscommunication.

The Indian Express, 31 Aug 2026

41 IPR and science policy

41.1 Intellectual property and Geographical Indications

41.1.1 Copyright in a machine generated work

Prelims and Mains

2 Sep 2026 India's Copyright Office refused to name the AI system DABUS as an author, holding that an author must be a person. [The Indian Express, 2 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

Earlier coverage: Copyright in a machine generated work, July 2026

41.2 Ocean, polar and earth science missions

41.2.1 India's deep sea mining programme

Prelims and Mains

Polymetallic nodules

Potato sized lumps lying on the deep seabed, rich in manganese, nickel, cobalt and copper.

India's deep sea mining programme explores the seabed for minerals under three International Seabed Authority contracts.

1 Exploration contract

Exclusive ISA rights to survey an area



2 Technology trials

Crawlers tested beyond 5,000 m under the Deep Ocean Mission



3 Industry and policy

Private participation and a White Paper on Deep Sea Mining



4 Exploitation Code

Commercial mining in international waters only after the ISA brings it out

From exploration contract to mining: the ISA ladder, from the PIB release of 8 September 2026

The contracts and the trials

- One, held since 2002, is for **polymetallic nodules** over an exclusive area of 75,000 sq km in the Central Indian Ocean Basin.
- Two are for polymetallic sulphides, on the Central and Southwest Indian Ridge and on the Carlsberg Ridge in the Arabian Sea, which made India the first country to hold two.
- Exploration is survey and test mining, and NIOT's indigenous mining crawler has been trialled at 5,270 m.
- Commercial mining waits on the Authority's Exploitation Code, which it has not adopted.

The case against

- The damage does not stay where the machine is.
- Removing nodules destroys slow growing habitats that may take very long to recover.
- Sediment plumes and noise spread well beyond the mined site, which is why the mission's own species lists matter.

WHAT CHANGED

8 Sep 2026

- At an industry outreach workshop the Ministry of Earth Sciences and the National Institute of Ocean Technology invited private firms into deep sea mining and announced a White Paper on Deep Sea Mining to set the terms.

[PIB, 8 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

42 Basic science in news

42.1 Physics, chemistry and mathematics in news

42.1.1 OpenAI's Navier–Stokes claim

Prelims and Mains

Navier–Stokes equations

The equations of fluid motion, relating a fluid's velocity, pressure and viscosity.

Clay Mathematics Institute

An American foundation that in 2000 named seven unsolved Millennium Prize Problems, each carrying a prize of one million dollars.

OpenAI's claim is a proposed answer to the Navier–Stokes problem, one of the **Clay Mathematics Institute's** prize problems: whether a smooth flow must stay smooth for ever. The **Navier–Stokes equations** are Newton's second law written for a fluid, balancing pressure, viscosity and the fluid's own momentum.

- The difficulty sits in the term where the flow carries itself along, which is not proportional to velocity and lets small swirls feed large ones.
- Turbulence is where the equations resist analysis, which is why engineers solve them by computer rather than exactly.
- A singularity would mean the equations stop describing a real fluid at that instant, marking the limit of the model rather than of the fluid.
- Smoothness for all time would show the model is self consistent, and methods built to prove such a thing usually outlast the result.
- The **Clay Mathematics Institute's** own rules require a result to appear in a refereed journal and to stand unchallenged for two years before a prize is considered.

Navier–Stokes existence and smoothness Open, and the subject of OpenAI's claim	Poincaré conjecture Resolved by Grigori Perelman, who declined the prize
P versus NP Open	Riemann hypothesis Open
Yang–Mills existence and mass gap Open	Hodge conjecture Open
Birch and Swinnerton-Dyer conjecture Open	

Seven problems named by the Clay Mathematics Institute, each carrying a million dollar prize. Status as reported in The Indian Express, 13 September 2026.

WHAT CHANGED

13 Sep 2026

- OpenAI said its artificial intelligence agents had cracked the problem.
- Its paper builds a fluid whose velocity becomes infinite at a point in finite time while the flow's energy stays bounded, so it claims blow up rather than smoothness.
- The proof was formalised in Lean, which checks each step mechanically, but the claimed proof is neither independently verified nor accepted.

[The Indian Express, 13 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

42.1.2 Correct the Map resolution

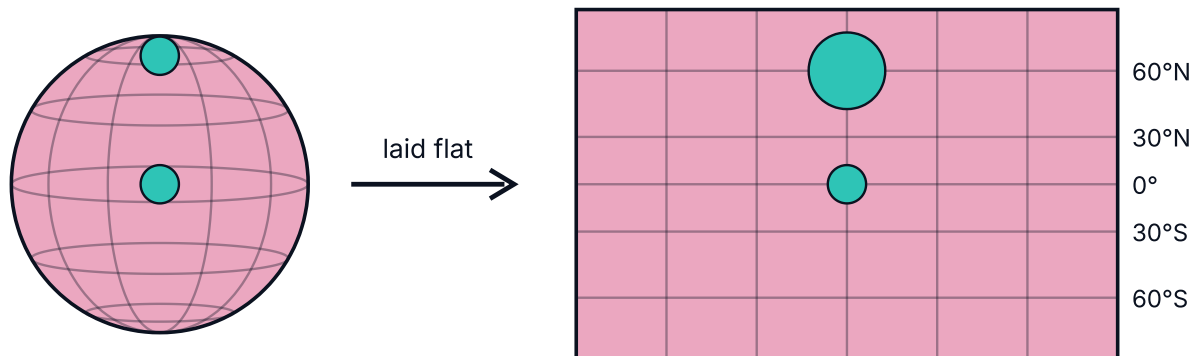
Prelims and Mains

Map projection

A way of drawing the Earth's curved surface flat, which always distorts area, shape, distance or direction.

Correct the Map is a non binding resolution of the United Nations General Assembly that names the Equal Earth projection as more accurate than Mercator's.

- A globe cannot be laid flat without something being stretched, so a **map projection** keeps one property at the cost of the others.
- The right choice depends on what the map is for.



Two equal circles on the globe

On Mercator: 4 times the area at 60°

Every flat map distorts at least one of these

Area How large a landmass is relative to others	Shape The true outline of a country
Distance The actual space between two points	Direction The correct compass bearing between places

Circles drawn to Mercator's scale. Properties as defined in The Indian Express explainers, 5 and 9 September 2026.

Mercator (conformal)	Equal Earth (equal-area)	Winkel Tripel (compromise)
- Keeps angles and local shapes - Rhumb lines are straight, so it suits navigation - Inflates areas more towards the poles - Greenland looks as big as Africa, which is 14 times larger	- Keeps relative areas of continents true - Shapes stretch near the poles - Suits thematic maps of population, climate and resources	- Keeps no property exact - Spreads error across area, distance and direction

From The Indian Express explainers, 5 and 9 September 2026

WHAT CHANGED

5 Sep 2026

- The United Nations General Assembly adopted the non binding Correct the Map resolution, 164 to 1, with the United States alone against.
- It names the 2018 Equal Earth projection as more accurate than Mercator's of 1569.
- The case made was that the projection a map uses shapes how important a region looks, a matter of soft power.

- India voted for it but said the resolution authenticates no map.
- It said its territory, including Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, must be shown as in India's official map.

[The Indian Express, 5 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#) · [The Indian Express, 6 Sep 2026, indianexpress.com](#)

42.2 Quantum science and technology

42.2.1 **National Quantum Mission** Prelims and Mains

30 Sep 2026 The mission has shown quantum secure communication over **1,000 km** in about three years, against a target of 2,000 km in eight. A link between Chennai and Bengaluru combined post quantum cryptography with **quantum key distribution** on existing optical fibre.

[PIB, 30 Sep 2026, pib.gov.in](#)

Earlier coverage: National Quantum Mission, July 2026