UPSC DARPAN

शीलं परं भूषणम्

Sheelam param bhushanam · Character is the highest ornament

The motto of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, from Bhartrihari's Shatakatraya

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Hum jeet ka maja chakh kar rahenge.

Quote of the Day

"The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."

— John Stuart Mill, On Liberty (1859), Chapter I

The Hindu, The Indian Express & The Economic Times (Delhi Editions) — 10 October 2026

General Studies · Daily Current Affairs · Concept Matrix · Point-Wise Analysis

Ability · Anonymity · Austerity

Free, and meant for every aspirant — whatever they can or cannot pay.

A Letter from the Editor

Why this magazine exists, and how it is meant to be read

This magazine begins with an admission rather than a promise. The Civil Services Examination is not, in the end, a test of how much you have collected. Our own reading of the last decade's papers is that well over sixty per cent of what this examination actually asks — across the General Studies papers, the essay and the interview — is not a fact you can look up. It is a critical issue: a live public problem with competing interests inside it, on which you are expected to have thought, weighed, and arrived somewhere. The candidate who has memorised a thousand facts and thought about none of them is the candidate who writes four hundred marks and cannot understand why.

That is the whole reason this magazine exists in the form it does. Every story here is turned into a study card that does the thinking work with you and not for you: what happened, which line of the syllabus it sits on, why the examiner keeps returning to this theme, the handful of facts that could actually decide a Prelims option, an analysis broken into named points so the argument can be read from the headings alone, a Mains question in the exam's own phrasing, a model approach to it — and then the question a District Magistrate or a Joint Secretary would actually have to answer on this very issue. That last part is the one most compilations leave out, and it is the one the examination is really testing.

The second reason is simpler and harder. Too many capable candidates fall behind for reasons that have nothing to do with ability. They do not know which sources matter. They cannot reach the good material, or cannot pay for it. They study in Hindi and find that the honest, current, well-organised version of a topic exists only in English. We have seen this, and we do not accept it as the natural order of things. Nothing in UPSC Darpan is behind a payment, and nothing assumes a coaching class. Whatever we read each morning — the newspapers, PIB, PRS, the court's own record, the research journals — is read once, properly, and handed on in full. No aspirant should be left behind because of where they were born, what their family earns, or which language they think in.

The third reason is the one we do not say out loud very often. The kind of officer this examination is supposed to produce was described long ago in Mussoorie, and the description has not improved since: a Karma Yogi, a civil servant whose soul is suffused with the principles of Ability, Anonymity and Austerity. Ability, because good intentions administered incompetently still hurt people. Anonymity, because the officer whose name is in the newspaper every week is usually not the officer whose district is working. Austerity, because the distance between the officer's life and the citizen's life is exactly the distance at which empathy fails. We are not there. But that is the standard this magazine is trying to be worth, and the standard we are asking you to prepare against — not the cut-off.

So read it slowly. Do not try to finish it. Take three cards, understand them to the point where you could argue either side, and write one answer. That is a better morning than reading all twenty-five and remembering none. And when you sit in that room, remember what you are actually being selected for.

— The Editor

UPSC Darpan · 10 October 2026

We want to become the Mussoorie-wala Karma Yogi — a civil servant whose soul is suffused with the principles of Ability, Anonymity and Austerity. And we shall become, my man.

Our Inspiration

Our inspiration, and the reason this initiative exists



Rakesh Verma Sir

Indian Administrative Service, 1981 batch

Every initiative has a person standing behind it who never asked to be named. Ours is Rakesh Verma sir — an IAS officer of the 1981 batch, who spent a career inside the administration and then, after retiring from it, went back to the classroom to teach the next set of officers. What he gave us was not a strategy. It was a way of looking at the work.

WHAT HE TAUGHT US

1. **सेवा परमो धर्मः — service is the highest duty, and it is a duty, not a favour —** He would not let the word 'service' stay decorative. A civil servant does not confer a benefit on a citizen; the citizen is entitled, and the officer is discharging an obligation. Once you accept that, the tone of an office changes — the file moves because someone is waiting on the other side of it, not because a note demanded it.
2. **The Mussoorie-wala Karma Yogi: Ability, Anonymity, Austerity —** Ability, because good intentions administered incompetently still hurt people. Anonymity, because the officer whose name is in the newspaper every week is usually not the officer whose district is working. Austerity, because the distance between the officer's life and the citizen's life is the distance at which empathy fails. He taught these three as one instruction, not three virtues to be picked from.
3. **Begin with the last person, not the average person —** His constant test for any scheme, any circular, any decision: what happens to the person at the end of the line — the one with no documentation, no connection, no way to complain, and no idea the scheme exists. A policy that works for the median citizen and fails the last one has not worked. It has only been measured generously.
4. **Reach the last mile, because the last mile is where the state actually is —** Delivery, he insisted, is not the boring part that follows policy; it is the policy. The budget line means nothing until the money reaches the panchayat, the entitlement means nothing until the beneficiary is on the list, and the list means nothing if the person who was left out has no way back onto it. He made us look at the exclusion errors, not the coverage numbers.
5. **Understand the system before you criticise it —** He had no patience for the easy cynicism aspirants pick up online. Learn how a file actually moves, who signs, where the discretion sits, what the officer on the spot is trading off. Criticism that comes after that understanding is worth something; criticism that replaces it is noise — and it writes a shallow answer, too.
6. **Karma yoga at the desk: do the work, stay with the work —** He taught the Gita's instruction as an administrator's working rule, not as a sermon. You control the effort and the honesty; you do not control the transfer order, the posting, the recognition or the result. An officer who needs the outcome to feel the work was worth it will not last a career. Nor will an aspirant who needs the result to justify the year.
7. **Teach what you know, to whoever cannot pay for it —** The clearest thing he did was the simplest: after a full career, he went back and taught. Not to a selected batch that could afford it — to whoever turned up. That is where this initiative came from. The idea that good preparation material should not be a function of what a family can spend is not our idea; it is his.

> *We are not his equals and this is not his page. It is the receipt for something we were given for free, by a man who spent forty years serving the country and then spent his retirement teaching other people how to do it properly. सेवा परमो धर्मः — and we shall become.*

Quotes of the Day

Carry one into the introduction of an essay — not into every paragraph. Each is quoted from a documented source, so it can be attributed with confidence.

> *"Therefore the seats to be reserved, if the reservation is to be consistent with sub-clause (1) of Article 10, must be confined to a minority of seats. It is then only that the first principle could find its place in the Constitution and effective in operation."*

— B.R. Ambedkar · *Speech in the Constituent Assembly on draft Article 10 (now Article 16), 30 November 1948 (Constituent Assembly Debates)*

Use in: Today's Madhya Pradesh High Court judgment striking down the 2019 Act that raised the OBC quota from 14% to 27% (taking the total with EWS to 73%), because the State showed no "extraordinary" situation to cross the 50% ceiling, and the Supreme Court's dismissal the same day of Andhra Pradesh's appeal for a 34% BC quota in local bodies. Use it in GS2 answers on reservation, equality of opportunity and the Indra Sawhney ceiling: Ambedkar himself gave the example of 70% reserved and 30% open and called it inconsistent with equality of opportunity. Balance it: he equally insisted that communities long kept out of the services must get their place, so the ceiling is a discipline on the size of quotas, not an argument against them; the remedy is current data on representation.

> *"Determined to put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes and thus to contribute to the prevention of such crimes, Recalling that it is the duty of every State to exercise its criminal jurisdiction over those responsible for international crimes …"*

— Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court · *Preamble (adopted at Rome, 17 July 1998; in force 2002)*

Use in: Today's Nobel Peace Prize to Navi Pillay, the South African jurist of Indian Tamil descent who judged at the Rwanda tribunal and the ICC, and the US sanctions on the ICC itself announced hours later ("Either the ICC will end its threats, or we will end the ICC"). Use it in GS2 answers on international institutions and India's position, and in essays on law and power. The second clause states complementarity: the duty to prosecute lies first with every State, so the court steps in only when a State fails. That is also the honest frame for India, which is not a party: it can stay outside the court yet strengthen its own law on grave crimes and oppose sanctions on judges.

> *"Floods are "acts of God," but flood losses are largely acts of man. Human encroachment upon the flood plains of rivers accounts for the high annual toll of flood losses."*

— Gilbert F. White · *Human Adjustment to Floods (University of Chicago, Department of Geography, Research Paper No. 29, 1945), p. 2*

Use in: Today's Gomti flood in Lucknow, where riverfront inundation on a scale last seen in 1982 has affected about 25,000 people, after about 150 mm of rain (against a normal 15 mm) fell in the upper catchment, and the opposition alleges building on wetlands and floodplains while the LDA proposes an embankment. Use it in GS1 and GS3 answers on urban flooding and disaster management, and in essays on nature and planning: White argued for adjusting land use rather than relying only on structures. Balance it: the rain itself was extreme, and embankments have a role, but they cannot replace floodplain zoning and protected drainage.

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Start here — today's top 5

The whole magazine is about a two-hour read. If you are short of time, read these five cards first.

1.1	**MP High Court strikes down 27% OBC quota under the 50% ceiling** ***Why it matters:*** *GS2 reservation: Article 16(4) and Indra Sawhney for Prelims; adequacy versus proportion of population for Mains.*
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4.1	**Navi Pillay wins Nobel Peace Prize as US sanctions the ICC** ***Why it matters:*** *GS2 international institutions: ICC, ICJ and complementarity for Prelims; India's distance from the Rome Statute for Mains.*
5.1	**Gomti floods Lucknow's riverfront to an extent unseen since 1982** ***Why it matters:*** *GS1 and GS3 disaster management: floodplains and embankments; urban floods as a land-use failure for Mains.*
8.1	**House panel asks NTA for question banks and government CBT centres** ***Why it matters:*** *GS2 governance and education: exam integrity and an accountable NTA; paper leaks are a recurring Mains theme.*

> *How to use this magazine — each story is a study card: what happened (The News), the syllabus topic it sits on (Static Linkage), why examiners return to this theme (Trend), the facts that could decide a Prelims option (Prelims Nuggets), a point-wise Analysis, a Mains question in the exam's own phrasing with a Model Approach, and the questions a District Magistrate or Joint Secretary would actually face on it. Every long field is broken into numbered points with its own heading, so the argument reads from the headings alone. Where a story works through a sequence of effects, the whole chain is given in one line before the points explain each link.*

1. Polity & Governance

All three stories turn on the same test: can the State show its reasons? Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh could not justify going past the 50% reservation line, Delhi could not justify halting the Metro for a protest, and the Election Commission has had to stop people filing objections against voters in bulk without grounds. In each case the courts or the rules now demand proof before the State acts.

1.1 Madhya Pradesh High Court strikes down 27% OBC quota, restoring 14% under the 50% ceiling

ISSUE THREAD **The 50% reservation ceiling** (new thread) **LENS** Growth and equity · Independence and accountability

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Indra Sawhney (1992) capped reservation at 50%. Madhya Pradesh's 2019 Act raised the OBC quota from 14% to 27%, taking the total with EWS to 73%. In February 2026 the Supreme Court sought a ruling within three months.*

THE NEWS Bhopal, October 9. A Madhya Pradesh High Court Bench of Justices Anand Pathak and Vinay Saraf struck down the State's 2019 Reservation Amendment Act as "unconstitutional". The State, it held, showed no "extraordinary conditions or emergent situations" to justify breaching the 50% ceiling. Citing a 2023 State university study, it noted that OBCs hold 33.87% of higher-education seats and 28.16% of government posts. With four OBC Chief Ministers in a row and over 25% of ministers and MLAs from OBCs, it found them "adequately represented". Appointments made under the 27% quota up to September 2022 are protected. The 13% of posts frozen since then under an "87:13 formula" are to go to unreserved candidates within three months, The Hindu reports. The same day the Supreme Court dismissed Andhra Pradesh's appeal to restore a 34% BC quota in local bodies.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Indra Sawhney sets the 50% ceiling (1992) → MP raises OBC quota to 27% before the 2019 elections → High Court freezes the extra 13% (2022) → Supreme Court asks for a decision (February 2026) → Act struck down for lack of extraordinary circumstances

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **Indra Sawhney fixed the 50% ceiling and the need for data —** Article 16(4) lets the State reserve posts for any backward class "not adequately represented" in State services. Article 15(4) and 15(5) allow special provisions, including admissions, for socially and educationally backward classes. In Indra Sawhney v Union of India (1992), a nine-judge Bench capped reservation at 50% "save in extraordinary situations". 2. **Local-body quotas must pass a separate triple test —** Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6) let States reserve panchayat and municipal seats for backward classes. Vikas Kishanrao Gawali (2021) requires a dedicated commission's empirical inquiry, quotas set body by body, and a combined cap of 50%.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **The ceiling is now tested on data, not on numbers alone —** GS2 asks about "mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections". Two courts testing State data on one day show how that protection is now judged.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Article 16(4) permits reservation in posts for a backward class that, in the State's opinion, is not adequately represented in its services. • Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6) enable reservation for backward classes in panchayats and municipalities respectively. • In Janhit Abhiyan v Union of India (2022) the Supreme Court upheld the 10% EWS quota of the 103rd Amendment by 3:2.
ANALYSIS	1. **The judgment measures adequacy, not entitlement —** The Court did not say OBCs are not backward; it kept their 14%. It asked whether the State had shown under-representation that only a larger quota could fix. Vacant OBC posts, it added, show a failure to recruit, not a need for more reservation.

	2. **Lens — Growth and equity: a quota sized to population trades away the equality it serves —** OBCs are about half of MP's people, so 27% looks modest, but Article 16(4) speaks of adequate, not proportionate, representation. Reaching groups the system leaves out needs current caste-wise data. A thoughtful officer would fund a proper backwardness survey before any State promises a bigger number. 3. **Andhra Pradesh shows what kind of data fails —** Andhra Pradesh cited a fresh survey and a dedicated commission, yet the Bench found a "unified family survey" inadequate without assessing backwardness in local bodies. Justice Datta asked, "Under what law is this being made?" A headcount is not a finding of political backwardness.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Reservation must rest on inadequacy of representation, not on proportion of population." Critically examine with reference to recent judgments on the 50% ceiling. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Critically examine —** Weigh the case for larger quotas against the ceiling; reach a judgement. 2. **Introduction — Article 16(4) speaks of adequacy —** Indra Sawhney's 50% rule; two quotas fall on October 9. 3. **Body — States may cross 50% only on proof of extraordinary need —** Value addition: MP data, 28.16% of posts and 33.87% of higher-education seats for OBCs. 4. **Body — proportional quotas create a race between castes —** Flowchart: data, commission, quota size, judicial review. 5. **Conclusion — a standing commission with periodic data —** Quotas reviewed on evidence, not on election timing.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As MP's Principal Secretary, General Administration, how do you comply with the order without unsettling serving employees?** ***Approach:*** I would list every post frozen under the 87:13 formula and fill it from existing merit lists within the three-month window. Employees appointed before September 2022 would get written assurance that the order protects them. Aspirants have waited four years, so I would avoid any fresh freeze.

1.2 Supreme Court tells Delhi to regulate, not halt, Metro and trains on protest day

ISSUE THREAD **Right to protest and public order** (new thread) **LENS** Liberty and order · Rule of law and discretion

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Delhi Police refused the Cockroach Janta Party permission for an October 10 Jantar Mantar protest seeking the CEC's resignation, citing short notice, while a Section 163 BNSS order barred gatherings in New Delhi.*

THE NEWS New Delhi, October 9. A Supreme Court Bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana held that the notifications shutting Metro stations and trains for the October 10 protest "appear... overreaching as they impose a complete ban upon essential public transportation", per LiveLaw (MA Baby v Union of India). It drew "a distinction... between total 'prohibition' and the 'regulation'" of train movement. Services are to run in a regulated manner, "adhering to the principles of proportionality". Proportionality means a curb no wider than the danger it meets. Proportionality "does not mean that you will use a hammer to kill a fly", the CJI said, suggesting frisking and CCTV instead. Closures covered 57 stations, later 45, and 245 trains were cancelled. The Centre will consider an alternative protest site. LiveLaw reports a plea alleging that closures continued despite the order.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

SIR controversy fuels a protest call → police refuse Jantar Mantar permission for short notice → Section 163 order, Metro closures and an internet shutdown → petitioners call the closures disproportionate → Supreme Court separates regulation from prohibition

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **Article 19 protects assembly but allows reasonable restrictions —** Article 19(1)(a) guarantees speech and expression and 19(1)(b) the right to assemble peaceably and without arms. Article 19(2) and 19(3) permit reasonable restrictions, including in the interest of public order. In Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan v Union of India (2018), the Court held peaceful demonstration a fundamental right and said protests can be regulated instead of banned. 2. **Proportionality is the test every restriction must pass —** Modern Dental College (2016) and K.S. Puttaswamy (2017) require a legitimate aim, a rational link, the least restrictive measure and a fair balance. Anuradha Bhasin (2020) applied this to internet shutdowns. Amit Sahni (2020) held that protesters cannot occupy public ways indefinitely.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Rights versus public order recurs every year —** GS2 lists the "Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features... significant provisions". A blanket transport ban is a clean example of when a restriction stops being reasonable.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Article 19(3) permits reasonable restrictions on the right to assemble in the interest of public order and the sovereignty and integrity of India. • Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 replaces Section 144 of the CrPC as the power to issue prohibitory orders. • Disobeying an order duly promulgated by a public servant is an offence under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, formerly Section 188 IPC. • A Delhi Police refusal of protest permission has no internal appeal; the remedy is a writ petition under Article 226.
ANALYSIS	1. **The Court protected commuters, not protesters —** With no organiser before it, the Bench ruled only on transport, for students, workers and senior citizens without cars. This shows that a curb aimed at protesters can fail proportionality because of its cost to everyone else. 2. **Lens — Rule of law and discretion: a power to regulate is not a power to stop —** Police may limit numbers, set routes and search crowds; the 2018 judgment allows that. Closing whole stations replaces a judgement about risk with a blanket ban that needs no reasons. A thoughtful officer would choose the least restrictive measure that works and record why lesser steps were not enough. 3. **An alternative venue is the lasting reform —** Jantar Mantar holds only 1,000 people under police guidelines, and refusals cannot be appealed within the police. A large designated site with amenities would let police plan instead of prohibit. Without one, every big protest returns to court.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Explain, with reference to the doctrine of proportionality, the difference between regulating and prohibiting a public protest. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Explain —** Make the distinction clear, with proportionality as the dividing line. 2. **Introduction — Article 19(1)(b) with 19(3) —** The October 9 order on Metro closures. 3. **Body — regulation limits manner, time and place; prohibition removes the right —** Value addition: Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (2018). 4. **Body — the four-part test makes police record lesser options —** Diagram: a ladder from frisking to closure, with reasons at each step. 5. **Conclusion — designated venues and written reasons —** Plan for protest instead of

	preventing it.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As DCP, New Delhi, you expect a large protest tomorrow. How do you keep order without shutting the Metro?** ***Approach:*** I would close only exits nearest the venue, add frisking and CCTV at busy stations, and publish a traffic advisory the evening before. Crowd numbers would be capped and an overflow ground identified. Any wider closure would need a written risk assessment showing why lesser steps would fail.

1.3 Election Commission caps Form 7 objections at ten per claims period, five a month afterwards

ISSUE THREAD **SIR of electoral rolls** (update 12) **LENS** Liberty and order · Independence and accountability

> *STORY SO FAR* *The Special Intensive Revision re-verifies every elector. After bulk Form 7 objections the EC ordered a probe and a drive for left-out voters; on October 1 it let EROs clear notice cases without a hearing.*

THE NEWS New Delhi, October 9. The Election Commission of India told the Chief Electoral Officers of all States and UTs that an individual may file at most ten Form 7s, the form for objecting to or deleting a name, in a claims-and-objections period, and five a month during continuous updation. The cap covers paper forms, which had no limit, as well as online filings. The Commission admitted "instances" of bulk objections "on unsubstantiated grounds". EROs must hear the objector, then the person objected to. In Vijayapura, an FIR names MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal over forged death certificates of eight living voters, The Indian Express reports. In West Bengal, 37.05 lakh of 38.31 lakh SIR appeals are pending, and the Supreme Court suggested hearing inclusion appeals first.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

SIR re-verifies every elector → bulk objections, some with forged papers → EC orders a probe (October 2) → caps and mandatory hearings (October 9) → appeals pile up before tribunals

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The Constitution makes the vote universal and the roll the EC's duty —** Article 324 vests superintendence of electoral rolls in the Election Commission. Article 325 bars exclusion from the roll on grounds only of religion, race, caste or sex, and Article 326 guarantees adult suffrage at 18. Sections 22 and 23 of the RP Act, 1950 govern correcting and including entries. 2. **The 1960 Rules require a hearing before deletion —** Rule 13(2) of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 confines objections to Form 7 and to electors of the same constituency. Rules 19 and 20 require notice and a hearing before the ERO decides. In Lal Babu Hussein (1995), the Supreme Court held that a listed voter cannot be struck off without notice and a hearing.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Electoral integrity now centres on the roll —** GS2 covers the "salient features of the Representation of People's Act" and the role of constitutional bodies. Deletion by objection tests both.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Form 6 is used for inclusion of a name in the electoral roll, Form 7 for objection to inclusion or deletion, and Form 8 for correction or shifting of entries. • Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 punishes making a false statement or declaration in connection with the electoral roll. • Under the Manual on Electoral Rolls, 2023, bulk objections by one individual are not entertained, and the ERO must personally verify where one person objects in more than five cases. • Booth Level Agents of recognised parties are limited to 50 forms a day before

	the draft roll and ten a day after it.
ANALYSIS	1. **A cap treats the symptom; the hearing is the cure —** Ten forms each still lets a coordinated group target hundreds of voters. What protects the voter is the mandatory hearing of both sides. If EROs hold it, bulk filing becomes costly for the filer; if they skip it, no cap helps. 2. **Lens — Independence and accountability: the EC is now judged by its own procedure —** An Indian Express editorial calls the clean-up "a cover for deleting voters without due process"; Ram Madhav, in the same paper, cites EC data that 2.80 crore of 13.39 crore reviewed were dead. Both can be true. A thoughtful officer would publish deletions by booth and reason so audits settle the dispute. 3. **The burden must fall on the objector —** Forged death certificates in Vijayapura show the risk: a voter never told of an objection cannot defend her name. Hearing inclusion appeals first follows that logic.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"The right to vote is only as secure as the procedure for removing a name from the roll." Examine in light of the Special Intensive Revision. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Test the claim against rules and evidence. 2. **Introduction — Article 326 promises the vote, the roll delivers it —** The Form 7 cap of October 9. 3. **Body — bulk objections shifted the burden onto voters —** Value addition: forged death certificates in Vijayapura; 37.05 lakh appeals pending in West Bengal. 4. **Body — Rules 19 and 20 already demand a hearing —** Flowchart: Form 7, notice, hearing, order, appeal. 5. **Body — yet a clean roll needs deletions —** EC data on dead, shifted and duplicate entries. 6. **Conclusion — published reasons and penalties for false objections —** Section 31 used, not just cited.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As ERO, you receive 40 Form 7s from four people against one locality. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** I would accept ten per objector, verify personally under the 2023 Manual, and notify every voter named. No name goes without hearing both sides. Forgeries go to the police, with action under Section 31.

2. Economy

All three stories are about plumbing, not headlines. A repo hike means little while surplus cash keeps overnight money cheap, so the RBI has tightened the daily reserve rule. A State's borrowing room and tax share rest on a GDP number each State compiles its own way, so MoSPI wants a common check. And a treaty means little to investors who must wait five years in Indian courts, so India is shortening the wait while guarding its right to regulate.

2.1 RBI Raises Daily CRR Floor to 99% From 90% to Drain Surplus Liquidity

ISSUE THREAD **Inflation, rates and the RBI** (update 10) **LENS** Market and State · Short-term relief and long-term reform

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *On 7 October the MPC raised the repo 25 bp to 5.50%, its first hike since February 2023, and moved to "calibrated tightening".*

THE NEWS Mumbai, October 9. Notification RBI/2026-27/290, under Section 42(1) of the RBI Act, 1934, raises the cash reserve ratio (CRR) balance scheduled banks must hold every day from 90% to 99% of the requirement, from the fortnight beginning October 16. The CRR, now 3%, is the share of deposits parked with the RBI without interest. Banks still meet a fortnightly average, but could so far hold 90% on some days and about 110% on others; that leeway now largely goes, a Jana Small Finance Bank treasury head told ET. ET puts the surplus to be drained at about ₹4 lakh crore; The Hindu (PTI) gives ₹3.88 lakh crore on October 8. Governor Sanjay Malhotra has called raising the CRR rate itself "the least preferred" tool.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Oil above $100 lifts inflation → MPC raises the repo to 5.50% → a ₹4 lakh crore surplus keeps overnight money cheap → RBI lifts the daily CRR floor to 99% → overnight rates rise toward the repo

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **Section 42 of the RBI Act, 1934 makes the CRR a statutory reserve —** Every scheduled bank (Second Schedule to the RBI Act) must keep with the RBI an average daily balance equal to the CRR share of its net demand and time liabilities, computed over a fortnight; a shortfall attracts penal interest linked to the Bank Rate. The SLR instead comes from Section 24 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. 2. **The Liquidity Adjustment Facility keeps overnight rates in a corridor —** The MPC sets the repo; the RBI manages liquidity so the weighted average call rate, the operating target, stays near it. Since April 2022 the floor is the Standing Deposit Facility, which absorbs surplus without collateral; the ceiling is the Marginal Standing Facility.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **GS3 monetary policy is tested through instruments, not just the repo —** "Mobilization of resources" covers how policy reaches borrowers; CRR, SLR and the LAF corridor are Prelims staples.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The CRR is prescribed under Section 42(1) of the RBI Act, 1934; the RBI pays no interest on it. • The CRR is met as a fortnightly average, with a separate daily minimum. • The Standing Deposit Facility (April 2022) is the LAF floor and needs no collateral. • The weighted average call rate is the operating target of monetary policy.
ANALYSIS	1. **A higher daily floor tightens money without touching the CRR rate —** With a 90% floor, a bank could lend spare reserves overnight and top up later; that freedom added to overnight supply and kept call rates below the repo. At 99%, almost every required rupee sits with the RBI daily, so less cash is free and the call rate drifts toward 5.50%. 2. **The RBI chose a reversible tool, as in 2013 —** A higher CRR rate locks up deposits indefinitely and, a banker told ET, would miss FCNR(B) inflows exempted from CRR. A daily floor targets the swing, not the stock; ET's sources recall July 2013, when it went

	from 70% to 99%. Counter-view: on tax-outflow days smaller banks lose their buffer and may hoard idle reserves. 3. **Lens — Short-term relief and long-term reform: draining cash guards the rupee at the cost of dearer credit —** Cheap rupee liquidity makes it easy to borrow rupees and buy dollars; the rupee closed at 96.73 after heavy RBI dollar sales, ET reports. Tightening helps the currency but raises borrowing costs. A thoughtful officer would accept it as temporary, if the RBI signals an exit once the surplus is gone.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Liquidity management, not the repo rate alone, decides whether monetary tightening reaches borrowers. Examine with reference to the RBI's recent change in CRR maintenance norms. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Probe how liquidity tools carry the policy rate to the market. 2. **Introduction — a repo hike sat on a ₹4 lakh crore surplus —** Define CRR and the daily floor. 3. **Surplus cash keeps the call rate below the repo, so a hike leaks —** Draw: CRR floor → less overnight cash → call rate up → lending rates. 4. **Reversible tools beat a CRR-rate hike —** Value addition: the July 2013 precedent (70% to 99%). 5. **The squeeze costs small banks —** Volatile call rates on tax days. 6. **Conclusion — tighten, then signal the exit —** Ease the floor once the surplus is absorbed.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As treasurer of a mid-sized public sector bank, how would you manage the 99% daily CRR floor?** ***Approach:*** I would stop treating the fortnightly average as a cushion and forecast daily cash flows, especially around advance-tax dates. Surplus would go to the Standing Deposit Facility, with a small reserve buffer and MSF access ready, because penal interest and reputational cost outweigh a few basis points of yield.

2.2 MoSPI Drafts Common Expenditure-Side Method to Estimate State GDP on 2022-23 Base

ISSUE THREAD **New GDP and IIP base** (update 5) **LENS** Centre and States · Independence and accountability

> *STORY SO FAR* *MoSPI has been rebuilding India's statistics: a new GDP series with 2022-23 as base, double deflation in manufacturing, a new industrial production base and the first district-level estimates of informal firms.*

THE NEWS New Delhi, October 9. The National Statistics Office of MoSPI released draft guidelines for estimating gross state domestic product (GSDP) from the expenditure side on the 2022-23 base, per a PIB release. GSDP, the value of final goods and services produced in a State, is now estimated from the production side, adding up value added by sectors. The expenditure side adds up who spends: households (private final consumption expenditure, PFCE), government (GFCE), fixed investment (GFCF), inventories, valuables and net exports. No State or UT compiles PFCE now. ET reports that State PFCE would use the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey plus Vahan vehicle sales, CEA electricity data and RBI deposit and loan figures, with central spending located through PFMS; State-level trade is deferred until data exist. Comments are due by October 28.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

States compile GSDP from the production side, each its own way → GSDP fixes borrowing ceilings and devolution shares → no State measures household consumption → 2022-23 base → common expenditure-side draft

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **Article 293 gives the Centre a hold over State borrowing —** Under Article 293(1) a State borrows within India on the security of its Consolidated Fund. Article 293(3) requires the Centre's consent for a new loan while any Central loan is outstanding, which covers every State. Through this consent the Centre sets each State's borrowing ceiling as a share of GSDP, anchored at a 3% fiscal deficit on the Finance Commission's path. 2. **GDP is measured three ways that should agree in principle —** The production approach sums gross value added; the income approach sums wages, rent, interest and profit; the expenditure approach sums final spending, C + G + I + (X − M). Nationally the NSO shows the gap between them as 'discrepancies'.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **GS3 measurement meets GS2 federal finance —** GS2's "issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure" and GS3's "mobilization of resources" share one denominator: GSDP.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• GSDP is compiled by each State's Directorate of Economics and Statistics; national accounts by the NSO under MoSPI. • PFCE covers spending by households and non-profit institutions serving households. • Article 293(3): a State owing the Centre any loan needs the Centre's consent to borrow afresh. • The 16th Finance Commission (2026–31) gives 42.5% weight to income distance, a State's per capita GSDP gap from the richest State; the 15th gave 45%.
ANALYSIS	1. **A common method matters because GSDP is money, not just a statistic —** Borrowing limits are a percentage of GSDP, so an overstated GSDP buys borrowing room. In the Finance Commission formula, income distance rewards States whose per capita GSDP lies far below the richest, so the same number shapes devolution. A spending-side estimate is an independent cross-check that makes production figures harder to inflate. 2. **Measuring household spending State by State is the hard part —** Without PFCE, the largest part of demand, no State can say whether its growth came from consumers, government or investment. The draft fills the gap with surveys and proxies such as vehicle registrations and electricity use. Counter-view: proxies capture urban, formal spending better than rural, informal spending, and cross-State purchases are hard to assign, which is why State trade is deferred. 3. **Lens — Centre and States: standardisation helps States only if their statistics offices own it —** A Delhi-written method for numbers that decide State money can look like central control. But the draft is open for comment, complements rather than replaces State estimates, and aims to build State Directorates' capacity. A thoughtful officer would back it through a joint Centre–State technical committee, because comparable numbers protect poorer States in Finance Commission bargaining.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Why does the method of estimating Gross State Domestic Product matter for fiscal federalism in India? Explain. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Explain —** Set out the causal links clearly. 2. **Introduction — GSDP is the denominator of State finances —** One line on MoSPI's draft. 3. **GSDP decides borrowing room and devolution shares —** Article 293(3) and the 3% ceiling; value addition: income distance carries 42.5% weight with the 16th Finance

	Commission (45% with the 15th). Draw: GSDP → borrowing limit and devolution share. 4. **A spending-side cross-check disciplines incomparable estimates —** No State compiles PFCE today. 5. **Conclusion — make statistics a cooperative-federal institution —** Joint technical committee; stronger State Directorates.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As a State's Director of Economics and Statistics, how would you prepare to adopt the new method?** ***Approach:*** I would map the data we already hold, such as Vahan registrations, electricity sales and treasury accounts, and file specific comments before 28 October. I would publish the expenditure estimate beside the production one with the gap explained, because a State that shows its working earns credibility with the Finance Commission and lenders.

2.3 Saudi BIT Shortens Local-Remedies Wait to Two Years as India Readies New Model

ISSUE THREAD **Investment treaties and arbitration** (update 4) LENS Strategic autonomy and partnership · Market and State

STORY SO FAR The Finance Ministry has sent a revised model Bilateral Investment Treaty to the Cabinet, keeping taxation outside investor–State arbitration, after new BITs with the UAE and Israel.

THE NEWS New Delhi, October 9. India is rebuilding its investment treaty network, The Indian Express reports. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday that the Cabinet would approve the new bilateral investment treaty (BIT) template "shortly"; 4–5 agreements are expected by year-end. New is the India–Saudi Arabia BIT, finalised last week: a Saudi investor may go to international arbitration after two years of pursuing remedies in India, against three in the 2024 UAE treaty and five under the 2015 Model BIT (IE calls it the 2016 model). This exhaustion of local remedies (ELR) rule makes investors try Indian courts first. An official said two years gives "enhanced access" to investor–State dispute settlement (ISDS) while preserving the "State's right to regulate". Partners sought one year; India refused. The Saudi terms are IE's report alone.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Adverse awards such as White Industries (2011) → 2015 Model BIT with a five-year wait → older BITs terminated in 2016-17 → inflows slow → new model, Saudi deal at two years

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **White Industries v. India (2011) turned court delay into a treaty breach —** An Australian firm's arbitral award against Coal India stayed unenforced for years in Indian courts. A tribunal under the India–Australia BIT held in 2011 that India had denied "effective means" of asserting claims, a standard imported via the most-favoured-nation clause from the India–Kuwait BIT. It was India's first BIT loss. 2. **The 2015 Model BIT narrowed protection and imposed a five-year wait —** It defines investment by the enterprise, drops the most-favoured-nation clause, excludes taxation and requires five years of local remedies before ISDS, the process by which a foreign investor sues the host State before an international tribunal. India then gave notice terminating its older BITs.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **GS2 "bilateral agreements" meets GS3 "investment models" —** ISDS and tax sovereignty became live after the Vodafone and Cairn disputes.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Exhaustion of local remedies requires a foreign investor to seek redress in the host State's courts or administrative bodies before an international claim. • India's 2015 Model BIT uses an enterprise-based definition of investment and excludes taxation measures.

	• India is not a party to the ICSID Convention. • Greenfield investment builds a new venture abroad; brownfield investment buys or expands an existing one.
ANALYSIS	1. **Two years is a calibrated retreat from 2015, not a surrender of sovereignty —** Five years in Indian courts made treaty protection largely theoretical, the core investor complaint IE records. Two years still lets India correct a wrong at home first, and the tax carve-out stays. Prof. Prabhash Ranjan of Jindal Global Law School wants a uniform one-to-two-year rule; a patchwork of windows invites treaty shopping, investors routing money through the most generous partner. 2. **Treaty cover matters because India competes for greenfield capital —** The Hindu reports, citing UNCTAD's Trade and Development Report 2026, that India drew 5.7% of global greenfield investment in 2020–25, more than double China's 2.8%. Refineries lock capital in for decades, so investors price the risk of unchallengeable rule changes. Yet IE notes a sharp slowdown in net inflows. 3. **Lens — Strategic autonomy and partnership: India concedes procedure, not policy space —** India, South Africa and Indonesia ended BITs because tribunals seemed to second-guess domestic policy. India now concedes on timing, when an investor may sue, but not on scope: tax stays out and the right to regulate is written in. A thoughtful officer would call this the right trade, provided India fixes slow contract enforcement, the best defence against foreign arbitration.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"India's new investment treaties trade procedural concessions for substantive policy space." Critically examine in the light of the India–Saudi Arabia Bilateral Investment Treaty. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Critically examine —** Weigh investor access against policy space; reach a judgement. 2. **Introduction — India is rebuilding the BIT network it dismantled —** 2016-17 terminations to the Saudi two-year window. 3. **A shorter wait restores credible protection for long-term capital —** Value addition: India's 5.7% greenfield share (The Hindu, citing UNCTAD). 4. **Substance stays guarded: tax carve-out, right to regulate —** Draw a timeline: 2011 award → 2015 model → 2016-17 terminations → UAE (three years) → Saudi (two). 5. **Uneven windows invite treaty shopping —** Ranjan's uniform rule. 6. **Conclusion — a uniform template plus faster commercial courts —** Credibility rests on domestic justice.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As a Joint Secretary negotiating a BIT, the partner insists on a one-year local-remedies window. How would you respond?** ***Approach:*** I would hold two years as a uniform standard, because conceding one year to one partner invites every other to demand it and lets investors route through that country. I would offer other comfort, such as a joint committee to settle grievances early, and record the trade-off for the Cabinet.

3. Agriculture & Food

A rural job guarantee is a drought alarm that rings before the crop data does. September's jump in work demand, in a year of a 13% monsoon deficit and a strengthening El Niño, says the countryside is already leaning on the State; the test of the new law is whether money follows that demand now that States share the bill.

3.1 Rural work demand under VB-G RAM G jumps 25% in September as El Niño looms

ISSUE THREAD **Rural job guarantee (VB-G RAM G)** (update 2) **LENS** Growth and equity · Short-term relief and long-term reform

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *The VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 replaced MGNREGA, raising the guarantee to 125 days and moving most States to 60:40 Centre–State cost sharing. On October 6 it notified 375 permissible works.*

THE NEWS New Delhi, October 9. Preliminary Rural Development Ministry data, reported by The Economic Times, give the first monthly demand figures under the new rural job law. Households seeking work under VB-G RAM G rose 25.2% to 15.6 million in September from 12.5 million in August, and 10.1 million in July, the launch month. Individuals seeking work rose to 18.8 million from 15.4 million. The guaranteed minimum daily wage is ₹300. 'Work demand' counts people who formally ask for guaranteed work, so under a demand-driven law it is a rough gauge of rural distress. Separately, ET reports food-industry warnings of a 2027 supply shock from a 'Super El Niño': the monsoon deficit stands at 13%, and drought in Maharashtra and Karnataka threatens the rabi chana crop.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

A monsoon 13% short hits kharif crops → farm work and incomes shrink → households turn to the 125-day guarantee → work-seekers rise from 10.1 million households in July to 15.6 million → El Niño threatens rabi and 2027 supplies

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 replaced MGNREGA, 2005 and changed who pays —** MGNREGA guaranteed 100 days of unskilled manual work a year to rural households that asked for it, with the Centre bearing the entire unskilled wage bill. The 2025 Act raises the guarantee to 125 days and shares costs 60:40 between Centre and State (90:10 for north-eastern and Himalayan States), so States pay for every extra day demanded. 2. **Articles 41 and 43 are the constitutional roots of a work guarantee —** Article 41, a Directive Principle, asks the State, within its economic capacity, to secure the right to work and public assistance in unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement; Article 43 seeks a living wage. Being non-justiciable, they needed a statute to make work an entitlement.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **GS2 asks about the "performance of these schemes"; GS3 about "inclusive growth" —** A redesigned guarantee meets its first drought year.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Article 41 directs the State, within its economic capacity, to secure the right to work and public assistance in unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement. • The VB-G RAM G Act, 2025, which replaced MGNREGA, 2005, guarantees 125 days of wage employment a year to rural households. • El Niño, the warm phase of ENSO, warms the central and eastern equatorial Pacific and usually weakens the Indian monsoon. • Chana (gram) is India's main rabi pulse; tur (arhar) is a kharif pulse.
ANALYSIS	1. **Rising demand signals distress, but a new scheme's ramp-up inflates it —** People seek public work when private work dries up, so a 25% monthly jump usually reflects stress. But the scheme is three months old, and part of the rise is households registering and Panchayats opening works. A fair reading needs MGNREGA comparisons for the same months and data on demand actually met. 2. **Lens — Short-term relief and long-term reform: a counter-cyclical guarantee works**

	only if money follows demand — The guarantee expands by itself when drought strikes. Yet with States paying 40%, a drought-hit State faces higher bills just as revenue falls, and may ration work by delaying registration or wages. A thoughtful officer would front-load water-security works, so today's relief builds tomorrow's drought-proofing. 3. **El Niño reaches workers through food prices, not only lost farm work —** Sugar experts, in a note to the RBI, see ex-mill sugar above ₹50 a kg in June–October 2027, and pulses and edible oils may tighten too. A ₹300 wage buys less as food prices climb, just as need grows, which argues for revising wages with rural prices.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Work demand under a rural employment guarantee is the economy's most honest drought gauge." Critically examine in the context of VB-G RAM G and a looming El Niño. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Critically examine —** Weigh both sides, then judge. 2. **Introduction — work-seeking households up 25.2% to 15.6 million —** Tie it to a 13% monsoon deficit. 3. **Body — demand rises when private work fails, so it tracks distress in real time —** Flowchart: El Niño → weak monsoon → less farm work → demand. 4. **Body — ramp-up and 60:40 State budgets distort the signal —** Value addition: 10.1 million households in July. 5. **Conclusion — read demand with unmet demand and prices, and fund it on time —** A drought trigger for central releases.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Collector of a drought-hit district, work demand has doubled but the State says funds are short. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** I would register and date every request; suppressing demand only hides the crisis. I would open water-security works already in approved Panchayat plans, send the State a week-by-week demand estimate to seek early release, and publish muster rolls.

4. International Relations

On the same day, Oslo honoured a judge who helped build international criminal law and Washington moved to cripple the court she once sat on. International law is strong as a norm and weak against great-power resistance. India watches from outside the court, a position worth re-examining, not abandoning.

4.1 Navi Pillay wins 2026 Nobel Peace Prize as the US sanctions the International Criminal Court

ISSUE THREAD **International law under pressure** (new thread) **LENS** National interest and global commons · Strategic autonomy and partnership

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *The US and Israel reject the ICC's reach; after its warrants against Israeli leaders, the US sanctioned its judges and prosecutors.*

THE NEWS Oslo / Washington. The Norwegian Nobel Committee on October 9 awarded the 2026 Peace Prize to South African jurist Navanethem "Navi" Pillay, 85, "for her efforts to promote peace and international law", per its official release. Born into an Indian Tamil family in Durban, she defended Nelson Mandela, judged at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the International Criminal Court (ICC), and was UN human rights chief. She now sits as an ad hoc judge of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the genocide case against Myanmar. Hours later the US sanctioned the ICC itself, beyond existing sanctions on 13 of its judges and prosecutors, which could punish firms serving the court. "Either the ICC will end its threats, or we will end the ICC," said Secretary of State Marco Rubio. António Guterres called it "a serious blow", per UN News.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Nuremberg trials → UN tribunal for Rwanda in 1994 → a permanent ICC in 2002 → ICC warrants against Israeli leaders draw US sanctions on its officials → Nobel to Pillay and sanctions on the court itself on one day

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The ICC is a treaty court that steps in only when States fail —** The Rome Statute was adopted in 1998 and came into force in 2002; the court sits in The Hague and tries individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression. Under complementarity it acts only when a State is unwilling or unable genuinely to prosecute. 2. **The ICJ judges States; India stays outside the ICC —** The ICJ is the UN's principal judicial organ under Article 92 of the UN Charter, with 15 judges, and settles disputes between States. India is not a party to the Rome Statute; it has objected to the Security Council's power to refer and defer cases and to a prosecutor who can start cases on his own.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **International institutions under strain is a live GS2 theme —** The syllabus asks for "important international institutions, agencies and fora — their structure, mandate".
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The Rome Statute was adopted in 1998 and entered into force in 2002; India has not signed it. • The ICC tries individuals; the ICJ, under Article 92 of the UN Charter, decides disputes between States. • The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was created by the UN Security Council in 1994. • An ad hoc judge may sit on an ICJ case when a party has no judge of its nationality on the bench.
ANALYSIS	1. **Sanctioning the court, not just its officials, attacks its plumbing —** Barring transactions with the institution reaches the banks and contractors any court needs, which is why Rubio spoke of "crippling its ability to operate". The six-month grace

	period ET reports is a test of whether the 125 member States will build workarounds. 2. **The prize is political, but norms grow from such signals —** Israel called the award a "grotesque weaponization". Yet international law has advanced through ideas that first lacked enforcement: the ICTR's ruling that rape can be a means of genocide changed how States define the crime. 3. **Lens — National interest and global commons: defend the rules without joining the court —** A court that the Security Council can steer and that exempts the powerful does not reassure a middle power, so India's distance is defensible. But India gains from rules against coercion and itself rejects unilateral sanctions without UN backing. The sensible line is to oppose sanctions on judges while keeping its reservations.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	US sanctions on the International Criminal Court show that international criminal justice depends on great-power consent. Critically examine, with reference to India's position. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Critically examine —** Weigh how far power limits the ICC, then judge. 2. **Introduction — one day, two signals —** Pillay's Nobel and the sanctions on the ICC itself. 3. **Body — the ICC has no police and needs State cooperation, so sanctions bite —** Value addition: 13 officials already sanctioned; Rubio's "end the ICC". 4. **Body — yet norms outlast power, as the ICTR's genocide rulings show —** Draw a two-column chart: ICC (individuals, treaty) vs ICJ (States, UN organ). 5. **Body — India's objection is Security Council control, not impunity —** Note complementarity. 6. **Conclusion — defend judicial independence, keep reservations —** Back the ICJ; oppose sanctions on judges.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. An interview board asks: should India now join the ICC to show support for international law?** ***Approach:*** Not yet. Its concerns about Security Council referrals and an unchecked prosecutor remain valid. India can support international justice by backing the ICJ, opposing sanctions on judges and strengthening its own law on grave crimes, so complementarity would keep any case in Indian courts.

5. Environment & Ecology

Lucknow did not flood because it rained in Lucknow; it flooded because rain 100 km upstream met a city that has built on the land its river needs. Urban floods are planning failures that arrive with a delay, and embankments only move the bill downstream.

5.1 Gomti floods Lucknow's riverfront to an extent unseen since 1982, hitting 25,000 people

ISSUE THREAD **Urban floods and floodplains** (new thread) LENS Development and environment · Independence and accountability

> *STORY SO FAR* *Indian cities, from Mumbai (2005) to Chennai (2015), have flooded after building over lakes, drains and floodplains, while flood control leaned on embankments.*

THE NEWS Lucknow, October 9. For over a week the Gomti has submerged parts of Uttar Pradesh's capital, affecting about 5,000 families, nearly 25,000 people, The Indian Express reports. IIIT Lucknow suspended classes after its substation flooded. Principal Secretary (Irrigation) Anil Garg traced the flood to about 150 mm of rain, against a normal 15 mm, between September 22 and 27 in the upper catchment (Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, Lakhimpur Kheri, Sitapur), about 100 km upstream; Lucknow's level rose suddenly on October 7. The Lucknow Development Authority says riverfront inundation on this scale was last seen in 1982, and has sent the State a project report for an embankment up to Naimish in Sitapur. The Congress alleges building was allowed on wetlands and floodplains, the flat land a river spreads over in high flow.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

150 mm of catchment rain in five days → a flood wave travels 100 km downriver → colonies on the floodplain sit in its path → drains back up → 25,000 hit; embankment proposed

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **NDMA's 2010 guidelines treat urban flooding as distinct from river flooding —** The Guidelines on Management of Urban Flooding (2010) recognise that cities flood faster because paved surfaces increase runoff and drains choke. They ask for flood-risk mapping, drainage designed for heavier rain, protection of water bodies and local early warning. 2. **The Disaster Management Act, 2005 runs a chain from the NDMA to the district —** It created the NDMA under the Prime Minister, State authorities under Chief Ministers, District authorities chaired by the Collector, and the NDRF. The 2025 amendment lets States set up Urban Disaster Management Authorities in State capitals and municipal-corporation cities, and gives SDRFs statutory backing.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **GS3 "disaster management" meets GS1 "urbanization, their problems and their remedies" —** The exam rewards tracing urban floods to planning, not rain alone.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The Union Government circulated a Model Bill for Flood Plain Zoning to States in 1975; only a handful enacted it. • The Gomti, a rain- and groundwater-fed left-bank tributary of the Ganga, rises in Pilibhit district and joins the Ganga below Varanasi. • Under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the District Disaster Management Authority is chaired by the Collector or District Magistrate. • The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) sets seven global targets and four priorities for action.
ANALYSIS	1. **The flood began 100 km away, so it was a warning failure as much as a rain event —** Rain ended on September 27, yet Lucknow's level rose sharply only on October 7: a plains flood wave gives days of notice. That lead time should have triggered evacuation and advance barrage regulation, though no gate can absorb 150 mm over a catchment. 2. **Lens — Development and environment: the riverfront was built on land the river had**

	only lent — Four decades without a big flood invite colonies, malls and stadiums onto a floodplain, and channelised riverfronts push the same water higher. Land in a growing capital is scarce, so the trade-off is real. A thoughtful officer would allow regulated building on the outer floodplain but keep the active floodplain free through notified zoning. 3. **An embankment shifts flood risk; it does not remove it —** Embankments confine floodwater, raise levels downstream and invite building behind them, so a breach does greater damage; inside, drains into a high river still back up. The counter-view: a dense city already on the floodplain cannot move, so an embankment with sluices and pumps may be the only practical shield.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Urban floods are less a failure of rainfall than of land-use planning." Discuss with reference to the recent Gomti floods in Lucknow. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Discuss —** Explain causes and remedies, then conclude. 2. **Introduction — 25,000 hit; riverfront inundation unseen since 1982 —** The rain fell 100 km upstream. 3. **Body — building on floodplains and wetlands put people in the river's path —** Value addition: the 1975 Model Bill for Flood Plain Zoning; NDMA's 2010 guidelines. 4. **Body — drains that cannot empty into a high river turn river floods into city waterlogging —** Diagram: river, active floodplain, embankment and a backed-up drain outfall. 5. **Body — warning time existed but was not turned into action —** The flood wave took days to arrive. 6. **Conclusion — zone the floodplain, retrofit drains, warn by catchment —** Embankments only as a last line.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Lucknow's District Magistrate, the development authority wants its embankment approved quickly. What do you advise?** ***Approach:*** I would back protection for dense settlements, subject to a hydrological study of downstream effects and drain outfalls, with sluices and pumps. Alongside, I would have the floodplain mapped and notified against new building, and set up catchment-rainfall warning with the Irrigation Department.

6. Health & Life Sciences

The WHO's first guideline on child obesity says the clinic is the last line of defence, not the first. For India, which still fights stunting and wasting, the lesson is sharper: the same poor diets feed both problems, so the answer lies in schools, food labels and advertising rules more than in pills.

6.1 WHO issues first global guideline on child and adolescent obesity, rejecting drugs for under-tens

ISSUE THREAD **Child nutrition and obesity** (new thread) **LENS** Short-term relief and long-term reform · Tradition and social justice

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *India's nutrition policy has long targeted undernutrition through anganwadis, while cheap processed food spreads overweight and diabetes to ever younger ages.*

THE NEWS Geneva. The World Health Organization on October 7 issued its first global guidelines on obesity in children and adolescents, per its news release. In 2024, 170 million people aged 5–19 lived with obesity, 70 million of them aged 5–9, and prevalence has quadrupled since 1990, from 2% to 8%. WHO calls obesity "a chronic, relapsing disease". Structured diet, physical-activity and behaviour programmes are strongly recommended as the first line. For children up to nine there should be no drugs, bariatric surgery (stomach-reducing operations) or devices; for those aged 10–19, medicines may be considered only after a supervised lifestyle programme fails, and surgery only for severe obesity under strict conditions. An Indian Express editorial notes that India faces malnutrition and obesity simultaneously, and urges curbs on junk-food advertising and better access to nutritious food.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Cheap processed food and less play → child obesity quadruples since 1990 → weight-loss drugs tempt doctors → WHO sets lifestyle-first rules → India must fight undernutrition and obesity together

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **FSSAI bars junk food in and near schools —** The Food Safety and Standards (Safe and Wholesome Food for School Children) Regulations, 2020, framed under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, bar the sale and advertisement of foods high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) in school canteens and within 50 metres of a school gate. 2. **POSHAN Abhiyaan and Eat Right India are the two policy arms —** POSHAN Abhiyaan, launched in 2018 under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, targets stunting, undernutrition and anaemia and is now part of Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0. Eat Right India, run by FSSAI since 2018, promotes safe, healthy and sustainable diets.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Lifestyle disease among the young is an emerging GS2 health theme —** The syllabus names "issues relating to development and management of social sector services relating to health" and "issues relating to poverty and hunger".
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• WHO calls obesity a chronic, relapsing disease; for ages 5–19 it is judged by BMI-for-age against WHO growth references. • The FSSAI school-food regulations of 2020 bar the sale of HFSS foods within 50 metres of a school gate. • POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. • SDG indicator 2.2.2 measures malnutrition among children under five as both wasting and overweight.
ANALYSIS	1. **The double burden is one problem with two faces —** A child in a poor home can be short for age yet gain weight, because cheap packaged snacks give calories without protein or micronutrients. NFHS-5 shows stunting falling only from 38% to 36% and wasting from 21% to 19% since NFHS-4, per a 2021 PIB release. A programme that only

	adds calories can worsen the second face. 2. **WHO's caution on drugs protects poorer countries from a costly shortcut —** New weight-loss medicines are costly and often taken for years; using them first turns a food-environment problem into a lifelong drug bill. The Indian Academy of Paediatrics' 2023 guidelines already ask that obese children above 10 be screened for hypertension, diabetes and fatty liver, a safety net, not a substitute for prevention. 3. **Lens — Short-term relief and long-term reform: regulate the food environment, not just the child —** Awareness drives and clinics show quick results; rules on advertising, labels and canteens are slow and resisted by industry, yet only they change what millions of children eat. A thoughtful officer would enforce the 50-metre rule now and press for clear front-of-pack warnings.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	India must tackle undernutrition and childhood obesity together. In light of the WHO's first guideline on child obesity, examine why a clinical approach alone will fail. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Probe causes; show why clinics fall short. 2. **Introduction — the double burden of malnutrition —** WHO's 170 million figure and its lifestyle-first rule. 3. **Body — the same poor diets drive stunting and obesity —** Value addition: NFHS-5 stunting at 36%; draw a cycle: cheap processed food → hidden hunger plus excess calories → stunting and obesity side by side. 4. **Body — drugs and surgery are costly and WHO bars them for under-tens —** Cite the IAP 2023 screening guidelines as a safety net. 5. **Body — the levers sit outside health: schools, labels, advertising —** FSSAI 2020 school rules. 6. **Conclusion — one nutrition mission for both burdens —** Merge POSHAN and food regulation.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As District Collector, you find packaged-snack shops crowding every school gate in town. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** I would have the food-safety officer enforce the 50-metre HFSS rule with notices first and penalties for repeat cases. I would ask schools for healthy canteens and daily play, and use school health check-ups to screen children for both underweight and overweight.

7. Science & Technology

Apple Pay's late arrival in India is a story about regulation, not a gadget. By fixing the security result it wants and letting firms choose the tool, the RBI has opened payments to fingerprints and faces while keeping banks liable. The test now is whether that liability reaches the phone-makers who hold the keys.

7.1 RBI authentication rules regulate outcomes, not technology: OTPs, Apple Pay and the fraud question

ISSUE THREAD **Cyber fraud and 'digital arrest'** (update 3) **LENS** Innovation and safeguards · Market and State

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *NCRB recorded 1,01,928 cybercrime cases in 2024. In the SPIR 2026 survey, about three in four victims recovered nothing.*

THE NEWS New Delhi. Apple Pay arrived in India on September 30, 12 years after its global debut; the real story is the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), argues former consumer affairs secretary Rohit Kumar Singh in The Economic Times. RBI's Authentication Mechanisms for Digital Payment Transactions Directions of September 2025, in force since April, retain two-factor authentication but widen the factors allowed, including biometrics built into a phone, and hold card issuers answerable to customers when they fall short. In Singh's words, RBI "chose to regulate the outcome, instead of prescribing the tool", ending the de facto rule that a card payment needed a one-time password (OTP). NPCI allowed on-device biometrics for UPI in October 2025; in June, over 611 million UPI payments worth ₹25,416 crore were authorised by fingerprint or face. Apple Pay does not yet support RuPay or UPI, which carries about 84% of digital payment volume.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

An extra factor, in practice the OTP, becomes the norm → fraudsters phish the six-digit code → RBI's 2024 draft on alternative authentication → 2025 Directions fix outcomes and issuer liability → biometric UPI and Apple Pay arrive

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 gives RBI its payments powers —** The Act makes RBI the regulator of payment systems; no one may run one without its authorisation, which is how NPCI operates UPI and RuPay. Section 18 lets RBI issue directions to system participants, the basis for authentication rules. 2. **The IT Act, 2000 sets liability for data and security lapses —** Section 43A makes a body corporate that handles sensitive personal data, such as passwords or biometrics, pay compensation if negligent security causes loss. RBI's 2017 circular on customer liability adds zero liability for customers who report third-party fraud within three working days.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Digital payments security sits in two GS3 lines —** The syllabus names "awareness in the fields of IT, computers" and "basics of cyber security".
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Two-factor authentication requires proof from two different categories: something you know (PIN), something you have (phone) or something you are (fingerprint). • Tokenisation replaces a card number with a unique token, so merchants never store the real card details. • Risk-based authentication asks for extra proof only when a transaction looks unusual by device, place, amount or behaviour. • NPCI, which runs UPI and RuPay, is authorised by RBI under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007. • Under RBI's 2017 rules a customer has zero liability for third-party fraud reported within three working days.
ANALYSIS	1. **The OTP made fraud easier because it was a single, shareable secret —** Every "your account will be blocked" message, Singh notes, aims to extract one six-digit code. A

	fingerprint checked on the phone cannot be read out over a call, and risk-based checks can flag a payment from a new device. Fixing outcomes and liability, not tools, lets defences evolve with attacks. 2. **The device-maker becomes part of the security chain —** When the phone checks the face, a few global platforms hold a critical function. Singh welcomes their secure hardware but warns of concentration, and says issuers must hold platform partners to the same standard. Outcome rules work only if accountability flows all the way down. 3. **Lens — Innovation and safeguards: inclusion means choice, not one mandated gate —** Fingerprints wear with age and manual work, and not every citizen owns a phone with secure biometrics. Singh argues biometrics should complement, not replace, PINs and OTPs. A sensible regulator keeps several safe doors open and insists that UPI and RuPay work inside global wallets too.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Outcome-based regulation suits fast-changing technology better than prescriptive rules. Evaluate with reference to RBI's 2025 directions on authentication of digital payments. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Evaluate —** Weigh merits and limits; give a verdict. 2. **Introduction — from the OTP mandate to outcome rules —** Apple Pay's entry as the trigger. 3. **Body — outcome rules let defences evolve and fix liability on issuers —** Value addition: 611 million biometric UPI payments in June; draw a flow: user → device biometric → issuer's risk check → payment, marking where liability sits. 4. **Body — but they concentrate power in device-makers and can exclude —** Worn fingerprints, basic phones. 5. **Conclusion — outcomes plus choice plus interoperability —** Keep PIN and OTP as fallbacks.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As a bank's grievance officer, a farmer says a fingerprint payment he never made drained his account. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** I would block the channel and record the complaint time, since prompt reporting limits his liability under RBI rules. The bank must prove the payment was genuine, so I would pull the device and authentication logs and credit the amount if they do not.

8. Society

A competitive examination is a promise that effort, not money or connections, decides who gets the seat or the job. A leaked paper breaks that promise for lakhs at once, and the poorest pay longest, in rent, coaching fees and lost years. Parliament's education panel now says the fix lies less in harsher punishment than in how the testing agency is built.

8.1 House Panel's 382nd Report Asks NTA for Question Banks and 1,000 Government CBT Centres

ISSUE THREAD **Recruitment exams and paper leaks** (update 6) LENS Independence and accountability · Growth and equity

STORY SO FAR *The ED arrested Karnataka's suspended PSC chairman on October 6 over leaked questions. The NEET-UG 2026 leak led the Supreme Court to seek NTA reform, and a Nilekani task force has committed NEET to computer-based testing.*

THE NEWS New Delhi. Parliament's Education committee, chaired by Mukul Wasnik, presented its 382nd report, "Reforms and Strengthening of the National Testing Agency (NTA)", to the Chairman, Rajya Sabha on October 9, per a PIB release. The Nilekani task force had said NEET will move to computer-based testing (CBT); the panel says how. A large, continuously updated question bank is "the most viable defence" against leaks: CBT papers need no printing or transport, so the final paper can be set very close to the exam, with vetters quarantined till it ends. NEET-UG should shift only after 1,000 secure government CBT centres exist, at least one per district, as private centres are "a weak link". It seeks a national registry of blacklisted vendors, notes only 23 of 39 NTA posts are filled, and suggests exploring age and attempt limits. In Pune, MPSC aspirants are protesting three State paper leaks this year.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

NEET-UG 2024 controversy → Radhakrishnan committee proposes government CBT centres → NEET-UG 2026 leak → Nilekani task force commits NEET to CBT → parliamentary panel sets the conditions

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The anti-leak law, toughened in 2026, targets organisers and service providers —** The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, amended in July 2026 (assent 31 July; the higher penalties apply once notified), covers UPSC, SSC, railway, banking and NTA exams. Unfair means now draw five to ten years' jail and a fine up to ₹50 lakh; organised leaks draw seven to ten years and at least ₹10 crore. A guilty service provider can be fined up to ₹5 crore and barred for up to eight years. 2. **The NTA is a registered society, not a statutory body —** Approved by the Cabinet in 2017 and registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, it runs NEET-UG, JEE (Main) and CUET for the Education Ministry and lays no annual report before Parliament. After the 2024 NEET controversy, a committee under former ISRO chief K. Radhakrishnan proposed secure government test centres, at least one per district, a plan the panel now sizes at 1,000.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Exam integrity is now a governance question —** GS2 covers "Social Sector/Services relating to … Education" and "statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies"; NTA tests reach about 1.2 crore candidates a year.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The NTA is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860; it is not a statutory body. • Each of the 24 Departmentally Related Standing Committees has 31 members: 21 from the Lok Sabha, 10 from the Rajya Sabha. • Offences under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 are cognisable, non-bailable and non-compoundable. • Under Article 317, only the President can remove a State PSC member for misbehaviour, after a Supreme Court inquiry.
ANALYSIS	1. **A question bank attacks the economics of a leak —** A leak pays because one fixed

	paper exists weeks early, passing through printers and trucks. A randomised paper drawn hours before the test shrinks both the window and the reward. The risk shifts to the bank itself, hence checks on setters' coaching links. 2. **Lens — Independence and accountability: the NTA has autonomy without answerability —** Staffed on deputation and answerable to no House, the NTA is called to account only in court. A thoughtful officer would back a statutory NTA with a fixed-tenure head, its own cadre, an annual report to Parliament and CAG audit: insulation for the paper, accountability for the result. 3. **CBT narrows or widens the rural gap depending on who owns the centres —** Private centres cluster in cities, so rural candidates pay for travel and lodging. A government lab in every district, used by schools on other days, turns exam spending into public assets. Attempt caps curb endless coaching cycles but must spare late starters a second chance.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Paper leaks in India are a failure of institutional design more than of policing." Critically examine with reference to the National Testing Agency. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Critically examine —** Weigh design against enforcement; judge. 2. **Introduction — one agency, about 1.2 crore candidates —** Cite the 382nd report (October 2026). 3. **Body — the design invites leaks: fixed papers, private centres, no vendor blacklist, a hollow cadre —** Diagram: setter → printer → transport → centre, each leak point crossed out under CBT. 4. **Body — a statute would join NTA's independence to accountability —** Value addition: Radhakrishnan committee. The 2024 Act acts only after a leak. 5. **Conclusion — redesign first, punish second —** Question banks, government centres, a national vendor registry.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Collector, you must host a government CBT centre in a district that has none. How?** ***Approach:*** Choose a government college with reliable power and connectivity for a lab that schools use on other days. Put access control and staff vetting under a named officer. Run mock tests for rural candidates first, so the new format is not a new disadvantage.

9. Internal Security

The war on drugs in the North-East is usually counted in hectares destroyed; Manipur is now counting hectares replanted. That is the right instinct, because poppy is a livelihood before it is a crime, and in Manipur it also fuels an ethnic conflict that no seizure figure can end.

9.1 Manipur plants bamboo on 255 ha of forest cleared of poppy in three hill districts

ISSUE THREAD **Narcotics: networks and diversion** (update 3) LENS Tradition and social justice · Rule of law and discretion

> *STORY SO FAR* *Amit Shah set December 31, 2029 as the deadline to 'uproot' the drug trade, asking States to dismantle networks rather than count seizures. In Manipur, Naga–Kuki clashes have been sustained by drug-route rivalry.*

THE NEWS Guwahati, October 9. Manipur's Forest Department has planted bamboo on 255 hectares of forestland cleared for opium poppy, the plant whose latex yields opium and, refined, heroin, The Hindu reports. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Anurag Bajpai said surveys since 2018 found 307 hectares under poppy in Chandel, Churachandpur and Senapati, and are continuing. Poppy cultivation is described as one of the triggers of the State's ethnic conflict. Until a species that can out-compete the 'fast-growing' poppy is found, bamboo, which 'can help restore the environment while creating livelihood opportunities', fills cleared patches, and village chiefs are being engaged to discourage the crop. About 78% of Manipur is classified forestland, but forest cover is about 74%. Seized smuggled forest products, such as Burmese teak, yielded ₹115 crore in 2023-24 to 2025-26.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Remote hills with few cash crops → forest cleared for poppy → drug money feeds armed groups and conflict → crops destroyed, leaving bare slopes and lost income → bamboo planted for land and livelihood

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The NDPS Act, 1985 bars poppy cultivation except under licence —** Section 8 prohibits cultivating opium poppy, cannabis or coca except for medical or scientific purposes as the Act permits; Section 18 punishes opium poppy and opium offences, graded by quantity. Article 47 directs the State to endeavour to prohibit consumption of drugs injurious to health except for medicinal purposes. 2. **Bamboo grown outside forests is no longer legally a tree —** The Indian Forest (Amendment) Act, 2017 removed bamboo from the definition of 'tree', so bamboo grown outside forests can be felled and moved without a transit permit; the restructured National Bamboo Mission promotes such planting. Bamboo planted inside forestland, as in Manipur, remains forest produce.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **GS3 links "organized crime" with "security challenges and their management in border areas" —** Drug-funded conflict on the Myanmar border joins both.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The Golden Triangle, a major opium region, lies where Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet; the Golden Crescent spans Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. • Under the Indian Forest (Amendment) Act, 2017, bamboo grown outside forest areas is not a 'tree'. • Bamboo is botanically a grass. • The Narcotics Control Bureau was constituted in 1986 under the NDPS Act, 1985.
ANALYSIS	1. **Destroying poppy without replacing income only relocates it —** Poppy pays far more than any legal crop, so slashing it without an alternative pushes cultivation deeper into the forest. Bamboo takes years to yield saleable culms while poppy income vanishes at once. Unless wage work, assured purchase or processing cover those bridge years, eradication becomes relocation. 2. **Lens — Tradition and social justice: village chiefs are the gate to lasting change —** In

	Manipur's hills land use runs through chiefs and customary authority, so engaging them is sound. But customary control can also shield cultivators and financiers, and conflict has made communities wary of agencies they see as partisan. A thoughtful officer would make chiefs partners with a share in bamboo income and clear consequences for relapse. 3. **Poppy, forest loss and conflict form one loop, so they need one plan —** Clearing forest for poppy erodes cover, and drug money buys weapons that keep the State out of the hills. The same porous border carries teak, areca nut and drugs, yet forest, police and customs pursue these networks separately. The counter-view: in an active conflict security comes first, since schemes cannot reach villages forces cannot enter.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Examine how alternative-livelihood programmes can complement enforcement in curbing illicit poppy cultivation in India's North-East, with reference to Manipur. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Probe the link and its limits. 2. **Introduction — 307 ha found under poppy, bamboo on 255 ha —** Poppy as a trigger of Manipur's conflict. 3. **Body — eradication alone relocates poppy because the income gap remains —** Value addition: surveys since 2018 keep finding new areas. 4. **Body — bamboo needs wage work and assured buyers to bridge the years before harvest —** Flowchart: survey → destroy → replant → assured market → resurvey. 5. **Body — chiefs, border control and the conflict decide whether it holds —** Agencies work in silos. 6. **Conclusion — one district plan sequencing security, livelihood and markets —** Measure land that stays clean.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As a Divisional Forest Officer, a village chief says families will go hungry if their poppy is destroyed. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** The law leaves no room to let poppy stand, and I would say so. But I would time destruction with alternatives ready: saplings, paid nursery and planting work, and a future buyer through the bamboo mission. I would record the agreement with the chief and recheck after a season.

9. Ethics & Administrator's Corner — Integrative Case Studies

These three case studies stitch together stories from today's papers into GS4-style scenarios. Work through the prompts on paper before reading the Model Approach, which is written as named points so you can compare your own structure against it, not just your conclusions.

Case 1 — "A Hammer to Kill a Fly": The Police Commissioner and the Protest-Day Shutdown

SCENARIO The Hindu and The Indian Express (10 October) report that ahead of a protest called in central Delhi for 10 October, authorities listed 57 Metro stations for closure (later revised to 45), cancelled at least 245 trains to and from Delhi and ordered a 24-hour mobile internet shutdown in Central Delhi. On 9 October the Supreme Court found the transport notifications "overreaching" and drew a distinction between "prohibition" and "regulation"; the Chief Justice remarked that proportionality does not mean using "a hammer to kill a fly". Imagine you are the police commissioner. Intelligence warns that some outsiders may try to provoke violence. Senior officials want the city sealed. Patients, litigants and daily-wage workers depend on the Metro, and the organisers say their protest will be peaceful.

Q1. Which values and rights collide here, and whose interests are easiest to overlook?

Q2. What arrangements will you make for the protest day that you could defend before the Court?

Q3. How will you respond to superiors who insist that a full shutdown is the only safe option?

MODEL APPROACH

1. **Proportionality is an administrative virtue, not only a legal test —** Peaceful assembly is protected by Article 19(1)(b), subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order under Article 19(3). A restriction must have a legitimate aim, be suitable and necessary, and be the least restrictive option that works. A complete shutdown punishes lakhs of commuters for a risk posed by a few.

2. **Regulate the flow, don't stop the city —** Keep the Metro running with closures limited to the stations nearest the venue, extra frisking and CCTV at the rest, and staggered trains. Publish a traffic advisory early. Act on specific intelligence through targeted preventive measures, not blanket bans. An internet shutdown should be the last resort, limited in area and time, with written reasons.

3. **Dissent within the chain of command, on record —** Put the Court's order and a costed alternative plan in writing to superiors. If overruled, comply with the lawful order but record the objection. Courage here means giving honest advice, not defying lawful authority.

4. **Conclusion — order kept with the least harm —** The test of a good public-order plan is that the protest passes peacefully and the hospital patient still reaches the hospital.

Case 2 — "Shocked to Know I Was Dead": The Electoral Registration Officer and the MLA's Objections

SCENARIO The Indian Express (10 October) reports that a vegetable vendor in Vijayapura, Karnataka, learnt from his booth-level officer that a death certificate had been issued in his name. Death certificates of eight living voters had allegedly been attached to a letter that the local MLA gave the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) during the objections phase of the Special Intensive Revision, and an FIR now names the MLA. The Election Commission has just capped individual Form 7 objections at 10 per claims period. Imagine you are the ERO. Hundreds of objections arrive in the last week before the deadline, many in bulk from party workers. Your staff are few, and the MLA's office calls daily to ask why deletions are "delayed".

Q1. What are your duties to the objector, to the voter named in the objection, and to the electoral roll itself?

Q2. How will you dispose of the bulk objections fairly before the deadline?

Q3. How will you deal with the MLA's pressure and the forged certificates?

MODEL APPROACH

1. **No deletion without a hearing —** Under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, the ERO must give notice and hear both the objector and the person objected to before removing a name. A name on the roll is presumed valid; the burden lies on the objector. Deleting a living voter wrongly takes away the right to vote under Article 326.
2. **Verify independently, triage by risk —** Have booth-level officers physically verify every case, check death certificates against the issuing municipal register, and treat a single person objecting in many cases as a red flag requiring personal scrutiny. Reject forms not in the prescribed form or period. If the deadline cannot be met fairly, report this to the District Election Officer rather than clear names in haste.
3. **Impartiality under pressure —** Answer the MLA's office only in writing, with the same procedure applied to every party. Refer forged documents to the police and report false declarations for action under Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. Keep a file note of every call.
4. **Conclusion — the roll belongs to the voter —** An ERO's neutrality is the first safeguard of a free election. It is better to be accused of delay than to strike a living citizen off the roll.

10. Prelims Quick-Revision Facts

These are written to the pattern UPSC Prelims actually uses — the provision, the parent Act, the appointing or administering authority, the composition, the definition, the treaty year and the threshold written into law. The news gives the hook; the permanent fact behind it is what gets asked. Transient numbers that no objective question can be built on have been left out on purpose.

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
Prescription-drug ads — G.S.R. 861(E) and Schedules H, H1 and X	The Health Ministry's draft notification G.S.R. 861(E) of 28 September proposes a new sub-rule (22) in Rule 65 of the Drugs Rules, 1945, barring retailers, wholesalers and distributors from advertising Schedule H, H1 and X drugs without prior Central sanction, a bar that already applies to manufacturers (PIB, 9 October; The Hindu p. 14; The Economic Times p. 5). It follows the 93rd meeting of the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB), the statutory expert body under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. Schedules H, H1 and X list prescription drugs, including certain antibiotics and psychotropic drugs.
National Formulary of India — DCGI flags unapproved drugs	The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), who heads the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), wrote to the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) that the 7th edition of the National Formulary of India (NFI 2026), released on 21 September, lists drugs not approved by CDSCO, which "may have international implications" (The Economic Times p. 5). The NFI is a guide to prescribing, dispensing and administering medicines; it is published by the IPC under the Health Ministry, and CDSCO is the national drug regulator.
SEBI settlement regulations — disgorgement now separate	SEBI has notified new settlement regulations under which the settlement amount is linked to the minimum penalty for the violation, while wrongful gains, loss avoided or loss caused to investors are disgorged separately, ending double counting; a fast-track route sends cases with settlement amounts up to ₹10 lakh straight to a panel of whole-time members (The Economic Times p. 11). Settlement lets a person end proceedings by paying an amount without admitting or denying guilt; the power comes from Section 15JB of the SEBI Act, 1992.
Critical minerals — a stockpile policy under the NCMM	Mines Secretary Keshav Chandra said a policy on stockpiling critical minerals is expected within a month, and four critical-minerals processing parks are planned in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha (The Economic Times p. 7; The Hindu p. 15). The National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM), announced in Budget 2024-25, has an outlay of ₹16,300 crore plus ₹18,000 crore of expected PSU investment over seven years, and covers exploration, overseas assets, recycling and a national stockpile (Cabinet release).
G20 'structural excess capacity' statement — India listed as a signatory	A joint statement released by the United States after the G20 Trade Ministers' meeting in Milwaukee (30 September–1 October) lists India, with the EU, Japan, Australia and others, among those that "acknowledged" structural excess capacity as a challenge in sectors such as automobiles, EVs, batteries, chemicals, foundational semiconductors and solar panels, and commit to technical talks before December 2026 drawing on OECD work (The Indian Express p. 22). This is the US account; Darpan's card of 3 October reported Piyush Goyal rejecting the "excess capacity" charge at the meeting.
Orangutan to Indonesia — CITES Appendix I	An infant orangutan seized in Thane district in November 2024 and held at the Greens Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre, Jamnagar, is set to be repatriated to Indonesia (The Indian Express p. 1, 12). Orangutans are in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, 1973), which allows no commercial trade in species threatened with extinction; the treaty encourages repatriation of seized animals where feasible. India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2022, gives effect to CITES.
Ladakh talks — Article 371 and a proposed Article 371(K)	The Home Ministry and Ladakh's representatives, the Leh Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance, meet on 15 October to discuss a UT-level elected body, after the Centre offered an additional constitutional provision, a proposed Article 371(K) (The Indian Express p. 10). Article 371 gives special provisions for Maharashtra and Gujarat, and Articles 371A to 371J for other States such as Nagaland, Mizoram and Karnataka; Article 371(K) does not yet exist and would

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
	need a constitutional amendment. Ladakh has two Autonomous Hill Development Councils, at Leh and Kargil; in July the UT administration announced councils for all seven districts.
CAQM — a panel to look beyond Delhi-NCR	The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has set up a 15-member expert sub-committee to identify areas in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh adjoining the NCR whose pollution sources affect NCR air, with a report due in two months (The Indian Express p. 6). The CAQM is a statutory body under the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021, and its directions override those of State pollution boards in the region.
Great Indian Bustard — first captive-bred birds released	On 4 October two captive-bred male Great Indian Bustards were released into the wild for the first time, in Desert National Park near Jaisalmer, under Project GIB run by the Centre, the Wildlife Institute of India and the governments of Rajasthan and Gujarat (The Indian Express p. 13). The birds were bred at centres at Sam and Ramdevra. The species is Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List and in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; Rajasthan's state bird is called the godawan.
Attempt versus preparation — SC takes up Patna HC ruling	A Supreme Court Bench headed by the CJI, in a suo motu case, issued notice to an accused whom the Patna High Court acquitted of attempt to rape after holding that removing a woman's salwar was "at best" an assault to outrage modesty under Section 354 IPC (The Hindu p. 14). The trial court had convicted him under Section 376 read with Section 511 IPC (attempt). In criminal law, preparation is generally not punishable while an attempt is; in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, attempt falls under Section 62 and outraging modesty under Section 74.
NCRB and protesters' biometrics — the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act	In an affidavit, the Home Ministry, through the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), called "omnibus" a Rajya Sabha MP's claim that biometrics of NEET protesters at Jantar Mantar were unlawfully stored, and said a plea to erase data from NAFIS (National Automated Fingerprint Identification System) and CCTNS must name specific records (The Hindu p. 14). Under the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022, the NCRB stores measurements such as fingerprints and iris scans of arrested and convicted persons for 75 years.
AITIGA review — next round in India, January 2027	The 15th Joint Committee reviewing the ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) met at the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, on 6–9 October, co-chaired by India and Malaysia; the next meeting will be in India in January 2027 (PIB, 9 October; The Economic Times p. 7). AITIGA was signed in 2009 and took effect in 2010. ASEAN was founded in 1967 by the Bangkok Declaration and has its secretariat in Jakarta.
INS Mangrol — anti-submarine shallow water craft	Mangrol, the third Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft built by Cochin Shipyard, is to be commissioned on 12 October at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai (PIB, 9 October). It has over 80% indigenous content, the Abhay hull-mounted sonar and waterjet propulsion. It is named after the fishing town of Mangrol in Junagadh, Gujarat, and carries on the name of a minesweeper decommissioned in 2004.
World Mental Health Day, 10 October — theme for 2026	The 2026 theme, set by the World Federation for Mental Health and used by the Health Ministry, is "Lived Experiences Heard: Real Voices, Real Change", asking that people with lived experience of mental illness shape services (PIB, 9 October; The Economic Times p. 6). Tele-MANAS, the national tele-mental-health helpline (14416), was launched on 10 October 2022. The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 makes access to mental health care a legal right and presumes that a person who attempts suicide is under severe stress, which in effect decriminalises the attempt.
WorldSkills 2026 — India in the top 10 for the first time	At the 48th WorldSkills Competition in Shanghai (September 2026), India finished in the top 10 for the first time, according to an article by Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (The Hindu p. 10). WorldSkills is held every two years, with young competitors from about 70 countries and regions in trades from welding to cyber security. PM-SETU is the scheme to upgrade 1,000 government ITIs in a hub-and-spoke model with industry partners.

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
Telecom fraud — ITU roundtable at IMC 2026	Minister of State for Communications Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar spoke at a roundtable of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) at India Mobile Congress 2026 on India's layered defence against telecom fraud, including real-time blocking of spoofed international calls, C-DOT's AI-based ASTR tool to detect SIMs taken on fake documents, and the Sanchar Saathi portal (PIB, 9 October). The ITU, headquartered in Geneva, is the UN specialised agency for information and communication technologies.
Railways Act, Section 145(2) — nuisance on trains	The Railways have warned that loud music and speaker-phone use on trains can be treated as nuisance under Section 145(2) of the Railways Act, 1989, as amended by the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026: a fine of ₹1,000 with removal from railway premises, and up to six months' simple imprisonment or a fine up to ₹5,000, or both, if the person persists after being told to stop (The Hindu p. 14). Jan Vishwas Acts amend many laws to replace jail terms for minor offences with fines.
JNU dismissal — the POSH Act and CCS (CCA) Rule 11	Jawaharlal Nehru University dismissed an associate professor, a sitting Lok Sabha MP, after its Internal Committee found sexual harassment, invoking Rule 11(ix) of the Central Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules (The Indian Express p. 1; The Hindu p. 3). Rule 11 lists penalties, and (ix), dismissal, is the severest, usually disqualifying a person from future government employment. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 requires every employer with ten or more employees to set up an Internal Committee.
Forest Rights Act — regional review in Kolkata	The Ministry of Tribal Affairs held its second regional review conference on the Forest Rights Act, 2006 in Kolkata on 9 October for eight States, including West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, with districts that have many pending claims; the first was held in Bengaluru on 10 September (PIB). Under the Act, the gram sabha starts the process of determining individual and community forest rights, and claims are decided by sub-divisional and district-level committees.

Source note: All items are drawn from The Hindu, The Indian Express & The Economic Times (Delhi Editions) — 10 October 2026, supplemented where indicated by official releases and PRS Legislative Research. Facts, figures and quotes are reproduced as reported on that date; verify currency (ongoing legal proceedings, evolving numbers) before using in an answer.

11. Answer Writing, GS1, Map, Ethics & CSAT

The daily part the newspapers do not give you: one fully written model answer, one GS1 static topic, map practice, one GS4 theory term and CSAT practice.

11.1 Model answer of the day — Card 1.1 (15 marks, 250 words)

> ***"Reservation must rest on inadequacy of representation, not on proportion of population." Critically examine with reference to recent judgments on the 50% ceiling. (15 marks, 250 words)***

Introduction — Article 16(4) permits reservation for a backward class "not adequately represented" in State services; it says nothing of population share. In Indra Sawhney (1992) a nine-judge Bench capped reservation at 50% "save in extraordinary situations". On October 9 two courts applied this test.

1. **Courts now demand proof of inadequacy —** The Madhya Pradesh High Court struck down the 2019 Act raising the OBC quota from 14% to 27%, which took the total with EWS to 73%. OBCs already held 28.16% of government posts and 33.87% of higher-education seats; the State showed no extraordinary situation. The Supreme Court dismissed Andhra Pradesh's appeal for a 34% BC quota in local bodies because a family survey did not assess political backwardness.
2. **Adequacy keeps reservation a remedy, not a share —** Proportional quotas start a race between castes. Vacant OBC posts, the High Court noted, show a failure to recruit, not a need for more reservation.
3. **Yet the population argument has force —** OBCs are about half of Madhya Pradesh's people. Without current caste-wise data, adequacy is hard to prove either way.
4. **The ceiling is a rule of evidence —** The States lost not because their numbers were high but because their data were weak. Protecting appointments made up to September 2022 shows courts balance fairness to serving employees.

Conclusion — The statement is broadly sound: Article 16(4) speaks of adequacy, and proportion would turn a remedy into an entitlement. Way forward: a standing backward classes commission with periodic caste-wise data on posts and seats, and quotas revised on evidence, not on election timing.

Draw this: *Beside the first body point, a flowchart: data → dedicated commission → quota size → judicial review, with a box marking "above 50% only on extraordinary proof".*

(254 words)

11.2 GS1 corner — Geography: Floodplains, natural levees and embankments in the Ganga plains

Today's peg: *5.1*

1. **A floodplain is built by the river's own floods —** When a river overflows its banks it spreads over the flat land beside it and drops silt there. Over centuries this deposition builds the floodplain, which is why it is fertile and why the river reclaims it in high flow.
2. **Natural levees form where the overflowing water first slows —** Coarser sediment settles next to the channel, building low ridges called natural levees. Artificial embankments copy them, but by confining water to the channel they raise flood levels downstream.
3. **Meanders and oxbow lakes mark the active floodplain —** Plains rivers wind in meanders; when a loop is cut off, an oxbow lake remains. These features show land the river still occupies in high flow.

Prelims facts

- Alluvial floodplains are formed mainly by deposition during floods.
- Natural levees are ridges of sediment deposited along a river's banks during floods.
- An oxbow lake forms when a meander loop is cut off from the main channel.

11.3 Places in news — mark them on your atlas

Place	Where it is	Why in news	Prelims fact
Lucknow	Central Uttar Pradesh, in the Ganga plains, on both banks of the Gomti.	Gomti floods hit about 25,000 people, the worst riverfront inundation since 1982 (5.1).	The Gomti is a tributary of the Ganga.
Vijayapura	Northern Karnataka near the Maharashtra border, between the Krishna and Bhima rivers.	FIR over forged death certificates of eight living voters in Form 7 objections (1.3).	The Gol Gumbaz, tomb of Muhammad Adil Shah, stands here; it was the Adil Shahi capital (Bijapur).
Durban	KwaZulu-Natal province, on South Africa's Indian Ocean coast.	Birthplace of Navi Pillay, born into an Indian Tamil family, the 2026 Nobel Peace laureate (4.1).	Gandhi founded the Phoenix Settlement near Durban in 1904.
The Hague	Western Netherlands, on the North Sea coast.	Seat of the International Criminal Court, now under US sanctions (4.1).	The International Court of Justice also sits here, in the Peace Palace.

11.4 Ethics term of the day (GS4 Section A): Proportionality in the use of power

Meaning — A public authority should use no more force or restriction than the harm it faces requires. Among measures that would work, the least intrusive one should be chosen, with reasons recorded.

In today's news — Case 1 and 1.2: shutting 45 Metro stations and cancelling 245 trains for one protest burdened lakhs of commuters; the Supreme Court asked for regulation, frisking and CCTV instead of a ban.

Use in an answer — Case studies on public order, enforcement or penalties: state it in the options analysis to justify the least restrictive choice.

11.5 CSAT practice (Paper II)

The passage below is original, written on the theme of one of today's editorials. Choose your answers first; the key is at the end.

> We usually think of mental health as something that happens inside one person's head, to be fixed by that person or by a doctor. This view is partly right. Serious mental illness needs qualified care, and no amount of friendship can replace treatment. But the view leaves out how much of our well-being is made between people.
>
> Humans evolved in small groups where being cut off could mean death. It is not surprising, then, that loneliness is felt as a kind of threat. A person who has no one to talk to after a bad day carries the day alone, and small worries grow large. A person with a friend, a neighbour or a group that expects them each week has somewhere to set the weight down.
>
> Modern life has thinned many of these ties. People move cities for work, families are smaller, and much conversation now passes through screens. Convenience has grown, but so has the number of people who can go days without a real exchange with anyone.
>
> This suggests that care for the mind cannot be left only to clinics. Schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods shape how connected people feel, and so they shape mental wellness for everyone, not only for those who fall ill. Those who have lived through mental distress also know things that experts may not: what helped, what hurt, and what made them feel heard. Building services with them, rather than only for them, makes help easier to accept.
>
> Treatment and connection are therefore not rivals. The first heals illness; the second makes illness less likely and recovery more lasting. A society that invests only in the first will always be running behind.

Q1. Which one of the following best expresses the central idea of the passage?

(a) Friendship can replace medical treatment for mental illness.

(b) Mental well-being depends substantially on social connection, so care must extend beyond clinics.

(c) Modern technology is the main cause of mental illness.

(d) Only experts can design good mental health services.

Q2. The suggestion to build services with people who have lived through mental distress assumes that

(a) experts have no useful knowledge.

(b) such people have insights into what helps that can improve services.

(c) mental distress is always caused by loneliness.

(d) clinics should be closed.

Q3. Which one of the following can be inferred from the passage?

(a) A society that invests in social connection may reduce the burden on treatment services.

(b) Loneliness is not a modern problem.

(c) Screens have made all conversation meaningless.

(d) Families today are larger than before.

Reasoning and quantitative aptitude

Q4. A bank's required CRR balance is ₹800 crore. The daily minimum it must hold rises from 90% to 99% of the requirement. By how much does its minimum daily balance rise?

(a) ₹8 crore

(b) ₹72 crore

(c) ₹80 crore

(d) ₹90 crore

Q5. Statements: All embankments are structures. Some structures are on floodplains. Conclusions: I. Some embankments are on floodplains. II. Some structures are embankments. Which conclusion(s) follow?

(a) Only I

(b) Only II

(c) Both I and II

(d) Neither I nor II

Answer key and explanations

Q1: (b) The passage argues that well-being is made between people and that treatment and connection work together; option 0 is contradicted in the first paragraph.

Q2: (b) The author says they know what helped and what made them feel heard; option 0 overstates, since experts are not dismissed.

Q3: (a) Connection makes illness less likely, so demand for treatment can fall; option 2 overstates the point about screens.

Q4: (b) 90% of 800 = 720; 99% of 800 = 792. Rise = 792 − 720 = ₹72 crore (or 9% of 800).

Q5: (b) II follows by conversion of 'All embankments are structures'. I does not follow: the structures on floodplains need not include any embankment.

12. Essays of the Day

Two essays, on prompts phrased the way the Essay paper actually sets them, written the way a top-ranked candidate writes under time. Read them for structure and for the sweep of examples — not to memorise.

ESSAY 1 · Essay · Section A · 7 min read

Regulate, do not prohibit: the art of governing free people.

Themes: A ban is easy to announce and costly to live with — its burden falls on the innocent · What people need does not disappear when it is banned; it goes underground · Some acts must be prohibited outright — the test is harm to others and the absence of a lesser remedy

On the morning of a protest in New Delhi, a nursing student who lives far from her hospital found her Metro station shut. She was not protesting anything. She simply had no other way to reach her shift. Closures covered 57 stations, later 45, and 245 trains were cancelled, all to manage a single gathering at Jantar Mantar. On 9 October the Supreme Court called the order "overreaching" and drew a line that every administrator should learn by heart: the line between regulating an activity and prohibiting it. Proportionality, the Chief Justice said, "does not mean that you will use a hammer to kill a fly." This essay argues that in a free society regulation should be the rule and prohibition the rare exception. A ban is often a confession that the State could not do the harder work of judgement. But the essay also accepts that some acts deserve nothing less than a ban, and that the real art lies in telling the two apart.

Governments like bans for understandable reasons. A ban is quick to announce, needs no judgement on the spot, and protects the officer: no one blames him for what happens at a closed station. Regulation is harder. It asks the police to frisk, to watch the cameras, to cap numbers and to keep the trains running, and it makes them answerable if something goes wrong. Yet the cost of a ban rarely falls on the person it targets. The protester walks; the student, the daily-wage worker and the elderly patient are stranded. John Stuart Mill put the principle plainly in On Liberty in 1859: power may rightfully be used against a member of a civilised community, against his will, only "to prevent harm to others". The Constitution follows the same logic. Article 19 guarantees the freedom to assemble and then permits only "reasonable restrictions", not abolition. In Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (2018) the Supreme Court held that protests can be regulated instead of banned.

History shows what happens when a society bans what people need or want. The United States outlawed alcohol in 1920. Drinking did not stop; it moved into illegal bars, and the profits built organised crime. The country repealed the ban in 1933. India knows the same story through its own literature. Premchand's "Namak ka Daroga" opens with a sentence that could stand as a law of governance: when the new salt department was formed and the use of a God-given thing was forbidden, people began to trade in it secretly. The ban created the smuggler, and the smuggler created the bribe that the honest inspector Vanshidhar refuses. When Gandhi walked to Dandi in 1930 and picked up a handful of salt, he turned a prohibition on a necessity into the clearest proof that the Raj had lost its moral authority. A law that forbids what ordinary people need does not end the need. It only decides who will profit from it.

Today's news offers better models. For years an OTP was, in practice, the only way to approve a card payment. Fraudsters learnt to phish that one six-digit code. The RBI's new authentication directions, in force since April, keep two-factor security but no longer prescribe the tool. In the words of a former consumer affairs secretary, the RBI "chose to regulate the outcome, instead of prescribing the tool", and made card issuers answerable when security fails. In June, over 611 million UPI payments were approved by fingerprint or face. Faced with bulk objections to voters "on unsubstantiated grounds", the Election Commission did not stop objections altogether. It capped each person at ten forms in a claims period and required a hearing of both sides. Even in Manipur, where the State is rightly destroying opium poppy, the Forest Department has planted bamboo on 255 hectares of cleared land and is working with village chiefs. Bamboo, it says, can help restore the environment while creating livelihood opportunities. A ban that offers no other way to earn a living only waits for the poppy to return.

The counter-argument deserves full weight. Some things must not be regulated; they must be ended. The Bengal Sati Regulation of 1829 did not license widow-burning under conditions; it forbade it. The Constitution does not regulate untouchability; Article 17 abolishes it. Article 23 prohibits trafficking and forced labour, and Article 24 bars children from hazardous work. To regulate these would be to admit that they can be acceptable in some dose. Prohibition can also work in science. The Montreal Protocol of 1987 phased out the chemicals that were thinning the ozone layer, and the layer is now on the path to recovery. There is a second warning too. Regulation can harden into its own kind of prohibition. Before 1991, India's licence-permit raj rarely banned an industry outright, yet its permissions, quotas and delays strangled enterprise just as surely. A rule that needs a hundred approvals is a ban in slow motion.

These objections do not defeat the argument; they sharpen it into a test. First, prohibit only what destroys the freedom or dignity of others — Mill's harm, not mere discomfort or offence. Sati, bonded labour and a poppy trade described as one of the triggers of Manipur's ethnic conflict all pass that test. A protest, a payment method and a voter's objection do not. Second, even when the aim is legitimate, use the least restrictive tool that works, and write down why a lesser one would fail. Frisking and CCTV come before closing stations. A cap and a hearing come before abolishing objections. Third, when a ban is truly needed, offer a substitute for the demand it suppresses. The Montreal Protocol succeeded because industry had alternatives to the banned chemicals; the poppy ban will last only if bamboo pays. Fourth, keep regulation light, clear and accountable to outcomes, so that it does not become a licence raj in new clothes.

The Gomti flood in Lucknow, the worst riverfront inundation since 1982, shows the same choice in another form. In 1945 the geographer Gilbert White wrote that floods are "acts of God", but flood losses are largely acts of man, caused by building on the flood plains of rivers. The answer is neither to abandon riverside cities nor to let anyone build anywhere. It is to regulate land use carefully: which areas stay open, which can be built on and how. Here too the wise State neither prohibits nor permits blindly. It governs.

Think again of the nursing student on the platform. She does not want a State that lets crowds do as they please; she wants her train to be safe. Nor does she want a State that keeps her safe by keeping her at home. Free people accept rules they can live with and learn to evade rules they cannot. The art of governing them is to forbid little and to regulate well. It means giving reasons for every restriction and reserving the hammer for the rare evil that no lighter tool can stop. A State that bans whatever is hard to manage soon finds itself ruling over smugglers and the stranded. A State that regulates with care governs citizens who trust it.

Built from today's cards: