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

Your one-stop solution for UPSC CSE examination resources.

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Hum jeet ka maja chakh kar rahenge.

Quote of the Day

"Nothing, Lucilius, is ours, except time. We were entrusted by nature with the ownership of this single thing, so fleeting and slippery that anyone who will can oust us from possession."

— Seneca, Letters to Lucilius (Epistulae Morales), Letter 1, tr. R.M. Gummere (1917)

The Hindu (Mumbai), The Indian Express (Mumbai) & The Economic Times (Mumbai) — 11 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 · 11 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.

> *"We became aware of the existence of a right to have rights (and that means to live in a framework where one is judged by one's actions and opinions) and a right to belong to some kind of organized community, only when millions of people emerged who had lost and could not regain these rights because of the new global political situation."*

— Hannah Arendt · *The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951; 2nd enlarged ed. 1958), Chapter 9, "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man"*

Use in: Today's Gauhati High Court case of Jahanara Begum and Mumtaz Begum, who were pushed into Bangladesh on the night of June 13–14 while their remanded Foreigners Tribunal cases were being re-heard, and the earlier Bench's holding that Article 21 protects "not only citizens of India but also aliens". Use it in GS2 answers on Article 21, statelessness and the procedure for detecting foreigners, and in essays on rights and citizenship: a person who loses a recognised status loses the framework in which any other right can be claimed. Balance it: India's power to identify and expel foreigners is real and upheld by courts; the point is that removal must follow a final, recorded order, so that no one becomes rightless by administrative haste.

> *"It is time that Parliament have a rethink on whether disqualification petitions ought to be entrusted to a Speaker as a quasi-judicial authority when such Speaker continues to belong to a particular political party either de jure or de facto."*

— Supreme Court of India (R.F. Nariman, Aniruddha Bose and V. Ramasubramanian JJ.) · *Keisham Meghachandra Singh v Hon'ble Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly (21 January 2020), para 30*

Use in: Today's news that the Lok Sabha Speaker has given 20 rebel TMC MPs until October 20 to reply to the petition for their disqualification, after their third request for more time, though the Supreme Court observed on September 25 that the Speaker should decide expeditiously. The same judgment held that, absent exceptional circumstances, three months from filing is the "outer limit" for deciding such petitions, and suggested a permanent tribunal headed by a retired Supreme Court judge or High Court Chief Justice. Use it in GS2 answers on the Tenth Schedule, the Speaker's office and reform of anti-defection law. Balance it: Kihoto Hollohan (1992) upheld the Speaker as the deciding authority, subject to judicial review, and a Speaker must also give members a fair hearing; the remedy debated is a time limit and an independent forum, not an end to due process.

> *"They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work."*

— Silvia Federici · *"Wages Against Housework" (New York, 1974; published by the Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press, 1975)*

Use in: Today's review of Prabha Kotiswaran's book "Wages for Housework", which traces the demand from the 1972 Padua campaign (of which Federici was a founder) back to the All India Women's Conference's 1939 report, and asks whether unconditional cash transfers to women in 12 States fulfil it; per a PIB release of 25 February 2025, women aged 15–59 spent 305 minutes a day on unpaid domestic work in 2024. Use it in GS1 answers on women's work and in GS2 answers on welfare schemes and the classing of ASHA and Anganwadi workers as volunteers. Balance it: many families see care as love and duty, and a cash payment may confirm housework as women's job; the stronger case is to count the work (Time Use Survey), pay those whom the State employs, and cut the hours through water, cooking gas and crèches.

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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	**Gauhati High Court: Assam women deported before tribunal re-hearing ended** ***Why it matters:*** *GS2 fundamental rights: Article 21 for non-citizens, De Raedt for Prelims; due process in deportation is a ready Mains theme.*
2.1	**RBI sets 20% Foreign Exchange Risk Reserve and oil dollar window** ***Why it matters:*** *GS3 external sector: FEMA, convertibility and NDFs for Prelims; managing a falling rupee without fixing its price for Mains.*
5.1	**Khasi chiefs and villagers oppose the Kulsi dam** ***Why it matters:*** *GS3 environment and GS2 federalism: Sixth Schedule, EIA and the Gangetic dolphin for Prelims; tribal consent for Mains.*
7.1	**Scientists build the first working thorium-229 nuclear clocks** ***Why it matters:*** *GS3 science: atomic versus nuclear clocks, the SI second and NavIC for Prelims; timing as strategic capability.*
8.1	**Telangana's child marriage falls to 17.9% in NFHS-6** ***Why it matters:*** *GS1 and GS2 women and children: PCMA 2006 and NFHS for Prelims; moving from prevention to deterrence for Mains.*

> *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

Both of today's polity stories are about the gap between a decision and the time it takes. In Assam, the State acted so fast that two women were pushed into Bangladesh before a tribunal had lawfully finished with them. In the Lok Sabha, a Speaker has let a defection petition run through three rounds of extensions. Speed without process and process without speed are failures of the same rule of law.

1.1 Gauhati High Court: two Assam women deported to Bangladesh before their tribunal re-hearing ended

ISSUE THREAD **Foreigners, entry and the 2025 Act** (update 2) **LENS** Liberty and order · Independence and accountability

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *The Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 replaced the Foreigners Act, 1946. Louis De Raedt (1991) confined foreigners' fundamental rights to Article 21; on September 30 the Delhi High Court held a visa confers no right to enter.*

THE NEWS Guwahati. On October 7 a Gauhati High Court Bench warned Assam that unless it shows when the Nagaon Foreigners Tribunal (FT) readied its opinion on Jahanara Begum, 47, and Mumtaz Begum, 43, it will presume the opinion "was not made ready within the appropriate time", The Indian Express reports. In April the High Court had set aside the FT's earlier opinions declaring them foreigners and remanded the cases. Police took them away at the re-hearing on May 29 and 30; a District Commissioner's order under the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950 gave them 24 hours to leave, and the BSF pushed them into Bangladesh on the night of June 13–14. On September 3 another Bench called those orders "farcical", awarded ₹2 lakh to each family and held that Article 21 protects "not only citizens of India but also aliens".

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

FT opinions (2019) → High Court remands (April 2026) → detention at re-hearing → BSF pushback (June 13–14) → court demands the FT's timestamp

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **Article 21 belongs to every person; Article 19 only to citizens —** Articles 14 and 21 protect any "person"; Article 19's freedoms are for citizens alone. Louis De Raedt v Union of India (1991) confined a foreigner's fundamental right to Article 21, while NHRC v State of Arunachal Pradesh (1996) bound the State to protect Chakma refugees, citizen or not. 2. **Foreigners Tribunals now work under the 2025 Act —** Per PRS, the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 repealed the Foreigners Act, 1946; the Foreigners Tribunals order under it reportedly replaces the 1964 order. The burden of proving citizenship lies on the person, a rule upheld in Sarbananda Sonowal v Union of India (2005), which struck down the IMDT Act, 1983.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Due process for non-citizens is a live GS2 theme —** GS2 covers "significant provisions" of the Constitution; detention and pushbacks test them.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Articles 14, 20 and 21 extend to all persons; Articles 15, 16 and 19 are confined to citizens. • Louis De Raedt v Union of India (1991): a foreigner's fundamental right is confined to Article 21. • NHRC v State of Arunachal Pradesh (1996) concerned Chakma refugees displaced by the Kaptai hydel project. • The Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 repealed the Foreigners Act, 1946 and three other immigration laws.
ANALYSIS	1. **A remand is hollow if the person can be removed before it ends —** The remand reopened the inquiry; removal within hours made the fresh trial a formality. Hence the court's focus on the timestamp: if no opinion existed when police acted, the detention

	had no legal basis. 2. **Lens — Liberty and order: expulsion is lawful only at the end of procedure —** De Raedt accepts a wide power to expel; Article 21 forbids only removal by an unfair procedure. A thoughtful officer would see a 24-hour order served on detained women as a paper trail, not a procedure, and would wait for a final, communicated order. 3. **Split agencies let each disown the outcome —** The FT, Border Police, District Commissioner and BSF each did one step, and the BSF told the court it had "no role" in deciding nationality. When nobody owns the chain, nobody checks it, and compensation cannot undo a pushback into a country that has not accepted the women.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Article 21 protects not only citizens but also aliens." Examine how far this principle constrains the State's power to detect and deport foreigners in Assam. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Probe the principle, its limits and practice; give a view. 2. **Introduction — the Nagaon women were removed before their remanded hearing ended —** One line on the September and October orders. 3. **Body — foreigners get Article 21, not Article 19 —** Value addition: De Raedt (1991), NHRC v Arunachal Pradesh (1996). 4. **Body — the power to expel is wide but fragmented agencies skip fair procedure —** Sonowal (2005) on burden of proof. Diagram: FT → Border Police → holding centre → DC order → BSF, missing check at each arrow. 5. **Conclusion — no removal before a final, recorded order —** Time-stamped opinions, notice to counsel, judicial oversight.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As District Commissioner, police ask you for an expulsion order against a person just declared a foreigner. What do you check?** ***Approach:*** I would see the signed FT opinion with its date and time, and whether any High Court remand or stay is pending. The person and counsel must get a copy and time to appeal. Every step goes on record, because a baseless order may wrong a citizen.

1.2 Speaker gives 20 rebel TMC MPs till October 20 to answer disqualification petition

ISSUE THREAD **Defections and the Tenth Schedule** (update 3) **LENS** Independence and accountability · Rule of law and discretion

> *STORY SO FAR* *The Telangana High Court disqualified BRS MLA Danam Nagender after the Speaker declined to act, and the Supreme Court upheld it. ADR counts 111 sitting legislators who switched parties since 2022, reviving the question of who should decide defection cases.*

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Lok Sabha Speaker's office has given 20 rebel Trinamool Congress (TMC) MPs until October 20 to reply to TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee's petition seeking their disqualification under Rule 6 of the Members of Lok Sabha (Disqualification on Ground of Defection) Rules, 1985, The Economic Times reports. The Speaker had set October 8 on September 25; on October 8 the MPs sought time till October 22, their third request for an extension. The rebels left the Mamata Banerjee-led party and merged with "the NCPI", seeking recognition as a separate entity. The Speaker gave them separate seats before the Monsoon Session but has not recognised them as a parliamentary party. On September 25 the Supreme Court, hearing Banerjee, observed that the Speaker should decide expeditiously. The question is whether the rebels' "merger" fits the Tenth Schedule's only surviving exception.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

TMC splits → 20 MPs merge with the NCPI → Banerjee petitions the Speaker → Supreme Court asks for expeditious disposal (September 25) → third extension, now to October 20

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The Tenth Schedule disqualifies for leaving or defying the party —** Added by the 52nd Amendment (1985), Paragraph 2 disqualifies a member who voluntarily gives up party membership or votes against its direction. Paragraph 3, which protected a one-third split, was omitted by the 91st Amendment (2003). Paragraph 4 saves a merger only if not less than two-thirds of the legislature party agree to it. 2. **The Speaker decides, subject to judicial review —** Paragraph 6 makes the Speaker or Chairman the deciding authority, and Paragraph 8 lets them frame rules such as the 1985 Lok Sabha Rules. Kihoto Hollohan (1992) upheld the Schedule but struck down Paragraph 7's bar on courts, so the Speaker acts as a tribunal open to review.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Delay is now the main defection problem —** GS2 lists "Parliament and State legislatures — structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges"; courts keep returning to timelines, which makes the Speaker's role exam-worthy.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Paragraph 3 of the Tenth Schedule (one-third split) was omitted by the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003. • Paragraph 4: a merger is valid only if at least two-thirds of the legislature party agree. • Keisham Meghachandra Singh (2020): the Speaker should decide disqualification petitions within three months, barring exceptional circumstances. • Subhash Desai (2023): the political party, not the legislature party, appoints the whip.
ANALYSIS	1. **Lens — Independence and accountability: the clock is the Speaker's real power —** A Speaker need not rule wrongly to help one side; ruling late is enough, because a defector keeps the seat while the petition waits. Meghachandra set three months and the 2025 Telangana ruling repeated it, calling Desai's "reasonable period" amorphous. A thoughtful officer would say extensions are fair once, but a third one strains the Supreme Court's September request for speed. 2. **Merger must be tested against the party, not just a count —** The rebels must show at least two-thirds of TMC's Lok Sabha members agreed. Desai held the political party, not the legislators alone, controls the whip, which weakens a claim built on legislative numbers. Separate seating is a floor arrangement, not recognition. 3. **Rules cannot outrun the Schedule's politics —** The 1985 Rules let the Speaker seek replies, so each extension is lawful on paper. But the Schedule's aim is to make the cost of defection immediate. Until a statute fixes a deadline, the outcome depends on the Speaker's judgement of fairness.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Evaluate whether courts fixing timelines for the Speaker can cure delay in deciding defection petitions under the Tenth Schedule. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Evaluate —** Judge how well timelines work; reach a verdict. 2. **Introduction — 20 TMC MPs have won three extensions —** One line; Speaker as tribunal under Paragraph 6. 3. **Body — timelines help but lack teeth —** Value addition: Meghachandra (2020), three months; Telangana (2025). Diagram: petition → notice → extensions → decision, delay marked. 4. **Body — the arbiter, not the deadline, is the deeper flaw —** Meghachandra suggested

	a tribunal headed by a retired judge. 5. **Conclusion — a statutory deadline plus an independent tribunal —** Courts can nudge; Parliament must legislate.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. An interview board asks: should the Speaker remain the authority on defection?** ***Approach:*** The Speaker knows the House, and Kihoto kept courts as a check. But Speakers come from parties, and delay serves whichever side the Speaker belongs to. I would keep the Speaker as deciding authority only with a binding three-month limit, failing which the petition moves to an independent tribunal, as Meghachandra suggested.

2. Economy

Today's three stories are about who carries the cost of a shock that starts abroad. A war-driven oil bill is pressing the rupee, and the RBI is making speculators and large importers pay more to bet against it. The AI boom is raising the price of grid hardware, and every electricity consumer may pay for it through transmission charges. Europe's carbon tax is raising the cost of Indian steel, and India hopes Washington's pressure will win the relief it could not.

2.1 RBI sets a 20% Foreign Exchange Risk Reserve on big forex contracts and opens a dollar window for oil marketing companies

ISSUE THREAD **Forex reserves and the rupee** (update 2) **LENS** Market and State · Strategic autonomy and partnership

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Since the Iran war, the RBI has spent reserves defending the rupee; they peaked at $785.71 billion on September 4 and have since fallen as it unwinds its forward book.*

THE NEWS Mumbai, October 10. With the rupee at 96.73 to the dollar on October 9, near its record low, the RBI said in press releases that banks must keep a Foreign Exchange Risk Reserve (FERR), in cash with the RBI, equal to 20% of the rupee value of any rupee–forex derivative above $2 million that hedges a current-account payment in which the user buys foreign currency. It is a reserve on banks, not automatically a fee on customers, The Indian Express notes. The limit for contracts taken without proving an underlying exposure falls from $100 million to $5 million, on all markets; a cancelled contract cannot be rebooked, though rollover at maturity is allowed. From October 12 the RBI will also sell dollars through designated banks to meet the entire daily needs of IOCL, HPCL and BPCL, about $300 million a day by The Hindu's estimate.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

The Iran war lifts Brent to $104.4 → oil bills and $26.3 billion of FII outflows raise dollar demand → forward buying and bets feed the rupee's fall → the October 7 repo hike fails → the RBI taxes big hedges and takes oil demand off the market

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **FEMA, 1999 makes the RBI the regulator of the forex market —** FEMA replaced FERA, 1973 and made forex violations civil offences. Banks deal as RBI-licensed "authorised dealers", directed through A.P. (DIR Series) circulars; these rules came as Circulars No. 25 and 26. 2. **The rupee is market-determined, but the RBI manages volatility —** The Liberalised Exchange Rate Management System of 1992 began a dual rate, unified into a market-determined rate in March 1993. The rupee is convertible on the current account since August 1994 but only partly on the capital account. The RBI aims to curb volatility, not defend a level.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **GS3: "Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment" —** Exchange-rate management and capital controls recur in both papers.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• FEMA, 1999 replaced FERA, 1973; contraventions under FEMA are civil, not criminal, offences. • India moved to a unified, market-determined exchange rate in March 1993. • The rupee has been convertible on the current account since August 1994, when India accepted Article VIII of the IMF's Articles of Agreement. • A non-deliverable forward (NDF) is settled by paying only the difference in a convertible currency, usually offshore.
ANALYSIS	1. **Hedging and speculation use the same contract, so the RBI regulates size and repetition, not intent —** An importer who fixes today the rate for a payment due in three months is hedging, insuring against loss; someone who buys dollars forward with nothing to pay is betting on a weaker rupee. Banks cannot read intent, so the RBI

	demands proof above $5 million and bans cancel-and-rebook switching. Genuine importers pay too: bankers told ET hedging becomes "almost impossible". 2. **Lens — Market and State: herd speculation is a market failure, but the cure blunts the price signal —** When everyone expects the rupee to fall, buying dollars early becomes self-fulfilling. Some bankers warn the curbs could distort the rupee's market-determined value. A thoughtful official would treat them as a circuit breaker with a sunset date, since a price held away from fundamentals invites fresh bets. 3. **The oil window moves India's biggest dollar bill from the market to the reserves —** Removing the largest regular buyer from the spot market eases pressure at once, as in 2013. But reserves fell $12.95 billion to $734.60 billion in the week to October 2, and the window has no end date.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	The RBI's Foreign Exchange Risk Reserve aims to separate hedging from speculation. Critically examine whether such curbs are compatible with a market-determined exchange rate. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Critically examine —** Weigh both sides, then judge. 2. **Introduction — a rupee at 96.73 and a 20% reserve on big hedges —** Name the three measures. 3. **Body — one-way bets are a market failure a regulator may correct —** Value addition: $26.3 billion of net FII outflows this year. 4. **Body — the curbs tax genuine importers, and the oil window drains reserves —** Flowchart: oil price → dollar demand → forward buying → weaker rupee. 5. **Conclusion — compatible only as a temporary circuit breaker —** Sunset the curbs; fix the current account.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As an RBI Executive Director, how do you answer importers who say the FERR makes hedging unaffordable?** ***Approach:*** I would check whether banks pass the full cost on, since the reserve is not a customer fee. I would publish a review date and, if small importers are hit hardest, consider raising the $2 million threshold.

2.2 AI data centres push up power-grid costs: the North-East grid's control upgrade jumps from ₹521 crore to ₹688 crore

ISSUE THREAD **Data centres and the grid** (new thread) **LENS** Innovation and safeguards · Development and environment

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *India is courting AI data centres, which draw large, round-the-clock power that can swing sharply with usage. Grid planners are only now estimating how much power they will need.*

THE NEWS New Delhi. In July the North Eastern Regional Power Committee (NERPC) met grid operators and Power Grid Corporation of India (PGCIL) as maintenance contracts for the region's grid-control systems neared expiry, The Hindu reports. PGCIL said the cost of upgrading SCADA/EMS, the systems with which State Load Despatch Centres watch and steer the grid in real time, had risen from ₹521 crore to about ₹688 crore, because AI-driven demand was making the hardware dearer. At an Eastern Regional Power Committee meeting last December, Odisha flagged the "ramping impact" of data centres' bulk power purchases. A Grid-India committee is studying data-centre demand. Official projections differ: a written reply in Parliament in July, as reported, put data-centre demand at 26.3 GW by 2031-32, while a Central Electricity Authority (CEA) estimate reported on October 1 gives about 17 GW.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

AI models need large server farms → demand for chips and control hardware rises → grid-control upgrades cost more, ₹521 crore to ₹688 crore in the North-East → data centres draw sudden bulk power that slow generators cannot follow → costs reach consumers through transmission charges

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The Electricity Act, 2003 builds a layered system of grid control —** Section 2(55) defines a Regional Power Committee as a body set up by the Central Government to facilitate integrated grid operation in a region. Under Section 28 the Regional Load Despatch Centre is the apex body for integrated operation in its region; the National Load Despatch Centre sits above and State centres below. 2. **CERC sets the rules and Grid-India runs the despatch centres —** The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission regulates inter-State transmission and framed the Deviation Settlement Mechanism, which charges users for straying from schedule. Grid Controller of India Ltd (Grid-India), formerly POSOCO, operates the national and regional centres. The CEA prepares the National Electricity Plan.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **GS3: "Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc." —** Energy questions are moving from capacity to grid stability and who pays.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Under Section 28 of the Electricity Act, 2003, the Regional Load Despatch Centre is the apex body for integrated operation of the power system in its region. • SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) lets load despatch centres monitor and control the grid in real time. • The Deviation Settlement Mechanism, framed by CERC, charges grid users for drawing or injecting power beyond schedule. • The Central Electricity Authority prepares the National Electricity Plan under the Electricity Act, 2003.
ANALYSIS	1. **The cost of AI's power is being spread over all consumers —** Alok Kumar of the All-India Discoms Association says upgrade costs will be recovered through transmission charges, which every consumer pays. That suits a shared grid, but when a few large users drive the cost, a cost-follows-cause rule, such as connection charges for heavy users, deserves weight. 2. **Lens — Innovation and safeguards: welcome data centres, but connect them like power plants —** Data centres bring investment, but CEA committee minutes note their load can ramp with global time zones. The Northern committee has discussed checking grid-connection compliance before supply. A sensible officer would make ramp limits and on-site storage a condition of connection, as for wind and solar. 3. **Concentration, not the national total, is the real stress —** Kumar says one to two gigawatts a year "will not make a huge difference" nationally, but it clusters in Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Delhi-NCR. With projections from 17 to 26.3 GW, planners risk building lines in the wrong places, and fossil power may fill any gap.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	AI data centres are a new kind of electricity load. Examine the challenges they pose to the operation and financing of India's power grid. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Set out the challenges with evidence. 2. **Introduction — a control upgrade up from ₹521 crore to ₹688 crore —** Tie it to AI demand. 3. **Body — sudden ramps strain slow generators —** Draw: load swing → frequency deviation → despatch centre response.

	4. **Body — costs reach all consumers through transmission charges —** Value addition: 17 GW versus 26.3 GW by 2031-32. 5. **Conclusion — grid-code conditions and cost-reflective charges —** Plan lines around data-centre clusters.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As head of a State transmission utility, three large data centres seek connection near the capital within two years. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** I would ask each for its load profile and ramp rate and make grid-code compliance, including storage or ramp limits, a connection condition. I would seek a dedicated connection charge from the regulator so ordinary consumers do not carry the whole cost.

2.3 US trade office targets the EU's carbon border tax as India writes a "forward-MFN" clause into its EU deal

ISSUE THREAD **India–EU FTA and CBAM** (update 5) **LENS** National interest and global commons · Strategic autonomy and partnership

> *STORY SO FAR* *India won a 2.8 million tonne EU steel quota, but CBAM still applies. The FTA is due to be signed on December 16, and India has joined Russia's WTO challenge to CBAM as a third party.*

THE NEWS New Delhi, October 10. The US Trade Representative (USTR) published a notice on October 8 seeking comments on how the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), and plans to widen it, affect US trade, including "whether enforcement action may be appropriate"; comments are due by November 9 (reported). The Indian Express calls it a probe; the notice is a request for comments citing no statute. CBAM makes EU importers of aluminium, cement, electricity, fertiliser, hydrogen and iron and steel declare the emissions embedded in those goods and pay the carbon price EU producers pay. USTR objects that EU default emission values carry a "punitive mark-up". A senior Indian official told IE that India secured a "forward-MFN" (most-favoured-nation) clause on CBAM in the India–EU deal: any concession the EU later gives the US must reach India too. GTRI estimates CBAM works as a 20–35% tax on select Indian metal exports.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

The EU prices carbon at home → it charges imports the same at the border → CBAM's definitive phase hits Indian steel from 2026 → India wins no exemption, only forward-MFN → US pressure may win relief that passes to India

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **WTO law: MFN is the rule, Article XX the escape hatch —** Article I of GATT requires a member to give all members the best treatment it gives any one. Article XX permits measures to protect life or health (XX(b)) or conserve exhaustible natural resources (XX(g)), if they are not arbitrary discrimination or a disguised restriction on trade. CBAM's legality turns on this test. 2. **The climate treaties favour differentiated duties and frown on unilateral trade measures —** The UNFCCC, 1992 rests on common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (Article 3.1). Article 3.5 says climate measures, including unilateral ones, should not be a disguised restriction on international trade. CBAM's reporting-only phase ran from 2023 to 2025.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **GS2: "Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests" —** CBAM joins trade, climate and diplomacy, which UPSC favours.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The EU's CBAM covers cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen; its definitive phase applies from 1 January 2026. • Article I of GATT contains the most-favoured-nation obligation; Article XX lists general exceptions. • Article 3.5 of the UNFCCC says climate measures should not be a disguised

	restriction on international trade. • Steelmaking emissions are highest on the blast furnace–basic oxygen furnace route and lowest on the scrap-based electric arc furnace route.
ANALYSIS	1. **Forward-MFN lets the US negotiate for India, but only on US-shaped concessions —** The likely US gains, a higher de minimis threshold and small-firm flexibilities promised in an EU–US statement last August, suit American SMEs. India's exposure is large steel and aluminium mills, so matching them may help only at the margin. 2. **Lens — Strategic autonomy and partnership: India gains from the US–EU quarrel without joining it —** India argues at the WTO that CBAM ignores differentiated responsibilities, yet signed an FTA with the EU and gains if Washington forces relief, at no cost. A careful negotiator would keep the CBDR argument alive while treating CBAM as permanent, since US pressure may fade in a deal. 3. **The lasting answer is cleaner steel, not better clauses —** Indian mills mostly use the carbon-heavy blast furnace route, and an ICRIER report of May 2025 says scrap is only 20% of India's steel feedstock. CBAM lets a carbon price paid at home be deducted, so a credible Indian carbon market would keep that money in India.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Climate measures must not become disguised restrictions on trade." In this light, examine India's options in responding to the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Probe each option and its limits. 2. **Introduction — CBAM charges carbon at the EU border from 2026 —** GTRI: a 20–35% tax on select Indian metals. 3. **Body — legally and diplomatically, CBDR and forward-MFN give leverage —** Value addition: UNFCCC Article 3.5; US relief suits SMEs, not steel. 4. **Body — domestically, cleaner steel and a home carbon price cut the bill —** Diagram: emissions across BF-BOF, gas-DRI and scrap-EAF. 5. **Conclusion — contest CBAM's design while decarbonising as if it will stay —** Use the EU's green-transition support well.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Steel Secretary, exporters want to wait for US pressure to soften CBAM. What do you advise?** ***Approach:*** Not to wait, since relief may never come or may not suit Indian mills. I would help firms report verified plant-level emissions, as EU default values carry a mark-up, and push scrap supply and a domestic carbon price the EU can credit.

3. Agriculture & Food

A crop can lose its world lead without a single policy mistake, simply because its climate and its gene pool changed faster than its farmers could. Sikkim's black cardamom shows how a warming Himalaya, decades of cloning and thin irrigation turn a high-value spice into a livelihood risk. Its revival is a test of whether hill agriculture can be rebuilt on science rather than subsidies.

3.1 Sikkim's black cardamom loses ground as Nepal grows 68% of the world's crop

ISSUE THREAD **Hill cash crops and climate** (new thread) **LENS** Development and environment · Growth and equity

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Large (black) cardamom, grown under forest shade in the Eastern Himalayas, has long been Sikkim's main cash crop. India once supplied nearly 85% of the world's output.*

THE NEWS Sikkim. India has lost its lead in large cardamom to Nepal, The Economic Times reports. Citing the Spices Board and Nepal's Trade and Export Promotion Centre, it says Nepal now grows nearly 68% of world output, India 22% and Bhutan 8–10%. Nepal's crop rose from 2,500–3,500 tonnes in 2003-04 to 8,000–10,000 tonnes in 2024-25; Sikkim's fell from 5,600 tonnes to 2,500 tonnes in 2010 and has only recovered to 5,591 tonnes. India's exports, over ₹1,200 crore a year at their peak, are now about 1,200 tonnes worth ₹150–180 crore, as more output meets domestic demand. Plants that should live 25–30 years dry up in five or six. About 21% of Sikkim's rural households grow the crop. The State's "Mero Alaichi, Mero Dhan" (My Cardamom, My Wealth) mission aims to extend plant life to 12–15 years.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

A mid-2000s drought weakens plantations → harmless fungi turn aggressive, with leaf blight, chirkey and foorkey viruses and rhizome rot → plants cloned from one genetic stock cannot resist → yields fall while Nepal expands with better planting material → India drops to second place

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The Spices Board develops cardamom and promotes spice exports —** The Spices Board is a statutory body under the Spices Board Act, 1986, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, headquartered in Kochi. It promotes exports of scheduled spices and is responsible for developing both small (green) and large cardamom. 2. **A Geographical Indication protects a product tied to its place —** The Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 lets producers register a name whose quality or reputation comes from a region, and bars others from using it. Sikkim Large Cardamom received a GI certificate in March 2015, per published GI listings.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **GS3: "Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems" —** Climate stress on hill crops links GS1 geography and GS3 agriculture.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Large cardamom (Amomum subulatum) is a shade-grown crop of the Eastern Himalayas; small cardamom (Elettaria cardamomum) grows mainly in the Western Ghats. • The Spices Board is a statutory body under the Spices Board Act, 1986, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. • Geographical Indications in India are registered under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999. • Sikkim was declared India's first fully organic State in 2016.
ANALYSIS	1. **Cloning traded resilience for convenience, so the cure must be genetic —** Dividing the rhizomes of existing bushes is quick and copies the parent exactly, so after decades whole plantations share one genetic make-up and a disease that beats one plant beats them all. Hence the mission's seed-based propagation and crossbreeding, though new

	plants take four years to bear and many farmers still lack resistant seed. 2. **Lens — Development and environment: the cardamom crisis is a forest-and-climate signal, not only a farm problem —** Warmer winters, erratic rain, shrinking shade and declining soil health have weakened a crop that lives under the forest canopy, and more than half the farms rely only on rain. Replacing cardamom would remove the reason to keep shade trees on steep slopes. A thoughtful officer would fund irrigation, shade-tree regeneration and disease surveillance together. 3. **High prices hide lost income for the farmers who need it most —** Prices rose to ₹2,300 a kg from about ₹400 in the mid-2000s, but only farmers whose plants survive gain. For nearly 80% of growing households farming is the main income, and cardamom can bring up to 70% of earnings, so a dead plantation means years without income.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Why has Sikkim lost its global lead in large cardamom to Nepal? Discuss with reference to climate stress and crop management. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Discuss —** Explain the causes from several sides. 2. **Introduction — from nearly 85% of world supply to 22% —** Nepal now grows nearly 68%. 3. **Body — climate stress turned harmless fungi into epidemics —** Flowchart: drought → weak plants → disease → early death → replanting. 4. **Body — cloning narrowed the gene pool and rain-fed farms had no buffer —** Value addition: plants dying in 5–6 years instead of 25–30. 5. **Conclusion — rebuild genetics, shade and water together —** Back the mission with seed supply and GI-backed marketing.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Collector in North Sikkim's cardamom belt, farmers say disease-resistant seedlings have not reached them. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** I would map plantations by disease level and give the worst-hit, poorest households first claim on seedlings. I would set up village nurseries so supply does not depend on one lab, and tie replanting to shade-tree and water-harvesting work so new plants do not fail like the old.

4. International Relations

Both stories show interest beating grievance. Canada, squeezed by US tariffs, is courting India with two ministers and its largest trade mission in three decades. Washington, squeezed by diesel prices before an election, has let in the Russian fuel its own new law was meant to choke. India should read both as proof that sanctions and quarrels are negotiable, and bargain accordingly.

4.1 Canada sends a 300-member trade mission as India and Canada revive CEPA talks

ISSUE THREAD **India–Canada reset** (new thread) **LENS** Strategic autonomy and partnership · National interest and global commons

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Ties collapsed after Canada's Prime Minister alleged in September 2023 that Indian agents were linked to a separatist's killing, which India rejected. Both expelled diplomats in October 2024 and restored high commissioners in 2025.*

THE NEWS New Delhi. Canada is sending two Indian-origin ministers to India next week, The Indian Express reported on October 10. Foreign Minister Anita Anand will meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, and Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu will meet Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal. Per the Government of Canada, Mr. Sidhu leads the Team Canada Trade Mission in Mumbai and Bengaluru from October 12 to 17; a Canadian statement quoted by IE counts nearly 300 delegates, "the largest trade delegation Canada has sent to India in over 30 years". The aim is a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) — a treaty covering goods, services and investment — by year-end; the fifth round was held in Ottawa this month, per AIR. Canada wants to double two-way trade to $70 billion by 2030. Delhi is reportedly weighing PM Mark Carney as Republic Day 2027 chief guest.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

A separatist's killing in Canada (June 2023) and Ottawa's allegation → trade talks paused, diplomats expelled (October 2024) → high commissioners restored (2025) → Modi and Carney set a year-end CEPA target (March 2026) → ministers and a trade mission arrive

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **A CEPA goes deeper than a goods-only FTA —** A Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement usually covers goods, services, investment and rules such as on intellectual property; a basic free trade agreement mainly cuts tariffs on goods. India has CEPAs with South Korea (2010), Japan (2011) and the UAE (2022). 2. **Expelling diplomats follows the Vienna Convention —** Under Article 9 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961, a host State may declare any diplomat persona non grata without giving reasons, and the sending State must recall that person. Since Article 31 shields diplomats from the host's criminal courts, expulsion is the usual tool in rows like that of 2024.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Repairing a broken tie is a GS2 staple —** The syllabus lists "bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests" and the "Indian diaspora"; this reset touches both.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Article 9 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961 lets a host State declare a diplomat persona non grata without giving reasons. • India has Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements with South Korea (2010), Japan (2011) and the UAE (2022). • Canada is a member of the G7 and the Commonwealth; it hosted the G7 summit at Kananaskis in 2025.
ANALYSIS	1. **The $70-billion goal is really a services and investment bet —** Goods trade was only US$8.66 billion in 2024-25, per AIR. Tariff cuts on goods alone cannot reach $70 billion; the gap must come from services, the movement of students and professionals, and Canadian pension-fund money in Indian infrastructure. The CEPA's services and investment chapters matter most.

	2. **Lens — Strategic autonomy and partnership: trade is being used to fence off the security dispute, not to settle it —** Canada wants to double exports beyond the US, and India too faces US tariffs, so both gain from a hedge. But the 2023 allegation is parked, not resolved, and one incident can reopen it. India's sensible line is to compartmentalise: sign the pact on its merits while insisting on a standing security dialogue on violent extremism. 3. **The diaspora is both bridge and fault line —** Two Indian-origin ministers show the diaspora can carry the relationship, though a small separatist fringe within it triggered the rupture. That works only if the host treats violence as a law-and-order issue and India does not suspect the whole community.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Trade first, trust later." Examine this approach to resetting India–Canada relations after the 2023–24 diplomatic rupture. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Probe how far trade can carry the reset. 2. **Introduction — Canada's largest trade mission in 30 years follows a deep rupture —** Two ministers; a CEPA by year-end. 3. **Body — trade suits both because both are hedging against US tariffs —** Value addition: goods trade US$8.66 billion vs a $70 billion goal. 4. **Body — the security grievance is parked, and the diaspora can anchor or derail ties —** Draw a timeline: 2023 allegation → 2024 expulsions → 2025 restoration → 2026 CEPA. 5. **Conclusion — compartmentalise, with a security dialogue alongside —** Trade makes the next quarrel costlier.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Joint Secretary on the Canada desk, how would you keep a fresh extremist incident from derailing the CEPA?** ***Approach:*** Set up a quiet channel between security agencies so incidents are handled as law-and-order matters, not public accusations. Insulate negotiators from daily politics and brief the minister on what suspending talks would cost. Share evidence privately and keep public statements to what the facts support.

4.2 Washington eases curbs on Russian diesel weeks after a law threatening buyers of Russian oil

ISSUE THREAD **US sanctions law and Russian oil** (update 7) **LENS** Strategic autonomy and partnership · Market and State

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Trump signed the Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, allowing tariffs of up to 100% on top buyers of Russian energy, India among them. Jaishankar raised it with Rubio, and a US determination on India looms.*

THE NEWS Washington. President Donald Trump said on October 9 that, after a call with Vladimir Putin, Russia would "immediately" supply over 3,00,000 tonnes of diesel, 5,00,000 tonnes in November and one million tonnes "immediately thereafter". The Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued General License 135 authorising the sale and import of Russian-origin diesel; a general licence is a blanket exemption from sanctions, and per the OFAC text this one runs until April 7, 2027. US diesel prices are near record highs before the November 3 congressional elections. The move contrasts with the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026, signed on September 18, which lets Washington impose tariffs of up to 100% on top importers of Russian oil or gas. Zelenskyy called it "a weak decision by strong partners".

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

War in Ukraine (2022) → price cap and US sanctions on Russian oil firms (October 2025) → Graham Act threatens tariffs on top buyers (September 2026) → US diesel nears record before the midterms → OFAC licence lets Russian diesel in

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **OFAC and its licences decide who may trade with a sanctioned country —** The Office of Foreign Assets Control, part of the US Department of the Treasury, administers US economic sanctions. A general licence permits a whole class of otherwise banned transactions for everyone, while a specific licence is granted to a named applicant. Secondary sanctions, which punish third-country firms for dealing with the target, are how US law reaches India. 2. **The price cap and CAATSA are the earlier tools —** The G7, the EU and Australia capped the price of Russian seaborne crude at $60 a barrel from December 2022: Western shipping and insurance may serve cargoes sold below the cap. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), 2017 threatened sanctions on buyers of major Russian defence equipment, which India faced over the S-400.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Unilateral sanctions recur in GS2 —** The syllabus asks about the "effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests". US sanctions on Iran, Venezuela and Russia have each reshaped India's oil basket.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is part of the US Department of the Treasury. • A general licence authorises a class of otherwise prohibited transactions for all persons; a specific licence covers a named applicant. • The G7 price cap on Russian seaborne crude took effect in December 2022 at $60 a barrel.
ANALYSIS	1. **Sanctions bend first where they hurt the sanctioning country —** Washington eased curbs on the product its own voters were paying record prices for, weeks after a law aimed at others' purchases. The Act also gives the President a national-interest waiver, so enforcement is discretionary. For India this means the 100% tariff threat is a bargaining tool, not an automatic trigger. 2. **Lens — Strategic autonomy and partnership: India's case gets stronger, but it should not overplay it —** Russia is now India's biggest source of crude, The Hindu notes. India can argue, by inference from this episode, that energy security is a national interest the US itself recognises. But the tariff clause stands and a trade deal is pending, so the wise course is to diversify suppliers quietly and avoid point-scoring. 3. **More Russian diesel in the Atlantic may squeeze Indian refiners —** Indian refiners turn discounted Russian crude into diesel for export. If Russian diesel now sells directly in Western markets, that margin could narrow, so the gain from cheap crude is not guaranteed.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	US easing of curbs on Russian diesel shows that sanctions bend to domestic prices. Comment, with reference to India's energy diplomacy. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Comment —** Give a reasoned opinion on the claim. 2. **Introduction — General License 135 weeks after the Graham Act —** Record diesel prices before the November 3 polls. 3. **Body — the waiver shows sanctions are discretionary and negotiable —** Value addition: the President's national-interest waiver. 4. **Body — India should hedge, not gloat —** Draw a flow: US pump prices → OFAC licence → weaker case for punishing India. 5. **Conclusion — diversify supply and negotiate the trade deal on facts —** Treat energy security as a stated national interest.

ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH

Q1. An interview board asks: if the US names India a 'top importer' under the new Act, what should the Petroleum Secretary do first?

Approach: First, assemble hard data on Indian purchases, price-cap compliance and diversification since 2022, so the government negotiates on facts. Second, map alternative suppliers if Russian volumes must fall. Third, coordinate with Commerce and External Affairs so oil is weighed within the wider trade deal, not conceded alone.

5. Environment & Ecology

Two governments agreeing is not the same as the people consenting. On the Kulsi, Assam and Meghalaya have finally found something to build together, in a border belt they have not yet settled, and the villagers of both States, with the Khasi chiefs, have answered with one voice: not here, not without us.

5.1 Border villagers and Khasi chiefs refuse consent to Assam–Meghalaya's joint Kulsi dam

DEEP READ — the day's big issue

RV SIR'S FILTER · Cat 3 — Developmental issue touching the common citizen: *Irrigation, power and the homes of up to 25 villages are at stake, and it tests whether two States can build in an unsettled border belt without tribal consent.*

ISSUE THREAD **Dams in the North-East** (new thread) **LENS** Development and environment · Centre and States

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Assam and Meghalaya settled six of twelve disputed border stretches in March 2022. The Kulsi dam, a National Project since 2008, was jointly revived in June 2025.*

THE NEWS Guwahati. More than 2,000 Bodo, Garo, Khasi and Rabha villagers of both States rallied at Ukiam on Thursday, October 8, against a 55-MW hydropower-cum-irrigation project on the Kulsi that the two State governments announced jointly in June 2025, The Hindu reports. The dam is proposed where the Dron, Shree and Dilma rivers form the Kulsi, a Brahmaputra tributary and "a natural habitat of the endangered Gangetic dolphin", about 80 km southwest of Guwahati. Ukiam lies almost equidistant from Borduar and Langpih, two of six border sectors still unsettled. The Syiems (traditional Khasi chiefs) of Nongkhlaw, Nongmynsaw and Rambrai refused consent: "Projects involving land in Meghalaya require no-objection certificates from the traditional chiefs." Per Land Conflict Watch, the 62-metre dam would irrigate about 26,000 hectares at ₹1,454.95 crore and could displace up to 25 villages; the government says nothing is final.

FIRST, UNDERSTAND (BACKGROUND)	1. **Why Assam and Meghalaya share a quarrelsome border —** Meghalaya was carved out of Assam by a 1971 Act. The line then drawn left twelve stretches both States claim, called "areas of difference". A 2022 agreement settled six; the rest, including Langpih and Borduar near the dam site, are open, so even a reservoir's ownership is unclear. 2. **Who has a say over land in the Khasi Hills —** In most States the government alone decides land use. In Meghalaya's hills the Sixth Schedule gives elected district councils power over land and over the traditional chiefs, the Syiems, who say every land project needs their no-objection certificate. 3. **What a multipurpose dam gives and takes —** A storage dam holds monsoon water and releases it later: through turbines for power, into canals for irrigation, and slowly enough to soften floods. The same wall submerges land and blocks fish and river dolphins.
KEY TERMS	• Syiem — Traditional chief of a Khasi customary chiefdom (hima), whose succession district councils regulate. • No-objection certificate (NOC) — A written statement that an authority does not oppose a proposal; here, the chiefs' customary consent. • Category A project — Under the EIA Notification, 2006, a project appraised by the Union environment ministry that must hold a public hearing.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

1971 reorganisation leaves twelve disputed stretches → 2022 agreement settles six, not Langpih or Borduar → both States revive the Kulsi dam there (2025) → villagers fear losing land, wetlands and dolphins → Syiems refuse consent

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The Sixth Schedule gives district councils power over land and chiefs —** The Sixth

	Schedule (Articles 244(2) and 275(1)) governs tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. Under paragraph 3, district councils legislate on land other than reserved forest, non-reserved forests and the appointment or succession of chiefs. Under paragraph 12A, a Meghalaya State law prevails over a conflicting council law. 2. **Large hydro needs central appraisal; National Projects get central money —** Under the EIA Notification, 2006, hydro projects above 50 MW are Category A, appraised by the Centre; 25-50 MW projects are Category B, appraised by the State. Kulsi is one of sixteen National Projects declared in February 2008 (Central Water Commission); the Centre funds their irrigation works 90:10 in the North-Eastern States.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Can a project in a disputed, tribal border belt proceed on governments' agreement alone? —** GS2 lists "issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure"; GS3 lists "conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment". Expect three dimensions: boundary disputes, Sixth Schedule self-rule and consent, and the hydro-versus-ecology trade-off.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Meghalaya became a State under the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971, which also made Manipur and Tripura States. • The Gangetic river dolphin, India's National Aquatic Animal, is in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and is Endangered on the IUCN Red List. • Hydro plants of 25 MW or less are "small hydro" (MNRE); in March 2019 the Cabinet approved treating large hydro as renewable energy.
ANALYSIS	1. **Lens — Development and environment: 55 MW is small for India but not for Meghalaya, and the larger gain is water —** Per a Lok Sabha reply of 7 December 2023, India ran 42,105 MW of large hydro and the North-East only 2,027 MW, under 4% of its 55,930 MW potential; Meghalaya ran 322 MW. Kulsi would add about a sixth to that and irrigate some 26,000 hectares. The other view is the price: the Wildlife Institute of India names dams as a major threat to river dolphins because they split populations, and the Kulsi held about 20 dolphins in the 2022 survey (Land Conflict Watch). A study, not a slogan, must decide. 2. **A joint dam in an unsettled belt can either seal the border peace or reopen it —** A reservoir turns map lines into hard questions: whose villages drown and who pays compensation. The 2022 agreement settled only six of twelve areas, and Langpih and Borduar flank Ukiam, so each of these is really a boundary dispute in disguise. The strongest counter-view is that shared assets build trust: both Chief Ministers announced the dam together, and National Project funding of 90% gives both a reason to cooperate. That holds only if benefit-sharing and rehabilitation are agreed before construction begins. 3. **The Syiems' refusal is customary rather than a statutory veto, but overriding it is the costlier path —** Paragraph 12A lets Meghalaya's law prevail over council law, so on paper the State could press on. In practice consent keeps projects alive: after the Supreme Court on 18 April 2013 left the Niyamgiri decision to gram sabhas, all twelve rejected Vedanta's bauxite mine and the Centre refused clearance. The other view: a few villages should not block water management for many in Assam, where the Rashtriya Barh Ayog rates 39.58% of land flood-prone. That argues for negotiating consent, not skipping it.
BOTH SIDES	• + For: The two governments: conceived in 1997 (Land Conflict Watch), the project would irrigate 26,000 hectares and add to Meghalaya's 322 MW of hydro, with the Centre paying 90% of irrigation works. • + For: Federal and energy logic: a shared dam gives both States a stake in border

	peace, and stored water yields power on demand, unlike solar. ● – Against: Villagers and Syiems: up to 25 villages could be displaced from land whose ownership is itself disputed, and customary consent has been refused. ● – Against: Ecologists: damming a dolphin river splits the population and, per Land Conflict Watch, would affect at least 12 wetlands.
WAY FORWARD	1. **Settle Langpih and Borduar first —** The two States, with the Union Home Ministry, should settle these sectors before acquiring any land, so the reservoir does not become a new claim. 2. **Make consent and study conditions, not courtesies —** Article 32 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) asks States to obtain free, prior and informed consent before approving projects that develop water on indigenous lands. A dolphin and wetland survey should precede the project report.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Critically examine the challenges of building hydropower projects in tribal, disputed inter-State border areas of the North-East, with reference to the Kulsi dam. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Critically examine —** Weigh the case against the obstacles; judge the conditions for proceeding. 2. **Introduction — a multipurpose dam on a disputed, tribal border —** Sample: Assam and Meghalaya's joint 55-MW Kulsi dam has met refusal from villagers and three Khasi Syiems, showing how boundaries, tribal self-rule and ecology collide in the North-East. 3. **Body — the North-East has tapped under 4% of its hydro potential —** Value addition: 2,027 of 55,930 MW potential in operation (Lok Sabha reply, 2023); 26,000 hectares; 90% central funding. 4. **Body — an unsettled boundary makes a reservoir a territorial claim —** Six of twelve areas settled in 2022. Sketch a map: the Kulsi flowing from West Khasi Hills into Kamrup, Ukiam, and Langpih and Borduar on either side. 5. **Body — Sixth Schedule self-rule makes consent a practical precondition —** Paragraph 3, the Syiems' certificate and paragraph 12A; Niyamgiri (2013), where all twelve gram sabhas said no. 6. **Body — the cost falls on an Endangered dolphin and 12 wetlands —** The Wildlife Institute of India names dams as a key threat. 7. **Conclusion — settle, consult, study, then build —** Sample: Kulsi can model cooperative federalism only if the boundary is settled, the Syiems consent freely and a full study shows the dolphins can be protected.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Deputy Commissioner of West Khasi Hills, you must begin Kulsi dam surveys, but the Syiems refuse consent. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** My options: send survey teams under police protection, report that work cannot begin, or consult first. Force would turn a dispute about consent into a law-and-order problem on a sensitive border; doing nothing fails a lawful mandate. I would consult: meet the three Syiems, the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council and village heads with my Assam counterpart, explain the survey's limits, and report every objection in writing to the State government. The stakeholders are villagers of both States, the chiefs, two governments and the river's dolphins. The deciding value is legitimacy: development lasts only when it is both lawful and accepted.
KARMA YOGI TEST (THE	Anonymity — Choosing slow consultation with the Syiems, which wins no headline, over

THREE A'S)	a forced survey that would look decisive but cost legitimacy.

7. Science & Technology

The world runs on time signals it rarely notices: every GPS fix, bank transfer and grid frequency depends on clocks. This week two teams made a clock that ticks with an atom's nucleus rather than its electrons. For India the lesson is that precise time is strategic infrastructure, and the race to build it has just moved on.

6.1 Scientists build the first working thorium-229 nuclear clocks

ISSUE THREAD **Frontier science and India** (update 4) **LENS** Innovation and safeguards · National interest and global commons

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Darpan has tracked the 2026 science Nobels (optogenetics, IceCube, asymmetric synthesis) for what they teach Indian research about long, fundamental bets.*

THE NEWS Vienna / Beijing. Two papers in Nature, published online on October 7, report the world's first working nuclear clocks, per a Nature press release. A Vienna–Braunschweig team led by Thorsten Schumm ran its thorium-229 clock alongside a ytterbium atomic clock to hunt for ultralight dark matter, and found no signal. A Beijing team led by Shiqian Ding built a clock that is about six times more stable in the short term. Both embed thorium-229 in calcium fluoride crystals and drive it with an ultraviolet laser of about 148 nanometres; a feedback loop keeps checking the laser against the nuclei and corrects its drift. A clock 'ticks' by counting oscillations of light tuned exactly to a transition, a jump between two energy states. The prototypes are not yet as precise as the best atomic clocks; a ytterbium clock misses one second in 23 billion years, The Hindu notes.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Atomic clocks use electrons, which stray fields disturb → the shielded nucleus usually needs X-rays to excite → thorium-229's low-energy transition suits an ultraviolet laser → crystals and stable lasers make it usable → first clocks in 2026

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The second is still defined by caesium —** The SI second is the duration of 9,192,631,770 periods of the radiation from a transition between two hyperfine levels of the caesium-133 atom. Optical clocks such as ytterbium and strontium tick far faster and are more precise, so metrologists are preparing to redefine the second around them. 2. **India keeps its own time at NPL and in space —** CSIR–National Physical Laboratory, New Delhi, maintains Indian Standard Time, which is UTC + 5:30 and based on the 82.5° E meridian. NavIC, ISRO's regional navigation system, depends on atomic clocks aboard its satellites; NVS-01, launched in 2023, carried India's first indigenous rubidium atomic clock.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Frontier physics with everyday uses is a GS3 favourite —** The syllabus asks for "science and technology — developments and their applications and effects in everyday life"; clocks link quantum physics to GPS and finance.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The SI second is defined by 9,192,631,770 periods of a hyperfine transition of the caesium-133 atom. • A nuclear clock uses a transition of the atomic nucleus; an atomic clock uses a transition of the atom's electrons. • The thorium-229 nucleus has a transition low enough in energy to be excited by an ultraviolet laser, not X-rays or gamma rays. • Indian Standard Time (UTC + 5:30) is based on the 82.5° E meridian and is maintained by CSIR–NPL, New Delhi.
ANALYSIS	1. **Precise timing is infrastructure, not a laboratory curiosity —** Satellite navigation finds position by timing signals; light covers about 30 cm in a nanosecond, so a tiny clock error becomes a large position error. Telecom, power grids and stock exchanges also need synchronised time. A rugged crystal clock could one day keep ships or

	submarines on time when satellite signals are jammed. 2. **Lens — National interest and global commons: time is sovereign, but the science is shared —** The research is published openly, but building such clocks needs ultraviolet lasers, ultra-pure crystals and rare isotopes, capabilities China already shows. India relies on NavIC and NPL for independent time, so it should fund these enabling technologies and partner with European groups rather than wait to buy finished clocks. 3. **A null result is still a result —** In thorium-229 the strong nuclear force and the electromagnetic force nearly cancel, so the clock reacts sharply to any change in the constants of nature. Finding no dark-matter signal rules out a range of theories. Science advances by such exclusions, which funders seeking only 'discoveries' often miss.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	What are nuclear clocks? Explain why precise timekeeping is a strategic capability for India. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Explain —** Clarify the concept, then its importance. 2. **Introduction — the first thorium-229 clocks of October 2026 —** Two Nature papers. 3. **Body — a nuclear clock is shielded where an atomic clock is exposed —** Draw two boxes: electron shell (atomic clock) and nucleus (nuclear clock), each with its laser. 4. **Body — navigation, grids, telecom and finance all run on time —** Value addition: a ytterbium clock misses one second in 23 billion years. 5. **Body — India's time rests on NPL and NavIC, which need home-grown clocks —** Cite NVS-01. 6. **Conclusion — invest in lasers, crystals and partnerships now —** Treat time as strategic infrastructure.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, why fund nuclear-clock research when India lacks the lasers it needs?** ***Approach:*** Because the lasers and crystals are the real prize: they also serve quantum sensing, semiconductors and space. A small, sustained grant to a few groups, tied to European partnerships, builds skills for independent timekeeping. Waiting for commercial clocks would leave a strategic capability in foreign hands.

8. Society

Both stories are about work and childhood that the household takes from girls and women without counting it. A Telangana girl married at 15 leaves school to cook and care; a homemaker's day of the same labour stays outside GDP. Laws and cash transfers have reached both problems, but neither has yet changed what a family thinks a daughter is for.

7.1 Telangana's child marriage falls to 17.9% in NFHS-6, but families still marry daughters early

ISSUE THREAD **Child marriage** (new thread) **LENS** Tradition and social justice · Growth and equity

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 sets 18 for women and 21 for men. In 2024 the Supreme Court issued guidelines for enforcing it, putting prevention before prosecution, while a Bill to raise women's age to 21 lapsed.*

THE NEWS Hyderabad. Telangana's Women Development and Child Welfare Department says it prevented 10,710 child marriages between 2014-15 and August 2026, including 1,245 in 2025-26, The Hindu reports; Vikarabad district recorded the most, 878. NFHS-5 (2019-21) found 23.5% of Telangana women aged 20-24 married before 18, second-highest in south India; NFHS-6 (2023-24) puts it at 17.9%, a fall of 5.6 percentage points against 3.2 nationally, where the figure is 20.1%. Of children found in such cases since 2025-26, 777 had already left school and 1,028 were re-enrolled. ASHA and Anganwadi workers detect many cases. The State has no formal survey of why child marriages occur. Ravi Kant of Just Rights for Children says laws and Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) mean little without prosecution.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Poverty and honour norms → girls leave school → marriage arranged at 14–15 → weddings stopped late → few prosecutions, so the norm survives

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The 2006 Act makes child marriage voidable, not void —** The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 defines a child as a man under 21 or a woman under 18. Section 3 lets the party who was a child annul the marriage by petition within two years of reaching majority, and Section 16 provides for Child Marriage Prohibition Officers. Its offences are cognisable and non-bailable. 2. **The Supreme Court's 2024 guidelines put prevention first —** In Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action v Union of India (18 October 2024), the Court's motto was to "prioritise prevention before protection and protection before penalizing", with guidelines on enforcement, training and monitoring. It left open whether the Act overrides personal laws, since the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, raising women's age to 21, was then pending.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Child marriage joins gender, health and education —** GS1 lists "Role of women and women's organization" and "social empowerment"; GS2 lists "mechanisms … for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections".
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, a child marriage is voidable at the option of the party who was a child. • Section 16 of the 2006 Act provides for Child Marriage Prohibition Officers appointed by State governments. • Independent Thought v Union of India (2017) held sex with a wife aged 15-18 is rape, reading down the marital exception. • SDG target 5.3 seeks to eliminate child, early and forced marriage.
ANALYSIS	1. **Prevented weddings measure surveillance, not change —** More stopped marriages may simply mean better detection of families who still try. The NFHS fall is the real outcome, and it shows Telangana improving faster than India. But a wedding stopped

	at the last minute leaves the poverty and dropout that caused it, so the same girl stays at risk. 2. **Lens — Tradition and social justice: the norm yields to prosecution and schooling, not slogans —** Families defend early marriage as protection of a daughter's honour, and the poorest see one less mouth to feed. A rights-based State cannot accept that, but blanket arrests of parents also push weddings underground. A thoughtful officer would prosecute the adult groom and organisers, keep girls in school, and run awareness drives alongside. 3. **The health case spans two generations —** Doctors say menarche does not mean a body is ready for pregnancy, and adolescent pregnancy is linked to preterm birth and foetal growth restriction. An anaemic teenage mother passes risk to her child, making child marriage a maternal-health problem, not only a legal one.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Despite legal prohibition, child marriage persists in India. Analyse its social causes and suggest how enforcement can move from prevention to deterrence. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Analyse —** Break into causes, then suggest. 2. **Introduction — Telangana fell from 23.5% to 17.9% between NFHS-5 and NFHS-6 —** Against 20.1% nationally. 3. **Body — poverty, dropout, honour and caste sustain the practice —** 777 dropouts among identified children. Diagram: poverty → dropout → marriage → early pregnancy → low-weight baby. 4. **Body — prevention without prosecution signals no cost —** Value addition: SEVA v Union of India (2024) and its prevention-first motto; CMPOs under Section 16. 5. **Conclusion — keep girls in school and prosecute adults —** Data on causes, re-enrolment and fast-tracked cases.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As District Collector of Vikarabad, how would you cut child marriages?** ***Approach:*** I would map girls who drop out of school, using school and Anganwadi data, since dropout precedes marriage. Each prevented marriage would be followed by re-enrolment and a scheme linkage for the family. Where a marriage has happened, the adult groom and organisers would be prosecuted.

7.2 Wages for housework: a new book links AIWC's 1939 demand to today's cash transfers

ISSUE THREAD **Unpaid care work** (new thread) **LENS** Growth and equity · Short-term relief and long-term reform

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Unpaid domestic and care work is not counted in GDP. Several States now pay women monthly cash transfers without conditions, and a 2021 Tamil Nadu poll promise to pay homemakers revived the debate on wages for housework.*

THE NEWS New Delhi. Reviewing Prabha Kotiswaran's "Wages for Housework" (Oxford University Press) in The Indian Express, Shalina Susan Mathew notes that Goa began paying married women a monthly sum under Griha Aadhar nine years before Kamal Haasan's January 2021 promise, without calling it a wage. Kotiswaran traces the idea past the 1972 Padua campaign of Selma James, Silvia Federici and Mariarosa Dalla Costa to the All India Women's Conference (AIWC), whose 1939 report and 1946 Indian Women's Charter equated a homemaker's labour with a factory wage; Constituent Assembly member Renuka Ray called a housewife as much a working woman. The book asks whether unconditional transfers in 12 States fulfil that demand, reviews about 300 judgments compensating a homemaker's lost labour and notes ASHA, Anganwadi and midday-meal workers are classed as volunteers. Per a PIB release of 25 February 2025, women aged 15-59 spent 305 minutes a day on unpaid domestic work in 2024.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

AIWC equates housework with wages (1939) → Padua campaign (1972) → courts price homemakers' work in compensation cases → States launch unconditional cash transfers → the question of recognising care as work

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **Article 39(d) promises equal pay; care work is not yet 'work' —** Article 39(d), a Directive Principle, asks the State to secure equal pay for equal work for men and women. It assumes paid work: unpaid care sits outside GDP and labour law, which is why scheme workers called volunteers get no wage protection. 2. **The Time Use Survey measures what GDP misses —** The National Statistics Office's Time Use Survey records how people spend 24 hours. Per PIB, TUS 2024 found 81.5% of women and 27.1% of men aged six and above did unpaid domestic work, and women aged 15-59 spent 305 minutes a day on it, against 315 in 2019. SDG target 5.4 asks countries to recognise and value unpaid care.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Women's cash transfers are now a fiscal question —** GS1 lists "Role of women" and GS2 "welfare schemes for vulnerable sections"; transfers to women in many States link both.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Article 39(d) directs the State to secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women. • The Time Use Survey is conducted by the National Statistics Office under MoSPI; TUS 2024 followed the first in 2019. • SDG target 5.4 concerns recognising and valuing unpaid care and domestic work.
ANALYSIS	1. **Lens — Short-term relief and long-term reform: a transfer pays the woman but may not free her time —** A monthly sum gives a homemaker money of her own and some bargaining power at once. But, as the book concedes, it may also confirm that housework is her job. A thoughtful officer would pair transfers with what Kotiswaran's "Care Manifesto" asks for: water, cooking gas, crèches and time-use data, which cut the hours themselves. 2. **Courts already price the work the State does not —** When a homemaker dies or is injured, courts award her family compensation by assigning her notional income, and the book finds them widening what counts as her services and raising the amounts. The law thus already accepts that her work has a money value. Kotiswaran's question is why that value is recognised only after death or injury. 3. **Calling care workers volunteers keeps costs low —** ASHAs and Anganwadi workers run frontline health and nutrition, yet as volunteers receive honoraria, not wages. Recognising care at home sits oddly with not recognising it in the State's own schemes.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Should unpaid domestic work be remunerated by the State? Comment in the light of women's cash-transfer schemes in India. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Comment —** Give a reasoned opinion with both sides. 2. **Introduction — women spend 305 minutes a day on unpaid domestic work (TUS 2024) —** AIWC made the demand in 1939. 3. **Body — transfers recognise value and give women money —** Value addition: Goa's Griha Aadhar; homemaker compensation case law. 4. **Body — but cash alone may lock in the gendered division of labour —** Diagram: two bars, women's and men's unpaid hours, with infrastructure arrows shrinking the women's bar.

	5. **Conclusion — pay and reduce the work —** Transfers plus care infrastructure and fair wages for scheme workers.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Women and Child Development Secretary, how would you judge whether your State's cash transfer works?** ***Approach:*** Beyond money reaching accounts, I would track women's time use, girls' school attendance and women's paid employment against a baseline. If unpaid hours do not fall, I would put funds into water connections, gas refills and crèches. The measure is whether the woman's work is counted, not only paid.

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 — "I Realised My Mistake": The Child Protection Officer, a Repentant Mother and a 15-Year-Old Bride

SCENARIO The Hindu (11 October) reports from Telangana that a daily-wage mother married off her 15-year-old daughter to a 40-year-old man after her landlord persuaded her it was "a very good alliance", then brought the girl back within three days. The husband had sexually assaulted the girl. Police booked him, the mother, the landlord and the priest who performed the marriage. Imagine you are the District Child Protection Officer, who also acts as the Child Marriage Prohibition Officer. The girl wants to keep studying and to stay with her mother, who is the family's only earner. A child-rights activist insists that everyone be prosecuted "to the logical conclusion", so that the law deters others. The village headman tells you the matter is "settled" and that a court case will ruin the family.

Q1. Whose interests must come first, and how do you weigh deterrence against the welfare of this particular child?

Q2. What will you do about the mother, the husband, the landlord and the priest?

Q3. How will you respond to the headman, and to the activist?

MODEL APPROACH

1. **The child's best interest is the anchor —** A child marriage is not a private family matter that a headman can "settle". The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 makes it an offence, and the Supreme Court's 2024 guidelines in Society for Enlightenment and Voluntary Action v Union of India set the order: "prevention before protection and protection before penalizing". The girl's safety, schooling and wishes come first, and she must be heard.

2. **Separate the abuser from the pressured parent —** The husband faces the full criminal process: sexual intercourse with a wife under 18 is rape, as the Supreme Court held in Independent Thought (2017), and POCSO applies. The landlord who arranged the match and the priest who performed it must also be prosecuted, because they make the practice possible. The mother's case is different. She admitted the wrong and reversed it. Report her role honestly, but ask the Child Welfare Committee to let the girl stay at home under supervision rather than in an institution.

3. **Remove the cause, not only the wedding —** Re-enrol the girl in school and link the family to the welfare schemes and girls' education support it qualifies for. Ask the ASHA, the anganwadi worker and the school principal to watch for renewed pressure.

4. **Conclusion — firm with exploiters, fair to the family —** Deterrence comes from prosecuting those who profit from or enable child marriage; punishing a girl's only carer may leave her more exposed. Justice here is measured by whether she stays in school and stays a child.

Case 2 — The 24-Hour Order: The District Commissioner and a Deportation Before the Remedy Is Exhausted

SCENARIO The Indian Express (11 October) reports that two women from Nagaon, Assam, whose 2019 "foreigner" opinions the Gauhati High Court had set aside and sent back to the Foreigners Tribunal, were held by police on the day of their fresh hearing. They were moved to a holding centre. The District Commissioner gave each 24 hours to leave India under the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, and both were pushed into Bangladesh before their families could get a court order. The High Court called the expulsion orders "farcical", as the women were already in detention, and awarded ₹2 lakh compensation to each family. Imagine you are a District Commissioner. A similar file reaches you: the tribunal's fresh opinion has no certified copy yet, the family says it will go to the High Court, and the border police want your signature today.

Q1. Is signing the order a routine administrative step or a moral choice? Why?

Q2. What will you check before acting on the file?

Q3. How will you handle pressure to meet deportation targets?

MODEL APPROACH

1. **Due process protects every person, not only citizens —** Article 21 applies to foreigners too, as the Supreme Court held in Louis De Raedt (1991) and NHRC v State of Arunachal Pradesh (1996). A person removed before she can use a legal remedy has effectively been denied that remedy, and the harm cannot be undone once she is across the border.
2. **Verify before you sign —** Check that a final tribunal opinion exists, when it was made, and that the person has received a certified copy. Give her reasonable time to approach the High Court. An order to "leave within 24 hours" given to someone already in detention is a legal fiction. Do not sign an order you know cannot be complied with.
3. **Speed is not a value in itself —** Write a reasoned note to the government explaining the delay and asking for written instructions. Inform the family and the legal aid authority. Keep a dated record of every step, since in the Nagaon case the High Court had to ask when the opinion was actually prepared.
4. **Conclusion — the signature carries the duty —** Integrity in administration means owning one's own signature. A District Commissioner who follows a lawful procedure fully protects both the state's right to remove foreigners and its duty not to remove the wrong person.

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
UN Human Rights Office on Delhi detentions — India calls it "interference"	The UN Human Rights Office said it was concerned by "reports of mass detentions" of demonstrators, protest leaders, lawyers and journalists during the 10 October protests in Delhi. Its spokesperson said restrictions must meet "strict tests of necessity and proportionality". India's Permanent Mission in Geneva replied that the right to peaceful assembly is guaranteed by the Constitution, subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order. It called the concerns "misplaced" and "an unwarranted interference in internal affairs of India" (The Indian Express p. 9). Peaceful assembly is protected by Article 19(1)(b), and Article 19(3) allows reasonable restrictions on it.
flydubai cockpit attack — NIA registers a case	The National Investigation Agency (NIA) registered an FIR on 9 October into the 30 September attack on Captain Smit Machchhar, an Indian pilot of flydubai flight 1073 (Dubai–Tel Aviv). His Omani first officer allegedly stabbed him in an apparent attempt to hijack or crash the aircraft over Saudi airspace (The Hindu p. 9; The Indian Express p. 8; The Economic Times p. 4). The FIR invokes Section 3 of the Anti-Hijacking Act, 2016 and Section 16 read with Section 15(1)(a) of the UAPA, 1967; both laws are scheduled offences under the NIA Act, 2008. A 2019 amendment to the NIA Act lets the agency investigate scheduled offences committed outside India against Indian citizens or affecting India's interests.
Kamjong, Manipur — prohibitory orders under Section 163 BNSS	After attacks around Chassad, Kamjong district authorities barred the assembly of five or more people within 400 metres of the Chassad police station (The Indian Express p. 7; The Economic Times p. 4). The Army and Assam Rifles had earlier defused 27 IEDs along an 8-km stretch of the Myanmar border in Kamjong (The Hindu p. 1). The Economic Times printed the power as "Section 162 of the BNSS". Prohibitory orders in urgent cases fall under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which replaced Section 144 CrPC; such an order can run for up to two months unless the State extends it.
Kerala HC — no preliminary inquiry needed before a corruption FIR	A single bench of the Kerala High Court directed the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau to register an FIR under the Prevention of Corruption Act against former Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and others, based on an Enforcement Directorate report. It held that a preliminary probe, which the State had ordered, was "not mandatory" before an FIR. The State says it will not appeal (The Indian Express p. 7). In Lalita Kumari v Government of UP (2013), a Constitution Bench held that an FIR is mandatory when information discloses a cognisable offence. It allowed a limited preliminary inquiry in some categories, including corruption cases, but only to see whether a cognisable offence is disclosed.
Penicillin G — DGTR opens an anti-dumping probe on imports from China	The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has started an anti-dumping investigation into Penicillin G and its salts from China. It acted on a complaint by Lyfius Pharma, an Aurobindo Pharma subsidiary, which says imports are causing "material retardation" to the domestic industry (The Hindu p. 10). Lyfius revived Indian production of this beta-lactam antibiotic after about three decades under the PLI scheme; the drug is a key starting material and active pharmaceutical ingredient. The DGTR only recommends. The Finance Ministry imposes anti-dumping duty under Section 9A of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975, in line with the WTO Anti-Dumping Agreement.
National Biodiversity Authority — ABS money from seed companies	The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) disbursed ₹2.02 crore of Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) money, paid by seed companies including East West Seeds India, Syngenta India and Bayer, to 27 States and 3 UTs through State Biodiversity Boards and UT Biodiversity Councils. Madhya Pradesh received the largest share (PIB, 10 October). ABS means that companies using India's biological resources share the benefits with the communities that conserve them. The

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
	system rests on the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, amended in 2023. Internationally, ABS is governed by the Nagoya Protocol under the Convention on Biological Diversity.
PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana — one year old	The PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana of the Agriculture Ministry was launched on 11 October 2025 after Cabinet approval on 16 July 2025 (PIB backgrounder, 10 October). It is a six-year scheme from 2025-26 for 100 Aspirational Agricultural Districts, with at least one in each State or UT. Districts were chosen for low productivity, low cropping intensity and low credit disbursement. The scheme brings together 36 Central schemes of 11 ministries and departments with State schemes and private participation, to tackle low productivity and gaps in irrigation, credit and post-harvest facilities.
NGOPV 'Shreyas' — a Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel	Yard 3040, "Shreyas", a Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV) for the Indian Navy, was launched at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, on 10 October. Other NGOPVs are being built at Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL). The Defence Ministry says they are indigenously designed and built (PIB). Offshore patrol vessels guard the Exclusive Economic Zone and offshore assets and carry out anti-piracy and search-and-rescue tasks. GRSE and GSL are defence public sector shipyards.
Exercise Tarang Shakti 2026 — Jodhpur	The IAF-hosted multinational air exercise Tarang Shakti 2026 is its second edition (the first was in 2024). It runs from 26 September to 12 October at Air Force Station Jodhpur, with the air forces of Australia, Bangladesh, France, Germany, Sri Lanka, the UAE and the US, and 32 observer nations (PIB; The Hindu p. 9). Indigenous platforms such as the Tejas and the Prachand light combat helicopter took part. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said future military power will depend on the speed of sensing, decision-making and action.
Forest Rights Act — the national picture	At the Tribal Affairs Ministry's second regional review of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 in Kolkata, the national figures as of 31 August 2026 were over 54 lakh claims, about 25 lakh titles, over 18 lakh rejections and about 11 lakh claims pending (PIB). The conference stressed community forest resource (CFR) management plans prepared through gram sabhas, habitat-rights roadmaps for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and updating land records. Under the Act, the gram sabha starts the process of recognising individual and community rights.
205 lighthouses — from beacons to tourist landmarks	India has 205 lighthouses along its coastline of over 11,000 km, according to a PIB backgrounder of 10 October. Visitors rose from about 4 lakh in 2014 to 18.63 lakh in 2024-25, and the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL) has launched digital ticketing. Heritage lighthouses named include Mandvi and Dwarka (Gujarat), Tadri (Karnataka), Pamban and Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu) and Vizhinjam (Kerala). The Marine Aids to Navigation Act, 2021 replaced the Lighthouse Act, 1927 and provides for marking lighthouses as heritage lighthouses.
GI-AI4FS — a UN initiative on AI for food systems	The second meeting of the Global Initiative on AI for Agri-Food Systems (GI-AI4FS) was held at India Mobile Congress 2026 in New Delhi (PIB, Department of Telecommunications). The initiative is coordinated by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP). The meeting discussed its governance structure, the chairs and terms of reference of its working groups, and an AI hackathon.
OPT fee — fewer Indian applications to US universities	After the US Department of Homeland Security proposed a $70,000 fee for initial Optional Practical Training (OPT) work permits (carded 8 October), study-abroad platforms report falling demand from India. Career Mosaic reports about 40% fewer applications to the US than last year, and MSM Unify and upGrad report declines of about 20% and 19% (The Economic Times p. 5).
Sujan Singh Park — a 1945 housing estate in court	Sujan Singh Park, opposite Khan Market in New Delhi, was built in 1945 to house military officers during World War II and was designed by Walter Sykes George, who came to India as an assistant to Herbert Baker. It is named after the father of contractor Sobha Singh, Khushwant Singh's father. A heritage conservation expert calls it "a seminal pre-Independence mass housing project"; it has seven blocks of 12 townhouses each on 7.85 acres. The Centre began eviction proceedings, arguing the lease expired in 1960; the Delhi High Court stayed them in August (The

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
	Indian Express p. 15).
Human hair — India's raw hair goes to China via Myanmar	About 98% of India's raw human hair exports are officially sent to Myanmar, where the hair is processed before reaching Xuchang in China's Henan province, which makes nearly 60% of the world's finished hair products. India exported about $940 million of human hair in FY2026, mostly raw and semi-processed, but only $1.35 million of wigs and extensions (The Economic Times p. 6). Exporters want a ban on raw-hair exports so that processing, which mostly employs women, happens in India. One industry leader says the minimum export price of $65 a kg is too low.
Deputy Election Commissioner — Prakash Rajpurohit	Prakash Rajpurohit, a 2010-batch IAS officer of the Rajasthan cadre, has been appointed Deputy Election Commissioner for a tenure up to 8 April 2030, in place of Sanjay Kumar. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet also cleared 27 joint-secretary-level posts, including Vivek Khare as Joint Secretary, National Testing Agency (The Hindu p. 9; The Indian Express p. 9). Deputy Election Commissioners are senior officers in the Election Commission's secretariat. They are not Election Commissioners under Article 324, which provides for the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners.
Form 6 — Odisha's special enrolment drive	In a three-day special enrolment drive (7–9 October) held on the Election Commission's directions, 33,515 people in Odisha submitted Form 6 at 26,446 special camps (The Hindu p. 5). The drive was for voters left out of the Special Intensive Revision and for those who turned 18 on 1 October. Under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, Form 6 is used for inclusion in the roll, Form 7 for objecting to or deleting a name, and Form 8 for corrections and shifting. Since 2022, the law has had four qualifying dates a year: 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October.
Graduates' and teachers' constituencies — Maharashtra Legislative Council	Maharashtra will hold Legislative Council elections on 23 October for three graduates' constituencies (Pune, Nagpur and Marathwada) and two teachers' constituencies (Pune and Amravati) (The Indian Express p. 8). Under Article 171(3), about one-twelfth of a Council's members are elected by graduates of at least three years' standing in the State and one-twelfth by teachers of at least three years' standing in secondary schools and above. About one-third are elected by local authorities and one-third by MLAs, and the Governor nominates the rest.
UNGA Fourth Committee — India's Right of Reply to Pakistan	India used its Right of Reply against Pakistan in the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly, under the agenda item "Decolonization", calling Pakistan's remarks on the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir "lies and falsehoods" (The Hindu p. 9). The Fourth Committee, also called the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, is one of the General Assembly's six main committees. A Right of Reply lets a state answer remarks made about it during a debate.
IAEA IPPAS — first nuclear-security mission to Pakistan	A seven-member International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) team completed the first International Physical Protection Advisory Service (IPPAS) mission to Pakistan (28 September–9 October), hosted by the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority. It said Pakistan has a "robust nuclear security regime" for the physical protection of nuclear material and facilities (The Hindu p. 14). The team visited the KANUPP decommissioning project in Karachi; KANUPP, Pakistan's first nuclear power plant, was a Canadian CANDU reactor that ran from 1971 to 2021. IPPAS missions are held only when a country asks for one.

Source note: All items are drawn from The Hindu (Mumbai), The Indian Express (Mumbai) & The Economic Times (Mumbai) — 11 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)

> ***"Article 21 protects not only citizens but also aliens." Examine how far this principle constrains the State's power to detect and deport foreigners in Assam. (15 marks, 250 words)***

Introduction — Article 21 protects every "person", while Article 19's freedoms belong only to citizens. Louis De Raedt (1991) confined a foreigner's fundamental right to Article 21; NHRC v State of Arunachal Pradesh (1996) protected Chakma refugees. On September 3 the Gauhati High Court applied it to two deported Nagaon women.

1. **It does not remove the power to expel —** De Raedt accepts a wide power to expel, now governed by the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025. Article 21 gives no right to stay.
2. **It forbids removal by unfair procedure —** The High Court had remanded the women's cases in April. Police took them at the re-hearing, a District Commissioner gave them 24 hours to leave under the 1950 Act, and the BSF pushed them into Bangladesh on June 13–14. The court called the orders "farcical" and awarded ₹2 lakh to each family.
3. **Procedure must be complete and on record —** On October 7 the court demanded the tribunal's timestamp: if no opinion existed when police acted, the detention had no legal basis. A final opinion, communicated, with time to appeal, is the minimum.
4. **Yet the constraint works mostly after the event —** Compensation cannot undo a pushback into a country that has not accepted the person. With tribunal, police, District Commissioner and BSF each doing one step, nobody owns the outcome.

Conclusion — Article 21 governs how the State deports, not whether it may. Way forward: no removal until the appeal window closes, time-stamped digital tribunal records, one accountable officer for each case and a readmission procedure with Bangladesh. Detection can then be firm and still fair.

Draw this: *Beside the second and third body points, a flowchart: tribunal opinion → certified copy served → appeal window → final order → removal, with a red mark showing where the Nagaon case jumped from detention to pushback.*

(260 words)

11.2 GS1 corner — Art & Culture: Durga Puja in Kolkata and the clay-idol makers of Kumartuli

Today's peg: *TH pp17–18*

1. **Durga Puja in Kolkata is on UNESCO's Intangible Heritage list —** It was inscribed in 2021 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. UNESCO's listing notes workshops sculpting Durga and her family from unfired Ganga clay, and a festival where divides of class, religion and ethnicity collapse.
2. **Kumartuli is the potters' quarter that makes the idols —** In Kolkata's Kumartuli, by the Hooghly, artisans build idols on bamboo frames with straw and layers of clay, then paint them. The Hindu traces the quarter back nearly 300 years to potters who migrated from Krishnanagar in Nadia district.
3. **An old craft now meets tourism and new styles —** Some workshops keep the traditional shabeki style; others take contemporary commissions. The craft is still largely male.

Prelims facts

- "Durga Puja in Kolkata" was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2021.
- Intangible cultural heritage is listed under UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- Kumartuli is Kolkata's traditional potters' quarter on the Hooghly, a distributary of the Ganga.

11.3 Places in news — mark them on your atlas

Place	Where it is	Why in news	Prelims fact
Ukiam and the Kulsi river	On the Assam–Meghalaya border, about 80 km southwest of Guwahati, where the Dron, Shree and Dilma meet to form the Kulsi.	Over 2,000 villagers rallied against the proposed 55-MW Kulsi dam, near unsettled Langpih and Borduar (5.1).	The Kulsi is a south-bank tributary of the Brahmaputra and a habitat of the Gangetic river dolphin.
Nagaon	Central Assam, on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, east of Guwahati.	Two women from Nagaon were pushed into Bangladesh during their tribunal re-hearing (1.1).	Part of Kaziranga National Park lies in Nagaon district.
Vikarabad	Western Telangana, west of Hyderabad, on the Deccan plateau.	The district recorded the most prevented child marriages in Telangana, 878 (8.1).	The Musi river rises in the Ananthagiri Hills of Vikarabad district.
Sikkim	Eastern Himalayas, between Nepal to the west, Tibet (China) to the north and east, Bhutan to the east and West Bengal to the south.	Its large-cardamom crop has fallen behind Nepal's, which now grows about 68% of world output (3.1).	Khangchendzonga National Park in Sikkim is India's first 'mixed' World Heritage Site.

11.4 Ethics term of the day (GS4 Section A): Procedural fairness (natural justice)

Meaning — A decision that harms a person is fair only if she is heard, told the reasons, and given a real chance to challenge it before it takes effect. Speed or a correct final result does not cure an unfair process.

In today's news — Case 2 and 1.1: a 24-hour order to leave, served on women already in detention, and a pushback before their re-hearing ended; the High Court called the orders "farcical".

Use in an answer — Case studies on enforcement, eviction or deportation: use it in the options analysis to reject the fastest option and justify verify-then-act.

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.

A classic is often imagined as a finished object, a book sealed long ago and handed down unchanged. Yet most great stories have lasted because they were never sealed. They were sung, performed, translated and retold, and each teller shaped them for a new audience.

Consider how an epic travels. A grandmother tells it at bedtime and shortens the battles. A village troupe performs it and adds local jokes. A poet in another language retells it and lets a minor character speak. None of these versions replaces the others. Together they keep the story in use, and a story in use is a story alive.

This does not mean that every retelling is equally good, or that anything goes. A retelling that ignores the spirit of the original may be clever but empty. The best retellings come from people who know the old text deeply, often in its own language, and then take liberties with care. Freedom without knowledge produces noise; knowledge without freedom produces museums.

There is a danger, too, in guarding a classic so closely that no one may touch it. Protection meant as respect can turn into distance. Young readers then meet the text only as something to admire from afar, not as something that speaks to their own lives. Over time the story becomes famous but unread.

The health of a literary tradition may therefore be judged less by how strictly its texts are protected than by how many people still argue with them, adapt them and pass them on. Societies that invest in the study of old languages give future tellers the depth they need to retell well.

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

(a) Classics should be protected from every kind of change.
(b) Classics stay alive through informed retelling and use, not by being sealed off.
(c) All retellings of a classic are equally valuable.
(d) The study of old languages is no longer necessary.

Q2. The author's call to invest in the study of old languages assumes that

(a) good retelling needs a deep knowledge of the original text.
(b) old languages are easy to learn.
(c) only scholars should be allowed to retell classics.
(d) translations are always inaccurate.

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

(a) A text that is widely admired may still be little read.
(b) Village troupes distort the epics they perform.
(c) A good retelling replaces the original.
(d) Bedtime stories are the best form of retelling.

Reasoning and quantitative aptitude

Q4. A bank must keep a reserve equal to 20% of the rupee value of a forward contract. The contract is for $5 million at ₹96 per dollar. What is the reserve?

(a) ₹4.8 crore
(b) ₹9.6 crore
(c) ₹48 crore
(d) ₹96 crore

Q5. What is the smaller angle between the hour and minute hands of a clock at 4:20?

(a) 0°
(b) 10°
(c) 20°
(d) 5°

Answer key and explanations

Q1: (b) The passage argues that stories survive by being retold with knowledge and care; option 2 is contradicted in the third paragraph.

Q2: (a) The best retellings, the author says, come from those who know the old text deeply; option 2 overstates, since grandmothers and troupes are also valued tellers.

Q3: (a) The fourth paragraph says an over-guarded story becomes 'famous but unread'; option 2 contradicts 'none of these versions replaces the others'.

Q4: (b) Rupee value = 50,00,000 × 96 = ₹48 crore. 20% of ₹48 crore = ₹9.6 crore.

Q5: (b) Hour hand: 4 × 30 + 20 × 0.5 = 130°. Minute hand: 20 × 6 = 120°. Difference = 10°.

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 B · 7 min read

Time is the one wealth a clock cannot create.

Themes: Clocks can measure time ever more finely; no clock, law or market can add an hour to anyone's day · Because time cannot be made, the real question is who takes whose time — at home, in childhood and in the State's own delays · A good society cannot create time, but it can stop wasting other people's and give it back

This week two teams of physicists announced the first working nuclear clocks. They may one day surpass the best atomic clocks, one of which misses a single second in 23 billion years. In the same week a newspaper reminded us that women in India aged 15 to 59 spend about 305 minutes a day on unpaid work at home. In Telangana, girls are still married off at 14 or 15 and leave school to cook and care. Put the three stories side by side and a plain truth appears. Human beings have become astonishingly good at measuring time, and remain completely unable to make any more of it. Every person, rich or poor, gets the same twenty-four hours. This essay argues that because time cannot be created, the real moral question is who takes whose time. A good society cannot add an hour to anyone's day, but it can stop wasting other people's hours and give them back.

The Stoic philosopher Seneca saw this two thousand years ago. "Nothing, Lucilius, is ours, except time," he wrote to a friend. Nature had made us owners of this single thing, "so fleeting and slippery that anyone who will can oust us from possession." Physics adds a twist: in 2010 American scientists found that a clock raised just 33 centimetres runs slightly faster, as Einstein predicted. But the inequalities of time that matter to a citizen are made not by gravity but by families, markets and governments, which decide whose hours are spent so that others may be saved.

Begin with the home. Five hours a day of cooking, cleaning, fetching and caring add up to more than seventy days a year, and almost none of it is counted in GDP. The demand to recognise this labour is older than many think. In 1939 the All India Women's Conference equated a homemaker's work with a factory wage, and Renuka Ray, a member of the Constituent Assembly, called a housewife as much a working woman. In the 1970s the campaigner Silvia Federici put it bluntly: "They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work." Hans Rosling told a gentler story in a 2010 talk. The day his family's first washing machine arrived, his mother said: "We have loaded the laundry. The machine will make the work. And now we can go to the library." The machine did not create time. It returned time to a woman, who used it to read to her son and to learn English herself. A tap in the courtyard, a gas cylinder in the kitchen and a crèche near the field do the same for millions of Indian women today.

Childhood is the most precious time of all, because it can never be bought back. A girl married at fifteen loses the years in which a person learns who she might become. India has fought for those years with a series of laws. Rukhmabai, married at eleven, refused in the 1880s to go and live with her husband, and fought the case in court rather than give in. The debate around her case helped bring the Age of Consent Act of 1891, and she went on to qualify as a doctor in London in 1894. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 set the minimum age for girls at 14; it was raised to 18 in 1978. Each law bought girls a few more years. Telangana's figure for women aged 20–24 married before 18 has fallen from 23.5% to 17.9%, faster than the national fall, yet 20.1% of young Indian women were still married as children. Among the children identified in such cases in Telangana since 2025–26, 777 had already left school. A year in school is wealth that no later scheme can repay.

The State, too, spends citizens' time, mostly through delay. In Hussainara Khatoon in 1979, the Supreme Court found men and women held for three to ten years without their trial even beginning, for offences that would rarely have earned

more than a year or two, and held that a speedy trial is “an integral and essential part” of the right to life and liberty under Article 21. In 2020 it told Speakers that three months is the “outer limit” for deciding a defection petition, “absent exceptional circumstances”. This week twenty MPs facing such a petition received a third extension. Time can also be stolen through haste. Two women in Assam were removed to Bangladesh while their remanded cases were still being re-heard. The Gauhati High Court now asks when the tribunal’s opinion was actually ready: liberty may turn on a timestamp. Delay and haste are both decisions about someone else’s time.

There is a serious counter-argument. Surely humanity does create time. Life expectancy has risen across the world, and every machine from the tractor to the computer lets us do more in an hour. Some delay is also a virtue, not a theft. A Speaker must hear both sides; justice in a hurry can be its own injustice. The physicists behind the thorium clock spent years on a nucleus that seemed impossible to tame, and one of their first experiments found no trace of the dark matter it was looking for. And the working day itself was changed by struggle: the International Labour Organisation’s first convention, in 1919, limited industrial work to eight hours a day and forty-eight a week, while allowing British India sixty a week.

Yet each of these examples confirms the argument rather than defeating it. Longer lives and faster machines do not create time; they free it, and the freed time goes to whoever has the power to claim it. The washing machine gave Rosling’s mother her afternoons; in many homes a convenience only adds chores for the same woman. The ILO convention did not lengthen the day; it decided who owned its hours, and the double standard for British India showed how unequally that ownership was shared. Patient deliberation is valuable when the person waiting is the one who benefits. When the delay benefits the powerful and the waiting falls on the weak, it is not patience but the transfer of a cost. A simple test separates the two: whose time is being spent, and for whose gain?

From this test follows a programme. First, count time: the Time Use Survey shows what GDP hides, and policy should be judged by whether women’s unpaid hours fall. Second, return time: water, cooking gas, electricity, crèches and nearby schools are time-saving infrastructure that gives hours cash alone cannot. Third, protect childhood: keep girls in school and prosecute the adults who arrange child marriages, since a stopped wedding saves a day but schooling saves the years. Fourth, put a price on official delay: fixed timelines, recorded timestamps and consequences for those who sit on files that hold someone’s liberty or livelihood.

The thorium clock will one day measure a second more finely than any instrument in history, a real triumph of the human mind. But the measure of a society is different. It is how many hours it gives back to a girl in Vikarabad, to a woman at the end of a long day of unpaid work, and to a citizen waiting for a decision she cannot hurry. No one can create time; that is why wasting another person’s time is a quiet kind of theft, and returning it is among the highest forms of public service.

Built from today's cards:

Aaj ka Aaina — two minutes before you close the magazine

Darpan means mirror. Before you close today's magazine, hold it up to yourself. Write the answers in your notebook — three lines are enough.

1. If you were the District Magistrate in today's lead story — "Border villagers and Khasi chiefs refuse consent to Assam–Meghalaya's joint Kulsi dam" — what would your first step be, and whom would you meet first?

2. Which story did you see from the other side for the first time today? Write the strongest form of the argument you disagreed with.

3. Austerity is about time too. Where did you save time today, and where did you lose it?

Ability, Anonymity, Austerity — one small step every day. And we shall become, my man.