UPSC DARPAN

शीलं परं भूषणम्

Sheelam param bhushanam · Character is the highest ornament

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Hum jeet ka maja chakh kar rahenge.

Quote of the Day

"The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything, that is done in a public way, by their public functionaries. They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearing."

— Justice K.K. Mathew, Supreme Court of India, State of U.P. v Raj Narain (1975)

The Hindu (Mumbai), The Indian Express (Delhi) & The Economic Times (Delhi) — 12 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 · 12 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.

> *"It is wholly a confusion of ideas to suppose that the economical use of fuel is equivalent to a diminished consumption. The very contrary is the truth."*

— W. Stanley Jevons · *The Coal Question (1865), Chapter VII, "Of the Economy of Fuel"*

Use in: Today's Draft National Steel Policy, which would cut the sector's carbon-emission intensity from 2.54 to about 1.54 tonnes of CO2 per tonne of crude steel by 2047 while raising capacity from about 220 mt to 604 mt — on the card's arithmetic, total emissions would still rise by roughly two-thirds at today's utilisation. Use it in GS3 answers on energy efficiency, intensity versus absolute targets and the rebound effect, and in essays on development and environment. Balance it: India's per-capita emissions are low and its net-zero year is 2070, so efficiency is essential for a developing country; Jevons's point is that efficiency must be paired with limits or prices, not that it is useless.

> *"Informational privacy is a facet of the right to privacy. The dangers to privacy in an age of information can originate not only from the state but from non-state actors as well. We commend to the Union Government the need to examine and put into place a robust regime for data protection."*

— Supreme Court of India (D.Y. Chandrachud J., for himself, J.S. Khehar CJ, R.K. Agrawal and S. Abdul Nazeer JJ.) · *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) v Union of India (24 August 2017), conclusions*

Use in: Today's order of the Kerala High Court directing the Union government to make the Data Protection Board under the DPDP Act, 2023 functional within eight weeks, in a PIL on passengers' face data at airports (Digi Yatra). Use it in GS2 answers on privacy under Article 21, the DPDP Act and courts directing the executive: the Court asked for a data protection regime in 2017, Parliament created one in 2023, and the Board that enforces it is still not working. Balance it: the same judgment notes that such a regime must balance individual interests with legitimate State aims such as national security and preventing leakage of welfare benefits, and the DPDP Rules, 2025 allow an 18-month phase-in.

> *"Watercourse States shall in their respective territories utilize an international watercourse in an equitable and reasonable manner."*

— United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses · *Article 5(1) (adopted by the UN General Assembly, 21 May 1997; in force 17 August 2014)*

Use in: Today's interview with Bangladesh's outgoing High Commissioner, who seeks a "techno-political" approach as the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty, which shares the Farakka flow in ten-day periods for thirty years, comes up for renewal in December. Use it in GS2 answers on India–Bangladesh relations and hydro-diplomacy: "equitable and reasonable" use, with Article 7's duty not to cause significant harm, is the vocabulary of transboundary water law. Balance it: India is not a party to the Convention, and it is upper riparian on the Ganga but lower riparian on the Brahmaputra, so the principles it argues for with China are the ones Dhaka will ask of it.

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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	**Kerala High Court: make the Data Protection Board functional in eight weeks** ***Why it matters:*** *GS2 regulatory bodies: DPDP Act, TDSAT, Puttaswamy for Prelims; a right without a working forum for Mains.*
2.1	**Draft National Steel Policy: 604 million tonnes and cleaner steel by 2047** ***Why it matters:*** *GS3 industrial policy and climate: green steel taxonomy for Prelims; growth versus decarbonisation in a hard-to-abate sector for Mains.*
3.1	**Pulses Mission at one: reward farmers for leaving paddy** ***Why it matters:*** *GS3 cropping patterns and subsidies: MSP, PM-KUSUM for Prelims; why incentives, not advice, decide crops for Mains.*
4.1	**Ganga Water Treaty due for renewal in December** ***Why it matters:*** *GS2 neighbourhood: treaty formula and Farakka for Prelims; Centre–State tension in water diplomacy for Mains.*
7.1	**Mizoram to count 38,213 refugees on a separate Census list** ***Why it matters:*** *GS1 population and GS2 rights: Refugee Convention, Census Act for Prelims; refugees without a refugee law for Mains.*

How to use this magazine — the day has two kinds of card. A DEEP READ card is one of the day's biggest issues, chosen by RV Sir's filter: it first teaches the background and the hard words, then the syllabus link, the Prelims facts, an argued Analysis, both sides, the way forward, a Mains question with a model approach, and the decision an officer would face — with the one of the three A's it tests. An IN BRIEF card is a story you must know but need not study: what happened, why it matters for the exam, and the Prelims facts; the concepts it names are explained on upscdarpan.in under Concept Booster → Today's concepts. Long fields are numbered points with their own headings, so the argument reads from the headings alone. The last page, Aaj ka Aaina, is two minutes with yourself.

1. Polity & Governance

Today's three stories share one problem: a right or a reform exists on paper, but the machinery that makes it work does not. The data protection law has no working regulator, the RTI Act's promise of proactive disclosure is kept by barely three in five public authorities, and delimitation waits on a constitutional amendment that could not find its majority. In each case the courts, the auditors or the arithmetic of Parliament are now forcing the question.

1.1 Kerala High Court tells the Centre to make the Data Protection Board functional in eight weeks

DEEP READ — the day's big issue

RV SIR'S FILTER · Cat 3 — Developmental issue touching the common citizen: *Every air traveller's personal data is governed by a 2023 law whose regulator does not yet work; a court is forcing the State to make a right enforceable.*

ISSUE THREAD **Data protection law and its regulator** (new thread) **LENS** Innovation and safeguards · Independence and accountability

STORY SO FAR *Parliament passed the Digital Personal Data Protection Act in August 2023; its Rules came on 14 November 2025 with 18-month phased compliance. Face-based Digi Yatra boarding has meanwhile spread.*

THE NEWS Kochi. A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court, Chief Justice Soumen Sen and Justice Syam Kumar V.M., has directed the Union government to make the Data Protection Board under the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 functional within eight weeks, The Hindu and LiveLaw report. It disposed of a public interest litigation asking that passengers' sensitive personal data at airports be collected, stored and processed in strict compliance with the Act and the DPDP Rules, 2025, saying "the privacy of citizens is being compromised". It had asked whether the Board under Section 18 existed, and had earlier ruled that Digi Yatra, the portal that verifies travellers at airports by matching their face, could not insist on Aadhaar. It recorded that Digi Yatra now accepts Aadhaar and the Driving Licence, and expects the Voter ID to be considered too.

FIRST, UNDERSTAND (BACKGROUND)	1. **Personal data, and who holds it —** Personal data is anything that identifies you: name, phone number, Aadhaar number, a photograph of your face. The body that decides why and how it is used, a company or a government office, is the "data fiduciary", because it holds your data in trust. 2. **A right needs a forum before it is real —** A law may say you must consent before your data is used and may complain if it leaks. If nobody can hear the complaint and punish the wrongdoer, the promise is only words. So data laws create a regulator; under the DPDP Act it is the Data Protection Board, and civil courts cannot hear these disputes. 3. **How India reached a data law —** In 2017 nine Supreme Court judges held in Puttaswamy that privacy is a fundamental right. The Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee drafted a Bill in 2018; after a withdrawn 2019 Bill, Parliament passed the DPDP Act in 2023.
KEY TERMS	• Data fiduciary — The person, company or government body that decides the purpose and means of processing someone's personal data. • Digi Yatra — A Civil Aviation Ministry project, conceived by the Digi Yatra Foundation, letting passengers clear airport checkpoints by face recognition. • Mandamus — A writ ordering a public authority to perform a duty the law places on it.

	• TDSAT — Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal; it hears appeals against the Data Protection Board's orders.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Privacy made a fundamental right (2017) → DPDP Act creates rights and a Board (2023) → Rules notified, Board not working → airports collect face data → PIL in Kerala High Court → eight-week deadline

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The DPDP Act, 2023 rests its enforcement on the Data Protection Board —** Section 18 establishes the Data Protection Board of India; the Central Government appoints its chairperson and members (Section 19(2)). Civil courts cannot hear matters the Board is empowered to decide (Section 39). Per PIB (November 2025), the four-member Board works digitally and its orders are appealable to TDSAT; the highest penalty, up to ₹250 crore, is for failing to keep reasonable security safeguards. 2. **Privacy is part of Article 21; High Courts enforce it under Article 226 —** Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017) held that any intrusion on privacy needs a law, a legitimate aim and proportionality. The 2018 Aadhaar judgment struck down Section 57, which let private firms demand Aadhaar. Article 226 lets High Courts issue writs for fundamental rights and "for any other purpose".
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Are statutory rights real when the regulator that enforces them is not working? —** GS2: "statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies" and "issues arising out of the design and implementation" of policies. Dimensions: privacy as a fundamental right, the regulator's independence, and consent in digital public services.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The Data Protection Board of India is established under Section 18 of the DPDP Act, 2023; appeals against its orders lie to TDSAT. • The DPDP Rules, 2025, notified on 14 November 2025, give an 18-month phased compliance period (PIB). • Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017), a nine-judge bench, held privacy a fundamental right under Article 21.
ANALYSIS	1. **Until the Board sits, the Act's rights cannot be enforced —** A complaint goes first to the company or department; after that only the Board can hear it, because the Act keeps civil courts out. So a traveller whose face data is misused has nowhere to go today; the court had to ask whether the Board even existed. The other view: the Rules allow 18 months, so the regime was never meant to bite at once. That holds for firms' duties, not for the grievance forum. 2. **A court setting a deadline for the executive is enforcement, not policy-making —** Courts do not run the government. But Parliament itself created the Board; the court only asks that Parliament's law be carried out, the classic use of mandamus. The strongest objection is that courts often issue directions governments ignore: the Supreme Court's police-reform directions in Prakash Singh (2006) are still only partly followed. That argues for a narrow, checkable order, which an eight-week deadline is, not for silence. 3. **Lens — Innovation and safeguards: paperless boarding is good engineering, but consent and trust need a referee —** Digi Yatra means faster queues and fewer paper checks. But consent counts only if refusing is easy: if the manual lane crawls, saying no costs time, which is why the court barred insisting on Aadhaar, echoing the 2018 judgment. And the Centre appoints every Board member while the Act lets it exempt notified State agencies under Section 17(2)(a). The other view: a new body needs State capacity to start; fixed tenure and published reasons can build independence later.

BOTH SIDES	• + For: The Centre and airport operators: face-based boarding cuts queues and paper checks, and 18-month phasing lets a large economy comply without disruption. • + For: Supporters of a lean regulator: a small digital Board starts quickly, with TDSAT appeals as a check. • − Against: Privacy advocates: biometric data is collected now while the only complaint forum is not working, so rights exist in name only. • − Against: Critics of the design: a Board appointed by the Centre, under a law letting the Centre exempt its agencies, may hesitate to act against government data handlers.
WAY FORWARD	1. **Seat the Board within the court's deadline —** MeitY should appoint members and publish the complaint procedure within eight weeks, as the High Court ordered. 2. **Keep a genuine non-biometric lane and build independence —** Airports should staff manual checks so refusing Digi Yatra costs no time; fixed tenures and reasoned orders would meet the proportionality test of Puttaswamy.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"A right without a remedy is no right at all." Examine this in the context of the delay in making the Data Protection Board functional. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Probe the gap between right and remedy in the DPDP regime, its causes and effects, and reach a judgement. 2. **Introduction — a court has had to order a regulator into working —** Sample: Nine years after Puttaswamy made privacy a fundamental right, the Kerala High Court has had to direct the Centre to make the Data Protection Board functional within eight weeks. 3. **Body — the Act's rights run only through the Board —** Consent and grievance rights; civil courts barred. Draw a flowchart: data principal → fiduciary's grievance desk → Data Protection Board → TDSAT → Supreme Court. 4. **Body — biometric boarding shows the cost of the gap —** Digi Yatra collects face data now; the court found privacy "being compromised". 5. **Body — phasing suits duties, not the forum; independence is the second gap —** Value addition: Rules of 14 November 2025, 18-month phasing; ₹250-crore penalties need an adjudicator; Centre appoints all members. 6. **Conclusion — MeitY must seat the Board first —** Sample: MeitY should seat an independent Board within the deadline, because a privacy right is only as real as its forum.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Airport Director, you receive complaints that passengers were nudged into Digi Yatra lanes. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** My options: ignore it because Digi Yatra is voluntary, issue a circular, or fix the gate. A circular alone changes nothing at a crowded gate. I would check manual-lane queue times, staff those lanes to move as fast, post signs saying Digi Yatra is optional, accept every ID the court has named, and report the complaints and my steps to the Ministry. The stakeholders are passengers, the operator, airlines and security agencies. The deciding principle: consent is real only when refusing carries no penalty.
KARMA YOGI TEST (THE THREE A'S)	Ability — Measuring manual-lane waiting times and fixing staffing, so that "voluntary" is true at the gate, not merely in a circular.

1.2 RTI at 21: only 62.7% of public authorities filed transparency audits with the CIC

IN BRIEF

ISSUE THREAD **RTI and transparency** (new thread) LENS Independence and accountability

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Right to Information Act turned 21 on October 12. A Data Point in The Hindu finds its proactive-disclosure duty widely skipped. Per the Central Information Commission's (CIC) annual report for 2024-25, only 1,446 of 2,303 registered public authorities, or 62.7%, submitted third-party transparency audit reports, now mandatory. Over half of these scored Grade C or below (80% or less); nearly 37% filed nothing. Compliance has roughly doubled since 2020-21, when 754 filed. The Hindu checked the websites of 94 departments: only 33 carried 2024-25 audit reports, and 26 had no Section 4 information at all. Section 4 requires disclosure "suo motu", that is, on the authority's own motion without anyone asking, so that the public needs "minimum resort" to filing applications, which would also cut pendency at Information Commissions.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE EXAM	GS2 lists "transparency and accountability" and "statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies". Prelims can test Section 4(1)(b), the CIC's composition and the 2019 amendment; Mains can ask why weak proactive disclosure pushes citizens into slow, case-by-case RTI applications and appeals.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act, 2005 lists 17 items, (i) to (xvii), that public authorities must publish suo motu. • The RTI Act came into force on 12 October 2005; the Central Information Commission is constituted under Section 12. • The RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019 lets the Central Government prescribe the tenure, salaries and allowances of Central and State Information Commissioners. • In State of U.P. v. Raj Narain (1975), the Supreme Court read the right to know into Article 19(1)(a).
CONCEPTS TO KNOW	• Suo motu (proactive) disclosure under Section 4 of the RTI Act · Central Information Commission • Short explanations: upscdarpan.in → Concept Booster → Today's concepts

1.3 Delimitation within 543 seats emerges as an option after the 131st Amendment stalls

IN BRIEF

ISSUE THREAD **Delimitation and seat allocation** (new thread) LENS Centre and States

THE NEWS New Delhi. With the Opposition demanding Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's resignation, The Economic Times' analysis suggests one way out for the Centre: redraw constituencies within the existing 543 Lok Sabha seats once post-2026 Census figures are published. Delimitation means redrawing seat boundaries and shares by population. Enlarging the House needs a constitutional amendment passed by two-thirds of members present and voting in each House, and the DMK's 22 MPs matter. Per PRS, the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and the Delimitation Bill, 2026 were introduced on 16 April 2026; the first would raise the cap from 550 to 850 seats and delink women's reservation from the post-census delimitation. The Delimitation Bill "was not proceeded with" after the amendment failed to secure the required majority (ET). Its Commission would include, per PRS, the State Election Commissioner of each State.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE EXAM	GS2 lists "salient features of the Representation of People's Act" and "issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure". Prelims tests Articles 81, 82 and 334A and the seat freeze; Mains asks how to balance one-person-one-vote against States that slowed population growth.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Article 82 requires readjustment of Lok Sabha seats after each census; Article 81 caps the House at 550 elected members. • The 42nd Amendment (1976) froze inter-State seat shares on the 1971 Census; the 84th Amendment (2001) extended the freeze until figures of the first census

	after 2026 are published. ● The 106th Amendment (2023) reserves one-third of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats for women; under Article 334A it takes effect only after the delimitation based on the first census after the Amendment. ● Article 329(a) bars courts from questioning laws on delimitation or allotment of seats made under Articles 327 or 328.
CONCEPTS TO KNOW	● Delimitation and the population-based seat freeze · Special majority under Article 368 ● Short explanations: upscdarpan.in → Concept Booster → Today's concepts

2. Economy

Both stories are about what India sells to the world and on whose terms. The draft steel policy wants nearly three times today's capacity by 2047 and cleaner steel at the same time, and its weak points are imported coking coal and Europe's carbon tax. The China exercise is smaller but sharper: India's strength is services, and rules on data, licences and visas, not tariffs, keep it out of a vast market.

2.1 Draft National Steel Policy targets 604 million tonnes capacity and cleaner steel by 2047

DEEP READ — the day's big issue

RV SIR'S FILTER · Cat 3 — Developmental issue touching the common citizen: *Steel moves all four of RV Sir's factors — capital, land (mines, plant sites), labour (MSME secondary steel) and enterprise — and tests India's net-zero promise in its hardest-to-abate sector.*

ISSUE THREAD **Steel capacity and green steel** (new thread) **LENS** Development and environment · Market and State

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *The National Steel Policy 2017 targeted 300 million tonnes of capacity by 2030-31. A green steel taxonomy followed in December 2024; the EU's carbon border tax bit from January 2026.*

THE NEWS New Delhi. India released a draft national steel policy for public consultation late on Saturday, October 10, ET and The Indian Express (citing Reuters) report. It is a draft for comment, not a decision. It targets 604 million tonnes (mt) of capacity by 2047, from about 220 mt now, and per-capita consumption of 302 kg, from 116 kg. Exports are to reach 45 mt within two decades. The sector's carbon-emission intensity is to fall from 2.54 to about 1.54 tonnes of CO_2 per tonne of crude steel by 2047, "in line with India's net zero" goal, through more scrap, hydrogen-based direct reduced iron, biochar, gasified coal and carbon capture. The ministry expects demand for 772 mt of iron ore and 236 mt of coking coal, partly to be met through overseas assets; MoUs are in place with Russia, Japan, South Korea, Brazil and Indonesia.

FIRST, UNDERSTAND (BACKGROUND)

1. **Steel can be made in two ways, and one emits far more —** Iron ore is iron locked with oxygen. In a blast furnace, coke from coking coal pulls the oxygen away and the carbon leaves as CO_2. In the other route, ore is reduced with gas into direct reduced iron, or scrap is simply melted in an electric furnace. Hydrogen leaves water instead of CO_2, and scrap needs no reduction at all.
2. **Steel use per person rises while a country is being built —** Rails, bridges, houses and machines need steel; use flattens only once a country is largely built. India's 116 kg a head is room to grow.
3. **Raw materials are the catch —** India has large iron-ore deposits, but most of its own coal is too high in ash to make good coke. Big plants import most of their coking coal; the 2017 policy put the dependence at about 85% (PIB).

KEY TERMS

- tCO2/tcs — Tonnes of CO_2 emitted per tonne of crude steel.
- Direct reduced iron (DRI) — Iron made by stripping oxygen from ore with gas or coal, without melting it.
- Secondary steel sector — Small, mostly MSME units making steel from scrap or sponge iron in electric furnaces.
- CBAM — The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism: a charge on carbon embedded in imports.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Infrastructure demand → 604 mt target by 2047 → more ore and imported coking coal → more emissions unless the process changes → scrap and hydrogen-DRI cut intensity to 1.54 → exports survive CBAM

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE

1. **The National Steel Policy 2017 is the policy this draft would replace —** Approved in May 2017, it targeted 300 million tonnes of crude steel capacity and about 158 kg per-

	capita consumption by 2030-31, and aimed to cut coking-coal import dependence from about 85% to around 65% (PIB). 2. **India's green steel taxonomy defines what counts as green —** Released by the Ministry of Steel on 12 December 2024 (PIB), it calls steel green below 2.2 tonnes of CO2-equivalent per tonne of finished steel: five stars below 1.6, four stars for 1.6-2.0, three for 2.0-2.2. The National Institute of Secondary Steel Technology certifies it.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Can India triple steel capacity and still cut the sector's carbon intensity? —** GS3 lists "changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth" and "conservation, environmental pollution and degradation". Expect three dimensions: raw-material security, decarbonising a hard-to-abate sector, and exposure to carbon border taxes.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The National Steel Policy 2017 targeted 300 million tonnes of crude steel capacity by 2030-31. • Under India's green steel taxonomy (2024), steel is green below 2.2 tCO2e per tonne of finished steel; the National Institute of Secondary Steel Technology certifies it. • The EU's CBAM covers iron and steel, aluminium, cement, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen.
ANALYSIS	1. **The draft's real test is value, not tonnes —** A tonnage target rewards building furnaces; value comes from grades India still struggles to make, such as automotive and electrical steel. The draft itself says the sector must move "beyond capacity-led growth towards value creation". The 2017 policy had the same aim for automotive steel, so the problem is old and unsolved. The other view is strong: at 116 kg a head, India genuinely needs volume. That holds, but volume without quality swaps imported special steel for surplus plain steel. 2. **Coking coal, not capital, is the binding constraint —** Plants can be financed and built in a few years, but a blast furnace cannot run without coke. The draft expects 236 mt of coking coal demand and plans "strategic global outreach" and overseas assets, a quiet admission that domestic coal will not suffice. Buying mines abroad hedges price, not dependence. The counter-view is that the draft's own green routes, scrap and hydrogen-DRI, need little or no coking coal. That is true, which makes raw-material security and green steel a single project. 3. **Lens — Development and environment: a cleaner tonne can still mean a dirtier sector —** Intensity is emissions per tonne, not in total. On this card's arithmetic, nearly tripling capacity while cutting intensity by about 40% would still raise total emissions by roughly two-thirds at today's utilisation. And CBAM prices carbon at Europe's border, so every tonne exported at 2.54 tCO2/tcs carries a charge cleaner rivals avoid. The other view: India's per-capita emissions are low and its net-zero year is 2070, so growth now is fair. That is valid in climate talks, but it does not lower the CBAM bill.
BOTH SIDES	• + For: Industry and planners: housing, rail and renewables need cheap domestic steel, and moving freight to rail cuts costs. • + For: Climate and trade: a clear path to 1.54 tCO2/tcs prepares exporters for CBAM and signals green investors. • − Against: Emissions lock-in: blast furnaces built now run for decades, so total emissions rise. • − Against: Land and small units: 772 mt of ore means new mines in forested districts, and MSMEs fear green norms they cannot finance.
WAY FORWARD	1. **Create demand through public procurement —** Central buyers can reserve a rising

	share of public steel purchases for star-rated steel under the 2024 taxonomy, since no buyer yet pays extra for green steel. 2. **Make scrap a planned resource —** Better collection and grading of scrap lets electric furnaces grow, building on the Steel Scrap Recycling Policy (2019). 3. **A phased path for MSMEs —** Efficiency finance for secondary units before any binding norm.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Beyond capacity-led growth towards value creation." Examine how India's draft National Steel Policy seeks to reconcile capacity expansion with decarbonisation. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Probe the targets and tools, show where growth and decarbonisation pull apart, and judge how far they reconcile. 2. **Introduction — a draft for nearly three times today's capacity —** Sample: India's draft National Steel Policy (October 2026) would raise capacity from about 220 to 604 million tonnes by 2047 while cutting emission intensity from 2.54 to 1.54 tCO2/tcs. 3. **Body — demand is real: 116 kg a head means a country still being built —** Infrastructure, housing and renewables; target 302 kg. 4. **Body — coking coal imports are the binding constraint —** 236 mt demand; the 2017 policy's 85% dependence; overseas mines hedge price, not dependence. 5. **Body — falling intensity can still mean rising total emissions —** Draw two bars: 220 mt × 2.54 against 604 mt × 1.54; the total still rises. Add CBAM from January 2026. 6. **Body — scrap, hydrogen-DRI and green procurement reconcile the two —** Value addition: the 2024 green steel taxonomy (green below 2.2 tCO2e/tfs; five-star below 1.6). 7. **Conclusion — the Ministry of Steel should finalise with a demand lever —** Sample: The Ministry of Steel should finalise the policy with green public procurement and a phased MSME path, so every added tonne is cleaner.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Secretary (Steel), MSME secondary-steel units tell you the draft's green norms will shut them. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** My options: exempt small units, leaving the most numerous furnaces untouched; apply big-plant norms, closing units and costing jobs; or a separate, phased path, which I choose. First I would have the National Institute of Secondary Steel Technology measure emissions in sample induction-furnace and coal-DRI clusters, so the norm rests on data rather than assumption, then pair a later deadline with efficiency loans and cleaner power. The stakeholders are unit owners, their workers, buyers who need cheap steel and towns that breathe furnace smoke. The deciding principle is proportionality: the norm binds every producer, but the pace matches what each can carry.
KARMA YOGI TEST (THE THREE A'S)	Ability — Measuring emissions in small-unit clusters before writing the norm, rather than diluting the target or copying big-plant rules onto induction furnaces.

2.2 Commerce department maps China's barriers to Indian services exporters: data, licences, visas

IN BRIEF

ISSUE THREAD **India–China ties after BRICS** (update 4) **LENS** Strategic autonomy and partnership

STORY SO FAR *At the Delhi BRICS summit Modi told Xi that ties must rest on mutual respect, interest and sensitivity; leaked files later showed a Chinese state bank froze loans in India during the 2017 Doklam standoff.*

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Commerce Department has asked industry for details of the hurdles Indian services firms face in China, The Economic Times reports: data localisation (rules forcing data to be stored inside China), cybersecurity and cross-border data-transfer rules, licensing, registration, visas, work permits and recognition of professional qualifications. It also seeks details on commercial presence: establishment, ownership and local partners. India's services exports to China were $8.95 billion in 2024; an industry representative puts China's total services imports at about $300 billion. A trade expert asked how compatible India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act is with China's Personal Information Protection Law. India's share of world commercial services exports rose to 4.3% in 2024 from 3% in 2014.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE EXAM	GS2 covers bilateral relations and the "effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests". India runs a large goods deficit with China, and services are its strength. The barriers here are rules, not tariffs, so the angle is non-tariff barriers in services.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Under the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS, 1995), services trade has four modes: cross-border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence and movement of natural persons. • Visas and work permits for professionals fall under Mode 4 of GATS; opening a branch abroad is Mode 3. • India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 allows personal data to go abroad except to countries the Centre restricts by notification.
CONCEPTS TO KNOW	• GATS modes of supply · Non-tariff barriers in services trade • Short explanations: upscdarpan.in → Concept Booster → Today's concepts

3. Agriculture & Food

India grows too much rice and too few pulses, and the reason is not farmers' habit but the incentives the State has built around paddy. A year into the Pulses Mission, imports are falling, but the hardest acres, Punjab and Haryana's paddy belt, will move only when pulses pay as surely as rice. The useful idea today is to pay for that shift, and to let the same fields earn from the sun.

3.1 Pulses Mission turns one: pay farmers to leave paddy, and grow solar too

DEEP READ — the day's big issue

RV SIR'S FILTER · Cat 3 — Developmental issue touching the common citizen: *Who grows what on India's land decides farm incomes, groundwater and the import bill; the Pulses Mission's first year and the agri-PV idea touch every small farmer.*

ISSUE THREAD **Pulses, oilseeds and crop diversification** (new thread) **LENS** Development and environment · Short-term relief and long-term reform

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *The Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses began on 11 October 2025 with ₹11,440 crore to 2030-31. Edible-oil prices hit a 3.5-year high in October.*

THE NEWS New Delhi. On the first anniversary of the Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses, a PIB backgrounder of 11 October reports pulse output of 274.09 lakh tonnes in 2025-26, up from 256.83 lakh tonnes, and imports down 31.52% to ₹31,793.59 crore. The Mission targets about 350 lakh tonnes, 1,130 kg/ha and 310 lakh hectares by 2030-31, focusing on tur, urad and masoor; NAFED and NCCF may buy 100% of these three crops from 2025-26 to 2028-29. In The Indian Express, Ashok Gulati of ICRIER argues that paddy in Punjab-Haryana gets input subsidies of almost ₹40,000 a hectare, so pulse and oilseed growers should get about ₹35,000, shared 50:50 by Centre and State, starting in Haryana, where the water table falls 1.7 feet a year. He also proposes agri-photovoltaics through a reworked PM-KUSUM.

FIRST, UNDERSTAND (BACKGROUND)	1. **Why Punjab and Haryana grow paddy —** Government agencies buy the rice at the minimum support price, so the farmer knows his price before sowing. Power for pumps is free or nearly free, fertiliser is subsidised and canal water is cheap. With low risk and low cost, paddy beats every alternative. 2. **What that does to water and imports —** Free power lets farmers pump groundwater without counting the cost. Pulses and oilseeds, which need far less water, get no such assured market, so India buys them abroad: per Gulati, farm imports of $40 billion in 2025-26 were mainly edible oils and pulses. 3. **What agri-photovoltaics is —** Solar panels are raised above a field, about 10 to 11 feet per Gulati, with gaps for sunlight, so crops grow beneath while the panels sell power. The same land earns twice.
KEY TERMS	• Minimum support price (MSP) — A price the Centre announces for notified crops; it is assured mainly where agencies actually procure. • Input subsidy — The State paying part of a farmer's cost of power, fertiliser or water. • Agri-photovoltaics (agri-PV) — Crops and solar power on the same plot, with panels raised above the crop. • Feed-in tariff — A fixed price a utility pays for each unit of power a small producer supplies to the grid.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Assured procurement and free power → paddy is the safest crop → groundwater falls, rice piles up → pulses and edible oils imported → a matching reward plus assured pulse purchase makes the shift pay

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **MSP is recommended by the CACP and decided by a Cabinet committee —** The

	Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices recommends MSPs for notified kharif and rabi crops; the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs decides. MSP is an administrative announcement, not a statutory right. 2. **PM-KUSUM is the farm solar scheme agri-PV would ride on —** Approved in 2019 and scaled up in November 2020 (PIB; MNRE), it has three parts: A lets farmers set up renewable plants of up to 2 MW on their land; B funds standalone solar pumps; C solarises grid-connected pumps. Central assistance under B and C is 30%, or 50% in the North-East, hill States and islands.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Do incentives, rather than advice, decide what Indian farmers grow? —** GS3 lists "major crops, cropping patterns in various parts of the country" and "issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices". Expect three dimensions: the incentives behind paddy, groundwater, and import dependence in pulses and edible oils.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses (2025-26 to 2030-31) focuses on tur, urad and masoor. • MSP is recommended by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices and approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs; it has no statutory backing. • PM-KUSUM Component A allows farmers to set up grid-connected renewable plants of up to 2 MW on their own land.
ANALYSIS	1. **Diversification fails on risk, not on price —** Farmers stay with paddy because its price and buyer are certain and the alternative's are not. That is why the Mission's promise of 100% procurement of tur, urad and masoor may matter more than its seed kits. Output rose to 274.09 lakh tonnes and imports fell 31.52% in the first year. The other view is that four years of assured purchase, to 2028-29, is a short window for a farmer changing a decades-old system. It holds: certainty must outlast one Mission cycle. 2. **Lens — Short-term relief and long-term reform: pay for the shift with the subsidy it saves —** Paddy draws almost ₹40,000 a hectare in power, fertiliser and canal subsidies, so a reward of about ₹35,000 for pulses or oilseeds would come from savings, not new spending. The catch: States save on power and the Centre on fertiliser, so a 50:50 split works only if each recovers its saving. The objection: paddy has other props, such as the plan to send almost 7 million tonnes of rice to ethanol, which Gulati calls "perverse". A Haryana pilot paying only for verified hectares moved tests the idea cheaply. 3. **Agri-PV can raise incomes faster than any crop switch, if the tariff is right —** A farmer selling power from panels above his field earns a second income that does not depend on rain or price. Gulati reports an ICRIER pilot in Rajasthan that raised a farmer's income eight to ten times. The objection is cost: raised structures are dearer than ground-mounted panels, and a distribution company must agree to buy the power. That is why his design detail, a feed-in tariff at even half the cost of supplying rural power, decides whether the idea spreads beyond a pilot.
BOTH SIDES	• + For: Water and soil: pulses need far less water and fix nitrogen, so a reward slows Haryana's falling water table. • + For: Fiscal: the reward is paid from input subsidies no longer spent on paddy. • − Against: Farmers: paddy procurement is certain; pulse procurement is promised only to 2028-29, and pulse yields are riskier. • − Against: States: savings appear only if paddy area shrinks, and verifying lakhs of plots needs capacity many lack.

WAY FORWARD	1. **A Haryana pilot, paid on verified hectares —** As Gulati proposes, the Centre and Haryana can share a reward 50:50, paying only for hectares shifted from paddy and verified by satellite. 2. **Extend assured pulse procurement —** The Agriculture Ministry should give NAFED and NCCF a window beyond 2028-29, so farmers trust the market enough to change. 3. **Rework PM-KUSUM for agri-PV —** Allow raised agri-PV under Component A with PM-Surya Ghar-style subsidy and a fixed feed-in tariff, as Gulati suggests.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	To what extent can per-hectare incentives wean farmers in Punjab and Haryana away from paddy towards pulses and oilseeds? (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — To what extent —** Judge how far incentives work and where they fall short. 2. **Introduction — paddy is a rational choice under today's incentives —** Sample: Punjab-Haryana farmers grow paddy because MSP procurement, free power and cheap fertiliser make it the safest crop, despite falling water tables. 3. **Body — a matching reward can close the gap —** Paddy's input subsidies of almost ₹40,000/ha against a proposed ₹35,000/ha reward, financed by savings (Ashok Gulati, ICRIER). Draw a flowchart: subsidy saved → reward paid → hectares shifted → water saved. 4. **Body — money is not enough without assured purchase —** Value addition: the Pulses Mission's 100% procurement of tur, urad and masoor to 2028-29; imports fell 31.52% in its first year. 5. **Body — incentives fail if other signals still favour paddy —** Rice for ethanol gives paddy a second buyer; verification of shifted hectares needs State capacity. 6. **Conclusion — the Centre and Haryana should start a verified pilot —** Sample: The Centre and Haryana should pilot a shared, verified reward with assured pulse purchase, judged by hectares moved and water saved.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Deputy Commissioner in a Haryana paddy district, farmers ask why they should leave paddy when its procurement is certain. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** My options: urge them to switch on promises I cannot guarantee; leave things as they are; or make the alternative as certain as paddy before asking. I would do the third. I would list, village by village, where and when NAFED or NCCF will buy tur, urad and masoor, and publish it before sowing. I would start with volunteer farmers in a few blocks and report their real costs and earnings to the State. The stakeholders are farmers, procurement agencies, the power utility and every family drawing on the aquifer. The deciding principle is credibility: a farmer should change only on promises the State can keep.
KARMA YOGI TEST (THE THREE A'S)	Austerity — Spending the sowing weeks in villages fixing purchase points and dates, not a costly awareness campaign that promises more than the budget can pay.

4. International Relations

Both stories are about who holds power over a shared space. On the Ganga, a 30-year treaty ends its term in December, and Dhaka wants water judged with power, trade and people, not alone. In Pakistan, Islamabad has taken over its only Opposition-run province. India should read the first as a federal test at home and the second as a warning on its western flank.

4.1 Ganga Water Treaty comes up for renewal in December as Dhaka seeks a 'techno-political' deal

DEEP READ — the day's big issue

RV SIR'S FILTER · Cat 1 — International event with an impact on India: *A dated decision this year on how a shared river's lean-season water is split decides relations with India's largest neighbour on its eastern flank, and Indian States' water demands.*

ISSUE THREAD **India–Bangladesh ties** (new thread) **LENS** Centre and States · Strategic autonomy and partnership

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *After the July–August 2024 upheaval in Bangladesh, an interim government under Muhammad Yunus held elections. Tarique Rahman became Prime Minister in February 2026. Ties with India have been turbulent since.*

THE NEWS New Delhi. M Riaz Hamidullah, Bangladesh's outgoing High Commissioner, who left India on October 10, spoke at an Idea Exchange with The Indian Express. The interviewer noted that the Ganga Water Treaty is "due for renewal this December" and that States in India are demanding it not be renewed. Mr Hamidullah said water needs "a techno-political approach based on mutuality of interests and inter-dependence". Bangladesh, he said, is water-abundant for five months and "practically dry" for seven, and shares "just 7 per cent" of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) basin. Bangladesh buys 2,500 MW of Indian power. He put economic interaction at "a minimum of US$ 28 to $30 billion", over double the formal $13 billion trade, and criticised people being "arbitrarily pushed in across the border".

FIRST, UNDERSTAND (BACKGROUND)	1. **Farakka is a barrage India built to save Kolkata port —** The Farakka Barrage stands on the Ganga in West Bengal, just upstream of Bangladesh. Commissioned in May 1975, it diverts part of the river through a feeder canal into the Hooghly to flush silt and keep Kolkata port navigable. What India diverts there does not reach Bangladesh. 2. **The quarrel is only about January to May —** In the monsoon there is surplus water. In the dry months flow falls sharply: the treaty's own schedule shows the average at Farakka dropping from about 1,07,500 cusecs in early January to about 61,000 in late April. 3. **The 1996 treaty turned a fight into a formula —** The treaty splits the flow at Farakka every ten days from 1 January to 31 May. It runs thirty years, renewable only by mutual consent.
KEY TERMS	• Cusec — Cubic foot per second: a unit of river flow, about 28 litres passing a point each second. • GBM basin — The joint catchment of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna, draining through Bangladesh into the Bay of Bengal. • Lean season — The dry months (January to May under the treaty) when the river runs lowest and every cusec is contested.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Farakka diverts dry-season water to Kolkata port → Bangladesh gets less from January to May → the 1996 treaty fixes ten-day shares for thirty years → the term ends in December 2026 → States' demands and Dhaka's linkage politics shape renewal

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The treaty's formula and safeguards —** Signed at New Delhi on 12 December 1996, the treaty splits the flow 50:50 when Farakka has 70,000 cusecs or less; between

	70,000 and 75,000, Bangladesh gets 35,000 and India the balance; at 75,000 or more, India gets 40,000 and Bangladesh the balance. Each side is guaranteed 35,000 cusecs in three alternate ten-day periods between 11 March and 10 May (Annexure I). If no agreement follows a review, India must release at least 90% of Bangladesh's share (Article XI). 2. **The Union makes treaties; States run the rivers —** Treaties are a Union subject (Entry 14), and Article 253 lets Parliament legislate on any subject to implement one. Water is a State subject (Entry 17, State List), subject to Entry 56 of the Union List on inter-State rivers. No Article requires a State's consent to a treaty.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Should a State's water needs decide the fate of a treaty with a neighbour? —** GS2 lists "India and its neighbourhood — relations". Expect three dimensions: shrinking dry-season flow, the Centre–State question in foreign policy, and linkage of water to power and migration.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The India–Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission was constituted in 1972. • The Land Boundary Agreement with Bangladesh was given effect by the Constitution (100th Amendment) Act, 2015, which amended the First Schedule. • The Farakka Barrage is on the Ganga in Murshidabad district, West Bengal.
ANALYSIS	1. **The weak point is not the split but the flows the treaty assumes —** The formula works only if the water arrives. Its schedule rests on average flows of 1949–1988, and Article II asks the upper riparian only to make "every effort" to protect them. If dry-season flow keeps falling through upstream use and erratic rain, the 50:50 and below-50,000-cusec emergency clauses will trigger more often. The other view: India cannot freeze its own States' upstream use for a neighbour. That holds, but it argues for a revised flow base, not for no treaty. 2. **Lens — Centre and States: the Union holds the pen, but a border State holds a practical veto —** In law, Entry 14 and Article 253 let New Delhi sign and implement the treaty alone. In practice the barrage, Kolkata port and upstream farmers all sit in States. The Teesta deal shows the cost: a draft ready in 2011 was never signed after West Bengal objected. The strongest objection is that foreign policy cannot be hostage to one State. True, but consulting early costs less than a treaty no State will help implement. 3. **Lens — Strategic autonomy and partnership: Dhaka will bargain water with everything else —** A "techno-political" approach means data plus politics: Bangladesh wants renewal judged within the whole relationship. It buys 2,500 MW of Indian power, and the envoy puts interaction at US$28-30 billion against $13 billion of formal trade. The other view: linkage hardens positions, since India will not let its border policy be priced in cusecs. Still, a neighbour that buys Indian power has a stake in a deal, and so does India, which is itself a lower riparian on the Brahmaputra.
BOTH SIDES	• + For: Renew with flexibility: the treaty has kept water technical for thirty years, and a lapse would leave no floor in a drought year. • + For: Neighbourhood logic: Bangladesh buys Indian power and links the North-East to the sea; a stable water deal protects both. • − Against: Indian States: drinking water, irrigation and port needs have grown since 1996, and a formula built on 1949–88 flows ignores them. • − Against: Renegotiate first: Farakka exists for Kolkata port, so India should not lock in shares again without a fresh study of the Hooghly's needs.
WAY FORWARD	1. **Renew on a recent flow base and use the review clause —** Article X of the treaty

	already provides for a review every five years; both governments should use it rather than leave it dormant. 2. **Publish daily flows —** The Joint Committee's teams at Farakka and Hardinge Bridge can share data in real time. 3. **Consult the States and think basin-wide —** The MEA and Jal Shakti ministry should consult West Bengal and upstream States formally before signing. Article IX commits both countries to agreements on other common rivers, a base for GBM-wide management.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	To what extent should Indian States' water needs shape the renewal of the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty with Bangladesh? (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — To what extent —** Judge how far States' needs should weigh and end with a clear position. 2. **Introduction — a treaty reaches its thirtieth year —** Sample: The 1996 Ganga Water Treaty, which splits the Ganga's lean-season flow at Farakka, ends its thirty-year term in December 2026, and renewal needs both countries' consent. 3. **Body — States' needs are real because the treaty rests on old flows —** The schedule uses 1949–88 averages. Value addition: the 50:50 split below 70,000 cusecs and the 90% fallback in Article XI. 4. **Body — the Union may sign alone but cannot implement alone —** Entry 14, Article 253, Entry 17 and the stalled Teesta draft of 2011. Draw a flowchart: Ganga → Farakka → Kolkata port on one arm, Bangladesh on the other. 5. **Body — non-renewal hurts India's wider interests —** Power exports of 2,500 MW and India's own case as a lower riparian on the Brahmaputra. 6. **Conclusion — the Union consults first, then renews on new numbers —** Sample: New Delhi should consult the riparian States, revise the flow base with Dhaka and renew, because shared rivers need shared rules.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As Joint Secretary (Bangladesh–Myanmar) in the MEA, a State government demands that the Ganga Water Treaty not be renewed unless its needs are met. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** My options: ignore the State, since treaties are a Union subject; stall talks until it agrees; or bring it into the preparation. Ignoring it risks a treaty no one implements; stalling lets December pass with no legal floor. I would ask the State for its water demand with data, set up a technical group with the Central Water Commission, and carry its strongest points into the negotiating brief. The stakeholders are the State's farmers and Kolkata port, Bangladesh's downstream users, and India's wider ties with Dhaka, including power exports. The deciding principle is cooperative federalism within the Union's constitutional role.
KARMA YOGI TEST (THE THREE A'S)	Ability — Reading Annexure I, the 1949–88 flow base and Article XI before the meeting, so the State's demand is answered with numbers, not assurances.

4.2 Pakistan puts Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under emergency rule and suspends its PTI-led government

IN BRIEF

ISSUE THREAD **Pakistan: frictions and contacts** (update 6)

STORY SO FAR *Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye agreed on October 5 to implement the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement at once, and Pakistan later confirmed troops in Saudi Arabia.*

THE NEWS Islamabad. On Sunday, October 11, President Asif Ali Zardari, on the federal cabinet's recommendation, proclaimed an emergency in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under Articles 232(1) and 234 of Pakistan's Constitution, citing "deteriorating law and order", rising terrorist attacks and a breakdown of constitutional machinery, The Hindu and The Indian Express report. The federal government may direct the Governor to take over the provincial government's functions, and the Assembly's powers pass to Parliament. Chief Minister Sohail Afridi and his ministers must vacate office. The province was the only one ruled by jailed former PM Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Afridi had been leading a march, begun at Lakki Marwat on October 4, for Khan's release. PTI MP Junaid Akbar said Afridi had been arrested (AFP, in The Economic Times).

WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE EXAM	GS2 covers "India and its neighbourhood" and "comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries". Instability in the province bordering Afghanistan, scene of rising militant attacks, matters for India's western security. Mains can compare this emergency against an elected provincial government with India's Article 356 and the safeguards built around it.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• India's Article 356 proclamation needs approval by both Houses within two months; S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994) made it subject to judicial review and the floor test. • The 44th Amendment (1978) replaced "internal disturbance" with "armed rebellion" as a ground for national emergency under Article 352.
CONCEPTS TO KNOW	• Article 356 and the S.R. Bommai safeguards · Durand Line • Short explanations: upscdarpan.in → Concept Booster → Today's concepts

5. Environment & Ecology

Recovery is now a matter of moving animals, not only guarding them. Eight wild buffaloes have travelled from Assam to bring a lost species back to Madhya Pradesh, and the test is not the release but whether the herd breeds and stays.

5.1 Eight wild buffaloes from Kaziranga released in Kanha, returning the species to MP

IN BRIEF

ISSUE THREAD **Species recovery and captive breeding** (update 4)

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Captive-bred Great Indian Bustards are being released in the Thar, and Project Cheetah's count reached 60 on October 5, as State-led efforts show gains despite steep global wildlife declines.*

THE NEWS Kanha (Madhya Pradesh). Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Sunday, October 11, released eight wild buffaloes, six females and two males, into a 17-hectare enclosure in Kanha Tiger Reserve, part of efforts to reintroduce the species in the State "after nearly a century", The Indian Express reports (PTI). The animals came from Kaziranga National Park in Assam, about 2,200 km away, with help from Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. They were moved from a one-hectare quarantine enclosure in the Supkhar range after completing quarantine. Reintroduction means bringing a species back to an area where it once lived but has died out; a soft release, through a large enclosure first, lets animals settle before they roam free.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE EXAM	GS3 covers "conservation". The angle for Mains is inter-State translocation as a recovery tool and its risks, small founder numbers and disease. For Prelims, UPSC asks about a species' IUCN status, its legal schedule and where it survives in the wild.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The wild water buffalo (Bubalus arnee) is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List and is in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. • The wild buffalo is the State animal of Chhattisgarh. • Kaziranga National Park was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985. • Kanha Tiger Reserve is known for the recovery of the hard-ground barasingha, Madhya Pradesh's State animal.
CONCEPTS TO KNOW	• Conservation translocation and reintroduction · IUCN Red List categories • Short explanations: upscdarpan.in → Concept Booster → Today's concepts

6. Science & Technology

Technology meets the ground in both stories. A satellite built with France will measure how thirsty India's fields are from space, while in Rewa a nuclear project has stalled at the first borehole because villagers say they never agreed. Hardware is the easier half; trust and use are the harder one.

6.1 TRISHNA, the third India–France satellite, will launch in 12–16 months to map water stress

IN BRIEF

ISSUE THREAD **India–France space partnership** (new thread)

THE NEWS Bengaluru. TRISHNA (Thermal Infra-Red Imaging Satellite for High-resolution Natural Resource Assessment) will be launched in the next 12-16 months, Jasvinder Singh Khoral, Director (Projects) of ISRO's U.R. Rao Satellite Centre, said on Sunday at the "TRISHNA Water for Tomorrow" workshop, The Hindu reports. It is the third satellite India and France have developed, after Megha-Tropiques and SARAL, with ISRO and the French space agency CNES. The project has taken "a decade or so" to reach this stage. Per ISRO, CNES supplies the thermal infrared instrument and ISRO a visible and short-wave infrared one, with 57 m resolution over land, from a 761 km sun-synchronous orbit. How it works: every surface gives off heat as infrared light; reading it gives land surface temperature. A well-watered crop stays cool because it loses water by evapotranspiration; a thirsty one heats up. So temperature maps water stress.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE EXAM	GS3 covers "awareness in the fields of space" and GS2 "bilateral agreements involving India". For Prelims, expect mission names, partners and what thermal sensing measures. For Mains, link space data to irrigation planning, drought warning and water-use efficiency.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Megha-Tropiques (2011) studied the tropical water cycle and SARAL (2013) carried the ARGOS data-relay system and the ALTIKA altimeter; both are ISRO–CNES missions. • CNES (Centre National d'Études Spatiales) is France's space agency. • A sun-synchronous orbit passes over any given place at the same local solar time, keeping lighting comparable between images.
CONCEPTS TO KNOW	• Thermal infrared remote sensing and evapotranspiration • Short explanations: upscdarpan.in → Concept Booster → Today's concepts

6.2 Rewa villagers halt drilling for a private 2x220 MW nuclear plant over Gram Sabha consent

IN BRIEF

ISSUE THREAD **Expanding nuclear power** (update 3) LENS Development and environment

STORY SO FAR *NPCIL began fuel loading at RAPP-8, a 700 MWe indigenous PHWR, and France's EDF pitched European reactors as India drafts rules under its new nuclear law.*

THE NEWS Rewa (Madhya Pradesh). On October 9 villagers near Rojhauhi stopped drilling equipment sent for site investigations for a proposed 2x220 MW nuclear power project, The Indian Express reports. Tata Power's letter of July 13 described pre-project activities; a Collector's office letter of August 21 covers eight boreholes, four of them 100 m deep. A special Gram Sabha at Sarai Kala on September 3 recorded objections, and the sarpanch wrote that consent was not granted. Activist Shivanand Dwivedi alleged no public hearing was held and the no-objection certificate rested on a "forged and fabricated letter". Collector Narendra Kumar Suryavanshi said no land was allotted, only suitability testing was permitted, and the administration had received the Gram Sabha's consent before the protests. A 220 MW unit is India's small indigenous pressurised heavy water reactor.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE	GS3 covers "infrastructure: energy" and GS2 local self-government. The angle: nuclear

EXAM	expansion now depends on private developers and on winning local consent for land and water. Mains can ask how social licence, public hearings and Gram Sabhas fit into siting high-risk plants.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board was constituted in 1983 under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962; Section 17 of the SHANTI Act, 2025 deems it constituted under the new Act. • The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025 (No. 39 of 2025) got the President's assent on 20 December 2025. It lets licences go to private companies, repeals the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010, and comes into force on dates the Centre notifies. • A PHWR uses natural uranium as fuel and heavy water as both moderator and coolant.
CONCEPTS TO KNOW	• Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor · Social licence and Gram Sabha consent for projects • Short explanations: upscdarpan.in → Concept Booster → Today's concepts

7. Society

Both stories today are about who gets counted, and by which yardstick. Mizoram will count refugees from three conflicts on a separate Census list, in a country that has no refugee law and leaves such people to executive practice. Jammu and Kashmir's EWS certificates show how a rule copied from the Centre can measure poverty in a way that misses the poor of one region.

7.1 Mizoram will count 38,213 registered refugees on a separate Census 2027 list

DEEP READ — the day's big issue

RV SIR'S FILTER · Cat 1 — International event with an impact on India: *Crises in Myanmar, Bangladesh's hill tracts and Manipur have come to rest in one Indian State; how the Census counts them tests a country with no refugee law.*

ISSUE THREAD **Census 2027 and demographic data** (update 5) **LENS** Liberty and order · Centre and States

> ***STORY SO FAR*** *Census 2027 records caste in an open column and keeps the 1981 census-town definition; the Home Ministry has sought religion-wise data, and disability groups objected to the Hindi notification calling disability 'nihshaktata'.*

THE NEWS Aizawl. Mizoram will enumerate refugees living temporarily in the State during Census 2027, recording them on a list separate from Indian citizens, officials said after a meeting on Saturday, October 10, chaired by Chief Secretary Khilli Ram Meena reviewing the Census's second phase, The Hindu reports. Home Minister K. Sapdanga had told the 40-member Assembly that 38,213 refugees were registered as of August 20: 29,575 from Myanmar, 6,959 from Manipur and 1,679 from Bangladesh; local organisations say over 60,000. Most Myanmar refugees are Chins who came after the February 2021 coup; Bawms fled a Bangladeshi military offensive in November 2022; Kuki-Zomi people fled Manipur's ethnic conflict in May 2023. All three are Mizo kin. Nobody will be compelled to share an Aadhaar number, and the 78,442 people deleted from the draft electoral rolls in the Special Intensive Revision will also be counted.

FIRST, UNDERSTAND (BACKGROUND)	1. **A refugee is not the same as an illegal migrant or a displaced person —** A refugee has crossed an international border out of a well-founded fear of persecution at home. An illegal migrant enters or stays without valid papers, for any reason. An internally displaced person has fled but remains inside his own country, as the Kuki-Zomi from Manipur have; Chins and Bawms crossed a border. 2. **India shelters refugees by practice, not by law —** India has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention and has no refugee law; in law every non-citizen is a "foreigner". Yet it has, for example, sheltered Tibetans and Sri Lankan Tamils by executive decision, so protection depends on the policy of the day, not on a right. 3. **The Census counts people, not citizens —** The Census aims to count everyone living in India on its reference date, whatever their papers. A separate list keeps refugees in the count without mixing them into citizen figures.
KEY TERMS	• Special Intensive Revision (SIR) — The Election Commission's fresh house-to-house check of electoral rolls, deleting names it finds ineligible, dead or shifted. • Biometric enrolment — Recording fingerprints, iris and face so each person can be identified uniquely later. • Executive practice — Government action through orders and decisions rather than through a law passed by the legislature.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Myanmar coup (2021), Bangladesh offensive (2022), Manipur conflict (2023) → kin groups cross into Mizoram → State registers them → Census 2027 lists them separately from citizens

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. **The Census Act, 1948 sets the Census and protects what people tell it —** "Census" is Entry 69 of the Union List, and the count runs under the Census Act, 1948, notified for

	2027 under its Section 3 (PIB, 4 June 2025). Every person must answer the enumerator's questions, but Census records are confidential and not admissible as evidence. 2. **Non-citizens fall under the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 and Article 21 —** The 2025 Act repealed the Foreigners Act, 1946 and treats every non-citizen as a foreigner, with no refugee category. Article 21 protects every person: Louis De Raedt v Union of India (1991) and NHRC v State of Arunachal Pradesh (1996) bind the State to protect a non-citizen's life and liberty.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. **Can India manage refugee flows without a refugee law, and what does counting them change? —** GS1 lists "population and associated issues"; GS2 lists "effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests". Expect three dimensions: the legal vacuum, ethnic kinship across borders, and the security and federal tension.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• India is not a party to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. • Census 2027's reference date is 1 March 2027, and 1 October 2026 for Ladakh, snow-bound J&K, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. • The Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 repealed the Foreigners Act, 1946.
ANALYSIS	1. **Lens — Liberty and order: a separate list protects the count only if refugees trust it —** A refugee who fears deportation hides from anyone with a form, so undercounting is natural; the gap between 38,213 registered and local groups' estimate of over 60,000 already shows it. Mizoram's two safeguards, a list apart from citizens and no forced Aadhaar disclosure, meet that fear, and the Census Act bars using answers as evidence. The other view: the State is also enrolling them biometrically, and a precise list of foreigners is what a deportation drive would want. The safeguard holds only while counting and enforcement data stay apart. 2. **Without a law, who counts as a refugee turns on kinship and politics —** Mizoram welcomes Chins, Bawms and Kuki-Zomi as kin of the Mizos; the Union Home Ministry, citing the "demographic structure" of the North-East, decided on 8 February 2024 to scrap free movement across the Myanmar border. Both are executive choices, and neither gives the refugee an enforceable right. The Gauhati High Court held on September 3 that Article 21 protects aliens too, but it guards life and liberty, not a right to stay. The objection to a law is that it creates a pull factor and binding duties; yet a law also sets limits. 3. **The Census and the voter roll answer different questions, and Mizoram keeps them apart —** The electoral roll asks who may vote, so it holds only citizens; the Census asks who lives here, so it must hold everyone. Counting the 78,442 people deleted in the revision accepts that losing a vote is not ceasing to exist and gives planners a truer base. The counter-view is that counting deleted voters could blur doubtful and proven citizenship. The separate refugee list answers that: it keeps the citizen count clean while leaving nobody out.
BOTH SIDES	• + For: Humanitarian case: the Chins, Bawms and Kuki-Zomi fled violence and are kin of the Mizos; counting them makes their needs visible. • + For: Data case: a Census that misses tens of thousands of residents misleads every plan built on it. • − Against: Security case: the Union moved in 2024 to scrap free movement to protect security and demography; an official list may read as accepting settlement. • − Against: Trust case: with biometric enrolment running alongside, refugees may

	see any list as a step to deportation, and hide.
WAY FORWARD	1. **Guarantee the refugee list stays confidential —** The Registrar General should state publicly that refugee schedules are confidential and will not be shared for enforcement. 2. **Set one national standard by law —** Parliament could define who qualifies as a refugee and what protection follows, so treatment does not vary by State or ethnic tie.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	India hosts refugees without a refugee law. Examine the significance of Mizoram's decision to count refugees separately in Census 2027. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. **Directive — Examine —** Probe what the decision achieves and risks, and what it reveals about refugee policy; end with a judgement. 2. **Introduction — a count in a legal vacuum —** Sample: Mizoram will list 38,213 registered refugees from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Manipur separately in Census 2027, though India has no refugee law. 3. **Body — a separate list gives accurate data without conferring citizenship —** The Census counts residents, the electoral roll citizens. Value addition: local groups estimate over 60,000, showing the undercount risk. 4. **Body — executive practice makes protection depend on kinship and politics —** Contrast Mizoram's welcome with the 2024 move to scrap free movement. Flowchart: conflict abroad → border crossing → State registration → Census list → relief or deportation. 5. **Body — confidentiality decides whether refugees cooperate —** Census answers are not admissible as evidence; Article 21 protects every person (NHRC v Arunachal Pradesh, 1996). 6. **Conclusion — the Census authority guarantees confidentiality first —** Sample: The Registrar General must first assure refugees their answers stay confidential, because only a trusted count can guide humane policy.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	**Q1. As District Census Officer in Champhai, a refugee family refuses to give details, fearing deportation. What do you do?** ***Approach:*** My options: cite the Census Act's duty to answer and warn of penalty, skip the family, or win their trust. Threats would confirm their fear; skipping them breaks a count I must complete. I would return with an enumerator who speaks their language and a respected church or village elder, explain that the refugee list is separate, Aadhaar is not compelled and Census answers cannot be used as evidence, and record only what the schedule asks. Stakeholders: the family, the refugee community, the State and the Census authority. The deciding principle: an accurate count depends on keeping the promise of confidentiality.
KARMA YOGI TEST (THE THREE A'S)	Ability — Knowing exactly what the Census Act lets you promise on confidentiality, and promising no more, so the family's trust rests on law, not reassurance.

7.2 J&K's EWS certificates: 91% went to Jammu division; MLA seeks ration-card norms

IN BRIEF

ISSUE THREAD **EWS quota and who counts as poor** (new thread) **LENS** Growth and equity

THE NEWS Srinagar. Of 26,514 Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) certificates issued in Jammu and Kashmir over the last two years, 24,058 (91%) went to Jammu division and 2,486 to Kashmir, The Indian Express reports. Handwara MLA Sajad Gani Lone moved a motion on the imbalance; Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather asked the government to examine it. J&K's

2019 rules, like the Centre's, require income under ₹8 lakh and under 5 acres of farmland, and exclude anyone with a 1,000 sq ft house. Critics say the rules ignore local reality: land is recorded in kanals and marlas, and Kashmir's multi-storeyed houses are measured floor by floor. Yet of about 2,20,000 Antyodaya Anna Yojana ration cards, the scheme for the poorest households, some 1,44,000 are in Kashmir and about 75,000 in Jammu. Lone wants AAY norms to decide EWS eligibility.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR THE EXAM	GS2 covers "welfare schemes for vulnerable sections" and GS1 "poverty and developmental issues". The case shows the Mains angle: an asset test copied uniformly can exclude the poor of a region whose housing and land records differ, and two official yardsticks of poverty can point in opposite directions. Prelims asks the EWS provisions and the AAY entitlement.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The 103rd Constitutional Amendment, 2019 inserted Articles 15(6) and 16(6), allowing up to 10% reservation for EWS not covered by SC, ST or OBC quotas. • In Janhit Abhiyan v Union of India (2022) a five-judge Bench upheld the 103rd Amendment by 3:2. • Antyodaya Anna Yojana households get 35 kg of foodgrains a month under the National Food Security Act, 2013.
CONCEPTS TO KNOW	• Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) reservation · Antyodaya Anna Yojana • Short explanations: upscdarpan.in → Concept Booster → Today's concepts

8. 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 — "Clear Any Group of Five": The SHO, a Supreme Court Direction and a Peaceful Crowd Outside the Zone

SCENARIO The Indian Express and The Hindu (12 October) report that the Supreme Court, at a special sitting on Sunday, found a prima facie case of contempt over the Delhi protest curbs. It directed that there be no detention "save and except by procedure established by law, particularly with regard to peaceful, unarmed assemblage of people beyond the area where Section 163" of the BNSS is in operation. Journalists and lawyers must be allowed to do their work. Imagine you are the SHO of a police station just outside the prohibitory zone. A wireless message from your superior says: "Clear any group of five or more. Detain those who refuse. Buses are ready." In a park in your area, about thirty students sit quietly with placards. Two reporters with press cards are filming. Local men are heckling the students. When you mention the court's order, your superior replies that it is "for the Commissioner to worry about".

Q1. Are you bound to carry out the wireless instruction? Why or why not?

Q2. What will you do at the park in the next hour?

Q3. How will you record and report your decision?

MODEL APPROACH

1. **A lawful order has limits —** A police officer must obey lawful orders, but a Supreme Court direction binds every authority; Article 144 requires all authorities to act in aid of the Court. Peaceful, unarmed assembly is protected by Article 19(1)(b) and can be restricted only by law under Article 19(3). Outside the Section 163 area there is no order that makes five people sitting in a park unlawful. Section 170 BNSS allows arrest without warrant only to prevent a cognizable offence that cannot otherwise be prevented. A silent crowd with placards does not meet that test.

2. **Act on the facts on the ground —** Go to the park yourself. Check the map of the Section 163 order. Speak to the organisers, let the sit-in continue and let the reporters work. The threat to public order here comes from the hecklers, so separate them and act against them under the law if they turn violent. If violence breaks out, use minimum force and record why.

3. **Put it in writing —** Ask for the instruction in writing. Reply in writing that the spot lies outside the prohibitory zone and quote the Supreme Court's direction. Enter your decision in the station diary and inform the ACP. Declining an unlawful instruction, politely and on record, is not insubordination.

4. **Conclusion — the A it tests: Ability —** Ability here means knowing exactly where the Section 163 order runs and what the Court said before sending anyone to the buses.

Case 2 — Six Acquittals: The Public Prosecutor, "Tutored" Witnesses and Two Cases Still Pending

SCENARIO The Indian Express (12 October) reports that Ghulam Nabi, whom the Jammu and Kashmir Police call a self-styled Hizbul Mujahideen divisional commander, has been acquitted in a sixth case in Doda. Members of the police search party told the court that officers had "instructed" them what names to take. One said the rifle shown as seized had already been shown as seized in other FIRs. In earlier cases, witnesses said their statements were "tutored". Nabi is still in jail for two 2010 cases; he was first arrested 16 years ago, and his wife raised their three children alone. Imagine you are the Public Prosecutor in those two cases. The case diaries show the same pattern. The SP's office asks you to "prepare the witnesses properly" and to oppose bail, because another acquittal would "demoralise the force". In an op-ed the same day, Nanditesh Nilay recalls Sardar Patel asking his law secretary: "Does the government pay you for your dishonest opinion?"

Q1. Whom does a public prosecutor serve: the police, the government or the court?

Q2. What will you advise on the two pending cases and on bail?

Q3. How will you respond to the SP's office?

MODEL APPROACH

1. **The prosecutor serves the court and the truth —** A prosecutor's job is to place all the evidence fairly before the court, including what helps the accused. It is not to win cases. Coaching witnesses to name a person is fabricating evidence. It is a crime, and it weakens the cases against real militants, because every tutored witness discredits the next honest one.
2. **Give an honest opinion, in writing —** This is Patel's standard. Test each pending case for independent, reliable corroboration. If there is none, record that the evidence cannot sustain a conviction. Recommend either that you seek the court's consent to withdraw from the prosecution or that the trial be finished quickly. Do not oppose bail by reflex. Sixteen years in custody raises the right to a speedy trial under Article 21, recognised in Hussainara Khatoon (1979).
3. **Fix the system, not only the file —** Report the pattern of "recycled" seized weapons and instructed witnesses to the Director of Prosecution and ask for an inquiry. The family of the SPO killed in 2009 deserves to see the real attacker found, not a convenient name.
4. **Conclusion — the A it tests: Anonymity —** Anonymity means putting the work before the credit: your note may end a case the department once announced as a commander's arrest, and no one will thank you for it.

9. 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
Supreme Court's Sunday sitting — prima facie contempt over Delhi protest curbs	At a special sitting on Sunday, 11 October, a Bench of Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana found a prima facie case of contempt of the Court's 9 October order, which had said Metro and train services may be regulated but not banned outright. It issued notices to the Union Home Secretary, the Delhi Police Commissioner and the DMRC chairperson. It directed that there be no detention "save and except by procedure established by law", particularly of peaceful, unarmed assemblies outside the area where a Section 163 BNSS order is in force, and that Internet services stay undisturbed (The Indian Express p. 3–4; The Hindu p. 1; LiveLaw). The Supreme Court's power to punish for its own contempt comes from Article 129, which makes it a court of record.
BNSS Sections 126 and 170 — the preventive powers used in Delhi	Protest leaders detained in Delhi were held as preventive arrests under Sections 126 and 170 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and released by an Executive Magistrate on bonds to keep the peace (The Indian Express p. 4). Section 126 lets an Executive Magistrate require a person likely to breach the peace to execute a bond for keeping the peace; it replaces Section 107 CrPC. Section 170 lets a police officer arrest without a warrant to prevent a cognizable offence that cannot otherwise be prevented; custody cannot exceed 24 hours unless further detention is authorised. It replaces Section 151 CrPC. Neither is an order under Section 163, which bars assemblies in a notified area.
Removal of the CEC — Keralam's Assembly resolution	The Keralam government will move a resolution in the State Assembly urging the Union government to remove the Chief Election Commissioner, the first such resolution by any State legislature (The Indian Express p. 7). A State resolution has no legal effect on the office. Under Article 324(5), the CEC can be removed only in the manner and on the grounds of a Supreme Court judge: proved misbehaviour or incapacity, by an address of both Houses of Parliament passed by a special majority. Other Election Commissioners can be removed only on the CEC's recommendation.
NHRC — foundation day, 12 October	The Chief Justice of India is to attend an event marking the 33rd anniversary of the National Human Rights Commission (The Indian Express p. 3). The NHRC was set up on 12 October 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. Its chairperson is a former Chief Justice of India or a former Supreme Court judge, appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee headed by the Prime Minister. Its findings are recommendations; it cannot enforce them itself.
Katchatheevu — the 1974 and 1976 agreements	Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake said on 11 October that India has acknowledged before its Supreme Court that Katchatheevu belongs to Sri Lanka (The Hindu p. 14). The Supreme Court is hearing petitions that challenge the "unconstitutional ceding" of the island; the Attorney General told the Court India does not intend to reopen the India–Sri Lanka maritime agreements of 1974 and 1976, and the matter is listed next in February 2027 (The Hindu p. 14; LiveLaw). The 1974 agreement drew the boundary in the Palk Strait; the 1976 agreement settled the boundary in the Gulf of Mannar and the Bay of Bengal, giving each side sovereign rights over the exclusive economic zone and its resources on its side of the line. Katchatheevu lies just on the Sri Lankan side of the International Maritime Boundary Line. In the Berubari reference (1960), the Supreme Court held that ceding Indian territory needs a constitutional amendment under Article 368.
Manipur — Kuki–Naga clashes and a shutdown over the 1949 merger	Two days of armed clashes between Kuki and Naga groups spread across Kamjong, Ukhrul and Kangpokpi districts; Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh appealed for peace (The Hindu p. 1; The Economic Times p. 6). Seven banned armed groups have called a 12-hour shutdown on 15 October as "National Black Day" against Manipur's merger with the Indian Union (The Hindu p.

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
	1, 12). The Manipur Merger Agreement was signed in Shillong on 21 September 1949 and took effect on 15 October 1949. Manipur became a Part C State, then a Union Territory in 1956, and a full State in 1972.
Japan — India's largest FDI source in April–June 2026-27	Government data cited by PTI show that Japan emerged as the largest source of foreign direct investment into India in April–June 2026-27, with the quarter's inflows already above Japan's total for 2025-26 (The Hindu p. 8; The Economic Times p. 13). FDI data are compiled by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), and foreign investment is governed by the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999. India and Japan have had a Special Strategic and Global Partnership since 2014.
GST e-invoicing — to cover imported services and reverse-charge purchases	Following the 57th GST Council's recommendation, e-invoicing is set to be extended to imported services and to purchases from unregistered suppliers taxed under the reverse charge mechanism (RCM), for businesses with annual turnover of ₹5 crore or more. The Council also proposed a mechanism to correct tax liability and input tax credit in returns, possibly from the April 2027 return period, after public consultation (The Economic Times p. 9). Under RCM the recipient, not the supplier, pays the tax (Section 9(3) and 9(4) of the CGST Act). Import of services is treated as an inter-State supply under the IGST Act. The Invoice Management System lets a buyer accept, reject or keep pending each supplier invoice.
RBI dollar window for oil marketing companies opens	From 12 October, the RBI sells dollars directly to Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum through designated banks at prevailing market rates, so that these oil marketing companies need not buy in the spot market (The Economic Times p. 12; carded 11 October). The aim is to take one of the largest sources of dollar demand out of the market and ease pressure on the rupee, not to meet a shortage of dollars. Oil importers are among the biggest buyers of foreign exchange because India imports most of its crude.
Joint Crediting Mechanism — India and Japan under Article 6.2	On 30 September, India and Japan launched the Operational Manual for their Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM) under Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement. The Memorandum of Cooperation was signed on 7 August 2025 and the Rules of Implementation were adopted on 8 June 2026 (PIB, pib.gov.in). Article 6.2 allows countries to cooperate bilaterally and transfer emission reductions, called internationally transferred mitigation outcomes (ITMOs), towards their national targets. Article 6.4 sets up a separate, UN-supervised crediting mechanism.
COP31 — Antalya, with an Australian president of negotiations	Türkiye and Australia have set out their plans for COP31, to be held in Antalya, Türkiye, next month. COP31 president is Türkiye's Murat Kurum, and Australia's Climate Change Minister Chris Bowen will serve as president of negotiations. They have proposed a "presidency-led" political decision, with an open process for finalising it (The Economic Times p. 9). COP30 was held at Belém, Brazil, in 2025.
INDRA and KONKAN — two naval exercises this week	INS Sahyadri reached Vladivostok on 10 October for Exercise INDRA 2026, the bilateral exercise of the Indian Navy and the Russian Federation Navy, from 13 to 18 October. The stealth frigate INS Trishul is at Plymouth for KONKAN-26, the annual India–UK maritime exercise with the Royal Navy, from 8 to 15 October (PIB, Ministry of Defence, 11 October). Pairs to remember: INDRA — Russia; KONKAN — UK; Varuna — France; JIMEX — Japan; SIMBEX — Singapore; SLINEX — Sri Lanka; AUSINDEX — Australia; Malabar — the US, Japan and Australia.
ICMR-CHAMP — a high-altitude medicine centre at Keylong	Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda lays the foundation stone on 12 October of the ICMR Centre for High Altitude Medicine and Public Health Research (ICMR-CHAMP) at Keylong, Lahaul and Spiti, Himachal Pradesh. It is ICMR's first centre dedicated to high-altitude medicine, under the Department of Health Research. Its work covers high-altitude physiology and acclimatisation, mountain medicine, climate-sensitive diseases, maternal and child health and disaster medicine, with the Armed Forces Medical Services and the State government as partners (PIB, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 11 October).
GSLV-F17 places EOS-05 in orbit	ISRO's GSLV-F17 launched the earth observation satellite EOS-05 on 4 September 2026 and placed it in its intended orbit. ISRO also says a national-level expert committee is reviewing the cause of an anomaly in a PSLV launch (ISRO flash news, isro.gov.in). The GSLV's upper stage is an

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
	indigenous cryogenic stage burning liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen; the PSLV uses solid and liquid stages.
Quantum-safe India — free-space QKD and 'Harvest Now, Decrypt Later'	QNu Labs, BISAG-N and IIT Gandhinagar demonstrated India's first free-space quantum key distribution (QKD) link, over 5.56 km, on the night of 27–28 September, integrated with BISAG-N's post-quantum cryptography platform "Vedic Kavach" (PIB, MeitY, 3 October). Under the National Quantum Mission, the target is 2,000 km of quantum-secure communication (PIB, Ministry of Science and Technology). The Digital Threat Report 2025-26 by CERT-In, CSIRT-Fin and SISA says "Harvest Now, Decrypt Later" attacks are already active: data stolen today is stored to be decrypted when quantum computers become powerful enough (The Indian Express p. 15). QKD protects keys by physics; post-quantum cryptography uses new mathematics that quantum computers cannot easily break.
Metal-free catalyst for zinc–air batteries	Researchers at two Department of Science and Technology institutes, S.N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences, Kolkata and the Institute of Nano Science and Technology, Mohali, with SRM University Amaravati, developed a metal-free porous catalyst for the oxygen reduction reaction. It could replace scarce and costly platinum in zinc–air batteries and fuel cells (PIB, Ministry of Science and Technology, 7 October). Zinc–air batteries promise higher theoretical energy density and lower cost than lithium-ion, but are hard to recharge over many cycles.
BRICS Traditional and Indigenous Sports Demonstration Games	Under India's BRICS Chairship in 2026, the BRICS Traditional and Indigenous Sports Demonstration Games are held on 12 October at the Veer Savarkar Sports Complex, Ahmedabad, in a non-competitive demonstration format. Examples include gorodki (Belarus), zarabatana or blowpipe, corrida de toras or log race, and capoeira (Brazil), and wushu and health qigong (China) (PIB, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 10 October).
Clinical Establishments Act — an unused price clause	Rule 9(ii) of the Clinical Establishments (Central Government) Rules, 2012, made under the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010, requires clinical establishments to charge within "the range of rates determined and issued by the Central Government". The Centre has not notified those rates, the Act is not in force in every State, and doctors' bodies have challenged the provision. A parliamentary committee has recommended a legally binding upfront cost estimate before complex treatment (The Indian Express p. 16). Health is a State subject, so the Act was passed under Article 252 and applies in States that adopt it and in Union Territories.
Chenab and Anji Khad — two bridges on the Kashmir rail line	The rail line to Kashmir includes the Chenab Bridge, the highest railway arch bridge in the world, and the Anji Khad bridge, India's first cable-supported railway bridge, 331 metres above the Anji river (The Indian Express p. 8). Both lie on the Udhampur–Srinagar–Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL), which brought a Vande Bharat service between Jammu and Srinagar.

Source note: All items are drawn from The Hindu (Mumbai), The Indian Express (Delhi) & The Economic Times (Delhi) — 12 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.

10. 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.

10.1 Model answer of the day — Card 2.1 (15 marks, 250 words)

> ***"Beyond capacity-led growth towards value creation." Examine how India's draft National Steel Policy seeks to reconcile capacity expansion with decarbonisation. (15 marks, 250 words)***

Introduction — India's draft National Steel Policy, released for consultation on October 10, would raise capacity from about 220 to 604 million tonnes by 2047. It would also cut emission intensity from 2.54 to about 1.54 tonnes of CO2 per tonne of crude steel, "in line with India's net zero" goal.

1. **Expansion answers a real need —** India uses 116 kg of steel a head; the draft targets 302 kg. Rails, housing and renewables need cheap domestic steel.
2. **The draft names cleaner routes —** More scrap, hydrogen-based direct reduced iron, biochar, gasified coal and carbon capture. Scrap and hydrogen-DRI need little coking coal and so ease the projected 236 million tonnes of coking-coal demand, much of it imported.
3. **Lower intensity can still mean higher totals —** 220 mt × 2.54 is about 559 mt of CO2; 604 mt × 1.54 is about 930 mt, roughly two-thirds more at today's utilisation. The EU's carbon border tax, biting since January 2026, prices every carbon-heavy tonne exported.
4. **Value, not tonnes, remains the gap —** Automotive and electrical grades are still hard to make, an aim the 2017 policy also set. Small secondary units fear green norms they cannot finance.

Conclusion — The draft reconciles growth and climate in direction, not yet in totals. Way forward: public procurement reserved for star-rated steel under the 2024 green steel taxonomy (green below 2.2 tCO2e per tonne of finished steel), planned scrap collection, phased efficiency finance for MSMEs and a path for absolute emissions beside intensity. Then every added tonne is a cleaner one.

Draw this: *Beside the third point, two bars: 220 mt × 2.54 ≈ 559 and 604 mt × 1.54 ≈ 930 mt CO2.*

(249 words)

10.2 GS1 corner — Geography: Taking a railway across the young Himalaya: the Udhampur–Srinagar–Baramulla line

Today's peg: *IE p8*

1. **The line crosses young, unstable mountains —** Between Jammu and the Kashmir Valley lie young Himalayan fold ranges, ending in the Pir Panjal south of the Valley. A PIB release calls the terrain "full of geological surprises", so much of the route runs in tunnels and on bridges.
2. **Engineering numbers worth knowing —** Per PIB, the 272-km USBRL has 36 tunnels (119 km) and 943 bridges. The Chenab Bridge in Reasi district is 1,315 m long and stands 359 m above the river bed, the world's highest railway arch bridge; the Anji Khad bridge is Indian Railways' first cable-stayed bridge, its deck 331 m above the river bed.
3. **An old dream, finished recently —** The Indian Express traces the idea to the Dogra ruler Maharaja Pratap Singh in the late 19th century. On 6 June 2025 Vande Bharat trains were flagged off between Katra and Srinagar (PIB).

Prelims facts

- The Chenab Bridge in Reasi district is the world's highest railway arch bridge, 359 m above the river bed (PIB).
- The Anji Khad bridge is Indian Railways' first cable-stayed bridge.
- The Pir Panjal range separates the Kashmir Valley from the Jammu region.

10.3 Places in news — mark them on your atlas

Place	Where it is	Why in news	Prelims fact
Farakka	Murshidabad district, West Bengal, on the Ganga just upstream of where it enters Bangladesh.	The Ganga Water Treaty, which splits the lean-season flow at the Farakka Barrage, is due for renewal in December (4.1).	A feeder canal diverts water into the Bhagirathi-Hooghly for Kolkata port; in Bangladesh the Ganga is the Padma.
Kanha Tiger Reserve	Mandla and Balaghat districts of Madhya Pradesh, in the Maikal hills at the eastern end of the Satpura range.	Eight wild buffaloes from Kaziranga were released into an enclosure there on October 11 (5.1).	Kanha is known for saving the hard-ground barasingha, Madhya Pradesh's State animal.
Rewa	Northeastern Madhya Pradesh, on the Vindhyan plateau, bordering Uttar Pradesh.	Villagers near Rojhauhi halted drilling for a proposed private 2x220 MW nuclear plant (6.2).	The Rewa Ultra Mega Solar park (750 MW) supplies power to the Delhi Metro.
Mizoram	Southern North-East: Myanmar east and south, Bangladesh west; Tripura, Assam, Manipur north.	It will list 38,213 registered refugees from Myanmar, Manipur and Bangladesh separately in Census 2027 (7.1).	The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project links Mizoram to Sittwe port in Myanmar.

10.4 Ethics term of the day (GS4 Section A): Courage of conviction (frank and fearless advice)

Meaning — A public servant owes an honest opinion even when unwelcome; the authority decides, but the advice must not bend to what it wants to hear.

In today's news — Case 2: a prosecutor pressed to "prepare the witnesses properly"; Nanditesh Nilay (IE p10) recalls Patel asking his law secretary whether the government paid him for a dishonest opinion.

Use in an answer — Case studies with pressure from superiors: justify a written, reasoned dissent and offer a lawful alternative.

10.5 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.

When a new technology appears, attention goes first to the people who invent it. Yet the history of economic growth suggests that most of the gains come later, and from somewhere else: from the slow spread of the technology into ordinary firms, farms and offices.

Electricity is a familiar example. Power stations existed for decades before factories learned to use them well. Owners first merely swapped steam engines for electric motors and gained little. Productivity rose only when factories were redesigned around small motors at each machine, and when workers were trained to work in the new way. The invention was necessary, but it was the long work of adoption that paid.

This carries a lesson for a country that is not at the frontier. It need not build the most advanced system in the world to benefit from it. A small clinic that uses a tool to read scans, or a farmer who gets weather advice on a phone, may add more to national welfare than a single brilliant laboratory. What matters is how cheaply, widely and sensibly the tool reaches users.

Adoption, however, is not automatic. It needs reliable power and connectivity, workers who can use and question the tool, and rules that make people trust it. Where these are missing, even a free technology sits unused. A country that builds new systems while neglecting these foundations may own impressive technology and see little change in daily life.

The wiser course, then, is to treat diffusion as a policy goal in its own right, measured by how many people actually use a technology well.

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

(a) Only countries at the technological frontier benefit from new technologies.
(b) The largest gains from a technology come from its wide and effective adoption.
(c) Inventors deserve more credit than users of technology.
(d) Electricity was a failed technology for many decades.

Q2. The example of electricity in factories is used to show that

(a) steam engines were better than electric motors.
(b) a new technology pays off only when work is reorganised around it.
(c) power stations were built too late.
(d) workers resisted electricity.

Q3. Which one of the following is an assumption made by the author?

(a) A free technology will always be widely used.
(b) Public policy can influence how widely a technology is adopted.
(c) Advanced laboratories are useless for poor countries.
(d) Farmers cannot use mobile phones.

Reasoning and quantitative aptitude

Q4. A sector makes 220 million tonnes of steel at 2.54 tonnes of CO2 per tonne. If output rises to 604 million tonnes and intensity falls to 1.54, total emissions rise by about

(a) 39%
(b) 52%
(c) 66%
(d) 175%

Q5. Five friends A, B, C, D and E sit in a row facing north. C is in the middle. A is immediately to the left of C. E is at the right end. B does not sit next to A. Who sits at the left end?

(a) A
(b) B
(c) D
(d) E

Answer key and explanations

Q1: (b) Most gains, it says, come from spread into ordinary use; option 3 is tempting, but the passage ranks sources of gain, not credit.

Q2: (b) Productivity rose only after redesign and training; swapping engines gave little gain, not a loss, so option 1 fails.

Q3: (b) Making diffusion a policy goal assumes policy can shape adoption; option 1 contradicts “even a free technology sits unused”.

Q4: (c) Now: 220 × 2.54 = 558.8 mt. Later: 604 × 1.54 = 930.16 mt. 930.16 ÷ 558.8 ≈ 1.66, so a rise of about 66%.

Q5: (c) Seats 1–5 from the left: C = 3, A = 2, E = 5. B and D take seats 1 and 4. Seat 1 is next to A, so B = 4 and D = 1.

11. Essays of the Day

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

ESSAY 1 · Essay · Section A · 7 min read

Efficiency saves only what restraint protects.

Themes: Efficiency lowers the cost of each unit, and a lower cost usually invites more use, so the total can rise · What efficiency saves is kept only where a limit, a price or a habit of restraint stands guard over it · Efficiency and restraint are partners, not rivals: the first is the engine, the second the brake and the steering

India has just published a draft steel policy with two numbers that sit uneasily together. By 2047 the country wants to make each tonne of steel far cleaner, cutting emissions from 2.54 tonnes of carbon dioxide per tonne to about 1.54. It also wants to raise capacity from about 220 million tonnes to 604 million. Each tonne will be cleaner; the sector, on simple arithmetic, could still emit about two-thirds more than today. Nobody has done anything wrong here. The numbers simply show an old truth that we forget whenever a new machine arrives: doing a thing more efficiently is not the same as doing less of it. This essay argues that efficiency is one of humanity's great gifts, but its savings are kept only where restraint stands guard over them, through a limit, a price or a habit of the mind.

The puzzle was first stated clearly in 1865. The English economist William Stanley Jevons was worried that Britain would run out of cheap coal. People told him that better steam engines, which burned less coal for the same work, would solve the problem. Jevons replied, in The Coal Question: "It is wholly a confusion of ideas to suppose that the economical use of fuel is equivalent to a diminished consumption. The very contrary is the truth." His reasoning was simple. When an engine needs less coal, the work it does becomes cheaper; when work becomes cheaper, people find many more uses for it; and so the nation burns more coal in total. Economists now call this the rebound effect, and in its extreme form the Jevons paradox.

Once you know the pattern, you see it everywhere. Wider roads were built to end traffic jams, and in many cities the new lanes filled with new cars within a few years. Mobile data in India became cheap, and Indians did not spend less time on their phones; they spent far more. Water gives the sharpest example. In 2008 two researchers, Frank Ward and Manuel Pulido-Velazquez, studied the Upper Rio Grande basin in the United States and found that subsidies for more efficient irrigation were unlikely to reduce water use. Farmers used the saved water to irrigate more land or thirstier crops, and less water seeped back into rivers and aquifers. Their paper carried a title that sounds like a riddle: "Water conservation in irrigation can increase water use."

India's own fields tell a similar story from the other side. In Punjab and Haryana, paddy enjoys assured purchase and power for pumps that is free or nearly free. When the cost of drawing water falls to almost nothing, the farmer has no reason to save it, and the water table in Haryana now falls about 1.7 feet a year. Cheapness, whether created by a better machine or by a subsidy, works the same way: it makes more use rational for each person, even when it is ruinous for everyone together. The individual is not foolish; the system has simply given him no reason to stop.

Indian thought understood this long before Jevons. The very first verse of the Īśopaniṣad says that the whole world is pervaded by the divine, and then gives a rule for living in it: "tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā, mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam" — enjoy it by letting go, and do not covet anyone's wealth. The verse does not ask us to give up the world. It asks us to enjoy it with restraint. That is exactly the missing half of efficiency. A better tool increases what we can take; only restraint decides what we will take. Gandhi's idea of trusteeship and the everyday Indian habit of mending, reusing and sharing came from the same instinct: abundance is safe only in hands that know when to stop.

There is a strong counter-argument, and it deserves a fair hearing. For a country like India, efficiency is not a luxury but a lifeline. An Indian uses about 116 kilograms of steel a year, a fraction of what richer countries use; per-capita emissions are low; and the net-zero target is 2070. To tell a poor nation to restrain its demand is to tell it to stay poor. Efficiency is what lets a village get light from a smaller solar panel, a farmer more crop from each drop, and a factory more output from each tonne of coal. Without efficiency, restraint means only going without. Moreover, the rebound is rarely total: in many cases efficiency saves something even after people use more.

All of this is true, and it changes the argument without defeating it. The counter-argument proves that efficiency is necessary; it does not prove that efficiency is sufficient. Growth in steel, roads and irrigation is right for India, but a planet has an absolute limit, and an aquifer has a bottom. A number per tonne, per hectare or per kilometre measures how well we work; only a total tells us whether we are within the limit. The world has done this once with success. The Montreal Protocol of 1987 did not ask factories to use ozone-destroying chemicals more efficiently; it set out to phase them out, and the ozone layer has begun to heal. The lesson is not that every good must be banned, but that a goal stated as a total is honest in a way that a goal stated only as a ratio is not.

From this follows a practical programme in which efficiency and restraint work together. First, pair every intensity target with a total: a steel policy that counts emissions per tonne should also say what it expects the sector’s total to be, so that progress cannot hide behind growth. Second, let the price carry the truth. Water and power that cost nothing will always be overused; a farmer paid to leave paddy, from the subsidy that paddy would have used, is being asked for restraint in a language he can afford. Third, give communities a budget, not only a better pump: when a village knows how much water lies under its fields and how much it draws, restraint becomes a shared decision rather than a sermon. Fourth, reward what is saved and not only what is produced, from recycled scrap in a steel plant to an hour of attention kept away from a screen.

Efficiency is the engine of progress, and India needs more of it, not less. But an engine without a brake or a steering wheel only takes us faster to wherever we were already heading. The steam engine, the wider road, the drip pipe and the cleaner furnace each gave humanity a saving, and each time the saving was spent unless someone chose to keep it. That choice is the work of restraint: a limit set by law, a price that tells the truth, and an old discipline of the mind that knows how to enjoy by letting go. Efficiency can save; only restraint can make the saving last.

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 — "Kerala High Court tells the Centre to make the Data Protection Board functional in eight weeks" — 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.