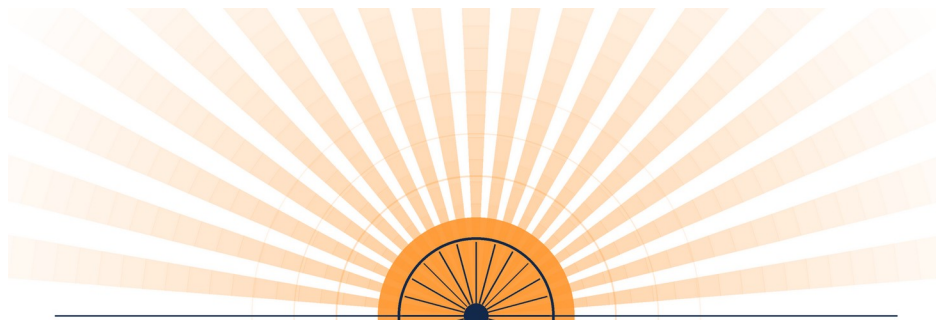




UPSC DARPAN

शीलं परं भूषणम्

Sheelam param bhushanam · Character is the highest ornament

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

Your one-stop solution for UPSC CSE examination resources.

Welcome to the Ohana family

Hum jeet ka maja chakh kar rahenge.

Quote of the Day

"The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity."

— Jawaharlal Nehru, "Tryst with Destiny", speech in the Constituent Assembly (14 August 1947)

The Hindu (Delhi), The Indian Express (Mumbai) & The Economic Times (Delhi) — 1 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 · 1 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 धर्म: — 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.

“The decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out.”

— **Michael Lipsky** · *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1980), Preface

Use in: The centenary of the UPSC (the Public Service Commission was set up on 1 October 1926) and the gap between a policy announced and a policy delivered (today's report that ten months after the Labour Codes took effect, only 10 States and UTs have notified rules; support prices for pulses and oilseeds that mean little where no one procures). Use it in GS2 answers on governance, service delivery, civil-services reform and the role of the civil service in a democracy, and in essays on the State and the citizen: the teacher, constable, patwari and ration dealer are where a law becomes real. Argue for filling frontline vacancies, training that reaches the lowest rung (Mission Karmayogi), time-bound service guarantee laws, and social audits that let citizens check what was delivered.

“Just as fish moving under water cannot possibly be found out either as drinking or not drinking water, so government servants employed in the government work cannot be found out (while) taking money (for themselves).”

— **Kautilya** · *Arthashastra*, Book II, Chapter IX, “Examination of the Conduct of Government Servants” (tr. R. Shamasastri, 1915)

Use in: Discretion and corruption at the point of delivery (today's ethics case of a superintendent of police reviewing an FIR whose accused column was left blank, and the essay on the clerk who meets the citizen). Use it in GS4 answers on probity in governance, integrity and accountability, and in GS2 answers on transparency and anti-corruption: Kautilya did not assume officials were honest; he built a system of inspection, rotation and spies because he assumed they might not be. Argue for the modern equivalents: digitised records, social audits, the Right to Information, rotation from sensitive posts, and protection for whistle-blowers, so that the fish can at least be watched.

“You will not have a united India if you do not have a good All-India Service which has the independence to speak out its mind.”

— **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** · *Speech in the Constituent Assembly on the All-India Services*, 10 October 1949 (Constituent Assembly Debates)

Use in: The UPSC's centenary today and the idea of a neutral, merit-based civil service (the essay on the clerk who meets the citizen; the Labour Codes card, where rules made by States decide what the worker actually gets). Use it in GS2 answers on the role of civil services in a democracy and Articles 312 and 315–323, and in GS4 answers on integrity, impartiality and the courage to give frank advice: Patel defended the services because a frank, secure officer is what holds a plural Union together. Argue for fixed tenures, recorded reasons for transfers and protection for honest dissent on file.

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- 12.1 A State is only as good as the clerk who meets the citizen.

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	Seven judges to test legislative privilege against free speech <i>Why it matters: GS2 legislative privileges: Articles 105/194, Searchlight versus Keshav Singh; hearings open October 6.</i>
2.3	Green Energy Corridor III: ₹1.86 lakh crore for lines and batteries <i>Why it matters: GS3 energy infrastructure: transmission, curtailment and storage are the new renewables questions; VGF suits Prelims.</i>
3.1	Wheat MSP held nearly flat; oilseeds and pulses get bigger rises <i>Why it matters: GS3 MSP and buffer stocks: CACP, A2+FL versus C2 and rabi crops are Prelims staples; diversification suits Mains.</i>
4.1	MEA's toughest advisory against joining Russia's army <i>Why it matters: GS2 diaspora and India–Russia ties: the Emigration Act's ECR gap, Article 23 and consular protection make a ready 15-mark question.</i>
5.1	CAFE-III fuel norms count each electric car as three <i>Why it matters: GS3 pollution and energy: CAFE versus BS norms and BEE suit Prelims; EV-versus-hybrid trade-offs suit Mains.</i>

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

1. Polity & Governance

Both stories today concern bodies the Constitution shields from ordinary checks: a legislature that can punish critics for breach of privilege, and an Election Commission whose members a 2023 law protects from lawsuits. Insulation lets them work without fear. The test is the same in both: when the shielded body harms a citizen, who can still say no?

1.1 Seven-judge Bench to decide from October 6 whether legislative privilege overrides free speech

ISSUE THREAD Legislative privileges and the press (new thread) **LENS** Liberty and order · Independence and accountability

STORY SO FAR Articles 105 and 194 give legislatures privileges to protect their work. No law defines them, so each House decides what a breach is.

THE NEWS New Delhi. A seven-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on October 6 a case pending since 2003 on whether a legislature can use its privileges to override citizens' freedom of speech, The Hindu reports. Journalists Seema Chishti and Ajit Anjum and comedian Kunal Kamra have applied to intervene; Mr. Kamra faces privilege proceedings in the Maharashtra Assembly over his act "Naya Bharat". The case began when The Hindu, itself a party, criticised then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa in an editorial. The Assembly called it "a breach of privilege of the entire House" under Article 194 and resolved to arrest the editorial staff. The Court stayed coercive action, and a five-judge Bench referred the question to seven judges in December 2003 because earlier rulings conflicted, per Supreme Court Observer. A privilege is a special right a House holds so that it can work unobstructed.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

The Constitution leaves privileges undefined "until so defined by law" → no legislature passes such a law → each House decides what counts as contempt → a 2003 editorial is treated as a breach and arrests are ordered → the Court must settle whether privilege yields to Article 19(1)(a)

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Articles 105(3) and 194(3) rest on privileges never written down — Articles 105 and 194 give MPs and MLAs freedom of speech in the House and immunity from court proceedings for what they say or vote there. All other privileges are what the legislature defines by law and, until then, what the House had immediately before the Forty-fourth Amendment, 1978; the original text referred to the British House of Commons. 2. Two old rulings pull in opposite directions — In <i>M.S.M. Sharma v. Sri Krishna Sinha</i> (1958, the "Searchlight" case), the Supreme Court held that Article 19(1)(a) must yield to privileges under Article 194(3). In <i>Special Reference No. 1 of 1964</i> (Keshav Singh), it held that courts can examine whether a claimed privilege exists, and that Article 21 prevails over Article 194(3).
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS2 names "parliament and state legislatures — ... powers & privileges" — In 2024 a seven-judge Bench in <i>Sita Soren v. Union of India</i> held bribery is not protected by privilege, so the Court has lately been narrowing privileges.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Article 105 covers the privileges of Parliament; Article 194 those of State legislatures. - Under Articles 105(3) and 194(3), undefined privileges are those that existed immediately before the Forty-fourth Amendment, 1978; the original text referred to the British House of Commons. - Article 212 bars courts from questioning a State legislature's proceedings for irregularity of procedure; Article 122 does the same for Parliament. - In <i>Sita Soren v. Union of India</i> (2024), a seven-judge Bench held that a legislator who takes a bribe to vote or speak is not protected by privilege.

ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Liberty and order: privilege is a shield for the House's work, not a sword against critics — Privileges exist so members can speak freely and the House is not obstructed. An editorial written outside the House obstructs nothing; it only stings. Treating criticism as contempt makes the House accuser and judge at once. A careful officer would conclude that a House may punish real obstruction, but a breach must be tied to its functioning, not its feelings. 2. The absence of a law is a choice that suits legislatures — A law listing privileges could be tested against Fundamental Rights, which is why Houses have avoided one: undefined power is larger power. The counter-view is that courts would then second-guess every disciplinary act. A short law limiting contempt to obstruction answers both worries. 3. The Kamra plea shows the issue is live, not historical — The tool used against a newspaper in 2003 is now used against a comedian. When the process itself is the punishment, critics self-censor.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	“Legislative privilege must protect the functioning of a House, not its reputation.” Critically examine with reference to Articles 194(3) and 19(1)(a). (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh the need for privileges against the risk to free speech, then judge. 2. Introduction — privileges exist so a House can work unobstructed — Cite Articles 105 and 194 and the 2003 case now before seven judges. 3. Privileges are necessary for free debate — Immunity for speech and votes, and power to punish real obstruction. 4. Uncodified privilege lets a House judge its own critics — Value addition: Searchlight (1958) against Keshav Singh (1964); Sita Soren (2024) narrowing privilege. 5. Codification limited to functional necessity is the balance — Flowchart: criticism → does it obstruct the House? → yes: privilege; no: Article 19(2) and ordinary law. 6. Conclusion — define by law, link contempt to obstruction — A short law would end the conflict the Court is being asked to settle.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Secretary of a State Assembly, the Speaker asks you to draft a privilege motion against a journalist for a critical article. What do you advise? Approach: I would first ask whether the article obstructs the House's work, such as misreporting proceedings, or merely criticises it. If it is criticism, privilege is a weak and risky route while seven judges are deciding the question. If a breach is pursued, the journalist must get notice and a hearing, and arrest should be avoided.

2. Economy

Today's three stories are about the gap between a headline and what reaches the ground. Factories are adding output, workers and capital, but the worker's pay packet grows at half the pace of the value he helps create. The Labour Codes are law at the Centre, yet most industrial States have not written the rules that decide what a worker actually gets. And India can install solar plants faster than it can carry their power, which is why the Cabinet is now spending on wires and batteries rather than panels.

2.1 Annual Survey of Industries 2024-25: factories add value and workers, but wages lag

ISSUE THREAD Factories, jobs and formal manufacturing (new thread) **LENS** Growth and equity · Market and State

STORY SO FAR Manufacturing hovers near 15% of GVA despite Make in India and PLI; the question is whether formal factories can absorb workers leaving farms at decent wages.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) 2024-25 on Wednesday, September 30. Gross value added (GVA, the value of output minus the inputs used up) of registered factories rose 9.6% to ₹26.9 lakh crore, and output 7.8% to ₹165.2 lakh crore, The Economic Times reports. The number of factories rose 2.6% to about 2.7 lakh, the first time in over a decade that the count has grown by more than 2% in two successive years, The Indian Express notes. The two papers count jobs differently: ET reports "persons engaged", which includes supervisors and managers, at 21 million (up 7.2%); IE reports workers alone at 1.67 crore (up 7.3%). Average wage per worker rose only 5.3%, to ₹2.28 lakh. Uttar Pradesh added 12.8% more factories, the fastest of any State.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Formal manufacturing stuck near 15% of GVA → PLI schemes and lower corporate tax draw fresh investment → factory count rises more than 2% for two years running → output, capital and jobs all grow → but wage per worker lags value added

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	The ASI covers only registered factories, the formal core of manufacturing — The ASI is conducted by the National Statistics Office under MoSPI under the Collection of Statistics Act, 2008, which makes filing returns compulsory. Its frame is factories registered under Sections 2(m)(i) and 2(m)(ii) of the Factories Act, 1948: units with 10 or more workers using power, or 20 or more without power. It feeds the GDP estimates for manufacturing. Small unregistered units are measured separately, by the ASUSE — The Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE), also by the NSO, covers small unregistered non-farm enterprises, where most manufacturing workers are. So ASI trends describe formal jobs only. Labour share means the part of value added paid out as wages; capital intensity means the capital used per worker.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	GS3 asks whether industrial growth creates jobs — The syllabus lines "effects on industrial growth" and "growth, development and employment" make jobless growth a recurring Mains theme; the ASI is its official evidence.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- The Annual Survey of Industries is conducted by the National Statistics Office, MoSPI, under the Collection of Statistics Act, 2008. - The ASI frame is factories under Sections 2(m)(i) and 2(m)(ii) of the Factories Act, 1948: 10 or more workers with power, or 20 or more without power. - Unincorporated non-agricultural enterprises are covered by a separate NSO survey, the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE).
ANALYSIS	Capital is growing faster than labour, so each new job costs more capital — Invested capital rose 11.1% to ₹75.6 lakh crore while persons engaged rose 7.2%. That is capital deepening: factories are buying machines faster than they hire. It raises productivity,

	but each formal job needs more investment. Yet 1.4 million added jobs in a year is strong for the formal sector: this is capital-heavy growth, not jobless growth. 2. Lens — Growth and equity: value is rising faster than the worker's share of it — GVA rose 9.6% but wage per worker only 5.3%, in nominal terms. Total emoluments rose 12.1% to ₹8 lakh crore, which suggests that supervisors and managers gained more than shop-floor workers. A falling labour share feeds profits and investment but not mass demand. A thoughtful officer would not cap profits; he would push skilling and wage enforcement so productivity gains reach workers. 3. Factories are slowly moving towards cheaper labour and land — Uttar Pradesh gained almost a full percentage point in its share of factories while Gujarat's share fell 0.4 point, though five States still hold over half of GVA. Firms follow cheaper wages, land and large labour pools; that is how markets spread industry. But power, roads and land records decide whether a lagging State catches the shift.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"India's formal manufacturing is adding jobs, but workers are not sharing equally in the value they create." Critically examine in the light of the Annual Survey of Industries 2024-25. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Test both halves with data; reach a judgement. 2. Introduction — ASI 2024-25 shows strong formal growth — Cite GVA up 9.6% and factories up 2.6%, the second year above 2%. 3. Jobs are real but capital-heavy — Persons engaged up 7.2%, capital up 11.1%; value addition: contrast the ASUSE informal picture. 4. The worker's share is lagging — Wage per worker up 5.3% against GVA up 9.6%; draw a bar chart of GVA, capital, emoluments and wage-per-worker growth side by side. 5. Industry is spreading slowly — UP rising, Gujarat dipping; five States still hold over half of GVA. 6. Conclusion — pair investment with skills and wage enforcement — Labour-intensive sectors and wage law turn output into shared prosperity.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. You are the District Magistrate of a fast-industrialising district in Uttar Pradesh. How do you make sure new factories bring decent jobs? Approach: With the labour department, I would check that workers in new units are on the rolls with provident fund and insurance, not hired through unregistered contractors. I would link the district skill centre to the skills these units lack, and clear their power and approval bottlenecks in a monthly single-window review. Registered workers and wages paid, not MoUs signed, would be my measure.

2.2 Ten months after the Labour Codes took effect, only 10 States and UTs have notified rules

ISSUE THREAD [Labour Codes and the States](#) (new thread) **LENS** Centre and States · Growth and equity

STORY SO FAR The four Labour Codes, consolidating 29 central labour laws, came into force on 21 November 2025; the Centre has since run a 'Shram Samvad' outreach to explain them.

THE NEWS New Delhi. Over 10 months after the four Labour Codes came into force, only 10 States and Union Territories have notified rules under at least one of them, The Economic Times reports, citing government data. Ten have finalised rules under the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code, 2020; nine each under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 and the Code on Wages, 2019; and eight under the Code on Social Security, 2020. They include Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Mizoram. Major industrial States — Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Telangana, Haryana and Punjab — have not finalised theirs. Employers face clashing rules: the Codes let

workers carry forward 30 days of leave, while Maharashtra's Shops and Establishments Act allows 45; the OSH Code's single-window electronic registration sits beside Haryana's Shops Act, 1958, which still demands separate registration. The Union Labour Secretary has met States to press them.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

29 central labour laws criticised as complex → consolidated into four Codes in 2019-20 → Centre brings them into force on 21 November 2025 → each "appropriate government" must notify its own rules → most big industrial States delay, leaving employers with two sets of rules

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Labour is a Concurrent subject, so the Centre legislates but States complete the law — Entries 22 (trade unions, industrial and labour disputes), 23 (social security, employment) and 24 (welfare of labour, conditions of work, provident fund, maternity benefit) of List III of the Seventh Schedule cover labour. Under Article 254, a central law prevails over a repugnant State law, unless the State law has received the President's assent. 2. The four Codes leave the decisive detail to the "appropriate government" — The Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the OSH Code, 2020 replaced 29 central laws. For most establishments the State is the "appropriate government", so its rules fix forms, registration, inspection and many thresholds.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS2 and GS3 meet in labour reform — The syllabus lines "issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure" and "growth, development and employment" together make labour reform a test of cooperative federalism in implementation, not only in law-making.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• Trade unions and industrial disputes are Entry 22, and welfare of labour including conditions of work is Entry 24, of the Concurrent List. • The four Labour Codes are the Code on Wages, 2019; the Industrial Relations Code, 2020; the Code on Social Security, 2020; and the OSH Code, 2020. • Under Article 254(2), a State law on a Concurrent subject that conflicts with a central law prevails in that State if it has received the President's assent. • The Code on Social Security, 2020 recognises gig workers and platform workers as categories eligible for social security schemes.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Centre and States: a Concurrent law is only half-made until States write rules — Parliament could pass the Codes, but working hours, registration and inspection reach a factory through State rules. Delay is not always obstruction: rules are where States bargain over thresholds that matter to their industry and unions. The judgement is that the Centre should persuade through model rules and deadlines, not override, because a Code that States resent will be enforced half-heartedly. 2. Workers lose most from the delay, not employers — Firms complain of compliance costs, but they can live with old rules. A gig worker's new social-security entitlement, or a uniform wage floor, means nothing until rules and portals exist, and only eight States have notified social security rules. 3. Divergent rules can rebuild the maze the Codes were meant to clear — Consolidation aimed at one simple national regime. If each State sets its own shift hours, overtime limits and standing-order thresholds, a firm with plants in five States again faces five regimes. The counter-view is that diversity lets States compete for investment and test ideas. The balance: a common floor of protection, with States free to vary procedure.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Labour reform in India is decided less in Parliament than in State rule-making."

	Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Comment — Give a reasoned opinion on the statement, with evidence, in one dimension: federal implementation. 2. Introduction — four Codes, 29 laws, in force since 21 November 2025 — About 20 words on the consolidation. 3. Body — only 10 States and UTs have notified rules — Value addition: OSH 10, Wages and IR 9 each, Social Security 8 (ET data); big industrial States missing. 4. Body — State rules decide registration, leave and thresholds — Use the Maharashtra and Haryana examples; draw a flowchart: Code → appropriate government → rules → worker. 5. Conclusion — model rules and deadlines through cooperative federalism — Harmonise without overriding Concurrent-List autonomy.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Labour Secretary of a large industrial State that has not notified the rules, how would you proceed? Approach: I would publish draft rules for each Code with a fixed comment period, so unions and employers argue over text, not rumours. Where the State genuinely differs, as on leave or thresholds, I would state and defend that rather than delay the whole set. I would prioritise social security rules, which create entitlements for workers who have none. Delay protects no one.

2.3 Cabinet clears Green Energy Corridor Phase III: ₹1.86 lakh crore for 135 GW with batteries

ISSUE THREAD Scaling up solar power (update 4) **LENS** Development and environment · Centre and States

STORY SO FAR Delhi doubled rooftop-solar support, canal-top solar could add 131 GW without new land, and Morbi farmers rejected compensation for transmission towers, bringing land and grid into the 500 GW debate.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Union Cabinet on Wednesday, September 30, approved the third phase of the Green Energy Corridor (GEC-III), with a project outlay of ₹1,86,405 crore, to let States carry up to 135 GW of renewable power into their grids by 2032-33. Of this, ₹1,36,378 crore is for intra-State transmission lines and ₹50,000 crore for 50 GWh of battery energy storage systems (BESS) — the first storage component in the programme. Central financial assistance is ₹54,082 crore, which the government says will offset intra-State transmission charges; The Economic Times reports ₹6,000 crore of it as viability gap funding (a one-time capital grant that makes a project bankable) for batteries. The scheme targets curtailment, when grid operators make solar or wind plants cut output because lines cannot carry it. Lines will be awarded through tariff-based competitive bidding, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

India adds solar and wind faster than transmission → lines in renewable-rich States congest → grid operators curtail clean power, especially at midday → Centre funds intra-State lines in GEC I and II → GEC-III adds 135 GW of evacuation and, for the first time, battery storage

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Inter-State and intra-State transmission are planned and regulated separately — Under the Electricity Act, 2003, the Central Transmission Utility plans the inter-State transmission system (ISTS), regulated by the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission; each State Transmission Utility handles intra-State lines under its State commission. Section 63 allows tariffs discovered through competitive bidding. GEC-II, approved in January 2022, funded intra-State lines for about 20 GW with 33% central assistance. 2. India's clean-power targets are about capacity, not just generation — At COP26 in Glasgow (2021), India announced 500 GW of non-fossil capacity by 2030. Its updated
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	NDC of August 2022 commits to about 50% of installed electric capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030 and a 45% cut in the emissions intensity of GDP from 2005 levels.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS3 links infrastructure to the energy transition — “Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads” and “conservation, environmental pollution” meet in grid integration; questions on renewables now turn on storage, transmission and intermittency rather than targets alone.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Under the Electricity Act, 2003, the Central Transmission Utility plans the inter-State transmission system, while each State Transmission Utility handles intra-State transmission. - Section 63 of the Electricity Act, 2003 lets a regulator adopt a tariff discovered through transparent competitive bidding. - Curtailment is the forced reduction of output from a generator, often solar or wind, because the grid cannot absorb or carry it. - Viability gap funding is a one-time capital grant that bridges the gap between a project's cost and what its revenues can support.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Development and environment: wires, not panels, are now the binding constraint — A solar plant that cannot send its power out wastes both money and the emissions it was meant to avoid. GEC-III spends nearly three-quarters of its outlay on lines, an admission that generation has outrun transmission. The environmental cost is real too: lines need land and forest corridors, as the Morbi tower dispute showed. A wise officer accepts lines as the price of clean power but insists on fair compensation and routes that spare fragile forests. 2. Batteries change what solar can do, but 50 GWh is a beginning — Solar peaks at noon while demand peaks after sunset; a battery stores midday power for the evening. At ₹50,000 crore for 50 GWh, the scheme assumes about ₹1 crore per MWh of storage. Against 135 GW of new evacuation, that covers a few evening hours for part of the capacity; pumped hydro and more batteries will still be needed. 3. The Centre is paying for State lines because the benefit crosses State borders — Renewable-rich States such as Rajasthan or Gujarat build lines for power that others consume, and would pass the cost to their own consumers. Central assistance that offsets intra-State charges spreads that burden nationally. The risk is that States treat the grant as a substitute for their own planning.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	“Transmission, not generation, is now the binding constraint on India’s renewable energy transition.” Examine with reference to Green Energy Corridor Phase III. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Examine — Probe the claim with evidence and show how far it holds. 2. Introduction — GEC-III: ₹1.86 lakh crore, 135 GW, 50 GWh by 2032-33 — Link to the 500 GW target. 3. Curtailment shows lines lag capacity — Value addition: ₹1,36,378 crore for intra-State lines, compared with about ₹10,141 crore for GEC-I. 4. Storage solves timing, which lines cannot — Draw a 24-hour curve: solar peaking at noon, demand peaking after sunset, battery shifting the gap. 5. Federal cost-sharing makes lines possible — Central assistance offsets State transmission charges.

	6. Conclusion — plan generation, lines and storage together — Integrated planning with land and forest safeguards.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As District Collector in a solar-rich district, farmers resist land for a GEC-III transmission line. What do you do? Approach: I would hold open meetings on the route, the compensation for tower footprints and right-of-way, and the line's purpose. I would ensure compensation follows current guidelines and is paid before work starts. Where a route crosses orchards or homesteads, I would ask the developer to examine realignment. A line built with consent finishes faster than one built through litigation.

3. Agriculture & Food

Both stories are about the State acting on a farm economy out of balance. The Centre is using the support price to pull farmers away from a crop it already has too much of; Maharashtra is using every lever it controls to hold off a drought. Neither price nor relief works without the institution behind it: procurement in the first case, work and credit in the second.

3.1 Cabinet Holds Wheat MSP Nearly Flat at ₹2,610 and Loads Rabi Increases on Oilseeds and Pulses

ISSUE THREAD MSP and farm prices (new thread) **LENS** Market and State · Growth and equity

STORY SO FAR The Minimum Support Price is announced before each sowing season for 22 mandated crops. Since the 2018-19 Budget it is pegged at no less than 1.5 times cost, while wheat and rice stocks keep rising.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Wednesday, September 30, raised the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) — the floor price at which the government offers to buy a crop — for the six rabi crops of the 2027-28 marketing season. Wheat got the smallest rise, ₹25 to ₹2,610 a quintal (0.97%), the lowest absolute increase since 2010-11, The Indian Express reports. Safflower got the largest, ₹675 to ₹7,215 (10.3%). Rapeseed-mustard rises ₹413 to ₹6,613, masur (lentil) ₹390 to ₹7,390, barley ₹136 to ₹2,286 and gram ₹83 to ₹5,958. The Cabinet puts margins at 50% to 106% over the all-India weighted average cost of production, wheat at 106%. Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said “wheat stocks are overflowing”; the stated aim is to push farmers towards pulses and oilseeds.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Assured wheat and rice procurement tilts north-western farmers to two cereals → stocks swell while India imports pulses and edible oil → the 2018-19 Budget promises MSP of at least 1.5 times cost → wheat already sits 106% above cost → the 2027-28 round holds wheat almost flat and favours oilseeds and pulses

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	The CACP recommends the MSP; the Cabinet decides it — The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), set up in 1965 as the Agricultural Prices Commission, is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. It recommends MSPs for 22 mandated crops; the CCEA decides. Its advice is not binding, and MSP has no statutory backing. Three cost concepts decide what “50% over cost” means — A2 is what a farmer actually pays out. A2+FL adds an imputed value for unpaid family labour; C2 further adds rent on owned land and interest on owned capital. The 2018-19 Budget fixed MSP at no less than 1.5 times cost, measured against A2+FL; farm unions demand 1.5 times C2.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	The syllabus names MSP and buffer stocks together — GS3 lists “issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices” and “issues of buffer stocks and food security”. This decision is a ready case for both.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- The 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. - The six mandated rabi crops are wheat, barley, gram, masur, rapeseed-mustard and safflower. - Under PM-AASHA’s Price Support Scheme, central agencies buy pulses, oilseeds and copra at MSP when market prices fall below it.
ANALYSIS	Lens — Market and State: MSP is now a crop signal, but a signal works only where someone buys — Holding wheat at 0.97% while giving safflower 10.3% tells farmers which crop the State wants. But farmers grow wheat because it is bought in bulk at a known centre — Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw put this season’s procurement

	across the six crops at 324 lakh tonnes, worth ₹90,962 crore. For mustard or masur, agencies buy only when prices fall below MSP, and in limited quantity. A thoughtful officer would conclude that pulse acreage shifts only where procurement is as certain as for wheat. 2. A ₹25 rise is a real-terms cut, chosen in a pre-election year — A rise under 1% is below general inflation, so the real floor under wheat falls in a drought year. The Indian Express notes that Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, both wheat States, vote early next year, yet the government chose restraint. The defence: wheat already earns 106% over cost, the highest margin, and every extra tonne in the pool costs storage and subsidy. 3. The equity gap: generous margins on paper, thin where procurement is absent — The 50% to 106% margins ignore rent, so tenant farmers earn far less than the headline. MSP money reaches mainly States with dense procurement, while small growers elsewhere sell to traders below the floor. More purchase centres would help them more than a higher number.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Critically examine whether the Minimum Support Price can steer farmers away from wheat towards pulses and oilseeds, in the light of the 2027-28 rabi MSP decision. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh MSP's power as a price signal against its limits and reach a judgement. 2. Introduction — open with the split decision — Wheat up 0.97% to ₹2,610, safflower up 10.3%, with diversification as the stated aim. 3. Relative prices can shift crops when returns are assured — Wheat's 106% margin left room to hold it flat. 4. Without procurement the signal breaks for pulses and oilseeds — Value addition: PM-AASHA buys only below MSP, while wheat's procurement is open-ended. Diagram: flowchart from MSP to procurement to expected income to crop choice, broken at procurement for pulses. 5. Conclusion — a price backed by purchase — MSP steers crops only with assured purchase and better pulse yields.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Collector of a mustard district, you find mandi prices below the new ₹6,613 MSP at harvest. What do you do? Approach: I would ask the State to seek immediate procurement under the Price Support Scheme and open purchase centres near villages. Farmers would be pre-registered and told the quality norms. I would watch for traders routing stock through farmers' names.

3.2 Maharashtra Declares Drought in 265 of 358 Talukas as Cane Cutters Leave Months Early in Debt

ISSUE THREAD Drought and the rabi season (update 5) **LENS** Centre and States · Growth and equity

STORY SO FAR With a deficient monsoon and a strengthening El Niño, the Centre advanced rabi planning. Maharashtra's drought declaration was expected to wait on NDRF rules until October 5, with 74 of Marathwada's 76 talukas drought-hit.

THE NEWS Mumbai. Maharashtra declared drought on September 26 in 265 of its 358 talukas — 74% of the State — across 32 districts and began "Trigger-1" relief, The Indian Express reports; this is the declaration earlier cards said was pending. On September 30, 45 more talukas were added to the drought-prone list. A sub-committee under Revenue Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule told banks and cooperative societies not to recover loans from affected farmers, and asked the Chief Secretary whether the RBI could issue a letter halting recovery. Panchnamas — on-spot crop-loss assessments —

carry each farmer's signature. Latur has banned fodder movement out of the district under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The IMD's final figure puts the monsoon 12.6% below normal. In Beed, Dhule and Nandurbar, sugarcane cutters have left months early, indebted to labour contractors.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

The monsoon ends 12.6% below normal, with 40-60 day gaps between spells → the kharif crop fails across Marathwada and northern Maharashtra → the State declares drought and freezes loan recovery → families with no local work take advances from mukadams → they leave for sugar factories in August-September, tied there until Holi

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The drought manual sets a test in three steps — The Manual for Drought Management (2016, updated 2020) first checks two mandatory indicators, rainfall deviation and dry spell (Trigger 1). If set off, the State assesses impact indicators as Trigger 2, then conducts a sample field survey (ground truthing) before declaring moderate or severe drought. Relief comes from the State Disaster Response Fund, with a National Disaster Response Fund top-up for severe events after a central team visits. 2. An advance that ties a worker to one employer can be bonded labour — Article 23 prohibits forced labour. The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 abolishes any arrangement in which a person takes an advance and in return loses the freedom to choose an employer or to move, and it extinguishes the debt. The District Magistrate enforces it through vigilance committees.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Drought sits where agriculture meets disaster management — GS3 lists “disaster and disaster management” beside cropping patterns, and GS1 asks about “poverty and developmental issues”. Distress migration lets one answer use relief, credit and labour law together.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Under the Manual for Drought Management, rainfall deviation and dry spell are the two mandatory indicators of Trigger 1. - Drought is declared by the State government, not by the Centre or the IMD. - The SDRF and NDRF are constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. - The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 is enforced by the District Magistrate through vigilance committees.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Centre and States: Maharashtra moved first and pays first — The State declared before the October 5 date cited last week, and rightly: relief delayed is relief denied. But early relief comes from the State's own fund and budget, already stretched by a ₹40,385 crore loan waiver, while central money follows a memorandum and a visiting team. The RBI request shows the limit of State power: banking is a Union subject, so a State can urge but not order a moratorium. A thoughtful officer would press for NDRF help on the manual's objective triggers. 2. Stopping recovery without fresh credit pushes farmers to moneylenders — The sub-committee itself says farmers who spent ₹18,000 to ₹20,000 an acre on soybean are borrowing from private lenders. A freeze protects a farmer from the bank but gives him no seed money for rabi. Relief needs restructured loans and fresh crop credit too. 3. The mukadam has become the drought's lender of last resort — Where public works fail, the contractor's advance is the only credit a landless family gets, binding a couple to a factory until March for about ₹366 a tonne. Officials say the new rural employment mission will provide work; workers say none has come, and districts report no migration despite the Bombay High Court's push for registration. A choice made for want of any alternative is what bonded-labour law was written for.

POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Analyse how drought turns the seasonal migration of sugarcane cutters in Maharashtra into a risk of debt bondage. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Analyse — Break the process into links and show how each leads to the next. 2. Introduction — the early exodus — Families from Beed, Dhule and Nandurbar left in August-September, before the usual post-Dussehra start. 3. Crop failure and no local work make the contractor's advance the only credit — Value addition: drought in 265 of 358 talukas; no work under the rural mission. Diagram: chain from crop failure to advance to tie-up until Holi. 4. The advance-for-labour bargain meets the 1976 Act's definition — The debt binds the worker to one employer. 5. Conclusion — register and employ at home — Register migrants, open local works, activate vigilance committees.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Collector of Beed, you learn families are leaving early with advances from mukadams. What do you do? Approach: I would first count them through gram sevaks and schools, since official records show no migration. I would open employment works in the worst villages so that staying is a real option. I would ask the vigilance committee to check whether advances restrict workers' movement.

4. International Relations

A strategic partnership is tested not only at summits but in what happens to citizens caught inside the partner's war. India's sharpest warning yet to would-be recruits marks a shift from rescuing nationals to deterring them, because quiet diplomacy with Moscow has brought some home but has not stopped the flow.

4.1 MEA Issues Its Toughest Advisory Yet: Do Not Travel to Russia to Join Its Army

ISSUE THREAD **Indians in Russia's army** (new thread) **LENS** Liberty and order · Strategic autonomy and partnership

STORY SO FAR Since 2024, Indians lured by agents' job offers have ended up at Russia's Ukraine front, and India has sought their discharge; Darpan's 26 September quick fact set out what the MEA confirmed.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The External Affairs Ministry on Wednesday, September 30, "strongly discouraged" Indians from travelling to Russia to join its army, warning of "mortal dangers", The Hindu reports. It is the toughest advisory since the Indian Embassy in Moscow began detecting a growing number of Indians recruited for the Russia-Ukraine warfront. The Ministry said Indians keep signing up despite two years of warnings, and that in "numerous instances" they joined willingly, believing that once they had earned enough, the Indian government would secure their release. "This is a dangerous path," it said, adding that it remains engaged with Russian authorities for the early discharge of all Indians in the Russian military. Officials said dozens have returned after a special dispensation from Moscow — Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised the issue with President Vladimir Putin in July 2024 — but more keep joining, lured by recruiting agents' "attractive" offers.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Russia's war needs foreign recruits → agents sell the work as jobs → Indians reach the front; Modi raises it with Putin in July 2024 → dozens return under a special dispensation, yet others join expecting a rescue → the MEA moves from rescue to deterrence

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The Emigration Act, 1983 protects only some workers going to some countries — The Act requires clearance from a Protector of Emigrants for employment abroad, but this applies to holders of Emigration Check Required (ECR) passports going to 17 notified ECR countries, mostly in the Gulf and West Asia. Russia is not an ECR country, so this route escapes the Act's main check. 2. Article 23 and the criminal law cover recruitment by deception — Article 23 prohibits traffic in human beings and forced labour, and binds private persons as well as the State. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 punishes recruiting or transporting a person by fraud for exploitation. India ratified the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which the anti-trafficking Palermo Protocol supplements, in 2011.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. The diaspora is now a security and consular question — GS2 lists the "effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora". A citizen in a foreign war tests consular protection and partnership together.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Under the Emigration Act, 1983, emigration clearance is required for ECR passport holders going for employment to notified ECR countries; Russia is not one of them. - Overseas recruiting agents must be registered with the Protector General of Emigrants under the Ministry of External Affairs. - Article 23 prohibits traffic in human beings, begar and forced labour, and is enforceable against private persons.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Strategic autonomy and partnership: India protects citizens through quiet requests, not public pressure — India has not condemned Russia over the war and relies on it for defence supplies and oil. So it handles recruits through leader-level requests and "special dispensation". The cost is that each release is a favour, not a

	right, and recruitment continues. A thoughtful officer would keep the quiet channel but seek a firm Russian commitment not to enlist Indians; the partnership can bear that request. 2. The advisory shifts responsibility, and that is partly fair — Calling many recruits willing tells citizens a rescue is not guaranteed. That ends a moral hazard: if every recruit expects to be brought home, more will sign. The counter-view is that a choice made on an agent's false promise is not truly free, so deterrence must fall hardest on agents, not recruits. 3. The State cannot stop a citizen travelling, so the law must catch the recruiter — Travel abroad is part of personal liberty, and a non-ECR destination needs no clearance, so the government can only advise. The enforcement point is the agent in India who sells a combat contract as a job — deception the criminal law already covers. Prosecuting a few would close the route faster than any advisory.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	To what extent can India protect its citizens recruited into a foreign army without straining a strategic partnership? Illustrate with the case of Indians in Russia's armed forces. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — To what extent — Show what India can achieve, where its leverage ends, and reach a balanced judgement. 2. Introduction — the toughest advisory — On September 30 the MEA “strongly discouraged” Indians from joining Russia's army, citing “mortal dangers”. 3. Quiet diplomacy has worked, case by case — Value addition: Modi raised it with Putin in July 2024; dozens returned under a special dispensation. 4. The legal net has a gap diplomacy cannot fill — Russia is not an ECR country, so trafficking law must reach the agents. Diagram: flowchart from agent to contract to front to discharge request, marking where law and diplomacy act. 5. Conclusion — partnership as leverage — Seek a no-enlistment commitment abroad and prosecute agents at home.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Superintendent of Police, you find several young men from your district left for Russia through one agent. What do you do? Approach: I would register a case of trafficking by deception against the agent, using families' testimony and the offers they were shown, and check whether he is a registered recruiting agent. I would share details with the MEA so the men can be traced and their discharge sought.

5. Environment & Ecology

Both stories today are about the State choosing a middle path and calling it balance. The car norms tighten fuel use but let hybrids and ethanol share the credit with electric cars; the Supreme Court refuses a total cracker ban but refuses round-the-clock bursting too. In each case the real test is not the rule on paper but whether anyone measures and enforces it.

5.1 Centre notifies CAFE-III fuel norms for 2027–32, counting each electric car as three

ISSUE THREAD Shift to cleaner vehicles (update 3) **LENS** Development and environment · Market and State

STORY SO FAR Delhi will register only electric three-wheelers from 2027. Alternative fuels overtook petrol in new car sales in August 2026, but CNG and hybrids, not EVs, led.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Centre has notified the third phase of Corporate Average Fuel Economy norms, CAFE-III, for passenger cars, in force from April 1, 2027 to March 31, 2032; The Indian Express dates the notification to September 29, and the Ministry of Power issued the statement. CAFE is a fleet-average limit: a carmaker may sell some thirsty models so long as the average of everything it sells stays under the cap. The benchmark tightens from 3.996 to 3.3273 petrol-equivalent litres per 100 km, about 16.7% over five years. Each battery or range-extended electric vehicle counts as three vehicles, a “super credit”; plug-in hybrids and flex-fuel strong hybrids count 2.5, strong hybrids 1.6 and flex-fuel vehicles 1.1. The reference weight rises to 1,229 kg from 1,082 kg, a proposed extra concession for cars up to 909 kg was dropped, and over-compliers earn tradable credits. This is GS3 on pollution and energy.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Cars burn imported oil and emit CO₂ → CAFE-I and CAFE-II set fleet limits from 2017 → EVs stay costly while hybrids, CNG and ethanol grow → A small-car concession fight splits industry → CAFE-III tightens targets and spreads credits

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. CAFE norms come from the Energy Conservation Act, 2001, not from pollution law — The Ministry of Power first notified CAFE standards in 2017 under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001, whose statutory body is the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE). The second phase, from 2022-23, set an average of 113 g CO₂ per km. 2. Bharat Stage norms and CAFE regulate different things — Bharat Stage (BS) norms, notified under the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, cap pollutants such as particulates and nitrogen oxides for each vehicle; India moved directly from BS-IV to BS-VI on April 1, 2020. CAFE instead caps a manufacturer’s average fuel use and CO₂ across all its sales. Both serve India’s NDC: 45% lower emissions intensity of GDP by 2030 over 2005, and net zero by 2070.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. The syllabus line is “conservation, environmental pollution and degradation” in GS3 — CAFE-III is a clean example of a market instrument, tradable credits, inside a command rule, which is how regulation rather than subsidy shapes technology choices.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) norms for passenger vehicles are notified by the Ministry of Power under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001. - The Bureau of Energy Efficiency is a statutory body set up under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001. - CAFE compliance is calculated on a manufacturer’s whole fleet, not individual models. - A “super credit” or volume derogation factor lets one low-emission vehicle count as more than one vehicle in a fleet-average calculation.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Development and environment: CAFE-III buys fuel savings now at the cost of a slower electric future — By rewarding hybrids, ethanol and plug-ins, the rule lets carmakers meet the target without betting heavily on battery cars. The ET reports S&P

	Global Mobility saying this will derail pure-EV ambitions, and the Centre for Science and Environment fearing slower EV adoption. Yet a hybrid sold today saves fuel today. A sensible officer would accept the plural path for this phase, with a review clause to tighten EV weight in CAFE-IV if hybrids become a permanent detour. 2. The weight formula decides winners more than the headline target does — A heavy SUV fleet may burn more than a light hatchback fleet, so the reference weight shifts burdens between companies. Dropping the 909 kg carve-out ended a special favour for the maker with the most small cars. That is why the fight split the industry: the rule redistributes compliance costs, not just emissions. 3. Tradable credits make the rule efficient only if enforcement is credible — Letting over-compliers sell credits to laggards cuts the total cost of meeting the target, as in any cap-and-trade system. But it works only if debits carry a real penalty and the data are audited; a target never penalised becomes a guideline.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Fleet-average fuel norms that reward many technologies may slow India's shift to electric cars. Critically examine with reference to CAFE-III. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh gains of a technology-neutral norm against the risk to electrification; reach a judgement. 2. Introduction — CAFE-III tightens the fleet average 16.7% between 2027 and 2032 — Define CAFE in one line. 3. Body — multiple credits cut fuel use quickly and cheaply — Value addition: the NDC target of 45% lower emissions intensity by 2030. 4. Body — the 3x EV multiplier is diluted when hybrids earn 1.6 to 2.5 — Diagram: bar chart of multipliers 3, 2.5, 1.6, 1.1. 5. Body — the credit market fails without audited enforcement — Penalties and audited data decide outcomes. 6. Conclusion — accept plural pathways now, tighten EV weight in CAFE-IV — A review clause keeps the transition honest.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Power, how would you make sure CAFE-III targets are actually enforced? Approach: I would publish each manufacturer's annual fleet figure and credit balance, so non-compliance is visible to buyers and investors. I would ask BEE to audit a sample of notified figures against independent tests, because a fleet average is only as honest as its inputs. Penalties for debits must be collected on time, and a mid-term review should check whether hybrid credits are crowding out electric cars.

5.2 Supreme Court rejects total Deepavali cracker ban, backs limited use of new green crackers

ISSUE THREAD Delhi-NCR winter air pollution (update 3) **LENS** Development and environment · Tradition and social justice

STORY SO FAR The Centre and Delhi fixed a winter pollution calendar from November 1 to February 28 — non-BS-VI entry curbs, 50% work from home, construction bans — after Haryana tightened action on farm fires.

THE NEWS New Delhi. On Wednesday, September 30, a Supreme Court Bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and P.B. Varale ruled out a nationwide firecracker ban for Deepavali, accepting CSIR-NEERI's suggestion of a "limited and conditional relaxation", The Hindu and The Economic Times report. CSIR-NEERI is the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. Additional Solicitor-General Aishwarya Bhati said NEERI recommends "next-generation joined green crackers", a string of crackers fired in sequence, made only by licensed makers, within a 125 dB(AI)/145 dB(C) peak noise limit and free of barium. NEERI's tests show about 30% lower emissions

than conventional joined crackers. “Total ban will hurt certain sentiments... At the same time, we will not allow a 24-hour bursting anywhere,” the Bench said. It will fix time windows after a pending CPCB report on barium crackers and decibel tests. The case is Arjun Gopal v. Union of India.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Delhi’s winter smog peaks around Deepavali → Children’s petition in Arjun Gopal leads to sales bans from 2016 → Court accepts NEERI green crackers as a middle path from 2018 → Bans prove hard to enforce and festival sentiment hardens → Court rejects a total ban and moves to time windows and tested formulations

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Clean air is part of the right to life under Article 21 — In Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar (1991), the Supreme Court held that the right to life includes the right to enjoy pollution-free water and air. The M.C. Mehta cases applied it to Delhi’s air, from CNG buses onward. In Arjun Gopal, filed in 2015 for three infants, the Court on October 23, 2018 allowed only improved and green crackers, banned joined crackers and barium salts, and set an 8–10 pm Deepavali window. 2. Who regulates crackers: PESO, CPCB and CAQM each hold a piece — The Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) licenses the manufacture and storage of fireworks under the Explosives Act, 1884. The Central Pollution Control Board sets and tests emission and noise standards. The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas, a statutory body under a 2021 Act, coordinates winter action across Delhi and neighbouring States.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS3 “environmental pollution and degradation” meets GS2 on the judiciary’s role — Judicial governance of pollution recurs: courts set standards, timings and tests where executive agencies have not.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Green crackers were developed by CSIR-NEERI, Nagpur, with lower emissions than conventional crackers and without banned chemicals such as barium nitrate. - The Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation licenses fireworks manufacture under the Explosives Act, 1884. - Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar (1991) read the right to pollution-free air and water into Article 21. - The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas is a statutory body created by a 2021 Act of Parliament.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Tradition and social justice: the Court is trading a symbolic ban for an enforceable one — A total ban sounds strong but is widely ignored, so it protects lungs only on paper. Short windows and licensed green crackers ask less of people and are likelier to be obeyed. The cost falls on those the Bench named — the sick, the elderly and children. A careful officer would back the window but pair it with checks on illegal stock, because the compromise works only if conventional crackers disappear. 2. Firecrackers are a short, sharp spike, not the main source of winter smog — Vehicles, dust and farm fires drive Delhi’s season-long pollution; crackers add a sudden peak on one still night. Time windows cap that spike, but fixing crackers without the winter calendar would be a gesture. 3. Science-led orders are only as good as the testing behind them — Waiting for CPCB’s barium and decibel tests is sound, but the rules may then arrive close to Deepavali, leaving makers and police little time. Regulators must test before the season, not during it.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	“Neither a total ban nor unrestricted use.” Comment on the Supreme Court’s approach

	to firecrackers in balancing Article 21 with festive practice. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Comment — Give a reasoned opinion on whether the middle path works. 2. Introduction — the Bench rejected a total ban on September 30 — Name Arjun Gopal and NEERI's 30% lower-emission crackers. 3. Body — time windows target the one-night spike that bans failed to stop — Value addition: Subhash Kumar (1991) on clean air under Article 21. 4. Body — the compromise fails without stock checks and timely CPCB testing — Draw a flowchart: NEERI formula → PESO licence → CPCB test → police check at sale. 5. Conclusion — enforceable limits beat unenforced bans — Pair it with the winter calendar.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As a District Magistrate in NCR, how would you enforce a two-hour green-cracker window on Deepavali night? Approach: I would license only sellers with PESO-licensed, CPCB-labelled stock, and raid godowns for conventional crackers a fortnight before the festival. On the night, police and resident welfare associations would share a helpline, with fines announced in advance. Portable air and noise monitors would publish readings next day. Messaging should present the window as a shared limit, not a ban on the festival.

6. Science & Technology

India's AI ambition runs on chips it does not make and dollars it must buy. The IndiaAI Mission's reset shows that a plan to rent compute from private suppliers breaks when global prices double, and the government is now learning to own some of the machines itself.

6.1 IndiaAI Mission to be reset as GPU prices double and committed capacity goes undelivered

ISSUE THREAD IndiaAI Mission and compute (new thread) **LENS** Innovation and safeguards · Market and State

STORY SO FAR The IndiaAI Mission, approved in March 2024, promised startups and researchers subsidised access to GPUs through government-empanelled private suppliers.

THE NEWS New Delhi and Bengaluru. The IT ministry plans to recalibrate the IndiaAI Mission because prices of GPUs, memory, storage and networking have “more than doubled” in a year, The Economic Times reports. A GPU (graphics processing unit) is the chip that trains and runs AI models. The mission has access to about 30,000 GPUs against a commitment of 45,000, as several firms could not deliver. Nvidia's H200 has risen from about \$20,000 to over \$40,000; a server that cost about ₹2 crore now costs about ₹4 crore, with the rupee at ₹96-97 to the dollar against ₹88 earlier. Cyfuture, one supplier, offered about 1,100 GPUs and delivered about 160. C-DAC has floated a bid for about 3,000 GPUs to own outright, “a shift from the earlier strategy of not owning compute”, alongside longer-term contracts. This is GS3 on science and technology and its effects on development.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

AI needs compute India does not make → IndiaAI rents GPUs from private suppliers at agreed rates → Global demand and a weaker rupee double prices → Suppliers fail to deliver → Government re-bids and buys 3,000 GPUs

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The IndiaAI Mission has seven pillars, with compute as the first — The Union Cabinet approved the IndiaAI Mission in March 2024 with an outlay of ₹10,371.92 crore, implemented by the IndiaAI Independent Business Division under the Digital India Corporation of the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY). Its pillars are compute capacity of 10,000 or more GPUs through public-private partnership, an Innovation Centre for foundation models, a Datasets Platform, application development, FutureSkills, startup financing and Safe and Trusted AI. 2. How subsidised compute works — The government empanels private data-centre firms that offer GPU hours at bid-discovered rates, and startups and researchers rent them at a subsidised price. The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), a MeitY scientific society known for the PARAM supercomputers, is the agency now buying GPUs directly.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS3 lists “indigenization of technology and developing new technology” — AI compute tests that line: the best policy stalls if the hardware cannot be sourced.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The IndiaAI Mission was approved by the Union Cabinet in March 2024 with an outlay of ₹10,371.92 crore. • The IndiaAI Mission is implemented by the IndiaAI Independent Business Division under the Digital India Corporation, MeitY. • C-DAC, which developed the PARAM series of supercomputers, is a scientific society under the Ministry of Electronics and IT.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Market and State: renting compute was cheap until the market turned — The original design let private firms carry the cost and risk of buying chips, with the government paying only for use. Once prices doubled, suppliers locked into old rates had every reason to delay, and the State had no machines of its own. A sound judgement is a mixed model: own a core for public research and strategic needs, and

	rent the rest so taxpayers do not carry hardware that ages fast. 2. The rupee has become an AI policy variable — GPUs are priced in dollars, so the rupee's fall from ₹88 to ₹96-97 alone raises costs by about a tenth. A fixed rupee outlay buys less compute each year, which is why the official speaks of "speeding up" to absorb phase-one funds. 3. Voluntary safety pledges and missing chips are two sides of AI governance — The Hindu reports that U.S. President Donald Trump and six tech chiefs signed a voluntary "White House Accord on Super Intelligence", pledging internal monitoring, independent external evaluations and board-level oversight; experts say its worth depends on firms acting on findings that delay a launch. Frontier powers debate guarding AI while India struggles to obtain it. Unless India plans safety rules and compute together, it will import both the chips and the rules.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Access to compute, more than talent, now limits India's AI ambitions. Examine with reference to the reset of the IndiaAI Mission. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Examine — Probe the causes of the shortfall and judge the new model. 2. Introduction — 30,000 of 45,000 committed GPUs are available after prices doubled — Name the mission and its compute pillar. 3. Body — imported chips, a weaker rupee and supplier default stall a rental model — Value addition: H200 from about \$20,000 to over \$40,000; Cyfuture delivered about 160 of 1,100. 4. Body — a C-DAC-owned core gives control but risks fast-ageing hardware — Draw a flowchart: chip price and rupee shock → supplier default → re-bid and direct purchase → access for startups. 5. Body — compute and safety governance must move together — Contrast with voluntary U.S. safety pledges. 6. Conclusion — own a strategic core, rent the rest, index budgets to the dollar — Long run: domestic chip design.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Mission CEO, a startup says it cannot get the GPU hours it was promised. What do you do? Approach: I would publish a queue of allocated, delivered and pending GPU hours for every applicant, so delays are visible, not discretionary. Suppliers who miss delivery should face their empanelment penalties, and their allocation should be re-bid quickly. Until new capacity arrives, public-interest projects and early-stage firms that cannot buy compute abroad come first. And I would give the startup a realistic date, not a promise.

7. Society

Caste insult has moved from the village square to the phone screen, and the law written in 1989 is being asked to follow it. The Calcutta High Court has answered that it must, weeks after the Supreme Court warned that not every caste remark is a crime. The harder test is whether police can trace an online abuser.

7.1 Calcutta High Court holds casteist Facebook slurs are “within public view” under Atrocities Act

ISSUE THREAD SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (new thread) **LENS** Tradition and social justice · Liberty and order

STORY SO FAR The SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 punishes caste insult only if it happens “within public view”. Courts read it as a place where the public can see or hear.

THE NEWS Kolkata. A single bench of Justice Uday Kumar of the Calcutta High Court has held that casteist slurs on social media can attract the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, because “public view” under Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s) “transcends physical space into the digital domain”, The Indian Express reported. The complainant, a Scheduled Caste member, said two men from general caste communities had used caste expletives against him on Facebook. Police filed a closure report (a report saying there is no case for trial), as Facebook had not provided user details. The High Court set aside a special court’s order upholding the closure as “perverse”. The ruling comes weeks after the Supreme Court, in Ramkrishna Chauhan v. State of Uttar Pradesh, quashed proceedings against a school manager over remarks inside school premises. Syllabus link: GS2 protection of vulnerable sections.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Caste insult persists despite Article 17 → the 1989 Act punishes insult “within public view” → courts read it as where the public can see or hear → abuse migrates to Facebook → Calcutta High Court extends “public view” to the digital domain

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The Atrocities Act punishes caste insult only “within public view” — The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 gives effect to Article 17, which abolishes untouchability, and to Article 46, which directs the State to protect SCs and STs from social injustice. Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s) punish intentional insult, intimidation or abuse by caste name of an SC or ST member “in any place within public view”. The 2015 amendment widened the offences and mandated Exclusive Special Courts. 2. Parliament overruled the Court in 2018 to restore the Act’s sharpness — Subhash Kashinath Mahajan (March 2018) required a preliminary inquiry before an FIR and approval before arrest; Parliament reversed it by inserting Section 18A: no inquiry, no prior approval, no anticipatory bail. In Prathvi Raj Chauhan v. Union of India (February 2020) the Supreme Court upheld it, allowing anticipatory bail only where no prima facie case is made out, per Supreme Court Observer.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Caste in a digital society is a natural GS1 and GS2 question — The GS1 syllabus lists “salient features of Indian society”; GS2 lists “mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections”.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s) of the Atrocities Act, 1989 require caste insult or abuse “in any place within public view”; Article 17 makes untouchability an offence. - Section 18A of the Atrocities Act (2018) bars a preliminary inquiry before an FIR and anticipatory bail; Prathvi Raj Chauhan (2020) upheld it. - In Swaran Singh v. State (2008), the Supreme Court held that a private place, such as a lawn outside a house visible to the public, can be “within public view”.
ANALYSIS	1. The test was always visibility, not geography, so the Calcutta reading is an extension rather than a rupture — Courts asked whether the public could witness the insult, not

	who owned the place. Even a private lawn visible from the road has qualified. A Facebook post others can read meets that test better than a closed-room remark; the Kerala High Court in 2022 called the Act an “ongoing statute” to be read with technological change. 2. Lens — Tradition and social justice: caste humiliation needs an audience, and social media supplies one at scale — The harm of caste abuse is degradation before others; an online slur reaches more witnesses and lasts longer, so the dignity injury is often greater. A thoughtful officer would treat a public post as the new village chaupal. The counter-view, voiced by the Supreme Court in the school case, is that courts must check each element strictly, so a private message should not qualify. 3. The weakest link is investigation, not interpretation — This case nearly died when the platform did not share user details. Without trained cyber cells that use the legal channels obliging intermediaries to assist, a victim wins on law and still loses on facts.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Should the requirement of “public view” under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act extend to social media? Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Comment — Give a reasoned opinion, with one limit. 2. Introduction — the Act punishes caste insult only “within public view” — Cite the Calcutta ruling. 3. Body — visibility, not physical place, has always been the test — Value addition: Hitesh Verma (2020) — where the public can see or hear. 4. Body — the limit is that private messages and unproven intent must stay outside — Ramkrishna Chauhan: each element is tested strictly. 5. Body — enforcement fails at tracing the accused — Flowchart: post → complaint → platform data request → identification → special court. 6. Conclusion — extend the reading, but build cyber investigation capacity — Article 17 dignity needs both.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Superintendent of Police, you find a Facebook caste-abuse complaint closed because the platform did not reply. What do you do? Approach: I would reopen the investigation: a platform’s silence is a failure of effort, not of evidence. The cyber cell would send a legal requisition to the intermediary and preserve evidence. I would brief officers on the High Court ruling and review similar closed cases.

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

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

Case 1 — The Accused Column Left Blank, and the Superintendent of Police Who Reviews the File

SCENARIO The Supreme Court has castigated Uttar Pradesh police for registering a molestation case against an “unknown person” although the accused had been caught on the spot and handed over (The Hindu, Indian Express, 1 October). The complainant says the accused column was left blank, the rider's name was added only after the High Court sought a status report, he was then given a clean chit, and his bike, seized without a number plate, later appeared with a registration number. The Bench asked, “How will people trust you if this is how you proceed?” Imagine you are the Superintendent of Police. A similar complaint reaches a station in your district. The Station House Officer says the man caught is locally influential, and a Circle Officer advises writing “unknown” for now and adding the name after “verification”.

- Q1.** Is leaving a named, apprehended suspect out of the FIR a matter of police discretion or a breach of duty? Examine the ethical and legal issues.
- Q2.** How will you deal with the SHO and the Circle Officer, and with the file already registered?
- Q3.** What systemic safeguards would stop such omissions from recurring in your district?

MODEL APPROACH

- 1. The FIR is a public record of what the complainant said, not the police's opinion of it** — A complaint disclosing a cognizable offence must be registered as told, and the Supreme Court's Lalita Kumari ruling (2013) requires registration without a preliminary check in such cases. Doubt about the suspect belongs to the investigation, never to the first record. A blank column turns the FIR into a tool of the police, not of the victim.
- 2. Pressure from a powerful suspect is a reason to record more, not less** — Order the correct entry at once, and record in writing why the file was reviewed. Ask why the bike's identity changed on paper. Fixing facts after a court asks is evidence tampering in spirit, and silence would make me a party to it.
- 3. Accountability must reach the supervisor, not stop at the constable** — A fair inquiry hears the SHO and the Circle Officer, and discipline follows facts. My own supervision is also on trial. Spot audits of FIRs against complaint copies, and a tamper-evident entry log, make omissions detectable.
- 4. Conclusion — trust is the police's only real authority** — Public trust grows when a citizen sees her words written down faithfully, including when the accused is powerful.

Case 2 — The Forest Officer Asked to Clear a Road He Must Also Pay For

SCENARIO Bihar's forest department has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Road Construction Department (RCD) to widen 10.5 km of National Highway 333 through Gangata forest, Munger, to two lanes. The Indian Express (1 October) reports that clause 4.2 asks the forest department to “extend all possible cooperation” in obtaining forest clearance, clause 4.3 to help make land available, and the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Munger, would pay the contractor. The project needs 2.1 hectares from Bhimband Wildlife Sanctuary, with clearance applications pending since April 2023 and February 2024. Asked about the conflict of interest, the department's head said the MoU was “being withdrawn”. Imagine you are the DFO, Munger. Until the withdrawal is formal, a written order tells you to start the processing of bills and speed up the file.

- Q1.** Identify the conflict of interest. Why does the same officer's role as assessor and as paymaster matter ethically?
- Q2.** What will you do before, during and after the MoU's withdrawal?
- Q3.** Can national development priorities justify blurring the line between regulator and executor?

MODEL APPROACH

1. **A regulator cannot also be the proponent of what it regulates** — The DFO makes the preliminary field assessment of a clearance application, and the MoU would also make him the project's paymaster and give his department "execution responsibility". His assessment can no longer be trusted by the public, the courts or the sanctuary he is sworn to protect, whatever his intentions.
2. **Obey lawfully, but write the objection and separate the roles** — Place a note on file citing the conflict and seek written clarification. Offer to process only functions unrelated to clearance, and request that the assessment go to another officer. Silent compliance and open defiance are both poor answers.
3. **Development is legitimate, but the safeguard is what makes it so** — The road serves residents, and delay has costs. Yet a clearance that cannot be defended before the Environment ministry's Parivesh portal, or a court, delays the road more. Speed comes from complete files, not from dual roles.
4. **Conclusion — the cleanest fix is structural** — Let the RCD seek and bear its own clearances, and keep forest staff to assessment and monitoring.

10. Prelims Quick-Revision Facts

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

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2026 — who may order a delayed registration	The Act amends Section 13 of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969, and came into force on 1 October (Ministry of Home Affairs; AIR). For a delay of one to two years, the order comes from a District Magistrate, Sub-Divisional Magistrate or Executive Magistrate after verification and a fee; for a delay of more than two years, only a Judicial Magistrate of the First Class can order it. Commentators differ on whether this shifts power from courts to the executive or raises the bar for the longest delays.
Subsidised LPG — biometric Aadhaar authentication from 1 October; Ujjwala subsidy continued	From 1 October, biometric Aadhaar authentication is mandatory for refills of domestic LPG at the subsidised price, to curb diversion to commercial use and remove duplicate connections (Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, per AIR). Separately, the Union Cabinet continued the targeted subsidy of ₹300 per 14.2 kg cylinder for Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) beneficiaries for 2026-27 (Indian Express, 30 September).
National Biodiversity Authority — Biological Diversity Act, 2002, and a three-tier structure	The NBA, headquartered at Chennai and set up in 2003, marked its 23rd Foundation Day on 1 October (PIB). It is the national tier of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, with State Biodiversity Boards above and Biodiversity Management Committees at the local-body level. The Act provides for access and benefit sharing (ABS), under which users of biological resources share benefits with providers.
NCERT Class 9 textbook on the Sengol — a ceremonial sceptre, and a disputed claim	The new Class 9 social science book, “Understanding Society: India and Beyond - Part Two”, says Jawaharlal Nehru received the Sengol from Adheenam saints of Tamil Nadu at midnight on 15 August 1947 as a “civilisationally rooted” transfer of authority; historians such as Rajmohan Gandhi have said there is no record of it as a formal symbol of transfer of power (The Hindu, 1 October). The Sengol was installed in the new Parliament building in 2023.
Status of Policing in India Report 2026 — published by Lokniti-CSDS and Common Cause	The report is a joint study by Lokniti-CSDS and Common Cause (The Hindu, 1 October). It finds that 63 per cent of cybercrime victims remain dissatisfied with how the police handle their complaints, and that satisfaction falls as a complaint moves from the helpline to investigation.
Export-Import Regulations 2026 — RBI’s revised framework under FEMA, 1999, from 1 October	The revised regulations, issued by the Reserve Bank of India under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, record services trade on the RBI’s digital platforms for the first time, alongside software and goods (The Economic Times, 1 October). Card payments to foreign vendors for services count as imports. The Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) separately allows a resident individual to remit up to \$250,000 a year.
RoDTEP and RoSCTL — export tax-refund schemes extended to 31 December 2026	Orders of 30 September extended the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP, Commerce Ministry) and the Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL, Textiles Ministry, for garments and made-ups) to 31 December without change in rates (The Hindu, 1 October). Both refund embedded taxes that are not otherwise rebated; RoSCTL was launched on 7 March 2019 (PIB).
TRAI’s draft on 5G network slicing — a telecom-quality regulation under the TRAI Act, 1997	The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, a statutory regulator under the TRAI Act, 1997, has proposed draft amendments to its Standards of Quality of Service of Access and Broadband Service Regulations, 2024, covering 5G network slicing, coverage-map accuracy and financial disincentives. Network slicing creates separate virtual networks on one 5G network; at an open house on 30 September, consumer groups backed the proposed 80% utilisation cap while telcos objected, and some groups cited net neutrality (The Economic Times, 1 October).
Cardiff MoU, 14 September	The First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland signed a Memorandum of

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
— a political statement by three devolved First Ministers, not a treaty	Understanding in Cardiff declaring their commitment to independence from the United Kingdom; it is not a legal or multilateral treaty (The Hindu, 1 October). Devolution began in the late 1990s, and the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999 after a 1979 referendum.
Good Friday Agreement, 1998 — consociational power-sharing in Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland is governed by the power-sharing arrangement laid down in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, called consociationalism: Nationalist and Unionist blocs must share power, with the First Minister from the largest party of the largest bloc. A border poll on Irish unity can be called only by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (The Hindu, 1 October).
Fiscal deficit — the FRBM Act, 2003 framework	The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003 sets the legal framework for the Centre's deficit targets; the fiscal deficit is total expenditure minus total receipts excluding borrowings. The Centre's target for this fiscal is 4.3 per cent of GDP, or ₹16.96 lakh crore (The Economic Times, 1 October).
UPSC's centenary — the Public Service Commission of 1 October 1926	The first Public Service Commission was set up on 1 October 1926, following the Lee Commission of 1924 and the Government of India Act, 1919; the Prime Minister was to join its centenary celebrations on 1 October (Indian Express). The Federal Public Service Commission followed under the Government of India Act, 1935, and the Union Public Service Commission became a constitutional body under Article 315 of the Constitution, whose Articles 315 to 323 govern Public Service Commissions.
Article 317 — removal of a Public Service Commission chairman or member	Under Article 317, the chairman or a member of a Public Service Commission is removed by the President, on a ground of misbehaviour, only after the Supreme Court, on a reference by the President, reports after inquiry that the person ought to be removed. Maharashtra's Chief Minister cited this when aspirants demanded the removal of the State commission's chairman (Indian Express, 1 October).
Mizo Peace Accord, 1986 — and Mizoram as the 23rd State	A 1986 settlement ended Mizoram's insurgency, and Mizoram became the 23rd State of India on 20 February 1987 (The Economic Times, 1 October). Article 371G contains special provisions for Mizoram.
Rajya Sabha election — single transferable vote, and the quota behind "37 MLAs"	Under Article 80(4), State representatives in the Rajya Sabha are elected by the Legislative Assembly's elected members by proportional representation through the single transferable vote. For the ten Uttar Pradesh seats on 16 October, 37 MLAs are needed to elect one candidate (The Economic Times, 1 October); the quota is the number of valid votes divided by one more than the seats, plus one, ignoring fractions.
Mountain Railways of India — the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, started in 1881	The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, started in 1881, became part of the "Mountain Railways of India" UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999 (The Economic Times, 1 October). The site was later extended with the Nilgiri and Kalka-Shimla railways.
India and the Arctic — Observer status since 2013, Arctic Policy 2022 and Himadri	India has been an Observer at the Arctic Council since 2013, published its Arctic Policy in 2022, and operates the Himadri research station at Svalbard (The Hindu, 1 October). The Arctic Council, formed in 1996, has eight Arctic States as members, among them Iceland.
National motto and Supreme Court motto — two different sources	"Satyameva Jayate", India's national motto, is from the Mundaka Upanishad, while the Supreme Court's motto "Yato Dharmastato Jayah" ("where there is righteous duty, there is victory") is from the Mahabharata (The Hindu, 1 October, on the new NCERT Class 9 text).
Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 — the Rules the NCSK invoked	On a sewer death at Santacruz, the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis asked the Mumbai Suburban Collector to act under the Manual Scavenging Rules, 2013 (Indian Express, 1 October). The 2013 Act prohibits employing people for hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks and for insanitary latrines, and provides for the rehabilitation of manual scavengers.

Source note: All items are drawn from *The Hindu* (Delhi), *The Indian Express* (Mumbai) & *The Economic Times* (Delhi) — 1 October 2026, supplemented where indicated by official releases and PRS Legislative Research. Facts, figures and quotes are reproduced as reported on that date; verify currency (ongoing legal proceedings, evolving numbers) before using in an answer.

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

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

11.1 Model answer of the day — Card 2.2 (10 marks, 150 words)

“Labour reform in India is decided less in Parliament than in State rule-making.” Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)

Introduction — The four Labour Codes replaced 29 central laws and took effect on 21 November 2025. But labour is a Concurrent subject, and for most establishments the State is the “appropriate government” that writes the rules.

- 1. Rules turn a Code into an entitlement** — Registration, inspection, leave and thresholds reach a factory only through rules. Ten months on, only 10 States and UTs have notified rules under any Code, and just eight under the Social Security Code.
- 2. Delay keeps two regimes alive** — Maharashtra’s Shops Act allows 45 days of carried-forward leave against the Codes’ 30; Haryana still demands separate registration.
- 3. Parliament still sets the frame** — It fixed the common floor, including social security for gig workers, and Article 254 lets central law prevail over repugnant State law.

Conclusion — The statement holds for implementation, not design. Way forward: model rules, deadlines and consultation, with a common floor of protection and State freedom on procedure.

Draw this: Flowchart beside the second body point: Code → appropriate government → rules → worker, with the count of notifying States under each Code (OSH 10, Wages 9, IR 9, Social Security 8).

(150 words)

11.2 GS1 corner — History: The Public Service Commission at 100: from the Lee Commission to Article 315

Today’s peg: IE p1

- 1. Demands for Indianisation produced the first commission** — The Government of India Act, 1919 first provided for one. The Royal Commission on the Superior Civil Services under Lord Lee of Fareham, with equal Indian and British members, recommended it in 1924. The Public Service Commission was set up on 1 October 1926 under Sir Ross Barker.
- 2. The 1935 Act turned it into a federal body** — The Government of India Act, 1935 provided for a Federal Public Service Commission. After Independence it became the Union Public Service Commission and received constitutional status on 26 January 1950.
- 3. The Constitution guards its independence** — Articles 315–323 in Part XIV provide a commission for the Union and each State. Removal for misbehaviour needs a Supreme Court inquiry; examinations are a core duty.

Prelims facts

- The Public Service Commission was set up on 1 October 1926 under Sir Ross Barker.
- Articles 315–323, in Part XIV of the Constitution, deal with Public Service Commissions for the Union and the States.
- Under Article 317, a UPSC member can be removed for misbehaviour only after an inquiry by the Supreme Court; Article 320 sets out its functions.

11.3 Places in news — mark them on your atlas

Place	Where it is	Why in news	Prelims fact
Beed	Marathwada, central Maharashtra, on the Deccan plateau; the Godavari runs along its northern edge, with Jalna to the north and Latur to the south-east.	Sugarcane cutters left months early, indebted to mukadams, as drought hit 265 talukas (3.2).	Beed, like the rest of Marathwada, was part of the Nizam’s Hyderabad State until 1948.

Place	Where it is	Why in news	Prelims fact
Nandurbar	North-west corner of Maharashtra; Gujarat lies to the west and north, Madhya Pradesh to the north-east; the Narmada marks its northern boundary amid the Satpura hills.	Another district where drought pushed cane cutters out early (3.2).	A predominantly tribal district: Scheduled Tribes are about 69% of its people, mostly Bhils.
Bhimbandh (Bhimband) Wildlife Sanctuary	South-west Munger district, Bihar, south of the Ganga in the Kharagpur hills, at the northern edge of the Chota Nagpur plateau.	Widening NH-333 needs 2.1 ha of it; the forest department's MoU to build the road is being withdrawn (IE p1).	Known for hot springs such as Bhimbandh, Sita Kund and Rishi Kund.
Lakshadweep	Coral islands in the Arabian Sea off the Kerala coast; the boat was intercepted about 160 nautical miles north-west of them.	526 kg of drugs seized from an Iranian boat loaded at Gwadar (TH p10).	The Nine Degree Channel separates Minicoy from the main group; the Eight Degree Channel separates Minicoy from the Maldives.

11.4 Ethics term of the day (GS4 Section A): Conflict of interest

Meaning — A conflict of interest arises when an official's private or institutional interest could improperly influence a public duty. It needs no proven wrongdoing; the appearance of compromised judgement erodes trust. Remedies: disclosure, recusal, separated roles.

In today's news — Bihar's forest department, which assesses forest clearance for a highway through Bhimbandh sanctuary, signed an MoU to execute and pay for the road (Case 2). In 1.1, a House treating criticism as contempt becomes accuser and judge at once.

Use in an answer — Case studies where one office both regulates and executes: name the conflict among the ethical issues, then propose recusal or role separation in the action plan.

11.5 CSAT practice (Paper II)

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

A loan is a promise made by today's self on behalf of tomorrow's. Whether that promise is wise depends less on its size than on its purpose. Borrowing to buy a machine or open a shop can raise future income and so pay for itself. Borrowing to meet a hospital bill or the rent does not create the income needed to repay it; it only moves today's shortfall into the future, with interest.

For this reason, a rising ratio of household debt to national income tells us little on its own. The same figure can describe a confident middle class investing in homes, or anxious families stretching wages to cover needs that public services once met. To read the number, one must ask who is borrowing, for what, from whom and at what cost.

New forms of credit have made these questions harder to answer. Loans approved on a phone in minutes and offers to pay later at the checkout lower the effort of borrowing. They also blur the line between what a family can afford and what it can merely obtain. A salaried employee may manage such debt comfortably; a daily-wage worker whose earnings vary weekly may not.

Spending financed by credit can lift an economy for a while, but it borrows demand from the future. Demand that grows out of rising incomes is slower to build and more durable. The sensible response, then, is not a blunt squeeze on lending, which would hurt productive borrowers too. It is to separate credit that builds capacity from credit that signals distress, and to read the second as a warning about wages and social protection, not finance alone.

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

- (a) Household borrowing should be restricted because it borrows demand from the future.
- (b) Why and how households borrow matters more than the level of their debt.

- (c) Digital lending is the main cause of household distress.
- (d) Salaried workers should borrow more than daily-wage workers.

Q2. The author's view that a blunt squeeze on lending is not sensible rests on the assumption that

- (a) some household borrowing raises the borrower's future income.
- (b) banks lend only to salaried workers.
- (c) digital loans are always costlier than bank loans.
- (d) public services have recently improved.

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

- (a) Rising household debt always signals distress.
- (b) Credit-financed spending harms an economy at once.
- (c) A family that borrows to pay rent adds to its future burden without adding to its means of repaying.
- (d) Daily-wage workers cannot obtain digital loans.

Reasoning and quantitative aptitude

Q4. The wheat MSP rose from ₹2,585 to ₹2,610 a quintal and the safflower MSP from ₹6,540 to ₹7,215. A farmer sells 20 quintals of wheat and 4 quintals of safflower at MSP. By how much does his revenue rise over last year's prices?

- (a) ₹700
- (b) ₹2,700
- (c) ₹3,200
- (d) ₹16,000

Q5. Five States P, Q, R, S and T notified labour rules on different days from Monday to Friday of one week. Q notified two days after P. S notified on Friday. R notified before P. T did not notify on Monday. Which State notified on Wednesday?

- (a) P
- (b) Q
- (c) R
- (d) T

Answer key and explanations

Q1: (b) The debt ratio 'tells us little on its own'; purpose and terms matter. A is tempting, but the author rejects 'a blunt squeeze'; C and D overreach.

Q2: (a) A squeeze 'would hurt productive borrowers' only if some borrowing builds capacity. B, C and D are unstated and unneeded.

Q3: (c) Borrowing for rent 'does not create the income needed to repay it'. A ignores the 'confident middle class'; B contradicts 'can lift an economy for a while'; D is unsupported.

Q4: (c) Wheat: $25 \times 20 = ₹500$; safflower: $675 \times 4 = ₹2,700$; total ₹3,200. Check: $81,060 - 77,860 = 3,200$. ₹2,700 counts safflower alone.

Q5: (d) S is Friday, so P is Monday or Tuesday. R precedes P, so P is Tuesday, R Monday, Q Thursday; Wednesday is left for T.

12. Essays of the Day

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

ESSAY 1 · Essay · Section A · 6 min read

A State is only as good as the clerk who meets the citizen.

Themes: The civil service and the citizen · The State's promise and its delivery · Discretion, accountability and technology

In September 2017, an eleven-year-old girl named Santoshi Kumari died in Karimati village in Simdega district of Jharkhand. Her mother said she died asking for rice. The family's ration card had been cancelled some months earlier because it had not been linked to Aadhaar. On paper, nothing had failed. The National Food Security Act, 2013 entitled the family to subsidised grain, Parliament had passed it, and the money had been budgeted. But Santoshi never met the Act. She met a ration shop and a list from which her family's name had been struck off. For her, the State was that list and the people who kept it.

Today the Union Public Service Commission completes a hundred years. The Public Service Commission set up on 1 October 1926, on the advice of the Lee Commission, gave India something rare among poor countries: an upper civil service chosen by open, merit-based examination, which Lloyd George in 1922 called the "steel frame" of the whole structure. This essay argues that the frame is judged by what it holds up at its far end. A State makes its promises at the top, in laws, budgets and Cabinet decisions, but it keeps them, or breaks them, at the bottom: in the patwari's register, the nurse's visit, the constable's first information report. Ministers and laws matter enormously. Their worth, however, becomes real only at the moment an ordinary person stands at a counter.

India has long known about this gap. In 1985 Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said that of every rupee the government spent on the poor, only about fifteen paise reached them. In 2009 the economist Lant Pritchett described India as a "flailing state": a capable head that could not rely on its own arms and legs to carry out what it decided. Today's news shows the same pattern. The four Labour Codes have been in force for ten months, yet only ten States and Union Territories have notified the rules that make them work, so a gig worker's promised social security exists in the Gazette but not in his life. The Cabinet has raised support prices for pulses and oilseeds, but where no official turns up to buy at that price, the support price is only a notice on a wall. In drought-hit Maharashtra, families of cane cutters are leaving early, in debt to labour contractors, because the public works that should have employed them at home have not started. In each case the policy is announced. What is missing is the person who carries it out.

The political scientist Michael Lipsky named these people "street-level bureaucrats": teachers, police officers, welfare clerks and health workers. In *Street-Level Bureaucracy* (1980) he argued that "the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out." The constable who decides whether to register a complaint against a powerful man decides, in effect, whether the law exists for the complainant. Kautilya knew that this discretion cuts both ways. In the *Arthashastra* he warned that just as fish moving under water cannot be seen drinking, government servants cannot easily be caught taking money. The clerk can be the State's best face or its worst one, and the citizen rarely gets to choose which.

Yet when the last link is trained, trusted and checked, the Indian State has done remarkable things. The Election Commission requires that no voter should have to travel more than two kilometres to vote. For years it set up a polling booth in Banej, deep in the Gir forest, for a single voter, the temple priest Bharatdas Darshandas. Elections in India work because a polling officer carrying a voting machine into a forest feels that the whole Constitution travels with her. The same was true of the polio campaign, when health workers and volunteers went from door to door, at railway stations

and brick kilns, until the World Health Organization certified India polio-free in 2014. Neither success came from a clever policy alone. Each came from the pride and accountability of the people at the far end.

There is a serious counter-argument. The State, it says, is not its clerks but its institutions: the Constitution, the laws and the policies. A good clerk cannot redeem a bad law, and many of the worst harms in history were done by officials who did their jobs well. Technology, it adds, can now go round the clerk altogether. Direct Benefit Transfer sends money straight into bank accounts, and the government reports large savings from removing fake beneficiaries. Both points are fair. But they do not defeat the prompt. Santoshi Kumari's death was itself a story of technology: an automated rule cancelled the card, and no official had the power or the will to make an exception. Technology does not remove the clerk. It moves him to the e-PoS machine, the help desk and the server that rejects a fingerprint. And the quality of the clerk is not an accident; it is made at the top, by how officials are recruited, trained, paid, supervised and punished. Read this way, the prompt does not excuse those at the top. It sets them their test.

If that is so, the reform agenda becomes clear. Frontline vacancies in schools, police stations and health centres must be filled, because a post on paper cannot serve anyone. Training must reach the lowest rung, as Mission Karmayogi, launched in 2020, intends. Service guarantee laws, beginning with Madhya Pradesh's Lok Sewa Guarantee Act of 2010, set time limits for services and fine officials who miss them. Social audits, which Andhra Pradesh built into the rural employment guarantee from 2006, let villagers check muster rolls in public. Every digital system needs a human override for the case the rules did not foresee. Above all, every desk needs a moral test. Gandhi offered one: "Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him."

A hundred years after the first Public Service Commission, the right measure of the steel frame is not how brilliant its toppers are, but what a widow finds at the ration shop, a farmer at the procurement centre and a migrant worker at the labour office. On the eve of Independence, Jawaharlal Nehru said that "the service of India means the service of the millions who suffer." The State is a chain: its strength is set at the top but tested at the last link, where the citizen meets it. Merit at the top is a promise. Dignity, capacity and accountability at the counter are how that promise is kept. A State that remembers this will be judged not by the laws it passes but by the clerk who meets the citizen, and it will be found good.

Built from today's cards: UPSC's centenary — the Public Service Commission of 1 October 1926 · Ten months after the Labour Codes took effect, only 10 States and UTs have notified rules · Cabinet holds wheat MSP nearly flat at ₹2,610 and loads rabi increases on oilseeds and pulses · Maharashtra declares drought in 265 of 358 talukas as cane cutters leave months early in debt