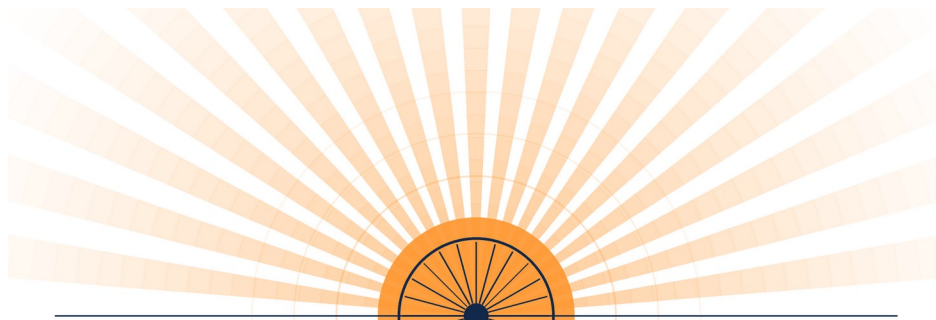




UPSC DARPAN

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.

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Hum jeet ka maja chakh kar rahenge.

Quote of the Day

"They say 'means are after all means'. I would say 'means are after all everything'. As the means so the end."

— Mahatma Gandhi, Young India (17 July 1924)

The Hindu, The Indian Express & The Economic Times (Delhi Editions) — 2 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 · 2 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 means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree.”

— **Mahatma Gandhi** · *Hind Swaraj* (1909), Chapter XVI, “Brute Force” (text as on mkgandhi.org)

Use in: Gandhi Jayanti and today's essay, “The road you take decides where you arrive.” Use it in GS4 answers on means and ends, ethics in public life and the contribution of moral thinkers, and in essays on power, justice and the State: Gandhi's point is not that goals do not matter but that the method is built into the result. Pair it with Indian examples where shortcuts defeated their own purpose: the Emergency's coerced sterilisation drive, “encounter” killings (the Sirpurkar Commission found the 2019 Hyderabad encounter staged), and punitive demolitions that the Supreme Court checked in November 2024. Argue for due process as part of justice, not an obstacle to it.

“I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends.”

— **Martin Luther King Jr.** · *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, 16 April 1963 (text as on the University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center site)

Use in: The essay on means and ends, and today's Election Commission probe into bulk Form 7 filings to delete voters' names (a legitimate end, a clean roll, can be pursued by means that leave a roll nobody trusts). Use it in GS4 answers on the relationship between law and ethics and on the limits of proceduralism, and in GS2 answers on electoral integrity: King, Gandhi's most faithful student, adds that correct procedure cannot clean an unjust goal. Argue that both tests apply together: the end must be just, and the method must be one the affected people could accept as fair.

“But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us.”

— **B.R. Ambedkar** · *Speech in the Constituent Assembly*, 25 November 1949 (*Constituent Assembly Debates*, Vol. XI)

Use in: The counter-position in today's essay, on Gandhi Jayanti: Ambedkar, Gandhi's sharpest critic, said that civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha had been justified under colonial rule but not in a republic where lawful routes exist. Use it in GS2 answers on constitutional morality, protest and public order, and in GS4 and essay answers on means and ends: it is itself an argument about means, since in a democracy the obligation to take the lawful road is greater. Balance it with the State's matching duty to keep those routes genuinely open: working courts, a free press, an impartial Election Commission and space for peaceful dissent.

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Everything in today's edition, card by card · Reading time: about 1 h 43 min.

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12.1 The road you take decides where you arrive.

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	EC probes bulk Form 7 objections, orders drive for left-out voters <i>Why it matters: GS2 elections: Form 6/7/8, Rule 20 inquiry, Section 31 RP Act 1950 and Article 324 suit Prelims; deletion versus franchise suits Mains.</i>
2.2	Imports supply a record 32.2% of GST collections <i>Why it matters: GS3 resource mobilisation: IGST on imports, gross versus net GST and the October 7 GST Council meeting are likely Prelims material.</i>
3.1	G20 statement on weaponisation of food; India defends public stockholding <i>Why it matters: GS3 food security and WTO: public stockholding, the peace clause and export curbs make a ready 15-mark question.</i>
5.2	Madhya Pradesh suspends forest department's CFR directive after tribal ministry objects <i>Why it matters: GS2/GS3 tribal rights: FRA 2006 makes the gram sabha, not the forest department, the claims authority; a Prelims favourite.</i>
6.1	Karnataka finds hospitals billing near MRP on cheaply bought drugs <i>Why it matters: GS2 health: NPPA and MRP for Prelims; price control that stops at the factory gate suits a 10-mark question.</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

All three stories are about the gap between a right on paper and the machinery that delivers it. A vote can be lost to a stranger's objection form, a quota can fall because the State counted people instead of measuring backwardness, and a city's tap water can turn lethal while a file waits 64 days for a discussion. In each case the law was adequate; the procedure, the data or the record-keeping was not.

1.1 EC orders probe into bulk Form 7 deletions, special drive for left-out voters

ISSUE THREAD SIR of electoral rolls (update 10) **LENS** Independence and accountability · Liberty and order

STORY SO FAR SIR re-verifies every elector against the last intensive roll. Two Election Commissioners objected to a changed Form 6; in Karnataka's Babaleshwar, 10 people filed 1,363 objections in one day.

THE NEWS Bengaluru and New Delhi, October 1. The Election Commission (EC) ordered a probe into Form 7s, the forms that object to a name on the roll, filed in bulk in Karnataka, after a five-hour protest by Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar. Chief Electoral Officer V. Anbu Kumar told Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to act under Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 against those who "knowingly" make false declarations, but only after an inquiry under Rule 20 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, The Hindu reports. The Indian Express reports that an EC letter of September 29 orders a "special drive" in the 20 States and UTs where SIR is over to enrol "left out" and first-time electors on the plain Form 6; CEOs must compare pre- and post-SIR rolls and send booth officers to the homes of those wrongly deleted.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

SIR strikes 13 crore names off draft rolls in 30 States and UTs → the Rules let any elector object to any entry → pre-filled Form 7s are filed in bulk against particular communities → a Chief Minister's protest forces a probe → the EC opens a Form 6 route back

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	The 1960 Rules require notice and inquiry before any deletion — Under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, Form 6 claims inclusion, Form 7 objects to an entry and Form 8 corrects one. The person objected to gets notice of a hearing (Rule 19), and the ERO holds a summary inquiry (Rule 20), where he may take evidence on oath. Section 31 punishes false declarations; Article 324 makes rolls the EC's duty — Section 31 of the RP Act, 1950 punishes a written statement about an electoral roll that the maker knows or believes to be false with imprisonment up to one year, or fine, or both. Article 324 vests control of the preparation of rolls in the EC.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	Roll revision is now the live edge of the GS2 elections syllabus — The syllabus names the "Salient features of the Representation of People's Act". Questions on electoral reform increasingly turn on who may be struck off a roll and by what procedure.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Form 7 under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 is used to object to the inclusion of a name in the electoral roll or to seek its deletion. - Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 punishes a knowingly false declaration relating to an electoral roll with imprisonment up to one year, or fine, or both. - Article 324 vests the preparation of electoral rolls in the Election Commission.
ANALYSIS	The system makes deletion cheap and re-inclusion costly — Filing a Form 7 costs a signature; answering it costs the voter documents and perhaps a hearing. In West Bengal, per the EC affidavit cited by petitioner Prasenjit Bose, about 90% of 6,39,000 Form 7s were accepted while over a fifth of Form 6s were rejected. When one side is effortless and the other demanding, outcomes tilt even if officers act in good faith.

	2. Lens — Independence and accountability: the EC cannot outsource deterrence — Former Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa says Section 31 has hardly been used and the EC rarely follows up its FIRs, so false objections are effectively free. The counter-view is that flagging a suspect entry is a citizen's right. A sound officer would inquire first, prosecute only proven, knowing falsehoods, and publish the numbers, through the separate NCRB dataset on election offences Lavasa proposes. 3. The special drive admits error but rebuilds rolls on weak footing — Comparing pre- and post-SIR rolls concedes that eligible people were removed. Yet they re-enter through Form 6 as if new, and party agents are asked to help, bringing partisanship back in. Its test is names restored, booth by booth, and published.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Making deletion easy and re-inclusion hard threatens adult franchise." Critically examine with reference to recent objections filed during revision of electoral rolls. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh both sides and reach a judgement. 2. Introduction — the franchise lives or dies by roll procedure — Article 326 promises adult suffrage; the 1960 Rules decide who is on the roll. 3. Body — objections cost little and the burden falls on the voter — Value addition: West Bengal's ~90% Form 7 acceptance; Karnataka's bulk filings. 4. Body — safeguards exist but go unenforced — Rule 20 and Section 31; counter: genuine objections clean rolls. Flowchart: Form 7 → display → notice → Rule 20 inquiry → order → appeal. 5. Conclusion — make deletion as accountable as inclusion — Booth-level disclosure and inquiry for bulk filers; the special drive is a start.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. You are an ERO. Hours before the window closes, 1,000 Form 7s arrive from ten people against voters of one community. What do you do? Approach: I would delete no name on the forms alone. Each voter would get notice, and I would hold a Rule 20 inquiry, asking objectors to testify on oath that they know the facts. Those who cannot substantiate, or deny filing, would be referred for Section 31 action. I would report the pattern in writing to the DEO and CEO, since bulk filing signals organised misuse.

1.2 Andhra Pradesh High Court strikes down 34% BC local-body quota over 50% cap

ISSUE THREAD Reservation in local bodies (new thread) **LENS** Growth and equity · Independence and accountability

STORY SO FAR Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6) let States reserve local-body seats for backward classes, but since 2021 the Supreme Court's triple test demands a dedicated commission, local-body-wise data and a 50% overall cap.

THE NEWS Vijayawada, October 1. A Division Bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, Chief Justice Lisa Gill and Justice Challa Gunaranjan, set aside Government Orders 105 and 1065, which gave Backward Classes (BCs) 34% of seats in Panchayat Raj Institutions and 33.33% in Urban Local Bodies, because total reservation crossed the Supreme Court's 50% ceiling. It held that data from the State's unified family survey cannot be the basis for BC reservation, and left the State free to fix a fresh share after collecting data as required by *Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra*. It directed the government and State Election Commission to begin the poll process preferably within six weeks, adding that the SIR cannot justify postponing polls. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had raised BC reservation from 20%, citing BCs as 50.54% of the population, The Indian Express reports.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

73rd and 74th Amendments let States reserve local-body seats for backward classes → Supreme Court caps reservation at 50% and in 2021 adds the triple test → Andhra Pradesh raises BC reservation from 20% to 34% → it relies on a household survey, not a dedicated commission → the High Court strikes the orders down and orders polls

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. OBC reservation in local bodies is enabling, not mandatory — Article 243D(6) lets a State Legislature reserve panchayat seats and chairpersons' posts for backward classes; Article 243T(6) does the same for municipalities. SC and ST reservation in proportion to population is mandatory. State Election Commissions conduct these polls under Articles 243K and 243ZA. 2. The triple test governs OBC quotas in local bodies — K. Krishna Murthy v. Union of India (2010) upheld these provisions but held that political backwardness differs from social and educational backwardness. Vikas Kishanrao Gawali (2021) set the triple test: a dedicated commission's contemporaneous empirical inquiry, quotas fixed local-body-wise on its advice, and SC, ST and OBC seats together not above 50%.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Local government is examined through the gap between devolution and delivery — The GS2 syllabus covers "Devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein". Quota disputes that stall elections are exactly such a challenge.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6) enable, but do not require, States to reserve seats for backward classes in panchayats and municipalities. - Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992), a nine-judge Bench, held that reservation should ordinarily not exceed 50%, save in extraordinary situations. - Under Articles 243E and 243U, panchayats and municipalities have a five-year term, and elections must be completed before it expires.
ANALYSIS	1. The court objected to the method, not merely the number — A household survey counts how many people belong to a group; it does not show whether that group is under-represented in a given council or ward. The triple test asks the second question because political backwardness is distinct. A State citing a 50.54% population share has answered a question the Constitution is not asking, which is why the court left room for a fresh, proper study. 2. Lens — Growth and equity: a rigid 50% cap sits awkwardly with representation — In jobs, a cap protects open competition for a fixed pool of posts; in local bodies, a seat is about voice, and a group that is half the population may fairly claim more than a fifth of seats. The counter-view is that without a ceiling quotas become a vote-bank auction captured by dominant backward castes. A thoughtful official would build ward-level data and consider sub-categorisation so the lawful quota reaches the weakest groups. 3. Refusing to let polls slide protects local democracy itself — When terms lapse, appointed special officers run villages and towns, suspending the 73rd Amendment's promise of elected self-government. By rejecting the SIR and delimitation as excuses, the court treated timely elections as a constitutional duty under Articles 243E and 243U. Quota disputes should be settled without stalling the vote.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Is the 'triple test' for backward class reservation in local bodies a safeguard of representation or a barrier to it? Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Comment — Give a clear opinion with brief reasons and the counter-view. 2. Introduction — local-body quotas rest on Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6) — One line on the Gawali triple test (2021). 3. Body — a safeguard, because it demands data on political backwardness — Value addition: the Andhra Pradesh High Court rejected a household survey as the basis.

	4. Body — a barrier, when States lack data and polls are delayed — Draw three boxes: dedicated commission → local-body-wise quota → 50% cap check. 5. Conclusion — keep the test, fund the commissions — Standing commissions with ward-level data make the test an enabler.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Principal Secretary, Panchayati Raj, you must start polls within six weeks after the quota is struck down. What do you advise? Approach: I would advise holding polls on time with BC reservation re-fixed within the 50% limit, so the order is obeyed and elected bodies are restored. In parallel, I would propose a dedicated commission with a clear deadline to study political backwardness body by body, to guide the next cycle. I would explain publicly that this sequences the State's commitment rather than reducing it.

1.3 Judicial commission calls Indore water deaths preventable, blames 859-day tender delays

ISSUE THREAD Urban water safety and accountability (new thread) **LENS** Independence and accountability · Rule of law and discretion

STORY SO FAR Between December 2025 and February 2026, contaminated tap water in Indore's Bhagirathpura made more than 100 people ill and killed more than 30, in a city ranked India's cleanest for eight consecutive years.

THE NEWS Bhopal, October 1. A one-member Judicial Commission, former Madhya Pradesh High Court judge Sushil Kumar Gupta, has told the High Court's Indore Bench that the Bhagirathpura deaths were preventable, The Hindu reports. Sewage entered the drinking-water system; the root cause was sewer and water lines laid in parallel, crossing, and in places with the sewer above the water pipe. One pipeline project took 859 days from tender to completion; on one file, a 64-day wait for a "discussion" caused a 72-day delay. It holds then Additional Commissioner Rohit Sisonia and executive engineer Sanjeev Shrivastava of the Indore Municipal Corporation "primarily responsible", and clears two IAS Commissioners. Of 52 pollution board samples, 50 had coliform and 40 E. coli, bacteria from faecal matter. The report links 22 deaths on hospital records and calls the tragedy a "cumulative consequence" of decades of failures.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Sewer and water networks are laid side by side decades ago → records of both projects go missing → pipe replacement stalls in tenders and approvals → sewage seeps into drinking water → an outbreak kills more than 30 and a judicial commission fixes responsibility

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Water supply is a State subject delivered by municipalities — Entry 17 of the State List covers water supplies. The 74th Amendment added Article 243W and the Twelfth Schedule, whose item 5 is water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes. The Supreme Court reads the right to safe drinking water into Article 21. 2. India has a binding drinking-water standard and a mission for urban taps — The Bureau of Indian Standards' IS 10500:2012 says total coliform and E. coli must not be detectable in any 100 ml sample. AMRUT 2.0, launched on October 1, 2021, aims at universal water-supply coverage in all statutory towns.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Urban services are tested as accountability questions, not only funding ones — The GS2 syllabus covers "Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability". Deaths caused by administrative delay are strong material for questions on municipal capacity.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Item 5 of the Twelfth Schedule, added by the 74th Amendment, lists water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes as a municipal function. - Under IS 10500:2012 of the Bureau of Indian Standards, total coliform and E. coli

	must not be detectable in any 100 ml sample of drinking water. ● AMRUT 2.0 was launched on October 1, 2021, with the aim of universal water-supply coverage in all statutory towns.
ANALYSIS	1. Delay in a file can be as lethal as a broken pipe — Nobody poisoned Indore's water; the danger lay in replacement work moving slowly through tenders and approvals. A one-word note, "discuss", left idle for 64 days, shows how unchecked discretion over timing becomes risk when the asset is a public-health system. Time-bound file disposal, with automatic escalation when a deadline passes, matters as much as engineering. 2. Lens — Independence and accountability: the file trail finds who signed, not who designed — The commission named officers whose delays are recorded but could not trace those who laid the networks, because records of 1990-95 and 1999-2004 are missing. Blame falls on mid-level officials while earlier planners escape. The counter-view is that a judge must find on evidence, not rank. A thoughtful government would punish proven delay and treat the loss of records as misconduct, so a vanished file never shields a decision. 3. A 'cleanest city' can have unsafe water because rankings see the surface — Cleanliness rankings reward visible outcomes such as waste collection and clean streets. Buried pipes, the gap between sewer and water lines and routine bacteriological testing are invisible to them, and a city optimises what it is measured on. Ward-wise water-safety audits against IS 10500, published, would close that blind spot.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Urban water disasters in India are rarely the result of a single act of negligence. Analyse with reference to the Indore inquiry. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Analyse — Break the failure into parts and show how they combined. 2. Introduction — the commission called Bhagirathpura a 'cumulative' failure — More than 30 deaths in India's cleanest city from sewage in drinking water. 3. Body — planning failed first: sewer and water lines laid together — Value addition: 50 of 52 samples had coliform, against IS 10500's zero tolerance. 4. Body — procedure failed next: 859 days in tenders, 64 days on one file — Draw a timeline: tender → file marked "discuss" → 64-day wait → approval → completion. 5. Body — memory failed last: missing records shield past decision-makers — Responsibility stops at mid-level officers. 6. Conclusion — time-bound files, mapped networks, published water tests — These turn accountability from blame into prevention.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. You take over as Indore Municipal Commissioner the week this report is released. What are your first steps? Approach: I would order bacteriological testing in every ward where sewer and water lines run together, publish the results, and supply safe water wherever samples fail. I would fix time limits for every water and sewerage file, with automatic escalation to me. I would map both networks on GIS and order an inquiry into the lost records. Action against the named officers would follow the rules, but my message to staff would be that prevention is the goal.

2. Economy

Both stories today are about who supplies the money in India's economy and what that tells the State. The RBI is easing the path for pooled savings to become larger owners of banks while keeping its veto. The September GST numbers show the tax base leaning on imports rather than on what Indians buy from each other. In both, the headline looks healthy; the structure underneath is what an aspirant must read.

2.1 RBI Lets Mutual Funds, Insurers and Pension Funds Take One-Time Approval for 10% Bank Stakes

ISSUE THREAD Who may own India's banks (new thread) **LENS** Market and State · Independence and accountability

STORY SO FAR Anyone buying 5% or more of an Indian bank needs the RBI's prior approval and must pass a "fit and proper" test; in July 2026 the RBI proposed easing this for institutional funds.

THE NEWS Mumbai. The Reserve Bank of India on Thursday, October 1, published final guidelines letting mutual funds, insurance companies and pension funds take a "one-time approval" to acquire up to 10% equity in banks, finalising its July draft, The Economic Times reports. A bank may also apply on behalf of a qualifying person in its promoter group. The 10% is computed on an "aggregate basis", counting all of an entity's holdings together. After the first purchase, the shareholder must tell the RBI and the bank within three working days whenever its holding crosses 5% of paid-up capital or voting rights, up or down. The RBI can revoke the approval for breach of conditions, or if the investor or an associate is later found not "fit and proper". Earlier, an investor whose holding fell below 5% needed a fresh approval to buy back up. The syllabus link is GS3 banking regulation.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Banks need capital as credit grows → funds are natural buyers of bank shares → trading pushes holdings across the 5% line → each crossing needed a fresh nod → one approval up to 10%, policed by reporting

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	Section 12B of the Banking Regulation Act gates bank ownership — Section 12B of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 requires the RBI's prior approval before anyone's aggregate holding in a bank reaches 5% or more of its shares or voting rights. The RBI's Master Direction of 16 January 2023 on acquisition and holding of shares or voting rights in banking companies caps non-financial investors at 10%, most financial institutions at 15%, and promoters at 26% after 15 years. Shares and votes are deliberately separated in banks — Section 12(2) of the Act caps the voting rights one shareholder can exercise, a ceiling the RBI has set at 26%. A bank runs mostly on depositors' money, so a dominant owner could steer loans to his own firms (connected lending) or take risks depositors pay for. The "fit and proper" test checks an investor's integrity, track record and source of funds.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	Bank ownership and governance recur in GS3 — The syllabus line "Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources" covers how banks raise capital; this rule shows a regulator easing capital flow while keeping a veto.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Section 12B of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 requires prior RBI approval for acquiring 5% or more of a bank's paid-up capital or voting rights. - Under the RBI's 2023 Master Direction, non-financial investors may hold up to 10% of a bank, regulated financial institutions up to 15%, and promoters 26% after 15 years. "Connected lending" is a bank lending to entities linked to its own owners.
ANALYSIS	The rule removes a cost that bought no safety — A fund trades bank shares daily, so its stake can cross 5% many times a year; a fresh approval each time added paperwork but no information about an already vetted fund. One approval plus three-day reporting keeps the RBI informed at lower cost: a shift from ex ante permission to ex

	post monitoring. 2. Lens — Market and State: the door opens to diversified money, not to controlling owners — The tension is market capital versus depositor safety. The RBI resolves it by choosing the owner: funds hold other people's savings, answer to SEBI, IRDAI or PFRDA, and rarely seek to run banks, while the 26% voting ceiling still blocks control. A thoughtful officer would call this a sound easing but watch for several funds of one group acting together, which is why the limit is counted on an aggregate basis. 3. The weak point is revocation after the money is in — Forcing the sale of a 10% stake can hit the bank's share price, so revocation is blunt. The reform leans on continuous supervision, strengthened after the Yes Bank and PMC Bank failures; the counter-view is that the threat alone disciplines investors.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Ownership of banks in India is regulated more tightly than ownership of other companies. Examine the rationale, with reference to the RBI's recent easing for institutional investors. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Examine — Probe why the rules are tight and whether the easing keeps them. 2. Introduction — banks run on depositors' money — Open with the October 1 one-time approval for funds up to 10%. 3. Approval gates and voting caps stop connected lending and concentration — Explain Section 12B, the 26% voting ceiling and fit and proper; value-addition: the 2023 Master Direction's 10%/15%/26% limits. 4. The easing targets regulated, passive capital — Draw a flowchart: approval → purchase → 5% crossing reported → supervision → revocation. 5. Conclusion — open the capital door, keep the control door shut — Back more domestic institutional capital with group-wise monitoring.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As an RBI supervisor, you find three funds of one asset manager together hold 11% of a mid-sized bank. What do you do? Approach: Counted on an aggregate basis, the group has crossed 10%, so I would direct an orderly sell-down within a fixed time, not a fire-sale. I would check whether the funds voted together or sought board seats, signalling influence rather than passive investment, and make reporting flag group-level holdings automatically.

2.2 GST from Imports Reaches Record 32.2% Share as Domestic Share Falls to 67.8%

ISSUE THREAD GST revenue and its structure (new thread) **LENS** Centre and States · Market and State

STORY SO FAR GST, in force since July 2017, merged most indirect taxes; GST rates were cut in 2025, so this year's collections are compared with a base that carried higher rates.

THE NEWS New Delhi. India's gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue rose 14.7% to ₹2.03 lakh crore in September 2026, The Hindu reports; The Economic Times prints ₹2.04 lakh crore, a rounding difference on domestic revenue of about ₹1.38 lakh crore plus import revenue of ₹65,525 crore. Import revenue grew 25.9% against 10.1% for domestic transactions, so imports supplied a record 32.2% of gross GST and the domestic share fell to a lowest-ever 67.8%, per The Hindu's analysis. Net GST, after refunds, rose 18.1% to ₹1,76,520 crore. Grant Thornton's Manoj Mishra attributed the import surge to rupee depreciation, elevated crude and commodity prices and higher landed costs (the full cost of an import on arrival). The GST Council meets on October 7, nearly a year after its last meeting. The syllabus link is GS3 resource mobilisation and GS2 fiscal federalism.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Rupee weakens and crude stays dear → the rupee value of imports rises → IGST, charged on that value at customs, rises with it → domestic sales grow more slowly on lower rates → import share of GST hits a record

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Import GST is IGST, shared under Article 269A — Article 246A lets Parliament and State legislatures both legislate on GST, with Parliament alone covering inter-State supply. Under Article 269A, GST on inter-State supply, which includes imports, is levied and collected by the Union and apportioned between the Union and States by law on the GST Council's recommendation. The States' share follows the State of final consumption. 2. The GST Council (Article 279A) is the federal forum — Created by the 101st Amendment, 2016, it is chaired by the Union Finance Minister with all State Finance Ministers as members. Decisions need three-fourths of weighted votes, the Centre holding one-third and the States two-thirds. The GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017 promised States compensation for five years through a cess.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Revenue quality and GST federalism are standing questions — GS3's "mobilization of resources" and GS2's "issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure" both cover GST; the import share tests whether a student reads revenue quality, not just size.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Under Article 269A, GST on inter-State supply, including imports, is levied and collected by the Government of India and apportioned between the Union and the States. - Article 246A gives Parliament and State legislatures power to make GST laws, with Parliament exclusive over inter-State supplies. - GST Council decisions need a three-fourths majority of weighted votes, the Centre's vote counting for one-third.
ANALYSIS	1. A record import share reflects prices more than demand — IGST is charged on the rupee value of imports, so a falling rupee and dear crude raise the tax even if volumes do not. Experts quoted in The Economic Times warned against reading the headline as strong consumption. Domestic GST at 10.1% is the better gauge of what Indians buy from each other. 2. Lens — Centre and States: import-led revenue widens State gaps — GST pools tax nationally, but each State lives on consumption within it, and import IGST reaches States only after apportionment. The Economic Times' State data show the gap: Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh grew above 15%, Tamil Nadu fell 5%. A thoughtful officer would press the Council on quick, transparent IGST settlement before debating rates. 3. Gross import GST overstates the gain — IGST paid on imported inputs returns later as input tax credit, so what matters is the mix of inputs and finished goods, which KPMG's Abhishek Jain said needs closer examination. Inputs feed future domestic output; finished goods replace it.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	A rising share of import-linked GST in total collections is not a sign of strong domestic demand. Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Comment — Give a reasoned, data-backed opinion on one dimension. 2. Introduction — the September split — Import GST grew 25.9% against 10.1% domestic, a record 32.2% share. 3. IGST tracks the rupee price of imports, not only volume — Value-addition: net GST rose 18.1% to ₹1,76,520 crore after refunds.

	4. Imported inputs may feed domestic output later — Draw a two-bar diagram of gross GST split into domestic and import shares. 5. Conclusion — read domestic and net GST, not the headline — Agree largely; ask for import data by goods category.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As a State Finance Secretary whose GST fell 5% in September while the national total rose 14.7%, how would you respond? Approach: I would split the fall into weaker consumption, delayed IGST settlement and the base effect of last year's higher rates, because each needs a different remedy. Settlement delays belong at the GST Council, not in a public quarrel with the Centre. A monthly revenue dashboard shared with the legislature keeps the explanation honest.

3. Agriculture & Food

Food is now a tool of foreign policy, and India stands on both sides of that sentence. It wants no country to coerce food importers through trade, and it wants the freedom to stock grain and curb exports when its own harvest fails. The G20 statement in Milwaukee gives India the first; the second must still be defended at the WTO.

3.1 G20 Trade Ministers Back Statement on “Weaponisation of Food” as India Defends Public Stockholding

ISSUE THREAD Food security, stockholding and the WTO (new thread) **LENS** National interest and global commons · Strategic autonomy and partnership

STORY SO FAR India buys grain at minimum support prices for the public distribution system; WTO subsidy rules count this support, and since 2013 India has relied on an interim “peace clause” against disputes.

THE NEWS Milwaukee, Wisconsin. G20 trade ministers, meeting under the U.S. presidency, reached consensus on the “G20 Statement on the Weaponization of Food Through Coercive Trade Actions”, the Commerce Ministry said, The Economic Times reports. Weaponisation here means using control over food exports or market access to pressure another country. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said food must remain “a source of security, stability and cooperation”. India, he said, maintains public stockholding, procures from small and marginal farmers, and in a harvest shortfall adopts “temporary and transparent measures” to keep food available and affordable; he asked for a clear distinction between such measures and coercive trade actions. A PIB release of October 1 adds that India gives free grain to over 800 million people. The syllabus link is GS3 buffer stocks and food security.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Wars and sanctions disrupt grain trade → importers fear food as leverage → G20 agrees a statement against coercive food trade → India separates its stockholding and export curbs from coercion → the WTO stockholding question returns

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The Agreement on Agriculture caps trade-distorting support — The WTO Agreement on Agriculture places trade-distorting price support in the Amber Box; developing countries may give it up to a de minimis 10% of the value of production, developed ones 5%. Support is measured against an external reference price fixed at 1986-88 levels and never adjusted for inflation, so India’s procurement looks a far larger subsidy than it is. 2. The Bali peace clause shields stockholding until a permanent solution — At Bali in 2013 WTO members agreed not to challenge developing countries’ public stockholding of traditional staples that breaches limits, subject to transparency conditions; a General Council decision of November 2014 kept this until a permanent solution is agreed. India first invoked it in 2020, for rice. The National Food Security Act, 2013 covers up to 75% of rural and 50% of urban people.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Buffer stocks and the WTO are a fixed GS3 theme — The syllabus line “Public Distribution System – objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security” makes India’s defence of stockholding a standing question; food weaponisation adds a GS2 angle.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Under the WTO Agreement on Agriculture, the de minimis limit on trade-distorting support for developing countries is 10% of the value of production. - The external reference price for calculating market price support under the Agreement on Agriculture is based on 1986-88 prices. - The interim “peace clause” on public stockholding was agreed at the WTO’s Bali Ministerial Conference (2013) and extended until a permanent solution by the General Council in 2014.
ANALYSIS	1. India has won the language, not the rule — A G20 statement binds no one at the

	WTO, and a permanent stockholding solution is still missing. India gains a recorded distinction between coercion and food-security measures to cite when its export curbs are attacked. But the word cuts both ways: an importer hit by an Indian export ban could call it coercive, which is why Mr. Goyal stressed “temporary and transparent”. 2. Lens — National interest and global commons: one nation’s food security can be another’s insecurity — Each country feeding itself first can drain the market poorer importers rely on. India’s answer is procedural: measures must be temporary, transparent and tied to a real shortfall, never to leverage. A thoughtful officer would judge that India’s credibility rests on practice: notifying curbs promptly and exempting humanitarian and government-to-government sales, or the case against weaponisation collapses. 3. A world of trade blocs makes the WTO more valuable to India — The Finance Ministry’s Monthly Economic Review for September, per The Hindu, cites the WTO’s World Trade Report 2026: if FTA networks replace the multilateral system, global GDP could fall 6.9% and exports 26.9% by 2050, the worst of three scenarios. No bilateral deal gives India a peace clause, so pursuing FTAs while defending the WTO core is consistent.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	To what extent can India reconcile its public stockholding and export restrictions with its campaign against the weaponisation of food in global trade? (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — To what extent — Weigh where the two positions fit and clash, then give a measured verdict. 2. Introduction — the Milwaukee consensus — Open with the G20 statement and India’s defence of stockholding. 3. Stockholding is a welfare duty penalised by outdated WTO arithmetic — Value-addition: 10% de minimis, the 1986-88 reference price, India’s 2020 invocation for rice. 4. Export curbs can look like coercion to importers — Draw a flowchart: shortfall → curb → notification → exemptions → withdrawal. 5. The WTO core protects India better than FTA networks — Use the MER’s 6.9% GDP-loss scenario. 6. Conclusion — reconcilable if India stays rule-bound — Seek a permanent stockholding solution and notified, time-bound curbs.
ADMINISTRATOR’S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Secretary, Food and Public Distribution, a poor harvest pushes you to consider curbing rice exports. How would you design it? Approach: I would first check buffer stocks against norms, since only a real gap justifies a curb, and prefer a duty or quota to an outright ban, with a fixed review date. I would exempt government-to-government supplies to food-deficit neighbours and notify the WTO promptly, keeping consumers safe and India’s argument credible.

4. International Relations

One card today, on the neighbour India helped most in its worst year. Sri Lanka's new rulers have done the hard economic work and put off the hard constitutional work. For India the result is mixed: a solvent, stable Colombo, but Provincial Councils still in limbo.

4.1 Two years after Dissanayake, Sri Lanka has restored stability but stalled on a new constitution and PTA repeal

ISSUE THREAD Sri Lanka after Dissanayake's first two years (new thread) **LENS** Strategic autonomy and partnership · Liberty and order

STORY SO FAR The 2022 crash and the Aragalaya protests forced Gotabaya Rajapaksa out, and his successor signed an IMF programme. In 2024 voters elected Anura Kumara Dissanayake's National People's Power on a promise of "system change".

THE NEWS Colombo. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake completed two years in office last week, and The Hindu's assessment finds a split record. He won in September 2024 with 42.31% of the votes, crossing the line on preferential votes, and his National People's Power (NPP) then won a supermajority. It kept the inherited IMF programme and met or beat its targets. That left room to absorb Cyclone Ditwah in late 2025, which killed nearly 700 people, and the fuel-price shock from the West Asian crisis. A former intelligence chief has been arrested in the 2019 Easter bombings probe. The structural promises have not moved. Provincial Council polls are stuck in a parliamentary committee, and there is no new constitution. The executive presidency has not been abolished. Rights defenders say the draft law replacing the Prevention of Terrorism Act falls short of international standards.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Default and shortages in 2022 → Aragalaya demands "system change" → NPP wins the presidency and a supermajority in 2024 → sticks to IMF discipline and stabilises the economy → defers the constitution, council polls and PTA reform

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	The 13th Amendment is India's standing stake in Sri Lanka's constitution — The India–Sri Lanka Accord, signed in July 1987 by Rajiv Gandhi and J.R. Jayewardene, led to the 13th Amendment. The amendment created elected Provincial Councils with devolved powers. India has pressed ever since for it to be implemented in full, including holding council elections. The IMF's Extended Fund Facility funds deep balance-of-payments crises — An Extended Fund Facility (EFF) lends over a longer period in return for structural reforms. The IMF approved a 48-month EFF of about US\$3 billion for Sri Lanka on 20 March 2023. In 2022 India had already given emergency credit lines for fuel, food and medicine, along with a currency swap.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	GS2 asks about "India and its neighborhood — relations" — Sri Lanka brings together three recurring themes: Tamil devolution, the debt crisis and China's presence in the Indian Ocean.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- The 13th Amendment to Sri Lanka's constitution (1987) created Provincial Councils. It followed from the India–Sri Lanka Accord of July 1987. - Sri Lanka's Prevention of Terrorism Act dates from 1979. - The IMF's Extended Fund Facility gives medium-term support for protracted balance-of-payments problems. - Sri Lanka's Hambantota port was leased to a Chinese state-owned company for 99 years in 2017.
ANALYSIS	Lens — Strategic autonomy and partnership: India's leverage now runs through money, not the 1987 Accord — The JVP, the party at the core of the NPP, once fought the 1987 Accord, so stalled council polls are no surprise. What India holds instead is goodwill from 2022 and its weight as a creditor and investor, while China keeps

	Hambantota. The wise course is to back council polls as the NPP's own promise to Tamil voters, not as New Delhi's demand. That keeps the concern alive without a sovereignty quarrel. 2. Stability has been bought, and transformation postponed — Political scientist Pradeep Peiris calls the NPP "better rulers in the same system". Sticking with the IMF brought credibility and a buffer against shocks. But poor families are eating less, and a government busy hitting fiscal targets has little political capital left for constitution-making. The counter-view is that a bankrupt country could not write a constitution first; that holds only if the clock is not run down to the next election. 3. Replacing the PTA still has to pass the proportionality test — The NPP promised repeal, but its draft replaces the Act. The 2019 Easter bombings show that the security case is real. The test is whether detention is time-bound, reviewed by courts and confined to genuine terrorism, or whether it can again reach minorities and critics.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"Sri Lanka's government has become better rulers in the same system rather than agents of system change." Critically examine this view and its implications for India. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh gains against stalled reforms and give a verdict. 2. Introduction — the NPP was elected in 2024 on the Aragalaya's demand for system change — Two lines on the crash and the supermajority. 3. The economic record backs the government — IMF targets met, Cyclone Ditwah absorbed. Value addition: the March 2023 EFF of about US\$3 billion. 4. The structural record backs the critics — No constitution, no council polls, a PTA replaced rather than repealed. 5. For India, stability matters more than the pace of reform, but the 13th Amendment cannot be dropped — Draw a two-column chart of India's gains: gains against concerns. 6. Conclusion — stability is the platform, not the destination — India should back council polls as Sri Lanka's own promise.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. You head MEA's Sri Lanka desk. Tamil Nadu parties want India to press Colombo publicly on Provincial Council polls. What do you advise? Approach: I would advise firm private diplomacy, because public pressure lets nationalists in Colombo paint the polls as Indian interference. India should restate its position in joint statements and refer to the NPP's own promise to Tamil voters. I would also tie development support in the North and East to working local institutions. I would also brief the Tamil Nadu government regularly.

5. Environment & Ecology

Both stories are about who controls a natural resource and on what terms. In one, the State is using price guarantees to turn dung and crop waste into a market. In the other, a forest bureaucracy tried to take back a power that Parliament had given to gram sabhas, and had to retreat. Good environmental policy depends as much on getting institutions right as on getting the technology right.

5.1 Centre launches a ₹23,731-crore GOBARdhan push to raise compressed biogas output tenfold with guaranteed offtake

ISSUE THREAD Biogas and waste-to-energy (new thread) **LENS** Market and State · Development and environment

STORY SO FAR Since 2018, GOBARdhan and SATAT have promoted compressed biogas from dung, crop residue and urban waste. Plants have struggled to find assured buyers and a stable price, so output has stayed small.

THE NEWS New Delhi. Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched the GOBARdhan compressed biogas (CBG) scheme on October 1, per a PIB release. CBG is gas from rotting organic waste, cleaned and compressed to stand in for natural gas. The Cabinet approved ₹23,731 crore on August 6 for ten years, 2026-27 to 2035-36. It aims to raise CBG output about tenfold, to roughly 5 million standard cubic metres a day. Sellers of CNG and piped gas must buy CBG equal to 3% of their sales in 2026-27, rising to 5% from 2028-29. Producers get a fixed price of ₹2,110 per mmbtu, and new plants get up to ₹2 crore per tonne-per-day of capacity. The scheme also funds 80% of pipeline connection costs for clusters and 50% for standalone plants, and gives small units an 85% credit guarantee. About 217 plants operate now. The Economic Times notes that earlier efforts had “limited success”.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Waste rots or is burnt, releasing methane → SATAT (2018) offers buyers but no firm price → plants stall → a blending obligation, fixed price and capital support → a bid for tenfold output

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	GOBARdhan and SATAT are the parents of India's biogas policy — GOBARdhan (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan) was launched in 2018 under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) to turn cattle dung and farm waste into biogas and manure. Plants are registered on a unified portal. SATAT (Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation), the petroleum ministry's 2018 initiative, invited entrepreneurs to build CBG plants, with oil marketing companies committed to buying their output. A blending obligation turns a voluntary market into a mandated one — In November 2023 the National Biofuels Coordination Committee announced phased CBG blending in CNG for transport and in piped gas for homes. Blending was voluntary until 2024-25 and mandatory after that, and the new 3–5% purchase obligation builds on that ladder. The digested slurry, called fermented organic manure, is a fertiliser under the Fertiliser Control Order, 1985.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	GS3 lists “Infrastructure: Energy” and “Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation” — Biogas links waste, rural incomes and methane, which makes it a ready example for the circular economy.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Compressed biogas is mainly methane, made by anaerobic digestion of organic waste. - Methane is a short-lived greenhouse gas that lasts about a decade in the atmosphere but traps far more heat than carbon dioxide over that period. - SATAT is an initiative of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. - The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board is a statutory body under the PNGRB Act, 2006.

ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Market and State: the State is fixing a market failure, but a fixed price can outlive its logic — Biogas plants failed because no buyer would promise to take the gas at a known price, and so banks would not lend. A purchase obligation and an administered price remove both risks at once. If it stays above imported gas prices, gas users pay the difference. A sensible officer would accept the guarantee for the start-up decade but build in price reviews, so the support shrinks as plants mature. 2. The real bottleneck is collecting the waste, not financing the plant — A plant needs a steady daily supply of dung, residue or municipal waste, scattered across small farms and seasonal. Capital can build a plant, but only village collection systems and municipal source-segregation can keep it fed. Pipeline access matters too: at PNGRB's 20th foundation day, NITI Aayog member Rajiv Gauba credited the common-carrier and open-access rules for opening the pipelines to competition. 3. The climate gain is real, but it depends on selling the manure — Capturing methane from rotting waste cuts a potent greenhouse gas; the release claims more than 40 million tonnes of carbon dioxide avoided. Yet plants also need income from organic manure, and farmers used to subsidised urea rarely buy it. Unless fertiliser subsidies treat organic manure fairly, one of the plant's two products will lose money.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Evaluate how far guaranteed offtake and an administered price can make compressed biogas a pillar of India's energy security and waste management. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Evaluate — Judge the tools against the goal and reach a verdict. 2. Introduction — earlier schemes failed for lack of buyers, not technology — Open with the ₹23,731-crore, ten-year scheme and its tenfold target. 3. The guarantee removes the risk that kept banks away — The 3–5% obligation, the ₹2,110 price and the 85% credit guarantee. Value addition: the 2023 blending obligation. 4. Feedstock logistics and manure markets remain unsolved — Draw a flowchart: waste → collection → digester → gas grid, with slurry going to farms. 5. Conclusion — necessary, not sufficient — Add village collection and fair fertiliser policy; review the price periodically.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As District Collector, you must get three CBG plants running within two years. Where do you start? Approach: I would start with feedstock: map dung, residue and municipal waste by block, and pay dairy cooperatives and self-help groups per tonne collected. I would clear land and pipeline permissions through a single district window. Plants built where waste is plentiful and buyers are close by will survive after the subsidy ends.

5.2 Madhya Pradesh puts its forest department's CFR directive in abeyance after the Union tribal ministry says it contradicts the Forest Rights Act

ISSUE THREAD Forest rights and gram sabhas (new thread) **LENS** Liberty and order · Centre and States

STORY SO FAR The Forest Rights Act, 2006, made gram sabhas the authority to start and verify forest-rights claims. Community forest resource rights, its strongest provision, have been recognised slowly, often against forest-department resistance.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Indian Express reports that the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department has suspended an August 6 directive. The directive told field officers, including directors of national parks and sanctuaries, to receive community forest resource (CFR) claims at meetings on August 15. A CFR right is a village's right to protect and manage the forest it has traditionally used. Under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, it is the gram sabha, not the forest department, that receives such claims. Durgadas Uikey, Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, wrote to Chief Minister Mohan Yadav that the

directive was “not in consonance” with the Act and appeared to narrow the forests open to claims, which include sanctuaries and national parks. Two members of the Chief Minister’s task force on the FRA and PESA also sought its withdrawal. On September 30 the Head of Forest Force ordered it kept in abeyance.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

FRA vests CFR claims in gram sabhas (2006) → officials doubt rights in reserved and protected forests → MP routes claims through forest officers (August 6) → tribal ministry and task-force members object → directive put in abeyance

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The FRA makes the gram sabha, not the forest officer, the starting authority — Section 3(1)(i) of the FRA gives communities the right to protect, regenerate, conserve or manage community forest resources they have traditionally protected. Under section 6 the gram sabha receives and verifies claims, which then pass to Sub-Divisional and District Level Committees. Section 5 empowers gram sabhas to protect forests and wildlife. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the nodal ministry. 2. PESA extends self-rule to Fifth Schedule areas — The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, extends Part IX of the Constitution, with modifications, to Fifth Schedule areas. It gives gram sabhas power over minor forest produce and community resources. Madhya Pradesh is one of the ten States with Fifth Schedule areas.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS2 covers “mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies” for “vulnerable sections”; GS3 covers “conservation” — The FRA sits where the two meet: tribal rights and forest governance.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, the gram sabha initiates the process of determining individual and community forest rights. - Under the FRA, “community forest resource” can include reserved forests and protected areas such as sanctuaries and national parks to which a community had traditional access. - The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the nodal ministry for the Forest Rights Act, 2006.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Liberty and order: a departmental letter cannot amend an Act of Parliament — Officials may say how a law is to be carried out, but they may not hand a statutory power to someone else. The directive put the forest department, an interested party, in the gram sabha’s seat and quietly narrowed where claims could be made. The checks worked, but “abeyance” is not withdrawal. An officer who respects the rule of law would replace the letter with instructions that follow the Act word for word. 2. Misconceptions held by the officials who verify claims are where forest rights usually die — Task-force members say district officials still believe that CFR rights cannot exist in reserved or protected forests, and that gram sabhas must prove continuous management. The Act requires neither. Fixing this needs training and model orders, not only letters from Delhi. 3. The Centre-State friction here is oversight working as designed — Forests are on the Concurrent List, but States implement the FRA. The tribal ministry sets norms and corrects deviations. The counter-view is that forest departments carry real duties in sanctuaries, but the Act already gives them a role in verification.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Community forest resource rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, remain weakly realised. Comment on the role of gram sabhas and forest departments in this outcome. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Comment — Give a reasoned opinion on who has held back CFR rights.

	2. Introduction — the FRA vests CFR claims in the gram sabha — Cite section 3(1)(i) and the MP directive now in abeyance. 3. Forest departments have treated a rights law as a forestry matter — Value addition: the misconceptions about reserved forests and continuous management. 4. Gram sabhas need maps and records to make claims stick — Draw a flowchart: gram sabha → SDLC → DLC → title. 5. Conclusion — implement the Act as written — Use model orders, training and monitoring.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As a Divisional Forest Officer, you receive CFR claims from villages near a sanctuary, and your seniors fear for its wildlife. What do you do? Approach: The gram sabha decides the claim; my role is to help verify it, not to block it. I would share forest maps and records and attend verification. Where wildlife concerns are genuine, I would draw up a joint conservation plan with the gram sabha, since the Act gives right-holders a duty to protect the forest. Any change to rights in critical wildlife habitat must follow the Act's own procedure.

6. Health & Life Sciences

India controls the price at which a medicine leaves the factory, but not what a patient pays at a hospital bed. Karnataka's inspections show that the gap between the two is where the profit sits, and that the maximum retail price has become the actual price for those with no choice.

6.1 Karnataka finds hospitals billing near MRP on drugs bought up to 52 times cheaper

ISSUE THREAD Hospital drug mark-ups and price control (new thread) **LENS** Market and State · Growth and equity

STORY SO FAR On 23 September the Supreme Court called a tenfold mark-up on a cancer drug “broad daylight dacoity” and faulted silent regulators.

THE NEWS Bengaluru. Karnataka has asked the Centre to curb steep mark-ups on cancer drugs, medical devices and hospital consumables, The Economic Times reports. Inspections by the State’s Food Safety and Drug Administration across hospitals, including cancer centres, found patients billed at or near the maximum retail price (MRP, the printed ceiling a seller may charge) although hospitals bought at heavily discounted institutional rates. Mark-ups ranged from 10 times to more than 52 times the acquisition cost in several cases, with anomalies in 253 medicines and consumables. Gufipol was procured at ₹86 against an MRP of ₹4,528; a Guficycline-50 injection at ₹160 against ₹7,110. The findings have gone to the Union Health Ministry and the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA). What is new since the Supreme Court’s remark is State-collected evidence that the problem lies in the hospital, not only the factory.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Companies print a high MRP but sell to hospitals cheaply → hospitals bill at MRP → admitted patients cannot shop around → Karnataka’s inspectors document 253 cases → the State asks the Centre and NPPA to act

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Drug prices are controlled by an order under the Essential Commodities Act — The Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 is issued under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955. It fixes a ceiling price for “scheduled” medicines, those in the National List of Essential Medicines, at the simple average of brands with at least 1% market share; for other medicines it limits the annual MRP increase to 10%. 2. NPPA fixes and enforces prices; trade margin caps are its sharper tool — The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority, set up in 1997 and now an attached office of the Department of Pharmaceuticals, fixes ceiling prices and recovers overcharges. In February 2019 it used its public-interest power under the order to cap the trade margin, the gap between the price to stockist and the MRP, at 30% for 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer medicines, pulling MRPs down towards real selling prices.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Health financing and regulation are a steady GS2 theme — The GS2 line “issues relating to development and management of social sector/services relating to health” covers out-of-pocket spending. Questions here ask why price control fails to reach patients, and this card gives a concrete answer.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- The Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 is issued under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955; its ceiling prices apply to medicines in the National List of Essential Medicines. - For non-scheduled medicines, a manufacturer may not raise the MRP by more than 10% in a year. - Trade margin rationalisation caps the gap between the price to stockist and the MRP; NPPA, under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, applied a 30% cap to 42 anti-cancer drugs in 2019.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Market and State: a hospital is not a market, so a price ceiling becomes a price target — A shopper can walk to another chemist; an admitted cancer patient cannot, and does not know what the hospital paid. This is information asymmetry with

	a captive buyer, and it lets the seller charge the most the law allows, so the MRP meant as a ceiling becomes the bill. The sound judgement: a market failure the State must fix, by making purchase prices visible. 2. Companies inflate MRP because hospitals reward it — A brand with a higher MRP gives the hospital a bigger margin and so wins its order over a rival with an honest price; competition works backwards. Capping trade margins attacks this incentive directly, which is why the 2019 cancer-drug cap cut prices sharply. Counter-view: margins fund hospital pharmacies and cold chains, so a cap must leave a handling fee. 3. Spurious and inflated drugs come from the same opaque chain — The Hindu reports that regulators tested 1,41,322 drug samples in 2025-26, checking what is inside the vial; nobody checks what the patient paid for it. Linking procurement invoices to patient bills would serve quality and price at once.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Price control in India regulates the factory gate but not the hospital bed. Comment with reference to recent findings on hospital drug mark-ups. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Comment — Give a reasoned opinion with evidence and end with a clear view. 2. Introduction — open with Karnataka's 253 cases and the 52-times mark-up — About 20 words. 3. The 2013 order caps the printed price, not the hospital's margin — Ceiling prices for NLEM drugs, a 10% annual limit for others. 4. A captive patient turns the ceiling into the bill — Draw a flowchart: factory price → institutional price → MRP → patient bill, marking where the gap arises. 5. Trade margin caps work where tried — Value addition: NPPA's 2019 cap of 30% on 42 anti-cancer drugs. 6. Conclusion — extend margin caps to hospital-heavy drugs and print purchase price on bills — About 15 words.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. You are a State Drugs Controller who has found these mark-ups. What do you do before the Centre acts? Approach: I would publish the 253 anomalies with purchase and billing prices so patients and insurers see the gap. I would ask hospitals empanelled under government insurance to bill these items at purchase price plus a fixed handling charge as a condition of empanelment. Any MRP that itself breaches the price order goes to NPPA for recovery.

7. Society

Words in an official form tell a citizen how the State sees her. A single Hindi word in the Census 2027 notification shows how easily old administrative habits outlive the laws meant to end them.

7.1 Census 2027 Hindi notification calls disability “nihshaktata”; Registrar General calls it inadvertent

ISSUE THREAD Census 2027 and demographic data (update 4) **LENS** Liberty and order · Tradition and social justice

STORY SO FAR The Registrar-General kept the 1981 ‘census town’ definition and will record caste in an open column, with tabulation undecided. Digital self-enumeration is under way, and the Home Ministry has sought religion-wise data that States say they lack.

THE NEWS New Delhi. Disability rights activists have objected to the term “nihshakt” (incapable) in Census 2027, calling it “derogatory” and “illegal”, The Economic Times reports. The Home Ministry’s Hindi gazette notification of August 14, 2026 lists 40 parameters for census officers; at serial 13 it uses “nihshaktata” (incapacity), while the English version says “disability”. Activists say the Registrar General of India (RGI), who conducts the Census, copied the 2011 parameters without noting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Akeel Ahmad Usmani of the Disability Rights Advocacy Group called it “derogatory and defunct”; Arman Ali of the NCPEDP said the chance to be counted “has come after 15 years”. The RGI office told ET the earlier use was “an inadvertence”, that “divyangata” is now used in the enumeration form, and that the gazette may need amending. This is new on a thread so far about caste and self-enumeration.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

The 2011 Census used “nihshaktata” → the RPwD Act, 2016 follows and official Hindi shifts to “divyangjan” → the 2026 Hindi notification reproduces the 2011 parameter → activists flag it as self-enumeration opens → the RGI calls it inadvertent

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The RPwD Act, 2016 widened who counts as disabled — The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 replaced the 1995 Act and raised the recognised disabilities from seven to 21, adding conditions such as autism, thalassaemia and acid attack. A “person with benchmark disability” has at least 40% of a specified disability and gets 4% reservation in government posts and 5% of seats in government higher education institutions. 2. The Act carries out India’s commitment under the UN Convention — India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007. The Convention treats disability as arising from the interaction between an impairment and barriers in society, the social model. The older medical model sees disability as a defect in the person to be cured, and “incapable” is that model’s vocabulary.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Laws for vulnerable sections recur in GS2 — The GS2 line “mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections” covers the RPwD Act directly, and Census data quality falls under GS1 “population and associated issues”.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 recognises 21 specified disabilities, against seven under the 1995 Act, and defines benchmark disability as not less than 40% of a specified disability. - India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007. - The Census is conducted under the Census Act, 1948 by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Tradition and social justice: the word carries a model, and the model decides the count — Asking people whether they are “incapable” invites the answer no,

	because few describe themselves that way; a question about difficulty in seeing, walking or learning gets honest replies. So language affects not only dignity but the number the State gets, and that number decides budgets and reservations. A careful officer would conclude that the form must speak the language of the 2016 Act, because a stigmatising word produces an undercount. 2. Self-enumeration raises the stakes of the wording — An enumerator can explain a question gently; in digital self-enumeration the citizen reads the official word alone on a screen. Some families will skip the question, especially for children and older relatives. A slip that might pass in an interview becomes serious online. 3. Replacing one word with another is not reform — The government prefers “divyang”, roughly “divine body”, and several disability groups have themselves questioned it, arguing that people seek rights and access, not reverence. The counter-view is that a respectful word signals intent. The Act’s real test is accessibility and equal treatment, which no word supplies.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	“The language of the State shapes how persons with disabilities are counted and served.” Examine with reference to Census 2027. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Examine — Test the claim against evidence and reach a view on how far it holds. 2. Introduction — the copied 2011 term at serial 13 of the Hindi notification — About 20 words. 3. A stigmatising question produces an undercount — Draw two boxes: medical model (defect, cure) and social model (impairment plus barriers), with the question each would ask. 4. The count drives entitlements — Value addition: the RPWD Act’s 21 disabilities, 40% benchmark and 4% reservation depend on reliable numbers. 5. Conclusion — amend the gazette and ask about functional difficulty — About 15 words.
ADMINISTRATOR’S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. You are a District Census Officer and families are skipping the disability question. What do you do? Approach: I would issue enumerators and helpline staff a short note with the corrected term and ask them to frame the question around difficulty with daily tasks. I would hold camps with local disability organisations so families see why being counted matters for benefits. I would report the gazette error to the Directorate of Census Operations for formal correction. The aim is an accurate count, not merely a corrected word.

8. Internal Security

The reinforced cockpit door was built after 9/11 to keep attackers out; on the flydubai flight the attacker was already inside. India's response is to watch its own aviation workforce more closely, which is the right instinct and a real test of how biometric surveillance is governed.

8.1 After flydubai cockpit stabbing, India mandates facial recognition for aviation staff and body scanners

ISSUE THREAD Aviation security (new thread) **LENS** Innovation and safeguards · Liberty and order

STORY SO FAR Airport security rests on screening passengers and checking staff passes at entry. On 25 September Digi Yatra announced face-based boarding pilots at five airports.

THE NEWS New Delhi. Airline and airport employees in India will have to undergo facial-recognition screening, and full-body scanners will be installed at eight major airports, officials said on Thursday, The Economic Times reports. The steps follow Wednesday's incident on a flydubai Dubai–Tel Aviv flight carrying 174 passengers, where the co-pilot allegedly stabbed the captain, Indian national Smit Machchhar, and tried to crash the plane; the captain opened the cockpit door so passengers could overpower him, and the plane landed at Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. The UAE is probing a possible "terrorist" link (The Hindu). Rajesh Nirwan, Director General of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), said entry passes, now physical cards, will become fully digital; almost 1.5 million are issued a year. Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Sinha said scanners have reached three airports.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

9/11 brings reinforced cockpit doors → security keeps outsiders out → on the flydubai flight the threat is a crew member inside → India turns to insider risk: biometric staff checks, digital passes and body scanners

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. BCAS is the statutory regulator for civil aviation security — The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security began as a cell in the DGCA and became a separate department under the Civil Aviation Ministry in 1987. The Aircraft (Amendment) Act, 2020 made it statutory, and the Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024, which replaced the Aircraft Act, 1934, retains it. BCAS issues entry passes and security standards; the CISF's Aviation Security Group screens people at most major airports. 2. Privacy law sets the test any facial-recognition mandate must pass — In Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017), a nine-judge bench held privacy a fundamental right under Article 21. Any intrusion must be backed by law, pursue a legitimate aim, be proportionate and carry safeguards against abuse. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 governs such data but lets the Centre exempt State agencies on security grounds.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Security agencies and their mandate is a GS3 syllabus line — The GS3 line "various security forces and agencies and their mandate" covers BCAS and the CISF, and the GS2 line on fundamental rights covers privacy.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Annex 17 to the Chicago Convention of 1944 sets the International Civil Aviation Organization's standards on aviation security. - The Hague Convention of 1970 deals with unlawful seizure of aircraft; the Montreal Convention of 1971 with unlawful acts against the safety of civil aviation. - The Anti-Hijacking Act, 2016 provides for the death penalty where hijacking results in the death of a hostage or security personnel.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Innovation and safeguards: biometric staff checks are justified, but only with written rules — An airport is a high-risk site, and verifying that a pass is held by its owner is a legitimate aim that passes the Puttaswamy test easily. The harder questions

	are what else the system records, how long it keeps face data and who may search it. Without published rules, a security tool drifts into a tracking database of 1.5 million workers. Adopt it, under a statutory standard on purpose, retention and audit. 2. Facial recognition answers “who is this?”, not “what does he intend?” — The flydubai co-pilot was a genuine, authorised employee; a face scan would have let him through. Insider threats are managed through background vetting, crew mental-health checks, the two-person cockpit rule and a culture where colleagues report concerns. The new measures close the borrowed-pass and forged-card gap, but they are no defence against a rogue pilot. 3. Body scanners trade privacy for detecting non-metallic threats — A metal detector misses ceramic blades and plastic explosives; a body scanner does not, which is why trials ran at Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Kochi. The cost is an image of the body, so acceptance depends on automated outlines instead of real images and a right to choose a manual search.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Insider threats are the weakest link in aviation security. Critically examine India’s response after the flydubai incident, with reference to the right to privacy. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh what the measures achieve against their limits and risks, and reach a judgement. 2. Introduction — post-9/11 doors keep outsiders out; this attacker was inside — About 30 words with the incident and India’s announcement. 3. The measures close the identity gap in 1.5 million passes — Digital passes and face matching stop borrowed or forged cards; scanners catch non-metallic items. 4. They cannot detect intent, the core insider risk — Draw a layered diagram: identity check → vetting → behaviour monitoring → two-person cockpit rule. 5. Biometric data needs a legal frame to be proportionate — Value addition: the Puttaswamy (2017) tests and the DPDP Act, 2023. 6. Conclusion — layered insider-risk management under a published biometric standard — About 25 words.
ADMINISTRATOR’S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Airport Director, a ground-staff union fears face data will be used to track attendance and discipline. How do you respond? Approach: The objection is reasonable: data collected for security should not quietly become workplace surveillance. I would issue a written order limiting the system to entry verification, fixing a short retention period and allowing access only to BCAS and CISF on logged requests. The union would get a seat on a review committee. Security the workforce trusts is stronger, because insiders are the first to notice a colleague in trouble.

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 — Three Near-Identical Certificates, and the Officer Who Must Protect the Genuine Child

SCENARIO The Indian Express (1 October) reports that police are examining three Old Delhi families for allegedly submitting forged disability certificates and Directorate of Education recommendation letters to secure Nursery seats for children aged four, five and six under the Children with Special Needs (CwSN) category in a Chanakyapuri school. The certificates “appeared almost identical”, each claiming 41% hearing impairment from the same hospital, which told police it had issued none. The school approached police on 16 September, and an FIR cites cheating, forgery and conspiracy under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Imagine you are the Deputy Director of Education of a district. After this news, another principal sends you a CwSN application, asks that every certificate be re-verified with hospitals before seats are confirmed, and warns that genuine parents may withdraw in fear. A well-connected caller asks you to “look kindly” on one family’s recommendation letter.

Q1. Identify the interests in conflict and the ethical issues. Who loses when a forged certificate wins a seat?

Q2. How will you check certificates without treating every disabled child’s family as a suspect?

Q3. How will you answer the caller, and what should happen to a family found guilty?

MODEL APPROACH

- 1. A forged seat is a stolen seat, and the victim is a child who cannot see the theft** — Each fake certificate displaces a child with a genuine disability from a scarce quota. Fraud also drains public trust in the quota itself. Honesty and compassion point the same way here: firm action protects the genuine applicant.
- 2. Verify the document, never the family** — Check through the issuing authority, the Unique Disability ID (UDID) portal and a single district nodal officer. Apply the same check to every applicant, so no family is singled out. Set a short, published deadline so honest parents are not left waiting.
- 3. Refuse the favour and put it on record** — Tell the caller the letter will be examined like any other, and note the call in writing. Evidence of forgery goes to the police, not to a private settlement. Guilt is for the court and school action for the department, so we avoid pre-judging either.
- 4. Conclusion — make honesty cheaper than fraud** — Digital certificates that a school can verify online, with penalties that are certain, will protect the quota and the dignity of genuine families.

Case 2 — The Ambulance That Waited for the Convoy

SCENARIO The Hindu (2 October) reports that Assam’s Chief Minister said stopping an ambulance to let his convoy pass was “not related” to the patient’s death. The patient, being shifted to Silchar Medical College Hospital on Wednesday, died on Thursday morning; the Chief Minister cited a critical liver ailment and said “no inconvenience should be caused to people due to his or any Minister’s movement.” The Indian Express (1 October) separately reports four ambulances stuck on Delhi’s Barapullah Phase 3 flyover. Imagine you are the Superintendent of Police responsible for a Minister’s visit in your district. The pilot vehicle radios that an ambulance with a patient is on the route. The Minister’s office says the schedule is tight and a five-minute delay will make him miss a function. Your escort commander says, “Protocol says clear the road.”

Q1. Whose claim comes first: the Minister’s schedule, the escort’s protocol or the patient’s need? Justify.

Q2. What will you instruct your escort commander in the next ten seconds, and what will you tell the Minister’s office afterwards?

Q3. How would you change your district’s VIP-movement rules so the choice need not be made on the road?

MODEL APPROACH

1. **Life outranks schedule, and no rule needs to say so for an officer to act** — The Supreme Court in *Parmanand Katara* (1989) held that preserving life is the first duty of the State, within Article 21. Protocol exists to protect a Minister's security, not to stop a patient reaching care. Whether the delay changed the outcome is unknowable and beside the point; the decision is judged at the time it is taken.
2. **Let the ambulance through at once, then report plainly** — Order the escort to give way, and record the time and reason in the log. Tell the Minister's office the facts without apology or blame, and offer a safe alternative. Courage here means accepting displeasure and not asking a junior to take it.
3. **Systems should make the right choice the default** — Provide ambulance-priority standing orders, a live route plan shared with hospitals and the control room, and trimmed convoys. Moving a ceremony by a few minutes costs little compared with a delayed emergency.
4. **Conclusion — Gandhi's talisman is the test** — Gandhi's well-known talisman asked us to recall the poorest and weakest person we have seen, and to judge whether our step would be of use to them. A patient in an ambulance is exactly that person.

10. Prelims Quick-Revision Facts

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

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
International Day of Non-Violence — 2 October, by UN General Assembly resolution	The UN General Assembly established the Day by resolution A/RES/61/271, adopted on 15 June 2007, and it falls on 2 October, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. Its purpose is to spread the message of non-violence through education and public awareness, and to reaffirm a culture of peace, tolerance and understanding (UN).
Ladakh — 28 places marked on Survey of India maps; who the mapping authority is	The Ministry of Home Affairs, in consultation with the UT of Ladakh, has marked 28 places and features on Survey of India maps, among them 11 peaks, 2 passes and 2 glaciers (PIB, 2 October). The Survey of India, set up in 1767, is the national mapping agency and works under the Department of Science and Technology.
Bengal OBC certificates — Articles 15(4), 16(4), 338B and 342A	The Supreme Court has issued notice on a challenge to a Calcutta High Court order voiding OBC certificates issued in a stated period, and said appointments will abide by the result (The Hindu). Article 15(4) allows special provision for socially and educationally backward classes, Article 16(4) reservation in public posts. The National Commission for Backward Classes became a constitutional body under Article 338B through the 102nd Amendment (2018), which also inserted Article 342A on the Central list.
UPSC — Article 320 functions and Article 323 annual report	Speaking at the UPSC centenary, the Prime Minister asked that selection give priority to testing complex problem-solving and foresight (The Hindu). Article 320 gives the Commission the duty to conduct examinations and a consultative role on recruitment rules, promotions, transfers and disciplinary matters. Under Article 323 it submits an annual report, which the President lays before Parliament with a memorandum explaining any case where its advice was not accepted.
Tawang — International Tourism Mart and the McMahon Line	The Ministry of Tourism will hold the International Tourism Mart at Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, from 27 October to 1 November, with delegates from about 20 countries invited, including China (The Indian Express). China calls Arunachal Pradesh "Zangnan" and claims it. The India-China boundary in the east follows the McMahon Line drawn at the Simla Convention of 1914.
Buxa Tiger Reserve — tigress translocation, NTCA and Section 38V	A tigress from Bihar's Valmiki Tiger Reserve was flown by the IAF to Hasimara and set for release in Buxa Tiger Reserve, Alipurduar, West Bengal, which currently has no tigers (The Economic Times). The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is a statutory body under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, added in 2006. Section 38V provides for a State to notify a tiger reserve on the NTCA's advice, and Project Tiger began in 1973.
Xenocortication — human brain tissue grown inside a mouse	A Stanford experiment, called xenocortication, grafts human cortical organoids, grown from induced pluripotent stem cells, into mice bred to lack most of their own cortex, to study how the human brain develops (The Hindu). "Xeno" means originating from another species. Induced pluripotent stem cells are adult cells reprogrammed to an embryo-like state, work for which Shinya Yamanaka shared the 2012 Nobel Prize.
Iraq — armed factions told to hand weapons to the state by 30 June 2027	Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi set 30 June 2027 as the deadline for armed factions to turn over weapons, after an earlier 30 September deadline was withdrawn; some Iran-backed groups say they are not bound by any timeline (The Hindu, 2 October). The aim is a state monopoly over arms, the basic test of Weber's definition of a state.
RBI Integrated Ombudsman Scheme — "One Nation One Ombudsman"	The Reserve Bank - Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2026 came into effect in July 2026, with jurisdiction-neutral handling of complaints under the "One Nation One Ombudsman" approach (The Economic Times). The first Integrated Ombudsman Scheme of 2021 had merged the earlier Banking Ombudsman, NBFC and digital-transactions schemes into one.

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 — Section 9 and the IBBI	The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), established on 1 October 2016, marked ten years (PIB). Under Section 9 of the Code, an operational creditor may file for insolvency at the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) only after a default of at least ₹1 crore. Section 10A suspended fresh filings during the Covid period, and the NCLT excludes that period when counting default (The Economic Times).
SARFAESI Act, 2002 — recovery without going to court	The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 lets banks and financial institutions take possession of and auction mortgaged property to recover bad loans without court intervention (The Economic Times). A borrower aggrieved by such action may approach the Debt Recovery Tribunal. Asset reconstruction companies, which buy bad loans, are regulated by the RBI under this Act.
School curriculum — a Concurrent List subject	A West Bengal government panel has proposed additions and deletions in school textbooks to take effect from January (The Indian Express). Education is Entry 25 of the Concurrent List, moved there from the State List by the 42nd Amendment (1976), so both Parliament and States may legislate on it.
Mission ANMOL — newborn genetic screening in Delhi; the sickle-cell rule	Delhi's Mission ANMOL, running at the LNJP hospital's Medical Genetics Lab, aims to screen newborns for 56 genetic diseases (The Indian Express). Sickle-cell disease is autosomal recessive: if both parents carry the trait, each child has a one-in-four chance of inheriting the disease. The National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission was launched in 2023.
Article 143 — advisory jurisdiction of the Supreme Court	Article 143 lets the President, not Parliament or a committee, refer a question of law or fact of public importance to the Supreme Court, which may give its opinion (The Indian Express, citing an MP's objection to a parliamentary committee consulting the Court). The opinion is advisory, not binding on the President.
Section 35B of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 — RBI approval of bank chiefs	RBI approval is required for the appointment and remuneration of a bank's managing director or chief executive, as the HDFC Bank approval was reported (The Indian Express). A whole-time director, MD or CEO of a bank faces a ceiling of 15 years of continuous tenure (The Economic Times).
PNGRB — the downstream gas regulator and open access	The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board marked its 20th foundation day on 1 October (PIB). It was set up under the PNGRB Act, 2006 to regulate refining, storage, transport and marketing of petroleum products and natural gas. Open access to pipelines works through common-carrier and contract-carrier principles (The Economic Times).
DigiLocker — a Digital India platform of the IT Ministry	DigiLocker was launched in July 2015 under Digital India and is run by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology; it holds citizens' issued documents in electronic form, which the Government is widening through private AI integrators (The Economic Times).
PFRDA and the National Pension System	The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority, a statutory regulator under the PFRDA Act, 2013, marked NPS Diwas with the launch of new NPS products (The Economic Times). The National Pension System began in 2004 for new central government entrants and was opened to all citizens in 2009.

Source note: All items are drawn from *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express* & *The Economic Times* (Delhi Editions) — 2 October 2026, supplemented where indicated by official releases and PRS Legislative Research. Facts, figures and quotes are reproduced as reported on that date; verify currency (ongoing legal proceedings, evolving numbers) before using in an answer.

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

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

11.1 Model answer of the day — Card 1.2 (10 marks, 150 words)

Is the 'triple test' for backward class reservation in local bodies a safeguard of representation or a barrier to it?

Comment. (10 marks, 150 words)

Introduction — Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6) let States reserve local-body seats for backward classes. Vikas Kishanrao Gawali (2021) attached a triple test: a dedicated commission's empirical inquiry, local-body-wise quotas on its advice, and a 50% overall cap.

- 1. A safeguard: it asks the right question** — K. Krishna Murthy (2010) held that political backwardness differs from social backwardness. A headcount cannot show under-representation in a council, so the Andhra Pradesh High Court struck down a 34% quota built on a household survey.
- 2. A barrier: data gaps stall representation** — Few States keep standing commissions. Quotas fall in court, polls slip and appointed officers run local bodies. A rigid 50% cap also sits uneasily where backward classes claim half the population.

Conclusion — On balance, the test safeguards representation; it becomes a barrier only through State inaction. Way forward: standing commissions with ward-level data, sub-categorisation so benefits reach the weakest groups, and polls held on time under Articles 243E and 243U.

Draw this: Three boxes in a row beside the intro: dedicated commission → local-body-wise quota → 50% cap check; mark the Andhra Pradesh orders as failing at the first box.

(153 words)

11.2 GS1 corner — History: Champaran 1917: Gandhi's first satyagraha in India

Today's peg: evergreen — Gandhi Jayanti; the tigress for Buxa came from Valmiki Tiger Reserve in West Champaran (ET p5)

- 1. Indigo planters squeezed tenants under the tinkathia system** — European planters in Champaran, north Bihar, forced tenants to grow indigo on part of their best land. Rajkumar Shukla, a local cultivator, persuaded Gandhi at the 1916 Lucknow Congress to come.
- 2. Inquiry and open defiance made up the method** — Gandhi reached Motihari in April 1917 and was ordered under Section 144 to leave the district. He refused and offered to bear the penalty; the case was withdrawn. With Rajendra Prasad, Brajkishore Prasad and J.B. Kripalani, he recorded peasants' statements, turning grievance into evidence.
- 3. The government conceded through law** — An enquiry committee set up in June 1917 included Gandhi as a member. The Champaran Agrarian Act, 1918 abolished tinkathia, and planters refunded a quarter of the money they had extracted.

Prelims facts

- Tinkathia obliged tenants to grow indigo on 3 of every 20 kathas (one bigha), that is, 3/20 of their land.
- Gandhi's first three campaigns in India were Champaran (1917), the Ahmedabad mill strike (1918), where he first fasted in India, and Kheda (1918).
- The Champaran Agrarian Act, 1918 abolished the tinkathia system.

11.3 Places in news — mark them on your atlas

Place	Where it is	Why in news	Prelims fact
Buxa Tiger Reserve	Alipurduar district in the north Bengal Dooars; Bhutan's border and the Sinchula hills to the north, Assam to the east.	A Valmiki tigress is being released into Buxa, which has no tigers now (ET p5).	Declared a tiger reserve in 1983; the Sankosh, Raidak and Jayanti rivers flow through it.

Place	Where it is	Why in news	Prelims fact
Valmiki Tiger Reserve	Northern West Champaran district, Bihar, on the Nepal border; Nepal's Chitwan National Park adjoins it to the north and the Gandak marks its western edge.	Source of the tigress translocated to Buxa (ET p5).	Bihar's only tiger reserve; it holds the easternmost Himalayan Terai forests in India.
Tawang	North-western Arunachal Pradesh; Bhutan to the west and south-west, Tibet (China) to the north; reached from Assam over the Sela Pass.	Venue of the International Tourism Mart, October 27 to November 1, with China among invitees (IE p1).	Birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso
Indore	Malwa plateau, western Madhya Pradesh, on the Khan and Saraswati rivers; Ujjain lies to the north.	Judicial commission found the Bhagirathpura water deaths preventable (1.3).	The Khan river flows into the Kshipra, a tributary of the Chambal.

11.4 Ethics term of the day (GS4 Section A): Accountability and the problem of many hands

Meaning — Dennis Thompson's term: when many officials each add a little to a public failure, no one seems responsible. He argued that individuals must still answer for what they did or failed to do; shared fault does not dissolve personal duty.

In today's news — The Indore commission calls the Bhagirathpura deaths a cumulative consequence of decades of failures, yet still names two municipal officers primarily responsible for tender delays and unsafe pipe layouts (1.3).

Use in an answer — Accountability questions and systemic-failure case studies: name the problem in the analysis, then fix responsibility file by file 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 solar farm can be built in a year; the line that carries its power to a city may take five. A country may add generating capacity at record speed and still burn coal at seven in the evening, because the sun sets just as homes switch on lights and fans, and because the clean power produced at noon could not always reach the people who needed it.

When lines are full, grid operators have little choice but to ask solar plants to cut their output. That energy is not saved for later; it is simply lost. Each such hour weakens the confidence of investors in new plants.

The obstacles to building lines are rarely technical. A tower stands on someone's field, and a one-time payment may not make up for the land's fallen value. Forest clearances, court cases and quarrels over compensation stretch timelines well beyond what engineers plan for. Because generating sites, wires and consumers seldom sit within one jurisdiction, a project may wait on several authorities, none of which bears the cost of delay.

Storage is often offered as the answer, and batteries can indeed shift noon sunshine into the evening. But a battery earns money only if rules say who may use it, how it is paid and who carries the risk when it stands idle. Without such rules, a storage target can be met on paper while the grid gains little.

The lesson is that a clean-energy transition is as much a problem of coordination as of hardware. Panels are the visible part of the system; lines, contracts and permissions decide whether they matter.

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

- (a) New solar farms should not be built until transmission lines catch up.
- (b) The worth of new clean generation depends on slower, less visible work on lines, storage rules and coordination.
- (c) Batteries will by themselves solve the problem of evening demand.
- (d) Farmers are the main obstacle to the energy transition.

Q2. The author's claim that a storage target can be met on paper while the grid gains little rests on the assumption that

- (a) installed batteries may sit unused if their use and payment are not defined.

- (b) batteries cost more than transmission lines.
- (c) storage technology is not yet mature.
- (d) governments never meet their energy targets.

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

- (a) Solar output is cut back mainly because the plants are badly built.
- (b) Delays in building lines can discourage investment in generation.
- (c) Coal is no longer needed in the evening.
- (d) Transmission projects are delayed chiefly by engineering problems.

Reasoning and quantitative aptitude

Q4. GST on imports rose 25% to ₹60,000 crore and GST on domestic transactions rose 10% to ₹1,32,000 crore. By about what percentage did total GST rise?

- (a) 12.5%
- (b) 14.3%
- (c) 17.5%
- (d) 35%

Q5. Five officers P, Q, R, S and T each hear objections on a different day from Monday to Friday. R hears on Wednesday. P hears on the day immediately after Q. S does not hear on Monday or Friday. T hears before R. Who hears on Friday?

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

Answer key and explanations

Q1: (b) The last paragraph says lines, contracts and permissions decide whether panels matter. A calls for a halt the passage never proposes; C and D overreach.

Q2: (a) The gap arises only if batteries go unused for want of rules. B, C and D are never needed.

Q3: (b) Lost hours weaken investors' confidence in new plants. A and D contradict the passage, which blames full lines and non-technical obstacles; C contradicts the coal example.

Q4: (b) Last year: $60,000 \div 1.25 = 48,000$ and $1,32,000 \div 1.1 = 1,20,000$, total 1,68,000. This year: 1,92,000. Rise $24,000 \div 1,68,000 = 1/7 \approx 14.3\%$. 17.5% wrongly averages 25% and 10%.

Q5: (c) T is Monday or Tuesday. Q-P must be consecutive, so Monday-Tuesday or Thursday-Friday. Monday-Tuesday leaves no day for T before Wednesday, so Q is Thursday and P Friday; then S is Tuesday and T Monday.

12. Essays of the Day

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

ESSAY 1 · Essay · Section B · 6 min read

The road you take decides where you arrive.

Themes: Means and ends in public life · Legitimacy, due process and the rule of law · Gandhi, realism and the ethics of power

In February 1922 the non-cooperation movement was the largest challenge the British Raj had faced. Then, at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district, a crowd set fire to a police station and more than twenty policemen died. Within days Gandhi called the whole movement off. Many of his colleagues were dismayed; Jawaharlal Nehru, then in prison, later admitted in his Autobiography that the decision angered him. Swaraj seemed close, and one village's violence appeared a poor reason to abandon it. Gandhi saw it differently. A freedom won by crowds that burned men alive would not be the freedom he had promised. He was not giving up the destination. He was refusing a road that led somewhere else.

That is the claim of this essay. Ends matter, and it would be foolish to pretend otherwise. But means are not a vehicle we leave at the gate once we arrive. They are built into whatever we arrive at. Gandhi put it plainly in *Hind Swaraj* (1909): "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree." The habits, institutions and trust that a method creates on the way are what remain when the goal is reached. A road shapes the traveller as well as the arrival.

Indian constitutional history is, in large part, a lesson on this point. The Constitution is full of rules about how things must be done, not only what must be achieved: notice before action, a hearing before punishment, reasons on the record. In *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978) the Supreme Court held that the "procedure established by law" under Article 21 must itself be fair, just and reasonable. The case came straight out of the Emergency of 1975–77, when discipline, efficiency and population control were pursued by suspending rights, jailing opponents and, in the sterilisation drive, by coercion that the Shah Commission later documented. The ends were not absurd. The means destroyed them. The government lost the 1977 election, family planning carried the stigma of compulsion for years, and Parliament passed the Forty-fourth Amendment so that Articles 20 and 21 could never again be suspended during an emergency.

The temptation has not gone away; it has only changed form. In December 2019 the police in Hyderabad shot dead four men accused of the rape and murder of a young veterinarian. Crowds showered the policemen with petals. In 2022 the Supreme Court's inquiry commission headed by Justice V.S. Sirpurkar found the encounter staged and recommended that the policemen be tried for murder. Whether the four were guilty will now never be proved in a court, and the public was taught that justice is what an angry crowd applauds. In November 2024 the Supreme Court, ruling on punitive demolitions, held that the executive cannot become judge and demolish a home because its owner is accused of a crime. Today's news offers quieter versions. A clean electoral roll is a legitimate goal, but bulk Form 7 objections seeking to delete voters' names, which the Election Commission has now ordered probed, would leave a roll that nobody trusts. Curfews and restrictions on women in the name of their safety, as today's Hindu editorial argues, protect women by taking away the very freedom that safety was meant to secure.

The pattern is the same in each case. A shortcut is justified by its goal, but the shortcut leaves something behind: a precedent, a habit in the police station, a fear in the citizen, a reason for the losing side to stop believing in the rules. Means outlive the purpose that justified them. Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi's most faithful student, added a second warning in his Letter from Birmingham Jail (1963): "it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends." Correct procedure does not clean an unjust goal. The road and the destination have to be judged together.

The opposing view deserves its full force. Politics, the realists say, is the management of violence, and clean hands are a luxury. Kautilya's Arthashastra advises the king to use deceit, spies and force when the kingdom's safety requires it. Max Weber, lecturing on politics as a vocation in 1919, argued that a statesman who follows only an "ethic of conviction" and ignores consequences may keep his conscience clear while his city burns. History supplies examples. India's use of force in 1971 helped end a genocide and create Bangladesh. Nelson Mandela turned to armed struggle in 1961, after the Sharpeville massacre and the banning of the African National Congress had closed every lawful door. Even Gandhi's own methods were not always gentle: B.R. Ambedkar, who signed the Poona Pact of 1932 under the pressure of Gandhi's fast unto death, later described that fast as coercion.

These objections are real, but they refine the prompt rather than defeat it. None of them shows that means do not matter. They show that the choice of means is itself a moral judgement, to be made with care. Force in 1971 was used by a state, under law, against an army carrying out mass killing, and it ended when its purpose was served. Mandela's turn came only when lawful routes were closed, and he spent his presidency rebuilding those routes rather than ruling by the gun. Ambedkar drew the same line from the other side. On 25 November 1949 he told the Constituent Assembly that where constitutional methods are open, unconstitutional ones, satyagraha included, are "nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy". That is itself an argument about means: in a democracy the lawful road exists, so the obligation to take it is greater. For a public servant the lesson becomes a set of tests. Could I defend this step openly? Is it the least harmful way available? Can it be reviewed and undone if I am wrong? Will it strengthen or weaken the institutions that will outlast me?

India arrived at freedom as a democracy partly because of the road it took. A movement that relied on mass participation, public argument and the voluntary acceptance of punishment produced leaders who were used to persuading people rather than commanding them, and a people who expected to be asked. Many countries whose liberation armies became their ruling armies were not so fortunate. On Gandhi's birthday the point is not to treat him as a saint beyond criticism, but to take his central claim seriously: in *Young India* in 1924 he wrote, "As the means so the end." A State that wants justice must reach it through fair procedure, a society that wants safety must reach it through freedom, and a citizen who wants a better country must try to build it in ways he would accept being used against himself. The road we choose is not separate from the place we reach. In the end, it becomes that place.

Built from today's cards: EC orders probe into bulk Form 7 deletion filings; Karnataka tells EROs to act under Section 31 of the RP Act · Hindu editorial: restrictions on women cannot be the answer to unsafe public spaces · ET edit page on Gandhi Jayanti: non-violence as a source of legitimacy in an era of wars · Iraq sets a June 2027 deadline for militias to hand their weapons to the state