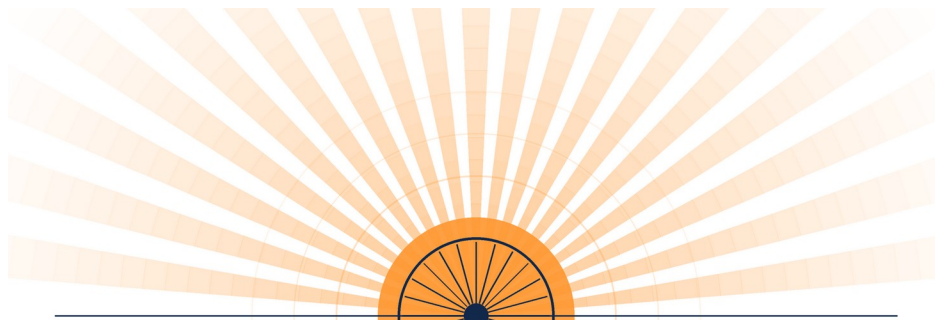




UPSC DARPAN

शीलं परं भूषणम्

Sheelam param bhushanam · Character is the highest ornament

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

Your one-stop solution for UPSC CSE examination resources.

Welcome to the Ohana family

Hum jeet ka maja chakh kar rahenge.

Quote of the Day

"So let us begin anew—remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate."

— John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address (20 January 1961)

The Hindu, The Indian Express & The Economic Times (Delhi Editions) — 3 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 · 3 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.

“We who have fought against you, the Palestinians, we say to you today in a loud and a clear voice: Enough of blood and tears. Enough!”

— **Yitzhak Rabin** · Speech at the signing of the Oslo Declaration of Principles, White House, 13 September 1993 (transcript as printed in *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 September 1993)

Use in: Today's essay, “It takes more courage to end a war than to begin one”, and India's Ukraine peace proposal, which Kyiv has called the most comprehensive on the table. Use it in GS2 answers on conflict resolution and India's role as a mediator, in GS4 answers on moral courage and leadership, and in essays on war and peace: Rabin was a soldier who had commanded Israel's army in 1967, and he was assassinated in 1995 by an Israeli opposed to the peace. Pair it with Indian examples where leaders took the same risk at home, such as the Mizo Accord of 1986 between Rajiv Gandhi and Laldenga. Argue that the hardest enemy of a settlement is often on one's own side.

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

— **Dwight D. Eisenhower** · “The Chance for Peace”, address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 16 April 1953 (text as on the Eisenhower Presidential Library site)

Use in: The cost side of today's essay on ending wars. Use it in GS3 answers on defence spending and its trade-offs, in GS2 answers on disarmament and global governance, and in essays on development, security and peace: the words carry weight because they came from the general who commanded the Allied invasion of Europe. Pair it with SIPRI data on rising world military expenditure and with India's own guns-versus-butter choices. Balance it honestly: Eisenhower did not argue for disarming in the face of attack, only that every war that drags on is paid for by the poor.

“Here, then, is the problem which we present to you, stark and dreadful, and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race: or shall mankind renounce war?”

— **Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein** · Russell–Einstein Manifesto, 9 July 1955 (text as on pugwash.org)

Use in: The science strand of today's essay. Use it in GS3 answers on nuclear weapons, deterrence and the ethics of science, in GS2 answers on arms control (the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963, the NPT, India's no-first-use doctrine), and in GS4 answers on the social responsibility of scientists: the manifesto led to the Pugwash Conferences, which shared the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize with Joseph Rotblat. Argue that in the nuclear age the courage to end and avoid wars is not idealism but the condition of survival.

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Everything in today's edition, card by card · Reading time: about 1 h 46 min.

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12. Essays of the Day

12.1 It takes more courage to end a war than to begin one.

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	Gujarat's Uniform Civil Code gets President's assent and is gazetted Why it matters: GS2 Article 44: Concurrent List Entry 5, Article 254(2) assent and ST exclusion for Prelims; State-wise UCC for Mains.
2.1	Forex reserves fall \$38 billion as RBI unwinds forward book Why it matters: GS3 external sector: reserve components, FCNR(B) and a 'short' forward book are Prelims-ready; intervention costs suit Mains.
4.3	Iraq returns as No. 2 crude supplier; G7 releases 100 million barrels Why it matters: GS3 energy security: Hormuz geography, IEA stock rules and ISPRL reserves for Prelims; diversification versus reserves for Mains.
5.1	Environment Ministry resumes post-facto clearances after Supreme Court's Vanashakti ruling Why it matters: GS3 environment law: EIA 2006 stages and Category A/B for Prelims; rule of law versus discretion for Mains.
7.1	Centre holds Kuki-Zo truce in abeyance; Manipur pays kin of 49 missing Why it matters: GS3 internal security: SoO pact, Article 355 and Article 371C are Prelims-ready; truce versus settlement suits Mains.

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

1. Polity & Governance

All three stories are about who gets to decide, and in what order. Gujarat has turned the Directive Principle of a uniform civil code into a State law with the President's assent, so the question is no longer whether but how many codes India will have. The Centre has built a commission to appoint tribunal members only after the Supreme Court refused to let ministries do it themselves. And the Supreme Court has declined to sit with a parliamentary committee on a Bill it may one day have to judge, a small decision that states the separation of powers more clearly than any textbook.

1.1 Gujarat's Uniform Civil Code Gets President's Assent and Is Gazetted; Enforcement Date Awaited

ISSUE THREAD Uniform Civil Code and personal laws (update 4) **LENS** Centre and States · Liberty and order

STORY SO FAR Amit Shah promised a UCC in NDA-ruled States; Omar Abdullah said only Parliament should make it. The 1948 Assembly debate was revisited, and Assam made every Muslim marriage's registration compulsory.

THE NEWS Gandhinagar. President Droupadi Murmu gave assent on September 17 to the Gujarat Uniform Civil Code Bill, 2026, and the Act appeared in the gazette dated October 1, The Hindu and The Indian Express report; it takes effect on a date the State notifies. A uniform civil code (UCC) is one civil law on marriage, divorce and succession for every religion. Passed in March and based on a report by a committee under former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Desai, the Act makes marriage registration compulsory within 60 days (penalty up to ₹10,000), prohibits bigamy and requires live-in couples to register; ET reports up to three months' jail for not registering. Per the Bill text on PRS, the marriage age is 21 for men and 18 for women. Scheduled Tribes and Part XXI groups are excluded. What is new since our 23 September card: Gujarat is the second State, after Uttarakhand, to enact a UCC (Goa retains its Portuguese-era civil code).

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Article 44 sets a non-justiciable goal → Hindu law is codified in 1955-56, others are not → Uttarakhand becomes the first State to enact a UCC → Gujarat's Desai committee drafts a Code, passed in March 2026 → President's assent on September 17, gazette on October 1, enforcement awaits notification

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- Article 44 is a directive, and personal law sits in the Concurrent List** — Article 44 in Part IV asks the State to endeavour to secure a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India; under Article 37 it cannot be enforced in court. Entry 5 of List III covers marriage, divorce, adoption, wills and succession, so both Parliament and a State legislature may legislate.
- A State law that clashes with a Central law survives only with the President's assent** — Under Article 254(1) a repugnant State law on a Concurrent subject yields to Central law; Article 254(2) saves it within the State if it gets the President's assent, though Parliament may later override it. The Governor reserves under Article 200; the President decides under Article 201.

WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)

- A State-made UCC tests federalism as much as secularism** — GS2 asks about "issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure" and GS1 about "secularism". Two State codes make the federal route to Article 44 a likely question.

PRELIMS NUGGETS

- Article 44, a Directive Principle in Part IV, directs the State to endeavour to secure a uniform civil code for citizens throughout the territory of India.
- Marriage, divorce, adoption, wills and succession fall under Entry 5 of the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule.
- Under Article 254(2), a State law on a Concurrent subject repugnant to a Central law prevails in that State if it received the President's assent.
- Scheduled Tribes are specified by the President under Article 342; Part XXI contains temporary, transitional and special provisions, including Article 371A on Naga customary law.

ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Centre and States: a code made State by State is uniform inside a State, not across India — Article 44 speaks of the whole territory, but concurrency lets each State write its own code. A third State may choose other marriage ages or live-in rules, so a family crossing a border meets a different law. A thoughtful officer would accept State experiments as lawful while expecting Parliament, which keeps the last word, to harmonise them. 2. The tribal exclusion shows that “uniform” already has exceptions — Excluding Scheduled Tribes and Part XXI groups respects protected customary law, but the code is then uniform for most citizens, not all, with the line drawn by tribe rather than religion. Equality is pursued by degrees. 3. Live-in registration takes the State into adults’ most private choices — Marriage registration gives a wife proof for maintenance and inheritance. Registering a live-in relationship, with penalties and parental notice for partners under 21, records a choice adults have not asked the State to recognise. Since Puttaswamy (2017) made privacy a fundamental right, the rule will be tested for necessity and proportionality; defenders say it protects women left without remedy.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	“A uniform civil code built State by State may achieve uniformity within States but not across India.” Critically examine with reference to the Gujarat Uniform Civil Code, 2026. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh gains against fragmentation and judge. 2. Introduction — Gujarat is the second State to enact a UCC — Assent September 17, gazette October 1; anchor in Article 44. 3. Body — concurrency makes State codes lawful and Article 254(2) makes them durable — Draw a flowchart: State Bill → Governor reserves (Article 200) → President assents (Article 201) → law prevails in the State. 4. Body — the code is uneven by design — Tribal exclusion and divergent State rules dilute “throughout the territory of India”. 5. Body — gains for women are real, but live-in registration raises privacy questions — Value addition: the Puttaswamy (2017) proportionality test. 6. Conclusion — let States experiment, then let Parliament harmonise — A common minimum code after consultation.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. You are a Collector in Gujarat when the Code is notified. How do you prepare for compulsory registration? Approach: I would open registration points near villages and publicise the 60-day deadline in Gujarati. Since penalties apply to wilful failure, the first months should be for awareness, not fines. Registrars must know tribal members are outside the Code.

1.2 Centre Notifies Members of Tribunals Rules, 2026 to Run the New National Tribunals Commission

ISSUE THREAD Tribunals and judicial independence (new thread) **LENS** Independence and accountability · Rule of law and discretion

STORY SO FAR Tribunals under Articles 323A and 323B decide specialised disputes faster than courts. The Supreme Court repeatedly struck down rules letting ministries control appointments and tenure; Parliament passed a Tribunals Reforms Bill in August 2026.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Union Law Ministry issued on September 30, and published on Thursday, the National Tribunals Commission and Qualification, Selection and Conditions of Service of Chairperson and Members of Tribunals Rules, 2026, The Hindu reports. A tribunal is a specialised body that decides disputes, such as tax, company or service matters, in place

of ordinary courts. The Rules let the new Commission appoint chairpersons and members to 16 tribunals and appellate bodies, set eligibility, create an inquiry mechanism for misconduct complaints and fix pay at ₹2.5 lakh a month for the Commission's chair and ₹2.25 lakh for members. Vacancies must be processed at least six months before they arise, through search-cum-selection committees using expert evaluation, personal interaction and writing exercises. Per PRS, the parent Bill passed Parliament on August 10-11, repealing the 2021 Act; tribunal chairs serve till 70, members till 67, and the Centre must appoint within three months of a recommendation.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

The 42nd Amendment allows tribunals in 1976 → sponsoring ministries control appointment, tenure and pay → the Supreme Court strikes down successive rules and parts of the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021, directing an independent commission → Parliament passes the 2026 Bill in August → Rules notified on September 30

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	Articles 323A and 323B were inserted by the 42nd Amendment, 1976 — Article 323A lets Parliament set up administrative tribunals for service disputes of public servants; the Central Administrative Tribunal rests on it. Article 323B lets Parliament or State legislatures set up tribunals for listed matters such as taxation, land reform and elections. The Supreme Court has kept tribunals under judicial control — In L. Chandra Kumar (1997) a seven-judge bench held High Court and Supreme Court judicial review part of the basic structure, so tribunal orders can be challenged in a High Court. In the Madras Bar Association cases the Court struck down executive-dominated selection and short tenures and directed a National Tribunals Commission.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	Tribunals are a standing example of separation of powers — GS2 lists “Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies” and the functioning of the Judiciary. The long contest between Parliament and the Court over tribunals is ready material for both.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Articles 323A and 323B, on administrative and other tribunals, were added by the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976. - Only Parliament can create tribunals under Article 323A; Parliament and State legislatures can both create them under Article 323B. L. Chandra Kumar v. Union of India (1997) held that High Court judicial review under Articles 226 and 227 extends to tribunal decisions and is part of the basic structure. - Per PRS, the National Tribunals Commission has a chairperson, two judicial members and two technical members, with a five-year term or until age 70.
ANALYSIS	Lens — Independence and accountability: a commission insulates appointments only if it is insulated itself — The old problem was that the ministry whose decisions a tribunal reviews also chose, paid and reappointed its members. A judicially led Commission with fixed pay removes that daily dependence. But ministries still fund many tribunals, and the three-month appointment deadline carries no stated consequence if missed. A careful officer would judge the reform by vacancy and delay data a year on. The six-month rule attacks vacancies at their source — Tribunals have often sat half-empty because selection began only after a post fell vacant. Starting six months ahead turns a discretionary habit into a fixed rule, a small change that may help litigants more than any change in qualifications. Uniform terms end forum-by-forum bargaining but must not erase expertise — One set of pay, eligibility and inquiry rules across 16 tribunals makes service predictable. Yet a tax tribunal and a securities tribunal need different skills, so the expert evaluation

	and writing exercises will decide whether uniformity helps or hurts.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	To what extent does the National Tribunals Commission resolve the tension between executive control and judicial independence in India's tribunals? (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — To what extent — Say how far the reform goes and where it stops. 2. Introduction — the September 30 Rules operationalise the Commission — One line on the 16 tribunals and the Court's direction. 3. Body — selection moves from ministries to a judicially led body — Value addition: L. Chandra Kumar (1997); diagram: old path (ministry selects) beside new path (Commission recommends, Centre appoints within three months). 4. Body — funding and the appointment deadline still sit with the executive — Independence stays partial while ministries hold the purse. 5. Conclusion — measure success by vacancies and disposal — Complete it with financial autonomy.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Secretary of a ministry that sponsors a tribunal, how would you show the new system is working? Approach: I would publish every quarter the sanctioned posts, vacancies and the date each selection began, so anyone can check the six-month rule. I would ring-fence the tribunal's budget from the ministry's litigation work to avoid any appearance of pressure. And I would track pendency, because the aim is faster justice, not new procedure.

1.3 Supreme Court Cancels Judges' Meeting With Parliamentary Committee on One Nation One Election Bill

ISSUE THREAD One Nation, One Election (new thread) **LENS** Independence and accountability · Centre and States

STORY SO FAR Lok Sabha and Assembly elections were held together until 1967. A committee under former President Ram Nath Kovind recommended restoring simultaneous polls, and two Bills introduced in December 2024 went to a Joint Parliamentary Committee.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Supreme Court on Thursday declined a proposed October 6 interaction between the Chief Justice of India, other judges and the Joint Committee of Parliament examining the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024 on simultaneous elections, The Indian Express reports. Its letter said that "as the proposed amendment might become a subject matter of Judicial Review", it may not be "expedient or desirable" to discuss it on the administrative side. The Election Commission had sought an "informal interaction", a "Local Study Visit", by email on September 28, routed through the Legislative Department. Kapil Sibal called the plan "a joke on the Constitution". The 39-member committee, chaired by P.P. Chaudhary, has heard four former Chief Justices, who reportedly said the plan could pass constitutional muster but flagged the Election Commission's vast powers under it. Separation of powers means each organ of the State keeps to its own role.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Simultaneous polls end after 1967 as Assemblies are dissolved early → the Kovind committee recommends restoring them → two Bills go to a 39-member JPC in December 2024 → the Election Commission seeks a "Local Study Visit" with sitting judges → the Supreme Court cancels the meeting, citing possible judicial review

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Two Bills would synchronise elections through a new Article 82A — The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024 proposes Article 82A, under which Assemblies elected after an "appointed date" end with the Lok Sabha's term, and amends Articles 83, 172 and 327. The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 extends this to Union
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	Territories with legislatures. 2. Judges advise only the President, and only through Article 143 — Under Article 143 the President may refer a question of law or fact to the Supreme Court, which may decline to answer. No route lets sitting judges advise Parliament on a pending Bill. Article 50 separates the judiciary from the executive.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Electoral reform now meets separation of powers — GS2 lists “Separation of powers between various organs” and the Representation of People’s Act. Simultaneous elections combine both, and this episode is a concrete example of judicial restraint.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024 proposes a new Article 82A to enable simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. • Article 143 empowers the President, not Parliament, to seek the Supreme Court’s advisory opinion. • Articles 83(2) and 172(1) fix the terms of the Lok Sabha and a State Assembly at five years from their first meeting, unless dissolved earlier. • A constitutional amendment under Article 368 needs a special majority in each House of Parliament.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Independence and accountability: a court that may judge a law should not help shape it — If sitting judges discuss a Bill with its drafters, they may appear to have pre-judged it, and a later challenger could seek their recusal. Declining protects the Court’s ability to decide cleanly. The counter-view calls a library visit harmless. A thoughtful officer would side with the Court: refusing costs a courtesy, meeting could cost confidence in a future basic-structure ruling. 2. The request came from the body whose powers are in question — The Election Commission, which gains new powers under the Bill, sought a meeting between the Bill’s committee and judges who may review it. That blurs three roles at once. The former Chief Justices’ warning about the Commission’s vast powers makes the point sharper. Retired judges may advise; sitting judges may not. 3. The federal stake is in cutting Assembly terms, not the polling date — Synchronisation means some Assemblies will serve less than five years to match the Lok Sabha, so voters lose part of the mandate they gave. Supporters cite cost; P.P. Chaudhary, per Kerala Kaumudi, put staggered polls at about ₹7 lakh crore a year. Critics answer that frequent elections are the price of federal democracy, so the real question is State consent.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	The Supreme Court’s refusal to meet the Joint Parliamentary Committee on simultaneous elections reflects a sound reading of the separation of powers. Discuss. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Discuss — Explain the decision, set out both views and conclude. 2. Introduction — the October 6 meeting was cancelled because the amendment may face judicial review — Name the 129th Amendment Bill and the JPC. 3. Body — judges decide laws, they do not co-draft them — Article 143 runs only through the President; value addition: four former CJIs deposed, showing retired judges can advise. 4. Body — a meeting would have invited recusal pleas later — Article 82A will likely face basic-structure review. 5. Body — the counter-view sees needless distance between organs — Diagram: a

	triangle of Legislature, Executive with Election Commission, and Judiciary, arrows showing the request and the refusal. 6. Conclusion — dialogue belongs in judgments and reports, not private meetings — Restraint strengthens trust in eventual review.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. An interview board asks: should judges ever interact with lawmakers on pending legislation? Approach: Sitting judges should not, because they may have to decide the law's validity and must come to it with an open mind. Lawmakers can learn the Court's views from judgments and from retired judges, as this committee did. Cooperation on court infrastructure is welcome; on a Bill's content it is not.

2. Economy

Both stories today are about the State reading the economy more finely before it acts. The RBI's \$38 billion fall in reserves is not a crisis but the bill for a swap it designed in June, and the number that matters is the forward book, not the headline. MoSPI's first district map of informal enterprises makes the same point for the real economy: one national scheme cannot fit Murshidabad's beedi rollers and Rangareddy's jewellers.

2.1 Forex Reserves Fall \$38 Billion in Three Weeks as RBI Unwinds Its Forward Book

ISSUE THREAD Forex reserves and the rupee (new thread) **LENS** Market and State · Short-term relief and long-term reform

STORY SO FAR Since the Iran war began, the RBI has spent reserves defending a weakening rupee. From June it ran a concessional swap window for NRI FCNR(B) deposits, which lifted reserves to a record in early September.

THE NEWS Mumbai/New Delhi. India's foreign exchange reserves fell \$18.343 billion in the week to September 25 to \$747.557 billion, the third weekly fall in a row, RBI data released on October 2 show — \$38.15 billion below the record \$785.71 billion of September 4. The Indian Express links the fall to the RBI squaring off its short forward book, a record \$200 billion at end-August; being "short" means the RBI has sold dollars for future delivery. The book grew as \$133 billion came in through a concessional swap for FCNR(B) deposits between June 8 and August 31. The Economic Times adds rupee defence and revaluation. Separately, loans against fixed deposits jumped 43.2% to ₹2.04 lakh crore in August, which analysts attribute to NRIs borrowing up to nine times against FCNR(B) deposits to redeposit.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Iran war swells the oil bill and drives out portfolio money → rupee hits ₹96.83 a dollar in May → RBI opens a concessional FCNR(B) swap and \$133 billion flows in → a record \$200 billion short forward book builds up → forwards now mature and reserves fall \$38 billion in three weeks

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	Reserves have four parts, held by the RBI — India's foreign exchange reserves comprise foreign currency assets, gold, Special Drawing Rights (the IMF's reserve asset) and the reserve tranche position at the IMF. The RBI manages them under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, while the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999, which replaced the criminal-law FERA of 1973, governs foreign exchange transactions. FCNR(B) deposits put currency risk on banks; a swap passes it to the RBI — An FCNR(B) deposit is a term deposit an NRI keeps in an Indian bank in a foreign currency and is repaid in that currency, so the depositor bears no rupee risk. In a swap, the bank sells those dollars to the RBI today and contracts to buy them back on a fixed date; the RBI's promise of future delivery is its forward book.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	External-sector management is a standing GS3 theme — It falls under "Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment". Mains asks whether reserves are a buffer or a cost.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- India's forex reserves consist of foreign currency assets, gold, Special Drawing Rights and the reserve tranche position with the IMF. - FEMA, 1999, replaced FERA, 1973, and made foreign exchange violations civil rather than criminal offences. - In an FCNR(B) deposit, principal and interest are repaid in foreign currency, so the exchange-rate risk lies with the bank, not the depositor. - A central bank with a "short" forward position has contracted to deliver dollars on a future date.
ANALYSIS	The fall is mostly scheduled delivery, not panic selling — Part of the record was borrowed: the RBI took in swapped dollars it must return. As forwards mature, those

	dollars leave and the headline drops even though nothing new has gone wrong. In forwards maturing within a month the RBI was actually net long \$12 billion. The honest measure of firepower is reserves net of the forward book. 2. Lens — Short-term relief and long-term reform: the swap buys calm now and a bill later — Because FCNR(B) deposits run three to five years, most of the short book matures after one year, pushing the RBI's dollar obligation and its currency risk years ahead. The counter-view is that reserves exist for a war shock, and calming the rupee now is cheaper than a currency run. A prudent officer treats it as a bridge and uses the time to cut the oil bill. 3. A public concession has become a private leveraged trade — The swap was meant to attract fresh NRI dollars. Banks then lent depositors up to nine times their deposit to place more FCNR(B) deposits, so the concession now rewards borrowed money. Such positions can unwind together, so the inflow is less stable than it looks.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	The RBI's concessional swap for FCNR(B) deposits strengthened reserves but created a large forward liability. Critically examine such interventions as a tool for managing currency volatility. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh benefits against hidden costs and reach a judgement. 2. Introduction — a record built on swapped dollars — Reserves peaked at \$785.71 billion on September 4 after \$133 billion of FCNR(B) swap inflows, then fell \$38 billion in three weeks. 3. The swap steadied the rupee without spending owned reserves — It signalled firepower during war-time portfolio outflows. 4. But headline reserves overstate usable reserves — Value addition: the \$200 billion short book and the 43.2% jump in loans against deposits; draw a flow — NRI dollars → bank → RBI swap → reserves up now → delivery later → reserves down. 5. Conclusion — a bridge, not a habit — Publish net reserves prominently, cap leverage on concessional deposits and diversify energy imports.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As an RBI Executive Director, would you curb bank lending against FCNR(B) deposits now? Approach: Yes, but only for new deposits. A sudden ban could force NRIs to unwind leveraged positions at once and hurt the rupee I am protecting. I would cap leverage on deposits that earn the concession and let existing positions run off.

2.2 First District-Level ASUSE Estimates Show Informal Enterprises Clustered With Wide Productivity Gaps

ISSUE THREAD New GDP and IIP base (update 4) **LENS** Growth and equity · Market and State

STORY SO FAR MoSPI has been rebuilding India's statistics: a new GDP series with 2022-23 as base, double deflation in manufacturing and a new industrial production base. Today that push reaches the informal sector, district by district.

THE NEWS New Delhi. Two MoSPI officials of the Enterprise Survey Division, Soumya Chakraborty and Sonakhya Samaddar, write in The Economic Times on October 3 that the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) 2025 has produced India's first district-level estimates of informal businesses — firms not registered as companies, mostly small shops and workshops. The top 10 districts hold nearly 10% of establishments, six of them in West Bengal. Just 10 of over 950 activities account for 39% of units but only 21% of gross value added (GVA). Gross value added per worker is ₹1,00,443 in Murshidabad, where three activities employ nearly half the workforce, and ₹2,72,216 in Rangareddy, against a national

₹1.56 lakh. A location quotient, an activity's local share of jobs divided by its national share, picks out clusters such as beedi in Murshidabad and zari in Howrah. The authors urge district-specific policy over uniform schemes.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Informal sector measured only at national and State level → policy relies on uniform credit schemes → ASUSE 2025 gives district estimates → clusters and nearly threefold productivity gaps appear → case for district-tailored support

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	ASUSE is the National Statistics Office's survey of the unincorporated economy — It is conducted by the National Statistics Office under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and covers non-farm enterprises not incorporated as companies, classified by the National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2008. The Periodic Labour Force Survey counts workers; ASUSE counts enterprises. MSMEs are defined by investment and turnover — The MSMED Act, 2006, used investment alone; a 2020 notification added turnover and merged manufacturing and services. Limits were raised from April 2025, so a micro enterprise may now invest up to ₹2.5 crore with turnover up to ₹10 crore. Udyam registration brings an informal unit into the MSME net.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	Informality is a recurring GS3 question — It falls under “inclusive growth and issues arising from it”. District data let an answer on formalisation move from slogans to evidence.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- ASUSE is conducted by the National Statistics Office under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. - A location quotient above one shows that a region is relatively specialised in an activity. - PMEGP is a credit-linked margin money subsidy scheme of the MSME Ministry, with the Khadi and Village Industries Commission as the national nodal agency.
ANALYSIS	Lens — Growth and equity: concentration helps only if the cluster climbs the value chain — Where one craft dominates, as beedi does in Murshidabad, workers have few alternatives and earnings stay low. Rangareddy shows that concentration tied to markets can mean high value. The equity task is to lift low-value clusters through skills and market links, not to spread credit thinly. Uniform schemes miss the variance the data reveal — The ET reports the government is examining an extension of PMEGP to 2030-31 with about ₹15,000 crore and collateral-free loans; jobs it generated fell from 9.29 lakh in FY22 to 5.98 lakh in FY26. Targeting the extension with ASUSE district data would make it a test of the new statistics rather than a repeat of the old design. District numbers give district planning something to plan with — Article 243ZD provides for a District Planning Committee, but such committees have had little enterprise data. The caution is that sample-based district estimates carry wider error margins, so they should set priorities, not rank districts precisely.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	How can district-level data on unincorporated enterprises improve policies to raise productivity in India's informal sector? Explain. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	Directive — Explain — Show how the data change policy design, with examples. Introduction — the first district map of informal enterprises — ASUSE 2025 gives district estimates for the first time. Specialised clusters need sector-specific support — Value addition: GVA per worker of ₹1,00,443 in Murshidabad against ₹2,72,216 in Rangareddy.

	4. Diversified districts need flexible finance — Draw a two-column chart: specialised versus diversified district, with matching interventions. 5. Conclusion — let scheme money follow measured gaps — Link PMEGP-type schemes to district plans.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As DM of a district dominated by one low-wage craft, how would you use the ASUSE data? Approach: I would map the craft's value chain to find where margins leak to middlemen. I would steer PMEGP and bank credit to units that move up the chain, such as finishing and direct selling, and link artisans to buyers. Success means GVA per worker rising, not more loans sanctioned.

3. Agriculture & Food

Indian agriculture is increasingly worked by women and still owned by men, and a drought exposes the gap faster than any survey. Maharashtra's Woman Farmer Certificates are a real break from the rule that only a land title makes a farmer, but relief that ignores water-carrying, lost wages and small loans will leave the certificate a paper honour.

3.1 Maharashtra Starts Woman Farmer Certificates as Drought Loads Women Labourers With Water and Debt

ISSUE THREAD Women in agriculture (new thread) **LENS** Growth and equity · Tradition and social justice

STORY SO FAR In July Maharashtra enacted the Women Farmers Empowerment Act, 2026, recognising landless women labourers as farmers. On September 26 it declared drought in 265 of 358 talukas, and sugarcane cutters left early, indebted to contractors.

THE NEWS Jalna, Beed and Dharashiv, Maharashtra. The State began issuing Woman Farmer Certificates on October 2 under the Maharashtra Women Farmers Empowerment Act, 2026, and says over 20 lakh women have applied, The Indian Express reports. The law drops the requirement of land title and recognises women farm labourers and livestock, dairy and poultry workers as farmers, for access to schemes and credit. The certificates arrive in a drought the Chief Minister calls the worst since 1972, yet relief so far — land revenue waivers and crop-loan restructuring — has no provision for women labourers. Per the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2025, 82% of the State's rural female workforce is in agriculture, but under a fifth of operational holdings are in women's names. In Marathwada, water-carrying now costs families a day's wage; one labourer earning about ₹300 a day repays ₹6,000 a month on moneylender, microfinance and MUDRA loans.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Men shift to non-farm work while women stay on the land → women do most farm work but hold under a fifth of holdings → schemes tied to land title pass them by → July 2026 law recognises them without title → drought adds water-carrying and debt just as certificates begin

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Feminisation of agriculture means more work, not more ownership — It is the rising share of women in the farm workforce as men move to non-farm jobs. Women's ownership has not kept pace: the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, gave daughters equal coparcenary rights, including in agricultural land, but transfers in practice still follow sons. 2. PM-KISAN and MKSP show the two routes, title and work — PM-KISAN pays ₹6,000 a year in three instalments to landholding farmer families identified through State land records, so landless labourers are outside it. The Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana, a sub-component of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission under the Ministry of Rural Development, instead supports women farmers through self-help groups to raise their productivity and participation.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Gender and agrarian distress meet in GS1 and GS3 — GS1 asks about the "role of women" and GS3 about "issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies". Feminisation of agriculture and women's land rights recur as themes.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- The Periodic Labour Force Survey is conducted by the National Statistics Office under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. - PM-KISAN income support of ₹6,000 a year is paid in three equal instalments to landholding farmer families. - The Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana is a sub-component of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission of the Ministry of Rural Development. - The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, made daughters coparceners with rights equal to sons in Hindu joint family property.

ANALYSIS	1. A certificate is a door; what lies behind it decides its worth — Twenty lakh applications show the demand for recognition. But a certificate yields benefits only when schemes accept it, and central schemes such as PM-KISAN still ask for land records. Unless banks, insurers and relief officers accept it as proof of farming, it is an identity with nothing attached. 2. Drought relief designed for owners misses the costs women carry — Revenue waivers and loan restructuring help owners who borrow from banks. Women labourers lose instead through time: water-carrying replaces paid work, as one family put it, costing a person's wages. Their debts are small loans from moneylenders, microfinance firms and self-help groups that crop-loan waivers never touch. 3. Lens — Tradition and social justice: law can recognise the worker before custom recognises the owner — Land passes through sons by custom, so a title-based definition of "farmer" quietly reproduces that custom in public policy. The Maharashtra law sidesteps the fight over inheritance by recognising work instead of ownership,, faster but leaving the property gap untouched. A thoughtful officer would use the certificate for immediate access while pushing joint titles in mutation and land-record drives, so recognition and ownership move together.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Women do much of India's farm work but own little of its farmland. Examine how this gap shapes their vulnerability during droughts, with reference to Maharashtra's Woman Farmer Certificates. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Examine — Probe the gap's effects and test the certificate as a remedy. 2. Introduction — work without title — PLFS 2025: 82% of rural working women in Maharashtra are in agriculture; under a fifth of holdings are theirs. 3. Title-linked schemes exclude women at the moment they need help — PM-KISAN, crop loans and waivers follow land records; value addition — relief in 265 drought talukas has no women-specific provision. 4. Drought adds unpaid water work and small-loan debt — Draw a flowchart: drought → water scarcity → women's water-carrying → lost wages → moneylender and microfinance loans → debt cycle. 5. Conclusion — recognise work now, secure title next — Link certificates to relief and credit, and push joint land titles through record drives.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Collector of Beed, how would you make drought relief reach women farm labourers? Approach: I would ask gram sabhas to list certificate holders and landless women and make them eligible for relief works close to home, so water-carrying does not cost them the day's wage. I would also hold camps with microfinance lenders and self-help groups to reschedule the small loans crop-loan restructuring misses.

4. International Relations

Today's three stories are about options, and who controls them. India has turned four years of being called a fence-sitter on Ukraine into a seat at the peace table, because it kept talking to both sides. On trade and oil Washington holds the levers, and India's answer is not defiance but more choices: WTO rules to argue from, and Gulf barrels that make Russian crude a preference rather than a dependence.

4.1 Ukraine Calls India's Peace Proposal the Most Comprehensive of Four on the Table

ISSUE THREAD Russia-Ukraine war and India (new thread) **LENS** Strategic autonomy and partnership · National interest and global commons

STORY SO FAR Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. India has not condemned Moscow, kept buying its oil and urged dialogue; Modi told Putin in 2022 "this is not the era of war", and at Bishkek on August 31 urged "end of war".

THE NEWS Kyiv and New Delhi, October 2. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said on Friday that India has put forward a "comprehensive" proposal to end the war, its first since February 2022, The Indian Express reports. "We have four proposals. The most comprehensive is India's proposal. For the first time, India has signalled its willingness to play a role," he said; the others came from Turkey, Egypt and the United States. No paper reports what India's proposal contains. Kyiv will accept a ceasefire only if it covers combat, attacks on energy and port infrastructure, and the Black Sea "in this combination", and is weighing an unconditional ceasefire along the line of contact, the present front line. Vladimir Putin told the Valdai Discussion Club, a Russian foreign-policy forum, that Mr. Modi "takes a neutral position but with an interest in the end of the conflict".

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Russia invades Ukraine in 2022 → India abstains at the UN and keeps ties with Moscow → the war shifts to energy, ports and Black Sea shipping → Turkey, Egypt and the US float partial truces → India tables a proposal Kyiv calls the broadest

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The UN Charter bars force against territorial integrity and prescribes peaceful settlement — Article 2(4) requires members to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Article 33 asks parties to a dispute to seek a solution first by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement. When a veto blocks the Security Council, the General Assembly can act under the Uniting for Peace resolution of 1950. 2. India has abstained on Ukraine resolutions and calls it strategic autonomy — In 2022 India abstained on the Security Council draft deploring the invasion, which Russia vetoed, and on the General Assembly's emergency-session resolution, and has generally abstained since while affirming territorial integrity. Strategic autonomy, the heir of non-alignment, means deciding each issue on national interest rather than joining a bloc.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS2 asks how other countries' quarrels touch India — The syllabus line is "Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests". Whether India's neutrality is principled or convenient is a natural Mains question; this story gives on-record evidence from both capitals.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. - Article 33 of the UN Charter lists negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and judicial settlement as peaceful means of settling disputes. - The Uniting for Peace resolution (General Assembly resolution 377, 1950) lets the Assembly act when the Security Council fails because its permanent members are not unanimous.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Strategic autonomy and partnership: India's neutrality has become its

	credential, not its liability — Western capitals long read India's abstentions as fence-sitting. Now Kyiv calls India's plan the broadest while Mr. Putin calls Mr. Modi neutral. A country that had sanctioned Russia or armed Ukraine could not win both, so autonomy makes the role possible. The sound judgement is to stay a facilitator, not a guarantor, because guarantees bring security obligations India cannot enforce. 2. Kyiv's praise is also an attempt to bind India to Ukraine's terms — Ukraine wants any truce to cover combat, energy, ports and the Black Sea together, and naming India's plan the broadest invites India to carry that package to Moscow. Since the plan is not public, nobody can say whose terms it resembles. The counter-view is that breadth is its strength: the other proposals each cover one slice of the war. 3. India's stake in peace is economic as much as moral — The war underlies the new US law threatening up to 100% tariffs on buyers of Russian oil, a list India tops with China. A settlement would ease that pressure and calm Black Sea routes that move world food prices. The risk: praise without results earns India little.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"India's neutrality on the Russia-Ukraine war has turned from a diplomatic liability into an asset." Critically examine in the light of India's reported peace proposal. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh evidence for and against the claim and reach a verdict. 2. Introduction — Both warring sides praised India on the same day — Kyiv's "most comprehensive", Moscow's "neutral position". 3. Neutrality kept open channels that sanctions would have closed — Abstentions, steady ties; Article 33's peaceful means as value addition. 4. It was a liability for years, and the proposal is untested — Western criticism since 2022; the plan's contents are not public. 5. Mediation serves India's own interest — Oil-tariff threat; flowchart: abstention → open channels → proposal → ceasefire. 6. Conclusion — Facilitate, do not guarantee — Neutrality stays an asset only if anchored in UN Charter principles.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. An interview board asks: should India offer to be a formal mediator between Russia and Ukraine? Approach: India should facilitate rather than formally mediate. Formal mediation invites blame if talks collapse and could pull India into guaranteeing a ceasefire. Carrying messages and proposing ideas uses India's access to both capitals at low risk, provided it rests openly on territorial integrity and peaceful settlement.

4.2 Goyal Rejects 'Excess Capacity' Charge at G20 as US Forced-Labour Tariff Bites

ISSUE THREAD India-US trade deal and tariffs (new thread) **LENS** Strategic autonomy and partnership · Market and State

STORY SO FAR India and the US agreed a framework for a trade deal in February 2026, but signing has stalled while Washington runs Section 301 probes and has enacted a law allowing 100% tariffs on buyers of Russian oil.

THE NEWS Milwaukee, October 2. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal told the G20 Trade Ministers' Meeting, hosted by the 2026 US presidency, that India has no "structural excess capacity" in the sectors the presidency identified, and that capacity itself does not cause dumping; hidden subsidies do. New since the September 23 card is the US machinery: the US Trade Representative (USTR) has opened two Section 301 investigations into 60 economies including India, one on forced labour, which has already brought a 10% tariff on Indian goods, and one on excess capacity in steel, textiles, aluminium, autos and semiconductors, whose result is awaited. Mr. Goyal said India has ratified ILO Conventions 29 and 105 and in

July banned imports made with forced labour, and that border measures need “specific and verifiable evidence” and WTO compliance. USTR Jamieson Greer said the deal is in the “short strokes” but “not imminent” (The Indian Express).

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

February 2026 framework → Section 301 probes into 60 economies → 10% forced-labour tariff on India → Graham Act threatens 100% Russian-oil tariffs → India defends on WTO and ILO ground as the deal stalls

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Section 301 is the US’s unilateral tool; GATT’s MFN rule and exceptions are the multilateral limit — Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974 lets the USTR investigate foreign practices that are unjustifiable, unreasonable or discriminatory and burden US commerce, and retaliate with tariffs. GATT Article I requires most-favoured-nation treatment, so a country-specific tariff must fit an exception: Article XX, including XX(e) on prison-labour products, or Article XXI on national security. 2. Forced labour is defined by ILO conventions and banned by Article 23 — The ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) defines forced labour as work exacted under menace of a penalty and not offered voluntarily; the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) bans its use for coercion or labour discipline. Both are fundamental conventions. Article 23 prohibits traffic in human beings, begar and forced labour, and binds private persons too.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS2 tests agreements that affect India’s interests — The syllabus line is “Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests”. Unilateral tariffs versus the WTO rulebook, and labour standards as trade conditions, are recurring themes.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	● Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974 is administered by the Office of the United States Trade Representative. ● GATT Article I contains the most-favoured-nation obligation; Article XX(e) covers prison-labour products and Article XXI is the security exception. ● ILO Conventions No. 29 (1930) and No. 105 (1957) on forced labour are fundamental conventions, and India has ratified both. ● The WTO Appellate Body has been non-functional since December 2019 because the US blocked appointments.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Strategic autonomy and partnership: India argues from WTO rules because it lacks bilateral leverage — Washington presses with three instruments: a forced-labour tariff, an awaited excess-capacity ruling and the Graham Act, whose tariffs, unlike IEEPA tariffs struck down by the US Supreme Court, cannot be challenged in court. India leans on evidence and the ILO because they are the only neutral ground, yet with the Appellate Body paralysed they cannot bind the US. The judgement is to settle tariffs bilaterally while refusing “economic security alignment” clauses that an expert says would curtail sovereignty. 2. India has conceded the principle and now disputes who judges the evidence — By banning forced-labour imports itself, India accepted that labour standards can be policed at the border. Its quarrel is with a partner acting as prosecutor and judge instead of the tripartite ILO, echoing India’s old resistance to a WTO “social clause” as disguised protectionism. 3. The real contest is over relative tariffs — Top US partners sit in a 10–15% bracket and India wants better rates than ASEAN and China (The Indian Express). An excess-capacity tariff would erase that edge, hence Mr. Goyal’s line between capacity and subsidy. The counter-risk is India’s own production-linked incentives, which Washington could cite.

POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Examine whether India's insistence on WTO-consistent, evidence-based trade measures can protect its exports from unilateral tariffs such as Section 301 actions. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Examine — Show where the approach works and where it fails. 2. Introduction — A 10% tariff and two probes test India — Mr. Goyal's G20 stand, the stalled deal. 3. Rules give India legitimacy and allies — MFN, Article XX, ILO competence; India's own July import ban as value addition. 4. Without an Appellate Body, rules cannot restrain the US — Draw a two-column table: WTO route versus bilateral deal. 5. Conclusion — Pair rules with a deal and market diversification — Rules for legitimacy, a deal for relative advantage.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Joint Secretary, Commerce, how would you help textile exporters hit by the forced-labour tariff? Approach: I would help exporters build supply-chain traceability so they can prove where fibre and labour come from, since the US demands evidence. I would ask States to publicise bonded-labour enforcement in export clusters, and press the USTR for exclusions for firms with clean chains, while councils help them find buyers beyond the US.

4.3 Iraq Returns as India's No. 2 Crude Supplier; G7 Releases 100 Million Barrels

ISSUE THREAD West Asia war's bill for India (update 9) **LENS** National interest and global commons · Strategic autonomy and partnership

STORY SO FAR With Hormuz blockaded and the Houthis tightening hold on Bab el-Mandeb, West Asian oil routes are choked. Crude crossed \$108; oil companies lose about ₹530 crore a day with pump prices frozen, and diesel is rationed.

THE NEWS New Delhi and Brussels, October 2. India's crude imports hit a year-high of 5.26 million barrels a day (mbd) in September, and Iraq became the second-largest supplier behind Russia for the first time since the US-Iran war began on February 28, The Economic Times reports from Kpler data. Tankers cross the Strait of Hormuz with AIS transponders, the ship-location beacons, switched off, and pass cargo ship-to-ship (STS) in UAE and Omani waters, so the supplier carries the strait's risk. Russian imports fell almost 9% to 1.9 mbd, still over 35% of the total (The Indian Express). Provisional figures differ: Iraq at 525,000 barrels a day (ET) or over 551,000 (IE). On Friday the G7, chaired by France, agreed to release 100 million barrels of oil and diesel through the International Energy Agency (IEA) over four months, front-loading diesel within 20 days. Brent fell \$1.80 to \$100.50.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

US-Iran war chokes Hormuz → Gulf supply to India nearly vanishes → Graham Act threatens tariffs on Russian-oil buyers → STS workaround brings Iraq back → G7 adds an IEA release before US midterms

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The IEA is the importers' insurance pool, and India is only an associate — The International Energy Agency was created in 1974 within the OECD framework after the 1973-74 oil embargo. Members must hold emergency stocks of at least 90 days of the previous year's net imports and join coordinated releases. India became an Association country in March 2017, so it is not bound by the members' 90-day stockholding rule. 2. India's strategic petroleum reserve is measured in days — Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), under the Oil Industry Development Board of the Petroleum Ministry, stores crude in underground rock caverns at Visakhapatnam (1.33 million tonnes), Mangaluru (1.5 MT) and Padur (2.5 MT), totalling 5.33 MT, roughly nine to ten days of national consumption.
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WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS3 makes energy security a standing question — The syllabus line is “Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.” Import dependence, chokepoints and strategic reserves recur, and this story joins all three to a live institution, the IEA.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The Strait of Hormuz lies between Iran and Oman’s Musandam peninsula, linking the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman. • The International Energy Agency, founded in 1974, requires members to hold oil stocks of at least 90 days of the previous year’s net imports. • ISPRL’s strategic crude reserves are at Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), Mangaluru and Padur (both Karnataka), with a combined capacity of 5.33 million tonnes. • The G7 comprises the US, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Canada, with the European Union also taking part.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — National interest and global commons: the G7 release helps India, but India cannot count on it — A coordinated release lowers the world price for every importer, so India gains without contributing. But it follows members’ politics: diesel-heavy for Europe, timed to the US midterms on November 3, and called “a political statement rather than a specific and binding commitment” by Energy Aspects. India should treat such releases as a bonus and build its own buffer, since others set the commons’ priorities. 2. The STS workaround shifts risk to suppliers but leaves India exposed — Refiners now take oil outside the strait, so freight and insurance risk falls on Gulf producers. But one major strike could halt the flow. The West Asian share was 36.7% in September against 56.3% before the war (The Indian Express), so the route has only partly reopened. 3. Gulf barrels are India’s hedge against the Graham Act — With Russia over a third of imports and the US law allowing tariffs of up to 100% on its biggest buyers, Gulf crude gives refiners “optionality” to cut Russian barrels, as Kpler put it, and its grades yield more diesel. Autonomy here means having choices; note that September’s Russian fall came from Chinese competition and Ukrainian strikes, not Indian policy.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	To what extent can diversification of crude suppliers, rather than strategic reserves, secure India’s energy needs during a prolonged disruption in the Strait of Hormuz? (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — To what extent — Weigh how far diversification works and where reserves still matter. 2. Introduction — September shows promise and limits — Year-high imports, yet Gulf share below pre-war. 3. Diversification has done the heavy lifting — Russian, then STS Gulf supply; Kpler data as value addition. 4. Every source carries its own risk — Graham Act, attacks; map: Gulf terminal → STS off UAE/Oman → India. 5. Reserves buy time, not supply — ISPRL covers days; IEA association gives price relief, not stock rights. 6. Conclusion — Diversify first, deepen reserves second — Combine sourcing, larger reserves and fuller IEA engagement.
ADMINISTRATOR’S BRAINSTORM — Q &	Q1. As Secretary, Petroleum, would you release crude from the strategic reserve now that the G7 is releasing stocks?

APPROACH

Approach: Not yet. The G7 release is easing prices and Gulf supply has partly returned, so drawing down a reserve of only days would waste the last buffer. I would hold it for a physical shortfall, such as a halt to the STS route, announce the trigger for its use, and push refiners to lock in Gulf cargoes.

5. Environment & Ecology

Both stories today are about repairing damage after the fact, and both show that repair is costlier and less certain than prevention. The Environment Ministry is now clearing projects that were built without the approval the law demands first, and the Great Indian Bustard is being returned to a desert that power lines and lost grassland had emptied of it. A State that waits for the harm and then pays to undo it has chosen the expensive path.

5.1 Environment Ministry resumes post-facto clearances after Supreme Court's final Vanashakti ruling

ISSUE THREAD Environmental clearance regime (new thread) **LENS** Rule of law and discretion · Development and environment

STORY SO FAR Since 2006 projects need environmental clearance before work begins; a 2017 amnesty and a 2021 Office Memorandum let violators apply afterwards, and the Supreme Court has been ruling on both since 2025.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Union Environment Ministry on September 30 directed its central and State expert bodies and pollution control boards to resume processing 'post facto' environmental clearance (EC) proposals, The Indian Express reports. Post-facto EC is a dispensation for projects that began work, expanded or modernised without the prior approval the law requires. Proposals pending, rejected, returned or de-listed because of the Supreme Court's interim orders will be taken to a "logical conclusion"; no fresh proposals will be accepted. The directive implements the Court's July 29 judgment in Vanashakti vs Union of India, delivered by Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M. Pancholi. It quashed the Ministry's 2021 Office Memorandum, kept approvals already granted valid, held prior clearance mandatory unless the law is amended, and upheld the 2017 notification as narrow and time-bound.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Projects start without the clearance the 2006 Notification demands → a 2017 one-time amnesty becomes a standing procedure in a 2021 Office Memorandum → the Court strikes the mechanism down in May 2025, then recalls that ruling on CREDAI's review → the July 2026 ruling upholds 2017 and quashes 2021 → the Ministry clears the backlog and bars new cases

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The EIA Notification, 2006 makes prior clearance a legal precondition — The Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 is issued by the Centre under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Listed projects need clearance before construction or expansion: Category A projects are appraised by the Ministry's Expert Appraisal Committees, Category B by State-level authorities, through screening, scoping, public consultation and appraisal. 2. The Court has called clearance after the fact an anomaly, yet moulded relief — In Common Cause v. Union of India (2017), on mining in Odisha, and Alembic Pharmaceuticals v. Rohit Prajapati (2020), the Supreme Court held prior clearance mandatory and ex post facto clearance alien to environmental law, yet in Alembic chose compensation over closure. Per Supreme Court Observer, the 2026 ruling reads them as declaring the rule while moulding the remedy.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. EIA is named in the GS3 syllabus — The line "Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment" makes the clearance regime examinable in itself; Vanashakti is now the leading case on EIA dilution.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- The Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 is issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. - Under the EIA Notification, 2006, Category A projects are appraised at the Centre and Category B projects by State-level authorities. - The four stages of environmental clearance under the 2006 Notification are screening, scoping, public consultation and appraisal.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Rule of law and discretion: the Court allowed a one-time pardon but not a

	standing one — A rule requiring permission first is meaningless if anyone may build and apply later, and the 2021 memorandum ran exactly such a parallel track. Per Supreme Court Observer, the Court asked whether a post-facto route was narrowly tailored, time-bound and in the public interest: 2017 passed, 2021 failed. The sound judgement: the executive may forgive a past class of violations once, by notification, but may not turn forgiveness into routine discretion. 2. The backlog decision protects investment but rewards those who did not wait — Demolishing a finished plant destroys capital and jobs — the case for appraising pending files. But the law-abiding developer waited, while one who built first is appraised on a finished project, where refusal is hard. The counter-view is that damage assessment and ecological compensation, make violation costly — only if they exceed the gain from building early. 3. Three rulings in fourteen months were themselves a cost — Per LiveLaw, the Chief Justice said the May 2025 bench had “unnecessarily” created uncertainty by not considering the whole case law. Stable doctrine is itself environmental governance, which is why the petitioners’ plea for a five-judge reference, reported by LiveLaw, matters.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	“Post-facto environmental clearance is a contradiction in terms.” Critically examine this view in the light of the Supreme Court’s 2026 judgment in Vanashakti vs Union of India. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh both sides and reach a reasoned verdict. 2. Introduction — prior clearance is the spine of the EIA Notification, 2006 — Cite the September 30 directive. 3. The claim holds for standing regimes: the 2021 memorandum was quashed — Value addition: Common Cause (2017) and Alembic (2020). 4. The claim overstates for one-time windows: the 2017 notification survived — Narrow and time-bound; draw a timeline 2006 → 2017 → 2021 → May 2025 → November 2025 → July 2026. 5. The real test is whether penalties exceed the gain from violating — Otherwise developers wait for the next pardon. 6. Conclusion — keep prior clearance absolute; make any amnesty rare and costly — Faster appraisal removes the excuse.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Member Secretary of a State EIA authority, how do you handle a post-facto file for a factory that ran six years without clearance? Approach: I would appraise it on merits, not as a formality on a finished project. I would commission a damage assessment of the six years, fix ecological compensation and a remediation plan, and make clearance conditional on both. If the site is environmentally unacceptable, I would recommend refusal despite the sunk investment, with reasons, because the authority is credible only if refusal is possible.

5.2 Captive-bred Great Indian Bustards to be released into Thar wild for first time

ISSUE THREAD Species recovery and captive breeding (new thread) **LENS** Development and environment · Innovation and safeguards

STORY SO FAR The Great Indian Bustard, a large grassland bird of the Thar, has declined to about 140 in the wild; since 2019 the Wildlife Institute of India has bred birds in captivity in Jaisalmer as insurance against extinction.

THE NEWS Jaisalmer. Captive-bred Great Indian Bustards (GIB) will be released into the wild for the first time, marking the start of the ‘rewilding’ phase of Project GIB, under way since 2013. The Indian Express reports at least two male chicks,

four to six months old, will be released on October 4 into enclosures of 15-20 sq km in the Desert National Park and radio-tagged; the Free Press Journal reports ten birds, at Ramdevra on October 3 and Sudasari on October 4, so the scale is not yet settled. The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has bred at least 98 birds at Sam and Ramdevra; about 140 survive in the wild, mostly in Rajasthan. Release follows the monsoon, when insects are plentiful as feed. Survival of released captive-bred bustards is only 10-30% a year, project scientists say.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Habitat loss, predation and power-line collisions keep the wild population at 120-150 → the Supreme Court orders lines in bustard habitat underground → WII hatches wild-collected eggs in captivity from 2019 → captive-bred chicks are now released to test whether they survive

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The GIB has the highest protection under Indian and international law — The Great Indian Bustard is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List and in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the highest protection. It is the State bird of Rajasthan, and breeds only once every one to two years, so a reduced population recovers slowly. 2. The Supreme Court has ruled on power lines in GIB habitat — In M.K. Ranjitsinh v. Union of India, the Supreme Court in April 2021 ordered overhead lines in priority GIB habitat in Rajasthan and Gujarat underground where feasible. In March 2024 it modified that order on the Centre's plea about renewable-energy costs, set up an expert committee and recognised a right against the adverse effects of climate change under Articles 14 and 21.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Species recovery sits in the GS3 conservation line — The syllabus line "Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation" covers species recovery. The GIB joins three examinable themes: an endangered species, a court order and a clash with clean energy.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The Great Indian Bustard is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List and in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. • The GIB conservation breeding centres at Sam and Ramdevra in Jaisalmer district are run by the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. • The 'jumpstart' method replaces infertile eggs laid by wild females with viable eggs from a captive-breeding centre.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Development and environment: releasing birds is pointless if the lines that killed them stay up — Captive breeding produces birds, but a major cause of death, collisions with lines evacuating renewable power, lies outside the breeding centre. The Supreme Court's December 2027 deadline for burying lines outside the Desert National Park, reported by The Indian Express, is as much part of this programme as the aviary. The judgement: clean energy and the bustard can share the Thar only if line routing is planned before projects, not after carcasses are found. 2. Low survival is expected, so the measure of success is years, not birds — Captive-raised birds must still learn to evade desert foxes and birds of prey, hence the low survival and the soft release in a quiet aviary at Sam. At least 40 wild birds live around the release sites. Success means released birds breeding in the wild, which, given eggs only every one to two years, will take several seasons. 3. Breeding technology buys time but cannot replace habitat — Artificial incubation, captive mating and the 'jumpstart' egg swap in Kutch are real gains and insurance against collapse. But the 2024-25 survey found the birds concentrated on flat grassland free of settlements and renewable infrastructure. Without protecting that grassland, a captive flock is a museum, not a recovery.

POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Can captive breeding save the Great Indian Bustard without addressing threats to its habitat? Explain. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Explain — Make clear, with reasons, why breeding alone is not enough. 2. Introduction — about 140 birds remain; the first captive-bred birds now enter the wild — About 20 words. 3. Breeding is insurance: at least 98 birds bred at Sam and Ramdevra — Value addition: 10-30% annual survival of released birds. 4. Power lines and lost grassland are the cause of decline, not lack of birds — Value addition: M.K. Ranjitsinh case and the December 2027 burial deadline; draw a cycle of breed, release, survive, breed in wild, with power lines and habitat loss as breaks. 5. Conclusion — breed, release and secure the grassland together — About 15 words.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As District Collector of Jaisalmer, a solar developer seeks approval for an overhead line across a GIB area. What do you do? Approach: I would check the route against mapped GIB habitat and the Supreme Court's directions, since an overhead line there may be barred. I would ask the developer to reroute or bury it, with bird diverters wherever overhead lines are permitted, and record the decision with the forest department's advice, so energy targets and a court-protected species are reconciled before the line goes up.

6. Health & Life Sciences

Medicine built on other populations' data can mismeasure Indian patients. A Hyderabad laboratory has rebuilt the yardstick for sickle cell anaemia from Indian children's records, and made a version that needs no laboratory at all. For a disease concentrated in tribal districts with few laboratories, that second feature may matter more than the first.

6.1 CSIR-CCMB builds India-specific severity score for sickle cell anaemia from Indian children's data

ISSUE THREAD Sickle cell elimination (new thread) **LENS** Growth and equity · Innovation and safeguards

STORY SO FAR Sickle cell disease, an inherited blood disorder common among tribal communities, is the target of a national elimination mission launched in 2023; screening newborns and adults for the gene has been the mission's first step.

THE NEWS Hyderabad. Scientists at the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) have developed an India-specific score to predict how severely sickle cell anaemia (SCA) will affect a patient, The Hindu reports. SCA is an inherited blood disorder in which a mutation in the beta globin gene produces abnormal haemoglobin, making red blood cells take a sickle shape; the result is anaemia, severe pain episodes and organ damage. Existing international scoring systems do not reflect Indian patients, who are said to have a milder disease than many African populations. The first model, ISS1 (India-specific Severity Score), built from clinical data on Indian children, improved clinical assessments to nearly 83%. A second, ISS2, replaces laboratory measurements with easily observable clinical signs and reaches about 85% agreement. India is among the countries with the highest burden, says Giriraj R. Chandak, who led the team.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

The national mission screens tribal communities to find patients and carriers → doctors then need to know which patients will fall seriously ill → international severity scores, built on other populations, misjudge milder Indian disease → CCMB builds scores from Indian data, one usable without a laboratory

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	Sickle cell disease is autosomal recessive, so carriers are healthy but pass the gene on — Inheriting the sickle gene from both parents causes the disease; inheriting it from one gives sickle cell trait, a usually healthy carrier. Two carriers face a one-in-four chance in each pregnancy of an affected child, which is why carrier screening and counselling are central to prevention. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 lists sickle cell disease, with thalassaemia and haemophilia, among blood disorders counted as specified disabilities. The national mission aims to eliminate sickle cell disease as a public health problem by 2047 — The National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission was launched in July 2023 at Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh. Run through the National Health Mission with a focus on tribal areas, it screens people up to 40 years of age, issues cards showing sickle status, and offers counselling and treatment.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	The story joins two syllabus lines: health services and indigenous science — GS2 covers “issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health”, and GS3 “achievements of Indians in science and technology; indigenization of technology”. This tool is a ready example for both.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Sickle cell disease is caused by a mutation in the beta globin gene and is inherited in an autosomal recessive pattern. - The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 includes sickle cell disease among blood disorders counted as specified disabilities. - The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, is a laboratory of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).
ANALYSIS	Lens — Growth and equity: a score that needs no laboratory reaches the patients the mission is for — The disease is concentrated in tribal districts, where a primary health

	centre may lack the laboratory to run the tests a standard severity score needs. ISS2, relying on signs a doctor can see, can be used where the patients actually are. So the simpler tool is the more equitable one, provided laboratory referral remains available when the score is uncertain. 2. Screening finds patients; a severity score decides who needs care first — Mass screening produces long lists of positives, and a system short of specialists must decide whom to follow closely. A reliable severity score turns that list into a priority list, the missing link between screening and treatment. 3. A score built on children must be tested before it guides care for all — The model rests on data from Indian children, and patients vary by region and age. Before entering national guidelines it needs validation in adults and other States, and a check that the idea of a 'milder' Indian disease does not cause undertreatment of severe patients. The counter-view is that waiting for perfect validation leaves clinicians using foreign scores known to fit badly.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Examine how population-specific clinical tools can strengthen India's effort to eliminate sickle cell disease as a public health problem. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Examine — Probe how far such tools help, with limits. 2. Introduction — an inherited disease concentrated in tribal India, with a 2047 elimination target — Name the national mission and the CCMB scores. 3. Foreign scores misjudge milder Indian disease; ISS1 improves assessment to nearly 83% — Value addition: ISS2 reaches about 85% agreement without laboratory tests. 4. Severity scoring links screening to treatment in clinics without laboratories, once validated beyond children — Draw a flowchart: screening → diagnosis → severity score → local care or referral. 5. Conclusion — pair carrier screening and counselling with Indian-built tools for care — Prevention plus care makes elimination credible.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Chief Medical Officer of a tribal district, how would you use a severity score that needs no laboratory? Approach: I would train medical officers and community health officers at primary health centres to score every screened patient at diagnosis. Those scored severe would be linked to the district hospital for regular follow-up and treatment, and the rest monitored locally. I would review outcomes each quarter to check that the score is not missing patients who later fall seriously ill.

7. Internal Security

In Manipur the Centre is now using silence as policy: it has neither renewed nor ended its truce with Kuki-Zo armed groups, and is sending more troops instead. A pause gives leverage to demand weapons, but it also leaves thousands of armed cadres in a legal limbo. Meanwhile the State is learning that the dead are not its only obligation; the missing are too.

7.1 Centre holds Kuki-Zo truce in abeyance; Manipur pays kin of 49 missing

ISSUE THREAD Manipur's shifting ethnic conflict (update 6) **LENS** Centre and States · Liberty and order

STORY SO FAR Manipur's conflict has outgrown the Meitei-Kuki frame: Naga-Kuki clashes have crossed 50 deaths since February, sustained by drug-route rivalry; AFSPA was extended six months and the Supreme Court sought a report on relief-camp deaths.

THE NEWS New Delhi and Guwahati. The Union Home Ministry has not extended the Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact with Kuki-Zo insurgent groups a month after the one-year agreement, signed on September 4, 2025 on "re-negotiated" terms, expired, The Hindu reports. Government sources say it is in abeyance until the groups surrender all weapons; an SoO member says not extending "does not mean it has been abrogated". Meitei and Naga civil society groups, and Deputy Chief Minister Losii Dikho, want it scrapped. The Centre will send 30 more CRPF companies (about 3,000 personnel) and two CoBRA battalions (about 2,000). On October 1 the State Cabinet approved a one-time ₹10 lakh each for kin of 49 people missing since May 3, 2023, because the law presumes a missing person dead only after seven years. The conflict has killed 306 and displaced over 60,000.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Kuki-Naga clashes of the 1990s → 2008 tripartite pact puts Kuki-Zo groups in camps → Meitei-Kuki violence from May 2023 brings valley demands to scrap it → renewal on new terms in September 2025 → expiry in September 2026 met with abeyance and more troops

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. A Suspension of Operations pact is a truce, not a peace settlement — Under an SoO agreement, security forces suspend operations against an armed group whose cadres stay in designated camps with weapons in monitored storage, under agreed ground rules. Manipur's pact, signed in 2008 by the Centre, the State and the Kuki National Organisation and United Peoples' Front (24 groups in all), holds violence down while talks continue. 2. The Constitution gives the Union a duty in Manipur and special arrangements for its hills — Article 355 makes it the Union's duty to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance and to ensure its government runs according to the Constitution. Article 371C provides for a Hill Areas Committee of Manipur's Assembly and an annual Governor's report to the President on the hill areas. The Sixth Schedule's autonomous councils cover Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, not Manipur, a gap behind recurring hill demands.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Insurgency management in the North-East is a standing GS3 theme — The syllabus asks about "security challenges and their management in border areas" and "linkages of organized crime with terrorism". Truce pacts, AFSPA and Article 355 recur.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Article 355 of the Constitution places on the Union the duty to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance. - Article 371C contains special provisions for Manipur, including a committee of the Legislative Assembly consisting of members elected from the Hill Areas. - The Sixth Schedule applies to tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram; Manipur is not covered.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Centre and States: the Union holds the levers while the State carries the politics — The pact, troops and talks are decided in New Delhi, while Manipur's

	government is split, its Deputy Chief Minister demanding abrogation. Article 355 justifies central control, but a settlement the State does not own will not hold. The sound judgement: set the weapons condition jointly with the State, so 'abeyance' is a shared position local leaders cannot disown. 2. Abeyance trades clarity for leverage, and the trade can backfire — Neither renewing nor ending the pact presses groups to disarm without pushing cadres back into the hills. But an SoO member says the interlocutor has not met them since April 30, so armed camps have neither rules nor talks. The counter-view: renewal without disarmament rewards groups when, per officials, weapons with civilians drive the killings. Abeyance works only if short and tied to a dialogue date. 3. The missing need a legal route, not only a cash grant — Without death certificates or autopsy reports, families of the missing fall outside the central assistance scheme; the ₹10 lakh "humanitarian measure" fills that gap once. A durable answer is a special procedure to declare persons missing in the conflict, so property, pensions and inheritance are not frozen for seven years.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Truce agreements with insurgent groups can hold down violence without resolving the conflict. Critically examine with reference to the Suspension of Operations pact in Manipur. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh gains against costs and reach a judgement. 2. Introduction — the 2008 tripartite pact has lapsed and is held in abeyance — 306 deaths since May 2023. 3. The pact kept 24 groups in camps under ground rules for years — It bought time for talks. 4. It froze arms and demands without a political settlement — Draw a timeline 2008 → 2023 → 2025 renewal → 2026 abeyance. 5. Disarmament must come with talks and protection for civilians — Value addition: Article 355; 30 CRPF companies and two CoBRA battalions sent. 6. Conclusion — a time-bound truce tied to disarmament and a political dialogue — Involve all communities.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Deputy Commissioner of a hill district with SoO camps, what do you do now that the pact is in abeyance? Approach: I would keep camp inspections running so every weapon stays accounted for, and keep a channel open with camp leaders so cadres do not drift out. I would coordinate with the arriving central forces to avoid clashes near camps, and list the district's missing persons so families receive the new assistance quickly.

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 — Seventy Doctors Dismissed, Seventy Posts Empty: The Director Who Must Enforce Discipline Without Emptying the Clinic

SCENARIO The Hindu (3 October) reports that Andhra Pradesh has dismissed 70 Civil Assistant Surgeons who stayed away without authorisation for more than a year. Doctors who come forward may rejoin, subject to measures such as withholding increments, and 78 have already done so. An assessment found 493 doctors and other employees absent from duty. The Health Minister has told officials to show “zero leniency” and complete disciplinary proceedings within three months, and to fill the resulting vacancies under a “zero vacancy policy”. You are the Director of Health Services of a district hospital network. Two primary health centres under you already have no doctor. One absent doctor writes that a family illness and a posting far from home kept the doctor away, and asks to rejoin. An influential local leader asks you to “go slow” on a relative’s case.

- Q1.** Identify the values in conflict and the stakeholders. What does each decision cost the rural patient?
- Q2.** How will you separate a wilful absentee from a doctor with a genuine difficulty, within a three-month limit?
- Q3.** How will you handle the leader’s request and keep every primary health centre staffed meanwhile?

MODEL APPROACH

- 1. Discipline and service are the same duty seen from two sides** — An unchecked absentee wrongs the village that has no doctor, and a harsh dismissal that leaves a post empty wrongs the same village again. Both discipline and rural care are held in trust for the patient, so neither can be given up.
- 2. Individual hearing, uniform standard** — Absence is a charge, not a verdict. Give each doctor notice, a chance to explain and a reasoned order, so that natural justice is followed even under a three-month clock. Treat the rejoining route with increments withheld as the graded penalty it is, and apply it equally.
- 3. Fill the gap before the dismissal lands** — Arrange locum or contract doctors, rotate staff from better-staffed centres and run mobile clinics for the two empty centres. A published roster, with attendance monitored by a biometric system and review by supervisors, shows patients what to expect.
- 4. Decline the favour, record the request** — Tell the leader every file will move on its merits and note the request in writing. A relative cannot get slower treatment than a stranger, nor faster.
- 5. Conclusion — make attendance easier than absence** — Fair postings, transfer rules and housing at remote centres reduce the reasons for absence. Firm action is only credible when the posting policy is also fair.

Case 2 — The Helicopter Above the Flooded Village: Speed of Relief Against Safety of Those Waiting Below

SCENARIO The Indian Express (3 October) reports that in Saran, Bihar, dry ration was being air-dropped from a helicopter to people marooned by the Gandak flood. A 58-year-old villager waiting for supplies died. Villagers gave two accounts: that relief material fell on him, or that he suffered a heart attack. The police say a post-mortem will establish the cause. The helicopter flew low, and its downdraft blew away tin sheds and structures, injuring one more person. Officials say 170 villages and about 3.32 lakh people are affected, 2,540 boats are operating, and 48 NDRF and SDRF teams are deployed. The air drop began on the Chief Minister’s instructions after the district sought more ration packets. You are the District Magistrate. Another drop is due tomorrow, crowds are gathering at the landing spot, and a politician asks that the sorties continue regardless.

- Q1.** What are the competing duties here? Is the helicopter the right tool, and who bears the risk?
- Q2.** What would you change before the next sortie, and how do you treat the unresolved cause of death?
- Q3.** How will you answer pressure to continue unchanged, and what do you tell the family?

MODEL APPROACH

- 1. Urgency does not cancel the duty of care** — Saving lives and feeding the hungry are the aim, but a method that harms the people it serves defeats that aim. The test is the 'least harm' route that still reaches everyone, not the quickest-looking one.
- 2. Change the method, not the mission** — Pause drops over crowds. Use boats and ground teams where they work, fix a cordoned drop zone away from sheds and houses, set a minimum height and have volunteers or police control the crowd. Distribute to marked families through lists, so people need not gather and wait.
- 3. Be honest about the unknown** — The cause of death is not yet known, so do not blame the helicopter or deny it. Order a prompt, fair inquiry, wait for the post-mortem and provide for the family's dignity and immediate support, since the compensation question is for the government to decide under the relief rules.
- 4. Hold your ground with the politician** — Explain that an avoidable second death would hurt relief far more than a day of delay. Note instructions in writing and give the safer plan as the answer, while seeking the higher authority's approval.
- 5. Conclusion — relief is judged by who it reaches safely** — A short standard operating procedure for air drops, drawn up before the next flood, would make the safe method the default.

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
SIR and Annual Special Summary Revision — Article 324 and Section 21 of the RP Act, 1950	The Election Commission has superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls under Article 324. Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 governs preparation and revision of rolls, and under Section 21(3) the Commission may, for reasons recorded, direct a special revision of a roll in such manner as it thinks fit. ET reports that the Annual Special Summary Revision, the routine yearly update, has not been announced since 2024, while Special Intensive Revision is the ground-up exercise that has run in its place in many States.
Vettri Payanam — fare-free bus travel for women and transgender persons in Tamil Nadu	Tamil Nadu has expanded its five-year-old ‘Magalir Vidiyal Payanam’ scheme into ‘Vettri Payanam’, giving no-fare travel to women and transgender persons on State Transport Corporation buses (The Hindu). Tamil Nadu’s State transport corporations are registered under the Companies Act, 1956, and the State reimburses them for concession travel.
PMEGP — Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme, launched 2008-09	PMEGP is a credit-linked subsidy scheme for setting up micro enterprises, with the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) as the nodal agency at the national level under the Ministry of MSME. The government is examining a proposal to extend it to 2030-31 (ET).
NBFCs and ‘new-to-credit’ borrowers — scale-based regulation and credit information companies	A TransUnion CIBIL-FIDC study says NBFCs originate about half of new-to-credit customers (ET). The RBI regulates NBFCs on a scale-based basis in four layers, Base, Middle, Upper and Top. Credit information companies such as CIBIL operate under the Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Act, 2005.
Petroleum Act, 1934 — draft amendments to decriminalise regulatory breaches	The Petroleum Ministry has sought comments on draft amendments to the Petroleum Act, 1934 that propose a civil-penalty regime for regulatory breaches, such as violating licence terms, while keeping criminal penalties for serious offences involving public safety (The Indian Express). The Act governs the import, transport, storage and production of petroleum.
Haryana land acquisition for Gurugram roads — the RFCTLARR Act, 2013	Haryana plans to acquire private land for 24-metre roads in Gurugram under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (The Indian Express). That Act replaced the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, and requires a Social Impact Assessment for acquisition. Acquisition of property is in the Concurrent List (Entry 42), while land itself is a State subject (Entry 18, List II).
Delhi School Education Rules, 1973 — private school approval and the RTE Act, 2009	Delhi’s 2026 amendment to Rules 44 and 50 removes the public-interest assessment for certain new private schools and the clause on proving need in the locality (The Indian Express). Critics say it conflicts with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, under which Article 21A makes education a Fundamental Right for children aged 6 to 14.
EU CBAM — the definitive phase from 1 January	The EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism has entered its definitive phase. It covers six sectors, namely iron and steel, aluminium, cement, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen, and exempts small importers through a 50-tonne threshold (ET). It puts a carbon price on the embedded emissions of imports.
Buxa Tiger Reserve — Tiger Augmentation and Recovery Project and the NTCA	Buxa in West Bengal was declared a tiger reserve in 1983 (ET). Its Tiger Augmentation and Recovery Project was started with support from the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Wildlife Institute of India (The Indian Express). The NTCA is a statutory body under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
Transporter-18 — Indian	Indian private firms, including Dhruva Space, TakeMe2Space, SatLeo Labs and EON Space Labs,

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
payloads on a SpaceX rideshare and the role of IN-SPACE	placed payloads in orbit on SpaceX's Transporter-18 rideshare mission (ET, The Hindu). IN-SPACE is the single-window agency under the Department of Space that authorises and promotes private space activity.
Surat Emissions Trading Scheme — a market for particulate matter	The Surat scheme, mooted with the Gujarat Pollution Control Board, caps particulate-matter emissions of textile plants and lets them trade permits, with a fine of ten times the permit value on firms that fall short (The Hindu). It was tested in a randomised trial covering 150 plants.
Section 163 of the BNSS — prohibitory orders replacing Section 144 CrPC	Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 lets a District Magistrate or other empowered executive magistrate issue orders to prevent public disorder in urgent cases, and it replaces Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Such orders have been enforced around Jantar Mantar (The Hindu).
Rajya Sabha elections — elected by MLAs through the single transferable vote	Under Article 80(4), the representatives of a State in the Rajya Sabha are elected by the elected members of its Legislative Assembly, according to the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. An election for Uttar Pradesh seats is due this month (The Hindu).

Source note: All items are drawn from *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express* & *The Economic Times* (Delhi Editions) — 3 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 1.3 (15 marks, 250 words)

The Supreme Court's refusal to meet the Joint Parliamentary Committee on simultaneous elections reflects a sound reading of the separation of powers. Discuss. (15 marks, 250 words)

Introduction — The Supreme Court has declined an October 6 interaction between sitting judges and the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, saying the Bill “might become a subject matter of Judicial Review”. India follows a functional, not rigid, separation of powers; the question is whether this refusal honours it.

- Judges who may decide a law should not help shape it** — Article 82A, which would end Assembly terms with the Lok Sabha's, will likely face a basic-structure challenge. A private meeting with the drafters could invite recusal pleas and shake confidence in the eventual verdict. Article 143 lets only the President seek the Court's opinion, so no route exists for advising Parliament on a pending Bill.
- The request itself blurred three roles** — The Election Commission, which gains new powers under the Bill, sought a meeting between the committee examining it and the judges who may review it. Article 50 separates the judiciary from the executive; the Court's distance protects that line.
- Counter-view: the organs of the State already cooperate** — Organs do cooperate, and committees take expert evidence. The committee has already heard four former Chief Justices, so it loses little; retired judges can advise without committing the Court. Critics may still read the refusal as aloofness on a major reform.

Conclusion — The refusal is a sound reading: restraint costs a courtesy, while a meeting could cost credibility. Way forward: the committee should rely on retired judges, jurists and States, and the Court should speak through judgments if the Bill becomes law.

Draw this: A triangle of Legislature (JPC), Executive (Election Commission) and Judiciary; draw the request as an arrow to the Judiciary, marked 'refused: possible review'.

(252 words)

11.2 GS1 corner — Geography: The Thar Desert: why it is dry and how it lives

Today's peg: 5.2 — captive-bred Great Indian Bustards to be released in the Desert National Park, Jaisalmer

- Monsoon geometry, not a mountain wall, keeps western Rajasthan dry** — The Arabian Sea branch of the monsoon blows parallel to the Aravallis and finds nothing to lift it; the Bay of Bengal branch arrives drained. Much of the west gets under 25 cm of rain a year.
- Wind and rare water carve the landforms** — Wind builds crescent-shaped barchans and long longitudinal dunes. Shallow salt basins, called playas, hold water briefly; Sambhar is India's largest inland salt lake. The Luni is the only sizeable river, and it is seasonal.
- An arid grassland, not a wasteland** — Khejri and tough grasses such as sewan support chinkara and the Great Indian Bustard. The Desert National Park in Jaisalmer protects the dune and grassland habitat.

Prelims facts

- The Luni rises in the Aravallis near Ajmer and drains into the Rann of Kachchh.
- Khejri (*Prosopis cineraria*) is the State tree of Rajasthan.
- The Great Indian Bustard is Rajasthan's State bird.

11.3 Places in news — mark them on your atlas

Place	Where it is	Why in news	Prelims fact
Desert National Park, Jaisalmer	Western Rajasthan, in the Thar Desert; Pakistan lies a short way to the west.	Captive-bred Great Indian Bustards are to be released into enclosures here (5.2).	The Wildlife Institute of India's breeding centres at Sam and Ramdevra are in Jaisalmer district.
Strait of Hormuz	Between Iran to the north and Oman's Musandam peninsula to the south; it joins the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman.	Tankers cross it with transponders off (4.3).	It is about 33 km wide at its narrowest.
Milwaukee	Wisconsin, United States, on the western shore of Lake Michigan.	Host of the G20 Trade Ministers' Meeting (4.2).	Lake Michigan is the only one of the five Great Lakes lying wholly within the United States.
Saran (Chhapra), Bihar	Western Bihar, between the Ghaghara to the west and the Gandak to the east; the Ganga flows along its south.	Gandak flood; ration air-dropped to marooned villages (Case 2).	The Gandak joins the Ganga near Hajipur, opposite Patna.

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

Meaning — Impartiality means deciding each matter on its merits and on the rules, without favour or prejudice towards anyone because of personal ties, influence or party. It is not indifference: circumstances are weighed, but by one standard for all.

In today's news — In Case 1, a local leader asks the Director to 'go slow' on a relative's absence case; the answer is the same notice, hearing and order for every doctor.

Use in an answer — Case studies in which an influential person seeks a favour: name impartiality in the analysis; show a written, uniform procedure 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 bare patch of ground invites action, and action is easiest to show when it is quick. Machines clear the land, rows of saplings go in, and a signboard announces that a forest is returning. The number of trees planted can be reported within weeks; whether they survive takes years to learn.

The difficulty is that a forest is a set of relationships rather than a collection of trees. Native species have grown up alongside the insects, birds and soil fungi that depend on them. Saplings chosen for speed or looks, and set close together so that the canopy closes soon, may compete for water that a dry site cannot spare. Removing an introduced species in one sweep can also strip away shade and shelter that wildlife already relies on.

Slower methods look less impressive. Protecting the soil, letting native seedlings spring up, thinning the unwanted species gradually and replanting only where regrowth fails demand patience and constant observation. They offer fewer photographs, and they are harder to put in a tender, since the work cannot be fixed in advance; it depends on what the site does each season.

None of this means that planting is wrong. Where the soil has been stripped to bare rock, nature may need help. The point is that success should be measured by what the land can do on its own later, not by the number of trees put in on the first day. A programme judged by its first month will be designed for the first month.

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

- (a) Planting of trees should be given up in favour of natural regrowth everywhere.
- (b) Quick, countable planting is a poor measure of restoration, which depends on lasting ecological relationships.

- (c) Native species always grow faster than introduced species.
- (d) Officials who run planting programmes do not care about forests.

Q2. The statement “A programme judged by its first month will be designed for the first month” assumes that

- (a) forests can be restored within a month.
- (b) planners tend to shape their work to the measure by which it will be judged.
- (c) planting programmes should never be reviewed.
- (d) slower methods always cost more than quick ones.

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

- (a) Tenders that fix the work in advance suit rapid planting better than responsive restoration.
- (b) Introduced species should never be removed.
- (c) Saplings planted close together never survive.
- (d) Slower methods produce no results.

Reasoning and quantitative aptitude

Q4. India imported 5.2 million barrels of crude a day in September. If Russia supplied 36% and Iraq 10%, how many barrels a day more did Russia supply than Iraq?

- (a) 13,52,000
- (b) 10,40,000
- (c) 18,72,000
- (d) 5,20,000

Q5. Five tribunals P, Q, R, S and T have their chairs appointed one per month from January to May. P is appointed before Q, and Q before S. R is appointed in the month immediately after S. T is appointed in neither January nor May. Which tribunal's chair is appointed in May?

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

Answer key and explanations

Q1: (b) The passage contrasts a visible count with long-term health. A is rejected by the last paragraph; C and D are never stated.

Q2: (b) The sentence works only if designers aim at whatever yardstick is applied. A and C contradict the passage, and D is not claimed.

Q3: (a) The third paragraph says responsive work cannot be fixed in advance for a tender. B, C and D overstate the passage's cautions.

Q4: (a) $36\% - 10\% = 26\%$ of 52,00,000 = 13,52,000. Option C is Russia's supply alone.

Q5: (c) P, Q, S come in order with R directly after S, so T fits only before S: P, T, Q, S, R or P, Q, T, S, R. Both end with R.

12. Essays of the Day

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

ESSAY 1 · Essay · Section A · 6 min read

It takes more courage to end a war than to begin one.

Themes: War, peace and the politics of compromise · Leadership, sunk costs and moral courage · Just settlements versus appeasement

On 13 September 1993 Yitzhak Rabin stood on the White House lawn and shook the hand of Yasser Arafat, a man he had spent most of his life fighting. Rabin had commanded Israel's army in the war of 1967; nobody could call him soft. That day he said: "We who have fought against you, the Palestinians, we say to you today in a loud and a clear voice: Enough of blood and tears. Enough!" Two years later, on 4 November 1995, he was shot dead at a peace rally in Tel Aviv, not by an enemy soldier but by an Israeli who believed that making peace was treason. Anwar Sadat, who flew to Jerusalem in 1977 and signed the Camp David Accords, had been killed by his own countrymen in 1981. Starting a war has rarely cost a leader his life at the hands of his own people. Ending one often has.

That is the argument of this essay. Beginning a war usually needs anger, a grievance and a crowd that applauds. Ending one needs a leader to admit that the goal will not be fully won, to face the families of the dead, and to sit across the table from people his own side has been taught to hate. The first is swept along by emotion; the second has to stand against it. War, in that sense, is the easier decision.

History shows why the exit is so hard to find. Once a war begins, every death becomes an argument for continuing, because stopping seems to say that the earlier deaths were for nothing. Economists call this the sunk-cost fallacy; generals and politicians experience it as honour. Robert McNamara, who as Defense Secretary helped escalate the Vietnam War, admitted in his memoir *In Retrospect* (1995) that he and his colleagues had been wrong, yet the war ran for years after the doubts were known inside the government, because nobody wanted to be the leader who lost. The First World War was expected to be over by Christmas 1914; it lasted four years. The poet Wilfred Owen, who called the patriotic Latin line about dying for one's country "the old Lie", was killed on 4 November 1918, one week before the Armistice. The machinery of war, once running, does not stop by itself.

Ending a war well is harder still, because a ceasefire is not yet a peace. The Treaty of Versailles in 1919 ended the fighting but humiliated Germany; John Maynard Keynes resigned from the British delegation and warned in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919) that such terms would breed the next disaster. The Korean War stopped with an armistice in July 1953, and because no peace treaty followed, the peninsula remains technically at war more than seventy years later. Peace that lasts requires the winner to give something up as well. After the Second World War the United States chose the Marshall Plan over revenge, and today's European Union grew out of a coal and steel community meant to make another Franco-German war impossible.

India's own record contains both kinds of courage. In 1971, after the Pakistani army surrendered in Dhaka on 16 December, Indira Gandhi announced a unilateral ceasefire on the western front, effective the next day, though some urged her to press on. At Simla in July 1972 India returned territory and, eventually, more than 90,000 prisoners of war; critics still argue about whether too much was given away for too little. The clearest Indian example came in Mizoram. For twenty years the Mizo National Front fought the Indian state. In June 1986 Rajiv Gandhi signed the Mizo Accord with its leader Laldenga, who laid down arms and became Chief Minister. Both men took political risks: one was accused of rewarding rebels, the other of betraying the cause. Mizoram has been among the most peaceful States in the North-East since. The Mahabharata, our oldest war story, makes the same point in reverse: Krishna went to the Kaurava court asking

for only five villages to avert the war, and Duryodhana's refusal to give up even a needle-point of land led to a slaughter that left almost no one to rule.

Science supplies the starkest version of the argument. In 1955, ten years after Hiroshima, Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein, joined by other leading scientists, issued a manifesto that asked: "Shall we put an end to the human race: or shall mankind renounce war?" Seven years later, in the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, Kennedy and Khrushchev each overruled advisers who wanted to escalate. Khrushchev withdrew missiles from Cuba; the United States quietly agreed to remove its missiles from Turkey. Neither looked heroic to his hardliners; both saved millions of lives, and the Partial Test Ban Treaty followed in 1963.

The counter-position deserves to be taken seriously. Sometimes the urge to end a conflict is not courage but fear. At Munich in 1938 Neville Chamberlain bought what he called "peace for our time" by handing part of Czechoslovakia to Hitler; within a year Europe was at war. In May 1940, when some in the British cabinet wanted to explore terms with Germany, it was Churchill's refusal to negotiate that took courage. Ceasefires can also freeze injustice: an aggressor may keep what it has seized while the victim is pressed to accept it in the name of peace. Eisenhower, a general who knew war better than most, reminded the world in 1953 that every weapon is "a theft from those who hunger and are not fed", yet he did not pretend that a nation could disarm while it was being attacked.

These objections sharpen the claim instead of defeating it. Munich did not end a war; it postponed one by sacrificing a third country, and Churchill's courage lay in refusing a peace that would have meant surrender. The courage the prompt speaks of is something else: the willingness to stop when the just aim of a war has been secured or can no longer be secured by fighting, and to offer the enemy terms he can live with. That takes three things that war itself does not require: honesty about what force can achieve, the generosity to let the other side keep its dignity, and the nerve to face one's own supporters. Colombia showed how hard this is. In 2016 its voters narrowly rejected the peace accord with the FARC rebels; President Juan Manuel Santos renegotiated rather than give up, and the revised agreement was ratified that year. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 survived in Northern Ireland because leaders on both sides accepted less than they had once demanded.

A war can be started by a single order. Peace has to be built against grief, pride and the voices of those who have profited from the fighting. As diplomats today weigh competing proposals to end the war in Ukraine, India among them, the question is not who can show more strength on the battlefield but who can show more courage at the table. The leader who begins a war is remembered for a day. The leader who ends one justly, and pays the price at home for doing so, deserves to be remembered for much longer.

Built from today's cards: Ukraine's foreign minister calls India's peace proposal the most comprehensive of four on the table · Russia strikes Kyiv's Dnipro bridges two days running as Ukraine seeks more air-defence interceptors