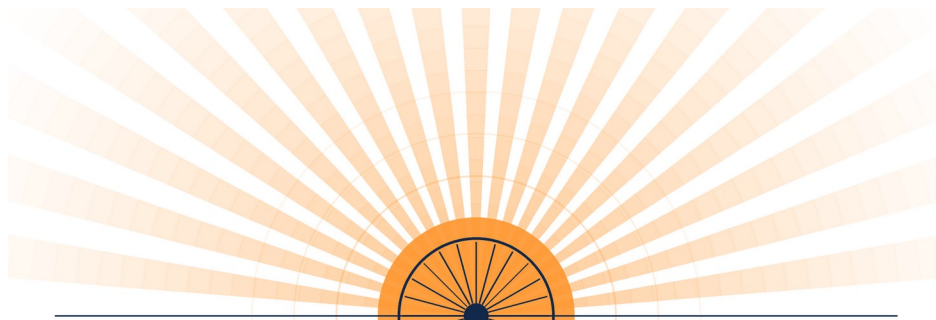




UPSC DARPAN

शीलं परं भूषणम्

Sheelam param bhushanam · Character is the highest ornament

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

Your one-stop solution for UPSC CSE examination resources.

Welcome to the Ohana family

Hum jeet ka maja chakh kar rahenge.

Quote of the Day

"The first principle is that you must not fool yourself—and you are the easiest person to fool."

— Richard P. Feynman, "Cargo Cult Science", Caltech commencement address (1974)

The Hindu & The Indian Express (Delhi Editions) — 7 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 · 7 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.

“Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman.”

— **Louis D. Brandeis** · “What Publicity Can Do”, *Harper’s Weekly* (20 December 1913); reprinted in *Other People’s Money and How the Bankers Use It* (1914), ch. V

Use in: Today’s stories on the KPSC recruitment probe and the Press Council working at half strength. Use it in GS2 and GS4 answers on transparency, the RTI Act, 2005, social audits and the integrity of public examinations, and in essays on institutions and accountability. Brandeis wrote it about disclosure of bankers’ fees, so it also fits GS3 answers on financial regulation. Balance it: sunlight is not the same as glare, and the RTI Act itself protects Cabinet deliberations until the matter is complete, so argue for timely, designed disclosure rather than exposure of every draft.

“Virtually every commercial transaction has within itself an element of trust, certainly any transaction conducted over a period of time.”

— **Kenneth J. Arrow** · “Gifts and Exchanges”, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1972)

Use in: Today’s survey finding that the Indians who trust UPI most are likelier fraud victims, while banks deny liability. Use it in GS3 answers on digital payments, cyber fraud and banking regulation, and in essays on trust and the digital economy: trust is economic infrastructure, so a system that lets it be exploited destroys its own foundation. Pair it with the RBI’s 2017 framework on customer liability in unauthorised electronic transactions and the I4C’s fraud-reporting system. Balance it: trust must be earned by design, through KYC that stops mule accounts and shared liability, not demanded through advertising.

“Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes? (But who will guard the guards themselves?)”

— **Juvenal** · *Satire VI*, lines 347–348 (c. early 2nd century CE)

Use in: Today’s arrest of a suspended Public Service Commission chairman and a member, after the controller of examinations was allegedly found leaking questions. Use it in GS2 answers on constitutional bodies (Articles 315–323), the removal and suspension of PSC members under Article 317, and the independence of regulators such as the Press Council; and in GS4 answers on integrity in recruitment. The answer to Juvenal is layered accountability: audit trails, two-key custody, independent members, courts and a protected complainant. Balance it: endless layers of watchers can slow every decision, so design checks that are few, independent and automatic.

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Start here — today's top 5

The whole magazine is about a two-hour read. If you are short of time, read these five cards first.

1.1	Supreme Court closes 23-year-old Hindu privilege reference as infructuous Why it matters: GS2 legislative privileges: Articles 105, 194 and the Searchlight case for Prelims; privilege versus free speech for Mains.
2.1	Cabinet approves ITLA to plan transport as one network Why it matters: GS3 infrastructure: Gati Shakti and the Logistics Policy for Prelims; integration versus another clearance layer for Mains.
4.1	Hormuz and Black Sea strikes injure Indian crew Why it matters: GS2 IR: UNCLOS flag-state rule and the Maritime Labour Convention for Prelims; protecting seafarers on foreign ships for Mains.
6.1	Leprosy transmission halted in only 148 of 300 projected districts Why it matters: GS2 health: WHO's elimination threshold and rifampicin prophylaxis for Prelims; prevalence versus transmission for Mains.
8.1	Sukma gram sabhas invoke PESA to bar pastors and burials Why it matters: GS1/GS2: PESA Section 4(d) and Articles 25 and 21 for Prelims; custom versus fundamental rights for Mains.

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

1. Polity & Governance

Each story today is about a guardian whose own guard has slipped. A legislature's power to punish critics survives because a court found the dispute dead, a press watchdog cannot sit in full because a Ministry has not signed a notification, a recruiting Commission is accused of selling the merit it exists to protect, and a State's police power is tested by a court-ordered CBI case. The answer in each is not more insulation but rules that make guardians answer on time.

1.1 Supreme Court closes 23-year-old Hindu privilege reference as infructuous; free-speech question left open

ISSUE THREAD Legislative privileges and the press (update 2) **LENS** Liberty and order · Independence and accountability

STORY SO FAR Articles 105 and 194 give legislatures privileges no law defines. A 2003 case, born of a Tamil Nadu Assembly resolution to arrest The Hindu's editorial staff, was listed before seven judges for October 6.

THE NEWS New Delhi, October 6. The case previewed here on October 1 has ended without a ruling. A seven-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant took "less than half-an-hour", The Hindu reports, to dispose of as infructuous the reference on whether legislative privilege can be used to choke free speech. "Infructuous" means the dispute behind a case no longer exists. The Bench noted that the Assembly's resolution of November 7, 2003, which held a Hindu editorial criticising then Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa a breach of privilege, was withdrawn on July 30, 2004, a fact that "escaped notice" when the case was referred (The Indian Express). Assembly counsel Raju Ramachandran raised it on October 5. The larger questions of law, Article 194 against Article 19(1)(a), were left open for an appropriate case.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

A 2003 editorial criticises the Jayalalithaa government → a November 7, 2003 resolution finds breach of privilege and orders arrests → the Court stays action; larger Benches take it up in 2003-04 → the Assembly withdraws the resolution on July 30, 2004, unnoticed → seven judges close the case on October 6, 2026

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. Article 194(3) leaves privileges uncodedified — Article 194(1) and (2) give State legislators free speech in the House and immunity from court proceedings for what they say or vote there; Article 105 mirrors this for Parliament. Other privileges are whatever the legislature defines by law and, until then, those it held before the Forty-fourth Amendment, 1978. No House has made that law. 2. Courts avoid questions that have become academic — When the cause of a case disappears, through a withdrawn resolution or a repealed law, it becomes infructuous and is closed without a ruling. A question left "open" creates no precedent, so earlier rulings keep binding. Only a presidential reference under Article 143 invites an opinion without a live dispute.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Privilege against the citizen is a live GS2 theme — The syllabus names legislatures' "powers & privileges and issues arising out of these"; a question left open is exactly such an issue.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- The Forty-fourth Amendment, 1978 removed the reference to the British House of Commons from Articles 105(3) and 194(3); privileges remain uncodedified. - In <i>M.S.M. Sharma v. Sri Krishna Sinha</i> (the Searchlight case), the Supreme Court held that Article 19(1)(a) yields to privilege under Article 194(3). - In <i>Raja Ram Pal v. Speaker, Lok Sabha</i> (2007), the Supreme Court upheld Parliament's power to expel members but held the exercise of privilege open to judicial review.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Liberty and order: an open question keeps the chilling effect alive — The Court has not said privilege yields to free speech, so the Searchlight ruling still binds. A House can still treat sharp criticism as contempt and summon its author. Restraint was

	correct, since law should not be made on a dead dispute, but its cost falls on journalists and satirists facing privilege motions now. 2. A missing record, not a hard question, kept the case alive — The withdrawal dated from 2004, yet the Court learnt of it only on the eve of the hearing. Pendency is usually blamed on hard law; here an unverified fact did the damage. A party should be bound to report such changes. 3. Withdrawing a resolution is cheaper than defending it — By revoking its resolution, the Assembly avoided a ruling that might have narrowed its power. A House can thus invoke privilege, retreat when challenged and keep the power intact. The counter-view: accommodation is how institutions settle quarrels.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	“By leaving the privilege-free speech question open, the Supreme Court has left legislatures as judges in their own cause.” Critically examine. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh restraint against undefined privilege; judge. 2. Introduction — a 23-year reference closed in under half an hour — The October 6 order and Article 194(3). 3. Restraint was right: no law on a dead dispute — Value addition: Raja Ram Pal (2007) already permits review of privilege. 4. Uncodified privilege lets a House punish contempt of itself — Flowchart: criticism → privilege motion → House finds breach → punishment → narrow review. 5. Conclusion — codify privileges, limited to protecting the House’s work — One line.
ADMINISTRATOR’S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Secretary of a State Assembly, you must process a privilege motion against a journalist over a critical report. How do you advise the Speaker? Approach: I would ask whether the report obstructed the House’s work or merely criticised it, recalling that Tamil Nadu’s 2003 resolution had to be withdrawn. I would advise hearing the journalist and closing the matter with a clarification, keeping punishment for real obstruction.

1.2 Press Council at half strength for a year as I&B delays 13 notifications

ISSUE THREAD Press freedom and media regulation (new thread) **LENS** Independence and accountability · Liberty and order

STORY SO FAR The Press Council of India, set up under the Press Council Act, 1978, is the statutory self-regulator of newspapers and news agencies. Its 14th term ended in October 2024.

THE NEWS New Delhi, October 6. The Press Council of India (PCI) has worked at half its sanctioned strength for nearly a year without a single working journalist or newspaper editor, The Indian Express reports. Only 14 of 28 members are in place: five MPs, three nominees and six from newspaper owners and management, besides the chairperson. The 13 missing are six editors and seven working journalists, nominated by the PCI under Section 5(3)(a) between December 2025 and July 2026. Under Section 5(5), a nomination takes effect only when the Centre notifies it in the Official Gazette. The PCI wrote to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry on May 25, July 2 and September 9; the Ministry says notification is “at the final stage”. The chair itself lay vacant about four months until Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai was reappointed in April.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

The 14th Council’s term ends in October 2024 → the PCI nominates 13 editors and journalists from December 2025 to July 2026 → no Gazette notification follows despite three reminders → the Council last meets in June with no journalist member → the Ministry says notification is at the final stage

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE

1. The Press Council is a statutory, quasi-judicial body for print only — The Press Council

	Act, 1978 creates a chairman and 28 members with three-year terms, charged under Section 13 “to preserve the freedom of the Press” and to improve standards of newspapers and news agencies. Under Section 14 it may warn, admonish or censure after inquiry, and its decision cannot be questioned in court. Broadcast and digital media lie outside it. 2. Press freedom is read into Article 19(1)(a) — The Constitution does not name the press. In <i>Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras</i> (1950), the Supreme Court held that free speech includes freedom to circulate ideas, which covers the press. Restrictions must fit Article 19(2), which is why the 1978 Act relies on peer censure, not licensing.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Regulators hollowed by vacancies are a governance theme — GS2 lists “Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies”; a body left unconstituted by executive delay tests what statutory independence means.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	• The PCI has a chairman and 28 members: six editors and seven other working journalists, six newspaper owners or managers, one from news agencies, three nominees of the UGC, Bar Council of India and Sahitya Akademi, and five MPs. • Under Section 14 of the Press Council Act, 1978, the Council can warn, admonish or censure, and its decision cannot be questioned in a court of law. • The PCI chairman is nominated by a committee of the Rajya Sabha Chairman, the Lok Sabha Speaker and a person elected by the Council’s members.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Independence and accountability: a pending signature has become a veto — The Act lets the profession choose its journalist members; the Ministry’s role under Section 5(5) is only to publish the names. Withholding that formal step for ten months gives the executive a veto the law never gave it. A thoughtful officer would treat notification as a duty with a deadline, not a discretion. 2. Self-regulation without the regulated loses its claim — Censure works because it comes from peers. A Council judging press conduct with no editor or reporter lacks that authority, and its orders may invite challenge. Delay thus weakens both protection and accountability. 3. The fix is a timeline in the statute — The chair stayed empty four months and the members a year because nothing forces timely action. Deemed notification after a fixed period would end the temptation to delay. Nominees may need verification, but not for ten months.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Executive delay in appointments can disable a self-regulatory body without any change in law. Examine with reference to the Press Council of India. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Examine — Test the claim against the PCI’s design and present state. 2. Introduction — 14 of 28 members, and no journalist, for a year — One line on the 1978 Act. 3. A Section 5(5) formality has become a veto — Value addition: three PCI reminders. Draw: PCI nominates → Ministry notifies → Gazette, marking the stall. 4. Peer censure needs peers — Both press protection and accountability suffer. 5. Conclusion — deemed notification after a fixed period — One line.
ADMINISTRATOR’S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Joint Secretary in the I&B Ministry, you find the PCI notification file stalled for months. What do you do? Approach: I would find what is pending, verification or approval, and fix a date for

each. The Act gives the Ministry no choice over names, so the only legitimate check is procedural. If one nominee raises a problem, I would notify the other twelve now.

1.3 ED arrests suspended Karnataka PSC chairman and a member in recruitment racket

ISSUE THREAD Recruitment exams and paper leaks (update 5) **LENS** Independence and accountability · Rule of law and discretion

STORY SO FAR Karnataka's PSC chairman was suspended in August and the High Court ordered a fresh SIT probe, calling a PSC a "constitutional sentinel". The NEET-UG 2026 leak prompted a Supreme Court call for NTA reform.

THE NEWS Bengaluru, October 6. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday arrested Shivashankarappa S. Sahukar, suspended chairman of the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC), and member B.V. Geetha in its money-laundering probe into the recruitment of veterinary officers for 400 posts, The Indian Express reports. The State police had not arrested Sahukar, whom Governor Thaaawar Chand Gehlot suspended on August 25. The arrests follow statements by arrested IAS officer Gyanendra Kumar Gangwar, KPSC's controller of examinations until March 2026, and middleman Basavaraj Kannale. Gangwar allegedly leaked questions to about 20 candidates who paid ₹20 lakh to ₹40 lakh. The ED told a special court that after the 1:3 merit list (three shortlisted per post) appeared on February 4, 2026, "the higher the candidate's chance of selection, the higher the amount demanded". These are allegations; no one is convicted.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Sahukar is picked for the KPSC in 2019, retained after 2023 → the veterinary-officer exam is allegedly leaked → the exam controller and a middleman are arrested → the Governor suspends the chairman on August 25 → the ED follows the money to the top

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	Article 317 protects PSC members from removal, not from arrest — State PSC members are appointed by the Governor (Article 316) but removable for misbehaviour only by the President, after a Supreme Court inquiry on a presidential reference. Under Article 317(2) the Governor may suspend a member against whom such a reference is made, until the President acts. Nothing bars criminal investigation. The 2024 anti-leak law covers central examinations only — Per PRS, the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 covers the UPSC, SSC, Railway Recruitment Boards, IBPS, NTA and Central ministries, with three to five years' jail for unfair means and five to ten years plus at least ₹1 crore fine for organised crime. A State PSC exam falls outside it.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	Who polices the recruiter is a standing GS2 question — The syllabus covers "powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies"; leaks across NEET and State PSCs make it topical.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Under Article 317(2), the Governor may suspend a State PSC member against whom a reference has been made to the Supreme Court, until the President passes orders on its report. - Offences under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 are cognisable, non-bailable and non-compoundable. - Under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002, laundering requires proceeds of crime from a scheduled offence, such as one under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.
ANALYSIS	Lens — Independence and accountability: the shield meant for merit protected the chairman — Article 317 makes removal hard so that no government can bully a Commission. Here that insulation let a chairman stay across two governments despite multiple fraud complaints; the papers do not say whether any Supreme Court reference was made. The answer is not weaker tenure but answerability: published marks, time-bound references.

	2. The weak point was discretion over results — By the ED's account, the merit list became a price list once officials knew who stood near selection. Wherever an official sees results before candidates and can sway the last stage, merit can be sold. Publishing shortlists with marks at once closes that window. 3. Money-laundering law is doing the recruitment law's job — With the central anti-leak law out of reach, the ED, tracing ₹52 lakh allegedly spent on jewellery, has reached the Commission's top. That works, but PMLA trials are slow and critics call the ED selective. A State anti-leak law with a dedicated prosecutor is cleaner.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	"The insulation that protects Public Service Commissions from governments has not protected candidates from Commissions." Do you agree? (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Do you agree — Take a position; concede the other side. 2. Introduction — Articles 315 to 317 build a protected recruiter — KPSC shows its failure mode. 3. Yes: removal via the President and Supreme Court shields office-holders — A chairman survived two governments. 4. But the leak points lie in exam administration — Flowchart: paper → exam → evaluation → 1:3 list → interview → final list, marking where discretion enters. Value addition: the 2024 Act excludes State exams. 5. Conclusion — keep tenure, add transparency — Time-bound references, State anti-leak laws.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. You are Secretary of a State PSC after its chairman's arrest. Candidates demand cancellation of the veterinary-officer selection. What do you do? Approach: I would neither cancel nor confirm wholesale. I would hold appointments in abeyance and use investigators' material to separate candidates linked to alleged payments from clean ones. If that fails, a fresh examination on a published timeline, so honest candidates do not pay for others' fraud.

1.4 High Court orders CBI probe into Punjab CM's office; Punjab pleads federalism

ISSUE THREAD Central agencies and federalism (new thread) **LENS** Centre and States · Independence and accountability

STORY SO FAR Under the DSPE Act, 1946, the CBI needs a State's consent to investigate there, but constitutional courts can send it in without consent. Several States have withdrawn general consent, alleging misuse.

THE NEWS Chandigarh, October 6. A day after a Division Bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to register a case, the CBI booked six persons, including Rajbir Singh Ghuman, Officer on Special Duty to Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, and searched eight locations including the CM's camp office. The allegations, sent by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to the Punjab Police in late July and early August, include cash for transfers and postings, policy manipulation and cash for tenders. Dissatisfied with the police's handling, the High Court sought a report in two months. Punjab's Special Leave Petition (an appeal needing the Supreme Court's permission) says the order violates "very basic principles of federalism"; the Supreme Court has only agreed to hear it. Mr. Mann says the agencies are "misused" before the Assembly election.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

The ED writes to the Punjab DGP under Section 66(2) of the PMLA → a PIL seeks an independent probe → the High Court orders the CBI in on October 5 → the CBI books six and searches the CM's camp office → Punjab moves the Supreme Court

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The CBI needs State consent, unless a constitutional court sends it — The CBI works under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946: Section 5 lets the Centre extend it to a State, but Section 6 requires the State's consent. In <i>State of West Bengal v. Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights</i> (2010), a Constitution Bench held that courts under Articles 32 and 226 can order a CBI probe without consent, sparingly. 2. Police is a State subject; the ED's duty to share comes from the PMLA — "Public order" and "police" are Entries 1 and 2 of the State List. Section 66(2) of the PMLA, 2002 requires the ED to pass information on other offences to the agency concerned. Lalita Kumari (2013) makes an FIR mandatory when information discloses a cognisable offence.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Central agencies are where federalism meets the rule of law — GS2 covers "issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure"; court-ordered probes in poll-bound States test both.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946 requires a State government's consent for the CBI to act in that State. - In <i>State of West Bengal v. CPDR</i> (2010), a Constitution Bench held that constitutional courts can direct a CBI probe without State consent. - Vijay Madanlal Choudhary (2022) upheld the ED's powers of arrest, search and seizure under the PMLA.
ANALYSIS	1. Lens — Centre and States: Punjab's real argument is about the threshold — A High Court, not the Centre, sent the CBI, which CPDR permits. Punjab's stronger point is whether ED letters on what it calls administrative matters justified bypassing State police. If every such letter can become a CBI case, List II shrinks. The Supreme Court should state the test: credible material, proven police failure, real exceptionality. 2. State police probing the CM's office face a conflict of interest — The Punjab Police answer to the government whose officials are accused, which is why an outside agency looked necessary. Against that, pre-election timing makes it look political. Both can be true, so the two-month court-monitored timeline matters. 3. Section 66(2) risks becoming a back door — It was meant to pass on facts the ED finds; here its letters became a PIL and then a CBI case. If Vijay Madanlal requires police to act only on a cognisable offence, as Punjab argues, someone must decide that. The Court will in effect decide whether the ED can choose the investigator.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	To what extent does a court-ordered CBI probe without State consent undermine the States' power over policing? (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — To what extent — Measure the encroachment; not all or nothing. 2. Introduction — police is a State subject and Section 6 needs consent — The Punjab order. 3. Courts may override consent, but only exceptionally — Value addition: CPDR (2010). Draw: ED letter → State police → PIL → High Court → CBI. 4. Routine use would hollow out List II — Yet a government's own office is the strongest case for exception. 5. Conclusion — a clear judicial test — One line.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As a State DGP, you receive an ED letter under Section 66(2) of the PMLA alleging corruption in the Chief Minister's office. What do you do?



Approach: If it discloses a cognisable offence, Lalita Kumari requires an FIR, with at most a time-bound preliminary inquiry in a corruption matter. I would assign it outside the political chain, recording every step. If independence cannot be assured, I would advise seeking an outside agency.

2. Economy

Both decisions taken by the Cabinet on Tuesday fix a gap between the parts of the economy rather than adding money to one part. The transport authority is meant to make five ministries plan as one network, and the SME fund is meant to give equity to firms too big for micro schemes and too small for private equity. Each will be judged by whether it changes behaviour, not by its announcement.

2.1 Cabinet Approves ITLA to Plan Rail, Road, Ports and Air as One Network

ISSUE THREAD Logistics and integrated transport planning (new thread) **LENS** Independence and accountability · Market and State

STORY SO FAR PM Gati Shakti (2021) put infrastructure assets on one digital map and the National Logistics Policy (2022) set out to cut logistics costs, but each ministry still plans, appraises and builds its own mode.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Union Cabinet on Tuesday, October 6, approved a Special Purpose Vehicle, the Integrated Transport & Logistics Authority (ITLA), as the apex body to plan, appraise and monitor transport projects now split across ministries, The Hindu reports. Its central task is a National Transport Master Plan of 10 years or more, against which ministries' plans will be checked so that capacity is "multi-modal rather than mode by mode". ITLA will technically appraise Central projects of ₹500 crore or more, testing their engineering and network sense, while financial appraisal stays with existing mechanisms; it will also monitor such projects and assess them after completion. A National Transport Data Repository will draw on GSTN e-way bills, FASTag and Vahan. The Indian Express reports it will sit in the Commerce Ministry; Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that when GDP grows 7%, logistics demand grows 10%.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Each ministry plans its own mode → Gati Shakti puts all assets on one map but leaves appraisal with ministries → logistics demand outruns GDP → ITLA writes one master plan and appraises every ₹500-crore project against it

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	PM Gati Shakti is a shared map with coordination machinery behind it — The PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, launched in October 2021, is a GIS-based platform on which ministries and States place existing and planned infrastructure. An Empowered Group of Secretaries and a Network Planning Group of ministries' planning heads examine large projects; DPIIT's Logistics Division in the Commerce Ministry services it. The National Logistics Policy, 2022 set cost and ranking goals — Launched in September 2022, it aims to cut logistics cost and place India among the top 25 in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index by 2030, using the Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP) and the LEADS ranking of States.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	Infrastructure planning is a standing GS3 theme — The syllabus lists "Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc." ITLA moves the answer from building more to planning the network.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- The PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (October 2021) is a GIS-based platform; DPIIT's Logistics Division in the Commerce Ministry is its nodal unit. - The National Logistics Policy (September 2022) targets a top-25 place in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index by 2030. - ITLA is a Special Purpose Vehicle that technically appraises Central infrastructure projects of ₹500 crore and above; financial appraisal stays with existing mechanisms.
ANALYSIS	Technical appraisal before money is the right order, but only if ITLA can say no — Whether a highway duplicates a rail line, or a port lacks rail links to clear cargo, now falls between ministries. ITLA asks that before money is committed. If its view is merely advisory, a strong ministry will route around it. Lens — Independence and accountability: one ministry's body must judge five others

	— Housed in Commerce, ITLA will appraise projects of larger ministries such as Railways and Highways, while the Network Planning Group already reviews big projects. It risks becoming another layer that adds months, not judgement. The fix is a firm Cabinet mandate, time limits, published appraisals and merging older review bodies into it. 3. The data repository may matter more than the master plan — E-way bills show where goods start and end; FASTag shows where trucks travel. Together they reveal real freight flows, so capacity follows cargo, not ministry preference. But GST data is tax data and vehicle data is personal, so sharing needs a legal basis and anonymisation.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Integrated planning bodies often become one more layer of clearance. Critically examine whether the Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority can lower India's logistics costs. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh gains against risks; give a verdict. 2. Introduction — logistics demand outruns mode-by-mode planning — Cite the 6 October decision and the 7%-to-10% figure. 3. One master plan and network appraisal close inter-ministry gaps — Value addition: the Policy's top-25 target. Flowchart: master plan → ITLA appraisal → financial appraisal → monitoring → review. 4. Overlap and advisory status are the real risks — Network Planning Group overlap, Commerce housing, data-privacy limits. 5. Conclusion — a binding, time-bound step — ITLA cuts costs only if it replaces layers instead of adding one.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Secretary of a transport ministry, ITLA says your ₹2,000-crore project duplicates a rail corridor. What do you do? Approach: I would not lobby around the appraisal; I would test ITLA's traffic data against ours. If duplication is real, I would redesign the project to feed the corridor; if our data are better, I would put them on record so evidence settles it.

2.2 ₹10,000-Crore SME Growth Fund to Supply Patient Equity to Growing Manufacturers

ISSUE THREAD Factories, jobs and formal manufacturing (update 2) **LENS** Market and State · Growth and equity

STORY SO FAR Manufacturing hovers near 15% of GVA despite Make in India and PLI. The Annual Survey of Industries 2024-25 showed registered factories' GVA up 9.6%, but invested capital grew 11.1% and wage per worker only 5.3%.

THE NEWS New Delhi. The Union Cabinet on Tuesday, October 6, approved the Finance Ministry's proposal to commit ₹10,000 crore to a Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Growth Fund announced in the Budget for 2026-27. The Indian Express reports that the money is an aggregate commitment to an Alternative Investment Fund (AIF), a SEBI-registered pool that buys stakes in companies. The government said existing funds mostly back early-stage and micro enterprises, so "a structural gap exists for equity growth capital for small and medium enterprises". The fund will offer "patient growth equity capital", from investors who wait years for returns rather than demand fixed repayments, to SMEs "with demonstrated business viability and scalability". Most will go to small and medium manufacturers, including Tier-II and Tier-III clusters. The India SME Forum said such firms are over-dependent on debt. No fund manager has been named.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Small firms grow on loans and promoters' savings → equity funds back start-ups and micro firms → growth-stage manufacturers stay debt-heavy and small → the government anchors an AIF to buy stakes in proven SMEs

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. MSMEs are classified on composite investment-and-turnover criteria — Under the MSMED Act, 2006, the classification revised from July 2020 uses investment in plant and machinery and annual turnover together, with the same limits for manufacturing and services; the ceilings were raised again in 2025. Firms register on the Udyam portal. 2. AIFs are SEBI-regulated, and the state already invests through them — The SEBI (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012 create Category I (venture capital, SME, social funds), Category II (private equity, debt) and Category III (leveraged funds). The Fund of Funds for Startups (2016), ₹10,000 crore managed by SIDBI, invests in AIFs, not in firms directly.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. The “missing middle” links finance to jobs — GS3 covers “mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment”. Why Indian firms stay small needs this finance-side answer.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Under the SEBI (AIF) Regulations, 2012, SME funds and venture capital funds are Category I AIFs. - The Fund of Funds for Startups (2016) is managed by SIDBI and invests in SEBI-registered AIFs, not directly in startups. - Since July 2020, MSMEs are classified on composite investment and turnover criteria, uniform for manufacturing and services. - The Self-Reliant India Fund (2020) is a ₹50,000-crore fund of funds for MSME equity, with ₹10,000 crore from the government.
ANALYSIS	1. Equity fixes a problem more credit cannot — A manufacturer adding capacity pays loan instalments at once, while the new line may take years to earn. Debt caps growth at what current cash flow can service. Equity shares risk and waits. Credit guarantees widened lending, but more debt on thin equity makes firms fragile, not bigger. 2. Lens — Market and State: a real market failure, best met as anchor, not owner — Private equity avoids mid-sized manufacturers because deals are small, checking accounts is costly and exits uncertain: a transaction-cost failure, not a lack of good firms. Public money can draw in institutional investors. But a professional manager must pick firms commercially, or this becomes a subsidy by another name. 3. Size and exits will decide the outcome — ₹10,000 crore across many firms is modest, and the Self-Reliant India Fund promised MSME equity in 2020. Investors return only if they can sell stakes, through SME listings or buyouts. Family promoters who resist sharing control may also make demand weaker than the gap suggests.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Explain why growth-stage small and medium manufacturers in India find it hard to raise equity, with reference to the SME Growth Fund. (10 marks, 150 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Explain — Set out the causes of one gap, equity, clearly. 2. Introduction — the missing middle lacks growth capital — Cite the ₹10,000-crore commitment and the “structural gap”. 3. Funds chase start-ups; banks lend against collateral — Value addition: the Fund of Funds for Startups model of investing through AIFs. 4. Small deals, costly checks and uncertain exits deter investors — Draw a chart of finance available by firm size, dipping in the middle. 5. Conclusion — anchor capital, professional management — Judge it by private money crowded in and exits achieved.

**ADMINISTRATOR'S
BRAINSTORM — Q &
APPROACH**

Q1. As General Manager of a District Industries Centre in a Tier-II cluster, how would you help firms use the fund?

Approach: No investor buys a stake without audited books, and most cluster firms keep informal accounts. I would run camps with accountants and the industry association on governance and investor expectations, then present firms with steady orders and export potential to the fund as a pipeline. Success is deals closed, not files forwarded.

3. Agriculture & Food

Drought is declared on paper before it is relieved in the field, and the date on that paper matters. Andhra Pradesh has moved a month ahead of the deadline, which is the right instinct; the harder questions are whether the indicators drew the line fairly, and whether a river-linking promise is standing in for the slower work of drought-proofing.

3.1 Andhra Pradesh Declares Drought in 388 of 688 Mandals a Month Before the Deadline

ISSUE THREAD Drought and the rabi season (update 6) **LENS** Short-term relief and long-term reform · Centre and States

STORY SO FAR The monsoon ended 12.6% below normal as El Niño strengthened, and Maharashtra declared drought in 265 of 358 talukas on September 26. States declare drought under a Central manual.

THE NEWS Andhra Pradesh. An order issued on October 1 by the Revenue (Disaster Management) Department declares 388 of the State's 688 mandals (sub-district units like blocks), in 21 of 26 districts, drought-affected for kharif 2026: 283 "severely" and 105 "moderately", The Indian Express reports. A high-level Committee on Drought advised on September 30 not to wait for the October 31 deadline. June–August rain was 197.6 mm against a normal 424.3 mm, a 53.4% deficit "amplified by prevailing El Niño conditions", a Pacific warming that usually weakens the monsoon. The order follows the Manual for Drought Management, 2016. The YSRCP says the government delayed, wrongly left out Nellore, and that Rayalaseema holds 186 of the 388 mandals. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said on October 5 that 2,000 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) of river water flows into the sea and that Godavari–Cauvery linking could make southern States drought-free.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

El Niño weakens June–August rains → kharif crops fail → the Committee advises an early call → 388 mandals declared on October 1 → relief before rabi sowing

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The Manual for Drought Management sets a two-step, indicator-based test — Issued by the Union Agriculture Ministry in 2016 and updated in 2020, it makes a rainfall indicator (deviation, Standardised Precipitation Index or dry spell) the mandatory trigger. Impact indicators (sown area, NDVI vegetation index, soil moisture, hydrology) then grade it severe or moderate, before ground-truthing. States notify it, normally by October 31 for kharif. 2. Relief money flows through the Disaster Management Act, 2005 — Section 48 creates the State Disaster Response Fund and Section 46 the National Disaster Response Fund. Drought relief is paid first from the SDRF, three-fourths Centre-funded for general-category States. For severe drought, the State seeks NDRF help; an Inter-Ministerial Central Team assesses it.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Drought sits where agriculture meets disaster management — GS3 lists "Disaster and disaster management" and irrigation systems. Two States declaring drought in a fortnight make the process exam-ready.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- The Manual for Drought Management is issued by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; the State Government declares drought. - Under the Manual, a rainfall indicator is the mandatory first trigger; impact indicators such as NDVI and soil moisture grade severity. - Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 provides for the NDRF and Section 48 for the SDRF. - The Godavari–Cauvery link belongs to the Peninsular component of the National Perspective Plan (1980) for inter-linking rivers.
ANALYSIS	1. Timing, not amount, decides how much distress turns into debt — A declaration

	switches on input subsidy, loan rescheduling and fodder works, so an October call reaches farmers before they borrow for rabi sowing. The opposition says drought was visible in early September, but the manual's June–August data and ground-truthing set a floor on how early a sound call can come. 2. Lens — Short-term relief and long-term reform: river-linking answers a different decade — A Godavari–Cauvery link needs every riparian State's consent, environmental clearances and vast sums, and moves no water this year. In rain-shadow Rayalaseema, watershed works, recharge and less thirsty crops act faster. The sound judgement: relief now, the link tested as a long-term option, not offered in place of drought-proofing. 3. Drawing lines between mandals is technical, and also political — Declaration brings money, so exclusion, as alleged for Nellore, breeds grievance. The indicators defend the State only if mandal-wise data are published. Federally, the State declares while the Centre pays extra for severe drought, so a transparent early call also strengthens Andhra Pradesh's NDRF claim.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Timely declaration of drought matters as much as the quantum of relief. Discuss with reference to the Manual for Drought Management. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Discuss — Show why timing matters, test its limits, conclude. 2. Introduction — Andhra Pradesh declared a month early — Cite 388 of 688 mandals and the 53.4% deficit. 3. Early declaration reaches farmers before rabi debt — Draw a timeline: June–August rains → declaration → relief → rabi sowing. 4. The manual's indicators make declaration a test, not a favour — Value addition: rainfall trigger, NDVI, ground-truthing, SDRF then NDRF. 5. Conclusion — early, data-led, then drought-proofing — Pair quick declaration with watershed and crop reform.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Collector of a district left off the drought list despite low rain in several mandals, how do you respond to protesting farmers? Approach: I would compile mandal-wise rainfall, sowing and soil-moisture data and check crop loss in the field. If the manual's test is met, I would send a reasoned proposal for reassessment to the Revenue (Disaster Management) Department, meanwhile arranging drinking water and fodder. If not, I would explain the data openly.

4. International Relations

India is not a party to the wars in West Asia or the Black Sea, yet its citizens keep turning up among the injured on the ships those wars hit. Indians crew the world's merchant fleet, mostly under other countries' flags, so protecting them is a test of diplomacy more than of naval power or law.

4.1 Hormuz and Black Sea Strikes Injure Indian Crew as India Leads Seafarer-Safety Diplomacy

ISSUE THREAD West Asia war: Iran, Saudi, Houthis (update 8) **LENS** National interest and global commons · Strategic autonomy and partnership

STORY SO FAR The war that began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran in February has spread to Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Hormuz is closed, the Houthis hold Bab el-Mandeb, and Yemen's government launched an offensive on October 4.

THE NEWS New Delhi. A projectile hit the Panama-flagged tanker MT On Peace in the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday, October 6. Of its 19 crew, 17 are Indian; 12 were injured, 11 of them Indian, the External Affairs Ministry (MEA) said; Oman evacuated them to Khasab. A day earlier a Russian drone strike set the Turkish-owned MV Royad Mammadov ablaze in the Black Sea, killing two foreign crew; reports differ on whether one of its three Indians was hurt, and India's mission in Romania says all three are safe. Indians are about 12% of the world's seafarers. Sources cited by The Indian Express count at least nine Indian seafarers dead and seven injured from the start of the West Asia crisis to July, in at least 29 attacks, only four on Indian-flagged ships. In September, India and Liberia launched a 25-nation Group of Friends on Safety and Security of Shipping and Seafarers at the UN General Assembly.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Wars around Hormuz and the Black Sea make merchant ships targets → Indian crews on foreign-flagged vessels take casualties → India talks to Russia and Ukraine from July and co-launches a UN group in September

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. UNCLOS makes the flag state, not the crew's country, answerable for a ship — Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982, a ship on the high seas is under the exclusive jurisdiction of its flag state (Article 92), which must ensure safety and labour conditions on board (Article 94). Part III guarantees transit passage through international straits such as Hormuz. 2. The Maritime Labour Convention is the seafarers' bill of rights — Adopted by the International Labour Organization in 2006, the MLC sets minimum standards on wages, hours, medical care and repatriation. India ratified it on 9 October 2015. Ship safety and crew training fall under the International Maritime Organization, a UN agency in London.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS2 links foreign policy to Indians abroad — The syllabus covers the "Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora". Seafarers are a diaspora at sea.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Under Article 92 of UNCLOS, a ship on the high seas is subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of its flag state. - The Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 is an ILO convention; India ratified it in 2015. - The International Maritime Organization, headquartered in London, administers the SOLAS convention on ship safety and the STCW convention on seafarer training.
ANALYSIS	1. Indian crews are exposed because they sail under other flags, which also limits what India can do — Only four of the 29 attacks involved Indian-flagged ships. Under the law of the sea, Panama, not India, answers for the On Peace, so India's role shrinks to consular help, as with Oman's evacuation. That is why India's response is diplomatic,

	not legal. 2. Lens — National interest and global commons: protecting Indian crews means defending navigation for all — The MEA framed the attacks as an assault on international waterways, not only on Indians. Pairing India, a crew-supplying state, with Liberia, a large flag registry, joins both halves of maritime responsibility. A sensible officer would steer the Group of Friends towards shared rules on reporting attacks, evacuation and compensation, not declarations alone. 3. Refusing to take sides lets India speak to both attackers — Indian seafarers have been hit by both Russia and Ukraine, and India talks to both. Neutrality buys access; the cost is that statements rarely name the attacker, which weakens deterrence.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Indian seafarers increasingly bear the cost of wars India is not party to. Examine the legal and diplomatic tools available to India to protect them. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Examine — Test what each tool can deliver, then conclude. 2. Introduction — Indians are about 12% of the world's seafarers — MT On Peace: 11 Indians injured. 3. Body — the law burdens flag states, so India's legal reach is thin — Value addition: only four of 29 attacks hit Indian-flagged ships. 4. Body — coalition diplomacy fills the gap — The India–Liberia group; talks with Russia and Ukraine. Draw a map marking the incidents. 5. Conclusion — rule-making plus a larger Indian-flagged fleet — Build safety into treaties, registries and crew contracts.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Director General of Shipping, what would you do on the day 11 Indian seafarers are injured on a foreign-flagged tanker? Approach: I would get the crew's medical status from the manning agency and owner, and work with the MEA on treatment and repatriation. I would remind the owner that wages, medical costs and repatriation are owed under the MLC, and advise manning agencies on conflict routes.

5. Environment & Ecology

A dam survey in the Siang valley has moved from protest to clashes and armed police. The strategic case for a big Indian reservoir against China's upstream Medog project is real, but a project meant to last a century cannot begin by bypassing the people whose land it will drown.

5.1 Adi Youth Body Seeks Forces' Withdrawal as Siang Dam Survey Protests Turn to Clashes

ISSUE THREAD Big dams in Arunachal (update 3) **LENS** Development and environment · Centre and States

STORY SO FAR The Arunachal Cabinet set up an empowered committee to push the Siang Upper project's survey past local resistance; an expert panel later backed the 1,605 MW Subansiri Upper dam.

THE NEWS Guwahati, October 6. The All Adi Youth Association has asked the government to withdraw Central Armed Police Forces and State Police deployed, it alleges, to quell protests against the pre-feasibility report — the first technical study of a site — and surveys for the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project, after days of clashes in Siang and Upper Siang districts, The Hindu reports. Secretary Okut Taki decried the “militarisation” of the Siang belt, saying the Adis resolve disputes through customary institutions such as the Kebang. Rebutting the BJP government's claim of majority support, he said memoranda signed with villagers do not reflect all 27 affected villages. NHPC's project is estimated at at least 11,000 MW; the Centre and State call it a counter to China's 60,000 MW Medog station upstream on the Yarlung Tsangpo. New since September: clashes and an armed deployment.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

China builds the 60,000 MW Medog station upstream → India backs an 11,000 MW-plus Siang dam as a counter → NHPC surveys need entry into Adi villages → memoranda with some, protests from others → clashes and a demand to withdraw the forces

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. The Siang becomes the Brahmaputra in Assam, and no treaty shares its waters — The Yarlung Tsangpo enters Arunachal Pradesh as the Siang and, joined by the Dibang and the Lohit in Assam, becomes the Brahmaputra (the Jamuna in Bangladesh). India and China have no water-sharing treaty, only an Expert Level Mechanism (2006) and memoranda under which China supplies flood-season hydrological data. 2. A survey comes before every legal gate for consent and ecology — Under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and a 2009 Environment Ministry order, forest land is diverted only after rights are settled and the gram sabha consents; the Niyamgiri judgment (2013) upheld the gram sabha's say. Under the EIA Notification, 2006, hydro projects of 50 MW or more are Category A, appraised at the Centre after a public hearing.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Himalayan dams meet three syllabus lines — GS3 lists “Infrastructure: Energy” and “environmental impact assessment”; GS2 asks for the protection of vulnerable sections. China's upstream works add India-China relations.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- India and China have no water-sharing treaty; they use an Expert Level Mechanism (2006) and hydrological-data memoranda. - Under the EIA Notification, 2006, hydroelectric projects of 50 MW or more are Category A, appraised at the Centre. - Article 371H gives the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh special responsibility for law and order.
ANALYSIS	1. Memoranda with some families cannot replace the consent of 27 villages — Adi consent is collective and voiced through the Kebang, so deals with selected households divide villages rather than settle them. A survey under armed escort yields data but spends the trust the project will need for decades. Yet without a survey no one can judge the dam, so route it through village councils and share findings first.

	2. Lens — Development and environment: the strategic case for big storage is also the case for the biggest local cost — Absorbing a sudden release from Medog needs a large reservoir: more submerged Adi land, forest and habitat, in a belt where the 1950 Assam–Tibet earthquake (magnitude 8.6) blocked rivers with landslides. The nation gains; the valley pays for generations. A thoughtful officer would disclose the size-versus-submergence trade-off and test smaller designs first. 3. Outside the Fifth and Sixth Schedules, customary councils are the only local check — Arunachal has no autonomous district council or PESA gram sabha standing between a central PSU, a willing State and the village. Central forces also blur who answers for injuries. A formal role for Kebangs and gram sabhas would make consent a procedure, not a favour.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Critically examine whether strategic rationale can justify the Siang Upper Multipurpose Project without the consent of affected Adi communities. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh strategy against consent, ecology and seismic risk; give a verdict. 2. Introduction — a dam survey under armed escort — The clashes, the 11,000 MW scale, the Medog argument. 3. Body — storage answers Medog but maximises submergence — Value addition: the 1950 Assam–Tibet earthquake. 4. Body — legitimacy needs collective consent — 27 villages; FRA; Niyamgiri. Draw a flowchart: survey, DPR, EIA hearing, forest clearance, marking where consent enters. 5. Conclusion — consent first, size second — Survey through Kebangs; publish findings.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Deputy Commissioner of Siang district, how would you restore calm? Approach: I would pause surveys in villages that saw clashes and move forces to standby, since police cannot be the face of a project. I would convene each Kebang with NHPC engineers to explain what the survey commits, record objections, and sign memoranda only after open village meetings.

6. Health & Life Sciences

India declared victory over leprosy in 2005 on a prevalence count, and the disease kept spreading behind the number. Today's programme data show detection improving faster than transmission is falling; the honest response is to keep the targets hard rather than redraw them.

6.1 Leprosy Transmission Halted in Only 148 Districts Against 300 Projected, Programme Report Shows

ISSUE THREAD Leprosy and neglected diseases (new thread) **LENS** Growth and equity · Short-term relief and long-term reform

STORY SO FAR India pushed leprosy prevalence below 1 per 10,000 by 2005, when WHO declared it eliminated as a public health problem, yet new cases kept appearing.

THE NEWS New Delhi, October 7. Citing the 2025-26 National Leprosy Elimination Programme report, a Hindu editorial says only 148 districts have achieved 'interruption of transmission' — no new local cases — pending field verification, against 300 projected. In 2025-26 workers screened more than 70 crore people in highly endemic areas, detecting 24,367 cases; ASHA workers flagged nearly 40 lakh suspected cases, of which 48,027 were confirmed. Single-dose rifampicin, a preventive dose, reached 91.1% of 16.9 lakh likely contacts. Yet incidence overshot projections by 41%, child incidence by 91.6% and the grade-2 (visible) disability rate by 34%. Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Maharashtra bear disproportionate shares. Official data (PIB, 2025) put national prevalence at 0.57 per 10,000 in 2024-25 and the child share of new cases at 4.68%.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Multi-drug therapy shortens time on the register → prevalence falls below 1 per 10,000 by 2005 and WHO declares elimination → surveillance folds into general health services → disability rises again in the early 2010s → screening and the 2023-27 plan target transmission, which still outruns projections

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	“Elimination as a public health problem” means low prevalence, not zero cases — WHO sets it at registered prevalence below 1 per 10,000 people. Prevalence counts patients on treatment, so shorter therapy lowers it even while infection spreads; new, child and disability cases are truer signals. Leprosy is caused by <i>Mycobacterium leprae</i>. The 2023-27 plan targets transmission, and the law has dropped an old stigma — The National Strategic Plan and Roadmap for Leprosy 2023-27 aims at interrupting transmission by 2030, per a PIB document; the Health Ministry has been reported as targeting “zero transmission” by 2027. Leprosy became notifiable by all health sectors in 2025. The Personal Laws (Amendment) Act, 2019 removed it as a ground for divorce.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	Neglected diseases test GS2's health line — The syllabus asks about “Social Sector/Services relating to Health”; leprosy adds stigma, child cases and regional inequality, and Prelims favours prevalence versus incidence.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- WHO's 'elimination as a public health problem' for leprosy means prevalence below 1 per 10,000; India achieved it nationally in 2005. - Single-dose rifampicin is given to contacts of leprosy patients as post-exposure prophylaxis. - The Personal Laws (Amendment) Act, 2019 removed leprosy as a ground for divorce under five personal laws. - WHO's Global Leprosy Strategy 2021-2030 is titled “Towards zero leprosy”.
ANALYSIS	The overshoot is partly better detection and partly a bill from the past — Screening 70 crore people is bound to raise recorded incidence, so part of the 41% overshoot is hidden cases surfacing. But grade-2 disability, the mark of late diagnosis, also overshoot,

	so many patients still reach care after nerve damage. Detection is improving faster than transmission is falling. 2. Lens — Short-term relief and long-term reform: declaring victory early is cheap now and costly later — The 2005 declaration freed money and attention, and the programme lost its own surveillance; the bill came as rising disability. Today, easing detection or revising targets would flatter the numbers, and two dates — 2027 as reported, 2030 in a PIB document — make a quiet goalpost shift easy. A thoughtful officer keeps the 300-district projection and gets ‘interruption’ verified independently. 3. Leprosy is a disease of where you live, so equity means spending unevenly — A national 0.57 per 10,000 hides endemic pockets in four States, where poverty, crowding and stigma delay care and doctors mistake leprosy for a skin condition. Trained screeners in endemic blocks, enforced private-sector notification and anti-stigma work will do more than another national campaign.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	“Leprosy was eliminated in 2005 but never ended.” To what extent has India’s strategy shifted from prevalence to transmission? (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — To what extent — Judge how far the shift has gone, with evidence both ways. 2. Introduction — a threshold mistaken for an end — The WHO definition and India’s 2005 milestone. 3. Body — the design has shifted — NSP 2023–27, prophylaxis to 91.1% of contacts, ASHA referrals, universal notification. 4. Body — results lag the design — 148 of 300 districts; incidence and disability above projections. Value addition: WHO strategy 2021–2030. Draw falling prevalence against child cases. 5. Conclusion — measure transmission, not prevalence — Hold targets, verify independently, focus on four States.
ADMINISTRATOR’S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Chief Medical Officer, you find a child case in a block reported transmission-free. What do you do? Approach: A child case signals recent transmission, so I would report it and treat the block’s status as provisional. I would examine household and neighbourhood contacts, give eligible contacts rifampicin, check whether verification relied on desk data, and work with the school so the child is not stigmatised.

7. Science & Technology

The Physics Nobel rewards a decades-long bet that a cubic kilometre of Antarctic ice could catch particles from distant galaxies. India had an early start in neutrino physics and still has no site for its own observatory: big science needs patient money and public consent together.

7.1 Physics Nobel 2026 Goes to Francis Halzen for IceCube, the South Pole's Neutrino Telescope

ISSUE THREAD Frontier science and India (update 2) **LENS** Innovation and safeguards · Short-term relief and long-term reform

STORY SO FAR Darpan tracks October's Nobel science prizes for lessons on India's research funding; the 2026 Medicine Nobel rewarded optogenetics, born of curiosity about how an alga senses light.

THE NEWS Stockholm, October 6. The 2026 Physics Nobel goes to Belgium-born Francis Halzen, 82, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, "for decisive contributions to the IceCube Neutrino Observatory and the discovery of high-energy neutrinos of astrophysical origin" (citation as printed in The Indian Express). Neutrinos are tiny, neutral particles that barely touch matter — the Nobel committee's "shyest particle"; nearly 65 billion pass through a fingernail each second. Halzen proposed in 1988 to use pure, stable South Pole ice as a detector. IceCube spans a cubic kilometre of ice with 5,160 sensors (The Hindu) that catch Cherenkov light, the glow of a charged particle outrunning light in a medium. Completed in 2010, it found the first high-energy cosmic neutrinos in 2013 and in 2018 traced one to a blazar. India's own neutrino observatory, The Indian Express reports, still has no final site.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Neutrinos detected from the 1950s, but only from nearby sources such as the Sun → Halzen proposes an ice detector in 1988 → IceCube completed in 2010 → first cosmic neutrinos in 2013, a blazar source in 2018 → multi-messenger astronomy and the Nobel

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. A neutrino has no charge, almost no mass and three flavours — Proposed by Wolfgang Pauli in 1930 and first detected in 1956, it comes as electron, muon and tau neutrinos. The 2015 Physics Nobel went to Takaaki Kajita and Arthur McDonald for neutrino oscillations, which prove neutrinos have mass. 2. Cherenkov light reveals neutrinos; India's INO would catch them under a mountain — Cherenkov radiation is emitted when a charged particle moves through a medium faster than light does in it; Pavel Cherenkov shared the 1958 Physics Nobel. The India-based Neutrino Observatory, funded jointly by DAE and DST, was planned in the Bodi West Hills of Theni district, Tamil Nadu, around a 50,000-tonne iron calorimeter, per the INO's FAQ.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. Nobels and mega-science projects recur in Prelims — GS3's "Science and Technology — developments and their applications" covers frontier physics; Prelims tests particles and projects such as INO and LIGO-India.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Cherenkov radiation is emitted when a charged particle travels through a medium faster than light does in that medium. - IceCube, at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, uses a cubic kilometre of Antarctic ice as its detector. - A blazar is an active galaxy whose central black hole fires a jet almost straight at Earth.
ANALYSIS	1. IceCube opened a new window on the universe, not just a new instrument — Light, cosmic rays and, since 2015, gravitational waves each show one face of the cosmos. Dense regions absorb radiation, but neutrinos pass through and point back to their source. Reading one event through several signals is multi-messenger astronomy, as D. Indumathi of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics told The Indian Express.

	2. Lens — Innovation and safeguards: big science needs a social licence, not just a budget — IceCube sits on uninhabited ice; INO needed a tunnel into hills near villages and, The Indian Express reports, met opposition over land and environment. A detector emits nothing harmful, but tunnelling raises real questions about water and ecology that were answered late. Independent environmental review and public engagement before any announcement let safeguard and project move together. 3. Halzen's prize rewards a decades-long bet that short grants cannot make — Idea in 1988, detector in 2010, discovery in 2013. Indian physicists recorded atmospheric neutrinos deep in the Kolar Gold Fields mines in 1965, an early lead not built on. The test for the ANRF and mega-science budgets is funding such horizons and settling INO's site once.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Big-science facilities like IceCube need decades of patient funding and public trust. Discuss in the context of the India-based Neutrino Observatory. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Discuss — Explain both needs, money and trust, and reach a view. 2. Introduction — a cubic kilometre of ice wins a Nobel — Halzen and neutrinos from distant galaxies. 3. Body — the science pays only over decades — 1988 to 2013; multi-messenger astronomy. Value addition: the 2015 oscillation Nobel. 4. Body — the site needs consent as much as rock — INO stalled over land. Draw a flowchart: site choice, environmental review, consultation, construction, marking where INO stopped. 5. Conclusion — decide once, explain early — Stable ANRF funding; engagement before announcement.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As DST Secretary, you must choose a new INO site. What process would you set? Approach: Scientific needs come first: about a kilometre of rock cover and stable geology. I would screen out ecologically sensitive and densely settled areas before any announcement, then publish a plain-language note, hold village meetings and commission an independent environmental review, so objections surface before money is committed.

8. Society

Tribal self-rule was meant to shield communities from outsiders who took their land and forests. In Bastar it is being turned against members of the same community who changed their faith. The question is not whether gram sabhas deserve power, but whether any local power can reach past the rights a citizen carries into the village and the grave.

8.1 Sukma Gram Sabhas Invoke PESA to Bar Pastors and Deny Burial Land to Christians

ISSUE THREAD **PESA and tribal self-rule** (new thread) **LENS** Liberty and order · Tradition and social justice

STORY SO FAR PESA, 1996 extends panchayats to Fifth Schedule areas and makes the gram sabha guardian of tribal custom. In January 2025 a split Supreme Court bench in Ramesh Baghel sent a pastor's burial to another village, Karkapal.

THE NEWS Raipur. At Punpalli village in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, a banner now bars pastors from religious activity and forbids conversion events, after a gram sabha on October 2 passed 12 resolutions, The Indian Express reports. An unwritten resolution, says Janpad member Madkam Bhima, denies burial land to tribal Christians; four Sukma villages have done this, and a Bastar Christian body counts at least ten. Punpalli's 21 Christian families (75 people) would have to travel over 13 km for burials. The banner cites PESA, which lets gram sabhas in Scheduled Areas (tribal areas notified under the Fifth Schedule) protect cultural identity. Advocate Sudeep Shrivastava calls this unconstitutional. Christian groups say the split verdict is being misused, and that since a February Supreme Court stay on forcible exhumations, villages refuse burial at the outset.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

Conversions in Bastar provoke a cultural backlash → the Supreme Court splits in Ramesh Baghel (January 2025) → a February stay halts forcible exhumations → villages refuse burial land upfront, citing PESA

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	1. PESA makes the gram sabha the guardian of custom in Fifth Schedule areas — Article 244(1) and the Fifth Schedule govern Scheduled Areas outside the four north-eastern Sixth Schedule States. PESA (Act 40 of 1996) extends Part IX on panchayats to them, and Section 4(d) makes every gram sabha competent to “safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity”. 2. Articles 25 and 21 protect worship in life and dignity in death — Article 25 guarantees freedom to profess, practise and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality and health. In Parmanand Katara (1995) the Supreme Court held that the right to dignity under Article 21 extends to a person's body after death.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	1. GS1 and GS2 meet where custom collides with rights — GS1 covers “communalism, regionalism and secularism”; GS2, laws “for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections”.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- PESA, 1996 is Act 40 of 1996; its Section 4(d) empowers every gram sabha to safeguard the traditions, customs and cultural identity of the people. - Article 19(5) permits reasonable restrictions on the freedom to move and reside anywhere in India for the protection of the interests of any Scheduled Tribe. - In Rev. Stanislaus v State of Madhya Pradesh (1977), the Supreme Court held that the right to propagate religion does not include a right to convert another person.
ANALYSIS	1. PESA protects custom, but not against the Constitution — Section 4(d) preserves customs; it does not suspend fundamental rights. Panchayats are “State” under Article 12, bound by Part III. Article 19(5) allows limits on outsiders' movement to protect tribal interests, so regulating a proselytising event may survive scrutiny. Denying a resident a grave cannot. 2. Lens — Tradition and social justice: the anxiety is real, the remedy is wrong — Many

	Bastar villagers fear conversion breaks the shared deities and festivals of village life; that fear deserves a hearing. But tribal Christians are also tribals, and refusing them a grave makes belonging conditional on faith. A sensible officer separates the two: inducement complaints go to the police, and burial land is secured for every resident. 3. A split verdict has left a vacuum that village politics is filling — Ramesh Baghel settled one burial but no principle, since the bench skipped a larger-bench reference while the body lay in a mortuary. Justice Sharma's designated-ground view is now read as licence to exclude. A larger-bench ruling or State rules guaranteeing burial land would close the gap.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Can a gram sabha's power under PESA to protect cultural identity limit a resident's right to worship and to a dignified burial? Critically examine. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Critically examine — Weigh both sides and judge. 2. Introduction — PESA made the gram sabha guardian of custom — Open with Punpalli and Section 4(d). 3. Body — custom has constitutional weight, including Article 19(5) — Bastar's conversion anxieties. 4. Body — a gram sabha is "State" and cannot override Part III — Value addition: Parmanand Katara and the Ramesh Baghel split. Flowchart: Constitution → PESA → gram sabha, Part III as ceiling. 5. Conclusion — autonomy within rights — A larger-bench ruling and burial land for every faith.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. You are Collector, Sukma. A Christian family in Punpalli has lost a member and the village refuses a grave. What do you do? Approach: The burial cannot wait: I would identify land that day and tell elders that the gram sabha cannot deny a grave, treating it as no one's victory. Within a week every panchayat would earmark burial land for all residents; conversion complaints would go to the police.

9. Internal Security

India built the world's busiest real-time payment system by making payment effortless and trusted. Fraudsters now exploit exactly that ease and trust, and banks too often tell victims the loss is their own. Cyber security is no longer only a policing problem; it is a question of who carries the risk.

9.1 SPIR 2026: Indians Who Trust UPI Most Are Likelier Fraud Victims, Banks Deny Liability

ISSUE THREAD Cyber fraud and 'digital arrest' (update 2) **LENS** Innovation and safeguards · Independence and accountability

STORY SO FAR As UPI spreads, online fraud has become the commonest crime citizens meet. NCRB data show cybercrime up 17.9% to 1,01,928 cases in 2024; the SPIR 2026 survey found 13% of respondents were victims and many paid police bribes.

THE NEWS New Delhi. Two Hindu pieces draw new findings on trust and banks from the Status of Policing in India Report 2026, a Common Cause-Lokniti-CSDS survey of 8,306 people in 16 States. Half (49%) use UPI daily, and 75% call it safe. Trust tracks risk: 28% of those who rated online banking "very safe" had been victims, against 14% of those who rated it "very unsafe", and frequent UPI users were likelier victims. As The Hindu reads the data, 52% of digital-fraud victims complained to their bank, 63% of them within 24 hours, yet banks typically said the victim had "collaborated"; 40% suspected a bank insider leaked their data. Weak KYC lets fraudsters open mule accounts, which receive and pass on stolen money. The report finds about three in four victims recovered nothing.

THE CHAIN IN ONE LINE

UPI makes payment instant and trusted → fraudsters trick users into authorising payments, routed through mule accounts opened under weak KYC → banks call these customer-authorised and deny liability → most victims recover nothing

STATIC SYLLABUS LINKAGE	RBI's 2017 framework decides who bears an unauthorised electronic loss — RBI's 2017 circular gives customers zero liability where the bank is at fault, or where a third-party breach is reported within three working days; later reporting brings limited liability. The burden of proving customer liability lies on the bank. The Hindu reports a 2026 pilot extending limited bank liability to customers tricked into paying. I4C and the CFCFRMS are the State's fast-response machinery — The Home Ministry's Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) runs the 1930 helpline. Its Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System links police with banks to freeze stolen money quickly. Section 66D of the IT Act, 2000 punishes cheating by personation using a computer resource.
WHY UPSC LOVES THIS (TREND)	GS3 treats fraud networks as a security and money-laundering problem — The syllabus lists "basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention". Mule accounts join the two.
PRELIMS NUGGETS	- Under RBI's 2017 customer-liability framework, a customer bears zero liability for an unauthorised electronic transaction caused by a third-party breach if the bank is notified within three working days. - Under the same framework, the burden of proving customer liability lies on the bank. - The Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System is operated by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
ANALYSIS	The trust paradox is a design problem, not only a literacy problem — UPI succeeded by removing friction, and fraud uses the same ease: the victim approves the payment himself. Urging distrust of a system the state promotes sends mixed signals; safety must be built in at risky moments, such as a first large payment to a new payee.

	2. Lens — Innovation and safeguards: liability rules have not caught up with how fraud works — The 2017 rule covers unauthorised transactions, but most UPI fraud is authorised by a deceived customer, hence “collaborated”. A sensible officer would put part of the loss on the receiving bank whose weak KYC opened the mule account, placing cost where failure occurs. The counter-view is moral hazard, so liability should be shared and capped. 3. Mule accounts make the bank part of the crime scene — Fraud kits of SIM cards, accounts and phones sell for ₹10,000–20,000; account lenders are the most replaceable link, so arresting them spares the organisers. Insider-leak suspicion adds an accountability gap: banks are data fiduciaries under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.
POSSIBLE MAINS QUESTION	Indians who trust digital payments most are likelier to be defrauded, and banks often deny liability. Examine how cyber-fraud losses should be shared between banks and customers. (15 marks, 250 words)
MODEL APPROACH TO THE MAINS QUESTION	1. Directive — Examine — Probe the paradox, test the options, conclude. 2. Introduction — the trust paradox — SPIR 2026: trusting, frequent UPI users were likelier victims. 3. Body — the 2017 framework misses deceived customers — Value addition: 63% complained within 24 hours, yet banks claimed collaboration. 4. Body — weak KYC makes the receiving bank a co-author of the loss — Flowchart: victim → payer bank → mule account → layering, marking intervention points. 5. Conclusion — shared, capped liability and friction at risky moments — Plus faster freezing.
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRAINSTORM — Q & APPROACH	Q1. As Superintendent of Police, you find most local fraud money passes through mule accounts at a few branches. What do you do? Approach: I would map the accounts by branch and ask the banks and the RBI's regional office for a KYC review. Account holders would be questioned to trace the organisers, not treated as the case's end. With the lead bank I would agree to freeze money within hours of a 1930 complaint.

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

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

Case 1 — The Merit List for Sale: The Commission Member Who Learns What the Controller Is Doing

SCENARIO The Indian Express (7 October) reports that the Enforcement Directorate has arrested a suspended State Public Service Commission chairman and a member in a money-laundering probe into recruitment for 400 veterinary-officer posts. The agency alleges that the Commission's controller of examinations, an IAS officer, leaked questions to about 20 candidates who paid Rs 20–40 lakh through a middleman, and that once the 1:3 merit list was out, officials sought candidates' names from him and the bribe rose with a candidate's chance of selection. These are allegations. Now imagine a fictional Commission. You are a member. A junior clerk quietly shows you that the controller has been passing the provisional list to outsiders before publication, and the next examination is three weeks away. The controller, close to the Chairman, reminds you that the Commission's name and every selected candidate's job are at stake.

Q1. Which duties and values are in conflict, and how much weight does one clerk's word carry?

Q2. What will you do, in what order, and whom will you approach if the Chairman cannot be trusted?

Q3. What will you do about the candidates already selected and the examination three weeks away?

MODEL APPROACH

- 1. Trustee of the process, not of its name** — Articles 315–323 create the Commission to give every candidate equal opportunity under Articles 14 and 16. Silence to save its reputation would betray that purpose. The member's loyalty is to the honest candidate, and to the institution only as far as it stays honest.
- 2. Verify quietly, then report in writing** — Do not confront the controller or tip him off. Secure access logs and message trails, with the clerk's consent, and check the facts through a trusted officer. Then give the Chairman a written note. If he is conflicted, write to the Governor, who appoints members (Article 316) and may suspend one once the President refers misbehaviour to the Supreme Court (Article 317), to the Chief Secretary, since the State government is the cadre authority for an IAS officer, and to the police, since a public servant who leaks papers for a bribe commits an offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.
- 3. Protect the next examination and the innocent** — Ask that the controller be kept away from all confidential work, change paper-setting and printing arrangements, and hold the pending list until an independent audit is done. Honest candidates must not suffer for others' fraud: those proved to have paid lose selection after a fair hearing, and the rest are cleared promptly.
- 4. Conclusion — accept the cost, build the guard** — Reporting may bring retaliation, so keep every step on record and use lawful channels. Then press for two-key custody of lists and papers, tamper-proof audit trails, rotation of sensitive posts and a safe channel for clerks to report.

Case 2 — “Their Names Are Gone, Hold Them”: The Police Officer and the Migrant Workers

SCENARIO The Hindu (7 October) reports that Chhattisgarh Police detained 23 migrant workers from West Bengal's Murshidabad district on 4 September on suspicion of being Bangladeshi, and lodged them in a Raipur holding centre for illegal immigrants. After a local court's order, 19 were freed on 18 September and found their names back on the voters' list after adjudication; four were held for over a month. In court the police questioned their nationality on the basis of their deletion in the Special Intensive Revision. A father says his family has lived in their village since 1973, after erosion destroyed an older house. Appeals for restoration are pending. Imagine you are a Superintendent of Police in a similar case. A superior tells you to keep the workers in custody because “their names are gone”, while the workers say their families have lived in India for generations and a local crowd demands action.

Q1. Does deletion from the electoral roll prove that a person is a foreigner? Distinguish suspicion from proof.

Q2. What will you do about the order and the men already in custody?

Q3. How will you serve public safety without treating a name, language or community as evidence?

MODEL APPROACH

1. **A deleted name is a reason to inquire, not a finding** — The roll records eligibility to vote, and deletions can be appealed; here 19 of 23 were restored. Citizenship rests on Articles 5–11 and the Citizenship Act, 1955. Under the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, which replaced the Foreigners Act, 1946, the burden of showing that one is not a foreigner lies on the person, but only in a proceeding before a competent authority, with notice and a hearing, not on police suspicion.
2. **Liberty cannot wait for paperwork** — Article 21 protects every person, and Article 22(2) requires that anyone detained be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours. Identify the legal authority for the holding. If there is none, release them on bond with a recorded address. Verify documents such as land papers, school records and earlier rolls through the home district police and employers in days, not months.
3. **Obey lawfully, dissent in writing** — A superior's instruction is no defence for unlawful detention. Ask for the order in writing, state the legal difficulty to the Inspector General and the Home Department, and refer any real doubt to the competent authority under the law. Keep the court informed, since it is the final protector of liberty.
4. **Conclusion — security and dignity together** — Policing that treats names, speech or faith as evidence loses the public trust that helps catch genuine illegal entrants. Use uniform, documented, individual checks, train staff, and coordinate with the workers' home State.

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
INS Surya (FSS-1) — the Navy's first indigenous Fleet Support Ship	Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched INS Surya at Hindustan Shipyard Limited, Visakhapatnam, and laid the keel of the fifth ship, FSS-5; the series is backed by a Rs 19,000 crore contract for five ships and carries over 82% indigenous content (The Hindu; PIB). A fleet support ship replenishes warships with fuel, fresh water, stores and ammunition at sea, extending blue-water endurance. Hindustan Shipyard is a defence public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Defence.
BrahMos fire-control contract — what 'Buy (Indian-IDD)' means	The Defence Ministry signed a Rs 661.50 crore contract with BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited for BrahMos fire control systems and launchers for Navy ships, under the Buy (Indian-IDD) category with at least 68% indigenous content and a three-year delivery period (The Hindu; PIB). IDD stands for Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured, the top category in the order of preference for capital acquisitions under the Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020, a priority the draft DAP 2026 keeps. BrahMos Aerospace is a joint venture of DRDO and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya.
DRDO's stratospheric airship — a high-altitude platform	A PIB release of 6 October says DRDO flight-tested an indigenous high-altitude platform, a stratospheric airship, which reached about 21 km, held about 20 km for roughly 30 minutes and then descended under control, carrying inertial measurement units, GPS, cameras and altitude control. Such platforms sit far above aircraft but much closer than satellites, and are meant for surveillance and communication. The stratosphere lies above the troposphere and contains the ozone layer.
SAREX-2026 and the National Maritime SAR Board	Per a PIB release of 6 October, the 12th National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX-2026) is being held off Paradip, Odisha, on 7–8 October, with 32 international observers from 30 countries; the drill scenario is a passenger aircraft ditching and colliding with a container ship. The 24th meeting of the National Maritime SAR Board, chaired by the Director General of the Indian Coast Guard, is held at Bhubaneswar. The Coast Guard functions under the Ministry of Defence and is India's coordinator for maritime search and rescue.
India-Switzerland Research Framework and the India-EFTA TEPA	Per a PIB release of 6 October, India and Switzerland launched the India-Switzerland Research Framework, building on science and technology cooperation formalised in 2003, with glacier studies, geohazards, systems medicine and social sciences among its areas, and a new 'Explore' programme. It sits beside the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement, which marks its first anniversary this week. EFTA's four members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland; it is a separate bloc from the EU.
Strategy for Environmental Economic Accounts 2026–30 — MoSPI and the UN SEEA	Per PIB, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released the Strategy for Environmental Economic Accounts in India 2026–2030, extending the 2022–26 strategy, with priority areas of forests, minerals, soil, land, water, carbon stock and biodiversity, plus material-flow, ocean and energy accounts. India began environmental accounting in 2018 on the UN System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) framework, the international statistical standard for linking natural capital to national accounts, adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in 2012. It underlies debates on 'green GDP'.
JOSH teams — a youth-led push for TB Mukht Bharat	A PIB release says Health Minister J P Nadda will launch Joint Squad for Health (JOSH) teams on 8 October at Bharat Mandapam. The teams of Class-I officers, MY Bharat volunteers and NCC cadets will mobilise communities on TB symptoms, diagnosis, treatment completion and stigma, starting in 55 districts of 11 States. MY Bharat (Mera Yuva Bharat) is a platform of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports; the NCC functions under the Ministry of Defence.

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
Outer Space Treaty, 1967 — Article II against Artemis 'safety zones'	Article II of the Outer Space Treaty, 1967 says outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means. A Hindu explainer notes that the Artemis Accords allow 'safety zones' to prevent harmful interference, which could let a state limit others' access, for instance around a lunar nuclear reactor, without claiming territory; the Accords say such zones must be temporary and respect free access. India is a party to the Treaty and signed the Accords in June 2023.
EU AI Act, Article 50(2) — machine-readable marking of AI content	Article 50(2) of the EU AI Act requires providers of generative AI systems to ensure that AI-generated or manipulated content, including text, is marked in a machine-readable format and detectable as artificially generated; the transparency obligations have applied since 2 August 2026 (The Hindu). The law does not specifically require a watermark, and the European Commission has also developed a voluntary Code of Practice on transparency of AI-generated content. OpenAI says it will add invisible watermarks to ChatGPT text in the EU, but not as a global default.
Helms–Burton Act, 1996 — the Cuba embargo written into US law	The United States imposed a partial embargo on Cuba in October 1960 and made it full-fledged in 1962; the Cuban Democracy Act, 1992 barred foreign subsidiaries of US firms from trading with Cuba, and the Helms–Burton Act, 1996 wrote the embargo into law, so that only the US Congress can lift it. The Act also allows lawsuits against foreign firms using property confiscated from Americans (The Hindu). UN General Assembly resolutions against the embargo, passed year after year since 1992, are not binding.
Navy espionage case — the Official Secrets Act, 1923 with UAPA and BNS	The Andhra Pradesh police's Counter Intelligence Cell has run 'Operation Firewall-2026' since 1 October, with 12 teams across 10 States and Union Territories, against an alleged racket sharing information on defence establishments with Pakistani intelligence operatives (The Hindu; IE). The FIR invokes BNS sections 61(2) (criminal conspiracy), 147 and 148 (waging, and conspiring to wage, war) read with 3(5) (common intention), besides the UAPA and the Official Secrets Act, 1923, the colonial-era law against spying and wrongful communication of official secrets.
Census 2027 — Ladakh first to finish; provisional data by March–April 2027	The Chief Principal Census Officer for Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh says provisional data for Population Census 2027 will be available by March or April 2027, and that Ladakh became the first State or UT to complete the entire exercise; the nationwide Population Enumeration phase is planned for February 2027 (The Hindu). It is the first digital Census and the first in independent India to enumerate caste other than Scheduled Castes and Tribes; the Centre has deferred it in Manipur 'till further declaration'.
World Bank's South Asia Economic Update — a twice-yearly report	The World Bank's twice-yearly South Asia Economic Update, released on 6 October, raised its forecast for India's growth in the current fiscal (FY27, April 2026 to March 2027) by half a percentage point from its April edition to 7.1%, and put South Asia's 2026 growth at 6.9% (IE; The Hindu). Remember it as the report's forecast, not a fact. The reforms the Bank credits include consolidation of labour codes, GST reforms, tariff rationalisation, the insolvency law and infrastructure investment.
Index of Services Production — MoSPI weighs UPI data	MoSPI said on 6 October that it is considering UPI payments data and government salary data to measure education, health, and public administration and defence services in the new Index of Services Production (IE). A sub-committee of the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics had decided against using UPI data as a GDP input because payments data were not yet stable; it said UPI might be explored later as an indicator for Private Final Consumption Expenditure, the largest component of GDP on the expenditure side.
GST rate changes — a reported once-a-year rule from 1 April	PTI reports, citing Finance Ministry sources, that the GST Council will take up proposals for tax rate changes only once a year, and that all rate changes will take effect from 1 April, the start of the fiscal year; this is a report, not a notified decision (IE). The Council is the constitutional body under Article 279A (101st Amendment, 2016), which empowers it to recommend GST rates, including floor rates with bands.
Kasturi Cotton Bharat —	The Hindu reports that nearly 2.1 lakh bales of Indian cotton were certified as Kasturi Cotton

TOPIC	EXAM-PATTERN FACTS
blockchain traceability for Indian cotton	Bharat in the marketing season that ended on 30 September, up from 47,100 bales in 2023-24, and that more than 10 lakh bales are now on the Kasturi Cotton Bharat blockchain, creating a technology-enabled trail from cotton to the final product. The cotton marketing season runs from October to September. The brand aims to assure buyers of the origin and quality of Indian cotton.
Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit — the next Chief of the Air Staff	The Defence Ministry has named Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, the Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, as the 29th Chief of the Air Staff; he takes over on 31 October from Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, who retires that day (The Hindu). He was commissioned in the fighter stream on 6 December 1986. The post carries the rank of Air Chief Marshal; Arjan Singh remains the only IAF officer made Marshal of the Indian Air Force (2002), a ceremonial five-star rank.

Source note: All items are drawn from *The Hindu* & *The Indian Express* (Delhi Editions) — 7 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 1.4 (10 marks, 150 words)

To what extent does a court-ordered CBI probe without State consent undermine the States' power over policing? (10 marks, 150 words)

Introduction — “Public order” and “police” are State List Entries 1 and 2; Section 6 of the DSPE Act, 1946 makes the CBI's entry depend on State consent. On October 5 the Punjab and Haryana High Court sent the CBI into the Chief Minister's office without it.

- Courts may override consent, but only exceptionally** — In *State of West Bengal v. CPDR* (2010), a Constitution Bench allowed such orders under Articles 32 and 226, sparingly. When a government's own office is accused, its police face a conflict of interest.
- Routine use would hollow out List II** — Here ED letters under PMLA Section 66(2) became a PIL, then a CBI case. If every such letter can, the ED effectively picks the investigator; pre-election timing invites charges of misuse.

Conclusion — The encroachment is limited in law but real in practice. Way forward: hearing Punjab's appeal, the Supreme Court should set a test of credible material, proven police failure and exceptionality.

Draw this: Flowchart beside point two: ED letter → State police → PIL → High Court → CBI, marking “consent bypassed” on the last arrow.

(154 words)

11.2 GS1 corner — History: The two October revolutions: Russia (1917) and China (1949)

Today's peg: IE p4

- Russia's October followed a February regime that kept fighting** — The February Revolution of 1917 toppled the Romanovs, but the Provisional Government continued World War I and postponed land reform. In October (by Russia's then calendar) the Bolsheviks under Lenin took Petrograd's Winter Palace and decreed peace and land.
- China's revolution put the peasant at the centre** — After Chiang Kai-shek turned on the communists in 1927, Mao built a rural movement on land reform and guerrilla war; the Long March of 1934-35 ensured its survival. Mao proclaimed the People's Republic on October 1, 1949, after the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan.

Prelims facts

- In 1917 Leon Trotsky headed the Petrograd Soviet.
- The Communist Party of China was founded in 1921, after the May Fourth Movement of 1919.
- Nehru's 1927 visit to the Soviet Union influenced his thinking on planning.

11.3 Places in news — mark them on your atlas

Place	Where it is	Why in news	Prelims fact
Strait of Hormuz	Between Iran (north) and Oman's Musandam peninsula (south); links the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman.	A projectile hit the tanker MT On Peace; 11 Indian crew injured (4.1).	Musandam, where Khasab lies, is an Omani exclave cut off from the rest of Oman by the UAE.
Siang and Upper Siang districts	Central Arunachal Pradesh, along the Siang, which enters from Tibet (China) and flows south into Assam.	Clashes over Siang Upper project surveys; Adi youth seek forces' withdrawal (5.1).	The Siang is the Yarlung Tsangpo; joined by the Dibang and Lohit in Assam, it becomes the Brahmaputra.

Place	Where it is	Why in news	Prelims fact
Sukma	Southernmost district of Chhattisgarh (Bastar region), bordering Odisha, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.	Gram sabhas cite PESA to bar pastors and deny Christians burial land (8.1).	It is a Fifth Schedule Scheduled Area, where PESA, 1996 applies.
Paradip	Odisha coast, Jagatsinghpur district, at the Mahanadi's mouth on the Bay of Bengal.	Hosts SAREX-2026, a maritime search-and-rescue exercise, October 7-8 (Quick Facts).	Paradip is one of India's major ports.

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

Meaning — Doing what duty requires when it carries a personal cost: isolation, retaliation or a damaged career. Unlike defiance, it works through lawful channels and keeps a record.

In today's news — In Case 1, built on the KPSC arrests (1.3), a member learns the controller is leaking the merit list; silence protects the Commission's name, reporting risks the Chairman's anger.

Use in an answer — Whistleblowing or loyalty dilemmas: name it when choosing to report, then show the lawful channel.

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 number chosen to track progress can, over time, become the goal itself. When that happens, an institution may improve the number without improving the condition the number was meant to describe. The danger is greatest when the number looks good.

Consider a disease counted by the patients currently under treatment. If a new medicine cures people faster, they leave the register sooner, and the count falls. Officials can then report success even if as many people are being infected each year as before. The figure is accurate; it simply answers a different question from the one that matters. Worse, a falling count can persuade governments to move money and trained staff elsewhere, so that fewer workers remain to find new cases, and the count falls further for the wrong reason.

The signs of such a mistake usually appear late and at the margins. Children falling ill show that infection is still passing between people, since they cannot have carried it for decades. Patients who arrive with lasting damage show that the illness was found too late. These numbers are harder to collect and less flattering to report, which is precisely why they are useful.

None of this means that measurement is futile. It means that every indicator should be read alongside the purpose it serves, and that a target, once achieved, should be checked against the outcome it was meant to secure. A programme willing to look at its uncomfortable figures is more likely to finish its work than one that celebrates early and stops looking.

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

- (a) Disease statistics are generally unreliable.
- (b) An indicator can improve while the problem it tracks persists, so measures must be checked against their purpose.
- (c) Governments should stop using numerical targets in public health.
- (d) Faster cures are the main reason diseases keep spreading.

Q2. The claim that illness among children shows continuing infection assumes that

- (a) children seek treatment more readily than adults.
- (b) children are screened more carefully than adults.
- (c) an adult's illness may come from an infection acquired many years earlier.
- (d) children's cases are easier to treat.

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

- (a) A fall in patients on treatment always reflects fewer new infections.
- (b) Lasting damage in patients signals effective treatment.
- (c) Indicators that are hard to collect should be abandoned.
- (d) Cutting staff after an apparent success can make the count fall further without real improvement.

Reasoning and quantitative aptitude

Q4. A district screened 2,40,000 people. One in every 600 was flagged as a suspected case, and 15% of suspected cases were confirmed. How many cases were confirmed?

- (a) 40
- (b) 60
- (c) 90
- (d) 400

Q5. Tankers A, B, C and D crossed a strait one after another. C crossed before A but was not first. D crossed immediately after B. Which tanker crossed last?

- (a) A
- (b) B
- (c) C
- (d) D

Answer key and explanations

Q1: (b) The passage shows a count falling while infection continues; option 2 contradicts its last paragraph.

Q2: (c) Only if adult cases may reflect old infection does a child's case prove recent spread; options 0 and 1 are irrelevant.

Q3: (d) Fewer workers find fewer cases, so the count "falls further for the wrong reason". Option 0 contradicts the second paragraph.

Q4: (b) Suspected = $2,40,000 \div 600 = 400$; confirmed = 15% of 400 = 60.

Q5: (a) If B were 2nd or 3rd, C would have to be first (it precedes A), which is barred. So the order is B, D, C, A: A is last.

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

The mirror and the window: institutions that cannot see themselves cannot serve others.

Themes: Self-scrutiny as the first duty of an institution · Transparency, trust and the citizen's right to look in · Honest error, concealment and the design of correction

The hardest exercise in my preparation has not been learning facts. It has been marking my own answers. When I reread what I wrote, I read what I meant, not what is on the page, and I give myself marks the examiner never would. Only when a friend reads the same answer coldly do I see the missing example and the weak conclusion. Institutions suffer from the same blindness, with far larger costs. They need two kinds of sight. A mirror lets an institution see itself: its errors, its leaks, the distance between its claims and its results. A window lets citizens look in and lets the institution look out at the people it serves. My argument is that the mirror must come first. A window without a mirror becomes a shop display, and an institution can tell the public only what it has first allowed itself to know.

History offers a rare example of a state holding up a mirror. After the conquest of Kalinga, Ashoka had his Thirteenth Rock Edict record its cost: a hundred and fifty thousand people carried away, a hundred thousand killed, many times that number dead, and the king's own remorse. Few rulers have carved their victims into stone. Yet even this mirror had a blind spot. The edict is missing at Dhauli and Jaugada, in Kalinga itself; there, separate edicts speak instead to officials, warning them that injustice grows from anger, haste and laziness. The lesson is double. Honest self-accounting is possible at the height of power, and even the most honest institution chooses where to place its mirror.

Science is the most developed mirror humanity has built. In September 2011 the OPERA experiment reported neutrinos that appeared to travel faster than light. Instead of announcing a revolution, CERN invited physicists everywhere to scrutinise the measurement and repeat it. By February 2012 the cause was found, a loose fibre-optic cable, and the experiment's leaders stepped down the next month. Science lost a headline and kept its authority. The Nobel Prize awarded this week for the IceCube neutrino telescope rests on that same habit: a claim earns trust only when its makers have tried hardest to break it.

Governance shows what happens when the mirror is missing. Articles 315 to 323 create Public Service Commissions so that merit is not only done but seen to be done. In Karnataka, the Enforcement Directorate now alleges that the Commission's own controller of examinations leaked questions for money. These are allegations, but one fact stands already: the alarm came from outside agencies, not from the Commission's own records. An institution that cannot tell who saw a merit list before it was published has no mirror. The Press Council of India has worked for nearly a year without a single working journalist, because nominations await a ministry's notification; the press's own mirror is held up by a pending signature. Measurement can also flatter. India met the global threshold for eliminating leprosy as a public health problem in 2005, yet the latest programme report finds transmission halted in only 148 districts against the 300 projected. A target met can hide a disease still moving.

The window matters because the people who suffer an institution's failures often see them first. In the 1990s the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in Rajasthan read government records aloud at village hearings, and labourers heard of work never done and wages they had never received. That window became the Right to Information Act, 2005, and the social audit. Today the test is digital. A new survey finds that Indians who trust online payments most are likelier to have been defrauded, while banks tell victims that they "collaborated". Trust that cannot see is not confidence but exposure.

Hans Christian Andersen understood this: in his tale, an entire court admires the emperor's invisible clothes, and only a child, standing outside, says what everyone can see. Kabir advised the same humility: "निंदक नियरे राखिए, आँगन कुटी छाया । बिन पानी साबुन बिना, निर्मल करै सुभाय ॥" Keep your critic close, give him a hut in your courtyard; without water or soap, he makes your nature clean.

The counter-argument is serious. Too much mirror can paralyse. Officers who fear that every file will be audited, investigated and reported learn to decide nothing, and policy suffers. Some deliberation needs privacy; the RTI Act itself shields Cabinet papers until a decision is taken and the matter is complete, because advisers who speak for the record stop speaking frankly. Self-scrutiny can also turn into self-exoneration, since no one should be judge in his own cause. And windows can be staged: a dashboard of green ticks shows the public exactly what the institution wishes it to see.

These objections do not argue for less sight; they argue for better-designed sight. First, part of the mirror must be held by others: the Comptroller and Auditor General, independent members, a protected complainant, a court. Second, an institution must separate honest error from concealment. OPERA's physicists were not disgraced for finding their own cable; they would have been for hiding it. Where reporting a mistake is safe and hiding one is costly, people will look. Third, it must measure what matters, transmission rather than prevalence, fraud recovered rather than complaints closed. Fourth, a window can open after the decision: records kept honestly today and opened tomorrow give advisers room to argue while still holding them to account.

I return to my answer sheet. I improve only when I let someone else read it and when I stop defending what I meant. Institutions are not different. Ashoka's edict, the physicists' cable and Kabir's critic in the courtyard teach one discipline: to look at ourselves as others will see us, before they must. The citizen can see an institution through its window only as clearly as the institution has first seen itself in the mirror.

Built from today's cards: