



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS DIGEST

UPSC Edition

20th to 26th September 2026

Prepared for: Civil Services Examination (CSE) aspirants: Prelims and Mains.

DO YOU KNOW? How to use this edition

- **Topic blocks** follow one pattern: Background, What happened, Why it matters, Way forward, Prelims pointers. Read the first three for understanding and the last two for revision.
- **Tags** show the GS paper and whether a topic suits Prelims (P), Mains (M) or both.
- Section 7 has 10 Mains practice questions; Section 8 has 25 Prelims-style questions with statement-type items.

1 WEEK AT A GLANCE

#	Topic	GS paper	Use
1	Election Commission of India (ECI) froze the name and symbol of the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) (interim order, 17 Sept).	GS2	P + M
2	Supreme Court (SC) on Article 22(1) : an illegal arrest cannot be 'papered over'; mandatory compensation.	GS2	P + M
3	SC struck down Maharashtra's methanol rules (proportionality test).	GS2	P + M
4	Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) designated the Shahzad Bhatti Network as the 46th terrorist organisation under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) .	GS3	P + M
5	Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls: two Election Commissioners recorded objections 14 times in 10 months.	GS2	M
6	Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kolkata and Pakistan Naval Ship (PNS) Hunain collided in the North Arabian Sea (15 Sept).	GS2	P + M
7	United States (US) says it has deployed 'space control' weapons in orbit.	GS3 / GS2	P + M
8	Greenland-US-Denmark security deal signed at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (UNGA) .	GS2	M
9	Japan asks the UN to drop ' enemy state ' clauses (Articles 53, 107) from the UN Charter.	GS2	P + M
10	US Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, 2026 : tariffs of up to 100% on buyers of Russian oil.	GS2 / GS3	M
11	New Gross Domestic Product (GDP) series: double deflation used in 28 of 30 manufacturing categories.	GS3	P + M
12	United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) strike and the five-day banking week (Indian Banks' Association (IBA)).	GS3	P + M
13	Maharashtra declared drought in 265 of 358 tehsils.	GS1 / GS3	P + M



#	Topic	GS paper	Use
14	Tulu gets additional official language status in Karnataka.	GS2	P + M
15	Census 2027: caste to be recorded through an open column.	GS1 / GS2	P + M
16	Gaganyaan crew module parachutes; Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)–European Space Agency (ESA) cooperation renewed till 2032.	GS3	P

2 1. POLITY AND GOVERNANCE (GS2)

2.1 ECI FREEZES THE TRINAMOOLOO CONGRESS NAME AND SYMBOL [WEB-ADDED]

GS2: Constitutional bodies, electoral reforms | P + M

Background

- Parties get reserved symbols under the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968**. **Paragraph 15** lets the ECI decide which rival group is the party when two groups each claim to be it. The ECI draws its wider authority from **Article 324** (superintendence, direction and control of elections).
- The AITC was founded by Mamata Banerjee about 28 years ago; its symbol is 'Flowers and Grass' (Jora Ghas Phul).

What happened

- On **17 September 2026** the ECI passed a 14-page **interim order** noting two rival groups, one led by **Mamata Banerjee** and one by a rival faction, and **barred both** from using the AITC name and symbol pending a final decision.
- For the by-elections of **6 October** (Nandigram and Rejinagar), the Banerjee group was allotted the name '**Mamata All India Trinamool Congress**' and the '**Football Player**' symbol; the rival group got '**Democratic Trinamool Congress**' and the '**Envelope**' (leader named as Ritabrata Banerjee in most reports, Arup Roy in some).
- Banerjee moved the Supreme Court on **18 September**; the Court agreed to list the plea urgently and asked the ECI to expedite its decision; the next hearing was set for **28 September**. The rift began after Banerjee told the ECI on 23 June 2026 about a National Working Committee meeting.

Why it matters

- Raises the question of how far the ECI may **freeze symbols mid-election** and whether such interim orders pre-judge a dispute.
- A defender's view: the ECI said there was **too little time** to complete proceedings before the by-elections. A critic's view (your file's editorial): the ECI is acting as a tool of the ruling party; parties should only 'wither away' by the people's verdict.

Way forward

- Fix time-bound adjudication of party disputes; protect the status quo of organisational control until decided; build institutional trust through transparent reasoning.

Prelims pointers

- Symbols Order 1968, **Paragraph 15** (dispute between rival groups); **Article 324**. Static: the Supreme Court upheld Paragraph 15 in **Sadiq Ali v. ECI (1971)**.



2.2 INSIDE THE ECI: DISSENT OVER THE SIR

GS2: Constitutional bodies; Representation of the People Act | M

Background

- The ECI is a **constitutional body under Article 324**, with a **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)** and two Election Commissioners of equal rank. Under **Section 18** of the CEC and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, **2023**, business should be transacted **unanimously** as far as possible; disagreements are decided by **majority**.
- The **SIR** began in Bihar in **June 2025**; it has now struck **over 13 crore** names off draft rolls in **30 States and Union Territories**.

What happened

- An Indian Express investigation: Election Commissioners **Sukhbir Singh Sandhu** and **Vivek Joshi** have objected on record **at least 14 times in 10 months** (four times on one day) to decisions taken without their knowledge.
- **Issues:** a **new question in Form 6** linking applicants to the SIR; **centralisation** of the electoral roll database (rolls were traditionally controlled by each constituency's Electoral Registration Officer); **who authorised appeals** in West Bengal; and **software-flagged 'logical discrepancies'** that rejected eligible voters in Goa.
- **West Bengal:** about **60 lakh** electors flagged, **27 lakh** deleted, **38 lakh** appeals pending; in 49 of 294 seats deletions exceeded the victory margin (spoils roughly even). **Delhi (Phase 3):** in 24 of 70 constituencies the draft roll has fewer electors than voted in February 2025.

Why it matters

- A rare, sustained public rupture inside a constitutional authority; it tests the principle of **collegiality** and the right of every eligible citizen to be on the roll.
- The Supreme Court has said no eligible elector should be left out; editorials call for 'verify first, delete later'.

Way forward

- Record decisions with reasons; share agenda with all Commissioners; independent audit of roll-database access; human verification before deletion; a transparent, time-bound appeals mechanism.

Prelims pointers

- Article 324; Section 18 of the 2023 Act; CEC is 'first among equals', with no power to decide alone.

2.3 POLITICAL PARTY FINANCE AND UNRECOGNISED PARTIES

GS2: Electoral reforms; transparency | M

Background

- Political parties find no mention in the Constitution except the **Tenth Schedule**. A **Registered Unrecognised Political Party (RUPP)** is registered with the ECI but has not met the vote-share or seat criteria for recognition.
- Under **Section 29B** of the **Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RPA)** parties can accept contributions; **Section 13A** of the **Income-tax Act** governs tax exemptions.



What happened

- A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) investigation revealed extraordinary donations to **six RUPPs**. The **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** found a **223% rise** in declared RUPP income in financial year (FY) 2022-23; of **2,764 RUPPs** only **739** filed financial records. The ECI delisted **334 of 2,854 RUPPs** in August 2025, but 'delisting' is not deregistration.
- A **Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative** paper: **22 parties** had **Rs 18,742.31 crore** available for the 2024 general election; the exchequer 'lost' **Rs 11,813 crore** in taxes over a decade through donation exemptions. **Electoral bonds** (2018) were held unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in **2024**.

Why it matters

- Shell parties can become channels for opaque money; parties still resist transparency (they united against the **Central Information Commission (CIC)** 2013 order bringing them under the **Right to Information (RTI) Act**).

Way forward

- Audit of party accounts by the **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** or its nominees; automatic deregistration of RUPPs that never contest; a central digital portal with standard-format filings; a court-monitored probe on electoral bonds (as proposed in the editorial).

Prelims pointers

- T.N. Seshan's 1994 order flagged 'adhocism' in party affairs; Article 324 is described by the Supreme Court (Kanhiya Lal Omar v. R.K. Trivedi) as a 'reservoir of authority'.

2.4 SUPREME COURT ON ARREST SAFEGUARDS AND WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS

GS2: Fundamental Rights, judiciary | P + M

What happened

- A bench headed by **Justice Ujjal Bhuyan** invoked **Article 22(1)**: an arrested person kept in the dark about the grounds of arrest is entitled to **immediate release**; grounds must be given **in writing and in a language the arrestee understands** ('non-negotiable'). It rejected the argument that grave allegations justify relaxing this; High Courts must award '**suitable mandatory compensation**' for violations.
- **Surinder Koli** (Nithari case) was acquitted in November 2025 after nearly 20 years in prison, mostly on death row; he was found dead on **18 September**. The Square Circle Clinic analysis: about **40%** of death sentences imposed by trial courts end in acquittal on appeal. In 2025 the Court recognised the need for a legislative response to wrongful convictions.

Why it matters

- Procedural due process is a fundamental right; the system lacks structured **compensation, rehabilitation and accountability** for wrongful prosecution (Law Commission of India has earlier suggested a statutory scheme; static).

Way forward

- Statutory compensation framework; police training on communicating grounds; time-bound review of death-sentence cases; reintegration support for exonerated prisoners.



Prelims pointers

- Article 22(1): right to be informed of grounds of arrest and to consult a lawyer of choice.

2.5 METHANOL RULES STRUCK DOWN: PROPORTIONALITY IN ACTION

GS2: Judicial review, state regulation | P + M

Background

- After the **1991 Mumbai hooch tragedy** (about 93 deaths) Maharashtra added **Rules 18A and 18B** (2011) to its **Poisons Rules**: Form A licence checks, mandatory colourant and bitterant for methanol sold to non-drug makers, and confiscation of unlicensed methanol. The **Poisons Act, 1919** lets States make such rules.

What happened

- On **18 September** the Supreme Court held the rules **unconstitutional** (Articles **14** and **19(1)(g)**): they were **disproportionate** and had no 'reasonable and proximate nexus' to preventing hooch deaths, which arise in the **unregulated** sector. Rule 18B could also nullify the lawful Form B permit.
- It applied the **proportionality framework of Puttaswamy (2017)**: legitimate aim, suitability, necessity (and balance). The Court also issued **guidelines**: inter-departmental coordination, border checks, licence review, stock records, de-addiction centres and counselling for affected families.

Why it matters

- A model of how courts test regulation of trade: a legitimate aim is not enough; the means must be suitable and necessary.

Prelims pointers

- Proportionality: Puttaswamy (2017); Article 19(1)(g) and 19(6).

2.6 UAPA DESIGNATION OF THE SHAHZAD BHATTI NETWORK

GS3: Internal security; cyber and social media | P + M

What happened

- On **16 September** the MHA designated the **Shahzad Bhatti Network (SBN)** a terrorist organisation under **Section 35** of the **UAPA, 1967**; it is the **46th** outfit so designated. Bhatti, a Pakistani social-media influencer now based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is alleged to be backed by Pakistan's **Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)**.
- **Modus operandi**: he engages young followers online, pays small sums (about Rs 5,000-10,000) for poster-pasting, then recruits for grenade attacks and for installing Chinese-made closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras near railway stations and air bases with feeds livestreamed to Pakistan. The network's activity has spread to **14 States**.

Why it matters

- Shows **online radicalisation and 'gig-style' terror recruitment** by foreign handlers; links to the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)**, the **Information Technology Act, 2000**, the **Official Secrets Act, 1923** and the **Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025**.



Way forward

- Platform accountability and rapid takedown; de-radicalisation and community outreach; supply-chain checks on surveillance hardware (see AASHVAST labs).

2.7 LANGUAGE POLITICS: TULU, AND THE VANDE MATARAM DEBATE

GS2: Federalism, official languages | P + M

Background

- **Article 345:** a State legislature may adopt one or more regional languages or Hindi as the State's official language(s), subject to Articles 346 and 347. Karnataka's **Official Language Act, 1963** names Kannada.
- Tulu (spoken mainly in Dakshina Kannada and southern Udupi) is taught as a third optional language in Classes 6-10 since 2010-11 and is recognised by the Census as an independent language; it is **not in the Eighth Schedule**.

What happened

- On **18 September** the Karnataka Cabinet (meeting at Mangaluru) decided to give Tulu **additional official (administrative) language** status. A BJP-era committee (2023) and a later committee that studied **Andhra Pradesh's Urdu** model preceded the decision. Legal experts say the Karnataka Official Language Act must be amended for it to take effect.
- **Vande Mataram:** during a petition against singing all six stanzas, the Supreme Court recalled **Bijoe Emmanuel v. State of Kerala (1986)** (no compulsion to sing the anthem). Your file's editorial argues that rendition must reflect 'unity in diversity'.

Prelims pointers

- Eighth Schedule; Article 345; Bijoe Emmanuel (1986).

2.8 CENSUS 2027: OPEN-COLUMN CASTE QUESTION

GS1/GS2: Social structure; governance | P + M

What happened

- The second phase lists **40 questions**, of which **13 are new** (including caste, family particulars, ID proofs and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination). People outside the **Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)** can enter their caste in an **open column**, unlike the list-based method used by Bihar and Telangana.
- The government has **not yet decided how to sort, tabulate and rationalise** the data. Critics fear a repeat of the **2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census**, which produced **over 46 lakh** caste names. Phase two has begun in remote, snow-bound areas (Ladakh and parts of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir).

Way forward

- Involve social scientists in designing the classification; publish tabulation methodology before enumeration; keep confidentiality safeguards under the **Census Act, 1948**.



2.9 CIC AND UPSC MARKS

GS2: Transparency, RTI | M

What happened

- The **CIC** recommended reinstating publication of the paper-wise marks of candidates selected through the Civil Services (Main) Examination. The **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)** says it gives detailed marks to the **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** and the **Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA)**; the DoPT says the marks are held only by the UPSC. The DoPT could show **no record** of the decision to stop publication from 2018. The CIC said disclosure ensures 'transparency and fairness'.

2.10 EDUCATION MARKETS AND IDEOLOGY (ACADEMIC ARGUMENT)

GS1/GS2: Society, education | M

What happened

- A study in the Economic and Political Weekly (Ritika Arora-Kukreja) of private schools in Delhi-NCR argues that after **1991 liberalisation**, parental demand in the education market can shape schools' decisions (admissions, food rules, festivals) alongside state policy, creating what it calls '**bottom-up**' pressure. It describes choices as being 'depoliticised' when presented as consumer preferences.
- For Mains, treat this as **one scholarly argument**, and balance it with the constitutional aims of **secularism** and **equal access** in education.

3 2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (GS2)

3.1 INDIA-PAKISTAN NAVAL COLLISION IN THE NORTH ARABIAN SEA

GS2: India and neighbours; GS3: Maritime security | P + M

Background

- INS Kolkata** is the lead ship of **Project 15A** (164 m; about 7,400 tonnes full load; built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders, Mumbai). **PNS Hunain (F-273)** is an offshore patrol vessel built by Damen Shipyards (Romania) and commissioned in July 2024.

What happened

- On **15 September** PNS Hunain collided with INS Kolkata after, India says, a **dangerous high-speed overtaking** manoeuvre. India summoned Pakistan's **Charge d'Affaires**, citing **Article 10** of the **1991 India-Pakistan agreement on advance notice of military exercises, manoeuvres and troop movements** (signed 6 April 1991; naval ships and submarines should not come within a stated minimum distance) and the **International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs)**. Pakistan gives a different account.
- It is the **second** reported collision involving this framework: in **June 2011** PNS Babur came close to INS Godavari in the Gulf of Aden.



Why it matters

- Tests **confidence-building measures (CBMs)** between nuclear-armed neighbours; incidents at sea can escalate through miscalculation.

Way forward

- Hotline use between navies; joint review of the 1991 agreement; fact-finding of the disputed sequence.

Prelims pointers

- The 1991 agreement is bilateral, not a universal rule for all warships.

3.2 UNGA 81ST SESSION: INDIA AND THE MULTILATERAL DEBATE

GS2: Groupings, international institutions | P + M

What happened

- **External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar** attended the high-level debate and the **Partners for Multilateralism (P4M)** meeting, and addressed the UNGA on **26 September**. P4M was founded by leaders of the **European Union, Brazil, Kenya and Canada** to push for a more representative, effective United Nations; it says it will not form a new exclusive bloc.
- UN Secretary-General **António Guterres** (who leaves office later this year) said 'superpowers are discovering their limits'. Prime Minister Modi skipped the UNGA this year, even as India campaigns for a **non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) for 2028-29**.
- At the first **Visegrad Group (V4) + India** foreign ministers' meeting (**Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic**), the V4 backed India's permanent UNSC seat. India **rejected** a reference to Jammu and Kashmir in a communique of the **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** contact group.

Why it matters

- Middle powers are seeking alternatives to a superpower-dominated order; India already belongs to the Non-Aligned Movement, BRICS, G20 and G4 (all with similar aims).

3.3 WHY JAPAN WANTS THE 'ENEMY STATE' CLAUSES REMOVED

GS2: UN reform | P + M

Background

- The UN Charter came into force on **24 October 1945**. **Article 53** allows enforcement action against 'enemy states' (states that were enemies of a Charter signatory in the Second World War) without Security Council authorisation by regional arrangements; **Article 107** says the Charter does not invalidate post-war action against them; **Article 77(1)(b)** refers to territories detached from enemy states.

What happened

- In her first UNGA address (**22 September**) Japan's Prime Minister **Sanae Takaichi** asked for their removal, as China and Russia have used the label against Japan's military build-up. The UNGA called the clauses '**obsolete**' in **1995** and adopted a resolution in **2005** to delete them, but deletion needs a **Charter amendment**: approval by the five permanent members, each ratifying domestically.



Why it matters

- Shows how UN reform is blocked by the **veto-holding Big Five** (US, UK, France, Russia, China); the clauses remain a talking point in Japan's domestic politics.

Prelims pointers

- Articles 53 and 107 (static: amendments to the Charter go through Article 108).

3.4 GREENLAND, DENMARK AND THE UNITED STATES

GS2: Effect of policies of developed countries | M

What happened

- On **22 September**, on the sidelines of the UNGA, the US signed a **new defence agreement with Denmark and Greenland**, with **Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen** signing as a party for the first time. It ends a stand-off that strained the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** after President Trump's repeated threats to take the island.
- Background:** the **1951 US-Denmark agreement** already gave broad base rights (the US once had over 30 bases there). Greenland (about **56,000** people, mostly Inuit) was a colony until the early 1950s; the **2009 Self-Government Act** recognises a right to independence if voters ask, while Denmark keeps **defence and foreign affairs**. Denmark delivered an official apology for abuses (forced contraception, removal of Inuit children) in **summer 2025**.

Why it matters

- Greenland gains a seat at the table and autonomy momentum; the episode dented trust in the US among European allies.

3.5 HORMUZ AND THE MALACCA-SINGAPORE MODEL

GS2/GS3: Maritime law, energy security | M

Background

- The **Strait of Malacca** runs about **800 km** between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, linking the **Andaman Sea** to the **Singapore Strait** (about 105 km), which leads to the South China Sea.
- In **1971** Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore jointly challenged the view that the straits were high seas. Overlapping **12-nautical-mile territorial seas** left no high-seas or exclusive economic zone (EEZ) strip. The **United Kingdom (UK)** later introduced 'transit passage' in the **UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**: continuous, expeditious passage with no stopping, applying to warships too. A **2007 Cooperative Mechanism** created an **Aids to Navigation Fund** financed voluntarily by users.

What happened

- The Hindu argues Hormuz is similar: Iran's and Oman's territorial waters overlap. **Iran has not ratified UNCLOS**; its **1993 law** requires foreign warships to seek authorisation. Iran and Oman have apparently agreed a framework to reopen the strait, but it has not reopened and the US has not accepted it.



Why it matters

- Malacca's main concern was **navigation safety and environment**; Hormuz's is **Iran's security**. A cooperative model needs great-power acceptance.

Prelims pointers

- Transit passage under UNCLOS; Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman.

3.6 'SPACE CONTROL' WEAPONS AND AI-LINKED INTELLIGENCE ERRORS

GS3: Space, security, technology | P + M

What happened

- On **14 September** US Air Force Secretary **Troy Meink** said the US has '**space control**' weapons deployed in orbit to defend its forces. Such weapons may be **kinetic** (physical impact) or **non-kinetic** (jamming, spoofing, directed energy). The US **Space Force** recognises orbital, electromagnetic and cyberspace counter-space operations. Details, orbits and rules of engagement are not public. Russia and China protested.
- Legal position:** the **Outer Space Treaty (1967)** bars nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in orbit, but **not conventional weapons**; activities must comply with international law, and **Article IX** requires 'due regard'. No body can order the US to remove them. Past episodes: Russian satellites manoeuvring near a US satellite (2020) and China's **Shijian-21** towing a dead satellite to a graveyard orbit (2022).
- AI risk:** Cable News Network (CNN) reported that a flawed intelligence report prepared with an **artificial intelligence (AI)** chatbot nearly led US forces to board a Chinese ship in West Asia; the misidentified cargo was wrongly thought to be nuclear-related.

Why it matters

- Weaponisation of space and **AI in decision-making** raise escalation risks; arms-control norms lag behind technology.

3.7 US SANCTIONING RUSSIA AND IRAN ACT, 2026: IMPACT ON INDIA

GS2/GS3: India and the US; energy security | M

What happened

- Signed by President Trump; **30 days after enactment** the US may impose a tariff of **up to 100%** on goods from countries that **import Russian oil** or are among the **top five facilitators** of Russian sanctions evasion in the prior 12 months. Tariffs are **in addition** to other duties (including those under **Section 301** of the Trade Act, 1974). The President can **waive** with a written national-interest certification, or if Russia signs a peace agreement accepted by Ukraine. Sanctions on Iran extend by five years to **2031**.
- India:** China and India are the top two importers of Russian crude. Russia supplied **over 51%** of India's crude imports in **July 2026**, a share that has risen since February 2026 (when the US Supreme Court struck down earlier tariffs), while passage through the **Strait of Hormuz** is still constrained. During the 50% tariff period (**August 2025 to February 2026**), exporters absorbed part of the cost to retain US customers.



Why it matters

- Forces a choice between **energy security and affordability** and **market access**; India has earlier complied with US pressure on Venezuela, Iran and Russia.

Way forward

- Diversify crude sources; build strategic reserves; negotiate waivers; use rupee-rouble and other local-currency settlement (rouble-rupee trade is said to be about 96% of India-Russia trade); deepen trade deals (for example the India-New Zealand trade agreement in force from 20 October).

3.8 INDIA-CHINA TRADE: THE 'ASSEMBLY TRAP'

GS3: Industry, trade | M

What happened

- After the Modi-Xi meeting on the sidelines of the **18th BRICS Summit (New Delhi, 12 Sept)**, an analysis notes that India's imports from China rose about **71%** between 2021 and 2025 (from **\$87.5 billion to \$149.5 billion**), while exports stayed flat. The share of imported **parts and components** in India's mobile-phone-related import basket rose from **3.3% (2022) to 10.1% (2025)**, despite 'Make in India' and the Phased Manufacturing Programme.
- Payment systems:** alternatives to the **Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT)** include **mBridge**, China's **CIPS** (launched 2015), Russia's **SPFS** (2014) and Iran's **SEPAM**.

Way forward

- Build capability in semiconductors and components, join global value chains while avoiding hardened dependencies, and diversify suppliers.

4 3. ECONOMY (GS3)

4.1 NEW GDP SERIES AND DOUBLE DEFLATION

GS3: Indian economy, data | P + M

Background

- GDP** is the sum of **Gross Value Added (GVA)** by each sector, plus indirect taxes, minus subsidies. **GVA = value of output minus value of inputs**. To get **real** (inflation-adjusted) GVA, values are deflated using price indices such as the **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**, **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** or **Producer Price Index (PPI)**.

What happened

- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** 'Sources and Methods' document says the 2022-23-base series applies **double deflation** in **28 of 30** manufacturing categories. The two exceptions (meat, fish, fruit, vegetables, oils and fats; and pharmaceuticals) use **single extrapolation** because **imported inputs** make it hard to match inputs with output prices.



- **Single deflation** used one index for both inputs and outputs, which mismeasures growth when input and output prices move at different rates; **double deflation** deflates outputs by an output index (PPI) and inputs by an input index.

Why it matters

- More reliable real GVA; MoSPI says work is on to extend the method.

Prelims pointers

- Double deflation vs single deflation; GVA formula.

4.2 BANK STRIKE AND THE FIVE-DAY BANKING WEEK [WEB-ADDED]

GS3: Banking; labour relations | P + M

Background

- The **UFBU** is an umbrella body of **seven** bank unions (about eight lakh employees, around 90% of the workforce, per your file; some reports say nine unions). Banks are closed on the **second and fourth Saturdays**. The IBA agreed to a **five-day week** in principle in the **12th Bipartite Settlement (8 March 2024)** by adding 40 minutes a day; the Finance Ministry has not approved it for over two years. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), the General Insurance Corporation (GIC) and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) already follow a five-day week.

What happened

- The UFBU called a **three-day strike on 28-30 September** (30 September is the half-yearly closing date) and threatened an **indefinite strike from 26 October**. **Four demands**: five-day week; changes to the **performance-linked incentive (PLI)** scheme; bilateral PLI talks; other pending issues. The Finance Ministry asked banks to keep ATMs stocked.
- **[Web-added]** A **one-day strike was held on 11 September**. On **27 September**, after talks with the IBA, the UFBU **deferred** both the 28-30 September and 26 October strikes; a **high-level committee** will examine the five-day week. The strike was deferred, not withdrawn.

Why it matters

- Balances **employee welfare** against **customer service**, branch-based services and the impact on **public sector banks**.

Way forward

- Push digital channels, ensure essential services during any reduced branch days, and decide the five-day week with a clear service-continuity plan.

4.3 PAYMENTS: UPI GOES CODE-LESS; AGENTIC AI

GS3: Technology, financial inclusion | P + M

What happened

- At the **Global Fintech Fest 2026 (Mumbai)** the RBI Governor and the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** introduced a '**tap and pay**' feature for **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** using **RuPay credit cards** (no one-time password (OTP) or quick response (QR) code; it uses the

4TH FLOOR SHATABDI TOWER, SAKCHI, JAMSHEDPUR

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point-of-sale terminal's internet). NPCI showed **MyUPI**, an AI-powered revamp. **Two-factor authentication** for UPI has been mandatory since **1 April 2026**; UPI is about **85%** of digital transactions.

- **Agentic AI** (software that acts for users with limited prompting) could automate 'procurement to payment' and **agentic commerce**, but needs clear authorisation limits and fraud safeguards.

4.4 BLUE BONDS AND SAGARMALA

GS3: Infrastructure, sustainable finance | P + M

What happened

- **Sagarmala Finance Corporation Ltd** plans India's **first blue bond** of **Rs 1,000 crore**. A **blue bond** funds **ocean and water-related** sustainability projects. The world's first **sovereign** blue bond was issued by **Seychelles in 2018**; cumulative issuance crossed **\$15 billion** by mid-2025 (Web-added).
- **Sagarmala (2015)**: about **845 projects, Rs 6.06 lakh crore**; **315 projects** (Rs 1.56 lakh crore) completed. The bond also helps correct the **asset-liability mismatch** of 12-year loans funded by shorter borrowings.

4.5 ECONOMY: DATA POINTS AND QUICK FACTS

Item	Key facts
RBI study: project finance FY26	Six States took 67.1% of the Rs 4.4 lakh crore project cost sanctioned by banks and financial institutions. Maharashtra 20.2% (Rs 88,880 crore) overtook Gujarat 17.9% .
Sulphur shortage	Prices doubled to about \$1,050-1,100 a tonne . Only about 10% is mined; the rest is a by-product of oil refining (56%) and gas processing (34%) . Fertiliser uses about 60% of global use; India uses 3.8-3.9 million tonnes. Russia has banned exports of sulphur and sulphuric acid.
Captive coal plants	Plants of 50 MW or more (about 112) must run at full capacity 1 Oct-31 Dec under Section 11 of the Electricity Act, 2003 .
Offshore minerals	Two blocks near Great Nicobar (West Sewell Ridge-01, 1,000 sq km; Sewell Rise-01, 632 sq km) notified for polymetallic nodules and crusts under the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002. The first auction failed.
High-speed corridors	Highway design guidelines target 50,000 km by 2036-37 . India has about 1% of the world's vehicles but about 11% of road-accident deaths; 2024: 1,77,175 deaths.
Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2025: youth NEET rate	Youth (15-29) Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) rate 25% nationally; Anugul (Odisha) 56.1% highest; Nabarangapur 4.1% lowest.
Domestic Tourism Expenditure Survey 2025-26	MoSPI; 2.46 lakh households ; pilgrimage 48% of overnight trips, health 30% , holidaying 22% .
SSA 5000	Sustainability assurance standard (aligned with ISSA 5000), effective 1 April 2027 ; targets greenwashing.
Screen protectors	Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) certification compulsory from 1 April 2027 .



5 4. ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, SECURITY (GS1 AND GS3)

5.1 MAHARASHTRA DROUGHT AND PUNJAB'S GROUNDWATER

GS1/GS3: Geography, disaster management, agriculture | P + M

What happened

- On **26 September** Maharashtra declared drought in **265 of 358 tehsils** (about 75%) under the **Drought Management Code, 2016**. Rainfall from 1 June to 26 September was **798.2 mm against 970.9 mm** normal: a **18% deficit** (all-India 13%). **Marathwada** (rain-shadow region) has a **38% deficit** (16% in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar to 48% in Hingoli); **Vidarbha** 27%. The first trigger is a **continuous dry spell of at least 21 days**. Declaration unlocks land-revenue waivers, crop-loan restructuring and stay on recovery; individual compensation follows **panchnamas** with photographs tagged by the Global Positioning System (GPS).
- Punjab**: the **2025-26 Dynamic Groundwater Assessment** puts groundwater extraction at **152%**; over-exploited blocks fell by five, but the pressure disadvantages small farmers.

Way forward

- Micro-irrigation, crop diversification, rain-shadow watershed development, and demand management for water-intensive crops.

Prelims pointers

- Definition: drought is persistent abnormally dry weather; desertification is land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas (**United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**, 1994).

5.2 WOMEN FARMERS

GS1/GS3: Women, agriculture | M

What happened

- In **2025** agriculture employed about **110 million women** and **127 million men** (rural), but only about **14%** of operational holdings are held by women, because land records are mostly in men's names and States use revenue records to identify beneficiaries.
- In **July 2026** Maharashtra passed the **Women Farmers' Empowerment Bill**, recognising women farmers (including landless cultivators, labourers and pastoralists) through a **Woman Farmer Certificate** and a new database. **2026** is the UN's **International Year of the Woman Farmer**. Examples: Kerala's **Kudumbashree** group farming and Odisha's **KALIA** scheme.

Way forward

- Link certificates to **Agri Stack** and issue **FarmerIDs**; standardise definitions across States; ensure access to credit, schemes and extension services.



5.3 WILDLIFE AND BIODIVERSITY

GS3: Environment, conservation | P + M

What happened

- **Cheetah:** a female (CCB-2) from **Botswana** was released into **Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary** (Madhya Pradesh) on **20 September**; it now has **four** cheetahs. It became India's **second cheetah habitat** in April 2025. **Project Cheetah** began in **September 2022** at **Kuno National Park**. Asiatic cheetah: **Critically Endangered**; African: **Vulnerable**.
- **World Rhino Day (22 Sept):** theme 'Keep the Five Alive'; the greater one-horned rhino is **Vulnerable**.
- **Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve (ABR)**, spread over Keralam and Tamil Nadu: the **Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI)** documented **3,261** flowering-plant species, 26 subspecies and 28 varieties in 1,139 genera and 190 families; **31.2%** endemic to India; Fabaceae is the richest family (349 taxa); **347 taxa** shared with Sri Lanka.
- **Rhesus macaque, Himachal Pradesh:** after a fatal attack in Shimla, officials say changes in legal protection status shifted responsibility away from State forest departments, which earlier used funds from the **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)**; the issue is before a Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.

Prelims pointers

- Environmental clearance for ports and harbours: minimum validity **20 years** (amended **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006**), extendable by two five-year terms.

5.4 SPACE, DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY AND INTELLIGENCE

GS3: Science and technology; internal security | P + M

What happened

- **Gaganyaan parachutes:** three types: **pilot** (pulls out larger chutes), **drogue** (stabilises) and **main**. The module descends at about **170 m/s** in the lower atmosphere; deploying full-size chutes at once would cause a damaging **opening shock**, so they are **staged** with timed cutters. The crew module has **two drogue** and **three main** chutes; two mains can ensure safe touchdown. Materials: **Kevlar** (suspension lines), **Nomex** (heat zones), **nylon** (canopy). Developed by the **Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE)**, **Agra**, under the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- **ISRO-ESA** cooperation renewed till **2032** (began 1978; links include Aditya-L1 and Proba-3).
- **AASHVAST labs:** the Army will run six labs to inspect drones (later CCTV cameras) for **firmware-level** vulnerabilities such as hidden commands and foreign-origin components; **AASHVAST** = Assessment and Analysis of Electronic Systems Hardware for Vulnerabilities and Security Threats. One lab is open in Delhi.
- **Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW):** completed **58 years on 21 September**; built by its first chief **Rameshwar Nath Kao** after the 1965 war, with an emphasis on intelligence about Pakistan and China; its inputs helped in the **1971** war.
- **Exercises: Tarang Shakti-26** (second edition; Jodhpur; 26 Sept-12 Oct) and **Veer Guardian-2026** (India-Japan air exercise, 14 days).



6 5. HEALTH, SOCIETY AND CULTURE (GS1 AND GS2)

6.1 HEALTH REGULATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

GS2: Health; GS3: Science | P + M

What happened

- **Front-of-pack labelling (FoPL):** the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** told the Supreme Court it will adopt a **single-phase** rollout and asked for **four months** to finalise draft amendments under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**, after the Court criticised the absence of warning labels for sugar, salt and saturated fat.
- **Antimicrobial resistance (AMR):** Kerala's 2025 antibiogram covers **65,849** isolates of nine priority pathogens: **E. coli 41.2%**, **Klebsiella 25.8%**, **Pseudomonas 10.8%**; **Shigella** is now resistant to common antibiotics, showing AMR is no longer confined to hospitals.
- **Stem cell therapy for autism:** a Health Ministry advisory (**16 September**) says it must remain confined to approved clinical trials under the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)'s National Guidelines for Stem Cell Research, 2017**; it cannot be sold as routine or commercial care.
- **Affordable diabetes drugs:** a Chennai study credits generic competition, **patent safeguards against evergreening**, inclusion in the **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)**, and **Jan Aushadhi Kendras**; challenges include urban-rural gaps and quality differences among generics. A counterfeit-medicine racket in Bengaluru has renewed calls for tighter drug-quality monitoring.

6.2 AMBEDKAR AND NAVAYANA BUDDHISM

GS1: Modern history, social reform | P + M

What happened

- On **14 October 1956** at **Nagpur**, Dr B.R. Ambedkar embraced Buddhism, choosing it because it **originated in India**, rejected the authority of the Vedas and questioned caste. His **Navayana** ('new vehicle') reinterpretation gives less weight to **karma, rebirth, miracles and nirvana** and more to **social equality, education, rationality and ethics in this life**; he also rejected the idea that vegetarianism signals purity and supported gender equality.
- Some Buddhist scholars disagree with his interpretation; Buddhism has always adapted over time (Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana).

Prelims pointers

- Navayana: Ambedkar's reinterpretation; conversion on 14 October 1956 at Nagpur.

6.3 PRELIMS FAST FACTS (SHORT NEWS)

Item	Fact
72nd National Film Awards (22 Sept, Kevadia)	Best Feature Film Article 370 ; Best Actor Kartik Aaryan (Chandu Champion) and Mammootty (Bramayugam); Best Actress Yami Gautam ; Best Director Rajkumar Periasamy (Amaran); Dadasaheb Phalke Award Anant Nag .
Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) Platform Prize	Angh (Theja Rio; set among the Konyak in 1960s Nagaland).



Item	Fact
Dr G. Vijayaraghavan	Cardiologist (Padma Shri 2009) who introduced 2D echocardiography in India; died 20 Sept.
Tarang Shakti-26	Indian Air Force (IAF)-hosted multinational air exercise; second edition; 8 participating forces and 32 observer countries.
Veer Guardian-2026	India-Japan air exercise at Jodhpur; 14 days.
ISRO-ESA	Cooperation renewed till 2032.
Maharashtra	Women Farmers' Empowerment Bill (July 2026); drought in 265 tehsils.

7 6. STATIC-DYNAMIC LINKAGES AND REVISION

Current event	Static concept to link
ECI freezes AITC symbol	Symbols Order 1968 (Para 15); Article 324; Sadiq Ali (1971)
SIR rift	Section 18 of the 2023 Act; collegial functioning
Article 22(1) ruling	Right to be informed of grounds of arrest; Article 21 and 22
Methanol rules	Proportionality (Puttaswamy 2017); Articles 14 and 19(1)(g)
Tulu	Article 345; Eighth Schedule (22 languages)
Enemy states	UN Charter Articles 53, 107, 77(1)(b)
Hormuz and Malacca	UNCLOS: territorial sea 12 nm, EEZ 200 nm, transit passage
Space weapons	Outer Space Treaty 1967 (Articles IV and IX)
Double deflation	GVA = output minus inputs; CPI, WPI, PPI
Drought	Drought Management Code 2016; UNCCD 1994
Cheetah	Project Cheetah (2022, Kuno); IUCN status

MNEMONIC: Remember the Hormuz-Malacca contrast

- **Malacca** = **M**ainly navigation safety and environment; **Hormuz** = **H**ard security of Iran. Same idea: overlapping territorial seas leave no high-seas strip, so 'transit passage' matters.

PYQ (PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS) CONNECT: Likely question angles

- Prelims: statement-based items on Symbols Order Para 15, Article 22(1), Article 345, UNCLOS transit passage, Outer Space Treaty, double deflation.
- Mains: independence of the ECI; reforming party finance; proportionality in regulation; India's choices under the US sanctions Act; UN reform bottlenecks; Hormuz and international straits.



8 7. MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1. [GS2 | 15 marks | 250 words]

The Election Commission's freezing of a party's name and symbol mid-election has been called both necessary and arbitrary. Examine the powers under Paragraph 15 of the Symbols Order and suggest safeguards.

Q2. [GS2 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Disagreement among Election Commissioners over the Special Intensive Revision points to deeper institutional concerns. Discuss, with reference to Article 324 and the 2023 Act.

Q3. [GS2 | 10 marks | 150 words]

'Registered unrecognised political parties have become conduits for opaque funding.' Critically evaluate and suggest reforms.

Q4. [GS2 | 15 marks | 250 words]

The Supreme Court has called compliance with Article 22(1) 'non-negotiable'. Discuss how procedural safeguards relate to wrongful convictions in India.

Q5. [GS2 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Why is reform of the United Nations Charter, including the 'enemy state' clauses, so difficult? What role can middle powers play?

Q6. [GS2/GS3 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Compare the Malacca-Singapore Straits and the Strait of Hormuz in terms of legal regime and security concerns. Can a cooperative mechanism work for Hormuz?

Q7. [GS3 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Examine the implications of the US Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act for India's energy security and strategic autonomy.

Q8. [GS3 | 10 marks | 150 words]

What is double deflation? How does it improve the reliability of India's GDP estimates?

Q9. [GS3 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Droughts in rain-shadow regions and groundwater overuse are two faces of India's water crisis. Suggest an integrated response.



Q10. [GS1/GS3 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Women are a large share of India's agricultural workforce but a small share of recognised farmers. Evaluate recent State-level efforts and suggest a national framework.



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