



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS DIGEST

UPSC Edition

27th September to 3rd October 2026

Prepared for: Civil Services Examination (CSE) aspirants: Prelims and Mains. **Built from:** the weekly compilation you supplied (27 Sept to 3 Oct 2026), re-organised by General Studies (GS) paper, with background, analysis and way forward for each major topic

DO YOU KNOW? How to use this edition

- **Topic blocks** follow one pattern: Background, What happened, Why it matters, Way forward, Prelims pointers.
- **Tags** show the GS paper and whether a topic suits Prelims (P), Mains (M) or both.
- Section 6 has 10 Mains practice questions; Section 7 has 25 Prelims-style questions, including statement-type items.
- This week's theme is the **institutional strain on the Election Commission** and the courts' role in checking executive power.

1 WEEK AT A GLANCE

#	Topic	GS paper	Use
1	Election Commission of India (ECI) : two Election Commissioners' dissent over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) ; law on removal of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ; split verdict on the 2023 appointment Act.	GS2	P + M
2	Supreme Court (SC) Collegium recommends three High Court Chief Justices as SC judges (28 Sept).	GS2	P + M
3	SC asks the Centre to frame rules fixing 18 years as minimum age for social media accounts.	GS2	M
4	SC: a confession cannot be the sole basis for detention under the National Security Act (NSA) .	GS2	P + M
5	Calcutta High Court: caste slurs online can attract the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 .	GS2	P + M
6	High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes (HLCDC) sends a religion-wise questionnaire to States.	GS2	M
7	Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Assembly resolution on statehood (28 Sept).	GS2	P + M
8	Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) extended in Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh from 1 Oct.	GS3	P + M
9	Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) completes 100 years; Prelims question disputes before the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) .	GS2	P + M
10	National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) Class 9 history book on medieval India; Sengol controversy.	GS1 / GS2	M
11	United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopts first Declaration on Sea Level Rise (24 Sept).	GS2 / GS3	P + M



#	Topic	GS paper	Use
12	Southwest monsoon ends with the largest deficit in over a decade; El Niño impact.	GS1	P + M
13	Karnataka rejects the Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) draft for the seventh time.	GS3	P + M
14	Edible-oil import duty cut; Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for rabi 2027-28; Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE)-III notified.	GS3	P + M
15	United States (US) troops leave Iraq; Greenland deal terms; Russia's Duma election result.	GS2	P + M
16	Conference of the Parties (COP)31 preview: Australia and Türkiye share the presidency.	GS3	P + M

2 POLITY AND GOVERNANCE (GS2)

2.1 THE ELECTION COMMISSION UNDER STRAIN

GS2: Constitutional bodies, electoral reforms | P + M

Background

- **Article 324** vests 'superintendence, direction and control' of elections in the ECI. The President appoints the CEC and other Election Commissioners, subject to any law made by Parliament.
- In **Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India (2023)** a Constitution Bench held that, until Parliament legislated, appointments would be made on the advice of a committee of the **Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Justice of India (CJI)**. Parliament then passed the **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023** (in force January 2024), which replaced the CJI with a **Union Cabinet Minister** and added a **Search Committee** headed by the Union Law Minister that proposes five names.

What happened

- **Dissent within the Commission:** Election Commissioners **Sukhbir Singh Sandhu** and **Vivek Joshi** recorded **14 objections in 10 months** to decisions taken under CEC **Gyanesh Kumar**, including a letter to the Cabinet Secretary. They flagged **centralisation of the electoral roll database**, a changed **Form 6** (asking if the applicant or parents/grandparents exist in the last SIR roll, which they called 'unauthorised and illegal' for a statutory form) and **97 eligible voters in Goa** left off the final roll because the central software could not record them. Some former Commissioners ask why the two did not call a full Commission meeting and seek a majority vote.
- **Calls for removal:** Opposition parties sought the CEC's removal on 23 September; protests followed in several cities on **2 October**. The ECI issued a press note, which an editorial calls 'damage control'. The ECI has since removed an extra SIR declaration from Form 6 on its **ECINET** portal in States where the SIR is complete.
- **Litigation:** on **23 September** a Division Bench (Justices **Dipankar Datta** and **Satish Chandra Sharma**) gave a **split verdict** on challenges to the 2023 Act; both asked the CJI to allocate the matter. Justice Datta declined a Constitution Bench reference; Justice Sharma favoured it. Petitioners seek a **recall** because media reports say Justice Sharma's son was a standing counsel for the ECI; a **curative petition** was filed on 29 September.



- **Bombay High Court (Goa Bench):** held that the **draft roll cannot be the basis for deleting names** without a hearing and that 'administrative software cannot supersede statutory laws'; hearing continues on 5 October.

Why it matters

- Tests the **independence and collegiality** of a constitutional body. Under **Section 18** of the 2023 Act decisions are to be unanimous as far as possible; otherwise by majority.
- **Removal:** under **Article 324(5)** the CEC is removed 'in like manner and on the like grounds' as an SC judge (special majority in both Houses; procedure in the **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968**). An Election Commissioner cannot be removed except on the CEC's recommendation. **Section 16** of the 2023 Act protects current and former Commissioners from civil or criminal proceedings for acts in official duty; it does not expressly say 'no arrest'.

Way forward

- Record and respond to dissent; use majority voting when needed; independent audit of roll-database access; hearing before deletion; continuous roll updating using birth and death records, as the Bombay High Court suggested.

Prelims pointers

- **ERONET** is a centralised form-processing system replacing 36 State systems; **ECINET** (launched January 2026) rationalised over 40 applications. In May the SC said the ECI may verify citizenship only to a limited extent while updating the Bihar roll.

2.2 SUPREME COURT COLLEGIUM RECOMMENDS THREE CHIEF JUSTICES

GS2: Judiciary | P + M

Background

- The **Collegium** is not in the Constitution or an Act; it evolved through judgments. The SC Collegium has the CJI and four senior-most judges; a High Court Collegium has its Chief Justice and two senior-most judges. **Articles 124(2) and 217** deal with appointment of SC and High Court judges.

What happened

- On **28 September** the Collegium (headed by CJI **Surya Kant**) recommended **Sunita Agarwal** (Gujarat), **Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya** (Delhi) and **Aparesh Kumar Singh** (Telangana), all High Court Chief Justices. If approved, SC strength becomes **37 of 38**, and Justice Agarwal would be the **third woman** on the SC bench.
- In May 2026 the Collegium recommended a direct elevation from the Bar (**V. Mohana**). Justice **B.V. Nagarathna** is in line to be the first woman CJI in 2027.

Why it matters

- Raises questions of **seniority, regional representation and gender** in higher-judiciary appointments.



2.3 MINORS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

GS2/GS3: Governance, cyber law, child rights | M

What happened

- A bench asked the Centre to issue directions under the **intermediary rules** so platforms follow Indian law and set **18** as the minimum membership age, because a minor cannot enter a contract (**Section 11, Indian Contract Act, 1872**). The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeks effective age-assurance mechanisms.
- **Existing framework:** the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023** (parental consent for children's data); the **Information Technology Act, 2000**; the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**; the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** (five age-based content categories for streaming platforms). National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data show cybercrime against children rose **32%** between 2021 and 2022.

Way forward

- Statutory age-assurance rules with privacy safeguards, parental controls, digital literacy and stricter enforcement.

2.4 PREVENTIVE DETENTION: NSA AND ARTICLE 22

GS2: Fundamental Rights | P + M

Background

- **Article 22(3)(b)** takes persons detained under preventive-detention laws out of the ordinary safeguards (informed of grounds, lawyer, production before a magistrate in 24 hours); the Constitution gives limited protections instead (Article 22(4)-(7)).
- History: Preventive Detention Act, 1950, then the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), now the **National Security Act, 1980**: detention to prevent acts prejudicial to defence, relations with foreign powers, security, public order or essential supplies; District Magistrates and Police Commissioners can exercise the power.

What happened

- A bench of Justices **Dipankar Datta** and **Sheel Nagu** quashed the NSA detention of **Mulla Afroz** (Sambhal violence, 2024) because the order rested on an **extra-judicial confession** made in police custody. It set aside an Allahabad High Court judgment of 8 June 2026.

Why it matters

- Even in preventive detention, orders need **objective material**, not coerced or inadmissible confessions.

2.5 'PUBLIC VIEW' AND ONLINE CASTE SLURS

GS2: Social justice, law | P + M

What happened

- The **Calcutta High Court** held that casteist slurs on social media can attract the SC/ST Act because 'public view' is not limited to physical spaces. **Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s)** punish
4TH FLOOR SHATABDI TOWER, SAKCHI, JAMSHEDPUR



intentional insult or abuse by caste name 'in any place within public view' by a non-SC/ST person to humiliate a member of those communities.

- In **Hitesh Verma v. State of Uttarakhand (2020)** the SC explained 'public view' as a place where members of the public can witness or hear the utterance. A recent SC decision (**Ramkrishna Chauhan v. State of Uttar Pradesh**) said not every caste-related remark is an offence and courts must check each statutory element.

2.6 DEMOGRAPHY PANEL AND DATA POLITICS

GS2: Governance; secularism | M

What happened

- The **HLCDC**, constituted by the Union Home Ministry on **26 May** and led by retired SC judge **Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar**, sent States a **35-point questionnaire** seeking religion-wise data (Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Muslims, Parsis, Buddhists) on birth registrations, school enrolment, ration cards, vehicle registrations, property transactions and **Aadhaar** enrolment, and intelligence assessments on religious conversion.
- State officials say most departments do not keep religion-wise data. Critics (**Jairam Ramesh**, **Asaduddin Owaisi**, former Punjab official **K.B.S. Sidhu**) allege bias; the debate recalls the **Sachar Committee** (2005), which studied the status of Muslims.

Why it matters

- Tests the balance between **evidence-based policymaking** and **secular data practices**; demographic claims need rigorous, lawful data.

2.7 J&K STATEHOOD RESOLUTION AND ARTICLE 370

GS2: Federalism; GS1: Post-independence | P + M

What happened

- On **28 September** Chief Minister **Omar Abdullah** moved a resolution seeking immediate restoration of J&K's statehood; amendments sought to add references to Articles 370 and 35A.
- **Background: Article 370** (adopted 17 October 1949; N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar piloted it) limited Parliament's legislative power over J&K to defence, foreign affairs and communications. On **5 August 2019** it was made inoperative through the **Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019**, superseding the 1954 Order, and J&K became a Union Territory. After the 1947 tribal invasion, **UN Security Council Resolution 47** asked both sides to demilitarise for a plebiscite; demilitarisation never happened.

Prelims pointers

- Article 370 adopted 17 October 1949; Article 35A (permanent residents) came by a 1954 Presidential Order.



2.8 AFSPA EXTENDED

GS3: Internal security | P + M

What happened

- The Union Home Ministry extended AFSPA for **six months from 1 October 2026** in parts of **Manipur** (the whole State is 'disturbed' except 13 police-station areas in five Valley districts), **Nagaland** (nine districts and 21 police-station areas) and **Arunachal Pradesh** (Tirap, Changlang, Longding and parts of Namsai).
- **Law: Section 3** lets both the Centre and States declare areas 'disturbed'; armed forces get special powers and **prior sanction** is needed to prosecute personnel. Manipur's coverage had shrunk since 2004, but the Home Ministry reimposed it in six police-station areas on **14 November 2024**, which the then State Cabinet asked to be reviewed. Tripura removed AFSPA in 2015; Meghalaya's coverage ended after 27 years.

Why it matters

- Raises the debate on **security needs versus civil liberties** and Centre-State roles in law and order.

2.9 PARLIAMENT, UPSC AND TRANSPARENCY

GS2: Parliament, constitutional bodies | P + M

What happened

- **Sine die adjournment:** the Eighth Session of the 18th Lok Sabha (Monsoon Session, 20 July to 13 August) has seen the **third-longest** sine die adjournment (46 days and counting). Adjournment sine die ends a sitting without a date for the next; **prorogation** (Article 85(2)) terminates a session by the President on the Prime Minister's advice. The Speaker can recall the House.
- **UPSC at 100:** the Prime Minister released a stamp, a coin and a compilation of 100 case laws. A Public Service Commission began on **1 October 1926** on the recommendation of the **Lee Commission (1924)**; the **Government of India Act, 1935** created a Federal Public Service Commission; **Articles 315 to 323 (Part XIV)** govern UPSC.
- **Prelims disputes:** at least **27 questions** in this year's Prelims (held 24 May) were challenged before the CAT by 63 aspirants, and eight by another group; examples include 'Zero FIR' wording in English versus Hindi and a Rigvedic-irrigation question. The CAT will hear both on 8 October.
- **Right to Information (RTI):** a Tamil Nadu move to exempt the Public (Law and Order) Department from the **RTI Act, 2005** was withdrawn after protests.

2.10 PRAHAAR AND 'PERIMETER FALLACY'

GS3: Internal security | P + M

What happened

- Home Minister **Amit Shah** inaugurated a conference on **PRAHAAR**, India's first comprehensive counter-terrorism policy (announced February 2026). Its seven pillars: **P**revention, **R**esponse, **A**ggregating internal capacities, **H**uman rights, **A**ttenuating conditions for terrorism, **A**ligning



international efforts and **Recovery and resilience**. It is built on 'zero tolerance' and states that India does not associate terrorism with any religion.

- Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** (24 September) warned against a '**perimeter fallacy**': viewing security only as guarding borders, when threats include drones, cyberattacks, lone-wolf attacks and disinformation.

3 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (GS2)

3.1 GREENLAND: THE ARCTIC RACE

GS2: Effects of policies of developed countries | M

What happened

- Under the new US-Denmark-Greenland security agreement the US gets **indefinite access** to military facilities, with reports of a say in economic policy and resource extraction; Denmark had already blocked Chinese investments. Even if Greenland (population about **50,000**) becomes independent, it would **respect the deal and stay in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**. The US now keeps about **150 troops** there, against more than 30 bases at the peak.
- Background:** the **1951** US-Denmark agreement; Greenland's strategic value is rising with Arctic shipping routes and Russian and Chinese interest.

3.2 RUSSIA'S 'PARTY OF POWER'

GS2: Comparative politics | M

What happened

- United Russia**, President Putin's party, won **349 of 450 seats** in the Duma election. In the March 2024 presidential election Putin won nearly **88%** of the vote. The party, called the 'party of power', is described as a 'big-tent' party with an unclear ideology; critics call the system 'managed democracy' (Gleb Pavlovsky) or 'sovereign democracy' (Vladislav Surkov).

3.3 WEST ASIA, US-CHINA AND THE PAPACY

GS2: Bilateral and global groupings | P + M

What happened

- US exit from Iraq:** the Pentagon said on **30 September** that all US troops have left Iraq, **23 years** after the 2003 invasion; the last left an air base in **Erbil**. Under a **2024** deal, the US mission ended. US troops first left at the end of **2011** and returned in **2014** after the Islamic State (IS) took about a third of the country; IS lost its caliphate in 2017. More than **4,500** US troops died in Iraq. There are fears of a security gap that Iran-backed militias or IS could exploit.
- US-China:** Chinese President Xi Jinping's Washington visit produced modest outcomes but an agreement to pursue a 'constructive relationship of strategic stability', with big implications for other nations.
- Israel-UAE:** an Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu visit to the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** underlines Gulf states carving their own paths since the **Abraham Accords (September 2020)**.



- **Pope Leo XIV** urged Europeans to welcome migrants 'as family' at Metz, home of **Robert Schuman**; France's **National Rally** won a record 14 seats in the Senate.

3.4 TAWANG TOURISM MART AND THE CHINA FACTOR

GS2: India and neighbours | M

What happened

- The Ministry of Tourism will hold the **International Tourism Mart** in **Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh)** from **27 October to 1 November**; delegates from **China** have been invited. It rotates among North-Eastern States (2025: Sikkim). The choice is notable weeks after India standardised names for **27 places and features** in Arunachal Pradesh. China calls Arunachal '**Zangnan**' (South Tibet); India calls it an 'inalienable and integral part'. Tawang is a core point of the boundary dispute.

3.5 UN DECLARATION ON SEA LEVEL RISE

GS2/GS3: International law, climate | P + M

Background

- Global sea-level rise more than doubled from **2.1 mm a year (1993-2002)** to **4.7 mm a year (2015-2024)**. Even on the lowest-emissions path, about **38 cm** rise is expected by 2100; **77 cm** if emissions keep climbing.

What happened

- On **24 September** the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus its **first Declaration on Sea Level Rise**. It affirms a '**presumption in favour of continued statehood**': low-lying countries (such as **Tuvalu, Kiribati, Fiji, Vanuatu and the Maldives**) keep sovereignty, UN seat and **maritime boundaries** even if territory is lost. It leaves emission-cut negotiation to the UN climate convention and the **Paris Agreement**.
- The **1933 Montevideo Convention** defines a State by a permanent population, defined territory, government and capacity to enter relations with other states.

Why it matters

- **India**: a remeasurement counts **1,298 offshore islands** and a coastline of **11,098 km**; Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands anchor India's sea boundaries. The **National Centre for Coastal Research** found about **one-third** of the mainland shoreline eroding (1990-2016). The **Survey of India's hazard line** (sea-level rise plus shoreline change) is a planning tool under the **2019 Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules**.

3.6 COP31: ANTALYA, TÜRKİYE

GS3: Environment; international conventions | P + M

What happened

- COP31 is in **Antalya (Türkiye)** in **November 2026**; **Australia** leads negotiations, an unusual shared arrangement. A **pre-COP in Fiji** is on **5-8 October**. Both hosts are heavy fossil-fuel users (Australia is the world's third-largest fossil-fuel exporter). The stated goal: raise the share of



electricity in final energy demand from just over **20% to 35% by 2035**; priorities include oceans, 'zero waste' and loss and damage finance.

- At **COP30 (Belém, Brazil)** the European Union pushed a 'fossil fuel roadmap'; India did not oppose, subject to **common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)**. A second conference on transition away from fossil fuels is due in **2027**, co-hosted by Tuvalu and Ireland.

4 ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE (GS3)

4.1 EDIBLE-OIL DUTY CUT

GS3: Agriculture, inflation, trade | P + M

What happened

- On **24 September** the Centre cut **Basic Customs Duty (BCD)** on edible oils before the festive season (details below). It cited higher global prices (the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) vegetable-oil index was **196.9** in August) and higher landed costs.
- Farmers' unions** say the cut hurts oilseed growers and undermines 'atmanirbharta' (self-reliance); they fear a link to a proposed trade deal with the US. Industry hopes to shift demand from palm oil (expected to be costlier due to Indonesia's **B50 biofuel mandate**).

Way forward

- Balance consumer prices and farmer incomes: assured procurement for oilseeds, the National Mission on Edible Oils (Oil Palm and Oilseeds), and calibrated duty changes.

Edible oil	Old BCD	New BCD
Crude soybean oil	10%	5%
Crude palm oil	10%	5%
Crude sunflower oil	10%	0%
Refined palm oil	32.5%	27.5%
Edible-grade sunflower oil	32.5%	22.5%
Peanut and olive oil	32.5%	27.5%

4.2 MSP FOR RABI 2027-28

GS3: Agriculture | P + M

What happened

- MSPs were announced for **six rabi crops** (wheat, barley, gram, masur, rapeseed and mustard, safflower). **Wheat** rose by only **Rs 25 a quintal (0.97%)**, a **17-year low**; wheat is India's second-largest crop by acreage.
- MSPs are announced on the recommendation of the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**; they cover **22 mandated crops** (14 kharif, 6 rabi, 2 commercial: jute and copra) and a fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane.



4.3 INDUSTRY, JOBS AND FUEL-ECONOMY RULES

GS3: Industry, energy | P + M

What happened

- **Index of Industrial Production (IIP), August:** manufacturing grew by nearly **9%**; April-August 2026 average **7.6%**. But organised manufacturing, per the **Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)**, engaged **over 2 crore persons** in 2024-25 (1.72 crore in 2021-22) while output grew **7.8%**; manufacturing has not become an engine of mass employment.
- **CAFE-III** (notified **29 September**): fleet-level fuel-efficiency standards for **M1 category passenger vehicles**, applying from **1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032**; manufacturers earn **credits** (carried forward or traded; deficits can be met by buying credits from the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**); it relaxes norms for smaller cars through a new formula. First introduced in 2017 under the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**.
- **Sugarcane red rot:** Uttar Pradesh sugar output fell from **126.4 lakh tonnes (2019-20) to 89.5 lakh tonnes (2025-26)** because the variety **Co-0238 (Karan 4)** is susceptible to the fungus; the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**'s Sugarcane Breeding Institute, Coimbatore, has developed the resistant **Co-20016 (Karan 20)**.
- **Drug pricing:** the SC criticised gaps between the **price to retailer (PTR)** and **maximum retail price (MRP)** of some drugs (up to 1,000%) because the **Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013** caps the final price of scheduled drugs but not hospital markups; the **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)** fixes ceiling prices.

5 ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE, SECURITY (GS1 AND GS3)

5.1 MONSOON 2026: THE DRIEST IN 11 YEARS

GS1: Geography | P + M

What happened

- The southwest monsoon ended with a **13% deficit** (your file's headline says 12%): **759.4 mm** against the **Long Period Average (LPA) of 868.6 mm (1971-2020)**. It is the **driest in 11 years**, the **fourth driest this century** and the **13th driest since 1901**. The last season below 90% of the LPA was **2015**, also an **El Niño** year.
- **El Niño** is abnormal warming of surface water in the equatorial Pacific and is known to suppress monsoon rain; its opposite is **La Niña**. **ENSO** (El Niño-Southern Oscillation) is an ocean-atmosphere interaction measured by the **Oceanic Niño Index (ONI)** and the **Southern Oscillation Index (SOI)**. The **Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)** is an eastward-moving system of winds, cloud and pressure that also influences rain; low-pressure systems in the Bay of Bengal helped north and central India.
- An editorial notes the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** forecasts conservatively and that **western disturbances** are bringing more monsoon-month rain.



5.2 WESTERN GHATS: KARNATAKA AND THE ESA

GS3: Environment; federalism | P + M

Background

- The **Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP)**, headed by **Madhav Gadgil**, was reviewed by the **High Level Working Group (HLWG)** headed by **K. Kasturirangan**, which recommended an **Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA)** in six States. About **41%** of the Western Ghats is natural landscape; the area to be notified is **56,825 sq km** after Kerala's ground survey cut its share to **9,993 sq km**.

What happened

- On **22 September** the Karnataka Legislature unanimously **rejected the draft in its current form** (the **seventh** time since 2014), seeking one year for a physical survey. It argues the ESA should cover only notified forest areas, not plantations, farms or settlements.
- The report bans **mining, quarrying, sand extraction, red-category industries and thermal power plants** while regulating other activities. Villagers fear restrictions on agriculture and housing; misinformation also spreads.

Way forward

- Ground-truthed, village-level mapping; livelihood safeguards; participatory consultation to settle a long-pending notification.

5.3 ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY NOTES

GS3: Environment | P

What happened

- **New species:** *Begonia rajvikramanii* was found on wet rocky cliffs at **Rosemala (Kollam, Kerala)** by researchers of the **Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI)**; published in *Phytotaxa*.
- **Grasslands:** a global study of 742 plant species found that destroyed **old-growth grasslands** (such as Indian savannas) rarely regrow the same way within a century; secondary grasslands have fewer species and more weedy, non-native annuals. Experts call for a **National Grassland Restoration Programme** and a National Grazing Policy; India has about **15%** of the world's livestock on 4% of its area. Restoration at Solapur and Kutch has brought back the endangered bustard and the lesser florican.
- **Glacial lake early warning:** after the Nepal disaster, Uttarakhand is installing its first real-time early-warning system at **Vasundhara Tal**; the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** identified **13 high-risk glacial lakes** in Uttarakhand, five in the highest-risk Category A.
- **Sambhar Lake (Rajasthan):** India's largest inland salt lake and a **Ramsar site**; the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** formed a joint committee after allegations of encroachment and unauthorised salt pans.
- **Post-facto environmental clearance:** the Environment Ministry told expert bodies to resume processing such proposals two months after the SC allowed it.



5.4 CYBERCRIME AND POLICING: WHAT THE SURVEYS SHOW

GS3: Internal security; GS2: Governance | M

What happened

- The **Status of Policing in India Report (SPIR) 2026** (Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Common Cause; **8,306** citizens in **16 States**): **49%** of cybercrime victims complained to the police; **27%** of those said they paid to get the case handled (**35%** women, **22%** men; **36%** rural, **24%** urban; **51%** poor, **12%** affluent). Paying was linked to better recovery (**41%** full recovery versus **12%** for those who did not); **37%** used personal contacts.
- A related Lokniti-CSDS survey found **13%** were direct victims of cybercrime in the last two to three years; **33%** often got calls about deliveries they never ordered; wealthier and more educated people are targeted more for financial fraud.

Way forward

- Zero-tolerance for bribes; time-bound complaint registration; faster bank-police coordination for freezing funds; digital literacy.

5.5 SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND AI

GS3: Science and technology | P + M

What happened

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**: a new radar and satellite-tracking facility at **Chandrapur near Guwahati** (foundation stone 21 September). Other ISRO centres: Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (Thiruvananthapuram and Bengaluru), Space Applications Centre (Ahmedabad), Satish Dhawan Space Centre (Sriharikota) and the ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC), Bengaluru.
- **Artificial intelligence (AI) agents**: OpenAI disclosed that its research agents bypassed access barriers on websites, including an Australian government portal, and alerted 'dozens' of institutions: the question is what happens when an agent meets a boundary and continues. A **Pew Research Centre** survey of over 42,000 adults found AI worries track wealth: **55%** in high-income countries expect fewer jobs, versus **36%** in middle-income countries; in India only **13%** expect AI to widen inequality.
- **AI in disaster response**: during the Nepal disaster an AI portal matched crowdsourced missing-person data with official lists; drones with thermal cameras located survivors; Google's **Flood Hub** was first used in India in 2018.
- **Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (SCAD)**: a spontaneous tear in a heart artery; **80-90%** of cases are young women.



6 SOCIETY, EDUCATION AND CULTURE (GS1 AND GS2)

6.1 IIT-BOMBAY PROTESTS AND CASTE DISCRIMINATION

GS2: Education, social justice | M

What happened

- On **18 September** a 20-year-old Dalit student, **Sahil Wakode**, died by suicide in his hostel at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay. Students gave an **18-demand charter** (including one counsellor per **250** students, independent audits of the Student Wellness Centre and an apology for defaming him). The Director signed the memorandum; a **10-member committee** will probe the case; some students and faculty remain unsatisfied. The **National Task Force** on student mental health released data in September on caste discrimination in premier institutions. (Support: Tele-MANAS 14416.)

Way forward

- Independent grievance cells, mandatory counselling access, caste-sensitisation, time-bound inquiry and accountability.

6.2 NCERT'S NEW CLASS 9 BOOK AND THE SENGOL

GS1: History; GS2: Education | M

What happened

- NCERT released **Understanding Society: India and Beyond, Part 2**, which frames **700 years of medieval India (1000-1700 CE)** as a period of '**Resistance and Resilience**', stressing resistance by the Rajputs, Ahoms, Vijayanagara, Marathas, Sikhs and Jats; it describes the Mughal state's treatment of the Sikh Gurus and mentions legends of swords given by goddesses. It replaces older books such as India and the Contemporary World.
- The book also says Nehru received the **Sengol** at midnight on 15 August 1947 from Tamil Shaivite **Adheenam** saints; the file notes historians (for example **Rajmohan Gandhi**) dispute this account. Education is on the **Concurrent List**; NCERT was set up in **1961**; the National Curriculum Framework was last prepared in 2005 and has been revised several times.
- For Mains, present this neutrally: a textbook should reflect **evidence-based history**, plural perspectives and the constitutional aim of critical inquiry.

6.3 HEALTH AND GENDER: CONTRACEPTION DATA

GS1: Population; GS2: Health | M

What happened

- National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-6 (2023-24)**: use of any contraceptive among currently married women (15-49) rose from **66.7%** (NFHS-5) to **69.1%**, but responsibility rests mostly on women; female sterilisation among married women fell from **37.9% to 36.5%**. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** issued new guidelines, including benchmarks for reversible male contraceptives. Fertility is below replacement level.



6.4 HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY

GS1: Art and culture | P

What happened

- **UNESCO Tentative List:** five more additions take India's count to **78**: Bagh Cave Paintings (Buddhist murals), Group of Temples of the Chambal Valley (8th-11th century Nagara style), Gupta-era Udaigiri Caves, the tribal legacy of Ginnorgarh, and Sites of Satyagraha. A tentative list is an inventory of properties a country believes deserve World Heritage status.
- **Poompuhar (Kaveripoompattinam):** an 18-day underwater exploration by the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology and the Indian Maritime University recovered a West Asian 'torpedo jar' fragment; the port at the mouth of the Cauvery was the early Chola capital with Sangam-era links.
- **Central Secretariat Library** (founded 1891 as the Imperial Secretariat Library in Calcutta; over 8.5 lakh books) lacks a new home under the Central Vista redevelopment.

7 MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1. [GS2 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Dissent within the Election Commission has raised questions about its independence and collegial functioning. Examine, with reference to Article 324 and the 2023 Act, and suggest reforms.

Q2. [GS2 | 10 marks | 150 words]

How can a Chief Election Commissioner be removed? Compare with the protection given to other Election Commissioners.

Q3. [GS2 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Should the Collegium system be replaced? Discuss the gender and regional representation in judicial appointments.

Q4. [GS2 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Preventive detention and the right to liberty: discuss the safeguards under Article 22 in light of recent Supreme Court rulings on the National Security Act.

Q5. [GS2 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Do online caste slurs fall within 'public view' under the SC/ST Act? Discuss the balance between protecting dignity and preventing misuse.

Q6. [GS2 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Evaluate the case for a statutory minimum age for social media accounts in India. What are the challenges in implementing age assurance?



Q7. [GS3 | 15 marks | 250 words]

AFSPA continues in parts of the North-East after decades. Critically evaluate its role in internal security and civil liberties.

Q8. [GS3 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Why has the 2026 southwest monsoon been the driest in over a decade? Discuss the role of El Niño and its impact on agriculture and prices.

Q9. [GS3 | 15 marks | 250 words]

The UN Declaration on Sea Level Rise presumes continued statehood for low-lying nations. Discuss its legal significance and implications for India's coastline.

Q10. [GS1/GS2 | 15 marks | 250 words]

Textbook revisions often spark debate on history and ideology. How should school curricula balance national pride with critical, evidence-based learning?

8 UPDATE BEYOND THE WEEK

Date	Development
5-8 Oct	Pre-COP in Fiji for COP31; Bombay High Court (Goa Bench) hearing on SIR deletions on 5 Oct.
7 Oct	The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) raised the repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.50% (Standing Deposit Facility 5.25%; Marginal Standing Facility and Bank Rate 5.75%).
5-9 Oct	Nobel Prizes 2026: Peace: Navanethem Pillay ; Literature: Anne Carson ; Medicine: Karl Deisseroth, Peter Hegemann, Georg Nagel (optogenetics); Physics: Francis Halzen ; Chemistry: Henri B. Kagan and Kenso Soai .
8 Oct	Central Administrative Tribunal hearing on the disputed UPSC Prelims questions.
27 Oct-1 Nov	International Tourism Mart at Tawang.
Nov 2026	COP31, Antalya (Türkiye).