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Q3 / 2026

QUARTERLY EDITION

CURRENT AFFAIRS

JULY / AUGUST / SEPTEMBER



THE QUARTER, EXPLAINED.

22 in-depth chapters · 50 Prelims questions
Photographs · Visual explainers · Mains practice

NEWS CUTOFF 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Cover: BRICS Summit, New Delhi, 12 September 2026 · PMO / GODL-India

EDITORIAL

Read the event. Understand the issue.

A quarterly companion for Prelims, Mains and clearer thinking.

A good current-affairs note should answer more than “what happened?”. It should explain the problem behind the announcement, the institutions involved and the choices that remain. This edition brings July, August and September together so that related developments can be studied as one connected story.

INSIDE THE ISSUE

22 analytical chapters, 22 comparison tables, 22 mechanism diagrams, 50 original Prelims questions with explanations, 22 Mains prompts with answer outlines, and two original ethics cases.

First reading: build the foundation

Start with the photograph, dated development and plain-language opening. Read the concept page slowly. The worked examples are illustrative teaching examples, not reported events.

Second reading: practise judgement

Use the analysis page to identify benefits, constraints and implementation choices. The mechanism diagram helps reconstruct an argument without memorising a paragraph.

Final revision: test the distinctions

Use the timeline, comparison tables and exam traps before attempting the practice set. Return to the linked chapter when an answer reveals a conceptual gap.

SCOPE AND DATING

This is a retrospective, subject-wise selection of 22 major themes from 1 July to 30 September 2026, not a day-by-day archive of every event. Prepared on 12 November 2026 using dated primary material. Later developments are excluded from the quarter’s narrative. GS links are editorial study links; practice questions are not official UPSC questions.

News summaries are source-linked. Explanations, examples, questions and policy assessments are editorial teaching material. Government projections are described as targets or expectations, not verified outcomes. Photographs are real, credited event or archival images; captions identify their context.

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QUARTER AT A GLANCE

July: institutions and productive capability

Announcement dates organise the story; they do not prove implementation.

JULY

15 JUL	**Chips and mobile manufacturing** - Semicon 2.0 and MPMS approvals.
20 JUL	**Parliament convenes** - Monsoon session begins.
25 JUL	**Sarnath recognised** - World Heritage inscription announced in Busan.
30 JUL	**Examination integrity** - Rajya Sabha passes the examination amendment Bill.
31 JUL	**Sports and energy** - Khelo India / federation support and offshore exploration approved.

STUDY PRIORITY

Connect parliamentary procedure with examination integrity. Study the manufacturing and energy approvals as investments in future capacity, and Sarnath as a responsibility for present conservation.

KEEP THE STAGES SEPARATE

Proposal → approval → legal or operational steps → delivery → measured outcome. The chapters identify what the quarter's evidence actually establishes.

QUARTER AT A GLANCE

August: rules, evidence and preparedness

Announcement dates organise the story; they do not prove implementation.

AUGUST

03 AUG **Glaw Lake** - Arunachal Pradesh's first Ramsar Site announced.

05 AUG **RBI and preparedness** - MPC decision; UCB draft; Gaganyaan and El Niño replies.

06 AUG **Compressed biogas** - GOBARdhan national framework approved.

13 AUG **Session closes** - 19 sittings; 12 Bills passed by both Houses reported.

21 AUG **Mobile manufacturing** - Notification details published.

27 AUG **Vaccine preparedness** - Mpox stockpile initiative launched; release follows in September.

31 AUG **GDP release and diplomacy** - April-June estimates published; SCO meeting begins.

STUDY PRIORITY

Distinguish the RBI decision from its forecasts, the UCB draft from final rules, and a GDP publication date from its reference period. Link climate and space milestones to evidence-based planning.

KEEP THE STAGES SEPARATE

Proposal → approval → legal or operational steps → delivery → measured outcome. The chapters identify what the quarter's evidence actually establishes.

QUARTER AT A GLANCE

September: cooperation and practical inclusion

Announcement dates organise the story; they do not prove implementation.

SEPTEMBER

01 SEP	**SCO summit** - Bishkek meeting concludes.
02 SEP	**Health and economic evidence** - WHO stockpile release; MoSPI methodology explanation.
04 SEP	**EOS-05 launch** - ISRO launch-register date for GSLV-F17.
08 SEP	**Literacy and participation** - National Literacy Day event highlights ULLAS.
09 SEP	**Rail capacity** - Five southern multitracking projects approved.
12-13 SEP	**BRICS in New Delhi** - Summit and global-governance agenda.
16 SEP	**Social security** - Higher EPFO coverage ceiling approved.

STUDY PRIORITY

Connect BRICS and SCO diplomacy with the work required to implement commitments. Study EPFO, adult literacy and vaccine access through the practical steps between eligibility and a usable benefit.

KEEP THE STAGES SEPARATE

Proposal → approval → legal or operational steps → delivery → measured outcome. The chapters identify what the quarter's evidence actually establishes.

01 / POLITY / JULY-AUGUST

Parliament: what a session’s numbers tell us

Read legislative output alongside scrutiny, accountability and constitutional procedure.



New Parliament building, New Delhi, 2023. Archival institutional context; not a photograph of the April 2026 debate or May election. Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs / GODL-India.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

The monsoon session ran from 20 July to 13 August 2026, with 19 sittings across 25 calendar days. The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs reported 12 Bills passed by both Houses. Its account also identified legislation replacing or encompassing two pre-session ordinances. These are measures of activity. They do not, by themselves, establish the quality of debate, committee scrutiny or implementation of the resulting laws.

A Parliament report often starts with hours worked and Bills passed. Those numbers matter, but the constitutional institution does more than produce laws. It also questions the government, authorises expenditure, represents competing interests and creates a public record of reasons. An aspirant should connect the session’s output with these wider responsibilities.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS II: Parliament; legislative procedure; executive accountability

Source notes: S01, S03 | Full register at the back.

01 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Follow a Bill through its stages

An ordinary Bill normally requires agreement of both Houses on the same text before presidential assent. Introduction places a proposal before a House; passage in one House does not complete Parliament's work. Committee examination, when undertaken, can test definitions, hear affected groups and identify implementation problems. A Bill's title is only a starting point: its operative clauses, delegated powers and commencement provision determine its practical effects.

Understand the ordinance route

Article 123 permits an ordinance when the constitutional conditions are met, including the President's satisfaction that circumstances require immediate action while both Houses are not in session together. An ordinance has the force of law but must be laid before Parliament. It ordinarily ceases six weeks after Parliament reassembles unless replaced or otherwise dealt with according to the Constitution. Where the Houses reassemble on different dates, the later date starts this six-week period.

Keep the parliamentary calendar clear

Adjournment interrupts a sitting. Adjournment sine die ends sittings without fixing a date for the next meeting. Prorogation formally ends a session; dissolution ends the life of the Lok Sabha. Their effects on pending business differ. A newspaper's description that Parliament has "closed" is too imprecise for a constitutional answer. Neither prorogation nor adjournment sine die should be casually equated with dissolution.

Term	What it establishes
Introduction	A proposal enters a House.
Passage by both Houses	Parliament has agreed to the required text.
Assent	The legislative proposal becomes an Act.
Commencement	The Act or specified provisions take effect.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

A hypothetical session passes 12 Bills after 19 sittings. Dividing 12 by 19 gives about 0.63 Bills per sitting. This calculation is possible, but it cannot show how thoroughly each proposal was examined or whether the laws improved public services.

Source notes: S01, S03 | Full register at the back.

01 / POLITY / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Productivity needs a denominator and a purpose

A high share of scheduled time used can coexist with rushed legislation. A low figure may conceal serious disagreement requiring institutional resolution. Evaluate time alongside the number of members participating, substantive amendments, committee referrals and opportunities to question ministers. These indicators help assess whether Parliament improved a proposal and exposed trade-offs before a binding decision was taken.

Scrutiny can reduce implementation costs

Poorly defined powers create disputes for administrators and citizens. A committee can identify an unrealistic deadline, unfunded obligation or unclear appeal before enactment. Consultation also helps reveal uneven effects across states and social groups. Scrutiny does not guarantee consensus, but it can make disagreement specific enough for lawmakers to address through drafting, safeguards and review provisions.

Frame reform around constitutional functions

Useful reforms include adequate notice of Bills, accessible explanatory material, predictable committee schedules and follow-up on delegated legislation. Executive responsiveness to questions matters alongside legislative speed. In a Mains answer, acknowledge the need to act on urgent problems, then explain how procedures can preserve deliberation, minority voice and public accountability without making all decisions indefinitely pending.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

Do not confuse 25 calendar days with 25 sittings. The official session account reported 19 sittings. Nor does passage establish that every provision commenced on the same date.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

How should the effectiveness of Parliament be assessed beyond the number of Bills passed? (250 words)

Answer route: Begin with legislation, representation, financial control and accountability. Use the session figures only as context. Examine debate, committees and questions; distinguish speed from quality. Recommend transparent timetables, stronger scrutiny and evaluation of implementation.

Source notes: S01, S03 | Full register at the back.

02 / GOVERNANCE / JULY

Examination integrity: rebuilding public trust

Fair recruitment depends on secure systems, reliable investigation and remedies for candidates.



Candidates and guardians near a Joint Entrance Examination venue in Howrah, April 2013. Archival examination context; no allegation of misconduct concerns those pictured. Biswarup Ganguly / CC BY 3.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

On 30 July, the Rajya Sabha passed the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, as passed by the Lok Sabha. The official account stressed a wider range of malpractice: leaks, answer-sheet or computer-system tampering, manipulated processes and fake examination websites. This chapter uses that verified parliamentary development to examine prevention and accountability; it does not infer detailed new penalties from a speech.

For a candidate, an examination represents months of effort, travel costs and a possible route to secure employment. A compromised process therefore causes more than a disputed result. It weakens faith that public opportunities are allocated fairly. Restoring trust requires a credible chain from paper preparation to the final appointment.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS II: governance; transparency; accountability | GS IV: integrity; public trust

Source notes: S02 | Full register at the back.

02 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Map the entire examination chain

Risk begins before the examination day. Question preparation, translation, printing, digital transfer, storage, centre selection, identity checks, evaluation and result publication each create opportunities for interference. The relevant question is who can access sensitive material at each stage and what evidence records that access. Outsourcing a task changes the operational arrangement; it does not remove the examination authority's responsibility for oversight.

Separate prevention, detection and response

Prevention limits opportunities through segregation of duties, secure access and vetted vendors. Detection uses logs, exception reports and carefully assessed statistical signals. Response preserves evidence, investigates responsibility and provides an intelligible remedy. An unusual answer pattern can justify further checking, but cannot alone establish individual guilt. Procedural fairness protects honest candidates while strengthening the defensibility of action against misconduct.

Use technology with a clear threat model

Encryption protects data only if keys and authorised accounts are well managed. Biometric verification may help with impersonation but requires reliable devices, proportionate data handling and alternatives for genuine failures. Computer-based testing can reduce some transport risks while introducing software and network risks. Technology must fit the vulnerability being addressed rather than becoming a substitute for operational discipline.

Layer	Practical safeguard
Before the test	Restricted access and separation of duties.
During the test	Identity checks, incident logs and trained supervisors.
After the test	Secure evaluation and evidence-based anomaly review.
When a breach occurs	Preserved evidence, fair investigation and clear remedies.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

Suppose one centre's access logs show an unauthorised login. Investigators should preserve the device and logs, examine the affected time window and establish which material was exposed. Automatically treating every candidate at every centre as complicit would confuse evidence of a breach with proof of individual misconduct.

Source notes: S02 | Full register at the back.

02 / GOVERNANCE / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Make vendor accountability verifiable

Contracts should define access controls, subcontracting limits, incident reporting and audit rights. Authorities need evidence that safeguards are used, including independent checks and rehearsed incident procedures. Concentrating sensitive work in one opaque contractor creates dependence. Capacity inside the public authority is essential for evaluating the provider's assurances and responding when commercial incentives conflict with fairness.

Protect candidates during uncertainty

Publish timely, factual notices through authenticated channels. Explain what is known, what is under examination and how candidates can seek review. A response may affect travel, employment and future attempts, so cancellation and re-testing decisions require reasoned proportionality. Preserve relevant records and accessible grievance routes. Silence and inconsistent announcements allow rumours and fraudulent agents to exploit anxious applicants.

Judge reform by the experience of a sincere applicant

A sound system combines security with predictable calendars, accessible centres and reasonable accommodation. Measure incidents, response time, grievance resolution and recurrence. Strong penalties can support deterrence, but detection probability and impartial enforcement remain central. The strongest public message is a documented process that treats similar cases consistently and gives candidates confidence in both the result and the remedy.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER

Restricted access → **Evidence and oversight** → **Fair examination process**

PRELIMS TRAP

A parliamentary speech summarising the law is not a substitute for the enacted text when answering a question about an exact penalty, offence or commencement date.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Examination integrity requires administrative reform as much as penal law. Discuss. (250 words)

Answer route: Explain the harm to equality of opportunity. Organise vulnerabilities across the examination cycle. Combine prevention, audit, vendor accountability and fair investigation with proportionate penalties. End with candidate communication and review of outcomes.

Source notes: S02 | Full register at the back.

03 / POLITY AND JUSTICE / AUGUST

Judicial capacity: posts, benches and timely justice

The quarter advances the judge-strength proposal; delivery still depends on the whole system.



Supreme Court of India, September 2019. Archival photograph; not evidence that additional judges have been appointed. Pinakpani / CC BY-SA 4.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

The monsoon-session account records parliamentary passage of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026. This follows the May proposal to raise the number of judges other than the Chief Justice from 33 to 37. The corresponding total is 38 including the Chief Justice. The session account also identifies the earlier ordinance. A change in authorised strength must be distinguished from appointments actually completed on any particular date.

Adding four judicial posts can expand potential capacity. A litigant experiences that capacity only when a case receives an effective hearing and an enforceable decision. The useful analytical question is how appointments, registry work, bench composition, documentation and court infrastructure turn an authorised post into a functioning judicial service.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS II: judiciary; access to justice; institutional capacity

Source notes: S01, S03, S04 | Full register at the back.

03 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Read Article 124 with the ordinary law

Article 124 establishes the Supreme Court and allows Parliament by law to prescribe a larger number of judges. Increasing that number therefore operates through the statutory framework; it does not automatically require a constitutional amendment. The Chief Justice must be counted consistently. An examination question may deliberately switch between “other judges” and the Court’s total sanctioned strength.

Distinguish stocks from flows

Pendency is the stock of unresolved cases at a given time. Institution and disposal are flows over a period. Pendency can rise even when disposals increase, if new cases rise faster. A meaningful assessment examines case age, type and procedural stage alongside the aggregate. An old, document-heavy matter and a newly filed routine application impose different demands on the institution.

Understand why benches matter

Judicial capacity is also shaped by the number and composition of benches. Constitutional questions requiring larger benches use several judges at once. Registry scrutiny, service of notice and complete records affect whether a listed hearing can proceed. Vacancies in support staff and inadequate courtroom facilities can prevent additional judges from delivering the expected increase in effective hearing time.

Indicator	Meaning
37 other judges	Excludes the Chief Justice.
38 total posts	Includes the Chief Justice.
Working strength	Judges actually serving on a specified date.
Clearance rate	Disposals divided by new institutions for a period.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

If a court begins with 1,000 pending matters, receives 600 and disposes of 550, it ends with 1,050. Higher disposals than last year may be real progress, yet the pending stock still rises. Compare inflow and outflow before drawing conclusions.

Source notes: S01, S03, S04 | Full register at the back.

03 / POLITY AND JUSTICE / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Improve the case pipeline

Better scheduling, timely service and accessible case documents can reduce avoidable adjournments. Case management should identify issues early and ensure parties know what is required for the next hearing. Digital tools help when they simplify work for judges, lawyers and litigants. They can create new burdens if portals are unreliable or if people lack assistance to submit documents correctly.

Preserve quality and independence

A disposal target alone may encourage premature closure or make difficult matters less attractive to take up. Judicial decisions need reasoned consideration and procedural fairness. Evaluation should include the age profile of pending matters, effectiveness of hearings and access barriers, while respecting institutional independence. The public interest is served by sound adjudication within a reasonable time, not by an unexplained numerical race.

Connect apex reform with the wider justice system

Many disputes begin far below the Supreme Court. Improvements in trial courts, tribunals, legal aid and government litigation practices affect the burden reaching the apex institution. Better departmental decisions and compliance with settled law can prevent avoidable cases. A balanced answer combines higher judicial capacity with reforms across the chain through which citizens seek and obtain justice.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER

Posts and appointments → **Effective hearings** → **Timely, reasoned justice**

PRELIMS TRAP

Sanctioned strength is not a claim that all posts are occupied. A positive reform also need not produce an immediate fall in the total pending caseload.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Why may an increase in judge strength be necessary but insufficient for timely justice? (250 words)

Answer route: Explain sanctioned and working strength. Use the stock-flow relationship of cases. Discuss benches, registry capacity, adjournments, legal aid and government litigation. Recommend system-wide measures while safeguarding reasoned decisions and judicial independence.

Source notes: S01, S03, S04 | Full register at the back.

04 / SOCIAL POLICY / SEPTEMBER

EPFO coverage: widening the social-security net

A wage-ceiling decision raises questions about inclusion, compliance and portability.



Textile manufacturing in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, 2022. Archival industry photograph; not a BHAVYA project. Ravi Dwivedi / CC BY-SA 4.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

On 16 September, the Cabinet approved raising the wage ceiling for mandatory EPFO coverage from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 a month. The official release expected more than 51 lakh additional employees to come within mandatory coverage. That is an anticipated inclusion figure, not a count of new accounts already operating by quarter-end. Applicability, contribution rules and implementation must be read through the relevant statutory scheme provisions.

Retirement protection is easy to postpone when a household faces rent, school fees and medical expenses. A contributory system builds savings through the employment relationship. Its public value depends on whether the worker is actually enrolled, contributions reach the account and benefits remain accessible when employment or location changes.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS II: welfare; labour institutions | GS III: employment; formalisation

Source notes: S05 | Full register at the back.

04 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

A wage ceiling is a coverage rule

A threshold helps define which employees fall within mandatory coverage under the applicable framework. Raising it brings an additional wage band into the policy's intended reach. It is not a statutory minimum wage and does not order every employer to raise salaries to that amount. Existing membership, establishment coverage and scheme conditions also matter; a headline threshold cannot answer every individual eligibility question.

Different benefits address different risks

Provident-fund savings, pension arrangements and deposit-linked insurance serve distinct purposes within the EPFO framework. Savings accumulate assets; a pension provides an income arrangement subject to its rules; insurance addresses specified contingencies. An aspirant should understand the function of each rather than describe them all as a single cash grant. Contributions and entitlement conditions shape the distribution of benefits over time.

Formalisation has several dimensions

A worker can have a bank account and still lack a written contract or regular social-security contributions. Registration, truthful wage reporting, timely remittance and enforceable rights are separate aspects of formality. Administrative enrolment is useful evidence, but it should be interpreted alongside continuity of contributions and the worker's ability to access benefits without excessive cost or delay.

Term	Keep distinct
Coverage ceiling	A threshold within the social-security framework.
Minimum wage	A separate legal floor for remuneration.
Enrolment	Registration of a member.
Effective protection	Regular contributions and usable benefits.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

A newly joining worker earning ₹22,000 lies between the old and approved new ceilings. This illustrates the band the decision seeks to include. It does not, by itself, establish an individual's entitlement without checking the establishment, effective rules and membership conditions.

Source notes: S05 | Full register at the back.

04 / SOCIAL POLICY / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Manage the transition for workers and firms

Contribution-based protection can affect current take-home pay and employment costs. Workers need clear explanations of deductions and benefits, while firms need practical payroll guidance. Smaller establishments may need help with compliance processes. The policy's long-term value is stronger when the transition is understood and accurately implemented rather than treated as an unexplained deduction on a wage slip.

Reduce evasion and exclusion together

Enforcement should examine under-reporting of wages, delayed deposits and employment arrangements used to avoid obligations. It must also make honest compliance simpler. Accessible grievance systems, correction of records and coordination across employment spells help workers retain their claims. Digital access should include assisted channels for people who cannot resolve identity or account problems on their own.

Measure durable protection

Track newly covered workers, regular contributions, claim-processing quality and continuity after job changes. Distinguish the government's projected reach from realised inclusion. A balanced Mains answer recognises the importance of widening coverage while asking how portable, affordable and enforceable the benefit becomes. Social security succeeds when a worker can rely on it through ordinary disruptions in working life.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

The ₹25,000 figure is not a universal minimum salary. The projected 51 lakh-plus additional employees should not be presented as verified completed enrolments.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

How can wider provident-fund coverage support formalisation without leaving implementation gaps? (250 words)

Answer route: Set out the coverage objective and the distinction from wage regulation. Explain contribution continuity, portability and enforcement. Examine small-firm capacity and take-home-pay concerns. Recommend clear transition guidance and outcome-based monitoring.

Source notes: S05 | Full register at the back.

05 / EDUCATION AND SOCIETY / SEPTEMBER

Adult literacy: learning that changes everyday choices

ULLAS connects foundational skills with dignity, livelihoods and active citizenship.



Audience at the national International Literacy Day programme in New Delhi, 8 September 2026. Official event photograph. Press Information Bureau / Ministry of Education, Government of India / PIB reproduction policy.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

The national International Literacy Day programme on 8 September highlighted ULLAS and participation in society; an ULLAS Mela followed on 9 September. The existing scheme addresses learners aged 15 and above who lack literacy, combining foundational literacy and numeracy with life skills, basic education, vocational skills and continuing education. The September event renewed attention to delivery; it was not the launch of a newly created scheme.

Reading a bus destination, checking a wage calculation or understanding a bank message can change how independently a person acts. Adult literacy works best when lessons begin with such real situations. Learners bring knowledge from work and family life; teaching should respect that experience while helping them acquire skills they were denied earlier.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS II: education; human resources; inclusion | GS I: social empowerment

Source notes: S06, S07 | Full register at the back.

05 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Literacy is usable capability

Recognising letters is an important step, but a learner must also understand and use information. Numeracy helps with prices, measurements and payments. Digital literacy includes recognising unsafe requests and finding a reliable service. These capabilities reinforce one another: reading an SMS is useful only if the person can interpret what it asks and decide whether it should be trusted.

Adult learners need a different timetable

Work, migration, care responsibilities and confidence affect attendance. Flexible local sessions, familiar language and relevant materials can reduce barriers. A school building may provide a convenient venue outside ordinary teaching hours, but access, lighting and safety matter. Volunteer support is valuable when volunteers receive guidance, teaching resources and a realistic understanding of the learner's pace.

Connect the scheme's components

Foundational literacy and numeracy underpin basic education and further learning. Life skills allow learners to use those foundations in health, finance and civic participation. Vocational learning becomes more valuable when learners can read instructions and calculate costs. Continuing education helps prevent newly acquired skills from fading. The components form a learning pathway rather than five unrelated activities.

Component	Practical purpose
Foundational literacy and numeracy	Read, understand and calculate.
Critical life skills	Use knowledge in daily decisions.
Basic and vocational education	Build pathways to further learning and work.
Continuing education	Practise and extend capability.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

In an illustrative lesson, a learner compares two offers: 500 grams for ₹40 and 1 kilogram for ₹72. Converting both to the same unit shows that the second costs less per kilogram. The task practises reading, arithmetic and an everyday household decision together.

Source notes: S06, S07 | Full register at the back.

05 / EDUCATION AND SOCIETY / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Reach those who remain least visible

A registration drive may miss people who feel embarrassed, work irregular hours or live far from the venue. Community outreach should avoid public labelling that undermines dignity. Women and persons with disabilities may face additional time and accessibility barriers. Assisted registration and trusted local facilitators can improve participation, provided they support voluntary engagement and protect personal information.

Assess learning, not only attendance

Attendance records cannot show whether a learner can interpret a medicine label or calculate change. Assessments should use suitable tasks and avoid turning participation into a humiliating test. Follow-up can identify which skills need reinforcement. Public reporting should distinguish registered learners, regular participants, assessed learners and those demonstrating specified competencies.

Make literacy a local public service

Libraries, panchayats, community organisations and public-service centres can provide opportunities to practise. Materials in familiar languages and accessible formats broaden participation. Link lessons to genuine needs such as using a grievance system or comparing loan terms. A strong answer treats adult literacy as an investment in agency and citizenship, supported by patient delivery and continuing opportunities to learn.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER

Accessible learning → **Practised skills** → **Greater everyday agency**

PRELIMS TRAP

ULLAS adult-learning coverage includes the 15-plus age group. Do not confuse it with a programme restricted to primary-school children or with an event launched only in September 2026.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Adult literacy should be understood as a capability for citizenship. Explain with practical delivery measures. (250 words)

Answer route: Connect literacy to autonomy, livelihoods and public services. Explain flexible teaching, local language, dignity and assisted participation. Distinguish enrolment from competency and propose continuing opportunities to practise skills.

Source notes: S06, S07 | Full register at the back.

06 / YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT / JULY

Khelo India: participation before the podium

Sports policy links health, opportunity, institutions and the quality of everyday facilities.



Birsa Munda Athletics Stadium, 2023. Archival sports infrastructure; no claim of funding under the revamped 2026 scheme. Government of Odisha / CC BY 4.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

On 31 July, the Cabinet approved a revamped Khelo India scheme and enhanced Assistance to National Sports Federations, with a combined outlay of ₹36,441 crore for 2026-27 to 2030-31. The combined figure covers both elements; it should not be attributed to a single tournament. The approval provides a policy and funding framework, while participation, athlete development and facility performance remain outcomes to be evaluated.

A stadium is visible from the road; a functioning sports system is visible in who can use it. A girl who has a safe practice slot, a child with a disability who has an accessible facility and a talented rural athlete who finds a qualified coach reveal different dimensions of public value. Medals capture only part of the story.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS II: social-sector policy; institutions | GS I: society; inclusion

Source notes: S08 | Full register at the back.

06 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Distinguish mass participation from elite performance

Participation programmes aim to make regular sport accessible and enjoyable. Talent development identifies and supports athletes who may progress to higher competition. Elite performance requires specialised coaching, competition and scientific support. The pathways should connect, but each has different measures of success. Treating every school participant only as a possible medal winner can neglect the health and social benefits of broad participation.

Build a usable facility

Construction is a capital expense; staffing, maintenance, equipment replacement and utilities are recurring needs. A facility can exist in an official inventory while being difficult to access or poorly maintained. Timetables, transport and fair booking systems shape use. Local planning should begin with demand, climatic conditions and the sports people can realistically practise throughout the year.

Governance influences athlete welfare

Sports federations organise pathways, selection and competition, so transparency and accountability matter. Clear selection criteria and accessible complaints processes reduce arbitrary treatment. Safeguarding, anti-doping education and respect for athletes' education and health are part of institutional quality. Public support should be accompanied by appropriate reporting and review rather than assumed to translate automatically into good governance.

Policy layer	Useful indicator
Community participation	Regular users and retention.
Access	Gender, disability and income-related barriers.
Talent pathway	Quality coaching and progression.
Facility management	Usable hours, maintenance and safety.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

Two hypothetical districts each build ten courts. In one, courts operate four days a week with coaches and affordable access. In the other, most remain locked. Counting constructed courts gives the same result; counting regular users and usable hours reveals a different public outcome.

Source notes: S08 | Full register at the back.

06 / YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Address unequal starting points

Household income, gender expectations and travel distance can decide who enters sport. Scholarships or equipment assistance help only if athletes also have coaching, safe travel and regular competition. Inclusion requires accessible design and trained staff for persons with disabilities. A local participation survey can reveal demand that a medal table misses and help prioritise scarce public resources.

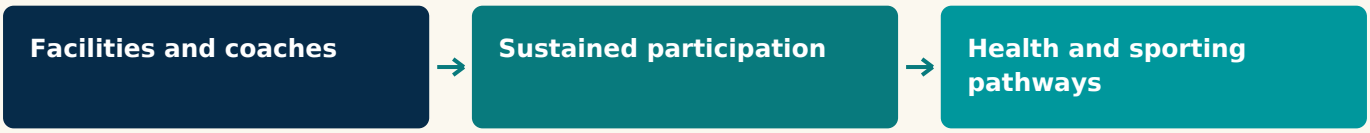
Evaluate the development pathway

Track regular users, retention, coaching quality and progression between levels. A one-day event can attract a large crowd without producing sustained participation. For elite programmes, evaluate athlete health and development over an appropriate period. For community programmes, reliable access and reduced barriers may be more meaningful than immediate competitive results.

Make sporting institutions serve a public purpose

Public sports investment can support physical activity, social interaction and confidence. Its value depends on transparent operations and continued access after an inauguration. A balanced answer should recognise the aspiration for international excellence while explaining how broad participation supplies a healthier and deeper talent pool. Financial planning must cover the facility's useful life, including maintenance and eventual renewal.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

₹36,441 crore is the announced combined outlay for revamped Khelo India and enhanced federation assistance over the stated five-year period, not annual expenditure already incurred.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

How can public sports expenditure combine wider participation with excellence? (250 words)

Answer route: Distinguish mass participation, talent development and elite support. Discuss safe access, coaches, transparent selection and maintenance. Recommend separate outcome measures for each layer and a connected, inclusive pathway.

Source notes: S08 | Full register at the back.

07 / ECONOMY / AUGUST

RBI's August decision: balancing growth and prices

An unchanged policy rate can still involve an active assessment of changing risks.



THE ISSUE BEHIND THE NEWS

A central bank may keep the same policy rate while the economy around it changes. Food prices, fuel costs, financial conditions and expectations can move in different directions. The decision must be judged against the inflation outlook and the transmission of earlier policy actions, rather than through the rate announcement alone.

Reserve Bank of India building in Mumbai, 2018. Archival institutional photograph. Pinakpani / CC BY-SA 4.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

The Monetary Policy Committee met on 3-5 August and unanimously retained the repo rate at 5.25%, with a neutral stance. The SDF rate remained 5.00%, while the MSF rate and Bank Rate remained 5.50%. Its August assessment projected FY 2026-27 real GDP growth at 6.7% and CPI inflation at 5.0%. These projections belong to the August policy information set and should not be presented as final annual outcomes.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: monetary policy; inflation; growth; financial conditions

Source notes: S09, S34 | Full register at the back.

07 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Understand the operating corridor

The repo rate is the policy anchor within the liquidity framework. The Standing Deposit Facility absorbs liquidity without collateral; the Marginal Standing Facility provides an overnight borrowing backstop to eligible banks against the applicable collateral framework. Their rates help shape short-term money-market conditions. The announced rate does not guarantee that every household or firm can borrow at that rate.

Trace transmission to the real economy

Policy affects market rates, bank funding costs, lending rates, asset prices and expectations. The strength and speed of transmission depend on loan contracts, deposit repricing, competition and credit risk. A business with weak finances may face a high borrowing rate even when the policy rate is stable. Credit availability and the terms of lending matter alongside the headline cost of funds.

Separate demand pressure from supply shocks

Higher prices can reflect strong demand, reduced supply or both. Monetary policy can influence aggregate demand and expectations, but cannot immediately produce food or repair a disrupted energy route. It must consider whether a temporary shock is becoming persistent through wages, margins or expectations. Fiscal, trade and supply-management measures may therefore complement monetary action without making price stability irrelevant.

August policy item	Value or meaning
Repo	5.25%.
SDF	5.00%.
MSF / Bank Rate	5.50%.
Neutral stance	Flexibility; no automatic commitment to the next move.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

The corridor rates in the August decision are 5.00%, 5.25% and 5.50%. Each adjacent gap is 0.25 percentage points, or 25 basis points. A 25-basis-point change is not the same as a 25% change in the rate.

Source notes: S09, S34 | Full register at the back.

07 / ECONOMY / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Read a neutral stance carefully

A neutral stance preserves flexibility to respond to the evolving outlook. It does not promise the next move will be a cut or a hike. Markets may revise expectations as fresh information arrives. Aspirants should separate the decision made at the meeting from forecasts about later meetings, and should avoid interpreting every short-term market movement as a direct policy instruction.

Use forecasts with their dates attached

A growth projection made early in August may differ from data published later that month. Forecasts incorporate assumptions about rainfall, energy, external demand and domestic spending. Revision can be a reasonable response to new evidence. Record the source, reference period and release date so an answer does not mix an annual forecast with a quarterly estimate or a calendar-year figure.

Evaluate the trade-offs

Persistent inflation erodes purchasing power, especially for households with limited savings. Excessively weak demand can reduce investment and employment. The policy challenge is to protect price stability while maintaining conditions for sustainable growth. A strong answer explains channels and uncertainties, recognises time lags and identifies complementary supply-side measures rather than assuming a single interest-rate change solves every macroeconomic problem.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER

Policy and liquidity → **Financial transmission** → **Demand and expectations**

PRELIMS TRAP

The 6.7% growth and 5.0% inflation figures were August forecasts for FY 2026-27. They are not observed outcomes for July-September or the completed financial year.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

How should monetary policy respond when inflation risks coexist with growth concerns? (250 words)

Answer route: Distinguish demand and supply pressures. Explain transmission, expectations and lags. Use the dated August decision as context. Discuss fiscal and supply-side coordination while retaining a clear price-stability objective.

Source notes: S09, S34 | Full register at the back.

08 / BANKING AND GOVERNANCE / AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

Cooperative banks: reopening entry with safeguards

The August licensing consultation connects financial inclusion with depositor protection.



THE ISSUE BEHIND THE NEWS

A local cooperative institution may know the livelihood and credit needs of its members well. That knowledge can improve access to finance, but it also creates risks when lending decisions favour influential insiders. Licensing policy must support useful local intermediation while ensuring that depositors are protected by credible governance and supervision.

Reserve Bank of India building in Mumbai, 2018. Archival institutional photograph. Pinakpani / CC BY-SA 4.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

On 5 August, RBI published draft guidelines for on-tap licensing of urban cooperative banks and invited comments until 5 September. The draft followed a January discussion paper and a long pause in new licensing dating to 2004. The August document is a consultation proposal. It should not be described as proof that applicants had already received licences or that every proposed criterion had become a final rule.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: banking; financial inclusion | GS II: regulation; cooperative institutions

Source notes: S10, S11, S34 | Full register at the back.

08 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Understand on-tap licensing

An on-tap framework allows applications on an ongoing basis rather than only during a one-time window, subject to the final applicable rules. It does not mean automatic permission or the absence of eligibility tests. The regulator must assess financial strength, management, governance and the proposed business. A consultation document invites scrutiny of how those tests should be designed.

Distinguish a cooperative society from a bank

Cooperative organisation and banking authorisation are separate questions. A society's registration alone does not establish that it can undertake regulated banking business on the same terms as a licensed bank. The distinction matters for public communication: people may infer safety from a familiar name or local reputation without understanding the institution's legal status and permitted activities.

Keep governance and prudential rules connected

Governance determines who makes decisions and whose interests they serve. Prudential requirements address capital, liquidity, asset quality and concentrated exposures. Good rules on paper cannot compensate for inaccurate accounts or unchecked connected lending. Conversely, community participation is stronger when members have intelligible information and management faces effective independent challenge.

Term	Meaning
Discussion paper	An initial invitation to examine policy options.
Draft guidelines	Proposed rules open to feedback.
Final framework	The operative regulatory design once issued.
Individual licence	Permission granted after the relevant assessment.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

Imagine a society with deposits concentrated among a few businesses and loans concentrated in one local industry. Its accounts may look healthy in a good year. A downturn in that industry could weaken borrowers and prompt deposit withdrawals together, illustrating correlated credit and liquidity risk.

Source notes: S10, S11, S34 | Full register at the back.

08 / BANKING AND GOVERNANCE / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Protect inclusion from institutional failure

A failed local bank can damage the savings and working capital of the very community it was meant to serve. Entry policy therefore needs a viable business model and the capacity to manage risk. Inclusion is measured by dependable service, appropriate products and fair treatment, not simply by the number of new institutions carrying a banking label.

Make proportional regulation credible

Smaller institutions have different resources from large banks, but depositors still require protection. Proportionality can adjust the complexity of compliance to the institution's size and risk while preserving essential safeguards. Supervisors need reliable reporting and timely corrective powers. Capacity building for boards, auditors and staff should accompany expansion so that growth does not outrun controls.

Use consultation as a policy tool

Stakeholder comments can reveal unrealistic costs, loopholes and unintended barriers to entry. Published reasoning helps explain how the final framework balances those concerns. In a Mains answer, treat the draft as a stage in regulatory development. The relevant test is whether eventual entry improves competition and access while maintaining resilience, transparency and accountability.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

On-tap licensing does not mean an automatic licence. The August 2026 source is explicitly a draft; the comment deadline is not an authorisation date.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Can wider entry of cooperative banks improve financial inclusion without weakening depositor protection? (250 words)

Answer route: Explain local knowledge and access benefits. Examine governance, connected lending, capital and liquidity. Propose proportionate regulation, board capacity, transparent status disclosure and supervision. Distinguish consultation from final licensing decisions.

Source notes: S10, S11, S34 | Full register at the back.

09 / ECONOMY AND DATA / AUGUST

GDP in August: match the number to its period

The release belongs to this magazine's quarter; the economic activity measured belongs to April-June.



Marine Drive skyline, Mumbai, 2016. Archival urban-development context. A.Savin / FAL.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

MoSPI's 31 August release estimated real GDP growth of 7.8% and nominal GDP growth of 10.3% for April-June, the first quarter of FY 2026-27. The constant-price estimates use the 2022-23 base. Real GVA growth was estimated at 8.2%. These are the figures in that release vintage. They describe April-June activity, even though they were published during July-September.

A current-affairs question can contain three different dates: when production occurred, when the estimate was released and when the estimate was revised. Keeping these separate prevents a common mistake: calling an August announcement the growth rate of the July-September quarter. Economic interpretation begins with the label attached to the number.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: national income; growth; macroeconomic measurement

Source notes: S12, S35 | Full register at the back.

09 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Real and nominal measures answer different questions

Nominal GDP values current production at current prices. Real GDP uses the national accounts' constant-price framework to analyse changes in output volume. Nominal growth therefore reflects both quantity and price movements. The GDP deflator is an economy-wide price measure derived from nominal and real GDP; it is conceptually different from a consumer-price index based on a defined consumption basket.

Relate GDP to value added

Gross value added measures output less intermediate consumption across producers. GDP at market prices connects to GVA through taxes less subsidies on products. The distinction prevents double counting of intermediate transactions and explains why GDP and GVA growth need not be identical. A higher sales value in one industry is not automatically the same as its contribution to value added.

Interpret year-on-year growth and the base

Quarterly year-on-year growth compares a quarter with the corresponding quarter a year earlier. It can be influenced by an unusually weak or strong comparison period. A base-year revision changes the statistical framework and can improve representation of the economy. Compare like-for-like series rather than stitching an old-base estimate to a new-base estimate without adjustment.

Label	Correct reading
Calendar Q3 2026	July-September 2026.
FY 2026-27 Q1	April-June 2026.
31 August release	Publication date of the estimates discussed here.
7.8% / 10.3%	Real / nominal GDP growth in that release.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

If nominal output rises from 100 to 110 and real output rises from 100 to 106, the implied price-level ratio is 110/106, about 1.0377. The implied increase is about 3.77%, rather than exactly four percentage points. This is an illustrative calculation, not the published quarter's deflator.

Source notes: S12, S35 | Full register at the back.

09 / ECONOMY AND DATA / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Read the composition of growth

Aggregate output can expand while some sectors or households struggle. Examine consumption, investment and external demand, alongside sectoral value added. Employment and real household income provide further context. GDP is useful for measuring production, but it does not directly measure distribution, unpaid household work or the environmental cost of producing that output.

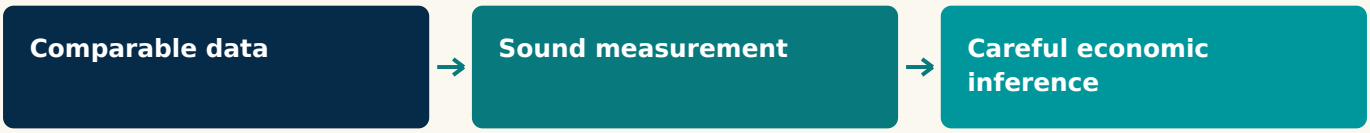
Respect provisional evidence

MoSPI's 2 September explanation highlighted double deflation: output and intermediate inputs are deflated separately before real GVA is calculated. An implicit GVA deflator can decline even when both output and input prices rise. This is not evidence by itself that every product became cheaper. Quarterly estimates also change as fuller information arrives; compare consistent series and avoid treating statistical discrepancies as proof of a predetermined revision.

Connect growth with productive capacity

Sustained development depends on the capacity to produce useful goods and services efficiently. Infrastructure, skills, health, institutions and investment shape that capacity. The quarter's industrial and social policies can be discussed as possible contributors, but their future effects cannot be claimed as already visible in an earlier quarter's GDP. Keep the direction of time consistent with the proposed causal argument.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

Do not label the 31 August estimate as July-September GDP. Do not compare the RBI's August annual forecast directly with an observed quarterly year-on-year estimate as if they measured the same period.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Why are reference periods, price measures and release vintages essential when interpreting GDP? (250 words)

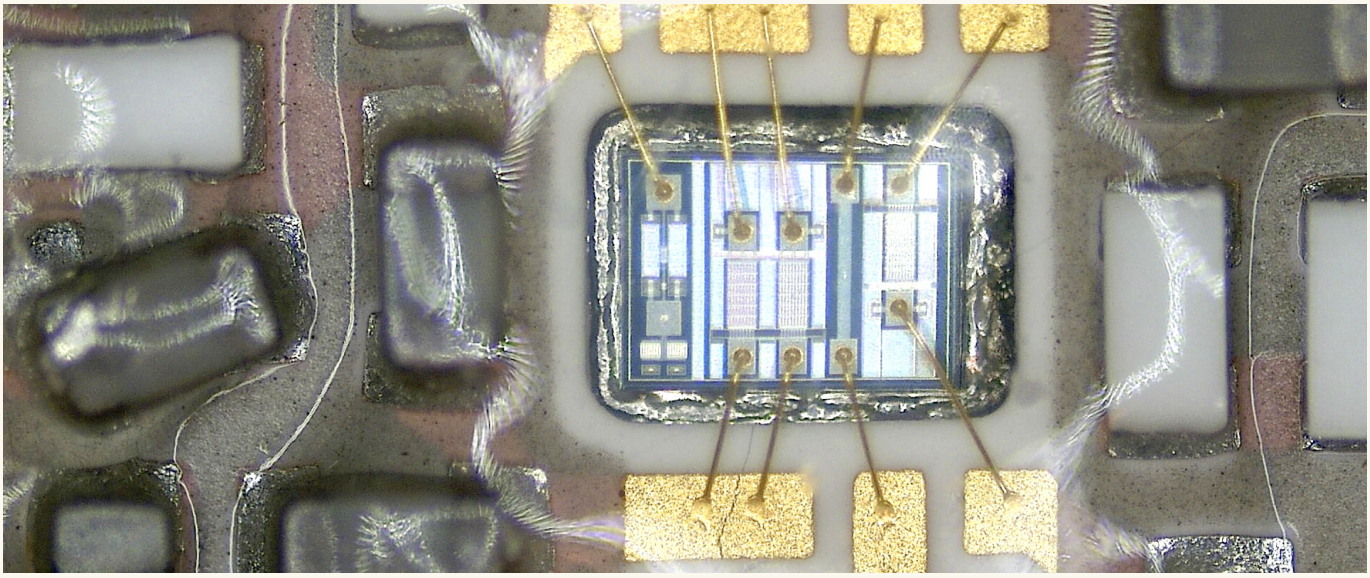
Answer route: Define the three distinctions and use the August release as an example. Explain GVA, price effects and revisions. Connect aggregate growth with composition, employment and distribution, avoiding unsupported causal claims.

Source notes: S12, S35 | Full register at the back.

10 / INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY / JULY-AUGUST

Mobile manufacturing: from assembly to domestic value

The policy’s design separates production scale, local components, brands and intellectual property.



Electronic circuit board, 2021. Archival technology detail; not a device certified under the 2026 manufacturing scheme. Jan Helebrant / CC0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

The Cabinet approved the ₹62,500 crore Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme on 15 July; MeitY announced its notification on 21 August. The five-year period is FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31. The notified design distinguishes manufacturing support and support for Indian brands, with additional incentives linked to design and R&D and domestic sourcing. Projected production and jobs are future expectations, not completed achievements of this quarter.

The label on a phone, the place where it is assembled and the location where its key components and design originate can all differ. Industrial policy must decide which capabilities it wants to develop. A useful evaluation follows the value retained through the supply chain, rather than relying on the final shipment’s gross value.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: industrial policy; manufacturing; employment; technology

Source notes: S13, S14 | Full register at the back.

Build the foundation

Explain domestic value addition

Domestic value addition concerns the economic value generated within the country through production-related activities. Assembly, components, engineering, testing and design can contribute differently. Gross exports may include a large imported-input component. Rising exports are significant, but the policy question also asks whether local suppliers acquire capabilities and whether domestic activity becomes more productive over time.

Separate contract manufacturing and brand ownership

An electronics manufacturing-services provider can produce devices for another company's brand. Brand ownership involves product strategy, marketing, distribution and often intellectual property, although many functions can still be outsourced. The notified scheme recognises manufacturing and Indian-brand support as different segments. An Indian factory does not by itself establish Indian ownership of the brand or of its underlying technology.

Understand performance-linked support

Incentives tied to eligible sales attempt to reward demonstrated production rather than only the promise of investment. Conditions can steer firms towards local sourcing and design. Their effectiveness depends on credible measurement, additional activity and enforceable rules. A payment that merely subsidises activity which would have happened anyway has a different public value from support that creates a lasting new capability.

Activity	Capability to examine
Assembly	Reliable, high-volume production.
Components	Local supplier quality and scale.
Design / R&D	Engineering knowledge and intellectual property.
Brand development	Product strategy and access to customers.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

A hypothetical exported device is worth ₹20,000 and uses imported inputs worth ₹15,000. The difference is a rough starting point for thinking about domestic content, not a complete national-accounts calculation. Gross export value alone would overstate the value retained domestically.

Source notes: S13, S14 | Full register at the back.

10 / INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Build supplier capability around large plants

Smaller firms need quality systems, reliable orders, technical support and access to finance to enter demanding supply chains. Tooling, testing and certification facilities can reduce the cost of upgrading. Policy should examine whether large assemblers develop local relationships that survive after incentives decline. Skills matter at several levels, from shop-floor reliability to process engineering and product development.

Consider competition and fiscal discipline

Eligibility thresholds and administrative procedures influence which firms can participate. Transparent selection, public reporting and independent verification reduce favouritism and inflated claims. Periodic evaluation should assess cost per unit of additional value or sustainable employment. The objective is a competitive industry with learning effects, rather than permanent dependence on increasingly generous public support.

Include workers and the product's life cycle

Employment gains depend on job quality, safety, training and advancement as well as headcount. Electronics also create repair, reuse and waste-management responsibilities. A balanced answer connects manufacturing ambition with worker welfare, resource efficiency and responsible disposal. Domestic value becomes more durable when production capability is accompanied by design competence, service networks and continued innovation.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

The scheme's July approval and August notification are distinct stages. Manufacturing in India does not automatically make every product an Indian-owned brand.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

How can production incentives move electronics manufacturing towards deeper domestic capabilities? (250 words)

Answer route: Distinguish assembly, components, design and brands. Explain the incentive mechanism and additionality. Discuss suppliers, skills, verification and competition. Evaluate lasting value addition and job quality rather than gross production alone.

Source notes: S13, S14 | Full register at the back.

11 / SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY / JULY

Semicon 2.0: building the complete chip ecosystem

A semiconductor strategy needs linked capabilities in design, materials, fabrication and packaging.



Semiconductor wafer being removed from processing equipment, from a Purdue Engineering video published in April 2026. General technology context; not the approved Gujarat facilities. YouTube — Purdue Engineering / CC BY 4.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

On 15 July, the Cabinet approved Semicon 2.0 with an outlay of ₹1,27,500 crore. The announced six pillars cover design; machines and materials; additional fabs; ATMP/OSAT; research and development; and talent. The scheme expands the ecosystem approach beyond an individual plant. Approval and announced investment plans should be distinguished from facilities commissioned, qualified production and commercial output actually achieved.

A semiconductor is produced through a long chain of specialised work. A country may design a chip, fabricate it elsewhere and package it in a third location. Reducing vulnerability requires identifying the missing capabilities in that chain. The most useful question is how one investment helps the rest of the ecosystem become more capable.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: semiconductors; industrial policy; supply-chain resilience

Source notes: S15 | Full register at the back.

11 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Follow the chip's journey

Design specifies the circuit and its behaviour. Fabrication forms devices and connections on a wafer. Packaging protects the chip and creates usable connections, while testing verifies performance. Assembly, testing, marking and packaging is commonly abbreviated ATMP; outsourced semiconductor assembly and test is OSAT. These activities require different equipment, skills and business models, even though all belong to the semiconductor industry.

Materials and machines are strategic inputs

High-purity gases, chemicals, wafers and precision equipment influence quality and yield. A fabrication plant depends on stable utilities and tightly controlled operating conditions. Dependence on a small number of suppliers can create vulnerability even when final manufacturing occurs locally. Developing supporting capabilities can therefore improve resilience and create specialised industrial opportunities beyond the headline fab.

Node size is not the whole strategy

Different applications require different combinations of performance, power, cost and reliability. Mature process technologies remain useful in many industrial, automotive and power-related applications. Advanced packaging and compound semiconductors create additional pathways. The appropriate technology depends on demand and the ability to deliver reliably; simply naming a smaller node does not establish a viable business.

Stage	Typical capability
Design	Architecture, circuit design and IP.
Fabrication	Controlled wafer processing.
ATMP / OSAT	Assembly, packaging and testing.
Supporting ecosystem	Equipment, materials, utilities and skilled people.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

Suppose two plants process the same number of wafers, but one obtains 80 usable chips per hundred designed positions and the other 60. Their commercially useful output differs despite similar wafer throughput. Yield and customer acceptance matter when evaluating capacity.

Source notes: S15 | Full register at the back.

11 / SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Coordinate investments over a long horizon

Semiconductor facilities have long development and qualification cycles. Training, supplier development and infrastructure must progress alongside plant construction. Predictable policy helps investors plan, while milestones allow public support to be linked to real progress. Coordination should avoid assuming that every approved project will reach commercial operation on its original timetable.

Measure learning and commercially useful output

A plant's output depends on yield, quality, customer qualification and sustained demand. Track engineers trained, suppliers qualified, designs commercialised and production sold, rather than only buildings completed. Public funding should recognise strategic benefits while examining cost and opportunity cost. Transparent performance information makes it easier to distinguish temporary setbacks from a fundamentally weak project.

Combine resilience with international cooperation

No country can efficiently replicate every part of a complex global value chain. Partnerships can provide technology, markets and research access while local capability develops. A resilient strategy diversifies critical dependencies and builds strengths that others value. It should preserve room for innovation and collaboration, rather than equating self-reliance with complete technological isolation.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

An OSAT facility is not automatically a wafer-fabrication plant. The ₹1,27,500 crore figure is an approved scheme outlay, not evidence that all the proposed capacity is already producing chips.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Discuss why semiconductor policy must develop an ecosystem rather than focus only on fabrication plants. (250 words)

Answer route: Map the value chain and identify complementarities. Discuss machines, materials, talent, utilities and customers. Balance strategic resilience with commercial viability and global cooperation. Recommend milestone-based support and transparent outcome measures.

Source notes: S15 | Full register at the back.

12 / ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY / AUGUST

GOBARdhan: make the waste-to-gas chain work

Compressed biogas links local feedstock, reliable demand and environmental performance.



Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate biogas facility, circa 2003. Archival industrial example, not a plant built under the 2026 scheme. The Agashe Foundation / CC BY-SA 4.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

On 6 August, the Cabinet approved the GOBARdhan national compressed-biogas framework with an outlay of ₹23,731 crore. The announcement combines demand support, pricing, capital assistance, pipeline connectivity and finance. It also links procurement to the notified CBG obligation trajectory in relevant city-gas segments. The policy seeks to make projects more viable; it does not establish that all proposed plants have begun operating or that all organic waste is suitable feedstock.

A biogas plant needs a dependable supply of usable organic material every day. It also needs a buyer, a way to move the gas and a safe use for the residual material. The technology is only one part of the enterprise. A breakdown in collection, quality or payment can stop the chain even when the digester itself works.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: bioenergy; waste management; agriculture; energy security

Source notes: S16 | Full register at the back.

12 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Understand anaerobic digestion and upgrading

Microorganisms break down suitable organic material without oxygen, producing biogas and a residual digestate. Raw biogas contains methane along with carbon dioxide and impurities. Upgrading removes unwanted components to meet the required fuel specification; compression enables storage and transport. CBG should therefore be distinguished from untreated biogas and from fossil natural gas extracted from geological reservoirs.

Feedstock quality determines performance

Animal waste, agricultural residues and segregated organic waste have different characteristics. Their moisture, contamination and seasonal availability affect collection and processing. Mixed municipal waste cannot be assumed ready for digestion. Contracts should address supply quality and competing uses, including existing uses of residues. A plant designed around optimistic feedstock assumptions may operate far below capacity.

Demand certainty changes investment risk

An offtake arrangement identifies who buys the product and on what terms. Predictable demand and pricing can help a project obtain finance, but costs still depend on operations and logistics. Pipeline connectivity or transport arrangements must match the project's scale and location. Policy support needs to connect the physical system with a commercially workable payment system.

Link	Question to ask
Feedstock	Is supply reliable, suitable and traceable?
Digestion and upgrading	Does gas meet the required specification?
Delivery and payment	Is offtake dependable and commercially workable?
Residual material	Is handling safe and use appropriate?

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

A hypothetical plant is rated to process 100 tonnes of feedstock daily but receives only 60 tonnes of suitable material. Its nameplate capacity cannot be treated as actual processing. Investigate collection, contamination and seasonal availability before assuming the machinery is at fault.

Source notes: S16 | Full register at the back.

12 / ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Count environmental performance across the chain

Potential benefits include waste treatment and substitution for some fossil fuel use. Methane leakage, transport energy, digestate handling and land-use effects influence the overall result. Poorly managed residual material can shift pollution elsewhere. Environmental claims should therefore be based on lifecycle evidence and operating standards, rather than treating every plant labelled “green” as automatically low-impact.

Design for rural participation

Farmers and local enterprises may benefit from supplying feedstock and using suitable organic fertiliser products. The terms of those relationships matter: delayed payments or costly collection can undermine participation. Quality assurance and agronomic advice are needed before residual material is widely used. Local workers require training in safe operation, gas handling and equipment maintenance.

Evaluate reliable output and public value

Track actual gas delivered, plant uptime, feedstock traceability, leakage control and verified waste-treatment outcomes. Installed capacity is a useful input indicator, but regular operation determines the benefit. A balanced Mains answer combines energy security and circular-resource opportunities with practical constraints. The policy succeeds when each participant in the chain has both the means and the incentive to perform.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

CBG is upgraded and compressed biogas. It is not identical to untreated biogas, and a renewable feedstock does not make methane leakage or other lifecycle impacts irrelevant.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

What conditions are necessary for compressed biogas to support a viable circular economy? (250 words)

Answer route: Explain the process briefly. Build the answer around feedstock, technology, offtake and residual management. Discuss farmer participation, finance and environmental safeguards. Evaluate actual delivery and lifecycle performance.

Source notes: S16 | Full register at the back.

13 / ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT / JULY

Offshore exploration: security with geological uncertainty

Samudra Manthan is an exploration programme; commercial production requires further evidence.



Offshore oil-and-gas platform in Norway, 2010. International technology context; not an Indian Samudra Manthan project. W. Bulach / CC BY-SA 4.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

On 31 July, the Cabinet approved Samudra Manthan, the National Offshore Exploration Scheme, as a Central Sector Scheme of the petroleum ministry. The approved outlay is ₹84,084 crore, with implementation up to FY 2030-31. The announcement covers seismic information, exploratory drilling, supporting offshore infrastructure and related capability. The decision funds a search and development framework; it does not establish a guaranteed volume of economically recoverable oil or gas.

Finding a promising geological structure is the beginning of an energy project. The next questions are whether hydrocarbons are present, whether they can be extracted safely and whether production makes economic sense. Offshore exploration links scientific uncertainty with large investments, long lead times and sensitive marine environments.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: energy security; infrastructure; environmental safeguards

Source notes: S17 | Full register at the back.

13 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Follow the exploration sequence

Seismic surveys help infer subsurface structures by analysing how waves travel through rock. Exploratory drilling tests what is actually present. Appraisal examines the extent and characteristics of a discovery. Development then requires a production plan, infrastructure and permissions. Each stage reduces some uncertainties while revealing new ones. A promising survey cannot be treated as equivalent to a producing field.

Distinguish resources and reserves

A geological resource is broader than a commercially recoverable reserve. Recoverability depends on knowledge, technology, costs and economic conditions. Prices and operating conditions can change a project's commercial attractiveness. The distinction is central to policy: a large estimated resource base may justify further study, but it cannot be counted immediately as a secure stream of domestic supply.

Locate the project within energy security

Domestic production can diversify supply and reduce exposure to some import disruptions. Energy security also depends on demand efficiency, infrastructure reliability, storage and the diversity of suppliers and fuels. Exploration cannot respond instantly to a short-term price spike because projects take time. A resilient energy strategy therefore works across several horizons rather than relying on one future discovery.

Stage	Evidence gained
Seismic survey	Possible subsurface structures.
Exploration well	Direct evidence about a prospect.
Appraisal	Size, quality and development understanding.
Commercial production	Operating output under an approved development plan.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

A hypothetical survey identifies five promising structures, but exploratory drilling confirms a commercially viable accumulation in only one. This does not mean the survey was useless. It shows why exploration results are probabilistic and why staged investment is preferable to assuming every prospect will produce.

Source notes: S17 | Full register at the back.

13 / ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Treat safety and ecology as project requirements

Offshore operations require well-control systems, emergency planning and reliable monitoring. Spills, routine discharges, noise and coastal infrastructure can affect marine life and livelihoods. Environmental assessment should consider the location, alternatives, cumulative pressures and response capacity. Fishing communities need meaningful information and routes to raise concerns before avoidable conflicts become embedded in project design.

Use public funds to reduce specific barriers

Government-supported data and common infrastructure can lower entry barriers and improve knowledge of frontier areas. Clear access arrangements are needed so publicly financed information produces wider value. Selection and milestone monitoring should recognise the uncertainty of exploration without excusing poor execution. An unsuccessful well can still generate useful geological knowledge if the process was sound and the evidence is preserved.

Connect near-term security with a changing energy system

Long-lived infrastructure must be assessed against future demand, climate policy and technological change. Exploration policy and clean-energy investment can coexist, but capital allocation requires honest comparison of costs and risks. In a Mains answer, avoid promising automatic import independence. Explain diversification, disciplined appraisal, safety and the need to reassess projects as evidence and economic conditions evolve.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

Samudra Manthan concerns offshore oil-and-gas exploration. Do not confuse the scheme with deep-ocean mineral exploration or treat its approved outlay as the value of proven reserves.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Examine the opportunities and constraints of offshore exploration as an energy-security strategy. (250 words)

Answer route: Explain the exploration-to-production sequence. Discuss domestic supply, data and capability benefits. Weigh geology, commercial risk, ecology and safety. Conclude with staged appraisal, transparent public support and a diversified energy strategy.

Source notes: S17 | Full register at the back.

14 / INFRASTRUCTURE / SEPTEMBER

Rail capacity: removing bottlenecks in a network

The value of another track depends on the junctions, terminals and services connected to it.



THE ISSUE BEHIND THE NEWS

A freight train can be delayed even when most of its route has spare capacity. One congested section, busy junction or constrained terminal can determine the journey's reliability. Rail investment is therefore best understood as a network problem: an additional track creates value when the rest of the operating system can use it.

Freight-train scene, 2025. Archival rail context; not a photograph of the five newly approved projects. Saankav / CC0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

On 9 September, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved five rail multitracking projects across Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana. The official release describes about 540 km of network expansion across 17 districts, at an estimated cost of approximately ₹10,021 crore, with planned completion up to 2029-30. These are approved projects and projected benefits, not completed lines as of September 2026.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: railways; logistics; infrastructure planning; investment

Source notes: S18 | Full register at the back.

14 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Distinguish doubling, multitracking and new routes

Doubling adds a second track to a single-track section; multitracking adds further lines where required. These changes can reduce conflicts between trains and improve flexibility. They do not necessarily connect a completely new geographical corridor. Route length, track length and the project's stated network addition measure different things and should not be used interchangeably in calculations.

Explain the capacity constraint

Trains need safe separation, paths through junctions and available platforms or terminals. Passenger and freight services can have different speeds and stopping patterns, which complicates timetabling. Signalling, maintenance windows and traction also affect capacity. The same physical distance can support different service levels depending on the operating system and the mix of traffic.

Connect railways with the logistics chain

A manufacturer needs reliable door-to-door delivery, not merely a fast movement between two railway stations. Warehouses, cargo terminals, roads and handling arrangements connect production with the rail network. Modal choice depends on total cost, reliability, shipment size and time sensitivity. Integrated planning should therefore consider first- and last-mile links alongside the main-line investment.

Measure	Interpretation
Project approval	Permission and investment commitment.
Physical completion	Construction milestone.
Operational capacity	Usable paths under safe operating conditions.
Logistics outcome	Reliable end-to-end movement at a reasonable cost.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

In a simplified network, three consecutive sections can handle 80, 40 and 70 train movements per day. Expanding the first section to 100 leaves the middle section's constraint unchanged. This illustration shows why the location of investment matters as much as the amount spent.

Source notes: S18 | Full register at the back.

14 / INFRASTRUCTURE / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Assess benefits using realistic assumptions

Additional capacity may improve punctuality, freight movement and access to markets. These benefits depend on demand and on complementary works being ready. Forecasts of traffic or emissions savings should state their assumptions and time horizon. Approval documents describe expected benefits; an evaluation after operation should test how much of that expectation materialised and why.

Manage construction and social impacts

Land, utilities, safety arrangements and existing services affect project delivery. Work alongside operating lines needs careful phasing. Local communities may experience disruption before the transport benefit arrives. Transparent information, fair processes and coordination among agencies help reduce delays and avoidable harm. Cost control should protect necessary safety and environmental measures rather than simply compress every expenditure.

Look beyond kilometres completed

Operational evaluation should examine transit time, variability, service reliability and terminal performance. A completed line that remains constrained by a junction may provide less benefit than projected. Maintenance planning preserves the investment's value. A strong answer explains how targeted capacity augmentation, integrated logistics and reliable operations can support competitiveness without assuming construction alone is sufficient.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

The September approval is not a completion announcement. Do not treat route kilometres, additional track kilometres and traffic capacity as identical quantities.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Why should rail infrastructure investment be evaluated as a network intervention? (250 words)

Answer route: Explain bottlenecks, junctions and mixed traffic. Connect track works with signalling, terminals and last-mile links. Discuss implementation and maintenance. Evaluate reliability, travel time and logistics cost alongside construction progress.

Source notes: S18 | Full register at the back.

15 / INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS / SEPTEMBER

BRICS in New Delhi: representation and practical cooperation

A leaders' declaration sets political direction; institutional change requires further action.



Leaders at the eighteenth BRICS Summit in New Delhi, 12 September 2026. Official event photograph. Press Information Bureau India Prime Minister's Office India Government of India / GODL-India.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

The XVIII BRICS Summit was held in New Delhi on 12-13 September under the theme of resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability. The published New Delhi Declaration reaffirmed cooperation and reform of global governance. India's session on inclusive governance emphasised greater representation of the Global South. These are diplomatic commitments and positions; they do not by themselves amend the UN Charter or establish a new common currency.

Countries can agree that international institutions need reform while differing on the design and pace of change. BRICS gives members a forum to coordinate, propose initiatives and widen partnerships. Its significance lies in what the members can achieve together despite differences in economic structure, security interests and political priorities.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS II: international groupings; global governance; India's interests

Source notes: S19, S20 | Full register at the back.

15 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Understand the Global South as a political category

The expression brings together countries concerned with development, representation and unequal influence in global decision-making. It is not a precise geographical hemisphere or a group with identical interests. Some members are large economies, while others face acute financing constraints. A useful answer identifies shared concerns without erasing differences in income, institutions or strategic priorities.

Separate declarations from legal reform

A summit declaration records agreed positions and intended cooperation. Changing an institution's governing rules requires its own legal procedures and political support. UN Security Council reform, for example, cannot be completed by a BRICS statement. The declaration can strengthen a coalition or agenda, but implementation depends on negotiation across the wider membership of the relevant organisation.

Distinguish financial cooperation from monetary union

Development finance, settlement arrangements and use of national currencies are different forms of cooperation. A common currency would require much deeper agreement about monetary governance, adjustment and credibility. Discussing alternatives in payments does not demonstrate that such a currency exists. Keep each initiative at the level of institutional commitment actually supported by the source.

Form of cooperation	What it can establish
Leaders' declaration	A shared political position.
Specific programme	An implementation mechanism if separately created.
Local-currency settlement	A payment arrangement with defined scope.
Common currency	A much deeper monetary institution.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

If several countries endorse a proposal for greater representation in a global body, they have strengthened a political position. Seats do not change until the body's required procedure is completed. The distinction resembles the difference between agreeing on a policy objective and enacting the rules needed to implement it.

Source notes: S19, S20 | Full register at the back.

15 / INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Assess India's opportunities

India can use the forum to advance development priorities, technology cooperation and a more representative international system. Convening also creates space for bilateral engagement and practical projects. The value is stronger when initiatives address identifiable needs and have institutions capable of carrying them forward. Diplomatic visibility should be connected to outcomes such as knowledge exchange, financing or reduced barriers to cooperation.

Recognise the constraints of a diverse grouping

Members may disagree on regional conflicts, trade practices and strategic alignments. Consensus can preserve participation but limit the specificity of commitments. Expansion can widen reach while increasing coordination costs. A balanced assessment avoids treating the group as either uniformly aligned or inherently ineffective; effectiveness varies by issue and by the incentives of participating states.

Link representation to institutional performance

A fairer distribution of voice matters, but institutions must also deliver credible decisions and useful services. Reform should examine accountability, financing and implementation as well as membership. For Mains, connect the New Delhi agenda with the broader challenge of making multilateralism representative and functional. Distinguish a justified aspiration from a completed institutional transformation.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

BRICS is not a military alliance, and the New Delhi Declaration does not by itself create a common currency or change permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

How can BRICS contribute to a more representative and effective multilateral order? (250 words)

Answer route: Explain representation, development finance and practical cooperation. Use the New Delhi summit as context. Examine divergent interests and consensus constraints. Recommend issue-based initiatives and distinguish political commitments from legal reform.

Source notes: S19, S20 | Full register at the back.

16 / INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS / AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

SCO at twenty-five: security, connectivity and opportunity

Regional cooperation depends on routes, rules and relationships as well as geography.



SCO Plus meeting in Bishkek, 1 September 2026. Official photograph of the wider-format summit gathering. Press Service of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan / CC BY 4.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

The 26th SCO Council of Heads of State meeting took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, from 31 August to 1 September. The official Indian account describes the organisation's twenty-fifth anniversary, the Bishkek Declaration and cooperation across several fields. India reiterated security, connectivity and opportunity as priorities. Participation in the forum should not be interpreted as automatic agreement with every member's bilateral policy or strategic project.

Central Asia's importance to India includes security, trade, energy and civilisational links. Geography creates potential connections, but actual movement depends on transit arrangements, infrastructure and political trust. The SCO provides a forum in which members can discuss these interests even when their wider relationships contain significant disagreements.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS II: regional groupings; connectivity; India and Central Asia

Source notes: S21 | Full register at the back.

16 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Locate the forum geographically

Bishkek is the capital of Kyrgyzstan, a landlocked Central Asian state. Regional trade often crosses several jurisdictions before reaching a seaport or final market. Border procedures, customs documentation and transport reliability can therefore be as important as physical distance. A map-based answer should link geography to the practical costs and vulnerabilities of movement.

Separate connectivity from infrastructure alone

A road or railway needs agreed procedures for transit, payment, inspection and dispute resolution. Political interruptions can reduce the usefulness of an otherwise sound route. Connectivity also includes digital, commercial and people-to-people links. The public value of a corridor depends on whether users can move legally, predictably and affordably along it.

Understand security cooperation within its limits

Regional dialogue can support information exchange and shared responses to problems such as terrorism and illicit trafficking. It does not eliminate divergent threat perceptions or replace domestic institutions. Cooperation must be assessed through agreed mechanisms and implementation. Membership of the same organisation is not evidence that all members share a single strategic outlook.

Dimension	Practical requirement
Physical connectivity	Routes and transport infrastructure.
Institutional connectivity	Transit, customs and commercial rules.
Security cooperation	Agreed mechanisms and implementation.
People-to-people links	Sustained education, science and cultural exchanges.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

Two hypothetical routes have the same distance. One requires unpredictable border waits and repeated document checks; the other offers reliable clearance and interoperable documentation. The second may be economically preferable even if its transport charge per kilometre is slightly higher.

Source notes: S21 | Full register at the back.

16 / INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Preserve room for independent engagement

India can participate in regional institutions while maintaining other partnerships. This requires clarity about national interests and issue-specific cooperation. Engagement may create opportunities to communicate concerns and prevent misunderstandings even where consensus is difficult. A nuanced answer explains why dialogue can be valuable without treating participation as unconditional endorsement.

Turn potential into usable economic links

Businesses need predictable customs, banking channels, insurance and dispute handling. Smaller firms may face information and compliance costs that larger firms can absorb. Cooperation on standards, logistics information and professional exchanges can complement major infrastructure. Outcomes should be measured through actual trade and dependable access, with attention to whose costs fall and which routes become more resilient.

Use cultural links with practical follow-through

Educational exchanges, scientific collaboration and cultural dialogue can build familiarity and support longer-term relationships. Their value grows when programmes are sustained and accessible beyond a narrow official circle. In Mains, connect the SCO's broad agenda to concrete cooperation while acknowledging geopolitical constraints. Avoid assuming that a declaration alone resolves transit or security disputes.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER

Routes and rules → **Predictable regional links** → **Trade and cooperation**

PRELIMS TRAP

The 2026 summit venue was Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan. A regional grouping does not automatically constitute a military alliance or guarantee unrestricted movement across all member borders.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Assess the relevance of the SCO for India's engagement with Central Asia. (250 words)

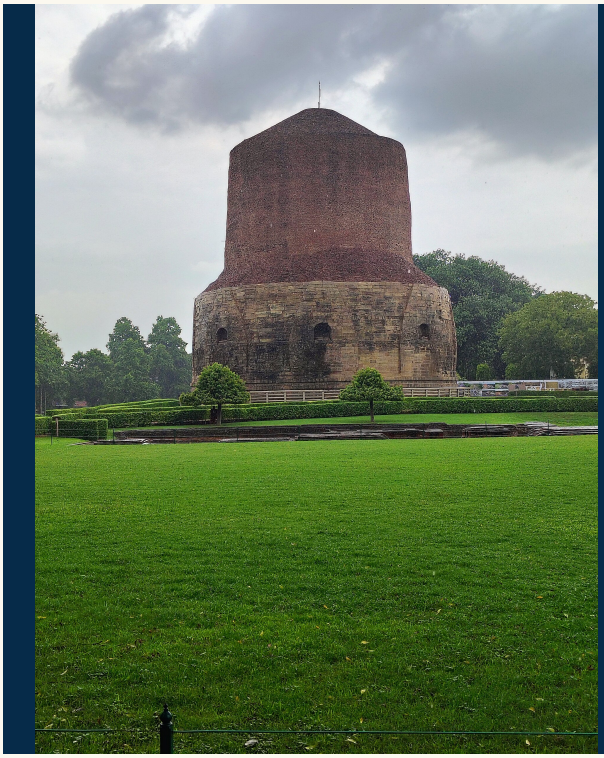
Answer route: Begin with geography and shared interests. Discuss security dialogue, trade, connectivity and cultural links. Examine transit constraints and divergent interests. Conclude with practical, issue-specific cooperation consistent with strategic autonomy.

Source notes: S21 | Full register at the back.

17 / ART AND CULTURE / JULY

Sarnath: heritage, history and living responsibility

World Heritage recognition makes conservation questions more urgent, not less.



THE ISSUE BEHIND THE NEWS

Sarnath is associated with the Buddha's first teaching after enlightenment. Its significance comes from religious memory, archaeological remains and centuries of artistic activity. A heritage answer should bring these dimensions together while recognising that the site people visit today contains layers from different periods, rather than a single building from one moment in history.

Dhamek Stupa at Sarnath, photographed in July 2025. Archival site photograph, not the 2026 inscription ceremony. Hardy Explorer / CC0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

On 25 July, the Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List during the forty-eighth World Heritage Committee session in Busan, Republic of Korea. UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture described it as India's forty-fifth World Heritage property. The inscription creates an opportunity to revisit Buddhist history and the responsibilities involved in protecting an archaeological landscape.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS I: Buddhism; Indian art and architecture; heritage conservation

Source notes: S22, S23, S31 | Full register at the back.

17 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Place Sarnath in the Buddhist landscape

The traditional account connects the first sermon at Sarnath with the setting in motion of the wheel of dharma. Distinguish this association from the Buddha's enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, birth at Lumbini and mahaparinirvana at Kushinagar. These place-event links are useful for Prelims. For Mains, explain how pilgrimage, patronage and institutions helped religious traditions travel and endure.

Read the archaeological forms

A stupa is a commemorative or reliquary monument associated with Buddhist devotion. Monasteries provided spaces for the life and learning of the monastic community. Pillars, sculpture and inscriptions offer different types of evidence about patronage and ideas. The Dhamek Stupa is a prominent surviving landmark at Sarnath. Avoid assigning all surviving remains to the same ruler or century without specific evidence.

Understand World Heritage recognition

The World Heritage framework concerns properties of outstanding universal value and their protection. Inscription involves assessment under relevant criteria and expectations concerning integrity, authenticity where applicable, and management. It does not transfer ownership to UNESCO. A property's legal protection and day-to-day conservation continue to depend on the responsible authorities and management arrangements.

Place / concept	Association
Sarnath	First sermon in Buddhist tradition.
Bodh Gaya	Enlightenment.
Stupa	Buddhist commemorative or reliquary monument.
World Heritage inscription	International recognition with conservation responsibilities.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

Suppose a new visitor path reduces congestion but cuts through an area with unexcavated remains. A heritage-sensitive decision would examine alternatives and archaeological evidence before construction. Improving access and protecting knowledge are connected design responsibilities.

Source notes: S22, S23, S31 | Full register at the back.

17 / ART AND CULTURE / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Conserve the setting as well as the monument

Archaeological remains can be affected by drainage, vegetation, vibration, pollution and inappropriate construction. The surrounding landscape influences how the site is understood and experienced. Conservation should preserve evidence rather than make every structure appear new. Documentation, preventive maintenance and careful assessment of interventions are essential, especially where fragile material has survived for centuries.

Manage tourism with local participation

Recognition may increase visitors and commercial activity. Better interpretation, accessible routes, crowd management and services can improve the experience while protecting the site. Local communities need a fair opportunity to benefit without being displaced from meaningful participation. Tourism planning should consider carrying capacity and seasonality rather than assume that the highest possible visitor count is always desirable.

Use heritage as a source of understanding

Well-designed interpretation can explain Buddhist thought, artistic change and historical exchange without reducing the site to a list of dates. Schools, museums and guides can connect tangible remains with the ideas they represent. In a Mains answer, link cultural diplomacy and livelihoods with scientific conservation. The responsibility after inscription is to preserve significance for future generations while allowing informed public access.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

Sarnath is in Uttar Pradesh; Bodh Gaya is in Bihar. World Heritage inscription does not transfer the site’s ownership to UNESCO or establish that all its monuments belong to one period.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

How can World Heritage recognition support conservation while managing the pressures of tourism? (250 words)

Answer route: Introduce Sarnath’s significance. Explain conservation of fabric and setting, visitor management and local participation. Address documentation, accessibility and interpretation. Evaluate success through preserved significance and sustainable benefits.

Source notes: S22, S23, S31 | Full register at the back.

18 / ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY / AUGUST

Glaw Lake: protect the catchment, sustain the wetland

A Ramsar designation recognises a connected ecological and cultural system.



Glaw (Glow) Lake in Arunachal Pradesh, 2008. Archival landscape photograph, not a 2026 ecological-condition assessment. Rohit Naniwadekar / CC BY-SA 3.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

On 3 August, Glaw Lake became Arunachal Pradesh's first Ramsar Site and India's 101st designated site, according to the contemporaneous official accounts. The freshwater lake lies within Kamlang Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary in the Eastern Himalayas. The Convention on Wetlands also notes its significance for the Mishmi community. The count of 101 belongs to that dated announcement; later additions are outside this edition's cutoff narrative.

A lake receives water, sediment and nutrients from the land around it. A project outside the visible water boundary can therefore alter the wetland inside it. Glaw Lake offers a useful way to connect mountain ecology, catchment management and community knowledge with the international idea of the wise use of wetlands.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: wetlands; biodiversity; conservation | GS I: physical geography

Source notes: S24, S25 | Full register at the back.

Build the foundation

Understand the Ramsar framework

The Convention on Wetlands provides a framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Designation identifies a Wetland of International Importance; it does not make every site a national park or create identical restrictions everywhere. The applicable domestic legal framework and management plan still matter. International recognition should support practical protection of ecological character.

Treat the catchment as part of the system

Rainfall, streams, slopes, soils and vegetation influence a lake's hydrology. Disturbance can increase sediment delivery or change the timing and quality of inflows. Wetland management therefore requires attention to land use beyond the shoreline. A boundary on a map is useful for administration, but ecological processes do not stop at that boundary.

Connect ecological and cultural values

Wetlands provide habitat and support a range of water-related functions. Local communities may also attach spiritual and livelihood significance to them. These values should be documented with consent and understood in context. Community participation becomes meaningful when people can influence decisions and management arrangements rather than merely attend an awareness event after plans are finalised.

Concept	Practical implication
Wetland boundary	Defines an administrative management area.
Catchment	Influences water, sediment and nutrients.
Ecological character	Conditions and processes that need monitoring.
Wise use	Use compatible with maintaining wetland values.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

If road work uphill increases sediment entering a lake, cleaning the shoreline alone will not solve the problem. The response must examine drainage and slope disturbance in the catchment. This illustrative case shows why management based only on the water's edge can fail.

Source notes: S24, S25 | Full register at the back.

18 / ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Monitor ecological character over time

A management system needs a baseline and repeatable indicators, including water conditions, habitat and relevant pressures. Natural seasonal variation should be distinguished from damaging change. Monitoring must be usable for decisions: identifying a problem without assigning responsibility and resources for response leaves the wetland vulnerable despite an impressive set of reports.

Plan nature-based recreation carefully

Trekking and tourism can support local incomes but may also create litter, disturbance and pressure on trails. Visitor management should match the sensitivity of the site and the capacity of local services. Community-guided tourism, waste arrangements and clear conduct rules can reduce harm. Revenue should support conservation and provide fair benefits rather than bypassing the people who help protect the landscape.

Avoid treating designation as the final result

The title raises visibility; continued ecological health depends on management. Coordinate forest, water, tourism and local institutions so responsibilities are clear. A strong Mains answer connects international recognition to catchment protection, participatory planning and monitoring. It also distinguishes a growing national list from evidence that every listed wetland is in good condition.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

Ramsar recognition does not automatically convert a wetland into a national park. Glaw Lake's 101st-site designation is a dated August fact, not a timeless national total.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Why is catchment-based, participatory management essential for wetland conservation? (250 words)

Answer route: Explain hydrological connections and ecological character. Use Glaw Lake's location and community significance. Discuss land use, tourism, monitoring and institutional coordination. Conclude with management outcomes beyond designation.

Source notes: S24, S25 | Full register at the back.

19 / CLIMATE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT / AUGUST

El Niño preparedness: turn forecasts into local decisions

Probabilities guide planning; rainfall impacts depend on place, timing and vulnerability.



Monsoon landscape in Maharashtra, August 2016. Archival photograph; not observed rainfall during the 2026 season. Nikhil More / CC BY-SA 4.0.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

An Earth Sciences Ministry reply on 5 August discussed preparedness for El Niño conditions and the 2026 monsoon outlook. It recalled the April forecast of 92% of the long-period average; the May update had projected 90%, with a model error of ±4%. These are dated forecasts, not the final observed rainfall for June-September. This chapter examines how such information should guide decisions without claiming a seasonal outcome from a forecast.

A farmer needs rain at the right stage of a crop, while a town needs enough stored water to bridge a dry spell. A national seasonal percentage cannot answer either need by itself. Effective preparedness combines broad climate information with local forecasts, water conditions and the vulnerability of households and livelihoods.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS I: climate; monsoon | GS III: agriculture; disaster preparedness

Source notes: S26, S33 | Full register at the back.

19 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Understand ENSO as an ocean-atmosphere system

El Niño concerns warming in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific associated with changes in the coupled ocean-atmosphere system. These changes can influence circulation and rainfall far away. The relationship with India's monsoon is important but not mechanically identical every year. Other oceanic and atmospheric conditions, internal variability and regional processes also affect rainfall.

Separate rainfall amount, distribution and timing

A season can contain heavy downpours and long dry intervals. A national average can conceal regional deficits and local floods. Agricultural effects depend on sowing, crop stage, soil moisture and irrigation access. Water planners need basin and reservoir information. The scale of the forecast should match the decision rather than being applied indiscriminately to every district.

Distinguish the main forms of drought

Meteorological drought concerns inadequate precipitation relative to the relevant norm. Agricultural drought concerns insufficient moisture for crops. Hydrological drought concerns reduced water in systems such as rivers, reservoirs and groundwater. These conditions are related but may develop at different times. A rainfall deficit alone does not describe every household's water or livelihood situation.

Information	Decision scale
Seasonal national outlook	Early preparedness and resource planning.
Regional / basin information	Water and sector-specific planning.
Short-range local forecast	Operational timing and warnings.
Observed impacts	Targeted response and revision of plans.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

A hypothetical district receives its usual seasonal total, but most rain falls in a few intense events separated by long dry spells. Crops can still suffer moisture stress, while settlements experience flooding. The total alone cannot describe the pattern or its consequences.

Source notes: S26, S33 | Full register at the back.

19 / CLIMATE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Use layered decisions under uncertainty

Seasonal forecasts can trigger early preparation, while shorter-range forecasts refine action. Authorities can arrange seed alternatives, water conservation, contingency supplies and outreach before conditions become severe. Low-regret measures are useful across several possible outcomes. A plan should specify thresholds, responsibilities and how decisions will be updated as evidence changes.

Protect people with the least capacity to adapt

Small farmers, agricultural workers and households with weak water access can face disproportionate losses. Information must reach them in understandable language and through usable channels. Advisories should include feasible options, not only warnings. Coordination between meteorological, agricultural, water and local institutions helps translate technical information into actions that people can actually take.

Evaluate forecast use fairly

A probability forecast should be assessed across appropriate events and periods, not declared useless because one locality differs from the national signal. Evaluate both forecast performance and whether agencies acted sensibly on the information available. In Mains, distinguish climate drivers, local hazards and social vulnerability. That structure supports practical recommendations without overstating certainty.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

El Niño raises particular risks; it does not guarantee drought in every Indian district. A forecast of 90% of LPA must not be rewritten as an observed rainfall total.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

How can probabilistic monsoon forecasts improve local drought preparedness? (250 words)

Answer route: Explain forecast scale, timing and uncertainty. Connect rainfall with agriculture and water systems. Propose layered triggers, local advisories, contingency measures and protection of vulnerable groups. Evaluate decisions against information available at the time.

Source notes: S26, S33 | Full register at the back.

20 / SPACE SCIENCE / AUGUST

Gaganyaan: why human-rating takes repeated tests

Spaceflight readiness is built through evidence about the complete mission and its failure modes.



THE ISSUE BEHIND THE NEWS

A launcher that carries a satellite successfully still needs additional assurance before carrying people. Crew survival depends on the vehicle, spacecraft, environment, communications, procedures and recovery system working together. Gaganyaan is useful for understanding engineering as a process of reducing uncertainty through tests rather than a single dramatic launch.

Dummy Gaganyaan crew module prepared for the TV-D1 abort test, October 2023. Archival test hardware, not a crewed spacecraft in flight. Indian Space Research Organisation / GODL-India.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

A Department of Space reply on 5 August reported completed ground testing of HLVM3 propulsion stages and structures, development of key orbital-module and escape systems, and completed integrated air-drop tests with simulated crew modules. The first uncrewed mission carrying Vyommitra was targeted for Q4 2026, with further missions in the programme's stated roadmap. These were programme milestones and targets, not a claim that India's indigenous crewed orbital flight had already occurred.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: space technology; indigenous capability; scientific development

Source notes: S27 | Full register at the back.

20 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Explain human-rating

Human-rating addresses the reliability and safety required for a system carrying people. It includes understanding credible failures, detecting them and providing appropriate responses. Redundancy can help, but only if duplicated components do not share the same vulnerability. Ground tests, integrated tests and flight tests provide different forms of evidence; one successful test cannot establish every aspect of mission readiness.

Follow the crew's complete journey

Launch, orbital operations, re-entry, descent and recovery expose the crew to different conditions. The crew module provides the habitable return element, while supporting systems supply functions needed during the mission. Life support manages the internal environment. Thermal protection, parachutes and recovery arrangements address the return to Earth. The mission must be evaluated end to end.

Understand escape and demonstration missions

A crew escape system is intended to move the crew module away from a hazardous launch situation within its designed operating envelope. Uncrewed tests allow engineers to examine performance without putting a crew aboard. Simulated modules and instrumented test articles answer specific questions; their results need to be interpreted against what was actually tested and the conditions represented.

Element	Core purpose
HLVM3	Human-rated launch vehicle.
Crew escape system	Response to specified launch emergencies.
Life-support system	Maintain a suitable internal environment.
Descent and recovery	Return the crew module safely and recover occupants.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

Suppose a parachute test succeeds with a simulated module. It provides evidence about the tested descent conditions. It does not automatically validate orbital life support or every possible abort situation. Each test belongs to a larger verification plan.

Source notes: S27 | Full register at the back.

20 / SPACE SCIENCE / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Treat schedules as conditional plans

A target date depends on tests, integration and readiness reviews. Revising a schedule after new evidence can be a responsible engineering decision. Public discussion should distinguish a completed milestone from a planned mission. An aspirant should describe the programme's status as of the dated source, rather than allowing later ambitions to become claimed accomplishments.

Recognise the wider capability being built

Human spaceflight develops expertise in complex systems, testing, materials, controls, operations and recovery. These capabilities require institutions and skilled teams, not only hardware. Wider applications are possible, but should not be asserted as automatic benefits without evidence. A balanced account explains the potential for learning while recognising the programme's technical and financial demands.

Make safety a culture of evidence

Teams must be able to report anomalies, challenge assumptions and trace corrective action. Clear configuration records ensure that a test result applies to the hardware and software eventually flown. Independent review and realistic simulations help expose weaknesses. In Mains, connect scientific ambition with disciplined development: reliability grows through careful verification, not through confidence in an announced deadline alone.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

The August roadmap targeted an uncrewed mission in Q4. Do not describe that future target as a completed July-September launch or confuse an uncrewed demonstration with a crewed flight.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Why is human-rating a systems challenge rather than merely a stronger launch vehicle? (250 words)

Answer route: Trace the complete mission. Explain redundancy, escape, life support, re-entry and recovery. Distinguish test types and conditional schedules. Discuss organisational learning and independent evidence-based readiness review.

Source notes: S27 | Full register at the back.

21 / SPACE AND GEOGRAPHY / SEPTEMBER

EOS-05: observing Earth from a different orbit

A launch vehicle’s insertion orbit and a satellite’s intended operating orbit are different stages.



GSLV-F17 / EOS-05 before launch, photographed on 2 September 2026. Official mission image. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) / GODL-India.

THE ISSUE BEHIND THE NEWS

Where a satellite travels determines what it can see and how often it can return to the same region. An Earth-observation mission is therefore an arrangement of orbit, sensor, communications and ground processing. The usefulness of the imagery depends on all of these working together and on agencies being able to interpret the resulting data.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

ISRO’s launch register dates GSLV-F17/EOS-05 to 4 September 2026. Its mission page reports successful placement into a sub-geosynchronous transfer orbit and describes EOS-05 as an Earth-observation spacecraft intended for imaging from geosynchronous orbit. The page retains an advance date of 29 August; that page date should not replace the launch-register date. Transfer-orbit insertion also should not be confused with the satellite’s final operational status.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS III: remote sensing; space applications | GS I: geography

Source notes: S28, S29 | Full register at the back.

21 / CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

Build the foundation

Understand geosynchronous and geostationary

A geosynchronous orbit has a period equal to Earth's sidereal rotation period. A geostationary orbit is the special circular, equatorial, prograde case in which a satellite appears fixed over a point on the equator. The terms are related but not interchangeable. A general statement about geosynchronous operation should not be expanded into an unsupported claim about the exact final orbit.

Distinguish transfer and operating orbits

A launch vehicle can place a spacecraft into an intermediate orbit from which onboard manoeuvres move it towards the intended operating configuration. Successful insertion is therefore one milestone in a sequence. Orbit raising, deployment, testing and commissioning can follow. Read mission reports carefully to identify which stage has been achieved before describing services as fully available.

Separate the dimensions of observation

Spatial resolution concerns the detail that can be distinguished. Temporal resolution concerns how frequently useful observations are obtained. Spectral characteristics concern the wavelengths measured. These dimensions involve trade-offs and depend on the sensor and orbit. High revisit frequency does not automatically imply the finest spatial detail, and a large volume of images does not guarantee useful information.

Term	Meaning
Geosynchronous	Orbital period matches Earth's sidereal rotation.
Geostationary	Special equatorial circular geosynchronous orbit.
Transfer orbit	Intermediate stage before the intended operating orbit.
Commissioning	Testing and preparation for routine service.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

A hypothetical sensor observes an area every hour but cannot distinguish small field boundaries. Another observes less often but provides finer detail. The appropriate choice depends on whether the task is rapid change detection or detailed mapping; there is no universally superior resolution measure.

Source notes: S28, S29 | Full register at the back.

21 / SPACE AND GEOGRAPHY / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Connect imagery with public decisions

Earth observation can support monitoring of land, water, agriculture and disasters when the sensor is suited to the task. Data need calibration, processing and interpretation. Local observations and administrative information help validate conclusions. Agencies require trained staff and clear workflows so an image becomes a timely decision rather than an unused file.

Account for limitations and uncertainty

Atmospheric conditions, viewing geometry and sensor characteristics affect observations. Optical and radar systems have different strengths and constraints. A responsible analysis states uncertainty and avoids interpreting a single image beyond what it can show. Repeated observations may reveal change, but explanation of that change often requires additional evidence on the ground.

Evaluate the service after the launch

A successful launch creates the opportunity for a useful mission. The lasting value depends on reliable operation, data quality, access and application. Measure whether agencies obtain timely information and improve decisions. In Mains, explain the chain from space infrastructure to public benefit while keeping launch success, commissioning and operational performance distinct.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

4 September is the launch-register date. A retained 29 August date on the advance mission page is not the launch date. Geosynchronous and geostationary are not exact synonyms.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

Explain how orbit and sensor design influence the public value of Earth-observation satellites. (250 words)

Answer route: Define orbital and resolution distinctions. Trace launch, orbit manoeuvres, commissioning and data processing. Discuss suitable applications, limitations and ground validation. Conclude with institutional capacity to use the data.

Source notes: S28, S29 | Full register at the back.

22 / HEALTH AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE / AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

Mpox vaccines: preparedness through equitable access

A global stockpile connects financing and allocation with the last mile of public-health delivery.



Vaccine-production work at Bio Farma, Bandung, 2017. Archival manufacturing context; these are not identified as mpox vaccine doses. Ümit Kartoğlu for VOA / Public domain.

WHAT CHANGED THIS QUARTER

A WHO and partners release on 2 September described a global mpox vaccine-stockpile initiative launched on 27 August, with operations expected later in September. Gavi finances the initiative and the International Coordinating Group on Vaccine Provision coordinates it. The ICG partners are IFRC, MSF, UNICEF and WHO. The announcement creates a mechanism for access; it does not demonstrate that every country had already received doses or completed vaccination.

A vaccine may exist while the communities facing an outbreak cannot obtain it in time. Financing, procurement, allocation, transport and local delivery each influence access. The stockpile initiative highlights a wider governance problem: how to turn scientific capability into a dependable public-health resource when demand rises suddenly and purchasing power is unequal.

UPSC CONNECTION

GS II: health systems; international institutions | GS III: disease preparedness

Source notes: S30, S32 | Full register at the back.

Build the foundation

Understand the public-health problem

Mpox is a viral disease that can spread through close physical contact; animal-to-human transmission also occurs in some settings. Risk and severity differ across people and contexts. Surveillance, diagnosis, care and community engagement remain important alongside vaccination. Communication should explain relevant risks without attaching blame to a community or treating infection as evidence of personal wrongdoing.

Explain what a stockpile does

A stockpile maintains access to a defined supply for use when needed. It requires financing, quality assurance, stock management and arrangements for deployment. Allocation rules determine how competing requests are assessed. Preparedness includes replacing expiring stock and anticipating delivery constraints. A warehouse full of doses is useful only if the system can move appropriate vaccines to the places where they can be used effectively.

Separate the roles of institutions

Financing, coordination, procurement, technical advice and local delivery are different functions. The September announcement assigns funding to Gavi and coordination to the ICG mechanism, whose partners bring different capabilities. National authorities still need surveillance and operational plans. International support should strengthen the response chain rather than be described as a substitute for a functioning domestic health system.

Stage	What it establishes
Stockpile announced	A mechanism and intent.
Doses allocated	A decision about distribution.
Doses delivered	Physical availability at a specified point.
People protected	An outcome requiring effective delivery and use.

UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH AN EXAMPLE

Two hypothetical districts receive equal numbers of doses, but one has twice the population at risk and faces a longer delivery delay. Equal shipments may not produce equitable protection. Allocation requires relevant epidemiological and operational information.

Source notes: S30, S32 | Full register at the back.

22 / HEALTH AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE / ANALYSIS

Think beyond the announcement

Allocate according to need and likely benefit

Transparent criteria can reduce the influence of purchasing power and political pressure. Assessment should consider outbreak conditions, people at risk and the capacity to deliver effectively. Equity may require extra delivery support for settings with weak systems rather than excluding them because implementation is difficult. Decisions should be explained and reviewed as the evidence changes.

Plan the last mile before an emergency

Cold-chain arrangements, trained staff, safety monitoring and trustworthy communication affect whether doses become protection. Communities need accessible information and respectful services. Operational readiness should include arrangements for reaching marginalised people and maintaining ordinary health services during the response. A shipment received at an airport is an intermediate milestone, not the final outcome.

Build trust through accurate communication

Authorities should state what is known, what remains uncertain and how decisions are being made. Stigma can discourage testing and care, weakening control efforts. A strong Mains answer combines equitable access with the practical capacity to use resources safely and effectively. Evaluate timeliness, coverage of intended groups and public-health outcomes rather than the announcement or procurement total alone.

MECHANISM TO REMEMBER



PRELIMS TRAP

Gavi financing and ICG coordination are distinct roles. An announced global stockpile is not proof of universal access already achieved, and vaccination does not remove the need for surveillance and care.

MAINS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTION

How can global vaccine stockpiles improve equity and outbreak preparedness? (250 words)

Answer route: Identify access failures and explain the stockpile mechanism. Discuss financing, transparent allocation and delivery capacity. Address trust, stigma and national systems. Evaluate timeliness and protection of intended groups.

Source notes: S30, S32 | Full register at the back.

CROSS-TOPIC REVISION

Four ideas that connect the quarter

Use these connections to turn individual facts into a coherent Mains answer.

Public capacity is a chain

Courts · examinations · spaceflight · railways

A system can be constrained by its weakest operational link. More judicial posts need registry and courtroom capacity; secure examinations need controls across the whole process; spaceflight needs every mission phase verified; rail lines need functioning junctions and terminals. Identify the bottleneck before recommending additional spending. Institutions also need feedback so a failure in one part leads to correction rather than repeated announcements.

Announced input	What must follow
Additional judicial posts	Appointments, support and effective hearings.
New rail capacity	Operating integration and terminal readiness.
Space hardware	Testing, qualification and mission review.

Inclusion has an operational meaning

EPFO · ULLAS · sports · vaccine access

A person can be formally eligible and still face practical exclusion. Workers need contributions credited and benefits accessible. Adult learners need suitable times and respectful teaching. Athletes need safe access and coaching. Communities need vaccines delivered through trusted services. Examine the cost, time, language, physical access and administrative steps between a policy promise and a usable benefit.

Policy promise	Operational question
Wider coverage	Can the person enrol and retain the benefit?
Accessible education	Can the learner attend, practise and progress?
Equitable health response	Can appropriate protection reach those at risk?

CROSS-TOPIC REVISION

Numbers, capability and resilience

Use these connections to turn individual facts into a coherent Mains answer.

Resilience requires connected capabilities

Semiconductors · mobile phones · energy · regional trade

Reducing vulnerability requires knowledge of the supply chain. A local assembly plant can remain dependent on imported components. Offshore exploration needs data, technology and infrastructure. Trade routes need workable border arrangements. Resilience can come from diversification, reliable partnerships and selective domestic capability. Complete self-sufficiency is rarely a useful substitute for examining where dependence creates a serious and manageable risk.

Capability	Question for policy
Domestic production	Which value and skills are retained locally?
Diversified supply	Does it reduce correlated disruption?
Shared infrastructure	Can multiple users access it reliably?

Recognition must lead to stewardship

Sarnath · Glaw Lake · climate preparedness

A title, designation or forecast changes information and responsibility; it does not automatically change the physical condition on the ground. Heritage needs maintenance and visitor management. Wetlands need catchment protection. Climate warnings need local action. Define the desired condition, assign responsibility and measure whether management preserves or improves it over time.

Information or recognition	Necessary follow-through
World Heritage inscription	Protect significance and manage visitors.
Ramsar designation	Maintain ecological character.
Seasonal risk forecast	Prepare feasible local actions and update them.

GS IV / ORIGINAL HYPOTHETICAL CASE

The leaked-paper allegation and the waiting candidates

Practise a reasoned decision, not a list of ethical vocabulary.

THE SITUATION

You supervise a public recruitment examination. Soon after the test, screenshots appear online claiming to show questions circulated beforehand. Some match the paper; their original posting time is uncertain. The contractor says the system was secure. Candidates demand immediate cancellation, while others say they cannot afford another journey. A senior official wants a statement declaring that no breach occurred before the records have been checked.

How would you protect examination integrity, procedural fairness and the interests of candidates?

Preserve evidence before taking a public position

Secure relevant access logs, question-paper versions, centre records and communication trails through the authorised process. Record who handles the evidence so its integrity can be assessed. Seek the original source and timing of the screenshots rather than treating a forwarded image as conclusive. The contractor's assurance is information to examine, not a substitute for independent verification.

Communicate honestly and predictably

Issue a factual notice through authenticated channels stating that the allegation is being examined and explaining the next update. Avoid both premature exoneration and collective accusations against candidates. Provide a way to submit evidence and warn candidates about unauthorised payment or information requests. Acknowledging uncertainty is compatible with decisive action when the investigation process is clear.

Use proportional, reasoned decisions

Assess the extent of any compromise and its effect on fairness before choosing a remedy. A targeted issue may require a different response from a system-wide leak. Explain the reasons, preserve review routes and consider practical burdens such as travel and scheduling. The objective is a credible selection process with a remedy supported by evidence and the applicable rules.

Resist pressure through the institutional record

Politely explain why an unsupported declaration would damage credibility and the investigation. Record the advice and escalate through the appropriate channel if necessary. Keep operational decisions within authorised responsibilities and protect confidential material. Personal certainty should not replace a documented assessment.

Prevent recurrence and account for the response

After the immediate decision, examine access controls, vendor oversight and incident procedures. Assign corrective actions with deadlines and verify completion. Publish appropriate findings without exposing sensitive security details or personal data. Public trust is rebuilt through a fair decision and visible institutional learning.

GS IV / ORIGINAL HYPOTHETICAL CASE

The tourism plan beside a protected lake

Practise a reasoned decision, not a list of ethical vocabulary.

THE SITUATION

You are coordinating a visitor-management proposal near a mountain wetland. A local cooperative supports guided trekking, but a contractor proposes a large parking area and a new access road uphill. The project promises jobs and is under pressure to open before the tourist season. Community representatives say they were shown the final drawings but never asked about water sources, sacred places or waste management.

How would you balance livelihoods, ecological responsibility and meaningful participation?

Clarify the evidence and the decision to be made

Identify the applicable permissions, the wetland's management objectives and the proposal's actual footprint. Obtain relevant ecological, drainage and slope information. Separate the legitimate aim of local income from the assumption that the particular road and parking design is necessary. An approaching tourist season does not remove the need for a defensible decision.

Make participation capable of changing the plan

Hold accessible discussions with affected groups, including people whose work or responsibilities may keep them away from formal meetings. Explain alternatives and constraints in understandable terms. Record concerns about water, cultural significance and benefit-sharing. Participation is meaningful when feedback can alter the proposal before resources and contracts make change difficult.

Examine lower-impact alternatives

Compare smaller visitor groups, existing access routes, locally guided visits and phased facilities. Consider waste collection, emergency access and the number of visitors that services can support. Assess impacts across the catchment rather than only the visible shoreline. Evaluate whether the proposed jobs are sustained local opportunities or short-term construction work.

Set clear conditions and responsibilities

Where a proposal is permissible, specify environmental safeguards, operating limits, monitoring and who responds to non-compliance. Ensure local groups have an accessible grievance route and a transparent role in benefits and management. Necessary approvals must be obtained before work begins; a ceremonial opening cannot substitute for them.

Review outcomes and remain willing to adjust

Monitor ecological conditions, visitor behaviour and local livelihood benefits. If impacts exceed agreed limits, revise operations rather than defend the initial plan at all costs. Explain decisions publicly and document the reasons. Stewardship means preserving the wetland's values while supporting livelihoods that can continue without undermining their ecological foundation.

PRELIMS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

Practice set · 01-05

50 questions · suggested time 60 minutes · +2 correct, −2/3 incorrect, 0 unattempted.

01. The GDP estimates released on 31 August 2026 for Q1 of FY 2026-27 refer to:

(A) October-December 2026
(B) April-June 2026
(C) July-September 2026
(D) January-March 2026

02. Compressed biogas is most accurately described as:

(A) Fossil gas extracted from offshore wells
(B) Untreated gas from any waste dump
(C) Coal converted directly into petrol
(D) Biogas upgraded to the required specification and compressed

03. The 2026 BRICS summit discussed in this edition was held in:

(A) Busan
(B) Geneva
(C) Bishkek
(D) New Delhi

04. Which is the strongest direct evidence of a functional numeracy gain?

(A) A village holds an inauguration
(B) A learner’s name appears on a registration list
(C) A centre receives new furniture
(D) A learner correctly compares prices after converting quantities to the same unit

05. A provision for 37 Supreme Court judges excluding the Chief Justice corresponds to a total sanctioned strength of:

(A) 37
(B) 38
(C) 36
(D) 39

PRELIMS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

Practice set · 06-10

Choose the single best answer. Statements use the quarter's dated context.

06. The September EPFO decision raising the coverage ceiling to ₹25,000 should be understood as:

(A) A universal minimum monthly salary
(B) A ceiling on all private-sector salaries
(C) A guaranteed monthly pension for every resident
(D) A change approved for the mandatory social-security coverage framework

07. Nominal output rises from 100 to 110 and real output from 100 to 106. The implied price increase is approximately:

(A) 4.00% exactly
(B) 6.00%
(C) 3.77%
(D) 10.00%

08. Which pairing is correct?

(A) ATMP - a national currency arrangement
(B) EDA - an offshore oil-well appraisal
(C) Fab - a retail phone showroom
(D) OSAT - outsourced semiconductor assembly and test

09. A proposed common currency differs from local-currency trade settlement because it would require:

(A) A substantially deeper common monetary framework
(B) Only a new summit logo
(C) No agreement about monetary governance
(D) Only a change in the language of an invoice

10. The August Gaganyaan roadmap's Q4 2026 mission target concerned:

(A) A completed crewed lunar landing
(B) A completed Indian space-station deployment
(C) A permanently occupied lunar base
(D) An uncrewed experimental mission carrying Vyommitra

PRELIMS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

Practice set · 11-15

Choose the single best answer. Statements use the quarter's dated context.

11. Which observation most directly supports deeper domestic value addition in mobile manufacturing?

(A) Sustained upgrading of domestic component, testing and design capabilities
(B) Higher final exports accompanied only by a matching increase in imported inputs
(C) A change in the colour of the retail package
(D) Relabelling an imported finished phone

12. Bishkek, the 2026 SCO summit venue, is the capital of:

(A) Uzbekistan
(B) Kazakhstan
(C) Kyrgyzstan
(D) Tajikistan

13. On-tap licensing most appropriately means:

(A) A licence valid only for a single day
(B) Permission without any eligibility assessment
(C) Automatic conversion of all societies into banks
(D) An ongoing application framework subject to applicable rules

14. Consider: 1. A neutral monetary-policy stance guarantees that the next move will be a rate cut. 2. Monetary transmission can be influenced by loan contracts and deposit repricing. Which is correct?

(A) Neither
(B) 1 only
(C) 2 only
(D) Both

15. In the September mpox stockpile announcement, the financing and coordination roles were respectively assigned to:

(A) BRICS and the SCO
(B) WTO and the IMF
(C) Gavi and the ICG mechanism
(D) UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee

PRELIMS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

Practice set · 16-20

Choose the single best answer. Statements use the quarter's dated context.

16. Consider ULLAS: 1. It concerns only children below the age of six. 2. Its components include critical life skills and continuing education. Which is correct?

(A) 2 only
(B) Neither
(C) 1 only
(D) Both

17. Consider: 1. Adjournment sine die is the same as dissolution of the Lok Sabha. 2. Prorogation formally ends a parliamentary session. Which is correct?

(A) Neither
(B) 2 only
(C) 1 only
(D) Both

18. Which indicator best supplements new EPFO enrolment when assessing durable protection?

(A) Only total payroll registrations on the first day
(B) Continuity of contributions and access to benefits after job changes
(C) The number of printed membership forms
(D) Only the number of publicity events

19. World Heritage inscription of Sarnath implies:

(A) All tourism restrictions automatically disappear
(B) International recognition with continuing conservation and management responsibilities
(C) Ownership transferred to UNESCO
(D) Every structure at the site dates to one century

20. Which factor can weaken the environmental benefit of a biogas project?

(A) Reliable feedstock segregation
(B) Monitoring of delivered gas
(C) Appropriate residual-material management
(D) Uncontrolled methane leakage

PRELIMS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

Practice set · 21-25

Choose the single best answer. Statements use the quarter's dated context.

21. Which sequence best describes offshore hydrocarbon development?

(A) Appraisal, retirement, survey, discovery
(B) Commercial production, seismic survey, appraisal, exploration
(C) Seismic survey, exploratory drilling, appraisal, development and production
(D) Pipeline construction alone establishes all reserves

22. The July sports-policy outlay of ₹36,441 crore was announced for:

(A) Revamped Khelo India and enhanced assistance to sports federations together
(B) An annual universal cash payment to athletes
(C) One international tournament
(D) Only stadium electricity charges

23. Consider semiconductor strategy: 1. Yield affects usable output. 2. A smaller process-node label alone establishes commercial viability. Which is correct?

(A) Neither
(B) 2 only
(C) 1 only
(D) Both

24. The August 2026 MPC decision retained the repo rate at:

(A) 6.25%
(B) 5.25%
(C) 5.00%
(D) 5.50%

25. An upstream road increases sediment entering a wetland. The most appropriate management approach is:

(A) Examine catchment drainage and slope disturbance as well as the wetland
(B) Ignore land outside the water boundary
(C) Assume Ramsar designation prevents any damage automatically
(D) Limit all action to painting shoreline signs

PRELIMS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

Practice set · 26-30

Choose the single best answer. Statements use the quarter's dated context.

26. Two districts construct the same number of sports facilities. Which additional evidence is most useful for comparing public benefit?

(A) Only the exterior colour of the buildings
(B) The length of the inauguration speeches
(C) The number of foundation-stone photographs
(D) Regular users, usable hours and accessibility

27. Which distinction is correct?

(A) Agricultural drought concerns crop-moisture stress, while hydrological drought concerns water-system deficits
(B) National rainfall averages determine every field's soil moisture
(C) Meteorological drought and hydrological drought always begin simultaneously
(D) A rainfall forecast is an observed seasonal total

28. If a rate rises from 5.00% to 5.25%, the increase is:

(A) 25 basis points
(B) 250 basis points
(C) 25 percentage points
(D) 0.25 basis points

29. A court starts with 1,000 pending cases, receives 600 and disposes of 550 during a period. Its closing pendency is:

(A) 1,050
(B) 1,150
(C) 1,600
(D) 950

30. ISRO's launch register dates the GSLV-F17/EOS-05 launch to:

(A) 30 September 2026
(B) 4 September 2026
(C) 29 August 2026
(D) 12 October 2026

PRELIMS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

Practice set · 31-35

Choose the single best answer. Statements use the quarter's dated context.

31. Glaw Lake, designated in August 2026, is located in:

(A) Rajasthan
(B) Kerala
(C) Arunachal Pradesh
(D) Gujarat

32. Which combination best represents usable international connectivity?

(A) Only cultural similarity
(B) Physical routes plus predictable transit, customs and commercial arrangements
(C) Only geographical proximity
(D) Infrastructure alone, regardless of transit permissions

33. A statistical anomaly in examination answers should most appropriately be treated as:

(A) Conclusive proof against every candidate at the centre
(B) A signal requiring evidence-based investigation
(C) A substitute for checking access logs
(D) A reason to destroy the original answer records

34. A successful parachute test with a simulated crew module primarily establishes:

(A) Evidence about the tested descent configuration and conditions
(B) That all possible abort situations are resolved
(C) That no further mission review is needed
(D) Every life-support system is ready for orbit

35. Which is an outcome indicator for rail logistics rather than merely a construction indicator?

(A) Reliability of end-to-end freight delivery
(B) Number of work-site signboards
(C) Number of kilometres sanctioned
(D) Number of tender notices

PRELIMS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

Practice set · 36-40

Choose the single best answer. Statements use the quarter's dated context.

36. Which combination best supports an evidence-based policy assessment?

(A) Only a large approved budget
(B) A defined objective, dated baseline, implementation evidence and relevant outcomes
(C) Only the number of ceremonial events
(D) A target with no baseline or date

37. Consider: 1. Nominal GDP uses current prices. 2. GDP and GVA are always identical because taxes and subsidies are irrelevant. Which is correct?

(A) 1 only
(B) Neither
(C) 2 only
(D) Both

38. Consider: 1. El Niño guarantees drought in every Indian district. 2. A normal seasonal rainfall total can coexist with harmful dry spells. Which is correct?

(A) 1 only
(B) Neither
(C) 2 only
(D) Both

39. Which measure most directly addresses the risk of a single vendor controlling every sensitive stage of an examination?

(A) Separating duties and providing independent audit rights
(B) Publishing candidates' personal records
(C) Giving the vendor unrestricted access
(D) Removing incident-reporting requirements

40. If the Houses reassemble on different dates, the six-week period relevant to an ordinance under Article 123 is reckoned from:

(A) The date of the next general election
(B) The earlier reassembly date
(C) The later reassembly date
(D) The day the ordinance was first drafted

PRELIMS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

Practice set · 41-45

Choose the single best answer. Statements use the quarter's dated context.

41. In a simple series network, three sections can handle 80, 40 and 70 movements daily. Increasing only the first section to 100 mainly illustrates that:

(A) The middle section can remain the bottleneck
(B) Total network throughput necessarily becomes 210
(C) Every section automatically gains capacity
(D) Junction capacity becomes irrelevant

42. Which place-event pairing is correct in Buddhist tradition?

(A) Kushinagar - birth
(B) Sarnath - first sermon
(C) Bodh Gaya - mahaparinirvana
(D) Lumbini - enlightenment

43. Which statement best distinguishes a public investment approval from an outcome?

(A) Every approved outlay is spent immediately
(B) Approval proves that all services are already operating
(C) Approval authorises a stage of action; delivery and benefits require further evidence
(D) An outcome can always be measured before implementation

44. Consider mobile manufacturing: 1. Contract manufacturing and brand ownership are distinct roles. 2. Every phone assembled in India necessarily has Indian-owned design IP. Which is correct?

(A) 2 only
(B) Neither
(C) Both
(D) 1 only

45. Equal vaccine shipments to two districts do not necessarily imply equitable protection because:

(A) Population at risk is irrelevant
(B) All districts always have the same needs
(C) Local risk and delivery capacity can differ
(D) Delivery delays never affect protection

PRELIMS PRACTICE / ORIGINAL QUESTIONS

Practice set · 46-50

Choose the single best answer. Statements use the quarter's dated context.

46. RBI's 5 August consultation on UCB licensing established that:

(A) Every cooperative society had received a banking licence
(B) Draft guidelines were open to stakeholder comments
(C) RBI had removed all prudential requirements
(D) All proposed criteria were already final rules

47. A programme reports that 10,000 people registered for adult classes. Which conclusion is justified without additional evidence?

(A) Every learner now has a formal job
(B) Continuing education is no longer needed
(C) 10,000 registrations have been recorded, subject to record validity
(D) All 10,000 achieved the specified competencies

48. Consider: 1. Every geosynchronous orbit is geostationary. 2. A transfer orbit can precede the final operating orbit. Which is correct?

(A) 1 only
(B) Both
(C) Neither
(D) 2 only

49. Samudra Manthan, approved in July 2026, concerns:

(A) Universal urban housing
(B) A new coastal state
(C) Only asteroid mining
(D) National offshore oil-and-gas exploration

50. Consider: 1. A BRICS declaration alone can amend the UN Charter. 2. Local-currency settlement is conceptually different from creating a common currency. Which is correct?

(A) Neither
(B) 2 only
(C) Both
(D) 1 only

PRELIMS PRACTICE

Answer key

Check the key only after attempting the set.

Questions	Answers
01-05	01 B 02 D 03 D 04 D 05 B
06-10	06 D 07 C 08 D 09 A 10 D
11-15	11 A 12 C 13 D 14 C 15 C
16-20	16 A 17 B 18 B 19 B 20 D
21-25	21 C 22 A 23 C 24 B 25 A
26-30	26 D 27 A 28 A 29 A 30 B
31-35	31 C 32 B 33 B 34 A 35 A
36-40	36 B 37 A 38 C 39 A 40 C
41-45	41 A 42 B 43 C 44 D 45 C
46-50	46 B 47 C 48 D 49 D 50 B

TURN A SCORE INTO A DIAGNOSIS

For each error, record whether it came from a missing fact, a confused concept, a date/status mistake or an avoidable reading error. Revisit the linked chapter and explain the correct reasoning aloud before another attempt.

Practice score = 2 × correct answers − (2/3) × incorrect answers. Maximum: 100. This is an original learning set, not a prediction of the examination or an official UPSC paper.

PRELIMS PRACTICE

Why the answers are correct

Questions 01-10 · Use the chapter links to repair the underlying concept.

01 / B India’s financial year begins in April. Publication during calendar Q3 does not change the period measured. [Chapter 09]

02 / D Anaerobic digestion produces raw biogas; upgrading removes unwanted components and compression supports its intended use and handling. [Chapter 12]

03 / D The XVIII BRICS Summit took place in New Delhi on 12-13 September. Bishkek hosted the SCO summit and Busan the World Heritage Committee session. [Chapter 15]

04 / D Correctly applying numeracy to a comparable-price decision demonstrates a usable skill; the other options measure inputs or participation. [Chapter 05]

05 / B Adding the Chief Justice to 37 other judges gives 38. Sanctioned posts remain distinct from the number of judges actually serving. [Chapter 03]

06 / D The decision concerns mandatory EPFO coverage, subject to the applicable statutory and scheme provisions. It is not minimum-wage legislation. [Chapter 04]

07 / C The implied price ratio is 110/106 = 1.0377. Subtracting the growth rates gives only an approximation. [Chapter 09]

08 / D OSAT means outsourced semiconductor assembly and test. Packaging and testing are distinct from wafer fabrication. [Chapter 11]

09 / A Settlement can use existing national currencies. A common currency requires deeper institutional arrangements, credibility and adjustment mechanisms. [Chapter 15]

10 / D The dated source described a future uncrewed demonstration target. It did not report an indigenous crewed orbital flight already completed in Q3. [Chapter 20]

PRELIMS PRACTICE

Why the answers are correct

Questions 11-20 · Use the chapter links to repair the underlying concept.

11 / A Local capabilities in components, engineering and related activities can increase value retained domestically. Gross shipments alone do not establish this. [Chapter 10]

12 / C Bishkek is in Kyrgyzstan. Locate it within landlocked Central Asia when analysing India's regional connectivity. [Chapter 16]

13 / D On-tap refers to the availability of an application route rather than a one-time window; the regulator still assesses eligibility and suitability. [Chapter 08]

14 / C Neutral preserves flexibility; it does not promise a direction. Transmission depends on financial conditions, contracts, competition and risk. [Chapter 07]

15 / C Gavi funds the initiative; the ICG on Vaccine Provision coordinates it. Its partners are IFRC, MSF, UNICEF and WHO. [Chapter 22]

16 / A ULLAS addresses adult learners aged 15 and above who lack literacy. Its approach extends beyond foundational literacy and numeracy. [Chapter 05]

17 / B Prorogation ends a session. Adjournment sine die ends sittings without fixing the next meeting date; dissolution ends the Lok Sabha's life. [Chapter 01]

18 / B Effective protection depends on regular remittance, usable benefits and continuity. Registration alone cannot establish those outcomes. [Chapter 04]

19 / B Inscription does not transfer ownership. Protection, management, integrity and the significance of the property remain central. [Chapter 17]

20 / D Methane leakage can undermine climate performance. The lifecycle also includes transport, energy use and digestate handling. [Chapter 12]

PRELIMS PRACTICE

Why the answers are correct

Questions 21-30 · Use the chapter links to repair the underlying concept.

21 / C Each stage provides different evidence. A promising geological structure is not the same as a commercially producing field. [Chapter 13]

22 / A The Cabinet announcement gives a combined outlay for the two policy elements over 2026-27 to 2030-31. [Chapter 06]

23 / C Yield and customer qualification affect saleable production. Viability also depends on demand, reliability, costs and application requirements. [Chapter 11]

24 / B The August decision kept repo at 5.25%, SDF at 5.00% and MSF/Bank Rate at 5.50%, with a neutral stance. [Chapter 07]

25 / A Water and sediment connect the catchment to the wetland. Effective conservation must address the source of pressure. [Chapter 18]

26 / D Facilities generate value through sustained, safe and inclusive use. Construction counts alone do not capture that result. [Chapter 06]

27 / A Different drought types measure related but distinct conditions and may develop with different lags. [Chapter 19]

28 / A One percentage point equals 100 basis points. The increase of 0.25 percentage points is 25 basis points. [Chapter 07]

29 / A Closing stock equals opening stock plus institutions minus disposals: 1,000 + 600 - 550 = 1,050. [Chapter 03]

30 / B 4 September is the launch-register date. The mission page’s retained advance date of 29 August is not the launch date. [Chapter 21]

PRELIMS PRACTICE

Why the answers are correct

Questions 31-40 · Use the chapter links to repair the underlying concept.

31 / C The freshwater lake lies within Kamlang Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh, in the Eastern Himalayas. [Chapter 18]

32 / B Infrastructure needs workable rules, services and political arrangements. Distance alone does not determine the cost or reliability of trade. [Chapter 16]

33 / B An anomaly can justify investigation but does not alone establish individual misconduct. Preserve evidence and distinguish a system breach from candidate culpability. [Chapter 02]

34 / A Testing is scoped. Results must be linked to what was tested and integrated with evidence about other mission systems. [Chapter 20]

35 / A Reliable delivery captures service experienced by users. Sanctions and construction measures are inputs or milestones. [Chapter 14]

36 / B Clear objectives, comparable evidence and outcome measures allow an assessment of whether a policy works and why. This applies to sports and other public programmes. [Chapter 06]

37 / A Nominal GDP uses current prices. GDP at market prices relates to GVA through taxes less subsidies on products. [Chapter 09]

38 / C Climate drivers influence probabilities, while local outcomes vary. Timing and distribution matter alongside seasonal totals. [Chapter 19]

39 / A Segregation of duties and independent oversight reduce unchecked control and support accountability across the examination chain. [Chapter 02]

40 / C Article 123 uses the later date when the Houses reassemble on different dates. The ordinance is subject to the Constitution’s parliamentary-control provisions. [Chapter 01]

PRELIMS PRACTICE

Why the answers are correct

Questions 41-50 · Use the chapter links to repair the underlying concept.

41 / A The unchanged limiting section can continue constraining the network. Investment location and complementary capacity matter. [Chapter 14]

42 / B Sarnath is associated with the first sermon; Bodh Gaya with enlightenment, Lumbini with birth and Kushinagar with mahaparinirvana. [Chapter 17]

43 / C Approval, expenditure, completion and outcomes are different stages. The rail approvals provide a concrete example. [Chapter 14]

44 / D An EMS provider can assemble for another brand. Assembly location does not by itself determine ownership of the brand or technology. [Chapter 10]

45 / C Equity considers need, risk, timeliness and the practical ability to deliver appropriate protection. [Chapter 22]

46 / B The release explicitly invited comments on draft guidelines until 5 September. A consultation is distinct from a final framework or an individual licence. [Chapter 08]

47 / C Registration supports an enrolment claim. Attendance, learning, retention and employment require separate evidence. [Chapter 05]

48 / D Geostationary is a special equatorial, circular, prograde geosynchronous orbit. Transfer insertion is an intermediate mission stage. [Chapter 21]

49 / D The petroleum ministry’s Central Sector Scheme concerns offshore exploration and supporting capability. Do not confuse it with deep-ocean mineral programmes. [Chapter 13]

50 / B Institutional reform requires the relevant legal procedures. Payment arrangements do not automatically create a monetary union. [Chapter 15]

REVISION GLOSSARY

The terms behind the headlines

Compact definitions; return to the chapters for context and limitations.

Additionality. Activity or benefit attributable to support beyond what would otherwise have occurred.

Appraisal. Investigation of a discovery to understand its extent, characteristics and development prospects.

ATMP / OSAT. Assembly, testing, marking and packaging / outsourced semiconductor assembly and test.

Basis point. One hundredth of a percentage point.

Catchment. Land area that contributes water and material to a drainage system or water body.

Commissioning. Testing and preparation of a system for routine operational use.

Domestic value addition. Economic value generated domestically within a production chain.

Geosynchronous. Having an orbital period equal to Earth’s sidereal rotation period.

Human-rating. Engineering and verification intended to support the safety of people carried by a space system.

Offtake. An arrangement for purchasing a project’s output.

Pendency. The stock of unresolved cases at a specified time.

Prorogation. Formal ending of a parliamentary session.

Provisional estimate. An estimate based on available evidence that may be revised as further information arrives.

Prudential regulation. Requirements directed at the safety and soundness of financial institutions.

Release vintage. The version of an estimate published at a particular date.

Yield. In chip production, the share of output meeting the required usable standard.

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Cabinet / PMO, 5 May 2026; background to Q3 passage

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Reserve Bank of India, 5 August 2026

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Reserve Bank of India, August 2026; draft status

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Inclusive global governance at the BRICS summit

PMO / PIB, 13 September 2026; session on 12 September

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26th SCO summit in Bishkek

Prime Minister’s Office, 1 September 2026

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Sarnath inscribed on the World Heritage List

UNESCO, 25 July 2026

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Sarnath: inscription and cultural context

Ministry of Culture / PIB, 25 July 2026

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MoEFCC / PIB, 3 August 2026

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Convention on Wetlands, 3 August 2026

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Department of Space / PIB, 5 August 2026

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GSLV-F17 / EOS-05 mission: spacecraft and insertion orbit

ISRO, mission page; advance page date 29 August, subsequently updated

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ISRO launch register: EOS-05 launched 4 September

ISRO, launch mission register

www.isro.gov.in · Click title for the full document

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Global mpox vaccine stockpile initiative

WHO and partners, 2 September 2026; launch on 27 August

www.who.int · Click title for the full document

S31

World Heritage selection criteria

UNESCO World Heritage Centre; background

whc.unesco.org · Click title for the full document

S32

Mpox: disease and prevention background

World Health Organization, fact sheet

www.who.int · Click title for the full document

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Updated 2026 southwest monsoon forecast

IMD / PIB, 29 May 2026; background to August preparedness

www.pib.gov.in · Click title for the full document

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August monetary and regulatory review

Reserve Bank of India, August 2026 review

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MoSPI / PIB, 2 September 2026

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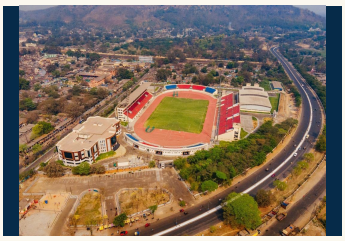

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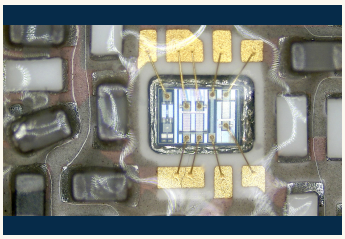

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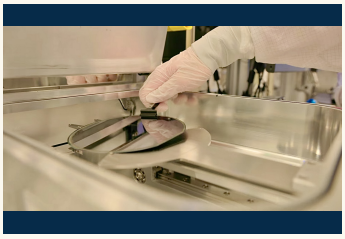

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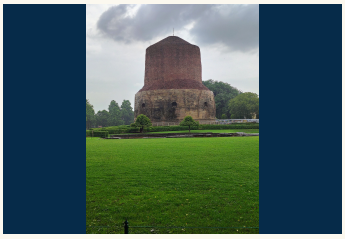

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