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MCQs

THE HINDU

Political demography, the future of democracy

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies 2

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Why in Focus?

- The ongoing **Census 2027** and the impending **delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies** have brought renewed attention to India's **uneven demographic trends**.
- Political leaders and groups are increasingly advocating **higher birth rates**, highlighting the growing importance of **political demography**.

Key Highlights

- **Political demography** examines how changes in **births, deaths, ageing and migration** affect public policy, political power and governance.
- India's **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** has fallen to **2.0 children per woman**, below the replacement level, according to **NFHS-5**.
- Fertility has declined across all major religious communities, while the **fertility gap between communities has narrowed**.
- India faces sharp **regional demographic**

differences, with some States ageing rapidly while others retain relatively young populations.

- ◆ **Keralam** has the **highest median age in India, estimated at 37 years** in 2026, and this is projected to reach **47 years by 2051**.
- ◆ The **median age in Uttar Pradesh** is approximately **26.9 years**, making it one of the youngest States in India.
- India's projected median age is about **29.2 years in 2026**.
- India also faces large-scale **internal migration**, with people moving from regions with fewer opportunities to those **offering greater economic prospects**.
- **Natalist policies** in countries such as **Japan, South Korea, China and Italy** have had limited success in reversing declining fertility.
- Fertility decisions depend on factors such as **employment, housing, education, gender relations and the cost of raising children**.
- ◆ Natalism, or pronatalism, is a belief system or policy stance that **encourages human reproduction and high birth rates**.

Implications

- **Uneven population growth** could create tensions over **delimitation and political representation** among States.
- Rapid ageing in some States could increase pressure on **healthcare, pensions and elderly care**.



- Regional differences in population and development could intensify disputes over **political representation, fiscal transfers and resource allocation**.
- Demographic changes could strengthen **identity-based politics** and create insecurity among different social and regional groups.

Way Forward

- Develop a **balanced demographic policy** that addresses fertility decline, ageing and migration rather than relying on simplistic pronatalist rhetoric.
- Ensure that future **delimitation and political representation** balance population changes with **federal fairness**.
- Strengthen policies for **elderly care, healthcare and social security** in rapidly ageing States.
- Promote **evidence-based political demography** to manage demographic change without turning group differences into political antagonism.

Mains Question

Q. India's demographic transition is marked by declining fertility, regional variations in population growth, ageing and migration. Examine how these demographic changes could reshape India's development planning, federal relations and political representation. (250 words)

The Baltic Way — Gandhi's imprint on Baltic freedom

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 1

History of the world will include events from 18th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, redrawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization, political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.— their forms and effect on the society

Why in Focus?

- August 23, 2026 marked the **37th anniversary**

of the Baltic Way, a peaceful protest in which people of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia joined hands to demand freedom from Soviet rule.

- The movement shows how **Gandhian ideas of non-violence and civil resistance** influenced freedom movements beyond India.

Key Highlights

- In **1989**, around **2 million people** formed a **675-km human chain** from Tallinn in Estonia through Riga in Latvia to Vilnius in Lithuania.
- The protest was part of the **Singing Revolution (1986-91)**, in which people used songs, cultural activities and peaceful protests to oppose Soviet rule.
- The Baltic Way was organised on the **50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939)**, a non-aggression pact between **Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union**. Its secret protocol had divided parts of Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence.
- The movement openly challenged Soviet repression and helped build international support for Baltic independence. **Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia regained independence in 1990-91**.
- The Baltic movements were influenced by **Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.** Gandhi's ideas of **ahimsa, satyagraha, civil disobedience and non-cooperation** provided a model for peaceful resistance.
- Gandhi showed that **moral authority, mass mobilisation and withdrawal of public cooperation** could challenge even a powerful state.
- The movement also strengthened **India-Baltic cultural relations**. Cooperation today extends to technology, sustainability, the blue economy and culture.

Implications

- The Baltic Way shows that **non-violent resistance can become a powerful political force** when supported by large-scale public participation.
- Peaceful movements can still face **state repression and violence**, especially when governments perceive them as a threat to political authority.



- Historical events such as the Baltic Way can become part of **contested memories**, particularly amid continuing Russia-West tensions.
- The success of civil resistance depends on **unity, public participation, leadership and sustained mobilisation**.
- The movement highlights the **global relevance of Gandhian thought**, showing that principles developed during India's freedom struggle can influence movements in different political and cultural settings.

Way Forward

- Encourage **peaceful dialogue, democratic participation and non-violent methods** for resolving political conflicts.
- Preserve important historical movements through **archives, education and international heritage institutions**.
- Strengthen **India-Baltic cooperation** in technology, education, culture, sustainability and the blue economy.
- Promote **human rights, democratic values and civilian participation** in governance.
- Use Gandhian principles such as **ahimsa, satyagraha and non-cooperation** as tools for peaceful social and political transformation.

Mains Question

The Baltic Way demonstrates the continuing global relevance of Gandhian principles of non-violence and civil resistance. Discuss. (15 marks, 250 words)

The broken promise of right to work

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 2

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Why in Focus?

- The Supreme Court recently examined whether the **Right to Work** should receive

protection similar to the **Right to Life under Article 21**.

- The issue has become important after the replacement of **MGNREGA** with the **Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar & Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act**, raising concerns about rural employment and wages.

Key Highlights

- The **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** was introduced in **2005**. It provides a legal guarantee of up to **100 days of wage employment** to rural households willing to do unskilled manual work.
- During the **Constituent Assembly debates**, leaders discussed whether the Right to Work should be a Fundamental Right. **K.T. Shah** supported this idea, while **B.R. Ambedkar** felt that universal enforcement was difficult because of India's limited resources.
- The Constitution therefore placed the Right to Work under **Article 41**, within the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)**. It asks the State to provide work within its economic capacity and development.
- In **Olga Tellis vs Bombay Municipal Corporation (1985)**, the Supreme Court held that the **Right to Livelihood is closely connected with the Right to Life under Article 21**.
- In **Sanjit Roy vs State of Rajasthan (1983)**, the Supreme Court held that paying workers below minimum wages could amount to **forced labour under Article 23**.
- In **December 2025**, the government replaced MGNREGA with the **Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar & Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act (VB-GRAM G Act)**. Its implementation began on **July 1, 2026**.
- The article reports a **68% fall in employment during July and August 2026** compared with the average for the previous five years, raising concerns about the weakening of the rural employment guarantee.



Feature	MGNREGA	VB-G RAM G
Seasonal Pause	Work available year-round.	60-day work suspension during peak harvest and sowing seasons.
Wage Funding	Centre paid 100% of wages.	States must now pay 40% of wage costs.
Allocation Mechanism	Demand-based: Central funds automatically expanded to match how many people asked for work.	Fixed budgets: Central funds are capped. States must pay out-of-pocket for any extra workers.
Digital Fear	Flexible manual attendance with late, partial app rollouts.	Mandatory biometrics and AI tracking risk excluding rural workers lacking digital literacy or internet access.

Implications

- The shift away from MGNREGA's **demand-driven employment system** may make it harder for rural households to obtain work when they need it.
- **Low and stagnant wages** can reduce the purchasing power and income of rural workers.
- Greater financial responsibility for States may create a **fiscal burden**, especially when States already face borrowing and spending constraints.
- Lower employment and wages can reduce **rural demand**, affecting local businesses and the wider rural economy.
- Women may face greater economic insecurity as stagnant rural wages contribute to an increase in **unpaid family work**.
- The **principle of non-retrogression** suggests that the State should not deliberately weaken rights and protections that have already been achieved.

Way Forward

- Strengthen the **Right to Work** while keeping it consistent with the country's economic and institutional capacity.
- Link rural employment wages with **minimum or living wages** and ensure timely payment.
- Maintain a strong **demand-driven employment guarantee** so that rural households can seek work when required.
- Strengthen **social audits and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** to improve transparency and reduce corruption.
- Treat rural employment spending as an **investment in rural income, human development and economic demand**, rather than only as welfare expenditure.

Mains Question

The Right to Work, though included under the Directive Principles of State Policy, has gained greater importance through judicial interpretation. Discuss its evolution in India and examine the challenges facing rural employment guarantees. (15 marks, 250 words)

What goes on behind the screen when you pay through UPI?

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 3

Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Why in Focus?

- UPI has become India's leading digital payment system, processing 2,366 crore transactions worth nearly ₹30 lakh crore in July 2026 and accounting for 49% of real-time payments globally in 2025.

Key Highlights

- Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a **real-time digital payment system operated by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
- UPI **enables instant transfer of money between bank accounts using a UPI ID, mobile number or QR code**.
- A **UPI ID acts as an alias for a bank account, allowing users to make payments** without sharing their bank account number.
- During a transaction, the **system authenticates the user, checks the account and transaction for validity and fraud, and routes the payment from the sender's bank to the receiver's bank**.
- UPI **relies on banks, payment apps, NPCI infrastructure, servers, databases, encryption and fraud-detection systems** to process transactions securely.
- UPI 2.0, launched in 2018**, introduced features such as mandates, overdraft accounts, invoice verification and signed QR codes.
- UPI crossed 100 crore transactions per month in October 2019**, demonstrating its rapid adoption.
- UPI **has expanded internationally to countries** including Bhutan, Singapore, UAE, France, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Qatar, Cambodia, Greece and Maldives.

Implications

- UPI has **strengthened financial inclusion and digitalisation** by enabling fast, convenient and interoperable payments.
- Its international expansion enhances India's digital payment diplomacy** and technological influence.
- The **growing scale of UPI also increases the need for strong cybersecurity, fraud prevention**, infrastructure capacity and data protection.

Way Forward

- Strengthen UPI's cybersecurity and fraud-detection mechanisms.**
- Expand UPI interoperability with more countries** to promote cross-border digital payments.
- Invest continuously in digital infrastructure, system resilience and disaster recovery.**

Mains Question

"UPI has emerged as a transformative pillar of India's digital economy. Discuss its significance for financial inclusion and India's digital diplomacy, while highlighting the challenges associated with its rapid expansion." (250 Words)



KEYWORDS

INS Nipun



- INS Nipun is a **Diving Support Vessel (DSV)** of the Indian Navy belonging to the Nistar class.
- The Nistar-class vessels are designed to **undertake deep-sea diving and underwater support operations**.
- INS Nipun is **equipped with Deep Sea Saturation Diving systems** for specialised underwater operations.
- It **can support submarine rescue operations and serve as a mother ship** for Deep Submergence Rescue Vessels (DSRVs).
- It was constructed by **Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL)**, reflecting India's growing indigenous shipbuilding capability.

UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

- The **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** is an **independent UN human rights treaty body** composed of 18 independent experts.
- UNCERD **monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)**, adopted in 1965 and entering into force in 1969.
- The **Committee is supported administratively by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**.

- UNCERD **undertakes periodic reviews of States Parties, issues concluding observations, and can use Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedures** to prevent racial or ethnic conflicts.
- **India signed ICERD in 1967 and ratified it in 1968.**

AYURGYAN Scheme

- **AYURGYAN** is an **umbrella scheme of the Ministry of AYUSH** for promoting AYUSH education and research.
- The scheme has **two components: Capacity Building and Continuing Medical Education (CME) in AYUSH and Research and Innovation in AYUSH**.
- The **Capacity Building and CME** component provides **need-based professional training and skill development** for AYUSH personnel.
- It aims to update the knowledge of **teachers and doctors** and promote **good teaching and clinical practices**, including through **IT and web-based education**.
- The **Research and Innovation** component promotes **research and development in priority areas** based on **disease burden** and aligned with **National Health Programmes**.
- The research component seeks to utilise the capabilities of **medical, scientific, and R&D institutions, universities, and organisations** for AYUSH research.
- It also aims to develop **new technologies and innovations** and strengthen the role of **AYUSH systems in public health delivery**.

Places in News

Sone River



- The Sone River is a **principal southern tributary of the Ganga**, after the Yamuna.
- It **originates in the Amarkantak Hills of the Maikal Range in Madhya Pradesh**.
- The river **flows through Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar** before joining the Ganga upstream of Patna.
- Major **tributaries of the Sone include Rihand, Kanhar, Gopad, Banas and North Koel**.
- Bansagar Dam, Rihand Dam and Indrapuri Barrage are important water infrastructure projects associated with the Sone River system.
- **Bihar and Jharkhand signed an MoU on 31 August 2026 to resolve their nearly 25-year-old dispute over Sone River water sharing.**

Larak Island

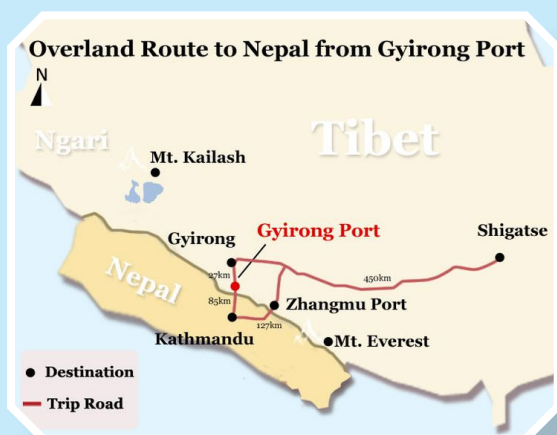


- Larak Island recently witnessed **United States military strikes** targeting Iranian

rocket launchers to prevent Tehran from planting mines in the vital shipping lanes of the **Strait of Hormuz**.

- It is a small, **49-square-kilometer Iranian island** located in the **Persian Gulf**, positioned directly at the narrowest point of the Strait of Hormuz, just east of **Qeshm Island** and south of **Hormuz Island**.
- Overlooking a maritime bottleneck through which approximately **20% of the world's traded oil** passes, the island serves as Iran's primary observation post for monitoring international vessels entering or leaving the Gulf.
- The island is a **heavily militarized zone** operated by the **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)**, equipped with advanced **radar surveillance, naval outposts, and anti-ship missile batteries** to project regional maritime deterrence.
- Geologically, Larak is a **salt plug** characterized by sandstone, rock salt, and iron oxide deposits, while its surrounding waters host some of the **most biodiverse and well-preserved coral reef ecosystems** in the Persian Gulf.

Gyirong Port



- Gyirong Port recently made headlines after **catastrophic flash floods and landslides**, triggered by a glacial collapse, engulfed the Nepal-China border crossing and buried the port complex in debris, prompting extensive **cross-border rescue operations** and efforts to rebuild road connectivity.

- Located in the **Tibet Autonomous Region of China**, the port sits directly opposite **Rasuwagadhi in Nepal** and is connected via a **friendship bridge** across the river gorge.
- It is the **largest and most critical land port between China and Nepal**, serving as a primary trade node within the **Belt and Road Initiative's China-Nepal Economic Corridor**.
- It functions as the **principal overland entry point for international tourists** traveling between **Kathmandu and Lhasa**, handling the majority of cross-border tourism traffic.
- Situated at a relatively lower altitude of around **2,800 metres**, it acts as a crucial **acclimatization zone** for travelers and maintains a milder climate, allowing the route to remain accessible for most of the year compared to higher Himalayan passes.

Majuli Island



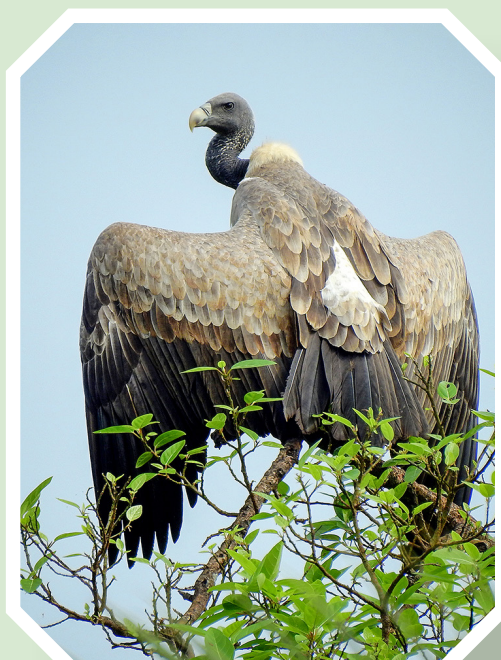
- Majuli Island was recently highlighted for successfully implementing a **decentralized rural solid waste management model** that utilizes **Central Material Collection Facilities (CMCFs)** to prevent non-biodegradable waste from polluting the **Brahmaputra River**.
- Located in **Assam**, it is recognized by

Guinness World Records as the **world's largest inhabited river island**, formed by the Brahmaputra River to the south and its anabranch, the **Kherkutia Xuti** (joined by the Subansiri River), to the north.

- In a significant administrative milestone, Majuli was officially declared a **revenue district in 2016**, making it the **first island in India to achieve district status**.
- The island is the **cultural heartland of Assamese Neo-Vaishnavism**, a movement initiated in the 15th century by saint-reformer **Srimanta Sankardeva**, and is renowned for its historic **Satras (monasteries)** and traditional **hand-made mask-making craft**.
- Majuli faces a severe **ecological threat from continuous fluvial erosion and seasonal flooding** by the Brahmaputra, which has caused its landmass to shrink drastically from over **1,200 sq km historically to less than 400 sq km today**.

Species In News

Indian Vulture (Gyps indicus)



- The **Indian vulture**, also called the **long-billed vulture**, is a large **bird of prey** native to the **Indian subcontinent**.
 - ◆ **Bird of prey** refers to a bird that **hunts or feeds on other animals for food**.
- It is mainly found in **central, southern, and peninsular India**, and has also been recorded in **Pakistan, Nepal, and Bhutan**.
- It inhabits **grasslands, shrublands, farmlands, and urban areas** and generally nests in **colonies**.
- As a **scavenger**, it feeds on animal carcasses and helps remove **rotting meat**, reducing the risk of disease spread.
- It is listed as **Critically Endangered** on the **IUCN Red List** and receives the highest level of protection under **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- Its population declined sharply after vultures fed on cattle carcasses containing **diclofenac**, which causes fatal **kidney failure**.
- Although **veterinary diclofenac was banned in India in 2006**, the use of harmful veterinary drugs remains a major concern.
- Other threats include **habitat loss, electrocution, wind turbine collisions, food scarcity and water pollution**.