

The 'harvest' China wants is one India cannot afford

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General Studies - 2
Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

1. What is the 'Early Harvest' Proposal and India's Response?

- The **"early harvest"** idea (revived in 2017) proposes **settling the Sikkim sector separately** from the full boundary dispute.
- India viewed it with **scepticism** as an **asymmetric concession benefiting China**.
- Recent talks (2025–26) show renewed push, raising concern that India may accept it for **short-term diplomatic optics**.

2. Why is the 2005 Agreement and Package Settlement Important?

- The **2005 Agreement** mandates a **comprehensive package settlement** across all sectors.
- It follows a **sequence**: political parameters → framework → delineation & demarcation.
- China's push for sector-wise settlement **violates this sequence**.
- Package approach ensures **balanced give-and-take** and prevents **piecemeal concessions**.

| Aspect | Early Harvest proposal | 2005 Agreement |
|----------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Approach | Solve one sector first | Solve all sectors together |
| Nature | Piecemeal | Comprehensive |
| Benefit | Quick progress (looks good) | Balanced final settlement |
| Risk | One-sided advantage | More stable outcome |

3. What are the Strategic Concerns in the Sikkim Sector?

- The Sikkim boundary is **disputed**, especially over the **trijunction (Gipmochi vs Batang La)**.
- The area near **Doklam-Jampheri Ridge** overlooks the **Siliguri Corridor**, a key vulnerability.
- A settlement favouring China could:
 - ⊖ Increase **strategic pressure on India's Northeast link**
 - ⊖ Strengthen China's position in **Chumbi Valley**
- China's **post-2017 infrastructure build-up** and pressure on Bhutan add to risks.

4. What Should be India's Strategic Approach?

- **Reject standalone Sikkim settlement;** uphold the **2005 framework**.
- Ensure peace on **LAC(Line of Actual Control)** as a precondition for progress.
- Resist **decoupling border tensions from relations**.
- Push for **comprehensive political settlement**, not symbolic progress.
- Avoid **short-term optics** that harm long-term strategic interests.
- "Early harvest" may offer **illusory gains but real strategic risks**.
- India should **stay with a package settlement approach** to safeguard its interests.

U.S.-Iran negotiations, still a road to nowhere

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1. Background and Need for Negotiations

- **Iran-U.S. relations** have been marked by decades of **hostility, distrust, and periodic crises**.
- Both countries are now considering a **memorandum leading to a ceasefire** and future negotiations.
- The move is driven by the **high political and economic costs** of prolonged conflict.
- However, reaching even a basic framework remains difficult due to **different expectations** on both sides.

2. Why Both Sides Want De-escalation

- The **U.S. and Israel** expected military pressure to force Iran to accept limits on its **nuclear and missile programmes**.
- Iran believed its **strategic resilience**, regional allies, and ability to threaten **energy flows** would raise costs for its adversaries.

- Neither side fully achieved its goals:
 - ➔ **Iran** suffered military and economic damage.
 - ➔ It still retained capabilities such as threatening the **Strait of Hormuz**, targeting U.S. allies, and using **proxy groups**.
- Risks to **shipping routes, energy markets, and regional stability** pushed both sides toward negotiations.

3. Major Obstacles to Lasting Peace

Mutual Distrust

- Iran believes the U.S. ultimately seeks **regime change**.
- The U.S. suspects Iran uses talks to **buy time** and preserve its **nuclear capabilities**.

Domestic Opposition

- In the U.S., critics fear repeating the shortcomings of the **2015 nuclear deal**.
- In Iran, **hardliners and the IRGC** view compromises as surrender.

Role of Israel

- Israel sees Iran's **nuclear and missile programmes** as a major security threat.
- **Israel may not openly oppose peace but could shape agreement terms to make implementation difficult.**
- Its **military actions in Lebanon** and **covert operations against Iranian nuclear scientists** could undermine diplomatic progress.
- **The U.S. prioritises stability and de-escalation**, while **Israel** focuses on **eliminating long-term threats**, even if it **undermines a U.S.-Iran peace deal**.

4. Future Prospects

- Iran's leadership may conclude that **nuclear weapons provide security**, citing **examples such as North Korea**.
- Power within Iran has increasingly shifted towards **hardliners in the IRGC**.
- Iran may continue negotiations but is unlikely to completely abandon the **nuclear weapons option**.
- A lasting solution would require a **nuclear-weapon-free West Asia**, including Israel, which is considered unlikely.

- Therefore, while a **memorandum or ceasefire agreement** may be signed, the chances of achieving **durable peace** remain low **due to deep-rooted mistrust and conflicting strategic interests**.

The future of India's chip industry

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Achievements of Indians in science & technology;
indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

1. What is the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) and how is it supporting India's semiconductor sector?

- India Semiconductor Mission was **launched in 2021 with a financial outlay of ₹76,000 crore**.
- It **provides capital subsidies of up to 50% for semiconductor fabrication (fab) projects**.
- It **supports semiconductor fabrication, packaging, testing, and component manufacturing**.
- It also **funds access to industry-grade Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools** for students and researchers.
- India currently has no operational semiconductor fab, with the **first fab expected at Dholera, Gujarat by 2028**.

2. Why is India pursuing domestic semiconductor manufacturing despite significant challenges?

- Semiconductors are **critical for electronics, telecom, AI, automobiles, and defence**.
- **India currently depends heavily on imported chips**.
- Supply chains are **vulnerable to disruptions, especially in Taiwan**.
- Reliance on foreign chips **poses national security risks**.
- **Domestic manufacturing enhances economic resilience** and technological self-reliance.

3. What are the major challenges facing semiconductor fabrication in India?

- Semiconductor fabs **take 4–5 years to become operational**.

- Setting up fabs **requires huge capital investment**.
- Manufacturing depends on specialised imported equipment.
- The **sector needs a highly skilled workforce and advanced expertise**.
- India's semiconductor ecosystem **remains underdeveloped and import-dependent**.

4. What recommendations has NITI Aayog's Frontier Tech Hub made for India's semiconductor future?

- The **report "Future of India's Semiconductor Industry"** recommends sustained commitment for **10 years or more**.
- It **estimates a public investment requirement of \$45–60 billion** over the next decade.
- India **should focus on mature and strategically relevant nodes rather than competing immediately in frontier 3–7 nm chips**.
- The report **identifies semiconductor packaging and testing as a core production pillar for India**.
- Priority technology partners include the United States, Japan, European Union, and South Korea for access to critical tools, equipment, and expertise.

Can CBSE's marking system be reformed for transparency and credibility?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
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Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

1. What is the OSM System and its Objectives?

- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) introduced **On-Screen Marking (OSM)** to digitise evaluation through scanned answer scripts assessed on secure platforms.
- It enables **random allocation, centralised monitoring, moderation, and automated checks**.
- The objective was to improve **transparency, uniformity, accuracy, and confidentiality** in evaluation.

- It marks a shift from **pen-and-paper to digital assessment** in large-scale Board exams.

2. What Challenges Emerged in OSM Implementation?

- The rollout faced **server failures, portal glitches, and payment issues**.
- Complaints of **blurred/incomplete scans, unchecked answers, and inconsistent step-marking** emerged.
- Issues stemmed from **hurried implementation, weak infrastructure, and limited examiner training**.
- The system raised concerns about **reliability, accountability, and verification of digital evaluation**.

3. Why is Evaluation a Critical Concern in CBSE Exams?

- Evaluation directly affects **college admissions, scholarships, and career opportunities**, especially for Class XII students.
- Descriptive exams involve **subjective assessment**, unlike objective OMR-based tests.
- **Variations among evaluators** create inconsistency in marking.
- Students have a **right to access and verify their answer scripts**, raising concerns over charging fees for it.

4. What Reforms are Needed in the OSM System?

- Provide **free access to scanned answer scripts** within a fixed timeline.
- Develop **robust SOP(standard operating procedures) s**, including high-resolution scanning, secure storage, and cybersecurity safeguards.
- Ensure **training of evaluators and staff** in digital marking and moderation.
- Release **detailed marking schemes with step-wise marks** quickly after exams.
- Introduce **verification stage before evaluation**, audit trails, anomaly detection, and quality checks.
- Maintain **re-evaluation mechanisms with digital tracking** to address grievances.
- OSM has potential to enhance **transparency and standardisation**, but poor implementation undermined trust.

- With **strong infrastructure, SOPs, and transparency measures**, CBSE can restore credibility and make digital evaluation reliable.

KEYWORDS

President of the UN General Assembly

- **Recently, Khalilur Rahman of Bangladesh was elected President of the 81st Session of the UNGA** and will assume office in September 2026, succeeding Annalena Baerbock of Germany.
- The **President of the UNGA is elected annually by all UN member states through a secret ballot** and simple majority vote.
- The presidency **rotates among the UN's five regional groups**: African, Asian-Pacific, Eastern European, Latin American and Caribbean, and Western European and Others.
- The President **serves a one-year term and presides over the sessions, debates, and proceedings of the General Assembly**.
- India has a notable connection to the post: **in 1953, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit became the first woman and the only Indian to serve as President of the UN General Assembly**.

Bundibugyo Ebolavirus

- The current **Ebola outbreak** in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda is caused by the **Bundibugyo strain** of the virus.
- It was first identified in **Uganda's Bundibugyo Province** during the **2007- 08 outbreak**; another outbreak occurred in the **DRC in 2012**.
- **Bundibugyo ebolavirus** has a **fatality rate of 30–40%**, lower than the **Zaire strain**, which can cause death in up to **90%** of cases.
- It is one of the **four species of Ebolavirus** known to cause severe disease in humans.
- The virus spreads through **direct contact with bodily fluids** of infected humans or animals, or contaminated objects.
- There are currently **no approved vaccines or specific drugs** for the Bundibugyo strain.
- **Healthcare workers** face a particularly high risk of infection due to exposure to patients' bodily fluids.

Place in News

Poltava



- Poltava is a **historic city in central Ukraine, situated on the Vorskla River**, with a population of approximately 280,000.
- **Located strategically between Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Dnipro**, it serves as an important economic and transport hub.
- The **city is widely known for the historic Battle of Poltava (1709)**, a decisive victory of the Russian Empire over Sweden that reshaped the balance of power in Europe.
- Due to the ongoing Russia–Ukraine war, the region has also faced frequent aerial attacks and infrastructure strikes by Russian forces.

Similipal Tiger Reserve

- **Similipal Tiger Reserve** is located in the **Mayurbhanj district of Odisha**, and was designated as a **Tiger Reserve under Project Tiger (1973)** and included in the **UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves (2009)**.
- It is globally renowned as the **only wild habitat hosting melanistic tigers**, which exhibit **pseudo-melanism** (abnormally dark and thick black stripes due to a rare genetic mutation).
- The reserve is a key site for **inter-state tiger translocation efforts**, including the introduction of a tigress **Zeenat from Maharashtra**, to enhance **genetic diversity**.
- Its geography includes **dense semi-evergreen and mixed deciduous forests (Sal-dominated)**, drained by rivers like the **Budhabalanga**, with waterfalls such as **Barehipani** and **Joranda**.

- The area forms an important **tribal cultural landscape**, inhabited by communities like the **Santhal, Ho**, and the **Mankidia (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group)**.

ODHISA PROTECTED AREAS

