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MCQs

THE HINDU

'Early Harvest' — larger but not necessarily safer

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 2

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Why in Focus?

- The 25th India-China Special Representatives (SRs) talks in Beijing and the subsequent **"Eight Points of Outcomes and Consensus"** indicate possible movement on the boundary issue.
- However, questions remain over the proposed **"Early and Substantial Harvest"**, territorial concessions and adherence to the 2005 boundary framework

Early and Substantial Harvest = First settle the relatively less disputed portions → then work towards the difficult areas → ultimately achieve a complete boundary settlement.

Key Highlights

- National Security Adviser **Ajit Doval** and Chinese Foreign Minister **Wang Yi** held talks on the India-China boundary dispute.
- The two sides agreed to advance discussions on an **Early and Substantial Harvest** covering boundary delimitation and border management.

- India had earlier proposed an early settlement covering the **Sikkim Sector and the entire Middle Sector**, based on the **highest-watershed principle**.
- China had earlier rejected this proposal and favoured a limited settlement covering the **Sikkim Sector and some undisputed areas of the Middle Sector**.
- The **Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question (2005)** calls for a **package settlement covering all sectors** rather than selective settlement.
- The Sikkim boundary is linked to the **India-Bhutan-China trijunction**. Any change around Batang La, Gipmochi or Jampheri Ridge can affect the security of the **Siliguri Corridor**.
- The two countries also agreed to strengthen **military communication**, continue pilgrimage and border trade, and discuss **trans-border rivers and hydrological data sharing**.
- The meeting marked renewed **India-China engagement and confidence-building**, but it was a step towards boundary negotiations, **not a final settlement** of the boundary dispute

Implications

- A **partial settlement** could resolve easy areas while leaving major disputes in the Eastern and Western Sectors unresolved.
- India may risk making **unequal territorial concessions** without receiving equivalent concessions from China.



- A piecemeal approach could weaken the **package settlement principle** contained in the 2005 Agreement.
- Greater Chinese presence around the **Chumbi Valley and Jampheri Ridge** could increase pressure on the **Siliguri Corridor**, India's link with the Northeast.
- Any settlement involving the **India–Bhutan–China trijunction** could affect Bhutan's territorial interests and therefore requires consultation with Bhutan.
- China's proposed **Medog hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo** raises concerns over downstream water security, ecological risks and flood vulnerability.

Way Forward

- India should ensure that any settlement remains consistent with the **2005 Agreement** and its principle of a comprehensive settlement.
- Both sides should follow objective principles such as the **highest-watershed principle** rather than settling only areas where their claims already overlap.
- **Trijunction areas** involving Bhutan should be addressed only after proper consultation with Bhutan.
- Confidence-building measures such as **hotlines, border trade and pilgrimages** should continue alongside substantive boundary negotiations.
- India should avoid **short-term diplomatic optics** and prioritise long-term territorial security, strategic interests and regional stability.

Mains Question

"The recent India-China boundary talks indicate renewed diplomatic engagement, but a piecemeal settlement may create serious strategic challenges for India." Discuss with reference to the 2005 Agreement and India's security interests. (15 marks, 250 words)

Reducing India's exposure to U.S. tariff risks

Prelims: General 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.

Why in Focus?

- The U.S. Senate has passed the **Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, 2026**, which could impose tariffs of up to **100%** on countries that continue buying Russian crude oil or natural gas.
- As India has become a major importer of Russian crude, the proposed law could create significant **trade, growth and diplomatic challenges**.

Key Highlights

- The proposed U.S. law allows additional tariffs of up to **100%** on major importers of Russian energy that knowingly make new purchases after the law comes into force.
- India's dependence on Russian crude has increased sharply. Russian oil accounted for around **2% of India's crude imports before the Russia-Ukraine conflict**, but now accounts for roughly **half**.
- India's Russian crude imports increased from **4.54 million tonnes (MMT) in January 2026 to 8.96 MMT in May 2026**, showing the growing importance of Russia in India's energy supply.
- The U.S. has already imposed an additional **10% tariff on India** under Section 301 of the **Trade Act, 1974**. If the proposed sanctions become law, India could face cumulative tariffs of up to **110%**.
- Such high tariffs could reduce the **price competitiveness of Indian exports** in the U.S., which is one of India's major export markets.
- A **GTAP (Global Trade Analysis Project)** simulation estimated that a 110% U.S. tariff could reduce India's welfare (overall economic well-being) by nearly **\$47 billion** and cause exports to fall by **5.1%**.
- The simulation also showed that **export diversification**, represented through a functional **India–European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**, could improve welfare by **\$26.3 billion** and increase exports by **3.1%** despite the high U.S. tariffs.



Implications

- Russian crude provides India with **diversified and relatively competitive energy supplies**, but continued purchases could increase pressure from the U.S.
- Very high U.S. tariffs could make **Indian products more expensive**, reducing India's market share and affecting export-oriented industries.
- Lower exports, imports and domestic demand could affect **GDP growth, employment and industrial production**.
- India must balance its **strategic partnership with the U.S.** with its long-standing defence and energy relationship with Russia.
- Export diversification will work only if **alternative markets have sufficient demand** to absorb additional Indian exports.
- **High logistics costs, non-tariff barriers, weak trade facilitation and inadequate product standards** can limit India's ability to compete in new markets.

Way Forward

- India should continue **export market diversification** by expanding trade with the EU, West Asia, Africa, ASEAN and other emerging markets.
- The **India-EU FTA** and other trade agreements should be effectively implemented to create wider market access for Indian products.
- India should reduce **logistics costs and non-tariff barriers** and improve customs and trade facilitation.
- Indian industries should move up the **quality and value chain** through technology, innovation and better global standards.
- India should pursue **balanced energy diplomacy**, maintaining energy security while engaging the U.S. and other partners to minimise the impact of secondary sanctions.

Mains Question

"India's growing dependence on Russian crude has created a difficult balance between energy security and access to Western markets." Discuss the economic and geopolitical challenges posed by possible U.S. sanctions and suggest measures

to strengthen India's trade resilience. (15 marks, 250 words)

Constitutional faultlines in FCRA Bill

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

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

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 **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026** proposes a framework for the **vesting, management and disposal of foreign contributions and assets**.
- The key concern is whether regulating foreign funding could extend to **excessive executive control over the institutions receiving it**.

Key Highlights

- The **FCRA** allows the government to regulate foreign contributions in the interests of **national security, transparency and public accountability**.
- In case of **cancellation, surrender or cessation of FCRA registration**, the government may appoint a **Designated Authority**.
- The authority may take **possession and management of assets** created from foreign contributions.
- It may also manage the organisation's **activities in the public interest, where considered necessary**.
- The **existing FCRA already provides for the vesting of assets created** from foreign contributions after cancellation.
- The Bill expands this framework by detailing procedures for **possession, management, restoration, permanent vesting and disposal of assets**.
- The Bill provides for **restoration of assets**, along with mechanisms for **revision and judicial appeal**, if registration is renewed or



restored within the prescribed period.

- Under the proposed framework, if **registration is not restored within the prescribed period**, the assets may be **permanently vested or disposed of**.

◆ **Vesting** means the **temporary transfer of control over assets** to a designated authority, which may become **permanent if registration is not restored** within the prescribed period.

Implications

- The Bill could significantly expand the consequences of losing **FCRA registration**, **beyond merely losing eligibility to receive foreign contributions**.
- Government control over assets and institutional activities could affect the **autonomy and functioning of civil society organisations**.
- Broad executive discretion without adequate safeguards could raise concerns regarding **constitutional proportionality and due process**.
- The framework could strengthen **financial accountability**, but may also **increase uncertainty** for institutions dependent on foreign-funded assets.

Way Forward

- Clearly define the circumstances in which the **Designated Authority** can take possession or manage institutional activities.
- Introduce strong **procedural safeguards and clear legislative standards** to limit excessive executive discretion.
- Ensure timely and effective mechanisms for **restoration, revision and judicial appeal**.
- Balance the legitimate objective of regulating foreign contributions with the **institutional autonomy and independence of civil society organisations**.

Mains Question

Q. The regulation of foreign contributions is essential for ensuring national security and financial accountability. However, such regulation must also

respect institutional autonomy and constitutional safeguards. Examine in the context of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026. (250 words)

Can jurists be appointed as Supreme Court judges?

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

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

Mains: General Studies 2

Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries

Why in Focus?

- Supreme Court judge **Justice Ujjal Bhuyan** questioned why the constitutional provision allowing a **“distinguished jurist”** to be appointed as a Supreme Court judge has remained unused for over **76 years**.

Key Highlights

- Article 124(3)** provides **three routes** for appointment as a Supreme Court judge.
- A person may qualify after serving as a **High Court judge for at least five years**.
- A person may also qualify after practising as a **High Court advocate for at least 10 years**.
- The third route allows the appointment of a person who, **in the President’s opinion, is a “distinguished jurist”**
- The Constitution does not define **“distinguished jurist”** or prescribe minimum professional experience for such a person.
- The Constituent Assembly included this category to create a **wider field of choice** and bring greater **professional diversity** to the Supreme Court.
- Despite being available since the Constitution came into force, the **“distinguished jurist” route has never been used**.
- One reason may be the present appointment process, under which such a jurist would need to be recommended by the **Supreme Court Collegium**.



Implications

- Using this provision could bring greater **academic and intellectual diversity** to the Supreme Court.
- Eminent legal scholars could contribute specialised expertise in areas such as **constitutional law and jurisprudence**.
- The absence of **courtroom and procedural experience** may raise concerns about the practical functioning of such appointees.
- The issue raises broader questions about whether judicial appointments should draw from a **wider pool of legal expertise**.

Way Forward

- Develop clearer standards for identifying a “**distinguished jurist**” for judicial appointment.
- Consider whether the appointment process can better recognise **legal scholarship and academic expertise**.
- Balance **academic excellence** with the practical requirements of judicial decision-making.
- Broaden diversity in judicial appointments while maintaining **judicial competence and institutional credibility**.

Mains Question

Q. Article 124(3) of the Constitution provides for the appointment of a “distinguished jurist” to the Supreme Court, yet this provision has never been invoked. Examine the significance and challenges of broadening the pool of candidates for appointments to the higher judiciary. (250 words)

KEYWORDS

Streptococcus pneumoniae and Pneumococcal Diseases

- **Streptococcus pneumoniae (S. pneumoniae)** is a bacterium with **over 100 different serotypes**.
- It commonly lives in the **lining of the nose and throat** and is usually harmless.
- When the **immune system is weakened**, such as during a viral infection, it can invade other parts of the body.
- It can cause **pneumonia** in the lungs, **meningitis** in the brain and spinal cord, and **sepsis** in the bloodstream.
- These infections are collectively called **pneumococcal diseases** and can be prevented through **vaccination**.
- Each of these vaccines contains a unique sugar-based substance called a **capsular polysaccharide, specific to each S. pneumoniae serotype**.
- Current vaccines protect against only a **subset of the more than 100 serotypes**.
- Developing a single vaccine covering **all serotypes** is scientifically challenging and **expensive**.

PM E-DRIVE

- The **622-km stretch of National Highway-66 between Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod** in Kerala is being developed as India’s first dedicated **e-truck corridor** under the initiative.
- **PM E-DRIVE** stands for **PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement**. It is a flagship national scheme aimed at accelerating **electric vehicle (EV) adoption**, expanding charging infrastructure and promoting a domestic EV manufacturing ecosystem.
- The scheme is administered by the **Ministry of Heavy Industries** with a total financial outlay of **₹10,900 crore** over its implementation period.



- It provides upfront **demand incentives (subsidies)** for electric **two-wheelers, three-wheelers, e-buses, e-trucks and e-ambulances**. These incentives are restricted to EVs using **advanced battery technologies**.
- To address **range anxiety**, ₹2,000 crore is earmarked for deploying **EV Public Charging Stations (EVPCS)** across India, along with funding to strengthen **vehicle testing agencies**.

Places in News

Mount Gipmochi



- Rising to **14,523 feet** in the Eastern Himalayas, it sits on the southwestern shoulder of the **Doklam Plateau** and forms a crucial part of the prominent **Jampheri (Zompelri) Ridge**.
- **Beijing claims** Mount Gipmochi is the exact border tri-junction between India, Bhutan and China, citing the ambiguous **1890 Anglo-Chinese Convention**. However, India and Bhutan assert that the actual tri-junction lies approximately **6.5 km further north at Batang La**.
- If China's claim is established, it would extend the Chinese boundary south along the Jampheri Ridge, providing the Chinese military with a **commanding line of sight over the vulnerable Siliguri Corridor ("Chicken's Neck")**.
- China's unilateral territorial claims and infrastructure buildup near Gipmochi are viewed as contrary to the **2012 India-China agreement**, which mandates that the final alignment of any tri-junction boundary be determined **jointly in consultation with all three concerned countries**.

Belém



- Belém is the capital of the Brazilian state of **Pará**, strategically situated on the Amazon River Delta where the river system meets the Atlantic Ocean.
- The city hosted **COP30 in 2025**, where the landmark **"Global Mutirão"** decision became the first COP text to acknowledge the likelihood of a temporary overshoot of the **1.5°C global warming limit**.
- Widely known as the **"gateway to the Amazon,"** Belém serves as a major port, cultural centre and commercial hub for the surrounding rainforest region.
- Despite its proximity to the world's largest rainforest, Belém faces severe environmental challenges. **Rapid, unplanned urbanisation and historical deforestation** have left over half its population in low-lying areas vulnerable to **urban flooding and extreme heat**.
- Its selection for COP30 highlighted the importance of **tropical forests as carbon sinks**, while emphasising the role of **Indigenous communities and nature-based solutions** in global climate governance and resilience.

Species In News

Asiatic Black Bear (*Ursus thibetanus*)

- The **Asiatic black bear** is a member of the **bear family (Ursidae)** found from **southern Iran and the Himalayas to Southeast and East Asia**, including **Japan**.
- It is an **omnivore**, feeding on **insects, fruits, nuts, honey, small mammals, birds and carrion**.
- It is easily recognised by a distinctive **cream-coloured crescent-shaped marking** on its chest.
- It is well adapted for **climbing**, with **strong forelimbs, curved claws and large heel pads**.
- Males are significantly larger than females, showing **sexual dimorphism**.
- The Asiatic black bear is listed as **Vulnerable** on the **IUCN Red List**.

