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MCQs

THE HINDU

Jammu and Kashmir — the elusive quest for Statehood

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 2

Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Why in Focus?

- It has been **seven years since Article 370 was removed** and **Jammu and Kashmir lost its Statehood in 2019**, making it a significant issue in current affairs.
- The topic remains relevant due to ongoing debates on **security, development, and democratic governance** in the region.

Key Highlights:

- In **August 2019**, the Government of India **revoked Article 370** and reorganised Jammu and Kashmir into a **Union Territory (UT)**.
- The government imposed strict measures such as **curfew, deployment of additional troops, detention of political leaders, and suspension of internet services**.
- The government argued that these steps would ensure **peace and economic growth**, but **incidents of terrorism have continued**

and spread to new areas (e.g., Pahalgam, Red Fort incidents). .

- The **economic condition remains weak**, with **per capita income at about 76.6% of the national average** and **high unemployment**, especially **graduate unemployment around 23.9%**.
- Authorities frequently use laws such as the **Public Safety Act (PSA)** and the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)**, along with **restrictions and mass questioning of citizens**.

Public Safety Act (PSA) is a **preventive detention law in Jammu and Kashmir** that allows authorities to detain a person **without trial for up to 2 years** to maintain public order and security.

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) is a **central anti-terror law** that allows the government to **designate individuals and organisations as terrorists** and take action against activities threatening the **sovereignty and integrity of India**.

- Even after elections, the **Lieutenant Governor (LG)** holds **significant powers**, while the **elected government has limited authority**.
- The **Supreme Court upheld the decision** but advised that **Statehood should be restored at the earliest**.

Implications:

- The downgrading of a full State into a **Union Territory raises concerns about federalism** and increased **central control**.



- The limited powers of elected representatives have **reduced democratic functioning** and weakened **public accountability**.
- Frequent use of **preventive detention laws** and communication restrictions has raised concerns about **civil liberties and human rights**.
- Economic challenges such as **high unemployment and low income levels** may lead to **youth dissatisfaction and instability**.
- The absence of a clear timeline for restoration of Statehood raises concerns about **judicial oversight and institutional response**.

Way Forward:

- The government should **restore Statehood at the earliest** to strengthen **democratic governance and accountability**.
- The authorities should initiate **inclusive dialogue with local stakeholders** to rebuild **trust and participation**.
- The focus should shift towards **development-oriented policies**, including **employment generation, tourism, investment, and infrastructure growth**.
- The administration should ensure that laws such as **PSA and UAPA** are used with **safeguards** to prevent misuse.
- Institutions such as the **judiciary, media, and civil society** should be strengthened to ensure **transparency and long-term stability**.

Mains Question:

“The changes made in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 have significant implications for federalism, democracy, and internal security in India. Discuss these implications and suggest a balanced way forward.” (15 marks, 250 words)

NATO enters a new strategic era of transformation

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 2

Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate

Why in Focus?

- The **United States** is redefining its role in **NATO**, asking **European allies** to take greater responsibility for their own defence.
- This marks a major shift in the **transatlantic security partnership** and has important implications for the **Indo-Pacific** and **India's strategic interests**.

Key Highlights

- The **U.S. National Security Strategy (2025)** calls for **Europe** to assume greater responsibility for its own security while the **U.S.** focuses more on the **Indo-Pacific**.
- NATO members have agreed to increase **defence spending** and strengthen **Europe's defence capabilities**.
- Following the **Russia-Ukraine war**, the **U.S.** has gradually reduced its military presence in **Europe**, signalling a shift in strategic priorities.
- NATO has evolved through **three phases**:
 - ◆ **NATO 1.0 (1949-1991)**: The **U.S.** served as NATO's **primary military and nuclear guarantor**, leading the Alliance in deterring the **Soviet Union** during the **Cold War**.
 - ◆ **NATO 2.0 (1991-2022)**: The **U.S.** remained NATO's dominant security provider as the Alliance **expanded eastward** and conducted operations in the **Balkans** and **Afghanistan**, while **Europe** became increasingly dependent on American military capabilities.
 - ◆ **NATO 3.0 (2022 onwards)**: Following the **Russia-Ukraine war**, the **U.S.** is encouraging **Europe** to take greater responsibility for its **conventional defence**, while continuing to provide **nuclear deterrence, intelligence**, and other strategic capabilities.
- A stronger and more self-reliant **Europe** could enable the **U.S.** to devote more military and diplomatic attention to the **Indo-Pacific**.

Implications

- Despite higher defence spending, **Europe** continues to depend on the **U.S.** for **nuclear deterrence, intelligence, strategic mobility**, and other advanced military capabilities.



- Building an **integrated European defence ecosystem** requires significant time, investment, and technological capacity.
- The continued **Russia-NATO rivalry** poses long-term security challenges for Europe.
- The shift in **U.S. strategic priorities** could reshape the global balance of power and security partnerships.

Way Forward

- Strengthen **Europe's independent defence capabilities** while maintaining **NATO's collective security framework**.
- Enhance **burden-sharing** among NATO members through sustained defence investments.
- Improve cooperation in **advanced defence technologies, intelligence, and defence industrial production**.
- The changing security environment offers **India** opportunities to deepen cooperation with **Europe** in **defence manufacturing, advanced technologies, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, semiconductors, and space**.

Mains Question

"The transformation of NATO reflects changing global security priorities rather than the decline of the Alliance." Discuss the evolving role of NATO and examine its implications for Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and India's strategic interests. (250 Words)

Out of work and outraged

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

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

Mains: General Studies 2

Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

Why in Focus?

- Large-scale student protests at **Jantar Mantar** were triggered by **paper leaks**, examination irregularities, and concerns over recruitment and education policies.

- The protests also highlighted deeper issues such as **youth unemployment, declining investment in education**, and the lack of institutional accountability.

Key Highlights

- **India's demographic dividend** remains underutilised due to **high youth unemployment**, especially among **women and urban youth**.
- **Youth unemployment (9.9%)** is over **three times** the **overall unemployment rate (3.1%)**.
 - ◆ In urban areas, **13.6%** of youth are unemployed compared to an overall urban unemployment rate of **4.8%**.
- **Higher educational qualifications** do not guarantee employment, reflecting a shortage of quality job opportunities.
- **Government expenditure on education** has declined from **3.75% (2009-10)** to **2.6% (2025-26)** despite the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** recommending higher public investment.
- Limited public investment has reduced access to **quality higher education**, while competition for educational seats has increased.
- The article highlights concerns over **political interference** in appointments at **public universities**, affecting the quality of higher education.

Implications

- High **youth unemployment** risks turning India's **demographic dividend** into a **demographic burden**.
- Despite the **promised education expenditure of ₹1,28,650 crore** in the Union Budget 2025-26, **the actual expenditure was only ₹1,21,949 crore**, resulting in a **shortfall of ₹6,701 crore**.
- **Frequent policy changes and examination irregularities** reduce the **credibility** of recruitment and entrance examinations.
- Increasing dependence on **coaching centres widens educational inequality** and **undermines classroom learning**.



Way Forward

- Increase **public investment** in education in line with the **NEP 2020** recommendations.
- Create more **quality employment opportunities** to effectively utilise India's demographic dividend.
- Ensure **transparent, predictable, and accountable** examination and admission systems.
- Strengthen **public educational institutions** by improving teaching quality and institutional autonomy.
- Establish effective **grievance redressal mechanisms** for recruitment and entrance examinations.

Mains Question

"India's demographic dividend can become a demographic burden without quality education and adequate employment opportunities." Discuss the challenges facing India's youth and suggest measures to address them. (250 Words)

What can be done to curb 'paper leaks' and ensure institutional accountability?

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 2

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

Why in Focus?

- The **controversies surrounding NEET-2024, UGC-NET 2024, and NEET-2026** have highlighted concerns over the integrity of public examinations, prompting debates on strengthening institutional safeguards.

Acts / Legal Framework

Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024

- Enacted to prevent unfair means in public examinations conducted by Central authorities.
- Covers offences such as paper leaks, unauthorized disclosure of question papers, cheating, impersonation, tampering with answer sheets, and organised examination fraud.
- Provides for stringent penalties, including imprisonment and fines, against individuals and organised groups involved in examination malpractice.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023

- Applicable for investigating criminal offences related to examination fraud, forgery, conspiracy, cheating, and other criminal acts associated with public examinations.

Key Highlights

- **NEET-2024, UGC-NET 2024, and NEET-2026 witnessed major irregularities;** UGC-NET 2024 and NEET-2026 were re-conducted by the **National Testing Agency (NTA)**.

The **National Testing Agency (NTA)** is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Education, established in 2017 to conduct transparent, efficient, and standardized entrance examinations in India. It conducts major national examinations such as NEET (UG), JEE (Main), CUET, UGC-NET, and NCET using technology-driven testing processes.

- CBI investigations into NEET-2024 and UGC-NET 2024 reportedly found no prosecutable evidence of a conventional printed paper leak, despite cancellations and re-examinations.
- Examination compromise includes unauthorised disclosure of question banks, selected questions, examiner identities, digital data, or insider information, not just leaked printed papers.
- Vulnerabilities exist across the examination lifecycle: from question setting, moderation, translation, and digitisation to examination administration, evaluation, and result processing.
- NEET-2024 exposed operational lapses, including wrong question paper distribution, delayed OMR handling, grace marks, tie-breaking disputes, and clustering of unusually high scores.

Implications

- A **narrow interpretation of “paper leak”** fails to address modern forms of examination compromise.
- **Insider threats, cyber vulnerabilities, and operational failures can undermine fairness** even without a leaked printed question paper.
- **Weak institutional safeguards reduce public confidence** in high-stakes examinations.

Way Forward

- **Broaden the definition of “paper leak” to cover all forms of unauthorized disclosure** of confidential examination information.
- **Establish a Public Examination Integrity Framework (PEIF)** with uniform Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the entire examination lifecycle.
- **Publish a White Paper on NEET-2024, UGC-NET 2024, and NEET-2026, documenting breaches, investigations, judicial outcomes, and lessons learned.**

A **White Paper** is an authoritative government or institutional policy document that presents facts, analyses a problem, explains the reasons behind it, and recommends reforms or future actions.

- **Strengthen cybersecurity, intelligence-based monitoring, audit trails, conflict-of-interest checks, and periodic rotation of experts.**
- **Ensure end-to-end institutional accountability from question setting to result declaration** to restore public confidence in public examinations.

Mains Question

“Examination integrity extends beyond preventing conventional paper leaks. Discuss the institutional and legal reforms required to strengthen the credibility of public examinations in India.” (250 Words)

KEYWORDS

Falcon 9



- Falcon 9 is a **partially reusable, two-stage orbital launch vehicle developed and operated by SpaceX.**
- The rocket is **powered by nine Merlin engines in its first stage, which use liquid oxygen (LOX) and rocket-grade kerosene (RP-1) as propellants.**
- Falcon 9 is **designed to land and reuse its first-stage booster, significantly reducing the cost of space launches.**
- It is **used to launch satellites, cargo missions, crewed spacecraft, and interplanetary missions**, including payloads for NASA and commercial customers.
- In **January 2025, a Falcon 9 rocket launched two lunar-bound satellites: Japan’s RESILIENCE lunar lander and the Blue Ghost Mission 1 lunar lander on the same mission.**
- It is expected to impact the Moon near the Einstein crater on 5 August 2026.

Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) and Precision Strike Missiles (PrSM)

- Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) is a **U.S.-made surface-to-surface ballistic missile developed for long-range precision strikes against high-value targets.**



- Precision Strike Missile (PrSM) is the **next-generation missile designed to replace ATACMS, offering greater range, accuracy, and improved battlefield capabilities.**
- Both missiles are **launched from the M270 Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) and the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS).**
- ATACMS **has a maximum range of about 300 km, while PrSM is designed to exceed 500 km, with future variants expected to reach even longer ranges.**
- These missile systems **enhance long-range precision firepower, enabling the U.S. Army to strike enemy command centres, air defence systems, and logistics hubs with high accuracy.**

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

- FSSAI is a **statutory body** established under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.**
- The **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006** consolidated various **food-related laws and orders** under a single framework.
- FSSAI lays down **science-based standards** for **food articles.**
- It regulates the **manufacture, storage, distribution, sale, and import** of food.
- Its objective is to ensure the availability of **safe and wholesome food** for **human consumption.**
- The **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India,** is the administrative ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.

Kusha Missile System



- Kusha is a **long-range surface-to-air missile (LR-SAM)** system developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).**
- It is capable of intercepting a wide range of **aerial threats, including fighter aircraft, missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and large enemy aircraft.**
- The missile system can engage targets over a **wide range and high-altitude envelope,** strengthening India's **air defence capability.**
- All major components, including the **missiles, radars, and command and control centre,** have been developed by **DRDO laboratories** in collaboration with **industry partners.**
- The successful **maiden flight test** was conducted from **Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha,** against a **high-speed, high-altitude electronic target.**
- The development of Kusha will **reduce India's dependence on imports** and place India among the **few countries** capable of developing **long-range surface-to-air missile systems.**

Conservation Reserve

- The concept of **"Conservation Reserve"** was introduced through the **Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2002.**
- These reserves function as **buffer zones, wildlife corridors, and ecological connectors** between **National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.**
- They are declared on **government-owned land by the State Government,** with **mandatory consultation of local communities.** In contrast, **Community Reserves** can be declared on **private or community-owned land**
- **Local community rights** are generally allowed to continue but are regulated in line with **conservation objectives,** and management is carried out through a **Conservation Reserve Management Committee.**

Places in News

Port of Mokha



- The **Port of Mokha** is in the news because **14 seafarers (including 13 Indians)** were safely brought here by the Yemeni Coast Guard after their vessel, *MSV Faize Noore Oliya*, was **hit by a projectile** and sank in the Red Sea.
- It is a **historic port city** located on the **southwestern coast of Yemen**, along the **Red Sea**, about **75 km north of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait**.
- Historically, Mokha was the **main global center for the export of *Coffea arabica*** from the **15th to 18th centuries**, and the term “**Mocha coffee**” originates from this port.
- The port lies near a **major maritime choke point**, which is crucial for **global trade between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea**.
- In the present context, the region is **highly sensitive geopolitically**, with **frequent threats to commercial shipping**, making it important for **maritime security and global supply chains**.

Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve

- The **Asan Wetland Conservation Reserve** is in the news because the **Supreme Court** has clarified that the **ban on mining within a 10-km radius** will be **uniformly applied to all wetland conservation reserves across India** to ensure **environmental parity**.
- It is located in the **Dehradun district of Uttarakhand**, at the **confluence**

of the **Asan River** and the **Eastern Yamuna Canal**, forming a **transition zone between riverine and forest ecosystems**.

- In **2020**, it was designated as a “**Wetland of International Importance**” (**Ramsar Site**) - the **first Ramsar Site of Uttarakhand**.
- It lies along the **Central Asian Flyway**, serving as a **major wintering ground for migratory birds**, including **critically endangered species** like the **Baer's Pochard** and the **Red-headed Vulture**.
- The area was declared a **Conservation Reserve in 2005**, ensuring **legal protection**.
- The reserve supports **rich biodiversity**, with about **330 bird species** and **49 fish species**, including the **endangered Putitor Mahseer**.

