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MCQs

THE HINDU

Striped hyenas help keep India clean, but remain misunderstood

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 3

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Why in Focus?

- The focus is **on the conservation of the Indian striped hyena, which is often misunderstood due to its unusual appearance, scavenging behaviour, nocturnal lifestyle** and negative cultural beliefs.



Key Highlights

- The **striped hyena** is mainly nocturnal, shy and feeds largely on carrion.
- Around 5,000–14,000 striped hyenas are estimated globally**, with about 1,000–3,000 in India.
- India has **no official nationwide census for striped hyenas**, making their exact population and distribution uncertain.
- The **striped hyena is classified as Near Threatened (NT) on the IUCN Red List and receives the highest level of legal protection under India's Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**
- Conservation efforts remain fragmented**, with initiatives in States such as West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.
- As scavengers, **hyenas help remove decaying carcasses, keeping landscapes and water sources cleaner** and reducing the spread of pathogens.

Implications

- Lack of reliable nationwide population and distribution data.**
- Elusive and nocturnal behaviour** makes population estimation difficult.
- Negative cultural beliefs and superstitions** lead to persecution.
- Absence of a unified national action plan** results in fragmented conservation efforts.
- Lack of identified safe habitats** and wildlife corridors.



Way Forward

- **Conduct a nationwide scientific population assessment** using camera traps, genetic tools and other modern techniques.
- **Develop a National Action Plan for striped hyena conservation** to coordinate State-level efforts.
- **Identify and protect critical habitats, safe havens and movement corridors** based on scientific data.
- **Strengthen community-based conservation and awareness programmes** to address myths and negative perceptions.
- **Highlight the hyena's role as a natural sanitation and public-health agent and integrate its conservation** with broader ecosystem management.

Mains Question

Striped hyenas play an important ecological role but remain among India's lesser-studied wildlife species. Discuss the challenges in their conservation and suggest measures to ensure their long-term survival. (250 words)

What is 'One Nation, One Time'?

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?

- The Centre **has notified the Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2026**, making IST the single reference time for legal, administrative, commercial and official purposes across India.

Key Highlights

- The **Legal Metrology (IST) Rules, 2026** were notified on August 27, 2026 and will come into force 180 days after publication in the Official Gazette.

- **Indian Standard Time (IST)** is 5 hours 30 minutes ahead of **Coordinated Universal Time (UTC)** and is maintained by the CSIR–National Physical Laboratory (CSIR–NPL).
- IST is **based on atomic clocks and satellite links** and is traceable to UTC with an uncertainty of less than 3 nanoseconds.
- The Rules aim to ensure a uniform and accurate time reference for banking, digital payments, telecom, railways, power systems, computer networks and government records.
- **ISRO will support secure dissemination of IST** and reduce dependence on foreign satellite-based time sources such as GPS.
- The initiative seeks to strengthen national security, critical infrastructure and cyber resilience by reducing the risk of time manipulation and inconsistent time sources.

Implications

- Ensures accurate time-stamping of digital and financial transactions.
- Improves coordination of railways, airports and other transport systems.
- Supports reliable functioning of telecommunication and internet networks.
- Enables precise time-keeping in power systems and critical infrastructure.
- Improves maintenance of legal/government records and emergency services.

Way Forward

- Ensure smooth transition during the 180-day implementation period.
- Synchronise government, financial, telecom and critical infrastructure systems with IST.
- Strengthen cybersecurity safeguards against time manipulation and spoofing.
- Promote wider adoption of indigenous technologies such as White Rabbit Technology for high-precision time dissemination.

White Rabbit Technology is a high-precision network-based system that enables nanosecond-level synchronisation of clocks across geographically distributed systems.

Mains Question

What is the significance of the 'One Nation, One Time' initiative for India's digital infrastructure and national security? Discuss the challenges in implementing a nationwide standardised time reference. (250 words)

Why is BRICS exploring cross-border payments?

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?

- India, as the Chair of **BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)**, is promoting discussions on making cross-border payments **faster, cheaper and more efficient**. The focus is on linking national payment systems and **Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs)**.

BRICS is a grouping of major **emerging economies** that aims to increase cooperation in areas such as **economy, trade, finance, development and global governance**. Originally founded by **Brazil, Russia, India, and China in 2009**, the coalition added South Africa in 2010 to form the acronym. As of 2026 : Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates.

Key Highlights

- At present, international payments usually pass through **correspondent banks**. For example, a payment from South Africa to India may pass through international banks before reaching the Indian bank.
- Many countries do not directly exchange their currencies. Therefore, currencies such as the **U.S. dollar** are often used as a **vehicle currency**, increasing conversion costs.
- SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication)** provides a

secure network through which banks send payment instructions. It does not directly transfer the money. SWIFT tells banks where and how to make a payment

- The existing system can be costly because there are **multiple intermediaries, bank charges and currency conversions**.
- BRICS countries are therefore discussing ways to connect their **national payment systems directly**. India has already linked **UPI (Unified Payments Interface)** with Singapore's **PayNow** system.
- Another possibility is using **CBDCs (Central Bank Digital Currencies)** issued by central banks for wholesale transactions between financial institutions. This can allow both sides of a transaction to settle at the same time.

Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) is the **digital form of a country's official currency issued by its central bank**. Unlike private cryptocurrencies, it is backed and regulated by the central bank and can be used for **digital payments and settlement**.

- India has proposed linking the CBDCs of BRICS countries for **trade and tourism payments**. India has mainly presented this as a way to reduce costs and improve payment efficiency rather than directly replacing the U.S. dollar.

Implications

- Creating separate payment links between every BRICS country may become **complex and difficult to scale**.
- Alternative payment systems need the participation of many **banks, financial institutions and regulators** to become effective.
- Different countries have different rules related to **capital flows, taxation, data protection and financial regulation**.
- Countries may hesitate to join a system if they fear **sanctions or geopolitical pressure**.
- Greater use of CBDCs can create new concerns related to **cybersecurity, privacy, money laundering and financial stability**.
- Reducing dependence on the dollar can also have wider **geopolitical and economic implications** for the global financial system.



Way Forward

- Develop **interoperable payment systems** so that different national systems can work together smoothly.
- Create common standards for **cybersecurity, Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Know Your Customer (KYC)** requirements.
- Start with practical areas such as **trade, remittances and tourism payments** and gradually expand.
- Ensure strong cooperation between **central banks, finance ministries and financial regulators**.
- Focus on reducing transaction costs and improving efficiency while maintaining an **open and complementary global financial system**.

Mains Question

Cross-border payment systems are becoming an important part of global economic and geopolitical relations. Discuss the reasons behind BRICS efforts to develop alternative payment mechanisms and examine their significance for India. (15 marks, 250 words)

Why is the Centre opposed to totalisers?

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?

- On **September 1**, the Supreme Court asked the Central government to examine the possibility of introducing **totaliser machines for counting votes recorded in EVMs**.
- The move aims to protect the **secrecy of booth-wise voting patterns** and prevent the possible **identification and victimisation of voters**.

Key Highlights

- The case dates back to **2014**, when **Yogesh Gupta and Imran Khan** filed a PIL seeking the **mixing of votes** from different polling stations in a constituency.
- They argued that **booth-wise voting results** could allow candidates to identify areas that had voted against them and potentially **intimidate voters**.
- This is especially relevant in **geographically or socially concentrated communities**, where booth-wise results may reveal a group's voting preference.
- A totaliser, **developed by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and the Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL)**, prevents the disclosure of individual booth-wise voting patterns.
- It combines the votes recorded in around **14 EVMs** and provides a **single consolidated result** for all those booths.
- At present, votes are counted and results are declared **booth by booth**, making individual booth-wise voting patterns available.
- The **Election Commission has consistently supported the introduction of totalisers** and first recommended the system to the government in **2008**.
- The **Central government has opposed the proposal**, arguing that booth-wise results do not necessarily lead to voter intimidation.
 - ◆ Argued that these results can help candidates **improve their outreach in areas where their support is weak**.
- The Centre has also raised concerns about possible **technical and data-security issues** associated with the totaliser system.
- The **Supreme Court has now asked the Central government to examine the proposal**, including any impediments or possible negative consequences.
- The **Election Commission has also been asked to submit its proposal to the government**.

Implications

- Totalisers could strengthen the **secrecy and anonymity of voting**.
- They could reduce the possibility of



intimidation or victimisation based on booth-wise voting patterns.

- They could strengthen public confidence by ensuring that voting patterns cannot be easily linked to **specific local communities or areas**.
- However, reducing access to booth-wise results may raise concerns about **electoral transparency and the availability of detailed election data**.

Way Forward

- Examine the technical and legal feasibility of introducing **totaliser machines**.
- Address concerns related to **VVPAT verification, data security and vote-counting procedures**.
- Balance the principle of **secret voting** with the need for a transparent and verifiable electoral process.
- Conduct thorough **technical testing and pilot assessments** before introducing the system on a large scale.

Mains Question

Q. Booth-wise disclosure of election results can raise concerns about voter anonymity and possible victimisation. Examine how the proposed totaliser system can balance the secrecy of voting with transparency in India's electoral process (250 words).

KEYWORDS

Purgi community

- The **Purgi (Purigpa) community** was recently highlighted during the **Suru Summer Festival** in Ladakh's Suru Valley, which promotes their **cultural heritage, traditional agrarian lifestyle and sustainable tourism**.
- The **Purigpa (Purgi)** are an **ethno-linguistic community of mixed Tibetan and Dardic origins**, mainly inhabiting **Kargil district of Ladakh** and surrounding high-altitude Himalayan areas.
- Their society reflects a unique **cultural syncretism**, combining elements of

Islamic and Buddhist traditions. Although they have historical links with **Tibetan Buddhism**, the majority of the community today follows **Shia Islam**, which spread through Islamic preachers in the **15th and 16th centuries**.

- The community speaks **Purgi (Puriki)**, a **Tibetic language** closely related to **Balti and Ladakhi**. Historically, it has been written using both **Perso-Arabic and Tibetan scripts**.
- The Purgi largely maintain an **agrarian lifestyle** based on communal farming, hospitality and spiritual traditions.
- They preserve several traditional practices, including the **Tibetan agricultural calendar** and the wearing of traditional **goncha robes**, while seeking to preserve their culture without excessive commercialization.

Building Opportunities & Driving Hope (BODH)

- **BODH** is a **capacity-building and leadership development programme for Indian researchers and scientists**, launched in **September 2025**.
- It was founded by four scientists, **Veda Krishnan, Sriparna Chatterjee, Chandra Shekhar Sharma and Pooja Devi**, based on their shared experiences with the **Indian National Young Academy of Sciences (INIAS)**.
 - ◆ **INIAS** is a **self-governing body of young scientists** that brings together **promising early-career researchers from across India**
- It addresses the gap between **scientific expertise** and the **leadership, mentoring and institutional skills** needed by researchers.

Dahi Handi

- **Dahi Handi** is a popular cultural sport and festival celebrated during **Krishna Janmashtami**, especially in **Maharashtra**.



- **Dahi** means **curd**, while **Handi** refers to an **earthen pot** filled with milk products such as curd and butter.
- It is also known as **Gopalakala** or **Utlotsavam**.
- The tradition commemorates the childhood stories of **Lord Krishna** and his love for butter and curd.
- The **Dahi Handi** is **hung high above the ground**, and participants, known as **Govindas**, form a **human pyramid** to reach and break it.
- Traditionally, the youngest participant climbs to the top, breaks the pot, and the contents are **shared among the participants**.

Places in News

Jask

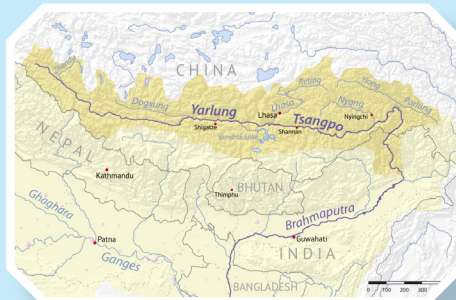


- It is a strategic **deep-water port on Iran's Makran coast**, opening directly into the **Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea**, outside the enclosed Persian Gulf.
- Jask provides Iran with a **strategic bypass** for oil exports. It can reduce the country's vulnerability to geopolitical disruptions, US sanctions, or blockades affecting the **Strait of Hormuz**, a narrow maritime chokepoint through which a significant share of global oil trade passes.
- Under the **25-year Iran–China Comprehensive Cooperation Agreement**, China has proposed major investments in Jask, including an **industrial town, refineries and petrochemical complexes**. This has raised concerns about a possible **Chinese strategic or military footprint** in the region.
- For **India**, Jask has both opportunities and security implications. It is located near **India-backed Chabahar Port** and **China-operated Gwadar Port** in Pakistan. A more secure oil-export route through Jask could reduce risks linked to Hormuz, but

a growing **Chinese naval presence** could complicate India's **maritime security strategy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.

Yarlung Tsangpo

- The **Yarlung Tsangpo** is the upper course of the **Brahmaputra River**, flowing eastward across the **Tibetan Plateau** before turning south at the Great Bend in Medog County.
- The **river originates from the Angsi Glacier in Tibet** and enters India through **Arunachal Pradesh**, where it is known as the **Siang/Dihang** before becoming the Brahmaputra.
- **China is constructing a mega hydropower project near the Great Bend in Medog County**, planned to have a **capacity of around 60 GW**, making it one of the world's largest hydropower projects.
- The **project has raised concerns in India over downstream flow regulation, sediment reduction, ecological impacts, and dam safety**, particularly because the Brahmaputra is a transboundary river.



Species In News

Neelakurinji

- **Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*) is a rare flowering shrub** endemic to the high-altitude Shola grasslands of southern India.
- It is **famous for its mass flowering once every 12 years**, after which the plant reproduces and dies.
- Its **purplish-blue flowers transform mountain landscapes and give the Nilgiri Mountains** (“Blue Mountains”) their name.
- It **supports biodiversity by attracting pollinators and serves as an indicator of ecosystem health**, while also supporting species such as the Nilgiri Tahr.
- **Neelakurinji is classified as “Vulnerable” on the IUCN Red List** due to habitat loss, invasive species, climate change and other threats.

