

A disturbing step for rights, dignity and mental health

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
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.

1. Context

- The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026** has created confusion, fear, and apprehension, raising the core question of **who determines gender identity**.
- While cisgender individuals freely self-declare gender in everyday settings, the amendment proposes **external verification for transgender persons**, undermining equality.
- This shift affects **dignity, autonomy, and mental well-being**.

Cisgender describes people whose **gender identity matches the sex** they were assigned at birth.

Transgender describes people whose **gender identity differs from the sex** they were assigned at birth

2. Legal and Constitutional Shift

- The landmark *NALSA v. Union of India* upheld **self-identification as the basis of gender identity**, rooted in Articles **14, 15, 19, and 21**.
- The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 retained this principle while ensuring **anti-discrimination and welfare measures**.
- Over time, institutions aligned with **gender-affirming practices**.
- The **2026 Amendment reverses this progress** by introducing **medical and bureaucratic gatekeeping**.

3. Key Provisions and Challenges

- Requires transgender persons to:
 - ➔ Appear before a **medical board**
 - ➔ Undergo assessment
 - ➔ Obtain certification via the **District Magistrate**
- There is **no objective medical test** for gender identity, making the process arbitrary.
- Practical issues:
 - ➔ Lack of medical boards at district level
 - ➔ Overburdened healthcare system
 - ➔ Risk of **invasive or humiliating examinations**
- Likely outcomes:
 - ➔ Violation of **privacy, dignity, and bodily autonomy**
 - ➔ **Reduced access to welfare schemes** and increased exclusion

4. Social and Mental Health Implications

- Existing vulnerabilities:
 - ➔ **99% face social rejection**
 - ➔ **52% face harassment in education**
 - ➔ **57% of trans women face violence**
 - ➔ **Suicide attempts: 13–50% among adolescents**
- Amendment may:
 - ➔ Intensify **stigma and mental distress**
 - ➔ Trigger a **public mental health crisis**
- Clause on **“undue influence”** (up to 15 years imprisonment):
 - ➔ Creates risks for **doctors, counsellors, educators, NGOs**
 - ➔ Discourages **gender-affirmative care**

- Also:
 - ➔ **Blurs distinctions** between transgender, intersex, and hijra identities
 - ➔ Keeps **trans men largely invisible**
- Overall, it risks **reversing gains and institutionalising exclusion instead of empowerment.**
- This highlights the need to reconsider the amendment by
 - ➔ **restoring self-identification**
 - ➔ **strengthening administrative safeguards instead of gatekeeping**
 - ➔ **ensuring policies that uphold constitutional morality, dignity, and inclusive welfare access.**

Climate change as a public health emergency

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
General issues on Environmental ecology, Biodiversity and Climate Change.

Mains: General Studies - 3
Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

1. Climate Change as a Public Health Crisis

- Climate change is not just environmental, it is a **broad-spectrum medical crisis.**
- It **intensifies existing diseases** and enables the emergence of **new health threats.**
- In India, impacts are already visible due to **changing weather patterns** and **urban vulnerabilities.**
- Often overlooked in discussions dominated by **sea-level rise and disasters.**

2. Water, Disease Spread, and Changing Epidemiology

- **Urban flooding/waterlogging** leads to **waterborne diseases:** cholera, typhoid, hepatitis A, leptospirosis.
- **Drought conditions** force use of unsafe water → rise in **diarrhoeal diseases** and **dehydration.**
- **Shifting climate patterns** expand disease spread:
 - ➔ Increase in **vector-borne diseases** (e.g., dengue, malaria).
 - ➔ Expansion into **new geographic regions** (e.g., malaria in Himachal Pradesh).

- ➔ Changes in **seasonality** (e.g., dengue peak shifting to November).
- Populations lack **immunity**, and **health systems remain unprepared.**

3. Air Pollution, Heat Stress, and Physiological Impacts

- Climate change increases **air pollution (PM2.5)** due to higher energy use.
- Health impacts:
 - ➔ **Respiratory diseases:** asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
 - ➔ **Cardiovascular risks:** hypertension, heart attack, stroke
 - ➔ **Kidney damage** and reduced filtration
- **Heat stress effects:**
 - ➔ Increased **cardiovascular strain**
 - ➔ Rising **heatstroke deaths** (Odisha, Telangana, Vidarbha)
 - ➔ Loss of **night-time cooling recovery** in cities
- **Vulnerable groups:** outdoor workers, urban poor
- **Infant health risks:** preterm birth, low birth weight

4. Food Security, Nutrition, and Long-term Health Risks

- **Extreme weather** disrupts agriculture → **reduced productivity** and **food shortages.**
- Decline in **nutritional quality of crops** + rising prices → **malnutrition & micronutrient deficiencies.**
- **Heat stress in livestock** reduces **milk production**, affecting child nutrition.
- Leads to:
 - ➔ **Weakened immunity**
 - ➔ Higher **disease vulnerability**, especially among **children and elderly**

Are students ready for CBSE's AI push?

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.

1.Context

- On April 1, 2026, the Union Minister of Education **launched a new CBSE curriculum on Computational Thinking and Artificial Intelligence for students of Classes 3 to 8.**

2. Building AI Literacy through Computational Thinking in Schools

- The curriculum **builds a strong foundation through Computational Thinking (CT)** in Classes 3–5.

Computational Thinking is the ability to solve problems logically by organizing steps in a way that a computer can understand and follow.

- These **skills are integrated into subjects like Mathematics and The World Around Us (TWAU)** using activity-based learning.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is introduced only from Class 6** with basic concepts.
- By Class 8, students learn the AI project lifecycle, data fairness,** and real-world applications.
- The curriculum ensures inclusivity through unplugged learning without relying on specific devices.

3. Achieving AI Goals through CT

- Develops Computational Thinking (CT) skills** like reasoning and problem-solving.
- Introduces Artificial Intelligence (AI) in everyday life** from 2026–27.
- Integrates CT across subjects instead of teaching it** separately.
- Uses language-based, activity-driven** learning methods.
- Assesses through tests, group work,** and teacher observation.

4. Are Students Ready for AI and CT?

- CT and AI learning depend on strong LSRW** (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) skills.
- The **CT curriculum for Classes 3–5 is language-based,** requiring good reading ability.
- Weak literacy turns CT tasks into reading barriers** rather than thinking exercises.
- Annual Status of Education Report 2024** shows many Class 5 students lack basic reading skills.
- PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024 reveals learning gaps** across both urban and private schools.

5.Challenges

- CT requires good understanding, **but many students lack basic comprehension skills.**
- Students who cannot read properly struggle with reasoning** and problem-solving tasks.
- Weak foundations in Classes 3–5 affect learning when AI is introduced in Class 6.
- Learning gaps begin early and become visible only later** in higher classes.
- Project-based assessments depend on strong reading** and speaking skills, which many students lack.
- Without strengthening basic literacy skills, the goals of CT and AI education may not be effectively achieved.

Understanding India's internet censorship regime

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

Mains: General Studies - 3
Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.

1.Context

- Internet access in India **depends on the Internet Service Provider (ISP).**
- Variations between ISPs include differences in price, quality of service,** and the extent of internet access

- **Sections 69A and 79 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 empower the government to order blocking**, and ISPs are legally obligated and bound by confidentiality to comply.
- Different ISPs follow different blocklists, **leading to inconsistent access across networks**.

2. Internet Protocols and DNS Basics

- The Internet works using systems like **HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol)**, **TLS (Transport Layer Security)**, and **DNS (Domain Name System)**.

Hypertext Transfer Protocol: It is a set of rules that allows a browser to request web pages from a server and receive them, but the data is not secure.

Transport Layer Security: A security protocol that protects data on the internet by encrypting it and ensuring safe communication.

Domain Name System: A system that converts website names into IP (Internet Protocol) addresses so computers can locate them.

- ISPs can block websites using any of these systems.
- DNS works like an address book, converting website names into IP addresses.
- **ISPs block sites by DNS poisoning, a technique where an ISP or attacker intentionally provides a false IP address for a website**, so that when a user tries to visit it, they are redirected to a wrong, blocked, or fake destination instead of the real site.
- Most ISPs **use this method because it is easy and low-cost**.

3. Findings on Website Blocking in India

- A 2025 study **tested DNS blocking across six ISPs for 294 million domains**.
- **Out of 43,083 blocked domains, only 1,414 were blocked** by all ISPs.
- **Blocking is inconsistent**, especially for piracy, porn, and gambling sites.
- **High consistency is seen in sensitive cases** like terrorism-related content.
- **Lack of clear rules leads to uneven and opaque (non-transparent) blocking practices**.

4. Way Forward

- **Standardised guidelines:** Create uniform rules for blocking across all ISPs.
- **Transparency:** Publicly disclose blocked websites, except in sensitive cases.
- **Accountability:** Ensure oversight and checks on arbitrary blocking.
- **Use of clear procedures:** Adopt consistent and well-defined implementation methods.

KEYWORDS

PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan

- PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) Rashtriya Sarvekshan is a **nationwide sample-based assessment of school students across districts in India**.
- It **covers Grades 3, 6, and 9** in subjects like Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, and The World Around Us.
- The **survey evaluates the overall performance of schools as systems**, in line with NEP (National Education Policy) 2020.
- It **uses MCQs (Multiple Choice Questions) with OMR (Optical Mark Recognition) technology** and collects contextual data from students, teachers, and schools.
- It is **administered by PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)**, an **autonomous institution under NCERT**, and provides report cards at national, state, and district levels.

Species In News

Ganges river dolphin

- The **Ganges river dolphin** is a **freshwater species** and is **functionally blind**.
- It relies on **echolocation**, emitting **ultrasonic sounds** that bounce off prey, allowing it to form a mental image of its surroundings.
- These dolphins are usually found **solitary or in small groups**, most commonly a **mother and calf** travelling together.
- Known as **Gangetic dolphins**, they are **India's National Aquatic Animal** and are primarily distributed across the **Ganges-Brahmaputra river system** in northern India.
- The species is classified as **"Endangered"** by the **IUCN**, reflecting its high risk of extinction.
- Despite legal protections, they face serious threats: they are **poached for flesh and blubber**, from which **oil is extracted for fishing bait**, and often die due to **boat collisions** or **entanglement in fishing nets**.

