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MCQs

THE HINDU

Twenty-five years of leadership, an India transformed

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?

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi completes 25 years in executive office** on October 7, 2026, marking 25 years since he became Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2001.
- The focus is on **leadership, governance, technology, infrastructure and India's global position** during this period.

Key Highlights

- **Vision, integrity, credibility and execution** are key qualities of effective leadership.
- India's **National Highway network** increased from about 91,287 km in 2014 to more than 1,46,000 km, while the number of airports increased from 74 to over 160.
- India's renewable-energy capacity reached nearly **296 GW**, including large hydro, with solar capacity crossing **168 GW**.
- **PM Gati Shakti** promotes integrated infrastructure development and multi-modal connectivity.
- Around **80 crore people** receive free foodgrains, while rural tap-water coverage increased from about 17% in 2019 to over 82%.
- About **24.8 crore people** moved out of multidimensional poverty between 2013-14 and 2022-23.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** has expanded access to banking, welfare and public services.
- The **Quantum Mission, Semiconductor Mission and Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes** aim to strengthen advanced technology and manufacturing.
- Opening the **space sector to private companies** has encouraged new startups such as Skyroot Aerospace, Pixxel, Agnikul, Dhruva and Bellatrix.
- The idea of **Team India** emphasises **cooperative and competitive federalism**, giving States and cities a greater role in development.
- India has strengthened its global position by balancing **national interests, strategic autonomy and international partnerships**.
- India's **demographic dividend, entrepreneurship, technology and young population** provide major opportunities for future development.
- The next phase is linked to the goal of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, with the focus shifting from



managing limitations to achieving greater national ambitions.

Implications

- Long-term political stability can support **policy continuity** and sustained development programmes.
- Greater use of **technology and digital infrastructure** can improve the scale and efficiency of public service delivery.
- Stronger **State participation and competitive federalism** can make development more decentralised.
- India's growing technological capabilities and entrepreneurial ecosystem can strengthen its **economic and strategic position** globally.
- The effectiveness of leadership will ultimately depend on how successfully India converts its **demographic and technological advantages into inclusive development**.

Way Forward

- Strengthen **institutions and governance systems** so that development continues beyond individual leadership.
- Ensure that technological and economic growth remains **inclusive**, reaching disadvantaged sections and regions.
- Give greater importance to **States, cities and local governments** in national development.
- Invest in **skills, innovation, research and employment** to fully utilise India's demographic dividend.
- Sustain reforms that can help India achieve the long-term goal of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Mains Question

Strong leadership is important for national development, but sustained progress also requires strong institutions and cooperative federalism. Discuss in the context of India's development journey. (250 words)

The China-U.S. rapprochement

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

General issues on Environmental ecology, Biodiversity and Climate Change.

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. and China have held four summits in just over six months**, raising speculation about a possible new **G2** arrangement between the two powers.
- Despite recent diplomatic engagement, the two countries remain locked in **strategic competition** over military power, trade, technology and influence in the Indo-Pacific and the wider world.

Key Highlights

- The U.S. and China are moving towards an imperfect system of **bilateral management** to prevent their strategic competition from escalating into conflict.
- The **Bessent-He channel**, involving U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, has become an important mechanism for managing economic tensions.
 - ◆ A regular **U.S.-China dialogue** between U.S. Treasury Secretary **Scott Bessent** and Chinese Vice Premier **He Lifeng** to manage **economic and trade tensions**.
- Both countries imposed **125% tariffs** on each other in April 2025 but later stepped back from a full-scale trade war to protect their economic interests.
- China is seeking greater **stability** with the U.S. as it faces weak domestic consumption, a prolonged property-sector slowdown and weak private investment.
- China's proposed idea of **"constructive strategic stability"** focuses on cooperation, managing competition within limits and handling strategic differences, particularly over **Taiwan**.



- The U.S. has accepted this framework but insists that any bilateral arrangement must be **“fair and reciprocal.”**
- The **Busan Tariff Truce** remains fragile, particularly over U.S. agricultural exports and the trade in **critical minerals and rare earths**.
 - ◆ The **Busan Agreement** refers to the **October 2025 U.S.-China trade truce** reached in Busan, South Korea.
- Beyond tariffs, the two countries continue to impose **export controls on critical technologies**, including advanced chips, while foreign investment restrictions remain on both sides.
- The U.S.-China relationship therefore remains a **managed but intense strategic competition**, rather than a move towards a genuine G2.
- Competition in **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** remains a major strategic concern for both countries, reflecting the broader technological rivalry.

Implications

- Continued U.S.-China competition could shape the **global economic and strategic order** for decades.
- A fragile relationship increases the risk of **trade wars, technology restrictions and geopolitical crises**, particularly over Taiwan.
- Managed competition could provide greater **stability to global markets and supply chains**, even without ending the rivalry.
- Restrictions on critical technologies and minerals could accelerate the **fragmentation of global supply chains**.
- Countries such as India will need to maintain **strategic autonomy** while managing relations with both major powers.

Way Forward

- Establish clear **rules and communication mechanisms** to prevent strategic competition from turning into conflict.
- Maintain dialogue on **trade, technology, critical minerals and Taiwan** to manage differences.
- Ensure that economic agreements remain **fair, reciprocal and predictable**.

- Diversify global supply chains to reduce excessive dependence on either the U.S. or China.
- India should continue its policy of **strategic autonomy and multi-alignment** while strengthening its own technological and economic capabilities.

Mains Question

The U.S.-China relationship is increasingly characterised by managed strategic competition rather than cooperation. Discuss its implications for India and the evolving global order. (250 words)

The status of U.S. blockade on Cuba

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.-Cuba fuel blockade** has deepened Cuba's economic and humanitarian crisis, with prolonged power cuts and shortages of essential goods.
- It has also raised concerns over **sanctions, national sovereignty, international law and humanitarian rights**.

Key Highlights

- The U.S. has maintained an economic **embargo** (trade and economic restrictions on a country) **on Cuba for over six decades**. It began in 1960 and became comprehensive in 1962 following the Cuban Revolution and nationalisation of U.S. property.
- The **Cuban Democracy Act, 1992** and **Helms-Burton Act, 1996** further strengthened the restrictions and expanded their impact on foreign companies dealing with Cuba.
- In 2026, the U.S. further tightened pressure by restoring Cuba to the **State Sponsors of Terrorism (SSOT)** list, imposing secondary sanctions and targeting countries supplying oil



to Cuba.

- The **UN General Assembly** has repeatedly called for an end to the embargo since 1992. In July 2026, **136 countries voted in favour**, 9 against and 30 abstained. However, such resolutions are **not legally binding**.
- Cuba's energy crisis worsened after the decline of **Venezuelan oil supplies**. Venezuela had earlier supplied Cuba with oil in exchange for Cuban medical and professional services under the 2000 **oil-for-services agreement**.
- Fuel shortages have resulted in long power cuts and disrupted **transport, food distribution, healthcare, water supply and communication**. The crisis has also affected surgeries and infant immunisation.
- **China** has supported Cuba by supplying solar panels and standalone solar systems. Cuba had installed **1,418 MW of solar capacity** by September 2026, but inadequate battery storage and an ageing electricity grid continue to cause blackouts.

Implications

- **The humanitarian crisis** has worsened as fuel shortages affect hospitals, schools, transport and food distribution.
- **Economic isolation** has made international payments difficult and increased the cost of trade, shipping and essential imports.
- **Energy insecurity** remains high because Cuba depends heavily on imported fuel and has an ageing electricity infrastructure.
- **Sovereignty concerns** have increased because threats of military action or regime change can conflict with the principles of the **UN Charter**.
- **Migration pressures** may increase as prolonged economic hardship encourages more Cubans to leave the country.
- The crisis may also deepen **geopolitical competition** in the Caribbean, particularly between the U.S. and China.

Way Forward

- **Protect humanitarian supplies** by ensuring that food, medicines, medical equipment and essential fuel are not disrupted by sanctions.
- **Promote diplomatic engagement** between

the U.S. and Cuba to resolve disputes through dialogue rather than prolonged economic pressure.

- **Strengthen UN involvement** in monitoring the humanitarian effects of sanctions and facilitating international assistance.
- **Diversify Cuba's energy sector** through renewable energy, battery storage and modernisation of its electricity grid.
- **Pursue economic reforms** by expanding private enterprise, foreign investment and economic diversification to improve long-term resilience.

Mains Question

Q. The U.S.-Cuba confrontation highlights the complex relationship between economic sanctions, national sovereignty and humanitarian concerns. Examine the implications of prolonged sanctions on Cuba and suggest a balanced way forward. (15 marks, 250 words)

Why growing trust in digital payments may be leaving Indians more exposed to cybercrime

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 3

Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

Why in Focus?

- India's rapid adoption of **digital payments**, especially **UPI (Unified Payments Interface)**, has also increased exposure to sophisticated cyber fraud.
- The **Status of Policing in India Report (SPIR) 2026** highlights a growing **trust paradox**, where high confidence in digital payments can coexist with risky online behaviour.

Key Highlights

- **UPI has become a daily payment method.**



Around 49% of respondents use UPI apps every day, while 24% use them once or twice a week.

- **High public trust** was reported in digital payments. Around 75% considered UPI either very safe or somewhat safe.
- The report found a **trust paradox**. People who showed greater confidence in online banking were also more likely to report unsafe online practices and past cybercrime victimisation.
- Frequent UPI users were more likely to have experienced cybercrime than those who rarely or never used it. This reflects the risks associated with **high digital exposure**.
- Cybercriminals increasingly operate through organised networks that provide **pre-activated SIM cards, bank accounts and mobile phones**, enabling fraud at relatively low cost.
- Fraudsters use methods such as **fake investment and betting apps, digital arrest scams, identity theft and OTP-based fraud** to exploit human trust and psychological vulnerabilities.

Implications

- **Overconfidence in digital payments** may reduce caution and encourage users to ignore basic cybersecurity practices.
- **Social engineering** remains a major weakness, as fraudsters manipulate emotions such as fear, greed and urgency rather than relying only on technical hacking.
- **Mule accounts**(account used by criminals to receive, move, and hide illegal money) and **SIM cards** make it difficult for law enforcement agencies to identify the real perpetrators.
- The rapid expansion of digital payments creates a larger **cybercrime attack surface**, particularly for first-time and less digitally literate users.
- Cyber fraud can cause serious **financial loss, psychological distress and loss of trust** in digital financial systems.

Way Forward

- Strengthen **cyber awareness and digital literacy**, focusing on OTP safety, suspicious links, fake apps and digital arrest scams.

- Banks and payment platforms should improve **real-time fraud detection** and quickly freeze suspicious transactions.
- Strengthen action against **mule accounts, fraudulent SIM cards and organised cybercrime networks** through better inter-agency coordination.
- Promote **responsible digital behaviour**, where convenience and trust are accompanied by basic security precautions.
- Improve **cybercrime reporting and recovery mechanisms** so victims can quickly report fraud and limit financial losses.

Mains Question

Q. India's rapid transition to digital payments has created new opportunities as well as new vulnerabilities. Examine the trust paradox associated with digital payments and suggest measures to strengthen cybersecurity. (15 marks, 250 words)

KEYWORDS

IceCube Neutrino Observatory

- **IceCube** is a **neutrino telescope** located at the **South Pole** that provides observations of almost the entire sky.
- It detects **high-energy neutrinos** ranging from **GeV to hundreds of TeV**, including neutrinos approaching **10 PeV**.
 - ◆ A **neutrino** is a **tiny subatomic particle with no electric charge and extremely small mass**.
- It can also detect **MeV-energy neutrinos** when they are produced in intense bursts, such as from a **Galactic supernova**.
 - ◆ **MeV - Mega-electronvolt, GeV - Giga-electronvolt, TeV - Tera-electronvolt, PeV - Peta-electronvolt**.
- IceCube uses **real-time alerts** to identify neutrinos likely to have an **astrophysical origin**.
- These alerts help scientists identify and study **cosmic events** by directing other observatories towards the relevant region of the sky.



- The **IceCube Neutrino Observatory at the South Pole** helped **Francis Halzen** win the **Nobel Prize in Physics** by revealing new information about the **Universe**.

National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP)

- **NLEP** is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** under the **National Health Mission (NHM)**.
- It provides **free prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation** services for leprosy through public health facilities.
- It supports States and Union Territories in **early detection, case confirmation, treatment and disability prevention**.
- The programme uses digital platforms such as **Nikusth 2.0** for **surveillance and reporting**.
- NLEP aims to eliminate **leprosy transmission, disability and stigma** and ensure dignified care for affected persons.
- It targets **zero transmission, zero disability and zero discrimination by 2027**, in line with the **WHO Global Leprosy Strategy and SDGs**.

Places in News

Antalya



- **Antalya** is currently in the news as the designated host city for the **31st United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31)**, scheduled to take place from **November 9 to 20, 2026**.

- Geographically, it is located on the **southwestern coast of Türkiye**, bordering the **Mediterranean Sea**, making it a prominent hub along the region often referred to as the **Turkish Riviera**.
- The city's topography is defined by the towering **Taurus Mountains** that run parallel to the coastline. This traps moisture and creates a classic **Mediterranean climate** with hot, dry summers and mild, rainy winters.
- The region holds significant **historical importance** as a cultural crossroad for the **Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires**, featuring well-preserved ruins such as the ancient city of **Termessos**, built high in the mountains and famous for resisting **Alexander the Great**.
- Antalya's reliance on **coastal tourism and agriculture** makes it highly vulnerable to **climate change**, providing a relevant backdrop for international discussions on **climate adaptation, climate finance and mitigation** at COP31.

Port of Mokha



- The **Port of Mokha** is currently in the news in the context of the ongoing conflict between **Yemen's government forces** and the **pro-Iran Houthi group**.
- 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**.

Silk Road

- The **Silk Road** was recently featured in the news as an educational explainer highlighting its historical significance as **premodern Eurasia's primary network of trade and cultural interconnectedness**.
- Contrary to its singular name, it was a **complex and evolving network of land and maritime trade routes** connecting **East, Central, South and West Asia**.
- The network became especially prominent around the **2nd century BC**, when China's **Han Dynasty** expanded westward. It earned its name because **Chinese silk** was a highly prized commodity.
- It facilitated large-scale, **two-way trade**, carrying **silk, tea, porcelain and spices** westward, while bringing **horses, glassware, gold and silver** from Central Asia and Europe to the East.
- Beyond commerce, it enabled **cultural and technological diffusion**, including the spread of **papermaking and gunpowder from China** and the transmission of **Buddhism from India to East Asia**.
- In contemporary geopolitics, the Silk Road serves as a **historical reference for China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, which seeks to strengthen connectivity through modern **terrestrial and maritime trade corridors**.

