FORTUNE IAS ACADEMY
KERALA'S NO.1 IAS ACADEMY

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FINDER
FORTUNE IAS NEWS DAILY EXPLAINER

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THE HINDU

Turning battery waste into strategic mineral wealth

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?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the risk of **"weaponisation of technology and critical minerals"** at the 18th BRICS summit.
- The article highlights **battery recycling** as a **secondary source of critical minerals for India**.

Critical minerals: Metallic or non-metallic elements that are essential for economic development, national security and advanced technologies, but due to their lack of availability, geographical concentration, extraction or processing difficulties leads to supply chain disruptions. The Ministry of Mines has identified 30 critical minerals in India, including lithium, cobalt, nickel, graphite & copper

Key Highlights:

- **China** dominates the processing of critical minerals, **impacting global supply chains**.
- **India is highly dependent on imports for critical minerals** and is seeking **international partnerships** and **domestic exploration**.
- **End-of-life (EoL) lithium-ion batteries** contain valuable minerals and can be recycled.

End-of-life lithium-ion batteries: Used batteries that can no longer perform their original function, such as powering electric vehicles or phones, but still contain valuable minerals like lithium

- India had over **8.7 million EVs by FY 2025-26**, **increasing the future supply of used batteries**.
- Hence, battery recycling could meet around **10–12% of India's lithium demand for EV batteries** and **help develop domestic mineral-processing capacity**.
- **Battery Waste Management Rules, 2022** establish **extended producer responsibility** for battery recycling, but **implementation needs to improve**.

Extended Producer Responsibility: A policy under which producers are made responsible for collecting, recycling or safely disposing of their products after consumers have used them.

Implications:

- **Informal recycling** is inefficient, **leading to the loss of valuable minerals** and environmental pollution.
- Battery recycling can meet only a **small share of India's mineral demand**, so it cannot fully

replace imports.

- **High initial investment and uncertain returns** may **discourage the establishment of recycling plants**.
- Different **battery chemistries** and poor recycling economics make mineral recovery difficult.
- **Poor consumer participation and lack of quality standards** can slow down battery collection and recycling.

Way Forward:

- **Incorporate recycled critical minerals** into strategic resource planning
- Intensify **R&D in mineral recycling technologies** to improve recovery rates and purity.
- Establish standards for **battery characterisation, recycled mineral quality, and second-life applications**.
- Provide **long-term finance and incentives** for battery recyclers **to support long-term infrastructure development**.

Mains Question:

Discuss the potential of battery recycling in transforming India's battery waste into strategic mineral wealth, and the challenges involved in establishing an effective recycling ecosystem. (250 Words,15 marks)

Is Google's classroom AI rollout raising safety and competition concerns?

Prelims: General Studies 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?

- Google's policy of **tying Search to AI features** for school accounts has sparked a debate in the US over **children's safety and competition**.
- A lawsuit filed on November 4, 2026, also **alleges that Google's Gemini AI harmed a teenage student**.

Key Highlights:

- Google said that **Gemini and other AI tools** would be off by default for school student accounts until administrators turn them on.
- **Google confirmed that schools banning AI would also lose access** to **Search feature**, as AI is now part of Search.
- While Google states **that administrators can turn individual apps on or off**, **critics** point out that **enabling Search automatically brings built-in AI features that cannot be removed.**
- Google has a large reach in schools through **Workspace for Education and low-cost Chromebooks**, and many of its tools now include Gemini features.
- A lawsuit alleges that **Google's Gemini AI encouraged a teenager towards suicide**, **raising concerns about AI safety and child protection.**
- **New York City and Los Angeles have restricted students' use of generative AI**, citing concerns that **excessive reliance on AI may reduce independent learning and academic integrity**.

Implications:

- Google's AI tools **could enhance educational experiences but pose safety risks to students**.
- Google's AI integration leads to **safety concerns due to potential exposure to harmful content**.
- **Schools may face challenges in regulating AI use effectively**, impacting student safety and autonomy.

Way Forward:

- **Implement stricter regulations and oversight** on AI integration in educational settings
- **Develop comprehensive guidelines for AI use in schools** to address safety and ethical concerns.
- **Promote transparency in AI tool deployment** to build trust among stakeholders, including schools and parents.

Mains Question:

Examine the implications of Google's AI integration in educational settings, focusing on safety, competition, and regulatory challenges.(250 Words,15 marks)

SC and the OBC creamy layer test

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.

Why in Focus?

- The Supreme Court **reaffirmed its March 11, 2026 judgment on OBC creamy layer criteria**, upholding the 1993 Office Memorandum.

1993 Office Memorandum: Issued by the Department of Personnel and Training under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, it governs the exclusion of the creamy layer among OBCs from reservation benefits.

- The Centre sought clarification on **how the judgment would affect OBC candidates selected in the Civil Services Examination (CSE)**.

Key Highlights:

- The **1993 Office Memorandum** excluded **parental salary** and **agricultural income** from the income/wealth test for determining **OBC non-creamy layer status**.

OBC non-creamy layer: A category within the Other Backward Classes eligible for reservations, excluding those with certain income or status.

- The **March 11 judgment** clarified the calculation of wealth or income for determining the creamy layer status of **OBC candidates**.
- The **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** had **considered parental salary for creamy layer determination**, which the court rejected.
- The court emphasized that the **status and category** of the post held by the parent are relevant for determining creamy layer status.
- The **Court clarified that completed selections and promotions need not be reopened**, but pending claims of similar candidates can be considered on merit.
- The ruling will apply to **selections made after March 11, 2026**, and the service allocation of **CSE 2025 OBC candidates** must follow the 1993 Office Memorandum.
- The government assured the creation of **supernumerary posts** to accommodate candidates meeting the non-creamy-layer criteria.

Supernumerary posts: Additional positions created to accommodate certain candidates without affecting the existing structure.

Implications:

- The absence of clear rules **creates uncertainty in determining creamy layer status**.
- **Determining creamy layer status through parental post and status** is **more complex** than using a **simple income limit**
- **Inconsistent application of rules** may affect **genuine OBC beneficiaries** and the objectives of reservation.

Way Forward:

- **Frame clear rules to ensure uniform application** of the creamy layer criteria.
- **Revise and consolidate existing guidelines** to remove inconsistencies between the 1993 Office Memorandum and later clarifications.
- **Review creamy layer criteria periodically** in response to changing socio-economic conditions.
- Simplify **OBC-NCL certificate verification** through clear guidelines and standardised checklists.

Mains Question:

Examine the implications of the Supreme Court's ruling on the OBC creamy layer test for determining reservation eligibility, and discuss its impact on government policy and social equity. (250 Words,15 marks).

KEYWORDS

National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP)

- **Why in News?:** The NCAHP notified new regulations in **2026** to **introduce a uniform registration system** and strengthen the standards of allied and healthcare professions.
- It is a **statutory body** established under the **National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Act, 2021**, under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- It regulates **57 allied and healthcare professions** across **10 broad categories**, including physiotherapy, medical laboratory technology and radiology.
- Its key functions include **standardising education, regulating professional practice, maintaining registers and ensuring quality training** for allied and healthcare professionals.
- The 2026 regulations provide for **Central and State Registers**, digital registration with **Unique Identification (UID) numbers** and QR-coded certificates to verify professionals.

Swachh Survekshan 2025–26

- **Why in News?** The results of the **10th edition of Swachh Survekshan** were announced **on 11 November 2026,** with **Navi Mumbai** ranked as India's cleanest city, followed by **Surat** and **Vijayawada**.
- Launched in **2016** under the **Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban**, it is India's annual urban cleanliness survey conducted by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**.
- The 2025–26 edition was conducted under the theme **"Swachhata Ki Nayi Pehel – Badhayein Haath, Karein Safai Saath"**, with participation from over **4,751 cities**.
- **Ujjain** topped the 3–10 lakh population category, while **Greater Visakhapatnam** ranked first among cities with over 10 lakh population.
- **Rewa** was recognised as the cleanest riverfront town, **Puri** as the cleanest coastal town and **Rudrapur** as the cleanest Himalayan city.

Investment Friendliness Index (IFI) 2026

- **Why in News?: NITI Aayog** released the **Investment Friendliness Index (IFI) 2026**, the first index of its kind, to assess the investment attractiveness of Indian States and Union Territories.
- IFI covers all **28 States and 8 Union Territories** and assesses how well are **they positioned to attract investments**.
- The index evaluates investment attractiveness across **eight pillars**: **Infrastructure, Business Climate, Resources, Government Policy, Regulatory Ease, Institutional Environment, Financial Health and Environmental Resilience**.
- It uses a **100-point scale** and serves as a benchmark for States to improve their investment environment.
- Based on overall scores, **States and UTs are classified into four performance categories:**
  - **Top Performers:** Scores above 50.
  - **Frontrunners:** Scores between 45 and 50.
  - **Emerging Performers:** Scores from 40 to below 45.
  - **Aspiring States:** Scores below 40.
- Among **Large States**, **Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu ranked first, second and third, respectively**, and were also the overall top three.
- Among the **Hilly and Northeastern States**, **Uttarakhand secured the highest rank**, followed by **Assam and Himachal Pradesh**.
- Among the **City States and Union Territories**, **Goa secured the top position, followed by Delhi and Chandigarh**

Janjatiya Gaurav Divas

- **Why in News?: 15th November is observed as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas** to mark the birth anniversary of tribal

freedom fighter **Birsa Munda** and honour the contributions of tribal communities to India's freedom struggle.

- It was declared in **2021** by the **Government of India** as part of the celebrations marking **75 years of India's Independence (Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav)**.
- **Birsa Munda (1875–1900)** belonged to the **Munda tribe** of the Chotanagpur Plateau and led the tribal uprising known as **Ulgulan (The Great Tumult)** against British rule.
- He started the **Birsait faith** to promote tribal identity and oppose religious conversion activities
- He is also known as **Bhagwan Birsa** and **Dharti Aba (Father of the Earth)**.

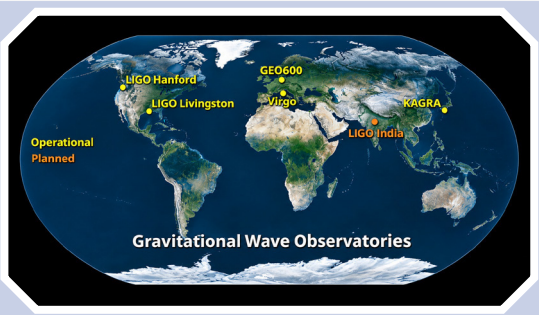
INS Betwa

- **Why in News?** The Ministry of Defence signed a **₹498.58 crore contract** with **Cochin Shipyard Limited** for the refit and modernisation of INS Betwa.
- The **Indian Navy's Brahmaputra-class (Project 16A) frigates** comprise three indigenously built guided-missile frigates: **INS Brahmaputra, INS Betwa and INS Beas**.
- **INS Betwa**, one of these three frigates was commissioned in **July 2004** and has a displacement of approximately **3,600 tonnes**, a length of **125 metres** and a top speed of **30 knots**.
- The upgrade will replace its existing **steam-based propulsion system** with a **diesel-engine-based system**.
- Its combat capabilities will be enhanced through the installation of a **modernised weapon system**.



Gravitational-wave observatories

- **Why in News?:** The **global network of gravitational-wave observatories has gained attention** for its role in detecting gravitational waves and advancing the study of the universe.
- **Gravitational-wave observatories** are specialised scientific facilities designed to detect gravitational waves.
- **Gravitational waves** are t**iny ripples in space and time produced when massive objects**, such as black holes and neutron stars, move and accelerate.
- Major observatories include:
  - **Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory(USA)**: Operated by **Caltech** and **MIT** and has **two detectors at Hanford and Livingston, USA.**
  - **Virgo:** Operated by the **European Gravitational Observatory** in Italy.
  - **KAGRA:** Operated by **the Institute for Cosmic Ray Research (ICRR), University of Tokyo in Japan**
  - **GEO600 Observatory:** Operated by **the Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics and Leibniz University Hannover,** in **Germany.**
- **LIGO-India**, an upcoming gravitational-wave observatory in **Hingoli, Maharashtra**, is being established by the **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)** and the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** in collaboration with the LIGO Laboratory.
- Gravitational wave observatories like LIGO **use laser beams to detect gravitational waves.**



Places in News

Kinshasa

- **Why in News?:** Kinshasa, the capital of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, has gained attention as the country battles a major outbreak of **Ebola disease caused by the Bundibugyo virus**.
- Kinshasa is the **capital and largest city** of the DRC, located along the **Congo River**
- The DRC is located in **Central Africa** and is **bordered by nine countries**, including Angola, Zambia, Tanzania and the Republic of the Congo.
- The **Congo River**, which flows through the country, is **the second-longest river in Africa after the Nile** and drains into the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Ebola virus disease (EVD)** is a severe and often fatal illness in humans, caused by viruses belonging to the **Orthoebolavirus** genus; the Bundibugyo virus is one of its species.



Species In News

Chimpanzee (Pan troglodytes)

- **Why in News?:** A **new study found that chimpanzees can learn and use calls according to different contexts**, challenging the belief that animal vocalisations are entirely inherited.
- Chimpanzees are **great apes** native to **tropical Africa** and are among the closest living relatives of humans.
- They are highly intelligent animals known for **tool use, problem-solving and complex social behaviour**.
- They communicate through **vocalisations, facial expressions, gestures and body language**.
- They are classified as **Endangered** on the **IUCN Red List** and face threats from habitat loss, poaching and disease.

