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13

OCTOBER | 2026

FINDER

FORTUNE IAS NEWS DAILY EXPLAINER



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THE HINDU

Warming Himalayas demand a rethink on development

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?

- Recent **catastrophic floods in Nepal** highlight the growing threat of climate-induced disasters in the Himalayas.
- Rising temperatures, glacier retreat and permafrost thaw** are increasing the risks of landslides, rock avalanches and flash floods.

Key Highlights:

- The high mountains of Asia are warming at around **0.3°C per decade**, nearly twice the global average.
- International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development reports released on March 21, 2026**, found that ice-loss rates across the Hindu Kush Himalaya have doubled since 2000.
- The **western Himalaya** is warming faster than the central and eastern regions, particularly

during winter and at night.

- Glacier melting and permafrost thaw** weaken mountain slopes, increasing the risk of landslides, rock avalanches and debris flows.

Permafrost: It is the ground that remains at or below 0°C for at least two consecutive years, commonly found in polar regions and high-altitude areas.

- The **August 26 Nepal disaster** involved an ice-and-rock collapse that temporarily blocked a river, triggering a flash flood that travelled around **170 km downstream**.

Flash Flood: A sudden, rapid rise in water levels caused by intense rainfall, the sudden release of stored water or the failure of a natural river blockage.

- Expert committees have recommended restricting major hydropower projects or subjecting construction **above 2,200 metres** to detailed expert review.

Implications:

- Water security** may be threatened by glacier retreat, affecting livelihoods and mountain ecosystems.
- Downstream communities** face greater risks from unstable slopes, glacial lake hazards and sudden floods.
- Infrastructure vulnerability** may increase when poorly planned development aggravates risks in fragile mountain regions.
- Climate vulnerability** can cause severe damage even in countries with very low



greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Transboundary disaster risks** require regional cooperation for effective preparedness and response.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthen regional data sharing** through real-time exchange of glacial, seismic and hydrological information.
- **Improve early-warning systems** using satellites, drones and ground sensors to detect signs of glacial instability.
- **Monitor glacial lakes continuously** and undertake engineered drainage wherever feasible.
- **Develop flood-risk zoning** based on valley slopes and local geological conditions.

Mains Question:

Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of disasters in the Indian Himalayan Region. Examine the underlying geological and climatic factors and suggest measures to promote climate-resilient development. (250 words, 15 marks)

Why does India need a trained workforce for elderly care?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

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 **Union Budget 2026–27** announced training for 1.5 lakh caregivers aligned with the **National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)**.

National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF): Introduced by the Government of India in 2013, it was notified by the Ministry of Finance to organise qualifications according to levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude.

- **NITI Aayog's August 2026 report, Reimagining Care: Strategies for Empowering Caregivers in Viksit Bharat@2047**, highlighted the need to recognise caregiving as an economic activity.

Key Highlights:

- India's population aged **60 years and above** is projected to increase from 149 million in 2022 to 347 million by 2050.
 - Women spend an average of **299 minutes daily on unpaid domestic work and caregiving**, compared with 97 minutes for men.
 - India has an estimated **26.8 million persons with disabilities** who may require care and support.
 - Kerala's **Kudumbashree** launched the K4 Care training programme in February 2024 to train certified geriatric, patient and disability care executives.
 - Only **838 people had completed the K4 Care course**, highlighting the need to accelerate caregiver training.
 - The **National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC)** has prepared an elderly-care training manual for ASHA workers, delivered through Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres.
 - Caregiver training needs to cover **physical care, emergency response, mental health and age-related cognitive decline**.
 - NITI Aayog has proposed a **National Caregiver Council (NCC)** to oversee caregiving standards, training curricula and caregiver certification.
- UPSC Key Definitions:

Care Economy: Economic activities involving paid and unpaid care services for children, older persons, persons with disabilities and other dependants.

Implications:

- **Improved quality of care** through formal training can enhance the safety and well-being of older persons and other dependants.
- **Recognition of unpaid caregiving** can improve caregivers' dignity and access to social security.
- **Reduced gender inequality** can be achieved by sharing caregiving responsibilities more equally between men and women.

- **Employment generation** can create new livelihood opportunities through professional caregiving services.
- **Rising demand for long-term care** will require a larger, skilled caregiving workforce as India's population ages.

Way Forward:

- **Expand training networks** through Kudumbashree and ASHA worker networks to increase access to caregiver training.
- **Standardise curricula and certification** to ensure consistent skills and quality across caregiving services.
- **Strengthen specialised training** in geriatric mental health, age-related cognitive decline and emergency care.
- **Promote gender-equitable caregiving** by encouraging families to share care responsibilities across genders.

Mains Question:

Discuss the importance of formalising India's care economy in the context of an ageing population. Examine the challenges faced by informal caregivers and suggest measures to build a skilled and gender-equitable caregiving system. (250 words, 15 marks)

Comparing SIR 2002-04 and 2025-26

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

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 **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** has faced criticism over voter exclusion, verification procedures and the burden of proving eligibility.
- Former **Election Commissioners and Supreme Court judges** have questioned the process, while some former judges and bureaucrats have supported it.

Key Highlights:

- Section 21(3) of the **Representation of the People Act, 1950**, empowers the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** to conduct special revisions of electoral rolls.
- The previous SIR was conducted between **2002 and 2004**, while the current exercise began in 2025.
- The previous SIR required **door-to-door verification**, whereas the current exercise excluded some electors who could not be found or did not submit forms from the draft rolls.
- The previous SIR required supervisors to verify **25% of households**, while Bihar's current SIR prescribed **10% random verification**.
- Under the previous SIR, shifted voters were transferred directly, whereas the current process may require separate applications through **Form 8 or Form 6**.

Form 8: Used for correction of entries in the electoral roll, change of residence, replacement of EPIC, or marking of a person with disability.

Form 6: Used to apply for inclusion of a name in the electoral roll for a new voter.

- The previous SIR accepted existing electoral-roll entries as evidence, whereas the current process requires links to **older electoral rolls or citizenship documents**.
- The ECI's **2023 Manual on Electoral Rolls** requires notice before deleting the names of shifted electors.

Implications:

- **Voter disenfranchisement** can occur when eligible citizens' names are wrongly deleted from electoral rolls.
- **Documentation burden** may create difficulties for vulnerable and mobile populations in proving their eligibility.
- **Inadequate supervision** can increase errors and omissions in electoral rolls.
- **Misuse of bulk objections** may result in genuine voters being unfairly targeted.
- **Delayed appeals** can weaken public confidence in the fairness and credibility of elections.



Way Forward:

- **Audit electoral rolls** finalised under SIR to identify and correct wrongful deletions and other errors.
- **Expedite re-enrolment** through home visits and timely updates to electoral rolls.
- **Ensure door-to-door enumeration** in States undergoing SIR to improve voter verification.
- **Maintain electoral continuity** by continuing to use pre-SIR rolls for upcoming State elections where legally permissible until revised rolls are finalised.

Mains Question:

Examine the procedural and legal concerns surrounding the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in India. Suggest measures to ensure accurate voter registration while safeguarding the right to vote. (250 words, 15 marks)

At sixes and sevens, the ECI's growing credibility crisis

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

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 **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls has raised concerns about voter inclusion, deletion of names and the functioning of the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**.

Special Intensive Revision (SIR): A detailed exercise to verify and update electoral rolls and check the eligibility of registered voters.

- Disputes over voter registration forms, mass objections to voter entries and access to electoral data have raised questions about the ECI's **transparency and independence**.

Key Highlights:

- Electoral rolls in India are governed by the

Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960**.

- **Form 6** is used to apply for inclusion in the electoral roll, including by first-time voters and people shifting constituencies.
- **Form 7** is used to object to the inclusion of a name in the electoral roll or request deletion on specified grounds.

Electoral Roll: An official list of eligible voters for a particular constituency.

- **Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950**, provides punishment for making false declarations in connection with electoral rolls.
- **Article 326 of the Constitution** provides for elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies based on adult suffrage, subject to constitutional conditions.
- The ECI's **2025 SIR notification** introduced an additional declaration with Form 6 in certain circumstances, raising questions about whether the procedure was consistent with existing rules.
- More than **16 lakh objections** were reportedly filed against voters whose names had been included in electoral rolls, raising concerns about the possible misuse of Form 7 and centralised electoral data management.

Implications:

- **Voter disenfranchisement** can occur when eligible citizens' names are incorrectly deleted from electoral rolls.
- **Procedural uncertainty** can create confusion among voters and election officials.
- **Mass objections** may be used to challenge genuine voter registrations.
- **Centralised data management** may weaken local electoral oversight if access and controls are inadequate.
- **Public trust** in the credibility and fairness of elections may decline.

Way Forward:

- **Follow prescribed legal procedures** to ensure voter registration forms comply with existing laws and rules.
- **Investigate malicious objections** and take

appropriate action where legally justified.

- **Ensure transparent deletions** by providing clear reasons and accessible appeal mechanisms.
- **Protect electoral officers' autonomy** so they can perform their statutory duties without unauthorised interference.
- **Strengthen data security and accountability** through transparent and secure electoral data management.

Mains Question:

Examine the role of the Election Commission of India in maintaining accurate electoral rolls. Discuss the challenges arising from the Special Intensive Revision and suggest measures to protect voters' rights. (250 words, 15 marks)

KEYWORDS

Living Planet Report 2026

- The **Living Planet Report** is published biennially by the **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)** to assess global biodiversity trends and ecosystem health.
- The **Living Planet Index (LPI)** tracks changes in the population sizes of monitored vertebrate species across terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems.
- The report recorded a **73% decline in the average size of monitored vertebrate wildlife populations between 1970 and 2022**.
- Ecosystem-wise, monitored wildlife populations declined by **85% in freshwater ecosystems, 69% in terrestrial ecosystems and 59% in marine ecosystems** between 1970 and 2022.
- Major drivers of biodiversity loss include **habitat loss and degradation, overexploitation, climate change, invasive species, pollution and disease**

INS Mangrol

- **INS Mangrol** is the Indian Navy's **third indigenous Anti-Submarine Warfare**

Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC), designed to detect, track and engage submarines in shallow coastal waters.

- The two earlier commissioned vessels in the ASW-SWC series are **INS Arnala** and **INS Androth**.
- **INS Mangrol** was constructed by **Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)**, Kochi, while **INS Arnala** and **INS Androth** were built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE)**, Kolkata.
- The vessel is equipped with specialised systems for **underwater surveillance and anti-submarine warfare**, strengthening the Indian Navy's coastal defence capabilities.
- Indigenous construction of ASW-SWCs supports **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**, promotes domestic shipbuilding and enhances India's maritime security.



Nobel Prize in Economics 2026

- The **2026 Nobel Prize in Economics** was awarded to **Robert E. Hall** of Stanford University and **Michael Woodford** of Columbia University.
- The laureates were recognised for developing macroeconomic models that improved the implementation of **effective economic stabilisation policies**.
- **Robert E. Hall** contributed to understanding household consumption behaviour and how individuals adjust consumption in response to changes in income and expectations.
- **Michael Woodford** advanced **New Keynesian economics**, highlighting the role of expectations, price-setting behaviour and central bank communication in monetary policy.



- **New Keynesian Economics** is an economic theory that combines Keynesian ideas about market imperfections and short-term economic fluctuations with microeconomic foundations.
- Their research strengthened the theoretical foundations of **macroeconomic stabilisation**, helping governments and central banks address fluctuations in inflation, output and employment

Places in News

Tigray Region

- Renewed fighting in **Tigray, northern Ethiopia**, in September–October 2026 has threatened the **2022 Pretoria peace agreement**, raising fears of a wider regional conflict.
- **Tigray** is a region in **northern Ethiopia**, bordering **Eritrea** to the north and **Sudan** to the west.
- Its capital is **Mekelle**, an important administrative and commercial centre in northern Ethiopia.
- The region was the centre of the **Tigray War (2020–2022)** between Ethiopia's federal government and the **Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)**.
- The **Pretoria Agreement**, signed in November 2022 between Ethiopia's federal government and the TPLF, aimed to end hostilities and restore peace in the region.



Cauvery River

- The Cauvery water-sharing dispute resurfaced in October 2026, as Tamil Nadu sought the release of **11 thousand million cubic feet (TMC)** of water from Karnataka, citing a shortfall, while Karnataka cited drought and declining reservoir levels.
- The **Cauvery River** originates at **Talakaveri in the Brahmagiri Hills of the Western Ghats**, in Karnataka.
- It flows through **Karnataka and Tamil Nadu**, with its basin extending into Kerala and the Union Territory of Puducherry.
- The river drains into the **Bay of Bengal** through a delta in Tamil Nadu.
- Major tributaries include the **Hemavati, Harangi, Kabini, Bhavani, Amaravati and Arkavathi** rivers.
- The **Cauvery water dispute** primarily involves Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, with Kerala and Puducherry also being parties; the **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)** oversees the implementation of water-sharing arrangements.

