

Why are there protests in PoK?

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

Mains: General Studies - 2
India and its neighborhood- relations.

1. What is the JAAC and why did it launch protests?

- The **Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC)** is an umbrella body of civil society groups, traders, students, and socio-religious organisations in **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)**.
- It was formed in **2023** to protest against **rising electricity tariffs, inflation, and economic hardships**.
- Its **38-point Charter of Demands** included:
 - ➔ Subsidised **wheat flour**.
 - ➔ **Cheaper electricity rates** based on the low cost of power generated by the Mangla Dam.
 - ➔ Abolition of **12 reserved refugee seats** in the PoK Legislative Assembly.
- Earlier protests in **2024** and **2025** led to violence and deaths, following which the government announced **financial grants and relief measures** on economic and electricity-related issues.
 - ➔ However, the key demand regarding the **abolition of the refugee seats remained unresolved**.

2. How did the current unrest escalate?

- PoK elections are scheduled for **27 July 2026**.
- JAAC announced a **march to Muzaffarabad** on **9 June** demanding the removal of the **12 refugee seats**.
- In response, authorities:
 - ➔ **Banned JAAC** under an anti-terrorism law.
 - ➔ **Declared its leaders wanted** and announced rewards for their arrest.

- This triggered widespread protests in **Mirpur, Rawalakot, and Muzaffarabad**.
- On **8 June**, security forces opened fire during protests in Rawalakot, killing **at least 11 people**, including police personnel.
- The violence has since intensified:
 - ➔ **Over 30 deaths were reported**.
 - ➔ **Paramilitary forces deployed**.
 - ➔ **Internet restrictions** imposed.
 - ➔ **Travel advisories issued** for the region.

3. Why have the 12 refugee seats become a flashpoint?

- The PoK Assembly has **53 seats**:
 - ➔ **33 directly elected seats** in PoK.
 - ➔ **12 reserved refugee seats** for people who migrated from Jammu & Kashmir during Partition.
 - ➔ **8 nominated reserved seats** (women, technocrat, religious scholar, diaspora, etc.).
- **Protesters argue** that:
 - ➔ Most refugee voters now live in **Pakistan**, not PoK.
 - ➔ Refugee votes carry **disproportionately greater electoral weight** than votes cast by residents of PoK.
 - ↳ Around **4.36 lakh refugee voters elect 12 Assembly members**, while about **33 lakh PoK residents elect only 33 members**, giving refugee votes significantly greater influence.
- Another controversy is that elected representatives must sign **loyalty oaths supporting Jammu & Kashmir's accession to Pakistan**.
- On **7 June**, the **Supreme Court of PoK** ruled that the refugee seats are **constitutionally protected** and can only be removed through a **constitutional amendment**.

4. How have India, Pakistan, and the international community reacted?

India's Response

- India accused Pakistan of **human rights abuses and police brutality** in PoK.
- The **Ministry of External Affairs urged the international community to hold Pakistan accountable.**
- Farooq Abdullah called for a **United Nations investigation** into the violence.

Pakistan's Response

- Pakistan **rejected India's criticism.**
- It argued that India itself has **denied Kashmiris the right to self-determination**, making its criticism "untenable."

International Response

- **Amnesty International condemned the crackdown**, describing it as part of a broader deterioration of human rights in the region.
- Nearly **30 British parliamentarians** urged the **U.K. Foreign Office** to engage diplomatically and promote **peaceful de-escalation**, citing concerns over arrests, communication disruptions, and escalating violence.

Why is the Zojila tunnel a game changer?

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

Mains: General Studies - 3
Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

1. What is the Zojila Tunnel and why is it significant?

- The **Zojila Tunnel is the world's longest high-altitude road tunnel**, stretching 13.14 km at an altitude of 11,578 feet.
- It **connects Baltal in Kashmir's Ganderbal district with Meenamarg** in Ladakh's Drass district.
- The **project has been constructed at an estimated cost of ₹6,800 crore.**
- It is **India's longest single-tube bi-directional road tunnel.**

- The tunnel will **provide seamless all-weather connectivity** between the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh.

2. Why is the Zojila Tunnel considered an engineering marvel?

- The tunnel has been **built through the geologically fragile and challenging terrain** of the western Himalayas.
- **Construction was carried out under extreme weather** conditions.
- Engineers **had to overcome frequent avalanche threats and heavy snowfall** during the execution of the project.
- The geological conditions remained highly unpredictable.
- The **tunnel is equipped with modern safety features, including emergency lighting, communication systems, and avalanche protection structures.**

3. What is the strategic importance of the Zojila Tunnel?

- The **tunnel will ensure year-round connectivity** to Ladakh.
- It will **improve the mobility of Indian armed forces along the Line of Control (LoC) and Line of Actual Control (LAC).**
- It will **reduce logistical delays** caused by snowfall and road closures.
- It will **strengthen India's strategic preparedness** and border infrastructure.

4. How will the tunnel benefit local communities and the economy?

- The tunnel will **end the seasonal isolation experienced by residents** of Ladakh during heavy winters.
- It will **improve access to healthcare, education, and other essential services.**
- It is **expected to boost tourism, including adventure tourism and winter sports activities** in the region.
- The tunnel will **promote economic integration and enhance trade and commercial activities** between Kashmir and Ladakh.

Why did the SC quantify labour of homemakers?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Economic and Social Development-Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 2

Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

1. What was the Supreme Court's ruling on homemakers' unpaid labour?

- The **Supreme Court** held that the **unpaid domestic work of homemakers has independent economic value** and must be considered while calculating compensation in motor accident death cases.
- It fixed a **minimum notional income of ₹30,000 per month** for homemakers.
 - ➔ **Notional income** refers to an **estimated or assumed income** assigned to a person who does not have a regular, documented income.
- The Court created a separate compensation category called **"loss of domestic care"**.
 - ➔ This amount will increase by **10% every three years** on a cumulative basis.

2. What was the case before the Court?

- The case arose from the death of **Reshma** in a road accident in **Punjab in 2001**.
- Her husband and three children sought compensation before the **Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT)**.
- Compensation awarded:
 - ➔ **₹2.42 lakh** by MACT (2003).
 - ➔ **₹8.43 lakh** by the Punjab and Haryana High Court (2024).
- Unsatisfied with the amount, the family appealed to the **Supreme Court**.
- The Court finally enhanced the compensation to **₹62.78 lakh**.

3. How did the Court value unpaid domestic labour?

- Courts and tribunals must award **₹30,000 per month** under the heading **"loss of domestic care"** when a

homemaker dies in a motor accident.

- The amount serves as a **minimum benchmark** for recognising domestic work.
- If the homemaker also had a paid job, this compensation would be **in addition to her proven income**.
- The Court recognised that household activities such as:
 - ➔ **Cooking**
 - ➔ **Cleaning**
 - ➔ **Childcare**
 - ➔ **Caregiving**
- are essential for family welfare and economic productivity.
- It observed that homemakers help build the country's **human capital**, though their work is often ignored in measures like **GDP**.

4. What are the broader implications of the judgment?

- The Court noted that **motor accident compensation cases face long delays**, often taking:
 - ➔ Around **6 years** before MACTs.
 - ➔ Around **8 years** before High Courts.
- It directed High Courts to:
 - ➔ **Prioritise older compensation cases.**
 - ➔ **Minimise unnecessary adjournments.**
 - ➔ Consider setting up **additional benches** for faster disposal.
- The judgment is significant because it is the **first time the Supreme Court has fixed a concrete minimum benchmark** for valuing the unpaid work of homemakers.
- It strengthens the recognition of **domestic labour as economically valuable work**, rather than treating it as having no monetary worth.

KEYWORDS

Naval Anti-Ship Missile–Medium Range (NASM-MR)

- The **Naval Anti-Ship Missile–Medium Range (NASM-MR)** is an indigenously developed medium-range anti-ship and anti-surface missile designed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation.
- It **represents a major milestone in India's pursuit of self-reliance in advanced defence manufacturing.**
- The **missile is designed to provide all-weather, over-the-horizon strike capability** against enemy warships and surface targets.
- Equipped with an **indigenous imaging infrared seeker, it can be integrated with multiple naval platforms,** enhancing the operational flexibility of the Indian Navy.
- DRDO recently conducted the successful maiden flight test of NASM-MR, validating its key systems and mission capabilities.

PSLV-C61/EOS-09 Mission

- Recently, the anomaly detected in the PSLV-C61/

EOS-09 Mission has **been resolved, restoring confidence in future Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) missions**

- The PSLV-C61/EOS-09 mission was **ISRO's 101st space mission and aimed to place the Earth Observation Satellite-09 (EOS-09)** into a Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbit.
- EOS-09 is a **radar imaging satellite capable of providing all-weather, day-and-night Earth observation** for surveillance, disaster management, and resource monitoring.
- The **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) is a four-stage rocket** that uses alternating solid and liquid propulsion stages: **1st Stage (Solid), 2nd Stage (Liquid), 3rd Stage (Solid), and 4th Stage (Liquid).**
- The mission was **launched on 18 May 2025 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota,** using the PSLV-C61 launch vehicle.
- The **mission failed due to a malfunction in the third stage of the PSLV rocket,** preventing the satellite from reaching its intended orbit.
- Despite the setback, the **mission highlighted the importance of EOS-09 in strengthening India's remote sensing, surveillance, and strategic monitoring capabilities.**

Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)

- The **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)** is an attached office under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways,** Government of India.
- It is the country's principal authority for matters related to **merchant shipping, maritime administration, maritime education and training,** and the **development of the shipping industry.**
- The DGS is responsible for implementing **shipping policies and laws,** including:
 - ➔ Regulation of the **employment and welfare of seafarers.**
 - ➔ Development of the **sailing vessel industry.**
 - ➔ Regulation of **ocean freight rates** in overseas trade.

Species in News

African Grey Foam-Nest Tree Frog



- A recent study has **highlighted the unique communal foam-nest building behaviour of the African Grey Foam-Nest Tree Frog**, which improves the survival chances of its offspring.
- The **African Grey Foam-Nest Tree Frog (Chiromantis xerampelina)** is an **arboreal amphibian** belonging to the Rhacophoridae family.
- It is **widely distributed across southern and eastern Africa, inhabiting savannas, woodlands, shrublands, and areas near seasonal water bodies.**
- The species is **known for constructing foam nests on tree branches overhanging water**, which protect eggs from predators, desiccation, and adverse environmental conditions.
- The frog is **currently classified as Least Concern (LC) on the IUCN Red List** due to its wide distribution and stable population trend.

Sea stars

- **Sea stars** do not possess **gills, scales, or fins** and are found exclusively in **saltwater environments.**
- Instead of blood, they use **seawater** to transport nutrients through a unique **water vascular system.**
- They move using thousands of tiny **tube feet** located on the underside of their bodies.

- ➡ An adult **sunflower sea star** can travel at speeds of up to **one metre per minute** using nearly **15,000 tube feet.**

- These tube feet also help sea stars **grip and capture prey.**
- **Not all sea stars have five arms;** some species possess **10, 20, or even 40 arms.**
- Sea stars also have a remarkable ability to **regenerate lost arms**, allowing them to recover from injuries.

