

Beyond political reshuffles, renew education in India

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 is the issue?

- India's **education system** needs **comprehensive reforms** that go beyond changes in political leadership.
- While India has significantly expanded **access to education and enrolment**, concerns remain over the **quality of learning and educational excellence**.
- Improving education is essential for India to fully benefit from its **demographic dividend** and develop **skilled, innovative, and responsible citizens**.

2. What reforms are needed in examinations and teaching?

- Shift from **memory-based examinations** to **competency-based assessments** that test **conceptual understanding, analytical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving**.
- Reduce dependence on the **coaching industry** by reforming entrance examinations and giving greater importance to **school performance**.
- Improve the **quality and status** of the **teaching profession** through better training, professional development, mentoring, and research opportunities.
- Fill **vacant teaching positions** through transparent and merit-based recruitment.

3. How can the quality of education be improved?

- Connect education with practical experience through **apprenticeships, research, entrepreneurship, rural immersion, community service, and industry exposure**.
- Strengthen **government schools** by ensuring minimum standards in **teachers, laboratories, libraries, sports facilities, digital infrastructure, and sanitation**.
- Provide educational institutions greater **academic freedom** while ensuring accountability for learning outcomes.
- Create a **real-time national education dashboard** to track **learning outcomes, teacher vacancies, infrastructure, research, employability, and student well-being**.

4. What long-term reforms are suggested?

- Increase **public spending on education to at least 6% of GDP** and **research funding to at least 2% of GDP**.
- Establish an **independent statutory National Education Reform Commission** to set benchmarks, monitor implementation, and submit annual progress reports to **Parliament**.
- Ensure that education reforms continue beyond **electoral and political cycles**.
- Treat **education as a national priority supported by all political parties** to develop India's young population into a **skilled workforce**.

It is not all bad between India and Pakistan

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 issue?

- A recent public debate has emerged over whether **India and Pakistan should restart dialogue** despite persistent tensions and **cross-border terrorism**.
- Although relations have been marked by wars and conflicts, there have also been instances of **military restraint, diplomatic engagement, and cooperation**.
- However, repeated **terror attacks**, including the **2025 Pahalgam attack**, have severely weakened the possibility of sustained dialogue.

2. How have India and Pakistan shown restraint and cooperation in the past?

- During the wars of **1947, 1965, and 1971**, both sides largely focused their attacks on **military targets** rather than deliberately targeting major civilian areas.
- India and Pakistan have occasionally shared **intelligence and cooperated against terrorism**, despite their political differences.
- Successive Indian Prime Ministers, including **Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh, and Narendra Modi**, made diplomatic efforts to improve relations with Pakistan.
- Both countries have also maintained certain **confidence-building measures**, particularly in the **nuclear domain**.
 - ➔ The **2005 nuclear confidence-building agreement** remains in place, with the latest meeting held in **January 2026**.

3. What are the major obstacles to better India-Pakistan relations?

- Cross-border terrorism** remains the biggest obstacle to sustained dialogue and cooperation.
- Previous attempts at improving relations have often been followed by **terrorist attacks**, undermining trust between the two countries.
- The influence of the **Pakistan military** over the country's foreign and security policies has also complicated diplomatic engagement.
- Political instability and weak civilian institutions in Pakistan** have made sustained bilateral engagement difficult.

4. Is there scope for future cooperation?

- Cooperation remains possible in areas of common concern such as **glacial melting, air pollution and alternatives to stubble burning**, and **narcotics trafficking**.
- Sustained cooperation would require Pakistan to demonstrate a **clear and credible end to support for cross-border terrorism**.
- Improved relations could eventually create space for broader negotiations on bilateral issues, including the **Indus Waters Treaty**.

How serious is Kudankulam data leak?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2

Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

1. What happened in the Kudankulam data leak incident?

- A **ransomware attack** led to the leak of data related to Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tirunelveli, with about **14.3 GB(Gigabyte) of operational data** reportedly accessed.
- The breach was linked to Reliance Infrastructure Ltd, and the stolen data was uploaded on a **Dark Web site ("World Leaks")**.
- The total leaked dataset is around **1.2 TB(Terabyte)**, but only a portion concerns the Kudankulam plant, and the attackers claim the data was released because the **ransom was not paid**.

A **ransomware attack** is a type of cyberattack in which hackers **lock or steal data and demand payment (ransom) to restore access or prevent its release**.

2. Was the nuclear reactor affected by the leak?

- Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited clarified that the **core reactor systems were not affected** and no **sensitive nuclear safety or security information** was compromised.
- The leaked data relates only to **Balance of Plant (BOP) systems**, meaning **auxiliary and support infrastructure** rather than the reactor itself.

Balance of Plant (BOP) refers to all the **supporting systems in a power plant that are not part of the core reactor but help it function**. It includes components like **turbines, generators, cooling systems, and electrical infrastructure that convert energy into electricity and ensure smooth operation**.

- The files include **blueprints, supplier details, inspection records, equipment reviews, and an insurance document**, but **not critical nuclear data**.

3. What did Yotta and Reliance say about the incident?

- Yotta Data Services Private Limited (an Indian data center and cloud services company) stated that it detected **suspicious activity on May 29**, immediately **isolated the affected server**, and **prevented ransomware execution**.
- It confirmed that there was **no encryption of data, no lateral movement to other systems, and no impact on other customers or infrastructure**.
- Reliance Infrastructure Ltd described it as an **attempted ransomware attack with a limited breach** and said that **enhanced security measures** have been implemented along with a **detailed investigation**.

4. Why does the data leak matter?

- The incident has caused concern among officials because even **non-core data** can reveal **infrastructure details and potential vulnerabilities**.
- The plant is strategically important as it has **two 1,000 MWe (megawatt electrical) VVER (Water-Water Energetic Reactor) reactors, totaling about 2 GW capacity**, built with Rosatom(Russia's state-owned nuclear energy corporation), and plans to add **four more reactors** to significantly increase capacity.
- The episode highlights the growing threat of **cyberattacks on critical infrastructure** and the risks associated with **third-party data systems**,
- A strong way forward would be to **enhance cybersecurity audits, reduce third-party vulnerabilities, and strengthen protection of critical infrastructure networks**.

Why is Maharashtra's Ladki Bahin scheme under scrutiny?

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. What is the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana?

- The **Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana** is a scheme launched by the Government of Maharashtra ahead of the **2024 Assembly elections** to provide **₹1,500 per month** to eligible women through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)**.

Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) is a system in which the government **transfers subsidies or benefits directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts to reduce leakage and ensure transparency**.

- At its peak, the scheme covered **2.43 crore beneficiaries**, but after verification, the number has reduced to about **1.66 crore women**.
- The scheme aims to **promote economic independence, improve health and nutrition, and strengthen women's role in family decision-making**, and is implemented by the **Women and Child Development Department**.

2. Who is eligible to receive funds under the scheme?

- Eligible beneficiaries are **women residents of Maharashtra aged 21-65 years**, with an **Aadhaar-linked bank account** and belonging to families with **annual income below ₹2.5 lakh**.
- Women of **any marital status** can apply, but **only one woman per family** is allowed to receive the benefit.

3. What are the concerns raised by the CAG?

- The Comptroller and Auditor General of India flagged **serious deficiencies in budget estimation, expenditure control, and financial management** during 2024-25.
- Against an allocation of **₹29,693.09 crore**, the government spent **₹33,237.24 crore**, resulting in an **excess expenditure of ₹3,541.16 crore**, which was termed **"unjustified"**.

- The CAG said this undermined **budgetary discipline, financial propriety, and legislative control over public finances.**

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India is a constitutional authority established under **Article 148 of the Indian Constitution** that audits government revenues and expenditures to ensure transparency and accountability in public finances.

KEYWORDS

BioE3 Policy

- The **BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) Policy** was recently approved by the Union Cabinet and is spearheaded by the **Ministry of Science and Technology (Department of Biotechnology)** to position India as a **global biomanufacturing hub.**
- It targets **six strategic sectors: high-value bio-based chemicals, smart proteins, precision biotherapeutics, climate-resilient agriculture, carbon capture, and marine and space research.**
- The framework establishes a **national network of Bio-AI Hubs, biofoundries, and biomanufacturing centers** to bridge the gap between **laboratory research and commercial-scale production.**
- India's **bioeconomy has grown from \$10 billion (2014) to over \$130 billion (2024)**, and the policy aims to accelerate this growth to **\$300 billion by 2030.**
- The initiative promotes a shift from **chemical-based industries to circular bio-based models**, aiming to generate **large-scale employment in tier-II and tier-III cities using local biomass.**

4. Why have many beneficiaries been removed from the list?

- The number of beneficiaries dropped from **2.43 crore to 1.66 crore** after **multiple rounds of verification**, which found many women **no longer eligible.**
- The government stated that there has been **no change in eligibility criteria**, and the reduction is due to stricter verification.
- A major reason cited is the **mandatory e-KYC process**, which many women failed to complete.

e-KYC (electronic Know Your Customer) is a digital process used to **verify a person's identity online, usually through Aadhaar and OTP authentication, to access government schemes or financial services.**

- The Opposition has also accused the government of using the scheme for **electoral gains** and criticised it for **not increasing the assistance from ₹1,500 to ₹2,100 as promised before elections.**
- The government should ensure **transparent beneficiary verification, timely completion of e-KYC, and better financial planning to avoid excess expenditure**, while also strengthening monitoring systems so that the scheme remains **efficient, fair, and sustainable in the long run.**

Places in news

Golan heights



- It is a **strategic rocky plateau** situated in southwest Syria, bordered by Israel to the west, Lebanon to the north, and Jordan to the south.
- The plateau offers a **commanding military vantage point** over the Jordan Valley and southern Syria, while also serving as a **critical water source** feeding into the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River basin.
- It was **seized by Israel from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War** and **effectively annexed in 1981**, but is still considered **occupied territory by the United Nations** and most of the international community.
- In **2019**, the **United States** recognized **Israeli sovereignty** over the Golan Heights, a **controversial move** rejected by the UN Security Council.

Species In News

Lestes paloti



- **Lestes paloti** is a newly discovered species of **spreadwing damselfly** from the **Western Ghats of Kerala**.
- It is the first new species of the genus **Lestes** described from **India since 1987** and from the **Western Ghats since 1929**.
- The species is named after **Muhamed Jafer Palot**, a scientist at the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)**, **Kozhikode**, for his contributions to **Indian odonatology and biodiversity research**.

- It has been recorded in **Kannur, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Malappuram, Palakkad, and Ernakulam** districts of Kerala, mainly in **scrub vegetation around houses and laterite hillocks**.
- **Lestes paloti** changes colour from **brown during the dry season to bluish during the monsoon**. Its discovery also showed that earlier records of **Lestes nodalis** from southern India were actually misidentified as **Lestes paloti**.

Nilgiri langur



- The **Nilgiri langur** is an **arboreal primate** native to the **Western Ghats of Kerala and Tamil Nadu**, known for its **golden-brown mane** and distinctive calls.
- It is found mainly in the **Nilgiri Hills, Silent Valley, Wayanad, Periyar, Agasthyamalai, Mudumalai, Kalakkad-Mundanthurai, and Mukurthi** regions.
- It prefers remote **evergreen and semi-evergreen forests** and **shola-grassland mosaics**, mainly at elevations of **300-2,000 metres**.
- It lives in **small troops**, feeds mainly on **leaves**, and contributes to **seed dispersal and forest regeneration**.
- Its population has declined due to **hunting, poaching, and habitat loss**. The total population is estimated at around **20,000** across southern India.
- The Nilgiri langur is classified as **Vulnerable** on the **IUCN Red List** and is protected under **Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- It is considered a **flagship species** for the conservation of the **southern Western Ghats**.