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THE HINDU

Reclaiming footpaths, taking cities back from cars

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 3

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

Why in Focus?

- Recently the **Supreme Court's judgment in Maniyar Iliyaz @ Shaik Riyaz vs. P. Ayyappan (2026)** recognised safe and accessible footpaths as a fundamental constitutional right and highlighted the need for pedestrian-friendly urban planning.

Key Highlights

- The **Supreme Court held that walking on safe, demarcated footpaths is protected under Articles 19(1)(d) and 21**, and directed States and Union Territories to frame policies for the provision and maintenance of footpaths.

Article 19(1)(d) of the Constitution of India guarantees every Indian citizen the fundamental right "to move freely throughout the territory of India.

- Safe, continuous and barrier-free footpaths are essential for protecting vulnerable groups**, including children, women, elderly persons and persons with disabilities.
- Walking is a low-cost preventive health**

intervention that helps reduce the burden of diabetes, hypertension, obesity and other lifestyle diseases.

- According to the **WHO India Physical Activity Profile 2024**, nearly **49.4% of adults, 57.2% of women, and 74% of adolescents (11–17 years)** do not meet recommended physical activity levels.

WHO India Physical Activity Profile is a World Health Organization report that assesses physical activity levels and related indicators in India to guide policies promoting active lifestyles and preventing non-communicable diseases.

- Poor pedestrian infrastructure significantly **increases road safety risks, with pedestrians and two-wheeler riders accounting for nearly 60–67% of road fatalities**.
- The **judgment shifts footpaths from being a municipal concern to a constitutional, public health and urban governance priority**, requiring people-centric city planning.

Implications

- Encroachment of footpaths by parked vehicles, vendors, debris and poor maintenance forces pedestrians onto roads, **increasing accident risks**.
- Lack of integrated urban planning discourages walking** and reduces accessibility for vulnerable groups.
- Balancing pedestrian rights with the livelihoods of street vendors requires**



planned allocation of space rather than periodic eviction drives.

- **Weak enforcement, inadequate funding and poor maintenance** undermines pedestrian infrastructure in many cities.
- Failure to improve walkability adversely affects public health, road safety and inclusive urban development.

Way Forward

- **Implement the Supreme Court judgment through uniform national and State guidelines** for safe, encroachment-free footpaths.
- **Promote people-centric urban planning with continuous, shaded, barrier-free footpaths** and safe pedestrian crossings.
- **Launch a National Active Mobility Mission** to promote walking and cycling.
- **Allocate dedicated spaces for pedestrians, vendors, parking and utilities**, with strict action against encroachments.
- **Strengthen accountability through regular footpath audits, walkability mapping** and citizen participation.

Mains Question

“The Supreme Court has recognised safe footpaths as a fundamental constitutional right. Discuss the significance of walkable cities for public health, road safety and inclusive urban governance. Suggest measures to improve pedestrian infrastructure in India.” (250 Words)

Canada–India defence collaboration for a secure future

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 2

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Why in Focus?

- India and Canada are **seeking to reset bilateral ties after recent diplomatic tensions**.
- During Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's visit to the G7 Summit (2026), both countries agreed to revive cooperation in defence, critical minerals, advanced technologies and Indo-Pacific security, signalling a renewed strategic partnership.

Key Highlights

- Canada is **significantly increasing defence spending, targeting 5% of GDP by 2035**, in response to evolving security threats and geopolitical instability.
- **Canada and India have strengthened bilateral defence engagement** by accrediting Defence Advisers in Ottawa and New Delhi and establishing a Defence Dialogue.
- Both countries have **enhanced military cooperation through participation in RIMPAC and Talisman Sabre naval exercises** and exchanges between defence institutions.

RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific Exercise) is the world's largest biennial multinational naval exercise, led by the U.S. Navy around Hawaii. It enhances maritime interoperability, collective security, disaster response and humanitarian assistance among partner navies.

Talisman Sabre is a biennial multinational military exercise hosted by Australia with the United States as the principal partner. It focuses on joint combat operations, amphibious warfare, logistics and Indo-Pacific security cooperation.

- **Canada's strengths in aerospace, space technology, artificial intelligence and research complement India's manufacturing capabilities** and growing defence industrial base.
- The **Canada–India MoU on Critical Minerals Value Chain (2026)** aims to build resilient supply chains for strategic minerals essential for defence and clean technologies.
- Defence cooperation reflects a shared commitment to strengthening Indo-Pacific security, technological innovation and economic resilience.



Implications

- **Past diplomatic tensions**, particularly following the 2023 allegations linking Indian agents to the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada, **have strained bilateral trust and slowed defence cooperation**.
- **Geopolitical competition and supply chain disruptions** require **diversification** of trusted partners.
- **Cooperation in sensitive technologies and defence manufacturing** requires **robust regulatory** and security frameworks.
- **Greater collaboration can strengthen both countries' strategic autonomy** and contribute to a stable Indo-Pacific region.

Way Forward

- **Institutionalise the Canada–India Defence Dialogue** with regular high-level meetings and military exchanges.
- **Expand co-development and co-production** in aerospace, drones, artificial intelligence and advanced defence technologies under the Make in India initiative.
- **Operationalise the Critical Minerals Value Chain partnership** to ensure secure and resilient supply chains.
- **Deepen cooperation in maritime security, space technologies, cyber security** and Indo-Pacific capacity building.
- **Promote defence industry partnerships, research collaboration and innovation** through joint investments and technology transfer.

Mains Question

“India and Canada have significant potential for strategic cooperation in defence, critical minerals and emerging technologies. Discuss the opportunities and challenges in strengthening bilateral defence relations in the evolving global security landscape.” (250 Words)

India's green transition is missing long-duration energy storage

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies 3

Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Why in Focus?

- India recorded its highest **peak power demand of 270.8 GW** on **May 21, 2026**, highlighting the growing need for reliable energy storage.
- With increasing dependence on **solar and wind energy, Long-Duration Energy Storage (LDES)** can help maintain power supply during prolonged periods of low renewable energy generation.

Key Highlights:

- **LDES** refers to technologies that can store energy and supply it for **8 hours to several days, weeks, or even seasons**, unlike short-duration storage systems that generally discharge for less than 8 hours.
- LDES stores surplus energy when **renewable generation is high** and supplies it during **peak demand or low generation**, improving **grid reliability and stability**.
- Major LDES technologies include **Pumped Hydroelectric Energy Storage (PHES), Compressed-Air Energy Storage (CAES), thermal storage, hydrogen-based storage, and flow batteries**.
- Among **LDES technologies**, **PHES** is the benchmark with **70-80% efficiency**, **CAES** has **40-70% efficiency**, while **thermal storage** offers a longer discharge duration of around **200 hours** with **55-90% efficiency**.
- According to the **Central Electricity Authority (2026)**, India has around **267 GW** of **PHES potential** and plans to install **100.8 GW** by **2035-36**, with **11.6 GW** currently under construction.

Implications:

- India's **current energy storage plans** mainly **focus on storage durations of a few hours** and may be **insufficient** during prolonged **heatwaves** or periods of low renewable generation.



- Technologies such as **PHES and CAES** require specific geographical conditions, including **suitable water reservoirs or underground storage spaces**.
- India's existing energy planning frameworks do not specifically recognise **LDES** or **provide clear technology-specific pathways for its deployment**.

Way Forward:

- Include **LDES** in **India's national energy storage framework** and future electricity planning.
- Identify suitable LDES technologies based on India's **geographical conditions** and **extreme weather requirements**.
- Provide faster **environmental and land clearances**, clear regulations, and appropriate financial incentives to attract investment.
- Improve **training and awareness** among grid operators and other stakeholders for effective management of long-duration storage systems.

Mains Question:

Long-Duration Energy Storage (LDES) can play a critical role in India's transition towards a renewable energy-based power system. Discuss its significance, challenges, and the measures needed for its effective deployment. (250 Words)

Why inflation is rising in India

Prelims: General 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?

- India is witnessing a sharp rise in inflation, with the Wholesale **Price Index (WPI - measures the average change in prices of goods at the wholesale level (before retail) over time)**, inflation nearing 10%, raising concerns about

what is really driving this increase.

Key Highlights:

- After remaining low (even negative) until recently, **WPI inflation has risen sharply since March**, indicating a sudden change in price trends.
- This rise is mainly driven by **fuel and power prices (linked to global oil prices)** and **manufactured goods**, rather than just food items.
- To understand this, economist Michal Kalecki's idea becomes important - he explained that **not all inflation is caused by demand and supply mismatch**.
- In the case of **primary commodities like food**, prices depend on supply conditions. For example, a poor monsoon reduces supply and raises prices, leading to **demand-pull inflation (price rise caused when demand exceeds supply)**.
- However, for **manufactured goods**, prices do not rise because of higher demand. Instead, firms increase production when demand rises. Prices increase only when **costs of production rise**, leading to **cost-push inflation (price rise due to increase in input costs like fuel, raw materials, etc.)**.
- In India's current situation, the major trigger has been **rising global oil prices**, which increased fuel costs and, in turn, raised the cost of manufacturing across sectors.

Implications:

- Since inflation is largely **cost-push in nature**, policies that reduce demand (like raising interest rates) may not be fully effective.
- India's heavy dependence on **imported crude oil** makes it vulnerable to global price shocks.
- Agriculture still depends heavily on the **monsoon**, making food prices unstable in years of drought or El Niño.
- Rising prices reduce the **real income and purchasing power** of people, especially the poor.
- Existing policy tools like **inflation targeting** may not adequately address these structural causes.



Way Forward:

- India should invest more in **irrigation and agricultural infrastructure** to reduce dependence on monsoon-driven supply shocks.
- The government can adopt **counter-cyclical tax policies**, such as reducing excise duties when global oil prices rise, to control fuel costs.
- There is a need to **diversify energy sources** to reduce reliance on imported crude oil.
- Policy focus should shift toward **supply-side solutions**, not just demand control.
- Strengthening **price stabilisation mechanisms** can help manage volatility in essential commodities.

Mains Question:

“Inflation in India is increasingly driven by structural and cost-side factors rather than demand.” Discuss the causes of recent inflation trends and suggest suitable policy measures. (15 marks, 250 words)

KEYWORDS

Central Electricity Authority (CEA)

- The **CEA** is a **statutory organisation** originally established under the now-repealed **Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948**, and is currently constituted under **Section 70 of the Electricity Act, 2003**.
- It was established as a **part-time body in 1951** and became a **full-time body in 1975**.
- The functions and duties of the CEA are provided under **Section 73 of the Electricity Act, 2003**.
- It advises the **Central Government** on the **National Electricity Policy** and prepares **short-term and long-term plans** for the development of India's electricity system.
- It sets **technical standards** for the construction of **electrical plants, electric lines, and grid connectivity** to ensure a **reliable and affordable electricity supply**.

APAAR (Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry)

- The **APAAR ID** is a unique **12-digit identification number** that serves as a **permanent digital identity** for students within the education ecosystem.

- It is part of the government's '**One Nation, One Student ID**' initiative and is aligned with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- It enables students to **digitally store, manage, and access academic records**, including **scorecards, marksheets, gradesheets, degrees, diplomas, certificates, academic credits, and co-curricular achievements**.
- APAAR aims to improve **transparency and efficiency**, track **student progress**, reduce **duplication and fraud**, and support holistic student development.
- It also promotes **student mobility, academic flexibility**, and allows students greater freedom to **choose their preferred learning pathways**.

Index of Eight Core Industries

- The revised Index of Core Industries (ICI) **measures the production performance of nine core sectors**: Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement, Electricity, and Iron Ore.
- The **base year has been revised to 2022–23 (from 2011–12)** to better reflect the current industrial structure of the economy.



- These **core industries** continue to **serve as key indicators of industrial activity** and contribute significantly to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), with updated sectoral weights under the new series.
- The **index is compiled and released monthly by the Office of the Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- The **revised series includes updated sectoral weights, revised methodology, and the addition of Iron Ore** as the ninth core industry.
- In **June 2026, the ICI recorded 5.0% growth, the fastest in five months, led by Iron Ore (43.9%), followed by Electricity (9.8%), Cement (9.8%), Steel (4.6%), and Coal (1.4%).**

Ballon d'Or



- Ballon d'Or (French: "Golden Ball") established in 1956, **is an annual football award presented by the French magazine France Football to honour the world's best-performing footballers based on the season**
- Since 2024, **the Ballon d'Or has been co-organised by UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) and Groupe Amaury, the owner of France Football and L'Équipe.**
- The **Ballon d'Or is awarded based on performances during the football season rather than the calendar year, with voting by journalists representing the top-ranked football nations.**
- The Ballon d'Or ceremony has two primary headline awards: **the Men's**

Ballon d'Or and the Women's Ballon d'Or which recognise the best overall male and female footballers of the season.

- In addition, the ceremony presents **several secondary awards, including the Kopa Trophy (Best U-21 Player), Yashin Trophy (Best Goalkeeper), Gerd Müller Trophy (Top Scorer), Johan Cruyff Trophy (Best Coach), Club of the Year Award, and the Sócrates Award (Humanitarian Work).**
- **Lionel Messi holds the record for the most Ballon d'Or titles (8), while Cristiano Ronaldo has received the highest number of nominations (18).**

QDENG (TAK-003)

- It is in the news because the **Drug Controller General of India (DCGI)** granted **market authorization to QDENG (TAK-003), making it the first dengue vaccine approved for use in India.**
- It is a **live-attenuated, tetravalent vaccine** developed by the Japanese pharmaceutical company **Takeda**, which means it is designed to stimulate immunity against **all four distinct serotypes (DENV-1 through DENV-4)** of the dengue virus.
- A major advantage for large-scale public health programs is that it can be administered **regardless of whether a person has previously had dengue, completely eliminating the need for mandatory pre-vaccination blood screening.**
- The vaccine is currently approved for individuals spanning a wide demographic from **4 to 60 years of age**, and it is administered as a **two-dose regimen given three months apart.**
- It has achieved **WHO prequalification**-meaning it meets stringent international standards for quality, safety, and efficacy-and is already approved in over 40 countries, enabling **procurement by global agencies like UNICEF.**

Places in News

Odessa Port



- Odessa Port is **Ukraine's largest seaport on the northwestern coast of the Black Sea**, serving as a major gateway for the country's international trade.
- The port is located near the **Danube Delta** and **provides maritime connectivity to the Mediterranean Sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits**.
- It is **one of Ukraine's principal export hubs for agricultural commodities**, particularly wheat, maize, sunflower oil, and other grains.
- During the **Russia-Ukraine conflict**, **Odessa Port became central to the Black Sea Grain Initiative (2022)**, which aimed to facilitate the safe export of Ukrainian food grains through the Black Sea.
- The strategic importance of Odessa Port lies in its role in global food security, regional maritime trade, and the geopolitics of the Black Sea region.

Second Thomas Shoal

- It is **recently in the news** after the **Philippine military accused China's coast guard of damaging a Filipino vessel and injuring a sailor** during a confrontation.

- It is a **tear-drop-shaped submerged coral reef** in the **Spratly Islands (South China Sea)**, about **105 nautical miles (194 km) west of Palawan (Philippines)**.
- In **1999**, the **Philippines grounded the BRP Sierra Madre (World War II-era ship)** to create a **permanent military outpost** and assert **sovereignty**.
- The shoal lies within the **Philippines' EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone)**, but **China claims it (as Ren'ai Jiao)** under the **controversial "Nine-Dash Line"**.
- In a **2016 UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) ruling**, the **Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)** declared it a **low-tide elevation**, **invalidating China's claims** and denying any **territorial sea**.

