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MCQs

THE HINDU

How conversion affects reservation

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution,
Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy,

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** upheld the **Madras High Court** judgment invalidating Tamil Nadu Government Order dated March 9, 2024.
- The order aimed to enable persons converting to **Islam** from **Backward Classes (BC)**, **Most Backward Classes (MBC)**, **Denotified Communities (DNC)**, and **Scheduled Castes (SC)** to obtain **Backward Class Muslim** certificates.

Key Highlights:

- The case involved an applicant born into a Hindu family who converted to Islam and sought a certificate as a **Muslim Lebbai**.
- The **High Court** held that conversion did not make the applicant a member of any of Tamil Nadu's seven notified backward Muslim communities.

- The seven notified Muslim communities in Tamil Nadu are **Ansar, Dekkani Muslims, Dubekula, Labbais (including Rowthar and Marakayar), Mapilla, Sheik, and Syed**.
- Article 341** governs SC identification, while the **Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950** restricts SC status to **Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists**.

Article 341: Empowers the President to specify Scheduled Castes for each State or Union Territory. Only Parliament can amend the SC list by law.

- Unlike SC status, backward-class identification follows **Articles 15(4), 16(4) and 342A**, requiring evidence-based classification of **socially and educationally backward groups**.

Article 15(4): Allows special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes .

Article 16(4): Allows reservation in public employment for backward classes inadequately represented in State services.

Article 342A: Deals with the identification of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes . The President specifies the Central List, while Parliament can amend it by law. States and Union Territories can maintain separate lists for their own purposes.

- Mandal Commission (1980):** Used **11 social, educational and economic indicators**, with a maximum score of **22 points**, to identify backward classes. Recommended **27% reservation for OBCs** in central government



services.

- **Sachar Committee (2006):** Highlighted the **socio-economic, educational and employment disadvantages** faced by Muslims in India.
- **Ranganath Misra Commission (2007):** Recommended **delinking SC status from religion** and extending it to eligible persons irrespective of religious affiliation.
- **K.G. Balakrishnan Commission (2022):** Examines whether **SC status** can be extended to persons who converted to religions other than **Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism**, including the constitutional and legal implications.

Implications:

- **Reservation eligibility** must follow constitutional criteria, not automatic status transfer after conversion.
- **Evidence-based classification** requires States to establish social and educational backwardness before recognising groups.
- **Continuing social exclusion** among converts may require assessment through reliable evidence.
- **Constitutional clarity** is strengthened by distinguishing SC status from backward-class identification.
- **Reservation policy** must reflect demonstrable disadvantage and constitutional requirements.

Way Forward:

- **Socio-economic assessment** should examine the conditions of converts from BC, MBC and DNC groups.
- **Objective indicators** should assess education, public employment, social acceptance and continuing exclusion.
- **Quantifiable data** should guide transparent backward-class classification.
- **Constitutional compliance** must be balanced with the need to address continuing disadvantage after conversion.

Mains Question:

Distinguish between Scheduled Caste status and

backward-class classification in India. Examine the constitutional implications of the Supreme Court's ruling on reservation eligibility after religious conversion. (15 marks, 250 words)

Moves by the North of England to unlock India trade

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?

- The **India-United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)** marks a new phase in the relationship between India and the UK.
- Leaders from the **North of England** are visiting India under **The Great North** banner to strengthen ties in trade, investment and innovation.

India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA): Signed on 24 July 2025 to reduce trade barriers and expand bilateral trade and investment, with preferential market access for Indian textiles, marine products, and engineering goods in the UK market.

Key Highlights:

- **14 rounds of negotiations** preceded CETA, which aims to improve **market access** by reducing tariffs and addressing regulatory barriers.
- The agreement covers **trade in goods and services, investment, professional mobility and rules of origin**.
- Nearly **5.4 lakh people of Indian origin** live in northern England. Indian companies have invested over **£1 billion in northwest England**, supporting more than **6,700 jobs**.
- **India-UK bilateral trade** reached **£47.4 billion in 2025**, up **11.7% year-on-year**, driven by advanced manufacturing, clean energy and technology.



- The **UK India Business Council (UKIBC)** developed the **CETA Business Utilisation Manual** to explain **tariff preferences, rules of origin, documentation and eligibility**.

Implications:

- Market access** can improve through reduced tariffs, boosting Indian exports and export earnings.
- Employment generation** can increase through greater UK investment in India's manufacturing and technology sectors.
- MSME growth** can be supported by improved access to the UK market.
- Innovation and supply chains** can benefit from cooperation in clean energy, advanced manufacturing and technology.
- Global trade integration** can deepen through better utilisation of CETA and stronger India–UK economic ties.

Way Forward:

- Business awareness** should be increased to help exporters understand CETA benefits and eligibility.
- Simplified procedures** should make it easier to claim tariff preferences.
- State-level partnerships** should strengthen cooperation between Indian States and UK economic hubs.
- Research and technology cooperation** should promote clean energy and advanced manufacturing.
- MSME support** should include practical guidance, training and export assistance.

Mains Question:

Examine the potential of the India–UK CETA in strengthening bilateral trade and investment. What challenges could affect its effective utilisation by Indian businesses?(10 marks, 150 words)

Can India turn retrofitment into the next mobility revolution?

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?

- Vehicle retrofitting** can accelerate **EV adoption** by converting existing vehicles instead of relying solely on new EV sales.
- It offers opportunities to reduce **oil-import dependence**, formalise local garages and create **skilled jobs**.

Vehicle Retrofitting: The process of converting an existing petrol or diesel vehicle into an electric vehicle by replacing its engine with an electric motor and battery system.

Key Highlights:

- A successful **retrofitting ecosystem** requires **battery systems, software, safety standards, financing, certified workshops and trained technicians**.
- The **PM Surya Ghar Yojana's** vendor network can serve as a model for setting up **vehicle retrofitting centres** across India.

PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana: A central government scheme launched in 2024 to promote rooftop solar installations in households by providing subsidies for solar power systems.

- Certified retrofitting centres** can upgrade local garages, generate jobs and serve vehicle owners in smaller towns and rural areas.
- The **Global South spends over \$550 billion annually on oil imports**, creating export opportunities for India's **affordable retrofitting solutions**.
- Battery and software development** is essential for reliable retrofitting, requiring advances in battery systems.
- Rural service networks** can expand access to EV conversion services through certified centres in smaller towns and rural areas.

Implications:

- Sustainable mobility** can be promoted by extending the usable life of existing vehicles.



- **Energy security** can improve through reduced dependence on imported fossil fuels.
- **Employment generation** can increase through certified retrofitting centres for technicians and local entrepreneurs.
- **Formalisation of the repair sector** can be supported through training and certification.
- **Export potential** can grow through affordable clean-mobility solutions for the Global South.

Way Forward:

- **Uniform safety standards** should be established for vehicle retrofitting.
- **Affordable financing** should make conversions accessible to vehicle owners and small businesses.
- **Skill development** should train and certify mechanics and technicians.
- **Research and testing** should strengthen batteries, power electronics and vehicle-control software.
- **International partnerships** should support exports and scalable service networks.

Mains Question:

Examine how vehicle retrofitting can promote sustainable mobility, employment generation and India's technological leadership in the Global South. (10 marks, 150 words)

KEYWORDS

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- The 25th Meeting of the **SCO Council of Heads of Government** was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 19–20 October 2026, with India represented by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.
- The **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** is a permanent intergovernmental organisation established on **15 June 2001** in Shanghai, China.
- It evolved from the **Shanghai Five** grouping formed in 1996 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.
- The SCO has **10 member states**: China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan,

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Belarus.

- Its key objectives include promoting regional security, combating **terrorism, separatism and extremism**, and strengthening economic and cultural cooperation.
- The SCO Secretariat is headquartered in **Beijing, China**, while its **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** is based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)

- The **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)** was launched by India in **September 2019** at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, with support from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).
- It is a **multi-stakeholder global partnership** involving national governments, UN agencies, multilateral development banks, private-sector organisations and academic institutions.
- Its main objective is to promote the resilience of infrastructure systems against **natural disasters and climate change**.
- The CDRI Secretariat is headquartered in **New Delhi, India**, and the coalition promotes knowledge-sharing, technical assistance and capacity-building.
- Its mission includes making infrastructure investments and services worth **US\$10 trillion resilient to natural hazards and climate change by 2050**.

Aditya-L1

- **Aditya-L1** is India's first space-based solar mission, developed by **ISRO** and launched on **2 September 2023** using the PSLV-XL launch vehicle.
- The spacecraft operates in a **halo orbit around the Sun–Earth Lagrange Point 1 (L1)**, approximately **1.5 million km from Earth**, enabling continuous observation of the Sun.

- It carries **seven scientific payloads** to study the Sun's photosphere, chromosphere, corona, solar wind and magnetic fields.
- The mission investigates **coronal heating, solar flares, Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)** and the origin and acceleration of solar wind.
- Its observations help improve **space-weather forecasting** and assess the effects of solar activity on satellites, communication systems and power grids on Earth

India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

- The **India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** came into effect on **20 October 2026**, providing duty-free access to Indian exports in the New Zealand market.
- The agreement aims to **double bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore** over the next four to five years.
- New Zealand has committed to investing **US\$20 billion in India over 15 years**, supporting sectors such as infrastructure, manufacturing and technology.
- India has secured duty-free access for **100% of its exports**, while protecting sensitive sectors such as dairy, onions, sugar, rice and wheat from tariff concessions.
- The agreement **provides opportunities for Indian professionals and businesses through improved services access** and temporary employment pathways

Places in News

Colombo Port

- China Merchants Port Holdings, a Chinese state-owned company, **withdrew from the proposed project at Colombo Port in October 2026**.
- **Colombo Port** is located on the western coast of Sri Lanka along major international shipping routes and

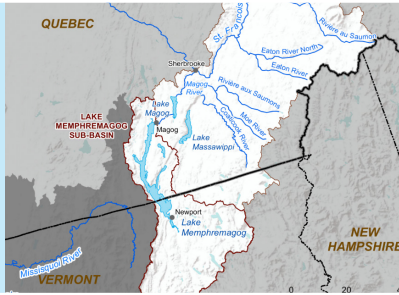
serves as a key regional **container transshipment hub**.

- The port has several terminals, including the **Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT)**, South Asia Gateway Terminal (SAGT) and Jaya Container Terminal (JCT).
- **China Merchants Port Holdings** operates the CICT with an 85% stake.
- Colombo Port is strategically important for **India's maritime security and regional trade** because a significant share of India's transshipment cargo passes through Sri Lankan ports.



Lake Memphremagog

- Scientists identified a rare, transmissible form of **melanoma (skin cancer)** in brown bullhead catfish in Lake Memphremagog, the first known transmissible cancer reported in a freshwater fish species.
- **Lake Memphremagog** is a transboundary freshwater lake shared by **Quebec, Canada, and Vermont, USA**, located in the Appalachian region.
- Approximately **75% of the lake's surface area lies in Quebec**, while most of its watershed is located in Vermont.
- The lake is approximately **50 km long** and was formed by glacial activity during the retreat of the last Ice Age glaciers.
- Its main outlet is the **Magog River**, which flows into the Saint-François River in Quebec.
- It is an important source of **drinking water** for surrounding communities and faces environmental concerns from phosphorus pollution and harmful algal blooms.



Species In News

Brown Bullhead Catfish (*Ameiurus nebulosus*)

- The **brown bullhead catfish (*Ameiurus nebulosus*)** is a freshwater fish native to **North America**, belonging to the family Ictaluridae.
- It is a bottom-dwelling fish that inhabits **lakes, ponds, rivers and other slow-moving freshwater bodies**.
- It has a **broad, flattened head, dark barbels around its mouth** and a scaleless body.
- The cancer detected in these fish is a rare form of **transmissible melanoma**; the exact mechanism by which cancer cells spread between fish remains unknown.
- It is listed as **Least Concern under the IUCN Red List**.

