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MCQs

THE HINDU

Ensuring equity amid India's educational progress

Prelims: General 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.

Why in Focus

- The **UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus) 2025-26** report shows significant progress in India's school education system. However, it also highlights continuing **regional, social and infrastructural inequalities**.

Key Highlights

- The report covers **1.47 million schools, 240 million students and 10.2 million teachers**, reflecting the large scale of India's school education system.
- India has made progress in **school enrolment, student retention, reduction in dropout rates, teacher availability and basic infrastructure** such as electricity and drinking water.
- However, **regional disparities remain significant**. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), dropout rates and **Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)**-number of students for every one teacher) vary widely across States and Union Territories.

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER): The **total number of students enrolled in a specific level of education** (like primary school, high school, or college) to the **total number of people** in the population who are the **"official" age** to be in that level.

Eg: The **official age group** for secondary education has **100 children**. But schools have **120 students enrolled** in secondary education. These 120 students include some who are **younger or older than the official age group**. $GER = 120 \div 100 \times 100 = 120\%$

- Social disparities also persist.** The national GER is highest among **OBCs at 49%**, followed by General category at 27%, **SCs at 17% and STs at 10%**, showing unequal participation among social groups.
- Girls' participation has improved.** The **Gender Parity Index (GPI)** indicates that girls' enrolment is higher than boys across most States and Union Territories.
- Teacher availability remains uneven. **Jharkhand has a high secondary PTR of 43**, placing a heavy workload on teachers, while rural and remote schools often face shortages and teachers handling multiple classes and non-teaching duties.
- Dropout remains a concern**, particularly at higher stages. Bihar records high dropout at the preparatory and middle stages, while **Ladakh has the highest secondary dropout rate at 14.8%**.



Implications

- **Regional inequality** continues because remote, hilly, tribal and border areas often have fewer schools, poor transport and weaker educational infrastructure.
- **Social exclusion** affects children from SCs, STs, minority communities and economically weaker families, creating barriers to enrolment, attendance and completion.
- **Teacher shortages and high PTR** reduce individual attention and can negatively affect the quality of learning.
- **Urban-rural and digital divides** create unequal access to infrastructure, technology and learning opportunities.
- **Children with disabilities** continue to face inadequate accessible classrooms, facilities and supportive teaching practices.
- Persistent educational inequality can weaken **human capital formation, social mobility and inclusive economic development** despite overall improvements in enrolment.

Way Forward

- Give **targeted investment** to educationally backward, tribal, hilly, border and remote regions to improve schools, transport and basic facilities.
- Ensure **equitable teacher deployment** by recruiting sufficient teachers and reducing their non-teaching responsibilities.
- Strengthen support for disadvantaged students through **scholarships, hostels, transport facilities, assistive technologies and inclusive infrastructure**.
- Bridge the **digital divide** by improving internet connectivity, access to devices and digital learning resources in underserved areas.
- Use **UDISE+ data for district-level planning and monitoring** and implement the objectives of **NEP 2020 (National Education Policy 2020)** with focus on **access, equity, quality and inclusion**.

Mains Question

Despite significant progress in school education, regional and social inequalities continue to affect educational outcomes in India. Discuss in the

light of the UDISE+ 2025-26 findings and suggest measures to ensure equitable and inclusive education. (15 marks, 250 words)

Unimpeded trade needs IPMDA as the answer

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?

- Amid tensions in U.S.–India relations, the article **highlights the need to strengthen cooperation on Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)** to protect trade, energy supplies and freedom of navigation across the Indo-Pacific.

Key Highlights

- The **Indo-Pacific carries nearly \$7 trillion in trade annually**, linking energy producers in the Persian Gulf with Asian manufacturing centres and global consumer markets.
- **Major maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Malacca, Lombok, Sunda, Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb** are crucial for global energy and container trade.
- The **Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) was launched under the Quad in 2022** to share near-real-time maritime information and detect threats to maritime security.
- In 2025, **India acquired SeaVision technology from the U.S.**, including software, training and logistical support for maritime surveillance.
- **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) provides information about activities at sea and their impact on security**, safety, economy and the environment.
- **Hundreds of vessels in the Indian Ocean reportedly “go dark” by switching off their Automatic Identification System (AIS)**, potentially facilitating sanctions evasion, smuggling and illegal activities.
- **Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU)**



fishing can threaten marine ecosystems, regional fish stocks and the food security of coastal countries.

Implications for India

- A stronger MDA can protect India's maritime trade, energy security and sea lanes of communication.
- Better surveillance can help counter smuggling, illegal fishing, maritime terrorism and grey-zone activities.
- The Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), established in Gurugram in 2018, can complement the IPMDA framework.
- Greater maritime cooperation can strengthen India's role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region.

Way Forward

- Fully operationalise IPMDA through real-time information sharing.
- Strengthen cooperation among Quad, ASEAN, Pacific Islands and EU.
- Support maritime surveillance in smaller coastal states.
- Integrate satellite, radar and sensor networks.
- Use transparency and information sharing to protect maritime trade.

Mains Question

"Maritime Domain Awareness has emerged as a crucial pillar of Indo-Pacific security. Discuss its significance for India and examine how cooperation through the Quad and IPMDA can safeguard maritime trade and freedom of navigation." (250 Words)

Saving faces: On protests, biometric surveillance

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

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

Mains: General Studies 2

Government policies and interventions for

development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Context

- The use of **facial recognition technology (FRT)** at political protests raises concerns about **privacy, civil liberties, and the right to protest**.
- India currently lacks a **specific legal framework** governing the widespread use of facial recognition by the police.

Key Highlights

- The Delhi Police used facial-recognition cameras, surveillance vans, smart spectacles, and drones to monitor protesters.
- The police have **not clarified whether the biometric data of every person captured by the cameras was processed**.
- The **facial recognition system has no specific law** governing its use by the police.
- The **Digital Personal Data Protection Act** does not currently provide adequate safeguards for such police use, while its data-processing provisions are yet to come into force.
- The **surveillance van and smart spectacles were operated through private contractors**, but their access to and handling of protesters' biometric data remain unclear.
- The **National Crime Records Bureau's Automated Facial Recognition System** is used for specific purposes such as identifying criminals and unidentified bodies.
 - ◆ It is not intended for **indiscriminate surveillance of protesters**.
- Mass facial recognition at protests can create a **chilling effect**, discouraging people from exercising their **right to protest**.
- The police have not adequately addressed **data access, retention, legal authorisation or false-positive risks**, making mass surveillance difficult to justify.

Implications

- **Private access to biometric data** without clear safeguards creates risks of misuse and unauthorised sharing.
- Mass facial recognition can undermine the



right to privacy and peaceful protest by making citizens fear identification and surveillance.

- Lack of clear legal rules can lead to **arbitrary use of facial recognition technology** by law-enforcement agencies.

Way Forward

- Enact a **specific law** governing police use of facial recognition technology.
- Require **judicial oversight and prior authorisation** for mass biometric surveillance.
- Clearly regulate **private contractors' access to biometric data** and impose strict data-security obligations.
- Set rules for **data collection, retention, access, sharing and deletion**.
- Use facial recognition only when it satisfies the **constitutional test of necessity and proportionality**.

Mains Question

The use of facial recognition technology at public protests raises serious concerns regarding privacy and civil liberties. Discuss the need for a clear legal and judicial framework for its use in India. (150 Words)

KEYWORDS

Nehru Trophy Boat Race



- The Nehru Trophy Boat Race is an **annual Vallam Kali (boat race)** held at **Punnamada Lake in Alappuzha, Kerala**.
- The **race originated in 1952, following Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Alappuzha**, where he witnessed a traditional snake-boat race.
- **Nehru donated a silver trophy shaped like a snake boat**, which became known as the Nehru Trophy.
- The **main attraction is the Chundan Vallam (snake boat) race**, featuring **long boats with large teams of oarsmen rowing in synchronisation to traditional songs and drumbeats**.

- The **Nehru Trophy Boat Race has evolved into a major cultural and sporting event of Kerala**, showcasing the state's rich maritime traditions, community participation and cultural heritage.

Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS)

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** recently notified the **Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS)** with a **₹62,500-crore financial outlay** to incentivize **domestic smartphone assembly** and increase **local value addition**.
- This new initiative **builds upon and succeeds the previous Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing**, which was operational from **2020 up to the last financial year**.
- A primary objective of the scheme is to **deepen the electronics supply chain** by raising India's overall **domestic value addition in mobile manufacturing**.

Places in News

from 23% to 35-40%.

- The scheme provides a major push for **homegrown companies**. Indian brands with **local management control and intellectual property** receive a **5% baseline incentive**, an additional **3% for domestic design and R&D**, and face a lower **qualifying turnover threshold of ₹1,000 crore**.
- To encourage **local component manufacturing**, companies can earn an **additional incentive of up to 1.5%** if they source specified **key parts and sub-assemblies domestically** for at least **25% of the phones sold** in a given financial year.

National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)

- The **NCSK** was constituted on **12 August 1994** under the **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993** as a **statutory body**.
- The original Act was initially valid for **three years**, up to **31 March 1997**, and was later extended until **29 February 2004**.
- After the Act **lapsed in 2004**, the NCSK became a **non-statutory body** under the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- Since then, its **tenure has been extended periodically through Government Resolutions**.
- The NCSK works towards safeguarding the **rights and interests of Safai Karamcharis** and addressing their welfare-related concerns.
- The Union Cabinet extended the NCSK's tenure for **three years beyond 31 March 2025**, i.e. **up to 31 March 2028**.

Kryvyi Rih

- Geographically, it is a **major industrial hub** located in the **Dnipropetrovsk Oblast of south-central Ukraine**, situated at the confluence of the **Inhulets and Saksahan rivers**.
- The city is the heart of the **Kryvyi Rih Iron Basin (Kryvbas)**, which is **Ukraine's most significant iron-ore-producing region** and holds some of the **largest proven iron reserves in the world**.
- Its economy is heavily anchored in **metallurgy**, hosting **massive integrated steel plants** and both **underground and open-pit mines** that exploit the region's rich **Precambrian iron deposits**.
- Uniquely shaped by its mining industry, **Kryvyi Rih is often cited as one of the longest cities in Europe**, stretching as a **narrow, continuous urban belt for several dozen kilometers** along the underlying mineral deposits.

