

FINDER

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THE HINDU

An education system's collapse, young India's trauma

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?

- Recent **nationwide student protests (2026)** over **exam paper leaks** and the **declining education system**, along with concerns about **state response and accountability**

Key Highlights:

- Students across India have protested demanding **accountability and education reforms**, especially in exams like **NEET (National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test)**
- The **use of force by police** against protesters has raised concerns about violation of **Right to Freedom (Article 19 of Constitution)**
- There is a **decline in public spending on education**, affecting both **school and higher education sectors**
- This has led to **increased privatisation and commercialisation**, making education more expensive

- The rise of the **coaching industry** has created a parallel system, increasing financial burden on families
- Centralisation of exams** under **NTA (National Testing Agency)** has led to administrative issues and **repeated paper leaks**
- High graduate unemployment (around 40%)** reflects a **skill gap and mismatch** between education and job market needs

Implications:

- Frequent **paper leaks undermine meritocracy** and reduce trust in the examination system
- Economic inequality increases**, as only affluent students can afford costly coaching and private education
- Centralisation weakens federal principles**, reducing the role of States in education
- Quality of higher education is declining** due to outdated curriculum and governance issues
- Youth frustration and unrest** are rising due to limited job opportunities and unfair evaluation systems
- Democratic concerns emerge** when peaceful protests face suppression, affecting civil liberties

Way Forward:

- Establish **strong accountability mechanisms** by giving **NTA statutory status with parliamentary oversight**
- Increase public investment in education**



to improve accessibility, infrastructure, and quality

- Reform the **examination system** with better security, transparency, and possible decentralisation
- Ensure **affordable education** by regulating private institutions and coaching centres
- **Align education with employability** through skill development, vocational training, and focus on emerging sectors like AI
- Encourage **dialogue-based governance**, respecting students' voices and democratic rights

Mains Question:

"Frequent examination irregularities and the declining quality of public education have led to growing student unrest in India." Analyse the structural issues involved and suggest measures to ensure a fair, inclusive, and efficient education system. (15 mark, 250 words)

Warning signals for India from NATO's Ankara summit

Prelims: General 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 **NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Ankara Summit 2026** outlined new defence commitments and reflects shifting **global security dynamics amid the Ukraine war and great power rivalry**

Key Highlights:

- The 32 NATO members reaffirmed their **collective defence commitment under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty**, strengthening the **transatlantic alliance**.

Washington Treaty (1949) is the founding agreement of **NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)**, under which member countries commit to **collective defence (Article 5)**-meaning an attack on one member is considered an attack on all.

- They endorsed the **"Hague Defence Commitment"**, agreeing to raise defence spending to **5% of GDP by 2035**, a major increase from the earlier 2% norm
- NATO reiterated its **unwavering support to Ukraine**, emphasising protection of its **sovereignty and territorial integrity**
- A major focus was on building a **strong Defence Industrial Base (DIB)** to enhance **military production capacity, innovation, and readiness**
- The summit stressed **implementation**, i.e., converting political commitments into **real military capabilities** through investments and technology
- NATO's expansion, including **Finland and Sweden joining**, reflects changing **European security concerns after Russia's invasion of Ukraine (2022)**
- Growing demand for weapons has exposed **shortages in ammunition, missiles, and defence systems**, highlighting global supply constraints

Implications:

- NATO's expansion is perceived by Russia as **strategic encirclement**, contributing to **heightened geopolitical tensions**
- The **5% defence spending target** may impose a heavy **economic burden** on member countries
- Europe's continued **dependence on the U.S. for defence supplies** limits its **strategic autonomy**
- **Defence production gaps and supply chain issues** can weaken NATO's long-term preparedness
- For India, increased NATO demand may cause **delays in defence imports** (e.g., aircraft engines), affecting **defence preparedness**



Way Forward:

- NATO countries should **strengthen domestic defence industries** and improve **intra-alliance coordination**
- Invest in **advanced technologies** such as **AI (Artificial Intelligence), cyber warfare, drones, and precision systems**
- Balance **defence spending with economic sustainability** to avoid fiscal stress
- Reduce overdependence on the U.S. by promoting **European strategic autonomy**
- India should accelerate **Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliance) in defence**, expand indigenous manufacturing and R&D
- Diversify defence procurement sources to reduce **external vulnerabilities**

Mains Question:

“NATO’s evolving strategic priorities reflect a transition towards a more militarised and technology-driven security framework.” Discuss the key outcomes of the 2026 NATO Summit and evaluate their implications for global security and India. (15 mark, 250 words)

How should cities reclaim footpaths?

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.

Why in Focus?

- Following the **Supreme Court’s recognition of the right to walk on safe and obstruction-free footpaths as a fundamental right**, Bengaluru launched a **10-day ‘Safe Footpath’ drive**.
- The removal of thousands of street vendors has raised questions about compliance with the **Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014**.

Key Highlights:

- The **Supreme Court** has recognised **street vending as a legitimate occupation** protected under **Article 19 of the Constitution**, though it can be regulated in the public interest.
- The **Street Vendors Act, 2014** was enacted to prevent **arbitrary eviction of street vendors** and regulate street vending through a proper legal process.
- The Act seeks to balance two rights, the **public’s right to safe and obstruction-free footpaths** and the **street vendor’s right to livelihood**.
- It sets the process for deciding **where vendors can operate and when they can be removed or relocated**.
- The Act requires the creation of a **Town Vending Committee (TVC)**.
 - ◆ **Street vendors must constitute at least 40% of its members, with representation for women and marginalised communities.**
- The **TVC must survey street vendors**, and **eligible vendors** are issued **Certificates of Vending**.
 - ◆ **Vendors cannot be evicted or relocated until this process is completed.**

Implications:

- Bengaluru’s drive came under scrutiny because vendors were removed before the required mechanism under the **Street Vendors Act** was fully in place.
- The Act requires the **TVC to identify vending and no-vending zones**, but Bengaluru reportedly does not have such a mechanism in place.
- Clearing footpaths for pedestrians should not lead to **arbitrary eviction** or bypass the legal safeguards protecting the **livelihoods of street vendors**.

Way Forward:

- Complete the **survey of street vendors** and issue **Certificates of Vending** as required by law.
- Properly identify **vending and no-vending**



zones through the **Town Vending Committee**.

- Ensure that any **removal or relocation** of vendors follows the process laid down in the **Street Vendors Act, 2014**.
- Maintain a balance between **pedestrians' right to safe footpaths** and **street vendors' right to livelihood**.

The right to protest and the limits of police power

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

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

Mains: General Studies 2

Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

Why in Focus?

- A protest march in **Delhi on July 20** led to clashes between protesters and police.
- The use of **tear gas and lathi charges** raised questions about the **right to protest** and the **use of force by police**.

Key Highlights:

- **Article 19(1)(b)** of the Constitution gives citizens the **right to assemble peacefully**.
- However, **Article 19(3)** allows the government to impose **reasonable restrictions** for **public order** and the **sovereignty and integrity of India**.
- Under the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)**, a gathering of **five or more people** becomes an **unlawful assembly** only when its common purpose involves certain unlawful acts.
 - ◆ **Examples include using criminal force or resisting the execution of law.**
- Under the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)**, authorities can order a gathering that is **unlawful or threatens public peace** to disperse and may use **force if it refuses**.
- As far as practicable, police should first use **persuasion, advice, and warning**. If force is

necessary, only the **minimum force required** should be used.

- The **UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms** state that police force must be **lawful, necessary, and proportionate**.

Implications:

- The main challenge is to balance the **right to peaceful protest** with the need to maintain **public order**.
- **Excessive police force** can violate **fundamental rights** and reduce **public trust in the police**.
- Police officers without visible **identification** during crowd control can make it difficult to ensure **accountability**.
- The **Supreme Court** has held that protests can be **regulated**, but the **right to protest cannot be completely denied**.
 - ◆ **At the same time, protesters cannot occupy public spaces indefinitely.**

Way Forward:

- Police should use force only when **necessary** and use only the **minimum force required**.
- The **right to peaceful protest** should be protected while maintaining **public order**.
- Police action during protests should have greater **transparency and accountability**.

Mains Question:

The right to peaceful protest is an important part of democracy, but it is not absolute. Discuss. (250 Words)

KEYWORDS

PARIVESH portal

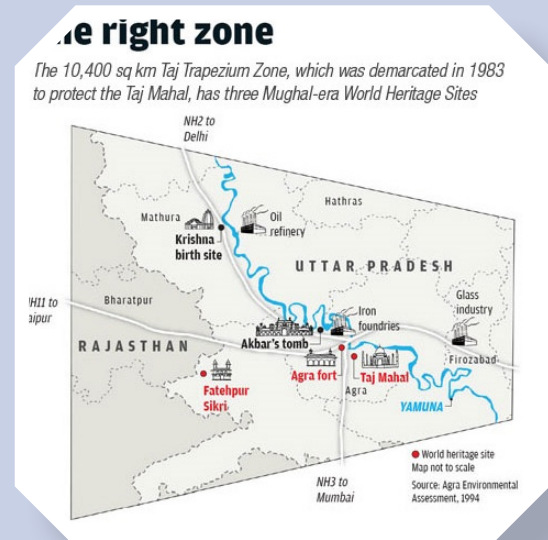
- It was recently in the news during the **Aripa land struggle in Kerala**, where the Forest Department clarified that **title deeds allocated for forest land are invalid** unless applied for and processed through the **PARIVESH portal** under the **Forest Conservation Act, 1980**.
- PARIVESH** stands for “**Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous, and Environmental Single-window Hub**”, launched by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** with technical support from the **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**.
- It serves as a **unified single-window digital platform** for project proponents to **submit, track, and manage proposals** seeking four types of approvals: **Environmental, Forest, Wildlife, and Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearances**.
- The upgraded system, **PARIVESH 2.0**, integrates **Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping** and **advanced data analytics** to **automate workflows**, evaluate **baseline environmental data**, and provide **real-time alerts** to authorities, thereby reducing delays.
- The portal embodies the **Digital India vision** of “**Minimum Government, Maximum Governance**” by **reducing clearance timelines** and ensuring **greater transparency** in **cost-benefit analysis** and **biodiversity assessments** of development projects.

On-Device AI

- On-device AI** refers to running **machine learning and generative AI models directly on a device’s local hardware**, rather than relying on remote cloud servers.
- It mainly uses specialised hardware called **Neural Processing Units (NPUs)**, which are designed to efficiently process **AI and neural network tasks**.

- It enables features such as **real-time language translation, computational photography, generative photo editing, and system optimization**.
- Its major benefits include **faster response, better privacy, and offline functionality**, as sensitive data can be processed locally without leaving the device.
- However, on-device AI has **limited computing power** compared to cloud-based AI. Therefore, a **hybrid model** is emerging, where sensitive and time-critical tasks are handled on-device, while complex tasks are processed in the **cloud**.

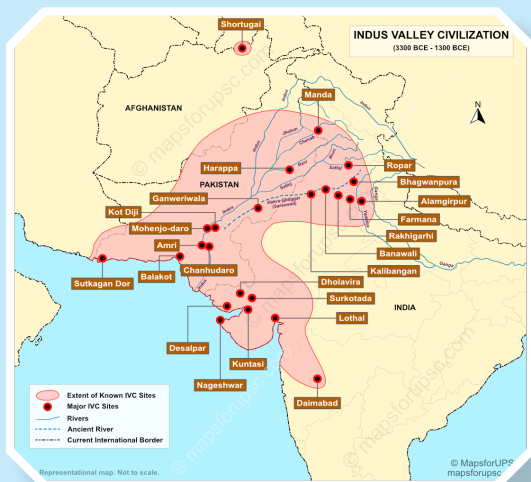
Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ)



- The **Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ)** is a **10,400 sq. km area** around the **Taj Mahal**, created to protect the monument from **environmental pollution**.
- It is called the **Taj Trapezium Zone** because the area around the Taj Mahal is **trapezoid-shaped**.
- In **1996**, the **Supreme Court** banned the use of **coal and coke** by industries within the TTZ.
- Industries were required to **switch to natural gas, relocate outside the TTZ, or shut down**.
- The TTZ includes three **World Heritage Sites: the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, and Fatehpur Sikri**.

Places in News

Lothal



- **Lothal** was recently in the news because **India announced at the East Asia Summit (EAS)** that it will host the **EAS Maritime Heritage Festival** in this ancient port city.
- It is an important site of the **Indus Valley Civilization**, located in **Gujarat (near Gulf of Khambhat)** and excavated by **S.R. Rao (1954-63)**.
- Lothal is famous for having one of the **world's earliest known dockyards**, indicating **advanced maritime trade and engineering skills**.
- Evidence of **trade with Mesopotamia** has been found (**seals, beads, weights**), showing it was a **major trading port**.
- The site shows **urban planning features** like **grid-pattern streets, drainage system, warehouse**, and a **bead-making industry**, highlighting **economic specialization**.

Yanbu

- **Yanbu** is currently in the news because **Houthi attacks on Red Sea oil tankers** disrupted Saudi Arabia's strategy to use this port as an **alternative route bypassing the Strait of Hormuz**.
- Located on the **Red Sea coast (western Saudi Arabia)**, it serves as a **major industrial hub and oil export terminal**.

- It forms the western terminal of the **1,200 km long East-West Crude Oil Pipeline (Petroline)**, which transports **crude oil from eastern oilfields to the west coast**.
- It serves as a critical alternative to the **Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf route**, enabling oil shipment via the **Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait** to **Asian importers like India**.
- This alternative route provides **strategic flexibility to Saudi Arabia**, ensuring **continuity of global energy supply chains** during **geopolitical tensions or blockades**.

