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THE HINDU

Beyond compliance, India's road to cleaner mobility

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

Mains: General studies 3

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

Why in Focus?

- India is planning new **CAFE III (Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency - rules to improve vehicle fuel efficiency)** norms.
- This is important because India depends heavily on **imported crude oil** and is shifting toward **EVs (Electric Vehicles)**.

Key Highlights:

- CAFE norms fix **average fuel efficiency targets** for all vehicles sold by a company, not each car's efficiency.
- These rules started in the **USA (1975)** to reduce oil use and later helped cut **GHG (Greenhouse Gas) emissions**.
- India now plans to reduce emissions from **113 gCO₂/km to 77 gCO₂/km by 2031-32**.
- Globally, countries are moving toward EVs; for example, **China uses a Dual Credit System** combining fuel efficiency and EV targets.
- EV adoption is still low in India (**around 4%**) compared to **China (about 55%)** and **EU (about 27%)**.

- India's draft rules give flexibility through:

- » **E20 fuel (20% ethanol blending)** benefits
- » **Super credits** for EVs and hybrids
- » **Credit trading via BEE (Bureau of Energy Efficiency)**- a system where companies that exceed energy or fuel efficiency targets earn extra credits, which they can sell to other companies that are unable to meet their targets

Implications:

- Too much flexibility may **weaken the impact** of the policy.
- Companies might **buy credits instead of improving technology**.
- Incentives for ethanol are unclear beyond **E20**, creating **policy confusion**.
- Weak penalties** reduce pressure on companies to comply seriously.
- Focus on hybrids may **slow full EV transition**.
- Continued oil dependence means **risk from global price shocks and inflation**.

Way Forward:

- Make rules **stricter and reduce excessive flexibility**.
- Introduce a **dual system (fuel efficiency + EV targets)** like China.
- Give **clear long-term policy** on fuels like ethanol, CNG (Compressed Natural Gas), hydrogen.



- Increase **penalties for non-compliance**.
- Invest in **EV ecosystem** (charging stations, batteries, local manufacturing).
- Link the policy with **energy security and climate goals (Glasgow commitments)**.

Mains Question:

“CAFE norms can shape not just fuel efficiency but also India’s energy security and EV transition.” Discuss in the context of CAFE III. (15 mark, 250 words)

AI’s next test — reaching India’s informal women worker

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?

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is emerging as a key driver of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, highlighting the need for **inclusive and gender-responsive AI** that benefits women in informal employment.

Key Highlights

- **About 82%** of working women in India are employed in the **informal sector** (ILO, 2018), making inclusive AI adoption crucial.
- **India’s AI Governance Guidelines (2025)** emphasise fairness and equity to promote responsible AI.
- AI can improve livelihoods through **precision agriculture, crop advisory, market access, healthcare, logistics, and financial services**.
- A 2024 Farmer Chat study across **12 States** found that **61% of women** using the **AI-based agricultural advisory platform** reported improved quality of life within 45 days.
- India has launched initiatives such as the **IndiaAI Mission, BHASHINI**, and the **AI Governance Guidelines** to promote responsible and inclusive AI.

Implications

- Gender bias in AI systems due to **biased data and algorithms**.
- Low **digital literacy**, language barriers, and limited access to digital infrastructure among women in the informal sector.
- Rising **technology-facilitated gender-based violence**, including deepfakes and online abuse.
- **Lack of transparency and explainability** in AI-based decisions affecting employment, credit, and welfare

Way Forward

- Conduct **gender impact assessments** for AI systems with significant social and economic impacts.
- Adopt **Gender Responsive Budgeting** for AI investments to ensure women benefit and barriers such as **access, language, safety, and digital capability** are addressed.
- Expand **AI literacy and digital skills** through **Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana and Skill India** to improve women’s digital participation.
- Strengthen safeguards against **AI-enabled cyber abuse**, including **deepfakes, online harassment, and non-consensual AI-generated content**, with effective grievance redressal.
- Promote **inclusive, transparent, and multilingual AI** to ensure that productivity gains benefit all sections of society.

Mains Question

“Artificial Intelligence can accelerate inclusive development only if it is designed and governed equitably.” Discuss the importance of gender-responsive AI in achieving inclusive growth and Viksit Bharat 2047. (250 Words)

The next chapter for Education Ministry

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?

- With a change in leadership in the **Ministry of Education**, attention has shifted to how effectively **NEP 2020 (National Education Policy 2020)** reforms are being implemented.
- Many initiatives are still incomplete and need continuity.

Key Highlights:

- NEP 2020 introduced major reforms focusing on **flexible learning, multidisciplinary education, and skill development**.
- The **NIPUN Bharat (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy)** mission aims to ensure **foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN)** by Grade 3 by 2026-27, but results remain mixed.
- While **ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) 2024** shows improvement in numeracy, reading ability is still weak among students.
- The **NPST (National Professional Standards for Teachers)** seeks to improve teaching quality through performance-based evaluation, but it is yet to be fully implemented.
- In higher education, reforms like **flexible degrees and credit transfer under the National Credit Framework** are in place, but universities are slow to adopt them.
- Initiatives such as **SWAYAM Plus** and **AI (Artificial Intelligence) for All** promote skill-based learning, but awareness and participation remain limited.
- The **three-language policy (where students learn three languages, with at least two Indian languages to promote multilingualism and national integration)** has created disagreements between the Centre and some States, raising concerns over implementation.

Implications:

- There is a clear gap between **policy design and ground-level implementation**, especially in improving learning outcomes.

- Lack of awareness and motivation among teachers affects the success of reforms like NPST.
- **State universities face financial and institutional constraints**, limiting their ability to adopt changes.
- Concerns of **centralisation** arise when funding is linked to policy compliance, affecting federal relations.
- Resistance to change among institutions slows down reforms like multidisciplinary education.
- Balancing the promotion of **Indian languages** with the need for **English and global skills** remains a challenge.

Way Forward:

- Focus on **effective implementation with regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms**.
- Provide **adequate funding and institutional support** to State universities.
- Strengthen **teacher training and awareness programmes** to improve participation in reforms.
- Ensure **cooperative federalism** by involving States in decision-making.
- Promote a **balanced language policy** that supports both Indian and global languages.
- Expand **digital learning and skill-based platforms** to improve employability.

Mains Question:

“NEP 2020 represents a transformative vision, but its success depends on effective implementation.” Discuss with suitable examples. (250 words)

What is India's policy on urea production?

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 3

Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country, - different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.



Why in Focus?

- Concerns over fertilizer shortages during the kharif season, geopolitical uncertainty in West Asia, rising demand and excessive chemical fertilizer use have highlighted India's fertilizer security challenges.
- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** approved the **National Investment Policy for Urea (NIPU)-2026** to boost domestic urea production and reduce import dependence.

Urea is a nitrogen-rich chemical fertilizer containing about 46% nitrogen, widely used to promote plant growth and increase crop yields. In India, it is the most widely consumed nitrogenous fertilizer and is heavily subsidised by the government.

Key Highlights

- NIPU-2026 seeks to encourage fresh investment in new gas-based urea manufacturing units, reducing dependence on imports.
- It separates fixed and variable costs and provides a Return on Equity of 12%-16%.
- India's urea investment policy began in 2012. Six new urea units were established under the earlier policy.
- India has **33 operational urea units with a capacity of 269.42 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT)**.
- Total fertilizer subsidy was ₹2.17 lakh crore in 2025-26**, including ₹1.42 lakh crore for urea.
- Subsidised fertilizers are sold through Point-of-Sale devices** under the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system.

In the fertiliser sector, a **Point of Sale (PoS) device** is an electronic device installed at fertiliser retail shops to record the sale of subsidised fertilisers to farmers.

- Integrated Nutrient Management (INM)** promotes the combined use of chemical fertilizers, organic sources and biological inputs.

Implications

- Import dependence exposes India to global supply disruptions and price volatility.

- High fertilizer subsidies** impose a significant fiscal burden.
- Excessive urea use contributes to nutrient imbalance**, soil degradation and environmental damage.
- Low urea prices** encourage imbalanced NPK use.

NPK refers to the three primary macronutrients essential for plant growth: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K) which are supplied through fertilizers to maintain soil fertility and improve crop growth and productivity.

Nano Urea: A liquid fertilizer containing nitrogen in very small particles, designed to provide nitrogen to plants more efficiently and reduce the use of conventional urea.

- Nano Urea has faced limited adoption** and concerns over its efficacy.

Way Forward

- Increase domestic urea production** and reduce import dependence.
- Rationalise fertilizer subsidies** while protecting small and marginal farmers.
- Promote Integrated Nutrient Management** and balanced fertilizer use.
- Strengthen Soil Health Cards** and need-based fertilizer application.
- Improve nutrient-use efficiency** through appropriate technologies.
- Diversify fertilizer and feedstock sources** to strengthen supply security.
- Ensure **independent scientific evaluation of Nano Urea** and other alternatives.

Mains Question

"India's fertilizer security requires balancing self-reliance in urea production with fiscal and environmental sustainability. Discuss." (250 Words)



KEYWORDS

Bharat-VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources)

- **Bharat-VISTAAR** is a **nationwide, AI-powered, voice-first, multilingual Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** platform for farmers.
- It provides **real-time, location-specific, and personalised agricultural advisories** along with access to various agricultural support services.
- The platform integrates data from **government digital platforms, ICAR, and other scientific sources.**
- It offers information on **crop management, weather, market prices, pest and disease alerts, and soil health.**
- **Phase I** was launched on **17 February 2026** and is available in **Hindi and English** through multiple channels.

RELOPDUO

- RELOPDUO is India's first LAG-3-based dual immunotherapy, used for treating unresectable or metastatic melanoma, a serious form of skin cancer.
- LAG-3 (Lymphocyte Activation Gene-3) is an **immune checkpoint protein found mainly on activated T-cells.** It can suppress T-cell activity and thereby limit the immune system's attack on cancer cells.
- **T-cells are a type of white blood cell** that form an important part of our immune system. They help the body identify and destroy harmful cells, including infected cells and some cancer cells.
- It **combines two medicines, Relatlimab and Nivolumab,** to help the immune system fight cancer.
- It **works by removing barriers that prevent immune cells** from effectively attacking cancer cells.

Nuzolvence (zoliflodacin)

- Nuzolvence (zoliflodacin) is a **new oral antibiotic developed to treat uncomplicated gonorrhoea.**

- Gonorrhoea is a **sexually transmitted infection (STI)** caused by the bacterium **Neisseria gonorrhoeae.**
- Zoliflodacin belongs to a **new class of antibiotics** and works differently from existing treatments.
- Its **development is significant because Neisseria gonorrhoeae has developed increasing antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** to several existing antibiotics.
- The **United States Food and Drug Administration** approved zoliflodacin in 2025, making it important in the global fight against drug-resistant gonorrhoea.

Soil Health Card Scheme (SHCS)

- The Soil Health Card Scheme (SHCS) was launched in 2015 under the **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, to improve soil health and promote balanced use of fertilizers.**
- Soil Health Cards are **issued to farmers every three years, providing information on the nutrient status of their soil** (soil samples for testing are typically collected twice a year after the Kharif and Rabi harvests).
- The **Soil Health Card assesses soil based on 12 parameters:** N, P, K (macronutrients); sulphur, zinc, boron, iron, manganese, copper ; and pH, electrical conductivity, and organic carbon.
- Based on soil-test results, **the card provides crop-specific recommendations on fertilizers and soil amendments** to improve soil fertility and nutrient-use efficiency.
- The scheme is implemented by the Agriculture Departments of States/UTs, with soil samples tested through designated soil-testing laboratories.
- **From 2022-23, SHCS operates as the "Soil Health & Fertility" component under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY),** rather than as a standalone centrally sponsored scheme.

Mount Olympus (Greece)



- **Mount Olympus**, located in **northern Greece**, is the **highest mountain** in the country.
- Its **microclimate**, created by its **proximity to the sea** and **high elevation**, supports rich **climatic and vegetation diversity**.
- In **Greek mythology**, it is believed to be the home of the **Twelve Olympian Gods**, led by **Zeus**, along with the **Muses and Graces**.
- Through the works of **Hesiod and Homer**, Mount Olympus became a lasting symbol of **Greek civilization**.
- It is known for **glacial cirques, limestone cliffs, karst sinkholes, sharp ridges, and deep gorges**.
- **UNESCO** inscribed Mount Olympus as a **World Heritage Site in 2026** as a **mixed property** for its cultural and natural significance.

Mount Hermon

- **Mount Hermon** has recently been in the news due to the **escalating West Asia conflict**, serving as a **strategic flashpoint** where **Israel has expanded military operations** and conducted **cross-border activities into southern Lebanon**.
- It is a **snowcapped mountain cluster** forming the **southern end of the Anti-**

Lebanon mountain range, with its **primary summit located along the Syria-Lebanon border**.

- Rising to an elevation of **2,814 meters**, it is the **highest point in Syria**, the **Israeli-occupied Golan Heights**, and the **highest elevation along the eastern Mediterranean coast**.
- It is a **highly critical geostrategic location** as it acts as a **tri-junction of Lebanon, Syria, and the Golan Heights**, providing an **unmatched vantage point for military surveillance**.
- Hydrologically significant, **its** porous limestone structure **absorbs** melting snow, **which feeds** major springs **that form the** primary sources of the **Jordan River**.

