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MCQs

THE HINDU

Five years on, Taliban are still at a fork in the road

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 2

Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Why in Focus?

- The editorial assesses five years of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, highlighting improved security and tentative economic recovery alongside restrictions on women, weak political inclusivity, humanitarian distress and continued international isolation.

Key Highlights

- Afghanistan has achieved relative stability and security after decades of conflict, while the Taliban has restricted the use of its territory for attacks against other countries.
- Around 5.7 million refugees have returned from Pakistan and Iran, adding pressure to Afghanistan's fragile economy.
- Taliban policies restricting girls' education, women's participation, music and social freedoms remain major concerns.
- Afghanistan's economy showed modest recovery, with 4.3% growth in 2025, stable currency and low inflation, but poverty,

unemployment and food insecurity remain widespread.

India-Afghanistan Relations

- India follows a policy of substantive engagement without formal diplomatic recognition of the Taliban regime.
- India has maintained high-level engagement, including visits by Afghan Ministers, while providing humanitarian assistance.
- Despite Pakistan denying overland transit, India-Afghanistan trade remains around \$1 billion annually, with India being a major market for Afghan exports.
- India's continued engagement can help promote regional stability, economic connectivity and Afghanistan's development.

Implications

- Afghanistan's stability is important for regional security and connectivity in South Asia.
- Continued restrictions on women and minorities could hinder Afghanistan's human development and international normalisation.
- Economic fragility and humanitarian distress may increase dependence on external assistance and create conditions for instability.
- Growing engagement by regional powers creates opportunities for India but also intensifies geopolitical competition.



Way Forward

- **Encourage the Taliban to restore women's education, employment** and meaningful political participation.
- **India should maintain calibrated engagement** while working through multilateral and regional platforms.
- A **multilateral donors' conference could provide economic assistance while creating incentives** for political and social reforms.

Mains Question

"Afghanistan under Taliban rule presents a paradox of relative stability alongside socio-economic and governance challenges. Examine the implications for regional security and discuss how India can contribute to Afghanistan's stabilisation and normalisation." (250 Words)

A shared disaster, beyond borders and geopolitics

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 3

Disaster and disaster management

Why in Focus?

- A massive **glacial collapse near the Nepal-China border** triggered devastating flash floods across **Nepal**.
- The disaster also affected **China and India**, highlighting the need for stronger **cross-border disaster cooperation**.

Key Highlights

- What initially appeared to be a **4.4-magnitude earthquake** was later identified as a **glacial collapse and landslide**, equivalent to a **5.2-magnitude seismic event**.
- The collapse triggered devastating **flash floods**, causing extensive loss of life and destruction of villages and infrastructure in **Nepal**.
- The disaster severely damaged **bridges and hydropower infrastructure**, wiping out

around **475 MW of generating capacity** from Nepal's electricity grid.

- The disaster also affected **China**, damaging the **Gyirong Port**, roads, power supplies and communication links near the Nepal border.
- **Indiannationals**, including tourists and pilgrims travelling towards **Kailash Mansarovar**, were reported missing or untraced.
- Floodwaters flowing downstream from Nepal raised serious concerns in **Bihar and Uttar Pradesh**, leading to evacuations and emergency deployments.
- ◆ **Floodwaters reached the Gandak, Kosi and Ganga rivers**, putting **Bihar on maximum alert**.
- India deployed the **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** and launched a **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** operation, sending emergency supplies to Nepal.
- The disaster demonstrates that **glacial and flood-related hazards cross political borders**, affecting all three countries.

Implications

- Increasingly unpredictable **Himalayan disasters** could threaten lives, infrastructure and economic activity across **Nepal, India, and China**.
- Damage to **hydropower, roads, and trade infrastructure** could create significant economic and connectivity disruptions.
- Downstream Indian States remain highly vulnerable to **cross-border floods originating in Nepal**.
- The disaster highlights the limitations of addressing **transboundary environmental risks through national responses alone**.
- Recurring Himalayan disasters could make **disaster preparedness and climate resilience** an important area for regional cooperation.
- Such disasters could create opportunities for **functional cooperation** among countries despite wider geopolitical tensions.

Way Forward

- Establish stronger **India-Nepal-China**

mechanisms for disaster information-sharing and early warning.

- Develop joint systems for monitoring **glacial lakes, landslides and other Himalayan hazards**.
- Strengthen **cross-border flood forecasting and emergency response coordination**.
- Improve the climate resilience of **hydropower projects, roads, bridges and communication infrastructure** in vulnerable Himalayan regions.
- Create dedicated channels for **humanitarian and disaster cooperation**, insulated from broader geopolitical disputes.
- Promote regular **joint disaster preparedness exercises and capacity-building** among the three countries.

Mains Question

Q. Transboundary Himalayan disasters highlight the need to move beyond geopolitical competition towards regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction. Discuss with reference to India, Nepal and China. (250 words)

Unkind cuts: On the Telangana and Karnataka electoral rolls

Prelims: General Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance.

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 **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has raised concerns over large-scale voter deletions and possible **disenfranchisement** in States such as Telangana and Karnataka.

Key Highlights

- Nearly **22% of electors in Telangana** and **19.5% in Karnataka** have reportedly been deleted from the electoral rolls.

- Deletions are especially high in cities. **Five Bengaluru constituencies** lost more than half their electors, while **9 of 15 Hyderabad constituencies** saw deletions above 40%.
- The scale of deletions is questioned because both States have significant **in-migration**. Internal migration within a State should generally lead to relocation rather than deletion.
- The process places significant responsibility on voters to identify and challenge wrongful deletions, but **low voter awareness** may limit objections.
- Concerns have also emerged over **ECI transparency**, including limited publication of elector-to-population data and difficulties in accessing deletion lists.
- In **West Bengal**, over **90% of decided appeals** reportedly favoured restoration of voters, raising concerns about wrongful deletions.

Implications

- Wrongful deletion can lead to **disenfranchisement** (deprivation of the right to vote) and deny eligible citizens their right to vote.
- Migrants, tenants and urban populations may be particularly vulnerable to exclusion.
- Limited access to data creates a **transparency and accountability deficit**.
- Large numbers of appeals can put pressure on **electoral grievance-redressal mechanisms**.
- Repeated errors can weaken **public trust in the ECI** and the electoral process.

Way Forward

- Ensure **transparent and publicly verifiable** criteria for deletion.
- Provide voters with **notice and adequate opportunity to object** before deletion.
- Publish detailed, booth-level data to enable independent verification.
- Strengthen **simple and time-bound appeal mechanisms** for restoring wrongly deleted names.
- Improve **voter awareness** about electoral-roll verification.



Mains Question

Large-scale voter deletions during Special Intensive Revision can create a conflict between electoral-roll accuracy and universal adult franchise. Discuss the concerns and suggest measures to prevent disenfranchisement. (15 marks, 250 words)

KEYWORDS

Javelin Missile

- The **Javelin** is an **American-made, man-portable anti-tank guided missile (ATGM)** developed jointly by Raytheon and Lockheed Martin.
- It uses **fire-and-forget technology with an imaging-infrared seeker**, allowing the operator to take cover after launch.
- The **missile can be employed in top-attack as well as direct-attack modes** and uses a tandem High-Explosive Anti-Tank warhead to defeat explosive reactive armour.
- The **standard Javelin has an effective range of around 2.5 km**, while newer variants can reportedly reach up to 4 km.
- **India has signed a deal with the US to procure Javelin anti-tank guided missile systems** for the Indian Army, strengthening bilateral defence cooperation.

US Open

- The US Open is **one of the four Grand Slam tennis tournaments** and is held annually in New York.
- The **other three Grand Slam tournaments** are the Australian Open, French Open (Roland-Garros), and Wimbledon.
- The **US Open is traditionally the final Grand Slam tournament** of the calendar year.
- It is **played on hard courts** at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York.
- The **tournament is organised by the United States Tennis Association (USTA)** and features men's and women's singles, doubles and mixed doubles.

PARIVARTAN scheme

- By late August 2026, the Centre announced that **over 1,450 beneficiaries** had registered on the newly launched **PARIVARTAN portal**, prompting the government to accelerate its target to replace **over 2 lakh old trucks and buses in Delhi-NCR within one year**, instead of the original two-year timeline.
- **PARIVARTAN (Programme for Accelerated Renewal and Incentivization of Vehicle Assets for Reducing Transport Air Pollution and Network Emissions)** aims to reduce **vehicular pollution in Delhi-NCR** by voluntarily phasing out commercial vehicles complying with **BS-IV or older norms** and replacing them with cleaner **BS-VI or electric vehicles**.
- It is funded by the **National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB)** and implemented by the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)**.
- Beneficiaries receive several incentives, including **100% motor vehicle tax waiver for up to 10 years**, **registration fee waiver**, **5% interest subvention** on vehicle loans, a **minimum 8% manufacturer discount**, and either **fuel vouchers for BS-VI vehicles** or a **one-time subsidy for EVs**.
- To ensure permanent removal of polluting vehicles, **BS-III and older vehicles must be scrapped at Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs)**. Eligible **BS-IV vehicles** can either be scrapped or sold outside the NCR in designated **non-NCAP cities**.

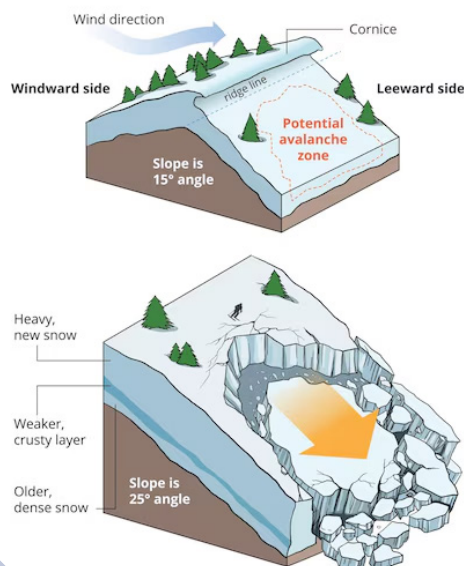
Avalanches

- An **avalanche** is a rapid movement of **snow down a mountain or slope**.

- Avalanches are more common during **winter**, especially from **December to April in the Northern Hemisphere**.
- **Loose snow avalanches** begin at a **single point** when loose snow starts moving downhill.
- **Slab avalanches** occur when a large, connected layer of snow breaks away from the snowpack and slides downhill.
- **Gliding avalanches** occur when the **entire snow cover** slides over a smooth surface such as **grass or rock**.
- **Powder avalanches** create a large cloud of snow and can reach speeds of up to **300 km/h**.
- **Wet-snow avalanches** occur when **melting snow or rainwater** weakens the bonds between snow layers.
- Both **loose snow and slab avalanches** can consist of **wet snow**.

- The **NDRF** was initially established in **2006** with **8 battalions** and has since expanded to **16 battalions**.
- It is a specialised force for responding to **natural and man-made disasters**.
- The **16 battalions** are drawn from the **CAPFs**, including **BSF, CISF, CRPF, ITBP, SSB and Assam Rifles**.
- Each battalion has **18 specialised search-and-rescue teams**, with each team comprising **47 personnel**.
- Each battalion has a total strength of **1,149 personnel**, including **engineers, technicians, electricians, canine units and medical/paramedic personnel**.
- The NDRF is also trained to handle **Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) emergencies**, in addition to conventional disaster-response operations.

AVALANCHE ANATOMY



National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)

- The **Disaster Management Act, 2005** provided for the establishment of the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** and the **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)**.