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MCQs

THE HINDU

The politics of calling minds 'Naxal'

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 use of the term “**dimaagi Naxal**” has sparked debate over how India should balance **national security with freedom of thought, expression and democratic dissent**.

Key Highlights

- The Prime Minister stated that the threat from **armed Naxalism/Maoism** had been eliminated but warned against individuals he described as “dimaagi Naxals”.
- The term refers broadly to people whose **ideas or views are considered harmful to national interests**, raising concerns about the criminalisation of thoughts and political dissent.
- Unlike armed Naxalism, the term does not clearly identify a specific organisation, ideology or unlawful activity, creating concerns about its **vague and broad interpretation**.
- The issue is closely linked to **Article 19(1)(a)**, which guarantees freedom of speech and expression, subject to reasonable restrictions

under **Article 19(2)**.

- The debate is particularly important in universities and civil society, where **student protests, academic criticism and political disagreement** are part of democratic participation.
- The proposal for a larger **civil defence volunteer force** has also raised questions about its role. India already has the **Civil Defence Act, 1968** and **Home Guards** for civilian assistance during emergencies.

The **Civil Defence Act, 1968** provides the legal framework for protecting civilians and essential infrastructure during **war, emergencies, disasters and other threats**. It enables the government to organise and train civilians for **non-combat roles** such as rescue, relief and emergency response.

Implications

- Vague labelling** can make it difficult to distinguish between genuine security threats and legitimate political criticism.
- The chilling effect on free speech** may discourage students, academics, journalists and citizens from expressing critical views.
- National security vs civil liberties** requires a careful balance so that security laws are not used against peaceful dissent.
- Social polarisation** may increase when political opponents are portrayed as enemies of the nation.
- Civilian security groups without proper **training, supervision and accountability** may



create risks of politicisation or vigilantism.

Way Forward

- Clearly distinguish between **peaceful dissent, radical ideas and actual involvement in violence or unlawful activities**.
- Use existing laws against genuine threats while ensuring **due process and judicial oversight**.
- Protect **freedom of speech and academic freedom** as essential elements of a democratic society.
- Ensure that civil defence volunteers function under proper **legal, professional and non-partisan supervision**.
- Promote **constitutional values, critical thinking and democratic dialogue** to address extremist ideas without criminalising legitimate disagreement.

Mains Question

“Balancing national security with freedom of expression is essential for a healthy democracy.” Discuss in the context of the debate over ‘dimaagi Naxals’ in India. (15 marks, 250 words)

Nepal's agony, the Himalayan warning to India

Prelims: General Studies Paper 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 3

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Why in Focus?

- Recent events in Nepal have highlighted the seismic, geological and **glacial risks of the Himalayas, raising concerns about India's preparedness for earthquakes, landslides and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)**.

A **Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF)** is a sudden and often catastrophic release of water from a glacial lake, usually caused by the failure of a moraine or ice dam, leading to rapid downstream flooding.

Key Highlights

- The **Himalayas form one interconnected geological system, so disasters in one part** can have consequences across national borders.
- The **region faces multiple hazards, including earthquakes, landslides, rockfalls, glacial activity** and GLOFs.
- Past events such as the 1934 Nepal–Bihar earthquake and 1950 Assam earthquake** demonstrate the potentially devastating impact of Himalayan earthquakes.
- Climate change and global warming are increasing concerns about the formation and instability of glacial lakes** and the risk of GLOFs.
- Disaster preparedness must move beyond scientific studies and ensure that communities in vulnerable areas** are informed, trained and equipped to respond.
- A **major earthquake or GLOF in the Himalayas could affect northern India through floods, landslides, debris flows** and river disruptions.
- China's proposed Medog hydropower project near the Brahmaputra and the Paizhen Fault raises concerns about possible downstream impacts** in India's Northeast during a major earthquake.

Paizhen Fault is an active tectonic fault/fracture in Tibet, located beneath the planned site of the Medog Hydropower Station on the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) River. It is associated with the ongoing collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates in the eastern Himalayas.

Implications

- High-risk infrastructure such as dams, hydropower projects and nuclear reactors** requires urgent safety assessment.
- Excessive concentration of people and infrastructure in high-risk Himalayan zones** increases disaster vulnerability.
- Development projects must incorporate seismic and climate-risk assessments** before approval.

Way Forward

- Strengthen early-warning systems** for



earthquakes, GLOFs, landslides and floods.

- **Conduct regular safety audits of dams, reactors and other critical infrastructure** in hazard-prone areas.
- **Promote risk-informed urban planning and gradually reduce human concentration** in extremely vulnerable zones.
- **Improve public awareness, community preparedness** and disaster-response capacity.
- **Adopt a transboundary Himalayan disaster-management framework based on scientific cooperation** and real-time data sharing.

Mains Question

“The Himalayan region is a shared ecological and geological system whose disasters transcend political boundaries. Discuss the major disaster risks facing the Himalayas and suggest measures to strengthen India’s preparedness and resilience.” (250 Words)

OBC creamy layer and the income test

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

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 **Supreme Court** is considering the Centre’s request for clarification on its **March 11, 2026 judgment** concerning the **OBC creamy layer income test**.
- The dispute centres on whether the **salary income of parents working in PSUs or the private sector** can be used to classify an OBC candidate as part of the **creamy layer**.

Key Highlights

- The **case involved at least 50 OBC candidates** who appeared for the **Civil Services Examination since 2015** and were denied OBC-reserved posts after being classified as creamy layer based on their parents’ salary

income.

- The **creamy layer principle**, evolved through the **Indra Sawhney judgment (1992)**, excludes relatively advanced sections of OBCs from reservation benefits.
- Under the **1993 Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) Office Memorandum**, salary and agricultural income were generally **excluded from the income/wealth test** used to identify the creamy layer.
- However, a **2004 DoPT clarification** was interpreted to include salary income for candidates whose parents worked in certain **PSUs or private employment**.
- This meant that candidates whose parents worked outside government service could be excluded based on **salary income**, while salary was not counted in the same way for children of government employees.
- The Supreme Court held that this unequal treatment amounted to **“hostile discrimination”** between similarly placed OBC candidates.
- The Court clarified that the **income/wealth test is a residual filter** and directed the Centre to provide relief to affected candidates through **supernumerary posts**.
 - ◆ A **supernumerary post** is a temporary additional post created to accommodate an officer until a regular post becomes available.
- The Centre now argues that retrospective implementation could create problems involving **appointments, seniority, and service allocation**, with similar claims emerging from other candidates.

Implications

- The ruling could ensure greater **equality in applying creamy layer criteria** to OBC candidates.
- Retrospective implementation could disrupt **settled appointments and seniority** in government services.
- The case exposes ambiguities in the **DoPT’s interpretation of the income/wealth test**.
- The final clarification could significantly influence the future framework for determining the **OBC non-creamy layer status**.



Way Forward

- Provide a **clear and uniform interpretation** of the creamy layer income/wealth test.
- Clearly define how candidates whose parents work in **PSUs and private employment** should be assessed.
- Develop a practical mechanism to address **past claims and service-related disputes**.
- Ensure that future creamy layer rules balance **administrative feasibility with equal treatment of similarly placed candidates**.

Mains Question

Q. The creamy layer principle seeks to ensure that reservation benefits reach the genuinely disadvantaged sections among Other Backward Classes. Examine the challenges involved in applying this principle while ensuring equality among similarly placed candidates. (250 word)

Can Meta's safety controls make Facebook and Instagram less addictive for teens?

Prelims : General Studies Paper I

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies 3

Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

Why in Focus?

- On **August 26**, Meta agreed to an approximately **\$18 billion settlement** with dozens of U.S. states and announced stricter **teen safety controls** for Facebook and Instagram.
- The lawsuit alleged that Meta's platforms **harmed children** and illegally collected their **personal data**.

Key Highlights

- The settlement introduces a **default two-hour daily limit** on Facebook and Instagram

for teens, which can be disabled only with **parental permission**.

- **Night Mode** will restrict access between **12 AM and 6 AM**, while **School Mode** will mute notifications during school hours.
- Teens can choose a **non-algorithmic feed** and turn off **Autoplay** to reduce addictive engagement.
- Meta will hide **likes and reactions** by default for teens and restrict the use of **extreme makeup filters**.
- The company will strengthen measures to detect **underage users**, maintain private accounts and restrict contact from **suspicious adults**.
- The effectiveness of these measures depends heavily on reliable **age verification**, as children can often bypass restrictions by providing false age information.
- Age-verification systems may also raise concerns about the collection and protection of **children's personal data**.
- Meta has called for similar safety standards across other platforms, arguing that children may otherwise move to **less regulated apps**.

Implications

- The settlement could establish stronger **industry standards for protecting children online**.
- Effective enforcement remains difficult because of weaknesses in **age verification and rule enforcement**.
- Collecting additional data to verify age could create new **privacy concerns for children**.
- Different safety standards across platforms could simply shift young users towards **less regulated social media apps**.

Way Forward

- Develop reliable and privacy-conscious **age-verification mechanisms**.
- Create common **child safety standards across social media platforms** to prevent regulatory gaps.
- Strengthen **parental controls and digital literacy** among children, parents and educators.

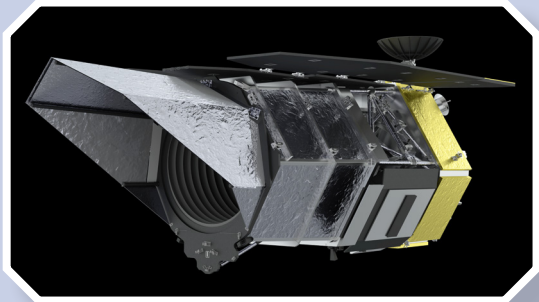
- Balance online safety measures with strong safeguards for **children's privacy and personal data**.

Mains Question

Q. The growing use of social media by children has raised concerns regarding online safety, addictive platform design and data privacy. Discuss the challenges in regulating digital platforms to ensure the protection of children in the online environment. (250 words)

KEYWORDS

Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope



- NASA is preparing to launch the approximately **\$4-billion Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope** aboard a **SpaceX Falcon Heavy** from the Kennedy Space Center, Florida.
- Named after **Dr. Nancy Grace Roman**, NASA's first chief astronomer and the **"Mother of Hubble"**, it will complement the **Hubble Space Telescope** and **James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)**.
- It will operate in a **halo orbit around the Sun–Earth Lagrange Point 2 (L2)**, about **1.6 million km from Earth**, providing a stable environment for observations.
- Its key objectives are to study **dark energy and dark matter**, understand the **expansion of the universe**, and discover **exoplanets**.
- Using **wide-field infrared instruments**, it will survey a field of view about **100 times larger than Hubble's**, enabling rapid, large-scale surveys of galaxies and the distant universe.

Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRCMRP)

- The **Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRCMRP)** is in the news because

Bangladesh and China have signed an agreement for a feasibility study, increasing strategic competition in the region.

- The mega-infrastructure project aims to address Bangladesh's **dry-season water shortage and monsoon flooding** through large-scale **river dredging, embankment construction, water storage and land reclamation** for agricultural and urban development.
- The proposed project site in **northwestern Bangladesh** is located around **10-12 km from India's Siliguri Corridor**, also known as the **"Chicken's Neck"**, raising security and surveillance concerns for India.
- **India has opposed China's involvement** near its sensitive border and has offered to finance the estimated **\$1-billion project** itself to prevent China from gaining a strategic foothold in the region.
- Bangladesh is pursuing the project to improve **irrigation and agricultural productivity in the Rangpur region**, particularly after decades of deadlock over a **Teesta water-sharing agreement with India**.

Mission ShakthiSAT

- **Mission ShakthiSAT** is described as the **first-ever female-led lunar satellite mission**, supported by **ISRO, IN-SPaCe, and the UK-based Meridian Space Command**.
- The mission was officially launched on **16 January 2025**.
- It has a proposed budget of **₹150 crore**.



- The mission aims to train **12,000 girls** from **government schools in India and across 108 countries**.
- The programme targets students aged **14-18 years** and provides **120 hours of online training**.
- Training focuses on **payload development, space technology, and spacecraft systems**.
- The mission promotes **STEM education, women's empowerment, innovation, and inclusivity** through international space collaboration.

Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT)

- **SUIT** is a **remote sensing payload** aboard ISRO's **Aditya-L1 mission**, launched on **2 September 2023**.
- Its primary objective is to study the **magnetised solar atmosphere**.
- It investigates energetic solar phenomena such as **solar jets, flares, filament evolution, and eruptions**.
- These observations can help scientists understand the **Sun-climate relationship**.
- It has an **onboard intelligence system** for the **detection and precise localisation of solar flares**.

Places in News

Austria

- **Austria** is a largely **mountainous and landlocked country** in **south-central Europe**.
- Its location makes it an important link along major **east-west Danubian trade routes** and **north-south Alpine routes**.
- Austria shares borders with **eight countries**: **Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein**.
- The **Alps** dominate much of Austria's landscape.
- Nearly all of Austria's territory lies within the **Danube River drainage basin**.

