



> GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL > MINES AND MINERALS IN INDIA > GOVT. SCHOOL CLOSURES

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EDITOR'S NOTE

As UPSC aspirants, it is essential to stay updated on current affairs to excel in the examination. This **Fortune Weekly Digest (ForWarD)** brings you the latest news and developments from around the world, carefully curated and analyzed to help you prepare for the Civil Services (Main) Examination.

We understand that time is precious, and we have made sure to present the information in a concise and easy-to-understand manner.

The magazine is divided into different sections. Mains relevant topics have been covered in detail with a UPSC previous year question perspective. The jot downs are examples and interesting facts to enrich your answer writing. Cherry picks has some key words from the week, helpful again in answer writing and essay. We have also included essay topics and sample questions to help you gauge your preparation.

We have designed this magazine to best supplement the daily current affairs notes we have launched by the name of **FIND (Fortune IAS News Daily)** and **FINDER (Fortune IAS News Daily Explainer)** and the **Fortune Prelims Precise** monthly compilation. This magazine will be explained in detail and your queries addressed in a live class we conduct.

At a time when there is no dearth of current affairs materials, our hope is help you get a one-stop solution for all your current affairs needs.

This magazine is a work in progress and your feedback will be appreciated.

We hope that this magazine will serve as a valuable resource for your exam preparation and contribute to your success in the UPSC examination.

I N D E X

MINES AND MINERALS IN INDIA: FEDERALISM, TAXATION AND THE MMDR AMENDMENT ACT, 2026	1
GI TAGS: LOCAL TO GLOBAL	4
GOVERNMENT SCHOOL CLOSURES	6
GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL: CPGRAMS	8
WEEKLY DOSSIERS	10
BEYOND VERDICTS: KEY JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS	12
ETHICS - CASE STUDY	13
ETHICS - EXAMPLES	13
MODEL ESSAY	14
MAINS JOT DOWN	15
CHERRY PICKS OF THE WEEK	16

**FIRST ATTEMPT TOPPERS FROM
OUR PRELIMS CUM MAINS BATCH**

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MINES AND MINERALS IN INDIA: FEDERALISM, TAXATION AND THE MMDR AMENDMENT ACT, 2026

Syllabus: GS III - Indian Economy, GS II - Centre State Relations

PYQ Mapping

Q) Examine the evolving pattern of Centre-State financial relations in the context of planned development in India. How far have the recent reforms impacted the fiscal federalism in India? (2025)

Why in News

The **MMDR Amendment Act, 2026** has triggered opposition from mineral-rich States over concerns of reduced taxation powers, revenue loss and erosion of fiscal federalism.

Introduction

India's mineral resources are vital for **infrastructure, manufacturing, energy security, defence and the green transition**. However, their regulation and taxation have become a major **Centre-State federalism issue**, particularly after the MMDR Amendment Act, 2026.

Constitutional Framework

- ➔ The Constitution distributes powers over mining between the Union and the States.
- ➔ Under **Entry 54 of the Union List**, Parliament can regulate mines and mineral development in the public interest. At the same time, **Entry 23 of the State List** allows States to regulate mines and mineral development, subject to Union law.
- ➔ The taxation issue is more complex. **Entry 50 of the State List** gives States the power to tax mineral rights, but Parliament may impose limitations on this power. In contrast, **Entry 49 of the State List** gives States the power to tax land and buildings, while **Entry 18** places land generally within the State domain.
- ➔ Thus, the Constitution recognises both a strong Union role in mineral regulation and significant State powers over land and taxation.

Importance of the 2024 Supreme Court Judgment

- 🌀 In 2024, a nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court clarified the constitutional position.
- 🌀 The Court held that **royalty is not a tax**. Royalty is a payment made for the right to extract minerals and is different from a tax imposed by the State.
- 🌀 The Court further held that **States have the legislative power to tax mineral rights under Entry 50**. Parliament may limit this power through legislation relating to mineral development.
- 🌀 More importantly, the Court held that mineral-bearing land can also be taxed by States under **Entry 49**, and that Parliament's power to restrict mineral-right taxation does not automatically extend to taxation of land.
- 🌀 This judgment strengthened the fiscal position of mineral-rich States.

What the 2026 Amendment Changes

- ♣️ The MMDR Amendment Act, 2026 seeks to bring greater **"stability, certainty and predictability"** to the mineral sector.
- ♣️ It expands the Central regulatory framework to include **mineral-bearing land**. It also restricts States from imposing taxes, cesses or similar levies on mineral rights and mineral-bearing land except in accordance with conditions or restrictions prescribed by the Central government.
- ♣️ The law also affects earlier tax demands. Certain unpaid or unrecovered State levies from before the commencement of the amendment may become invalid, while amounts already collected are generally not required to be refunded.

MMDR Act: Previous Position vs 2026 Amendment

Aspect	Previous position – MMDR Act, 1957	New position – MMDR Amendment Act, 2026
Scope of Central regulation	Centre regulated mines and mineral development .	The central framework expanded to specifically include mineral-bearing land .
State tax on mineral rights	States could impose taxes under Entry 50 of State List ; the existing MMDR Act did not impose such restrictions.	States can impose such taxes only according to conditions/restrictions prescribed under the Central law .

Tax on mineral-bearing land	States could tax mineral-bearing land under Entry 49 (tax on land) , as recognised by the Supreme Court in 2024.	The amendment also restricts specified taxes/cesses on mineral-bearing land , creating a federalism controversy.
Different State tax rates	States could have different mineral-related levies, leading to different tax burdens across States .	Seeks greater uniformity, stability and predictability in mineral taxation.
Role of Central government	Centre regulated the mining framework, while States retained greater freedom in their taxation sphere.	Centre gets a greater role in determining conditions for State mineral-related taxation .

Why the Centre Supports the Amendment

- ☀ The Union government argues that different States imposing different taxes on the same minerals creates uncertainty and increases the cost of mining.
- ☀ For example, if one State imposes a high tax on limestone while another State imposes a lower tax, cement producers may face different input costs. Similar effects can occur with iron ore, coal and bauxite.
- ☀ The Centre therefore argues that multiple and unpredictable State levies can make domestic minerals expensive, reduce investment, discourage mineral extraction and increase dependence on imports.
- ☀ A more uniform framework, according to the Centre, can improve investor confidence, increase domestic production and strengthen mineral security.



Why Mineral-Rich States Oppose It

- ☀ Mineral-rich States see the amendment as a threat to their **fiscal and legislative autonomy**.
- ☀ Their argument is that minerals are extracted from land located within their territory, while the social and environmental costs of mining are also largely borne locally. Mining may lead to displacement, deforestation, pollution, damage to roads and pressure on water resources.

- ☀ Therefore, States believe they should retain sufficient taxation powers to compensate for these costs and finance development.
- ☀ For States that depend heavily on mining revenues, any restriction on additional taxes or cesses can also reduce funds available for welfare, infrastructure, health and education.

Major Constitutional Issues

✧ Legislative competence:

- Parliament clearly has power over mineral development under Entry 54, but land is a State subject. Critics therefore question whether Parliament can extend its control to mineral-bearing land and restrict taxes imposed under Entry 49.

✧ Retrospective effect of the law:

- The amendment may invalidate certain earlier tax demands that had not yet been recovered. This raises the question of whether Parliament is legitimately changing the legal basis of taxation or indirectly neutralising the effect of the Supreme Court's 2024 judgment.

✧ Third issue relates to Article 14:

- A company that had already paid a State levy may not receive a refund, while another company that delayed payment may benefit if its unpaid liability becomes invalid. This differential treatment may be challenged as arbitrary.

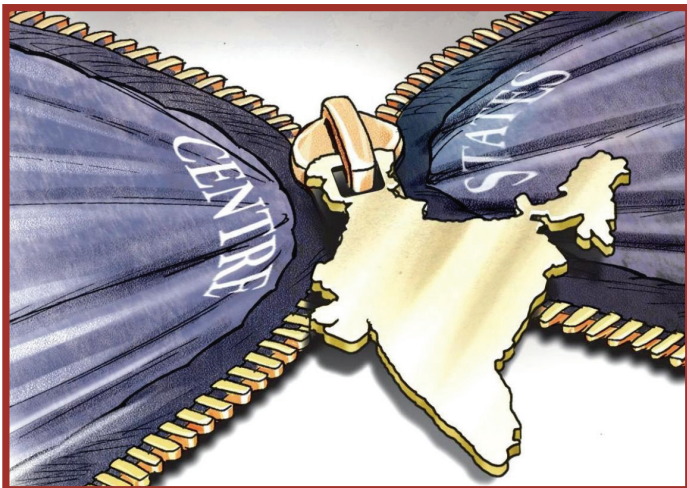
✧ Excessive delegation:

- The Act allows the Central government to prescribe conditions and restrictions governing State taxation. Since taxation powers are an important matter of constitutional policy, critics argue that Parliament should itself lay down clearer principles rather than leaving wide discretion to the executive.

Federalism Dimension

- 👁 **Broader Issue:** Mining disputes raise the larger question of **fiscal federalism**.

- 🔍 **Centre's Concern:** Minerals are **nationally important resources**; excessive State taxation may increase costs and affect industries across India.
- 🔍 **States' Argument:** States bear the **local environmental, social and infrastructure costs** of mining and therefore need adequate revenues.



Conclusion

India needs a **balanced mineral governance framework** that safeguards national interests while respecting State autonomy, ensuring that mineral wealth becomes a source of **inclusive growth, equitable revenue and cooperative federalism**.

Sample Question

Q) "The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026 has brought the issue of fiscal federalism in mineral governance to the forefront." Discuss the constitutional and economic issues involved. **(15 marks)**

Way Forward

- * **Cooperative federalism:** Centre and mineral-rich States should jointly decide major taxation and mining policies.
- * **Fair compensation to States:** Mining States should receive adequate revenue for environmental damage, displacement and infrastructure burden.
- * **Clear revenue-sharing rules:** Strengthen mechanisms such as the **District Mineral Foundation (DMF)** and make Centre–State revenue sharing transparent.
- * **Balanced taxation:** Taxes should protect State revenues without making Indian minerals too expensive or discouraging investment and domestic production.

GI TAGS: LOCAL TO GLOBAL

Syllabus: GS I - Indian culture, arts and heritage

PYQ Mapping

Q) How is the Government of India protecting traditional knowledge of medicine from patenting by pharmaceutical companies? (2019)

Why in News

India is strengthening the **Geographical Indication (GI) ecosystem** to transform traditional products into global brands, with a target of **10,000 GI registrations by 2030**.

Introduction

A **Geographical Indication (GI)** identifies a product whose quality, reputation or characteristics are essentially linked to a particular geographical region. GI protection helps India simultaneously preserve **traditional knowledge and cultural heritage** while improving the incomes of farmers, artisans and local producers communities.

WHAT IS A GI TAG?

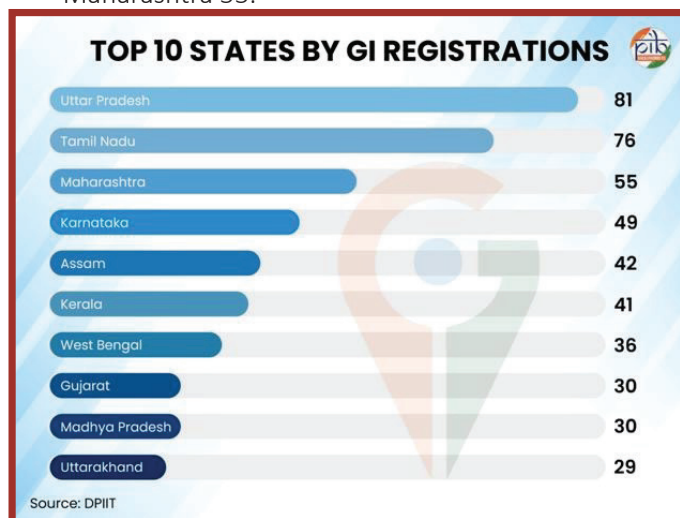


- ☛ GI tag is a certificate of geographical authenticity linking a product to a specific region.
- ☛ **Examples:**
 - Banarasi Saree is associated with Banaras and its traditional weaving.
 - Darjeeling Tea is associated with Darjeeling and was India's first registered GI.
- ☛ **GI connects:** Product, Place, Traditional Skill or Quality and Legal Protection
- ☛ **Legal Framework:** Geographical Indications of Goods Registration and Protection Act, 1999 and GI Rules
- ☛ **Registration:** GI Registry, Chennai

- ☛ **Validity:** 10 years and renewable
- ☛ **International Protection:** WTO TRIPS Agreement and Paris Convention

Growth of India's GI Ecosystem

- ➔ India has **over 800 registered GI products**.
- ➔ **607 GIs** have been granted since 2014.
- ➔ Authorised GI users increased from **365 to around 29,000 by January 2025**, showing greater participation of producer communities.
- ➔ GI products cover **handicrafts, agricultural products, food, manufactured goods and natural products**.
- ➔ **Examples:** Pashmina, Banarasi crafts, Darjeeling Tea, Tirupati Laddu, Kannauj Perfume and Makrana Marble.
- ➔ **Top States:** Uttar Pradesh 81, Tamil Nadu 76 and Maharashtra 55.



Importance of GI Tags with Examples

- ☛ **Protect Traditional Knowledge and Culture:** Preserves traditional skills and cultural heritage.
 - **Example-** Banarasi Saree, Pashmina and Channapatna Toys.
- ☛ **Increase Farmers' and Artisans' Income:** Helps producers earn premium prices and access wider markets.
 - **Example-** Darjeeling Tea and Kancheepuram Silk.
- ☛ **Promote Rural Development:** Creates employment across farming, handicrafts, processing and tourism.
 - **Example-** Aranmula Kannadi and Madhubani Paintings.
- ☛ **Promote Exports:** Enhances global recognition and

consumer confidence.

- o **Example-** Basmati Rice, Darjeeling Tea and Tirupur Knitwear.

☀ **Support Sustainable Production:** Encourages preservation of traditional techniques and local resources.

- o **Example-** Kuthampully Sarees and Toda Embroidery.

Government Initiatives to Promote GI Products

🇮🇳 **PM Ekta Mall:** Provides market space for **ODOP and GI products**, helping producers commercialise their products.

🇮🇳 **One Station One Product:** Railways provides **sales platforms at railway stations** for local and GI products.

🇮🇳 **GI Trails:** Connects GI products with **tourism and local markets**.

- o **Example-** Muga Silk Trail in Assam.

🇮🇳 **MSME Innovative Scheme:** Provides eligible applicants support for **GI registration expenses**.

🇮🇳 **Ministry of Textiles:** Supports GI products through **registration, legal protection, promotion and marketing**.

🇮🇳 **APEDA Support:** Helps GI agricultural products through **quality improvement, export promotion, infrastructure and market development**.

🇮🇳 **Recent Reform:**

- o **GI Rules, 2025-** Registration and renewal costs were reduced.
- o **Renewal fee-** Reduced from ₹3,000 to ₹500, benefiting small producer groups and artisans.

🇮🇳 **GI and India's Trade Strategy:**

- o GI protection is increasingly incorporated into **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)**.
- o India seeks international protection for products such as **Darjeeling Tea, Basmati Rice and regional handicrafts**.
- o **Benefit-** Prevents imitation and improves **international market access and export potential**.
- o **Example-** New Zealand has agreed to facilitate registration of Indian GI products.

Major Challenges

▼ **GI tag does not guarantee sales:** Registration gives legal recognition, but producers still need good marketing, branding and distribution.

▼ **Weak packaging and quality standards:** Many local products lack attractive packaging and consistent quality, which reduces their competitiveness in national and global markets.

▼ **Counterfeit products:** Fake products using famous GI

names can reduce consumer trust and hurt genuine producers.

▼ **Benefits may not reach artisans and farmers:** Middlemen may capture a large share of the higher price, while actual producers receive only a small benefit.

▼ **Need to shift from registration to commercialisation:** India should focus not only on giving more GI tags, but also on **branding, e-commerce, exports, traceability and direct market access for producers**.

Way Forward

* **Strengthen producer groups and FPOs:** Farmers and artisans should work collectively so they can market directly, reduce dependence on middlemen and get better prices.

* **Use digital authentication:** QR codes and traceability systems can help consumers verify whether a GI product is genuine.

* **Link GI products with bigger markets:** GI products should be promoted through **ODOP, e-commerce platforms, tourism circuits, exports and trade agreements**.

* **Improve branding and enforcement:** Better packaging, international branding and strict action against fake GI products can increase their market value.

* **Ensure benefits reach actual producers:** The main objective should be to increase the income of the **farmers, artisans and local communities** who preserve the traditional product.

Conclusion

GI tags can transform India's traditional knowledge from merely a cultural asset into a powerful instrument of **rural development, employment generation and export-led growth**. India's goal of reaching **10,000 GI registrations by 2030** should therefore focus not merely on increasing the number of tags, but on converting **"local identity into global value"** while ensuring that the economic benefits reach the communities that created and preserved these traditions.

Sample Question

Q) "Geographical Indications can serve as an effective bridge between preservation of India's cultural heritage and promotion of rural economic development." Discuss. **(15 Marks)**

GOVERNMENT SCHOOL CLOSURES

Syllabus: GS II - Education

PYQ Mapping

Q) National Education Policy 2020 is in conformity with the Sustainable Development Goal-4 (2030). It intends to restructure and reorient the education system in India. Critically examine the statement. (2020)

Why in the News?

A **NITI Aayog report (2026)** based on UDISE+ data highlighted the decline in the number of Government schools



Introduction

India's education policy has traditionally focused on ensuring a **neighbourhood school for every child** to promote equity and access. However, demographic changes, declining enrolment and the rise of very small schools have led to discussions on **improving quality and holistic learning**.

Current Trends

- ✦ Total schools declined from **15.16 lakh in 2014–15** to **14.71 lakh in 2024–25**.
- ✦ Government schools were reduced by about **94,000**, while private schools expanded.
- ✦ Student enrolment fell from **26.95 crore to 24.69 crore**, partly due to demographic transition.
- ✦ Teachers increased from **89.8 lakh to over 1 crore**.
- ✦ Over **65,000 government schools have fewer than 10 or zero students**.

Issues and Challenges

- **Accessibility:** Closure can increase travel distances for children in remote areas.
 - **Example:** Children in tribal and hilly regions may have to travel several kilometres to the nearest consolidated school.
- **Equity:** Disadvantaged groups may be disproportionately affected.
 - **Example:** Longer travel can particularly discourage **girls and children with disabilities** from attending school.
- **Quality concerns:** Very small schools often lack subject specialists and facilities.
 - **Example:** A **single teacher managing multiple grades** may struggle to provide science, sports and co curricular activities.



- **Risk of Dropouts:** Increased distance without transport can reduce attendance.
 - **Example:** Poor rural households may be unable to bear additional travel costs.
- **Community Participation:** Closure can weaken the relationship between schools and local communities.
 - **Example:** The neighbourhood school often serves as a centre for **mid day meals and community engagement**.
- **Private School Shift:** Declining government enrollment can increase dependence on private schools.
 - **Example:** Government school enrolment declined while private school enrolment increased between **2022–23 and 2024–25**.

Way Forward

- * **Data driven rationalisation:** Decisions should consider enrolment, distance, geography and availability of alternatives.
 - o **Example:** Consolidation should be avoided in **remote tribal areas** where no accessible alternative exists.
- * **School Complexes and Clusters:** Share teachers, laboratories, libraries and sports facilities.
 - o **Example:** NEP 2020 promotes school complexes for resource sharing.
- * **Safe Transport:** Provide transport or travel assistance where schools are merged.
 - o **Example:** School buses or transport allowances can support children travelling to consolidated schools.
- * **Protect Neighbourhood Schools:** Retain schools where they are essential for access.
 - o **Example:** Small schools in **hilly, tribal and border areas** may need to continue despite low enrolment.
- * **Improve Teacher Deployment:** Rationalise teacher distribution rather than simply reducing schools.
 - o **Example:** Teachers from under enrolled schools can be deployed through **school clusters**.
- * **Outcome Based Evaluation:** Measure success through learning outcomes, retention and holistic development.
 - o **Example:** Assess whether consolidation improves **learning levels, attendance and access to sports and laboratories** rather than merely counting schools closed.

Conclusion

The objective should not be **more schools or fewer schools, but better schools** that balance **access, equity and quality**, ensuring safe, inclusive and holistic education for every child, in line with **SDG 4- Quality Education** and the principle of **leaving no one behind**.

Sample Question

Q) "School consolidation is not merely an administrative exercise but a challenge of balancing educational quality with equitable access." Discuss in the context of recent trends in India's school education system. **(250 words)**

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL: CPGRAMS

Syllabus: GS II - Government policies and interventions

PYQ MAPPING

Q) "E-governance is not only about utilization of the power of new technology, but also much about critical importance of the 'use value' of information. Explain." (2022)

Q) "Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based Projects / Programmes usually suffers in terms of certain vital factors. Identify these factors, and suggest measures for their effective implementation." (2019)

SHORT TAKES

- **Common Service Centres (CSCs):** Government-supported access points that deliver **digital and public services** to citizens, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- **BHASHINI (National Language Translation Mission):** Under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), launched in July 2022, that uses AI-based language technologies to overcome language barriers and promote digital inclusion across Indian languages.

WHY IN NEWS

A recent **PIB explainer** highlighted CPGRAMS and its latest **digital and AI-enabled reforms**.

INTRODUCTION

Effective grievance redressal is a cornerstone of **responsive, accountable and citizen-centric governance**, as it provides citizens with an institutional mechanism to voice concerns regarding public service delivery. In India, **CPGRAMS** has emerged as a technology-enabled platform that seeks to make grievance redressal **accessible, transparent, time-bound and responsive**.

ABOUT CPGRAMS

➔ Meaning and Purpose:

- o **Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)** is the Government of India's flagship digital grievance redressal platform.
- o It provides a single, 24x7 portal connecting Central Ministries/Departments, States and Union Territories for registration, tracking and resolution of public grievances.

➔ Access:

- o Citizens can lodge grievances through the CPGRAMS portal, mobile application, **UMANG**, and **5 lakh+ Common Service Centres (CSCs)**.
- o Offline grievances received by post are also digitised and uploaded to the system.

➔ Time-Bound Redressal:

- o The **August 2024 Comprehensive Guidelines for Effective Redressal of Public Grievances** reduced the prescribed grievance disposal timeline from **30 days to 21 days**.
- o Dissatisfied citizens can approach the appellate mechanism, with the Nodal Appellate Authority required to resolve appeals within **30 days**.

KEY FEATURES AND REFORMS

🔍 10-Step Reform Programme:

- o Introduced in **2022**, it sought to make grievance redressal more **efficient, accessible, accountable and citizen-centric** through institutional and technological reforms.

🔍 CPGRAMS 7.0:

- o Enabled automatic routing of grievances to the appropriate authority, replacing the earlier manual forwarding system.
- o All Central Ministries and Departments were onboarded by **2022**.

🔍 AI and Data Analytics:

- o **Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and advanced analytics** are used for pattern recognition, real-time monitoring and identification of systemic grievances.

🔍 Language Inclusivity:

- o CPGRAMS supports submissions in **22 Scheduled Languages**, besides English, with **BHASHINI** enabling multilingual communication between citizens and grievance officers.

🔍 Grievance Redressal Assessment and Index (GRAI):

- o **GRAI** is a performance benchmarking framework that evaluates grievance redressal by Ministries and Departments which promotes **efficiency, accountability and healthy competition**.

🔍 Feedback and Appeal:

- o A dedicated **Feedback Call Centre** contacts citizens after grievance resolution to assess their satisfaction.

👁️ **One Nation–One Portal:**

- o Integration of State grievance portals and other government platforms with CPGRAMS seeks to create a **unified national grievance redressal ecosystem**.

👁️ **Samadhan Didi:**

- o **Samadhan Didi**, launched on **30 May 2026**, is an AI-enabled CPGRAMS voice chatbot that allows citizens to register grievances by speaking in their preferred language.

👁️ **Performance — June 2026:**

- o CPGRAMS recorded **1,99,968 grievances redressed**, an average disposal time of **14 days**, and a **76% citizen satisfaction rate** during January–June 2026

CHALLENGES

- ▼ **Quantity vs quality of disposal:** Fast disposal may not always translate into **effective resolution** of the underlying grievance.
- ▼ **Inter-departmental coordination:** Grievances involving multiple departments or levels of government can complicate accountability.
- ▼ **Digital divide:** Citizens with limited digital literacy, connectivity or access to technology may face barriers.
- ▼ **Overburdening of grievance officers:** Rapid growth in grievance volumes requires adequate institutional capacity and trained personnel.
- ▼ **Repetitive grievances:** Recurring complaints may indicate unresolved **structural or systemic governance deficiencies**.
- ▼ **Data and AI concerns:** Increasing use of AI and large-scale grievance data requires safeguards relating to **data security, privacy, algorithmic accuracy and human oversight**.
- ▼ **Limited scope:** Important categories such as **RTI, sub-judice matters and certain service-related grievances** fall outside CPGRAMS.

WAY FORWARD

- * **From Disposal to Resolution:** Performance assessment should focus on the **quality and effectiveness of grievance resolution**, rather than merely the number of grievances closed.
- * **Strengthen AI-Based Validation:** AI should be used to identify grievances that have been **prematurely closed, transferred or inadequately resolved**
- * **Deepen Inclusion:** Voice-based interfaces, multilingual services and CSC networks should be expanded to reach **digitally excluded, rural and vulnerable citizens**.
- * **Capacity Building:** Continuous training of Grievance Redressal Officers under the **Sevottam framework** should be strengthened to improve the quality of service.
- * **Data Security:** Robust safeguards for **privacy, cybersecurity and responsible use of citizen grievance data** should accompany the expansion of AI-enabled grievance redressal.
- * **Preventive Governance:** CPGRAMS should increasingly function as a **predictive governance tool**, where recurring grievances trigger corrective administrative action.

CONCLUSION

CPGRAMS represents a shift from conventional grievance disposal towards data-driven, technology-enabled and citizen-centric governance. Its future effectiveness will depend on ensuring that grievances are not merely closed, but substantively resolved while using citizen feedback and grievance data to improve governance.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) CPGRAMS has evolved from a grievance registration platform into an instrument of administrative reform. Explain. **(10 marks, 150 words)**

WEEKLY DOSSIERS

FOOD SECURITY TO NUTRITION SECURITY

Introduction

- India has moved from food scarcity to foodgrain self sufficiency through the Green Revolution and improvements in agricultural productivity. The present challenge is not only to provide enough food but also to ensure that people receive nutritious and diversified diets.

Important Data

- India's foodgrain production is estimated at around **376.56 million tonnes in 2025 to 26**, according to government estimates.
- According to **NFHS 5**, about **35.5 percent of children below five years were stunted, 19.3 percent were wasted, and 32.1 percent were underweight**.
- These figures show that adequate food production does not automatically guarantee good nutrition.

Major Issues

- India's food security system has traditionally focused mainly on rice and wheat.
- Poor households may receive sufficient calories but still lack proteins, vitamins, minerals and micronutrients.
- Limited consumption of pulses, fruits, vegetables, milk and eggs contributes to nutritional deficiencies.

- Poverty and high food prices also reduce dietary diversity.

Example

- In 2024, the government released **109 high yielding, climate resilient and biofortified crop varieties covering 61 crops**.
- Biofortified crops can improve the nutritional quality of commonly consumed foods.

Way Forward

- India should diversify procurement towards pulses, millets and nutritious crops.
- PM POSHAN and Anganwadi nutrition programmes should provide more diversified meals.
- Biofortified crops and kitchen gardens should be promoted.
- Nutrition awareness among households should also be strengthened.

Conclusion

- India must move from simple foodgrain security towards **nutrition security**, where every citizen receives adequate calories, proteins, vitamins and micronutrients.

FOOD SECURITY AS AN ISSUE OF ACCESS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Introduction

- Food security depends not only on food production but also on whether people can afford and access food. Poverty, unemployment and food price inflation can create hunger even when sufficient food is available in the country.

Important Data

- The **National Food Security Act, 2013** provides subsidised foodgrain entitlements to around **81.35 crore beneficiaries**.
- Priority households receive **5 kilograms of foodgrain per person every month**.
- Antyodaya Anna Yojana households receive **35 kilograms of foodgrain per household every month**.

- The government has continued free foodgrain distribution for five years from January 2024 with an estimated expenditure of around **Rs 11.8 lakh crore**.

Importance

- The Public Distribution System protects poor families from sudden increases in food prices.
- Free foodgrain allows low income households to spend more on health, education and other essential needs.
- Food assistance becomes especially important during unemployment, disasters and economic shocks.

Example

- The **One Nation One Ration Card** scheme allows

eligible beneficiaries to receive ration from different parts of the country.

- ◆ It is particularly useful for migrant workers who frequently move between States for employment.

Major Challenges

- ◆ Some deserving households may remain excluded because of outdated beneficiary lists.
- ◆ Leakages and identification errors continue in certain areas.
- ◆ The food basket remains largely cereal based.
- ◆ Remote and vulnerable populations may still face problems in accessing Fair Price Shops.

Way Forward

- ◆ Beneficiary databases should be regularly updated.
- ◆ Portability of ration benefits should be strengthened.
- ◆ Social audits and grievance redressal mechanisms should be improved.
- ◆ Food baskets should gradually include more nutritious and locally appropriate foods.

Conclusion

- ◆ Food security is ultimately an issue of **social justice**, because no citizen should suffer from hunger merely because of poverty or lack of purchasing power.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE FUTURE OF FOOD SECURITY

Introduction

- ◆ Climate change is emerging as a major long term threat to India's food security. Agriculture is highly dependent on rainfall, temperature, groundwater and soil conditions. Heat waves, floods, droughts and irregular monsoons can reduce agricultural productivity and increase food prices.

Important Data

- ◆ ICAR studies indicate that without adequate adaptation, **rainfed rice yields may decline by around 20 percent by 2050**.
- ◆ Wheat yields may decline by approximately **19.3 percent by 2050** under adverse climate conditions.
- ◆ Such losses can directly affect India's food availability, food prices and buffer stocks.

Impact on Food Security

- ◆ Crop failures reduce the amount of food available in markets.
- ◆ Reduced production can increase food inflation.
- ◆ Higher food prices reduce the purchasing power of poor households.
- ◆ Repeated climate shocks can increase farmer distress and rural poverty.
- ◆ Malnutrition may rise when families shift towards cheaper and less nutritious foods.

Example

- ◆ India is promoting climate resilient crop varieties capable of tolerating drought, floods, heat and salinity.
- ◆ Examples include drought tolerant, submergence tolerant and salt tolerant rice varieties developed by agricultural research institutions.
- ◆ The release of **109 climate resilient and biofortified varieties in 2024** is an important step towards resilient agriculture.

Way Forward

- ◆ Climate resilient seeds should be promoted on a larger scale.
- ◆ Farmers should be encouraged to diversify towards millets and pulses.
- ◆ Micro irrigation and rainwater harvesting should be expanded.
- ◆ Crop insurance and weather advisory systems should be strengthened.
- ◆ Soil health management and agroforestry should receive greater policy support.
- ◆ Food storage and supply chains should be made more resilient to extreme weather events.

Conclusion

- ◆ India must shift from simply increasing agricultural production towards building a **climate resilient food system** that can provide adequate, affordable and nutritious food even during environmental shocks.

BEYOND VERDICTS: KEY JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS

Supreme Court Re-examines Polygamy

- ◆ The Supreme Court is examining the constitutional validity of polygamy after petitioners challenged **Section 2 of the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937**, arguing that it conflicts with **Articles 14 and 15** on equality and non-discrimination. They have also sought compulsory registration of Muslim marriages, codification of personal law and stronger protection for women.
- ◆ Earlier, in **Sarla Mudgal (1995)** and **Lily Thomas (2000)**, the Court held that a Hindu man cannot convert to Islam merely to contract a second marriage without dissolving the first. The issue therefore raises important questions of **gender justice, personal laws, fundamental rights and constitutional morality**.

Supreme Court Protects Students' Right to Peaceful Protest

- ◆ The Supreme Court has agreed to invoke **Article 142 of the Constitution** to quash FIRs against students who participated peacefully in protests over the **NEET UG paper leak**, while excluding persons with serious criminal backgrounds or involvement in violence.
- ◆ The Court emphasised that peaceful protest and dissent are protected under **Article 19** and that students' education and future should not be harmed for legitimate democratic participation.
- ◆ It has also proposed a **high-powered committee** to examine protest related issues, including allegations of excessive police action and misconduct against women protesters, highlighting the need to balance **public order with fundamental rights and proportionality in policing**.

Supreme Court Reduces Legal Practice Requirement for Judicial Service

- ◆ The Supreme Court has upheld the requirement of prior legal practice for entry into the **Civil Judge Junior Division**, but reduced the mandatory experience from **three years to one year**. From **April 1, 2027**, candidates must produce proof of one year of active legal practice before applying.
- ◆ Selected candidates will then undergo **one year of training at the State Judicial Academy and one year of structured law clerkship** with senior judicial officers and High Court judges. The Court said the reform aims to combine practical courtroom exposure with institutional training so that new judges better understand litigation, court procedures and the concerns of litigants before assuming full judicial responsibilities.

Supreme Court Redefines "Industry" Under New Labour Code

- ◆ The Supreme Court has ruled that the broad definition of **"industry"** laid down in the landmark **Bangalore Water Supply case, 1978** will not govern disputes under the **Industrial Relations Code, 2020**. Under the earlier judgment, the Court's "triple test" brought a wide range of establishments, including hospitals, educational institutions and municipalities, within labour-law protection.
- ◆ The Court has now held that **Section 2(p) of the Industrial Relations Code must be interpreted independently**, while the 1978 precedent will continue to apply to older disputes under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. The judgment may significantly influence the scope of **collective bargaining, labour protection and employer-employee relations**, especially in an era of privatisation and changing employment structures.

Supreme Court Cracks Down on Illegal Constructions

- ◆ The Supreme Court has directed civic authorities across India to **identify and act against illegal constructions and unauthorised commercial use of residential premises without delay**, warning that interference with its orders could invite **contempt proceedings**.
- ◆ The Court criticised municipal bodies for failing to enforce building and land-use laws and stressed that such negligence can endanger public safety. It also stayed a Madhya Pradesh government order that sought to delay enforcement and questioned officials in Bihar over large-scale violations.
- ◆ The ruling highlights the need for **urban governance, accountability of civic authorities, strict enforcement of building norms and protection of public safety**.

ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) You are the Municipal Commissioner of a rapidly growing city. A newly constructed flyover, built at a cost of ₹450 crore, has developed visible cracks within six months of its inauguration. The project was executed by a major private contractor and had been cleared by engineers of the municipal corporation.

A preliminary technical report suggests that substandard construction material may have been used. However, senior officials inform you that closing the flyover immediately would create severe traffic congestion and public inconvenience. The contractor also claims that the cracks are only superficial and offers to repair them without a formal investigation. Meanwhile, you discover that some officials involved in approving the project have close links with the contractor. Local residents and civil society organisations are demanding an independent inquiry. The State government is concerned that controversy over the project may damage its public image.

As Municipal Commissioner, you have to balance public safety, administrative accountability and continuity of essential infrastructure.

Questions

- What are the major ethical issues involved in this case?
- Identify the stakeholders and explain their competing interests.
- What options are available to you? Discuss the merits and limitations of each option.
- What course of action would you adopt? Give reasons for your decision.
- What long term reforms would you suggest to improve transparency, accountability and safety in public infrastructure projects?

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

- Environmental Ethics :** In July 2026, a landslide washed away **100 metres of the Yamunotri National Highway**, showing how **extreme rainfall, fragile Himalayan slopes and road construction** interact to trigger disasters. **Climate change, slope cutting, road widening and poor drainage** amplify the risk, highlighting the need for **early-warning systems, improved drainage and climate-resilient infrastructure**.
- Social Responsibility :** In **Khawai, Tripura**, 100 women sanitation workers transformed waste management through a **women-led cooperative**, moving from contract work and social stigma to becoming **owners and decision-makers**. With **over 90% waste segregation**, composting and recycling, the model turned “**kachara**” into “**sampatti**”, improving both **dignity and livelihoods**.
- Animal Ethics:** Bengaluru’s community feeders help nearly **2.7 lakh street dogs** survive the monsoon through **low-cost shelters, food, clean water and basic first aid**. The approach promotes **early detection of injuries, safe care and timely veterinary treatment**, showing how small **community-led interventions can reduce animal suffering** during the rains.
- Environmental Ethics :** India’s **sacred groves**—including **Devarakadu, Kavus, Orans, Sarnas, Law Kyntang and Umang Lai**—are protected through **religious beliefs and customary rules**, supporting biodiversity, water security and livelihoods. The **Supreme Court’s December 2024 judgment** recognised Rajasthan’s **Orans**, directing their mapping and notification regardless of size and emphasising **community-based conservation**.
- Women Empowerment :** A **15-member Salim Ali Birdwatchers Network (SABN)**, Jammu and Kashmir’s first women-led birding network, is restoring wetlands through **cleanliness drives, awareness campaigns and community participation**, with Chatlam Wetland witnessing **over 1 lakh migratory birds** compared with fewer than 50,000 earlier. The initiative promotes **women-led grassroots conservation**, addressing **encroachment, pollution and poaching** while encouraging youth and community participation.
- Lack of Empathy:** A **six-year-old UKG student in Visakhapatnam** died after **allegedly being assaulted and humiliated by a teacher**, with CCTV reportedly showing the teacher slapping and attempting to strip him before he collapsed. The incident triggered protests and calls for **stricter enforcement against corporal punishment**, while the government ordered legal action and constituted a **three-member committee** to investigate.
- Lack of Accountability :** In **Nalanda, Bihar**, 36 students fell ill after a cook allegedly mistook **detergent powder for salt** and added it to the mid-day meal, highlighting lapses in **food safety and kitchen management**.

MODEL ESSAY

"When the rich wage war, it's the poor who die."

Introduction

- **Quote by Jean-Paul Sartre**
- In **1943**, Churchill's War Cabinet diverted large quantities of food grains from **India to build military buffer stocks and European reserves** – starvation of an estimated **three million impoverished Bengalis** during the Bengal Famine.

The Rich Wage War, the Poor Die

- **War Inflation:** Military mobilisation diverts food and resources, disproportionately hurting the poor. *Example: Bread shortages contributed to the Russian Revolution of 1917.*
- **Refugee Inequality:** Wealthier populations can more easily flee conflict zones, while poorer communities remain trapped. *Example: Syrian refugees during the civil war.*
- **Exploitation of Vulnerable Groups:** Armed groups recruit prisoners and economically desperate people for high-risk operations. *Example: Wagner Group's recruitment of Russian convicts in Ukraine.*
- **Destruction of Livelihoods:** War destroys agriculture and natural resources, disproportionately affecting rural populations. *Example: Agent Orange's long-term impact on Vietnamese communities.*
- **Proxy Wars:** Powerful states often fight through conflicts in poorer countries, shifting the human cost to local populations. *Example: Angola during the Cold War.*
- **Destruction of Civilian Infrastructure:** Damage to electricity, water and transport systems disproportionately affects ordinary citizens. *Example: NATO's 1999 bombing campaign in Yugoslavia.*

The Rich Do Not Always Win Wars

- **Total War:** Industrialised warfare can destroy elite wealth and political structures along with the masses. *Example: WWI ended the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires.*

- **Revolutionary Class Violence:** Revolutions can reverse the direction of class violence, making elites the primary targets. *Example: French Revolution*
- **Genocidal Warfare:** In wars of extermination, wealth and social status may offer little protection. *Example: Holocaust persecution and extermination of European Jews.*
- **Nuclear Deterrence: Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)** makes elites vulnerable to catastrophic consequences alongside ordinary citizens. *Example: Cold War nuclear deterrence.*

Synthesis

- **Shared Risk:** War becomes less attractive when political and economic elites themselves bear the **physical and emotional costs** of conflict.
- **Democratic Accountability:** Decision-makers should face stronger institutional accountability for decisions that impose severe costs on citizens.
- **Preference for Diplomacy:** Greater elite exposure to the consequences of war can strengthen incentives for **negotiation, restraint and peaceful conflict resolution.**

Conclusion

- The three million victims of the Bengal Famine did not die because there was a global shortage of grain; they died because a war cabinet in London calculated that a Bengali peasant's life was worth less than a British soldier's rations.
- A fair society should ensure that the **burden of war is not disproportionately shifted onto poorer sections** of society.

Sample Quotes

- *Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents, which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant. (Horace)*
- *The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness. (John Muir)*
- *To know what is right and not do it is the worst cowardice. (Confucius)*

MAINS JOT DOWN



GS I: INDIAN SOCIETY

→ Gendered Domestic Work

- » Gender conditioning begins early, with girls' domestic work rising sharply from around age 10.
- » Adolescent girls face a much higher unpaid-work burden, with the girl-to-boy ratio reaching 7.5 times among 15–17-year-olds.
- » Domestic work reduces girls' leisure time, affecting opportunities for recreation, social interaction, confidence and development of agency.
- » Cooking is highly gendered, with 42.4% of girls vs 2.9% of boys aged 15–17 reporting participation.



GS II: INDIAN POLITY

→ Police Accountability

- » Low conviction rate with less than 1% of cases against police personnel ending in conviction.
- » Underreporting concerns as NCRB data on civilians injured during police operations appears significantly lower than injuries reported by independent sources.
- » Accountability gap is evident when police-related cases are compared with the ~50% conviction rate for general crimes.



GS II: EDUCATION

→ Gender Gap in Private Education

- » Private schooling gap remains significant with 34.7% of boys vs 30.2% of girls attending private schools.
- » Private coaching gap is relatively small with 27.8% of boys vs 26% of girls receiving coaching.
- » Gender gap persists across income groups, with girls about 2 percentage points behind boys even among the richest and poorest households.



GS I: GEOGRAPHICAL PHENOMENA

→ Thunderquakes

- » It happens when **energy from lightning and thunder gets converted into seismic waves** in the ground.
- » Scientists use **fibre-optic cables as thousands of vibration sensors** through a technique called Distributed Acoustic Sensing.
- » This technology can help **map what lies beneath the ground**, including groundwater, fractures, sinkholes and weak zones.
- » It offers a **low-cost and non-invasive method** for monitoring urban land and assessing infrastructure safety.
- » The approach could also use **sonic booms, volcanic eruptions and meteor airbursts** as natural sources of seismic energy.



GS III: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

→ BRICS Science, Technology & Innovation Cooperation

- » 2026 BRICS Presidency theme is Building for **Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability**.
- » India called for stronger global cooperation in emerging technologies such as biotechnology, photonics, advanced materials, geospatial technology and high-performance computing.
- » BRICS STI cooperation focuses on research collaboration, innovation partnerships, young scientist exchanges and sharing of research infrastructure.
- » India highlighted initiatives such as the National Quantum Mission, National Supercomputing Mission, BioE3 Policy and National Geospatial Policy.
- » India advocated a human-centric, inclusive and sustainable technology ecosystem aligned with the developmental needs of the Global South.



GS II: GOVERNMENT POLICIES & INTERVENTIONS

→ Unconditional Cash Transfers

- » UCTs provide immediate income support and are often spent on food, health and education.
- » Fiscal burden is rising, with UCT expenditure exceeding 10% of total State expenditure in some States.
- » Crowding-out concern arises as higher spending on cash transfers may reduce fiscal space for education, health and infrastructure.
- » In some States, UCT spending exceeds half of education expenditure and can even exceed total health expenditure.

→ Social Media Bans

- » **Bans may be ineffective** as teenagers can bypass restrictions through fake accounts, borrowed logins and alternative platforms.
- » **Adolescent vulnerability** is higher because the brain's reward system develops earlier than the self-control mechanisms of the prefrontal cortex.
- » **Platform design matters** as personalised content, unpredictable rewards, autoplay and infinite scrolling can encourage compulsive use.

→ PM-CARES Fund

- » Corpus growth increased from ₹6,722 crore to ₹8,453 crore between 2022-23 and 2024-25, mainly due to interest earnings.
- » Donations declined, with interest income in 2024-25 reaching ₹475 crore against donations of ₹480 crore.
- » Low utilisation fell sharply from ₹437.9 crore to just ₹87.5 lakh during the same period.



GS III: INDIAN ECONOMY

→ Rural–Urban Divide in Female Labour Force Participation

- » Overall FLFPR increased from 30% in 2019-20 to 40% in 2025 for women aged 15 years and above.
- » Rural women saw a sharper rise, with FLFPR increasing from 33% to 45.9%, compared with 23.3% to 27.7% in urban areas.

→ India's Export Growth

- » Merchandise exports rose nearly 20% in July 2026 to \$44.2 billion.
- » Petroleum products were the major driver, contributing nearly 39% of the additional export growth.
- » Electronics and engineering goods also recorded strong growth, indicating some progress in export diversification.
- » Trade deficit widened from about \$28 billion to \$32 billion due to faster import growth.

CHERRY PICKS OF THE WEEK

PEROVSKITE SOLAR CELLS:

- These are next-generation solar cells made using perovskite-structured materials. They offer high efficiency and potentially lower manufacturing costs than conventional silicon cells.

METAGENOMICS:

- It is the study of genetic material collected directly from environmental samples without culturing organisms. It is widely used to study the human microbiome and microbial diversity.

ORGANOIDS:

- These are miniature, simplified versions of organs grown from stem cells in laboratories. They are useful for disease modelling, drug testing and personalised medicine.

QUANTUM SENSING:

- It uses quantum properties of matter to make extremely precise measurements of time, gravity, magnetic fields and acceleration. It has applications in navigation, defence and geology.

METAMATERIALS:

- These are artificially engineered materials designed to have properties not normally found in nature. They can manipulate electromagnetic waves and have applications in antennas, imaging and stealth technology.