



FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST



> KURUKSHETHRA SEPTEMBER 2025

> US SHUTDOWN

> FILM CENSORSHIP

03rd NOVEMBER, 2025 - 09th NOVEMBER, 2025

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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. Cherrypicks 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

FILM CENSORSHIP	1
US SHUTDOWN - LESSONS AND COMPARISON WITH INDIA	4
PAY COMMISSION	7
KURUKSHETHRA SEPTEMBER 2025:	12
WEEKLY DOSSIERS	18
BEYOND VERDICTS: KEY JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS	21
ETHICS - CASE STUDY	23
ETHICS - EXAMPLES	23
MODEL ESSAY	24
MAINS JOT DOWN	25
CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK	27

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

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MANJIMA P
AIR 235

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FILM CENSORSHIP

Syllabus: GS II - Government policies and interventions

PYQ MAPPING

Q) What do you understand by the concept “freedom of speech and expression”? Does it cover hate speech also? Why do the films in India stand on a slightly different plane from other forms of expression? Discuss (2014)

WHY IN NEWS

The Malayalam movie *Haal* is before the Kerala High Court after its **producer and director challenged the CBFC’s decision to grant it an “A” certificate** with mandatory cuts that they argue significantly alter the film.

INTRODUCTION

Film censorship in India operates at the intersection of artistic freedom and the state’s responsibility to maintain public order, decency, and cultural sensitivity. As cinema remains one of the most influential mass media forms in the country, its regulation continues to generate debates on constitutional rights, societal values, and evolving technological landscapes.

SHORT TAKES

➤ Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms:

- o Digital services that stream video or audio content directly over the internet, bypassing traditional cable, broadcast, or satellite television systems.
- o They deliver content through online streaming

technologies such as content-delivery networks rather than dedicated TV infrastructure.

- o Examples of major OTT platforms include Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar, Zee5, SonyLIV, and JioCinema.

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING CENSORSHIP

- **Fundamental Right to Free Speech:** Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression.
- **Reasonable Restrictions:** This right is not absolute. Article 19(2) allows the State to impose “reasonable restrictions” for specified grounds: sovereignty, security of state, public order, decency/morality, contempt, etc.
- **Judicial Safeguards:** Courts have held that restrictions must be “reasonable,” “proportionate,” and justified by necessity, not merely expediency.

ABOUT CINEMATOGGRAPH ACT, 1952

➔ Objective and Legal Framework

- o The Act regulates the **public exhibition of films** in India through a system of certification.

➔ Important Sections

- o **Section 5B — Principles for Guidance in Certifying Films:** Aligns film restrictions with constitutional limitations under Article 19(2)
- o **Section 5E — Suspension and Revocation of**

Certificate: The Central Government may suspend or revoke certification if a film is screened in a different form or violates the Act if:

- The film is modified post-certification.
- Exhibition threatens **public order**.
- o **Section 7A — Power of Seizure:** Police can seize uncertified films or films exhibited in violation of certification.

ABOUT THE CENTRAL BOARD OF FILM CERTIFICATION (CBFC)

♣ Statutory Creation and Role

- o The **Cinematograph Act, 1952** created the CBFC under the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and empowered it to **examine and certify films** before public release.
- o The primary mandate is to **classify films** based

on suitability for different age groups, ensuring alignment with constitutional limits.

♣ Categories of Film Certification

- o **U (Unrestricted):** Open to all audiences.
- o **UA (Unrestricted with Parental Guidance):** Children can watch with advisory guidance.

- o **A (Adults Only):** Viewing restricted to adults.
- o **S (Special Class):** For designated professional groups (e.g., doctors).
- o The Cinematograph (Amendment) Act, 2023 expanded the UA category to **UA 7+, UA 13+, and UA 16+** to reflect *streaming-era viewing practices*; these **do not ban children** but advise parental judgment.

♣ **How Certification is Processed**

- o Certification begins with an **Examining Committee**, which views the film and issues recommendations.
- o The film may then be referred to a **Revising Committee** for further scrutiny.
- o The Board may **mandate edits/cuts** prior to issuing a certificate.
- o Filmmakers can challenge decisions in **High Courts**, since the **Film Certification Appellate Tribunal (FCAT)** was abolished in **2021**.

NOTABLE CONTROVERSIES RELATED TO CENSORSHIP

👁 **Rajinikanth-starrer *Coolie*:**

- o The CBFC gave it an **"A" (adults-only)** certificate, citing **violent content**.
- o Producers (Sun TV Network) appealed to Madras High Court, arguing the film could qualify for a U/A rating if some cuts were made.
- o CBFC defended its certificate as the examining and revising committees "unanimously agreed" on the adult rating and the court dismissed the appeal.

👁 **Malayalam film *Haal***

- o The CBFC asked for cuts in **religious dialogues and scenes involving beef biryani**, citing sensitivity concerns.
- o Filmmakers have challenged these demands in the **Kerala High Court**, calling them "unjustified and excessive."

👁 **Janaki v. State of Kerala**

- o CBFC objected to naming a rape survivor "Janaki"—a name associated with Goddess Sita—claiming it may hurt sentiments and disrupt public order.
- o Filmmakers argued violation of **Articles 14 and 19(1)(a)**.
- o Ultimately, CBFC suggested renaming as **"JSK — Janaki V v State of Kerala"**, which filmmakers accepted.

👁 **e-Cinepramaan Portal**

- o CBFC has **permanently restricted** public access to its e-Cinepramaan portal (used for checking certification data).
- o Industry professionals and filmmakers view this as a setback for transparency, limiting public scrutiny of certification decision

LANDMARK JUDICIAL DECISIONS ON CENSORSHIP

🔪 **K. A. Abbas v. Union of India (1970):**

- o The Supreme Court held that **Section 5-B of the Cinematograph Act** mirrors the original wording of **Article 19(2)** prior to the First Amendment.
- o It confirmed that film censorship is justified only to protect **public order, decency, morality, and sovereignty**.

🔪 **Prakash Jha Productions v. Union of India (2011)**

- o The State of Uttar Pradesh suspended screening

using powers under Section 6 of the U.P. Cinemas Act, fearing law-and-order issues.

- o The Court held that once the CBFC certifies a film, the State **cannot suspend its exhibition on mere apprehensions**

🔪 **Chetna Gautam v. Union of India & Ors (2025):**

- o The Delhi High Court declined to re-examine CBFC's certification of **"The Taj Story"**, ruling that courts cannot act as a **"super censor board."**

CHALLENGES

- 🔥 **Increased Policing of Digital Content:** Even though OTTs promised creative freedom, the **Information Technology Rules, 2021** extended regulatory oversight to online content as well, exposing them to CBFC-like scrutiny.

- 🔥 **Overbroad Interpretation of "Public Interest":** CBFC often stretches constitutional limits by citing **religious sensitivities, offence to institutions, potential law-and-order issues** leading to "elastic censorship"

beyond the Act's intended narrow scope.

- o **Example:** According to an independent research project CBFC Watch—over **720 hours of film content** have been altered (deleted, inserted, replaced) between 2017 and 2025, with limited accountability.

- 🔥 **Political Misuse:** There is a risk that censorship powers be used to suppress dissent or critical voices under the guise of "public order" or "security."

- ✧ **Biased Decision-Making:** Selective censorship creates a skewed cultural environment: progressive narratives are curtailed, while regressive ones often pass without scrutiny, affecting the overall creative ecosystem.
- ✧ **Lapsed Tenure and Stalled Governance:** The CBFC's present board's tenure **lapsed in 2020**, its last official appointment occurred in **2017**, and it has **not convened an official meeting since 2019**, raising questions around transparency and legal propriety.
- ✧ **Lack of Transparency:** Decisions by CBFC may not always be transparent which can be seen in absence of timely written reasons and arbitrary referrals to Revising Committees.
- ✧ **Effect of Abolishing FCAT:** With no dedicated tribunal, filmmakers must approach High Courts, increasing litigation burden, delays in release, uncertainty in distribution and marketing cycles

WAY FORWARD

- ✧ **Restore Institutional Checks:** Reinstating an independent appellate authority like the former FCAT is essential to ensure accountability and prevent arbitrary decision-making.
- ✧ **Stronger Legal Safeguards:**
 - o Reform laws to clarify and narrow the grounds for censorship, ensure reasonable restrictions are not abused
 - o Reduce reliance on vague notions of "public interest" or "sensibilities."
- ✧ **Transparent Regulation:** Make the working of CBFC more transparent, with written reasons for every decision, clear timeline for certification, logical explanations for revising committee referrals.
- ✧ **Self-regulation & Co-regulation:** Encourage creative industries (films, digital platforms) to adopt self-regulatory frameworks, with oversight but less heavy-handed control.
- ✧ **Judiciary as Protector:** Courts should continue to play a strong role in checking arbitrary censorship, ensuring decisions align with constitutional freedoms.
- ✧ **Digital Rights Framework:** Develop robust digital rights policies that protect online expression, limit government overreach, and provide for redressal of takedowns.
- ✧ **Education & Media Literacy:** Promote media literacy so that citizens can critically engage with content, reducing moral panic and supporting a mature public discourse.

CONCLUSION

Balancing creative liberty with genuine public interests demands a transparent, predictable, and constitutionally grounded regulatory framework, especially as India shifts toward a digital-first media landscape. Institutionalising the Kerala High Court's reminder that the CBFC must "certify, not moralise" will require targeted policy reforms and capacity building to protect free expression while addressing real societal concerns.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) What challenges does the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) face in balancing creative freedom and societal sensitivities? **(10 marks) (150 words)**

US SHUTDOWN - LESSONS AND COMPARISON WITH INDIA

Syllabus: GS II - Indian Polity; International relations

PYQ MAPPING

- Q)** Critically examine the procedures through which the Presidents of India and France are elected. (2022)
- Q)** The judicial systems in India and the UK seem to be converging as well as diverging in recent times. Highlight the key points of convergence and divergence between the two nations in terms of their judicial practices. (2020)

WHY IN NEWS

Recently, US President Donald Trump signed a stopgap funding bill, bringing an end to the longest government shutdown in American history.

INTRODUCTION

- A government shutdown in the United States is a unique political and fiscal phenomenon rooted in the country's constitutional design. The longest shutdown in US history ended only after President Donald Trump signed a **stopgap funding bill**, bringing to a close the 43-day lapse in federal operations, surpassing the earlier record of 34 days.
- Shutdowns disrupt government functioning, furlough federal employees, and carry measurable economic costs. Their recurrence reflects deeper structural, institutional, and political features of the American system.

SHORT TAKES

➤ Vote on account:

- It is a temporary measure under **Article 116 (not explicitly mentioned)** of the Constitution of India that grants the government parliamentary approval to withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund of India to meet essential expenses until the new government presents a full budget.
- It is passed usually during election years when a full budget cannot be completed and is usually a formality approved without extensive discussion.
- It is distinct from an interim budget, as a vote on account only covers the expenditure side and does not include tax proposals.

➤ Filibuster and cloture

- Filibuster** is a **tactic used in the U.S. Senate to delay or block a vote on a bill** by extending debate indefinitely.
- Senators can speak for as long as they want, propose endless amendments, or use procedural maneuvers to **prevent the Senate from voting**. It is usually used by the **minority party** to force the majority to negotiate or change a bill.
- **Ending a filibuster:** The Senate can invoke **cloture**, which requires **60 votes**, to stop debate and move to a final vote.

WHY GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWNS OCCUR IN THE UNITED STATES

- ➔ A shutdown occurs not because the US government runs out of money, but because it loses **legal authority** to spend. Under US law, federal agencies cannot operate without congressional approval of appropriations.
- ➔ When Congress fails to pass either the annual budget or a temporary funding extension, a **"funding gap"** emerges, compelling agencies to suspend all activities not deemed essential.
- ➔ The reason such breakdowns occur lies in the structure of American democracy. The US follows a **presidential system**, where the Executive (President) is institutionally separate from the Legislature (Congress).
- The President cannot guarantee passage of the budget, and a failed budget does not require resignation of the government. In periods of intense partisan polarization, divided chambers, or **Senate filibuster constraints**, budget agreements often stall.
- ➔ In the recent shutdown, Republicans lacked the 60 votes needed in the Senate to overcome procedural hurdles (filibuster). The impasse concluded only when eight Democratic Senators supported the **stopgap bill**.
- ➔ Since the modern budget system was introduced in 1976, the US has witnessed **11 major shutdowns**, driven by disagreements over issues ranging from immigration and border security to healthcare subsidies and nutrition programmes.

HOW THE US BUDGET CYCLE WORKS

The US fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30. Funding must be authorised by Congress before the fiscal year begins. The President initiates the process much earlier:

- ♣ By the first Monday of February, the President submits a detailed budget proposal to Congress.
- ♣ Congress (both the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate) drafts a **budget resolution**, which sets overall spending and revenue limits.
- ♣ Congress then prepares **appropriation bills** (usually around 12) that allocate funding to specific departments and programs.
- ♣ Each appropriation bill must be passed by a **simple majority** in both the House and the Senate (more than half of those present and voting).
- ♣ In the Senate, however, there's a procedural rule called the **filibuster**: to end debate and move to a vote (cloture), typically **60 votes** are required. This means even with a majority, one party may need opposition support.

Current party situation (119th Congress):

- ♣ Senate: Republicans hold **53 seats**, Democrats **45**, plus **2 Independents** who caucus with Democrats.
- ♣ House: Republicans hold **219 seats**, Democrats **212** (there are also a few vacant seats) in the main count.

THE LEGAL TRIGGER FOR A SHUTDOWN

Under the **Antideficiency Act**, federal agencies cannot spend money without congressional authorisation. When appropriations lapse at the end of the fiscal year, agencies must:

- furlough non-essential staff,
- continue essential services without pay,
- halt non-critical programmes and activities.

The shutdown continues until Congress passes a budget or a continuing resolution (stopgap bill).

THE REASONS FOR CURRENT SHUTDOWN

- 👁 **Healthcare dispute:** Democrats wanted to extend Obama-era **Affordable Care Act (ACA) premium tax credits** and reverse **Medicaid cuts** to low income American households, while Republicans proposed a "clean" **continuing resolution** without these healthcare changes.
- 👁 **Senate deadlock:** The Republican funding bill couldn't get **60 votes** to overcome the filibuster; Democrats blocked it to force negotiations.
- 👁 **Spending cuts fight:** Trump had indicated **possible rescissions**, which means cancellation or permanent withdrawal of funds that Congress had previously approved, **particularly over Medicaid**. Democrats wanted policy guarantees that this will not happen.
- 👁 **Political leverage:** Both parties used the shutdown to **pressure the other side** and frame the narrative. Democrats to show commitment to welfare and liberal priorities; Republicans to push back and avoid concessions.

IMPACT OF A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

- 🇺🇸 **Administrative Disruptions:** In the 2018–19 shutdown, nearly **800,000 out of 2.2 million federal employees** were either furloughed or made to work without pay.
 - o Non-essential services from federal oversight to processing of permits were suspended. National parks remained technically open, but staffing was absent, restrooms shut, and waste disposal halted, illustrating the limits of partial functioning.
- 🇺🇸 **Economic Impact:**
 - o Short shutdowns have minimal impact, particularly over weekends. Prolonged shutdowns, however, affect consumer spending and business operations as federal workers miss paychecks.
 - o The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the 2018–19 shutdown alone cost the US economy around **\$3 billion**, roughly 0.02% of GDP.
 - o Shutdowns amplify economic uncertainty, especially when they coincide with periods of trade conflict or financial market volatility.
 - o Under Trump, tensions with the Federal Reserve and trade wars with key partners made such fiscal disruptions even more destabilising.

COMPARISON: WHY SHUTDOWNS OCCUR IN THE US BUT NOT IN INDIA

Feature	United States	India
Form of Government	The Presidential system, Executive, is separate from the Legislature.	Parliamentary system, Executive (Council of Ministers) is part of Parliament.
Budget Failure Consequence	Budget not passed, Government loses legal authority to spend , Shutdown.	Budget not passed, Government loses majority , Must resign, Elections or formation of new govt.
Executive's Ability to Ensure Budget Passage	The President cannot guarantee Congressional approval.	The Prime Minister usually commands the majority; budget passage is almost assured.
Legal Framework	The Antideficiency Act prohibits spending without appropriations, automatic halt.	The Constitution allows Vote-on-Account , enabling temporary expenditure even if the full budget is delayed.
Reason for Shutdown	Funding gap due to partisan conflict; failure to pass appropriations by Oct 1.	Budget delays do not stop expenditure; the political system prevents gaps.
Fiscal Year Timeline	Oct 1 – Sep 30; shutdown begins at fiscal expiry.	Apr 1 – Mar 31; interim budget allows continuity.
Nature of Conflict	Policy disputes (e.g., SNAP funding, immigration, healthcare).	Budget debates exist but cannot halt government functioning.
Impact of Failure	Federal agencies furlough workers; essential services operate without pay; economic losses.	No operational halt; continuity ensured through constitutional and parliamentary safeguards.

WAY FORWARD

- * **Ruling Republican party members must show greater willingness to compromise** to avoid alienating voters before the mid-term elections.
 - o Let voters judge the shutdown, policy priorities, and governance style, pushing lawmakers to align with public needs.
- * **A genuine bipartisan solution on health-care subsidies is needed**, beyond just holding a symbolic vote.
- * **Both parties need to refocus on key public issues** like jobs, healthcare, education, and immigration instead of power tussles. Establish **pre-agreed spending caps and priorities** across parties to minimize last-minute conflicts.
- * Pass laws that **automatically extend government funding at existing levels** if Congress cannot agree on a budget by the deadline
- * Impose **political or financial consequences** for Congress members who fail to pass budgets on time. Alternatively, provide incentives for timely agreement, like bonus allocations to agencies.
- * Avoid linking unrelated political demands to budget bills; fund government operations **independently of partisan issues**.
- * Empower **bipartisan committees** or neutral mediators to resolve disputes before deadlines.

CONCLUSION

A US government shutdown stems from its institutional design, where a separated executive and legislature, strict appropriation laws, and partisan divisions can halt federal funding. India avoids such disruptions because its parliamentary system ensures continuity of expenditure. With rising fiscal stress and political polarisation, shutdowns are likely to remain a recurring challenge in the US, affecting governance and the broader economy.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Compare the institutional and budgetary mechanisms of the United States and India that explain why government shutdowns occur in the US but not in India.
(10 marks) (150 words)

PAY COMMISSION

Syllabus: GS II - Government policies and interventions

PYQ MAPPING

Q) Examine the pattern and trend of public expenditure on Social Services in the post-reforms period in India. To what extent this has been in consonance with achieving the objective of inclusive growth? (2024)

WHY IN NEWS

The Government of India on **October 28, 2025**, approved the **Terms of Reference (ToR)** for the **Eighth Central Pay Commission (8th CPC)**, following its announcement in **January 2025**.

INTRODUCTION

The Pay Commission in India is a vital institutional mechanism established by the Government of India to **review and recommend changes in the salary structure, allowances, and pension benefits of central government employees including defence personnel**. Since independence, these commissions have played a pivotal role in maintaining equity, motivation, and administrative efficiency within India's vast bureaucracy.

SHORT TAKES

➤ Dearness Allowance (DA)

- o An allowance paid to government employees and pensioners in India to **offset the impact of inflation and rising cost of living**, calculated as a percentage of the basic salary and revised periodically based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- o It is fully taxable and varies depending on the employee's pay, location, and the prevailing inflation level.

➤ Fitment Factor:

- o A multiplier applied to the existing basic pay of a government employee to calculate their new revised basic pay under a pay commission.

➤ Compression Ratio:

- o Refers to the ratio between the maximum and minimum pay within a given pay structure or scale.
- o It shows how much higher the top-level salary is compared to the entry-level pay.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

➔ Origin and Establishment:

- o The First Central Pay Commission was established in **January 1946 under Srinivasa Varadachariar** and submitted its report in **May 1947**, even before India's Independence.
- o It was created to bring uniformity and fairness in government salaries, addressing colonial disparities in pay.

➔ Timeline of Pay Commissions:

- o Since then, India has had **seven Pay Commissions** — in **1946, 1957, 1970, 1983, 1994, 2006, and 2014**, with the **Eighth** announced in **2025**.
- o These are usually set up every decade to revise salaries, pensions, and allowances.

➔ Evolution of Focus:

- o Earlier Commissions focused mainly on pay parity and inflation adjustment.
- o Later Commissions, especially the **6th and 7th**, emphasised **performance incentives, simplified pay structures, and rationalisation of allowances**.

➔ Socio-Economic Rationale

- o Each commission reflects changing socio-economic conditions — inflation, living costs, and the need for parity with private-sector pay scales — ensuring the government remains a competitive employer.

COMPOSITION AND WORKING OF THE PAY COMMISSION

♣️ **Constitution and Nature:**

- o The Pay Commission is **constituted by the Union Government** through an **executive order**, not by constitutional mandate.
- o It functions as an **advisory body** to review salaries, pensions, and service conditions of **Central Government employees**.

♣️ **Composition:**

- o Usually consists of:
 - **Chairperson** (retired judge or senior bureaucrat),
 - **One or more members**, and
 - **A Member-Secretary**

♣️ **Working Process:**

- o **Data Collection:** Gathers data on wages, inflation, allowances, and service conditions.
- o **Consultations:** Engages with ministries, employee unions, and state governments.

- o **Comparative Studies:** Examines pay structures in **PSUs, private sector, and state services**.
- o **Recommendations:** Suggests a **fitment factor**, new **pay matrix**, **rationalised allowances**, and **pension revisions**.

♣️ **Terms of Reference (ToR):** Each commission receives a **mandate** to:

- o Review pay, allowances, and pensions.
- o Assess fiscal implications.
- o Ensure parity with the private sector.
- o Recommend sustainable solutions within economic capacity.

♣️ **Timeline of Work:**

- o Each Pay Commission generally submits its report **within 18 months**.
- o Implementation is approved by the **Union Cabinet** and often **back-dated** to a fixed date (e.g., 1 January of the review year)

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAY COMMISSION

- 🕒 **Fair and Equitable Compensation:** To revise salaries, allowances, and pensions of government employees in line with **inflation** and **cost of living** changes.
- 🕒 **Internal and External Parity:** To ensure **internal equity** (between different ranks) and **external parity** (with comparable private sector roles).
- 🕒 **Simplification of Pay Structure:** To rationalise pay scales, remove anomalies, and introduce a **transparent and predictable progression system**.
- 🕒 **Motivation and Efficiency:** To improve **morale, motivation, and productivity** by ensuring fair pay and better working conditions.
- 🕒 **Fiscal Responsibility:** To make sure salary revisions are **fiscally sustainable**, balancing employee welfare and macroeconomic stability.

ABOUT 8TH PAY COMMISSION (2025)

🕒 **Formation and Approval:**

- o The **8th Central Pay Commission (8th CPC)** was approved in **January 2025**, with the **Terms of Reference finalised in October 2025**.

🕒 **Composition:**

- o **Chairperson:** Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai (former Supreme Court judge and the chairperson of the Press Council of India).
- o **Member (Part-Time):** Prof. Pulak Ghosh (IIM-Bangalore)
- o **Member-Secretary:** Pankaj Jain (Petroleum Secretary)

🕒 **Expected Implementation:**

- o Its recommendations are likely to take effect from **1 January 2026**, similar to past Commissions.

🕒 **Beneficiaries:**

- o Around **50 lakh Central Government employees** and **65–70 lakh pensioners** are expected to benefit.

🕒 **Terms of Reference (ToR):**

- o The economic conditions in the country and the need for fiscal prudence;
- o The need to ensure that adequate resources are available for developmental expenditure and welfare measures;
- o The unfunded cost of non-contributory pension schemes;

- o The likely impact of the recommendations on the finances of the State Governments which usually adopt the recommendations with some modifications; and
- o The prevailing emolument structure, benefits and working conditions available to employees

of Central Public Sector Undertakings and private sector.

Timeline and Report Submission:

- o The Commission is expected to **submit its report within 18 months**, followed by cabinet approval and implementation.

CPC	Year	Minimum Pay	Maximum Pay	Compression Ratio
1st CPC	(1946-47)	55	2000	36.4
2nd CPC	(1957-59)	80	3000	37.5
3rd CPC	(1972-73)	196	3500	17.9
4th CPC	(1983-86)	750	8000	10.7
5th CPC	(1994-97)	2550	26000	10.2
6th CPC	(2006-08)	7000	80000	11.4
7th CPC	(2014-15)	18000	225000	12.5

Source: 7th CPC report

REVISIONS OF VARIOUS PAY COMMISSIONS

IMPORTANCE

- ☀ **Strengthens Public Administration:** Ensures competitive remuneration, attracting **talent and skill** to government service.
- ☀ **Enhances Employee Morale:** Regular pay revision **boosts motivation and job satisfaction**, reducing attrition in public institutions.
- ☀ **Economic Impact:**
 - o Increases in pay and pension raise **consumption demand**, stimulating short-term economic growth.
 - o However, they also contribute to **higher fiscal expenditure** and potential inflationary effects.
- ☀ **Benchmark for States and PSUs:** Central Pay Commissions serve as a **model for state pay revisions** and **public sector enterprises**, creating national uniformity.
- ☀ **Promotes Administrative Reforms:** Introduces modern pay structures, **performance linkages**, and **technology-driven transparency** in service management.
 - o **Example:** The **pension bill for 2025–26** is projected at **₹2.76 lakh crore**, forming a part of the **₹39.44 lakh crore** total revenue expenditure.

CRITICISMS AND CHALLENGES

- ▼ **Fiscal Burden:** Implementation causes a **substantial rise in government expenditure**, straining fiscal discipline and deficit targets.
- ▼ **Narrow Scope of ToR:** The current ToR excludes key elements such as **training, learning opportunities, flexible working, and health promotion**, which are integral to modern employment structures.
- ▼ **Compression Ratio Disparity:** The **compression ratio**—the ratio of lowest to highest salaries—is fixed at **1:12.5** (7th CPC), which may deter talented professionals from entering top administrative roles.
- ▼ **Private Sector Comparison Issues:** While **entry-level government salaries** are higher than private sector roles, **senior and specialist positions** in the government offer lower pay, creating a **competitiveness gap**.
- ▼ **Delay and Arrears:** Recommendations are often **implemented late**, creating arrears and administrative complications.
- ▼ **Composition Limitations:** With members only from **judiciary, academia, and bureaucracy**, the Commission lacks representation from **finance and human resource management**, which could provide practical insights into pay structures and workforce planning.
- ▼ **Centre-State Fiscal Tensions:** Many **states adopt central pay hikes**, leading to **financial stress** in fiscally

weaker states.

- ▼ **Weak Link to Productivity:** Pay revisions are largely **seniority-based** rather than tied to **performance metrics**.
- ▼ **Allowance Disparities:** Despite rationalisation, **inter-**

departmental anomalies in allowances and perks persist.

- ▼ **Pension Scheme** **Liabilities:** Rising **non-contributory pension costs** under the Old Pension Scheme pose **long-term fiscal risks**.

INTERNATIONAL PRACTISES

Evolution of Global Public Sector Pay Philosophy:

- o Until the **1970s**, the focus was on **equity** by benchmarking public pay with private roles.
- o In the **1980s**, it shifted to **efficiency**.
- o Since the **1990s**, the emphasis has been on **performance and incentives**.
- o Modern public sector pay systems aim to **recruit and retain competent individuals** while ensuring **affordability and fiscal discipline**.

- **Characteristics of Fair Compensation:** As per global standards, fair public sector compensation should

demonstrate:

- o A clear pay philosophy;
- o Ability to attract and retain talent;
- o Internal equity;
- o External competitiveness; and
- o Transparency and clarity in pay structures.

- **India's Relative Position:** Although there is a perception that India's public sector employment and pay structure are oversized, data shows that **India's public sector wages and employment levels are lower** compared to major democracies.

Table1: Comparison of public sector employment and expenditure

Country	Public sector wage bill (% of GDP)	Public sector wage bill (% of total expenditure)	Public sector employment (% of total employment)
India	5.48	17.70	8.5
U.S.	9.50	20.58	12.9
U.K.	10.20	20.29	29.0
France	13.37	21.43	31.5
Germany	8.51	16.46	22.4
Brazil	10.65	24.92	12.5

Source: World Bank – World Bureaucracy Indicators - 2022

WAY FORWARD

- * **Move Towards a Permanent Review Body:** Establish a **Permanent Pay Review Authority** for **continuous assessment** instead of once-a-decade reviews.
- * **Link Pay to Performance:** Introduce **productivity-based increments** and **merit-linked promotions** for greater efficiency.
- * **Inclusion of Modern HR Parameters:** The next pay framework should include **intangibles** like **training, work environment, and health promotion**, which are crucial for employee satisfaction.
- * **Rationalise Allowances Further:** Merge redundant allowances, revise outdated ones, and ensure **region-specific compensation** for fairness.

- * **Improve Transparency:** Publish **fiscal impact assessments** and **implementation timelines** for accountability.
- * **Coordinate with State Governments:** Institutionalise **Centre–State consultations** to maintain balance between employee welfare and fiscal sustainability.
- * **Fiscal and Welfare Balance:** Recommendations must continue to balance **fiscal prudence** with **welfare imperatives**, particularly in the context of India’s large and diverse workforce.

CONCLUSION

The Pay Commission continues to serve as a **cornerstone of India’s administrative and fiscal governance**, ensuring fair compensation and workforce stability. However, its future success will depend on balancing fiscal prudence with social equity and adapting pay structures to evolving economic realities and performance-based systems.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Critically analyse the role of Pay Commissions in balancing employee welfare with fiscal prudence.
(10 marks) (150 words)

KURUKSHETHRA SEPTEMBER 2025:

SKILLS EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY

FOSTERING JOBS, BUILDING BHARAT: ELI SCHEME AS A GAMECHANGER

Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme

→ Aim and Coverage

- o The Union Cabinet approved the **Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme** to boost job creation, employability, and social security across all sectors, with **special focus on manufacturing**.
- o The scheme aims to support the creation of **over 3.5 crore jobs** in **2 years** (Aug 2025–July 2027).

→ Financial Outlay

- o The ELI Scheme has an outlay of **₹99,446 crore** and is part of the **PM's five-scheme package** announced in the **Union Budget 2024–25**, which overall targets 4.1 crore youth with **₹2 lakh crore** total allocation.

→ Part A – Incentives for First-Time Employees

- o About **1.92 crore first-time workers** entering the workforce will receive **one month's EPF wage (up to ₹15,000)** in **two instalments** (after 6 and 12 months of service).
- o Eligible salaries: **up to ₹1 lakh per month**; includes a mandatory **financial literacy programme** and partial amount is kept in a **savings instrument** to encourage long-term savings.

→ Part B – Incentives for Employers

- o Employers hiring **additional employees** with salaries up to ₹1 lakh will receive incentives for **two years**, extended to **four years for manufacturing units**.
- o Incentives range from **₹1,000 to ₹3,000 per month per employee**, depending on wage slab, and require sustained employment of at least **six months**.

→ Eligibility and Hiring Requirements for Establishments

- o Establishments must be **registered with EPFO** and hire **a minimum of 2 additional employees** (if they have <50 workers) or **5 additional employees** (if 50+ workers).
- o Part B is expected to generate **2.6 crore additional employment opportunities**

→ Payment Mechanism and Expected Impact

- o Payments to employees will be made via **DBT using Aadhar Bridge Payment System (ABPS)**, while employer incentives go to **PAN-linked accounts**.
- o The scheme aims to **formalize the workforce**, expand **social security**, and catalyse large-scale employment, especially in **manufacturing**.

Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana

- The **Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PMVBRY) portal** has gone live to enable registrations for the new employment-linked scheme announced by PM Modi in his **12th Independence Day address**.
- The scheme was approved by the Union Cabinet on **1 July 2025**.
- Aims to **support employment generation**, enhance **employability**, and expand **social security** across all sectors, with **special focus on manufacturing**.
- Targets the creation of **more than 3.5 crore jobs** between **1 August 2025 and 31 July 2027**.

UNORGANISED WORKERS AND SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES: AN OVERVIEW

Who is an Unorganized Worker?

According to
THE UNORGANIZED WORKERS' SOCIAL SECURITY ACT, 2008
an unorganized worker is

UNORGANIZED WORKER means a home-based worker, self-employed worker or a wage worker in the unorganized sector and includes a worker in the ORGANISED sector who is not covered by any of the Acts mentioned in Schedule II



श्रम एवं रोजगार मंत्रालय
Ministry of Labour & Employment
भारत सरकार (Government of India)



The

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana

Achievements
up to 22.11.2023

Cumulative enrolment
18.58 crore

Cumulative No. of Claims disbursed
7.18 lakh
of
₹ 14,360 crore

Life cover for one year	Insurance coverage of Rs. 2,00,000/-	Affordable premium Rs. 436 per annum
Annual Renewal	Eligibility age for entry : 18 to 50 years	Enrolment can be done at Bank Branches / BC points / Post Office

Follow us on

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana

Premium of
₹ 20/-
per year
auto deducted from the bank account

PMSBY
Pradhan Mantri
Suraksha Bima Yojna

Achievements
up to 16.11.2022

Cumulative enrolment
30.92 crore

Cumulative no. of claims disbursed
1,06,238
for
₹ 2,109 crore

Accidental insurance and disability cover
for individuals
in the age group of
18 to 70 years

Accident insurance cover of
₹ 2 lakh

Enrolment at Bank Branches/
BC points/ Post Office
Renewable annually

Follow us on

Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

- ➔ Atal Pension Yojana (APY) is a government-backed, voluntary pension scheme targeted mainly at workers in the unorganised sector.
- ➔ Individuals aged 18–40 with a savings bank or post office account can join, and contribute regularly until they turn 60.
- ➔ After 60, they receive a **guaranteed** monthly pension of ₹1,000 to ₹5,000 (decided based on their contributions).
- ➔ If returns on contributions are lower than assumed, the government makes up the shortfall — and if higher, the subscriber benefits

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan Dhan (PM SYM)

- ➔ **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan (PM-SYM)** is a voluntary, contributory pension scheme for unorganised workers aged 18–40 with monthly income ≤ ₹15,000
- ➔ Under this scheme, the subscriber contributes a fixed monthly amount (₹55–₹200 depending on age), and the Government matches it 50:50.
- ➔ After turning 60, the subscriber receives a **minimum assured pension of ₹3,000/month**.
- ➔ In case of the subscriber's death, the spouse gets 50% of this pension as a family pension.

PM SVANidhi

CABINET DECISION- 27-08-2025

RESTRUCTURING OF PM SVANidhi

Cabinet restructures PM SVANidhi and extends lending period till March 31, 2030

Restructured scheme aims to benefit 1.15 crore beneficiaries including 50 lakh new beneficiaries

Key features of the restructured scheme :

- Enhanced loan amount across first and second tranche
- First tranche loans increased up to Rs.15,000 (from Rs.10,000)
- Second tranche loans increased up to Rs.25,000 (from Rs.20,000)
- Provision of UPI-linked RuPay Credit Card for beneficiaries who have repaid the second loan

1/2

CABINET DECISION- 27-08-2025

RESTRUCTURING OF PM SVANidhi

Key features of the restructured scheme :

- Digital cashback incentives for retail/wholesale transactions to ensure digital onboarding of street vendors
- Survey of street vendors
- Capacity building of street vendors
- Yearly SVANidhi Swabhiman Awards to instil healthy competition amongst banks/ULBs
- SVANidhi Mahotsav to celebrate the contribution of street vendors

2/2

GRAMODAY 2.0: FROM SKILLS TO SELF RELIANCE

Case Study

- ➔ **Daspara village in Tripura's Sepahijala district** became **India's first self-sustaining modified bio-village** under the state's Bio-Village 2.0 initiative led by the Directorate of Biotechnology.
- ➔ Out of 70 households, 64 adopted **solar energy, biogas plants, organic fertilizers, and other climate-smart technologies**, raising monthly household incomes by ₹5,000–15,000.
- ➔ The administration supported villagers through solar pump sets under PM-KUSUM, fisheries kits for all households, piggery kits for selected families, and a puffed-rice machine to diversify livelihoods.
- ➔ **Chemical fertilizer use dropped sharply** as farmers shifted to bio-fertilizers, improving soil health and crop yields.
- ➔ Recognized globally by The Climate Group as a top sustainable rural practice, Daspara now serves as a **model for Tripura's plan to develop 100 bio-villages**, with villagers demanding further expansion of organic farming.

Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI)

- ➔ RSETIs are Rural Self Employment Training Institutes, an **initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** to have dedicated infrastructure in each district of the country to impart training and skill upgradation of rural youth geared towards entrepreneurship development.

- ➔ RSETIs are managed by banks with active co-operation from the Government of India and State Governments.

Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU GKY)

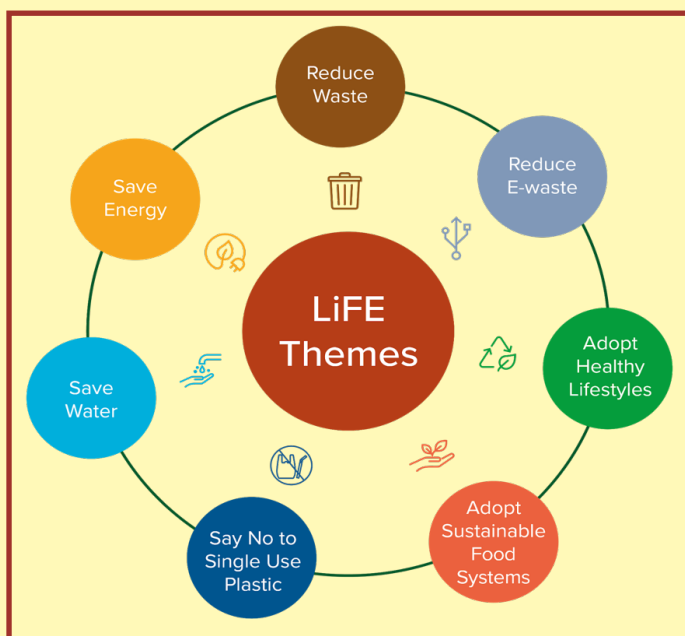
- ➔ A Ministry of Rural Development scheme that provides high-quality skill training to rural poor youth, aiming to equip them with industry-relevant skills and ensure access to jobs offering regular monthly wages at or above the minimum wage.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)

- ➔ JSS is a unique Government of India scheme that provides low-cost, literacy-linked vocational training and **Life Enrichment Education (LEE) to poor, illiterate, neo-literate, and underserved groups.**
- ➔ Unlike other training institutions, JSS centres reach beneficiaries directly in slums and rural areas, do not require age or educational qualifications, and focus on creating self-reliant employees and entrepreneurs through need-based, multi-dimensional skill, knowledge, and awareness programmes.

GREEN TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL JOBS

Mission LiFE



Three Phases of Mission LiFE

Each phase requires a fundamental shift in our approach towards sustainability.

- **Change in Demand (Phase I):** Nudging individuals across the world to practice simple yet effective environment-friendly actions in their daily lives
- **Change in Supply (Phase II):** Changes in large-scale individual demand are expected to gradually nudge industries and markets to respond and tailor supply and procurement as per the revised demands
- **Change in Policy (Phase III):** By influencing the demand and supply dynamics of India and the world, the long-term vision of Mission LiFE is to trigger shifts in large-scale industrial and government policies that can support both sustainable consumption and production

Mission LiFE: An India-led global mass movement to nudge individual and community action to protect and preserve the environment.

THE SUCCESS OF DIGITAL INDIA IN RURAL INDIA

PMGDISHA (Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan)

- ➔ Approved in 2017, it aims to provide digital literacy to **6 crore rural households** by training one person per household to use computers, smartphones, internet, email, government services, and cashless payment methods.
- ➔ Targeting citizens aged **14–60 years**, the scheme promotes rural digital empowerment through awareness campaigns, digital vans, rural school partnerships, workshops, and better connectivity.

SWAYAM Platform

- ➔ Designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of Education Policy viz., **access, equity and quality.**
- ➔ SWAYAM seeks to **bridge the digital divide** for students who have hitherto remained untouched by the digital revolution and have not been able to join the mainstream of the knowledge economy.

INDIA UK FTA: FROM FARM GATE TO PREMIUM SHELVES

INDIA-UK FTA INKED

**What is an FTA
(Free Trade Agreement)?**

A Free Trade Agreement is a deal between countries to make trade easier by:

- ✓ Reducing or removing import and export duties
- ✓ Lowering trade barriers for goods and services
- ✓ Covering areas like investment, intellectual property, and government procurement

Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry

INDIA-UK FTA INKED

How India Gains

Pre-FTA Duty Range	Up to	POST-FTA DUTY
Processed Food*	Up to 70%	%
Vegetable Oils*	Up to 20%	
Transport / Auto	Up to 18%	
Leather / Footwear	Up to 16%	
Electrical Machinery	Up to 14%	
Headgear / Glass / Ceramics	Up to 12%	
Textiles / Clothing	Up to 12%	
Wood / Paper	Up to 10%	
Base Metals	Up to 10%	
Mechanical Machinery	Up to 8%	
Minerals	Up to 8%	
Chemicals	Up to 8%	
Plastic / Rubber	Up to 6%	
Instruments / Clocks	Up to 6%	
Gems & Jewellery	Up to 4%	
Furniture / Sports Goods	Up to 4%	
Arms / Ammunition	Up to 2%	

Applies to 97.1% of tariff lines*

Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry

- ➔ India-UK bilateral annual trade ~**USD 56 billion**
- ➔ Total merchandise-trade ~ **USD 23 billion**
- ➔ Total services trade ~ **USD 33 billion**

A New Field For **FARMERS**

Farmers get access to the UK's \$37.5B agri market and premium buyers

New export markets for jackfruit, millets & organic herbs

Sensitive sectors (Dairy, apples & edible oils) stay protected with no tariff cuts

No safeguard duties ensure stable, penalty-free market access

Traditional farming knowledge receives patent protection

A New Shelf for **INDIA'S MSMES**

MSMEs gain access to **trade finance, education, and global partner networks**

IPR & GI protections boost **global recognition of MSME-made products**

Leather & footwear exports to UK could cross \$900M, uplifting artisans & small units

Textile & footwear hubs like **Tirupur and Kanpur** see job and export growth

INDIA-UK FTA

A New Ease for BUSINESSES TO GO GLOBAL

Simplified customs & single-window clearance ease UK market entry

Indian firms receive **equal treatment** in goods, services & procurement

IT & service sector businesses **gain visa clarity** for skilled Indian professionals

Indian MSMEs can now **participate** in UK government procurement

INDIA'S CHEMICALS
Fuel Export Growth

Boost to India's chemical exports by **30-40%**

Exports projected to reach **\$650-750 MILLION** in FY 2025-26

Strengthens India's position in **UK's chemical supply chain**

AI ENABLED DIGITAL SKILLING FOR RURAL INDIA

Skilling for AI Readiness (SOAR)

- ➔ Targets **school students from class 6 to class 12 and educators** to enable a future-ready India in this increasingly digital world.
- ➔ SOAR incorporates 3 targeted 15-hour modules for students and one independent 45-hour module for educators, focusing on topics like ethical AI use and basic concepts of machine learning.
- ➔ The **Union Budget 2025-26** allocates **₹500 crore** to establish a **Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence for education**, aimed at advancing AI-driven learning and innovation.

SKILL INDIA MISSION
Skiiling Youth, Building New India

KEY SCHEMES

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK)
- Integration with General Education
- Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)
- Pradhan Mantri YUVA
- SANKALP (Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion)
- Vocational Training Programme For Women

WEEKLY DOSSIERS

TAMIL NADU MODEL OF SUB-STATE CLIMATE ACTION

Tamil Nadu has emerged as a pioneer in *sub-State climate governance* by institutionalising district-level decarbonisation, real-time climate tracking, and ecosystem restoration through a dedicated Special Purpose Vehicle — the **Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company (TNGCC)**. The model exemplifies a bottom-up, evidence-driven climate framework aligned with India's net-zero commitments.

- ◆ Tamil Nadu contributes **7% of India's emissions** despite being highly industrialised.
- ◆ Between **2005–2019**, the State reduced its **emission intensity to GDP by nearly 60%**.
- ◆ To accelerate transition and embed climate action locally, Tamil Nadu launched **statewide GHG inventories**, a **Net Zero Pathway**, and **district-level climate plans**.

Institutional Innovation: Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company (TNGCC)

- ◆ A first-of-its-kind **Special Purpose Vehicle** coordinating all climate and ecosystem work through four missions:
 - **Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission (TNCCM)** – GHG reduction, resilience.
 - **Green Tamil Nadu Mission (GTNM)** – afforestation, greening.
 - **Tamil Nadu Wetlands Mission (TNWM)** – wetland protection, Ramsar sites.
 - **TN SHORE Coastal Restoration Mission** – mangroves, seascapes, coastal livelihoods.

Key Features of the Tamil Nadu Model

- ◆ **District-Level Decarbonisation Plans (Bottom-Up Approach)**
 - Four pilot districts: **Nilgiris, Coimbatore, Ramanathapuram, Virudhunagar**. Each district has:
 - Detailed GHG inventories (2005–2019).
 - Climate variability projections till 2100.
 - District-specific emission drivers.
 - Year-wise list of “shovel-ready” projects to start from 2025.
- ◆ **Real-Time Climate Action Tracker**
 - Built with Vasudha Foundation.
 - Tracks district-wise progress across sectors.
 - Ensures transparency, evidence-led monitoring.
 - Operationalises the principle: *“What gets*

measured, gets done.”

◆ Integration of Nature-Based Solutions

- Restoration of mangroves and seascapes along the **1,068 km coastline**.
- **20 Ramsar wetlands are protected**.
- 30% of land area under protection.
- Focus on biodiversity and livelihoods (fisherfolk, forest communities).

◆ Economy-Wide Decarbonisation

- Renewable energy: **60% of installed capacity, 30% of power generated**.
- Electric mobility programme targeting full public transport electrification.
- Waste, agriculture, livestock also included (beyond industry & energy).

◆ Community-Centric Governance

- Local bodies and communities participate in planning & implementation.
- Climate action integrated with district development priorities.
- A dedicated Project Management Unit in each pilot district drives execution.

Impact and Significance

◆ State-Level Impact

- Strengthens adaptive capacity and resilience.
- Aligns economic growth with ecological security.
- Builds transparent systems, not just targets.

◆ National Significance

- Demonstrates how India's net-zero ambition can be deepened through **local innovation**.
- Provides a scalable template for other States: geospatial tracking, district climate budgets, and real-time accountability.

Conclusion

Tamil Nadu's sub-State climate governance marks a shift from *high-level pledges* to *grounded, measurable, participatory climate action*. By combining district-specific decarbonisation, robust data systems, and ecosystem restoration, the State highlights how climate change can be reframed as an opportunity for inclusive, nature-positive development. The model stands as a replicable blueprint for India's climate federalism in the decades ahead.

JUSTICE P.S. NARASIMHA ON ANTHROPOCENTRIC VS ECOCENTRIC ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES

While hearing a petition on the conservation of two critically endangered species, the **Great Indian Bustard (GIB)** and the **Lesser Florican**, Justice P.S. Narasimha made significant observations about the limits of *imported* Western environmental principles such as **inter-generational equity**. The case involved captive breeding efforts where only *70 bustards are in captivity, 150 in the wild, and the Lesser Florican population is just 70*.

Key Issue in the Case

- ◆ The petition sought stronger conservation measures for the dying species. Captive breeding has had mixed success:
 - GIB: Moderate success
 - Lesser Florican: Failing recovery
- ◆ The Supreme Court was asked to intervene to prevent extinction, a point where environmental philosophy meets environmental law.

Justice Narasimha's Core Argument

- ◆ **Imported Principles Are Anthropocentric**
 - He argued that ideas like **inter-generational equity**, the idea that natural resources should be fairly used between present and future *human* generations, originate from Western, often Biblical, hierarchies where humans sit at the top of creation.
 - Such principles assume:
 - Nature exists to serve human needs.
 - The duty is to humans (present and future).
 - Species matter only insofar as they help human survival or well-being.
 - This makes them **insufficient for species that may have zero instrumental value**, such as the GIB.
- ◆ **Ecocentric Approach Is Needed for Species Protection**
 - Justice Narasimha drew on his own submissions in the **2012 Red Sanders case**, where he had urged the Court to consider **intrinsic value**.
 - Ecocentrism means:
 - Every species has value *independent of human use*.

- Conservation is not charity but an obligation flowing from the natural order.
- Humans are not the centre of the ecosystem; they are one species among many.
- The Constitution (Art. 51A(g)) already recognises this, *a duty to show compassion to all living beings*.
- In this worldview, biodiversity is not a storehouse for human needs but a web of life with its own legitimacy.

◆ Extinction Cannot Be Considered an 'Option'

- The judge responded to the petitioner's argument that captive breeding of the Lesser Florican is failing. He emphasised that **extinction is not a permissible outcome**, not because humans need the species, but because the species has a **right to exist**.

Significance of the Observation

- ◆ **A shift in Indian environmental jurisprudence**
 - Indian environmental law has long been built on *sustainable development*, *polluter pays*, and *inter-generational equity*, all rooted in human welfare.
 - Justice Narasimha's remarks strengthen the **ecocentric turn** in Indian jurisprudence, which began with cases on animal rights, wetlands, and forests.
- ◆ **A warning against uncritical borrowing**
 - Not every global environmental principle maps cleanly to Indian ecological realities. A bird on the brink of extinction cannot be saved by policies that measure value only through human utility.

Conclusion

The case underscores a profound truth: *laws built around human interests cannot always protect non-human life*. Justice Narasimha's intervention signals an evolution in Indian environmental jurisprudence from a human-centred sustainability model to one that respects the independent existence of other species. In a country with deeply interdependent ecosystems, this shift may be crucial for preventing silent extinctions.

CRYOSPHERE CRISIS IN THE HIMALAYA: CAUSES, IMPACTS AND THE RACE TO ADAPT

The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), stretching across 12 States and a Union Territory and supporting nearly **77 million people**, forms the planet's largest reservoir of ice and snow outside the poles — the “**Third Pole**”. It feeds major Asian rivers and stabilises monsoon systems. Accelerated warming, erratic snowfall, and aerosol pollution are destabilising this cryosphere, threatening water security, ecosystems and infrastructure. The crisis is now deep enough to reshape Himalayan societies if adaptation does not keep pace.

Drivers of the Himalayan Cryosphere Crisis

- ◆ **Rapid Warming in High Altitudes**
 - The Hindu Kush Himalaya has warmed nearly **2°C since 1950**, higher than the global average. Elevations above 4,000 m record warming up to **0.34°C per decade**, pushing glaciers into unstable retreat.
- ◆ **Greenhouse Gases and Black Carbon Double Punch**
 - Black carbon, an absorbing aerosol, accelerates glacier melt by up to **50%**. Deposited soot lowers the albedo (reflectivity) of snow, acting like dark paint on a mirror.
- ◆ **Declining Snowfall & Snow Persistence**
 - Snow cover has dropped dramatically:
 - Indus basin: –23.3%
 - Ganga basin: –17%
 - Brahmaputra basin: –14.6%
 Shorter snow persistence disrupts the timing of meltwater that farmers depend on for early sowing.
- ◆ **Altered Precipitation Regimes**
 - Erratic rain, snow shifts destabilise traditional water systems (glacier-fed irrigation, zings, kulhs, and spring networks).
- ◆ **Global Trend of Glacier Decline**
 - Planet losing **270 billion tonnes** of glacier mass annually. On track to lose **two-thirds** of all glaciers by 2100.

Impacts: From Water Stress to Hazard Cascades

- ◆ **Water Scarcity for Mountain Communities**
 - Snow and glacier melt form critical water supplies, up to **40% of Indus flow**, and 15% for Ganga and Brahmaputra. Late-season meltwater arrives too late for sowing, threatening food security.
- ◆ **Loss of Traditional Water Systems**
 - Centuries-old community-managed systems are fading, eroding local resilience.
- ◆ **Increase in Cryospheric Hazards**
 - Glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), avalanches, and landslides now act like fast-moving dominoes. Recent reminders:
 - **Kedarnath 2013**: glacial lake and cloudburst
 - **Chamoli 2021**: cascading hazard
 - **South Lhonak, Sikkim 2023**: sudden lake breach
 - A 2021 survey identified **4,418 glacial lakes**, with Jammu & Kashmir showing the highest number of “high priority” dangerous lakes.
- ◆ **High Infrastructure Risk**
 - Hydropower projects, roads, and military infrastructure lie in vulnerable valleys with extremely short early-warning windows.
- ◆ **Social & Livelihood Disruptions**
 - Tourism, agriculture, and pastoralism all face upheaval as water regimes shift.

Adaptation: What Needs to Be Done

- ◆ **Strengthen Local Water Security**
 - Revive traditional water systems (zings, kuhl channels, glacier grafting techniques).
 - Build decentralised storage and small reservoirs.
 - Promote climate-smart agriculture suited to reduced early-season water.
- ◆ **Integrated Mountain Water Management**
 - Combine hydrology, cryosphere studies, and socio-economic data at the **catchment** level rather than broad regions.
- ◆ **Early Warning Systems for GLOFs**
 - Install sensors near unstable lakes.
 - Use climate, ice-thickness and hydrodynamic

modelling.

- o Community-based warning and evacuation plans.

◆ **Regulate Infrastructure Development**

- o Avoid construction in fragile valleys. Mandatory GLOF and landslide risk assessments before hydropower and highway projects.

◆ **Improve Data and Risk Mapping**

- o Using satellite data, local measurements to generate simplified but accurate risk maps for policymakers.

◆ **Reduce Black Carbon Emissions**

- o Clean cooking, stricter transport norms, and dust

control in Himalayan urban centres.

◆ **Community Resilience**

- o Awareness programmes, emergency drills, livelihood diversification.

Conclusion

The Himalayan cryosphere is melting into a new geological era, one created by human emissions and accelerated by soot settling on ancient ice. What melts in the high mountains does not stay there; it cascades into rivers, cities, farms, and national security. Adapting to this rapid transformation requires science, traditional knowledge, and policy imagination working together. The future of water for North India rests on decisions made in this decade.

BEYOND VERDICTS: KEY JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS

Supreme Court Direction on Saranda Forest

- ◆ The **Supreme Court has ordered the Jharkhand government to notify Saranda Forest as both a wildlife sanctuary and a conservation reserve**, while imposing a one-kilometre no-mining buffer around its boundary.
- ◆ Saranda, often called the **“land of seven hundred hills,”** is a dense Sal forest located in the Chhotanagpur biogeographic zone, with its landscape blending into Odisha and Chhattisgarh.
- ◆ It is inhabited by tribal communities such as the **Ho, Munda, Uraon, and Santhal. The region is drained by rivers like the Karo, Koina, and Lailor.**

Supreme Court on Human–Wildlife Conflict

- ◆ The **Supreme Court has asked all States to consider classifying human–wildlife conflict** as a **“natural disaster”** to ensure faster relief and mandated a uniform ex gratia payment of **₹10 lakh for every human death**, as fixed under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats scheme.
- ◆ The **Court also directed the National Tiger Conservation Authority** to prepare Model Guidelines on managing such conflicts within six months, to be adopted by States soon after.
- ◆ It stressed that compensation systems must be simple, inclusive and time-bound, covering crop loss, injuries, deaths and cattle loss.
- ◆ The judgment further highlighted the need for tight coordination across forest, revenue, police, disaster management and local governance departments to reduce response delays. Some States, such as Uttar Pradesh, have already notified such conflicts as natural disasters; others have been urged to follow suit.

Supreme Court Rejects Year-Long Construction Ban in Delhi–NCR Pollution Case

- ◆ The Supreme Court **declined to impose an annual construction ban in Delhi–NCR, stating that such an extreme measure would cripple livelihoods and bring the region to a standstill.**
- ◆ Responding to submissions that the air quality crisis is “an emergency,” the Court acknowledged the severity of

pollution but insisted on long-term, practical solutions rather than blanket prohibitions. The bench asked the Union Ministry of Environment and the Delhi Chief Secretary to propose sustainable, multi-year strategies to gradually improve air quality.

Supreme Court Questions Sale of Liquor in Tetra-Packs

- ◆ The Supreme Court **criticised States for allowing liquor in tetra-packs, warning that the packaging looks like juice boxes and makes alcohol easily accessible to schoolchildren.**
- ◆ During a hearing in a trademark dispute, the bench said governments are prioritising revenue over public health and stressed that tetra-packs lack proper warnings and pose serious social risks.
- ◆ The Court referred the trademark case to mediation but urged States to reconsider permitting such packaging in the larger public interest.

Supreme Court Orders Restoration of Corbett Tiger Reserve

- ◆ The Supreme Court **directed Uttarakhand to restore ecological damage caused by illegal constructions, roadworks and tree felling inside Corbett Tiger Reserve,** especially around the **Pakhrau Tiger Safari site.**
- ◆ The State must demolish all unauthorised structures within three months and submit a full restoration plan within two months, following the Expert Committee's guidelines on hydrological restoration and native plantations.
- ◆ The **Chief Wildlife Warden** must report progress to the Central Empowered Committee for one year

ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) You are the District Education Officer of a rural district where government schools have long struggled with teacher absenteeism. During a surprise inspection, you find that the headmaster of a well-known school has been marking several teachers as “present” even when they have not attended for weeks. When confronted, he explains that most of these teachers come from influential local families, and reporting them will trigger political backlash and social tension in the village. Meanwhile, students and parents privately complain to you that learning levels have dropped sharply, and many children have begun migrating to private schools far from their homes. A senior official in the department subtly hints that it may be wiser to “avoid creating noise” during the upcoming local elections. At the same time, an NGO working in the district offers to collaborate with you to improve school functioning, but only if strict action is taken against absenteeism. You must decide how to address the malpractice without destabilising community relations, compromising educational integrity, or appearing politically motivated.

- What are the ethical issues involved in this situation?
- Who are the stakeholders, and how is each affected?
- Which ethical principles and values should guide your decision as District Education Officer?
- Suggest three possible courses of action, along with their merits and demerits.
- Recommend the most appropriate course of action, with clear justification based on ethical reasoning.

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

- Commitment:** Booth-level officer Hakeem Kambar in Kasaragod is completing door-to-door voter list verification using a three-wheeled scooter, covering 175 of 355 households despite mobility challenges. He is known for his dedicated public service, including a previous polio awareness campaign across the district.
- Healthcare Ethics:** The Health Department of Kerala, following High Court directions, has issued guidelines requiring schools to conduct safety audits, maintain first-aid rooms, train staff in CPR and snakebite response, and coordinate with nearby PHCs for anti-venom availability.
- Social Justice:** The Seasonal Education Programme in Jammu & Kashmir sets up mobile tent schools for Gujjar and Bakarwal children during their annual high-altitude migration, ensuring they do not miss months of schooling. Despite challenges like long travel distances, harsh weather, and limited resources, over **33,000 children** are currently benefiting from these classrooms in remote mountain pastures.
- Environmental Ethics:** Once notorious for large-scale bird poaching, Mangalajodi in Odisha saw birds being poisoned and sold to markets in the 1990s. After NGO *Wild Orissa* intervened in 1998, hunters became conservation guides, poaching stopped, and now the Chilika wetland welcomes **over 3 lakh migratory birds** each year.
- Innovation:** Sruthi **Srivatsan** and her father, K K Babu, developed **Sahayatha**, a wheelchair with a built-in water-cleaning and waste-collection system, after witnessing the loss of dignity faced by people with mobility challenges. Patented in over 140 countries and already helping 300+ users, it restores independence by reducing caregiver dependence and allowing users to manage basic hygiene with privacy.
- Perseverance:** Minakshi Hooda, 24, from Rohtak overcame severe financial constraints, training from the back of a rented auto-rickshaw while her father worried about affording equipment, diet, and tournament expenses. Despite these challenges, she progressed under coach Vijay Hooda’s guidance to win gold in the women’s 48kg category at the 2025 World Boxing Championships in Liverpool.
- Lack of Accountability:** Two senior officers and the chief superintendent of Parappana Agrahara Central Prison (Karnataka) were suspended/transferred after social-media-videos showed inmates violating rules and enjoying undue privileges.
- Gender Rights:** The Delhi government is set to introduce free travel on Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and cluster buses for transgender individuals, with smart mobility cards and behaviour-training for bus staff to ensure dignity and safety.

MODEL ESSAY

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards"

Introduction

- Quote by Danish philosopher **Søren Kierkegaard**.
- We **act in the present**, often with limited clarity, and only later do we look back and realize **why things unfolded the way they did**.

Importance of Balance Between Reflection and Action

- **Clarity and momentum:** Action creates experiences; reflection extracts meaning from them. **Eg:** After the Chandrayaan-2 landing setback, ISRO analyzed failures and made corrections, leading to the success of **Chandrayaan-3**.
- **Enhances leadership:** Leaders must learn from their past choices and act decisively in real time. **Eg:** : **Satya Nadella** reflected on Microsoft's closed culture and shifted to a *growth mindset* approach,
- **Emotional resilience:** Reflection gives emotional processing; action provides purpose and movement. **Eg:** **Mary Kom** reflected on early defeats, reworked her training, became a world champion.
- **Supports Better Public Policy:** Governments review past successes/failures to improve future governance. **Eg:** After the **2016 demonetization**, lessons on digital payments adoption helped design **UPI and Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM)**

Challenges

- **Overthinking leads to paralysis:** Excessive analysis can delay decisions and discourage risk-taking.
- **Impulsive action repeats mistakes:** Without reflection, individuals replicate poor habits or judgments. **Eg:** Stock traders who do not study their loss patterns repeat emotional buying and selling.

- **Emotional discomfort:** Self-reflection exposes insecurity and guilt, which many avoid.
- **Time pressure and fast-paced life:** Modern lifestyles encourage *doing* more than *thinking*; reflection feels "unproductive."
- **Information Overload:** With constant news, notifications, and social media, the mind stays reactive rather than reflective.

Way forward

- **Use the Performance Feedback Loop:** Act → Analyze → Adjust → Act again. This is the model used in sports coaching and start-ups.
- **Seek Mentorship or Peer Review:** Others can help us see blind spots that self-reflection alone cannot.
- **Practice Mindfulness or Slowing Down:** Being present deepens both reflection and purposeful action. **Eg:** Yoga, journaling, and meditation are practical tools.
- **Translate Reflection Into One Action Step:** Always end reflection with one concrete next step. **Eg:** If social media distracts, set a **digital curfew** instead of attempting total detox.

Conclusion

- Reflection helps us understand *who we are*, and action helps us *become who we can be*.
- The wisdom of life lies in **living forward with courage**, and **understanding backward with humility**.

Sample Quotes

- *Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous -Confucius*
- *Learning never exhausts the mind- Leonardo da Vinci*
- *The more the marbles wastes, the more the statue grows- Michelangelo*

MAINS JOT DOWN



GS- III - AGRICULTURE

- The **2025 FAO report *Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security*** underscores how disasters continue to destabilize global food systems, while emphasizing digital technologies as crucial tools for reducing agricultural risks.
- It estimates that disasters caused about **USD 3.26 trillion in agricultural losses between 1991 and 2023**, with cereals suffering the most. Asia experiences the highest share of these losses, **around 47%** due to its vast agricultural output and strong vulnerability to floods, storms and other climate-related shocks.



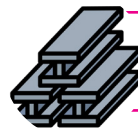
GS- III - ENERGY

- The **Union Minister of Science and Technology** announced the development of **four Hydrogen Valley Innovation Clusters (HVICs)** to showcase India's complete green hydrogen value chain.
- These HVICs will demonstrate large-scale projects covering hydrogen production, storage, transport, and end-use.
- Initially conceptualised by the Department of Science and Technology, they are now part of the **National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM)**, launched in 2023 to build a full green hydrogen ecosystem and achieve a production target of 5 million metric tonnes a year by 2030.



GS- III- POLLUTION

- The **Global Carbon Budget 2025 report**, released by the **Global Carbon Project**, notes that India's emissions rose modestly by **1.4% in 2025**, helped by a cooler monsoon and expanding renewable energy.
- India remains the **world's third-largest emitter at about 3.2 billion tonnes (after the U.S. and China)**, yet its per-capita emissions, around 2.2 tonnes a year, are the second lowest among the world's 20 biggest economies.



GS- III - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

- A new report by **UNEP's Cool Coalition** outlines a Sustainable Cooling Pathway to curb the sharp rise in greenhouse gas emissions from cooling systems by 2050.
- It warns that, under a Business-as-Usual scenario, global cooling equipment capacity could jump from **22 TW in 2022 to 68 TW** by mid-century.
- Despite growing awareness, only 54 countries currently meet the full standards for sustainable cooling.
- Rising temperatures intensify the challenge: populations facing deadly heat stress may increase from today's 30% to as high as 76% by century's end, further worsened by heatwaves and the urban heat-island effect.



GS- II - GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

- The **Dumpsite Remediation Accelerator Programme (DRAP)**, launched under **Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban 2.0**, is a year-long initiative aimed at achieving **Lakshya Zero Dumpsites by September 2026**. SBM-U 2.0, introduced in 2021, focuses on making all cities garbage-free and converting legacy dumpsites into green zones.
- DRAP prioritises high-impact locations, targeting around **8.8 crore MT of legacy waste**, the old, mixed waste accumulated in landfills across the country. Nearly 80% of this waste is concentrated in 214 sites across 202 Urban Local Bodies.
- The programme, led by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**, is open to all States and UTs, with priority for sites holding over 45,000 MT of legacy waste, while UTs and the Northeast have no minimum threshold.



GS- III - INDIAN ECONOMY

- Home Minister Amit Shah, speaking as Chief Guest at the international conference **“Co-Op Kumbh 2025”** in New Delhi, highlighted the growing strength of the urban cooperative credit sector.
- He noted that the newly adopted Delhi Declaration 2025 will guide the expansion of Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs), while digital tools like Sahkar Digi-Pay and Sahkar Digi-Loan mark the sector’s shift into the digital era.
- He said UCBs and credit societies have gained fresh momentum under the Modi government, with plans to set up a UCB in every city with a population above two lakh within five years.
- **UCBs are increasingly empowering small traders, entrepreneurs, and youth**, and the global success of Amul and IFFCO underscores the growing strength of India’s cooperative sector.

- SEBI has issued a public advisory cautioning investors against online **‘Digital Gold’ or ‘E-Gold’ products**, noting that they are outside its regulatory scope.
- Digital gold allows people to buy and trade gold electronically, with its price linked to physical gold. Although often supported by blockchain systems, these products are not recognised as securities or regulated as commodity derivatives.

- The **Export Promotion Mission (EPM)**, announced in the Union Budget 2025–26, is a flexible framework aimed at strengthening India’s export ecosystem in a shifting global trade environment.
- With an outlay of **₹25,060 crore for FY 2025–26 to FY 2030–31**, the mission focuses on affordable trade finance for MSMEs, improving competitiveness through better compliance and certification, and expanding global market access.
- It prioritises MSMEs, first-time exporters, and labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, leather, and gems and jewellery.



GS- III - DEFENCE

- The 11th edition of the India–Sri Lanka joint military exercise **Mitra Shakti 2025** has begun in Belagavi, Karnataka.
- Mitra Shakti is an annual bilateral army exercise between the two countries, conducted alternately in India and Sri Lanka to strengthen military cooperation.
- India has activated the **Mudh-Nyoma** **airbase in eastern Ladakh**, strengthening its defence posture along the Line of Actual Control with China.
- Located at nearly 13,000 feet and close to the LAC, the base provides strategic oversight of key areas such as the Depsang Plains, Pangong Tso sector and Chushul Valley.

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

RIFT VALLEY FEVER (RVF):

- It is caused by a **Phlebovirus** of the *Phenuiviridae* family and mainly affects livestock such as cattle.
- Humans can get infected through contact with sick animals or bites from infected mosquitoes, though it does **not** spread from person to person.
- There is no specific treatment for RVF in humans, though vaccines are available for animals.
- Recently confirmed by the WHO in Mauritania and Senegal, is a viral disease first identified in Kenya's Rift Valley in the 1930s.

NEODYMIUM

- It is a lanthanide metal and an essential rare-earth element used worldwide for high-strength permanent magnets, critical to electric vehicles, renewable energy systems, and defence technology.
- It appears as a shiny, silvery-yellow metal that quickly tarnishes in air. Neodymium is used to make powerful iron–boron magnets, as well as lasers for eye and cosmetic surgery and some cancer treatments.
- Like most lanthanides, it is mainly extracted from minerals such as **monazite** and **bastnaesite**.

ALTERMAGNETISM

- It is a new magnetic state that **mixes traits of ferromagnets and antiferromagnets**.
- Like antiferromagnets, it has no net magnetic field, but its internal electronic structure behaves like a ferromagnet, producing strong spin polarization.

QUANTUM DIAMOND MICROSCOPE

- It uses **nitrogen-vacancy (NV) centres in diamonds** to map magnetic fields at nanoscale resolution even at room temperature.
- It supports cutting-edge work in neuroscience, materials science, and non-destructive semiconductor testing.

FOURIER TRANSFORM INFRARED (FTIR) SPECTROSCOPY

- It is a method for identifying and analysing materials by observing how they absorb infrared light.
- It relies on an interferometer to capture signals, which a computer converts into a spectrum for interpretation.
- The technique is non-destructive, needs only a tiny sample, and yields both qualitative and quantitative insights. It is widely used in pharmaceuticals, materials research, environmental testing, and forensic investigations.