

FWD

FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST



> CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT

> 18TH BRICS SUMMIT

> CLEAN AIR

07th SEPTEMBER, 2026 - 13th SEPTEMBER, 2026

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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.

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

KASTURI SHA
AIR 68

MANJIMA P
AIR 235

FABI RASHEED
AIR 71

SWATHI S BABU
AIR 522

OORMILA J S
AIR 561

W O M E N I N P O W E R

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WORLD MAP AT UNITED NATIONS: CONSEQUENCES AND INDIA'S STAND

Syllabus: GS I - Geography

PYQ Mapping

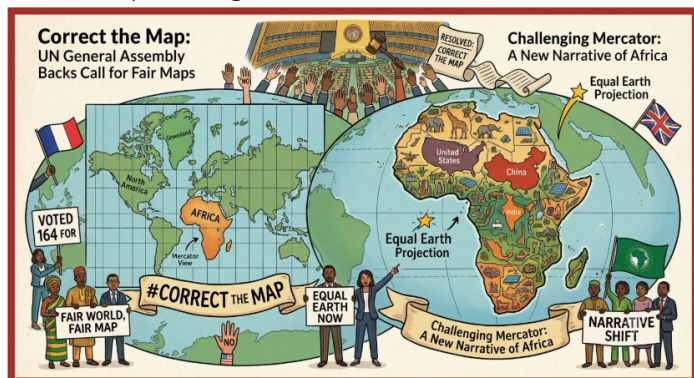
Q) How can Artificial Intelligence (AI) and drones be effectively used along with GIS and RS techniques in locational and area planning? (2025)

Why in the news

The United Nations has adopted a resolution to shift away from the 16th-century Mercator map of the world towards one that more accurately depicts Africa's vast size.

Introduction

At the UN General Assembly, **164 countries, including India, backed the 2018 Equal Earth map projection**, signalling broad support for a more proportionate representation of the world, although the non-binding resolution leaves its actual adoption to governments and institutions.



UN Resolution 'Correct the Map'

- ➔ The UN General Assembly has voted in favour of a resolution calling for a correction in world maps that do not accurately represent the size of Africa, challenging the centuries-old Mercator projection that has long dominated classrooms, institutions and navigation.
- ➔ The resolution, titled '**Correct the Map**', was sponsored by Togo and backed by members of the African Union.
- ➔ It received the support of 164 countries, including France and the United Kingdom. The United States was the only country to vote against it, while six countries abstained.
- ➔ The UN resolution is non-binding but supporters say it could encourage institutions around the world to move away from the Mercator projection and adopt maps based on more accurate representations of the relative size of continents.

Mercator projection

History:

- o The **Mercator projection**, developed by Flemish cartographer **Gerardus Mercator in 1569**, was primarily designed to aid maritime navigation. However, while it preserves direction well, it **greatly distorts the relative size of landmasses**, especially those closer to the poles.

Design:

- o It is impossible to represent the Earth's curved surface perfectly on a flat map, so every **map projection involves some degree of distortion**.
- o Projections therefore make different trade-offs
 - » **conformal projections** preserve angles and local shapes,
 - » **equal-area projections** preserve relative area,
 - » **equidistant projections** preserve distance along specified lines, and
 - » **compromise projections** balance distortions in area, shape, distance and direction.
- o The **Mercator projection is a conformal projection**, making it useful for navigation but less accurate in representing the true size of landmasses.

Advantages of the Design:

- o **Useful for navigation-** The Mercator projection represents **rhumb lines (constant compass bearings) as straight lines**, making route planning easier for sailors.
- o **Simple course-following-** A ship could maintain the **same compass direction throughout the journey**, for example, from Mumbai to Muscat, without repeatedly recalculating its bearing.
 - » Because the Mercator projection is **conformal**, it preserves local angles and compass bearings. As a result, a route of constant bearing, called a **rhumb line**, appears as a straight line on the map, so sailors can keep the same compass direction throughout the journey.

Limitations of the design:

- o The **Mercator projection exaggerates the size of regions farther from the equator**, while equatorial regions appear relatively smaller.

- o This distortion arises because the projection keeps latitude and longitude lines at right angles to preserve shape and direction, but progressively increases the spacing between latitudes toward the poles.
- o As a result, high-latitude regions such as **Greenland and Antarctica appear disproportionately large** compared with areas near the equator.

♣ **Critical view:**

- o **Western cultural hegemony-** Greenwich-centred maps can reinforce Western centrality while visually reducing Africa's relative size.
- o **Cartography and power-** Colonial powers used maps for **surveying, boundary-making and territorial control**.
- o **Scramble for Africa-** Mapping supported the **partition and administration of African territories**, linking cartography with imperial expansion.

Equal Earth Map

🕒 **History:**

- o The **Equal Earth projection** was developed in **2018** by cartographers **Bojan Šavrič, Tom Patterson and Bernhard Jenny**.
- o It was designed as an **equal-area projection** that preserves the true relative size of continents while maintaining a visually balanced shape.
- o In **2026**, it gained wider attention after the UNGA-backed **"Correct the Map"** initiative promoted more accurate world-map representation.

🎨 **Design:**

- o **Equal Earth projection** is an equal-area, pseudocylindrical map, created using a mathematical transformation that projects Earth's curved surface onto a flat, rounded map while **preserving the relative area of countries and continents**.
- o It uses straight parallels and curved meridians to spread distortion more evenly across the map.

🌱 **Advantages of Equal Earth Projection:**

- o Preserves true relative area, so continents such as Africa are shown more accurately in size.
- o Reduces Eurocentric visual distortion compared with Mercator.
- o Visually balanced and suitable for education, atlases and thematic maps.

🌱 **Limitations:**

- o Does not preserve exact shapes or angles,

especially away from the equator.

- o Not ideal for navigation, because constant compass directions are not shown as straight lines.
- o Like every flat map, it cannot eliminate all distortions of shape, distance and direction.

Consequences of Changing the World Map Projection

- 🌞 **More accurate perception of size:** Equal-area maps would show continents such as **Africa and South America closer to their true relative size**, correcting the exaggeration of high-latitude regions.
- 🌞 **Educational impact:** Textbooks and classrooms may present a **less Eurocentric visual image of the world**, influencing how students perceive global geography.
- 🌞 **Political and cultural significance:** Changing map design can challenge long-standing visual hierarchies and debates over **cartographic bias and representation**.
- 🌞 **Need for institutional transition:** Governments, schools, publishers and digital platforms would need to **update maps, atlases and teaching materials**.
- 🌞 **Navigation unaffected:** Mercator and other conformal projections would still remain useful for **navigation**, since no single projection is suitable for every purpose.
- 🌞 **Possible boundary sensitivities:** Any new map must still correctly depict **international boundaries and disputed territories**, as projection change should not alter sovereignty claims.

Other Important Map Projection

- 🌐 **Gall-Peters Projection:** Proposed by **James Gall (1855)** and popularised by **Arno Peters (1973)**; it preserves **area accurately** but distorts shapes, making continents appear stretched or compressed. Boston schools adopted it in **2017**.
- 🌐 **Robinson Projection:** Developed by **Arthur H. Robinson in 1963** as a **compromise projection** balancing area and shape distortions, with gently curved meridians.
- 🌐 **Winkel Tripel Projection:** Created by **Oswald Winkel in 1921** to minimise distortions in **area, distance and direction**; it replaced Robinson in **National Geographic maps in 1998** and was later widely adopted by schools, textbooks and the World Bank.

What can be done and which projection to choose? India's Concerns

- 🇮🇳 India supported the **"Correct the Map"** resolution

but clarified that it should promote **equal-area projections generally**, not endorse the **Equal Earth projection** or any single map design.

India also stressed that its **sovereign territory, including Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, must be shown according to India's official map**, and any misleading depiction would be unacceptable.

clarified that it is **strictly cartographic, scientific and educational**, aimed at correcting distortions in the relative size of continents.

It **does not determine sovereignty, territorial status, international boundaries or disputed territories**, nor does it require endorsement of any particular political map.

• WHICH PROJECTION TO PICK?

Choosing a projection depends entirely on the purpose of the map. According to Dr Siva Kumar, these are the ideal use-cases of different projections:

 Equal Earth THEMATIC AND STATISTICAL DATA: Use equal-area projections (like the Equal Earth map) which show correct relative sizes of landmasses, making them ideal for population density, climate, or land-cover maps.	 Robinson GENERAL REFERENCE AND WORLD MAPS: Use compromise projections, such as the Robinson projection or Winkel Tripel. They do not perfectly preserve any single dimension, but they balance shape and area distortion to create a visually natural view of the whole Earth.	 NAVIGATION AND DIRECTION: Use conformal projections (like the Mercator projection). They preserve true angles and local shapes, allowing pilots and sailors to plot straight-line compass courses, though they severely distort high-latitude sizes.
		 POLAR OR SINGLE-POINT STUDIES: Use Azimuthal/Planar projections. They project the earth onto a flat plane from a central point, making them best for polar regions or flight-distance routes.

Conclusion

Shifting toward more accurate world-map projections is not merely a cartographic change but a step toward **fairer geographic representation and better public understanding of the world**. At the same time, no projection is perfect, so maps should be chosen according to purpose while ensuring that **scientific accuracy, educational value and territorial sensitivities** are respected.

Sample Question

Q) Map projections are not merely technical tools of cartography; they also shape perceptions of geographical and geopolitical importance." Discuss with reference to the Mercator and Equal Earth projections. **(10 marks)**

UN / Resolution Clarification

During the UNGA debate, the resolution's sponsors

CLEAN AIR

Syllabus: GS III - Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

PYQ MAPPING

Q) Describe the key points of the revised Global Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs) recently released by the World Health Organisation (WHO). How are these different from its last update in 2005? What changes in India's National Clean Air Programme are required to achieve these revised standards? **(2021)**

Q) Why is sulphur dioxide a major air pollutant? Explain how thermal power plants contribute to SO₂ pollution. **(2016)**

SHORT TAKES

➤ Particulate Matter (PM)

- Consists of tiny solid or liquid particles suspended in air.
- **PM10:** Particles measuring **10 micrometres or less** in diameter.
- **PM2.5:** Fine particles measuring **2.5 micrometres or less** in diameter.
- A human hair is about **100 micrometres wide**, making PM2.5 extremely small.
- Their small size enables finer particles to **penetrate deeper into the respiratory system**, with some potentially entering the bloodstream.

WHY IN NEWS

A **PIB backgrounder** highlighted the urgent need for action against air pollution on the occasion of the **International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies**, observed globally on **7 September**.

INTRODUCTION

Clean air is essential for **public health, environmental sustainability and economic productivity**, with the United Nations estimating that air pollution causes around **7 million premature deaths annually** worldwide. India launched the **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in 2019 across 130 cities**, reflecting the need for coordinated, long-term action against air pollution.

UNDERSTANDING AIR POLLUTION

- ☞ **Air pollution** occurs when harmful substances accumulate in the atmosphere at levels that can affect human health and the environment.

- ☞ Pollutants may occur as **gases, liquid droplets or solid particles** and arise from both natural and human activities.
- ☞ Major anthropogenic sources include **transport, industries, construction, road dust, waste burning and crop-residue burning**.

IMPORTANCE OF CLEAN AIR

- ➔ **Human health:** Clean air is fundamental to **human health**, as fine particulate matter such as **PM2.5** can penetrate deep into the respiratory system and may enter the bloodstream.
- ➔ **Environmental sustainability:** Better air quality supports **ecosystem health and environmental resilience**.
- ➔ **Economic well-being:** Air pollution affects productivity, livelihoods and overall economic well-being.

WHY INDIA STRUGGLES WITH AIR POLLUTION?

- 🌀 **Rapid urbanisation and economic activity:** Expanding cities and economic activities increase emissions from transport, construction, industries and energy use.
- 🌀 **Vehicular emissions:** Growing vehicle use contributes significantly to urban air pollution.
- 🌀 **Construction and road dust:** Studies under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) indicate that **construction and road dust contributes around 40–50% of PM10** in most cities.
- 🌀 **Industrial emissions:** Industrial clusters and highly polluting sectors remain important sources of particulate and gaseous emissions.
- 🌀 **Open waste burning:** Inadequate waste processing can result in burning of solid and plastic waste, releasing pollutants.
- 🌀 **Crop-residue burning:** Seasonal stubble burning, particularly in the northern States, contributes to regional air pollution.

CHALLENGES

- 🔥 **Monitoring and enforcement:** India requires continuous monitoring and effective enforcement across diverse pollution sources and regions.
- 🔥 **Regional disparities:** Pollution-control capacity and

air-quality management vary across States and cities.

- ✧ **Urban dust management:** Construction activity, road dust and inadequate management of Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste remain major challenges.
- ✧ **Industrial compliance:** Ensuring industries comply with prescribed emission standards requires continuous monitoring and regulatory action.
- ✧ **Institutional coordination:** Effective clean-air management requires coordination among the **Central Government, State Governments, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), district administrations and regulatory agencies.**

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

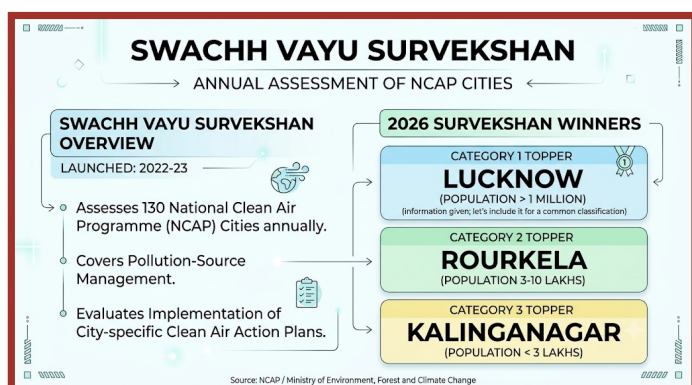
Air Quality Monitoring

- 🇮🇳 **National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP):**
 - o Initiated by the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** to assess air pollution, track air-quality trends, identify violations of prescribed standards and assess health hazards.
 - o As of **March 2026**, India has **1,646 ambient air-quality monitoring stations across 603 cities in 28 States and 7 Union Territories (UTs).**
- 🇮🇳 **Air Quality Index (AQI):**
 - o Classifies air quality into six categories- **Good (0–50), Satisfactory (51–100), Moderate (101–200), Poor (201–300), Very Poor (301–400) and Severe (401–500).**
 - o It uses eight pollutants, with the worst-performing pollutant determining the overall AQI.
- 🇮🇳 **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):**
 - o Launched in **2019** for **130 cities** as a multi-sectoral programme involving Central and State Governments and other stakeholders.
 - o **₹16,423.55 crore** was provided to 130 cities from **FY 2019–20 to FY 2025–26** through air-quality performance-linked grants

- 🇮🇳 **PM-eBus Sewa:** Supports the deployment of **electric buses** in cities to promote cleaner and sustainable public transport
- 🇮🇳 **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):** Makes producers responsible for the collection, recycling and environmentally sound management of specified wastes such as **plastic packaging and e-waste.**
- 🇮🇳 **Green India Mission:** Focuses on increasing **forest cover, improving forest quality and enhancing ecosystem services**, including carbon sequestration.

WAY FORWARD

- ✧ **Strengthen Scientific Monitoring:** Expand real-time monitoring and scientific forecasting to identify pollution sources and hotspots.
- ✧ **Promote Clean Mobility:** Shift towards public transport, electric vehicles and cleaner fuels to reduce vehicular emissions.
 - o **Example: PM E-DRIVE** promotes electric mobility and the development of supporting infrastructure.
- ✧ **Control Industrial Emissions:** Strengthen emission standards, compliance and continuous monitoring of industries.
 - o **Example:** Online Continuous Emission Monitoring System (OCEMS) enables regulators to track industrial emissions in real time.
- ✧ **Control Road Dust and Construction Pollution:** Enforce dust-control measures and improve road maintenance and construction practices.
- ✧ **Improve Waste and Crop-Residue Management:** Promote scientific waste processing and alternatives to open burning
- ✧ **Expand Green Infrastructure:** Increase urban forests and ecological restoration to improve environmental resilience.
 - o **Example:** Nagar Van Yojana promotes the development of urban forests and green spaces.
- ✧ **Strengthen Institutional Coordination:** Coordinate action among Central, State and local authorities because air pollution crosses administrative boundaries.
 - o **Example:** Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) coordinates air-pollution control across Delhi-NCR.



CONCLUSION

India has made measurable progress, with **108 of 130 NCAP cities recording lower PM10 levels in 2025–26 compared with 2017–18.** Sustaining this progress requires **source-specific interventions, stronger enforcement, scientific**

monitoring and coordinated action across sectors and levels of government.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) “A shift from emergency pollution control to source-specific, long-term air-quality management is essential for India.” Critically examine. **(15 marks, 250 words)**

18TH BRICS SUMMIT

Syllabus: GS II - India and its neighborhood- relations

PYQ MAPPING

Q) "BRICS acts as a powerful counterweight in global governance, actively amplifying the voice and influence of the Global South." Explain the role of BRICS in projecting itself as an alternative to other groupings. (2016)

WHY IN NEWS

The **18th BRICS Summit**, hosted by India in **New Delhi on 12–13 September 2026**, concluded with the adoption of the **New Delhi Declaration** focusing on global governance reform, economic cooperation and Global South priorities.

INTRODUCTION

BRICS has evolved into an expanded platform representing around **49.5% of the global population and 40% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**. The **18th BRICS Summit** focused on strengthening cooperation in economic development, global governance, technology and the priorities of the Global South.

ABOUT BRICS

- BRIC was **coined by Goldman Sachs in 2001** in its paper "*The World Needs Better Economic BRICs*", which projected Brazil, Russia, India and China as **major global economies over the following five decades**.
- It now comprises **11 member countries**.



- BRICS functions through **three pillars**-
 - o Political and Security Cooperation
 - o Economic and Financial Cooperation
 - o Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges

IMPORTANCE OF BRICS

- ♣ **Voice of the Global South:** Provides **emerging and developing economies** a platform to collectively articulate their concerns in global institutions.
- ♣ **Global Governance Reform:** BRICS advocates a more representative and inclusive international order.
 - o **Example:** Including **greater representation** of developing countries in the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**.
- ♣ **Economic Cooperation:** Promotes trade, investment, financial cooperation and greater economic integration among emerging economies.
- ♣ **Financial Resilience:** Institutions such as the **New Development Bank (NDB)** provide alternative sources of development finance.
 - o **Example:** NDB provided **\$500 million for the Delhi–Meerut RRTS**.
- ♣ **Local-Currency Trade:** Cooperation on local-currency transactions can potentially reduce dependence on dominant international currencies and transaction costs.
 - o **Example:** India promotes **rupee–dirham settlements** with the UAE.
- ♣ **Technology Cooperation:** Creates opportunities for cooperation in **Artificial Intelligence (AI), digital technologies, science and innovation**.
- ♣ **Strategic Significance for India:** BRICS strengthens India's engagement with major economies across **Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East**.

OUTCOMES OF THE 18TH BRICS SUMMIT

- **Chairship:**
 - o India assumed the **BRICS Chairship for the fourth time in 2026**, with the theme "**Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability**."
 - o BRICS leaders adopted the **New Delhi Declaration** at the 18th Summit held in New Delhi.

- 🌀 **BRICS Network on Digital Agriculture:** Promotes Artificial Intelligence (AI), geospatial technology, Internet of Things (IoT) and data analytics in agriculture.
- 🌀 **BRICS AGRIN:** Voluntary, farmer-centric framework for cooperation in seeds, germplasm and agricultural inputs.
- 🌀 **BRICS Mission for Healthy Lifestyle:** Promotes preventive approaches to obesity and non-communicable diseases under the **2026–2029 Roadmap**.
- 🌀 **Expert Working Group on Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine (TCIM):** Promotes cooperation in research, evidence generation, standards, regulation and traditional knowledge.
- 🌀 **Focus on Mental Health:** Establishes BRICS Training Hub and Centres of Excellence networks, coordinated by **NIMHANS India**, to strengthen mental-health training and primary healthcare integration.
- 🌀 **BRICS CONNECT for Skilling:** Promotes cooperation in social security, women's workforce participation, skills, employability and digital public infrastructure.
- 🌀 **BRICS MSME Cooperation Portal:** Supports **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** through improved access to markets, finance, technology and capacity building.
- 🌀 **BRICS Incubator Network:** Connects incubators and start-ups across BRICS to facilitate cross-border linkages and support.
- 🌀 **BRICS Science and Research Repository:** Provides a structured platform for sharing scientific knowledge among BRICS countries.
- 🌀 **BRICS Global Value Chains (GVC) Action Plan 2026–2030:** Promotes resilient value chains, market opening and economic diversification among BRICS members.
- 🌀 **Sport Technology Working Group:** Institutionalises cooperation through exchange of technology, research, technical information and best practices in sports.

Control (LAC).

- ⚠️ **Limited institutionalisation:** Many BRICS initiatives depend on voluntary cooperation and require stronger implementation mechanisms.
 - **Example:** BRICS lacks a **permanent centralized secretariat or binding treaties**.
- ⚠️ **Currency and financial challenges:** Issues with compatible financial infrastructure, liquidity and confidence in participating currencies.
- ⚠️ **Trade barriers:** Differences in tariffs, regulations and standards can restrict intra-BRICS trade.
 - **Example:** Inability to establish a BRICS Free Trade Agreement
- ⚠️ **Geopolitical conflicts:** Conflicts involving member countries can make it difficult to maintain a common position on international issues.

WAY FORWARD

- ✳️ **Strengthen Institutional Mechanisms:** Convert BRICS declarations into clearly defined programmes with timelines, funding and measurable outcomes.
- ✳️ **Deepen Economic Integration:** Reduce trade barriers, improve customs cooperation and strengthen investment and supply-chain linkages.
- ✳️ **Promote Financial Cooperation:** Develop interoperable payment systems and gradually expand **local-currency trade** while maintaining financial stability.
- ✳️ **Expand Technology Partnerships:** Promote joint research, digital public infrastructure, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies while addressing digital divides.
- ✳️ **Build Consensus:** Use dialogue and flexible cooperation to manage differences among members.
- ✳️ **Enhance People-to-People Links:** Strengthen youth, education, cultural, tourism and sports exchanges to build long-term institutional and societal connections.

CONCLUSION

The 18th Summit reflects BRICS' growing role as a platform for **South-South cooperation and reform of global governance**. Its long-term relevance will depend on converting political commitments into **concrete projects, stronger institutional mechanisms and measurable outcomes**.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) "BRICS has evolved from an economic grouping into an important platform for Global South cooperation." Examine its significance and the challenges to its effectiveness. **(15 marks, 250 words)**

CHALLENGES

- ⚠️ **Diverse geopolitical interests:** BRICS members have differing strategic priorities and foreign-policy positions, making consensus difficult.
 - **Example:** **Russia and China** seek to position BRICS as an **anti-Western bloc**, members like **India and Brazil** prefer a **multi-aligned approach**.
- ⚠️ **India-China differences:** Bilateral tensions can complicate deeper strategic and economic cooperation within BRICS.
 - **Example:** Border tensions along the **Line of Actual**

YOJANA SEPTEMBER 2026

CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT

INDIA'S FREE TRADE AGREEMENT: A NEW ERA OF FOREIGN DIPLOMACY

India–Mauritius Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA):

- ➔ Came into force on **1 April 2021**, India's first trade agreement with an African nation, providing concessional access for **300+ Indian products**.

India–Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA):



- ➔ Came into force in **December 2022**, driven by shared **Indo-Pacific interests, supply-chain concerns and Quad convergence**.

India–United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):

- ➔ Effective from **1 May 2022**, serving as a gateway for Indian trade to the **Gulf, Africa and Europe**.

India–United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA):

- ➔ Signed in **July 2025**, enhancing market access, professional mobility and recognition for **Indian IT, healthcare and consultancy professionals**.

India–Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):

- ➔ Signed on **24 December 2025**, strengthening cooperation in **logistics, manufacturing, energy and services**.

India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA):

- ➔ Signed in **December 2025**, combining market access with phased protections and **World Trade Organization (WTO)-aligned safeguards** for agriculture and dairy.

India–European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA):

- ➔ Signed in **December 2025**, concluding nearly two decades of negotiations and deepening India's access to the **European Union's large consumer market**.



FROM PARTNERSHIP TO PROGRESS: COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM IN ACTION

State Support Mission (SSM)



- ➔ An initiative by **NITI Aayog** to build and augment the institutional capacity of States and Union Territories.
- ➔ Assists in setting up dedicated **State Institutions for Transformation (SITs)** or upgrading existing State Planning Departments on the lines of NITI Aayog.
- ➔ **Examples:**
 - o **MITRA:** Maharashtra Institution for Transformation.
 - o **TIFT:** Tripura Institution for Transformation

Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP)

- ➔ Launched in **2018** to drive socio-economic

transformation in lagging areas.

- ➔ **Anchored in the core framework of the "Three Cs":** *Convergence* of schemes, *Collaboration* among stakeholders, and healthy *Competition* driven by real-time ranking.
- ➔ Covers **112 underdeveloped districts** across **28 States**.
- ➔ Directly covers approximately **16% of India's total population**

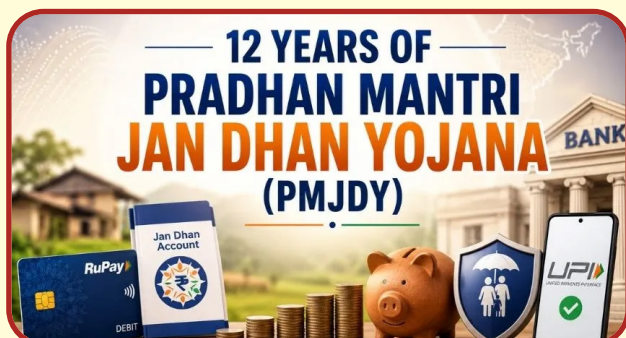


Digital Governance Tools & Platforms

- ➔ **NITI for States (NFS) Portal:** A centralised **national digital knowledge repository** of policies, best practices, and datasets, accessible across 22 Indian languages.
- ➔ **AI Sarthi:** An integrated AI-powered conversational assistant to help officials navigate policies and datasets within the NFS portal.

EVOLUTION AND IMPACT OF INDIA'S WELFARE DELIVERY ARCHITECTURE

- ➔ **PMJDY Accounts:** Over **58 crore** bank accounts have been opened since the scheme's inception in August 2014.
- ➔ **Mobile Penetration:** India currently boasts an overall tele-density of **94.02%**.
- ➔ **Scale of Direct Benefit Transfer(DBT) Expansion:** Beneficiary coverage expanded from roughly **11 crore** to over **180+ crore**.
- ➔ **Total Value of Transfers:** Cumulative Direct Benefit Transfers amount to over **Rs 40+ lakh crore**



THE STARTUP AND INNOVATION REVOLUTION: A DECADE THAT CHANGED INDIA'S ECONOMY

Startup India Initiative

- ➔ Launched on 16 January 2016, backed by a **19-point Action Plan** spanning income tax exemptions, fast-tracked patent examinations, relaxed public procurement norms, and self-certification under labour laws.



Digital Platforms & Ecosystem Enablers

- ➔ **BHASKAR (Bharat Startup Knowledge Access Registry):** A single digital interface connecting founders with investors, mentors, and institutional support; crossed 7.47 lakh registered users.
- ➔ **Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs):** Network of over 10,000 labs established across 733 districts, engaging over 1.1 crore students.



Grassroots & State-Level Outreach

- ➔ **TEJAS Initiative (Transforming Entrepreneurial Journeys Across State & Districts):** District-level sensitisation and outreach initiative operating across 130+ districts in approximately 27 States/UTs to support first-generation, rural, and women entrepreneurs.
- ➔ **National Startup Awards:** Annual recognition celebrating innovative founders across 20 diverse categories.

KEY DATA

📌 Ecosystem Size & Global Position:

- India is the **third-largest startup ecosystem in the world**, hosting over **2.26 lakh DPIIT-recognised startups** across 56 industry sectors (up from fewer than 400 in 2016).
- Nationally accounts for over 6.6 lakh enterprises and more than **120 unicorns** valued at over **\$350 billion**

📌 **Patent Activity:** Over **19,400 patent applications** filed by startups.

📌 **Inclusion & Diversity:** **48%** of DPIIT-recognised startups (over 1.10 lakh enterprises) have at least one woman director or partner.

📌 **Geographical Spread:** More than **52%** of recognised startups originate from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

📌 **100% district saturation:** Every single one of India's 700+ districts hosts at least one registered startup.

📌 **Demographic Context:** India's working-age demographic includes roughly **375 million youth aged 28 or younger**.

DAY NRLM: GIVING WINGS TO SOARING ASPIRANTS

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)

- ➔ Launched in 2011 and renamed in 2015 to incorporate **Antyodaya** (uplifting the last person in the queue).
- ➔ Operates as one of the world's largest community-driven, women-led poverty alleviation and livelihood programmes.

Lakhpati Didi Initiative:

- ➔ National initiative targeting sustainable annual household income generation of at least ₹1 lakh for rural women.
- ➔ The initial target of 3 crore Lakhpati Didis was achieved in under two years; the revised target was raised to **6 crore Lakhpati Didis** within a three-year timeline.



e-Saras Portal

- ➔ An official digital marketing platform for **Self Help Group (SHG) handlooms, handicrafts, and processed foods, complemented by physical Saras Fairs and state-level brands (Eg: Tribal jewellery sub-brand Adiva in Jharkhand).**
- ➔ Hosts **3,301 Stock Keeping Units (SKUs)** from 237 SHGs; recorded sales exceeding **₹1.20 crore**.

PM SETU: EMPOWERING YOUTH, POSITIONING AS SKILL CAPITAL

Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU)

- ➔ **Total investment outlay: ₹60,000 crore** over a 5-year period.
- ➔ Upgradation of **1,000 Government ITIs nationwide (200 Hub ITIs and 800 Spoke ITIs).**
- ➔ Development of **5 National Centres of Excellence (NCEs).**

DIGITAL INDIA CORPORATION: DRIVING CITIZEN CENTRIC TRANSFORMATION

Important Digital Platforms

- ➔ **Kisan Sarathi 2.0:** Provides personalized, real-time, AI-enabled, and multilingual agricultural advisories directly from scientists and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) to farmers.
- ➔ **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC):** An initiative under the Ministry of Education, regulated by the UGC, enabling credit mobility and Multiple Entry-Multiple Exit (ME-ME) pathways under NEP 2020.
- ➔ **Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR ID):** A lifelong unique academic digital identity integrated with ABC to store and verify student credentials.
- ➔ **Poshan Tracker:** Real-time nutrition tracking platform developed for the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** to monitor Anganwadi services and nutritional outcomes for women and children.
- ➔ **MANAS:** A secure digital reporting channel developed for the **Narcotics Control Bureau (Ministry of Home Affairs)** to report illegal drug production, trafficking, and distribution.
- ➔ **MY Bharat (Mera Yuva Bharat):** Flagship digital youth engagement platform of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports connecting youth with experiential learning, leadership, and voluntary service.

BEYOND ACCESS: SECURING SOCIAL SECURITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

- ➔ **Aadhaar Saturation:** Over **1 billion** residents actively use Aadhaar-based biometric and OTP verification.
- ➔ **Global Footprint of UPI:** More than **10 countries** have adopted, deployed, or initiated interoperability arrangements with the UPI platform.
- ➔ **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C):** Nodal agency under the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** coordinating cybercrime mitigation, helplines, and state-level cyber bureaus/stations.
- ➔ **Enactment & Rules Notification:** The *Digital Personal Data Protection Act* was passed in **2023**, with formal notification of operational rules occurring at the **end of 2025**

WEEKLY DOSSIERS

Globalisation has made economies deeply interconnected, but the same networks of finance, energy, shipping, trade and technology can also become instruments of geopolitical pressure. This weekly dossier examines how weaponised interdependence, sanctions preparedness, and energy-maritime-financial resilience are reshaping India's strategic autonomy and economic security.

WEAPONISED INTERDEPENDENCE AND INDIA'S STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

Context

- Recent expansion of U.S. secondary sanctions against Iran has highlighted how global financial, shipping and insurance networks can be used as instruments of **economic coercion**.

Introduction

- Globalisation has created deep economic interdependence, but dependence on critical networks can also become a source of geopolitical vulnerability. This phenomenon is termed **"weaponised interdependence"**, where control over financial, technological or logistical chokepoints is used to influence other states.

Key Dimensions

- Secondary sanctions:** A country can pressure third-country companies by threatening to cut their access to its financial system even when the transaction is legal in their own country. U.S. sanctions policy towards Iran has explicitly expanded such secondary-sanctions risks.
- Financial chokepoints:** Dependence on **dollar payments, correspondent banking and global financial institutions** increases exposure to extraterritorial sanctions.

- Transaction-wide sanctions:** Restrictions increasingly extend beyond sellers to **banks, tankers, insurers, traders and technology suppliers**, making entire supply chains vulnerable.
- Maritime chokepoints:** Disruptions in the **Strait of Hormuz** demonstrate how control over strategic waterways can affect trade and energy security; the EU has also responded to actions threatening freedom of navigation there.
- Strategic-autonomy challenge:** India must simultaneously preserve independent foreign-policy choices and protect its companies from disruption of global financial and commercial networks.

Way Forward

- India needs to diversify **markets, currencies, energy sources, payment systems and logistics networks**, while using diplomacy to secure exemptions and transition periods where necessary.

Conclusion

- In an era of economic coercion, **strategic autonomy requires not only independent decision-making but also reduced vulnerability to external economic chokepoints**.

NEED FOR AN ECONOMIC SECURITY AND SANCTIONS 'WAR ROOM'

Introduction

- Modern economic sanctions can simultaneously affect **foreign policy, banking, trade, shipping and energy supplies**. Since these sectors fall under different ministries and regulators, fragmented decision-making can delay India's response.

Why is a 'War Room' Needed?

- Whole-of-government approach:** MEA, Finance, Commerce, Petroleum, Shipping, Law and Defence ministries along with the **RBI and market regulators** need coordinated action.

- ◆ **Early-warning mechanism:** A dedicated office could identify vulnerable **banks, payment routes, insurers, ports and shipping routes** before disruption occurs.
- ◆ **Support for Indian firms:** It could clarify sanctions exposure, distinguish actual legal restrictions from excessive commercial caution and assist legitimate businesses.
- ◆ **Diplomatic response:** The office could seek clarification of foreign listings, negotiate **exemptions, transition periods and delisting** where justified.
- ◆ **Domestic protection:** Sanctions-related disruptions can eventually affect **fuel prices, fertilisers, shipping costs, businesses and household consumption**,

making economic security a governance issue rather than merely a foreign-policy issue.

Way Forward

- ◆ Create a permanent **Economic Security and Sanctions Office** supported by real-time data.
- ◆ Legal expertise, scenario planning and regular coordination with industry.

Conclusion

- ◆ As economic coercion becomes more network-based, India needs to move from **ad hoc crisis management to institutionalised economic-security governance**.

BUILDING INDIA'S ENERGY, MARITIME AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Introduction

- ◆ Growing sanctions risks and tensions affecting shipping through the **Strait of Hormuz** have highlighted vulnerabilities in India's energy, maritime and financial supply chains.

Major Vulnerabilities

- ◆ **Energy dependence:** Disruptions in West Asian shipping routes can affect India's supplies of **oil, LNG and LPG**.
- ◆ **Strait of Hormuz:** It remains a crucial maritime chokepoint, making diversification of energy sources and routes important for India.
- ◆ **Foreign shipping dependence:** Heavy reliance on foreign-owned vessels can expose Indian trade to sanctions, insurance restrictions and geopolitical disruptions.
- ◆ **Insurance vulnerability:** Sanctions can restrict access to international marine insurers, potentially preventing otherwise lawful cargo from moving.
- ◆ **Dollar dependence:** Rupee settlement can facilitate some lawful transactions, but cannot completely

protect banks that still require access to the **U.S.-linked financial system**.

Building Resilience

- ◆ Expand **strategic LPG and energy storage**.
- ◆ Increase the size of the **Indian-controlled tanker fleet**.
- ◆ Strengthen domestic mechanisms such as the **Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool**.
- ◆ Secure long-term LNG contracts from geographically diversified suppliers.
- ◆ Expand viable **local-currency settlement arrangements** while maintaining internationally compliant banking channels.
- ◆ Diversify energy sources, shipping routes and supply chains to prevent excessive dependence on a single chokepoint.

Conclusion

- ◆ India's economic sovereignty increasingly depends on **resilient energy supplies, shipping capacity, insurance and payment architecture**. Diversification can therefore transform strategic autonomy from a diplomatic principle into practical economic capability.

BEYOND VERDICTS: KEY JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS

Parity in Stipends for Medical Interns

- ◆ The Supreme Court has said that **all undergraduate medical interns, whether Indian Medical Graduates (IMGs) or Foreign Medical Graduates (FMGs), should receive stipends on parity**, since both perform comparable medical duties.
- ◆ The Court also questioned the **NMC and State governments over non-payment and unequal payment of stipends**, stressing that interns working long hours cannot be denied remuneration.
- ◆ The issue is relevant to **Article 14 (equality), labour fairness, medical education regulation, accountability of statutory bodies and protection against exploitation of young professionals**.

Dharavi's Community Resilience During COVID-19

- ◆ The Supreme Court praised the **collective discipline, community cooperation and civic response of Dharavi residents and municipal officials during the COVID-19 pandemic**, noting that such efforts helped control transmission despite extreme population density and limited amenities.
- ◆ The episode is a strong example of **community resilience, social capital, citizen–state cooperation and local governance in disaster management**, showing that effective crisis response depends not only on infrastructure but also on trust, participation and collective responsibility.

Gender Equality in Public Employment

- ◆ The Supreme Court awarded **₹12 lakh compensation** to a woman denied employment by Indian Oil Corporation solely on the ground of gender, holding that such exclusion violated her dignity and equal opportunity.
- ◆ The case reinforces constitutional principles under **Articles 14, 15 and 16**, and highlights that **gender stereotypes cannot be used to deny women access to physically demanding or traditionally male-dominated jobs**.

Equal Pay for Equal Work

- ◆ In **G.P. Sangeetha & Ors. v. State of Kerala & Ors. (2026)**, the Supreme Court held that the doctrine of **“equal pay for equal work” cannot be applied mechanically merely because employees perform similar duties**.
- ◆ Differences in **experience, educational qualifications, mode of recruitment, responsibilities and accountability** can justify different pay scales. The principle flows from **Articles 14 and 39(d)**, but relief is warranted only when there is substantial parity in all relevant service conditions.

Proof of Bribery under the Prevention of Corruption Act

- ◆ In **Bharat Raj Meena v. Central Bureau of Investigation (2026)**, the Supreme Court held that **mere payment of money to an intermediary is insufficient to prove that a public servant demanded or accepted a bribe**.
- ◆ The prosecution must establish, beyond reasonable doubt, a clear link showing that the illegal gratification was **intended for or actually reached the accused public servant**. The ruling reinforces the principles of **presumption of innocence, proof beyond reasonable doubt and procedural fairness** in corruption cases.

ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) You are the District Collector of a rapidly urbanising district. The State government has sanctioned a ₹500-crore drinking-water project intended to provide safe water to several drought-prone villages. During scrutiny of the tender process, you discover that the lowest bidder has close links with a senior political functionary. Technical officers informally tell you that the company has a poor record in earlier projects, but the tender documents have been structured in a way that technically qualifies it. You also learn that some officials in your department have accepted hospitality and expensive gifts from representatives of the company. A senior minister asks you to “avoid unnecessary delays”, arguing that cancellation of the tender will postpone the project and deprive thousands of villagers of drinking water. At the same time, local media has begun questioning the transparency of the procurement process. If you cancel the tender, the project may be delayed and you may face political and administrative pressure. If you allow it to proceed, there is a risk of corruption, poor-quality work and misuse of public funds.

Questions

- What are the ethical issues and stakeholders involved in the case?
- What are the major ethical dilemmas before you as District Collector?
- What course of action would you adopt? Give reasons.
- Suggest institutional measures to promote probity in public procurement and governance.

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

- Technology Ethics:** A 65-year-old retired Army soldier from Pune lost ₹28.7 lakh after downloading a fake pension-verification APK sent via WhatsApp, enabling a suspected remote-access cyber fraud. This highlights how scammers exploit urgency and trusted identities, with police advising people never to install unknown APKs or grant unusual permissions through unsolicited messages.
- Environmental Ethics:** Since 2008, Mumbai’s Bal Gopal Mitra Mandal has replaced plaster-of-Paris idols with eco-friendly Ganesha idols made from tissue paper, banana fibre, flowers and other recycled materials. In 2026, its 25-foot idol was made using paper pulp recovered from the previous year’s immersion, creating a cycle of reuse and reducing water and environmental pollution.
- Accountability:** An audit found that 2,487 Odisha construction workers were declared dead and death benefits paid to nominees, even though many continued to authenticate Aadhaar and receive subsidised rations. The findings point to fake death certificates, database manipulation and possible corruption.
- Innovation:** Himaja Lingampalli, a BTech student, developed ‘Rudhra’, a voice-enabled Braille printing system after interacting with visually impaired students, and won the 2026 James Dyson Award in India. The innovation converts spoken words into Braille, aiming to make learning more accessible, less physically demanding and inclusive for visually impaired students.
- Social Justice:** In Rajasthan’s Syalodra village, silicosis caused by prolonged exposure to silica dust from stone crushing has claimed many lives, while affected families struggle with medical costs and inadequate administrative support. Despite thousands of certified cases and deaths, difficulties in obtaining certification and limited access to relief expose gaps.
- Lack of Integrity:** Delhi Police uncovered a fake matrimonial scam in which callers posed as brides and family members, using dummy profiles to build trust before extracting ₹2,500–₹15,000 as registration and other fees.
- Social Responsibility:** Ahmedabad’s Your Reading Circle, founded by Heet Doshi and Om Thakkar, created free mini-libraries in public parks where people can borrow and exchange books without membership cards, fines or formal procedures, relying entirely on trust. Started at Parimal Garden in 2024, the initiative has grown to 13 libraries across Ahmedabad and Vadodara, supported by residents who donate books and maintain the shelves voluntarily.
- Inclusivity:** In 2020, **Nita Gopalakrishnan, Chaithanya Kothapalli and Rahul Jain** founded **Yunikee** to address the lack of accessible education, skills and employment opportunities for deaf persons in India. The organisation has reached **over 50,000 deaf persons**, offering Indian Sign Language (ISL) training, skill courses, government-exam preparation and entrepreneurship support.

MODEL ESSAY

"Fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth."

Introduction

- Quote by Albert Camus
- In 1945, **George Orwell** made pigs speak, rebel and rule a farm in *Animal Farm*. Though biologically absurd, the story brilliantly captured the realities of the **Russian Revolution** and the corruption of **totalitarian power**.
- Great storytelling turns fabrication into a protective mask, using invented worlds and characters to reveal deeper truths about reality.

How the "Lie" Reveals the Truth

- **Political Censorship:** Fiction can bypass censorship and expose political realities. **Eg:** Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* uses the Salem witch trials to reflect McCarthyism.
- **Grief and the Subconscious:** Fiction can express emotions that facts cannot easily capture. **Eg:** *Inception* explores grief, guilt and emotional closure through shared dreams.
- **Racism and Prejudice:** Fiction can create empathy by placing readers in the victim's experience. **Eg:** *To Kill a Mockingbird* exposes racial prejudice through Tom Robinson's trial.
- **Social Hypocrisy:** Satire uses absurdity to expose real social injustice. **Eg:** *A Modest Proposal* uses cannibalism to criticise British exploitation of Ireland.
- **Moral Boundaries:** Fiction provides a safe space to examine extreme moral choices. **Eg:** *Crime and Punishment* explores guilt, morality and the consequences of murder.
- **Future Possibilities:** Science fiction can imagine social and technological developments before they become reality. **Eg:** *Brave New World* explores technological control, consumerism and manufactured happiness.
- **Civilizational Values:** Myths use supernatural stories to communicate enduring ethical principles. **Eg:** The *Mahabharata* explores **Dharma, duty, statecraft and the moral ambiguities of war**.

When the Lie Obscures the Truth

- **State Propaganda:** Fiction can manufacture false national myths and justify oppression. **Eg:** Leni Riefenstahl's Nazi films glorified Aryan ideology and Nazi power.
- **Romanticising Toxic Behaviour:** Fiction can portray stalking, abuse and possessiveness as love.
- **Escapism and Civic Apathy:** Excessive immersion in fictional worlds can distance people from real social problems..
- **Reinforcing Stereotypes:** Repeated fictional stereotypes can strengthen existing prejudices. **Eg:** Portraying minorities as villains or women as helpless can reinforce social biases.
- **Commodification of Trauma:** Fiction can turn serious suffering into entertainment.

Synthesis

- History tells us **what happened**, while literature and cinema can help us understand **why it mattered**.
- When used to challenge prejudice and expose hidden fears, fiction becomes a tool for empathy and understanding; When used to glorify power, hide atrocities or create false realities, the same "lie" becomes a tool of propaganda and oppression.

Conclusion

- George Orwell's talking pigs were a **brilliant fiction**, yet millions living under Soviet rule could recognise the **reality of oppression** behind every page of the fairy tale.
- A lie told to deceive the masses is a fraud, but a lie told to illuminate the human soul is art.

Sample Quotes

- *Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made.* - Immanuel Kant
- *Doubt is an uncomfortable condition, but certainty is a ridiculous one.* — Voltaire
- *Misunderstanding of the present is the inevitable consequence of ignorance of the past* - Marc Bloch

MAINS JOT DOWN



GS I: INDIAN ART & HERITAGE

- The **12th-century Ramanathaswamy Temple** at **Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu**, is dedicated to **Lord Shiva** and is one of the **12 Jyotirlingas**.
- Associated with the **Ramayana**, it is believed that Lord Rama worshipped Shiva here after defeating Ravana.
- Built in the **Dravidian style**, the temple is noted for its monumental gopurams, intricate pillars, sacred sanctum, **22 theerthams**, and its famous **Third Corridor**, regarded as one of the longest temple corridors in Asia.



GS I: INDIAN ART & HERITAGE

- On the sidelines of the **18th BRICS Summit**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented Russian President Vladimir Putin with a **Russian translation of the Thirukkural**, highlighting its universal ethical message.
- Written by the Tamil poet-philosopher **Thiruvalluvar**, the text contains teachings on **virtue, governance and love**, organised into three sections — **Aram (virtue), Porul (wealth/polity) and Inbam (love)**. It is valued for its emphasis on **moral conduct, good governance and universal human values**.



GS I: WOMEN

- **NFHS-6 (2023-24)**: Among people completing **10 or more years of education**, the gender gap is **10.2 percentage points in rural India** (49.9% men vs 39.7% women), compared with only **2.5 points in urban India** (64% men vs 61.5% women) — about **four times wider**.
- **Rural disadvantage affects women more**: Urban women are **21.8 percentage points** more likely than rural women to complete 10 years of schooling, while the corresponding urban advantage for men is **14.1 points**.



GS II: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- India and **MERCOSUR** signed the **First Additional Protocol** to their Preferential Trade Agreement to enable acceptance of **electronic Certificates of Origin**. The move is expected to promote **paperless trade, simplify customs procedures, reduce transaction costs, and improve ease of doing business** between India and MERCOSUR member countries.



GS II: GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

- India has inaugurated its **51st Doppler Weather Radar at Sambalpur, Odisha**, helping bridge observational gaps in eastern India; Odisha now has three DWRs at **Sambalpur, Gopalpur and Paradip**.
- DWRs are **remote-sensing instruments** that detect the type, intensity and movement of precipitation and storm systems, enabling better assessment of storm structure and severity. The **IMD uses S-, C- and X-band radars** to track clouds, rainfall and severe weather for improved forecasting and early warning.



GS III: INFRASTRUCTURE

- India has set a **Guinness World Record for the world's longest steel slag road in Chhattisgarh**, showcasing the use of industrial waste in sustainable infrastructure.
- **Steel slag**, a solid by-product of steelmaking containing oxides of calcium, iron, silicon and magnesium, has high **strength, durability and corrosion resistance**, making it suitable for roads, cement and concrete.
- Steel slag road technology can reportedly **reduce construction costs by around 40%**, provide greater strength than conventional roads, and promote **waste utilisation and the circular economy**.



GS III: DEFENCE

- **DRDO** has indigenously developed **Gallium Nitride Monolithic Microwave Integrated Circuit (GaN MMIC) technology**, strengthening India's

capabilities in advanced defence electronics.

- ➔ GaN is a **wide-bandgap semiconductor** that can handle high power, high frequency and high temperatures more efficiently than silicon, making it suitable for **radars, electronic warfare systems, satellite communication and microwave applications**.
- ➔ The technology improves power density, speed and thermal efficiency while reducing dependence on imported high-end semiconductor components.



GS III: EMPLOYMENT

- ➔ The **Skills4Future EV & Green Skills Lab** has been inaugurated at the **National Skill Training Institute (NSTI), Bengaluru** to promote green-sector employability.
- ➔ The programme is a joint initiative of **Shell India, the Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, and Edunet Foundation**, aimed at equipping youth with **future-ready skills in electric vehicles, clean mobility and green technologies**.



GS III: ENERGY

- ➔ **Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV)** combines an **internal combustion engine (ICE)** with an electric motor powered by a battery. In conventional HEVs, the battery is charged mainly through the engine and **regenerative braking**, not by plugging into an external charger. The vehicle automatically switches between or combines electric and engine power to improve fuel efficiency.



GS III: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

- ➔ **7,874 people died in building collapses across India between 2020 and 2024**, according to analysis of NCRB's *Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India* reports.
- ➔ **Delhi recorded 169 deaths in the same five-year period**; in 2024 alone, **Uttar Pradesh recorded 223 deaths and Maharashtra 220**, the highest among States.

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

OVUM PICK-UP-IN VITRO FERTILISATION (OPU-IVF)

- It is an assisted reproductive technique in which oocytes are collected directly from the ovaries using **ultrasound-guided aspiration**, fertilised in the laboratory, and developed into embryos for transfer to recipient females. Compared with conventional embryo-production methods, OPU can often be performed **more frequently and with less intensive hormonal stimulation**, making it useful for rapid genetic improvement in livestock.

DRYLAND AGRICULTURE

- It refers to crop cultivation that depends primarily on **rainfall rather than assured irrigation**. It focuses on conserving limited soil moisture through practices such as **mulching, deep tillage, contour farming and rainwater harvesting**, while promoting **drought-tolerant crops** such as millets and sorghum.

GEGENEOPHIS CHANDGADI

- It is a newly described **caecilian**, a group of **limbless, burrowing amphibians** often mistaken for earthworms or blind snakes. It is named after the **Chandgadi dialect of Marathi** spoken in the region where it was found. Significantly, the species was recorded in **residential and agricultural landscapes**, showing that important amphibian biodiversity can also survive outside protected forests.

DARK FLEET OR SHADOW FLEET

- It refers to vessels used to transport **sanctioned commodities while concealing their ownership, origin, destination or cargo movements**. These ships often employ deceptive practices such as **disabling Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponders**, falsifying vessel identity, and **GPS spoofing** to avoid tracking and sanctions enforcement.

GREY FLEET

- It refers to vessels that show **suspicious or irregular shipping behaviour**, such as unusual routing, opaque ownership, or atypical port calls, but are **not formally sanctioned** and may not deliberately disable tracking systems. It occupies a middle ground between normal commercial shipping and the more covert **dark/shadow fleet**.