FWD

FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST



› KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM › FRANCE PROTESTS 2026 › RAMSAR SITES IN INDIA

19th OCTOBER, 2026 - 25th OCTOBER, 2026

www.fortuneias.com

FWD

FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST

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 guage 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.

INDEX

KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM _____ 1

RAMSAR SITES IN INDIA _____ 4

LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS _____ 7

FRANCE PROTESTS 2026 _____ 9

WEEKLY DOSSIERS _____ 12

BEYOND VERDICTS: KEY JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS _____ 14

ETHICS - CASE STUDY _____ 16

ETHICS - EXAMPLES _____ 16

MODEL ESSAY _____ - 17

MAINS JOT DOWN _____ 18

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK _____ 20



KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM

Syllabus: GS I - Indian Culture

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *Unity in diversity remains the defining feature of Indian society despite the challenges from communalism and regionalism. Comment.* ***(2026)***

Q) *What makes Indian society unique in sustaining its culture? Discuss.* ***(2019)***

SHORT TAKES

➢ **Central Institute of Classical Tamil (CICT)**

- An autonomous institution under the Ministry of Education, established in Chennai on 19 May 2008, following the recognition of Tamil as a classical language in 2004.
- Promotes and preserves Classical Tamil through research on ancient Tamil literature (up to 600 CE), manuscript documentation, translation, publications and academic fellowships.

WHY IN NEWS

Union Education Minister Pralhad Joshi **launched the registration portal for the 5th Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS 5.0),** scheduled from 28 November to 12 December 2026.

INTRODUCTION

Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS), **launched in 2022 under the Ministry of Education,** is a cultural and educational initiative aimed at celebrating the historical and civilisational links between Tamil Nadu and Kashi. Rooted in the **spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**, it seeks to strengthen national integration through cultural and linguistic exchange.

ABOUT KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM (KTS)

Meaning: Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS) is a **cultural and educational exchange programme** celebrating the historical, civilisational and spiritual connections between **Tamil Nadu and Kashi (Varanasi).**

Major Objectives:

- Rediscover and strengthen civilisational connections between North and South India.
- Promote cultural and linguistic exchange.
- Facilitate interaction among students, teachers, scholars, artisans and professionals.
- Showcase India's shared knowledge traditions and cultural diversity.

Organising Institutions:

- **Ministry of Education** – Nodal Ministry.
- **IIT Madras** – Coordination and implementation support.
- **Banaras Hindu University (BHU)** – Academic coordination in Kashi.
- **Central Institute of Classical Tamil (CICT), Chennai** – Classical Tamil language and knowledge initiatives.

HISTORICAL LINKAGES BETWEEN KASHI AND TAMIL NADU

- **Pilgrimage Tradition:** The traditional Kashi Yatra involved visiting Rameswaram first, taking a dip in Koti Theertham, proceeding to Kashi for darshan and bringing back Ganga water for abhishekam at Rameswaram.
- **Temple Architecture:** Pandya King Parakrama Pandya built the **Kasi Viswanathar Temple at Tenkasi (1456 CE),** popularly known as **Dakshina Kashi (Kashi of the South).**
- **Literary Connections:** Classical Tamil Sangam poetry, including collections like ***Ettuthogai* and *Kalithogai*,** as well as Sekkizhar's 12th-century ***Periya Puranam*,** contain references to Kashi.
- **Contribution of Saints:** The 17th-century **Tamil Saivite saint Kumaraguruparar** traveled to Varanasi, established the Kumaraswamy Mutt, restored the Kedareshwar Temple at Kedar Ghat, and authored the Tamil literary work *Kashi Kalambagam*.
- **Scholarly Exchange:** King Serfoji II of Thanjavur visited Kashi (1820–1822) and brought palm-leaf manuscripts, now preserved in the Saraswathi Mahal Library.
- **Freedom Movement:** Nationalist Tamil poet **Subramania Bharati** lived in Kashi for five years from the age of 16, influencing his literary and intellectual outlook.
- **Institutional Linkages:** Tamil scholars contributed to Kashi's intellectual life; Dr. **Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan** served as Vice-Chancellor of Banaras Hindu University (BHU).

ABOUT THE FIFTH EDITION OF KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM (KTS 5.0)

- **Date:** 28 November – 12 December 2026
- **Theme:** Thirukkural Payilvom – Thirukkural Abhyas Karen (Let's Learn Thirukkural).
- **Significance of the Theme:** The Thirukkural covers **three major dimensions of human life:**
  - **Aram (Virtue):** Ethical conduct and moral values.
  - **Porul (Wealth):** Governance, administration, economics and social life.
  - **Inbam (Love):** Love and human relationships.
- **Central Focus:** Popularising the **ethical and moral teachings of the Thirukkural,** composed by the Tamil poet-philosopher Thiruvalluvar.
- **Participants:**
  - Around 1,400 participants from Tamil Nadu.
  - Includes students, teachers, writers, media professionals, agriculturalists, artisans, women and spiritual leaders.
- **Nationwide Students' Engagement Programme:**
  - Involves 1,000 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across India.
  - One student will be selected on merit from each participating institution.
- **Multilingual Outreach:**
  - The Thirukkural contains **1,330 couplets** which have been translated by the CICT into all 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule.

IMPORTANCE

- **National Integration:** Strengthens emotional and cultural bonds between North and South India, reinforcing the idea of **Unity in Diversity.**
- **Civilisational Continuity:** Revives historical connections between two ancient centres of learning and spirituality, Kashi and Tamil Nadu.
- **Preservation of Heritage:** Creates awareness about classical literature, traditional knowledge, art forms, architecture and cultural practices.
- **Promotion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS):** Provides opportunities to explore indigenous philosophical, scientific, literary and ethical traditions.
- **Tourism and Local Economy:** Promotes cultural tourism, traditional crafts, handloom products and local livelihoods.

CHALLENGES

- **Event-Centric Approach:** Cultural exchanges may remain limited to periodic events without sustained institutional collaboration.
- **Linguistic Barriers:** Differences in language and communication can restrict meaningful interaction and wider participation.
- **Limited Outreach:** Benefits may remain concentrated among selected participants.
- **Regional Representation:** Focus on **selected cultural corridors** may leave other regional and cultural linkages relatively **underrepresented**.
- **Documentation Gaps:** Several traditional art forms, oral histories and indigenous knowledge systems remain inadequately documented.
- **Continuity and Evaluation:** Absence of long-term outcome assessment may make it difficult to measure the programme's impact on cultural understanding and academic collaboration.

WAY FORWARD

- **Institutional Collaboration:** Establish **long-term partnerships** between universities, research institutions and cultural organisations.
- **Expand Regional Participation:** Extend similar cultural exchange programmes to other regions to promote India's diverse civilisational connections.
- **Strengthen Language Learning:** Promote translation initiatives, language-learning programmes and multilingual educational resources.
  - **Example:** AI translation initiatives like the government's **Bhashini architecture**
- **Community Participation:** Involve local historians, artisans, artists, spiritual institutions and cultural practitioners in programme planning and implementation.
  - **Example:** Bringing together local craftsmen such as Kanchipuram silk weavers and Varanasi brocade weavers.
- **Sustainable Cultural Tourism:** Integrate heritage conservation with responsible tourism and livelihood generation.
  - **Example:** The Ministry of Railways introduced the dedicated "Kashi Tamil Sangamam Express" and IRCTC "Bharat Gaurav" tourist circuits
- **Outcome-Based Evaluation:** Develop measurable indicators to assess long-term educational, cultural and institutional outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Kashi Tamil Sangamam reflects the idea that India's strength lies in its civilisational diversity and shared cultural heritage. True national unity must **promote cultural integration without cultural homogenisation**, preserving distinct regional identities while strengthening a common sense of belonging.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) "Kashi Tamil Sangamam seeks to rediscover and strengthen India's civilisational and cultural linkages. Examine its significance in promoting national integration and preserving India's cultural heritage." **(15 Marks, 250 Words)**

RAMSAR SITES IN INDIA

Syllabus: GS III - Conservation

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *Comment on the National Wetland Conservation Programme initiated by the Government of India and name a few of India's wetlands of international importance included in the Ramsar Sites* ***(2023)***

Q) *What is wetland? Explain the Ramsar concept of 'wise use' in the context of wetland conservation. Cite two examples of Ramsar sites from India.* ***(2018)***

WHY IN NEWS

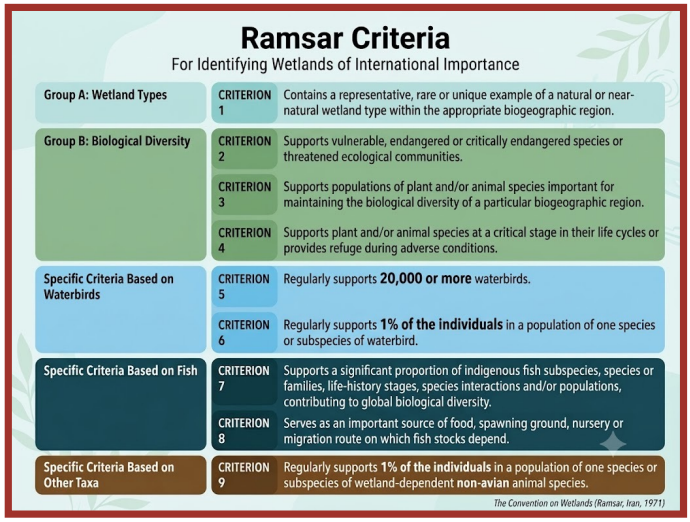
PIB released a backgrounder on *Ramsar Sites in India: Safeguarding Wetlands of International Importance,* highlighting India's wetland conservation efforts.

INTRODUCTION

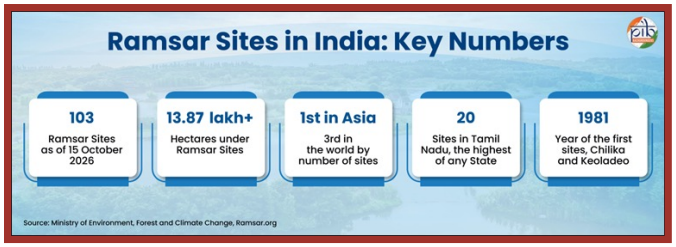
Wetlands are among the **world's most productive ecosystems**, supporting biodiversity, regulating water cycles and sustaining livelihoods. Under the Ramsar Convention, adopted in 1971, India has **expanded its network to 103 Ramsar Sites** across 28 States and Union Territories.

ABOUT RAMSAR CONVENTION

- **Origin:** Adopted on **2 February 1971 at Ramsar, Iran**; came into force in 1975.
- **Nature:** Intergovernmental treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands through national action and international cooperation.
- **World Wetlands Day:** Celebrated on 2 February every year to mark the adoption of the Convention.
- **India's Membership:** India became a Contracting Party on **1 February 1982.**
- **Definition of Wetlands:** Wetlands are the areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide **does not exceed six metres.**
- **Ramsar Sites:** Wetlands designated as **Wetlands of International Importance** based on their ecological, botanical, zoological, limnological or hydrological significance.
- **Montreux Record:** A register of Ramsar Sites **experiencing or threatened by adverse changes in their ecological character**, identifying them as priorities for conservation attention.
- **Three Pillars of the Convention:**
  - Wise use of all wetlands.
  - Designation and effective management of Ramsar Sites.
  - International cooperation on shared wetlands and species.
- **Designation Criteria:** A wetland must satisfy **at least one of the nine** Ramsar criteria.



STATUS OF RAMSAR SITES IN INDIA





IMPORTANCE

- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Provide habitats for **diverse flora and fauna,** including endangered species, migratory birds and aquatic organisms.
- **Groundwater Recharge:** Facilitate groundwater replenishment and maintain hydrological balance.
- **Water Purification:** Act as natural filters by trapping sediments, absorbing excess nutrients and removing certain pollutants.
- **Climate Change Mitigation:** Mangroves, peatlands and other wetlands act as carbon sinks, storing significant amounts of carbon (**Blue Carbon in coastal ecosystems**).
- **Livelihood Security:** Support fisheries, agriculture, tourism and other livelihood activities, particularly for local and indigenous communities.
- **Disaster Risk Reduction:** Protect coastlines against erosion,floods, cyclones and storm surges.
- **Cultural Significance:** Support traditional practices, religious activities and community heritage.
  - **Example:** Vembanad Lake sustains cultural heritage, particularly the traditional Vallam Kali (snake boat races).

CHALLENGES FACED BY WETLANDS

- **Encroachment and Urbanisation:** Conversion of wetlands for housing, industries, roads and other infrastructure.
  - **Example:** Urban encroachment has degraded **Chennai's Pallikaranai Marshland.**
- **Pollution:** Untreated sewage, industrial effluents, agricultural run-off and solid waste degrade water quality.
  - **Example: Bellandur Lake in Bengaluru** receives around 500 million litres of untreated sewage daily.
- **Invasive Alien Species:** Water hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes) and other invasive species threaten native biodiversity and alter wetland ecosystems.
- **Climate Change:** Rising temperatures, irregular rainfall, prolonged droughts and sea-level rise threaten wetland ecology.
- **Overexploitation:** Unsustainable fishing, aquaculture, tourism and extraction of wetland resources.
  - **Example: Vembanad Lake has shrunk by 27% since 1917** and faces pressures from unregulated tourism, overfishing and agricultural runoff.
- **Weak Implementation:** Poor enforcement of conservation laws, fragmented institutional responsibilities and inadequate monitoring.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- **Wetlands of India Portal (2021):** Serves as a digital knowledge repository providing information on wetlands, conservation initiatives, management and capacity-building.
- **Mission Sahbhagita (2022):** Promotes participatory wetland conservation through a **whole-of-society approach,** encouraging community participation through **Wetland Mitras.**
- **Amrit Dharohar Initiative (2023):** Promotes conservation and sustainable use of Ramsar Sites through species and habitat conservation, nature tourism, wetland livelihoods and carbon assessment.
- **MISHTI (2023):** Promotes mangrove restoration across coastal States and UTs to strengthen shoreline resilience, biodiversity and local livelihoods.
- **Wetland City Accreditation (WCA):** A Ramsar Convention initiative recognising cities that conserve urban and peri-urban wetlands; **Indore and Udaipur became India's first accredited Wetland Cities in January 2025.**

WAY FORWARD

- **Integrated Management Plans:** Prepare and implement site-specific Integrated Management Plans (IMPs) based on ecological characteristics, hydrology and local threats.
  - **Example:** The Chilika Development Authority (CDA) successfully **restored Chilika Lake** by implementing an IMP.
- **Strengthen Legal Enforcement:** Ensure effective implementation of the **Wetlands Rules, 2017** and prevent illegal encroachments and pollution.
- **Landscape-Level Conservation:** Protect entire wetland catchments, feeder rivers and drainage channels rather than focusing only on the designated wetland area.
- **Scientific Monitoring:** Use GIS, remote sensing, biodiversity assessments and regular water-quality monitoring to track ecological changes.
  - **Example:** ISRO's Space Applications Centre (SAC) developed the **National Wetland Decadal Change Atlas** to track changes in over two lakh wetlands across India.
- **Community-Based Conservation:** Strengthen **Wetland Mitras,** involve local communities and integrate traditional ecological knowledge into conservation.

- **Restoration of Degraded Wetlands:** Prioritise desiltation, removal of invasive species, restoration of natural water flows and revival of native vegetation.
  - **Example:** Ansupa Lake, Odisha, was revived through desiltation and weed removal.

CONCLUSION

India's expanding Ramsar network reflects a stronger commitment to wetland conservation, but **protecting their ecological character requires sustained management**. Strengthening scientific monitoring, catchment-based conservation and community participation will be crucial to achieving the Convention's principle o**f wise use of wetlands**.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) "Recognition of wetlands as Ramsar Sites is only the first step towards their conservation." Critically examine the challenges in ensuring their ecological integrity in India. **(10 marks, 150 words)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS

Syllabus: GS II - Parliament and State Legislature

PYQ MAPPING

Q) *Explain the constitutional provisions under which Legislative Councils are established. Review the working and current status of Legislative Councils with suitable illustrations.* ***(2021)***

WHY IN NEWS

Elections to 28 Legislative Council seats across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Karnataka were held on 23 October 2026.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Constitution adopts a **flexible approach to bicameralism at the State level,** providing for both unicameral and bicameral legislatures. Legislative Councils (Vidhan Parishads), envisaged under Article 169, serve as permanent Upper Houses intended to facilitate legislative scrutiny and informed deliberation.

ABOUT LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS

- **Meaning:** Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad) is the **Upper House of a State Legislature**, functioning as a revising and deliberative chamber.
- **Nature:** Provides for a **bicameral legislature at the State level**, consisting of the **Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha)** and **Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad).**
- **Optional Institution:** Unlike Parliament, where bicameralism is constitutionally mandated, States have the **option to establish or abolish Legislative Councils.**
- **Permanent House:** It is a continuing chamber and is not subject to dissolution.
- **Tenure:** Members serve a six-year term, with one-third retiring every two years.
- **Election Method:** Elections to the Council are conducted through **Proportional Representation by Single Transferable Vote** for the specified elected categories.
- **Current Status (2026):** Six States have Legislative Councils:
  - Andhra Pradesh
  - Bihar
  - Karnataka
  - Maharashtra
  - Telangana
  - Uttar Pradesh

IMPORTANT CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

Creation and Abolition – Article 169

- **The Legislative Assembly must pass a resolution by:**
  - A majority of its total membership; and
  - A majority of not less than two-thirds of members present and voting.
- **Parliament can then create or abolish the Council through a law.**
- Such a law is passed through the **ordinary legislative process** and is not treated as a constitutional amendment under Article 368.
- **Parliament is not constitutionally bound** to accept the State Assembly's recommendation.

Composition – Article 171

- **Strength of a Legislative Council:**
  - Cannot exceed one-third of the total membership of the State Legislative Assembly.
  - Cannot be less than 40 members.

Qualifications – Article 173



- Must be a citizen of India.
- Must be at least **30 years of age** to become a member of the Legislative Council.
- Must possess other qualifications prescribed by Parliament.

POWERS AND FUNCTIONS

- **Legislative Functions:**
  - Can introduce and pass ordinary bills.
  - Examines and suggests amendments to bills passed by the Legislative Assembly.

- Under Article 197, it can delay an ordinary bill for a **maximum of four months**.

♣ **Financial Powers:**

- **Cannot introduce Money Bills**; these can originate only in the Legislative Assembly.
- Can make recommendations on a Money Bill within 14 days which the Legislative Assembly may accept or reject.
- Cannot vote on demands for grants.

♣ **Executive Functions:**

- Ministers may be members of either House of the State Legislature.
- Can question ministers, discuss government policies and scrutinise executive functioning.
- However, the **Council of Ministers is collectively responsible only to the Legislative Assembly** under Article 164(2).
- Cannot remove the government through a no-confidence motion.

IMPORTANCE

☼ **Checks Hasty Legislation:** Provides an opportunity for reconsideration and scrutiny of bills passed by the popularly elected Legislative Assembly.

☼ **Representation of Diverse Interests:** Provides representation to graduates, teachers, local authorities and other sections that may receive limited representation through direct elections.

☼ **Continuity in Governance:** Being a permanent House, it ensures institutional continuity despite changes in the Legislative Assembly.

☼ **Platform for Debate:** Provides additional opportunities for discussion on public issues, government policies and legislative proposals.

☼ **Democratic Deepening:** Broadens participation in the legislative process beyond direct electoral representation.

CHALLENGES

▼ **Political Patronage:** Councils may be used to accommodate **defeated politicians or provide political appointments** to party loyalists.

▼ **Financial Burden:** Maintaining an additional House involves expenditure on salaries, allowances, infrastructure and administration.

- **Example:** In 2020, Andhra Pradesh sought to abolish its Legislative Council, citing its annual cost of approximately ₹60 crore to the state exchequer.

▼ **Limited Legislative Powers:** Councils have restricted powers over Money Bills and ordinary legislation, raising questions about their **institutional effectiveness.**

▼ **Legislative Delays:** Can delay the passage of important legislation, potentially affecting governance and policy implementation.

▼ **Questionable Representation:** Graduate and teacher constituencies represent **relatively narrow electorates** and may not adequately reflect wider societal interests.

▼ **Uncertain Institutional Continuity:** The creation or abolition of Councils may be influenced by changing political interests rather than objective institutional assessments.

WAY FORWARD

✳ **National Policy Framework:** Develop **objective national criteria for the creation and abolition of Legislative Councils**, as recommended by the **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its 63rd Report (2013).**

✳ **Strengthen Legislative Scrutiny:** Establish effective committees, encourage evidence-based deliberations and ensure detailed examination of bills.

✳ **Ensure Functional Autonomy:** Prevent the use of Legislative Councils as instruments of political patronage and provide greater institutional independence.

✳ **Improve Accountability:** Strengthen transparency in nominations, member attendance, legislative performance and public participation.

✳ **Constructive Federalism:** Encourage States to assess the need for a second chamber based on their population, administrative complexity, diversity and legislative requirements

CONCLUSION

Legislative Councils can strengthen democratic deliberation by providing a revising chamber, and representation of specialised interests. Their effectiveness, however, depends on insulating them from political patronage and ensuring that their composition and functioning serve the larger objectives of **accountable and effective governance.**

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Legislative Councils have the potential to improve the quality of legislative deliberations, but their institutional relevance remains contested." Critically examine the role, limitations and reforms required in State Legislative Councils. **(15 Marks, 250 Words)**

FRANCE PROTESTS 2026

Syllabus: GS II - International Relations

PYQ Mapping

Q) *How do pressure groups influence the Indian political process? Do you agree with the view that informal pressure groups have emerged as more powerful than formal pressure groups in recent years?* ***(2017)***

Why in the News?

France witnessed widespread youth-led protests in October 2026, escalating into nationwide unrest over deteriorating educational facilities, rising living costs, economic stagnation and growing dissatisfaction with President Emmanuel Macron's government.



Introduction

France, the birthplace of the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, is experiencing one of its most significant waves of social unrest in recent years. What began as student demonstrations demanding better educational infrastructure in September 2026 has evolved into a broader movement against economic inequality, unemployment, weakening public services and political alienation.

Background: How Did the Protests Begin?

- **September 2026:** Student and teacher protests began in Créteil, near Paris, over teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms and deteriorating infrastructure.
- **Early October:** Demonstrations spread across major French cities, attracting students, parents, teachers and trade unions.
- **October 17:** Protests escalated into nationwide unrest, with government estimates of approximately 550,000 participants, accompanied by vandalism, clashes and arrests.
- **October 24–31:** Further demonstrations continued, drawing support from the Yellow Vest movement and groups demanding better living standards and public services.

Major Causes of the France Protests

Educational Crisis and Youth Discontent:

- Shortage of teachers, overcrowded classrooms and deteriorating school infrastructure.
  - A study conducted by SNES-FSU (the leading public secondary school teacher union), found that 53% of surveyed secondary schools were missing at least one teacher. Additionally, SNES-FSU noted that 69% of these schools lacked at least one total staff position, including educational assistants, psychologists, and school counselors.
- Concerns regarding unequal access to higher education and the quality of public education.
- Growing dissatisfaction among young people regarding employment opportunities and economic mobility.

Economic Stagnation and Cost-of-Living Crisis:

- **Slow GDP growth:** France's economic growth has remained weak, constraining income growth and government revenues.
- **Youth unemployment:** Nearly 20%, compared with overall unemployment of around 8%.
- **Purchasing-power concerns:** Inadequate wage growth, housing costs and rising living expenses have generated public dissatisfaction.
  - Annual consumer inflation rose to 3.4%, compared with 3.1% in September, indicating growing pressure on household purchasing power.
- **Social inequality:** Young people and disadvantaged communities face disproportionate economic insecurity.

Fiscal Crisis and Pressure on the Welfare State:

- France faces the challenge of sustaining its extensive social protection programmes amid a rising fiscal burden, with public debt exceeding 118% of GDP, a fiscal deficit of 5.4% of GDP, and sluggish projected economic growth of just 0.4% in 2026.

- Rising pension and healthcare expenditure, alongside population ageing, increases fiscal pressure.

Political Instability and Crisis of Representation:

- Declining confidence in President Macron's centrist leadership and traditional political institutions.
- Growing influence of far-left and far-right parties amid dissatisfaction with mainstream politics.
- Public resentment over perceived disconnect between political elites and ordinary citizens.
- The approaching April 2027 presidential election has intensified political competition and polarisation.

France Protests: 1968 vs 2026 – Comparison & Similarities

- **Youth-Led Movements:** Both protests were driven by students expressing dissatisfaction with educational institutions, inequality and government policies.
- **Causes:** The 1968 protests challenged authoritarianism, traditional values and capitalism, while the 2026 protests focus on educational inequality, unemployment and rising living costs.
- **Mass Mobilisation:** The 1968 movement expanded into nationwide workers' strikes, whereas the 2026 protests have involved students, teachers and trade unions.
  - **Worker Solidarity:** In 1968, heavy police repression of students in Paris encouraged major trade unions, including the CGT and FO, to organise solidarity strikes, transforming a student uprising into a nationwide labour movement.
  - **Mass General Strike:** At its peak, approximately 10–11 million French workers participated in strikes and factory occupations in 1968, paralysing much of the national economy.
- **Government Response:** Both movements witnessed police intervention, public confrontations and government efforts to address protesters' grievances.
- **Political Impact:** The 1968 uprising triggered a major political crisis under Charles de Gaulle, while the 2026 protests reflect dissatisfaction with governance under Emmanuel Macron.
- **Common Significance:** Both movements highlight youth activism, social justice, democratic accountability and the importance of responsive governance.

Political and Social Implications

- **Erosion of political centrism:** Public discontent may strengthen ideological extremes and weaken the traditional political centre.
- **Rise of populism:** The revival of the Gilets Jaunes (Yellow Vests) reflects resentment against economic inequality and perceived elitist governance.
- **Generational divide:** High youth unemployment, concerns over education and the burden of financing an ageing society have intensified intergenerational tensions.
- **Democratic challenges:** Violent clashes and police crackdowns raise concerns over civil liberties, proportional policing and the right to peaceful protest.
- **European implications:** Prolonged instability in France, a major EU economy, could weaken investor confidence and complicate European fiscal and political coordination.

Government Response and Challenges

- **Educational Reforms:** Announced measures to reduce class sizes and proposed €4 billion in loans for school renovation.
- **University Reforms:** Planned to replace the existing university admissions system by 2028.
- **Massive Police Deployment:** Deployed around 70,000 police personnel nationwide to maintain law and order.
- **Police Crackdown:** Police reportedly used tear gas, water cannons and baton charges, with several protesters arrested.

Similar Ongoing Protests Across Europe (October–November 2026)

- **Italy:** Cost-of-Living Protests: Youth and workers protesting rising living costs, low wages and educational challenges; demonstrations in Milan and Turin witnessed clashes with police.
- **Spain:** Housing Crisis Protests: Demonstrations against soaring rents, forced evictions, housing shortages and declining affordability, particularly in Madrid.
- **Belgium:** Anti-Austerity Protests: Students, teachers and workers protesting rising education costs, declining purchasing power and pressure on public services; clashes reported in Brussels and Liège

Way Forward

- **Inclusive economic growth:** Promote employment-intensive investment, productivity improvements and opportunities for young workers.
- **Sustainable fiscal reforms:** Adopt gradual, progressive expenditure reforms while protecting essential public services.
- **Strengthening public education:** Improve teacher recruitment, infrastructure and equitable access to higher education.
- **Participatory governance:** Institutionalise dialogue with students, trade unions and civil society to rebuild public trust.
- **Democratic accountability:** Ensure transparent governance, proportionate policing and protection of peaceful dissent.
- **Intergenerational equity:** Balance pension and healthcare obligations with adequate investment in education, housing and future employment.

Conclusion

The 2026 protests in France represent more than a temporary expression of public anger; they reveal deeper tensions between economic stagnation, welfare-state sustainability, generational inequality and democratic representation. Addressing the crisis requires a balanced approach that combines fiscal responsibility with social justice, economic reforms with inclusive growth, and political stability with democratic accountability.

Sample Question

Q) *"The recent protests in France reflect a crisis of economic governance as much as a crisis of political representation." Critically examine the statement in the context of welfare-state sustainability, youth unemployment and democratic accountability.* ***(250 words, 15 marks)***

WEEKLY DOSSIERS

VIBRANT VILLAGES PROGRAMME: FROM LAST VILLAGES TO FIRST VILLAGES

Introduction:

- India's border villages have historically faced geographical isolation, inadequate infrastructure and outward migration. The Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP), launched in 2023, aims to transform these remote settlements into vibrant centres of inclusive growth and national development.

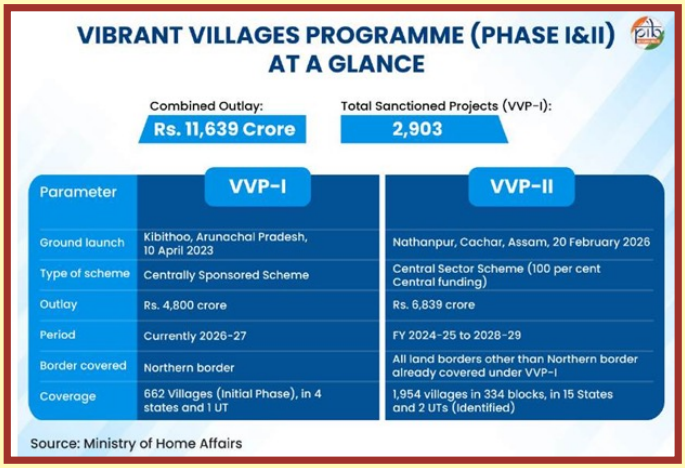


Key Highlights:

- **Two phases:** VVP-I (₹4,800 crore) focuses on northern borders, while VVP-II (₹6,839 crore) extends development to other international land borders.
- **Coverage:** Both phases target 2,616 villages through improved roads, electricity, telecommunications, healthcare and education.
- **Participatory governance:** Village Action Plans and convergence of government schemes promote locally relevant development.
- **Social empowerment:** SHGs, cooperatives, financial inclusion and skill development strengthen community participation.

Challenges:

- **Geographical constraints:** Difficult terrain, harsh climatic conditions and scattered settlements increase infrastructure costs.



- **Implementation gaps:** Interdepartmental coordination challenges and delays in project execution.
- **Service delivery:** Shortages of skilled healthcare workers, teachers and digital infrastructure.

Way Forward:

- Adopt decentralised, village-specific planning with greater community participation.
- Strengthen scheme convergence, real-time monitoring and outcome-based evaluation.
- Prioritise climate-resilient infrastructure and last-mile delivery of essential services.

Conclusion:

- VVP marks a paradigm shift from viewing border settlements as India's last villages to recognising them as its first villages, advancing inclusive development and the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

BORDER COMMUNITIES: INDIA'S FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

Introduction:

- India's international land borders extend over 15,000 km, making inhabited frontier settlements strategically important for national security. The Vibrant Villages Programme integrates community development with border security to strengthen India's frontier resilience.

Key Highlights:

- **Community intelligence:** Border residents act as the

eyes and ears of security forces, as demonstrated during the 1999 Kargil intrusion.

- **Strategic infrastructure:** All-weather roads, electricity and telecommunications improve accessibility and support security operations.
- **Demographic security:** Sustainable livelihoods help prevent depopulation of strategically sensitive border regions.
- **Cross-border threats:** Stronger communities can assist in preventing smuggling, trafficking and other trans-border crimes.
- **Security-development convergence:** Cooperation between district administrations, local communities and border guarding forces promotes integrated border management.

Challenges:

- **Difficult terrain:** Mountainous regions and extreme weather obstruct surveillance and logistical operations.
- **Out-migration:** Population decline weakens local intelligence networks and community resilience.
- **Security vulnerabilities:** Porous borders, illicit trafficking and inadequate communication infrastructure.
- **Trust deficit:** Excessive securitisation may undermine community participation and civilian rights.

Way Forward:

- Promote community-based border intelligence through voluntary cooperation and trust-building.
- Integrate VVP with border infrastructure initiatives and modern surveillance technologies.
- Create sustainable employment opportunities to retain frontier populations.
- Strengthen coordination among security agencies, local governments and border communities while protecting civilian rights.

Conclusion:

- Effective border security requires not only modern surveillance and physical infrastructure but also prosperous, connected and resilient frontier communities. VVP reinforces the principle that national security and human development are mutually complementary.

BORDER TOURISM AND REVERSE MIGRATION: UNLOCKING FRONTIER ECONOMIES

Introduction:

- India's remote border regions possess significant ecological, cultural and tourism potential but often suffer from poor connectivity and limited employment opportunities. The Vibrant Villages Programme seeks to transform these regions into sustainable and self-reliant rural economies.

Key Highlights:

- **Tourism-led growth:** Eco-tourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism and homestays diversify rural income sources.
- **Local entrepreneurship:** SHGs, cooperatives and Farmer Producer Organisations strengthen local agricultural value chains.
- **Assured markets:** Local procurement by border security forces, including ITBP, provides income opportunities for farmers.
- **Reverse migration:** Improved connectivity, public services and employment encourage residents to remain in or return to their villages.
- **Community resilience:** Livelihood diversification reduces dependence on traditional agriculture.

Challenges:

- **Ecological fragility:** Unregulated tourism may increase waste, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation.
- **Limited market connectivity:** High transportation costs and weak supply chains restrict local enterprise growth.
- **Seasonal employment:** Tourism-dependent livelihoods remain vulnerable to weather and seasonal fluctuations.
- **Climate risks:** Landslides, flash floods and glacial hazards threaten infrastructure and livelihoods.

Way Forward:

- Develop community-led, low-impact tourism based on ecological carrying capacity.
- Promote local products through One District One Product (ODOP), e-commerce and improved market linkages.

- Invest in skill development, homestays, sustainable agriculture and renewable energy.
- Encourage public-private partnerships and climate-resilient livelihood diversification.

Conclusion:

- By integrating sustainable tourism, local entrepreneurship and infrastructure development, VVP can transform border settlements into self-reliant economic hubs, simultaneously strengthening rural prosperity, ecological sustainability and India's strategic interests.

BEYOND VERDICTS: KEY JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS

Executive Magistrate's Power to Order Peace Bonds under BNSS

- The Delhi High Court (2026) upheld a Special Executive Magistrate's notice requiring AISA leader Neha Bora to furnish a ₹10,000 peace bond following a protest, highlighting the preventive powers of magistrates under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023. Under Section 126, an Executive Magistrate can initiate proceedings when there is credible apprehension of a breach of public peace, even without an FIR. Sections 130 and 135 prescribe procedural safeguards, including written notice, inquiry and recorded reasons for interim bonds.
- In ***Madhu Limaye v. Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Monghyr (1970),*** the Supreme Court emphasised that personal liberty cannot be curtailed arbitrarily.
- Similarly, in ***Istkar v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2022***), it reiterated that peace bonds are preventive, not punitive. The ruling highlights the need to balance public order, individual liberty and procedural fairness under Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution.

Supreme Court Upholds Individual Autonomy and Freedom of Choice

- The Supreme Court (October 2026) ruled that courts cannot impose moral judgments on adults' personal relationships, emphasising individual autonomy, dignity and freedom of choice under Article 21.
- A Bench comprising Justice B.V. Nagarathna and Justice R. Mahadevan discharged a man accused of rape on a false promise, cheating and bigamy, overturning orders of the Kerala High Court and Trial Court.
- The Court held that the breakdown of a consensual relationship cannot automatically constitute rape under Section 376(2)(n) of the IPC, and criminal law must not be misused for personal revenge or coercion. However, it clarified that consent obtained through genuine deception about marital status may constitute an offence, depending on the evidence.

Supreme Court Restricts Commercial Exploitation of Courtroom Proceedings

- The Supreme Court directed the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to incorporate measures against unauthorised circulation and commercial exploitation of courtroom audio-video recordings in its proposed policy.
- In ***Harshita Grover v. Union of India*** and Others, a Bench comprising CJI Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V. Mohana emphasised that YouTubers and other content creators must obtain prior permission from the Supreme Court's Secretary General or the concerned High Court's Registrar General before using courtroom clips. The Court expressed concerns over misrepresentation, selective editing, monetisation and dissemination of misleading judicial content.
- While permitting news organisations to report proceedings without reproducing clips, the ruling highlights the need to balance judicial transparency, freedom of expression under Article 19(1)(a), responsible digital journalism and institutional integrity.

Supreme Court on False Rape Allegations and Individual Autonomy

- The Supreme Court, in ***Santosh Kumar N.P. v. State–Station House Office***r, held that a consensual relationship

between adults cannot be retrospectively treated as rape merely because it ends. A Bench comprising Justice B.V. Nagarathna and Justice R. Mahadevan discharged a man accused of rape, cheating and bigamy under the In ?dian Penal Code (IPC), observing that criminalising failed consensual relationships undermines individual autonomy, liberty and reputation.

- The Court distinguished between consent obtained through deliberate deception from the outset and subsequent regret following a breakup. It emphasised that individuals have the right to withdraw from relationships without automatically facing criminal liability. However, the Court also acknowledged the underreporting of sexual violence and stressed that genuine rape cases must be prosecuted vigorously.

Supreme Court Calls for Strict Bank Liability in Digital Arrest Frauds

- **The Supreme Court, in In *Re: Victims of Digital Arrest Related to Forged Documents [SMW (Crl.) 3/2025]***, emphasised that banks and financial institutions must compensate cyber fraud victims when losses result from their negligence or failure to exercise due diligence.
- A Bench comprising CJI Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V. Mohana called for strict liability, including compensation of at least the amount lost, where institutional negligence is established.
- The Court urged the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to introduce stronger safeguards, including detection, suspension and verification of suspicious transactions. It also highlighted possible collusion by bank officials and the need for coordination among the RBI, MeitY and Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) You are the District Collector of a tribal-dominated district where the State Government has approved a major hydropower project. The project is expected to generate renewable electricity, create employment and contribute to India's clean energy transition. However, the project requires the displacement of nearly 2,000 tribal families and the diversion of forest land. Environmental experts have warned that the project could threaten biodiversity and increase landslide risks. During a public consultation, tribal representatives oppose the project, arguing that their livelihoods, cultural identity and traditional forest rights are being ignored. Meanwhile, senior government officials pressure you to expedite environmental clearances, citing national development priorities. You also discover that the project's environmental impact assessment (EIA) report has underestimated the number of affected households. As District Collector, you must balance development objectives, environmental sustainability, tribal rights and administrative accountability.

Questions

a. Identify the ethical issues and stakeholders involved in this case.

b. What are the possible courses of action available to you? Examine their merits and limitations.

c. How would you reconcile public interest, environmental protection and tribal rights while ensuring administrative integrity?

d. Explain how the principles of constitutional morality, transparency, empathy and sustainable development should guide your final decision.

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

1. **Social Responsibility:** Founded in 2011 by NRI engineer Bethala Veera Swami and his childhood friends in Yernagudem, Andhra Pradesh, PARD INDIA bridges the rural education gap through free after-school classes, digital literacy centres and scholarships for disadvantaged children. As of March 2026, its After-School Education Programme delivered 5.69 lakh hours of free education across 79 villages.
2. **Workplace Dignity:** At Taj Convention Hotel, Agra, a guest allegedly slapped waiter Kanti over a misunderstanding caused by his limited English proficiency. Kanti, belonging to a poor farming family near Agra, remained silent fearing the loss of his dream job; upon learning of the incident, the hotel management permanently blacklisted the guest.
3. **Empathy:** During vehicle inspection in Erumeli, Kottayam, police fined Sujith, an unemployed father from Erumeli, ₹250 for traffic violations. Learning that he had been unemployed for three weeks and had only ₹200 to buy sweets for his daughter Vaiga's fourth birthday, SI Cijo Ravindran and his team paid the fine, bought her a birthday cake, sweets and a new dress, and celebrated with the family.
4. **Public Administration Ethics:** In Madhya Pradesh's Narsinghpur, Zilla Panchayat CEO Gajendra Singh Nagesh led the ₹4.8-crore revival of the 39.6-km Singri River in 2026 through gram panchayats, voluntary labour (Shramdaan), stone embankments and decentralised wastewater filtration. The initiative involved 26 panchayat projects and restored a 600-metre community riverfront.
5. **Perseverance:** Jhandu Kumar (Avinash Kumar) is a para-powerlifter from Bihar who contracted polio at five, he overcame poverty and social ridicule, selling vegetables and driving an e-rickshaw to support his family and training. Despite initially failing all three lifts at the 2023 National Championships, he persevered to win bronze in men's heavyweight para-powerlifting at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, lifting 190 kg.
6. **Innovation:** Residents of Wadji village in Maharashtra once travelled up to 1.5 km to fetch drinking water. Using Meghdoot technology, the village now extracts moisture from the air to produce around 500 litres of purified water daily.
7. **Inclusivity:** The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) in Purnea, Bihar, integrate nearly 75 hearing-impaired girls into mainstream classrooms alongside other students, rather than isolating them in separate institutions. Teachers and hearing students learn Indian Sign Language to communicate with them.

MODEL ESSAY

"Justice is a train that is nearly always late."

Introduction

- ***Quote by Yevgeny Yevtushenko***
- Neelam Krishnamoorthy lost her two children in the Uphaar Cinema fire, which killed 59 people. She spent 24 years pursuing accountability against the cinema's owners, the Ansal brothers, who received seven-year sentences in a separate evidence-tampering case in 2021 – illustrates the emotional cost of prolonged litigation on victims' families.

Why Justice is Always Late

- **Elite Sabotage:** Wealthy accused exploit financial resources and procedural loopholes to delay trials. **Eg**: Salman Khan's 2002 hit-and-run case, which underwent prolonged litigation before the 2015 acquittal.
- **Judicial Backlog:** Shortage of judges and inadequate infrastructure prolong litigation. **Eg**: India's over 50 million pending court cases.
- **Undertrial Injustice:** Poor prisoners remain incarcerated for years without conviction due to inability to secure bail. **Eg**: Over 75% of India's prison population comprises undertrial prisoners.
- **Environmental Injustice:** Corporate litigation and delayed compensation prolong victims' suffering. Eg: Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984), where compensation and legal accountability took decades.
- **Posthumous Justice:** Innocence or injustice is acknowledged only after the victim's death. **Eg**: Alan Turing received a posthumous royal pardon in 2013, decades after his conviction for homosexuality.
- **Legislative Lag:** Legal recognition of rights often follows decades of social discrimination. **Eg**: Supreme Court's 2018 Navtej Singh Johar judgment decriminalising consensual same-sex relations under Section 377.

However, while the agony of delay is undeniable, the romanticized demand for "swift justice" frequently invites catastrophic tyranny.

The Necessity of Delay

- **Mob Justice (Vigilantism):** Public impatience with courts can lead to mob violence and miscarriage of justice. **Eg**: 2015 Dimapur lynching, where a rape suspect was dragged out of jail and killed by a mob before trial.
- **Extrajudicial Killings:** Bypassing judicial procedures undermines the rule of law. Eg: 2019 Hyderabad encounter killings of four rape accused
- **Due Process and Innocence:** Judicial scrutiny and forensic evidence protect innocent people from wrongful convictions.
- **Social Stability:** Careful adjudication of sensitive disputes can prevent impulsive decisions from aggravating social tensions. **Eg**: Supreme Court's deliberation before delivering the Ayodhya verdict

Synthesis

- Necessary judicial scrutiny must be preserved, while administrative inefficiency and avoidable adjournments must be eliminated.
- Expand judicial capacity, adopt digital technologies and strengthen alternative dispute resolution to reduce pendency without compromising fairness.
- Justice must be **swift but not rushed, firm but not arbitrary, and efficient without sacrificing due process.**

Conclusion

- No grieving mother should have to spend 25 years seeking justice against powerful billionaires responsible for a deadly theatre fire.
- A delayed train is better than a derailed one, but **justice loses its meaning when litigants die waiting for it.**

Sample Quotes

- *The oppressor would not be so strong if he did not have accomplices among the oppressed.— Simone de Beauvoir*
- *Demography is destiny.— Auguste Comte*
- *Power is not a means; it is an end.— George Orwell*

MAINS JOT DOWN

GS II: SOCIAL JUSTICE

Gender Inequality in Access to Eye Healthcare in India

- **Gender Discrimination:** Patriarchal attitudes, concerns about marriage prospects and women's limited decision-making power often delay or prevent girls and women from receiving necessary eye treatment.
- A study published in **JAMA Ophthalmology,** conducted in Bengaluru government schools, found that parental opposition prevented 11.4% of girls compared to 4.2% of boys from wearing prescribed spectacles, largely due to concerns about marriage prospects.
- **Healthcare Disparity:** A study published in the **British Journal of Ophthalmology** in Tamil Nadu found that cataract surgery coverage was lower among women (73.9%) than men (78.6%), despite women having a higher prevalence of cataracts (21.4% versus 17.5%).

GS III: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ICMR Study on Genetic Links and Treatment of Autoimmune Diseases (2026)

- The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has funded a four-year nationwide study involving 200 families to investigate genetic and immunological factors responsible for autoimmune diseases such as lupus and type 1 diabetes.
- **Institutional Collaboration:** The study is led by researchers from AIIMS Delhi and Ashoka University, with participation from six medical institutions, including SGPGIMS Lucknow, AIIMS Bibinagar and St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru.
- **Research Significance:** By comparing affected and unaffected family members through genomic and immunological analysis, the study aims to identify genetic risk markers, shared disease mechanisms and potential targets for new therapies, advancing precision medicine in India.

GS III: CLIMATE CHANGE

Rising Heat-Related Deaths and Global Climate Inaction

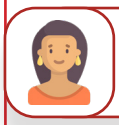
- **Research Finding:** The ***2026 Lancet Countdown Report on Health and Climate Change, led by University College London (UCL)*** in collaboration with WHO, found that average annual heat-related deaths increased by nearly 36% globally during 2016–2025 compared with 2006–2015.
- **Climate-Health Crisis:** In 2023, extreme heat contributed to approximately 7.1 lakh deaths worldwide, with over 70% attributable to human-induced climate change. Fossil-fuel-related air pollution also causes an estimated 28 lakh deaths annually.
- **Climate Finance Gap:** Despite the Paris Agreement (2015), fossil fuels still supply over 80% of global energy. Developing countries identified at least $3.3 billion annually in health adaptation needs, but only $1.1 billion was committed in 2024, highlighting inadequate climate finance.

GS II: EDUCATION

Faculty Vacancies and the Student–Teacher Ratio in Higher Education

- **AISHE Report 2023–24 (Released July 2026):** India's higher education system has nearly 4.5 crore students and over 17 lakh faculty members, with a national Pupil–Teacher Ratio (PTR) of 22:1, within the desirable range of 15:1 to 25:1.
- **According to 2025 RTI data and the Tamil Nadu Federation of Universities Faculty Association (TANFUFA), nearly 65% of sanctioned teaching posts at the University of Madras were vacant, while vacancies exceeded 40% in 12 of Tamil Nadu's 21 universities, despite the State reporting a favourable PTR of 14:**1.
- **Structural Challenges:** Faculty vacancies, reliance on contractual teachers and unequal distribution of teaching staff can increase workloads, weaken research capacity and

affect the quality of higher education.



GS II: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- **Impact of Free Bus Travel on Women's Mobility in India**
  - » **NSO Time Use Surveys (2019 & 2024): The National Statistics Office (NSO)** surveyed approximately 4.5 lakh individuals in each round to examine changes in daily activities and mobility.
  - » **Improved Women's Mobility:** In four States examined, the proportion of women aged 15–59 making at least one trip daily increased from 38.7% in 2019 to 45.3% in 2024, a rise of 6.6 percentage points, compared with 3.7 points among men.
  - » **Gender-Responsive Public Transport:** In the other 12 large States studied, women's mobility increased by only 4.4 percentage points, compared with 7.6 points for men. The findings suggest that free bus travel schemes may have improved women's mobility, although the comparison alone does not establish causation.



GS III: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- **India's First Private Nuclear Fusion Power Initiative (2026)**
  - » **Technological Advancement:** Bengaluru-based startup Pranos Fusion has developed **PRAGYA**, a small experimental **tokamak**, and plans to finalise the design of PRANIK, a larger fusion reactor, by 2027. The technology uses powerful magnetic fields to confine extremely hot plasma for nuclear fusion.
  - » The startup is supported by the **Institute for Plasma Research (IPR)** under the Department of Atomic Energy and the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Bengaluru, under the Department of Science and Technology.



GS III: ENVIRONMENT

- **India's Next Investment Cycle and Its Carbon Future**
  - » **Carbon Lock-in Risk:** India's upcoming investments in power plants, industries, transport and urban infrastructure will influence its carbon emissions for decades. Continued investment in fossil-fuel-intensive assets could create long-term dependence on high-carbon technologies.
  - » **Green Investment Opportunities:** Prioritising renewable energy, green hydrogen, electric mobility, energy-efficient industries and sustainable infrastructure can promote economic growth while reducing emissions and improving energy security.



GS III: DISASTER MANAGEMENT

- **Gujarat Declares Four Districts Drought-Affected (2026)**
  - » The Gujarat Government declared Devbhoomi Dwarka, Kutch, Jamnagar and Porbandar drought-affected under the Central Government's Manual for Drought Management, 2016, following deficient monsoon rainfall. The declaration is valid for six months.
  - » Despite Gujarat receiving 89% of its normal monsoon rainfall, Devbhoomi Dwarka recorded an 83.5% rainfall deficit, followed by Porbandar (69.1%), Jamnagar (56.7%) and Kutch (42.4%), highlighting significant regional rainfall disparities.



GS II: SOCIAL JUSTICE

- **AI in Classrooms and the Digital Infrastructure Gap**
  - » On April 1, 2026, the **Union Education Ministry launched CBSE's new curriculum on Computational Thinking and Artificial Intelligence** for Classes 3 to 8, to be introduced from the 2026–27 session. It aims to build computational thinking as the foundation for later AI learning.
  - » A JAN AI survey of nearly 800 government school teachers across Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Jharkhand and Maharashtra found that 72% were positive about AI and 26% used it regularly, showing growing acceptance among teachers.

» **Core Challenge:** Of India's 14.67 lakh schools, only 63.1% have functional computers for teaching. Around 5.42 lakh schools (37%) lack working computers, including 4.41 lakh schools without any computer facility.



GS II: EDUCATION

Distance to Educational Institutions and Rural–Urban Disparities in India

» **National Household Travel Survey (NHTS):** The first-of-its-kind survey conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO) found that 60.6% of students aged 6–14 travel more than 1 km to reach school. The survey covered over 4.92 lakh households and 20 lakh individuals.

» **Rural–Urban Disparity:** Among students aged 15–29, 79.1% in rural areas travel over 1 km, compared with 73.3% in urban areas, highlighting unequal access to educational institutions.

» **Economic Survey 2025–26:** Only 17.1% of rural schools offer secondary education, compared with 38.1% of urban schools, indicating significant gaps in educational infrastructure.

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

RELATIVE OCEAN NIÑO INDEX (RONI):

- An index measuring tropical Pacific sea-surface temperature anomalies relative to tropical ocean conditions to assess ENSO strength.

BASE EFFECT:

- The influence of the previous period's statistical level on the current rate of economic growth or inflation.

GOLDEN CRESCENT:

- A major illicit opium-producing and trafficking region encompassing Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE:

- A region associated with illicit narcotics production and trafficking where Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet.

HANGING GLACIER:

- A glacier situated on a steep mountain slope or above a cliff, potentially posing ice-avalanche hazards.