THE DAILY UPSC BRIEF

HIGH-YIELD DAILY SOURCES & ANALYSIS | 19 SEPTEMBER 2026

TODAY'S COVERAGE

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HOW TO READ THIS BRIEF

- Why in News / Target Prelims MCQ
- How to Use in UPSC Mains
- Mains Practice / Case Study Question
- Correct Answer

GS PAPER 2: Polity, Governance & International Relations

EC Freezes Trinamool Congress's Name and Symbol Amid Banerjee Family Split

Why in news: The Election Commission has frozen the Trinamool Congress's name and 'grass and twin flowers' symbol amid a split between Mamata Banerjee and her nephew-rival Ritabrata Banerjee, ahead of West Bengal Assembly bypolls on October 6.

Key Details:

- **The legal basis:** Para 15 of the Election Symbols (Reservation & Allotment) Order, 1968 lets the EC freeze a symbol when it can't immediately verify which faction holds a majority.
- **What happens next:** Both factions must submit alternative names and pick fresh symbols from the EC's free list for the Nandigram and Rejinagar bypolls.
- **The political charge:** Congress called it a 'late-night gift' to the BJP; the BJP countered that Congress itself has a long history of splitting allied parties.
- **Not the first time:** Similar splits have hit the NCP (2023) and Shiv Sena (2022), both resolved by the EC applying the same 'test of majority' principle.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Precedent:** In Sadiq Ali v. Election Commission of India (1971), arising from a 1969 Congress split, the SC upheld the EC's power to decide the 'real' party by testing organisational and legislative majority.
- **Scale of today's bypolls:** Nandigram and Rejinagar go to the polls on October 6, 2026, after their sitting MLAs vacated the seats.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Cite Sadiq Ali (1971) and the 2022 Shiv Sena precedent to show the EC's 'test of majority' doctrine is a settled, repeatable process — not an ad hoc political call.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the powers of the Election Commission of India (ECI) over political party symbols, consider the following statements:
1. Under the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, the ECI can temporarily freeze a party's name and symbol when a dispute over its leadership arises.
2. The ECI decides which faction of a split party is entitled to the parent party's symbol based on a 'test of majority' within the party's organisational and legislative wings.
3. The Supreme Court has held that the ECI's decision on a party symbol dispute cannot be challenged in a court of law.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: The 1968 Order does empower the ECI to freeze a disputed symbol pending resolution (statement 1 correct), applying a 'test of majority' as settled in Sadiq Ali v. ECI (1971) (statement 2 correct). However, ECI decisions remain subject to judicial review by courts, not immune from challenge — statement 3 is false.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2017, GS Paper I: "Consider the following statements: 1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body. 2. Union Ministry of Home Affairs decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections. 3. Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognised political parties. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?" (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 3 only — Answer: (d). Same core idea as today's story: this tests exactly the EC power — deciding party-split disputes — invoked against the Trinamool factions.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** EC: Election Commission | SC: Supreme Court

Telangana High Court Disqualifies BRS MLA for Defection Under the Tenth Schedule

Why in news: The Telangana High Court disqualified BRS MLA Danam Nagender for defection, after he contested and won the Secunderabad Lok Sabha seat as a Congress nominee in 2024 while still holding his BRS Assembly seat.

Key Details:

- **The ruling:** The HC held Nagender stood disqualified from April 23, 2024 under para 2(1)(a) of the Tenth Schedule and Article 191(2), voiding his Khairatabad Assembly seat.
- **Why it took two years:** The Speaker had earlier dismissed disqualification petitions against him; High Court writ jurisdiction was needed to force a ruling.
- **The wider fallout:** Nine other BRS MLAs who defected to Congress between March-August 2024 are expected to face similar disqualification, the BRS says.
- **The test applied:** Contesting a Lok Sabha seat on a rival party's ticket while remaining a sitting MLA of the original party is itself treated as 'voluntarily giving up membership.'

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Judicial review limits:** In Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu (1992), the SC held the Speaker acts as a quasi-judicial tribunal; courts can review only after a final order, not mid-process.
- **A related SC push:** The Court has separately pressed Speakers to decide defection petitions within a reasonable time, after past cases saw years-long delays.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Pair Kihoto Hollohan's 'Speaker as tribunal' doctrine with this case to discuss why judicial review of defection rulings stays narrow and after-the-fact, not preventive.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. The Tenth Schedule vests the power to decide disqualification on grounds of defection in the Speaker/Chairman of the House, subject to limited judicial review. Critically examine whether this arrangement serves the anti-defection law's original purpose. (250 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2025, GS Paper I: "Consider the following statements: I. If any question arises as to whether a Member of the House of the People has become subject to disqualification under the Tenth Schedule, the President's decision in accordance with the opinion of the Council of Union Ministers shall be final. II. There is no mention of the word 'political party' in the Constitution of India. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?" (a) I only (b) II only (c) Both I and II (d) Neither I nor II — Answer: (d). Same core idea as today's story: disqualification under the Tenth Schedule is decided by the Speaker/Chairman, not the President — exactly the authority the Telangana HC was reviewing here.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** HC: High Court | SC: Supreme Court

JPC Grills Centre Over FCRA Bill's Asset-Takeover Powers

Why in news: At the first meeting of Parliament's Joint Committee on the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, Opposition MPs objected that a new 'designated authority' could take over an NGO's assets without a prior hearing once its FCRA licence is cancelled.

Key Details:

- **The flashpoint provision:** If an NGO's FCRA certificate is cancelled or lapses, its foreign-funded assets would vest in a government-appointed 'designated authority' with no prior hearing.
- **The constitutional objection:** Opposition members argued this violates Article 300A, under which no person can be deprived of property without the authority of law and due process.
- **The government's defence:** The Home Ministry called the FCRA amendment, at its core, a 'national security' law, saying current rules leave a 'passive custodian' unable to act.

- **What else drew scrutiny:** Members questioned why contributions are catalogued by religious group, noting a majority of funds went to Christian organisations.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Why FCRA exists:** Enacted in 1976 at the height of Cold War-era mistrust of Western influence, FCRA predates any centralised law on foreign funding of NGOs.
- **The registration gap:** FCRA-registered NGOs nearly halved from 29,022 (2015) to 14,466 (2024-25), even as the foreign funds they received rose from ₹17,832 crore to ₹22,974 crore.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use Article 300A — a constitutional, not Fundamental, right since the 44th Amendment — to frame the due-process objection precisely: the property right survives, just outside Part III.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), consider the following statements:
1. The FCRA was originally enacted in 1976.
2. The right to property in India, under Article 300A, is a Fundamental Right enforceable under Article 32.
3. Under the existing FCRA framework, a 'prescribed authority' can take substantive decisions on the disposal of an organisation's vested foreign-funded assets.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 only

Explanation: FCRA was indeed enacted in 1976 (statement 1 correct). The 44th Amendment (1978) removed the right to property from Part III, making it a constitutional/legal right under Article 300A rather than a Fundamental Right — it is no longer enforceable under Article 32 (statement 2 false). Under existing law, the 'prescribed authority' is described as a 'passive custodian' unable to take substantive decisions on vested assets — the very gap the 2026 Bill seeks to fill (statement 3 false).

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2015, GS Paper II: "Examine critically the recent changes in the rules governing foreign funding of NGOs under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 1976." (200 words). Same core idea as today's story: this is the standing Mains question on FCRA reform, now directly relevant to the 2026 Amendment Bill's asset-takeover provisions.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** FCRA: Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act | JPC: Joint Parliamentary Committee | NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

The Maratha Reservation Battle Returns to the Bombay High Court

Why in news: The Bombay High Court will begin hearing petitions for and against the Maharashtra SEBC Act, 2024 — which gives Marathas 10% reservation — from October 9, reopening a legal battle that has run since 2018.

Key Details:

- **Round one:** The original SEBC Act, 2018 gave Marathas 16% reservation; the Bombay HC upheld it in 2019 but cut it to 12% (education) and 13% (jobs).
- **Round two:** In May 2021, the Supreme Court struck down the entire 2018 Act, holding no 'extraordinary circumstances' justified breaching the 50% ceiling set in Indra Sawhney (1992).
- **Round three:** A curative petition against that verdict remains pending; a fresh SEBC Act, 2024 (10% quota) is what will now be argued from October 9.
- **The gateway question:** Before the 50% ceiling even applies, a group must first be validly classified as backward — the job of the National Commission for Backward Classes.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **The 50% rule's own exception:** Indra Sawhney itself allowed the ceiling to be breached only in 'extraordinary situations,' a deliberately narrow carve-out.

- **A newer precedent cuts differently:** Janhit Abhiyan (2022) upheld the EWS 10% quota partly by holding the 50% ceiling applies only to SC/ST/OBC reservation under Articles 15(4)/16(4), not to EWS.

The Maratha Reservation Timeline

Year	What Happened
2018	Maharashtra grants Marathas 16% reservation via the SEBC Act
2019	Bombay HC upholds it but cuts the quota to 12% (education) / 13% (jobs)
2021	Supreme Court strikes down the entire Act, citing the Indra Sawhney 50% ceiling
2022	A curative petition against the verdict is filed; it remains pending
2024	A fresh SEBC Act grants Marathas a 10% quota
2026	Bombay HC begins hearing petitions on the 2024 Act from October 9

How to use in UPSC Mains: Contrast Indra Sawhney's narrow 'extraordinary situations' exception with Janhit Abhiyan's separate EWS carve-out — Maratha-quota defenders now invoke the latter by analogy, a live doctrinal tension worth flagging.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to reservation in India, consider the following statements:
1. The Indra Sawhney judgment (1992) fixed a general ceiling of 50% on total reservations, permitting exceptions only in extraordinary situations.
2. The National Commission for Backward Classes was converted from a statutory body into a constitutional body by the 102nd Constitutional Amendment.
3. The Supreme Court's verdict upholding the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) quota held that the 50% ceiling applies to all categories of reservation without exception.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: Indra Sawhney (1992) did fix the 50% ceiling with a narrow 'extraordinary situations' exception (statement 1 correct). The 102nd Amendment did make the NCBC a constitutional body under Article 338B (statement 2 correct). However, the Janhit Abhiyan (2022) verdict upholding the EWS quota held that the 50% ceiling applies only to SC/ST/OBC reservation under Articles 15(4)/16(4) — not to the separately created EWS category — so it did not treat the ceiling as exception-free across all categories (statement 3 false).

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2022, GS Paper II: "Discuss the role of the National Commission for Backward Classes in the wake of its transformation from a statutory body to a constitutional body." (150 words). Same core idea as today's story: before any 50%-ceiling debate applies, a group's classification as backward runs through exactly this NCBC machinery.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SEBC: Socially and Educationally Backward Classes | NCBC: National Commission for Backward Classes | EWS: Economically Weaker Sections

Ramming Incidents at Sea Put the Law of the Sea to the Test

Why in news: A China Coast Guard ship rammed a Philippine fisheries boat in the contested Spratly Islands, while India separately rejected Pakistani allegations over a naval 'collision' in Pakistan's Exclusive Economic Zone — two live tests of the law of the sea.

Key Details:

- **The South China Sea incident:** China's coast guard rammed the BRP Datu Magat Salamat while it was delivering fuel subsidies to Filipino fishermen; Beijing blamed the Philippine vessel.

- **A 2016 ruling still ignored:** The Permanent Court of Arbitration held China's 'nine-dash line' claim has no legal basis under UNCLOS — China has never accepted or complied with it.
- **The India-Pakistan incident:** Pakistan alleged a 'highly provocative' collision between its vessel and INS Kolkata in Pakistan's EEZ; India called it 'usual prevarication' and rejected the claim.
- **Why India's position holds:** UNCLOS's Article 58 preserves high-seas navigation freedoms for all states, including warships, even inside another country's EEZ.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **What an EEZ actually is:** An Exclusive Economic Zone extends up to 200 nautical miles from a state's baseline, giving it rights over resources — not a territorial sea.
- **Territorial sea vs. EEZ:** A territorial sea extends only 12 nautical miles, where innocent passage is a right for all ships; the EEZ is a separate, wider resource zone.

UNCLOS Maritime Zones, at a Glance

Zone	Breadth from Baseline
Territorial Sea	Up to 12 nautical miles
Contiguous Zone	Up to 24 nautical miles
Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)	Up to 200 nautical miles

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use the South China Sea arbitration ruling and Article 58's navigation-freedom guarantee together to explain why 'freedom of navigation' claims in the Indo-Pacific rest on settled UNCLOS law, not just diplomatic assertion.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), consider the following statements:
1. A coastal state's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends up to 200 nautical miles from its baseline.
2. Ships and aircraft of all states enjoy freedom of navigation and overflight within another state's EEZ.
3. The territorial sea of a coastal state extends up to 24 nautical miles from its baseline.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: The EEZ does extend up to 200 nautical miles (statement 1 correct), and Article 58 of UNCLOS preserves high-seas navigation and overflight freedoms for all states within another state's EEZ (statement 2 correct). The territorial sea, however, extends only up to 12 nautical miles, not 24 — 24 nautical miles is the separate 'contiguous zone' (statement 3 false).

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2022, GS Paper I: "With reference to the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea, consider the following statements: 1. A coastal state has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles... 2. Ships of all states...enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea. 3. The Exclusive Economic Zone shall not extend beyond 200 nautical miles from the baseline... How many of the above statements are correct?" (a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None — Answer: (c) All three. Same core idea as today's story: the exact UNCLOS zone definitions at stake in both the South China Sea and the India-Pakistan EEZ dispute.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea | EEZ: Exclusive Economic Zone

GS PAPER 3: Economy, Governance & Innovation

India's Oil Import Map Is Redrawn Again by U.S. Sanctions Pressure

Why in news: Fresh data show India has repeatedly cut oil imports from Venezuela, Iran and Russia whenever U.S. sanctions bit, then ramped them back up the moment pressure eased — a pattern now repeating with Russian oil.

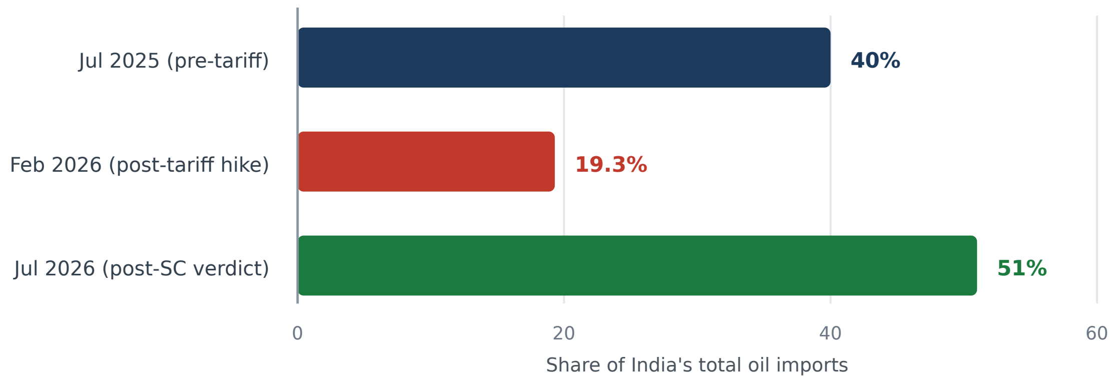
Key Details:

- **The Russia swing:** Russia's share of India's oil imports fell to 19.3% by February 2026 after a 50% U.S. tariff, then jumped past 51% by July 2026 once the U.S. Supreme Court struck the tariffs down.
- **The Venezuela pattern:** Venezuela's share fell from 6.7% (2017-18) to zero by 2021-22 after U.S. sanctions, resuming to 4.8% only after Trump partly eased them in March 2026.
- **The Iran pattern:** India imported zero Iranian oil for six straight years (2020-26) after 2018 U.S. sanctions, resuming a token 1.1% share after limited easing in March 2026.
- **India's official line:** The MEA insists energy sourcing is based on 'national interest' and diversified supply, not any single country's pressure.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **The price angle:** India paid Russia only a modest discount for its oil in July 2026 — $658.6 a tonne versus its $669 average across all oil imports.
- **Rising exposure:** India's overall crude-import dependence hit a record 88.7% in 2025-26, up from 85.5% in 2021-22, magnifying the stakes of every sourcing swing.

Russia's Share of India's Oil Imports: A Sanctions Rollercoaster



How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this three-country pattern (Venezuela, Iran, Russia) as concrete evidence in essays on 'strategic autonomy' — India visibly complies under pressure, then reverts, rather than either fully aligning or fully resisting.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to India's crude oil imports, consider the following statements:
1. India's imports of Venezuelan crude oil fell to zero after the United States widened sanctions on Venezuela's oil sector in 2019.
2. India has continuously imported crude oil from Iran every year since 2018.
3. Russia's share of India's oil imports exceeded 50% in July 2026.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: Venezuela's share did fall to zero by 2021-22 after the 2019 U.S. sanctions widening (statement 1 correct). India actually imported no Iranian oil at all for the six years spanning 2020-26 — the opposite of continuous imports (statement 2 false). Russia's oil-import share did cross 51% in July 2026 (statement 3 correct).

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2017, GS Paper II: "The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries." (250 words, 15 marks). Same core idea as today's story: India's energy-security calculus under external pressure is exactly what this evergreen PYQ tests, even though today's specific sanctions/tariff dynamics are more recent.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** MEA: Ministry of External Affairs

Cabinet Raises EPFO Wage Ceiling to ₹25,000, But the Minimum Pension Stays Frozen

Why in news: The Union Cabinet has raised the EPFO wage ceiling for mandatory coverage from ₹15,000 to ₹25,000 — the first revision in 12 years — while the EPS minimum pension of ₹1,000 stays frozen despite years of demands.

Key Details:

- **What changed:** Workers earning ₹15,000-₹25,000 a month will now be compulsorily covered under EPFO and the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), 2026.
- **Scale of the change:** Around 51 lakh additional employees may join the PF fold, adding to EPFO's existing 7.98 crore contributing members.
- **What didn't change:** The EPS minimum pension has stayed at ₹1,000 since September 2014; about 45% of the roughly 82 lakh EPS pensioners get ₹1,000 or less.
- **The delay, acknowledged:** A March 2026 Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour report called the existing minimum pension 'inadequate,' urging a review that hasn't followed through.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **The legal architecture is shifting:** The Code on Social Security, 2020 came into force on November 21, 2025 and has already subsumed the ESI Act, 1948; the EPF Act still runs in parallel pending its own transition.
- **Contribution structure:** Both employer and employee currently contribute 12% of wages each toward EPF under the EPF Act, 1952.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Distinguish the wage-ceiling revision (who gets covered) from the minimum-pension freeze (how much covered pensioners get) — examiners often test whether a scheme's wider coverage also improved adequacy, and here it didn't.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to social security for organised-sector workers in India, consider the following statements:
1. The Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Act's coverage is limited to workers employed in factories.
2. The Code on Social Security, 2020 has already subsumed the ESI Act, 1948.
3. Both the employer and the employee are currently required to contribute an equal percentage of wages toward the Employees' Provident Fund.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only

Explanation: The ESI Act's coverage has long been extended well beyond factories, to hotels, restaurants, cinemas, road-motor transport undertakings, newspaper establishments, and private medical/educational institutions (statement 1 false). The Code on Social Security, 2020, in force since November 2025, has indeed subsumed the ESI Act (statement 2 correct). Employer and employee currently contribute 12% each toward EPF (statement 3 correct).

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2012, GS Paper I: "Consider the following: 1. Hotels and restaurants 2. Motor transport undertakings 3. Newspaper establishments 4. Private medical institutions. The employees of which of the above can have the 'Social Security' coverage under 'Employees' State Insurance Scheme'?" (a) Only 1, 2 and 3 (b) 4 only (c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4 — Answer: (d). Same core idea as today's story: India's organised-sector social-security architecture (EPFO/ESI) and how far its coverage actually extends.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** EPFO: Employees' Provident Fund Organisation | EPS: Employees' Pension Scheme | ESI: Employees' State Insurance

A Homegrown Innovation Ecosystem Is Taking Root — But the Numbers Still Lag

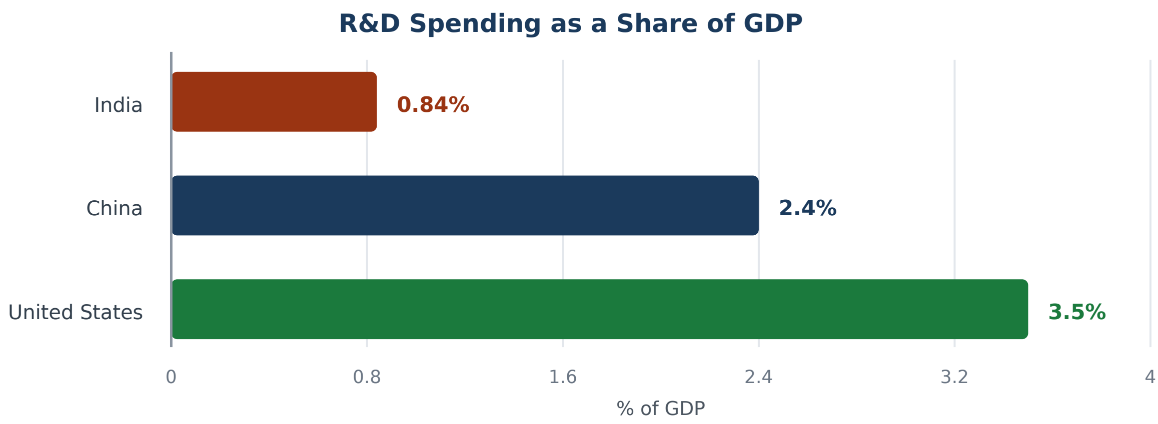
Why in news: An emerging innovation ecosystem — spanning public R&D, corporate research, and deep-tech startups — is starting to let India develop critical technologies like Gallium Nitride semiconductors at home instead of importing them.

Key Details:

- **The GaN breakthrough:** DRDO's Delhi and Hyderabad labs cracked Gallium Nitride microwave circuits in 2023 — technology France had refused to share under Rafale offset terms.
- **Filings are up, force is thin:** Patent filings grew 30.2% to over 1.43 lakh in 2025-26, but patents actually 'in force' in India (~2.4 lakh) remain a fraction of China's, the U.S.'s or Japan's.
- **Why the gap persists:** Low grant rates and high abandonment compound India spending well under 1% of GDP on R&D, against about 2.4% in China and 3.5% in the U.S.
- **A funding shift already under way:** Private R&D spending overtook all levels of government R&D combined for the first time in 2024, and deep-tech investors have committed over $2.5 billion.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **The exact R&D number:** India's Gross Expenditure on R&D (GERD) stood at just 0.84% of GDP in FY24 (₹2.45 lakh crore), though private spending overtook government spending within that total for the first time.
- **Filed vs. granted vs. in force:** A patent is 'granted' only after surviving examination, and stays 'in force' only as long as renewal fees are paid — so India's in-force count is always far smaller than its filing count.



Patents in Force, 2025 Data

Country	Patents in Force
India	~0.24 million
Japan	~2.1 million
United States	~3.5 million
China	~5.7 million

How to use in UPSC Mains: Cite the exact GERD figure (0.84% of GDP) against China's 2.4% and the U.S.'s 3.5% whenever a question asks about India's R&D/innovation gap — precise numbers outscore vague comparisons.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to India's research and innovation ecosystem, consider the following statements:
1. India's Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) exceeds 2% of its GDP.
2. Private-sector R&D spending in India overtook combined government R&D spending for the first time in 2024.
3. A patent remains 'in force' only as long as its holder continues to pay renewal (annuity) fees.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a) 2 and 3 only

Explanation: India's GERD stood at just 0.84% of GDP in FY24 — well under 2% (statement 1 false). Private R&D spending did overtake all levels of government R&D combined for the first time in 2024 (statement 2 correct). A granted patent lapses if renewal/annuity fees aren't paid, which is why 'patents in force' is always smaller than patents filed or granted (statement 3 correct).

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2024, GS Paper III: "What is the present world scenario of intellectual property rights with respect to life materials? Although India is second in the world to file patents, still only a few have been commercialized. Explain the reasons behind this less commercialization." (10 marks). Same core idea as today's story: the exact patent-filings-versus-commercialisation (and patents-in-force) gap covered here.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** GaN: Gallium Nitride | DRDO: Defence Research and Development Organisation | GERD: Gross Expenditure on Research and Development

Deep-Sea Mining and the Question India Must Ask Before It Digs

Why in news: As India expands deep-sea exploration under the Deep Ocean Mission, a Hindu editorial argues the real question isn't how much can be mined, but whether it should be mined at all, given how little is understood about deep-ocean ecosystems.

Key Details:

- **India's footprint so far:** India holds three International Seabed Authority exploration contracts covering about 95,000 sq km across the Central Indian Ocean Basin and two ridges.
- **What's down there:** Exploration has identified an estimated 366 million tonnes of polymetallic nodules containing nickel, copper, cobalt and manganese.
- **The technology exists, the case doesn't yet:** India has tested a mining machine at ~5,270 metres depth and built the MATSYA-6000 submersible, but exploration need not lead to mining.
- **The editorial's core argument:** Before extraction, India should ask 'do we need to mine at all,' not just 'how can we mine with minimum damage' — necessity must be demonstrated, not presumed.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Biodiversity stakes:** Surveys across 19 seamounts have studied about 1,300 deep-sea organisms, including nearly 23 species new to science.
- **The Mission's scale:** The Deep Ocean Mission was approved in June 2021 with an estimated cost of ₹4,077 crore over five years, spanning six components from mining tech to marine biodiversity.

India's Deep Ocean Mission, at a Glance

Component	Key Fact
ISA exploration contracts	3, covering ~95,000 sq km
Estimated nodule reserve	366 million tonnes (nickel, copper, cobalt, manganese)
Manned submersible	MATSYA-6000 (Samudrayaan project), carries 3 people
Deepest mining-machine test	~5,270 metres (National Institute of Ocean Technology)
Biodiversity survey	19 seamounts, ~1,300 organisms studied, 23 new species

How to use in UPSC Mains: Frame the answer around the editorial's reframed question — 'do we need to mine at all' versus 'how can we mine with minimum damage' — examiners reward this kind of precautionary-principle articulation.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Discuss the strategic and ecological considerations involved in India's deep-sea mineral exploration under the Deep Ocean Mission. Should exploration necessarily lead to commercial exploitation? Give reasons. (250 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2026, GS Paper I: "Which of the following statements with regard to India's Deep Ocean Mission is/are correct? 1. It was launched by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India. 2. Matsya-6000 has been designed to carry 3 people for deep sea exploration. 3. Samudrayaan is a project under this mission." (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3 — Answer: (b). Same core idea as today's story: the exact Deep Ocean Mission facts — Ministry of Earth Sciences, not Shipping; Matsya-6000; Samudrayaan — this article is built on.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** ISA: International Seabed Authority | NIOT: National Institute of Ocean Technology

GS PAPER 4: Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude

Ethics Case Study: The Counterfeit Drug Racket and the Duty to Warn

Why in news: A Bengaluru farmhouse used to repackage low-cost, expired medicines — including cancer drugs — as counterfeit branded products reached over 90 hospitals and clinics, raising hard questions about a hospital's duty to warn patients even while an investigation is still active.

Key Details:

- **The scale uncovered:** Police seized over 5,600 vials of counterfeit antibiotic injections worth ₹4.91 crore, tracing supply from Karnataka to five other States.
- **The regulatory framework:** The alleged racket falls squarely under Section 17B (defines a spurious drug) and Section 18 (prohibits its manufacture, sale, distribution) of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- **The ethical bind:** Regulators haven't disclosed which hospitals or oncology drugs are implicated, citing an active SIT probe — leaving patients unable to know if their treatment was genuine.
- **Where responsibility sits:** Experts say hospitals have a legal duty to verify authenticity and procure responsibly, and an ethical duty to inform patients once warning signs exist — obligations that run concurrently, not as substitutes.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **A global pattern, not a local lapse:** WHO estimates roughly 1 in 10 medical products in low- and middle-income countries is substandard or falsified.
- **The human cost, in one case:** One Bengaluru family spent over ₹20 lakh on a cancer treatment that showed no improvement, learning of the counterfeit-drug racket only after the patient's death.

How to use in UPSC Mains/Ethics: Frame this as a disclosure-versus-institutional-protection dilemma — the same structure as a whistleblower case — rather than only a pharma-regulation question.

MAINS CASE STUDY EXERCISE

Q. You are the medical superintendent of a large hospital. You learn that your hospital may have unknowingly administered counterfeit cancer medicines to several patients over the past year, sourced through a distributor now under criminal investigation. Disclosing this immediately could cause panic, reputational damage, and interfere with the ongoing probe; staying silent could deny patients and their families critical information about their treatment and legal options. (a) Identify the ethical issues involved. (b) What course of action would you take, and why? (250 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2022, GS Paper IV (Case Study): Ashok, an investigative journalist, uncovers a nexus of illegal stone-mining operators with corrupt police, officials and a local MLA; his channel's CMD pressures him to suppress the report in exchange for a promotion and other benefits. Candidates were asked to identify his options, the ethical dilemmas involved, and the most appropriate course of action. Same core idea as today's story: an individual (or institution) with knowledge of public harm is pressured — by financial or reputational incentive — to prioritise institutional protection over disclosure.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SIT: Special Investigation Team | WHO: World Health Organization