

THE DAILY UPSC BRIEF

HIGH-YIELD DAILY SOURCES & ANALYSIS | 9 OCTOBER 2026

TODAY'S COVERAGE

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PRELIMS POINTERS — TODAY IN ONE LINE EACH

1. **Anne Carson** — Canadian poet-classicist, author of *Autobiography of Red*, wins the 2026 Nobel Prize in Literature.
2. **JOSH teams** — Health Ministry's youth squads (NCC + MY Bharat) for active TB case-finding in 55 districts under TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan.
3. **World Sight Day** — observed on the second Thursday of October; 2026 edition fell on October 8.
4. **Indian Air Force Day** — October 8; the IAF marked its 94th anniversary at Hindon Air Base, Ghaziabad.
5. **Cochin Shipyard** — Kochi-based CPSU under the Shipping Ministry; has export orders for over 40 ships from Europe and the U.S.

HOW TO READ THIS BRIEF

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

GS PAPER 1: SOCIETY & CULTURE

Untouchability in 2026: Are Legal Guarantees Enough?

Why in news: A 'purification' ritual by some groups at a Dehradun venue where the Congress President, a Dalit, had held a rally has revived debate on whether laws alone can end untouchability.

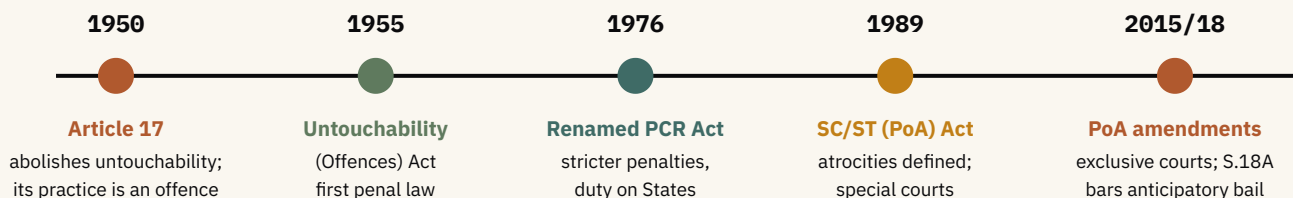
Key Details:

- **The incident:** Groups 'cleansed' the Ramlila Maidan site after the rally; the State BJP chief defended it, and an FIR followed a public campaign.
- **Law's success:** Overt practices — bars on public wells, temples and schools — have declined sharply since the Constitution came into force.
- **Law's limits:** Untouchability survives as 'notions in the mind' (Ambedkar) and in new forms of backlash against Dalit social mobility.
- **Beyond criminal law:** Experts favour civil remedies (as in the POSH Act), mixed public spaces, textbook reform and local dispute-resolution bodies.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Two traditions:** Ambedkar sought legal abolition of untouchable practices; Gandhi stressed a change in social conscience — India needs both.
- **Everyday segregation:** Separate anganwadis and water taps for Dalits show how spatial planning can quietly reproduce caste.

India's legal shield against untouchability



Article 35: only Parliament can make laws prescribing punishment for acts declared offences under Part III, including Article 17.

Article 17 & the PCR Act, 1955

- **Article 17:** Abolishes untouchability and forbids its practice 'in any form'; enforcing any disability arising from it is a punishable offence.
- **Not defined:** Neither the Constitution nor the PCR Act defines 'untouchability'; courts read it in its historical, caste-based sense.
- **Horizontal reach:** Article 17 binds private persons too, not just the State.
- **Article 35:** Only Parliament, not State legislatures, can prescribe punishment for offences under Article 17.
- **PCR Act:** Enacted as the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955; renamed and made stricter in 1976.
- **Not to confuse:** The PCR Act punishes untouchability practices; the SC/ST (PoA) Act, 1989 deals with atrocities against SCs and STs.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS1 (caste, social change) and GS2 (rights of vulnerable sections) to argue that law can abolish the practice but not the prejudice — social reform must work alongside legal reform.

Mains value-add: In *State of Karnataka v. Appa Balu Ingale* (1992), the SC called untouchability 'an indirect form of slavery' and said Article 17 aims to abolish the practice itself — cite it to show the constitutional weight of the right.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to untouchability and the Constitution of India, consider the following statements:

1. The term 'untouchability' is not defined in the Constitution.
2. State Legislatures can make laws prescribing punishment for the practice of untouchability.
3. Article 17 can be enforced against private individuals.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: Neither the Constitution nor the PCR Act defines the term (Statement 1 true). Article 35 vests this power only in Parliament, not the States — the classic trap (Statement 2 false). Article 17 operates against private persons as well (Statement 3 true).

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2020: "Which one of the following categories of Fundamental Rights incorporates protection against untouchability as a form of discrimination? (a) Right against Exploitation (b) Right to Freedom (c) Right to Constitutional Remedies (d) Right to Equality" — Answer: (d).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** FIR: First Information Report | POSH: Prevention of Sexual Harassment | PCR: Protection of Civil Rights | SC: Supreme Court / Scheduled Castes | ST: Scheduled Tribes | PoA: Prevention of Atrocities

Monuments as Stages: Heritage, Culture and the Economics of Conservation

Why in news: Concerts and curated events at Safdarjung Tomb, Purana Qila and other Delhi monuments are turning heritage sites into venues, raising questions on conservation limits.

Key Details:

- **A new model:** Private 'heritage partners' run curated events at centrally protected sites under the ASI's partnership schemes.
- **Rules:** ASI guidelines (2005) bar using monuments for functions except approved cultural events; sound must stay within limits and events end by 10 p.m.
- **Tension:** Purana Qila's Sufi festival in March 2026 saw ASI complaints about unauthorised stalls and commercial activity.
- **Conservation view:** 'The monument comes first' — the scale of an event must suit the site's character, condition and capacity.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Sound cap:** Event noise must not exceed 10 dB(A) above ambient, or 75 dB(A), whichever is lower.
- **Private restoration:** Kathika in Old Delhi restored two 19th-century havelis in Sitaram Bazaar — conservation outside the ASI's ambit.

How heritage partnership has evolved

Year	Step	What changed
2005	ASI event guidelines	Cultural events allowed at select monuments with conditions
2009	Evening performances	ASI considered regular events at 10 Delhi monuments
2017	Adopt a Heritage	Launched on World Tourism Day; companies adopt amenities
2023	Adopt a Heritage 2.0	ASI-led revamp; partners called 'Monument Mitras'

The AMASR Act, 1958

- **Purpose:** Protects ancient monuments and archaeological sites of national importance; the ASI is the custodian.
- **Age test:** An ancient monument must have existed for at least 100 years.
- **Prohibited area:** No construction within 100 m of a protected monument.
- **Regulated area:** A further 200 m beyond the prohibited area, where building needs permission.
- **NMA:** The National Monuments Authority was created by the 2010 amendment to regulate these zones.
- **Not to confuse:** The ASI works under the Ministry of Culture; Adopt a Heritage 1.0 was led by the Ministry of Tourism.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS1 (art and culture) to show how public-private partnership can fund upkeep and draw visitors — but only with strict carrying-capacity limits so that heritage is not commodified.

Mains value-add: India has 44 properties on UNESCO's World Heritage List (2025) — cite it to show the scale of heritage that needs sustainable funding models beyond the ASI's budget.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the protection of monuments in India, consider the following statements:

1. Under the AMASR Act, 1958, the prohibited area extends 100 metres from a protected monument.
2. The National Monuments Authority was set up under the original AMASR Act of 1958.
3. The Archaeological Survey of India functions under the Ministry of Culture.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: The prohibited zone is 100 m, followed by a 200 m regulated zone (Statement 1 true). The NMA was created only by the 2010 amendment, not in 1958 (Statement 2 false, the trap). The ASI is an attached office of the Ministry of Culture (Statement 3 true).

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2018, GS Paper I: "Safeguarding the Indian art heritage is the need of the moment. Comment."

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** ASI: Archaeological Survey of India | dB(A): A-weighted decibels | AMASR: Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains | NMA: National Monuments Authority | UNESCO: UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 1

Reclaiming the night: 'Women Walk at Midnight' and 'WhyLoiter' groups walk through Delhi neighbourhoods after dark, with mothers and daughters joining, to assert women's right to public space after a gang-rape case near Astha Kunj park.

How to use: GS1 (women, urbanisation): example of citizen-led activism on safe cities and the idea that loitering is a right, not a risk.

GS PAPER 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE & HEALTH**Who Picks the Police Chief? SC to Scrutinise DGP Appointment Laws Across States**

Why in news: Hearing a Centre–Jharkhand dispute over the State's 2025 DGP Regulation, the SC decided to examine DGP appointment laws of all States for compliance with the Prakash Singh judgment.

Key Details:

- **The clash:** The Centre said Jharkhand's 2025 Regulation breaches Prakash Singh; Jharkhand said other States with 'worse' laws face no challenge.
- **SC's stand:** 'The law declared in Prakash Singh should not be diluted' — the Bench is not concerned with who is in power in a State.

- **Next step:** Senior advocate Raju Ramachandran was appointed amicus curiae, with the UPSC asked to help scrutinise State laws.
- **Why it matters:** Ad hoc acting DGPs and short tenures expose police leadership to political pressure.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Jharkhand case:** The State appointed its first woman DGP under its own 2025 Regulation.
- **West Bengal:** Jharkhand argued Bengal's DGP, appointed by the ECI in March 2026, had his tenure extended by six months.

The seven directives of Prakash Singh (2006)

Directive	What it requires
State Security Commission	Insulate police from political pressure; lay down broad policy
DGP selection	From three senior-most officers empanelled by UPSC; minimum two-year tenure
Fixed tenure	Two years for IGs, SPs and SHOs in field postings
Separate wings	Investigation separated from law and order
Police Establishment Board	Transfers and postings of officers below DSP
Police Complaints Authority	At State and district levels to hear complaints against police
National Security Commission	At the Centre, for selecting chiefs of CAPFs

Police as a State Subject

- **Constitution:** 'Police' and 'Public order' are in the State List (Entries 2 and 1, List II).
- **Colonial law:** Most States still run on the Police Act, 1861, framed after the 1857 revolt.
- **Model law:** The Soli Sorabjee Committee drafted a Model Police Act in 2006; States adopted it unevenly.
- **Committees:** The National Police Commission (1977–81) first proposed most of the reforms later ordered in 2006.
- **2018 clarification:** States must send names to UPSC three months before a DGP vacancy; no acting DGPs.
- **Not to confuse:** IPS officers are recruited by the Centre (All India Service) but serve under State control.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (police reforms, federalism) to show how court-made reform stalls when States legislate around it — and why a professional, autonomous police chief is central to rule of law.

Mains value-add: The Second ARC's 5th Report, 'Public Order' (2007), recommended separating investigation from law and order and setting up State Police Boards — cite it to show the executive's own reform blueprint matches Prakash Singh.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to police administration in India, consider the following statements:

1. Under the Prakash Singh judgment, a State DGP is selected from among the three senior-most officers empanelled by the UPSC.
2. The Prakash Singh judgment prescribed a minimum tenure of two years for a DGP.
3. 'Police' is a subject in the Concurrent List.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: The DGP is chosen from the three senior-most officers empanelled by the UPSC (Statement 1 true) and gets a minimum two-year tenure (Statement 2 true). 'Police' is Entry 2 of the State List, not the Concurrent List — a common trap (Statement 3 false).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SC: Supreme Court | DGP: Director General of Police | UPSC: Union Public Service Commission | ECI: Election Commission of India | IGs: Inspectors General | SPs: Superintendents of Police | SHOs: Station House Officers | DSP: Deputy Superintendent of Police | CAPFs: Central Armed Police Forces | IPS: Indian Police Service | ARC: Administrative Reforms Commission

CAPF (General Administration) Act, 2026 Comes Into Force

Why in news: The MHA notified that the CAPF (General Administration) Act, 2026 came into force on October 8, even as its constitutional validity is being challenged in the SC.

Key Details:

- **What it does:** Reserves top posts in five CAPFs for IPS officers on deputation and lets the Centre frame service rules for these forces.
- **The conflict:** The SC's May 23, 2025 judgment had directed that IPS deputation to senior CAPF posts be progressively reduced.
- **The challenge:** Serving CAPF cadre officers say the law overrides the judgment and blocks their promotions; contempt petitions are also pending.
- **Next date:** On September 30, a Bench decided to hear the contempt petitions and three writ petitions on October 15.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **IPS share:** 50% of Inspector General posts, at least 67% of Additional DG posts, and all DG and Special DG posts.
- **Override:** Rules under the Act can be made notwithstanding any court judgment or order.

The Central Armed Police Forces

- **Members:** CRPF, BSF, CISF, ITBP and SSB — all under the MHA.
- **Roles:** CRPF: internal security; BSF: Pakistan and Bangladesh borders; ITBP: China border; SSB: Nepal and Bhutan borders; CISF: industrial and airport security.
- **Assam Rifles:** Administratively under the MHA but operationally under the Army; not covered by the 2026 Act.
- **Legal base:** Each force has its own Act, e.g., the CRPF Act, 1949 and the BSF Act, 1968.
- **Not to confuse:** The NSG is a counter-terror force under the MHA, but it is not one of the five CAPFs listed in the Act.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2/GS3 (security forces, separation of powers) to discuss legislative override of judicial directions and morale and career stagnation in the CAPF cadre.

Mains value-add: In *Madras Bar Association v. Union of India* (2021), the SC held that Parliament cannot simply re-enact provisions struck down by the Court without removing the defect — cite it to frame the debate on legislative override.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to India's border-guarding and armed police forces, consider the following statements:

1. The Sashastra Seema Bal guards India's borders with Nepal and Bhutan.
2. The Assam Rifles is under the operational control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
3. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police guards the India–China border.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: The SSB guards the Nepal and Bhutan borders (Statement 1 true). The Assam Rifles is administratively under the MHA but operationally under the Army — dual control is the trap (Statement 2 false). The ITBP guards the China border (Statement 3 true).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** CAPF: Central Armed Police Forces | MHA: Ministry of Home Affairs | SC: Supreme Court | IPS: Indian Police Service | DG: Director General | CRPF: Central Reserve Police Force | BSF: Border Security Force | CISF: Central Industrial Security Force | ITBP: Indo-Tibetan Border Police | SSB: Sashastra Seema Bal | NSG: National Security Guard

Cancer Drug Prices and Pharma Marketing: A 30% Trade-Margin Cap and a Push for Regulation

Why in news: The Centre decided to cap trade margins at 30% of MRP for all non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs, while the SC directed it to form an expert committee on unethical pharma marketing.

Story so far: The 30 Sep Brief covered the SC questioning steep mark-ups on essential drugs. New today: a 30% trade-margin cap for all non-scheduled cancer drugs and an SC-ordered expert panel on marketing practices.

Key Details:

- **The cap:** Applies to branded and generic, domestic and imported, patented and off-patent cancer drugs; a DGHS-led committee will finalise the list.
- **Why:** The NPPA found average trade mark-ups of about 170% on non-scheduled cancer drugs, reaching 700% in some cases.
- **Marketing practices:** The SC asked the Centre to form an expert committee within two weeks and report within two months of its first meeting.
- **Petitioners:** The Federation of Medical and Sales Representatives' Associations of India sought binding rules on pharma marketing.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Out-of-pocket burden:** Cancer treatment costs push many families into debt, as most drugs are bought out of pocket.
- **Voluntary code:** The UCPMP, 2024 bars gifts and paid travel for doctors but has no statutory backing.

The NPPA & the DPCO, 2013

- **NPPA:** Set up in 1997 under the Department of Pharmaceuticals to fix and revise drug prices.
- **DPCO, 2013:** Issued under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955; caps prices of drugs on the NLEM.
- **Scheduled drugs:** Ceiling prices are fixed for NLEM drugs; non-scheduled drugs may rise up to 10% a year.
- **Paragraph 19:** Lets the government act on any drug's price 'in extraordinary circumstances' in public interest.
- **Precedent:** In 2019 the NPPA used Para 19 to cap trade margins at 30% on 42 non-scheduled cancer drugs.
- **Not to confuse:** Price control is the NPPA's job; drug quality and approval lie with the CDSCO under the D&C Act, 1940.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (health, affordability) to show how trade-margin rationalisation cuts prices without hurting innovation — and why marketing ethics need a statutory code.

Mains value-add: The National Health Accounts Estimates 2021-22 put out-of-pocket expenditure at about 39% of total health expenditure — cite it to argue that drug-price control is a key lever for financial protection.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to drug pricing in India, consider the following statements:

1. The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority functions under the Department of Pharmaceuticals.
2. The Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 is issued under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
3. The Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices, 2024 is a statutory code with penal provisions.

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: The NPPA is under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers (Statement 1 true). The DPCO is issued under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, not the D&C Act — a common mix-up (Statement 2 false). The UCPMP, 2024 is voluntary, without statutory backing — which is why the SC case arose (Statement 3 false).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** MRP: Maximum Retail Price | SC: Supreme Court | DGHS: Directorate General of Health Services | NPPA: National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority | UCPMP: Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices | DPCO: Drugs (Prices Control) Order | NLEM: National List of Essential Medicines | CDSCO: Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation | D&C: Drugs and Cosmetics

Missed Chances: Closing the Gaps in Early Childhood Eye Care

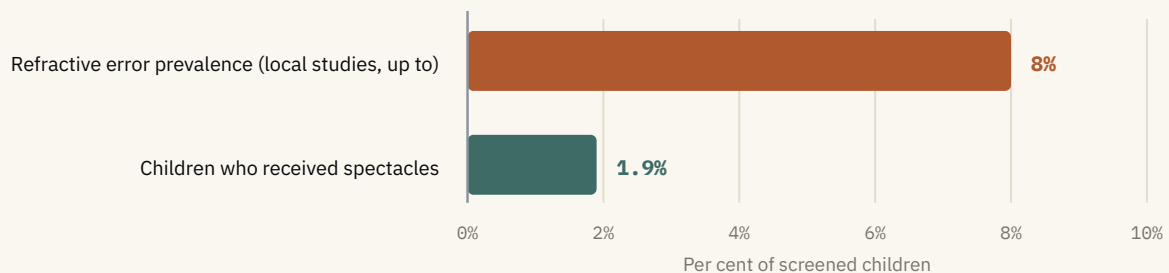
Why in news: On World Sight Day, a paediatric ophthalmologist flagged that India's child-health system often meets children with treatable eye disease but fails to detect it in time.

Key Details:

- **The burden:** India has about 3 lakh blind children; nearly half the cases are preventable or treatable if caught early.
- **Missed contacts:** Children are seen repeatedly for vaccination and check-ups, yet vision is rarely screened.
- **Critical window:** Amblyopia (lazy eye) develops when the brain gets no clear image early; vision lost then cannot be fully restored.
- **Fix:** Add the 30-second red reflex test to routine visits and train ASHAs to spot visual behaviour in infants.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Global:** The WHO estimates 19 million visually impaired children worldwide, 1.4 million of them blind.
- **Follow-through gap:** Only 47.4% of children flagged under RBSK screening received further care, per a coverage study.

Karnataka school screening: need vs spectacles given (2023-24)**Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK)**

- **Launch:** Started in 2013 under the NHM for children from birth to 18 years.
- **4 Ds:** Screens for Defects at birth, Deficiencies, Diseases and Development delays including disability.
- **Teams:** Dedicated Mobile Health Teams visit anganwadis and government schools.
- **Referral:** District Early Intervention Centres (DEICs) handle referrals and treatment.
- **Not to confuse:** The NPCBVI (1976) is the national programme for blindness control; RBSK is a child-screening programme.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (health, education) to argue that better integration of existing programmes — not new schemes — can prevent childhood blindness and protect learning outcomes.

Mains value-add: The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 lists blindness and low vision among 21 specified disabilities and mandates early detection — cite it to frame child eye screening as a legal duty, not a welfare choice.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to child health programmes in India, consider the following statements:

1. Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram covers children from birth to 18 years.
2. The 4 Ds under RBSK include Defects at birth, Deficiencies, Diseases and Development delays.
3. The National Programme for Control of Blindness was launched after the National Health Mission in 2005.

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: (b) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: RBSK covers 0–18 years (Statement 1 true) and screens for the 4 Ds (Statement 2 true). The blindness control programme dates to 1976, long before the NRHM (2005) — the chronology is the trap (Statement 3 false).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** ASHAs: Accredited Social Health Activists | WHO: World Health Organization | RBSK: Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram | NHM: National Health Mission | NRHM: National Rural Health Mission | DEICs: District Early Intervention Centres | NPCBVI: National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 2

Women's safety in Delhi: acting on its September 28 suo motu case, the SC ordered patrolling near educational institutions, strict verification of drivers of public transport and app-based cabs, and action against unlawful liquor sales, citing the 'Broken Windows' theory; compliance reports are due by November 6.

How to use: *GS2 (governance, women's safety): example of continuing mandamus and of how small lapses (dark streets, broken CCTV) breed a sense of insecurity.*

U.S. green-card suspension: the U.S. suspended Microsoft, Adobe, Cognizant, Infosys, Tata, Wipro, HCL and Capgemini from a programme that lets skilled foreign workers gain permanent residency, citing alleged fraud.

How to use: *GS2 (India–U.S., diaspora): cite on the tightening of skilled-migration routes and its effect on Indian IT professionals.*

PRASHAST: the Education Ministry trained 72 lakh teachers in 60,000 schools to use the PRASHAST app, a two-part checklist to spot children with any of the 21 disabilities under the RPwD Act, 2016.

How to use: *GS2 (inclusive education): example of early identification under NEP 2020's focus on children with special needs.*

GS PAPER 3: ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE**57th GST Council Meeting: Arrest Powers Scrapped, Compliance Eased**

Why in news: The GST Council recommended removing GST officers' arrest powers, raising the prosecution threshold to ₹5 crore and easing refunds and input tax credit, with changes proposed from April 1, 2027.

Story so far: The 5 Oct Brief covered half-year GST collections and the agenda of process reform. New today: the Council's actual recommendations, mostly on decriminalisation and compliance.

Key Details:

- **Decriminalisation:** Proposed: no arrest powers for GST officers, prosecution only above ₹5 crore turnover, and lower general penalties (₹25,000 → ₹10,000).
- **Ease of business:** Automated ITC processing, fewer returns, single-State registration for small e-commerce sellers and no notices below ₹10,000.
- **Inter-State movement:** Goods in transit can be intercepted only on 'specific intelligence' with Joint Commissioner-level approval.
- **Rates:** No change in rates; rate decisions will come to the Council only once a year, effective from the next financial year.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Registration:** 61% of applicants already get automatic registration within three working days.
- **Faceless assessment:** The Centre plans faceless assessment for CGST like income tax, after consultation before Budget 2027.

Key proposals at a glance (to take effect after legal amendments)

Area	Now	Proposed
Arrest by tax officers	Allowed for serious offences	Power removed
Prosecution threshold	Lower limits	Above ₹5 crore
General penalty	₹25,000	₹10,000
Small taxpayers' returns	Monthly	Concept note for annual filing

Decriminalising Economic Laws

- **Jan Vishwas Act, 2023:** Decriminalised 183 provisions across 42 Central Acts, replacing jail terms with fines.
- **Why:** Fear of prosecution for minor lapses raises compliance costs and hurts small businesses.
- **Companies Act:** The Company Law Committee (2019) shifted many compoundable offences to in-house adjudication.
- **Tax side:** Faceless assessment in income tax (2020) cut discretion and face-to-face contact.
- **Not to confuse:** GST Council decisions are recommendations; changes to arrest and prosecution need amendment of the CGST Act by Parliament.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (indirect taxation, ease of doing business) to show the shift from enforcement-by-fear to trust-based compliance — and the need to guard against tax evasion.

Mains value-add: ORF's 'Jailed for Doing Business' study (2022) counted over 69,000 business compliances, of which over 26,000 carried imprisonment clauses — cite it to justify decriminalisation of minor economic offences.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. The GST Council has recommended removing the arrest powers of GST officers and raising the prosecution threshold. Critically examine whether such decriminalisation can improve compliance without weakening action against tax evasion. (150 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2019, GS Paper III: "Enumerate the indirect taxes which have been subsumed in the goods and services tax (GST) in India. Also, comment on the revenue implications of the GST introduced in India since July 2017."

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** GST: Goods and Services Tax | ITC: Input Tax Credit | CGST: Central Goods and Services Tax | ORF: Observer Research Foundation

Why Stubble Fires Keep Coming Back

Why in news: As the paddy harvest begins and Delhi's air quality worsens, a law meant to save groundwater and a procurement system tilted to rice and wheat keep stubble burning alive.

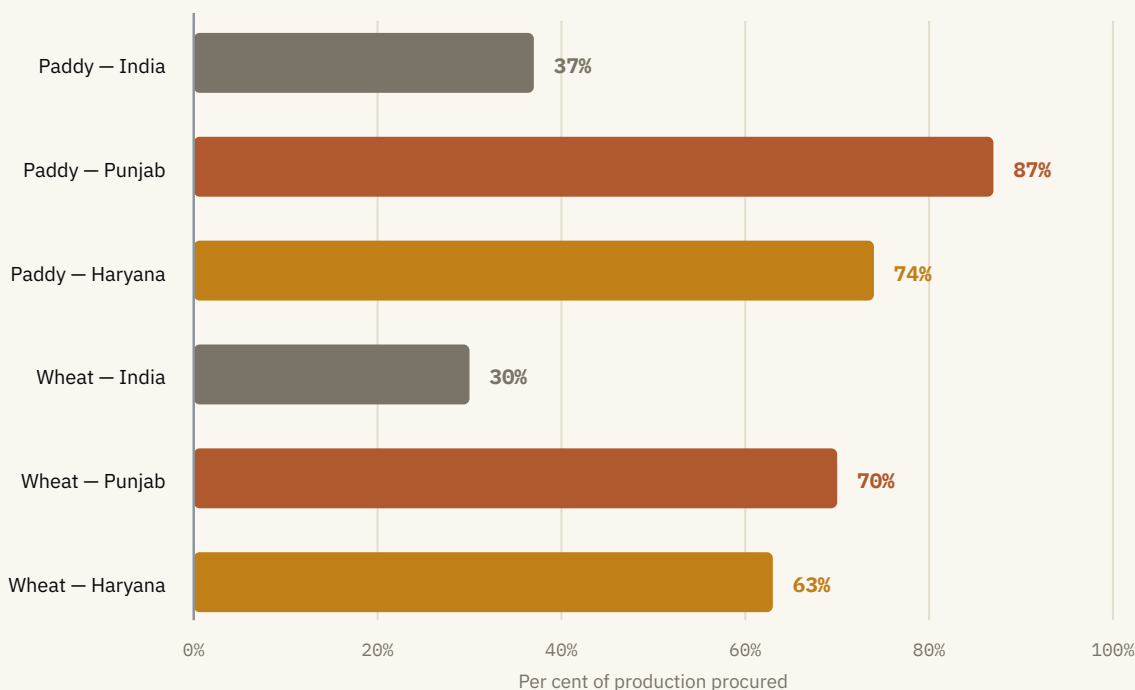
Key Details:

- **Groundwater law:** The PPSSWA, 2009 bars paddy nursery before May 10 and transplanting before June 10, pushing harvests to late October.
- **Narrow window:** Farmers get only 10–15 days between harvest and wheat sowing; long-duration varieties like PUSA-44 shrink it further.
- **Incentives:** Assured MSP procurement and free or cheap power in Punjab and Haryana keep farmers locked into the paddy–wheat cycle.
- **Measurement:** Satellite counts at fixed hours miss fires lit in the evening, so claimed reductions may be overstated.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Scale:** Punjab and Haryana produce about 29 million tonnes of paddy straw a year.
- **Groundwater:** NASA's GRACE satellites showed Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan lost 109 km³ of groundwater between 2002 and 2008.

Share of production procured by the government (average, 2012–2024)

**The CAQM & Crop-Residue Management**

- **CAQM:** The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas was set up by the CAQM Act, 2021, replacing EPCA.
- **In-situ:** Machines like Happy Seeder and Super Seeder sow wheat through the residue; needs a costly 60-HP tractor.
- **Ex-situ:** Straw used as fuel for biomass plants, CBG or 2G ethanol; costs ₹1,500–₹2,500 an acre.
- **Bio-decomposer:** IARI's PUSA decomposer is a microbial spray that breaks down stubble in the field.
- **Not to confuse:** GRAP sets stage-wise emergency curbs in Delhi-NCR; it does not regulate stubble burning by itself.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (environment, agriculture) to show how one policy (saving groundwater) can create another problem (air pollution) — and why crop diversification, not penalties, is the lasting fix.

Mains value-add: Punjab and Haryana reported a 90% fall in stubble-burning incidents in 2025 over 2022, but an IFEST analysis using burnt-area data found a reduction of only about 30% — cite it to show why measurement must be improved before claiming success.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to stubble burning and its regulation, consider the following statements:

1. The Punjab Preservation of Sub-Soil Water Act, 2009 restricts early sowing and transplanting of paddy.
2. The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR was created by an executive order of the Environment Ministry.
3. Satellite-based fire counts from polar-orbiting satellites can miss fires lit outside their overpass time.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: The 2009 Act bars paddy nursery before May 10 and transplanting before June 10 (Statement 1 true). The CAQM began as an ordinance in 2020 but now stands on the CAQM Act, 2021 — it is statutory, not executive (Statement 2 false, the trap). Polar satellites pass over India only around 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., so evening fires can go unrecorded (Statement 3 true).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** PPSSWA: Punjab Preservation of Sub-Soil Water Act | MSP: Minimum Support Price | GRACE: Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment | CAQM: Commission for Air Quality Management | NCR: National Capital Region | EPCA: Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority | HP: horsepower | CBG: Compressed Biogas | IARI: Indian Agricultural Research Institute | GRAP: Graded Response Action Plan | IFEST: International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology

From Commitments to Projects: Calibrating India's Inbound Investment Framework

Why in news: Gross FDI inflows hit a record \$94.8 billion in FY26, but investors say slow approvals, court delays and uneven State rules keep commitments from turning into projects.

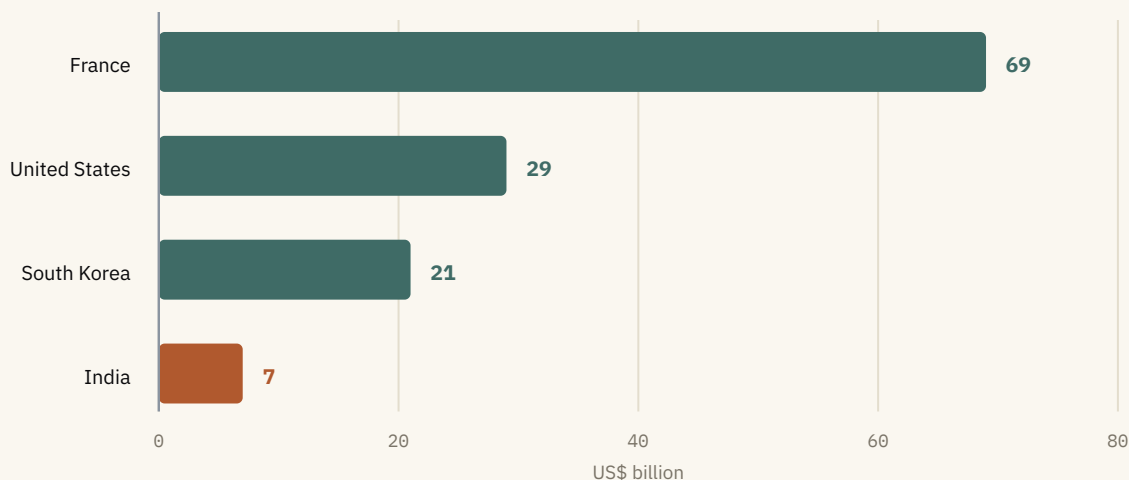
Key Details:

- **Ranking:** UNCTAD's World Investment Report 2026 ranks India 11th among FDI destinations after a 44% rise in inflows.
- **The lag:** Greenfield data-centre investment in India (~\$7 billion, first three quarters of 2025) trails peers sharply.
- **Bottlenecks:** About 4.8 crore pending court cases, labour codes awaiting State rules, and Quality Control Orders that raised input costs.
- **Reforms:** Commercial Courts Act, 2015; Mediation Act, 2023; Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021 ending retrospective tax.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **QCO surge:** The Gauba Committee found QCOs rose from under 70 to nearly 790; some were withdrawn on PVC, aluminium and zinc.
- **Success story:** Mobile-phone production grew from ₹18,000 crore (FY15) to ₹6.27 lakh crore, with exports of ₹2.59 lakh crore.

Greenfield data-centre investment, first three quarters of 2025 (\$ billion)



FDI: Routes, Rules and Definitions

- **Legal base:** FDI is governed by FEMA, 1999 and the FDI Policy issued by the DPIIT.
- **Two routes:** Automatic route needs no prior approval; government route needs approval of the ministry concerned.
- **Definition:** Investment of 10% or more of a listed company's equity counts as FDI; below 10% is FPI (Mayaram Committee, 2014).
- **Press Note 3 (2020):** Investment from countries sharing a land border with India must take the government route.
- **Not to confuse:** FIPB was abolished in 2017; approvals now go to the ministries concerned, with DPIIT as the nodal agency.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (investment, growth) to show that India's FDI challenge has shifted from attracting pledges to execution — contract enforcement, State-level approvals and regulatory certainty.

Mains value-add: India–Singapore CECA (2005) has helped Singapore become one of India's largest FDI sources, with over \$195 billion in cumulative FDI since 2000 — cite it to show how investor-protection clauses in trade pacts sustain inflows.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to foreign investment in India, consider the following statements:

1. Investment of 10% or more of the post-issue paid-up equity of a listed Indian company is treated as FDI.
2. All FDI from countries sharing a land border with India must come through the government route.
3. The Foreign Investment Promotion Board is the current approving authority for government-route FDI.

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: (b) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: The 10% threshold separates FDI from FPI (Statement 1 true). Press Note 3 of 2020 puts all investment from land-border countries on the government route (Statement 2 true). The FIPB was abolished in 2017; ministries now approve with DPIIT as the nodal agency (Statement 3 false, the trap).

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2012: "Which of the following would include Foreign Direct Investment in India? 1. Subsidiaries of companies in India 2. Majority foreign equity holding in Indian companies 3. Companies exclusively financed by foreign companies 4. Portfolio investment" — Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3 only.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** FDI: Foreign Direct Investment | UNCTAD: UN Conference on Trade and Development | QCOs: Quality Control Orders | PVC: polyvinyl chloride | FEMA: Foreign Exchange Management Act | DPIIT: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade | FPI: Foreign Portfolio Investment | FIPB: Foreign Investment Promotion Board | CECA: Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement

Jal Satyagraha in Bundelkhand: Dams, Displacement and Fair Rehabilitation

Why in news: Tribal villagers displaced by the Majhgaon irrigation project in M.P.'s Panna district are holding a month-long jal satyagraha, extending protests against the Ken-Betwa river link project.

Story so far: The 4 Oct Brief covered an ATREE study on invasive species risks from river interlinking, including Ken-Betwa. New today: protests over compensation and rehabilitation for those displaced by projects in the Ken-Betwa region.

Key Details:

- **Grievances:** Families say they were wrongly declared ineligible, houses were under-valued, and middlemen demanded bribes for payouts.
- **Partial relief:** After protests, M.P. raised the rehabilitation package from ₹5 lakh to ₹12.5 lakh and approved another ₹300 crore in July.
- **Cut-off date:** Protesters want the eligibility cut-off of February 16, 2024 moved to 2026.
- **Policing:** Leaders were arrested; one was hospitalised after a hunger strike — raising questions of dialogue versus force.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **KBLP:** The ₹44,000-crore Ken-Betwa link is the first of 30 link projects under the NPP; foundation stone laid on December 25, 2024.
- **Bribery:** A Lokayukta team arrested a land revenue officer in Panna for taking a bribe from a tribal man affected by the project.

The Majhgaon irrigation project in numbers

Item	Figure
Project cost	₹693 crore
Families displaced	1,450 in four villages
Land required	1,552 ha across eight villages (988 ha private)
Benefits	Irrigation for 8,370 ha in 43 villages; drinking water
Compensation paid	₹194.86 crore to 97.43% of private landowners

The RFCTLARR Act, 2013

- **Purpose:** Replaced the colonial Land Acquisition Act, 1894 with fair compensation and rehabilitation.
- **Consent:** 80% of affected families for private projects and 70% for PPP projects.
- **SIA:** A Social Impact Assessment is required before most acquisitions.
- **Compensation:** Up to four times market value in rural areas and two times in urban areas.
- **R&R:** Rehabilitation and resettlement entitlements apply to landowners and to livelihood losers.
- **Not to confuse:** The Act's consent rule does not apply to government projects; Gram Sabha consent under PESA and FRA is a separate safeguard.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (infrastructure, displacement) and GS1 (tribal issues) to argue that projects succeed only when rehabilitation is transparent, timely and free of middlemen.

Mains value-add: In Narmada Bachao Andolan v. Union of India (2000), the SC allowed the Sardar Sarovar dam to proceed but tied height increases to completion of rehabilitation — cite it to argue 'rehabilitation before submergence'.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the RFCTLARR Act, 2013, consider the following statements:

1. It requires the consent of at least 80% of affected families for land acquisition for private companies.
2. It requires the consent of affected families for all government projects.
3. It provides for a Social Impact Assessment before acquisition.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: Private projects need 80% consent and PPP projects 70% (Statement 1 true). Consent is not required when the government acquires land for its own projects — the trap (Statement 2 false). A Social Impact Assessment is a core step (Statement 3 true).

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2025, GS Paper I: "Does tribal development in India centre around two axes, those of displacement and of rehabilitation? Give your opinion."

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** M.P.: Madhya Pradesh | KBLP: Ken-Betwa Link Project | NPP: National Perspective Plan | ATREE: Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment | ha: hectares | RFCTLARR: Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement | PPP: Public-Private Partnership | SIA: Social Impact Assessment | R&R: Rehabilitation and Resettlement | PESA: Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act | FRA: Forest Rights Act

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 3

Copper squeeze: global copper demand is about 28 million tonnes against supply of about 23 million tonnes, keeping prices above \$14,000/tonne; Hindustan Copper plans to raise capacity to 12.2 MTPA and is pursuing four copper blocks in Chile.

How to use: GS3 (critical minerals); cite on India's import dependence and overseas asset acquisition for energy-transition metals.

Cheaper data, bigger reach: 1 GB of mobile data cost ₹268 in 2014 and about ₹8 now; average monthly use per user rose from 0.26 GB to 36 GB. The Bharat 6G Alliance has filed about 7,700 patents.

How to use: GS3 (digital economy); example of affordability-led digital inclusion and India's push into standard-setting.

Deepfakes: MeitY advised platforms to curb manipulated and out-of-context content, beyond AI deepfakes already covered by the IT Rules, 2021; a consultation paper on AI regulation is promised within a month.

How to use: GS3 (cyber security, AI governance); cite on the shift from voluntary advisories toward an AI regulatory framework.

Nurse-led heart care: the TIME-HF trial (1,507 patients, led by SCTIMST) found that nurse-led follow-up with a mobile app cut deaths among heart failure patients by 22%.

How to use: GS2/GS3 (health, task-shifting): evidence that trained nurses can extend specialist care in resource-poor settings.

Gold imports: gold, silver and platinum imports by banks and nominated agencies attract 3% IGST from April 1, 2026, after the exemption lapsed.

How to use: GS3 (external sector): cite on curbing non-essential imports and the current account deficit.

GS PAPER 4: ETHICS

'What Is an Andolanjeevi?': Objectivity in Official Orders

Why in news: The Allahabad HC questioned how the political term 'andolanjeevi' found its way into a District Magistrate's NSA detention order against journalist Satyam Verma.

Key Details:

- **The order:** The Gautam Buddha Nagar DM described Verma as an 'illogical, stubborn and violent andolanjeevi' with a 'warped ideology'.
- **The court:** Justice Atul Sreedharan asked how a person's ideology, reading material or organisational ties alone could ground preventive detention.
- **The term:** 'Andolanjeevi' (professional protester) was popularised in a 2021 Rajya Sabha speech about farm-law protesters.
- **GS4 concept:** This illustrates the civil-service values of objectivity and non-partisanship — official orders must rest on facts, not political labels.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Stakes:** Preventive detention denies liberty without trial, so the reasons recorded must be precise and relevant.
- **Status:** The Bench reserved its order on Verma's plea for release and compensation.

Objectivity, Impartiality & Non-partisanship

- **Objectivity:** Decisions based on merit, evidence and law — not on personal beliefs or prejudice.
- **Impartiality:** Treating all citizens equally, without favour to any group or person.
- **Non-partisanship:** Serving the government of the day loyally while staying free of party-political leanings.
- **Codified:** The All India Services (Conduct) Rules were amended in 2014 to list political neutrality, objectivity and impartiality.
- **Not to confuse:** Neutrality is not indifference — a civil servant must still be committed to constitutional values.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS4 (civil-service values, attitude) to show how language in official records reveals bias — and how objectivity protects both citizens' rights and the credibility of administration.

Mains value-add: The Nolan Committee's principle of 'Objectivity' (1995) says holders of public office must take decisions 'impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias' — cite it as the benchmark for quasi-judicial orders.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Objectivity and non-partisanship are foundational values for a civil servant exercising quasi-judicial powers. Illustrate with examples how the absence of these values can affect citizens' rights, and suggest safeguards. (150 words)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** HC: High Court | DM: District Magistrate | NSA: National Security Act