

THE DAILY UPSC BRIEF

HIGH-YIELD DAILY SOURCES & ANALYSIS | 2 OCTOBER 2026

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PRELIMS POINTERS — TODAY IN ONE LINE EACH

1. **UPSC at 100** — the first Public Service Commission was set up on 1 October 1926 (chair: Sir Ross Barker) on the Lee Commission's advice; it became the UPSC on 26 January 1950 (Arts. 315-323).
2. **International Day of Non-Violence** — observed on 2 October, Gandhi's birth anniversary, under a UN General Assembly resolution of 2007.
3. **Dikhow river** — Brahmaputra tributary flowing from Nagaland into Assam's Sivasagar district; a landslide upstream in Nagaland has put Assam districts on alert.
4. **2027 ICC Men's ODI World Cup** — to be hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia from 2 October to 21 November 2027; final in Johannesburg.
5. **Nitesh Siwach** — won silver in 97 kg Greco-Roman wrestling at the 2026 Asian Games (Aichi-Nagoya), the first Indian to reach that final in 64 years.

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, URBANISATION & HISTORY

Delhi's Urban Villages: How Colonial Land Records Remade the Dehat

Why in news: A Text & Context study traces how colonial surveys, land acquisition for New Delhi and later urbanisation turned Delhi's agrarian villages into 'urban villages' with uncertain legal status.

Key Details:

- **Records as control:** From 1837, revenue surveys recorded every field via *shajra naksh*, *khasra* and *jamabandi*, turning customary rights into state-recorded property.
- **Lal Dora, 1908:** The 1908 Lal Dora system drew a red line around each village's *abadi* (habitation), separating it from farmland.
- **Capital-building:** After 1911, around 30 villages lost land for New Delhi — Raisina for the Viceroy's House, Malcha for Chanakyapuri; descendants still seek compensation.
- **Paradox:** The State acquired farmland but left the *abadi deh* intact, creating 'unplanned' urban villages — Munirka, Katwaria Sarai — engulfed by the city.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Scale:** The 1880 settlement organised Delhi district into three tehsils and hundreds of villages; in 1880 about a quarter of Kanjhawala's land was commons (*shamilat deh*).
- **Heritage at risk:** Ponds (*johad*), *chaupals*, *havelis* and temples survive inside urban villages but have no planning protection.

Lal Dora & Urban Villages

- **Origin:** Demarcated in 1908 under British settlement operations; the *abadi* was marked with a red line on revenue maps — hence 'Lal Dora'.
- **Legal status:** Land inside the Lal Dora was traditionally outside formal title records, so residents often lack registered ownership documents.
- **Urbanisation route:** Delhi notifies rural villages as 'urbanised' under Section 507 of the DMC Act, 1957; the Delhi Land Reforms Act, 1954 governs agricultural land.
- **Census link:** 'Census towns' are settlements urban in character but still governed as villages — the national version of the same governance gap.
- **SVAMITVA (2020):** The Panchayati Raj Ministry's drone-survey scheme issues property cards for rural *abadi* land, addressing the Lal Dora title gap nationally.
- **Not to confuse:** *Abadi deh* (habitation) vs *shamilat deh* (village commons) vs agricultural holdings — each was treated differently in acquisition.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS1 (urbanisation and its problems, colonial land policy) and GS2 (urban local governance). Urban villages illustrate how planning excludes old settlements, leaving title, services and heritage gaps.

Mains value-add: Census 2011 counted 7,933 towns, of which 3,892 were 'census towns' — urban in character but governed as villages; cite it to show India's urbanisation outruns its urban governance.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Urban villages are often described as places the city absorbed but did not plan for. Discuss the social and governance problems of urban villages in Indian metropolises, with reference to Delhi. (150 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2013, GS1: "Discuss the various social problems which originated out of the speedy process of urbanization in India."

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** DMC Act: Delhi Municipal Corporation Act | SVAMITVA: Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 1

Crimes against women. NCRB data show crimes against women rose about 80% from 2.4 lakh in 2012 to 4.4 lakh in 2024 — more than 50 an hour in 2024, highest in Jaipur, Indore, Lucknow and Delhi. Several Nirbhaya Fund schemes (Safe City, one-stop centres, fast-track courts) exist, yet recent cases show weak implementation.

How to use: *GS1 (women's issues) / GS2: evidence that scheme-based policing must give way to preventive, outcome-based policing; also argue against 'safety' via restrictions on women.*

GS PAPER 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**Form 7 and Mass Deletions: Who Guards the Electoral Roll?**

Why in news: The EC ordered a probe into bulk filing of Form 7 deletion requests after the Karnataka CM's protest; the Bombay HC held a draft roll cannot be the basis for deleting names without a hearing.

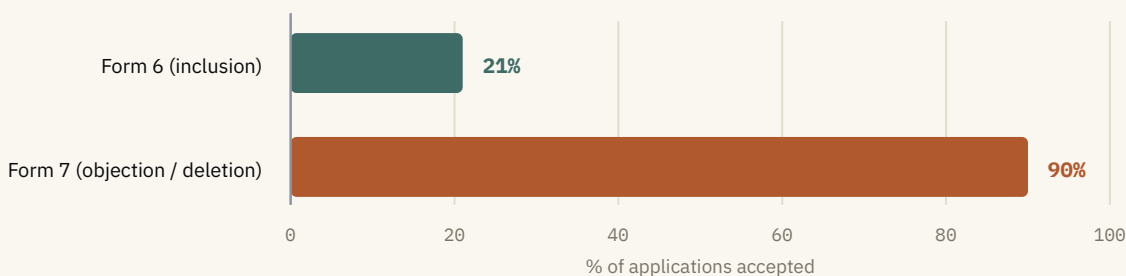
Story so far: The 1 Oct Brief covered the EC's majority-rule functioning and two ECs' 14 objections to SIR decisions. New today: the focus shifts to misuse of Form 7 and judicial limits on automated deletions.

Key Details:

- **Bulk filings:** Over 4,000 Form 7s were filed in Karnataka; in Babaleshwar, 1,363 came from just 10 electors, many reportedly targeting Muslim names.
- **EC response:** Karnataka's CEO told EROs to act under Section 31 of the RP Act, 1950 against knowingly false declarations, after an inquiry under Rule 20.
- **HC check:** The Bombay HC's Goa Bench said software cannot override statute: once a Form 8 (shifting) is filed, the ERO must apply its mind, not auto-reject.
- **Penalty unused:** Former EC Ashok Lavasa notes Section 31 has hardly ever been invoked, eroding deterrence; FIRs were lodged under the BNS instead.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **West Bengal anomaly:** Of 34 lakh Form 6s only 7.26 lakh were accepted (<21%), while 5.72 lakh of 6.39 lakh Form 7s (~90%) were accepted.
- **Tech backbone:** ERONet 2.0, developed with TCS, was merged into the umbrella ECINet in January 2026.

West Bengal SIR: share of applications accepted (per EC affidavit)

Electoral Roll Forms under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960

- **Legal basis:** The RP Act, 1950 governs electoral rolls; the 1960 Rules, framed under it, prescribe the forms and procedure.
- **Form 6:** Application by a new elector for inclusion of name in the roll.
- **Form 6A:** Inclusion of an overseas (NRI) elector, enrolled at the address in the passport.
- **Form 7:** Objection to a proposed or existing entry — used to seek deletion of a name (death, shifting, duplicate, non-citizen).
- **Form 8:** Correction of entries, shifting of residence, replacement EPIC or marking as PwD.
- **Due process:** Objections must be displayed publicly and the affected person given notice; Rule 20 provides for a hearing before the ERO decides.
- **Penalty:** Section 31, RP Act 1950: a knowingly false declaration is punishable with up to one year's imprisonment, a fine, or both.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (EC's functioning, electoral reforms, due process) — contrast the 90% Form 7 and 21% Form 6 acceptance to argue that roll-cleansing must not become disenfranchisement.

Mains value-add: In *Lal Babu Hussein v. ERO* (1995) the SC held that names already on the roll cannot be struck off without notice and a reasonable opportunity of hearing — cite it as the due-process floor for any deletion drive.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to electoral rolls in India, consider the following statements:

1. Form 7 is used to object to the inclusion of a name in the electoral roll.
 2. Form 6A is used by an overseas Indian elector to seek inclusion in the roll.
 3. Making a knowingly false declaration in a claim or objection is punishable under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- 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: Statement 1 is correct: Form 7 is the objection/deletion form. Statement 2 is correct: Form 6A is for overseas electors. Statement 3 is wrong: the penalty is under Section 31 of the RP Act, 1950 — the 1950 Act deals with rolls, the 1951 Act with the conduct of elections.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** EC: Election Commission | CM: Chief Minister | HC: High Court | SC: Supreme Court | CEO: Chief Electoral Officer | ERO: Electoral Registration Officer | RP Act: Representation of the People Act | SIR: Special Intensive Revision | BNS: Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita | ERONet/ECINet: EC's electoral-roll IT platforms | TCS: Tata Consultancy Services | EPIC: Electors Photo Identity Card | PwD: Person with Disability | NRI: Non-Resident Indian

Vande Mataram Under Criminal Law: The National Song and the 1971 Act

Why in news: On Gandhi Jayanti, debate continues over Parliament's 2026 amendment bringing the National Song under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, and the SC's pending hearing of T.M. Krishna's challenge.

Key Details:

- **What changed:** The 1971 Act, which protected the Flag, the Constitution and the Anthem, now also penalises insulting or obstructing the National Song, with up to three years' jail.
- **Executive orders:** MHA directed in January 2026 that all six stanzas be sung at official functions standing at attention; a July order placed the Song before the Anthem.
- **Court challenge:** The SC (22 Sept) heard Krishna's challenge without deciding; Justice Joymalya Bagchi orally noted that *Bijoe Emmanuel* still governs silent, respectful objection.
- **The 1937 settlement:** The Congress Working Committee in 1937 adopted only the first two stanzas, acknowledging objections to the later stanzas' religious imagery.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Constituent Assembly:** On 24 January 1950, Rajendra Prasad declared Jana Gana Mana the National Anthem and said Vande Mataram would be 'honoured equally'.

- **Critique:** Senior advocate Sanjay Hegde argues honour by usage, not compulsion, and proposes Gandhi's *Vaishnava Jana To* as a non-mandatory 'National Prayer'.

India's National Symbols: Anthem, Song & the 1971 Act

- **National Anthem:** Tagore's Jana Gana Mana, first sung at the Calcutta INC session on 27 Dec 1911; full version lasts about 52 seconds.
- **National Song:** Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Vande Mataram, published in *Anandamath* (1882); first sung at the 1896 INC session by Tagore.
- **The 1971 Act:** Penalises insulting the National Flag or Constitution (Section 2) and preventing the singing of the Anthem (Section 3), up to three years' jail.
- **Fundamental Duty:** Art. 51A(a) asks citizens to respect the Constitution, the Flag and the Anthem — the Song is not named there.
- **Key judgment:** *Bijoe Emmanuel* (1986): Jehovah's Witness children who stood silently could not be expelled for not singing; no law compels singing.
- **Not to confuse:** The Anthem is a constitutional-era adoption with a Fundamental Duty attached; the Song's protection now rests on the amended 1971 Act.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (fundamental rights vs national symbols, Arts. 19 and 25) and GS1 (national movement's symbols). The 1937 compromise is a strong example of inclusive nationalism.

Mains value-add: Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy in *Bijoe Emmanuel* (1986): 'Our tradition teaches tolerance; our philosophy preaches tolerance; our Constitution practices tolerance; let us not dilute it' — cite it against compelled patriotism.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to India's national symbols, consider the following statements:

1. Article 51A(a) expressly requires citizens to respect the National Song.
2. Vande Mataram first appeared in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel *Anandamath*.
3. Jana Gana Mana was first sung at a session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta.

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: (b) 2 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is wrong: Art. 51A(a) names the Constitution, the National Flag and the National Anthem, not the Song — a common trap. Statement 2 is correct: the song appears in *Anandamath* (1882). Statement 3 is correct: the Anthem was first sung at the Calcutta INC session in December 1911.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 1996: "Consider the following statements: No one can be compelled to sing the National Anthem since 1. It will be violative of the Right to freedom of speech and expression. 2. It will be violative of the Right to freedom of conscience and practise and propagation of religion. 3. There is no legal provision obliging anyone to sing the National Anthem." — Answer: (c) 1, 2 and 3 are correct.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SC: Supreme Court | MHA: Ministry of Home Affairs | INC: Indian National Congress | Art.: Article

A.P. HC Strikes Down 34% BC Quota in Local Bodies

Why in news: A Division Bench of the A.P. HC set aside the G.O.s giving 34% reservation to BCs in PRIs and 33.33% in ULBs, holding total reservation breached the SC's 50% ceiling.

Key Details:

- **Ruling:** The quota failed the triple test of *Vikas Kishanrao Gawali*; data from the State's unified family survey cannot substitute for a dedicated commission's study.
- **Liberty to redo:** The State may revisit the BC percentage after proper data collection, keeping the ceiling in view.
- **Elections first:** The SEC must begin polls to PRIs and ULBs, preferably within six weeks from 1 October; the SIR is no ground to postpone.

- **Delimitation:** Neither the Census Act, 1948 nor the Census Rules, 1990 bar the State from delimiting municipalities.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Pattern:** Similar triple-test failures stalled local polls in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh in 2021-22 until dedicated commissions reported.
- **Stakes:** Delayed local elections leave PRIs and ULBs under administrators, weakening the 73rd/74th Amendments' promise of regular polls.

Reservation ceiling: the key judgments

Case	Year	Holding relevant to local bodies
<i>Indra Sawhney</i>	1992	Reservations ordinarily capped at 50% (for jobs under Art. 16(4))
<i>K. Krishna Murthy</i>	2010	BC quotas in PRIs/ULBs valid under Arts. 243D(6)/243T(6), but within 50% and on separate data
<i>Vikas Kishanrao Gawali</i>	2021	'Triple test': dedicated commission, local-body-wise proportion, total within 50%
<i>Janhit Abhiyan</i>	2022	Upheld 10% EWS quota; the 50% ceiling not treated as inflexible for EWS

Reservation in Local Bodies & the 50% Ceiling

- **Constitutional basis:** Arts. 243D and 243T mandate SC/ST seats in PRIs and ULBs in proportion to population, and one-third for women.
- **BC quotas:** Arts. 243D(6) and 243T(6) let States reserve seats for backward classes by law — an enabling, not mandatory, power.
- **Political backwardness:** *K. Krishna Murthy* held that backwardness for local-body seats differs from educational/job backwardness, so needs separate data.
- **Triple test:** (1) A dedicated commission studies backwardness locally; (2) quota fixed body-wise on its findings; (3) SC+ST+OBC total stays within 50%.
- **Regular polls:** Arts. 243E and 243U fix a five-year term and require elections before it expires; the SEC (Arts. 243K/243ZA) conducts them.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (local governance, reservation jurisprudence, SECs). Shows courts insisting on empirical data for quotas while protecting timely local elections.

Mains value-add: *K. Krishna Murthy* (2010): 'political backwardness' is distinct from social and educational backwardness — cite it to argue local-body quotas need their own evidence base, not job-quota data.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions, consider the following statements:

1. Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes in panchayats is mandatory under Article 243D.
2. Reservation of seats for backward classes in panchayats is mandatory for every State under Article 243D.
3. Under the 'triple test', the total of SC, ST and OBC reservation in a local body should not exceed 50%.

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: Statement 1 is correct: SC/ST reservation in proportion to population is mandatory. Statement 2 is wrong: Art. 243D(6) only enables States to reserve for backward classes — the trap is 'mandatory'. Statement 3 is correct: the third limb of the *Gawali* triple test caps the vertical total at 50%.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** A.P.: Andhra Pradesh | HC: High Court | SC: Supreme Court / Scheduled Castes (by context) | ST: Scheduled Tribes | BC/OBC: Backward Classes / Other Backward Classes | G.O.: Government Order | PRI: Panchayati Raj Institution | ULB: Urban Local Body | SEC: State Election Commission | SIR: Special Intensive Revision | EWS: Economically Weaker Sections | Art.: Article

Counterfeit Medicines: Gaps in India's Drug-Quality Chain

Why in news: Delhi Police busted an inter-State racket in counterfeit and diverted cancer drugs (17 arrested, items worth about ₹9 crore), exposing how fakes slip through supply chains with no system to trace affected patients.

Story so far: The 30 Sept Brief covered the SC's concern over steep mark-ups on essential drugs under DPCO 2013. New today: the quality side — counterfeit, spurious and diverted medicines.

Key Details:

- **Modus operandi:** Original cartons were reused; batch numbers and MRPs were wiped with acetone and vials refilled; fake invoices created paper trails.
- **Weak links:** Drugs pass through C&F agents, stockists, sub-stockists and retailers; each handover is a pilferage point, and lowest-bidder procurement favours suspect suppliers.
- **QR limits:** Barcodes/QR codes have been mandatory on about 300 top brands since August 2023, but a cloned code still passes a visual or app check.
- **Victims untraced:** Patients rarely learn they took fakes; in May, spurious oxytocin was linked to the deaths of five women in Kota hospitals.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Inspection drive:** Risk-based inspections of over 960 manufacturing premises in six months led to more than 860 regulatory actions.
- **Scale problem:** Over 8.5 lakh retail pharmacies make physical checking impossible; 779 prosecutions were launched in 2025-26.

Drug-quality testing by regulators (CDSCO + State regulators)

Year	Samples tested	Not of Standard Quality	Spurious / adulterated
2024-25	1,16,323	—	245
2025-26	1,41,322	3,012	283

Drug Regulation in India: the D&C Act, 1940 & CDSCO

- **Law:** The D&C Act, 1940 and Rules, 1945 regulate import, manufacture, sale and distribution of drugs and cosmetics.
- **Regulator:** CDSCO, headed by the DCGI under the DGHS (Health Ministry), approves new drugs and clinical trials and licenses imports.
- **Split licensing:** State drug controllers license manufacture and sale within their States — a key source of uneven enforcement.
- **Three categories:** NSQ = fails a quality parameter; spurious = imitation or false identity; adulterated = contaminated or substituted contents.
- **Traceability:** Schedule H2 requires barcodes/QR codes on the top 300 brands; revised Schedule M (2023) tightened GMP for manufacturers.
- **Not to confuse:** Drug *prices* are controlled by NPPA under the DPCO 2013 (Essential Commodities Act); drug *quality* is CDSCO's domain.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (health governance, regulatory capacity, Centre-State roles) and GS3 (pharma exports and credibility). Pair the data table with the 'victims untraced' gap for a strong patient-centric argument.

Mains value-add: The Mashelkar Committee (2003) on spurious drugs led to the D&C (Amendment) Act, 2008, raising punishment for spurious drugs that cause death or grievous hurt up to life imprisonment — cite it to show deterrence exists on paper, enforcement lags.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

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

1. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation licenses the sale of drugs by retail chemists across India.
2. A 'spurious' drug is one that imitates or passes off as another drug.
3. The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority regulates drug prices under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d) 2 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is wrong: sale and manufacturing licences are issued by State drug controllers; CDSCO handles new-drug approvals, imports and clinical trials. Statement 2 is correct: imitation/false identity defines a spurious drug. Statement 3 is correct: NPPA enforces the DPCO, which is issued under the Essential Commodities Act.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SC: Supreme Court | DPCO: Drugs (Prices Control) Order | MRP: Maximum Retail Price | C&F: Clearing and Forwarding | QR: Quick Response (code) | D&C Act: Drugs and Cosmetics Act | CDSCO: Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation | DCGI: Drugs Controller General of India | DGHS: Directorate General of Health Services | NSQ: Not of Standard Quality | GMP: Good Manufacturing Practices | NPPA: National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority

Mahanadi Water Dispute: Talks Run Parallel to the Tribunal

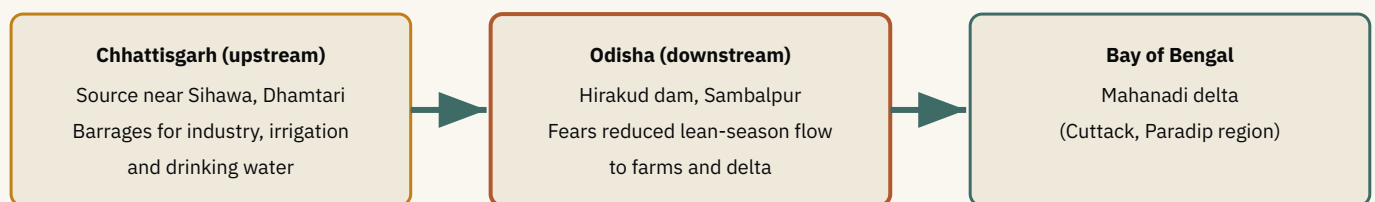
Why in news: Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi said the Mahanadi water-sharing dispute with Chhattisgarh is 'moving closer to a solution' after a meeting chaired by the Union Home Minister, with CWC technical support.

Key Details:

- **Timeline:** After a 30 July meeting under the Jal Shakti Minister, Odisha said the issue would be settled within three months; two months have passed.
- **Twin track:** Both States have submitted proposals for a negotiated framework while legal proceedings before the tribunal continue.
- **Next steps:** An expanded technical committee meets on 13 October; the tribunal, headed by former SC Justice Bela M. Trivedi, sits on 15 October.
- **Transparency demand:** The opposition BJD wants the decisions made public, calling the dispute vital to Odisha's interests.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Origin of dispute:** Odisha objects that upstream barrages in Chhattisgarh reduce lean-season inflows into the Hirakud reservoir.
- **Political shift:** With the same party governing both States, negotiation has gained momentum alongside adjudication.

The Mahanadi: upstream–downstream stakes

Dispute track: Tribunal set up 2018 (Justice Bela M. Trivedi now heads it) · parallel talks under the Jal Shakti Minister with CWC support

Schematic diagram, not to scale

Inter-State River Water Disputes

- **Constitution:** Art. 262(1) lets Parliament provide for adjudicating inter-State river disputes; Art. 262(2) lets it bar the SC's jurisdiction.
- **The law:** The Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 lets the Centre set up a tribunal when negotiations fail.
- **Award's force:** Since the 2002 amendment, a tribunal's award, once published, has the same force as an order or decree of the SC.
- **Other mechanism:** The River Boards Act, 1956 provides for advisory river boards, but none has ever been set up under it.
- **Mahanadi tribunal:** Constituted in March 2018 on the SC's direction after Odisha's complaint over Chhattisgarh's upstream projects.
- **Track record:** Tribunals are slow: the Cauvery tribunal (1990) gave its final award only in 2007.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (cooperative federalism, inter-State relations, dispute-resolution institutions). The parallel negotiation track shows political settlement can outpace tribunal adjudication.

Mains value-add: The Sarkaria Commission (1988) recommended time-bound tribunals and that awards carry the force of an SC decree — the 2002 amendment adopted this, yet delays persist; cite it to argue for enforceable timelines.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to inter-State river water disputes in India, consider the following statements:

1. Article 262 empowers Parliament to bar the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court over such disputes.
2. An award of a tribunal under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 has the same force as a decree of the Supreme Court.
3. River boards set up under the River Boards Act, 1956 are presently managing major inter-State rivers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct under Art. 262(2). Statement 2 is correct since the 2002 amendment. Statement 3 is wrong: no river board has ever been constituted under the 1956 Act, though bodies such as the Cauvery Water Management Authority exist under separate schemes.

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2013, GS2: "Constitutional mechanisms to resolve the inter-state water disputes have failed to address and solve the problems. Is the failure due to structural or process inadequacy or both? Discuss."

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** CM: Chief Minister | CWC: Central Water Commission | SC: Supreme Court | BJD: Biju Janata Dal | Art.: Article

Sri Lanka at Two Years of 'System Change': A Report Card

Why in news: President Anura Kumara Disanayake completed two years in office; his NPP government has stabilised the economy, but promised structural reforms — Provincial Council polls, a new Constitution — remain stalled.

Key Details:

- **Mandate:** Elected in September 2024 with 42.31% of first-preference votes after the 2022 Aragalaya; the NPP won a supermajority in November 2024.
- **Economy:** The government stayed with the IMF programme, met or beat key targets, and absorbed shocks from Cyclone Ditwah (late 2025) and the West Asia crisis.
- **Pending promises:** Provincial Council elections, a new Constitution, abolishing the executive presidency and repealing the PTA are unfulfilled.
- **Verdict:** Analyst Pradeep Peiris calls it a 'government of good governance' rather than transformation — better rulers in the same system.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Accountability:** High-profile arrests include politicians, narcotics suspects and a former intelligence chief probed over the 2019 Easter bombings.
- **Concern:** A proposed amendment extending judges' retirement age drew criticism that it could be used to shape the judiciary.

The 13th Amendment & Provincial Councils

- **Origin:** Enacted in 1987 after the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord (29 July 1987) signed by Rajiv Gandhi and J.R. Jayewardene.
- **What it does:** Created Provincial Councils with devolved powers over subjects such as education, health and agriculture.
- **Tamil question:** It is the only constitutional devolution mechanism for the Tamil-majority North and East — hence India's long-standing interest.
- **Gaps:** Land and police powers were never fully devolved; Provincial Council elections have not been held since 2014 and 2012 in various provinces.
- **India's stance:** India consistently calls for full implementation of the 13th Amendment and early Provincial Council elections.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (India and its neighbourhood, democratic transitions). Sri Lanka's IMF-led recovery and stalled devolution frame India's economic diplomacy and its 13th-Amendment advocacy.

Mains value-add: India extended about US\$4 billion in emergency support to Sri Lanka in 2022 — credit lines, currency swaps and deferred payments — cite it as Neighbourhood First in action during the crisis.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Sri Lanka's recovery shows that economic stabilisation can precede political reform but cannot substitute for it. Examine with reference to the NPP government, and discuss the implications for India. (250 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2013, GS2: "In respect of India-Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy."

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** NPP: National People's Power | IMF: International Monetary Fund | PTA: Prevention of Terrorism Act (Sri Lanka)

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 2

Unpaid e-challans. In the road-safety case it has monitored since 2012, the SC ordered States to blacklist vehicles with unpaid e-challans on the Parivahan portal and refuse licence, fitness and PUC renewals. Of ₹49,194 crore in e-challans issued, only ₹26,175 crore has been recovered.

How to use: *GS2 governance: shows technology-enabled enforcement (Section 136A, MV Act) working only when linked to service denial — useful for 'compliance by design' arguments.*

Indore water deaths. A one-member judicial commission found the Bhagirathpura contamination (22 deaths linked by hospital records) preventable — tender delays of about 859 days, missing records, and sewage lines laid over water pipes; 50 of 52 samples had coliform.

How to use: *GS2 urban governance/GS4 accountability: 'cumulative failure' across decades — use to argue for asset registers and fixed responsibility in municipal bodies.*

OBC certificates in West Bengal. The SC issued notice on a plea against the Calcutta HC order voiding OBC certificates issued between May 2025 and May 2026 after the State re-declared 114 classes; appointments made meanwhile will abide by the outcome.

How to use: *GS2 reservation: an example of executive OBC lists struck down for want of a lawful basis — pair with the State Backward Classes Commission's role.*

SC/ST protection funding. The Social Justice Ministry released ₹1,423.30 crore to States/UTs over three years to implement the PCR Act, 1955 and the SC/ST (PoA) Act, 1989.

How to use: *GS2 vulnerable sections: a data point for answers on implementation of protective legislation.*

GS PAPER 3: ECONOMY, TRADE, ENERGY & SCIENCE

Multilateralism vs. FTA Networks: Finance Ministry Warns of Trade Diversion

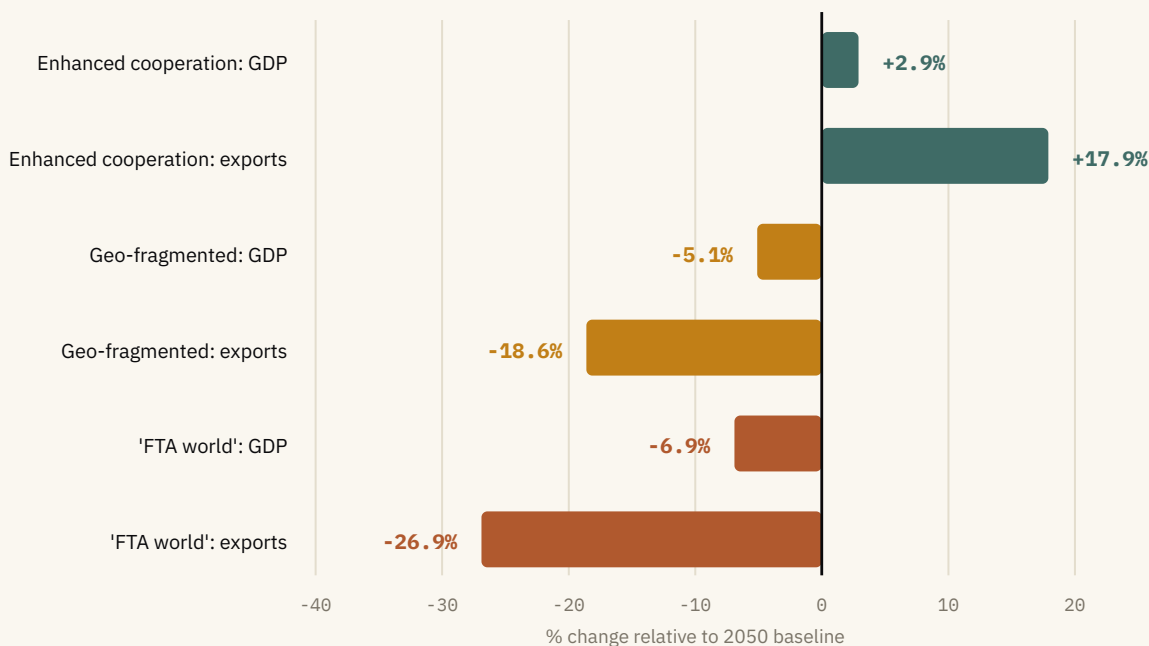
Why in news: The Finance Ministry's Monthly Economic Review warned that bilateral and regional deals replacing the multilateral system could cause trade diversion, higher costs and slower growth — even as India negotiates an interim deal with the U.S.

Key Details:

- **Core warning:** FTAs outside the WTO framework create 'greater trade diversion, higher trade costs, and greater uncertainty', with market access tied to terms of each deal.
- **India's balance:** India pursues a diversified trade strategy but within the multilateral system, seeking to keep the WTO at its core.
- **Live context:** Piyush Goyal and USTR Jamieson Greer discussed 'early conclusion' of an interim India-U.S. deal; the U.S. is weighing up to 100% tariffs on Russian-oil buyers.
- **Complement, not substitute:** Regional pacts can add market access when they operate within WTO rules, not replace them.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Worst case:** An 'FTA world' replacing multilateralism cuts global GDP by 6.9% and exports by 26.9% by 2050, per the WTO's World Trade Report 2026.
- **GST signal:** Imports' share of gross GST hit a record 32.2% in September 2026 (₹2.03 lakh crore total), showing how trade flows feed revenue.

WTO World Trade Report 2026: scenarios for 2050 vs baseline

The WTO & Regional Trade Agreements

- **Origin:** Set up on 1 January 1995 by the Marrakesh Agreement, succeeding GATT (1947); headquarters in Geneva; India is a founder member.
- **Core principle:** Most-Favoured-Nation treatment (GATT Art. I): a concession to one member must extend to all.
- **FTA exception:** GATT Art. XXIV allows FTAs and customs unions if they cover 'substantially all the trade'; the 1979 Enabling Clause allows developing-country pacts.
- **Bodies:** The Ministerial Conference (at least once every two years) is the top body; the Dispute Settlement Body hears disputes.
- **Crisis:** The Appellate Body has been non-functional since December 2019 because the U.S. blocked new appointments.
- **Flagship:** The World Trade Report is the WTO Secretariat's annual analytical publication.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (WTO, India's trade diplomacy) and GS3 (external sector, growth). The scenario data make a strong case that India's FTAs must complement, not erode, multilateral rules.

Mains value-add: Jagdish Bhagwati called overlapping FTAs a 'spaghetti bowl' of conflicting rules of origin that raise costs and divert trade — cite it to support keeping the WTO at the core.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the World Trade Organization (WTO), consider the following statements:

1. The Most-Favoured-Nation principle prohibits all free trade agreements among WTO members.
2. GATT Article XXIV permits free trade areas that cover substantially all the trade between the parties.
3. The WTO's Appellate Body has been unable to function since 2019 due to a blockade on appointments.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c) 2 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is wrong: MFN is the rule, but Art. XXIV and the Enabling Clause are explicit exceptions that allow FTAs. Statement 2 is correct: 'substantially all the trade' is the Art. XXIV condition. Statement 3 is correct: the U.S. has blocked Appellate Body appointments since December 2019.

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2018, GS2: "What are the key areas of reform if the WTO has to survive in the present context of 'Trade War', especially keeping in mind the interest of India?"

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** FTA: Free Trade Agreement | WTO: World Trade Organization | USTR: United States Trade Representative | GST: Goods and Services Tax | GDP: Gross Domestic Product | GATT: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade | Art.: Article | MFN: Most-Favoured-Nation

Xenocortication: Human Brain Tissue Grown Inside Mice

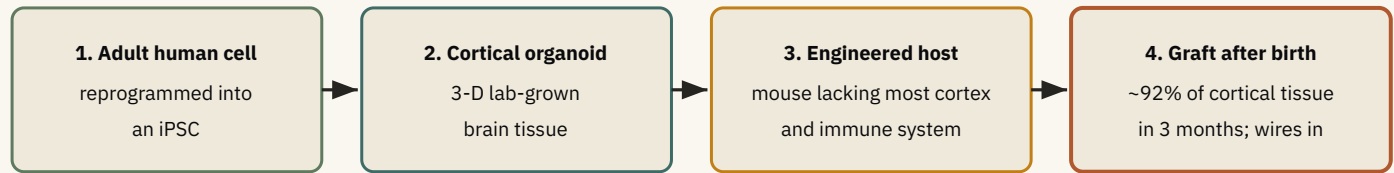
Why in news: A Stanford team led by Sergiu Pașca reported in *Nature* that human cortical organoids transplanted into mice lacking most of their own cortex grew, became electrically active and integrated with the host brain.

Key Details:

- **Method:** Human iPSC-derived cortical organoids were grafted soon after birth into mice engineered to lack most neocortex and hippocampus and a working immune system.
- **Growth:** In three months grafts formed about 92% of the animals' cortical tissue, with neurons, progenitors and astrocytes at a second-trimester-like stage.
- **Integration:** Grafts produced slow electrical waves, connected with mouse circuits, and human fibres reached the cervical spinal cord; behaviour partly changed.
- **Use case:** After five hours of oxygen deprivation, stress markers appeared only in the human graft — a model for birth injury such as cerebral palsy.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Limits:** Tissue stayed immature, lacked normal cortical layering; the study cannot prove human neurons caused specific behaviour.
- **Ethics:** Bioethicists were consulted before the work; larger, more mature grafts or primate hosts would need much stricter scrutiny.

Xenocortication: from a human cell to a graft in a mouse brain

Limit: tissue stays immature ($\approx$ second-trimester stage); no human-like mind shown

Schematic diagram

Stem Cells, iPSCs & Organoids

- **Stem cells:** Unspecialised cells that can self-renew and turn into specialised cells; embryonic stem cells are pluripotent.
- **iPSCs:** Adult cells reprogrammed to a pluripotent state by Shinya Yamanaka (2006), avoiding embryo use; Nobel Prize 2012 (with John Gurdon).
- **Organoids:** Tiny 3-D tissues grown from stem cells that mimic features of an organ — used for disease modelling and drug screening.
- **Chimera:** An organism containing cells from two species; human-animal chimera work is tightly regulated worldwide.
- **India's rules:** ICMR-DBT National Guidelines for Stem Cell Research (2017) classify research as permissible, restricted or prohibited, with chimera studies under strict review.
- **Not to confuse:** Organoid (lab-grown mini-organ) vs organ-on-chip (microfluidic device) vs xenotransplant (whole animal organ into a human).

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (biotechnology, regenerative medicine, research ethics) and GS4 (ethics of science). A good example of a breakthrough whose ethics must be settled before it scales.

Mains value-add: The ISSCR Guidelines (2021) place human-animal chimera studies under specialised oversight and prohibit transferring human-animal chimeric embryos into a human or ape uterus — cite it as the global benchmark for responsible chimera research.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), consider the following statements:

1. They are obtained by reprogramming adult somatic cells.
2. Their production necessarily requires destruction of human embryos.
3. They can be used to grow organoids for disease modelling.

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: Statement 1 is correct: iPSCs come from reprogrammed adult cells (e.g. skin or blood). Statement 2 is wrong: avoiding embryo destruction is precisely why iPSCs matter — the common confusion with embryonic stem cells. Statement 3 is correct: iPSC-derived organoids, as in this study, model diseases.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2012: "With reference to 'stem cells', frequently in the news, which of the following statements is/are correct? 1. Stem cells can be derived from mammals only. 2. Stem cells can be used for screening new drugs. 3. Stem cells can be used for medical therapies." — Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** iPSC: induced Pluripotent Stem Cell | ICMR: Indian Council of Medical Research | DBT: Department of Biotechnology | ISSCR: International Society for Stem Cell Research

PNG Drive 3.0: Pushing Piped Gas into 50 Lakh More Homes

Why in news: The Petroleum Ministry, PNGRB and city gas distributors launched National PNG Drive 3.0, targeting 50 lakh new domestic PNG connections by the end of FY27.

Key Details:

- **Targets:** Convert 40 lakh existing registrations into active consumers and onboard 50 lakh new PNG registrations alongside the new connections.
- **Phase 2 result:** The second phase (1 Jan-30 June 2026) added nearly 13.4 lakh billed connections and over 15.3 lakh registrations.
- **Momentum:** Daily new connections rose 43% (4,702 to 6,690) and billed consumers per day jumped from 2,781 to 7,392.
- **Why it matters:** PNG gives continuous supply without cylinder logistics and frees LPG — whose commercial price rose ₹65 this month — for areas without pipelines.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Energy mix goal:** India targets raising natural gas to 15% of its primary energy mix by 2030, from around 6% now.
- **Infrastructure:** CGD networks use 'One Nation One Gas Grid' trunk pipelines; domestic PNG and CNG get priority allocation of domestic gas.

City Gas Distribution & the PNGRB

- **Regulator:** PNGRB, a statutory body under the PNGRB Act, 2006, regulates refining, processing, storage, transport and distribution of petroleum products and gas.
- **Authorisation:** It awards CGD rights for 'Geographical Areas' through competitive bidding rounds, with exclusivity for a set period.
- **Two outputs:** CGD supplies PNG to homes, shops and industry, and CNG for vehicles.
- **Priority gas:** Domestically produced gas is allocated first to PNG (domestic) and CNG (transport) segments.
- **Not to confuse:** PNG/CNG is methane-rich natural gas; LPG is a propane-butane mix from refineries and gas processing.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (energy transition, infrastructure, clean cooking). Gas as a 'bridge fuel' between coal/oil and renewables is a recurring Mains theme; the drive's numbers show demand-side execution.

Mains value-add: Natural gas forms about 6% of India's primary energy mix against a global average of about 23-24% — cite it to show how far the 15%-by-2030 goal still has to go.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to City Gas Distribution (CGD) in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board authorises entities to develop CGD networks in specified geographical areas.
2. Piped Natural Gas (PNG) supplied to households is chemically the same as Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).
3. Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) for vehicles is supplied through CGD networks.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct: PNGRB awards CGD rights through bidding rounds. Statement 2 is wrong: PNG is mostly methane, while LPG is a propane-butane mix — the classic confusion. Statement 3 is correct: CGD networks supply both PNG and CNG.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** PNG: Piped Natural Gas | PNGRB: Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board | FY27: financial year 2026-27 | LPG: Liquefied Petroleum Gas | CGD: City Gas Distribution | CNG: Compressed Natural Gas

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 3

Drought after a weak monsoon. Karnataka has declared drought in well over 100 taluks and Maharashtra in 265 of 358; the national deficit of about 12% is below the Centre's 20% threshold for 'agricultural drought'. Kharif sowing trailed by 16% on 10 July before narrowing to under 2%.

How to use: *GS3 agriculture/disaster management: shows how national averages hide district-level drought — continues the 1 Oct monsoon story.*

GST, September 2026. Gross GST rose 14.7% to ₹2.03 lakh crore; imports' share of revenue hit a record 32.2%, with import GST up 25.9% vs about 10% for domestic transactions.

How to use: *GS3 indirect taxes: evidence of shifting revenue composition — use with caution as a demand indicator.*

Manufacturing PMI. HSBC India Manufacturing PMI rose to 55.1 in September (from 52.8), a seven-month high, on stronger demand for electronics, food and pharma; export orders grew fastest since February 2026.

How to use: *GS3 growth: a high-frequency indicator supporting a festive-season recovery narrative (above 50 = expansion).*

'No PUC, No Fuel' in Delhi. Fuel stations now use ANPR cameras linked to VAHAN to deny fuel to vehicles without a valid PUC or that are overage.

How to use: *GS3 air pollution: an example of tech-enabled, point-of-sale enforcement of emission norms.*

Sugar stock limit. The Food Ministry capped sugar dealers' stocks at 1,000 quintals (2,000 quintals for the Kolkata metropolitan area and Assam) from 15 October to 30 November to curb festive hoarding.

How to use: *GS3 food management: a use of stock limits (Essential Commodities Act powers) to manage prices.*

GS PAPER 4: ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE**Gandhi at 157: The Moral Thinker and His Global Reach**

Why in news: On the 157th Gandhi Jayanti, The Hindu's compilation revisits Gandhi's ideas — from his careful use of the word 'genius' to how satyagraha shaped the U.S. civil-rights movement.

Key Details:

- **Moral judgement:** Gandhi used 'genius' sparingly as a value judgement — for Tilak's 'genius of swaraj' and Tagore — and 'evil genius' for Sir Michael O'Dwyer after Jallianwala Bagh.
- **Global method:** Bayard Rustin, organiser of the 1963 March on Washington, said in 1948 that 'Indian non-violent revolution has much to teach us'.

- **Montgomery:** During the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rustin pushed King to give up armed guards and court arrest openly — Gandhian tactics in practice.
- **GS4 linkage:** A direct example of UPSC's syllabus item 'contributions of moral thinkers from India and the world' — ethics as method, not just belief.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Diffusion:** James Lawson set up a satyagraha training school in Nashville; Gandhian non-violence later shaped movements from East Timor to the first Intifada.
- **Ethics in action:** Gandhi tied means to ends: open defiance, voluntary acceptance of punishment and no hatred of the opponent.

Gandhi's Ethical Ideas — Key Terms

- **Satyagraha:** 'Truth-force': non-violent resistance accepting suffering to convert the opponent; first used in South Africa in 1906.
- **Sarvodaya:** 'Welfare of all', inspired by Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, which Gandhi paraphrased in Gujarati (1908).
- **Trusteeship:** The wealthy hold property as trustees for society, using it for common good.
- **Seven Social Sins:** Listed in *Young India* (1925): wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice, politics without principle.
- **Talisman (1947):** When in doubt, recall the face of the poorest person and ask if your step will be of use to them.
- **Ends and means:** In *Hind Swaraj* (1909): 'The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree' — impure means corrupt the end.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS4 (moral thinkers, ethics of public life, non-violence) and Essay. Rustin and King show Gandhian ethics as a practical method of political change, not just personal virtue.

Mains value-add: Martin Luther King Jr.: 'Christ gave us the goals and Mahatma Gandhi the tactics' — cite it to show Gandhian ethics as a transferable method of moral persuasion.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree." (Gandhi, *Hind Swara*). Examine the relevance of Gandhi's insistence on the purity of means for a civil servant facing pressure to deliver quick results. (150 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2016, GS4: "Discuss Mahatma Gandhi's concept of seven sins."