

THE DAILY UPSC BRIEF

HIGH-YIELD DAILY SOURCES & ANALYSIS | 1 OCTOBER 2026

TODAY'S COVERAGE

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PRELIMS POINTERS — TODAY IN ONE LINE EACH

1. **Kaliningrad** — Russian exclave on the Baltic Sea between Poland and Lithuania; Moscow warned NATO it could use nuclear weapons if the exclave were cut off.
2. **H2Global** — German-backed auction mechanism (run by Hintco) for green-hydrogen derivatives; AM Green won its Asian lot to supply RFNBO green ammonia worth at least €585 mn over 10 years.
3. **RoDTEP & RoSCTL** — export duty-remission schemes of the Commerce and Textiles Ministries; extended to 31 December 2026 with no change in rates.
4. **Gandak** — Himalayan tributary of the Ganga, called Narayani in Nepal; breached embankments in West Champaran, Bihar, below the Valmikinagar barrage.
5. **Beamline for Schools (CERN)** — Indian team 'attoPION' among five global winners of the 13th edition, with a pion charge-exchange experiment relevant to the U.S.-based DUNE neutrino project.

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: GEOGRAPHY

Southwest Monsoon 2026 Ends 12.6% Below Normal

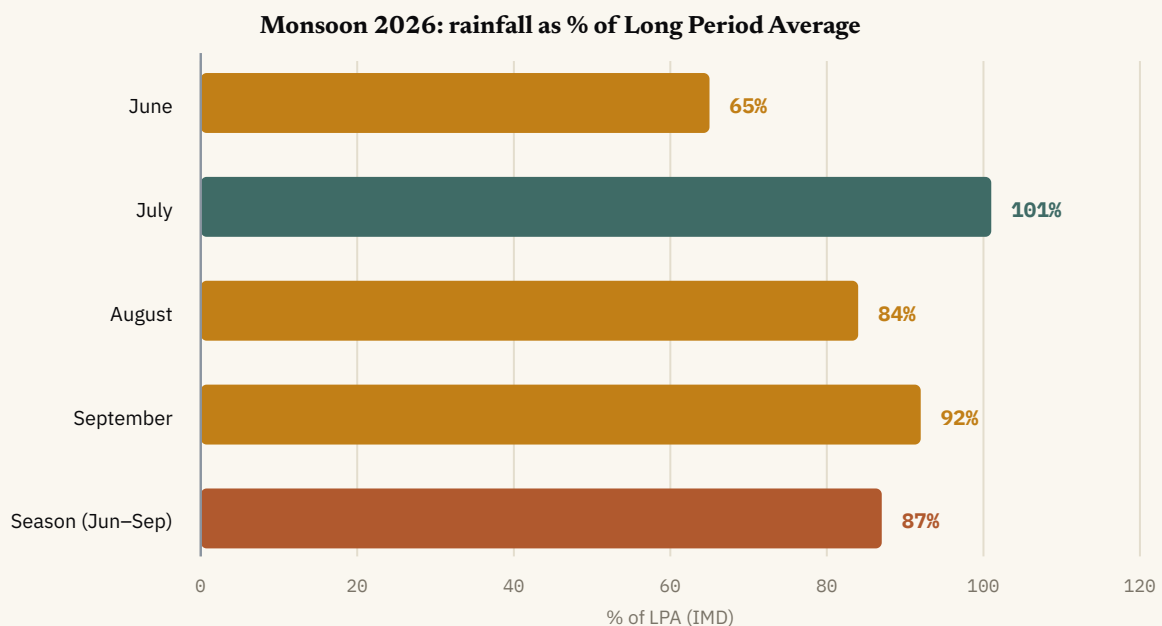
Why in news: IMD declared the 2026 southwest monsoon at 759.4 mm — 87% of the LPA and the weakest season since 2015 — with October rain also forecast below normal.

Key Details:

- **Category:** At 87% of LPA the season falls in IMD's 'deficient' band (below 90%); 17 of 36 subdivisions, covering 42% of the land area, were deficient.
- **Regional skew:** East & Northeast India (1,017.1 mm) had its driest monsoon since records began in 1901; the southern peninsula, at 24.3% below normal, its fourth lowest.
- **Forecast record:** The seasonal call (92% in April, 90% in May) held, but monthly calls missed: June got 65% of normal against a 92% forecast.
- **Driver:** A strengthening El Niño — one of the strongest in recent history — suppressed rainfall; the Northeast shows a 'marked trend' of decline, per IMD.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Districts:** Of 741 districts assessed, 282 were deficient and 34 'large deficient'.
- **Persistent deficit:** Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam & Meghalaya were rain-deficient in every month, June to September.

**IMD Monsoon Forecasting, ENSO & IOD**

- **Releasing body:** IMD, set up in 1875 and now under MoES, issues the monsoon forecast and the end-of-season statement.
- **Forecast stages:** A first-stage forecast in April and an update in late May/June, using an MME dynamical framework adopted in 2021.
- **LPA:** The 1971-2020 average of 87 cm (868.6 mm) for June-September; adopted in 2022, replacing the earlier 88 cm normal.
- **Categories:** Deficient: below 90% of LPA; below normal: 90-95%; normal: 96-104%; above normal: 105-110%; excess: above 110%.
- **ENSO:** El Niño is the warm phase and La Niña the cool phase of SST in the central/eastern equatorial Pacific; El Niño usually weakens the monsoon.
- **IOD:** The SST gap between the western Arabian Sea and the eastern Indian Ocean off Indonesia; a positive IOD generally aids the monsoon.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS1 (monsoon mechanism, El Niño/IOD teleconnections) and GS3 (rain-fed farming, rabi water stress, drought management). The East/NE decline is useful for answers on climate variability and changing rainfall geography.

Mains value-add: IMD treats a season as an 'all-India drought year' when the national deficit exceeds 10% of LPA and over 20% of the country's area is under drought conditions — cite it to frame how a national average converts into drought declarations and relief.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the Indian southwest monsoon, consider the following statements:

1. IMD classifies all-India seasonal rainfall below 90% of the Long Period Average as 'deficient'.
2. A positive Indian Ocean Dipole event generally suppresses southwest monsoon rainfall over India.
3. El Niño refers to anomalous warming of sea-surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific.

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: below 90% of LPA is 'deficient' (90-95% is 'below normal'). Statement 2 is wrong: a positive IOD (warmer western Indian Ocean) generally aids the monsoon and can offset El Niño. Statement 3 is correct: El Niño is the warm phase of ENSO in the central/eastern equatorial Pacific, usually linked to weaker Indian monsoons.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2017: "With reference to 'Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)' sometimes mentioned in the news while forecasting Indian monsoon, which of the following statements is/are correct? 1. IOD phenomenon is characterised by a difference in sea surface temperature between tropical Western Indian Ocean and tropical Eastern Pacific Ocean. 2. An IOD phenomenon can influence an El Nino's impact on the monsoon." — Answer: (b) 2 only.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** IMD: India Meteorological Department | LPA: Long Period Average (868.6 mm, 1971-2020 base) | IOD: Indian Ocean Dipole | ENSO: El Niño-Southern Oscillation | MoES: Ministry of Earth Sciences | MME: Multi-Model Ensemble | SST: Sea-Surface Temperature

GS PAPER 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Legislative Privilege vs. Free Speech: Seven-Judge Bench to Hear 23-Year-Old Case

Why in news: Journalists Seema Chishti and Ajit Anjum and comedian Kunal Kamra have sought to intervene in the long-pending case on whether a House's privileges under Art. 194 can override Art. 19(1)(a); a seven-judge Constitution Bench hears it on 6 October.

Key Details:

- **Origin:** In 2003 the T.N. Assembly held a *The Hindu* editorial criticising CM J. Jayalalithaa a breach of privilege and resolved to arrest its editorial staff; the SC stayed coercive action.
- **The question:** Whether a critical speech or publication can itself be a breach of privilege, and how Arts. 194(3), 19(1)(a) and 21 are to be balanced; referred to seven judges in 2003.
- **Live instances:** Kamra faces privilege proceedings in the Maharashtra Assembly over his act 'Naya Bharat'; the PDP has moved a privilege motion against J&K's Chief and Law Secretaries.
- **Core concern:** Privileges remain uncoded, so the House is accuser and judge — critics say this chills press criticism of legislators.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Conflicting precedents:** *M.S.M. Sharma* (1959) held privileges prevail over Art. 19(1)(a); the *Keshav Singh* reference (1965) held courts can examine a House's committal of a citizen.
- **Recent shift:** *Sita Soren* (2024), a seven-judge ruling, held a legislator taking a bribe is not shielded by privilege — privilege must be essential to the House's functioning.

Parliamentary & Legislative Privileges (Articles 105 & 194)

- **What they are:** Special rights that let Parliament and State Legislatures, their members and committees work without obstruction — e.g. freedom of speech inside the House.
- **Where found:** Art. 105 covers Parliament and Art. 194 the State Legislatures; both use identical wording.
- **Speech & votes:** Nothing a member says or votes in the House can be challenged in any court (Arts. 105(2)/194(2)).
- **Other privileges:** Clause (3) leaves the rest uncoded: until a law defines them, a House has the privileges it held before the 44th Amendment, 1978.
- **Before 1978:** The text tied these privileges to those of the British House of Commons; the 44th Amendment dropped that express reference.
- **Punishing breaches:** A House can reprimand, admonish or commit to custody anyone, including a non-member, for breach of privilege or contempt.
- **Judicial review:** Courts cannot question the House's internal proceedings, but can test whether a claimed privilege exists and whether Art. 21 is violated.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 answers on parliamentary privileges, codification, and the legislature-judiciary-press balance. The 2003 case and Kamra's proceedings make strong examples of how uncoded privilege can chill dissent.

Mains value-add: The NCRWC (2002) recommended that privileges be defined and delimited by law for the free and independent functioning of Parliament — cite it to argue for codification rather than open-ended discretion.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the privileges of State Legislatures in India, consider the following statements:

1. Article 194(3) exhaustively lists all the privileges of a State Legislature.
2. The 44th Amendment Act, 1978 removed the express reference to the British House of Commons from the privilege clauses.
3. A House may punish a non-member, including a journalist, for breach of privilege or contempt.

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: clause (3) does not list privileges; they remain uncoded and are those the House held before the 44th Amendment. Statement 2 is correct: the 44th Amendment replaced the House of Commons reference with that formula. Statement 3 is correct: privilege and contempt powers extend to outsiders, as the 2003 resolution against journalists showed.

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2014, GS2: "The 'Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and its Members' as envisaged in Article 105 of the Constitution leave room for a large number of un-codified and un-enumerated privileges to continue. Assess the reasons for the absence of legal codification of the 'parliamentary privileges'. How can this problem be addressed?"

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** Art.: Article | SC: Supreme Court | PDP: Peoples Democratic Party | NCRWC: National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution | CM: Chief Minister

How the Election Commission Decides – and Why Its Members Are Immune

Why in news: Former CEC O.P. Rawat said the two ECs who objected 14 times to SIR decisions should have used their majority; the INDIA bloc plans to challenge Section 16 of the CEC & ECs Act, 2023, which bars suits against the CEC and ECs.

Key Details:

- **Majority rule:** The 2023 Act requires EC business to be transacted unanimously as far as possible, failing which the majority view prevails — the CEC has no veto, per Rawat.
- **Dissent episode:** ECs Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi formally objected to SIR decisions 14 times over 10 months, including changes to Form 6.

- **Section 16:** No court can entertain civil or criminal proceedings against a serving or former CEC/EC for acts or words in the discharge of official duty.
- **Debate:** Supporters see it as shielding the EC from vexatious suits; critics call it lifelong blanket immunity that weakens accountability.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Appointment:** Under the 2023 Act, a committee of the PM, LoP in the Lok Sabha and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the PM selects the CEC and ECs.
- **Before the Act:** *Anoop Baranwal* (2023) had set an interim panel of the PM, LoP and CJI until Parliament legislated; the Act dropped the CJI.

The CEC and Other ECs Act, 2023

- **Background:** It replaced the Election Commission (Conditions of Service of ECs and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991, after *Anoop Baranwal* (2023) asked Parliament to legislate.
- **Search committee:** Headed by the Union Law Minister with two Secretary-rank members; it shortlists five names.
- **Selection committee:** The PM (chair), the LoP or leader of the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha, and a Cabinet Minister nominated by the PM; it may pick from outside the shortlist.
- **Eligibility:** Persons who hold or have held a post equivalent to Secretary to the GoI.
- **Tenure:** Six years or until age 65, whichever is earlier; no reappointment.
- **Pay & immunity:** Salary equal to an SC judge; Section 16 bars civil or criminal suits for official acts.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 answers on the independence and internal functioning of constitutional bodies. The 14 recorded dissents and the majority rule show collegial checks; Section 16 anchors the immunity-versus-accountability debate.

Mains value-add: In *T.N. Seshan v. Union of India* (1995) the SC upheld the multi-member EC, holding the CEC and ECs equal and decisions by majority — cite it to argue collegiality is a built-in check, not a weakness.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the Election Commission of India, consider the following statements:

1. The Constitution fixes the number of Election Commissioners at three.
2. Under the CEC and Other ECs Act, 2023, the Chief Justice of India is a member of the selection committee.
3. An Election Commissioner other than the CEC can be removed from office only on the recommendation of the CEC.
4. If the CEC and ECs differ in opinion, the matter is decided by the majority.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 3 and 4 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Answer: (a) 3 and 4 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is wrong: Art. 324(2) lets the President fix the number of ECs. Statement 2 is wrong: the CJI sat only on the interim panel set by *Anoop Baranwal*; the 2023 Act uses a Cabinet Minister instead. Statement 3 is correct under the proviso to Art. 324(5). Statement 4 is correct: the Act provides for majority decisions.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2017: "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 by-elections. 3. Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognized political parties. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?" — Answer: (d) 3 only.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** EC: Election Commission / Election Commissioner | CEC: Chief Election Commissioner | SIR: Special Intensive Revision (of electoral rolls) | PM: Prime Minister | LoP: Leader of the Opposition | CJI: Chief Justice of India | SC: Supreme Court | Art.: Article | GoI: Government of India

India–EFTA TEPA at One: Trade Pact Built Around Investment

Why in news: The India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement completed one year in force on 1 October; Iceland's Ambassador highlighted cooperation beyond tariffs — geothermal, CCUS and fisheries.

Key Details:

- **The partners:** EFTA — Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland — sits outside the EU; TEPA was signed on 10 March 2024 and entered into force on 1 October 2025.
- **Distinctive feature:** India's first trade agreement with a dedicated chapter on investment and job creation: EFTA aims to raise investment by US\$100 bn over 15 years.
- **Geothermal:** At Tapri (Kinnaur, H.P.), an Indian-Icelandic venture uses ground heat to dry apples, so growers can store and time sales instead of selling at harvest lows.
- **CCUS:** Iceland's CarbFix turns over 95% of injected CO₂ to stone within two years in basalt — relevant for India's Deccan Trap basalts.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **CCUS push:** DST issued India's first CCUS R&D road map in December 2025; the Budget set aside ₹20,000 crore over five years to scale CCUS.
- **Blue economy:** Iceland uses about 90% of every cod landed (vs 40-60% in most fishing nations), turning skin, liver and bones into medical products and feed.

India-EFTA TEPA: tariff concessions at a glance

Offer by	Share of tariff lines	Share of partner's export value covered
EFTA states (to India)	92.2%	99.6% of India's exports
India (to EFTA)	82.7%	95.3% of EFTA's exports
Investment pledge	US\$100 bn over 15 years	Aim: 1 million direct jobs in India

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

- **Origin:** Created in 1960 by the Stockholm Convention as a free-trade alternative to the EEC; the U.K. was a founder but left in 1973.
- **Members today:** Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland; none is an EU member.
- **Link to the EU:** Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway join the EU single market through the EEA; Switzerland relies on bilateral agreements instead.
- **TEPA timeline:** Talks began in 2008; the deal was signed on 10 March 2024 and entered into force on 1 October 2025.
- **Investment pledge:** US\$50 bn in the first 10 years and US\$50 bn in the next five, aiming at one million direct jobs.
- **Coverage:** 14 chapters, including goods, services, investment promotion, IPR, sustainable development and dispute settlement; gold is outside tariff cuts.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (India-Europe ties, new-generation FTAs) and GS3 (investment-led trade, CCUS, geothermal). TEPA's investment-and-jobs chapter shows India linking market access to capital and job outcomes.

Mains value-add: Arctic angle: India has been an Arctic Council Observer since 2013, released its Arctic Policy in 2022 and runs the Himadri station at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard — cite it to show TEPA partners as gateways to Arctic science and governance.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), consider the following statements:

1. All four EFTA members are also members of the European Union.
2. TEPA is India's first trade agreement with a dedicated chapter on investment and job creation.
3. EFTA states' tariff concessions under TEPA cover over 99% of the value of India's exports to them.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d) 2 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is wrong: none of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland is an EU member — EFTA is a separate bloc, so TEPA complements the India-EU FTA. Statement 2 is correct: TEPA carries the first such investment-and-jobs chapter in an Indian trade deal. Statement 3 is correct: EFTA's offer covers 99.6% of India's export value.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** EFTA: European Free Trade Association | TEPA: Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement | EU: European Union | FTA: Free Trade Agreement | CCUS: Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage | DST: Department of Science and Technology | H.P.: Himachal Pradesh | EEC: European Economic Community | EEA: European Economic Area | IPR: Intellectual Property Rights

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 2

Drug-pricing loophole. DPCO 2013 caps the ceiling price of scheduled drugs but not the gap between price-to-retailer and MRP, so hospitals can buy a drug cheaply and bill the full ceiling. In a 2019 proof-of-concept, NPPA capped trade margins on 42 non-scheduled anti-cancer drugs at 30%; prices of 526 brands fell by up to 91%.

How to use: *GS2 health/governance: evidence that trade-margin rationalisation, not just ceiling prices, cuts out-of-pocket spending on essential medicines.*

Cardiff MoU (14 Sept 2026). The First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland jointly pressed for self-determination and EU re-entry. Their aims differ — Scottish independence, Irish reunification (open under the 1998 Good Friday Agreement's power-sharing model), and deeper Welsh devolution.

How to use: *GS2 comparative polity: a ready example of asymmetric devolution and identity-based federal pressures, useful against India's asymmetric arrangements.*

Validation gaps in e-challans. A CAG report tabled in the Odisha Assembly found that in 2019-24, 2,988 two-wheeler riders were fined for not wearing seat belts and 4,786 car drivers for not wearing helmets. The VAHAN database lacked validation controls to block such impossible entries.

How to use: *GS2 e-governance: shows that digitising enforcement without built-in data validation erodes public trust — pair with a 'technology is not governance' argument.*

GS PAPER 3: ECONOMY, ENERGY, SECURITY & ENVIRONMENT**CAFE-III Norms Notified: Tighter Fuel-Efficiency Targets for Cars**

Why in news: The Centre notified the third phase of CAFE norms for passenger vehicles (1 April 2027 – 31 March 2032), tightening fleet fuel-consumption targets and giving EVs a triple count.

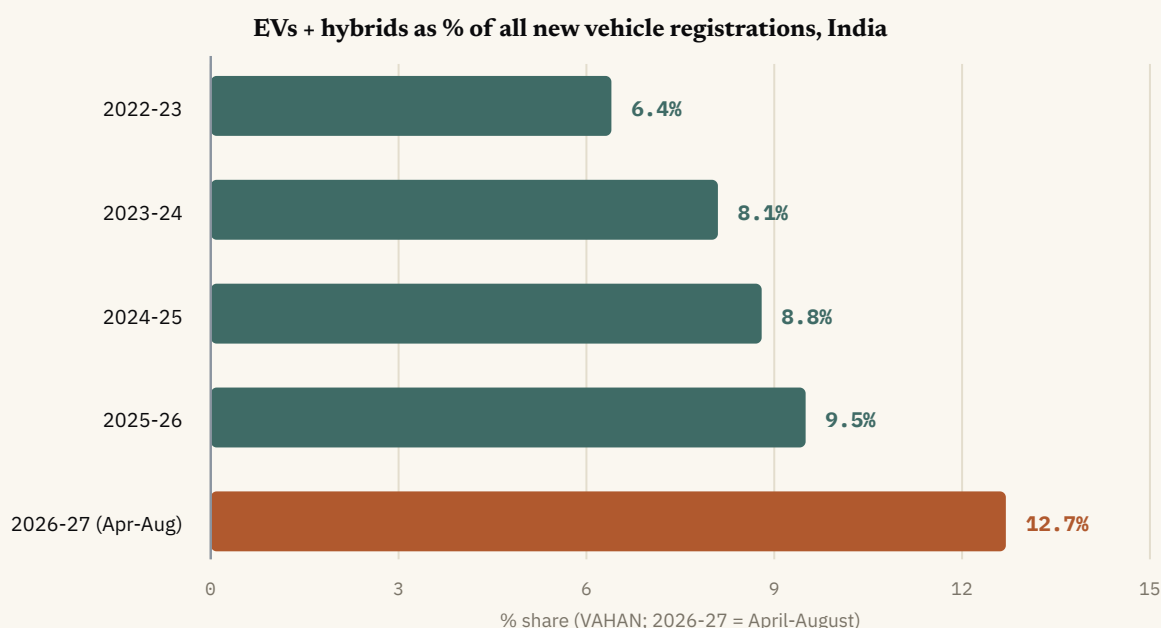
Key Details:

- **Target:** Fleet benchmark tightens from 3.996 to 3.3273 litres/100 km by 2031-32 — about 16.7% over five years, in petrol-equivalent terms.
- **Super-credits:** Each BEV counts as three vehicles in a carmaker's fleet average; hybrids, flex-fuel and biofuel vehicles get specified credits.
- **Weight & test:** Reference weight is 1,229 kg; the earlier concession for small cars up to 909 kg was removed after a split in the auto industry; testing uses the MIDC.

- **Coverage:** Applies to new passenger vehicles made in or imported into India; diesel, CNG, LPG and EV energy use is converted to petrol-equivalent.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Earlier phases:** CAFE-I (2017-18) set about 130 g CO₂/km and CAFE-II (2022-23) about 113 g CO₂/km for fleets.
- **Adoption gap:** EVs + hybrids are 12.7% of registrations in 2026-27 so far, but below 5% if three-wheelers are excluded — cars still lag.



CAFE Norms

- **Origin:** The idea began in the U.S. in 1975, after the 1973 oil crisis, to cut fuel use by regulating fleet averages.
- **Legal basis in India:** Fuel-consumption standards are notified by the Ministry of Power under the EC Act, 2001; BEE is the nodal technical agency.
- **Phases:** CAFE-I from April 2017 (~130 g CO₂/km), CAFE-II from April 2022 (~113 g CO₂/km), CAFE-III for 2027-32.
- **Coverage:** M1-category passenger vehicles (up to nine seats including the driver) below 3,500 kg gross vehicle weight.
- **How it works:** Each manufacturer's sales-weighted fleet average, not each model, must meet the target; super-credits reward EVs and hybrids.
- **Not to confuse:** Bharat Stage norms cap pollutants such as NO_x and PM under the CMVR, 1989 (MoRTH); CAFE targets fuel use and CO₂.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (energy efficiency, transport decarbonisation, EV policy). Fleet-average norms with super-credits show standards being used to steer industry, but critics warn credits can replace real electrification.

Mains value-add: India's updated NDC (2022) commits to cutting the emissions intensity of GDP by 45% by 2030 from 2005 levels — cite it to link vehicle-efficiency standards to a binding international climate pledge.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) norms in India, consider the following statements:

1. They are framed under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001, with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency as the technical agency.
2. Compliance is tested model by model; a manufacturer's fleet average has no bearing.
3. Under the third phase, each battery electric vehicle counts as more than one vehicle in a manufacturer's fleet calculation.

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: CAFE is an energy-efficiency standard under the EC Act, 2001 (BEE) — unlike Bharat Stage pollutant norms under motor-vehicle rules. Statement 2 is wrong: 'corporate average' means the sales-weighted fleet average is tested, so efficient models offset inefficient ones. Statement 3 is correct: each BEV counts as three vehicles.

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2023, GS3: "The adoption of electric vehicles is rapidly growing worldwide. How do electric vehicles contribute to reducing carbon emissions and what are the key benefits they offer compared to traditional combustion engine vehicles?"

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** CAFE: Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency | BEV: Battery Electric Vehicle | EV: Electric Vehicle | MIDC: Modified Indian Driving Cycle | BEE: Bureau of Energy Efficiency | EC Act: Energy Conservation Act | NDC: Nationally Determined Contribution | CNG/LPG: Compressed Natural Gas / Liquefied Petroleum Gas | CMVR: Central Motor Vehicles Rules | MoRTH: Ministry of Road Transport and Highways | NOx/PM: Nitrogen Oxides / Particulate Matter

Green Energy Corridor Phase III: ₹1.86 Lakh Crore for Grids and Batteries

Why in news: The Union Cabinet approved GEC-III (also called PM-DHARA) to integrate up to 135 GW of RE into State grids by 2032-33, with the scheme's first dedicated battery-storage component.

Key Details:

- **Outlay split:** ₹1,36,378 crore for InSTS and ₹50,000 crore for 50 GWh of BESS; CFA of ₹54,082 crore.
- **Problem addressed:** Curtailment — grid operators cutting RE output to keep the grid stable when lines or balancing capacity fall short.
- **Delivery model:** STUs implement; new projects use tariff-based competitive bidding and brownfield work uses cost-plus, with private transmission providers on a BOOM basis.
- **Past hurdles:** Earlier phases were slowed by right-of-way, forest clearances and GIB habitat overlap in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Why storage:** Solar peaks at midday while demand peaks in the evening; BESS shifts power across hours and steadies frequency.
- **Scale jump:** GEC-III's outlay is over eight times GEC-I and GEC-II combined (see table).

Green Energy Corridor: three phases of intra-State transmission

Phase	Approved	Outlay	Scope	Central support
GEC-I	2015	₹10,141 cr	Intra-State lines in 8 RE-rich States	40% grant
GEC-II	Jan 2022	₹12,031 cr	~20 GW RE in 7 States	33% CFA
GEC-III	Sept 2026	₹1,86,405 cr	135 GW RE + 50 GWh BESS, FY27-FY33	₹54,082 cr (~29%)

The Green Energy Corridor (GEC)

- **Origin:** Based on POWERGRID's 2012 'Green Energy Corridors' report on evacuating large-scale RE; the intra-State component (GEC-I) was approved in 2015.
- **Nodal ministry:** MNRE runs the intra-State scheme; STUs build the lines, while POWERGRID handled the inter-State part.
- **GEC-I funding:** 40% central grant, 40% soft loan from Germany's KfW and 20% State equity, across eight RE-rich States.
- **GEC-II:** Approved in January 2022 for ~20 GW in seven States (Gujarat, H.P., Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, U.P.), with 33% CFA.
- **GEC-III:** 135 GW of RE plus 50 GWh of BESS during FY27-FY33; it is the first phase with a storage component.
- **Support systems:** REMCs were set up under the GEC to forecast and schedule variable wind and solar power.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (energy security, infrastructure, RE integration). Shows the energy-transition bottleneck shifting from generation to transmission and storage; pair with the GIB conflict for a sustainability angle.

Mains value-add: At COP26 (2021) India pledged 500 GW of non-fossil capacity by 2030 under its 'Panchamrit' — cite it to argue that transmission and storage, not panels alone, decide whether that target delivers usable power.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Integrating renewable energy at scale is as much a transmission and storage challenge as a generation one. In the light of the third phase of the Green Energy Corridor, examine the constraints in evacuating renewable power in India and suggest measures to address them. (250 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2013, GS3: "Write a note on India's green energy corridor to alleviate the problem of conventional energy."

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** GEC: Green Energy Corridor | RE: Renewable Energy | InSTS: Intra-State Transmission System | BESS: Battery Energy Storage System | CFA: Central Financial Assistance | STU: State Transmission Utility | BOOM: Build-Own-Operate-Maintain | GIB: Great Indian Bustard | PM-DHARA: scheme branding of GEC-III | POWERGRID: Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd | MNRE: Ministry of New and Renewable Energy | KfW: German state development bank | REMC: Renewable Energy Management Centre | H.P./U.P.: Himachal Pradesh / Uttar Pradesh

Rabi MSP 2027-28: Oilseeds and Lentil Get the Big Hikes

Why in news: The CCEA raised MSPs for all six mandated rabi crops for 2027-28: safflower got the largest rise (₹675 to ₹7,215/quintal) while wheat rose just ₹25 to ₹2,610.

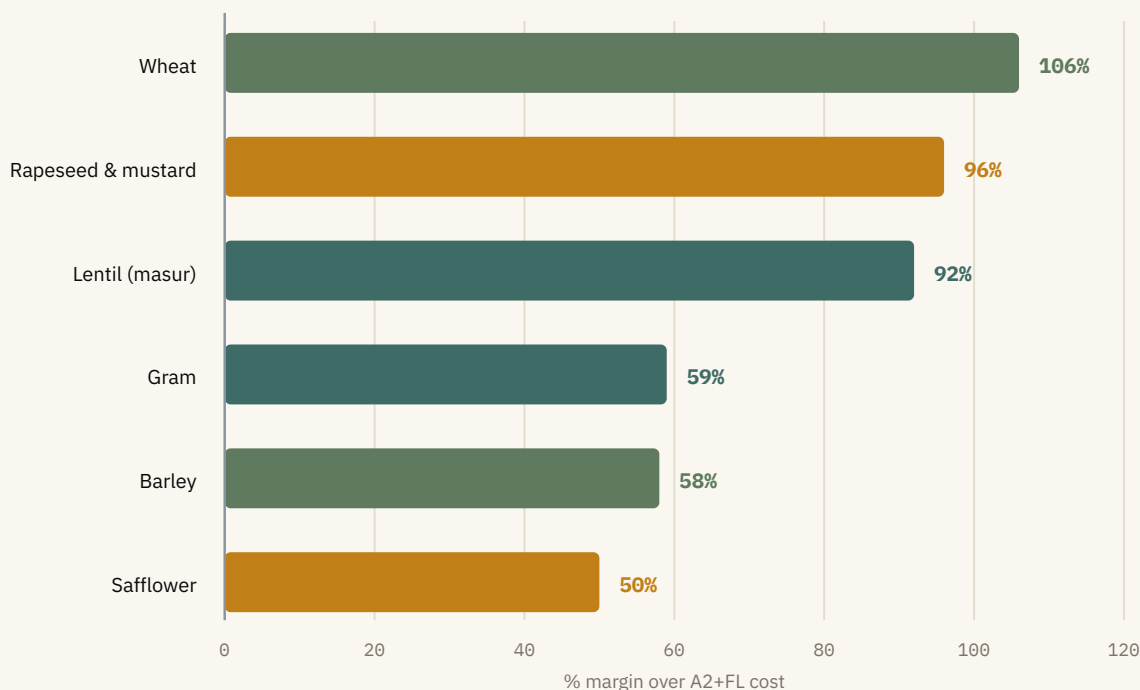
Story so far: The 30 Sept Brief covered the cut in basic customs duty on crude edible oils (10% to 5%) and NMEO-Oilseeds. New today: the rabi MSP gives oilseeds and lentil the largest increases, nudging sowing away from wheat.

Key Details:

- **Increases:** Rapeseed & mustard +₹413 (to ₹6,613), lentil +₹390 (₹7,390), barley +₹136 (₹2,286), gram +₹83 (₹5,958) per quintal.
- **Margins:** MSPs carry 50% to 106% margin over the all-India weighted average cost of production; wheat has the highest margin despite the smallest hike.
- **Policy intent:** Larger hikes for oilseeds and pulses aim at crop diversification and lower import dependence on edible oils and pulses.
- **Benchmark:** Since 2018-19, MSP is set at least 1.5 times the A2+FL cost of production.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Outlay:** Estimated financial implication of the rabi MSP: about ₹90,962 crore.
- **Procurement record:** Wheat procurement from 2014-15 to 2025-26 totalled 3,715 lakh tonnes; MSP paid across six rabi crops was ₹8.36 lakh crore.

Rabi MSP 2027-28: margin over all-India weighted cost of production**Minimum Support Price & the CACP**

- **What MSP is:** A price at which the government stands ready to buy a crop, giving farmers a floor against price crashes at harvest.
- **Who recommends:** The CACP, an attached office of the Agriculture Ministry set up in 1965, recommends MSPs; the CCEA takes the final decision.
- **Coverage:** MSPs are announced for 22 mandated crops — 14 kharif, 6 rabi, plus copra and jute — and an FRP for sugarcane.
- **Cost concepts:** A2 covers paid-out costs; A2+FL adds imputed family labour; C2 also adds rent and interest on owned land and capital.
- **Legal status:** MSP is an administrative policy, not a statutory right; actual procurement is concentrated in wheat and paddy.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (MSP, crop diversification, edible-oil self-reliance). The contrast between wheat's ₹25 rise and oilseeds' large hikes shows MSP being used as a signal for cropping patterns.

Mains value-add: The Swaminathan-led National Commission on Farmers (2006) recommended MSP at least 50% above the weighted average cost of production; farm groups read this as C2, while the Centre uses A2+FL — cite it to frame the MSP-adequacy debate.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the MSP for Rabi Marketing Season 2027-28:

1. Wheat received the largest absolute increase among the mandated rabi crops.
2. MSPs are recommended by the CACP and approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.
3. MSPs are fixed at least 1.5 times the all-India weighted average A2+FL cost of production.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 2 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is wrong: wheat got the smallest rise (₹25); safflower got the largest (₹675) — a high margin over cost (106%) is not the same as a large hike. Statement 2 is correct: CACP recommends and the CCEA decides. Statement 3 is correct: the benchmark is 1.5 times A2+FL, not C2.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2020: "Consider the following statements: 1. In the case of all cereals, pulses and oil-seeds, the procurement at Minimum Support Price (MSP) is unlimited in any State/UT of India. 2. In the case of cereals and pulses, the MSP is fixed in any State/UT at a level to which the market price will never rise. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?" — Answer: (d) Neither 1 nor 2.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** MSP: Minimum Support Price | CCEA: Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs | CACP: Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices | A2+FL: paid-out cost plus imputed family labour | FRP: Fair and Remunerative Price | NMEO: National Mission on Edible Oils

Household Debt at 45.5% of GDP: Financing Today Against Tomorrow

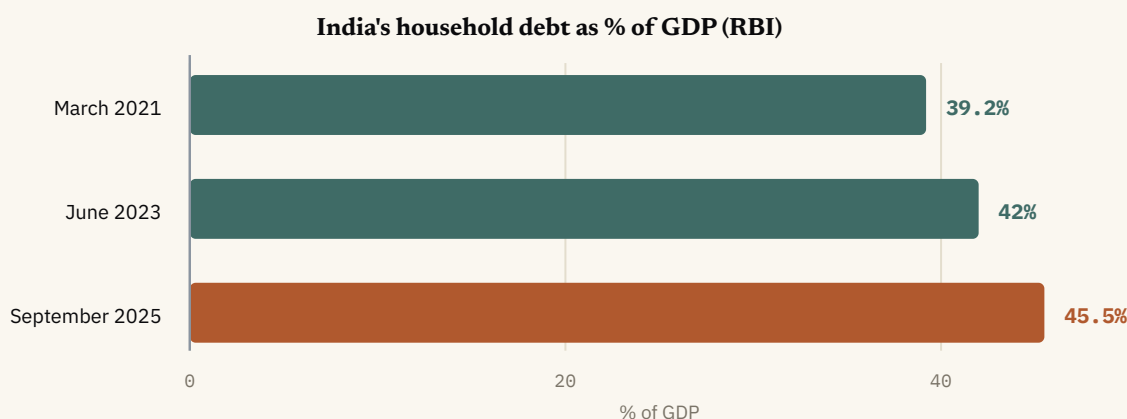
Why in news: Household debt rose to 45.5% of GDP by September 2025 (RBI), from 39.2% in March 2021, raising the question of whether borrowing reflects financial deepening or income stress.

Key Details:

- **Shift in model:** India's household balance sheet, long built on savings, is tilting towards credit — cards, personal loans, BNPL and app-based lending.
- **Savings picture:** Household net financial savings recovered to about 6% of GDP in 2024-25 from 5.2% in 2023-24, so there is no across-the-board collapse.
- **Why it matters:** Borrowing to build assets (homes, education) differs from borrowing to fund food, health or rent when incomes fall short.
- **Macro risk:** Credit-led consumption lifts demand briefly, but rising debt service later squeezes disposable income and spending.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Comparison:** At 45.5% of GDP, India's household leverage is still modest compared with several emerging-market economies.
- **Distribution:** A salaried borrower can service EMIs predictably; informal and casual workers with uneven incomes face far higher repayment risk.



Household Savings in National Accounts

- **Who counts:** The 'household sector' covers individuals plus non-government, non-corporate enterprises (proprietorships, partnerships) and non-profits serving households.
- **Two forms:** Gross household savings = financial savings (deposits, shares, insurance, pension funds, currency) + physical savings (housing, gold, other assets).
- **Net financial savings:** Gross financial savings minus financial liabilities (bank, NBFC and HFC loans); rising debt lowers it.
- **Data sources:** The NSO (MoSPI) publishes estimates in National Accounts Statistics; the RBI tracks household debt and assets.
- **Why it matters:** Household financial savings are the economy's main source of funds for government borrowing and corporate investment.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (savings-investment, consumption, financial stability, inclusive growth). Separate productive from distress credit, and link debt-financed health and education spending to gaps in social protection.

Mains value-add: Hyman Minsky's financial instability hypothesis holds that long periods of stability encourage borrowers to move from 'hedge' to 'speculative' to 'Ponzi' finance — cite it to argue that unsecured-credit booms need watching even when headline leverage looks moderate.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Rising household debt can signal either financial deepening or income distress. Critically examine with reference to recent trends in household borrowing and savings in India. (250 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2022: "With reference to the Indian economy, consider the following statements: 1. A share of the household financial savings goes towards government borrowings. 2. Dated securities issued at market-related rates in auctions form a large component of internal debt. Which of the above statements is/are correct?" — Answer: (c) Both 1 and 2.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** RBI: Reserve Bank of India | GDP: Gross Domestic Product | BNPL: Buy-Now-Pay-Later | EMI: Equated Monthly Instalment | NBFC: Non-Banking Financial Company | HFC: Housing Finance Company | NSO: National Statistics Office | MoSPI: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Maritime Drug Trafficking: ₹3,000-Crore Haul Seized off Lakshadweep

Why in news: The Indian Coast Guard and Gujarat ATS seized 526 kg of methamphetamine and heroin (valued at over ₹3,000 crore) from an Iranian boat in the Arabian Sea and detained five Pakistani crew.

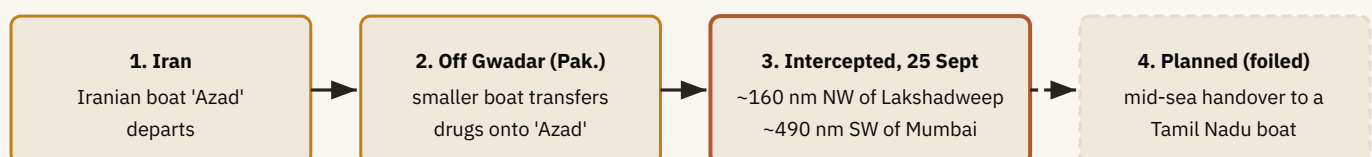
Key Details:

- **Operation:** Launched on 14 September on intelligence inputs; the boat 'Azad' was intercepted on 25 September after about 10 days of sea-air surveillance.
- **Network:** The consignment allegedly belonged to a network run by Haji Salim; a Nigerian national had met a wanted Gujarat-based accused to plan the smuggling.
- **Modus operandi:** Mid-sea transfers, satellite internet via a Starlink device and hawala funding — the sea route is used to avoid land checkpoints.
- **Policy push:** The Union Home Minister set 31 Dec 2029 as the deadline for a drug-free Punjab and urged regular NCORD meetings.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Source region:** Heroin and methamphetamine on this route originate in the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan).
- **Coordination:** NCORD, set up by MHA in 2016 and restructured into four tiers in 2019, links central agencies and States on drug enforcement.

How the 526-kg consignment moved (as described by Gujarat ATS)



Enablers: Starlink terminal for internet at sea · hawala-routed advance funds · route avoiding the Gujarat coast

Response: ICG sea-air surveillance on Gujarat ATS and central intelligence inputs · 5 Pakistani crew held

Schematic diagram, not to scale

The NDPS Act, 1985

- **Purpose:** The main law against narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; it bans their production, sale, transport and use except for medical or scientific purposes.
- **Tiered punishment:** Penalties depend on quantity: small, intermediate or commercial; commercial quantities attract 10-20 years' rigorous imprisonment.
- **Agencies:** The NCB, constituted under the Act in 1986, coordinates enforcement and works under the MHA.
- **Nodal ministry:** The Department of Revenue (Finance Ministry) administers the Act; later amendments added forfeiture of illegally acquired property.
- **Treaty basis:** The Act and its amendments give effect to India's obligations under the three UN drug conventions (1961, 1971, 1988).

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (internal security, coastal security, narco-terror links, role of technology in organised crime). The Starlink-hawala-mid-sea pattern shows convergence of drug trafficking with terror and money-laundering networks.

Mains value-add: Article 47 directs the State to endeavour to prohibit the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drinks and drugs injurious to health — cite it to ground drug control in the Directive Principles, not just policing.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to drug trafficking and India's legal framework, consider the following statements:

1. The 'Golden Crescent' comprises Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.
2. The 'Golden Triangle' comprises Myanmar, Laos and Thailand.
3. The Narcotics Control Bureau functions under the Ministry of Finance.

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: Statements 1 and 2 are correct: these are the two main illicit opium-producing regions flanking India. Statement 3 is wrong: the NCB functions under the MHA. The common confusion arises because the Department of Revenue (Finance Ministry) is the nodal administrator of the NDPS Act.

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2018, GS3: "India's proximity to two of the world's biggest illicit opium-growing states has enhanced her internal security concerns. Explain the linkages between drug trafficking and other illicit activities such as gunrunning, money laundering and human trafficking. What counter-measures should be taken to prevent the same?"

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** ATS: Anti-Terrorism Squad | ICG: Indian Coast Guard | nm: nautical miles | NCORD: Narco Coordination Centre | MHA: Ministry of Home Affairs | NDPS: Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances | NCB: Narcotics Control Bureau | UN: United Nations

SC Rules Out a Total Firecracker Ban, Backs 'Next-Generation' Green Crackers

Why in news: The SC refused a nationwide ban on firecrackers for Deepavali and accepted CSIR-NEERI's suggestion of a 'limited and conditional relaxation' for next-generation green crackers.

Key Details:

- **Court's stance:** A total ban 'will hurt certain sentiments', but no 24-hour bursting anywhere; the Bench will consider fixed time windows.
- **Specifications:** CSIR-NEERI prescribed shell size, shell number and bursting time; crackers must stay within 125 dB(AI)/145 dB(C) peak noise and emission limits.
- **Composition:** Next-generation joined green crackers are barium-free and made only by licensed manufacturers to approved formulations.
- **Pending tests:** CPCB and the Centre got more time to complete barium and decibel tests on joined crackers.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Performance:** Tests show about 30% lower emissions than conventional joined crackers; smaller shells cut solid waste by 4% to 32%.

- **Trade-off:** Bursting duration rises about five times — longer but cleaner and quieter displays.

Green Crackers

- **Origin:** Developed by CSIR-NEERI (Nagpur) after the SC's 2018 *Arjun Gopal* order allowed only reduced-emission crackers.
- **Variants:** SWAS (safe water releaser), STAR (safe thermite cracker) and SAFAL (safe minimal aluminium).
- **Key features:** No barium nitrate, smaller shells, dust-suppressing additives and about 30% lower particulate emissions.
- **Identification:** Genuine green crackers carry a green logo and a QR code for verification.
- **Licensing:** PESO, under DPIIT (Commerce Ministry), licenses manufacture under the Explosives Act, 1884 and Explosives Rules, 2008.
- **Noise limit:** Under 1999 EP Act rules: 125 dB(AI) or 145 dB(C) peak, measured 4 m from the bursting point.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (air and noise pollution, science-led regulation) and GS2 (judicial balancing of Art. 21 against cultural practice). A good example of court policy built on technical standards rather than outright prohibition.

Mains value-add: In *Arjun Gopal v. Union of India* (2018) the SC allowed only green or reduced-emission crackers and set time windows for bursting — cite it as the root of the regulate-not-ban approach the Court has now reaffirmed.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to 'green crackers' developed by CSIR-NEERI, consider the following statements:

1. They are designed to be completely emission-free.
2. They avoid barium compounds and use a reduced shell size.
3. Noise limits for firecrackers in India are prescribed under rules made under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

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: 'green' means reduced emissions (about 30% less), not zero emissions. Statement 2 is correct: barium-free formulation and smaller shells are core features. Statement 3 is correct: firecracker noise limits (125 dB(AI)/145 dB(C) peak) were notified under EP Act rules in 1999.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2016: "In the cities of our country, which among the following atmospheric gases are normally considered in calculating the value of Air Quality Index? 1. Carbon dioxide 2. Carbon monoxide 3. Nitrogen dioxide 4. Sulfur dioxide 5. Methane" — Answer: (b) 2, 3 and 4 only.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SC: Supreme Court | CSIR-NEERI: Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – National Environmental Engineering Research Institute | CPCB: Central Pollution Control Board | dB: decibel | Art.: Article | EP Act: Environment (Protection) Act | PESO: Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation | DPIIT: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade | QR: Quick Response (code)

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 3

Industrial output, August 2026. IIP growth quickened to 8% (new series) — the second-fastest since April 2024 — with manufacturing near 9% and consumer durables at 11.1%. April-August growth was 6.8%, and the new IIP now largely tracks the Index of Core Industries.

How to use: GS3 growth answers: evidence that domestic consumption is joining exports as a growth driver ahead of the festive quarter.

Fiscal deficit, end-August. The Centre's fiscal deficit reached ₹7.1 lakh crore, 41.9% of the 2026-27 target (38.1% a year ago), driven by higher fertiliser subsidy; capex stood at 41.7% of BE.

How to use: GS3 fiscal answers: shows subsidy pressure on deficit targets while capex keeps pace — useful for quality-of-expenditure arguments.

Value-chain finance gap. Agriculture and allied GVA was ₹48.8 lakh crore in 2023-24 against institutional credit of ₹20 lakh crore. Only 10-12% of farm produce is processed in India, against 35-45% in East and Southeast Asia (Sanjay Agarwal, former Agriculture Secretary).

How to use: *GS3 agriculture: supports the case for warehouse-receipt and receivables finance beyond crop loans to raise farm incomes.*

Gulmarg gondola review. An inquiry into the 25 May breakdown, which left 300 tourists stranded mid-air for six hours, recommended an extra rescue bull wheel and training ski guides, photographers and pony owners in vertical rescue as first responders.

How to use: *GS3 disaster management: an example of community-based first response in line with the Sendai Framework's 'whole-of-society' approach.*

Voluntary AI safety accord (U.S.). President Trump and six frontier-AI firms signed a non-binding 'White House Accord on Super Intelligence' committing to internal monitoring, external evaluations and board oversight. Experts flagged the absence of enforcement.

How to use: *GS3 S&T/ethics of technology: illustrates the limits of voluntary self-regulation in AI governance.*

GS PAPER 4: ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

Homeless Voters and the Ethics of Last-Mile Service

Why in news: The NGO Centre for Holistic Development, which ran two-day enrolment camps for Delhi's homeless, wrote to the Chief Electoral Officer after only 747 applications came in, flagging lapses by field officials.

Key Details:

- **The effort:** Camps on 23-24 September at 130 DUSIB shelters across 43 constituencies — the first such drive in five years, per CHD's Sunil Kumar Aledia.
- **Rule vs practice:** The EC's Manual on Electoral Rolls, 2023 exempts homeless applicants from documentary address proof, yet BLOs at the camps were unaware and asked for it.
- **Human face:** Virendra Kaur, 53, lost her papers in a fire; her only ID, a voter card, is misspelt and unusable for enrolment.
- **GS4 value:** A textbook case of compassion towards the weaker sections — one of UPSC's named foundational values — and of empathy in service delivery.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Scale:** CHD estimates Delhi had over 10,000 homeless voters before the SIR; Census 2011 counted about 17.7 lakh houseless people nationwide.
- **Barriers:** Low BLO awareness, weak IEC outreach, language barriers, low literacy and mistrust of formal processes.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS4 answers on compassion, empathy and citizen-centric service delivery, and on the gap between rules and frontline conduct. The civil-society role also fits GS2 answers on inclusive electoral participation.

Mains value-add: Gandhi's talisman — when in doubt, 'recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man... and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him' — cite it as the ethical test frontline officials should apply.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Rules can be inclusive on paper and still exclude in practice. Discuss what 'compassion towards the weaker sections' demands of a frontline public servant beyond compliance with rules, with reference to the enrolment of homeless voters. (150 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2022, GS4: "Apart from intellectual competency and moral qualities, empathy and compassion are some of the other vital attributes that facilitate the civil servants to be more competent in tackling the crucial issues or taking critical decisions. Explain with suitable illustrations."

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation | CHD: Centre for Holistic Development | DUSIB: Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board | EC: Election Commission | BLO: Booth Level Officer | IEC: Information, Education and Communication | SIR: Special Intensive Revision

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 4

'Toeing the line is one thing but bending over is another.' A two-judge SC Bench rebuked U.P. Police for filing a molestation FIR against an 'unknown person' though the accused was caught on the spot.

How to use: *GS4 answers on impartiality and non-partisanship of civil servants and the police; pair with Prakash Singh (2006) on insulating police from political pressure.*

Candour before courts. The Gujarat HC rebuked journalist Ravi Nair for not disclosing a parallel bail plea, holding a party must disclose all material facts 'even if such facts are adverse to its case'.

How to use: *GS4 integrity answers: truthfulness includes disclosing inconvenient facts, not just avoiding false ones.*