

THE DAILY UPSC BRIEF

HIGH-YIELD DAILY SOURCES & ANALYSIS | 31 OCTOBER 2026

TODAY'S COVERAGE

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PRELIMS POINTERS — TODAY IN ONE LINE EACH

1. **Siang Upper Multipurpose Project** — 11,200 MW hydro project in Arunachal Pradesh; Adi-led protests turned violent on 23 October 2026.
2. **Article 371H** — special provisions for Arunachal Pradesh in the Constitution, in addition to the general Article 371 framework for other States.
3. **Devolution to States** — ₹6,99,409 crore devolved to State Governments up to September 2026, ₹67,658 crore more than the previous year (PIB, 30 Oct 2026).
4. **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023** — replaced the Indian Penal Code, 1860 from 1 July 2024; the IT Act, 2000 continues alongside it for cyber offences.
5. **Article 243D** — reservation of seats for SCs and STs in Panchayats; OBC reservation at the panchayat level is enabled by State law under clause (6).

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 & Disasters

Cyclone Arnab and Odisha's Post-Monsoon Flood Risk

Why in news: Cyclone Arnab crossed the Andhra Pradesh coast on 28 October 2026, and its rain then triggered floods and landslides across southern Odisha.

Story so far: The Brief covered the October–December cyclone season on 24 Oct 2026 (Bay of Bengal, IMD classification). New today: that outlook has now played out as a very severe cyclonic storm landfall on the Andhra–Odisha coast, with flood and landslide impacts in Odisha.

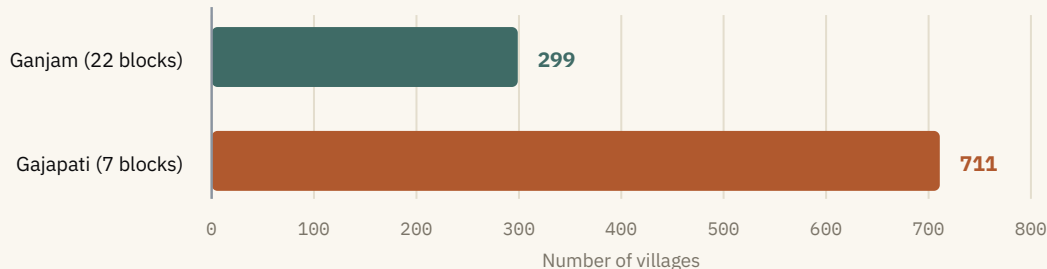
Key Details:

- **Landfall:** The storm crossed the Andhra Pradesh and Yanam coasts between 2 am and 8 am on 28 October, about 20 km ENE of Narsapur (IMD).
- **Intensity:** It was a very severe cyclonic storm with sustained winds of 125–135 km/h and gusts to 150 km/h, weakening to a severe cyclonic storm by 8:30 am.
- **Rain and floods:** Gajapati recorded 249.9 mm of rain in the 24 hours ending 8.30 am on 28 October, and rivers rose above danger marks by 30 October.
- **Human cost:** At least three people died in landslides, including a nine-month-old baby in Kandhamal, and nearly a dozen landslides hit Ganjam, Gajapati and Kandhamal.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Shelters:** More than 100,000 people were moved from high-risk areas to cyclone shelters before landfall, and about 2,200 pregnant women were moved to hospitals.
- **Affected villages:** Ganjam had 299 affected villages across 22 blocks and Gajapati had 711 across seven blocks (state figures as reported).
- **Response:** 313 rescue teams were deployed statewide, and NDRF and ODRAF teams delivered food by boat; helicopters airdropped food in Ganjam.

Affected villages in the two worst-hit districts (reported, 30 Oct 2026)



Prelims angle: Rushikulya, which drains into the Bay of Bengal in Ganjam, is a river whose floods were central to the Gajapati and Ganjam damage reports.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use the Arnab episode to show how a post-monsoon cyclone's wind damage gives way to river and landslide floods, and why early warning must extend beyond the coast.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	A post-monsoon cyclone's threat is often greatest after landfall, through rain-driven rivers and slopes, not only through wind.
BODY	Physical (Bay of Bengal low-pressure systems; hilly catchments of Eastern Ghats); social (shelter access, pregnant women, villages cut off); administrative (NDRF, ODRAF, airdrops).
WAY FORWARD	Impact-based forecasting for rivers and slopes, village-level evacuation plans and early relief logistics for cut-off blocks.

Mains value-add: The Disaster Management Act, 2005 (Section 2(d)) defines a disaster as a catastrophe causing widespread destruction, the trigger for the NDMA and SDMA framework.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ MODERATE

Q. With reference to rivers of Odisha, consider the following statements:

1. The Rushikulya river drains into the Bay of Bengal in Ganjam district.
2. The Mahanadi river drains into the Bay of Bengal.
3. The Chilika lagoon is a freshwater lake fed only by the Mahanadi.

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: both rivers drain into the Bay of Bengal. Statement 3 is a trap: Chilika is a brackish lagoon fed by several rivers, not a freshwater lake fed by the Mahanadi alone.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** IMD: India Meteorological Department | NDRF: National Disaster Response Force | ODRAF: Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force | km/h: kilometres per hour | mm: millimetres

GS PAPER 2: Polity & Governance

Local Body Polls and the 50% Reservation Ceiling: SC on Maharashtra

Why in news: The Supreme Court allowed Maharashtra's remaining local body polls to proceed, while the OBC quota and the 50% ceiling await a final decision.

Story so far: The Brief covered the same 50% ceiling on 10 Oct 2026 (MP OBC and A.P. BC quotas) and on 22 Oct 2026 (SC on A.P. civic nominations). New today: Maharashtra's remaining polls may proceed under an interim arrangement, while the OBC percentage is yet to be decided.

Key Details:

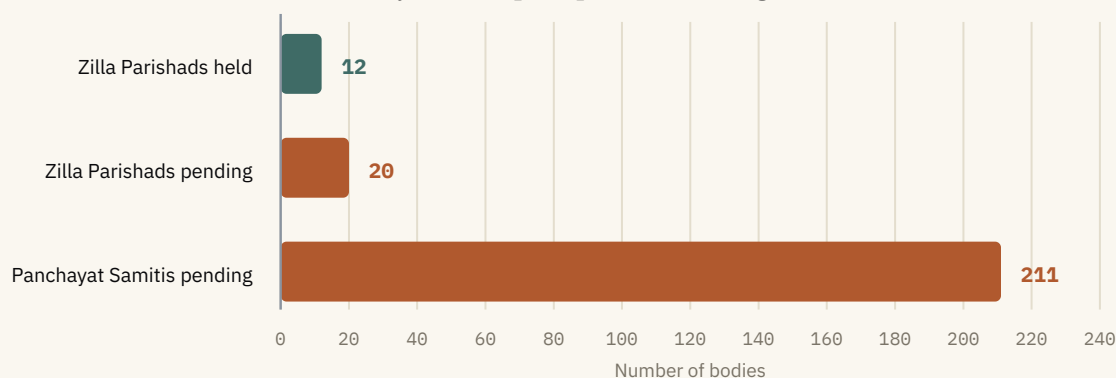
- **Status:** Polls have been held in 12 Zilla Parishads; 20 Zilla Parishads and 211 Panchayat Samitis are still to vote.
- **Interim order:** The CJI said remaining elections may go ahead under the existing interim arrangement, subject to the final determination.
- **Pending question:** The OBC reservation percentage is yet to be fixed, and the aggregate cap of 50% depends on that outcome.
- **Ceiling:** The 50% limit on reservation was laid down in Indra Sawhney (1992) for public posts, and the courts apply the same ceiling to local-body quotas.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Constitution:** Article 243D provides reservation for SCs and STs in Panchayats; Article 243T does the same for Municipalities.
- **Backward classes:** Clause (6) of Article 243D allows the State to reserve seats for backward classes by law, subject to the ceiling.

- **Electoral bar:** Article 243O bars courts from interfering in panchayat electoral matters, except through an election petition.

Maharashtra local bodies yet to complete polls (SC hearing, 29 Oct 2026)



Reservation in Local Bodies and the 50% Ceiling

- **Basis:** Articles 243D and 243T let States reserve seats for SCs, STs and, by State law, backward classes in local bodies.
- **Ceiling:** Indra Sawhney (1992) fixed 50% as the general limit on reservation for public posts; courts apply the same limit to local-body quotas.
- **Triple test:** Per Vikas Kishanrao Gawali (2021), a State must set up a dedicated backward-classes commission, quantify the quota, and keep the total within 50%.
- **Not to confuse:** Reservation in Lok Sabha and Assemblies for SCs and STs is under Articles 330 and 332, not Article 243D.

Prelims angle: Article 243O is the bar on courts interfering in panchayat electoral matters, which is often confused with Article 329(b), the parallel bar for Parliament and Assembly elections.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Treat the 50% cap as a constitutional limit whose exact contours are still being decided in the courts, and link it to federalism, social justice and electoral integrity.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	The 50% ceiling is a judicially evolved limit on reservation, now tested in local bodies where delay has become the bigger harm.
BODY	Constitutional (Arts 243D, 243O); legal (Indra Sawhney; triple test); governance (overdue local polls); social justice (OBC representation).
WAY FORWARD	A dedicated, data-based backward-classes commission, fixed election calendars and a clear final ruling on the ceiling.

Mains value-add: Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992): reservation beyond 50% is an exception that must be justified by extraordinary circumstances, not a routine rule.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ MODERATE

Q. With reference to local body elections in India, consider the following statements:

1. Article 243D provides for reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Panchayats.
2. Reservation for backward classes in Panchayats is mandatory under Article 243D.
3. Article 243O bars courts from interfering in panchayat electoral matters except through an election petition.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct: Article 243D reserves seats for SCs and STs. Statement 2 is wrong: clause (6) only permits the State to reserve for backward classes by law, so it is not mandatory. Statement 3 is correct: Article 243O is the electoral-bar provision.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SC: Supreme Court | OBC: Other Backward Classes | ZP: Zilla Parishad | CJI: Chief Justice of India

GS PAPER 3: Economy & Internal Security

Digital Arrest Scams: SC Takes Up the Issue on Its Own Motion

Why in news: The Supreme Court, on its own motion, reviewed the spread of digital arrest scams and sought state-level status reports and suggestions.

Key Details:

- **Bench:** The Supreme Court (CJI Surya Kant, Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana) heard the suo motu matter on 29 October 2026.
- **Amicus:** The amicus curiae said inputs show the scams continue, including one in which a woman lost ₹2.5 crore in the preceding week.
- **Directions sought:** The Court sought a status report and suggestions from State police on curbing such frauds.
- **Victim psychology:** The CJI asked why victims do not realise that they are being duped, pointing to the manipulation at the heart of the scam.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Modus operandi:** Fraudsters pose as police, CBI or other officials, claim the victim is under digital arrest, and extract money through online transfers.
- **Legal provisions:** Offences such as cheating by personation using a computer resource are punishable under Section 66D of the IT Act, 2000.
- **Criminal law:** The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 has replaced the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and governs the substantive cheating offences.

Cyber Frauds and the Legal Framework

- **Statute:** The IT Act, 2000 covers unauthorised access (Section 43) and cheating by personation using a computer resource (Section 66D).
- **Criminal code:** BNS, 2023 replaced the IPC from 1 July 2024 and covers cheating and extortion offences.
- **Mule accounts:** Bank accounts used to route fraud proceeds are called mule accounts; banks and RBI guidelines seek to detect them.
- **Not to confuse:** Digital arrest is a social-engineering fraud; the arrest itself is not a legal power of any investigative agency.

Prelims angle: Section 66D of the IT Act, 2000 punishes cheating by personation using a computer resource, a frequent statement-based MCQ on cyber law.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Link the rise of cyber frauds to digital public infrastructure, awareness, and the enforcement gap between states and the Centre.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	Digital arrest scams show how social engineering can defeat the technical safeguards of banking and telecom networks.
BODY	Legal (IT Act S.66D; BNS cheating); enforcement (State police capacity); financial (mule accounts); social (victim awareness).
WAY FORWARD	Coordinated State-Centre enforcement, bank-level mule detection and public awareness campaigns on impersonation tactics.

Mains value-add: Section 66D, IT Act, 2000: cheating by personation using a computer resource, punishable with imprisonment up to three years and a fine of up to one lakh rupees.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ EASY-MODERATE

Q. With reference to cyber offences in India, consider the following statements:

1. Section 43 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 deals with penalty for unauthorised access to a computer resource.
2. Section 66D of the Information Technology Act, 2000 deals with cheating by personation using a computer resource.
3. Only the Central Government can initiate prosecution for cyber fraud under the IT Act, 2000.

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: Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Statement 3 is a trap: prosecution is not reserved to the Centre; State police investigate and prosecute most cyber frauds, which is why the Court asked for State reports.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SC: Supreme Court | IT Act: Information Technology Act | BNS: Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita | CJI: Chief Justice of India

Beneficial Ownership in AIFs and FPIs: SC Declines Mandatory Disclosure

Why in news: The Supreme Court refused a plea seeking directions to SEBI to mandate public disclosure of beneficial owners of AIFs and FPIs.

Key Details:

- **Plea:** The petition sought public disclosure of ultimate beneficial owners, last natural persons and portfolios of AIFs, FPIs and their intermediaries.
- **Outcome:** The Court refused the plea, so no new public disclosure mandate follows from the order.
- **Why it matters:** Beneficial ownership tells regulators who ultimately controls an investment vehicle, beyond the registered name.
- **Policy tension:** Investor confidentiality and anti-money-laundering transparency pull in opposite directions in portfolio investment.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **AIFs:** Alternative Investment Funds are governed by the SEBI (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012.
- **FPIs:** Foreign Portfolio Investors are governed by the SEBI (Foreign Portfolio Investors) Regulations, 2019.
- **PMLA link:** The Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 and its Rules define beneficial owner by ownership and control thresholds.

Beneficial Ownership and Portfolio Investment

- **Concept:** The beneficial owner is the natural person who ultimately owns or controls a legal entity, even if an intermediary holds the asset.
- **Regulators:** SEBI regulates AIFs and FPIs; the Enforcement Directorate and FIU-IND act under the PMLA framework.
- **FPI route:** Portfolio investment by an FPI is different from FDI, which involves a lasting interest and management control.
- **Not to confuse:** The SEBI Act, 1992 is the parent statute for SEBI; the PMLA, 2002 is the anti-money-laundering law.

Prelims angle: Foreign Portfolio Investment is portfolio investment; FDI carries a lasting interest and management control, a common Prelims trap.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this to illustrate the trade-off between financial transparency and privacy, and the role of regulators in capital-market integrity.

Answer skeleton

INTRO Beneficial ownership is the test of who really controls capital flowing through complex investment structures.
BODY Legal (SEBI AIF and FPI Regulations; PMLA); economic (capital-market integrity, FDI vs FPI); ethical (investor privacy vs transparency).
WAY FORWARD Targeted, risk-based disclosure to regulators, with data-sharing among SEBI, FIU-IND and enforcement agencies.

Mains value-add: SEBI Act, 1992: SEBI was established as a statutory body to protect investor interests and regulate the securities market.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Critically examine whether mandatory public disclosure of beneficial owners of foreign portfolio investors and alternative investment funds is necessary for capital-market integrity in India. (250 words)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** AIF: Alternative Investment Fund | FPI: Foreign Portfolio Investor | SEBI: Securities and Exchange Board of India | PMLA: Prevention of Money Laundering Act | FDI: Foreign Direct Investment

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 3

Monthly accounts, April–September 2026 (PIB, 30 Oct 2026): total receipts ₹18,35,422 crore (50.3% of BE 2026-27); total expenditure ₹25,49,835 crore (47.7% of BE); interest payments ₹6,46,010 crore and major subsidies ₹2,22,905 crore.

How to use: Use as a fiscal-health example in Economy answers on deficit management, interest burden and subsidy pressure.

GS PAPER 4: Ethics & Probity

Timely Disclosure in Disasters: A Probity Case Study from Odisha

Why in news: A minister's early statement that Odisha had achieved 'zero loss of life' in Cyclone Arnab was followed by reports of landslide deaths on 30 October.

Key Details:

- **Early claim:** On 28 October, Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Kumar Pujari credited early preparation and said the response had achieved 'zero loss of life'.
- **Later reports:** On 30 October, PTI reported at least three deaths in landslides, including a nine-month-old baby in Kandhamal.
- **The dilemma:** Officials face pressure to report success, yet casualty figures change as rain continues; the question is how to frame and update such claims honestly.
- **Stakes:** Overstated safety claims can weaken public vigilance and the trust on which future warnings depend.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Principle:** Transparency and information-sharing are listed in GS IV under probity in governance.
- **Legal anchor:** Section 4 of the RTI Act, 2005 requires public authorities to proactively disclose information of public interest.
- **Accountability:** The DM Act, 2005 places a duty on State authorities to keep the public informed during a disaster.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Treat this as a case study in honesty under pressure: weigh the duty to reassure against the duty to inform, and show how probity protects public trust.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	In a disaster, a government's early message shapes public behaviour, so its accuracy is an ethical duty, not only a communications choice.
BODY	Ethical (duty to reassure vs duty to inform); legal (RTI S.4, DM Act); accountability (corrections issued promptly); trust (future warnings believed).
CONCLUSION	Issue provisional figures with a clear date stamp, correct them publicly when they change, and let verified data lead the message.

Mains value-add: Disaster Management Act, 2005, Section 2(d): a disaster is defined as a catastrophe, mishap or calamity that causes widespread loss of life or damage, the basis for State disaster authority duties.

MAINS CASE STUDY EXERCISE

Q. A state minister announces that 'zero loss of life' has been achieved during a cyclone, and two days later landslide deaths are reported. As a senior disaster-management officer, how would you frame and update official casualty figures? Examine the ethical dilemma and suggest a course of action. (250 words)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** RTI: Right to Information | DM Act: Disaster Management Act | PTI: Press Trust of India