

THE DAILY UPSC BRIEF

HIGH-YIELD DAILY SOURCES & ANALYSIS | 28 SEPTEMBER 2026

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HOW TO READ THIS BRIEF

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GS PAPER 1: Society

Rape Cases in India: A Widening Trial-to-Conviction Gap

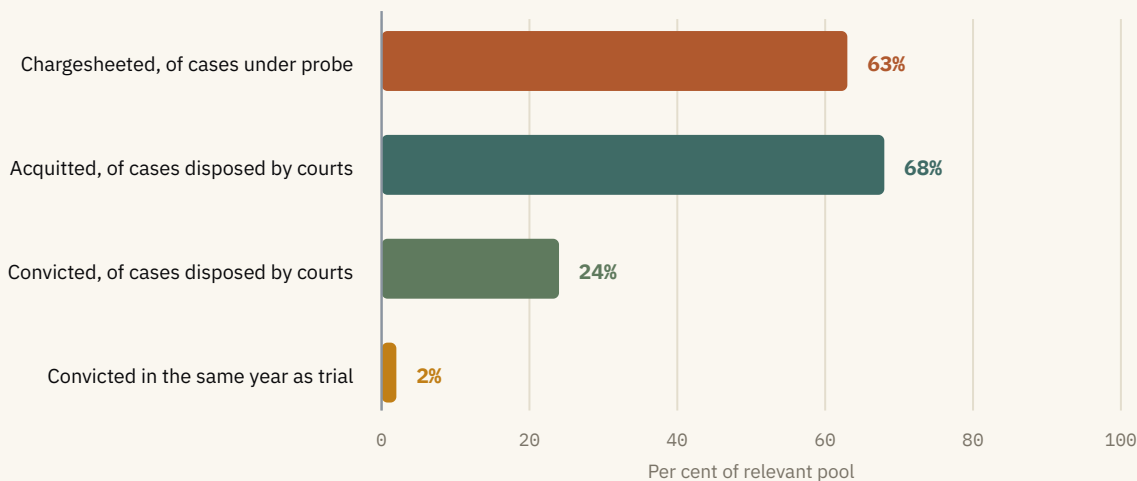
Why in news: A gang-rape in South-East Delhi and viral videos of harassment from Bihar have renewed alarm over women's safety, even as NCRB data show convictions lag far behind cases filed.

Key Details:

- **Steady filings, rising backlog:** Roughly 29,536 rape cases were reported in 2024 (NCRB), a figure that has stayed largely steady since 2018, even as court pendency keeps climbing.
- **Trial-year conviction near-zero:** Only about 2% of chargesheeted cases sent to trial in 2024 ended in conviction that same year — just 421 of 20,587 cases decided.
- **Acquittals dominate disposals:** Of cases the judiciary actually disposed of in 2024, nearly 68% ended in acquittal and only 24% in conviction.
- **Legal reform outpacing delivery:** Tougher timelines and punishments followed the 2012 Delhi gang-rape case, but time-bound disposal on the ground has not kept pace with the law.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Investigation pool:** Nearly 40,000 cases were up for investigation in 2024, including that year's reported cases and carry-overs; 63% were chargesheeted.
- **Overall conviction rate:** The country's rape-conviction rate has stayed below 30% for years, and even convictions typically follow a long wait.
- **Scale:** The reported case load works out to about 84 cases a day, or nearly three every hour, on 2024 figures.

Rape Trial Pool, 2024: Share at Each Stage

How to use in UPSC Mains: Cite this trial-to-conviction gap as evidence for answers on criminal-justice delays, victim-centric reform, or the limits of purely punitive legislative amendments (GS1/GS2 — Society, Governance).

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. The conviction rate in rape cases remains low even after successive legislative amendments tightening timelines and punishments. Examine the systemic reasons for this trial-to-conviction gap and suggest measures to close it. (150 words)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** NCRB: National Crime Records Bureau

GS PAPER 2: Polity, Governance & International Relations

Is the Right to Vote a Fundamental Right? The Debate Reopens

Why in news: A reported rift inside the Election Commission over the special intensive revision (SIR) of rolls has revived the decades-old question of whether India's right to vote deserves fundamental-right status.

Key Details:

- **EC rift exposed:** Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi reportedly recorded 14 objections over 10 months against the Chief Election Commissioner over unilateral rule changes and voter deletions.
- **Goa deletions flagged:** 97 eligible Goa voters were reportedly dropped after the centralised ECINet software denied ground-level Electoral Registration Officers the power to reverse erroneous deletions.
- **Courts call it statutory, not fundamental:** A Constitution Bench in *Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India* (2006) held the 'right to elect' is a statutory right under Section 62 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 — not a fundamental or constitutional one.
- **A live minority view:** Justice Ajay Rastogi's dissent in *Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India* (2023) argued the right to vote flows from Articles 19(1)(a) and 21, giving future benches an opening to revisit the question.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Constitutional anchor:** Article 326 guarantees universal adult suffrage to every citizen aged 18 or above, regardless of gender, caste, religion, education or property.
- **Two governing statutes:** The Representation of the People Act, 1950 governs preparation and revision of electoral rolls; the 1951 Act governs election conduct, candidature and offences.
- **Why status matters:** A fundamental right would subject roll-revision exercises like the SIR to the heightened standard of judicial review reserved for Part III rights, rather than ordinary statutory scrutiny.

The Representation of the People Acts, 1950 & 1951

- **1950 Act:** Governs preparation and revision of electoral rolls, and delimitation of constituencies for Parliament and state legislatures.
- **1951 Act:** Governs the actual conduct of elections — candidature, disqualifications, election offences and the resolution of election disputes.
- **Key insertion:** Section 33-A, added in 2002 after the ADR judgment, requires candidates to disclose pending criminal cases in their nomination affidavit (Form 26).
- **Ordinary residence:** Under RPA 1950, only a person 'ordinarily resident' in a constituency — implying genuine, continuous presence — may be enrolled there.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use the statutory-vs-fundamental distinction to discuss whether India's electoral-roll safeguards (GS2 — Polity, Constitution) need constitutional entrenchment against administrative overreach.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the legal status of the 'right to vote' in India, consider the following statements:

1. Article 326 of the Constitution places the right to vote in the fundamental rights part of the Constitution.
2. The Supreme Court in *Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India* (2006) held that the right to vote is a statutory right under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
3. No Supreme Court judge has ever taken the view that the right to vote could be linked to a fundamental right.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 2 only

Explanation: Article 326 is in Part XV (Elections), not Part III (Fundamental Rights), so the right to vote it grants has long been read as constitutional/statutory rather than fundamental — this is what *Kuldip Nayar* (2006) confirmed. Justice Rastogi's 2023 dissent in *Anoop Baranwal* did link it to Articles 19(1)(a)/21, so a view favouring fundamental-right status does exist, making statement 3 false.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2017: "Right to vote and to be elected in India is a — (a) Fundamental Right (b) Natural Right (c) Constitutional Right (d) Legal Right." Answer: (c) Constitutional Right.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** EC: Election Commission of India | SIR: Special Intensive Revision | RPA: Representation of the People Act | ADR: Association for Democratic Reforms

Supreme Court Tightens the Mandatory-FIR Rule for Missing Persons

Why in news: The Supreme Court has reiterated that police must register an FIR the moment any missing-person complaint is received, widening earlier protections meant only for missing children.

Key Details:

- **'Person', not just 'child':** In *G. Ganesh v. State of Tamil Nadu*, the Court clarified its FIR directions cover every missing person, extending 2013 guidelines that had applied only to missing children.
- **Presumption of abduction:** Once a missing-person FIR is probed, investigators must presume abduction or trafficking unless the probe proves otherwise — a rebuttable, not automatic, finding.
- **Special units activated:** The ruling requires a specially trained officer at each police station and referral to the district's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit if a missing child is not traced within four months.
- **A genuine dilemma flagged:** The Court itself questioned extending the same presumption to consenting adults who leave home voluntarily, warning it could trigger unnecessary, intrusive investigation of couples.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **The triggering case:** A one-year-and-ten-month-old child who went missing from Chennai in 2011 remained untraced for 14 years despite the case being probed and later transferred to a Special Investigation Team.
- **Institutional gap found:** The Madras High Court had held 2013 child-protection guidelines did not apply retrospectively to the 2011 disappearance — a gap the Supreme Court's directions now aim to close going forward.
- **MHA portal:** A dedicated Ministry of Home Affairs portal on human trafficking, ordered earlier by the Court, is meant to let FIRs be registered without waiting for a preliminary enquiry.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Weigh the state's duty to protect vulnerable missing persons against an adult's autonomy to leave home voluntarily — a live tension between protective policing and individual liberty (GS2 — Polity, Governance).

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. The Supreme Court has directed mandatory FIR registration in all missing-person cases, extending protections earlier limited to children. Discuss the rationale for this extension and the concerns it raises regarding the autonomy of consenting adults. (150 words)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** FIR: First Information Report | MHA: Ministry of Home Affairs

Census 2027: PM Modi Calls it a 'National Responsibility'

Why in news: Prime Minister Narendra Modi used his Mann Ki Baat address to urge public participation in Census 2027, India's first census offering digital, mobile-based self-enumeration.

Key Details:

- **Scale so far:** Data for over 32 crore families has already been recorded nationwide, with 2.6 crore people having self-enumerated their details digitally via mobile phones.
- **First phase near complete:** The first phase of the exercise — covering all States and Union Territories — is nearly finished, according to the PM's address.
- **No documents needed:** Citizens can register Census details for themselves and their families directly from a mobile phone, without uploading any supporting documents.

- **Framed as nation-building:** The government is positioning accurate, granular population data as the basis for planning welfare and development programmes for the next decade.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Why it matters:** An accurate Census recalibrates delimitation, resource allocation and welfare targeting — decisions all keyed to verified population figures.
- **Historical continuity:** India has held censuses decennially without a break since 1881, making Census 2027 the 16th in that unbroken series.

The Census Act, 1948

- **Legal basis:** The Census of India is conducted under the Census Act, 1948, which empowers the Union government to direct a nationwide population count.
- **Union subject:** Census-taking falls under Entry 69 of the Union List, so only Parliament can legislate on it — states cannot conduct their own headcount for this purpose.
- **Confidentiality shield:** Section 15 of the Act bars individual Census records from being used as evidence in any court or made public — only aggregated data is released.
- **Nodal authority:** The Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, conducts and compiles the Census.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Link Census 2027's digital self-enumeration to the broader debate on data governance, privacy safeguards and inclusion of the digitally unconnected (GS2 — Governance).

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

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

1. The Census of India is conducted under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948.
2. Conducting the Census falls under the Concurrent List, allowing both Parliament and State legislatures to make laws on it.
3. Individual answers given in a Census schedule cannot be used as evidence in any court of law.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: The Census Act, 1948 is the governing law, and Section 15 of that Act protects individual Census records from disclosure or evidentiary use. However, 'Census' is Entry 69 of the Union List (Seventh Schedule), not the Concurrent List, so only Parliament — not state legislatures — can legislate on it, making statement 2 false.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** PM: Prime Minister

Kashmir as India's Gateway to Eurasian Opportunity

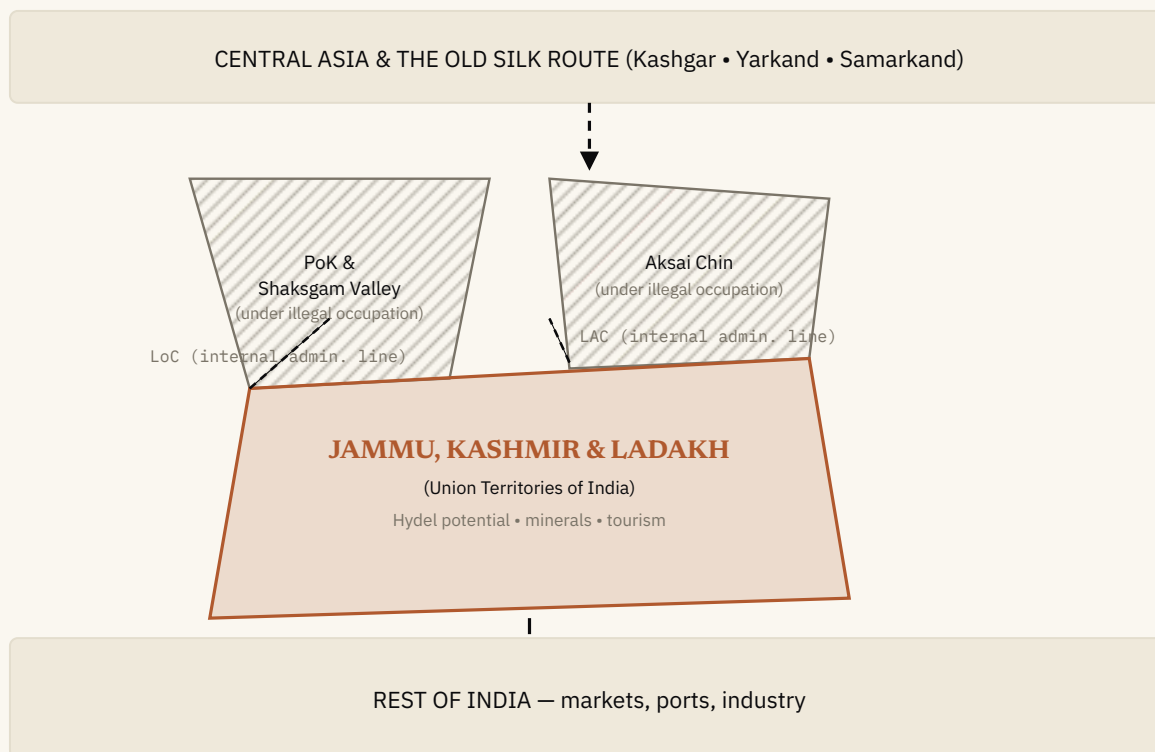
Why in news: With Union home affairs debating Jammu and Kashmir's future economic role, a renewed push is building to reopen historic trade routes linking Kashmir and Ladakh to Central Asia.

Key Details:

- **A historic crossroads:** For centuries before Partition and the wars that followed, Kashmir sat on caravan routes linking the Indian subcontinent with Central Asia, Tibet and the wider Eurasian landmass.
- **Untapped strategic asset:** Beyond hydel potential, minerals and tourism, J&K and Ladakh's most underused strategic asset may be their location astride these old connectivity corridors.
- **A phased, security-first approach:** Any reopening would need to begin with routes where security and diplomatic conditions are most conducive, expanding only as confidence-building measures with Pakistan and China progress.
- **Wider payoff than air links:** Unlike air connectivity, which concentrates gains around a few hubs, a land trade corridor spreads construction, logistics, manufacturing and services activity across a wider geography.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Existing model:** India already operates the International North-South Transport Corridor, a multimodal route linking India to Russia and Europe via Iran and Central Asia — a template connectivity could draw on for J&K/Ladakh.
- **Demographic stakes:** India's youth population is a demographic dividend only if matched with real economic opportunity — a gap connectivity-led growth in J&K/Ladakh could help close.

Kashmir & Ladakh: A Prospective Eurasian Gateway

Schematic block-diagram, not to scale — follows India's official depiction of J&K/Ladakh, PoK, Shaksam Valley & Aksai Chin

How to use in UPSC Mains: Frame Kashmir/Ladakh connectivity as a test case for balancing security imperatives with economic integration in India's neighbourhood policy (GS2 — International Relations, Internal Security).

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Reviving Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh's historic role as a trade corridor to Central Asia could give the region's youth new economic opportunity. Discuss the potential benefits of such connectivity and the security constraints that would shape its phased implementation. (250 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2025: "India is one of the founding members of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multimodal transportation corridor, which will connect — (a) India to Central Asia to Europe via Iran (b) India to Central Asia via China (c) India to South-East Asia through Bangladesh and Myanmar (d) India to Europe through Azerbaijan." Answer: (a).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** J&K: Jammu and Kashmir

GS PAPER 3: Economy & Science and Technology

The De-Sinification Paradox: An Opening for Indian Manufacturing

Why in news: As firms worldwide try to cut their exposure to Chinese supply chains after the Trump-Xi summit's modest trade truce, India is beginning to attract pieces of production ecosystems once concentrated in China.

Key Details:

- Ecosystems, not just factories:** Relocating a factory abroad is straightforward; reproducing the dense supplier networks, tooling and skills that made production efficient in China is far harder — the real bottleneck in 'de-sinification'.
- A two-sided challenge:** Foreign firms struggle to disentangle themselves from Chinese suppliers even as Chinese manufacturers, expanding overseas themselves, must decide how much of their own supporting ecosystem to carry abroad.
- India already gaining pieces:** Japan's TDK has expanded battery production in Haryana, and Murata Manufacturing is expanding its India footprint — early signs of production ecosystems shifting India's way.
- The real test ahead:** Whether these investments deepen linkages with Indian suppliers and bring specialised capability into the domestic economy, rather than remaining isolated assembly nodes.

Data/Facts/Example:

- Modest summit outcomes:** The Trump-Xi summit yielded a two-month extension of the Busan trade truce, a \$30-billion reciprocal tariff-reduction arrangement, and a new AI dialogue — but no new semiconductor, rare-earth or Taiwan-arms-sales agreement.
- PLI's scale:** India's Production Linked Incentive scheme spans 14 sectors with a total outlay of ₹1.97 lakh crore, and had drawn ₹1.23 lakh crore in realised investment by March 2024.

Two Routes Chinese Firms Take When 'De-Sinifying' Abroad

Company	Overseas move	Supplier strategy
BYD (EVs)	Manufacturing hub in Hungary	Also building new European supplier relationships
Xpeng (EVs)	Contract assembly via Magna in Austria	Uses an existing Canadian supplier's plant
CXMT (memory chips)	Expanding output as world's No. 4 DRAM maker	Still dependent on foreign chipmaking equipment

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use India's PLI-driven gains from de-sinification to discuss what more is needed — supplier ecosystems, logistics, skilled labour — to convert factory relocation into durable domestic manufacturing capability (GS3 — Indian Economy).

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. The global reorganisation of supply chains away from China ('de-sinification') is opening opportunities for Indian manufacturing. Examine what India needs to do to convert this opportunity into durable, deep manufacturing capability rather than isolated assembly operations. (250 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2025, GS Paper 3: "Discuss the rationale of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme. What are its achievements? In what way can the functioning and outcomes of the scheme be improved?" (15 marks)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** PLI: Production Linked Incentive | EV: Electric Vehicle | DRAM: Dynamic Random-Access Memory

One Nation, One Time: India Locks In IST as Sole Legal Time

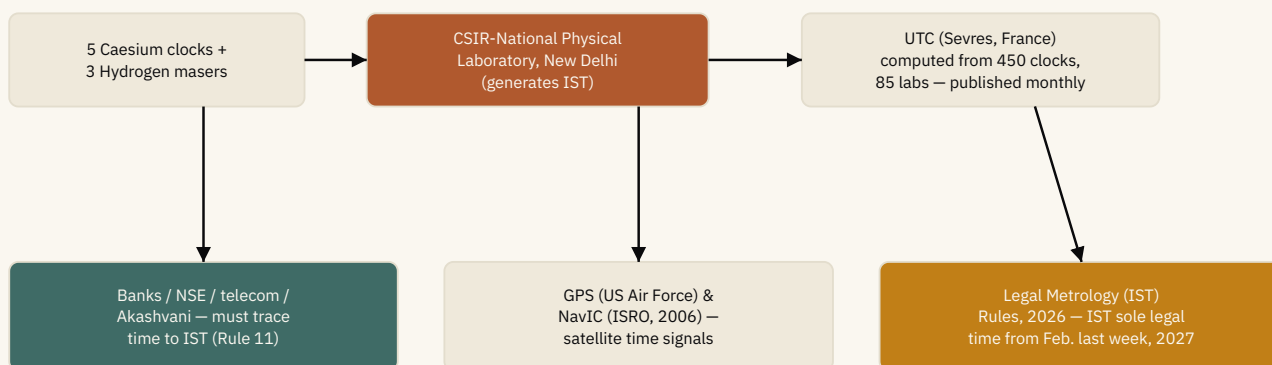
Why in news: India has notified the Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2026, making IST the country's only permissible time reference for legal, administrative and commercial use from February 2027.

Key Details:

- **What changes:** From the last week of February 2027, every legally significant timestamp in India — bank transactions, telecom logs, official records — must trace back to an authorised Indian time source, not GPS or any other feed.
- **Compliance burden on end users:** Rule 11 places the monitoring duty on the entity itself (a bank, telco or data centre), requiring it to track its drift from IST and keep auditable records — not on its equipment supplier.
- **Why not just use GPS:** GPS is a US Air Force asset whose signal can be denied, jammed or falsified — a sovereignty and reliability risk the rules are designed to remove from India's legal timekeeping.
- **NavIC not yet a substitute:** India's own satellite navigation system, NavIC, lost most of its rubidium clocks after 2016 and briefly had only three of four minimum satellites transmitting in March 2026 — so it is named an authorised source, but not yet a stand-alone solution.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Where IST is made:** CSIR-National Physical Laboratory in Delhi runs five caesium clocks and three hydrogen masers, weighted by a secret in-house algorithm, to generate India's official time.
- **Extreme precision, real-world drift:** NPL's clocks are accurate to one part in a hundred trillion, yet India's fibre backbone still lost 40 picoseconds carrying a signal 460 km from Bengaluru to the Chennai stock exchange.
- **Global reference:** Universal Co-ordinated Time is computed monthly at Sevres, France, by weighting readings from 450 atomic clocks across 85 laboratories worldwide — IST sits a fixed 5 hours 30 minutes ahead of it.

How India's Legal Time (IST) Is Made and Used

Schematic diagram — block relationships only, not to scale

How to use in UPSC Mains: Connect IST's new legal status to India's push for technological sovereignty — reducing dependence on foreign-controlled infrastructure such as GPS in critical national systems (GS3 — Science and Technology, Indigenisation).

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

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

1. Indian Standard Time is generated using caesium atomic clocks and hydrogen masers maintained by the CSIR-National Physical Laboratory.
2. Under the Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2026, GPS will remain an equally valid legal source of time alongside IST.
3. NavIC is India's indigenous satellite navigation system, approved in 2006.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: NPL's caesium clocks and hydrogen masers do generate IST, and NavIC was indeed approved in 2006. But the 2026 Rules make IST the sole permissible legal time reference — GPS, a foreign-controlled asset that can be denied or jammed, is explicitly not treated as an equally valid legal source, making statement 2 false.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 1989: "Very small time intervals are accurately measured by the _____. " Answer: Atomic clocks.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** IST: Indian Standard Time | CSIR-NPL: Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – National Physical Laboratory | UTC: Co-ordinated Universal Time | NavIC: Navigation with Indian Constellation

Bank Unions Defer Strike, Press Five-Day Week and OPS Switch

Why in news: Bank unions called off a proposed three-day nationwide strike after management agreed to form a high-level committee to examine long-pending demands, including a five-day banking week.

Key Details:

- **Strike averted:** The United Forum of Bank Unions deferred its planned September 28-30 strike after an hour-long meeting with the Indian Banks' Association on Sunday night.
- **Three core demands:** Unions sought a five-day working week, changes to the performance-linked incentive scheme for Scale IV-and-above officers, and pension reform — including letting NPS subscribers switch to the Old Pension Scheme.
- **Committee, not resolution:** Management agreed only to set up a joint high-level committee to consult stakeholders, including customers, before any change is implemented — no timeline was announced.
- **Long-pending grievance:** Unions say the five-day-week demand has been under discussion since at least March 2024, when it was first listed in negotiation minutes with no resolution since.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Who represents whom:** The UFBU is an umbrella body of seven bank employees' and officers' unions; the IBA represents bank managements in these talks.
- **Pension contrast:** Government employees who joined service after 2004 fall under the NPS, a market-linked, defined-contribution scheme, unlike the assured, defined-benefit OPS it replaced.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use the NPS-versus-OPS demand to discuss trade-offs between fiscal sustainability and retirement-income security in India's pension architecture (GS3 — Indian Economy).

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to pension systems for government and public-sector employees in India, consider the following statements:

1. The National Pension System is a defined-contribution scheme in which the final payout depends on market-linked returns.
2. The Old Pension Scheme guaranteed a fixed, defined-benefit pension linked to the last drawn salary.
3. Employees who joined government service on or after January 1, 2004 are automatically covered by the Old Pension Scheme.

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: NPS is indeed a defined-contribution, market-linked scheme, while OPS guaranteed a defined pension benefit. However, employees joining service on or after January 1, 2004 were moved to NPS, not OPS, which is why some employee bodies — including bank unions now — are demanding the option to switch back.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** UFBU: United Forum of Bank Unions | IBA: Indian Banks' Association | NPS: National Pension System | OPS: Old Pension Scheme

GS PAPER 4: Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

Probity in Practice: Tamil Nadu Withdraws Its RTI-Exemption Order

Why in news: Facing sharp criticism from political parties and activists, the Tamil Nadu government withdrew a controversial order that had exempted its Public (Law and Order) Department from the Right to Information Act.

Key Details:

- **Order reversed within a week:** A September 21 Government Order citing security grounds to exempt the department was withdrawn after backlash, with the minister confirming the reversal directly on social media.
- **What the exemption would have hidden:** The department's ambit includes inquiry reports into police firing and custodial deaths, and monthly law-and-order review meetings — precisely the material RTI activists said the public most needed to see.
- **Process, not just outcome, mattered:** Officials said the government was never opposed to registering an FIR or disclosing information outright, but chose to first take legal advice given a lack of clarity on the department's scope.
- **A responsive course-correction:** The swift reversal, after opposition from figures including a former AMMK founder and RTI activists, shows institutional responsiveness winning out over an initial security-first instinct.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Legal route used and reversed:** The exemption had been issued under Section 24(4) of the RTI Act, which lets government notify additional organisations as exempt — a power the same government chose to roll back.
- **The proviso that still applied:** Even under a Section 24 exemption, the RTI Act's own proviso keeps information about corruption and human-rights violations open to disclosure — a safeguard the reversal now makes moot for this department.

The Right to Information Act, 2005

- **Core guarantee:** The Act lets any citizen seek information held by a public authority, to be furnished within 30 days (48 hours if life or liberty is involved).
- **Section 8 exemptions:** Certain categories — information affecting sovereignty, security, or a fiduciary relationship, for instance — can be withheld under Section 8(1).
- **Section 24 carve-out:** Intelligence and security organisations listed in the Second Schedule are exempt from the Act altogether, but a proviso still requires disclosure of information on corruption or human-rights violations.
- **Oversight body:** Information Commissions — one Central and one in each State — hear appeals and can penalise a public information officer for unjustified refusal.

How to use in UPSC Mains: This is a textbook instance of probity in governance — a government reversing an opaque exemption in the face of public and institutional pressure, restoring transparency and accountability as the Second ARC has repeatedly recommended.

MAINS CASE STUDY EXERCISE

Q. A state department is exempted from the Right to Information Act citing security sensitivity, but the exemption also shields records of police firing and custodial deaths from disclosure. Public backlash follows, and the government withdraws the exemption within days. Discuss the values of transparency, accountability and probity in governance illustrated by this episode, and the competing considerations a government must weigh before granting such exemptions. (150 words)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** RTI: Right to Information | ARC: Administrative Reforms Commission