

THE DAILY UPSC BRIEF

HIGH-YIELD DAILY SOURCES & ANALYSIS | 29 SEPTEMBER 2026

TODAY'S COVERAGE

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HOW TO READ THIS BRIEF

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

GS PAPER 1: SOCIETY, GEOGRAPHY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Gender Disparities in Contraceptive Use and Sterilisation

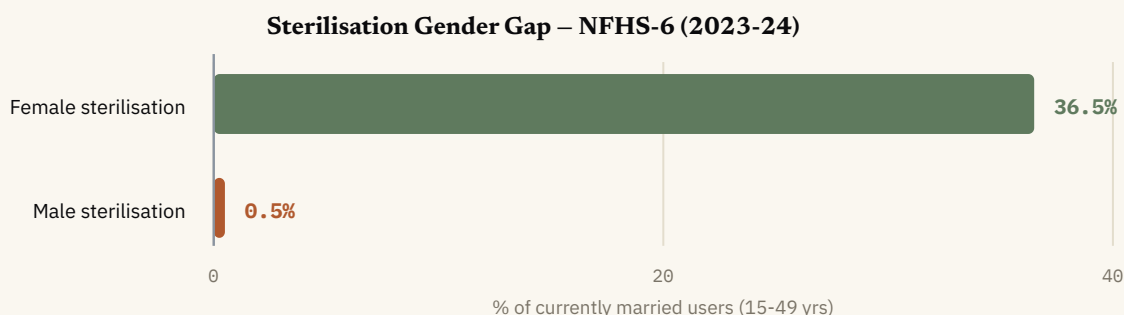
Why in news: NFHS-6 data show that while India's contraceptive prevalence has risen, the burden of sterilisation remains almost entirely on women — even as the WHO issues new guidelines to expand male contraceptive options.

Key Details:

- **The gender gap:** 36.5% of currently married women reported female sterilisation in NFHS-6, against just 0.5% of men reporting male sterilisation.
- **A declining trend, not a rising one:** Female sterilisation actually fell from 39.7% (NFHS-5) to 36.5% (NFHS-6); male sterilisation fell too, from an already-low 3.5% (NFHS-1) to 0.5%.
- **Modern methods losing ground:** Overall contraceptive use rose from 66.7% to 69.1% between NFHS-5 and NFHS-6, but modern-method use fell (56.4% to 52.7%) while traditional methods — rhythm and withdrawal — rose sharply by 6 points.
- **A rare bright spot:** Male sterilisation's share rose in 22 States between the two surveys, but only Telangana crossed a one-percentage-point increase.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Fertility milestone:** India's Total Fertility Rate fell from 5.2 (1970) to 1.9 (2025), already below the replacement level and past the National Population Policy 2000 target of 2.0, achieved in 2021.
- **WHO's new benchmark:** The WHO has for the first time set a 'Target Product Profile' for male contraceptives, defining the safety, effectiveness and acceptability a new generation of reversible methods must meet.
- **Named voice:** Pascale Allotey, WHO Director for Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing, called the imbalance a matter of "gender equality".



How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this as primary evidence in any answer on gender and the family-planning programme — the data shows administrative targets have historically been met by women's bodies, not through genuine choice-based, male-inclusive contraception.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to India's National Family Health Survey (NFHS), consider the following statements:

1. India's Total Fertility Rate fell below the replacement level for the first time in NFHS-6 (2023-24).
2. Between NFHS-5 and NFHS-6, the share of currently married women using any contraceptive method increased.
3. Modern contraceptive method use among currently married women increased between NFHS-5 and NFHS-6.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 2 only

Explanation: India's TFR (2.0) had already fallen to replacement level by 2021, per the National Population Policy 2000 target — so it was not a NFHS-6 first (Statement 1 is false). Overall contraceptive use rose 66.7% to 69.1% (Statement 2 is true), but modern-method use actually fell from 56.4% to 52.7%, with traditional methods rising instead (Statement 3 is false).

■ [Abbreviations & Terminology]: NFHS: National Family Health Survey | TFR: Total Fertility Rate | WHO: World Health Organization

Census 2027: PM Calls It a 'National Responsibility' as Phase 1 Nears Completion

Why in news: In his Mann Ki Baat address, the Prime Minister said the first phase of Census 2027 — India's first census offering online self-enumeration — is nearly complete nationwide, with over 32 crore families already recorded.

Key Details:

- **The headline claim:** Information on more than 32 crore families has been recorded so far; the PM called the Census "a national responsibility for all of us."
- **A digital first:** Census 2027 is India's first census to offer a self-enumeration facility, letting citizens fill in their own household details online, available in 16 regional languages.
- **A two-phase, staggered exercise:** House-listing (housing conditions, amenities) is followed by population enumeration (individual and demographic details); the two phases are being rolled out state-by-state rather than on one uniform date.
- **What's still pending:** A revision round to fix errors in already-covered areas runs 1-5 October 2026; population enumeration in most remaining States and UTs is scheduled only from February 2027.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Legal basis:** Census-taking in India is conducted under the Census Act, 1948, which makes furnishing accurate information to an enumerator a legal obligation, with penalties for refusal or false information.
- **Scale, in one State alone:** In Uttarakhand, around 30,000 enumerators and supervisors covered roughly 32,000 house-listing blocks — indicative of the exercise's scale when extended nationwide.

Census 2027 – The Two-Phase Structure

PHASE 1: HOUSE-LISTING

Housing conditions,
amenities, assets

First self-enumeration
facility — 16 regional
languages

32+ crore families
recorded; nearly
complete nationwide

PHASE 2: POPULATION ENUMERATION

Individual & demographic
details (age, sex,
religion, etc.)

Revision round for
covered areas: 1-5
October 2026

Remaining States/UTs:
from February 2027

How to use in UPSC Mains: A timely example for a GS2/GS3 answer on e-governance and administrative capacity — contrast the efficiency gains of self-enumeration against the verification and digital-access challenges of a national exercise this size.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

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

1. Census-taking is conducted under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948.
2. Census 2027 is the first Indian census to offer citizens a self-enumeration facility.
3. Furnishing information to a census enumerator is optional for citizens.

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: Census-taking is governed by the Census Act, 1948 (Statement 1 true), and Census 2027 is indeed India's first to offer online self-enumeration (Statement 2 true) — but furnishing accurate census information is a legal obligation under the Act, not optional, with penalties for refusal or false information (Statement 3 false).

■ [Abbreviations & Terminology]:

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 1

A deep depression over the Bay of Bengal triggered floods for the second time in six days across Andhra Pradesh's Godavari Delta and Valley, damaging the crops of 71,700 farmers with an estimated ₹1,498.30 crore in losses, 2,405 km of roads affected, and 17 habitations submerged in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema district. The Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage at Dowleswaram received over 9.7 lakh cusecs.

How to use: Cite as a live, current example in any GS1/GS3 Disaster Management answer on flood vulnerability in deltaic regions, or on the case for decentralised, community-led flood response over a centralised one.

GS PAPER 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A New Governance Model for Ladakh

Why in news: Amid protests demanding Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh, the Centre has instead proposed inserting a new Article 371-K into the Constitution to give the Union Territory a directly elected legislative body.

Key Details:

- **Why Ladakh is asking:** Made a UT without a Legislative Assembly under the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, Ladakh's local groups fear outsiders acquiring land and diluting its distinct culture, language and customs.
- **The Centre's counter-proposal:** Rather than Sixth Schedule status, the Government has proposed Article 371-K under Part XXI of the Constitution, to create a directly elected legislative authority sitting above the existing Hill Development Councils.
- **What stays, what's unsettled:** Panchayats and district-level institutions would be retained, but the extent of the Lieutenant Governor's powers under the new authority — especially over finance — is not yet defined.
- **A constitutional precedent:** Parliament has already made special provisions for another Union Territory — Delhi, under Articles 239AA and 239AB — showing it can legally grant a bespoke governance status to any UT.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Strategic context:** Ladakh's location along the Line of Actual Control with China is cited as a reason the Centre is wary of the greater autonomy the Sixth Schedule would confer.
- **Constitutional test:** A UT being granted a legislature-like body raises the question of whether this constitutionally equates it with a State — the Supreme Court in *State of Rajasthan v. Union of India* (1977) called India's federalism 'amphibian', shifting between federal and unitary depending on the context.

Three Models of Special Sub-State Governance

Schematic comparison — not a map, not to scale

SIXTH SCHEDULE MODEL	LADAKH — TODAY	PROPOSED ART. 371-K
Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram Autonomous District Council (ADC) — up to 30 elected members (Art. 244(2), 275(1)) Legislates on land, forest, water, village administration Can set up village courts for minor civil/criminal disputes	Union Territory, no Legislative Assembly (J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019) Administered by the Lieutenant Governor Leh & Kargil Hill Dev. Councils (LAHDCs) handle local development only	New directly-elected legislative authority for the UT Sits above existing LAHDCs; panchayats & district bodies retained L-G's exact powers under new body still undefined Inserted under Part XXI (Temporary & Special Provisions)

The Sixth Schedule

- **Coverage:** Governs tribal administration only in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, under Articles 244(2) and 275(1) of the Constitution.
- **Autonomous District Councils:** The Governor can create Autonomous District Councils (ADCs), each with up to 30 members (mostly elected, some nominated), for a 5-year term.
- **Legislative powers:** ADCs can make laws on land, forests, water, shifting cultivation, village/town administration, inheritance and marriage — subject to the Governor's assent.
- **Judicial powers:** ADCs may set up village courts to try minor civil and criminal disputes among Scheduled Tribes within the district.
- **Distinct from the Fifth Schedule:** The Fifth Schedule covers scheduled areas in other States and works through the Governor and a Tribes Advisory Council — it does not create a separate elected legislature like the Sixth Schedule does.

How to use in UPSC Mains: A strong answer on India's asymmetric federalism should cite Ladakh alongside Delhi's Articles 239AA/239AB as evidence that Parliament can tailor a Union Territory's governance structure without amending its basic constitutional status. **Note:** Article 371-K is only a proposal at this stage — treat its specific contents as a live policy debate to discuss, not a settled fact to test, until it is actually enacted.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. The Centre has proposed inserting Article 371-K into the Constitution to give Ladakh a directly elected legislative authority, instead of the Sixth Schedule status local groups have demanded. Critically examine whether this proposal adequately addresses Ladakh's demand for cultural and political autonomy, comparing the safeguards it would offer with those under the Sixth Schedule. (250 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2015: "The provisions in Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule in the Constitution of India are made in order to (a) protect the interests of Scheduled Tribes (b) determine the boundaries between States (c) determine the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats (d) protect the interests of all the border States" — Answer: (a).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** UT: Union Territory | LAHDC: Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council | L-G: Lieutenant Governor

SC: Authorities Lax in Ensuring Women's Safety in Delhi

Why in news: Taking suo motu cognisance of a spate of sexual violence cases in the National Capital Region, the Supreme Court has directed Delhi Police to identify vulnerable pockets, step up patrolling, and audit lighting and CCTV coverage within four weeks.

Key Details:

- **The Court's finding:** A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran held that the right to live with dignity, free from fear of violence, is intrinsic to the right to life under Article 21.
- **The trigger cases:** The Bench cited the rape of a 17-year-old at Astha Kunj Park near Lady Shri Ram College, the gang-rape of a minor at Swaroop Nagar, and the sexual assault of another minor on a bus to Delhi.
- **What was ordered:** Delhi Police must constitute dedicated teams to survey vulnerable pockets, prepare and share district-wise vulnerability maps across jurisdictions, and increase patrolling at parks, transit hubs, markets and educational institutions.
- **A hard deadline:** An audit of lighting and CCTV coverage across public parks and vulnerable areas has been ordered, with non-functional cameras to be repaired within four weeks.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Constitutional anchor:** The Court invoked Article 21's guarantee of life and personal liberty — read expansively since *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978) to cover a bundle of rights beyond mere survival.
- **Court's own words:** "Expressing solidarity is not the solution to this social evil. What is required is a measurable response, with responsibility and accountability fixed upon the authorities," the Bench observed.

SC's Four-Week Directive to Delhi Police

1. Constitute dedicated police teams to survey vulnerable pockets
2. Prepare district-wise vulnerability maps, shared across jurisdictions
3. Increase patrolling at parks, transit hubs, markets, schools
4. Audit lighting & CCTV; repair non-functional cameras within 4 weeks

How to use in UPSC Mains: Cite this order as an example of the judiciary using Article 21 to impose concrete, auditable administrative obligations — not just declaring a right, but mandating vulnerability mapping and time-bound compliance.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "The right to live with dignity, free from fear of violence, is intrinsic to Article 21," the Supreme Court observed recently. Discuss the judiciary's role in expanding the substantive content of the right to life, with reference to public safety for women in urban India. (150 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2012, GS Paper I (5 marks): "What are the Rights within the ambit of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution?"

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** NCR: National Capital Region | SC: Supreme Court

Bar and Bench: Few Judicial Officers Make It to High Courts Despite Years of Experience

Why in news: Despite a constitutional norm reserving one-third of High Court seats for the subordinate judiciary, judicial officers continue to make up only a fraction of sitting High Court judges across most States.

Key Details:

- **The shortfall, in numbers:** Judicial-service judges form just 9.09% of the Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh High Courts, 11.90% in Telangana, 15.15% in Odisha and 17.02% in Bombay — all far below the one-third norm.
- **Where it works better:** Tripura (40%), Himachal Pradesh (35.29%) and Delhi (31.67%) exceed or come close to the norm; Sikkim currently has zero representation from the State Judicial Service.
- **Why the pipeline is thin:** Most join the judicial service as civil judges in their late twenties, take roughly a decade to become a senior civil judge, and reach district/sessions judge rank only a few years before the retirement age of 62.
- **The last such elevation:** The most recent judicial-service appointment to the Supreme Court was Justice Bela M. Trivedi, elevated in August 2021 and retired in June 2025.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **No fixed legal ratio:** The one-third convention comes from judicial practice, not a numerically binding statute — leaving High Courts free to recommend fewer judicial-service names.
- **Career risk vs. the Bar:** Because elevation to the High Court Bench, if it comes at all, comes late in a judicial officer's career, most law graduates prefer to build a career at the Bar instead.

Uphill climb – judges elevated from subordinate courts vs. sanctioned strength

High Court	Sanctioned	Current	Elevated from judicial service
Tripura	5	4	2
Himachal Pradesh	17	15	6
Delhi	60	50	19
Bombay	94	75	16
Orissa	33	17	5
Telangana	42	27	5
Uttarakhand	11	8	1
Sikkim	3	2	0

Constitutional Provisions for High Court Judges

- **Appointment:** Article 217 provides for High Court judges to be appointed by the President after consultation with the CJI, the State Governor and the High Court's Chief Justice — in practice, decided by the Collegium since the NJAC verdict (2015).
- **Composition:** Article 216 — a High Court consists of a Chief Justice and as many other judges as the President deems necessary from time to time; there is no fixed numerical strength in the Constitution itself.
- **Retirement age:** High Court judges retire at 62 (Article 217), five years earlier than Supreme Court judges, who retire at 65 (Article 124).
- **Temporary judges:** Article 224 allows appointment of additional or acting judges for a limited period, typically to help clear case backlogs.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this data to argue that judicial diversity and trial-court experience on the High Court Bench is a structural, not incidental, problem — link it to Collegium reform debates on transparency and criteria.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Critically examine why the constitutionally desirable representation of the subordinate judiciary in India's High Courts remains persistently low. Suggest reforms to create a more structured career path to the High Court Bench. (250 words)

Related PYQ: UPSC Mains 2025, GS Paper II (15 marks): "Discuss the evolution of collegium system in India. Critically examine the advantages and disadvantages of the system of appointment of the Judges of the Supreme Court of India and that of the USA."

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:****QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 2**

The Home Ministry's High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes (HLCDC) has asked States for 15 years of religion-wise data on births, school enrolment, property transactions and voter registration (35 questions in all) — data most States say they don't maintain in that form, with some officials arguing the Constitution's secular character weighs against collecting data in religious categories at all.

How to use: Use as a current example in a GS2 answer on the tension between administrative data-gathering for policy and India's constitutional secularism (Preamble, Articles 25-28).

GS PAPER 3: ECONOMY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, ENVIRONMENT

Rare-Disease Drugs Can Be India's Next Pharma Frontier

Why in news: Having built its reputation as the 'pharmacy of the world' on affordable generics, India's next challenge is making rare-disease treatments accessible — both to its own patients and as a globally competitive manufacturing opportunity.

Key Details:

- **Scale of the problem:** India has reported 1,004 distinct rare genetic disorders; globally, around 8,000 rare diseases cumulatively affect hundreds of millions of people.
- **A government cap that falls short:** The Centre supports rare-disease patients with up to ₹50 lakh for treatment, but this is often insufficient to cover even a single year's cost, forcing patients to crowdfund the rest.
- **The scale of that gap:** Nearly 4,000 children are listed on a Government of India crowdfunding platform, with cumulative annual treatment costs for them exceeding ₹9,000 crore.
- **A policy template that worked elsewhere:** The U.S. Orphan Drug Act, 1983 — offering tax incentives, 7-year market exclusivity and fee waivers — helped lift orphan-drug approvals in the U.S. from just 38 before the Act to 1,122 by 2022.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **India's existing strength:** India is already called the 'pharmacy of the world', supplying 47% of generic drug prescriptions filled in the U.S. and 15% of biosimilars sold in the U.S. and EU.
- **What the authors propose:** A production-linked incentive scheme for orphan-drug manufacturing, tax breaks for companies investing in rare-disease R&D, and using Rule 101 of the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019 to waive repeat Indian trials where six specified regulators have already approved a drug.

Some expensive drugs for rare diseases

Drug	Disease	Price (USD)
Lenmeldy	Metachromatic leukodystrophy	\$4.25 million (one-time)
Hemgenix	Haemophilia B	\$3.5 million (one-time)
Elevidys	Duchenne muscular dystrophy	\$3.2 million (one-time)
Zokinvi	Hutchinson-Gilford progeria	\$1-1.2 million/year
Skyclarys	Friedreich's ataxia	\$370,000/year
Trikafta	Cystic fibrosis	\$200,000-300,000/year

How to use in UPSC Mains: A strong S&T/health-policy answer should connect India's generic-drug manufacturing base with the specific regulatory incentives (market exclusivity, PLI, trial waivers) needed to pivot into orphan drugs.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. Examine the challenges in making rare-disease (orphan) drug treatment accessible and affordable in India. Drawing on the U.S. Orphan Drug Act experience, suggest a policy framework to build a globally competitive domestic rare-disease pharmaceutical sector. (250 words)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** PLI: Production-Linked Incentive

SC Questions Government's Power to Levy UPI Merchant Fees

Why in news: The Supreme Court has questioned the Centre's legal authority to impose a 0.4% Merchant Discount Rate on larger UPI transactions, asking what the 'executive scope' for such a charge is if it is neither a tax nor a fee.

Key Details:

- **The court's question:** Justice Joymalya Bagchi asked: "If it is not a tax or fee, what is the executive scope of making this expropriation? We want an explanation."
- **What's being challenged:** A 3-judge Bench led by CJI Surya Kant issued notice to the Union, RBI and NPCI on a plea alleging the MDR would push transactions back toward cash and encourage black money.
- **The charge itself:** A 0.4% MDR now applies to person-to-merchant UPI transactions above ₹2,000, introduced by a September 14, 2026 notification; the Court declined to grant an interim stay and gave the government four weeks to respond.
- **The government's defence:** 96% of gateway users are exempt; essential-service transactions are capped at ₹5; for transactions of ₹75,000 and above, the MDR is capped at ₹300 per transaction; RuPay debit cards keep zero-charge protection.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Regulatory context:** The Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 governs India's digital payment infrastructure, with the RBI as the principal regulator of MDR and interchange charges.

UPI Merchant Discount Rate (P2M transactions) – the fee structure being challenged

Transaction band	MDR charge
Up to ₹2,000	Nil
₹2,000 – ₹75,000	0.4%
₹75,000 and above	Capped at ₹300
Essential services (all values)	Capped at ₹5
RuPay debit cards	No-charge protection continues

How to use in UPSC Mains: A timely digital-economy/regulatory-law example — frame it as a separation-of-powers question: can the executive impose a charge with tax-like effect without Parliament's express sanction?

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) recently challenged before the Supreme Court, consider the following statements:

1. It applies to Person-to-Merchant (P2M) UPI transactions above ₹2,000.
2. It was introduced through a specific amendment to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 passed by Parliament.
3. RuPay debit card transactions continue to enjoy no-charge protection under the current structure.

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: The 0.4% MDR applies to P2M UPI transactions above ₹2,000 (Statement 1 true), and RuPay debit cards remain protected (Statement 3 true) — but it was introduced through an executive notification, not a specific parliamentary amendment to the Act, which is exactly what the Supreme Court is now questioning the legal basis for (Statement 2 false).

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2026: "Which one of the following statements about Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Central Bank Digital Currency (Digital Rupee) is not correct?" (four statements on settlement, records and liability) — Answer: the statement that liability in both cases lies with users and their banks is incorrect, since Digital Rupee is a direct RBI liability.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** MDR: Merchant Discount Rate | P2M: Person-to-Merchant | NPCI: National Payments Corporation of India | RBI: Reserve Bank of India

Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool: A Sovereign Shield for Indian Shipping

Why in news: Amid Middle East tensions raising fears that foreign insurers could withdraw cover from India-linked shipping, the Centre has stood up a sovereign-backed maritime insurance pool worth USD 1.5 billion.

Key Details:

- **What it is:** A USD 1.5 billion insurance pool launched by the Department of Financial Services (Ministry of Finance) on 12 May 2026, covering Hull & Machinery, Cargo, Protection & Indemnity (P&I) and War risk for Indian-linked vessels.
- **The sovereign backstop:** A USD 1.4 billion (₹12,980 crore) sovereign guarantee kicks in only after claims exceed USD 100 million, acting as a 'backstop of last resort' once pool capacity is exhausted.
- **Why now:** The pool was created in the context of ongoing Middle East tensions, which raised the risk of international re/insurers withdrawing war-risk cover from India-bound or India-linked shipping over sanctions exposure.
- **Who runs it:** State-run reinsurer GIC Re administers the pool; domestic insurers issue policies to shipowners using its combined capacity, instead of relying solely on foreign reinsurance.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Strategic intent:** The scheme is explicitly framed as building India's 'sovereign control over maritime trade' — reducing dependence on foreign insurers who could withdraw cover during a geopolitical crisis.
- **A wartime-insurance logic, applied in peacetime:** It mirrors the war-risk mutual insurance pools some countries historically stood up during conflict-driven shipping crises, but built here as a standing sovereign backstop rather than a one-off wartime measure.

Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool – how the cover is layered

Layer	Value
Total pool size	USD 1.5 billion
Claims serviced from pool capacity	Up to USD 100 million
Sovereign guarantee (backstop)	USD 1.4 billion (₹12,980 crore)
Administered by	GIC Re

How to use in UPSC Mains: A strong current example for GS3 answers on economic/maritime security — link it to India's broader strategy of insulating trade-critical sectors from sanctions-driven geopolitical shocks.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** GIC Re: General Insurance Corporation of India (Re-insurance) | P&I: Protection & Indemnity

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 3

India's Index of Industrial Production (IIP) growth quickened to 8% in August 2026 (from 7.35% in July) — the second-highest reading since the current series began — led by capital goods (+16.9%) and electricity (+12.3%); MoSPI is separately revising the IIP's base year from 2011-12 to 2022-23 to better reflect today's industrial structure.

How to use: Use as a live data point in a GS3 economy answer on industrial recovery, or to show awareness of the IIP's methodology and base-year context.

Odisha's BJD chief Naveen Patnaik has urged united political opposition to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026, warning of 'thousands of crores' in annual mineral-revenue loss for the State — reviving a federalism dispute rooted in Mineral Area Development Authority v. Steel Authority of India (2024), where a 9-judge Supreme Court Bench affirmed States' power to tax mineral-bearing land separately from the Centre's MMDR royalty.

How to use: Use as a current example in a GS2/GS3 answer on Centre-State fiscal federalism over natural resources — cite the fault line between Union List Entry 54 (mines/mineral development) and State List Entry 50 (taxation of mineral rights).

GS PAPER 4: ETHICS, INTEGRITY AND APTITUDE

Light on Truth: A Government Order, Withdrawn Without Explanation

Why in news: Tamil Nadu's move to exempt its entire Public (Law and Order) Department from the Right to Information Act was withdrawn within days of coming to light — with no explanation offered either way.

Key Details:

- **The order:** A September 21 Government Order invoked RTI Section 24(4) to notify the Department as an 'intelligence and security organisation', exempting it from disclosure — the order surfaced publicly only on September 27.
- **The defence, then the reversal:** State Law Minister C.T.R. Nirmalkumar initially defended the move as necessary and said the exemption list wasn't sweeping enough to shield the entire department — then, days later, the government withdrew the G.O. without explaining why.
- **The institutional strain behind it:** Tamil Nadu's Information Commission is functioning with only half its sanctioned eight Information Commissioners and has no Chief Information Commissioner at all.
- **The backlog:** A 2024-25 report by the Satark Nagrik Sangathan found the Commission sitting on a backlog of over 41,000 appeals and complaints, as of June last year.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **The legal lever used:** Section 24(4) of the RTI Act, 2005 allows a State government to exempt an 'intelligence or security organisation' from the Act by notifying it in the Official Gazette.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this as a live illustration of GS4's Ethics and Human Interface dimension (the tension between administrative confidentiality and transparency) intersecting with Probity in Governance (Right to Information as a check on unaccountable power).

MAINS CASE STUDY EXERCISE

Q. You are a Joint Secretary in a State's Law and Order Department. Disclosing certain intelligence-sharing protocols under the Right to Information Act could compromise ongoing investigations and informant safety — yet exempting the entire department from the Act would also shield routine administrative decisions (transfers, postings, procurement) from all public scrutiny indefinitely. Your Minister asks you to draft a notification exempting the whole department under RTI Section 24(4). (a) Identify the competing values and duties at stake. (b) What course of action would you recommend, and why? (250 words)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** RTI: Right to Information | G.O.: Government Order