THE DAILY UPSC BRIEF

HIGH-YIELD DAILY SOURCES & ANALYSIS | 15 OCTOBER 2026

TODAY'S COVERAGE

Table of Contents

9	3	9
ARTICLES	GS PAPERS	MCQS & MAINS QS

GS Paper 2: Polity, Governance & Social Justice — Page 1

1. Grounds of Arrest in Writing: SC Closes the 'Re-arrest' Loophole GS2 · Fundamental Rights & Judiciary 1
2. NSAP Becomes PM Samajik Sahayata Yojana: Social Pensions Till 2030-31 GS2 · Welfare of Vulnerable Sections 2
3. Forest Rights Holders and Rural Jobs: The Extra 50 Days in Limbo GS2 · Welfare of STs & Rural Employment 3

GS Paper 3: Economy, Environment & S&T — Page 6

4. IDBI Bank Goes to Fairfax: India's First Strategic Sale of a Bank GS3 · Banking & Disinvestment 6
5. China+1 Begins at Home: The Trade Deficit and State-Led Manufacturing GS3 · Industrial Policy & External Sector 7
6. Mining vs. a Micro-Endemic: The Jeypore Ground Gecko and Balda Hills GS3 · Biodiversity & Conservation 9
7. Topological Qubits: Microsoft's Majorana 2 and the Science of Proof GS3 · Science & Technology 11
8. The Myth of 'Unskilled' Labour: Skill, Wages and Safety GS3 · Inclusive Growth & Employment 12

GS Paper 4: Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude — Page 14

9. Indicted, Then Promoted? Accountability in Postings After the Indore Water Tragedy GS4 · Probity & Accountability 14

PRELIMS POINTERS — TODAY IN ONE LINE EACH

1. **UNIFIL** — UN Interim Force in Lebanon, a peacekeeping mission since 1978; the UN Security Council has voted to end its mandate on 31 December 2026.
2. **MAHASAGAR** — Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions, India's maritime vision that extends SAGAR; 2026 is the ASEAN–India Year of Maritime Cooperation.
3. **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** — compiled by the Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT; the new series uses 2022-23 as its base year (old series: 2011-12).
4. **Jamboo Savari** — the Vijayadashami elephant procession of Mysuru Dasara (Karnataka); the lead elephant carries the 750-kg golden howdah.
5. **Aravalli Range** — runs from Gujarat through Rajasthan and Haryana to Delhi; its highest peak is Guru Shikhar (1,722 m) at Mount Abu.

HOW TO READ THIS BRIEF

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

GS PAPER 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE & SOCIAL JUSTICE

Grounds of Arrest in Writing: SC Closes the 'Re-arrest' Loophole

Why in news: In *Jaskaran Jeet Singh Deol v. State of Punjab* (21 Sept 2026), the SC held that police who release an accused after failing to give written grounds of arrest cannot simply re-arrest. They need a Magistrate's prior approval.

Story so far: The 11 Oct Brief covered mass detentions in Delhi, Art. 22 and habeas corpus. New today: the SC's rule that a re-arrest after an Art. 22 breach needs judicial approval.

Key Details:

- **Written, and in time:** Grounds may first be given orally if writing is impractical. But they must be in writing, in a language the accused understands, at least two hours before production for remand.
- **Re-arrest needs a judge:** Police must serve written grounds, then apply to the Magistrate with the immediate superior's endorsement, explaining why custody is needed and why the grounds were withheld.
- **Accountability built in:** The investigation must be moved to another officer and a departmental inquiry ordered. HCs may award compensation as a public-law remedy for the Art. 22 breach.
- **Gravity is no excuse:** 'Constitutional protections cannot depend upon the gravity of the offence.' The same rule covers a breach of the 24-hour rule in Art. 22(2).

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Why writing matters:** Oral grounds can later be disputed, and the accused needs the precise grounds to seek bail and oppose remand. The Constitution and BNSS S.47 are silent on the mode, so the courts have filled the gap.
- **Due-process arc:** From *A.K. Gopalan* (1950) to *Maneka Gandhi* (1978), 'procedure established by law' came to mean a procedure that is fair, just and reasonable.

How the SC built the written-grounds rule

Case (year)	Law	Holding
Pankaj Bansal (2023)	PMLA	Written grounds must be furnished as a matter of course
Prabir Purkayastha (2024)	UAPA	Same rule; a breach vitiates arrest and remand
Vihaan Kumar (2025)	General	Breach violates Arts. 21 and 22(1); a later charge sheet cannot cure it
Mihir Rajesh Shah (2025)	All offences, incl. BNS	Writing in a known language; at least 2 hours before remand
Jaskaran Jeet Singh Deol (2026)	All offences	Re-arrest only with Magistrate's approval; inquiry against the officer

Prelims angle: Under Art. 22(4), preventive detention beyond three months needs an Advisory Board's opinion, unless a law made by Parliament under Art. 22(7) provides otherwise.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this in GS2 answers on fundamental rights, police reforms and criminal-justice safeguards. It shows the courts turning Art. 22 into enforceable procedure with consequences for officers.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	Art. 22(1)–(2) safeguards and the *Deol* ruling on written grounds and re-arrest.
BODY	Legal (Arts. 21/22, BNSS S.47); institutional (police accountability, Magistrate's scrutiny); rights (bail, legal aid); balance with investigation needs.
WAY FORWARD	Standard bilingual arrest memos (*D.K. Basu*, 1997); e-records of grounds; training; Model Police Act; compensation jurisprudence.

Mains value-add: In *D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal* (1997), the SC laid down 11 arrest requirements, including an arrest memo attested by a witness and informing a relative. Cite it to show that procedural safeguards are the first line against custodial abuse.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ MODERATE

Q. With reference to the rights of an arrested person under the Constitution of India, consider the following statements:
1. Article 22(1) entitles an arrested person to be informed of the grounds of arrest as soon as may be.
2. The safeguards in Article 22(1) and 22(2) do not apply to a person detained under a law providing for preventive detention.
3. The Constitution expressly requires the grounds of arrest to be furnished in writing.
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: Statement 1 is correct: it is the text of Art. 22(1). Statement 2 is correct: Art. 22(3)(b) excludes preventive detainees, who are covered by Art. 22(4)–(7) instead. Statement 3 is incorrect: neither Art. 22 nor BNSS S.47 specifies the mode. The written requirement comes from SC judgments such as *Pankaj Bansal* and *Mihir Rajesh Shah*. That is the trap.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SC: Supreme Court | HCs: High Courts | Art.: Article | BNSS: Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 | BNS: Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 | S.: Section | PMLA: Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 | UAPA: Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967

NSAP Becomes PM Samajik Sahayata Yojana: Social Pensions Till 2030-31

Why in news: The Cabinet approved ₹53,428 crore to continue the National Social Assistance Programme from 2026-27 to 2030-31. It renamed the scheme and its components and widened the disability pension.

Key Details:

- **Disability pension widened:** Eligibility is now 40% benchmark disability (was 80%), from birth, at ₹375 a month (₹625 at 80+). This brings it in line with the RPwD Act, 2016.
- **Others unchanged:** Old-age, widow and family-benefit components continue in their existing form. Monthly central pensions of ₹200–500 have not been revised for over a decade.
- **Static cap:** NSAP caps beneficiaries at about 3.20 crore. Other welfare schemes use SECC 2011 data to identify beneficiaries, so coverage does not grow with need.
- **Erosion by inflation:** At 5% annual inflation, simply keeping pensions' real value would need about ₹55,698 crore over the period (Azim Premji University estimate).

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Design:** The Centre funds 100% of NSAP's central assistance. Most States top up the pension from their own budgets, so the actual amount varies widely by State.
- **Rights vs schemes:** Social pensions remain a scheme-based entitlement under Art. 41, not a statutory right. Coverage depends on budget ceilings rather than on how many people are eligible.

NSAP components: new names and central assistance (per month)

Old name	New name	Central assistance
IGNOAPS (BPL, 60+)	PM Vridhavastha Pension Yojana	₹200 (60–79); ₹500 (80+)
IGNWPS (BPL widows, 40+)	PM Vidhawa Pension Yojana	₹300 (40–79); ₹500 (80+)
IGNDPS (was 80% disability, 18+)	PM Divyangjan Pension Yojana	₹375 (up to 79); ₹625 (80+), 40% disability, from birth
NFBS	PM Parivar Labh Yojana	₹20,000 one-time, on death of primary breadwinner (18–59)
Annapurna	—	10 kg food grains/month to eligible elderly not getting pension

Social Assistance: Article 41 and NSAP

- **Constitutional basis:** Art. 41 (DPSP): within its economic capacity, the State shall secure public assistance in old age, sickness, disablement and unemployment.
- **Launch:** NSAP was launched on 15 August 1995 under the Ministry of Rural Development. Annapurna was added in 2000.
- **Targeting:** Benefits go mainly to BPL households, which ties coverage to old poverty lists.
- **Disability law:** The RPwD Act, 2016 defines 'benchmark disability' as at least 40%. S.24 asks for disability assistance at least 25% higher than for other similar schemes.
- **Related law:** The MWPSC Act, 2007 makes children liable to maintain parents. NSAP is the State's own safety net.
- **Not to confuse:** APY and PM-SYM are contributory pensions for informal workers. NSAP is non-contributory social assistance.

Prelims angle: Annapurna gives 10 kg of free food grains a month to senior citizens who are eligible for, but not receiving, the old-age pension.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this in GS2 answers on welfare of vulnerable sections, ageing and disability rights. It contrasts a rights-based disability reform with flat, inflation-eroded old-age pensions.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	Art. 41 and NSAP as India's non-contributory social-pension floor; the 2026 renewal.
BODY	Adequacy (pensions flat since 2012); coverage (cap and old BPL lists); federal variation (State top-ups); disability reform aligned with RPwD; delivery (DBT, Aadhaar exclusion).
WAY FORWARD	Index pensions to inflation; demand-driven coverage; a universal non-contributory old-age pension; one social-registry database.

Mains value-add: In *Ashwani Kumar v. Union of India* (2018), the SC read the rights of the elderly to dignity, shelter and health into Art. 21 and asked for old-age pensions to be revisited. Cite it to argue that adequate pensions are a constitutional obligation, not charity.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ MODERATE

Q. With reference to the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), consider the following statements:
1. It was launched in 1995 in pursuance of the Directive Principle contained in Article 41.
2. States must share the cost of NSAP's central assistance with the Centre in a 60:40 ratio.
3. Under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, 'benchmark disability' means not less than 40% of a specified disability.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct: NSAP began on 15 August 1995 to give effect to Art. 41. Statement 2 is incorrect: the Centre provides 100% of NSAP's assistance, and States only add top-ups. Most centrally sponsored schemes use 60:40 sharing, which is the trap. Statement 3 is correct: S.2(r) of the RPwD Act sets the 40% benchmark.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** NSAP: National Social Assistance Programme | RPwD: Rights of Persons with Disabilities | SECC: Socio-Economic and Caste Census | Art.: Article | DPSP: Directive Principle of State Policy | BPL: Below Poverty Line | S.: Section | IGNOAPS: Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme | IGNWPS: Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme | IGNDPS: Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme | NFBS: National Family Benefit Scheme | MWPSC: Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens | APY: Atal Pension Yojana | PM-SYM: Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan | DBT: Direct Benefit Transfer | SC: Supreme Court

Forest Rights Holders and Rural Jobs: The Extra 50 Days in Limbo

Why in news: The VB-G RAM G Act guarantees 125 days of rural work, but no notification yet clarifies the extra 50 days that FRA title-holder households had under MGNREGA. The Ministry says a notification is coming.

Key Details:

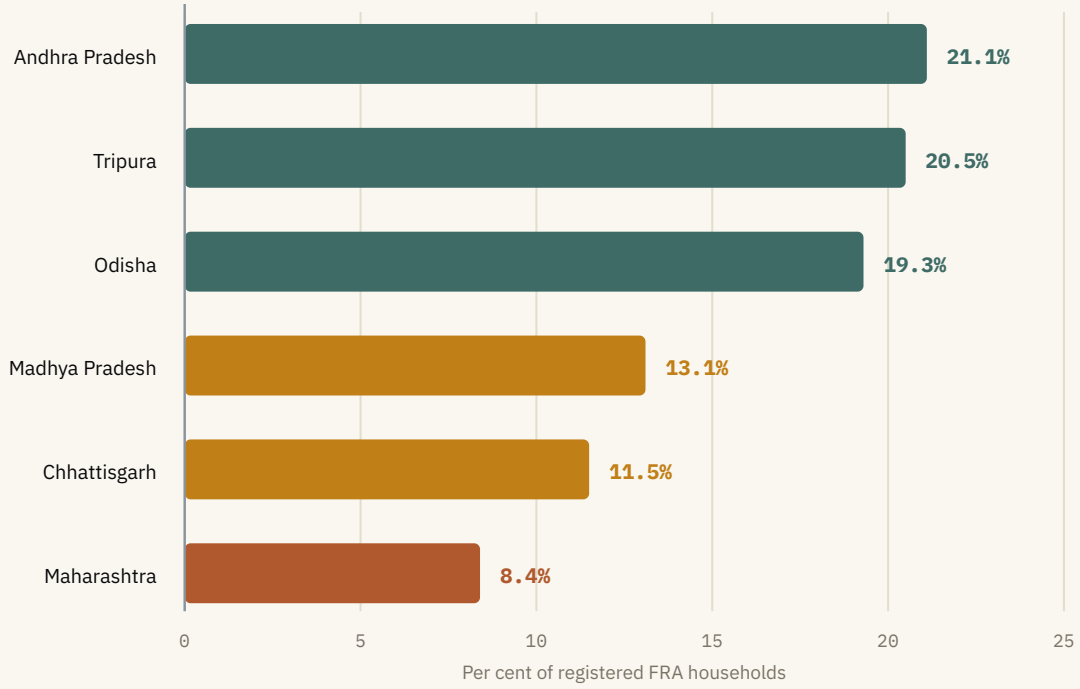
- **What was lost:** Since 2014, FRA title holders were entitled to 150 days of work under MGNREGA, 50 more than others. The new Act has no separate tier for them.

- **Discretion, not entitlement:** Under S.5(4), the Centre or a State may provide more days within its economic capacity. Without a named group, extra work for Adivasis becomes discretionary.
- **Poor uptake even before:** Only 15% of 14 lakh eligible households took the extra days in 2025-26. Low awareness and weak supply of work, not low need, explain the gap.
- **Why it matters:** FRA households often hold small, rain-fed forest plots. Assured wage work is their buffer against seasonal hunger and distress migration.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Concentration:** Six States (Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tripura, Maharashtra) account for 12.9 lakh of the registered FRA households.
- **New design:** Under VB-G RAM G, the Centre and States share costs 60:40 (90:10 in the NE and Himalayan States). States may pause works for up to 60 days in peak farm seasons.

Share of FRA households that availed the extra 50 days (2025-26, %)



The VB-G RAM G Act, 2025

- **What it is:** The Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act replaced MGNREGA, 2005. It was passed in December 2025 and rolled out from 1 July 2026.
- **Guarantee:** At least 125 days of wage work a year per rural household (was 100). Wages are paid weekly, or within 15 days.
- **Planning:** Works come from Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans approved by the Gram Sabha, mapped on PM Gati Shakti.
- **Work areas:** Water security, core rural infrastructure, livelihood assets and extreme-weather mitigation.
- **Funding:** A centrally sponsored scheme with 60:40 sharing (90:10 for NE/Himalayan States; 100% Centre for UTs without legislatures). States pay the unemployment allowance.
- **Not to confuse:** The FRA, 2006 recognises land and forest rights. The extra days were a MGNREGA-era executive entitlement, not part of the FRA itself.

Prelims angle: Mendha-Lekha in Gadchiroli (Maharashtra) was the first village to receive community forest resource rights under the FRA, in 2009.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this in GS2 and GS3 answers on tribal welfare, rural employment and the shift from rights-based to scheme-based design. It shows how legislative change can quietly remove a group-specific entitlement.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	FRA households' 150-day entitlement and its absence in VB-G RAM G.
BODY	Rights (FRA's promise of livelihood security); fiscal federalism (60:40 sharing limits States); implementation (15% uptake, low awareness); tribal vulnerability (rain-fed plots, migration).
WAY FORWARD	Notify the FRA tier under S.5(4); Gram Sabha-led VGPPs prioritising forest-based livelihoods; convergence with PM-JANMAN and Van Dhan; social audits.

Mains value-add: The Xaxa Committee on tribal communities (2014) found that development projects and weak FRA implementation had steadily eroded tribal livelihoods. Cite it to argue that targeted employment guarantees are compensation for historic dispossession, not a favour.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ MODERATE

Q. Consider the following statements:
1. Under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes must have occupied the forest land before 13 December 2005 to claim rights.
2. The Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 guarantees at least 125 days of wage employment per rural household in a financial year.
3. Under the VB-G RAM G Act, the Centre bears the entire wage cost in all States, as it did under MGNREGA.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct: 13 December 2005 is the FRA cut-off. Other traditional forest dwellers must also show 75 years (three generations) of residence. Statement 2 is correct: S.5(1) sets the 125-day guarantee. Statement 3 is incorrect: the new Act makes it a 60:40 centrally sponsored scheme. Under MGNREGA, the Centre paid the full wage bill, and assuming that continued is the trap.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2013: "Under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, who shall be the authority to initiate the process for determining the nature and extent of individual or community forest rights or both? (a) State Forest Department (b) District Collector/Deputy Commissioner (c) Tahsildar/Block Development Officer/Mandal Revenue Officer (d) Gram Sabha" — Answer: (d).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** VB-G RAM G: Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) | FRA: Forest Rights Act, 2006 | MGNREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 | S.: Section | NE: North-Eastern | UTs: Union Territories | VGPPs: Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans | PM-JANMAN: Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 2

Panchayat polls must not wait. The Allahabad High Court directed the Uttar Pradesh State Election Commission to hold panchayat elections within three months. Under Article 243E, elections must be completed before a panchayat's five-year term expires.

How to use: *GS2 answers on local self-government. Pair it with Suresh Mahajan (2022), where the Supreme Court held that State Election Commissions cannot delay polls.*

The Governor's neutrality. Odisha's Governor-designate was criticised by the Biju Janata Dal for saying he would 'work to strengthen' the BJP after assuming office.

How to use: *GS2 answers on the Governor's role. The Sarkaria Commission (1988) said a Governor should be a detached figure, not too closely connected with local politics.*

Prohibitory orders must be public. Justice (retd.) Abhay S. Oka noted that Section 163(5) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita lets an aggrieved person seek modification of an order. That right is meaningless unless the order is published, yet Delhi Police had not made such orders public.

How to use: *GS2 answers on the right to protest and transparency; it complements Anuradha Bhasin (2020), which required restrictive orders to be published.*

Demography panel seeks inputs. The Ministry of Home Affairs' High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes, chaired by former Supreme Court judge P.P. Naolekar, opened a public portal on demographic shifts, especially in border districts, since 2011.

How to use: *GS2 and GS3 answers on border management and illegal migration. Treat it as a consultative exercise, not a finding.*

Equal treatment for offline passengers. The Supreme Court directed that travel insurance be offered on railway tickets bought at counters, as it already was for online bookings, from 27 October 2026.

How to use: *GS2 answers on Article 14 and digital exclusion: welfare benefits should not depend on a citizen's mode of access.*

GS PAPER 3: ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & S&T

IDBI Bank Goes to Fairfax: India's First Strategic Sale of a Bank

Why in news: The CCEA approved the sale of a 60.72% stake in IDBI Bank to Fairfax Financial for ₹52,878 crore. It is the largest FDI in India's financial sector and the biggest strategic disinvestment since Air India.

Key Details:

- **Why 'strategic':** Management control passes to a private owner. That is the test of strategic disinvestment, as opposed to minority stake sales.
- **Price discovery:** The winning bid of ₹81 a share beat a fair value of ₹75.99, set by two independent valuations rather than a volatile market price.
- **Turnaround first, then sale:** Gross NPAs fell from 31.8% (Sept 2018) to 2.3% (Mar 2026), and capital adequacy rose from 6.22% to 26.65%. Recapitalisation and PCA discipline made the bank saleable.
- **What stays:** The Government (15%) and LIC (19%) keep minority stakes. The RBI must clear the buyer as 'fit and proper', and the MHA gave security clearance.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Policy anchor:** Under the New PSE Policy (2021), banking, insurance and financial services is a 'strategic sector' where the State keeps a bare minimum presence. IDBI is its first bank test case.
- **Lesson:** Rescue (LIC's ₹21,624 crore infusion, 2019), clean-up and then exit shows a sequence for PSB privatisation. Selling a weak bank yields little.

IDBI Bank shareholding: before and after the strategic sale (%)



Sold: Government 30.48% + LIC 30.24% = 60.72% at ₹81 a share (₹52,878 crore). Grey = public and others.

Rounded; pre-sale holdings as reported (Government ~45.5%, LIC ~49.2%).

Disinvestment and the New PSE Policy, 2021

- **Two routes:** Minority disinvestment sells shares but keeps control. Strategic disinvestment transfers management control, usually 50% or more, to a strategic buyer.
- **Nodal body:** DIPAM under the Ministry of Finance (renamed from the Department of Disinvestment in 2016).
- **PSE Policy, 2021:** Four strategic sectors keep a bare minimum PSE presence; all other CPSEs are to be privatised or closed.
- **The four sectors:** Atomic energy, space and defence; transport and telecom; power, petroleum, coal and minerals; banking, insurance and financial services.
- **Past landmark:** Air India went to the Tata group in 2021–22, completing the first major strategic sale in two decades.
- **Not to confuse:** Disinvestment proceeds go to the Consolidated Fund. The NIF was set up in 2005 to hold them.

Prelims angle: The FDI cap is 74% in private sector banks (49% automatic, the rest with approval) and 20% in public sector banks (government route).

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this in GS3 answers on banking reform, disinvestment and FDI in finance. It shows that turnaround before sale is the key to getting value.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	IDBI's strategic sale under the New PSE Policy, 2021.
BODY	Economic (fiscal receipts, efficiency, value realisation); regulatory (RBI fit-and-proper test, foreign ownership); social (financial inclusion, jobs); governance (valuation transparency); risks (concentration, foreign control).
WAY FORWARD	Sequence the clean-up before the sale; strong RBI supervision; P.J. Nayak Committee (2014) governance reforms for remaining PSBs; ring-fence priority-sector duties.

Mains value-add: The P.J. Nayak Committee (2014) found PSB governance hampered by dual regulation (Finance Ministry and RBI). It recommended cutting the government stake below 50% through a bank holding company. Cite it to argue that ownership reform is about governance, not only revenue.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ MODERATE

Q. Consider the following statements:
1. IDBI Bank was recategorised as a private sector bank by the RBI after LIC acquired a controlling stake in 2019.
2. Under the New Public Sector Enterprise Policy (2021), banking, insurance and financial services is a strategic sector with a bare minimum government presence.
3. The Prompt Corrective Action framework for banks is administered by the Ministry of Finance.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct: once LIC held 51%, the RBI classified IDBI as a private bank in 2019. Statement 2 is correct: it is one of four strategic sectors under the 2021 policy. Statement 3 is incorrect: PCA is an RBI supervisory framework that triggers on capital, asset-quality and leverage thresholds. The Finance Ministry owns PSBs but does not run PCA, and confusing owner with regulator is the trap.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** CCEA: Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs | FDI: Foreign Direct Investment | NPAs: Non-Performing Assets | PCA: Prompt Corrective Action | LIC: Life Insurance Corporation | RBI: Reserve Bank of India | MHA: Ministry of Home Affairs | PSE: Public Sector Enterprise | PSB: Public Sector Bank | PSBs: Public Sector Banks | DIPAM: Department of Investment and Public Asset Management | CPSEs: Central Public Sector Enterprises | NIF: National Investment Fund

China+1 Begins at Home: The Trade Deficit and State-Led Manufacturing

Why in news: India's trade deficit with China crossed $100 billion in January–September 2026, even as exports to China grew 40%. Evidence from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka shows global firms choose States, not 'India', when relocating.

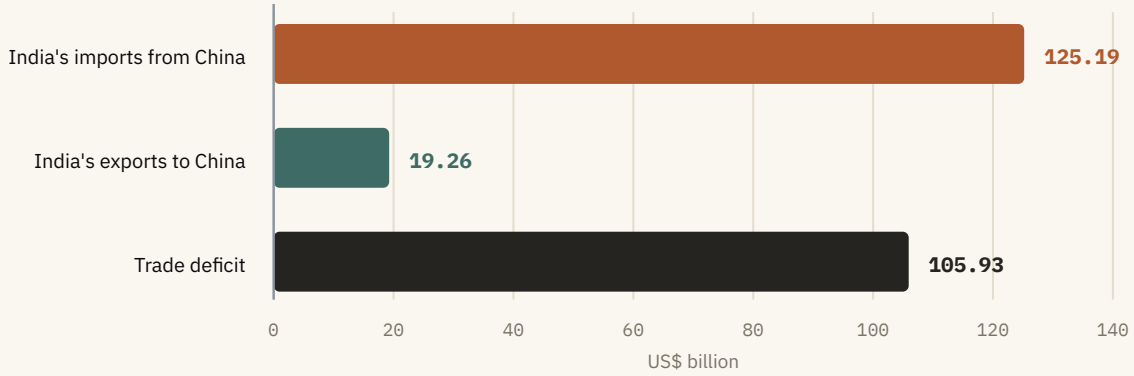
Key Details:

- **Lopsided trade:** Per China's customs data, imports of $125.19 billion are 6.5 times exports of $19.26 billion. Electronics, machinery and intermediates for Indian factories dominate the imports.
- **Assembly, not depth:** Electronics exports of about $48 billion in 2025-26 sat beside imports of $116 billion. Indian phones are 'assembled products with 20% inputs from India'.
- **States decide:** Tamil Nadu (autos, Foxconn at Sriperumbudur) and Karnataka (engineering talent, Devanahalli) won investment through land, power, skills and policy continuity built over decades.
- **Policy shift:** The PLI for large-scale electronics ended on 31 March 2026. ECMS now targets components, where the import dependence lies.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **ECMS so far:** 46 projects approved in three tranches (₹54,567 crore investment, ~51,000 jobs). The outlay was raised from ₹22,919 crore to ₹40,000 crore in Budget 2026-27.
- **Concentration:** Maharashtra (31%), Karnataka (21%), Gujarat (15%) and Delhi (13%) lead FDI equity inflows (Oct 2019–Mar 2026). Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand lag far behind.

India–China trade, January–September 2026 (US$ billion)



Electronics Manufacturing: PLI and ECMS

- **PLI idea:** Incentives linked to incremental sales over a base year, launched in 2020. The large-scale electronics PLI was the first.
- **ECMS:** The Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme under MeitY was notified in April 2025. It runs six years with turnover-linked, capex and hybrid incentives.
- **Target:** Sub-assemblies and components (PCBs, camera and display modules, passive components), where value addition is low.
- **Semiconductors:** The ISM (2021) supports fabs and ATMP units separately; ECMS fills the component layer between chips and phones.
- **Value-chain logic:** Backward linkages (local suppliers) take four to five years to form, so incentives need policy stability.
- **Not to confuse:** PLI pays for output. A capital subsidy pays a share of investment cost. ECMS offers both.

Prelims angle: India is not a member of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). It walked out of the negotiations in November 2019, citing trade-deficit concerns, especially with China.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this in GS3 answers on industrial policy, manufacturing and trade dependence. Pair it with GS2 answers on cooperative and competitive federalism.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	The $100-billion deficit with China and the China+1 opportunity.
BODY	Economic (assembly vs components, value addition); strategic (dependence on a rival for intermediates); federal (State capacity decides FDI); regional inequality (southern and western concentration); policy (PLI to ECMS).
WAY FORWARD	Component ecosystems and supplier parks; State-level reforms in land, power and skills; stable tariffs; R&D; a balanced FDI screen under Press Note 3.

Mains value-add: The Economic Survey 2023-24 argued that India may need Chinese FDI to plug into global supply chains and cut its trade deficit, much as the U.S. and Mexico gained from it. Cite it to show the trade-off between security caution and manufacturing depth.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. "India's China+1 opportunity will be won or lost in its States." Examine the factors behind the concentration of manufacturing investment in a few States, and suggest how component-level industrial policy can reduce dependence on Chinese imports. (250 words)

▪ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** PLI: Production Linked Incentive | ECMS: Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme | FDI: Foreign Direct Investment | MeitY: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology | PCBs: Printed Circuit Boards | ISM: India Semiconductor Mission | ATMP: Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging | R&D: Research and Development

Mining vs. a Micro-Endemic: The Jeypore Ground Gecko and Balda Hills

Why in news: A proposed 147-hectare bauxite mine in Odisha's Balda hills (Nageswari reserve forest) overlaps one of the last known habitats of the endangered Jeypore ground gecko. Local Bondo and Poraja Adivasis oppose it.

Key Details:

- **A species rediscovered:** Described in 1878 by Richard Beddome, the gecko was presumed extinct for 130 years until rediscovered in Koraput in 2010. Just four individuals were recorded in Balda in the past year.
- **Extreme range restriction:** It lives only under boulders in high forested hills of the Eastern Ghats (about 900–1,400 m). Losing one hill can wipe out a population.
- **History repeats:** Its type locality near Potangi was already lost to NALCO's bauxite mining. Bauxite caps on Eastern Ghats hilltops are exactly where such endemics survive.
- **Rights angle:** Adivasis have applied for forest rights over the hill. Under the FRA and *Niyamgiri*, Gram Sabha consent and rights recognition must come before forest diversion.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Status:** IUCN Endangered (2019); listed in CITES Appendix II at COP19 (2022) on India's proposal, to curb the international pet trade.
- **Protection gap:** None of its known habitats lies inside a protected area, so project-level EIAs and forest clearance are the only filters.

The Eastern Ghats and the Niyamgiri Precedent

- **Geography:** A broken chain of hills from Odisha through Andhra Pradesh to Tamil Nadu, cut by the Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri.
- **Contrast:** Older and lower than the Western Ghats. The Western Ghats are a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a global biodiversity hotspot; the Eastern Ghats are neither.
- **Minerals:** Hilltop bauxite caps in Koraput, Rayagada and Kalahandi feed India's aluminium industry, which is a source of mining conflict.
- **Niyamgiri (2013):** In *Orissa Mining Corporation v. MoEF*, the SC let Gram Sabhas decide on Vedanta's bauxite mine. All 12 Gram Sabhas rejected it.
- **Legal filters:** Forest clearance under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980; EIA Notification, 2006; FRA Gram Sabha certification.
- **Not to confuse:** The 'Eastern Ghats' are not one of India's four biodiversity hotspots (Himalaya, Indo-Burma, Western Ghats–Sri Lanka, Sundaland).

Prelims angle: Jindhagada Peak (about 1,690 m) in Andhra Pradesh is the highest point of the Eastern Ghats. The Bonda of Malkangiri are one of Odisha's PVTGs.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this in GS3 answers on biodiversity and mining, and GS2 answers on tribal consent. It shows how small, unglamorous endemics fall through protected-area-centric conservation.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	The bauxite proposal in the Balda hills and the endangered Jeypore ground gecko.
BODY	Ecological (micro-endemism, Eastern Ghats neglect); legal (FRA, Gram Sabha consent, *Niyamgiri*); economic (aluminium demand); social (Bondo, Poraja livelihoods); institutional (protected-area gap).
WAY FORWARD	Cumulative impact assessment; biodiversity-heritage sites under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002; no-go zones for micro-endemics; free, prior and informed consent.

Mains value-add: In *T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad v. Union of India* (1996), the SC held that 'forest' must be understood in its dictionary sense, whatever its ownership or classification. Cite it to argue that reserve-forest hills like Balda need full forest-law scrutiny before mining.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ `MODERATE–HARD`

Q. With reference to the Jeypore ground gecko, consider the following statements:
1. It is endemic to the Eastern Ghats.
2. It is listed as 'Critically Endangered' on the IUCN Red List.
3. It was included in Appendix II of CITES on India's proposal.
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: it is known only from the hills of southern Odisha and northern Andhra Pradesh. Statement 2 is incorrect: the IUCN lists it as Endangered (2019), not Critically Endangered. Its 130-year 'extinction' tempts aspirants to pick the higher category, which is the trap. Statement 3 is correct: COP19 (Panama, 2022) listed it in Appendix II on India's proposal.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2015: "With reference to IUCN and CITES, which of the following statements is/are correct? 1. IUCN is an organ of the United Nations and CITES is an international agreement between governments. 2. IUCN runs thousands of field projects around the world to better manage natural environments. 3. CITES is legally binding on the States that have joined it, but this Convention does not take the place of national laws." — Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** NALCO: National Aluminium Company Limited | FRA: Forest Rights Act, 2006 | IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature | CITES: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora | COP19: 19th Conference of the Parties | EIAs: Environmental Impact Assessments | EIA: Environmental Impact Assessment | MoEF: Ministry of Environment and Forests | SC: Supreme Court | PVTGs: Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

Topological Qubits: Microsoft's Majorana 2 and the Science of Proof

Why in news: Microsoft's Majorana 2 chip claims a far more stable topological qubit, but leading physicists say Majorana zero modes are still not convincingly demonstrated. The dispute is a lesson in how science should verify big claims.

Story so far: The 4 Oct Brief covered India's first 5.56-km free-space QKD link under the National Quantum Mission. New today: the global contest over topological qubits and the evidence needed to back them.

Key Details:

- **The promise:** Ordinary qubits are fragile. A topological qubit stores information across a pair of separated Majorana zero modes (MZMs), so local noise cannot easily destroy it.
- **What changed:** Majorana 2 swapped aluminium for lead and used a gallium-antimonide substrate. The 'topological gap' rose from ~30 to ~70 μeV, and parity lifetime from milliseconds to ~20 seconds.
- **Why sceptics remain:** MZMs cannot be seen directly; they are inferred from measurements. Similar-looking 'trivial' states exist, and a 2018 *Nature* paper claiming MZMs was retracted in 2021.
- **The process works:** Rebuttals, responses and replication are being published in *Nature* and at the APS. Science corrects itself through open scrutiny, not press releases.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Stakes:** Microsoft targets a scalable quantum computer by 2029 and is in the final phase of DARPA's US2QC programme. Error correction is the bottleneck for every quantum platform.
- **India's route:** The National Quantum Mission funds four thematic hubs, including one on quantum computing at IISc Bengaluru. Superconducting and photonic qubits are India's main bets.

Majorana 1 vs. Majorana 2 (as reported by Microsoft)

Feature	Majorana 1 (Feb 2025)	Majorana 2 (June 2026)
Superconductor	Aluminium	Lead
Topological gap	~30 μeV	~70 μeV
Parity switching time	Milliseconds	~20 seconds
Peer status	*Nature* paper; claims contested	Preprint; claims still contested

Qubits, Majorana Fermions and Topological Protection

- **Qubit:** The basic unit of quantum information. It can be in a superposition of 0 and 1, and qubits can be entangled with each other.
- **Decoherence:** Interaction with heat or stray fields destroys a qubit's state. This is why quantum error correction needs many physical qubits per logical qubit.
- **Majorana fermion:** Predicted by Ettore Majorana (1937): a particle that is its own antiparticle. MZMs are its quasiparticle analogue in materials.
- **Topological protection:** Information is stored in a global property of the system, so small local disturbances cannot change it.
- **Other platforms:** Superconducting circuits (Google, IBM), trapped ions, neutral atoms and photonic qubits.
- **Not to confuse:** Quantum computing performs calculations. QKD is quantum communication for secure key exchange.

Prelims angle: India's National Quantum Mission targets intermediate-scale quantum computers with 50–1,000 physical qubits in eight years.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this in GS3 answers on emerging technologies and India's quantum ambitions. It also works for essays on scientific temper and research integrity.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	Qubits, decoherence and the case for topological qubits.
BODY	Technology (MZMs, topological gap, parity lifetime); verification (inference, retractions, rebuttals); strategic (2029 race, DARPA); India (NQM hubs, platform choices).
WAY FORWARD	Diversify platforms under NQM; open data and replication norms; talent and fabrication capacity; quantum-safe cryptography in parallel.

Mains value-add: Art. 51A(h) makes developing 'the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform' a Fundamental Duty. Cite it to argue that peer review and replication, not corporate announcements, should anchor public trust in science.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ MODERATE–HARD

Q. With reference to quantum computing, consider the following statements:
1. A qubit can exist in a superposition of the states 0 and 1.
2. Topological qubits seek to reduce errors by storing information non-locally, across a pair of Majorana zero modes.
3. A Majorana fermion is a particle that is distinct from its own antiparticle.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct: superposition is what distinguishes a qubit from a classical bit. Statement 2 is correct: splitting the information across two separated MZMs is the basis of topological protection. Statement 3 is incorrect: a Majorana fermion is its own antiparticle, unlike the electron (whose antiparticle is the positron). Assuming every particle has a distinct antiparticle is the trap.

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2022: "Which one of the following is the context in which the term 'qubit' is mentioned? (a) Cloud Services (b) Quantum Computing (c) Visible Light Communication Technologies (d) Wireless Communication Technologies" — Answer: (b).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** MZMs: Majorana Zero Modes | μeV: microelectronvolt | APS: American Physical Society | DARPA: Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (U.S.) | US2QC: Underexplored Systems for Utility-Scale Quantum Computing | IISc: Indian Institute of Science | QKD: Quantum Key Distribution | NQM: National Quantum Mission | Art.: Article

The Myth of 'Unskilled' Labour: Skill, Wages and Safety

Why in news: Labour studies show that workers officially classed as 'unskilled' face lower pay, more wage theft and worse injuries, even when the work demands real competence. The classification itself drives the inequity.

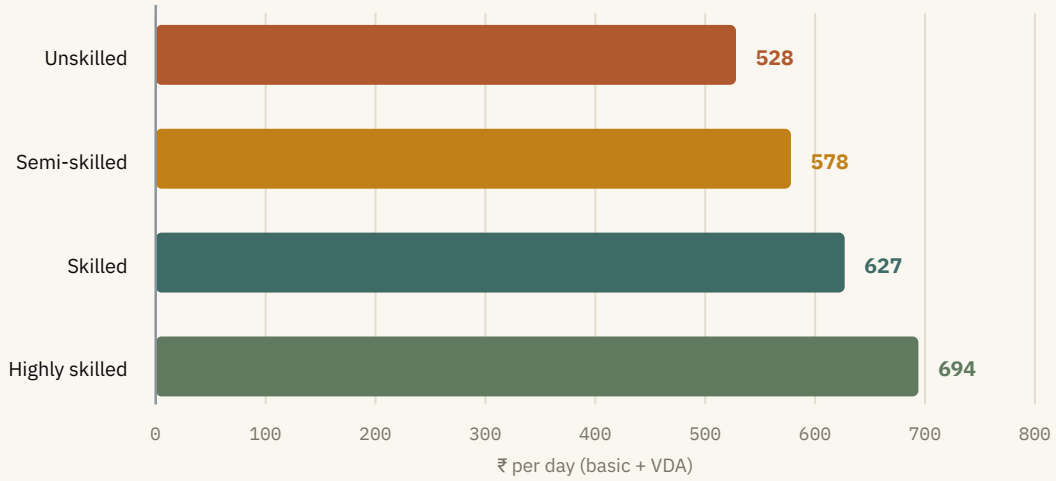
Key Details:

- **Classification shapes pay:** Minimum wages are fixed by skill category, so the 'unskilled' label caps earnings regardless of the expertise the job actually needs.
- **A self-reinforcing trap:** Low wages leave little room to earn formal qualifications, and precarious jobs give employers no reason to invest in training.
- **Safety penalty:** In auto-sector accidents (2024), 'unskilled' workers earning under ₹8,000 a month lost 2.27 fingers per accident, against 1.54 for those earning over ₹20,000 (Safe in India Foundation).
- **Social stratification:** Who counts as 'skilled' tracks caste, gender and migration lines. Formal credentials recognise institutional training, not embodied experience.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Wage theft:** 'Unskilled' migrant workers in Keralam's construction and hospitality sectors faced 40% more wage theft than skilled workers (IIMAD, Thiruvananthapuram).
- **Tool for reform:** Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) under PMKVY certifies existing skills, letting experienced workers move up the wage ladder without formal courses.

Central-sphere minimum wage, agriculture, Area A (₹ per day, from 1 Apr 2026)



The Code on Wages, 2019

- **What it merged:** Four laws: Payment of Wages Act (1936), Minimum Wages Act (1948), Payment of Bonus Act (1965) and Equal Remuneration Act (1976).
- **In force:** All four Labour Codes took effect on 21 November 2025.
- **Universal coverage:** Minimum wages now apply to all employees, not only to 'scheduled employments' as under the 1948 Act.
- **Floor wage:** The Centre sets a floor wage (S.9). States cannot fix minimum wages below it.
- **Fixing factors:** Skill category (unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled, highly skilled), geographical area, and arduous or hazardous conditions.
- **Not to confuse:** VDA is the inflation-linked part of the central minimum wage, revised every April and October. It is different from government employees' DA.

Prelims angle: The four Labour Codes are on Wages (2019), Industrial Relations (2020), Social Security (2020), and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (2020).

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this in GS3 answers on labour reforms and inclusive growth, and in GS1 answers on social stratification. It shows that labour classification is a policy choice, not a natural fact.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	'Unskilled' as an administrative label under the Code on Wages, 2019.
BODY	Economic (wage caps, wage theft); safety (injury gap); social (caste, gender, migration); informality (contract labour); policy (skill-based wage fixing).
WAY FORWARD	RPL at scale; an occupation-wise skill taxonomy (NSQF); OSH Code enforcement; a statutory floor wage indexed to living costs; trade-union voice.

Mains value-add: In *PUDR v. Union of India* (1982), the SC held that paying less than the minimum wage amounts to 'forced labour' under Art. 23. Cite it to show that wage floors are a fundamental-rights issue, not just a labour-market rule.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ EASY–MODERATE

Q. With reference to the Code on Wages, 2019, consider the following statements:
1. It empowers the Central Government to fix a floor wage.
2. Minimum wages under the Code are to be fixed taking into account the skill category of workers and the geographical area.
3. It subsumed the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 and the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct: S.9 provides for a Centre-set floor wage. Statement 2 is correct: skill and area are the fixing factors, with weight for arduous or hazardous work. Statement 3 is correct, and it is the trap: many assume bonus law sits in the Social Security Code. In fact the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 was merged into the Code on Wages, along with the Payment of Wages Act, the Minimum Wages Act and the Equal Remuneration Act.

▪ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** IIMAD: International Institute of Migration and Development | RPL: Recognition of Prior Learning | PMKVY: Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana | VDA: Variable Dearness Allowance | DA: Dearness Allowance | S.: Section | NSQF: National Skills Qualifications Framework | OSH: Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions | PUDR: People's Union for Democratic Rights | SC: Supreme Court | Art.: Article

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 3

Wholesale inflation spikes. WPI inflation rose to 11.4% in September 2026, a high on the new 2022-23 base series. Food was at 8.1%, fuel and power at 25.85%, and manufactured goods at 9.8%.

How to use: *GS3 answers on imported and cost-push inflation. A high WPI–CPI gap signals pressure on producers that may later pass through to consumers.*

Sugarcane pricing panel. The Centre set up a four-member panel under former NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand to examine sugarcane farmers' issues, including revising the minimum selling price of sugar.

How to use: *GS3 answers on agricultural pricing. The cane FRP is set by the Centre on CACP advice, while the sugar minimum selling price protects mills' ability to pay farmers.*

Punjab's drug burden. The AIIMS-led Magnitude of Substance Use survey (2017–18 data) found opioid dependence in 1.28% of Punjab's population aged 10–75, against 0.26% nationally. NCRB data show 106 overdose deaths in Punjab in 2024, up from 89 in 2023.

How to use: *GS3 answers on drug trafficking as an internal-security threat, linking the Golden Crescent, border smuggling and organised crime.*

E-mobility push. The PM E-DRIVE scheme (₹10,900 crore) supports electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers, buses, trucks, ambulances and charging infrastructure. It succeeded the FAME-II scheme.

How to use: *GS3 answers on clean transport and urban air quality: electrification works best when combined with public transport and last-mile connectivity.*

GS PAPER 4: ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

Indicted, Then Promoted? Accountability in Postings After the Indore Water Tragedy

Why in news: An IAS officer named 'primarily responsible' by a judicial commission for Indore's water-contamination deaths has been posted as Collector of Raisen, weeks after the report reached the High Court.

Story so far: The 2 Oct Brief carried the commission's report on the Indore water deaths as a Quick Fact. New today: an officer it named has been posted as a District Collector.

Key Details:

- **The finding:** A one-member commission (Justice Sushil Kumar Gupta, retd.) found that delays of up to 859 days in pipeline tenders let sewage enter drinking water, calling it 'gross negligence'.
- **The posting:** The officer, earlier suspended (2 January 2026), was given a district charge in a 23-officer reshuffle. The commission had recommended departmental and legal action.
- **Competing duties:** Due process says no penalty without an inquiry and a hearing. Public trust says no plum posting while an indictment is pending.
- **Signal to the system:** When postings ignore findings of fault, the incentive to avoid negligence weakens across the service.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **GS4 linkage:** Accountability (answerability for outcomes), probity in governance (merit-based postings) and public trust as a value in its own right.
- **Administrative tool:** Neutral options exist between punishment and reward: a non-field posting pending inquiry, or a time-bound departmental proceeding.

Probity in Postings: Civil Services Boards and Tenure

- ***T.S.R. Subramanian v. UoI* (2013):** The SC directed Civil Services Boards to advise on transfers and postings, minimum fixed tenure, and written recording of oral instructions.
- **Why tenure matters:** Arbitrary transfers are used as punishment or reward, which undermines neutrality and courage in the bureaucracy.
- **Disciplinary law:** All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969: suspension, inquiry and penalties. Art. 311 protects against dismissal without inquiry.
- **2nd ARC (Ethics in Governance, 2007):** Recommended a code of ethics and accountability for outcomes, not just processes.
- **Not to confuse:** Accountability is answerability for results to an external authority. Responsibility is the duty an official owns.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use this in GS4 case studies on accountability, probity and the ethics of administrative discretion. It shows the tension between procedural fairness and public trust.

Answer skeleton

INTRO	Stakeholders (victims' families, the officer, the government, the service) and the core dilemma.
BODY	Options: retain posting / revoke posting / neutral posting pending a time-bound inquiry. Weigh each on fairness, public trust and precedent.
CONCLUSION	Neutral non-field posting plus a time-bound inquiry, which upholds both due process and accountability.

Mains value-add: The Nolan Committee (U.K., 1995) defined accountability as public office-holders being 'accountable to the public for their decisions and actions', submitting to 'whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office'. Cite it to argue that a pending indictment is precisely the scrutiny a posting decision must respect.

MAINS CASE STUDY EXERCISE

Q. You are the Chief Secretary of a State. A judicial commission has named an officer 'primarily responsible' for deaths caused by contaminated water supply. Weeks later, the officer has been proposed as a District Collector in a routine reshuffle. The officer has not yet been heard in a departmental inquiry, and the media and victims' families are protesting. Identify the ethical issues involved, evaluate the options available to you, and state the course of action you would recommend. (250 words)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** IAS: Indian Administrative Service | UoI: Union of India | SC: Supreme Court | Art.: Article | 2nd ARC: Second Administrative Reforms Commission | U.K.: United Kingdom