

THE DAILY UPSC BRIEF

HIGH-YIELD DAILY SOURCES & ANALYSIS | MONDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2026

TODAY'S COVERAGE

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PRELIMS POINTERS — TODAY IN ONE LINE EACH

- CEC appointments:** The 2023 Act's Selection Committee comprises the Prime Minister, a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister and the Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition.
- FRLD:** The World Bank is the Fund's interim host and trustee; this role is distinct from the Fund's governing Board.
- Farmer IDs:** Indian Express reported that 26% of the 11 crore registered farmers were women and about 81% held small or marginal operational holdings; registry coverage does not by itself prove who actually cultivates each plot.
- UNESCO Tentative List:** Sirpur and two Andaman properties were added in September 2026, taking India's list to 81; tentative status is not World Heritage inscription.
- Fertiliser balance:** ICRIER's cited analysis gives India's N:P:K use ratio as 10.5:4.1:1 against its derived normative ratio of 2.8:1.5:1.

HOW TO READ THIS BRIEF

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

GENERAL STUDIES PAPER I

Sirpur: A Multi-Religious Urban Landscape on UNESCO’s Tentative List

GS1 · ART & CULTURE

WHY IN NEWS

UNESCO added the Sirpur Cultural and Archaeological Landscape to India’s Tentative List on 28 September 2026. This is a preliminary step toward a possible nomination, not World Heritage inscription.

- Key Details:**
- **Location and period:** Sirpur lies on the eastern bank of the Mahanadi in Chhattisgarh’s Mahasamund district; its reported archaeological remains span roughly the 5th to 12th centuries CE.
 - **Shared urban fabric:** The landscape contains Hindu, Buddhist and Jain monuments alongside civic and water-management remains, supporting study of religious and urban life in Dakshina Kosala.
 - **Next step:** India must prepare and submit a nomination dossier that demonstrates Outstanding Universal Value and provides conservation and management plans.

- Data/Facts/Example:**
- **Reported monument count:** The Indian Express reports 22 Shiva temples, five Vaishnava temples, 10 Buddhist viharas and three Jain viharas.
 - **Architectural example:** The Lakshmana Temple, dedicated to Vishnu and built around the 7th century, is a notable brick temple at Sirpur.
 - **Status distinction:** A Tentative List entry is an inventory of properties a State Party considers suitable for nomination; it does not itself confer UNESCO World Heritage status.



STATIC SYLLABUS LINK

Tentative List: A State Party’s inventory of properties it considers suitable for nomination.

Nomination dossier: Must explain Outstanding Universal Value and support it with authenticity, integrity, conservation and management arrangements.

Decision: The World Heritage Committee evaluates nominations; Tentative List inclusion alone is not inscription.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Sirpur is on UNESCO’s Tentative List, not yet inscribed on the World Heritage List.

HOW TO USE IN UPSC MAINS

For GS1 art and culture, use Sirpur to discuss shared urban heritage and plural traditions. Pair heritage recognition with local stewardship, conservation capacity and sustainable visitor management.

ANSWER SKELETON	
Intro	Heritage is both material evidence and a living cultural landscape.
Significance	Religious plurality, urban history, architecture and water management.
Challenges	Conservation, encroachment, visitor pressure and fragmented management.
Way forward	Dossier-led conservation, local participation and sustainable access.

Mains value-add: Sirpur’s religious and civic remains sit within one archaeological landscape; this makes management of the setting and connections between monuments relevant alongside protection of individual structures.

- TARGET PRELIMS MCQ · MODERATE**
- Q.** With reference to UNESCO’s World Heritage process, consider the following statements:
1. A Tentative List is an inventory submitted by a State Party of properties it considers suitable for nomination.
 2. Inclusion on a Tentative List automatically makes a property a World Heritage Site.
 3. A nomination dossier must make the case for Outstanding Universal Value and address conservation and management.
- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 2 and 3 only

ANSWER: (c) 1 and 3 only

Tentative List inclusion is preliminary and does not confer World Heritage status. A nomination dossier must justify Outstanding Universal Value and address how the property will be protected and managed.

• **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** OUV: Outstanding Universal Value | ASI: Archaeological Survey of India

GENERAL STUDIES PAPER II

An Independent Election Commission, Accountable from Within

GS2 · POLITY & GOVERNANCE

WHY IN NEWS

An RTI disclosure reported on 23 October showed the Cabinet Secretariat declining direct action on letters from two Election Commissioners about an officer serving in the ECI. The episode brings institutional autonomy and internal accountability into focus.

Key Details:

- **Constitutional mandate:** Article 324 vests the superintendence, direction and control of elections in the Election Commission of India.
- **Boundary of executive coordination:** The Cabinet Secretariat coordinates government business under the Rules of Business; the ECI's constitutional role requires safeguards against executive direction in election administration.
- **Accountability question:** A multi-member institution needs clear procedures for recording disagreement, deciding collectively and addressing staff conduct without weakening its independence.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Article 324(5):** Parliament may regulate service conditions and tenure; the Chief Election Commissioner has removal safeguards comparable to a Supreme Court judge, while other Election Commissioners may be removed only on the CEC's recommendation.
- **Institutional balance:** Autonomy protects impartial elections; transparent internal procedure and reasoned decisions protect accountability and public confidence.



STATIC SYLLABUS LINK

Article 324(1): Election superintendence, direction and control vest in the ECI.

Article 324(2): Appointments are made by the President, subject to parliamentary law; the 2023 Act now governs appointments.

Article 324(5): Removal safeguards distinguish the CEC from other Election Commissioners.

Not to confuse: Constitutional independence does not remove the need for transparent institutional procedure.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Article 324(5): CEC removal follows the process applicable to a Supreme Court judge; other Election Commissioners require the CEC's recommendation.

HOW TO USE IN UPSC MAINS

For GS2, frame the issue as a balance between constitutional autonomy and institutional accountability. Strengthen collegial decision-making, written procedures, disclosure of reasons and safeguards against executive interference.

ANSWER SKELETON

Intro	Free and fair elections depend on an independent election authority.
Constitution	Article 324 mandate and differentiated removal safeguards.
Tension	Autonomy from executive control alongside internal accountability.
Reform	Collegial procedure, reasoned records, transparent rules and fair staff processes.

Mains value-add: The Supreme Court's 2023 Anoop Baranwal judgment treated an independent appointment process as part of protecting the ECI's constitutional role; Parliament subsequently enacted the 2023 appointments law.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ · MODERATE

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

1. Article 324 vests the superintendence, direction and control of elections in the Commission.
2. Other Election Commissioners can be removed only on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner.
3. The Cabinet Secretariat is the constitutional authority that directs the ECI in election matters.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER: (a) 1 and 2 only

Article 324(1) vests election control in the ECI. Under Article 324(5), other Election Commissioners cannot be removed except on the CEC's recommendation. Executive coordination does not confer power to direct the ECI in election matters.

- **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** ECI: Election Commission of India | CEC: Chief Election Commissioner | RTI: Right to Information

Nepal's \$20 Million Tests the Loss-and-Damage Fund

GS2 · INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

WHY IN NEWS

The FRLD board earmarked USD 20 million (about INR 190 crore) for Nepal's post-flood recovery, its first emergency allocation; release remains subject to formalities.

Key Details:

- **Why it matters:** The decision tests whether the climate-finance mechanism can deliver rapid support after a disaster.
- **Funding gap:** The allocation is small beside Nepal's estimated reconstruction need of roughly USD 4.75 billion.
- **Institutional context:** The fund emerged from COP27 and was operationalised at COP28; its regular application process is separate from this emergency decision.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Scale:** The fund had received about USD 822 million against requests totalling USD 2.8 billion.
- **Equity:** Loss-and-damage finance addresses residual harms that adaptation and mitigation cannot fully prevent.



STATIC SYLLABUS LINK

COP27: Parties agreed to establish the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage.

COP28: Parties operationalised the fund and selected the World Bank as interim host.

Distinct purpose: It addresses climate harms that mitigation and adaptation cannot avert; it is not the same as disaster insurance.

PRELIMS ANGLE

FRLD: established at COP27, operationalised at COP28; distinguish it from adaptation and mitigation finance.

HOW TO USE IN UPSC MAINS

For GS2/GS3, assess climate finance through access, predictability, adequacy and equity; distinguish emergency allocations from regular calls.

ANSWER SKELETON

Intro	Define loss and damage as residual climate harms.
Context	COP27 decision; COP28 operationalisation; Nepal emergency allocation.
Challenges	Scale, predictable contributions, access and prioritisation.
Way forward	Adequate replenishment, transparent criteria and locally led recovery.

Mains value-add: Paris Agreement Decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 51, states that Article 8 does not provide a basis for liability or compensation—an important legal context for loss-and-damage finance.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ · MODERATE

Q. With reference to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), consider the following statements:

1. It was established following COP27 and operationalised at COP28.
2. Every request automatically creates an enforceable entitlement to a grant.
3. The Nepal allocation illustrates an emergency pathway distinct from the regular application round.

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) 2 and 3 only

ANSWER: (b) 1 and 3 only

The fund was established in 2022 and operationalised in 2023. Funding is not automatic; Nepal's emergency allocation followed a separate board decision.

- **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** FRLD: Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage | COP: Conference of the Parties

OBC Creamy Layer: Equality Requires More Than an Income Cut-off

GS2 · SOCIAL JUSTICE

WHY IN NEWS

The Supreme Court’s 11 March 2026 ruling on how the Other Backward Classes creamy layer is identified has affected service allocation and training for a 2025 Civil Services Examination cohort while the Centre seeks clarification. The underlying issue is how exclusion criteria can remain constitutionally fair.

Key Details:

- **Constitutional aim:** The creamy-layer principle excludes relatively advanced sections within OBCs so that reservation benefits reach the socially and educationally backward.
- **Court’s holding:** The Supreme Court held that parental income cannot be the sole test; comparing candidates also requires attention to the status and comparability of their parents’ posts and circumstances.
- **Implementation question:** The case raises how criteria should apply across government, public-sector, university and private-sector employment without treating similarly placed candidates differently.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Legal foundation:** The OBC creamy-layer principle followed the Supreme Court’s 1992 Indra Sawhney judgment.
- **Administrative framework:** DoPT’s 1993 Office Memorandum set the central framework; a 2004 clarification on salary income in private and public-sector cases was part of the dispute considered by the Court.
- **Ethical-governance link:** Transparent criteria, reasoned decisions and a workable appeal route matter to both distributive justice and public trust.



STATIC SYLLABUS LINK

Purpose: Exclude socially advanced sections within OBCs from reservation benefits.
Constitutional context: Affirmative action must operate consistently with equality and non-arbitrariness.
Assessment: Apply relevant status-based criteria; do not collapse every case into a single income number.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Do not equate the creamy-layer test with an income-only rule; the Supreme Court’s 2026 decision addressed status comparability as well.

HOW TO USE IN UPSC MAINS

For GS2, examine the ruling through equality, affirmative action and administrative design. A fair framework must target exclusion accurately, treat comparable candidates alike and give reasons that can be reviewed.

ANSWER SKELETON

Intro	Explain the creamy-layer principle and its role within OBC reservation.
Issue	Income-only proxies may fail to capture social and occupational status.
Constitution	Balance substantive equality with non-arbitrary classification.
Reform	Clear comparable-post criteria, reasoned orders, consistent application and review.

Mains value-add: The judgment’s equality concern is that similarly placed OBC candidates should not be treated differently merely because one parent works in a private or public-sector organisation.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ · MODERATE

Q. With reference to the OBC creamy-layer principle, consider the following statements:

1. The principle seeks to exclude relatively advanced sections within OBCs from reservation benefits.

2. The Supreme Court’s 2026 ruling held that parental income alone is sufficient to determine creamy-layer status in every case.

3. A fair assessment may require comparing the status of parents’ posts and circumstances, rather than using salary as the sole proxy.
- (a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 2 and 3 only

ANSWER: (c) 1 and 3 only

The creamy-layer principle is intended to exclude relatively advanced sections within OBCs. The 2026 ruling rejected parental income as the sole criterion and emphasised relevant status and comparability.

• [Abbreviations & Terminology]: OBC: Other Backward Classes | DoPT: Department of Personnel and Training

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER II

The Supreme Court’s 11 March 2026 ruling held that parental income alone cannot determine OBC creamy-layer status; it stressed comparing similarly placed candidates by relevant status and circumstances. How to use: Connect affirmative action with equality and non-arbitrariness under Articles 14–16.

GENERAL STUDIES PAPER III

11 Crore Farmer IDs: Milestone Reached, Inclusion Test Ahead

GS3 · AGRICULTURE

WHY IN NEWS

The Ministry of Agriculture announced that India had reached the target of 11 crore Farmer IDs, five months before the 31 March 2027 deadline under the Digital Agriculture Mission.

STORY SO FAR

The 25 October Brief examined what Farmer IDs may unlock. Today's target achievement shifts the focus to registry design, actual cultivators, and safeguards against exclusion.

Key Details:

- **AgriStack:** The Farmer Registry links a verified farmer identity with relevant land, crop and service records, subject to applicable state rules.
- **Service delivery:** The ID is intended to simplify access to schemes, bank credit, crop insurance and disaster relief while reducing repeat verification.
- **Federal design:** States and Union Territories create and maintain AgriStack's three foundational registries; the mission is therefore a cooperative-federal digital public infrastructure effort.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Mission outlay:** INR 2,817 crore; Cabinet approval came on 2 September 2024.
- **Three registries:** Farmers Registry, Geo-referenced Village Maps and Crop Sown Registry. Krishi Decision Support System is a separate mission pillar, not a fourth registry.
- **Reach:** More than 6 crore farmers have received benefits through Farmer ID-based service delivery.

**STATIC SYLLABUS LINK**

Three registries: Farmers Registry, Geo-referenced Village Maps and Crop Sown Registry.

Federal implementation: States and Union Territories create and maintain the foundational registries.

Safeguard: Reliable records, correction routes and assisted enrolment matter for tenant and women cultivators.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Do not confuse the three AgriStack registries with KDSS, a separate Digital Agriculture Mission pillar.

HOW TO USE IN UPSC MAINS

For GS3 agriculture, discuss targeted delivery and data-enabled planning alongside exclusion risks, consent, correction mechanisms and tenant cultivator coverage.

ANSWER SKELETON

Intro	Digital public infrastructure can improve agricultural service delivery.
Potential	Targeted benefits, crop data, credit/insurance access, planning.
Risks	Exclusion, inaccurate land links, privacy, tenant/sharecropper coverage.
Reforms	State-led correction, assisted enrolment, grievance redress and data safeguards.

Mains value-add: The 2024 mission architecture combines AgriStack with the Krishi Decision Support System and soil-profile mapping, joining identity infrastructure with geospatial decision support.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ · MODERATE

Q. With reference to AgriStack under the Digital Agriculture Mission, consider the following statements:

1. Its three foundational registries include the Farmers Registry and Crop Sown Registry.
2. These registries are created and maintained only by the Union Government.
3. The Krishi Decision Support System is a separate mission pillar.

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 2 and 3 only

ANSWER: (c) 1 and 3 only

The three AgriStack registries are created and maintained by States/UTs. KDSS is a separate pillar of the mission.

RELATED PYQ

UPSC Prelims 2023 asked two statements about the G20, including whether digital public infrastructure was an Indian G20 priority. Both statements were correct.

• **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** DPI: Digital Public Infrastructure | DBT: Direct Benefit Transfer

Beyond the AQI: AATAL Tracks Delhi's Pollution to Its Sources

GS3 • ENVIRONMENT

WHY IN NEWS

The Ministry of Earth Sciences inaugurated the Integrated Atmospheric Chemistry and Aerosol Toxicity Analysis Laboratory (AATAL) on 24 October to identify pollution composition, sources and potential health implications.

Key Details:

- **Beyond AQI:** The facility aims to move from reporting pollution levels to analysing chemical composition and the relative contribution of sources.
- **Decision support:** Integrated with AIRWISE for source apportionment and forecasting; findings can help CAQM and agencies target and assess interventions.
- **Sources:** The facility is designed to distinguish traffic, industry, biomass/crop-residue burning, construction and road dust, and transported pollution.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Institutional home:** Established under Mission Mausam at IITM's Delhi branch.
- **Policy use:** Source apportionment informs which emission sources contribute to observed pollution; it complements ambient concentration monitoring and AQI.



STATIC SYLLABUS LINK

What it does: Estimates how much different sources contribute to observed pollution.

What it is not: It is not the AQI, which communicates ambient pollution level and health risk.

Policy use: Helps target source-specific measures and assess whether they reduce emissions.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Source apportionment identifies pollution sources; AQI communicates ambient air quality and associated health risk.

HOW TO USE IN UPSC MAINS

For GS3 environment, distinguish monitoring from source diagnosis; pair scientific evidence with airshed-wide coordination, enforcement and health protection.

ANSWER SKELETON

Intro	Air pollution is a multi-source, airshed-scale externality.
Evidence	AATAL links chemical composition, source shares and forecasting.
Governance	Coordinate CAQM, states and local bodies; target source-specific measures.
Safeguards	Public data, health surveillance and outcome-based review.

Mains value-add: The WHO 2021 guideline recommends an annual mean PM_{2.5} level of 5 micrograms per cubic metre; it is a health guideline, distinct from India's legally notified standards.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ • MODERATE

Q. Consider the following statements about source apportionment in air-quality management:

1. It estimates the contribution of different sources to measured pollution.
2. It is identical to the Air Quality Index and makes ambient monitoring unnecessary.
3. It can help agencies target and evaluate pollution-control measures.

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 3 only

(d) 1 and 3 only

ANSWER: (d) 1 and 3 only

Source apportionment diagnoses likely source contributions; AQI communicates pollution levels and health risk. Both monitoring and intervention assessment remain necessary.

RELATED PYQ

UPSC Mains GS3 (2020), Q17: "What are the key features of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) initiated by the Government of India?"

• **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** AATAL: Integrated Atmospheric Chemistry and Aerosol Toxicity Analysis Laboratory | CAQM: Commission for Air Quality Management

Ramsar Network Reaches 103: Will Designation Protect Wetlands?

GS3 • ENVIRONMENT

WHY IN NEWS

India's Ramsar network reached 103 sites covering more than 13.87 lakh hectares as of 15 October 2026, including Sukhna Wetland and Sauj Jheel among the latest additions.

Key Details:

- **Convention:** The Ramsar Convention was adopted in 1971 and entered into force in 1975; India became a Contracting Party in 1982.
- **Three pillars:** Wise use of all wetlands; designation and effective management of Ramsar Sites; international cooperation.
- **Ecological role:** Wetlands store water, recharge groundwater, buffer floods, support fisheries and farming, and sustain biodiversity.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Network:** 103 sites across 28 States/UTs; first in Asia and third globally by number.
- **First Indian sites:** Chilika Lake and Keoladeo National Park were designated on 1 October 1981.
- **Recent additions:** Sukhna Wetland (Chandigarh) and Sauj Jheel (Uttar Pradesh); Tamil Nadu has the highest state count at 20.

STATIC SYLLABUS LINK

Adopted: 1971 in Ramsar, Iran; entered into force in 1975.

Wise use: Promote conservation and wise use of all wetlands, not only listed sites.

Montreux Record: Tracks designated sites where ecological-character change has occurred, is occurring or is likely.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Ramsar Convention: adopted 1971, in force 1975; wise use applies to wetlands broadly, with designated sites receiving international recognition.

HOW TO USE IN UPSC MAINS

For GS3 environment, link designation with ecological character, catchment-level governance and wise use; a larger site count alone does not establish ecological health.

ANSWER SKELETON

Intro	Wetlands are productive ecosystems and natural infrastructure.
Benefits	Water security, flood moderation, livelihoods, biodiversity and carbon storage.
Threats	Encroachment, pollution, altered flows and fragmented governance.
Way forward	Catchment plans, community stewardship, ecological monitoring and wise use.

Mains value-add: The Montreux Record is a register of Ramsar Sites where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur; Chilika was removed in 2002 after restoration.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ • MODERATE

Q. With reference to the Ramsar Convention, consider the following statements:

1. It was adopted in 1971 and entered into force in 1975.
2. Its core approach is limited to strict preservation of designated sites; wise use of other wetlands is outside its scope.
3. The Montreux Record concerns Ramsar Sites where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur.

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 2 and 3 only

ANSWER: (c) 1 and 3 only

The Convention's pillars include wise use of all wetlands, management of designated sites and international cooperation. The Montreux Record flags ecological-character change.

RELATED PYQ

UPSC Prelims 2019 asked which statements about the Ramsar Convention and Wetlands Rules were correct; the correct option was "3 only."

- **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** Ramsar Site: Wetland designated as internationally important under the Convention

Fertiliser Imbalance Is a Soil-Health and Fiscal Problem

GS3 · AGRICULTURE

WHY IN NEWS

An Indian Express analysis of nutrient use and fertiliser pricing argues that nitrogen-heavy application is harming soil and water while raising subsidy costs.

Key Details:

- **Price signal:** Urea pricing and nutrient-based subsidy for other fertilisers can make nitrogen relatively cheaper, shaping farmers' input choices.
- **Soil consequences:** Imbalanced nutrient application, low organic matter and micronutrient deficiencies can reinforce one another and weaken long-term soil productivity.
- **Policy choices:** The article discusses better soil-test advice, balanced nutrient application, targeted support and crop diversification; these require safeguards for small farmers.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Agronomic principle:** The 4R approach means the right fertiliser source, rate, time and place.
- **Exam link:** Connect soil health to sustainable agriculture, groundwater quality, greenhouse-gas emissions and subsidy design.



STATIC SYLLABUS LINK

Scope: Introduced in 2010 for phosphatic and potassic fertilisers; urea pricing remains governed separately.

Purpose: Encourage balanced use of nutrients through per-nutrient subsidy rates.

Limitation: Price incentives alone do not address soil testing, extension, cropping patterns or access to organic inputs.

PRELIMS ANGLE

NBS applies to phosphatic and potassic fertilisers; do not assume urea is within the same pricing framework.

HOW TO USE IN UPSC MAINS

For GS3 agriculture, show how input-price policy affects farm choices and environmental externalities. Pair subsidy reform with extension, soil testing and transition support.

ANSWER SKELETON

Intro	Soil health underpins sustainable productivity.
Diagnosis	Relative prices, nutrient imbalance and soil-test gaps.
Impacts	Yield resilience, water quality, emissions and fiscal cost.
Response	4R advice, extension, calibrated support and crop diversification.

Mains value-add: The 4R nutrient-stewardship framework—right source, rate, time and place—offers a practical bridge between soil testing and fertiliser policy.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ · MODERATE

Q. With reference to the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) policy, consider the following statements:

1. NBS was introduced for phosphatic and potassic fertilisers in 2010.
2. Urea is currently covered by the same NBS pricing framework.
3. Balanced fertiliser use depends only on changing retail prices and requires no extension support.

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1 and 3 only

ANSWER: (a) 1 only

NBS began in 2010 for phosphatic and potassic fertilisers; urea is outside that framework. Balanced use also depends on soil testing, crop-specific advice and effective extension, so statement 3 is incorrect.

• **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** NBS: Nutrient-Based Subsidy | DAP: Diammonium Phosphate | MOP: Muriate of Potash

Agrivoltaics: Share Farm Land Between Crops and Solar Power

GS3 · ENERGY & AGRICULTURE

WHY IN NEWS

The Indian Express explained the proposed inclusion of agrivoltaics in the next phase of PM-KUSUM: elevated solar panels could generate power while cultivation continues beneath them.

Key Details:

- **What it is:** Agrivoltaics combines photovoltaic power generation and crop cultivation on the same land.
- **Potential trade-off:** Panel height, spacing, shade, crop choice, water and machinery access shape yields and project economics.
- **Farmer safeguards:** The report highlights transparent contracts, land control, timely power payments, responsibility for repairs and restoration of land when projects end.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Policy context:** PM-KUSUM supports solarisation in agriculture; the article reports that agrivoltaics is proposed for its next phase.
- **Evidence standard:** Most Indian projects remain pilots; outcomes need crop- and region-specific comparison with open-field cultivation.



STATIC SYLLABUS LINK

Definition: Co-location of solar photovoltaic generation and agriculture.

Policy connection: PM-KUSUM supports solar energy in agriculture, including decentralised and irrigation-linked components.

Assessment: Evaluate net farm income, crop yield, land rights, grid connection and end-of-lease restoration together.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Agrivoltaics is co-location of solar generation and farming; it is not simply conversion of farmland into a solar park.

HOW TO USE IN UPSC MAINS

For GS3 energy and agriculture, present agrivoltaics as a land-use and distributional question: clean power gains must be assessed alongside farm productivity, ownership and bargaining power.

ANSWER SKELETON

Intro	India must expand renewables while protecting farm livelihoods.
Opportunity	Dual land use, decentralised energy and added income.
Risks	Yield loss, unequal contracts, grid constraints and land degradation.
Way forward	Local pilots, farmer-led contracts, transparent payments and restoration bonds.

Mains value-add: A credible pilot should report both electricity output and crop yield against an open-field comparison, alongside lease terms and farmer income.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ · MODERATE

Q. Consider the following statements about agrivoltaics:

1. It combines solar photovoltaic generation with cultivation on the same land.
2. A design suited to one agro-climatic region can be assumed to maximise yields in every region.
3. Project assessment should include farmers' net returns and land-restoration obligations.

(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

Agrivoltaics combines farming and solar generation, but crop response and design suitability vary by region. Net returns and land restoration are relevant safeguards.

• **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** PV: Photovoltaic | PM-KUSUM: Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyaan

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER III

Of 96 lakh soil samples tested under the Soil Health Card scheme in 2025–26, 52% were found low in organic carbon, according to the Indian Express report drawing on the scheme's data. **How to use:** Treat this as a sample-based signal of soil-health challenges, not as a census of every Indian field.

The Commission for Air Quality Management Act, 2021 provides for a statutory commission whose jurisdiction includes the National Capital Region and adjoining areas in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. **How to use:** Show why airshed pollution requires coordination across administrative boundaries.

GENERAL STUDIES PAPER IV

Power Is Not Permission: Dignity and Due Process in Civil Service

GS4 • ETHICS

WHY IN NEWS

Allegations of abusive conduct at an official review meeting prompted an inquiry; the allegations remain unproven. The episode raises questions about ethical use of authority.

- Key Details:**
- **Public trust:** Official authority is held in trust and should be exercised with courtesy, self-restraint and respect for colleagues and citizens.
 - **Due process:** An inquiry should establish facts impartially, protect the complainant and the accused, and avoid prejudice.
 - **Institutional duty:** Maintain continuity of public work, document decisions and use formal grievance channels.

- Data/Facts/Example:**
- **Ethics lens:** Emotional intelligence, impartiality, accountability, empathy and moral courage.
 - **Conduct standard:** All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968, Rule 3 requires integrity, devotion to duty and conduct becoming of a member of the service.

STATIC SYLLABUS LINK

Rule 3: All India Services conduct requires integrity, devotion to duty and conduct becoming of an officer.

Emotional intelligence: Self-regulation and empathy help resolve conflict fairly.

HOW TO USE IN UPSC MAINS

Use as a GS4 case-study frame: distinguish allegation from finding, identify stakeholders, protect dignity and due process, and preserve administrative functioning.

ANSWER SKELETON

Immediate	Stop escalation and ensure safety.
Fair process	Record evidence, hear both parties and avoid prejudice.
Administration	Prevent retaliation and keep services functioning.
Prevention	Model respectful conduct and improve complaint safeguards.

Mains value-add: Public service values require fairness, courtesy and due process in routine staff interactions as well as citizen-facing decisions.

MAINS CASE STUDY EXERCISE

During a tense district review, a senior officer is accused of humiliating a junior officer in front of staff. You are the district head. How will you respond immediately and through the inquiry, while protecting dignity, impartiality and continuity of public service? (250 words)

RELATED PYQ

UPSC CSE Mains 2017, GS Paper IV, Q6(a): “How will you apply emotional intelligence in administrative practices?” (150 words, 10 marks).

• **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** EI: Emotional Intelligence | AIS: All India Services