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### India Shows Steady Progress in Reducing Child Deaths Amid Slowing Global Gains

- ❖ The UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) released its flagship report “Levels & Trends in Child Mortality 2025” in mid-March 2026. The report reveals that while the global decline in under-five mortality has slowed dramatically since 2015 (annual reduction rate dropped from ~4% to ~2.2%), India has maintained a relatively strong and consistent reduction in under-five and neonatal mortality rates.
- ❖ India’s progress stands out as a positive outlier in a year when global child survival gains have stagnated, underscoring the effectiveness of sustained health and nutrition interventions (NHM, POSHAN Abhiyaan, Mission Indradhanush, Ayushman Bharat). The findings have been highlighted by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and NITI Aayog as evidence of policy success, while also drawing attention to persistent intra-state disparities and the need for accelerated efforts to meet SDG 3.2 by 2030.

#### Key Data & Findings from the Report

- **India’s Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR)**
  - 2000: ~126 per 1,000 live births
  - 2015: ~49 per 1,000
  - 2024 (latest estimate): ~27-29 per 1,000
  - Reduction (2015-2024): ~38-42%
  - Average annual reduction rate: ~5.5-6% (among the fastest in Asia)
- **Neonatal Mortality Rate (first 28 days)**
  - 2015: ~28 per 1,000
  - 2024: ~18-20 per 1,000



- Neonatal deaths now account for ~45-50% of all under-five deaths (down from ~60% in earlier decades)

- **Global Comparison**

- Global U5MR 2024: ~37 per 1,000 (only ~14% reduction since 2015)
- Annual global reduction rate: ~2.2% (2015-2024) vs. ~4% (2000-2015)
- SDG 3.2 target ( $\leq 25$  per 1,000 by 2030): Only ~84 countries on track globally; India is on track or very close

- **Regional & Peer Comparison**

- Faster progress than Pakistan (~2.5-3% annual reduction), Bangladesh (~4-4.5%), and most sub-Saharan African countries
- Lags behind Sri Lanka (~12 per 1,000) and China (~6-7 per 1,000)

## Key Drivers of India's Progress

- **Policy & Programme Interventions**

- **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) & Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** → Institutional deliveries >90%
- **Mission Indradhanush & Intensified Mission Indradhanush** → Full immunization coverage >90% in many states
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan & Anemia Mukht Bharat** → Reduction in stunting, wasting, and anaemia
- **Ayushman Bharat - Health & Wellness Centres** → Early detection and management of childhood illnesses
- **Home-based newborn care (HBNC)** by ASHAs → Reduced neonatal mortality

- **Other Enabling Factors**

- Improved access to ORS, zinc, antibiotics for diarrhoea/pneumonia



- Better sanitation (Swachh Bharat Mission) → reduced diarrhoeal deaths
- Strong rebound after COVID-19 disruption (2022-2025)

## Background & Long-Term Trend

- **Pre-2005** → High mortality due to malnutrition, poor sanitation, low immunization
- **2005-2015** → NRHM → U5MR halved from ~74 to ~49 per 1,000
- **2015-2026** → Sustained focus via SDG-aligned programmes; temporary stagnation during COVID (2020-2022) followed by strong recovery

## 5. Implications & Challenges Ahead

### • Positive

- Validates long-term investment in MNCH programmes
- Positions India as a relative success story amid global slowdown
- Likely to meet or come very close to SDG 3.2 target by 2030

### • Remaining Challenges

- Stark inter-state disparities (U5MR in UP/Bihar still >40 vs. Kerala ~6-8)
- High burden of neonatal deaths (~45-50% of U5 deaths)
- Persistent malnutrition (NFHS-5: stunting 35.5%, wasting 19.3%)
- Emerging threats: air pollution, climate change, antimicrobial resistance

### • Policy Direction

- Intensify equity-focused interventions in high-burden states
- Strengthen neonatal care (SNCUs, NBCCs)
- Sustain nutrition & immunization momentum
- Integrate climate & pollution mitigation into child health strategies



## UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

### Prelims

- Key terms: UN IGME, SDG 3.2, U5MR, Neonatal Mortality Rate, POSHAN Abhiyaan, Mission Indradhanush
- Data: India U5MR 2024 (~27-29 per 1,000), Global U5MR 2024 (~37 per 1,000)
- Related: NFHS-5, NHM, Ayushman Bharat

### GS-2 (Health & Governance)

- Maternal & child health programmes
- SDG progress & policy effectiveness

### GS-2 (Social Justice)

- Health equity & regional disparities

### GS-3 (Environment)

- Link between air pollution/climate change and child mortality

### Essay / Interview

- "India's Child Survival Success Amid Global Stagnation: Lessons for Health Policy"
- "Bridging Regional Disparities: The Next Frontier in India's Child Health Journey"

## MCQs

1. With reference to the UN IGME "Levels & Trends in Child Mortality 2025" report, consider the following statements:
2. India's under-five mortality rate declined by approximately 38-42% between 2015 and 2024.
3. The global annual reduction rate in U5MR has slowed significantly since 2015.



4. India is currently off-track to meet the SDG 3.2 target of  $\leq 25$  under-five deaths per 1,000 live births by 2030.

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)**

2. Which of the following programmes has been most directly associated with India's improvement in institutional deliveries?

- (a) POSHAN Abhiyaan
- (b) Anemia Mukht Bharat
- (c) Janani Suraksha Yojana
- (d) Mission Indradhanush

**Answer: (c)**

3. The SDG target to reduce under-five mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births by 2030 is part of:

- (a) SDG 2.2
- (b) SDG 3.2
- (c) SDG 3.1
- (d) SDG 5.1

**Answer: (b)**



4. According to NFHS-5 (2019-21), the prevalence of stunting among children under five in India is approximately:

- (a) 19%
- (b) 35%
- (c) 50%
- (d) 65%

**Answer: (b)**

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## Mains Questions

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1. "India's steady progress in child mortality reduction amid global stagnation is a testament to sustained policy focus." Discuss the key drivers and the remaining challenges in achieving SDG 3.2. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Analyse the factors behind India's consistent decline in neonatal and under-five mortality rates since 2015. How can intra-state disparities be addressed to accelerate progress? (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Health outcomes for children remain one of the clearest indicators of governance effectiveness." Examine India's performance in the context of the 2026 UN IGME report and suggest policy measures for the next phase. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "From High Mortality to Global Benchmark: India's Journey in Child Survival and the Road Ahead to SDG 3.2."

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## PM POSHAN Scheme: Parliamentary Committee Recommends Breakfast Provision & Extension to Class 12

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### Why in News?

- ❖ The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports** (Chairperson: Lok Sabha MP Sanjay Jha) presented its report titled

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“Implementation of PM POSHAN Scheme” to Parliament in mid-March 2026. The Committee has made far-reaching recommendations:

- Introduce **light breakfast** in addition to the existing midday meal.
- Expand coverage from **Class 8 to Class 10 immediately** and **up to Class 12 in a phased manner** within five years. The report emphasises that adolescence is a critical growth phase and that discontinuing nutritional support after Class 8 creates a major gap, especially for girls facing high dropout risk during secondary education.
- The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women & Child Development have been asked to examine the feasibility and submit an action-taken report. This comes amid persistent concerns over adolescent malnutrition (NFHS-5: 35.5% stunting, 19.3% wasting among 10-19 years) and the need to link nutrition with improved learning outcomes in secondary education.

## Key Details of the PM POSHAN Scheme

- **Full Name & Launch**
  - Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) Scheme
  - Launched September 2021 (restructured Mid-Day Meal Scheme)
- **Objectives**
  - Improve nutritional status of school children
  - Enhance enrolment, retention, and attendance
  - Reduce dropout rates, especially among girls and disadvantaged groups
  - Promote social equity through common dining
- **Current Coverage**
  - Classes 1-8 in government and government-aided schools
  - ~11.80 crore children (2025-26 data)
  - ~100+ crore meals served monthly

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- **Nutritional Norms**

- Primary (Classes 1-5): 450 calories, 12 g protein
- Upper Primary (Classes 6-8): 700 calories, 20 g protein
- Supplementary items: milk, eggs, fruits, green leafy vegetables (varies by state)

- **Funding Pattern**

- Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)
- Centre: 60% (90% in NE states, J&K, Ladakh, UTs)
- States contribute the rest
- Total outlay (2021-26): > ₹1.3 lakh crore

- **Key Components**

- Hot cooked meals
- School Nutrition Gardens
- Supplementary nutrition (milk, eggs in some states)
- Real-time monitoring via mobile app & portal

## Parliamentary Committee Recommendations (March 2026)

- **Introduce Breakfast**

- Light breakfast (e.g., milk + banana / puffed rice / upma) in addition to midday meal
- Rationale: Improves morning concentration, cognitive performance, and learning outcomes

- **Expand Coverage**

- Immediate extension to Class 10
- Phased extension to Class 12 within five years

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- Rationale: Adolescence is a critical growth phase; board exam pressure requires sustained nutrition

- **Other Suggestions**

- Extend PM-SHRI school benefits to more government schools
- Ensure timely fund release under Samagra Shiksha
- Address concentration of resources in select institutions

## Background & Policy Evolution

- **Mid-Day Meal Scheme (1995-2021)**

- One of the world's largest school feeding programmes
- Initially focused on primary classes; later expanded

- **PM POSHAN (2021 onwards)**

- Renamed and restructured with enhanced nutrition norms
- Linked to POSHAN Abhiyaan and Anemia Mukh Bharat

- **Adolescent Nutrition Gap**

- NFHS-5 (2019-21): 35.5% stunting, 19.3% wasting, 58.6% anaemia in 15-19 years girls
- Dropout rates spike after Class 8 (especially girls)

## Implications

- **For Education & Health**

- Breakfast + extended coverage → better attendance, retention, cognitive development
- Reduces adolescent malnutrition and gender gaps in secondary education

- **Fiscal & Administrative**



- Additional burden on central & state budgets (estimated ₹15,000-25,000 crore/year)
- Requires strengthening supply chains, kitchen-cum-stores, and monitoring
- **Social Justice**
  - Addresses nutritional insecurity in vulnerable adolescents
  - Supports inclusive education and human capital development

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## UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

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### Prelims

- Key terms: PM POSHAN, Mid-Day Meal Scheme, POSHAN Abhiyaan, NFHS-5, SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)
- Data: Current coverage (Classes 1-8), ~11.8 crore children, Proposed expansion (up to Class 12)
- Related: Samagra Shiksha, Anemia Mukht Bharat

### GS-2 (Governance & Social Justice)

- Centrally sponsored schemes for nutrition & education
- Parliamentary oversight & committee recommendations

### GS-2 (Health)

- Adolescent nutrition & public health linkages

### GS-3 (Economy)

- Human capital formation & long-term growth

### Essay / Interview

- “Nutrition and Education: The Dual Imperative for India’s Human Capital Development”
- “From Mid-Day Meal to PM POSHAN: Evolution of School Nutrition Policy in India”



## MCQs

1. With reference to the PM POSHAN Scheme, consider the following statements:
2. It currently covers students from Class 1 to Class 8 in government and aided schools.
3. The Parliamentary Committee has recommended immediate extension up to Class 10.
4. The scheme is implemented under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

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)**

2. The primary objective of introducing breakfast under PM POSHAN (as recommended in 2026) is to:
  - (a) Reduce food wastage
  - (b) Improve morning concentration and cognitive performance
  - (c) Increase agricultural procurement
  - (d) Promote school gardening

**Answer: (b)**

3. The PM POSHAN Scheme is a restructured version of:
  - (a) Anemia Mukht Bharat
  - (b) Mid-Day Meal Scheme
  - (c) POSHAN Abhiyaan



(d) Samagra Shiksha

**Answer: (b)**

4. According to NFHS-5, the prevalence of stunting among children under five in India is approximately:

(a) 19%

(b) 35%

(c) 50%

(d) 65%

**Answer: (b)**

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## Mains Questions

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1. "Expanding PM POSHAN to include breakfast and coverage up to Class 12 can transform adolescent nutrition and secondary education outcomes." Discuss the rationale and challenges in implementing the Parliamentary Committee's recommendations. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Analyse the role of school feeding programmes like PM POSHAN in addressing malnutrition, dropout rates, and learning outcomes in India. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Nutrition and education are interlinked pillars of human capital development." Examine this statement in light of the 2026 Parliamentary recommendations on PM POSHAN and suggest measures for effective implementation. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "From Mid-Day Meal to PM POSHAN: Strengthening India's Fight Against Child Malnutrition and School Dropout."

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## NATO's Stance in the US–Israel–Iran War (2026): Collective Defence, Burden-Sharing & Limited Engagement

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### Why in News?

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- ❖ US President Donald Trump (second term) has publicly urged NATO allies to actively support the ongoing US-Israel military campaign against Iran, particularly by deploying naval assets to secure the **Strait of Hormuz** (threatened with closure by Iran) and provide “enabling support” for US operations in the Persian Gulf.
- ❖ Several key European NATO members – led by **Germany**, followed by France, Spain, and Italy – have firmly rejected the call, stating: “This is not a NATO matter.” “NATO’s mandate does not extend to offensive operations outside the North Atlantic area.”
- ❖ The war, now in its **third week** (as of 16 March 2026), has seen Iran launch multiple missile and drone barrages, closure threats to Hormuz, and attacks on shipping – but **no NATO member has been directly attacked**, so **Article 5** has not been invoked.
- ❖ The episode has reignited the long-standing **burden-sharing debate** within NATO, with Trump accusing allies of “free-riding” on US security guarantees, while European capitals emphasise NATO’s defensive character and preference for diplomacy over escalation.

## Key Details of NATO’s Current Position

- **No Collective Military Action**
  - NATO has not invoked **Article 5** (collective defence).
  - No decision taken by the North Atlantic Council to activate the alliance militarily.
  - Official NATO statement (15 March 2026): “NATO remains in a defensive posture. Any participation by Allies is on a national basis.”
- **Individual Member Contributions**
  - **UK**: Allowing use of sovereign bases in Cyprus; deploying Type-45 destroyers and F-35Bs to the Gulf.
  - **Greece**: Sent two frigates and F-16s for maritime patrol.
  - **France**: Deployed Charles de Gaulle carrier group for “freedom of navigation” operations.
  - **Germany**: Limited to intelligence-sharing and logistical support; no combat assets.

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- **Eastern Flank (Poland, Baltics, Romania):** Focused on Russia deterrence; minimal involvement in Gulf.
- **Trump's Key Statements**
  - "NATO must step up or face consequences."
  - "Many countries are not paying anything – they're free-riding on American blood and treasure."
  - Urged allies to deploy warships to Hormuz and provide missile defence support.
- **European Counter-Arguments**
  - Conflict lies outside NATO's **Article 6** geographical scope (Europe, North America, Turkey, North Atlantic islands).
  - No armed attack on a NATO member → no obligation under Article 5.
  - Emphasis on de-escalation and diplomacy over military escalation.

## NATO Structure & Core Principles

- **Founding & Purpose**
  - Established: 4 April 1949 (Washington Treaty)
  - Core principle: **Collective defence** (Article 5) – "an armed attack against one... shall be considered an attack against all."
  - Only invoked once: after 9/11 attacks on the US (2001).
- **Article 1**
  - Members shall settle disputes peacefully and refrain from threat or use of force inconsistent with UN Charter.
- **Burden-Sharing Debate**
  - 2014 Wales Summit: 2% of GDP defence spending target by 2024.
  - 2024 status: 18 of 31 members met 2% target (up from 4 in 2016).



- US share of total NATO defence spending: ~63% (down from 72% in 2016).
- Non-US allies increased spending from \$292 bn (2016) to \$482 bn (2024).
- **Geographical Scope (Article 6)**
  - Limited to Europe, North America, Turkey, islands in North Atlantic north of Tropic of Cancer.
  - Persian Gulf / Iran conflict falls outside this zone.

## Background: NATO & US-Led Middle East Operations

- **Historical Precedents**
  - 2001: Article 5 invoked after 9/11 → NATO AWACS, naval patrols, ISAF in Afghanistan.
  - 2003 Iraq War: No NATO consensus; major allies (France, Germany) opposed.
  - Libya 2011: NATO-led operation under UN mandate.
- **Trump's Long-Standing Grievances**
  - First term (2017-2021): Repeatedly criticised “delinquent” allies.
  - Threatened withdrawal from NATO.
  - Second term (2025-): Renewed pressure on 2% spending and support for US priorities.

## Implications

- **For NATO Unity**
  - Highlights transatlantic divide on Middle East policy.
  - Eastern flank prioritises Russia; Western Europe prefers diplomacy.
- **For India**
  - Energy security risk: Hormuz disruption → oil import shock.



- Diplomatic balancing: India maintains ties with US, Israel, Gulf states, and Iran (Chabahar).
- Naval posture: Indian Navy on heightened alert in Arabian Sea / Gulf of Oman.
- **Global Energy & Security**
  - Oil price volatility → inflation risk for oil importers.
  - NATO's non-involvement limits escalation but also limits deterrence against Iran.

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## UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

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### Prelims

- Key terms: Article 5, Article 6, Collective Defence, NATO, Burden-Sharing, 2% GDP Target
- Data: NATO members (32), US share of defence spending (~63%), Allies meeting 2% (18/31 in 2024)
- Related: North Atlantic Treaty (1949), Wales Summit (2014)

### GS-2 (IR)

- India's multi-alignment & West Asia policy
- Transatlantic relations & NATO's role

### GS-2 (International Organisations)

- NATO structure, Article 5 invocation, collective defence mechanism

### GS-3 (Security)

- Maritime security & chokepoint protection

### Essay / Interview

- "NATO in the Age of Multi-Polar Disorder: Collective Defence vs. National Interests"
- "Burden-Sharing Debate in NATO: Implications for Transatlantic Unity and Global Security"



## MCQs

1. With reference to NATO's position in the 2026 US-Israel-Iran war, consider the following statements:
2. NATO has not invoked Article 5.
3. The alliance's geographical scope under Article 6 includes the Persian Gulf.
4. Several European members have rejected direct military involvement.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**Answer: (b)**

2. NATO's principle of collective defence is enshrined in:

- (a) Article 1
- (b) Article 5
- (c) Article 6
- (d) Article 10

**Answer: (b)**

3. As of 2024, how many NATO members were meeting the 2% GDP defence spending target?

- (a) 4
- (b) 10
- (c) 18



(d) 25

**Answer: (c)**

4. The only time Article 5 has been invoked in NATO's history was:

- (a) 1991 Gulf War
- (b) After 9/11 attacks
- (c) 2011 Libya intervention
- (d) 2022 Russia-Ukraine war

**Answer: (b)**

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## Mains Questions

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1. "NATO's limited role in the 2026 US-Israel-Iran conflict highlights the tension between collective defence obligations and national strategic interests." Discuss. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Analyse the implications of President Trump's renewed burden-sharing demands on NATO cohesion and transatlantic relations. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Article 5 remains the cornerstone of NATO, yet its invocation threshold and geographical scope limit the alliance's role in contemporary conflicts." Examine this statement in light of the current West Asia crisis. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Collective Defence in a Fragmented World: NATO's Relevance and Challenges in the 21st Century."

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## Autonomous District Councils: Meghalaya Govt Extends GHADC Term by 6 Months Amid Delays in Elections

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### Why in News?

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1. On 13 March 2026, the Meghalaya State Government issued a notification extending the term of the **Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC)** by **six months** (from 15 March 2026 to 14 September 2026). The extension was necessitated due to:
  - Delays in the delimitation exercise of constituencies.
  - Pending finalisation of the electoral roll.
  - Ongoing administrative and logistical preparations for holding elections.

This is the **second consecutive extension** for GHADC (earlier extended in September 2025). Similar extensions have been granted to the **Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC)** and **Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC)** in recent years.

The move has drawn criticism from opposition parties (Congress, VPP) and civil society groups, who allege it undermines democratic functioning and the spirit of the Sixth Schedule. The State Election Commission has been directed to complete preparations and hold elections by September 2026.

## Key Details of the Extension

- **Legal Basis**
  - Under **Paragraph 16(2) of the Sixth Schedule**, the Governor (on the advice of the State Government) can extend the term of an Autonomous District Council by up to **six months** if elections cannot be held before the expiry of the normal five-year term.
- **Current Status of Meghalaya ADCs (as of March 2026)**
  - GHADC: Term extended till 14 September 2026
  - JHADC & KHADC: Already functioning on extended terms (elections pending)
- **Political Context**
  - Opposition alleges “deliberate delay” to continue “proxy rule” and avoid accountability.



- NPP-led MDA government claims technical and administrative reasons; blames legacy issues from previous regimes.

## Constitutional & Legal Framework: Sixth Schedule & Autonomous District Councils

- **Sixth Schedule (Articles 244(2) & 275(1))**
  - Special provisions for administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.
  - Creates **Autonomous Districts** and **Regional Councils** (where applicable).
- **Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)**
  - **Membership:** Up to 30 members
    - 4 nominated by the Governor
    - Remaining 26 elected on adult franchise
  - **Term:** 5 years (extendable by Governor up to 6 months)
- **Powers & Functions**
  - Legislative: Laws on land, forests (except reserved forests), inheritance, marriage, divorce, social customs, village courts, etc.
  - Executive: Management of primary schools, dispensaries, markets, ferries, fisheries, roads, water channels, etc.
  - Regulatory: Control of money-lending and trading by non-tribals (with Governor's assent)
  - Revenue: Taxes on professions, animals, vehicles, market entry, ferries, school/dispensary/road maintenance
- **Governor's Role**
  - Assent required for certain laws
  - Power to annul or suspend ADC acts/resolutions



- Can dissolve ADC and assume direct administration

## Background: Evolution & Current Status of ADCs in India

### • Sixth Schedule Areas

- Assam: 3 ADCs (North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong, Bodoland)
- Meghalaya: 3 ADCs (Garo Hills, Jaintia Hills, Khasi Hills)
- Tripura: Tripura Tribal Areas ADC
- Mizoram: 3 ADCs (Chakma, Lai, Mara)

### • Key Challenges

- Delayed elections → prolonged extensions → democratic deficit
- Overlapping jurisdiction with state government → frequent disputes
- Financial dependence on state grants → limited autonomy
- Corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency allegations

### • Recent Developments (2024-2026)

- Multiple extensions in Meghalaya → criticism of “administrative inertia”
- Bodoland Territorial Council elections held in 2025 after long delay
- Ongoing demand for greater financial autonomy and clarity on overlapping powers

## Implications

### • Democratic Governance

- Repeated extensions undermine representative democracy in tribal areas.
- Risk of governance vacuum and reduced accountability.

### • Federalism & Tribal Autonomy

- Tests balance between state control and Sixth Schedule autonomy.
- Governor’s discretionary power under scrutiny.

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- **Social & Political**

- Delays fuel ethnic tensions and mistrust between communities.
- Opposition may use issue to mobilise tribal voters.

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## UPSC CSE State PCS Relevance

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### Prelims

- Key terms: Sixth Schedule, Autonomous District Council, Garo Hills Autonomous District Council, Governor's Powers
- Data: Maximum members (30), Nominated members (4), Term (5 years + 6-month extension)
- Related: Articles 244(2), 275(1), Fifth Schedule (contrast)

### GS-2 (Polity & Governance)

- Tribal administration under Sixth Schedule
- Centre-state relations & Governor's discretionary powers

### GS-2 (Social Justice)

- Protection of tribal rights & autonomy

### GS-1 (Society)

- Ethnic diversity and federalism in Northeast India

### Essay / Interview

- "Sixth Schedule: Balancing Tribal Autonomy with Democratic Accountability"
- "Repeated Extensions of Autonomous District Councils: A Threat to Tribal Self-Governance?"



## MCQs

1. With reference to Autonomous District Councils under the Sixth Schedule, consider the following statements:
2. The Governor can extend the term of an ADC by up to six months.
3. Out of 30 members, four are nominated by the Governor.
4. All laws made by an ADC require the prior approval of the President of India.

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)**

2. Which of the following states does NOT have an Autonomous District Council under the Sixth Schedule?
  - (a) Meghalaya
  - (b) Tripura
  - (c) Nagaland
  - (d) Mizoram

**Answer: (c)**

3. The Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) term was recently extended till:
  - (a) September 2026
  - (b) March 2027
  - (c) December 2026



(d) No extension was granted

**Answer: (a)**

4. Laws made by Autonomous District Councils on certain subjects (e.g., money-lending by non-tribals) require the assent of:

- (a) President of India
- (b) Governor
- (c) State Legislative Assembly
- (d) Parliament

**Answer: (b)**

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## Mains Questions

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1. "Repeated extensions of Autonomous District Councils undermine the spirit of tribal self-governance under the Sixth Schedule." Critically examine the recent extension of GHADC and suggest reforms to ensure timely elections. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Discuss the powers and functions of Autonomous District Councils under the Sixth Schedule. How effective have they been in protecting tribal autonomy and development? (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "The Sixth Schedule provides a unique model of tribal self-rule, but overlapping jurisdictions and administrative delays limit its potential." Analyse this statement with reference to Meghalaya's recent ADC extension controversy. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Sixth Schedule and Tribal Autonomy: Balancing Self-Governance with Democratic Accountability in Northeast India."

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## Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme (2026–2031): Cabinet Approval & Push for Green Energy in Hilly & NE Regions

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### Why in News?

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- ❖ On **13 March 2026**, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the **Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme** for the five-year period **FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31** with a total outlay of **₹3,000 crore**.
- ❖ The scheme aims to add **1,500 MW** of small hydro capacity (projects 1-25 MW each) across the country, with **special incentives** for North-Eastern states and international border districts.
- ❖ The decision is part of the broader push for renewable energy under **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and the **National Electricity Plan (2022-32)** target of 500 GW non-fossil capacity by 2030. It also responds to the untapped hydro potential in hilly and NE regions, where large hydro projects face ecological and social resistance.

## Key Features of the Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme

- **Capacity Target & Project Size**
  - Total target: **1,500 MW** (new projects only)
  - Project range: **1 MW to 25 MW** (small hydro category)
- **Central Financial Assistance (CFA)**
  - **North-Eastern states & international border districts:** ₹3.6 crore/MW (or 30% of project cost, capped at ₹30 crore per project)
  - **Other states:** ₹2.4 crore/MW (or 20% of project cost, capped at ₹20 crore per project)
- **DPR Support**
  - ₹30 crore earmarked for preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for ~200 future projects by government agencies and state utilities
- **Mandatory Domestic Procurement**
  - 100% sourcing of plant & machinery from Indian manufacturers (supports Atmanirbhar Bharat & domestic electrical equipment industry)



- **Technology Preference**
  - Emphasis on **run-of-the-river** projects (no large dams/reservoirs)
  - Minimises displacement, deforestation, submergence, and ecological disruption
- **Employment Generation**
  - Expected to create **51 lakh person-days** during construction phase
  - Long-term jobs in operation & maintenance, tourism (hydro-tourism), and local manufacturing

## Background & Policy Context

- **Small Hydro in India**
  - Small hydro defined as  $\leq 25$  MW (MNRE classification)
  - Installed capacity (as of Feb 2026):  $\sim 5.0$  GW (out of total hydro  $\sim 47$  GW)
  - Untapped potential:  $\sim 20$  GW (mostly in Himalayan & NE states)
- **Previous Schemes**
  - SHP Programme (1990s-2010s)  $\rightarrow$  subsidy-based
  - National Clean Energy Fund support (2010s)
  - Current scheme is a dedicated, focused successor with higher CFA and domestic content mandate
- **Why Focus on NE & Border Areas?**
  - Highest untapped potential (Arunachal Pradesh alone  $> 50$  GW theoretical)
  - Strategic importance (border districts)
  - Difficult terrain  $\rightarrow$  higher project costs  $\rightarrow$  justified higher CFA
- **Run-of-the-River Advantage**
  - No large storage  $\rightarrow$  minimal submergence



- Lower environmental & social impact compared to large hydro

## Implications

- **Energy Security & Transition**
  - Adds clean, renewable base-load power (hydro provides peaking & storage support)
  - Supports 500 GW non-fossil target by 2030
- **Regional Development**
  - Boosts economy in NE & hilly states (jobs, infrastructure, tourism)
  - Reduces migration from remote areas
- **Environmental & Social**
  - Lower ecological footprint than large dams
  - But still requires careful EIA, forest clearance, and community consent
- **Industrial & Economic**
  - 100% domestic sourcing → strengthens Indian hydro-turbine & generator manufacturing (BHEL, ANDRITZ, Voith, etc.)
  - Supports Atmanirbhar Bharat in power equipment

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## UPSC CSE State PCS Relevance

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### Prelims

- Key terms: Small Hydro Power (SHP), Run-of-the-River, National Electricity Plan, Atmanirbhar Bharat, CFA (Central Financial Assistance)
- Data: Scheme period (FY 2026-31), Target capacity (1,500 MW), CFA for NE/border areas (₹3.6 cr/MW or 30%)
- Related: MNRE, National Clean Energy Fund, Hydro Power Policy

### GS-3 (Economy & Infrastructure)

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- Renewable energy targets & schemes
- Regional development in NE & hilly states

## GS-3 (Environment)

- Run-of-the-river vs. large hydro - ecological trade-offs
- Energy transition & sustainable development

## GS-2 (Governance)

- Centrally sponsored schemes & federal financing

## Essay / Interview

- “Small Hydro as a Bridge Between Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability”
- “Harnessing the Himalayas: Role of Small Hydro Projects in Northeast Development & India’s Renewable Future”

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## MCQs

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1. With reference to the Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme approved in March 2026, consider the following statements:
2. The scheme targets addition of 1,500 MW capacity during FY 2026-31.
3. Higher Central Financial Assistance is provided for projects in North-Eastern states and international border districts.
4. The scheme mandates 100% sourcing of plant and machinery from domestic manufacturers.

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)**

2. Under the SHP Development Scheme, the Central Financial Assistance for projects in North-Eastern states is capped at:

- (a) ₹20 crore per project
- (b) ₹30 crore per project
- (c) ₹40 crore per project
- (d) No cap

**Answer: (b)**

3. The scheme gives special emphasis to which type of hydro projects to minimise environmental and social impact?

- (a) Pumped storage projects
- (b) Run-of-the-river projects
- (c) Reservoir-based projects
- (d) Cascade projects

**Answer: (b)**

4. Small Hydro Power projects are classified by MNRE as having installed capacity up to:

- (a) 5 MW
- (b) 25 MW
- (c) 50 MW
- (d) 100 MW

**Answer: (b)**



## Mains Questions

1. “The Small Hydro Power Development Scheme (2026-31) reflects India’s strategic shift towards sustainable and regionally balanced renewable energy development.” Discuss its key features, significance, and potential challenges. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the role of small hydro projects in achieving India’s 500 GW non-fossil energy target by 2030, with special reference to incentives for North-Eastern and border states. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. “Run-of-the-river small hydro projects offer a lower-impact alternative to large dams, yet face implementation hurdles.” Critically analyse this statement in the context of the newly approved SHP scheme. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** “Harnessing Small Hydro: Balancing Energy Security, Regional Development, and Environmental Sustainability in India’s Renewable Transition.”

## Stockholm Water Prize 2026: Kaveh Madani Named Laureate for Pioneering Work on Water Governance & Climate Resilience

### Why in News?

- ❖ On **18 March 2026**, the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and the Stockholm Water Foundation announced **Dr. Kaveh Madani** as the **2026 Stockholm Water Prize** laureate. Kaveh Madani, an Iranian environmental scientist and former Vice President of Iran (2017-2018), is recognised for his groundbreaking contributions to **water governance, transboundary water diplomacy, climate adaptation, and integrating socio-political dimensions** into water resource management.
- ❖ The prize citation highlights his work on bridging science, policy, and society, especially in water-stressed regions facing conflict, sanctions, and climate change. The award will be presented by **King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden** during **World Water Week** in Stockholm in **August 2026**. The prize amount is **1 million Swedish Kronor** (~₹80 lakh).

### Key Details of the Stockholm Water Prize

- **About the Prize**

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- Regarded as the “Nobel Prize for Water” – most prestigious global award for water-related achievements
- Established: 1991
- Awarded annually by: **Stockholm Water Foundation** in collaboration with **Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences**
- Presented by: **H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf** (patron of the prize)
- Ceremony: World Water Week, Stockholm (August)
- **Eligibility & Nomination**
  - Open to individuals or organisations
  - Recognises extraordinary contributions to **conservation, protection, management, or improved understanding** of water resources
  - Anyone can nominate (except self-nomination or close family/professional ties)
- **Previous Indian Laureates**
  - 2015: **Dr. Madhav Gadgil** (ecologist, Western Ghats conservation)
  - 2007: **Dr. Asit K. Biswas** (water management & policy expert)
- **2026 Laureate - Kaveh Madani**
  - First Iranian to receive the prize
  - Known for:
    - Developing game-theoretic models for transboundary water negotiations (e.g., Iran-Afghanistan Helmand River disputes)
    - Work on water-energy-food nexus under sanctions & climate stress
    - Advocacy for science-based water diplomacy and conflict resolution



- Former Deputy Head of Iran's Environment Department & Vice President of Iran (2017-18)

## Significance of the Award

- **Global Recognition**
  - Elevates water governance & transboundary cooperation as critical climate-security issues
  - Highlights importance of science-policy interface in water-stressed conflict zones
- **For India**
  - Reinforces relevance of transboundary water issues (Indus Waters Treaty, Brahmaputra, Teesta)
  - Strengthens India's narrative on equitable & science-based water diplomacy
  - Aligns with India's push for climate-resilient water management (National Water Policy, Jal Jeevan Mission, PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana)
- **Broader Context**
  - Amid global water stress (UN: 2.4 billion people face water scarcity by 2050)
  - Growing conflicts over shared rivers (Nile, Mekong, Indus, Brahmaputra)
  - Link between water insecurity, migration, and geopolitical instability

## Implications

- **For Transboundary Water Governance**
  - Validates multi-disciplinary approaches (science + diplomacy + socio-economics)
  - Encourages dialogue in tense basins (e.g., Indus, Brahmaputra, Helmand)
- **For India's Water Diplomacy**
  - Opportunity to highlight India's own models (e.g., Indus Waters Treaty resilience)
  - Reinforces push for data-sharing & joint management in shared basins

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- **Environmental & Climate**

- Stresses integration of water management with climate adaptation & disaster resilience

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## UPSC CSE State PCS Relevance

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### Prelims

- Key terms: Stockholm Water Prize, Transboundary Water Governance, Water-Energy-Food Nexus, Sixth Schedule (unrelated but similar institutional context)
- Data: Prize amount (1 million SEK), First awarded (1991), Indian winners (Madhav Gadgil 2015, Asit K. Biswas 2007)
- Related: UN Water Conferences, Indus Waters Treaty, Brahmaputra basin issues

### GS-2 (IR)

- Transboundary water conflicts & cooperation
- India's water diplomacy & neighbourhood policy

### GS-3 (Environment & Disaster Management)

- Water scarcity, climate change & security linkages
- Sustainable water resource management

### GS-2 (Social Justice)

- Equity in water access & transboundary justice

### Essay / Interview

- "Water as a Catalyst for Conflict and Cooperation: Lessons from the Stockholm Water Prize"
- "Transboundary Rivers and India's Neighbourhood: Balancing Sovereignty with Regional Stability"



## MCQs

1. With reference to the Stockholm Water Prize 2026, consider the following statements:
2. Dr. Kaveh Madani has been named the 2026 laureate.
3. The prize is presented by the King of Sweden during World Water Week in August.
4. The award amount is 1 million Swedish Kronor.

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)**

2. Which of the following Indian scholars has previously received the Stockholm Water Prize?
  - (a) Vandana Shiva
  - (b) Madhav Gadgil
  - (c) Sunita Narain
  - (d) Rajendra Singh

**Answer: (b)**

3. The Stockholm Water Prize is regarded as the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in the field of:
  - (a) Climate Change
  - (b) Water
  - (c) Biodiversity



(d) Sustainable Development

**Answer: (b)**

4. The Stockholm Water Prize is awarded by:

- (a) United Nations Environment Programme
- (b) Stockholm Water Foundation & Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences
- (c) World Bank
- (d) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

**Answer: (b)**

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## Mains Questions

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1. "The Stockholm Water Prize 2026 awarded to Kaveh Madani underscores the growing intersection of water governance, climate change, and geopolitical stability." Discuss its relevance to India's transboundary water challenges. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Analyse the importance of science-based diplomacy in managing shared river basins. How can India apply lessons from the 2026 Stockholm Water Prize laureate's work? (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Water insecurity is emerging as a major driver of regional conflict and migration." Examine this statement in light of the Stockholm Water Prize recognition of transboundary water governance efforts. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Water: From Resource to Geopolitical Flashpoint - Lessons from the Stockholm Water Prize and India's Regional Challenges."

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## Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna

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- ❖ On **18 March 2026**, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the **Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA)** – a new flagship central sector scheme with an outlay of **₹33,660 crore**.
- ❖ The scheme aims to develop **100 world-class “plug-and-play” industrial parks** (100-1,000 acres each) across the country, providing ready-to-use infrastructure to drastically reduce the time from “intent to production”.
- ❖ The move is part of the government’s strategy to position India as a global manufacturing hub under **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and to attract large-scale investments amid global supply chain shifts. The National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC) under DPIIT will be the nodal agency.

## Key Features of BHAVYA Scheme

- **Core Objective**
  - Create ready-to-occupy industrial parks with pre-approved land, internal infrastructure, and single-window clearances.
  - Transition from “intent to production” in record time.
- **Scale & Financial Support**
  - 100 industrial parks (100-1,000 acres each)
  - Central assistance: Up to **₹1 crore per acre** for core infrastructure (roads, drainage, power, water, testing labs)
  - Additional **25% of project cost** for external connectivity (roads, power lines)
  - Provision for worker housing, common facilities, and value-added infrastructure
- **Special Focus Areas**
  - Priority to backward districts, aspirational blocks, and regions with high unemployment
  - Cluster-based approach (manufacturing + suppliers + services)

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- Integration with National Industrial Corridors, PM Gati Shakti, and PLI schemes
- **Employment & Economic Impact**
  - Expected to generate **15 lakh direct jobs**
  - Significant boost to manufacturing, exports, and MSME ecosystem

## Background & Policy Context

- **Need for the Scheme**
  - Despite PLI schemes and ease-of-doing-business reforms, land acquisition, infrastructure delays, and fragmented approvals remain major bottlenecks.
  - Global companies shifting from China require “plug-and-play” ready infrastructure.
- **Link with Existing Initiatives**
  - Complements National Industrial Corridor Development Programme
  - Aligns with PM Gati Shakti, Make in India 2.0, and Atmanirbhar Bharat
  - Builds on successful models like Gujarat’s GIDC parks and Tamil Nadu’s industrial corridors
- **Implementation Mechanism**
  - NICDC as lead agency in partnership with states and private developers
  - Single-window clearance system at park level
  - Time-bound development targets

## Implications

- **For Manufacturing & Investment**
  - Major reduction in project gestation period → higher FDI inflows
  - Boost to sectors like electronics, auto components, textiles, pharmaceuticals, and defence manufacturing



- **For States & Regions**
  - Special focus on backward and aspirational areas → balanced regional development
  - States get ready infrastructure without heavy capital burden
- **For Employment & Economy**
  - Direct and indirect job creation in construction and operations
  - Support for MSMEs through anchor units and ecosystem development
- **Challenges Ahead**
  - Land acquisition and state coordination
  - Environmental clearances and sustainability standards
  - Ensuring quality infrastructure and long-term maintenance

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## UPSC CSE State PCS Relevance

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### Prelims

- Key terms: Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA), Plug-and-Play Industrial Parks, NICDC, Atmanirbhar Bharat
- Data: Outlay ₹33,660 crore, Target 100 parks, Expected jobs 15 lakh
- Related: PM Gati Shakti, National Industrial Corridors, PLI Scheme

### GS-2 (Governance)

- Centrally sponsored/central sector schemes for industrial development
- Cooperative federalism in economic planning

### GS-3 (Economy)

- Manufacturing sector reforms & infrastructure push
- Ease of doing business & investment climate

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## GS-3 (Industry)

- Industrial corridors, cluster development, and Atmanirbhar initiatives

## Essay / Interview

- “Plug-and-Play Infrastructure: The Next Frontier of India’s Manufacturing Revolution”
- “From Policy to Production: How Schemes like BHAVYA Can Accelerate India’s Journey to a \$5 Trillion Economy”

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## MCQs

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1. With reference to Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA) approved in March 2026, consider the following statements:
2. The scheme aims to develop 100 plug-and-play industrial parks across the country.
3. It has an outlay of ₹33,660 crore.
4. The National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC) is the lead implementing agency.

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)**

2. BHAVYA scheme provides central assistance of up to how much per acre for core infrastructure?

- (a) ₹50 lakh
- (b) ₹75 lakh



(c) ₹1 crore

(d) ₹2 crore

**Answer: (c)**

3. The primary objective of the BHAVYA scheme is to:

(a) Promote MSME credit guarantee

(b) Develop ready-to-use plug-and-play industrial parks

(c) Provide subsidies for renewable energy

(d) Focus exclusively on defence manufacturing

**Answer: (b)**

4. BHAVYA scheme is implemented under the administrative control of:

(a) Ministry of Heavy Industries

(b) Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)

(c) NITI Aayog

(d) Ministry of Finance

**Answer: (b)**

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## Mains Questions

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1. "The Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA) represents a paradigm shift from policy announcements to ready infrastructure delivery." Discuss the scheme's features and its potential to accelerate India's manufacturing growth. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Analyse how plug-and-play industrial parks under BHAVYA can address the long-standing challenges of land acquisition and project delays in India. (10 marks / 150 words)



3. "Infrastructure-led industrialisation is key to Atmanirbhar Bharat." Examine the role of schemes like BHAVYA in achieving this vision while ensuring balanced regional development. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "From Intent to Production: Transforming India's Industrial Landscape through Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna."

## India–Vietnam Bilateral Meeting on Tribal & Ethnic

### Why in News?

- ❖ A high-level bilateral meeting between the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India** and the **Ministry of Ethnic and Religious Affairs, Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam** was held in **New Delhi** on **18-19 March 2026**. The meeting focused on:
  - Sharing best practices in tribal/ethnic community development
  - Governance models for forest-dwelling and indigenous populations
  - Cultural preservation, education, health, and livelihood initiatives
  - Potential cooperation in skill development, tourism, and sustainable forest management
- ❖ This is the first structured bilateral dialogue at the ministerial level specifically on tribal/ethnic affairs between the two countries. It builds on the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** (upgraded in 2016) and aligns with India's Act East Policy and Vietnam's outreach to South Asia. The talks assume added significance amid growing geopolitical alignment between India and Vietnam in the Indo-Pacific, especially in maritime security and supply-chain resilience.

### Key Outcomes & Agreements

- **Areas of Cooperation Identified**
  - Exchange of officials and study visits on tribal governance models
  - Joint workshops on forest rights, community forestry, and eco-tourism
  - Collaboration on education & skill development for tribal/ethnic youth



- Sharing of India's **Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006** experience with Vietnam's ethnic minority policies
- **MoU / Roadmap**
  - Both sides agreed to finalise a **bilateral action plan** within six months.
  - Vietnam expressed interest in India's **Van Dhan Yojana** (tribal livelihood model) and **Eklavya Model Residential Schools**.
- **Strategic Context**
  - Vietnam has 54 officially recognised ethnic groups (14% of population).
  - India has over 700 Scheduled Tribes (8.6% of population).
  - Both nations face similar challenges: poverty alleviation, land rights, cultural preservation, and integration with mainstream development.

## Background: India–Vietnam Relations

- **Historical & Diplomatic Ties**
  - Diplomatic relations established in 1972.
  - Upgraded to **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** in 2016.
  - Vietnam is one of India's **Act East Policy** priority partners.
- **Key Pillars**
  - **Defence & Security:** Joint exercises (VINBAX), defence equipment supply (Akash missile, BrahMos interest), maritime cooperation in South China Sea.
  - **Economic & Trade:** Bilateral trade ~\$15 billion (2025); Vietnam is India's 8th largest trading partner in ASEAN.
  - **Energy & Connectivity:** ONGC Videsh oil blocks in Vietnam's continental shelf; India's support for INSTC-like connectivity.



- **Cultural & People-to-People:** Strong Buddhist heritage link; Indian diaspora in Vietnam (~10,000).

- **Recent Milestones**

- PM Modi's visit to Vietnam (2024) → elevated ties.
- Vietnam's support for India's UNSC bid and Quad+ outreach.

## Geographical & Strategic Profile of Vietnam

- **Location & Borders**

- Eastern mainland Southeast Asia
- Land borders: China (north), Laos & Cambodia (west)
- Maritime boundaries: South China Sea (east & south), Gulf of Thailand (southwest)

- **Physiography**

- S-shaped elongated country (~1,650 km north-south)
- Annamese Cordillera (central highlands)
- Highest peak: **Fansipan** (3,143 m)
- Major rivers: Red River (north), Mekong River (south)

- **Strategic Importance**

- Key player in South China Sea disputes (Paracel & Spratly Islands)
- Major manufacturing hub (China+1 strategy)
- Long coastline → critical for Indo-Pacific maritime security

## Implications

- **For India**

- Strengthens Act East outreach & Indo-Pacific engagement
- Opens new avenue for soft-power diplomacy (tribal/ethnic governance)



- Potential cooperation in ethnic tourism & sustainable livelihood models
- **For Vietnam**
  - Access to India's tribal welfare models (FRA, Van Dhan, Eklavya schools)
  - Deepens strategic partnership amid South China Sea tensions
- **Regional & Global**
  - Reinforces India-Vietnam axis as counter-balance in Indo-Pacific
  - Supports ASEAN centrality & Quad outreach

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## UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

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### Prelims

- Key terms: Act East Policy, Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, Sixth Schedule (India) vs Ethnic Minority Policy (Vietnam), South China Sea
- Data: Bilateral trade ~\$15 bn (2025), Vietnam ethnic groups (54), Fansipan (3,143 m)
- Related: Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, ASEAN-India Summit

### GS-2 (IR)

- India's Act East Policy & neighbourhood-first strategy
- India-Vietnam strategic partnership

### GS-1 (Geography)

- Southeast Asia physical & human geography

### GS-2 (Social Justice)

- Tribal/ethnic governance models & comparative public policy

### Essay / Interview

- "India-Vietnam Partnership: From Historical Ties to Strategic Convergence in the Indo-Pacific"

Head. Office: 201, Ansal Building No. A-12-13, Commercial Complex, Dr. Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009.  
Assam Center: House No. 12, 3rd Floor, Bylane -6 Hriday Ranjan Path, Guwahati 781003.  
Ph.: 011-460-448-9312, 999012-6023, 999012-60-24/ Web: [www.onlycompetition.com](http://www.onlycompetition.com)



- “Ethnic Governance Models: Comparative Lessons from India’s Sixth Schedule and Vietnam’s Ethnic Minority Policies”

## MCQs

1. With reference to the recent India-Vietnam bilateral meeting (March 2026), consider the following statements:
2. The meeting was held between the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (India) and the Ministry of Ethnic and Religious Affairs (Vietnam).
3. It focused on sharing best practices in tribal/ethnic governance and livelihood models.
4. Vietnam has 54 officially recognised ethnic groups.

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)**

2. The highest peak in Vietnam is:

- (a) Mount Fansipan
- (b) Mount Kinabalu
- (c) Mount Apo
- (d) Mount Rinjani

**Answer: (a)**

3. India-Vietnam ties were upgraded to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in:

- (a) 2014



(b) 2016

(c) 2020

(d) 2024

**Answer: (b)**

4. Which major river system in Vietnam is shared with Cambodia and Laos?

(a) Red River

(b) Mekong River

(c) Irrawaddy River

(d) Chao Phraya River

**Answer: (b)**

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## Mains Questions

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1. "The March 2026 India-Vietnam meeting on tribal/ethnic affairs marks a new dimension in bilateral ties." Discuss its significance in the context of Act East Policy and shared challenges of indigenous governance. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Compare and contrast the tribal administration models in India (Sixth Schedule) and Vietnam's ethnic minority policies. What lessons can both countries draw from each other? (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "People-to-people and cultural diplomacy are becoming central to India's neighbourhood engagement." Examine this statement with reference to the recent India-Vietnam dialogue on tribal and ethnic affairs. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Beyond Defence & Trade: The Emerging Soft-Power Dimension in India-Vietnam Strategic Partnership."