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Minor Planet Centre Announces Discovery of 15 New Moons

Why in News?

- The **Minor Planet Centre (MPC)**, the world's primary repository for observations of small solar system bodies, has announced the discovery of **15 new moons** – **four around Jupiter** and **11 around Saturn**. This discovery significantly increases the known satellite count of these gas giants and highlights the continued advancement in deep-space observation capabilities.
- The MPC, operating under the International Astronomical Union (IAU) at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in Cambridge, Massachusetts, plays a pivotal role in verifying discoveries, assigning official designations, and tracking near-Earth objects (NEOs).

Key Details of the Discovery

- **New Moons**
 - **Jupiter:** 4 new moons discovered.
 - **Saturn:** 11 new moons discovered.
 - These are mostly small, irregular satellites likely captured by the planets' strong gravitational fields.
- **Significance**
 - Adds to the rapidly growing tally of known moons in the outer solar system.
 - Enhances understanding of planetary formation, capture mechanisms, and the dynamical history of the solar system.

3. About the Minor Planet Centre (MPC)

- **Location & Affiliation**
 - Located in **Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA**.
 - Operates at the **Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory** under the **International Astronomical Union (IAU)**.

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- **Core Functions**

- Serves as the global repository for all observations of asteroids, comets, and small bodies (including moons of outer planets).
- Verifies observations, calculates orbits, and assigns official designations to newly discovered objects.
- Tracks **Near-Earth Objects (NEOs)** – asteroids and comets whose orbits bring them close to Earth – and issues alerts on potential impact risks.
- Publishes **electronic circulars** to rapidly disseminate new discoveries and important celestial events to the global scientific community.

- **Importance**

- Critical for planetary defence (monitoring potentially hazardous asteroids).
- Supports scientific research on solar system dynamics and evolution.

Implications

- **Scientific**

- Improves knowledge of satellite systems around gas giants and their formation processes.
- Strengthens global collaboration in observational astronomy.

- **Planetary Defence**

- Reinforces the MPC's role in early detection and tracking of NEOs, which is vital for Earth's safety.

- **For India**

- India's growing space programme (ISRO) and astronomical institutions benefit from MPC data for research and potential future planetary missions.
- Supports capacity building in asteroid tracking and space situational awareness.

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UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Minor Planet Centre (MPC), Near-Earth Objects (NEOs), International Astronomical Union (IAU), Jupiter & Saturn Moons
- Data: 15 new moons (4 Jupiter + 11 Saturn), Location (Cambridge, Massachusetts)
- Related: ISRO, Planetary Defence, Solar System Dynamics

GS-3 (Science & Technology)

- Space research, astronomy, and planetary science
- Role of international scientific institutions

GS-3 (Security)

- Space situational awareness and planetary defence against NEOs

Essay / Interview

- “Small Bodies, Big Impact: The Role of the Minor Planet Centre in Modern Astronomy and Planetary Defence”
- “Discovering the Solar System’s Hidden Moons: How Technological Advances are Reshaping Our Understanding of the Cosmos”

MCQs

1. With reference to the recent announcement by the Minor Planet Centre, consider the following statements:
2. It announced the discovery of 15 new moons – 4 around Jupiter and 11 around Saturn.
3. The MPC operates under the International Astronomical Union at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory.
4. One of its key functions is monitoring Near-Earth Objects (NEOs).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

2. The Minor Planet Centre is located in:

- (a) Paris, France
- (b) Cambridge, Massachusetts
- (c) Geneva, Switzerland
- (d) Tokyo, Japan

Answer: (b)

3. Which of the following is NOT a primary function of the Minor Planet Centre?

- (a) Verifying observations of small solar system bodies
- (b) Calculating orbits and assigning designations
- (c) Launching space missions
- (d) Monitoring Near-Earth Objects

Answer: (c)

4. The Minor Planet Centre issues electronic circulars primarily to:

- (a) Alert researchers about new discoveries and celestial events
- (b) Announce funding opportunities
- (c) Regulate satellite launches
- (d) Publish climate data

Answer: (a)

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Mains Questions

1. "The Minor Planet Centre plays a critical role in advancing our understanding of the solar system and ensuring planetary defence." Discuss its functions and significance in the context of recent discoveries of new moons. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine how discoveries of new moons around Jupiter and Saturn contribute to our knowledge of planetary formation and solar system dynamics. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "International scientific collaboration is essential for monitoring Near-Earth Objects and mitigating cosmic threats." Analyse this statement with reference to the work of the Minor Planet Centre. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Exploring the Invisible: The Role of Institutions like the Minor Planet Centre in Unveiling the Secrets of Our Solar System."

Akasha300

Why in News?

- A Kerala-based start-up has delivered the **Akasha300**, a cutting-edge high-temperature multi-material extrusion 3D printer, to the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.
- Backed by the **Space Technology Innovation and Incubation Centre at IIST** and the **Kerala Startup Mission**, this development marks a significant step towards **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in advanced manufacturing and additive technology for space applications.
- The Akasha300 is designed as an industrial-grade research platform capable of handling high-performance materials under extreme thermal conditions, which are critical for aerospace and defence components.

Key Features of Akasha300 3D Printer

- **Core Technology**
 - High-temperature **multi-material extrusion** system.
 - **Dual-extrusion** capability with current operating temperature up to **350°C**, with planned upgrades to **500°C**.

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- **Modular Design**

- Modular extruder system allows integration of additional extrusion heads.
- Enables hybrid additive manufacturing techniques in the future.

- **Thermal Management**

- Heated bed reaching up to **110°C** (upgradeable to **150°C**).
- Enclosed chamber maintaining temperatures up to **80°C** for stable printing of high-performance polymers and composites.

- **Additional Features**

- Robust motion system for precision.
- Integrated air filtration for safe operation with advanced materials.
- Designed specifically as a research and development platform for functional prototypes and components.

Significance of the Development

- **For ISRO & Space Sector**

- Enables faster prototyping and production of complex, lightweight, high-temperature-resistant components required for satellites, launch vehicles, and spacecraft.
- Reduces dependence on imported additive manufacturing systems.
- Supports ISRO's push for indigenous technology in critical areas.

- **For India's Manufacturing Ecosystem**

- Demonstrates the growing capability of Indian start-ups in cutting-edge additive manufacturing.
- Strengthens the "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiatives in high-tech sectors.
- Opens avenues for similar technology adoption in defence, aerospace, automotive, and medical fields.

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- **Broader Impact**

- Promotes innovation through academia-industry-government collaboration (IIST, Kerala Startup Mission, and ISRO).
- Enhances India's position in the global additive manufacturing landscape.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Akasha300, High-Temperature 3D Printer, Multi-material Extrusion, Additive Manufacturing
- Data: Operating temperature (up to 350°C, upgradeable to 500°C), Heated bed (110°C, upgradeable to 150°C)
- Related: ISRO, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Space Technology Innovation and Incubation Centre (IIST), Kerala Startup Mission

GS-3 (Science & Technology)

- Additive manufacturing and its applications in space and defence
- Indigenous technology development and start-up ecosystem

GS-3 (Economy)

- Role of start-ups in achieving self-reliance in high-tech manufacturing

Essay / Interview

- "Additive Manufacturing as a Pillar of Atmanirbhar Bharat: The Akasha300 Example"
- "From Start-up Innovation to Space Applications: Bridging Academia, Industry and ISRO"

MCQs

1. With reference to the Akasha300 3D Printer, consider the following statements:

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2. It is a high-temperature multi-material extrusion 3D printer delivered to ISRO by a Kerala start-up.
3. It features dual-extrusion technology with operating temperatures up to 350°C.
4. It was developed with support from the Space Technology Innovation and Incubation Centre at IIST.

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 Akasha300 3D Printer is primarily designed for:
 - (a) Consumer electronics
 - (b) Industrial-grade research and aerospace applications
 - (c) Household decoration
 - (d) Textile printing

Answer: (b)

3. Which of the following is NOT a feature of the Akasha300?
 - (a) Heated bed up to 110°C
 - (b) Enclosed chamber up to 80°C
 - (c) Integrated air filtration
 - (d) Laser sintering technology

Answer: (d)

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4. The Akasha300 project is supported by:

- (a) Kerala Startup Mission and IIST
- (b) DRDO only
- (c) Ministry of Electronics and IT
- (d) NITI Aayog

Answer: (a)

Mains Questions

1. “Additive manufacturing technologies like the Akasha300 3D Printer are crucial for achieving self-reliance in India’s space and defence sectors.” Discuss the significance of this development and its broader implications. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the role of start-ups and academic institutions in advancing indigenous technology for ISRO. What policy measures can further strengthen such collaborations? (10 marks / 150 words)
3. “High-temperature 3D printing represents a paradigm shift in manufacturing complex components for extreme environments.” Analyse this statement with reference to the Akasha300 and its potential applications. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** “From Conventional Manufacturing to Additive Revolution: India’s Quest for Technological Self-Reliance in Aerospace and Defence.”

Panama Canal Operating at Full Capacity Amid Surge in LNG Traffic Due to Iran War

Why in News?

- The **Panama Canal** is currently operating at its **top capacity** as the ongoing US-Israel-Iran war has triggered a sharp increase in liquefied natural gas (LNG) vessel traffic through the waterway.

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- Rerouting of energy shipments due to disruptions and security concerns in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz has significantly boosted transits via the Panama Canal, especially for LNG carriers heading from the US Gulf Coast to Asia and Europe.
- This surge highlights the canal's continued strategic importance as a critical chokepoint in global maritime trade, even as it faces long-term challenges from climate-induced water shortages.

Key Details of the Panama Canal

- **Geographical & Structural Profile**
 - Man-made waterway connecting the **Atlantic and Pacific Oceans** across the **Isthmus of Panama**.
 - Length: **40 miles** (approximately 64 km) from shoreline to shoreline.
 - Uses a sophisticated **lock system** (with elevators) to lift and lower ships because the Pacific Ocean lies slightly higher than the Atlantic.
- **Functioning**
 - Ships are raised or lowered using a series of locks that are flooded (to gain elevation) or drained (to lose elevation), functioning like water elevators.
 - This engineering marvel allows vessels to move between the two oceans without sailing around the southern tip of South America (Cape Horn).
- **Historical Background**
 - Built by the **United States** and completed in **August 1914**.
 - Controlled solely by the US from 1914 until 1979.
 - In 1979, joint control was given to the **Panama Canal Commission** (US-Panama).
 - Full control transferred to **Panama** on **31 December 1999**.
 - Currently owned and administered entirely by Panama.

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Current Situation & Impact of Iran War

- **Surge in Traffic**
 - Increased LNG shipments from the US to Asia and Europe as alternative routes become riskier due to the West Asia conflict.
 - The canal is handling near-maximum capacity, with longer waiting times for some vessels.
- **Strategic Importance**
 - Remains one of the world's most vital artificial waterways for global trade.
 - Handles a significant portion of international maritime cargo, including energy, grains, and container traffic.
- **Challenges**
 - Climate-induced droughts have previously forced restrictions on vessel drafts and numbers of transits.
 - Current high traffic adds pressure on water management and infrastructure.

Implications

- **For Global Trade**
 - Any disruption or capacity constraint at the Panama Canal can cause delays, higher shipping costs, and supply chain pressures worldwide.
 - The current surge due to the Iran war demonstrates how regional conflicts can rapidly affect distant maritime routes.
- **For Energy Security**
 - Increased reliance on the canal for LNG rerouting highlights its role in global energy flows.
- **For India**

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- India, as a major LNG importer, is indirectly affected by changes in shipping costs and transit times via the Panama Canal route.
- Reinforces the importance of diversified energy import routes and investment in strategic maritime infrastructure (e.g., Chabahar, INSTC).

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Panama Canal, Lock System, Isthmus of Panama, LNG Traffic
- Data: Length (40 miles), Control transferred to Panama (1999), Completed (1914)
- Related: Strategic Chokepoints, Global Maritime Trade, West Asia Conflict 2026

GS-2 (IR)

- Impact of regional conflicts on global trade routes
- India's energy security and maritime interests

GS-1 (Geography)

- Important artificial waterways and their strategic significance

Essay / Interview

- "Strategic Chokepoints in Global Trade: The Enduring Importance of the Panama Canal"
- "From Regional Conflict to Global Supply Chain Disruptions: Lessons from the Iran War and Panama Canal Traffic Surge"

MCQs

1. With reference to the Panama Canal, consider the following statements:
2. It connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans across the Isthmus of Panama.
3. It was completed by the United States in 1914.
4. Full control was transferred to Panama in 1999.

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Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

2. The Panama Canal uses a system of locks primarily because:

- (a) The two oceans have different tidal patterns
- (b) The Pacific Ocean lies slightly higher than the Atlantic
- (c) It avoids strong ocean currents
- (d) It reduces fuel consumption

Answer: (b)

3. Which of the following has caused the recent surge in traffic through the Panama Canal?

- (a) Expansion of the canal
- (b) Increased LNG shipments due to the Iran war
- (c) Closure of the Suez Canal
- (d) Reduction in global trade

Answer: (b)

4. The length of the Panama Canal from shoreline to shoreline is approximately:

- (a) 20 miles
- (b) 40 miles
- (c) 60 miles
- (d) 80 miles

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Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. "The Panama Canal remains one of the most strategically important artificial waterways in global trade." Discuss its geographical significance and the impact of recent geopolitical developments on its traffic. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Analyse how regional conflicts, such as the ongoing Iran war, can disrupt distant global supply chains with special reference to the Panama Canal. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Strategic chokepoints like the Panama Canal are vulnerable to both climatic and geopolitical risks." Examine the challenges facing the canal and their implications for countries like India. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Global Trade Arteries in a Turbulent World: The Enduring Strategic Value of the Panama and Suez Canals."

GARBH-INi Initiative

Why in News?

- The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology recently highlighted that India's largest pregnancy cohort study involving **12,000 women** under the **GARBH-INi** initiative is focused on developing **indigenous, AI-driven solutions** to predict and address **preterm births**.
- The initiative is a flagship programme of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes.
- This interdisciplinary effort underscores India's push for indigenous research and technology in maternal and child health under the **Atal Jai Anusandhan Biotech Mission (UNaTI)**.

Key Details of GARBH-INi Initiative

- **Full Form**

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- Group for Advanced Research in Birth outcomes - DBT India Initiative (GARBH-INi).
- **Launch & Scope**
 - Launched in **May 2015** as a long-term cohort study of pregnant women.
 - Currently tracking **12,000 women** – India's largest pregnancy cohort study.
- **Objectives**
 - To generate deep knowledge on adverse pregnancy outcomes such as **preterm birth (PTB)** and **fetal growth restriction (FGR)**.
 - To develop efficient, sustainable, and indigenous solutions (including AI-based prediction tools) to reduce associated mortality and morbidity.
 - To promote maternal and child health through evidence-based interventions.
- **Implementing Agency**
 - Led by the **Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI)**, NCR Biotech Science Cluster, Faridabad.
 - An interdisciplinary collaborative programme under the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology.
- **Linkage with National Missions**
 - Part of the **Atal Jai Anusandhan Biotech Mission - Undertaking Nationally Relevant Technology Innovation (UNaTI)**.

What is Preterm Birth?

- **Definition**
 - Birth of a baby before **37 completed weeks** of gestation.
- **Sub-categories**
 - **Extremely preterm:** Less than 28 weeks.
 - **Very preterm:** 28 to 32 weeks.

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- Moderate to late preterm: 32 to 37 weeks.
- **Global & Indian Context**
 - Preterm birth is a leading cause of neonatal mortality and long-term disability.
 - India has one of the highest burdens of preterm births globally.
 - Early prediction and intervention are critical for improving maternal and child health outcomes.

Significance of the GARBH-INi Initiative

- **Scientific**
 - Generates high-quality longitudinal data on Indian pregnant women.
 - Enables development of **indigenous AI/ML-based prediction models** tailored to Indian population genetics and socio-economic conditions.
- **Policy & Health Impact**
 - Supports India's efforts to reduce neonatal and maternal mortality (aligned with SDG 3).
 - Provides evidence for better clinical guidelines and public health interventions.
- **Technological**
 - Promotes use of AI in healthcare for predictive diagnostics.
 - Strengthens India's biotechnology and health-tech ecosystem.
- **Broader Vision**
 - Reinforces **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in health research and innovation.
 - Encourages interdisciplinary collaboration between clinicians, biologists, data scientists, and engineers.

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UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: GARBH-INi, Preterm Birth (PTB), Fetal Growth Restriction (FGR), THSTI, UNaTI
- Data: Cohort size (12,000 women), Launched (May 2015), Preterm birth definition (<37 weeks)
- Related: Atal Jai Anusandhan Biotech Mission, SDG 3, Maternal & Child Health

GS-3 (Science & Technology)

- Application of AI and biotechnology in healthcare
- Indigenous research initiatives in maternal health

GS-2 (Governance & Social Justice)

- Government schemes for maternal and child welfare
- Health policy and innovation

Essay / Interview

- “Leveraging AI and Big Data for Maternal and Child Health: The GARBH-INi Initiative”
- “From Data to Delivery: How Indigenous Research Can Address India’s Preterm Birth Challenge”

MCQs

1. With reference to the GARBH-INi initiative, consider the following statements:
2. It is India’s largest pregnancy cohort study involving 12,000 women.
3. It is led by the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI).
4. The initiative focuses on developing AI-driven solutions for preterm birth prediction.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

2. Preterm birth is defined as birth before completion of how many weeks of gestation?

- (a) 34 weeks
- (b) 37 weeks
- (c) 40 weeks
- (d) 42 weeks

Answer: (b)

3. GARBH-INi is an initiative under which ministry?

- (a) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- (b) Ministry of Science and Technology
- (c) Ministry of Women and Child Development
- (d) Ministry of Education

Answer: (b)

4. Which of the following is NOT a sub-category of preterm birth?

- (a) Extremely preterm
- (b) Very preterm
- (c) Moderate to late preterm
- (d) Post-term

Answer: (d)

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Mains Questions

1. “The GARBH-INi initiative represents a significant step towards using data science and AI for improving maternal and child health outcomes in India.” Discuss its objectives, methodology, and potential impact. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the challenges of preterm births in India and evaluate how initiatives like GARBH-INi can contribute to achieving SDG 3 targets. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. “Interdisciplinary research combining biotechnology, clinical medicine, and artificial intelligence is the future of public health solutions.” Analyse this statement in the context of the GARBH-INi programme. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** “From Cohort Studies to AI-Driven Interventions: Transforming Maternal and Child Health in India.”

Path Ahead for Nepal’s New Leadership: Balendra Shah’s Historic Mandate & Foreign Policy Challenges

Why in News?

- ❖ Nepal’s political landscape witnessed a historic shift after the parliamentary elections held on **5 March 2026**, with **Balendra Shah**, leader of the **Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP)**, emerging as the **Prime Minister-designate**. Shah, a former rapper-engineer-turned-mayor of Kathmandu, secured a strong mandate by capitalising on widespread disillusionment with traditional political parties.
- ❖ His victory has been described as a “monastic anomaly” in Nepali politics – a young, independent-minded leader who bypassed the old-guard establishment. The development assumes added significance amid the ongoing **US-Israel-Iran war** in West Asia, which has severely impacted Nepal due to the large number of Nepalese migrant workers in the Gulf region.
- ❖ Balendra Shah now faces the complex task of navigating Nepal’s delicate balancing act between India, China, and the United States while addressing domestic governance reforms.

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Key Details of the Political Shift

- **Balendra Shah & RSP**
 - Shah positioned himself as an “outsider” and “clean reformer”.
 - His campaign was marked by minimal media interviews, symbolic “Greater Nepal” mapping in his office, and a deliberate rejection of traditional political rhetoric.
 - RSP’s rise reflects “post-Gen Z” fatigue with dynastic and ideological politics.
- **Foreign Policy Challenges**
 - **India:** Nepal’s largest trading partner and most consequential neighbour; historical sensitivities over border issues and water resources.
 - **China:** Major infrastructure investor (Belt and Road Initiative projects); Shah has signalled caution by dropping a China-backed industrial park from his manifesto.
 - **United States:** Growing strategic engagement; Nepal’s large migrant workforce in the Gulf makes the West Asia conflict a direct livelihood issue.
 - **West Asia Crisis:** Millions of Nepalese migrants’ lives and remittances are tied to the Persian Gulf; the ongoing war has created an immediate contingency planning challenge for Kathmandu.
- **Domestic Mandate**
 - Shah’s victory is seen as a rejection of old-guard politics.
 - His “monastic silence” and reformist image resonated with youth and urban voters.

Background: Nepal’s Political & Geopolitical Context

- **Internal Politics**
 - Long history of coalition instability and ideological polarisation (Congress, CPN-UML, Maoists).
 - Rise of new-generation parties like RSP signals demand for clean governance and anti-corruption.

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- **Geostrategic Location**

- Landlocked between India and China → classic buffer state dilemma.
- “Roti-Beti” social bonds with India; deep economic dependence on Indian market and ports.
- China’s growing footprint through infrastructure financing (Pokhara Airport, BRI projects).

- **West Asia Link**

- Nepal is heavily dependent on remittances from the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait).
- The 2026 US-Israel-Iran war has already affected migrant safety and employment, making foreign policy management a domestic political necessity.

Implications

- **For Nepal**

- Shah’s leadership will be tested on balancing economic dependence on India with infrastructure ties to China.
- Immediate priority: Ensuring safety and evacuation support for Nepalese workers in the Gulf.
- Domestic reforms: Anti-corruption, governance efficiency, and youth employment.

- **For India**

- Opportunity to recalibrate ties with a new, non-traditional leadership in Kathmandu.
- India must move beyond the “coercive shadow” of the 2015 blockade perception and engage on equal terms.
- Key areas: Trade, connectivity, water resources, and security cooperation.

- **Regional & Global**

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- Highlights the interplay of domestic politics and foreign policy in small Himalayan states.
- China's infrastructure push vs. India's cultural and economic influence.
- US strategic interest in Nepal as part of Indo-Pacific strategy.

UPSC CSE & State PCS PCSRelevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP), Balendra Shah, Act East Policy (India), Belt and Road Initiative (China), West Asia Conflict (2026)
- Data: Nepal's parliamentary election (5 March 2026), India-Nepal trade dependence
- Related: India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950), Gorkha recruitment

GS-2 (IR)

- India's Neighbourhood First Policy & Act East Policy
- Nepal's foreign policy balancing between India and China

GS-2 (Polity & Governance)

- Emerging trends in South Asian democratic politics (rise of new parties)

GS-3 (Security)

- Migration, remittances, and human security linkages with West Asia conflict

Essay / Interview

- "Nepal's New Leadership: Navigating the Tightrope Between India, China, and Domestic Renewal"
- "Geopolitics of the Himalayas: How Domestic Political Shifts in Nepal Affect India's Strategic Interests"

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MCQs

1. With reference to Nepal's recent political developments (March 2026), consider the following statements:
2. Balendra Shah of the Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP) has emerged as the Prime Minister-designate.
3. The West Asia conflict has significant implications for Nepal due to its large migrant workforce in the Gulf.
4. Shah's campaign was marked by extensive media interviews and traditional political rhetoric.

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 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship governs relations between:
 - (a) India and Bhutan
 - (b) India and Nepal
 - (c) India and Bangladesh
 - (d) India and Myanmar

Answer: (b)

3. Which of the following is NOT a major challenge for Nepal's new leadership?
 - (a) Managing remittances from the Gulf amid West Asia conflict
 - (b) Balancing relations with India and China

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- (c) Resolving the Doklam border dispute
- (d) Addressing domestic governance and anti-corruption demands

Answer: (c)

4. Balendra Shah's political rise is described as a rejection of:

- (a) Monarchical rule
- (b) Old-guard traditional politics
- (c) Federalism
- (d) Republicanism

Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. "Balendra Shah's victory in Nepal represents a generational shift in South Asian politics." Discuss the factors behind his mandate and the foreign policy challenges his government is likely to face. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Analyse the complex interplay of domestic politics and foreign policy in Nepal, with special reference to its relations with India and China. How should India recalibrate its approach? (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "The West Asia conflict has direct livelihood implications for Nepal's migrant workers." Examine the human security dimension of the 2026 crisis and its impact on Nepal-India relations. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Nepal's New Leadership: Navigating the Geopolitical Tightrope Between Delhi, Beijing, and Domestic Renewal."

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