

ONLY COMPETITION IAS

DAILY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS



Only Competition

26 March 2026



ONLY COMPETITION TEAM MEMBERS

Editor: Imtiyaz Khan

Managing Editor: Ritika Sharma

Academic Advisors: Raj Shekhar, Haroon, Banjit Hujuri, Manas Garg, Puneet Talukdar

Academic Research Team: Only Competition IAS Research Cell

Creative Media Team: Sunil Kansal, Shivam Sharma, Imaduddin Gaani, Anirban Saikia

Digital Publishing: Abhijeet Sahu & Media Unit

Marketing & Outreach: Akanshya Dutta & Team

Support Staff: Ankit Kumar, Manab Kalita

■ ABOUT ONLY COMPETITION IAS

Only Competition IAS is a premier academic platform dedicated to Civil Services and Competitive Examination preparation.

Our mission is to provide **high-quality, research-based, and exam-oriented content** to students across India through:

- Digital Platforms
- Classroom Programs
- Publications

📍 **Locations:** New Delhi | Guwahati | Online Edition Available

✉ **Email:** onlycompetitionofficial@gmail.com

☎ **Contact:** +91 9990-1260-23 / 24

⚖️ COPYRIGHT & LEGAL NOTICE

© 2026 Only Competition IAS. All Rights Reserved.

No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission from the publisher, except for brief quotations for academic and educational purposes.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Only Competition IAS. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the publisher does not take responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Jurisdiction Clause:

Any dispute arising out of or in connection with this publication shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi, India.

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



CONTENT

Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme (2026-2031).....	4
UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance.....	5
MCQs.....	6
Mains Questions.....	7
PRISM-SG.....	7
UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance.....	9
MCQs.....	9
Mains Questions.....	10
Israel Announces Plan to Establish Security Zone in Southern Lebanon up to Litani River.....	11
UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance.....	12
MCQs.....	13
Mains Questions.....	14
Telangana Government Initiates Rehabilitation of Tribal Families from Amrabad Tiger Reserve...	14
UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance.....	16
MCQs.....	16
Mains Questions.....	17
QS World University Rankings 2026.....	18
UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance.....	19
MCQs.....	19
Mains Questions.....	20
UDAN Scheme.....	21
UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance.....	23
MCQs.....	23

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

2



Mains Questions.....	24
India Unveils Updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for 2035.....	25
MCQs.....	27
Mains Questions.....	28
Constitutional Roadblocks in Expanding Lok Sabha Seats.....	29
UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance.....	31
MCQs.....	31
Mains Questions.....	33
14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) of WTO.....	33
UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance.....	35
MCQs.....	36
Mains Questions.....	37

Only Competition



Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme (2026–2031)

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of the **Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme** for a period of five years – from **1 April 2026 to 31 March 2031**.
- The scheme aims to create a secure, integrated, and technology-driven ecosystem for immigration, visa issuance, and tracking of foreigners in India.
- The approval comes in the backdrop of the recently enacted **Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025**, and is aligned with the government's vision of digital transformation, national security, and ease of doing business.

Key Features of the IVFRT Scheme

- **Core Objective**
 - To integrate and streamline immigration, visa issuance, and foreigners' registration processes through a secure digital platform.
 - To ensure efficient tracking, monitoring, and management of foreign nationals in India.
- **Focus Areas (2026-2031 Phase)**
 - **Emerging Technology Innovations:** Adoption of mobile-based services, self-service kiosks, AI/ML tools, and biometric advancements for seamless passenger movement.
 - **Core Infrastructure Transformation:** Upgradation and expansion of infrastructure at Immigration Posts, Foreigners Regional Registration Offices (FRROs), and Data Centres for nationwide resilience and scalability.
 - **Optimisation of Technology-Enabled Service Delivery:** Unified digital platforms, revamped core application architecture, strengthened network and deployment frameworks for improved efficiency and user experience.
- **Historical Context**
 - Originally approved in **2010**.
 - Has undergone multiple phases of expansion and technological upgrades over the years.

Significance of the Scheme

- **National Security**

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



- Strengthens border management and real-time tracking of foreigners.
- Enhances detection of overstays, illegal immigration, and potential security threats.
- **Ease of Governance & Business**
 - Simplifies visa and immigration procedures for genuine travellers, students, and business visitors.
 - Supports India's goal of becoming a preferred global destination for tourism, education, and investment.
- **Digital India Alignment**
 - Promotes paperless, faceless, and contactless services.
 - Integrates with broader initiatives like Aadhaar, DigiLocker, and e-Visa systems.
- **Legal Backing**
 - Complements the **Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025**, providing a robust technological backbone for its implementation.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: IVFRT Scheme, Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO), Immigration and Foreigners Act 2025
- Data: Approved for continuation from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2031; Originally launched in 2010
- Related: Digital India, National Security, e-Visa, Border Management

GS-2 (Governance)

- Digital governance and technology-driven public service delivery
- Immigration policy and foreigners' management

GS-3 (Internal Security)

- Border management, immigration control, and use of technology for national security

Essay / Interview

- "Technology as a Force Multiplier in Immigration and Border Management"
- "Balancing National Security with Ease of Movement: The Role of IVFRT in India's Digital Governance"



MCQs

1. With reference to the IVFRT Scheme, consider the following statements:
2. It has been approved for continuation from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2031.
3. The scheme focuses on integrating immigration, visa issuance, and foreigners' registration through technology.
4. It was originally launched in 2010.

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 IVFRT Scheme is primarily implemented by which ministry?
 - (a) Ministry of Home Affairs
 - (b) Ministry of External Affairs
 - (c) Ministry of Electronics and IT
 - (d) Ministry of Tourism

Answer: (a)

3. Which of the following is NOT a focus area of the continued IVFRT Scheme?
 - (a) Emerging technology innovations
 - (b) Core infrastructure transformation
 - (c) Optimisation of technology-enabled service delivery
 - (d) Construction of new international airports

Answer: (d)

4. The IVFRT Scheme complements which recently enacted legislation?
 - (a) Citizenship Amendment Act
 - (b) Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025
 - (c) Digital Personal Data Protection Act
 - (d) Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

Answer: (b)



Mains Questions

1. "The IVFRT Scheme represents a critical step in leveraging technology for secure and efficient immigration management." Discuss its objectives, key components, and significance in the context of national security and ease of doing business. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the role of digital platforms like IVFRT in modern border management and foreigners' tracking. What challenges need to be addressed for its effective implementation? (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Technology-driven governance is essential for balancing national security with facilitation of legitimate movement." Analyse this statement with reference to the IVFRT Scheme and the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Securing Borders in the Digital Age: The Evolution and Impact of India's Immigration and Visa Management Systems."

PRISM-SG

Why in News?

- The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways launched the **PRISM-SG (Portal for Rail-Road Inspection & Stages Management - Steel Girders)** in New Delhi.
- This digital platform is designed to streamline and digitise the approval and inspection processes for the construction of **Road Over Bridges (ROBs)** and related steel girder fabrication.
- The initiative aims to enhance efficiency, transparency, accountability, and inter-agency coordination between the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Indian Railways, state road-owning departments, contractors, fabricators, and inspection agencies.

Key Features of PRISM-SG Portal

- **Scope**
 - Digitises key processes including **Quality Assurance Plan (QAP)**, **Welding Procedure Specification Sheet (WPSS)**, and **fabrication stage inspection** of steel girders.
 - Covers end-to-end workflow for Road Over Bridges (ROBs) and related railway bridge components.
- **Functionalities**

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

7



- Online submission of documents and drawings.
- Scrutiny, query raising, and resolution.
- Approvals and scheduling of inspections.
- Uploading of inspection reports, photographs, and test results.
- Complete **audit trail** and real-time monitoring dashboard.
- **Stakeholder Integration**
 - Brings together all key players – Road Owning Departments, Indian Railways, contractors, fabricators, and third-party inspection agencies – on a single integrated platform.

Significance of the Portal

- **Time & Efficiency Gains**
 - Expected to reduce the overall approval and inspection timeline from approximately **12 months to 3-4 months**.
 - Will accelerate the construction of Road Over Bridges and Railway Bridges, reducing delays in infrastructure projects.
- **Transparency & Accountability**
 - Digital workflow with audit trail minimises discretion and scope for delays or corruption.
 - Real-time tracking improves coordination among multiple agencies.
- **Infrastructure Development**
 - Supports faster completion of ROBs, which are critical for eliminating level crossings and improving road-rail connectivity.
 - Aligns with the government's push for seamless multi-modal transport and enhanced last-mile connectivity.
- **Broader Policy Alignment**
 - Complements initiatives like Gati Shakti National Master Plan, PM Gati Shakti, and Bharatmala Pariyojana.
 - Promotes "Digital India" in the infrastructure sector.



UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: PRISM-SG Portal, Road Over Bridge (ROB), Quality Assurance Plan (QAP), Welding Procedure Specification Sheet (WPSS)
- Data: Expected reduction in timeline (from 12 months to 3-4 months)
- Related: Gati Shakti, Bharatmala, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Indian Railways

GS-3 (Economy & Infrastructure)

- Infrastructure development and project implementation efficiency
- Use of digital technology in governance and infrastructure

GS-2 (Governance)

- Inter-ministerial coordination and e-governance initiatives

Essay / Interview

- “Digital Transformation in Infrastructure: How Platforms like PRISM-SG Can Accelerate India’s Connectivity Goals”
- “Eliminating Level Crossings and Enhancing Multi-Modal Transport: The Role of Technology and Policy Coordination”

MCQs

1. With reference to the PRISM-SG Portal, consider the following statements:
2. It has been launched to digitise approval and inspection processes for Road Over Bridges (ROBs).
3. It integrates multiple stakeholders including Indian Railways and Road Owning Departments.
4. It is expected to reduce the approval timeline from 12 months to 3-4 months.

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. PRISM-SG stands for:

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



- (a) Portal for Rail-Road Inspection & Stages Management - Steel Girders
- (b) Public Road Infrastructure Safety Management System
- (c) Project Rail-Road Integrated Surveillance Mechanism
- (d) Platform for Rapid Infrastructure and Steel Management

Answer: (a)

3. Which of the following is NOT a feature of the PRISM-SG Portal?

- (a) Online submission of documents
- (b) Real-time monitoring and audit trail
- (c) Direct financial disbursement to contractors
- (d) Scheduling of inspections and uploading of reports

Answer: (c)

4. The PRISM-SG Portal is an initiative of which ministry?

- (a) Ministry of Railways
- (b) Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
- (c) Ministry of Electronics and IT
- (d) NITI Aayog

Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. "Digital platforms like PRISM-SG can significantly improve the efficiency and transparency of infrastructure project implementation." Discuss the features and expected impact of the PRISM-SG Portal on road-rail connectivity in India. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the challenges in timely completion of Road Over Bridges (ROBs) in India and how initiatives like PRISM-SG address them. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Technology-enabled governance is key to accelerating infrastructure development while ensuring accountability." Analyse this statement with reference to the launch of the PRISM-SG Portal. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Digitising Infrastructure Delivery: Transforming Project Execution through Platforms like PRISM-SG."



Israel Announces Plan to Establish Security Zone in Southern Lebanon up to Litani River

Why in News?

- Israel has stated that its military will take control of southern Lebanon up to the **Litani River** to create a “**security zone**”.
- This announcement comes amid the ongoing escalation between Israel and Hezbollah, with Israel aiming to push Hezbollah forces away from its northern border and neutralise immediate threats.
- The Litani River, a strategically important waterway in southern Lebanon, has become a focal point in the conflict, raising concerns about territorial integrity, humanitarian impact, and regional stability.

Key Details of the Announcement

- **Israeli Position**
 - The military operation seeks to establish a buffer/security zone north of the Israel-Lebanon border up to the Litani River.
 - Objective: Prevent Hezbollah from launching rocket attacks and ground incursions into Israeli territory.
- **Strategic Context**
 - Part of broader Israeli operations against Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanon.
 - Follows repeated cross-border incidents and rocket fire from Hezbollah since the intensification of the West Asia conflict.

About Lebanon

- **Geographical Profile**
 - Located on the **eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea** in Western Asia.
 - Borders: **Syria** (north and east), **Israel** (south), **Mediterranean Sea** (west).
 - Maritime border with **Cyprus**.
- **Capital**
 - **Beirut** – the political, economic, and cultural centre of Lebanon.
- **Major Geographical Features**
 - **Climate:** Mediterranean climate with mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers.
 - **Mountains:** Lebanon Mountains (Jabal Lubnan) and Hermon Ranges.

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



- **Highest Peak:** Qurnat as Sawda' (10,128 ft / 3,087 m) in the Lebanon Mountains.
- **Major Valley:** Bekaa Valley (Al-Biqqa) – fertile agricultural region.
- **River:** Litani River – the most significant river, irrigating the Bekaa Valley and flowing into the Mediterranean south of Sidon.
- **Natural Resources**
 - Limestone, gypsum, oil, natural gas, salt, and semiprecious gemstones.
- **Economy**
 - Services sector (banking and tourism) remains the backbone of the economy, though severely impacted by repeated conflicts and political instability.

Implications of Israel's Announcement

- **For Lebanon**
 - Potential occupation or control of territory south of the Litani River would have serious humanitarian and sovereignty implications.
 - Risk of large-scale displacement and damage to civilian infrastructure.
- **Regional Security**
 - Further escalation of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict.
 - Could draw in other regional actors and complicate ceasefire efforts.
- **For India**
 - India maintains a significant troop contribution to **UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon)** deployed in southern Lebanon.
 - Any expansion of conflict increases risks to Indian peacekeepers and affects India's broader West Asia policy.
 - Indirect impact on energy security and stability of Indian diaspora and trade interests in the region.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Litani River, Bekaa Valley, Qurnat as Sawda', UNIFIL
- Data: Highest peak (3,087 m), Capital - Beirut, Borders with Syria and Israel
- Related: West Asia Conflict 2026, Israel-Hezbollah Tensions, Mediterranean Geography

GS-2 (IR)

- India's role in UN peacekeeping (UNIFIL) and West Asia policy



- Geopolitics of the Levant and Mediterranean region

GS-1 (Geography)

- Physical and political geography of Lebanon and major river systems

Essay / Interview

- “Rivers as Strategic Flashpoints: The Litani in the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict”
- “Small States in Major Conflicts: Lebanon’s Enduring Vulnerability in West Asian Geopolitics”

MCQs

1. With reference to the recent developments involving the Litani River, consider the following statements:
2. Israel has announced plans to establish a security zone up to the Litani River in southern Lebanon.
3. The Litani River is the most significant river in Lebanon, irrigating the Bekaa Valley.
4. Lebanon shares its borders with Syria, Israel, and the Mediterranean Sea.

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 capital city of Lebanon is:
 - (a) Damascus
 - (b) Beirut
 - (c) Amman
 - (d) Baghdad

Answer: (b)

3. The highest point in Lebanon is:
 - (a) Mount Hermon
 - (b) Qurnat as Sawda'
 - (c) Mount Lebanon
 - (d) Jabal Barouk

Answer: (b)



4. Which of the following is NOT a bordering country of Lebanon?

- (a) Syria
- (b) Israel
- (c) Jordan
- (d) None (all are correct)

Answer: (c)

Mains Questions

1. "Rivers like the Litani often become strategic flashpoints in regional conflicts." Discuss the geographical and economic importance of the Litani River and the implications of Israel's proposed security zone. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine Lebanon's geopolitical vulnerabilities in the context of its location and the ongoing Israel-Hezbollah tensions. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Small states in conflict zones face disproportionate humanitarian and sovereignty challenges." Analyse this statement with reference to recent developments in southern Lebanon. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Water, Territory and Conflict: The Enduring Strategic Role of Rivers in West Asian Geopolitics."

Telangana Government Initiates Rehabilitation of Tribal Families from Amrabad Tiger Reserve

Why in News?

- The Telangana Government has launched the **rehabilitation and relocation** of tribal families living inside the **Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR)**.
- The initiative aims to balance the development and welfare needs of tribal communities with the long-term conservation goals of the tiger reserve.
- This move is part of a broader strategy to reduce human-wildlife conflict, improve habitat quality for tigers and other wildlife, and provide better livelihood opportunities to the affected families, particularly from the Chenchu tribe.

Key Details of Amrabad Tiger Reserve

- **Location & Geography**
 - Situated in the **Nallamala hills** of the Eastern Ghats in Telangana.

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



- Originally part of the larger **Nagarjunasagar-Srisaillam Tiger Reserve** before the 2014 bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- Characterised by rugged terrain, deep valleys, and dense forests.
- **Hydrology**
 - The **Krishna River** and its perennial streams originating within the reserve feed major reservoirs such as **Srisaillam Dam** and **Nagarjunasagar Dam**.
- **Flora**
 - Dominated by **dry deciduous forests** with sal, teak, bamboo, and acacia trees.
 - Rich in medicinal plants and shrubs traditionally used by local tribes.
- **Fauna**
 - Home to tigers, leopards, wild cats, sambar deer, chital (spotted deer), nilgai (blue bull), wild boar, and Indian bison (gaur).
 - Supports over **303 bird species**, including eagles, pigeons, doves, cuckoos, woodpeckers, and drongos.
- **Tribal Community**
 - The **Chenchu tribe** is one of the major Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) living inside the reserve.

Significance of the Rehabilitation Initiative

- **Conservation**
 - Reduces human pressure on the core and buffer zones of the tiger reserve.
 - Improves habitat quality and minimises human-wildlife conflict (crop raiding, livestock depredation).
- **Tribal Welfare**
 - Provides better access to education, healthcare, housing, and livelihood opportunities outside the forest.
 - Ensures voluntary relocation with proper rehabilitation packages, respecting the rights and culture of the Chenchu community.
- **Policy Alignment**
 - Consistent with the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** guidelines on voluntary relocation from tiger reserves.
 - Supports the broader objectives of the **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA)** and wildlife conservation laws.



UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Nallamala Hills, Chenchu Tribe, Nagarjunasagar-Srisaillam Tiger Reserve
- Data: Location (Telangana), Fauna (tiger, leopard, gaur, 303+ bird species)
- Related: Project Tiger, National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

GS-3 (Environment & Biodiversity)

- Tiger conservation and human-wildlife conflict resolution
- Relocation and rehabilitation of forest-dwelling communities

GS-1 (Society)

- Tribal issues and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (Chenchu)

GS-2 (Governance)

- Implementation of Forest Rights Act and wildlife conservation policies

Essay / Interview

- “Balancing Conservation and Tribal Rights: The Challenge of Relocation from Protected Areas”
- “Human-Wildlife Coexistence in India: Lessons from Tiger Reserves like Amrabad”

MCQs

1. With reference to Amrabad Tiger Reserve, consider the following statements:
2. It is located in the Nallamala hills of Telangana.
3. It was originally part of the Nagarjunasagar-Srisaillam Tiger Reserve.
4. The Chenchu tribe is one of the major tribal communities living in the reserve.

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. Amrabad Tiger Reserve is significant for the conservation of which of the following?

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



- (a) Snow leopard
- (b) Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros
- (c) Tiger
- (d) Asiatic Lion

Answer: (c)

3. Which of the following rivers is associated with the Amrabad Tiger Reserve?

- (a) Godavari
- (b) Krishna
- (c) Mahanadi
- (d) Narmada

Answer: (b)

4. The rehabilitation of tribal families from tiger reserves is primarily guided by:

- (a) National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines
- (b) Only state forest department policies
- (c) International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) directives
- (d) United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Answer: (a)

Mains Questions

1. "Relocation of tribal communities from protected areas like Amrabad Tiger Reserve involves a delicate balance between conservation goals and tribal rights." Discuss the challenges and suggest a humane and sustainable approach. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the ecological significance of Amrabad Tiger Reserve and the role of the Chenchu tribe in its conservation landscape. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Human-wildlife conflict and habitat fragmentation are major threats to tiger conservation in India." Analyse this statement with special reference to tiger reserves in the Eastern Ghats. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Coexistence or Relocation: The Future of Tribal Communities and Wildlife Conservation in India's Protected Areas."



QS World University Rankings 2026

Why in News?

- The **Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIM-K)** has achieved a historic milestone by breaking into the **Top 100** of the prestigious **QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026** for the first time. India recorded **120 new entries** this year, placing it fourth globally for fresh appearances (after the US, China, and the UK).
- The country now holds the **fourth-largest presence** in these rankings by institution count. Six Indian institutions have entered or improved their positions in the global top 100 for computer science, while **IIT (ISM) Dhanbad** and **IIM Ahmedabad** secured India's highest global rank of **21** in their respective subjects.

Key Highlights of QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026

- **India's Performance**
 - 120 new entries – fourth highest globally.
 - India now ranks fourth in total institutions featured (after US, China, UK).
 - Six Indian institutions in global top 100 for **Computer Science**, all showing improvement.
- **Notable Indian Institutions**
 - **IIT (ISM) Dhanbad** and **IIM Ahmedabad** – both at India's highest global rank of **21**.
 - IIT (ISM) Dhanbad retained its stronghold in **Mineral and Mining Engineering**.
 - IIM Ahmedabad broke into the top 25 globally in **Business & Management Studies** and **Marketing**.
- **Methodology**
 - QS evaluates universities across five broad **lenses**: Research and Discovery, Employability and Outcomes, Global Engagement, Learning Experience, and Sustainability.
 - Key indicators include Academic Reputation, Employer Reputation, Citations per Faculty, and Employment Outcomes.

Significance of IIM Kozhikode's Achievement

- **For the Institution**
 - Marks a major leap in global recognition for academic excellence and employability.
 - Reflects strong performance in research, faculty quality, and industry linkages.

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

18



- **For Indian Higher Education**
 - Demonstrates improving global competitiveness of Indian management institutions.
 - Encourages other IIMs and universities to focus on research output, internationalisation, and employability metrics.
- **Broader Impact**
 - Boosts India's soft power and attractiveness as a destination for quality higher education.
 - Aligns with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** vision of making Indian institutions globally competitive.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: QS World University Rankings by Subject, IIM Kozhikode, IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, IIM Ahmedabad
- Data: India's 120 new entries (fourth globally), Highest Indian rank - 21 (IIT ISM Dhanbad & IIM Ahmedabad)
- Related: National Education Policy 2020, Global University Rankings

GS-2 (Governance & Social Justice)

- Higher education reforms and global competitiveness of Indian institutions

GS-3 (Economy)

- Role of quality education and research in building a knowledge economy

Essay / Interview

- "Global University Rankings as a Mirror: India's Progress and Challenges in Higher Education"
- "From Quantity to Quality: Elevating Indian Institutions in the Global Academic Landscape"

MCQs

1. With reference to the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026, consider the following statements:
2. IIM Kozhikode has entered the global Top 100 for the first time.
3. India recorded 120 new entries, placing it fourth globally for fresh appearances.
4. IIT (ISM) Dhanbad and IIM Ahmedabad secured India's highest global rank of 21.

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



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 QS World University Rankings evaluate institutions primarily on which of the following lenses?

- (a) Only research output
- (b) Research and Discovery, Employability, Global Engagement, Learning Experience, and Sustainability
- (c) Only teaching quality
- (d) Only international student ratio

Answer: (b)

3. Which of the following Indian institutions achieved the country's highest global rank of 21 in the QS Subject Rankings 2026?

- (a) IIM Bangalore and IIT Bombay
- (b) IIT (ISM) Dhanbad and IIM Ahmedabad
- (c) IIM Kozhikode and IISc Bengaluru
- (d) IIT Delhi and IIM Calcutta

Answer: (b)

4. The National Education Policy 2020 aims to:

- (a) Reduce the number of higher education institutions
- (b) Make Indian institutions globally competitive and research-oriented
- (c) Focus only on vocational education
- (d) Limit international collaborations

Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. "India's improving performance in global university rankings reflects the impact of higher education reforms." Discuss the significance of the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026 for Indian institutions and the challenges that remain. (15 marks / 250 words)



2. Examine the key parameters used in QS World University Rankings and analyse why Indian institutions have shown better performance in subjects like Business & Management and Mining Engineering. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. “Global university rankings are both an opportunity and a benchmark for countries aspiring to build knowledge economies.” Evaluate this statement in the context of India’s higher education sector. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** “From Ranking to Excellence: Transforming Indian Higher Education for Global Leadership.”

UDAN Scheme

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved a major revamp of the **Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)** Scheme to address structural challenges and improve long-term sustainability.
- The revamped scheme has a total outlay of **₹28,840 crore** (nearly six-fold increase from the earlier allocation) and extends subsidy support for airlines from **3 years to 5 years**.
- Funding will now come directly from the government exchequer instead of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) levy.
- The revamp also includes redevelopment of 100 additional airports and support for 441 aerodromes, along with development of 200 helipads for better last-mile connectivity.

Key Features of the Revamped UDAN Scheme

- **Increased Funding & Scope**
 - Total outlay: **₹28,840 crore**.
 - Shift from infrastructure creation to sustained operational and maintenance support.
- **Extended Subsidy Support**
 - Viability Gap Funding (VGF) period extended from **3 years to 5 years** for airlines operating on regional routes.
 - Aims to improve route viability and reduce premature discontinuation of services.
- **Funding Mechanism Change**
 - Subsidy will now be provided directly from the **government exchequer** instead of the RCS levy imposed on major route flights.
- **Infrastructure & Connectivity Focus**
 - Redevelopment of **100 additional airports** with an outlay of **₹12,159 crore**.



- Operational and maintenance support for **441 aerodromes**.
- Development of **200 helipads** to strengthen last-mile connectivity in remote, hilly, and island regions.
- **Fleet Support**
 - Procurement of **HAL Dhruv helicopters** for Pawan Hans.
 - Procurement of **HAL Dornier aircraft** for Alliance Air.

Background & Achievements of Original UDAN Scheme

- **Launch & Objectives**
 - Launched in **2017** under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS).
 - Aims to improve air connectivity to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, make air travel affordable, and promote balanced regional development.
- **Key Mechanism**
 - Airlines selected through competitive bidding.
 - 50% of seats offered at a capped fare of around ₹2,500 per hour of flight.
 - Viability Gap Funding (VGF) provided to airlines for less profitable routes.
- **Achievements**
 - Over **600 routes** operationalised.
 - More than **90 airports** (including many unused airstrips) revived.
 - Improved last-mile connectivity, especially in the North-East and hilly regions.
- **Challenges**
 - High discontinuation rate after subsidy withdrawal (over 90% of routes became unviable).
 - CAG report noted only 7-10% routes remained sustainable post-subsidy.
 - Out of 663 routes launched since 2017, **327 have been discontinued**.

Implications of the Revamp

- **For Regional Connectivity**
 - Longer subsidy support and direct government funding are expected to improve route sustainability.
 - Enhanced focus on helipads and small aircraft will strengthen last-mile air connectivity.
- **For Aviation Sector**
 - Greater financial viability for airlines operating on regional routes.
 - Boost to indigenous aircraft and helicopter manufacturing (HAL Dhruv and Dornier).

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



- **For Economy & Development**

- Promotes balanced regional growth by improving air access to underserved areas.
- Supports tourism, trade, and economic activities in Tier-2/3 cities.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: UDAN Scheme, Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS), Viability Gap Funding (VGF), HAL Dhruv, HAL Dornier
- Data: Total outlay ₹28,840 crore, Subsidy period extended to 5 years, 100 additional airports to be redeveloped
- Related: Atmanirbhar Bharat, Gati Shakti, Civil Aviation Policy

GS-3 (Economy & Infrastructure)

- Regional connectivity and infrastructure development
- Government schemes for balanced regional growth

GS-2 (Governance)

- Policy intervention and scheme revamping for better outcomes

Essay / Interview

- “UDAN Scheme: Bridging the Gap between Metros and Tier-2/3 Cities through Affordable Air Connectivity”
- “From Subsidy to Sustainability: Challenges and Reforms in India’s Regional Aviation Ecosystem”

MCQs

1. With reference to the revamped UDAN Scheme, consider the following statements:
2. The total outlay has been increased to ₹28,840 crore.
3. Subsidy support for airlines has been extended from 3 years to 5 years.
4. Funding will now come directly from the government exchequer instead of the RCS levy.

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 UDAN Scheme was originally launched in which year?
- (a) 2014
 - (b) 2017
 - (c) 2019
 - (d) 2021

Answer: (b)

3. Which of the following is NOT a component of the revamped UDAN Scheme?
- (a) Redevelopment of 100 additional airports
 - (b) Development of 200 helipads
 - (c) Procurement of indigenous aircraft and helicopters
 - (d) Construction of new international airports

Answer: (d)

4. The primary objective of the UDAN Scheme is to:
- (a) Promote international air travel
 - (b) Enhance regional air connectivity to Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities
 - (c) Provide free air travel to senior citizens
 - (d) Regulate airline fares across all routes

Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. "The revamped UDAN Scheme addresses structural weaknesses of the original programme and aims to ensure sustainable regional air connectivity." Discuss the key changes and their expected impact. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the challenges faced by the original UDAN Scheme and evaluate how the recent revamp attempts to overcome them. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Affordable regional air connectivity is crucial for balanced economic development and national integration." Analyse this statement in the context of the UDAN Scheme. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "Connecting the Unconnected: The Role of UDAN in Transforming India's Aviation Landscape and Regional Growth."



India Unveils Updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for 2035

Why in News?

- India has submitted its updated **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** for 2035 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in line with the Paris Agreement's five-yearly update cycle.
- The new targets reflect a progression over the 2022 NDC while balancing climate ambition with developmental needs and energy security. Key 2035 targets include **60% installed electricity capacity from non-fossil sources**, **47% reduction in emissions intensity of GDP** (from 2005 levels), and an enhanced **carbon sink of 3.5-4 billion tonnes** of CO₂ equivalent.
- The announcement comes ahead of the next global stocktake and positions India as a responsible voice of the Global South.

Key Highlights of India's Updated 2035 NDC Targets

- **Non-Fossil Energy Capacity**
 - Target: **60%** of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil sources (solar, wind, hydro, biomass, nuclear) by 2035.
 - Current status: Approximately **52%** achieved (as of early 2026).
 - Earlier target: 50% by 2030 (already on track or exceeded in capacity terms).
- **Emissions Intensity Reduction**
 - Target: **47%** reduction in emissions intensity of GDP from 2005 levels by 2035.
 - Earlier target: 45% by 2030.
 - Current progress: Around 36% reduction achieved between 2005 and 2020.
- **Carbon Sink Enhancement**
 - Target: **3.5-4 billion tonnes** of CO₂ equivalent through forest and tree cover.
 - Earlier target: 2.5-3 billion tonnes by 2030.
 - Current progress: Approximately 2.3 billion tonnes achieved by 2021.

Understanding NDCs under the Paris Agreement

- **What are NDCs?**
 - Nationally Determined Contributions are voluntary climate action plans submitted by countries under the Paris Agreement.



- They are updated every five years with progressively higher ambition, reflecting national circumstances and capabilities (principle of **CBDR-RC** - Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities).
- **India's NDC Evolution**
 - 2015: First NDC (targets for 2025).
 - 2022: Updated NDC (targets for 2030).
 - 2026: Third update (targets for 2035).
- **Global Stocktake Influence**
 - The first Global Stocktake (concluded at COP28) highlighted that the world is not on track for the 1.5°C goal.
 - India's updated NDC responds to this while emphasising equity and developmental priorities.

Significance of India's Updated NDC

- **Climate Leadership**
 - Positions India as a proactive leader among developing countries.
 - Demonstrates "incremental progression" while maintaining the principle of equity.
- **Balancing Growth & Sustainability**
 - Reflects "climate justice" by prioritising energy access, industrial growth, and poverty alleviation alongside mitigation.
- **Strategic Autonomy**
 - NDCs remain self-determined, not externally imposed, aligning with domestic priorities like energy security and affordable power.

Implementation Framework

- **National Missions**
 - Operationalised through the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** and its eight missions, plus State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC).
- **Key Schemes**
 - Jal Jeevan Mission, National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture, MISHTI (mangrove initiative), PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, Soil Health Card, etc.
- **People-Centric Approach**
 - Promotes **Lifestyle for Environment (LIFE)** as a mass movement.
 - Initiatives like **Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam** encourage community participation in tree plantation.



Challenges & Concerns

- **Ambition Gap**
 - Critics argue the 60% non-fossil capacity target by 2035 is modest given current progress.
 - Significant gap between installed capacity and actual generation from renewables due to intermittency.
- **Implementation Hurdles**
 - Land acquisition and transmission infrastructure bottlenecks for renewable expansion.
 - Forest and tree cover (~24.6%) still below the national target of 33%.
- **Global Context**
 - Developed countries rolling back commitments and imposing unilateral measures (e.g., carbon border taxes).

Way Forward

- **Renewable Ecosystem**
 - Invest heavily in grid modernisation, energy storage, and green hydrogen.
- **Carbon Sink**
 - Scale up agroforestry, urban forestry, and community-led conservation.
- **Climate Finance**
 - Push for adequate international climate finance and technology transfer.
- **Domestic Reforms**
 - Streamline approvals, strengthen climate governance, and improve ease of doing business for green projects.

MCQs

1. With reference to India's updated 2035 NDCs, consider the following statements:
2. India aims for 60% of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil sources by 2035.
3. The target for emissions intensity reduction is 47% from 2005 levels.
4. The carbon sink target has been set at 3.5-4 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

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

27



(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)

2. The principle of CBDR-RC, frequently referenced in India's NDCs, stands for:

- (a) Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities
- (b) Collective Binding Development and Resource Conservation
- (c) Climate Balanced Development and Renewable Commitment
- (d) Coordinated Bilateral Development and Regional Cooperation

Answer: (a)

3. Which of the following is NOT part of India's updated 2035 NDC targets? (a) 60% non-fossil power capacity

- (b) Net-zero emissions by 2035
- (c) 47% emissions intensity reduction
- (d) 3.5-4 billion tonnes carbon sink

Answer: (b)

4. The first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement was concluded at:

- (a) COP26
- (b) COP27
- (c) COP28
- (d) COP29

Answer: (c)

Mains Questions

1. "India's updated 2035 NDCs reflect a balanced approach between climate ambition and developmental priorities." Discuss the key targets and their significance in the context of the Global Stocktake. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Analyse the challenges India faces in achieving its 2035 non-fossil energy capacity target and suggest measures to bridge the capacity-generation gap. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Equity and CBDR-RC remain central to India's climate diplomacy." Examine this statement with reference to India's evolving NDCs and global expectations. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "From Paris to 2035: India's Climate Leadership and the Quest for a Just and Sustainable Global Order."



Constitutional Roadblocks in Expanding Lok Sabha Seats

Why in News?

- The government has proposed increasing the strength of the **Lok Sabha** from **543 to 816 seats** (a 50% rise) to implement the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act), 2023**.
- The plan involves basing the delimitation exercise on the **2011 Census** instead of waiting for the upcoming Census, while maintaining the existing proportional representation among states. A similar increase is proposed for State Legislative Assemblies.
- The proposal is being discussed with political parties to build consensus, but it is likely to encounter significant **constitutional, legal, and federal hurdles**.

What Is Being Proposed

- **Seat Expansion**
 - Lok Sabha seats to increase from **543 to 816**.
 - **273 seats** (33%) to be reserved for women.
- **Delimitation Basis**
 - Use of **2011 Census** data instead of the next Census to fast-track implementation of women's reservation.
 - Existing inter-state proportional representation to be maintained to avoid penalising southern states that have successfully controlled population growth.
- **Rationale**
 - The Women's Reservation Act links reservation to delimitation, which normally requires fresh Census data.
 - Using 2011 data helps avoid politically sensitive north-south imbalances in seat allocation.

Constitutional Provisions Governing Lok Sabha Seat Allocation

- **Article 81**
 - Lays down the principle of **equal representation**.
 - Article 81(2)(a): The ratio between the number of seats allotted to a state and its population must be, as far as practicable, the same for all states.
 - Article 81(2)(b): Each state must be divided into constituencies such that the population-to-seat ratio is uniform.



- Exception: Very small states with population ≤ 6 million may have disproportionate representation.
- **Article 82**
 - Mandates that after every Census, Parliament must readjust:
 - Allocation of seats to states, and
 - Division of each state into territorial constituencies.
- **Delimitation Freeze**
 - The current freeze on inter-state seat allocation (unchanged since 1971) was introduced through:
 - **1976 Amendment:** Froze the definition of “last preceding census” to 1971 for 25 years.
 - **2001 Amendment:** Extended the freeze until the first Census after 2026 is published.
 - Reason: To prevent southern states (successful in population control) from losing political representation to northern states with higher population growth.

Legal & Constitutional Roadblocks

- **Core Constraint**
 - Any delimitation using 2011 data must still comply with **Article 81's “one person, one vote, one value”** principle.
 - Arbitrarily increasing seats by 50% without amending Article 81 could violate equality provisions.
- **Possible Routes**
 - **Route 1:** Amend the Women's Reservation Act itself to delink reservation from delimitation (simpler path).
 - **Route 2:** Amend **Articles 81 and 82** to enable delimitation based on 2011 Census (more complex and open to challenge).
- **Potential Challenges**
 - **Violation of Right to Equality (Article 14):** Removing or diluting the population-based ratio could be challenged as violating the Basic Structure.
 - **Reasonable Classification Test:** Protecting southern states would require proving backwardness or special need – a difficult legal standard.
 - **Judicial Review:** Delimitation Commission decisions can be challenged in court for constitutional violations.



- **Compensatory Principle**

- Experts suggest that if amendments are inevitable, Parliament could introduce a “compensatory principle” to safeguard southern states’ relative representation.

Implications

- **Federal**

- Risk of deepening North-South political divide if southern states perceive loss of influence.

- **Political**

- Requires broad consensus across parties for constitutional amendments.

- **For Women's Reservation**

- Fast-tracking using 2011 data could enable earlier implementation of 33% reservation.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam 2023, Article 81, Article 82, Delimitation, Delimitation Freeze (1976 & 2001 Amendments)
- Data: Proposed seats – 543 to 816, Women’s quota – 273 seats
- Related: Women’s Reservation Act, Delimitation Commission, Basic Structure Doctrine

GS-2 (Polity)

- Federalism, representation in Parliament, and constitutional amendments
- Delimitation and its impact on North-South balance

GS-2 (Governance)

- Implementation of women’s reservation and associated constitutional hurdles

Essay / Interview

- “Delimitation and Federal Balance: Navigating North-South Political Dynamics in India”
- “Women’s Reservation and Constitutional Roadblocks: Balancing Representation with Federal Equity”

MCQs

1. With reference to the proposal to expand Lok Sabha seats, consider the following statements:

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



2. The government proposes increasing seats from 543 to 816.
3. Delimitation is proposed to be based on the 2011 Census.
4. Article 81 mandates equal representation based on population.

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 current freeze on Lok Sabha seat allocation among states was extended by which amendment?
 - (a) 42nd Amendment
 - (b) 84th Amendment
 - (c) 91st Amendment
 - (d) 2001 Amendment

Answer: (d)

3. Which Article of the Constitution lays down the principle that the ratio of seats to population should be the same for all states?
 - (a) Article 80
 - (b) Article 81
 - (c) Article 82
 - (d) Article 83

Answer: (b)

4. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 provides for what percentage of reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies?
 - (a) 25%
 - (b) 33%
 - (c) 50%
 - (d) 40%

Answer: (b)



Mains Questions

1. “The proposed expansion of Lok Sabha seats to implement women’s reservation raises significant constitutional and federal concerns.” Discuss the key legal hurdles and suggest a balanced way forward. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Examine the rationale behind the delimitation freeze since 1971 and its impact on North-South political representation in India. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. “Delimitation exercises must balance the principles of equality, federalism, and social justice.” Analyse this statement in the context of the current proposal to increase Lok Sabha seats. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** “One Person, One Vote, One Value: The Challenges of Delimitation and Women’s Reservation in a Federal Democracy.”

14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) of WTO

Why in News?

- The **14th Ministerial Conference (MC14)** of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is being held from **26-29 March 2026** in **Yaoundé, Cameroon**.
- As the WTO’s highest decision-making body, MC14 has the authority to take decisions on trade rules and set the future direction of multilateral negotiations.
- The conference is taking place against a deeply troubled global trade environment marked by rising unilateralism (especially US tariff actions), the paralysis of the dispute settlement system, and growing tensions between developed and developing countries.
- Key battles are expected on plurilateral agreements, the e-commerce moratorium, Special and Differential Treatment (SDT), and restoring the Appellate Body.

MC14: A Multilateral Meeting in a Unilateral World

- **Backdrop**
 - Intensifying US-China geopolitical rivalry and ongoing global conflicts have weakened multilateral cooperation.
 - The US has launched a sweeping assault on the WTO-based order through arbitrary tariffs that violate the **Most Favoured Nation (MFN)** rule and **bound rate obligations**.
 - Washington is also pushing one-sided bilateral deals through tariff coercion, bypassing the multilateral framework.



- **Why Trade Multilateralism is in Crisis**

- The US believes the WTO (which it helped create in 1995) no longer serves its interests, particularly after China's rise and failure to discipline Beijing's state-led policies.
- The US has paralysed the **Appellate Body** by blocking new appointments, rendering the dispute settlement system ineffective.
- Slow consensus-based decision-making has pushed many countries towards Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) instead of WTO rule-making.

Major Issues at MC14

- **Plurilateral Agreements**

- Debate on whether plurilateral deals (binding only on participating members) should be incorporated into the WTO rulebook (Annex 4).
- Key agreements under discussion: **Investment Facilitation for Development** (supported by 120+ members) and the **Agreement on Electronic Commerce**.
- India and some developing countries warn that this could fragment the system and create a two-tier WTO.

- **E-Commerce Moratorium**

- In place since 1998, it prohibits tariffs on electronic transmissions.
- Developed countries want it made permanent; India and other developing countries oppose it, citing significant revenue loss and limited policy space for digital regulation.

- **Special and Differential Treatment (SDT)**

- The US wants to weaken SDT by excluding larger developing economies (China, India, Brazil, Indonesia) from its benefits.
- Developing countries strongly resist this move.

- **Restoring the Appellate Body**

- MC14 is expected to demand the restoration of the paralysed Appellate Body to revive the WTO's judicial function.

- **Defending Core Principles**

- Developing countries must defend the MFN rule and bound rate obligations against unilateral US actions.

India's Position & Strategic Challenges

- **India's Stance**

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



- Long-standing advocate of consensus-based multilateralism.
- Opposes plurilateral agreements that bypass full consensus.
- Uses opposition to IFD as leverage to secure a permanent solution on **public stockholding for food security**.
- **Strategic Concerns**
 - Risk of diplomatic isolation if a large number of developing countries support plurilaterals.
 - Need to balance development priorities with strategic autonomy.
- **Recommended Approach**
 - Engage constructively to shape plurilateral provisions rather than outright rejection.
 - Strengthen alliances with the Global South.
 - Push for safeguards protecting developing country interests and consensus principles.

Implications

- **For Global Trade Governance**
 - MC14 could determine whether the WTO moves towards flexible plurilateralism or tries to revive full multilateral rule-making.
 - Failure would further strengthen unilateralism and bilateral coercion.
- **For India**
 - Opportunity to reassert leadership of the Global South.
 - Challenge to avoid marginalisation while safeguarding core interests like agriculture and policy space.

UPSC CSE & State PCS Relevance

Prelims

- Key terms: WTO MC14, Plurilateral Agreements, E-Commerce Moratorium, Special and Differential Treatment (SDT), Appellate Body, MFN Rule
- Data: MC14 venue - Yaoundé, Cameroon; IFD supported by 120+ members
- Related: Paris Agreement (for comparison), G20, UNCAC (for comparison with GlobE)

GS-2 (IR)

- India's role in WTO and Global South diplomacy
- Multilateralism vs Plurilateralism/Unilateralism in global economic governance



GS-3 (Economy)

- Global trade rules and their impact on developing economies
- Agriculture subsidies and food security at WTO

Essay / Interview

- “Plurilateralism at the WTO: Opportunity for Revival or Threat to Multilateralism?”
- “India’s Dilemma at WTO MC14: Defending Multilateralism While Protecting Development Priorities”

MCQs

1. With reference to WTO MC14, consider the following statements:
2. It is being held in Yaoundé, Cameroon.
3. A major issue is the incorporation of plurilateral agreements like Investment Facilitation for Development.
4. India supports making the e-commerce moratorium permanent.

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 Most Favoured Nation (MFN) rule under the WTO requires:
 - (a) Special treatment for developing countries
 - (b) Equal treatment to all member countries
 - (c) Preferential treatment for LDCs only
 - (d) Bilateral trade agreements

Answer: (b)

3. Which of the following is NOT a core principle being challenged at MC14?
 - (a) Most Favoured Nation
 - (b) Special and Differential Treatment
 - (c) Consensus-based decision-making
 - (d) Free trade agreements between two countries

Answer: (d)

4. The WTO’s Appellate Body has been paralysed primarily due to:



- (a) Lack of funding
- (b) US blocking new appointments
- (c) Withdrawal of developing countries
- (d) COVID-19 restrictions

Answer: (b)

Mains Questions

1. "The 14th WTO Ministerial Conference is taking place at a critical juncture when multilateralism is under threat from rising unilateralism." Discuss the major issues at MC14 and India's strategic priorities. (15 marks / 250 words)
2. Analyse the debate surrounding plurilateral agreements at the WTO and their potential impact on developing countries like India. (10 marks / 150 words)
3. "Special and Differential Treatment (SDT) is a cornerstone of equity in the WTO system." Examine the challenges to SDT and why developing countries must defend it. (15 marks / 250 words)
4. **Essay (250 marks)** "From Consensus to Clubs: The Future of Multilateral Trade Governance in a Fragmenting World Order."

Only Competition