



RAMAKRISHNA MISSION - GEO IAS DAILY UPSC NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS 25 SEPTEMBER 2026



DETAILED REVISED EDITION

WHAT HAS BEEN IMPROVED

- Current-affairs explanations are now deeper: context, background, static linkage, multidimensional analysis, critical concerns, Prelims traps and exam-ready way forward.
- Each topic includes a dedicated infographic immediately after the detailed analysis.
- Mains model answers have been rebuilt in a strict UPSC structure: syllabus/PYQ linkage, demand, introduction, multidimensional body, critical analysis, way forward and conclusion.
- No model answer is presented as mere hints or suggestions.

SOURCE NOTE

- The Hindu remains the priority newspaper, but its website blocked automated retrieval this morning. No inaccessible article is falsely attributed.
- Fresh facts have been cross-checked against PIB, Reuters and Indian Express; source labels are shown with each topic.



1. MAKE IN INDIA AT 12: FROM SCALE TO TECHNOLOGICAL DEPTH

UPSC syllabus: GS-III: Indian Economy, industrial policy, infrastructure, investment and technology

Source: PIB Backgrounder, 24 September 2026

WHY IN NEWS

Make in India completes 12 years on 25 September 2026. PIB's anniversary backgrounder presents a shift from simply expanding output toward building components, strategic materials, technology and industrial capabilities.

BACKGROUND & STATIC LINKAGE

- Make in India was launched on 25 September 2014 with four broad ambitions: facilitate investment, foster innovation, build best-in-class infrastructure, and make India a manufacturing, design and innovation hub.
- Make in India 2.0 focuses on 27 sectors - 15 manufacturing and 12 services. Its policy ecosystem includes Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, the National Single Window System (NSWS), PM GatiShakti, the India Industrial Land Bank and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) reforms.
- PIB reports cumulative FDI of about USD 843 billion during 2014-15 to 2025-26, 4,220 industrial parks mapped by the India Industrial Land Bank as of May 2026, and a policy shift toward semiconductors, specialty steel, rare-earth magnets and advanced manufacturing.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Industrialisation raises productivity when labour and capital move into more productive activities, but gross output is not the same as domestic value addition. The key question is how much design, component production, intellectual property, machinery and supplier capability is created within India.

EMPLOYMENT DIMENSION

Manufacturing can absorb workers moving out of low-productivity agriculture, yet automation means India needs a dual strategy: labour-intensive manufacturing for job scale and advanced manufacturing for strategic capability.

TECHNOLOGY DIMENSION

Semiconductor, electronics, defence and specialty-material policies matter because strategic dependence often lies in components, tools, process know-how and materials rather than final assembly.

FEDERAL DIMENSION

Land, electricity, labour administration, logistics and local infrastructure are largely implemented by States. Therefore industrial policy success depends heavily on Centre-State coordination and competitive federalism.

EXTERNAL-SECTOR DIMENSION

Export competitiveness matters because domestic markets alone may not provide sufficient scale for globally efficient firms. Tariff protection can nurture capacity temporarily, but long-run competitiveness requires productivity and technology.

CRITICAL CONCERN

Incentives can correct coordination failures, but they can also create subsidy dependence. The test is whether firms remain competitive after incentives decline.

PRELIMS FACTS / TRAPS

- GVA = Gross Value Added; IIP = Index of Industrial Production; PLI = Production Linked Incentive; NSWS = National Single Window System.
- FDI through the automatic route means investment can enter without prior government approval in permitted sectors, subject to sectoral conditions.
- PM GatiShakti is an integrated infrastructure planning framework using geospatial data; it is not a direct cash-subsidy scheme.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

- Use PIB data as value addition, but distinguish government claims from independent outcomes.
- Best Mains framing: 'Scale is necessary; technological depth determines durability.'
- Connect Make in India with jobs, strategic autonomy, exports, urbanisation and federalism.

WAY FORWARD

- Link incentives to measurable domestic value addition, exports, productivity and R&D;
- Build supplier clusters for electronics, machinery, specialty chemicals and precision components.
- Scale industrial R&D; through university-industry partnerships and mission-oriented technology programmes.
- Improve power quality, logistics, standards/testing infrastructure and customs efficiency.
- Invest in technicians, toolmakers and process engineers, not only degree-level talent.

2. UPI MDR AND GST: HOW SHOULD DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE BE PRICED?

UPSC syllabus: GS-III: Digital economy, taxation, financial inclusion and regulation

Source: Reuters, 15-22 September 2026

WHY IN NEWS

From 15 October 2026, select merchant UPI transactions above Rs 2,000 will attract a 0.4% Merchant Discount Rate (MDR). Reuters also reports debate around the tax treatment and market-concentration implications of the shift away from the zero-MDR model.

BACKGROUND & STATIC LINKAGE

- UPI = Unified Payments Interface. MDR = Merchant Discount Rate. NPCI = National Payments Corporation of India. P2P = Person-to-Person. P2M = Person-to-Merchant.
- Reuters reported 24.5 billion UPI transactions worth about Rs 29.8 trillion in August 2026. Person-to-person transfers remain free; exemptions apply to small merchants and rural/semi-urban QR transactions, while some essential-service categories face lower flat charges.
- The fee is intended to fund cybersecurity, reliability, innovation and customer service. But PhonePe and Google Pay together account for a very large share of transaction value, raising competition questions.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

PUBLIC-UTILITY DIMENSION

UPI has characteristics of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI): interoperability, open standards and network effects. Yet the infrastructure has real operating, fraud-prevention and cybersecurity costs.

INCLUSION DIMENSION

Small merchants operate on thin margins. A badly designed fee could encourage cash reversion or informal surcharging. Exemptions and rural incentives therefore matter.

CONSUMER DIMENSION

Regulators have barred direct pass-through to consumers, but economic incidence can still emerge indirectly through prices, discounts or merchant acceptance.

COMPETITION DIMENSION

A revenue model can strengthen investment, but dominant incumbents may benefit disproportionately because fee revenue scales with transaction volume. This may raise barriers for smaller players.

TAX-FEDERAL DIMENSION

GST on payment fees is not merely a fintech issue; it is a federal indirect-tax question involving the GST Council under Article 279A.

CRITICAL CONCERN

The debate is not 'free versus paid'; it is how to price a network in a way that funds resilience while preserving inclusion, competition and interoperability.

PRELIMS FACTS / TRAPS

- GST Council is a constitutional body under Article 279A.
- UPI is not a digital currency; it is a real-time payment interface linking bank accounts.
- MDR is a merchant-side transaction fee, not the same thing as GST.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

- UPI policy now moves from adoption-at-all-costs toward sustainability and competition.
- Good Mains line: 'Digital public infrastructure can be low-cost without pretending it is costless.'
- Use Article 279A, network effects and financial inclusion together.

WAY FORWARD

- Use tiered MDR with strong exemptions for small and rural merchants.
- Publish the cost structure of UPI operations, fraud losses and system-resilience investment.
- Prevent hidden consumer surcharges and maintain interoperability.
- Enforce competition rules and revisit market-share concentration periodically.
- Review GST incidence so taxation does not defeat the inclusion objective.

3. HFSS FOOD REGULATION: FROM CALORIE SECURITY TO NUTRITION SECURITY

UPSC syllabus: GS-II: Health and social justice | GS-III: Food regulation

Source: Reuters, September 2026; FSSAI debate

WHY IN NEWS

India's food regulator and courts are debating stronger front-of-pack warnings and stricter treatment of foods high in sugar, salt or saturated fat. The wider policy question is how to protect children and consumers in a rapidly changing food environment.

BACKGROUND & STATIC LINKAGE

- HFSS = High in Fat, Salt and Sugar. FSSAI = Food Safety and Standards Authority of India.
- FSSAI is a statutory body under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
- Reuters reported debate over red front-of-pack warnings, with health experts criticising thresholds that may allow products high in a single harmful nutrient to escape warnings, while industry argues that overly strict thresholds may misclassify products and damage legitimate markets.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

PUBLIC-HEALTH DIMENSION

India faces a nutrition transition: undernutrition persists, while obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease are rising. Food regulation therefore must address both deficiency and excess.

CHILD-RIGHTS DIMENSION

Children have lower ability to evaluate marketing and long-term health risks. This strengthens the case for restrictions on school-zone sales and child-targeted advertising.

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Non-communicable diseases create future healthcare costs and productivity losses. Conversely, abrupt rules can impose reformulation and compliance costs on small producers and retailers.

BEHAVIOURAL DIMENSION

Labels are information tools, not complete solutions. Consumer choice is shaped by price, convenience, advertising, school canteens and availability of healthy alternatives.

ETHICAL DIMENSION

The State must balance autonomy with beneficence and non-maleficence. Restrictions are easier to justify for children and vulnerable groups than for informed adult consumers.

CRITICAL CONCERN

A rule that is scientifically weak will lose legitimacy; a rule that is scientifically sound but impossible to enforce will also fail.

PRELIMS FACTS / TRAPS

- FSSAI is statutory, not constitutional.
- Front-of-pack labelling is different from nutrition information printed on the back of packages.
- HFSS does not mean all processed food is unhealthy; the classification depends on nutrient thresholds.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

- Strong GS-II example of preventive health regulation.
- Use 'nutrition transition', 'food environment' and 'proportional regulation'.
- Best critical point: information labels work only when healthier choices are affordable and available.

WAY FORWARD

- Adopt transparent, evidence-based thresholds and simple front-of-pack warnings.
- Combine labelling with school-food standards, healthy meals and child-advertising restrictions.
- Support small retailers and manufacturers in reformulation and product substitution.
- Create independent outcome evaluation on consumption and obesity trends.
- Use public education so regulation complements rather than replaces informed choice.

4. STRAIT OF HORMUZ: GEOGRAPHY AS ECONOMIC POWER

UPSC syllabus: GS-II: West Asia and India's interests | GS-III: Energy security

Source: Reuters, 22 September 2026

WHY IN NEWS

Iran has indicated it could reopen the Strait of Hormuz to commercial traffic if the United States eases military pressure and lifts blockade measures. The development again shows how a narrow maritime chokepoint can influence global energy prices and India's macroeconomy.

BACKGROUND & STATIC LINKAGE

- The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea. Iran lies to the north; Oman and the UAE are on the southern side of the wider approach.
- A large share of Gulf crude and LNG exports transit the strait. Disruption affects not just physical supply but freight, war-risk insurance, shipping schedules and market expectations.
- India is a major importer of crude oil and LNG. Energy-price shocks transmit into inflation, the current account, the rupee, fertiliser costs and transport.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

GEOPOLITICAL DIMENSION

Control over or disruption of a chokepoint can convert geography into bargaining power. Diplomatic sequencing, verification and credible de-escalation therefore matter.

SUPPLY-CHAIN DIMENSION

Energy security includes shipping, insurance, storage and refinery configuration, not merely supplier contracts.

SOCIETAL DIMENSION

Fuel-price shocks filter into freight, food prices, electricity and household budgets, disproportionately affecting lower-income households.

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Higher crude prices worsen India's import bill and may weaken the rupee. This can create imported inflation and complicate monetary policy.

STRATEGIC-AUTONOMY DIMENSION

India's West Asia policy must balance relations with Iran, Gulf states, the United States and broader maritime interests.

CRITICAL CONCERN

Supplier diversification does not fully solve chokepoint risk if multiple suppliers still depend on the same maritime route.

PRELIMS FACTS / TRAPS

- Do not confuse Hormuz with Bab-el-Mandeb (Red Sea-Gulf of Aden) or Malacca (Indian Ocean-Pacific route).
- Persian Gulf -> Strait of Hormuz -> Gulf of Oman -> Arabian Sea.
- Chokepoint risk includes physical closure and higher insurance/freight even without closure.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

- High-value map topic.
- Use the transmission chain: Hormuz -> oil -> CAD -> rupee -> inflation -> monetary/fiscal policy.
- Energy security is a system, not just a supplier list.

WAY FORWARD

- Diversify crude and LNG suppliers and routes where feasible.
- Maintain adequate strategic petroleum reserves and refinery flexibility.
- Strengthen maritime-domain awareness, shipping insurance and contingency planning.
- Support freedom of navigation and diplomatic de-escalation.
- Accelerate domestic renewables, efficiency and electrification to reduce oil intensity.

5. RBI LIQUIDITY WITHDRAWAL: WHY POLICY RATE ALONE DOES NOT DEFINE MONETARY POLICY

UPSC syllabus: GS-III: Monetary policy, banking and external sector

Source: Reuters, 22 September 2026

WHY IN NEWS

Reuters reported that RBI actions through bond sales, reverse repos and foreign-exchange operations reduced a large banking-system liquidity surplus from about Rs 11.16 trillion to Rs 4.92 trillion.

BACKGROUND & STATIC LINKAGE

- RBI = Reserve Bank of India. OMO = Open Market Operation. FX = Foreign Exchange. VRRR = Variable Rate Reverse Repo.
- An OMO sale withdraws durable rupee liquidity because buyers pay money to the RBI in exchange for government securities.
- Reverse-repo-type operations absorb liquidity temporarily. FX operations can also affect rupee liquidity and may require sterilisation.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

TRANSMISSION DIMENSION

If banks are flooded with liquidity, overnight rates can remain below the intended policy corridor and weaken transmission of a restrictive monetary stance.

BOND-MARKET DIMENSION

OMO sales can push bond yields higher, raising government borrowing costs and affecting the yield curve.

BANKING DIMENSION

Liquidity withdrawal can tighten funding conditions and affect deposit/credit pricing even without an immediate repo-rate change.

INFLATION DIMENSION

Excess liquidity matters more when high oil prices, a weak rupee or supply shocks threaten inflation.

EXTERNAL-SECTOR DIMENSION

Rupee support through FX intervention can drain domestic liquidity, connecting exchange-rate management with monetary conditions.

CRITICAL CONCERN

Liquidity management must distinguish temporary surplus from durable surplus; using the wrong tool can create unnecessary market volatility.

PRELIMS FACTS / TRAPS

- OMO purchase injects liquidity; OMO sale absorbs it.
- Repo rate and system liquidity are related but not identical.
- FX intervention can have domestic-liquidity effects.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

- Excellent Prelims mechanism topic.
- Good Mains distinction: 'policy stance' versus 'liquidity stance'.
- Use Reuters numbers as current value addition, not as timeless norms.

WAY FORWARD

- Match instruments to the duration and source of liquidity surplus.
- Improve forward communication on liquidity objectives.
- Avoid excessive yield volatility during government borrowing.
- Coordinate FX sterilisation with inflation and growth conditions.
- Deepen the government-securities and money markets.

6. MAHARASHTRA DROUGHT: WHY A SLOW-ONSET DISASTER NEEDS EARLY GOVERNANCE

UPSC syllabus: GS-I: Climatology and geography | GS-III: Agriculture and disaster management

Source: Indian Express UPSC Key, 24 September 2026

WHY IN NEWS

Calls to declare drought are rising in Maharashtra as El Nino-linked rainfall deficits, long dry spells and water stress damage the kharif season. Formal drought assessment under relief norms begins only after specified seasonal windows.

BACKGROUND & STATIC LINKAGE

- Indian Express reports 31 of Maharashtra's 36 districts are rain-deficient, with many drought-hit talukas experiencing 40-60 day gaps between rain spells.
- Drought has multiple forms: meteorological drought (rainfall deficit), agricultural drought (soil-moisture/crop stress) and hydrological drought (low surface/groundwater storage).
- States declare drought based on local conditions, but relief claims must conform to prescribed national norms. NDRF = National Disaster Response Fund.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

CLIMATIC DIMENSION

Total seasonal rainfall can conceal damaging intra-seasonal distribution. Long dry spells followed by intense rain can simultaneously create crop stress and soil erosion.

WATER-GOVERNANCE DIMENSION

Groundwater extraction, reservoir management and water-intensive crops can amplify climatic drought.

FISCAL DIMENSION

Delayed recognition can postpone relief, while premature declaration without objective indicators can weaken credibility and fiscal targeting.

AGRICULTURAL DIMENSION

Rain-fed crops such as cotton and soybean are vulnerable at critical growth stages. Low irrigation coverage raises exposure.

SOCIAL DIMENSION

Drought affects farm income, wage employment, livestock, fodder, drinking water and migration. Small and tenant farmers often face the highest risk.

CRITICAL CONCERN

Drought policy should not wait for crop failure; leading indicators are more useful than post-disaster surveys alone.

PRELIMS FACTS / TRAPS

- Drought is not the same as desertification.
- Rainfall deficit alone does not capture agricultural or hydrological drought.
- NDRF relief norms guide assistance but do not create a single universal definition of drought.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

- Use Marathwada and Vidarbha as case studies.
- Good GS-I linkage with El Nino and monsoon variability.
- Best Mains point: 'Drought is a governance continuum, not a declaration date.'

WAY FORWARD

- Create block-level drought dashboards using rainfall, soil moisture, reservoirs and sowing data.
- Adopt aquifer-based water budgeting and drought-resilient cropping.
- Build fodder and drinking-water contingency plans before crisis peaks.
- Improve crop-insurance assessment and payment speed.
- Use employment programmes to stabilise rural incomes during drought.



7. TULU AS AN ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE LANGUAGE: DIVERSITY, FEDERALISM AND THE CONSTITUTION

UPSC syllabus: GS-I: Indian society and culture | GS-II: Constitution and federalism

Source: Indian Express UPSC Key, 24 September 2026

WHY IN NEWS

Karnataka has accorded Tulu the status of a second additional administrative language in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, enabling official communication in Tulu alongside Kannada.

BACKGROUND & STATIC LINKAGE

- Tulu is a Dravidian language spoken mainly in coastal Karnataka and parts of northern Kerala. Indian Express notes a strong oral tradition and cultural practices such as Yakshagana and Bhoota Kola.
- Article 345 permits a State legislature to adopt one or more languages in use in the State, or Hindi, for official purposes of the State, subject to constitutional provisions.
- The Eighth Schedule currently contains 22 languages. Inclusion in the Eighth Schedule is different from a State declaring a language for administrative use. India has no constitutionally declared 'national language'.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

CULTURAL DIMENSION

Administrative recognition can strengthen language transmission, documentation and cultural confidence.

FEDERAL DIMENSION

Language policy illustrates India's asymmetric and accommodative federalism: States have space to reflect local linguistic realities.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIMENSION

Official use requires translators, terminology, scripts, trained staff, forms and digital interfaces. Symbolic recognition without implementation capacity has limited effect.

EDUCATIONAL DIMENSION

Language vitality depends on school materials, literacy, teacher training and digital content, not only government notifications.

POLITICAL DIMENSION

Language recognition can reduce alienation but can also become competitive identity politics if one group's recognition is framed as another group's loss.

CRITICAL CONCERN

Eighth Schedule inclusion, State official-language status and cultural promotion should not be conflated; they have different constitutional and administrative effects.

PRELIMS FACTS / TRAPS

- Article 343: official language of Union; Article 345: official language(s) of a State; Eighth Schedule: 22 languages.
- India has no constitutionally declared national language.
- Tulu is Dravidian; official-administrative recognition in districts does not automatically place it in the Eighth Schedule.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

- Very high-value Constitution + culture topic.
- Use to explain accommodation rather than homogenisation in Indian federalism.
- Best trap to avoid: 'national language'.

WAY FORWARD

- Develop transparent criteria for different forms of language recognition.
- Create standard administrative terminology and translation capacity.
- Support mother-tongue teaching resources and teacher training.
- Digitise corpora, dictionaries and speech technologies.
- Fund cultural documentation even where Eighth Schedule inclusion is unresolved.

8. BLACK CARBON AND HIMALAYAN GLACIERS: A SHORT-LIVED POLLUTANT WITH FAST BENEFITS

UPSC syllabus: GS-I: Physical geography | GS-III: Environment and climate change

Source: Indian Express Knowledge Nugget / weekly UPSC pointers, September 2026

WHY IN NEWS

A Himalayan resilience report highlighted black carbon as an important contributor to glacier loss and a pollutant whose emissions can be reduced relatively quickly compared with long-lived greenhouse gases.

BACKGROUND & STATIC LINKAGE

- Black carbon is soot produced by incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, biomass and waste. It is a component of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}).
- It absorbs sunlight in the atmosphere and, when deposited on snow or ice, darkens the surface, lowers albedo and accelerates melting.
- Indian Express cites modelling in the report attributing a significant share of Himalayan glacier mass loss to South Asian black-carbon deposition, with brick kilns a major regional source.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

CLIMATE DIMENSION

Black carbon is a short-lived climate pollutant. Reducing it can deliver relatively rapid near-term cooling benefits, especially regionally.

HEALTH DIMENSION

The same combustion sources that emit black carbon also worsen PM_{2.5} exposure, causing respiratory and cardiovascular harm.

REGIONAL DIMENSION

Air pollutants cross borders; Himalayan black-carbon control requires cooperation across South Asia.

CRYOSPHERE DIMENSION

Lower albedo increases absorbed solar energy, accelerating glacier and snow melt and altering seasonal runoff.

LIVELIHOOD DIMENSION

Glacier and snow changes affect river seasonality, hydropower, agriculture, mountain tourism and disaster risk.

CRITICAL CONCERN

Black-carbon cuts are a complement to, not a substitute for, deep CO₂ decarbonisation because CO₂ drives long-term global warming.

PRELIMS FACTS / TRAPS

- Black carbon is an aerosol/particle, not a long-lived greenhouse gas like CO₂.
- Albedo = fraction of incoming radiation reflected by a surface.
- Snow darkening lowers albedo and increases absorption.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

- Excellent co-benefits case: air quality + climate + cryosphere.
- Use 'albedo' accurately.
- Good Mains line: 'Short-lived pollutants offer fast gains; long-lived gases determine the long game.'

WAY FORWARD

- Modernise or phase out high-emitting brick kilns.
- Accelerate clean cooking, diesel-emission control and waste-burning bans.
- Create a high-resolution Himalayan black-carbon emissions inventory.
- Strengthen regional air-quality and cryosphere cooperation.
- Pair short-lived pollutant cuts with long-term CO₂ mitigation.

9. KISHAU MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT: COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM ON A RIVER BASIN

UPSC syllabus: GS-II: Federalism | GS-III: Water resources, infrastructure and environment

Source: Indian Express, 15-16 September 2026

WHY IN NEWS

Six beneficiary States signed an MoU to advance the long-delayed Kishau Multipurpose Project on the Tons River, reviving a major Upper Yamuna storage and hydropower proposal.

BACKGROUND & STATIC LINKAGE

- The project is proposed on the Tons, a major tributary of the Yamuna, along the Himachal Pradesh-Uttarakhand border.
- Indian Express reports a proposed 232.6-metre concrete gravity dam, 422 MW installed capacity and benefits in irrigation, drinking/industrial water and hydropower.
- The project's delay reflected disagreements over costs and the unequal geography of costs and benefits. A 2026 breakthrough involved the Centre bearing 90% of the project cost, with States sharing the remainder.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

FEDERAL DIMENSION

Upstream States bear submergence and rehabilitation costs while downstream States may receive much of the water benefit. Cooperative federalism therefore requires explicit benefit-sharing.

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Benefits include irrigation, water supply and hydropower, but large dams carry capital, rehabilitation and ecosystem costs.

SOCIAL DIMENSION

Submergence and displacement require fair rehabilitation, livelihood restoration and participatory consent processes.

HYDROLOGICAL DIMENSION

Storage can smooth seasonal variability, but river-basin planning must consider downstream flows, sediment and cumulative impacts of multiple dams.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

Himalayan geology raises concerns over seismicity, landslides, sedimentation, biodiversity and construction impacts.

CRITICAL CONCERN

A signed MoU solves political bargaining, not the full project-risk equation. Technical, ecological and social appraisal remain essential.

PRELIMS FACTS / TRAPS

- Tons -> Yamuna -> Ganga river system.
- Project site spans Sirmaur district (Himachal Pradesh) and Dehradun district (Uttarakhand).
- Do not confuse water allocation with water governance; the latter includes quality, ecology, timing, institutions and conflict resolution.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

- Strong map-practice topic.
- Use as a positive cooperative-federalism example, but include ecological caveats.
- Links GS-II federalism with GS-III infrastructure and environment.

WAY FORWARD

- Conduct basin-level cumulative environmental and sediment assessment.
- Make benefit-sharing and cost-sharing transparent.
- Guarantee environmental flows and robust dam-safety/seismic review.
- Ensure fair rehabilitation and livelihood restoration.
- Use independent monitoring throughout construction and operation.

10. CHANDRAYAAN-1 ARCHIVAL DATA AND THE AUSTRale BASIN: WHY OLD SPACE DATA STILL MATTERS

UPSC syllabus: GS-III: Space technology and scientific research

Source: Indian Express UPSC Key, 15 September 2026

WHY IN NEWS

Indian planetary scientists used Chandrayaan-1 mineralogical data to identify evidence of an ancient, previously untraced lunar impact basin known as the Australe Basin.

BACKGROUND & STATIC LINKAGE

- Chandrayaan-1 was India's first lunar mission. Its instruments generated mineralogical and remote-sensing datasets that continue to support research long after the mission ended.
- Impact basins are much larger than simple craters and are produced by high-energy asteroid or meteorite impacts.
- Ancient lunar basins can be obscured by later impacts, erosion of rims and lava or ejecta deposits; mineralogical signatures may reveal structures that morphology alone cannot.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

SCIENTIFIC DIMENSION

Re-analysis shows the value of open, well-curated mission archives. Space missions create long-lived scientific infrastructure, not just launch events.

TECHNOLOGY DIMENSION

Spectroscopy can infer composition remotely by analysing how materials interact with electromagnetic radiation.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Cross-comparison with international datasets improves confidence and scientific return.

PLANETARY-GEOLOGY DIMENSION

Very old basins help reconstruct the Moon's crustal evolution and bombardment history.

INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION

High-quality science depends on instruments, data calibration, computing, laboratories and research careers - not only launch vehicles.

CRITICAL CONCERN

Mission success should be measured by peer-reviewed science and usable data, not only headline milestones.

PRELIMS FACTS / TRAPS

- Chandrayaan-1 = India's first lunar mission.
- Remote sensing does not require physical contact with the target.
- Impact basin is not the same as volcanic caldera.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

- Strong GS-III example of data reuse and scientific ecosystems.
- Useful essay idea: 'Science is cumulative; yesterday's data can answer tomorrow's questions.'
- Do not reduce space policy to launches alone.

WAY FORWARD

- Maintain open, standardised and well-documented mission archives.
- Fund planetary-science fellowships and long-duration research programmes.
- Develop next-generation spectrometers and calibration facilities.
- Encourage cross-mission data fusion with international datasets.
- Frame future missions around long-term scientific questions, not only engineering demonstrations.

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS - MAINS ORIENTED

EDITORIAL 1 - MAKE IN INDIA: CAPABILITY, NOT JUST CAPACITY

- The important shift is from asking 'how much is produced?' to 'how much capability is retained?' A manufacturing ecosystem is durable when firms can design, source, improve and export without permanent dependence on subsidies.
- Industrial policy is justified where coordination failures are large - for example, a fab requires power, water, gases, equipment and trained workers simultaneously. But incentives should have measurable performance conditions and sunset clauses.
- MSMEs must be integrated into supplier chains; otherwise headline investment can coexist with low domestic value addition.

WAY FORWARD

- Track domestic value addition, R&D; intensity and export sophistication.
- Use sunset-bound incentives linked to productivity.
- Create common testing, tooling and design infrastructure for MSMEs.
- Build vocational and process-engineering skills.

EDITORIAL 2 - DIGITAL PAYMENTS: FREE IS NOT THE SAME AS SUSTAINABLE

- UPI's zero-fee era accelerated adoption and network effects, but cybersecurity, fraud control and infrastructure resilience have continuing costs.
- The ethical-economic question is how to finance the network without imposing regressive costs on small merchants or entrenching dominant platforms.
- Public digital infrastructure can combine open standards with market competition, but only if interoperability and anti-concentration safeguards remain strong.

WAY FORWARD

- Protect small/rural merchants through exemptions.
- Publish cost and reliability metrics.
- Prevent hidden consumer pass-through.
- Use competition regulation alongside payment regulation.

EDITORIAL 3 - BLACK CARBON: A CO-BENEFITS STRATEGY FOR THE HIMALAYA

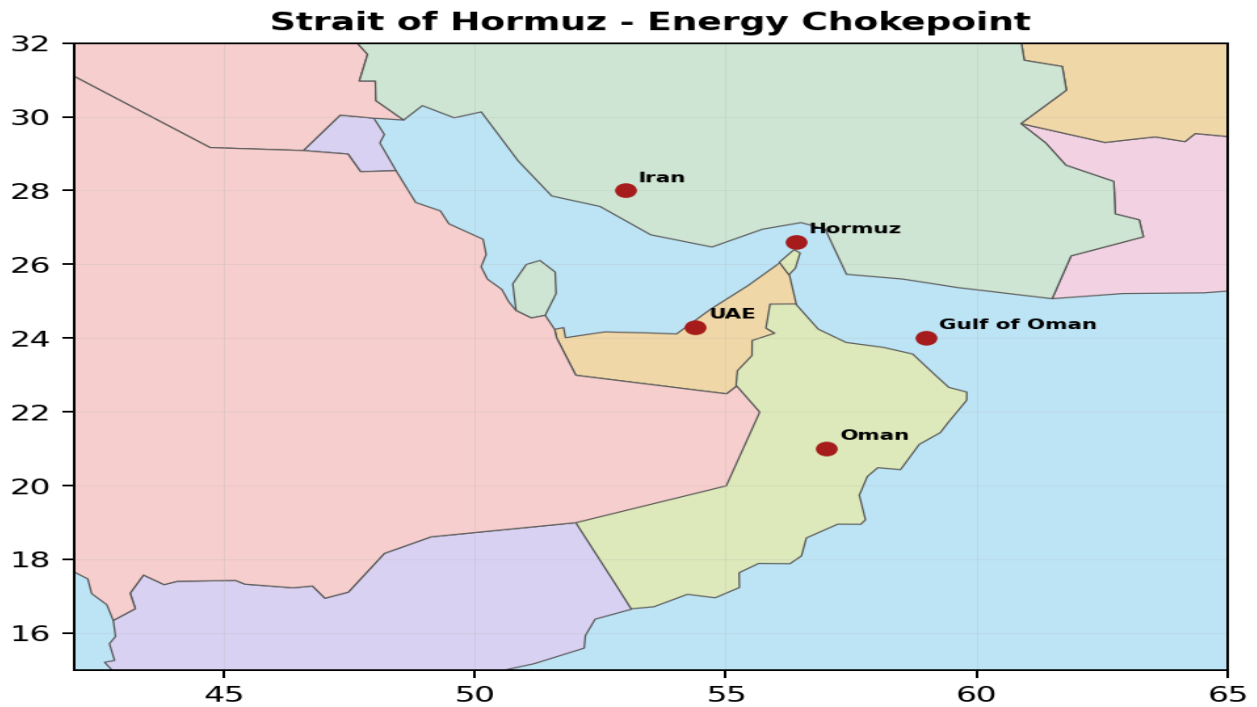
- Black-carbon control is unusually attractive because the same intervention can improve public health, local air quality and near-term climate outcomes.
- Brick kilns, diesel and biomass burning are governance targets that do not require waiting for global carbon agreements.
- However, short-lived pollutants cannot substitute for CO₂ mitigation, because long-lived greenhouse gases determine long-run warming.

WAY FORWARD

- Modernise high-emitting combustion sources.
- Build cross-border Himalayan emissions inventories.
- Link air-quality and cryosphere monitoring.
- Keep CO₂ decarbonisation as the long-term core.

ORIGINAL MULTICOLOUR MAP PRACTICE

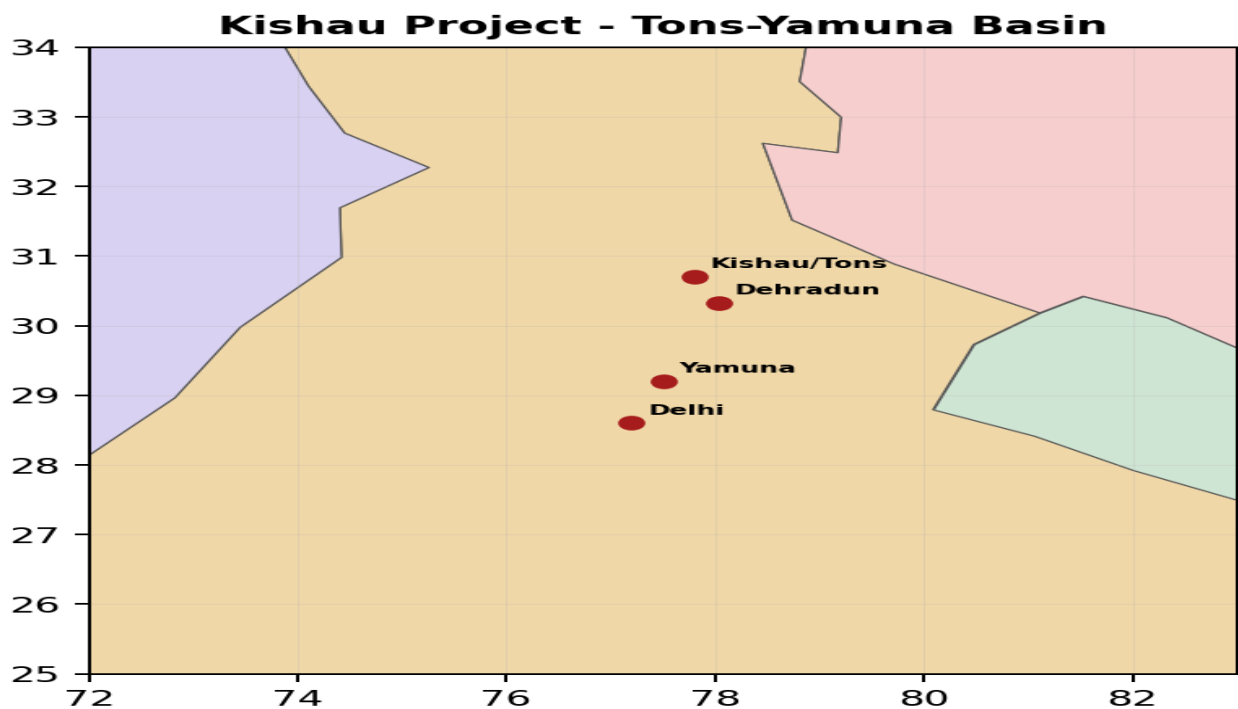
Strait of Hormuz - Energy Chokepoint



MAP TASK

- Locate all labelled places without notes.
- Add one adjacent state/country/river/sea.
- Write one current-affairs trigger and one static fact.
- For river and chokepoint maps, draw the flow/connection with arrows.

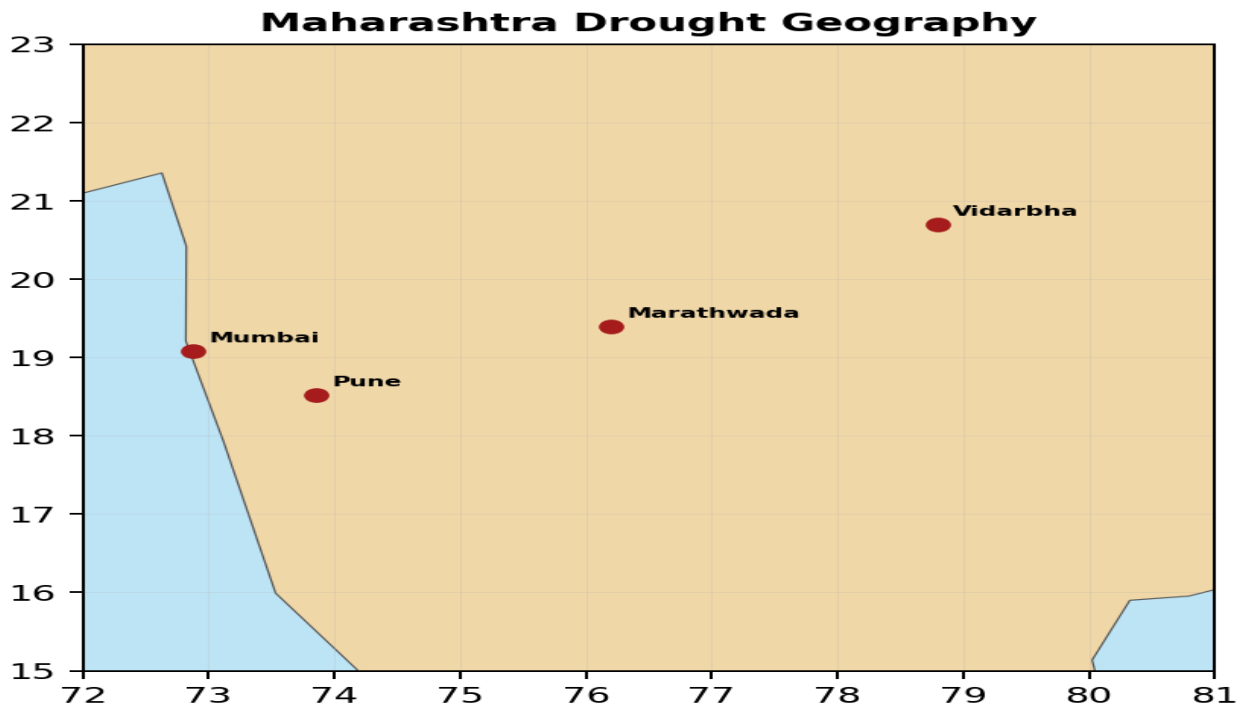
Kishau Project - Tons-Yamuna Basin



MAP TASK

- Locate all labelled places without notes.
- Add one adjacent state/country/river/sea.
- Write one current-affairs trigger and one static fact.
- For river and chokepoint maps, draw the flow/connection with arrows.

Maharashtra Drought Geography

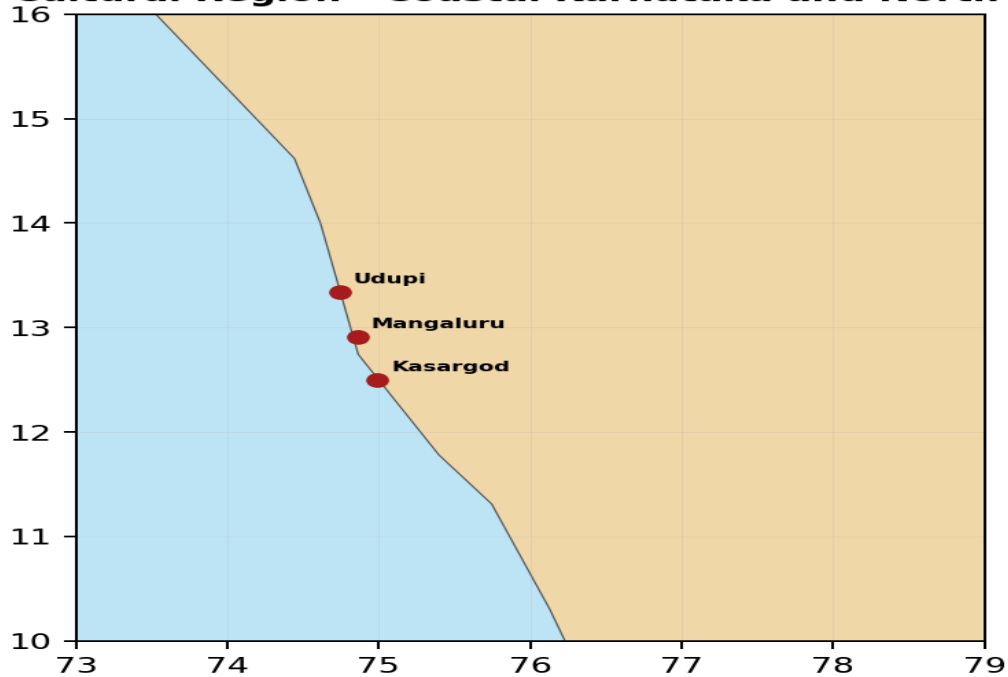


MAP TASK

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Tulu Cultural Region - Coastal Karnataka and North Kerala

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PRELIMS PRACTICE - 10 MCQs WITH DETAILED SOLUTIONS

Q1. With reference to the GST Council, consider: 1. It is provided under Article 279A. 2. It is chaired by the Union Finance Minister.

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

DETAILED SOLUTION - ANSWER: (c)

- Both statements are correct. Article 279A creates the GST Council. It is chaired by the Union Finance Minister and includes Union and State representation.

Q2. An Open Market Operation sale by the RBI generally:

- (a) Injects durable liquidity
- (b) Absorbs durable liquidity
- (c) Automatically changes CRR
- (d) Automatically reduces fiscal deficit

DETAILED SOLUTION - ANSWER: (b)

- When the RBI sells government securities, purchasers pay rupees to the RBI, withdrawing liquidity from the banking system.

Q3. The Strait of Hormuz connects:

- (a) Red Sea and Gulf of Aden
- (b) Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman
- (c) Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea
- (d) Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea

DETAILED SOLUTION - ANSWER: (b)

- The Strait of Hormuz is the outlet of the Persian Gulf into the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

Q4. Which of the following is true of UPI?

- (a) It is a digital currency issued by RBI
- (b) It is a real-time payment interface linking bank accounts
- (c) It is limited to credit cards
- (d) It is a cryptocurrency network

DETAILED SOLUTION - ANSWER: (b)

- UPI is a real-time interoperable payment system built on bank accounts; it is not a currency.

Q5. The Eighth Schedule of the Constitution currently contains:

- (a) 14 languages
- (b) 18 languages
- (c) 22 languages
- (d) 24 languages

DETAILED SOLUTION - ANSWER: (c)

- The Eighth Schedule currently recognises 22 languages. This is distinct from a State's official-language decision under Article 345.

Q6. Black carbon deposited on snow accelerates melting mainly by:

- (a) Increasing albedo
- (b) Lowering albedo and increasing solar absorption
- (c) Reducing gravity
- (d) Increasing snowfall

DETAILED SOLUTION - ANSWER: (b)

- Black carbon darkens snow and ice, lowering reflectivity (albedo) and increasing absorption of solar energy.



Q7. The Tons River is a major tributary of the:

- (a) Yamuna
- (b) Narmada
- (c) Godavari
- (d) Brahmaputra

DETAILED SOLUTION - ANSWER: (a)

- The Tons is a major tributary of the Yamuna and is central to the Kishau Multipurpose Project.

Q8. A meteorological drought refers primarily to:

- (a) Long-term groundwater decline only
- (b) Significant precipitation deficit over a period
- (c) Crop failure regardless of rainfall
- (d) Desert formation

DETAILED SOLUTION - ANSWER: (b)

- Meteorological drought is defined mainly by precipitation deficiency; agricultural and hydrological drought capture other dimensions.

Q9. FSSAI is a:

- (a) Constitutional body
- (b) Statutory authority under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006
- (c) RBI department
- (d) Parliamentary committee

DETAILED SOLUTION - ANSWER: (b)

- FSSAI is a statutory authority created under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

Q10. Impact basins on the Moon are primarily produced by:

- (a) Plate tectonics
- (b) Large asteroid or meteorite impacts
- (c) River erosion
- (d) Monsoon weathering

DETAILED SOLUTION - ANSWER: (b)

- Lunar impact basins are formed by high-energy collisions with asteroids or meteorites.

MAINS MODEL ANSWERS - REBUILT UPSC STRUCTURE

GS-I MODEL ANSWER

Syllabus: Indian climatology, drought, water resources and human geography

15 Marks | ~250 words

PYQ linkage: recurring UPSC questions on drought, micro-watershed development, climate variability and migration.

Question: Drought is a slow-onset disaster produced by both climate variability and patterns of resource use. Discuss with reference to peninsular India.

QUESTION DEMAND

- Explain physical causes, show how human choices amplify vulnerability, and conclude with a risk-reduction strategy rather than relief-only measures.

INTRODUCTION

Drought is not simply 'absence of rain'. It is a prolonged imbalance between water availability and demand. In peninsular India, monsoon variability interacts with hard-rock aquifers, rain-fed farming, crop choices and groundwater extraction, making drought both a climatic and governance phenomenon.

1. CLIMATIC AND PHYSICAL BASIS

The southwest monsoon is highly seasonal and spatially variable. El Nino years can increase the probability of deficient rainfall, but intra-seasonal breaks are equally important. A season may record moderate total rainfall yet long dry spells can damage crops. Hard-rock aquifers in the Deccan have limited storage compared with deep alluvial aquifers.

2. AGRICULTURAL TRANSMISSION

Agricultural drought occurs when soil moisture is insufficient at critical crop stages. Cotton, soybean, pulses and sugarcane have different water needs; water-intensive cropping in semi-arid regions can convert rainfall stress into severe farm distress.

3. HYDROLOGICAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

Reservoir depletion and falling groundwater may persist after rainfall recovers. Drinking-water stress, fodder scarcity, indebtedness, wage loss and seasonal migration disproportionately affect small farmers, women and landless workers.

4. GOVERNANCE GAPS

Relief often begins after visible crop loss. Fragmented data, delayed insurance assessment, weak aquifer planning and incentives for water-intensive crops can magnify exposure.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Meteorological drought cannot be prevented, but agricultural and socio-economic drought can be reduced. The policy objective should therefore be vulnerability reduction, not merely post-facto compensation.

WAY FORWARD

Use block-level drought dashboards combining rainfall, soil moisture, reservoir, groundwater and sowing data; adopt aquifer-based water budgets; diversify crops; expand micro-watershed work, fodder banks, insurance and employment support; and protect drinking-water security before crisis peaks.

CONCLUSION

Peninsular India's drought challenge is ultimately a test of anticipatory governance: climate may trigger scarcity, but institutions determine whether scarcity becomes disaster.

GS-II MODEL ANSWER

Syllabus: Indian Constitution, federalism, diversity, language policy and cultural rights

15 Marks | ~250 words

PYQ linkage: constitutional accommodation of diversity, federalism, language provisions and cultural rights.

Question: India's linguistic federalism is based on accommodation rather than uniformity. Examine in the context of State official-language policy and demands for wider constitutional recognition.

QUESTION DEMAND

- Distinguish Union, State and Eighth Schedule provisions; explain why accommodation strengthens unity; discuss implementation and political challenges.

INTRODUCTION

India's language policy reflects a constitutional choice to manage diversity through accommodation rather than a single-language nation-building model. The recent decision to allow Tulu for additional administrative use in parts of Karnataka illustrates this flexible federal approach.

1. CONSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE

Article 343 deals with the official language of the Union; Article 345 allows a State legislature to adopt one or more languages in use in the State for official purposes. The Eighth Schedule lists 22 languages but is not identical to State official-language status. India has no constitutionally declared 'national language'.

2. WHY ACCOMMODATION MATTERS

Language carries identity, memory and cultural knowledge. Administrative use can reduce distance between citizens and the State, improve access to services and strengthen cultural confidence.

3. FEDERAL VALUE

States can respond to local linguistic realities without requiring a uniform national solution. This flexibility reduces the pressure for cultural homogenisation and supports cooperative federalism.

4. ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRAINTS

Recognition requires trained staff, standard terminology, scripts, translation, digital interfaces and educational resources. Symbolic recognition without implementation capacity can create frustration.

5. POLITICAL RISKS

Language claims can become competitive if recognition is treated as zero-sum. Demands for Eighth Schedule inclusion also raise questions of criteria, administrative feasibility and fairness among many language communities.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Accommodation should neither freeze linguistic identities nor become endless symbolic expansion. The constitutional objective is meaningful access and cultural preservation while maintaining administrative coherence.

WAY FORWARD

Develop transparent criteria for recognition; support mother-tongue resources, digital corpora and translation technologies; fund cultural preservation independently of Schedule status; and build multilingual public-service capacity.

CONCLUSION

India's unity is strengthened when the Constitution gives diversity legitimate institutional space. Linguistic federalism works best when recognition is practical, inclusive and non-zero-sum.

GS-III MODEL ANSWER

Syllabus: Indian economy, industrial policy, science and technology, employment and exports

15 Marks | ~250 words

PYQ linkage: manufacturing share, Make in India, employment, technology, MSMEs and global value chains.

Question: Twelve years after Make in India, the central challenge is to move from production scale to technological depth. Analyse.

QUESTION DEMAND

- Acknowledge gains, identify structural gaps, distinguish assembly from value addition, and propose the next-generation industrial-policy agenda.

INTRODUCTION

Make in India has helped expand scale in electronics, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, steel and defence. The next phase, however, will be judged less by gross output and more by whether India develops domestic design, components, machinery, materials, intellectual property and globally competitive firms.

1. GAINS IN SCALE AND ECOSYSTEM

PIB's 12-year review highlights rising investment, industrial parks, PM GatiShakti, NSWS and Production Linked Incentive schemes. Electronics and mobile-phone production demonstrate how coordinated policy can create scale.

2. WHY TECHNOLOGICAL DEPTH MATTERS

Final assembly can remain import-dependent for semiconductors, displays, machine tools, specialty chemicals and software. Strategic autonomy requires capability in critical layers of the value chain.

3. EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

India needs labour-intensive manufacturing for mass employment alongside advanced manufacturing. Automation means GDP growth in manufacturing does not automatically translate into enough jobs.

4. MSME AND SUPPLIER CHALLENGE

Large plants cannot create a resilient industrial system if domestic suppliers remain low-productivity. Tooling, quality certification, finance and technology diffusion are crucial.

5. EXTERNAL COMPETITIVENESS

Export markets impose discipline on productivity and quality. Permanent tariff protection can weaken competitiveness; strategic support should be time-bound and performance-linked.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Industrial policy is justified where coordination failures are large, but success should be measured by capabilities that remain after subsidies decline.

WAY FORWARD

Tie incentives to value addition, R&D; and exports; build supplier clusters and common testing facilities; deepen university-industry research; improve logistics and energy reliability; and scale technician, toolmaker and process-engineer training.

CONCLUSION

The next Make in India phase should aim not merely to make more in India, but to know more, design more and own more of the technology embedded in what India makes.

GS-IV MODEL ANSWER

Syllabus: Ethics in public policy, beneficence, autonomy, justice and proportionality

15 Marks | ~250 words

PYQ linkage: ethical dilemmas in public administration, regulation, public health and vulnerable groups.

Question: Public policy often restricts individual or commercial choice to protect vulnerable groups. What ethical tests should such restrictions satisfy? Discuss with reference to food and health regulation.

QUESTION DEMAND

- Balance autonomy with public welfare; use ethical principles; show why children justify stronger protection; conclude with a proportionality framework.

INTRODUCTION

A democratic State cannot treat autonomy as absolute, nor can it invoke welfare to justify unlimited paternalism. Ethical regulation must therefore establish when restricting choice is legitimate and how far the restriction should go.

1. BENEFICENCE

Food warnings and school-zone restrictions seek to improve health and prevent future disease. The State has a positive duty to create conditions in which citizens, especially children, can make healthier choices.

2. NON-MALEFICENCE

Regulation should prevent foreseeable harm. High exposure to sugar, salt and unhealthy fats can contribute to long-term disease, but poorly designed rules can also harm small vendors or stigmatise foods without sufficient evidence.

3. AUTONOMY

Adults ordinarily deserve wide freedom of choice. Children, however, have lower capacity to assess long-term risks and are more vulnerable to advertising, making stronger protective rules ethically easier to justify.

4. JUSTICE

The benefits and costs of regulation should be fairly distributed. If compliance costs fall heavily on small retailers, transition support may be necessary while large manufacturers reformulate products.

5. PROPORTIONALITY AND EVIDENCE

A restriction should pursue a legitimate objective, be suitable for achieving it, be necessary relative to less restrictive alternatives, and impose benefits proportionate to burdens.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Ethical policy is not simply 'strict' or 'lenient'. It combines scientific evidence, transparency, stakeholder voice, reviewability and sensitivity to unequal impacts.

WAY FORWARD

Publish nutrient thresholds, require clear labels, regulate child-directed marketing, improve school meals, assist small vendors, disclose outcomes and periodically revise rules as evidence evolves.

CONCLUSION

The ethical State protects without infantilising: it intervenes most strongly where vulnerability and harm are greatest, and it justifies every restriction through evidence, fairness and proportionality.

PLACES IN NEWS - AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2026 + CURRENT

Place	UPSC relevance
Strait of Hormuz	Persian Gulf-Gulf of Oman chokepoint; current US-Iran diplomacy and India's energy-security relevance.
Kishau / Tons River	Himachal-Uttarakhand border; Upper Yamuna storage and hydropower project.
Marathwada	Maharashtra drought case study; rainfall variability, groundwater and cropping stress.
Vidarbha	Cotton/soybean region; drought and agrarian vulnerability.
Mangaluru-Udupi	Core Tulu-speaking coastal Karnataka region; language and cultural-policy relevance.
Kasargod	Northern Kerala area with Tulu-speaking communities; useful for cultural mapping.
Kachchh	September biodiversity and coastal-environment relevance.
Digha	Bay of Bengal coastal-management and erosion relevance.
Petrapole	India-Bangladesh land-port geography; August-September trade relevance.
Australe Basin, Moon	Ancient lunar impact basin identified through Chandrayaan-1 mineralogical data.

FINAL QA CHECK

- 10 topics with full current-affairs explanation: context, static linkage, multidimensional analysis, Prelims traps, Key Points and Way Forward.
- Every topic has an infographic immediately after analysis.
- 10 MCQs include four options and detailed explanations.
- Four Mains model answers are complete, structured and substantial - not hints.
- Original multicolour maps are included.
- Both approved logos and visible watermarks are present on content pages.

