RAMAKRISHNA MISSION – GEO IAS

DAILY NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS

22 NOVEMBER 2026 | SUNDAY

UPSC CSE PRELIMS + MAINS | STUDENT EDITION

Ten current developments, static foundations, integrated learning visuals, practice questions and four GS model answers.

Coverage window: verified developments reported through 21 November 2026.

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GEO IAS

01. SCO Civilisational Dialogue and India’s cultural diplomacy

GS LINKAGE: GS I: cultural history; GS II: international relations

WHY IN NEWS

India hosted the first Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Civilisational Dialogue Forum at Purana Qila, New Delhi, on 20 November 2026. The meeting foregrounded historical exchanges among Asian societies and the role of cultural engagement alongside traditional security diplomacy.

BACKGROUND, BASIC CONCEPTS AND EXAM FACTS

The SCO evolved from the Shanghai Five of 1996 and was founded in Shanghai in 2001. Its ten members include India and Pakistan, which joined in 2017, Iran (2023), and Belarus (2024). Its two permanent bodies are the Secretariat in Beijing and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) Executive Committee in Tashkent. It is a Eurasian intergovernmental organisation, not a military alliance equivalent to NATO. The Silk Routes were overlapping overland and maritime networks transmitting goods, religious ideas, technologies and artistic forms. Purana Qila is an archaeological site in Delhi; the Astitva exhibition connects material remains to the city’s layered history.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

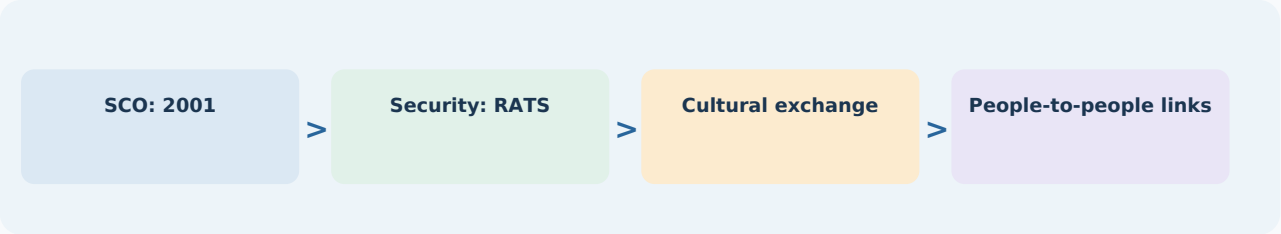
SCO formed 2001; RATS at Tashkent; India joined 2017; distinguish cultural forum from security body; Silk Routes are plural networks.

MAINS AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

For India, civilisational engagement can deepen trust with Central Asia, expand academic and heritage partnerships, support tourism and language exchanges, and sustain dialogue even when bilateral ties are difficult. Yet cultural diplomacy cannot itself settle territorial disputes, trade barriers or security conflicts. Competing historical narratives and the risk of politicising heritage require careful handling. A strong programme would support joint archaeology, digitised manuscripts, student mobility, museum collaboration and multilingual public access, while protecting archaeological integrity.

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Convert event-based cultural contact into funded, measurable research, education and heritage programmes with transparent scholarly collaboration.



Institutional distinction: the SCO security architecture and cultural diplomacy serve different purposes.

PRELIMS TRAP: Do not confuse the news event or announcement with completed implementation, and distinguish similarly named institutions and processes.

02. Juvenile Justice Act: rehabilitation and accountability

GS LINKAGE: GS II: vulnerable sections and legislation; GS IV: justice and compassion

WHY IN NEWS

A debate about changing juvenile justice provisions intensified following a fatal road incident involving a minor in Kochi. It raises the distinction between public anger, legal responsibility, victim protection and the rehabilitative philosophy of child justice.

BACKGROUND, BASIC CONCEPTS AND EXAM FACTS

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 covers children in conflict with law and children needing care and protection. A child is below 18 years. Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) consist of a principal magistrate and two social workers, at least one a woman. Section 12 establishes a general presumption of bail subject to specific statutory exceptions. Under Section 15, a JJB may conduct a preliminary assessment for a child aged 16–18 alleged to have committed a heinous offence; assessment of capacity and circumstances is not itself a finding of guilt. A Children's Court decides the subsequent course. The Act distinguishes petty, serious and heinous offences, and amendments altered the classification of certain offences.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

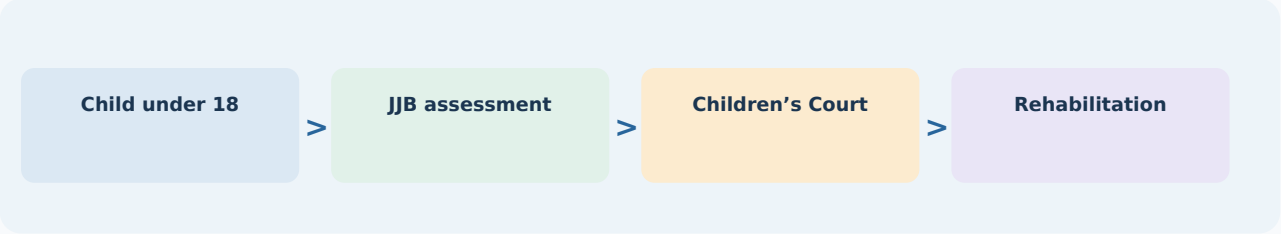
Section 12: bail as general rule; Section 15: preliminary assessment, not adult trial; JJB is different from Children's Court; 16–18 threshold concerns heinous offences.

MAINS AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

An effective system must recognise developmental science, rehabilitation, public safety, victim compensation and proportionality. Automatic adult trials would risk undermining child rights; unconditional release without support can ignore risk. Investigations should preserve child-friendly safeguards and due process while documenting evidence promptly. The Motor Vehicles Act contains distinct liability provisions concerning driving by juveniles, which should not be confused with the JJ Act. Institutional capacity, social-worker availability, psychological assessment and post-release supervision determine outcomes more than punitive slogans.

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Strengthen trained JJBs, victim-support services, restorative justice, family counselling, independent assessment and rehabilitation monitoring.



Legal pathway is conditional: a preliminary assessment does not automatically produce an adult trial.

PRELIMS TRAP: Do not confuse the news event or announcement with completed implementation, and distinguish similarly named institutions and processes.

03. Project Cheetah: wild births and conservation outcomes

GS LINKAGE: GS III: biodiversity, ecology and conservation

WHY IN NEWS

Four cubs were reported born to a Botswana-origin female in the wild at Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh, raising the reported Indian cheetah population to 62. A wild birth is a positive milestone, but ecological establishment requires evidence over generations.

BACKGROUND, BASIC CONCEPTS AND EXAM FACTS

The Asiatic cheetah was declared extinct in India in 1952. Project Cheetah began with translocation of eight cheetahs from Namibia to Kuno in September 2022, followed by South African and Botswana-origin animals. Cheetahs prefer open habitats with adequate prey and require extensive connected landscapes. A reintroduction is the release of a species into an area within its historical range after local extinction; it differs from introducing a species outside its native range. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines emphasise feasibility, genetic management, disease risk, habitat suitability and long-term monitoring.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

Kuno is in Madhya Pradesh; cheetah is not a leopard; extinction in India declared 1952; reintroduction launched 2022; population figure is a dated report, not a permanent fact.

MAINS AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Cub births alone do not demonstrate a self-sustaining population. Survival to adulthood, successful reproduction by India-born animals, stable prey populations, low conflict, sufficient dispersal corridors and genetic diversity are more meaningful indicators. Risks include disease, climate stress, vehicle collisions, livestock conflict, enclosure dependence and fragmented habitats. Local communities should benefit through compensation, livelihoods and participation. Landscape-level coordination across protected and surrounding areas is essential; conservation should also protect grasslands, often incorrectly classified as wastelands.

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Publish independently reviewed survival and reproduction metrics; secure corridors and prey; fund community coexistence and veterinary surveillance.



Conservation success requires population viability, not simply an increasing headcount.

PRELIMS TRAP: Do not confuse the news event or announcement with completed implementation, and distinguish similarly named institutions and processes.

04. Electoral-roll revision: inclusion, deletion and due process

GS LINKAGE: GS II: Constitution, electoral governance and reforms

WHY IN NEWS

West Bengal's planned Special Summary Revision (SSR) of electoral rolls was postponed amid scrutiny of exclusions and pending appeals arising from a Special Intensive Revision (SIR). The issue concerns both roll accuracy and protection against wrongful disenfranchisement.

BACKGROUND, BASIC CONCEPTS AND EXAM FACTS

Article 324 vests election superintendence, direction and control in the Election Commission of India (ECI). Electoral-roll preparation is governed principally by the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and Registration of Electors Rules, 1960; the 1951 Act primarily concerns conduct of elections. Section 21 concerns preparation and revision, Section 22 corrections, and Section 23 inclusion. Form 6 requests new inclusion; Form 7 relates to objection/deletion; Form 8 to correction or shifting. Rule 25 recognises intensive, summary and combined modes of revision. SSR generally updates an existing roll; intensive revision involves preparation afresh.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

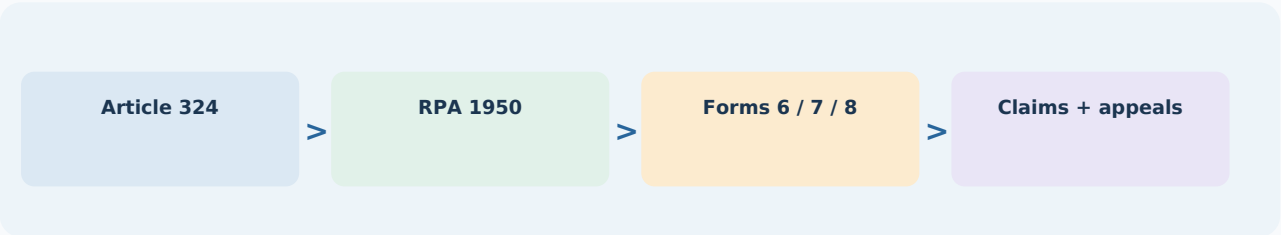
Article 324; RPA 1950 vs 1951; Forms 6/7/8; SSR updates while intensive revision prepares afresh; electoral registration is not citizenship adjudication.

MAINS AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Accurate rolls help prevent duplication, impersonation and errors, but mass verification can exclude migrants, women, the elderly and people lacking standard documentation. A constitutional balance requires advance notice, intelligible reasons, accessible hearings, appeal rights, local-language support and independent oversight. Aadhaar should not be treated as an automatic substitute for statutory eligibility or a universal compulsory condition. Digital portals increase efficiency but can disadvantage people with low connectivity or literacy. Transparency should include error rates, pending claims and disposal times without exposing sensitive personal data.

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Publish clear procedures, provide offline help desks and reasoned decisions, and audit wrongful exclusions with time-bound appeal resolution.



A sound revision system simultaneously minimises ineligible entries and wrongful exclusions.

PRELIMS TRAP: Do not confuse the news event or announcement with completed implementation, and distinguish similarly named institutions and processes.

05. Critical minerals and the geopolitics of clean energy

GS LINKAGE: GS III: energy security, industry, science and technology

WHY IN NEWS

The green transition has exposed strategic dependencies in refining and battery supply chains. India's reported restrictions on exports of lithium-ion battery black mass and the Cabinet's processing-support programme have renewed debate about domestic value addition.

BACKGROUND, BASIC CONCEPTS AND EXAM FACTS

Critical minerals are materials of high economic or strategic importance exposed to supply risks; the designation varies by country and technology. Lithium and nickel are important to several battery chemistries, while cobalt, graphite and rare-earth elements serve other specialised functions. Black mass is the shredded, processed mixture from spent lithium-ion batteries containing recoverable metals and other materials. Beneficiation, refining, cell manufacturing and recycling are different stages. The National Critical Mineral Mission, approved in 2025, covers exploration, extraction, processing, recycling and overseas assets. Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) is a joint venture of NALCO, HCL and MECL.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

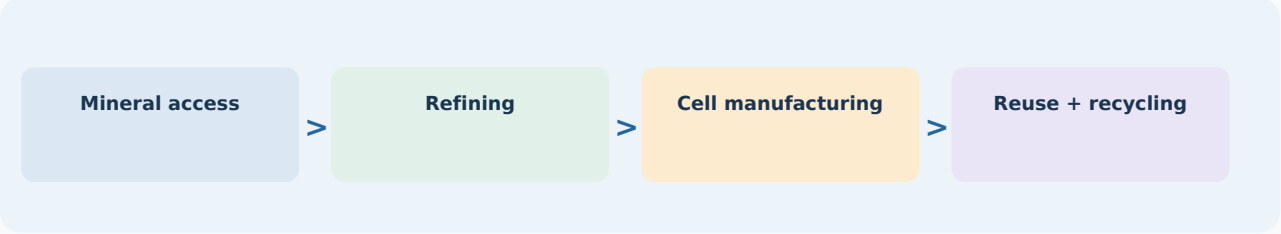
Black mass is not a mined ore; KABIL pursues overseas assets; distinguish mining from refining; critical-mineral lists differ across countries; battery chemistries differ.

MAINS AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

An export restriction may retain feedstock for domestic processors but can also reduce recycler incentives if local capacity is insufficient. China's concentration in refining illustrates that mineral deposits alone do not guarantee industrial resilience. India needs chemistry research, energy-efficient refining, environmental safeguards, skilled workers, predictable policy and diversified international partnerships. Sodium-ion and other technologies can reduce some dependencies but do not eliminate the need for strategic material planning. Recycling can mitigate mining demand but cannot immediately supply all minerals while the stock of end-of-life batteries remains limited.

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Build certified recycling networks, domestic processing and research capacity, and transparent strategic partnerships with strict pollution controls.



Value-chain perspective: access to ore is only one part of clean-energy security.

PRELIMS TRAP: Do not confuse the news event or announcement with completed implementation, and distinguish similarly named institutions and processes.

06. Rohingya case: genocide, ICJ and international accountability

GS LINKAGE: GS II: international institutions, human rights and India’s neighbourhood

WHY IN NEWS

The reported International Court of Justice judgment concerning Myanmar’s Rohingya population has renewed discussion of state responsibility under the Genocide Convention and the limits of international enforcement.

BACKGROUND, BASIC CONCEPTS AND EXAM FACTS

The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide entered into force in 1951. Article II requires specified acts coupled with intent to destroy, wholly or partly, a protected national, ethnic, racial or religious group. The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, settles disputes between states and issues advisory opinions. The International Criminal Court (ICC), created under the Rome Statute, prosecutes individuals for certain international crimes. ICJ judgments bind the parties to a case; Article 94 of the UN Charter addresses compliance and possible Security Council recourse. The Rohingya are a largely stateless minority from Myanmar’s Rakhine State; many fled to Bangladesh in 2017.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

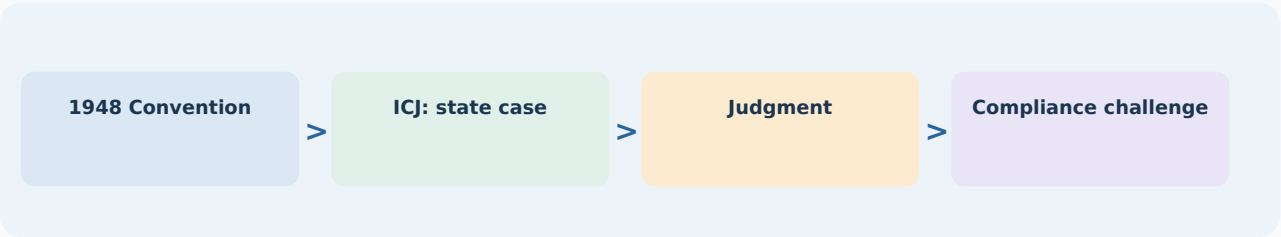
ICJ = state disputes; ICC = individual criminal liability; genocide requires specific intent; UN Security Council veto can obstruct enforcement; Rakhine is in Myanmar.

MAINS AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Genocide is not interchangeable with every atrocity: proving specific intent is a distinctive legal threshold. A judicial finding can establish legal responsibility but does not itself provide safe return, citizenship, compensation or enforcement. Security Council politics and vetoes can impede collective action. Regional governments must consider non-refoulement concerns, humanitarian access, safe and voluntary repatriation, host-community pressures and durable legal status. India is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol and lacks a single comprehensive refugee statute.

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Combine accountability with humanitarian financing, citizenship pathways, monitored voluntary return and regional diplomatic engagement.



Legal distinction: ICJ state responsibility differs from ICC criminal prosecution of individuals.

PRELIMS TRAP: Do not confuse the news event or announcement with completed implementation, and distinguish similarly named institutions and processes.

07. Gold-price movements and monetary-policy expectations

GS LINKAGE: GS III: inflation, monetary policy, external sector

WHY IN NEWS

A sharp correction in gold prices after an earlier rally has prompted analysis of interest-rate expectations, inflation hedging, global uncertainty and India’s demand for imported gold.

BACKGROUND, BASIC CONCEPTS AND EXAM FACTS

Gold is a non-interest-bearing asset whose price depends on investment demand, central-bank purchases, jewellery and technology use, real yields, the dollar, inflation expectations and geopolitical risk. A real interest rate is the nominal rate adjusted for inflation. When real bond yields rise, the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding gold can increase. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) holds gold as one component of foreign-exchange reserves alongside foreign-currency assets, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) and the reserve tranche position at the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs) are rupee-denominated government securities linked to gold prices, not physical gold stored for each investor.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

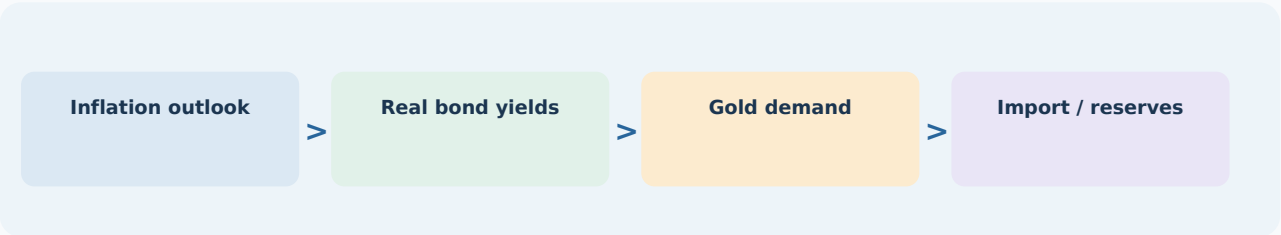
Gold is non-yielding; real yields matter; RBI gold is a reserve asset; SGBs are not identical to physical gold; correlation is not guaranteed.

MAINS AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Gold does not provide regular coupons or dividends by itself; price appreciation is uncertain. It may hedge some long-term inflation risks but is not guaranteed to rise whenever inflation rises. India’s large gold imports can widen the merchandise trade deficit and increase foreign-exchange demand. Central-bank diversification and retail investment motives differ. Policy should avoid treating household gold as unproductive without considering cultural preferences, savings access and financial inclusion. Transparent investment education can reduce confusion between jewellery costs, bullion and financial gold products.

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Improve financial literacy, household access to diversified savings and transparent gold-market reporting while monitoring external-sector effects.



Economic mechanism: higher real yields often raise the opportunity cost of holding gold.

PRELIMS TRAP: Do not confuse the news event or announcement with completed implementation, and distinguish similarly named institutions and processes.

08. Stubble burning: satellite fire counts versus burnt area

GS LINKAGE: GS III: environment, remote sensing and agriculture

WHY IN NEWS

New analysis of northern India's crop-residue fires has highlighted that declining satellite fire detections may not imply an equivalent fall in area burned or pollution exposure.

BACKGROUND, BASIC CONCEPTS AND EXAM FACTS

Farm-fire detection often uses thermal anomalies recorded by instruments such as the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) and Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS). Polar-orbiting satellites pass over a location at particular times, so short-lived or evening fires may be missed. Burnt-area mapping instead examines land-surface changes after a fire, using optical imagery and indices such as the Normalised Burn Ratio (NBR). Sentinel-2 multispectral imagery can provide substantially finer spatial detail than coarse active-fire products. Particulate matter of aerodynamic diameter 2.5 micrometres or less is PM2.5; it is a health-relevant air pollutant.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

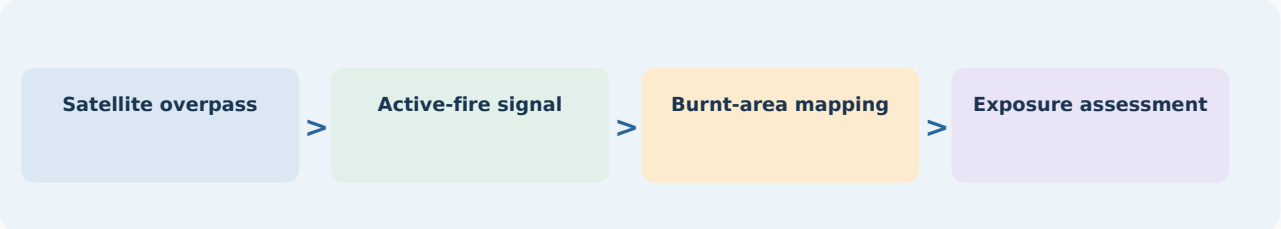
MODIS vs VIIRS; thermal anomalies vs burnt-area maps; NBR differs from NDVI; PM2.5 is a particle-size category, not a specific chemical.

MAINS AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Fire count, burned area, emissions and population exposure are different measures. Small fires can evade thermal sensors, while cloud cover and timing affect observations. Attribution of Delhi's pollution must also account for meteorology, transport, industry, road dust, domestic fuel and regional sources. Farmers face narrow sowing windows, mechanisation costs and uncertain markets for residue. Sustainable solutions include timely residue collection, in-situ mulching, machinery access, bioenergy demand, crop diversification and enforcement that does not disproportionately penalise small farmers.

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Combine multi-sensor monitoring with verified burned-area estimates and viable residue-management incentives for farmers.



Measurement distinction: fewer detections do not necessarily mean fewer hectares burned.

PRELIMS TRAP: Do not confuse the news event or announcement with completed implementation, and distinguish similarly named institutions and processes.

09. Indigenous H5N1 vaccine and One Health preparedness

GS LINKAGE: GS III: biotechnology; GS II: public health

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Agriculture Ministry announced the dedication of an indigenous H5N1 bird-flu vaccine on 20 November 2026, making animal-health preparedness and surveillance an important current-affairs topic.

BACKGROUND, BASIC CONCEPTS AND EXAM FACTS

Avian influenza is caused by influenza A viruses; H5 and N1 refer to surface proteins haemagglutinin and neuraminidase. Highly pathogenic avian influenza can cause severe disease and high mortality in poultry, although pathogenicity categories refer to behaviour in birds and do not automatically predict human disease severity. Vaccination in poultry can reduce disease burden when appropriately matched and deployed, but it does not replace biosecurity, laboratory diagnosis, reporting, movement controls and surveillance for viral change. The One Health approach integrates human, animal and ecosystem health, recognising zoonotic spillover pathways.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

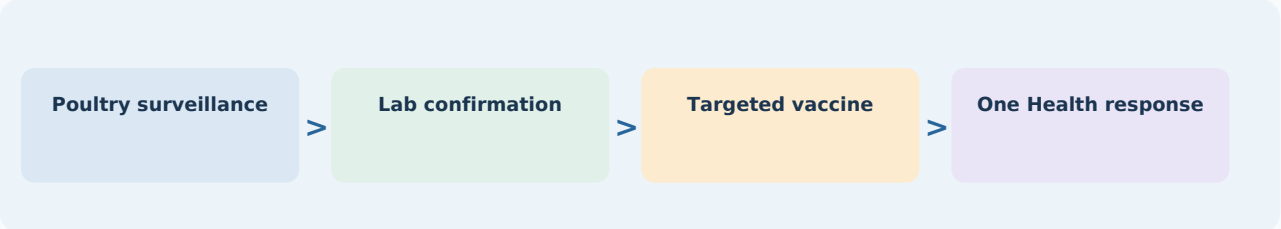
H5N1 is influenza A subtype; H and N denote viral surface proteins; zoonosis means animal-to-human transmission; vaccination is not a substitute for surveillance.

MAINS AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Vaccine policy must address strain matching, field efficacy, affordability, distribution, cold chain and monitoring of virus circulation. Unmonitored vaccination can obscure outbreaks if surveillance weakens. Poultry losses affect small farmers, nutrition and trade. A coordinated system needs veterinary laboratories, wildlife surveillance, transparent outbreak reporting, farm biosecurity and public-health links. Distinguish an announcement of a vaccine from evidence of nationwide coverage or proven elimination of transmission.

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Publish independent efficacy data, deploy risk-based surveillance and strengthen animal-human laboratory coordination under One Health.



Vaccination is one component of an integrated avian-influenza control strategy.

PRELIMS TRAP: Do not confuse the news event or announcement with completed implementation, and distinguish similarly named institutions and processes.

10. Rajasthan Atomic Power Project: first approach to criticality

GS LINKAGE: GS III: nuclear technology, energy and safety

WHY IN NEWS

The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) approved the first approach to criticality of Rajasthan Atomic Power Project Unit 8 on 20 November 2026, a significant commissioning-stage development.

BACKGROUND, BASIC CONCEPTS AND EXAM FACTS

In a nuclear fission reactor, criticality means a self-sustaining chain reaction: the effective neutron multiplication factor k-effective is approximately one. It does not mean a dangerous emergency or full commercial power generation. Subcritical means k-effective below one; supercritical means above one. Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) commonly use heavy water as moderator and coolant and natural uranium fuel, though exact configurations vary. The AERB is India's nuclear safety regulator. First criticality is followed by testing, power ascension, safety checks and further authorisations before commercial operation.

KEY POINTS FOR UPSC

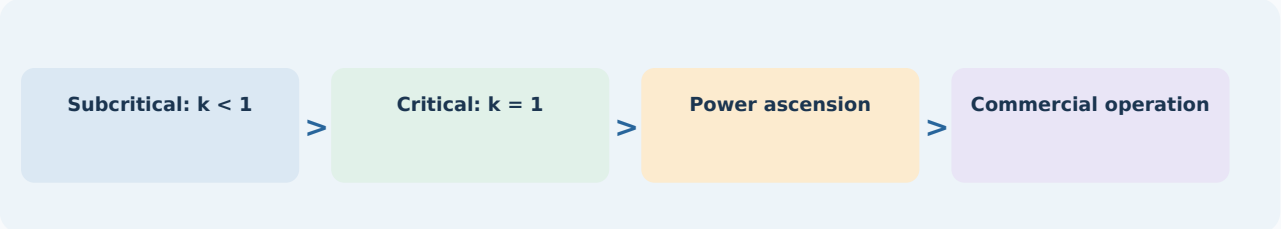
Criticality is k-effective = 1; AERB regulates safety; PHWR uses heavy water; first criticality differs from grid synchronisation and commercial operation.

MAINS AND EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Nuclear energy offers low operational carbon emissions and firm electricity but entails capital cost, construction time, spent-fuel management, cooling-water requirements and stringent safety obligations. Public trust requires independent oversight, emergency preparedness, transparent monitoring and clear communication. Nuclear power can complement variable solar and wind generation but is not a substitute for grid planning or energy efficiency. The commissioning milestone must not be presented as proof that the unit has begun commercial generation.

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Complete staged testing, disclose safety milestones clearly and maintain robust emergency and waste-management planning.



Reactor physics: criticality refers to neutron balance, not maximum electricity output.

PRELIMS TRAP: Do not confuse the news event or announcement with completed implementation, and distinguish similarly named institutions and processes.

PRELIMS PRACTICE: TEN UPSC-PATTERN MCQs

Q1. Regarding the SCO, consider: 1. Its Secretariat is in Beijing. 2. RATS is headquartered in Tashkent. 3. India was a founding member in 2001. Which are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q2. With reference to the JJ Act, 2015: 1. A preliminary assessment under Section 15 is itself an adult criminal trial. 2. Bail is generally favoured under Section 12, subject to exceptions. 3. The JJB includes social workers. Choose the correct option.

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) All three

Q3. Which indicator most directly tests whether reintroduced cheetahs have become a self-sustaining wild population?

(a) Total translocated animals alone

(b) Number of publicity events

(c) Survival and reproduction across generations

(d) Number of fenced enclosures

Q4. Match electoral forms: Form 6, Form 7, Form 8 respectively relate primarily to:

(a) New inclusion; objection/deletion; correction/shifting

(b) Correction; inclusion; deletion

(c) Deletion; correction; inclusion

(d) All three are for new inclusion

Q5. Regarding lithium-ion battery black mass, consider: 1. It is obtained from processed battery waste. 2. It may contain recoverable valuable metals. 3. It is the same as unprocessed lithium ore. Correct statements:

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) All three

Q6. Which distinction is accurate?

(a) ICJ prosecutes individuals while ICC settles state disputes

(b) ICJ deals with states; ICC can prosecute individuals

(c) Both are UN principal organs

(d) Neither deals with international crimes

Q7. A sustained rise in real bond yields, other things equal, tends to:

(a) Increase gold coupon payments

(b) Eliminate gold imports

(c) Increase opportunity cost of holding non-yielding gold

(d) Make gold risk-free

Q8. Regarding remote sensing of farm fires: 1. Polar-orbiting satellite overpass timing can miss brief fires. 2. Burnt-area mapping and active-fire detection measure exactly the same thing. 3. NBR can help identify burned land. Correct statements:

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) All three

Q9. In H5N1 influenza, H and N refer to:

(a) Host and nutrition

(b) Haemagglutinin and neuraminidase

(c) Heat and nitrogen

(d) Human and non-human

Q10. First criticality of a nuclear reactor means:

(a) Commercial electricity supply has started

(b) Reactor is being decommissioned

(c) A self-sustaining fission chain reaction is achieved

(d) No neutrons remain in the reactor

GEO IAS

DETAILED PRELIMS SOLUTIONS

Ten UPSC-standard explanations | Statement analysis, option elimination and conceptual traps

Q1. SCO institutional geography and membership

Correct answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Statement 1 is correct. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Secretariat, the permanent administrative body, is in Beijing, China. Do not confuse its location with the venue of a summit or the chairing country. Statement 2 is correct. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), the SCO's specialised counter-terrorism body, has its Executive Committee in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Statement 3 is incorrect. The SCO was established in 2001 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; India and Pakistan became full members in 2017.

Why the other options fail: Option (a) alone includes both true statements and excludes statement 3. Option (b) wrongly includes 3 and excludes 1; (c) wrongly includes 3 and excludes 2; (d) includes false statement 3.

UPSC trap and value addition: Distinguish founding members, later entrants, observer states and dialogue partners. The SCO is not a collective-defence alliance like NATO.

Q2. Juvenile Justice Act: assessment versus trial

Correct answer: (b) 2 and 3 only

Statement 1 is incorrect. Under Section 15 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) conducts a preliminary assessment for children aged 16–18 alleged to have committed heinous offences. It considers mental and physical capacity, ability to understand consequences and circumstances; this is not a criminal trial or a presumption of guilt. Statement 2 is correct. Section 12 generally favours bail, subject to statutory exceptions involving criminal association, danger or defeating the ends of justice. Statement 3 is correct. A JJB has a Principal Magistrate and two social workers, at least one a woman.

Why the other options fail: Option (b) contains precisely the true statements. (a) and (c) rely on false statement 1; (d) also includes 1.

UPSC trap and value addition: 'Heinous offence' has a statutory definition; avoid assuming all cases involving 16–18-year-olds are automatically transferred to adult court.

Q3. Cheetah reintroduction and ecological viability

Correct answer: (c) Survival and reproduction across generations

The central test of reintroduction is whether a free-ranging population can survive, reproduce and maintain sufficient genetic diversity over successive generations without perpetual replacement by imported animals. Prey availability, connected habitat, mortality from conflict or disease, dispersal and long-term monitoring are relevant ecological indicators. A single rise in the total headcount, even when associated with births, is encouraging but does not itself prove population viability.

Why the other options fail: (a) Counts translocated animals, which measure inputs rather than ecological outcomes. (b) Publicity events are unrelated to population dynamics. (c) directly assesses long-term persistence and is correct. (d) Enclosures can help acclimatisation but do not demonstrate a self-sustaining wild population.

UPSC trap and value addition: The 20 November PIB announcement reported 62 cheetahs, including 43 Indian-born; this is a dated snapshot, not proof of self-sustainability.

Q4. Electoral roll application forms

Correct answer: (a) New inclusion; objection/deletion; correction/shifting

Form 6 is the prescribed application for inclusion of a name in the electoral roll by an eligible new elector. Form 7 is used for objections to a proposed inclusion or for deletion of an existing entry on specified grounds, subject to due process. Form 8 concerns correction of particulars, shifting of residence, replacement of EPIC and marking of a person with disability, as applicable. Electoral roll preparation is governed by the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.

Why the other options fail: (a) correctly preserves the 6–7–8 sequence. (b) reverses the purposes; (c) misassigns all three; (d) falsely treats the three distinct forms as inclusion forms.

UPSC trap and value addition: Remember RPA 1950 for electoral rolls and RPA 1951 for conduct of elections, corrupt practices and disqualifications.

Q5. Lithium-ion battery black mass

Correct answer: (c) 1 and 2 only

Statement 1 is correct: black mass is a processed intermediate fraction produced after mechanical treatment of spent lithium-ion batteries, commonly following discharge, dismantling, shredding and separation. Statement 2 is correct: depending on battery chemistry, it can contain recoverable lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese and graphite; composition varies, and lithium iron phosphate batteries do not have the same nickel/cobalt content as NMC chemistries. Statement 3 is false: black mass is secondary material recovered from manufactured batteries, not naturally mined lithium ore.

Why the other options fail: (a) omits correct statement 2. (b) includes false statement 3 and omits 1. (c) is correct. (d) includes false statement 3.

UPSC trap and value addition: Recycling may use hydrometallurgy or pyrometallurgy. Recoverability is not the same as economically viable recovery.

Q6. International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court

Correct answer: (b) ICJ deals with states; ICC can prosecute individuals

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), based in The Hague, is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It settles contentious disputes between states where jurisdiction exists and gives advisory opinions when properly requested. The International Criminal Court (ICC), also in The Hague, is a separate court established by the Rome Statute; it prosecutes individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression subject to jurisdictional conditions. The ICC is not a UN principal organ.

Why the other options fail: (a) reverses the courts. (b) captures the central distinction. (c) is false because only the ICJ is a UN principal organ. (d) is false: the ICC deals with specified international crimes.

UPSC trap and value addition: Neither court automatically has jurisdiction over every situation. Distinguish state responsibility, individual criminal liability, admissibility and enforcement.

Q7. Gold prices and real bond yields

Correct answer: (c) Increase opportunity cost of holding non-yielding gold

Gold is a non-interest-bearing asset: it does not pay a contractual coupon. If inflation-adjusted (real) yields on relatively safe bonds rise, investors can earn a higher real return on an alternative to holding gold, so the opportunity cost of holding gold generally increases, all else equal. Gold prices also respond to the dollar, central-bank purchases, geopolitical risk, liquidity and expectations; therefore the relationship is a tendency rather than an invariant law.

Why the other options fail: (a) Gold has no coupon to increase. (b) Real yields cannot eliminate all gold imports. (c) correctly states the opportunity-cost channel. (d) Gold remains subject to price and market risk.

UPSC trap and value addition: Nominal yield minus expected inflation approximates real yield (Fisher relation). Avoid confusing rising nominal yields with rising real yields.

Q8. Satellite detection of stubble burning

Correct answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Statement 1 is correct: a polar-orbiting satellite sees a location at discrete overpass times, so short-duration fires may begin and end between observations; cloud cover and pixel resolution also affect detection. Statement 2 is false: active-fire products detect thermal anomalies during burning, whereas burned-area products identify land affected after a fire, often using spectral change over time. Statement 3 is correct: the Normalised Burn Ratio (NBR), calculated using near-infrared and short-wave infrared reflectance, helps map burned surfaces; differenced NBR (dNBR) can support burn-severity assessment.

Why the other options fail: (a) contains 1 and 3. (b) includes false 2 and omits 1. (c) includes false 2 and omits 3. (d) includes false 2.

UPSC trap and value addition: Satellite fire counts are not identical to hectares burned or tonnes of emissions. Avoid drawing trend conclusions without comparable sensor, coverage and detection conditions.

Q9. Influenza A subtype nomenclature

Correct answer: (b) Haemagglutinin and neuraminidase

Influenza A viruses are classified by the two principal surface glycoproteins: haemagglutinin (H), involved in attachment/entry into host cells, and neuraminidase (N), which helps newly formed viral particles exit infected cells. Thus H5N1 denotes a particular combination of H and N subtypes. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) refers to pathogenicity in poultry, not an automatic prediction of severity in humans. Influenza is viral, so antibiotics do not treat the virus itself.

Why the other options fail: (a), (c) and (d) invent expansions that are not influenza nomenclature. (b) correctly names both viral surface proteins.

UPSC trap and value addition: Vaccination, surveillance, biosecurity and outbreak response are distinct measures; vaccine development does not imply universal deployment.

Q10. First approach to reactor criticality

Correct answer: (c) A self-sustaining fission chain reaction is achieved

A nuclear reactor reaches criticality when the effective neutron multiplication factor (k-effective) equals approximately one: each fission generation sustains the next on average. 'First approach to criticality' is a regulated commissioning milestone involving controlled testing and safety authorisation. It is not the same as grid synchronisation, full-power operation or commercial electricity generation. A pressurised heavy water reactor (PHWR) commonly uses heavy water as moderator and coolant and natural uranium fuel in the Indian design.

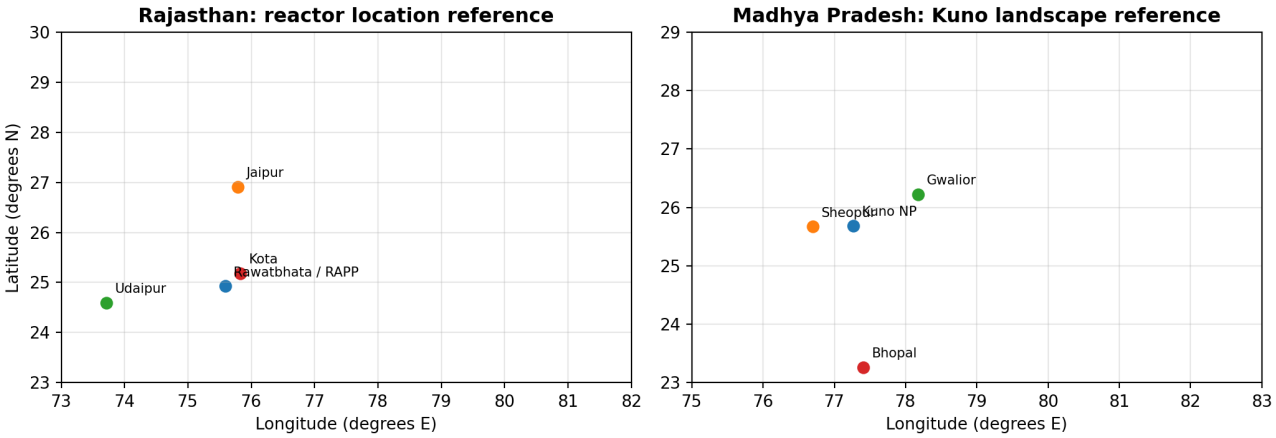
Why the other options fail: (a) incorrectly equates criticality with commercial supply. (b) refers to the opposite end of a reactor's life cycle. (c) correctly defines criticality. (d) is impossible: neutrons are essential to the chain reaction.

UPSC trap and value addition: AERB permitted first approach to criticality of RAPP-8 on 19 November 2026; later commissioning steps require further tests and permissions.

GEOGRAPHICAL & VISUAL LEARNING

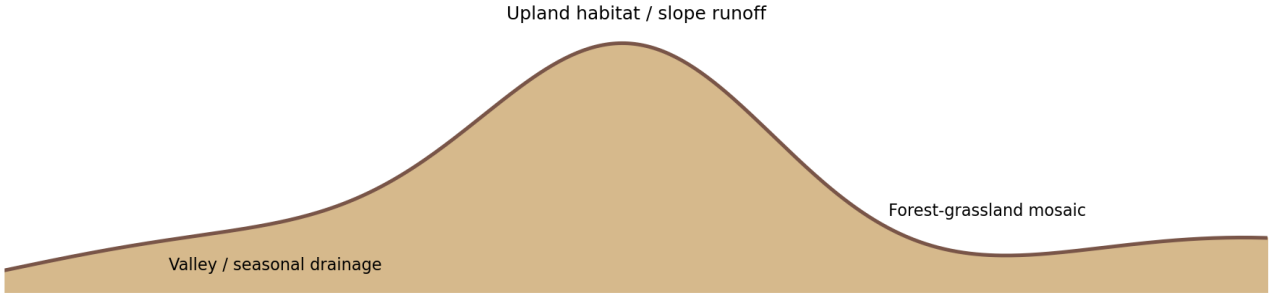
Accurate geographic reference points for two places in the news. Coordinate plots deliberately do not claim to show administrative boundaries or detailed relief.

Geographical location references (latitude/longitude, not political boundary maps)



Physical geography: terrain, habitat connectivity and runoff

Habitat connectivity and terrain: conceptual cross-section (not a surveyed relief map)



The cross-section explains a physical-geography relationship; it is not a topographic or geological survey. Use an authoritative Survey of India or other licensed terrain dataset for boundary-accurate relief maps.

GS-I | MODEL MAINS ANSWER

15 marks | 250 words

How can India use civilisational connections to deepen regional cooperation without politicising heritage?

Demand Explain how shared heritage can build regional cooperation and propose safeguards against political appropriation.

Syllabus Indian culture: art forms, literature and architecture | PYQ theme: cultural exchange and continuity

Introduction

India's civilisational links grew through travel, trade and intellectual exchange. Nalanda Mahavihara, inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2016, illustrates how a site in India can embody a shared Asian history of learning.

Research and conservation

India can co-fund archaeological training, manuscript digitisation and conservation with regional universities and museums. The Chang'an–Tianshan Silk Roads corridor, jointly inscribed by China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, shows how countries can cooperate around sites that span modern borders. Joint catalogues can make collections accessible while recording where objects came from.

People-to-people ties

Reciprocal fellowships, translation grants and travelling exhibitions can sustain relationships beyond summits. Community-led heritage routes can link guides, artisans and museums across borders, with local communities sharing tourism revenue and helping decide how sacred sites are interpreted.

Risks and safeguards

A narrative claiming exclusive ownership can alienate partners and erase the contributions of minorities, traders and translators. Use independent curators, multilingual labels and publication of evidence and competing interpretations. Obtain community consent for displaying sacred material, and resolve disputed provenance through transparent bilateral processes. Cultural cooperation can keep channels open during political tensions, though it has limited leverage over security disputes.

Way forward

Pilot a jointly governed conservation and exchange programme through regional cultural forums, with rotating leadership, published selection criteria and multi-year funding. Review results against jointly conserved collections, reciprocal exchanges and community participation. Keep the resulting catalogues openly accessible in each partner language.

Conclusion

India can build lasting regional trust by sharing authority over how connected histories are researched, interpreted and presented.

GS-II | MODEL MAINS ANSWER

15 marks | 250 words

Discuss the balance between rehabilitation, public safety and victim justice under juvenile justice law.

Demand Weigh all three objectives and explain how statutory safeguards and implementation can reconcile them.

Syllabus Welfare and protection of vulnerable sections | PYQ theme: implementation of protective legislation

Introduction

The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 treats developmental capacity as relevant to culpability. Proportionate accountability, rehabilitation and meaningful support for victims can together reduce future harm.

Rehabilitation

Juvenile Justice Boards can combine counselling, education, community service and supervised probation under Section 18. Section 12 generally favours bail, subject to specified risks such as association with known criminals, danger to the child or defeat of the ends of justice. Individual care plans and aftercare can address school exclusion, unsafe homes and other risks of reoffending.

Public safety

For an alleged heinous offence by a child aged 16 or 17, Section 15 requires a preliminary assessment of capacity, understanding of consequences and circumstances. The Children's Court independently decides under Section 19 whether adult trial is necessary. Section 21 bars death and life imprisonment without possibility of release. In Barun Chandra Thakur (2022), the Supreme Court required expert assistance where the Board lacks a practising professional with the stipulated qualifications.

Victim justice and trade-offs

Victims need timely information, safety planning, counselling and access to compensation where eligible. Restorative processes should be voluntary and screened for coercion. Reflexive detention can disrupt education and reintegration, while release without supervision or support can leave risks unmanaged. Under-resourced Boards make these safeguards uneven in practice.

Way forward

Staff Boards with trained personnel, ensure access to accredited experts and legal aid, and link district victim services with child protection and probation teams. Review case delays and completion of care plans.

Conclusion

Individualised orders, enforceable safeguards and accessible victim support make accountability compatible with rehabilitation and public safety.

GS-III | MODEL MAINS ANSWER

15 marks | 250 words

Why are wild births an encouraging but insufficient measure of Project Cheetah's success?

Demand Explain what wild births demonstrate and assess the demographic, ecological and social evidence needed to establish success.

Syllabus Conservation | PYQ theme: biodiversity protection and ecosystem-based management

Introduction

On 20 November 2026, the environment ministry reported four cubs born in the wild to Botswana-origin KOMG 3, the project's second recorded wild birth event. India received the first eight Namibian cheetahs at Kuno in September 2022.

What wild births show

Giving birth under free-ranging conditions after months in the wild indicates adaptation to local conditions and successful reproduction. It establishes one stage of reintroduction. Recruitment requires cubs to survive to breeding age and themselves reproduce.

What births leave unresolved

The reported national total of 62 combines animals of different ages and origins. Imports can increase the count even when local deaths exceed recruitment. Small founder numbers and unequal breeding contributions can also narrow genetic diversity. Assess age-specific survival, breeding among India-born animals and long-term population growth separately from additions through translocation.

Landscape and coexistence

Persistence depends on prey density, suitable open habitats and safe dispersal. An India-born cheetah was found injured outside Kuno in Morena in October 2026, illustrating the need for monitoring beyond park boundaries. Conflict response and prompt livestock compensation can sustain local acceptance. Habitat management should also track effects on native open-ecosystem species.

Way forward

Publish cohort outcomes by site, birth origin and free-ranging status, alongside mortality causes, prey trends and conflict records. Use telemetry and independent review to guide corridor protection and evaluate whether multiple sites can support managed genetic exchange without routine reliance on overseas imports.

Conclusion

Wild births mark reproductive progress. Lasting success requires multiple generations surviving in suitable landscapes with workable arrangements for coexistence.

GS-IV | MODEL MAINS ANSWER

15 marks | 250 words

A district officer faces pressure to accelerate electoral-roll deletions despite unresolved claims. Identify the ethical issues and a justified course of action.

Demand Identify stakeholders and value conflicts, compare feasible options, and justify a lawful, implementable response.

Syllabus Public service values, probity and case studies | PYQ theme: impartiality under administrative pressure

Introduction

I would protect eligible electors from wrongful exclusion while enabling timely removal of verified ineligible entries. An erroneous deletion can deny participation in an election before an appeal is decided.

Stakeholders and dilemmas

Electors need access and fair hearings, especially migrants, older people and persons with disabilities. Registration staff face deadlines and pressure. Parties and the public need accurate rolls and impartial decisions. The dilemmas are speed versus procedural fairness, obedience versus integrity, and transparency versus voter privacy.

Options and evaluation

Bulk deletion meets the deadline but risks wrongful exclusion and prejudges pending claims. Freezing every change protects disputed entries but retains verified errors and disrupts lawful roll maintenance. Case-by-case triage takes more staff time and protects fairness while allowing verified cases to proceed.

Decision and implementation

I would document the pressure, seek written directions and refer any improper interference through the election hierarchy. Within statutory timelines, I would ask the Electoral Registration Officer to prioritise unresolved claims and process verified cases individually. Section 22 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 requires proper verification and a reasonable opportunity to be heard where applicable. Use accessible notices, assisted filing and scheduled hearings. Communicate reasoned decisions and the Section 24 appeal route. If deadlines threaten fair disposal, seek directions from the competent election authority.

Way forward

Audit unusual deletion patterns and publish aggregate disposal and appeal figures while protecting personal records.

Conclusion

This approach preserves roll accuracy, makes decisions reviewable and gives eligible voters a fair opportunity to remain enrolled.

EDITORIAL READING AND VERIFICATION NOTES

News was selected from developments reported on 20–21 November 2026. The analysis distinguishes official announcements from operational outcomes and explains the underlying concepts in original language.

The Indian Express, UPSC Key, 21 November 2026: https://indianexpress.com/article/upsc-current-affairs/upsc-key-sco-cultural-diplomacy-juvenile-justice-electoral-rolls-10972836/

Press Information Bureau, all releases (November 2026): https://www.pib.gov.in/AllRelease.aspx?lang=1&reg=1

Press Information Bureau, SCO Civilisational Dialogue photo record, 20 November 2026: https://www.pib.gov.in/ShowAlbum.aspx?albumid=233825&lang=1&reg=48

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