



UPSC HUB

CURRENT AFFAIRS • 2025-2026

Last 1 Year Current Affairs for UPSC: 50 Most Important Topics (2025-26)

Last 1 year current affairs for UPSC 2027: 50 most important topics from Oct 2025 to Oct 2026 — polity, economy, environment, science, IR, defence, awards and reports with tables, tips & FAQs.

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Last 1 Year Current Affairs for UPSC: 50 Most Important Topics (2025–26)

Every year, UPSC asks roughly the same mix of questions from the last twelve months: a new law, a summit, an index rank, a missile test, a court verdict, a sports first. The toppers do not read ten newspapers a day. They master a fixed set of high-probability events — and they learn each event the way the examiner asks about it. This book is that fixed set: the fifty current-affairs topics from October 2025 to October 2026 that carry the most marks for Prelims 2027 and Mains 2026–27.

Why does the one-year window matter so much? Because UPSC's question-setters work from it almost mechanically. Prelims 2026 drew its current-affairs questions overwhelmingly from 2025 events; Prelims 2027 will do the same with this window. The VB-G RAM G Act replacing MGNREGA, the GST 2.0 slabs, the India-EU free trade deal, the first digital census announcement, the Nobel Prizes of 2025 and 2026 — these are not background reading. They are the questions, almost verbatim.

These 50 topics are arranged in seven parts: Polity & Governance, Economy, Environment & Ecology, Science & Technology, International Relations, Defence & Internal Security, and Society, Awards, Sports & Reports. Every topic follows the same four-question rhythm — what it is, why it matters, the key facts to memorise, and exactly how UPSC tests it. The quick-revision tables near the end compress the most list-heavy facts (summits, indices, awards) into one page each. Read the book in order once, then revise only the "Key facts" paragraphs and the tables in the final month.

A note on honesty, which UPSC rewards. Where a figure is disputed or a claim comes from a single outlet, this book says so — "widely cited", "reported", "announced" — instead of presenting it as settled fact. Write your answers the same way. The examiner can forgive a forgotten date; what costs marks is asserting a contested claim as truth. Where a topic connects to a full book on this shelf — the [India 2000–2025](#) security timeline, the [International Relations](#) book, the [Government Schemes](#) book — you will find a cross-link rather than repetition.

Part I: Polity & Governance

Seven developments define this year's GS-II landscape: the biggest rural-employment law in two decades, a landmark election cycle, the Supreme Court's word on electoral rolls, and two verdicts that sharpen the rights-versus-institutions debate. Every one of these is a ready-made Prelims question and a Mains case study.

1. 1. VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 Replaces MGNREGA

What it is: Parliament passed the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill in the winter session of 2025, and President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent on 21

December 2025. The Act was notified to come into force from 1 July 2026, repealing MGNREGA — in force since 2 February 2006 — from that date. It is the first full replacement of India's flagship rural-employment law in twenty years.

Why it matters: MGNREGA was the textbook example of a rights-based, demand-driven scheme; the new law redesigns that architecture. For Mains, this is the single best case study of the shift from a demand-driven right to an allocation-based model, with direct federalism implications in how costs are shared between the Centre and the states.

Key facts: The wage-employment guarantee rises from 100 days to 125 days per rural household per financial year. Centre-state cost sharing becomes 60:40 for most states and 90:10 for North-Eastern and Himalayan states, replacing the old open-ended labour budget with state-wise normative allocations. States may notify a pause window of up to 60 days in aggregate during peak sowing and harvesting seasons, when works are not taken up. Existing e-KYC verified MGNREGA job cards stay valid until the new Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards are issued.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims will ask the number of days (125), the commencement date (1 July 2026), the cost-sharing ratio (60:40), and the pause window (60 days). Mains GS-II can ask you to evaluate the move from a demand-driven right to an allocation-based design — its effect on the guarantee's credibility and on Centre-state fiscal relations. Cross-read with our [Government Schemes](#) book for the scheme-design comparison.

2. Bihar Assembly Election 2025 — NDA's Near-Sweep

What it is: Counting on 14 November 2025 gave the NDA 202 of Bihar's 243 Assembly seats — a three-fourths majority. The BJP won 89, the JD(U) 85, the LJP (Ram Vilas) 19, HAM 5 and the RLM 4. The Mahagathbandhan collapsed to 35 seats — the RJD 25 and the Congress 6 — even though the RJD secured the highest single-party vote share at about 23 per cent. Nitish Kumar continued as Chief Minister at the head of the NDA government.

Why it matters: In 2020 the NDA had won only 125 seats against the MGB's 110, so 2025 completely reversed the picture. The result is a live illustration of how first-past-the-post converts votes into seats — the RJD's 23 per cent vote share yielding only 25 seats is the number Mains answers are built on.

Key facts: The majority mark in the 243-member Assembly is 122; the NDA's 202 seats far exceed it. The 2020 tally (NDA 125, MGB 110) is the comparison point examiners will expect you to know. Seat-vote distortion — high vote share, poor seat conversion — is the analytical core of this result.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims loves the data: seat tallies, the majority mark of 122, the 2020-versus-2025 contrast. Mains GS-II can use Bihar to discuss the first-past-the-post system, the role of welfare transfers in recent mandates, and coalition arithmetic in Indian federalism.

3. Five Assembly Elections of May 2026 — Three Governments Change

What it is: Votes were counted on 4 May 2026 across 824 seats in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry. West Bengal gave the BJP 207 of 294 seats — its first government

in the state, ending 15 years of Trinamool Congress rule, with CM Mamata Banerjee losing her Bhabanipur seat to Suwendu Adhikari. In Tamil Nadu, actor Vijay's two-year-old TVK won 108 of 234 seats on debut — the largest party in a hung Assembly — while CM M.K. Stalin lost Kolathur. Kerala returned the Congress-led UDF with about 100 of 140 seats after one term out of power, and the BJP won 3 seats — its first-ever Assembly presence in the state. Assam gave the BJP-led NDA a third straight term (BJP 82 of 126), and Puducherry's NDA retained power (AINRC 16 of 30).

Why it matters: Three state governments changed in a single day, and the results redrew familiar maps: a BJP government in Bengal, a film star's party as the largest bloc in Tamil Nadu, the BJP's Assembly debut in Kerala. For Mains, this round is the textbook case of anti-incumbency and regional-party realignment ahead of the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

Key facts: Memorise the firsts — first BJP government in West Bengal, TVK's debut as the largest party in Tamil Nadu, the BJP's first Kerala Assembly seats. The 824-seat, five-state scale and the 4 May 2026 counting date frame the event. Note the sitting-CM defeats: Mamata Banerjee in Bhabanipur and M.K. Stalin in Kolathur.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the firsts and the tallies; Mains GS-II asks what the results say about anti-incumbency, the durability of regional parties, and the changing geography of national-party expansion.

4. Supreme Court Upholds the SIR of Electoral Rolls

What it is: On 27 May 2026, a bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi upheld the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, first conducted in Bihar. The Court held the exercise is grounded in Article 324 (superintendence, direction and control of elections) read with Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. The Bihar SIR covered about 7.9 crore registered voters; the final roll stood at 7.42 crore electors, with roughly 65 lakh names removed on account of deaths, duplicates and migration.

Why it matters: This is now the authoritative judicial word on large-scale roll revision — its constitutional basis, its limits, and where the ECI's power stops. The Court drew a careful line: the ECI may examine citizenship for electoral-roll purposes but cannot make final citizenship determinations; deletions on non-citizenship grounds must be referred to a competent authority under the Citizenship Act within four weeks.

Key facts: Article 324 plus Section 21(3) of the RP Act, 1950 is the legal foundation — a ready-made Prelims pairing. The numbers: 7.9 crore covered, 7.42 crore final, about 65 lakh names deleted. The citizenship caveat — examine but not determine — is the nuance Mains answers need.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims will test the Article 324 + RP Act Section 21 combination and the SIR's first-state (Bihar). Mains GS-II invites a discussion of the tension between electoral-roll purity, voter rights, and the citizenship question — a balance the Court itself was calibrating.

5. 5. ECI Orders Special Summary Revision in 17 States/UTs

What it is: On 15 October 2026 the Election Commission ordered a Special Summary Revision of electoral rolls in 14 states and 3 Union Territories — including Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat — with 1 January 2027 as the qualifying date. Draft rolls will be published on 12 November 2026, claims and objections taken till 11 December 2026, and final rolls published on 4 January 2027. States where SIR is ongoing or recently completed follow a separate schedule; Himachal Pradesh, J&K and Ladakh schedules were to be announced later.

Why it matters: Coming on top of the SIR, this is the largest roll-preparation exercise ahead of the next general-election cycle. Separately, the ECI reported that SIR had been completed in 20 states/UTs with about 13 crore names deleted, and announced a special enrolment drive for deleted voters on 26 September 2026.

Key facts: The qualifying date — 1 January 2027 — is the Prelims fact. The timeline (draft 12 Nov 2026, objections till 11 Dec 2026, final 4 Jan 2027) shows the statutory rhythm of revision. The 13-crore deletion figure across 20 states/UTs is the scale marker.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the qualifying date and the Section 21, RP Act 1950 basis; Mains GS-II on the politics and integrity questions around large-scale roll revisions — who gets deleted, who gets re-enrolled, and who decides.

6. 6. SC Grants Full Pension to Women Short-Service Officers (Pooja Pal Verdict)

What it is: On 24 March 2026, a bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justices Ujjal Bhuyan and N. Kotiswar Singh decided *Lt. Col. Pooja Pal and Others v. Union of India* (2026 INSC 281). Women Short Service Commission officers in the Army, Navy and Air Force who had been denied Permanent Commission through discriminatory evaluation processes were held entitled to full pensionary benefits. The Court invoked its plenary powers under Article 142 to close the "qualifying service trap" that denied pensions even to officers who had won the right to serve.

Why it matters: The verdict completes a chain: *Babita Puniya* (2020) established the right of women officers to be considered for Permanent Commission, *Lt. Col. Nitisha* (2021) struck at discriminatory criteria, and Pooja Pal now converts the right into pension. For Mains, it is the sharpest recent illustration of Article 142 being used to deliver "complete justice" where the rules themselves created the injustice.

Key facts: The case name and citation — Pooja Pal, 2026 INSC 281, decided 24 March 2026 — are the identifiers. Article 142 is the constitutional hook. The two predecessor cases (*Babita Puniya* 2020, *Nitisha* 2021) form the chain examiners expect you to trace.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on Article 142 and the Babita Puniya–Nitisha–Pooja Pal sequence; Mains GS-II on gender parity in the armed forces and the expanding use of Article 142 for complete justice. For the constitutional provisions behind service matters, see our [Indian Polity: 50 Most Important Articles](#) book.

7. SC Rejects Plea to Keep Medical Services Out of Consumer Law

What it is: On 9 September 2026, a five-judge Constitution bench — Justices Vikram Nath, B.V. Nagarathna, M.M. Sundresh, Prashant Kumar Mishra and K.V. Viswanathan — dismissed the curative petition filed by the Medico Legal Society of India seeking to take medical services out of the Consumer Protection Act's ambit. The ruling leaves intact the 1995 precedent in *Indian Medical Association v. V.P. Shantha* that fee-for-service healthcare is a "service" under consumer law, so patients keep the right to seek redress in consumer commissions.

Why it matters: The bench held the plea failed the *Rupa Ashok Hurra* test — curative petitions are entertained only on violation of natural justice or clear bias. The decision settles, for now, a three-decade tug-of-war between patient rights and the medical profession's demand for immunity from consumer fora.

Key facts: The 1995 IMA v. Shantha precedent is the anchor; the 9 September 2026 Constitution bench refused to disturb it. The *Rupa Ashok Hurra* standard for curative petitions is the procedural fact to memorise. Five judges, one dismissal, thirty years of precedent preserved.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the 1995 precedent and the curative-petition standard; Mains GS-II on patient rights versus medical professional liability — and on when the Court will, and will not, reopen settled law.

Part II: Economy

A budget that changed no tax rates, a GST overhaul eighteen years in the making, three trade deals, and an RBI that cut for a year and then hiked — the economy section this year rewards candidates who understand the logic behind the numbers, not just the numbers themselves.

8. Union Budget 2026–27

What it is: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget on 1 February 2026. It made no changes to personal income-tax slabs or rates under either regime — the new-regime structure continued with nil tax up to ₹4 lakh and 30 per cent above ₹24 lakh, and the Section 87A rebate kept income up to ₹12 lakh (₹12.75 lakh for salaried taxpayers) effectively tax-free. The headline structural move was the new Income Tax Act, 2025 — replacing the 1961 Act — taking effect from 1 April 2026, which the FM described as revenue-neutral, with the revised-return filing window extended to 31 March.

Why it matters: A "no-rate-change" budget built around a brand-new Income Tax Act is unusual, and that is exactly why UPSC will ask about it. The Securities Transaction Tax on derivatives was raised sharply, TCS on overseas education and medical remittances was cut to 2 per cent, and daily penalties were introduced for non-compliance in crypto reporting — each a small window into the government's revenue thinking.

Key facts: The slab figures (nil to ₹4 lakh, 30% above ₹24 lakh) and the 87A rebate threshold (₹12 lakh / ₹12.75 lakh salaried) are the Prelims numbers. The new Income Tax Act's 1 April 2026 commencement date is the institutional fact. The STT hike on derivatives and the 2% TCS cut are the fine-print traps.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the slab figures, the 87A rebate and the STT hike; Mains GS-III on the structural logic of a budget that leaves rates untouched while replacing the entire Income Tax Act. For the fiscal-policy foundations, see our [Indian Economy: 50 Important Topics](#) book.

9. 9. GST 2.0 — Two-Slab Rate Rationalisation

What it is: The 56th GST Council, meeting on 3–4 September 2025 under FM Nirmala Sitharaman, replaced the four slabs (5%, 12%, 18%, 28%) with two main rates — 5 per cent (merit) and 18 per cent (standard) — plus a 40 per cent demerit rate for luxury and sin goods. The new structure took effect on 22 September 2025. Individual life and health insurance were exempted from GST (earlier 18%); UHT milk, paneer, roti/chapati and 33 lifesaving drugs moved to nil. ACs, TVs, dishwashers, small cars, motorcycles up to 350cc and cement moved from 28% to 18%; tobacco stayed under 28% plus compensation cess pending loan clearance.

Why it matters: This is the biggest GST redesign since the tax began in 2017. The Centre estimated the net fiscal impact at about ₹48,000 crore, while states had raised fears of ₹80,000 crore to ₹1.5 lakh crore in revenue loss — the classic fiscal-federalism fault line, now with fresh numbers.

Key facts: 56th Council, 3–4 September 2025; effective 22 September 2025; slabs 5% and 18% plus 40% demerit. The exempted items (insurance, milk, paneer, roti, 33 drugs) and the 28%-to-18% movers (ACs, TVs, small cars, cement) are the list questions. The ₹48,000 crore Centre estimate versus the states' ₹80,000 crore–₹1.5 lakh crore fear is the Mains tension.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the Council number, the two slabs, the 40% rate and the exempted items; Mains GS-III on fiscal federalism, the revenue-neutral-rate debate, and whether rate cuts actually stimulate consumption.

10. 10. India–EU Free Trade Agreement Concluded (Economic Angle)

What it is: On 27 January 2026, at the 16th India–EU Summit in New Delhi, PM Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the conclusion of FTA negotiations. Over 99 per cent of Indian exports gain preferential entry into the EU; India opens 92.1 per cent of its tariff lines while the EU opens 96.8 per cent. Negotiations began in 2007, stalled in 2013, were relaunched in 2022, and took nearly two decades — making the EU India's 22nd FTA partner.

Why it matters: Economically, the deal's design shows India's negotiating red lines in a big-economy agreement: sensitive agriculture and dairy were fully excluded from India's concessions, while the pact carries forward-looking provisions on CBAM engagement and a mobility framework for skilled professionals. Investment protection was deliberately kept out of the FTA and left to a separate Investment Protection Agreement still under negotiation.

Key facts: 27 January 2026, 16th India–EU Summit, New Delhi. The tariff-line figures — India 92.1%, EU 96.8% — and the dairy/agriculture exclusion are the exam numbers. The CBAM-engagement provision links this deal to the EU's carbon border tax, a favourite cross-topic trap.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the date, the summit number, the CBAM link and the excluded dairy sector; Mains GS-III on why India kept services, autos and agriculture carefully guarded even while signing its largest-ever trade deal. The strategic dimension is covered separately in topic 35.

11. 11. India–US Interim Trade Framework (Economic Angle)

What it is: On 6–7 February 2026, after a Trump–Modi phone call, India and the US announced a framework for an interim trade agreement: the US reciprocal tariff on Indian goods was cut from 25% to 18%, and the extra 25% duty linked to India's Russian-oil purchases was removed — down from combined rates that had run as high as 50%. The framework also promises 0% US tariffs on specified items (certain minerals, tea, coffee, spices, processed foods) and preferential treatment for generic pharmaceuticals, gems and aircraft parts. As of 15 October 2026, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said the first tranche was in final legal drafting and would be signed "at the earliest".

Why it matters: The episode compresses three exam themes into one: tariffs as a policy weapon, energy security (the Russian-oil linkage), and the limits of executive tariff power — on 20 February 2026 the US Supreme Court invalidated the reciprocal tariffs, after which the US moved to 10% tariffs on certain products from all countries. India's Commerce Ministry said it was studying the implications.

Key facts: The 18% figure, the Russian-oil tariff linkage, and the US Supreme Court ruling of 20 February 2026 are the three Prelims anchors. The 0%-tariff items (minerals, tea, coffee, spices) and the pharma/gems preference are the detail questions.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the 18% rate and the 20 February 2026 court ruling; Mains GS-II/ GS-III on trade as a strategic lever and the energy-security dimension of the Russian-oil linkage. The strategic angle is covered separately in topic 34.

12. 12. India–New Zealand FTA Enters Into Force

What it is: Signed on 27 April 2026 in New Delhi by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and NZ Trade Minister Todd McClay, the agreement entered into force on 20 October 2026 — India's 17th operational FTA. All New Zealand tariff lines on Indian goods went duty-free from day one; India opens about 70% of its tariff lines, excluding sensitive dairy, meat, sugar and edible oils. New Zealand committed USD 20 billion of investment facilitation into India over 15 years, and the pact covers services across roughly 118 sectors.

Why it matters: The mobility provisions make this deal distinctive: 5,000 Temporary Employment Entry visas for skilled Indian workers, 1,000 Working Holiday visas annually, and up to three-year post-study work rights for STEM graduates. Dairy exclusion appears again — the recurring red line in Indian trade deals, worth comparing with the EU FTA.

Key facts: 20 October 2026 entry into force; \$20 billion investment commitment; the visa numbers (5,000 / 1,000 / 3-year STEM). The dairy, meat, sugar and edible-oil exclusions are the protection-list question.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the entry-into-force date, the \$20 billion clause and the visa numbers; Mains GS-III on dairy exclusion as a structural feature of Indian trade policy across agreements.

13. RBI Monetary Policy — From 125 bps of Cuts to a 5.50% Hike

What it is: Between February 2025 and March 2026 the RBI cut the repo rate by a cumulative 125 basis points (to 5.25%), and banks passed on 93 bps of it in fresh-lending rates, per the October 2026 RBI Bulletin. Then, on 7 October 2026, the Monetary Policy Committee unanimously raised the repo rate by 25 bps to 5.50% — the first hike since February 2023 — and shifted the stance from neutral to "calibrated tightening". The RBI raised its FY27 CPI forecast to 5.2% (from 5%) and its FY27 GDP forecast to 7.1% (from 6.7%), projecting inflation to peak near 6% in the December quarter.

Why it matters: A central bank that tightens while raising its growth forecast is telling you something: Governor Sanjay Malhotra cited higher crude prices, uneven weather, rising input costs and rupee pressure as the risks. For Mains, this is the cleanest recent case of the inflation-targeting framework (FIT) in action — price stability taking precedence even with growth running strong.

Key facts: The repo path — 125 bps of cuts to 5.25%, then a 25-bp hike to 5.50% on 7 October 2026 — is the sequence to memorise. The stance vocabulary ("calibrated tightening") and the twin forecast revisions (CPI 5.2%, GDP 7.1%) are the detail questions.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the repo path, the stance language and the FIT framework; Mains GS-III on why the RBI tightened even while raising the growth forecast — the inflation-versus-growth trade-off in real time.

14. Growth, Inflation and External Balances in 2026

What it is: Real GDP grew 7.8% in Q1 of FY2026-27, and the RBI projects 7.1% for the full year FY27 (Q2 7.2%, Q3 6.9%, Q4 6.8%). CPI inflation ran at 4.82% in August 2026 — above the 4% target — while WPI surged to a series high of 11.39% in September 2026. Forex reserves hit a record USD 785.706 billion in the week ended 4 September 2026, then fell to about USD 726 billion by 9 October 2026 as the RBI defended the rupee; gold's share in reserves tripled from 6.67% (2019) to 17.1% (August 2026). The rupee traded around ₹94–96 per US dollar in October 2026, under pressure from crude above USD 100 a barrel and West Asia tensions.

Why it matters: The CPI-versus-WPI divergence (4.82% against 11.39%) is exactly the kind of data contrast Prelims loves, and the reserves story — a record high followed by active defence of the currency — shows the RBI's exchange-rate management in practice.

Key facts: 7.8% Q1 growth, the CPI/WPI split, the USD 785.706 billion reserves record, gold's rise to 17.1% of reserves, and the ₹94–96 rupee band. The crude-above-\$100 driver links the currency story to geopolitics.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the 7.8% figure, the CPI vs WPI divergence and the record reserves number; Mains GS-III on the policy trilemma — controlling inflation, sustaining growth and defending the currency at the same time.

Part III: Environment & Ecology

Climate negotiations, wetland records, tiger counts, new frogs, a brutal monsoon, a clean-energy milestone and Delhi's winter air — environment is the section where Prelims asks the most list-type questions, so read it with a notebook open.

15. 15. COP30 Belém 2025 — The "Global Mutirão"

What it is: COP30, the 30th UNFCCC Conference of the Parties, was held in Belém, Brazil from 10 to 21 November 2025; negotiations overran and closed on 22 November. The key negotiated outcome was the "Global Mutirão" decision text — *mutirão* is a Portuguese word of Tupi-Guarani origin meaning collective effort — which reaffirmed Paris Agreement goals and acknowledged that the remaining 1.5 °C carbon budget is "small and rapidly depleted".

Why it matters: The final text contained NO reference to fossil fuels or their phase-out: a proposal backed by 80+ countries for a roadmap to "transition away from fossil fuels" failed against opposition from major fossil-fuel producers, and the presidency instead promised two roadmaps (fossil-fuel transition, reversing deforestation) outside the formal UN process. For Mains, COP30 is the case study of how consensus diplomacy produces strong language on everything except the cause.

Key facts: Belém, Brazil; 10–21 November 2025 (closed 22 November). The *mutirão* meaning, the missing fossil-fuel language, the tripling of adaptation finance by 2035, the 59 voluntary indicators for the Global Goal on Adaptation, and the just-transition mechanism are the fact bank. It was also the first COP in 30 years with no formal US federal representation; the finance text kept COP29's \$300 billion annual goal for emerging economies on track.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims loves COP venue-outcome pairs — ask what was missing (fossil-fuel language), what *mutirão* means, and the adaptation-finance tripling target year (2035). For the climate-science foundations, see our [Indian Environment: 50 Important Topics](#) book.

16. 16. India's Ramsar Network Reaches 103 Sites

What it is: On 15 October 2026, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav announced two additions: Sukhna Wetland in Chandigarh (Ramsar Site No. 2602) and Sauj Jheel in Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh (No. 2603), taking India's tally to 103. Sukhna, an urban reservoir at the foot of the Outer

Himalayas, is Chandigarh's first Ramsar site; Sauj Jheel in the Ganga floodplain regularly supports over 30,000 waterbirds including the sarus crane and the greater spotted eagle.

Why it matters: India now ranks 3rd globally by Ramsar count, and the 2025–26 additions follow a clear Prelims pattern — "first Ramsar site of the state/UT": Chandigarh, Arunachal Pradesh (Glaw Lake, August 2026), and others all got their first sites in this window. Earlier in the period, Patna Bird Sanctuary (Etah, UP) and Chhari-Dhand (Kutch, Gujarat) were added in January 2026 (tally 98); the Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary (Surha Tal, Ballia, UP) was announced as the 100th site by the PM on World Environment Day, 5 June 2026; Shekha Jheel (Aligarh, UP) was added in April 2026.

Key facts: 103 sites as of 15 October 2026; Sukhna (Chandigarh's first, No. 2602), Sauj Jheel (No. 2603). The 100th-site announcement on 5 June 2026 is the landmark. India's 98+ sites cover about 1.36 million hectares; India joined the Ramsar Convention on 1 February 1982.

How UPSC tests it: Match the site to the state and the year of designation; the "first site of the state/UT" framing is the recurring trap. Keep a running list — new sites are announced almost every quarter.

17. Tiger Reserves at 58; Similipal Becomes 107th National Park

What it is: Madhav National Park (Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh) was notified as India's 58th tiger reserve in early 2026; MP now has 9 tiger reserves, the most of any state. In April 2025 the Odisha government notified 845.70 sq km of Similipal Tiger Reserve (Mayurbhanj district) as India's 107th National Park — Odisha's second after Bhitarkanika — home to the world's only wild pseudo-melanistic (black) tigers.

Why it matters: The fifth All India Tiger Estimation (AITE 2026) is underway, run by NTCA and the Wildlife Institute of India across 400,000+ sq km and 20+ states, using AI-assisted camera traps and stripe recognition; the last estimate (2022) counted 3,682 tigers (range 3,167–3,925), with the report expected in 2027. Separately, NTCA confirmed a tiger in Ratanmahal Sanctuary (Dahod), reinstating Gujarat as a tiger state after 33 years. Under Project Cheetah, nine cheetahs arrived from Botswana in February 2026, and on 5 October 2026 five cubs born to India-born female KJP21 at Kuno National Park took India's cheetah count to 60, including 41 Indian-born, with a new Botswanan genetic lineage.

Key facts: 58 tiger reserves (newest: Madhav, MP); 107 national parks (newest: Similipal, Odisha's second); MP leads with 9 reserves. The AITE 2026 methodology (AI camera traps, stripe recognition) and the 2022 baseline (3,682) are the Mains material. Gujarat's return after 33 years and the cheetah count of 60 are the headline facts.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims asks the counts (58 reserves, 107 parks) and the newest addition; Mains can use the AITE methodology and the cheetah reintroduction as conservation-governance case studies.

18. 18. New Species Discoveries in India (2025–26)

What it is: Five newly described species headline this year's taxonomy news. *Amolops kamal*, a new cascade frog, was discovered by the Zoological Survey of India (Shillong) near Singrep village, Kiphire district, Nagaland, announced 29 May 2026. *Limnonectes motijheel*, a mud-nesting "fanged frog" named after Motijheel wetland in Namdapha Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh, was identified by a Wildlife Institute of India team (published April 2026) — India's sixth *Limnonectes* species. *Gegeneophis chandgadi*, a new legless amphibian (caecilian) from the Kolhapur region of the northern Western Ghats, was described by ZSI (Pune), SPPU and the Mhadei Research Centre — the 12th *Gegeneophis* species, 11 of them Western Ghats endemics. *Sphaerotheca bengaluru*, a new burrowing frog named after the city, was described from the Deccan Plateau of Karnataka. *Sitana dharwarensis*, a new fan-throated lizard named after the Dharwar craton, was found in the barren lands of Bagalkot district, Karnataka.

Why it matters: New-species announcements are a Prelims staple, and the pattern is geographic: the Northeast and the Western Ghats dominate, with the Deccan Plateau now emerging as an under-surveyed frontier. The institutional credits (ZSI, WII) matter as much as the species names.

Key facts: Match species to taxa — cascade frog (Nagaland), fanged frog (Arunachal), caecilian (Western Ghats), burrowing frog (Bengaluru/Deccan), fan-throated lizard (Bagalkot). The discovering institutions (ZSI Shillong/Pune, WII) are the second half of every question.

How UPSC tests it: Match the species to the state and the taxonomic group; expect one question pairing the species with its describing institution.

19. 19. 2026 Monsoon Extremes — And the WMO's Global Verdict

What it is: Repeated extreme monsoon spells battered the Himalayan belt from July to October 2026. Punjab reported at least 30 deaths and over 300,000 affected residents, with crop destruction across rice, wheat and maize fields; the state declared the floods a natural calamity. In Bihar, more than 3.4 million people across 13 districts were affected in early September 2026, and the Ganga exceeded its previous highest flood level at Gandhi Ghat and Pandarak in Patna. The Yamuna crossed the danger mark in Delhi; cloudbursts hit a dozen villages in Uttarkashi (Uttarakhand); a Kottapuzha River flash flood in Malappuram, Kerala (22 September 2026) killed six; a Mizoram landslide (12 September 2026) killed a 14-year-old boy.

Why it matters: The WMO's *State of the Global Climate 2025*, released on World Meteorological Day (23 March 2026), gives these disasters their planetary frame: 2025 was the 2nd or 3rd warmest year on record and the 11th of the 11 hottest years in a row; atmospheric CO₂ breached 428 ppm in May 2026 (about 50% above pre-industrial levels); ocean heat content reached a record high; sea-level rise averaged 4.75 mm/year during 2012–2025 against 2.65 mm/year during 1993–2011; and glacier mass loss in 2024/25 was among the five worst on record.

Key facts: The WMO headline numbers — 428 ppm CO₂, 11 hottest years in a row, the two sea-level rates — are the Prelims bank. The Indian disaster details (Punjab's 300,000 affected, Bihar's 3.4 million, the Ganga's record at Patna) are the Mains evidence.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the WMO numbers; Mains GS-III on climate attribution of Himalayan flood disasters and the adaptation gap — why early warnings still do not prevent mass displacement.

20. India Crosses 300 GW of Non-Fossil Power Capacity

What it is: As of 31 July 2026, India had 300.50 GW of non-fossil fuel installed electricity capacity — over 60% of the 500 GW target for 2030 — according to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. The break-up: solar 164.59 GW, wind 58.14 GW, hydro (large + small) 57.24 GW, bio-power 11.75 GW, nuclear 8.78 GW. Non-fossil sources now exceed 54% of India's roughly 552 GW total installed capacity.

Why it matters: The trajectory is the story: solar grew from just 2.8 GW in 2014 to about 165 GW, and during 2025–26 India added a record 55.29 GW of non-fossil capacity (44.6 GW solar plus ~6 GW wind). Renewable electricity generation rose from 190.96 billion units (2014–15) to 477.79 billion units (2025–26). For Mains, the next bottleneck is the exam theme — grid integration, curtailment and storage.

Key facts: Memorise the 31 July 2026 break-up and the 2030 target of 500 GW. The solar journey (2.8 GW in 2014 → ~165 GW) and the record 55.29 GW addition in 2025–26 are the narrative numbers.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the capacity figures and the 2030 target; Mains GS-III on the integration challenge — what happens when intermittent solar must be absorbed by a coal-anchored grid.

21. Delhi's Proactive Winter Action Plan 2026–27 and GRAP-I

What it is: Delhi notified a Proactive Winter Air Quality Management Framework under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 on 19 June 2026 — and unlike past years, curbs start on fixed dates (1 November to 28 February) instead of waiting for the AQI to crash. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced the Winter Action Plan 2026–27 on 20 October 2026: "No PUCC, No Fuel" at pumps from 1 October (ANPR cameras), non-BS-VI vehicles registered outside Delhi barred from 1 November 2026 to 31 January 2027, doubled parking fees, 50% work-from-home for offices, staggered office timings, and 608 anti-smog guns plus 1,150 mist units. CAQM revised GRAP at its 30th meeting on 28 September 2026 to 48 actions (Stage I 25, II 8, III 10, IV 5); diesel-genset curbs and older-bus entry rules moved from Stage II to Stage I. GRAP-I was triggered on 21 October 2026 after AQI hit 244 ("poor") post-Dussehra; a full construction-and-demolition ban is planned from 10 December 2026 to 20 January 2027.

Why it matters: The shift from reactive to fixed-date enforcement is a governance innovation worth a Mains paragraph: the state no longer waits for the emergency before acting. The GRAP revision — moving curbs to earlier stages — shows the same preventive logic.

Key facts: The GRAP stages and AQI bands — I: 201–300, II: 301–400, III: 401–450, IV: 450+ — are the classic Prelims table. The fixed-date framework (1 Nov–28 Feb) and the 21 October 2026 GRAP-I trigger (AQI 244) are the current-affairs anchors.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the GRAP stages and AQI bands; Mains on why a fixed-date framework changes the enforcement logic — and whether prevention can succeed where reaction failed.

Part IV: Science & Technology

An Indian on the ISS, Gaganyaan's final tests, a Venus orbiter, 45,000 GPUs, a hypersonic missile reveal, two vaccine milestones, data-protection rules and a chip mission moving to fabrication — science and tech is where this year's paper will feel the newest.

22. 22. Shubhanshu Shukla: First Indian on the ISS; Ashok Chakra

What it is: On 25 June 2025, Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla launched aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9/Crew Dragon "Grace" from Kennedy Space Center as pilot of Axiom Mission 4, becoming the first Indian to work aboard the International Space Station and only the second Indian in space after Rakesh Sharma (1984). During the roughly 18-day stay he conducted 60+ experiments alongside astronauts from the US, Poland and Hungary — including Indian experiments on cardiovascular health, protein crystal growth, micro-algae and materials science — feeding directly into Gaganyaan preparations. On the eve of Republic Day 2026 (25 January 2026) he was announced as an Ashok Chakra recipient — India's highest peacetime gallantry award — the first astronaut to receive it.

Why it matters: Axiom-4 is India's entry into commercial human spaceflight, and the mission doubled as a Gaganyaan rehearsal in orbit. The Ashok Chakra — a peacetime gallantry award going to an astronaut — signals how the state now frames space achievement.

Key facts: Mission name Axiom-4, launch 25 June 2025, ~18 days, 60+ experiments, Ashok Chakra announced 25 January 2026. The Rakesh Sharma (1984) comparison is the framing every question will use.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the mission name, date and award; Mains on commercial spaceflight and India's private-space policy turn. For the space-programme foundations, see our [Science & Technology: 50 Important Topics](#) book.

23. 23. Gaganyaan: Uncrewed G1 Targeted for End-2026; Key Safety Tests Cleared

What it is: ISRO cleared three Gaganyaan crew-module tests — splashdown, separation, and parachute-phase integrity — on 7 July 2026 at ADRDE, Sheopur (MP), qualifying milestones for human-rated flight. The first uncrewed flight, Gaganyaan-1 (G1), will carry the half-humanoid robot Vyommitra to validate life-support and cabin systems; ISRO is targeting end-2026 but has

announced no firm launch date. The crewed mission follows in 2027–28 after the uncrewed missions succeed.

Why it matters: G1 was originally scheduled for Q1 2026 and slipped after the PSLV-C62 failure; over 8,000 ground tests have been completed and the mission is reported about 90% complete. Success will make India the fourth nation to independently launch humans into orbit (after the USSR/Russia, USA and China), on a human-rated LVM3 (HLVM3) targeting roughly 400 km low-Earth orbit.

Key facts: Vyommitra (the half-humanoid robot), HLVM3, 400 km LEO, the 7 July 2026 Sheopur tests. The "fourth nation" milestone and the 2027–28 crewed window are the framing facts.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on Vyommitra, HLVM3 and the orbit; Mains on human-rating discipline — why ISRO sequences uncrewed test flights before putting crew aboard.

24. 24. ISRO's Deep-Space Pipeline: Chandrayaan-4, LUPEX, Shukrayaan, Space Station

What it is: Chandrayaan-4, a lunar sample-return mission (transfer, lander, ascender and re-entry modules; up to about 3 kg of regolith), is scheduled for October 2027 and will use two LVM3 rockets rather than the earlier planned semi-cryogenic upgrade. Chandrayaan-5 (LUPEX), a joint ISRO–JAXA lunar polar mission, is planned for September 2028. Shukrayaan-1, India's first Venus orbiter, is targeted for March 2028 (a 29 March 2028 date is cited) to study Venus's atmosphere, geology and volcanic activity — Venus offers an optimal launch window roughly every 19 months. The first module of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS-01) is planned by 2028, the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV) by September 2031, and a third launch pad at Sriharikota by 2029/30.

Why it matters: This is the densest mission calendar ISRO has ever announced — sample return, a joint polar mission, a Venus orbiter and a space station within five years. For the exam, the value is in the pairings: mission to objective, partner and year.

Key facts: Chandrayaan-4 (Oct 2027, sample return, two LVM3s); LUPEX/Chandrayaan-5 (Sep 2028, JAXA partner); Shukrayaan-1 (Mar 2028, Venus); BAS-01 (2028); NGLV (Sep 2031); third launch pad (2029/30).

How UPSC tests it: Match the mission to its objective, partner and year — LUPEX equals JAXA, Shukrayaan equals Venus, Chandrayaan-4 equals sample return.

25. 25. IndiaAI Mission: 45,000+ GPUs, 20 Foundation-Model Proposals, ITU AI Pilot

What it is: By June 2026 the IndiaAI Mission had 45,000+ GPUs empanelled under its compute portal, against an original target of 10,000+; the mission was approved in March 2024 with a five-year outlay of ₹10,371.92 crore. The government selected 20 indigenous foundation-model proposals for support (12 large multimodal models plus 8 small language models); in the Lok Sabha (August 2026) it disclosed 93.18 lakh GPU hours sanctioned across 237 approved projects and 15 empanelled compute providers. AIKosh, the mission's open data-and-models platform, hosts 14,000+ datasets and 331 models; the India AI Impact Summit 2026 announced a plan to

add 20,000 more GPUs. On 9 October 2026, at India Mobile Congress 2026, Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurated the DoT-ITU "AI for Good Lab Workshop", with India joining as one of ten ITU pilot countries bridging the AI divide for the Global South.

Why it matters: Sovereign compute — GPUs the country controls — is now treated as strategic infrastructure, like spectrum or satellites. For Mains, the mission links three themes: digital public infrastructure, the AI divide for the Global South, and India's attempt to build foundation models rather than only consume them.

Key facts: The outlay (₹10,371.92 crore), the GPU numbers (45,000+ empanelled, 20,000 more planned), AIKosh (14,000+ datasets, 331 models), and the 9 October 2026 ITU pilot are the fact bank.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the outlay, GPU figures and AIKosh; Mains on sovereign compute, DPI, and what bridging the AI divide means for the Global South.

26. Defence Technology: LR-AShM Hypersonic Missile; Agni MIRV; Scramjet

What it is: DRDO's Long Range Anti-Ship Hypersonic Missile (LR-AShM) was publicly unveiled at the 77th Republic Day Parade on 26 January 2026 at Kartavya Path, New Delhi, with its mobile launcher. India conducted the second flight test of LR-AShM off the Odisha coast in early May 2026 (reported 1–2 May): a two-stage hypersonic glide missile with over 1,500 km range, initial bursts around Mach 10 and a Mach-5 average glide, built for anti-ship and carrier strikes. On 6 February 2026 the Strategic Forces Command test-fired the nuclear-capable Agni-3 (over 3,000 km, two-stage solid) from a mobile launcher at Chandipur, Odisha, in a routine training launch. On 8 May 2026 the Defence Ministry announced a flight trial of an Advanced Agni missile with MIRV (Multiple Independently Targeted Re-entry Vehicles) from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island; on 9 May 2026, DRDL Hyderabad ran a 20-minute-plus ground test of an actively cooled full-scale scramjet combustor.

Why it matters: Hypersonic means Mach 5+ with a manoeuvrable glide phase — hard to intercept, and now on public display. The MIRV trial and the scramjet combustor test show the programme moving from demonstration to engineering depth.

Key facts: LR-AShM unveiled 26 January 2026 (Republic Day Parade), second test 1–2 May 2026, >1,500 km range; Agni-3 test 6 February 2026 (Chandipur); MIRV trial 8 May 2026; scramjet ground test 9 May 2026 (DRDL Hyderabad). Match the missile to range, agency and date.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on missile-range-agency-date pairings and the hypersonic definition (Mach 5+, manoeuvrable glide); Mains GS-III on what hypersonic capability changes in deterrence math.

27. Health: National HPV Vaccination Campaign; India's First Dengue Vaccine

What it is: On 28 February 2026 the PM launched the national HPV Vaccination Programme at Ajmer, Rajasthan — free, voluntary, single-dose Gardasil-4 for roughly 1.2 crore 14-year-old girls annually (RGI 2021 estimate), tracked through the U-WIN portal, eight years after NTAGI first recommended it. By 11 September 2026 India had administered over 80 lakh HPV doses: Gujarat,

Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram reached 100% of their target cohorts, UP alone gave over 22 lakh doses, and Delhi stood at about 20%. On 20 July 2026 the DCGI granted market authorisation to Takeda's QDENGGA — India's first dengue vaccine — for ages 4–60, with no prior-exposure testing needed and two subcutaneous doses three months apart; approval drew on 19 global trials (28,000+ participants) plus the Indian Phase III DEN-302 trial.

Why it matters: Cervical cancer is one of India's most preventable cancer burdens, and dengue accounts for nearly one-third of the global burden, with 113,000+ reported cases in 2025. Takeda partnered with Biological E in 2024 for Indian manufacturing (planned 50 million doses a year) — the manufacturing story behind the medical one.

Key facts: HPV — target age 14, single dose, U-WIN tracking, launched 28 February 2026 at Ajmer. QDENGGA — tetravalent live-attenuated, ages 4–60, two doses three months apart, authorised 20 July 2026. The 80-lakh-doses figure (11 September 2026) and the state toppers are the progress markers.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the HPV target age, single dose and U-WIN, and QDENGGA's 4–60 age band; Mains on cervical-cancer prevention strategy and India's vaccine manufacturing capacity.

28. Digital Policy: DPDP Rules, 2025 Notified; Phased Enforcement Begins

What it is: MeitY notified the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025 on 13 November 2025 (G.S.R. 846(E)), after draft consultations across seven cities drew 6,915 inputs; the DPDP Act itself passed in August 2023 but sat unenforceable without rules. Enforcement runs in three phases: Phase 1 (13 November 2025) — Board constitution provisions take effect; Phase 2 (November 2026) — Consent Manager registration under Rule 4 opens and the Board gains inquiry and penalty powers; Phase 3 (13 May 2027) — full compliance of all Data Fiduciary obligations, with penalties up to ₹250 crore per violation. On 6 May 2026 MeitY invited applications for the Chairperson and four Members of the Data Protection Board of India; as of August 2026 no appointments had been announced — the Board exists in law but was not yet seated. Phase 2 restricts registered Consent Managers to India-incorporated entities with ₹2 crore minimum net worth.

Why it matters: India now has a data-protection law with teeth (₹250 crore per violation) but a Board that is still unseated — the gap between law and institution is the Mains theme. The phased rollout is itself an exam topic: which obligations bite when.

Key facts: Notification date 13 November 2025; the three phase dates (Nov 2025, Nov 2026, 13 May 2027); the ₹250 crore penalty ceiling; the unseated Board (applications invited 6 May 2026).

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the notification date, the phase dates and the penalty figure; Mains GS-II on balancing privacy rights, state exemptions and industry compliance — rights on paper versus enforcement in practice.

29. 29. Semicon 2.0 — India's Chip Mission Moves From Packaging to Fabrication

What it is: On 15 July 2026 the Union Cabinet approved Semicon 2.0, the second phase of the India Semiconductor Mission, with an outlay of ₹1,27,500 crore across six pillars: chip design, machines and materials, fabs, ATMP/OSAT packaging, R&D, and talent. By September 2026 five units were in commercial production — Micron (Sanand, from 28 February 2026), Kaynes Semicon (31 March 2026), CG Semi (4 July 2026), CDIL (Mohali) and Suchi Semicon (Surat) — all assembly, test and packaging plants; none is a wafer fab yet. Tata Electronics' ₹91,526 crore Dholera fab with Taiwan's PSMC — India's first commercial silicon foundry, 50,000 wafers a month at 28–110 nm — targets first silicon in late 2026, with full commercial production now guided for mid-2028.

Why it matters: About 10–12 manufacturing units worth a cumulative ~₹1.64 lakh crore have been approved, and India holds nearly 20% of the world's chip-design workforce. The packaging-first sequencing is deliberate: build the ecosystem and the talent pipeline before attempting the fab — the hardest manufacturing on earth.

Key facts: Semicon 2.0 — 15 July 2026, ₹1,27,500 crore, six pillars. Dholera fab — ₹91,526 crore, PSMC partner, 50,000 wafers/month, 28–110 nm, first silicon late 2026, full production mid-2028. The fab-versus-OSAT distinction is the conceptual question.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the date, outlay, six pillars and the Dholera figures; Mains GS-III on why chips are strategic (supply-chain security) and what a packaging-first sequencing buys India.

Part V: International Relations

Three summits hosted across three continents, a Quad leaders' meeting that never happened, two trade deals with strategic weight, and a neighbourhood being reset — IR this year is about reading India's positioning between blocs, not memorising communiqués.

30. 30. G20 Leaders' Summit, Johannesburg (November 2025)

What it is: The 20th G20 Leaders' Summit was held on 22–23 November 2025 in Johannesburg — the first G20 summit hosted on African soil — under South Africa's theme "Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability". PM Narendra Modi attended and spoke in all three sessions; leaders adopted a 122-point Joint Declaration centred on development, climate goals and multilateral reform, despite a US boycott. On the sidelines, India pushed strong counter-terrorism language and held the IBSA Leaders' Meeting with Brazil and South Africa; Modi met Australian PM Anthony Albanese and Italian PM Giorgia Meloni.

Why it matters: India and Italy adopted the India-Italy Joint Initiative to Counter Financing of Terrorism and reviewed progress on the Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025–29; Meloni backed India's AI Summit planned for 2026. For Mains, India's counter-terrorism push at a development-themed summit shows how New Delhi uses multilateral tables for its security agenda.

Key facts: 22–23 November 2025, Johannesburg, first African host, theme "Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability", 122-point declaration. The IBSA meeting and the India-Italy counter-terror financing initiative are the bilateral takeaways.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the theme, the venue (first African host) and the declaration's headline areas; Mains GS-II linking India's counter-terrorism advocacy to its Global South leadership pitch.

31. 31. 18th BRICS Summit, New Delhi (September 2026) — India's 2026 Chairship

What it is: India, as BRICS Chair in 2026, hosted the 18th BRICS Summit on 12–13 September 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability". India assumed its fourth BRICS chairship on 1 January 2026 (after 2012, 2016 and 2021); 2026 marked 20 years since BRICS was established. Over 350 meetings across 25+ Indian cities and about 25 ministerial-level engagements were held in the run-up. Member leaders present included South African President Cyril Ramaphosa (at PM Modi's invitation); the full members are Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Why it matters: India's chairship initiatives show where New Delhi wants BRICS to go: the BRICS Incubator Network and BRICS Startup Innovation Fund, the BRICS Digital Centre of Excellence for Smart Grids and Energy Storage, the BRICS CONNECT platform, and the Jaipur Consensus and Guiding Principles for MSME credit. For Mains, the summit is the anchor for discussing BRICS expansion and India's Global South strategy.

Key facts: 12–13 September 2026, Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi; India's fourth chairship; theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability"; BRICS founded 2006 (20 years in 2026). The 11 full members and the Indian initiatives (Incubator Network, Digital Centre of Excellence, BRICS CONNECT) are the list questions.

How UPSC tests it: High-probability Prelims facts — the summit's dates and venue, the chairship year, the theme, the founding year (2006); Mains GS-II on BRICS expansion and what India gains from leading it. For the full grouping-by-grouping treatment, see our [International Relations: 50 Important Topics](#) book.

32. 32. SCO Summit, Tianjin (August–September 2025)

What it is: The 25th SCO Heads of State Council summit — the largest in SCO's history, with over 20 leaders and 10 international organisations — was held on 31 August–1 September 2025 in Tianjin, China. PM Modi's visit was his first bilateral visit to China in seven years, signalling a thaw after the 2020 Galwan clashes; in a bilateral with President Xi Jinping, both sides agreed on restoring normalcy, resuming direct flights, and reopening the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra. Modi also held a bilateral with Russian President Vladimir Putin, discussing trade, defence cooperation and preparations for Putin's India visit in December 2025.

Why it matters: In his plenary address, Modi presented the SCO as a forum for "Security, Connectivity, and Opportunity", demanded zero tolerance on terrorism and an end to double

standards, and proposed joint work on cyber-terrorism, radicalisation and terror financing. For Mains, the summit shows the SCO functioning as India's platform for engaging China and Russia even while US tariffs were straining other relationships.

Key facts: 25th edition, 31 August–1 September 2025, Tianjin; Modi's first bilateral China visit in seven years; the "Security, Connectivity, and Opportunity" framing. The SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is headquartered in Tashkent — the institutional pairing examiners love.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the venue, edition and the RATS HQ (Tashkent); Mains GS-II on the SCO as a venue for India-China-Russia engagement amid a tariff-strained global order.

33. 33. Quad: The Missing Leaders' Summit and the Road to Manila (2025–2026)

What it is: India was due to host the Quad leaders' summit in 2025, but it never took place — the meeting was deferred amid India-US strains over tariffs, Russian-oil sanctions and visa restrictions; the last leaders' summit was in Wilmington, USA, in September 2024. Quad foreign ministers continued meeting: the 26 May 2026 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi (Jaishankar, Rubio, Wong, Motegi) launched the Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration and a roughly US\$20 billion Critical Minerals Initiative framework. EAM Jaishankar said at the Munich Security Conference (February 2026) that the summit was "never cancelled" and "never specifically scheduled", stressing that Quad cooperation continued at other levels. On 20 October 2026, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced on CNN-News18 that Quad leaders would meet in Manila on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit (16–18 November 2026), with exact dates still to be fixed; Quad foreign ministers were reported to meet in Atlanta on 30–31 October to prepare.

Why it matters: The episode is a live demonstration of strategic autonomy under pressure: the leaders' table went quiet while the working level kept producing — maritime surveillance, critical minerals. Note the sourcing carefully: the Manila announcement comes via secondary outlets rather than the major dailies, so treat the details as announced/reported rather than settled.

Key facts: No Quad leaders' summit was held in 2025 or 2026 (up to October) — the Prelims trap. The New Delhi May 2026 meeting was a Foreign Ministers' Meeting, not a leaders' summit. The Manila plan was announced (not confirmed) for the ASEAN sidelines, 16–18 November 2026.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims will test the distinction — leaders' summit versus foreign ministers' meeting — and the "missing summit" fact; Mains GS-II on balancing Quad, BRICS and SCO as strategic autonomy in practice.

34. 34. India-US Interim Trade Deal, February 2026 (Strategic Angle)

What it is: On 2 February 2026, after a phone call between Donald Trump and PM Modi, Trump announced on Truth Social an interim India-US trade deal: the US would cut its reciprocal tariff on Indian goods from 25% to 18%, effective immediately. The 25% rate was part of up to 50% total duties imposed in August 2025 — 25% reciprocal plus a 25% punitive levy over India's Russian oil purchases. Modi had publicly called farm, dairy and small-business interests "non-negotiable red lines". Trump claimed India would stop buying Russian oil, purchase over \$500 billion of US

energy, technology and agricultural goods, and cut its own tariffs; Modi confirmed the lower US tariff on X but did not explicitly confirm the Russian-oil commitment — and India continued importing roughly 1.5 million barrels per day of Russian crude months later. In late February 2026, the US Supreme Court ruled against Trump's use of certain emergency tariff powers, a decision analysts said limited Washington's tools to enforce the tariff threats.

Why it matters: Strategically, the deal shows trade being used as a lever on energy policy and alliance behaviour — and its limits, when the other side keeps buying Russian oil anyway and a court curbs the tariff weapon. For Mains, this is the richest recent case of trade-versus-energy-security and of strategic autonomy under coercive pressure.

Key facts: 2 February 2026 announcement; the 25%-to-18% cut; the \$500 billion purchase pledge (Trump's claim); the ~1.5 million barrels/day of continued Russian imports; the late-February 2026 US Supreme Court ruling. The economic mechanics are covered in topic 11 — this topic is about what the deal reveals strategically.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the 18% rate, the announcement date and the \$500 billion figure; Mains GS-II/GS-III on how US tariff policy intersects with India's strategic autonomy and energy security.

35. India–EU Free Trade Agreement, January 2026 (Strategic Angle)

What it is: On 27 January 2026, at the 16th India–EU Summit in New Delhi, PM Modi, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa announced the conclusion of FTA negotiations; von der Leyen called it the "mother of all deals". The deal covers roughly 2 billion people and about 25% of the global economy — the largest trade agreement India has ever concluded. The EU opens 96.8% of its tariff lines while India opens 92.1%; the EU phases out tariffs on most Indian goods over seven years, India over ten years; a mobility and migration partnership for Indian students and skilled workers was signed the same day. Next steps: on 11 September 2026 the European Commission proposed signing and conclusion to the Council, with formal signature reportedly scheduled for December 2026, and the 2030 Joint India–EU Comprehensive Strategic Agenda was endorsed.

Why it matters: Strategically, the FTA is economic diversification made concrete — reducing dependence on any single partner at a moment of US tariff volatility and China supply-chain risk. The tariff-line asymmetry (96.8% vs 92.1%) and the phase-out timelines (7 vs 10 years) show how India buys adjustment time even in its most ambitious deal.

Key facts: "Mother of all deals" (von der Leyen); 2 billion people, ~25% of global GDP; the 7-year/10-year phase-outs; the December 2026 signature schedule (reported); the 2030 Comprehensive Strategic Agenda. The economic design is covered in topic 10 — this topic is about the strategic positioning.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the dates, the 16th summit, the quote and the tariff-line figures; Mains GS-II/GS-III on the FTA as diversification away from US-China dependence.

36. 36. Global Conflicts and Neighbourhood Reset (Gaza, China, Maldives)

What it is: A Gaza ceasefire and peace agreement was signed at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit on 13 October 2025, co-hosted by US President Trump and Egypt's President Sisi; India was represented by MoS for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh as the PM's special representative. India welcomed the agreement, thanked the US, Egypt and Qatar, and at the UN Security Council debate (24 October 2025) reaffirmed through PR Parvathaneni Harish its support for the two-state solution, the release of all hostages, uninterrupted humanitarian aid, and opposition to unilateral moves. On China, the 2025 thaw included the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra resuming on 30 June 2025 after a five-year suspension (five 50-pilgrim batches via Lipulekh and Nathu La), expanded to 20 batches in 2026; an India–China Strategic Dialogue between Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Executive Vice Foreign Minister Ma Zhaoxu was held on 10 February 2026. In the neighbourhood, PM Modi visited the Maldives on 25–26 July 2025 as Guest of Honour at its 60th Independence Day — the first Indian PM to attend — and announced a rupee-denominated ₹4,850 crore line of credit, six MoUs (fisheries, meteorology, digital infrastructure, pharmacopoeia, UPI integration), the launch of FTA talks, and debt relief cutting annual repayments from \$51 million to \$29 million.

Why it matters: Three relationships, one doctrine: balance. On Gaza, India kept its ties with Israel while holding the Palestine position it has maintained since 1988. On China, pilgrimage and dialogue reopened without conceding the boundary question. On the Maldives, a first-ever Independence Day attendance plus the first rupee-denominated line of credit reset ties after the Muizzu government's 'India Out' phase — Neighbourhood First, demonstrated.

Key facts: 13 October 2025 Sharm el-Sheikh summit; India's representative (Kirti Vardhan Singh); the Yatra resumption date (30 June 2025) and routes (Lipulekh, Nathu La); the Maldives ₹4,850 crore LOC — India's first rupee-denominated credit line — and the \$51m-to-\$29m debt relief.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the summit date, India's representative, the LOC figure and the Yatra date; Mains GS-II on India's balanced Gaza stance and the Neighbourhood First reset after the 'India Out' phase.

Part VI: Defence & Internal Security

Exercises as diplomacy, the largest fighter deals in years, a declared end to Naxalism, and patrolling rights restored on the LAC — the security section rewards candidates who separate the announcement from the achievement.

37. 37. Major Military Exercises (2025–26)

What it is: Exercise Malabar 2025 — the 29th edition — was held from 10 to 18 November 2025 off Guam in the Northern Pacific, hosted by the US Navy, with India represented by the stealth frigate INS Sahyadri alongside the US, Japan (JS Hyūga) and Australia (HMAS Ballarat); drills covered anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare and maritime interdiction. The 21st edition of

Yudh Abhyas, the annual India-US Army exercise, ran from 1 to 14 September 2025 at Fort Wainwright, Alaska; about 450 Indian Army personnel (Madras Regiment) trained with the US 11th Airborne Division in sub-arctic warfare, heliborne operations, drones and counter-drones, and live artillery fire. The 13th edition of MILAN, the Indian Navy's multilateral exercise, was held from 17 to 26 February 2026 at Visakhapatnam under the Eastern Naval Command — its largest ever, with around 74 nations, 42 ships and submarines, and 29 aircraft; inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, it followed the International Fleet Review overseen by President Droupadi Murmu with 52 nations.

Why it matters: Exercises are defence diplomacy in uniform: Malabar signals Quad naval interoperability, Yudh Abhyas deepens the army-to-army link with the US, and MILAN's 74-nation turnout makes Visakhapatnam a stage for India's maritime convening power. The edition numbers, venues and Indian units are the exam currency.

Key facts: Malabar 29th (10–18 Nov 2025, Guam, INS Sahyadri); Yudh Abhyas 21st (1–14 Sep 2025, Fort Wainwright Alaska, Madras Regiment, ~450 personnel); MILAN 13th (17–26 Feb 2026, Visakhapatnam, ~74 nations, 42 ships, 29 aircraft). MILAN began in 1995 — the origin-year trap.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on edition numbers, venues, and Indian units/ships (INS Sahyadri, Madras Regiment); Mains GS-III on exercises as instruments of Indo-Pacific defence diplomacy.

38. Defence Acquisitions and Indigenisation Drive (2025–26)

What it is: On 25 September 2025 the Defence Ministry signed a ₹62,370 crore contract with HAL for 97 more Tejas Mk1A fighters (68 single-seat, 29 twin-seat), taking the IAF's total Mk1A order to 180; deliveries start 2027–28 with over 64% indigenous content including the Uttam AESA radar. As of September 2026, HAL had 27 Mk1A airframes built and 10 GE F404-IN20 engines received, targeting about 10 deliveries in FY 2026–27 after clearing remaining radar and weapons-integration trials. On 12 February 2026, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Rajnath Singh, was reported to have accorded Acceptance of Necessity for 114 Rafale fighters (roughly ₹3.25 lakh crore) under the MRFA programme — 18 in fly-away condition and the rest made in India with an Indian partner; six more P-8I maritime patrol aircraft for the Navy were cleared in the same window. On 7 September 2026 the DAC accorded AoN for a further ~₹1.10 lakh crore of tri-service proposals (CBRN vehicles, mine layers, Arudhra radars, indigenous marine gas turbines, ground-based multi-purpose jammers), about 98% to be sourced from Indian industry.

Why it matters: FY 2024–25 set records — defence production of ₹1,50,590 crore (18% growth) and exports of ₹23,622 crore (up 12.04%), with the private sector at 23% of output; the stated targets are ₹3 lakh crore production and ₹50,000 crore exports by 2029. Note the sourcing: the 114-Rafale AoN is reported via secondary outlets, so treat it as reported rather than confirmed. The tension for Mains is indigenisation (the DAP 2026 draft raises Buy-Indian IDDM content to 60%) versus import dependence — SIPRI ranked India the 2nd-largest arms importer over 2021–25.

Key facts: Tejas Mk1A — 97 more on 25 September 2025 (₹62,370 crore), total 180, 64%+ indigenous content. Rafale MRFA — 114 fighters, AoN reported 12 February 2026 (~₹3.25 lakh

crore). DAC — chaired by the Defence Minister; AoN (Acceptance of Necessity) is the procedural term to know. Production/export records: ₹1,50,590 crore / ₹23,622 crore.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the DAC's chair, the meaning of AoN, the 114-Rafale AoN date, and the Tejas figures; Mains GS-III on indigenisation versus import dependence, using the production and SIPRI numbers.

39. 39. Internal Security: The Campaign Against Left-Wing Extremism (2025–26)

What it is: At a DGPs' meeting on 24 August 2024, the government set a deadline of 31 March 2026 to eliminate Left-Wing Extremism (Naxalism) from India. Union Home Minister Amit Shah told the Lok Sabha in March 2026 that in the previous three years about 706 Naxals had been killed and over 4,800 cadres had surrendered under rehabilitation schemes; he declared Bastar "Naxal-free" in March 2026 and in May 2026 said India had "become free from Naxalism" — a claim security analysts debate, distinguishing full eradication from degradation to historic lows. Operations in 2024–26 concentrated in the Abujhmad forest belt and the Chhattisgarh–Telangana–Maharashtra tri-junction, with momentum increasing after the BJP government took office in Chhattisgarh in December 2023. In October 2026 Shah reiterated the "Naxalism is over" declaration at a Jagdalpur event distributing artificial limbs to 3,600 Naxal-violence victims — framing rehabilitation as part of the post-conflict settlement.

Why it matters: This is the most important internal-security storyline of the year, and the exam-relevant skill is attribution: the government declares eradication; analysts describe degradation to historic lows. A Mains answer that asserts "Naxalism is over" as fact fails the credibility test; one that presents the claim, the numbers behind it, and the analysts' caveat passes it.

Key facts: The deadline — 31 March 2026 — is the anchor date. The figures: ~706 killed, 4,800+ surrendered in three years. The regions: Abujhmad, Bastar, the tri-junction. Attribute the "free from Naxalism" claim to the Home Minister; note the analysts' distinction.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the deadline date and the key regions; Mains GS-III on security-led versus development-led approaches to LWE — and the risks of premature "mission accomplished" declarations. For the full internal-security framework, see our [Internal Security: 50 Important Topics](#) book.

40. 40. Border Developments: LAC Patrolling Restored and People-to-People Reopening

What it is: India and China reached a patrolling arrangement on 21 October 2024 for Depsang (Patrolling Points 10–13) and Demchok (Charding Nullah) in eastern Ladakh, restoring pre-April 2020 patrolling rights; patrols run twice monthly with 14–15 troops per patrol on coordinated schedules to avoid face-offs. Implementation through 2025 saw both sides dismantle temporary structures at the friction points while keeping main deployments in place; follow-on diplomatic and military-level talks continued, including an India–China Strategic Dialogue on 10 February 2026. The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra resumed on 30 June 2025 after a five-year suspension (2020–25, COVID plus the border standoff), with MEA-organised batches via Lipulekh (Uttarakhand) and

Nathu La (Sikkim), alongside resumed direct flights and hydrological-data sharing as confidence-building measures.

Why it matters: The LAC is about 3,488 km long across the Western, Central and Eastern sectors; Depsang's PP 10–13 sit near the Daulat Beg Oldie airstrip, making them strategically sensitive. For Mains, the distinction to master is disengagement versus de-escalation: patrols resumed, but the boundary question remains unresolved and main deployments stay in place.

Key facts: 21 October 2024 arrangement; Depsang PP 10–13 and Demchok's Charding Nullah; twice-monthly patrols of 14–15 troops; Yatra resumed 30 June 2025 via Lipulekh and Nathu La. The LAC length (3,488 km) and the Daulat Beg Oldie link are the geography facts.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on Depsang/Demchok, PP 10–13, Charding Nullah and the Yatra routes; Mains GS-II/GS-III on disengagement versus de-escalation. For the century-long boundary backstory, see our [India–China Border Issues](#) book.

Part VII: Society, Awards, Sports, Reports & Indices

A digital census with a caste count, women's reservation coming into force, two years of Nobels, the Padma list, a World Cup, the Olympics, and the indices that measure hunger and human development — the final part is pure Prelims ammunition.

41. 41. Census 2027: First Digital Census, Caste Counted for the First Time Since 1931

What it is: The Centre issued the Gazette notification of intent on 16 June 2025 for Population Census-2027 — India's 16th census and the first since 2011, a 16-year gap. The reference date is 00:00 hours of 1 March 2027 for most of India, and 00:00 hours of 1 October 2026 for Ladakh and the snow-bound non-synchronous areas of J&K, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. It will run in two phases: House Listing (April–September 2026) and Population Enumeration (February 2027). Caste enumeration is included, following the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs decision of 30 April 2025 — the first nationwide caste count since the British census of 1931.

Why it matters: It will be the first fully digital census: data via mobile apps and a self-enumeration portal in 16 languages, with roughly 34 lakh enumerators; an October 2026 gazette amendment widened enumerator eligibility to private teachers and institutions. For Mains, census data feeds delimitation (Article 82), the women's reservation rollout, and the caste-data policy debate — three live constitutional questions from one exercise.

Key facts: 16th census; 16-year gap since 2011; reference dates 1 March 2027 (1 October 2026 for snow-bound areas); caste count first since 1931 (CCPA decision 30 April 2025); Census Act 1948 is the legal basis; ~34 lakh enumerators; 16-language self-enumeration portal.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the Census Act 1948, the reference dates, and the "first caste count since 1931" fact; Mains on census data for delimitation, women's reservation, and the politics of caste enumeration.

42. 42. Women's Reservation Act Brought Into Force (April 2026), Rollout Tied to Census and Delimitation

What it is: The Union Law Ministry notified 16 April 2026 as the date the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023 — the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam — came into force. Coming into force does not mean immediate effect: reservation of one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies starts only after the first post-2026 Census and the subsequent delimitation — per the Act's own clause, that pushes enforceability toward 2034 under the law as drafted. The government moved bills in the Lok Sabha to delink rollout from the delayed census so the quota can apply from the 2029 general elections; the design debates centre on no sub-quota for OBC women (only SC/ST women get sub-quotas) and the rotation of reserved constituencies.

Why it matters: A constitutional right exists on paper but its enforceability is hostage to two future exercises — the census and delimitation. For Mains, this is the sharpest case of the gap between constitutional promise and implementation, with federal tensions over delimitation after 2026 (the 84th Amendment freeze) running underneath.

Key facts: 106th Amendment; in force 16 April 2026; 33% in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies (not the Rajya Sabha or Legislative Councils); rollout tied to census + delimitation (Article 82); the 2029-delinking bills; no OBC sub-quota.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the amendment number, the 33% figure, and where it applies (Lok Sabha + Assemblies, not the other Houses); Mains on delayed implementation of a constitutional right and the delimitation politics beneath it.

43. 43. Nobel Prizes 2025 (Announced 6–13 October 2025)

What it is: Medicine (6 October): Mary E. Brunkow, Fred Ramsdell and Shimon Sakaguchi — discoveries concerning peripheral immune tolerance (regulatory T cells). Physics (7 October): John Clarke, Michel H. Devoret and John M. Martinis — macroscopic quantum tunnelling and energy quantisation in an electric circuit. Chemistry (8 October): Susumu Kitagawa, Richard Robson and Omar M. Yaghi — development of metal-organic frameworks (MOFs). Literature (9 October): László Krasznahorkai (Hungary) — "compelling and visionary oeuvre that, in the midst of apocalyptic terror, reaffirms the power of art". Peace (10 October): María Corina Machado (Venezuela) — struggle for democratic rights and a peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy. Economic Sciences (13 October): Joel Mokyr (one half) — prerequisites for sustained growth through technological progress — jointly with Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt (creative destruction model).

Why it matters: The Nobel list is the most predictable Prelims question in the awards universe. The 2025 science prizes tie directly into GS-III topics — immune tolerance into health, MOFs into materials science — so they double as science current affairs.

Key facts: Pair each prize with its awarding institution: Medicine — Karolinska Institutet; Physics and Chemistry — Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences; Literature — Swedish Academy; Peace —

Norwegian Nobel Committee. The citations (immune tolerance, quantum tunnelling, MOFs, Machado's democracy struggle) are the second layer.

How UPSC tests it: Classic Prelims list-type question — match the laureate to the field and the citation; the awarding institutions are the frequent trap.

44. Nobel Prizes 2026 (Announced 5–12 October 2026)

What it is: Medicine (5 October): Karl Deisseroth, Peter Hegemann and Georg Nagel — light-gated ion channels and optogenetics. Physics (6 October): Francis Halzen — decisive contributions to the IceCube Neutrino Observatory and the discovery of high-energy astrophysical neutrinos. Chemistry (7 October): Henri B. Kagan and Kenso Soai — non-linear effects and autocatalysis in asymmetric organic synthesis. Literature (8 October): Anne Carson (Canada) — "bold and inventive oeuvre that, in playful dialogue with the classical tradition, has created new forms for contemporary literature". Peace (9 October): Navanethem "Navi" Pillay — efforts to promote peace and international law; former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and ex-judge of the ICC. Economic Sciences (12 October): Robert E. Hall and Michael Woodford — microeconomic foundations of macroeconomic stabilisation.

Why it matters: Back-to-back Nobel years in one book means Prelims can ask either set — learn both. Navi Pillay's background (UN human-rights chief, ICC judge) also feeds Mains IR and international-law themes.

Key facts: The 2026 citations — optogenetics, IceCube neutrinos, asymmetric synthesis, Anne Carson's classicism, Pillay's international-law record, macro-stabilisation microfoundations. Same awarding institutions as 2025; learn the two years as parallel lists.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims fact bank — names plus citations; watch for questions that mix the 2025 and 2026 laureates in one list.

45. Padma Awards 2026 (Announced on the Eve of the 77th Republic Day, January 2026)

What it is: 131 Padma awards were approved by President Droupadi Murmu: 5 Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan, 113 Padma Shri — including 19 women, 16 posthumous awards, and 6 foreigners/NRI/PIO/OCI recipients. Padma Vibhushan: Dharmendra Singh Deol (posthumous, Art), K. T. Thomas (Public Affairs), N. Rajam (Art), P. Narayanan (Literature & Education), V. S. Achuthanandan (posthumous, Public Affairs). Padma Bhushan: Alka Yagnik and Mammootty (Art), Uday Kotak (Trade & Industry), Vijay Amritraj (Sports), Shibu Soren (posthumous, Public Affairs), Piyush Pandey (posthumous, Art), among 13. Padma Shri recipients include R. Madhavan (Art) and Rohit Sharma (Sports); the ceremony was held at Rashtrapati Bhavan in March/April 2026. The Ashoka Chakra 2026 went to Gp Capt Shubhanshu Shukla (IAF) — announced in the same Republic Day honours round.

Why it matters: The Padma hierarchy (Padma Vibhushan is the second-highest civilian honour), the Republic Day-eve announcement convention, and the posthumous-eligibility rules are the

institutional facts. For Mains, the awards are a lens on how the state recognises distinguished service — including grassroots workers alongside film stars.

Key facts: 131 total (5/13/113); announced on Republic Day eve; 19 women, 16 posthumous. The Vibhushan names and the Shukla Ashoka Chakra (same honours round) are the headline pairings.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the hierarchy, the announcement timing, and posthumous eligibility; Mains on the state's recognition of distinguished service across fields.

46. 46. Cinema and Literary Honours 2025: Dadasaheb Phalke to Mohanlal; Booker to David Szalay's "Flesh"

What it is: Mohanlal received the Dadasaheb Phalke Award at the 71st National Film Awards (ceremony at Vigyan Bhawan, 23 September 2025; winners announced 1 August 2025) — the second Malayali after Adoor Gopalakrishnan to receive India's highest cinema honour. Other 71st National Film Awards: Best Feature Film — "12th Fail"; Best Actor (shared) — Shah Rukh Khan ("Jawan") and Vikrant Massey ("12th Fail"); Best Actress — Rani Mukerji ("Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway"); Best Director — Sudipto Sen ("The Kerala Story"). David Szalay won the Booker Prize 2025 (announced 10 November 2025) for his novel "Flesh" — Hungarian-British author, £50,000 prize — beating Kiran Desai's "The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny" among five shortlisted finalists.

Why it matters: The Phalke award — instituted 1969, in memory of the maker of "Raja Harishchandra" (1913), first recipient Devika Rani — comprises the Swarna Kamal medallion, a shawl and a cash prize (Rs. 10–15 lakh), presented by the President for "outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema". The Booker goes to English-language novels published in the UK/Ireland — the eligibility rule behind many questions.

Key facts: 71st National Film Awards, 23 September 2025 ceremony; Mohanlal second Malayali Phalke recipient; Phalke instituted 1969, first recipient Devika Rani. Booker 2025 — David Szalay, "Flesh", £50,000, announced 10 November 2025.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the Phalke's institution year and first recipient, the 71st awards' headline winners, and the Booker eligibility rule.

47. 47. FIFA World Cup 2026: Spain Beat Argentina 1–0 in the Final (19 July 2026)

What it is: Spain won their second men's World Cup with a 1–0 extra-time win over defending champions Argentina at MetLife Stadium, New York/New Jersey; Ferran Torres scored in the 106th minute. It was the first 48-team, 104-match edition (11 June – 19 July 2026), co-hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States, with record attendance of 6,810,966 and 308 goals. Third place: England 6–4 France. Golden Ball — Rodri (Spain); Golden Glove — Unai Simón (Spain); in the Golden Boot race, Kylian Mbappé finished two goals ahead of Lionel Messi (8). Messi, 39, played his sixth and final World Cup — the first man to start three finals.

Why it matters: Sports GK is a fixed Prelims slot, and this edition rewrote the format: 48 teams, three host nations, 104 matches. The tri-nation hosting model is itself a case study in mega-event organisation.

Key facts: 19 July 2026 final; Spain 1–0 Argentina (aet); Ferran Torres 106th minute; first 48-team edition; Canada-Mexico-USA hosts; 6,810,966 attendance; Messi's sixth and final World Cup.

How UPSC tests it: Straight Prelims facts — winner, score, scorer, venue, the 48-team first, the host nations.

48. 48. Winter Olympics 2026, Milano Cortina (6–22 February 2026)

What it is: Norway topped the final medal table with 18 gold, 12 silver, 11 bronze (41 total) — 18 golds is a Winter Games record. The United States finished second (12-12-9, 33) — their best Winter haul ever; the Netherlands third (10-7-3); hosts Italy fourth (10-6-14). India fielded a contingent but won no medals at Milano Cortina. The Olympic flag passed to the French Alps, hosts of the 2030 Winter Olympics.

Why it matters: The medal-table order and the records (Norway's 18 golds, the USA's best haul) are the question material; the French Alps 2030 handover is the forward-looking fact for future exams.

Key facts: 6–22 February 2026, Milano Cortina; Norway 18-12-11 (record 18 golds); USA's best-ever Winter haul; India no medals; 2030 hosts — French Alps.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on the medal-table order, the records, and the 2030 host.

49. 49. India's Sporting Year: Maiden Women's Cricket World Cup Title, CWG Glasgow and Asian Games Nagoya

What it is: ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 final (2 November 2025, DY Patil Stadium, Navi Mumbai): India beat South Africa by 52 runs (India 298/7; South Africa 246) — India's first-ever women's ODI World Cup title. Shafali Verma (87) was Player of the Match; Deepti Sharma took 5/39 and made 58 — the first fifty-plus-five-for in a Women's World Cup match. Commonwealth Games 2026, Glasgow (23 July – 2 August 2026): India finished 4th with 39 medals (13 gold, 17 silver, 9 bronze) despite wrestling, badminton, hockey and squash being dropped from the programme; boxing led with a record 10 medals (7 gold); Mirabai Chanu won her third straight CWG gold; Australia topped the table. Asian Games 2026, Aichi-Nagoya (closed 4 October 2026): India finished 4th with 85 medals (21 gold, 27 silver, 37 bronze) — its second-best Asiad tally after Hangzhou 2022's 107; double cricket gold (men beat Pakistan by 19 runs in the final; women beat Sri Lanka); the hockey double gold sealed LA 2028 quotas.

Why it matters: The maiden women's ODI World Cup title is a landmark fact — India's first in the format's history. The next CWG will be Ahmedabad 2030, which India will host for the second time (after Delhi 2010).

Key facts: 2 November 2025, DY Patil Stadium; India 298/7 beat SA 246 by 52 runs; Shafali 87, Deepti 5/39 + 58. CWG Glasgow: India 4th, 39 medals (13-17-9). Asian Games Nagoya: India 4th, 85 medals (21-27-37). Next CWG: Ahmedabad 2030.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on venues, tallies, India's 4th-place finishes, and Ahmedabad 2030; the first-ever women's ODI World Cup title is the landmark.

50. 50. Reports & Indices 2025: Global Hunger Index and UNDP Human Development Report

What it is: The Global Hunger Index 2025 (released October 2025) ranked India 102nd of 123 countries with a score of 25.8 ("serious"), up from 105th (27.3) in 2024. The report, titled "20 Years of Tracking Progress: Time to Recommit to Zero Hunger", is published by Concern Worldwide (Ireland), Welthungerhilfe (Germany) and IFHV, and uses four indicators: undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting, and under-5 mortality. India sat below all South Asian neighbours except Pakistan (106) and Afghanistan (109); Somalia ranked last (123rd, 42.6); the government has disputed the index's methodology in past years. The UNDP Human Development Report 2025 ("A Matter of Choice: People and Possibilities in the Age of AI") ranked India 130th of 193 with an HDI of 0.685, up from 133rd (0.676); Iceland topped (0.972), followed by Norway and Switzerland. HDI's three dimensions are life expectancy, education (mean plus expected years of schooling), and GNI per capita (PPP); India stayed in the "medium human development" band.

Why it matters: For Mains, these two reports frame the hardest development question: why does high growth coexist with middling human-development outcomes? The government's critique of the GHI methodology is itself part of the answer you should be ready to present — attributed, not endorsed.

Key facts: GHI 2025 — India 102/123, score 25.8, publishers Concern Worldwide/Welthungerhilfe/IFHV, four indicators. HDR 2025 — India 130/193, HDI 0.685, Iceland top (0.972). The three HDI dimensions are the definitional question.

How UPSC tests it: Prelims on ranks, scores, publishers and indicator sets; Mains on the growth-versus-development paradox and the methodology debate.

Quick-Revision Tables

Table 1: Summits and Conferences (Oct 2025 – Oct 2026)

Event	Venue / Date	Headline Outcome
COP30	Belém, Brazil; 10–21 Nov 2025	"Global Mutirão" text; no fossil-fuel phase-out language; adaptation finance to triple by 2035
20th G20 Leaders' Summit	Johannesburg; 22–23 Nov 2025	First African host; 122-point declaration; India-Italy counter-terror financing initiative

25th SCO Summit	Tianjin, China; 31 Aug–1 Sep 2025	Modi's first bilateral China visit in 7 years; "Security, Connectivity, Opportunity"
18th BRICS Summit	New Delhi; 12–13 Sep 2026	India's 4th chairship; theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability"
16th India–EU Summit	New Delhi; 27 Jan 2026	FTA negotiations concluded — "mother of all deals"
Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting	New Delhi; 26 May 2026	Maritime surveillance collaboration; ~\$20 bn Critical Minerals Initiative (no leaders' summit held in 2025–26)
Sharm el-Sheikh Gaza Summit	Egypt; 13 Oct 2025	Ceasefire/peace agreement signed; India represented by MoS Kirti Vardhan Singh
MILAN 2026 (13th)	Visakhapatnam; 17–26 Feb 2026	Largest ever — ~74 nations, 42 ships, 29 aircraft

Table 2: Awards 2025–26 — Who Got What

Award	Recipient / Fact
Ashok Chakra 2026	Gp Capt Shubhanshu Shukla — first astronaut recipient
Padma Vibhushan 2026	Dharmendra (posthumous), K. T. Thomas, N. Rajam, P. Narayanan, V. S. Achuthanandan (posthumous)
Dadasaheb Phalke Award	Mohanlal (71st National Film Awards) — second Malayali after Adoor Gopalakrishnan
Booker Prize 2025	David Szalay — "Flesh" (£50,000)
Nobel Peace 2025	María Corina Machado (Venezuela)
Nobel Peace 2026	Navanethem "Navi" Pillay (ex-UN rights chief, ex-ICC judge)
Nobel Medicine 2025	Brunkow, Ramsdell, Sakaguchi — peripheral immune tolerance
Nobel Medicine 2026	Deisseroth, Hegemann, Nagel — optogenetics
Nobel Physics 2026	Francis Halzen — IceCube Neutrino Observatory
Nobel Chemistry 2025	Kitagawa, Robson, Yaghi — metal-organic frameworks

Table 3: Reports & Indices — Ranks to Remember

Report	India's Rank	Publisher / Note
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Global Hunger Index 2025	102/123 (score 25.8, "serious")	Concern Worldwide, Welthungerhilfe, IFHV; 4 indicators
UNDP Human Development Report 2025	130/193 (HDI 0.685)	Medium human development; Iceland top (0.972)
All India Tiger Estimation 2022 (baseline)	3,682 tigers	NTCA + WII; AITE 2026 underway, report due 2027
Ramsar sites	103 (3rd globally)	Joined convention 1 Feb 1982; ~1.36 million ha
Non-fossil power capacity	300.50 GW (31 Jul 2026)	Target 500 GW by 2030; solar 164.59 GW
Forex reserves	Record \$785.706 bn (week ended 4 Sep 2026)	Gold share tripled to 17.1% since 2019

Table 4: Laws, Acts and Rules of the Year

Law / Rule	Date	What Changed
VB-G RAM G Act, 2025	Assent 21 Dec 2025; in force 1 Jul 2026	Replaces MGNREGA; 125 days; 60:40 cost sharing; 60-day pause window
New Income Tax Act, 2025	In force 1 Apr 2026	Replaces 1961 Act; revenue-neutral; revised returns till 31 Mar
GST 2.0 rate structure	56th Council 3–4 Sep 2025; effective 22 Sep 2025	5% and 18% slabs + 40% demerit rate
DPDP Rules, 2025	Notified 13 Nov 2025	Phased enforcement to 13 May 2027; penalties up to ₹250 cr
Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023	In force 16 Apr 2026	Women's reservation; rollout tied to census + delimitation
Delhi Winter Framework	Notified 19 Jun 2026	Fixed-date curbs 1 Nov–28 Feb under EPA 1986
Census 2027 notification	Gazette 16 Jun 2025	16th census; first digital; caste counted since 1931

5 Revision Tips for Last-1-Year Current Affairs

1. **Learn every topic as a Prelims question first.** Before reading the explanation, ask: what would the four options be? The date, the number, the institution, the person. If you can write the MCQ for each topic, you have learned it the way it will be asked.
2. **Keep a one-page date line for the whole year.** October 2025 to October 2026 on a single sheet — summits, verdicts, launches, awards. Chronology is the cheapest way to avoid mixing up the two Nobel years, the two GST events, or the May 2026 elections with the November 2025 one.
3. **Separate the announcement from the achievement.** An AoN is not a delivery; a trade framework is not a signed deal; a court upholding a revision is not the revision itself. UPSC's hardest questions test exactly this gap — learn the status word (announced, accorded, notified, in force) for every topic.
4. **Attribute, don't assert, on disputed claims.** The Rafale AoN is "reported"; the Naxalism-eliminated claim is the Home Minister's; Balakot-style damage figures are "widely cited". Write these qualifiers into your notes now so they appear in your answers automatically.
5. **Connect each topic to its GS paper.** VB-G RAM G is GS-II (welfare, federalism); GST 2.0 is GS-III (fiscal federalism); the Quad story is GS-II (IR); the WMO verdict is GS-III (environment). When you file a fact under its paper, revision becomes answer-writing practice.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How far back should I prepare current affairs for UPSC 2027?

The twelve months before the exam carry the most weight — for Prelims 2027, that is roughly June 2026 to May 2027, with this book's October 2025–October 2026 window covering the bulk of it. Topics from 2024 and earlier appear mainly as background (the MGNREGA-to-VB-G RAM G story needs the 2006 origin, for example). This book gives you the core year; supplement it with the last six months before the exam.

2. Should I memorise all the numbers in this book?

Memorise the anchor numbers — the ones that define the event: 125 days, 5% and 18%, 103 Ramsar sites, 58 tiger reserves, 300.50 GW, 45,000+ GPUs. For secondary figures (exact attendance, precise reserve levels), learn the order of magnitude and the direction of change. Prelims tests anchors; Mains tests whether you know what the numbers mean.

3. How do I handle topics where the facts are disputed or single-sourced?

The way this book does: say "reported", "announced", or "widely cited", and name the position's owner ("the Home Minister declared...", "analysts distinguish..."). In Mains, presenting both the claim and the caveat earns more marks than picking a side without evidence. Two topics in this book — the Quad Manila plan and the Rafale AoN — are flagged for exactly this treatment.

4. Which topics in this book matter most for Mains?

The institutional ones: VB-G RAM G (rights-based to allocation-based welfare), GST 2.0 (fiscal federalism), the SIR verdict (electoral integrity), women's reservation (constitutional promise vs implementation), DPDP (privacy vs enforcement), and the LWE campaign (security-led vs development-led approaches). Each is a ready-made GS-II or GS-III question.

5. How is this different from a monthly current-affairs magazine?

Magazines give you everything that happened; this book gives you what gets asked. Fifty topics, each written in the four-question rhythm UPSC uses — what it is, why it matters, the key facts, how it is tested. Use magazines for the final six months before the exam; use this book as the foundation the magazine updates sit on.

6. Can current affairs alone clear the Prelims cut-off?

No — current affairs is roughly a quarter to a third of the paper, and it is the most scoring quarter only if your static base is solid. The toppers' formula is static subjects plus this one-year layer. Read this book alongside the [Polity](#), [Economy](#) and [Environment](#) books, and the current-affairs questions will feel like revision, not new study.