



SAMARTHYA IAS · AHMEDABAD

DAILY UPSC COMPANION

Samarthya Current Affairs

Prelims facts · Mains frameworks · Practice MCQs

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September 2026

SATURDAY

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TOPICS

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STORIES

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MCQS

Your Complete UPSC Current Affairs Companion

5 Things You Must Know

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Judicial Service Administration and Institutional Cadre Capacity



STORY 1 The Hindu

Supreme Court urges uniform elevation of district judicial retirement age to 62 years

The Supreme Court issued clear directions to seven consenting states to amend service rules and raise the retirement age of district judges to 62 years.

The Bench welcomed suggestions from High Courts that extending service beyond 60 years must remain subject to rigorous judicial performance assessment.

Official records show working judicial officer strength at 21,027 against a sanctioned 25,894, while district court pendency stands at 5.18 crore cases.

India currently operates with approximately 22 judges per million population, creating an unprecedented crisis in timely justice dispensation for ordinary litigants.

Relevant for GS Paper II under Judiciary functioning, structural legal reforms, and institutional mechanisms for reducing arrears in subordinate courts.



STORY 2 The Hindu

Chief Justice of India proposes BRICS commercial arbitration platform at judicial forum

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant highlighted the judiciary's role in enhancing bilateral ties and coordinated legal cooperation during the BRICS Chief Justices' Forum.

The CJI officially proposed constructing a unified platform for arbitration and mediation to efficiently resolve cross-border commercial disputes among member nations.

The forum hosted top judicial leaders, supreme court presidents, and official delegations from BRICS member states and partner nations in New Delhi.

CJI Kant conducted a series of high-level bilateral meetings, including interactions with Uzbekistan Supreme Court Chairperson Robakhon Makhmudova on judicial capacity building.

Relevant for GS Paper II under Judicial Cooperation, International Forums, and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) frameworks for international commerce.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Examines structural judicial reforms, cadre retention in subordinate courts, and international judicial collaboration under GS-II Judicial Administration.

PRELIMS FACTS

- India's working strength of judicial officers in district courts stands at 21,027 against a sanctioned strength of 25,894 as of early 2026.
- The current national judge-to-population ratio in India is approximately 22 judges per million population.
- Total pending cases across the district judiciary in India have crossed 5.18 crore cases.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Subordinate judiciary forms the bedrock of justice delivery in India, yet severe human resource shortages and rising pendency severely undermine public faith and the fundamental right to timely justice under Article 21.

DIMENSIONS

- **Administrative Dimension:** High attrition and early retirement ages at 60 years deplete experienced judicial talent while vacancy rates hover above 18 percent.
- **Capacity Dimension:** With 5.18 crore pending cases, inadequate judge-to-population ratios create systemic delays in civil and criminal adjudications.
- **International Dimension:** Integration of bilateral judicial cooperation and specialized platforms for commercial arbitration enhances regional legal standardization.

Way forward: Implement uniform enhancement of district judge retirement age to 62 years coupled with rigorous performance evaluations, institutionalize dedicated commercial dispute resolution frameworks, and establish an All India Judicial Service (AIJS).

PYQ LINK

Discuss the key causes of mounting pendency in Indian courts and evaluate structural measures required to strengthen the district judiciary.

KEY TERMS

District Judiciary

Pendency of Cases

Judge-to-Population Ratio

Judicial Diplomacy

Alternative Dispute Resolution

ACTS & ARTICLES

Article 21 - Right to Speedy Trial and Timely Justice

Article 233 - Appointment of District Judges

02

INTERNAL SECURITY

Internal Security and Prevention of Organised Crime and Arms Theft



STORY 1

The Hindu

National Investigation Agency probes missing service weapons from Secunderabad Army camp

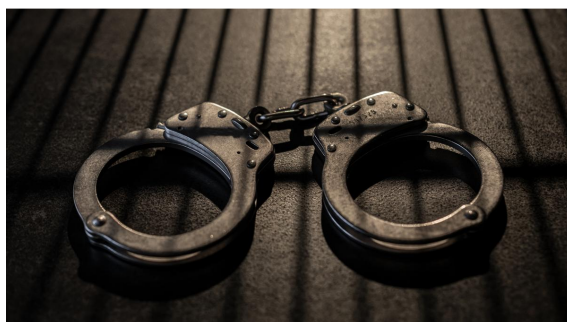
An NIA team inspected the 20 Madras Regiment premises in Secunderabad Cantonment to investigate the disappearance of 12 service firearms and ammunition.

Investigating authorities confirmed missing weapons include four AK-203 assault rifles, an INSAS 1B1 rifle, six 9mm Auto 1A pistols, and one civilian pistol.

The break-in occurred at the Battalion Magazine and Kote between August 30 and August 31, triggering a joint probe involving Military Intelligence.

Investigators questioned personnel with camp access while officially ruling out the involvement of Agniveers following initial forensic and logistical examinations.

Relevant for GS Paper III under Internal Security, defense installation protocols, and counter-weapon proliferation investigation frameworks.



STORY 2

The Hindu

Mumbai Police invoke MCOCA against organized gang for violent extortion

Mumbai Police arrested seven men operating under the guise of a Mathadi labor union for violent assault and extortion in Andheri's industrial district.

State authorities invoked stringent provisions of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), 1999 following prior sanction from competent police executives.

The accused allegedly conspired to extort money from commercial enterprises and brutally assaulted a rival union worker with weapons in MIDC-Andheri.

First Information Reports were initially registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections before organised crime provisions were added to prevent syndicate operations.

Relevant for GS Paper III under Organised Crime, police reforms, and legal statutory tools for curbing industrial extortion networks.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Focuses on security vulnerabilities in military armories, counter-organized crime statutes like MCOCA, and multi-agency investigative protocols under GS-III.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) functions as the central counter-terrorism law enforcement agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), 1999 provides stringent powers including enhanced detention periods and admissibility of confessions made to senior police officers.
- Section 3 of MCOCA specifically targets extortion, land grabbing, and violent offences committed by organized crime syndicates.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Securing sensitive military establishments and dismantling urban organized crime networks are vital imperatives for preserving national internal security and public order.

DIMENSIONS

- **Institutional Vulnerability:** Security breaches and weapon disappearances from military armories reveal gaps in physical access control and internal inventory auditing.
- **Legal Deterrence:** Special state enactments like MCOCA provide necessary statutory leverage to prosecute organized crime syndicates where ordinary penal laws prove insufficient.
- **Inter-Agency Coordination:** Effective investigations require seamless intelligence sharing between Military Intelligence, central probe agencies, and state police forces.

Way forward: Standardize biometric armory surveillance protocols across military installations and enforce rigorous judicial scrutiny during MCOCA prosecutions to balance security with civil liberties.

PYQ LINK

Evaluate the threat posed by organized crime syndicates to internal security and analyze the effectiveness of special state legislations in curbing organized crime.

KEY TERMS

National Investigation Agency

MCOCA

Military Armory Security

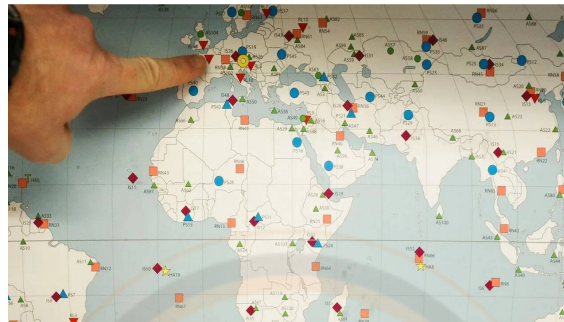
Organised Crime Syndicate

Criminal Justice System

03

GEOGRAPHY

Global Cartography and UNGA Resolutions on Geographic Representation



STORY 1

Times of India

United Nations General Assembly adopts resolution endorsing Equal Earth projection map

The UN General Assembly formally endorsed a new world map utilizing the Equal Earth projection to accurately display continental sizes and proportions.

A total of 164 member states voted in favor of the 'Correct The Map' resolution, while the United States voted against and six nations abstained.

The diplomatic initiative was spearheaded by Togo and supported by the African Union to address historical cartographic distortions favoring Northern Hemisphere landmasses.

Unlike the 16th-century Mercator projection which inflates polar areas, the Equal Earth projection maintains true relative area proportions across all continents.

Relevant for GS Paper I Geography under cartographic techniques, map projections, and GS Paper II under Global South multilateral diplomacy.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Examines map projections, geopolitical representation, and international cartographic standards under GS-I Geography and GS-II Global Governance.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The Equal Earth projection is an equal-area pseudocylindrical map projection created in 2018 to accurately represent relative landmass areas.
- The Mercator projection, developed in 1569, exaggerates landmass sizes near the poles while shrinking equatorial regions like Africa and South America.

- The 'Correct The Map' UNGA resolution was sponsored by Togo and endorsed by 164 member states.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Map projections are not merely neutral scientific tools but political instruments that shape worldviews, historical narratives, and international power dynamics.

DIMENSIONS

- **Cartographic Distortion:** The traditional Mercator map drastically distorts landmass areas, making Greenland appear equal in size to the African continent despite Africa being 14 times larger.
- **Geopolitical Dimension:** Historical reliance on Eurocentric map projections perpetuated colonial-era biases in global educational and diplomatic institutions.
- **International Consensus:** The adoption of the Equal Earth projection reflects growing Global South advocacy for equitable geographic representation in global multilateral bodies.

Way forward: Standardize equal-area map projections across national curriculum frameworks, international publishing standards, and multilateral mapping platforms.

PYQ LINK

Critically analyze how map projections influence global geopolitical perceptions and discuss the cartographic merits of equal-area projections.

KEY TERMS

Equal Earth Projection

Mercator Projection

UN General Assembly

Cartographic Distortion

Correct The Map Campaign

ACTS & ARTICLES

UNGA Resolution - 'Correct The Map' (2026)

UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management Framework

04

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Geopolitics, Military Leadership, and Infrastructure Crises in International Affairs



United States considers Pentagon leadership restructuring amid ongoing Iran conflict

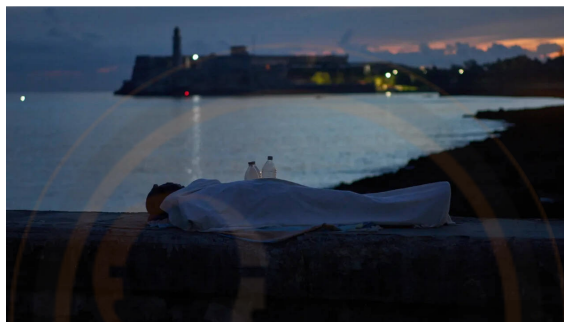
The US administration is evaluating replacement candidates for the Army Secretary post following the resignation of Dan Driscoll after internal policy disagreements.

Potential successors under consideration include Marc Andersen and Sean Parnell, with Adam Telle currently designated to serve as acting Army Secretary.

Driscoll's resignation after 18 months in office followed reported friction with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth regarding executive management of the Iran war.

The administrative shifts reflect broader operational frustrations within the Pentagon as military engagements and defense budgeting strategies undergo review.

Relevant for GS Paper II under Foreign Policy, international conflict management, and civil-military executive administration structure.



United States issues health warning over deteriorating public utilities in Cuba

The US Embassy in Havana issued an official health alert regarding a sharp increase in intestinal and diarrheal illnesses across Cuba.

Diplomatic officials linked the health crisis to severe degradation in municipal water supply, electrical grid stability, and food refrigeration systems.

Strict fuel import restrictions maintained by Washington have exacerbated island-wide power blackouts and compromised municipal sanitation operations.

Health advisories urge travelers and residents to take precautionary steps regarding food storage temperatures and unpasteurized water consumption.

Relevant for GS Paper II under International Relations, humanitarian impacts of geopolitical sanctions, and public health infrastructure.



STORY 3 **Times of India**

Explosion at Bolivian military base stockpiles causes severe casualties

A massive explosion at a military complex in Viacha, Bolivia resulted in at least 10 fatalities and over 60 severe injuries.

Local emergency health officials reported that the blast occurred in a storage zone housing defense ministry pyrotechnic and explosive materials.

The blast radius damaged dozens of surrounding residential homes, prompting authorities to establish a 150-meter safety exclusion perimeter.

Military and civil defense agencies launched investigations to determine the precise trigger behind the catastrophic depot ignition near La Paz.

Relevant for GS Paper II International Events and GS Paper III Disaster Management regarding explosive storage safety regulations.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Analyzes executive civil-military relations, humanitarian crises arising from economic sanctions, and emergency safety protocols at defense establishments.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The US Department of Defense (Pentagon) operates under statutory civilian executive leadership headed by the Secretary of Defense and military department secretaries.
- Viacha is a strategic defense enclave located approximately 30 kilometers from Bolivia's administrative capital, La Paz.
- Restricting fuel shipments during international disputes directly compromises municipal water pumping and refrigeration infrastructure.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Geopolitical friction and internal administration challenges within defense apparatuses significantly shape global stability and national security outcomes.

DIMENSIONS

- **Civil-Military friction:** Leadership disputes within defense departments during wartime undermine operational planning and strategic coherence.
- **Humanitarian Externalities:** Comprehensive trade restrictions and fuel blockades trigger secondary public health collapses by destabilizing power and water utilities.

- **Domestic Munitions Management:** Inadequate safety protocols in military storage facilities expose civilian populations near defense enclaves to severe industrial hazards.

Way forward: Establish robust statutory protocols for defense leadership transitions, enforce international exemptions for humanitarian civil infrastructure, and mandate industrial safety audits for military stockpiles.

PYQ LINK

Examine how international conflict and economic sanctions impact public health and critical civil infrastructure in target nations.

KEY TERMS

Civil-Military Relations

Pentagon Leadership

Humanitarian Infrastructure Crisis

Economic Sanctions

Pyrotechnic Safety Standards

ACTS & ARTICLES

Geneva Convention (Protection of Civilians in Time of War)

US National Security Act of 1947

05

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

Biodiversity Discoveries and Species Conservation in Tropical Ecosystems



STORY 1

Times of India

Botanists discover non-photosynthetic devil flower species in Thailand rainforest

Botanists described a new achlorophyllous plant species, **Thismia daemona** ('devil flower'), discovered in Thong Pha Phum National Park, Thailand.

Published in **PhytoKeys**, research shows the plant lacks leaves and chlorophyll, relying entirely on underground fungal networks for nutrient absorption.

The plant remains buried under leaf litter for most of its life cycle, emerging briefly as a dark, horn-like flower structure.

Taxonomists estimate fewer than 50 individual plants exist in the wild, qualifying the newly described species for extreme conservation priority.

Relevant for GS Paper III Environment under new species discoveries, plant taxonomy, and specialized ecosystem adaptations.



STORY 2 Times of India

Critically endangered Mindoro bleeding-heart pigeon photographed after two decades

Conservationists captured the first confirmed photograph in 20 years of the critically endangered Mindoro bleeding-heart pigeon (*Gallicolumba platenae*).

The photograph was secured in Puerto Galera rainforests, Philippines, through an Indigenous-led monitoring initiative within the Iraya Mangyan ancestral domain.

Local Iraya forest patrollers collaborated with the Centre for Conservation Innovation Ph Inc. to deploy strategic camera trap networks.

Experts noted that while the photograph confirms species survival, the extremely low detection rate highlights severe threats from habitat loss.

Relevant for GS Paper III Biodiversity Conservation, Indigenous rights in wildlife management, and island endemic species protection.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Examines specialized botanical adaptations, indigenous-led conservation efforts, and critically endangered species monitoring under GS-III Environment.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Mycoheterotrophic plants lack chlorophyll and obtain nutrients entirely through symbiotic relationships with underground fungi rather than photosynthesis.
- The Mindoro bleeding-heart pigeon (*Gallicolumba platenae*) is a critically endangered bird endemic to Mindoro island in the Philippines.
- Puerto Galera in Mindoro is designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve supporting endemic rainforest fauna.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Tropical forest ecosystems host unique evolutionary adaptations and critically endangered taxa whose survival depends on protected habitat integrity and indigenous stewardship.

DIMENSIONS

- **Ecological Specialization:** Parasitic botanical species like *Thismia daemon* demonstrate specialized evolutionary reliance on soil fungal networks rather than solar radiation.
- **Community Governance:** Indigenous patrollers (such as the Iraya Mangyan) provide crucial ground surveillance in remote ancestral domains inaccessible to conventional survey teams.
- **Conservation Urgency:** Rediscovery of ultra-rare fauna underscores the imperative of preserving key biodiversity areas from deforestation and habitat fragmentation.

Way forward: Integrate Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) with scientific camera-trapping technology and expand statutory protections for fragile micro-habitats.

PYQ LINK

Discuss the significance of Indigenous community participation in biodiversity conservation and protected area management.

KEY TERMS

Mycoheterotrophy

Thismiaceae

Critically Endangered Species

Indigenous Stewardship

UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

ACTS & ARTICLES

Biological Diversity Act, 2002

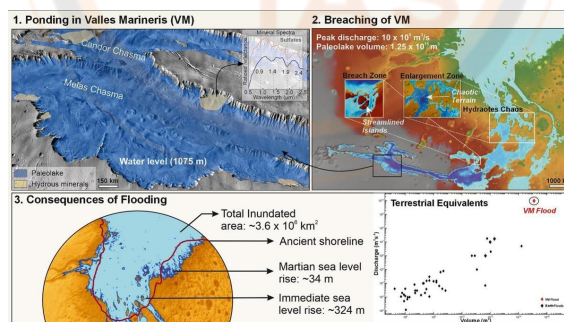
IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria

Article 48A - Protection and Improvement of Environment

06

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Planetary Geology, Astrobiology, and Bioacoustics Research



STORY 1

The Hindu

Ancient Martian paleolake flood raised sea level by 34 meters study reveals

A study published in *Icarus* demonstrates that ancient paleolake breaches in Mars' Valles Marineris released approximately 1,245 trillion cubic meters of water.

Simulations indicate this massive outburst flood raised the global mean level of Mars' hypothesized ancient northern ocean by roughly 34 meters.

Valles Marineris, extending over 4,000 km along Mars' equatorial belt, previously held paleolakes containing 2,369 trillion cubic meters of water.

The event occurred during the Late Hesperian to Early Amazonian transition, providing vital clues about Mars' historic hydrological cycle and climate evolution.

Relevant for GS Paper III Science & Technology under Space Exploration, planetary geology, and astrobiological habitability studies.



STORY 2 Times of India

Scientists reconstruct 165-million-year-old Jurassic insect calls using artificial intelligence

Researchers used fossilized wings, laser imaging, and AI models to reconstruct sound calls of nine extinct Jurassic insect species from Inner Mongolia.

Published in **PNAS**, the bioacoustic study analyzed 20 fossil specimens of ancient cricket and katydid relatives dating back 165 million years.

Reconstructions revealed that species like **Sigmaboilus peregrinus** emitted calls between 20 and 22 kilohertz, exceeding normal human hearing capacity.

The findings prove that ultrasonic insect communication had already evolved alongside dinosaurs during the Jurassic Period.

Relevant for GS Paper III Science & Technology under Artificial Intelligence applications, evolutionary biology, and paleontology.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Covers ancient planetary hydrology on Mars and artificial intelligence applications in paleontology bioacoustics under GS-III Science & Tech.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Valles Marineris on Mars is the largest canyon system in the Solar System, stretching over 4,000 kilometers along the Martian equator.
- Human hearing frequency range typically spans 20 Hz to 20,000 Hz (20 kHz); frequencies above 20 kHz are classified as ultrasonic.
- The Late Hesperian to Early Amazonian epoch on Mars was characterized by major geological transitions and episodic catastrophic flooding.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Cross-disciplinary scientific innovations combining space geology and AI-driven bioacoustics offer groundbreaking insights into planetary hydrologic histories and prehistoric terrestrial biomes.

DIMENSIONS

- **Planetary Hydrology:** Catastrophic paleolake breaches in Mars' Valles Marineris canyon released over 1,200 trillion cubic meters of water, altering global Martian ocean levels.
- **Computational Paleontology:** Utilizing AI modeling, laser scans, and fossil wing morphology allows precise digital reconstruction of soundscapes from 165 million years ago.
- **Evolutionary Acoustics:** Prehistoric Jurassic insects evolved high-frequency ultrasonic communication (above 20 kHz) millions of years prior to modern specialized acoustic fauna.

Way forward: Promote interdisciplinary research funding combining planetary geology, machine learning, and evolutionary biology to expand planetary discovery capabilities.

PYQ LINK

Discuss how technological advancements in artificial intelligence and space science contribute to our understanding of planetary evolution and ancient ecosystems.

KEY TERMS

Valles Marineris

Paleolake Outburst Flood

Late Hesperian Epoch

Bioacoustics

Ultrasonic Insects

ACTS & ARTICLES

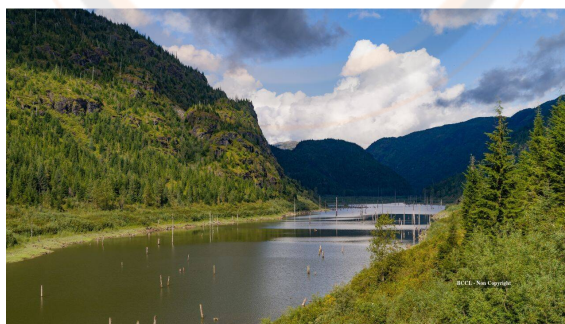
ISRO Space Vision 2047

National Deep Tech Startup Policy

07

GEOGRAPHY

Geomorphological Dynamics and Floating Ecosystems in Hydrological Reservoirs



STORY 1

Times of India

Massive floating forested island drifts 30 kilometers across Canadian reservoir

A large forested peat island detached from the shoreline of Williston Reservoir, Canada, drifting 30 kilometers downstream over 15 days.

Scientists observed that the floating landmass maintained mature spruce trees, active bird nests, and localized wildlife throughout its migration.

Geomorphologists attributed the detachment to saturated peaty soils along the edge of the artificial lake formed by the W.A.C. Bennett Dam.

The event prompted technical studies on how climate variability, fluctuating reservoir levels, and soil thawing increase drifting landmass occurrences.

Relevant for GS Paper I Physical Geography under geomorphological processes, wetland dynamics, and GS Paper III environmental management.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Examines geomorphological soil displacement, reservoir dynamics, and climate-induced peatland instability under GS-I Geography and GS-III Environment.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Williston Reservoir, located on the Peace River in British Columbia, is created by the W.A.C. Bennett Dam and is one of North America's largest artificial lakes.
- Floating islands (typha mats or peat hummocks) detach when buoyant organic peat soils separate from saturated bedrock under wave action and wind.
- Peatlands store vast quantities of organic carbon; soil saturation changes exacerbated by warming temperatures increase peat detachment frequency.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Large artificial reservoirs alter local geomorphology and hydrodynamics, occasionally detaching massive floating organic landmasses that impact ecology and navigation.

DIMENSIONS

- **Geomorphological Mechanism:** Prolonged water saturation and wave action in boreal peatlands weaken structural root matrices, causing entire forested peat blocks to detach.
- **Ecological Mobility:** Drifting landmasses function as mobile micro-ecosystems, transporting mature trees, nesting bird populations, and soil organisms across lake basins.
- **Infrastructure Risk:** Large floating forested islands pose potential navigation hazards and operational risks to hydroelectric dam intake structures downstream.

Way forward: Incorporate satellite remote-sensing surveillance for reservoir shorelines and develop engineering booms to anchor unstable peatlands near dam infrastructures.

PYQ LINK

Examine the geomorphological mechanisms responsible for soil erosion and landmass displacement near major artificial hydrological reservoirs.

KEY TERMS

Floating Peat Island

Williston Reservoir

Geomorphology

Peatland Saturation

Reservoir Operations

ACTS & ARTICLES

National Dam Safety Act Framework

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Social Infrastructure, Human Capital, and Cultural Heritage Preservation



STORY 1 The Hindu

Prime Minister urges teachers to address student screen addiction and drug risks

Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged educators to combat excessive screen time and substance addiction among children during an interaction with 82 awardee teachers.

Modi advocated encouraging physical sports, outdoor activities, and creative hobbies to nurture children's natural curiosity and protect emotional childhood development.

The awardees comprised 48 school teachers, 21 higher education faculty members, and 13 skill trainers recognized under National Teachers Awards.

Teachers shared innovative classroom approaches aimed at replacing passive digital consumption with experiential and interactive learning models.

Relevant for GS Paper II Education, Social Sector Development, child mental health policies, and NEP 2020 pedagogical objectives.



STORY 2 The Hindu

Historic restoration of Kamal Amrohi classic Pakeezah selected for Lyon Film Festival

Kamal Amrohi's 1972 cinematic masterpiece *Pakeezah* was painstakingly restored from damaged negative reels and fading archival audio elements.

The newly restored version of the classic film will be showcased internationally at the prestigious Festival Lumière in Lyon, France.

Restoration technicians spent months repairing brittle film stocks to preserve the rich portrayal of Lucknow's historical Nawabi culture and Urdu poetry.

Archivists emphasized that systematic restoration is crucial to safeguard India's cinematic history from irreversible chemical degradation.

Relevant for GS Paper I Art & Culture under preservation of tangible and intangible heritage, art forms, and Indian cultural cinema history.



STORY 3 The Hindu

Kerala Police file cases under Scheduled Castes Act following political scuffle

Chirayinkeezhu police in Kerala registered cross-cases involving MLA Ramya Haridas and 15 political workers following a violent public altercation.

Police booked seven identified individuals under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita provisions and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

A counter-complaint was filed against the legislator, prompting law enforcement to conduct cautious statement recordings from both sides.

Investigating officers emphasized adhering strictly to statutory procedural safeguards provided under specialized social justice legislation.

Relevant for GS Paper II Statutory Bodies, Criminal Justice System, and implementation of SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities statutory frameworks.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Covers child psychology, educational innovations, digital health risks, and tangible cultural heritage restoration under GS-I Culture and GS-II Education.

PRELIMS FACTS

- National Teachers' Awards in India recognize educators across three divisions: School Education, Higher Education, and Skill Development.
- Film preservation utilizes digital restoration techniques to recover degraded cellulose nitrate and acetate negative stocks.
- The Festival Lumière in Lyon, France is one of the premier international film festivals dedicated to classic cinema restoration and heritage.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Building robust human capital requires addressing modern lifestyle vulnerabilities among youth while simultaneously safeguarding historical art and cultural expressions.

DIMENSIONS

- **Educational & Behavioral Dimension:** Excessive screen exposure and substance risks among students demand preventive counseling, sports integration, and curiosity-driven pedagogy.
- **Institutional Recognition:** Honoring innovative educators across primary, higher, and vocational streams incentivizes grassroots pedagogical reforms.
- **Cultural Archival Dimension:** Restoring iconic cinematic masterworks preserves intangible socio-cultural traditions, dialects, and artistic craftsmanship for global heritage.

Way forward: Mandate balanced digital wellness curricula in schools, expand sports infrastructure, and establish a National Film Archival Mission with modern technical facilities.

PYQ LINK

Evaluate the social impact of excessive digital screen exposure on child development and assess the role of value-based education in mitigating youth vulnerabilities.

KEY TERMS

Digital Addiction in Youth

Holistic Education

National Teachers Awards

Film Archiving and Restoration

Cultural Heritage Preservation

ACTS & ARTICLES

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

Article 49 - Protection of Monuments and Places of National Importance

Practice MCQs (UPSC Prelims)

Attempt these questions on your own first. The answer key is on the next page.

GEOGRAPHY

Global Cartography and UNGA Resolutions on Geographic Representation

United Nations General Assembly adopts resolution endorsing Equal Earth projection map

Q1. With reference to cartographic map projections, consider the following statements: 1. The Equal Earth projection is an equal-area map projection that maintains the accurate relative proportions of landmasses. 2. The traditional Mercator projection accurately represents landmass areas near the poles while shrinking landmasses near the equator. 3. The UN General Assembly adopted the 'Correct The Map' resolution to promote equal-area map projections. Which of the statements given above are correct?

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| A. 1 and 2 only | B. 1 and 3 only |
| C. 2 and 3 only | D. 1, 2 and 3 |

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

Biodiversity Discoveries and Species Conservation in Tropical Ecosystems

Botanists discover non-photosynthetic devil flower species in Thailand rainforest

Q2. Regarding botanical adaptations, what defines a 'mycoheterotrophic' plant such as the newly discovered *Thismia daemona*?

- | | |
|--|--|
| A. It fixes atmospheric nitrogen using leaf nodule bacteria. | B. It relies entirely on insect carnivory for nitrogen intake. |
| C. It lacks chlorophyll and derives nutrients through symbiotic fungal networks. | D. It absorbs nutrients directly from ambient rainfall through aerial roots. |

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Judicial Service Administration and Institutional Cadre Capacity

Supreme Court urges uniform elevation of district judicial retirement age to 62 years

Q3. In the context of judicial administration in India, consider the following statements: 1. The working strength of judicial officers in India's district judiciary is around 21,000 against a sanctioned strength of over 25,000. 2. Total case pendency across India's district judiciary currently exceeds 5 crore cases. 3. High Courts have suggested that extending the retirement age of district judges beyond 60 years should be subject to performance evaluation. Which of the statements given above are correct?

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| A. 1 and 2 only | B. 2 and 3 only |
| C. 1 and 3 only | D. 1, 2 and 3 |

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Planetary Geology, Astrobiology, and Bioacoustics Research

Ancient Martian paleolake flood raised sea level by 34 meters study reveals

Q4. Valles Marineris, recently featured in planetary geology studies regarding ancient paleolake floods, is located on which planetary body?

- | | |
|----------|---------|
| A. Venus | B. Mars |
|----------|---------|

C. Jupiter's moon Ganymede

D. Earth's Moon

INTERNAL SECURITY

Internal Security and Prevention of Organised Crime and Arms Theft

National Investigation Agency probes missing service weapons from Secunderabad Army camp

Q5. Which central agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs primarily investigates offenses affecting the sovereignty, security, and integrity of India, including weapon breaches from military depots?

A. Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

B. National Investigation Agency (NIA)

C. Enforcement Directorate (ED)

D. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

Biodiversity Discoveries and Species Conservation in Tropical Ecosystems

Critically endangered Mindoro bleeding-heart pigeon photographed after two decades

Q6. The critically endangered Mindoro bleeding-heart pigeon (*Gallicolumba platenae*) is endemic to which island nation?

A. Indonesia

B. Philippines

C. Madagascar

D. Papua New Guinea



Answer Key — Practice MCQs

Quick reference and explanations for the practice questions on the previous page.

Q1: B

Q2: C

Q3: D

Q4: B

Q5: B

Q6: B

Q1 Option B · 1 and 3 only

Statements 1 and 3 are correct. The Equal Earth projection is an equal-area projection that accurately displays landmass proportions, and UNGA adopted the 'Correct The Map' resolution to endorse it. Statement 2 is incorrect because the Mercator projection drastically inflates landmasses near the poles (such as Greenland) rather than shrinking them.

Q2 Option C · It lacks chlorophyll and derives nutrients through symbiotic fungal networks.

Mycoheterotrophic plants (such as *Thesium daemona*) contain no chlorophyll and cannot photosynthesise. Instead, they obtain organic nutrients by parasitizing underground fungal networks connected to other plants.

Q3 Option D · 1, 2 and 3

All three statements are factually correct according to judicial data. Working strength is 21,027 against 25,894 sanctioned, pendency stands at 5.18 crore, and performance assessments were welcomed by the Supreme Court for extensions beyond 60 years.

Q4 Option B · Mars

Valles Marineris is the largest canyon system in the Solar System, stretching over 4,000 km across the equatorial region of Mars.

Q5 Option B · National Investigation Agency (NIA)

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is India's central counter-terrorism and specialized security law enforcement agency established under the NIA Act, 2008 to investigate offenses against national security and strategic installations.

Q6 Option B · Philippines

The Mindoro bleeding-heart pigeon is a critically endangered bird species endemic to the island of Mindoro in the Philippines.