

PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

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"From Daily News to Direct UPSC Questions"

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MoEF / WTO brief

§2 Polity & Governance

PMRC Scheme 2026 — Prime Minister Research Chair for Global Indian Scientists

WHY IN NEWS

Department of Higher Education launched the PMRC Scheme 2026, inviting Indian-origin researchers from top global universities to take up positions at India's premier institutions from 1 June 2026.

PRELIMS FACTS

BACKGROUND

Part of India's strategy to reverse brain drain and build a world-class domestic research ecosystem aligned with Anusandhan National Research Foundation objectives.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Three categories: Young Research Fellows, Senior Research Fellows, Research Chairs
- Benefits worth up to ₹14 crore per fellow (grants + relocation + lab access)
- Covers 13 national priority sectors including Advanced Computing, Semiconductors, Cybersecurity
- Host institutions: Top 100 NIRF Overall/Engineering or Top 50 NIRF Research-ranked govt. bodies
- Brain drain reversal: India competes globally for talent, not just students
- Industry–academia interface: private labs and tech industries now eligible as sources
- Federalism angle: NIRF-ranked state institutions can also host, decentralising excellence

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS2: Government Policies

GS3: R&D and Innovation

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2022: "Discuss India's initiatives to promote research and innovation in higher education."

Consider statements on PMRC Scheme 2026:

1. Only Indian nationals working abroad are eligible as fellows.
2. Host institutions must figure in NIRF rankings.
3. The scheme covers 13 national priority sectors.

Answer: Only 2 & 3 are correct.

OCI cardholders and Persons of Indian Origin are also eligible, making statement 1 incorrect.

Q. "The PMRC Scheme represents a structural shift in India's approach to talent retention." Critically examine. (250 words)

GS2

PYQ-Linked

Brain Drain

NIRF

ANRF

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

PMRC is India's answer to the "knowledge diaspora" — it doesn't just want NRIs to send remittances; it wants them to send ideas. Connect this to NEP 2020's internationalisation goals and the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam principle in knowledge sharing.

Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) — India's First Rural Body Evaluation Framework

WHY IN NEWS

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj introduced the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI), India's first comprehensive analytics-driven framework to evaluate, score, and rank rural local bodies.

PRELIMS FACTS

- PAI assesses panchayats on 9 thematic areas aligned with Localisation of SDGs

BACKGROUND

Decentralisation under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment mandates devolution of powers to PRIs; PAI operationalises accountability by measuring outcomes across 9 themes linked to SDGs.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Accountability gap: India had fiscal devolution but lacked outcome measurement at panchayat level

- First comprehensive, analytics-driven evaluation of all gram panchayats in India
- Linked to Ministry of Panchayati Raj's Gram Swaraj portal
- Provides state-level and national-level comparative rankings
- Data-driven governance: PAI brings GovTech to grassroots administration
- 73rd Amendment fulfilment: moves beyond electoral decentralisation to functional decentralisation

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS2: Local Governance

GS2: Constitutional Bodies

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2021: "Assess the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India."

The Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) is primarily designed to:

(a) Elect gram panchayat heads (b) Rank panchayats on SDG-linked outcomes (c) Manage MGNREGS fund flows (d) Audit rural roads under PMGSY

Answer: (b)

PAI is an analytics-driven evaluation framework ranking gram panchayats on 9 SDG-linked themes.

Q. "The Panchayat Advancement Index can bridge the accountability deficit in India's decentralisation story." Discuss. (250 words)

GS2

PYQ-Linked

73rd Amendment

SDGs

Decentralisation

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

Remember the 3 Fs of Panchayati Raj — Funds, Functions, Functionaries. PAI now adds a 4th F: Feedback. Without measurement, devolution is just paper transfer of power, not real governance.

§3 International Relations

India–Australia Defence MoU — Co-Production of Military Hardware

WHY IN NEWS

Following the 2nd India-Australia Defence Ministers' Dialogue, both nations agreed to develop an MoU for provision of defence articles and services, marking a significant step toward co-production.

PRELIMS FACTS

- 2nd India-Australia Defence Ministers' Dialogue held in India (June 2026)

BACKGROUND

India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020) elevated ties; the 2020 Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement (MLSA) already enables logistics sharing; this MoU deepens defence-industrial linkages.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- QUAD consolidation: India-Australia defence ties strengthen the Quad's operational depth

- Countries to jointly explore sensor technology and advanced defence R&D areas
- Search & Rescue (SAR) tabletop exercise planned at MRCC Chennai
- Builds on 2020 Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement (MLSA)
- Diversification of defence supply chains: reduces over-dependence on Russia/US
- Indo-Pacific maritime security: joint SAR exercises signal shared governance of IOR

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS2: India's Bilateral Relations

GS3: Internal Security / Defence

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2023: "Examine India's growing strategic partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region."

Which of the following best describes the India-Australia MLSA (2020)?

- (a) A free trade pact (b) A logistics support arrangement for military operations (c) A cyber security treaty (d) A joint naval command agreement

Answer: (b)

MLSA allows reciprocal access to military logistics facilities — fuel, supplies, and maintenance support during exercises and operations.

Q. "India's defence partnerships in the Indo-Pacific reflect a strategic balancing act." Analyse with reference to India-Australia ties. (250 words)

GS2

PYQ-Linked

QUAD

Indo-Pacific

Make in India

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

Australia is the missing piece in India's defence supply chain story — a democracy, a Five Eyes member, a vast EEZ, and a rare earths giant. An MoU here is not just military; it's about minerals, maritime surveillance, and mutual deterrence.

India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme at WTO — Green Trade Diplomacy

WHY IN NEWS

India organized a special session at WTO Trade and Environment Week 2026 in Geneva, showcasing its Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) and renewable energy standardisation milestones.

PRELIMS FACTS

- India's non-fossil fuel installed capacity: 53.21% (as of March 2026) — exceeded 50% NDC target
- Emissions intensity of GDP fell 37.38% between 2005–2022 (NDC target: 33–35%)
- CCTS aims to establish a national electronic carbon credit trading platform

BACKGROUND

India's CCTS framework under the Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act 2022 created the Indian Carbon Market (ICM); India's NDC commitments include 45% emissions intensity reduction by 2030.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Carbon border adjustment: India using WTO platform to pre-empt EU CBAM concerns
- South-South leadership: India positions itself as model for emerging economies on green transition
- Trade-environment nexus: CCTS links domestic compliance to international trade credibility

- Green Hydrogen Mission emission thresholds also presented at the WTO event

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS2: International Bodies (WTO)

GS3: Environment & Economy

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2022: "Discuss India's commitments under the Paris Agreement and domestic policy measures."

The Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) in India was enabled by which legislation?

(a) Environment Protection Act, 1986 (b) Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (c) Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022 (d) Climate Action Bill, 2023

Answer: (c)

The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022 provided the statutory basis for India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme and the Indian Carbon Market.

Q. "India's performance on climate NDCs is a story of exceeding targets ahead of schedule." Substantiate and examine remaining challenges. (250 words)

GS2

GS3

PYQ-Linked

CCTS

NDC

WTO

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

India didn't go to Geneva to defend itself — it went to teach. When a country that contributes less than 4% of global cumulative emissions arrives at WTO having exceeded its 2030 targets in 2026, that is geopolitical credibility made from climate action.

§4 Defence & Security

Rampage Missile — India Fast-Tracks Domestic Production Post-Operation Sindoor

WHY IN NEWS

India is fast-tracking large-scale domestic production of the Rampage supersonic air-to-ground missile after its highly successful deployment in Operation Sindoor (May 2025).

PRELIMS FACTS

- Rampage: Israeli air-to-surface missile; supersonic; range ~150 km; high precision

BACKGROUND

Rampage is an Israeli-designed supersonic air-to-surface missile (range 150+ km). It was deployed from IAF Su-30MKI and Jaguar jets during Operation Sindoor to strike terrorist infrastructure in Bahawalpur and Muridke.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Atma Nirbhar Bharat in defence: reducing single-source dependence on Israel/Russia

- Used during Operation Sindoor (May 2025): 9 Pakistani terror camps struck
- Production roadmap: 3 phases — SKD (Semi-Knocked-Down) from late 2026; full domestic by 2028
- Aerospace Services India (ASI): joint entity of IAI + DRDO for India-based production
- Technology transfer milestones: SKD → CKD → full indigenous production model
- Deterrence calculus: domestic missile stockpile readiness signals strategic depth

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS3: Internal Security

GS3: Defence Industry

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2023: "Examine the significance of indigenisation of defence production for India's strategic autonomy."

Which of the following is CORRECT regarding the Rampage missile?

1. It is a surface-to-air missile.
2. It was used in Operation Sindoor in 2025.
3. India is developing it solely through DRDO without foreign collaboration.

Answer: Only 2 is correct.

Rampage is an air-to-surface missile (not surface-to-air), and its India-based production involves Aerospace Services India — a DRDO-IAI joint entity.

Q. "Operation Sindoor has become the inflection point for India's defence indigenisation programme." Critically examine. (250 words)

GS3

PYQ-Linked

Atma Nirbhar

Operation Sindoor

DRDO

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

Every war teaches a lesson. Operation Sindoor taught India that combat-proven missiles must be stockpiled domestically — because emergencies don't wait for procurement cycles. This is exactly why Atma Nirbhar Bharat in defence matters beyond slogans.

§5 Science & Technology

Indian Navy's IONS Chairmanship (2026–28) — Maritime Technology & Security Cooperation

WHY IN NEWS

India assumed chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) at the 9th Chiefs' Conclave in

BACKGROUND

IONS was established in 2008 by the Indian Navy as a multilateral naval forum for IOR coastal states; India's

Visakhapatnam, marking India's return to the helm after 16 years (last chaired in 2008).

PRELIMS FACTS

- IONS: Indian Ocean Naval Symposium; founded 2008 by Indian Navy
- 9th Conclave held at Visakhapatnam; 33 countries — members, observers, IOR littoral states
- Three Working Groups: Maritime Security; HADR; Information Sharing & Interoperability
- India to conduct IONS Maritime Exercise (IMEX) and deploy IOS SAGAR during its tenure

IONS tenure (2026–28) follows Thailand's (2024–26) chairmanship.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- SAGAR doctrine operationalised: IONS is the institutional expression of India's maritime neighbourhood policy
- IOR governance: filling the institutional gap between bilateral naval ties and multilateral ocean governance
- Technology sharing: IMEX and IOS SAGAR enable interoperability — critical for HADR and anti-piracy

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS2: International Organisations

GS3: Maritime Security

PYQ Linkage: GS2 2021: "What is QUAD? How does India view its role in the Indo-Pacific maritime security architecture?"

The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) was established in:

(a) 2002 (b) 2006 (c) 2008 (d) 2012

Answer: (c) 2008

IONS was established in 2008 during India's earlier chairmanship — the same year India hosted the inaugural conclave. India has now assumed chairmanship again after 16 years.

Q. "India's IONS chairmanship signals a shift from reactive naval presence to proactive maritime governance in the IOR." Discuss. (250 words)

GS2

GS3

PYQ-Linked

IONS

IOR

SAGAR

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

IONS, IORA, QUAD, MILAN — India is building overlapping maritime institutions like concentric rings of influence. The IOR is not just India's backyard; it is the world's most contested maritime commons. India's chairmanship is about setting the rules of engagement.

§6 Economy

RBI MPC — Repo Rate Held at 5.25%; Neutral Stance Amid West Asia Tensions

WHY IN NEWS

The RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) kept the repo rate unchanged at 5.25% in its June 2026 bi-

BACKGROUND

RBI had cumulatively cut the repo rate by 75 bps in FY27 before pausing; the US-Iran conflict drove

monthly review, maintaining a neutral policy stance amid rising global uncertainty due to the West Asia conflict.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Current Repo Rate: 5.25% (unchanged in June 2026 MPC meeting)
- MPC stance: Neutral (watching for inflationary risks from West Asia)
- ATF prices: surged 2.5× in 2 months due to US-Iran war impact
- Government allocated ₹10,000 crore via petroleum ministry for fuel price stabilisation

international ATF prices from ₹60.50/litre (March 2026) to ₹142/litre (May 2026), creating an inflationary shock.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Imported inflation: India remains vulnerable to global energy price volatility — structural concern
- Growth-inflation trade-off: neutral stance prioritises watching over acting — reflects data dependency
- Fuel price management: fiscal intervention (₹10,000 cr) vs. market pricing — electoral economy tension

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS3: Indian Economy — Monetary Policy

PYQ Linkage: GS3 2022: "Evaluate the role of the RBI's monetary policy in controlling inflation while sustaining growth."

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI comprises:

(a) 3 RBI members + 3 government nominees (b) 4 RBI members + 2 government nominees (c) 6 RBI members only (d) 3 RBI members + 3 external experts

Answer: (a)

MPC has 6 members — 3 from RBI (including Governor as chair) and 3 external members nominated by the Government of India.

Q. "A neutral monetary policy stance in times of imported inflation reflects both prudence and limitation." Critically examine in the context of India's June 2026 MPC decision. (250 words)

GS3

PYQ-Linked

MPC

Repo Rate

Inflation

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

India can control the rupee printing press but not the price of oil. When war breaks out in West Asia, India's inflation becomes a geopolitical hostage. That is why energy diversification (solar, green hydrogen) is ultimately the most powerful monetary policy India can run.

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