

THEIAS AKADEMIA PRESENTS

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The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning.

PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

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— *The Topper's Last Read* —

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GS3

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences awards the 2026 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences jointly to Robert E. Hall and Michael Woodford for work explaining business-cycle fluctuations and the credibility of monetary-policy rules.
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GS2

Ministry of AYUSH releases India's first Standard Treatment Guidelines for dermatological disorders under classical Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani protocols, aimed at standardising traditional-medicine prescriptions nationwide.
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GS3

RBI conducts a ₹1.5-lakh-crore overnight Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR) auction to absorb surplus banking-system liquidity ahead of the festive-season currency demand spike.
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GS3

Gross GST collections for September 2026 rise 14.7% year-on-year to ₹2.04 lakh crore — the third straight month above the ₹2-lakh-crore mark.
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GS2

Delhi High Court is listed to hear a challenge to Delhi Police's 11 October order de-notifying Jantar Mantar as a protest venue (full card below).
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GS3

CeNS Bengaluru scientists show how a single methylene spacer alters peptide self-assembly behaviour, with implications for drug-delivery and biomaterial design, published in *Polymer Chemistry*.
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GS1

India Meteorological Department launches a WebGIS-based Cyclone Warning and Marine Weather Services Decision Support System ahead of the post-monsoon cyclone season in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
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GS2

Union Health Secretary directs States/UTs to tighten enforcement of mandatory healthcare-rate display at hospitals and clinics under the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010.
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GS3

Empowered Group of Secretaries approves the first 19 Second-Level Fund Managers under the Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme to begin routing patient capital to sunrise-sector R&D (full card below).

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GS2

First-ever BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting, chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi, adopts the “Delhi Declaration” and five regional-security frameworks (full card below).

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GS3

ISRO Chairman S. Somanath confirms 21 October 2026 as the date for Gaganyaan's maiden TV-D1 test-vehicle flight to validate the crew-module escape system (full card below).

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GS2

United Nations' International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction is observed worldwide with the 2026 theme “Resilience Starts at Home,” spotlighting community-level preparedness (full card below).

2

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

3 CARDS

GS2

Fundamental Rights · Freedom of Assembly (Art. 19)

11–12 October 2026 · Source: Delhi Police order; Supreme Court proceedings

Jantar Mantar De-Notified as a Protest Site — Dissent Looks for a New Address

Why in News: On 11 October 2026, Delhi Police Commissioner Anurag Kumar signed a standing order partially modifying the force's 28 April 2022 order and formally de-notifying Jantar Mantar — India's best-known protest address since 1993 — as a designated demonstration venue. Three alternative sites were named: Ramlila Ground (Old Delhi, ≈3 km away), CBD Ground (East Delhi, ≈13.5 km), and Burari Ground (North Delhi, ≈44 km from the city centre), with detailed SOPs for each to follow separately. The order came two days after a Supreme Court bench, hearing pleas against metro and rail restrictions imposed ahead of planned 10 October protests, asked the “competent authority” to identify a larger, better-equipped venue — a suggestion both petitioners and the government accepted in principle.

Background: Protests shifted to Jantar Mantar in 1993 after the colonial-era Boat Club lawn near India Gate was closed to demonstrations on security and heritage grounds. In 2017 the National Green Tribunal banned protests along the Jantar Mantar stretch over noise and air pollution, redirecting gatherings to Ramlila Maidan; in July 2018 a three-judge Supreme Court bench set aside that blanket ban, holding that peaceful assembly under Article 19(1)

(b) cannot be extinguished outright but only reasonably regulated under Article 19(3) to protect public order and the rights of nearby residents. Because “public order” and “police” sit in the State List (Entries 1 and 2, List II of the Seventh Schedule), the Centre's position — reiterated in a 24 March 2026 Lok Sabha reply — has been that permitting and site-selection for protests rests primarily with the Delhi Police/State machinery, not a fixed constitutional entitlement to one address; Delhi's unique status as a Union Territory with a Legislature, where police remain a Central subject under the Lieutenant Governor even though public order is nominally devolved elsewhere, sharpens the accountability question of who truly decides where India protests.

KEY FACTS

- Standing order dated 11 October 2026, signed by Delhi Police Commissioner Anurag Kumar, modifying the 28 April 2022 order.
- Three new designated protest sites: Ramlila Ground, CBD Ground, and Burari Ground — site-specific SOPs to follow.
- Jantar Mantar has served as India's principal protest venue since 1993, following the Boat Club ban.
- 2017: NGT bans protests on the Jantar Mantar stretch over noise/air pollution; redirects gatherings to Ramlila Maidan.
- July 2018: Supreme Court sets aside the NGT's blanket ban, affirming a *regulable, not absolute*, right to protest there.
- 9 October 2026: SC, hearing pleas on metro/rail curbs before planned protests, calls for a “larger, better-equipped” venue.
- “Public order” and “Police” are State List subjects (Entries 1 & 2, List II) — reaffirmed in a 24 March 2026 Lok Sabha reply.
- Delhi High Court was listed to hear a separate challenge to the de-notification order itself.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests the Article 19(1)(b)–19(3) balance: peaceful assembly is fundamental, but subject to “reasonable restrictions” in the interest of public order — the de-notification must still pass that proportionality test, not merely assert administrative convenience.
- Delhi's hybrid federal status (Union Territory with Legislature, police retained by the Centre via the L-G) sharpens the accountability question of who actually decides where India's capital can protest, compared to a full State.
- Symbolic-capital argument: critics say shifting protests away from the seat of government dilutes the visibility that gives protest its democratic function, while the State's case rests on residents' Article 21 right to a peaceful environment and on security logistics.
- Comparative angle: London's Parliament Square and Washington's Lafayette Square face similar “buffer-zone” debates — the assembly-rights-versus-seat-of-government-security tension is a universal constitutional problem, not an India-specific anomaly.
- Way forward: a transparent, consultative, ideally court-monitored process to select and properly equip an alternative site would meet the Supreme Court's own suggestion without

diminishing the underlying right.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the 2018 Jantar Mantar case as the “regulate, don't eliminate” precedent — just as a noisy neighbour can be asked to lower the volume but not evicted from the colony, the State may regulate *when, where and how loudly* you protest, but Article 19(1)(b) itself cannot be switched off.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 Mains 2022 (thematic): restrictions on freedom of speech/assembly and the proportionality standard — flagged as thematic linkage, not an exact year-match.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the freedom of peaceful assembly in India:

1. It is guaranteed under Article 19(1)(b) of the Constitution.
2. It is available to foreign nationals residing in India on the same footing as citizens.
3. “Public order” and “Police” are subjects placed in the State List of the Seventh Schedule.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) 1 only

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is incorrect — Article 19 freedoms, including assembly, are available only to citizens, not to foreign nationals.

Article 19

Freedom of Assembly

Seventh Schedule

NGT

Delhi Police

MEMORY TECHNIQUE — RETURNING TOPIC

Previously covered: 7 October 2026 (West Bengal SIR appeal-backlog/bypoll framing)

What's new today:

INDIA bloc leaders have escalated from a State-specific appeals-backlog grievance to a national, pan-opposition Supreme Court petition that directly questions the Special Intensive Revision's legal basis, alleges large-scale unexplained deletions, and seeks a court-monitored probe plus a review of paper-trail (VVPAT) safeguards.

UPSC relevance shift:

Moves the card from an administrative/appeals-process angle (GS2 governance mechanics) to a constitutional-institutional one — the ECI's Article 324 mandate, Section 21/21-A of the RP Act 1950 on roll revision, and the judiciary's evolving posture on electoral-roll litigation.

GS2

Elections · Representation of the People Act, 1950 (S.21/21-A)

12 October 2026 · Source: Supreme Court filing coverage; ECI framework documents

INDIA Bloc Moves Supreme Court Against the Special Intensive Revision of Electoral Rolls

Why in News: On 12 October 2026, Rahul Gandhi and ten other INDIA bloc leaders filed a fresh petition before the Supreme Court against the Election Commission's ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging large-scale, unexplained voter deletions across several States and seeking an independent, court-monitored probe alongside a review of paper-trail verification safeguards for EVMs. The petitioners argue the exercise has disproportionately struck off migrant workers, the urban poor, and minority-community voters who could not produce the specified documents within the revision's compressed timeline.

Background: SIR is conducted under Section 21/21-A of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, which empowers the ECI to intensively revise electoral rolls — as distinct from the routine annual “summary revision” — whenever it deems a constituency's rolls to need a ground-up clean-up of duplicate, deceased, or shifted entries. The present SIR round began in Bihar in 2025 ahead of that State's Assembly election and has since been extended to several other States through 2026. The ECI maintains the exercise is a legally mandated, document-based accuracy drive under its Article 324 superintendence mandate; opposition parties counter that the compressed timelines and document requirements function as a de facto disenfranchisement tool for the already-vulnerable.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Petition filed 12 October 2026 by Rahul Gandhi and ten other INDIA bloc leaders directly before the Supreme Court.
- SIR is conducted under Section 21/21-A of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.
- The present SIR round began in Bihar (2025) and has since been extended across further States through 2026.
- Petitioners seek: (i) an independent probe into alleged deletions, and (ii) a review of EVM-era VVPAT verification safeguards.
- The ECI's authority to superintend, direct and control elections flows from Article 324 of the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court has previously intervened on SIR timelines and documentation lists in related 2025–26 litigation.

- Electoral-roll preparation is otherwise governed by the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests the limits of the ECI's Article 324 "plenary power" doctrine (from *Mohinder Singh Gill v. CEC*, 1978) against statutory procedure under the RP Act — can an intensive revision override ordinary safeguards for due notice and appeal?
- Raises an inclusion-versus-integrity trade-off central to electoral management worldwide: purging genuinely invalid entries without disenfranchising legitimate but document-poor voters.
- Federal/political-economy angle: migrant workers crossing State lines are structurally more likely to be flagged in any document-heavy revision, intersecting with the broader internal-migration and interstate-portability-of-entitlements debate.
- The EVM-VVPAT demand revives the Court's own 2024 *Association for Democratic Reforms* line of cases on paper-trail verification percentages, suggesting institutional memory rather than a wholly new claim.
- Way forward: a published, auditable deletion list with a standing appellate window before rolls are finalised would meet most procedural objections without halting the broader accuracy exercise.

📌 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2022 (thematic): "Analyse the role of the Election Commission of India in the light of the evolution of the Model Code of Conduct" — flagged as thematic, not an exact year-match.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. With reference to the revision of electoral rolls in India, consider the following statements:

1. Intensive revision of electoral rolls is carried out under Section 21/21-A of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.
2. The Election Commission's power of superintendence, direction and control of elections flows from Article 324 of the Constitution.
3. Electoral rolls, once published after a Special Intensive Revision, cannot be amended before the next general election.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is incorrect — rolls remain subject to continuous/summary correction even after an intensive revision.

International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction 2026: “Resilience Starts at Home”

Why in News: The United Nations observed the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction on 13 October 2026 under the theme “Resilience Starts at Home,” a UNDRR framing that shifts emphasis from large infrastructure-only resilience to household- and community-level preparedness — retrofitted housing, early-warning literacy, and localised evacuation planning. In India, the observance coincided with NDMA-coordinated outreach on community-based disaster management and the ongoing State-level roll-out of the Aapda Mitra volunteer scheme.

Background: The day traces to the UN General Assembly's 1989 designation, repurposed in 2015 to track implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), the successor to the Hyogo Framework of Action. India operationalises its own disaster-management architecture through the Disaster Management Act, 2005, which created a three-tier structure — the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA, chaired by the Prime Minister), State Disaster Management Authorities, and District Disaster Management Authorities — and mandated the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) as the specialist response arm. The Sendai Framework's four priorities — understanding risk, strengthening governance, investing in resilience, and enhancing preparedness for “build back better” recovery — are the benchmark against which India's own National Disaster Management Plan is periodically revised.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- 2026 UNDRR theme: “Resilience Starts at Home,” emphasising household- and community-level preparedness.
- Sendai Framework for DRR (2015–2030) succeeded the Hyogo Framework of Action (2005–2015).
- India's Disaster Management Act, 2005 created the NDMA (chaired by the PM), SDMAAs, and DDMAAs.
- NDRF functions as India's specialist, multi-hazard disaster-response force under the 2005 Act.
- Sendai Framework's four priorities: understand risk; strengthen governance; invest in resilience; enhance preparedness for “build back better” recovery.
- Aapda Mitra is India's community volunteer scheme for last-mile disaster response, under continued State-wise expansion.
- The Day originated from a 1989 UN General Assembly designation, repurposed in 2015 to track Sendai Framework implementation.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- “Resilience starts at home” reframes DRR away from a purely top-down, infrastructure-funded model toward household retrofitting, insurance penetration, and citizen early-warning literacy — a governance-capacity question as much as an engineering one.
- India’s federal disaster-management structure (NDMA–SDMA–DDMA) is a useful case study in cooperative federalism, since response is State-led but funding/doctrine is Centrally coordinated through the National Disaster Response Fund and NDMA guidelines.
- Climate-attribution science increasingly links intensifying extreme-weather events to the growing frequency of “notified disasters,” raising the analytical question of whether India’s disaster list (presently excluding heatwaves as a notified natural disaster in most States) needs updating.
- “Build back better” as a Sendai priority is itself contested: faster reconstruction can conflict with more resilient (and costlier/slower) reconstruction — a genuine policy trade-off rather than a slogan.
- Community volunteer schemes like Aapda Mitra test the limits of the “last-mile state capacity” problem common to Indian welfare delivery more broadly.

LET’S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Pair the two Frameworks by their host cities: **Hyogo** (Japan, 2005) came first, **Sendai** (also Japan, 2015) came next — both frameworks are Japanese because Japan’s own earthquake/tsunami history made it the natural home for global DRR diplomacy.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2020 (thematic): “Disaster management is more about mitigation, not response” — discuss, with reference to the Sendai Framework priorities.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding India’s institutional disaster-management architecture:

1. The National Disaster Management Authority is chaired by the Prime Minister.
2. The National Disaster Response Force was constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
3. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction is legally binding on all UN member states.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is incorrect — the Sendai Framework is a voluntary, non-binding international agreement.

Sendai Framework

NDMA

Disaster Management Act 2005

Aapda Mitra

THEIAS AKADEMIA A dense, multi-angle Polity day like this — spanning Article 19 jurisprudence, electoral-law litigation and disaster-governance architecture — is exactly where one-on-one answer refinement pays off. If you're finding it hard to structure a 150-word GS2 answer that uses all three dimensions above without padding, that is precisely what **Sahyog Mentorship** — theiasakademia.com

3

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2 CARDS

GS2

India & its Neighbourhood · Regional Groupings (BIMSTEC)

13 October 2026 · Source: PIB; MHA press briefing

First-Ever BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting Adopts the “Delhi Declaration” and Five Security Frameworks

Why in News: Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired the first-ever BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi on 13 October 2026, bringing together the seven-member grouping — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand — to adopt the “Delhi Declaration” and approve five concrete regional-security initiatives on terrorism financing, trafficking, narcotics, illicit financial flows, and disaster-response coordination. The meeting, decided upon at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit in 2018, finally convened eight years later, with Shah telling delegates that India views drug trafficking as “death trafficking” and that the region's “terrorist networks are not allowed to find safe havens.” Bangladesh's Home Adviser notably skipped the meeting, a gap read by observers against the backdrop of Dhaka's post-2024 political transition and its cooling bilateral engagement with New Delhi.

Background: The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was established in 1997 and has long struggled against SAARC-style institutional inertia, convening summits irregularly and taking years to operationalise sectoral ministerial tracks. India has positioned BIMSTEC as the practical substitute for a SAARC paralysed by India-Pakistan tensions, since BIMSTEC excludes Pakistan and

bridges South and Southeast Asia along the Bay of Bengal littoral — aligning with India's Act East Policy and Neighbourhood First doctrine simultaneously. The Home Ministers' track specifically targets non-traditional security threats (terrorism, narcotics, cybercrime, trafficking) that conventional defence-ministerial cooperation does not cover, filling an institutional gap the grouping has carried since 2018.

KEY FACTS

- Seven BIMSTEC members: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand (Pakistan is not a member).
- Five frameworks adopted: (1) Convention against Trafficking in Persons; (2) Plan of Action on Drug Control; (3) MoU on Combating Money Laundering & Terror Financing; (4) Plan of Action on Illicit Financial Flows; (5) Plan of Action on Natural Disaster Preparedness in the Bay of Bengal region.
- The Home Ministers' track was first proposed at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit (Kathmandu, 2018) — convened only in 2026.
- A proposed BIMSTEC Disaster Management Centre is to be hosted in Jamnagar, Gujarat.
- BIMSTEC was established in 1997; its Secretariat is based in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh's Home Adviser was absent from the meeting — the only member not represented at Home Minister/equivalent level.
- BIMSTEC deliberately excludes Pakistan, positioning it as India's preferred alternative regional platform to a dormant SAARC.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests whether “functional regionalism” (cooperation on narrow, technical security tracks) can succeed where broad, summit-level regionalism (SAARC) has stalled — BIMSTEC's bet is that narcotics and trafficking cooperation is less politically fraught than trade or connectivity.
- Bangladesh's absence is a live case study in how a member's domestic political transition (post-Sheikh Hasina) can quietly erode a regional grouping's cohesion even without open withdrawal.
- The disaster-preparedness framework dovetails with India's existing Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) leadership, reinforcing India's bid to be seen as the Indian Ocean region's preferred “first responder.”
- Money-laundering/terror-financing cooperation intersects with India's FATF-related commitments, testing whether a seven-nation MoU can create real extradition-and-asset-recovery teeth, not just a declaratory framework.
- Comparative institutional point: unlike SAARC (headquartered in Kathmandu but paralysed since 2016), BIMSTEC's Dhaka-based Secretariat now sits awkwardly close to a member State that just skipped its own flagship meeting.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember BIMSTEC's five 2026 frameworks with the acronym **T-D-M-I-D**: Trafficking, Drugs, Money-laundering, Illicit finance, Disaster — the five non-traditional security “TDs” BIMSTEC's

Home Ministers just signed up to fight together.

 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2021: “Members of some AI expert groups...” — discuss significance of economic cooperation to ensure peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region” (thematic, re-purposed for BIMSTEC's Bay of Bengal relevance).

 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding BIMSTEC:

1. It was established in 1997 and its Secretariat is located in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
2. Pakistan is a member of BIMSTEC but not of SAARC.
3. The grouping brings together countries from both South Asia and Southeast Asia along the Bay of Bengal littoral.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is incorrect — Pakistan is a member of SAARC, not BIMSTEC.

BIMSTEC

Delhi Declaration

Amit Shah

Bay of Bengal

Non-Traditional Security

GS2

Bilateral Relations · India–UK CETA Implementation

12 October 2026 · Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry (PIB); UK Government statement

India and UK Reposition JETCO to Track Real-World Use of CETA Tariff Preferences

Why in News: India and the United Kingdom signed Terms of Reference on 12 October 2026 to reposition their bilateral Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO), agreeing for the first time to an annual exchange of data on how fully businesses on both sides are actually utilising the tariff preferences negotiated under the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). The move responds to a well-documented global pattern in which free trade agreements are signed with fanfare but see only partial “preference utilisation” by exporters, who often continue paying Most Favoured Nation (MFN) tariffs rather than navigating rules-of-origin paperwork to claim the lower CETA rate.

Background: India and the UK signed CETA in 2025 after nearly three years of negotiation, eliminating or phasing down tariffs across a wide range of goods while carving out sensitive

sectors. A trade deal's legal entry into force does not automatically translate into commercial benefit: exporters must prove originating status under the agreement's rules of origin, a compliance cost that historically suppresses utilisation rates to well below 100% for most FTAs, India's own FTA utilisation record (with ASEAN and Japan, for instance) has been criticised by the Economic Survey and various parliamentary standing committees for running under 25% in several product lines. JETCO itself is the pre-existing ministerial-level mechanism for India-UK trade dialogue, now being repurposed with a specific utilisation-monitoring mandate.

KEY FACTS

- India–UK CETA was signed in 2025 after roughly three years of negotiation.
- JETCO (Joint Economic and Trade Committee) is the ministerial-level India-UK trade dialogue mechanism, now repositioned with a monitoring mandate.
- Terms of Reference for annual preference-utilisation data exchange signed 12 October 2026.
- Preference utilisation refers to the share of eligible trade that actually claims an FTA's lower tariff, versus continuing to pay MFN rates.
- India's FTA utilisation rates with existing partners (e.g., ASEAN, Japan) have historically run below 25% in several product categories, per past Parliamentary Standing Committee findings.
- Rules of origin — the compliance mechanism proving a good “originates” in a treaty partner — are the principal friction point suppressing utilisation.
- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is the nodal department for CETA implementation on the Indian side.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Highlights a persistent gap in India's trade-policy toolkit: negotiating capacity has historically outpaced implementation and exporter-facilitation capacity, leaving FTA benefits under-claimed by the MSME exporters who would benefit most.
- Annual data exchange creates a rare, measurable accountability mechanism for an FTA — most trade agreements are evaluated only by ex-ante modelled gains, not ex-post utilisation audits.
- Tests whether simplifying rules-of-origin certification (self-certification vs third-party certificates of origin) could be the single highest-leverage reform to raise utilisation without renegotiating tariff lines.
- Comparative angle: the EU's own FTAs with South Korea and Canada faced similar early-utilisation lags before certificate-of-origin digitisation improved uptake — a template India-UK trade facilitation could borrow.
- Way forward: linking utilisation-tracking to targeted exporter helpdesks (as DGFT has piloted for CETA-sensitive sectors like textiles and leather) would convert this monitoring mechanism into an actual uptake driver.

GS3 2019 (thematic): “What are the main implications of the ongoing US-China trade war for India?” — repurposed for the broader FTA-utilisation theme.

 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. With reference to Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), consider the following statements:

1. “Preference utilisation rate” refers to the share of trade that actually avails the lower tariff negotiated under an FTA.
2. Rules of origin are criteria used to determine the national source of a traded product under an FTA.
3. India's CETA with the United Kingdom was signed before India's FTA with Japan.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is incorrect — India's Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Japan (2011) long predates the 2025 India-UK CETA.

India-UK CETA

JETCO

FTA Utilisation

Rules of Origin

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Regional groupings like BIMSTEC, their founding years, member lists and sectoral tracks are exactly the kind of static-meets-current material that gets cold-drilled, card by card, inside **ANTIM 2027** — theiasakademia.com

4

DEFENCE & SECURITY

1 CARD

GS3

Defence Platforms · Air Defence Architecture

Static Topic — not tied to a current event · Source: MoD/DRDO disclosures; defence-press reporting

S-400 Triumph (“Sudarshan Chakra”): India's Long-Range Air Defence Shield

Why in News: With no fresh, verified, non-blacklisted Defence story clearing the day's multi-source sweep (PIB/MoD, DRDO, Service HQ trackers, MP-IDSA, ORF), today's slot falls — per the pre-approved Rule 14/Part E static fallback — to a profile of the S-400 Triumf, the Russian-origin long-range surface-to-air missile system that forms the backbone of India's layered air defence and whose combat debut came during Operation Sindoor (May 2025).

Background: India signed a \$5.43-billion agreement with Russia in 2018 for five S-400 squadrons, officially designated “Sudarshan Chakra” in Indian service. The first three squadrons were inducted by 2023; deliveries of the remaining two were delayed by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and associated sanctions-linked supply disruptions before the fourth squadron arrived in mid-2026. During Operation Sindoor in May 2025, an S-400 battery reportedly downed a high-value Pakistani surveillance aircraft at a range exceeding 300 km — described by defence analysts as a record-setting intercept that validated the system's combat performance and reportedly prompted the Defence Acquisition Council to explore acquiring up to five additional squadrons, potentially doubling India's eventual fleet to ten.

KEY FACTS

- Manufacturer: Almaz-Antey (Russia); system NATO reporting name “SA-21 Growler”; Indian service name “Sudarshan Chakra.”
- 2018 agreement: \$5.43 billion for five squadrons; three inducted by 2023, a fourth delivered in 2026, fifth pending.
- Engagement range: reported up to ~400 km for the system's longest-range interceptor missile variant.
- Operation Sindoor (May 2025): credited with a 300+ km intercept of a high-value surveillance aircraft — a record-range kill.
- Forms a multi-layered air-defence network alongside the indigenous Akash, Israeli-origin Barak-8 (MR-SAM), and the under-development indigenous Project Kusha.
- Post-Sindoor validation reportedly prompted DAC exploration of 5 additional squadrons, potentially expanding the fleet to 10.
- Deployment doctrine covers both the western (Pakistan) and northern (China) sectors as part of India's integrated air-defence grid.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Illustrates the strategic cost of import dependence: sanctions on Russia directly delayed delivery of a frontline Indian defence asset, reinforcing the Atmanirbhar Bharat case for projects like the indigenous Project Kusha.
- Operation Sindoor's reported intercept range revives the long-running Prelims/Mains theme of India's layered, multi-vendor air-defence architecture (Akash + Barak-8 + S-400) as deliberate diversification against single-supplier risk.
- Raises a genuine policy trade-off: doubling the S-400 fleet deepens a Russia-dependent supply chain at the same time as India diversifies defence partnerships toward the US, France and Israel — a balancing act central to India's multi-alignment doctrine.

- Comparative angle: Turkey's acquisition of the S-400 triggered US CAATSA sanctions and expulsion from the F-35 programme — India's parallel acquisition, absorbed without equivalent penalty, is itself a data point on India's distinct strategic-autonomy leverage.
- Way forward: accelerating indigenous Project Kusha's induction timeline would hedge against future supply disruptions for whichever imported system India depends on next.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the S-400's Indian name literally: *Sudarshan Chakra* is Lord Krishna's discus — a weapon that strikes from a distance and returns — a fitting name for a missile system whose signature feature is engaging targets at extreme range.

📌 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2020 (thematic): "What is the significance of Industrial Corridors in India? Identify industrial corridors and explain their main characteristics." is unrelated — use instead GS3 2017 (thematic): India's defence indigenisation and import-dependence debate.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the S-400 Triumf air defence system:

1. It is manufactured by Almaz-Antey of Russia.
2. India's acquisition of the S-400 has attracted sanctions under the US CAATSA framework, as it did for Turkey.
3. It forms part of a layered Indian air-defence network that also includes the indigenous Akash and the Israeli-origin Barak-8 systems.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 2 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is incorrect — India's S-400 purchase has, to date, not triggered CAATSA sanctions, unlike Turkey's.

S-400

Sudarshan Chakra

Operation Sindoor

Air Defence

Project Kusha

THEIAS AKADEMIA

The S-400/CAATSA comparison above is a live illustration of strategic-autonomy ethics in foreign policy — the kind of real-world dilemma we dissect from first principles in **EMP (Ethics & Moral Philosophy)** — theiasakademia.com

GS3

Space Technology · Human Spaceflight (Gaganyaan)

12–13 October 2026 · Source: ISRO Chairman's statement

Gaganyaan's Maiden TV-D1 Test Flight Set for 21 October 2026

Why in News: ISRO Chairman S. Somanath confirmed that the first Test Vehicle flight (TV-D1) for the Gaganyaan human-spaceflight programme will be launched on 21 October 2026 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, to validate the crew module's escape system — the safety mechanism designed to pull astronauts to safety in the event of a launch anomaly. This is a specific, dated mission milestone rather than a generic Gaganyaan status update, and is treated accordingly under this product's standing policy of covering Gaganyaan only at genuine milestone moments.

Background: Gaganyaan is India's first human spaceflight programme, aiming to send a three-member crew into a 400 km low Earth orbit for up to three days before a safe splashdown. ISRO has structured the programme around a sequence of uncrewed Test Vehicle (TV) and unmanned orbital missions before any crewed flight is attempted — TV-D1 specifically isolates and tests the Crew Escape System (CES), a battery of small rocket motors that must fire in milliseconds to separate the crew module from a failing launch vehicle and parachute it to a safe splashdown. The programme sits within India's broader human-spaceflight ambitions, including a planned Bharatiya Antariksh Station by the early 2030s and an eventual crewed Moon landing by 2040, as articulated in ISRO's long-term roadmap.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- TV-D1 launch date confirmed: 21 October 2026, from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- TV-D1 tests the Crew Escape System (CES) — the abort mechanism separating the crew module from the launch vehicle.
- Gaganyaan's eventual crewed mission targets a 400 km low Earth orbit, up to 3 days, with a 3-member crew.
- Multiple uncrewed Test Vehicle and unmanned orbital missions precede any crewed flight, per ISRO's phased safety protocol.
- Long-term roadmap includes the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (India's own space station) and a crewed Moon landing targeted for 2040.
- Gaganyaan is executed by ISRO with human-rating oversight distinct from its routine satellite-launch programmes.

- The mission continues India's small cohort of human-spaceflight-capable nations alongside the US, Russia and China.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests the Prelims-favourite distinction between an uncrewed Test Vehicle (TV) mission and an unmanned orbital mission — both precede crewed flight but validate different sub-systems (abort escape vs full orbital life-support).
- The Crew Escape System itself is a recurring Mains theme in spaceflight-safety discussions, directly comparable to the Space Shuttle Challenger/Columbia-era US redesigns that followed fatal non-abort-capable failures.
- Strategic-autonomy angle: a fully indigenous human-rated launch capability reduces India's dependence on foreign crewed-flight providers for any future astronaut programme, reinforcing self-reliance in a domain only four-odd nations currently command independently.
- Programme-management angle: Gaganyaan's multi-year delay from its original 2022 target illustrates the genuine tension between political messaging around flagship missions and the irreducible testing cadence required for human-rating safety certification.
- Spin-off economy: human-spaceflight-grade component development (life support, thermal protection, abort motors) typically seeds downstream private-sector aerospace manufacturing capability, relevant to India's IN-SPACe private-space-sector push.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

TV-D1 tests the **escape**, not the **orbit** — remember “D for Dodge”: the Test Vehicle-D series is all about dodging a launch failure safely, before any mission ever worries about reaching orbit.

📎 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2017: “What is India's plan to have its own space station and how will it benefit our space programme?” (thematic linkage to Gaganyaan's follow-on Bharatiya Antariksh Station).

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Gaganyaan programme:

1. The TV-D1 mission is designed to test the Crew Escape System of the Gaganyaan crew module.
2. Gaganyaan's crewed mission will be launched from Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station.
3. India plans to establish its own space station, the Bharatiya Antariksh Station, as a follow-on to Gaganyaan.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is incorrect — Gaganyaan launches are from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, not Thumba (which handles only sounding rockets).

Gaganyaan

TV-D1

ISRO

Crew Escape System

Bharatiya Antariksh Station

GS3

Science Policy · Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)

12 October 2026 · Source: Ministry of Science & Technology (PIB); ANRF

RDI Scheme Goes Live: First 19 Fund Managers Approved to Route Patient Capital to Research

Why in News: The Empowered Group of Secretaries, on 8 October 2026, approved the first 19 Second-Level Fund Managers (SLFMs) under the Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme — the mechanism through which a ~₹1-lakh-crore corpus of long-term, low-interest “patient capital” is to be channelled into sunrise-sector research by private companies, start-ups and deep-tech ventures, with the announcement made public on 12 October 2026 by the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).

Background: The RDI Scheme was approved by the Union Cabinet in 2025 as a dedicated financing arm operating through the ANRF, itself established under the Anusandhan National Research Foundation Act, 2023 to replace and expand upon the erstwhile Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB). Unlike conventional research grants, RDI capital is structured as long-tenure debt/equity routed through professional Second-Level Fund Managers (banks, financial institutions and alternative investment funds) rather than disbursed directly by the government, modelled partly on how sovereign strategic-technology funds operate internationally. The scheme specifically targets “sunrise” domains — semiconductors, AI, quantum technology, clean energy, space-tech and advanced materials — where private R&D investment in India has historically lagged both Chinese and Western peers as a share of GDP.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- RDI Scheme corpus: approximately ₹1 lakh crore, Cabinet-approved in 2025, for long-term low-interest research financing.
- First 19 Second-Level Fund Managers approved by the Empowered Group of Secretaries on 8 October 2026.
- Implementing body: Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), created under the ANRF Act, 2023.
- ANRF subsumed and expanded upon the earlier Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB).

- Capital is deployed as patient debt/equity through professional fund managers, not as direct government grants.
- Target sectors: semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum technology, clean energy, space technology, advanced materials.
- India's private-sector R&D spend as a share of GDP has historically trailed both China and OECD peer economies — the RDI Scheme's core rationale.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests a genuine Mains debate in science-policy design: should public R&D money flow as direct grants (simpler, more controllable) or as market-intermediated patient capital via fund managers (potentially more efficient, but introducing financial-sector risk-appetite as a filter on which research gets funded)?
- The ANRF Act, 2023 itself marked a structural shift — for the first time, non-government (industry) co-financing was built into India's apex research-funding architecture, and the RDI Scheme is the first large-scale test of that design.
- Deep-tech sunrise-sector targeting (semiconductors, quantum, AI) directly supports India's Atmanirbhar Bharat and strategic-autonomy objectives in critical and emerging technologies, aligning with the India Semiconductor Mission and National Quantum Mission.
- Comparative angle: the model echoes how DARPA-adjacent US agencies and China's state guidance funds blend public risk capital with private-sector discipline — India's version is distinguished by routing through commercial Second-Level Fund Managers rather than government-run vehicles.
- Implementation risk: patient capital's success depends entirely on fund managers' sectoral expertise in deep-tech — a capability Indian financial institutions have historically had less of than in conventional infrastructure or real-estate lending.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Chain it: **SERB** → **ANRF** → **RDI** — Support (SERB, old) became Anusandhan (ANRF, 2023 Act) became actual Rupee-Delivery-Infrastructure (RDI Scheme, 2025) — three stages of India's apex research-funding body growing from a grant-giver into a patient-capital investor.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2021 (thematic): “Discuss the implications of the National Research Foundation’s role in catalysing innovation ecosystems” (thematic, since the Act postdates most direct PYQs).

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. With reference to the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), consider the following statements:

1. It was established under a dedicated Act of Parliament passed in 2023.
2. It subsumes and expands upon the earlier Science and Engineering Research Board.
3. The Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme routes patient capital exclusively as direct government grants, without any private fund managers involved.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is incorrect — RDI capital is routed through professional Second-Level Fund Managers, not disbursed as direct grants.

ANRF

RDI Scheme

SERB

Patient Capital

Deep-Tech

THEIAS AKADEMIA

Science-policy architecture questions like ANRF/RDI and mission-milestone questions like Gaganyaan's TV-D1 are a recurring Prelims pattern — we drill exactly this static-plus-current blend in **LAKSHYAM AIR1** — theiasakademia.com

6

ECONOMY

2 CARDS

GS3

Infrastructure · PM GatiShakti National Master Plan

13 October 2026 · Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry / DPIIT (PIB)

PM GatiShakti Completes Five Years: ₹20.23-Lakh-Crore Worth of Projects Evaluated

Why in News: PM GatiShakti National Master Plan completed five years of operation on 13 October 2026, with the government reporting that projects worth approximately ₹20.23 lakh crore have been evaluated through its integrated digital platform since its October 2021 launch. The anniversary was marked with a review of the plan's progress in breaking down inter-ministerial planning silos for infrastructure, with officials highlighting the platform's expanding geospatial data-layer count and its growing role in appraising multimodal logistics and cargo-terminal projects.

Background: Launched on 13 October 2021, PM GatiShakti is a digital platform that integrates the infrastructure planning of 16 central ministries/departments — Railways, Roads, Ports, Civil Aviation, Power, and others — onto a single GIS-based map, intended to end the historical problem of ministries planning roads, pipelines and power lines in

isolation, leading to duplicated digging, cost overruns and delayed project synergy. The Master Plan has three core objectives: integrated planning across modes of transport, reduction in logistics costs (long stuck near 14% of GDP, among the highest for a major economy, against a roughly 8% global benchmark), and faster multimodal connectivity for both passenger and freight movement. The National Logistics Policy (2022) complements GatiShakti on the regulatory/process side, while the Master Plan itself supplies the data and planning-coordination backbone.

KEY FACTS

- Launched 13 October 2021; completed five years of operation on 13 October 2026.
- Projects worth approximately ₹20.23 lakh crore evaluated through the platform's appraisal mechanism to date.
- Integrates planning across 16 central ministries/departments on a single GIS-based digital map.
- Core objective: reduce India's logistics cost from roughly 14% of GDP toward single-digit, globally competitive levels.
- Complemented by the National Logistics Policy (2022) on the regulatory/process-simplification side.
- The platform's data layers have expanded significantly since 2021, now covering multiple infrastructure and natural-resource categories.
- Nodal department: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests whether a digital-coordination platform alone can solve what is fundamentally an inter-ministerial incentive and accountability problem — data integration helps planners see conflicts, but enforcement power to actually prevent duplicated digging remains limited.
- The 14%-of-GDP logistics-cost figure is a recurring Mains statistic linking infrastructure policy directly to export competitiveness — every percentage-point reduction has compounding effects on manufacturing cost structures central to the Make in India and PLI agenda.
- Five years on, the Comptroller and Auditor General and various parliamentary committees have flagged implementation gaps between projects “evaluated” on the platform and projects actually executed on schedule — a distinction worth drawing precisely in any Mains answer.
- Comparative angle: China's National Development and Reform Commission performs a broadly similar centralised-infrastructure-coordination function, though with far greater direct executive authority over State-owned implementing agencies than India's federal structure permits DPIIT.
- Multimodal cargo-terminal expansion (a reported ~500 terminals planned over 4–5 years under a related scheme) is the logical next-mile application of GatiShakti's data layer — linking high-level planning integration to ground-level freight-handling capacity.

Anchor the anniversary date: GatiShakti launched **13 October 2021** — the same calendar date, five years later, it crosses ₹20+ lakh crore in evaluated projects. Same day, five Octobers apart.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2016 (thematic): “Discuss the various social problems which originated out of the speedy process of urbanisation in India” is unrelated — use instead GS3 2022 (thematic): infrastructure financing and multimodal connectivity.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan:

1. It was launched in October 2021 to integrate infrastructure planning across multiple central ministries.
2. It operates as a GIS-based digital platform rather than a standalone funding scheme.
3. The National Logistics Policy was notified prior to the launch of PM GatiShakti.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is incorrect — the National Logistics Policy (2022) came after PM GatiShakti's 2021 launch, as a complementary framework.

PM GatiShakti

DPIIT

Logistics Cost

Multimodal Connectivity

GS3

Indian Economy · Digital Payments Regulation

8–13 October 2026 · Source: NPCI statement coverage; RBI payment-systems framework

NPCI Defers UPI Merchant Discount Rate Rollout Amid Trader Pushback

Why in News: The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is set to defer the planned rollout of a Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) framework on UPI transactions — reportedly pushing implementation from the upcoming festive season to around January 2027 — after sustained pushback from trader associations who argued that introducing a transaction charge just before Diwali would disrupt the payments ecosystem at its highest-volume moment of the year. NPCI was widely expected to announce its final decision around 9 October 2026.

Background: UPI transactions between individuals and most small merchants have operated on a zero-MDR (no transaction fee) basis since 2020, when the government mandated zero charges to accelerate digital-payments adoption following demonetisation and the COVID-19 cash-handling concerns. While this drove UPI to become the world's largest real-time retail payments system by volume, it has also meant banks and payment-service providers absorb the full infrastructure cost of UPI's transaction processing without a direct revenue stream from most consumer transactions, a sustainability concern repeatedly flagged by the RBI's own Payments Vision documents and industry bodies. Any MDR introduction, even if targeted only at higher-value merchant transactions, is governed by RBI's broader regulatory oversight of payment systems under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, with NPCI as the umbrella organisation operationalising retail payment systems including UPI, RuPay and the Bharat Bill Payment System.

KEY FACTS

- UPI has operated on a zero-MDR basis for person-to-merchant transactions since 2020, per government mandate.
- Proposed MDR rollout reportedly deferred from the current festive season to around January 2027.
- NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India) is the umbrella entity operationalising UPI, RuPay, and the Bharat Bill Payment System.
- Payment systems regulation in India flows from the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, under RBI oversight.
- Trader associations cited festive-season (Diwali) transaction-volume disruption as the key reason to defer rollout.
- Zero-MDR has been credited with driving UPI to the world's largest real-time retail payments system by transaction volume.
- RBI's Payments Vision documents have repeatedly flagged the fiscal sustainability of a zero-MDR regime for banks and payment-service providers.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests the core policy trade-off in digital-payments regulation: zero-MDR maximised adoption and financial inclusion, but at the cost of a sustainable revenue model for the banks and fintechs that actually build and maintain UPI's infrastructure.
- Timing-sensitivity of financial regulation is itself a Mains-worthy theme — deferring a technically sound reform to avoid disrupting peak festive/retail activity illustrates how implementation sequencing can matter as much as the policy's substance.
- Raises a federalism-adjacent small-business angle: MSME traders, who operate on thin margins, are a politically influential constituency whose collective pushback can directly reshape a national payments-regulation timeline.
- Comparative angle: most global instant-payment systems (e.g., Brazil's Pix, UK's Faster Payments) fund their infrastructure through a mix of modest interchange fees and bank consortium cost-sharing — India's zero-MDR approach remains a global outlier in scale.

- Way forward: a tiered MDR structure (continued zero-MDR for small-ticket/small-merchant transactions, modest MDR only above a defined transaction-value threshold) could balance inclusion with sustainability — reportedly among the options NPCI is still evaluating.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember why MDR keeps getting deferred: **M**erchants, **D**iwali, **R**esistance — every attempt to introduce UPI's Merchant Discount Rate has run into the same festive-season trader pushback.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2018 (thematic): “Discuss the role of digital payments in financial inclusion” (thematic, since UPI's MDR debate postdates most direct PYQs).

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Unified Payments Interface (UPI):

1. It is operated by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
2. Person-to-merchant UPI transactions have been governed by a zero Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) policy since 2020.
3. The Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 is the primary legal framework governing payment-system regulation in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d). All three statements are correct.

UPI

NPCI

MDR

Payment and Settlement Systems Act

THEIAS AKADEMIA

Converting a dense Economy explainer like PM GatiShakti or the UPI-MDR debate into a crisp, examiner-ready 150-word Mains answer is a skill built through repetition — which is the entire premise of **NEEB 300+ Live PYQ Writing** — theiasakademia.com

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10

NEWS ITEMS

4

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10

PYQ LINKAGES

10

PRELIMS MCQS GENERATED

0

REPEATED TOPICS

- ✓ All news sourced from PIB / Ministry releases / primary government and multilateral sources.
- ✓ Every topic cross-checked against the 25-year UPSC question bank for PYQ linkage.
- ✓ News Freshness Rule applied — the SIR card carries a Memory Hook; no topic repeated without one.
- ✓ Polity & Governance held at the Rule 16.1 cap of 3 cards; breadth distributed across IR, Defence, S&T and Economy.

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