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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR UPSC PRELIMS & MAINS

PART I • HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

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"From Daily News to Direct UPSC Questions"

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Env • Places • Ethics • MCQs • Mains

01 Top 10 Headlines

UPSC-RELEVANT NEWS · 06 JUNE 2026

01

GOVERNANCE

Jan Samarth Portal completes 4 years — 54.10 lakh beneficiaries, ₹3,00,951 crore disbursed

PIB / MINISTRY OF FINANCE

02

IR · NEIGHBOURHOOD

Nepal FM Shishir Khanal on first official India visit (June 5–7); holds talks with EAM Jaishankar

ANI / MEA

03

IR · ECONOMY

India–Oman CEPA enters into force; 99.38% of India's exports get zero duty; trade at \$11.18 bn

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE / MEA

04

DEFENCE · IR

India signs BrahMos missile deal with Vietnam at Shangri-La Dialogue; Indonesia in final stages

DEFENCE SECRETARY / SINGAPORE

05

DEFENCE

PRAGATI 2026: India's first 13-nation multinational military exercise concludes in Meghalaya

INDIAN ARMY / BHARATSHAKTI

06

S&T · ECONOMY

India ranks 5th in global digital economy, 4th in AI — SIDE 2026 Report (ICRIER-Prosus)

IPCIDE / ICRIER

07

FINTECH · IR

UPI launched in Cambodia — 4.5 million merchants; India's 9th cross-border UPI country

NPCI INTERNATIONAL / PHNOM PENH

08

EDUCATION POLICY

PM Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026 — applications open for Indian-origin researchers worldwide

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION / PIB

09

ENVIRONMENT

World Environment Day 2026: Theme "Inspired by Nature. For Climate. For Our Future"

UNEP / MOEFCC

10

ENVIRONMENT

State of India's Environment 2026 (CSE): Rising climate risks, wildlife conflict, air monitoring gaps

CENTRE FOR SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

02 Polity & Governance

GS PAPER II · CONSTITUTIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

WHY IN NEWS

Jan Samarth Portal Completes 4 Years — ₹3,00,951 Crore Disbursed, 54 Lakh

WHY IN NEWS

PM Research Chair (PMRC) Scheme 2026 — Applications Open for Global Indian-Origin

BACKGROUND

Jan Samarth is India's first unified digital platform for credit-linked government schemes. As of June 1, 2026: 54.10 lakh applications processed worth ₹3,00,951 crore; 49.55 lakh digital approvals worth ₹2,76,493.78 crore. It hosts 16 central government schemes across multiple ministries, allowing citizens to apply through a single window.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Convergence governance: single-window platform reducing last-mile barriers
- Financial inclusion: credit access for the underserved — MSMEs, farmers, women
- e-Governance innovation: Jan Samarth as a model of digital-first welfare delivery
- DBT architecture: how Jan Samarth complements Direct Benefit Transfer
- Challenges: digital divide, awareness gaps, NPA recovery

PYQ LINKAGE

e-Governance in Prelims 2022, 2023. Financial inclusion in GS3 Mains 2021. Mains 2022 GS2: "e-Governance has reduced the interface between government and citizens." Government schemes and portals in Prelims 2024.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Launched: 2022; Ministry of Finance / DARPG oversight
- First unified credit-linked scheme portal in India
- 16 central government credit-linked schemes
- 54.10 lakh applications; ₹3,00,951 crore total sanctions
- 49.55 lakh approvals; ₹2,76,493.78 crore disbursed
- Covers MSMEs, students, farmers, self-employment, housing

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS2: e-Governance · Welfare Delivery

GS3: Financial Inclusion · Credit Policy

Q. Consider the following statements about Jan Samarth Portal:

1. It is India's first unified digital platform for credit-linked government schemes.
2. It currently hosts over 25 central government schemes.
3. Citizens can apply for schemes from multiple ministries through a single window.

Which of the above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 3 only ✓

b) 2 and 3 only

c) 1 only

d) 1, 2 and 3

Statement 2 is incorrect — Jan Samarth hosts 16 credit-linked schemes (not 25+). Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Higher Education (Ministry of Education) opened PMRC Scheme 2026 applications on June 1, 2026 via a dedicated PMRC Portal. The scheme attracts accomplished Indian-origin researchers from globally reputed universities, labs and industries to join India's premier HEIs and national research labs.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Brain drain vs. brain gain — India's policy for reverse diaspora migration
- NEP 2020: internationalisation of higher education
- PMRC vs PMRF: senior chairs vs domestic PhD scholars — two pillars
- India's R&D expenditure at 0.64% of GDP vs global peers
- Anusandhan NRF as backbone of India's research funding architecture

PYQ LINKAGE

NEP 2020 in Mains GS2 2021. Brain drain in Essay 2022. India's R&D ecosystem in GS3. Anusandhan NRF in Prelims 2024.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Under: Dept. of Higher Education, Ministry of Education (NOT Ministry of S&T)
- Three categories: Young Research Fellow (0–5 yrs post-PhD), Senior Fellow (5–10 yrs), Research Chair (10+ yrs)
- Host institutions: Premier govt. HEIs + national labs + research centres
- Applications opened: June 1, 2026 on PMRC Portal
- Aligned with NEP 2020 internationalisation goals
- Complements Anusandhan NRF (National Research Foundation)

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS2: Education Policy · Human Resources

GS3: Science & Technology Ecosystem

Q. Consider the following about PMRC Scheme 2026:

1. It is implemented by the Ministry of Science and Technology.
2. It has three categories based on post-doctoral experience.
3. It is distinct from PMRF which targets domestic PhD scholars.

Which is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 1 only

c) 2 and 3 only ✓

d) 1, 2 and 3

Statement 1 wrong — PMRC is under Ministry of Education (Dept. of Higher Education). Statements 2 and 3 correct.

"The Jan Samarth Portal exemplifies convergence governance in India's welfare ecosystem. Examine its design, achievements, and limitations in promoting financial inclusion." (250 words)

GS2

GS3

PYQ-LINKED

JAN SAMARTH

E-GOVERNANCE

FINANCIAL INCLUSION

CREDIT SCHEMES

SINGLE WINDOW

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

Jan Samarth is the "single-window" answer for any GS2 question on e-governance convergence. Memorise: 16 schemes + 54 lakh applicants + ₹3 lakh crore = the scale proof. Distinguish it from PMJDY (deposit scheme) — Jan Samarth is credit-linked. In Mains, connect to DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) and India Stack to write a comprehensive GS2 answer.

"India's diaspora in science and technology is an untapped resource for national R&D. Critically examine the adequacy of India's initiatives like PMRC to attract returning talent and build a world-class research ecosystem." (250 words)

GS2

GS3

PMRC 2026

NEP 2020

BRAIN DRAIN

ANUSANDHAN NRF

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

Research talent pipeline: PMRF (domestic PhD scholars) + PMRC (senior global diaspora) + Anusandhan NRF (national funding). This 3-pillar framework = complete Mains answer on India's R&D ecosystem. The key exam trap: PMRC is under Ministry of Education NOT Science & Technology — set this right with students before they write the exam.

03

International Relations

GS PAPER II · INDIA & THE WORLD

WHY IN NEWS

Nepal FM Shishir Khanal's First Official India Visit — Bilateral Reset, Trade & Connectivity Focus

BACKGROUND

Nepal's Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal visited India June 5–7, 2026 — the first official engagement from PM Balendra Shah's government (in office since March 2026). He held formal talks with EAM S. Jaishankar on trade, investment, energy, connectivity, and people-to-people ties — marking a significant effort to reset the bilateral relationship.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Nepal PM: Balendra Shah (in office March 2026); FM: Shishir Khanal
- India-Nepal border: 1,751 km — one of the world's most open land borders
- Treaty of Peace and Friendship: 1950 — governs open border movement
- Key dispute: Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh tri-junction
- India: Nepal's largest trade partner and source of FDI
- ~8 million Nepali nationals work in India (remittances critical to Nepal economy)
- Nepal is landlocked; bordered by India on 3 sides + China (Tibet)

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- India's "Neighbourhood First" policy — Nepal as the most complex test case

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

WHY IN NEWS

India–Oman CEPA Enters Into Force — 99.38% Duty-Free Access; Trade at USD 11.18 Billion

BACKGROUND

The India–Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed in Muscat on December 18, 2025 by PM Modi and Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said, entered into force on June 1, 2026. It grants 99.38% duty-free access to India's exports by value and covers 127 service sub-sectors.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Signed: December 18, 2025, Muscat; In force: June 1, 2026
- Zero duty: 99.38% of India's exports by value; 98.08% of Oman's tariff lines
- Previous MFN rate: only 15.33% duty-free
- Bilateral trade: USD 11.18 billion (FY 2025-26)
- ~7 lakh Indian nationals in Oman
- Oman's strategic ports: Salalah and Duqm (outside Strait of Hormuz)
- India's CEPAs so far: Mauritius (2021), UAE (2022), Australia (2022), Oman (2026)

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- India's "Act West" policy and Gulf strategic-economic integration
- Oman's strategic neutrality — value for energy security

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS2: India-GCC · Bilateral Agreements

GS3: Trade Policy · External Sector

- China's BRI in Nepal vs. India's connectivity response
- Hydropower diplomacy: Nepal's 83,000 MW potential; India as buyer
- Kalapani border dispute: historical, legal and political dimensions
- 1950 Treaty: Nepal periodically calls it "unequal" — renegotiation demand
- Diaspora and remittances as elements of bilateral soft power

GS2: India & Neighbourhood — Nepal

GS2: Bilateral, Regional Groupings

PYQ LINKAGE

India-Nepal in Mains GS2 2023, 2021. Kalapani dispute in Prelims 2020, 2021. Neighbourhood First Policy in Mains 2019, 2022. 1950 Treaty in Prelims 2020.

Q. Consider the following about India–Nepal relations:

1. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950) governs open border movement between India and Nepal.
2. Kalapani-Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh is the primary territorial dispute between India and Nepal.
3. Nepal is not a member of SAARC.

Which of the above is/are correct?

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

Statement 3 is incorrect — Nepal is a founding SAARC member. Statements 1 and 2 are correct.

PROBABLE MAINS Q (GS2)

"Despite civilisational ties, India–Nepal relations have witnessed periodic friction. Analyse the structural and conjunctural factors behind this paradox and suggest a roadmap for a durable bilateral partnership." (250 words)

GS2 PYQ-LINKED INDIA-NEPAL

NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST KALAPANI SHISHIR KHANAL

JAISHANKAR

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

India-Nepal is the "most complex simple" relationship in South Asia — civilisational closeness with geopolitical friction. Teach the timeline: 1950 Treaty → 2015 earthquake relief → Kalapani dispute (2020) → BRI entry → 2026 bilateral reset. Always add the China angle — it elevates a GS2 answer from average to excellent. Hydropower = biggest cooperation opportunity.

- and logistics
- Duqm port access outside Strait of Hormuz — strategic bypass route
- Diaspora as diplomatic capital (7 lakh Indians in Oman; remittances)
- CEPA vs. FTA vs. PTA — India's trade agreement architecture

PYQ LINKAGE

India-UAE CEPA in Prelims 2023. Gulf relations in Mains GS2 2022. Trade agreements in GS3 2020. Strait of Hormuz in Prelims 2021, 2024.

Q. With reference to India–Oman CEPA (2026), which of the following is correct?

1. It grants 99.38% of India's exports to Oman duty-free access by value.
2. The CEPA was signed in New Delhi in January 2026.
3. Oman's Salalah and Duqm ports are located outside the Strait of Hormuz.

Select the correct answer:

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

Statement 2 incorrect — CEPA was signed in Muscat, Oman (December 2025). Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

PROBABLE MAINS Q (GS2/GS3)

"India's CEPA strategy in the Gulf represents a shift from tactical diplomacy to structural economic integration.' Examine with reference to India–Oman CEPA and India's broader Act West policy." (250 words)

GS2 GS3 PYQ-LINKED INDIA-OMAN CEPA

GULF DIPLOMACY ACT WEST STRAIT OF HORMUZ

DUQM PORT

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

Map India's CEPA timeline: Mauritius (2021) → UAE (Feb 2022) → Australia (Apr 2022) → Oman (June 2026). This is India's "strategic trade encirclement" — each CEPA unlocks a new maritime corridor. Duqm port outside Hormuz = energy security angle (GS3). Teach students to combine GS2 diplomacy + GS3 trade in one answer — examiners reward this cross-paper linkage.

WHY IN NEWS

India Signs BrahMos Missile Deal with Vietnam at Shangri-La; Indonesia in Final Stages

BACKGROUND

At the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026 in Singapore, India's Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh announced the formal signing of a BrahMos supersonic cruise missile deal with Vietnam and confirmed Indonesia's deal is in its final stages. India also offered the extended-range BrahMos to the Philippines amid escalating South China Sea tensions.

PRELIMS FACTS

- BrahMos: India-Russia JV (BrahMos Aerospace Ltd.) — Brahmaputra + Moskva rivers
- Speed: Mach 2.8–3.0 (supersonic); Extended range: up to 500 km
- Platforms: Land, Sea, Submarine, Air (Su-30MKI)
- First export: Philippines (2022, ₹2,670 crore)
- Vietnam deal signed at Shangri-La Dialogue 2026, Singapore
- Shangri-La Dialogue: Annual defence summit hosted by IISS, Singapore
- India's defence export target: ₹50,000 crore by 2029

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- India's emergence as an arms exporter — Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing
- South China Sea: Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia all claimants vs. China
- India-Russia defence JV amid Western sanctions on Russia
- ASEAN engagement via defence exports — Act East Policy operationalised
- India's defence export policy: positive indigenisation list, defence corridors

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS2: India-ASEAN · Indo-Pacific

GS3: Defence Exports · Indigenisation

PYQ LINKAGE

BrahMos in Prelims 2014, 2020. Defence exports in Mains GS3 2023. South China Sea in GS2 2019, 2022. Atmanirbhar defence in GS3 2021.

Q. Consider the following about BrahMos missile:

1. It is a joint venture between DRDO (India) and NPO Mashinostroyeniya (Russia).
2. Philippines was the first foreign buyer of BrahMos (2022).

WHY IN NEWS

Exercise PRAGATI 2026 — India's First 13-Nation Multinational Military Exercise, Meghalaya

BACKGROUND

India conducted its first-ever multinational military exercise 'PRAGATI 2026' at Umroi Cantonment, Meghalaya. Thirteen nations participated in a two-week counter-terrorism and jungle terrain drill. The exercise also showcased India's Atmanirbhar Bharat defence innovations to friendly nations.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Location: Umroi Cantonment, near Shillong, Meghalaya (NE India)
- 13 participant nations: Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Vietnam + India
- India's FIRST EVER multinational (multilateral) military exercise
- Duration: Two weeks; Focus: Counter-terrorism, jungle warfare, semi-mountain terrain
- Aligned with India's Act East Policy
- Demonstrated Atmanirbhar Bharat defence products

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Act East Policy operationalised through military-to-military engagement
- India's bid for regional security leadership in South and Southeast Asia
- NE India (Meghalaya) as India's gateway to ASEAN — strategic signalling
- Military exercises as instruments of defence diplomacy and interoperability
- Counter-terrorism cooperation in India's volatile neighbourhood

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS2: India-ASEAN · Neighbourhood

GS3: Internal Security · Defence Diplomacy

PYQ LINKAGE

Joint exercises in Prelims 2022, 2023. Act East Policy in Mains GS2 2021. NE India security in GS3 2020. Military diplomacy in GS2 2019.

Q. Exercise PRAGATI 2026 was India's first multinational military exercise. Which country did NOT participate?

3. BrahMos can only be launched from land-based

platforms.

Which is/are correct?

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

Statement 3 is incorrect — BrahMos can be launched from land, sea, submarine, and air (Su-30MKI) platforms. Statements 1 and 2 are correct.

PROBABLE MAINS Q (GS3)

"India's BrahMos exports represent a strategic shift from arms importer to emerging arms exporter. Analyse the opportunities and challenges in this transition and its significance for India's Indo-Pacific strategy." (250 words)

GS2 GS3 **PYQ-LINKED** BRAHMOS VIETNAM DEAL

DEFENCE EXPORTS ATMANIRBHAR SHANGRI-LA

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

BrahMos export arc: Philippines (2022) → Vietnam (2026) → Indonesia (coming). All 3 are South China Sea claimants/neighbours. Frame in Mains as "deterrence by export" — India isn't just selling weapons, it's selling strategic reassurance to ASEAN frontline states. This framing earns GS2 + GS3 marks simultaneously. China angle is mandatory in the answer.

(a) Bhutan (b) Vietnam (c) Thailand (d) Maldives

- a) Bhutan b) Vietnam
c) **Thailand ✓** d) Maldives

Thailand was NOT among the 13 participating nations. Bhutan, Vietnam and Maldives all participated.

PROBABLE MAINS Q (GS2)

"Joint military exercises are instruments of strategic signalling and relationship-building. Examine how India's PRAGATI 2026 exercise advances its Act East Policy goals and regional security architecture." (150 words)

GS2 GS3 **PYQ-LINKED** PRAGATI 2026

FIRST MULTINATIONAL ACT EAST POLICY MEGHALAYA

COUNTER-TERRORISM

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

The exam-relevant distinction: PRAGATI 2026 is India's FIRST multilateral exercise — previously India only did bilateral exercises (GARUDA SHAKTI with Indonesia, SAMPRITI with Bangladesh, etc.). In Mains, this evolution proves India has "graduated" from regional power to regional security provider. Hosting in Meghalaya (NE India) = strategic messaging: our eastern gateway IS our ASEAN gateway.

05 Science & Technology

GS PAPER III · TECHNOLOGY, DPI, DIGITAL ECONOMY

WHY IN NEWS

India 5th in Global Digital Economy & 4th in AI — SIDE 2026 Report (ICRIER-Prosus)

BACKGROUND

The State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) 2026 report by ICRIER-Prosus Centre for Internet and Digital Economy (IPCIDE) ranked India 5th (up from 8th in 2025) among 71 countries. In the AI sub-index (CHIPS framework), India ranked 4th globally — behind only USA, China, and Singapore. Key drivers: UPI expansion, 5G rollout, IndiaAI Mission, ONDC.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Report: SIDE 2026 by ICRIER-Prosus IPCIDE (New Delhi)
- Coverage: 71 countries; India: 5th (up from 8th in 2025)
- CHIPS framework: Connect, Harness, Innovate, Protect, Sustain
- India's AI rank: 4th globally (USA #1, China #2, Singapore #3, India #4)
- Chandigarh University: India's first private university IndiaAI Data Lab (with Intel India)

WHY IN NEWS

UPI Launched in Cambodia — 4.5 Million Merchants; India's 9th Cross-Border UPI Country

BACKGROUND

NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) partnered with ACLEDA Bank Plc. to enable UPI QR-code payments for Indian travellers at 4.5 million merchant outlets in Cambodia. Formal launch: June 2, 2026, Phnom Penh. Cambodia becomes the 9th country in India's cross-border UPI network — after Singapore, UAE, France, UK, Mauritius, Qatar, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

PRELIMS FACTS

- NPCI International (NIPL) + ACLEDA Bank Plc.: Cambodia UPI partnership
- Launch: June 2, 2026, Phnom Penh; 4.5 million QR-code merchant outlets
- Cambodia = 9th UPI-enabled country for Indian travellers
- Previous UPI nations: Singapore, UAE, France, UK, Mauritius, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Nepal
- NPCI: National Payments Corporation of India

- Key drivers: UPI, Aadhaar, ONDC, 5G, IndiaAI Mission (2024)

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI): Aadhaar + UPI + ONDC as global model
- IndiaAI Mission: compute infrastructure, open datasets, AI talent pipeline
- Digital divide: rural-urban gap persists despite global rankings
- India's DPI as an export product — offered to Global South nations (G20 commitment)
- Cybersecurity and data sovereignty alongside digitalisation

PYQ LINKAGE

Digital India in Prelims 2022, 2023. DPI and UPI in Mains GS3 2022. AI governance in GS3 2024. India's digital public infrastructure in Essay 2023.

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS3: Science & Tech · Digital Economy

GS2: e-Governance · Digital India

(established under RBI)

- NPCI International: subsidiary of NPCI managing UPI's global rollout

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- UPI as an instrument of financial and digital diplomacy ("soft power")
- Reducing SWIFT/card network dependence — de-dollarisation dimension
- India's ASEAN digital connectivity — UPI corridors vs. China's digital silk road
- G20 commitments on cross-border payments — India's leadership role
- Financial inclusion at global scale: UPI as a model for emerging economies

PYQ LINKAGE

UPI milestones in Prelims 2023, 2024. NPCI in GS3 2022. Digital payments in Mains 2023. India-ASEAN in GS2 2021. Fintech and financial inclusion in GS3 2022.

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS3: Digital Economy · Fintech · Payments

GS2: India's Global Engagements · Soft Power

Q. According to SIDE 2026 report, India's rank in the global digital economy index among 71 countries is: (a) 3rd (b) 5th (c) 7th (d) 10th

- a) 3rd **b) 5th ✓**
c) 7th d) 10th

India rose from 8th (2025) to 5th (2026) in the CHIPS Combined Index across 71 countries in the SIDE 2026 report.

PROBABLE MAINS Q (GS3)

"India's rising global digital economy ranking reflects the transformative potential of its Digital Public Infrastructure. Critically evaluate the challenges India must overcome to translate digital rankings into inclusive development." (250 words)

GS3

GS2

PYQ-LINKED

SIDE 2026

CHIPS INDEX

INDIAAI

DPI

DIGITAL ECONOMY

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

India's DPI trinity — Aadhaar (identity) + UPI (payment) + ONDC (commerce) — drove this global ranking jump from 8th to 5th. Teach students to structure answers as: Infrastructure → Adoption → Innovation → Governance. The SIDE 2026 data point is exactly what examiners expect in GS3 current affairs answers — fresh, specific, and data-backed. Use it.

Q. With reference to UPI's international expansion, consider:

1. NPCI International Payments Limited manages UPI's global rollout.
2. Cambodia is the 9th country to enable UPI for Indian travellers.
3. The Cambodia launch was in partnership with the National Bank of Cambodia.

Which is/are correct?

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

Statement 3 incorrect — partnership was with ACLEDA Bank Plc. (commercial bank), not the National Bank of Cambodia. Statements 1 and 2 correct.

PROBABLE MAINS Q (GS2/GS3)

"The internationalisation of UPI is India's most potent exercise of digital soft power. Analyse how UPI's global expansion serves India's strategic, economic and diplomatic interests." (150 words)

GS2

GS3

PYQ-LINKED

UPI

NPCI INTERNATIONAL

CAMBODIA

9TH COUNTRY

FINTECH DIPLOMACY

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

Teach UPI's global journey as a geographic expansion: Domestic (2016) → South Asia (Nepal, Sri Lanka) → Gulf (UAE, Qatar) → Europe (France, UK) → Southeast Asia (Singapore, Cambodia). This progression IS the "payment

06 Economy

GS PAPER III · INDIAN ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT

WHY IN NEWS

Navachar Mantra Launched — National Entrepreneurship Initiative for Grassroots Innovators

BACKGROUND

Navachar Mantra was launched June 3, 2026 as a national entrepreneurship initiative targeting grassroots innovators and early-stage entrepreneurs. It offers mentorship, investor access, IP guidance, and market linkages in sectors like AgriTech, HealthTech, and EdTech — aligned with Viksit Bharat @2047 and India's innovation ecosystem goals.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Launched: June 3, 2026; National entrepreneurship & grassroots innovation initiative
- Target beneficiaries: Grassroots innovators, early-stage entrepreneurs
- Sectors: AgriTech, HealthTech, EdTech + emerging technologies
- Services: Mentorship, investor access, IP guidance, business support, market linkages
- India: 3rd largest startup ecosystem globally (1.4 lakh+ DPIIT-recognised startups)
- Startup India launched: January 16, 2016; Atal Innovation Mission: under NITI Aayog

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Innovation ecosystem vs. startup ecosystem — structural gaps in India
- Barriers for rural/grassroots innovators: funding, IP access, digital literacy, market reach
- Government's role in de-risking early-stage innovation (public venture capital)
- Viksit Bharat 2047 and the role of distributed entrepreneurship
- Female entrepreneurship gap and tier-2/3 city startup exclusion

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS3: Entrepreneurship · Innovation Policy

GS2: Govt Policies for Development

WHY IN NEWS

India-UK Launch Critical Minerals Global Supply Chain Observatory (GSCO) in New Delhi

BACKGROUND

Launched June 5, 2026 in New Delhi by Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy and UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper. The GSCO is jointly hosted by TEXMin (IIT-ISM Dhanbad, under DST India) and University of Cambridge. It was first announced at India-UK PM bilateral talks in October 2025.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Launched: June 5, 2026, New Delhi
- Partners: TEXMin/IIT-ISM Dhanbad (India) + University of Cambridge (UK)
- Focus: Lithium, Cobalt, Nickel, Rare Earth Elements (REE)
- India's Critical Minerals Mission: 30 critical minerals identified
- KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd): India's overseas mineral procurement arm
- China controls 60–80% of global critical mineral processing
- First announced: India-UK PM summit, October 2025

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Critical minerals as the "new oil" for 21st-century energy security
- China's supply chain dominance — India's diversification strategy
- India-UK post-Brexit strategic tech partnership
- Clean energy transition dependencies: EV batteries, semiconductors, defence

UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING

GS3: Critical Minerals · Clean Energy

GS2: India-UK Relations

PYQ LINKAGE

Critical minerals in Prelims 2024. Rare earths in GS3 2022. India-UK in Mains GS2 2023. Clean energy in GS3 2021.

Q. Consider the following about India-UK Critical Minerals GSCO (2026):

Startup India in Prelims 2021,
2023. AIM (Atal Innovation
Mission) in GS3 2022.
Grassroots entrepreneurship +
MSME in Mains 2021.
Innovation ecosystem in GS3
2020.

Q. 'Navachar Mantra', launched in June 2026, is best described as:

- a) A defence R&D challenge scheme under DRDO
- b) A national entrepreneurship initiative for grassroots innovators and early-stage entrepreneurs
- c) A scholarship for rural science students
- d) A government e-marketplace for traditional artisans

- a) DRDO R&D Challenge **b) Entrepreneurship Initiative ✓**
- c) Rural Scholarship d) e-Marketplace

Navachar Mantra (June 3, 2026) is a national entrepreneurship initiative for grassroots innovators in Agritech, HealthTech and EdTech sectors.

PROBABLE MAINS Q (GS3)

"India aspires to be a global innovation hub by 2047. Critically evaluate whether India's current entrepreneurship support ecosystem equitably serves grassroots innovators beyond metro cities." (250 words)

GS3 **NAVACHAR MANTRA** **STARTUP INDIA** **AIM**

AGRITECH **VIKSIT BHARAT**

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

Navachar Mantra fills the gap Startup India left: Startup India served urban tech-savvy founders; grassroots/jugaad innovators were left out. In Mains, argue for a two-tier innovation policy — one for high-tech unicorn creation, one for grassroots pipeline. Agritech + HealthTech + EdTech = three SDG-aligned sectors UPSC rewards. This nuanced analysis is what separates 150-mark Mains answers from 100-mark ones.

1. It is jointly hosted by IIT-ISM Dhanbad and University of Oxford.

2. It was first announced at India-UK PM talks in October 2025.

3. It focuses on lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements.

Which is/are correct?

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

Statement 1 incorrect — partner is University of Cambridge, not Oxford. Statements 2 and 3 correct.

PROBABLE MAINS Q (GS3)

"Securing critical mineral supply chains is as vital to India's 21st-century energy security as fossil fuel imports were in the 20th century.' Discuss India's strategic response with reference to the India-UK GSCO and India's Critical Minerals Mission." (250 words)

GS2 **GS3** **PYQ-LINKED** **CRITICAL MINERALS**

INDIA-UK **GSCO** **KABIL** **CAMBRIDGE**

AKADEMIA TEACHING HOOK

Critical minerals = new oil. Teach: lithium (batteries), cobalt (EV), rare earths (chips + missiles). China processes 60-80% globally. India's counter: GSCO + Critical Minerals Mission + KABIL + MSP Corporation. Near-certain UPSC 2026 topic. The common exam trap: Cambridge NOT Oxford — set this right before exam day.