

PART I • HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

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INSIDE PART I

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§1 Top Headlines

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THEIAS AKADEMIA A news day this dense — three Supreme Court rulings, a BRICS Summit and two fresh tech stories in one morning — is exactly what Sahyog Mentorship is built for: one-on-one sessions to help you triage which stories deserve full notes versus a quick memory tag. theiasakademia.com

§2 Polity & Governance

Supreme Court Presses FSSAI on "Red Hexagon" Front-of-Package Warning Labels

Why in News: On 10 September 2026, a bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran, hearing an Article 32 PIL by 3S and Our Health Society, directed FSSAI to file a sworn affidavit within 10 days answering 13 specific questions before finalising the proposed "red hexagon" Front-of-Package Labelling (FoPL) scheme for foods high in fat, sugar or salt. The Court flagged that FSSAI has still not resolved the "two-or-more-nutrient" threshold that triggers a warning, and that the proposed red hexagon symbol visually clashes with the existing brown-dot non-vegetarian label. The matter, framed as a continuing-mandamus PIL, is next listed for 28 September 2026.

Background: FSSAI regulates under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 as India's apex food-safety authority. FoPL warning labels, loosely modelled on Chile's octagon and Mexico's warning systems, were proposed years ago but have stalled amid industry pushback and unresolved technical thresholds, even as India's burden of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease rises, increasingly among children.

KEY FACTS

- Case: 3S and Our Health Society v. Union of India & Anr., 2026 INSC 988
- Bench: Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K. Vinod Chandran; filed under Article 32
- FSSAI ordered to answer 13 implementation questions by sworn affidavit within 10 days
- Unresolved: number of nutrients (fat/sugar/salt) that must cross threshold to trigger a warning
- Design flaw flagged: proposed red hexagon clashes with the existing brown-dot non-veg symbol
- FSSAI functions under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006
- FSSAI is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
- Next hearing: 28 September 2026

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Judiciary's use of "continuing mandamus" to prod a slow regulator — a separation-of-powers question on judicial micromanagement of technical rule-making
- Public-health paternalism vs food-industry interests: comparative global FoPL models (Chile, Mexico, Brazil, Israel)
- Federal/implementation challenge of enforcing uniform labelling across India's fragmented, largely informal food-processing sector
- Behavioural angle: whether warning labels alone shift consumption without complementary fiscal (sin-tax) measures
- Institutional lesson: symbol clashes with existing labels show the cost of inadequate stakeholder consultation before draft notification

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the "3 T's" of India's FoPL logjam: Threshold (how many nutrients trigger a label), Timeline (repeatedly delayed for years), and clash with the existing non-veg dot symbol.

PYQ Linkage

FSSAI's mandate and regulatory design is a recurring Prelims static theme; no exact past year confirmed for this specific FoPL matter.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI):

1. FSSAI was established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

2. FSSAI functions as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
3. Front-of-Package Labelling for high fat/sugar/salt foods has already been notified and is in force nationwide.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) — Statement 3 is false; FoPL remains sub judice and unnotified.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (150 WORDS)

Discuss the public-health rationale and implementation challenges of Front-of-Package warning labelling for ultra-processed foods in India, with reference to recent judicial intervention.

#GS2

#FSSAI

#FoodSafety

#SupremeCourt

#PublicHealth

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

Chile was the first country to mandate black octagon warning labels (2016), cutting sugary-drink purchases by roughly a quarter within years — the data point examiners love to test against India's still-pending scheme.

GS2

Government Policies · E-Commerce Regulation

10 September 2026 · Source: Department of Consumer Affairs notification

Centre Notifies Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Amendment Rules, 2026

Why in News: On 10 September 2026 the Department of Consumer Affairs notified the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) (Amendment) Rules, 2026, which replace the 2020 E-Commerce Rules from 1 January 2027. The amendment mandates disclosure of a "prior price" — the lowest price offered in the preceding 30 days — alongside any discount claim, bars manipulation of search results, and requires sponsored/paid listings to be clearly separated from organic results. It follows a surge in dark-pattern and fake-discount complaints on the National Consumer Helpline (NCH).

Background: The original 2020 Rules were framed under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 to check unfair trade practices online. The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), created under the same Act, has issued voluntary "dark pattern" guidelines since 2023; this amendment folds price-transparency obligations directly into binding statutory rules.

KEY FACTS

- Notified under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 by the Department of Consumer Affairs
- Replaces the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020, effective 1 January 2027
- "Prior price" = lowest price in preceding 30 days, must accompany any discount claim
- Sponsored/paid listings must be clearly labelled, separated from organic search results
- Every e-commerce entity must integrate with the NCH's grievance mechanism
- NCH logged 17,71,622 grievances in 2025; ~29% (5,11,196) were e-commerce-related
- CCPA remains the enforcement authority for violations
- Follows global "dark pattern" regulation trends, e.g. the EU's Digital Services Act

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Dark-pattern regulation as an emerging global consumer-protection frontier
- Tension between algorithmic-discount business models and mandated transparency
- CCPA's enforcement capacity versus the scale of India's e-commerce sector
- Federal dimension: role of State Consumer Commissions/District Forums in redressal

- Comparative angle: EU's rules-first approach versus India's rules now backed by statutory rules rather than guidelines

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the "3 P's" of the 2026 Rules: Prior-price disclosure, Prohibition on search-result manipulation, Plain labelling of sponsored listings.

PYQ Linkage

Consumer Protection Act 2019/CCPA is a recurring Prelims static theme; no exact past year confirmed for this specific 2026 amendment.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements about the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) (Amendment) Rules, 2026:

1. They are notified under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
2. They require disclosure of the lowest price offered in the preceding 30 days alongside any discount claim.
3. They replace the 2020 E-Commerce Rules with effect from 1 January 2027.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (150 WORDS)

Examine the regulatory challenges in curbing "dark patterns" in e-commerce and assess the adequacy of India's Consumer Protection framework in addressing them.

#GS2

#GS3

#ConsumerProtection

#ECommerce

#CCPA

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

The National Consumer Helpline, launched in 2005, now handles over 20 lakh grievances a year — one of the world's largest single-window consumer-grievance systems.

GS2

Article 311 · Civil Services

9 September 2026 · Source: Supreme Court judgment (2026 INSC 980)

SC: Full Service Record, Not Selective Remarks, Must Precede Compulsory Retirement

Why in News: On 9 September 2026, a Supreme Court bench of Justices Sheel Nagu and Dipankar Datta held that an officer's entire service record — not a selective reading of adverse remarks — must be weighed before compulsory retirement under Fundamental Rule (FR) 56(j). The Court set aside the 2018 compulsory retirement of an Indian Trade Service officer who had been promoted Joint Secretary shortly before the order, awarding ₹15 lakh compensation. The ruling reinforces judicial scrutiny of "public interest" retirements against arbitrariness.

Background: FR 56(j) empowers government to compulsorily retire officers found unfit on periodic review, ostensibly to weed out non-performers. Courts have long held such orders cannot rest on stale or selectively-read adverse entries, tracing back to the constitutional safeguards for civil servants under Article 311.

KEY FACTS

- Officer: Indian Trade Service, appointed 1989; compulsorily retired 10 May 2018 — nearly 5 years before superannuation
- Bench: Justices Sheel Nagu and Dipankar Datta; citation 2026 INSC 980
- Government's basis: adverse remarks plus a confidential note, read selectively
- Officer had been promoted Joint Secretary shortly before the retirement order
- Relief granted: ₹15 lakh compensation and a direction for a formal farewell
- Principle affirmed: full service record, not selective extracts, must inform FR 56(j) orders
- FR 56(j)'s constitutional anchor lies in Article 311's safeguards for civil servants
- Judgment reinforces limits on "public interest" compulsory-retirement powers

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Balance between administrative efficiency (removing non-performers) and protection against arbitrary executive action
- Judicial review as a check on administrative discretion in civil-service management
- Recurring pattern of FR 56(j) allegedly used to sideline officers rather than genuine underperformers
- Comparative accountability mechanisms: departmental promotion committees vs judicial recourse
- Way forward: clearer, published review criteria to reduce repeated litigation

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Think "FR 56(j) needs the Full Record, not a Fragment" — the Court's core holding in one phrase.

PYQ Linkage

Article 311 safeguards for civil servants is a recurring GS2 Mains theme; no exact past year confirmed for this specific case.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

With reference to Fundamental Rule 56(j), consider the following statements:

1. It empowers the Government to compulsorily retire a government servant in public interest.
2. Compulsory retirement under this rule is treated as a penalty under service-discipline rules.
3. The Supreme Court has held that only selectively chosen adverse remarks need be considered, not the entire service record.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — compulsory retirement under FR 56(j) is not a disciplinary penalty, and the Court held the opposite of statement 3.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (150 WORDS)

Discuss the constitutional safeguards available to civil servants against arbitrary compulsory retirement, with reference to recent judicial pronouncements.

#GS2

#Article311

#CivilServices

#JudicialReview

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

FR 56(j)/(l) reviews are typically triggered at 15, 25 or 30 years of service, or on attaining 50/55 years of age — a periodic filter unique to India's civil-service architecture.

§3 International Relations

GS2

India & Groupings · UNSC Reform

12 September 2026 · Source: MEA / Summit proceedings, Bharat Mandapam

18th BRICS Summit Adopts "New Delhi Declaration" as India Hosts First In-Person Chairship

Why in News: India is hosting the 18th BRICS Summit at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, on 12-13 September 2026 under its Chairship theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability." On 12 September, leaders adopted the "New Delhi Declaration" after a closed-door session on inclusive global governance; PM Modi called it a diplomatic achievement given sharp differences among members, notably over the West Asia conflict. The Declaration calls for UN Security Council reform and "strongly condemns" the April 2025 Jammu & Kashmir terror attack, urging a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the UN.

Background: BRICS grew from its four founding members (Brazil, Russia, India, China) plus South Africa to 11 full members after the 2023-24 expansion (adding Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Indonesia). This is India's first in-person hosting since the bloc's expansion, following a virtual 2021 chairship.

KEY FACTS

- Venue: Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi; Summit dates 12-13 September 2026
- BRICS now has 11 full members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE
- Attending: Putin, Xi Jinping, Ramaphosa, Pezeshkian, Prabowo Subianto, El-Sisi, Abiy Ahmed, UAE's Crown Prince; Brazil represented by its Foreign Minister
- 9 partner countries and additional invitees also participating (Belarus, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and more)
- Declaration calls for UN Security Council reform for greater developing-country representation
- Declaration "strongly condemns" the April 2025 J&K terror attack (26 killed); urges a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism
- Declaration flags concern over unilateral tariffs, stresses conflict prevention
- Theme: "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability"

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- India's Global-South leadership diplomacy and consensus-building across a bloc with divergent members
- UNSC reform debate: India/Brazil aspirations versus China/Russia's conditional support
- BRICS as a platform balancing rival powers (China-India, Russia-West) within one grouping
- Terrorism-condemnation language as a concrete diplomatic outcome tied to a specific attack
- Institutional trajectory: from an economic acronym (2001) to a broad geopolitical bloc today

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"11 members, 1 Declaration" — the expanded 11-nation bloc speaking with one voice on UNSC reform and terrorism.

PYQ Linkage

GS2 Mains 2021: "Bring out the reasons for the growing importance of BRICS platform in world affairs." — directly relevant, well-established recurring theme.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding BRICS:

1. The term "BRIC" was coined by a Goldman Sachs economist.
2. Following its 2023-24 expansion, BRICS has eleven full members.
3. The New Development Bank (NDB) is headquartered in New Delhi.

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) — the NDB is headquartered in Shanghai, not New Delhi.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (250 WORDS)

"BRICS today is less an economic acronym and more a geopolitical platform for the Global South." Discuss with reference to the 18th BRICS Summit outcomes.

#GS2

#BRICS

#UNSCReform

#GlobalSouth

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

The term "BRIC" was coined in 2001 by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill — decades before India ever imagined hosting an in-person Summit of an 11-nation bloc.

GS2

India-China Relations · LAC

12 September 2026 (developing) · Source: MEA / press coverage

Modi-Xi Hold First Bilateral Since Galwan, on BRICS Summit Sidelines

Why in News: Xi Jinping arrived in New Delhi on 12 September 2026 for his first visit to India in seven years, ahead of a scheduled bilateral meeting with PM Modi on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit — their first face-to-face bilateral since the June 2020 Galwan Valley clash. The reported agenda includes LAC boundary stabilisation, trade and investment restrictions, and rare-earth/critical-mineral supply chains. As of this edition's press time, concrete outcomes had not been officially confirmed and should be treated as still developing.

Background: India-China leadership engagement froze after the Galwan clash (20 Indian and 4 Chinese soldiers killed). Since then, incremental confidence-building steps — LAC patrolling arrangements, resumed direct flights, eased business-visa procedures — have set the stage for this thaw.

KEY FACTS

- First Modi-Xi bilateral since the Galwan clash of June 2020
- Xi's first visit to India in seven years
- Meeting held on the margins of the 18th BRICS Summit, Bharat Mandapam

- Reported agenda: LAC boundary stabilisation, trade/investment channels, rare-earth and critical-mineral supply chains
- Preceding CBMs: LAC patrolling arrangements, resumed direct flights, eased visa norms
- Outcome/joint statement not yet confirmed at time of writing — flagged as developing
- India-China bilateral trade remains heavily skewed with a large Indian trade deficit
- China is a founding BRICS member alongside India

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- LAC de-escalation trajectory since 2020 and its limits (disengagement vs full de-escalation vs de-induction)
- Trade dependency (critical minerals, APIs, electronics) vs strategic caution — India's "de-risking, not decoupling" approach
- Rare-earth/critical-mineral supply-chain vulnerability as an emerging economic-security frontier
- China's dual role: border rival and BRICS/SCO multilateral partner
- Way forward: institutionalising border-management mechanisms beyond ad hoc Special Representative talks

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"Galwan to Delhi" — six years from the 2020 clash to the first face-to-face thaw in 2026.

PYQ Linkage

India-China relations/LAC management is a recurring GS2 Mains theme; no exact past year confirmed for this specific meeting.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Which of the following best describes the Line of Actual Control (LAC)?

- An international boundary demarcated by treaty between India and China
- A ceasefire line from the 1962 war, without a formal, mutually agreed delineation
- A boundary recognised by the United Nations
- A boundary defined under the Shimla Agreement of 1972

Answer: (b)

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (250 WORDS)

Discuss the trajectory of India-China border management since the 2020 Galwan clash, and assess the prospects for durable de-escalation.

#GS2

#IndiaChina

#LAC

#Galwan

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

India and China share one of the world's longest disputed borders, roughly 3,488 km, yet have never formally delineated the LAC on the ground.

GS2

India-Iran · West Asia Policy

11 September 2026 · Source: MEA / press coverage, BRICS sidelines

Modi-Pezeshkian Meeting: India Pushes West Asia Peace, Reaffirms Chabahar Ties

Why in News: PM Modi met Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit on 11 September 2026, urging dialogue, freedom of navigation, and regional peace in West Asia. The two leaders also discussed trade, connectivity and energy cooperation, reinforcing India's Chabahar-anchored engagement with Iran even as Tehran remains under Western sanctions pressure.

Background: India-Iran ties centre on the Chabahar port, developed by India as an alternative connectivity corridor to Afghanistan and Central Asia bypassing Pakistan, alongside long-standing energy-trade interests complicated by US sanctions. Iran became a full BRICS member in the 2023-24 expansion.

KEY FACTS

- Meeting held 11 September 2026, on BRICS Summit sidelines
- Modi's stated priorities: dialogue, freedom of navigation, regional peace in West Asia
- Discussion areas: trade, connectivity, energy cooperation
- Iran is a full BRICS member since the 2023-24 expansion
- Chabahar port remains the anchor project of India-Iran connectivity cooperation
- Chabahar bypasses Pakistan to connect India with Afghanistan and Central Asia
- India continues to balance Iran ties against Gulf Arab relations and the US sanctions regime

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf/Strait of Hormuz as a global energy-security concern
- India's multi-vector West Asia policy: balancing Iran, Israel and Gulf Arab states simultaneously
- Chabahar's strategic value for India's Central Asia connectivity, independent of Pakistan
- Sanctions-compliance risk for Indian entities engaging with Iran
- BRICS as a venue enabling India-Iran engagement outside bilateral-visit optics

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"Chabahar bypasses Pakistan" — the one-line reason India keeps investing diplomatic capital in Iran despite sanctions friction.

PYQ Linkage

Chabahar/India-Iran connectivity is a recurring Mains theme on India's neighbourhood-plus connectivity policy; no exact year confirmed.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Chabahar Port, developed with Indian investment, is located in which country and provides India connectivity to which region, bypassing which country?

- (a) Iran; Central Asia and Afghanistan; bypassing Pakistan
- (b) Oman; the Gulf; bypassing Iran
- (c) Iran; East Africa; bypassing Saudi Arabia
- (d) UAE; South Asia; bypassing Bangladesh

Answer: (a)

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (150 WORDS)

Assess the strategic significance of Chabahar port for India's connectivity to Central Asia, and the challenges India faces in sustaining its Iran engagement.

#GS2

#IndiaIran

#Chabahar

#WestAsia

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

Chabahar is Iran's only oceanic port, giving India direct sea access to a corridor toward Afghanistan and Central Asia that entirely bypasses Pakistani territory.

THEIAS AKADEMIA A single week carrying a BRICS Declaration, a Modi-Xi thaw and a West Asia outreach is precisely the density ANTIM 2027 is designed for — structured IR trackers that turn a fast-moving diplomatic week into exam-ready notes. theiasakademia.com

§4 Defence & Security

GS3

Defence Indigenisation

Static Topic — not tied to a current event · Source: Indian Navy / MoD / MP-IDSA analysis

Static Defence Profile: Kalvari-Class Submarines (Project-75)

Why Covered Today: After an exhaustive multi-source search, no fresh, verified Defence & Security news cleared the freshness bar for 11-12 September 2026. Per the pre-approved static-fallback protocol for this section, today's Defence card profiles the Kalvari-class submarines — India's Scorpène-design diesel-electric attack submarines built under Project-75 — a high-yield, exam-relevant static topic.

Background: Project-75 was launched to indigenise conventional submarine construction under technology transfer from France's Naval Group, built at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai, as part of India's Atmanirbhar Bharat push in defence manufacturing. All six boats of the class are now commissioned, completing the programme's first phase.

KEY FACTS

- Class: Kalvari-class, based on the French Scorpène design
- Built under Project-75 at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Mumbai, with Naval Group (France) collaboration
- Six boats: INS Kalvari, Khanderi, Karanj, Vela, Vagir, Vagsheer — all commissioned by 2024
- Diesel-electric attack submarines (SSK) with advanced sonar, precision-guided torpedoes and weapons
- Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) retrofit planned to extend submerged endurance
- Complements India's Arihant-class (SSBN) and the upcoming Project-75(I)
- Key pillar of India's underwater deterrence in the Indian Ocean Region
- Continues a naming tradition from an earlier Foxtrot-class submarine

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Indigenisation trajectory: from imported submarines to technology-transfer-based domestic construction
- Strategic rationale: countering expanding Chinese naval/submarine presence in the Indian Ocean Region

- Industrial ecosystem development: MDL's capacity-building as a template for other strategic sectors
- Project-75(I) as the next phase, with AIP and vertical-launch land-attack missile capability
- Comparative angle: India's three-tier submarine force (SSBN, SSN aspirations, SSK) versus regional peers

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"6 boats, 1 Project" — all six Kalvari-class submarines under Project-75 are now in service, completing its first phase.

PYQ Linkage

Defence indigenisation/Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing is a recurring GS3 Mains theme; no exact past year confirmed for this specific class.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements about the Kalvari-class submarines:

1. They are built under Project-75 with French collaboration.
2. They are nuclear-powered submarines.
3. All six boats of the class have been commissioned into the Indian Navy.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — they are diesel-electric, not nuclear-powered.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (150 WORDS)

Discuss the significance of indigenous submarine-construction programmes for India's maritime security, with reference to Project-75 and Project-75(I).

#GS3

#Defence

#Project75

#AtmanirbharBharat

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

"Kalvari" means tiger shark in Malayalam — continuing a legacy name first used by an earlier Foxtrot-class submarine commissioned in 1967.

THEIAS AKADEMIA

Static Defence topics like this one are exactly where GS4-linked ethical questions on national duty and institutional trust also surface — EMP (Ethics & Moral Philosophy) sessions connect the two so your GS3 facts and GS4 arguments reinforce each other. theiasakademia.com

§5 Science & Technology

GS3

Digital Public Infrastructure

9-10 September 2026 · Source: UIDAI, Global Fintech Fest 2026

UIDAI Launches Aadhaar Face Authentication SDK and Testing Sandbox

Why in News: UIDAI released a native Face Authentication SDK for Android/iOS along with a companion testing Sandbox at the Global Fintech Fest 2026 in Mumbai, letting banks, fintechs and government departments embed Aadhaar face-based verification directly within their own apps instead of redirecting users to a separate Aadhaar app. The SDK includes liveness detection and anti-spoofing controls with encrypted handling of biometric data, building on UIDAI's claim of over 5 billion face-authentication transactions since the feature's 2021 launch.

Background: Aadhaar face authentication was introduced in 2021 as a contactless alternative to fingerprint/iris verification, useful for elderly users and manual labourers whose fingerprints are often worn or unreadable. It forms part of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) stack alongside UPI and DigiLocker, increasingly promoted internationally as an exportable governance model.

KEY FACTS

- SDK works natively inside third-party Android/iOS apps without redirecting to the Aadhaar app
- Companion Sandbox lets developers test the full authentication journey before going live
- Over 5 billion face-authentication transactions completed since the feature's 2021 launch
- Used by nearly 200 authorised user agencies (AUAs/KUAs)
- Built-in liveness detection and anti-spoofing controls cited by UIDAI
- Announced at Global Fintech Fest 2026, Mumbai
- Aadhaar operates under the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016
- Forms part of India Stack/DPI, alongside UPI and DigiLocker

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- DPI as a diplomatic/export model — India promoting India Stack to African and Southeast Asian nations
- Privacy and surveillance concerns of expanding biometric capture across third-party apps, referencing the Puttaswamy (2017) right-to-privacy judgment
- Financial-inclusion gains: frictionless KYC for elderly/manual-labour populations with degraded fingerprints
- Cybersecurity risk: centralising biometric capture across hundreds of third-party applications
- Regulatory question: adequacy of Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 safeguards for biometric data held by private AUAs

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"5 billion faces, 200 agencies" — the scale UIDAI cites to justify expanding face-auth further via this SDK.

PYQ Linkage

Aadhaar's constitutional status/Puttaswamy judgment is a recurring GS2 Mains theme; no new exact-year PYQ applicable to this specific SDK launch.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements about Aadhaar Face Authentication:

1. It was introduced as an alternative to fingerprint and iris-based authentication.
2. Users must always be redirected to a separate government-hosted Aadhaar application.
3. Aadhaar functions under a statute enacted in 2016.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) — the new SDK removes the need for redirection.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (250 WORDS)

Digital Public Infrastructure has become India's signature contribution to global governance innovation. Discuss with reference to Aadhaar, UPI and DigiLocker, along with associated privacy concerns.

#GS2

#GS3

#Aadhaar

#DPI

#DataPrivacy

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

India Stack — the Aadhaar-UPI-DigiLocker trio — is often cited as a model DPI stack; several African and Southeast Asian nations have sought partnerships to replicate elements of it domestically.

GS3

Emerging Technology · Quantum

9 September 2026 · Source: National Quantum Mission co-investment announcement

QNu Labs Raises ₹200 Crore With National Quantum Mission Co-Investment

Why in News: Bengaluru-based quantum-cybersecurity startup QNu Labs closed a ₹200 crore Series A1 funding round on 9 September 2026, co-led by the National Quantum Mission itself alongside Speciale Invest, with Sony Innovation Fund, Gaja Capital and Artha Ventures also participating. The funds will build a 2,000-km live Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) network connecting Bengaluru and Delhi, taking QNu Labs' total capital raised to ₹375 crore — a rare instance of a government mission co-investing directly in a private deep-tech startup rather than only disbursing grants.

Background: The National Quantum Mission (₹6,003 crore outlay, 2023-2031) aims to build domestic capability across quantum computing, communication, sensing and materials. QNu Labs, incubated at IIT Madras, works on Quantum Key Distribution, Quantum Random Number Generation and Post-Quantum Cryptography — hedges against future quantum-computer-enabled decryption of today's encrypted data.

KEY FACTS

- ₹200 crore Series A1 round closed 9 September 2026
- Co-lead investor: the National Quantum Mission — a government mission co-investing in a private startup's equity
- Other investors: Speciale Invest, Sony Innovation Fund, Gaja Capital, Artha Ventures
- Target: 2,000-km live QKD network on the Bengaluru-Delhi corridor
- Total funds raised by QNu Labs to date: ₹375 crore
- Company incubated at IIT Madras
- National Quantum Mission outlay: ₹6,003 crore over 2023-2031
- Product lines: QKD, Quantum Random Number Generation, Post-Quantum Cryptography

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- A new public-private capital model: mission funds co-investing in equity rather than only disbursing grants
- Quantum communication as strategically sensitive infrastructure requiring secure domestic supply chains
- India's positioning in the global quantum race against the US and China
- "Harvest now, decrypt later" threat: adversaries archiving encrypted data today to decrypt once quantum computers mature
- Ecosystem angle: IIT incubation-to-scale-up pipeline as a template for other deep-tech missions

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"2,000 km, 1 Mission" — the QKD corridor length matched against the National Quantum Mission's direct equity stake.

PYQ Linkage

National Quantum Mission is a post-2023 syllabus addition; no confirmed past PYQ, likely to feature in upcoming Mains GS3 questions on emerging technologies.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements about the National Quantum Mission:

1. It was launched in 2023 with an outlay of over ₹6,000 crore.
2. It covers quantum computing, communication, sensing and materials.
3. Government funds under it have co-invested directly in the equity of a private quantum-technology startup.

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: (d)

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (150 WORDS)

Discuss the strategic importance of quantum communication technologies for India's national security, and evaluate emerging public-private investment models to build this capability.

#GS3

#NationalQuantumMission

#QKD

#Cybersecurity

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

Quantum Key Distribution is theoretically "unhackable" because any interception attempt physically disturbs the quantum state, alerting both parties — a property with no classical-cryptography equivalent.

THEIAS AKADEMIA Two distinct emerging-tech stories in one morning — biometric DPI and quantum cybersecurity — is exactly the kind of GS3 depth LAKSHYAM AIR1 drills into with topic-wise test series. theiasakademia.com

§6 Economy

GS2

International Trade · Payment Systems

11 September 2026 · Source: BRICS Business Forum, New Delhi

BRICS Share of Global Exports Nears 24%; Push for UPI-Pix Payment Interoperability

Why in News: Addressing the BRICS Business Forum's Leaders' Session in New Delhi on 11 September 2026 — the largest such forum yet, with over 2,000 delegates — Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal noted that BRICS countries' share of

global merchandise exports has nearly doubled from about 12% in 2003 to roughly 24% today, with total BRICS exports rising from about \$900 billion to nearly \$6 trillion. Alongside, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra and other officials advanced discussions on interlinking India's UPI with Brazil's Pix and China's digital-yuan rails, and on Central Bank Digital Currencies, aiming at near-instant cross-border settlement in local currencies.

Background: BRICS Pay, an interoperability initiative connecting national payment systems, has been discussed across several summit cycles as part of a broader de-dollarisation push. India's UPI has become a flagship DPI export, and its potential linkage with BRICS partners' payment rails is central to reducing dependence on dollar-based correspondent banking (SWIFT).

KEY FACTS

- BRICS share of global merchandise exports: ~12% (2003) to ~24% (2026)
- BRICS merchandise exports: ~\$900 billion (2003) to nearly \$6 trillion (2024)
- Over 2,000 business delegates — the largest BRICS Business Forum to date
- Discussions on linking UPI with Brazil's Pix and China's digital-yuan payment rails
- Parallel discussion on Central Bank Digital Currencies for cross-border settlement
- Stated aim: bypass SWIFT/dollar-correspondent banking for intra-BRICS trade settlement
- India holds the 2026 BRICS chairship under "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability"
- New Development Bank (NDB) continues expanding its lending role among BRICS members

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- De-dollarisation debate and its practical limits given continued dollar dominance in reserves/invoicing
- India's UPI as both a domestic financial-inclusion tool and a diplomatic/DPI-export instrument
- Intra-BRICS trade imbalance — China's outsized share versus other members — as a structural tension
- NDB's expanding role as a complementary institution to the IMF and World Bank
- Currency-settlement interoperability risk: technical, regulatory and monetary-sovereignty challenges

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"12 to 24" — BRICS' share of world exports has doubled in roughly two decades.

PYQ Linkage

GS2 Mains 2021: "Bring out the reasons for the growing importance of BRICS platform in world affairs" — directly relevant to BRICS' economic-weight theme.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Which of the following payment systems belongs to Brazil, referenced in discussions on BRICS payment interoperability?

(a) Pix (b) UPI (c) e-CNY (d) SEPA

Answer: (a)

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (250 WORDS)

Examine the rationale behind BRICS countries' push for payment-system interoperability and Central Bank Digital Currencies, and assess the challenges to reducing dependence on dollar-based settlement.

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

UPI now processes more real-time payment transactions each month than several G7 countries process in an entire year — the scale argument India pitches abroad.

GS3

Sagarmala · Maritime Infrastructure

11 September 2026 · Source: Cochin Shipyard Ltd / press coverage

Cochin Shipyard, Drydocks World Sign ₹1,800 Crore Ship-Repair JV for Kochi

Why in News: Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL) and Drydocks World, a DP World company, signed a 50:50 joint-venture agreement worth ₹1,800 crore on 11 September 2026 to operate and expand the International Ship Repair Facility (ISRF) at Kochi, Kerala — described as India's first public-private partnership model in the ship-repair sector. The agreement was signed on the margins of the BRICS Business Forum in New Delhi.

Background: India has historically lost significant ship-repair business to hubs like Singapore, Colombo, Dubai and China due to limited domestic capacity. The government's Maritime India Vision 2030 and the Sagarmala programme have pushed for building indigenous ship-repair and port-linked industrial clusters to capture this business domestically.

KEY FACTS

- 50:50 joint-venture structure between Cochin Shipyard Ltd (a PSU) and Drydocks World (DP World, UAE)
- Deal value: ₹1,800 crore
- Facility: International Ship Repair Facility (ISRF), Kochi, Kerala
- Signed 11 September 2026, on BRICS Business Forum sidelines in New Delhi
- Described as India's first PPP model specifically in the ship-repair sector
- Aligns with the Sagarmala programme and Maritime India Vision 2030 targets
- Expected to expand ship-repair, fabrication and marine-engineering services regionally
- DP World is a Gulf-based (UAE) global ports-and-logistics operator

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Import substitution in ship-repair: reversing business currently going to Singapore/Colombo/UAE
- PPP as a financing and expertise-transfer model for capital-intensive maritime infrastructure
- Strategic significance of a UAE-based operator investing in Indian port-adjacent infrastructure amid India-Gulf economic deepening
- Linkage to Sagarmala's port-led industrialisation and employment-generation goals
- Comparative angle: China's and Singapore's dominance in global ship-repair versus India's underdeveloped capacity

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"50:50 at ISRF" — the joint-venture split, easy to pair with the ₹1,800 crore figure.

PYQ Linkage

Sagarmala/port-led development is a recurring GS3 Mains theme; no exact past year confirmed for this specific JV.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

The Sagarmala Programme is primarily associated with which of the following objectives?

- (a) Development of inland waterways alone
- (b) Port-led development and modernisation of India's coastline
- (c) Nuclear-powered submarine construction
- (d) Space-based ocean monitoring

Answer: (b)

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (150 WORDS)

Discuss the significance of public-private partnerships in developing India's ship-repair and shipbuilding capacity, in the context of the Sagarmala programme.

#GS3

#Sagarmala

#ShipRepair

#PPP

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

India captures only a tiny fraction of Asia's ship-repair market despite having one of the world's longest coastlines (~7,516 km) — the gap this Kochi JV is designed to close.

GS3

Monetary Policy · Digital Currency

11-12 September 2026 · Source: Global Fintech Fest 2026, Mumbai

FM Sitharaman Urges RBI to Scale Up e-Rupee After REC's Tokenised-Bond Test

Why in News: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, speaking at the Global Fintech Fest 2026 in Mumbai, urged the RBI to further scale up both its wholesale and retail Central Bank Digital Currency (e-Rupee) pilots, citing REC Ltd's tokenised corporate-bond pilot — run under SEBI's regulatory sandbox — in which bond transfer and digital-rupee payment settled simultaneously through an atomic delivery-versus-payment mechanism.

Background: RBI has run wholesale and retail e-Rupee pilots since November 2022, but retail volumes remain a small fraction of UPI's massive scale, which had constrained the case for aggressive scale-up until this fintech-fest push and the REC pilot's success.

KEY FACTS

- FM Sitharaman calls for scaling both wholesale and retail CBDC pilots at Global Fintech Fest 2026, Mumbai
- Trigger: REC Ltd's tokenised corporate-bond pilot under SEBI's regulatory sandbox
- Innovation demonstrated: simultaneous ("atomic") delivery-versus-payment settlement of bond transfer plus digital-rupee payment
- RBI's e-Rupee pilots (wholesale and retail) have run since November 2022
- Retail e-Rupee transaction volumes remain a tiny fraction of UPI's volumes as of 2026
- SEBI's regulatory sandbox enables controlled real-world testing of novel fintech products
- Tokenisation of securities is being explored as a route to faster, cheaper settlement
- Discussion occurred alongside BRICS-linked UPI-interoperability talks the same week

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Why India needs both UPI (retail payments) and CBDC (programmable, wholesale-capable money)
- Tokenisation and delivery-versus-payment efficiency gains for capital markets versus current settlement cycles
- Regulatory sandboxes (RBI/SEBI) as a calibrated innovation-testing mechanism balancing innovation and systemic risk

- Financial-stability implications of programmable money operating at scale
- Comparative angle: China's aggressive e-CNY rollout versus India's calibrated, pilot-first approach

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"REC Bond = Bond + e-Rupee, Same Instant" — the atomic-settlement idea in one line.

PYQ Linkage

CBDC/e-Rupee is a post-2022 syllabus addition; likely to feature in coming Mains GS3 questions on digital currency and monetary policy; no confirmed past PYQ.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

With reference to India's Central Bank Digital Currency (e-Rupee), consider the following statements:

1. It has been piloted in both wholesale and retail segments since 2022.
2. It is intended to replace UPI as India's primary retail digital-payment system.
3. A recent pilot demonstrated simultaneous settlement of a tokenised bond transfer and a digital-rupee payment.

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) — CBDC is meant to complement, not replace, UPI.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION (150 WORDS)

Discuss the potential of Central Bank Digital Currency in transforming securities settlement in India, with reference to recent pilot initiatives.

#GS3

#CBDC

#eRupee

#DigitalFinance

AKADEMIA MEMORY TRIVIA

An "atomic" settlement means the bond transfer and payment either both complete or both fail together — eliminating the classic capital-market risk of one leg settling without the other.

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