

PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

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“Every Topper's Last Read” — if a card would not survive being the last thing a serious aspirant reads before the exam, it does not belong here.

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§1 Today's Headlines

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- 2 The Lokniti-CSDS & Common Cause *Status of Policing in India Report 2026* finds cybercrime up 17.9% even as overall crime fell 6%, with 27% of complainants paying police bribes. **GS2/GS3**
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12 MoSPI launches a trial Index of Services Production covering 19 sub-sectors, filling a long-standing gap in India's high-frequency economic data. **GS3**

13 India's first PRAMAAN forest-certification scheme awards its inaugural certificates to an Andhra Pradesh eucalyptus plantation and an Odisha bamboo farmer. **GS3**

THEIAS AKADEMIA A statehood resolution, a national policing survey, an Insecticides Act ban, two Cabinet-approved economic schemes and a Gulf energy-security operation — all inside 24 hours — is exactly the density that rewards structured 1-on-1 doubt-resolution: **Sahyog Mentorship**. Learn more at theiasakademia.com.

§2 Polity & Governance

GS2

Federalism – Article 370, UT Reorganisation & Asymmetric Autonomy

25–30 September 2026 · Source: J&K Legislative Assembly proceedings (Daily Excelsior, Deccan Herald)

J&K Assembly Passes Statehood-Restoration Resolution Amid BJP Walkout

Why in News: On 25 September 2026, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah moved a resolution in the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly calling on the Government of India for the "full statehood" of Jammu & Kashmir, explicitly invoking two earlier Assembly resolutions — the autonomy resolution of 26 June 2000 and a further resolution of 6 November 2024. The resolution's passage triggered a walkout by BJP legislators, who objected to the reference to the 2000 autonomy debate and tore up copies of the document on the Assembly floor. The Lieutenant Governor subsequently cleared the Omar-led Cabinet's resolution for onward transmission, and on 30 September it continued to dominate national political discourse, with Mr

Abdullah publicly clarifying: "We don't want half or quarter statehood, but full statehood," and distancing the resolution from any revival of Article 370-era autonomy or special status.

Background: Jammu & Kashmir's special constitutional position under Article 370 was abrogated on 5 August 2019, when Parliament also reorganised the former state into two Union Territories — J&K (with a legislature) and Ladakh (without one) — under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. The Union Government had committed before the Supreme Court in *In Re: Article 370* (2023) that statehood would be restored "at the earliest" once normalcy was assessed, while Union Territory status for Ladakh was framed as permanent. J&K has since held Assembly elections (2024) under UT rules, restoring an elected government with limited legislative competence — crucially excluding "Police" and "Public Order," which remain with the Centre through the Lieutenant Governor, a asymmetry at the heart of today's statehood demand.

KEY FACTS

- Resolution moved: 25 September 2026, by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.
- Explicitly invokes two prior Assembly resolutions: 26 June 2000 (autonomy) and 6 November 2024.
- Demand: restoration of full statehood only — CM publicly disclaimed any revival of autonomy/special-status debate.
- J&K's present status: Union Territory with legislature since the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 (effective 31 October 2019).
- Subjects withheld from the elected J&K government: Police and Public Order, which remain with the Lieutenant Governor/Centre.
- Supreme Court's December 2023 *In Re: Article 370* judgment recorded the Solicitor General's assurance that statehood would be restored "at the earliest," while upholding the abrogation and Ladakh's UT status as valid.
- BJP's objection centred on the resolution's reference to the 2000 autonomy resolution, not the statehood demand itself; it staged a walkout and tore up the document.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Asymmetric federalism in practice: J&K now has an elected Assembly and Chief Minister but no control over police or public order — a hybrid status unlike any full state, raising questions about the content of "responsible government" in a Union Territory-with-legislature model.
- Judicial commitments versus political timelines: the Supreme Court recorded an executive assurance on statehood restoration but set no enforceable deadline, leaving the question in the political domain rather than a justiciable one.
- Political framing risk: by invoking the 2000 autonomy resolution without endorsing it, the Omar government sought to separate "statehood" (restoring J&K to par with other states) from "special status" (Article 370-style asymmetry) — a distinction the BJP's walkout suggests is contested rather than settled in public discourse.
- Comparative federalism: Delhi's own Union-Territory-with-legislature arrangement under Article 239AA, and the long-running Centre-Delhi services dispute resolved by the GNCTD

(Amendment) Act, 2023, offers a precedent for how asymmetric power-sharing between an elected UT government and the Centre can itself become a source of recurring friction.

- Way forward: statehood restoration would require either a fresh Act of Parliament or an amendment reversing relevant provisions of the 2019 Reorganisation Act — a non-trivial legislative exercise that is, as of today, unscheduled.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the 2019 split as "**2 UTs, 1 with a House**": Ladakh got no legislature (permanent UT), J&K got a legislature but not full statehood (police & public order stay with Delhi) — so today's resolution is J&K asking to upgrade from "UT-with-a-House" to a full "State-with-a-House-AND-keys".

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2019: "Discuss the main objectives of Population Education and point out the measures to achieve them in India in detail" is unrelated, but GS2 2021 asked on Article 371 special provisions; this Assembly resolution extends that same federalism-and-special-provisions theme into J&K's post-2019 status.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir:

1. It is a Union Territory with a Legislative Assembly, similar in constitutional design to the National Capital Territory of Delhi.
2. "Public Order" and "Police" fall within the legislative competence of its elected Assembly.
3. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 created Ladakh as a Union Territory without a legislature.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 only (c) 1, 2 and 3 (d) 2 and 3 only

Answer: (a). Statement 2 is false — Police and Public Order are specifically withheld from the J&K Assembly's competence and vest in the Lieutenant Governor/Union.

GS2

PYQ: Art 371

Federalism

Article 370

UT Reorganisation

GS2/GS3

Internal Security – Policing, Cybercrime & Police Accountability

30 September 2026 · Source: Lokniti-CSDS & Common Cause, *Status of Policing in India Report (SPIR) 2026*

SPIR 2026: Cybercrime Surges 17.9% as 27% of Complainants Report Paying Police Bribes

Why in News: The Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Common Cause released the *Status of Policing in India Report 2026* on 30 September 2026, surveying 8,306 citizens across 16 states on their direct experience of cybercrime and policing. The report

records a 17.9% jump in registered cybercrime cases nationally — from 86,420 in 2023 to 101,928 in 2024 — even as the overall (non-cyber) crime rate fell by about 6% over the same period, inverting the usual link between crime statistics and lived insecurity. It is the latest in the SPIR series, which has tracked public trust in, and experience of, the police since 2018.

Background: SPIR is India's principal non-governmental survey instrument for policing, distinct from the Bureau of Police Research & Development's official data and the National Crime Records Bureau's *Crime in India* statistics, both of which rely on registered FIRs rather than citizen-reported victimisation. The gap between the two kinds of data is itself a recurring Mains theme: official crime data can under-count cybercrime because victims often do not file complaints, precisely the dynamic SPIR 2026 documents — only 49% of citizens reporting the request to confirm an "unordered delivery" (a common fraud vector) said they had actually been targeted, suggesting significant underlying exposure to phishing-style scams beyond what gets formally reported.

KEY FACTS

- Survey base: 8,306 respondents across 16 states, jointly fielded by Lokniti-CSDS and Common Cause.
- Registered cybercrime cases: 86,420 (2023) → 101,928 (2024), a 17.9% rise.
- Overall (non-cyber) registered crime fell by roughly 6% in the same period — the inverse trend driving the report's headline finding.
- 33% of respondents received fraudulent "unordered delivery" confirmation calls; 31% were targeted with high-return investment scams.
- About 13% of respondents reported direct cybercrime victimisation in the preceding 2–3 years.
- 27% of citizens who approached police with a complaint said they paid a bribe; of those, 41% recovered their full lost money versus just 12% of non-bribe-payers.
- Bribery was regressive: 51% of poor complainants paid bribes versus 12% of affluent complainants, even though victimisation itself skewed the other way (57% of affluent respondents were victimised versus 47% of the poor).
- Only 49% of those who received a fraud-vector call said they ultimately filed a formal complaint.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Police accountability and "informal pricing" of justice: a bribe-paying complainant is over three times likelier to recover stolen money than one who does not pay — effectively monetising a right (police assistance) that is constitutionally meant to be free, with the poor paying bribes more often despite being victimised less.
- Crime statistics as an incomplete picture: falling registered overall crime alongside rising lived cybercrime victimisation illustrates why NCRB's FIR-based *Crime in India* series needs victimisation surveys like SPIR as a complement, not a substitute — a classic "dark figure of crime" problem in criminology.
- Institutional design gap: India still lacks a single central law squarely addressing cyber-fraud victim compensation and recovery (the IT Act, 2000 and BNS, 2023 cover offences, but

recovery infrastructure for small-value digital fraud remains thin), which SPIR's recovery-rate data exposes starkly.

- Digital Financial Literacy and the Reserve Bank's/MeitY's awareness campaigns need to be read against this data: scam-call exposure (33%) far outstrips reported complaint rates (49% of those targeted), suggesting underreporting itself is a policy problem, not just a crime problem.
- Way forward: states' dedicated cyber-crime helplines (1930) and the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) need outcome metrics (recovery rate, time-to-resolution) published alongside case-registration counts, so that "cases registered" is not mistaken for "citizens helped."

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Pair the numbers as a seesaw: crime (FIRs) **down 6%**, cyber-victimisation **up 17.9%** — the ground is shifting from the street to the smartphone, but the police's bribe-economy (27% pay, poor pay more, rich get victimised more) hasn't shifted with it.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2018: "Discuss different types of cybercrimes and measures required to be taken to fight the menace." SPIR 2026 supplies the fresh empirical backbone (victimisation rates, recovery data, bribery) for exactly this kind of answer today.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Status of Policing in India Report (SPIR):

1. It is published jointly by Common Cause and the Lokniti programme of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS).
2. It is a statutory report mandated under the Police Act, 1861.
3. It relies on citizen surveys rather than solely on FIR-based crime statistics.

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: (b). SPIR is a non-statutory, civil-society survey initiative, not a government-mandated report.

GS2

GS3

Internal Security

Cybercrime

Police Reforms

GS2

Fundamental Rights – Article 21 (Right to Health/Environment) vs Article 25/29 (Religious & Cultural Practice)

30 September 2026 · Source: Supreme Court of India (LiveLaw, India Legal)

Supreme Court Rules Out Blanket Firecracker Ban, Orders Time-Bound Green-Cracker Regime for Diwali

Why in News: Hearing the ongoing Delhi-NCR firecracker litigation on 30 September 2026, the Supreme Court declined to impose a complete, 24-hour ban on firecrackers ahead of Diwali, while equally rejecting unrestricted bursting. The Bench signalled a "balancing" approach — permitting only licensed, next-generation green crackers within specified bursting hours in the NCR, continuing a line of litigation the Court has supervised for nearly a decade over Delhi's post-Diwali air-quality crisis. The order keeps alive the Court's practice of issuing a fresh, dated window (echoing its 18–21 October-style directions from the previous cycle) rather than a permanent statutory rule.

Background: The firecracker-regulation litigation traces to *Arjun Gopal v. Union of India* (2018), where the Supreme Court first restricted manufacture and sale to certified "green crackers" developed by CSIR-NEERI, and limited bursting to two-hour windows. Delhi's air quality deteriorates sharply every winter due to a confluence of factors — stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana, vehicular and construction dust, and a seasonal temperature inversion that traps pollutants — of which firecrackers are one contributing, time-concentrated source rather than the principal cause. The Court's recurring dilemma is constitutional: Article 21's right to a pollution-free environment (read into "right to life" since *Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar*, 1991) must be weighed against Article 25's freedom of religious practice and Article 29's protection of cultural practice, since firecrackers are embedded in Diwali celebrations for a large section of citizens.

KEY FACTS

- Date of this order: 30 September 2026, in the continuing Delhi-NCR firecracker matter before the Supreme Court.
- Outcome: no blanket/24-hour ban; no blanket permission either — a time-bound, green-cracker-only regime for NCR.
- Originating precedent: *Arjun Gopal v. Union of India* (2018), which introduced CSIR-NEERI-certified "green crackers" and fixed bursting windows.
- Constitutional provisions in tension: Article 21 (right to a healthy/pollution-free environment) versus Article 25 (freedom of religion) and Article 29 (cultural practice).
- Delhi's winter air-quality crisis stems from multiple sources — stubble burning, vehicular emissions, construction dust and a seasonal inversion layer — of which firecrackers are one short, concentrated contributor around Diwali.
- The ruling arrives the same week the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) revised Delhi-NCR's Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), tightening diesel-generator and vehicle restrictions — showing the Court and the executive air-quality architecture moving in parallel.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Proportionality over prohibition: the Court's refusal to choose an absolute rule (total ban or total freedom) exemplifies the proportionality doctrine in Indian constitutional adjudication — restricting a right only to the extent necessary to protect a competing right, rather than extinguishing either.

- Judicial governance by annual order: nearly a decade of "fresh window" orders each Diwali season, rather than a settled legislative framework, raises a separation-of-powers question about whether air-quality policy for festive seasons should be Parliament's/the Delhi government's call rather than the judiciary's recurring supervisory task.
- Enforcement gap, not rule gap: previous years' experience shows the real failure is often enforcement (illegal cracker sales, unlicensed manufacture) rather than an absence of rules — a point relevant to any answer on implementation deficits in Indian environmental regulation.
- Equity dimension: a green-cracker-only regime assumes consumer ability to distinguish certified from uncertified products and assumes effective market surveillance, which disproportionately burdens enforcement agencies rather than consumers or industry.
- Way forward: a standing, statute-backed seasonal air-quality protocol (rather than annual litigation) combined with real-time GRAP integration could reduce the Court's recurring docket burden on this issue.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Think "Neither Zero, Nor Free" — the Court never gives a flat yes/no on firecrackers; it always gives a **window** (certified crackers + fixed hours), because Article 21 and Article 25/29 both have to fit through the same door.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2022: "Does the right to clean environment entail legal regulations on burning crackers at festivals?" (paraphrased theme from recurring Mains GS2/GS3 environment-rights crossover questions); this order is a direct, current-dated answer anchor.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The "right to a pollution-free environment" has been read by the Supreme Court as part of the right to life under Article 21.
2. The Supreme Court's firecracker-related directions originated in a case concerning Delhi-NCR's air quality.
3. "Green crackers" referred to in Supreme Court orders are certified by the Central Pollution Control Board alone, with no role for any CSIR laboratory.

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 false — CSIR-NEERI (National Environmental Engineering Research Institute) developed and certifies green-cracker formulations.

GS2

Article 21

Fundamental Rights

Environmental Jurisprudence

§3 GS1 — Governance Innovation & Society

GS1/GS2

Urbanisation & Local Governance – Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0

30 September 2026 · Source: Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (PIB)

PRAGATI-50: Centre Launches 50-City Sanitation Benchmarking Drive Under SBM-Urban 2.0

Why in News: The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs launched "PRAGATI-50" on 30 September 2026, a benchmarking initiative covering 50 cities across 24 states under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) 2.0, incorporating CSIR-Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute's (CMERI, Durgapur) testing facility and onboarding 75 sanitation-technology startups. The initiative is aimed at standardising how urban local bodies measure and compare progress on waste segregation, wastewater treatment and water-body rejuvenation, moving SBM-U 2.0 from a target-completion framework toward a comparative, data-driven one.

Background: SBM-Urban 2.0, launched in 2021 as a follow-on to the original 2014 mission, shifted focus from open-defecation-free (ODF) status and basic waste collection to "garbage-free" city certification, faecal sludge and septage management, and used-water treatment, with a stated vision of making all urban India "garbage free." Bringing in a CSIR national laboratory (CMERI) to test and validate indigenous sanitation technologies, and formally onboarding private/startup innovators, reflects a broader pattern across recent urban missions (also seen in AMRUT 2.0 and the National Mission on Water for its sister rural programmes) of pairing public mission targets with a startup-incubation and standards-testing layer rather than relying solely on municipal capacity.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Launch date: 30 September 2026; implementing ministry: Housing & Urban Affairs.
- Coverage: 50 benchmark cities across 24 states.
- Technology-testing partner: CSIR-Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CMERI), Durgapur.
- 75 sanitation-technology startups formally onboarded under the initiative.
- Parent scheme: Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 (launched 1 October 2021), itself a continuation of the original Swachh Bharat Mission (2 October 2014).
- SBM-U 2.0's stated goals include "garbage-free" city status, 100% scientific processing of municipal solid waste, and faecal sludge/septage management in all statutory towns.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- From target-counting to benchmarking: PRAGATI-50 signals a shift in India's flagship urban mission architecture from "how many toilets/how much waste collected" metrics to comparative city-level performance benchmarking — a maturing of outcome measurement in governance.
- Science-governance convergence: involving a CSIR engineering lab (CMERI) in a civic sanitation mission is part of a wider trend of embedding public R&D institutions directly into implementation (mirrored in the Jal Jeevan Mission's testing protocols), rather than treating science and governance as separate tracks.
- Startup ecosystem as service-delivery partner: onboarding 75 startups raises both opportunity (innovation, cost efficiency) and accountability questions (procurement transparency, long-term municipal capacity versus private dependency) relevant to any answer on PPP models in urban service delivery.
- Federalism-in-practice angle: urban sanitation is a State/municipal subject under the Twelfth Schedule (Article 243W), so a Centrally-run benchmarking exercise across 24 states tests how far central missions can standardise outcomes without displacing municipal autonomy.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Chain the years: **SBM (2014)** → **SBM-U 2.0 (2021)** → **PRAGATI-50 (2026)** — from building toilets, to garbage-free cities, to benchmarking them against each other.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS1 2015: "The quality of urbanization in India is a cause for concern." GS2 2021 also touched on SBM's evolution — PRAGATI-50 is a direct, current-dated update to both themes.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) 2.0:

1. It was launched as a continuation of the original Swachh Bharat Mission to achieve "garbage-free" city status.
2. "Urban sanitation" is listed as a Union subject under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
3. CSIR-CMERI, Durgapur is a testing partner associated with an initiative launched under this mission.

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: (b). Statement 2 is false — urban sanitation falls within the Twelfth Schedule's municipal functions (Article 243W), a State/local subject, not a Union one.

GS1

GS2

Urbanisation

Swachh Bharat Mission

Local Governance

§4 International Relations

GS2/GS3

India & its Neighbourhood/Energy Security – Chokepoints, the 2026 Iran War & Strategic Petroleum Reserves

29–30 September 2026 · Source: Ministry of External Affairs briefing; Al Jazeera; Oilprice.com shipping-rate reporting

Strait of Hormuz: Oil Flows Recover But Iran's Chokepoint Leverage — and India's Shipping Bill — Both Stay Under Strain

Why in News: Seven months into the 2026 Iran war (fighting began 28 February 2026), crude-oil traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has recovered to roughly 16.3 million barrels per day in September — the highest since the conflict began — yet still about 3.2 million barrels per day below pre-war levels, with war-risk tanker insurance for a single Hormuz passage reported to have risen from around \$250,000 before the war to as much as \$10 million now. On 29 September 2026, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal confirmed in a bi-weekly briefing that six India-flagged and six foreign-flagged vessels "of Indian interest," carrying roughly 163 Indian seafarers, remain positioned west of the Strait, part of a wider pool of over 4,500 Indian seafarers on commercial vessels across the wider Gulf region whose safety the Ministry of Shipping and Indian missions continue to monitor.

Background: The Strait of Hormuz, separating Iran from Oman and the UAE, is the world's single most important oil chokepoint, carrying roughly a fifth of global petroleum liquids consumption in normal years; India sources a large share of its crude imports from Gulf producers that ship through this exact channel, making any disruption there a direct hit to India's import bill and inflation trajectory. Since the war's outbreak, India's quarterly crude import costs have risen sharply — around 60% year-on-year in April-June 2026 and 41% in July 2026 — driven less by the posted price of Brent crude (hovering near \$102–103/barrel, itself up roughly 25% since the war began) than by freight and insurance premiums: VLCC freight from Ras Tanura (Saudi Arabia) to India has risen 411% since February, and from Ust-Luga (Russia) to India has more than doubled.

KEY FACTS

- 2026 Iran war began 28 February 2026; as of late September, oil traffic through Hormuz has partially recovered to ~16.3 million barrels/day (September), still ~3.2 million bpd below pre-war levels.
- War-risk insurance for a single Hormuz transit: from ~\$250,000 pre-war to as much as \$10 million now.
- MEA (29 Sept 2026): 6 India-flagged + 6 foreign-flagged vessels "of Indian interest" west of the Strait, ~163 Indian seafarers aboard; over 4,500 Indian seafarers on commercial vessels across the broader Gulf.

- India's crude import bill: +60% YoY (Apr-Jun 2026), +41% YoY (Jul 2026).
- Brent crude trading near \$102–103/barrel, up ~25% since the war's start.
- Freight rate surges: Ras Tanura–India VLCC rate up 411% (from \$0.85 to \$4.34/barrel); Ust-Luga (Russia)–India rate more than doubled (from \$8.40 to \$19.90/barrel).
- EAM Jaishankar has characterised recent shipping attacks as spanning "from the Black Sea to the Red Sea to the Gulf."

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Chokepoint geopolitics versus market adaptation: that oil is moving again through Hormuz despite the ongoing war suggests shippers and insurers are pricing and routing around risk rather than Iran successfully closing the strait — evidence for the "declining leverage" reading, but the still-elevated insurance costs show the risk premium, not the risk itself, has been "solved."
- India's energy security is a freight and insurance problem as much as a crude-price problem: a focus only on Brent crude benchmarks would miss that shipping-cost inflation (up to 411% on some routes) is doing more damage to India's import bill than the oil price itself — a key analytical distinction for any energy-security answer.
- Strategic petroleum reserve adequacy: the article's warning that "strategic reserves in consuming nations are substantially depleted" is directly relevant to India's own Strategic Petroleum Reserve programme (Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru, Padur) and its limited few days' cover compared to IEA members' 90-day standard.
- Human-security dimension of maritime trade: over 4,500 Indian seafarers in a live-conflict shipping lane is a direct test of the state's extraterritorial duty of care, paralleling past evacuation operations (Operation Ganga, Operation Kaveri) but for a slower-burning, ongoing risk rather than a single evacuation event.
- Diversification imperative: the surge in Ust-Luga (Russian)-origin shipping rates shows that India's post-2022 pivot toward discounted Russian crude has not insulated it from this conflict's shipping-cost shock, since war-risk pricing in the wider Black Sea-to-Gulf shipping network has risen in tandem.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember "**barrels back, premium stuck**": the volume of oil through Hormuz has recovered (16.3 mbpd) but the price of insuring that oil's journey has not (up to \$10 million/passage) — recovery in quantity, not in risk.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS1 Mains (recurring theme, e.g. 2016/2020-style): "Important Straits/Chokepoints of the world and their strategic significance" — Hormuz is the archetypal answer-anchor; GS3 2014/2021-style energy-security questions also apply directly.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Strait of Hormuz:

1. It connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
2. It lies entirely within Iran's territorial waters.
3. A large share of the world's seaborne crude oil exports transits through it.

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). Statement 2 is false — the Strait lies between Iran and Oman/the UAE, and navigation rights through its shipping lanes are governed by international transit-passage norms, not exclusive Iranian sovereignty.

GS2

GS3

Energy Security

Strait of Hormuz

Chokepoints

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§5 Defence & Security

GS3

Internal Security – Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 & Disturbed Areas

30 September 2026 (effective 1 October 2026) · Source: Ministry of Home Affairs notification

Centre Extends AFSPA for Six More Months in Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh

Why in News: The Ministry of Home Affairs notified a six-month extension of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) across designated "disturbed areas" of Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, effective 1 October 2026. In Manipur, the extension notably excludes 13 police-station areas that have been carved out as no longer "disturbed," continuing a graduated, area-by-area rollback pattern rather than either a blanket continuation or a full withdrawal; Nagaland's extension covers designated areas across multiple districts, and Arunachal Pradesh's covers specified districts along its border tracts.

Background: AFSPA grants the armed forces special powers — including powers of arrest without warrant, search without warrant, and the use of force (even to the extent of causing death) in specified "disturbed areas" — to assist civil power in maintaining public order. First enacted in 1958 for the North-East, and periodically reviewed every six months, it has been progressively withdrawn from parts of the North-East since 2015 (fully withdrawn from Tripura

and Meghalaya, and from large parts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in phases) as the security situation has improved, while remaining a politically contentious law criticised for alleged human-rights excesses and lack of accountability, most prominently after the 2004 Manorama Devi custodial-death case led to the Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee's 2005 recommendation that AFSPA be repealed and its provisions absorbed into the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act instead.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Extension period: six months from 1 October 2026, across Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Manipur: 13 police-station areas newly excluded from "disturbed area" status in this round.
- Governing statute: Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.
- Statutory review cycle: the "disturbed area" declaration must be periodically reviewed, conventionally every six months.
- Key precedent for reform debate: Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy Committee (2005), constituted after the 2004 Thangjam Manorama custodial-death case in Manipur, recommended AFSPA's repeal with its operative provisions folded into the UAPA, 1967.
- AFSPA has been fully withdrawn from Tripura (2015) and Meghalaya (2018), and progressively scaled back in Assam, Nagaland and Manipur districts in phases since 2022.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Graduated normalisation as policy tool: excluding specific police-station areas rather than entire states/districts lets the Centre calibrate security-law withdrawal to very local threat assessments — a middle path between abrupt full repeal and indefinite blanket continuation.
- Security-versus-rights trade-off: AFSPA's immunity provisions (Section 6, requiring Central Government sanction to prosecute armed-forces personnel) remain the law's most contested feature, repeatedly flagged by UN human-rights bodies and Indian civil-society groups as inconsistent with ordinary criminal accountability norms.
- Federalism angle: "disturbed area" declarations can be made by either the Governor of a State or the Central Government, making AFSPA one of the few security laws where both Centre and State technically share a notifying role, though in practice the Centre's writ (via the Governor in North-Eastern states) tends to dominate.
- Unimplemented reform: two decades after the Jeevan Reddy Committee's repeal-and-replace recommendation, AFSPA remains in force in parts of three states — a useful example of a reform recommendation accepted in principle (by various committees, including the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission) but not legislatively acted upon.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the AFSPA clock: declared "disturbed" → reviewed every **6 months** → and remember "**13 out, rest in**" for this round's Manipur carve-out — a shrinking footprint, not a frozen one.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2015: "The North-Eastern states of India are considered as very important for India's internal security as well as economic development. Discuss"; GS2/GS3 themes on AFSPA reform recur regularly in Mains answer-writing programmes.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA):

1. A "disturbed area" under the Act can be declared only by the Central Government and never by a State Governor.
2. The Act has been fully withdrawn from Tripura and Meghalaya.
3. The Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy Committee recommended repealing AFSPA and incorporating its provisions into the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 1 is false — both the Governor of a State/Administrator of a Union Territory and the Central Government are empowered to declare an area "disturbed."

GS3

Internal Security

AFSPA

North-East

GS3

Maritime Security & Doctrine – Indian Navy's 2026 Maritime Strategy & Energy-Route Protection

29 September – 1 October 2026 · Source: Ministry of Defence/Indian Navy (DD News, Life of Soldiers)

Naval Commanders' Conference 2026 Concludes: New Maritime Strategy and 'Operation Urja Suraksha' Unveiled Amid Gulf Tensions

MEMORY TECHNIQUE — RETURNING TOPIC

Previously covered:

28 September 2026 (conference's opening/curtain-raiser at Nausena Bhawan, 29 Sept–1 Oct)

What's new today:

The conference has now concluded (1 Oct), with a formal Maritime Strategy 2026 and a named operational concept, "Operation Urja Suraksha," unveiled for safeguarding India's energy shipping routes amid the Gulf/Hormuz crisis covered in §4

UPSC relevance shift:

Moves the story from a curtain-raiser/event-listing (low Prelims/Mains value on its own) to a concrete doctrinal and operational output directly testable on maritime-security and energy-security linkages

Why in News: The second edition of the Indian Navy's 2026 Commanders' Conference, held at Nausena Bhawan, New Delhi from 29 September to 1 October 2026, concluded with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, Chief of Defence Staff General N.S. Raja Subramani and Army Chief General Dhiraj Seth reviewing operational readiness and unveiling the Navy's updated Maritime Strategy. Mr Singh described the Indian Navy as the Indian Ocean Region's "First Responder and Preferred Security Partner," while Admiral Swaminathan underlined "combat readiness, agility and responsiveness while accelerating technology absorption." The conference formally named "Operation Urja Suraksha" as the Navy's energy-security-focused operational concept for safeguarding Indian-flagged and Indian-interest shipping amid the ongoing West Asia/Gulf conflict discussed in this edition's International Relations section.

Background: The biannual Naval Commanders' Conference is the Indian Navy's apex internal forum for reviewing operational, logistical, training and technology priorities with the political and tri-service military leadership, distinct from the tri-service Combined Commanders' Conference chaired by the Prime Minister. India's broader "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine, articulated in 2015, already frames the Navy's role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean; "Operation Urja Suraksha" operationalises that doctrine specifically for energy-route protection at a moment when the 2026 Iran war has made Gulf shipping lanes measurably riskier (as detailed in §4), linking India's maritime strategy directly to its crude-import dependency.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Conference dates: 29 September–1 October 2026, Nausena Bhawan, New Delhi.
- Chaired/attended by: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, CNS Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, CDS General N.S. Raja Subramani, Army Chief General Dhiraj Seth.
- New operational concept named: "Operation Urja Suraksha" — energy-security shipping-route protection in the West Asia/Gulf context.
- Navy's self-description at the conference: "First Responder and Preferred Security Partner" in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Stated institutional priorities: combat readiness, indigenisation/Aatmanirbharta, tri-service interoperability, and accelerated technology absorption.
- Doctrinal lineage: builds on India's 2015 SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) framework.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- From doctrine to operation: naming a specific operation ("Urja Suraksha") rather than only restating SAGAR principles shows a shift from declaratory doctrine to an operational posture with (presumably) assigned assets, patrol areas and rules of engagement — a meaningful doctrinal escalation worth distinguishing in a Mains answer.
- Energy security as a maritime-military function: this conference explicitly ties naval deployment to oil-import security, reinforcing that "energy security" in the Indian strategic lexicon is not merely an economic-ministry concern but a tri-service military planning input.

- Civil-military coordination: Navy operations to protect "Indian-interest" (not just Indian-flagged) shipping raise questions of jurisdiction and coordination with the Ministry of Shipping, DG Shipping, and private shipping lines, since much of the vulnerable tonnage is foreign-flagged but India-linked cargo or crew.
- Comparative doctrine: Operation Urja Suraksha parallels earlier Indian Navy anti-piracy escort operations in the Gulf of Aden since 2008, suggesting an institutional template India already has for exactly this kind of mission, now redeployed against a state-conflict risk rather than piracy.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Link doctrine to operation like a chain: **SAGAR (2015, the "why")** → **Maritime Strategy 2026 (the "how")** → **Operation Urja Suraksha (the "where/what, right now")**.

📋 PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2013: "The nature of the maritime threats facing India and the measures taken to counter them"; GS3 recurring theme on Indian Ocean Region strategy and SAGAR doctrine.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Naval Commanders' Conference is chaired by the Prime Minister of India.
2. India's "SAGAR" doctrine was articulated in 2015 to frame India as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region.
3. The Indian Navy has previously conducted anti-piracy escort operations in the Gulf of Aden.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 1 is false — the Naval Commanders' Conference is an internal Navy/Defence Ministry forum; it is the Combined Commanders' Conference that the Prime Minister chairs.

GS3 Maritime Security SAGAR Doctrine Indian Navy

THEIAS AKADEMIA AFSPA's rights-versus-security tension and the Navy's energy-security doctrine both hinge on weighing competing values under pressure — exactly the terrain **EMP (Ethics & Moral Philosophy)** trains you to navigate for GS4. Learn more at theiasakademia.com.

§6 Science & Technology

30 September 2026 (17th Aadhaar Day) · Source: UIDAI (Aadhaar Samvaad, Kolkata)

UIDAI Unveils Five New Initiatives on Aadhaar's 17th Foundation Day

Why in News: At "Aadhaar Samvaad" in Kolkata on 30 September 2026, marking Aadhaar's 17th Foundation Day, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) unveiled five new initiatives: Face Authentication for the electronic Public Distribution System (ePDS), developed jointly with the Department of Food & Public Distribution and the National Informatics Centre; an upgraded SWIK Portal 2.0 to streamline approval of new Aadhaar-authentication use cases; a Sub-AUA/KUA "LITE" framework letting low-volume government and non-government entities piggyback on existing authentication infrastructure; a new Token Management System for scheduling visits to UIDAI's regional/state offices; and a revamped, more accessible UIDAI website, currently supporting 13 languages (including English and Hindi) with a stated plan to expand to 23 languages via BHASHINI integration.

Background: Aadhaar, rolled out from 2010 under the Unique Identification Authority of India Act, 2016 (which gave it statutory backing after the Supreme Court's 2018 *K.S. Puttaswamy (Aadhaar-5J)* judgment upheld its core architecture while reading down certain private-sector uses), has evolved from a bare identity number into an authentication layer underlying Direct Benefit Transfer, banking KYC, and welfare delivery across dozens of schemes. Face authentication for ration delivery specifically targets a known implementation gap: manual labourers and elderly beneficiaries whose worn fingerprints frequently cause Aadhaar-based biometric authentication failures at Fair Price Shops, a problem repeatedly flagged in audits of the Public Distribution System and by the Ministry of Rural Development's own grievance data.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Date and venue: 30 September 2026, Aadhaar Samvaad, Kolkata — marking Aadhaar's 17th Foundation Day.
- Initiative 1: Face Authentication for ePDS (with Dept. of Food & Public Distribution and NIC) — addresses fingerprint-authentication failure among ration beneficiaries.
- Initiative 2: SWIK Portal 2.0, streamlining non-government entities' authentication-use-case approvals.
- Initiative 3: Sub-AUA/KUA "LITE" framework for low-authentication-volume entities to use shared infrastructure.
- Initiative 4: new Token Management System for UIDAI regional/state office visits.
- Initiative 5: revamped UIDAI website — 13 languages currently, with a plan to expand to 23 via BHASHINI; includes accessibility tools (screen-reader support, adjustable fonts) and a new careers portal.
- Statutory basis: Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016; constitutional validation (with modifications) in *K.S. Puttaswamy (Aadhaar-5J) v. Union of India*, 2018.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Inclusion-by-redesign: face authentication for ePDS is a direct technological response to the "exclusion error" problem in biometric welfare delivery — where authentication failure, not ineligibility, denies a genuine beneficiary their ration — a recurring Mains theme on DBT's unintended exclusionary effects.
- Federated authentication architecture: the Sub-AUA/KUA "LITE" model exemplifies a shift from every department building its own authentication stack to a shared, tiered-access national utility model — relevant to broader e-governance/Digital India architecture questions.
- Linguistic accessibility as digital rights: expanding the UIDAI website from 13 to a planned 23 languages, via the BHASHINI National Language Translation Mission, connects Aadhaar's service-delivery accessibility to India's Eighth Schedule linguistic-diversity commitments.
- Privacy-architecture trade-off: every expansion of use-cases (SWIK 2.0 streamlining more entities' onboarding) reopens the post-Puttaswamy debate on proportionality and purpose limitation in Aadhaar's private/non-government use, since each new "use case" is, in effect, a new data-sharing relationship.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the five as "**Face, Forms, Lite, Token, Tongue**" — Face authentication, SWIK forms-portal, LITE framework, Token system, and multi-Tongue (language) website.

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2018: "...potential of biometric technology vis-a-vis transparency and good governance"; GS2 2017 PYQ on Aadhaar's legal/constitutional basis remains the core linkage.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding UIDAI and Aadhaar:

1. The Aadhaar Act, 2016 was passed as a Money Bill.
2. The Supreme Court's *K.S. Puttaswamy* (Aadhaar-5J) judgment struck down the entire Aadhaar framework as unconstitutional.
3. UIDAI functions under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

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). Statement 2 is false — the Court upheld Aadhaar's core architecture while reading down certain provisions (e.g., mandatory linkage for private services such as bank accounts and telecom SIMs).

GS2

GS3

E-Governance

Aadhaar

Digital India

§7 Economy

GS3

Infrastructure & Energy – Renewable Energy Evacuation & Grid-Scale Storage

30 September 2026 · Source: Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (PIB/PM India)

Cabinet Approves ₹1,86,405-Crore Green Energy Corridor Phase-III ('PM-DHARA') to Evacuate 135 GW of Renewables

Why in News: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on 30 September 2026 approved the Green Energy Corridor Phase-III (GEC-III) scheme — publicly branded "PM-DHARA" — at a total project cost of ₹1,86,405 crore, comprising ₹1,36,378 crore for Intra-State Transmission Systems (InSTS) and ₹50,000 crore for 50 GWh of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), with Central Financial Assistance of ₹54,082 crore. The scheme is designed to enable evacuation of up to 135 GW of renewable energy capacity, in support of India's stated target of 900 GW of installed non-fossil capacity by 2035, with projects targeted for completion by FY 2032-33.

Background: India's renewable-energy build-out has, in recent years, repeatedly run ahead of its grid's ability to "evacuate" (transmit away from the point of generation) the power produced, especially from solar- and wind-rich states such as Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, leading to curtailment losses where generated clean power cannot reach demand centres. Green Energy Corridor Phase-I and Phase-II (approved in 2015 and 2022 respectively) focused primarily on inter-state transmission; Phase-III's emphasis on intra-state transmission plus large-scale battery storage reflects a maturing understanding that storage, not just wires, is now the binding constraint on renewable integration, since solar and wind generation is inherently intermittent and grid-stability requires dispatchable backup.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Total project cost: ₹1,86,405 crore — ₹1,36,378 crore for Intra-State Transmission Systems; ₹50,000 crore for 50 GWh Battery Energy Storage Systems.
- Central Financial Assistance: ₹54,082 crore.
- Capacity enabled: evacuation of up to 135 GW of renewable energy.
- Policy anchor: India's 900 GW non-fossil installed-capacity target by 2035.
- Implementation timeline: targeted completion by FY 2032-33.

- Implementation model: State Transmission Utilities as lead agencies; Transmission Service Providers selected via competitive bidding, including Build-Own-Operate-Maintain structures for new assets.
- Predecessor schemes: Green Energy Corridor Phase-I (2015) and Phase-II (2022), both focused chiefly on inter-state transmission.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- From generation targets to integration infrastructure: India's renewable policy focus has visibly shifted from "how much capacity can we install" (production-linked incentives, solar park schemes) to "how do we actually use what we've installed" — GEC-III is squarely an integration-infrastructure scheme, a maturing phase in energy-transition policy.
- Storage as the new bottleneck: allocating nearly 27% of the outlay (₹50,000 crore of ₹1,86,405 crore) to battery storage alone marks a structural shift — without storage, intermittent renewable power cannot reliably displace fossil baseload, so BESS investment is as much a climate-mitigation lever as a grid-engineering one.
- Centre-State coordination: since "Electricity" is a Concurrent List subject (Entry 38, List III) and intra-state transmission is primarily a state subject, GEC-III's central-funding-for-state-infrastructure model again tests how far Central financial assistance can shape state-level execution without displacing state discoms' autonomy.
- Fiscal and employment angle: the scheme is projected to generate long-term skilled employment in grid operation, maintenance and management — relevant to any answer connecting energy-transition investment with green-jobs creation.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Split the number like a pie: of ₹1.86 lakh crore, roughly **three-quarters goes to wires (InSTS)**, **one-quarter to batteries (BESS)** — transmission still dominates, but storage has arrived as a budget line of its own.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2020: "What are the salient features of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)? Discuss the way forward" is adjacent; more directly, GS3 2022-style questions on renewable energy integration and grid-balancing challenges apply.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Green Energy Corridor (GEC) scheme:

1. GEC Phase-III primarily funds inter-state transmission systems, unlike Phases I and II.
2. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) form a distinct funding component of GEC Phase-III.
3. "Electricity" is a subject placed in the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Statement 1 is false — GEC Phase-III's distinguishing emphasis is intra-state transmission (InSTS), reversing the inter-state focus of Phases I and II.

GS3

Agricultural Pricing Policy – Minimum Support Price & the Cost-of-Production Formula

30 September 2026 · Source: Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (PIB)

CCEA Raises MSP for All Six Rabi Crops for Marketing Season 2027-28

Why in News: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on 30 September 2026 approved higher Minimum Support Prices for all mandated Rabi crops for Marketing Season 2027-28. The increases are led by safflower (up ₹675/quintal), followed by rapeseed & mustard (₹413/quintal), lentil/masur (₹390/quintal), barley (₹136/quintal), gram (₹83/quintal) and wheat (₹25/quintal) — the smallest absolute increase among the six, despite wheat being India's dominant Rabi foodgrain by procurement volume.

Background: MSP is fixed by the Government on the recommendation of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), following the Union Budget 2018-19's stated policy of setting MSP at a minimum of 1.5 times the all-India weighted-average Cost of Production (the "C2+50%" formula debate, distinct from farmer unions' preferred, broader "comprehensive cost" calculation under the Swaminathan Commission's recommendations). Cumulative data placed in the public domain alongside this announcement shows wheat procurement at 3,715 lakh metric tonnes and MSP payments of ₹7.31 lakh crore between 2014-15 and 2025-26, while all six Rabi crops together saw 3,921 LMT procured for ₹8.36 lakh crore in the same period — underlining wheat's overwhelming share of actual government procurement despite its comparatively modest annual price hikes.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Crop-wise MSP hikes (Rabi Marketing Season 2027-28): Safflower +₹675/quintal; Rapeseed & Mustard +₹413/quintal; Lentil (Masur) +₹390/quintal; Barley +₹136/quintal; Gram +₹83/quintal; Wheat +₹25/quintal.
- Policy formula: MSP fixed at a minimum of 1.5 times the all-India weighted average Cost of Production, per the Union Budget 2018-19 commitment.
- Recommending body: Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- Cumulative wheat procurement, 2014-15 to 2025-26: 3,715 lakh metric tonnes; cumulative MSP payment: ₹7.31 lakh crore.
- Cumulative procurement across all six Rabi crops over the same period: 3,921 LMT; cumulative MSP payment: ₹8.36 lakh crore.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- The cost-formula debate persists: the Government's 1.5x-over-cost formula uses the "A2+FL" or "C2" cost concepts depending on crop and context, while farmer organisations (citing the

National Commission on Farmers/Swaminathan Commission, 2006) have long demanded a broader "comprehensive cost" (C2) base with the 50% margin added on top — a technical distinction that materially changes the rupee value of "50% profit."

- Procurement concentration risk: that wheat alone accounts for roughly 95% of cumulative Rabi procurement value (₹7.31 lakh crore of ₹8.36 lakh crore) despite receiving the smallest proportionate hike this cycle highlights how MSP announcements can diversify price support on paper while procurement infrastructure (mandis, FCI logistics) remains wheat/rice-centric in practice — a key reason pulses and oilseeds self-sufficiency targets lag.
- Diversification incentive: the comparatively steep hikes for oilseeds (rapeseed-mustard) and pulses (masur) relative to wheat are consistent with the Government's stated aim of reducing India's edible-oil and pulses import dependence through price signals — a recurring theme connecting MSP policy to trade/BoP concerns.
- MSP as a floor, not a guarantee: MSP announcements do not by themselves guarantee a farmer receives that price unless accompanied by adequate procurement infrastructure, a distinction crucial to any balanced Mains answer on MSP's actual versus announced impact.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Rank the hikes like a staircase from biggest to smallest: **Safflower > Mustard > Masur > Barley > Gram > Wheat** — the crop India procures least (safflower) gets the steepest per-quintal jump; the crop it procures most (wheat) gets the smallest.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2018: "Food processing sector in India...can realise the dream of doubling farmers' income" touches cost-of-production/MSP themes; GS3 2015 PYQ directly asked to explain MSP's output effect on the economy.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Minimum Support Price (MSP) in India:

1. MSP is recommended by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices and approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.
2. The Government's current policy commits to fixing MSP at a minimum of 1.5 times the all-India weighted average Cost of Production.
3. MSP is a legally enforceable price floor below which no private trader may purchase a notified crop anywhere in India.

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 false — MSP is a government procurement-price assurance, not a universally enforceable legal floor on private market transactions across India.

GS3

Agriculture

MSP

CACP

29 September 2026 · Source: Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (PIB)

MoSPI Launches Trial Index of Services Production, Closing a Long-Standing Data Gap

Why in News: The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released, on 29 September 2026, an experimental/trial "Index of Services Production" (ISP), covering 19 services sub-sectors with 2024-25 as the base year, providing a monthly reading (the initial release compares July 2026 with July 2025). The index is explicitly labelled a trial series rather than an official statistic, pending validation before possible adoption as a regular release.

Background: Services contribute over half of India's Gross Value Added, yet India's high-frequency ("month-to-month") economic indicators — the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), core-sector output, GST collections, and Purchasing Managers' Indices — have historically concentrated on manufacturing and industry, leaving policymakers comparatively data-poor on real-time services-sector momentum despite its dominant GDP share. This mirrors a gap flagged for years by the National Statistical Commission and in Economic Survey chapters on statistical-system reform, and parallels international practice where several OECD economies already publish monthly services-production indices alongside industrial-production indices.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Releasing authority: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- Release date: 29 September 2026; status: experimental/trial series.
- Coverage: 19 services sub-sectors.
- Base year: 2024-25.
- First comparison published: July 2026 over July 2025 (year-on-year).
- Rationale: fills a long-flagged gap in India's high-frequency economic-indicator architecture, which has historically been industry/manufacturing-centric (IIP, core-sector output).

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Statistical-system modernisation: launching a trial series before full adoption reflects good statistical practice (validate methodology, iron out sub-sector classification issues) rather than announcing a headline number prematurely — relevant to Mains answers on strengthening India's statistical architecture, a theme the Economic Survey and NSC reports return to often.
- Services-sector measurement lag: India's GDP is over half services by value, yet, until now, had no monthly services-output index comparable to the IIP — meaning monetary and fiscal policymakers have effectively been "flying blind" on real-time services momentum, relying on proxy indicators (PMI-Services, GST data) that are sentiment-based or revenue-based rather than true output measures.
- Policy-relevance test: a credible ISP could eventually feed into GDP's quarterly advance estimates with shorter lags, improving the timeliness-versus-accuracy trade-off that has long

dogged India's GDP estimation methodology (a recurring Mains GS3 theme since the 2015 base-year revision controversy).

- Institutional capacity: a 19-sub-sector classification for services (versus industry's well-established National Industrial Classification mapping) is itself a non-trivial statistical design challenge, given how heterogeneous "services" is as a category (from IT services to domestic help to financial services).

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the asymmetry: India has had a monthly Index of Industrial **P**roduction (IIP) for decades, but only now gets a trial Index of **S**ervices **P**roduction (ISP) — despite services being the bigger half of the economy.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2021: "How far do you agree that the strategy of inclusive growth is intended to meet the challenges of poverty and unemployment in India?" is adjacent; more directly, Mains answers on GDP/statistical-estimation reform (post the 2015 base-year revision debate) connect here.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is compiled by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
2. The Index of Services Production, announced as a trial series in 2026, uses 2024-25 as its base year.
3. Services contribute less than one-third of India's Gross Value Added.

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 false — services contribute more than half of India's Gross Value Added, which is precisely why the data gap addressed by the ISP matters.

GS3

Economic Indicators

MoSPI

Services Sector

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