

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

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A dense, multi-domain news day like today's is exactly when a structured one-on-one review pays off — **Sahyog Mentorship** pairs you with a mentor to turn a long headline list into a durable revision plan. theiasakademia.com

Polity & Governance

GS2

Population Census & Digital Governance • Women's Reservation / Delimitation Trigger

6 October 2026 · Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India)

Census 2027: Ladakh Becomes the First Union Territory in India to Complete Population Enumeration

Why in News: On 6 October 2026, the Directorate of Census Operations for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh announced that Population Enumeration (PE) under Census 2027 stood complete across the whole of Ladakh and in the snow-bound “Special Charges” of Jammu & Kashmir — making Ladakh the first Union Territory anywhere in India to finish this phase. Field enumeration ran from 1–30 September 2026 across 695 Enumeration Blocks in Ladakh (Leh 367, Kargil 328), out of a combined 5,292 Enumeration Blocks for the two Union Territories. Kishtwar became the first district in the country to complete the exercise.

Background: Census 2026-27 is India's 16th census and the 8th since Independence — the first to be conducted as a fully digital, paperless exercise with app-based self-enumeration, and the first since 1931 to record caste data for the general population. The exercise is split into a House Listing Operation (housing and assets) and a Population Enumeration (demographic, socio-economic and caste details). Snow-bound Himalayan terrain is enumerated early: self-enumeration ran 17–31 August 2026 and field operations 1–30 September 2026, against a 1 October 2026 reference date for these areas, distinct from the 1 March 2027 reference date for the rest of the country. In August 2026 the Centre had notified a 40-question schedule that, for the first time since 1931, includes a caste column.

KEY FACTS

- Census 2027 is the 16th census and 8th since Independence; first fully digital/paperless census with app-based self-enumeration.
- First census since 1931 to enumerate caste data for the entire population, not just SC/ST.

- Two phases: House Listing Operation (HLO) and Population Enumeration (PE).
- Reference dates differ: 1 October 2026 for snow-bound areas (Ladakh/J&K) versus 1 March 2027 for the rest of India.
- Ladakh completed PE across 695 Enumeration Blocks (Leh 367, Kargil 328) — first UT nationally to finish.
- J&K's snow-bound tranche covers 4,597 Enumeration Blocks across 16 districts and 95 Charges; Kishtwar (602 EBs) is the first district nationally to finish.
- 125 “Special Charges” (defence/CAPF establishments) in J&K and 47 in Ladakh are enumerated on paper for security reasons, to be digitised later.
- ₹49.2 crore was released to J&K/Ladakh districts for IT infrastructure, training and honoraria.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Operational significance: proves the feasibility of a digital, app-based self-enumeration model in India's most logistically difficult and security-sensitive terrain, ahead of the main national rollout.
- Federal/symbolic angle: Ladakh, a Legislature-less Union Territory since 2019, achieving a national administrative “first” carries weight for its institutional identity.
- Caste-enumeration debate: the first full caste count since 1931 will feed directly into live sub-categorisation and quota-extent litigation (see the MP High Court reservation card below).
- Delimitation/women's-reservation link: this census operationalises the “first census after 2026” trigger written into the 106th Constitutional Amendment (Women's Reservation Act, 2023) for any future delimitation exercise.
- Implementation challenge: paper-based Special Charges data creates a parallel digitisation track that must be securely merged into the main digital database without compromising security-sensitive locations.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“Ladakh first, Kishtwar first” — remember the UT-first/district-first pair, and that Census 2027 is the 16th census, 8th since Independence, first digital, and first caste count since 1931.

PYQ LINKAGE

Thematic — no exact year-matched PYQ found; census periodicity and delimitation-trigger mechanics are a recurring conceptual theme.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. It is being conducted as India's first fully digital census with app-based self-enumeration.
2. It is the first census since Independence to collect caste data for the entire population.
3. The reference date for snow-bound areas like Ladakh is 1 March 2027, the same as for the rest of the country.
4. Ladakh was the first Union Territory in India to complete Population Enumeration.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2, 3 and 4 only (d) All four

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is the trap — snow-bound areas had an *earlier* reference date (1 October 2026), not the uniform national date of 1 March 2027.

GS2

Indian Constitution — Article 16(4) • Reservation Policy • Indra Sawhney Doctrine

9 October 2026 • Source: Madhya Pradesh High Court, Jabalpur Bench (reportable judgment)

“Adequate,” Not “Proportionate”: Madhya Pradesh High Court Strikes Down the State's 27% OBC Quota

Why in News: On 9 October 2026, a Division Bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court (Justices Anand Pathak and Vinay Saraf) allowed a batch of writ petitions led by general-category NEET-PG 2019 aspirants (*Ashita Dubey v. State of MP*, WP 5910/2019) and struck down MP Ordinance 2 of 2019 and the subsequent MP Lok Seva (SC/ST/OBC Reservation) Sanshodhan Adhiniyam, 2019, which had raised the state's OBC reservation from 14% to 27%. The Court held that OBCs in Madhya Pradesh are already “adequately represented” and are entitled only to the original 14% quota, reverting years of admissions policy built on the higher figure.

Background: Madhya Pradesh had raised OBC reservation from 14% to 27% via a mid-counselling ordinance during NEET-PG 2019, later formalised as an amendment Act. India's affirmative-action architecture under Article 16(4) permits reservation for backward classes “not adequately represented” in public employment. The Supreme Court's landmark *Indra Sawhney* (1992) ruling fixed a general 50% ceiling on reservations and drew a sharp distinction between “adequate” representation (the constitutional test) and “proportionate” representation by population share (a political, not legal, standard). A separate 10% EWS quota, introduced via the 103rd Constitutional Amendment (2019), was itself upheld by the Supreme Court in *Janhit Abhiyan v. Union of India* (2022).

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Judgment dated 9 October 2026, MP High Court, Jabalpur Bench; lead case *Ashita Dubey v. State of MP*, WP 5910/2019.
- Struck down: MP Ordinance 2/2019 and the MP Lok Seva (SC/ST/OBC Reservation) Sanshodhan Adhiniyam, 2019 (OBC quota 14% → 27%).
- Court's evidentiary basis: Madhya Pradesh has had four OBC Chief Ministers since 2003, and over 25% of ministers/MLAs are OBC.
- 2023 data cited in judgment: OBC students form 33.87% of higher-education enrolment in the state.
- A cited study found 23.91% of OBCs in the state hold a graduate degree or higher.
- Combined SC+ST+OBC+EWS reservation in MP had reached 60% after the 2019 amendment, against 40% open-category seats.

- Legal standard applied: Article 16(4)'s “adequate representation,” not “proportionate representation” by population share.
- The ruling reopens years of NEET-PG admissions conducted under the now-struck-down 27% quota.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Reinforces the constitutional standard of “adequate” over “proportionate” representation at a moment when caste-census data (see the Census 2027 card) is about to become available nationwide for the first time since 1931.
- Counter-view: critics may argue that political-office metrics (CM/MLA counts since 2003) do not fully capture socio-economic backwardness in employment and education, inviting a Supreme Court appeal.
- Implementation challenge: years of admissions already conducted under the struck-down 27% quota create a retrospective-disruption risk for seats already allotted.
- Federal/comparative angle: several states (e.g. Tamil Nadu at 69%) exceed the Indra Sawhney 50% ceiling under special legal protections, while MP's quota fell on “adequate representation” grounds without even reaching the ceiling question.
- Way forward: a contemporaneous backwardness/under-representation survey, rather than a two-decade-old political-representation proxy, would better withstand judicial review for any future reservation enhancement.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“14, not 27” — MP's OBC quota reverts to 14%. Remember: Adequate ≠ Proportionate under Article 16(4).

PYQ LINKAGE

Thematic — directly tied to *Indra Sawhney* (1992) and *Janhit Abhiyan* (2022), both repeatedly tested conceptually; no exact year-matched question for this specific case.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 16(4) of the Constitution uses the expression “proportionate representation” as the test for reservation in public employment.
2. The *Indra Sawhney* judgment (1992) held that reservations should not ordinarily exceed 50% of seats or posts.
3. The 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2019 introduced a 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections.
4. Reservation in promotions for SCs/STs is available unconditionally, without any ceiling or backwardness test.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 4 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1, 2 and 3 only (d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Answer: (b). Statement 1 is false — Article 16(4) says “adequate,” not “proportionate,” representation (the MP High Court’s exact reasoning); Statement 4 is false — SC/ST promotion quotas remain conditional on quantifiable-data and ceiling requirements under *M. Nagaraj/Jarnail Singh*.



GS1 — History, Art, Culture & Society

GS1

Indian Culture — Architecture from Ancient to Modern Times • Heritage Conservation Governance

8 October 2026 (order) • Source: Rajasthan High Court (reportable order)

Public Trust Doctrine Meets “Living Heritage”: Rajasthan High Court Takes Up Jaipur's Threatened UNESCO Status

Why in News: On 8 October 2026, a Division Bench of the Rajasthan High Court (Chief Justice Sanjay K. Agrawal and Justice Sameer Jain) took suo motu cognisance — registered as *In Re: Global Identity of the Pink City v. State of Rajasthan* — of a newspaper report on “alarming degradation” inside Jaipur's Walled City from illegal construction and large-scale encroachment, in violation of the Jaipur (Walled City) Heritage Conservation and Protection Regulations, 2020. The Court noted that UNESCO's World Heritage Committee has itself expressed “serious reservations” about the Walled City's state of conservation, directed authorities to file data-backed affidavits, and listed the matter for the week of 26 October 2026.

Background: Jaipur's Walled City (the “Pink City”), founded in 1727 by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2019 for its town-planning based on Vastu Shastra and Shilpa Shastra principles and its fusion of Hindu, Mughal and Western architectural ideas. UNESCO-inscribed cities undergo periodic “state of conservation” review; adverse findings can lead to an “in danger” listing or, in extreme cases, delisting — as happened to Liverpool's waterfront (2021) and the Dresden Elbe Valley (2009). This is not the Rajasthan judiciary's first intervention: an August 2026 order from another Bench had already directed a crackdown on illegal Jaipur construction.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Order dated 8 October 2026; case: *Suo Motu — In Re: Global Identity of the Pink City v. State of Rajasthan*.
- Bench: Chief Justice Sanjay K. Agrawal and Justice Sameer Jain; cognisance first taken by Justice Pramil Kumar Mathur.

- Triggered by a newspaper report on illegal construction, unauthorised alterations and encroachment.
- Jaipur Walled City inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2019.
- Violations cited breach the Jaipur (Walled City) Heritage Conservation and Protection Regulations, 2020.
- Legal basis invoked: Article 49 (protection of monuments), Article 51A(f) (fundamental duty to value heritage), and the public trust doctrine.
- UNESCO's World Heritage Committee has flagged "serious reservations" about the site's conservation status.
- Authorities directed to file affidavits with data; matter listed for the week of 26 October 2026.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Significance: a judicial invocation of the public trust doctrine to protect a "living" UNESCO-inscribed heritage city, where losing World Heritage Site status would damage both tourism revenue and India's global cultural standing.
- Governance challenge: "living heritage" sites house active populations and commerce, making conservation regulations far harder to enforce than for an isolated monument.
- Critical angle: repeated judicial interventions (August and October 2026) point to an executive/municipal enforcement failure, not an absence of law — the 2020 Regulations already exist on paper.
- Comparative angle: UNESCO has delisted or threatened sites abroad (Dresden Elbe Valley, Liverpool) over unchecked development — a cautionary precedent for Jaipur and India's other living historic cities (e.g. Ahmedabad).
- Way forward: a dedicated heritage-enforcement cell under the Jaipur Development Authority, mandatory heritage-impact assessments for new construction, and periodic third-party conservation audits ahead of UNESCO's own review cycle.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"Pink City, Red Flag" — Jaipur (a World Heritage Site since 2019) is now flagged by both UNESCO and the High Court for "alarming degradation."

PYQ LINKAGE

Thematic — UNESCO World Heritage Sites of India recur in Prelims factual sets; no exact year-matched question on Jaipur specifically verified.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Jaipur Walled City was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2019.
2. Its town planning is based on Vastu Shastra and Shilpa Shastra principles.
3. It was founded by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II.
4. It is protected solely under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act,

1958.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only (c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) All four

Answer: (a). Statement 4 is false — the Walled City is governed by the dedicated Jaipur (Walled City) Heritage Conservation and Protection Regulations, 2020, not solely the 1958 AMASR Act, which mainly covers individually protected monuments rather than an entire living urban heritage zone.



International Relations

GS2

Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements Involving India

29–30 September 2026 (still-developing; honestly dated, not previously covered) · Source: Ministry of External Affairs
/ agency reporting on the SCO Council of National Coordinators meeting

Compartmentalised Multilateralism: India Attends the SCO's Apex Coordination Meeting in Islamabad Under Pakistan's Chairmanship

Why in News: An Indian delegation led by Joint Secretary Alok Dimri, India's National SCO Coordinator, attended the three-day Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of National Coordinators (CNC) meeting in Islamabad on 29–30 September 2026 — the first CNC gathering under Pakistan's 2026–27 chairmanship of the SCO Council of Heads of State, and among the most senior Indian official visits to Pakistan in roughly a year and a half. The meeting set the SCO's annual work programme and began preparations for the August 2027 SCO Summit, to be hosted in Islamabad. This edition flags the story with its true date rather than disguising it as this week's news, because it has not been covered in this product before and remains analytically live.

Background: The SCO was founded in 2001, growing out of the “Shanghai Five” formed in 1996; India and Pakistan became full members together at the 2017 Astana Summit. India has consistently drawn a firm line between SCO-platform engagement and its frozen bilateral relationship with Pakistan — EAM Jaishankar's October 2024 visit to Islamabad for an SCO Heads-of-Government meeting was itself the first visit by an Indian foreign minister to Pakistan in nearly nine years. Pakistan's current SCO chairmanship theme is “Turning Vision into Action: Connectivity, Innovation and Shared Prosperity.”

⚡ KEY FACTS

- SCO founded 2001; predecessor “Shanghai Five” formed 1996 (China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan).
- India and Pakistan were admitted as full SCO members simultaneously in 2017, at the Astana Summit.
- The Council of National Coordinators (CNC) manages the SCO's day-to-day agenda-setting between summits; it is subordinate to the Council of Heads of State.
- India's National SCO Coordinator for this meeting: Joint Secretary Alok Dimri, Ministry of External Affairs.
- Pakistan holds the SCO's Council of Heads of State chairmanship for 2026–27; the next full Summit is slated for Islamabad in August 2027.
- An earlier 2026 precedent: an Indian delegation also attended an SCO border-service-chiefs meeting in Islamabad in July 2026.
- India's RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure) engagement continues through SCO even as bilateral counter-terror cooperation with Pakistan remains suspended.
- No bilateral talks occurred on the sidelines of the CNC meeting, consistent with India's compartmentalisation doctrine.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests India's “compartmentalisation” doctrine in diplomacy — engaging an adversary through multilateral platforms (SCO, UN, G20) while bilateral channels stay frozen, versus the “terror and talks cannot go together” posture.
- Raises the live question of whether the Prime Minister will attend the 2027 Islamabad Summit if invited — a concrete future test of this doctrine at head-of-government level.
- SCO's substantive relevance to India: counter-terrorism cooperation through RATS, and connectivity initiatives India has never endorsed where they reference CPEC or China's Belt and Road framing.
- Analytical trade-off: multilateral visibility and Central Asian/Eurasian connectivity access, weighed against the optics of legitimising Pakistan's chairmanship amid unresolved terrorism grievances.
- Fits India's broader “multi-alignment” strategy of simultaneous SCO, Quad, BRICS and G20 membership, despite internal contradictions among these groupings' members.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“2017 twins, 2027 return” — India and Pakistan joined SCO together at Astana in 2017; the SCO comes full circle with Pakistan hosting in Islamabad in 2027.

PYQ LINKAGE

Prelims has tested SCO membership facts before in recollection; please verify the exact year independently. No confirmed Mains PYQ specifically on SCO.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation originated from the “Shanghai Five” grouping formed in 1996.
2. India and Pakistan became full members of the SCO in the same year.
3. The Council of National Coordinators is the SCO's apex decision-making body, superior to the Council of Heads of State.
4. Pakistan holds the SCO's rotating Council of Heads of State chairmanship for 2026–27.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 4 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is the trap — the Council of Heads of State is the SCO's supreme body; the CNC is a preparatory/coordinating mechanism, not the apex body.

GS2

India and Its Neighbourhood • Effect of Developed/Developing-Country Policies on India's Interests

9 September 2026 (honestly dated — over a month old but not previously covered; retained as the institutional anchor for a live Neighbourhood First trend) · Source: Government of Sri Lanka press reporting on Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's Colombo visit

Three MoUs, Twelve Guns: India's “Soft-Balancing” Defence Diplomacy With Sri Lanka

Why in News: During a Colombo visit, India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on 9 September 2026, and the two sides exchanged three defence agreements: a National Defence College-to-National Defence College cooperation MoU; a Cadet Corps cooperation arrangement; and a government-to-government deal for India to supply six new L-70 air-defence guns to the Sri Lanka Air Force, plus free maintenance support for Sri Lanka's existing six L-70 systems. This edition carries the story with its true date because it has not previously appeared here and remains the clearest recent anchor for analysing India's Neighbourhood First defence diplomacy.

Background: India's “Neighbourhood First” policy prioritises South Asian neighbours in trade, connectivity, security and disaster response, operating alongside the maritime SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine and its expanded successor framing, MAHASAGAR. Sri Lanka sits at a strategically sensitive Indian Ocean node, where India has for over a decade competed with Chinese port and infrastructure investment (Hambantota, Colombo Port City) for strategic space. President Dissanayake's government, after initial ambiguity over Chinese research-vessel port calls, visibly deepened security cooperation with India through 2025–26, including the Sri Lankan Navy Chief's August 2026 call on India's Defence Secretary in New Delhi.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Three agreements exchanged on 9 September 2026 in Colombo.

- Agreement 1: National Defence College-to-National Defence College cooperation on security, development and strategic studies.
- Agreement 2: Cadet Corps-to-Cadet Corps cooperation between the two countries.
- Agreement 3: a government-to-government deal for 6 new L-70 anti-aircraft guns for the Sri Lanka Air Force, plus free Indian maintenance support for Sri Lanka's existing 6 L-70 guns.
- L-70 is a Bofors-origin towed anti-aircraft gun system that India licence-manufactures and upgrades domestically.
- The visit followed the Sri Lankan Navy Chief's call on India's Defence Secretary in New Delhi in August 2026.
- Sri Lanka is a founding-era partner in India's Neighbourhood First policy and a member of the India-origin, now-expanded Colombo Security Conclave.
- India extended lines of credit, fuel and currency-swap support to Sri Lanka through its 2022 economic crisis, also framed under Neighbourhood First.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests a “soft-balancing” model — India using defence-education, training and low-cost legacy-equipment maintenance diplomacy, rather than big-ticket platform sales, to build durable institutional ties with a smaller neighbour.
- Classic India-China competitive dynamic in a third country: Chinese debt/infrastructure diplomacy versus Indian security/capacity-building diplomacy.
- Analytical trade-off: defence-college and cadet-corps linkages build long-term officer-level goodwill (a “long game”) compared with visible, headline hardware deals.
- Maritime-domain-awareness dimension: Sri Lanka's location astride east-west Indian Ocean shipping lanes is central to India's SAGAR/MAHASAGAR vision and to recurring Chinese survey-vessel port-call controversies.
- Feeds the larger debate on whether Neighbourhood First is being outcompeted by Chinese economic statecraft, or whether India's recent run of defence MoUs across the neighbourhood shows a course correction.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“3 MoUs, 6+6 guns” — three agreements; six new L-70 guns supplied; six existing L-70 guns getting free maintenance.

PYQ LINKAGE

Thematic — connects to the recurring theme of China's economic/strategic footprint in India's neighbourhood; verify exact year/wording independently before citing a specific PYQ.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. India agreed to supply new L-70 air-defence guns to the Sri Lanka Air Force.
2. The agreement includes free Indian maintenance support for Sri Lanka's existing L-70 guns.

3. A cooperation MoU was signed between the two countries' National Defence Colleges.
4. The agreements were signed on the sidelines of a BIMSTEC summit in Colombo.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 2 and 4 only (c) 2, 3 and 4 only (d) All four

Answer: (a). Statement 4 is false — the agreements were exchanged during a bilateral visit by India's Defence Minister, not at a BIMSTEC summit.

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Defence & Security

GS3

Indigenisation of Technology • Defence Production and Export Policy

4 October 2026 · Source: Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, on-record interview (Ministry of Defence)

BrahMos and the \$600-Million Benchmark: India's Defence-Export Diversification Strategy

Why in News: On 4 October 2026, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said India's BrahMos-related defence exports could cross USD 600 million once contracts with three Southeast Asian buyers — the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia — are fully realised: roughly USD 330 million already delivered or contracted with the Philippines, around USD 100 million expected from Vietnam, and around USD 200 million from Indonesia. He called BrahMos “a kind of benchmark for our emerging export story.”

Background: BrahMos is a supersonic cruise missile jointly developed by India's DRDO and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya through the BrahMos Aerospace joint venture, formed in 1998 and named after the Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers. The Philippines became BrahMos's first export customer through a January 2022 deal for the shore-based anti-ship variant, with battery deliveries in April 2024 and April 2025. The air-launched variant has since been integrated onto India's Su-30MKI fleet, widening the exportable product line across land, sea and air launch options. The export push sits inside India's Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP), reflecting a shift from exporting low-value components to exporting sophisticated, front-line weapon systems.

KEY FACTS

- Projected cumulative BrahMos-linked exports: over USD 600 million.
- Philippines: approximately USD 330 million — first overseas BrahMos customer, shore-based anti-ship batteries.
- Vietnam: approximately USD 100 million expected.
- Indonesia: approximately USD 200 million expected.
- BrahMos Aerospace is an India-Russia joint venture (DRDO + NPO Mashinostroyeniya), established in 1998.
- Philippines deal originated in a January 2022 contract; first and second missile batteries delivered April 2024 and April 2025.
- The air-launched BrahMos variant is now integrated with India's Su-30MKI fleet, expanding the export-ready product basket.
- The export push is framed within India's Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) targets.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Marks India's shift from a net defence importer to a credible defence exporter, relevant to Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence and DPEPP's export targets.
- Analytical tension: selling a high-end missile system to Southeast Asian states with South China Sea disputes against China draws Beijing's objections, testing India's balancing act between deepening Act East/Indo-Pacific partnerships and managing its own China relationship.
- Defence exports function as instruments of India's Act East policy and maritime-security diplomacy, not merely as commercial transactions.
- Raises a “dual-use diplomacy” debate — whether India's export diplomacy constitutes a tacit balancing posture in the South China Sea without India being a direct claimant.
- Institutional angle: tests understanding of DPEPP's production/export targets and the respective roles of DRDO, BrahMos Aerospace and the Department of Defence Production.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“330-100-200 = 600+” — Philippines 330, Vietnam 100, Indonesia 200 million dollars, summing past the \$600 million benchmark the Defence Secretary cited.

PYQ LINKAGE

Thematically close to Mains GS3 questions on the significance of India's defence-export/procurement choices for Indo-Pacific stability; verify exact year independently. No confirmed direct PYQ on BrahMos exports specifically.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. BrahMos Aerospace is a joint venture between India's DRDO and a Russian defence firm.
2. The Philippines was the first export customer for the BrahMos missile.
3. Only the land-based variant of BrahMos has been cleared for export.
4. The air-launched variant of BrahMos has been integrated with the Su-30MKI aircraft.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only (b) 1, 2 and 3 only (c) 2, 3 and 4 only (d) All four

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is the trap — India is exporting/negotiating multiple variants, not only the land/shore-based one.

GS3

Disaster Management • Maritime Security and International Cooperation Mechanisms

8 October 2026 · Source: Indian Coast Guard / Ministry of Defence

SAREX-2026: Stress-Testing India's National Maritime Search-and-Rescue Architecture

Why in News: The Indian Coast Guard conducted SAREX-2026, the 12th National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise, off Paradip on the Odisha coast from 8 October 2026, under the theme “Leveraging Technology to Strengthen SAR Preparedness and Maritime Safety.” The exercise simulated a mass-casualty scenario — a passenger aircraft carrying 228 people ditching near Paradip Port and striking the container vessel MV Zumba, causing fire — and drew 32 observers from 30 countries, alongside the 24th National Maritime Search and Rescue Board meeting held concurrently in Bhubaneswar. Raksha Rajya Mantri Sanjay Seth inaugurated the exercise.

Background: India's maritime search-and-rescue responsibility is organised under the National Maritime Search and Rescue Board (NMSARB), chaired by the Director General of the Indian Coast Guard, coordinating the Coast Guard, Navy, Air Force, Shipping Corporation of India, the Directorate General of Shipping, port authorities, fisheries and customs agencies, and state governments under a unified national SAR plan. India's maritime SAR region is one of the largest in the world, reflecting obligations assigned to coastal states under international maritime-safety conventions. The Coast Guard explicitly links SAREX to India's SAGAR vision and its expanded successor, MAHASAGAR, which project India as the Indian Ocean's principal security and disaster-response provider.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- SAREX-2026 was the 12th edition of India's National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise.
- Conducted off Paradip, Odisha, from 8 October 2026.
- Theme: “Leveraging Technology to Strengthen SAR Preparedness and Maritime Safety.”
- 32 observers from 30 countries attended.

- Assets deployed: 15 Coast Guard ships, 3 Dornier aircraft, 3 Advanced Light Helicopters, 1 Chetak helicopter, IAF C-130J and Mi-17 aircraft, and 2 Indian Navy ships.
- Scenario: a simulated passenger-aircraft ditching (228 persons) colliding with the container vessel MV Zumba near Paradip Port.
- The 24th National Maritime Search and Rescue Board (NMSARB) meeting was held concurrently in Bhubaneswar.
- Inaugurated by Raksha Rajya Mantri Sanjay Seth; reviewed by Coast Guard Director General Paramesh Sivamani.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests India's role as “first responder”/net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region, an instrument of soft power and regional leadership built on past HADR operations.
- Multilateral confidence-building: inviting 30 countries as observers to a domestic SAR exercise builds interoperability and transparency in a contested Indian Ocean.
- Institutional-coordination analysis: SAREX tests the NMSARB's inter-agency, civil-military coordination model — a maritime-specific complement to the standard NDMA/NDRF disaster-management framework.
- Technology dimension: the “leveraging technology” theme connects to India's push for AI- and satellite-based maritime-domain awareness, bridging into Science & Technology GS3 content.
- Quiet strategic signalling: wide international observer participation in a SAR exercise projects India's logistical reach into the Indian Ocean, distinct from and complementary to hard military exercises.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“12th SAREX, 228 souls, 30 nations” — a three-number chain for quick recall of the exercise edition, simulated casualties and observer countries.

PYQ LINKAGE

No confirmed direct PYQ on SAREX/NMSARB specifically; connects thematically to recurring Mains GS3 questions on disaster-management institutional architecture.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. SAREX-2026 was the 12th edition of India's National Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise.
2. It was conducted under the aegis of the National Maritime Search and Rescue Board.
3. The exercise was conducted off the coast of Kochi, Kerala.
4. Observers from 30 countries participated in the exercise.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2, 3 and 4 only (d) All four

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is the trap — the exercise was conducted off Paradip, Odisha, not Kochi.



Science & Technology

GS3 / GS2**S&T Developments & Applications • Health Research Infrastructure**

12 October 2026 (foundation-stone ceremony) · Source: PIB Delhi, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (Release ID 2321966)

ICMR-CHAMP: India Gets Its First Dedicated High-Altitude Health Research Centre, at Keylong

Why in News: On 12 October 2026, Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda laid the foundation stone for the ICMR Centre for High Altitude Medicine and Public Health Research (ICMR-CHAMP) at Keylong, Lahaul & Spiti district, Himachal Pradesh — upgrading ICMR's existing field station there into a full multidisciplinary research hub. It is billed as ICMR's first dedicated institute for high-altitude and climate-sensitive-region health research, set up under the Department of Health Research with the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) and the Himachal Pradesh government as partners.

Background: India's Himalayan border belt poses distinctive health challenges — hypoxia, high-altitude pulmonary and cerebral oedema, and hard-to-reach tribal populations — relevant to both civilian and military (soldier) health. DRDO already runs the Defence Institute of High Altitude Research (DIHAR) at Leh for soldier physiology; ICMR-CHAMP's AFMS/DRDO partnership creates civil-military research synergy rather than duplication. It plugs into India's climate-health research agenda and digital-health push — telemedicine and drone-enabled logistics — for inaccessible terrain.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Location: Keylong, Lahaul & Spiti district, Himachal Pradesh.
- Nodal body: ICMR, Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- Upgrades ICMR's existing Keylong field station into a full research institute.
- Research mandate: high-altitude physiology/acclimatisation, mountain medicine, climate-sensitive and emerging diseases, maternal-child health, nutrition, mental health, occupational

health and disaster medicine.

- Digital-health components: telemedicine, drone-enabled health logistics, real-time surveillance for remote terrain.
- Key partners: Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS), DRDO, Himachal Pradesh government, academic institutions in India and abroad.
- Billed as ICMR's first dedicated institute of this kind in India.
- Ceremony attended by MoS Defence Sanjay Seth, ICMR Director-General Dr Rajiv Bahl and DG-AFMS Air Marshal Sandeep Thareja.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Exemplifies civil-military synergy in frontier health research, running parallel to DRDO's DIHAR at Leh without duplicating it.
- Frames border-health security as a climate-change-exposed frontier, as shifting disease patterns move into Himalayan altitudes.
- Tribal and hard-to-reach population health equity becomes a direct policy output of a high-altitude-specific research institute.
- Digital health (telemedicine, drone logistics) acts as a force-multiplier in inaccessible terrain, linking to the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.
- Trade-off: specialised research institutes versus strengthening broader primary health infrastructure across hill states more generally.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“CHAMP meets DIHAR” — ICMR-CHAMP (civilian/public health) pairs with DRDO-DIHAR at Leh (soldier physiology) as India's twin high-altitude health-research poles.

PYQ LINKAGE

No exact prior PYQ on ICMR's high-altitude centres (too recent); thematically closest to Mains GS3 questions on Himalayan ecosystem fragility — flagged as approximate, not exact.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. ICMR-CHAMP is located at Keylong, Lahaul & Spiti, Himachal Pradesh.
2. It has been set up exclusively by DRDO for military use.
3. It upgrades an existing ICMR field station.
4. Its mandate includes mountain medicine and disaster medicine.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only (b) 1, 3 and 4 only (c) 2, 3 and 4 only (d) All four

Answer: (b). Statement 2 is false — it is an ICMR institute under the Health Ministry, with DRDO/AFMS only as partners, not the nodal agency.

11–16 October 2026 (ongoing) • Source: PIB Delhi, Ministry of Earth Sciences (Release ID 2322018); IITM Pune official conference pages

India Hosts the World Climate Research Programme's Apex Atmospheric Science Body for the First Time

Why in News: The Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, is hosting the APARC General Assembly 2026 from 12–16 October 2026 — India's first time hosting this World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) core project's apex meeting. A curtain-raiser Early Career Researcher workshop was held on 11 October 2026 at IITM, also previewing India's own ESTIC 2026 (Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave). Ministry of Earth Sciences Secretary Dr T. Srinivas Kumar delivered the keynote, with WCRP and WMO representatives in attendance.

Background: APARC (Atmospheric Processes And their Role in Climate) is a WCRP core project founded in 1992 as SPARC (Stratosphere-troposphere Processes And their Role in Climate), later renamed to broaden its scope from the stratosphere to the whole atmosphere. WCRP's four core projects are APARC, CLIVAR (ocean-climate), CliC (cryosphere) and GEWEX (global water/energy cycle). APARC's three research themes are Atmospheric Dynamics & Predictability, Chemistry & Climate — including ozone-depleting substances regulated under the Montreal Protocol — and Long-term Climate Records. Hosting the Assembly in India reflects IITM Pune's rising stature in monsoon and climate modelling.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- APARC = Atmospheric Processes And their Role in Climate; founded 1992 as SPARC, later renamed to broaden scope.
- WCRP's four core projects: APARC, CLIVAR, CliC and GEWEX.
- 2026 General Assembly hosted at IITM Pune, 12–16 October — the first time in India.
- Early Career Researcher curtain-raiser workshop held 11 October 2026 at IITM's Meghdoot Hall, around 120 participants.
- Keynote delivered by Dr T. Srinivas Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- APARC's International Project Office is in Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany (DLR-sponsored); its Data Centre is hosted by the UK's CEDA.
- The event doubles as a curtain-raiser for ESTIC 2026, India's flagship S&T platform aligned with Viksit Bharat 2047.
- Partners/sponsors include WMO, WCRP, Forschungszentrum Jülich, IAMAS, ICMA and NASA.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Signals India's rising role in global climate-science governance and soft power, paralleling its engagement with WMO/IPCC processes.

- APARC's ozone/Montreal Protocol linkage ties directly to India's stake in global-commons environmental governance.
- The Early Career Researcher workshop raises the researcher-mobility and scientist-retention debate, relevant to India's comparatively low R&D-spending-to-GDP ratio.
- AI/ML applications in Earth-system science signal a convergence of data science and climate modelling, a live GS3 crossover theme.
- Trade-off: whether high-visibility international conferences translate into sustained domestic climate-science funding, or remain largely prestige events.

LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“SPARC became APARC” — the stratosphere-only SPARC broadened into the all-atmosphere APARC. Remember WCRP's four projects as “A Cool Climate Group” (APARC-CLIVAR-CLiC-GEWEX).

PYQ LINKAGE

No direct PYQ on APARC/WCRP by name; closest static-concept overlap is the recurring Montreal Protocol/ozone-depleting-substances theme in Prelims.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. APARC is a core project of the World Climate Research Programme.
2. It was earlier known as SPARC.
3. Its scope excludes issues related to the Montreal Protocol.
4. Its 2026 General Assembly was hosted for the first time in India, at IITM Pune.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only (b) 1, 2 and 3 only (c) 2, 3 and 4 only (d) All four

Answer: (a). Statement 3 is false — APARC's “Chemistry and Climate” theme explicitly covers Montreal Protocol-controlled gases.

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Health-research infrastructure and climate-science diplomacy are exactly the kind of cross-cutting GS3 themes **LAKSHYAM AIR1** builds into a rank-one answer-writing strategy.
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11 October 2026 (first-anniversary backgrounder) · Source: PIB Delhi, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
(Release ID 2321930)

One Year of the Mission for Self-Reliance in Pulses: Imports Down 31.5%, Procurement Up

Why in News: On 11 October 2026, marking its first anniversary, PIB issued a detailed backgrounder on the Mission for Self-Reliance in Pulses — a six-year (2025-26 to 2030-31), ₹11,440 crore scheme to cut India's structural pulses-import dependence. 2025-26 production rose to 274.09 lakh tonnes (3rd Advance Estimate) from 256.83 lakh tonnes the year before; pulses import value fell 31.52%; Minimum Support Prices for tur, urad and masur were raised for 2026-27; and NCCF/NAFED were authorised to procure 100% of tur, urad and masur from registered farmers through 2028-29.

Background: India is simultaneously the world's largest producer and largest consumer of pulses, which supply 20–25% protein content — more than double wheat and nearly triple rice — making them vital for both nutrition security and rainfed-farmer incomes. Yet India remains a structural net importer (from Myanmar, Mozambique, Tanzania, Canada and Australia), unlike its self-sufficiency in rice, wheat and sugar, exposing both farm incomes and the current account to global price swings. The Mission marks a shift of pulses from a sub-component of the National Food Security Mission to a dedicated, Cabinet-approved standalone mission combining price support with productivity-side levers and digital monitoring.

⚡ KEY FACTS

- Outlay: ₹11,440 crore over 2025-26 to 2030-31.
- 2030-31 targets: approximately 350 lakh tonnes production; yield 1,130 kg/ha; area 310 lakh hectares.
- Focus crops for special procurement: tur (arhar), urad and masur.
- 2025-26 production: 274.09 lakh tonnes, up from 256.83 lakh tonnes; productivity up from 926 to 957 kg/ha.
- Pulses import value fell 31.52% (₹46,427.60 crore → ₹31,793.59 crore); exports rose 13.40% to China, UAE, Bangladesh, the US and Sri Lanka.
- MSP for 2026-27: Urad ₹8,200/quintal (+₹800); Tur ₹8,450/quintal (+₹900); Masur ₹7,000/quintal (+₹300).
- NCCF/NAFED authorised for 100% assured procurement of tur, urad and masur from registered farmers, 2025-26 to 2028-29; procurement rose from 18.4 to 31.4 lakh tonnes.
- Digital tools deployed: Krishi Mapper (geo-fencing), SATHI (seed traceability), AgriStack.

🎯 MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Tests the MSP-plus-100%-procurement model against market price discovery, carrying a fiscal and storage burden risk akin to the Food Corporation of India's rice-wheat stock experience.

- Import-substitution trade-off: forex savings on one side, historical consumer price spikes in deficient-output years on the other, inside the food security-farmer income-consumer price trilemma.
- Digital infrastructure (Krishi Mapper, SATHI, AgriStack) as a last-mile subsidy and seed-targeting tool.
- Pulses as a diversification crop away from water-intensive paddy, connecting to the groundwater-depletion debate in Punjab-Haryana.
- Institutional evolution from an NFSM sub-component to a standalone Cabinet mission with its own dedicated budget line.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“11,440 for 1,110 days” — ₹11,440 crore mission; MSP hikes descend T-U-M: Tur (+900) > Urad (+800) > Masur (+300).

📄 PYQ LINKAGE

MSP/procurement-institution mechanics are a recurring Prelims staple (e.g. past questions on MSP mechanics); no exact match for this specific, recently launched Mission.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Mission is a six-year scheme, 2025-26 to 2030-31, with an outlay of ₹11,440 crore.
2. NAFED/NCCF have been authorised to procure 100% of tur, urad and masur from registered farmers.
3. The Mission's focus crops are limited to tur, urad and masur, excluding chana and moong from the scheme entirely.
4. The Mission targets a yield of 1,130 kg/ha by 2030-31.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 1, 2 and 4 only (c) 2, 3 and 4 only (d) All four

Answer: (b). Statement 3 is the trap — the Mission's broader area/production targets cover pulses generally, even though the special MSP/procurement push focuses on tur/urad/masur.

GS3

Indian Economy — Mobilisation of Resources • Financial Stability Institutional Architecture

3 October 2026 (honestly dated; a distinct policy speech, not the MPC rate decision) · Source: Reserve Bank of India, official speech transcript (rbi.org.in)

RBI Governor's Five Global Risks: A Financial-Stability Framework for an “Evolving World”

Why in News: On 3 October 2026, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra addressed the 5th Kautilya Economic Conclave in New Delhi, laying out five emerging global financial-stability risks and five policy priorities. He cited the June 2026 Financial Stability Report: banks' core capital ratios stayed comfortable under stress scenarios, and NBFCs' average Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) stood at 24.6% as of 31 March 2026, against a 15% regulatory minimum. He invoked Hyman Minsky's Financial Instability Hypothesis, warning that prolonged calm “breeds complacency,” citing India's own early-2000s NPA cycle — whose clean-up took nearly a decade — as precedent.

Background: RBI's financial-stability role is implicit rather than an explicit standalone statutory object, read into the RBI Act 1934's preamble, Section 45W (regulating the financial system) and FEMA 1999 (orderly forex markets). India's systemic-risk architecture centres on the Finance-Minister-chaired Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), coordinating RBI, SEBI, IRDAI and PFRDA. RBI issues a half-yearly Financial Stability Report. The “separation principle” holds that monetary policy (rate-setting, around a 4% CPI target) should stay focused on price stability, while macroprudential tools (risk weights, countercyclical buffers, liquidity facilities) handle financial-stability risk — itself a classic conceptual distinction.

KEY FACTS

- Venue and date: 5th Kautilya Economic Conclave, New Delhi, 3 October 2026.
- NBFC average CRAR: 24.6% as of 31 March 2026, against a 15% regulatory minimum.
- Banks' aggregate core capital (CET1) ratio comfortable under adverse stress, per the June 2026 Financial Stability Report.
- Five global risks flagged: elevated global debt/hardening sovereign yields; stretched AI-linked asset valuations; rising non-bank financial institution leverage and bank-NBFI interlinkage; private-credit vulnerabilities; AI-amplified cyber risk.
- Five priorities: accept shocks as inevitable; understand cross-border/interconnected risk; strengthen data and monitoring; build system-wide (not just bank) resilience; ensure innovation strengthens trust.
- Legal/institutional basis cited: RBI Act 1934 preamble, Section 45W, FEMA 1999 and the FSDC sub-committee mechanism.
- Historical precedent cited: India's early-2000s non-performing-asset buildup, whose clean-up took nearly a decade.
- 2026 regulatory references: new bank cyber/tech-risk governance directions and draft “Model Risk” guidance for AI/ML models.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- The monetary-versus-macroprudential “separation principle” is a core, frequently tested conceptual distinction in Indian monetary economics.
- AI is framed as a dual systemic risk — a source of valuation bubbles and an amplifier of cyber/model risk — a genuinely novel 2026-27 analytical angle.
- Charts NBFC regulatory evolution since the IL&FS/DHFL crisis, now standing at a healthy 24.6% CRAR.

- Links global debt and “hardening sovereign yields” to India's own government-securities yield and foreign-portfolio debt-market dynamics.
- Two-sided debate: does macroprudential buffering pre-empt Minsky-style complacency, or does reliance on buffers itself breed a false sense of security?

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

“5+5 = Stability” — 5 Risks (Debt, AI-valuations, NBFI-leverage, Private-credit, Cyber) plus 5 Priorities (Accept, Understand, Strengthen-data, System-wide, Trust-innovation).

📋 PYQ LINKAGE

Thematically adjacent to past Mains GS3 questions on banking-sector institutional evolution; no exact match for this specific, recent speech.

🎯 PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ (STATEMENT-BASED)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The RBI Act, 1934 explicitly and separately mandates “financial stability” as a stated statutory object.
2. The Financial Stability and Development Council is chaired by the Finance Minister.
3. The Financial Stability Report is released half-yearly by the RBI.
4. CRAR norms apply only to NBFCs and not to scheduled commercial banks.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1, 3 and 4 only (d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Answer: (b). Statement 1 is false — financial stability is implicit, not an explicit RBI Act object, per the Governor's own address; Statement 4 is false — banks also carry capital-adequacy (CET1/Basel III) norms.

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