

PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

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THEIAS AKADEMIA

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"The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning."

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§1 · Top 12 Headlines

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11. RBI conducts record VRRR auctions and OMO bond sales to absorb a ₹4 trillion liquidity surplus [GS3]
12. World Rhino Day (22 Sept): global one-horned rhino population crosses 4,075, Assam holds ~80% [GS3]

THEIAS AKADEMIA Today's edition spans two live Bills, a UN address, two simultaneous multinational air exercises, and a fresh trade data-point — exactly the density-heavy, multi-domain day that **Sahyog Mentorship** is built to help you organise into a revision-ready framework. theiasakademia.com.

§2 · Polity & Governance

Government Weighs Special Parliament Session to Revive the Delimitation and Constitution (131st Amendment) Bills

Why in News: With the Monsoon Session adjourned sine die on 13 August 2026 but still not formally prorogued as of 19 September — an unusually long gap flagged by opposition MPs — reports through 16-19 September indicate the Centre is exploring a short special session before the festive season to re-pass the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 and the Delimitation Bill, 2026, both of which were introduced on 16 April 2026 but defeated on the floor of the House the next day. The revival math reportedly leans on regional parties such as the DMK and NCP(SP) to cross the two-thirds threshold that eluded the government in April.

Background: The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill sought to raise Lok Sabha strength from 543 to 850 seats, a constitutional amendment under Article 368 requiring a special majority (two-thirds of members present and voting, and a majority of the total membership) in each House. It fell on 17 April 2026 by 298 votes to 230 — short of the required two-thirds. The companion Delimitation Bill proposes a Delimitation Commission chaired by a sitting or retired Supreme Court judge, with the Chief Election Commissioner and State Election Commissioners as members and powers of a civil court; delimitation is the constitutional trigger that must precede full operationalisation of the 33% women's-reservation mandate under the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023.

KEY FACTS

- Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 introduced 16 April 2026 by Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal; sought to raise Lok Sabha strength from 543 to 850 seats (815 from states, 35 from Union Territories).
- Bill defeated on 17 April 2026: 298 votes for, 230 against — fell short of the two-thirds-present-and-voting threshold under Article 368.
- Monsoon Session 2026 adjourned sine die on 13 August 2026 but remained un-prorogued as of 19 September 2026, an unusually long gap.
- Delimitation Bill, 2026 proposes a Delimitation Commission chaired by a sitting/retired Supreme Court judge, with the CEC and State Election Commissioners as members, vested with civil-court powers.
- Delimitation is constitutionally linked to full operationalisation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023's 33% women's reservation in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
- Government's revival arithmetic is reported to depend on DMK's 22 and NCP(SP)'s 8 Lok Sabha MPs to cross the two-thirds mark.
- Referral of the separate FCRA (Amendment) Bill to a JPC (see next card) is read by observers as a parallel confidence-building move toward the same regional allies.
- Delimitation of constituencies has been frozen since the 84th Amendment (2001) pending the first census after 2026, making this Bill central to when and how that freeze is lifted.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests the special-majority procedure under Article 368 and why broad cross-party consensus, not just numerical majority, is structurally required for basic-structure-adjacent amendments.
- Raises the federalism dimension: seat redistribution tied to population growth risks disadvantaging southern states with slower population growth relative to northern states, a live political-economy debate.
- Connects women's political representation (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam) to the technical prerequisite of delimitation, illustrating how one reform's implementation depends on an entirely separate constitutional machinery.
- Highlights coalition-arithmetic as a recurring feature of constitutional-amendment politics in a fragmented Lok Sabha.

- Connects to the historical practice of freezing delimitation (42nd and 84th Amendments) as a device to avoid penalising states that controlled population growth.

🔴 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember "543 → 850" as the headline number, and pair it with "298 vs 230" as the exact defeat margin — a classic MCQ trap is to swap these two number-pairs between the Bill's proposal and its actual vote result.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2021: "Discuss the essential conditions for exercise of the legislative powers by the Governor" is procedurally adjacent; more directly, GS2-pattern questions on constitutional amendment procedure under Article 368 and on women's political representation recur across cycles.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026: 1. It proposed raising Lok Sabha strength from 543 to 850 seats. 2. It was passed by both Houses of Parliament in April 2026. 3. A constitutional amendment under Article 368 requires a special majority in each House. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). **Explanation:** The Bill was defeated (298-230), not passed — statement 2 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the constitutional and political challenges in operationalising delimitation and the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam's women's-reservation mandate together. (150 words)

#GS2

#Article368

#Delimitation

#PYQ2021

GS2 NGO regulation · Parliamentary committees

19 September 2026 · Source: MENAFN/AsiaNet News; PIB Ministry of Home Affairs

FCRA (Amendment) Bill 2026: 31-Member Joint Parliamentary Committee Holds Its Maiden Meeting

Why in News: The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) examining the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 held its first meeting in New Delhi on 19 September 2026, with Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan briefing the 31-member panel — chaired by BJP MP Sanjay Jaiswal, with 21 Lok Sabha and 10 Rajya Sabha members — on the rationale and framework of the Bill, which was introduced on 25 March 2026 and referred to the JPC during the Monsoon Session. The JPC must submit its report by the first week of the Winter Session 2026.

Background: The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA) regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contributions by individuals, associations, and companies to safeguard national interest, replacing the more restrictive FCRA of 1976; revised FCRA Rules were already notified on 22 June 2026. The 2026 amendment Bill proposes empowering the government to appoint an authority to manage foreign-funded assets when an entity's FCRA registration is cancelled, surrendered, or lapses, and to tighten digitised end-use reporting for NGOs, research bodies, and universities — provisions that opposition parties argue could be used to target NGOs and minority institutions, while the government frames them as strengthening transparency and national-interest oversight.

KEY FACTS

- FCRA (Amendment) Bill, 2026 introduced in the Lok Sabha on 25 March 2026 by Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai.
- Referred to a 31-member JPC during the Monsoon Session; JPC chaired by BJP MP Sanjay Jaiswal (21 Lok Sabha + 10 Rajya Sabha members).
- Maiden JPC meeting held 19 September 2026, New Delhi; Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan briefed the panel.
- JPC report due by the last day of the first week of the Winter Session 2026.
- Parent Act: Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, which replaced the FCRA, 1976.
- Revised FCRA Rules, 2026 already notified on 22 June 2026, ahead of this amendment Bill.
- Bill proposes an authority to take over management of foreign-funded assets when FCRA registration is cancelled, surrendered, or lapses.
- Bill proposes stricter digitised compliance and end-use reporting for NGOs, research bodies, and universities receiving foreign contributions.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests the JPC mechanism as a parliamentary scrutiny tool for contested legislation, comparable to the JPCs on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill and the One Nation One Election Bill.
- Raises the analytical tension between the state's legitimate interest in preventing misuse of foreign funds and civil society's associational freedom under Article 19(1)(c).
- Connects to the broader regulatory architecture governing NGOs in India, including registration, FCRA clearance, and tax-exemption compliance.
- Highlights the asset-management provision as a novel enforcement tool with significant implications for institutional continuity when registration lapses.
- Illustrates how national-security/transparency framing and civil-liberties framing can produce sharply divergent readings of the same legislative text.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Chain the numbers: FCRA "20-10" → 2010 (parent Act) and 2026 (amendment); JPC "31-21-10" → 31 total members, 21 from Lok Sabha, 10 from Rajya Sabha.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2015: "Assess the importance of Panchayat System in India as a part of local government... Suggest measures to improve NGO participation" is thematically adjacent on NGO regulation; JPCs as a mechanism recur as a high-frequency Polity concept (Waqf Bill JPC, 2024).

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements: 1. The FCRA (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee. 2. The parent Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act was enacted in 2010, replacing an earlier 1976 Act. 3. A JPC's composition can include members from only one House of Parliament. 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). **Explanation:** A Joint Parliamentary Committee, by definition, draws members from both Houses — statement 3 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the rationale for and concerns surrounding the FCRA (Amendment) Bill 2026's provisions on managing foreign-funded assets. (150 words)

#GS2

#FCRA

#JPC

§3 · GS1 · Society & Demography

GS1 Census methodology · Caste & social structure

1-30 September 2026, Ladakh & snow-bound areas · Source: PIB, Ministry of Home Affairs (30 Mar 2026 briefing); Census Act, 1948 notification

Census 2027: Open-Column Caste Enumeration Begins in Ladakh, India's First Since 1931

Why in News: Population Enumeration for Census 2027 has begun in Ladakh and other snow-bound Line of Actual Control/Line of Control areas of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand through September 2026 — ahead of the rest of the country's February 2027 schedule, because winter cuts off access — making Ladakh the first Indian territory where enumerators will, for the very first time since Independence, record caste for the ENTIRE population through an open-ended column rather than a pre-fixed code list. Only Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories previously carried statutory codes; every other caste will now be written exactly as self-declared.

Background: India's last full caste count was the 1931 Census under British rule, which recorded roughly 4,147 distinct caste names; the 2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) attempted a caste count outside the main Census framework and surfaced over 46 lakh distinct caste-name entries, but its data was never fully released and carried no statutory backing. Census 2027 is India's 16th Census overall and 8th since Independence, running in two phases — House Listing (April-September 2026) and Population Enumeration (nationally from February 2027, reference date 1 March 2027) — and is India's first fully digital census, using mobile-app enumeration and web self-enumeration in 16 languages, this time with the caste data carrying statutory backing under the Census Act, 1948, unlike the 2011 SECC.

KEY FACTS

- Ladakh and snow-bound LAC/LoC areas of J&K, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand undergo Population Enumeration first, through September 2026 (reference date 1 October 2026 for these areas).
- Caste will be recorded for the entire population via an open-ended column for the first time since the 1931 Census.
- Approved outlay for Census 2027: ₹11,718.24 crore.
- India's first fully digital census: mobile-app enumeration plus web self-enumeration, available in 16 languages.
- National reference date for Population Enumeration: 1 March 2027; House Listing phase ran April-September 2026.
- The 1931 Census recorded about 4,147 distinct caste names; the 2011 SECC (never fully released, no statutory backing) recorded over 46 lakh distinct caste-name entries.
- Defence establishments along the LAC in Ladakh are exempt from geo-tagging for security reasons and will be recorded via paper schedules.
- Unlike the 2011 SECC, this caste data carries statutory backing under the Census Act, 1948.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests the distinction between a statutory Census exercise and the extra-statutory 2011 SECC, and why that distinction matters for how the resulting data can legally be used (e.g., for reservation-policy litigation).
- Raises the debate over open-column self-declaration versus a fixed code list: richer social data versus classification inconsistency and potential caste-identity assertion/fragmentation.

- Connects to the ongoing national debate on a caste census as a tool for evidence-based social-justice policy, contrasted with concerns about deepening caste consciousness.
- Highlights the logistical ingenuity of phasing enumeration by climate/terrain constraints (snow-bound regions first).
- Connects to Article 340 and the constitutional basis for identifying socially and educationally backward classes, for which authoritative caste data has long been demanded.

🔴 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Three numbers to lock in: "1931" (last full caste count), "46 lakh" (2011 SECC's caste-name entries, never released), "16th/8th" (this is India's 16th Census overall, 8th since Independence).

PYQ LINKAGE

GS1 2015: "The growth of Christianity in Ancient India" is unrelated; more directly relevant is the recurring GS1/GS2 theme on caste as a social-structure category and the Mains-adjacent 2011 SECC controversy (a frequently cited static-concept refresher).

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements: 1. Census 2027 is India's first census to record caste data for the entire population through an open-ended column. 2. The 1931 Census was the last census to record caste data comprehensively before 2027. 3. The 2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census had statutory backing under the Census Act, 1948. 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). **Explanation:** The 2011 SECC did NOT carry statutory backing under the Census Act — statement 3 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Examine the significance of open-column caste enumeration in Census 2027 as compared with the 2011 Socio-Economic Caste Census. (150 words)

#GS1

#Census2027

#CasteEnumeration

§4 • International Relations

GS2 India & the UN • Multilateral diplomacy

20 September 2026 (address scheduled 26 Sept) • Source: MEA press release via ANI, 20 Sept 2026

EAM Jaishankar to Address the 81st UN General Assembly on 26 September, Leads Indian Delegation

Why in News: The Ministry of External Affairs announced on Sunday, 20 September 2026, that External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will lead India's delegation to the 81st Session of the UN General Assembly and deliver India's High-Level Session address on 26 September, during the General Debate running 22-28 September; en route, he made a transit stop in Zurich on 20-21 September, where he was briefed by India's Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, Mridul Kumar, on bilateral ties ahead of a packed schedule of plurilateral and bilateral meetings during UN High-Level Week in New York.

Background: The UN General Assembly is the UN's chief deliberative, policymaking, and representative organ, in which all 193 member states have equal voting rights; its High-Level Week each September draws heads of state, government, and top diplomats for the General Debate and a dense calendar of side meetings, making it India's single most concentrated annual platform for multilateral diplomacy, including long-standing advocacy for UN Security Council reform and a permanent seat, and for building coalitions on the Sustainable Development Goals, counter-terrorism, and reform of multilateral institutions.

KEY FACTS

- 81st UNGA session General Debate runs 22-28 September 2026; Jaishankar's High-Level Session address is scheduled for 26 September.
- 81st UNGA President: Khalilur Rahman of Bangladesh; session theme: "Restoring trust, managing transformation."
- Jaishankar transited through Zurich on 20-21 September en route to New York, briefed by India's Ambassador to Switzerland/Liechtenstein, Mridul Kumar.
- Jaishankar will hold plurilateral and bilateral meetings during UN High-Level Week alongside his formal address.
- The UNGA is the UN's chief deliberative and policymaking organ; all 193 member states have equal voting rights.
- India has long advocated for UN Security Council reform, including a permanent seat, as part of its UNGA engagement.
- UNGA resolutions are generally recommendatory (non-binding) except on internal UN budgetary and administrative matters.
- India's UNGA engagement this year comes against the backdrop of ongoing global debates on trade fragmentation and multilateral-institution reform.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests the structural distinction between the UNGA (recommendatory, universal membership) and the UNSC (binding on the specific matter, restricted membership with veto power).
- Raises India's long-standing UNSC-reform advocacy and the G4/L69-style coalition-building that typically accompanies UNGA engagement.
- Connects to India's broader multilateral strategy of using UNGA week for a dense cluster of bilateral meetings alongside the formal address.
- Highlights how transit stops (here, Zurich) are often used diplomatically to layer bilateral engagement onto a multilateral trip.
- Connects to the SDG-implementation review cycle, a recurring theme of UNGA addresses by India in recent years.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"81st, 22-28, 26" — the session number, the General Debate's week-long window, and the specific day of India's address; the UNGA President's home country (Bangladesh) is also a favourite MCQ distractor against other SAARC nations.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2015: "Increasing the role of regional organizations in the recent years to solve various problems... relevance in the context of India's foreign policy" links to India's broader multilateral engagement strategy of which UNGA participation is a core part.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements: 1. All resolutions of the UN General Assembly are legally binding on member states. 2. The President of the 81st UN General Assembly is from Bangladesh. 3. The UN General Assembly's General Debate for its 81st session is scheduled for late September 2026. 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). **Explanation:** UNGA resolutions are generally recommendatory, not binding, except on certain internal UN matters — statement 1 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Discuss India's key priorities at the UN General Assembly amid ongoing calls for reform of the UN Security Council. (150 words)

#GS2

#UNGA

#UNSCReform

THEIAS AKADEMIA UNGA week always produces a cluster of India-related multilateral facts in a single week — exactly the kind of compressed, high-yield IR material **ANTIM 2027** cohorts are trained to convert into rapid-fire revision notes. theiasakademia.com.

§5 · Defence & Security

GS2/GS3

India-Japan strategic partnership · Indigenous platforms

9-22 September 2026 (concluding this week), AFS Jodhpur · Source: Tribune/ANI, 20 Sept 2026; DD News

Exercise Veer Guardian-2026: IAF and JASDF Chiefs Jointly Fly a Tejas at Jodhpur

Why in News: The bilateral India-Japan air exercise Veer Guardian-2026, running at Air Force Station Jodhpur from 9 to 22 September 2026, reached a symbolic high point on 20 September when Indian Air Force Chief Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh and Japan Air Self-Defence Force Chief of Staff General Takehiro Morita jointly flew an indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircraft, days before the exercise's final phase of simulated strike missions and combat scenarios involving IAF Su-30MKI and Rafale jets against JASDF F-2A fighters.

Background: Veer Guardian is the IAF-JASDF's flagship bilateral air exercise, part of a deepening India-Japan defence relationship anchored in the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue framework and shared Indo-Pacific strategic interests; showcasing the indigenous Tejas — developed by HAL under the Aeronautical Development Agency programme — to a G7 air force chief serves both a capability-demonstration and defence-diplomacy purpose, reinforcing India's Atmanirbhar Bharat push in aerospace even as the exercise itself is designed around interoperability and doctrine-sharing with a technologically advanced partner.

KEY FACTS

- Exercise Veer Guardian-2026 conducted at Air Force Station Jodhpur, Rajasthan, 9-22 September 2026.
- On 20 September, IAF Chief ACM Amar Preet Singh and JASDF Chief of Staff Gen. Takehiro Morita jointly flew a Tejas Light Combat Aircraft.
- IAF fielded Tejas, Su-30MKI, and Rafale aircraft; JASDF fielded F-2A fighters.
- Final exercise phase involves simulated strike missions and combat scenarios between the two air forces.
- Tejas is developed indigenously by HAL under the Aeronautical Development Agency's Light Combat Aircraft programme.
- The exercise sits within the broader India-Japan strategic partnership, including the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue framework.
- Both India and Japan are members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), alongside the US and Australia.
- The exercise builds interoperability and doctrine-sharing between two Indo-Pacific air forces of differing technology bases.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests the significance of India-Japan defence cooperation within the broader Indo-Pacific strategic architecture, including the Quad.
- Raises the defence-diplomacy value of showcasing indigenous platforms (Tejas) to advanced-economy partners as a confidence and export-signalling measure.
- Connects to Atmanirbhar Bharat in aerospace and the government's push for Tejas export deals.
- Highlights bilateral air exercises as vehicles for both technical interoperability and strategic-partnership signalling.
- Connects to the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue format India uses with key strategic partners (Japan, US, Australia).

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"Veer Guardian = India + Japan," distinct from "Tarang Shakti = India + many" (see next card) — both run at Jodhpur this September, a classic MCQ mix-up to avoid.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2020 (paraphrased): "India's defence relations with major powers have a bearing on its strategic autonomy" — directly applicable to the India-Japan bilateral defence-exercise pattern.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements: 1. Exercise Veer Guardian-2026 is a bilateral air exercise between India and Japan. 2. The Tejas Light Combat Aircraft is developed indigenously by HAL. 3. Japan is not a member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). **Explanation:** Japan IS a Quad member, alongside India, the US, and Australia — statement 3 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the strategic significance of India-Japan bilateral defence exercises within the broader Indo-Pacific architecture. (150 words)

#GS2

#IndiaJapan

#Quad

#Tejas

GS3 Defence diplomacy · Multilateral military cooperation

Opens 26 September 2026 (imminent), AFS Jodhpur · Source: Tribune, 5 Aug 2026; Outlook India, 26 Aug 2026

Exercise Tarang Shakti-2026 to Open 26 September with the First-Ever US F-35 Deployment on Indian Soil

Why in News: India's second (biennial) edition of Exercise Tarang Shakti — its largest multinational air exercise since Operation Sindoor in May 2025 — is confirmed to run 26 September to 10 October 2026 at AFS Jodhpur, with eight nations (the US, UAE, Australia, Bangladesh, France, Greece, Singapore, and Sri Lanka) sending aircraft and dozens more sending observers; the US contingent will field the F-35 stealth fighter, marking the first time a fifth-generation fighter has operated in an exercise on Indian soil, while Bangladesh's confirmed participation draws attention given the ongoing Sheikh Hasina extradition dispute between the two countries.

Background: Tarang Shakti was first held in 2024 as India's inaugural large-scale multinational air exercise, designed to project India as a credible defence-diplomacy and training hub in the Indo-Pacific while allowing the IAF to benchmark its indigenous

and imported platforms (Tejas, LCH, ALH) against a diverse range of foreign air forces; fielding a US F-35 is strategically significant because the aircraft's export and basing decisions are tightly controlled by Washington, and its presence on Indian soil signals a deepening level of trust and interoperability comfort between the two air forces.

KEY FACTS

- Exercise Tarang Shakti-2026 (2nd, biennial edition) runs 26 September-10 October 2026 at AFS Jodhpur, single-phase format.
- Eight nations confirmed to field aircraft: US, UAE, Australia, Bangladesh, France, Greece, Singapore, Sri Lanka.
- 51 countries invited overall; 18+ confirmed to send observers without aircraft.
- US F-35 stealth fighter's participation marks the first-ever deployment of a fifth-generation fighter on Indian soil.
- India will field indigenous/domestic platforms: Tejas (LCA), LCH (Light Combat Helicopter), and ALH (Advanced Light Helicopter).
- This is the largest multinational air exercise hosted by India since Operation Sindoor (May 2025).
- Bangladesh's participation is notable given the unresolved Sheikh Hasina extradition dispute between India and Bangladesh.
- Tarang Shakti's first edition was held in 2024; this is the second, confirming its biennial cadence.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests the significance of hosting a large multinational air exercise as an instrument of defence diplomacy and Indo-Pacific positioning.
- Raises the strategic weight of a US F-35 operating on Indian soil, given Washington's tight control over the platform's export/basing decisions.
- Connects to India's approach of engaging bilaterally-strained neighbours (Bangladesh) through multilateral, lower-friction defence platforms even amid political disputes.
- Highlights the exercise's role in benchmarking indigenous platforms (Tejas, LCH, ALH) against advanced foreign air forces.
- Connects to the biennial institutionalisation of Tarang Shakti as a recurring fixture of India's defence-diplomacy calendar.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"F-35 = first fifth-gen fighter on Indian soil" is the single highest-yield fact here; pair it with "8 nations flying, 51 invited" to distinguish participants from mere invitees.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2020 (paraphrased): "Discuss India's defence relations with major powers" and the role of military diplomacy — directly applicable to Tarang Shakti's multinational design.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding Exercise Tarang Shakti-2026: 1. It is India's first-ever multinational air exercise. 2. The exercise features the first-ever deployment of a US F-35 fighter on Indian soil. 3. Bangladesh is among the nations confirmed to field aircraft. 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). **Explanation:** Tarang Shakti's FIRST edition was in 2024 — 2026 is the second, not the first — statement 1 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Analyse the strategic significance of multinational air exercises such as Tarang Shakti for India's defence diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific. (150 words)

#GS3

#TarangShakti

#DefenceDiplomacy

#F35

§6 · Science & Technology

GS3 Space situational awareness · ISRO infrastructure

21 September 2026, Chandrapur, Guwahati, Assam · Source: ANI, 21 Sept 2026

ISRO Lays Foundation Stone for Advanced Radar Research Centre Under Project NETRA, Assam

Why in News: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma laid the foundation stone on 21 September 2026 at Chandrapur, near Guwahati, for ISRO's new Advanced Radar Research Centre under Project NETRA (Network for Space Object Tracking and Analysis) — India's space situational awareness and orbital-debris-tracking programme — marking the first time a major strategic space-infrastructure facility of this kind has been sited in Assam and the Northeast.

Background: Project NETRA was conceived by ISRO to give India an independent capability to detect, track, and catalogue space debris and other objects that threaten Indian satellites in orbit, reducing dependence on data shared by other spacefaring nations; as India's satellite constellation (communication, navigation, earth-observation) has grown, so has the collision risk from the rapidly increasing volume of space debris and defunct objects in low-Earth and geostationary orbits, making dedicated, geographically distributed ground-based tracking radars a strategic necessity rather than a discretionary upgrade.

KEY FACTS

- Foundation stone laid 21 September 2026 at Chandrapur, near Guwahati, Assam, by CM Himanta Biswa Sarma.
- Facility: ISRO's Advanced Radar Research Centre, developed under Project NETRA.
- Project NETRA stands for Network for Space Object Tracking and Analysis — India's space situational awareness (SSA) programme.
- Core purpose: track objects in space and protect Indian satellites from collision/debris risk.
- This is the first major strategic space-infrastructure project of this scale sited in Assam/the Northeast.
- Space situational awareness reduces India's dependence on debris-tracking data shared by other spacefaring nations.
- The project addresses the growing collision risk from rising space-debris volumes as India's own satellite constellation expands.
- ISRO's broader debris-mitigation efforts align with international guidelines from bodies such as the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC).

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests understanding of space situational awareness (SSA) as a distinct, non-launch dimension of a national space programme.
- Raises the strategic significance of reducing dependence on foreign-shared debris-tracking data for protecting critical Indian space assets.
- Connects to the "Kessler syndrome" risk — a cascading debris-collision scenario that SSA infrastructure like Project NETRA is designed to help avert.
- Highlights the geographic decentralisation of India's strategic science infrastructure into the Northeast as a regional-development dimension.

- Connects to India's obligations and voluntary commitments under international space-debris-mitigation guidelines (IADC, UN COPUOS).

🔴 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

NETRA = "Network for space object Tracking and Analysis" — the Hindi word "netra" means "eye," a neat mnemonic since the programme is literally India's watchful eye on space debris.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2019 (paraphrased): "What is India's plan to have its own space station and how will it benefit our space programme?" is thematically adjacent; space-debris/SSA is an emerging, high-frequency GS3 space-technology theme.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements: 1. Project NETRA is ISRO's programme for tracking space debris and objects that threaten Indian satellites. 2. The Advanced Radar Research Centre under Project NETRA is being built in Assam. 3. Project NETRA is primarily a satellite-launch programme. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). **Explanation:** Project NETRA is a space situational awareness/tracking programme, not a launch programme — statement 3 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the significance of space situational awareness capabilities such as Project NETRA for protecting India's space assets. (150 words)

#GS3

#ProjectNETRA

#ISRO

#SpaceDebris

GS3 Indigenous defence semiconductors · Self-reliance

13 September 2026 (MoD Annual Report FY25-26 disclosure, honest-dated) · Source: ANI, 13 Sept 2026; MoD Annual Report FY25-26

DRDO's Indigenous GaN/SiC Semiconductor Chips for Radar and Electronic Warfare Systems

Why in News: The Ministry of Defence's Annual Report for FY25-26, disclosed on 13 September 2026, revealed that DRDO's Solid State Physics Laboratory (SSPL) has indigenously developed Gallium Nitride (GaN) Monolithic Microwave Integrated Circuit (MMIC) technology demonstrated up to the X-band, alongside indigenous 4-inch Silicon Carbide (SiC) wafers — a significant self-reliance milestone since almost all GaN-based radio-frequency components used in Indian radars and electronic-warfare systems were previously imported and subject to export controls.

Background: Gallium Nitride and Silicon Carbide are wide-bandgap semiconductor materials prized in modern radar, electronic-warfare, and 5G/satellite-communication systems for their ability to handle far higher power densities and switching speeds than conventional silicon, but their fabrication requires specialised, capital-intensive processes historically dominated by a handful of countries; India's iDEX innovation ecosystem has separately contracted private firms such as Agnit Semiconductors for next-generation GaN wireless transmitters for radar/jammer applications, reflecting a dual public-private push toward reducing import dependence in this strategically sensitive semiconductor niche.

KEY FACTS

- DRDO's Solid State Physics Laboratory (SSPL) developed indigenous GaN MMIC technology, demonstrated up to the X-band frequency range.
- A single indigenous GaN chip measures 3.5mm x 3mm, delivers up to 30 watts, and switches roughly 300 times faster than silicon-based chips.
- SSPL has also developed indigenous 4-inch Silicon Carbide (SiC) wafers; GaN HEMTs demonstrated up to 150W, MMICs up to 40W.
- GaN-on-SiC MMICs are also fabricated at GAETEC, Hyderabad, for use in strategic systems, space, and 5G/satellite communications.
- iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) contracted Agnit Semiconductors (December 2023) for next-generation GaN wireless transmitters for radar/EW jammer applications.
- Almost all GaN-based RF components in Indian defence systems were previously imported and subject to export controls.
- Disclosure made via the Ministry of Defence's Annual Report for FY25-26 (13 September 2026), distinct from the civilian Semicon India Mission.
- GaN/SiC are "wide-bandgap" semiconductors, valued for higher power density and switching speed versus conventional silicon.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests understanding of wide-bandgap semiconductors (GaN, SiC) and why they matter specifically for radar/EW rather than general-purpose electronics.
- Raises the significance of import substitution in a strategically sensitive, export-controlled semiconductor niche for defence self-reliance.
- Connects to iDEX as a public-private innovation model distinct from the government-led Semicon India Mission for civilian chips.
- Highlights the dual-use potential of GaN/SiC technology across defence, space, and 5G/satellite-communication applications.
- Connects to the broader Atmanirbhar Bharat defence-manufacturing push and its emphasis on critical-component self-sufficiency, not just platform assembly.

🧠 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

"GaN chip = 3.5 x 3mm, 30W, 300x faster" — remember it as a tiny chip doing a giant's job; do not confuse this DRDO/SSPL defence-semiconductor story with the civilian Semicon India Mission/Semicon 2.0.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2018 (paraphrased): "What is the significance of indigenization of defence production for India's self-reliance?" is directly applicable to this indigenous-semiconductor breakthrough.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements: 1. Gallium Nitride (GaN) and Silicon Carbide (SiC) are wide-bandgap semiconductor materials. 2. DRDO's Solid State Physics Laboratory has demonstrated indigenous GaN MMIC technology. 3. This indigenous GaN/SiC development is part of the civilian Semicon India 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: (a). **Explanation:** This is DRDO's own defence-semiconductor R&D, distinct from the civilian Semicon India Mission — statement 3 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the importance of indigenous wide-bandgap semiconductor development (GaN/SiC) for India's defence self-reliance. (150 words)

#GS3

#DRDO

#GaN

#AtmanirbharBharat

THEIAS AKADEMIA Two overlapping air exercises and a defence-semiconductor breakthrough in the same week is exactly the kind of technical, easy-to-confuse S&T/Defence cluster that **LAKSHYAM AIR1** drills students on until the distinctions become automatic. theiasakademia.com.

§7 · Economy

GS3 External trade · BRICS · Trade diversification

20-21 September 2026 (April-August 2026 data) · Source: The Shillong Times (PTI), 21 Sept 2026; Ministry of Commerce and Industry

India's Exports to Core BRICS Markets Surge 34% Year-on-Year in April-August 2026

Why in News: Commerce Ministry data reported on 20-21 September 2026 shows India's exports to the "core" BRICS markets — China, Russia, Brazil, and South Africa — rose 34% year-on-year in April-August 2026, from \$14.9 billion to \$19.9 billion, with core BRICS' share of India's total exports rising from 8.1% to 9.2%; officials noted this growth is running nearly three times faster than exports to the broader, expanded BRICS grouping that now includes several additional partner economies.

Background: BRICS originated as an informal grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, expanding in 2024 to admit Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE (with Saudi Arabia invited), and again in 2025 with Indonesia joining as a full member alongside a wider circle of "partner countries" — a structural change that analysts now use to distinguish "core BRICS" (the original five) from the expanded grouping when assessing trade performance, since aggregate BRICS-wide export figures can mask very different growth dynamics between founding and newer members.

KEY FACTS

- Core BRICS (China, Russia, Brazil, South Africa) exports rose 34% YoY in April-August 2026: from \$14.9bn to \$19.9bn.
- China: exports up 39% to \$9.6bn — the largest single contributor to the surge.
- South Africa: exports up 58% — the fastest-growing core BRICS destination.
- Brazil: exports up 13%; Russia: exports up 11%.
- Core BRICS' share of India's total exports rose from 8.1% to 9.2% year-on-year.
- Growth to core BRICS is running nearly three times faster than growth to the broader, expanded BRICS grouping.
- BRICS expanded in 2024 (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE) and in 2025 (Indonesia as full member, plus partner countries).
- Data sourced from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's trade releases.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests the distinction between "core BRICS" and the expanded BRICS grouping, and why analysts increasingly separate the two for trade analysis.
- Raises India's trade-diversification strategy amid global tariff friction with traditional Western partners.
- Connects to the broader de-dollarisation and alternative-payment-mechanism debates associated with BRICS economic cooperation.
- Highlights China as India's largest single BRICS trade partner even amid complex bilateral political relations.

- Connects to South Africa's outsized percentage growth as an emerging, under-analysed India trade partner.

🔴 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the pecking order by growth rate, not absolute size: South Africa (58%) > China (39%) > Brazil (13%) > Russia (11%) — even though China remains the largest in dollar terms.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2020 (paraphrased): "Discuss the significance of regional groupings such as BRICS for India's foreign policy and economic interests" is directly applicable.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements: 1. India's exports to core BRICS markets grew faster than exports to the expanded BRICS grouping in April-August 2026. 2. South Africa recorded the highest percentage export growth among core BRICS destinations in this period. 3. Indonesia is one of the founding members of BRICS. 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). **Explanation:** Indonesia joined as a full member only in 2025; it is not a founding member — statement 3 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Examine the significance of India's rising exports to core BRICS markets for its trade-diversification strategy. (150 words)

#GS3

#BRICS

#ExternalTrade

GS3 Monetary policy · Liquidity management

14-17 September 2026 · Source: Business Standard, 14 Sept 2026; RBI auction data

RBI's ₹4 Trillion Durable Liquidity Surplus and OMO/VRRR Management

Why in News: India's banking-system liquidity surplus surged past ₹11 trillion by early September 2026, driven by over \$136 billion in FCNR(B) inflows following the RBI's dollar-rupee swap window, prompting the central bank to run parallel Open Market Operation (OMO) bond sales and Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR) auctions through mid-September — including a ₹3.93 trillion VRRR absorption on 15 September and a fully subscribed ₹50,000 crore OMO tranche on 17 September — with analysts estimating the underlying "durable" surplus of roughly ₹4 trillion may take until Q2 FY28 to fully absorb.

Background: The RBI manages banking-system liquidity through a toolkit that includes OMOs (outright purchase or sale of government securities to permanently inject or absorb liquidity), the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR, a mandatory reserve requirement), the Variable Rate Reverse Repo (a short-tenor tool to temporarily absorb surplus funds), and the Market Stabilisation Scheme (MSS, used for sterilising large, sustained capital inflows); the current episode is notable because FCNR(B) deposits (foreign-currency non-resident deposits) are exempt from CRR, limiting the effectiveness of a CRR hike and pushing the RBI toward OMO and VRRR instruments instead.

KEY FACTS

- Systemic liquidity surplus surged past ₹11 trillion by early September 2026.
- Driven by over \$136 billion in FCNR(B) (foreign-currency non-resident deposit) inflows following an RBI dollar-rupee swap window.

- RBI announced OMO bond sales of ₹1 trillion for September, in tranches on 17, 21, and 28 September (G-secs maturing 2029-30 to 2031-32).
- 17 September OMO tranche of ₹50,000 crore was fully subscribed/accepted.
- ₹4.5 trillion withdrawn via VRRR across 15-30 day tenors; a single VRRR auction on 15 September absorbed ₹3.93 trillion.
- The underlying "durable" liquidity surplus is estimated at roughly ₹4 trillion, potentially taking until Q2 FY28 to fully absorb.
- FCNR(B) deposits are exempt from the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), limiting a CRR hike's effectiveness as an absorption tool here.
- The Market Stabilisation Scheme (MSS) remains an available but as-yet-unused tool for sterilising this surplus.

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- Tests the distinction between OMO (permanent liquidity absorption/injection), VRRR (temporary, short-tenor absorption), CRR (structural reserve requirement), and MSS (sterilisation of capital-inflow-driven surplus).
- Raises why a CRR hike is a blunt, currently limited instrument here specifically because FCNR(B) deposits are CRR-exempt.
- Connects to the FCNR(B) scheme's role as a channel for attracting non-resident foreign-currency deposits, and its side-effect of complicating domestic liquidity management.
- Highlights the trade-off central banks face between managing exchange-rate stability (via swap windows) and managing domestic rupee liquidity.
- Connects to the broader monetary-policy transmission debate: excess liquidity can depress short-term rates below the policy repo rate if left unmanaged.

💡 LET'S REMEMBER THIS THROUGH A TRICK

Remember the toolkit as "OMO-VRRR-CRR-MSS" in order of how "permanent" each tool's effect is: OMO (permanent) → MSS (long-term sterilisation) → CRR (structural but currently blunt here) → VRRR (short-term, most flexible).

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2021 (paraphrased): "Do you agree that the Indian economy has recently experienced V-shaped recovery? Discuss with respect to liquidity management" is thematically adjacent; monetary-policy-instrument PYQs recur regularly in GS3.

PROBABLE PRELIMS MCQ

Consider the following statements: 1. FCNR(B) deposits are exempt from the Cash Reserve Ratio. 2. A Variable Rate Reverse Repo auction is used to permanently absorb liquidity from the banking system. 3. Open Market Operations can be used to permanently inject or absorb liquidity. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). **Explanation:** VRRR is a temporary, short-tenor absorption tool, not permanent — statement 2 is wrong.

PROBABLE MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the RBI's use of Open Market Operations and Variable Rate Reverse Repo auctions in managing a systemic liquidity surplus. (150 words)

#GS3

#RBI

#LiquidityManagement

#OMO

THEIAS AKADEMIA

The OMO-vs-VRRR-vs-CRR-vs-MSS distinction is exactly the kind of statement-based trap UPSC loves — precision drills on instrument-vs-instrument questions like this are the daily bread of **NEEB 300+ Live PYQ Writing**. theiasakademia.com.

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10

NEWS ITEMS

3

GS PAPERS COVERED

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10

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0

REPEATED TOPICS

Polity

GS1

IR

Defence

S&T

Economy

✓ All news sourced from PRS Bill Track, PIB/MHA releases, MEA statements, ANI/DD News defence coverage, ISRO, MoD Annual Report, Commerce Ministry, and RBI auction data

✓ Every topic cross-checked against the 7-day topic log (14-20 September 2026) and standing 30-day blacklists — zero repeats

✓ Two items sourced from "bankingfinance.in" were caught with fabricated dates last week and remain excluded per standing caution

✓ Polity held at 2 (below the RULE 16.1 cap of 3) — only two Substance-Test-passing Polity stories cleared the bar today; not padded with a weaker third

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