ANTIM ASSURED 100+

The Topper's Last Read. Every Morning.

PART I · HEADLINES TO ECONOMY

Monday, 10 August 2026

"The Topper's Last Read"

Morning Edition · 08:00 IST · TheIAS Akademia

INSIDE PART I

SECTION 01

Top Headlines

1. Supreme Court issues notice on plea challenging the Tenth Schedule's "merger exception" that lets defecting MLAs escape disqualification.
2. Nation observes the 84th anniversary of the Quit India Movement, launched 8 August 1942.
3. ASI's resumed excavation at Lothal, Gujarat, yields fresh evidence of the Harappan port city's maritime trade network.
4. e-Courts Mission Mode Project Phase III crosses 753 crore digitised court-record pages and 4.18 crore video-conference hearings.
5. Supreme Court orders Rajasthan to set up a River Commission for the pollution-hit Jojari River under the Polluter Pays doctrine.
6. India presses China at the 36th WMCC talks for hydrological-data sharing over the Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra mega-dam.
7. India examines a boundary-demarcation proposal involving a land exchange with Myanmar along the Manipur border.
8. Dassault Aviation submits a formal ₹3.25 lakh crore bid for 114 Rafale jets under India's MRFA programme.
9. Parliamentary Standing Committee flags IndiaAI Mission fund under-utilisation and fellowship shortfalls.
10. INCOIS's indigenous AI/ML model projects El Niño persisting into February 2027.
11. GST collections for July 2026 rise 15.4% year-on-year — the fastest pace in 14 months.
12. LIC's ₹31,550 crore Offer-for-Sale anchors an 11-year-high pace of PSU disinvestment.

SECTION 02

Polity & Governance

GS2 | Anti-Defection Law — Tenth Schedule

27 July 2026 (notice); still developing · Source: Supreme Court cause list / Bar & Bench

Supreme Court Questions the Tenth Schedule's "Merger Exception" Loophole

Why in News: On 27 July 2026, a Supreme Court Bench of Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe issued notice on a plea by Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal challenging how courts have interpreted the "merger exception" in Paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule, and sought the Union government's response. The Court itself flagged "enormous issues" with how the provision is being used to shield defectors from disqualification.

Background: The Tenth Schedule, inserted by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment (1985), disqualifies legislators who voluntarily give up party membership or vote against a party whip. Paragraph 4 carves out an exception: if two-thirds of a legislature party claims to have "merged" with another party, defection rules do not apply. Over the decades this exception has been used even when the original party itself never merged, effectively becoming a backdoor around the law's anti-defection intent.

KEY FACTS

- Petitioner: Kapil Sibal, Independent Rajya Sabha MP and senior advocate.
- Bench: Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe.
- Challenges the judicial interpretation of Paragraph 4 (the "merger exception") of the Tenth Schedule.
- Tagged with a separate SLP by Girish Chodankar seeking disqualification of defecting MLAs in a separate state case.
- Tenth Schedule was inserted via the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985.
- Core legal question: can legislators escape disqualification through a claimed merger even when their original party never actually merged with the other party.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- The merger exception was designed to protect genuine party mergers, not to launder individual or small-group defections — the litigation tests whether courts will close this gap.
- Speaker-adjudicated disqualification proceedings (rather than an independent tribunal) remain a structural weakness the anti-defection law has never resolved.
- A stricter reading could stabilise state governments against engineered defections, but critics warn it may also entrench incumbent leaderships against legitimate internal dissent.
- Echoes recurring debates (2019 Karnataka, 2022-23 Maharashtra/Shiv Sena) about whether the Tenth Schedule should be reformed by Parliament rather than repeatedly reinterpreted by courts.

Let's Remember This Through a Trick

Remember "merger of parties, not of convenience" — Paragraph 4 was meant for real party mergers, and the Sibal plea asks the Court to stop it being used as a convenient exit ramp from disqualification.

Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)

Consider the following statements about the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution:
1. It was inserted by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985.
2. The "merger exception" under Paragraph 4 applies only if two-thirds of a legislature party claims to have merged with another party.
3. Disqualification disputes under the Tenth Schedule are decided by the President or Governor, not the Speaker.
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) All three

Answer: (a). Disqualification decisions rest with the Speaker/Chairman, not the President or Governor.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS2 2022: Anti-defection law and its impact on legislator behaviour; recurring theme in Prelims and Mains alike.

#GS2 #AntiDefectionLaw #TenthSchedule #PYQ2022

GS1 Modern Indian History — Freedom Struggle

8-9 August 1942 (84th anniversary observed 8-9 Aug 2026) · Source: National Archives / standard historiography

The Quit India Movement at 84: Why the "Do or Die" Call Still Matters for GS1

Why in News: India observed the 84th anniversary of the Quit India Movement on 8-9 August 2026, marking Gandhi's launch of the movement at the AICC session in Bombay on 8 August 1942 with his "Do or Die" call, followed by the mass arrest of nearly the entire Congress leadership on 9 August 1942.

Background: The movement was triggered by the failure of the Cripps Mission (1942), Britain's wartime conscription of Indian resources without consultation, and worsening inflation and shortages. With top leadership arrested within a day, the movement became leaderless but grew into the most widespread spontaneous popular uprising against British rule since 1857, with parallel "underground" administrations emerging in pockets like Ballia, Tamluk and Satara.

KEY FACTS

- Launched 8 August 1942 at the AICC session, Gowalia Tank Maidan, Bombay.
- Gandhi's call: "Do or Die" (Karo ya Maro).
- Virtually the entire top Congress leadership arrested by 9 August 1942.
- Immediate trigger: collapse of the Cripps Mission talks earlier in 1942.
- Parallel/underground governments emerged in Ballia (UP), Tamluk (Bengal), and Satara (Maharashtra).
- Did not secure immediate independence but demonstrated to Britain that continued rule was unsustainable, shaping the post-war political settlement leading to 1947.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Illustrates the shift from elite-negotiated constitutionalism (Cripps Mission) to mass civil disobedience as the Congress's final pre-independence strategy.
- The "leaderless" character of the movement is analytically significant — it shows how deeply Gandhian methods had been internalised beyond the top leadership.
- Parallel governments in Ballia/Tamluk/Satara are useful case studies in local self-organisation under colonial repression.
- Comparative angle: contrast Quit India's mass-mobilisation model with the more negotiated, elite-led constitutional politics of 1935-39.

Let's Remember This Through a Trick

Remember "8 calls, 9 falls" — 8 August 1942 is when Gandhi called for Quit India, and by 9 August the leadership had fallen into British custody, leaving the movement to the people.

Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)

Consider the following statements about the Quit India Movement:
1. It was launched at the Bombay session of the AICC in August 1942.
2. It was triggered in part by the failure of the Cripps Mission.
3. Parallel underground governments emerged in places such as Ballia, Tamluk and Satara.
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) All three

Answer: (d) All three.

📋 **PYQ LINKAGE**

GS1 2016: "Discuss the role of the Cripps Mission in shaping India's freedom struggle" — recurring examiner interest in the 1942-45 window.

#GS1 #QuitIndiaMovement #ModernHistory #PYQ2016

GS1 Ancient History — Indus Valley Civilisation

Ongoing excavation, active through 2026 · Source: Archaeological Survey of India

Lothal Dig Resumes After 65 Years, Yields Fresh Harappan Port-City Evidence

Why in News: The Archaeological Survey of India's excavation at Lothal, Gujarat — resumed since March 2025 after a 65-year gap — continues to yield fresh finds through 2026, including gold particles, copper-working traces, seals and brick structures, using modern methods such as drone surveys and digital mapping.

Background: Lothal, roughly 80 km from Ahmedabad, is India's first known Harappan port city, discovered and first excavated by S.R. Rao between 1955 and 1960. It is famous for its dockyard structure, standardised weights, and evidence of maritime trade with Mesopotamia. The renewed dig, running alongside the separately ongoing Rakhigarhi excavation in Haryana (which yielded eight Harappan-era skeletons in 2026), reflects a broader ASI push to re-examine Indus Valley sites with contemporary scientific techniques.

⚡ **KEY FACTS**

- Location: Lothal, ~80 km from Ahmedabad, Gujarat.
- Dig resumed March 2025 after a 65-year gap since S.R. Rao's original 1955-60 excavation.
- Fresh finds: gold particles, copper-working traces, bone fragments, seals, brick structures, marine remains, craft tools.
- Modern techniques used: drone surveys, digital mapping, scientific sampling.
- Findings suggest Lothal functioned as a central maritime-trade and manufacturing node, not a peripheral outpost.
- Runs parallel to the ongoing Rakhigarhi excavation, Haryana — the largest known Indus Valley Civilisation site.

🎯 **MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS**

- Lothal's dockyard and standardised weights are classic evidence for the IVC's urban planning and long-distance maritime trade — a recurring Prelims theme.
- Renewed scientific excavation (drone survey, digital mapping) reflects a methodological shift in Indian archaeology from descriptive to data-driven analysis.
- Findings reinforce the "network" model of IVC settlements — ports, granaries and craft centres integrated rather than isolated.
- Raises the recurring heritage-management question of balancing active excavation with conservation of a fragile, already-exposed site.

🧠 **Let's Remember This Through a Trick**

Remember "Lothal = dock + gold" — a dockyard for maritime trade and, as the 2025-26 dig shows, gold-working evidence confirming its role as a wealthy craft-and-commerce hub, not a minor outpost.

🎯 **Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)**

Consider the following statements about Lothal:
1. It is located in present-day Gujarat.
2. It was first excavated by S.R. Rao.
3. It is known for evidence of a dockyard and maritime trade.
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) All three

Answer: (d) All three.

📋 **PYQ LINKAGE**

GS1 2014 Prelims: matched IVC sites to their distinctive features (dockyard/granary/etc.) — Lothal's dockyard is the standard association.

#GS1 #Lothal #IndusValleyCivilisation #PYQ2014

GS2 | E-Governance — Judicial Reform

Data as of 30 June 2026, reported 8 Aug 2026 · Source: PIB / Department of Justice

e-Courts Phase III Crosses 753 Crore Digitised Pages, 4.18 Crore Virtual Hearings

Why in News: The Department of Justice's e-Courts Mission Mode Project, now in Phase III (2023-27, outlay ₹7,210 crore), has digitised over 753 crore pages of court records and enabled more than 4.18 crore video-conference hearings, per data reported 8 August 2026.

Background: The e-Courts project, running since 2007, aims to make the Indian judiciary paperless and remotely accessible. Phase III, approved by the Cabinet in September 2023, quadrupled Phase II's funding and added e-filing, e-payment and AI/ML integration components, reflecting a broader push to reduce judicial backlog and improve access to justice through technology.

⚡ **KEY FACTS**

- Phase III (2023-27) outlay: ₹7,210 crore — four times Phase II's funding.
- 753 crore+ pages of court records digitised to date.
- 4.18 crore+ remote hearings conducted via video-conferencing.
- 1.25 crore+ cases filed via the e-filing platform (till 30 June 2026).
- ₹1,404 crore in court fees and ₹75 crore in fines processed via e-payment.
- 49 e-Sewa Kendras at High Courts and 2,535 at District Courts; AI/ML integration for legal research and transcription planned through 2027.

🎯 **MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS**

- Digitisation at this scale directly targets the "access to justice" gap for litigants in remote areas, a long-standing GS2 governance theme.
- Planned AI/ML integration raises the analytical question of algorithmic accountability in judicial administration — who audits an AI tool used for legal research?

- Video-conference hearings reduce litigant travel costs but raise digital-divide concerns for rural and economically weaker litigants.
- e-Courts sits within the larger Digital India/e-governance architecture, illustrating how flagship missions cascade into sector-specific reforms.

🧠 **Let's Remember This Through a Trick**

Remember "4x funding, 4 crore hearings" — Phase III's budget is 4x Phase II's, and it has already crossed over 4 crore virtual hearings.

🎯 **Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)**

Consider the following statements about the e-Courts Mission Mode Project:
1. Phase III was approved by the Cabinet in 2023.
2. It is implemented by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice.
3. It includes AI/ML integration for legal research and case management.
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) All three

Answer: (d) All three.

📋 **PYQ LINKAGE**

GS2 2023: E-governance initiatives and their impact on service delivery — directly applicable framework.

#GS2 #eCourts #DigitalIndia #PYQ2023

GS2 Judicial Activism — Environmental Governance

7 August 2026 · Source: Supreme Court order, In Re: Jojari River Contamination, 2026 INSC 316

Supreme Court Orders River Commission for Rajasthan's Pollution-Hit Jojari River

Why in News: On 7 August 2026, the Supreme Court, acting suo motu after a documentary exposed severe industrial pollution in the Jojari River affecting roughly two million people, directed Rajasthan to constitute an independent River Commission and an Integrated Coordination Group, and laid down principles for environmental compensation grounded in the Polluter Pays doctrine.

Background: The Jojari, a seasonal river near Jodhpur, has for years absorbed untreated effluent from textile-dyeing and other industrial units, becoming a byword for unregulated industrial pollution in western Rajasthan. The suo motu case reflects a now-familiar pattern of the judiciary stepping into river-governance gaps left by weak state-level enforcement.

⚡ **KEY FACTS**

- Case: In Re: 2 Million Lives at Risk — Contamination in Jojari River, Rajasthan, 2026 INSC 316.
- Bench: Justices Pamidighantam Sri Narasimha and Alok Aradhe.

- Directed Rajasthan to set up an independent River Commission / River Rejuvenation Authority plus an Integrated Coordination Group.
- Ordered a ban on discharging even tertiary (treated) water directly into the river.
- Directions cover High Flood Line demarcation, decentralised effluent treatment, groundwater conservation and digital compliance reporting.
- Compensation principles anchored in the Polluter Pays doctrine — restitutionary, not merely punitive.

🎯 **MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS**

- Creating a dedicated River Commission via judicial direction highlights the judiciary's increasing role in institutional design when the executive fails to act.
- The tertiary-water discharge ban sets a stricter compliance bar than most state pollution-control norms — a potential template for other polluted rivers.
- Raises a federalism question: courts directing specific state institutional architecture risks blurring the separation of powers even when well-intentioned.
- Complements this month's broader SC jurisprudence on environmental compensation (the SWM Rules order), showing a consolidating judicial doctrine on river pollution.

🧠 **Let's Remember This Through a Trick**

Remember "not even treated water" — the Jojari order's strictest line is that even tertiary-treated water cannot be discharged directly into the river, a stronger standard than typical effluent norms.

🎯 **Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)**

Consider the following statements about the Supreme Court's Jojari River order (2026):
1. It was passed in a suo motu case.
2. It directs Rajasthan to constitute an independent River Commission.
3. It permits discharge of tertiary-treated water into the river.

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) All three

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only. The order bans tertiary-water discharge, it does not permit it.

📋 **PYQ LINKAGE**

GS3 2018: Environmental impact assessment and compensation mechanisms — the Polluter Pays framing directly applies.

#GS2 #GS3 #JojariRiver #PolluterPays

International Relations

GS2 India-China Relations — Transboundary Rivers

6 August 2026 · Source: MEA readout, 36th WMCC meeting, New Delhi

India Presses China on Hydrological Data-Sharing Over the Brahmaputra Mega-Dam

Why in News: At the 36th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on India-China Border Affairs, held in New Delhi on 6 August 2026, India pressed China to resume sharing hydrological data and sought early operationalisation of the Expert Level Mechanism on trans-border rivers, amid concerns over China's mega hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra near the disputed boundary.

Background: China's Medog (Motuo) Hydropower Station on the Yarlung Tsangpo — reported to cost $137-147 billion with a generation capacity of around 60,000 MW — sits upstream of India's Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, and downstream Bangladesh, raising long-standing concerns about flood risk, sediment flow and water security. The WMCC and the Expert Level Mechanism are existing institutional channels meant to manage exactly such transboundary-river tensions alongside broader border-affairs coordination.

KEY FACTS

- 36th WMCC meeting held 6 August 2026, New Delhi; India led by Joint Secretary (East Asia) Sujit Ghosh, China by DG Hou Yanqi.
- India sought resumption of hydrological data-sharing and early activation of the Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) on trans-border rivers.
- China's Medog Hydropower Station on the Yarlung Tsangpo: reported cost $137-147 billion, capacity ~60,000 MW.
- Talks positioned as part of a broader "gradual normalisation" process ahead of a possible Special Representatives dialogue.
- Downstream concerns cited: flood risk, sediment-flow disruption, and water security for India and Bangladesh.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- Hydrological data-sharing is a recurring flashpoint in India-China relations — its resumption (or continued denial) is a barometer of overall bilateral trust.
- A 60,000 MW mega-dam near a disputed, seismically active boundary raises both strategic and disaster-risk dimensions simultaneously.
- The WMCC-ELM combination illustrates how India manages an asymmetric relationship through incremental institutional channels rather than headline summitry.
- Transboundary river governance (India-China-Bangladesh) lacks a binding treaty framework, unlike the Indus Waters Treaty model with Pakistan — a useful comparative point.

Let's Remember This Through a Trick

Remember "WMCC talks, ELM walks" — the WMCC is the broader border-affairs talking mechanism, while the Expert Level Mechanism is the specific channel India wants activated for river data.

Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)

Consider the following statements about India-China transboundary river cooperation:
1. The Yarlung Tsangpo is the Tibetan name for the river that becomes the Brahmaputra in India.
2. India and China have a legally binding water-sharing treaty on the Brahmaputra similar to the Indus Waters Treaty.
3. The Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) deals specifically with trans-border river issues between India and China.
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) All three

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only. No binding treaty exists on the Brahmaputra.

📋 **PYQ LINKAGE**

GS1/GS2 2016: River water disputes and inter-country water-sharing mechanisms — a recurring theme extending to India's northern neighbours.

#GS1 #GS2 #IndiaChina #Brahmaputra

GS2 | India-Myanmar Relations — Border Management

6 August 2026; still developing · Source: MEA spokesperson briefing

India Examines Boundary Land-Swap Proposal With Myanmar Along the Manipur Border

Why in News: MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal confirmed on 6 August 2026 that India is examining a proposal to complete boundary demarcation with Myanmar between border pillars 65-68 in Manipur, reportedly involving an exchange of about 1.4 square miles of territory in Chandel district — though MEA stopped short of confirming any approval, describing discussions as "ongoing."

Background: The undemarcated 2.8-km stretch lies along Manipur's border with Myanmar's Kabaw Valley in Sagaing Region. An internal government document, reported by The Diplomat in May 2026, had envisaged completing the demarcation within three months. The proposal has drawn sharp opposition from Manipur's Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), which warns against ceding any territory, reflecting the acute sensitivity of border issues in a state already dealing with ethnic conflict.

⚡ **KEY FACTS**

- Proposal covers boundary pillars 65-68 along Manipur's Chandel district border with Myanmar's Sagaing Region.
- Reported exchange: approximately 1.4 square miles of territory across a 2.8-km undemarcated stretch.
- Internal document (reported May 2026) targeted completion within three months.
- MEA has confirmed only that discussions are "ongoing" through the established bilateral boundary mechanism — not that any swap has been approved.
- Local opposition led by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI).

🎯 **MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS**

- Border demarcation in India's Northeast repeatedly intersects with ethnic and identity politics, making even technical boundary fixes politically fraught.
- Highlights the Centre-state coordination challenge: boundary negotiations are a Union subject, but local consent shapes their political viability.

- Ties into the larger, unresolved debate over the Free Movement Regime along the India-Myanmar border and its security implications amid Myanmar's internal conflict.
- Illustrates how unresolved colonial-era boundary pillars continue to generate contemporary diplomatic friction decades after independence.

🧠 **Let's Remember This Through a Trick**

Remember "pillars 65 to 68, not yet fixed" — a specific, narrow stretch of undemarcated boundary is what's under discussion, not a broader border revision.

🎯 **Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)**

Consider the following statements about the India-Myanmar border:
1. It runs along four Indian states, including Manipur.
2. The Kabaw Valley lies within Myanmar's Sagaing Region.
3. India and Myanmar currently operate a Free Movement Regime along their border.
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) All three

Answer: (d) All three. The border touches Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.

📋 **PYQ LINKAGE**

GS2 2021: India's border management and neighbourhood policy — the Myanmar border's ethnic-security overlay is a recurring analytical thread.

#GS2 #IndiaMyanmar #BorderManagement #Manipur

SECTION 04

Defence & Security

GS3 Defence Procurement — Aatmanirbharta

6 August 2026 · Source: Dassault Aviation submission to Government of India / defence-trade press

Dassault Submits Formal ₹3.25 Lakh Crore Bid for 114 Rafale Jets Under MRFA

Why in News: Dassault Aviation submitted its formal techno-commercial proposal on 6 August 2026 for India's Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) tender covering 114 fighters, valued at roughly ₹3.25 lakh crore (approximately $34-39 billion) — one of India's largest-ever fighter procurement programmes, now under review by the Ministry of Defence's acquisition wing and the Indian Air Force.

Background: The MRFA tender seeks to modernise the IAF's depleting squadron strength as older MiG-21 and Jaguar fleets retire. Dassault's Rafale already has a foothold in India through the 2016 government-to-government deal for 36 Rafales and the Navy's 2025 contract for 26 Rafale-Marine jets, giving it an incumbency advantage in a competition that also involves other global fighter manufacturers.

KEY FACTS

- Proposal covers 114 fighters under the MRFA (Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft) tender.
- Reported deal value: ~₹3.25 lakh crore (~$34-39 billion).
- Structure: 20 aircraft flyaway from France, 94 manufactured in India with a local industry partner.
- Aircraft would be the newer F4-standard Rafale, with MBDA (missiles), Safran (engines) and Thales (avionics) participation.
- Sits alongside the Navy's already-contracted 26 Rafale-Marine (April 2025, ₹63,000 crore) and reports of a further 31 Rafale-M under consideration for future carrier air wings.
- Now under review by MoD's Defence Acquisition wing and the IAF ahead of formal government-to-government negotiations.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- The 20-flyaway/94-local-build split tests how far Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence can be reconciled with urgent squadron-strength shortfalls that favour faster imports.
- Concentrating both Air Force and Navy fleets around one foreign OEM (Dassault) raises a strategic diversification-versus-standardisation trade-off.
- MRFA's scale ($34-39 billion) makes it a bellwether for whether India's defence-offset and Make-in-India policies can absorb a programme of this size domestically.
- Comparative angle: contrasts with the more diversified multi-vendor approach historically used in India's fighter fleet (Su-30MKI, Mirage, MiG, Tejas, Rafale).

Let's Remember This Through a Trick

Remember "20 fly, 94 build" — of the 114 Rafales proposed, only 20 would arrive ready-built from France while 94 would be manufactured in India.

Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)

Consider the following statements about India's MRFA (Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft) programme:
1. It seeks to procure 114 fighter aircraft.
2. Dassault's Rafale is the only aircraft under consideration for the tender.
3. India's Navy has separately contracted 26 Rafale-Marine jets.
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) All three

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only. MRFA is a competitive, multi-vendor tender.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2020: Defence indigenisation and offset policy — MRFA's local-manufacture clause is a direct extension of this theme.

#GS3 #MRFA #Rafale #DefenceProcurement

SECTION 05

Science & Technology

GS3 | Digital Governance — AI Policy

6 August 2026 · Source: 31st Report, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications & IT

Parliamentary Panel Flags IndiaAI Mission's Fund Under-Utilisation and Fellowship Shortfall

Why in News: The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, chaired by MP Nishikant Dubey, tabled its 31st Report on 6 August 2026, flagging that the ₹10,371.92 crore IndiaAI Mission utilised only 32% of its 2025-26 revised-estimate funds by 31 December 2025, while its FutureSkills fellowship scheme fell drastically short of targets across UG, PG and PhD categories.

Background: The IndiaAI Mission was approved in March 2024 to build sovereign AI compute capacity, datasets and talent pipelines. The Committee's findings, based on MeitY's own action-taken replies, point to a broader pattern: India's national R&D spend stands at just 0.64% of GDP, below the global average, and even other flagship digital bodies like the Data Protection Board of India recorded zero expenditure in both 2024-25 and 2025-26 despite the DPDP Rules being notified in November 2025.

KEY FACTS

- IndiaAI Mission: ₹10,371.92 crore, approved March 2024; only 32% of 2025-26 revised-estimate funds utilised by 31 Dec 2025.
- 2026-27 budget request for the Mission halved by the Finance Ministry.
- FutureSkills fellowships (2024): only 150 of 5,000 UG, 140 of 2,000 PG, and 3 of 100 PhD targets filled.
- India's R&D spend: 0.64% of GDP, below the global average (per Economic Survey data cited by the Committee).
- UIDAI received ₹572.41 crore against a ₹1,200 crore request and a projected ₹2,900 crore need for 2026-27.
- The Data Protection Board of India recorded zero expenditure in both 2024-25 and 2025-26 despite the DPDP Rules being notified 13 November 2025.

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- A 32% utilisation rate against a headline ₹10,371.92 crore allocation illustrates the classic "announcement versus implementation" gap in flagship digital missions.
- Fellowship shortfalls (as low as 3% of the PhD target) undercut the Mission's stated goal of building India's AI talent pipeline from within.
- The Data Protection Board's zero-expenditure record raises serious questions about the DPDP Act's enforcement readiness, even after its rules were formally notified.

- Parliamentary Standing Committees function here as a real accountability check on executive digital-governance claims — a useful institutional-design example for GS2 answers.

🧠 **Let's Remember This Through a Trick**

Remember "32% spent, 68% unspent" — just under a third of the IndiaAI Mission's revised funds were actually used, exposing the execution gap the Committee is flagging.

🎯 **Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)**

Consider the following statements about the IndiaAI Mission:
1. It was approved in March 2024.
2. It is administered by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
3. The Parliamentary Standing Committee found 100% utilisation of its 2025-26 revised-estimate funds.
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) All three

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only. Utilisation was only 32%, not 100%.

📋 **PYQ LINKAGE**

GS3 2020: Artificial Intelligence and its application/governance in India — the IndiaAI Mission is the natural current-affairs update to this static theme.

#GS2 #GS3 #IndiaAIMission #DigitalGovernance

GS3 Earth Sciences — AI in Climate Forecasting

5 August 2026 · Source: Ministry of Earth Sciences reply to Lok Sabha

INCOIS's Indigenous AI/ML Model Projects El Niño Persisting to February 2027

Why in News: The Ministry of Earth Sciences told the Lok Sabha on 5 August 2026 that the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)'s indigenous AI/ML-based ENSO prediction system projects the El Niño that developed in May 2026 will persist until February 2027, with a probability of 70-90%.

Background: El Niño is the warm phase of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), a periodic warming of central and eastern tropical Pacific waters that alters global atmospheric circulation. INCOIS, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, has built an AI/ML system fed by its Global Ocean Data Assimilation System (GODAS) and live ocean observations to forecast such events, supplementing traditional statistical climate models.

⚡ **KEY FACTS**

- Current El Niño episode developed in May 2026.
- INCOIS's AI/ML model forecasts persistence from June 2026 to February 2027.
- Forecast probability: 70-90%.
- Model draws on INCOIS's Global Ocean Data Assimilation System (GODAS) plus live ocean observations.
- Government explicitly clarified El Niño is "not the sole determinant" of the Indian Summer Monsoon — multiple climate systems interact.

- INCOIS functions as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

🎯 **MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS**

- Applying AI/ML to ocean-atmosphere coupled forecasting is a concrete example of technology upgrading a classical geography/climatology tool.
- A persistent El Niño into early 2027 has direct implications for India's winter and subsequent monsoon planning, water-resource management, and agricultural risk.
- The government's careful "not the sole determinant" caveat reflects the scientific complexity of monsoon prediction — useful for avoiding oversimplified answers on ENSO-monsoon linkage.
- Illustrates institutional specialisation: INCOIS (ocean data) versus IMD (meteorological forecasting) working in complementary roles under the same ministry.

🧠 **Let's Remember This Through a Trick**

Remember "El Niño, not alone" — the government's own clarification is the exam-safe answer: El Niño influences but does not solely determine the Indian monsoon.

🎯 **Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)**

Consider the following statements about El Niño:
1. It refers to the warm phase of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO).
2. It involves warming of central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean waters.
3. INCOIS functions under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
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) All three

Answer: (d) All three.

📋 **PYQ LINKAGE**

GS1 2015 & 2021: El Niño/La Niña and their impact on Indian monsoon — a perennial Prelims favourite, now with a fresh AI-forecasting angle.

#GS1 #GS3 #ElNino #INCOIS

SECTION 06

Economy

GS3 Public Finance — Indirect Taxation *Released 1 August 2026; latest available print · Source: PIB / GST Network*

GST Collections Rise 15.4% in July 2026 — Fastest Growth in 14 Months

Why in News: Gross GST revenue for July 2026 came in at ₹2,11,205 crore, up 15.4% year-on-year — the fastest monthly growth in 14 months — driven largely by a surge in import-linked collections, per Finance Ministry data released 1 August 2026, which remains the latest available monthly print for this edition.

Background: GST, rolled out in July 2017, replaced a fragmented indirect-tax structure with a unified destination-based tax administered jointly by the Centre and states through the GST Council. Monthly collection figures are a widely watched proxy for both consumption demand and import activity, and are tracked cumulatively against the fiscal year's revenue assumptions.

KEY FACTS

- Gross GST collection, July 2026: ₹2,11,205 crore, up 15.4% year-on-year.
- Net GST (after ₹27,147 crore in refunds): ₹1,84,058 crore.
- Domestic transaction collections up 10.1% to over ₹1.44 lakh crore.
- Import-linked collections up ~29% to ₹66,511 crore.
- Cumulative April-July FY27: gross collections ₹8.43 lakh crore (+10.1%), net ₹7.21 lakh crore (+9.2%).

MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS

- The sharper rise in import-linked collections (~29%) versus domestic collections (~10.1%) suggests import demand, not necessarily domestic consumption strength, is driving the headline number.
- Fastest growth in 14 months offers a positive fiscal signal, but sustained analysis requires checking whether this reflects genuine demand recovery or one-off base effects.
- Strong indirect-tax collections ease pressure on the fiscal deficit target, complementing direct-tax and disinvestment receipts.
- GST's destination-based design means state-wise collection patterns also matter for Centre-state devolution debates, not just the aggregate figure.

Let's Remember This Through a Trick

Remember "15 up, 14 fast" — 15.4% year-on-year growth, the fastest pace in 14 months.

Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)

Consider the following statements about GST collections for July 2026:
1. Gross collections crossed ₹2 lakh crore.
2. Import-linked collections grew faster than domestic transaction collections.
3. GST is administered solely by the Union Government without state involvement.
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) All three

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only. GST is jointly administered via the GST Council.

PYQ LINKAGE

GS3 2019: Effects of GST on Centre-state financial relations — the GST Council's cooperative-federalism design remains a core Mains theme.

#GS3 #GSTCollections #PublicFinance

GS3 | Disinvestment Policy — Fiscal Management | *7 August 2026 · Source: DIPAM/Finance Ministry disinvestment data*

LIC's ₹31,550 Crore OFS Anchors an 11-Year-High Pace of PSU Disinvestment

Why in News: The government's Offer-for-Sale (OFS) route for PSU stake sales raised roughly ₹25,490 crore in 2026 as of early August — the highest through OFS in 11 years — anchored by LIC's ₹31,550 crore share sale completed the week of 7 August 2026 at ₹382 per share, putting the government on track to exceed its FY27 disinvestment target of ₹80,000 crore.

Background: Disinvestment of government stakes in public sector undertakings, managed by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), is a recurring non-tax capital-receipts strategy used to fund the fiscal deficit without additional borrowing. LIC's own 2022 IPO had itself been a landmark disinvestment event; this OFS represents a further reduction in the government's holding.

KEY FACTS

- LIC OFS: ₹31,550 crore raised at ₹382 per share — the government's largest single divestment in years.
- LIC shares fell over 7% following the sale.
- 2026 OFS-route PSU stake sales total ~₹25,490 crore — the highest via OFS in 11 years.
- Other 2026 OFS deals: Coal India (₹5,542 crore), NHPC (~₹4,300 crore), IRFC (up to 2% stake at ₹91/share), NLC India (up to 3% stake at ₹303/share, a 12% discount to market).
- FY27 Budget Estimate for disinvestment/capital receipts: ₹80,000 crore — government on track to exceed it.

🎯 **MAINS DIMENSIONS / ANALYSIS**

- Reliance on non-tax capital receipts like disinvestment to meet fiscal targets raises the classic "one-off versus sustainable" revenue debate in public finance.
- LIC's 7% share-price fall after the OFS illustrates the market-timing and pricing-discipline criticism often levelled at large government stake sales.
- An 11-year-high OFS pace signals renewed momentum in India's disinvestment policy after a relatively quiet stretch, worth tracking against the FY27 target.
- Disinvestment proceeds interact directly with the fiscal-deficit and twin-deficit framework — a useful cross-link to recent RBI/Economy coverage.

🧠 **Let's Remember This Through a Trick**

Remember "11 years, one LIC" — the highest OFS-route disinvestment pace in 11 years is anchored by a single LIC sale worth over ₹31,000 crore.

🎯 **Probable Prelims MCQ (Statement-Based)**

Consider the following statements about India's disinvestment policy:

1. DIPAM stands for the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management.
2. Disinvestment receipts are classified as tax revenue in the Union Budget.
3. LIC's 2026 OFS was completed at ₹382 per share.

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) All three

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only. Disinvestment receipts are non-tax capital receipts, not tax revenue.

📋 **PYQ LINKAGE**

GS3 2016 & 2021: Disinvestment policy and its impact on fiscal management — DIPAM's role is a recurring institutional-design question.

#GS3 #Disinvestment #LIC #DIPAM

→ Continue to Part II: Environment · Places in News · Ethics · MCQs · Mains Questions · Direct Hit Tracker