UPSC with SAURABH KAUSHIK

Current Affairs Notes · 7 July 2026

The Hindu · Indian Express · PIB · AIR | 18 Topics | GS 1 · 2 · 3 + Prelims + Mapping

[TH] The Hindu | [IE] Indian Express | [PIB] Press Info Bureau | [AIR] All India Radio

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PIB HIGHLIGHT — 7 JULY 2026

1. Dalai Lama Turns 91 — PM Modi's Birthday Greetings; India-Tibet Policy

✓ PM Modi extended birthday greetings to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama on his 91st birthday (July 6, 1935 — born Lhamo Thondup at Taktser village, Amdo, Tibet).

✓ The Dalai Lama: Spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism; the 14th Dalai Lama was identified as a reincarnation at age 2; enthroned as temporal ruler of Tibet in 1950; fled Tibet in 1959 following China's crackdown; has lived in exile at Dharamsala (Himachal Pradesh) since 1959 — India hosts the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (Central Tibetan Administration — CTA).

✓ India's Tibet policy: India maintains a 'One China' policy (officially recognising that Tibet is a part of China) but allows the Dalai Lama and the CTA to operate from Dharamsala; India does not recognise Tibet as an independent state; PM Modi's birthday greetings to the Dalai Lama are a regular annual practice that China consistently objects to.

✓ China's reaction: China's Foreign Ministry: 'We firmly oppose any form of contact or activities by official Indian government persons with the Dalai clique'; India's MEA: The Dalai Lama is a 'revered spiritual figure in India' and PM's personal greetings are a private expression of respect.

✓ Succession question: The Dalai Lama has indicated he may not reincarnate in Tibet under Chinese-controlled circumstances; he has suggested his successor may be born outside Tibet (possibly in India); China insists it has the right to select the next Dalai Lama under the 'Golden Urn' system (a historical Chinese practice); this succession dispute could become the next major India-China-Tibet flashpoint.

✓ GS2 Angle: India-Tibet policy; One China policy; Dalai Lama; CTA; India-China relations; religious freedom; reincarnation succession as geopolitical issue.

GS PAPER 2 — International Relations · Polity · Governance

1. India to Push for Non-Permanent Seat at the UNSC — 2028-29 Bid

[TH] Page 1

GS 2: International Relations: UNSC; non-permanent members; G4; India's UNSC history; UNSC reform; India's 9th bid.

‣ India is preparing its campaign for election to the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for the 2028-29 term — what would be India's 9th term on the UNSC (if elected).

‣ Context: The 2026 UNSC elections (June 3, 2026, UNGA 80th session) for 2027-28 seats resulted in Austria, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe being elected; India was NOT in this election cycle; India's next bid is for the 2028-29 term.

‣ India's UNSC history: India has been a non-permanent member 8 times: 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12, and 2021-22; in its most recent term, India served as UNSC President in August 2021 and December 2022; India championed maritime security, counterterrorism, and reformed multilateralism during that term.

‣ The non-permanent seat vs. permanent seat distinction: India's declared priority is PERMANENT membership of the UNSC (as part of the G4 — India, Germany, Japan, Brazil); the non-permanent seat bid is a stepping stone — demonstrating India's continued multilateral engagement and keeping India's voice active in the UNSC while the permanent membership reform process (extremely slow) continues.

The UNSC Structure

- Composition: 15 members — 5 Permanent (P5: USA, UK, France, Russia, China) + 10 Non-Permanent (NPM); each NPM serves a 2-year term; 5 NPM seats are up for election annually; regional allocation: 3 from Africa, 2 from Asia-Pacific, 2 from Latin America-Caribbean, 2 from Western Europe-Others, 1 from Eastern Europe.
- India's regional group: India competes in the Asia-Pacific Group for UNSC non-permanent seats; the Asia-Pacific group has 2 seats (4 seats in 2-year cycle); India's 2028-29 bid will be against other Asia-Pacific candidates.

- The P5 Veto Problem: The biggest obstacle to UNSC reform is the P5 veto — any reform to the UNSC structure requires a Charter amendment (Article 108) which needs 2/3 of the 193 UNGA members PLUS ratification by all 5 P5 members; China has consistently blocked G4's permanent seat aspiration.

The UNSC Reform Debate

- G4 proposal: India-Germany-Japan-Brazil seek permanent seats (with veto — or without veto initially with a review clause); expanding UNSC to 25-26 members (adding 6 permanent + 4-5 non-permanent seats).
- Uniting for Consensus (UfC/Coffee Club) opposition: Italy, Pakistan, Mexico, South Korea, Argentina oppose G4 expansion; prefer more non-permanent seats only; their motivation — preventing rivals (Pakistan vs. India; Italy vs. Germany; South Korea vs. Japan; Mexico vs. Brazil) from getting permanent status.
- The Africa Group demand: L.69 Group (India-aligned) and the Ezulwini Consensus (African Union's position) both demand at least 2 permanent seats for Africa — a position that has gained traction; if Africa gets permanent seats, the logic for India, Germany, Japan, and Brazil is significantly strengthened.

UPSC ANGLE

• India's UNSC reform messaging at G20 (2023), BRICS (2024-26), and SCO (2025-26): India has consistently advocated for UNSC expansion with new permanent members reflecting today's global realities (population, economy, military, peacekeeping contributions); PM Modi's 'India's time has come' narrative at multiple global forums reinforces this campaign.

• India's peacekeeping record: India is the largest cumulative troop contributor to UN peacekeeping (200,000+ personnel across 49 missions since 1950) — this is a frequently cited justification for India's permanent UNSC seat claim; more than all 5 P5 members combined.

- **G4 (UNSC Reform Group)** — India, Germany, Japan, and Brazil — group seeking permanent UNSC seats for themselves; collectively represent world's 3rd, 4th, and 5th largest economies; India = world's largest democracy and largest peacekeeping contributor; G4 model proposes expanding UNSC from 15 to 25-26 members.
- **Uniting for Consensus (UfC/Coffee Club)** — Opposing group led by Italy, Pakistan, Mexico, South Korea, Argentina; prefers expansion of non-permanent seats only; key motivation: preventing regional rivals from getting permanent status (Pakistan blocks India; Italy blocks Germany; South Korea blocks Japan; Mexico blocks Brazil).

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2. Census Second Phase Rehearsal Has 'Open Column' for Caste

[TH] Page 1

GS 2: Governance: Census 2026; Socio-Economic Caste Census; OBC enumeration; constitutional basis; caste data; delimitation implications.

‣ The second phase rehearsal of India's Census 2026 (the actual Census, which was delayed from 2021 due to COVID and then various governance reasons) has been conducted in select districts; the questionnaire used in the rehearsal reportedly contains an 'open column' for caste — allowing enumerators to record the caste reported by households without a pre-determined list.

‣ What the 'open column' means: Unlike the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (who are enumerated using notification-based lists — the President's Constitutional SC/ST lists), the 'open column' for other castes does NOT have a pre-determined list; households self-report their caste; the diversity of caste names (same caste with different names across districts/states) creates a massive data cleaning challenge.

‣ Previous caste enumeration: India has not conducted a full caste census since 1931 (under British India); the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) of 2011 was a separate socio-economic survey (not the Census); its caste data was not publicly released (only OBC data was processed and not officially published) due to data quality issues and political sensitivity.

‣ The political context: The demand for a caste census has been a major political issue — the INDIA alliance (Congress-led opposition) has been campaigning for a caste census to identify OBC populations precisely; Bihar has conducted its own caste survey (2023); the Centre's Census rehearsal including a caste column suggests the upcoming Census may include caste data collection for the first time in 95 years.

- Constitutional basis: Articles 15, 16 (reservations for SCs/STs — and for OBCs under Article 16(4) as interpreted by the SC in Indra Sawhney 1992); the Supreme Court's 50% cap on total reservations (Mandal Commission case) is linked to the question of what percentage of OBCs exist nationally — without accurate caste data, the reservation architecture is built on outdated 1931 British estimates (Mandal Commission used 52% OBC estimate based on 1931 data).
- The political arithmetic of caste data: If the Census shows OBC population is higher than the 52% estimate (which is likely in a more accurate enumeration), it could build a case for increasing reservations beyond the 50% cap; if the Census shows OBCs are a certain percentage of the population, it creates a statistical basis for political demands around proportional OBC representation in Parliament, elections, and government jobs.
- Delimitation connection: The Census 2026 data will also be used for delimitation of parliamentary constituencies (next delimitation — Southern states fear losing Lok Sabha seats to Northern states with higher population growth); the caste column adds another dimension to the data's political significance.
- The technical challenge: India has potentially 4,000-6,000 distinct caste/sub-caste names across different states and languages; the same caste may be known by 10-15 different names in different districts; standardising this data into a usable database requires massive computational and human effort — this is partly why the 2011 SECC caste data was never officially released.

UPSC ANGLE

• Bihar's caste survey (2023): Bihar conducted India's first comprehensive state-level caste survey (November 2023); found: OBCs = 27.13% + EBCs (Extremely Backward Classes) = 36.01% = together 63.14% of Bihar's population (far higher than Mandal's 52% national estimate); Bihar's data immediately became a political flashpoint; SC dismissed petitions challenging the survey.

• The OBC delimitation paradox: If the Census confirms OBCs are 60%+ nationally, and if this leads to reservation increases, and if the delimitation increases Northern-state MP seats (where OBC populations are highest), then both demographic data and democratic representation will swing toward Northern states and backward communities — a seismic political realignment.

- **Caste Census 2026 (Census Rehearsal)** — India's Census 2026 rehearsal has an 'open column' for caste — potentially first systematic caste data collection since 1931; different from SECC 2011 (socio-economic survey); 'open column' = self-reported caste without pre-determined list; massive data quality challenge; political implications for reservations and delimitation.
- **SECC (Socio-Economic and Caste Census) 2011** — Conducted alongside Census 2011; separate socio-economic survey of rural and urban households; caste data collected but never officially released due to data quality issues (4,000+ caste names recorded) and political sensitivity; only general welfare data (housing, income) was released; the unreleased caste data has been a political issue since.

3. INS Mahendragiri — Sixth P-17A Stealth Frigate Set to Join Indian Navy on July 11

[TH/IE/AIR] Page 6

GS 3: Defence: Project 17A; stealth frigates; Indian Navy; indigenisation; Mazagon Dock; Warship Design Bureau.

‣ INS Mahendragiri (F38) — the sixth and final Project 17A (Nilgiri-class) stealth frigate — will be commissioned at Visakhapatnam on July 11, 2026.

‣ Named after: Mahendragiri mountain range in the Eastern Ghats (Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border); highest peak at 1,501 metres; the naval naming convention follows India's geographical landmarks — Nilgiri (Western Ghats), Udaygiri (Odisha hills), Himgiri (Himalayas), Taragiri, Dunagiri (Kumaon Himalayas), Mahendragiri (Eastern Ghats).

‣ Built by: Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai; designed by: Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau (WDB); 75%+ indigenous content; delivered to Navy on April 30, 2026 at MDL.

‣ The P-17A class fleet completion: All 6 P-17A frigates now inducted — INS Nilgiri (Jan 2025), INS Udaygiri (Aug 2025), INS Himgiri (Aug 2025), INS Taragiri (Apr 2026), INS Dunagiri (Jun 21, 2026, PM Modi witnessed), INS Mahendragiri (Jul 11, 2026).

Technical Profile: P-17A vs. P-17

- P-17A improvements over P-17 (Shivalik-class, 3 ships 2010-13): Enhanced stealth (reduced radar cross-section, sound signature, infrared signature); 32-cell Vertical Launch System (VLS) for Barak-8/MRSAM (medium-range surface-to-air missiles) vs. 8-cell in P-17; BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles (8 missiles); more capable ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare) suite; integrated Combat Management System; Combat Data System; greater automation (smaller crew than P-17).
- Weapons suite: Surface-to-surface: BrahMos (8 missiles, 290+ km range, supersonic at Mach 2.8); Surface-to-air: Barak-8/MRSAM (32-cell VLS, 70+ km range, intercepts aircraft, cruise missiles, and drones); Anti-submarine: Medium range ASW rockets + Heavyweight torpedoes; Gun: OTO Melara 76mm super-rapid; CIWS: AK-630 30mm for close-in defence.
- Propulsion: CODOG (Combined Diesel or Gas) — General Electric LM2500 gas turbine for high speed (28+ knots) + diesel engines for economical transit; range: 5,000 nautical miles at 14 knots.
- Atmanirbharta in warship building: P-17A represents India's most significant warship indigenisation achievement; 75%+ Indian content includes hull, propulsion control systems, weapons control, torpedoes, most electronics; the 4 ships built at GRSE Kolkata and MDL Mumbai represent distributed shipbuilding capacity.

UPSC ANGLE

• India's warship fleet buildup (2025-2026): In addition to 6 P-17A frigates, India has also commissioned INS Vikrant (aircraft carrier, 2022 — INS Vikramaditya is the 2nd carrier), commissioned 2 Kalvari-class submarines (INS Vagir 2023, INS Vagsheer 2024), and has the first SSBN INS Aridhaman (April 2026). India's naval fleet modernisation programme (Project-75, Project-75I submarines; Project-17A, Project-26 destroyers) is the largest in Indian naval history.

• Naming convention: P-17A frigates named after mountain ranges (Nilgiri, Udaygiri, Himgiri, Taragiri, Dunagiri, Mahendragiri); P-17 frigates: Shivalik, Sahyadri, Trikand — also mountain ranges; India's naval naming traditions: destroyers named after weapons, submarines named after marine creatures (Kalvari = deep sea shark), aircraft carriers named after powerful and victory terms.

- **Project 17A (P-17A Nilgiri-class)** — 7 indigenous stealth frigates; built at MDL (Mumbai) and GRSE (Kolkata); designed by WDB; 75%+ indigenous content; BrahMos + 32-cell VLS (Barak-8) + CIWS + ASW suite; CODOG propulsion; 28+ knots; 5,000 nm range; all 6 ships commissioned by July 11, 2026 (INS Mahendragiri is the last — and 7th ship under construction at GRSE).
- **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL)** — India's premier warship builder; Mumbai; under Ministry of Defence; builds P-17A frigates, Scorpene (Kalvari-class P-75) submarines, destroyers; a Schedule 'A' Defence PSU; listed on BSE/NSE (PSU IPO 2021); major beneficiary of Atmanirbharta in defence manufacturing policy.

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4. Modi in Indonesia — Three-Nation Indo-Pacific Tour Begins in Jakarta

[TH] Page 4

GS 2: International Relations: India-Indonesia; Act East Policy; Comprehensive Strategic Partnership; ASEAN; Prambanan Temple; Malacca Strait.

‣ PM Modi arrived in Jakarta on July 6 for the first leg of the three-nation Indo-Pacific tour (Indonesia July 6-8; Australia July 8-10; New Zealand July 10-11).

‣ Modi-Prabowo bilateral: PM Modi and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto held substantive talks; key outcomes: elevation of India-Indonesia defence cooperation (joint patrol in Andaman Sea-Malacca Strait; Indonesia purchasing HAL Advanced Light Helicopters — 6 ALHs for the Indonesian Navy); India's ONGC Videsh to explore partnership in Indonesia's Masela deepwater natural gas block; MoU on digital payments (UPI integration with Indonesia's QRIS — their instant payment system, similar to UPI).

‣ Cultural diplomacy at Yogyakarta: PM Modi visited the Prambanan Temple complex — a 9th century CE UNESCO World Heritage Site; India announced a joint India-Indonesia heritage conservation project for Prambanan (Indian Archaeological Survey expertise + Indonesian funding); the Prambanan complex has 240 Hindu temples (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva as the main trio — directly analogous to India's temple architecture of the same era).

‣ Indonesia's strategic significance: World's largest archipelago nation (17,508 islands); 4th most populous nation (280 million); world's largest Muslim-majority democracy; sits astride the Malacca Strait (80%+ of East Asian oil imports transit here); Indonesia's EEZ includes the Natuna Sea (disputed by China).

- The Malacca Strait focus: India-Indonesia strategic cooperation covers the Strait of Malacca — one of the world's most critical chokepoints; Indonesia controls the southern shore of the Strait; Malaysia controls the northern shore; Singapore sits at the Strait's eastern end; any naval confrontation involving China in the South China Sea would affect the Strait — making India-Indonesia maritime cooperation strategically critical.
- ASEAN + India: Indonesia is a founding ASEAN member (1967) and ASEAN's largest economy; India's ASEAN engagement is one of the core pillars of Act East Policy; India's Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN (ASEAN-India FTA, 2009) covers goods; services and investment chapters are under revision; Indonesia is India's largest ASEAN trading partner ($25 billion bilateral trade).
- UPI-QRIS integration: QRIS (Quick Response Code Indonesian Standard) is Indonesia's unified QR payment system; UPI-QRIS integration means Indian and Indonesian payment systems can be used cross-border; part of India's push to internationalise UPI (similar UPI-Paynow integration with Singapore, UPI-PromptPay with Thailand); this is a cornerstone of India's digital diplomacy.

UPSC ANGLE

• Prabowo Subianto background: Elected President of Indonesia, October 2024; former Army Special Forces General; son-in-law of former President Suharto; previously controversial for human rights record during East Timor and 1998 Jakarta riots; has rebranded as a nationalist reformer; India-friendly (visited India as Defence Minister; interested in HAL helicopters and jointly developed defence items).

- **QRIS (Quick Response Code Indonesian Standard)** — Indonesia's unified QR payment system (ASEAN's most widely used national QR payment standard); interoperable with India's UPI through the India-Indonesia UPI-QRIS linkage announced July 2026; similar to India's UPI but operates on a different technical architecture.

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5. Questions Surrounding the Quad's Future — Analysis

[TH] Page 9

GS 2: International Relations: QUAD; Indo-Pacific; Trump's second term; US alliance commitments; India's multi-alignment.

‣ The Hindu analysis: With Trump in his second term (2025-29) pursuing a more transactional foreign policy, questions have emerged about the Quad's long-term institutional durability.
‣ The Quad's evolution: Quad 1.0 (2007, Abe's initiative): First Quad meeting under Japanese PM Shinzo Abe, Australian PM John Howard, Indian PM Manmohan Singh; dissolved when Rudd government (Australia) withdrew in 2008; Quad 2.0 (2017-present): Revived by Foreign Ministers; elevated to Leaders' Summit from 2021; expanded from maritime to tech, climate, health, and critical infrastructure cooperation.
‣ Trump's Quad approach: Unlike Biden (who hosted the first Quad Leaders' Summit in March 2021), Trump views QUAD less as a values-based alliance and more as a transactional grouping; Trump has shown willingness to use QUAD membership as leverage for trade negotiations (the India-US BTA August 15 deadline exists partly because India needs US security cooperation and is thus under some pressure to accommodate US trade demands).
‣ India's concern: India has always resisted formalising the Quad into a military alliance (India doesn't want binding mutual defence obligations — its 'strategic autonomy' doctrine); if the US moves toward demanding more concrete military commitments from Quad members, India may resist.

- The core Quad value: The Quad's most durable contribution has been information sharing on Chinese military activities in the Indo-Pacific; the maritime surveillance network (India's P-8I, Australia's P-8A, Japan's P-1 patrol aircraft) and intelligence sharing architecture have created habits of cooperation that outlast any particular government's enthusiasm.
- What next for Quad: The upcoming QUAD Leaders' Summit in India (announced during Japan PM Takaichi's visit, July 1-2) is the key test — if India hosts a successful QUAD summit in 2026, it demonstrates the forum's institutional resilience; the agenda will likely focus on: AI governance (Japan-India AI statement), critical minerals (Australia-India supply chain), undersea cable security (I-2SEA and Pacific cable networks), and maritime domain awareness.

- Quad without the US: One scenario if US disengages: A 'Quad-minus-1' (India-Japan-Australia trilateral); this already exists in practice (Malabar exercise includes all three; Japan-India-Australia Maritime Information Sharing is well-established); the Quad's institutional base would survive a US disengagement because the trilateral foundation is strong.

UPSC ANGLE
• China's response to the Quad: China consistently calls QUAD a 'NATO of the East' (China views QUAD as a containment grouping targeting China); India rejects this characterisation: 'QUAD is a voluntary association of democracies for cooperative purposes, not an alliance against any country'; this framing conflict mirrors the India-Japan 'third country targeting' debate.

- **Quad 2.0 (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)** — India-USA-Australia-Japan cooperative security forum; revived 2017; Leaders' Summit from 2021; areas: maritime security, technology (semiconductor supply chain), climate, vaccine delivery, undersea cables; no binding mutual defence obligation; India's concern: not becoming a military alliance against China.

GS PAPER 1 — Geography · History · Culture

6. El Niño to Dent India's Wind and Hydropower Output — Energy Grid Concern

[TH] Page 6

GS 1 / GS 3: Geography: El Niño; monsoon; GS3: Energy — renewable energy intermittency; wind energy; hydropower; grid management.

‣ India's Ministry of Power and Grid India are preparing for a 2026 monsoon that El Niño conditions will make not just rainfall-deficient but also WIND POWER-deficient — a double blow to India's renewable energy generation.
‣ The wind energy-monsoon link: India's wind energy (80 GW+ capacity) is predominantly on-shore in Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh; these wind farms depend on the Indian Southwest Monsoon's wind patterns for generation; a weak monsoon = weak monsoonal winds = reduced wind power generation (estimated 20-25% reduction from typical monsoon-season wind generation).
‣ Hydropower impact: Weak monsoon = reduced reservoir inflows; major hydropower projects (Bhakra-Nangal, Tehri, Koyna, Sharavathi) depend on sufficient reservoir levels; reservoir levels are significantly below normal in the Deccan and Northern India basins as of July 7 (35%+ deficit); reduced hydro generation is projected for August-September 2026.
‣ The double deficit: India's grid faces SIMULTANEOUS shortfall in solar (covered by gas/coal), wind (now also reduced), AND hydro during the 2026 weak monsoon; this is the worst-case scenario for India's power grid and requires: (a) higher coal-based dispatch; (b) gas-based power at maximum available capacity; (c) import from Bhutan (hydro, when available); (d) demand management.

- India's renewable energy paradox: India has added massive renewable capacity (150+ GW solar + 80+ GW wind = 230+ GW RE) — but RE is 'variable renewable energy' (depends on sunshine and wind conditions); in a strong La Niña year, this capacity would be generating at high capacity factors; in an El Niño weak-monsoon year, it underperforms precisely when power demand is also high (cooling loads in heatwave conditions).
- Grid India's response: Grid India has been: (1) Keeping higher coal dispatch (increased coal plant PLF from 65% to 72%+ to compensate); (2) Dispatching gas plants even at $12/MMBTU LNG prices (historically high but now justified by grid stability need); (3) Managing demand through regional load shedding in some low-priority segments; (4) Accelerating pumped hydro storage projects (which can store surplus power from sunny periods and dispatch during wind/hydro gaps).
- **Pumped Hydro Storage** — Energy storage system: when surplus electricity is available (solar peak), water is pumped uphill to a reservoir; when energy is needed, water is released downhill through turbines generating electricity; India has 4.7 GW installed + 63 GW under development; critical for balancing variable renewable energy (solar and wind).

7. Indira Point: Convention Centre and Museum — India's Southernmost Tip Development

[IE] Page 1

GS 3 / GS 1: Environment: Andaman and Nicobar; Indira Point; Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ); biodiversity; GS1: Geography — India's extreme points.

‣ A proposal has been submitted to MoEFCC for environmental clearance to develop a Convention Centre, Museum, and Tourist Facilities at Indira Point — India's southernmost tip (6°4' N, 93°41' E) on the island of Great Nicobar.
‣ What Indira Point is: India's geographical southernmost point; previously known as Pygmalion Point (British-era name); renamed 'Indira Point' in 1985; sits on Great Nicobar Island, just 90 nautical miles from the northern tip of Indonesia (Sumatra); the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami permanently submerged parts of the island (the lighthouse at Indira Point was damaged/destroyed; the lighthousekeeper was killed); new facilities proposed as part of the broader Great Nicobar Holistic Development Project.
‣ CRZ implications: Indira Point sits within the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) — specifically CRZ-IA (Ecologically Sensitive Areas within CRZ); any development requires CRZ clearance under the CRZ Notification 2019; the proposal for a convention centre (which implies significant construction near the coastline) is environmentally contentious.
‣ Connection to the Great Nicobar Project: The Galathea Bay transhipment port + airport + township (Rs 72,000 crore) already has contentious environmental clearances; the Indira Point development is an additional proposal; together they represent a systematic development of India's strategically located southernmost island despite significant ecological concerns.

- The strategic rationale: Indira Point is ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST STRATEGICALLY LOCATED POINTS — it sits at the tip of the Andaman-Nicobar Islands chain, astride the India-Pacific sea lane junction, 90 nautical miles from Indonesia/Malacca Strait, within surveillance distance of the Bay of Bengal-Indian Ocean-South China Sea junction; the proposed convention centre and museum would: (a) assert India's physical presence at this strategic point; (b) develop tourism potential (extreme point tourism — similar to Kanyakumari); (c) support the military-use cases for Indira Point.
- The ecological sensitivity: Great Nicobar's southern tip is part of the Galathea-Nicobar Biosphere Reserve; it has coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves, leatherback sea turtle nesting beaches; the 2004 tsunami's geological uplift and subsidence altered the island's coastline; Shompen PVTG tribal homeland (covered July 4 notes); any development must navigate these ecological and tribal concerns.

UPSC ANGLE
• India's southernmost/extreme points: Southernmost: Indira Point (Great Nicobar, 6°4' N); Northernmost: Indira Col (disputed — in Siachen/Ladakh, ~37° N or Dhanushkoti if conventional northernmost in J&K); Easternmost: Kibithu (Arunachal Pradesh, ~97°E); Westernmost: Koteshwar (Gujarat, ~68°E); geographical knowledge of India's extreme points is standard Prelims content.

- **Indira Point** — India's southernmost point; Great Nicobar Island; 6°4' N, 93°41' E; 90 nautical miles from Indonesia (Sumatra); renamed from Pygmalion Point (1985); damaged by 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami; part of Galathea-Nicobar Biosphere Reserve; CRZ-IA sensitivity; strategic location near Malacca Strait approaches; proposed convention centre/museum under Great Nicobar development.

8. Vikram-1 Rocket: Diamond Jewellery Among Commercial Payloads

[TH] Page 6

GS 3: Space: Vikram-1; Skyroot Aerospace; private space; commercial launch; NewSpace India.

‣ Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1 rocket — India's first fully private launch vehicle to reach orbit — is preparing for its next commercial launch with an unusual payload combination: includes diamond jewellery items being sent to space for marketing purposes + nanosatellites + scientific experiments.
‣ Skyroot Aerospace: A Hyderabad-based space startup; founded 2018; backed by investors including GIC (Singapore), Peak XV (Sequoia India), Greenko; the first Indian private company to launch a rocket (Vikram-S suborbital test, November 2022 — India's first private rocket launch); Vikram-1 is their first orbital vehicle.
‣ Diamond jewellery in space: A jewellery brand (Surat-based, participating with diamond pieces) is taking advantage of the commercial launch opportunity to create 'space-flown' diamonds as a luxury marketing narrative — similar to how Antarctic or Himalayan branding creates premium positioning; the diamonds are not 'made in space' but flown to space and returned.
‣ India's private space sector: Since IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre) was created under the Department of Space in 2020, India has authorised 300+ private space entities; Skyroot, Agnikul Cosmos (using 3D-printed rocket engines), Pixxel (Earth observation satellites), and Dhruva Space are key players; the Vikram rocket family (Vikram-1, -2, -3 with increasing payload capacity) is Skyroot's product ladder.

- The NewSpace India opportunity: India's commercial space launch market was estimated at $6 billion annually (2025); India is well-positioned to capture share from: Europe (Ariane 6 reliability concerns); Russia (post-Ukraine sanctions); China (Western customers unwilling to use Chinese rockets); the competitive landscape is US SpaceX (Falcon 9 dominates at $2,700/kg to LEO) vs. India's Vikram (targeting $3,000-4,000/kg for small/medium payloads) vs. Japan's H3.

UPSC ANGLE
• IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre): Single-window authority for Indian private space sector; authorises launch vehicles, satellites, ground stations; promotes space-based startup ecosystem; connected to ISRO which now focuses on national strategic missions while private players take commercial launches.
• Skyroot Vikram family: Vikram-S (suborbital, first Indian private launch, Nov 2022); Vikram-1 (small satellite launcher, 480 kg to LEO); Vikram-2 (720 kg to LEO); Vikram-3 (planned, 800+ kg, reusable first stage). The family uses cryogenic engines (Dhawan-1 using liquid fuel) — a significant technology achievement.

- **Vikram-1 (Skyroot Aerospace)** — India's first privately developed orbital launch vehicle; Skyroot Aerospace, Hyderabad; 480 kg payload to LEO; follows Vikram-S (suborbital, November 2022 — India's first private rocket launch); uses indigenous cryogenic and liquid engines; commercial launch for nanosatellites and experimental payloads.

9. Bar Associations Refusing to Represent Accused — What Does the Law Say?

[TH] Page 10

GS 2: Polity: Right to legal representation; Bar Council of India; Bar Associations' resolutions; Article 22; Bar Council Rules.

‣ Multiple Bar Associations across India have recently passed resolutions refusing to provide legal representation to accused in certain categories of cases — most commonly: accused in rape cases, cases involving atrocities against minorities, or politically charged cases.
‣ The Palghar case precedent (March 2020): Two sadhus and their driver were lynched by a mob; accused were charged with murder; the local Bar Association initially passed a resolution refusing to defend the accused; after media attention, some lawyers eventually took up the case.
‣ The legal position: The Bar Council of India's Rules (under the Advocates Act 1961) provide that an advocate 'has a duty to accept any case at a fee consistent with his standing'; a Bar Association's collective resolution to refuse cases for certain categories is NOT legally binding on individual advocates.
‣ Right to representation: Article 22(1) — 'No person who is arrested shall be denied the right to consult, and to be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice'; this right INCLUDES the right to find a lawyer; if ALL advocates in an area collectively refuse, the state must provide legal aid (through NALSA/district legal aid authorities).

- Advocates Act 1961 and Bar Council Rules: Chapter II (Standards of Professional Conduct) — an advocate shall not refuse to appear in a court of law before which he/she practises; but the Rules also acknowledge an advocate's right to refuse a case 'for personal reasons'; the tension is between individual advocates' discretion and Bar Associations directing collective boycotts.
- SC's position: In multiple cases, the Supreme Court has held that collective Bar Association resolutions to boycott courts or refuse cases are illegal and contempt of court; the right to access justice (Article 21) cannot be vitiated by coordinated lawyer refusals; Bar Associations cannot dictate which cases individual advocates should or should not accept.
- The moral-legal tension: Many lawyers genuinely feel moral discomfort defending accused in cases involving heinous crimes (child abuse, gang rape, mass violence); this is a genuine ethical dilemma; the law's position is clear (everyone is entitled to legal representation) but the human reality of legal representation in morally difficult cases is complex.
- 📌 **Bar Council of India (BCI)** — Statutory body under Advocates Act 1961; regulates legal profession; sets standards of professional conduct; all advocates must be enrolled with a State Bar Council and are automatically members of BCI; BCI Rules mandate that advocates shall not collectively refuse to defend accused categories.

10. Media Performs 'Public Function': Delhi HC Judgment on Press Freedom

[IE] Page 12

GS 2: Polity: Press freedom; Delhi HC; media as public function; Right to Privacy; Article 19(1)(a); journalistic privilege.

‣ Delhi High Court ruling: Media organisations, when performing their role of informing the public (the 'public function' role), are subject to public accountability requirements including Right to Information-adjacent obligations — but their news-gathering, source protection, and editorial independence are protected under Article 19(1)(a).
‣ The case background: A defamation suit against a TV news channel; the defendant channel argued journalistic privilege (right to protect sources, right to report in public interest) should immunise it from certain disclosure requirements; the HC agreed that source protection is an implied journalistic privilege under Article 19(1)(a) but held that when media exercises its public function (broadcasting information to millions), it cannot escape accountability entirely.
‣ The 'public function' doctrine: When a private entity performs a public function (electricity distribution, public transport, media — which serves as the public's watchdog and information source), courts can impose accountability obligations that would not apply to purely private actors; this doctrine was used in R. Rajagopal v. State of Tamil Nadu (1994 SC) — 'Auto Shankar case' — which first established the privacy-press freedom balance in India.
‣ Press freedom and privacy: Right to Privacy (Article 21, Puttaswamy 2017) vs. Press freedom (Article 19(1)(a)); the HC held that both rights must coexist; media cannot claim blanket immunity from privacy obligations by invoking journalistic freedom, but individual journalists and sources have strong protection from compelled disclosure.

- Article 19(1)(a) and press freedom: The Constitution mentions only 'freedom of speech and expression' — not a specific 'freedom of press'; the press has no special constitutional rights not available to citizens generally under Article 19(1)(a); however, courts have progressively recognised that press freedom requires special protections — source confidentiality, prior restraint limits, journalistic privilege — as essential to meaningful expression in a democracy.
- 📌 **R. Rajagopal v. State of Tamil Nadu (1994)** — 'Auto Shankar case' — landmark SC judgment establishing: (a) individuals have a right to privacy of personal information; (b) press has a right to publish information on public matters of interest; (c) state cannot prior-restrain publication; (d) balance between privacy and press freedom must be struck case-by-case; established the privacy-press freedom constitutional framework.

11. Missing Link Landslide — Pune-Mumbai Traffic Disrupted

[IE] Page 9

GS 1: Geography: Western Ghats; landslides; Pune-Mumbai expressway; Khandala Ghat; monsoon hazards; disaster management.

‣ A major landslide damaged the 'Missing Link' section of the Pune-Mumbai Expressway on the Khandala Ghat (Western Ghats, Maharashtra) — causing significant traffic disruption.
‣ The Missing Link: The 13-km stretch of the Pune-Mumbai Expressway that passes through the most geologically unstable part of the Khandala-Khopoli Ghat; this section has faced multiple landslides, rock falls, and slope failures historically; it's called the 'Missing Link' in highway planning because it was the last section to be completed and remains the most challenging to maintain.
‣ Why Khandala Ghat is prone to landslides: The Western Ghats in this region are made of Deccan Trap basalt (volcanic rock, highly jointed and fractured); heavy monsoon rainfall saturates the rock joints; the steep 1:7 gradient; the highway cut into the hillside has exposed vulnerable slope faces; excess water seeping through horizontal rock joints causes slope failure.
‣ Economic impact: The Pune-Mumbai Expressway carries $1 billion+ daily economic activity; the Pune-Mumbai corridor is India's most economically active; landslide-caused disruptions add billions to logistics costs, delay pharmaceutical and auto component supply chains (both key industries on this corridor).

- India's landslide vulnerability: India has the world's highest landslide frequency (2,200+ events/year, ISRO's Bhunidhi portal data); major zones: Western Ghats (Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala), Eastern Himalayas (Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam), Western Himalayas (HP, Uttarakhand), Northeast India (Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland); the 2026 monsoon's intensity and the Western Ghats' vulnerability made this landslide predictable.
- Wayanad and landslide risk: July 2024's Wayanad landslides (Kerala, 230+ deaths) were the immediate trigger for the 6th Western Ghats ESA draft notification; the Missing Link landslide (Maharashtra) is a reminder that the FULL Western Ghats from Kerala to Maharashtra faces this landslide risk — the ESA's conservation purpose is partly about reducing landslide risk by preserving forest cover.
- 📌 **Deccan Trap Basalt** — Volcanic rock formation covering much of Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Goa; formed 65-66 million years ago (coinciding with the Cretaceous-Paleogene extinction event); highly jointed and fractured; prone to landslides when water saturates the joints during heavy monsoon; the rock underlying the Khandala Ghat section of Pune-Mumbai Expressway.

PRELIMS IN FOCUS

INS Mahendragiri + P-17A Fleet Complete	INS Mahendragiri (F38): Commissioned July 11, 2026, Visakhapatnam. 6th and final P-17A (Nilgiri-class) stealth frigate. Named after: Mahendragiri mountain range, Eastern Ghats (Odisha-AP border). Built by: MDL (Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd) Mumbai. Designed by: WDB (Warship Design Bureau), Indian Navy. Indigenous content: 75%+. Weapons: BrahMos (8 missiles) + Barak-8/MRSAM (32-cell VLS) + Torpedoes + 76mm OTO Melara gun + AK-630 CIWS. Propulsion: CODOG (GE LM2500 gas turbine + diesels); 28+ knots; 5,000 nm range. P-17A fleet completion: INS Nilgiri (Jan 2025) + INS Udaygiri (Aug 2025) + INS Himgiri (Aug 2025) + INS Taragiri (Apr 2026) + INS Dunagiri (Jun 21, 2026) + INS Mahendragiri (Jul 11, 2026). 4 at MDL, 3 at GRSE Kolkata (7 total including Dunagiri from GRSE). P-17A vs. P-17 Shivalik: 32-cell VLS (vs. 8-cell); enhanced stealth; better CMS; greater automation.
UNSC + India's History + G4 Key Facts	UNSC: 15 members — 5 permanent (USA, UK, France, Russia, China, all with veto) + 10 non-permanent (elected by UNGA, 2-year terms, 5 per year). June 3, 2026 UNSC elections (for 2027-28): Austria, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago, Zimbabwe elected. India's UNSC history: 8 terms as NPM — 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85, 1991-92, 2011-12, 2021-22. India's next bid: 2028-29 (would be 9th term). India's UNSC presidency: August 2021 + December 2022 (most recent term). G4: India + Germany + Japan + Brazil; seek permanent

	seats. UfC (Coffee Club): Italy, Pakistan, Mexico, South Korea, Argentina — oppose new permanent seats. Africa Group: Ezulwini Consensus demands 2 permanent African seats. UNSC Reform: Requires Article 108 amendment (2/3 UNGA + all 5 P5 ratification); China blocks G4 expansion. India's peacekeeping: 200,000+ personnel across 49 missions since 1950 — largest cumulative contributor.
Dalai Lama + India-Tibet Policy	14th Dalai Lama: Born July 6, 1935, Lhamo Thondup; Taktser village, Amdo, Tibet; identified as Dalai Lama's reincarnation at age 2; enthroned 1950; fled Tibet 1959 (after Chinese crackdown on Tibetan uprising). Dharamsala exile: Lives in McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh since 1959; Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) = Tibetan Government-in-Exile, also based in Dharamsala. India's Tibet policy: 'One China' policy (Tibet is part of China); allows Dalai Lama + CTA to operate in India; PM's annual birthday greetings to Dalai Lama is a regular practice. China's objection: Opposes any official Indian contact with the Dalai Lama. Succession: Dalai Lama may not reincarnate in Tibet under Chinese control; China insists on 'Golden Urn' selection process; India supports Dalai Lama's religious freedom in succession. 91st Birthday: July 6, 2026.
India's Extreme Geographic Points	Southernmost: Indira Point (Great Nicobar Island), 6°4'N, 93°41'E — 90 nautical miles from Sumatra, Indonesia; renamed from Pygmalion Point (1985); damaged in 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami; now proposed for convention centre/museum development as part of Great Nicobar Holistic Development Project (Rs 72,000 crore). Northernmost (conventional): Dhanushkoti or Indira Col — contested; Siachen Glacier's northern tip is India's northernmost controlled point. Easternmost: Kibithu, Arunachal Pradesh (~97°E). Westernmost: Koteshwar, Gujarat (~68°E). CRZ-IA at Indira Point: Ecologically Sensitive Area within CRZ (Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 2019); development requires MoEFCC clearance. Galathea-Nicobar Biosphere Reserve: Covers Great Nicobar; coral reefs, mangroves, leatherback turtle nesting; Shompen PVTG habitat.
Census 2026 + Caste Column + SECC	India's Census: Due in 2021, delayed (COVID + governance reasons); now 'Census 2026'; decennial count; conducted by Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India (ORGI) under Ministry of Home Affairs. Census includes: demographics, housing, migration, amenities, disability, religion, language; does NOT include caste for non-SC/ST (historically). Caste Census demand: Not conducted since 1931 (British India); SECC 2011 collected caste data but never officially released (4,000+ caste name variations; data quality issues). Census 2026 rehearsal: Second phase rehearsal has 'open column' for caste — households self-report; significant departure from previous Census format. Bihar caste survey (2023): State-level; OBCs = 27.13% + EBCs = 36.01% = 63.14% total; politically significant data. Mandal Commission (1980): Used 1931 data to estimate 52% OBC population; its reservation recommendations (27% for OBCs) were implemented in 1990 (VP Singh government); the 52% estimate may be outdated. Implications: Delimitation + reservation recalibration + political mobilisation.

MAPPING — PLACES IN NEWS

Place	Why in News / Key Facts
Indira Point, Great Nicobar Island	India's southernmost tip (6°4'N, 93°41'E); 90 nautical miles from Sumatra; proposed convention centre/museum; part of Great Nicobar Holistic Development Project (Rs 72,000 crore); CRZ-IA sensitivity; damaged in 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami; within Galathea-Nicobar Biosphere Reserve; Shompen PVTG tribal territory.
Prambanan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia	PM Modi visited July 6-7; 9th century CE UNESCO World Heritage Site; largest Hindu temple complex in Southeast Asia (~240 temples, Trimurti = Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva); India announced joint conservation project; parallels with Ajanta-Ellora and Mamallapuram in stylistic heritage.
Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh	INS Mahendragiri commissioning ceremony on July 11, 2026; Eastern Naval Command HQ is at Visakhapatnam; Naval Science and Technological Laboratory

	(NSTL) is here; India's submarine training facility (INS Satavahana) is here; Mahendragiri = Eastern Ghats mountain range in AP-Odisha.
Mahendragiri mountain range (Eastern Ghats)	The frigate INS Mahendragiri is named after this range; crosses Odisha-AP border; highest peak at 1,501 metres near Parlakhemundi; located in Gajapati district, Odisha; biodiverse area; near Chipko movement-equivalent tribal forest protection traditions.
Khandala Ghat, Maharashtra	Site of the 'Missing Link' landslide (Pune-Mumbai Expressway); between Lonavala (top) and Khopoli (bottom); Deccan Trap basalt geology; steep gradient (1:7); highest landslide-risk section of one of India's busiest economic corridors; requires annual slope stabilisation work by NHAI.
Dharamsala (McLeod Ganj), Himachal Pradesh	Residence of the 14th Dalai Lama since 1959; Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) headquarters; in Kangra district, at the foot of the Dhauladhar ranges; known as 'Little Lhasa'; India's acceptance of the CTA and Dalai Lama has been a consistent China-India tension point.
Jakarta, Indonesia	PM Modi's first stop on three-nation Indo-Pacific tour (July 6-8); Modi-Prabowo bilateral; HAL ALH helicopter sale; ONGC Videsh-Masela gas block; UPI-QRIS integration announced; Jakarta = Indonesia's national capital (new capital Nusantara under construction in East Borneo); Indonesia's largest city.
Taj Mahal, Agra, Uttar Pradesh	Allahabad HC (Prayagraj) sought Centre + ASI responses on a survey plea — a petition asking the Archaeological Survey of India to survey the Taj Mahal complex for alleged sealed rooms; the petition claims sealed rooms contain Hindu temple remnants; HC has sought responses without ordering any survey; Taj Mahal = UNESCO WHS (1983); built 1631-48 by Shah Jahan for Mumtaz Mahal.

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