UPSC with SAURABH KAUSHIK

Current Affairs Notes · 23 June 2026

The Hindu · Indian Express | 8 Topics | GS 2 · 3 + Prelims + Mapping

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GS PAPER 2 — International Relations · Governance

1. Keir Starmer Resigns as UK PM — Britain's 7th Prime Minister in 10 Years

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GS 2: International Relations: United Kingdom; Westminster Parliamentary System; Political Stability; Brexit; India-UK CETA implications; comparative governance.

- June 22, 2026: UK PM Keir Starmer announced his resignation outside 10 Downing Street after losing the confidence of his parliamentary party.
- 'I have spoken to His Majesty the King this morning to inform him of my decision. I will remain in post as PM until the contest is complete. The new leader will be in place before Parliament returns in September.'
- Succession: Andy Burnham (ex-Greater Manchester Mayor, newly elected MP for Makerfield June 18) is runaway favourite; Wes Streeting endorsed Burnham.
- Context: Britain's 7th PM in 10 years — Cameron, May, Johnson, Truss, Sunak, Starmer, and now incoming Burnham.

The Starmer Saga: Why He Resigned

- **Reform UK's rise:** Nigel Farage's hard-right Reform UK party won big in May 2026 local elections — taking hundreds of Labour seats; Labour lost the working-class Northern England vote to Reform; polling showed Labour on track for a catastrophic defeat at the next general election.
- **Ministerial resignations cascade:** Health Secretary Wes Streeting resigned May 14, 2026 ('clear that Starmer will not lead us into the next election'); Defence Secretary John Healey resigned June 11 over the Defence Investment Plan; Chief of Staff Morgan McSweeney resigned February 2026 after Peter Mandelson (UK Ambassador to US) appointment disaster.
- **Mandelson-Epstein scandal:** New Labour figure Peter Mandelson was appointed UK Ambassador to the US in December 2024; in September 2025, the Epstein files revealed Mandelson's relationship with Jeffrey Epstein; Starmer sacked Mandelson, but the damage to his credibility was severe.
- **Makerfield by-election catalyst:** Starmer's rival Andy Burnham entered Parliament through the Makerfield by-election (June 18, 2026) — triggered specifically to allow Burnham to contest the leadership; Burnham's overwhelming win (25,000 votes, 9,200 majority) made Starmer's position untenable.
- **Net approval -46%:** Starmer's approval rating averaged -46% by November 2025 — worse than most PMs in British polling history; 64% of voters said Labour managed the NHS badly; 67% disapproved of immigration policy.

Starmer's Achievements in <2 Years

- India-UK CETA: Signed July 2025; effective July 15, 2026 — the most significant UK trade deal post-Brexit; a genuine diplomatic achievement that outlasts his premiership.
- National Wealth Fund: Established a £7.3 billion National Wealth Fund for green energy investments.
- Windfall Tax: Extended the windfall profits tax on oil companies; funded NHS staffing increases.
- UK-EU reset: Achieved improved UK-EU defence cooperation framework (without rejoining Single Market).

Why Burnham Is the Frontrunner

- Andy Burnham (born 1970, Leigh, Greater Manchester): Former MP (2001-17); Secretary of State for Health under Brown; ran for Labour leadership in 2010 and 2015 (came 2nd both times); Mayor of Greater Manchester 2017-2026 — transformed Greater Manchester's transport (the Bee Network integrated bus/tram/bike system), homelessness services, and housing policy.
- Burnham's political brand: A 'one nation' Labour figure — appeals to both traditional working-class Labour voters (lost to Reform) and metropolitan progressives; his 'for the many' rhetoric is inclusive without being divisive.
- Context: He entered Parliament 1 week before Starmer resigned — the fastest transition from by-election to leadership favourite in modern British history.

India-UK CETA in This Context

- Despite Starmer's resignation, the India-UK CETA remains effective from July 15, 2026 — it is a treaty obligation not affected by who is PM. The new PM (Burnham) will be the first to preside over the CETA's operation.
- India-UK strategic relationship: Burnham's Greater Manchester has significant Indian diaspora; he is expected to maintain strong India ties.

> **UPSC ANGLE**
> • UPSC perspective: The Starmer resignation illustrates: Westminster parliamentary accountability (PM can be removed without a general election); the Reform UK phenomenon (far-right populism in mature democracies — comparable to Trump's Republican capture); party vs. people in parliamentary systems.
> • India-UK CETA continuity: Trade agreements survive government changes in Westminster — unlike presidential systems where executive agreements can be reversed; the CETA is a ratified treaty.
> • Britain's 7th PM in 10 Years: Cameron (2010-16), May (2016-19), Johnson (2019-22), Truss (2022, 50 days), Sunak (2022-24), Starmer (2024-26), Burnham (2026-) — a remarkable political instability for a G7 democracy.

- **Westminster Parliamentary System** — UK's system where the PM is the leader of the party that commands a majority in the House of Commons; PM can be replaced by a party leadership election without a general election; the outgoing PM 'remains in post as caretaker' until a successor is chosen.
- **Reform UK** — Hard-right populist party led by Nigel Farage; positioned to the right of the Conservative Party; won big in May 2026 local elections; drawing working-class Labour voters concerned about immigration and living costs.

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- **Andy Burnham** — Incoming UK Labour leader and PM; ex-Greater Manchester Mayor; built the Bee Network integrated transport system; known for 'one nation Labour' politics; first entered Parliament 2001; became MP again June 18, 2026 (Makerfield by-election).

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2. What Makes Replacing a UK PM So Simple? The Constitutional Process

[IE] Page Online

GS 2: Comparative Polity: Westminster System; Constitutional Conventions; Written vs. Unwritten Constitution; Parliamentary vs. Presidential Systems.

‣ Indian Express explains how a UK PM can be replaced without any formal constitutional amendment, referendum, or even parliamentary vote — purely through party process.
‣ The UK's 'unwritten constitution': Unlike India's written Constitution (with elaborate amendment procedures), the UK relies on constitutional conventions, statutes, common law, and parliamentary practice — a living, adaptable system.
‣ The PM replacement process: (1) PM loses party confidence → (2) PM informs the King of resignation → (3) Party's NEC sets leadership election timeline → (4) Contest/no-contest → (5) New leader seeks audience with King → (6) King appoints new PM — all without Parliament voting on the matter.
‣ India comparison: India's PM can only be removed by a no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha (Article 75(3)) — requiring a floor test; the UK process is entirely internal to the governing party.

The UK's Unwritten Constitution

- The UK has no single written constitutional document; instead, the constitutional framework consists of: Acts of Parliament (Magna Carta 1215, Bill of Rights 1689, Parliament Acts 1911/1949, Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 — repealed); constitutional conventions (PM must command House of Commons majority, Cabinet collective responsibility); common law; royal prerogatives (the King's formal powers, exercised on advice); and EU Treaties (now replaced).
- Constitutional conventions: Unwritten rules that are politically binding but not legally enforceable; e.g., 'The King appoints the PM who commands a majority' is a convention — nowhere in statute, but always followed.
- Role of the King in PM appointment: When a PM resigns, the King invites the person most likely to command a Commons majority to form a government; in practice, this is always the newly elected party leader. The King does NOT vote, does NOT refuse (convention of constitutional monarchy).

Why India Is Different

- Article 75(3): The Council of Ministers is 'collectively responsible' to the Lok Sabha; if the government loses a no-confidence motion, the PM must resign; alternatively, the PM can advise dissolution and seek a fresh mandate from voters.
- Party vote vs. parliamentary vote: In the UK, a party can change its leader (and therefore its PM) through an internal party vote that never comes before Parliament; in India, the PM must maintain the confidence of the Lok Sabha — a parliamentary (not party) accountability.
- Coalition implications: India is currently a coalition (NDA); if the ruling party's leader resigned, the coalition's continued majority would need reassessment; in the UK's majoritarian system, Labour's internal leadership change doesn't require reassessing parliamentary arithmetic (Labour still has a majority with Burnham).

UPSC ANGLE
• India's Article 75: Connects with Articles 74 (Council of Ministers), 75 (appointment, tenure, accountability of Ministers), 85 (dissolution of Lok Sabha); the PM's constitutional position is far more formally defined than in the UK.
• Collective Responsibility: A constitutional convention in both UK and India — the Cabinet must present a united front; ministers who cannot support Cabinet decisions must resign. This convention worked imperfectly in Starmer's case — multiple ministers resigned publicly before the PM did.

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• Fixed-term vs. Discretionary: UK's Fixed-term Parliaments Act (2011, repealed 2022) tried to create US-style fixed election dates; the repeal restored PM's discretion to call elections within a 5-year maximum; India has fixed 5-year Lok Sabha terms (Article 83) subject to dissolution.

- **Constitutional Conventions** — Unwritten political rules that are politically binding but not legally enforceable; govern how constitutional powers are exercised; essential part of the UK's uncodified constitutional framework.
- **Royal Prerogative** — Ancient powers of the Crown (King) exercised without parliamentary approval; in practice exercised on advice of PM and Cabinet; includes appointing PM, dissolving Parliament (now restricted), declaring war.

GS PAPER 2 — Governance · Disaster Management

3. 15 Die in UP Building Fire — Victims Mostly Students; Fire Safety Laws Examined

[TH] Page 1

GS 2 / GS 3: Governance: Disaster Management; Building Safety Regulations; Fire Safety Laws; Model Building Bye-Laws; Urban Governance.

‣ June 22, 2026: A fire broke out in a 4-storey private coaching institute-cum-hostel building in Hazratganj area, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh — 15 people died, mostly students (aged 18-22) preparing for competitive exams.
‣ Cause: Electrical short circuit in the building's ground-floor server room; fire spread rapidly due to: no sprinkler system; locked emergency exits; single staircase; combustible interior decoration (plywood partitions, foam mattresses); no fire alarm.
‣ Building violations: The building had no valid fire NOC (No Objection Certificate) from the UP Fire Service; it was operating a student hostel in a mixed-use commercial zone without residential conversion permission.
‣ Pattern: This is the 4th major coaching institute / student hostel fire in UP in 3 years; earlier: Surat coaching centre fire (2019, 20+ deaths); Rajkot game zone fire (2024, 27 deaths); Delhi coaching institute flooding (July 2024, 3 deaths).

The Regulatory Framework (and Its Failures)

- Model Building Bye-Laws 2016 (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs): These are model regulations that states are recommended to adopt; they specify: mandatory fire escapes; minimum staircase widths; maximum floor area without sprinklers; emergency lighting; fire alarms. States adopt and modify these — UP's adoption has been partial and enforcement has been weak.
- National Building Code (NBC) 2016: Bureau of Indian Standards' comprehensive code for construction; Chapter 4 covers fire safety — mandatory fire doors, fire breaks, smoke detection, sprinklers above certain floor areas. The NBC has not been made legally binding nationwide — it requires state legislation to be enforceable.
- Fire NOC: Required from state fire services before occupancy; grants permission after inspection of fire safety equipment, exits, and structural compliance; the Lucknow building had no valid NOC — the local municipal corporation and police had failed to enforce this.
- National Disaster Management Act 2005 (NDMA): Under this Act, the National Disaster Management Authority sets guidelines for fire safety; the guidelines for urban buildings and hostels are comprehensive but depend on state enforcement machinery.

The Student Housing Safety Gap

- India has 4.5 crore+ students in higher education (AISHE 2024-25); a large proportion live in private hostels, paying guest accommodations, and coaching institute residential facilities that are entirely

unregulated — they fall between the regulatory cracks (not proper hotels, not university hostels, not residential apartments).

- No specific 'Student Hostel Safety Standard' exists in India; the MoE (Ministry of Education) has draft guidelines but they are not mandatory; the UGC (University Grants Commission) has hostel safety standards for university hostels but no jurisdiction over private coaching hostels.
- The Kota problem writ large: Kota (Rajasthan) has 150,000+ coaching students in private hostels — the city has strengthened safety regulations post-SC NTF report (suicide barriers), but fire safety remains inadequately enforced.

UPSC ANGLE

• NBC 2016 and BIS Standards: The National Building Code is a BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) standard — which ties directly to the 'No one should own the law' article (page 11, same date): BIS standards are not freely publicly available; architects and builders must BUY the NBC; this creates a barrier to compliance.

• Article 21 and safe housing: SC has held that the right to safe living conditions is part of Article 21 (right to life); the state's failure to enforce fire safety standards in student housing is arguably a violation of this fundamental right.

• NDMA's role: The National Disaster Management Authority's urban fire safety guidelines should be made MANDATORY by law (via amendment to NDMA Act) rather than advisory — a key reform recommendation.

- **National Building Code (NBC) 2016** — Bureau of Indian Standards' comprehensive construction code; Chapter 4 = fire safety standards; not legally binding nationwide — requires state legislation; key gap in India's building safety architecture.
- **Fire NOC (No Objection Certificate)** — Certificate from state fire services certifying that a building meets fire safety standards; required for commercial and public buildings; essential before occupancy certificate; the Lucknow building lacked a valid NOC.
- **Model Building Bye-Laws 2016 (MoHUA)** — Model regulations for states to adopt; specify fire escapes, sprinkler requirements, staircase standards; adoption by states is inconsistent; enforcement even in adopting states is weak.

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4. No One Should Own the Law: Why Government Standards Should Be Public

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GS 2: Governance: Consumer Rights; BIS Standards; Regulatory Transparency; Right to Information; Rule of Law.

‣ The Hindu editorial: India's Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) sells its standards documents — the National Building Code (NBC), food safety standards, electrical safety standards, etc. — at prices ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 15,000 per document.

‣ The argument: When the law (or quasi-law — mandatory standards) is only accessible to those who can afford to pay for it, the rule of law is fundamentally compromised; compliance becomes a privilege of those with money.

‣ Context: The Lucknow building fire (page 1, same issue) — where a building violated multiple NBC provisions — raises the question: how can a small coaching institute owner be expected to comply with standards they cannot afford to access?

‣ International comparison: ISO (International Organization for Standardization) sells standards globally; US NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) offers some standards free; EU standards (EN-series) are also sold; but India's standards — which are legally mandatory in many contexts — should be freely accessible.

- BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards): India's national standards body; established under BIS Act 2016 (replaced IS Act 1986); issues standards for products, services, processes, and systems; its ISI mark (mandatory for 350+ product categories) is the most visible enforcement mechanism. Standards cover: food safety, construction, electrical goods, toys, automobiles, pharmaceuticals.
- The paywalled law problem: The National Building Code (NBC) costs Rs 5,000+ per copy; a small contractor building a hostel in Tier 2/3 cities is unlikely to have paid for and read the NBC. Yet they are legally expected to comply. This creates a compliance gap where the law is practically inaccessible to those most needing to comply.

- RTI and BIS standards: Multiple RTI applications have sought free access to BIS standards; BIS has argued that standards are 'copyrighted' and revenue from their sale funds standards development. The editorial argues this is wrong — mandatory regulatory standards are quasi-legislation and cannot be paywalled.
- The solution: Mandatory standards that have legal backing (under Quality Control Orders, NBC, Food Safety Standards) should be freely available on the government's public domain (like legislation on India Code or e-Gazette); only voluntary/advisory standards can continue to be sold.

UPSC ANGLE

• Quality Control Orders (QCOs): Orders under the BIS Act making specific standards mandatory (e.g., mandatory BIS certification for toys, electronics, helmets); violating a QCO is a criminal offence. If the standard itself is paywalled, the rule of law is inequitable.
• RTI and standards access: The right to access information about public regulatory frameworks is implicit in the right to a fair legal system; paywalling mandatory safety standards arguably conflicts with the RTI Act's objective of transparency and accountability.

- **BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards)** — India's national standards body; BIS Act 2016; issues ISI marks; mandatory for 350+ product categories; publishes National Building Code, food safety standards; sells standards documents that are mandatory to comply with.
- **Quality Control Order (QCO)** — Issued under the BIS Act making specific standards mandatory for products in India; violating a QCO = criminal offence; currently covers 350+ product categories including toys, helmets, electrical goods, food products.

5. Better Monitoring of Sale of Banned Drugs Is Essential

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GS 2 / GS 3: Governance: Drug Regulation; CDSCO; Scheduled H1 Drugs; Fixed-Dose Combinations; Pharmacy Regulation; Public Health.

‣ The Hindu editorial: India's system for monitoring the sale of banned or restricted drugs is severely inadequate — pharmacies routinely sell banned Fixed-Dose Combinations (FDCs), Schedule H1 drugs without prescription, and unapproved drugs.
‣ Context: CDSCO has banned 350+ FDCs (Fixed-Dose Combination drugs) since 2018 — but surveys show many banned FDCs are still available at pharmacies across India.
‣ The Schedule K loophole (partial fix): The June 2026 amendment removed codeine-containing cough syrups from Schedule K exemption — but many other problematic drugs remain available without proper oversight in rural areas.
‣ The digital pharmacy gap: Online pharmacies (1mg, PharmEasy, Netmeds) have grown dramatically; they often dispense prescription drugs without verifying prescriptions — a major regulatory enforcement challenge.

- FDC (Fixed-Dose Combination): A single tablet/capsule combining 2+ active drugs; some FDCs are medically rational (e.g., HIV triple therapy); many are irrational (combining unrelated drugs to enable chemists to sell more per prescription). CDSCO banned 350+ irrational FDCs in 2018 (Drugs and Cosmetics Act review) — including popular brands that doctors had been prescribing for decades.
- Monitoring gap: India has ~11 lakh licensed pharmacies; state drug controllers have ~3,500 inspectors nationally; one inspector for every 300+ pharmacies; meaningful surveillance is impossible at this scale without technology.
- Digital solutions: CDSCO's e-Pharmacy portal (launched 2021) requires online pharmacies to verify prescriptions digitally; Aadhaar-linked e-prescription (under discussion) would create a national prescription audit trail — essential for Schedule H and H1 drug monitoring.
- Jan Aushadhi Kendras: Government's generic medicine outlets (10,000+) as the regulated alternative; these dispensaries operate under stricter oversight and sell only approved drugs at lower prices.

UPSC ANGLE

• Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940 + 2022 Rules: CDSCO operates under this Act; amendments have added digital pharmacy rules, but enforcement is state responsibility — and most states lack the inspector capacity to enforce.
• Pharmacist shortage: India has ~3 lakh licensed pharmacists vs. 11 lakh pharmacies — many pharmacies operate without a qualified pharmacist; this is the front-line enforcement failure for prescription drug monitoring.

- **FDC (Fixed-Dose Combination)** — A drug product combining two or more active ingredients; irrational FDCs offer no therapeutic advantage but may cause harm; CDSCO banned 350+ irrational FDCs in 2018; many remain available due to weak enforcement.
- **CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation)** — India's national drug regulator; approves drugs, sets standards, bans harmful drugs; under Ministry of Health; coordinates with State Drug Control Authorities for enforcement.

GS PAPER 3 — Technology · Environment · Economy

6. CRED Founder Kunal Shah Named WhatsApp Global CEO — First Indian to Head the Platform

[TH] Page 12

GS 3: Science and Technology: Digital Economy; Social Media; Fintech; India's Tech Ecosystem; Data Localisation; Competition Law.

‣ June 22, 2026: Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced CRED founder Kunal Shah will join Meta as WhatsApp's next global CEO — the first Indian to lead WhatsApp.
‣ Alongside: Meta is investing $900 million in CRED (20% minority stake) — valuing CRED at $4.5 billion.
‣ Shah's background: 42 years old; born Ahmedabad, raised Mumbai; philosophy graduate Wilson College; MBA dropout; co-founded FreeCharge (2010, sold to Snapdeal for $400M+, then to Axis Bank); founded CRED (2018).
‣ Succeeds: Will Cathcart (WhatsApp head since 2019, who scaled it to 3 billion users + launched Communities, Channels, AI features).

CRED and the Meta Deal

- CRED: Founded 2018; rewards credit card bill-payers with exclusive offers and experiences; expanded to payments (CRED Pay), personal loans (CRED Cash), car insurance, wealth management, credit cards, and commerce. 17 million members; profitable quarter in 2026.
- Meta's $900 million investment: 20% stake in CRED at $4.5 billion post-money valuation; the strategic logic — Meta wants to integrate WhatsApp Pay into CRED's fintech ecosystem; India is WhatsApp's largest market (500+ million users); India is also the world's most active UPI payment market. The combination of WhatsApp's reach and CRED's fintech capabilities is powerful.
- Shah's WhatsApp vision: Shah has been a prominent public commentator on WhatsApp's unrealised potential — particularly in India: WhatsApp-native financial services (insurance, loans, investments); WhatsApp as an e-commerce platform (Meta has piloted 'WhatsApp Business' with 200M+ global users); AI-powered WhatsApp agents for personalised services.

What This Means for India

- WhatsApp Pay: Currently operational in India with NPCI approval; limited to UPI-linked bank accounts; Shah's appointment signals aggressive expansion of WhatsApp Pay in India — potentially challenging Google Pay, PhonePe, and Paytm.
- Data localisation: WhatsApp's data practices in India are under RBI and MeitY scrutiny; Shah (as an Indian entrepreneur) is expected to be more attuned to Indian regulatory concerns, potentially smoothing WhatsApp's compliance pathway.
- Competition and CCI: WhatsApp's combination with CRED's fintech capabilities raises potential CCI (Competition Commission of India) concerns — bundling of dominant messaging platform (WhatsApp) with financial services. CCI's market definition analysis will be critical.

- DPDP Act 2023: WhatsApp's data practices — particularly end-to-end encryption and metadata — will need to comply with India's DPDP framework under the new leadership.

UPSC ANGLE

• India's tech ecosystem boost: Kunal Shah's WhatsApp appointment demonstrates that Indian tech entrepreneurs are now operating at the highest global leadership levels — not just as service providers to global tech (as Indian IT originally did) but as strategy leaders of the world's largest platforms.

• WhatsApp's commercial potential: 3 billion global users; messaging dominant in India, Brazil, Indonesia; the shift from messaging to financial services, healthcare, and e-commerce is the 'super-app' strategy; WeChat (China's WhatsApp equivalent) achieved this for Tencent — Shah's task is to replicate it in democratic, multi-regulatory environments.

- **CRED** — Indian fintech company (founded 2018, Bengaluru); rewards credit card bill-payers; 17 million members; expanded to payments, lending, insurance, wealth management; valued at $4.5 billion (post Meta investment June 2026).
- **WhatsApp Pay** — UPI-linked payment feature within WhatsApp; operational in India with NPCI approval; limited market share vs. Google Pay, PhonePe; poised for aggressive expansion under Kunal Shah's leadership.
- **Super-App** — A mobile application providing multiple services (messaging, payments, e-commerce, health, transport) within a single platform; WeChat (Tencent, China) is the archetype; WhatsApp's expansion under Shah is aimed at becoming India's super-app.

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7. Reliance Communications and Telegram's 'Global' Blocking — BGP Analysis

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GS 3 / GS 2: Technology: BGP Hijacking; Internet Infrastructure; Platform Regulation; GS 2: Governance — Section 69A IT Act; Internet Shutdowns.

‣ The Hindu analysis of the technical claim made by Telegram CEO Pavel Durov: that India's Telegram block involved 'BGP hijacking' that affected Telegram users globally.

‣ Reliance Communications (RCom) — now in bankruptcy but still holding some network assets — was identified in Durov's claims as potentially connected to the BGP routing anomaly.

‣ MeitY's position: India used standard DNS blocking and IP-level blocking under Section 69A; any BGP anomaly was a technical implementation glitch, NOT deliberate hijacking.

‣ The technical analysis: Multiple internet monitoring services (RIPE NCC's RIPE Atlas, Cloudflare Radar, BGPmon) detected unusual BGP announcements from Indian ISP infrastructure during the June 16-22 Telegram block — consistent with ISPs implementing IP blocks using route announcement modifications.

BGP and Internet Routing: The Technical Background

- BGP (Border Gateway Protocol): The internet's routing protocol — determines how data packets travel from source to destination across 70,000+ autonomous networks worldwide. Each autonomous system (AS) announces via BGP which IP addresses it can reach. Internet routing is essentially a global BGP-based consensus system.
- How India's block worked technically: India's DOT (Dept of Telecommunications) issued blocking instructions to ISPs (Jio, Airtel, BSNL, etc.) under Section 69A; ISPs implemented blocks by: DNS filtering (most common); IP route withdrawal (removing Telegram's IP ranges from their routing tables); in some cases, BGP route modification (announcing Telegram's IPs as unreachable or routing them to a null destination).
- The 'global bleed' concern: If a major Indian ISP used a BGP announcement modification to block Telegram's IPs — and if that announcement propagated to international BGP peers — international traffic destined for Telegram could have been mis-routed. This is the 'BGP hijacking' Durov alleged.
- RPKI (Resource Public Key Infrastructure): The solution — allows IP address owners (like Telegram) to cryptographically sign their routing announcements; any forged or modified BGP announcement would be rejected; RPKI adoption is growing but not universal.

The Regulatory and Policy Implications

- India's Section 69A blocking infrastructure: As India blocks more platforms (TikTok, Chinese apps, Telegram), the technical infrastructure for implementing blocks must be mature enough to avoid unintended international effects. BGP-level blocks are powerful but risky — DNS and IP blocking are safer.
- Accountability gap: India's Section 69A orders are confidential — even the target (Telegram) cannot see the order or challenge it in advance; Durov's BGP hijacking claim cannot be independently verified because the order and its technical implementation are not public.

UPSC ANGLE

• Internet governance: India's Section 69A blocking mechanism operates without an independent judicial check (it's an executive action); the Shreya Singhal case (2015) established that blocking orders must have procedural safeguards but did not require judicial pre-approval.

• Telegram's counter-claim: Durov's BGP hijacking allegation, even if partly true (ISP implementation error rather than deliberate hijacking), serves a strategic purpose — it frames India's block as internationally harmful, building sympathy in global tech/freedom networks.

- **BGP (Border Gateway Protocol)** — The routing protocol of the internet; determines how networks announce reachability of IP addresses; vulnerable to 'hijacking' where false route announcements misdirect traffic; RPKI is the security solution.
- **RPKI (Resource Public Key Infrastructure)** — Cryptographic framework allowing IP address owners to sign BGP route announcements; prevents unauthorised BGP announcements; growing adoption by major ISPs and internet exchanges; would prevent BGP hijacking concerns in platform blocking.

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8. Western Ghats: What Is the ESA Plan for Conservation, Why States Are Opposing It

[IE] Page Online

GS 3: Environment: Western Ghats; ESA; Biodiversity Hotspot; Gadgil Committee; Kasturirangan Committee; Centre-State Relations; Tribal Livelihood.

‣ Indian Express deep-dive (June 23): Explaining the full Western Ghats ESA plan and the reasons different states oppose it.

‣ Status: 6th draft notification covers 56,825 sq km (37% of Ghats, reduced from Kasturirangan's 60,000 sq km) across 6 states; Gujarat and Goa are agreeing to notification; Maharashtra near agreement; Kerala and Karnataka have fundamental objections.

‣ Kerala's objection: ~13,000 sq km of Kerala's territory in the proposed ESA has dense human settlement — 500,000+ people in affected villages; the state argues communities have been living there for generations and the ESA restrictions would destroy their livelihoods.

‣ Karnataka's objection: Significant coffee, spice, and plantation agriculture within the proposed ESA zone; mining interests in Bellary (iron ore) and South Karnataka districts.

The Conservation Case

- Ecological significance: Western Ghats has been in near-continuous ecological degradation since colonial times — by 2020, only 35% of the original forest cover remained (from ~90% in the pre-colonial era). Without ESA protection, remaining forests will continue to be lost to quarrying, resort development, encroachment, and infrastructure.
- GLOF risk: Wayanad landslides (July 2024) demonstrated that deforestation in the upper Ghats increases disaster risk; slope destabilisation, soil erosion, and loss of water-holding capacity of forests are directly linked to landslide frequency.
- River origin protection: All 6 major peninsular rivers originate in the Ghats; their watershed protection depends on maintained forest cover — not just in forest reserves but across the entire landscape.

State Objections: Legitimate Concerns

- Kerala: The Coffee Growers' Association (covering 150,000 small coffee farmers, many tribal) argues that the ESA would restrict existing agricultural activity and prevent generational farm transfers; the state wants 'cultural landscapes' (areas with established human settlement) excluded from the ESA.
- Tribal rights: Under the Forest Rights Act 2006 and PESA 1996, tribal communities have individual and community rights over forest land that they have traditionally used; the ESA notification must be compatible with these recognised rights — Gram Sabha consent is constitutionally required (Article 244 and 5th Schedule for some areas).
- Mining industry: Karnataka's Bellary iron ore mining and Goa's iron ore mining are partially in Ghats areas; the mining industry has lobbied against ESA; the Supreme Court has separately imposed mining restrictions in the Ghats (EMPRI and CEC recommendations).
- Staggered approach: The Centre's strategy of notifying 3 states first (Gujarat, Goa, Maharashtra) creates a 'partial ESA' — conserving less ecologically critical northern Ghats while the most ecologically sensitive southern Ghats (Kerala, Karnataka) remain unprotected. Critics argue this approach is backwards — the southern Ghats are ecologically most critical.

UPSC ANGLE

• Forest Rights Act + ESA compatibility: The June 2026 notification must explicitly state that existing FRA rights are preserved within the ESA; otherwise, Kerala and Karnataka tribal communities face loss of recognised rights — a constitutional problem.

• Eco-tourism as a compromise: Some regions within the ESA could be designated for regulated eco-tourism — generating livelihoods without destructive development; Coorg's homestay model and Wayanad's community-based tourism are examples of livelihood-compatible conservation.

• The Wayanad lesson: States that resist ESA protection continue to face landslides, floods, and species loss; the economic cost of inadequate conservation (disaster relief, water scarcity, agricultural losses) exceeds the short-term income from restricted activities.

- **Cultural Landscape (UNESCO concept)** — A landscape that represents the combined works of nature and humankind; areas with long-established human settlement within ecosystems; Kerala argues that tribal and farmer settlements within the Ghats are 'cultural landscapes' deserving protection, not restriction.
- **Gram Sabha Consent (FRA, PESA)** — Under Forest Rights Act 2006 and PESA 1996, any government activity (including ESA notifications affecting community forest rights) in scheduled tribal areas requires prior consultation with and consent of Gram Sabhas — a constitutional requirement.

PRELIMS IN FOCUS

UK PM Succession Process	UK's unwritten constitutional process for replacing a PM: (1) PM loses party confidence; (2) PM informs King of resignation; (3) Party NEC (National Executive Committee, for Labour) sets leadership election timetable; (4) Nominations open and close; (5) If uncontested, new leader declared immediately; if contested, party members vote; (6) New leader seeks audience with King; (7) King appoints new PM. Key: No parliamentary vote required; entirely internal to the governing party; outgoing PM remains caretaker. Starmer's timeline: Nominations July 9; closes July 16 (summer recess); new leader before Parliament returns in September. Britain's PMs since 2016: Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss (50 days), Rishi Sunak, Keir Starmer, Andy Burnham (incoming) = 6 PMs in ~10 years.
Kunal Shah / WhatsApp / CRED	Kunal Shah: 42 years old; born Ahmedabad; philosophy graduate Wilson College Mumbai; MBA dropout; co-founded FreeCharge (2010, sold to Snapdeal for $400M+, then Axis Bank for Rs 385 crore, 2017); founded CRED (2018, Bengaluru). CRED: Fintech platform rewarding credit card bill-payers; 17 million members; profitable 2026; expanded to payments, loans, insurance, wealth management. WhatsApp appointment: June 22, 2026; succeeds Will Cathcart (2019-2026); first Indian to lead WhatsApp. Meta investment: $900 million in CRED; 20% stake; CRED valued at $4.5 billion. WhatsApp: 3 billion global users; 500M+ in India (largest market); founded 2009 (Jan Koum, Brian Acton); acquired by Facebook/Meta 2014 for $19 billion.

Andy Burnham — Likely Next UK PM	Andy Burnham: Born 1970, Leigh, Greater Manchester; Labour MP 2001-2017 (Leigh constituency); Secretary of State for Health (Brown govt, 2009-10); Shadow Home Secretary; contested Labour leadership 2010 (3rd) and 2015 (2nd); Mayor of Greater Manchester 2017-2026. Key achievement as Mayor: 'Bee Network' — integrated public transport (buses + Metrolink trams + cycling + walking) across Greater Manchester; world-famous for political vision of 'integrated transport.' Makerfield by-election (June 18, 2026): Won with 25,000 votes (9,200 majority); entered Parliament specifically to contest leadership. Political brand: 'One-nation Labour'; appeals to traditional working-class voters AND metropolitan progressives; known for strong NHS advocacy.
Western Ghats ESA — State-wise Position (June 2026)	Gujarat: AGREEING to notification. Goa: AGREEING to notification (with some modifications). Maharashtra: NEAR AGREEMENT. Kerala: OPPOSING — 500,000+ people in affected villages; tribal livelihood concerns; Forest Rights Act compatibility issues. Karnataka: OPPOSING — coffee/plantation agriculture; Bellary mining interests; South Karnataka districts. Total ESA area in 6th draft: 56,825 sq km (37% of Western Ghats' 1,64,000 sq km total). Gadgil recommendation: 100% (1,64,000 sq km). Kasturirangan recommendation: 37% (60,000 sq km). ESA PROHIBITS: Mining, quarrying, large industry, new townships. Key trigger for June 2026 action: Wayanad landslides July 2024 (230+ deaths).
National Building Code 2016 (BIS)	Issued by: Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS); under BIS Act 2016. Purpose: Comprehensive code for all aspects of building construction in India. Fire Safety Chapter (Chapter 4): Mandatory fire doors; smoke detection; sprinklers above prescribed floor areas; minimum staircase widths; emergency lighting and signage. Legal status: NOT directly legally binding nationwide — requires state legislation to be enforceable. States adopt and modify through their building bye-laws. Key problem: Sold at Rs 5,000+ per copy — not freely publicly available. Gap: No specific 'Student Hostel Safety Standard' in India; MoE has only advisory guidelines. Related: Model Building Bye-Laws 2016 (MoHUA) — recommended for state adoption.

MAPPING — PLACES IN NEWS

Place	Why in News / Key Facts
10 Downing Street, London	Keir Starmer's resignation announcement (June 22, 2026); official residence and office of the UK PM since 1735 (Robert Walpole); No. 10 is a Grade I listed building; iconic black door is a 2002 addition; PM's private flat is above the flat doors on the building's upper floors.
Greater Manchester, UK	Andy Burnham's political base as Mayor (2017-2026); home of the Bee Network (integrated public transport); England's 2nd largest city-region (3.2 million people); site of Makerfield constituency (by-election June 18, 2026) that enabled Burnham to enter Parliament.
Hazratganj, Lucknow, UP	Site of the building fire (June 22, 2026) that killed 15 students; Hazratganj is Lucknow's central commercial district; 4-storey coaching institute-cum-hostel; no valid fire NOC; single staircase; electrical short circuit.
Menlo Park, California, USA	Meta (Facebook) headquarters; where Kunal Shah will relocate to as WhatsApp Global CEO; Silicon Valley hub; also home to Stanford University, Tesla, Andreessen Horowitz (top VC firm that has invested in CRED).
Wayanad, Kerala	Western Ghats ESA context: Mundakkai landslides (July 2024, 230+ deaths); the disaster catalysed the June 2026 push to finalise ESA notification; Wayanad is also the Lok Sabha constituency represented by Rahul Gandhi (2024 elections); known for tribal communities, coffee-tea-spice plantations, Kurichy Pakshipathanam bird sanctuary.
Bürgenstock, Switzerland	US-Iran nuclear talks (June 21-22, 2026 — continuing from previous day); Vance-Ghalibaf talks; no breakthrough reported by June 23; Iran has not walked out despite Lebanon tensions; 60-day August 13 deadline creating urgency.

Kasargod, Kerala	The northernmost district of Kerala; part of the proposed Western Ghats ESA; shares a border with Karnataka's Dakshina Kannada district; important biodiversity area including Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary and parts of Coorg ecosystem.
Makerfield, Greater Manchester	Site of the UK by-election (June 18, 2026) that created a parliamentary seat for Andy Burnham; the first by-election since 1965 (Leyton) specifically engineered to provide a parliamentary vacancy for a future party leader.

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PIB HIGHLIGHTS — 23 JUNE 2026 (Press Information Bureau)

1. FOUR FERTILISER SHIPS CROSS HORMUZ — Bolstering India's Agricultural Stocks

✓ Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers: Four fertiliser ships — carrying DAP (Di-Ammonium Phosphate), urea, and MOP (Muriate of Potash) — have successfully crossed the Strait of Hormuz following the reopening under the US-Iran Muscat Accord (June 14, 2026).

✓ Cargo details: Combined cargo ~1.2 lakh tonnes; sourced from Saudi Arabia (Maaden DAP), Qatar (IFFCO's Gulf JV urea), and Oman (Salalah-origin MOP); expected at Indian ports (Kandla, Paradip, Tuticorin) by June 27-30.

✓ Significance: The fertiliser supply disruption since February 28, 2026 (Hormuz closure) had reduced DAP availability in Punjab, Haryana, UP to 40-50% of normal; Kharif sowing season requires DAP as basal dose (June 15-July 15 window); these 4 ships provide critical Kharif season relief.

✓ Cost: The government has supplemented with an additional Rs 25,000 crore fertiliser subsidy in May 2026 to cover the higher procurement costs; NBS (Nutrient-Based Subsidy) per kg of phosphorus (P) raised by Rs 15/kg for Kharif 2026.

✓ GS 3 Angle: Fertiliser supply chain; Hormuz reopening economic dividend; Kharif agriculture; India's import dependence on DAP (~60% imported); food security.

2. INDIA BECOMES WORLD'S TOP SHIP RECYCLING NATION IN 2025

✓ Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways: India surpassed Bangladesh and Pakistan to become the world's largest ship recycling nation in 2025.

✓ Data: India recycled 1,382 vessels totalling 8.2 million LDT (Light Displacement Tonnes) in 2025 — 36% of global ship recycling volume.

✓ Key location: Alang ship-breaking yard (Bhavnagar, Gujarat) accounts for ~90% of India's ship recycling; world's largest ship breaking yard; currently ~150 active plots.

✓ Value: Ship recycling generates ~Rs 45,000 crore annually; employs 50,000+ workers at Alang; produces scrap steel (a major input for India's secondary steel sector — electric arc furnace-based).

✓ Environmental context: Ship recycling is an environmentally hazardous activity if not properly managed — asbestos, PCBs, heavy metals on decommissioned vessels; the Hong Kong Convention (2009, not yet in force — needs more ratifications) sets international standards; India has enacted its own Ship Recycling Act 2019, aligned with Hong Kong Convention principles.

✓ GS 3 Angle: Circular Economy; Blue Economy; Maritime Sector; Ship Recycling Act 2019; Alang yard; environmental regulations for hazardous recycling.

3. KAVACH DEPLOYMENT — Rs 270 CRORE ON EAST COAST RAILWAY (631 KM)

✓ Ministry of Railways: Indian Railways approved deployment of Kavach (anti-collision system) on 631 route kilometres of East Coast Railway at a cost of Rs 270 crore.

✓ Kavach: India's indigenous automatic train protection system; RDSO-developed; prevents Signal Passing At Danger (SPAD) — automatically stops a train if it crosses a red signal; enables zero-collision operations at speeds up to 160 km/h.

✓ Current status: Kavach deployed on ~1,600 km (South Central Railway is the most advanced deployment); MoR has a target of deploying Kavach on the entire IR network (~68,000 km) — timeline challenged by supply and cost.

✓ East Coast Railway significance: East Coast Railway (HQ Bhubaneswar, Odisha) covers Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana — a high-traffic coal, iron ore, and passenger corridor; the Balasore accident (2023, 293 deaths) occurred on a South Eastern Railway route; the East Coast Railway deployment directly addresses safety in similar corridors.

✓ Cost comparison: Total Kavach deployment for full IR network is estimated at Rs 1.6-2 lakh crore — one of the largest safety infrastructure investments in India's railway history.

✓ GS 3 Angle: Railway safety; indigenous technology; TCAS (Train Collision Avoidance System); Kavach; disaster prevention; Balasore accident context.

4. CORE INDUSTRIES INDEX MAY 2026 — Economic Health Check

✓ Ministry of Commerce & Industry released the Eight Core Industries index for May 2026 (base year 2011-12 = 100).

✓ Index composition: Coal (10.33% weight), Crude Oil (8.98%), Natural Gas (6.88%), Refinery Products (28.04%), Fertilisers (2.63%), Steel (17.92%), Cement (5.37%), Electricity (19.85%). Total weight in IIP: 40.27%.

✓ May 2026 performance: Overall core index growth: 5.4% year-on-year. Positive performers: Coal (+8.2% — domestic production push); Cement (+7.8% — construction season); Steel (+6.1% — infrastructure demand); Electricity (+4.9% — heatwave-driven demand surge).

✓ Negative/weak: Crude Oil (-1.2% — declining aging wells despite offshore push); Natural Gas (-0.8% — Hormuz disruption reduced LNG domestic processing); Refinery Products (-2.1% — reduced crude availability during Hormuz crisis).

✓ Interpretation: The 5.4% overall growth reflects domestic demand resilience despite the Hormuz-induced supply chain disruption; the recovery in Refinery Products (expected positive for June 2026 after Hormuz reopening) will drive the next month's index higher.

✓ GS 3 Angle: Core Industries Index; IIP composition; economic health indicators; manufacturing sector data.

5. DISHA 2.0 — Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice

✓ Ministry of Law and Justice approved 'DISHA 2.0' (Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice) — a revised, enhanced access-to-justice scheme.

✓ DISHA 2.0 components: (1) Legal Aid Clinics at all Gram Panchayats (1 per GP in LWE-affected districts); (2) Mobile Legal Aid Vans — mobile courts and legal counselling in remote areas; (3) Para-legal volunteers programme — trained community members providing basic legal guidance; (4) Online dispute resolution (ODR) platform — digital mediation for property and family disputes; (5) ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) at block level — Lok Adalats made permanent at block level, not just district level.

✓ NALSA integration: DISHA 2.0 works through the NALSA (National Legal Services Authority) infrastructure at state and district levels.

✓ Target: Reach 5 crore unserved/underserved persons with legal aid and awareness annually; significant expansion over DISHA 1.0 (which reached ~1 crore).

✓ Connects to: 'Ease of Justice' agenda (BNS/BNSS); Justice by 2029 initiative (Amit Shah); SC's Article 39A jurisprudence on free legal aid.

✓ GS 2 Angle: Access to Justice; NALSA; Article 39A DPSP; Lok Adalats; ADR; legal aid for the poor; rural justice delivery.

6. INDIA ACHIEVES 5 LAKH ORGAN DONATION PLEDGES

✓ Ministry of Health and Family Welfare: India crossed 5 lakh (500,000) registered organ donation pledges — a milestone announced on the occasion of International Organ Donation Day (June 13, 2026).

✓ Context: India has one of the lowest organ donation rates globally — 0.86 donors per million population (PMP) vs. Spain (49.6 PMP), USA (44.5 PMP), UK (22 PMP). The 5 lakh pledges, while a milestone, represent a tiny fraction of India's 1.4 billion population.

✓ NOTTO (National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation): India's apex body for organ donation and transplantation; under MoHFW; manages the national registry, waitlist, and allocation.

✓ Cadaver vs. living donors: India depends predominantly on living donors (family members donating a kidney or portion of liver); cadaveric (brain-dead) donation — the primary source in Western countries — is

still rare in India due to: (a) cultural and religious beliefs; (b) lack of hospital protocols for brain death declaration; (c) inadequate infrastructure for organ preservation and transport.

✓ Legal framework: Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA) 2011 (amended 2014): Governs organ donation; prohibits commercial trade in organs; defines brain death; requires hospital authorization for deceased donor programmes.

✓ GS 2 Angle: Health governance; organ donation; NOTTO; THOTA; brain death; healthcare infrastructure.

7. India's Emerging Technology Ecosystem — PIB Backgrounder

✓ PIB Backgrounder: Documenting India's position as an emerging global hub for deep technology development.

✓ Key data: India has 3rd largest startup ecosystem globally (110,000+ DPIIT-recognised startups); 111 unicorns (companies valued at $1 billion+); startup funding raised $42 billion+ since 2016.

✓ Sector breakdown: Fintech (19% of startups), SaaS/Software (16%), EdTech (9%), HealthTech (8%), AgriTech (6%), SpaceTech (4%), DeepTech/AI (growing fastest at 28% YoY).

✓ Government enablers: Startup India (DPIIT, 2016); Fund of Funds for Startups (SIDBI, Rs 10,000 crore); iDEX (Defence startups); IN-SPACe (Space startups); PLI schemes creating manufacturing startups; IndiaAI Mission (Rs 10,371 crore); National Quantum Mission (Rs 6,003 crore).

✓ Talent: India produces 1.5 million engineering graduates annually; IITs ranked in global top-50 for CS; 5+ million developers; 4th largest developer community globally (after USA, China, India... wait — India is 2nd).

✓ Gap: India's deep-tech R&D still lags — R&D spend at 0.64% of GDP vs. China 2.55%, USA 3.5%; most unicorns are in consumer/financial services, not deep tech.

✓ GS 3 Angle: India's startup ecosystem; technology policy; Startup India; unicorns; R&D gap; deep tech vs. consumer tech.

8. HAJ POLICY 2027 — Applications Invited by Haj Committee of India

✓ Ministry of Minority Affairs: Haj Committee of India announced Haj Policy 2027; invited applications from prospective Haj pilgrims.

✓ India's Haj quota: Saudi Arabia allocates Haj pilgrim quotas by country; India's quota for 2027: approximately 1,75,025 pilgrims (among the world's largest national quotas, after Indonesia and Pakistan).

✓ Subsidy status: The Supreme Court (2012, Haj Subsidy case) directed the government to phase out Haj subsidies over 10 years; the Haj subsidy was completely abolished from 2018; pilgrims now pay full cost. The government redirected the subsidy savings to girl child education in the minority community.

✓ Air India's Haj flights: Air India (now Tata-owned since 2022) is the primary carrier for Indian Haj pilgrims; special Haj charters operate from 21 embarkation points across India.

✓ Digital Haj: Application process is fully digital through the Haj Committee portal; AI-based lottery system for allocation when demand exceeds quota; digital tracking of pilgrims.

✓ GS 2 Angle: Minority rights; Haj policy; subsidy reform; SC 2012 Haj subsidy ruling; minority welfare without subsidy.

9. NAFEX.in — NAFED's Agricultural Auction Portal Launched

✓ Ministry of Cooperation: Home Minister Amit Shah launched NAFEX.in — NAFED's digital auction portal for agricultural produce.

✓ NAFED (National Agricultural Cooperative Federation): India's apex agricultural cooperative marketing federation; procures and trades pulses, oilseeds, cereals; implements Price Support Scheme (PSS) for oilseeds and pulses; key buyer for MSP-based procurement.

✓ NAFEX.in: A digital marketplace for NAFED's agricultural procurement and disposal; enables farmers and FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations) to auction produce directly to NAFED; transparent price discovery; reduces middleman dependence.

✓ Context: NAFED procured record quantities of pulses in 2025-26 under PSS; the portal digitises the disposal of these buffer stocks to processors and traders — transparent bidding replaces negotiated deals.

✓ Connection to Cooperatives Ministry: The Ministry of Cooperation (created July 2021, Amit Shah as Minister) is systematically building cooperative sector digital infrastructure — NAFEX follows PACS (Primary Agricultural Credit Societies) computerisation, Dairy cooperative apps, and FPO digital platforms.

✓ GS 3 Angle: Agricultural marketing; cooperatives; NAFED; MSP; Price Support Scheme; FPO; digital agriculture; cooperative sector reform.

10. RAKHIGARHI SKELETAL REMAINS TRANSFERRED TO ANTHROPOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

✓ Ministry of Culture: Human skeletal remains from the Rakhigarhi IVC site (Haryana) have been formally transferred to the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) for advanced scientific research.

✓ Previous holder: The remains had been held by IARI (Indian Agricultural Research Institute) and a private research team; the formal transfer to AnSI (India's premier anthropological research body) brings the study under a government scientific institution.

✓ Research agenda: aDNA (ancient DNA) extraction and population genomics; stable isotope analysis (diet and migration patterns); osteological analysis (health, pathology, age-at-death); facial reconstruction (connecting to the ASI + Seoul National University work in parallel).

✓ AnSI: Anthropological Survey of India (established 1945); under Ministry of Culture; studies human genetic and cultural diversity; headquartered in Kolkata; conducts tribal and population studies across India.

✓ Significance: The formal transfer ensures scientific research under ICMR/DST ethical guidelines; addresses concerns raised by some tribal groups that skeletal remains of their possible ancestors should be studied under Indian institutional oversight rather than foreign university collaboration.

✓ GS 1 Angle: IVC; Rakhigarhi; aDNA; AnSI; Anthropological Survey; heritage research; Indian history and culture.

ADDITIONAL PRELIMS — PIB ITEMS

India's Ship Recycling — Key Facts	India: World's top ship recycling nation in 2025; 1,382 vessels; 8.2 million LDT; 36% of global volume. Location: Alang, Bhavnagar, Gujarat — world's largest ship breaking yard; ~150 active plots; 50,000+ workers. Value: Rs 45,000 crore/year; major scrap steel source for EAF (Electric Arc Furnace) steel production. Environmental: Ship Recycling Act 2019 (aligned with Hong Kong Convention 2009, not yet in force); hazardous materials: asbestos, PCBs, heavy metals. Competitive edge: Lower labour costs, proximity to steel mills, deep-water berths at Alang. Competitors: Bangladesh (Chittagong), Pakistan (Gadani), Turkey, China.
Kavach (Anti-Collision System)	What: India's indigenous Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system; developed by RDSO (Research Designs and Standards Organisation, Lucknow); also called TCAS (Train Collision Avoidance System). How it works: Continuous radio frequency data exchange between loco-pilot, signal systems, and central control; automatically applies brakes if train approaches a red signal (SPAD — Signal Passing At Danger). Current deployment: ~1,600 route km (primarily South Central Railway); new: 631 km East Coast Railway (Rs 270 crore). Target: 68,000 km (full IR network) — estimated cost: Rs 1.6-2 lakh crore. Speed capability: Up to 160 km/h. Context: Balasore accident (2023, 293 deaths) occurred on a South Eastern Railway segment without Kavach — accelerated deployment urgency.

Core Industries Index — Structure and GS3 Relevance	Eight Core Industries index (ECI): Published monthly by DPIIT (Office of Economic Adviser); base year 2011-12=100. Eight sectors and their weights: Electricity (19.85%), Refinery Products (28.04%) — highest, Steel (17.92%), Coal (10.33%), Crude Oil (8.98%), Natural Gas (6.88%), Cement (5.37%), Fertilisers (2.63%). Total: 40.27% weight in IIP (Index of Industrial Production). Why important: ECI is a leading indicator of industrial production; released ~4 weeks before IIP data; used by RBI and government for monetary and fiscal policy assessment. May 2026 headline: 5.4% growth — positive despite Hormuz disruption (coal, cement, steel up; oil, gas, refinery down).
NAFED and NAFEX	NAFED (National Agricultural Cooperative Federation of India): Established 1958 under Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act; apex body for agricultural cooperative marketing; headquarters New Delhi; implements PSS (Price Support Scheme) for oilseeds and pulses; key buyer for Minimum Support Price (MSP) procurement when market prices fall below MSP. NAFEX.in: Digital agricultural auction portal; launched June 2026 by Amit Shah; enables farmers and FPOs to bid directly; transparent price discovery; digitises NAFED's procurement and stock disposal. Cooperatives Ministry: Created July 2021; Amit Shah as Minister; systematically digitalising cooperative sector.
NOTTO and Organ Donation Law	NOTTO: National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation; under MoHFW; manages national registry, waitlist, allocation for organ transplantation. THOTA 2011 (Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act): Governs organ donation; prohibits commercial organ trade; defines brain death (legal definition for cadaveric donation); requires Authorisation Committee approval for non-related living donation. India's rate: 0.86 donors per million population (PMP) — among world's lowest. Spain: 49.6 PMP (world leader, due to 'opt-out' (presumed consent) system and dedicated transplant coordinators in every hospital). Haj Subsidy: SC 2012 ruled government should phase out Haj subsidy over 10 years; fully abolished 2018; savings redirected to girl child education (minority scholarship). India's Haj quota (2027): ~1,75,025 pilgrims.

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