



SAMARTHYA IAS · AHMEDABAD

DAILY UPSC COMPANION

Samarthya Current Affairs

Prelims facts · Mains frameworks · Practice MCQs

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THURSDAY

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Your Complete UPSC Current Affairs Companion

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Constitutional Governance & Electoral Integrity: Autonomy and Internal Dissent in the Election Commission



STORY 1 **The Hindu**

Opposition Demands Removal of CEC Gyanesh Kumar Over Internal Dissent

Opposition parties demanded the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar following reports of internal dissent within the Election Commission of India.

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha along with opposition parties raised concerns in New Delhi regarding electoral integrity and centralisation of authority.

Two Election Commissioners, Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, formally recorded objections at least 14 times over a ten-month period against unilateral decisions.

Objections pertained to centralisation of the poll roll database, modifications to Form 6, and voter deletions in West Bengal and Goa during Special Intensive Revisions.

Relevant for GS Paper II under Constitutional Bodies, functioning of the Election Commission of India, independence of statutory authorities, and electoral process reforms.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Analysis of internal decision-making processes, dissent recording, and institutional independence within the Election Commission of India.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Article 324 of the Constitution vests the superintendence, direction, and control of elections in the Election Commission of India.
- Under the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, decisions within the multi-member Commission are made by majority vote when consensus cannot be reached.
- Special Intensive Revision (SIR) refers to comprehensive voter roll updates conducted by electoral registration officers to ensure electoral list accuracy.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: The Election Commission of India (ECI) is a constitutionally mandated body under Article 324 entrusted with conducting free and fair elections, where internal cohesion and institutional independence are paramount.

DIMENSIONS

- **Institutional Transparency:** Recording formal dissenting opinions strengthens procedural accountability but highlights internal friction in executive decision-making.
- **Administrative Integrity:** Centralisation of electoral databases and unilateral changes to voter registration forms risk procedural oversights and state-level friction.
- **Public Trust & Credibility:** Open disputes among election commissioners erode public faith in the neutrality of electoral management bodies during voter roll revisions.

Way forward: Establish clear multi-member consensus protocols, mandate formal disclosure of dissenting views in commission decisions, and institute independent oversight mechanisms.

PYQ LINK

In light of recent controversies surrounding statutory bodies, discuss the measures required to preserve the impartiality and institutional autonomy of the Election Commission of India. (UPSC Mains GS II)

KEY TERMS

Article 324

Chief Election Commissioner

Special Intensive Revision

Institutional Autonomy

Electoral Integrity

ACTS & ARTICLES

Article 324 of the Constitution

Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners Act

Representation of the People Act, 1950

02

GS PAPER II - PARLIAMENT AND STATE LEGISLATURES

Parliamentary Democracy & Anti-Defection Law: Judicial Restraint in Fixing Timelines for the Speaker



Supreme Court Declines Time Limit for Speaker in Disqualification Proceedings

The Supreme Court refused to fix a strict schedule for Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to complete disqualification proceedings against 20 rebel Trinamool Congress MPs.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant heard the petition filed by TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee in the Supreme Court.

The case involves 20 rebel TMC MPs who aligned with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India, requesting four weeks to file their official responses.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta argued against judicial monitoring of the Speaker's schedule, emphasizing constitutional separation of powers between the judiciary and legislative presiding officers.

Highlights GS Paper II themes including Anti-Defection Law under Tenth Schedule, powers and discretion of the Speaker, separation of powers, and judicial review.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Examination of judicial restraint versus judicial intervention regarding the Speaker's discretionary power under the Tenth Schedule.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The Tenth Schedule was inserted into the Constitution by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1985 to prevent political defection.
- In *Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu* (1992), the Supreme Court ruled that the Speaker acts as a tribunal while deciding disqualifications and is subject to judicial review.
- Disqualification petitions under the Tenth Schedule can only be initiated upon a petition filed by a member of the concerned legislative house.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: The Anti-Defection Law aims to uphold party discipline and legislative stability, but delay in deciding disqualification petitions by presiding officers challenges constitutional governance.

DIMENSIONS

- **Constitutional Separation of Powers:** Courts exercise judicial restraint to respect the autonomy and constitutional status of legislative presiding officers.
- **Prolonged Political Ambiguity:** Unbounded delays allow defecting legislators to continue holding legislative positions, frustrating the intent of the Tenth Schedule.
- **Judicial Precedents:** While *Kihoto Hollohan* affirms judicial review over final orders, recent rulings emphasize non-interference during pendency.

Way forward: Amend the Tenth Schedule to vest disqualification powers in an independent tribunal or fix a statutory timeline of 3 months for Speakers to resolve petitions.

Discuss the role of the Speaker under the Tenth Schedule and evaluate whether fixing a time limit for deciding disqualification petitions is necessary to prevent political instability. (UPSC Mains GS II)

KEY TERMS

Tenth Schedule

Anti-Defection Law

Judicial Restraint

Separation of Powers

Kihoto Hollohan Case

ACTS & ARTICLES

Tenth Schedule of the Constitution

Article 102(2) and Article 191(2)

52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985

03

GS PAPER II - BILATERAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL GROUPINGS

International Sanctions & Global Migration: India-US Strategic Concerns and Visa Processing Challenges



STORY 1 The Hindu

India Raises Concerns Over Sanctions Law with US Foreign Policy Leadership

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar voiced India's explicit concerns regarding newly enacted United States secondary sanctions legislation during formal bilateral discussions in New York.

EAM S. Jaishankar met with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in New York during their first official engagement since the sanctions enactment.

Bilateral talks addressed the implications of the Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act enacted by the United States Congress affecting strategic and trade relations.

India sought clarity on potential trade interruptions and diplomatic friction stemming from unilateral US sanctions targeting energy and defense procurement channels involving Russia and Iran.

Pertains to GS Paper II Bilateral Relations, impact of policies of developed nations on India's strategic autonomy, and global geopolitical economic sanctions regimes.



STORY 2 **Times of India**

Immigrant Visa and Green Card Lottery Delays Persist Despite Court Orders

Immigrant visa processing and Diversity Visa lottery allocations remain stalled at US embassies despite federal court rulings declaring administrative freezes unlawful.

Immigration attorney Jennifer Bade highlighted operational delays affecting applicants from 75 countries subjected to State Department processing holds across global consulates.

Federal court decisions issued on August 21 and August 28 struck down visa pauses, yet pending Diversity Visa slots risk invalidation after September 30.

A significant disconnect exists between judicial rulings overturning immigration restrictions and practical execution by consular authorities, threatening prospective immigrants with administrative expiration deadlines.

Directly links to GS Paper II Indian Diaspora, international migration policy, institutional compliance with judicial mandates, and global administrative law challenges.



STORY 3 **Times of India**

Scrutiny Mounts Over H1B Visa Compliance and Workforce Management Firms

Public allegations and whistle-blower complaints raised serious concerns regarding labor compliance and compensation practices within IT staffing consultancies managing H-1B visa holders.

Investigations in Texas targeted Great America Technologies, owned by Nagarjuna Reddy Sakam, over alleged non-payment and exploitation of foreign technology workers.

Multiple whistle-blowers surfaced following a May confrontation, leading to claims of unpaid wages and the listing of residential property for liquidation.

The development underscores ongoing regulatory debates surrounding skilled immigration safeguards, wage compliance, and working conditions for Indian professionals employed under H-1B visas in the US.

Pertains to GS Paper II Diaspora issues, international labor migration regulation, protection of skilled workers abroad, and Indo-US economic mobility partnerships.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Assessment of secondary US sanctions on Indian trade autonomy and regulatory challenges facing Indian skilled workers and immigrants abroad.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Secondary sanctions target non-US entities and foreign nationals for conducting commercial transactions with sanctioned countries or entities.
- The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa category allowing US companies to temporarily employ foreign workers in specialty occupations.
- Diversity Visa (DV) program allocates up to 55,000 immigrant visas annually to individuals from countries with historically low immigration rates to the US.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: India's foreign policy navigates complex external headwinds arising from unilateral foreign sanctions while simultaneously advocating for the rights and mobility of its global diaspora.

DIMENSIONS

- **Strategic Autonomy vs. Economic Risk:** US secondary sanctions create compliance hurdles for Indian defense and energy procurement, necessitating diplomatic re-engagement.
- **Judicial vs. Administrative Delays:** Administrative pauses on visa processing, despite court reversals, disrupt global mobility and foreign labor recruitment.
- **Diaspora Protection:** Allegations of labor exploitation and H-1B compliance fraud highlight the need for robust consular oversight and migration safeguards.

Way forward: Deepen institutional bilateral dialogues on sanctions exemptions, streamline global labor mobility frameworks, and enhance consular protection mechanisms.

PYQ LINK

Evaluate how unilateral economic sanctions imposed by major foreign powers impact India's strategic autonomy and bilateral partnerships. (UPSC Mains GS II)

KEY TERMS

Secondary Sanctions

Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act

H-1B Visa

Diversity Visa

Strategic Autonomy

ACTS & ARTICLES

Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act (SRIA)

US Immigration and Nationality Act

Emigration Act, 1983

Geopolitics & Great Power Rivalry: US-China Summitry and Implications for Strategic Stability



STORY 1 **The Hindu**

China Confirms Xi Jinping Visit to US for Bilateral Summit

Chinese President Xi Jinping is conducting a three-day state visit to the United States for high-level bilateral discussions with President Donald Trump.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Guo Jiakun announced the official summit schedule taking place in Washington D.C., emphasizing strategic dialogue between both heads of state.

The state visit spans three days from Wednesday to Friday, marking a key diplomatic event between the world's two largest national economies.

The summit aims to build constructive strategic stability, establish bilateral artificial intelligence dialogues, strengthen economic cooperation, and manage long-standing trade and security differences.

Essential for GS Paper II Important International Institutions and Geopolitics, US-China Great Power Competition, and global economic stability frameworks.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Impact of US-China strategic stability, bilateral trade truces, and technology dialogues on the Indo-Pacific geopolitical balance.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Strategic stability in bilateral diplomacy refers to structural arrangements that reduce the risk of accidental escalation or armed conflict between major powers.
- High-level bilateral AI dialogues aim to establish guardrails against autonomous weapon risks and artificial intelligence escalation in global security.
- Bilateral trade truces utilize temporary duty freezes to facilitate structured negotiations on structural trade imbalances and technology transfer policies.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: The high-level engagement between the United States and China signals an effort to stabilize tense bilateral ties and establish operational guardrails in global governance.

DIMENSIONS

- **Strategic Stability & Risk Reduction:** Bilateral talks on AI security and trade truces seek to prevent miscalculation between the world's two largest economies.
- **Asian Order & Indo-Pacific Dynamics:** Tactical truces allow China to re-evaluate its diplomatic footprint across Asian security architectures.
- **Global Trade & Supply Chain Realignment:** Stabilization of US-China trade disputes impacts global economic predictability and emerging market supply chains.

Way forward: India must strengthen its strategic partnerships across the Indo-Pacific, promote multipolarity, and build domestic capacity in critical supply chains.

PYQ LINK

Analyze how shifting relations between the US and China influence regional security and strategic equations in the Indo-Pacific region. (UPSC Mains GS II)

KEY TERMS

Constructive Strategic Stability

Great Power Competition

AI Dialogue

Indo-Pacific Order

Bilateral Truce

ACTS & ARTICLES

UN Charter Article 2(4)

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)

05

GS PAPER III - ENVIRONMENT & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Climate Change & Environmental Health: Super El Niño and Extreme Heat Mortality



STORY 1 The Hindu

Super El Nino Threatens Over 15000 Heat Deaths in India

A comprehensive report by the Climate Impact Lab projects an estimated 15,800 additional heat-related deaths in India due to a severe Super El Niño event.

The report analyzed climate data across global regions, indicating extreme vulnerability across India, Southeast Asia, Brazil, and the African Sahel region.

Projections estimate 15,800 (+/- 1,600) extra deaths in India between September 2026 and February 2027, alongside 451,000 extra heat deaths globally.

The Super El Niño brings extreme temperatures equivalent to projected climate warming 20 years in the future, highlighting severe gaps in heat adaptation investments.

Highly relevant for GS Paper III Disaster Management, Climate Change, Environmental Impact Assessment, and GS Paper II Public Health Infrastructure resilience.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Socio-economic and public health implications of El Niño-driven extreme heat events and the imperative for climate adaptation investments.

PRELIMS FACTS

- El Niño involves anomalous warming of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, disrupting global weather patterns.
- Super El Niño events refer to extreme warming episodes where sea surface temperatures exceed 2.0°C above historical baseline averages.
- Thermal stress during extreme heat events exacerbates pre-existing cardiovascular, respiratory, and renal conditions, significantly raising excess mortality.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: The emergence of Super El Niño conditions underscores the intensifying threat of global climate variability, posing severe risks to public health and heat disaster preparedness in India.

DIMENSIONS

- **Vulnerability & Excess Mortality:** Extreme heat disproportionately impacts outdoor workers, rural populations, and urban poor due to inadequate cooling infrastructure.
- **Economic & Labor Impacts:** High wet-bulb temperatures reduce labor productivity, impair agricultural output, and strain energy grids during peak summer months.
- **Adaptation Deficit:** Projected heat deaths reflect a lag in climate adaptation investments, early warning systems, and urban heat mitigation planning.

Way forward: Mandate localized Heat Action Plans (HAPs), invest in passive cooling architecture, expand social safety nets for outdoor workers, and strengthen emergency health infrastructure.

PYQ LINK

Discuss the impact of El Niño phenomena on Indian agriculture and public health, and suggest comprehensive heat adaptation strategies. (UPSC Mains GS III)

KEY TERMS

Super El Niño

Heat Mortality

Climate Adaptation

Thermal Stress

Short-Lived Climate Pollutants

06

GS PAPER III - ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY

Ecology & Habitat Conservation: Marine Reef Creation and Invasive Species Management



STORY 1 Times of India

Alabama Converts Gas Rig into Massive Offshore Artificial Reef

The state of Alabama repurposed the decommissioned Spirit VK 780A offshore natural gas platform into two large-scale artificial marine reef structures.

Located 60 nautical miles south of Alabama's Gulf Coast, the project integrates industrial infrastructure into the marine conservation network managed by state authorities.

The steel framework rises 632 feet from the seafloor, preserving biological communities that have organically colonized the structure since its deployment in 1998.

Transforming retired energy structures into artificial reefs provides durable marine habitats capable of sustaining fish and benthic biodiversity for over 50 years without total extraction.

Fits GS Paper III Environment and Ecology, Biodiversity Conservation, Sustainable Coastal Zone Management, and Circular Industrial Economy approaches.



Trout Eradication in Sierra Nevada Drives High Frog Population Recovery

Systematic removal of introduced non-native trout from high-altitude lakes resulted in a dramatic ecological recovery of endangered native mountain yellow-legged frogs.

National Park Service staff conducted ecological restoration across 19 lakes within California's Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in the Sierra Nevada.

Nearly 44,000 non-native trout were removed over ten years, resulting in frog counts surging from 190 to over 18,800 across three focus lakes.

Native amphibians evolved in naturally fishless aquatic habitats; introduced predatory fish decimated frog populations, requiring targeted mechanical removal to restore native food webs.

Directly applicable to GS Paper III Environment, Invasive Species Management, Ecosystem Restoration, and Species Recovery Protocols under Wildlife Protection.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Ecological restoration techniques through artificial reef creation and native species protection via invasive fauna removal.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Artificial reefs are submerged human-made structures designed to mimic natural reef characteristics, enhancing local marine biomass and habitat complexity.
- Invasive non-native species can alter food webs, outcompete endemic fauna, and cause trophic collapses in isolated high-altitude aquatic ecosystems.
- Benthic communities consist of organisms living on, in, or near the seabed or lake bottom, forming the foundational layer of aquatic food chains.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Aquatic ecological restoration requires multi-pronged approaches, combining habitat engineering via artificial structures with active removal of invasive non-native species.

DIMENSIONS

- **Habitat Enhancement:** Transforming retired industrial infrastructure into artificial reefs provides long-term benthic habitats and supports marine biodiversity.
- **Ecosystem Recovery:** Eradicating invasive alien species reverses predatory pressure, allowing native amphibian and fish populations to recover dramatically.
- **Sustainable Resource Reuse:** Industrial recycling for marine conservation presents a viable circular model for decommissioned offshore installations.

Way forward: Scale up science-based invasive species eradication programs, establish environmental guidelines for offshore rig decommissioning, and monitor restored aquatic corridors.

PYQ LINK

Examine the role of habitat restoration and invasive species management in preserving fragile aquatic ecosystems. (UPSC Mains GS III)

KEY TERMS

Artificial Reefs

Invasive Species

Ecological Restoration

Benthic Ecosystems

Trophic Cascades

ACTS & ARTICLES

Biological Diversity Act, 2002

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

UN Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

07

GS PAPER III - ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION & TECHNOLOGY

Sustainable Infrastructure & Circular Economy: Urban Organic Waste to Bioenergy Conversion



STORY 1 Times of India

Sydney Converts Urban Food Waste into Biogas and Renewable Power

An advanced waste processing facility in Sydney utilizes anaerobic digestion to process municipal food waste into bioenergy and agricultural soil improver.

The EarthPower facility located in Camellia, Australia, handles commercial and household organic waste diverted from municipal landfills across Sydney.

The facility processes 62,500 tonnes of organic waste, generating electricity to power 4,000 homes while producing 1,500 tonnes of soil improver annually.

Anaerobic digestion breaks down organic matter without oxygen, capturing biomethane for clean power generation and reducing potent short-lived climate pollutant emissions from degrading urban waste.

GS Paper III Waste Management, Renewable Energy, Circular Economy, and Methane Emission Mitigation in Sustainable Urban Planning.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Utilization of anaerobic digestion technology for converting municipal organic waste into renewable power and organic soil improvers.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Anaerobic digestion is a biological process where microorganisms break down biodegradable material in the absence of oxygen, producing biogas.
- Biogas primarily consists of methane (50-70%) and carbon dioxide (30-50%), which can be scrubbed into biomethane for power generation.
- Digestate, the solid and liquid residue remaining after anaerobic digestion, serves as a nutrient-rich organic soil improver and fertilizer.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Urban waste management presents a twin challenge of environmental pollution and resource loss, where circular bioenergy systems offer scalable solutions.

DIMENSIONS

- **Methane Mitigation:** Diverting food waste from landfills prevents uncontrolled anaerobic decay, significantly reducing atmospheric methane emissions.
- **Renewable Energy Generation:** Capturing biogas for grid electricity enhances municipal energy self-reliance and offsets fossil fuel reliance.
- **Circular Agricultural Inputs:** Converting organic residues into soil improvers recycles essential nutrients back into agrarian land systems.

Way forward: Mandate source segregation of organic waste in urban centers, incentivize private investments in biomethanation plants, and subsidize city-compost distribution.

PYQ LINK

Highlight the potential of Waste-to-Energy projects in achieving urban sustainability and reducing municipal carbon footprints in India. (UPSC Mains GS III)

KEY TERMS

Anaerobic Digestion

Biomethane

Circular Economy

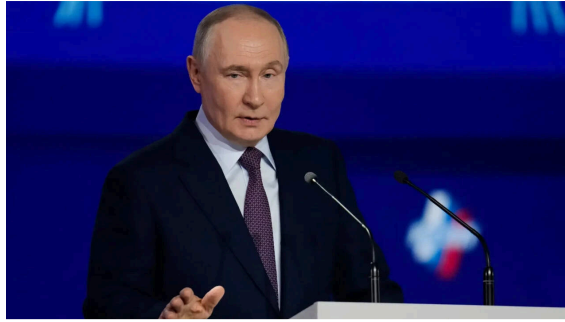
Municipal Solid Waste

Short-Lived Climate Pollutants

ACTS & ARTICLES

Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016

SATAT (Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation) Initiative



STORY 1 **Times of India**

Russian Parliamentary Election Yields Record Majority for Ruling Party

Russian President Vladimir Putin cited high voter turnout in parliamentary elections as a strong mandate endorsing the government's economic policies and military operations.

Elections conducted across Russia and four annexed Ukrainian regions resulted in a decisive parliamentary victory for the ruling United Russia party.

United Russia secured 355 of 450 seats in the State Duma, representing nearly 80% control with over 57% of total votes cast.

Held across three days from September 18 to 20, this marked the first State Duma election since 2022, featuring voting participation in annexed territories rejected by Ukraine.

GS Paper II International Politics, Comparative Constitutional Governance, Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity debates under International Law.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Analysis of electoral turnout, legislative consolidation, and territorial claims during wartime elections in major powers.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The State Duma is the lower house of the Federal Assembly of Russia, consisting of 450 elected parliamentary seats.
- Parliamentary elections in Russia employ a mixed electoral system combining single-member constituency voting and party-list proportional representation.
- Annexation under international law refers to the forcible acquisition of a state's territory by another state, which is generally unrecognized under the UN Charter.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Parliamentary elections conducted during active military conflicts reflect the complex interplay between domestic political consolidation and international legal scrutiny.

DIMENSIONS

- **Electoral Consolidation:** Record parliamentary majorities strengthen executive control over legislative and fiscal appropriations during war.
- **Territorial Legitimization:** Conducting polls in contested annexed regions aims to normalize administrative control despite international legal rejection.

- **Global Diplomatic Repercussions:** Election outcomes shape future negotiations, domestic stability, and long-term geopolitical posturing.

Way forward: Adhere to international law principles regarding territorial sovereignty, promote multilateral peace dialogues, and uphold UN guidelines on contested territories.

PYQ LINK

Discuss how elections conducted under ongoing international conflicts impact domestic legitimacy and international legal recognition. (UPSC Mains GS II)

KEY TERMS

State Duma

United Russia

Electoral Legitimacy

Territorial Annexation

Conflict Governance

ACTS & ARTICLES

UN Charter Article 2(4)

Geneva Conventions relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War

09

GS PAPER II - INDIAN CONSTITUTION & GOVERNANCE

Regional Autonomy & Civil Security: Post-Unrest Accountability and Governance in Ladakh



STORY 1 The Hindu

Sonam Wangchuk Demands Judicial Report Release on Leh Protests

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk led a symbolic march in Ladakh, demanding the public release of the judicial report investigating the September 2025 Leh violence.

Sonam Wangchuk and local civil society groups organized a 20-kilometer padayatra in Leh, commemorating four individuals killed during police action in 2025.

Four persons died during the September 24, 2025 violence in Leh; Wangchuk warned of forming a 'people's panel' if official findings remain suppressed.

Protests in Ladakh center on demands for Sixth Schedule inclusion, statehood, legislative representation, and ecological protection for the fragile trans-Himalayan region.

Relevant for GS Paper II Sixth Schedule, Federal Structure, Union Territory Governance, Civil Society Movements, and Regional Autonomy Aspirations.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Demands for Sixth Schedule protection, judicial transparency in police actions, and ecological governance in Union Territories.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The Sixth Schedule under Article 244(2) provides for Autonomous District Councils with legislative, judicial, and executive powers in specific tribal areas.
- Ladakh was constituted as a separate Union Territory without a legislature under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.
- Judicial commissions of inquiry appointed under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952 submit reports whose recommendations are advisory to the government.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: The demand for constitutional safeguards and judicial accountability in Ladakh underscores the sensitive dynamics of governing ecologically and strategically critical border territories.

DIMENSIONS

- **Constitutional Autonomy:** Demands for Sixth Schedule inclusion stem from anxieties regarding land rights, cultural preservation, and local democratic representation.
- **Judicial Transparency:** Delays in publishing inquiry reports into police action undermine local trust and necessitate public civil society interventions.
- **Ecological Security:** Sustainable development models are vital to prevent environmental degradation in the climate-sensitive trans-Himalayan ecosystem.

Way forward: Timely publish judicial probe findings, engage in constructive political dialogue on constitutional safeguards, and empower local hill development councils.

PYQ LINK

Examine the constitutional mechanisms available for protecting tribal culture, land rights, and ecological balance in fragile Union Territories like Ladakh. (UPSC Mains GS II)

KEY TERMS

Sixth Schedule

Union Territory Administration

Judicial Panel Report

Padayatra

Ecological Vulnerability

ACTS & ARTICLES

Article 244 of the Constitution

Sixth Schedule

Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019

Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952

Gender Rights & Social Welfare: Community Interventions and Menstrual Health Equity



STORY 1 **Times of India**

Project Dignity Expands Menstrual Product Distribution for Vulnerable Women

A grassroots non-profit initiative expanded its monthly distribution of free essential menstrual hygiene products to low-income women and girls facing financial hardship.

Founded by Barbara Morgan in Western North Carolina, Project Dignity relies on volunteer networks to address severe gaps in period product accessibility.

Initiated in 2017, the organization expanded over eight years to support nearly 1,900 women and young girls on a monthly basis.

Period poverty forces vulnerable individuals to choose between food and basic sanitation items, impacting school attendance, workplace participation, and fundamental personal health dignity.

GS Paper II Social Justice, Gender Equity, Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections, and Public Health Interventions for Sanitary Hygiene.



STORY 2 **Times of India**

Volunteer Network Establishes Free Job Search Councils for Unemployed

A volunteer-driven peer support movement established Job Search Councils to assist displaced and laid-off workers navigate unemployment without financial charges.

Career coach Phyl Terry created the 'Never Search Alone' movement, expanding across global remote networks through volunteer facilitators and peer-led councils.

Since its inception in 2022, the non-profit network has assisted over 50,000 job seekers through thousands of peer-led job search councils.

Rapid structural changes in tech and corporate sectors leave workers vulnerable to sudden layoffs, highlighting the value of non-governmental community safety nets during career transitions.

GS Paper III Employment, Human Resource Development, Social Security Mechanisms, and Informal Safety Nets in Modern Labor Dynamics.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Role of community organizations in eliminating period poverty, improving female health equity, and supporting vulnerable socio-economic groups.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Period poverty refers to the lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual hygiene education, toilets, handwashing facilities, and waste management.
- Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) is recognized globally as an essential component of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programs.
- In India, the Menstrual Hygiene Scheme (MHS) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare targets adolescent girls in rural areas for subsidized sanitary pads.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Access to menstrual hygiene products is a fundamental aspect of human dignity, health, and gender equity, where community-led initiatives bridge systemic welfare gaps.

DIMENSIONS

- **Health & Education Linkages:** Inability to afford sanitary products leads to school absenteeism, reproductive tract infections, and social isolation.
- **Economic Hardship:** Economic distress forces vulnerable women to prioritize food over personal hygiene, exacerbating systemic poverty traps.
- **Grassroots Mobilization:** Non-profit and volunteer models demonstrate effective decentralized delivery mechanisms for basic healthcare essentials.

Way forward: Integrate free menstrual product distribution into public school and primary health networks, eliminate sales taxes on sanitary items, and expand community awareness campaigns.

PYQ LINK

Discuss how addressing period poverty and improving menstrual hygiene management contributes to broader gender equality and educational empowerment. (UPSC Mains GS II)

KEY TERMS

Period Poverty

Menstrual Hygiene Management

Social Safety Nets

Gender Equity

Community-Based Organizations



Practice MCQs (UPSC Prelims)

Attempt these questions on your own first. The answer key is on the next page.

GS PAPER II - CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES

Constitutional Governance & Electoral Integrity: Autonomy and Internal Dissent in the Election Commission

Opposition Demands Removal of CEC Gyanesh Kumar Over Internal Dissent

Q1. With reference to the Election Commission of India (ECI), consider the following statements: 1. The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners enjoy equal voting powers within the Commission. 2. Decisions of the Election Commission must be passed unanimously, and dissenting opinions cannot be formally recorded in its proceedings. 3. The conditions of service and tenure of office of Election Commissioners are determined by Parliament by law. Which of the statements given above are correct?

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| A. 1 and 2 only | B. 1 and 3 only |
| C. 2 and 3 only | D. 1, 2 and 3 |

GS PAPER II - POLITY

Parliamentary Democracy & Anti-Defection Law: Judicial Restraint in Fixing Timelines for the Speaker

Supreme Court Declines Time Limit for Speaker in Disqualification Proceedings

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Anti-Defection Law under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution of India: 1. The Tenth Schedule was added to the Constitution by the 44th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1978. 2. The decision of the Speaker or Chairman regarding disqualification on grounds of defection is final and cannot be subjected to judicial review at any stage. 3. A petition for disqualification under the Tenth Schedule can be filed only by a member of the concerned House. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| A. 3 only | B. 1 and 2 only |
| C. 1 and 3 only | D. None of the above |

GS PAPER III - ENVIRONMENT & DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Climate Change & Environmental Health: Super El Niño and Extreme Heat Mortality

Super El Nino Threatens Over 15000 Heat Deaths in India

Q3. With reference to the El Niño phenomenon and its global impacts, consider the following statements: 1. El Niño is characterized by the unusual warming of surface waters in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean. 2. During an El Niño event, the trade winds along the equator strengthen, pushing warm water further west toward Asia. 3.

El Niño events are generally associated with weakened monsoon rainfall across India. Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

GS PAPER III - ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

Ecology & Habitat Conservation: Marine Reef Creation and Invasive Species Management

Alabama Converts Gas Rig into Massive Offshore Artificial Reef

Q4. Which of the following ecological benefits are associated with the creation of artificial reefs using submerged structures? 1. Provision of hard substrate for sessile marine organisms like corals and barnacles. 2. Creation of shelter and breeding grounds for reef-associated fish species. 3. Protection of coastal areas by attenuating wave energy. Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

GS PAPER III - SCIENCE & ENERGY

Sustainable Infrastructure & Circular Economy: Urban Organic Waste to Bioenergy Conversion

Sydney Converts Urban Food Waste into Biogas and Renewable Power

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding Anaerobic Digestion used in waste management: 1. Anaerobic digestion occurs in the presence of abundant oxygen to break down organic matter rapidly. 2. Biogas produced through anaerobic digestion consists predominantly of methane and carbon dioxide. 3. The byproduct digestate can be utilized as a soil conditioner and organic bio-fertilizer. Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

GS PAPER II - POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Regional Autonomy & Civil Security: Post-Unrest Accountability and Governance in Ladakh

Sonam Wangchuk Demands Judicial Report Release on Leh Protests

Q6. With reference to the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, consider the following statements: 1. It provides for the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. 2. Autonomous District Councils constituted under the Sixth Schedule have powers to make laws on land, forests, and inheritance of property. 3. The provisions of the Sixth Schedule automatically apply to all Union Territories without a legislature. Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer Key — Practice MCQs

Quick reference and explanations for the practice questions on the previous page.

Q1: B

Q2: A

Q3: B

Q4: D

Q5: B

Q6: A

Q1 Option B · 1 and 3 only

Statement 1 is correct: The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners have equal powers and receive equal pay, and decisions are taken by majority vote if opinions differ. Statement 2 is incorrect: Under the law, decisions can be taken by majority vote when there is a difference of opinion, and members can formally record dissenting opinions. Statement 3 is correct: Article 324(5) states that conditions of service and tenure are determined by Parliament by law.

Q2 Option A · 3 only

Statement 1 is incorrect: The Tenth Schedule was added by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985. Statement 2 is incorrect: In *Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu* (1992), the Supreme Court ruled that the Speaker's order under the Tenth Schedule acts as a tribunal and is subject to judicial review. Statement 3 is correct: Under the relevant rules of the House, disqualification proceedings can only be initiated upon a petition submitted by a member of that House.

Q3 Option B · 1 and 3 only

Statement 1 is correct: El Niño involves abnormal warming of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. Statement 2 is incorrect: During El Niño, trade winds weaken (or even reverse), allowing warm ocean water to move east toward South America rather than being pushed west toward Asia. Statement 3 is correct: El Niño is traditionally associated with suppressed or deficient southwest monsoon rainfall in India.

Q4 Option D · 1, 2 and 3

All three statements are correct ecological benefits of artificial reefs. They offer hard substrate surfaces for sessile organisms (Statement 1), create complex 3D habitat niches for fish breeding and protection (Statement 2), and help dissipate ocean wave energy to reduce coastal erosion (Statement 3).

Q5 Option B · 2 and 3 only

Statement 1 is incorrect: Anaerobic digestion is a biological process that occurs specifically in the absence of oxygen. Statement 2 is correct: Biogas is primarily composed of methane (50-70%) and carbon dioxide (30-50%). Statement 3 is correct: Digestate is rich in nutrients and is widely repurposed as organic soil improver and agricultural fertilizer.

Q6 Option A · 1 and 2 only

Statement 1 is correct: The Sixth Schedule applies specifically to tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram (AMTM). Statement 2 is correct: Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) have legislative powers over specific subjects including land, unclassified forests, and inheritance. Statement 3 is incorrect: The Sixth Schedule does not automatically apply to Union Territories; extending it requires a constitutional amendment or parliamentary legislation.

