



SAMARTHYA IAS · AHMEDABAD

DAILY UPSC COMPANION

Samarthya Current Affairs

Prelims facts · Mains frameworks · Practice MCQs

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Your Complete UPSC Current Affairs Companion

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Cabinet Approves Continuation and Restructuring of National Social Assistance Programme

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Cabinet approved the continuation of the National Social Assistance Programme for five years (2026-27 to 2030-31) with a financial outlay of ₹53,428 crore and major eligibility revisions.

Story so far:

- **15 October 2026** Cabinet Approves Extension and Renaming of National Social Assistance Programme

STORY 1 **PIB**

Cabinet Restructures Social Assistance Schemes with ₹53,428 Crore Outlay for Five Years

The Union Cabinet approved the proposal of the Department of Rural Development to continue the National Social Assistance Programme from FY27 to FY31.

The decision was taken in New Delhi under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, impacting about 3.2 crore total beneficiaries.

The scheme involves a total financial outlay of ₹53,428 crore and lowers the benchmark disability criterion from 80% to 40% for divyangjan pension.

The overarching programme was renamed Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana, with individual pension and family benefit sub-schemes receiving new official Hindi titles.

Social assistance schemes operationalise Article 41 of the Constitution, which directs the State to provide public assistance in cases of old age, sickness, and disablement.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Tests constitutional obligations under Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 41) and social safety net governance for vulnerable groups.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The National Social Assistance Programme has been officially renamed as Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana with an outlay of ₹53,428 crore till FY31.
- The benchmark disability requirement for divyangjan pension was reduced from 80% to 40%, with minimum age eligibility set from birth.

- Revised monthly assistance for divyangjan pension stands at ₹375 for ages 0–79 years and ₹625 for individuals aged 80 years and above.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: The extension and restructuring of NSAP reinforces India's social safety net, directly fulfilling Directive Principles under Article 41 of the Constitution.

DIMENSIONS

- **Inclusivity Expansion:** Lowering the disability threshold from 80% to 40% extends coverage to a wider population of divyangjan.
- **Fiscal Predictability:** A multi-year outlay of ₹53,428 crore ensures sustained funding stability for state welfare departments.
- **Targeting Challenges:** Ensuring accurate identification and eliminating biometric authentication failures remain essential for effective delivery.

Way forward: Integrating welfare databases with digital address verification and conducting periodic social audits will minimize exclusion errors.

KEY DEFINITIONS

- **Benchmark Disability:** A specified disability where a person suffers from not less than 40% of a certified disability under the law.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy:** Non-justiciable constitutional guidelines in Part IV that instruct the State in formulating social and economic welfare policies.

PYQ LINK

UPSC Mains 2021 GS-2 question on the effectiveness of social welfare schemes in addressing vulnerability and poverty.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Critically analyse the role of social safety net schemes in fulfilling Directive Principles of State Policy in India. How do recent reforms in social assistance address existing gaps? (250 words)

ANSWER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Social safety nets like the National Social Assistance Programme act as direct instruments to translate Part IV DPSP provisions into tangible socio-economic security.

BODY

1. CONSTITUTIONAL FULFILLMENT:

Article 41 mandates State assistance during old age, disablement, and undeserved want, which NSAP operationalises directly.

2. BROADENED ELIGIBILITY:

Reducing the benchmark disability threshold from 80% to 40% expands coverage to previously excluded disabled individuals from birth.

3. **FINANCIAL RELIEF:**

Revised assistance rates of ₹375 and ₹625 provide direct monetary support to over 3.2 crore vulnerable beneficiaries.

4. **BUDGETARY STABILITY:**

A dedicated five-year outlay of ₹53,428 crore protects welfare funding against annual fiscal volatility.

CONCLUSION

Strengthening digital payment pipelines and social auditing mechanisms will ensure social security reaches every eligible citizen without leakage.

KEY TERMS

National Social Assistance Programme

Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana

Directive Principles of State Policy

Benchmark Disability

Social Security

ACTS & ARTICLES

Article 41 of the Constitution

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

02

GS-2 · POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Law Ministry Mobilises NLUs to Address Criminal Case Backlogs in 100 Hotspot Districts

WHY IN NEWS

The Ministry of Law and Justice launched a nationwide initiative engaging 19 National Law Universities to study and reduce trial court backlogs across 100 hotspot judicial districts.

STORY 1

PIB

Law Ministry Enlists 19 National Law Universities to Target Case Pendency in Hotspot Districts

The Ministry of Law and Justice convened a national meeting with Vice Chancellors of 19 National Law Universities across 16 states to formulate pendency reduction strategies.

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal chaired the meeting virtually, bringing together officials from the Department of Justice, BPR&D, and NCRB in Delhi.

The initiative focuses on 100 hotspot districts that collectively account for over half of all district court pendency in the country.

Key focus areas include case profiling, identifying infructuous cases, promoting plea bargaining, Lok Adalats, and deploying NLU pro bono clubs for ground research.

Speedy trial is recognized as a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution, as established in the landmark Hussainara Khatoon ruling.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Relates to judicial reforms, court pendency, access to justice under Article 21, and administrative mechanisms for alternative dispute resolution.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Total case pendency across all courts in India stands at over 5.8 crore cases, with the majority in district and subordinate courts.
- Just 100 hotspot judicial districts account for over 50% of the total case pendency in India's district court system.
- The Ministry of Law and Justice collaborated with 19 National Law Universities across 16 states to carry out ground-level pendency research.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Heavy pendency in subordinate courts dilutes the fundamental right to speedy justice under Article 21, necessitating targeted, empirical interventions.

DIMENSIONS

- **Empirical Policy-Making:** Partnering with NLUs brings rigorous academic research to identify specific procedural bottlenecks.
- **Geographic Targeting:** Focusing on 100 hotspot districts addresses over half of total district pendency efficiently.
- **Alternative Disposals:** Emphasising plea bargaining and summary trials reduces the burden of formal long-drawn trials.

Way forward: Combining academic case profiling with digital court management systems (e-Courts) will expedite trial dispositions.

KEY DEFINITIONS

- **Plea Bargaining:** A pre-trial agreement in criminal cases where the accused pleads guilty in exchange for a lesser charge or reduced sentence.
- **Case Profiling:** The process of categorising pending court cases based on subject matter, age, and complexity to streamline disposal.

PYQ LINK

UPSC Mains 2020 GS-2 question on judicial delays and the role of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms in India.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Judicial backlog in India's subordinate courts impairs access to justice. Examine the key drivers of pendency and evaluate recent policy measures targeting hotspot districts. (150 words)

ANSWER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

High case pendency in subordinate courts impedes rule of law and affects the fundamental right to speedy trial under Article 21.

BODY

1. GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION:

100 judicial districts account for over 50% of total pendency out of 5.8 crore pending cases nationwide.

2. ACADEMIC COLLABORATION:

Partnering with 19 National Law Universities utilizes pro bono student clubs for empirical case profiling.

3. FOCUS ON PROCEDURAL RELIEF:

Prioritising infructuous case removal, plea bargaining, and Lok Adalats diverts non-complex disputes from formal trials.

4. INTER-AGENCY SYNCHRONIZATION:

Joint efforts between the Law Ministry, BPR&D, and NCRB improve data tracking across law enforcement and judiciary.

CONCLUSION

Sustained empirical research coupled with court infrastructure expansion is imperative to deliver timely justice.

KEY TERMS

Judicial Pendency

Plea Bargaining

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Pro Bono Legal Clubs

Article 21

ACTS & ARTICLES

Article 21 of the Constitution

Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023

03

GS-3 • INFRASTRUCTURE & ENERGY

Government Approves Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority (ITLA)

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Cabinet approved setting up the Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority (ITLA) as an apex body for integrated planning, project appraisal, and monitoring across transport modes.

Story so far:

- **15 October 2026** Government Approves Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority
- **14 October 2026** Cabinet Approves Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority

STORY 1 **PIB**

Cabinet Approves Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority for National Master Plan

The Union Cabinet approved the creation of the Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority as a specialized apex institution for transportation sector planning.

The decision was taken in New Delhi to create a centralized mechanism for research, project appraisal, and impact assessment.

ITLA is tasked with preparing a comprehensive Long-Term National Transport Master Plan to streamline logistics movement nationwide.

The authority directly complements existing national infrastructure initiatives, including PM GatiShakti and the National Logistics Policy.

Multi-modal infrastructure planning reduces economic friction by breaking institutional silos across road, rail, air, and maritime sectors.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Relates to infrastructure development, logistics cost reduction, PM GatiShakti, and multi-modal transport integration.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority (ITLA) was approved on October 6, 2026, as an apex national body for transport planning.
- ITLA is mandated to formulate a comprehensive Long-Term National Transport Master Plan across all modes of logistics.
- ITLA acts as a specialized authority for pre-project appraisal and post-implementation impact assessment to complement PM GatiShakti.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Establishing ITLA provides a structural solution to high logistics costs by harmonising multi-modal infrastructure planning across India.

DIMENSIONS

- **Institutional Integration:** Unifies decision-making across disparate transport ministries to eliminate infrastructure bottlenecks.
- **Data-Driven Appraisal:** Conducts rigorous pre-project appraisal and post-implementation impact assessments.

- **Global Competitiveness:** Lowering domestic supply chain costs enhances manufacturing competitiveness under Make in India.

Way forward: Aligning state-level logistics policies with ITLA's master plan will ensure seamless multi-modal connectivity.

KEY DEFINITIONS

- **Multi-modal Transport:** Transportation of goods under a single contract using at least two different modes of transport across road, rail, sea, or air.
- **National Logistics Policy:** A comprehensive framework designed to reduce logistics costs, improve efficiency, and enhance India's global trade competitiveness.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Integrated infrastructure planning is essential for lowering logistics costs and boosting manufacturing. Discuss the mandate of the newly approved ITLA in achieving multi-modal integration. (150 words)

ANSWER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

High logistics costs relative to GDP hinder India's trade competitiveness, necessitating institutional streamlining through the Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority (ITLA).

BODY

1. APEX INSTITUTIONAL ROLE:

ITLA serves as the national apex body tasked with preparing a Long-Term National Transport Master Plan.

2. POLICY SYNERGY:

ITLA directly complements PM GatiShakti and the National Logistics Policy to bridge inter-departmental gaps.

3. PROJECT OVERSIGHT:

Conducts specialized research, project appraisal, data analytics, and post-implementation impact assessments.

4. SILO REDUCTION:

Streamlines transport planning across roads, railways, shipping, and aviation to lower overall logistics costs.

CONCLUSION

By creating a synchronized logistics ecosystem, ITLA will significantly enhance India's industrial and export growth.

KEY TERMS

ITLA

PM GatiShakti

National Logistics Policy

Multi-modal Transport

Logistics Efficiency

ACTS & ARTICLES

PM GatiShakti Framework

National Logistics Policy

India Accedes to Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

WHY IN NEWS

The Central Government approved India's accession to the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) to expand high seas fishing rights and enhance global ocean governance.

Story so far:

- **20 September 2026** Extraterritorial Maritime Interdiction and Anti-Trafficking Operations

STORY 1 **PIB**

Government Approves Accession to Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement

The Central Government approved India's accession to SIOFA, establishing legal harvesting rights across international waters in the Southern Indian Ocean.

The approval was issued by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying in New Delhi to strengthen India's Blue Economy.

Indian-flagged vessels gain authorized rights to fish non-migratory stocks such as squids, toothfish, and alfonsino within SIOFA's jurisdiction.

The initiative builds on national Guidelines for High Sea Fisheries issued in December 2025 and targets Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

High seas fisheries management operates under UNCLOS principles, balancing marine resource exploitation with conservation.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Relates to the Blue Economy, high seas governance under UNCLOS, marine biodiversity conservation, and IUU fishing prevention.

PRELIMS FACTS

- SIOFA is a regional fisheries management treaty governing non-migratory marine resources in the high seas of the Southern Indian Ocean.
- Accession allows Indian fishing vessels to harvest high-value species like toothfish, squids, and alfonsino under international oversight.

- India issued national Guidelines for High Sea Fisheries in December 2025 to enable deep-sea commercial fleet operations.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Accessing to SIOFA integrates India's deep-sea fishing sector into multilateral ocean governance while expanding its Blue Economy footprint.

DIMENSIONS

- **Economic Expansion:** Grants Indian commercial vessels legal access to lucrative non-migratory fisheries in high seas.
- **Ocean Governance:** Facilitates international cooperation to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- **Strategic Presence:** Reinforces India's role as a net security and administrative actor across the Indian Ocean.

Way forward: Upgrading deep-sea trawler technology and real-time vessel monitoring systems will ensure compliance with SIOFA standards.

KEY DEFINITIONS

- **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing:** Fishing activities conducted in violation of national laws or international regional fisheries management obligations.
- **High Seas:** Ocean areas beyond national Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) open to all states under international law.

PYQ LINK

UPSC Mains 2022 GS-3 question on Blue Economy and sustainable development of coastal and marine resources.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Analyse the strategic and economic significance of India's accession to the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) for its Blue Economy strategy. (150 words)

ANSWER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Joining SIOFA advances India's Blue Economy vision by expanding legal high-seas fishing access while strengthening international marine governance.

BODY

1. HIGH-SEAS HARVESTING RIGHTS:

Indian vessels gain legal authority to harvest non-migratory fish like toothfish, squids, and alfonso in SIOFA jurisdiction.

2. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION:

Operationalises the Guidelines for High Sea Fisheries issued in December 2025 for fleet expansion.

3. IUU PREVENTION:

Enhances collaboration with regional partners to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing through joint scientific assessments.

4. REGIONAL STATURE:

Asserts India's active presence in Indian Ocean resource management and maritime security.

CONCLUSION

SIOFA membership harmonises commercial deep-sea harvesting with global marine conservation norms.

KEY TERMS

SIOFA

UNCLOS

High Seas Fishing

Blue Economy

IUU Fishing

ACTS & ARTICLES

UNCLOS 1982

Guidelines for High Sea Fisheries 2025

05

GS-2 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Russia Ratifies Temporary Employment Agreement with India

WHY IN NEWS

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law ratifying a bilateral agreement with India to facilitate the temporary employment of Indian workers in Russia.

Story so far:

- **20 September 2026** Global Migration Laws and Due Process Protections



STORY 1 Business Standard

Russia Ratifies Agreement with India on Temporary Employment of Citizens

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed into law the ratification of a bilateral agreement facilitating temporary employment of citizens in each other's countries.

The law was passed in Moscow after approval by the State Duma on October 1 and the Federation Council on October 2.

Over 71,000 Indian citizens work in Russia, primarily in construction and textiles, with projections reaching 100,000 by late 2026.

The pact was originally signed during President Putin's state visit to New Delhi in December 2025 alongside an agreement to combat irregular migration.

Establishing structured mobility corridors aligns with India's policy of securing safe, regulated overseas employment for skilled labor.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Covers bilateral international relations, diaspora welfare, labor mobility agreements, and legal migration channels.

PRELIMS FACTS

- Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the law ratifying the India-Russia temporary employment agreement on October 12, 2026.
- Over 71,000 Indian workers are employed in Russia, with the total expected to reach 100,000 by the end of 2026.
- The Russian Labour Ministry estimates Russia will require 3.1 million additional workers by 2030 due to labor shortages.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Bilateral labour mobility agreements channel human capital efficiently, helping partner nations offset demographic shortages through legal mechanisms.

DIMENSIONS

- **Economic Complementarity:** Addresses Russia's projected workforce deficit of 3.1 million workers by 2030 while providing overseas job opportunities.
- **Migrant Protection:** Combining employment pacts with irregular migration treaties protects workers from illegal recruitment fraud.
- **Diaspora Diversification:** Expands Indian workforce migration beyond traditional Gulf markets into Russian manufacturing, construction, and electronics.

Way forward: Standardising skill recognition and pre-departure language training will accelerate integration for Indian workers in non-English speaking markets.

KEY DEFINITIONS

- **Labour Mobility Agreement:** A treaty between two nations regulating conditions, recruitment, and worker rights for cross-border employment.

- **Irregular Migration:** Cross-border movement of people occurring outside the regulatory legal frameworks of origin, transit, or host countries.

PYQ LINK

UPSC Mains 2019 GS-2 question on Indian diaspora and its impact on India's foreign policy and economy.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Analyse the significance of bilateral labour mobility agreements in expanding India's overseas workforce and protecting migrant rights. (150 words)

ANSWER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Bilateral labour agreements convert informal migration into regulated, secure, and economically beneficial workforce mobility corridors.

BODY

1. RUSSIAN RATIFICATION:

President Putin signed the ratification law for the employment agreement concluded during the December 2025 Delhi summit.

2. GROWING WORKFORCE:

Indian worker presence in Russia is projected to expand from 71,000 to 100,000 by late 2026 in construction, textiles, and engineering.

3. DEMOGRAPHIC DEMAND:

Helps address Russia's projected deficit of 3.1 million workers by 2030 while expanding remittance avenues.

4. LEGAL SAFEGUARDS:

Paired with anti-irregular migration pacts to suppress trafficking and protect migrant labor rights.

CONCLUSION

Formal workforce agreements strengthen India's diaspora footprint while reinforcing economic ties with key partner nations.

KEY TERMS

Labour Mobility

India-Russia Relations

Irregular Migration

Bilateral Employment Agreement

ACTS & ARTICLES

Emigration Act, 1983

India-Russia Strategic Partnership Framework

IMF Endorses India's Revised GDP Methodology and Projects 4th-Largest Economy Status by 2027

WHY IN NEWS

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) endorsed MoSPI's revised GDP calculation methodology and projected India to become the world's 4th-largest economy in 2027 with a nominal GDP of \$4.52 trillion.

Story so far:

- **15 October 2026** IMF Upgrades India's FY27 Growth Forecast to 7%
- **14 October 2026** IMF Upgrades India's FY27 GDP Growth Forecast to 7%

STORY 1 Mint

IMF Backs India's Revised GDP Methodology, Projects 4th-Largest Economy Status in 2027

The IMF officially endorsed India's updated GDP calculation methodology, affirming its alignment with international best statistical practices.

Krishna Srinivasan, Director of IMF's Asia and Pacific Department, made the announcement during a media briefing in Bangkok.

IMF upgraded India's 2026 economic growth forecast to 7% and projected nominal GDP to reach \$4.52 trillion in 2027, overtaking Japan.

The technical endorsement followed consultations between the IMF Statistics Department and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

GDP methodology base-year revisions incorporate updated administrative datasets like MCA-21 to capture formal and informal output accurately.

UPSC RELEVANCE

Covers national income accounting, GDP calculation methodologies, economic growth projections, and statistical credibility.

PRELIMS FACTS

- The IMF endorsed MoSPI's revised GDP calculation methodology as consistent with international best practices.
- IMF projects India's nominal GDP to reach \$4.52 trillion in 2027, overtaking Japan as the world's 4th-largest economy.

- The IMF upgraded India's 2026 economic growth forecast to 7%, while Japan's growth is projected at 0.7%.

MAINS FRAMEWORK

Intro: Global endorsement of national income accounting methods enhances investor confidence and reinforces India's macroeconomic credibility.

DIMENSIONS

- **Statistical Integrity:** IMF endorsement refutes doubts surrounding GDP calculations and validates MoSPI's statistical upgrades.
- **Global Ranking:** Achieving a \$4.52 trillion economy by 2027 underlines resilient domestic consumption and investment demand.
- **Methodological Modernisation:** Incorporating updated base years and digital administrative data captures changing economic structures.

Way forward: Regularizing high-frequency informal sector surveys will further refine economic forecasting and national accounts.

KEY DEFINITIONS

- **Gross Domestic Product:** The total monetary value of all finished goods and services produced within a country during a specified period.
- **Nominal GDP:** Gross domestic product calculated at current market prices without adjusting for inflation.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Statistical credibility is foundational for macroeconomic policy. Discuss the significance of the IMF's endorsement of India's revised GDP calculation methodology. (150 words)

ANSWER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

The IMF's validation of MoSPI's GDP accounting methodology solidifies domestic statistical credibility and global investor trust.

BODY

1. GLOBAL ALIGNMENT:

IMF Asia-Pacific Director Krishna Srinivasan confirmed the updated GDP methodology aligns with international statistical standards.

2. GROWTH MILESTONE:

IMF projects India's nominal GDP will reach \$4.52 trillion in 2027, surpassing Japan to become the 4th-largest economy.

3. UPGRADED OUTLOOK:

India's 2026 growth forecast was upgraded to 7%, reflecting strong macroeconomic fundamentals.

4. DATA CREDIBILITY:

Resolves debates regarding growth data accuracy, reassuring global financial markets and rating agencies.

CONCLUSION

Transparent, standardized statistical methods provide a reliable framework for national policy and foreign investment planning.

KEY TERMS

Gross Domestic Product

MoSPI

IMF Projections

Nominal GDP

Base Year Revision

ACTS & ARTICLES

Collection of Statistics Act, 2008

UN System of National Accounts

EDITORIAL OF THE DAY

Can wildlife thrive in India without active human intervention? — The Hindu: Can wildlife thrive in India without active human intervention?

The discussion examines whether India's rich biodiversity can persist through natural processes alone or whether active human intervention, such as reintroductions and intensive management, is essential. It highlights India's unique conservation path where high human density coexists with recovering megafauna populations.

KEY ARGUMENTS

- Reintroduction programmes (e.g., tigers in Buxa, cheetahs in Kuno) demonstrate that human intervention is often necessary to restore species in historically depleted habitats.
- Historical context shows that pre-colonial cultural integration and post-colonial legal protections (like the Wildlife Protection Act) enabled India to conserve wildlife despite economic poverty.
- Active management prevents local extinctions and maintains genetic diversity in fragmented protected areas surrounded by human settlements.

THE OTHER SIDE

- Excessive human intervention and artificial management can disrupt natural ecological balances and evolutionary pressures.
- High-cost reintroduction projects divert finite financial resources away from core habitat protection and community-based co-existence initiatives.

Way forward: A balanced conservation paradigm combining strict habitat protection with science-based, selective active management is required for long-term wildlife survival.

Use it in: GS-3: Environment and Biodiversity Conservation; Essay: Human-Nature Coexistence

Mains practice question: In the context of wildlife conservation in India, critically examine whether active human intervention is essential for species survival or if habitat protection alone is sufficient. (250 words)

PRELIMS IN FOCUS

PLACE Nimmu-Padum-Darcha Road

- A 298-km long strategic road constructed by BRO connecting Nimmu in Leh with Darcha in Himachal Pradesh through Zaskar Valley.
- Provides alternative all-weather connectivity to Ladakh and strengthens strategic mobility for the Armed Forces.

ORGANISATION Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

- A regional fisheries management treaty governing non-migratory marine resources across international waters in the Southern Indian Ocean.
- Provides a legal framework for member states to harvest toothfish, squids, and alfonso while suppressing IUU fishing.

REPORT Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) September 2026

- Released by the National Statistics Office (NSO), MoSPI, tracking employment and unemployment indicators nationwide.
- Reported overall unemployment rate at 5.0%, with rural UR at 4.2% and urban UR at 6.9% for September 2026.

TERM Foreign Exchange Risk Reserve (FERR)

- A reserve requirement mandated by the Reserve Bank of India for authorised dealer banks on specified currency derivative contracts.
- Applies a 20% reserve requirement on rupee-linked current account hedging derivatives exceeding \$2 million notional value.

SCHEME Weather Information Network and Data System (WINDS)

- A initiative by the Ministry of Agriculture to build a nationwide network of automatic weather stations and rain gauges.
- Supplies hyper-local weather data to calculate crop damage and streamline insurance payouts under PM Fasal Bima Yojana.

Practice MCQs (UPSC Prelims)

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

SOCIAL ISSUES

Cabinet Approves Continuation and Restructuring of National Social Assistance Programme

Cabinet Restructures Social Assistance Schemes with ₹53,428 Crore Outlay for Five Years

Q1. With reference to the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) recently approved for continuation till 2030-31, consider the following statements: 1. The overarching scheme has been renamed as Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana. 2. The benchmark disability threshold for receiving disability pension was reduced from 80% to 40%. 3. The minimum age eligibility for disability pension is now set at 18 years. 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 |

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Law Ministry Mobilises NLUs to Address Criminal Case Backlogs in 100 Hotspot Districts

Law Ministry Enlists 19 National Law Universities to Target Case Pendency in Hotspot Districts

Q2. The Ministry of Law and Justice has partnered with National Law Universities (NLUs) to address criminal case pendency. In this context, consider the following statements: 1. A total of 100 hotspot judicial districts account for over 50% of total pendency in India's district courts. 2. Total pending cases across all courts in India currently exceed 5.8 crore. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| A. 1 only | B. 2 only |
| C. Both 1 and 2 | D. Neither 1 nor 2 |

INFRASTRUCTURE & ENERGY

Government Approves Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority (ITLA)

Cabinet Approves Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority for National Master Plan

Q3. What is the primary mandate of the Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority (ITLA) approved by the Union Cabinet?

- | | |
|--|--|
| A. Operating public transport buses across inter-state corridors | B. Serving as an apex institution for research, project appraisal, and preparing a Long-Term |
|--|--|

C. Managing airport security and customs clearance for international freight

National Transport Master Plan

D. Regulating fuel tariffs for commercial haulage trucks

ENVIRONMENT

India Accedes to Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

Government Approves Accession to Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement

Q4. India recently approved accession to the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA). SIOFA primarily applies to which category of marine resources?

- A. Highly migratory tuna stocks in coastal EEZs B. Non-migratory fish stocks in international waters of the Southern Indian Ocean
- C. Inland freshwater fisheries along river basins D. Coral reef species located strictly within Territorial Waters

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Russia Ratifies Temporary Employment Agreement with India

Russia Ratifies Agreement with India on Temporary Employment of Citizens

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the India-Russia temporary employment agreement: 1. Russia has ratified the bilateral agreement to facilitate temporary employment of citizens in each other's territories. 2. The agreement was accompanied by a concurrent pact on cooperation to combat irregular migration. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2 D. Neither 1 nor 2

ECONOMY

IMF Endorses India's Revised GDP Methodology and Projects 4th-Largest Economy Status by 2027

IMF Backs India's Revised GDP Methodology, Projects 4th-Largest Economy Status in 2027

Q6. According to recent projections by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in which year is India projected to overtake Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy?

- A. 2025 B. 2026
- C. 2027 D. 2030

Answer Key — Practice MCQs

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

Q1: A

Q2: C

Q3: B

Q4: B

Q5: C

Q6: C

Q1 Option A · 1 and 2 only

Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Statement 3 is incorrect because the minimum age criterion for divyangjan pension under the approved revisions is now set since birth, not 18 years.

Q2 Option C · Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct according to Ministry of Law and Justice data. 100 hotspot districts account for over half of district court pendency out of a national total exceeding 5.8 crore cases.

Q3

Option B · Serving as an apex institution for research, project appraisal, and preparing a Long-Term National Transport Master Plan

ITLA is established as an apex body for transport and logistics research, project appraisal, monitoring, and preparing a comprehensive Long-Term National Transport Master Plan.

Q4

Option B · Non-migratory fish stocks in international waters of the Southern Indian Ocean

SIOFA provides a regional framework for harvesting non-migratory marine resources (such as squids, toothfish, and alfonsino) across high seas/international waters of the Southern Indian Ocean.

Q5 Option C · Both 1 and 2

Both statements are correct. President Putin signed the ratification law following approval by the Duma and Council, alongside a concurrent migration pact signed during the December 2025 Delhi summit.

Q6 Option C · 2027

The IMF projected that India will overtake Japan as the world's fourth-largest economy in 2027, with nominal GDP reaching \$4.52 trillion.

TOPIC 03 · GOVERNMENT APPROVES INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS AUTHORITY (ITLA)

UPSC Prelims 14 Oct 2026

Consider the following statements regarding the Integrated Transport and Logistics Authority (ITLA):

1. It was approved by the Union Cabinet on 6 October 2026 as an apex institution for transport planning.
 2. It is tasked with preparing a comprehensive National Transport Master Plan.
 3. It works independently and replaces the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A)** 1 only **B)** 1 and 2 only
C) 2 and 3 only **D)** 1, 2 and 3

TOPIC 06 · IMF ENDORSES INDIA'S REVISED GDP METHODOLOGY AND PROJECTS 4TH-LARGEST ECONOMY STATUS BY 2027

UPSC Prelims 14 Oct 2026

According to the IMF's World Economic Outlook released in October 2026, what is the upgraded GDP growth forecast for India for FY27?

- A)** 6.4% **B)** 6.7%
C) 7.0% **D)** 7.8%