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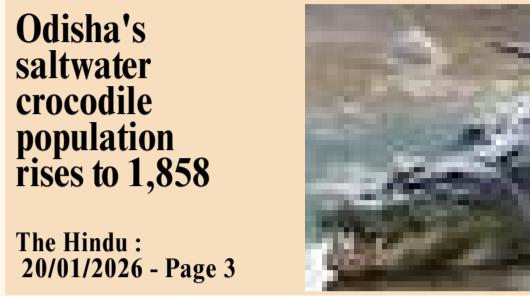
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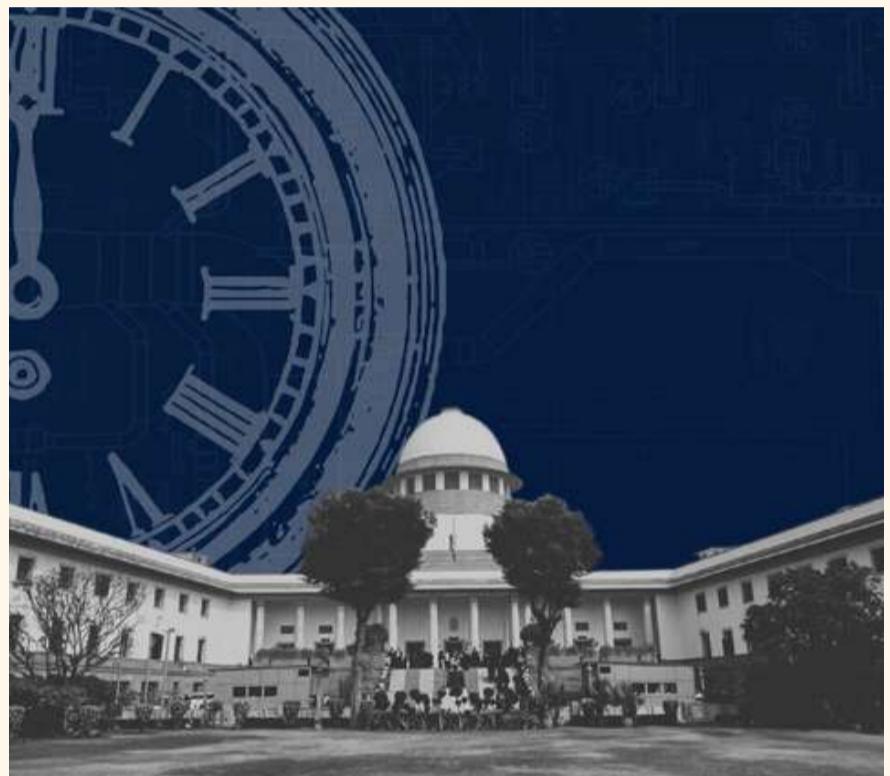
'Finger on the trigger': Iran Guards chief cautions U.S.

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Is SIR about illegal immigration, asks SC

The Supreme Court questioned whether the Election Commission had clearly stated illegal cross-border immigration as a reason for conducting the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and verifying the citizenship of registered voters. The court's query came at a time when nearly 6.5 crore names were removed from draft electoral rolls published in nine States and three Union Territories. In Uttar Pradesh alone, around 3.26 crore voters received notices asking them to attend hearings and show citizenship credentials.



The Supreme Court noted that the Election Commission had mentioned only "frequent migration" as a reason for carrying out the SIR. The Court further observed that if the examination of citizenship under the 2003 amendments to the Citizenship Act was a reason for the SIR in 2025, this reason was not clearly stated in the official SIR notification.

India absent as Trump rolls out his Board of Peace with 19 countries in attendance



The U.S. President inaugurated the new "Board of Peace" to lead efforts to maintain a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war. He said the body could grow into a global platform and claimed that 59 countries had signed on. However, representatives of only 19 countries and the U.S. were present at the event held during the World Economic Forum in Davos. Several U.S. allies did not attend the ceremony.

India was among the countries not present, though the Prime Minister had been invited. India has not yet taken a decision on joining. Pakistan, Turkiye, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are among the countries that accepted the invitation.

The U.S. President said the initiative is meant for the world and could later be extended to other situations after succeeding in Gaza. During the event, a Palestinian official overseeing a committee to govern Gaza under U.S. supervision announced that the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt will open in both directions next week.

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Questionnaire for first phase of Census notified

Census 2027

- First-time use of Mobile Apps for data collection.
- Census Monitoring & Management Portal with multilingual support.
- Online self-enumeration for the public for both phases of Census.
- Code Directory to streamline data processing.
- Training of more than 35 lakh field functionaries.
- In-built validation check mechanism

The Registrar-General and Census Commissioner of India has notified 33 questions for the first phase of Census 2027, which will be conducted from April 1 to September 30. The earlier Census 2021 notification had 31 questions but was delayed due to COVID-19 and never conducted. The new notification splits the single question on floor, wall and roof into three separate questions on the main material used.

According to the government, Census 2027 will be the first digital Census, the first to count caste, and the first to allow self-enumeration through a portal. The second phase, Population Enumeration, will be held in February 2027, and its questions are yet to be notified.

The first phase will collect details on housing conditions, household size, amenities, assets, fuel, water, sanitation, and communication facilities, along with a mobile number for Census use. A pre-test for this phase was conducted from November 10 to 30, 2025, in selected areas across the country.

Top Maoist leader among 15 members killed in Jharkhand

Anal, also known as Patiram Manjhi or Toofan Da, a senior leader and central committee member of the banned CPI (Maoist), was among 15 Maoists killed in a special operation in the Saranda forest area of West Singhbhum district in Jharkhand. The joint operation, named "Medhaburu," was carried out by COBRA, Jharkhand Jaguar, CRPF and district police. Around 6.30 a.m., the Maoists fired at the security forces, who retaliated in self-defence. After the encounter, 15 bodies and a large quantity of weapons were recovered.

Preliminary investigation identified 11 of the dead, including Anal, who carried a reward of ₹2.1 crore in Jharkhand, ₹1.2 crore in Odisha and ₹15 lakh by the NIA. There were 149 cases against him in Giridih district. He was active in the Saranda area since 2022. The Union Home Minister called the operation a major success and said the government is committed to end Naxalism before March 31, 2026.

Red Corridor to Naxal-Free Bharat: (2014–2025)

- Affected districts reduced: from 126 (2014) → 11 (2025)
- Most-affected districts: from 36 → 3
- 12,000+ km roads built
- 586 fortified police stations
- 361 new security camps
- 8,500+ mobile towers operational
- ₹92 crore worth assets seized
- 317 Naxals neutralised (including top leaders)
- 800+ arrested
- ~2,000 surrendered

Trump withdraws tariffs after NATO 'agrees to Greenland framework'

The U.S. President announced the cancellation of proposed tariffs on eight European countries, including Denmark, which had been earlier linked to discussions on Greenland. The tariffs were to begin at 10% from February 1 and rise to 25% by June 2026. The decision was announced after a meeting with the NATO Secretary General in Davos. According to the U.S. President, the U.S. and NATO have formed a framework for a future arrangement concerning Greenland and the Arctic region.

The countries concerned had earlier sent small numbers of troops to Greenland. The U.S. President stated that force would not be used to annex the territory. He also referred to discussions on a multi-layered missile and air defence system linked to Greenland.

European countries have expressed concern over developments related to Greenland. The European Parliament had earlier suspended approval of an EU-U.S. trade agreement concluded in 2025. The U.S. Vice-President, Secretary of State, and a special envoy have been named to handle further negotiations. Discussions on the exact terms of the framework are ongoing.



'Finger on the trigger': Iran Guards chief cautions U.S.



Following mass protests in Iran, the commander of the Revolutionary Guards stated that the force was on high alert and warned Israel and the United States against any miscalculations, referring to lessons from the recent 12-day war in June 2025. He said the warnings were based on past experiences. The U.S. President stated that the United States had earlier carried out strikes on Iranian uranium enrichment sites to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, a claim which Iran has denied. He said such a development could not be allowed. At the same time, he said Iran appeared interested in talks and that the United States was open to discussions, while also keeping open the option of further military action in the future.

Iranian authorities released their first official death toll from the protests, stating that **3,117** people had been killed.

Odisha's saltwater crocodile population rises to 1,858

Odisha's estuarine crocodile population has increased by 32 and reached 1,858, according to the State Forest and Environment Department. This year, a pilot drone-based survey was used for the first time for estimation. The annual crocodile census was conducted from January 8 to 10. Data released by the office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) showed that a total of 1,858 crocodiles were counted during the survey.

The population includes 531 hatchlings, 442 yearlings, 365 juveniles, 167 sub-adults and 353 adult crocodiles. This shows that different age groups were carefully recorded in the survey. The department also said that the highest number of crocodiles, 1,424, were spotted in the Kanika Wildlife Range. The increase in numbers and the use of drone-based survey indicate an improved method of monitoring wildlife. The survey helps the State government understand the present status of the crocodile population and track changes in their numbers over time.



Faster warming, faster breeding: Climate change upends Antarctic penguins



A study says warming temperatures in Antarctica are forcing penguins to breed earlier, creating serious problems for some species. From 2012 to 2022, temperatures in breeding areas rose by 3°C, and three penguin species began breeding about two weeks earlier than before. Scientists used remote cameras to study colonies from 2011 to 2021 and found this to be the fastest change in breeding timing seen in any vertebrate.

The three species are Adelie, chinstrap and gentoo penguins. Gentoo penguins have a more varied diet, while Adelie and chinstrap mainly eat krill. Gentoo breeding has shifted earlier faster, causing overlap and competition for food and nesting areas. Chinstrap penguins are declining globally, and models show they may go extinct before the end of the century. Adelies are also doing very poorly in the Antarctic Peninsula. Warming reduces sea ice and changes plankton growth, affecting the entire food chain. Earlier commercial fishing further reduces food available for penguins.

Raise focus on critical, strategic minerals: Ministry of Mines

The Ministry of Mines plans to strongly increase mineral exploration between 2026 and 2031, with main focus on strategic and critical minerals, said Piyush Goyal, Secretary of the Ministry of Mines, at the 65th meeting of the Central Geological Programming Board. The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has been asked to raise the number of exploration projects to 500, with at least 300 projects focused on strategic or critical minerals.

He urged the Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd., private exploration agencies and State Directorates of Geology and Mining to speed up exploration work. He said the entire mapping of the country, especially important geopotential areas, should be completed by 2030 through coordinated efforts of all stakeholders.

He also asked States and private agencies to use funds from the National Mineral Exploration Trust to reduce dependence on Central and State budgets. He noted that GSI has taken up projects with private explorers, but expressed dissatisfaction with their slow progress. He said the country is missing opportunities and, in the present geopolitical context, there is no time to waste.



Net FDI negative for fourth month in a row in Nov. 2025

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

- Investment through the mode other than the stock exchange is called foreign direct investment in India.
- There is no prescribed size to treat an investment as foreign direct investment in India.

FDI includes the following:

- Shares acquired by way of IPO
- Shares acquired by way of preferential allotment
- Shares acquired by way of offer for sale through private arrangement
- Transfer of shares by way of offer for sale through private arrangement

In all these purchases there is direct contact between the securities buyer and the seller company.

India's net foreign direct investment (FDI) remained negative for the fourth consecutive month in November 2025, with outflows exceeding inflows by \$446 million, according to RBI data. This happened mainly due to high repatriation and disinvestment by foreign companies operating in India. Gross FDI inflows stood at \$6.4 billion in November 2025, 22.5% higher than November 2024, but slightly lower than October and September. Japan, Singapore and the U.S. contributed more than 75% of total inflows. About 75% of FDI went to financial services, followed by manufacturing and retail trade.

Repatriation and disinvestment rose to a five-month high of \$5.3 billion. Outward FDI by Indian companies fell to \$1.5 billion from \$3.2 billion in October. Singapore, Mauritius, the U.S. and the U.K. accounted for more than half of total outward FDI. More than 70% went to manufacturing and services. Net FPI has also remained negative in 2025–26 due to trade uncertainty and a weakening rupee.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) The people of India agitated against the arrival of the Simon Commission because (2013)

- (a) Indians never wanted the review of the working of the Act of 1919
- (b) Simon Commission recommended the abolition of Dyarchy (Diarchy) in the provinces
- (c) there was no Indian member in the Simon Commission
- (d) the Simon Commission suggested the partition of the country

2) In the context of Colonial India, Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Kumar Sehgal and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon are remembered as (2021)

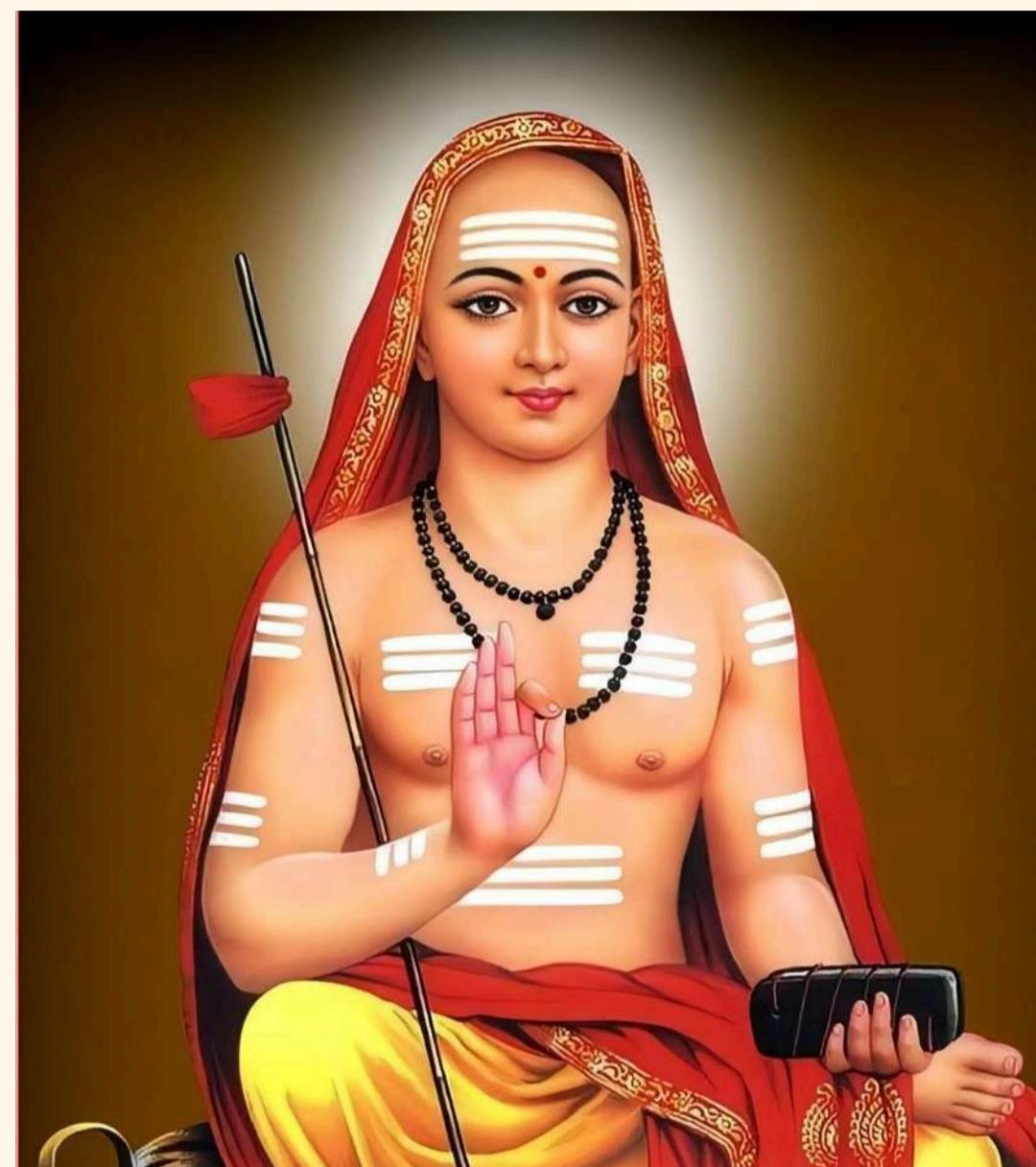
- (a) leaders of Swadeshi and Boycott Movement
- (b) members of the Interim Government in 1946
- (c) members of the Drafting Committee in the Constituent Assembly
- (d) officers of the Indian National Army

PRELIMS 2026 COUNTDOWN

121 DAYS TO GO



HERITAGE Shankaracharya



Spirituality deals with metaphysical and non-material aspects of life, unlike material life which is concerned with tangible and physical things. Indian philosophical schools have generally criticised worldly pleasures and considered liberation from the cycle of birth and death as the highest goal of human life. They argued that a person is not defined by the body but by the soul, and therefore suggested different paths to free the soul from bondage. Shankaracharya supported the path of Jnana. He believed that gaining knowledge about questions like "Who am I?", "What am I?" and "What am I bound to?" can help a person attain salvation.

Shankaracharya taught that Brahma is the ultimate reality, without attributes, and everything else is Maya (unreal). He emphasised that Atma (self) is identical to Brahma, and both are eternal and indestructible.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Answer is option C

Simon Commission Background: • The Simon Commission, officially known as the Indian Statutory Commission, was constituted in 1927 by the British government to review the working of the Government of India Act, 1919. It was chaired by Sir John Simon and consisted entirely of British representation of Indians.

Reason for Agitation: The exclusion of Indian members was perceived as an insult to Indian self-respect and a denial of their right to participate in decisions affecting their own governance. This led to widespread protests across India, with the slogan "Simon Go Back" becoming popular during the demonstrations.

Prominent leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose, opposed the commission, as did moderates like M.A. Jinnah.



2) Answer is option d

Indian National Army (INA): • Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Kumar Sehgal, and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon were prominent officers of the Indian National Army (INA), led by Subhas Chandra Bose.

The INA sought to overthrow British rule in India with the support of Axis powers during World War II.

Significance of These Officers:

- These officers were captured by the British after the defeat of the INA and were put on trial at the Red Fort Trials (1945–46) in Delhi.
- The trials stirred widespread nationalist sentiments across India, with mass protests demanding their release.
- Their trial and subsequent support from Indian leaders became a rallying point for the independence movement.

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When Freedom Was Taken, Not Given



India's beloved Netaji, Subhas Chandra Bose, shines brightly in the history of the freedom struggle for his valour, firm will, and uncompromising resolve to achieve independence. Initially a prominent member of the Indian National Congress, he gradually came to differ with its conventional methods of struggle. He believed in more direct and organised action, a belief reflected in his words,

“Freedom is not given, it is taken.”

A towering figure of his time, Netaji's efforts to mobilise international support brought India's freedom movement to global attention. He later formed the Indian National Army (INA) with volunteers and prisoners of war, and these forces fought against colonial rule during the Second World War. His call for young people to dedicate themselves to the nation still echoes among the youth. He is remembered as a symbol of heroism, unity, and patriotic fervour.

Every year, January 23 is observed as Parakram Diwas (Day of Valour) in his honour, celebrating his fearless spirit and enduring legacy.