Time for nations facing tariffs to unionise: Lula
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3 JeM terrorists killed in Kishtwar: Army
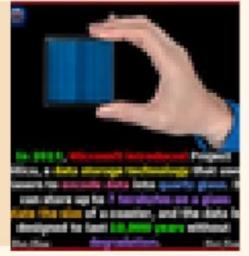THE HINDU : 23/02/2026 - Page 1

Indigenous tetanus and adult diphtheria vaccine launched; Nadda calls it momentous
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Laser pulses turn glass into super-dense data store
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Trump's Section 122 Tariff Pivot

On February 20, 2026, the US Supreme Court struck down President Trump's global tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977. Hours later, Trump announced a 10% tariff on all imports using Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, effective February 24. He later raised it to 15%, the maximum allowed under this provision, via a social media post. The White House fact sheet excludes critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, energy, some electronics, agriculture like beef, automobiles, aerospace, Section 232 goods, and USMCA free trade imports. Trump stated these could be more impactful than the previous tariffs.

Section 122 empowers presidents to impose tariffs up to 15% for 150 days to address balance-of-payments crises, echoing Nixon's 1971 use of the Trading with the Enemy Act during currency turmoil. It tests separation of powers, as courts limit executive overreach while Congress delegates emergency tools. For global trade, it pressures partners amid WTO rules, risking retaliation and supply chain disruptions. Developing nations like India face export challenges, urging diversified markets. The shift highlights US protectionism's evolution, balancing domestic industry with multilateral norms.

8% of voters removed from poll rolls after SIR in 9 States, U.T.s

Nearly 8% of voters have been deleted from electoral rolls across nine States and Union Territories after the second phase of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise. The final lists were published for Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Andaman and Nicobar, Chhattisgarh, and Goa. Gujarat's list came out on February 17, while Puducherry and Lakshadweep released theirs on February 14. The total voters dropped from 21.45 crore on October 27 to 19.75 crore, with 1.70 crore deletions or 7.93% reduction. Gujarat saw the highest deletions at 13.4%, followed by Chhattisgarh at 11.77% and Goa at 10.76%. Kerala had the lowest at 3.22%.

Among UTs, Andaman and Nicobar recorded 16.87% deletions, while Lakshadweep had just 0.36%. Final lists for Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu are pending. Bengal's is due on February 28 after Supreme Court intervention due to trust issues between the EC and state government. Uttar Pradesh's list is set for April 10, and Tamil Nadu's for February 23. Accurate voter lists ensure free and fair elections, removing ghosts, duplicates, and ineligible voters.

Finally left out

Combined number of voters in nine States and U.T.s fell from **21,45,62,215** to **19,75,33,701** after the SIR, with net deletions of **1,70,28,514** or **7.93%**

Share of deleted voters:

- Andaman and Nicobar: **16.87%**
- Gujarat: **13.40%**
- Chhattisgarh: **11.77%**
- Goa: **10.76%**
- Puducherry: **7.5%**
- Madhya Pradesh: **5.96%**
- Rajasthan: **5.74%**
- Kerala: **3.22%**
- Lakshadweep: **0.36%**

The SIR strengthens democracy by enhancing transparency and credibility of the electoral process. High deletions highlight issues like migration and deaths but raise concerns over genuine voter exclusion. Supreme Court involvement in Bengal underscores centre-state tensions in poll management. The exercise supports the Election Commission's push for clean rolls ahead of future polls, promoting accountability and public trust in institutions.

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THE PALA CIVIL TIMES

NATIONAL

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ED identifies eight priority areas for coordinated action

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) held its 34th quarterly conference of zonal officers in Guwahati from February 19 to 21. The meeting was headed by ED Director Rahul Navin. The agency identified eight focus areas for coordinated action against financial crimes. These include tracking foreign assets, misuse of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), trade-based money laundering, cyber-fraud, illegal online gambling, drug financing, share market manipulation, and foreign interference through illicit funding. Zonal heads were directed to intensify efforts in tracing crime proceeds parked abroad, especially in places like Dubai and Singapore. They were also told to monitor professional money laundering hidden as trade and scrutinise collusions in IBC cases involving corporate debtors, resolution professionals, and creditors. Further, officials must crack down on digital arrest scams, organised cyberfraud syndicates, online betting networks, payment gateways, mule accounts, drug traffickers' hawala links, and foreign funding for destabilising activities.

This development holds significance for governance and internal security. It reflects the ED's proactive strategy to combat evolving economic offences amid rising digital threats and global financial flows. By prioritising cross-border cooperation and institutional partnerships, the ED aims to strengthen India's enforcement framework under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The focus on IBC misuse and trade-based laundering safeguards economic stability and investor confidence. Targeting foreign interference and drug financing enhances national security against anti-national elements. Overall, these measures promote transparency, deter white-collar crimes, and bolster India's global standing in financial intelligence sharing.

3 JeM terrorists killed in Kishtwar: Army

Security forces gunned down three Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists in an encounter in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday. The operation was part of Operation Trashi-I, launched in January against terrorists in the Chatroo belt. Troops from the Army's White Knight Corps, J&K Police, and CRPF jointly cordoned off the area and engaged the terrorists hiding in a hut around 11 a.m. in challenging terrain. The hut caught fire during the intense gunfight, charring the terrorists' bodies beyond recognition. Preliminary probes suggest one was Saifullah, a JeM commander active in J&K for five years. Forces recovered two AK-47 rifles and war-like stores from the site. Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi commended the troops for their tactical precision, synergy, and resolve. This marks the fourth major encounter in Kishtwar this year, following a soldier's death on January 18 and another terrorist killed on February 4.

This incident underscores the significance of coordinated counter-terrorism efforts for internal security and governance in Jammu and Kashmir. It highlights seamless inter-agency collaboration under challenging conditions, reinforcing zero-tolerance towards terrorism. Operation Trashi-I demonstrates proactive intelligence-driven operations to deny sanctuary to militants in remote areas. The neutralisation of a top JeM commander disrupts terror networks linked to cross-border infiltration. Overall, such actions support lasting peace, protect high mountain passes, and strengthen national resolve against threats to stability

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INTERNATIONAL

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Time for nations facing tariffs to unionise: Lula

During his recent four-day visit to Delhi, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva urged countries hit by U.S. tariffs to form "negotiating blocs" instead of dealing with the U.S. individually. This came after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down President Trump's global tariffs, including 50% duties on high exporters like Brazil and India. Lula, drawing from his trade union past, compared nations to workers bargaining with a powerful employer. He stressed equal treatment for all countries and no interference. Lula plans a Washington visit next month to discuss issues like BRICS ties, Iran trade, and Russian oil imports. India and Brazil signed pacts on critical minerals, steel mining, and digital cooperation during the trip.

This matters for international relations as it promotes collective bargaining by Global South nations against U.S. trade pressure, echoing union strategies for fair deals. Lula's push for UN Security Council reform, backing permanent seats for India, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, Nigeria, and Egypt, highlights demands for a more representative global body. He noted the UN diagnoses issues but lacks action power due to outdated structure. Lula also praised India's 2005 reserves lesson, which helped Brazil build $360 billion reserves and shift from IMF debtor to creditor. These steps strengthen South-South ties amid tariff tensions.

South Korea condemns Japan for hosting event over disputed islands

South Korea protested Japan's Takeshima Day event on Sunday, organised by Shimane prefecture to commemorate the disputed islands called Dokdo in South Korea. A vice-minister from Japan's Cabinet Office attended the ceremony. South Korea's foreign ministry strongly objected to it as an unjust sovereignty claim over its territory. The ministry summoned Japan's top diplomat in Seoul to lodge the protest. It urged Japan to abolish the event immediately. South Korea asserts Dokdo as its sovereign territory based on history, geography, and international law. This follows Friday's protest against Japan's foreign minister's parliamentary claim over the islets. South Korea controls the islets, which Japan also claims. They offer rich fishing grounds and potential natural gas deposits worth billions.

This dispute holds significance for international relations and regional stability in East Asia. It stems from Japan's colonial rule over Korea from 1910 to 1945, fueling historical tensions between the neighbours. Such conflicts hinder cooperation on trade, security, and resource sharing. They test diplomatic norms like peaceful resolution under international law. For global governance, the issue highlights challenges in managing overlapping maritime claims. Both nations must balance domestic sentiments with dialogue to avoid escalation and promote peace.

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HERITAGE

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Unearthing the silent splendour of Hoysalas

Karnataka's Hassan, Mandya and Mysuru districts house lesser-known Hoysala-era monuments from the 11th to 13th centuries. These temples and shrines showcase the dynasty's devotion and sculptural skill beyond famous sites like Belur, Halebidu and Somanathapura. Built from soft soapstone, they stand on star-shaped platforms with sanctums in ekakuta, dvikuta or trikuta layouts. Walls feature carvings of dancers, pillars and epic friezes.

Temples of Koravangala village

The Nageshwara and Govindeshwara temples date to 1160 CE and mark early Hoysala style. The Bucheshwara temple, built in 1173 CE by Buchi for Veera Ballala II, represents the village's peak and stands restored today. Srinathpur, named after fast bowler Javagal Srinath, was a Hoysala commercial hub under King Vira Someshwara. Its Lakshminarasimha temple from 1250 CE is a trikuta shrine with fine elephant carvings and a Vijayanagara gateway.

Doddagaddavalli's Lakshmidevi temple from 1114 CE is one of the earliest Hoysala structures. Built by merchant Sahaja Devi, it has a unique four-shrine plan for Lakshmidevi, Shiva, Vishnu and Kali. A rare Mahakali shrine with skeletal betala guardians hints at tantric roots. Hulikere Kalyani, a 1160 CE stepwell near Halebidu, shows Hoysala water architecture skill. Commissioned by official Lattayya for Narasimha I, local lore links it to Queen Shantala Devi's bath.

The Jain Basadi(shrine) complex near Hoysaleshwara temple includes Parshvanatha (1133 CE), Shantinatha (1192 CE) and Adinatha Basadis. These reflect Jain simplicity and clarity. These sites reveal the Hoysala empire's vast cultural reach through enduring stone craft.
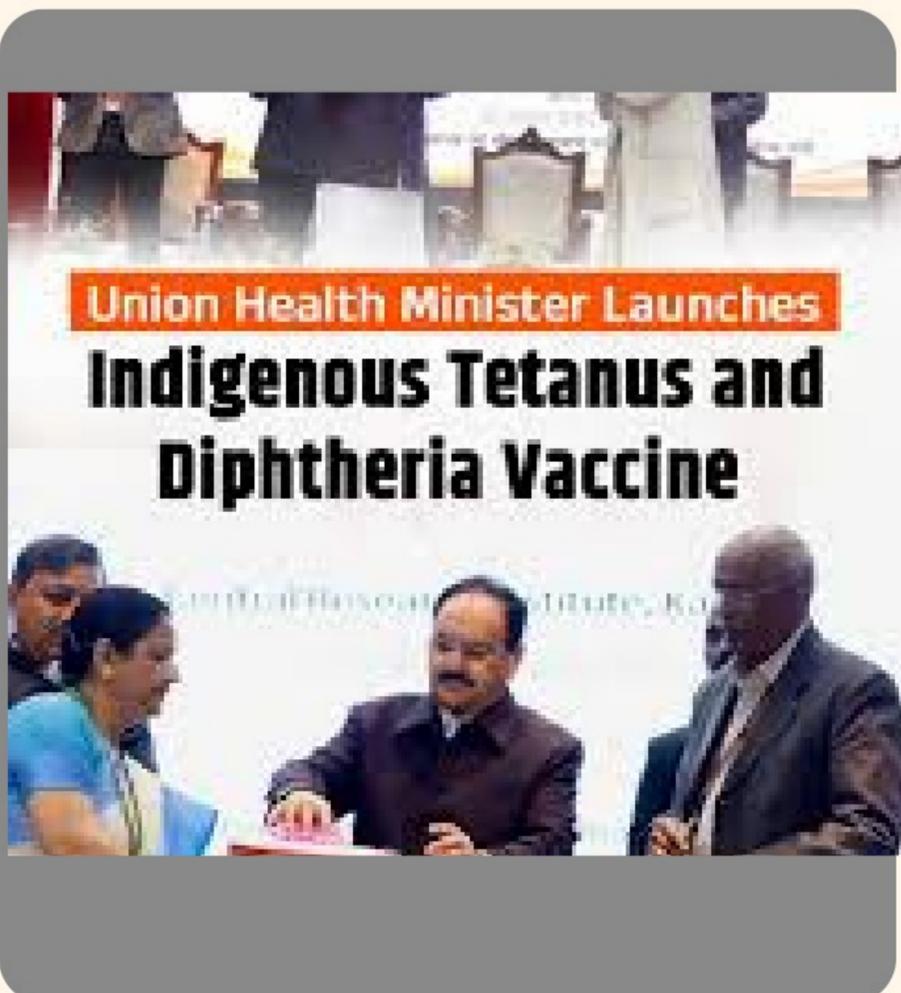
Significance for History and Culture

These monuments highlight Hoysala architecture's spread across rural Karnataka, blending Dravidian and Vesara styles. Soapstone carvings depict mythology, dance and daily life, offering insights into medieval society, trade and religion. Early temples like Doddagaddavalli show evolving temple plans from simple to ornate trikuta designs. Jain basadis underscore religious tolerance alongside Hinduism. Water structures like Hulikere Kalyani reflect engineering for drought-prone regions. This piece of architectural history illustrate South Indian feudal kingdoms' patronage of art, economy through commercial centres like Srinathpur, and women's roles as donors like Sahaja Devi and Shantala Devi.

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SCIENCE

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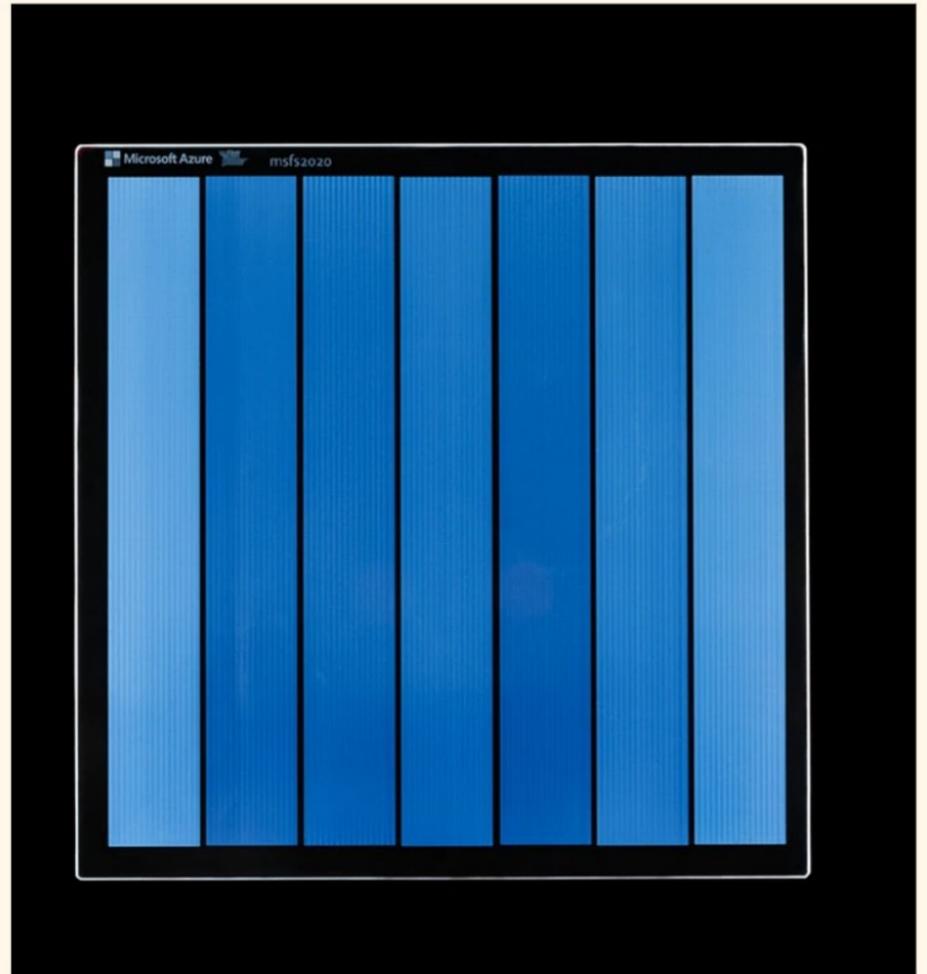www.civilservicepala.org

Indigenous tetanus and adult diphtheria vaccine launched.

Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda launched India's indigenously manufactured tetanus and adult diphtheria (Td) vaccine at the Central Research Institute in Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh on Saturday. He described the event as a momentous occasion for national health security. The vaccine is now supplied under the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP). CRI will provide 55 lakh doses by April this year. Production will scale up in coming years to support the programme. Mr. Nadda highlighted India's role as the world's pharmacy and a top vaccine maker. He noted that global vaccine development often takes decades, like tetanus or Japanese Encephalitis vaccines. In contrast, India created two COVID-19 vaccines in nine months and gave over 220 crore doses.

This launch holds significance for public health governance in India. It boosts self-reliance in vaccine production and cuts import dependence. CRI becomes the first government institute to meet Good Manufacturing Practices standards, modernising public sector units. UIP, the world's largest immunisation drive, now covers 11 vaccines against 12 diseases for millions. Such steps strengthen health infrastructure, ensure affordable vaccines, and enhance epidemic readiness. India's rapid innovation sets a global example in equitable health access.

Union Health Minister Launches Indigenous Tetanus and Diphtheria Vaccine
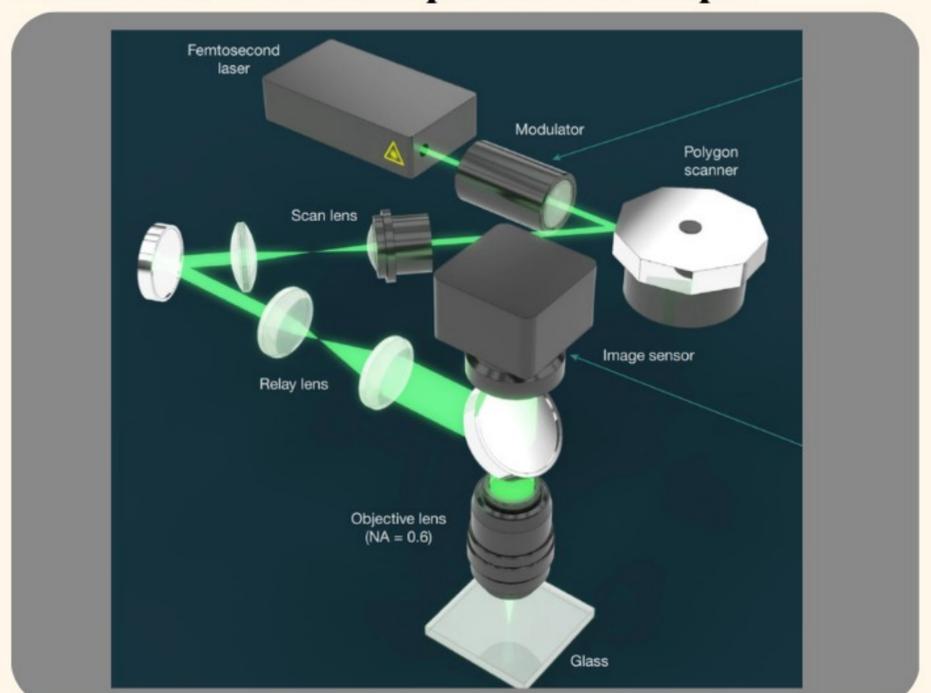
Laser pulses turn glass into super-dense data store

Microsoft researchers developed Project Silica, a new data storage method using a thin 2-mm glass plate. They fire short femtosecond laser pulses to create 3D pixels called voxels in hundreds of layers inside the glass. Each voxel can store more than one bit of data. A 120 mm x 120 mm plate holds up to 4.8 TB of information. The data remains stable for billions of years in borosilicate glass. Researchers read the stored data using microscopes and machine learning algorithms.

Governance angle

This breakthrough offers ultra-durable storage resistant to water, heat, and magnetic fields, unlike traditional hard drives that degrade over time. Governments can preserve critical records like census data, land registries, and digital archives for millennia without repeated backups.

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UPSC ESSENTIAL

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PRELIMS CORNER :

Q) Which one of the following is not the most likely measure the Government/RBI takes to stop the slide of Indian rupee? (2019)

a) Curbing imports of non-essential goods and promoting exports

b) Encouraging Indian borrowers to issue rupee denominated Masala Bonds

c) Easing conditions relating to external commercial borrowing

d) Following an expansionary monetary policy

Q) The money multiplier in an economy increases with which one of the following? (2019)

a) Increase in the cash reserve ratio

b) Increase in the banking habit of the population

c) Increase in the statutory liquidity ratio

d) Increase in the population of the country

LIFE SCIENCE
The biology of belief, optimism, and good health

Optimism is a positive outlook that drives achievement, as Helen Keller noted. It involves expecting good outcomes despite challenges. Neuroscientist Tali Sharot estimates 80% of people are mildly optimistic. This trait shapes how we view the future by amplifying positive possibilities and downplaying negatives. Evolution favours it because it boosts survival. In ancient times, an optimistic person facing drought would hunt for food despite low odds. This effort increases actual success chances over lethargy. Dispositional optimism works best as a general positive mindset. Optimists bounce back from setbacks by thinking tomorrow offers new chances, unlike pessimists.

This matters for governance and personal resilience in public service. Optimism enhances health, with studies linking it to stronger hearts and brain protection via BDNF in ageing. Tools like the Revised Life Orientation Test measure it through statements on expecting the best in uncertainty. For UPSC aspirants and administrators, it builds perseverance amid policy failures or crises. It aids decision-making by focusing on solutions over despair. In polity, optimistic leaders inspire public trust and drive reforms. Neuroscientifically, the brain's rACC region prioritises good news, fostering resilience essential for long-term societal progress and effective governance.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Answer is option d

When the Indian rupee depreciates, the Government and RBI aim to stabilise it by reducing demand for foreign currency and boosting inflows. Curbing non-essential imports like gold or luxury goods lowers dollar demand, while promoting exports like IT services brings dollars in. Encouraging Masala Bonds lets Indian firms raise rupees abroad, reducing external debt pressure without direct dollar outflows. Easing external commercial borrowing rules attracts foreign capital to fund rupee needs.

Expansionary monetary policy, however, worsens depreciation. It involves cutting interest rates or increasing money supply to spur growth. Lower rates make rupee assets less attractive to foreign investors, triggering capital outflows. More liquidity fuels imports and inflation, further eroding rupee value against stronger currencies like the dollar. RBI typically responds with contractionary tools instead—hiking rates, selling forex reserves, or forward contracts to defend the currency.

This question tests understanding of exchange rate dynamics central to UPSC economics. Depreciation raises import costs, widens current account deficits, and fuels inflation. Effective measures prioritise forex stability over short-term growth stimulus. In 2013 and 2018 crises, RBI raised rates and tightened liquidity to stem rupee falls near 70/USD. Aspirants must grasp how policy tools balance growth with external stability for India's import-dependent economy.

2) Answer is option b

The money multiplier measures how much the money supply expands from the monetary base through bank lending.

An increase in banking habit lowers the currency-deposit ratio (c), as people deposit more in banks instead of holding cash. Banks then lend more, amplifying the multiplier effect through repeated deposit-loan cycles.

Options a) and c) raise reserve ratios, increasing the reserve ratio (r) (CRR/SLR) and shrinking the multiplier. RBI hikes CRR/SLR to contract money supply. Option d) boosts population but doesn't directly alter c or r. It may indirectly raise deposits yet lacks precise linkage to multiplier mechanics. This UPSC question (2019) tests core banking concepts. Greater banking penetration, as seen in India's Jan Dhan revolution, enhances financial inclusion, broadens the deposit base, and improves monetary transmission. For governance, a higher multiplier aids economic growth via credit expansion but risks inflation if unchecked. Aspirants must grasp how public behaviour directly shapes RBI's policy tools for economic stability. Understanding this balance remains key for effective monetary management in India's diverse economy.

UPSC PRELIMS 2026 COUNTDOWN 90 DAYS TO GO

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OPPORTUNITIES

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RRC Western Railway Apprentice Recruitment 2026
- Eligibility: 10th Pass / ITI
- Stipend: ₹7,000 – ₹9,000/month
- Last Date: 23 March 2026

No. of Vacancies: 5349

UPSC CAPF Assistant Commandant Recruitment 2026
- Eligibility: Graduation (Final Year Eligible)
- Salary: ₹56,100 – ₹1,77,500
- Last Date: 12 March 2026

No. of Vacancies: 349

ECIL Technical Officer Recruitment 2026
- Eligibility: B.E. / B.Tech.
- Salary: ₹25,000 – ₹31,000/month
- Walk-In Date: 24 February 2026

No. of Vacancies: 200

GAIL Executive Trainee Recruitment 2026
- Eligibility: B.E. / B.Tech.
- Salary: ₹60,000 – ₹1,80,000
- Last Date: 18 March 2026

No. of Vacancies: 70

Chandigarh High Court Steno Typist & Stenographer Recruitment 2026
- Eligibility: Graduation (BA/BSc)
- Salary: ₹25,500 – ₹1,12,400
- Last Date: 10 March 2026

No. of Vacancies: 50

RRC WR Apprentice Recruitment 2026
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ECIL Technical Officer Recruitment 2026
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Chandigarh High Court Steno Typist & Stenographer Recruitment 2026
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> "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
> **Nelson Mandela**