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## GLOBAL ENERGY CONCERNS MOUNT

Three crew members missing from India-bound Thai cargo ship struck in the Strait of Hormuz

New Delhi deplores attacks on ships; Iran warns of targeting financial institutions in West Asia

International Energy Agency members to unlock 400 million barrels of oil from their reserves



Rising tensions in West Asia have intensified concerns about global energy security, particularly after Iran attacked commercial vessels in the Persian Gulf and near the Strait of Hormuz, a critical route for global oil shipments. A Thai cargo ship bound for Kandla in India was struck by a projectile near the Oman coast, setting it ablaze and prompting rescue operations by the Omani Navy. Drone strikes were also reported near Dubai International Airport, while regional countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia intercepted incoming drones and missiles. These developments occurred alongside continued airstrikes involving United States and Israel targeting Iranian assets, highlighting the expanding regional dimension of the conflict and increasing risks to civilian shipping and infrastructure.

The escalation has had immediate implications for global energy markets because the Strait of Hormuz handles roughly one-fifth of the world's oil trade. Disruptions in shipping through this narrow passage have already pushed up global oil prices, with Brent crude rising significantly since the conflict began. To stabilise markets, the International Energy Agency announced that member countries would release 400 million barrels of oil from strategic reserves, the largest such release in its history. The situation underscores how geopolitical conflict in this strategically important region can quickly disrupt energy supply chains, affect global oil prices, and create ripple effects for economies dependent on imported energy.

## Chandigarh achieves 99.93% literacy, gets 'fully literate U.T.' tag

Chandigarh has achieved a 99.93% literacy rate, making it a fully literate Union Territory, announced Gulab Chand Kataria, the Governor of Punjab and Administrator of Chandigarh. It is the sixth State/UT and the second Union Territory in India to reach full literacy.

To mark the achievement, the Education Department organized a felicitation event for neo-literates, honoring individuals who recently became literate. Mr. Kataria called it a historic moment for the city and credited the success to the *ULLAS (Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society) programme*, which helped Chandigarh exceed the 95% literacy benchmark set by the National Education Policy 2020.

The city's literacy rate rose from 93.7% to 99.93%, with 15,556 citizens participating and 14,711 clearing the literacy assessment. Women's literacy also saw a significant jump from 90.7% to 99.89%, a milestone hailed as a major step toward women's empowerment.



## In a first, SC allows passive euthanasia for man in vegetative state for 13 years



The Supreme Court of India upheld the right to die with dignity by allowing the withdrawal of clinically assisted nutrition and hydration (CANH) for Harish Rana, a 32-year-old man who had remained in a persistent vegetative state for nearly 13 years after suffering severe head injuries. The judgment was delivered by a Bench comprising J. B. Pardiwala and K. V. Viswanathan. This is the first instance where the Court operationalised the guidelines on passive euthanasia laid down by the 2018 Constitution Bench, which recognised the legality of withdrawing life support under specific safeguards.

### Implications

The Court clarified the distinction between active and passive euthanasia. *Active euthanasia involves a direct act to cause death, such as administering a lethal injection, thereby introducing a new cause of harm; this remains illegal in India.* In contrast, passive euthanasia involves withdrawing or withholding life-sustaining treatment, allowing the patient's underlying medical condition to take its natural course. The Court emphasised that withdrawal of treatment must occur within a structured palliative care framework, ensuring dignity, sensitivity, and continued duty of care by medical professionals.

### Significance

The ruling reinforces that the constitutional right to dignity extends to the end of life, and at a certain stage the State's interest in preserving life must yield to the individual's right to die with dignity, particularly when medical interventions become futile and invasive.

## Is China's Silence on US-Israel's War in Iran Strategic?

*China's message for its anti-American partners is clear: China hopes they will continue to oppose the US, but it does not want them to court trouble by directly clashing with the US.*

China's muted response to crises in Venezuela and the US-Israel-Iran conflict reflects a calculated strategic approach rather than neutrality. Many Chinese strategists believe that China should focus primarily on its core national interests, particularly Taiwan and stability in East Asia, rather than becoming deeply involved in distant geopolitical conflicts.

### Core Interests vs Global Engagement

Within China's strategic thinking, Taiwan remains the foremost national priority, followed by the South China Sea region. Beyond these areas, China's interests are largely economic—trade, markets, and energy security. As a result, China avoids direct geopolitical confrontation with the United States outside these critical zones.

### Energy Security and Economic Interests

China's relationships in West Asia are largely shaped by energy needs and trade considerations. Countries such as Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq consistently rank among China's top crude oil suppliers.

Even though some of these countries maintain close ties with the United States, China continues strong economic engagement with them. For instance, China's trade and investment in Iraq are significantly larger than those with Iran, demonstrating that economic pragmatism outweighs ideological alignment.

### Economic and Strategic Assistance

China is also expected to maintain trade and financial engagement with Iran to stabilise its economy. In addition, coordination with partners such as Russia, Pakistan, and North Korea may provide indirect economic or military support.

### Strategic Message to Anti-US Partners

China's approach sends a clear signal to countries that oppose the United States. While China may welcome anti-American rhetoric, it prefers that its partners avoid direct confrontation with the US that could drag China into conflict.

Similarly, in resolving the Taiwan issue, China is unlikely to expect military support from partners. Instead, it expects them to maintain economic relations and avoid aligning with adversarial blocs.

### Concerns for Multilateral Groupings

Chinese strategists also worry that a collapse of the Iranian regime could weaken platforms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS. Such developments could reduce Chinese and Russian influence in West Asia and strengthen the geopolitical position of the United States and its allies.

### China's Low-Key Support Strategy

China is therefore likely to adopt a low-profile but supportive approach toward Iran. Diplomatically, China has criticised military strikes and emphasised principles such as respect for sovereignty and opposition to unilateral force. China also seeks to encourage negotiations and prevent escalation, urging restraint from the United States and Israel.

### Diplomatic Mediation in West Asia

China has attempted to mediate tensions between Iran and other regional states, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to prevent the formation of a broader anti-Iran coalition. Diplomatic engagement and special envoys to the region are part of China's efforts to reduce conflict intensity while maintaining its regional influence.

## What is the Essential Commodities Act, invoked by the Centre amidst the West Asian crisis?

India has invoked the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to regulate the supply of natural gas after disruptions in fuel shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, caused by ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia. The government has issued the Natural Gas (Supply Regulation) Order, 2026 to divert available natural gas supplies to sectors considered essential for the public. The move aims to manage shortages of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and ensure uninterrupted fuel access for key services.

### India's Dependence on Gas Imports

India requires around 190 million standard cubic metres of natural gas per day, nearly half of which is met through LNG imports. More than 50% of these imports come from West Asian countries, particularly Qatar and United Arab Emirates. Similarly, India imports about 60% of its LPG requirement, and nearly 80% of these imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, making the country vulnerable to disruptions in that route.

### What is the Essential Commodities Act?

The Essential Commodities Act (1955) allows the government to regulate the production, supply, distribution, and trade of certain critical commodities in the interest of the general public. The law is typically used to prevent hoarding, black marketing, or supply disruptions that could affect everyday life. Commodities listed under the Act include food items, drugs, coal, iron and steel, textiles, cattle fodder, and other products notified by the central government when necessary.

### Additional Measures to Manage LPG Supply

To address LPG shortages, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has instructed refineries to increase domestic LPG production. Distribution of imported LPG is being prioritised for essential services such as hospitals and educational institutions. To discourage hoarding, a 25-day gap between LPG cylinder bookings has been introduced, and a committee of oil marketing company officials has been formed to review supply requests from sectors such as hotels and restaurants.



### Amendments to the Act in 2020

In 2020, the government amended the Act to remove several agricultural products—such as cereals, pulses, onions, potatoes, edible oilseeds, and edible oils—from the permanent list of essential commodities. Under the amended law, the government can regulate these items only in extraordinary circumstances, such as war, famine, natural disasters, or sharp price rises. Stock limits can be imposed when prices increase significantly—100% for horticultural produce and 50% for non-perishable food items.

### Supply for Fertiliser and Industrial Sectors

The second priority category includes fertiliser plants, which will receive 70% of their average gas consumption from the previous six months. These units must certify that the allocated gas will be used only for fertiliser production. The third and fourth categories include industries connected to the national gas grid and commercial or industrial consumers of city gas distribution networks, which will receive around 80% of their average consumption levels.

## Prelims 2026 Most Probable High-Yield Topics

### National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR 2.0)

India launched National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR) 2.0 for 2025–2029 on 18 November 2025, marking the updated national strategy to tackle antimicrobial resistance. The plan was launched by Jagat Prakash Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, on the first day of World AMR Awareness Week (18–24 November). The updated plan aims to address gaps in the earlier action plan and strengthen India's response to the growing global threat of AMR.

#### What is Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

Antimicrobial Resistance occurs when microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites) develop resistance to medicines designed to kill them, making treatments less effective.

#### Key implications:

- Delayed or failed treatment of infections.
- Increased spread of resistant microbes.
- Higher healthcare costs and economic burden.
- Threatens the safety of surgical procedures, cancer therapy, and organ transplants.
- Recognized as a major global health threat, especially affecting developing countries in Asia and Africa.

#### India's Policy Response – Evolution

India has progressively developed institutional mechanisms to tackle AMR:

- 2010 – National Task Force on AMR Containment established.
- 2011 – National Policy on AMR containment formulated.
- 2017–2021 – First National Action Plan on AMR (NAP-AMR) launched in alignment with the Global Action Plan on AMR.
- 2025–2029 – Launch of NAP-AMR 2.0, updating strategies and strengthening implementation.

#### Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR):

The "Silent Pandemic"  
5.2 Million Deaths by 2030



#### Key Features of NAP-AMR 2.0

NAP-AMR 2.0 focuses on strengthening governance, surveillance, and coordination to control antimicrobial resistance.

Major features include:

- Stronger inter-sectoral coordination across ministries and departments.
- Greater private sector engagement in AMR control efforts.
- Defined action plans, timelines, and budgets for each stakeholder ministry.
- Regular stakeholder meetings for monitoring and resolving challenges.
- Improved laboratory capacity for detecting resistant microbes.
- Enhanced infection prevention and control in healthcare facilities.
- Awareness, education, and training programs for healthcare professionals and the public.

The World Health Organization's Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS) supports countries in developing national surveillance systems and provides standardized data on antibiotic resistance, based on analysis of over 23 million confirmed infection cases reported by more than 100 countries between 2016 and 2023.

## Prelims 2026 Most Probable High-Yield Topics

### One Health Approach

AMR is a multisectoral issue, requiring a One Health approach, which integrates action across four sectors:

- Human health
- Animal health
- Agriculture
- Environment

Effective containment requires coordinated efforts across all these sectors.

### Important State-Level Initiatives

- Some states have already taken important steps to control antibiotic misuse:
- *Kerala and Gujarat became the first states to ban over-the-counter sale of antibiotics, aiming to reduce misuse and resistance.*
- Certain antimicrobials and pesticides have also been banned for crop use to prevent resistance development in agriculture.
- 
- An India AMR Innovation Hub has been established to promote research, innovation, and collaboration.

#### **World AMR Awareness Week (WAAW)**

*It is a global campaign to raise awareness, understanding and best practices. One of WHO's official health campaigns since 2015, WAAW is celebrated from 18 to 24 November every year.*

### Institutional and Implementation Mechanisms

- Development of the plan involved stakeholder consultations since 2022.
- Meetings were coordinated through NITI Aayog involving 20+ ministries and departments.
- After launch, each ministry must create an implementation roadmap involving private sector, research institutions, industry, NGOs, and international partners.
- An India AMR Innovation Hub has been established to promote research, innovation, and collaboration.

### Prelims model questions

1. With reference to Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), consider the following statements:

1. AMR occurs when microorganisms evolve mechanisms that protect them from antimicrobial drugs.
2. AMR affects only bacterial infections and does not apply to viruses, fungi or parasites.
3. AMR can undermine the safety of medical procedures such as organ transplantation and chemotherapy.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

2. The One Health approach, frequently discussed in the context of antimicrobial resistance, emphasizes which of the following?

1. Integrated action across human, animal and environmental health sectors
2. Restricting antimicrobial use only in human medicine
3. Addressing antimicrobial misuse in agriculture and livestock

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a)

## PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Invasive Species Specialist Group' (that develops Global Invasive Species Database) belongs to which one of the following organizations? (2023)

- (a) The International Conservation of Nature Union for
- (b) The United Nations Environment Programme
- (c) The United Nations World Commission for Environment and Development
- (d) The World Wide Fund for Nature

2) Consider the following statements:

Statement-I: Marsupials are not naturally found in India.

Statement-II: Marsupials can thrive only in montane grasslands with no predators.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
- (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

## Lessons from the Epics The Strength to Stay True



The Mahabharata teaches that while the comforts and difficulties of life are temporary, dharma and commitment must never be abandoned. A powerful example is Bhishma, who took a solemn vow never to marry in order to honour his promise to his father. Later, when Amba demanded that he marry her and even his teacher Parashurama urged him to do so, Bhishma refused, declaring that even if the natural order of the world changed, he would never break his promise. His unwavering resolve illustrates the power of steadfast commitment. In a modern context, this serves as a lesson for students living in an age of constant distractions—temporary temptations may arise, but staying firmly committed to one's goals and discipline ultimately leads to lasting achievement.

“

**“The future belongs to those who prepare for it today.” – Malcolm X**

Prelims 2026 countdown

**73 days to go**

# Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Answer is option A

The Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) is a specialist group under the IUCN Species Survival Commission, which itself functions within the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The ISSG works to reduce threats to ecosystems and native species caused by invasive alien species by promoting awareness and supporting measures for their prevention, control, or eradication. It also develops and manages the Global Invasive Species Database, which provides scientific information on invasive species worldwide.



*Crassula helmsii*

The ISSG is part of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC), a global network of thousands of volunteer experts organised into nearly 200 specialist groups and task forces focusing on specific taxonomic groups or conservation issues. The SSC contributes scientific data for biodiversity conservation, including assessments used in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Additionally, IUCN has developed the Environmental Impact Classification for Alien Taxa (EICAT), a global standard that measures the environmental impact of alien species by classifying them into categories such as Data Deficient, Minimal Concern, Minor, Moderate, Major, and Massive impact, depending on the severity of ecological damage caused.

2) Answer is option C

Marsupials, a group of mammals which is characterised by carrying their young in a pouch, are not naturally found in India. They are primarily found in Australia and surrounding regions.

aptations to coexist with predators.



While some marsupials, such as kangaroos and wallabies, are known to inhabit grassland habitats, they are not limited to montane grasslands. They can be found in a variety of habitats, including forests, woodlands, and even deserts. Their survival is not limited to areas without predators, as marsupials have evolved various adaptations to coexist with predators.



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