

THE PALA

CIVIL TIMES

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P2. NATIONAL



Odisha village to get crocodile alert system under 'Smart Village' plan - CSIR's Smart Village initiative aims to transform rural development through technology, infrastructure, and sustainable livelihoods.

P3. NATIONAL



Rajnath praises rise in 'women's strength' in IAF- The commissioning of the first NDA-trained women officers marks a significant milestone in advancing gender inclusion within the Indian Air Force.

P4. INTERNATIONAL



Modi, Macron talks stress economic security- Latest bilateral meet saw India-France deepen cooperation in innovation, trade, and security.

Editor's Note

This week begins on a positive note with significant developments in India-France relations, as both countries move forward with the ambitious Innovation Roadmap 2030, signalling deeper cooperation in technology, innovation, artificial intelligence, and economic security. At the same time, growing unrest in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) serves as a reminder of the evolving political dynamics in the region and the importance of closely monitoring developments that may carry broader strategic implications for India.

On the domestic front, today's edition of The Pala Civil Times explores the Smart Village initiative in Odisha, highlighting how an integrated development model can combine infrastructure creation, technological innovation, sustainable livelihoods, and local entrepreneurship to drive rural transformation. Our decoded editorials examine the challenges faced by Indian seafarers amid rising maritime tensions and the persistent systemic concerns surrounding the implementation of the POCSO Act. In the science section, we turn our attention to the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance linked to drought conditions and climate change. Readers are encouraged to engage critically with these topics, attempt the solved practice questions, and revisit the accompanying UPSC previous-year questions to strengthen both conceptual understanding and analytical skills.

Editorials Decoded

P8. SCIENCE



Droughts can drive antibiotic resistance in soil bacteria - Climate-driven droughts may accelerate antibiotic resistance through changes in soil microbial ecosystems.

The Indian EXPRESS

Make it clear: Indian sailors are not collateral damage



Escalating West Asian conflicts have heightened risks to Indian seafarers, prompting calls for stronger maritime security and protection measures.

THE HINDU

Series of gaps



Systemic gaps in prevention, reporting, and justice continue to undermine child protection against sexual abuse in India.

Odisha village to get crocodile alert system under 'Smart Village' plan

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has selected **Kusunpur village** in **Odisha's Kendrapara district** for its **Smart Village initiative**, aimed at demonstrating technology-driven rural development. The project seeks to improve infrastructure, livelihoods, public services, and environmental sustainability through the deployment of scientific innovations. Guided by **CSIR's "Lab to Land"** approach, the initiative will involve contributions from multiple research laboratories to transform the village into a model of integrated rural development over the next three years.

AI-Based Crocodile Detection and Public Safety

One of the most notable features of the initiative is the proposed installation of an artificial intelligence-enabled wild animal detection and alert system. The system will be placed at key entry points to the village to warn residents when crocodiles approach inhabited areas. Kendrapara district has experienced frequent human-crocodile conflicts, resulting in more than 20 fatalities over the past four years.



Technology Transfer and Long-Term Support

To ensure effective implementation, scientists from 17 CSIR laboratories will regularly visit Kusunpur and oversee the deployment of technologies tailored to local needs. The initiative combines scientific research with practical rural applications, including nutrition-focused food products to address malnutrition and small-scale processing technologies to improve agricultural value addition. By integrating infrastructure development, livelihood generation, environmental sustainability, and technological innovation, the project aims to create a replicable model for technology-enabled rural transformation in India.

Infrastructure Development and Civic Facilities

The Smart Village programme includes extensive infrastructure upgrades to improve living conditions and public services. Planned projects include the renovation of water-gate facilities, construction of underground drainage systems, redevelopment of community buildings, establishment of community toilets, and modernisation of the village cremation centre. Road infrastructure will also be upgraded using innovative techniques such as **cold-mix technology, waste-plastic road construction, and cement-grouted bituminous mixes**. These measures are intended to create resilient and sustainable rural infrastructure.

Green Livelihoods and Rural Entrepreneurship

The initiative seeks to generate employment opportunities through environmentally sustainable economic activities. Proposed livelihood interventions include dry-flower processing, freeze-dried fruit production, biodegradable tableware manufacturing, herbal floor-cleaning products, mosquito-repellent lotions, and beeswax-based scented candles. Village-level enterprises such as rice and green gram milling units, scientifically designed parboiled rice processing facilities, and brick and block-making units are also planned to **encourage entrepreneurship while promoting green and locally rooted economic development**.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. How does smart city in India, address the issues of urban poverty and distributive justice? (2025 – GS I : Indian Society)

Q. Achieving sustainable growth with emphasis on environmental protection could come into conflict with poor people's needs in a country like India – Comment. (2025 – GS I : Indian Society)

RELEVANCE

GS I : Indian Society

Anomaly in PSLV detected and resolved

Union Minister Jitendra Singh announced that the anomaly responsible for the recent PSLV setbacks has been identified and resolved following the recommendations of a national-level expert committee. The issue had affected the PSLV-C62 mission in January 2026 and the PSLV-C61 mission in May 2025, both involving anomalies during the rocket's third stage. The committee, comprising eminent scientists including former Principal Scientific Adviser K. Vijay Raghavan and former ISRO Chairman S. Somanath, investigated the failures and submitted its findings.

The government expressed confidence that the corrective measures would enable ISRO to resume normal launch operations soon. Emphasising that setbacks are an integral part of space exploration, Dr. Singh highlighted ISRO's strong success record, citing achievements such as the Chandrayaan-3 and Mars Orbiter missions. ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan also announced that the organisation's next launch mission is scheduled for the following month, marking the first launch since the PSLV setback in January 2026.

Rajnath praises rise in 'women's strength' in IAF



The Indian Air Force marked a historic milestone with the commissioning of the first batch of women officers trained through the National Defence Academy during the **217th Combined Graduation Parade at the Air Force Academy, Dundigal**. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh described the growing participation of women as making the Air Force more balanced and stronger. **Five women officers** from the NDA batch were commissioned, including **two in the fighter stream**, while a total of **231 flight cadets graduated across various branches of the IAF**, alongside personnel from the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, and Vietnam. Flying Officer Ekta Gupta received the President's Plaque for securing first position in the Navigation stream, while Flying Officer Divyanshi Singh was awarded the President's Plaque for topping the Ground Duty branches.

Congratulating the graduating officers, the Defence Minister highlighted their role in carrying forward the IAF's legacy and emphasised the importance of adapting to evolving security challenges through innovation and continuous learning. Referring to Operation Sindoor, he noted the Air Force's demonstrated capability for precision operations and credited its achievements to indigenous platforms, organisational strength, and dedicated personnel. The commissioning of the first NDA-trained women officers represents a significant step in advancing gender inclusion within India's armed forces.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. "With reference to India's satellite launch vehicles, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. PSLVs launch the satellite useful for Earth resources monitoring whereas GSLVs are designed mainly to launch communication satellites.
2. Satellites launched by PSLV appear to remain permanently fixed in the same position in the sky, as viewed from a particular location on Earth.
3. GSLV Mk III is a four-staged launch vehicle with the first and third stages using solid rocket motors; and the second and fourth stages using liquid rocket engines.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

RELEVANCE

GS III : Science and Technology - Space

GS I : Indian Society - Role of Women; GS III : Internal Security

Modi, Macron talks stress economic security

India and France expanded their bilateral relationship through the adoption of the **Innovation Roadmap 2030** and the **establishment of a Dialogue on Economic Security** during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron in Nice. The two countries reaffirmed their “Special Global Strategic Partnership” and agreed to deepen cooperation in innovation, technology, trade, education, defence, energy, and strategic sectors. They also called for the early implementation of the India–EU Free Trade Agreement and created a High-Level Mechanism to double bilateral trade within the next five years.

Latest Agreements

Innovation and technology emerged as the central pillars of the partnership. Both sides adopted the **Innovation Roadmap 2030** to provide long-term direction for collaboration and agreed to establish a **Joint India–France AI Working Group**. They welcomed the signing of 19 agreements between innovation ecosystem entities from both countries and emphasised cooperation in artificial intelligence, research, advanced technologies, start-ups, and trusted, human-centric digital innovation. Inauguration of **Bharat Innovates 2026** further highlighted their shared commitment to technological development and industrial innovation.

Economic Dimensions

Economic and industrial cooperation was broadened through agreements covering trade, supply chains, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), railways, aviation, and investment. Under the newly created Dialogue on Economic Security, India and France agreed to strengthen resilient supply chains, particularly in critical minerals. Both leaders encouraged greater business engagement, investment, and industrial partnerships, while emphasising reliable and trusted economic cooperation amid global geopolitical and technological disruptions.

Cooperation in Defence and Nuclear Energy

The two countries also expanded collaboration in defence, space, and nuclear energy. Discussions covered private-sector cooperation in the space sector and opportunities arising from **India’s SHANTI Act**, which enables greater private participation in nuclear energy. France expressed interest in collaborating with India in conventional nuclear power projects and advanced Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). Defence cooperation was strengthened through the proposed Rafale fighter jet programme, aligned with India’s “Make in India” initiative.

Human Factor

Education, mobility, and people-to-people ties formed another important area of cooperation. Prime Minister Modi thanked France for implementing visa-free airport transit facilities for Indian travellers and invited French universities to establish campuses in India under the National Education Policy. Both countries emphasised stronger academic, research, and institutional linkages. While global issues such as West Asia and Ukraine were discussed, the primary outcomes of the meeting focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation across innovation, trade, technology, education, energy, defence, space, and strategic economic security.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. Consider the following countries:

1. China
2. France
3. India
4. Israel
5. Pakistan

Which among the above are Nuclear Weapons States as recognized by the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, commonly known as Nuclear Non–Proliferation Treaty (NPT)?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
- c) 2, 4 and 5 only
- d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. With reference to the recent India–France bilateral engagements, consider the following statements:

1. The Dialogue on Economic Security includes cooperation on critical mineral supply chains.
2. India and France agreed to establish a Joint AI Working Group under the Innovation Roadmap 2030.
3. The bilateral discussions resulted in the conclusion of a dedicated India–France Free Trade Agreement.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

RELEVANCE

GS II : International Relations

Why are there protests in PoK?

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) is witnessing widespread unrest led by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), an umbrella platform comprising civil society groups, traders, students, and socio-religious organisations. Formed in 2023 amid rising inflation and electricity tariffs, the JAAC demanded subsidised wheat flour, lower electricity prices linked to local hydropower generation, better public services, and reforms in political representation. Although authorities initially assured action on some demands, delays in implementation led to repeated protests and growing public dissatisfaction.

Refugee Seats: The Core Political Dispute

The immediate trigger for the current crisis is the long-standing issue of **political representation in PoK's Legislative Assembly**. The JAAC has particularly opposed the **reservation of 12 Assembly seats for refugees who migrated to Pakistan from Jammu and Kashmir during Partition**. Protesters argue that these seats distort democratic representation because refugee voters residing in Pakistan exercise disproportionate electoral influence over PoK's politics despite not residing in the region. The demand to abolish these seats has become the central political issue driving the movement.

Ban on JAAC and Escalation of Unrest

The situation escalated ahead of the July 2026 regional elections when the JAAC announced a march to Muzaffarabad demanding electoral reforms. Regional authorities responded by banning the organisation under anti-terrorism legislation, alleging that it threatened public order and state security. The ban, arrests of activists, and bounty announcements against JAAC leaders triggered widespread protests across Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, and Rawalakot. Subsequent clashes between protesters and security forces resulted in multiple deaths and injuries, while strikes, communication restrictions, and deployment of paramilitary forces further intensified tensions.

Representation, Governance, and Constitutional Challenges

The refugee seat controversy lies at the heart of the unrest. **PoK's Assembly consists of 53 seats**, including 12 reserved for refugees settled in Pakistan which allow political parties operating from Pakistan to exert influence over PoK's governance. However, the PoK Supreme Court recently ruled that these seats are constitutionally protected and can only be removed through a constitutional amendment, limiting the scope for immediate reform.

Indian Response and International Reactions

The developments have drawn regional and international attention. India has accused Pakistan of human rights violations and excessive use of force against protesters, while Pakistani authorities have rejected these allegations. The unrest has also attracted concern from international actors, with Amnesty International criticising the crackdown on civil liberties and calling attention to arrests and restrictions on protests. In addition, a group of British parliamentarians urged diplomatic engagement to address reports of violence, communication disruptions, and the deteriorating human rights situation, highlighting the growing international scrutiny of events in PoK.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. Analyse the multidimensional challenges posed by external state and non-state actors, to the internal security of India. Also discuss measures required to be taken to combat these threats. (GS III – Internal Security – 2021)

RELEVANCE

GS III : Internal Security

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. With reference to the recent protests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), consider the following statements:

1. The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) was formed in 2023 primarily in response to rising electricity tariffs and inflation.
2. One of JAAC's major demands is the abolition of the Assembly seats reserved for refugees from Jammu and Kashmir settled in Pakistan.
3. The PoK Legislative Assembly consists of 53 seats, of which 45 are directly elected and 8 are filled through reserved categories.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Make it clear: Indian sailors are not collateral damage (Indian Express : 15-06-2026)

The deaths of three Indian sailors aboard the oil tanker MT Settebello during a U.S. strike in the Gulf of Oman have added strain to India-U.S. relations. India strongly protested the incident, with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar raising the issue directly with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The episode has highlighted concerns over the safety of Indian mariners operating in conflict-prone waters amid escalating tensions in West Asia.

Sanctioned Vessels and Maritime Law

The incident has also renewed debate over the status of "sanctioned vessels." Such vessels may be subject to restrictions imposed by countries or international organisations for activities linked to prohibited trade, sanctions evasion, or security concerns. However, unilateral sanctions are not universally applicable, and a vessel sanctioned by one country does not automatically become illegal under international law. Despite operational restrictions, sanctioned ships often continue participating in global maritime trade.

Risks Faced by Indian Seafarers

The broader concern is the growing vulnerability of civilian seafarers in regions affected by geopolitical conflicts. India supplies nearly 12% of the world's maritime workforce, with over three lakh Indian seafarers serving on international vessels. Complex ownership structures, open registries, and multinational crews often expose sailors to security risks beyond their control. The incident has reinforced concerns about civilian casualties becoming collateral damage in military confrontations at sea.

Measures Needed to Protect Mariners

Maritime stakeholders have called for stronger Indian action to safeguard seafarers. Suggested measures include enhanced naval deployments, improved Coast Guard surveillance, rapid-response mechanisms, intelligence sharing, and security coordination with shipowners and operators. There are also demands for mandatory risk disclosure, informed consent before deployment in war-risk zones, better insurance coverage, war-risk compensation, and dedicated support systems for affected families during maritime emergencies.

India's Policy Options and Future Response

Experts favour a calibrated approach rather than a blanket ban on Indian seafarers serving in high-risk regions such as the Strait of Hormuz, a critical global energy corridor. Periodic risk assessments, clear travel advisories, and stronger security protocols are considered more practical solutions. The incident has also highlighted the need for an integrated maritime-security framework involving the Ministries of External Affairs, Shipping, Labour, defence agencies, maritime regulators, and industry stakeholders to ensure coordinated protection of Indian seafarers.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. What are the maritime security challenges in India? Discuss the organisational, technical and procedural initiatives taken to improve the maritime security. (GS III - Internal Security 2022)

PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. With reference to the challenges faced by Indian seafarers in recent years, consider the following statements:

1. Indian seafarers constitute about 12% of the global maritime workforce.
2. A vessel sanctioned by one country automatically becomes illegal under international law and cannot participate in global trade.
3. Maritime stakeholders have called for mandatory risk disclosure and informed consent before deploying seafarers in war-risk zones.
4. A blanket prohibition on Indian seafarers serving aboard vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz is widely regarded by the maritime industry as the most practical long-term solution.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 3 only
 B. 2 and 4 only
 C. 1, 2 and 3 only
 D. 1, 3 and 4 only

RELEVANCE

GS III : Internal Security

Series of gaps (The Hindu : 15-06-2026)

Child sexual abuse remains a serious but under-reported issue in India, with systemic weaknesses limiting effective prevention and justice. Public perception often focuses on threats from strangers, whereas more than **90% of abuse cases** involve individuals known to the child or family. This misconception reduces the ability of families and communities to identify risks early. The problem is particularly acute among migrant and working-class communities, where weaker social support networks can leave children more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Social and Urban Factors Increasing Vulnerability

Child safety is influenced not only by family and community dynamics but also by the physical environment. Abandoned industrial sites, neglected public spaces, and poorly maintained common lands frequently become locations for crimes against children. Although initiatives such as the **Safe City project** promote safer urban spaces, implementation remains concentrated in major metropolitan areas. Broader concerns such as child-friendly urban planning, community surveillance, and the safety implications of projects like urban wetland restoration often receive insufficient policy attention.

Weak Criminal Justice Response and Delayed Justice

Despite legal provisions under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act requiring trials to conclude within a year, the justice system continues to face significant delays. **POCSO courts reportedly have an 89% pendency rate**, while conviction rates have historically remained low. Such delays weaken public confidence in law enforcement and the judiciary. As a result, many families hesitate to report crimes or rely on informal efforts to locate missing children, creating opportunities for offenders to evade detection and accountability.

Limitations of a Punishment-Centred Approach

Amendments to the POCSO Act in 2018 and 2019 largely emerged in response to public outrage and focused on increasing penalties. However, evidence on whether stricter punishments improve deterrence remains limited. In many cases involving family members or acquaintances, harsher penalties may even discourage reporting. The need for evidence-based policymaking supported by research on recidivism, acquittals, and the actual effectiveness of legal interventions.

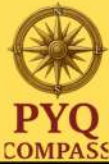


Need for Child-Centred and Trauma-Informed Reforms

A major challenge identified is the secondary victimisation experienced by survivors and their families through insensitive administrative procedures, inadequate trauma-informed policing, and intrusive media coverage. While data collection on child abuse has improved, qualitative lessons from acquittals and failed prosecutions rarely influence policy reform. Protecting children requires more than stronger laws; it demands better prevention mechanisms, community awareness, child-sensitive urban planning, trauma-informed institutions, and a justice system capable of delivering timely and effective support to survivors.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has to address the challenges faced by children in the digital era. Examine the existing policies and suggest measures the Commission can initiate to tackle the issue. (GS II - 2025)

RELEVANCE

GS II : Indian Polity - Social Justice

PRACTICE QUESTION

Consider the following statements and find the incorrect one:

- In a majority of child sexual abuse cases, the accused is known to the child or family.
- POCSO courts continue to face a high pendency of cases despite provisions for speedy trials.
- Existing evidence conclusively establishes that harsher punishments alone are the most effective deterrent against child sexual abuse.
- Survivors and their families may face secondary victimisation through insensitive administrative and social responses.

SCIENCE

Droughts can drive antibiotic resistance in soil bacteria

Researchers from the California Institute of Technology have found that **drought conditions can increase antibiotic resistance (ABR) in soil**. Published in Nature Microbiology, the study highlights a previously underexplored link between climate change and antibiotic resistance. As droughts become more frequent and severe due to climate change, environmental factors may increasingly contribute to the emergence and spread of resistant bacteria.

How Drought Increases Resistance in Soil

When soil dries, the concentration of naturally occurring antibiotics increases. This creates selective pressure that favours bacteria carrying antibiotic-resistance genes. Analysis of soil DNA samples from croplands, wetlands, grasslands, and forests across the United States, China, and Europe showed that drought conditions increased the prevalence of genes responsible for both antibiotic production and resistance. Laboratory experiments further confirmed that resistant bacteria survive better under dry soil conditions.

Expanding the Understanding of Antibiotic Resistance

Traditionally, antibiotic resistance in the environment has been linked to human activities such as excessive antibiotic use in medicine, livestock farming, and agriculture. However, this study suggests that environmental stress itself can drive the evolution and enrichment of resistance. Supporting evidence from other research shows that prolonged warming associated with climate change can significantly increase the abundance of antibiotic-resistance genes, indicating a broader climate-resistance connection.

Under pressure

When soil dries, the concentration of natural antibiotics increases, favouring the survival of resistant bacteria



■ New research has found that drought conditions increase natural antibiotic levels in soil, fuelling antibiotic resistance

■ Researchers project that several countries, especially India, will face severe antibiotic resistance challenges by the year 2050

■ Environmental stress from droughts independently shapes the evolution and enrichment of resistant bacteria within various soil ecosystems

■ Antibiotic resistance can move from the environment to humans through horizontal gene transfer and contaminated agricultural products

■ India faces heightened risks due to frequent droughts, dense populations, and heavy antibiotic use in livestock industries

Per a 2024 report, 91 districts in India are in the 'very high' drought risk category while 188 districts face 'high' drought risk. AFP

■ Experts recommend using vaccines and integrated monitoring systems to reduce the disease burden amplified by climate change

Implications for India and Human Health

The findings are particularly relevant for India, which faces increasing drought frequency alongside extensive antibiotic use, wastewater irrigation, intensive agriculture, and close human-animal-environment interactions. Researchers noted that drier regions tend to report more antibiotic-resistant infections. Resistance can move from soil to humans through contaminated water, aerosols, agriculture, and horizontal gene transfer between environmental bacteria and human pathogens. Drought conditions may also promote the spread of enteric diseases such as typhoid, increasing antibiotic demand and further accelerating resistance.

Monitoring, Prevention, and the Way Forward

Experts have called for integrated strategies to address this emerging challenge. Recommended measures include establishing long-term monitoring stations in drought-prone regions, tracking microbial changes in soil, and monitoring antibiotic residues in agricultural systems through institutions such as Krishi Vigyan Kendras. Researchers also emphasise the importance of vaccination, epidemiological surveillance, microbiome sequencing, and climate monitoring. Such a One Health approach can help understand and mitigate the combined impacts of climate change and antibiotic resistance on human, animal, and environmental health.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. With reference to agriculture in India, how can the technique of 'genome sequencing', often seen in the news, be used in the immediate future? (2017)

1. Genome sequencing can be used to identify genetic markers for disease resistance and drought tolerance in various crop plants.
2. This technique helps in reducing the time required to develop new varieties of crop plants.
3. It can be used to decipher the host pathogen relationships in crops.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

RELEVANCE

GS III : Science and Technology

Practice Questions and answers

Consider the following statements and find the incorrect one:

- In a majority of child sexual abuse cases, the accused is known to the child or family.
- POCSO courts continue to face a high pendency of cases despite provisions for speedy trials.
- Existing evidence conclusively establishes that harsher punishments alone are the most effective deterrent against child sexual abuse.
- Survivors and their families may face secondary victimisation through insensitive administrative and social responses.

Answer: c) Existing evidence conclusively establishes that harsher punishments alone are the most effective deterrent against child sexual abuse.

There is insufficient evidence to conclude that harsher punishments by themselves effectively deter child sexual abuse. While amendments to the POCSO Act in 2018 and 2019 increased penalties, they were largely driven by public outrage rather than comprehensive evidence-based research. On the other hand, data on recidivism and the deterrent effect of stricter punishments remain limited.

Q. With reference to the recent India–France bilateral engagements, consider the following statements:

- The Dialogue on Economic Security includes cooperation on critical mineral supply chains.
- India and France agreed to establish a Joint AI Working Group under the Innovation Roadmap 2030.
- The bilateral discussions resulted in the conclusion of a dedicated India–France Free Trade Agreement.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Answer: A. 1 and 2 only

Statement 1: Correct. This statement is directly supported by the India–France talks. Both countries agreed to establish a Dialogue on Economic Security and identified critical minerals as a key area of cooperation. The objective is to strengthen supply-chain resilience for strategically important minerals that are essential for sectors such as electric vehicles, batteries, renewable energy technologies, electronics, and advanced manufacturing.

Statement 2: Correct. One of the major outcomes of the bilateral engagement was the adoption of the **Innovation Roadmap 2030**, which aims to provide long-term direction to cooperation in innovation and technology. As part of this framework, the two countries agreed to establish a Joint India–France AI Working Group to expand collaboration in artificial intelligence, research, and emerging technologies.

Statement 3: Incorrect. The discussions did not result in an India–France Free Trade Agreement. Instead, both countries called for the early implementation of the India–European Union (EU) Free Trade Agreement and agreed to establish a mechanism to boost bilateral trade. France, as a member of the European Union, participates in the broader India–EU trade framework, not in a separate India–France FTA.

Practice Questions and answers

Q. With reference to the recent protests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), consider the following statements:

1. The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) was formed in 2023 primarily in response to rising electricity tariffs and inflation.
2. One of JAAC's major demands is the abolition of the Assembly seats reserved for refugees from Jammu and Kashmir settled in Pakistan.
3. The PoK Legislative Assembly consists of 53 seats, of which 45 are directly elected and 8 are filled through reserved categories.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: b) 1, 2 and 3

Statement 1: Correct "The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) emerged in 2023 as an umbrella platform representing civil society groups, traders, students, and socio-religious organisations. Its formation was driven by public dissatisfaction over rising electricity tariffs, inflation, and broader economic hardships faced by residents of PoK.

Statement 2: Correct The demand to abolish the 12 refugee seats reserved for communities that migrated to Pakistan during Partition has become the central political issue behind the protests. JAAC argues that these seats distort democratic representation because refugee voters residing in Pakistan exercise disproportionate influence over PoK's electoral politics.

Statement 3: Correct The PoK regional Assembly has 53 total seats

- 45 elected seats (33 general seats + 12 refugee seats)
- 8 reserved/nominated seats (for women, technocrats, religious scholars, and the diaspora)

Q. With reference to the challenges faced by Indian seafarers in recent years, consider the following statements:

1. Indian seafarers constitute about 12% of the global maritime workforce.
2. A vessel sanctioned by one country automatically becomes illegal under international law and cannot participate in global trade.
3. Maritime stakeholders have called for mandatory risk disclosure and informed consent before deploying seafarers in war-risk zones.
4. A blanket prohibition on Indian seafarers serving aboard vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz is widely regarded by the maritime industry as the most practical long-term solution.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 4 only
- C. 1, 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4 only

Answer: A. 1 and 3 only

Statement 1 – Correct India is one of the world's largest suppliers of maritime manpower, with approximately 3.08 lakh seafarers, accounting for about **12%** of the global maritime workforce.

Statement 2 – Incorrect A vessel sanctioned by one country does not automatically become illegal under international law. Unless sanctions arise from a binding UN Security Council resolution, they generally apply only within the jurisdiction of the imposing country and entities subject to its laws.

Statement 3 – Correct The maritime industry has advocated mandatory risk disclosure, informed consent, enhanced insurance coverage, and war-risk compensation for seafarers deployed in conflict-prone maritime regions.

Statement 4 – Incorrect Maritime industry does not support a blanket ban on Indian seafarers serving in the Strait of Hormuz. Instead, it favours a calibrated approach involving periodic risk assessments, security advisories, and strengthened protection measures.

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.

Q. "With reference to India's satellite launch vehicles, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. PSLVs launch the satellite useful for Earth resources monitoring whereas GSLVs are designed mainly to launch communication satellites.
2. Satellites launched by PSLV appear to remain permanently fixed in the same position in the sky, as viewed from a particular location on Earth.
3. GSLV Mk III is a four-staged launch vehicle with the first and third stages using solid rocket motors; and the second and fourth stages using liquid rocket engines.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans : a

Statement 1: Correct. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) is primarily used for launching satellites into polar orbits, making it ideal for Earth resource monitoring, remote sensing, and scientific applications. The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) is mainly used for launching heavier communication satellites into geostationary orbits.

Statement 2: Incorrect. Satellites launched by PSLV do not remain fixed in the same position in the sky. PSLV typically places satellites in sun-synchronous orbits or polar orbits, where they move relative to the Earth's surface. Satellites that remain fixed in the sky are placed in geostationary orbits, which are achieved using GSLV.

Statement 3: Incorrect. The GSLV Mk III is not a four-staged launch vehicle. It has three stages: the first stage uses two solid rocket boosters, the second stage uses a liquid rocket engine, and the third stage uses a cryogenic engine.

Q. Consider the following countries:

- 1.China
- 2.France
- 3.India
- 4.Israel
- 5.Pakistan

Which among the above are Nuclear Weapons States as recognized by the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, commonly known as Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)?

- a) 1 and 2 only
b) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
c) 2, 4 and 5 only
d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans : a NPT recognizes the five countries: USA, Russia, UK, France and China as the official 5 Nuclear Power states.

Q. With reference to agriculture in India, how can the technique of 'genome sequencing', often seen in the news, be used in the immediate future? (2017)

1. Genome sequencing can be used to identify genetic markers for disease resistance and drought tolerance in various crop plants.
2. This technique helps in reducing the time required to develop new varieties of crop plants.
3. It can be used to decipher the host pathogen relationships in crops.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans : d

Genome sequencing helps identify beneficial crop traits, accelerate the development of improved varieties, and enhance understanding of crop–pathogen interactions.