

THE PALA



CIVIL TIMES

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P2. NATIONAL



**House panel urges government to increase spending on education to 6% of GDP.-** underscores the need for greater investment in human capital and knowledge-driven growth.

P3. NATIONAL



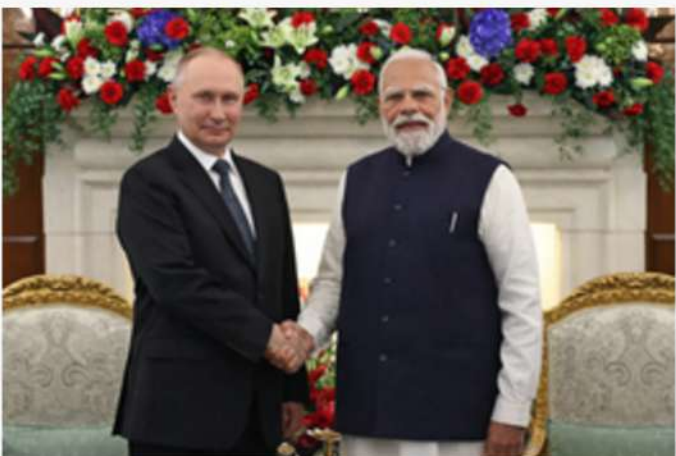
**Defence production hits record ₹1.78 lakh cr. :** - sustained investments, indigenisation reforms, innovation, and public-private collaboration leads the growth.

P4. ECONOMICS



**India to meet 3% compressed biogas blending goal for FY27-** CBG blending programme seeks to strengthen energy security, promote a circular economy, and support cleaner fuels.

P6. INTERNATIONAL



**Air Force to take part in 'Exercise Pitch Black** - SpaceX's historic IPO, which pushed its valuation above \$2 trillion and made Elon Musk the world's first trillionaire.

Editor's Note

Across the world, rapid advances in technology, shifting geopolitical realities, and evolving economic priorities are reshaping the future. In today's edition of the Pala Civil Times, we examine these developments - one topic at a time. At the national level, Parliamentary Committee has made a call for higher investment in education to build the human capital needed for India's future, alongside the remarkable growth of India's defence manufacturing sector driven by self-reliance. We also decode editorials to understand why innovation and emerging technologies in the age of artificial intelligence are becoming central to India's long-term economic and strategic ambitions. At the same time, as India undergoes a significant demographic transition, we examine the growing challenges of ageing and elder welfare. On the international front, we assess the evolving strategic partnerships that India is building with Australia and Russia, reflecting the changing dynamics of the global order. We also examine key developments in the economy, including India's push towards a circular economy through compressed biogas blending and the changing investment strategies of Indian industries in response to technological transformation. Together, these issues offer valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges shaping India's future. Readers are encouraged to engage with each article carefully to appreciate the larger trends influencing governance, development, security, technology, and society in the years ahead.

Editorials Decoded

 **The IndianEXPRESS**

**Prevention of Elder Abuse Needs All-Society Approach**



Rising elder abuse amid rapid demographic ageing highlights the urgent need for preventive welfare systems and age-friendly public policies.

**THE HINDU**

**Innovate or be eaten**



India's ambition to become a global innovation hub depends on strengthening deep-tech capabilities, attracting capital, and retaining talent.

## House panel urges government to increase spending on education to 6% of GDP

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education has recommended increasing public expenditure on education to **6% of GDP**, in line with the target set by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The committee expressed concern that the allocation for higher education in 2025-26 has grown at a slower pace than the previous year and may not adequately account for inflation. It observed that **education spending stood at only 4.12% of GDP in 2021-22**, well below the NEP target, and recommended an annual increase of 8-10% in allocations to maintain educational standards and prevent a decline in real expenditure on the sector.

The committee argued that greater investment is essential to improve enrolment levels, strengthen human resource development, and address persistent challenges such as examination irregularities and institutional capacity gaps. It noted that the Gross Enrolment Ratio has not shown significant improvement in recent years and stressed that achieving the NEP's long-term goals for 2035 would require substantially higher funding. **International comparisons further highlight the need for enhanced spending, with countries such as Bhutan and the Maldives allocating a larger share of GDP to education.** Increased public investment, therefore, is viewed as critical for improving the quality, accessibility, and competitiveness of India's higher education system.

## Nicobarese Tribal Councils Oppose Proposed Electoral Reforms



The proposed Draft Tribal Council (Preparation of Electoral Rolls and Conduct of Elections) Rules, 2026, has triggered strong opposition from several Nicobarese tribal councils, which view the changes as an intrusion into their traditional system of self-governance. Issued under the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Tribal Councils) Regulation, 2009, the draft seeks to introduce a state-monitored framework governing constituency delimitation, electoral rolls, polling procedures, dispute resolution, and election oversight. Tribal councils from Great and Little Nicobar, Katchal, and Nancowry have argued that the proposal transfers significant authority from traditional institutions to government officials, thereby weakening community autonomy and undermining long-established consensus-based leadership structures.

The issue is significant because the Nicobarese tribal councils are not merely electoral bodies but foundational institutions that preserve tribal identity, customary law, social harmony, and local governance. Village councils led by elected captains serve as the primary link between the administration and tribal communities and play a central role in implementing development programmes. Tribal leaders fear that introducing bureaucratic control, electoral competition, and external influence could erode traditional decision-making mechanisms, weaken community cohesion, and diminish the cultural distinctiveness of the Nicobarese people. The debate therefore extends beyond electoral procedures and raises broader questions regarding tribal self-governance, cultural rights, administrative intervention, and the balance between democratic regulation and protection of indigenous institutions.

### PYQ Compass

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



Q. With reference to the funds under Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), which of the following statements are correct? (2020)

1. MPLADS funds must be used to create durable assets like physical infrastructure for health, education, etc.
2. A specified portion of each MP's fund must benefit SC/ST populations.
3. MPLADS funds are sanctioned on a yearly basis and the unused funds cannot be carried forward to the next year.
4. The district authority must inspect at least 10% of all works under implementation every year. Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

### RELEVANCE

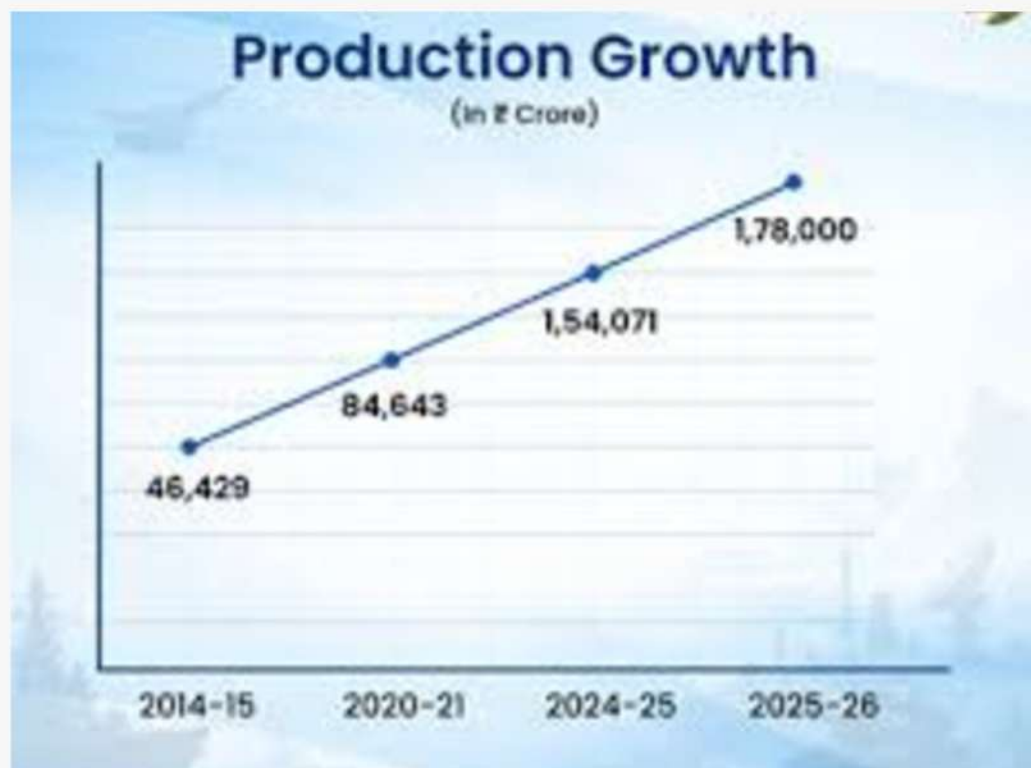
**GS II : Indian Polity - Education; Centre and States relation.**

## Defence production hits record ₹1.78 lakh cr.

India's defence production reached an all-time high of ₹1.78 lakh crore in FY 2025-26, marking a 15.6% increase over the previous year and more than a fourfold rise from FY 2013-14. **Defence exports** also recorded unprecedented growth, touching **₹38,424 crore** and reaching over **80 countries**. These achievements reflect the steady transformation of India from a major arms importer into an increasingly self-reliant defence manufacturing and export hub, strengthening both national security and strategic autonomy.

### Policy Reforms Driving Self-Reliance

A key factor behind this growth has been a series of structural reforms aimed at promoting indigenous defence production. Initiatives such as the **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020**, **Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) 2025**, **Positive Indigenisation Lists**, and the broader **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and **Make in India** programmes have prioritised domestic procurement and reduced dependence on imports. These measures have created a policy environment that encourages local manufacturing, enhances ease of doing business, and supports long-term capacity building within the defence sector.



### Expanding Investment and Modernisation

The growth of the defence ecosystem has been supported by substantial increases in public investment. **The defence budget expanded from ₹2.53 lakh crore in FY 2013-14 to ₹7.85 lakh crore in FY 2026-27**, while capital expenditure rose significantly to support infrastructure, advanced platforms, and force modernisation. Simultaneously, **defence research and development funding more than doubled**, enabling greater technological advancement and strengthening India's capacity to develop indigenous military systems suited to future security challenges.

### RELEVANCE

GS III :Internal security

### Innovation and Private Sector Participation

India's defence sector has also benefited from a deliberate effort to widen participation beyond government institutions. The opening of 25% of the defence R&D budget to industry, startups, and academia, along with access to DRDO testing facilities, has fostered a more collaborative innovation ecosystem. Initiatives such as **Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)** and the **ADITI scheme** have encouraged startups, MSMEs, researchers, and innovators to develop indigenous technologies, accelerating the growth of a vibrant defence innovation landscape.

### Towards a Self-Reliant Defence Ecosystem

The record growth in defence production is the outcome of sustained investments, policy reforms, technological innovation, and greater public-private collaboration. Defence Public Sector Undertakings continue to play a major role, while the private sector's contribution is steadily expanding. Together, these developments have strengthened India's manufacturing capability, enhanced export competitiveness, and improved military preparedness. The progress achieved over the past decade has laid the foundation for a technologically advanced, globally competitive, and self-reliant defence ecosystem aligned with India's long-term strategic objectives and Vision 2047.

### PYQ Compass

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



Q. With reference to the Union Budget, which of the following is/are covered under Non-Plan Expenditure? (2014)

1. Defence expenditure
2. Interest payments
3. Salaries and pensions
4. Subsidies

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1, 2, 3 and 4
- d) None

## Prevention of Elder Abuse Needs All-Society Approach (Indian Express : 18-06-2026)

India is witnessing a disturbing rise in elder abuse at a time when its population is ageing rapidly. A recent study across ten states reported a nearly two-thirds increase in the mistreatment of senior citizens within a year, with family members emerging as the primary perpetrators. Rising distress calls to elder helplines point to a growing crisis, though the true scale is likely much larger due to underreporting driven by stigma and dependence. The trend exposes the vulnerability of older persons in a society where ageing is often accompanied by social isolation and financial insecurity.

### India's Emerging Demographic Challenge

The issue is particularly concerning because India is entering a major demographic transition. While the country currently benefits from a large working-age population, the share of elderly citizens is steadily increasing and is expected to rise significantly over the coming decades. States such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Himachal Pradesh are projected to have a larger elderly population than youth by 2036. As longevity increases and family structures evolve, a growing number of senior citizens may face neglect, abuse, and inadequate support, making elderly welfare a pressing public policy challenge.

### Beyond Legal Remedies: The Need for Prevention

India has strengthened legal protections through the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act and the establishment of dedicated tribunals to address complaints. However, such mechanisms primarily provide redress after abuse has occurred. Prevention requires addressing the underlying causes of elderly vulnerability, including the breakdown of traditional support systems, economic dependence, poor access to healthcare, and social exclusion. Ensuring financial security, promoting independent living, and creating elder-friendly communities are essential to reducing the risks faced by senior citizens.

### Kerala's Model for Elderly Welfare

Kerala offers important lessons in responding to an ageing society. With one of the highest proportions of elderly citizens in India, the state has developed a range of welfare measures including pension coverage, mobile healthcare services through Vayomithram, daycare support under Samayaprabha, community-based palliative care networks, and a dedicated State Elderly Commission. The newly announced department for elderly affairs reflects a recognition that ageing requires specialised policy attention. Kerala's experience demonstrates the importance of integrating healthcare, social support, and legal protection within a comprehensive framework for elderly welfare.



### Building a Framework for Dignified Ageing

Going forward, India needs to shift its focus from reactive intervention to preventive care and dignified ageing. Expanding affordable healthcare, strengthening geriatric services, improving access to pensions, supporting caregivers, and investing in mental health and dementia care will become increasingly important. Governments must also develop age-friendly civic infrastructure and nurture a robust care economy to meet future demand. As the elderly population grows, protecting their dignity, security, and well-being is not only a social obligation but also an essential component of sustainable development in an ageing India.

#### PYQ Compass

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



Consider the following countries :

1. Italy
2. Japan
3. Nigeria
4. South Korea
5. South Africa

Which of the above countries are frequently mentioned in the media for their low birth rates, aging population or declining population ?

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

#### PYQ Compass

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



Q. The increase in life expectancy in the country has led to newer health challenges in the community. What are those challenges and what steps need to be taken to meet them? (2022)

### RELEVANCE

**GS II : Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors**

## Innovate or be eaten (The Hindu : 18-06-2026)

India has repeatedly demonstrated its capacity for world-class innovation, as reflected in the success of Indian and Indian-origin leaders at the forefront of global technology industries. The innovations showcased at Bharat Innovates 2026 in France further highlighted that breakthrough technologies can be developed and scaled from within India. With sustained support for research, startups, and strategic technologies, India possesses the potential to emerge as a significant global hub for innovation rather than merely a consumer of technologies developed elsewhere.

### The Strategic Imperative of Technological Self-Reliance

Recent developments in the global technology landscape have also underscored the importance of **technological self-reliance**. The restriction of access to advanced AI models such as **Claude Mythos** and **Fable** for non-American users illustrates the vulnerabilities associated with dependence on foreign-controlled technologies. In this regard, India must strengthen their domestic innovation ecosystems to secure long-term technological and economic resilience.

### Identifying India's Innovation Opportunities

India must be realistic about where it can generate the greatest impact. Competing directly in frontier fields such as cutting-edge AI model development or semiconductor fabrication requires enormous financial resources and technological capabilities concentrated among a few global players. However, significant opportunities remain in deep-tech sectors including space technology, defence innovation, advanced manufacturing, material sciences, and specialised applications of artificial intelligence. These domains provide avenues where India can leverage its scientific talent and entrepreneurial capabilities to create globally competitive innovations.

### Creating a Conducive Environment for Innovation Capital

Realising this potential requires India to become a more attractive destination for investment and innovation capital. Entrepreneurs and investors need a predictable policy environment with transparent regulations, stable taxation, and efficient governance. Venture capital must also be encouraged to support exploratory and high-risk technologies rather than focusing solely on proven business models. A supportive ecosystem that rewards innovation is essential for nurturing the next generation of globally competitive enterprises.

### Retaining Talent & Building an Innovation Ecosystem

Focus should go to attract, retain, and bring back talented individuals. Beyond economic incentives, quality-of-life factors increasingly influence where innovators choose to build their careers. Investments in clean air, reliable public transport, and urban green spaces can make Indian cities more attractive for skilled professionals. Ultimately, India's innovation challenge is not constrained by a lack of talent or ideas but by long-standing structural issues that require sustained political commitment.

## STATIC CORE LINKAGE

Frontier AI models are the most advanced artificial intelligence systems available at a given time, trained on vast datasets to achieve state-of-the-art performance in tasks such as reasoning, text and image generation, and autonomous decision-making. In practice, they are often used alongside smaller open-source models, with AI systems automatically routing tasks to the most suitable model to balance accuracy, speed, and cost efficiency.

### PYQ Compass

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



**Q. Define potential GDP and explain its determinants. What are the factors that have been inhibiting India from realizing its potential GDP? (GS III – 2020)**

**Q. What are the salient features of 'inclusive growth'? Has India been experiencing such a growth process? Analyse and suggest measures for inclusive growth. (2017)**

## RELEVANCE

*GS III : Indian Economy*

## What does the India-Russia logistics agreement allow?

The operationalisation of the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) in 2025 marks an important milestone in the revival of India–Russia defence cooperation. Negotiations for the agreement began in 2018, and its eventual conclusion reflects the continued strategic relevance both countries attach to their long-standing military partnership. Alongside new memorandums on joint defence production and the resumption of the Indra military exercises after a three-year gap, RELOS signals that defence ties between New Delhi and Moscow remain active despite major shifts in the global geopolitical landscape.

### Understanding the Purpose of RELOS

RELOS is fundamentally a logistics support agreement designed to facilitate military cooperation rather than establish a military alliance. Similar to logistics agreements India has signed with countries such as the United States, France, Japan, Australia, and the United Kingdom, it enables reciprocal access to military facilities for refuelling, repairs, supplies, medical support, training, joint exercises, port calls, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. By creating a structured framework for logistical cooperation, the agreement reduces administrative hurdles and improves operational efficiency during military engagements between the two countries.

### Dispelling Misconceptions

A key aspect of the discussion surrounding RELOS has been the misconception that it permits the permanent stationing of Russian troops in India or Indian troops in Russia. The agreement contains no provision for military bases or long-term deployment of personnel and assets. References to a maximum contingent of 3,000 personnel merely establish an upper operational limit for mutually agreed exercises, visits, or logistical activities. Any deployment under the agreement remains temporary, mission-specific, and subject to prior approval by both governments, making RELOS consistent with other logistics agreements signed by India.

### Strategic Significance for India and Russia

The agreement also reflects the differing strategic priorities of India and Russia in the current international environment. Russia views the agreement as an opportunity to reinforce existing partnerships and demonstrate the resilience of its defence relationships following the Ukraine conflict. India, meanwhile, has sought to maintain defence cooperation with Russia while carefully balancing its growing ties with Western countries and other strategic partners. The relatively low-profile handling of RELOS by New Delhi illustrates India's broader effort to preserve its strategic autonomy and maintain its position as a trusted partner to multiple global powers.

### Long-Term Implications of RELOS

Beyond logistics, RELOS carries important long-term strategic implications. The agreement enhances interoperability between the armed forces of both countries, supports regular military exercises, and expands opportunities for defence cooperation in emerging regions such as the Arctic. Access to Russian military facilities in the Arctic could become increasingly significant as new navigation routes and strategic opportunities emerge due to climate change. Taken together, RELOS reinforces the institutional foundations of India–Russia defence ties while providing both countries with greater flexibility to cooperate across a range of military and strategic domains.

#### PYQ Compass

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



Q. What is the significance of Indo-US defence deals over Indo-Russian defence deals? Discuss with reference to stability in the Indo-Pacific region (GS II – 2020)

Q. Recently, India signed a deal known as 'Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field' with which of the following countries?

a) Japan b) Russia c) The United Kingdom d) The United States of America

#### RELEVANCE

GS II : International Relations

## Air Force to take part in 'Exercise Pitch Black'

India and Australia have steadily deepened their strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific, moving from diplomatic engagement to operational security cooperation. The foundation for this transformation was laid through the 2020 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP), which expanded collaboration in defence, intelligence sharing, maritime security, counter-terrorism, and regional stability. Since then, both countries have increasingly viewed each other as key partners in maintaining a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific, reflecting their growing strategic convergence amid evolving regional security challenges.

### Maritime Security & Cooperation

A major focus of this partnership has been maritime security. During the second India-Australia Defence Ministers' Dialogue, Defence Ministers Rajnath Singh and Richard Marles agreed to deepen cooperation in Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), including monitoring activities on and beneath the seas. Both sides also committed to advancing the Joint Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap, aimed at strengthening maritime surveillance, information sharing, and coordinated responses to emerging security challenges. These initiatives seek to safeguard critical sea lanes, ensure secure trade routes, and enhance regional maritime stability.

### Shared Response to Indo-Pacific Security Challenges

The growing emphasis on maritime cooperation is closely linked to developments in the wider Indo-Pacific. India and Australia share concerns regarding increasing militarisation, territorial disputes, and coercive activities in regional waters, particularly in the South China Sea. Through the Quad and initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Maritime Security Collaboration, both countries support adherence to international law, freedom of navigation, and peaceful dispute resolution. Their cooperation reflects a broader effort to strengthen regional resilience and preserve stability without resorting to unilateral actions or confrontation.

### Exercise Pitch Black: Strategic Significance

Exercise Pitch Black 2026 represents the latest step in translating strategic intent into operational cooperation. Hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force, the multinational exercise will bring together more than 100 aircraft and personnel from 19 partner nations, including India. As the RAAF's premier air combat exercise, Pitch Black focuses on interoperability, joint planning, tactical coordination, and large-force operations. India's participation demonstrates the increasing trust and military integration between the two countries while providing an opportunity to strengthen coordination with like-minded Indo-Pacific partners.

### Pitch Black's Contribution to India-Australia Maritime Cooperation

Viewed in a broader context, Exercise Pitch Black is not merely a military drill but part of a larger process through which India and Australia are institutionalising their defence and maritime partnership. Combined with maritime **domain awareness initiatives**, intelligence sharing, **Quad** cooperation, and the **Joint Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap**, the exercise strengthens bilateral cooperation. It illustrates how both nations are moving beyond policy declarations toward practical collaboration, enhancing their collective ability to contribute to security, stability, and a rules-based order across the Indo-Pacific region.

#### PYQ Compass

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



**Q. 'Sea is an important Component of the Cosmos.' Discuss in the light of the above statement, the role of the IMO (International Maritime Organisation) in protecting environment and enhancing maritime safety and security. (GS II – 2023)**

**Q. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is transforming itself into a trade bloc from a military alliance, in present times Discuss (GS II – 2020)**

#### RELEVANCE

**GS II : International Relations**

## India to meet 3% compressed biogas blending goal for FY27

India is steadily progressing towards its target of mandatorily blending 3% Compressed Biogas (CBG) with Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and domestic Piped Natural Gas (PNG) by FY27 under the CBG Blending Obligation (CBO) framework. The blending level has already reached nearly 2%, with current CBG sales contributing around 0.63–0.66 million metric standard cubic metres per day against total domestic CNG and PNG consumption of about 34–35 MMSCMD. The growth is expected to accelerate as hundreds of CBG plants are under construction across the country, indicating that India is on track to achieve its near-term blending targets.

The development reflects a broader public policy push to strengthen energy security, reduce dependence on imported liquefied natural gas (LNG), and promote a circular economy through the productive use of agricultural residue, animal waste, and other organic feedstock. By creating assured demand through mandatory blending, the government aims to stimulate investments estimated at ₹37,500 crore and facilitate the establishment of around 750 CBG projects by 2028–29. The policy is also expected to reduce foreign exchange outflows, support rural incomes, generate employment, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and contribute to India's net-zero objectives. In this context, the CBG Blending Obligation represents both an energy transition strategy and an economic development initiative that links waste management, clean energy production, and sustainable growth.

## Premium valuations for AI acquisitions



India's information technology sector is increasingly adopting a capability-driven investment strategy to position itself for the AI era. Rather than pursuing acquisitions primarily to increase revenue or workforce size, major IT firms are investing in specialised talent, intellectual property, engineering expertise, and AI-focused platforms. According to UearthInsight, Indian IT companies spent about \$5.5 billion across 19 acquisitions in FY26, with most transactions aimed at strengthening technological capabilities. Companies such as Coforge, Infosys, HCLTech, and Hexaware have focused on acquiring niche firms that provide advanced AI and engineering capabilities, reflecting a broader shift in the industry as businesses adapt to changing client demands and the growing importance of artificial intelligence.

This transformation is being driven not only by technological opportunity but also by the changing nature of work itself. A recent Cognizant–Pearson report found that AI is already handling around 37% of entry-level jobs in India, highlighting the rapid pace at which automation is reshaping workplaces. As traditional IT service models face increasing pressure, firms are seeking access to specialised talent, platforms, and innovation ecosystems rather than relying solely on workforce expansion. The concentration of acquisitions in North America further reflects the importance of accessing mature AI ecosystems and global expertise. Together, these trends indicate that India's AI investment model is evolving towards building high-value technological capabilities, ensuring that its IT sector remains competitive in an increasingly AI-driven global economy.

### PYQ Compass

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



Q. With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following? (2020)

1. Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units
2. Create meaningful short stories and songs
3. Disease diagnosis
4. Text-to-Speech Conversion
5. Wireless transmission of electrical energy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

### RELEVANCE

GS III : Indian Economy

## Practice Questions and answers

Q. Q. With reference to ageing, elderly welfare, and elder abuse in India, consider the following statements:

1. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act primarily focuses on providing legal remedies and mechanisms for redressal of grievances faced by senior citizens.
2. Kerala's rapid ageing is attributed only to increasing life expectancy and does not involve migration-related factors.
3. According to demographic projections, some Indian states are expected to have a larger elderly population than youth population by 2036.
4. The old-age dependency ratio refers to the number of elderly persons per 100 persons in the working-age population.
5. Community-based initiatives such as mobile healthcare, palliative care networks, and daycare centres can play a preventive role in addressing elderly vulnerability and social isolation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only four
- (d) All five

**Answer: (c) Only four**

**Statement 1: Correct** The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act and related tribunals provide legal recourse and redressal mechanisms for elderly persons facing neglect, abandonment, or abuse.

**Statement 2: Incorrect** Kerala's ageing is driven by multiple factors:

- Low fertility rate (below replacement level),
- Higher life expectancy,
- Large-scale outmigration of working-age population,
- Return migration of elderly persons from abroad, particularly West Asia.

**Statement 3: Correct** Demographic projections indicate that states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Himachal Pradesh are expected to have a higher proportion of elderly population than youth population by 2036.

**Statement 4: Correct** The old-age dependency ratio is defined as the number of elderly persons per 100 persons in the working-age population.

**Statement 5: Correct** Initiatives such as Kerala's Vayomithram, Samayaprabha, palliative care networks, and community support systems address health, isolation, and vulnerability before abuse or neglect occurs, thereby serving a preventive function.

Q. With reference to recent India–Australia defence cooperation, consider the following statements:

1. The Joint Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap seeks to strengthen maritime cooperation and domain awareness between the two countries.
2. Exercise Pitch Black is primarily a naval exercise conducted under the Quad framework.
3. Maritime Domain Awareness includes monitoring activities that may affect maritime security, safety, economy, and the marine environment.
4. Exercise Pitch Black contributes to interoperability among participating air forces.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

**Answer: (c)**

**Statement 1: Correct** – The roadmap strengthens India–Australia maritime security cooperation and domain awareness.

**Statement 2: Incorrect** – Exercise Pitch Black is a multinational air combat exercise, not a Quad naval exercise.

**Statement 3: Correct** – MDA covers monitoring activities affecting maritime security, economy, safety, and environment.

**Statement 4: Correct** – Pitch Black enhances interoperability among participating air forces.

## PYQ Compass

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



Q. With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following? (2020)

1. Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units
2. Create meaningful short stories and songs
3. Disease diagnosis
4. Text-to-Speech Conversion
5. Wireless transmission of electrical energy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans : b

**Statement 1 is Correct:** AI can optimise energy use by analysing consumption patterns, predicting demand, and automating processes to improve efficiency and reduce waste.

**Statement 2 is Incorrect:** AI can generate stories and songs, but their quality, creativity, and depth often require human review and refinement.

**Statement 3 is Correct:** AI assists in diagnosing diseases by analysing medical images and patient data to identify patterns and predict health conditions.

**Statement 4 is Correct:** AI-powered systems can effectively convert text into natural-sounding speech and are widely used in voice assistants and accessibility tools.

**Statement 5 is Incorrect:** This is an application of electromagnetic engineering and physics, not artificial intelligence.

Q. With reference to the funds under Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), which of the following statements are correct? (2020)

1. MPLADS funds must be used to create durable assets like physical infrastructure for health, education, etc.
2. A specified portion of each MP's fund must benefit SC/ST populations.
3. MPLADS funds are sanctioned on a yearly basis and the unused funds cannot be carried forward to the next year.
4. The district authority must inspect at least 10% of all works under implementation every year.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans : d

**Statement 1 is correct.** Under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), funds must be used to create durable assets such as infrastructure in the areas of health, education, drinking water, and sanitation, among others.

**Statement 2 is correct.** A specified portion of MPLADS funds must benefit Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) populations. The guidelines mandate that at least 15% of the funds be utilized for SCs and 7.5% for STs.

**Statement 3 is incorrect.** MPLADS funds are allocated on a yearly basis, but unused funds can be carried forward to the subsequent years during the term of the MP. However, unused funds at the end of an MP's tenure are returned to the government.

**Statement 4 is correct.** The District Authority, responsible for implementing the MPLADS works, must inspect at least 10% of all works under implementation every year to ensure proper utilization of funds and quality of work.

**While the Parliamentary Committee has called for greater budgetary allocation to education at the national level, schemes such as MPLADS illustrate how public representatives can support educational infrastructure at the grassroots level through the creation of durable community assets.**

### PYQ Compass

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



Q. With reference to the Union Budget, which of the following is/are covered under Non-Plan Expenditure? (2014)

1. Defence expenditure
2. Interest payments
3. Salaries and pensions
4. Subsidies

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1, 2, 3 and 4
- d) None

**Ans : c**

Non-Plan Expenditure refers to the recurring expenses of the government that are not part of any specific development project or plan. These expenses are necessary to run the government and maintain its operations. The following items are covered under Non-Plan Expenditure:

- 1) Defence Expenditure: Includes spending on the military, arms procurement, salaries of armed forces personnel, and maintenance of defense establishments.
- 2) Interest Payments: The government incurs interest payments on its borrowings, which are a significant component of Non-Plan Expenditure.
- 3) Salaries and Pensions includes salaries of government employees and pensions for retired personnel, forming a substantial part of Non-Plan Expenditure.
- 4) Subsidies includes subsidies on food, fertilizers, fuel, and other essential items provided by the government to support citizens.

Consider the following countries :

1. Italy
2. Japan
3. Nigeria
4. South Korea
5. South Africa

Which of the above countries are frequently mentioned in the media for their low birth rates, aging population or declining population ?

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

**Answer: A**

The phenomenon of low birth rates, aging populations, and declining populations is particularly noted in several developed countries.

Italy : Italy is well-known for its low birth rates and an increasingly aging population.

Nigeria : Nigeria, in contrast, does not fit this pattern. It has one of the highest birth rates in the world and a very young population. Concerns in Nigeria are more often related to managing population growth rather than dealing with declines. South Korea : South Korea also experiences very low birth rates and an aging population. The country has one of the lowest fertility rates globally, prompting the government to implement various policies to encourage higher birth rates and manage the challenges of an aging society. South Africa : South Africa does not typically face issues related to low birth rates or a significantly aging population compared to the other countries listed.

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



Q. Recently, India signed a deal known as ‘Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field’ with which of the following countries? (2019)

a) Japan  
b) Russia  
c) The United Kingdom  
d) The United States of America

**Ans : b**  
India signs Action Plan with the Russian Federation. “Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field”. The two countries intent to develop a project of six nuclear power units of Russian design at a new site in India, further enhance cooperation in the third countries and bring in new perspective nuclear technologies together with joint construction of nuclear power plants. According to the document, for the new nuclear project in India Russia will offer the evolutionary VVER generation “3+” technical solutions and will increase the level of Indian industry’s involvement and localization. This is state of art nuclear reactor technology in the world.

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2014)

| No. | Region often in news | Country              |
|-----|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1.  | Chechnya             | : Russian Federation |
| 2.  | Darfur               | : Mali               |
| 3.  | Swat Valley          | : Iraq               |

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

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

**Ans : a**  
1) Chechnya – Russian Federation is Correct. Chechnya is a region in the Russian Federation, located in the North Caucasus. It has been in the news due to conflicts and separatist movements.  
2) Darfur – Mali. It is incorrect. Darfur is a region in Sudan, not Mali. Darfur gained international attention due to the Darfur conflict and the humanitarian crisis there.  
3) Swat Valley – Iraq: It is incorrect. Swat Valley is located in Pakistan, not Iraq. The valley has been in the news due to conflicts, particularly involving the Taliban and military operations.

Q. Consider the following countries: (2024)

1. Finland  
2. Germany  
3. Norway  
4. Russia

How many of the above countries have a border with the North Sea?

a) Only one  
b) Only two  
c) Only three  
d) All four

**Ans: b**  
Germany and Norway border the North Sea.  
Finland and Russia do not.

