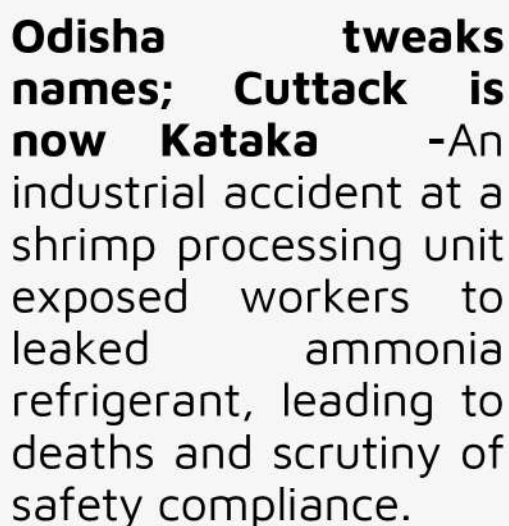




P4. CONTOURS



P7. INTERNATIONAL



P8. ECONOMICS



Editor's Note

In today's edition of Pala Civil Times, we explore a range of issues of national and international significance.

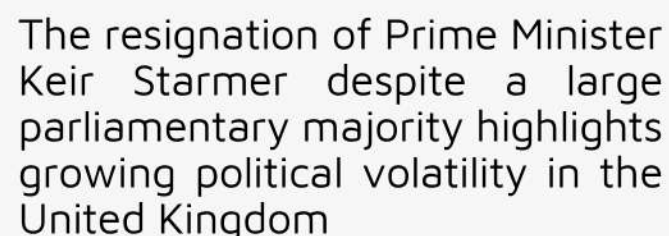
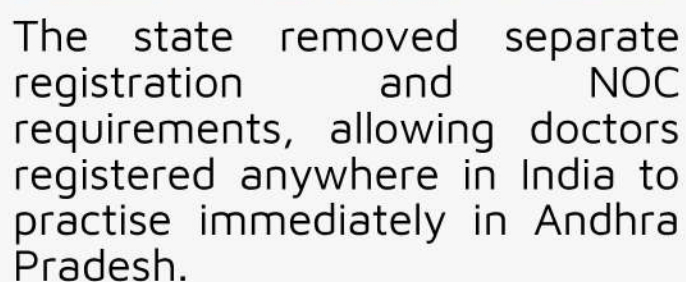
On the national front, we examine developments with judicial, cultural, and ecological relevance. These include Odisha's initiative to restore indigenous spellings to place names in order to preserve its linguistic heritage, the Supreme Court's reaffirmation of the primacy of the collegium system in High Court judicial appointments, and the continuing debate over granting Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) status to the Western Ghats.

On the international front, we analyse India's evolving relations with West Asian nations and the growing importance of engagement with BRICS countries in a changing global order. Our economics section focuses on shifting growth trends in the Indian economy and the key insights and advisories highlighted in the latest RBI Bulletin.

The decoded editorials section examines the Union Government's recent action against irrational Fixed Dose Combination (FDC) drugs, highlighting the importance of evidence-based medicine and patient safety. Finally, the Contours page explores the concept of digital sovereignty and discusses both historical and contemporary examples that demonstrate India's capacity to build and maintain strategic technological independence.

We encourage readers to engage with these topics critically, understand their wider implications, and develop a well-rounded perspective on the issues shaping India and the world today.

Editorials Decoded



Odisha tweaks names; Cuttack is now Kataka

The Odisha Government has approved changes in the English spellings of 64 administrative units, including districts, subdivisions, tehsils, blocks and urban local bodies, to better reflect Odia pronunciation. Under the revised spellings, Cuttack will be written as Kataka, Balasore as Baleshwar, and Rourkela as Raurkela, among other changes. The decision was cleared by the State Cabinet earlier this month and subsequently notified by the Revenue and Disaster Management Department. Officials clarified that these changes affect only the English spellings of place names and do not alter the actual names of the administrative units.



Pali 2024	Prakrit 2024	Bengali 2024	Marathi 2024	Assamese 2024
Odia 2014	Malayalam 2013	Kannada 2008	Telugu 2008	Sanskrit 2005
		Tamil 2004		

Preserving Odia Linguistic Identity and Classical Language Heritage

The changes were undertaken to preserve Odisha's linguistic identity and standardise English spellings in accordance with Odia phonetics, while correcting several colonial-era anglicised spellings that did not accurately reflect local pronunciation or etymology. The initiative forms part of the State Government's Odia Asmita campaign and was based on recommendations made by a high-level committee headed by litterateur Pratibha Ray. The move also reflects broader efforts to promote and preserve the Odia language, which was accorded Classical Language status in 2016, becoming the sixth Indian language to receive this recognition after Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. To support research and promotion of the language, the Centre of Excellence for Studies in Classical Odia (CESCO) has been established under the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) at Bhubaneswar.

RELEVANCE GS II : Indian Constitution
 GS II : Judiciary

Top court dismisses plea against Collegium picks for High Court

The Supreme Court declined to entertain a petition filed by a Himachal Pradesh judicial officer challenging the recommendation of the Supreme Court Collegium to appoint certain officers junior to him as judges of the Himachal Pradesh High Court. The petitioner argued that despite being the senior-most judicial officer and having been considered earlier, officers junior to him were recommended for elevation. However, the Court observed that appointments to constitutional courts are based on the Collegium's subjective assessment and are open to only limited judicial review in exceptional circumstances. The Bench further noted that there was no record showing that the petitioner's candidature had been formally rejected and emphasised that seniority by itself does not create a right to be recommended for appointment as a High Court judge.

Appointment and Qualifications of High Court Judges

Judges of a High Court are appointed by the President of India. The Chief Justice of a High Court is appointed after consultation with the Chief Justice of India and the Governor of the concerned State, while the appointment of other judges also involves consultation with the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court. Under the present Collegium system, High Court appointments must be made in accordance with the opinion of the **Chief Justice of India and a Collegium of senior Supreme Court judges**. To be appointed as a High Court judge, a person must be a citizen of India and must either have held a judicial office in India for at least ten years or have practised as an advocate of a High Court (or multiple High Courts in succession) for at least ten years.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. The Constitution (71st Amendment) Act, 1992 amends the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution to include which of the following languages? (2024)

1. Konkani 2. Manipuri 3. Nepali 4. Maithili

Select the correct answer using the code given below :

(a) 1, 2 and 3 (b) 1, 2 and 4 (c) 1, 3 and 4

(d) 2, 3 and 4

Western Ghats: What is the ESA plan for conservation, why it is necessary and the concerns

An Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) is a region identified for special protection and regulation due to its ecological significance, biological diversity and environmental fragility. In the Western Ghats context, ESA status is intended to balance conservation with sustainable development by regulating activities that may damage the ecosystem. The Kasturirangan Committee proposed that ecologically important natural landscapes within the Ghats should receive ESA protection, including restrictions on mining, quarrying, red-category polluting industries, thermal power plants and large construction projects.

Why the Western Ghats Require ESA Protection

The Western Ghats constitute a 1,500-km-long mountain chain and are among the world's eight hottest biodiversity hotspots. The region contains abundant endemic plant and animal species and supports important wildlife habitats, including national parks and tiger and elephant corridors. The Ghats also play a crucial role in influencing the monsoon by intercepting moisture-laden winds and generating heavy rainfall along the western coast. This rainfall sustains numerous rivers such as the Godavari, Krishna, Cauvery and Periyar, which support agriculture, livelihoods and economic activity across peninsular India.

Evolution of the Western Ghats ESA Framework

The Madhav Gadgil Committee report (2011) identified about 1,29,037 sq km as the extent of the Ghats and recommended that the entire region be designated as an ecologically sensitive area with extensive restrictions. Later, the Kasturirangan Committee (2013) adopted a more differentiated approach. It estimated the Western Ghats' extent at 1,64,280 sq km and found that nearly 60% of the area consisted of settlements, plantations and agricultural lands classified as "**cultural landscapes**". The remaining 40%, comprising ecologically rich "**natural landscapes**", was proposed for ESA protection. Based on these recommendations, the Centre issued a draft notification in 2014 identifying 56,825.7 sq km as ESA after incorporating certain state-level modifications, particularly from Kerala.

Addressing the Conservation-Development Deadlock

The Union Government constituted an expert committee under Sanjay Kumar in 2022 to re-examine state objections to the proposed ESA boundaries. The committee's key focus has been to reconcile differences regarding village-level demarcation and the extent of ESA coverage while maintaining the ecological objectives of the notification. The committee explored the idea of **financial incentives for states conserving the Western Ghats**. In line with earlier suggestions of the Kasturirangan Committee, the committee has considered grant-in-aid support and mechanisms for payments for ecosystem services, recognising that states protecting ecologically valuable landscapes incur developmental and economic costs.

What Is the Present Legal Position?

Despite six draft notifications since 2014, consensus on the final ESA boundaries remains elusive. The latest draft notification issued on July 31, 2024, valid until July 2026, introduced the possibility of notifying ESA boundaries in a phased or state-wise manner rather than waiting for agreement from all states. Karnataka continues to reject the Kasturirangan recommendations, while Kerala seeks exclusion of additional areas, particularly plantation and agricultural regions in Idukki and the Cardamom Hills. Maharashtra has proposed removing 378 villages from the notified area on grounds relating to industrial activity, mining interests and distance from ecologically sensitive zones.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. (a) Bring out the causes for more frequent occurrence of landslides in the Himalayas than in the Western Ghats.

(b) There is no formation of deltas by rivers of the Western Ghats. Why? (GS I – 2013)

The challenge of India's digital sovereignty

Digital infrastructure has become the foundation of modern governance, commerce and national security. Recent incidents, including the compromise of Indian CCTV networks through foreign software and the denial of access to Nayara Energy's digital services due to external sanctions, have exposed India's dependence on foreign-controlled technology platforms. Even when data is physically stored within India, control over cloud infrastructure, authentication systems, software platforms and digital services may remain with foreign corporations operating under the laws and directives of their home countries. This creates concerns regarding India's digital and technological sovereignty and its ability to independently control critical digital infrastructure.

Strategic Risks of Dependence on Foreign Technology

Dependence on externally controlled digital systems creates vulnerabilities extending beyond cyberspace into economic and national security domains. Decisions taken by foreign governments or corporations can potentially disrupt business operations, government functioning, manufacturing activity and critical services. The risks are particularly significant in defence, where modern military platforms increasingly depend on software-controlled systems. The experience of limited GPS support during the Kargil conflict is an example of the strategic costs associated with technological dependence.

Global Shift Towards Technological Sovereignty

France plans to migrate government communications to sovereign platforms, while the Netherlands, Denmark and parts of Germany are exploring alternatives to major foreign software and cloud services. The European Union is pursuing independent cloud and digital infrastructure capabilities, and Türkiye is similarly attempting to reduce external technological dependence. These developments indicate a broader global recognition that technological infrastructure has become a strategic asset linked to national sovereignty and security.

India's Emerging Approach to Technological Self-Reliance

India has already taken important steps towards reducing critical technological dependencies. The development of an indigenous satellite navigation system following the Kargil experience, the success of UPI and RuPay, efforts to strengthen semiconductor manufacturing, and the adoption of domestic digital platforms in parts of government administration reflect this trend. In defence, India is increasingly encouraging private-sector participation, as seen in the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft programme, to complement traditional public-sector efforts. The underlying objective is to create indigenous capabilities in areas such as digital infrastructure, defence technology, cloud services and advanced manufacturing while strengthening strategic autonomy.



Building Sovereignty Through Innovation and Strategic Partnerships

Alongside domestic capability creation, India can reduce vulnerabilities through trusted international partnerships that create mutual dependence and shared technological interests. Examples cited include the India–Russia BrahMos programme, the Micron semiconductor facility in Gujarat and India's participation in Pax Silica. However, the long-term success of this strategy depends on significantly increasing domestic research and development expenditure, which averaged only 0.74% of GDP between 2000 and 2020 compared with the global average of 2.07%. Strengthening innovation capacity, technological capabilities and research ecosystems is therefore presented as essential for safeguarding India's future economic competitiveness and strategic autonomy.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. e-Governance is not just about the routine application of digital technology in service delivery processes. It is as much about multifarious interactions for ensuring transparency and accountability. In this context, evaluate the role of the 'Interactive Service Model' of e-Governance. (GS II – Governance – 2024)

Q. E-governance is not only about utilization of the power of new technology, but also much about critical importance of the 'use value' of information. Explain. (GS II – 2018)

Starmer's Fall Reflects Fracturing British Polity (Indian Express : 23-06-2026)

Recent political developments in Britain illustrate the evolution of the traditional Westminster model from a system centred on collective cabinet responsibility towards what many scholars describe as "Prime Ministerial Government." While the Prime Minister was historically regarded as *primus inter pares* (first among equals), modern governance increasingly concentrates political authority in the office of the Prime Minister. However, the resignation of Prime Minister Keir Starmer despite a large parliamentary majority demonstrates that executive dominance remains dependent on public legitimacy, party unity and continued confidence within the parliamentary framework.

Fragmentation of the Traditional Party System

Britain's long-standing Labour-Conservative two-party system is witnessing significant fragmentation. Political competition is no longer confined to the traditional duopoly, with parties such as Reform UK, the Liberal Democrats and the Greens attracting substantial electoral support. This shift reflects declining trust in established political institutions, changing social identities and dissatisfaction with mainstream political leadership. ***The rise of alternative political platforms has weakened traditional class-based voting patterns and created a more volatile electoral environment.***

Brexit as a Long-Term Governance Challenge

A decade after Brexit, Britain continues to grapple with its economic and political consequences. The debate has moved beyond the question of leaving the European Union to managing the practical challenges arising from that decision. Issues such as trade barriers, immigration management, customs procedures, labour mobility, regulatory divergence and economic competitiveness continue to shape public discourse. Successive governments have struggled to balance demands for sovereignty with the need for economic integration. Brexit therefore serves as an important case study of how major constitutional and geopolitical decisions can generate long-term governance challenges.

Comparative Insights for India's Parliamentary System

India's parliamentary system is substantially derived from the Westminster model. Both countries follow principles such as collective responsibility of the cabinet, executive accountability to the legislature and leadership by a Prime Minister. At the same time, contemporary trends in both systems reveal increasing concentration of authority in the executive leadership and a growing role of party discipline in legislative functioning. The British case demonstrates that constitutional provisions alone do not ensure effective governance. Rather, political leadership, institutional adaptability and public trust remain equally important for sustaining parliamentary democracy.

Future Challenges for Parliamentary Democracies

Rising populism, declining confidence in institutions, economic insecurity, identity-based politics and increasing electoral fragmentation are testing traditional governance structures. These trends have intensified the debate between political stability and democratic accountability, a central issue in comparative politics. While parliamentary systems provide mechanisms for continuous executive accountability, they may also experience frequent leadership changes during periods of political volatility.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. We adopted parliamentary democracy based on the British model, but how does our model differ from that model? (2021)

1. As regards legislation, the British Parliament is supreme or sovereign but in India, the power of the Parliament to legislate is limited.
2. In India, matters related to the constitutionality of the Amendment of an Act of the Parliament are referred to the Constitution Bench by the Supreme Court.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Stay with the evidence (The Hindu : 23-06-2026)

The Union Health Ministry has banned **16 Fixed Dose Combination (FDC) drugs** after scientific review found that these combinations lacked therapeutic justification and could be unsafe for patients. The banned formulations include certain dermatological drugs, painkillers, antispasmodics, and antibiotic-based medicines. State drug regulators and enforcement agencies have been directed to ensure that these products are removed from the market and that manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacies stop their sale and stocking.

What is a Fixed Dose Combination (FDC)?

A Fixed Dose Combination (FDC) is a medicine that contains two or more active pharmaceutical ingredients combined in a fixed ratio within a single tablet, capsule, or dosage form. FDCs were developed to simplify treatment by reducing the number of pills a patient needs to take. They are commonly used in diseases such as Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, hypertension, and diabetes, where multiple medicines are often required simultaneously.



Advantages of FDCs

When scientifically justified, FDCs offer several benefits. They reduce the pill burden on patients, making treatment more convenient and improving adherence to prescribed therapies. They can also enhance therapeutic effectiveness when different drugs act together in a complementary manner. In chronic diseases requiring long-term treatment, FDCs help patients follow treatment schedules more consistently, thereby improving health outcomes.

Why are Some FDCs Banned? Disadvantages and Risks

Not all drug combinations are medically necessary or safe. Irrational FDCs may expose patients to medicines they do not need, increasing the risk of side effects. Since the doses of individual drugs are fixed, doctors cannot adjust them according to a patient's specific requirements. If an allergic reaction occurs, identifying the responsible ingredient becomes difficult. Particularly concerning are antibiotic-based FDCs, as their irrational use can accelerate antimicrobial resistance (AMR), a major public health challenge. These concerns led the government to ban the 16 FDCs.

Way Forward

While the ban is an important step towards evidence-based medicine, effective implementation is crucial. Regulatory authorities must ensure that banned drugs are completely withdrawn from the market and are not sold through existing stocks. Continuous monitoring, inspections, and awareness among manufacturers, pharmacists, and healthcare providers are necessary. The government should also strengthen post-market surveillance and promote the use of scientifically validated medicines so that the benefits of the ban reach patients across the country.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. What do you understand by Fixed Dose Drug Combinations (FDCs)? Discuss their merits and demerits.(GS III – Science and Technology – 2013)

Q. Can overuse and free availability of antibiotics without Doctor's prescription, be contributors to the emergence of drug-resistant diseases in India? What are the available mechanisms for monitoring and control? Critically discuss the various issues involved. (GS III – Science and Technology – 2014)

RELEVANCE

GS III : Science and Technology

India, Israel discuss expanding defence, industrial relations

Defence remains the cornerstone of India-Israel relations and has witnessed sustained growth in both scope and scale over the years. During the visit of Major General Amir Baram, Director General of Israel's Ministry of Defence, discussions with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh focused on strengthening cooperation in defence manufacturing, military technology and joint defence projects under the framework of the India-Israel Special Strategic Partnership. The engagement reflects the high level of strategic trust between the two countries and their shared commitment to expanding collaboration in defence research, production and capability development. Defence cooperation has gradually evolved from a conventional buyer-seller relationship into a broader partnership involving technology sharing, industrial collaboration and long-term strategic engagement.

Emerging Dimensions of the Defence Partnership

The contemporary defence partnership increasingly extends beyond military hardware into emerging domains of security and strategic technology. Cooperation in areas such as **Artificial Intelligence, cyber security and Horizon Scanning or Strategic Foresight mechanisms** reflects a growing emphasis on preparing for future security challenges. These initiatives seek to leverage advanced technologies, data analysis and innovation for strategic planning and decision-making. The expanding defence-industrial alliance aligns with India's objective of strengthening indigenous defence production and technological self-reliance while benefiting from Israel's expertise in high-technology sectors.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. How will I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE and USA) grouping transform India's position in global politics? (GS II – 2022)

Q. "India's relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back." Discuss. (GS II – 2018)

RELEVANCE GS II : International relations

Doval hosts NSAs of BRICS nations amid West Asia tensions

The BRICS National Security Advisers' meeting hosted by India in New Delhi took place against the backdrop of heightened tensions in West Asia, making regional security a key theme of discussions. National Security Adviser Ajit Doval held bilateral meetings with representatives from Iran, China, Brazil and other BRICS members, reviewing developments in West Asia, India-Iran relations and broader security concerns. Discussions with China focused on the gradual normalisation of India-China relations and the importance of stable and predictable engagement, while meetings involving Iran highlighted ongoing consultations among BRICS members on regional stability and security challenges. The gathering also reviewed the work of BRICS Joint Working Groups on Counter-Terrorism and other emerging security issues.

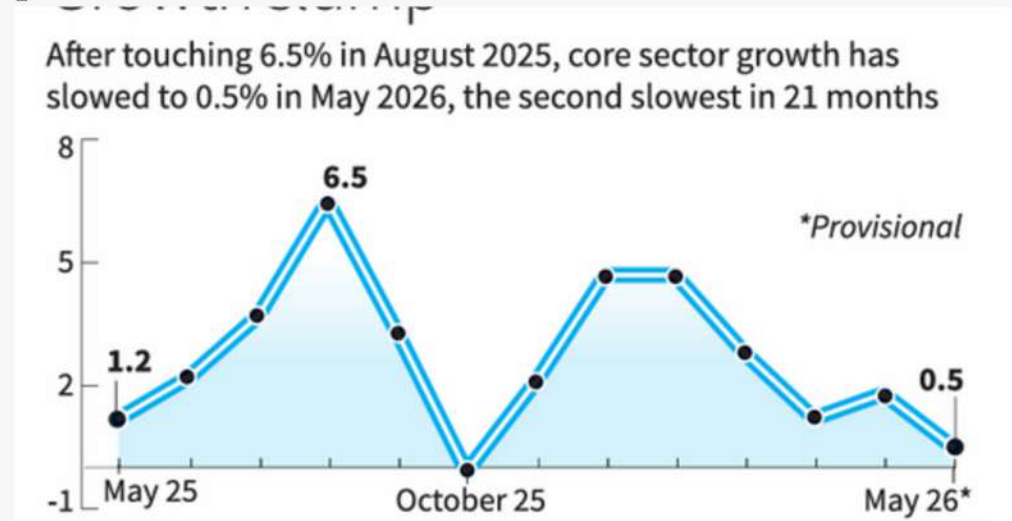


Significance for BRICS and Global Security Governance

The meeting highlights the growing importance of BRICS as a platform for consultations on major geopolitical and security developments, particularly at a time of heightened tensions in West Asia. Discussions among India, Iran, China and other members focused on regional stability, evolving security dynamics and the broader global security architecture. The engagement between Iranian and Chinese representatives further underscored efforts by BRICS members to maintain dialogue and coordination during periods of geopolitical uncertainty. In addition, the meeting reviewed the work of BRICS Joint Working Groups on Counter-Terrorism, which operate under the grouping's long-standing commitment to combating terrorism, enhancing security cooperation and contributing to international efforts against threats to peace and stability.

Core sector growth slows to 0.5%; crude, coal contract

India's Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI), which tracks the performance of coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilizers, steel, cement and electricity and accounts for 40.27% of the weight in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), recorded a growth of only 0.5% in May 2026. This was the second-lowest growth rate in the last 21 months, indicating a significant slowdown in industrial activity. The weakness was broad-based, with five of the eight core sectors contracting. The sharpest declines were observed in petroleum-linked sectors: crude oil (-4.6%), natural gas (-4.9%) and refinery products (-8.7%), while coal production also contracted by 9.3%. Fertilizer output continued to remain in negative territory for the third consecutive month, though the pace of contraction moderated compared to previous months.



Economic Implications of the Slowdown

Since the core industries provide critical inputs to manufacturing, infrastructure and construction activities, a slowdown in their growth could weigh on broader industrial production. The contraction in petroleum-related sectors reflects higher crude imports, softer international prices and disruptions linked to the West Asia situation, highlighting the vulnerability of the sector to external developments. At the same time, continued growth in steel, cement and electricity points to ongoing infrastructure and construction activity. Overall, the data presents a mixed picture: **while domestic investment-linked sectors remain relatively resilient, weakness in energy and resource-based industries has significantly dampened aggregate core sector growth.**

RELEVANCE

GS III : Indian Economy

Global economic landscape remains fragile: RBI Bulletin

The Reserve Bank of India, in its June 2026 Bulletin, cautioned that the global economic environment remains fragile despite the interim U.S.-Iran peace agreement. RBI officials noted that any breakdown of the agreement could revive significant risks through disruptions in international trade, commodity markets, capital flows and cost structures. Such a scenario could lead to higher inflation expectations, disruptions to critical energy infrastructure, delays in investment spending, concerns over food security, financial market instability and weaker global growth prospects. The assessment highlights how geopolitical developments in West Asia continue to influence the global economic outlook, particularly through energy markets and supply chains.

Implications for India: Resilience Amid Emerging Inflationary Pressures

According to the RBI, India is better positioned than many economies to withstand such external shocks due to strong macroeconomic fundamentals, including sustained economic growth, anchored inflation expectations, fiscal consolidation, a manageable current account balance and adequate foreign exchange reserves. However, the impact of the West Asia conflict has already become visible in domestic inflation trends, with headline CPI inflation rising from 3.5% in April 2026 to 3.9% in May 2026. The increase was broad-based, covering food, fuel and core inflation components. Rising international energy prices led to higher retail prices of petrol, diesel and CNG, with petrol and diesel prices increasing by about ₹7.5–7.6 per litre during May. The RBI also identified an adverse southwest monsoon as an additional risk that could further affect India's growth and inflation outlook in the coming months.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. Do you agree that the Indian economy has recently experienced V-shaped recovery? Give reasons in support of your answer. (GS III – 2021)

PYQ Compass

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



Q. We adopted parliamentary democracy based on the British model, but how does our model differ from that model? (2021)

1. As regards legislation, the British Parliament is supreme or sovereign but in India, the power of the Parliament to legislate is limited.
2. In India, matters related to the constitutionality of the Amendment of an Act of the Parliament are referred to the Constitution Bench by the Supreme Court.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans : C

Statement 1: True. In the British model, the Parliament is sovereign and can make or unmake any law without any legal constraints. In contrast, in India, the Parliament's power to legislate is limited by the Constitution. Indian laws must conform to the Constitution, and the judiciary has the power of judicial review to ensure this.

Statement 2: True. In India, matters related to the constitutionality of amendments or Acts of Parliament are often referred to a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court as per Article 145(3) of the Constitution. This ensures a thorough examination of such issues to maintain constitutional validity. Hence, both statements are correct.

Q. The Constitution (71st Amendment) Act, 1992 amends the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution to include which of the following languages? (2024)

1. Konkani
2. Manipuri
3. Nepali
4. Maithili

Select the correct answer using the code given below :

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

Ans : a

The Constitution (71st Amendment) Act, 1992, amended the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution to include three languages:

1. Konkani
2. Manipuri
3. Nepali

These languages were added to recognize their significance and ensure their development.

Maithili was added later through the 92nd Amendment Act, 2003, and is not part of the 71st Amendment.

The **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution** contains the languages recognized by the Constitution of India. Its provisions are linked to Articles 344(1) and 351, which aim to promote the progressive use of Hindi for official purposes of the Union while enriching it through interaction with other Indian languages. Article 344(1) provides for a Commission to make recommendations regarding the use of Hindi and includes representation from the languages listed in the Eighth Schedule. Article 351 directs the Union to promote the spread and development of Hindi by drawing upon Sanskrit and other Eighth Schedule languages.

The Schedule currently contains 22 languages. Initially, 14 languages were included in 1950. Sindhi was added in 1967; Konkani, Manipuri, and Nepali in 1992; and Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santhali in 2004.

Practice Questions and answers

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Digital sovereignty refers only to localisation of data within national borders.
2. Dependence on foreign-controlled software platforms can create strategic vulnerabilities even when data is physically stored domestically.
3. Indigenous digital infrastructure such as UPI and RuPay are cited as examples of reducing external technological dependence.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 2 and 3 only

The debate on digital and technological sovereignty gained prominence following concerns over foreign-controlled digital infrastructure. Recent instances such as the alleged compromise of CCTV systems through foreign software platforms and the denial of access to digital services used by an Indian company due to external sanctions have raised questions about India's ability to retain control over critical digital systems that underpin governance, commerce and national security.

Statement 1: Incorrect – Digital sovereignty is not merely about storing data within national territory. Even if data is physically located in India, control may still rest with foreign technology providers that own the software, cloud infrastructure or authentication systems. Therefore, digital sovereignty involves effective control over data, infrastructure, software and access mechanisms, not just geographical location of servers.

Statement 2: Correct – Critical services such as cloud computing, communication platforms, enterprise software and digital infrastructure may remain vulnerable if their operation ultimately depends on foreign entities.

In extreme situations, denial of access, software restrictions or external political decisions could disrupt business operations, government services, supply chains or defence preparedness.

Statement 3: Correct – Indigenous digital infrastructure such as UPI and RuPay are successful examples of India building critical digital infrastructure under domestic control. These platforms demonstrate that large-scale technological systems can be developed and operated without excessive dependence on foreign-controlled networks.

Q. Consider the following statements regarding appointment of High Court judges:

1. Seniority among judicial officers creates a legitimate expectation but not a legal right to elevation.
2. Recommendations of the Collegium are subject to unrestricted judicial review.
3. The present Collegium system continues because the NJAC framework was struck down by the Supreme Court.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

Statement 1 – Correct: The Supreme Court reiterated that seniority among judicial officers entitles a candidate to consideration for elevation but does not confer a legal right to become a High Court judge.

Statement 2 – Incorrect: Collegium recommendations are subject only to limited judicial review in exceptional circumstances and not to unrestricted judicial scrutiny.

Statement 3 – Correct: The Collegium system continues because the Supreme Court struck down the NJAC and the 99th Constitutional Amendment in 2015.

Practice Questions and answers

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Since core industries form a substantial component of the Index of Industrial Production, sustained weakness in core sectors can affect broader industrial performance.
2. The May 2026 slowdown was driven primarily by contraction in petroleum-related sectors.
3. Positive growth in electricity, steel and cement suggests that all infrastructure activity remained robust.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

The Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) recorded a growth of only 0.5% in May 2026, the second-lowest growth rate in the previous 21 months. Since these eight sectors account for **40.27%** of the weight in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), the data is an important indicator of the health of India's industrial economy.

Statement 1: Correct – Since core industries form a substantial component of the Index of Industrial Production, sustained weakness in core sectors can affect broader industrial performance.

The Eight Core Industries comprise Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilisers, Steel, Cement and Electricity. Together they contribute 40.27% of the IIP weight, making them foundational inputs for manufacturing, infrastructure and construction.

Therefore, persistent weakness in core sectors often transmits to overall industrial production and economic activity. This is why economists closely monitor ICI data as a leading indicator of industrial growth.

Statement 2: Correct – The May 2026 slowdown was driven primarily by contraction in petroleum-related sectors.

- The sharpest declines were recorded in:
 - Refinery Products: -8.7%
 - Natural Gas: -4.9%
 - Crude Oil: -4.6%
- Economists attributed much of this weakness to developments affecting the energy sector, including factors linked to international crude markets and the broader West Asia situation.
- Since petroleum-linked industries occupy an important place within the core sector basket, their contraction significantly pulled down the overall growth rate.

Statement 3: Incorrect – Positive growth in electricity, steel and cement suggests that all infrastructure activity remained robust.

- Electricity (8.7%), Cement (8.4%) and Steel (5%) did register positive growth, indicating continued activity in certain infrastructure and construction segments.
- Simultaneous contractions in coal, crude oil, natural gas and refinery products indicate that the overall industrial picture remained mixed rather than uniformly strong.
- Hence, growth in a few sectors cannot be used to infer broad-based strength across the entire infrastructure ecosystem.