

THE PALA

CIVIL TIMES

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P2. NATIONAL



Modi hails Australia’s social media ban on minors, signals curbs
-Explores the growing global movement to regulate children's social media access and India's evolving approach towards introducing age-based digital safeguards.

P3. NATIONAL



Rainfall in eastern river basins down 20% since 1951: Study on water availability in Indus river system :
Analyses new scientific evidence on climate-induced changes in the Indus River Basin and its implications for water security and the Indus Waters Treaty.

P4. NATIONAL



Why is the Centre revising the NFSA? :
Examines the proposed changes to foodgrain entitlements under the NFSA, the concerns raised by States, and the broader significance of India's food security framework.

P7. WORLD



Building a durable India-Australia partnership
- Highlights the expanding strategic partnership between India and Australia across defence, critical technologies, education, and the Indian diaspora..

Editor’s Note

In today’s edition of the Pala Civil Times, we focus on a diverse set of issues spanning governance, environment, disaster management, social policy, and international relations. The edition examines global and Indian initiatives to regulate social media access for children, the proposed amendments to the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the debates surrounding food security, as well as new scientific evidence on the impact of climate change on water availability in the Indus River Basin and its implications for the Indus Waters Treaty.

Our editorial section decodes the significance of Operation Hard Ball, its implications for India–Canada relations and international security cooperation, while also analysing the recent Wayanad landslide, its underlying causes, and the importance of strengthening landslide preparedness through scientific early warning systems. In the international section, we explore the evolving pillars of the India–Australia partnership, with a focus on defence, critical technologies, and the Indian diaspora. Overall, this edition offers an integrated understanding of topics relevant to climatology, disaster management, food security, governance, internal security, and international relations. We encourage readers to engage with each article patiently and build a strong conceptual foundation. Happy Reading!

Editorials Decoded

 **The IndianEXPRESS**

A global crackdown and a chance for India



Explains the international crackdown on transnational organised crime networks and its implications for India's security, diplomacy, and India–Canada relations.

THE HINDU

A perfect storm



Investigates the causes behind the recent Wayanad landslide while highlighting the need for scientific early warning systems and climate-resilient disaster management in India.

Modi hails Australia's social media ban on minors, signals curbs

During his visit to Australia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised Australia's restrictions on social media access for children, signalling that India is actively considering similar safeguards to protect minors in the digital space.

Global efforts to regulate children's access to social media

Several countries are introducing stricter regulations to limit children's exposure to social media due to concerns over mental health, online safety, and harmful content. **Australia** has taken the lead through the **Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act, 2024**, which requires social media platforms to **detect and block users below the age of 16**. Other countries, including **Singapore and Denmark**, are also developing legal and technological frameworks to strengthen online child protection. These developments reflect a growing global trend towards age-based regulation of social media and greater platform accountability for safeguarding children online.

India's evolving approach to age-based social media regulation

India has indicated that it is actively considering similar safeguards for children. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has confirmed that discussions are underway on introducing age-based restrictions on social media use. The government is exploring a graded regulatory framework, under which different age groups of minors may receive varying levels of access to social media platforms and content. The proposed framework could be introduced either through a new law enacted by Parliament or through amendments to the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**. States such as Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have also announced plans to regulate children's social media usage by drawing upon international best practices.

Monsoon has covered the entire country, a day later than normal, announces IMD

The Southwest Monsoon covered the entire country on July 10, one day later than its normal date, marking the completion of its seasonal advance across India after reaching Kerala on June 5.

The S-W Monsoon advanced into the remaining parts of the north Arabian Sea, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab, completing its nationwide coverage on July 10. The monsoon took 35 days to travel from Kerala to the rest of the country, reflecting a slower advance than in recent years. IMD records since 1971 show nationwide coverage occurring anywhere between June 16 (2013) and August 15 (2002). Over the past week, the monsoon has strengthened, bringing widespread heavy rainfall to several regions, including Delhi and the National Capital Region, leading to waterlogging and traffic disruptions.



Monsoon progress does not determine seasonal rainfall

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast below-normal rainfall for July (less than **94% of the Long Period Average**) at the national level, although parts of northwest and northeast India, east-central India, and the eastern peninsula are expected to receive normal to above-normal rainfall. Despite an improvement in the country's cumulative monsoon rainfall deficit from 38% on June 30 to 15%, historical data indicate that the date of nationwide monsoon coverage has little correlation with the total June–September seasonal rainfall. While some El Niño years, such as 2002 and 2009, witnessed delayed monsoon coverage and severe rainfall deficits, 2015 experienced an early nationwide advance despite below-normal seasonal rainfall. This highlights that the geographical spread of the monsoon is not, by itself, a reliable indicator of seasonal rainfall, as large-scale climatic factors such as El Niño continue to influence the strength, distribution, and overall performance of the monsoon.

PYQ Compass

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



PYQ
COMPASS

Q. Child cuddling is now being replaced by mobile phones. Discuss its impact on the socialization of children. (GS I – 2023)

RELEVANCE

GS I : Indian Society; GS III : Indian Geography

Rainfall in eastern river basins down 20% since 1951: Study on water availability in Indus river system

IIT Gandhinagar researchers have published the first long-term assessment (1951–2024) showing significant climate-induced changes in water availability across the Indus basin. The findings strengthen India's argument that changing hydro-climatic conditions warrant a review of the Indus Waters Treaty (1960).

Key Findings of the Study

Declining precipitation in eastern rivers : The catchment areas of the Ravi, Beas and Sutlej experienced nearly 20% decline in precipitation between 1951 and 2024.

Stable rainfall in western rivers : The Indus, Jhelum and Chenab catchments recorded only about 6% decline, which the study considers statistically insignificant.

Groundwater depletion : The Ravi and Sutlej sub-basins experienced significant groundwater depletion, whereas western river basins remained relatively stable.

Declining reservoir inflows : Major reservoirs such as Bhakra, Pong and Thein witnessed a significant decline in annual inflows, affecting water storage and irrigation potential.

Pakistan's reservoirs relatively unaffected : Reservoirs like Mangla and Tarbela continued to receive relatively stable inflows because they are located on the western rivers.

Why are these findings important?

Evidence of climate-induced hydrological change : The study provides one of the first long-term datasets showing that climate change has altered river flows within the Indus basin.

Challenges historical assumptions : The Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan was negotiated under hydro-climatic conditions prevailing around 1960, which differ significantly from present conditions.

Supports adaptive water governance : The findings strengthen the argument that international river-sharing arrangements (IWT) may require periodic review to reflect changing climatic realities.

Implications for the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

Changing water availability : Reduced flows in eastern rivers could affect India's utilisation of waters allocated under the treaty.

Increasing water demand : Population growth, urbanisation, irrigation expansion and clean energy needs have increased pressure on available water resources.

Climate resilience : Future river-sharing arrangements may need greater flexibility to respond to changing rainfall patterns and extreme weather events.

Long-term sustainability : The study argues that hydro-climatic changes raise questions regarding the treaty's long-term sustainability.



PYQ Compass

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



Q. Climate change' is a global problem. How India will be affected by climate change? How Himalayan and coastal states of India will be affected by climate change? (GS I – 2017)

RELEVANCE

GS I ; Indian Geography; GS III : Environmental degradation

Why is the Centre revising the NFSA?

The Union Government has proposed an amendment to the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, to **change the foodgrain entitlement for Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households from the existing 35 kg per household per month to 7 kg per person per month, subject to a maximum of 35 kg per household**. The proposal has drawn objections from States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which argue that it would reduce foodgrain allocation for households with fewer than five members.

Significance of the NFSA

The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 is a rights-based legislation that aims to ensure food and nutritional security by providing eligible households with subsidized foodgrains through the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). It is one of India's most significant social welfare legislations as it transforms **food assistance into a legal entitlement rather than a discretionary welfare measure**. The Act complements the National Food Security & Nutrition Mission (NFSNM), which focuses on increasing agricultural production and improving productivity. Together, the two initiatives form the twin pillars of India's food security architecture—**NFSNM strengthens food production, while NFSA guarantees equitable distribution**, thereby promoting food security and nutritional security.

What is the proposed amendment?

- **Shift in entitlement:** The draft amendment proposes replacing the existing household-based entitlement for Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households with a per-capita entitlement of 7 kg of foodgrains per person per month, subject to a maximum of 35 kg per household.
- **Objective of equity:** The Union Government states that the amendment aims to remove inequities within the AAY category, as smaller households currently receive a higher per-capita allocation than larger households under the existing system.
- **Rationalisation of allocation:** The proposed change seeks to make foodgrain distribution more rational by ensuring that allocations are linked more closely to the number of beneficiaries in each household.
- **Nutritional focus:** The amendment also aims to align foodgrain entitlements more closely with the nutritional requirements of individual beneficiaries.

Why are some States opposing the proposal?

States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala argue that the amendment would reduce foodgrain allocations for a large proportion of AAY households because both States have **relatively smaller, nuclear families**. They contend that this would **increase out-of-pocket expenditure on essential food items** and adversely affect poor households. Concerns have also been raised that the amendment could create regional disparities in foodgrain allocation, with States having larger average family sizes receiving comparatively higher allocations under the new formula. Kerala has one of India's oldest public distribution systems, while Tamil Nadu has long pursued an extensive universal food subsidy programme. Consequently, both States have advocated stronger food security protections and had earlier negotiated safeguards during NFSA implementation (2013).



The debate highlights the broader policy challenge of balancing equity, fiscal sustainability, nutritional needs, and regional demographic differences within India's food security framework.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. Food Security Bill is expected to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in India. Critically discuss various apprehensions in its effective implementation along with the concerns it has generated in WTO. (GS III – 2013)

RELEVANCE

GS III : Public Distribution System

A global crackdown and a chance for India (Indian Express : 10-07-2026)

Law enforcement agencies from the United States, Canada, and several European countries have launched Operation Hard Ball, a coordinated crackdown on transnational organised crime networks linked to India-based criminal syndicates. The operation has resulted in multiple arrests across jurisdictions and has renewed attention on the nexus between organised crime, terrorism, and cross-border extortion targeting the Indian diaspora.

What is Operation Hard Ball?

Operation Hard Ball is a multi-agency international law enforcement operation initiated after the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada in 2023. The investigation targets transnational organised crime groups allegedly involved in activities such as racketeering, targeted killings, extortion, drug trafficking, illegal arms trafficking, and money laundering across North America and Europe. As part of the operation, authorities have filed indictments against members of three India-based organised crime groups, including the Lawrence Bishnoi network, conducted coordinated searches across multiple countries, seized large quantities of narcotics, firearms, and cash, and announced rewards for key fugitives.



How does the operation impact India?

Reinforces India's position on the Nijjar case : The investigation has strengthened India's long-standing position that it was not responsible for the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Rather than pointing towards direct state involvement, the investigation has focused on transnational organised criminal networks operating across multiple countries.

Opportunity to restore India-Canada relations : The operation has coincided with a shift in Canada's approach under the new leadership, creating an opportunity to normalise bilateral relations that had deteriorated following the Nijjar controversy.

Highlights the organised crime-terror nexus : The investigations have reinforced concerns regarding the growing convergence between organised criminal syndicates and extremist networks. Such linkages enable criminal organisations to finance separatist activities while simultaneously engaging in narcotics trafficking, extortion, targeted violence, and illegal arms networks across international borders.

Strengthens international security cooperation : The coordinated operation demonstrates the importance of intelligence sharing and joint investigations among countries in addressing transnational organised crime.

Enhances protection of the Indian diaspora : The crackdown targets criminal syndicates that have increasingly used extortion, intimidation, and violence against members of the Indian diaspora in countries such as Canada, the United States, and parts of Europe. Disrupting these networks is expected to improve the security of overseas Indian communities.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. Explain how narco-terrorism has emerged as a serious threat across the country. Suggest suitable measures to counter narco-terrorism. (GS III – Internal Security – 2024)

The Retail Value of Transnational Crime



RELEVANCE

GS II : International Relations; GS III : Science and Technology

A perfect storm (The Hindu : 10-07-2026)

A heavy downpour on July 7 triggered a debris slide near the under-construction twin tunnel at Kalladi in Meppadi, Wayanad, resulting in the death of six workers. The incident has once again highlighted the ecological fragility of the Western Ghats and renewed the debate on sustainable infrastructure development and landslide preparedness in India.



Why did the recent landslide occur?

Extreme rainfall trigger : Heavy rainfall acted as the immediate trigger by saturating the soil, increasing pore-water pressure, and destabilising the already fragile hill slopes, ultimately leading to a debris slide.

Fragile ecology of Wayanad : Wayanad forms part of the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats, where steep slopes, highly weathered rocks, and intense monsoon rainfall make the region susceptible to landslides.

Climate-induced vulnerability : Successive disasters since the **2018 Kerala floods**, including the **2019 Puthumala landslide**, the **2024 Chooralmala disaster**, and the latest incident, indicate increasing climate-related risks in the region.

Infrastructure-related disturbances : Large-scale excavation and tunnelling activities can disturb the natural stability of hill slopes if geological and environmental safeguards are not implemented rigorously.

Excavation debris management : Questions have been raised regarding the timely removal of excavated material from the construction site, as accumulated debris can become unstable during periods of intense rainfall.

Possible geomorphological factors : Experts are investigating whether a mudslide in the upper reaches triggered the cascading movement of debris towards the tunnel entrance.

Governance & environmental concerns

Compliance with environmental safeguards : The Kerala Government has ordered an investigation into whether construction activities complied with the conditions prescribed by the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) while granting environmental clearance.

Balancing development and ecology : The tunnel project was justified on the grounds of improving connectivity and healthcare access for Wayanad, but environmental groups have consistently warned about its ecological risks.

Need for climate-resilient infrastructure : Infrastructure projects in ecologically fragile regions must integrate geological assessments, climate projections, slope stabilisation measures, and continuous environmental monitoring.

Disaster preparedness gaps : The recurrence of landslides despite similar meteorological conditions highlights the need to strengthen forecasting, evacuation planning, and disaster response mechanisms.

Way Forward

Need for early warning systems : Recurring landslides across the Western Ghats underline the need for reliable landslide early warning systems that enable timely evacuation.

Sensor-based monitoring systems : Researchers have demonstrated that networks of tilt meters, pressure gauges, accelerometers, and other ground sensors can detect slope instability and provide advance warnings at identified high-risk locations.

Satellite-based probabilistic forecasting : Researchers at IIT Mandi have developed forecasting models that combine satellite data, rainfall forecasts, geological characteristics, soil conditions, slope stability, and historical landslide records to estimate the probability of landslides across larger regions.

More accurate and localised rainfall forecasts can significantly improve landslide prediction while scientific identification and mapping of landslide-prone areas should form the basis for infrastructure planning, settlement regulation, and disaster preparedness. Monitoring, environmental regulation, and institutional coordination rather than relying solely on post-disaster response.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. What is disaster resilience? How is it determined? Describe various elements of a resilience framework. Also mention the global targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030). (GS III – 2024)

RELEVANCE

GS III : Disaster Management

WORLD

Building a durable India-Australia partnership

India and Australia are deepening their partnership as both seek to reduce excessive dependence on any single major power amid an uncertain global order. Australia aims to diversify its economy beyond China and reduce strategic dependence on the United States, while India is diversifying its energy sources, defence partnerships and critical mineral supply chains. This shared objective has strengthened their strategic convergence in the Indo-Pacific, where both view resilient partnerships as essential for regional stability rather than relying on any one power.

Defence and Maritime Security

- **Joint Defence Declaration:** India and Australia adopted a Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation to deepen long-term security collaboration.
- **Strengthening maritime coordination:** Both countries signed an MoU between Australia's Maritime Border Command and the Indian Coast Guard.
- **Maritime Security Roadmap:** The India-Australia Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap aims to strengthen cooperation in maritime domain awareness, information sharing and coordinated responses to emerging threats.
- **Addressing common security challenges:** Cooperation focuses on securing Indian Ocean sea lanes, countering illegal maritime activities, protecting undersea communication cables and responding to other non-traditional maritime threats.
- **Strategic alignment without alliance commitments:** While Australia remains part of AUKUS and maintains its Western Pacific focus, India continues its policy of strategic autonomy. Their partnership represents trusted security cooperation rather than a formal military alliance.

Economic Partnership

- **Trade integration:** Implementing the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) has boosted trade.
- **Bridging implementation gaps:** Despite rising trade, greater awareness is needed among small and medium enterprises to fully utilise opportunities under ECTA.
- **Boosting strategic investments:** India encourage larger investments by Australian pension funds, describing such investments as symbols of long-term strategic trust rather than merely financial capital.
- **Supporting economic resilience:** Both countries seek to strengthen investment flows, diversify supply chains and promote sustainable long-term economic cooperation.

Energy Security and Critical Technologies

- **Operationalising nuclear cooperation:** India's SHANTI Act (2024) resolved nuclear liability concerns, enabling the implementation of the 2014 India-Australia Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement and paving the way for Australian uranium exports to India.
- **Technology partnership:** The launch of the Australia-India Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies and Supply Chains (PACTS) expands cooperation in emerging technologies.
- **Critical minerals and supply chains:** Both countries aim to build resilient supply chains in critical minerals, advanced manufacturing and strategic technologies.
- **Minilateral cooperation:** India and Australia also reaffirmed cooperation under the Australia-Canada-India Technology and Innovation Partnership, reflecting a growing preference for flexible technology partnerships among like-minded countries.

Diaspora: A Strategic Bridge

- **Growing Indian community:** Indian-origin Australians have become *Australia's largest immigrant-born community*, reflecting deepening people-to-people ties.
- **Economic facilitator:** The diaspora can help businesses navigate regulatory systems, promote trade, facilitate investment and strengthen innovation.
- **From cultural links to strategic asset:** Both countries increasingly view the diaspora not merely as a cultural connection but as an institutional bridge supporting economic, technological and strategic cooperation.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. The new tri-nation partnership AUKUS is aimed at countering China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. Is it going to supersede the existing partnerships in the region? Discuss the strength and impact of AUKUS in the present scenario. (GS II – 2021)

Q. Indian diaspora has scaled new heights in the West. Describe its economic and political benefits for India. (GS II – 2023)

RELEVANCE

GS II : International Relations

Practice Questions and answers

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Australia's Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act, 2024 requires social media platforms to prevent access by children below 16 years.
2. India has already enacted a Parliamentary law imposing a nationwide social media ban on children below 16 years.
3. The Union Government is exploring a graded framework with different levels of access for different age groups of minors.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

- **Statement 1 is Correct:** Australia's 2024 law requires platforms to detect and block users below 16 years.
- **Statement 2 is Incorrect:** India is still discussing possible regulations; no such law has yet been enacted.
- **Statement 3 is Correct:** MeitY has indicated that a graded age-based framework is being explored.

Q. With reference to the National Food Security Act (NFSA), consider the following statements:

1. NFSA legally entitles up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to subsidised foodgrains.
2. Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) beneficiaries presently receive foodgrains entirely on a per-capita basis.
3. The proposed amendment seeks to replace the existing household-based entitlement for AAY households with a per-person entitlement.

Select the correct answer.

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

Answer: (b)

- **Statement 1 is Correct:** This is the legal coverage provided under the NFSA.
- **Statement 2 is Incorrect:** AAY currently receives 35 kg per household, not per capita.
- **Statement 3 is Correct:** The draft amendment proposes 7 kg per person subject to a ceiling of 35 kg.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. Which of the following statements about Rare Earth Elements (REEs) and Critical Minerals is/are correct? (2026)

1. Modern technological innovations including Artificial Intelligence, robotics and space exploration extensively utilise Rare Earth Elements (REEs).
2. China has the highest share in mining of REEs followed by India.
3. The Government of India launched the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) in 2025 to establish a robust framework for self reliance in the critical mineral sector.
4. Rare Earth Elements are a set of 13 metallic elements.

Select the answer using the code given below:

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

Ans : a

Statement 1 is correct. REEs are essential in producing specialized components such as microchips, sensors, and high performance magnets that are widely used in advanced technologies.

Statement 2 is incorrect. China holds the largest share in global REE mining; however, countries such as the United States or Australia generally rank next, rather than India.

Statement 3 is correct. The mission was introduced to enhance domestic exploration, support overseas acquisitions, and reduce dependence on imports of strategic minerals.

Statement 4 is incorrect. Rare Earth Elements actually comprise 17 metallic elements, including the 15 lanthanides along with scandium and yttrium.

Q.) In which of the following areas can GPS technology be used? (2018)

1. Mobile phone operations
2. Banking operations
3. Controlling the power grids

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

Statement 1 is correct. Mobile phone operations GPS technology is integral to mobile phone operations, especially for navigation, location-based services, and emergency response systems. Many apps and services rely on GPS for accurate positioning and tracking.

Statement 2 is correct. Banking operations GPS technology plays a role in banking operations by providing time synchronization for secure transactions. Many financial systems depend on precise timestamps from GPS for coordinating transactions across the globe, ensuring security and efficiency.

Statement 3 is correct. Controlling the power grids GPS technology is used in power grids for time stamping and synchronizing grid operations. This is essential for monitoring, load balancing, and preventing power outages by ensuring that grid components operate in harmony.