

P2. NATIONAL



India's Democratic Performance: Key Concerns- weakening democratic safeguards and shrinking spaces for independent expression have fuelled concerns over a gradual process of autocratisation.

P3 WORLD



India rejects Hague court's Indus Waters Treaty ruling, says it has no jurisdiction - India rejects the Permanent Court of Arbitration's authority even as the tribunal insists the decades-old water-sharing pact remains fully in force.

P6. ECONOMICS



ONGC to infuse ₹1 lakh crore for deepwater exploration- With ₹1 lakh crore earmarked for 87 ultra-deepwater wells, ONGC is betting on the ocean floor to unlock India's untapped hydrocarbon potential.

P7. ECONOMICS



What goes on behind the screen when you pay through UPI? i From thousands of transactions every second to nearly half of the world's real-time payments, UPI has transformed how money moves in India and beyond.

Editor's Note

In this edition of the Pala Civil Times, our focus centres on how international developments and domestic responses intersect with India's growth aspirations and national interests. Recent reports from academic and research institutions have raised concerns about the gradual weakening of India's democratic institutions and the possibility of autocratisation. Meanwhile, the Hague-based arbitration proceedings concerning the Indus Waters Treaty have added another layer to India-Pakistan tensions over a critical shared water resource. On the economics front, we turn to ONGC's ambitious deepwater exploration push, as the energy major prepares to invest heavily in offshore exploration to reduce dependence on imports, an especially significant move amid growing geopolitical uncertainty. That same uncertainty takes centre stage in our Decoded Editorials, where we explore why the Strait of Hormuz lies at the heart of the wider U.S.-Iran confrontation and its global economic consequences. We also delve into India's distinctive vulture conservation challenge. Together, these topics have been carefully curated to help students stay consistent with their preparation while sharpening their ability with broader issues of governance, economy, environment, geopolitics and national development. So, turn the pages, question the developments and connect the dots. Happy reading!

Editorials Decoded

THE HINDU

Deadly span



India's vulture crisis requires a broader conservation approach addressing food scarcity, habitat loss, electrocution, poisoning and unsafe veterinary medicines.

The Indian EXPRESS

In US vs Iran, all roads lead back to Hormuz



As US-Iran tensions intensify, this strategic chokepoint has emerged as the critical intersection of military conflict, global energy flows, shipping and oil prices.

India's Democratic Performance: Key Concerns

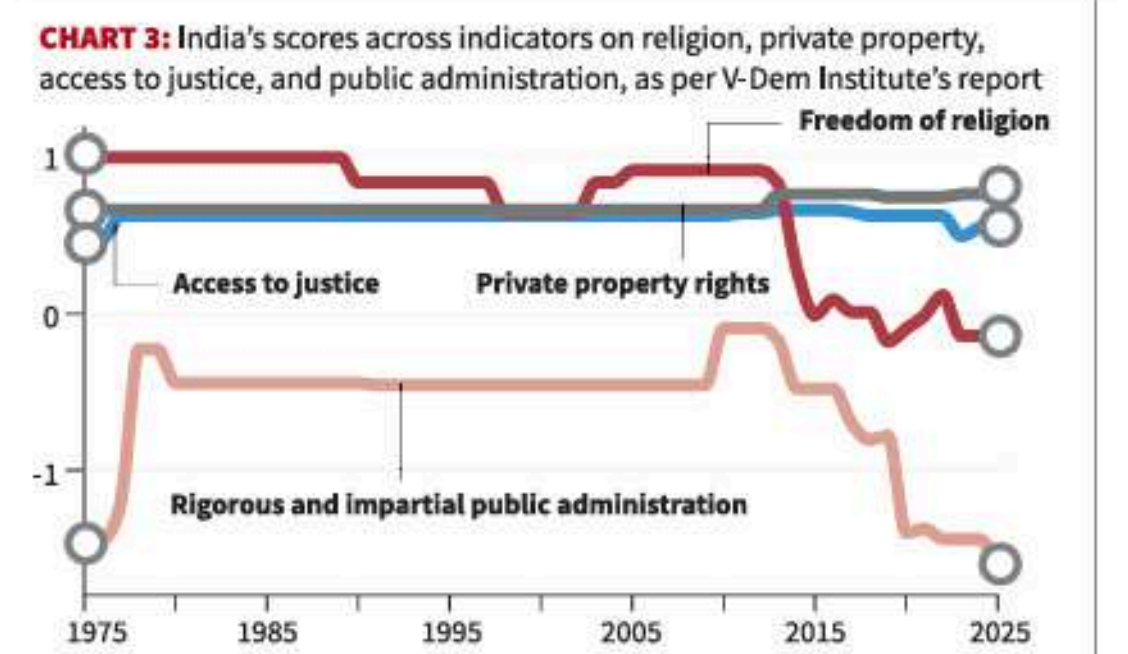
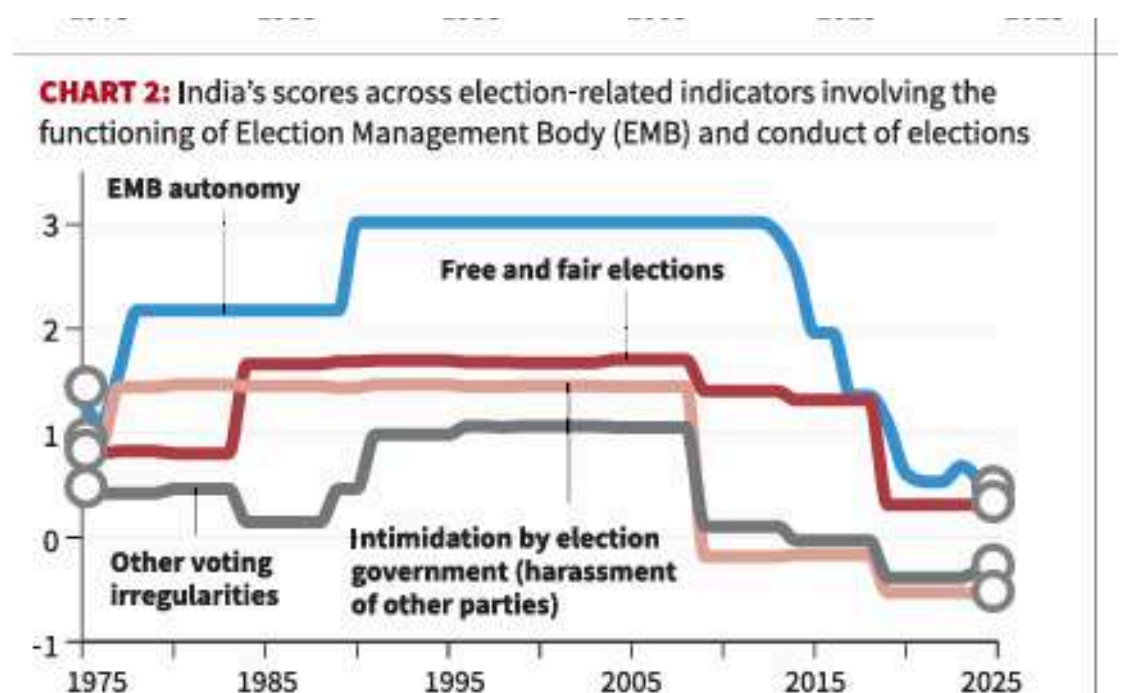
As India marks 80 years of independence, concerns over the functioning of its democratic institutions have gained renewed attention. Recently, UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) expressed "grave concern" over reported large-scale violations by law-enforcement officials, including concerns over the exclusion of voters, particularly Muslims, during the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in India. Such assessments point to deterioration across judicial accountability, corruption control, institutional autonomy and impartiality of public officials, highlighting the need to examine the evidence underlying these concerns.



What does the V-Dem data indicate?

In its latest democracy report, the University of Gothenburg-based Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute identifies India among countries experiencing **gradual autocratisation**, marked by a **systematic weakening of democratic institutions**. India's Electoral Democracy Index has declined gradually since 2009, reaching its lowest level since 1975 (emergency period).

Which democratic institutions show deterioration? India recorded its lowest scores in five decades on judicial accountability, corruption control, autonomy of the Election Management Body (EMB) and impartiality of public administration.



What has happened to democratic freedoms? Declining institutional autonomy has been accompanied by deterioration in academic and cultural expression and increased harassment of journalists.

What does the academic freedom data show? Academic freedom has declined across freedom of academic expression, freedom to research and teach, and institutional autonomy.

PYQ Compass



Q. Which of the following are regarded as the main feature of "Rule of Law"? (2018)

1. Limitation of power
2. Equality before the law
3. People's responsibility to the Government
4. Liberty and civil rights

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

WORLD

Ensure peace, freedom of navigation, PM urges Iran



The recent meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the SCO Summit highlights India's preference for dialogue, de-escalation and regional stability rather than taking sides in the Iran conflict. India's approach can be understood through the following points:

India's Core Stand: Peace and De-escalation

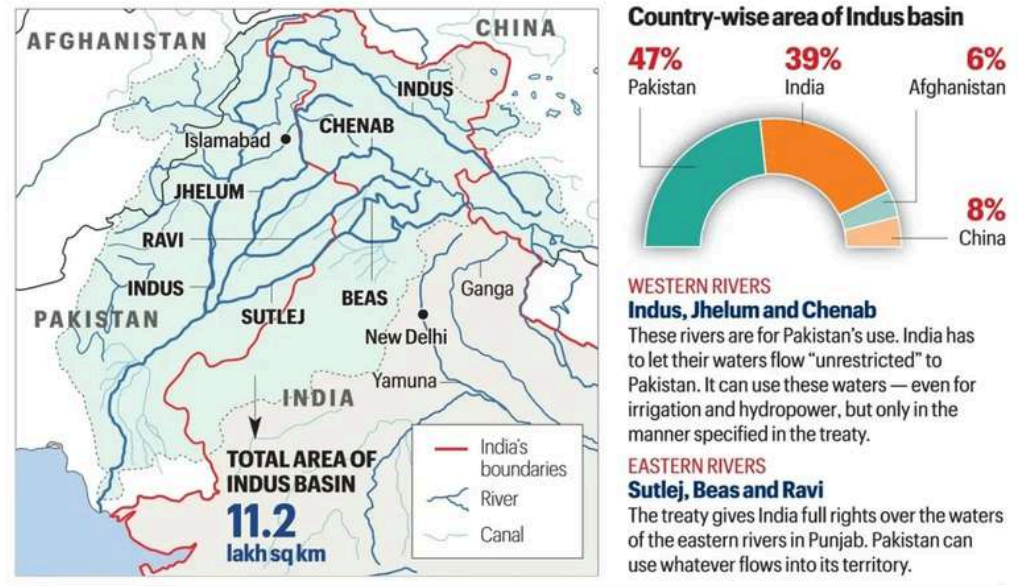
India has called for lasting peace and stability in West Asia and emphasised that the continuation of war serves neither the region nor humanity. India supports dialogue and negotiations as the preferred means of resolving disputes.

Freedom of Navigation in the Strait of Hormuz : India has specifically stressed the importance of freedom of navigation and commerce. The Strait of Hormuz is crucial for international maritime trade and energy supplies. India therefore wants commercial shipping and seafarers to remain protected from the consequences of the conflict. Modi specifically emphasised that civilians, civilian infrastructure, commercial shipping and seafarers must not be harmed.

India as a Diplomatic Bridge : President Pezeshkian requested Modi to use India's extensive contacts with various parties to facilitate dialogue. India reiterated its commitment to its long-standing friendship with Iran. India intends to expand and diversify bilateral trade and cooperation across different sectors. Thus, India's peace diplomacy is accompanied by an effort to preserve its strategic and economic relationship with Tehran.

India rejects Hague court's Indus Waters Treaty ruling, says it has no jurisdiction

• THE WAY OF WATER: RIVERS OF THE INDUS BASIN



What happened : The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) rejected the Permanent Court of Arbitration's assertion that the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) remains fully in force, arguing that the constitution of the arbitral body itself violated the Treaty. India has never recognised the body's legal existence and has not participated in its proceedings.

Treaty placed in abeyance: India placed the IWT "in abeyance" following the April 22, 2025 Pahalgam terror attack and reiterated that this decision remains in force. It also maintains that the arbitral body has no jurisdiction over India's sovereign decisions or ongoing projects.

Pakistan's plea and PCA ruling: Acting on Pakistan's plea, the arbitration body examined India's grounds for placing the Treaty in abeyance and concluded that they did not justify its suspension or termination. It therefore held that the IWT remains fully in force and that India must comply with its provisions governing hydroelectric projects on the Western Rivers.

Ratle Hydroelectric Project: The PCA also imposed interim measures concerning the Ratle Hydroelectric Plant, restricting India from concreting the dam wall and power-intake structure above specified levels until 90 days after the Neutral Expert's final decision, expected in July 2027.



PYQ Compass

Q. With reference to the Indus river system, of the following four rivers, three of them pour into one of them which joins the Indus directly. Among the following, which one is such a river that joins the Indus directly? (2021)

a) Chenab b) Jhelum c) Ravi d) Sutlej

In US vs Iran, all roads lead back to Hormuz (I.E 01-09-2026)

The US–Iran confrontation has acquired a strong economic dimension, with Washington using sanctions and threats of secondary sanctions to pressure Tehran alongside renewed military strikes. A durable resolution ultimately requires consensus on the security and management of the Strait of Hormuz, a critical artery for global maritime trade and energy flows and the strategic centre of the ongoing confrontation.

- **Location:** ~30-mile-wide narrow strait between Iran & Oman's Musandam Peninsula; links Persian Gulf–Gulf of Oman.
- **Main shipping route:** Commercial vessels generally use the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) north of Musandam.
- **Strategic depth:** >650 ft in the southern Inshore Traffic Zone

How has the nature of the US–Iran conflict evolved? From primarily military confrontation to a combination of military strikes and economic warfare, particularly through sanctions and secondary sanctions.

Why may sanctions alone fail to force Iran into submission?

Iran has endured multiple layers of sanctions for years and developed mechanisms to adapt, making prolonged economic pressure less likely to produce a decisive outcome.

Why does China complicate the US sanctions strategy? China buys up to 90% of Iran's oil. Targeting Chinese entities through secondary sanctions could trigger US–China tensions, particularly over critical minerals and supply chains.

What are the wider global economic implications? Prolonged instability can cause higher energy prices, shipping/trade disruptions, inflationary pressures and energy-supply shocks, extending the impact beyond West Asia.

What is essential for a permanent resolution? A durable arrangement for the security and management of the Strait of Hormuz. It is the intersection of military strategy and global energy security. Threats to shipping in this route can disrupt energy flows and trigger oil-price volatility as already witnessed.

PYQ Compass



Q. Ships from which of the following countries have to cross the Strait of Hormuz to reach out to the Indian Ocean?

1. Bahrain
2. Syria
3. Qatar
4. Egypt

Select the answer using the code given below:

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

Deadly span (The Hindu : 01-09-2026)

India's vulture crisis began primarily as a veterinary-drug crisis, but their recovery now requires a broader conservation approach addressing food scarcity, habitat loss, electrocution, poisoning and unsafe veterinary medicines. India once had an estimated four crore vultures in the 1980s, but their population declined by around 99.5% by 2007, making it one of the most severe bird population crashes recorded globally.

Present Situation

The White-rumped, Indian and Slender-billed Vultures were among the worst affected species and were brought close to extinction. A 2025 assessment reported that vultures were nesting at only about 50% of their historic nesting sites, highlighting the continuing loss of suitable breeding habitats.

The Emerging Threat of Electrocution

Specific Vulnerability: Vultures are particularly vulnerable to electrocution from expanding power infrastructure due to their large wingspans, preference for elevated perches and tendency to congregate in open landscapes.

Large Wingspan: A large vulture can potentially bridge two conductors simultaneously, resulting in electrocution.

Human Factor: Food waste and carcass dumping near electrical infrastructure can further increase the risk by attracting vultures towards unsafe power installations.

Medium-Voltage Risk: Evidence from Uttarakhand indicates that medium-voltage lines can also pose a significant risk, rather than the threat being limited to high-voltage infrastructure.

Continuing Threats

Habitat loss and fragmentation : reduces the availability of nesting and roosting sites.

Urbanisation : reduce the availability of livestock carcasses and safe feeding grounds.

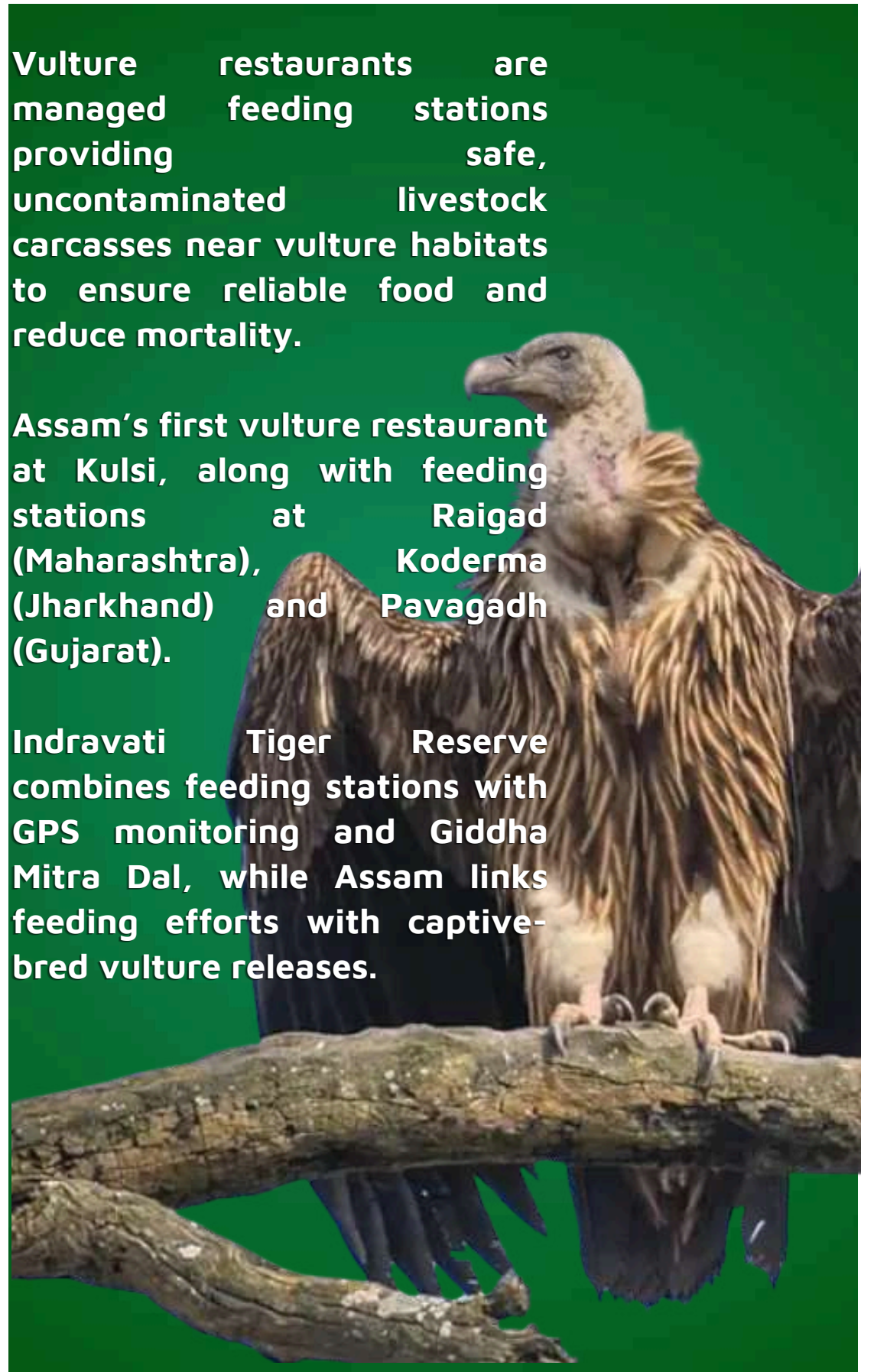
Unsafe veterinary drugs : pose a threat in some regions despite regulatory restrictions.

Human influence : Poisoning, human disturbance and loss of nesting trees further weaken already fragmented populations.

Vulture restaurants are managed feeding stations providing safe, uncontaminated livestock carcasses near vulture habitats to ensure reliable food and reduce mortality.

Assam's first vulture restaurant at Kulsi, along with feeding stations at Raigad (Maharashtra), Koderma (Jharkhand) and Pavagadh (Gujarat).

Indravati Tiger Reserve combines feeding stations with GPS monitoring and Giddha Mitra Dal, while Assam links feeding efforts with captive-bred vulture releases.



Continuing Threats

Vultures are highly efficient scavengers that rapidly remove animal carcasses from the environment.

Their highly acidic digestive systems allow them to consume carcasses containing pathogens that could be dangerous to other animals.

The decline of vultures left livestock carcasses exposed for longer periods, contributing to increases in feral dog populations and the risk of disease transmission.

A 2024 study estimated that the ecological disruption following the vulture decline contributed to a 4% increase in human mortality and economic damages of about \$69.4 billion annually in India.

PYQ COMPASS



Q. In India, the use of carbofuran, methyl parathion, phorate and triazophos is viewed with apprehension. These chemicals are used as: (2019)

- a) pesticides in agriculture
- b) preservatives in processed foods
- c) fruit-ripening agents
- d) moisturising agents in cosmetics

ONGC to infuse ₹1 lakh crore for deepwater exploration

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) plans to invest ₹1 lakh crore by 2030 in deepwater and ultra-deepwater exploration and drill 87 wells. ONGC is set to expand exploration into India's offshore frontier areas, where significant untapped hydrocarbon potential remains.

Why deepwater exploration matters: India is the world's third-largest crude oil consumer and has an annual crude oil import bill of nearly \$144 billion. At the same time, existing oil and gas fields experience natural production declines of around 6–7% annually, making continuous exploration and new discoveries necessary. Much of the country's remaining hydrocarbon potential lies in offshore and frontier areas, but exploiting these resources requires advanced technology, high capital investment and long gestation periods.

Government support through Samudra Manthan: ONGC's expansion is aligned with the ₹84,084-crore Samudra Manthan – National Offshore Exploration Scheme, approved up to FY 2030–31. The scheme seeks to reduce the risks associated with offshore exploration through government financial support, better geological data, accelerated deepwater drilling and common offshore infrastructure. It provides ₹43,200 crore for 60 deepwater exploration wells, with government support of up to 50% of eligible drilling costs or ₹675 crore per well, whichever is lower.

Strategic significance: ONGC's investment represents a major effort to increase domestic hydrocarbon production by tapping offshore resources and countering the decline of mature fields. Along with government risk-sharing and technological support, greater exploration could help increase domestic energy availability, reduce import dependence, strengthen energy security and develop indigenous offshore exploration capabilities. Separately, ONGC Videsh is also seeking operatorship of its Venezuelan assets, indicating the company's broader effort to strengthen its upstream portfolio beyond India.

BRAIN BOOSTERS

#301

04-08-2026

Civil Service Institute Pala

Did You Know?

Samudra Manthan

Why in news? The Union Cabinet has approved Samudra Manthan, the National Offshore Exploration Scheme, with an outlay of ₹84,084 crore up to FY 2030–31.

- Samudra Manthan is a Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) designed to accelerate offshore oil and gas exploration, particularly in India's deepwater and ultra-deepwater basins.
- The scheme seeks to **de-risk offshore exploration** through government financial support, **encourage greater participation by public and private companies**, and build long-term domestic capabilities across the offshore exploration and production value chain.
- It marks the transition towards mission-mode implementation for achieving energy security and Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil** and spends nearly USD 144 billion (about ₹ 13 lakh crore) annually on crude oil imports.

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PYQ Compass



Q. In which of the following regions of India are shale gas resources found? (2016)

1. Cambay Basin
2. Cauvery Basin
3. Krishna-Godavari Basin

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

What goes on behind the screen when you pay through UPI?

UPI has emerged as the backbone of India's digital payments ecosystem, processing 2,366 crore transactions worth nearly ₹30 lakh crore in July 2026 alone, at around 7,600 transactions per second. In FY 2025–26, it accounted for nearly 85% of India's digital payment transactions by volume, while contributing 49% of global real-time payment transactions in 2025, highlighting India's growing leadership in digital payments.

How a UPI transaction works

A user initiates payment through a UPI app/TPAP, which communicates through a PSP/bank with NPCI's interoperable payment infrastructure; the transaction is authenticated and checked for validity/fraud, NPCI routes it between the sender and recipient banks, the sender's account is debited and the recipient's account credited, and the completed status is communicated back to the user.

PYQ Compass



Q. Which one of the following best describes the key objective of India's 'Open Network for Digital Commerce' (ONDC) initiative?

- (a) To allow government control over all digital commerce transactions
- (b) To replace private e commerce players
- (c) To break the dominance of large e commerce platforms by enabling interoperability across networks
- (d) To mandate UPI based payments for all online transactions

Evolution of UPI

2016: Launched with 21 banks, building on IMPS infrastructure.

2018: UPI 2.0 introduced mandates, overdraft linkage, invoice verification, signed QR codes and enhanced autopay.

Internationalisation: NIPL facilitates adoption abroad. UPI expanded from Bhutan (2021) to Singapore, UAE, France, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Qatar and others, with further interoperability efforts underway.

UPI (Unified Payments Interface) is an interoperable, instant bank-to-bank payment system, operated by NPCI



Technological Architecture of UPI

APIs (Application Programming Interfaces):

Act as the communication bridges that allow UPI apps, banks and NPCI systems to exchange payment information securely and in real time.

Transaction switches & routers: Direct payment requests to the correct bank and account, ensuring that money initiated through one bank/app can reach an account held with another bank.

Databases & servers: Store, process and update transaction records while handling the enormous volume of simultaneous payment requests.

Encryption & authentication: Protect transaction data and verify the identity of users, including authentication through mechanisms such as the UPI PIN.

Fraud detection & security systems: Analyse transactions for suspicious patterns or unauthorised activity and help prevent fraudulent payments.

Reconciliation & recovery systems: Ensure that debit and credit records match across banks and help resolve failed, incomplete or interrupted transactions.

Interoperability: These components collectively allow hundreds of participating banks and multiple payment applications to communicate through a common NPCI infrastructure, enabling seamless bank-to-bank payments across different platforms.

PYQ Compass



Q. Which of the following are regarded as the main feature of "Rule of Law"? (2018)

1. Limitation of power
2. Equality before the law
3. People's responsibility to the Government
4. Liberty and civil rights

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Ans : C

The Rule of Law emphasizes the supremacy of law over arbitrary power. Its core features include:

1. Limitation of power: Ensures that no individual, including those in authority, is above the law, preventing misuse of power.
2. Equality before the law: Guarantees that all individuals, irrespective of status, are treated equally under the same legal framework.
3. Liberty and civil rights: Protects fundamental freedoms and individual rights, ensuring justice and fairness in governance.

The concept does not include "people's responsibility to the government," as the Rule of Law primarily focuses on limiting state power and safeguarding individual rights.

Q. With reference to the Indus river system, of the following four rivers, three of them pour into one of them which joins the Indus directly. Among the following, which one is such a river that joins the Indus directly? (2021)

- a) Chenab
- b) Jhelum
- c) Ravi
- d) Sutlej

Ans : d

In conjunction with the rivers Chenab, Jhelum, Sutlej, Ravi, Beas, and two tributaries from Afghanistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Indus creates the Sapta Sindhu (Seven Rivers) delta of Pakistan. Chenab river moves into the lands of Punjab in the vicinity of Akhnur and is subsequently connected with the Jhelum. It creates the border between the Rechna and the Jech Doabs. The Chenab also meets the Ravi and the Sutlej in Pakistan. The Ravi River runs as a portion of the boundary between India and Pakistan for a particular distance prior to moving into Pakistan and meeting the Chenab River. The river moves into Pakistan in the vicinity of Sulemanki and is subsequently met by the Chenab.

PYQ Compass



Q. Ships from which of the following countries have to cross the Strait of Hormuz to reach out to the Indian Ocean?

1. Bahrain
2. Syria
3. Qatar
4. Egypt

Select the answer using the code given below:

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

Ans : b

The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf → Gulf of Oman → Arabian Sea → Indian Ocean. So, any country located inside the Persian Gulf must pass through Hormuz to reach the Indian Ocean. Hence option 1 and 3 are correct.

Q. Which one of the following best describes the key objective of India's 'Open Network for Digital Commerce' (ONDC) initiative?

- (a) To allow government control over all digital commerce transactions
- (b) To replace private e commerce players
- (c) To break the dominance of large e commerce platforms by enabling interoperability across networks
- (d) To mandate UPI based payments for all online transactions

Ans : C

The Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is a transformative initiative by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce, Government of India aimed at democratizing digital commerce. Launched in April 2022, ONDC is an initiative aiming at promoting open networks for all aspects of exchange of goods and services over digital or electronic networks. ONDC is based on open-sourced methodology, using open specifications and open network protocols independent of any specific platform. By fostering open protocols and reducing dependency on monopolistic platforms, ONDC aims to catalyze innovation and inclusivity in the digital commerce landscape. Hence option (c) is the correct answer.

PYQ Compass



Q. In which of the following regions of India are shale gas resources found? (2016)

1. Cambay Basin
2. Cauvery Basin
3. Krishna–Godavari Basin

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Ans : d

Shale gas is an unconventional natural gas found trapped within shale formations, requiring advanced extraction techniques such as hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling. India, recognizing its increasing energy demands and dependency on energy imports, has identified several basins with potential shale gas resources.

Cambay Basin: Located in western India, predominantly in Gujarat, the Cambay Basin is one of the most well-studied and productive basins for hydrocarbons, including shale gas. Its geological characteristics include thick sedimentary sequences, making it favorable for the presence of shale formations.

Cauvery Basin: Situated in southern India, covering parts of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, the Cauvery Basin is another region identified for shale gas potential. Studies have highlighted its prospects for unconventional hydrocarbon resources, including shale gas.

Krishna–Godavari Basin: Located along the eastern coast of India, in Andhra Pradesh and parts of Telangana, the Krishna–Godavari Basin is a prolific hydrocarbon-producing region. India's Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, along with exploration agencies like ONGC, has undertaken efforts to assess and explore shale gas potential in these basins.

Q. In India, the use of carbofuran, methyl parathion, phorate and triazophos is viewed with apprehension. These chemicals are used as: (2019)

- a) pesticides in agriculture
- b) preservatives in processed foods
- c) fruit-ripening agents
- d) moisturising agents in cosmetics

Ans : a

Carbofuran, methyl parathion, phorate, and triazophos are all pesticides used in agricultural practices. They are chemical compounds applied to crops to protect them from pests, insects, and other harmful organisms that can affect yield. However, these chemicals have raised concerns due to their potential toxicity to humans, animals, and the environment. Some of them are linked to health risks and environmental pollution, leading to apprehension about their widespread use in India.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. Which of the following measures can help reduce the risk of electrocution among vultures near power infrastructure?

1. Relocating carcass dumping and feeding sites away from high-risk power lines.
2. Insulating electrical conductors to prevent birds from coming into contact with live components.
3. Increasing the distance between energised and grounded components of electrical infrastructure.
4. Installing safe perches that prevent vultures from coming into contact with electrical components.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q. Which of the following developments could be indicative of a gradual process of autocratisation?

1. A sustained weakening of institutional checks and oversight mechanisms.
2. A decline in the quality and autonomy of processes through which political authority is exercised.
3. Increasing constraints on spaces that enable independent expression and knowledge production.

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: (d) 1, 2 and 3

Statement 1 — Correct: The V-Dem assessment points to deterioration in judicial accountability, corruption control, autonomy of the Election Management Body (EMB), and impartiality of public officials—all of which relate to the strength of institutional checks.

Statement 2 — Correct: India's Electoral Democracy Index has gradually declined since 2009 and reached its lowest reported level since 1975, indicating concerns extending beyond the mere conduct of elections to the quality of democratic processes.

Statement 3 — Correct: The reported decline in academic and cultural expression, along with concerns over journalists, reflects shrinking spaces for independent expression.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the scale of Unified Payments Interface (UPI):

1. During FY 2025–26, UPI processed nearly four-fifths of India's digital payment transactions by volume.
2. In 2025, UPI accounted for nearly half of the world's real-time payment transactions.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (c) Both 1 and 2

Statement 1 is Correct: In FY 2025–26, UPI handled 24,160 crore transactions worth ₹314 lakh crore, constituting around 85% of India's digital payment transactions by volume.

Statement 2 is Correct: According to the IMF, UPI accounted for 49% of global real-time payment transactions in 2025.

Q. Q. Consider the following statements regarding ONGC's recent deepwater exploration initiative:

1. ONGC plans to invest around ₹1 lakh crore by 2030 in deepwater and ultra-deepwater exploration.
2. The investment is aimed at tapping domestic offshore hydrocarbon resources and reducing India's dependence on imported energy.
3. The initiative is limited to shallow-water exploration, where technological and financial risks are relatively lower.

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

ONGC plans to invest ₹1 lakh crore by 2030 and drill 87 deepwater and ultra-deepwater wells. The move seeks to exploit India's offshore hydrocarbon potential and strengthen domestic energy security amid high import dependence. Statement 3 is incorrect because the initiative specifically targets deepwater and ultra-deepwater exploration, which involves greater technological and financial challenges.