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THE HINDU ANALYSIS

8 June 2026

Curated from The Hindu — UPSC Prelims & Mains Focus

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1 PM E-DRIVE Scheme — 2,800 Low-Floor E-Buses for Delhi

GS 2 · Governance / Schemes

The Hindu, Pg 1

WHY IN NEWS

The Delhi government plans to induct **2,800 air-conditioned low-floor electric buses** under the Centre's **PM E-DRIVE** scheme to strengthen public transport connectivity and promote sustainable mobility. The fleet will comprise **1,400 nine-metre** and **1,400 twelve-metre** e-buses, aiming to expand Delhi's overall fleet to nearly **14,000 buses by 2028-29**.

About the PM E-DRIVE Scheme

- A flagship scheme with a **₹10,900 crore outlay** (October 2024 – March 2026), implemented through the **Ministry of Heavy Industries**.
- Revised incentive deadlines extend to **31 July 2026** for electric two-wheelers and **31 March 2028** for electric three-wheelers.
- Builds on earlier programmes — **FAME-I (2015)** and **FAME-II (2019)** (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles) — to accelerate adoption of electric two- and three-wheelers.

Objective

- Accelerate adoption of **electric vehicles (EVs)** across categories.
- Build robust EV **charging infrastructure**.
- Develop a strong domestic EV **manufacturing ecosystem** aligned with the vision of **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**.

KEY PROVISIONS & TARGETS

- ▶ **Target beneficiaries:** commercial & private e-2W and e-3W with advanced batteries, e-ambulances, e-trucks with scrapping certificates, and electric buses for public transport.
- ▶ **Demand incentives:** capped at **15% of ex-factory price** (or a fixed limit); eligibility restricted to vehicles priced below **₹1.5 lakh (e-2W)** and **₹2.5 lakh (e-3W)**.
- ▶ **Caps:** support for **24,79,120 e-2W** and **39,034 e-3W**; the **L5 category** of e-3W was closed after meeting its target in December 2025.
- ▶ **Charging infrastructure:** aims to set up **72,300 public fast chargers** in key cities and on select highways.

2

A Targeting in the Name of Demography

GS 1 · Society / Population

The Hindu, Pg 8

WHY IN NEWS

India is on the cusp of a **demographic upheaval** — fertility rates have fallen for decades and are now on or below replacement levels, shifting the challenge from the youth bulge towards caring for an **ageing population**. Against this backdrop, a **High-Level Committee on Demographic Change** has been constituted, whose Terms of Reference (ToRs) emphasise “illegal immigration” and border management.

The Committee

- **Chairmanship:** headed by **Justice Prakash Prabhakar Navlekar**, a retired Supreme Court judge and former Lokayukta of Madhya Pradesh; also includes the **Census Commissioner**, among others.
- **Tenure:** directed to submit its final report within one year (by **May 2027**), with provision for a six-month extension.

Arguments for Studying Demographic Shifts

- **Internal security & sovereignty:** unchecked infiltration across porous eastern borders is framed as a “silent demographic invasion”.
- **Catalyst for ethnic conflict & displacement** in border regions.
- **Protecting indigenous & tribal identities** in resource-rich tribal belts (e.g. Santhal Pargana, Sixth Schedule areas).
- **Electoral integrity:** illegal procurement of Aadhaar/Voter IDs can skew electoral demography.
- **Key data:** per **Sample Registration System (SRS)** data, India’s national **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** has declined to **2.0** — below the replacement level of **2.1**.

CONSTITUTIONAL & LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ **Article 355:** duty of the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance.
- ▶ **Foreigners Act, 1946:** places burden of proof of citizenship on the individual; empowers identify, detain & deport.
- ▶ **Citizenship Act, 1955:** statutory framework; **Section 6A** operationalises the Assam Accord.
- ▶ **Fifth & Sixth Schedules** and laws like the **Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act, 1876** protect tribal land & autonomy.
- ▶ **Sarbananda Sonowal vs. Union of India (2005):** SC equated mass influx into Assam to “external aggression” under Article 355.

PRELIMS PYQ · 2013

Q. To obtain full benefits of demographic dividend, what should India do?

- (a) Promoting skill development
- (b) Introducing more social security schemes
- (c) Reducing infant mortality rate
- (d) Privatization of higher education

Answer: (a) Promoting skill development — converting the working-age population into a productive workforce is central to the demographic dividend.

3

Testing Times — GDP Data Reveal Strengths, but Strains Ahead

GS 3 · Economy

The Hindu, Pg 8

WHY IN NEWS

The GDP growth data released on Friday simultaneously portray recent economic strength and reveal reasons for worry. Provisional estimates of GDP growth for **2025-26 are pegged at 7.7%** — marginally higher than the **7.6%** the government predicted in February.

Strengths Visible in the Data

- Key sectors — **manufacturing** and several **services** sectors — grew by double digits over a relatively high base.
- Both **Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE)** and **Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF)** — metrics of household consumption and investment — grew faster than in the previous year.

Reasons for Concern

- Resilience is expected to be **dented** by severe supply-related headwinds linked to the **war in Iran**.
- **Agriculture** growth slowed to **3% in 2025-26** (from 4.2% in 2024-25); its share in GVA fell **below 20%** (from 22.1% in 2022-23), even as it employs the largest share of the population.
- **Services** share rose to **54.3% of GVA** (from 51.9% in 2022-23); the **manufacturing** share stayed largely unchanged — signalling value-added manufacturing is not growing fast enough.
- RBI, government and independent economists agree **2026-27** will see growth slowing; the **RBI projects 6.6%**.

GDP — CONCEPT & FORMULA

- ▶ **GDP**: total monetary value of all **final** goods & services produced within a country's geographical boundaries in a period (year/quarter).
- ▶ Counts only final goods (avoids double counting); based on **territory, not nationality**; measured at **current or constant** prices.
- ▶ **GDP = C + I + G + (X - M)** — C: private consumption; I: investment; G: govt. expenditure; X: exports; M: imports.

GDP — The New Series

- **New Base Year: 2022-23** (earlier 2011-12); FY 2022-23 chosen as the most recent “normal” period after the COVID-19 disruptions of 2019-2021.
- **New data sources:** integrates high-frequency & administrative data including **GST collections**, the **e-Vahan portal**, and the **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)**.
- **Household sector measurement:** shifts from inter-survey growth rates/proxies to **actual level estimates** using regular annual surveys — **ASUSE** (Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises) and **PLFS** (Periodic Labour Force Survey); GST data used for cross-checking.

HOW THE NEW DATA SOURCES ARE USED

- ▶ **GST data:** allocation of all-India estimates for the private corporate sector across States, cross-validation in annual accounts, and as an indicator in Quarterly National Accounts.
- ▶ **e-Vahan:** used to estimate **PFCE** related to road transport services.
- ▶ **PFMS:** used to compile central government estimates and allocate them among States — enabling use of **actual expenditure** data instead of Revised Estimates at the FRE stage.

PRELIMS POINTER

- ▶ **GVA** = GDP at market prices – (Net product taxes – subsidies). Sectoral shares are measured in GVA terms.
- ▶ **Constant prices** → real growth (inflation removed); **current prices** → nominal growth.

4 Missed Call — Bracing for a Deficient Southwest Monsoon

GS 3 · Agriculture / Geography

The Hindu, Pg 8

WHY IN NEWS

The southwest monsoon reached Kerala on **June 4** — three days past its normal date and four days behind the IMD's own forecast. This is the **first time since 2015** the agency has misjudged the onset beyond its margin of error. A late arrival, in itself, is no calamity.

The Forecast

- The **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** has pegged seasonal rainfall at **90% of the Long-Period Average (LPA)**, with a **60% probability of an outright deficient year** — its most pessimistic pre-season call in a decade.
- Only the **northeast** is expected to see normal rain; the **northwest, central India, the peninsula and the monsoon core zone** — which water most of the country's rain-fed farmland — are all forecast to fall short.
- It is the **distribution** — sudden long dry spells leaving sown crops unwatered — that matters most.
- The monsoon arrives atop an **input crisis**: the West Asia conflict and disruption at the **Strait of Hormuz** have throttled energy supply and fertilizer production.

Way Forward — Preparing for the Worst

- Activate the **Agriculture, Jal Shakti and Consumer Affairs Ministries** with disaster management authorities on a war footing.
- Advisories steering farmers toward **short-duration pulses, oilseeds and millets** over thirsty paddy.
- **Disciplined groundwater and reservoir management**; ready **crop insurance** and relief provisioning.
- Brace for more days of **severe heat** that a parched landscape will sharpen.

PRELIMS POINTERS — MONSOON

- ▶ **LPA** = average rainfall over a long reference period; **96–104%** of LPA = “normal” monsoon; **below 90%** = deficient.
- ▶ **El Niño** typically suppresses Indian monsoon rainfall; the **Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)** can offset its impact.
- ▶ Around **60% of El Niño years since 1951** brought deficient/below-normal rains (2002, 2009 among the severest droughts).

MAINS QUESTION

Q. The Indian monsoon remains the single most important determinant of agricultural productivity despite advances in irrigation and technology. Examine the impact of monsoon variability on Indian agriculture. Suggest measures to enhance the resilience of the agricultural sector against erratic rainfall patterns.

प्रश्न: सिंचाई एवं कृषि प्रौद्योगिकी में प्रगति के बावजूद भारतीय मानसून कृषि उत्पादकता का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण निर्धारक बना हुआ है। भारतीय कृषि पर मानसून की अनिश्चितता के प्रभावों का परीक्षण कीजिए। अनियमित वर्षा के प्रति कृषि क्षेत्र की लचीलापन (Resilience) बढ़ाने हेतु आवश्यक उपाय सुझाइए।

15 Marks · 250 Words

5 From Borderland to India's Strategic Resource Frontier

GS 2 · IR / Internal Security

The Hindu, Pg 8

WHY IN NEWS

Within days of one another, official platforms of the **Ministry of Mines** cast several northeastern States in a similar frame — as repositories of **strategic minerals and untapped potential**. Manipur was described as a “quiet mineral frontier”, Arunachal Pradesh as a “resource-rich frontier”, with Meghalaya and Mizoram portrayed through comparable narratives.

The Critical Mineral Push

- Critical minerals have moved from geological discussions into **strategic** ones: **lithium, cobalt, graphite, nickel and rare earth elements** increasingly shape industrial competition, technology manufacturing and energy transitions.
- **Batteries, semiconductors, renewables and defence systems** depend on them, prompting countries to reposition around access.
- India depends on imports for several critical minerals and has expanded exploration. Per a Ministry of Mines reply in Parliament, the **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** undertook **43 critical-mineral exploration projects** across northeastern States during the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 field seasons.
- In **Manipur**, projects involving **nickel, cobalt and chromium** exploration have recently been initiated.

The Deeper Argument — A Shift in Language

- The repeated use of the word “**frontier**” is revealing — frontiers rarely function as neutral descriptions; they reflect how States **imagine** spaces awaiting integration, development or extraction.
- But these frontiers are **not empty spaces**: the hills and valleys already contain dense social and political worlds, customary land systems and long-standing relationships with territory.
- Resource development risks reproducing tensions if extraction outpaces institutions capable of managing its social consequences.
- The central question: whether this new frontier will **include the people who already inhabit it**, or merely assign another purpose to the land beneath their feet.

PRELIMS POINTERS — CRITICAL MINERALS

- ▶ **GSI** is an attached office of the **Ministry of Mines** (HQ: Kolkata); key role in mineral exploration & mapping.
- ▶ India released its **list of 30 Critical Minerals** (2023) and launched the **National Critical Mineral Mission**.
- ▶ **KABIL** (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd.) secures critical mineral assets abroad.

6 India's Pension Scheme Lags in Coverage & Contribution

GS 2 · Social Justice / Welfare

The Hindu, Pg 9

WHY IN NEWS

The **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)** — the Centre's flagship cash-assistance scheme for the elderly under the **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)** — is in dire need of a revamp. It remains frozen **since 2007** at **₹200 per person per month** and roughly **2.2 crore beneficiaries**.

Key Concerns

- States/UTs add their own top-ups (**₹150 to ₹2,000**) over the Union's **₹200** (60+ group) or **₹500** (80+ group). The Centre's share has stayed flat while State top-ups rose (2012–2023).
- The real value of the fixed **₹200** has been **significantly eroded by inflation** — the amount should be around **₹353** to retain its original purchasing power.
- Over **95%** of beneficiaries cited price rise as the main reason to raise the pension; over **80%** said the current amount does not cover even their basic needs.
- A **MoRD** report estimates IGNOAPS beneficiaries should be nearly **17 crore** now and about **20 crore by 2030** — roughly **10-fold higher** than the present 2.2 crore coverage.
- Calls to link assistance with inflation (like Dearness Allowance) date to at least **2013**; the latest recommendations came from the **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** of the Lok Sabha (2025) and an independent evaluation report released in **May 2026**.

ABOUT NSAP

- ▶ Launched on **15 August 1995** as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**; implemented by the **Ministry of Rural Development** with States/UTs.
- ▶ Gives effect to **Directive Principles in Articles 41 and 42** of the Constitution.
- ▶ Supports **aged persons, widows, the disabled and bereaved BPL families** on death of the primary breadwinner; uses **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)**.

NSAP — The Five Sub-Schemes

- **IGNOAPS** (Old Age Pension): BPL persons aged **60+** — ₹200/month up to 79 years, ₹500/month thereafter.
- **IGNWPS** (Widow Pension): BPL widows aged **40–59** — ₹200/month.
- **IGNDPS** (Disability Pension): BPL persons aged **18–59** with severe/multiple disabilities — ₹200/month.
- **NFBS** (National Family Benefit Scheme): lump sum of ₹10,000 to a BPL household on death of the primary breadwinner (aged 18–64).
- **Annapurna: 10 kg of food grains/month free** to eligible senior citizens uncovered under the old-age pension scheme.

SURVEY FINDINGS (MORD-COMMISSIONED EVALUATION)

- ▶ An analysis based on the **Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI)** showed the value of ₹200 has eroded to roughly ₹99 since 2013 — beneficiaries can buy only about half the food they could earlier.
- ▶ The PAC's 2025 report and the recent MoRD report recommend an **increase in coverage**, noting the Union relied on outdated BPL data to fix beneficiary ceilings.
- ▶ Among the reasons cited for raising assistance: **price rise (96.5%)**, “not enough to meet daily needs” (82.1%), and “household income very low” (68.2%).

PRELIMS POINTER

- ▶ NSAP has a dedicated **web portal** (guidelines, reports, grievance redressal) and uses **DBT** to bank/postal accounts.
- ▶ Articles **41** (right to work, education & public assistance) and **42** (just & humane conditions of work) are **Directive Principles of State Policy**.

7

Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI)

Prelims · Governance / Polity

The Hindu

WHY IN NEWS

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj's flagship data-driven platform, the **Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI)**, has been selected for the prestigious **Gold Award** at the **National Awards for e-Governance 2026**.



PAI selected for the Gold Award at the National Awards for e-Governance 2026 (Ministry of Panchayati Raj).

About the PAI

- India's **first comprehensive, analytics-driven framework** to assess, score and rank the performance of **rural local bodies (Gram Panchayats)** — an indigenous initiative of the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**.
- Acts as a standardized **report card for rural governance** on a unified digital dashboard.
- **Objective:** drive **competitive federalism at the grassroots**, eliminate subjective assessments, identify developmental gaps and help States allocate funds efficiently.
- **Scale (PAI 2.0):** evaluates more than **6 lakh Gram Panchayats**, processing over **150 indicators** and **230 data points**.

ALIGNED WITH THE 9 LSDG THEMES

- ▶ Poverty-free & enhanced-livelihood villages; healthy villages; child-friendly villages.
- ▶ Water-sufficient villages; clean & green villages; self-sufficient infrastructure villages.
- ▶ Socially secured villages (plus good-governance & women-friendly themes) — the **Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs)**.

NATIONAL AWARDS FOR E-GOVERNANCE

- ▶ India's premier decorations recognising excellence in **digital governance**; presented **since 2003**.
- ▶ Presented annually by the **Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG)** with the **Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY)**.
- ▶ Reward groundbreaking digital initiatives by Ministries, States, UTs, Districts and PSUs; build a repository of replicable digital blueprints.



Prelims Practice — Complex MCQs

12 Multi-Statement Questions · Drawn from Today's Analysis · With Answer Keys & Traps

QUESTION 1

PM E-DRIVE

With reference to the PM E-DRIVE scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It is implemented through the Ministry of Heavy Industries.
2. It succeeds the FAME-I and FAME-II programmes.
3. Demand incentives are capped at 15% of the ex-factory price of the vehicle.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) All three (d) None

Answer: (c) All three

PM E-DRIVE is implemented by the Ministry of Heavy Industries, builds on FAME-I (2015) and FAME-II (2019), and caps demand incentives at 15% of the ex-factory price.

QUESTION 2

PM E-DRIVE

Consider the following statements about the PM E-DRIVE scheme:

1. It has a financial outlay of about ₹10,900 crore.
2. Its incentive deadline for electric three-wheelers extends to March 2028.
3. Eligibility for the e-two-wheeler incentive is limited to vehicles priced below ₹1.5 lakh.

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

All are correct: the outlay is ~₹10,900 crore; the e-3W incentive deadline runs to 31 March 2028; and the e-2W incentive applies to vehicles priced below ₹1.5 lakh.

QUESTION 3

Demography / Polity

Consider the following statements regarding the constitutional and legal framework on demographic change:

1. Article 355 imposes a duty on the Union to protect States against external aggression and internal disturbance.
2. Under the Foreigners Act, 1946, the burden of proving citizenship lies on the State.
3. Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 operationalises the Assam Accord.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Under the Foreigners Act, 1946 the burden of proof lies on the **individual** to prove citizenship, not the State — so 2 is wrong. Article 355 and Section 6A are correctly stated.

QUESTION 4

Demography

With reference to India's fertility trends, consider the following statements:

1. As per recent SRS data, India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has fallen to about 2.0.
2. The replacement level of fertility is generally taken as 2.1.
3. The Sarbananda Sonowal vs. Union of India (2005) case dealt with illegal migration into Assam.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) All three (d) None

Answer: (c) All three

India's TFR has declined to ~2.0 (below the 2.1 replacement level), and the Sonowal (2005) judgment equated mass influx into Assam with 'external aggression' under Article 355.

QUESTION 5

Economy / GDP

With reference to the expenditure method of computing GDP ($GDP = C + I + G + (X - M)$), consider the following:

1. 'I' denotes investment expenditure.
2. 'M' (imports) is added to arrive at GDP.
3. GDP is based on production within national territory, irrespective of nationality.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1 and 3 only

Imports (M) are **subtracted**, not added — net exports = $(X - M)$; so 2 is wrong. GDP measures production within territory (not nationality), and I is investment.

QUESTION 6

Economy / GDP

Consider the following regarding the revised GDP series in India:

1. The new base year is 2022-23.
2. Data from the e-Vahan portal are used to estimate consumption on road transport services.
3. GST collections and the PFMS are among the new administrative data sources integrated.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) All three (d) None

Answer: (c) All three

The new base year is 2022-23; e-Vahan data feed PFCE estimates for road transport services; and GST collections and PFMS are integrated as new data sources.

