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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Current Affairs & Editorial

17 July 2026

PRELIMS · MAINS · EDITORIALS · PRACTICE MCQS

COMPILED BY

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★ How to use this booklet

- Each topic pairs the original **Hindu clipping** with crisp analysis bullets and a gold **Concept Connect** box.
- End with **2 Mains questions** (answer hints) and **10 Prelims MCQs** with an answer key.

1

India's First Hydrogen-Powered Train — NaMo Green Rail

GS 3

WHY IN NEWS

PM Modi is set to flag off the NaMo Green Rail, India's first-ever hydrogen-powered fuel-cell train, from Haryana's Jind, as part of a multi-State visit unveiling initiatives worth over ₹25,000 crore.



The NaMo Green Rail, ready on the Jind–Sonapat route in Haryana.

- **Indigenous build:** The 10-coach trainset is designed and integrated in India and is among the world's longest and most powerful hydrogen-fuelled passenger trainsets, driven by a **3,200 HP** propulsion system.
- **How it works:** Unlike diesel/electric trains, it generates its own electricity onboard through a chemical reaction between **hydrogen and atmospheric oxygen**, leaving behind only water vapour.
- **Green hydrogen:** It uses green-hydrogen fuel cells; the hydrogen will be supplied by a dedicated plant at Jind.
- **Pilot project:** Part of Indian Railways' eco-friendly rail push — may pave the way for hydrogen trains on other corridors.
- **Wider visit:** Modi will also lay stones for the Delhi–Amritsar–Katra Expressway, a Sikh museum in Kurukshetra, and health/road projects across Haryana, Chandigarh & Punjab.

★ Concept Connect — Hydrogen Rail

- **Significance:** Promotes zero-emission rail transport and reduces diesel dependence, supporting India's net-zero-by-2070 goal.
- **Safety:** Equipped with hydrogen leak detection and fire-prevention systems.
- **Economics:** Expected to cut operational costs vs diesel over the long term.
- **Link:** National Green Hydrogen Mission (2023); PEM fuel-cell technology.

REFERENCE — THE HINDU (PAGE 4) & FUEL-CELL WORKING

Modi set to flag off India's first hydrogen-powered train from Haryana's Jind

Unlike traditional trains, the NaMo Green Rail generates its own power through chemical reaction between hydrogen and atmospheric oxygen; PM will unveil initiatives worth over ₹25,000 crore

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In a push towards sustainable transport, modern health care and advanced connectivity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Haryana, Chandigarh, and Punjab on Friday and unveil initiatives worth over ₹25,000 crore.

The highlight of the multi-State visit will be the flagging off of the NaMo Green Rail, India's first-ever hydrogen-powered fuel cell train in Haryana's Jind.

Designed and integrated indigenously, the 10-coach train is among the world's longest and most powerful hydrogen-fuelled passenger trainsets. It is powered by a 3,200 horsepower propulsion system.

Unlike traditional trains, it generates its own electricity onboard through a chemical reaction between hydrogen and atmospheric oxygen, leaving behind water vapour.

The Prime Minister will



India's first hydrogen-powered train, the NaMo Green Rail, is ready for operations on Jind-Sonapat route in Haryana. X/@NAYABSAINIBJP

then proceed to the Eklaya Stadium in Jind to lay foundation stones and dedicate to the nation national highway projects worth ₹12,470 crore, including the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway.

The 157.92-km, four-lane access-controlled stretch has been built at a cost of ₹9,680 crore and will reduce the travel time between Delhi and Katra from 14 hours to six hours. The Jind-Gohana Greenfield Highway (NH-352A) will re-

duce travel time from two hours to 40 minutes.

He will also lay the foundation stone for a state-of-the-art Sikh museum in Kurukshetra to honour the legacy of the Sikh gurus. He will also dedicate to the nation new medical colleges in Bhiwani and Narnaul.

Healthcare facilities

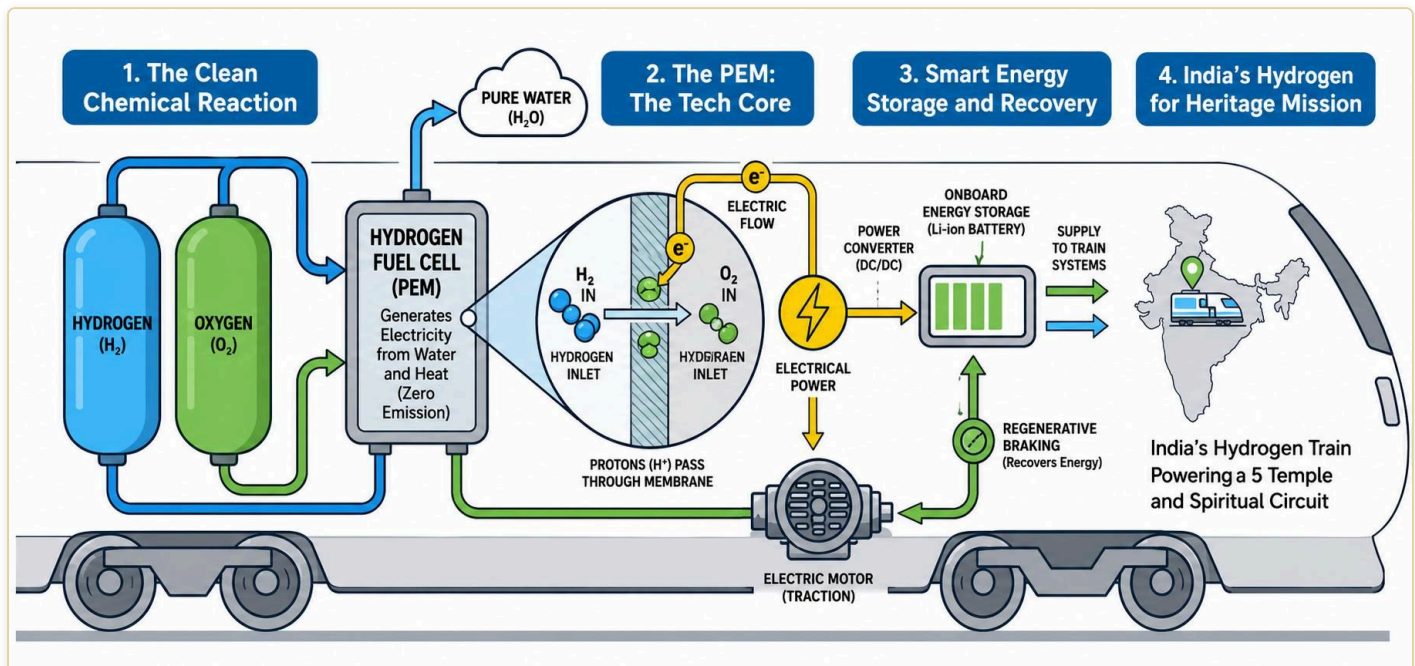
In the afternoon, the Prime Minister will arrive in Chandigarh to inaugurate and commission health-care and road infrastruc-

ture projects worth ₹4,700 crore in the city. The projects include PGIMER Chandigarh's Advanced Mother and Child Centre, a 300-bed tertiary care facility tailored for high-risk pregnancies and intensive newborn treatment.

Mr. Modi will also inaugurate an advanced neurosciences centre, which will be an integrated hub offering neurology, neurosurgery, and neuro-critical care diagnostics under a single roof. He will lay the foundation stone for the PM-ABHIM Critical Care Block, a 150-bed emergency response and disaster backup facility.

Mr. Modi will also inaugurate the six-lane greenfield highway from IT City to Kurali (Mohali) to streamline inter-State transit between Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir.

Concluding his tour in Jalandhar, the Prime Minister will dedicate rail and road infrastructure projects worth ₹5,470 crore.



How a hydrogen fuel-cell train produces power — from the clean chemical reaction to regenerative braking.



2

Three-Language Formula & the ‘R3 in Class 9’ Debate

GS 2

WHY IN NEWS

Supreme Court judge Justice B.V. Nagarathna made an oral appeal urging the Centre not to introduce a third language (R3) in Class 9 under the three-language scheme, calling it too stressful for children facing Board exams a year later.

- **Her view:** A third language should be introduced in **Class 6 and stopped in Class 9** — “third language should stop in Class 9, not start in Class 9.” Board-exam pressure begins as early as Class 8.
- “Why introduce a third language in Class 9? Why not Class 6?” the judge asked, heading a Division Bench. (She is in line to become the first woman Chief Justice of India.)
- **Context — T.N. dispute:** Tamil Nadu argued schools under the Centre’s Navodaya scheme are “fundamentally incompatible” with its two-language policy; the State called the formula a “backdoor” ploy to make Hindi compulsory.
- The apex court suggested T.N. could have its “own education system” without denying children the option of Navodaya schools; next hearing set for **August 11**.

★ Concept Connect — Three-Language Formula

- **Origin:** First formulated by the Ministry of Education in **1968** on the Kothari Commission (1964–66) recommendations.
- **NEP 2020:** Requires three languages; at least **two must be native Indian languages**; allows flexibility unlike the rigid 1968 formula.
- **Foreign language:** Can be R3 only if the other two are Indian languages, or taken as an optional fourth.
- **Debate:** Balances multilingualism vs teacher shortage, load on primary education & language politics.

REFERENCE — THE HINDU (PAGE 16) & BENEFITS/CHALLENGES

'Third language should start in Class 6 and stop in Class 9'

SC judge asks Centre to not bring a third language in Class 9 as part of three-language scheme; T.N. says schools under Centre's Navodaya scheme are incompatible with two-language policy in State

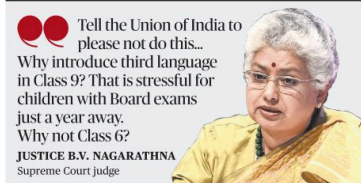
Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge, Justice B.V. Nagarathna, made an oral appeal in open court to the government to not introduce a third language (R3) in Class 9 as part of the three-language scheme, saying it would be too stressful for children with Board exams just a year away.

She said a third language should be introduced in Class 6 and stopped in Class 9. "Third language should stop in Class 9, not start in Class 9," Justice Nagarathna, heading a Division Bench, said. The pressure of the Class 10 Board exam starts as early as in Class 8, she added.

"Tell the Union of India to please not do this... Tell the government not to do it. Why introduce third language in Class 9? That is stressful. Why not Class 6?" Justice Nagarathna said.

The judge, who is in line to become the first woman Chief Justice of India as per the seniority norm, re-



called how, while she was in school, the teaching of lessons meant for Class 10 would begin in Class 8 itself. "And this was in 1976. You can just imagine what the pressure would be on children now," she remarked.

'Backdoor' ploy

The Supreme Court was hearing petitions filed on the introduction of Navodaya schools in Tamil Nadu. The State government, during the previous Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) regime, had maintained that the schools envisioned under the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Scheme were "fundamentally incompatible" with the two-language policy followed in Tamil Nadu.

The State had, in earlier hearings, argued that the Navodaya scheme based on the three-language formula was a deviation from the mandate of the Tamil Nadu Tamil Learning Act, 2006.

The State had submitted that the three-language formula was considered a core pedagogical and administrative framework of the Navodaya scheme.

It required compulsory instruction in Hindi, English, and the mother tongue/regional language. The Tamil Nadu government had maintained that the imposition of the scheme was a "backdoor" ploy to make Hindi compulsory.

The apex court suggested that Tamil Nadu could have its "own education

system" without denying children the option of enrolling in Navodaya schools.

Justice Nagarathna pointed out that Hindi was not compulsory under the three-language scheme. "...All other States have Navodaya schools, then why not have them for the children of Tamil Nadu?" the judge asked senior advocate Hsripriya Padmanabhan, Additional Advocate General for Tamil Nadu.

While the earlier DMK regime was of the opinion that the implementation of the Navodaya scheme was unnecessary in Tamil Nadu, which already provided quality residential education to meritorious students from rural and economically weaker sections, Ms. Padmanabhan adopted a cautious tone, saying the new government was engaged in talks about the Navodaya school scheme and needed some time to chalk out its course of action.

Acknowledging the intricacies of a "change of guard" in the State, the court gave time till August 11, the next date of hearing.

THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

The Three-Language Formula under NEP 2020 promotes multilingualism and respects India's linguistic diversity. Here are its key advantages and the arguments against it.

ADVANTAGES OF THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA	ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA
ACCESS & INCLUSION 1. ENHANCES ACCESS AND INCLUSION Wider Access: Helps children from diverse linguistic backgrounds learn in a language they comprehend. Parental Engagement: Learning in native languages boosts parental involvement. Inclusivity: Respects and integrates the linguistic and cultural diversity of marginalized groups.	CHALLENGES FOR LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STATES 1. CHALLENGES FOR LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STATES - States like Nagaland, with multiple tribal languages and limited resources, struggle to implement the formula. - Developing standardised curricula for many local languages is administratively difficult.
BETTER LEARNING OUTCOMES 2. IMPROVES LEARNING OUTCOMES Socio-emotional Growth: Helps children express themselves better and understand diverse perspectives. Academic Performance: Research shows multilingual students often excel in other subjects due to enhanced cognitive abilities.	EXECUTION DIFFICULTIES 2. EXECUTION DIFFICULTIES - Past attempts have faced practical hurdles. For instance, Haryana previously introduced Tamil as a language option but faced immense difficulties in execution.
SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 3. SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT Cultural Preservation: Protects indigenous languages and traditions for future generations. Economic Benefits: Multilingualism drives economic growth (e.g., Switzerland attributes 10% of its GDP to its multilingual heritage). Environmental Protection: Indigenous languages preserve traditional ecological knowledge.	SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS 3. SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS - There is a severe shortage of qualified teachers for second and third languages. - Hiring them diverts crucial funds from basic infrastructure and faculty training.
FACILITATES NATIONAL INTEGRATION 4. FACILITATES NATIONAL INTEGRATION - Promotes effective cross-regional communication and fosters "Unity in Diversity" by building respect for different cultures.	STRUGGLES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION 4. STRUGGLES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION - Many students already lack foundational literacy. - Adding a compulsory third language could overburden the system and cause confusion for children from monolingual homes.
POLITICAL SENSITIVITY 5. POLITICAL SENSITIVITY - Language is politically sensitive. Policies may be viewed with suspicion or used to mobilise regional chauvinism, threatening migrants and potentially hampering national unity.	LANGUAGE AS A CHOICE, NOT COMPELSION 6. LANGUAGE AS A CHOICE, NOT COMPELSION - Critics argue that language learning should be driven by individual or professional needs later in life, not by compulsory school policies.
TECHNOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVES 7. TECHNOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVES - Rapid advancement of AI translation tools (like Google Gemini) reduces the functional barrier of language, making forced multilingual proficiency less critical for basic communication.	

"The Three-Language Formula, if implemented with flexibility, resources, and sensitivity to regional realities, can be a powerful tool for inclusive education and national unity."

MULTILINGUALISM TODAY, STRONGER INDIA TOMORROW.

Advantages vs arguments against the three-language formula.

3

NALSA & Premature Release of Aged/Terminally-Ill Inmates

GS 2

WHY IN NEWS

The Supreme Court directed all States and UTs to frame, within three months, a uniform policy for the premature release of elderly and terminally ill prisoners — entitling them to a humane, time-bound mechanism for remission or compassionate release.

- The directions came on a petition by **NALSA**, whose prison inspections showed no common framework existed for releasing aged/terminally-ill inmates.
- Facilitating such release would address a humanitarian concern **and reduce prison overcrowding** (India's prisons had a 131% occupancy rate as of Dec 2022).
- **'Terminal illness' definition:** States must adopt a clear, uniform definition, drawing on the UNODC *Handbook on Prisoners with Special Needs*.
- **Medical boards:** Independent boards must certify terminal illness/advanced medical vulnerability under uniform eligibility criteria.
- **Digital backbone:** The Union govt, with the **NIC**, must provide States technical assistance, digital infrastructure and training; compliance affidavits due in six months.

★ Concept Connect — NALSA

- **Statutory basis:** Apex body under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** (constituted 1995); ensures free legal aid to the poor & underprivileged.
- **Article 39A:** Directive Principle mandating equal justice & free legal aid (added by 42nd Amendment, 1976).
- **ADR:** Promotes Lok Adalats & alternative dispute resolution.
- **Section 12:** Covers women, children, SC/ST, disabled, persons in custody, trafficking & disaster victims, and those earning < ₹1 lakh/year.

REFERENCE — THE HINDU (PAGE 18) & LEGAL-AID TIMELINE

'Frame policy for release of aged, terminally ill inmates'

The Supreme Court orders States and UTs to draft uniform policy for premature release of such prisoners within three months in coordination with the respective State Legal Services Authorities

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed all States and Union Territories to put in place, within three months, a uniform policy governing the premature release of elderly and terminally ill prisoners, observing that such inmates are entitled to a humane and time-bound mechanism for remission or early release on compassionate grounds.

A Bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta directed that every State policy must clearly lay down the eligibility criteria and procedural framework governing such releases.

"All States and Union Territories shall, within a period of three months from the date of this judgment, formulate and notify a comprehensive policy for early or premature release of prisoners who are of advanced age and/or are terminally ill. Such policy shall be framed in consultation with the respective State Legal Services Authorities so as to ensure institutional coordination and



Joint approach: The policy must ensure institutional coordination to identify eligible prisoners, the court said. ISTOCK

effective identification of eligible prisoners," the Bench said.

NALSA petition

The directions were issued while hearing a petition filed by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), which, based on inspections conducted in prisons across the country, pointed to the lack of a common framework for the premature release of aged and terminally ill prisoners. The petition contended that facilitating the release of such inmates would not only address a humanitarian concern but also help reduce overcrowding in prisons.

The court directed that

every policy must incorporate a clear and uniform definition of "terminal illness". It permitted the authorities to draw upon the definition contained in the *Handbook on Prisoners with Special Needs* published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which describes terminal illness as "a condition where there is no reasonable medical possibility that the patient's condition will not continue to degenerate and result in death".

It also directed the States and Union Territories to constitute independent medical boards to assess and certify cases of terminal illness or ad-

vanced medical vulnerability in accordance with uniform eligibility criteria while considering applications for remission of prison sentences.

To facilitate the implementation of its directions, the Bench directed the Union government, in coordination with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), to provide the States and Union Territories with technical assistance, digital infrastructure, software support and training.

Compliance affidavits

The Bench directed the Centre, States and Union Territories to file compliance affidavits within six months, detailing the number of prisoners identified under the policy, those granted premature release, and those whose cases remain under consideration. The matter has been listed on January 19, 2027.

The petition had pointed out that India's prisons had an occupancy rate of 131% as of December 31, 2022, and that terminally ill and elderly inmates often require specialised care that prison authorities are ill-equipped to provide.

Year	Initiative
1960	 Guidelines for legal aid schemes introduced in India
1976	 Article 39A incorporated through 42nd Amendment of Constitution
1980	 Formation of The Committee for Implementing Legal Aid Schemes (CILAS) under Justice Bhagwati
1987	 Enactment of the Legal Services Authorities Act , providing a statutory framework for legal aid programs in India
1995	 Establishment of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) , the apex body for legal aid coordination in India
1998	 Introduction of Permanent and Continuous Lok Adalats , offering an alternative dispute resolution mechanism
2000	 Implementation of various legal aid initiatives, including legal literacy programs and counselling centres

Evolution of legal aid in India, 1960–2000.

4

Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS)

Prelims

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Cabinet approved the Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS) with a ₹62,500-crore outlay to boost domestic value addition, strengthen component supply chains and build globally competitive Indian smartphone brands.



Smartphone assembly line — deepening domestic value addition.

- **What it is:** A macro-level manufacturing incentive policy giving direct financial support for phone production, localised component sourcing and design engineering — the new cornerstone of India's high-tech electronics push.
- **Aim:** Scale up high-volume smartphone production, deepen domestic value addition and build supply-chain resilience.
- **Implementing agency:** Ministry of Electronics & IT (**MeitY**).
- **Tenure:** Five years, FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31.

★ Concept Connect — Key Incentives & Targets

- **Base incentive:** Differentiated support on eligible India-made sales, ranging **25% down to 5%**.
- **Component linkage:** Extra up to **1.5%** tied to domestic sourcing of key components/sub-assemblies.
- **Brand & R&D:** Extra **3%** for design, engineering and R&D to nurture local brands.
- **Targets:** ~₹39,00,000 crore cumulative production; ~**60,000** direct jobs.
- **Link:** Successor framework to the PLI scheme for large-scale electronics.

5

The Indian Grey Hornbill

Prelims

WHY IN NEWS

More than 60 years after vanishing from Gujarat's Gir forests, the Indian Grey Hornbill has re-established its presence following a landmark reintroduction programme by the Gujarat Forest Department.



Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyrceros birostris*).

- **Species:** *Ocyrceros birostris* — a medium-sized, adaptive arboreal bird of the hornbill family (Bucerotidae); one of the commonest hornbills of the Indian subcontinent.
- **Range:** Endemic to the subcontinent — India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh.
- **Habitat:** Unlike deep-forest relatives, it thrives in open deciduous forests, thorn scrub, riparian woodlands, rural fields and even urban parks with mature hollow trees.
- **IUCN status:** Least Concern (LC).

★ Concept Connect — Key Characters

- **Appearance:** ~24 inches; silvery-grey/brownish plumage, pale eyebrow line, white-tipped long tail.
- **Bill & casque:** Large curved bill with a pointed casque (smaller in females).
- **Nesting ritual:** The female **mud-seals** herself in a tree cavity, leaving a slit — depends entirely on the male for food while nesting.
- **Behaviour:** Monogamous; seen in pairs/family groups; flaps-and-glides flight with loud squealing calls.

6

Cybersecurity in Vital Installations — ‘Wealth of Lacunae’

GS 3

EDITORIAL — WHY IN NEWS

A ransomware attack on a contractor linked to the Kudankulam nuclear project renews concern over India’s inconsistent, often opaque, breach-disclosure regime — even if nothing threatening the plant’s integrity was stolen.

Wealth of lacunae

Cybersecurity, transparency are non-negotiable in vital installations

The ransomware attack against a contractor involved in the Kudankulam nuclear power project is concerning, even if nothing threatening the plant’s integrity was stolen. In 2019, malware was found on the same facility’s administrative network, but the NPCIL maintained that the operational reactor network was unaffected. The new incident extends the same theme. India’s breach disclosure regime is inconsistent and often plainly opaque. Affected organisations tend to believe admitting a breach will damage public confidence, share prices, contracts, and invite regulatory scrutiny. So, they tend to ease their language in public statements and avoid disclosure until compelled. Many organisations also lack mature incident response capabilities, not uncommonly because they treat cybersecurity as a matter of compliance rather than necessity. So, assessing what data has been affected in the early stages of an attack becomes technically impossible. According to public information, the facility’s core infrastructure is unaffected; instead, a group called ‘World Leaks’ mounted a ransomware attack compromising systems belonging to Reliance Infrastructure, one of the engineering contractors of Units 3 and 4. The data in the incident were hosted by Yotta Data Services, which said it detected suspicious activity on its servers on May 29.

The Hindu editorial, ‘Wealth of lacunae’ (Page 12).

- The group ‘World Leaks’ hit systems of Reliance Infrastructure (an engineering contractor for Units 3&4); data was hosted by Yotta, which flagged suspicious activity on May 29.
- Some **14.3 GB** of files reportedly surfaced — ventilation layouts, floor plans of an alleged “control room”, and supplier/vendor lists — though NPCIL says these pertain only to infrastructure beyond the nuclear island.
- **Disclosure gap:** Organisations fear that admitting breaches damages confidence, share prices and contracts, so they soften statements and delay disclosure.
- Many lack mature incident-response capability because they treat cybersecurity as **compliance rather than necessity**, making early damage assessment near-impossible.
- India is the **third-most-breached country**, with prior attacks on AIIMS Delhi, airlines and State portals. CERT-In is

7

Breaching the Inflation Target

GS 3

EDITORIAL — WHY IN NEWS

India's retail inflation breached the RBI's 4% target for the first time under the new CPI series, rising to 4.38% in June from 3.93% in May — leaving little room for a rate cut at the MPC's August meeting.

Breaching the target

Rising inflation leaves no room for a cut in interest rates

India's retail inflation breached the RBI's 4% target for the first time under the new CPI series, rising to 4.38% in June from 3.93% in May and about 2.7% a year earlier. The latest print reflects a broader pass-through of price pressures that had, until recently, remained concentrated at the producer level, largely driven by spiralling transport and fuel costs since the U.S.-Iran conflict in late February. Consequently, the gap between wholesale and retail inflation has only marginally narrowed. Wholesale inflation (WPI), now based on 2022-23, remained elevated at 9.87% in June, up from 9.68% in May. Fuel and power continued to exert the greatest pressure on producers, recording inflation of 27.41%, only marginally lower than May's 28.18%. As India imports nearly 90% of its crude oil requirements, the value of merchandise imports surged to \$70.8 billion in June from about \$54.1 billion a year earlier, even though import volumes did not rise proportionately. This underscores how imported inflation, amplified by crude prices that briefly crossed \$110 a barrel, has driven systemic price pressures across the economy. The rupee's sharp depreciation during the conflict added to these pressures, although RBI intervention in the foreign exchange market helped cushion the fall.

The transport category merits closer examination. Transport inflation more than doubled to 4.31% in June from 1.75% in May, while the sub-group "transport services for goods" remained

The Hindu editorial, 'Breaching the target' (Page 12).

- **Imported inflation:** Crude prices that briefly crossed **\$110/barrel** during the conflict drove systemic price pressures; a sharp rupee depreciation added to them, cushioned partly by RBI intervention.
- **Producer pressure:** Wholesale inflation (WPI, 2022-23 base) stayed elevated at **9.87% in June**; fuel & power inflation for producers was 27.41%.
- **Crude again rising:** A late-June ceasefire briefly eased crude, but prices have started climbing again amid geopolitical uncertainty.
- **Verdict:** With persistent upstream pressures, inflation is unlikely to return to 4% soon — leaving **no room for a rate cut** in August.

EDITORIAL — WHY IN NEWS

An op-ed by Gitanjali J. Angmo argues India must move beyond ministerial reshuffles to a genuine education *renaissance* — realising the demographic dividend by producing thinkers, not memorisers.

Beyond political reshuffles, renew education in India

When Parliament assembles next week, there will be debates, disruptions and legislation. Television studios will reduce complex issues to political arithmetic, and headlines will declare winners and losers. Yet, I cannot help asking whether the true measure of Parliament is not by the number of Bills it passes, but by the questions it chooses to confront and resolve. For the past several days, one such question has been waiting outside its doors. My husband, Sonam Wangchuk, scientist, engineer, educator and social reformer, has been on an indefinite fast. Every morning I watch with growing anxiety as his body weakens. His body is paying the price for a conviction that education deserves the nation's urgent attention. Every day begins with the same silent question: how much longer can his body endure?

This is not merely a family's private concern. It has become a test of our national conscience. Those who choose the path of non-violent sacrifice hope their suffering will awaken society's conscience to a greater purpose. If this fast culminates only in the resignation or reshuffling of the Union Education Minister, India would have reduced an extraordinary act of conviction and personal sacrifice to an ordinary political outcome. Public accountability is the cornerstone of democracy. Ministers must have the moral courage to own their failures and step aside when necessary. But individuals are transient; institutions endure. More important than replacing a Minister is defining an educational future for which every Minister, regardless of party, is held accountable.

Fifteen years ago, around half of India's population was under 25. Economists celebrated this as India's demographic dividend, perhaps the greatest developmental opportunity available to any nation in the 21st century. In one of my articles, I had argued that while India has invested significantly in access to education, it has missed out on excellence. Enrolment has grown, but learning has not been transformed. If India aspires to become a Vishwa Guru, it must educate this generation differently. But India seems to have missed the opportunity.

What demographic dividend is

A demographic dividend is realised by producing better thinkers, wiser leaders, confident innovators, skilled researchers and teachers, ethical entrepreneurs, honest public servants and compassionate citizens. This, therefore, is the moment to rise above personalities, parties and politics. Sonam Wangchuk's fast should become the catalyst for a national awakening on the future of education. The question is larger than whether one Minister should resign. It is whether India will dare rebuild the education system that will shape the next century. We need more than a reshuffle — we need reform, renewal, and a renaissance. In my view, that renaissance rests on



Gitanjali J. Angmo

Founder of the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh, and an education reformer and public intellectual working to reimagine education, democracy, ecology and Himalayan futures through grassroots leadership and innovation

10 urgent reforms. First, reform the system of examination. Assessment determines learning. As long as examinations reward memory, schools will teach memory. If examinations reward thinking, schools will cultivate thinkers. Within three years, every examination, from school boards to JEE, NEET, CUET and the UPSC, should progressively evaluate conceptual understanding, application, creativity, analytical reasoning, ethical judgement and real world problem-solving rather than recall. Competency-based assessment should become the national norm.

Second, India must dismantle the coaching culture that it has inadvertently created as a parallel education system. Families spend fortunes on coaching because India's entrance examinations reward repetition more than reflection. Multiple examination windows, greater weightage to school performance and portfolios, and redesigned entrance tests can gradually restore learning to schools and childhood to children.

Respect for teaching

Third, build the world's best teachers: No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers as is seen in Finland, Singapore, South Korea and Japan. India needs a National Teacher Excellence Mission that treats teaching as one of the most respected professions through rigorous preparation, continuous professional development, mentoring, research opportunities and leadership training.

Fourth, every vacant teaching position represents thousands of lost learning opportunities. Vacancies from Anganwadis and primary schools to central universities, IITs, IIMs, NITs and AIIMS should be filled through transparent, merit-based recruitment within three months.

Fifth, reconnect education with society. Education must prepare young people not just for employment but also for citizenship. Every undergraduate should complete a semester of apprenticeship, research, entrepreneurship, rural immersion, community service or industry experience before graduation. Knowledge acquires meaning when tested against reality.

Sixth, India must restore faith in its government schools. Every child deserves an equal education until the age of 13, regardless of income or geography. Laboratories, libraries, sports facilities, digital infrastructure, sanitation and qualified teachers should become guaranteed minimum national standards. This can only happen when policymakers have a personal stake in public education and those responsible for governing public institutions also trust them with their own families.

Seventh, trust educational institutions with greater academic freedom that they deserve. Governments should define learning outcomes and ensure accountability. They should not

micromanage pedagogy, curriculum innovation or research. The world's finest institutions flourish because they are trusted to innovate, collaborate and respond to local contexts. Academic freedom produces excellence.

Eighth, what is measured improves. Transparency is one of the most powerful drivers of reform. A real-time national public education dashboard should be set up, on which every stakeholder can compare schools and universities using verified measures of learning outcomes, teacher vacancies, infrastructure, research output, accreditation, employability, and student well-being.

Ninth, public investment in education should rise to at least six per cent of GDP, accompanied by an increase in research funding to at least two per cent of GDP. Nations become knowledge economies not through aspiration alone, but through sustained investment in schools, universities, laboratories and ideas.

Tenth, educational reform must outlive electoral cycles and not begin afresh every time governments change. India needs an independent statutory national education reform commission that establishes measurable national benchmarks, audits implementation, publishes annual progress reports to Parliament, tracks outcomes across every State/Union Territory and holds governments accountable to measurable outcomes rather than political rhetoric.

Education beyond political divides

None of these reforms belongs to one political party or to one ideology. Every government has contributed something valuable, yet every government has also inherited unresolved structural weaknesses. Education must become India's first genuinely bipartisan national mission. History offers nations only a few defining moments when public attention, moral conviction and political urgency converge. This may be one of them. Parliament will eventually adjourn. But whether the child entering class one this year will grow into an innovator or an imitator, a responsible citizen or a passive spectator depends on the education we choose to build today.

The question before India is no longer who will lead the Ministry of Education. It is whether we, as a nation, have the vision and the resolve to build an education system worthy of our children. That responsibility belongs not to one government or one political party, but to every citizen who believes that education is the foundation upon which every other national aspiration rests.

If Sonam Wangchuk's fast helps us begin that journey, then his sacrifice will not merely have drawn attention to a crisis. It will have helped awaken a nation. History will remember whether we dared to transform a personal sacrifice into a national renaissance. That responsibility belongs to all of us.

The Hindu op-ed by Gitanjali J. Angmo (Page 12).

- **Reform exams first:** As long as exams reward memory, schools teach memory. Within three years, boards, JEE, NEET, CUET and UPSC should assess conceptual understanding, application and reasoning — making competency-based assessment the norm.
- **Dismantle coaching culture:** End the parallel education system that entrance exams have inadvertently created.
- **Best teachers:** A **National Teacher Excellence Mission** (like Finland/Singapore/South Korea) with rigorous prep, mentoring & research; fill all vacancies (Anganwadi to AIIMS/IITs) via transparent merit recruitment within three months.
- **Reconnect with society:** Every undergraduate should complete a semester of apprenticeship, research, rural immersion or community service.
- **Equity & investment:** Equal education till age 13 as a guaranteed national standard; public investment in education to rise

MAINS PRACTICE

Two questions with answer hints — freshly framed on today's themes

Mains Questions

Q1

GS 3 · 10 marks · 150 words

Green hydrogen is being positioned as a cornerstone of India's decarbonised transport. Examine the significance of hydrogen-powered rail for India's net-zero goals, and the technological and economic challenges to scaling it up.

Approach: Intro on NaMo Green Rail as India's first H2 train → body on how fuel cells cut diesel dependence, National Green Hydrogen Mission linkage, and safety/regenerative-braking features → challenges: green-H2 cost, refuelling infrastructure, storage & import dependence → conclude with a phased corridor-wise roadmap.

Q2

GS 2 · 15 marks · 250 words

"A humane criminal-justice system must build a time-bound mechanism for the compassionate release of aged and terminally ill prisoners." In light of the recent Supreme Court directions, discuss the role of NALSA and the reforms needed to operationalise such a mechanism.

Approach: Intro on the SC's uniform-policy directive → body on NALSA's statutory role (Art. 39A, LSA Act 1987), prison-overcrowding (131% occupancy) and the UNODC terminal-illness definition → reforms: independent medical boards, NIC-backed digital tracking, uniform eligibility → balance humanitarian concern with public safety & victim rights.

PRELIMS PRACTICE

10 MCQs with answer key & explanations

Prelims MCQs (1–4)

Q1. Consider the following statements about the NaMo Green Rail:

1. It generates electricity onboard through a chemical reaction between hydrogen and atmospheric oxygen.
2. It was flagged off from Tamil Nadu's Chennai.
3. Its only emission is water vapour.

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

Answer: (a) — It was flagged off from **Jind, Haryana** (not Tamil Nadu), so 2 is wrong. Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

Q2. With reference to the Three-Language Formula, consider the following:

1. It was first formulated based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission.
2. Under NEP 2020, at least two of the three languages must be native Indian languages.
3. NEP 2020 rigidly mandates Hindi as a compulsory language.

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

Answer: (a) — NEP 2020 allows flexibility and does **not** make Hindi compulsory, so 3 is wrong. 1 and 2 are correct.

Q3. The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) was established under which Act?

- (a) The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987
- (b) The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
- (c) The Advocates Act, 1961
- (d) The Right to Information Act, 2005

Answer: (a) — NALSA is the apex body constituted under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** (constituted in 1995).

Q4. Article 39A of the Constitution, related to free legal aid, was:

1. Added by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment.
2. Placed under the Directive Principles of State Policy.
3. Made a Fundamental Right enforceable in courts.

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

Answer: (a) — Article 39A is a **Directive Principle** (not a Fundamental Right), added by the 42nd Amendment (1976). So 3 is wrong.

Prelims MCQs (5–7)

Q5. The Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS) is implemented by which Ministry?

- (a) Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- (b) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
- (c) Ministry of Heavy Industries
- (d) Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

Answer: (b) — The MPMS (₹62,500-crore outlay, FY 2026-27 to 2030-31) is implemented by **MeitY**.

Q6. Consider the following about the Indian Grey Hornbill:

- 1. Its scientific name is Oryx capensis.
- 2. It is classified as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List.
- 3. The nesting female seals herself inside a tree cavity.

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

Answer: (a) — The Indian Grey Hornbill is **Least Concern (LC)**, not Endangered, so 2 is wrong. 1 and 3 are correct.

Q7. CERT-In, the national nodal agency for cybersecurity, was:

- 1. Formed in 2004 under the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- 2. An office within the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- 3. The agency that certifies terminal illness in prisoners.

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

Answer: (a) — CERT-In is under **MeitY** (not MHA), so 2 is wrong; 3 is unrelated. Only 1 is correct.

Prelims MCQs (8–10)

Q8. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) is an initiative of the:

- (a) Ministry of Electronics and IT
- (b) Ministry of Home Affairs
- (c) Ministry of Defence
- (d) Reserve Bank of India

Answer: (b) — I4C is a **Ministry of Home Affairs** initiative (approved 2018, dedicated to the nation in 2020, HQ New Delhi).

Q9. With reference to India's June inflation data, consider the following:

- 1. Retail inflation (CPI) breached the RBI's 4% target.
- 2. The RBI's flexible inflation-targeting band is 4% ($\pm 2\%$).
- 3. WPI is computed by the RBI.

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

Answer: (a) — WPI is released by the **Office of the Economic Adviser (Ministry of Commerce & Industry)**, not the RBI, so 3 is wrong. 1 and 2 are correct.

Q10. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI:

- 1. Consists of six members.
- 2. Is responsible for setting the repo rate to achieve the inflation target.
- 3. Is chaired by the Union Finance Minister.

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

Answer: (a) — The MPC is chaired by the **RBI Governor** (not the Finance Minister), so 3 is wrong. 1 and 2 are correct.

ANSWER KEY — 1(a) · 2(a) · 3(a) · 4(a) · 5(b) · 6(a) · 7(a) · 8(b) · 9(a) · 10(a)

Rapid Revision: NaMo Green Rail — India's first H2 fuel-cell train (Jind) · R3 debate — SC judge, Class 6 not 9 · NALSA — LSA Act 1987, Art. 39A · MPMS — ₹62,500 cr, MeitY · Grey Hornbill — *Oryzopsis birostris*, LC · CERT-In — 2004, MeitY · I4C — MHA · CPI June 4.38% · MPC — 6 members, RBI Governor.