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THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Daily Current Affairs & Editorial Decoded



24 JULY 2026

THURSDAY

GS 2 · GS 3 · 7 TOPICS · MAINS · 10 PRELIMS MCQs

COMPILED BY

Sapna Chauhan

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Prelims 2027

How to use this booklet: Read each analysis, then the gold **Static / Syllabus Linkage** boxes for ready Prelims facts, and finish with the Mains & MCQ sections for active revision. Blue “Why in News” strips give you the exact hook for each topic.

WHY IN NEWS

PM-YASASVI (PM Young Achievers Scholarship Award Scheme for Vibrant India) — an umbrella scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment — unifies scholarship support and hostel infrastructure for socially and educationally backward youth.

- **Nodal body:** Implemented by the **Department of Social Justice & Empowerment** under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- **Origin:** The hostel-construction component began in **1998–99** to tackle educational backwardness among OBC youth; it underwent a major revision in **2017–18**, and was later restructured into the present umbrella framework.
- **Coverage:** Financial assistance spans all learning stages — from school level through top-tier college education — removing financial and geographical barriers for rural and economically weaker students.
- **Target categories:** Other Backward Classes (OBC), Economically Backward Classes (EBC), and Denotified, Nomadic & Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNT).
- **Non-creamy-layer rule:** Applicants must be in Central/State/UT OBC lists and strictly **outside the creamy layer**; family income cap is **₹2.5 lakh** for the test-based components.
- **Hostel priority:** Post-matric and undergraduate students from rural areas lacking local colleges, with a mandatory **5% seat reservation for students with disabilities**.
- **Selection & testing:** Benefits under the entrance-based track require clearing a **computer-based YASASVI Entrance Test**, conducted by the **National Testing Agency (NTA)**.

PM-YASASVI AT A GLANCE

- **Ministry:** Social Justice & Empowerment | **Objective:** financial assistance to OBC/EBC/DNT students at post-matriculation / post-secondary stage.
- **Eligibility:** permanent resident of India; OBC / EBC / DNT-SAR / NT / SNT community; studying in Class 9 or 11; family income ≤ ₹2.5 lakh; all genders eligible.
- **Benefits:** ₹75,000/yr (Class IX) and ₹1,25,000/yr (Class XI) as scholarship / financial assistance.
- **Selection:** qualify the computer-based YASASVI Entrance Test, conducted by the **NTA**.

FIVE SUB-SCHEMES UNDER PM-YASASVI

- **1. Pre-Matric Scholarship** — Class IX & X, full-time, Government Schools only; consolidated academic allowance of ₹4,000/annum.
- **2. Post-Matric Scholarship** — post-matriculation / post-secondary stage; allowance of ₹5,000–₹20,000 by course category.
- **3. Top-Class Education in Schools** — meritorious OBC/EBC/DNT students, Class 9 to 12; up to ₹75,000/annum (Cl. 9–10) and ₹1,25,000/annum (Cl. 11–12).
- **4. Top-Class Education in Colleges** — full financial support: tuition, living expenses, books & stationery.
- **5. Construction of Hostels for OBC Boys & Girls** — hostel facilities near govt. schools, universities & institutions for backward-class students, especially rural.

2

UMEED Portal & Digitisation of Waqf Properties

GS 2

POLITY

PRELIMS

WHY IN NEWS

The Ministry of Minority Affairs told the Lok Sabha that over **6.17 lakh Waqf properties** have been validated and approved on the **UMEED Central Portal-2025**, as part of the drive to digitise and streamline Waqf property records.

- Responding to an unstarred question by TMC MP **Sajda Ahmed**, Minority Affairs Minister **Kiren Rijiju** stated that **7,99,978** Waqf properties had been initiated for uploading as of **17 July**.
- Of these, **6,17,102** were validated and approved, **91,623** remain at various uploading stages, and **91,253** were rejected during verification. State/UT-wise status is available on the portal.
- UMEED Central Portal-2025 is a **statutory portal** developed under the provisions of the **UMEED Act, 1995**, designed to manage the complete lifecycle of Waqf properties — registration, verification, survey by the Collector, mutation, annual audits and related administration.
- **Launch:** The Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development (UMEED) Portal was launched on **6 June 2025**; a six-month window to upload authenticated data concluded on **6 December 2025**.



'6.17 lakh Waqf properties approved on portal, says Ministry' — The Hindu, Page 13 (Prelims)

UMEED PORTAL — KEY FEATURES

- Centralised digital platform for **registration & regulation** of Waqf properties across India.
- Records include **precise measurements & geolocation** data at registration.
- Properties unregistered after the deadline are flagged as **disputed** and referred to the **Waqf Tribunal**.
- Built-in **legal-awareness tools** clarify beneficiaries' rights under the amended law.
- Properties registered in **women's names cannot be designated as Waqf**; women, children & EWS remain eligible beneficiaries.

STATIC LINKAGE — TYPES OF PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

Type of Question	Mode of Answer	Supplementaries?	Colour in List	Key Note
Starred	Oral	Yes	 Green	Distinguished by an asterisk (*)
Unstarred	Written	No	 White	Requires a written reply only
Short-Notice	Oral	Yes	 Light Pink	Notice <10 days; for urgent matters
To Private Members	Oral / Written	Yes / No (by type)	 Yellow	Where the subject is a Bill/resolution the member is responsible for

WHY IN NEWS

At the **21st East Asia Summit (EAS)** in Manila, EAM S. Jaishankar said global maritime channels “must remain safe and unimpeded”, and that attacks on seafarers, civilian shipping or infrastructure cannot be countenanced.

- Jaishankar also called for **dialogue and diplomacy** in the Persian Gulf crisis and a **political solution** to the Myanmar conflict, where Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) challenge the junta that seized power in February 2021.
- On the **South China Sea**, India backed a substantive, effective and legally-binding **Code of Conduct**, fully compliant with **UNCLOS 1982**, that does not prejudice the rights of other users.
- India reiterated **zero tolerance for terrorism**; separately, the MEA rebutted Pakistan Deputy PM Ishaq Dar’s remarks on Kashmir and the Indus Waters Treaty at the ARF, calling it cynical exploitation of a multilateral forum.

Global waterways should be safe, unimpeded: Jaishankar

Attacks on seafarers, civilian shipping or infrastructure cannot be countenanced, says External Affairs Minister at East Asia Summit; Ministry hits back at Pakistan Deputy PM's comments

Kalpal Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Participating in the 21st East Asia Summit (EAS) in Manila, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Thursday that the global maritime channels “must remain safe and unimpeded”.

At the meeting, Mr. Jaishankar also called for dialogue and diplomacy in dealing with the crisis in the Persian Gulf region and a “political solution” to the civil conflict in Myanmar, where Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) have been challenging the authority of the military junta that took power in February 2021.

“Calling for dialogue and diplomacy to end the West Asia/Gulf conflict, India stresses that international waterways must remain safe and unimpeded, fully in consonance with international law. Under no circumstances can attacks on seafarers, civilian shipping or infrastructure be countenanced,” said Mr. Jaishankar. He described the evolving condition of the global order as “uncertain and volatile”.

He said India will be



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addresses the 21st East Asia Summit in Manila on Thursday. ANI

hosting two specific EAS activities in the current year – the seventh EAS conference on maritime security cooperation in Kochi and an EAS Maritime Heritage Festival in the ancient port city of Lothal.

South China Sea

He informed the EAS of the Indian position on South China Sea and said that India supports the “conclusion of a substantive, effective and legally binding Code of Conduct (CoC), fully compliant with UNCLOS 1982 that does not prejudice the legitimate rights of all users”. Continuing with the theme, he

called for “ASEAN centrality, regional stability, and the realisation of a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific”.

Regarding the ongoing civil conflict in Myanmar, he expressed India’s support for ASEAN efforts to resolving the situation. “India stands for finding a political solution to the Myanmar issue,” said Mr. Jaishankar, who also spoke at the 39th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

He reiterated India’s policy on “zero tolerance for terrorism”, and said there should not “be any doubt that acts of terrorism will have consequen-

es”. He said that “collective action against cyberattacks” should be prioritised. On the Israel-Palestine crisis, he reiterated India’s position, and said “a two-state solution can lead to a lasting and durable peace”.

Indus Waters Treaty

The External Affairs Ministry separately responded to Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar’s remarks on Kashmir and the Indus Waters Treaty at the ARF.

“It is no surprise that a multilateral forum has once again been cynically exploited by Pakistan to amplify falsehoods, peddle state-sponsored disinformation, and divert attention from its own well-documented record of sponsoring cross-border terrorism,” said the Ministry’s official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.

Mr. Dar, in his remarks, had said, “... lasting peace in South Asia lies in the just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with UN Security Council”.

He further said that upholding the treaty is a “cornerstone of regional peace and stability”.

‘Global waterways should be safe, unimpeded: Jaishankar’ — The Hindu, Page 14 (GS 2)

EAS — STATIC FACTS

- Established in **2005** as an **ASEAN-led** initiative; the only leader-led Indo-Pacific forum bringing together all key partners on political, security & economic issues.
- The idea of an East Asia Grouping was first proposed by Malaysian PM **Mahathir Mohamad in 1991**; inaugural EAS held at Kuala Lumpur on **14 Dec 2005** (Australia a founding member). 2025 marked its **20th anniversary**.
- 19 members**: 11 ASEAN states + Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia & the USA. **Timor-Leste** joined after ASEAN accession on 26 Oct 2025.
- The **ASEAN Chair chairs the EAS**. **Philippines** is 2026 Chair (theme: ‘Navigating Our Future, Together’); Singapore chairs 2027, Thailand 2028.
- In 2024, EAS members held **~53% of world population** and **~60% of global GDP**.

WHY IN NEWS

In Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district, a sustainable cultivation model is bringing the prized medicinal herb **Kutki (Picrorhiza kurroa)** back from the brink of extinction while boosting the rural mountain economy.

- Decades of destructive **wild harvesting** — uprooting the whole plant — pushed Kutki onto the **IUCN Red List**. It is native to alpine & sub-alpine regions (**2,700–4,500 m**) of the Himalayas.
- Researchers at the **Himalayan Research Group (HRG)** — a DST Core Support Group under the Programme of Science for Equity Empowerment & Development (SEED) Division — developed an alternative: farmers now harvest only the plant's side '**stolons**', leaving the mother plant intact.
- A **stolon** is a creeping side-branch (stem) with nodes; roots are fibrous with **no medicinal content** — debunking the myth that the root is the drug. After drying, only stolons are collected, making the plantation perennial.
- Kutki is listed as **Endangered** on the IUCN Red List and, recognising the threat from international trade, is included in **Appendix II of CITES** — permitting trade only under regulated conditions with export permits.

Himachal farmers pioneer sustainable cultivation of endangered herb

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

In the higher reaches of the Himalayas, an agricultural initiative is helping bring one of the region's most prized medicinal plants back from the brink of extinction. Decades of destructive wild harvesting pushed *Picrorhiza kurroa*, known locally as Kutki, a herb used in medicinal formulations, onto the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. Now, a sustainable cultivation model adopted by farmers in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district is showing promising signs of conserving the species while boosting the rural mountain economy.

For years, harvesting Kutki, the high-value medicinal herb native to the alpine and sub-alpine regions (2,700-4,500 metres)

of the Himalayas, meant uprooting the plant entirely. Researchers at the Himalayan Research Group (HRG), a Department of Science and Technology Core Support Group under the Programme of Science for Equity Empowerment and Development Division, spent more than a decade developing and demonstrating an alternative method. Farmers now harvest only the plant's side "stolons", leaving the mother plant intact to continue producing for years, making the practice sustainable.

From wild to fields
What started as a research project under the Department of Biotechnology's Himalayan Bioresource Mission in 2022 has grown into the largest private land cultivation cluster of this endangered species,

now spanning nearly 180 farmers across Mandi.

"Our initiative is aimed at promoting sustainable cultivation of this high-value medicinal plant. This species was collected from the natural habitat in a destructive way of uprooting the plant. There was a myth that still exists that the root of this plant is a drug and sold in the market. But technically, it is a



Farmers at work in a Kutki field in Mandi district. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

side branch that creeps on the soil and possesses nodes. It is a type of stem and technically called a 'stolon'. Roots are fibrous and possess no medicinal contents. After drying, only these stolons are collected for marketing. HRG worked extensively to develop sustainable harvesting techniques and demonstrated successfully in the field that Kutki plantation

can be a perennial plantation for life," said Lal Singh, director, HRG, which is based in Shimla.

Kutki is currently categorised as an endangered species on the IUCN Red List, with several regional conservation assessments identifying it among the most threatened medicinal plants in the Himalayan region. Recognising the threat posed by international trade, it was included in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

This listing permits international trade only under regulated conditions and requires export permits to ensure that trade does not adversely affect wild populations.

For 70-year-old Narad Ram, a horticulturist from Manjha village in Mandi

district, scientific cultivation has become a welcome source of additional income.

'Beneficial method'
"I started planting Kutki in my farmland about 4-5 years ago. Before that, I used to collect it from the wild for self-consumption. It is disappearing from the forests due to multiple reasons. Now, I grow and harvest it in my field scientifically. Earlier, I used to pluck the whole plant, but now I harvest it with the 'stolon' method. They grow further from there. They keep expanding forward and roots sprout from them. This method is beneficial. I have been selling it through HRG and earning around ₹15,000-₹16,000 annually by producing about 5-6 kg of dried herb," Mr. Ram told *The Hindu*.

'Himachal farmers pioneer sustainable cultivation of endangered herb' — *The Hindu*, Page 4 (GS 3)

STATIC LINKAGE — CITES & IUCN

- CITES (1975)**: regulates international trade in endangered species. **Appendix I** — trade banned (species threatened with extinction); **Appendix II** — trade regulated via permits; **Appendix III** — protection at a member's request.
- IUCN Red List** categories: Least Concern → Near Threatened → Vulnerable → **Endangered** → Critically Endangered → Extinct in Wild → Extinct.
- The project began under the **Himalayan Bioresource Mission (2022)**, DBT; HRG is based in **Shimla**.

WHY IN NEWS

The 32 NATO heads of state/government met at the **Ankara Summit (7–8 July 2026)**, Türkiye, to review progress since the 2025 Hague Summit. The outcomes carry warning signals for India's defence-procurement strategy.

- **Four commitments from Ankara:** (i) reaffirming **ironclad** collective defence under **Article 5**; (ii) endorsing 'The Hague defence commitment' to spend **5% of GDP** on defence by 2035 (up from 2%); (iii) **unwavering support for Ukraine**; and (iv) building a high-tech, high-capacity, Europe-wide **Defence Industrial Base (DIB)**.
- Without revitalising Europe's defence industry, the 5% pledge only deepens dependence on the US. **Half** of Europe's defence spending (2022–24) came from the US (up from 28% in 2019–21); US Foreign Military Sales notifications to European buyers **quadrupled since 2008 to \$76 billion in 2024**.
- **Impact on India:** as NATO spends more, the arms bazaar shifts from a **buyers'** to a **sellers'** market. An early sign was GE Aerospace's delay in supplying **F-404 engines** for the **Tejas LCA** programme.
- **Way forward:** India must accelerate **self-reliance** in new-age domains — drones, AI, cyber & electronic warfare, resilient networks — rather than depend on overstretched suppliers with their own wars to fight.

Warning signals for India from NATO's Ankara summit

The heads of state or government of the 32 countries that are politico-military allies under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) met in Ankara, Türkiye, on July 7–8, 2026 for what is called the Ankara Summit. Their stated objective was to review progress made since the 2025 Summit in The Hague and to set out a roadmap for continuing delivery on NATO's key objectives.

The gathering in Ankara is being regarded as one of NATO's more successful summits, despite the attractive presence of United States President Donald Trump, who devoted most of his speaking time to extolling the putative success of U.S. strategy and talking up the superiority of American weapons systems.

A strategic road map

Four substantive commitments came out of Ankara. First, the 32 NATO allies — too often divided by divergent objectives and capacities — agreed on their 'ironclad commitment to (their) collective defence under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, and to the transatlantic bond'; second, the unanimous endorsement of 'The Hague defence commitment', in which all NATO members undertook last year to allocate at least five per cent of their respective Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) on defence by 2035 — an unprecedented hike over the two per cent spending pledge that existed earlier. Third, NATO declared its 'unwavering support for Ukraine in defending its freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity', and fourth, the alliance partners vowed to build a high technology, high capacity, Europe-wide defence industrial base (DIB) — the term for the network of firms, factories, laboratories and skilled workers needed to build and sustain a country's military power.

The focus in Ankara was overwhelmingly on implementation — turning political commitments into military capability through investment, industrial capacity and innovation.



Ajai Shukla
Former Indian Army officer (colonel), who now analyses issues and events relating to defence

Europe's defence revival and commitments may create new challenges for India's defence needs

Russia accuses the U.S. and European democracies of unbridled expansionism, through NATO's progressive incorporation of East and Central European countries. These include Poland, Romania, the Baltic states, and former Soviet republics that Moscow has historically regarded as lying within its sphere of influence. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was driven in part by the fear that Kyiv was inching towards joining the Atlantic alliance, a step that would have increased NATO's numbers from just 12 countries at its founding in 1949 to 31 now. The Russian invasion effectively blocked Ukraine, but spooked historically neutral Finland and Sweden into abandoning nonalignment and becoming NATO's 31st and 32nd members.

NATO's transformations

NATO, however, sees itself not as expansionist, but as merely adapting to Europe's changing strategic landscape. In 1990–91, with the relatively peaceful ending of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, NATO shifted its focus to out of area operations in theatres such as the Balkans. After the 9/11 strikes in 2001 on the World Trade Center towers, NATO made another strategic shift, joining the Global War on Terror. Now, with Russia and China joining hands in a new era of superpower confrontation, NATO is adapting once again.

It was evident from the discussions at the Ankara Summit that Europe has prioritised the revitalisation of its DIB. The European defence industry was struggling to scale up production even before the five per cent defence spending pledge at The Hague. European defence industry giants, MBDA and Rheinmetall, have warned of shortages in ammunition production.

Operation Epic Fury, the U.S.-Israel bombing campaign against Iran, illustrates the inevitability of weapons and ammunition shortages when Asian allies' demands for U.S. weaponry compete with ongoing European needs. The U.S. has fired

more than 850 Tomahawk cruise missiles at Iran during this campaign. At the current production rate of 85 per year, replacing these would take a decade.

Many NATO members have capable defence industrial bases, but there is little coordination of alliance-wide priorities. The resulting strategic mismatch has been found during the Ukraine war to cluster in the critical categories of air defence missiles and interceptors, precision guided munitions, and artillery rockets. While the U.S. decision to allow Ukraine to produce Patriot air defence systems under licence is a strong signal of support to Ukraine, more needs to be done.

Without a major revitalisation of Europe's defence industry, NATO's five per cent pledge will only deepen its dependency on the U.S. Half of Europe's defence spending between 2022–2024, came from the U.S., up from 28% in 2019–2021. Foreign Military Sales notifications to the U.S. Congress for European customers have quadrupled since 2008 to \$76 billion in 2024.

Need for self-reliance

For the world's big arms buyers and especially for India, this spike in European demand is bad news. As NATO spends more, the international arms bazaar is shifting inexorably from a buyers' market to a sellers' market. The first sign of this was the delay by U.S. firm General Electric Aerospace in supplying India with F-404 fighter jet engines, which are critically needed for the Indian Air Force's Tejas light combat aircraft programme.

Looking ahead, as India's defence increasingly relies on new-age defence technologies and weaponry, such as drones, artificial intelligence, cyber and electronic warfare and resilient networks, it will become critical for its defence industry to achieve self-reliance in these technology realms, rather than relying on overstretched suppliers who have their own battles to fight.

'Warning signals for India from NATO's Ankara summit' — The Hindu, Page 8 (GS 2)

NATO — STATIC FACTS

- Political-military alliance formed **1949** by 12 Euro-Atlantic countries after WWII. HQ: **Brussels**; Allied Command Operations HQ near **Mons**, Belgium.
- Article 5** enshrines collective defence — an attack on one is an attack on all.
- Finland (2023)** and **Sweden (2024)** joined, taking NATO to **32 members** by 2026.
- EU members NOT in NATO: **Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, Malta**.

NATO+ & WARSAW PACT

- NATO Plus** = NATO + 5 (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel, South Korea) for global defence cooperation.
- Warsaw Pact (1955)**: USSR-led collective-defence treaty with 7 states to counter NATO; **abolished 1991**. All 7 are now NATO members.
- Founding 12: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, UK, USA.

6

Index of Core Industries — New 2022-23 Series

GS 3

ECONOMY

PRELIMS

WHY IN NEWS

The **Index of Core Industries (ICI)** has been updated to a new base year **2022-23**, expanding from eight to nine sectors with the inclusion of **Iron Ore** — making it more representative of the economy.

- Released by the **Office of Economic Adviser (OEA), DPIIT**, Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The 2022-23 series replaces the 2011-12 series and applies retrospectively from **April 2023**, with a back-series for historical comparison.
- Ninth sector added: Iron Ore**, recognising its extensive use in steel manufacturing. The ICI now covers Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement, Electricity & Iron Ore.
- Methodology fixes**: Steel now uses **Gross Production** data (aligned with revised IIP); to remove double-counting only **Raw Coal** is retained (Coal Middling & Washed Coal excluded); weights re-derived from IIP (base 2022-23), normalised to 100.
- June 2026 performance**: a five-month-high growth of **5%**, suggesting industry is shrugging off the West Asia slump — though iron ore (+43.9%) and electricity (+9.8%) partly reflect a low base effect. Crude oil & natural gas kept contracting.

Core upgrade

The updated Index of Core Industries rounds out economic data upgrades

The Index of Core Industries (ICI) has finally joined the country's other economic metrics in becoming up-to-date and representative of the economy. The other metrics such as the national accounts, Consumer Price Index (CPI), Wholesale Price Index (WPI), and the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) were updated earlier this year, although even those were after considerable delays. The ICI has now joined their ranks with the June data being based on a new series with an updated base year, an additional sector being covered, and revised weights and methodologies. This is a welcome upgrade. The performance of these core industries is a vital barometer of the state of the economy. In the new series, the previous eight sectors have become nine, with the vital inclusion of the iron ore sector. Improvements have also been made to how the steel and coal sectors are measured in order to remove the previous double-counting that was taking place. The addition of a sector would naturally change the distribution of weights of the sectors in the index, but the final weights also reflect a broader shift in economic activity. The coal and natural gas sectors have seen their weights nearly halve to about 5.6% and 3.8%, respectively. On the other hand, the electricity sector now makes up more than 30% of the index from less than 20% in the previous se-

tricity sector now makes up more than 30% of the index from less than 20% in the previous series. All of this perhaps reflects the rising share of renewables in electricity generation, even as demand for electricity itself surges.

The performance of the index in June 2026, with a five-month-high growth of 5%, would suggest that Indian industry is shrugging off the slump induced by the West Asia crisis. However, two of the strong growth numbers – iron ore by 43.9% and electricity by 9.8% – were due to a statistical base effect since both sectors had contracted in June last year. It remains to be seen whether the numbers will remain this positive once that base effect wears off in the months ahead. The new series highlights some of the systemic issues that the old series did, such as the persistent contraction of the crude oil and natural gas sectors. They have contracted continuously for 18 and 24 months, respectively. If India does not have these resources, that is one thing. But if it has them and still is not able to extract them economically, then that is a serious shortcoming. The update of the ICI and the recent upgrade of the WPI would have been a good time for a broader statistical reorganisation. With the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation handling the CPI and the IIP, it only makes sense for the WPI and ICI to move to it from their current home in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. That change can still be made.

'Core upgrade' editorial — The Hindu, Page 8 (GS 3)

INDEX OF CORE INDUSTRIES — WEIGHTS (BASE YEAR 2022-23)

#	Sector	Weight (%)
1	Coal	5.596
2	Natural Gas	3.841
3	Crude Oil	7.430
4	Refinery Products	22.572
5	Fertilizers (lowest)	2.731
6	Steel	17.584
7	Cement	4.410
8	Electricity (highest)	30.932
9	Iron Ore (newly added)	4.905
Overall Index		100.000

The rising weight of **electricity** (from <20% earlier) reflects the growing share of renewables and surging power demand.

WHY IN NEWS

The decision by Yemen's **Ansar Allah (Houthis)** to blockade Saudi Arabia signals that the war on Iran has entered its most dangerous phase — with major implications for global energy chokepoints.

- The Houthis — a close Iranian ally controlling most of Yemen's population centres including **Sana'a** — had earlier held a fragile ceasefire with Saudi Arabia; on **20 July** they announced a blockade on ships using Saudi ports on the Red Sea.
- With crude exports through the **Strait of Hormuz** constrained by Iran's blockade, Saudi Arabia leaned on Red Sea ports, especially **Yanbu**. Tankers from Yanbu to Asia must pass the **Bab-el-Mandeb Strait** (linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden & Arabian Sea).
- The Houthis overlook much of Yemen's Red Sea coastline and can enforce a blockade of the **Bab-el-Mandeb chokepoint**, deepening the war's economic pain across the Persian Gulf and beyond (Jordan, Kuwait).
- **Editorial view:** repeating the same military tactics while expecting different results risks another unwinnable war; the argued way out is an **immediate ceasefire and return to diplomacy**.

Escalation trap

Donald Trump should change course if he wants to end the war with Iran

The decision by Yemen's Ansar Allah, better known as the Houthis, to impose a blockade on Saudi Arabia signals that the war on Iran has entered its most dangerous phase. The Houthis, a close Iranian ally, had avoided direct involvement due to a fragile but functional ceasefire with Saudi Arabia, despite their controlling most of Yemen's population centres, including capital Sana'a. That ceasefire effectively fell apart on July 13 when an airport in Sana'a was attacked by forces of "Yemen's internationally recognised government". Based in Saudi Arabia, this government maintains loyal forces inside Yemen, though the Houthis remain the country's most powerful and influential political and military force. Blaming Riyadh for the attack, the Houthis announced on July 20 a blockade on ships using Saudi ports on the Red Sea. Saudi Arabia, whose crude and other exports through the Strait of Hormuz have been severely constrained by Iran's blockade, has increased its reliance on Red Sea ports, especially Yanbu. Tankers from Yanbu to Asian markets must pass through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea. The Houthis control much of Yemen's Red Sea coastline overlooking the Bab el-Mandeb and can enforce a blockade of the chokepoint.

When Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz after

the U.S.-Israel war began on February 28, all Persian Gulf states struggled to sustain their exports. Saudi Arabia, however, cushioned the impact by using its East-West Pipeline, which links its eastern oilfields to the Red Sea export terminals. If the Houthis enforce a total blockade on the kingdom, Riyadh could face far deeper economic disruption. This, coupled with Iran's attacks on Kuwait's desalination plants and power grid — after U.S. strikes on Iranian civilian infrastructure — paints a grim picture of the war and its regional consequences. If the first phase of Iran's counter-attack targeted the Persian Gulf monarchies, the second has expanded to include Jordan, which hosts two major U.S. military bases. Now, with the Houthi blockade, the war's economic pain is set to deepen further. U.S. President Donald Trump had an opportunity to extricate himself from the conflict when he signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran on June 17. But by returning to war over disputes surrounding control of the Strait of Hormuz, Mr. Trump has not only squandered the opportunity but has also raised the risk of dragging the U.S. into yet another forever, unwinnable war. At this point, he is pursuing the same military tactics against Iran repeatedly, expecting different results. If Mr. Trump wants a way out, he should change course, push for an immediate ceasefire and return to diplomacy.



West Asia chokepoints — Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Suez & SUMED

'Escalation trap' editorial — The Hindu, Page 8 (GS 2)

STATIC LINKAGE — KEY CHOKPOINTS

- **Strait of Hormuz:** between Iran & Oman (Musandam); connects Persian Gulf to Gulf of Oman — world's most critical oil chokepoint.
- **Bab-el-Mandeb:** between Yemen and Djibouti/Eritrea; links Red Sea to Gulf of Aden — gateway to the Suez route.
- **Suez Canal & SUMED Pipeline (Egypt):** connect the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, bypassing the Cape of Good Hope.
- **Bordering the Red Sea:** Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Yemen (and Israel/Jordan via Gulf of Aqaba).

ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Mains Practice Questions

Q1 **GS 2****10 Marks · 150 Words**

“Scholarship-plus-hostel umbrella schemes such as PM-YASASVI address both financial and geographical barriers to education.” Examine how such convergence models advance social justice for backward classes.

“PM-YASASVI जैसी छात्रवृत्ति-सह-छात्रावास अम्ब्रेला योजनाएँ शिक्षा में वित्तीय और भौगोलिक दोनों बाधाओं को संबोधित करती हैं।” समीक्षा कीजिए।

Approach: Define the umbrella structure → five sub-schemes → how income cap + non-creamy-layer target the neediest → hostels solve geography → 5% PwD reservation → note gaps (test dependence, awareness) and conclude on equity.

Q2 **GS 2****10 Marks · 150 Words**

Digital public infrastructure is transforming the governance of religious endowments in India. Analyse the objectives and challenges of the UMEED Central Portal for Waqf property management.

भारत में डिजिटल सार्वजनिक अवसंरचना, धार्मिक न्यासों के शासन को बदल रही है। वक्फ संपत्ति प्रबंधन हेतु UMEED पोर्टल के उद्देश्यों और चुनौतियों का विश्लेषण कीजिए।

Approach: Objectives: single lifecycle record, geolocation, transparency, dispute resolution via Tribunal → data (6.17 lakh validated) → challenges: rejections, digital literacy, federal data quality, contested provisions → balanced conclusion.

Q3 **GS 2****15 Marks · 250 Words**

“As NATO’s defence spending surges, the global arms market is shifting from a buyers’ to a sellers’ market.” Discuss the implications of this shift for India’s quest for defence self-reliance.

“जैसे-जैसे NATO का रक्षा व्यय बढ़ता है, वैश्विक हथियार बाजार क्रेताओं से विक्रेताओं की ओर स्थानांतरित हो रहा है।” भारत की रक्षा आत्मनिर्भरता के लिए इसके निहितार्थों की चर्चा कीजिए।

Approach: Context: Ankara 5% pledge & DIB → demand crowding-out, longer delivery timelines (F-404/Tejas) → pricing & leverage risks → opportunity for indigenisation: iDEX, drones, AI, cyber, DPSU-private synergy → conclude on strategic autonomy.

PRELIMS 2027 · FACT REVISION

Prelims Practice — 10 MCQs

Q1. Consider the following about the PM-YASASVI scheme:

1. It is implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
2. It is open to OBC, EBC and Denotified/Nomadic/Semi-Nomadic Tribes.
3. The YASASVI Entrance Test is conducted by the UGC.

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q2. The UMEED Central Portal-2025 is associated with the management of:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (a) Tribal forest-rights records | (b) Waqf properties |
| (c) Minority scholarship disbursal | (d) Agricultural land titles |

Q3. With reference to Parliamentary Questions, which pair is correctly matched?

- | | |
|--|--|
| (a) Starred Question — written reply, white paper | (b) Unstarred Question — oral reply, green paper |
| (c) Short-Notice Question — oral reply, light-pink paper | (d) Private Member Question — asterisk-marked |

Q4. Consider the following about the East Asia Summit (EAS):

1. It was established in 2005 as an ASEAN-led initiative.
2. Timor-Leste became a member in 2025.
3. The ASEAN Chair also chairs the EAS.

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

Q5. Picrorhiza kurroa (Kutki), in news recently, is best described as a:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| (a) Marine algae used in cosmetics | (b) High-altitude Himalayan medicinal herb |
| (c) Genetically modified food crop | (d) Freshwater invasive weed |

Q6. The medicinal herb Kutki is listed under which appendix of CITES?

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| (a) Appendix I | (b) Appendix II |
| (c) Appendix III | (d) Not listed under CITES |

Q7. ‘The Hague defence commitment’, reaffirmed at the 2026 NATO Ankara Summit, refers to members’ pledge to spend, by 2035, at least:

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| (a) 2% of GDP on defence | (b) 3.5% of GDP on defence |
| (c) 5% of GDP on defence | (d) 10% of GDP on defence |

Q8. Consider the following about NATO:

1. Its headquarters is located in Brussels, Belgium.
2. Finland and Sweden joined NATO in 2023 and 2024 respectively.
3. Ireland and Austria are members of NATO.

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

Q9. In the revised Index of Core Industries (base 2022-23), which sector was newly added and which carries the highest weight, respectively?

- (a) Cement; Steel (b) Iron Ore; Electricity
(c) Natural Gas; Refinery Products (d) Iron Ore; Steel

Q10. The Bab-el-Mandeb Strait connects the Red Sea to the:

- (a) Persian Gulf (b) Mediterranean Sea
(c) Gulf of Aden (d) Caspian Sea

ANSWER KEY & EXPLANATIONS

- 1 — (c) 2 — (b) 3 — (c) 4 — (d) 5 — (b) 6 — (b) 7 — (c) 8 — (a)
9 — (b) 10 — (c)

Q1 (c): Statements 1 & 2 correct; the YASASVI Entrance Test is conducted by the **NTA**, not UGC.

Q2 (b): UMEED = Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency & Development — a statutory portal for Waqf properties.

Q3 (c): Short-Notice = oral, light-pink paper. Starred = oral/green/asterisk; Unstarred = written/white.

Q4 (d): All three are correct — EAS (2005, ASEAN-led), Timor-Leste joined 2025, ASEAN Chair chairs EAS.

Q5 (b): Kutki is a high-value alpine/sub-alpine Himalayan medicinal herb (2,700–4,500 m).

Q6 (b): It is included in **CITES Appendix II** — trade permitted only under regulated conditions with export permits.

Q7 (c): The Hague commitment targets **5% of GDP** on defence by 2035, up from the earlier 2% pledge.

Q8 (a): Statements 1 & 2 correct. Ireland and Austria are EU members but **not** in NATO.

Q9 (b): **Iron Ore** was newly added (9th sector); **Electricity** has the highest weight (30.93%).

Q10 (c): Bab-el-Mandeb links the Red Sea to the **Gulf of Aden** (and onward to the Arabian Sea).