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05 AUGUST 2026

Digital Arrest Scams

Glaw Lake · 101st Ramsar Site

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NATO's New Era

COMPILED BY

Sapna Chauhan

10 MCQs · 2 Mains Questions · GS Paper 2 & GS Paper 3

Why in news: The Supreme Court passed a detailed order directing the Centre, States, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and telecom authorities to prepare **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** to curb "digital arrest" scams.

- The Court directed them to **operationalise grievance-redress mechanisms** for victims, initiate criminal action through **zero-FIRs** against cyber fraudsters, and restore the monetary losses of the defrauded in a **time-bound manner**.
- It relied on a status report by the **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Complaints on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal against digital arrests fell sharply — **1,23,672 (2024)** → **58,249 (2025)** → **16,377** (up to 30 June 2026).
- Terming the statistics "certainly encouraging", the Court still stressed that continued **monitoring** of the situation is essential.

SC directs Centre to frame SOPs to curb 'digital arrest' scams

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday passed a detailed order directing the Centre, States, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and telecom authorities to prepare standard operating procedures (SOPs) to curb "digital arrest" scams.

The court directed them to operationalise mechanisms to redress grievances of victims, initiate criminal action through zero first information reports (FIRs) against cyber fraudsters, and restore the monetary losses of those defrauded in a time-bound manner.

The court referred to a status report submitted by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which stated that the complaints received on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal against digital arrests have

Complaints against digital arrests dipped from 1,23,672 in 2024 to 58,249 in 2025, and stood at 16,377 for the period ending June 30, as per the Centre's report to the court

sharply reduced from 1,23,672 in 2024 to 58,249 in 2025, and stood at 16,377 for the period ending June 30, 2026.

However, the court said though the statistics were "certainly encouraging", it was still essential to monitor the situation.

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★ Value Addition — Understanding the Threat

- **Digital arrest:** a scam where fraudsters impersonate police / CBI / ED / customs over video calls, falsely claim the victim is under "arrest", and extort money by inducing fear and isolation.
- **Zero-FIR:** an FIR that can be registered at *any* police station irrespective of jurisdiction, later transferred to the competent station — ensuring no delay in cyber-crime cases.
- **I4C** (est. 2020, MHA) runs the portal *cybercrime.gov.in* and the citizen helpline **1930** for financial cyber-fraud reporting.



Glaw Lake (Glow Lake), Lohit District, Arunachal Pradesh

Why in news: The Union Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change designated **Glaw Lake (Glow Lake)** in Arunachal Pradesh as India's **101st Ramsar Site** — the State's **first-ever** Ramsar Site, taking India past the 100-mark.

- ◆ A high-altitude, pristine natural **freshwater lake** in the Eastern Himalayas — ~8 sq km, at ~1,168 m elevation, and the primary source of the perennial **Kamlang River**.
- ◆ Located in **Lohit District** (near Wakro), deep inside the **Kamlang Tiger Reserve & Wildlife Sanctuary** (bounded by the Lang River to the north and Namdapha National Park to the south).
- ◆ Surrounded by the traditional territories of the **Miju, Digaro and Idu Mishmi** tribal communities.
- ◆ Rare eco-zone supporting all **four big cats** — Bengal Tiger, Indian Leopard, Clouded Leopard, Snow Leopard — plus Hoolock Gibbon, Slow Loris, Capped Langur, Mishmi Takin and Red Panda; 150+ tree species and 49 wild orchid species.

★ Value Addition — Ramsar Convention

- ◆ An intergovernmental treaty on wetlands, signed at **Ramsar, Iran (1971)**; in force since 1975. India became a party in **1982**.
- ◆ The **Montreux Record** lists Ramsar sites where ecological character is threatened by human interference (India: Keoladeo & Loktak).
- ◆ India now has the **largest network of Ramsar Sites in Asia**, third largest in the world.

Why in news: The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) — the WHO's cancer research agency — classified three widely prescribed medicines as “**carcinogenic to humans**” (Group 1).

- ◆ **Hydrochlorothiazide** (hypertension) → sufficient evidence for squamous cell skin carcinoma & lip cancer.
- ◆ **Voriconazole** (fungal infections) → squamous cell skin carcinoma in transplant recipients on prolonged therapy (phototoxic mechanism).
- ◆ **Tacrolimus** (immunosuppressant preventing transplant rejection) → non-Hodgkin lymphoma & post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder.
- ◆ All three are on the **WHO Model List of Essential Medicines**. The assessment (Vol. 137, IARC Monographs) expands on conclusions first published in *The Lancet Oncology* (Nov 2024).
- ◆ Experts clarified the classification is a **hazard identification** — patients must not discontinue treatment without consulting doctors. Concern is acute in India given irrational prescribing and OTC availability.

3 widely used medicines classified as carcinogenic by WHO research agency

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

Three widely prescribed medicines used to treat high blood pressure, fungal infections, and organ transplant rejection have been classified as “carcinogenic to humans” (Group 1) by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the World Health Organization (WHO)'s cancer research agency.

Experts said the classification is a hazard identification and should not prompt patients to discontinue treatment without consulting their doctors.

The three medicines — hydrochlorothiazide (hypertension), voriconazole (fungal infections), and tacrolimus (an immunosuppressant preventing transplant rejection) — are on the WHO Model List of Es-

sential Medicines, prescribed to millions worldwide. The assessment, published as Volume 137 of the IARC Monographs, expands on conclusions first released in *The Lancet Oncology* in November 2024.

There is sufficient evidence that hydrochlorothiazide causes squamous cell skin carcinoma and lip cancer, IARC said.

Voriconazole was similarly linked to squamous cell skin carcinoma in transplant recipients on prolonged therapy, through the same phototoxic mechanism. Tacrolimus was linked to non-Hodgkin lymphoma and post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder, with limited evidence for leukaemia and skin carcinoma.

Kabir Sardana, Director, Professor and Head of the Department, Department

of Dermatology, at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Medical Sciences and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, said: “Hydrochlorothiazide has long been recognised as carrying a risk, especially in rural areas, the Northeast, hilly and coastal regions, and among outdoor workers.

Voriconazole is another concern, not only because of its known association with skin cancer risk, but also because it is frequently prescribed without labelled indications, including for fungal infections caused by *Trichophyton indotineae*. We cannot ignore these warnings in a country where irrational prescribing, over-the-counter availability, and poor adherence to ethical prescribing and dispensing practices remain significant challenges.”

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★ Value Addition — About IARC

- ◆ Created in **1965** by a World Health Assembly resolution as the specialised cancer agency of the **WHO**; objective — promote international collaboration in cancer research.
- ◆ **27 member countries** (India is a member); headquartered at **Lyon, France**.
- ◆ IARC groups: **Group 1** (carcinogenic), 2A (probably), 2B (possibly), 3 (not classifiable).

‘Six-in-one’ (hexavalent) vaccine may boost the immunisation programme

Why in news: A study by the Union Health Ministry with the George Institute for Global Health India, the Gates Foundation, Gavi and John Snow India found that introducing the **hexavalent (six-in-one) vaccine** into India's **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)** could improve efficiency.

- ◆ The hexavalent vaccine protects infants against six diseases in a single injection — **diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), Hepatitis B, polio, and Hib** (*Haemophilus influenzae*).

type b).

- ◆ It eases the workload of frontline health workers, lowers **cold-chain** requirements, and saves caregivers' time.



'Six-in-one vaccine may boost immunisation programme'

Introducing the hexavalent (six-in-one) vaccine into India's Universal Immunisation Programme could improve the efficiency of childhood immunisation programme, according to a study conducted by the Union Health Ministry along with the George Institute for Global Health India; the Gates Foundation; Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; and John Snow India Private Limited. A hexavalent vaccine is a combination that protects infants against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), Hepatitis B, polio, and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) in a single injection. It eases the workload of frontline health workers, lowers cold-chain requirements, and saves caregivers' time.

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★ **Value Addition — Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)**

- ◆ Flagship of the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**; launched as the **Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) in 1978**, expanded & renamed **UIP in 1985**.
- ◆ One of the world's largest — reaches **~2.9 cr pregnant women** and **2.54 cr newborns** free every year; covers **12 vaccine-preventable diseases** (JE vaccine only in endemic districts).
- ◆ Integrated with CSSM (1992), RCH (1997) and NRHM (2005). **Mission Indradhanush** (Dec 2014) targets 90%+ full immunisation; **Intensified MI** (2017) focuses on children under two & pregnant women in urban / low-coverage areas.

	Disease	Disease Description
1	Tuberculosis (severe childhood form)	Bacterial infection affecting the lungs; can spread to the brain and multiple organs
2	Diphtheria	Bacterial infection affecting the throat; can damage the heart and nerves
3	Pertussis (Whooping Cough)	Highly contagious cough illness, dangerous for infants
4	Tetanus	Bacterial infection from contaminated wounds causing muscle stiffness
5	Polio	Viral infection attacking the nervous system; can cause permanent paralysis or death
6	Measles	Highly contagious viral disease, causes fever and rash
7	Rubella	Mild viral illness with fever & rash; spreads through coughing and sneezing
8	Hepatitis B	Viral infection of the liver that can become chronic and cause liver damage
9	Meningitis & Pneumonia (Hib)	Meningitis — infection and inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord
10	Rotavirus Diarrhoea	Viral infection causing severe diarrhoea in infants
11	Pneumococcal Pneumonia	Bacterial lung infection causing fever and breathing difficulty
12	Japanese Encephalitis	Mosquito-borne viral disease-causing brain inflammation

The 12 vaccine-preventable diseases covered under UIP

05

Indian-flagged ship sinks after attack in the Red Sea; 14 rescued

GS PAPER 2

International Relations · India & West Asia · Maritime Security

Why in news: The Indian-flagged merchant vessel **MSV Faize Noore Oliya** sank off the coast of Yemen (4 Aug) after being hit by a projectile in the Red Sea. All **14 crew (13 Indians)** were rescued by the Yemeni Coast Guard and brought to the **Port of Mokha**.

- ◆ New Delhi condemned the “unprovoked attack” and said the targeting of commercial shipping in the region must stop.
- ◆ The Embassy in Riyadh is coordinating with Yemeni authorities; Shipping Minister **Sarbananda Sonowal** directed the DG (Shipping) / DGMA to secure Indian seafarers.
- ◆ India called for **free and unimpeded navigation** through international waterways, consistent with international law.

Indian-flagged ship sinks after attack in Red Sea; 14 rescued

13 Indian nationals among those rescued; New Delhi strongly condemns attack, says the targeting of commercial shipping in the region must end

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

An Indian-flagged merchant vessel sank off the coast of Yemen on Tuesday after being hit by a projectile, the External Affairs Ministry said. All 14 crew members, including 13 Indians, were rescued.

Union Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said the vessel was hit by a projectile near Yemeni waters, causing the vessel to capsize and sink.

New Delhi condemned the attack and said targeting of commercial shipping in the region must stop.

“We condemn the attack on the Indian-flagged commercial vessel, *MSV Faize Noore Oliya* that sank in the Red Sea, off the coast of Yemen on August 4,” the Ministry said.

“Our Embassy in Riyadh is closely monitoring the situation and proactively coordinating with the Yemeni authorities for the safety and security of the

The safety of our people is our supreme priority; I am relieved to inform that all 14 seafarers (including 13 Indians) have been safely rescued by the Yemeni Coast Guard and brought to the port of Mokha

SARBANANDA SONOWAL
Union Shipping Minister



The Ministry thanked the Yemeni authorities for their support in rescuing the Indians.

“The continuing incidents of attacks on commercial shipping in the region are deeply worrisome,” it said.

“The targeting of commercial shipping in the region must end, and free and unimpeded navigation and commerce through the international waterways in the region, in keeping with international law, must be restored at the earliest,” the Ministry said in a statement.

In a social media post,

strongly condemned the “unprovoked attack” on the ship.

“The safety of our people is our supreme priority; I am relieved to inform that ALL 14 seafarers (including 13 Indians) have been safely rescued by the Yemeni Coast Guard and brought to the Port of Mokha,” he added.

Mr. Sonowal said he had instructed the Director General Maritime Administration (DGMA) to take immediate steps in coordination with all agencies to ensure the security of Indian seafarers in the region and provide all necessary

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The Red Sea, Bab-el-Mandeb strait and the Gulf of Aden

★ Value Addition — Red Sea Geography & Chokepoints

- ◆ The **Bab-el-Mandeb** strait connects the Red Sea to the **Gulf of Aden** & Arabian Sea; the **Suez Canal** lies at its northern end — together a critical global trade artery.
- ◆ Bordering states: Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Repeated attacks on shipping since 2023 have disrupted this route, raising freight and insurance costs.

06

FSSAI bans '100% pure' Dabur products for misleading claims

GS PAPER 2

Governance · Statutory Regulators · Consumer Protection

Why in news: The **FSSAI** ordered Dabur India Ltd. to withdraw products carrying “misleading 100% claims” — honey, apple cider vinegar, virgin coconut oil, sesame oil, cow ghee, coconut water and coconut milk.

- ◆ Claims such as “**100% Natural / Pure / Purity Guaranteed / Organic / Tender**” contravene the **FSS (Advertising & Claims) Regulations, 2018** — being ambiguous, unverifiable and likely to mislead consumers.
- ◆ Two products displayed the **Jaivik Bharat Logo** without valid FSSAI organic endorsement, violating the **FSS (Organic Foods) Regulations, 2017**.
- ◆ The regulator directed an immediate halt of sale and an **Action Taken Report (ATR) within 15 days**; Dabur's shares fell ~4%.

FSSAI bans '100% pure' Dabur products, firm's share falls 4%

Labels such as '100% pure, natural, organic and tender' are in contravention of food safety regulations, as they are ambiguous, unverifiable and likely to mislead consumers, says regulator

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

In a major clamp down on companies making false and misleading claims, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued an order directing FMCG major Dabur India Ltd. to withdraw products carrying 'misleading 100% claims'.

The regulator issued notice to the company to withdraw such products from the market with immediate effect and report the action taken, in 15 days.

The order is against the company's food products which include honey, apple cider vinegar, virgin coconut oil, sesame oil, cow ghee, coconut water, and coconut milk.

Stating that several critical non-compliances had been observed, FSSAI said, “Food products being sold on the company's website were found carrying misleading “100%” claims such as “100% Natural”, “100% Pure”, “100% Purity Guaranteed”, “100% Organic” and “100% Tender”.

“The use of the 100% claims are in contravention



Block list: The order is against Dabur products including honey, apple cider vinegar, virgin coconut oil, and cow ghee. FILE PHOTO

of the FSS (Advertising & Claims) Regulations, 2018, as they are ambiguous, unverifiable and likely to mislead consumers,” the regulator said on X.

It said Dabur Himalayan Organic Apple Cider Vinegar and Dabur Organic Honey were found displaying the Jaivik Bharat Logo without valid FSSAI organic endorsement, in contravention of the FSS (Organic Foods) Regulations, 2017.

“Dabur Hommade Coconut Milk was marketed with the claim “100% Purity”. Such a claim is not permissible for compound foods under the FSS (Advertising & Claims) Regulations, 2018, FSSAI said.

Despite an earlier notice directing discontinuation of misleading “100%”

claims, no satisfactory corrective action was taken by the company, the FSSAI stated. The regulator directed Dabur India to immediately halt sale of the food products identified in the notice and all other food products carrying misleading “100%” claims, and to submit an action taken report (ATR) within 15 days.

Following reports of the action, the company's shares fell by about 4% to ₹408.25 on the BSE. In a filing with stock exchanges, Dabur India said, “The company believes that the declaration on our product labels comply with the prevailing legal and regulatory framework and are consistent with long-standing industry practices.” “Dabur

stands by the purity and quality of its products and has never made any misleading claims,” it stated.

The company said it was exploring options in relation to the prohibitory order. “However, as a good corporate citizen, Dabur had already initiated transitioning of the product labels as mentioned in the FSSAI letter to new labels/advertisements without the 100% claim,” it said.

'In transition'

“Most product labels/advertisements/website as mentioned in aforesaid order, have either already transitioned or are in the process of transition. The company is responding accordingly to FSSAI and will continue to engage constructively with them to resolve the matter,” it added.

“We reiterate that Dabur stands by the purity and highest standards of quality of its products and does not make any misleading claims,” it emphasised.

The company said the order would have limited impact on its business operations, financial position or performance and be confined to the food products under objection.

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★ Value Addition — About FSSAI

- ◆ An autonomous **statutory body** under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**; administered by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**; HQ at Delhi.
- ◆ Established 2008 (functional from 2011); it consolidated older laws such as the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954, Fruit Products Order 1955 and others — shifting to a single line of control with a focus on **self-compliance**.

Jammu and Kashmir — the elusive quest for Statehood

August 5 marks seven years since Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)'s special status (Article 370) was revoked by the Narendra Modi administration; a few days hence, August 9 will mark seven years of J&K's loss of Statehood. Both actions were accompanied by the most dubious lockdown in India's history. Thousands of troops were flown in, over 5,000 political leaders and cadre were detained, and curfew was imposed together with a communications blockade.

These were emergency measures, yet no emergency was either visible or declared. The Modi administration argued that its measures were temporary and would lead to a violence-free region in which economic growth would be unleashed. Instead, and predictably, violence has continued, as last year's terrorist attacks in Kashmir's Pahalgalam (April) and Delhi's Red Fort (November) attest; indeed, it has spread to areas that were relatively dormant, such as Poonch-Rajouri, and from there to adjoining districts of J&K.

Economically, the region continues to suffer. According to the J&K Economic Survey 2025-2026, the ratio of the region's per capita income to the national average is 76.6%, whereas it was 79.9% in 2013-14, a fall of 3.3 percentage points. Unemployment remains close to twice that of the national average; graduate unemployment is as high as 23.9%.

Lockdowns and summons

Kashmiri response to the Pahalgalam attack was a wholehearted rejection of violence, expressed in peace marches and candlelit demonstrations. It offered the Modi administration an opportunity for peacebuilding on the ground, beginning with the restoration of Statehood. Instead, the Union Home Ministry chose an even more heavy-handed security response. This year's Amarnath yatra is the most militarised in the history of J&K. Citizens are routinely charged under the draconian Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act on the flimsiest of grounds; mass summons are common — over 2,000 were called in for questioning after Constable Ashiq Hussain Qureshi was shot on July 22 this year — curfews are more often in place than not; and the Union Territory has had the highest number of Internet and communications shutdowns in the country since 2019.

At the time, few recognised how momentous



Radha Kumar

Former Member, Group of Interlocutors for Jammu and Kashmir, and the author of the book, 'The Republic Relearned: Renewing Indian Democracy, 1947-2024'

Seven years on, J&K still awaits restored Statehood and accountable governance

the Modi administration's actions were, not only in what they did but also in how they did it. Article 370 was hollowed out by executive fiat — a Governor who later said he was 'ordered' to sign by the Union Home Minister. Statehood was removed by legislative fiat, via a Parliament which did not even consider consulting J&K's people or political leaders. No Indian State had been stripped of its Statehood since Delhi lost its Statehood in 1956.

Together, the two actions comprised a breathtaking violation of India's constitutional principles and the basic structure of the Union. They should have been seen as the second major salvo against India's democracy — the first being the re-communalisation of the Indian polity through state-sanctioned attacks on Muslims and Christians — but instead they were hived off as specific to conflict-ridden Jammu and Kashmir.

The belief that draconian measures are justified in a conflict-ridden region is fundamentally flawed both morally and pragmatically, as India knows from its own colonial past. Morally, the argument that subjugation is a means towards a desirable end masks the point that subjugation is a repugnant end *per se*, never a means. Pragmatically, as India knows from its more recent past, subjugation only breeds disaffection which will likely express itself in violence when peaceful means of expression are disallowed.

Yet, the deployment of the argument has allowed the Modi administration to get away with direct rule for seven years. The Supreme Court of India let Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta parrot the argument for four years before weakly advising that Statehood be restored as soon as possible.

Three more years have passed since then, without the Court hearing petitions seeking a timeline for restoration. At no point did the Court question the Union on the utility of its measures on constitutionally moral, or even merely pragmatic, grounds.

Lieutenant-Governor holds power

The Constitution limited the imposition of emergency conditions to six months. Yet, in J&K, emergency conditions have not been lifted for seven years. Though the J&K High Court has repeatedly and increasingly lamented the misuse of draconian laws by the J&K police, its strictures do not appear to have led to reform. J&K held elections two years ago, but the elected

administration has few powers. It is the Lieutenant-Governor who controls the administration, the police and government prosecutors under the 2024 Transaction of Business Rules; he has now been granted emergency powers over telecommunications. As an appointee rather than an elected representative, the Lieutenant-Governor is not accountable to the people.

Accountability through democracy

Thanks to India's young, who so joyfully turned the derogatory 'cockroach' into an assertion of strength, accountability has acquired a salience that it had been stripped of over the past decade. Fortuitously, J&K's ruling National Conference party had already decided to renew a campaign for the restoration of Statehood that the Congress party had launched two years ago but persisted with only fitfully. Now the campaign for Statehood must couch itself in the name of accountability.

As the Constitution clearly recognised, an elected administration is the only way to provide for accountability. Though accountability needs guarantees by an independent legislature, oversight and autonomous institutions and a free media, these too require an elected administration to develop. At base, civil society acquires some space to push for reform under an elected administration, which it lacks under an appointed administration.

Over the past decade, J&K has acquired a number of ugly firsts. It was the first State to undergo wide use of the semi-lethal pellet guns in 2016. (Ironically, pellet guns were developed partly as a less lethal response to the stone-pelting agitation in 2010. Our Interlocutors report had criticised their induction.) It was the first State to lose its special status and its Statehood in 2019. It was the first State to undergo a communal delimitation in which Jammu's demography was altered by the creation of additional Hindu-majority constituencies, some of them with populations below 50,000, in 2022.

Is it not time for J&K to experience some positive firsts instead of suffering only ugly ones? After all, it was the first State to overcome communal gerrymandering when the 2024 elections yielded a majority for the pluralist National Conference-Congress alliance. It is only fitting that it also be the first State to regain the Statehood that has been withheld for so long.

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Why in news: August 5 marks seven years since J&K's special status (**Article 370**) was revoked; August 9 will mark seven years since J&K lost its **Statehood**.

- Both actions were accompanied by an unprecedented lockdown — thousands of troops, 5,000+ political leaders detained, curfew and a communications blockade.
- No Indian State had been stripped of its Statehood since **Delhi lost its Statehood in 1956**.
- The **Lieutenant-Governor holds power** — controlling administration, police and public order under the 2024 Transaction of Business Rules; the elected administration has limited powers.
- The author argues an **elected administration** is the only route to accountability — supported by an independent legislature, oversight institutions and a free media.

★ **Value Addition — Constitutional Backdrop**

- ◆ **J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019** split the State into two UTs — J&K (with legislature) and Ladakh (without).
- ◆ In **Dec 2023**, the Supreme Court upheld the abrogation of Article 370 and directed restoration of Statehood “at the earliest” and Assembly elections (held 2024).

08

Top Spot: India must upgrade sports infrastructure & train coaches

GS PAPER 3

Governance & Development · Sports Ecosystem · Khelo India

Top spot

India needs to upgrade infrastructure, train coaches

One of the biggest impediments to India's aspiration to bid for the 2036 Olympics is the lack of enough world-class performers. For India, a prospective host, targeting a prestigious top-10 finish is a humongous task. In the 21st century, the country achieved its best-ever result of 48th with seven medals at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and was 71st with six medals at Paris 2024. India needs to win approximately 30 to 40 medals, including gold in double digits, to be in the elite club. To chase this Olympic dream, the Union Cabinet has approved an allocation of ₹29,054 crore – an eight-fold increase – for the new phase of the Khelo India Scheme. The primary goal of this ambitious grassroots programme is to tap talent early for the 2036 Olympics. It aims to increase Khelo India centres, State and National centres of excellence and accredited academies from roughly one per district – more than 1,000 centres at present – to an average of two or three. Involving schools and clubs, encouraging talented children to compete in club-level events, upgrading facilities, and assimilating grassroots-coaches and technical officials are essential ingredients of the wholesome scheme.

A novel concept of upgrading the knowledge of local coaches by helping them overcome the language barrier posed by English, the formation of a National Coach Accreditation Board to standardise coaching and better utilisation of physical education teachers are expected to impart

standardise coaching and better utilisation of physical education teachers are expected to impart correct training at the basic level. In sync with the National Education Policy, the Khelo India Feeder Schools and Khelo India Utkrishta Vidyalaya initiatives are designed to integrate education and sports. The existing Khelo India Athletes programme, with 2,904 athletes, and the new Emerging Khelo India Athletes initiative aim to expand the talent pool to around 28,000. Talent identification, digitisation of the sports ecosystem to maintain data on every athlete, and a bottom-to-top communication channel are its key components. The overall outlay, including assistance to National Sports Federations, stands at a staggering ₹36,441 crore for 2026-31. However, the biggest challenge will be effective and transparent implementation of the scheme. Enabling talent to graduate to the highest level, already backed by the Target Olympic Podium Scheme, with an eye on the 2036 Olympics and beyond will be crucial. The 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad will be an immediate test. The other major hurdle for India's attempt to emerge as a sporting power is its dubious distinction as a doping hub. Strict anti-doping measures, promotion of a sports culture by maximising the scope of the Fit India Movement, and a focus on grassroots development must go hand-in-hand to achieve the desired results.

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Context: India's ambition to bid for the **2036 Olympics** and target a top-10 finish is constrained by a shortage of world-class performers.

- ◆ Best-ever showings: 48th at Tokyo 2021 (7 medals) and 71st at Paris 2024 (6 medals); India needs ~**30–40 medals** to enter the elite club.

- ◆ The Union Cabinet approved **₹29,054 crore** (an eight-fold increase) for the new phase of the **Khelo India Scheme**, aimed at tapping talent early.
- ◆ Plans: expand centres from ~1,000 to two-three per district; a **National Coach Accreditation Board** to standardise coaching; **Khelo India Feeder Schools** & Utkrishta Vidyalaya (aligned with NEP); athlete pool to grow from 2,904 to ~28,000; total outlay ~₹36,441 crore for 2026–31.
- ◆ Key hurdles: effective, transparent implementation, and India's image as a **doping hub**. The 2030 Commonwealth Games (Ahmedabad) will be an immediate test.

★ Value Addition

- ◆ Khelo India launched in **2018**; elite athletes are also supported by the **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)**, complemented by the **Fit India Movement** for grassroots sports culture.

NATO enters a new strategic era of transformation

For the first time since the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, Washington is asking Europe not merely to spend more on defence but also to assume primary responsibility for its own security. This marks a fundamental shift in the transatlantic compact and signals the emergence of a new phase in the Alliance's evolution. The question is no longer whether NATO will endure, but how it is adapting to a changing strategic landscape.

America's shift

The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (November 2025) maintained NATO as America's principal transatlantic alliance while signalling a significant shift in Washington's expectations of European allies, particularly regarding burden-sharing and collective defence responsibilities. It argued that the era of the U.S. serving as Europe's primary security guarantor was drawing to a close and that prosperous European allies must shoulder greater responsibility for defending their own continent. While endorsing NATO's commitment to increase defence spending to 5% of GDP as the new benchmark for burden sharing, the strategy envisaged the U.S. remaining the Alliance's strategic enabler, nuclear guarantor and political convener rather than its sole military backbone. The objective is a stronger, more self-reliant Europe that allows Washington to devote greater strategic attention to the Indo-Pacific.

This rebalancing is already evident. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, U.S. troop strength in Europe rose to around 1,00,000 personnel. Since then, Washington has gradually reversed that surge. During 2025-26, it withdrew around 5,000 troops from Germany, cancelled the planned deployment of 4,000 troops to Poland, and reduced Brigade Combat Teams in Europe from four to three, bringing the U.S. military presence in Europe down to approximately 75,000-80,000 troops – close to pre-Ukraine war levels. The 36th NATO Summit in Ankara in July 2026 reinforced this transition. While reaffirming the Alliance's commitment to Article 5, members pledged €70 billion in military assistance for Ukraine in 2026, committed to sustaining comparable support in 2027, endorsed European-led development of long-range



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NATO's European shift offers India new strategic and defence opportunities

precision strike capabilities and accelerated efforts to strengthen NATO's defence industrial base. The underlying message was unmistakable: Europe must assume greater responsibility for its conventional defence as the U.S. increasingly prioritises the Indo-Pacific.

Lord Ismay, NATO's first Secretary General, famously described the Alliance's original purpose as "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down". While that dictum captured the strategic logic of the Cold War, NATO today has entered a distinctly different phase that may be summed up as keeping Russia deterred, America engaged and Europe prepared.

NATO's evolution over time

The Alliance's evolution can be viewed in three phases. NATO 1.0 (1949-1991) relied overwhelmingly on American military and nuclear power to deter Soviet aggression and preserve transatlantic unity. NATO 2.0 (1991-2022) followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, expanding eastwards, incorporating former Warsaw Pact members and undertaking operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan. Yet, this period also witnessed declining European defence expenditure and growing dependence on the U.S. for intelligence, logistics, strategic mobility and high-end military capabilities, making burden sharing an increasingly contentious issue.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has ushered in NATO's third phase, a more balanced transatlantic partnership in which Europe assumes primary responsibility for conventional defence while the U.S. continues to provide strategic enablers such as nuclear deterrence, intelligence, long-range precision strike capabilities and global power projection. This is less a story of American disengagement than one of strategic redistribution.

The scale of Europe's response was evident at the 2025 Hague Summit, where NATO members committed to increasing core defence spending to at least 3.5 % of GDP by 2035, with progress to be reviewed in 2029. Germany has doubled defence expenditure since 2023 and aims to reach the same target by 2029 while rebuilding military capability to deter Russia. Moscow, meanwhile, has reorganised its western military

posture with new headquarters, formations and bases facing NATO.

The more difficult challenge, however, is not spending but replacing the American military ecosystem. Even as European armies become stronger, they continue to depend heavily on the U.S. for intelligence, surveillance, satellite support, command and control systems, strategic airlift, missile defence, long-range precision strike capabilities and, above all, the nuclear umbrella. Washington's reduction of rapid reaction assets, including bombers, fighter aircraft, air-refuelling tankers, warships, aircraft carriers and attack submarines, together with the deferred deployment of Tomahawk cruise missiles to Germany, illustrates the extent of that dependence. Europe's central dilemma is therefore not simply building larger armed forces but developing the integrated capabilities that have long underpinned NATO's effectiveness. As Poland's Foreign Minister recently observed, Europe does not need to match American military power; it simply needs to be stronger than Russia.

New Delhi and the rebalance

For India, NATO's transformation is less about Europe than about the redistribution of American strategic attention. A Europe capable of assuming greater responsibility for its own security would enable Washington to devote more diplomatic attention, military resources and strategic investments to the Indo-Pacific, reinforcing the regional balance amid China's growing assertiveness. At the same time, a more capable Europe could emerge as an important partner for India in defence manufacturing, advanced technologies, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, semiconductors and space.

New Delhi should therefore view these changes through the prism of strategic opportunity rather than alliance politics. Closer cooperation with both the U.S. and Europe can complement, not compromise, India's long-standing commitment to strategic autonomy. If navigated prudently, NATO's new strategic model can expand India's defence industrial partnerships, accelerate technological modernisation and strengthen its position as a leading power in an increasingly multipolar world.

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Why in news: For the first time since NATO's creation in 1949, Washington is asking Europe not merely to spend more on defence but to assume **primary responsibility for its own security** — a fundamental shift in the transatlantic compact.

- The US National Security Strategy (Nov 2025) keeps NATO central but sets a **5% of GDP** defence-spending benchmark, with the US as **strategic enabler and nuclear guarantor** rather than sole military backbone.
- The objective is a self-reliant Europe that frees Washington to devote greater attention to the **Indo-Pacific**.
- The **36th NATO Summit at Ankara (July 2026)** reaffirmed Article 5, pledged €70 billion for Ukraine in 2026, and endorsed European-led long-range precision-strike capability.
- **For India:** the redistribution of US attention to the Indo-Pacific reinforces the regional balance amid China's assertiveness; a more capable Europe could become a partner in defence

manufacturing, AI, cybersecurity, semiconductors and space — without compromising India's strategic autonomy.



★ **Value Addition — About NATO**

- ◆ Founded **1949** via the North Atlantic (Washington) Treaty; HQ at **Brussels, Belgium**; a political-military alliance of **32 countries**.
- ◆ Built on **collective defence (Article 5)** — an attack on one is an attack on all; Article 5 has been invoked **only once**, after the 9/11 attacks.
- ◆ 12 founding members; **Finland joined in 2023** and Sweden in 2024.

Prelims MCQs — 05 August 2026

1 Glaw Lake, recently designated as a Ramsar Site, is located in which of the following States?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| (a) Sikkim | (b) Assam |
| (c) Arunachal Pradesh | (d) Nagaland |

2 Consider the following statements regarding Glaw Lake:

1. It is India's 101st Ramsar Site and the first in its State.
2. It is a major source of the perennial Kamlang River.
3. It lies within the Kamlang Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary.

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

3 With reference to the Ramsar Convention, consider the following:

1. It was signed in 1971 at Ramsar, Iran.
2. India became a party to the Convention in 1982.
3. The Montreux Record lists wetlands whose ecological character is under threat.

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

4 Consider the following statements about the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC):

1. It is the specialised cancer agency of the World Health Organization.
2. It was established in 1965.
3. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

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

5 Consider the following pairs (Medicine : Primary use):

1. Hydrochlorothiazide — Hypertension
2. Voriconazole — Fungal infections
3. Tacrolimus — Prevention of organ-transplant rejection

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

6 The hexavalent (six-in-one) vaccine protects infants against all of the following EXCEPT:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| (a) Diphtheria | (b) Tetanus |
| (c) Measles | (d) Hepatitis B |

7 Consider the following statements about the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP):

1. It was launched as the Expanded Programme on Immunization in 1978 and renamed UIP in 1985.

2. Under UIP, the Japanese Encephalitis vaccine is administered in all districts of the country.

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

8 The Bab-el-Mandeb strait connects the Red Sea with the:

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

9 Consider the following statements about the FSSAI:

1. It is a statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

2. It functions under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

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

10 Consider the following statements about NATO:

1. It was established in 1949 through the Washington Treaty.

2. Its Article 5 (collective defence) has been invoked only once — after the 9/11 attacks.

3. It is headquartered in Geneva.

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

ANSWER KEY & QUICK EXPLANATIONS

- 1 – (c) Glaw Lake is in Arunachal Pradesh (Lohit district), the State's first Ramsar Site.
- 2 – (d) All three are correct — 101st Ramsar Site, source of the Kamlang River, inside the Kamlang Tiger Reserve.
- 3 – (d) Ramsar Convention (1971, Iran); India joined 1982; the Montreux Record flags threatened sites.
- 4 – (a) IARC (WHO's cancer agency, est. 1965) is headquartered at Lyon, France — not Geneva.
- 5 – (d) All pairs are correctly matched.
- 6 – (c) The six are diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, Hepatitis B, polio and Hib — not measles.
- 7 – (a) Only 1 is correct; the JE vaccine is given only in endemic districts.
- 8 – (c) Bab-el-Mandeb links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.
- 9 – (a) Only 1 is correct; FSSAI works under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- 10 – (a) Statements 1 & 2 are correct; NATO is headquartered at Brussels, not Geneva.

ANSWER WRITING

Mains Practice Questions

GS PAPER 3

Q1. 'Digital arrest' is emerging as one of the fastest-growing forms of cyber-enabled financial fraud in India. Examine the challenges in tackling such frauds and discuss the significance of institutional mechanisms such as zero-FIRs and the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) in curbing them.

(Answer in 250 words · 15 marks)

GS PAPER 2

Q2. The ongoing transformation of NATO signals a redistribution of American strategic attention towards the Indo-Pacific. Analyse its implications for India's strategic autonomy and its emerging defence and technology partnerships with Europe.

(Answer in 250 words · 15 marks)