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7 TOPICS · 2 MAINS · 10 PRELIMS MCQS

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★ HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

- ▶ Each topic opens with a “Why in News” box, the original **Hindu clipping**, crisp **key-highlight notes**, a gold ★ **static/fact box** and a **Syllabus Linkage** strip.
- ▶ Attempt the **2 Mains questions** before revising; then test recall with the **10 Prelims MCQs** and the answer key.

01 Candidates Trained Under Rural Skilling Programme Not Getting Jobs, Says Panel

GS PAPER II

Governance

Welfare Schemes

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WHY IN NEWS

A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development (headed by Congress MP Saptagiri Ulaka) flagged a wide gap between training and employment under DDU-GKY, urging stronger placement tracking, post-placement support and district-level placement cells.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The panel expressed concern over the **gap between training and employment outcomes** under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), recommending stronger placement tracking, enhanced post-placement support, and creation of **district-level placement cells** to improve long-term livelihood outcomes.
- As of **March 2026, 18.38 lakh** rural youth have been trained under DDU-GKY, with **11.94 lakh placed** in jobs, including **576 foreign placements**.
- The scheme covers **37 sectors and 816 trades**. Women account for 9.65 lakh trained and 6.03 lakh placed (nearly 50%).
- The committee directed the government to ensure near **“100% placement tracking”** with mandatory industry linkages, localised placement drives, regular post-training follow-ups, mentorship and credit facilitation.
- It said performance of **Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs)** should be judged not on initial placements but on **sustained employment and retention**; inadequate wages and weak support drive high dropout and distress migration.

Candidates trained under rural skilling programme not getting jobs, says panel

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

A parliamentary committee has expressed concern over the gap between training and employment outcomes under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), recommending stronger placement tracking, enhanced post-placement support, and the creation of district-level placement cells to improve long-term livelihood outcomes for rural youth.

As of March 2026, 18.38 lakh rural youth have been trained under DDU-GKY, with 11.94 lakh placed in jobs, including 576 foreign placements. The scheme covers 37 sectors and 816 trades. Women account for 9.65 lakh of those trained and 6.03 lakh of those placed in jobs (nearly 50%).



Women account for 9.65 lakh of those trained and 6.03 lakh of those placed in jobs (50%).

contributing to high dropout rates and distress migration among rural workers.

The committee has directed the government to ensure near “100% placement tracking as far as possible, with mandatory industry linkages, localised placement drives, regular post-training follow-ups, mentorship and credit facilitation”. “Enhanced post-placement support, including extended migration assistance, retention monitoring, skill upgradation and raising minimum wage employment targets should be institutionalised,” the panel said.

The Standing Committee on Rural Development, headed by Congress Lok Sabha MP Saptagiri Ulaka, in its report tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, noted that a significant number of candidates trained under DDU-GKY were not securing employment, while those who found jobs often received low salaries. It said inadequate wages and support mechanisms were

The Hindu, 12 August 2026 — Women account for 9.65 lakh of those trained and 6.03 lakh of those placed in jobs (nearly 50%).

★ ABOUT DDU-GKY — STATIC LINKAGE

- Announced by the **Ministry of Rural Development** on **Antyodaya Diwas, 25 September 2014**; a part of the **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**.
- Targets rural youth aged **15–35 years** from poor families; upper age limit for **women is 45 years**.
- Mandates that **one-third** of candidates trained be women.
- Supports flagship missions — Make in India, Digital India, Smart Cities, Start-Up & Stand-Up India.
- Over **180 million (69%)** of India’s youth (18–34) live in rural areas; ~55 million are bottom-of-pyramid with marginal employment.

SYLLABUS LINKAGE GS-II: Government policies & interventions for development in various sectors; issues in design and implementation of welfare schemes; mechanisms for skilling and employment of vulnerable rural youth.

02 NASA Invites ISRO to Join Its Mission for a Lunar Outpost

GS PAPER III

Science & Tech

Space

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WHY IN NEWS

At the 9th India–U.S. Civil Space Joint Working Group (CSJWG) in Bengaluru, NASA formally invited ISRO to join its Moon Base programme, building on the Artemis Accords partnership.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- NASA has invited **ISRO** to join its **Moon Base programme**; the formal invitation was extended at the **ninth India–U.S. Civil Space Joint Working Group (CSJWG)** held in Bengaluru.
- The programme aims to establish humanity's **first outpost on another celestial body near the lunar South Pole**, building on the two countries' partnership under the **Artemis Accords**.
- The meeting advanced cooperation under the U.S.–India **TRUST Initiative** (Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology), in line with the **February 2025 Joint Leaders' Statement** of PM Modi and President Trump.
- Both sides discussed expanding cooperation after the successful launch of the joint **NASA–ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR)** mission, and pursuing future science and human-spaceflight collaborations.
- They reaffirmed commitment to **UN COPUOS** guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer-space activities and reviewed efforts to keep the Committee effective.

NASA invites ISRO to join its mission for lunar outpost

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has invited the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to join its Moon Base programme.

The formal invitation was extended by the U.S. space agency at the ninth meeting of the India-U.S. Civil Space Joint Working Group (CSJWG), held recently in Bengaluru.

"NASA invited ISRO to join its Moon Base program, building on the two countries' partnership under the Artemis Accords," the U.S. Embassy said in a statement.

According to NASA, the programme aims to establish humanity's first outpost on another celestial body near the South Pole of the moon.

The meeting also advanced civil and commercial

space cooperation under the U.S.-India Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology Initiative, aligning with the February 2025 Joint Leaders' Statement issued by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump.

"Both sides discussed expanding cooperation following the successful launch of the joint NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission last year, as well as pursuing future science and human spaceflight technology collaborations. They reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space guidelines on the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, as well as reviewed ongoing multilateral efforts for ensuring its effectiveness," the statement added.

The Hindu, 12 August 2026 — The invitation builds on India–U.S. cooperation under the Artemis Accords.

★ ARTEMIS & INDIA'S SPACE PUSH — STATIC LINKAGE

- ▶ India joined the **Artemis Accords in 2023** as the **27th signatory**; a total of **70 countries** are now part of the Accords.
- ▶ NASA's **Artemis programme** aims to return humans to the Moon: uncrewed flight (Nov 2022), a crewed lunar fly-by (this April), with the first human landing since Apollo scheduled **by 2028**.
- ▶ ISRO pursues its own human spaceflight programme **Gaganyaan**, and plans a **human landing on the Moon by 2040**.
- ▶ **NISAR** is a joint NASA–ISRO L- and S-band radar earth-observation satellite.

SYLLABUS LINKAGE

GS-III: Awareness in the field of space; indigenisation of technology and developing new technology; achievements of Indians in science & technology; international S&T collaborations.

03 Centre Relaxes Construction Hurdles in the Ganga Floodplain

GS PAPER III

Environment

Rivers

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WHY IN NEWS

An August 10 gazette order by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) amends the 2016 Ganga Authorities Order — removing the blanket ‘no-construction’ clause and redefining the floodplain by flood frequency, allowing regulated building in moderate/rare-flood zones.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The Union government eased restrictions on construction along the **Ganga floodplain**, revising the definition of a “floodplain” and deleting a clause in the **River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016** that expressly prohibited construction.
- Done via an **August 10 gazette order from NMCG** (under the **Jal Shakti Ministry**). Officials said it corrects an **inconsistency** in the law rather than diluting standards.
- The order replaces the total ban with a **regulated, approval-based system**; strict prohibitions are now confined to the **“active floodplain”**, with minor exceptions for temporary set-ups like religious events.
- The 2016 order had declared the bank and floodplain a **“construction-free zone”** to reduce pollution and protect groundwater recharge — a clause routinely cited before the **National Green Tribunal** against riverfront roads, embankments and sewage works.
- The amendment makes two changes: it **removes the ‘no-construction’ clause** and adopts a **stratified, flood-frequency definition** of floodplain.
 - **Active floodplain** — along the channel, submerges at least once every **5 years**.
 - **Regulatory zone** — middle belt, moderate flooding every **5–25 years**.
 - **Warning zone** — periphery, floods only in severe **25–100-year** events.
 - Beyond the five-year flood line, construction in the ‘regulatory’ and ‘warning’ zones is now **permissible subject to official clearances**.

Centre relaxes construction hurdles in Ganga floodplain

It removes 2016 order's blanket declaration that Ganga floodplain is construction-free zone; new definition may allow construction in areas subject to moderate or rare flooding, after clearances

Jacob Kohler
NEW DELHI

The Union government has eased restrictions regarding construction along the Ganga floodplain, paving the way for building projects in areas which are only subject to moderate or rare flooding.

This has been done by revising the definition of a “floodplain” and deleting a clause in the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016, that expressly prohibited construction, according to an August 10 gazette order from the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), affiliated to the Jal Shakti Ministry.

A senior government official told *The Hindu* that the amendments did not represent any “relaxation of standards”, but rather, attempted to correct an inconsistency in the law.

While the new order does not grant blanket permission for development, it replaces the total ban on floodplain construction



The new order replaces the total ban on floodplain construction with a regulated, approval-based system. FILE PHOTO

with a regulated, approval-based system. Strict building prohibitions are now confined to “active floodplain”, with minor exceptions for temporary set-ups like religious events. In recent months, there have been several petitions before the National Green Tribunal against construction along the Ganga and its tributaries.

“Construction-free zone” Litigants have routinely cited the blanket “construction-free zone” mandate in the 2016 order in their petitions against riverfront roads and embankments, as well as in earlier cases involving municipal sewage treatment plants and riverfront works.

“That notification defines the Ganga ‘floodplain’ as ‘the area of the river or its tributaries which comes under water’ on either side of it due to floods corresponding to its greatest flow or with a flood of frequency once-in-a-hundred years.”

The 2016 order included a clause saying: “...the bank of River Ganga and its floodplain shall be a construction free zone to reduce pollution sources, pressures and to maintain its natural ground water recharge function.” Other clauses banned construction in the “active floodplain” of the Ganga, though there was no definition of what constituted “active.”

Stratified regulation

However, an amendment to the 2016 order, published on August 10, makes two crucial modifications. It removes the “no construction” clause.

It also adopts a stratified definition of “floodplain” based on flood frequency: an “active floodplain”, which is immediately along the channel that submerges at least once every five years; a middle “regulatory zone”, subject to “moderate” flooding, every five to 25 years; and an outer “warning zone” on the periphery that floods only during severe 25 to 100-year events.

Beyond that five-year flood line, construction in the “regulatory” and “warning” zones is now permissible, subject to official clearances.

The Hindu, 12 August 2026 — The new order replaces the total ban on floodplain construction with a regulated, approval-based system.

★ CLEAN GANGA FRAMEWORK — STATIC LINKAGE

- ▶ NMCG is the implementation wing of the **National Ganga Council**, registered as a society; it operates the **Namami Gange** programme.
- ▶ The 2016 order earlier defined floodplain by the **once-in-a-hundred-years** flood line and greatest-flow area of the river and its tributaries.
- ▶ Disputes over floodplain construction are frequently litigated before the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**.

SYLLABUS LINKAGE GS-III: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation; river rejuvenation; environmental regulation and the balance between development and ecological protection.

04 Panel Seeks Enhanced Relief, Counselling for SC/ST Victims

GS PAPER II

Polity

Vulnerable Sections

Page 10

WHY IN NEWS

An internal Centre task force (headed by the Secretary, Social Justice & Empowerment) recommended amending the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules — raising inflation-indexed relief, introducing counselling, and setting up relief-and-rehabilitation cells.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The task force recommended raising the **relief and rehabilitation amounts** governments must pay atrocity victims to **adjust for inflation**, plus **counselling** for victims, dependants and the accused.
- The **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)** separately suggested amending the **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989** — mainly to protect the **livelihoods of ST communities alienated from their land** and stuck in prolonged litigation, and to check registration of **“counter-FIRs”** against those reporting atrocities.
- In a report submitted on **July 31**, the task force drafted amendments to the Rules (last amended in **2018** after protests against a Supreme Court ruling on prior permission for arrests and anticipatory bail).
- Recommendations include **special relief and rehabilitation cells** in States and UTs, and requiring **FIRs and chargesheets to be sent to concerned officials within 24 hours**.
- Currently relief ranges from **₹85,000 to ₹8.25 lakh** (set in 2016), depending on the seriousness of the crime and harm suffered.

Panel seeks enhanced relief, counselling for SC/ST victims

The task force, headed by the Secretary, Social Justice and Empowerment, suggests amendments to the Rules framed under the SC/ST Act; recommendations include relief and rehabilitation cells

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

An internal task force of the Centre has recommended several amendments to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules, including raising the relief and rehabilitation amounts that governments are mandated to pay victims of atrocities to adjust for inflation. Also among the recommendations made by the task force are measures to introduce counselling for the accused and the victims and their dependants. Further, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has separately suggested amendments to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, mainly focusing on introducing a provision to protect the livelihoods of Scheduled Tribes communities who are alienated from their land and are involved in

Rule revision
The SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act was last amended in 2018 in response to widespread protests from SC and ST communities.



prolonged legal battles over it. The NCST has also called for measures to check the registration of “counter FIRs” against those who end up reporting atrocity cases. In a report submitted to the Centre on July 31, the task force, headed by the Secretary, Social Justice and Empowerment, drafted suggested amendments to the SC/ST Act, which was last amended in 2018 in response to widespread

Recommended amendments
• Setting up of special relief and rehabilitation cells in States and UTs
• Increasing relief and rehabilitation amounts in accordance with inflation
• Fast-tracking FIR and chargesheet procedures
• Measures for counselling for the victims, their dependants, and those accused

protests from SC and ST communities across the country against a Supreme Court ruling that held that prior permission was required to make arrests in such cases and that anticipatory bail could be granted. **Rehabilitation cells** According to government officials, the recommendations will “include” measures to establish special relief and rehabilitation cells in States and Union

Currently, the relief and rehabilitation amount to be paid to victims of atrocities
Dependants range from ₹1.25 lakh to ₹8.25 lakh, depending on the seriousness of the crime and the degree of injuries and harm suffered by the victims and their dependants. The amounts were set in 2016.

The task force has also suggested amendments that require FIRs and chargesheets in such cases to be sent to government officials concerned within 24 hours. The move to initiate discussions on amendments comes as the anti-reservation movement under the “reservation hatao andolan” banner is gaining to also campaign for other issues faced by the “general category” in India.

Territories. One official told The Hindu that the idea under discussion at the task force meetings was to increase the relief and rehabilitation amounts in accordance with inflation. Currently, the relief and rehabilitation amount ranges from ₹85,000 to ₹8.25 lakh, depending on the seriousness of the crimes under the Atrocities Act and the degree of injuries and harm suffered by the victims and their dependants. The amounts were set in 2016. The task force has also suggested amendments that require FIRs and chargesheets in such cases to be sent to government officials concerned within 24 hours. The move to initiate discussions on amendments comes as the anti-reservation movement under the “reservation hatao andolan” banner is gaining to also campaign for other issues faced by the “general category” in India.

The Hindu, 12 August 2026 — Recommended: special relief cells, inflation-indexed compensation, fast-tracked FIRs and counselling.

★ NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES (NCST)

- A **constitutional body** set up in **2004** via the **89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003**, inserting **Article 338A** and splitting the old joint commission into NCSC and NCST.
- Composition: a **Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and 3 members** appointed by the President; at least one member must be a **woman**; term of **3 years**.
- Chairperson ranks as **Union Cabinet Minister**, Vice-Chairperson as **Minister of State**; members not eligible for more than **two terms**.
- Oversees safeguards for STs and reports to the **President** annually.

SYLLABUS LINKAGE

GS-II: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections; welfare schemes and their performance; statutory and constitutional bodies.

05 The Mecca Pact and the Rise of Strategic Hedging

GS PAPER II

International Relations

West Asia

Page 6

WHY IN NEWS

A mutual-defence agreement signed by Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan in Mecca on August 7 could mark a turning point in West Asian geopolitics — a move by regional powers to supplement, not replace, external security guarantees.

The Mecca Pact and the rise of strategic hedging

The mutual-defence agreement signed by Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan in Mecca on August 7 could mark an important turning point in the geopolitics of West Asia. Its significance lies not merely in its provision that an attack upon one member will be considered an attack upon all three, but in what it reveals about the changing character of defence of the most important states in the Muslim world. For decades, West Asia, especially the Gulf, security has depended overwhelmingly upon the United States. The new pact does not terminate that dependence. Saudi Arabia remains closely tied to Washington militarily. Türkiye is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and Pakistan retains an important, albeit tentative, relationship with the U.S. which has been recently strengthened because of the personal friendship between U.S. President Donald Trump and Field Marshal Arif Alvi. What the agreement suggests instead is a growing determination among regional powers to supplement external security guarantees with arrangements of their own.

The partners, complementary strengths
The three powers are long-standing allies. Saudi Arabia provides enormous financial resources, energy power and political influence throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds. Türkiye contributes the strongest conventional military establishment among the Muslim countries of West Asia and a rapidly expanding indigenous defence industry. Pakistan contributes a large professional military and decades of military cooperation with Saudi Arabia, but is now dependent upon its state in its nuclear weapons. Although Pakistan has not formally extended its nuclear guarantee to its partners, an adversary contemplating an attack upon one member must now take Pakistan's nuclear capabilities into account. Each participant has distinctive reasons for joining. For Saudi Arabia, the agreement provides



Muhammad Arshad
Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence, Pakistan. He is the author and co-author of 'From Regional Security to Global W' (2014).

strategic insurance. The attacks on Saudi oil installations in 2019, subsequent regional crises and the current confrontation with Iran have demonstrated the risks of excessive dependence upon a single external guarantor. Türkiye sees the arrangement through the prism of strategic autonomy. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has sought to transform Turkey from NATO's southeastern flank into an independent centre of power. The pact expands Ankara's influence into the Gulf and South Asia while creating opportunities for its growing defence industry.

The pact through India's eyes
This inevitably raises questions for India. New Delhi has cultivated exceptionally close relations with Saudi Arabia during the past two decades. Therefore, India must not interpret the pact automatically as an anti-Indian development. Saudi Arabia has enormous economic and strategic interests in maintaining good relations with India and would have little incentive to allow the agreement to become an instrument in Pakistan's disputes with New Delhi.

Türkiye presents a more complicated problem because Ankara has repeatedly supported Pakistan's position on Kashmir and implied weapons that Pakistan has used against India. New Delhi should seek to build reassurance from Islamabad that the pact will not replicate its old India-Pakistan confrontation but it should resist viewing the emerging alignment exclusively through the prism of Pakistan.

The pact's implications for Iran are also very complicated. Given the Saudi-Iranian rivalry and recent Iranian attacks on Saudi Arabia, and vice-versa, it is tempting to interpret it as an

anti-Iranian coalition. However, Türkiye and Pakistan share borders with Iran with complementary interests in keeping their respective militaries inhabiting the border regions in check. They thus have strong reasons to avoid confrontation with Tehran. Iran is likely to view the development with great concern. One of its central strategic objectives has been the political and military fragmentation of the Muslim world. The Mecca agreement does not explicitly create an anti-Iranian alliance. Nevertheless, an institutionalised relationship combining Saudi financial power, Turkish conventional strength and Pakistan's nuclear capability inevitably alters strategic calculations.

For Washington, the pact presents a paradox. The U.S. has long demanded that regional partners assume greater responsibility for their own defence. But greater responsibility can also produce greater strategic autonomy and consequently diminish America's leverage.

Put together by regional powers
It would be premature to describe the agreement as an anti-American realignment. Saudi Arabia continues to depend heavily upon American military technology and security guarantees. Turkey remains in NATO and it shares an interest in unnecessary confrontation with Washington in the midst of its current law test. The more appropriate description is strategic hedging, but when several major states begin hedging simultaneously, their cumulative actions can transform the regional order.

For most of the modern era, West Asian security arrangements have been created or sustained by external powers. The Mecca pact raises the possibility of something different: a more autonomous security architecture constructed by regional powers themselves. Indeed, with enormous economic, energy and strategic stakes in West Asia, cannot create a speculative realist transformation but, at the same time, should not react to it with undue alarm.

The Hindu, 12 August 2026 — The pact could end decades of externally guaranteed West Asian security arrangements.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The agreement signed in **Mecca on August 7** provides that an attack upon one member will be treated as an attack upon all three — signalling a determination among regional powers to **supplement external security guarantees** with their own arrangements.
- Complementary strengths: Saudi **financial power**, Türkiye's **conventional military** and defence industry, and Pakistan's **professional army and nuclear capability**. Though Pakistan has not formally extended a nuclear umbrella, adversaries must now factor it in.
- For Saudi Arabia the pact is **strategic insurance** after the 2019 attacks on its oil installations and the current confrontation with Iran exposed the risk of depending on a single external guarantor.
- Through India's eyes: New Delhi should **not read it as automatically anti-Indian** — Riyadh has strong incentives to keep good ties with India; but India should seek explicit reassurance that the pact has no application to an India–Pakistan confrontation.
- The author calls it **strategic hedging** rather than an anti-American realignment — Saudi Arabia still depends on U.S. arms, Türkiye stays in NATO, and Pakistan avoids friction with Washington.

★ ANALYSIS — WHY IT MATTERS FOR INDIA

- For most of the modern era West Asian security was **guaranteed by outside powers**; the pact raises the prospect of a more **autonomous, regionally-built security architecture**.
- When several major states hedge simultaneously, their cumulative actions can **transform the regional order**.
- India has **enormous economic, energy and strategic stakes** in West Asia and cannot be a spectator — but should react without **undue alarm**.

SYLLABUS LINKAGE

GS-II: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

06 Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026 — In the Way of Full Autonomy

GS PAPER II

Polity

Judiciary

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WHY IN NEWS

The Lok Sabha (Aug 10) and Rajya Sabha (Aug 11) passed the Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026, creating a National Tribunals Commission (NTC) to select and oversee tribunal members — but critics say it still leaves the NTC short of institutional independence.

In the way

The government should not be able to remove tribunal members at will

Tribunals have a raison d'être in the justice system: they allow specialists to settle technical disputes faster than the judiciary could. In *S.P. Sampath Kumar* (1987) and *L. Chandra Kumar* (1997), the Supreme Court said that tribunals' decisions remain subject to review by High Courts because judicial review is part of the basic structure. Sensible though they were, the orders left a structural flaw standing. Tribunals have historically been administered by the same Ministries whose decisions the tribunal might have to review. In *Rojer Mathew* (2019), the Court recommended an independent, statutory National Tribunals Commission (NTC) to oversee the selection and administration of tribunals. However, Parliament used the Finance Act 2017 to give the executive more control over appointments and the Tribunals Reforms Ordinance 2020 to reinstate conditions the Court had rejected. The final straw was the Court's judgment in *Madras Bar Association* (2025), where it struck down the objectionable provisions Parliament had re-enacted, restored the previous framework, and gave the government four months to establish the NTC. That is the Tribunals Reforms Bill 2026, which the Lok Sabha passed on August 10 with no discussion, and the Rajya Sabha on August 11. To its credit, *inter alia*, the Bill restores the five-year terms for tribunal members, introduces uniform service conditions, includes provisions for a National Tribunals Data Grid, and does not make room already pending appointments.

However, the Bill still does not give the NTC enough institutional autonomy. For one, Section 14 leaves the qualifications, manner of selection, salaries, allowances, and other conditions of service of tribunal members to future executive rules. But in *Rojer Mathew*, Justice Deepak Gupta had held that defining who is qualified to exercise judicial power is an essential legislative function that cannot be delegated to rulemaking. Yet, the Bill claims consonance with the 2025 judgment while making room for the sort of delegation the judge's line of reasoning had resisted. Experts have also flagged similarly vague language in Section 3. Further, under Section 16, a Ministry will first screen a complaint before it passes to the NTC for inquiry. So, while the process is more elaborate than it was in 2021, the Centre still appoints the NTC's members, only consulting the CJI for the chairperson and judicial members, and retains substantial influence over its finances and administration. That is essentially a continuing failure: a commission designed to insulate tribunals from executive control cannot be thus subject to the terms of the executive. The government must make the NTC fully independent by forsaking its power to appoint or remove its members at will.

The Hindu, 12 August 2026 — The Bill sets up a National Tribunals Commission to select and oversee tribunal members.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The Bill sets up a **National Tribunals Commission (NTC)** to select chairpersons and members of tribunals — CAT, Armed Forces Tribunal, NGT, ITAT and the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, among others.
- It **replaces the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021** (parts struck down by the SC). The Court had recommended an independent NTC in **Rojer Mathew (2019)** and struck down re-enacted provisions in **Madras Bar Association (2025)**.
- NTC functions: conduct selections, **review tribunal performance**, oversee complaint inquiries against members, and maintain a **National Tribunals Data Grid**.
- Composition: a **chairperson** (former SC judge/HC CJ), **two judicial members** and **two technical members** (25+ yrs in administration, finance, law, accountancy, banking, management or technology). Members serve **5 years or until 70**; chairperson and judicial members chosen after consulting the **CJI**.
- Critics: **Section 14** leaves qualifications, selection, salaries and service conditions to **future executive rules** — against Rojer Mathew's view that defining who exercises judicial power is an essential **legislative** function.
- Under **Section 16** a Ministry first screens complaints before the NTC; the Centre still appoints members and controls the NTC's **finances and administration** — a continuing failure of insulation from the executive.

★ BACKGROUND — STATIC LINKAGE

- ▶ Tribunals derive constitutional backing from **Articles 323A and 323B**.
- ▶ Rationalisation of tribunals began in **2015**; the Bill's Statement of Objects (Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal) cites the need to replace the struck-down 2021 Act.
- ▶ The NTC will have a **secretariat** headed by a secretary to the central government.

SYLLABUS LINKAGE GS-II: Structure, organisation and functioning of the judiciary; separation of powers; statutory bodies; parliamentary legislation and its constitutional scrutiny.

07 No Path to Peace — Israel's Rejection of the Gaza Plan

GS PAPER II

International Relations

West Asia

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WHY IN NEWS

Nearly a year after a U.S.-brokered ceasefire, Israeli PM Netanyahu rejected a 15-point Trump-led 'Board of Peace' road map, ruling out withdrawal until Hamas fully disarms — signalling intent to subjugate Gaza.

No path to peace

Israel's rejection of peace plan shows its intent to subjugate Gaza

It has been nearly a year since the U.S.-brokered ceasefire supposedly ended Israel's bombardment and decimation of Gaza. But since the ceasefire, Israel's strikes have killed nearly 1,300 Palestinians and its forces hold about 65% of the Strip, where much of the two-million population lives in tent camps amid rubble with schools and hospitals shut. Aid remains severely restricted, while Israel has blocked reconstruction, insisting that Hamas disarm first. Yet, when Hamas agreed to decommission and store its heavy weapons in phases, with U.S.-backed Palestinian technocrats in step with a gradual Israeli withdrawal — as part of a 15-point road map proposed by the Donald Trump-led 'Board of Peace' — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refused to accept this. He said Israel was "ruling out the 15-point document" and that there would be no withdrawal until Hamas gave up "heavy weapons, lighter weapons, all weapons". Israel is keen not only on Hamas's disarmament, but also on the total subjugation of Gaza, at a continuing cost to civilians and children. It faces genocide proceedings at the International Court of Justice while the International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Mr. Netanyahu, who also faces a corruption trial still before the courts. By promising the complete destruction of Hamas, he has been trying to stay

destruction of Hamas, he has been trying to stay in power by retaining the support of the jingoistic right wing; any concession on withdrawal would invite political repercussions for his right-wing coalition in elections due in October.

The war on Iran launched by Mr. Trump and Israel on February 28 to effect a regime change has proved to be a disaster, setting off a fuel crisis that has affected several countries. With the Strait of Hormuz barely functioning, rising costs of American petrol and fertilisers have begun to affect the U.S. economy, leading to Mr. Trump seeking a face-saving breakthrough in West Asia. Waning sympathy for Israel as the U.S. mid-term elections approach also explains the Board's proposal. While the farcical Board's vision of a "New Gaza" — free-trade zone, privatised infrastructure, no Palestinian representation on the Board — resembles an attempt at naked profiteering following the disastrous conflict, the 15-point proposal would actually be welcomed by the battered people of Gaza. For Hamas, which has few cards left, disarmament is an imperative, but must be matched by Israeli withdrawal. Mr. Trump and his advisers must ask whether Washington's decades-long Faustian bargain — arming and shielding a militarised Israel on Israel's terms — is worth continuing, or whether it will use its leverage as Israel's principal arms supplier to compel a genuine withdrawal. It is still not too late.

The Hindu, 12 August 2026 — Israel holds about 65% of the Strip; much of the two-million population lives in tent camps amid rubble.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Since the ceasefire, Israeli strikes have killed **nearly 1,300 Palestinians**; its forces hold about **65% of the Strip**, where much of the two-million population lives in tent camps amid rubble, with schools and hospitals shut and reconstruction blocked.
- When Hamas agreed to decommission and store heavy weapons in phases (with U.S.-backed Palestinian technocrats and a gradual Israeli withdrawal, under a **15-point road map** by the Trump-led **"Board of Peace"**), **Netanyahu refused**, ruling out withdrawal until Hamas gives up all weapons.
- Israel faces **genocide proceedings at the ICJ**; the **ICC** has issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu, who also faces a domestic corruption trial. Concessions could threaten his right-wing coalition ahead of **October elections**.
- The war on Iran launched by Trump and Israel on **February 28** triggered a fuel crisis; with the **Strait of Hormuz** barely functioning, rising U.S. petrol and fertilizer costs push Trump toward a face-saving West Asia breakthrough.
- The 'New Gaza' vision — free-trade zone, privatised infrastructure, **no Palestinian representation** — reads as profiteering; yet the battered people of Gaza would welcome the 15-point plan. For Hamas, disarmament is imperative but **must be matched by Israeli withdrawal**.

★ CONTEXT — INSTITUTIONS IN FOCUS

- ▶ **ICJ** (principal judicial organ of the UN, The Hague) hears the genocide case; the **ICC** (a treaty-based court under the Rome Statute) issued the arrest warrant.
- ▶ The **Strait of Hormuz** is a critical chokepoint for global oil and LNG shipments.
- ▶ Editorial view: Washington should weigh whether its role as Israel's principal arms supplier can be used as leverage to compel a genuine withdrawal.

SYLLABUS LINKAGE GS-II: Important international institutions, agencies and fora; effect of conflicts in India's extended neighbourhood; India's interests in West Asia — energy, diaspora and trade.

ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Mains Questions

1

15 Marks · 250 Words

GS Paper III

Skilling programmes such as DDU-GKY have expanded training numbers but struggle to convert them into sustained employment. Critically examine the gap between skill-training and employment outcomes for rural youth, and suggest measures to strengthen placement and retention.

2

15 Marks · 250 Words

GS Paper II

“The Mecca Pact among Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan reflects a shift from externally guaranteed security to regional strategic hedging in West Asia.” In this light, analyse the implications for India’s strategic and energy interests and the calibrated response India should adopt.

MODEL ANSWER STRUCTURE

★ Q1 — SKILLING & EMPLOYMENT

- ▶ **Intro:** DDU-GKY’s scale — 18.38 lakh trained, 11.94 lakh placed (as of Mar 2026).
- ▶ **Gap:** low wages, weak retention, distress migration, high dropouts; placement ≠ sustained livelihood.
- ▶ **Fixes:** 100% placement tracking, industry linkages, district placement cells, PIA accountability on *retention*.
- ▶ **Conclusion:** align skilling with NRLM & local labour demand for durable rural livelihoods.

★ Q2 — MECCA PACT & INDIA

- ▶ **Intro:** Aug 7 mutual-defence pact — Saudi finance, Türkiye military, Pakistan nuclear factor.
- ▶ **Frame:** strategic *hedging*, not anti-American realignment; regional security autonomy.
- ▶ **India:** not automatically anti-Indian; seek assurance it excludes India–Pakistan theatre.
- ▶ **Conclusion:** engage Gulf via energy, diaspora, I2U2/IMEC; act without undue alarm.

★ KEYWORDS & DATA BANK — QUOTE THESE FOR MARKS

- ▶ **Q1 data:** 18.38 lakh trained · 11.94 lakh placed · 576 foreign placements · 37 sectors / 816 trades · ~50% women (9.65 lakh trained, 6.03 lakh placed) · one-third women mandate.
- ▶ **Q1 keywords:** distress migration · retention monitoring · district placement cells · PIA accountability · NRLM · Skill India.
- ▶ **Q2 data:** pact signed 7 Aug 2026 · 2019 Saudi oil-installation attacks · Strait of Hormuz chokepoint · ~9 million Indian diaspora in the Gulf.
- ▶ **Q2 keywords:** strategic hedging · collective defence · nuclear deterrence factor · strategic autonomy · I2U2 / IMEC · energy security.

TEST YOUR RECALL

Prelims MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), consider the following statements:

1. It is implemented under the National Rural Livelihood Mission.
2. It targets rural youth in the 15–35 age group, with the upper age limit for women being 45 years.
3. It mandates that at least half of all candidates trained be women.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q2. The Artemis Accords, sometimes seen in the news, are related to:

- | | |
|---|---|
| (a) A framework for cooperative civil exploration of the Moon and outer space | (b) A defence pact among West Asian nations |
| (c) A river-basin management treaty | (d) A trade bloc for critical minerals |

Q3. With reference to the NISAR mission, consider the following statements:

1. It is a joint NASA–ISRO synthetic aperture radar mission.
2. It is an Earth-observation satellite using dual-frequency radar.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q4. The August 2026 amendment to the Ganga Authorities Order redefines the floodplain into zones. Match the zone with its flood frequency:

1. Active floodplain — submerges at least once every 5 years
2. Regulatory zone — moderate flooding every 5–25 years
3. Warning zone — severe 25–100-year events

Which of the pairings given above are correctly matched?

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

Q5. The body that issued the August 10 gazette order easing Ganga floodplain construction is the:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| (a) National Green Tribunal | (b) National Mission for Clean Ganga |
| (c) Central Water Commission | (d) National Ganga Council secretariat, MoEFCC |

TEST YOUR RECALL

Prelims MCQs (contd.)

Q6. With reference to the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), consider the following statements:

1. It is a constitutional body established under Article 338A.
2. It was created by the 89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003.
3. Its Chairperson holds the rank of a Union Cabinet Minister.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q7. The relief and rehabilitation amount under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules, which a task force recommended be inflation-indexed, currently ranges between:

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| (a) ₹50,000 and ₹5 lakh | (b) ₹85,000 and ₹8.25 lakh |
| (c) ₹1 lakh and ₹10 lakh | (d) ₹75,000 and ₹7.5 lakh |

Q8. With reference to the Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2026, consider the following statements:

1. It establishes a National Tribunals Commission (NTC) to select tribunal members.
2. Appointments of the NTC chairperson and judicial members are made after consulting the Chief Justice of India.
3. It replaces the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q9. The Supreme Court judgment that recommended an independent statutory National Tribunals Commission was:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (a) S.P. Sampath Kumar (1987) | (b) L. Chandra Kumar (1997) |
| (c) Rojer Mathew (2019) | (d) Madras Bar Association (2025) |

Q10. The Mecca Pact recently in the news is a mutual-defence agreement among:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| (a) Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan | (b) Saudi Arabia, UAE and Egypt |
| (c) Iran, Türkiye and Qatar | (d) Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia |

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Answer Key & Rationale

CORRECT OPTIONS

Q1

(a)

Q2

(a)

Q3

(c)

Q4

(d)

Q5

(b)

Q6

(d)

Q7

(b)

Q8

(d)

Q9

(c)

Q10

(a)

EXPLANATIONS

- **Q1 — Option (a).** The women mandate is one-third, not half; hence 3 is incorrect.
- **Q2 — Option (a).** Artemis Accords set common principles for civil space exploration; India joined in 2023 as the 27th signatory.
- **Q3 — Option (c).** NISAR is a joint NASA–ISRO L- and S-band SAR Earth-observation satellite.
- **Q4 — Option (d).** All three zones are correctly matched as per the stratified, flood-frequency definition.
- **Q5 — Option (b).** The order came from the NMCG, affiliated to the Jal Shakti Ministry.
- **Q6 — Option (d).** All three are correct; NCST was set up in 2004 by inserting Article 338A.
- **Q7 — Option (b).** The amounts, set in 2016, range from ₹85,000 to ₹8.25 lakh.
- **Q8 — Option (d).** All three are correct as per the Bill's provisions and Statement of Objects.
- **Q9 — Option (c).** The NTC was recommended in Rojer Mathew (2019); Madras Bar Association (2025) struck down re-enacted provisions.
- **Q10 — Option (a).** Signed in Mecca on August 7 among Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan.

★ REVISION & SCORING STRATEGY

- ▶ Re-read each “Why in News” box and the gold ★ fact boxes — these carry the exam-relevant statics (dates, articles, bodies).
- ▶ For **statement-based MCQs**, eliminate options using one clearly wrong statement (e.g., the DDU-GKY “half women” trap) before finalising.
- ▶ Note the frequently tested pairs: **NCST → Art. 338A / 89th Amendment**, **Artemis Accords → India 27th signatory (2023)**, **NTC → Rojer Mathew (2019)**.
- ▶ Revise today's 7 topics again after 24 hours and before the weekend for durable retention.

KEEP GOING Consistency beats intensity — one Hindu edition analysed daily compounds into a formidable current-affairs base by prelims. — Team Vedanta