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The Hindu *Analysis*

Monday, 31 August 2026

PRELIMS + MAINS • GS I-III

India-Uzbekistan & Uranium

VB-G RAM G Act

'Dimaagi Naxal' Debate

Himalayan Disasters

CERD & Discrimination

Mission ShaktiSAT

PARIVARTAN Scheme

Lake Ontario

Compiled by **Sapna Chauhan**

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GS I

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MCQs

02

MAINS

EDITOR'S FOCUS

Today's edition is anchored in India's Central Asian diplomacy (Uzbekistan, uranium, UPI & critical minerals) and a cluster of governance & rights themes – the new VB-G RAM G rural employment architecture, the contested vocabulary of 'urban/dimaagi Naxal', and India's CERD review. Environment & disaster management run through the Himalayan warning and the PARIVARTAN clean-air scheme, while geography is covered by the Great Lakes.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

- ▶ Each topic follows: **Why in News** → **news clipping** → **analysis** → **Prelims Pointers** → **Value Addition** → **Syllabus Link**.
- ▶ Revise the **Prelims Pointers** and **Quick Revision Recap** for last-minute factual retention; attempt the **10 MCQs** before checking the rationale.
- ▶ **Prelims marking**: +2 for a correct answer, -0.66 (one-third) for a wrong one – attempt only when you can eliminate at least two options.

WHY IN NEWS

India and Uzbekistan elevated their relationship to a

COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

and set a

\$5 BILLION ANNUAL TRADE TARGET BY 2030

after talks between PM Narendra Modi and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev at Tashkent, inking

11 AGREEMENTS

including a framework for long-term uranium supply.

India, Uzbekistan upgrade ties, agree on uranium deal

Uzbekistan is at the heart of India's engagement in Central Asia, says PM as the two nations elevate relations to comprehensive strategic partnership and set a \$5 billion annual trade target by 2030

Press Trust of India
TASHKENT

India and Uzbekistan on Sunday decided to elevate their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and set a target of \$5 billion in annual trade by 2030 following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The two sides inked 11 agreements for boosting engagement in several key sectors, including mining and tourism, and agreed to establish a framework for long-term supply of uranium from Uzbekistan to India in line with cooperation in the civil nuclear energy sector.

The talks focused on expanding cooperation in areas of trade, investment,



Hand in hand: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tashkent on Sunday. ANI

infrastructure, critical minerals, mining, defence and security, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, health, information technology, ayurveda, digital public infrastructure, including UPI, and education.

"We are celebrating the 15th anniversary of our strategic partnership. I am

delighted that, on this special occasion, we are elevating our ties to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership," Mr. Modi said.

"We will move forward by setting concrete goals within this framework," he said. Mr. Modi said both sides would also elevate

their existing joint commission from the level of secretaries to that of ministerial level.

Mr. Mirziyoyev said Uzbekistan was determined to boost ties with India in diverse sectors. "We are aiming to advance cooperation in sectors such as energy, culture, critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, jewellery, and agriculture," the Uzbek President said. The current volume of bilateral trade between the two nations is over \$1 billion.

"Uzbekistan is at the heart of Central Asia and is at the heart of India's engagement in the region," Mr. Modi said.

CONTINUED ON

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PM VISITS MEMORIAL

» PAGE 10

Hand in hand: PM Narendra Modi with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tashkent. (The Hindu)

- The two sides agreed to establish a framework for the **long-term supply of uranium** from Uzbekistan to India, aligned with cooperation in the **civil nuclear energy sector** — a strategic gain for India's clean-energy and fuel-security goals.
- Cooperation was widened across **trade, investment, infrastructure, critical minerals, mining, defence & security, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, health, IT, Ayurveda, digital public infrastructure (incl. UPI) and education.**

- A joint statement flagged **critical-minerals cooperation** through joint projects in geological exploration, mining, mineral processing and the development of **integrated value chains** — reducing India's import dependence on a single source.
- A commercial pact between **NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL)** and Uzbekistan's National Interbank Processing Centre will let Indian **UPI** apps scan Uzbekistan's national QR (**UZQR**) for merchant payments — deepening India's digital-payments diplomacy.
- India announced a **\$1 million grant for afforestation in the Aral Sea region**, and both agreed to raise the existing **Joint Commission from Secretary to Ministerial level**. Current bilateral trade is just over **\$1 billion**.

PRELIMS POINTERS — CENTRAL ASIA

- ▶ **Five Central Asian Republics:** Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan. Uzbekistan & Liechtenstein are the world's only two “**double land-locked**” countries.
- ▶ **Rivers:** Amu Darya & Syr Darya drain into the **Aral Sea** (shared by Uzbekistan & Kazakhstan), now largely desiccated due to Soviet-era irrigation.
- ▶ **Uranium:** Uzbekistan & Kazakhstan are among the world's top uranium producers; Kazakhstan is the single largest.
- ▶ **Institutional links:** India–Central Asia Dialogue, SCO, INSTC and the “Connect Central Asia” policy anchor engagement; Chabahar port offers connectivity bypassing Pakistan.

VALUE ADDITION — WHY CENTRAL ASIA MATTERS FOR INDIA

Energy & critical minerals: The region is rich in uranium, natural gas, gold and rare/critical minerals vital for India's nuclear programme and clean-energy transition.

Strategic depth & security: Proximity to Afghanistan makes the region central to counter-terror cooperation and regional stability under the “extended neighbourhood” framework.

Connectivity: The **Chabahar port** and the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** give India overland access, offsetting China's BRI footprint in the region.



Central Asia — the five republics between Russia, China, Iran & Afghanistan.



Aral Sea, Amu Darya & Syr Darya across Uzbekistan & Turkmenistan.



2 MGNREGA Workers Migrated to VB-G RAM G; e-KYC Not Mandatory

GS II / III

WHY IN NEWS

The Union Rural Development Ministry said that

EVERY WORKER

registered under MGNREGA — irrespective of whether job-card e-KYC is complete — has been migrated to the new

VIKSIT BHARAT GUARANTEE FOR ROZGAR AND AJEEVIKA MISSION (GRAMIN), VB-G RAM G

, and that

PENDING E-KYC DOES NOT BAR

a worker from demanding or receiving employment.

All workers shifted to VB-G RAM G; e-KYC not mandatory, says Rural Development Ministry

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Rural Development Ministry on Sunday said that every worker registered under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), irrespective of whether e-KYC of their job cards has been completed, has been migrated to Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) [VB-G RAM G].

In a statement, the Ministry also underlined that pending e-KYC does not prevent a worker from demanding or receiving employment.

The statement was issued in response to *The Hindu's* report on Saturday, which flagged that the



So far, e-KYC has been completed for 15.89 crore workers, including 10.27 crore of 10.84 crore active workers. FILE PHOTO

job cards of 57 lakh active workers have not yet completed the e-KYC process.

95% e-KYC completed

So far, e-KYC has been completed for 15.89 crore workers, including 10.27 crore of 10.84 crore active workers, which is approximately 95%.

While not disputing the numbers given in *The Hindu* report, the government said that e-KYC is a database-authentication measure and not a precondition for exercising the statutory right to demand employment under VB-G RAM G.

"Every worker regis-

tered under MGNREGA, irrespective of whether e-KYC has been completed, has been migrated to VB-G RAM G. Pending e-KYC does not prevent a worker from demanding or receiving employment. An appropriate exception mechanism is also available to facilitate employment demand and the provision of work for workers whose e-KYC is pending," the statement said.

Simple process

The Ministry further said that e-KYC of workers is the responsibility of the concerned State and Union Territory governments and is being undertaken to strengthen authentication and maintain an accurate and credible worker database.

"The process is simple and can ordinarily be completed in less than 30 seconds," the statement said.

2.11 cr. offered jobs

The government further underlined that every worker who has demanded employment has been offered work as per demand, and around 2.11 crore workers have so far been offered employment under VB-G RAM G. Simultaneously, the Centre has advised States to expeditiously complete e-KYC of all active workers.

"The Ministry is continuously supporting and monitoring States/UTs in this exercise while ensuring that no willing worker is deprived of employment merely because e-KYC is pending," it said.

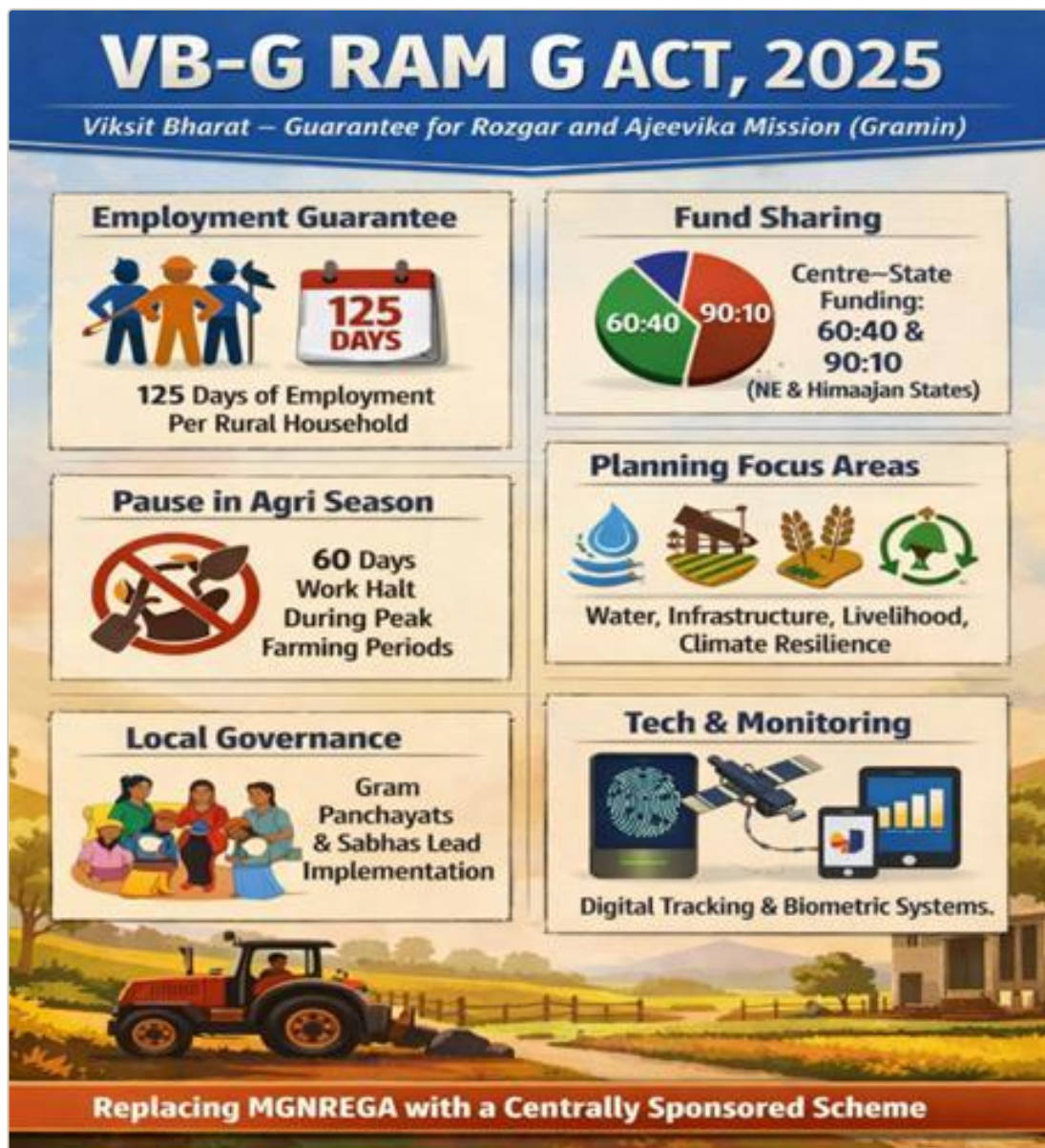
e-KYC completed for 15.89 crore workers, including 10.27 crore of 10.84 crore active workers (~95%). (*The Hindu*)

- The clarification followed **The Hindu's** report that job cards of **57 lakh active workers** had not completed e-KYC, raising fears of exclusion from work.
- The Ministry stressed e-KYC is a **database-authentication measure, not a precondition** for exercising the statutory right to demand employment; an exception mechanism facilitates work where e-KYC is pending.
- So far, e-KYC is done for **15.89 crore workers** (incl. 10.27 cr of 10.84 cr active workers, ~95%); the process "can ordinarily be completed in under 30 seconds."
- Every worker who demanded work has been offered it, and about **2.11 crore workers** have been offered employment under VB-G RAM G; States were advised to complete e-KYC expeditiously.

- e-KYC is the responsibility of the concerned **State/UT governments**, undertaken to strengthen authentication and maintain an accurate, credible worker database.

PRELIMS POINTERS — VB-G RAM G ACT, 2025

- ▶ **Employment guarantee:** raised to **125 days** per rural household (up from 100 under MGNREGA).
- ▶ **Agri-season pause:** up to **60 days** work-halt during peak farming periods to avoid labour clash.
- ▶ **Fund sharing:** Centre–State **60:40** (general) and **90:10** (NE & Himalayan States).
- ▶ **Focus areas:** water, infrastructure, livelihood, climate resilience; **Gram Panchayats/Sabhas** lead; digital tracking & biometrics for monitoring.



Snapshot of the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 — replacing MGNREGA as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

VALUE ADDITION — MGNREGA TO VB-G RAM G

MGNREGA (2005) gave a legal guarantee of 100 days of unskilled manual work to rural households, anchored in the **right to work** and demand-driven employment.

Continuity of rights: The Ministry's stand protects the core principle that **authentication cannot override entitlement** — a safeguard against technology-driven exclusion (echoing Aadhaar-seeding controversies in welfare delivery).

Debate: Critics fear a shift from a rights-based statutory guarantee toward a scheme-based model may dilute justiciability; supporters cite better targeting, wider works and climate focus.

SYLLABUS LINK » GS II — welfare schemes, mechanisms & issues in implementation; GS III — inclusive growth & employment.

3 The Politics of Calling Minds 'Naxal'

GS II / III

WHY IN NEWS

In his Independence Day address, PM Modi declared that armed Naxals/Maoists had been eliminated but that

'DIMAAGI NAXALS' (BRAINY NAXALS)

remain — the first use of such phrasing in an I-Day speech, reviving debate over the term

'URBAN NAXAL'

and dissent.

The politics of calling minds 'Naxal'

In his Independence day address this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that his government had eliminated the threat of armed Naxals/Maoists, but added that 'dimaagi Naxals (brainy Naxals)' remain. These dangerous individuals, he said, had been elevated to policy advisers by his predecessors. Now, they look for opportunities to 'drag society onto the wrong path' and 'steer the nation's youth' away from the 'mainstream effort' to turn India into 'a developed nation.' He asked Indian citizens to 'identify and isolate' such individuals among them.

Defining the enemy

Is Mr. Modi the first leader of a democratic nation to declare thoughts to be crimes, without resort to innuendo or euphemism, in a formal address to the nation? A search for other instances came up empty.

But has he not used terms such as 'urban Naxal' before? Is 'dimaagi Naxal' any different? I believe it is a significant escalation.

First, while he has used the term 'urban Naxal' in campaign speeches and in Parliament, he has not previously used it in an Independence Day address to the nation.

Second, 'urban' implies an alleged connection to 'rural' Naxals: urban individuals are alleged to be facilitating crimes attributed to Maoist insurgents. The actual charges may be fabricated, and individuals might in fact be criminalised for their ideology, that is, for thought crimes. But the government did not admit this. In this case, however, Mr. Modi declared the end of rural Naxals, and then formulated the category of 'dimaagi Naxals'. It is their 'dimaagi' alone, cut off from any alleged ties to armed Maoist insurgents, that he declares to be criminal.

Had Mr. Modi chosen to say 'Naxali dimaagi' or 'Naxali soch' (thinking), it might be taken to mean Maoist ideology. But 'dimaagi Naxal' does not identify a specific ideology as dangerous.

'Dimaagi' itself is the deadly weapon. In Hindi/Urdu, *dimaagi* is used to mean the brain, head, mind, consciousness, intellect, and intelligence. To use your *dimaagi* is to 'use your head' — that is, to think out of the box, to reason, to think critically, to use your intelligence for resourceful problem-solving.

Mr. Modi is notorious for asking Indians to identify terrorists by what they wear — *'kapde se pechhano'* (Identify/judge someone by their clothes) — a dog whistle for Muslims wearing lungis, skullcaps or hijabs. Now, he is saying '*dimaagi se pechhano*' — identify anti-nationals by how they think.

Operation Demonise *Dimaagi* began a decade



Kavita Krishnan
Author of
'De-democratisation,
A Global Story: Script,
Actors, Enablers'

ago in 2016, with the attempt to incite hatred and violence against Jawaharlal Nehru University students and teachers. For six years the regime has declared student protesters (such as Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, Gulfisha Fatima, Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita) to be terrorists, without a trial, without much push-back from the judiciary and the press. Emboldened, it deployed the same tactic against students protesting examination paper leaks, calling them '*dehshatgari*' (terrorists). But stretched to such lengths, this tactic snapped — and backfired. It 'leaked' the key to the regime's propaganda codes. All of a sudden, all too many people could see the pattern plainly. The government rewarded mindless obedience, reverence and adulation for Power. Apply your mind, your *dimaagi*, to demand democratic accountability from Power, and it would "identify and isolate" you as a terrorist, an *andolanjevi* (parasite feeding on protests), a cockroach.

Echoes of an old template

The timing is telling. Mr. Modi is attacking *Dimaagi* when he is still smarting from his debacle at the hands of young students armed only with wit and imagination. He wants to prevent a recurrence. Ironically, since he calls his critics 'Naxals' (Maoists), he seems to be embracing the Chinese template for thought crimes.

A Chinese Communist Party memorandum, of 2013, warns that Internet forums, "lectures, seminars, university classrooms, class discussion forums, civilian study groups" as well as "open letters and... petition-signings to vocalise requests for political reforms, improvement of human rights" represent a threat to the nation. Why? Because "if we allow any of these ideas to spread, they will disturb people's existing consensus on important issues like which flag to raise, which road to take, which goals to pursue".

That is what the student protests did: demolish Mr. Modi's claim to represent a monolithic popular consensus, challenged only by a tiny gang of unpopular critics. That consensus must be restored.

Mr. Modi identified '*dimaagi Naxals*' as the foremost internal threat to national security. Is his plan for "a huge voluntary force of civil defence" intended to deal with them?

The examples Mr. Modi cites are unconvincing. Defending refineries from aerial bombardment and banks from cyber attacks cannot be left to 'civilian volunteers' — these would need enhanced air defence and cyber-security systems comprising experts. We already have the Civil Defence Act 1968 and the Home Guards to organise civilians for non-combat roles. Is Mr.

Modi's proposal inspired by his ideological gurus from a century ago?

In 1931, Dr. B.S. Moonje, Hindu Mahasabha leader and close associate of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) founder K.B. Hedgewar, visited Italy to meet the fascist leader Benito Mussolini. Mussolini was notorious for civilian militias such as the 'Voluntary Militia for National Security', colloquially known as the Blackshirts, which unleashed violent terror against political rivals, union leaders, journalists and writers. In 1934, Moonje and Hedgewar met to discuss the need for a Hindu-supremacist militia to achieve the "ideal" of "a Hindu as a dictator... like Mussolini or Hitler of the present day Italy and Germany". In 1935, Moonje explained that his aim was to also militarise Hindu society so as to completely choke off any other expressions of social life — "There will thus be no longer any distinction between the citizen and the soldier, between the civilian and the man in uniform".

In 1939, Moonje expressed the hope that the RSS "might be useful and handy" in the task of preparing such a Hindu-supremacist militia. Who would it fight? Not so much the British Raj or potential Japanese invaders, but "internal enemies" — i.e., Muslims and the Congress wing of the freedom struggle. Moonje specifically visualised a conflict between "the mutually antagonistic and clashing ideologies", i.e., between "the Rifle" (symbolising the Hindutva militia) and "the Charka" (symbolising Gandhi). Nearly a decade later, Nathuram Godse wielded the Rifle that killed Gandhi.

The road ahead

Today, a woman who proudly declared herself a 'fan of Godse' and said the very name 'Gandhi' is like a '*gaali*' (a swear word), has been elevated to the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party's social media cell. As has a man who used foul abuse against Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, and the "brave" voting right" for Muslims and oppressed castes as the "root cause" of India's problems. Meanwhile, online and offline pro-Modi mobs as well as police are hounding student protesters, especially girls and women. The pretext is that the students, as a last resort, raised profane slogans at Mr. Modi himself, which turned out to be the only thing to move him to remove his corrupt Minister.

Will these mobs, together with the moral policing mobs and the anti-Muslim lynch mobs, be elevated to the ranks of Mr. Modi's 'civilian defence force'? This is a real danger, given that his supporters believe he is the 'Hindu Hitler' of Moonje's and Hedgewar's dreams.

Opinion: 'The politics of calling minds Naxal' — on labelling, dissent & internal security. (The Hindu)

- 'Urban' implies an alleged link to 'rural' Naxals: urban individuals are alleged to **facilitate** crimes attributed to Maoist insurgents — the charges may be contested, and the concern is **criminalisation of ideology or thought**.
- The label targets the **ideological/organisational support network** rather than the armed cadre — those said to supply intellectual scaffolding rather than carry weapons.

- **Why the coinage matters:** it shifts the counter-insurgency target from **territory held** to **ideas circulated** — a conceptual expansion with implications for civil liberties.
- The counter-view holds that Naxalism was always an **ideology before a militia**; the stated aim is to overthrow the constitutional order and establish a communist state through armed revolution.
- The core civil-liberties tension: distinguishing **legitimate dissent and democratic accountability** from actual incitement to or facilitation of violence, without chilling free speech.

PRELIMS POINTERS — LEFT-WING EXTREMISM (LWE)

- ▶ **Origin:** Naxalbari uprising, **1967**, West Bengal (Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal).
- ▶ **CPI (Maoist)** is banned under the **UAPA, 1967** as a terrorist organisation.
- ▶ **Nodal ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs; schemes — **SAMADHAN** doctrine, Security Related Expenditure (SRE), Aspirational Districts.
- ▶ LWE-affected districts have **fallen sharply** over the last decade due to security & development push.

VALUE ADDITION — DISSENT, FREE SPEECH & THE CONSTITUTION

Article 19(1)(a) guarantees free speech & expression, subject to reasonable restrictions under 19(2) (sovereignty, public order, incitement to offence, etc.).

SC jurisprudence: mere membership or holding of ideology is not an offence absent incitement to imminent violence (*Kedar Nath Singh*, 1962; recent readings on UAPA). The state must show a proximate link to violence.

Balance: Internal-security imperatives must be reconciled with the “**marketplace of ideas**” — democracies distinguish thought from crime.

SYLLABUS LINK » GS II — fundamental rights, free speech; GS III — linkages of extremism with internal security; role of the state.



4 Nepal's Agony — the Himalayan Warning to India

GS III · ENV / DM

WHY IN NEWS

A commentary by Gopalkrishna Gandhi warns that the Himalaya are “

ONE LIVING ROCK

” — seismically and glacially charged — and that the disaster in Nepal is a warning India must heed on earthquakes,

GLOFS

and unsustainable development in high-risk zones.

Nepal's agony, the Himalayan warning to India

Will India learn now at least? Will it let Nepal speak to India through its agony what India has refused to hear?

The Himalaya are not a series of silos – Afghanistan Hindu Kush Himalaya, Pakistan Himalaya, Indian Himalaya, Nepal Himalaya, the Himalaya in Tibet-China, Bhutan. To employ a powerful term I have heard Vadodra-based painter Gulam Mohammed Sheikh use for the Elephanta Caves, the Himalaya are one living rock, silently, broodingly, tense with seismic voltages, glacial stirrings and geological turbulence.

And they spell their uncoded thought in swipes no one can foretell. When, where exactly, with what ferocity, no one knows. And what disasters may radiate from them – through rivers plucked from their courses, rockfalls and landslides depositing mud and silt, turning human habitations into rubble and fertile farms into slime – no one can precisely envision.

Ask those who have heard from their parents and grandparents of the Nepal-Bihar earthquake of 1934 or the Assam temblor of 1950. They will speak of the nightmare.

The question of preparedness

The world has been told – India has specifically been warned – by seismologists of an impending earthquake of humungous scale with the potential of a cataclysm across a great swathe of northern India which lies under the quake-shadow of the Himalaya. It is not as if India's government has declined to heed the warning. It has done much, as its disaster management agencies will rightly assure us, to be alert to the risk.

But after 26/8 what we need to ask and know is: should what happened in upper Nepal have



Gopalkrishna Gandhi

Former administrator who has held diplomatic and constitutional offices

One living rock, shared by nations, makes its dangers a shared concern for all

happened in lower Nepal, and even lower than that, would our 'preparedness' have sufficed to save riverside habitations from instant death?

More pertinently, we need to ask and know whether the absolutely fearsome phenomenon of global warming triggered GLOFs (or Glacial Lake Outburst Floods), has led authorities to warn people living in potential GLOF-affected areas in India of the danger they face and advised them on how to face it.

We are, let us face it, in seismic, glacial, climatological and geological innocence.

By 'we' I mean we the people of India. Our earth scientists know it all but their *jhana* is clasped tight in their *acharya-mushis* ('knowledge kept in the teacher's fist').

What happened in Nepal on that stricken Wednesday is yet to be fully appraised. We will soon enough know whether it was an earthquake that caused the GLOF, or whether the GLOF resulted in the earth quaking and waterbodies swelling as they never have before.

Whatever happened, India must learn

Be the sequence as it may, the following lessons scream to be learnt by India.

First, the Himalaya, held sacred since memory has served, gestate 'sure-shot' danger.

Second, these dangers can now no longer be left to be unravelled in seminars and technical papers.

Third, they have to be made known on a war footing to us, the clear potential victims.

Fourth, and not just made known as in increasing our knowledge but made known as in making us part of a new safeguarding.

Fifth, our scholar-diplomat Shyam Saran has, in two timely and telling articles in *The Tribune* ('China's hydel project bodes ill for India', July 14, 2026) and *The Indian Express* ('From Nepal to

Uttarakhand and China, the mountains are warning us', August 28, 2026), explained how China's construction of Medog, the world's largest hydropower project, at the great bend of the Brahmaputra river just across the border and very close to the Paizhen Fault, could (should there be a major earthquake in the project's vicinity), cause a massive discharge of floodwaters and debris into India's northeast. India's salutary initiatives to bring about a measure of mature civility on the borders with China must now include frankness about the ferocious danger that Medog poses.

Sixth, an urgent review of India's own built hazards such as dams and reactors in the high risk zones followed by the dismantling of the real 'baddies' can no longer be postponed.

Seventh, and no less difficult but no less important, a calibrated but time-bound decongestion of human agglomerations in high-risk zones.

Eighth, if surgical strikes can be used with precision and without excesses against an external enemy to good effect, their civilian equivalent should be deployed to disable that which, though intended for our well-being, has become a danger.

Progress and danger

Marjorie Sykes was a British devotee of India, in the tradition of C.F. Andrews, Verrier Elwin and J.B.S. Haldane. I once heard her say with passion: "Dams are a damnation." All dams may not be, but some, depending on their location, are. Likewise, some reactors can become rakshasas. And some commercial behemoths, predatory.

A big and great nation can learn from the experience of a small neighbour. Especially when both are perched on the same living rock that threatens to turn into a mass grave.

Opinion: 'Nepal's agony, the Himalayan warning to India.' (The Hindu)

- The Himalaya are not a series of silos – the Afghan Hindu Kush, Pakistan, Indian, Nepal and Tibet-China ranges form **one continuous, tectonically active system**.
- Seismologists have specifically warned of an impending earthquake of **humungous scale** across northern India, which lies under the quake-shadow of the Himalaya.
- **GLOFs (Glacial Lake Outburst Floods)**, triggered by global warming, threaten downstream habitations; authorities must warn and prepare communities in GLOF-affected areas.
- The piece cites concern over China's **Medog** hydropower project at the great bend of the Brahmaputra, near the **Paizhen Fault** – a seismic-and-flood risk for India's northeast.
- **Lessons for India:** move disaster knowledge from "seminars" to a **war footing**; urgently review built hazards (**dams, reactors**) in high-risk zones; and pursue calibrated, time-bound **decongestion** of human agglomerations in fragile zones.

PRELIMS POINTERS — HIMALAYAN HAZARDS

- ▶ **Seismic zones:** most of the Himalaya lie in **Zone IV & V** (highest risk) of India's seismic zonation map.
- ▶ **GLOF** = sudden release of water from a glacial lake; e.g., **South Lhonak Lake** GLOF, Sikkim (2023) that damaged the Teesta-III dam.
- ▶ **Great Himalayan earthquakes:** Bihar-Nepal (1934), Assam (1950), Kangra (1905), Uttarkashi (1991), Bhuj (2001 – intraplate).
- ▶ **Brahmaputra** = Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet; the "**Great Bend**" near Namcha Barwa is the site of the Medog project.

VALUE ADDITION — IHR ECOLOGICAL VULNERABILITY

Why fragile: young fold mountains, steep slopes, high seismicity, fragile lithology, and rapid glacial retreat make the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) acutely disaster-prone.

Anthropogenic stress: unplanned hydropower, road-widening/tunnelling, deforestation and unregulated tourism/construction amplify landslides & subsidence (e.g., **Joshimath**).

Way forward: carrying-capacity studies, GLOF early-warning systems, cumulative EIA for dam cascades, strict zoning, and NDMA-led community preparedness.

SYLLABUS LINK » GS III — disaster & disaster management; conservation, environmental pollution; GS I — geophysical phenomena.



5 State of Exception: India, CERD & the Culture of Discrimination

GS II

WHY IN NEWS

In its first review by the

UN COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (CERD)

since 2007, India drew an expression of “

GRAVE CONCERN

” over reports of violence — physical and otherwise — against minority ethnic/ethno-religious groups, Dalits and non-citizens.

State of exception

India must not normalise a culture of discrimination

In its first review by the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) since 2007, India has elicited an expression of “grave concern” about reports of the law enforcement apparatus resorting to violence — physical and otherwise — against minority ethnic and ethno-religious groups, Dalits, and non-citizens over the years. The Committee also noted that India, which ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1968, has not provided detailed and updated information about the state’s inquiries and sanctions arising from allegations of such violence. While the government has told CERD that caste bias falls outside Article 1 of the convention because caste is not synonymous with race, CERD has allowed all forms of discrimination based on inherited status. The Committee’s concerns also span the practice of manual cleaning of sewers despite a law banning it; hate speech against, poor living conditions of, and the mass refoulement of Rohingya Muslims; the mass deprivation of citizenship via the National Register of Citizens; large-scale deletions from the Special Intensive Revisions of electoral rolls; the government’s use of the FCRA, UAPA, AFSPA, and PMLA instruments to hamper the work of civil society organisations; the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita not expressly criminalising racist hate speech; and the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act exempting “national security” projects from consultative decision-making.

Given these issues and the fragmented recourse available, the lack of suitably disaggregated data on disenfranchised communities, including due to a much-delayed Census and the slow release of NCRB data, has transcended the bounds of administrative lethargy to actively impeding independent checks of India’s claims about fighting caste- and faith-based discrimination. In fact, India has been implementing “special measures” based on 2011 Census data, which could mask a regression in the socioeconomic status of Scheduled Tribes and Adivasis. Together with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions recommending the downgrade of the NHRC last year, following the government appointing police officers to investigative roles and a lack of pluralism, CERD is effectively stepping into a vacuum. The road ahead remains clear, from restoring the NHRC’s independence and criminalising hate speech to supportive affirmative action, collecting and publishing disaggregated data, and improving the transparency of the electoral roll revisions, and strengthening enforcement overall. But if the government’s attempted use of a technicality to keep the issues of 200 million Dalits a “domestic matter” and avoid international accountability — and its dismissal of CERD’s concerns as politically motivated — is any guide, the task continues to fall to civil society to exert influence in multilateral fora and sustain political, legal, and administrative resistance to government choices that normalise India’s sadly widespread culture of discrimination of all sorts.

Editorial: ‘State of exception — India must not normalise a culture of discrimination.’ (The Hindu)

- CERD noted India ratified the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)** in **1968** but has not provided updated information on inquiries and sanctions in such cases.
- India argues **caste bias falls outside Article 1** (caste ≠ race); CERD, however, treats discrimination based on **descent / inherited status** as covered.
- Concerns span manual scavenging despite a ban, hate speech, conditions & **refoulement of Rohingya**, citizenship deprivation via NRC, deletions in electoral-roll **SIR**, and use of **FCRA, UAPA, AFSPA, PMLA** against civil society.

- Gaps in **disaggregated data** — a delayed Census and slow NCRB release — impede independent checks on India's claims about fighting caste- and faith-based discrimination.
- **Road ahead:** restore NHRC independence, criminalise hate speech, supportive affirmative action, publish disaggregated data, and improve transparency of electoral-roll revisions.

PRELIMS POINTERS — ICERD & INSTRUMENTS

- ▶ **ICERD (1965):** a core UN human-rights treaty; monitored by **CERD** (18 independent experts). India is a party (1968).
- ▶ **NHRC:** statutory body under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**; graded by the **Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)**.
- ▶ **Article 17:** abolishes untouchability; **Article 15** bars discrimination on religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth.
- ▶ **Manual scavenging** banned by the **PEMSR Act, 2013**.

VALUE ADDITION — CASTE, RACE & 'DESCENT'

The debate: at the 2001 Durban Conference India resisted equating caste with race; CERD's **General Recommendation 29** reads "descent" in Article 1 to include caste-based discrimination.

Domestic safeguards: constitutional guarantees (Arts. 14–17), SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, and reservations complement international obligations.

Significance: credible, disaggregated data and independent institutions are essential both for policy and for defending India's record in multilateral fora.

SYLLABUS LINK » GS II — mechanisms, laws & institutions for vulnerable sections; important international institutions & bodies.



6 Keeping Youth Drug-Free; PM SVANidhi & Mission ShaktiSAT

GS II

WHY IN NEWS

In his

137TH MANN KI BAAT

, PM Modi flagged the dangers of drug addiction, highlighted women's economic empowerment via

PM SVANIDHI

, and spotlighted

MISSION SHAKTISAT

for girl students in satellite technology.

Modi stresses need to keep India's youth free from drugs

Students, theatre groups must raise awareness against drug menace, says PM in his *Mann ki Baat* address; 35 lakh women across the country have benefited from PM SVANidhi Yojana, he adds

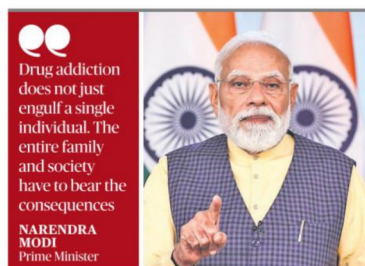
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has flagged the dangers of drug addiction, highlighted the economic avenues opening up for women and girls in India, including in the space industry, and lauded the cleanliness initiatives being undertaken by citizens.

"Drug addiction does not just engulf a single individual. The entire family and society have to bear the consequences," Mr. Modi said in his 137th *Mann ki Baat* episode on Sunday. "I would like to commend those who raise awareness against drugs and step forward to help individuals struggling with addiction."

Mr. Modi urged young musicians to produce songs that convey the message of a drug-free life, students and theatre groups to write short plays that highlight the dangers of drugs while also showing the path to recovery, and content creators to spread the message on social media in various languages.

"Let us all play our part in this noble mission to



keep India's youth away from drugs and free from addiction," Mr. Modi said.

Women empowerment

"From morning till evening, lakhs of women across the streets of our cities and towns are engaged in their work," the Prime Minister noted. "Some sell vegetables or fruits, others run tea stalls, while some sell flowers, earthen lamps, and worship materials."

He added that, often, a lack of capital prevents such businesses from growing further. "But now, lakhs of such mothers and sisters are gaining new strength through the PM SVANidhi Yojana," Mr. Modi said. "This aspect of wo-

men empowerment is not discussed as much as it should be. Women account for approximately 46% of the beneficiaries of the PM SVANidhi Yojana."

This, he explained, meant that around 35 lakh women across the country are expanding their businesses by connecting with this scheme. PM SVANidhi Yojana is a Central government scheme aimed at providing affordable and easy working capital loans without any guarantee to street vendors and hawkers in urban areas. "Today the flight of our daughters' dreams is soaring from the earth to outer space," Mr. Modi told listeners of his radio programme. "And

you will be proud to know that India is bringing together thousands of daughters who are nurturing such dreams, from across the globe. This initiative is named Mission ShaktiSAT."

Through this initiative, 12,000 girl students from 108 countries are getting the opportunity to learn satellite technology and to advance in the field of innovation, he said.

On August 23, celebrated as National Space Day, the second phase of Mission ShaktiSAT was launched at Gautam Buddha University in Greater Noida where around 100 female students from across the country, including remote regions, and various other countries came together.

"The goal of this entire initiative is truly special: preparations are under way to send a satellite – developed entirely through the participation of female students – into lunar orbit," Mr. Modi said. "I am confident that many of these students will carve out a distinct identity for themselves in the fields of science, technology, and innovation in the future."

"Drug addiction does not just engulf a single individual..." — PM in Mann ki Baat. (The Hindu)

- The PM urged **musicians, students, theatre groups and content creators** to spread anti-drug awareness in various languages — a whole-of-society approach to the drug menace.
- **PM SVANidhi** provides affordable, collateral-free working-capital loans to **street vendors/hawkers** in urban areas; women are ~**46%** of beneficiaries and about **35 lakh women** are expanding businesses through it.
- **Mission ShaktiSAT** gives **12,000 girl students from 108 countries** the chance to learn satellite technology; Phase-2 launched on **National Space Day (Aug 23)** at Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida.
- The initiative aims to send a satellite — developed entirely with the participation of female students — into **lunar orbit**.
- Together the themes tie **social reform (de-addiction)** with **women-led development (Nari Shakti)** in the economy and in STEM.

PRELIMS POINTERS — SCHEMES & MISSIONS

- ▶ **PM SVANidhi (2020):** MoHUA; micro-credit for urban street vendors; incremental loans on timely repayment; digital-transaction & interest incentives.
- ▶ **Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA):** Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment; demand-reduction for drugs.
- ▶ **National Space Day: 23 August**, marking **Chandrayaan-3's** Vikram lander touchdown (2023) at **Shiv Shakti Point**.
- ▶ **Mission Shakti** (Women & Child Development) — umbrella scheme for women's safety, security & empowerment (distinct from ShaktiSAT).

India's policy narrative has shifted from **“women's development”** to **“women-led development”** — from beneficiaries to drivers of growth, endorsed under India's G20 presidency.

Convergence: financial inclusion (SVANidhi, Jan Dhan, Mudra), skilling and STEM access (ShaktiSAT) together widen women's economic agency.

Drug de-addiction is framed as a public-health & social issue needing community, cultural and rehabilitative responses, not policing alone.

SYLLABUS LINK » GS II — welfare schemes; issues relating to development & management of the social sector; women & vulnerable sections.



7 The PARIVARTAN Scheme — Fleet Renewal for Cleaner Air

GS III · ENV

WHY IN NEWS

PARIVARTAN

— a comprehensive vehicle scrappage & fleet-renewal programme — aims to replace ageing pre-BS-IV / BS-IV commercial trucks and buses in Delhi-NCR with cleaner

BS-VI OR ELECTRIC

vehicles to curb vehicular air pollution.



Delhi-NCR traffic — vehicular emissions are a major source of the region's air pollution.

- **Full form:** Programme for Accelerated Renewal and Incentivization of Vehicle Assets for Reducing Transport Air-pollution and Network emissions.
- **Implementing Ministry:** Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH); **funding agency:** National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) under MoHUA.
- **Aim:** phase out and replace over **2 lakh** older high-emission commercial trucks and buses across the NCR to cut toxic particulate emissions.

- **Financial backing:** total outlay of **₹9,585 crore**, with **₹5,041 crore** in direct budgetary support from the Centre.
- **Incentives:** 5% interest subvention on eligible loans for 5 years via 42 banks/NBFCs; **100% road-tax waiver for 10 years** plus registration-fee waiver (Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, UP); and an OEM upfront discount of at least **8%** on new eligible vehicles.

PRELIMS POINTERS — VEHICLES & AIR QUALITY

- ▶ **BS-VI** norms (in force since **1 Apr 2020**) sharply cut NOx & particulate emissions vs BS-IV.
- ▶ **Vehicle Scrappage Policy (2021):** fitness & age-based de-registration of unfit vehicles; incentives for scrapping.
- ▶ **CAQM** = Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR & adjoining areas (statutory, 2021); GRAP for graded responses.
- ▶ **NCAP** aims to reduce particulate pollution in non-attainment cities.

VALUE ADDITION — TACKLING NCR AIR POLLUTION

Sources: vehicles, industry, construction dust, stubble burning and biomass; the NCR's land-locked geography and winter inversion trap pollutants.

Co-benefits: fleet renewal improves air quality, aids the EV transition, supports auto-manufacturing and formalises the scrappage-recycling economy (circular economy).

Complementary steps: public-transport expansion, cleaner fuels, GRAP enforcement and airshed-level coordination across States.

SYLLABUS LINK » GS III — environmental pollution & degradation; government policies & interventions; conservation.



8 Lake Ontario & the Great Lakes System

GS I • GEOGRAPHY

WHY IN NEWS

US President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing federal agencies and the

US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY (USGS)

to refer to

LAKE ONTARIO AS "LAKE AMERICA"

amid trade tensions with Canada — putting the Great Lakes in focus.



The five Great Lakes — Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie & Ontario — on the US–Canada border.

- **Lake Ontario** is the **smallest by surface area** and the **easternmost** of the five Great Lakes; the name derives from the Huron-Wendat **Ontari'io** ("lake of shining waters").
- It forms a natural international boundary between **Canada and the United States**; surface area is about **19,011 sq km**.
- **Inflow**: the **Niagara River** is its principal feeder, connecting it with Lake Erie; other tributaries include the Genesee, Oswego, Black and Trent rivers.
- **Outflow**: it drains eastward into the **St. Lawrence River**, eventually reaching the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Glacial origin**: its basin was shaped by **Pleistocene continental glaciation**; mean depth **~86 m**, maximum **~244 m**.

PRELIMS POINTERS — GREAT LAKES

- ▶ **Mnemonic "HOMES"**: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior. **Superior** is the largest freshwater lake by area in the world.
- ▶ **Lake Michigan** lies entirely within the USA; the other four are shared with Canada.
- ▶ Connected to the Atlantic via the **St. Lawrence Seaway**; the lakes hold **~21% of the world's surface fresh water**.
- ▶ **Niagara Falls** lies on the Niagara River between Lakes Erie and Ontario.

Renaming as politics: place-name changes are increasingly used as instruments of nationalism/diplomacy (cf. the “Gulf of Mexico / Gulf of America” debate). Names on shared water bodies require bilateral acceptance to have international standing.

Trans-boundary governance: the US–Canada **International Joint Commission** and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement manage shared water resources — a model relevant to India’s river–water diplomacy.

SYLLABUS LINK » GS I — world physical geography; important geophysical features & changes in critical geographical features.

Practice Zone

MAINS — ANSWER-WRITING PRACTICE

MAINS Q.1 · GS III — ENVIRONMENT / DISASTER MANAGEMENT

“The increasing frequency of extreme events in the Himalayas is not merely a natural warning, but a reflection of unsustainable development choices.” Discuss the emerging ecological vulnerabilities of the Indian Himalayan Region and suggest measures for climate-resilient development.

“हिमालय में चरम प्राकृतिक घटनाओं की बढ़ती आवृत्ति केवल एक प्राकृतिक चेतावनी नहीं, बल्कि असतत विकास विकल्पों का भी प्रतिबिंब है।” भारतीय हिमालयी क्षेत्र की उभरती पारिस्थितिकीय संवेदनशीलताओं की चर्चा करते हुए जलवायु-सहनीय विकास के लिए उपाय सुझाइए।

(15 Marks · 250 Words)

APPROACH » Intro with the ‘one living rock’ framing & recent events. Body-1: natural vulnerabilities (seismicity Zone IV/V, glacial retreat, GLOFs, fragile lithology). Body-2: anthropogenic drivers (hydropower cascades, road/tunnel projects, tourism, Joshimath). Conclude with climate-resilient measures: carrying-capacity, EWS, cumulative EIA, zoning, NDMA-led preparedness.

MAINS Q.2 · GS II — INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India’s engagement with Central Asia has moved from symbolism to strategy. In light of recent agreements on uranium, critical minerals and digital payments, examine the significance of the region for India’s energy security and connectivity, and the challenges involved.

भारत का मध्य एशिया के साथ जुड़ाव प्रतीकात्मकता से रणनीति की ओर बढ़ा है। यूरेनियम, महत्वपूर्ण खनिजों तथा डिजिटल भुगतान पर हाल के समझौतों के आलोक में, भारत की ऊर्जा सुरक्षा और संपर्क (कनेक्टिविटी) के लिए इस क्षेत्र के महत्व और इससे जुड़ी चुनौतियों की विवेचना कीजिए।

(15 Marks · 250 Words)

APPROACH » Intro with the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership & \$5 bn trade target. Body: significance — uranium/civil-nuclear, critical minerals value chains, UPI-UZQR, INSTC/Chabahar connectivity, security vis-à-vis Afghanistan & counter to China’s BRI. Challenges: land-locked geography, low trade base, connectivity via Pakistan, great-power competition. Conclude with ‘Connect Central Asia’ way forward.

1. With reference to Central Asia, consider the following statements:

1. Uzbekistan is one of only two doubly land-locked countries in the world.
2. The Amu Darya and Syr Darya drain into the Caspian Sea.
3. Kazakhstan is the world's largest producer of uranium.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

2. The “VB-G RAM G Act, 2025”, recently in the news, is associated with:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (a) Urban housing for migrants | (b) Rural employment guarantee |
| (c) Riverfront rejuvenation | (d) Skill certification of artisans |

3. Consider the following about the VB-G RAM G framework:

1. It guarantees 125 days of employment per rural household.
2. Fund sharing is 60:40 generally and 90:10 for NE & Himalayan States.
3. Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas lead its implementation.

How many of the statements above are correct?

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

4. The Naxalbari uprising, which gave rise to the Naxalite movement, took place in:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) Andhra Pradesh, 1948 | (b) West Bengal, 1967 |
| (c) Bihar, 1974 | (d) Telangana, 1946 |

5. A “Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF)” is most directly associated with which of the following recent disasters?

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| (a) Bhuj, Gujarat | (b) South Lhonak Lake, Sikkim |
| (c) Chennai floods | (d) Cyclone Amphan |

6. The “Medog” hydropower project, recently in the news, is being built by China on which river at its “Great Bend”?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| (a) Indus | (b) Sutlej |
| (c) Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo) | (d) Mekong |

7. With reference to the Convention monitored by CERD, consider the following:

1. India ratified the ICERD in 1968.
2. CERD treats discrimination based on “descent” as including caste.
3. NHRC is graded by the GANHRI.

Which of the statements above are correct?

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

8. The “PM SVANidhi” scheme provides working-capital micro-credit primarily to:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) Small & marginal farmers | (b) Urban street vendors & hawkers |
| (c) Self-help groups in forests | (d) MSME exporters |

9. The PARIVARTAN scheme is implemented mainly by which Ministry?

- | | |
|--|---|
| (a) Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change | (b) Ministry of Heavy Industries |
| (c) Ministry of Road Transport & Highways | (d) Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas |

10. Consider the following about Lake Ontario:

1. It is the smallest of the Great Lakes by surface area.
2. The Niagara River is its principal feeder from Lake Erie.
3. It drains eastward into the St. Lawrence River.

Which of the statements above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

ANSWER KEY WITH RATIONALE

DETAILED ANSWER KEY

- 1 → (a)** 1 and 3 only. Uzbekistan (with Liechtenstein) is doubly land-locked and Kazakhstan is the top uranium producer – both correct. St.2 is wrong: the Amu Darya & Syr Darya drain into the **Aral Sea**, not the Caspian.
- 2 → (b)** Rural employment guarantee – VB-G RAM G (Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission, Gramin) succeeds MGNREGA.
- 3 → (c)** All three – 125 days, 60:40 & 90:10 fund sharing, and Gram Panchayat/Sabha-led implementation are all features.
- 4 → (b)** West Bengal, 1967 – the Naxalbari peasant uprising (Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal).
- 5 → (b)** South Lhonak Lake, Sikkim (2023 GLOF that damaged the Teesta-III dam).
- 6 → (c)** Brahmaputra / Yarlung Tsangpo – Medog is at the Great Bend near Namcha Barwa.
- 7 → (d)** 1, 2 and 3 – all correct: 1968 ratification; “descent” includes caste (GR-29); NHRC is graded by GANHRI.
- 8 → (b)** Urban street vendors & hawkers – collateral-free working-capital loans under MoHUA.
- 9 → (c)** Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH); funding via NCRPB under MoHUA.
- 10 → (d)** 1, 2 and 3 – all correct: smallest by area, fed by the Niagara River from Lake Erie, drains into the St. Lawrence.

QUICK REVISION RECAP

- ✓ **India-Uzbekistan:** Comprehensive Strategic Partnership; \$5 bn trade by 2030; uranium framework; UPI-UZQR; \$1 mn Aral Sea afforestation.
- ✓ **VB-G RAM G:** replaces MGNREGA; 125 days; e-KYC not a precondition for work; ~95% active workers e-KYC done.
- ✓ **‘Dimaagi Naxal’:** shifts focus from armed cadre to ideas; raises free-speech vs internal-security questions; CPI(Maoist) banned under UAPA.
- ✓ **Himalaya:** Zone IV/V seismicity, GLOFs, Medog on Brahmaputra; move DM to a war footing; decongest high-risk zones.
- ✓ **CERD:** ‘grave concern’; caste as ‘descent’; NHRC/GANHRI grading; need disaggregated data.
- ✓ **Schemes:** PM SVANidhi (urban vendors, 46% women); Mission ShaktiSAT (12,000 girls, 108 countries); National Space Day = 23 Aug.
- ✓ **PARIVARTAN:** ₹9,585 cr fleet-renewal for Delhi-NCR; BS-VI/EV; MoRTH + NCRPB.
- ✓ **Great Lakes:** HOMES; Superior largest; Ontario smallest & easternmost; drains to St. Lawrence.

PRELIMS TRAP-SETTERS — DON'T CONFUSE

Aral Sea vs Caspian Sea: Amu Darya & Syr Darya feed the **Aral Sea**; the Caspian is the world's largest inland water body (bordered by 5 nations incl. Iran & Russia).

Mission ShaktiSAT vs Mission Shakti: ShaktiSAT = girls in satellite technology; **Mission Shakti** (WCD) = umbrella scheme for women's safety & empowerment; **Mission Shakti (2019)** was also India's ASAT test.

ICERD vs ICCPR vs ICESCR: CERD monitors the **ICERD (racial discrimination)**; do not confuse with the Covenants on Civil-Political and Economic-Social-Cultural rights.

Lake Michigan: the only Great Lake lying **entirely within the USA** — a favourite prelims trap.

PRELIMS ONE-LINERS — FACTS TO REMEMBER

- ✓ **Doubly land-locked countries:** only Uzbekistan and Liechtenstein.
- ✓ **INSTC** (International North-South Transport Corridor) links India-Iran-Russia via Chabahar, cutting transit time to Central Asia/Europe.
- ✓ **UPI-UZQR** tie-up = NPCI International (NIPL) + Uzbekistan's national QR — India's expanding digital-payments diplomacy.
- ✓ **MGNREGA** enacted **2005**; legal right to 100 days work — now succeeded by VB-G RAM G (125 days).
- ✓ **CPI (Maoist)** banned under **UAPA, 1967**; MHA anti-LWE doctrine = **SAMADHAN**.
- ✓ **Seismic Zone V** = highest risk; covers much of the NE, J&K, Himachal & the Kutch region.
- ✓ **ICERD** adopted **1965**; monitored by **CERD** (18 experts); India a party since 1968.
- ✓ **National Space Day** = **23 August** (Chandrayaan-3 landing, 2023, at Shiv Shakti Point).
- ✓ **BS-VI** emission norms in force since **1 April 2020**.
- ✓ **Great Lakes mnemonic** = **HOMES**; Superior is the largest freshwater lake by area on Earth.

PLACES & PERSONS IN NEWS

Tashkent: capital of Uzbekistan — venue of the India-Uzbekistan summit (recall the historic Tashkent Declaration, 1966).

Aral Sea: shared by Uzbekistan & Kazakhstan; shrank drastically due to Soviet-era diversion of the Amu & Syr Darya — India granted \$1 mn for afforestation there.

Namcha Barwa / Great Bend: the Brahmaputra's sharp turn in Tibet, site of China's Medog project near the Paizhen Fault.

Shavkat Mirziyoyev: President of Uzbekistan, who elevated ties with India to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.