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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

The Hindu Analysis

A curated decode of the day's editorials & news — mapped to the
GS syllabus, with a full Practice Zone.

TUESDAY · 22 SEPTEMBER 2026

UPSC CSE

HPAS / HAS

COMPILED BY

Sapna Chauhan

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MAINS + PRELIMS

01

GS 3 · ECONOMY / INTERNATIONAL TRADE

India-New Zealand FTA to come into effect on Oct. 20

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India-New Zealand FTA to come into effect on Oct. 20

Both countries ratify agreement which aims at doubling bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore in 'next four to five years'; India's dairy, sensitive agriculture sectors protected, says Commerce Minister

Saptaparni Ghosh
NEW DELHI

The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and New Zealand that was ratified on Monday and comes into effect on October 20 aims at doubling bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore in the 'next four to five years', according to Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal.

"The entry into force of the India-New Zealand FTA will translate this goal into concrete economic outcomes," he told journalists. According to New Zealand's foreign trade office, the FTA is set to erase import levies on all Indian goods, while 95% of exports to India will either be allowed tariff-free or at "sharply" reduced levies.



PIYUSH GOYAL
Union Commerce Minister



TODD MCCLAY
Minister of Trade and Investment,
New Zealand

Mr. Goyal insisted that India has safeguarded its sensitive sectors, such as dairy and agricultural produce, including onions, almonds, chickpeas, peas, artificial honey, and sugar, not granting "Wellington any relaxation or concessions on these products in

They [New Zealand] could look to support our companies or invest and set up manufacturing in India to capture global markets

It [the FTA] gives confidence to our business communities to grow, form relationships, and trade

Mr. Goyal said, "They could look to support our companies or invest and set up manufacturing in India to capture global markets," he added.

New Zealand's Minister of Trade and Investment, Todd McClay, emphasised the significance of the two countries getting the deal done at a time of global "uncertainty", with escalating tariffs and trade barriers. "It gives confidence to our business communities to grow, form relationships, and trade," he said.

India is New Zealand's ninth largest export market, and the value of bilateral trade between the two countries stood at \$1.3 billion in the fiscal year 2024-25.

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Why in News

- ◆ The **India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** was **ratified on Monday** and comes into effect on **October 20**; it aims to **double bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore** in the "next four to five years" (Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal).
- ◆ Per NZ's foreign trade office, the FTA will **erase import levies on all Indian goods**, while **95% of NZ exports to India** will be tariff-free or at "sharply" reduced levies.
- ◆ **Sensitive sectors safeguarded:** India granted **no concession on dairy and agri produce** — onions, almonds, chickpeas, peas, artificial honey and sugar.

KEY NUMBERS & FACTS

- ▶ Bilateral trade value: **\$1.3 billion** (FY 2024-25).
- ▶ India is New Zealand's **9th largest export market**.
- ▶ Wellington committed **\$20 billion FDI** into India under the deal.
- ▶ Beneficiaries: MSMEs, farmers, handloom artisans, weavers.

PRELIMS POINTERS · INDIA's FTA TRAIL

- ▶ UAE–CEPA (2022), Australia–ECTA (2022), EFTA–TEPA (2024), UK–CETA (2025), **New Zealand (2026)**.
- ▶ NZ Minister of Trade & Investment: **Todd McClay**.
- ▶ NZ has technological expertise in **engineering-goods manufacturing** — potential India investment for global markets.

◆ DEEP DIVE · India's FTA Landscape — Strategic Depth

- ◆ **FTA vs CEPA/ECTA/TEPA:** an FTA mainly eliminates goods tariffs; CEPA/CECA also cover services & investment. India–NZ talks resumed in 2023 after a decade-long pause.
- ◆ **Why dairy is a red line:** NZ is a global dairy powerhouse (Fonterra); India shielded its ~80 million dairy farmers — the same red line that drove India's **2019 RCEP walkout**.
- ◆ **Strategic logic:** locks in an Indo-Pacific partner and diversifies away from China-centric supply chains, amid global tariff turbulence.

02

GS 3 • ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

Kasturirangan report on Western Ghats "threatens livelihoods"

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Kasturirangan report on Western Ghats threatens livelihoods: Karnataka CM

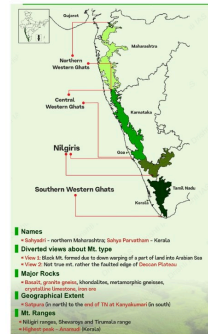
The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Monday told the Legislative Assembly that the proposed implementation of the Kasturirangan Committee report could threaten the livelihoods of people in 10 districts, even as he reaffirmed the State government's commitment to protecting the livelihoods of farmers and residents of the Western Ghats.

During the debate on the report, Mr. Shivakumar said his recommendations had created "an atmosphere of fear" among farmers. "More than six rivers originate and flow through the Western Ghats. The proposal of unscientific measures has caused widespread anxiety regarding people's livelihoods," he said. Before attending the session, Mr. Shivakumar had toured the coastal and Malnad regions, which would be affected by the report, and

had held meetings with people. According to the Kasturirangan report, 20,668 sq. km of Karnataka's Western Ghats region has been identified as ecologically sensitive, covering 1,449 villages. Mr. Shivakumar said people and farmers had made several suggestions during his consultations. "Farmers have sought rejection of the report and have demanded that a new committee be constituted," he said. The Chief Minister said

residents had questioned the inclusion of agricultural land within the proposed boundaries. "People want to know why boundaries are being fixed on their agricultural lands when the buffer zone should be restricted to forest areas. They simply want their properties and livelihoods to remain undisturbed," he said. The Centre has asked Karnataka to convey its decision on the report by September 27.



Rivers (originating)	- West-flowing: Periyar, Sharavathi, Netravathi, Sharavathi, Mandovi - East-flowing: Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Tungabhadra, Bhavani, Malaprabha, Chhatraprabha, Hemavathi, Kaveri
Endemic Species	- Nilgiri tahr (IUCN Status - EN) - Centropomus viridis (IUCN Status - EN)
Insp. Protected Areas	- Shivapuri Biosphere Reserve - Agasthyamala and Nilgiri - Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve - Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve - Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve - Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve
Insp. Parks	- Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve) - Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve) - Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve)
Significance	- Highly sensitive production - Highly sensitive production - Highly sensitive production
Major Threats	- Highly sensitive production - Highly sensitive production - Highly sensitive production
Insp. Committees	- Highly sensitive production - Highly sensitive production - Highly sensitive production

Why in News

- Karnataka CM **D.K. Shivakumar** told the Assembly that implementing the **Kasturirangan Committee report** could threaten livelihoods in **10 districts**, creating an "atmosphere of fear"; the State wants the report **rejected** and a new committee constituted.
- 20,668 sq km** of Karnataka's Western Ghats (covering **1,449 villages**) is identified as **Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA)**. The Centre has asked Karnataka to convey its decision by **September 27**.

GADGIL (WGEEP, 2011)

- Entire Western Ghats as **ESA** in graded zones **ESA-1/2/3** (ESA-1 = most activities restricted).
- Bottom-up governance** starting from Gram Sabhas.
- WGEA** as statutory authority under EPA 1986 (Sec. 3).
- Criticised as too "green", out of tune with ground realities.

KASTURIRANGAN (2013)

- Only **37%** of Western Ghats as ESA (development-conservation balance).
- Complete ban on **mining, quarrying, sand mining**; no thermal power; hydel only after study; **red (highly polluting) industries banned**.
- Excludes inhabited regions & plantations** — pro-farmer approach.

Prelims Snapshot • Western Ghats

- Also called **Sahyadri**; UNESCO World Heritage Site; among the **8 "hottest" global biodiversity hotspots**; older than the Himalayas; runs through 6 States.
- Highest peak **Anamudi** (Kerala). Endemic & Endangered: **Nilgiri tahr**, **lion-tailed macaque**. West-flowing: Periyar, Sharavathi; East-flowing: Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri. ESAs are notified under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.

DEEP DIVE • Environmental Federalism — The Larger Picture

- Western Ghats span **6 States** — Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu (~1,600 km; ~1,40,000 sq km).
- MoEF&CC has issued **six draft ESA notifications since 2014** (latest 2022); none finalised due to State resistance — a textbook **Centre-State environmental deadlock**.
- Ecosystem services**: sustains peninsular India's monsoon & rivers (water security for ~245 million people), acts as a carbon sink (~4 MT CO₂/yr), and hosts several PVTGs.

03

GS 2 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India to attend session on UN-based multilateralism (P4M)

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India to attend session on UN-based multilateralism

EU, Brazil, Kenya, Canada launch grouping beyond superpower politics; the P4M initiative seeks a more representative UN that is prepared for global challenges, including AI and climate change

Subhash Jha:

India will join a number of countries committed to supporting United Nations (UN)-based multilateralism, away from "superpower" politics, as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was set to address the "Partners for Multilateralism" (P4M) meeting at the United Nations on Tuesday.

Mr. Jaishankar landed in New York on Monday at the start of the UN General Assembly "High Level Week" session. He is due to hold a number of bilateral meetings and multilateral meetings there, and will address the UNGA on September 26.

The P4M initiative, founded by leaders of the European Union, Brazil, Kenya and Canada, was unveiled to make a push for the grouping this week.

In a joint editorial, leaders of the four founders said the grouping will support the UN's push for a more representative and prepared for the global challenges, including AI and digital transformation.

"We will support the reform of the UN and other multilateral institutions, and make them more representative, legitimate, effective and inclusive," the leaders, including European Council President Antonio Costa, said President Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil President Lula da



Jaishankar (second from left) speaking at the P4M meeting.

Silva, Kenyan President William Ruto and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, said in the editorial published in the US-based New York Times.

Mr. Jaishankar had addressed a speech on "Middle powers" coming together at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January.

He also spoke at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, where he said India is committed to a more representative and prepared for the global challenges, including AI and digital transformation.

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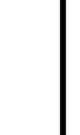
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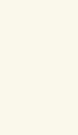
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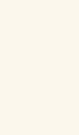
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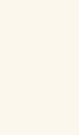
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Why in News

- ◆ India (EAM S. Jaishankar) is to attend the **"Partners for Multilateralism" (P4M)** meeting at the UN — a push for UN-based multilateralism, "away from superpower politics."
- ◆ P4M is founded by leaders of the **EU, Brazil, Kenya and Canada**; it seeks a more **representative UN** prepared for AI, climate change, health security and digital transformation.
- ◆ Jaishankar landed in New York for the UNGA **High-Level Debate**; will address the UNGA on **September 26**.

WHO & WHAT

- ▶ Founding leaders: **Antonio Costa** (European Council), **Lula da Silva** (Brazil), **William Ruto** (Kenya), **Mark Carney** (Canada) — joint editorial in the *Financial Times*.
- ▶ Carney's Davos speech on **"middle powers"** flagged dissatisfaction with US/Russia/China unilateralism.
- ▶ P4M is **not** an exclusive bloc; it is an open framework for UN reform.

CONTEXT · GUTERRES

- ▶ UNSG: superpowers are "discovering their limits."
- ▶ **2025** saw the highest recorded number of **state-based armed conflicts since 1946** (35 countries); military spending ~\$3 trillion.
- ▶ India already in **NAM, BRICS, G20, G-4** with similar objectives.

Mains Dimension

- ◆ **UNSC reform** and legitimacy deficit of post-1945 institutions; the rise of **middle-power coalitions** in a multipolar order.
- ◆ Fits India's doctrine of **multi-alignment** / strategic autonomy — engaging plural groupings without exclusive commitments.

DEEP DIVE · UN Reform — Why It Stays Stuck

- ◆ Reform is blocked by the **"Uniting for Consensus" (Coffee Club)** — Italy, Pakistan, etc. — which opposes new permanent seats; Africa's **Ezulwini Consensus** demands 2 permanent + 5 non-permanent seats.
- ◆ The **G-4 (India, Japan, Germany, Brazil)** mutually back each other's UNSC bids; India argues the Council still mirrors the 1945 power order.

◆ **Middle-power multilateralism** = issue-based plurilateralism — a natural fit for India's shift from Non-Alignment to multi-alignment.

Accused entitled to release if grounds of arrest not given: SC

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Accused entitled to release if grounds of arrest not given: SC

Right to know grounds of arrest, availability of counsel of choice are fundamental rights under Article 22(1) of Constitution, and 'cannot be breached under any situation', says Supreme Court

Krishna Das Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in a judgment on Monday held that an arrested person kept in the dark about the grounds of arrest and without access to a lawyer was entitled to immediate release.

The right to know the grounds of arrest in writing in a familiar language, and the availability of a counsel of choice, was a sacrosanct fundamental right under Article 220 of the Constitution, and "cannot be breached under any situation", a Bench headed by Justice Ujjal Bhuyan said. It has to be followed without exception and at the earliest.

"Any breach or non-compliance would entail immediate release of the arrested person because such arrest is unconstitutional. We cannot tinker with the most important safeguards provided under Article 22. Any attempt to encroach upon the fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 22(3) of the Constitution has to be

Any attempt to curtail the rights guaranteed under Article 22(1) of the Constitution is frowned upon by the courts and dealt with strictly. It will vitiate the process of law and demand

JUSTICE UJJAL BHUYAN



accused who had suffered breach of Clauses (1) and (2) of Article 22 could be re-arrested for the same offence, and if so, under what circumstances. Clause (2) of the Article mandates the production of an accused person before the Magistrate within 24 hours of arrest.

There cannot be a blanket immunity against future arrest, Justice Bhuyan said, as some cases relate to grave offences. However, any such move by the probe agencies must be based on stringent judicial oversight in order to protect citizens from police arbitrariness.

The apex court directed that a specific sanction from the Magistrate concerned must precede any attempt by the police to arrest for the second time a person whose earlier ar-

The police must apply before the Magistrate, providing recorded reasons for seeking arrest, the judgment said.

Why in News

- ◆ Supreme Court (Justices **Ujjal Bhuyan** & Atul S. Chandurkar): an arrested person kept in the dark about the **grounds of arrest** and denied a lawyer is entitled to **immediate release**.
- ◆ The right to know grounds of arrest **in writing, in a familiar language**, and counsel of choice is a **sacrosanct fundamental right under Art. 22(1)** — "cannot be breached under any situation", across IPC and special laws (**terror & money-laundering**).
- ◆ Breach is **not a "mere procedural lapse"**; release is from **unconstitutional detention**, not bail. A later chargesheet/cognisance does **not** validate the arrest.

ART. 22(1) & (2) – FOUR RIGHTS

- ▶ To be **informed of grounds** of arrest "as soon as may be".
- ▶ To **consult & be defended** by a lawyer of choice.
- ▶ To be **produced before a magistrate within 24 hours**.
- ▶ No detention beyond 24 hrs except by magistrate's order.
- ▶ Available to **citizens & non-citizens**; NOT to enemy aliens or preventive-detention detenus [Art. 22(3)].

PREVENTIVE DETENTION • 22(4)-(7)

- ▶ No detention beyond **3 months** without an **Advisory Board**.
- ▶ Grounds must be communicated "as soon as may be".
- ▶ Earliest opportunity to make a **representation**.
- ▶ Parliament may prescribe longer detention [Art. 22(7)(a)].

- ◆ **DEEP DIVE · Jurisprudence on Arrest — Building Blocks**
- ◆ Extends a line of safeguards: **D.K. Basu v. State of W.B. (1997)** arrest guidelines; **Pankaj Bansal (2023)** & **Prabir Purkayastha (2024)** — written grounds of arrest are mandatory even under PMLA/UAPA.
- ◆ The **44th Amendment (1978)** sought to trim preventive detention without an Advisory Board from 3 to 2 months (that clause remains un-notified).
- ◆ Art. 22 read with **Art. 21 (life & liberty)** and **Art. 20 (protection re conviction)** forms the constitutional trilogy of rights of the accused.

05

GS 3 • ECONOMY / ENVIRONMENT

Decoding the transition to alternative fuels

Page No.7, GS 3

Decoding the transition to alternative fuels

While adoption of EVs has risen in the passenger vehicles category, it is mainly two-wheeler and three-wheeler categories that are adopting EVs then cars.

DATA POINT

Sankha Senapati
Ganika Sinha

August 2026 marked a historic fuel crossover (FADA data): in passenger vehicles, the alternative-fuels share (41.95% = CNG + hybrid + EV) overtook petrol (40.85%) for the first time. Yet petrol & diesel still dominate at 83.5% of ~82 lakh vehicles (Jan-Mar) — down 11.5 percentage points from >95% in 2021. EVs are 10.6% of total registrations.

Without doubt, India has made considerable progress in shifting away from fossil fuels towards greener alternatives. EVs, as Chart 1 shows, petrol and diesel still dominate the market by a large margin, accounting for 83.5% of all the roughly 82 lakh vehicles registered till March this year. But this is a sharp 11.5 percentage point drop from the same period in 2021, when petrol and diesel accounted for over 95% of all the EV lakh vehicles registered then.

Less adoption among cars
While the chart shows the rise of EVs on a sharp increase, accounting for 10.6% of total registrations, a similar analysis of car category under "alternative fuels" under the Vahan portal shows that this was driven more by EV adoption in the two-wheeler and three-wheeler categories. When cars register, the growth under the alternative fuels is more pronounced in vehicles that use CNG or LPG, which are fuel-burners with significantly lower emissions, than EVs.

The two-wheeler segment which accounts for over 70% of all the new vehicles registered in the country had shown signs that EV adoption is gaining pace.

After registering a marginal increase year-on-year, the share of EVs in two-wheelers has made a jump from 6.6% in 2021 to 9.1% in 2026, as per FADA data. This is also the first time the share of two-wheelers running on petrol has come down to the 40% mark. This jump in the sale of EV two-wheelers has contributed significantly to the overall share of petrol and diesel vehicles, across all categories, making them still the dominant force in the market.

If there is one segment that has made a rapid transition away from petrol and diesel, it is the three-wheeler category. This, however, accounts for only 4% of all the vehicles sold. Of the roughly 14 lakh three-wheelers registered off August this year, all EVs have been EVs under 10. The share of petrol and diesel in the registration of three-wheelers has fallen from nearly 90% in 2021 to less than 80% in 2026. Interestingly, the share of three-wheelers using CNG or LPG has also come down this year.

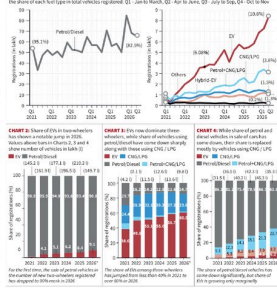
It is in the car segment, which accounts for the second biggest share in the market after two-wheelers, that this picture is most nuanced. Chart 2 shows a considerable dip in the share of petrol and diesel cars from 95% in 2021 to 83.5% in 2026.

However, this decline is because there are more hybrid cars than EVs. There is certainly growth in the sale of EV cars, but it is much slower when compared to vehicles using CNG or LPG. The share of hybrid EVs has remained fairly constant since 2021, as announced per cent. The data also shows the need for further investment through incentives such as the easing up of charging infrastructure, which will help speed up the pace of EV adoption among cars.

Nuance in the mix

The data in the charts were sourced from the FADA portal, which has the latest car category sales for 2021 to 2026. EVs in the car category with negligible share in registrations are not shown in the charts. Also, charging and fueling infrastructure are not shown in the charts.

Chart 1: The chart shows the total number of vehicles registered in each car category while the share of EVs within each category shows the share of each fuel type in total vehicles registered. EV: all EVs, 2W: up to 200 cc, 3W: up to 200 cc, 4W: up to 200 cc.



Why in News

- ◆ **August 2026** marked a "historic fuel crossover" (FADA data): in **passenger vehicles**, the alternative-fuels share (41.95% = CNG + hybrid + EV) **overtook petrol (40.85%)** for the first time.
- ◆ Yet petrol & diesel still dominate at **83.5%** of ~82 lakh vehicles (Jan-Mar) — down **11.5 percentage points** from >95% in 2021. EVs are **10.6%** of total registrations.

WHERE EVs ARE WINNING

- ▶ **Two-wheelers** (>70% of all new vehicles): EV share jumped **6.4% (2025) → 9.1% (2026)**; petrol 2W fell below 90% for the first time.
- ▶ **Three-wheelers** (~4% of vehicles): **60.5%** are now EVs.

THE CAR PROBLEM & PRELIMS

- ▶ In cars, alt-fuel growth is driven more by **CNG/LPG** (low-emission fossil fuels) than by EVs.
- ▶ Fix: ramp up **charging infrastructure** to accelerate car-EV adoption.
- ▶ **FADA** = Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations; data from the **Vahan portal** (MoRTH). Schemes: **FAME, PM E-DRIVE**.

DEEP DIVE • The EV Policy Ecosystem

- ◆ Demand push: **FAME-I (2015), FAME-II (2019)** and **PM E-DRIVE (2024, ₹10,900 cr)**; supply push via **PLI** for ACC batteries & autos; target **EV30@30** (30% EV sales by 2030).
- ◆ Cars lag on **range anxiety, charging gaps and battery cost** — CNG/LPG serve as a lower-emission "**bridge fuel**" during transition.
- ◆ Co-benefits: cuts the oil-import bill (India imports ~85% of crude) and urban PM2.5; **grid-readiness and battery recycling** are the next hurdles.

06

GS 2 · POLITY · EDITORIAL

"Presumed ineligible": the ECI's SIR of electoral rolls

Page No.6, GS 2

Presumed ineligible

The ECI must end its method of deleting first and verifying later

Not one eligible elector should be left out of the electoral rolls. This statement appears in nearly every document released by the Election Commission of India (ECI) as part of the ongoing SIR process, and the Supreme Court of India, which is hearing petitions challenging the SIR, has also used this refrain. Yet, according to an ECI counter-affidavit filed in the Court, by early September 2025, out of more than 38 lakh appeals submitted to SIR appellate tribunals in West Bengal, just over 1,22,000 appeals were disposed of (a disposal rate of just 3.2%) and 1,13,943 electors were added back to the rolls (an inclusion rate of nearly 93%). This suggests that the claims/corrections phase in the West Bengal SIR – during which judicial officers deployed for verification deemed 27 lakh of the 60 lakh electors flagged for “logical discrepancies” to be ineligible – was deeply flawed. More than 22 lakh of those found ineligible have since appealed, and ECI data show that more than nine in 10 cases decided by the tribunals have ended with the electors back on the rolls. If these “inclusion” and “disposal” rates hold, the majority of the 27 lakh electors should not have been ineligible in the first place and are now struggling to get back on the rolls – an indication that massive disenfranchisement preceded the West Bengal Assembly polls. With municipal elections in the State approaching, the ECI must speed up the appellate process and restore eligible electors to the rolls.

In Phase 3 of the SIR, *The Hindu's* analysis found that in 24 out of Delhi's 70 constituencies, the draft roll now records fewer electors than those who voted in the February 2025 Assembly election. Such large-scale deletion cannot hold unless there was a major migration process in the capital region or large numbers of voters were never ordinarily resident in Delhi. A more plausible answer is that the enumeration itself has struck off actual voters. The process puts the onus of proving eligibility on the elector, and the ECI's dropping of enumeration forms at homes has not translated into full enumeration. Requiring electors to link themselves to rolls drawn in the early 2000s then manufactures “discrepancies” even when documents are valid. In Delhi, this “mapping” has put 13.79 lakh electors under notice with a further 19.33 lakh flagged for “logical discrepancies” on undefined grounds. While hearing the Bihar SIR petitions, the Court had intervened sharply to stop eligible voters from being struck off. Its permissiveness in the year since, towards an insouciant ECI has allowed disenfranchisement on a scale that will remain a black mark on the jurisprudence of universal adult franchise in India. As the Court hears petitions on Delhi and West Bengal, it must compel the ECI to reverse course.

Why in News · Editorial

- ◆ Editorial argues the **ECI must end its "delete first, verify later"** method in the ongoing **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls.
- ◆ **Phase 3 (Delhi):** in **24 of 70 constituencies**, the draft roll records **fewer electors than voters in the Feb 2025 Assembly election** — implausible without large migration; suggests enumeration struck off actual voters.
- ◆ **West Bengal:** of >38 lakh appeals, only **1,22,000 disposed (3.2%)** and **1,13,943 added back (≈93% inclusion)** — implying ~27 lakh were wrongly flagged as ineligible.

THE PROCESS PROBLEM

- ▶ Onus of proving eligibility shifted **onto the elector**.
- ▶ "Mapping" to early-2000s rolls manufactures "discrepancies" even when documents are valid.
- ▶ Delhi: **13.79 lakh** under notice; **19.33 lakh** flagged for "logical discrepancies" on undefined grounds.

PRELIMS + MAINS

- ▶ **SIR** = Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls; ECI derives powers from **Art. 324**; rolls under the **RP Act, 1950**.
- ▶ SC intervened in the **Bihar SIR** to stop eligible voters from being struck off.
- ▶ Core issue: **due process** in disenfranchisement & ECI accountability under universal adult franchise.

◆ DEEP DIVE · Electoral Rolls — Law & Safeguards

- ◆ Legal basis: **RP Act, 1950 & Registration of Electors Rules, 1960**; Forms 6/7/8 for inclusion/deletion/correction; the **ERO** decides, with appeals to the DM and then the CEO.
- ◆ Constitutional anchor: **Art. 324** (ECI superintendence) and **Art. 326** (universal adult suffrage).
- ◆ **Lal Babu Hussein (1995)**: a person already on the roll cannot be deleted without **notice and a hearing** — the very due process the editorial says SIR is bypassing.

07

GS 2/3 • SECURITY • EDITORIAL

"Unsafe space": deployment of weapons in orbit

Page No.6 , GS 2

Unsafe space

Deployment of weapons calls for multilateral governance in space

Although the U.S. military doctrine was openly considering offensive and defensive space control by 2025, the admission on September 14 by U.S. Air Force Secretary Troy Meink, and confirmed by Space Force chief Gen. Douglas Schiess, that the country has deployed "on-orbit space control weapons" to "defend against hostile adversary action" is cause for concern. Satellite systems increasingly underpin communications, energy, and financial networks and many commercial systems serve civilian and military users. To that end, the U.S., Russia, China, and India, among others, have been developing counter-space capabilities while contributing to the technological and strategic environment rendering earth orbit the next major battlefield. The increasing military use of commercial satellites can endanger the protections they enjoy under international humanitarian law even as this law is underprepared for satellites being highly interconnected and often dual-use. That said, the details that justify the need for orbital defence systems also make poorly specified weapons a potential cause of instability. Mr. Meink described the weapon as defensive, but U.S. military doctrine defines "space control" as encompassing both offensive and defensive operations.

Compounding the consequences of confusion

when two steerable satellites approach each other without understanding the other's intentions – including due to future autonomous satellites running artificial intelligence models onboard – is the lack of policy details. What constitutes "hostile action" and what the weapon can do remain unclear. While the Outer Space Treaty does not ban weapons in orbit *per se*, Article IV prohibits nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit – a fluid line considering the centrality of satellite-based networks for contemporary society and the ability of conventional weapons to render damage en masse; its Article III also requires space activities to comply with international law. But when an autonomous, dual-use orbital asset operated by a commercial entity initiates an unwanted defensive strike, the existing rules, including the Liability Convention, cannot be applied straightforwardly to determine accountability. The rules have become too coarse for what contemporary technologies, and the declining esteem for a rules-based world order, warrant. The U.N. Open-Ended Working Group on the 'Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space' should offer governments an opportunity to address the disclosure. The U.S. government should also reveal the particulars of the weapons it has deployed, and enter into a multilateral governance arrangement that defines exact thresholds of action and escalation.

Why in News • Editorial

- ◆ On **Sept 14**, US Air Force Secretary **Troy Meink** (confirmed by Space Force chief Gen. Douglas Schiess) admitted the US has deployed "**on-orbit space control weapons**" to defend against "hostile adversary action" — raising concern over the weaponisation of orbit.
- ◆ The editorial calls for **multilateral governance in space**: "hostile action" is undefined, existing rules (Liability Convention) are too coarse, and the **UN Open-Ended Working Group on PAROS** should address disclosure.

SPACE LAW FRAMEWORK

- ▶ **Outer Space Treaty, 1967**: Art. IV bans **nuclear/WMD** in orbit — but has a loophole: **no ban on conventional/kinetic/jammers/directed-energy** arms.
- ▶ **UN Charter Art. 51** (self-defence) applies to space.
- ▶ **PTBT 1963**: bans nuclear tests in outer space.
- ▶ **Moon Agreement 1979**: no military bases — but major powers have not ratified.

COUNTER-SPACE TECHNIQUES

- ▶ **DA-ASAT** (kinetic): China (2007, Fengyun-1C), **India — Mission Shakti, 2019**, US, Russia.
- ▶ **Co-orbital RPO**: maneuverable "inspector" satellites (Russian Cosmos).
- ▶ **Directed-energy / laser blinding & RF jammers**.
- ▶ **Space-based interceptors** — US "**Golden Dome**".

◆ DEEP DIVE • India in Orbit — Capability & Governance

- ◆ **Mission Shakti (Mar 2019)**: a DRDO-led **DA-ASAT** test destroyed a live LEO satellite (~283 km), making India the **4th ASAT power** after the US, Russia and China.
- ◆ Governance gaps: OST has **no verification or definitions**; **PAROS** has been stalled at the UN Conference on Disarmament since the 1980s; the **Artemis Accords** (India joined 2023) set voluntary norms.
- ◆ India's ecosystem: **Indian Space Policy 2023, IN-SPaCe, NSIL** — but dual-use tech deepens debris and security concerns.

08

GS 2 • INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A Malacca-Singapore model for resolving Hormuz

Page No.6, GS 2

A Malacca-Singapore model for resolving Hormuz

A territorial turning point
The Horn of Africa was once a hotbed of international law. In the 1970s, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the "Treaty of the Sea" which gave the world's nations a new framework for resolving maritime disputes. The treaty was a landmark achievement for the world's nations, and it was a testament to the power of international law. The treaty was a landmark achievement for the world's nations, and it was a testament to the power of international law.



M. Kalyanaram

The treaty and the great powers
The treaty was a landmark achievement for the world's nations, and it was a testament to the power of international law. The treaty was a landmark achievement for the world's nations, and it was a testament to the power of international law.

The geographic context
The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow waterway that connects the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea. It is a vital shipping lane for the world's oil supply. The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow waterway that connects the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea. It is a vital shipping lane for the world's oil supply.



Why in News • Op-Ed

- Op-ed (M. Kalyanaram) proposes the **Malacca-Singapore Straits model** to resolve the **Strait of Hormuz** impasse.
- 1971:** Malaysia, Indonesia & Singapore challenged the "international strait" tag, issued a joint statement and set up a coordinating body; UNCLOS later introduced "**transit passage**". An **Aids to Navigation Fund** (voluntary; Nippon Foundation) funds safety — **littoral states levy no tolls**.
- Parallel:** at Hormuz, the territorial waters of **Iran & Oman** intersect. Iran (not a UNCLOS party) passed a 1993 law requiring foreign warships to seek authorisation — a persistent sore point.

UNCLOS — "CONSTITUTION OF THE OCEANS"

- Adopted **1982 (Montego Bay, Jamaica)**; in force **1994**; **168 parties + EU**.
- US signed but not ratified**; Iran not ratified.
- Zones: **Territorial Sea 12 nm**, **Contiguous 24**, **EEZ 200 nm**, **High Seas**.
- Bodies: **ITLOS (Hamburg)**, **ISA (Kingston — seabed "common heritage")**.

PASSAGE & HIGH SEAS

- Innocent passage** (territorial sea) vs **transit passage** (straits — continuous & expeditious, applies to warships too).
- High Seas** = beyond 200 nm EEZ; freedom of navigation/overflight; **Art. 88 — peaceful use**; no sovereignty claims.
- Chokepoints: **Hormuz (Iran-Oman)**, **Bab-el-Mandeb**, **Malacca**.

DEEP DIVE • India & the Law of the Sea

- India's stake in Hormuz:** a large share of India's crude and most of its LPG transit the Strait — it is energy-security critical; India **signed and ratified UNCLOS in 1995**.
- Enrica Lexie case (Italy v. India, PCA 2020):** UNCLOS dispute-settlement was applied to an incident in India's waters — showing the treaty's teeth.
- ~20% of global oil passes through Hormuz with **no equal-capacity bypass pipeline** — hence the appeal of a Malacca-style cooperative, toll-free transit regime.



Q

PRACTICE ZONE · MAINS

Answer-Writing Questions

MAINS 1 · GS-3 (ENVIRONMENT / FEDERALISM) · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

The recurring resistance to the Kasturirangan report reveals an unresolved tension between ecological conservation and livelihood security in India's ecologically sensitive areas. Critically examine, and suggest a way forward that reconciles the two.

कस्तूरीरंगन रिपोर्ट के प्रति बार-बार उठता विरोध भारत के पारिस्थितिकीय रूप से संवेदनशील क्षेत्रों में पारिस्थितिक संरक्षण एवं आजीविका सुरक्षा के बीच अनसुलझे तनाव को उजागर करता है। समालोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए तथा दोनों में सामंजस्य स्थापित करने का मार्ग सुझाइए।

Approach: Intro — define ESA & the Western Ghats context. Body — contrast Gadgil (37 vs 100% ESA, bottom-up governance) and Kasturirangan; give the livelihood concerns (10 districts, 1,449 villages, "atmosphere of fear") vs ecological stakes (hotspot, water security, carbon sink). Discuss federal friction (Centre's Sept 27 deadline). Way forward — participatory (Gram Sabha) demarcation, buffer restricted to forests, eco-sensitive livelihoods, scientific ground-truthing. Conclude on sustainable development.

MAINS 2 · GS-2 (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS) · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

Coalitions such as "Partners for Multilateralism" (P4M) signal a churn in which "middle powers" seek to reform, rather than replace, the multilateral order. Examine the relevance of such groupings for India's foreign policy of multi-alignment.

"पार्टनर्स फ़ॉर मल्टीलैटरलिज़्म" (P4M) जैसे गठबंधन उस मंथन का संकेत देते हैं जिसमें "मध्यम शक्तियाँ" बहुपक्षीय व्यवस्था को प्रतिस्थापित करने के बजाय उसमें सुधार करना चाहती हैं। भारत की बहु-संरेखण (multi-alignment) विदेश नीति के लिए ऐसे समूहों की प्रासंगिकता का परीक्षण कीजिए।

Approach: Intro — the legitimacy/representation deficit of post-1945 institutions & P4M's founders (EU, Brazil, Kenya, Canada). Body — what "middle-power" multilateralism offers (UN reform, AI/climate/health agenda, "away from superpower politics"); align with India's existing platforms (G-4, BRICS, G20, NAM) & UNSC-reform interest; note risks (bloc dilution, US-China rivalry, whether India was even invited). Way forward — issue-based plurilateralism serving strategic autonomy. Conclude.



P

PRACTICE ZONE · PRELIMS

10 MCQs from Today's Analysis

Q1. With reference to the recently ratified India–New Zealand FTA, consider the following statements:

1. It comes into effect on 20 October 2026.
2. It aims to double bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore over the next four to five years.
3. India granted New Zealand duty-free access to its dairy sector under the deal.

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

Q2. Regarding ESAs in the Western Ghats, which statement is correct?

- (a) The Gadgil report recommended bringing only 37% of the Ghats under ESA (b) The Kasturirangan report imposed a complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in ESAs
(c) ESAs are notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (d) The Gadgil report proposed a top-down governance model

Q3. Consider the following about the Western Ghats:

1. Anamudi is its highest peak.
2. The Nilgiri tahr and lion-tailed macaque are endemic to it.
3. The Godavari and Krishna are west-flowing rivers originating here.

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

Q4. The rights guaranteed under Article 22(1) and 22(2) of the Constitution are available to:

- (a) Indian citizens only (b) Both citizens and non-citizens, except enemy aliens and preventive detainees
(c) All persons including those under preventive detention (d) Only persons accused under special laws

Q5. Under Article 22 (preventive detention safeguards), which is correct?

- (a) Detention beyond 3 months always requires an Advisory Board opinion (b) The detaining authority need not communicate the grounds of detention
(c) Parliament may prescribe detention beyond 3 months without an Advisory Board in certain classes of cases (d) A detainee has no right to make a representation

Q6. The August 2026 "historic fuel crossover" reported by FADA refers to:

- (a) EVs overtaking all fuels in two-wheeler sales (b) Alternative fuels overtaking petrol in the passenger-vehicle category for the first time
(c) Diesel falling below 10% of total registrations (d) CNG becoming the single largest fuel for cars



P

PRACTICE ZONE · PRELIMS

MCQs (contd.) & Answer Key

Q7. With reference to UNCLOS, consider the statements:

1. It was adopted in 1982 and entered into force in 1994.
2. The Exclusive Economic Zone extends up to 200 nautical miles.
3. The United States has ratified the convention.

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

Q8. Which of the following is NOT prohibited by the Outer Space Treaty, 1967?

- (a) Placing nuclear weapons in orbit (b) Stationing weapons of mass destruction in space
(c) Deploying conventional/kinetic weapons in Earth orbit (d) Installing WMD on celestial bodies

Q9. The "Partners for Multilateralism" (P4M) initiative was founded by leaders of:

- (a) USA, UK, France and Germany (b) European Union, Brazil, Kenya and Canada
(c) India, Japan, Germany and Brazil (d) China, Russia, India and South Africa

Q10. Match the strait with its bordering states — which pair is correctly matched?

- (a) Strait of Hormuz — Iran and Oman (b) Bab-el-Mandeb — India and Sri Lanka
(c) Strait of Malacca — China and Vietnam (d) Strait of Hormuz — Saudi Arabia and Qatar

ANSWER KEY & RATIONALE

- 1 → (a)** The FTA enters into force on **20 Oct 2026** (✓) and targets **₹35,000 crore** bilateral trade in 4–5 years (✓). India granted **no concession** on dairy — a protected sensitive sector (X3).
- 2 → (b)** Kasturirangan imposed a **complete ban on mining/quarrying/sand mining**. Gadgil sought ~100% (not 37%) as ESA with **bottom-up** governance; ESAs are notified under the **EPA, 1986**.
- 3 → (a)** Anamudi is the highest peak (✓); tahr & macaque are endemic (✓). Godavari & Krishna are **east-flowing** (X3).
- 4 → (b)** Art. 22(1)&(2) protect **citizens and non-citizens alike**, but **not** enemy aliens or those under preventive-detention law [Art. 22(3)].
- 5 → (c)** Art. 22(7)(a): Parliament may by law prescribe detention **beyond 3 months without an Advisory Board** for certain classes of cases. Grounds must be communicated & representation allowed.
- 6 → (b)** In **passenger vehicles**, alternative fuels (CNG+hybrid+EV = 41.95%) **overtook petrol** (40.85%) for the first time — the "historic fuel crossover".
- 7 → (a)** UNCLOS adopted 1982, in force 1994 (✓); EEZ = 200 nm (✓); the **US has signed but NOT ratified** (X3).
- 8 → (c)** OST Art. IV bans **only nuclear weapons/WMD** — its loophole is that **conventional/kinetic weapons in orbit are not prohibited**.



R

PRACTICE ZONE · REVISION

Quick Recap · Trap-Setters · In News

Quick Revision — One-Liners

- ★ **India–NZ FTA**: ratified Mon, in force **Oct 20**; target ₹35,000 cr; NZ = India's 9th-largest export market; \$20 bn FDI; dairy/sugar protected.
- ★ **Western Ghats**: Gadgil (2011) ~100% ESA + bottom-up; Kasturirangan (2013) 37% ESA + mining ban; Karnataka to reply by **Sept 27**.
- ★ **P4M**: EU + Brazil + Kenya + Canada; UN reform "away from superpower politics"; Jaishankar addresses UNGA **Sept 26**.
- ★ **Art. 22**: grounds of arrest + counsel = sacrosanct 22(1) right; breach → release from unconstitutional detention, not bail.
- ★ **EV crossover (Aug 2026)**: alt-fuels 41.95% > petrol 40.85% in cars; EVs strongest in 2W/3W; source = FADA/Vahan.
- ★ **SIR editorial**: "delete first, verify later"; Delhi Phase 3 & WB appeal data show wrongful deletions; ECI under Art. 324.
- ★ **Space weapons**: US admits "on-orbit space control weapons"; OST 1967 bans only WMD; India's DA-ASAT = Mission Shakti 2019.
- ★ **Hormuz & UNCLOS**: Malacca-Singapore transit-passage model; UNCLOS 1982/1994; EEZ 200 nm; US & Iran not ratified.

⚠ Trap-Setters

- ⚠ **Gadgil vs Kasturirangan**: 37% ESA is **Kasturirangan**, not Gadgil.
- ⚠ **OST Art. IV** bans only **WMD/nuclear** — conventional weapons in orbit are legal.
- ⚠ **US** has **signed but not ratified** UNCLOS; so has **not** Iran.
- ⚠ Release for Art. 22(1) breach is **NOT bail** — it is release from illegal detention.
- ⚠ **Godavari/Krishna/Kaveri** are **east-flowing**; Periyar/Sharavathi west-flowing.

📍 Places in News

- Strait of Hormuz** — Iran & Oman; oil chokepoint.
- Strait of Malacca / Singapore** — Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore.
- Bab-el-Mandeb** — Red Sea gateway (Yemen–Djibouti).
- Western Ghats** — Sahyadri; UNESCO WHS; Anamudi peak.
- Montego Bay** (Jamaica) — where UNCLOS was adopted, 1982.

👤 Persons in News

- Piyush Goyal** — Union Commerce Minister (India–NZ FTA).
- Todd McClay** — NZ Minister of Trade & Investment.
- S. Jaishankar** — EAM, at UNGA / P4M.
- Antonio Costa · Lula da Silva · William Ruto · Mark Carney** — P4M founders.
- António Guterres** — UN Secretary-General.

- D.K. Shivakumar** — Karnataka CM (Kasturirangan report).
- Justice Ujjal Bhuyan** — authored the Art. 22 judgment.
- Troy Meink** — US Air Force Secretary (space weapons).
- Madhav Gadgil · K. Kasturirangan** — Western Ghats panel chairs.