



Mastering others is
strength. Mastering
yourself is true power.



Important Issues of the Day

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- **Grok – Page No. 1, GS 3**
- **ST status – Page No. 1, GS 2**
- **Waste-ridden urban India – Page No. 6, GS 1**
- **Fiscal targets – Page No. 6, GS 3**
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- **Bulgaria – Places in News**

U.S. 'locked and loaded' as Iran protests turn deadly

Trump's threat to intervene against protest crackdown drew sharp reactions from Iranian officials who warned that U.S. interference would 'destabilise' the region and 'destroy' American interests

Stanly Johny
CHENNAI

U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday threatened to intervene if Iran used lethal force against protesters, drawing swift and angry responses from Iranian officials who warned that American troops and bases in West Asia would become legitimate targets if Washington interfered.

"If Iran shoots and violently kills peaceful protesters, which is their custom, the United States of America will come to their rescue. We are locked and loaded and ready to go," Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post.

Mr. Trump's threat came at a time when protests over poor economic conditions in Iran turned



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ALI LARIJANI, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council 

deadly on Thursday with multiple casualties. Iran's *Fars* news agency said at least seven people were killed in clashes, including one security official.

"With the statements by Israeli officials and Donald Trump, what has been going on behind the scenes is now clear," Ali Larijani, Se-

cretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, wrote on social media in response to Mr. Trump's post. "We distinguish between the stance of the protesting shopkeepers and the actions of disruptive actors, and Trump should know that U.S. interference in this internal

matter would mean destabilizing the entire region and destroying America's interests," he added.

The protests began last Sunday in Tehran when shopkeepers downed shutters over a sharp fall in the value of the rial. Iranian officials initially acknowledged the economic pressure and promised to address their grievances. But protests spread across the country in the following days leading to deadly clashes between the security personnel and protesters, whom state media and officials dubbed "rioters". On Thursday, *Fars* news agency reported that two people were killed in clashes in the city of Lordegan and three in Azna.

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عشق و محبت
سینه زدن و تپیدن
عرفان
شالیاخان



جانشینان
امام محمد امین
Mohammad Amin Diva
سوره
حکرم مطهر

- **U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday threatened to intervene if Iran used lethal force against protesters, drawing swift and angry responses from Iranian officials who warned that American troops and bases in West Asia would become legitimate targets if Washington interfered.**
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- **The names of 10.56 lakh voters have been deleted on the draft electoral rolls of Assam which were published on Saturday after a house-to-house verification of the voter lists during the special revision exercise conducted by the Election Commission in the State from November 22 to December 20.**
- **Of the voters whose names were deleted, almost 4.79 lakh are dead, over 5.23 lakh have shifted, and 53,619 were found to have duplicate entries.**
- **Hello – Page No. , GS 1**
- **Hello – Page No. , GS 1**
- **Hello – Page No. , GS 1**



Turkey

Arm. Azer.

Caspian Sea

Turkmenistan

Iraq

★ Tehran

Iran

Afghanistan

Persian Gulf

Pakistan

- **The unrest comes at a particularly volatile time for Iran's clerical rulers. Western sanctions continue to weigh heavily on the economy, while inflation remains stubbornly high.**
- **The situation has worsened after Israeli and US airstrikes in June targeted Iran's nuclear infrastructure and military leadership.**
- **Iran was also involved in a 12-day air war with Israel in June, further straining government finances and adding to public anger.**
- **However, the scale and economic roots of the current unrest, combined with Iran's fragile geopolitical position, make this wave particularly significant.**

- **The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed in July 2015 between Iran and world powers (P5+1: U.S., U.K., France, Russia, China, and Germany), along with the European Union (EU).**
- **After US abandoned the deal in 2018 and reinstated banking and oil sanctions, Iran ramped up its nuclear programme in earnest, returning to approximately 97% of its pre-2015 nuclear capabilities.**

Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act

- **CAATSA is a United States federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia.**
- **It includes sanctions against countries that engage in significant transactions with Russia's defense and intelligence sectors.**

India is one of the founding members of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multimodal transportation corridor, which will connect

(a) India to Central Asia to Europe via Iran

(b) India to Central Asia via China

(c) India to South-East Asia through Bangladesh and Myanmar

(d) India to Europe through Azerbaijan

Q. Which of the following is not a member of 'Gulf Cooperation Council'? (2016)

(a) Iran

(b) Saudi Arabia

(c) Oman

(d) Kuwait

Mains Question

Iran–USA tensions have significant implications for India.

Examine their impact on **India's energy security, regional connectivity, and foreign policy choices.**

How should India respond to protect its national interests?

(150 words / 10 marks)

ईरान-अमेरिका के बीच तनाव का भारत पर महत्वपूर्ण प्रभाव पड़ता है।

भारत की ऊर्जा सुरक्षा, क्षेत्रीय संपर्कता तथा विदेश नीति विकल्पों पर इसके प्रभावों की चर्चा कीजिए।

भारत को अपने राष्ट्रीय हितों की रक्षा के लिए क्या रणनीति अपनानी चाहिए?

(150 शब्द / 10 अंक)

Centre directs X to check Grok misuse in morphing images

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on Friday directed social media platform X to undertake a “comprehensive technical, procedural and governance-level review” of its chatbot Grok, which allegedly has been responding to user requests to undress or alter clothing in women’s photos. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi raised an alarm over the issue in a letter to Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw earlier in the day.

X did not have an immediate response. Grok operates as a separate Artificial Intelligence (AI) firm under X’s holding firm, but maintains an account on the platform, interacting with users. Elon Musk, X’s owner, has often praised Grok’s relatively unfiltered responses, which incorporate



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few safeguards that other Big Tech firms have used on their large language models.

In a four-page letter to X’s Chief Compliance Officer for India, the Ministry stated it has “been observed that [Grok] is being misused by users to create fake accounts” to generate or share obscene visuals of women.

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Mains Question

- *The rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence has raised serious concerns regarding its misuse. Discuss the **ethical, social, and security challenges** arising from the misuse of AI. Suggest **measures to ensure responsible and accountable use of Artificial Intelligence.***
(250 words | 15 marks)

- कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता (AI) के तीव्र विस्तार ने इसके दुरुपयोग से जुड़ी गंभीर चिंताओं को जन्म दिया है।
AI के दुरुपयोग से उत्पन्न नैतिक, सामाजिक तथा सुरक्षा संबंधी चुनौतियों की चर्चा कीजिए।
कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता के जिम्मेदार एवं उत्तरदायी उपयोग को सुनिश्चित करने हेतु उपाय सुझाइए।
(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)

Assam tribal body rejects GoM proposal to grant ST status to six OBC communities

The Hindu Bureau

GUWAHATI

The Coordination Committee of Tribal Organisations of Assam (CCTOA) has rejected the “illegal and unconstitutional” recommendations of the Group of Ministers (GoM) to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six Other Backward Classes (OBC) communities – Koch-Rajbongshi, Chutia, Matak, Moran, Tai Ahom, and “Tea Tribes” (Adivasis).

The CCTOA represents 14 tribes of Assam.

In its report submitted to the 126-member Assam Assembly in November 2025, the GoM suggested

Assam provides 59% reservation, which is already higher than the Supreme Court-stipulated 50%, the tribal body said

dividing the six communities into three categories – ST (Plain), ST (Hill), and ST (Valley).

The Consultative Group of the CCTOA, chaired by New Delhi-based rights activist Suhas Chakma, on Friday said the recommendations, apart from being illegal and unconstitutional, would “affect and destroy the political rights” of the existing tribes at all levels from the panchayats to

the Lok Sabha.

The CCTOA pointed out that while the Scheduled Castes are identified based on their status in the Hindu caste system, the STs are identified based on tribal characteristics – indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness for the community as laid down in the Lokur Committee report of 1965.

“The granting of ST status to these communities will destroy the political reservation of the existing STs in addition to affecting the reservation from the Central government’s

pool,” CCTOA coordinator Tilak Doley said.

The tribal body said the existing reservation scheme in Assam is already “unconstitutional”.

“A 1992 Supreme Court judgment stipulates that reservation must not exceed 50%. The Assam government provides 59% reservation [SC 7%, ST(P) 10%, ST(H) 5%, OBC/MOBC (including ‘Tea Tribes’ 3%, Adivasis 27%, and EWS 10%]. If 35 other Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Communities which are not yet included in the ST list get the same status, the reservation can go beyond 70%, which is absolutely unconstitutional,” it said.

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- **The CCTOA represents 14 tribes of Assam.**
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- **The Constitution of India in Article 366 (25) prescribes that Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 of the Constitution to be Scheduled Tribes.**
- **342(1) Scheduled Tribes — the President may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe in relation to that State or Union Territory as the case may be.**

- According to the modalities, for inclusion first framed in 1999, the proposal for inclusion must originate from the respective State or Union Territory government.
- Following this, the proposal is sent to the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry, which sends it to the Office of the Registrar General of India (ORGI).
- If the ORGI approves the inclusion, the proposal is forwarded to the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.
- the ORGI continues to follow the criteria set out by the Lokur Committee in 1965 to decide whether a community can be included in the ST list.
- These criteria include indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness.
- Only after the concurrence of these institutions, will the proposal go forward to the Cabinet to bring in the appropriate amendment to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950.
- The final decision rests with the President's office issuing a notification specifying the changes under powers vested in it from Articles 341 and 342.

Benefits of Inclusion in ST List / Constitutional Safeguards

- **Reservation in educational institutions has been provided in Article 15(4) of the constitution while reservation in posts and services has been provided in Article 16(4), 16(4A) and 16(4B) of the Constitution.**
- **Specific safeguards have been provided in Article 244 read with the provisions contained in the Fifth and Sixth Schedules to the Constitution.**
- **Article 243D provides reservation of Seats for Scheduled Tribes in Panchayats.**
- **Article 330 provides reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha.**

Consider the following statements:

- 1. It is the Governor of the State who recognizes and declares any community of that State as a Scheduled Tribe.**
- 2. A community declared as a Scheduled Tribe in a State need not be so in another State.**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

At the national level, which ministry is the nodal agency to ensure effective implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006?

(a) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

(b) Ministry of Panchayati Raj

(c) Ministry of Rural Development

(d) Ministry of Tribal Affairs

The provisions in Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule in the Constitution of India are made in order to

(a) protect the interests of Scheduled Tribes

(b) determine the boundaries between States

(c) determine the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats

(d) protect the interests of all the border States

Export Promotion Mission: Govt. unveils 2 more credit-linked plans

**The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI**

The Government introduced two new components in the Export Promotion Mission (EPM) aimed at easing and reducing the cost of the credit-access process for exporters.

This comes days after the Ministry of Commerce and Industry notified guidelines for a market access scheme under the EPM. With Friday's announcement, three of the 11 schemes under the EPM have been operationalised.

The two schemes would entail an outlay of ₹5,181 crore over six years until 2030-31. The two schemes were under the Niryat Protsahan category, which is meant to lower the cost of credit for exporters.



Export boost: The two schemes would entail an outlay of ₹5,181 cr. over six years until 2030-31. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Interest Subvention for Pre- and Post-Shipment Export Credit scheme will reduce the cost of export finance and “strengthens MSME liquidity, improve competitiveness and supports India’s integration into global value chains, while ensuring fiscal pru-

dence and compliance,” the Ministry of Commerce said in its announcement.

Interest subvention

“Eligible MSME exporters can avail interest subvention on rupee export credit (pre- and post-shipment) extended by scheduled

banks, in accordance with RBI Master Directions,” it added. The second sub-scheme – Collateral Support for Export Credit – is aimed at giving MSME exporters the ability to access bank credit even with limited collateral or third-party guarantees.

The scheme would be implemented through the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) on a pilot basis and be applicable to export-linked working capital loans.

MSME exporters exporting notified tariff lines will be eligible for the collateral support.

Micro & small exporters would be eligible for up to 85% guarantee, while medium exporters would be capped at a 65% guarantee.



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- **The Government of India has approved the Export Promotion Mission (EPM), aiming to boost exports—especially from Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) labour-intensive sectors and low-export-intensity regions.**
- **The EPM, announced in Union Budget 2025–26, merges fragmented export-support schemes into a single, digitally enabled framework.**
- **With a Rs 25,060 crore outlay for FY 2025–26 to FY 2030–31, it aims to strengthen India’s export ecosystem and boost competitiveness for MSMEs and labour-intensive sectors.**
- **Structure and Governance: EPM is anchored in a coordinated institutional framework involving the Department of Commerce, MSME Ministry, Finance Ministry, Export Promotion Councils, Commodity Boards, financial institutions, industry bodies and state governments.**
- **The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) serves as the implementing agency.**

- **Integrated Sub-Schemes:** EPM operates through two integrated sub-schemes Niryat Protsahan & Niryat Disha, that together address finance and non-financial enablers.
- **Niryat Protsahan:** Provides financial support such as affordable trade finance, interest subvention, factoring, exporter credit cards, collateral aid and credit enhancement for MSMEs.
- **Niryat Disha:** Provides non-financial support such as quality and compliance help, branding, trade fairs, logistics and transport support, and district-level capacity-building.

Consider the following statements:

The effect of devaluation of a currency is that it necessarily

- 1. Improves the competitiveness of the domestic exports in the foreign markets**
- 2. Increases the foreign value of domestic currency**
- 3. Improves the trade balance**

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

With reference to the international trade of India at present, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. India's merchandise exports are less than its merchandise imports.**
- 2. India's imports of iron and steel, chemicals, fertilisers and machinery have decreased in recent years.**
- 3. India's exports of services are more than its imports of services.**
- 4. India suffers from an overall trade/current account deficit.**

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only**
- (b) 2 and 4 only**
- (c) 3 only**
- (d) 1, 3 and 4 only**

Which one of the following is not the most likely measure the Government/RBI takes to stop the slide of Indian rupee?

- (a) Curbing imports of non-essential goods and promoting exports**
- (b) Encouraging Indian borrowers to issue rupee denominated Masala Bonds**
- (c) Easing conditions relating to external commercial borrowing**
- (d) Following an expansionary monetary policy**

Mains Question

India's Export Mission is central to boosting economic growth and enhancing global competitiveness.

Discuss the **objectives and key components** of India's Export Mission.

Analyze the **structural challenges** facing India's export sector and suggest measures to address them.

(250 words | 15 marks)

भारत का निर्यात मिशन (India Export Mission) आर्थिक विकास और वैश्विक एकीकरण के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है।

भारत के निर्यात मिशन के **उद्देश्यों और प्रमुख घटकों** की चर्चा कीजिए।

निर्यात वृद्धि में आ रही **संरचनात्मक चुनौतियों** का विश्लेषण करते हुए उन्हें दूर करने के उपाय सुझाए।

(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)

Transforming a waste-ridden urban India

Page No. 6, GS 1

At the 30th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30), at Belem, in November 2025, host Brazil quite fittingly placed waste at the heart of the climate agenda. Sizeable funds were committed to a new global initiative, No Organic Waste, NOW, to cut methane emissions. The Conference noted Circularity as the way to inclusive growth, cleaner air, and healthier populations. COP30 called upon cities to accelerate circularity initiatives where waste is recognised as a resource. Mission LIFE (Lifestyle for Environment), espoused by India at COP26, in Glasgow in 2021, calling for “deliberate utilisation, instead of mindless and destructive consumption” was strongly premised on the idea of circularity as well.

Urban India, its growing problem of waste

Expanding cities and towns are an irreversible reality in growing India. The choice is between good and bad cities. Often, this choice gets translated into clean and pollution-free cities or waste-ridden, ugly urban areas. A number of studies suggest that Indian cities do not match up to global standards in providing a clean and healthy environment. Pollution is the talk of the town, posing questions to an aspirational India.

The National Capital Region (NCR) as well as many other cities in the country are also among the world's most polluted. Governments and regulators are at work, with courts also stepping in, but with limited effect. Citizen grievance is at its peak. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), that ended open defecation in India within a specific timeframe, has the active goal of making the cities clean and garbage free.

It is estimated that cities in India will generate 165 million tonnes of waste annually by 2030, and emit over 41 million tonnes of greenhouse gases. By 2050, as the urban population grows to about 814 million, the waste burden could rise to 436 million tonnes. Without early solutions, these will result in grave levels of emissions, and creating havoc with peoples' health, the economy and the overall climate. The goal of Garbage Free Cities (GFC) by 2026 is an existential necessity, not a matter of aesthetics.

Under SBM Urban 2.0, about 1,100 cities and towns have been rated free of dumpsites, if not exactly free of garbage. Complete freedom from garbage, fortified by sustainable waste management and resource optimisation, is possible when all 5,000 cities and towns adopt the circular economy model, which underlines waste as a resource. India needs to move away from a linear to circular mode of waste management, with the twin objectives of



Akshay Rout
is former Director
General, Swachh
Bharat Mission

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energy and
other resources

minimising waste and recovering energy and other resources.

Plastic, construction and demolition waste

The good thing is that more than half of municipal waste is organic that can be managed through composting from a house to large bio-methanation plants. Compressed Biogas Plants (CBG) have created possibilities of generating green fuel from municipal wet waste, whereas complete combustion of this also yields power. More than a third of the waste piled in cities is dry, all of which is not recyclable. The demon in this category is plastic, posing a threat to the ecosystem and human health.

Plastic waste also poses the toughest challenge to waste management. Dry waste is dependent on the critical habit of efficient segregation at households before recycling is done through material recovery facilities, which need to be constantly augmented with the rise in the waste burden. Refuse derived fuel from dry waste, as a source of energy for cement and other industries, is still under consolidation. But there is much distance to cover for entrepreneurship and market linkages in these modes of circularity.

Construction and demolition waste – about 12 million tonnes is generated in a year – is a major city spoiler, as it causes pollution in urban centres. It is collateral damage from relentless construction, at times unplanned, in India's fast-growing economy. Unauthorised dumping of construction discards wherever there is space, by the roadside, or even city lanes, is a common sight in India.

Much of this waste can be reused or recycled as cost-efficient raw materials of substantial value. This will also cause less damage to the environment. Minor construction and demolition waste mixed up with other unsegregated household waste and dumped in waste bins do not help processing. The recycling capacity in India is rising but is not sufficient to match the rate of construction and demolition waste being generated.

What could help is ensuring more serious compliance with the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2016, which seek to levy a charge on generators of high volumes of construction and demolition waste, besides setting out other parameters. The Environment (Construction and Demolition) Waste Management Rules, 2025 are to come into effect from April 1, 2026.

Wastewater is the other thread in waste management and circularity. Water and sanitation are state subjects and States need to take proactive steps to recycle wastewater and reuse it in agriculture, horticulture, and for

industrial purposes. Water security in cities has a causal link with complete used water and faecal sludge management, as outlined under urban missions such as Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and SBM. With India's water stock inadequate to meet the needs of its population, recycling and reuse are the only ways out to meet increasing water demand.

Hurdles before circularity

The path to achieving circularity is not an easy one, considering the multiplicity of actors. The smooth functioning of segregation of waste at source, collection logistics and processing, and aggregation and distribution are far from ideal. Recycled products face quality issues, marketing challenges and consequential financial feasibility.

Besides infrastructure, there are shortfalls in testing and monitoring. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) has yet to extend to all categories of dry waste. Construction and demolition waste has issues of identification, tracing and tracking of its origin. This is an issue that has not been integrated in an ideal way with construction and building laws to ensure proper accountability. Inter-departmental coordination, stakeholder awareness, and incentive and penalty systems must vastly improve, with sharper focus to make meaningful circularity possible in city societies.

Resource shortfalls with municipalities for taking up circularity projects require early resolution. It is heartening that policymakers, experts and industrial houses deliberated on these issues at a national urban conclave in New Delhi recently while working out an agenda for urban rejuvenation. Last year, Asia-Pacific nations, at their meeting in Jaipur endorsed an Indian initiative of 'Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3)' for efficient knowledge and expertise sharing among cities and institutions of the region.

Citizens need to get a clear sense of profit and a true cause in order to be partners in the circularity movement. In a society that is becoming increasingly consumerist, the first R of the three Rs – 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' – looks a difficult proposition to achieve. With products and consumable items arriving in new incarnations each day, 'reuse' may become a tall order too. 'Recycling', aided by technology and private enterprise and with sound policy backup, could emerge as a pillar of circularity. It could also be an assured way of helping India's cities and towns move away from swamps of waste while adding to national resources.

The views expressed are personal

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- **Expanding cities and towns are an irreversible reality in growing India. The choice is between good and bad cities. Often, this choice gets translated into clean and pollution-free cities or waste-ridden, ugly urban areas.**
- **A number of studies suggest that Indian cities do not match up to global standards in providing a clean and healthy environment. Pollution is the talk of the town, posing questions to an aspirational India.**
- **The National Capital Region (NCR) as well as many other cities in the country are also among the world's most polluted.**
- **Governments and regulators are at work, with courts also stepping in, but with limited effect. Citizen grievance is at its peak.**
- **The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), that ended open defecation in India within a specific timeframe, has the active goal of making the cities clean and garbage free.**

- **It is estimated that cities in India will generate 165 million tonnes of waste annually by 2030, and emit over 41 million tonnes of greenhouse gases. By 2050, as the urban population grows to about 814 million, the waste burden could rise to 436 million tonnes.**
- **Without early solutions, these will result in grave levels of emissions, and creating havoc with peoples' health, the economy and the overall climate. The goal of Garbage Free Cities (GFC) by 2026 is an existential necessity, not a matter of aesthetics.**
- **Under SBM Urban 2.0, about 1,100 cities and towns have been rated free of dumpsites, if not exactly free of garbage.**
- **Complete freedom from garbage, fortified by sustainable waste management and resource optimisation, is possible when all 5,000 cities and towns adopt the circular economy model, which underlines waste as a resource. India needs to move away from a linear to circular mode of waste management, with the twin objectives of minimising waste and recovering energy and other resources.**

- **Plastic, construction and demolition waste**
- **Construction and demolition waste — about 12 million tonnes is generated in a year — is a major city spoiler, as it causes pollution in urban centres.**
- **What could help is ensuring more serious compliance with the Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2016, which seek to levy a charge on generators of high volumes of construction and demolition waste, besides setting out other parameters.**
- **The Environment (Construction and Demolition) Waste Management Rules, 2025 are to come into effect from April 1, 2026.**
- **Last year, Asia-Pacific nations, at their meeting in Jaipur endorsed an Indian initiative of ‘Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3)’ for efficient knowledge and expertise sharing among cities and institutions of the region.**
- **Rs — ‘Reduce, Reuse, Recycle’**

In the context of which one of the following are the terms 'pyrolysis and plasma gasification' mentioned?

(a) Extraction of rare earth elements

(b) Natural gas extraction technologies

(c) Hydrogen fuel-based automobiles

(d) Waste-to-energy technologies

As per the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 in India, which one of the following statements is correct?

(a) Waste generator has to segregate waste into five categories.

(b) The Rules are applicable to notified urban local bodies, notified towns and all industrial townships only.

(c) The Rules provide for exact and elaborate criteria for the identification of sites for landfills and waste processing facilities.

Unenviable choice

Growth-generating capital expenditure can affect fiscal targets

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue of ₹1.74 lakh crore in December 2025 confirms just how narrow the government's fiscal policy space is. The December data reflect the economic activity in November, the second month under the new, reduced GST rates. December's revenues were marginally higher than the ₹1.7 lakh crore collected in November. This was expected. Any belief that the rate reductions would lead to an immediate and sustained increase in demand, and hence GST collections, was pure optimism. In reality, people are more likely to use that extra money to pad up savings or pare down debt, with increased consumption a more medium-term outcome. This happened following the income-tax rejig in Budget 2025 too, when the government effectively exempted people earning up to ₹12 lakh a year from income-tax. The GST and income-tax decisions were both welcome relaxations. However, at least for this year, they are going to cause the government more pain than gain. The most recent data on the government's accounts reflect this. Total tax revenue stood at ₹13.9 lakh crore at the end of November 2025, 3.4% lower than in the same period of 2024-25. On the other hand, the Centre's capital expenditure stood at ₹6.58 lakh crore in the April-November 2025 period, 28% higher

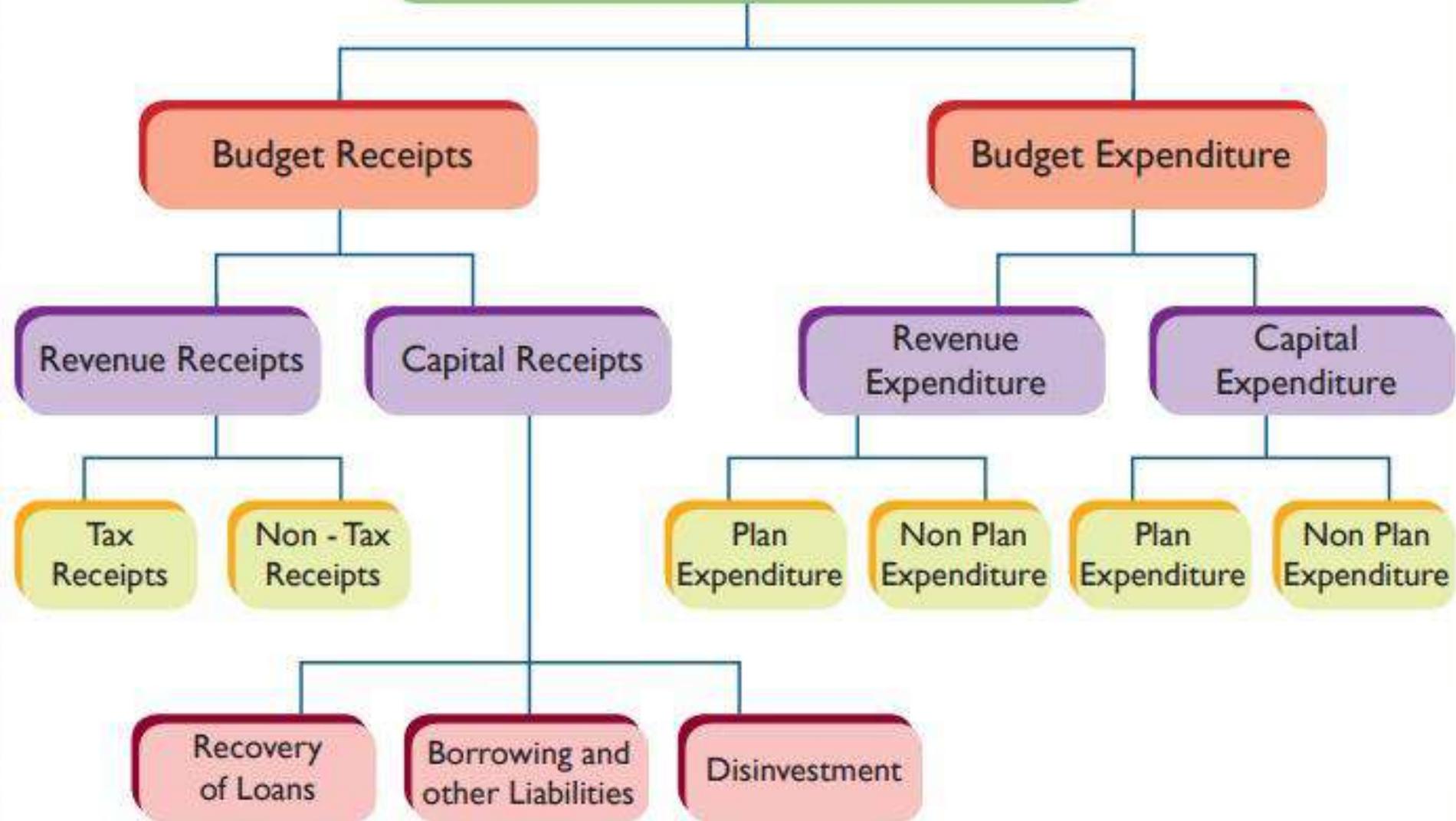
than in the same period of the previous year. This jump in capital expenditure was balanced out by a much slower growth in revenue expenditure of 2.1%. However, of the two types of spending, the government has much less discretion over revenue expenditure, which comprises expenses such as salaries, pensions and interest on loans. These cannot be kept subdued for long.

The government has valiantly tried to bolster its earnings through the new excise and GST rates on tobacco products, not to mention the health and security cess on the manufacture of pan masala. However, since all these new rates and cesses will come into effect only on February 1, their full benefit will be felt only in the next financial year. Yet, the troubles for the government's finances do not end there. The remarkably low levels of wholesale inflation this year – averaging -0.08% so far – have also meant that the size of the nominal GDP would likely be smaller than initially budgeted. This means that several ratios pegged to it, most pertinently the fiscal deficit and debt-GDP, would automatically come in larger than earlier estimated. The Centre has displayed commendable fiscal discipline over the last few years. However, this year, it has placed before itself the unenviable choice of either pulling back on growth-generating capital expenditure, or risking missing its fiscal targets.

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Components of Budget



Primary Deficit

- $\text{Primary Deficit} = \text{Fiscal Deficit} - \text{Interest Payment}$
- Indicates the government's total borrowing requirements, except interest
- Difference between the fiscal deficit of the current year and the interest paid on the borrowings of the previous year



Fiscal Deficit

- $\text{Fiscal Deficit} = \text{Total Expenditure} - \text{Total Receipts (except borrowings)}$
- Indicates the government's total borrowing requirements, including interest
- Excess of total expenditure over total receipts/income, excluding borrowings

Which of the following is likely to be the most inflationary in its effects?

(a) Repayment of public debt

(b) Borrowing from the public to finance a budget deficit

(c) Borrowing from the banks to finance a budget deficit

(d) Creation of new money to finance a budget deficit

There has been a persistent deficit budget year after year. Which action/actions of the following can be taken by the Government to reduce the deficit?

- 1. Reducing revenue expenditure**
- 2. Introducing new welfare schemes**
- 3. Rationalizing subsidies**
- 4. Reducing import duty**

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) 1 only**
- (b) 2 and 3 only**
- (c) 1 and 3 only**
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4**

Recasting sanitation with urban-rural partnerships

When the Swachh Bharat Mission ('Clean India Mission') was launched in 2014, its vision was both simple and transformative; to ensure that every household in India had access to a toilet. In just a decade, this vision has become reality. More than 12 crore household toilets have been built in rural India, and every village has declared itself Open Defecation Free (ODF). This achievement has improved public health, reduced indignities faced by women and vulnerable groups, and marked a turning point in India's development journey.

Focus on waste management

Yet, the success of the sanitation mission has also revealed the next frontier. Toilets are only the starting point. The real challenge lies in managing the resultant faecal waste. In most rural households, septic tanks and pits serve as the primary form of containment. Over time, these fill up and must be desludged at regular intervals. Without safe systems for collection, transport, and treatment, the gains of the ODF movement risk being undermined. It is this challenge that defines the transition to Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), or SBM-G, Phase II, with its focus on ODF Plus.

ODF Plus goes beyond toilet construction to ensure the sustainability of outcomes through solid and liquid waste management, behavioural change, and safe sanitation service chains. The progress has been encouraging. As of October 2025, more than 5.68 lakh villages, nearly 97% of India's total, have been declared ODF Plus. But faecal sludge management remains one of the most critical gaps in the sanitation chain, especially in peri-urban and rural areas.

Maharashtra has been at the forefront of

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The model in Satara district in Maharashtra is an innovative experiment

experimenting with innovative approaches to address this gap. The State has invested in more than 200 faecal sludge treatment plants in urban areas and encouraged co-treatment in 41 sewage treatment plants. These facilities are a backbone of treatment infrastructure to cities, but the challenge lies in extending their benefits to the villages that surround them. It is here that urban-rural partnerships show great promise.

At the gram panchayat level

In Satara district, Maharashtra, such a partnership was put into practice. Satara city's faecal sludge treatment plant, with a capacity of 65 kilo litres a day (KLD), was operating below full capacity. Recognising this, four villages, Jakatwadi, Songaon, Kodoli, and Degaon, have been brought under an arrangement that will allow them to access the city's treatment plant.

Their septic tanks, often never desludged or emptied only at exorbitant rates by informal operators, will be serviced at regular intervals and in a safe way. A private service provider is to be engaged by the gram panchayats, under a contract, to provide scheduled desludging services every five years.

The costs will be recovered through a modest sanitation tax levied by the gram panchayats, ensuring affordability and accountability. A formal agreement between the Satara Panchayat Samiti and the Satara Municipal Council will allow authorised desludging vehicles from the gram panchayats to access the faecal sludge treatment plant and treat the sludge at no cost, making the arrangement sustainable and mutually beneficial.

But not every village can be linked to a treatment system of a city. Some will have to treat

their waste independently. An example is Mayani, a large village in Khatav taluka. With the high demand for desludging services, the gram panchayat has agreed to introduce scheduled desludging every five to seven years, managed by either a private operator or local self-help groups.

In addition, Mayani has been selected for the development of a cluster-level faecal sludge treatment plant under the SBM-G, designed to serve around 80 surrounding villages. This approach shows that rural clusters can pool resources to develop standalone treatment infrastructure that meets their needs, while remaining financially and technically viable.

The demonstration of urban-rural linkages and the standalone faecal sludge management business model in Satara district will promote the adoption and the institutionalisation of safe, sustainable sanitation services across rural Maharashtra. It also aims to show that sustaining the gains of ODF and effectively integrating faecal sludge management into rural sanitation require strong collaboration between urban and rural governments, private and public actors, and citizens and institutions.

A model that can be scaled up

If scaled up, such models have the potential to transform not only villages in Maharashtra but also rural communities across the country. By doing so, India can ensure that its sanitation gains are not only celebrated today but can be sustained for generations to come. The true measure of Swachh Bharat will not only be the toilets built but also the systems created to manage them – systems that protect peoples' health, preserve the environment, and uphold the dignity that this mission set out to achieve.

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- **More than 12 crore household toilets have been built in rural India, and every village has declared itself Open Defecation Free (ODF).**
- **This achievement has improved public health, reduced indignities faced by women and vulnerable groups, and marked a turning point in India's development journey.**
- **Focus on waste managementHello**

- **Toilets are only the starting point. The real challenge lies in managing the resultant faecal waste. In most rural households, septic tanks and pits serve as the primary form of containment.**
- **ODF Plus goes beyond toilet construction to ensure the sustainability of outcomes through solid and liquid waste management, behavioural change, and safe sanitation service chains. The progress has been encouraging.**
- **As of October 2025, more than 5.68 lakh villages, nearly 97% of India's total, have been declared ODF Plus.**
- **It is a massive mass movement that seeks to create a Clean India by 2019. The father of our nation Mr. Mahatma Gandhi always puts the emphasis on swachhta as swachhta leads to healthy and prosperous life.**
- **Keeping this in mind, the Indian government has decided to launch the swachh bharat mission on October 2, 2014. The mission will cover all rural and urban areas.**
- **The urban component of the mission will be implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, and the rural component by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.**

Bulgaria



- **Bulgaria officially adopted the euro on January 1, 2026, becoming the 21st member of the eurozone and retiring its national currency, the lev.**
- **member of the European Union (since 2007) and NATO (since 2004). It replaced the Bulgarian lev (in use since 1881) with the euro after fulfilling EU convergence criteria.**
- **The eurozone (euro area) is the group of EU countries that have adopted the euro (€) as their official legal tender and follow a common monetary policy.**
- **Single currency (euro) as legal tender.**
- **European Central Bank (ECB) conducts unified monetary policy.**

SECTION B

Essay Question

5 लड़कियाँ बंदिशों के तथा लड़के अपेक्षा के बोझ तले दबे हुए होते हैं — दोनों ही समान रूप से हानिकारक व्यवस्थाएँ हैं ।

Girls are weighed down by restrictions, boys with demands — two equally harmful disciplines.

6 गणित ज्ञान का संगीत है ।

Mathematics is the music of reason.

7 जिस समाज में अधिक न्याय होता है, उस समाज को दान की कम आवश्यकता होती है ।

A society that has more justice is a society that needs less charity.

8 शिक्षा वह है जो विद्यालय में सीखी गई बातों को भूल जाने के बाद भी शेष रह जाती है ।

Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.

