

Topics of discussion:

1. PM urges 10-year pledge to shed 'colonial mindset' rooted in Macaulay's 200-year legacy
 2. Bangla ex-PM Hasina sentenced to death, says tribunal 'rigged'
 3. 'Historic first': India to source 10% LPG imports from US
 4. Digital arrest scams: SC asks centre to decide on ratifying UN cybersecurity treaty
 5. It's time to fix climate finance. India has shown the way
 6. World: At UN Climate meet in Brazil, a prayer to save the sacred trees of Amazon
 7. How China dealt with air pollution, lessons for India
-

PM urges 10-year pledge to shed 'colonial mindset' rooted in Macaulay's 200-year legacy

Syllabus:

Preliminary Examination: Current events of national importance and history.

Mains Examination: General Studies-I: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities, issues.

What's the ongoing story: Whether under the British Raj or during the Emergency, Ramnath Goenka, founder of the Express Group, embodied the people's resistance to attempts at "enslavement" and affirmed the power of dissent. It was this spirit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Monday, that should guide a national pledge to "put the locks on" the Western mindset embedded in India since 1835 through Thomas Macaulay's project of reshaping Indian thought by dismantling indigenous knowledge systems and enforcing colonial education.

Key Points to Ponder:

- Who was Macaulay?
- Read about education in pre-British and under British rule.

STORIES YOU MAY LIKE

Why Western Ghats are classified as natural site of 'significant concern'

With former Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina's ICT conviction, a diplomatic test lies ahead of India

Dismal Jan Suraaj show, retirement rumours: What Prashant Kishor said at first public address since Bihar result

— What was the Orientalist–Anglicist debate, and how did it shape India’s education policy under British rule?

— What was Macaulay’s Minute on Indian Education?

— What is the Downward Filtration Theory?

— What was Wood’s Despatch?

— Read about the New Education Policy.

Key Takeaways:

— Delivering the Sixth Ramnath Goenka Lecture, the Prime Minister set a 10-year timeframe — leading up to the 200th year of Macaulay’s campaign — to reverse that legacy.

— Macaulay’s aim, Modi said, was to create Indians who “are Indians by appearance but British at heart.” India “paid a heavy price” for this, he argued, as the belief that the Western or foreign was superior took deep root. Macaulay, the PM said, broke India’s “self-confidence and instilled a sense of inferiority. In one stroke, he discarded thousands of years of India’s knowledge, science, art, culture, and entire way of life.”

Story continues below this ad

— That imprint persisted after Independence, Modi continued, as India’s “education, economy, and societal aspirations became increasingly aligned with foreign models.” When a nation does not honour itself, he said, “it ends up rejecting its indigenous ecosystem.”

— As an illustration, he pointed to tourism: countries that have built flourishing tourism industries do so by taking pride in their heritage, he said, whereas post-Independence India often sought to distance itself from its own legacy. “Without pride in heritage, there is no motivation for its preservation, and without preservation, such heritage is reduced to mere ruins of brick and stone,” he said.

— Modi noted that nations such as Japan and South Korea did adopt Western ideas but remained rooted in their own languages. This was a balance India’s new education policy also seeks to encourage, he said, stressing that he was not opposed to English but supportive of Indian languages.

— “At a time when the world is fearful of disruption, India is confidently moving in the direction of a bright future,” he said, adding that “India is not just an emerging market, but also an emerging model.” Despite global turbulence since Covid, he noted, India continues to sustain growth at around 7 per cent.

Do You Know:

— Around the time that Macaulay was preparing education policy, there was a debate among Indians and the British about the type of education needed in India. The Orientalists believed in the promotion of traditional Indian education in vernacular languages while their opponents, the Anglicists, thought that the government should spend money only on Western education, delivered in English.

— Macaulay belonged to the latter camp, advocating for the creation of a pool of Indians capable of serving British interests. This group would be “Indian by blood and colour, but English by tastes, opinions, morals and intellect.” Entry into this group would also be limited to only a few Indians, who would then educate the rest of the population according to Macaulay’s controversial Downward Filtration Theory.

— However, even amongst the British, Macaulay’s theory was controversial. After the British Crown took over from the Company following the revolt of 1857, Viceroy Lord Mayo made a scathing assessment of the country’s educational policy, lamenting that the British were educating a few hundred Babus at a great expense, who would then do nothing toward extending knowledge to the millions.

— Viceroy Lord Mayo prioritised the recommendations of the 1854 ‘Wood’s Despatch,’ which called for the spread of education in both English and vernacular languages.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question Covering similar theme:

(1) With reference to the Orientalist–Anglicist debate, consider the following statements:

1. Orientalists supported the promotion of traditional Indian education through vernacular languages.
2. Anglicists argued that government funds should focus exclusively on Western education delivered in English.
3. Macaulay supported the Orientalist view and advocated spending on vernacular education.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Bangla ex-PM Hasina sentenced to death, says tribunal 'rigged'

Syllabus:

Preliminary Examination: Current events of national and international importance

Mains Examination: General Studies-II: India and its neighbourhood- relations, Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

What's the ongoing story: Bangladesh's ousted prime minister, [Sheikh Hasina](#), was sentenced to death in her absence on Monday at the end of a months-long trial that found her guilty of ordering a deadly crackdown on a student-led uprising last year.

Key Points to Ponder:

- What is the history of India-Bangladesh bilateral relations?
- What are the areas of cooperation between India and Bangladesh?
- What are the challenges in India and Bangladesh ties?
- What is the significance of Bangladesh for India?
- How does growing Chinese influence in Bangladesh pose a new challenge for India?
- How does the political transition in Bangladesh and its impact on India's foreign policy underscores the importance of neighbourhood diplomacy?
- **Map work:** Location of Bangladesh and Indian states sharing boundaries with Bangladesh.

Key Takeaways:

- Hasina – who fled to neighbouring India in August 2024 at the height of the uprising against her government – issued a statement dismissing the court as a “rigged tribunal”.
- The interim government led by Nobel laureate [Muhammad Yunus](#) described it as a “historic verdict”, but called for calm and warned that it would deal with any disorder.
- After the verdict, the Bangladeshi foreign ministry called on India to extradite Hasina and former interior minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, who was also sentenced to death in the same case.
- India said it noted the verdict, was committed to the best interests of the people of Bangladesh and would “engage constructively”, without going into more detail.

— The verdict by the International Crimes Tribunal – Bangladesh’s domestic war crimes court – comes ahead of elections in February. Hasina’s son warned on Sunday there could be violence if a ban on her Awami League party taking part was not lifted.

— A United Nations report estimated that up to 1,400 people were killed and thousands wounded — most by gunfire from security forces — during the anti-government demonstrations between July 15 and August 5 last year, the worst political violence in Bangladesh since its 1971 war of independence.

— Judge Golam Mortuza Mozumder said Hasina, 78, was found guilty on three counts including incitement, ordering killings and failing to prevent atrocities during the uprising. “We have decided to inflict her with only one sentence, that is sentence of death,” Mozumder said.

— In an emailed statement sent to media after the verdict, Hasina accused the court of being “biased and politically motivated”.

— Hasina was represented by a state-appointed defence counsel who told the court that the charges against her were baseless and called for her acquittal.



From the Explained Page- “ICT: tribunal which has convicted Hasina”

— Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been convicted of “crimes against humanity” and sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), a tribunal that she herself set up in 2009 to allegedly go after political enemies.

— During the 2008 general election, Hasina pledged to try “war criminals” who collaborated with Pakistan during the 1971 Liberation War. After coming to power with two-thirds majority, Hasina established the ICT in 2009.

— The tribunal went after alleged war criminals with gusto. Many people were convicted in absentia; others were brought into custody and sentenced. The tribunal handed out life imprisonment and death sentences to many associated with the Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh’s largest Islamist party.

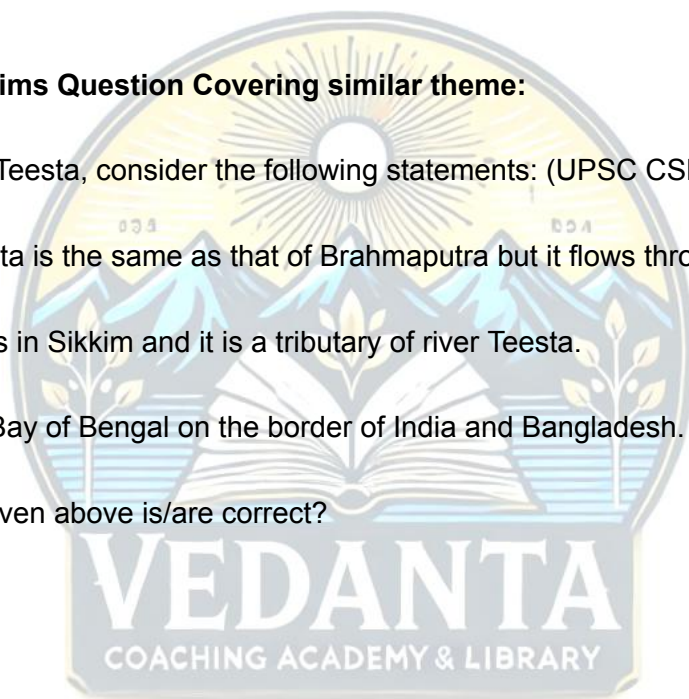
Previous year UPSC Prelims Question Covering similar theme:

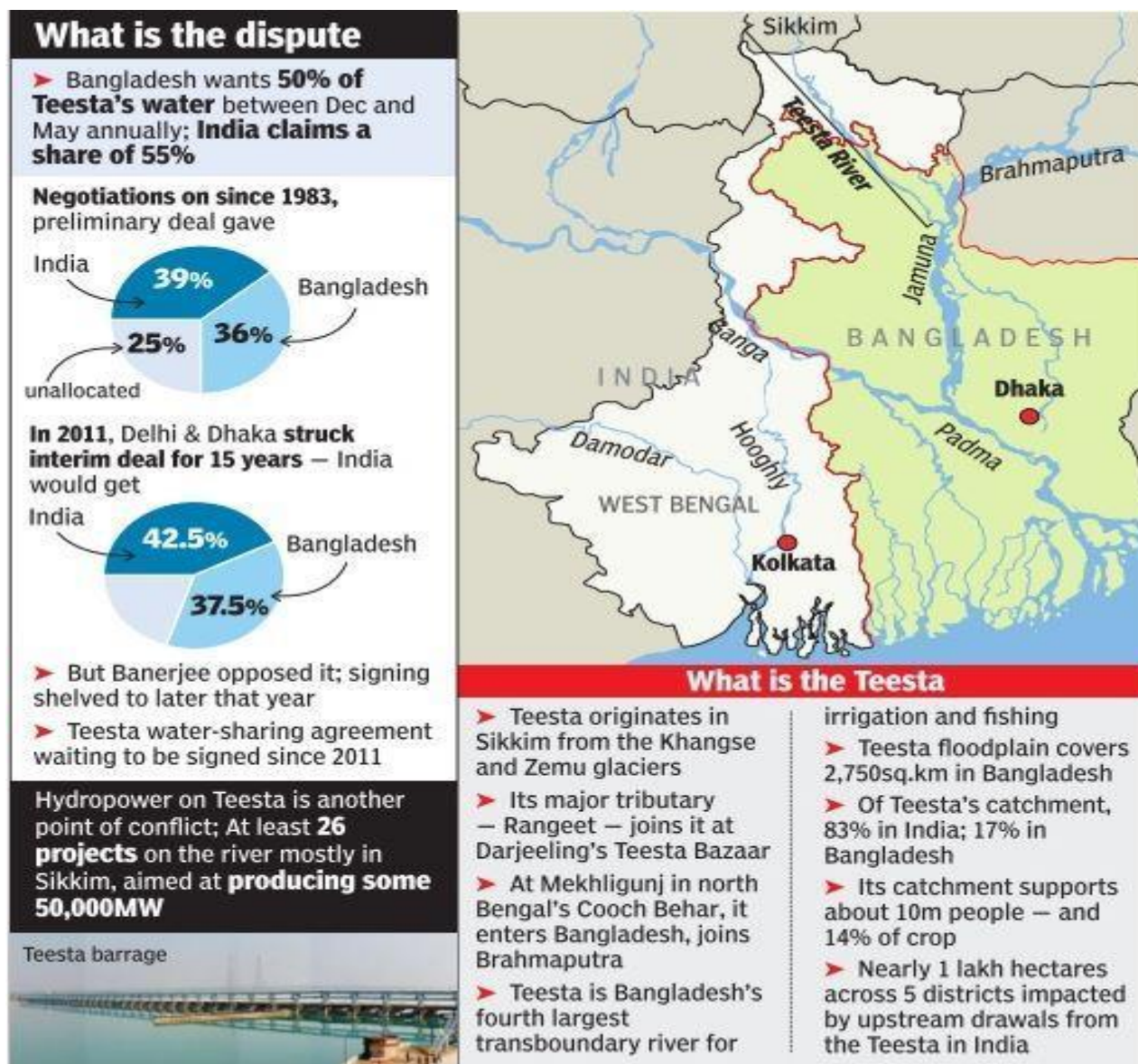
(2) With reference to river Teesta, consider the following statements: (UPSC CSE 2017)

1. The source of river Teesta is the same as that of Brahmaputra but it flows through Sikkim.
2. River Rangeet originates in Sikkim and it is a tributary of river Teesta.
3. River Teesta flows into Bay of Bengal on the border of India and Bangladesh.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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





- Teesta River originates from the Pahunri glacier (not from the same source as the Brahmaputra).
- The Brahmaputra originates in the Angsi glacier near Mount Kailash.
- Teesta is one of the right tributaries of Brahmaputra.
- Before going to the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh Teesta flows through West Bengal and Sikkim.
- River Rangeet originates in Sikkim which is the largest river in Sikkim and also a tributary of river Teesta.

Previous year UPSC Prelims Question Covering similar theme:

Critically examine the compulsions which prompted India to play a decisive role in the emergence of Bangladesh. (UPSC CSE 2013)

The protests in Shahbag Square in Dhaka in Bangladesh reveal a fundamental split in society between the nationalists and Islamic forces. What is its significance for India? (UPSC CSE 2013)

‘Historic first’: India to source 10% LPG imports from US

Syllabus:

Preliminary Examination: Current events of national and international importance

Mains Examination: General Studies-II: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

General Studies-III: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth, development and employment.

What’s the ongoing story: As India looks to increase its energy trade with the US amid trade pact negotiations, Indian public sector refiners have signed a one-year deal for American liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) imports, marking the first structured contract of US LPG for the domestic market.

Key Points to Ponder:

- What is the status of India’s energy imports?
- What are the rationale cited by America for imposing tariffs on India?
- What is the status of the India-USA trade deal?
- What are the main components of LPG?
- What is the difference between LPG and CNG?
- What is the impact of US tariffs on various sectors of the Indian economy?
- “The US would play an important role in India’s energy security going forward.” Analyse.

Key Takeaways:

- The term deal, which Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri called a “historic first”, is for imports of around 2.2 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of LPG, close to 10% of India’s annual imports.
- It comes at a time when India is looking to shrink its trade surplus with the US — one of the issues flagged by President [Donald Trump](#) when he slapped the 50 per cent tariff on incoming Indian goods.

Government data released Monday showed that India's trade surplus with the US had halved to \$1.45 billion between April and October.

— The past few months have seen Indian refiners increasing oil imports from the US. Sources in the Indian government have indicated that India could step up US energy imports to finalise the trade agreement to reduce the tariffs.

— According to industry sources, the three public sector refiners — Indian Oil Corporation Ltd, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd — have awarded their joint tender for US LPG imports in the coming year to Chevron, Phillips 66 and TotalEnergies Trading.

— LPG is predominantly used as a cooking fuel, with much of India's requirement being imported from countries like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Kuwait.

— This deal is expected to reduce India's dependence for LPG on these traditional West Asian suppliers as the country looks to diversify import sources in search of better prices.

— A significant chunk of LPG sales to households in India is subsidised by the government. Over the past few years, the government has made concerted efforts to increase LPG penetration by bringing poor and rural households under the LPG net in a bid to cut the use of traditional and polluting cooking fuels.

Trump tariffs drag down India's US exports by 9% in October

— India's goods exports to the US fell nine per cent year-on-year in October, on top of a 12 per cent y-o-y decline the previous month, owing to US President [Donald Trump](#)'s steep 50 per cent tariffs that took effect in August.

— Exports from labour-intensive sectors, such as engineering goods and textiles, slowed sharply in October as the US tariffs, the highest globally, left Indian goods uncompetitive compared to key competitors — particularly the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and China

— Official data released Monday showed that India's goods exports to the US slipped 8.6 per cent to \$6.3 billion in October compared to \$6.9 billion in the same month last year.

— In the face of the steep US tariffs, which kicked in on August 27, the Union Cabinet had last week cleared the **Export Promotion Mission**, announced in the [Budget](#), with an outlay of Rs 25,060 crore to help sustain export orders. The government also extended additional credit facilities of up to Rs 20,000 crore to exporters.

— Government officials have said that India has sent its final proposal to the US and is awaiting Washington's response. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal had earlier this year said that the US will play an important role in India's energy security going forward.

Do You Know:

— India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil with an import dependency of around 88 per cent. The country is also among the biggest importers of liquefied natural gas (LNG), with around half of its natural gas demand being met through imports.

— For the past few years, the US has been the fifth-largest supplier of crude oil to India. It has also been the second-largest supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to India. As for LPG, over 60 per cent of the petroleum fuel's requirement in India is met through imports.

— India's heavy reliance on imported crude oil makes its economy vulnerable to global oil price fluctuations. This also impacts the country's trade deficit, foreign exchange reserves, the rupee's exchange rate, and inflation rate, among others. The Indian government aims to reduce the country's reliance on imported crude oil but faces challenges due to sluggish domestic oil output amid rising demand.

— In 2015, the government had set a target to cut the dependence on imported oil from 77 per cent to 67 per cent by 2022. However, import dependency has only increased.

— The government has implemented several policy reforms to encourage investments in India's oil and gas exploration and production sector. The government is also promoting electric mobility, biofuels, and other alternative fuels to reduce oil imports.

— While there has been an increase in electric mobility adoption and the blending of biofuels with conventional fuels, it is not sufficient to offset petroleum demand growth.

Previous year UPSC Prelims Question Covering similar theme:

(3) The term 'West Texas Intermediate', sometimes found in news, refers to a grade of (UPSC CSE 2020)

- (a) Crude oil
- (b) Bullion
- (c) Rare earth elements
- (d) Uranium

Previous year UPSC Mains Question Covering similar theme:

Do you think India will meet 50 percent of its energy needs from renewable energy by 2030? Justify your answer. How will the shift of subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables help achieve the above objectives? Explain. (UPSC CSE 2022)

Digital arrest scams: SC asks centre to decide on ratifying UN cybersecurity treaty

Syllabus:

Preliminary Examination: Current events of national and international importance

Mains Examination: General Studies-II: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

What's the ongoing story: Underlining the importance of international cooperation in combating cybercrimes, the Supreme Court Monday asked the Centre to take a call on ratifying the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime.

Key Points to Ponder:

- What is the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime?
- Has India signed it?
- What are the different types of cybercrime?
- What is the status of cybercrime in India?
- What is the latest NCRB data on cybercrime in India?
- What is Digital Arrest?
- What are the reasons for the rise in digital arrest in India?
- What are the steps taken by the government to create awareness against digital arrest?

Key Takeaways:

- Justice Joymalya Bagchi, who was part of a two-judge bench hearing a suo motu case concerning a 'digital arrest' fraud, asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, "To the best of our knowledge, there is a United Nations resolution – the UN Convention against Cybercrime – has our country ratified it?"

— The bench, meanwhile, in an extraordinary order directed that the accused in a ‘digital arrest’ case in which a 72-year-old woman lawyer was duped of Rs 3.29 crore should not be given bail till the investigation is complete.

— The Supreme Court then proposed transferring all such ‘digital arrest’ cases from the different states to the CBI and asked them to submit details of such cases registered in their respective jurisdictions.

Do You Know:

— The world’s first universal legislative framework to combat cybercrime has moved a step closer to become legally binding after at least 72 of the 193 member states signed the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime in Hanoi, Vietnam, on Saturday, October 25. As of October, India has not signed the treaty.

— The 41-page UN cybercrime treaty proposes a legislative framework to boost international cooperation among law enforcement agencies and offer technical assistance to countries that lack adequate infrastructure for combating cybercrime. It also contains provisions addressing illegal interception, money laundering, hacking, and online child sexual abuse material.

— A “Digital Arrest” scam involves fraudsters impersonating law enforcement via video calls, threatening fake arrests to extort money.

— In the majority of cases, online frauds and criminals typically call potential victims and tell them that they have sent or are the intended recipients of a parcel containing illegal goods, drugs, fake passports or any other contraband item. In some cases, the criminals contact relatives or friends of the target and tell them that the target has been found to be involved in a crime or an accident, and is in their custody.

— The criminals, who often use pictures or identities of police personnel to convey authenticity, usually demand money from the target for a ‘compromise’ and closure of the case. In certain cases, the victims are “digitally arrested”, and forced to stay visible over Skype or other video conferencing platforms to the criminals until their demands are met.

— The number of cases registered under the cybercrimes category surged by 31.2 per cent in 2023 to 86,420, up from 65,893 cases recorded in 2022, as per the [latest data released by the National Crime Records Bureau](#) (NCRB) in September 2025.

— Fraud, extortion and sexual exploitation accounted for the majority of cybercrime cases in India, with Karnataka reporting the highest number of cybercrime cases (21,889) among all the states.

Previous year UPSC Prelims Question Covering similar theme:

(4) In India, it is legally mandatory for which of the following to report on cyber security incidents? (UPSC CSE 2017)

1. Service providers
2. Data centres
3. Body corporate

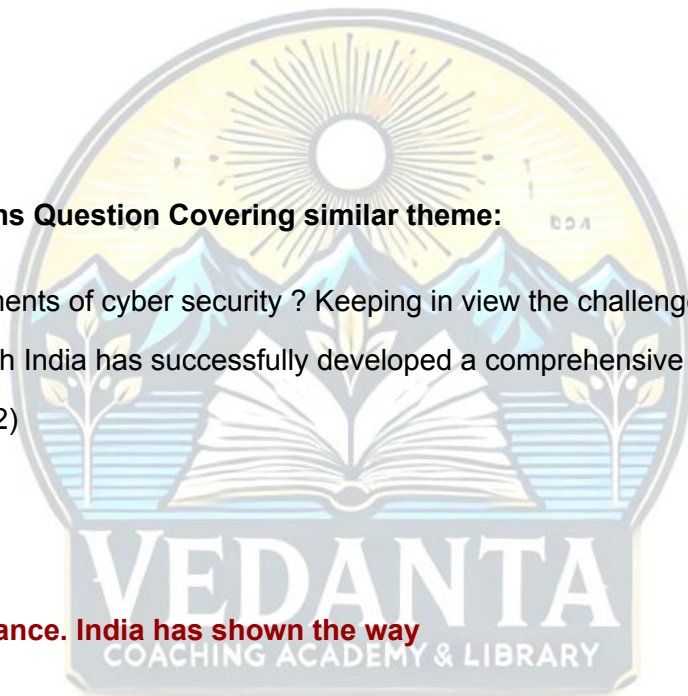
Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Previous year UPSC Mains Question Covering similar theme:

What are the different elements of cyber security ? Keeping in view the challenges in cyber security, examine the extent to which India has successfully developed a comprehensive National Cyber Security Strategy. (UPSC CSE 2022)

It's time to fix climate finance. India has shown the way



Syllabus:

Preliminary Examination: Current events of national and international importance

Mains Examination: General Studies-II: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate

General Studies-III: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

What's the ongoing story: Bhupender Yadav writes: India's G20 Presidency delivered a clear message to the world: The 20th-century multilateral framework is no longer fit for purpose. Nowhere is this failure

more evident, or more dangerous, than in the architecture of global climate finance. The need for multilateralism is non-negotiable.

Key Points to Ponder:

- What is climate finance?
- What are the concerns raised by developing countries, especially India about the shortcomings of climate finance?
- What are the various mechanisms in place for climate financing?
- What is the Belem Health Action Plan?
- What reforms are necessary in Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs)?
- What is Climate Finance Taxonomy?
- A section of the indigenous community also staged a public demonstration last week outside the COP30 venue— Why?
- What is the significance of the Samauma tree?

Key Takeaways:

- This is why, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is challenging this broken system. As we accelerate our clean energy transition, we ask: What precisely counts as climate finance? Who defines it? And how do we ensure it delivers on promises?
- At COP26, PM Modi pressed developed countries to mobilise \$1 trillion annually, insisting, “as we track climate mitigation, we must also track climate finance”. At COP28, he stated: “Climate finance and technology are essential to fulfil the hopes of the Global South”.
- India alone requires \$467 billion by 2030 to decarbonise hard-to-abate sectors. Globally, annual needs exceed \$7 trillion, yet flows remain stubbornly low.
- The anchors of the current system, the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), are failing to meet this moment.
- First, accountability is weak, as is transparency. Second, power remains concentrated. International financial institutions are still governed by structures that afford disproportionate influence to a handful of wealthy nations. Third, access is prohibitive.

— For developing countries, complex application processes mean critical funds are slow to arrive, if at all. This is compounded by steep borrowing costs and mounting debt, forcing nations to choose between paying creditors and protecting their populations.

— This is precisely why India, during its historic G20 Presidency, championed MDB reform.

— Today, private capital flows to where risk is lowest and profit is highest. It bypasses the difficult, urgent needs of adaptation, resilience, and Loss and Damage in the most vulnerable nations. By using tools like guarantees or blended finance, MDBs “de-risk” private capital into the sectors and regions that need it most.

— India’s draft Climate Finance Taxonomy is a substantive intervention. It proposes clear, scientific criteria for “green” or “climate-aligned” investment, guiding both public planning and private capital. This creates a stable playing field and signals that India’s green market is built on credibility.

— India’s journey shows what pragmatic leadership can build. Global architecture demands the same foundation, built on three essential reforms: Transparency and common standards; democratised governance across MDBs and, lastly, innovative debt and resilience finance.

— The international community must re-engineer global frameworks to be fairer and more effective. Only then can the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — the world as one family — be realised as the organising philosophy of our shared climate future.

World: At UN Climate meet in Brazil, a prayer to save the sacred trees of Amazon

— In the south of Brazil’s Belém, the host city to the United Nations’ (UN) annual climate conference COP30, flows the Guamá River which separates the vast Amazon rainforest from the main city. Amid the vastness of the rainforest stands a majestic 50-metre tropical tree of the Malvaceae family.

— In Brazil, the tree is known by the Portuguese nomenclature, **Samaúma**, and is considered to be sacred and the queen of the entire tropical forest that covers 40 per cent of Latin America, including large parts of Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, among others.

— While policymakers, leaders and administrators have gathered at Belém to discuss ways to combat the global climate crisis, members of Brazil’s indigenous communities and local residents are trying to bring to light various aspects of their culture, including the existence of the Samaúma.

— Also known as the Kapok tree, the Samaúma can grow up to a height of 70 metres or a 20-storeyed building, forming a natural canopy and towering over other trees in the rainforest. These trees have an

average lifespan varying from 300-400 years, its buttress roots sturdy in nature and taller than a full-grown human.

— The Amazon is home to more than 400 different indigenous communities, whose culture is intertwined with the flora and fauna of the region. The tree is also worshipped by the communities and holds spiritual significance among them.

— Over the past decade, several Samaúma trees have fallen prey to deforestation, which has been a key issue of concern in the Amazon region. A section of the indigenous community also staged a public demonstration last week outside the COP30 venue, protesting the deforestation and cutting of trees to make way for infrastructure projects as well as commercial ventures like mining and agricultural business.

— Garcia said that because of its height, the Samaúma has an expansive capacity for carrying out photosynthesis as its vast foliage receives sunlight directly. This also leads to an increased production of oxygen, which is then fed to the world.

Do You Know:

— The Belem Health Action Plan, a **flagship outcome of Brazil's COP 30 Presidency**, was unveiled on the dedicated Health Day of COP30 – 13 November 2025.

— It is aimed at strengthening global health systems to cope better with the impacts of climate change. It is structured around **two cross-cutting principles and concepts**: health equity and 'climate justice' and leadership and governance on climate and health with social participation.

— Under the ambit of '*The Climate and Health Funders Coalition*', over 35 leading philanthropies united to address the escalating public health crisis driven by climate change. They committed **an initial \$300 million** to tackle both the causes of climate change and its consequences for health.

Previous year UPSC Prelims Question Covering similar theme:

(5) "Climate Action Tracker" which monitors the emission reduction pledges of different countries is a:
(UPSC CSE 2022)

(a) Database created by coalition of research organisations

(b) Wing of "International Panel of Climate Change"

(c) Committee under "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change"

(d) Agency promoted and financed by United Nations Environment Programme and World Bank

How China dealt with air pollution, lessons for India

Syllabus:

Preliminary Examination: General issues on Environmental ecology, Biodiversity and Climate Change – that do not require subject specialization.

Main Examination: General Studies-II, III: Government policies and interventions, Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

What's the ongoing story: Every winter brings a yearly reminder of India's persistent air pollution problem, [in the form of smog blanketing cities](#) across northern India.

Key Points to Ponder:

- What is air pollution and what are its sources?
- What are the impacts of poor air quality?
- What is the Air Quality Index (AQI)?
- What are the key initiatives taken by the Indian government to control air pollution?
- What is a Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)?
- What steps should be taken to control air pollution?

Key Takeaways:

- Data show that air pollution levels are high in other months too, even in coastal cities like [Mumbai](#), primarily because of industrial activity and vehicular emissions. But during winters, meteorological factors (wind direction, low temperatures) and certain triggers (farm stubble burning and festive firecrackers) worsen the conditions in cities like [Delhi](#).
- In this context, China is often held up as an example worth emulating. Earlier this month, a spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in India, Yu Jing, stated on social media that “China once struggled with severe smog, too” and that they were ready to share their journey towards blue skies with India.
- Arideep Mukherjee, a former senior researcher at the Banaras Hindu University and a visiting professor at China's Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology, was a co-author for a 2023 study comparing the countries' air pollution woes. He told The [Indian Express](#) that “India's current air pollution scenario is comparable to China's in the late 2000s in terms of high particulate matter concentrations and

the significant health and economic burdens associated with it. Both nations share common drivers of pollution, such as rapid development and urbanisation.”

— The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, in its 2022 Guide to Chinese Climate Policy, noted that the primary air pollutant in China’s urban areas was fine particulate matter, such as PM2.5.

— In the late 2000s, air pollution attracted substantial government focus. Alex L Wang, a professor at the UCLA School of Law, wrote in a 2017 paper for Harvard Environmental Law Review that China’s 11th Five-Year Plan (2006–10) mentioned the issue as a concern, and a key method to enforce green norms was “the cadre evaluation system — China’s system for top-down bureaucratic personnel evaluation.”

— Here, the organisation departments of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) implement performance targets for officials at various levels, covering governors, mayors, county magistrates, and others. Their performance relative to their peers determines promotions and overall assessments.

— This was accompanied by increasing investment in pollution control equipment in industries. “Implementation also relied to a significant degree on shutdowns of outdated industrial capacity designated as excessively polluting or energy consuming (for example, power plants, smelters, chemical facilities, paper plants),” Wang wrote.

— The government further pushed for the adoption of Electric Vehicles. Shenzhen, the third-largest city in China, completely electrified its fleet of over 16,000 buses in 2017 — a first in the world. At the time, its population stood at around 11 million, roughly the size of [Bengaluru](#) today. Other major cities, such as Shanghai, followed suit.

— Both countries introduced environmental legislation in the 1980s, and air quality-focused programmes in the 2010s. However, their trajectories have diverged in terms of effectiveness.

For one, China’s approach was characterised by long-term continuous action. A key policy in India is the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which mandates measures like the closure of certain factories but only once a certain level of air quality is breached. It is also more localised, covering only the NCR.

— The 2023 comparative study, published in the Environmental Science and Policy journal, zeroed in on two fundamental determinants of success: “whether the country has adequate political will and financial resources to prioritise air quality, and whether the country can develop an accountability mechanism that clearly links top-level air quality standards with facility-level emissions control measures.”

— It noted some differences. Unlike China, India must contend with emissions from households, in the form of biomass burnt for fuel in rural areas.

— Then there are the governance systems — China's unitary setup against India's tiered governance, where authorities often overlap in jurisdiction and accountability is rarely attached to a particular institution.

— This is not to say that India has made no progress. The judiciary, especially, has allowed for various public interest litigations that direct action.

Do You Know:

— GRAP is a set of emergency measures that kick in to prevent further deterioration of air quality once it reaches a certain threshold.

— Stage 1 of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'poor' category (201 to 300). The second, third and fourth stages are activated three days ahead of the AQI reaching the 'very poor' category (301 to 400), 'severe' category (401 to 450) and 'severe +' category (above 450) respectively.

— Measures being imposed under the previous categories continue even when the subsequent category is activated, that is, if measures under Stage-2 are activated, measures under Stage-1 will continue to remain in place.

— Notably, the GRAP was first notified in January 2017 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. This was based on a plan that was submitted by the CPCB in November 2016.

— According to the notification, the task of implementing the GRAP fell on the now-dissolved Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority for the NCR. From 2021 onwards, the GRAP is being implemented by the CAQM.

Previous year UPSC Prelims Question Covering Similar Theme:

(6) In the cities of our country, which among the following atmospheric gases are normally considered in calculating the value of Air Quality Index? (UPSC CSE 2016)

1. Carbon dioxide
2. Carbon monoxide
3. Nitrogen dioxide
4. Sulfur dioxide
5. Methane

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1, 2 and 3 only

(b) 2, 3 and 4 only

(c) 1, 4 and 5 only

(d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Previous year UPSC Mains Question Covering Similar Theme:

Describe the key points of the revised Global Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs) recently released by the World Health Organisation (WHO). How are these different from its last update in 2005? What changes in India's National Clean Air Programme are required to achieve revised standards? (UPSC CSE 2021)

ALSO IN NEWS



<p>SC ruling in telecom dues case softens a crippling blow</p>	<p>Arvind P. Datar writes: The decision of the Supreme Court permitting reconsideration of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) dues of Vodafone is a welcome step and will set right the damage done by the judgment in <i>Union of India vs Association of United Telecom Service Providers of India</i> that was delivered in October 2019.</p> <p>The definition of the word “gross revenue” was very wide and included interest, dividend, and other miscellaneous revenue. The AGR reduced the gross revenue by certain items, including service tax and sales tax. Telecom operators had to share 15 per cent of AGR as licence fees with the Union of India; this was later reduced to 8 per cent.</p> <p>It is an elementary principle of accounting that the word “revenue” refers to the actual inflow that accrues or arises to a company. If a hotel has a tariff rate of Rs 5,000 per night, but actually rents the room at Rs 3,000, all taxes are payable only on Rs 3,000.</p> <p>Accounting Standards (AS-9) also mandate that revenue would only mean the consideration that is received or receivable after granting discounts, rebates and deductions. Indeed, the Companies Act, 2013 makes it mandatory that these accounting standards are followed.</p> <p>The welcome direction of the SC will now enable reconsideration of the AGR dues, and waiver of interest and penalty. In 2016, the SC had highlighted the need for courts to reckon the economic impact of their judgments. In 1970, almost 50 years earlier, the SC had held that a penalty could be levied only when a person had consciously disregarded his statutory obligations. These salutary safeguards could have reduced the financial burden on the telecom sector. Mercifully, this is an opportunity to undo the crippling blow of the 2019 judgment.</p>
<p>India, Russia look to finalise new pacts during Putin visit</p>	<p>Weeks ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit to India for the 23rd Annual India-Russia Summit, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov held a meeting in Moscow to discuss details of the summit and also finalise a slew of pacts, including those on defence and mobility, that may be signed during the visit.</p>

Sentinel-6B:
new satellite
to observe
ocean

Sentinel-6B was launched on Monday from the Vandenberg Space Force Base in California. It is an ocean-tracking satellite with six onboard science instruments that will measure the rising sea levels and its impacts on the planet. Sentinel-6B will orbit Earth at a speed of 7.2 km per second, completing one revolution every 112 minutes.

Sentinel-6B is a joint mission between the United States' NASA and NOAA, and the European Space Agency; it is the latest in a series of satellites launched since the 1990s, mainly by NASA, to measure the sea-level changes from space

PRELIMS ANSWER KEY

1. (b) 2. (b) 3. (a) 4. (d) 5. (a) 6. (b)

