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THE HINDU ANALYSIS

Current Affairs & Editorial

26 June 2026

Prelims · Mains · Editorials · Practice MCQs

COMPILED BY

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IN TODAY'S EDITION

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1

188 dead, 1,500 injured as a ‘doublet earthquake’ strikes Venezuela

GS 1 GEOGRAPHY

GS 3 DISASTER MGMT

WHY IN NEWS

A pair of powerful earthquakes (USGS magnitude 7.2 followed within a minute by 7.5), centred west of Caracas, killed at least 188 people and injured over 1,500. Tremors were felt in neighbouring Colombia and Brazil, prompting an international outpouring of aid.

Key Facts of the Event

- The first quake struck near the coastal town of **Moron** (epicentre ~21 km west) at 6.04 p.m. local time; the second, stronger 7.5 quake hit about **45 km away** within a minute.
- The two shocks struck at shallow depths of **22 km and 10 km** respectively, which amplified surface damage and building collapse.
- Interim President **Delcy Rodriguez** declared the State of **La Guaira** a disaster zone; the international airport near Caracas was closed due to serious damage.
- Rescue specialists from the U.S., several European nations and the UN joined the effort, while China, **India**, Brazil and Iran offered help.

Concept: What is a ‘Doublet Earthquake’?

- A **doublet (or multiplet) earthquake** is a sequence of two (or more) mainshocks of comparable magnitude occurring close in time and space, where neither is clearly a foreshock or aftershock of the other.
- Venezuela lies along the complex boundary between the **Caribbean and South American plates**, a transform/strike-slip margin prone to shallow, destructive quakes.

188 dead, 1,500 injured as earthquakes hit Venezuela

'Doublet earthquake,' with an initial 7.2 magnitude tremor closely followed by a stronger 7.5 one, wreaks havoc in the South American country; tremors felt in neighbouring Colombia and Brazil

Agence France-Presse
LA GUAIRA

A pair of powerful earthquakes that rocked Venezuela have killed at least 188 people and left more than 1,500 hurt, officials said on Thursday as residents searched for loved ones trapped under rubble after many buildings were flattened within minutes.

An international outpouring of aid quickly followed the tremors on Wednesday evening, which the United States Geological Survey (USGS) measured as magnitude 7.2 and 7.5, centred west of the capital Caracas. Tremors from the earthquakes were also felt in neighbouring Colombia and Brazil.

Interim President Delcy Rodríguez said that intense



Lost in seconds: A woman holds a boy near a collapsed building in Caracas, Venezuela, on Thursday following the earthquakes. AFP

rescue efforts were going on, noting that the State of La Guaira was hit hard.

"Dozens of buildings have collapsed, and we are currently carrying out very intense rescue efforts to save as many lives as God allows us to save," Ms. Rodríguez said on state televi-

sion on Thursday. "La Guaira State is a true tragedy, and has become a disaster zone."

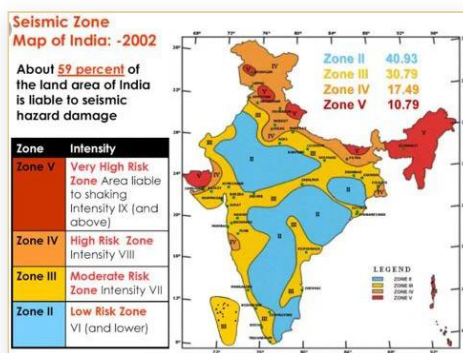
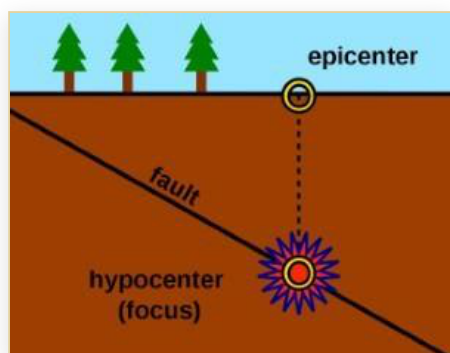
The first earthquake, with an epicentre 21 kilometres west of the coastal town of Moron, occurred at 6.04 p.m. local time on Wednesday, the USGS said.

Within a minute, a 7.5-magnitude earthquake struck about 45 kilometres away. They struck at depths of 22 kilometres and 10 kilometres, respectively.

Scores of rescuers from the U.S. and several European countries and UN specialists were on their way to help search for survivors, Ms. Rodríguez said while nations including China, India, Brazil, and war-battered Iran offered help. However, threatening to complicate the relief effort, the international airport near Caracas was closed due to "serious damage," Ms. Rodríguez said, with social media videos showing the terminal's ceiling collapsing over panicked travellers.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

Source: The Hindu, Page 1 — "188 dead, 1,500 injured as earthquakes hit Venezuela"



Focus (hypocentre) vs epicentre · Seismic Zone Map of India (BIS 2002)

EARTHQUAKE TERMINOLOGY — PRELIMS CAPSULE

- ◆ **Focus / Hypocentre:** point inside the earth where energy is released; **Epicentre:** point on the surface directly above the focus.
- ◆ **Isoseismic line:** joins points of equal intensity. **Seismograph:** instrument that records waves.
- ◆ **Depth classes:** Shallow 0–70 km, Intermediate 70–300 km, Deep 300–700 km.
- ◆ **P-waves** (primary): fastest, travel through solids, liquids & gases. **S-waves** (secondary): slower, travel only through solids.
- ◆ **India:** ~59% of land is liable to seismic hazard; Zone V (very high) covers the NE, Kashmir, Kutch & parts of the Himalaya.

2

CBI searches 80 locations, nabs 2 over ‘digital arrests’

GS 3 INTERNAL SECURITY

CYBER

WHY IN NEWS

Under **Operation Chakra-VI**, the CBI searched 80+ locations across 16 States and Delhi, linked to 200+ cases, to dismantle the cybercrime infrastructure behind ‘digital arrest’ scams. Two accused — from Chennai and Kolkata — have been arrested so far.

The Crackdown

- The CBI formed **60 special teams** for coordinated searches across Punjab, Gujarat, Delhi, Maharashtra, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, UP, MP, Rajasthan, Assam, West Bengal, Manipur, Karnataka and Odisha.
- The accused incorporated **shell companies** and operated **mule bank accounts** used to launder about **₹2 crore** of suspected proceeds of crime.
- A **fraudulent website** mimicking the Supreme Court's official URL was unearthed; a case was registered on a complaint from the SC Registry.

What is a ‘Digital Arrest’?

- A cyber scam where fraudsters **impersonate law-enforcement agencies** (police, CBI, ED, customs) to extort money by manufacturing fear and urgency.
- Victims are falsely linked to a criminal case and threatened with arrest or account freezing via **spoofed numbers and fake documents**, then pressured into paying a fake fine or ‘security deposit’.
- As of 2024, the **I4C** had blocked over **59,000 WhatsApp accounts** linked to digital-arrest scams.

CBI searches 80 locations, nabs 2 over 'digital arrests'

Devesh K. Pandey

NEW DELHI

In a crackdown on the cybercrime infrastructure facilitating "digital arrest" scams, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) searched more than 80 locations across the country over the past week in connection with 200-plus cases. It has arrested two accused so far – Naresh from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, and Sanjib Saha of Kolkata, West Bengal.

Under Operation Chakra-VI, the agency formed 60 special teams and conducted coordinated searches in Punjab, Gujarat, Delhi, Maharashtra, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh,

The Central agency conducted searches in locations linked to more than 200 cases in 15 States and Delhi

Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, West Bengal, Manipur, Karnataka, and Odisha.

"The searches were carried out as part of an ongoing investigation aimed at dismantling a targeted operational network involved in over 200 cases of digital arrest scams," said the agency.

The arrested accused were involved in the incorporation of shell companies and the opening and

operation of mule bank accounts. These accounts were used for laundering about ₹2 crore of suspected proceeds of crime, the CBI said.

Fraudulent website

Recently, the agency unearthed a fraudulent website with a URL deceptively similar to the official website of the Supreme Court. The fraudsters allegedly used the registered domain to defraud victims. Based on a complaint received from the Registry of the Supreme Court, the agency registered a case and launched an investigation.

**CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12**

Source: The Hindu, Page 1 — "CBI searches 80 locations, nabs 2 over 'digital arrests'"

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AGAINST CYBER FRAUD

- ◆ **I4C (Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre):** set up by MHA to coordinate the national cybercrime response, capacity building & intelligence sharing.
- ◆ **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal:** lets citizens report cybercrime online; cases routed to State/UT police.
- ◆ **Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting System (Helpline 1930):** enables immediate reporting of financial fraud.
- ◆ **Anti-spoofing:** DoT & telecom operators identify and block international spoofed calls posing as Indian numbers.
- ◆ **Awareness:** SMS alerts, the **CyberDost** handles, and displays at airports/railway stations.

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- **GS 3:** Internal security — cybercrime, money laundering, role of agencies (CBI, ED, I4C).
- **Static:** PMLA 2002, IT Act 2000, Operation Chakra series, BharatPol/Interpol cooperation.

3

Netra AEW&C gets Final Operational Clearance

PRELIMS

DEFENCE / S&T

WHY IN NEWS

The indigenous **Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C)** system — a force multiplier in the 2019 Balakot strikes and Operation Sindoor — was accorded **Final Operational Clearance (FOC)** at the Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS), Bengaluru.

About the System

- Developed indigenously by the Bengaluru-based **Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS)**, a DRDO lab, and integrated on the Brazilian **Embraer EMB-145I** platform.
- Carries an **Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar**, IFF, mission computer, secure comms, and electronic & communication support measures (ESM/CSM).
- India is the **fifth country** in the world to develop this capability; Netra can detect, track, identify and monitor airborne and maritime targets, boosting network-centric warfare.

The Long Road

- Seeds of India's AWACS effort were sown in the early 1980s; the programme was abandoned after the tragic **1999 crash of a modified HS-748 Avro** near Arakkonam (8 aboard, incl. 4 IAF & 4 scientists).
- Re-sanctioned in **2004**; **Initial Operational Clearance** in 2015 and induction into the IAF in **2017**; FOC now marks full operational maturity.

Spreading the wings



Mission ready: The indigenously developed NETRA Airborne Early Warning and Control system during an event to receive final operational clearance at the Centre for Airborne Systems in Bengaluru, Karnataka, on Thursday. K. MURALI KUMAR (REPORT: PAGE 14)

Source: The Hindu, Page 1 — “Spreading the wings”: Netra AEW&C at CABS, Bengaluru

AEW&C VS AWACS — QUICK DISTINCTIONS

- ◆ **AEW&C (Netra):** smaller, business-jet based (Embraer), ~240° coverage radar; tactical reach.
- ◆ **AWACS (‘Netra-MkII’ / Phalcon on IL-76):** larger, 360° rotodome coverage, longer endurance.
- ◆ **Force multiplier:** extends radar horizon, directs fighters, and enables network-centric operations.
- ◆ Implementing agency: **DRDO — CABS**; platform: **Embraer EMB-145I**.

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- **Prelims:** CABS, DRDO labs, AESA radar, IFF; differentiate AEW&C and AWACS.
- **GS 3:** Indigenisation of defence (Atmanirbhar Bharat), DefSpace, network-centric warfare.

4

Keeping humanity at the centre of the AI revolution

GS 3 SCI & TECH

ETHICS

WHY IN NEWS

An editorial argues that AI's promise must be guided by **ethics, dignity and accountability**. Even as AI delivers vast gains, its risks demand a values-anchored, 'humanist-centric' framework of governance.

The Promise of AI

- Automating tedious, repetitive work and freeing time for leisure; expanding access to essential services.
- Breakthroughs in medicine — **cancer screening**, prediction of terminal illness, robotic nursing — and longevity.
- More effective targeting of economic aid to the marginalised; wider access to education; and contributions to **disaster management and weather forecasting**.

The Perils & the Need for a Moral Compass

- Data-privacy vulnerabilities, misinformation, electoral manipulation, AI-enabled phishing, surveillance, and the risk of **super-intelligent weapons** going rogue.
- Preserving **digital sovereignty** of nation-states is hard when control over data is tied to national security — a global regulatory regime can no longer be postponed.
- Pope Leo XIV's encyclical on 'Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of AI' stresses the duty to remain 'profoundly human' and warns against deepening inequality.

India's Position

- PM Modi (at **VivaTech 2026, Paris** and the **India-AI Impact Summit 2026, New Delhi**) called for a **robust, enforceable regulatory framework** rather than voluntary, non-binding commitments.
- Such a framework could democratise access to frontier AI and build a shared, trustworthy ecosystem — defining inclusive democracy anchored in equality and human dignity.

Keeping humanity at the centre of the AI revolution

At the peak of human history, the Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolution stands out as a transformative moment, harnessing the infinite potential of science and innovation in the service of humankind. The endless possibilities of AI in every sphere of human activity and its empowering potential to deal with the unprecedented challenges of our times, is a tribute to mankind's collective ingenuity that validates the boast of accomplishments which 'even the gods might be envious'. The automating of tedious tasks involving repetitive work and freeing time for leisure, expanding access to essential services, breakthroughs in medicine, ensuring longevity and better health care including cancer screening and prediction of terminal illnesses, robotic nursing of the sick, a more effective targeting of economic aid to the marginalised, enhanced accessibility of education and knowledge to all and its vast contribution to environmental sustainability in several ways including disaster management and weather forecasting are some of the crowning contributions of AI toward a more inclusive development agenda.

Technology and human values

Even so, questions about the future of human society and the 'destiny of intelligence' are most vigorously debated by philosophers, scientists, statesmen and the technology czars, some of whom have pleaded for a pause in the further development and deployment of AI that could hijack our idea of humanity. The claims of the AI protagonists about the 'amazing abundance' of goods and services and the caution against slowing down of scientific progress through regulation must contend with the compelling questions about the necessity of ethical guardrails warranted by humanitarian considerations and emotions embedded in the deepest recesses of our being through a cultural evolution spanning the millennia. The question of who we are, and whether we are ready for a new narrative of humanity in which functional efficiency and promised material abundance prevail over the yearnings of the human soul and the dignity of emotion, is an unavoidable and larger inquiry that has resisted the seduction of technological wonders. This is particularly important given that AI is able to replicate, and in some cases even outperform, cognitive skills, including the ability to understand human emotions and intuition.

Are we ready for an endless technological disruption and a 'global epidemic of stress' caused by a prolonged volatility in the job market



Ashwani Kumar
Senior Advocate,
Supreme Court
of India, an author
and a former Union
Minister for Law
and Justice

AI's promise
must be guided
by ethics,
dignity and
accountability

and a predicted 'useless' class of millions caused by an unmanageable stress in coping with the effects of technological disruption? Whether we have new social and economic models that protect individual self-worth and ensure for all a life of belonging and emotional well-being are larger philosophical questions arising from a humanist perspective founded on the sacrosanctity of the values we carry as a badge of humanity.

Clearly, the fact that passionate propounders of AI have cautioned against 'summoning the devil without a kill switch', must awaken us to the urgency of serious reflection on how to preserve 'the hidden realm of the mind from which emotions emerge, from which inspiration flows, from which our desires pulse – the subjective part of the human spirit that makes each of us ineluctably who we are'.

Data privacy vulnerabilities, proliferation of misinformation, electoral manipulations, the possibility of super intelligent weapons systems going rogue, AI-enabled phishing campaigns, and surveillance and censorship are some of the ominous portents that can cause social upheavals without effective global regulation.

Preserving the digital sovereignty of nation-states remains a challenge, given that control over data is intrinsically linked to national security and the strategic autonomy of nations. The establishment of a global regulatory regime that respects national sovereignty and ensures effective enforcement can no longer be postponed.

A moral compass

The world of AI that could rewrite the code of humanity, therefore, needs a moral vision that can harmonise technological advancement with the preconditions of a virtuous and happy society. Terry Eagleton's caution in relation to a sense of seductive self-assurance is eloquent and I quote: 'An inflated self-belief can earn its calamitous comeuppance, which caused the ancient Greeks to shudder and look fearfully to the skies'.

Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset reminded us that 'we live at a time when man believes himself fabulously capable of creation, but he does not know what to create. Lord of all things, he is not Lord of himself. He feels lost amid his own abundance. With more means at its disposal, more knowledge, more technique than ever, it turns out that the world today goes the same way as the worst of worlds that have been; it simply drifts'.

The encyclical letter of His Holiness, Pope Leo

XIV on 'Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence', clinches the moral debate on the humanist dilemmas in relation to AI. Recognising that technology is not antagonistic to humanity, the Pope has stressed the duty to remain 'profoundly human' in an era of AI when 'human dignity is threatened by new forms of dehumanization'.

Emphasising the need to establish standards of ethical discernment based on the dignity of the individual, His Holiness has warned against the 'illusion' of 'self assertion' and cautioned against progress that exacerbates inequalities and is incapable of healing peoples' wounds. He has called for a rejection of the 'idolatry of profit that sacrifices the weak, a uniformity that neutralizes differences and the pretense that a single language – even a digital one – can translate everything, including the mystery of the person into data and performance'. These assertions by the Pontiff are moral injunctions in a world that needed a reminder of the 'splendour and grandeur of humanity' beyond its creations and of the limitations of AI in terms of its 'affective, relational or spiritual capabilities'.

The moral code propounded by the Pope, a product of an encounter between lived experiences, spiritual consciousness and historical memory, asserts that humanity flourishes in the 'fragility and finitude' of the human person and in its limitations.

Ethical AI governance

Thus viewed in the framework of core human values anchored in the dignity of man, global leaders are expected to opt for a 'humanist centric' approach in the deployment and regulation of AI for the larger good of humanity with the individual at the centre of their decisions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stressed at both the VivaTech 2026 conference in Paris (June 2026) and the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi (February 2026) that such an approach would require a robust and enforceable regulatory framework, rather than voluntary and non-binding commitments, to govern the use of AI. Such a framework could democratise access to frontier AI and help build a shared, trustworthy AI ecosystem in an age that 'levels everything and reverts nothing'. How nations deal with this epochal challenge will define the quality of political leadership and our commitment to inclusive democracy anchored in equality and human dignity as the ultimate civilisational aspiration.

The views expressed are personal

Source: The Hindu, Page 8 (Editorial) — Ashwani Kumar, "Keeping humanity at the centre of the AI revolution"

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- **GS 3:** Awareness in IT & AI; ethical & governance challenges of emerging tech.
- **GS 4:** Ethics — human dignity, accountability, the 'humanist-centric' approach.
- **Static:** NITI Aayog's #AIForAll, IndiaAI Mission, Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023, global AI summits.

5

‘Onerous rules’: FCRA Amendment Rules, 2026 & the squeeze on NGOs

GS 2 GOVERNANCE

POLITY

WHY IN NEWS

An editorial argues the newly notified **FCRA Amendment Rules, 2026** point to a renewed attempt to stifle NGOs that use foreign funding for civil-society work, by raising compliance burdens and treating advocacy as disqualifying ‘political content’.

What the New Rules Require

- All NGOs under FCRA, 2010 must **confine work to the activities, States and UTs named in their registration**, and disclose social-media handles, websites and publications.
- They are **barred from carrying ‘political content’**, face stringent penalties for using funds for unapproved purposes, and must pay **separate fees for each category** and each State/UT — replacing the single registration fee.
- These raise compliance costs and paperwork; critics see a **chilling effect** on legitimate civil-society activity.

Context & Judicial Backdrop

- Civil-society organisations fill gaps the State leaves in health, education, disaster relief and rights; yet the State has long treated NGOs with suspicion under FCRA.
- In **Noel Harper (2022)**, the Supreme Court upheld the stringent 2020 FCRA amendments, accepting the state's invocation of sovereignty and national security.
- In 2020 the Court had **read down** rules that would have classed rights activism (protests, demonstrations) as work ‘of a political nature’, distinguishing party politics from social/economic betterment.
- A March 2026 proposal to let a government authority **take over assets** of NGOs whose registration was cancelled/surrendered was put on hold after protests.

Onerous rules

The newly amended FCRA Rules point to a renewed attempt to stifle NGOs

Civil society organisations play a vital role in areas such as health, education, disaster relief, and civil liberties and rights, stepping in where the state falls short. Yet, the Indian state has treated NGOs with suspicion, using the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010, to impose stringent restrictions on their functioning. Earlier this week, the FCRA Amendment Rules, 2026 were notified, which require all NGOs registered under the FCRA, 2010, to confine their work to activities specified for their category and to the States and Union Territories named in their registration. They must also disclose their social media handles, websites and publications and are barred from carrying “political content”. The new rules impose stringent penalties for using funds for unapproved purposes and require NGOs to pay separate fees for each category of work and to each State or Union Territory in which they operate, replacing the earlier system of a single registration fee. These increase compliance costs and paperwork. While the government argues that such measures promote transparency, even-handedness and national security, the rules are clearly meant to stifle the work of NGOs. The operation of the FCRA regime has been far from transparent. As CPI(M) MP John Brittas recently complained, parliamentary questions on FCRA cancellations and non-renewals have been disallowed as “secret”, even

John Brittas recently complained, parliamentary questions on FCRA cancellations and non-renewals have been disallowed as “secret”, even though more than 20,000 registrations have reportedly been revoked over the past decade on opaque grounds. Far from improving transparency, the new rules burden NGOs with greater barriers and commitments, raising concerns that the Centre intends to create a chilling effect.

In *Noel Harper* (2022), the Supreme Court upheld the stringent 2020 FCRA amendments, accepting the state’s invocation of sovereignty and national security. Yet, in 2020, the Court had read down rules that would have classified the rights activism of civil society bodies, including protests and demonstrations as work “of a political nature”, drawing a distinction between party politics and the everyday work of social and economic betterment. The new Rules seek to treat advocacy and “political content” as grounds for disqualification. In March 2026, the Centre had proposed amendments allowing a government-appointed authority to take over the assets of NGOs whose registrations were cancelled, surrendered, or not renewed. Following strong protests, particularly from minority institutions, it put the proposal on hold. Now, the newly notified rules seem another way of throttling NGOs that utilise foreign funding for civil society work. The Centre should withdraw the punitive provisions, particularly those on multiple fees and political content, and adopt fairer rules.

Source: *The Hindu*, Page 6 (Editorial) — “Onerous rules: the FCRA Rules point to a renewed attempt to stifle NGOs”

FCRA — KEY STATIC POINTS

- ◆ **FCRA, 2010** regulates the acceptance & use of foreign contribution by individuals/associations; administered by the **MHA**.
- ◆ **2020 amendments:** banned sub-granting of foreign funds, capped administrative expenses at 20%, mandated SBI New Delhi main branch FCRA account, Aadhaar of office-bearers.
- ◆ Balances **national security / sovereignty** against the constitutional freedoms of association (Art. 19) and the role of civil society.

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- **GS 2:** Role of NGOs, SHGs & civil society; statutory regulation; centre-state & rights issues.
- **Static:** FCRA 2010 & 2020 amendments, Noel Harper case, Art. 19(1)(c).

6

‘Broken accountability’: corruption takes a toll at construction sites

GS 2 GOVERNANCE

GS 4 ETHICS

WHY IN NEWS

Following the **Taratala warehouse collapse** in Kolkata (June 24), which has claimed 11 lives, an editorial argues that fragmented accountability and corruption across the construction chain repeatedly take lives, and that the time has come to reckon with this fragmentation itself.

The Anatomy of Failure

- Per the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, an empanelled architect and a structural engineer must certify plans; yet corruption runs from local cartels to surveyors signing off on designs not their own.
- Early reports found the contractor used **corrugated tin sheets** to support the far heavier load of a concrete roof cast — a cost-cutting shortcut; eyewitnesses reported shaking and rapid ‘pancaking’ of floors after heavy rains.
- At Taratala there were **no records of who was on site** when the structure collapsed, forcing reliance on residents’ accounts; blame centred on the local contractor — “only one rung of the ladder”.

The Accountability Gap

- Many such failures reflect an **anachronistic model of governance** that has not kept pace with modern construction and private-sector complexity.
- Gaps arise from land-ownership and **Centre-State uncertainties**, and from legal systems built for an era when the State was the primary builder.
- Loopholes let the **ultimate owners of capital** stay away from the ‘dirty work’, impugned engineers claim ignorance, and jurisdictions play ‘ping-pong’.

Broken accountability

Corruption at all levels takes a toll on lives at construction sites

In light of the Taratala warehouse collapse in Kolkata on June 24, the ability to erect a structure based on a reportedly flawed plan is reminiscent of West Bengal's infamous Syndicate Raj. As per the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, an empanelled architect and a structural engineer must certify building plans. The corruption ranges from local cartels, some backed by political heavyweights, allegedly forcing developers to buy subpar construction materials at premium prices to licensed surveyors allegedly delegating the task of signing off on designs not of their doing to unlicensed persons. Early reports of the warehouse collapse – which has now claimed 11 lives while several of the injured are critical – have already found that the contractor used corrugated tin sheets to support the much heavier load of the concrete roof cast – a shortcut cartels have been known to take to cut costs. Eyewitnesses described sudden shaking, a loud sound, and the rapid pancaking of floors; one account also reported visible shaking hours before the collapse following heavy rains. While West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari has suspended all Trinamool Congress-era projects in and around Kolkata as part of a bid to eliminate corruption, migrant labourers will continue to bear the brunt of flawed construction approval and activities if the State does not rein in the informal subcontracting chain. This need is also in-

corruption, migrant labourers will continue to bear the brunt of flawed construction approval and activities if the State does not rein in the informal subcontracting chain. This need is also informed by India expecting to have more migrant labourers with time as environmental degradation undermines many rural livelihoods.

Several structural failures such as this have displayed fragmented accountability, and given the tragic spate of similar 'accidents' around India over the last few years, the time has come to reckon with the fragmentation *per se*. At least some of these failures may have been the result of an anachronistic model of governance that has failed to keep up with the speed of modern construction and complexities in the private sector. An accountability gap thus arises due to land ownership, especially if it involves Centre-State uncertainties, as at Taratala, and/or due to legal systems catering to a paradigm in which the State was the primary builder. Persistent loopholes in existing licensing procedures may also allow the ultimate owners of capital to stay away from 'dirty work' at the construction site, allow impugned engineers to claim ignorance of day-to-day lapses, and give way to jurisdictional ping-pong. At Taratala, reports indicated there were no records of who was on site when the structure collapsed, forcing authorities to rely on accounts from residents and family members, even as blame centred on the local contractor. While he is likely liable, he is only one rung of the ladder.

Source: *The Hindu*, Page 8 (Editorial) — “Broken accountability: corruption at all levels takes a toll on lives”

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- **GS 2:** Transparency & accountability, regulatory institutions, urban local bodies (74th Amendment).
- **GS 4:** Ethics in governance — integrity of professionals, corporate responsibility, conscience of the engineer.
- **Static:** Building bye-laws, National Building Code, role of municipal corporations & structural certification.

7

India's shipbuilding ambitions can set sail with Korea

GS 3 ECONOMY

INFRASTRUCTURE

WHY IN NEWS

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's visit — the first by a Korean leader in eight years — has given momentum to India-South Korea shipbuilding collaboration, a strategic sector India is seeking to revive.

Seoul Plugs into India's Drive

- The 'big three' Korean yards — **Samsung Heavy Industries, HD Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Engineering, and Hanwha Ocean** — have announced plans, partnerships or interests in India.
- A Hyundai subsidiary signed an MoU with **Cochin Shipyard** and plans a **\$4 billion green shipyard** at Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu; SHI has partnered Swan Defence & Heavy Industries.
- **KOMEA** (304 ancillary enterprises) has opened a Mumbai office, helping seed a shipbuilding cluster — inspired by the Ulsan model — with ancillary industries.

Filling the Gaps

- India's **Maritime Vision 2030** and **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047** target the top 10 shipbuilding nations by 2030 and top five by 2047.
- Enabling schemes: **Maritime Development Fund**, Shipbuilding Development Scheme, Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy, and the new **Sagarmala Finance Corporation Ltd (SFCL)** — India's first NBFC for the maritime sector.
- Reforms needed: regulatory consistency, legal predictability, and access to **low-cost, long-term capital**; Korea went from minor player to global leader in ~15 years from the 1970s.

India's shipbuilding ambitions can set sail with Korea

In April this year, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India, his first visit to India and the first by a Korean leader in eight years. The meeting was remarkable in many ways, as it revived high-level political interaction at the leaders' level, resulting in the expansion of partnership in strategic sectors. However, the visit was special for another reason: it paved the way for strong collaboration between India and South Korea in the shipbuilding industry, a strategic sector that India is seeking to revive.

Seoul plugs into India's shipbuilding drive
Mr. Lee's visit has given positive momentum to the slowly progressing India-South Korea shipbuilding partnership, as seen in the slew of memoranda of understanding (MoU) and agreements signed during his trip. While the big three of the South Korean shipbuilding industry – Samsung Heavy Industries (SHI), HD Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Engineering, and Hanwha Ocean – had already announced their investment plans, partnerships, or interests in India, Mr. Lee's support reiterates the South Korean government's strategic commitment to shipbuilding collaboration with India. Last year, a subsidiary of Hyundai signed an MoU with Cochin Shipyard Limited and has since announced plans to invest \$4 billion in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, to construct a green shipyard. Similarly, SHI has signed a partnership with Swan Defence and Heavy Industries to build ships in India. These developments showcase India's attractiveness as a shipbuilding destination for global giants.

South Korea is also interested in developing a complementary supply chain that includes ancillary industries. For instance, the Korea Marine Equipment Association (KOMEA), which comprises 304 enterprises across ship design, shipbuilding, marine equipment, and ship repair, has opened an office in Mumbai. This is expected to pave the way for the development of a robust shipbuilding ecosystem in India. Such steps will help foster a shipbuilding cluster encompassing ancillary industries and other critical facilities



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South Korean
partnerships
could help
accelerate
India's
ambitions to
become a
shipbuilding
powerhouse

required for scaling up the sector. Further, these partnerships are expected to provide the Indian shipbuilding industry with much-needed support, including design and engineering expertise as well as production know-how. This will help India develop human capital and adopt technology at scale, making its shipyards more competitive internationally. In addition, the various MoUs signed between India and South Korea – at both the government-to-government and business-to-business levels – on workforce development, maritime education, research, and innovation will further strengthen the shipbuilding ecosystem. Together, these efforts could help establish a holistic, cluster-led development model inspired by the success of the city of Ulsan in South Korea.

What has been accomplished in such a short time is commendable, but the task is far from complete. To emerge as a leading shipbuilding nation, India will have to pursue multiple objectives simultaneously. It must support the industry through proactive policy and fiscal measures while also responding effectively to external crises that could disrupt supply chains and affect demand. The sector will require sustained hand-holding until it becomes self-sufficient and capable of competing globally, particularly with established giants such as China.

Fill the gaps

There must be a focus on human capital development, policy and fiscal support, and bringing in ancillary industries. India's Maritime Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 clearly state the objective of being among the top 10 shipbuilding nations by 2030 and in the top five by 2047.

Complementing initiatives such as the Maritime Development Fund, Shipbuilding Development Scheme, and Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy make it clearer that India is serious about attracting foreign investment in the shipping and shipbuilding sector.

However, policy and operational gaps persist.

To rectify these gaps, India will have to focus on implementing a series of reforms related to regulatory consistency and legal predictability and also providing access to low-cost and long-term capital. Steps such as the creation of the Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SFCL), India's first non-banking financial company for the maritime sector, are a positive and welcome development.

However, the greater challenge will be establishing a comprehensive industrial ecosystem for shipbuilding. To achieve this, India will need to move quickly on workforce development, supplier localisation, and the creation of dedicated maritime institutions. In addition, Indian academia and research institutions will have to play a larger role in this developmental partnership to support the country's shipbuilding ambitions.

India must continue to focus on three key priorities: providing sustained policy and fiscal support, developing the capacity to absorb transferred technologies, and formulating a sectoral strategy with clearly defined goals and targets. The in-principle approval of the greenfield project in Tamil Nadu is a welcome development, signalling that approval and implementation bottlenecks need not be insurmountable. To capitalise on this opportunity, however, State governments, alongside the central government, must ensure timely follow-through at every stage, facilitate the entry of foreign investors, and provide continuous support throughout the investment process.

A proven pathway

While India's shipbuilding ambitions are ambitious, they are not impractical. South Korea's shipbuilding journey, from a minor player to a global leader in just 15 years, beginning in the 1970s, demonstrates what is possible. India can replicate that success by focusing on three priorities: sustained policy and financial support, competitive shipbuilding and industrial capacity, and a skilled workforce.

Source: *The Hindu*, Page 8 (Editorial) — Abhishek Sharma, "India's shipbuilding ambitions can set sail with Korea"

MARITIME INITIATIVES — CAPSULE

- ◆ **Sagarmala Programme:** port-led development — modernisation, connectivity, coastal community development.
- ◆ **Maritime Vision 2030 / Amrit Kaal Vision 2047:** roadmaps for ports, shipping & shipbuilding.
- ◆ **SFCL:** first non-banking financial company dedicated to the maritime sector.
- ◆ **Ship Recycling:** Recycling of Ships Act 2019 (Alang); India a leader in ship-breaking.

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- **GS 2 (IR):** India-South Korea Special Strategic Partnership; Indo-Pacific.
- **GS 3:** Infrastructure, manufacturing, Make in India, blue economy.

8

NCERT introduces the 1975 Emergency in the Class 9 textbook

GS 2 POLITY

CONSTITUTION

WHY IN NEWS

NCERT has introduced the **1975 Emergency** in its Class 9 textbook *Understanding Society: India and Beyond*, presenting it as “one of the major challenges to democracy in India” — the first such reference at the Class 9 level (earlier limited to Class 12).

What the Textbook Says

- In the early 1970s, rising unemployment, inflation and allegations of misgovernance fuelled protests against the Indira Gandhi government; in **June 1975** a National Emergency was imposed on grounds of ‘internal disturbance’.
- It records that fundamental rights were suspended, the press censored, and political leaders/activists arrested; it highlights the role of **Jayaprakash Narayan (Lok Nayak)**.
- The Emergency was lifted in 1977; general elections allowed people to express their will — the defeat of the ruling government demonstrating the strength of Indian democracy.
- The book also adds a page on women's rights & reservation in local bodies, and lists fake news, regionalism & social discrimination as challenges to democratic practice.

Constitutional Provisions on Emergency

- **National Emergency (Art. 352):** on war, external aggression (‘external’) or armed rebellion (‘internal’).
- **President's Rule / State Emergency (Art. 356)** and **Financial Emergency (Art. 360)**.
- A proclamation under Art. 352 must be approved by **both Houses with a special majority within one month**; once approved it runs for six months and can be extended indefinitely with approval every six months.

NCERT introduces 1975 Emergency in Class 9 text

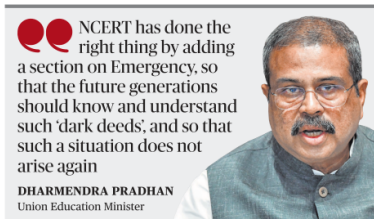
This is the first time a reference has been made to the Emergency at the Class 9 level, while earlier references were limited to Class 12 textbook; it also mentions democratic traditions of early times

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has introduced the 1975 Emergency in India in its Class 9 textbook *Understanding Society: India and Beyond*. The reference in a chapter examining the strengths and challenges of Indian democracy presents the Emergency as “one of the major challenges to democracy in India”.

This is the first time a reference has been made to the Emergency at the Class 9 level, while earlier references were limited to the Class 12 political science textbook. India recently observed 50 years since the declaration of the Emergency.

“In the early 1970s, public dissatisfaction with the government led by Indira Gandhi was growing. Rising unemployment, inflation and allegations of misgovernance led to widespread protests. In June 1975, a National Emergency was imposed by the government on grounds of



internal disturbance,” reads a section in the chapter under the political science component of the social science textbook.

“During this period, a majority of fundamental rights were suspended, the press was censored, and numerous political leaders and activists were arrested. Democratic institutions came under severe strain, and citizens’ freedom was restricted,” it adds. The section also highlights the role of Jayaprakash Narayan in the movement against the Emergency.

“Mass movements led by Jayaprakash Narayan – a political leader and socialist thinker, popularly known as Lok Nayak – mobilised students and citi-

zens, especially in Bihar and Gujarat. The Emergency was lifted in 1977, and general elections were held, allowing people to express their will through the ballot. The defeat of the ruling government demonstrated the strength of Indian democracy and highlighted the importance of democracy,” reads an excerpt from the book.

In a statement, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said, “NCERT has done the right thing by adding a section on Emergency, so that the future generations should know and understand such ‘dark deeds’, and so that such a situation does not arise again. NCERT has done a good job.”

The textbook also traces the democratic traditions of early times and discusses their contemporary relevance. It mentions the Election Commission and its role in conducting “free and fair elections”.

Women's rights

Also, a full page on women's rights and women's reservation in local bodies has been added.

“In a number of countries, women had to wage a long and difficult struggle to secure the right to vote... In contrast, women in India were granted the right to vote... However right to vote does not automatically ensure equal participation. Social prejudices continue to act as barriers and affect women's adequate participation in politics,” the excerpt states.

The section on “Challenges to Democratic Practices in India” mentioned spread of fake news, misinformation, damaging public property, violation of public rules, poverty, regionalism, social discrimination, and gender inequality as challenges to democratic practice.

Source: *The Hindu*, Page 14 — “NCERT introduces 1975 Emergency in Class 9 text”

EMERGENCY PROVISIONS — PRELIMS CAPSULE

- ◆ Three emergencies: **Art. 352** (National), **Art. 356** (President's Rule), **Art. 360** (Financial).
- ◆ National Emergencies declared: **1962** (Indo-China war), **1971** (Indo-Pak war), **1975** (internal disturbance).
- ◆ Word ‘internal disturbance’ (1975 ground) was replaced by ‘**armed rebellion**’ via the **44th Amendment, 1978**.
- ◆ President revokes via a fresh proclamation, without parliamentary approval.

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- **GS 2:** Indian Constitution — emergency provisions, federalism, fundamental rights.
- **Static:** 38th, 42nd & 44th Amendments; Shah Commission; Minerva Mills & Kesavananda (basic structure).

ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Mains Questions

Set I — Long Answer

12 Marks each · Answer in ~225 words

Q1 · GS 3 · FROM TODAY'S FILE

“The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence offers transformative opportunities but also creates unprecedented ethical, social and governance challenges.” Critically examine the need for AI regulation in India and suggest a balanced framework that promotes innovation while ensuring accountability and public interest.

APPROACH › Intro: AI's dual nature. Body: opportunities (healthcare, governance, productivity) vs risks (privacy, misinformation, autonomous weapons, job loss); current Indian approach (IndiaAI Mission, DPDP Act 2023, advisory-led). Framework: risk-based tiers, data sovereignty, algorithmic accountability, human-in-the-loop. Conclude: humanist-centric, innovation-friendly regulation.

Q2 · GS 1 / GS 3 · REFRAMED

Earthquakes such as the recent Venezuela ‘doublet’ event highlight the vulnerability of densely populated regions to shallow seismicity. Discuss the factors that determine earthquake damage and evaluate India's preparedness for seismic disasters.

APPROACH › Factors: magnitude, focal depth, distance from epicentre, soil/building quality, population density. India: Seismic Zoning (BIS 2002), NDMA guidelines, retrofitting, building codes, early-warning gaps; way forward.

Set II — Short Answer

8 Marks each · Answer in ~150 words

Q3 · GS 2 · REFRAMED

“Regulation of NGOs must balance national security with the constitutional freedoms that underpin a vibrant civil society.” In the light of the FCRA framework and recent amendments, critically analyse this statement.

APPROACH › Cover: role of NGOs; FCRA 2010/2020 regime; Noel Harper (2022); 2026 Rules & chilling effect; Art. 19(1)(c); balance — transparency without throttling. Suggest reforms.

Q4 · GS 4 · REFRAMED

Structural failures like the Taratala collapse reveal how fragmented accountability and professional compromise cost lives. What ethical responsibilities do engineers, regulators and contractors owe to the public, and how can accountability be strengthened?

APPROACH › Ethical core: integrity, competence, public safety as paramount; conflicts of interest; whistleblowing. Institutional fixes: clear liability, audits, digital records, professional codes, swift action.

Prelims Practice — 10 MCQs

Statement-based & single-correct questions from today's edition · answer key with reasoning below each

Q1.

With reference to earthquakes, consider the following statements:

- 1. The epicentre is the point within the earth where seismic energy is first released.
- 2. S-waves can travel through both solid and liquid media.
- 3. Shallow-focus earthquakes have a focal depth of less than 70 km.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

ANS: (b) — The focus/hypocentre (not epicentre) is where energy is released; the epicentre is the surface point above it (1 wrong). S-waves travel only through solids (2 wrong). Shallow earthquakes: 0–70 km (3 correct).

Q2.

A 'doublet earthquake', recently in the news, is best described as:

- (a) A single quake felt simultaneously in two countries
- (b) Two mainshocks of comparable magnitude occurring close in time and space
- (c) An earthquake immediately followed by a tsunami
- (d) Two quakes with epicentres at exactly the same location a year apart

ANS: (b) — A doublet is a sequence of two (or more) comparable-magnitude mainshocks close in space and time, neither clearly a foreshock/aftershock of the other — as seen in Venezuela (7.2 then 7.5).

Q3.

'Operation Chakra-VI', seen in the news, is associated with:

- (a) A counter-insurgency operation in the North-East
- (b) A CBI crackdown on cybercrime infrastructure behind digital-arrest scams
- (c) An ISRO satellite recovery mission
- (d) An anti-narcotics drive by the NCB

ANS: (b) — Operation Chakra-VI is the CBI's coordinated action against cybercrime networks running 'digital arrest' scams, with searches across 16 States and Delhi.

Q6.

The term 'Final Operational Clearance (FOC)' in defence procurement signifies that:

- (a) The project has received initial budgetary sanction
- (b) The platform has demonstrated full operational maturity and is ready for combat employment
- (c) The aircraft has completed its maiden flight
- (d) Foreign technology transfer has been approved

ANS: (b) — FOC certifies that the system meets all operational requirements and is fully ready for service, following the earlier Initial Operational Clearance (IOC).

Q7.

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010 is administered by which Ministry?

- (a) Ministry of Finance
- (b) Ministry of External Affairs
- (c) Ministry of Home Affairs
- (d) Ministry of Corporate Affairs

ANS: (c) — FCRA, 2010 is administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs, which regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution.

Q8.

The Supreme Court case 'Noel Harper (2022)' is associated with:

- (a) The reservation of seats in local bodies
- (b) Upholding the 2020 amendments to the FCRA
- (c) Decriminalisation of defamation
- (d) The right to be forgotten

ANS: (b) — In Noel Harper v. Union of India (2022), the Supreme Court upheld the stringent 2020 FCRA amendments, accepting sovereignty and national-security grounds.



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“Technology must remain the servant of human dignity, not its master — the measure of progress is whether it leaves the weakest among us better protected.”

TODAY'S EDITION — QUICK RECAP

- ◆ Venezuela ‘doubler’ earthquake — focus/epicentre, P&S waves, India's seismic zones.
- ◆ Operation Chakra-VI & digital arrests — I4C, Helpline 1930, CyberDost.
- ◆ Netra AEW&C FOC — CABS/DRDO, Embraer platform, AEW&C vs AWACS.
- ◆ AI & ethics — humanist-centric, enforceable regulation, IndiaAI & DPDP Act.
- ◆ FCRA Rules 2026 & NGOs — Noel Harper (2022), Art. 19(1)(c).
- ◆ Taratala collapse — fragmented accountability & ethics in governance.
- ◆ India-Korea shipbuilding — Maritime Vision 2030/2047, SFCL, Sagarmala.
- ◆ 1975 Emergency in NCERT — Arts. 352/356/360, 44th Amendment.