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THURSDAY · 15 OCTOBER 2026

ECONOMY · SOCIETY · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS · SOCIAL JUSTICE · ENVIRONMENT · FEDERALISM · POLITY

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Compiled by Sapna Chauhan

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GS 3 · INDIAN ECONOMY — INFLATION THE HINDU · PAGE 1

Wholesale inflation rises to a 49-month high of 11.4%

WPI · New base 2022-23 · Food & primary articles · Monetary policy

WHY IN NEWS WPI-based inflation climbed to **11.4% in September 2026** — the highest in the two-and-a-half years of data for the **new WPI series**, and a **49-month high** on the much longer old series.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

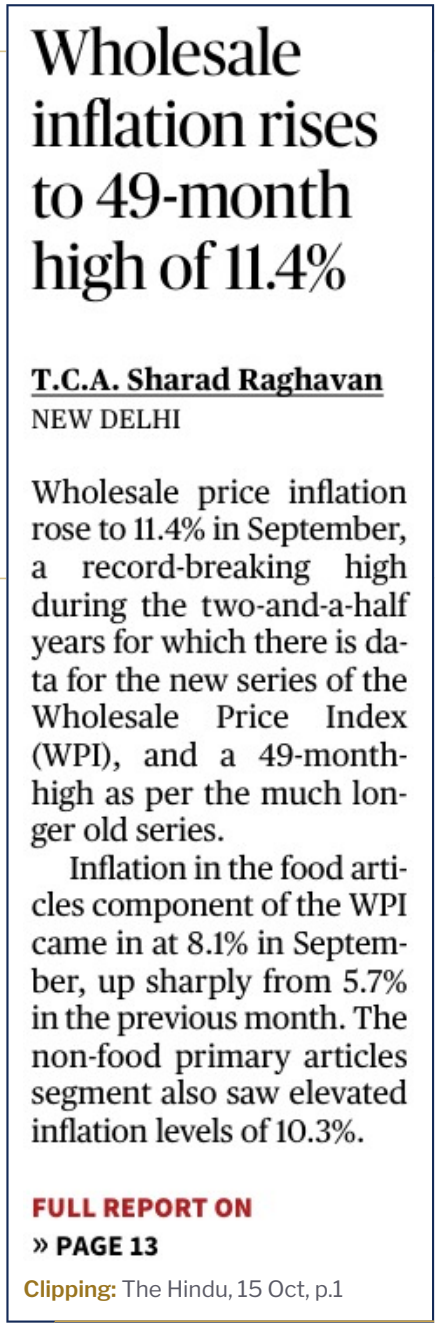
- **Headline WPI:** 11.4% in September — a record for the new series.
- **Food articles:** 8.1%, up sharply from 5.7% in August — signals pressure building in the food supply chain.
- **Non-food primary articles** (fibres, oilseeds, minerals etc.) also elevated at **10.3%** — feeds directly into manufacturers' input costs.

THE NEW WPI SERIES (BASE 2022-23)

- The **Office of Economic Adviser, DPIIT** (Ministry of Commerce & Industry) revised the base year from **2011-12 to 2022-23**.
- **Bigger basket:** items expanded from **697 to 957** to mirror the modern economy.
- **Green energy captured:** Solar, Wind and Nuclear electricity now sit under the 'Electricity' group.
- **Restructuring:** Crude Petroleum & Natural Gas moved from 'Primary Articles' to the **'Fuel and Power'** group.
- WPI tracks **goods only** — services such as healthcare, education and telecom are excluded.

WHY IT MATTERS

- **Pipeline pressure:** wholesale prices are an early signal of producer costs; they pass through to retail (CPI) with a lag, especially for manufactured goods.
- **Monetary policy:** the RBI's MPC targets **CPI**, not WPI — but a sharp WPI–CPI gap shrinks the room for rate cuts and squeezes corporate margins.
- **National accounts:** WPI is used to deflate nominal output of many sectors; high WPI lowers real GDP estimates.
- **Way forward:** supply-side action (buffer stocks, calibrated import duties, logistics), better commodity monitoring, and a gradual move towards a **Producer Price Index (PPI)**, long recommended by expert groups to remove double counting.



Wholesale inflation rises to 49-month high of 11.4%

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Wholesale price inflation rose to 11.4% in September, a record-breaking high during the two-and-a-half years for which there is data for the new series of the Wholesale Price Index (WPI), and a 49-month-high as per the much longer old series.

Inflation in the food articles component of the WPI came in at 8.1% in September, up sharply from 5.7% in the previous month. The non-food primary articles segment also saw elevated inflation levels of 10.3%.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 13

Clipping: The Hindu, 15 Oct, p.1

VALUE ADDITION · WPI vs CPI

Feature	WPI	CPI
Compiled by	Office of Economic Adviser, DPIIT	National Statistics Office (NSO), MoSPI
Price stage	First point of bulk (wholesale) transaction	Retail prices paid by consumers
Services	Not covered	Covered (housing, health, education, transport)
Main use	Producer costs, GDP deflator, contract escalation	RBI inflation target: 4% ± 2% (Sec 45ZA, RBI Act)
Release	Monthly, around the 14th	Monthly, around the 12th

PRELIMS POINTERS **Headline inflation** includes food and fuel; **core inflation** excludes them. **Disinflation** = falling rate of inflation (prices still rise); **deflation** = falling prices. Manufactured products carry the largest weight in WPI. **Base effect:** a low index a year ago can inflate the current year-on-year rate.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 3 — Indian economy: mobilisation of resources, growth, inflation & monetary policy · Prelims — Economy (price indices).

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GS 1 · POPULATION & ASSOCIATED ISSUES THE HINDU · PAGE 1

Centre seeks public input on "demographic changes"

HLCDC · Illegal immigration · Data protection · Census 2027

WHY IN NEWS The **High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes (HLCDC)** set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs has launched a portal (demography.mha.gov.in) inviting inputs from governments, citizens, NGOs and even international organisations on "frequent demographic changes", preferably **post-2011**.

KEY FACTS

- **The committee:** chaired by former Supreme Court judge **Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar**; constituted on **May 26** to study the "nature, causes and consequences" of demographic changes in various parts of the country.
- **MHA's framing:** changes are most visible in **border districts** but have spread to urban centres, industrial corridors and tribal regions — affecting public service delivery, local governance, resource distribution and social cohesion. They are described as "not attributable to normal fertility or mortality trends" but to **illegal immigration, irregular population mobility and administrative laxity**.
- **Goal:** recommend a permanent operational system for the "legal, fair and time-bound **identification, detention and deportation** of illegal immigrants".

- **Three respondent categories:** (i) Union Ministries/departments; (ii) State governments & UT administrations; (iii) civil society, NGOs, academia, industry, international organisations, think tanks and individual citizens. Individuals answer **eight questions** — e.g., major changes seen over the past 15 years in their village, town, district or State.
- **Personal data:** the portal mandatorily seeks mobile number, address and e-mail, with consent for processing.

Centre seeks public input on demographic changes

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The demography panel set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has launched a portal to allow government bodies, members of the public, NGOs, and even "international organisations" to submit their input on "frequent demographic changes in the country", preferably post-2011.

The portal stated that while these changes are most visibly concentrated in border districts, their impact has extended to affect urban centres, industrial corridors, tribal regions, and other socially and economically sensitive areas, severely impacting public service delivery, local governance, resource distribution, and social cohesion. It said these changes are "not attributable to normal fertility or mortality trends but are emerging due to external abnormal factors, including illegal immigration, irregular population mobility, and administrative laxity."

The demography panel portal says impact of changes has extended from border districts to urban centres. FILE PHOTO

The Ministry said that the inputs will help the panel to analyse and identify the causes of demographic changes and to recommend a well-organised and permanent operational system for the "legal, fair, and time-bound identification, detention, and deportation of illegal immigrants residing in the country".

The portal mandatorily seeks the mobile phone number, address, and e-mail ID of the respondents, and seeks their consent for the processing of their personal data and analysis of the information provided.

The portal – https://demography.mha.gov.in – says that the High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes (HLCDC), chaired by former Supreme Court judge Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar, was constituted on May 26 to study the "nature, causes and consequences of demographic changes being observed in various parts of the country".

Three categories

The respondents have been divided into three categories: Union government Ministries, departments, and organisations; State governments and Union Territory administrations; civil society groups, NGOs, academic institutions, industry and business associations, international organisations, and think tanks; and individual citizens, public representatives, students, and others.

There are eight questions under the individual citizen/public representative/student/others category. One of the questions asks the respondent to "describe the major demographic changes" observed or studied over the past 15 years in the geographical areas the respondent is familiar with, such as villages, towns, cities, districts, States/UTs, regions, or "across India."

The survey seeks views on the principal drivers behind these changes and invites respondents to identify challenges arising from demographic trends.

Clipping: The Hindu, 15 Oct, p.1

TWO SIDES OF THE DEBATE

GOVERNMENT'S CASE Border management and identification of illegal migrants are sovereign functions; unplanned population shifts strain land, jobs, welfare budgets and voter rolls; a structured, consultative study can feed into a durable legal mechanism. The PM's Independence Day address (2025) had flagged demographic change in border areas as a security concern.

CONCERNS RAISED The questionnaire appears to **presume the cause** (external abnormal factors) before the study; crowd-sourced perceptions are no substitute for **Census, SRS and NFHS** data; mandatory personal details may deter honest responses and must comply with the **DPDP Act, 2023**; vague framing risks stigmatising communities and internal migrants, who move lawfully under **Article 19(1)(d)–(e)**.

- **Balanced way forward:** base conclusions on Census 2027 and scientific demographic data; separate *internal migration* (a constitutional right) from *illegal immigration*; ensure due process, judicial review of detention, and strong data safeguards.

VALUE ADDITION · LEGAL FRAMEWORK & DATA

Citizenship	Articles 5–11; Parliament regulates citizenship under Art. 11 → **Citizenship Act, 1955** (defines "illegal migrant").

Foreigners law	**Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025** replaced the Passport (Entry into India) Act 1920, Registration of Foreigners Act 1939, Foreigners Act 1946 and Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 2000.
Assam	Sec. 6A (Assam Accord, cut-off 25 March 1971) upheld by a Constitution Bench (4:1) in Oct 2024; Assam NRC final list (2019) left out ~19 lakh people.
Census 2027	First digital Census, with caste enumeration. Reference date **1 March 2027**; **1 October 2026** for snow-bound areas — Ladakh, J&K, **Himachal Pradesh**, Uttarakhand.
Fertility	NFHS-5 (2019-21): TFR **2.0**, below the replacement level of 2.1.

HPAS CONNECT Because of the 1 October 2026 reference date, Himachal's snow-bound areas are among the first in India to be enumerated for Census 2027 — useful for HP GK.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 1 — Population and associated issues; migration · GS 2 — Government policies; GS 3 — Internal security & border management.

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GS 3 · EXTERNAL SECTOR / GS 2 · INDIA–CHINA THE HINDU · PAGE 1

India's exports to China grow 40%; deficit crosses $100 bn

Trade deficit · Import dependence · Electronics · Press Note 3

WHY IN NEWS Data from **China's General Administration of Customs** show that in **Jan–Sept 2026** India's exports to China rose 40.7%, yet the bilateral trade deficit has already crossed **$100 billion**.

THE NUMBERS (JAN–SEPT 2026)

- **Two-way trade:** $144.45 bn, up 25.4% year-on-year.
- **Exports to China:** $19.26 bn (+40.7%, from a small base) — already equal to last year's full-year total.
- **Imports from China:** $125.19 bn (+23.3%).
- **Deficit:** $105.93 bn — on track to beat last year's record of **$116.12 bn**.
- **What India sells:** seafood, naphtha and printed circuit boards (PCBs) — the last a product India until recently bought in bulk from China.

WHY THE GAP KEEPS WIDENING

- **Structural dependence:** Indian factories need Chinese **intermediates** (electronic components, APIs, solar cells, chemicals); the worry is continued reliance on **finished goods** such as electronics and machinery.
- **Market access:** Indian pharma, IT services and farm products face non-tariff barriers in China.
- **Scale & cost:** China's integrated supply chains offer prices India's manufacturers cannot yet match.
- **Strategic risk:** concentration makes India vulnerable to supply curbs — as seen in China's 2025 restrictions on rare-earth magnets that hit automakers.

- **Diplomacy:** the deficit figured in last month's Modi–Xi talks on the sidelines of the BRICS summit; New Delhi does not expect balanced trade but wants a less lopsided relationship.

WAY FORWARD

- Deepen component manufacturing (PLI successor, **ECMS**), use WTO-compatible trade remedies through **DGTR**, push for market access in pharma and agri-products, and allow **calibrated Chinese investment** where it brings technology and local value addition rather than just assembled imports.
- **Diversify sources:** use FTAs and supply-chain pacts with Japan, South Korea, ASEAN, the UAE, Australia and the EU to reduce single-country dependence for critical inputs.
- **Mind the trade-off:** blanket curbs on Chinese intermediates can raise costs for Indian exporters; the aim is resilience in strategic sectors, not autarky.

India's exports to China grow 40%, deficit crosses $100 bn

Ananth Krishnan
BEIJING

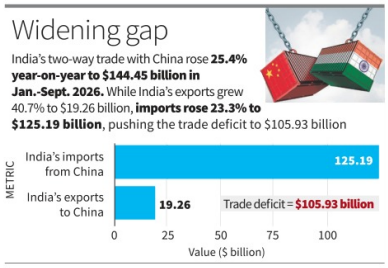
India's exports to China grew 40% in the first three quarters of 2026 to around $20 billion, although the trade deficit with the neighbouring country has continued to widen, already crossing $100 billion this year, according to data released on Wednesday by China's General Administration of Customs.

India's two-way trade with China between January and September this year was up 25.4% to $144.45 billion, while India's imports from China continued to rise, up 23.3% to $125.19 billion.

Indian exports to China registered a robust 40.7% growth, albeit from a much smaller base, to $19.26 billion after the first three quarters, already reaching last year's total. The trade deficit stood at $105.93 billion and is on track to surpass last year's record figure of $116.12 billion.

Indian officials say that while there is no expectation for trade to be perfectly balanced, the broader concern is the heavily lopsided trade relationship, a lack of market access for Indian firms, and the nature of India's imports.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10



Clipping: The Hindu, 15 Oct, p.1

VALUE ADDITION · TRADE TOOLKIT

Press Note 3 (2020)	FDI from countries sharing a **land border** with India only via the **Government route**; Cabinet approved easing it in March 2026.
Trade remedies	**Anti-dumping duty** (against below-normal-value pricing), **countervailing duty** (against subsidies), **safeguard duty** (against import surges) — investigated by DGTR, Ministry of Commerce.
Data caveat	Chinese customs data are calendar-year; India's Commerce Ministry reports by financial year — figures differ.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 3 — Indian economy, external sector, industrial policy · GS 2 — India and its neighbourhood.

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GS 2 · INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THE HINDU · PAGE 10

Rajnath calls for deeper India–ASEAN defence ties

Act East · Indo-Pacific · SAGAR → MAHASAGAR · Maritime security

WHY IN NEWS Addressing the **maiden ASEAN-India Defence Think Tank Forum** at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh pitched for **joint research, co-production of military equipment** and stronger maritime security.

KEY MESSAGES

- **Vision:** an Indo-Pacific where countries, "irrespective of their size", make independent choices, protect their interests and develop peacefully.

- **Principles:** mutual trust, respect for sovereignty, adherence to international law and open channels of dialogue — "security is strengthened when countries build capacity together".
- **Policy fit:** India's **Act East Policy**, **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and **MAHASAGAR** (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) are aligned with **ASEAN-led mechanisms**, which are central to India's Indo-Pacific approach.
- **Maritime focus:** cooperation in **maritime domain awareness**, interoperability and **underwater surveillance** for a rules-based order. **2026 is the ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation.**

SIGNIFICANCE & CHALLENGES

- **Why ASEAN matters:** sits astride the Malacca Strait and South China Sea sea-lanes; a large trading partner; anchor of "ASEAN centrality" in forums like the EAS, ARF and ADMM-Plus.
- **Defence footprint:** BrahMos missile supplies to the Philippines; ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise (first held 2023); Information Fusion Centre–IOR (Gurugram) for shared maritime awareness.
- **Challenges:** ASEAN members hedge between the US and China; India's trade deficit with ASEAN and the AITIGA review; Myanmar's crisis; India's exit from RCEP (2019).

Rajnath calls for deeper India-ASEAN defence ties

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and DG MP-IDSA Ambassador Sujan R. Chinoy during the ASEAN-India Defence Think Tank Forum. ANI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday called for deeper defence and technological cooperation between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), pitching for joint research, co-production of military equipment and enhanced maritime security to address emerging regional challenges.

Addressing the maiden ASEAN-India Defence Think Tank Forum at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses in New Delhi, Mr. Singh said India sought an Indo-Pacific where countries, irrespective of their size, could make independent choices, protect their interests and pursue development peacefully.

He called for mutual trust, respect for sovereignty, adherence to international law and keeping channels of dialogue open to address conventional and emerging security threats. "India believes that security is strengthened when countries build capacity together, respect international law and maintain trust through dialogue," he said.

Mr. Singh said India's Act East policy, along with its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) visions, aligned with ASEAN-led mechanisms central to New Delhi's Indo-Pacific approach.

Highlighting the shared maritime interests of India and Southeast Asian nations, he said cooperation in maritime domain awareness, interoperability and underwater surveillance was essential to maintaining a stable, rules-based maritime order. Designating 2026 as the ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation offered an opportunity to translate common interests into practical outcomes, he added.

Clipping: The Hindu, 15 Oct, p.10

VALUE ADDITION · ASEAN FACT FILE

Founded	8 August 1967, **Bangkok Declaration**; founders: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand.
Members (11)	+ Brunei (1984), Vietnam (1995), Laos & Myanmar (1997), Cambodia (1999), **Timor-Leste** (full member 2025 — applied 2011, observer 2022).
Secretariat · Motto	Jakarta, Indonesia · "One Vision, One Identity, One Community".
India–ASEAN ladder	Sectoral partner 1992 → Dialogue partner 1996 → Summit level 2002 → Strategic Partnership 2012 → **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership 2022**.
SAGAR · MAHASAGAR	SAGAR announced in Mauritius (2015); MAHASAGAR unveiled in Mauritius (March 2025) as its wider, Global-South version.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 2 — Bilateral, regional and global groupings involving India; India's interests · GS 3 — Security challenges in maritime domain.

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GS 2 · SOCIAL JUSTICE — WELFARE SCHEMES THE HINDU · PAGE 10

₹53,428 crore cleared for social assistance till 2030-31

NSAP → Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana · Pensions · Article 41

WHY IN NEWS The Union Cabinet approved **₹53,428 crore** to continue the **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)** for five years (2026-27 to 2030-31), **renamed it the Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana**, and dropped the "Indira Gandhi" prefix from its old-age, widow and disability pension sub-schemes.

WHAT THE CABINET DECIDED

- **Continuation** of old-age and widow pensions and the family benefit scheme "in its existing form".
- **Revised eligibility criteria and assistance rates** for disability pension beneficiaries.
- The beneficiary base for the three pension schemes stays **capped at 3.09 crore** — unlike other schemes that draw on **SECC 2011** data to identify beneficiaries.

THE CRITIQUE

- **Static budget, rising need:** locking the outlay for five years ignores inflation and population ageing. Economist **Rajendran Narayanan** (Azim Premji University) estimates that even the existing base would need **₹55,698 crore** at 5% inflation.
- **Arbitrary ceiling:** as the handbook *Realising Rights* notes, the cap is set neither by administrative capacity nor by the number of eligible people — so eligibility on paper does not become an **entitlement** in practice.
- **Meagre central share:** the central old-age pension of ₹200 a month (age 60–79) has stayed unchanged for years; adequacy depends on State top-ups, creating wide inter-State variation.
- **Ageing India:** the share of people aged 60+ is projected to roughly double from about 10% to over 20% by 2050 (UNFPA India Ageing Report 2023) — demand for pensions will only grow.

WAY FORWARD

- Index pensions to inflation, replace the fixed cap with demand-based coverage, use updated databases for inclusion, and strengthen DBT with doorstep options for the very old and disabled.

₹53,428 cr. cleared for social assistance scheme till 2030-31

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Govt. announces the renaming of NSAP as Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved an outlay of ₹53,428 crore for the continuation of the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) for five years, from 2026-27 to 2030-31. It has also renamed the scheme and removed the "Indira Gandhi" prefix from three sub-schemes covering old-age, widow and disability pensions.

The Cabinet also revised the eligibility criteria and assistance rates for disability pension beneficiaries.

The government statement spoke of "continuation of pension schemes for old age and widows and the family benefit scheme in its existing form". The decision to lock in the budget for the next five years has raised questions, with critics arguing that NSAP is already inadequate to meet current socio-economic realities. Unlike several other welfare schemes that use the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) data to identify beneficiaries, NSAP caps the beneficiary base for its three pension schemes at 3.09 crore.

"Realising Rights: A Handbook of Welfare in India", published by Azim Premji University, notes that since this ceiling is "neither defined by administrative capacity nor the actual number of eligible rights holders, eligibility as determined in the guidelines does not translate into an entitlement in practice".

Rajendran Narayanan, Associate Professor at Azim Premji University said the decision overlooked the need for pension outlays to keep pace with demographic changes and inflation. "The decision appears to assume that the number of beneficiaries will remain static. Even for the existing beneficiary base, a back-of-the-envelope calculation using a 5% inflation rate shows that ₹55,698 crore would be required," he said.

The government also said that NSAP will be renamed the Pradhan Mantri Samajik Sahayata Yojana.

Clipping: The Hindu, 15 Oct, p.10

VALUE ADDITION · NSAP AT A GLANCE

Component	Who is covered (BPL)	Central assistance
Old Age Pension (IGNOAPS)	Persons aged 60+ · ~221 lakh beneficiaries	₹200/month (60–79); ₹500 (80+)
Widow Pension (IGNWPS)	Widows aged 40–79 · ~67 lakh	₹300/month; ₹500 at 80+
Disability Pension (IGNDPS)	Earlier: 18–79 yrs, 80% severe/multiple disability · ~8.3 lakh (now revised)	₹300/month; ₹500 at 80+
National Family Benefit (NFBS)	Death of primary breadwinner (18–59 yrs) · ~3.5 lakh	₹20,000 lump sum
Annapurna	Elderly eligible for but not getting old-age pension · ~8.3 lakh	10 kg free foodgrains/ month

Basics: launched **15 August 1995**; implemented by the **Ministry of Rural Development** in rural *and* urban areas; a "core of the core" Centrally Sponsored Scheme with full central funding of the assistance; beneficiaries identified by **Gram Panchayats and Municipalities**; ~94% paid through **DBT**. Constitutional basis: **Article 41** (public assistance in old age, sickness and disablement); "relief of the disabled and unemployable" is State List entry 9, social security is Concurrent List entry 23.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 2 — Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections and their performance · GS 1 — Population issues (ageing).

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GS 3 · ENVIRONMENT & BIODIVERSITY THE HINDU · PAGE 12

Bauxite mine proposal in Odisha's Balda hills threatens rare ground gecko

Jeypore ground gecko · Eastern Ghats · Mining vs conservation · Forest rights

WHY IN NEWS Just **four individuals** of the endangered **Jeypore ground gecko** recorded in the past year in Odisha's **Balda hills** lie inside the site of a proposed **147-hectare opencast bauxite mine** by Adani-subsidiary **Kalinga Alumina Ltd** in the **Nageswari reserve forest**.

SPECIES PROFILE

- **Identity:** a nocturnal, strikingly patterned gecko about **3.6 inches** long, with a large head and yellow-orange body; **endemic to the Eastern Ghats** of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.
- **History:** described in **1878 by Richard Henry Beddome**; presumed extinct for ~130 years; **rediscovered in 2010** in Koraput district by herpetologists **Ishan Agarwal and Aniruddha Datta-Roy**. More sightings: one in 2025, three in 2026.
- **Habitat:** boulder crevices and leaf litter of **high-elevation forests (900–1,400 m)**; range-restricted; split from its closest relatives over **20 million years** ago.
- **Status:** IUCN Red List — **Endangered** (2019); **CITES Appendix II** on India's proposal at **CoP19, Panama City** (2022).

- **Warning sign:** its type locality, **Potangi**, was lost to NALCO's bauxite mining; the gecko is believed extinct there.

Bauxite mining proposal in Odisha's Balda hills threatens future of rare ground gecko

Divya Gandhi
BENGALURU

In the crevices of boulders and beneath the rustle of leaf litter in the hills of the Eastern Ghats in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh lives a tiny population of the strikingly-patterned Jeypore ground gecko, which was presumed extinct for 130 years until it was rediscovered in 2010.

Just four individuals of this endangered species have been documented in the past year in Odisha's Balda hills, worryingly, within the site of a proposed bauxite mining project by an Adani-linked group.

The nocturnal gecko, some 3.6 inches long, with a comparatively large head, and a yellow-orange body, was originally documented in 1878 by the British naturalist Richard Henry Beddome. More than a century later, in 2010, herpetologists Ishan Agarwal and Aniruddha Datta-Roy rediscovered a specimen in Odisha's Koraput district.

Facing oblivion: The Jeypore ground gecko was presumed extinct for 130 years until it was rediscovered in 2010. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Later, there were more sightings: one in 2025, and three this year, including one this month. The gecko's behaviour, habits and lifecycle continue to elude scientists.

What is known, however, is that its habitat is fast shrinking. In fact, the habitat where it was first sighted in the 1870s, Potangi in Odisha, has already been lost to bauxite mining by the National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), where the animal is believed to be now extinct.

And today, the spectre of Adani's opencast bauxite mine proposal, covering 147 hectares of forest in the Balda hills, within the Nageswari reserve forest, threatens the future of this vulnerable species.

Adivasi uprising

The bauxite mining project has also been the site of much contention among resident Adivasis of the Nageswari reserve forest, who have protested the proposal for the past two years. The Bondo and Porja Adivasis, whose ancestral land this is, lodged a complaint against the Adani-subsidiary Kalinga Alumina Ltd. in February, but to no avail.

"The communities have also applied for forest rights over the hill, which the government has refused to recognise," naturalist Yuvan Aves told *The Hindu*. "There was a demonstration earlier this month too, and when the Adani group flew drones to scope the area, the Adivasi people stopped the exercise, asserting that this is their ancestral land."

Mr. Agarwal said that the gecko is "an ecologically and biogeographically significant species having split from its closest relatives over 20 million years ago." This is a relatively range-restricted species that is only found in high-elevation (900-1,400 metres) forests in the Eastern Ghats. "Anything that threatens their habitat is the major risk. Coffee [though we don't understand to what extent], hydel, mining are all potential threats," he told *The Hindu*.

Clipping: The Hindu, 15 Oct, p.12

THE PEOPLE'S DIMENSION

- The **Bondo and Porja Adivasis**, whose ancestral land this is, have protested for two years, lodged a complaint against Kalinga Alumina in February, and stopped a drone survey; their **forest rights claims** over the hill have reportedly been refused.
- Recalls the **Niyamgiri case** (2013), where the Supreme Court let Dongria Kondh gram sabhas decide on Vedanta's bauxite mine.

Jeypore ground gecko (Cyrtodactylus jeyporensis)

WAY FORWARD

- EIAs must include proper surveys of small, cryptic fauna; honour **FRA, 2006** and gram sabha consent; consider declaring the Balda hills a **Biodiversity Heritage Site** (Sec. 37, Biological Diversity Act, 2002); fund research on the species' ecology.

VALUE ADDITION · LINKAGES

Bauxite	Ore of aluminium; **Odisha has India's largest reserves**, mostly on Eastern Ghats plateaus (Koraput, Rayagada, Kalahandi); NALCO's Panchpatmali mines are in Koraput.

CITES appendices	I — trade banned except in exceptional cases · II — trade regulated by permits · III — listed by one country seeking cooperation.
Bonda (Bondo)	One of Odisha's 13 **PVTGs** — the most of any State.
Eastern vs Western Ghats	Eastern Ghats are discontinuous, older and less protected; the Western Ghats are a UNESCO site and a global biodiversity hotspot.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 3 — Conservation, environmental impact assessment · GS 1 — Distribution of mineral resources · GS 2 — Vulnerable sections (tribal rights).

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GS 2 · FEDERALISM / GS 3 · INDUSTRIAL POLICY THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · EDITORIAL

India's China+1 lessons lie within its own States

Tamil Nadu & Karnataka models · ECMS · PLI · Value addition · Regional divide

WHY IN NEWS Based on 50 interviews for a 2026 East Asian Institute (NUS) study, P.S. Srinivas and Anisha Sircar argue that India need not look to Vietnam or Mexico — the best lessons for winning China+1 investment are in **Tamil Nadu and Karnataka**.

CORE ARGUMENT

- "Don't look at India — look at specific States." Global firms do not choose a monolithic "India"; they choose a **State** — and with it land, power, approvals, workers and suppliers.

TWO STATES, TWO PATHS

Tamil Nadu — the manufacturing route	Karnataka — the talent route
Foxconn assembles iPhones at **Sriperumbudur**; Tata Electronics expanded at **Hosur**. In Jan 2026, ECMS projects approved incl. Foxconn-linked **Yuzhan Technology** and Tata Electronics. Built over decades: technical education, an auto-components hub around Chennai, suppliers and administrative experience.	Grew from Bengaluru's software and engineering talent. Foxconn's 300-acre **Devanahalli** campus (women ~80% of workforce; target ~50,000 jobs); Tata took over Wistron's iPhone plant at **Narasapura** (2023).
Limits: land, power and labour constraints; relies on migrants from northern and central States; now moving to capital-intensive, innovation-led exports.	**Lesson:** a skilled-workforce ecosystem can attract high-value manufacturing even without a legacy industrial base.

NATIONAL POLICY, STATE-LEVEL DELIVERY

- **Centre's levers:** the PLI for large-scale electronics ended on 31 March 2026; a successor was approved on 15 July. In January, **22 ECMS proposals** worth ₹41,863 crore (33,791 direct jobs, eight States) were cleared; Press Note 3 curbs were eased in March. But "the factory still has to come up somewhere".
- **Data caveat:** DPIIT's FDI data (Oct 2019–Mar 2026) rank Maharashtra 31%, Karnataka 21%, Gujarat 15%, Delhi 13%, Tamil Nadu ~6% — but FDI is recorded by the company's **head office**, not where the factory is built.

- **Shallow value addition:** electronics exports ~$48 bn vs imports ~$116 bn (2025-26); exports described as "assembled products with 20% inputs in India"; one firm sourced only ~$600 mn of a $1 bn local-sourcing target — "a four-to-five-year process".
- **Industrial divide:** growth is concentrated in the south and west, not in populous Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Spreading subsidies thinly will not replicate TN's supplier networks or Karnataka's talent pool.

India's China+1 lessons lie within its own States

"Don't look at India – look at what's happening with specific States," a veteran investor told these writers in one of 50 interviews with senior industry executives, policymakers and experts for a 2026 study at the East Asian Institute on how global firms are reworking their China+1 plans.

However, the national conversation tends to run the other way. Every few months, someone advises India to study Vietnam's industrial parks, Mexico's nearshoring or Poland's supply chains. Meanwhile, two instructive case studies sit right at home – in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Global firms do not choose "India" as a homogenous monolithic edifice. They choose a State, and with it, the land, power supply, approvals, workers and suppliers.

Two States, their approaches

At Sriperumbudur, near Chennai, Foxconn employs tens of thousands of people assembling iPhones. Tata Electronics has expanded at Hosur. In January 2026, the Centre approved projects in Tamil Nadu under its Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS), including mobile-phone enclosure units by Yuzhan Technology, a Foxconn-linked firm, and Tata Electronics. These are commitments rather than finished factories, but they reflect the advantages of an industrial ecosystem that has taken decades to build.

None of this began with China+1. Tamil Nadu invested in technical education, built an automobile and components industry around Chennai, and developed the suppliers, skills and administrative experience that new manufacturers look for. Several investors told us that policy continuity is essential and that commitments must be honoured regardless of political turnover. That is now being tested following the change of government in Tamil Nadu in May 2026. One academic respondent argued that Tamil Nadu would have done well irrespective of China. Its industrial base took four or five decades to build; no announcement of an industrial park or round of subsidies can conjure that up. Karnataka followed a different path. Bengaluru began with software and engineering talent, and not Chennai's automobile base. Foxconn's 300-acre campus at Devanahalli, where women reportedly form about 80% of the workforce, aims to create around 50,000 jobs. Tata Electronics took over Wistron's iPhone plant at Narsapura, in a deal agreed in late 2023, and has grown rapidly since.

Tamil Nadu faces limits in land, power and labour, and relies on migrant workers from the northern and central States. It is now seeking to move beyond labour-intensive assembly towards more capital-intensive manufacturing and innovation-led exports.

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Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are leading examples of how industrial ecosystems attract global manufacturers

National policy, State-level delivery

National incentives are integral, too. One manufacturer explained the combined effect of tariffs and production-linked incentives (PLI): "If the duty is 20 per cent and I get a PLI of 6 per cent, competitors cannot compete with me. This is working right here." The PLI scheme for large-scale electronics manufacturing ended on March 31, 2026, and the Cabinet approved a successor on July 15. In January, the Centre cleared 22 proposals under the ECMS, worth ₹41,863 crore and expected to create 33,791 direct jobs across eight States. The Centre describes this spread as "geographically balanced industrial growth". In March, the Cabinet approved easing Press Note 3, which introduced curbs in 2020 on investment from countries sharing a land border with India. These measures help attract investment, but whether that investment takes root depends on what individual States can offer. The factory still has to come up somewhere.

Still, Tamil Nadu ranks only fifth in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade's (DPIIT) data on foreign direct investment (FDI) equity inflows for October 2019 to March 2026, accounting for about 6%. This is behind Maharashtra (31%), Karnataka (21%), Gujarat (15%) and Delhi (13%).

However, DPIIT records FDI against the State in which the receiving company has its head office, rather than where the money is spent. So, the figures tell us little about where factories are being built.

Assembly is only the first step. One electronics executive told us that "very few components are manufactured in India" and that there is still a "huge reliance on China for major parts and supply chains". Backward linkages remain thin. Another respondent said his firm had set a billion-dollar target for sourcing in India but, after two or three years, had managed to source "about 600 million out of that". Such ecosystems cannot be built in a hurry: "Value addition is a process which takes time – it is a four-to-five-year process."

Electronics exports touched about $48 billion in 2025-26, while imports stood at about $116 billion. Although export growth is impressive, the trade gap suggests that India still has considerable ground to cover in component manufacturing. One executive described the exports as "assembled products with 20 per cent inputs in India".

India's industrial divide

Concentration also carries risks. One respondent said growth is "largely happening in the southern and western parts, not in the most populous States such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand".

Spreading subsidies thinly will not, by itself, replicate Tamil Nadu's supplier networks or Karnataka's technical labour pool. The key questions are what these States did to prepare land, train workers, clear approvals, nurture suppliers and retain investors, and which of these measures can be replicated, and what rests on decades of accumulated capacity.

India's China+1 debate keeps looking abroad for a model, even as some of the most instructive factories have been coming up all along on the outskirts of Chennai and Bengaluru.

This article draws on 50 interviews for the EAI Special Report, "India, China, and the 'China+1' Strategies of Global Firms" (September 2026), and on P.S. Srinivas, Frank N. Pieke and Alfred Schipke, "India, China and the China+1 Strategy", Global Policy (2026)

Clipping: The Hindu, 15 Oct, p.6 (Editorial)

VALUE ADDITION · CONCEPTS

China+1: a strategy where global firms keep China operations but add at least one other production base to de-risk supply chains. **Competitive federalism:** States compete for investment through reforms — tracked by DPIIT's **Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP)** rankings and NITI Aayog's **Export Preparedness Index**. **Backward linkages:** local suppliers of parts and materials — the real test of value addition beyond final assembly.

PRELIMS POINTERS **PLI scheme** (2020) covered 14 key sectors. **ECMS** (notified April 2025) supports electronic components such as PCBs, modules and enclosures. **BRAP** is DPIIT's annual assessment of State business reforms. **Press Note 3** dates to April 2020, issued during the pandemic to curb opportunistic takeovers.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 3 — Industrial policy, effects of liberalisation, investment models · GS 2 — Federalism; Centre–State relations.

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GS 2 · POLITY — CONSTITUTIONAL BODIES THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · OP-ED

A split verdict, faltering remedies and people's power

Election Commission · Anoop Baranwal (2023) · CEC & ECs Act, 2023 · Judicial ethics

WHY IN NEWS In **Dr. Jaya Thakur vs Union of India**, a two-judge Supreme Court Bench delivered a **split verdict on 23 September 2026** on the challenge to the 2023 law on appointing the **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs)**; the case now goes to a larger Constitution Bench.

THE TWO OPINIONS

- **Justice Dipankar Datta:** since the Constitution Bench in **Anoop Baranwal (2023)** settled the principles, the 2023 Act must be tested against them — and a committee with **executive predominance** cannot select impartial umpires.
- **Justice Satish Chandra Sharma:** given the importance of the issues, the case should be referred to a **larger Constitution Bench**. Both judges sought an expeditious hearing.

THE AUTHOR'S ARGUMENT

- **Delay = extended life:** a law that is, on its face, contrary to Baranwal survives longer because of the reference.
- **Executive majority:** the committee — PM, a Union Minister chosen by the PM and the Leader of the Opposition — gives the government a 2:1 majority, making the Opposition's presence "merely ornamental".
- **Lifelong immunity:** the statute shields the CEC and ECs from proceedings for acts done in office; the author seeks its repeal and a new law with a neutral selection body.
- **Judicial propriety:** one judge's son had been an empanelled standing counsel for the Election Commission — non-disclosure raises a possible conflict of interest (cf. **Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct, 2002**; **Restatement of Values of Judicial Life, 1997**; curative jurisdiction in **Rupa Ashok Hurra, 2002**).
- **Beyond courts:** history shows people's movements can correct what courts endorse — TADA lapsed, POTA was repealed, the Emergency government was voted out after **ADM Jabalpur (1976)**, and the farm laws were repealed in 2021. He also recalls **Dr. Ambedkar's 1951 warning** about government servants influencing elections.

THE OTHER SIDE Baranwal's committee (PM, LoP, CJI) was expressly an interim arrangement "until Parliament makes a law"; Article 324(2) leaves appointment "subject to any law made by Parliament"; many democracies leave such appointments to the executive; and a reference to a larger Bench on a substantial constitutional question is itself a normal judicial step (Art. 145(3)).

WAY FORWARD

- **Broad-based, transparent selection:** a collegium with a neutral member (CJI or a nominee) as suggested by the 255th Law Commission Report, a public shortlist from the search committee, and reasons recorded for the final choice.
- **Equal security for all members:** protect ECs' removal on the same footing as the CEC, and settle the reference to the larger Bench early so the law's validity is not left hanging before major elections.

A split verdict, faltering remedies and people's power

Kaleeswaram Raj

A lawyer who argued in support of the Petitioners in Anoop Baranwal (2023) and Dr. Jaya Thakur (2026)

Jaya Thakur underscores the limits of judicial intervention and the enduring power of people's movements to defend the Constitution

In *Dr. Jaya Thakur vs Union of India*, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India was faced with a challenge to the 2023 law governing the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs). On September 23, 2026, the Court delivered a split verdict. Justice Dipankar Datta held that, since a Constitution Bench in *Anoop Baranwal* (2023) had settled the constitutional position on the mechanism for selecting the CEC and the ECs, the challenge to the 2023 Act needed to be examined in light of the principles laid down in that judgment. The *Baranwal* approach is simple and straightforward: a committee with executive predominance cannot be entrusted with selecting impartial umpires such as the CEC and the ECs. A three-member committee comprising the Prime Minister and another Union Minister clearly demonstrates such executive predominance.

Therefore, the law governing the selection and appointment of the CEC and the ECs must consciously avoid these vices. Justice Satish Chandra Sharma, however, held that, given the importance of the issues involved, the case should be referred to a larger Constitution Bench. After delivering separate and divergent opinions, the judges also passed a common order expressing their desire for an expeditious hearing of the case by a Constitution Bench.

There will be a further delay

The net result of the present order is that a decision on the validity of the legislation governing the appointment of the CEC and the ECs will take further time. A statute that is, on the face of it, illegitimate and unconstitutional will have an extended lifespan solely because of the reference ordered on the basis of Justice Satish Chandra Sharma's opinion. This law, as it is now evident, envisages a Prime Minister's Committee to select the CEC and the ECs, with the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Minister chosen by him forming two-thirds of the Committee, making the Opposition leader's presence merely ornamental.

Had this Bench struck down the controversial law on its own, it would have radically altered India's electoral and judicial history, particularly at a time when people at large are sceptical of electoral institutions and the electoral process. That did not happen. The legitimacy of the 2023 law and the decisions of the Commission are now being questioned by Opposition parties and others, including the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP). Protests are mounting across the country, with many people calling for the resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar.

The impact

This demand has a strong moral basis. However, replacing an individual alone cannot provide a permanent solution to systemic flaws. The Court has failed to take up the issue in time, and the present order referring the matter to a larger Bench in Dr. Jaya Thakur will, in effect, amount to an institutional confession of this failure. The statute that overturns the *Baranwal* principle and grants the CEC and the ECs lifelong immunity for their acts and words while in the office, needs to be repealed. A fresh law that incorporates the principle of a neutral body selecting the CEC and the ECs, thereby ensuring neutral umpires in the Commission, should be put in place. It is equally important to revisit the controversial revision of electoral rolls and undo its consequences.

The order in Dr. Jaya Thakur contains certain political and moral lessons. Although it does not decide the challenge, some of Justice Datta's observations are significant. The judge quoted Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's speech of October 28, 1951: "We also find that the Government servants are influencing the elections in favour of the party which is feeding them and their dependents. No less a personality than Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, at the inaugural session of the Bhartiya Jan Sangh at Delhi recently, openly charged the Government servants of helping the Congress and thereby nullifying the elections from being free and fair. ..... If Parliamentary Democracy fails in this country and it is bound to fail for the reasons mentioned by me, the only result will be rebellion, anarchy and Communism".

History magnifies and inverts reality, inviting the ruling dispensation, which claims the legacy of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, to confront its own mirror image. Today, amid institutional capture and what is described as centrally orchestrated mass disenfranchisement, Dr. Ambedkar's warning is all the more relevant.

The split judgment has become controversial for another reason as well. The fact that Justice Satish Chandra Sharma's son has served as an empanelled standing counsel for the Election Commission before the Madhya Pradesh High Court raises the possibility of a conflict of interest.

The judge's failure to disclose this association at any point has invited speculation about the impartiality of the adjudicative process. This shatters the moral and even legal foundation of Justice Sharma's order referring the matter to a Constitution Bench, thereby further delaying a decision on the case. Recently, petitions have been filed in the Court for recalling and nullifying Justice Sharma's order. In *Rupa Ashok Hurra vs Ashok Hurra* (2002), a Constitution Bench had indicated that failure on the part of a judge to disclose his connection with the subject-matter or the parties would vitiate the judgment, warranting a revisit.

The Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct state that "a judge shall avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all of the judge's activities". They also stipulate that "a judge shall not participate in the determination of a case in which any member of the judge's family represents a litigant or is associated in any manner with the case". The Restatement of Values of Judicial Life, adopted by the Court in May 1997, contains similar prohibitions.

Beyond the courts

Now, back to the 2023 law. As the country's history has shown, political struggles can have a larger dimension than judicial proceedings. As regarding the draconian laws, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) was allowed to lapse and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was repealed by the Centre, even though they had earlier received the Court's endorsement.

The National Emergency (1975-77) was upheld by the Court in judgments, including the infamous ADM Jabalpur case (1976), which upheld the suspension of fundamental rights. Ultimately, the people voted Mrs. Gandhi's regime out of power in the subsequent election. Likewise, the controversial farm laws were repealed by Parliament in 2021 following massive protests.

In short, a political and moral reading of the split verdict in *Dr. Jaya Thakur* takes us beyond the Court to recognise the Constitution's potential for survival through peaceful people's movements.

Clipping: The Hindu, 15 Oct, p.6 (Op-Ed by Kaleeswaram Raj, counsel for petitioners)

VALUE ADDITION · ELECTION COMMISSION ESSENTIALS

Article 324	Superintendence, direction and control of elections to Parliament, State legislatures, President and Vice-President. Number of ECs fixed by the President (multi-member since 1993).
Removal (Art. 324(5))	CEC — like a Supreme Court judge; ECs — only on the CEC's recommendation.
2023 Act	Search committee under the Law Minister shortlists; **Selection Committee: PM + Leader of Opposition/largest Opposition party + a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by PM**; term 6 years or till 65.
Reform reports	**Dinesh Goswami Committee (1990)** and **Law Commission's 255th Report (2015)** favoured including the CJI/LoP in a collegium.
Current CEC	Gyanesh Kumar — first CEC appointed under the 2023 Act.

SYLLABUS LINK GS 2 — Appointment to constitutional posts; powers and functions of constitutional bodies; judiciary · Essay — institutions and democracy.

Practice Zone

MAINS · PRELIMS · RECAP · TRAP-SETTERS · PLACES & PERSONS

MAINS QUESTION 1 · GS 2 · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

The independence of the Election Commission depends as much on how its members are selected as on the powers they wield. In the light of the Anoop Baranwal judgment (2023) and the CEC and other ECs Act, 2023, critically examine the debate on the selection mechanism.

भारत निर्वाचन आयोग की स्वतंत्रता उतनी ही इस बात पर निर्भर करती है कि उसके सदस्यों का चयन कैसे होता है, जितनी इस पर कि उनके पास कौन-सी शक्तियाँ हैं। अनूप बरनवाल निर्णय (2023) तथा मुख्य निर्वाचन आयुक्त और अन्य निर्वाचन आयुक्त अधिनियम, 2023 के आलोक में चयन तंत्र से जुड़ी बहस का आलोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए।

APPROACH **Intro:** Art. 324 and the EC as the "umpire" of democracy. **Body:** (i) Baranwal's principle — no executive predominance; interim PM-LoP-CJI committee; (ii) 2023 Act — 2:1 executive majority, search committee under Law Minister, immunity clause; (iii) arguments for the Act — Art. 324(2) "subject to law", parliamentary competence, interim nature of Baranwal; (iv) arguments against — perception of bias, trust deficit, Jaya Thakur split verdict and reference; (v) reforms — Goswami Committee, 255th Law Commission Report, equal protection for ECs, transparent shortlisting. **Conclusion:** credibility of elections rests on both impartiality and its perception.

MAINS QUESTION 2 · GS 3 · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

Despite a 40% rise in exports to China, India's trade deficit with it continues to widen. Analyse the structural reasons and discuss how State-level industrial ecosystems can help India convert the 'China+1' opportunity into deeper domestic value addition.

चीन को निर्यात में 40% वृद्धि के बावजूद उसके साथ भारत का व्यापार घाटा लगातार बढ़ रहा है। इसके संरचनात्मक कारणों का विश्लेषण कीजिए तथा चर्चा कीजिए कि राज्य-स्तरीय औद्योगिक पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र 'चाइना+1' अवसर को गहन घरेलू मूल्य-संवर्धन में बदलने में भारत की किस प्रकार सहायता कर सकते हैं।

APPROACH **Intro:** Jan–Sept 2026 data — exports $19.26 bn, imports $125.19 bn, deficit $105.93 bn. **Body:** (i) reasons — dependence on intermediates and finished electronics/machinery, scale and cost gap, Chinese non-tariff barriers, shallow component base; (ii) risks — supply weaponisation (rare-earth magnets); (iii) State ecosystems — Tamil Nadu (auto base, suppliers, administrative experience), Karnataka (talent, Foxconn Devanahalli); (iv) Centre's role — PLI successor, ECMS, Press Note 3 easing; (v) gaps — 20% local inputs, FDI data by head office, regional divide (Bihar, Jharkhand). **Conclusion:** national incentives + State-level delivery of land, power, skills and suppliers.

MAINS KEYWORD BANK

Polity: institutional independence · executive predominance · neutral umpire · "appearance of impartiality" · interim judicial arrangement · legislative override · recusal. **Economy:** import intensity · backward linkages · domestic value addition · supply-chain resilience · State capacity · competitive federalism · producer-price pressure · pass-through to CPI. **Social justice & environment:** entitlement vs ceiling · inflation indexation · ageing dividend · range-restricted endemic · free, prior and informed consent.

PRELIMS · 10 MCQs

Q1 Consider the following statements about the Wholesale Price Index (WPI):

1. It is compiled by the National Statistics Office, MoSPI.
2. It covers services such as telecom and education.
3. In the new series, crude petroleum and natural gas fall under the 'Fuel and Power' group.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q2 With reference to the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), consider:

1. It was launched on 15 August 1995.
2. It is implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
3. It gives effect to Article 41 of the Constitution.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q3 The Jeypore ground gecko, recently in news:

1. is endemic to the Western Ghats.
2. is listed in Appendix II of CITES.
3. is classified as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q4 Which one of the following was **not** a founding member of ASEAN (1967)?

(a) Thailand (b) Singapore
(c) Brunei (d) Philippines

Q5 Under the CEC and other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, the Selection Committee consists of:

(a) PM, Chief Justice of India and Leader of Opposition
(b) PM, Leader of Opposition and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the PM
(c) President, PM and Chief Justice of India
(d) PM, Lok Sabha Speaker and Leader of Opposition

Q6 Consider the following statements:

1. The CEC can be removed only in like manner and on like grounds as a Supreme Court judge.
2. An Election Commissioner can be removed only on the recommendation of the CEC.
3. The Constitution fixes the number of Election Commissioners at two.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Q7 Consider the following pairs (Place in news : State):

1. Balda hills : Odisha
2. Devanahalli : Karnataka
3. Hosur : Tamil Nadu
4. Sriperumbudur : Andhra Pradesh

How many pairs are correctly matched?

(a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) Only three (d) All four

Q8 'MAHASAGAR', recently mentioned in the context of India–ASEAN ties, stands for:

(a) Maritime and Hydrographic Alliance for Security and Growth
(b) Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions
(c) Multilateral Harbour Arrangement for Sea Governance
(d) Maritime Hub for Asia and Global Resilience

Q9 Under Press Note 3 (2020), foreign investment from an entity of a country sharing a land border with India is:

(a) completely prohibited
(b) allowed only through the Government route
(c) allowed under the automatic route up to 49%
(d) allowed only in the services sector

Q10 The Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 repealed which of the following?

1. Foreigners Act, 1946
2. Citizenship Act, 1955
3. Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939
4. Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920

Select the correct answer:

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

ANSWER KEY — 1 (a) · 2 (b) · 3 (b) · 4 (c) · 5 (b) · 6 (b) · 7 (c) · 8 (b) · 9 (b) · 10 (b)

RATIONALE

1 · a WPI is compiled by the Office of Economic Adviser, DPIIT (not NSO) and covers only goods; only statement 3 is correct.

2 · b NSAP is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development; it was launched on 15 Aug 1995 and reflects Art. 41 (DPSP).

3 · b The gecko is endemic to the Eastern Ghats (Odisha–Andhra Pradesh); CITES App. II (CoP19, 2022) and IUCN Endangered (2019) are correct.

4 · c Brunei joined in 1984; the founders were Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

5 · b The 2023 Act replaced the CJI of the Baranwal interim committee with a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the PM.

6 · b Art. 324(2) leaves the number of ECs to the President; statements 1 and 2 reflect Art. 324(5).

7 · c Sriperumbudur (Foxconn's iPhone plant) is near Chennai in Tamil Nadu; the other three pairs are correct.

8 · b MAHASAGAR, unveiled in Mauritius in March 2025, broadens the 2015 SAGAR vision.

9 · b Press Note 3 put land-border countries' FDI under the Government route; easing was approved in March 2026.

10 · b The Citizenship Act, 1955 continues in force; the four foreigner-related laws (incl. Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000) were consolidated.

QUICK REVISION RECAP

WPI: 11.4% in Sept 2026 — new-series record, 49-month high; food 8.1%, non-food primary 10.3%; base 2022-23, 957 items, goods only. **Demography panel:** HLCDC under Justice P.P. Naolekar (constituted May 26) seeks inputs on post-2011 changes via demography.mha.gov.in; aims at a system to identify, detain and deport illegal immigrants. **India–China:** Jan–Sept trade $144.45 bn; exports $19.26 bn (+40.7%); deficit $105.93 bn vs last year's record $116.12 bn. **ASEAN:** maiden ASEAN-India Defence Think Tank Forum at MP-IDSA; 2026 is the ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation. **NSAP:** ₹53,428 cr (2026-31); renamed PM Samajik Sahayata Yojana; cap 3.09 crore. **Gecko:** four individuals in Balda hills, Nageswari RF; 147-ha opencast bauxite proposal. **China+1:** TN and Karnataka as models; ECMS — 22 proposals, ₹41,863 cr. **Jaya Thakur:** split verdict (Datta vs Sharma), referred to a larger Bench.

PRELIMS TRAP-SETTERS

1. RBI targets **CPI**, not WPI. **2.** WPI is compiled by DPIIT — not NSO. **3.** The ~$100 bn deficit figure is from **China's** customs data (calendar year). **4.** The Jeypore ground gecko is from the **Eastern** Ghats,

and it is in CITES **Appendix II**, not I. **5.** The last ASEAN entrant before Timor-Leste was **Cambodia (1999)**; Timor-Leste is the **11th** member. **6.** NSAP is run by the **Ministry of Rural Development** and covers urban areas too. **7.** The Baranwal committee (PM-LoP-CJI) was **interim**; the 2023 Act has no CJI. **8.** Census 2027's 1 October 2026 reference date applies only to **snow-bound** areas.

PLACES & PERSONS IN NEWS

Balda hills / Nageswari RF	Odisha (Eastern Ghats) — gecko habitat; proposed bauxite mine.
Potangi	Koraput, Odisha — gecko's type locality, lost to NALCO bauxite mining.
Sriperumbudur · Hosur	Tamil Nadu — Foxconn and Tata Electronics plants.
Devanahalli · Narasapura	Karnataka — Foxconn campus; Tata (ex-Wistron) iPhone plant.
Justice P.P. Naolekar	Former SC judge; chairs the High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes.
Sujan R. Chinoy	Director General, MP-IDSA, host of the Think Tank Forum.
Justices Dipankar Datta & S.C. Sharma	SC Bench that split in Dr. Jaya Thakur vs Union of India.

CONNECT THE DOTS · STATIC LINKAGE

News today	Static concept	Exam angle
WPI at 11.4%	Inflation measurement; RBI's flexible inflation targeting (2016)	WPI vs CPI; GDP deflator; base effect
Demography portal	Arts. 5–11, Art. 19(1)(d)–(e); DPDP Act, 2023	Citizenship vs migration; data privacy (Puttaswamy, 2017)
India–China deficit	Balance of trade vs current account; WTO trade remedies	Import dependence and economic security
India–ASEAN defence	Look East (1991) → Act East (2014); UNCLOS, 1982	ASEAN centrality; Indo-Pacific strategy
NSAP renamed	DPSP — Art. 41; Centrally Sponsored Schemes	Social security for an ageing population
Jeypore ground gecko	CITES, IUCN Red List; FRA 2006; Niyamgiri (2013)	Mining vs biodiversity vs tribal rights
China+1 in States	Competitive and cooperative federalism; PLI	State capacity as the real investment magnet
Jaya Thakur verdict	Art. 324; Anoop Baranwal (2023); Art. 145(3)	Independence of constitutional bodies

PRELIMS BYTES

MP-IDSA: set up in 1965 as IDSA, funded by the Ministry of Defence; renamed after former Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar in 2020. **ADMM-Plus:** ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting with eight dialogue partners including India; first held in 2010. **Biodiversity Heritage Sites:** notified by State governments in consultation with local bodies under Sec. 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002; the first was the Nallur Tamarind Grove in Karnataka (2007).