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# The Hindu Analysis

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## IN THIS EDITION


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | **Developing Minds in a Digital World**<br>*Screens, AI and the adolescent brain* | GS 3 · GS 1 | 2 |
| 02 | **Beyond Religiosity: The Kolkata Pandal Stampede**<br>*Crowd management & disaster preparedness* | GS 2 · GS 3 | 5 |
| 03 | **Treacherous Waters: Unsafe River Crossings**<br>*Raghopur boat capsize & rural mobility* | GS 2 · GS 3 | 7 |
| 04 | **A Case for Joining the Global Carbon Coalition**<br>*OCCCM, CCTS & the CBAM challenge* | GS 3 | 10 |
| 05 | **Revamp the Functioning of Parliament**<br>*Delimitation, Question Hour & sitting days* | GS 2 | 12 |
| 06 | **The PM-SETU Scheme**<br>*Hub-and-spoke upgrade of 1,000 ITIs* | PRELIMS · GS 2/3 | 16 |
| ★ | **Practice Zone**<br>*2 Mains (with Hindi) · 10 MCQs · Recap · Trap-Setters · Places & Persons* | PRELIMS + MAINS | 18 |


**19**
lives lost in the Kolkata pandal stampede

**13**
children drowned at Raghopur, Bihar

**~500**
firms filed first CCTS compliance reports

**850**
proposed Lok Sabha strength (from 550)


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GS 3 · GS 1 THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · OP-ED

# Developing Minds in a Digital World

01

*Screens, social media and generative AI are reshaping how India's young brains learn and grow*

**WHY IN NEWS**

In an op-ed, **Derick H. Lindquist** (Dean, Jindal School of Psychology and Counselling, O.P. Jindal Global University) warns that constant exposure to screens, social media and AI during critical windows of brain development may reshape attention, memory and self-control — and calls for evidence-based safeguards for India's roughly **65 crore people under 25**.

## The Scale of the Shift

- A teenager moves seamlessly between chats, videos, social media and games; homework is completed with the latest AI platform. Screens increasingly dominate everyday life — a **profound change in how developing minds experience the world**.
- The change is especially significant for India: ~65 crore people under 25 and one of the world's largest, fastest-growing technology ecosystems, as education, recreation and social interaction move online.
- The benefits are undeniable — unprecedented access to information and learning resources, new ways to communicate and create — yet digital environments have introduced **"a powerful and largely unregulated force"** into children's lives.

## A Brain Under Construction

- **Technology itself is not the problem**; the concern is constant exposure during critical periods when the brain systems underlying cognition, emotion and behaviour are still maturing.
- The **prefrontal cortex** — attention, working memory, planning, decision-making and impulse control — continues to mature into **early adulthood**, so the concern extends beyond childhood.
- A dense, repetitive stream of digital experiences can strengthen some neural pathways while leaving others underdeveloped; given early-life plasticity, such patterns may shape how young people think, feel and act across the lifespan.
- Emerging research **links** high screen time to changes in brain structure and connectivity — but such findings **do not establish causation**; they underline the need for better understanding of attention, memory, self-control and creativity.

## The Attention Economy

- Social media is most appealing in adolescence, when belonging, peer evaluation and social approval are salient. Platforms capture attention by exploiting basic features of cognition, emotion and reward.
- Short videos, autoplay, infinite scroll, algorithmic recommendations and social feedback (likes, shares, comments) create **reinforcement loops** that deliver novelty and rewards rapidly but unpredictably.
- This **variable reinforcement** encourages repetitive checking and rapid attention shifts, making sustained focus harder; ordinary experiences — a face-to-face conversation, practising a skill, sitting with one's thoughts — feel less rewarding by comparison.

## Offloading Mental Effort

- Unlike earlier technologies, generative AI does not just assist mental effort — **it can supplant it**. Cognitive offloading (e.g., photographing where we parked) is not inherently problematic.
- The concern arises when AI replaces the effort **necessary for learning**: generating ideas, organising arguments, writing essays. Grappling with difficult questions, making mistakes and revising are central to learning, judgement and perseverance.
- Technology also replaces **idle moments**: boredom creates space for imagination, reflection, creativity and a rich inner life. When every free moment is filled with stimulation, there is less room to think, wonder or daydream.
- Yet **neuroplasticity** cuts both ways — many young people filter information, navigate complex digital environments and switch between sources with impressive skill. Young people worldwide are part of "a vast, largely uncontrolled experiment", while corporations have strong financial incentives to keep them engaged.

## Safeguarding the Future — Way Forward

1. **Parents:** practical, evidence-based guidance — device-free times and places, protected study periods, healthy sleep routines and unstructured time. The aim is not to eliminate screens but to stop them occupying every moment.
2. **Schools:** preserve **"productive struggle"** — the effort of thinking, writing, reasoning and problem-solving. AI should support analysis, revision and feedback without replacing critical thinking; more oral examinations, supervised writing and applied problem-solving.
3. **Platforms:** products aimed at young people must face greater scrutiny and accountability, with stronger evidence on how they affect cognitive and emotional development.
4. **Governments:** fund independent research to inform policy; we should **not wait for definitive evidence of harm** before asking whether digital environments suit healthy development.

### VALUE ADDITION · CONCEPTS & POLICY

**Neuroplasticity:** the brain's capacity to reorganise neural connections in response to learning, experience and injury; it is highest in childhood and adolescence but continues lifelong.

**Prefrontal cortex:** seat of executive functions (planning, impulse control, working memory); among the last brain regions to mature — around the mid-20s.

**Variable-ratio reinforcement:** B.F. Skinner's operant-conditioning finding that rewards at unpredictable intervals produce the most persistent behaviour — the "slot-machine" logic behind feeds and notifications.

**Cognitive offloading:** using external tools (notes, search, AI) to reduce mental load; overuse is linked to "digital amnesia" and weaker retention.

**DPDP Act, 2023:** defines a child as a person under 18; requires verifiable parental consent before processing a child's data and bars tracking, behavioural monitoring and targeted advertising directed at children.

**PRAGYATA Guidelines (MoE, 2020):** screen-time caps for online schooling — pre-primary about 30 minutes a day; longer, session-based limits for higher classes.

**WHO (2019):** no sedentary screen time for children under 2; not more than 1 hour a day for ages 2–4.

**Global practice:** Australia set a minimum age of 16 for social-media accounts (law of 2024, in force from December 2025).

# Developing minds in a digital world, a changing India

**Derick H. Lindquist**

Dean of the Jindal School of Psychology and Counselling at the O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, Haryana

Each evening, a familiar scene unfolds in homes around the world. A teenager moves seamlessly between chats, videos, social media, and games on their phone. Homework is completed using the latest Artificial Intelligence (AI) platform. Screens increasingly dominate everyday life. This is a profound change in how developing minds experience the world, learn, and grow.

These changes are particularly significant for India, with approximately 65 crore people under the age of 25 and one of the world's largest and fastest-growing technological ecosystems. Digital engagement by this vast young population continues to grow as education, recreation, and social interaction increasingly move online.

The digital world has brought undeniable benefits, from unprecedented access to information and educational resources to new ways of communicating, creating, and learning. Recent advances in AI have expanded these possibilities even further. Nonetheless, these digital environments have also introduced a powerful and largely unregulated force into children's lives – one we are only beginning to understand.

**A brain under construction**

Technology itself is not the problem. The concern is constant exposure to powerful digital tools during critical periods of development, when the brain systems underlying cognition, emotion, and behaviour are still maturing. These concerns extend beyond childhood. The prefrontal cortex – which supports attention, working memory, planning, decision-making, and impulse control – continues to mature into early adulthood.

Digital environments provide a dense, repetitive stream of experiences that can shape how brain circuits develop – strengthening some pathways while leaving others underdeveloped. Given the brain's plasticity during early life, such patterns may have lasting effects, shaping how young people think, feel, and act across the lifespan.

Emerging research links high levels of screen time to alterations in brain structure and connectivity. Though revealing, such findings do not establish causation. They do, however, underscore the need to better understand how digital experiences affect cognitive development, including attention, memory, self-control, and creativity.

Social media platforms are particularly appealing during adolescence, when belonging, peer evaluation, and social approval are especially salient. These platforms are designed to capture and sustain attention by exploiting basic features of cognition, emotion, and reward. Short videos, autoplay, infinite scroll, algorithmic recommendations, and social feedback create reinforcement loops that deliver novelty and rewards – likes, shares, and comments – in a rapid but unpredictable manner.

Digital innovation must be balanced with children's cognitive, emotional and social development

This form of variable reinforcement encourages repetitive checking and rapid attention shifts, potentially making it harder to sustain attention on a single task. Over time, such patterns of engagement may shape what young people come to expect from everyday experiences. When digital rewards are immediate and constantly accessible, ordinary experiences – having a face-to-face conversation, practising a skill, or simply sitting with one's thoughts – may feel less rewarding by comparison.

**Offloading mental effort**

Generative AI has rapidly transformed how we engage with the world. Unlike earlier technologies, AI does not just assist with mental effort; it can supplant it. Humans have long used tools to reduce cognitive load. Taking a photograph in a crowded parking lot, for example, means we do not have to remember where we parked. Such cognitive offloading is not inherently problematic.

The concern arises when AI replaces the mental effort necessary for learning. Students can now use AI platforms to generate ideas, organise arguments, write essays, and summarise material. Used thoughtfully, these tools can enhance the learning process. When used as a substitute for independent thinking, however, AI can undermine the cognitive effort through which knowledge and skills develop.

Grappling with difficult questions, finding the right words, making mistakes, and revising arguments are central to learning. If AI routinely eliminates these experiences, we should rightly ask what the impact will be on young people's ability to think critically, use informed judgement, and persevere when answers are not immediately available.

A related concern is what happens when technology replaces not just our intellectual efforts but our idle moments. Though rarely welcomed, boredom creates space for imagination, reflection, creativity, and the development of a rich inner life. When every free moment is filled with stimulation, young people have fewer opportunities to think, wonder, daydream, or reflect.

Neuroplasticity – the brain's lifelong capacity to adapt to experience, learning, and the environment – offers another perspective on how digital technology shapes young minds. Today's youth are certainly adapting to a world very different from that of previous generations. Indeed, many young people exhibit impressive abilities to filter information, navigate complex digital environments, and switch among information sources.

We must be cautious, however, when evaluating whether these changes are beneficial or harmful. It is important to consider what may be gained – and lost – as young minds adapt to today's technologically advanced ecosystem.

In effect, young people worldwide are participating in a vast, largely uncontrolled experiment in how sustained exposure to digital technology may shape developing brains and minds. Meanwhile, the corporations designing these digital tools and devices have strong financial incentives to keep young people – their current and future users – engaged.

**Safeguarding the future**

India's youth are growing up in an environment that was unimaginable until quite recently. Whatever our concerns, we cannot simply ignore or reject digital technology. Children will use it. Our responsibility is to help them use it capably, thoughtfully, and responsibly.

Parents need practical, evidence-based guidance. Children should have device-free times and places, protected study periods, healthy sleep routines, and opportunities for unstructured time. The objective is not to eliminate screens, but to ensure that they do not occupy every available moment.

Schools and educators must preserve what might be called productive struggle – the effort involved in thinking, writing, reasoning, solving problems, and working through uncertainty. Digital tools, including AI, can support analysis, revision, and feedback without replacing critical thinking. Greater emphasis should be placed on independent cognitive engagement, including oral examinations, supervised writing, and applied problem-solving.

Digital platforms – especially those targeted at young people – must face greater scrutiny and accountability. Policymakers should require companies to provide stronger evidence about how their products affect the cognitive and emotional development of children and adolescents. Governments must also support independent research capable of informing policies and regulations as these technologies continue to evolve.

We should not wait for definitive evidence of harm before asking whether the digital environments we are creating are conducive to healthy development. A young mind needs stimulation, but also silence; information, but also reflection; assistance, but also struggle. We can embrace technological progress while still protecting the experiences through which children and adolescents learn to think, imagine, reflect, and grow.

THE HINDU, 19 OCT 2026 · *Page 6 · Derick H. Lindquist*

## MAINS ANGLE

Use for GS 1 (effects of technology on society and youth), GS 2 (education and child welfare), GS 4 (corporate responsibility) and Essay. Key line: **"A young mind needs stimulation, but also silence; information, but also reflection; assistance, but also struggle."**

## PRELIMS POINTERS

- ✓ India: ~65 crore people under 25 (as cited in the article).
- ✓ Screen-time research shows **correlation, not causation**.
- ✓ Prefrontal cortex matures into early adulthood.
- ✓ "Productive struggle" = effortful thinking essential to learning.

## KEY TERMS FOR ANSWER WRITING

- ✓ **Attention economy:** business model in which user attention is the scarce resource monetised through ads and engagement metrics.

- ✓ **Digital well-being:** balanced, intentional use of technology that supports physical and mental health.
- ✓ **Productive struggle:** effortful engagement with difficult problems that builds durable learning.

**MAINS ANGLE**

**Ethics (GS 4) lens:** platforms designed for engagement face a conflict between profit and a **duty of care** towards minors who cannot give fully informed consent; "safety by design" and age-appropriate design codes shift responsibility from children to companies.

**SYLLABUS LINK** GS 1 – Society, effects of globalisation & technology on youth · GS 2 – Education, Health, vulnerable sections · GS 3 – S&T in everyday life · Essay / GS 4

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GS 2 · GS 3 THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · EDITORIAL

02

# Beyond Religiosity: The Kolkata Pandal Stampede

*Better crowd regulation could have prevented the Girish Park tragedy*

**WHY IN NEWS**

**19 people lost their lives** in a stampede at a Durga Puja pandal (Chorbagan Sarbojanin Durgotsab) in Kolkata's **Girish Park** area on Saturday. The Hindu's editorial argues that the tragedy could have been avoided with better organisation and crowd regulation.

## What Happened

- This was the first Durga Puja after the BJP formed the government in West Bengal. Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari highlighted that pandals in the State had grown by **25% to more than 57,000**; Union Home Minister Amit Shah was also in Kolkata.
- The pandal's theme was **"Beyond Sound"** — a **narrow entry and exit** designed to control the light falling inside. Surrounding lanes were narrow gullies that cannot hold two cars at once.
- **Unanticipated rain** with heavy thunder and lightning (during monsoon retreat) made people barge into the pandal seeking shelter. Organisers, fearing the structure might collapse, asked people to leave — the announcement apparently **triggered panic and a surge**.

## Where the System Failed

- Both police and organisers failed to anticipate the sudden surge. Packed crowds stay incident-free **only if sudden surges of movement**, often triggered by panic, are avoided throughout.
- The fear about the structure was justified, but the effort should have been to **wean the crowd away in a regulated manner**.
- Only **temporary home guards** were posted at the pandal; deploying experienced police personnel may have prevented the tragedy.
- The larger question: whether, in the drive to make celebrations spectacular and grand, **safe-management practices got ignored**. The government has promised an inquiry and deterrent follow-up action.

# Beyond religiosity

## Better crowd regulation could have prevented the Kolkata pandal tragedy

This year's Durga Puja in Kolkata was meant to be truly special. The first after the Bharatiya Janata Party formed the government in West Bengal, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari wanted the pandals to showcase his party's commitment to Hindu religiosity as well as to demonstrate the efficiency of the administrative machinery under him. He made it a point to highlight that the number of pandals in the State had increased by 25% over last year to more than 57,000. He was a visible presence at pandals across the city. Union Home Minister Amit Shah was in Kolkata as well to add heft and leverage to the puja's popular appeal. But disaster struck at Kolkata's Girish Park area on Saturday, as 19 people lost their lives in a stampede that could have been avoided with better organisation and crowd regulation. Both the police and the puja organisers failed to anticipate the sudden surge of the crowd at the venue.

Puja pandals, just like Mumbai's Ganapati installations, are often sites of creativity and festivity; they have generally been accident-free despite the participation of a large number of people. The *Chorbagan Sarbojanin Durgotstab*'s theme this year was Beyond Sound. With a narrow entry and exit, the creators apparently sought to give an experience to visitors that involved controlling the light falling inside. The surrounding lanes were narrow city gullies that cannot hold two cars at the same time. Unanticipated too – at a time of retreat of the monsoon – was the rain that struck India's east coast with heavy thunder and lightning in the evening. As people barged into the pandal seeking safety – visitors keep moving inside the Durga Puja pandals typically – the organisers requested people to leave fearing that the structure might collapse. Packed crowds can be incident-free only if sudden surges of movement, often triggered by panic, are avoided throughout. In Kolkata, panic apparently stemmed from the announcement regarding the safety of the structure, though the fear about the structure's safety was justified. The effort should have been to wean the crowd away in a regulated manner. The government has promised an inquiry and deterrent follow-up action. There is the question of whether in the government's drive to make the celebrations spectacular and grand, safe management practices got ignored at the event. Although Mr. Adhikari said the police helped rush the victims to hospitals, he also indicated that only temporary home guards had been posted at the pandal. Effective deployment of experienced police personnel may have helped avoid the tragedy.

THE HINDU, 19 OCT 2026 · Page 6 · Editorial

## ◆ Factors Leading to Stampedes

1. **Structural failures** — weak temporary structures, poor barricading, narrow entry and exit points.
2. **Poor crowd control** — underestimating crowd size, inadequate staffing and exits, uncontrolled access.
3. **Panic and rumours** — false alarms or mass hysteria trigger sudden rushes and falls.
4. **Fire and electrical issues** — short circuits, missing extinguishers or poor lighting create panic.
5. **Lack of coordination** — poor inter-agency planning, delayed response, no real-time monitoring.

## ◆ NDMA Guidelines on Preventing Stampedes

1. **Crowd estimation and management:** assess expected crowd size, control entry points and regulate footfall.
2. **Infrastructure and safety:** strong barricades, emergency exits and adequate ventilation.
3. **Security and surveillance:** CCTV, public-address systems and trained security staff to monitor movement.
4. **Emergency preparedness:** medical teams, ambulances and fire units stationed for rapid response.

5 **Public awareness:** signboards, helplines and real-time digital updates to prevent panic.

**VALUE ADDITION**

**NDMA guide (2014):** "Managing Crowds at Events and Venues of Mass Gathering" — for State governments, local authorities, administrators and event organisers; stresses capacity planning, crowd-flow design and a single incident command.

**Crowd crush science:** above about 5 persons per sq. metre individuals lose control of their movement; most deaths are due to **compressive asphyxia**, not trampling.

**Recent tragedies:** Hathras satsang, U.P. (July 2024, 121 dead); Maha Kumbh, Prayagraj (Jan 2025); New Delhi Railway Station (Feb 2025, 18 dead); Bengaluru Chinnaswamy Stadium (June 2025, 11 dead); Karur, T.N. rally (Sept 2025, 41 dead).

**DM (Amendment) Act, 2025:** strengthens NDMA/SDMA mandates and provides for Urban Disaster Management Authorities in State capitals and cities with municipal corporations (except Delhi and Chandigarh).

**Durga Puja in Kolkata:** inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2021.

**HIMACHAL ANGLE · HPAS**

The **Naina Devi temple stampede** (Bilaspur district, August 2008) killed over 140 pilgrims after a rumour of a landslide/rain-shelter collapse — the same panic-trigger seen in Kolkata. Lessons apply to crowd plans at Chintpurni, Jwalaji, Manimahesh and Kullu Dussehra.

**PRELIMS POINTERS**

- ✓ Girish Park — north Kolkata.
- ✓ Panic triggered by an announcement on structural safety.
- ✓ Durga Puja — UNESCO ICH since 2021.
- ✓ NDMA crowd guide issued in 2014.

**SYLLABUS LINK** GS 3 – Disaster & disaster management · GS 2 – Governance, accountability of administration · GS 4 – Public-service ethics

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GS 2 · GS 3 THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · EDITORIAL

# 03 Treacherous Waters: Unsafe River Crossings

*Access to safe transport is of utmost importance in remote villages*

**WHY IN NEWS**

On **October 13**, at least **13 children drowned** when a country-made boat capsized in **Raghopur, Vaishali district (Bihar)**. The editorial flags unregulated river crossings and the chronic lack of safe public transport in remote villages.

## The Incident

- The boat set off at 8.30 p.m. for a memorial feast in an adjoining village, even though **rides are prohibited after sunset**.
- It was visibly dilapidated — a **hole in the deck** through which it drew water — and was operated by a young boatman.
- At least half a dozen other people were aboard besides the children, though its reported **capacity was five** — clear overloading.

# Treacherous waters

## Access to safe transport is of utmost importance in remote villages

River crossings on stretches of the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are notoriously unsafe as poorly lit, unregistered boats ply with bare access to lifesaving equipment. Overcrowded vessels, operated by untrained or underaged people, add to the risks, and enforcement action only follows an accident. These boats are not the preserve of the poor but are also used by government personnel, teachers, and bank employees: many areas lack reliable alternatives, making the riverine journeys the sole option. On October 13, at least 13 children drowned when a country-made boat capsized in Raghopur, in Bihar's Vaishali district, after setting off at 8.30 p.m. for a memorial feast in an adjoining village, even though rides are prohibited post sunset. The boat was visibly dilapidated, including a hole in the deck through which it drew water, and was being operated by a young boatman. There were at least half a dozen other people on the vessel when it capsized despite its reported capacity having been five. The riverine tract in Raghopur is continuously shaped by sediment deposits and has historically been hard to access, especially during the monsoons. Raghopur lacks all-weather roads, and has a history of being isolated during floods. The first section of the Kachchi Dargah-Bidupur bridge, between Patna and Raghopur, was ready in June 2025, but the monsoons still flooded the approach road and blocked access. The overarching motif across these episodes has been a consistent lack of safer alternatives, including the general paucity of public transport. A choate regulatory framework, including the Model Rules 2011 under the Bengal Ferries Act 1885 and the Inland Vessels Act 2021, has also not prevented training programmes and inspections from lagging behind the proliferation of unsafe transport practices.

That all those who drowned on October 13 were children deepens the sense of tragedy. In general, children warrant additional, more sensitive socio-economic support. The Bombay High Court had recently upbraided the Maharashtra government for failing to arrange transportation for over 200 children from villages near Chandoli National Park and Sahyadri Tiger Reserve; they had to walk several kilometres to reach school, braving the risk of wildlife encounters. Such precarity persists in Hingoli, Palghar, and Nashik in Maharashtra alone; similar situations have also been created by school reorganisation programmes that do not sufficiently account for children's safety when shuttering infeasible facilities. The children who drowned in Vaishali were not headed to school, but the risk exposure is paramount. The ultimate tragedy is that access to ordinary childhood activities remains contingent, in so many economically disadvantaged communities, on accepting dangers that public institutions already know how to prevent.

THE HINDU, 19 OCT 2026 · Page 6 · Editorial

## A Structural Problem

- River crossings on the Ganga in **U.P. and Bihar** are notoriously unsafe: poorly lit, unregistered boats with bare access to life-saving equipment, overcrowded and run by untrained or underage operators. **Enforcement follows only an accident.**

- These boats are not just used by the poor — government staff, teachers and bank employees also depend on them, as many areas lack reliable alternatives.
- Raghopur's riverine tract is shaped by sediment deposits, lacks all-weather roads and is isolated during floods. The first section of the **Kachchi Dargah–Bidupur bridge** (Patna–Raghopur) was ready in June 2025, but monsoon floods still blocked the approach road.
- The overarching motif: a **consistent lack of safer alternatives**, including a general paucity of public transport.

## Regulatory Gaps

- A **choate** (well-formed) framework exists — the **Model Rules 2011 under the Bengal Ferries Act, 1885** and the **Inland Vessels Act, 2021** — yet training programmes and inspections lag behind the spread of unsafe practices.

## Children Bear the Risk

- The **Bombay High Court** recently upbraided Maharashtra for failing to arrange transport for 200+ children near **Chandoli National Park** and the **Sahyadri Tiger Reserve**, who walk several kilometres to school braving wildlife encounters.
- Similar precarity exists in Hingoli, Palghar and Nashik; school-reorganisation drives that shut "infeasible" schools often ignore children's safety.
- **The ultimate tragedy:** access to ordinary childhood activities remains contingent, in disadvantaged communities, on accepting dangers that public institutions already know how to prevent.

### MAINS ANGLE

**Way forward:** registration and fitness certification of country boats; mandatory life jackets and lighting; a strict ban on night trips with local monitoring; capacity marking on hulls; training and licensing of boatmen; all-weather approach roads to bridges; and school transport/escort support for children in remote habitations.

### VALUE ADDITION

**Inland Vessels Act, 2021:** replaced the Inland Vessels Act, 1917; uniform registration valid across States, certificate of survey, mandatory insurance, a central electronic database; non-mechanised vessels to be enrolled by State governments at local level.

**Constitutional position:** ferries and inland waterways (other than national waterways) are in the **State List (Entry 13)**; shipping on national waterways is a Union subject; mechanically propelled vessels on inland waterways fall in the Concurrent List.

**Diara:** flood-plain islands of the Ganga in Bihar formed by shifting sediment — fertile but cut off for months.

**Sahyadri Tiger Reserve:** Maharashtra's Western Ghats reserve formed by Chandoli National Park and Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary.

**World Drowning Prevention Day:** 25 July (UN General Assembly resolution, 2021).

**Word watch:** *choate* = complete, fully formed (opposite of *inchoate*).

### PRELIMS POINTERS

✓ Raghopur — Vaishali district, Bihar.

- ✓ Bengal Ferries Act, 1885 → Model Rules 2011.
- ✓ Inland Vessels Act, 2021 replaced the 1917 Act.
- ✓ Ferries — State List.

**LINKED SCHEMES & PROVISIONS**

- ✓ **Samagra Shiksha:** supports transport and escort facilities for children in sparsely populated or difficult areas.
- ✓ **PMGSY:** all-weather road connectivity for eligible unconnected rural habitations.
- ✓ **RTE Act, 2009:** right to a neighbourhood school; States must ensure access where schools are far away.

**MAINS ANGLE**

**Mains line:** the Raghopur tragedy shows how **infrastructure gaps, weak enforcement and poverty** combine to make risk "normal" — safety must be designed into rural mobility, not left to individual choice.

**SYLLABUS LINK** GS 2 – Vulnerable sections (children), welfare schemes, governance · GS 3 – Infrastructure, disaster management

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GS 3 THE HINDU · PAGE 6 · OP-ED

# 04 A Case for Joining the Global Carbon Coalition

*India's carbon market is live — should it now sit in the room where the rules are written?*

**WHY IN NEWS**

**Vaibhav Chaturvedi** (CEEW) and **Catherine Wolfram** (MIT Sloan) argue that India — whose **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)** is now live — should join the **Open Coalition on Compliance Carbon Markets (OCCCM)**, launched by the EU, China and Brazil.

## ◆ India's Carbon Market Goes Live

- ◆ On **July 31**, nearly **500 Indian companies across seven industrial sectors** filed their first-ever compliance reports under the CCTS. The scheme — on paper since 2023 — now has binding targets, penalties and real entities.
- ◆ The **first credits are due in October**, with trading on power exchanges expected between November and January.
- ◆ The CCTS (compliance) is in its **first phase** and is designed to deliver India's **NDC targets** and the **2070 net-zero** goal.

## ◆ What is the OCCCM?

- ◆ Launched in **May in Florence** by the **EU, China and Brazil** to align how the world's compliance carbon markets communicate with each other.

- **Germany and New Zealand** joined as the first new members; Canada, France, Norway, Singapore, Türkiye and the U.K. followed. On **September 14, at Wuhan**, the coalition adopted its first work plan.
- A collaborative platform for exchange on carbon-pricing mechanisms, **MRV** (monitoring, reporting and verification), carbon-accounting methods and rules on high-integrity offsets.
- Governance: high-level meetings (highest decision-making body), executive-level meetings, thematic working groups and a Secretariat. India has stayed outside so far.

## *A case for joining the global carbon coalition*

On July 31, nearly 500 Indian companies across seven industrial sectors filed their first-ever compliance reports under the national Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS). The country's scheme – on paper since 2023 – is now live with binding targets, penalties and real entities. The first credits are due to be issued in October, with trading on power exchanges expected to follow between November and January. In May, the European Union, China, and Brazil launched the Open Coalition on Compliance Carbon Markets (OCCCM) in Florence, aimed at aligning the way the world's compliance carbon markets communicate with each other. Germany and New Zealand joined as the first new members; Canada, France, Norway, Singapore, Türkiye and the United Kingdom have since followed. On September 14, at its meeting in Wuhan, the coalition adopted its first work plan.

India has stayed outside so far. With its own market now live, the more interesting question is no longer whether India can afford to build a carbon price – it already has. It is whether India can afford to sit outside the room where its rules get written. Or is it best avoided due to unforeseen risks? The OCCCM is a collaborative initiative for exchange on carbon pricing mechanisms; monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) systems, carbon accounting methodologies, and rules related to the potential use of high-integrity offsets.

In India, the government has adopted a compliance carbon market framework in the form of a Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), which is currently in its first phase. The CCTS (compliance) is set up to deliver on India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets and the 2070 net-zero goal.

**The issue of a carbon price**

There are two key reasons why India must seriously consider joining the OCCCM. The first is the proliferation of carbon pricing systems worldwide. The idea of having a carbon price as a key instrument, supported by complementary policy instruments, is back at the high table. It minimises the economy-wide cost of mitigation (critical for the global South) and can promote innovation while minimising the impact on the vulnerable. It can also deliver significant fiscal revenues at a time when government resources are increasingly stretched, including by the impacts of climate change – from heatwaves to devastating floods. As of now, over 50 countries have instituted carbon pricing measures. As the world advances towards a net-zero future, the likelihood that more and more countries adopt a carbon price is high.

We could be looking at a future where a bulk of emissions would be priced. At some point, more and more of these domestic carbon pricing systems will be linked – even if partially – to better coordinate. While the beginning of OCCCM focuses on knowledge exchange, one potential long-term strategic outcome is improved interoperability among domestic carbon pricing systems. It could be valuable to link India's CCTS (compliance) to other carbon trading systems, given the potential to earn revenue from jurisdictions with more stringent mitigation targets.

**Vaibhav Chaturvedi**

Senior Fellow at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)

**Catherine Wolfram**

The William Barton Rogers Professor of Energy Economics at the MIT Sloan School of Management, U.S.

India should join the Open Coalition on Compliance Carbon Markets, as it aligns well with the country's decarbonisation choices

**On 'climate clubs'**

The second is to be better prepared in case a coalition along the lines of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) develops. The idea of 'climate clubs' is re-emerging as geopolitics fractures United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) discussions and attention turns to implementation. A report on a climate coalition centred around the CBAM issue was released in the context of an independent council convened by the COP30 President, Ambassador André Aranha Corrêa do Lago (The writers of this article are the co-authors of the report). The report describes alternative scenarios for CBAM coalitions in which there could be uniform or differentiated carbon prices across member-countries, incentives for member-countries, and penalties for non-member countries. With the European Union CBAM now operational, and many other countries contemplating their own versions of CBAM, being better prepared on this front is absolutely critical for India. While the OCCCM does not mention CBAM explicitly – most probably because of the sharp reactions the term evokes, especially during climate negotiations – OCCCM's objectives around the MRV, carbon accounting, and domestic compliance markets are very relevant for being better prepared to deal with the CBAM world.

**Why joining matters now**

Are there potential risks in joining the coalition? The coalition is about better alignment of domestic compliance markets and carbon pricing across countries. It does not seek to enforce any mitigation targets or any other decision. However, as discussions evolve, some critical decisions are likely to be made by coalition members. OCCCM's governance structure consists of high-level meetings (the highest decision-making body), executive-level meetings, thematic working groups and a Secretariat. It is critical to be in the room and shape the discussions rather than respond to the developments as an outsider. The risk is more in being an outsider. That Brazil is a founding member, and other like-minded developing countries are in the process of becoming members, should be a source of comfort for India.

Some aspects of the future world are likely: geopolitics will remain fractured, climate negotiations will continue to meet logjams, the profile of carbon pricing will continue to rise across countries, and efforts from outside the Paris Agreement framework will become increasingly important to achieving the agreement's goals. In this context, the role played by country-backed climate coalitions will likely grow.

The OCCCM aligns well with India's decarbonisation choices and offers a useful platform not just to learn about carbon markets, but also to be better prepared to engage with other national carbon pricing architectures and border carbon taxes within the evolving geopolitical landscape. India should consider making this move sooner rather than later.

*The views expressed are personal*

THE HINDU, 19 OCT 2026 · *Page 6 · Chaturvedi & Wolfram*

## Why India Should Join

1. **Proliferation of carbon pricing:** 50+ countries price carbon. A carbon price minimises the economy-wide cost of mitigation (critical for the Global South), promotes innovation and raises fiscal revenue when budgets are stretched by heatwaves and floods. Linking India's CCTS with other systems could earn revenue from jurisdictions with stricter targets.
2. **Preparing for CBAM-style "climate clubs":** as geopolitics fractures UNFCCC talks, a report from a council convened by the **COP30 President André Aranha Corrêa do Lago** sketches CBAM coalitions with uniform or differentiated carbon prices, incentives for members and penalties for non-members. With the EU CBAM operational, preparedness is critical.

## Risks and the Case for Being Inside

- The coalition does not enforce mitigation targets, but critical decisions are likely to be made by members — **"the risk is more in being an outsider."** Brazil's founding role and other developing countries joining should reassure India.
- Likely future: fractured geopolitics, logjammed negotiations, rising carbon prices and greater weight for efforts outside the Paris framework — making country-backed coalitions more important.
- **Counter-view:** India has opposed CBAM as a unilateral trade measure inconsistent with CBDR-RC; any alignment must protect policy space, MSME competitiveness and the right to differentiated

pricing.

**VALUE ADDITION**

**CCTS (notified 2023):** under the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001** (amended 2022); **Bureau of Energy Efficiency** is the administrator and Grid Controller of India the registry; has a compliance mechanism (emission-intensity targets for obligated entities) and an offset mechanism (voluntary). 1 Carbon Credit Certificate = 1 $tCO_2e$.

**EU CBAM:** transitional (reporting) phase Oct 2023 – Dec 2025; definitive phase from 1 January 2026; covers iron & steel, aluminium, cement, fertilisers, hydrogen and electricity — steel and aluminium are India's most exposed exports.

**Paris Agreement Article 6:** 6.2 — bilateral cooperative approaches (ITMOs); 6.4 — UN-supervised Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism.

**Climate clubs:** concept popularised by economist William Nordhaus; the G7-backed Climate Club was launched in 2022.

**India's NDC:** 45% cut in emission intensity of GDP by 2030 over 2005; 50% non-fossil installed power capacity by 2030; net zero by 2070.

**HIMACHAL ANGLE · HPAS**

Himachal Pradesh was among the first in India to earn carbon credits for forestry — under the World Bank's BioCarbon Fund through the Mid-Himalayan Watershed Development Project, with payments shared with gram panchayats.

**PRELIMS POINTERS**

- ✓ OCCCM founders: EU, China, Brazil (Florence).
- ✓ First work plan: Wuhan, 14 September.
- ✓ India is **not** a member.
- ✓ CCTS administrator: BEE.

**SYLLABUS LINK** GS 3 – Environment, conservation, climate finance · Indian economy & industry · GS 2 – International groupings & agreements

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GS 2 THE HINDU · PAGE 7 · OP-ED

# Revamp the Functioning of Parliament

05

*More MPs without more floor time will mute, not magnify, the voice of constituents*

**WHY IN NEWS**

**Atharva Deshmukh** and **Mehul Chhabra** (LAMP Fellows) argue that the **Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill** and the **Delimitation Bill, 2026** — raising Lok Sabha strength from **550 to 850** — ignore Parliament's working capacity.

# Revamp functioning of Parliament

**Atharva Deshmukh**

Policy Researcher and LAMP Fellow (2024–25)

**Mehul Chhabra**

Policy Researcher and LAMP Fellow (2024–25)

India's impending delimitation debate may appear, at first glance, to be a matter of democratic arithmetic: if too many citizens are being represented by one Member of Parliament (MP), then the answer seems to be to simply increase the number of MPs. However, in a diverse democracy like India, representation cannot be limited to the number of MPs occupying the House; rather, it must also ensure that those elected have the institutional space to speak for their constituents.

Parliamentary representation operates in two layers: the voter's access to their MP and the MP's ability to speak for them on the floor of the House. The latter relies significantly on whether the MP receives the actual floor time to raise issues. While delimitation may bring legislators closer to their constituents, merely increasing the seats without strengthening their functional capacity will leave representatives muted on the floor.

The jointly introduced Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and the Delimitation Bill, 2026, provide for increasing the strength of the Lok Sabha from 550 to 850 members. As per the Election Commission's 2024 Atlas, India manages an electoral roll of 97.98 crore voters, across 543 Lok Sabha constituencies, averaging roughly 18 lakh voters/constituency, highlighting the burden on an MP. This average also conceals severe constituency-wide disparities: the constituency of Malkajgiri in Telangana has 37.8 lakh voters, whereas Lakshadweep has just 57,953. While these realities signify an urgent need for restructuring, the proposed plan has turned a blind eye towards increasing Parliament's working capacity.

This missing institutional capacity represents a major structural blind spot. Adding hundreds of members will worsen an existing problem: the severe lack of available floor time. If Parliament's operational timetable remains fixed, adding more lawmakers dilutes individual members' ability to participate in legislative business.

If Parliament's operational timetable remains fixed, adding more lawmakers dilutes individual members' ability to participate in legislative business

## Not enough time

In the Question hour currently, Lok Sabha rules allow a maximum of 20 starred questions for oral answers and 230 unstarred questions for written answers per sitting day. Even though each MP can submit up to five questions daily, only a tiny fraction is selected through the daily ballot. If the total number of MPs is increased to 850, while keeping daily sitting hours the same, the chances of an MP getting an oral answer from a Minister will become even more low.

Moreover, during the 17th Lok Sabha, Question Hour functioned for only 60% of its scheduled time. The time constraints were even more severe during the 2026 Monsoon Session, where the Question Hour operated for only 1% of its scheduled time, running for a total of just nine minutes across the entire session. Adding more members to a House operating under these constraints will not improve executive-legislative accountability.

Other crucial parliamentary procedures will also be impacted by this reduction in time. For example, MPs use Zero Hour to raise urgent issues as it does not require any advance notice. It has been crucial in bringing to light urgent public matters such as regional crop failures or disaster relief. Similarly, Private Member's Business gives MPs who are not part of the Cabinet a chance to bring in their own legislation. These are indispensable instruments that will lose their essence if they are not protected with measures that allow them to be fully utilised.

In order to protect the voice of the representatives, it is necessary to give Parliament's sitting time a statutory status. Article 85(1) of the Constitution states that the President shall summon each House of Parliament to meet at such time and place as he thinks fit, but six months shall not intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session. This provision should be expanded to include a mandatory minimum working days clause. As recommended by the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, Lok Sabha must meet for a minimum of 120 days per year. Additionally, parliamentary instruments such as Zero Hour and Question Hour need protected status, with a mandatory allocated time that cannot be changed as per the directions of the Speaker.

While delimitation can redraw the boundaries of the constituencies, parliamentary reforms are necessary to ensure that the voices within those constituencies are heard.

THE HINDU, 19 OCT 2026 · Page 7 · Deshmukh & Chhabra

## ◆ Two Layers of Representation

- Delimitation may look like democratic arithmetic — too many citizens per MP, so add MPs. But representation must also ensure that those elected have the **institutional space to speak** for their constituents.

- Representation operates in two layers: **(i)** the voter's access to the MP and **(ii)** the MP's ability to speak on the floor, which depends on actual floor time. More seats without functional capacity will leave representatives **muted on the floor**.

## The Numbers Behind the Debate

- Election Commission's 2024 Atlas: **97.98 crore electors** across 543 constituencies — roughly **18 lakh voters per constituency**.
- Severe disparity: **Malkajgiri (Telangana) — 37.8 lakh voters** versus **Lakshadweep — 57,953**. Restructuring is needed, but the plan has a **"structural blind spot"** on working capacity.
- If the timetable stays fixed, adding hundreds of members dilutes each member's ability to participate in legislative business.

## Not Enough Time

- Lok Sabha rules allow at most **20 starred** (oral) and **230 unstarred** (written) questions per sitting day. Each MP may submit up to five questions a day, but only a tiny fraction is picked through the daily ballot — with 850 MPs, the chance of an oral answer falls further.
- In the **17th Lok Sabha**, Question Hour functioned for only **60%** of its scheduled time; in the **2026 Monsoon Session**, just **1%** — a total of **nine minutes** across the session.
- **Zero Hour** (urgent issues without advance notice — crop failures, disaster relief) and **Private Members' Business** (legislation by non-Cabinet MPs) will also be squeezed.

## Way Forward

1. Give Parliament's sitting time **statutory status**: expand **Article 85(1)** (no more than six months between sessions) with a **mandatory minimum number of working days**.
2. Follow the **NCRWC** recommendation that the Lok Sabha meet for at least **120 days a year**.
3. Give Zero Hour and Question Hour **protected status**, with allocated time that cannot be changed at the Speaker's discretion.
4. Delimitation can redraw boundaries; **parliamentary reform ensures the voices within them are heard**.

## Starred vs Unstarred Questions

| Basis | Starred Question | Unstarred Question |
|---|---|---|
| **Meaning** | Requires an **oral answer** from the Minister during Question Hour; on important public matters needing immediate clarification. | Requires a **written answer**; used to obtain detailed facts, reports and statistics. |
| **Symbol** | Marked by an **asterisk (*)** before the number. | No asterisk. |
| **Reply** | Oral reply in the House, allowing direct discussion. | Written reply laid on the Table of the House. |
| **Supplementaries** | **Allowed** after the reply. | **Not allowed**. |
| **Daily limit (LS)** | 20 | 230 |

UPSC PYQ

**Consider the following statements in respect of questions asked by Members in the Parliament of India:**

1. Unstarred questions are those to which a Member desires an oral answer in the House.
2. Starred questions are those to which a Member desires a written answer.
3. No supplementary question can be asked on an unstarred question.

**Which one of the following conclusions is correct?**

(a) All three statements are correct
(b) Two correct, including statement 2
(c) Only one statement is correct
(d) No statement is correct

**Answer: (c)** — Statements 1 and 2 swap the definitions (starred = oral, unstarred = written); only statement 3 is correct.

UPSC PYQ

**The Parliament of India exercises control over the functions of the Council of Ministers through: 1. Adjournment motion 2. Question hour 3. Supplementary questions**

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

**Answer: (d)** — all three are tools of executive accountability under collective responsibility (Article 75(3)).

## VALUE ADDITION

**Article 81:** composition of the Lok Sabha — at present up to 530 members from States and 20 from UTs; **Article 82** — readjustment after every census.

**Freeze on seats:** 42nd Amendment (1976) froze allocation on the 1971 Census until 2001; the 84th Amendment (2001) extended the freeze until the first census after 2026.

**Delimitation Commissions:** set up in 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002; orders cannot be questioned in any court.

**Question Hour & Zero Hour:** Question Hour is the first hour of a sitting; Zero Hour is an Indian parliamentary innovation (since 1962) not mentioned in the Rules of Procedure.

**NCRWC:** National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (chair: Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah, 2000–02).

**New Parliament building:** the Lok Sabha chamber seats up to 888 members — built with future expansion in mind.

### HIMACHAL ANGLE · HPAS

Himachal Pradesh sends 4 members to the Lok Sabha and 3 to the Rajya Sabha. A purely population-based expansion raises concerns for small hill States about their **relative** voice — making floor-time guarantees even more vital for their MPs.

### PRELIMS POINTERS

✓ Bills: Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill & Delimitation Bill, 2026.

- ✓ LS strength proposed: 550 → 850.
- ✓ Art 85(1): ≤ 6 months between sessions.
- ✓ NCRWC: LS to sit ≥ 120 days a year.

**OTHER DEVICES OF PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL**

- ✓ **Calling attention motion:** draws a Minister's attention to a matter of urgent public importance — an Indian innovation (1954).
- ✓ **Adjournment motion:** sets aside normal business to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance; needs support of 50 members.
- ✓ **Short Notice Question:** on an urgent matter, asked with less than 10 days' notice and answered orally.
- ✓ **Half-an-hour discussion:** on a matter arising from the answer to a question.

**MAINS ANGLE**

**Mains line:** representation has a **quantitative** dimension (seats, constituency size) and a **qualitative** one (floor time, questions, committees). Delimitation addresses the first; only procedural reform secures the second.

**SYLLABUS LINK** GS 2 – Parliament: structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges · Representation of the People · Executive accountability

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PRELIMS · GS 2/3 SCHEMES IN NEWS

# The PM-SETU Scheme

06

*Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs*

**WHY IN NEWS**

The **National Steering Committee of PM-SETU** approved **five Strategic Investment Plans worth ₹1,194.92 crore** to modernise Industrial Training Institute (ITI) clusters across **Maharashtra, Odisha and Jammu & Kashmir**.

## About the Scheme

- **Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs** — a flagship vocational-education initiative to modernise government ITIs through industry-aligned pedagogy, modern infrastructure, advanced workshops and curriculum upgrades.
- **Approved** by the Union Cabinet on **May 7, 2025**; **launched** on **October 4, 2025**; total outlay **₹60,000 crore over five years**.
- **Ministry:** Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- **Target:** upgrade **1,000 Government ITIs** into high-tech, demand-driven institutions using a **hub-and-spoke model**.

## Key Features

1. **Hub-and-spoke clusters:** a lead **hub ITI** shares advanced infrastructure, equipment and expertise with about **four spoke ITIs**.
2. **Industry and SPV-led governance:** corporate partners co-invest, co-design curricula, bring technology, manage clusters through Special Purpose Vehicles and facilitate placements.
3. **Future-ready curriculum and AI:** courses in emerging sectors, redesigned traditional trades, simulation tools, digital learning and AI-driven platforms.

### VALUE ADDITION

**Funding pattern:** Centre ₹30,000 crore, States ₹20,000 crore, industry ₹10,000 crore; part of the central share co-financed by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

**Scale:** about 200 hub ITIs linked to 800 spoke ITIs; National Skill Training Institutes to be strengthened as centres of excellence, including for training of trainers.

**ITI ecosystem:** ITIs run the Craftsmen Training Scheme under the **Directorate General of Training (DGT)**, MSDE; **NCVET** regulates vocational education and training.

### PRELIMS POINTERS

- ✓ Ministry: MSDE — **not** Ministry of Education.
- ✓ Outlay: ₹60,000 crore / 5 years.
- ✓ 1,000 ITIs; hub-and-spoke.
- ✓ Launched: 4 Oct 2025.

### RELATED SKILLING INITIATIVES

- ✓ **PMKVY 4.0:** short-term skilling and certification under Skill India.
- ✓ **NAPS:** National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme — stipend support for apprentices.
- ✓ **Skill India Digital Hub:** unified digital platform for skilling, credentials and jobs.
- ✓ **PM Vishwakarma:** support for traditional artisans and craftspeople.

### MAINS ANGLE

**Mains line:** ITIs suffer from outdated trades, vacant instructor posts and weak industry links; PM-SETU's **industry-led SPV model** aims to align training with jobs — the test will be placement outcomes, not just infrastructure.

**SYLLABUS LINK** GS 2 – Government policies & interventions · GS 3 – Employment, human-resource development, inclusive growth

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TEST YOURSELF

# Practice Zone

*Mains answer writing · Prelims MCQs · Rapid revision*

## Quick Revision Recap

60-SECOND REVISION

**Digital minds:** Screens and AI shape developing brains; prefrontal cortex matures into early adulthood; screen-time research shows correlation, not causation; preserve "productive struggle"; parents, schools, platforms and governments all have roles.

**Kolkata stampede:** 19 dead at Girish Park pandal ("Beyond Sound" theme, narrow entry/exit); rain + safety announcement → panic surge; only home guards deployed; NDMA 2014 crowd guide; DM (Amendment) Act, 2025.

**Raghopur boat tragedy:** 13+ children drowned on Oct 13 (Vaishali, Bihar); overloaded, leaking boat, night trip despite ban; Bengal Ferries Act 1885/Model Rules 2011 and Inland Vessels Act 2021 poorly enforced; Bombay HC on school transport near Chandoli.

**OCCCM & CCTS:** ~500 firms in 7 sectors filed CCTS reports (July 31); first credits in October; OCCCM by EU–China–Brazil (Florence), work plan at Wuhan; reasons to join — carbon-pricing spread and CBAM-style clubs.

**Parliament reform:** 131st Amendment & Delimitation Bills: LS 550 → 850; QH ran 60% (17th LS) and 1% (2026 Monsoon Session); statutory sitting days (Art 85), NCRWC 120 days, protected QH/Zero Hour.

**PM-SETU:** ₹1,194.92 crore SIPs approved for Maharashtra, Odisha, J&K; ₹60,000 crore / 5 years; 1,000 ITIs; hub-and-spoke; MSDE; launched 4 Oct 2025.

## Mains Answer Writing

GS 2 · GS 3

MAINS Q1 · GS 2 · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

**"Increasing the number of seats in the Lok Sabha will not, by itself, deepen representation unless Parliament's functional capacity is strengthened." Critically examine in the context of the proposed delimitation.**

"जब तक संसद की कार्यात्मक क्षमता को सुदृढ़ नहीं किया जाता, तब तक केवल लोकसभा की सीटों की संख्या बढ़ाने से प्रतिनिधित्व गहरा नहीं होगा।" प्रस्तावित परिसीमन के संदर्भ में समालोचनात्मक परीक्षण कीजिए। (15 अंक, 250 शब्द)

APPROACH / ANSWER SKELETON

**Introduction:** Cite the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and Delimitation Bill, 2026 (550 → 850 seats); the freeze since the 42nd and 84th Amendments; 18 lakh voters per constituency on average.

**Case for expansion:** Constituency size disparity (Malkajgiri 37.8 lakh vs Lakshadweep 57,953); better MP–voter access; principle of "one person, one vote"; new chamber seats 888.

**Why seats alone are insufficient:** Two layers of representation; Question Hour limits (20 starred, 230 unstarred); QH ran 60% of time in the 17th Lok Sabha and 1% in the 2026 Monsoon Session; squeeze on Zero Hour and Private Members' Business; fewer sitting days; weak committee scrutiny.

**Way forward:** Statutory minimum sittings (NCRWC: 120 days); protected QH/Zero Hour; stronger DRSCs; parliamentary calendar; federal balance for small States.

**Conclusion:** Delimitation redraws boundaries; parliamentary reform makes the voices within them heard — quantity of representation must be matched by quality of deliberation.

MAINS Q2 · GS 3 · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

**With the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism now operational and "climate clubs" re-emerging, examine the case for India joining the Open Coalition on Compliance Carbon Markets (OCCCM). How can the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme strengthen India's position?**

यूरोपीय संघ के कार्बन सीमा समायोजन तंत्र (CBAM) के लागू होने और 'क्लाइमेट क्लबों' के पुनः उभरने के बीच, भारत के 'अनुपालन कार्बन बाज़ारों पर खुले गठबंधन' (OCCCM) में शामिल होने के पक्ष का परीक्षण कीजिए। कार्बन क्रेडिट ट्रेडिंग योजना (CCTS) भारत की स्थिति को कैसे मज़बूत कर सकती है? (15 अंक, 250 शब्द)

APPROACH / ANSWER SKELETON

**Introduction:** CCTS goes live — ~500 entities in seven sectors filed compliance reports; OCCCM launched by the EU, China and Brazil (Florence), first work plan at Wuhan.

**Case for joining:** Rule-shaping on MRV, carbon accounting and offsets; future linking and revenue; preparedness for CBAM-style clubs; developing-country members (Brazil) as comfort; 50+ countries already price carbon.

**Concerns:** CBDR–RC and opposition to unilateral trade measures; loss of policy space; MSME competitiveness; MRV capacity gaps; risk of EU–China dominance.

**Role of CCTS:** Credible domestic price signal; BEE-administered compliance and offset mechanisms; basis for negotiating CBAM deductions for carbon price paid; supports NDC (45% intensity cut) and net zero 2070.

**Conclusion:** Join with safeguards — be "in the room" to shape rules rather than respond to them as an outsider.

## Prelims MCQs

10 QUESTIONS

**Q1** **Chandoli National Park, recently in news, forms part of which tiger reserve?**

(a) Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve
(b) Sahyadri Tiger Reserve
(c) Melghat Tiger Reserve
(d) Pench Tiger Reserve

**Q2** **With reference to the PM-SETU scheme, consider the following statements:**

1. It is implemented by the Ministry of Education.
2. It follows a hub-and-spoke model to upgrade 1,000 Government ITIs.
3. It has a total outlay of ₹60,000 crore over five years.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

**Q3** **Consider the following statements regarding India's Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS):**

1. It was notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. The Bureau of Energy Efficiency acts as the administrator of the Indian carbon market.
3. It comprises both a compliance mechanism and an offset mechanism.

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** **The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) in its definitive phase covers which of the following?**

1. Iron and steel
2. Aluminium
3. Fertilisers
4. Textiles

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

**Q5** **Consider the following statements regarding the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023:**

1. A "child" under the Act means a person who has not completed eighteen years of age.
2. Verifiable parental consent is required before processing a child's personal data.
3. The Act permits targeted advertising directed at children if parents consent.

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

**Q6** **With reference to the regulation of inland water transport in India, consider the following statements:**

1. The Inland Vessels Act, 2021 replaced the Inland Vessels Act, 1917.
2. "Ferries" is a subject in the Union List of the Seventh Schedule.
3. The Bengal Ferries Act, 1885 is a pre-independence law still used as a basis for State ferry rules.

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

**Q7** **With reference to the Open Coalition on Compliance Carbon Markets (OCCCM), consider the following statements:**

1. It was launched by the European Union, China and Brazil.
2. India is one of its founding members.
3. It enforces binding emission-reduction targets on its members.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**Q8** **With reference to the impact of digital technologies on cognitive development, consider the following statements:**

1. The prefrontal cortex, associated with decision-making, impulse control and working memory, continues to mature into early adulthood.
2. Neuroplasticity refers to the brain's capacity to reorganise neural connections in response to learning and experience.
3. Scientific studies have conclusively established that increased screen time causes irreversible structural damage to the adolescent brain.

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

**Q9** **Consider the following statements:**

1. The National Disaster Management Authority is chaired by the Prime Minister.
2. The Disaster Management (Amendment) Act, 2025 provides for Urban Disaster Management Authorities.
3. Durga Puja in Kolkata is inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

**Q10** **Consider the following statements regarding the functioning of Parliament:**

1. Under Article 85(1), six months shall not intervene between the last sitting of one session and the first sitting of the next.
2. Zero Hour is expressly provided for in the Rules of Procedure of the Lok Sabha.
3. The NCRWC recommended that the Lok Sabha sit for a minimum of 120 days in a year.

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

## Answer Key & Rationale

CHECK YOURSELF

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 → (b) | Q2 → (d) | Q3 → (b) | Q4 → (b) | Q5 → (a) |
| Q6 → (c) | Q7 → (a) | Q8 → (b) | Q9 → (c) | Q10 → (c) |

**Q1 (b)** Chandoli National Park and Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary together form the **Sahyadri Tiger Reserve** in Maharashtra's Western Ghats.

**Q2 (d)** PM-SETU is implemented by the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**. Statements 2 and 3 are correct.

**Q3 (b)** The CCTS was notified under the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001** (as amended in 2022), not the EPA. BEE is the administrator; the scheme has compliance and offset mechanisms.

**Q4 (b)** CBAM covers iron & steel, aluminium, cement, fertilisers, hydrogen and electricity. **Textiles are not covered.**

**Q5 (a)** The Act defines a child as under 18 and mandates verifiable parental consent; it **prohibits** tracking, behavioural monitoring and targeted advertising directed at children.

**Q6 (c)** Ferries fall in the **State List (Entry 13)**. The 2021 Act replaced the 1917 law; Bihar's Model Rules 2011 were framed under the Bengal Ferries Act, 1885.

**Q7 (a)** The EU, China and Brazil launched it in Florence. India has stayed outside so far, and the coalition does not seek to enforce mitigation targets.

**Q8 (b)** Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Statement 3 is wrong — research **links** high screen time with changes in brain structure, but the findings do not establish causation.

**Q9 (c)** All three are correct. The PM chairs the NDMA; the 2025 amendment provides for UDMAs in State capitals and cities with municipal corporations; Kolkata's Durga Puja was inscribed in 2021.

**Q10 (c)** Zero Hour is an informal Indian innovation (since 1962) and **is not mentioned** in the Rules of Procedure. Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

## Prelims Trap-Setters

DON'T FALL FOR THESE

⚠ **Correlation ≠ causation:** screen-time studies "link" use with brain changes; any option saying they "prove" or "establish" damage is wrong.

⚠ **Starred = oral (*); unstarred = written.** Supplementaries are allowed only on starred questions.

⚠ **Zero Hour** is not in the Rules of Procedure; **Question Hour** is.

⚠ **Ferries — State List**; shipping on national waterways — Union List; mechanically propelled vessels on inland waterways — Concurrent List.

⚠ **OCCCM founders** are EU, China and Brazil — Germany and New Zealand were the first *new* members; India is **not** a member.

⚠ **CCTS** rests on the Energy Conservation Act, 2001 — not the Environment (Protection) Act; administrator is BEE.

⚠ **PM-SETU** belongs to MSDE, not the Ministry of Education; the 131st Amendment is still a **Bill**.

## Places & Persons in News

MAP + PEOPLE

| Name | Why it matters |
|---|---|
| **Girish Park** | North Kolkata; site of the Durga Puja pandal stampede. |
| **Raghopur** | Riverine (diara) block in Vaishali district, Bihar; boat capsize on the Ganga. |
| **Kachchi Dargah–Bidupur bridge** | Ganga bridge linking Patna and Raghopur/Vaishali. |
| **Chandoli National Park** | Maharashtra; with Koyna WLS forms the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. |
| **Florence & Wuhan** | OCCCM launch (Italy) and first work-plan meeting (China). |
| **Malkajgiri & Lakshadweep** | India's largest and smallest Lok Sabha constituencies by electors. |
| **Derick H. Lindquist** | Dean, Jindal School of Psychology and Counselling. |
| **André Aranha Corrêa do Lago** | COP30 President (Brazil). |

## Connect the Dots

STATIC ↔ CURRENT

| Today's issue | Static linkage |
|---|---|
| **Digital minds** | DPDP Act 2023 (children's data) · NEP 2020 (critical thinking) · Art 21 (right to health) |
| **Kolkata stampede** | DM Act 2005 & 2025 amendment · NDMA crowd guide 2014 · Art 21 (right to life) |
| **Raghopur boat** | RTE Act & Art 21A · Inland Vessels Act 2021 · State List Entry 13 |
| **OCCCM & CCTS** | Paris Agreement Art 6 · Energy Conservation Act 2001 · NDC & net zero 2070 |
| **Parliament reform** | Arts 81, 82, 85, 118 · 42nd & 84th Amendments · NCRWC |
| **PM-SETU** | Skill India Mission · NCVET · demographic dividend |

## Editorial Vocabulary

WORDS FROM TODAY'S PAPER

| Word | Meaning & usage |
|---|---|
| **Choate** | complete, fully formed (opp. inchoate) — "a choate regulatory framework". |
| **Supplant** | to take the place of — "AI can supplant mental effort". |
| **Salient** | most noticeable or important. |
| **Upbraid** | to scold or criticise sharply — "the High Court upbraided the State". |
| **Precarity** | a state of insecurity or risk. |
| **Wean (away)** | to draw people away gradually — "wean the crowd away in a regulated manner". |
| **Logjam** | a deadlock — "climate negotiations will meet logjams". |
| **Heft** | weight, influence — "to add heft to the puja's appeal". |

## Prelims Bytes · Static Linkage

CONNECT THE DOTS

**Article 75(3):** Council of Ministers collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha — the root of Question Hour accountability.

**Article 118:** each House makes rules to regulate its procedure and conduct of business.

**Article 21A:** free and compulsory education for children aged 6–14 — the basis for safe access to school.

**NW-1:** Ganga–Bhagirathi–Hooghly system, Haldia to Prayagraj, the longest national waterway.

**Panchamrit:** India's COP26 pledges, including net zero by 2070.

*"Delimitation can redraw the boundaries of constituencies; parliamentary reforms are necessary to ensure that the voices within them are heard."*

THOUGHT OF THE DAY