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Index of Core Industries · Iron Ore · INS Trishul · FSSAI · Codex Alimentarius · Navi Pillay · ICC vs ICJ · Bab al-Mandeb · Strait of Hormuz · Houthis · Forest Rights Act · NMEO-Oilseeds

"Read the news, connect the static, write the answer."

Compiled by

Sapna Chauhan

Vedanta Coaching Academy & Library

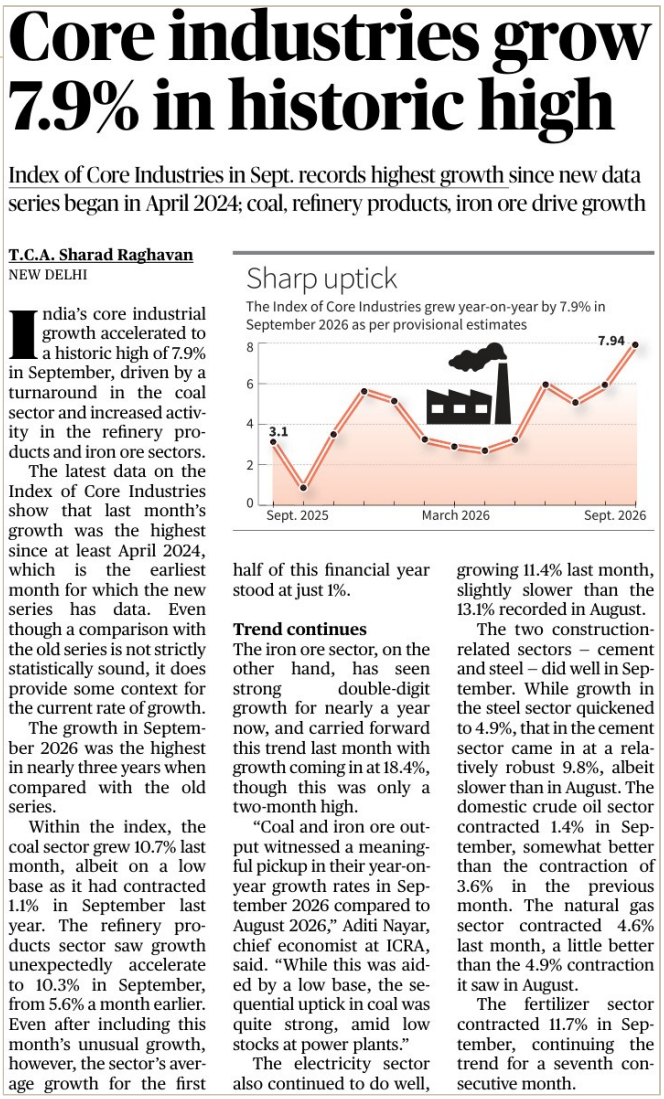
GS 3 INDIAN ECONOMY · THE HINDU, PAGE 1

Core industries grow 7.9% in historic high

WHY IN NEWS The Index of Core Industries (ICI) grew **7.9% year-on-year in September 2026** (provisional) — the highest since April 2024, the earliest month of the new data series, and the highest in nearly three years when read against the old series. Coal, refinery products and iron ore drove the surge.

What the September data shows

- **Coal (+10.7%)** staged a turnaround — partly a low-base effect, since it had contracted 1.1% in September 2025. ICRA's Aditi Nayar notes the sequential uptick was strong amid **low coal stocks at power plants**.
- **Refinery products** accelerated unexpectedly to **10.3%** from 5.6% in August; yet the sector's average growth for H1 of the financial year was only about 1%.
- **Iron ore (+18.4%)** — double-digit growth for nearly a year; a two-month high.
- **Electricity (+11.4%)** stayed strong, though slower than August's 13.1%. With the largest weight, it anchors the index.
- **Construction inputs:** steel quickened to 4.9%; cement grew a relatively robust 9.8%, albeit slower than in August.
- **Drags:** crude oil −1.4% (vs −3.6%), natural gas −4.6% (vs −4.9%) and **fertilizers −11.7% — a seventh straight month of contraction**.
- A comparison with the old series is **not strictly statistically sound**, but it gives useful context for the current rate of growth.



Core industries grow 7.9% in historic high

Index of Core Industries in Sept. records highest growth since new data series began in April 2024; coal, refinery products, iron ore drive growth

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India's core industrial growth accelerated to a historic high of 7.9% in September, driven by a turnaround in the coal sector and increased activity in the refinery products and iron ore sectors.

The latest data on the Index of Core Industries show that last month's growth was the highest since at least April 2024, which is the earliest month for which the new series has data. Even though a comparison with the old series is not strictly statistically sound, it does provide some context for the current rate of growth.

The growth in September 2026 was the highest in nearly three years when compared with the old series.

Within the index, the coal sector grew 10.7% last month, albeit on a low base as it had contracted 1.1% in September last year. The refinery products sector saw growth unexpectedly accelerate to 10.3% in September, from 5.6% a month earlier. Even after including this month's unusual growth, however, the sector's average growth for the first half of this financial year stood at just 1%.

Trend continues

The iron ore sector, on the other hand, has seen strong double-digit growth for nearly a year now, and carried forward this trend last month with growth coming in at 18.4%, though this was only a two-month high.

"Coal and iron ore output witnessed a meaningful pickup in their year-on-year growth rates in September 2026 compared to August 2026," Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA, said. "While this was aided by a low base, the sequential uptick in coal was quite strong, amid low stocks at power plants."

The electricity sector also continued to do well, growing 11.4% last month, slightly slower than the 13.1% recorded in August.

The two construction-related sectors – cement and steel – did well in September. While growth in the steel sector quickened to 4.9%, that in the cement sector came in at a relatively robust 9.8%, albeit slower than in August. The domestic crude oil sector contracted 1.4% in September, somewhat better than the contraction of 3.6% in the previous month. The natural gas sector contracted 4.6% last month, a little better than the 4.9% contraction it saw in August.

The fertilizer sector contracted 11.7% in September, continuing the trend for a seventh consecutive month.

The Hindu, 22 Oct 2026, p.1

The new ICI series at a glance

- Released by the **Office of Economic Adviser (OEA), DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry** — the first provisional ICI under a new series with **base year 2022-23**.
- Coverage expanded from **eight to nine** industries by adding **Iron Ore**, recognising its extensive use in steel making and its contribution to industrial development.
- Nine sectors: Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement, Electricity and Iron Ore.
- **Weights:** Electricity 30.93% › Refinery Products 22.57% › Steel 17.58% › Crude Oil 7.43% › Coal 5.60% › Iron Ore 4.90% › Cement 4.41% › Natural Gas 3.84% › Fertilizers 2.73%.

INDEX OF CORE INDUSTRIES (ICI) BASE YEAR 2022-23	
Sector	**Weight (%)**
1. Coal	5.596
2. Natural Gas	3.841
3. Crude Oil	7.430
4. Refinery Products	22.572
5. Fertilizers	2.731
6. Steel	17.584
7. Cement	4.410
8. Electricity	30.932
9. Iron Ore	4.905
Overall Index	**100.000**

Sector weights in the revised ICI (base 2022-23)

VALUE ADDITION · OLD vs NEW ICI WEIGHTS

Sector	2011-12 series (8 sectors)	2022-23 series (9 sectors)
Electricity	19.85	**30.93** (now the highest)
Refinery Products	**28.04** (then the highest)	22.57
Steel	17.92	17.58
Coal	10.33	5.60
Crude Oil / Natural Gas	8.98 / 6.88	7.43 / 3.84
Cement / Fertilizers	5.37 / 2.63	4.41 / 2.73
Iron Ore	—	4.90 (new entrant)

- **ICI vs IIP:** the ICI (OEA–DPIIT) tracks nine infrastructure-type inputs and is released earlier; the Index of Industrial Production is compiled by the **NSO, MoSPI** across mining, manufacturing and electricity. In the 2011-12 series the core industries made up about **40.27%** of the IIP's weight — hence the ICI is read as a lead indicator of the IIP.
- **Base effect:** a high growth rate that partly reflects a weak figure in the same month of the previous year (coal's −1.1% in Sept 2025).

UPSC PRELIMS PYQ (2015) In the 'Index of Eight Core Industries', which one of the following is given the highest weight? (a) Coal production (b) Electricity generation (c) Fertilizer production (d) Steel production

Answer: (b). Electricity carried the highest weight in the series then in use. In the 2011-12 series Refinery Products led; in the new 2022-23 series Electricity is on top again — a favourite trap.

SYLLABUS LINK › GS 3 — Indian economy: growth, development & employment; Infrastructure: energy, industrial policy. Prelims — economic indicators.

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GS 2 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS · DEFENCE

Exercise KONKAN 2026

WHY IN NEWS The Indian Navy's guided-missile stealth frigate **INS Trishul** arrived at **Plymouth, United Kingdom**, to take part in the bilateral maritime exercise **KONKAN-26** with the UK's Royal Navy.

INS Trishul with Royal Navy vessels during KONKAN-26

About the exercise

- The **annual flagship bilateral maritime exercise** between the Indian Navy and the British Royal Navy, **institutionalised in 2004** to build operational synergy and tactical cooperation.
- **Host:** the United Kingdom, off the coast of Plymouth, England. **Participants:** Indian Navy and Royal Navy.
- **Aim:** consolidate tactical interoperability, exchange best practices across multi-threat warfare scenarios, and reaffirm a shared commitment to **open, secure and free seas** under the international rules-based maritime order.
- **Significance:** builds blue-water reach of the Indian Navy beyond the Indian Ocean, deepens defence ties under the India–UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and supports maritime-security cooperation from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific.

VALUE ADDITION · INDIA–UK DEFENCE EXERCISES

Exercise	Service	Note
KONKAN	Navy	Annual bilateral naval exercise since 2004
Ajeya Warrior	Army	Bilateral army exercise
Indradhanush	Air Force	Bilateral air exercise

Konkan Shakti	Tri-service	First held in 2023

- **INS Trishul:** a Talwar-class (Project 1135.6) guided-missile stealth frigate built in Russia and commissioned in 2003.
- **India–UK ties:** Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2021, Roadmap 2030); Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and India–UK Vision 2035 (2025).

PRELIMS POINTER Plymouth lies on the English Channel coast of south-west England and is home to a historic Royal Navy base (Devonport). Do not confuse KONKAN (India–UK) with Varuna (India–France) or Malabar (India–US–Japan–Australia).

SYLLABUS LINK › GS 2 — Bilateral relations, groupings & agreements involving India; GS 3 — Security challenges and their management.

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GS 2 HEALTH · GOVERNMENT POLICIES · THE HINDU, PAGE 6 (EDITORIAL)

Bitter and sweet: FSSAI must cover all added sugars in infant foods

WHY IN NEWS In a **draft proposal**, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has pitched to remove the allowance for **sucrose and fructose** in products meant for infants aged **0-6 months**. The editorial argues the restriction must cover **all added sugars** and extend across the **first 24 months**.

The current rule and the draft

- The **Food Safety and Standards Regulations, 2020** let manufacturers add sucrose and fructose if their combined total does not exceed **20% of the carbohydrates** in a product for infants aged 0-6 months.
- The draft would remove this allowance — in line with **WHO's recommendation** of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, followed by nutritionally adequate complementary foods that **avoid added sugars until 24 months**.
- Corporations defend sugary formulations as abiding by the **Codex Alimentarius**; public health experts call selling infant foods with added sugar **"nutritional dumping"**.
- Sugar is a commercial strategy: a **cheap bulking agent** that improves palatability and encourages repeat purchases. WHO's **2022 nutrient and promotion profile model** for baby foods also flagged sweet purées and products where fruits release sugars during processing.

Why the draft falls short

- **Substitution loophole:** stopping at sucrose and fructose lets manufacturers swap in another sweetening ingredient. FSSAI should assess both **added ingredients and the nutritional profile of the finished food**.
- **Age mismatch:** the **ICMR-NIN Dietary Guidelines, 2024** advise that children under two avoid added sugars, and the **Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (IMS) Act, 1992** restricts marketing of infant foods for children up to two years. Limiting the draft to six months looks like a **concession to manufacturers**.

- **Taste programming:** children given sweetened water in infancy later preferred sweeter liquids; early formula flavours shaped preferences years later, even for neutral or bitter foods. Infants need to meet **diverse flavours**.
- **Policy momentum:** India's response to ultra-processed foods is expanding — curbs on added sugar for the youngest infants, on unhealthy foods around schools, and on **front-of-pack labelling (FOPL)** for packaged foods.

Bitter and sweet

The FSSAI must expand restrictions to cover all added sugars in infant foods

The Food Safety and Standards Regulations 2020 currently allow manufacturers to add sucrose and fructose, provided their combined total does not exceed 20% of the carbohydrates in a product intended for infants aged 0-6 months. In a draft proposal, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has pitched to eliminate this allowance – in line with WHO's recommendation to have infants breastfeed exclusively for the first six months, followed by nutritionally adequate complementary foods avoiding added sugars until 24 months. While corporations have defended sugary formulations as abiding by the Codex Alimentarius, public health experts have repeatedly described their decision to sell infant foods with added sugar as nutritional dumping. Adding sugar has often been a commercial strategy, as it serves as a cheap bulking agent, improves palatability and encourages repeat purchases. WHO's nutrient and promotion profile model for baby foods in 2022 also identified sweet purées and products in which fruits released sugars during processing as concerns. While the FSSAI's draft proposal is a step in the right direction, stopping here would allow manufacturers to replace sucrose with another sweetening ingredient. It should assess the ingredients that manufacturers add and the nutritional profile of the finished food, thus completing the loop, with the Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods Act 1992 rightly restricting aggressively the marketing of infant foods for children up to two years old.

Research has found that children who regularly received sweetened water during infancy subsequently preferred sweeter liquids, while exposure to different infant formula flavours influenced their dietary preferences years later, including for foods tasting neutral or bitter. Across both personal and public health dimensions, then, infants need to encounter diverse flavours. Since the 2024 dietary guidelines of the ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition say that children under two should avoid added sugars, the FSSAI's draft proposal limiting itself to six months seems like a concession to manufacturers. This should be avoided since India's regulatory response to ultra-processed foods is expanding after years of sluggishness. India is currently mulling restrictions on added sugar in foods for the youngest infants, on unhealthy foods around schools, and on front-of-pack labelling for packaged foods. If the FSSAI does not expand its proposed restriction to cover all added sugars and extend it across the first 24 months, and pair it with mandatory, interpretative front-of-pack labelling for all foods, its regulatory progress will remain incomplete.

The Hindu Editorial, 22 Oct 2026, p.6

VALUE ADDITION · WAY FORWARD & STATIC LINKS

- **Way forward:** ban all added sugars (including honey, syrups, malt and fruit concentrates) in foods for 0-24 months; regulate the finished product's nutrient profile; pair it with **mandatory, interpretative FOPL** for all foods; align FSSAI rules with the IMS Act.
- **FSSAI:** statutory body under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**; administrative ministry — Health & Family Welfare.
- **Codex Alimentarius Commission:** set up in 1963 jointly by the **FAO and WHO** to frame international food standards.
- **Context:** in 2024 an investigation by the Swiss NGO Public Eye with IBFAN reported added sugar in a leading cereal-based infant food sold in India, but not in the same product in Europe — reviving the "double standards" debate.

PRELIMS POINTER IMS Act, 1992 (amended 2003) defines an infant as a child up to two years and bans promotion of infant milk substitutes, feeding bottles and infant foods. ICMR-NIN is located in Hyderabad.

SYLLABUS LINK › GS 2 — Issues relating to development and management of health; Government policies and interventions. GS 3 — Food processing; public distribution and food security.

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GS 2 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS · THE HINDU, PAGE 6 (OP-ED)

The struggle to preserve a fair international law

WHY IN NEWS South African jurist **Navi Pillay** has been named recipient of the **2026 Nobel Peace Prize**. The author, Prabhash Ranjan (Jindal Global Law School), reads it as a signal that international law matters — and asks *what kind* of international law matters.

◆ Two narratives on the state of international law

- **Normative decline:** core tenets such as the **prohibition on the use of force** appear shredded with multiple wars raging; compliance with international human rights law has fallen while war crimes and crimes against humanity have risen.
- **Language shift:** the U.S. under Joe Biden leaned on the ambiguous term **"rules-based order"** instead of "international law", signalling norm-light governance; Donald Trump went further, saying he did not need international law as he was guided by his own morality.
- **Authoritarian international law (Tom Ginsburg):** authoritarians are not merely hollowing international law out — they are **retooling it** to create a new normative order that serves regime survival.

◆ Liberal order vs authoritarian order

Feature	Liberal international legal order (post-1945, deepened after Cold War)	Authoritarian international law
Rights	Civil, political and human rights institutionalised as its "operating system"	Little place for rights or for holding executives accountable for war crimes
Sovereignty	Pooled and delegated to international organisations	Used as a **cloak** shielding regime excesses from scrutiny (e.g., Israel rejecting UN human-rights reports as interference)
Institutions	Strong IOs with significant delegated powers	**Weak IOs** with little independence — the SCO cited as a case in point
Disputes	High judicialisation — international courts & tribunals	Preference for negotiation; **backlash against courts** such as the ICC

- **Pillay's conception** is a thicker one: rule of law laced with **equality, fairness and accountability**, treating the **individual as a subject** of international law. Israel condemned the award, calling it the "greatest lie" of the 21st century, referring to her role as Chair of the UN Commission of Inquiry that concluded Israel committed genocide in Gaza.
- **Way forward:** authoritarian regimes cannot be expected to build a just legal order; **courts, civil society and academia** must mount resistance to keep international law liberal and fair.

The struggle to preserve a fair international law

Prabhash Ranjan

Professor and Vice Dean (Research), Jindal Global Law School

The news that South African jurist Navi Pillay is the recipient of the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize could not have come at a better time for those agonisingly disconcerted by global apathy towards international law. At a time when international law is being battered by powerful, authoritarian men, drunk on power and willing to go to any lengths to pursue their imperialistic designs, the Nobel Committee has unequivocally signalled that international law matters. The real question, however, is what kind of international law matters.

Multiple narratives shape international law. One key narrative, as mentioned, is that vital tenets of international law, such as prohibiting the use of force in international relations, have been completely shredded, with multiple wars raging. Likewise, with rising authoritarianism, there has been a precipitous waning in compliance with international human rights law and an increase in the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

While the normative decline of international law has been going on for quite some time, the fall has been precipitous in recent years, accompanied by utter disdain for universally accepted international norms. This scornful attitude towards international law became evident when (then) U.S. President Joe Biden leaned heavily towards using the ambiguous term "rules-based order" instead of "international law", signalling a movement towards an era of norm-light global governance. U.S. President Donald Trump took this several notches up when he said that he did not need international law because he was guided by his own morality.

Authoritarian international law

This brings us to what Tom Ginsburg calls authoritarian international law – an attempt to create a new normative order. Thus, while authoritarian leaders attacking the fundamental tenets of international law might give the impression that they are hollowing it out, the more nuanced picture is that authoritarians are retooling international law to pursue their objectives. As Ginsburg, Shirley Scott and others argue, the liberal international law order that emerged after the Second World War and which intensified after the end of the Cold War was a product of what democratic states did on the international plane.

Authoritarian leaders are undermining legal norms and reshaping international institutions to serve their interests

Although the liberal international law order's democratic credentials can always be questioned, civil, political and human rights were institutionalised and made part of its operating system. Countries created international organisations (IOs) to which they delegated significant powers, accompanied by high judicialisation – the creation of international courts and tribunals to settle disputes.

A scant respect for rights

With the rise of authoritarianism, including in liberal democracies, the fundamental nature of the liberal international legal order is being altered or, as Anne Applebaum argues, its operating system is changing. Authoritarian states view international law as a tool for coordinating regime survival. Respect for civil, political and human rights, and holding executive power accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity, has little place in the authoritarian international legal order. Innovative uses of the age-old concept of sovereignty are another key feature. While developing countries often invoke sovereignty to shape international legal norms to serve their aspirations, today, sovereignty seems to be the cloak aimed at shielding authoritarian regimes' excesses from international scrutiny. Israel's systematic rejection of reports by UN human rights bodies that chide it for human rights violations, on the grounds that they interfere in its sovereign affairs, is a case in point.

Creating weak IOs with limited independent powers is another key feature of authoritarian international law. Once created, an IO takes on a life of its own, and member-states should not be able to control on a whim. This, however, does not suit authoritarian states, which want to retain maximum power while delegating as little as possible to IOs. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is a case in point. A preference for negotiation or quasi-judicial mechanisms to resolve disputes, rather than faith in third-party international adjudication, is also a pivotal attribute of authoritarian international law. The recent backlash against international courts, such as the International Criminal Court, is an example.

The need for a fightback

The kind of international law that Ms. Pillay represents is what most authoritarian regimes despise. The clearest example of this is Israel's condemnation of the Nobel prize, saying that the Nobel Committee has awarded the prize to the "greatest lie" of the 21st century. Israel was referring to Ms. Pillay's role as the Chair of the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which concluded that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza.

Rather than serving merely as a tool for extending a regime's influence and values beyond its borders, the kind of international law that Ms. Pillay represents has a thicker conception of the rule of law, laced with values of equality, fairness, accountability and making the individual a subject of international law. Authoritarian regimes cannot be expected to develop a fair international legal order premised on justice. Other actors, including courts, civil society and academia, must therefore mount international resistance to authoritarian regimes to pave the way for a liberal and fair international law.

The views expressed are personal

The Hindu Op-Ed, 22 Oct 2026, p.6

VALUE ADDITION · PERSON & INSTITUTIONS

- **Navi Pillay:** South African jurist; judge and President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; judge of the ICC; **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2008-14)**; Chair of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
- **ICJ vs ICC:** the ICJ (The Hague, 1945) is a **principal organ of the UN** deciding disputes between **States**; the ICC (The Hague, Rome Statute 1998, in force 2002) is an independent court that tries **individuals** for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression. **India is not a party** to the Rome Statute.
- **UN Charter, Article 2(4):** prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.
- **Nobel Peace Prize:** awarded by the **Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo** (other Nobels are given in Stockholm). Earlier South African laureates: Albert Luthuli (1960), Desmond Tutu (1984), Nelson Mandela & F.W. de Klerk (1993).

PRELIMS POINTER "Authoritarian international law" is a phrase associated with legal scholar **Tom Ginsburg**; **Anne Applebaum** wrote *Autocracy, Inc.* (2024) on networks of autocracies. The UN Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory was set up by the **UN Human Rights Council** (Geneva) in 2021. The ICTR, where Pillay served, sat at Arusha, Tanzania.

SYLLABUS LINK › GS 2 — Important international institutions, agencies and fora; effect of policies of developed and developing countries on India's interests. GS 4 — Ethics in international relations.

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GS 2 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS · WEST ASIA · THE HINDU, PAGE 6 (OP-ED)

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in dire straits

WHY IN NEWS Already strained by trouble in the **Strait of Hormuz**, Saudi Arabia is now caught in an intensifying conflict at the **Bab al-Mandeb** with Yemen's Iran-backed al-Houthis. Former Ambassador Mahesh Sachdev calls the two-chokepoint squeeze the toughest test yet for Crown Prince **Mohammed bin Salman**.

Roots of the Saudi–Houthi conflict

- **West Asia's largest economy** and the world's **eighth-largest defence spender** faces simultaneous constrictions at two chokepoints, amid an economic downturn at home and shifting alliances abroad.
- **History:** the rivalry is nearly a century old. King Ibn Saud's forces defeated Imam Yahya's tribal fighters in **1934**; Yemen ceded three provinces in the **Asir region** under the **Treaty of Taif**. A border was demarcated in **2000**, but many Yemeni nationalists still question it.
- **People:** until 1990 Yemenis needed no visa to work in Saudi Arabia; many Saudis in Hijaz and Asir have Yemeni ancestry.
- **Sect:** Saudis are mostly Wahhabi Sunni; the al-Houthis are mostly **Zaydis**, a "Fiver" Shia sect, forming about a third of Yemen's population. Riyadh backs anti-Houthi Sunni factions in the 12-year Yemeni civil war.
- **Not a simple proxy:** the Houthis have strong Iran ties, but calling them a proxy ignores their Arab identity — they joined the 2023-24 Gaza war by attacking shipping at Bab al-Mandeb, while Iran stayed out.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in dire straits

Mahesh Sachdev

A retired Indian Ambassador specialising in the Arab world and oil issues

Two chokepoints, one crisis — Riyadh faces growing threats to its security, oil exports and regional influence

As if the simmering trouble in the Strait of Hormuz were not bad enough, Saudi Arabia has lately been embroiled in an intensifying conflict at the Bab al-Mandeb Strait as well. West Asia's largest economy and the world's eighth-largest defence spender is no pushover. Yet, the simultaneous constrictions at its two vital chokepoints pose an unprecedented challenge to the Kingdom, already grappling with an economic downturn at home and shifting alliances abroad. The evolving situation may be the toughest test yet for Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister, although existential alarms seem overblown. The high-stakes crisis could have profound domestic, regional and global consequences for geopolitics, energy and global trade. A granular analysis of its causes and ramifications is called for.

An old conflict, slanted reportage

Despite media saturation with related developments, the coverage is often myopic and slanted, perpetuating several myths that need either debunking or proper nuancing. Historically, the Saudi-Al-Houthi conflict is nearly a century old. Saudi King Ibn Saud's forces defeated Yemeni Imam Yahya's tribal fighters in 1934, compelling the latter to cede three provinces in the Asir region under the Treaty of Taif. Although a bilateral border was demarcated in 2000, many Yemeni nationalists still question its finality.

Second, until 1990, Yemenis did not need visas to travel to and work in Saudi Arabia, leading millions to migrate to the booming oil economy. A significant number of Saudi nationals, particularly in the Hijaz and Asir regions, still have Yemeni ancestry, the most egregious example being al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden.

Third, sectarian differences sharpen the divisions: while Saudis are predominantly Wahhabi Sunnis, al-Houthis are mostly Zaydis, a five-worshipping Shia sect. Al-Houthis constitute around a third of Yemen's total population, with the rest being Sunnis. This sectarian divide underlies the vicious 12-year-old Yemeni civil war – Saudi Arabia supports anti-Houthi Sunni factions and accuses al-Houthis of attacking Islam's holiest cities.

Fourth, although al-Houthis have strong ties with Iran, describing the relationship as a proxy arrangement is an oversimplification, as it gives insufficient weight to their Arab identity. Al-Houthis remained inactive during the two recent United States-Iran wars. In contrast, when Israel attacked Hamas and Hezbollah in 2023-24, al-Houthis were the only Arab side to wade into hostilities, launching missile and drone attacks against Israel and disrupting shipping through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, despite intensive American and Israeli airstrikes. Rather than supporting al-Houthis, Iran recently offered to mediate between Riyadh and Sana'a. Similarly, al-Houthis have reportedly promised not to attack U.S. and Israeli assets unless in retaliation, causing U.S. President Donald Trump to vacillate over MbS's call for support. Arguably, the al-Houthis' successful closure of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait set a precedent for Iranian action in the Strait of Hormuz 18 months later.

Last but not least, the media has also been silent on al-Houthis' rationale for air and naval attacks against Saudi Arabia: retaliation for the Kingdom's decade-old air and sea blockade against them.

Similar myths are percolating about navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and need to be challenged. A 70% rise in global oil prices belies loud and repeated claims that oil and gas flows from the Gulf are near normal. Truth has been collateral damage in Trumpian hyperbole to 'talk down' U.S. pump prices ahead of crucial congressional midterm elections.

Second, Iran has been inconsistent about its self-appointed role as the 'supervisor' of Hormuz traffic. After turning a blind eye to the U.S.-protected stealthy oil shuttle for weeks, it has stepped up attacks on tankers. This has raised suspicions that Iran's Revolutionary Guards initially entered into an informal tolling arrangement with some Gulf oil exporters. However, Tehran has now decided to restrict supplies to keep oil prices high until the U.S. midterm elections.

Lastly, why has Pakistan, credited with the June 17 Islamabad Memorandum, been sidelined from a peacemaking role, even as Qatar, Iraq and even Moscow are being requisitioned? Some reports indicate that Mr. Trump has quietly demoted Islamabad as a go-between, with Iran blaming Pakistani diplomacy for being either gullible or complicit in selling him a document tilted in Iran's favour.

The Iran-Houthi pincer

Riyadh has long perceived Tehran as a geopolitical and sectarian rival and sought to resist its influence in West Asia. It remains deeply suspicious of the Iran-backed "Axis of Resistance" of non-state actors in general, and al-Houthi militias in particular. The Kingdom aims to keep Yemen as a weak but not dysfunctional state. Yemenis, on the other hand, chafe at Saudi interference and nurse their historic grievances against Riyadh.

These smouldering tensions, kept in check by a tenuous ceasefire since 2022, exploded in July 2026. In September, in a sudden escalation, the al-Houthi militia occupied coastal plains along the Red Sea, positioning themselves more strategically at the Bab al-Mandeb chokepoint, menacing nearly 12% of global maritime traffic. The Saudi-led coalition's recent counteroffensive has rekindled the fighting, with a strong Saudi bombing campaign. The al-Houthi militia retaliated by launching missiles and drones at strategic Saudi targets, including Riyadh airport and Aramco headquarters, denting Saudi Arabia's image as a safe and stable country. This is the first time in 35 years that the Kingdom's cities have come under sustained attack. Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, the al-Houthi threat to Saudi-linked maritime activity, and the disruption of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline, allegedly by Iraqi Shia militias, have created a worst-case scenario for Saudi Arabia, jeopardising its vital oil exports, particularly to Asia.

The Saudis have no good options for untangling this unprecedented Iran-Houthi pincer. Despite an $83 billion defence budget, Riyadh lacks the military heft to dislodge the al-Houthis from their mountainous perches by a ground offensive. The offensive by its local Yemeni allies has bogged down into a war of attrition. Pro-Saudi stakeholders, such as the White House and the partners to the Makkah Agreement, have responded with tokenism, seemingly daunted by Yemen's reputation as a graveyard of foreign interventions and the prospects of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait being blocked again. The only other viable strategy, therefore, is to negotiate a package of measures to de-escalate tensions, lift mutual air and maritime blockades, and negotiate a truce based on the 2022 ceasefire. From Riyadh's perspective, the risks would include a loss of prestige both domestically and regionally, the possible collapse of Yemen's fractious "internationally recognised government", and the consolidation of the Tehran-Sana'a axis.

An expeditious resolution of the Yemeni crisis is a Saudi priority, as it would help insulate the Kingdom from the fallout of the next round of U.S.-Iran conflict, which could follow the U.S. midterm elections. Iran has made no secret of its intention to retaliate for American attacks on its civilian infrastructure by hitting the Gulf Arab states acting as the U.S. accomplices. In the past, Riyadh has been privately inconsistent on this issue, advising Washington to clobber Iran until regime change at one time, and also cautioning it about the potential blowback against Saudi Arabia's vulnerabilities. Unless the current fracas with Yemen is sorted out, Saudi Arabia may have to face attacks from Iran as well as the al-Houthis.

The stakes for India

Although India has avoided any direct entanglement at the two maritime chokepoints in the Arabian Peninsula, it is not immune from the impact. Beyond the ongoing economic losses and related supply disruptions from interrupted trade, high oil, gas and fertiliser prices, India needs to look after the safety and well-being of nine million of its citizens currently resident in the Gulf. It is worth recalling that in 1990-91, the huge expense involved in repatriating 1,60,000 Indians from Kuwait precipitated the economic crisis, forcing the country to pledge its sovereign gold for the first time. While India is much stronger today, it remains sobering to note that the number of Indians living in the Gulf now exceeds that figure by more than 50 times.

The Hindu Op-Ed, 22 Oct 2026, p.6

How the crisis escalated

- Smouldering tensions held in check by a tenuous ceasefire since 2022 **exploded in July 2026**. In September, the Houthis occupied coastal plains along the Red Sea, menacing the **Bab al-Mandeb, which carries nearly 12% of global maritime traffic**.
- A Saudi-led counter-offensive rekindled fighting; the Houthis retaliated with missiles and drones on **Riyadh airport and Aramco headquarters** — the first sustained attack on Saudi cities in 35 years, denting its image as a safe, stable country.
- **Worst case for oil exports:** Iran's blockade of Hormuz + Houthi threat to Saudi-linked shipping + disruption of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline, allegedly by Iraqi Shia militias — jeopardising exports, particularly to Asia.

Riyadh's options

- **No military fix:** despite an **$83 billion** defence budget, Riyadh lacks the heft to dislodge the Houthis from their mountain perches; its Yemeni allies are bogged down in attrition, and backers such as the White House and Makkah Agreement partners have offered only tokenism.
- **Only viable path:** a package to de-escalate, lift mutual air and maritime blockades and negotiate a truce based on the **2022 ceasefire** — at the cost of prestige, a possible collapse of Yemen's "internationally recognised government" and a consolidated **Tehran–Sana'a axis**.
- Early resolution matters, as the Gulf could be hit in any next round of U.S.–Iran conflict; Iran has signalled it would retaliate against Gulf states seen as U.S. accomplices.

Chokepoints around the Arabian Peninsula: Suez, Bab el-Mandeb and Hormuz

VALUE ADDITION · THE STAKES FOR INDIA

- **Economy:** India avoided direct entanglement but is hit by supply disruptions, high oil, gas and fertiliser prices, and costlier trade.
- **Diaspora:** about **9 million Indians** live in the Gulf. In 1990-91 the repatriation of about 1,60,000 Indians from Kuwait helped precipitate the **balance-of-payments crisis**, forcing India to pledge its gold. Today's Gulf diaspora is more than 50 times larger.
- **Past evacuations:** Operation Raahat (Yemen, 2015); Indian Navy's Operation Sankalp (2019) escorts Indian-flagged ships in the Gulf region.

Chokepoint	Connects	Flanked by
Strait of Hormuz	Persian Gulf ↔ Gulf of Oman / Arabian Sea	Iran and Oman (Musandam)
Bab el-Mandeb	Red Sea ↔ Gulf of Aden	Yemen and Djibouti / Eritrea
Suez Canal	Mediterranean ↔ Red Sea	Egypt (SUMED pipeline runs parallel)

PRELIMS POINTER The al-Houthis call themselves **Ansar Allah**; their stronghold is Yemen's capital Sana'a. Zaydis are called "Fivers" because they recognise Zayd ibn Ali as the fifth Imam — distinct from Iran's "Twelver" Shias.

SYLLABUS LINK › GS 2 — Effect of policies and politics of other countries on India's interests; Indian diaspora. GS 1 — Important geophysical features (straits). GS 3 — Energy security.

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GS 2 · GS 3 VULNERABLE SECTIONS · AGRICULTURE · THE HINDU, PAGE 7

Unlocking agri-potential of FRA lands

WHY IN NEWS S. Mahendra Dev (Chairman, EAC-PM) and Sushil Kumar Singla (Secretary, Environment, Science Technology & Climate Change, **Government of Himachal Pradesh**) argue that rights under the **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006** must be complemented with sustainable agriculture — especially **pulses and oilseeds**.

From title to livelihood

- For a tribal household, land is more than a legal right — it can be the **foundation of livelihood security**, provided conditions exist to make it productive and sustainable.
- Next step: complement rights with **sustainable practices, soil and water management, institutional support and market access**.
- **Why pulses & oilseeds:** they turn FRA lands into remunerative assets, strengthen domestic supply and **cut India's import dependence**; they suit **rain-fed and marginal lands** and promote climate-resilient farming.
- **Diversity:** tribal districts across **33 States/UTs** differ in settlement, resources and potential — so approaches must respond to local conditions.
- **Soil & crops:** an analysis using the **FAO soil map** shows many tribal regions suit soybean, groundnut, sunflower, mustard, chickpea and other pulses. Paddy and maize dominate Kharif; wheat, gram, mustard and lentil are key Rabi crops; millets, sesame, spices and horticulture add scope for diversification.

Unlocking agri-potential of FRA lands

For millions of forest-dwelling communities, securing rights over land is a vital milestone. For a tribal household, a parcel of land can mean much more than just a legal right. It can be the foundation of livelihood security – provided that conducive conditions exist to make the land productive and sustainable.

While the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, has strengthened land and livelihood rights of millions of tribals and forest-dwelling communities, the next step is to complement these rights with sustainable agriculture practices, improved soil and water management, institutional support, and market access.

Oilseed and pulses can play a significant role in unlocking the productive potential of FRA-recognised lands. Promoting the cultivation of these crops can turn these lands into more productive and remunerative livelihood assets, while simultaneously strengthening domestic supplies and helping reduce India's import dependence. The adaptability of pulses and oilseeds to rain-fed and marginal lands make them a suitable choice to improve agricultural productivity and promote climate-resilient agriculture.

The geographical spread of tribal districts across 33 States and Union Territories reflects ecological and socio-economic diversity. These regions also differ in settlement patterns, resource availability and agricultural potential, underscoring the importance of approaches that are responsive to local conditions and development priorities. An analysis based on the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) soil map suggests that several tribal regions are well suited to crops such as soybean, groundnut, sunflower, mustard, chickpea and other pulses. Further, a State-wise cropping pattern analysis shows considerable diversity across tribal regions: paddy and maize dominate the Kharif season, while wheat, gram, mustard, lentil and other pulses are important Rabi crops.

Regional crops namely millets, soybean, cotton, groundnut, sesame, spices, and horticulture crop further reflect local agro-ecological conditions, offering scope for sustainable diversification of oilseed and pulse cultivation on FRA lands.

Scoping the country

The analysis also found that out of 244 tribal districts, 60 districts have major oilseed production potential, 31 have strong pulse production potential, while 23 districts possess favourable conditions for the cultivation of both pulses and oilseeds. Such a spatial alignment of FRA lands with agricultural potential suggests that one needs targeted interventions to expand sustainable pulse and oilseed cultivation in these regions. Expanding access to quality seeds and improved varieties, improving the soil moisture regime, and scientific crop management can strengthen pulse and oilseed production, with potential benefits for farm incomes, nutrition and livelihood resilience. Integrating these measures with FRA land development can make tribal development more resilient and simultaneously strengthen national food security and improve tribal livelihoods, particularly since many tribal districts overlap with aspirational districts.

A region-specific strategy could be adopted to help develop oilseed and pulse production clusters on FRA lands in high-potential tribal districts. Priority measures could include timely and adequate access to certified seeds, improved irrigation and watershed management and stronger agri-extension. Further, investments in local drying, storage, grading and primary processing infrastructure can reduce post-harvest losses and improve value realisation. Empowered and stronger farmer producer organisations, cooperatives, self-help groups and other community institutions in and around tribal regions can facilitate aggregation, value addition and market access. Convergence with programmes such as the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, National Food Security and Nutrition Mission, National Mission on Edible Oils, Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan and Van Dhan Yojana can broaden institutional support. GIS-based crop planning, together with improved institutional credit, crop insurance and assured procurement can strengthen the overall marketing ecosystem.

The journey from forest rights to livelihood security does not end with land recognition; it begins from there. The productive potential of FRA lands can be strengthened by aligning local agro-ecological conditions with suitable pulses and oilseeds and providing the support needed to cultivate and market them effectively.

S. Mahendra Dev
Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)

Sushil Kumar Singla
Secretary (Environment, Science Technology and Climate Change), Government of Himachal Pradesh

While the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, has strengthened the livelihood rights of millions of tribals and forest-dwelling communities, the next step is to complement these rights with sustainable agriculture practices

The Hindu, 22 Oct 2026, p.7

Scoping the country

Of 244 tribal districts	Number
Major **oilseed** production potential	**60**
Strong **pulse** production potential	**31**
Favourable for **both** pulses and oilseeds	**23**

- **Targeted interventions:** quality seeds and improved varieties, better soil-moisture regime and scientific crop management — with gains for farm incomes, nutrition and resilience. Many tribal districts overlap with **aspirational districts**.

- **Region-specific clusters** of oilseeds and pulses on FRA lands in high-potential districts: certified seeds, irrigation and watershed management, stronger agri-extension; drying, storage, grading and primary processing to cut post-harvest losses.
- **Institutions:** FPOs, cooperatives, SHGs for aggregation, value addition and market access; **GIS-based crop planning**, institutional credit, crop insurance and assured procurement.
- **Convergence:** PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, National Food Security and Nutrition Mission, National Mission on Edible Oils, PM-AASHA and Van Dhan Yojana.
- "The journey from forest rights to livelihood security does not end with land recognition; **it begins from there**."

VALUE ADDITION · FOREST RIGHTS ACT, 2006 & SCHEMES

- **Full name:** Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006; nodal ministry — **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
- **Rights:** individual forest rights (occupation up to **4 hectares**), community rights, and **Community Forest Resource (CFR)** rights to protect, regenerate and manage forests.
- **Eligibility:** forest-dwelling STs, and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers who have lived in forests for **three generations (75 years)**, in occupation before the cut-off date of **13 December 2005**.
- **Process:** the **Gram Sabha** initiates claims; Sub-Divisional and District Level Committees verify and decide.
- **Schemes:** National Mission on Edible Oils–Oilseeds (2024-25 to 2030-31) and –Oil Palm (2021); Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses (Budget 2025-26); **Van Dhan Yojana** (2018, TRIFED) for value addition to minor forest produce; Aspirational Districts Programme (2018).

HPAS ANGLE One of the authors heads Himachal Pradesh's Environment, Science Technology & Climate Change department — FRA implementation in HP's tribal districts (Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti, Pangi and Bharmour in Chamba) is a ready example for HP-specific answers.

SYLLABUS LINK › GS 2 — Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; mechanisms for their protection. GS 3 — Cropping patterns, agricultural marketing, food security; Inclusive growth.

EXAM DRILL · 22 OCTOBER 2026

Practice Zone

MAINS PRACTICE

Q1 · GS 3 · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

The Index of Core Industries has recorded its highest growth since the new series began. Examine the significance of the revised Index (base 2022-23) and discuss whether the recent surge reflects a durable industrial recovery or merely base effects.

कोर उद्योग सूचकांक ने नई श्रृंखला आरंभ होने के बाद से अब तक की सर्वाधिक वृद्धि दर्ज की है। संशोधित सूचकांक (आधार वर्ष 2022-23) के महत्व की जाँच कीजिए तथा चर्चा कीजिए कि हालिया उछाल एक टिकाऊ औद्योगिक पुनरुद्धार को दर्शाता है या केवल आधार प्रभाव को।

APPROACH **Intro:** 7.9% growth in Sept 2026; ICI by OEA–DPIIT, nine sectors. **Body (1) Significance of revision:** base 2022-23 captures today's economy; iron ore added; electricity now

30.93% weight; lead indicator for IIP and GDP. **(2) Durable recovery:** electricity, iron ore and cement show sustained demand; infrastructure capex. **(3) Base effects & caveats:** coal on a −1.1% base; refinery H1 average only ~1%; fertilizers contracting seven months; crude and gas declining; series comparison not strictly sound. **Conclusion:** a mixed picture — sustain with energy security, fertilizer supply and investment push.

Q2 · GS 2 / GS 3 · 15 MARKS · 250 WORDS

"The journey from forest rights to livelihood security does not end with land recognition; it begins from there." Discuss how promoting pulses and oilseeds on Forest Rights Act lands can serve both tribal welfare and national self-reliance.

"वन अधिकारों से आजीविका सुरक्षा तक की यात्रा भूमि की मान्यता पर समाप्त नहीं होती, बल्कि वहीं से आरंभ होती है।" चर्चा कीजिए कि वन अधिकार अधिनियम के अंतर्गत मान्यता प्राप्त भूमि पर दलहन एवं तिलहन की खेती को बढ़ावा देना किस प्रकार जनजातीय कल्याण और राष्ट्रीय आत्मनिर्भरता — दोनों लक्ष्यों को पूरा कर सकता है।

APPROACH **Intro:** FRA 2006 gave tenure security; productivity is the missing link. **Body (1) Why pulses & oilseeds:** rain-fed suitability, climate resilience, import dependence in edible oils and pulses. **(2) Evidence:** 244 tribal districts — 60 oilseed, 31 pulse, 23 both; FAO soil map. **(3) Strategy:** region-specific clusters, seeds, watershed, storage, FPOs/SHGs, GIS planning, credit, insurance, procurement. **(4) Convergence:** PMKSY, NFSNM, NMEO, PM-AASHA, Van Dhan; aspirational districts. **(5) Challenges:** pending claims, small holdings, poor market access. **Conclusion:** rights + resources + markets = resilient tribal livelihoods.

PRELIMS PRACTICE · 10 MCQs

1 Consider the following statements about the revised Index of Core Industries (base 2022-23):

1. It is released by the National Statistics Office, MoSPI.
2. Iron Ore has been added, taking the number of industries to nine.
3. Electricity carries the highest weight in the revised index.

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

2 Arrange the following in descending order of their weights in the revised ICI:

1. Steel
2. Refinery Products
3. Coal
4. Crude Oil

(a) 2-1-4-3 (b) 1-2-3-4
(c) 2-1-3-4 (d) 1-2-4-3

3 Which of the following core sectors contracted in September 2026 for a seventh consecutive month?

(a) Natural Gas (b) Crude Oil
(c) Fertilizers (d) Cement

4 Consider the following pairs (Exercise : Participants):

1. KONKAN : India–United Kingdom
2. Varuna : India–France
3. Ajeya Warrior : India–United States

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

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

5 With reference to regulation of infant foods in India, consider the following statements:

1. Current FSS regulations allow sucrose and fructose up to 20% of carbohydrates in products for infants aged 0-6 months.
2. The ICMR-NIN Dietary Guidelines, 2024 advise children under two to avoid added sugars.
3. The IMS Act, 1992 restricts the marketing of infant foods for children up to two years.

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

6 The Codex Alimentarius Commission, often cited by food manufacturers, was established jointly by:

(a) WHO and UNICEF (b) FAO and WHO
(c) FAO and WTO (d) WHO and UNEP

7 With reference to Navi Pillay, the 2026 Nobel Peace laureate, consider the following statements:

1. She served as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
2. She chaired the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
3. The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded by the Royal Swedish Academy in Stockholm.

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

8 Consider the following statements:

1. The International Court of Justice is a principal organ of the United Nations.
2. The International Criminal Court tries individuals, not States.
3. India is a party to the Rome Statute.

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

9 The Bab el-Mandeb strait connects which of the following water bodies?

(a) Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman
(b) Red Sea and Gulf of Aden
(c) Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea
(d) Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea

10 Under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, consider the following statements:

1. The Gram Sabha is the authority to initiate the process of determining forest rights.
2. Other Traditional Forest Dwellers must show residence in forests for at least three generations (75 years).
3. The cut-off date for occupation of forest land is 13 December 2005.

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

ANSWER KEY & RATIONALE

1 – (b) The ICI is released by the Office of Economic Adviser, DPIIT (Commerce & Industry), not NSO; IIP is the NSO's. Iron ore added; electricity weighs 30.93%.

2 – (a) Refinery 22.57 › Steel 17.58 › Crude Oil 7.43 › Coal 5.60.

3 – (c) Fertilizers fell 11.7% — seventh straight month. Gas and crude contracted, but less sharply.

4 – (b) Ajeya Warrior is India–UK (Army); India–US Army exercise is Yudh Abhyas.

5 – (d) All three are correct as per the editorial; FSSAI's draft would remove the 20% allowance.

6 – (b) Codex was set up in 1963 by the FAO and WHO.

7 – (b) The Peace Prize is awarded by the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo.

8 – (a) India has neither signed nor ratified the Rome Statute.

9 – (b) Hormuz joins the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman; Suez joins the Mediterranean and Red Sea.

10 – (d) All three are statutory features of the FRA, 2006.

QUICK REVISION RECAP

ICI: +7.9% in Sept 2026, highest of new series; base 2022-23; 9 sectors with iron ore added; electricity heaviest at 30.93%; fertilizers down for seven months.

KONKAN-26: India–UK naval exercise since 2004; INS Trishul at Plymouth; focus on interoperability and free, open seas.

Infant foods: FSSAI draft drops sucrose/fructose allowance for 0-6 months; editorial wants all added sugars banned up to 24 months plus mandatory FOPL.

International law: Navi Pillay's Nobel; Ginsburg's "authoritarian international law" retools rather than abandons norms — sovereignty as cloak, weak IOs, backlash against courts.

Saudi Arabia: Hormuz + Bab al-Mandeb pincer; Houthi attacks on Riyadh and Aramco; truce on the 2022 ceasefire is the only viable path; India's 9 million Gulf diaspora at stake.

FRA lands: 244 tribal districts — 60 oilseed, 31 pulse, 23 both; clusters, FPOs and scheme convergence to turn rights into livelihoods.

PRELIMS TRAP-SETTERS

Weights shift: Refinery Products led the 2011-12 ICI; Electricity leads the 2022-23 ICI — check which series a question refers to.

ICI ≠ IIP: ICI is OEA–DPIIT; IIP is NSO–MoSPI.

Oslo, not Stockholm: only the Peace Prize is given in Oslo by the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

ICJ vs ICC: ICJ — States, UN organ; ICC — individuals, independent treaty body. Both sit in The Hague.

Zaydi ≠ Twelver: the Houthis are Zaydi "Fivers"; Iran is mainly Twelver Shia.

Bab el-Mandeb's African shore is Djibouti and Eritrea — not Somalia.

FRA dates: the Act is of 2006, but the cut-off for occupation is 13 December 2005.

PLACES & PERSONS IN NEWS

Name	Why in news
Plymouth (UK)	Port in south-west England hosting KONKAN-26
Bab al-Mandeb	Red Sea chokepoint menaced by Houthis; ~12% of global maritime traffic
Strait of Hormuz	Iran's blockade squeezes Saudi exports
Asir / Taif	Region ceded to Saudi Arabia under the 1934 Treaty of Taif
Navi Pillay	South African jurist; 2026 Nobel Peace Prize
Mohammed bin Salman	Saudi Crown Prince & PM facing the Houthi–Iran pincer
Aditi Nayar	ICRA chief economist commenting on core-sector data
S. Mahendra Dev	Chairman, EAC-PM; co-author on FRA lands