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SUPREME COURT TO DECIDE WHAT COUNTS AS AN 'INDUSTRY' UNDER INDIAN LABOUR LAW



A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India, led by Surya Kant, is currently re-examining the scope of the term "industry" under Indian labour law. This assumes major significance as the definition of an "industry" determines which workplaces fall within the legal framework and, consequently, which employees are entitled to statutory protections related to wages, working hours, the right to strike, and safeguards against arbitrary dismissal. The bench is revisiting the expansive interpretation laid down in the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board v. A. Rajappa, which had brought hospitals, educational institutions, philanthropic bodies, and government welfare departments under labour regulations.

The outcome will directly influence the implementation of the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, set to replace the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. From a governance perspective, the ruling will determine the extent of statutory protections available to workers across sectors and redefine the boundary between welfare-oriented institutions and commercial enterprises. A broader definition could strengthen labour rights and institutional accountability, while a narrower interpretation may reduce regulatory burdens but risk excluding sections of workers from legal safeguards. The decision is thus crucial in balancing labour welfare with administrative efficiency and will shape the trajectory of labour reforms in India.

Jharkhand House adopts resolution against rural jobs Act

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) recently became the subject of a political and policy debate when the Jharkhand Assembly passed a resolution urging the Union government to retain its existing framework instead of moving to the proposed Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-GRAM). The State emphasised MGNREGA's role as a demand-driven, rights-based employment guarantee scheme and expressed concerns that the new framework could dilute legal entitlements, increase financial burden on states, and weaken livelihood security for rural populations.

What is a Resolution in a Legislature?

A resolution is a formal motion moved in a legislative body (Parliament or State Assembly) to express the opinion, will, or decision of the House on a specific matter of public importance. It is a self-contained proposal that members can debate, approve, or reject. Unlike laws (Acts), resolutions do not necessarily create enforceable legal obligations but serve as instruments for discussion, consensus-building, and signalling policy preferences.



Legal Status: Binding or Not?

Resolutions passed by State Assemblies—especially those concerning Central laws or policies—generally do not have the force of law. The Supreme Court of India has clarified that such resolutions represent the “opinion” of the House rather than a legally binding directive. This means:

- They cannot compel the Union government to act.
- They do not override existing laws.
- They serve as formal expressions of political will.

Types and Significance of Resolutions

Resolutions can range from highly consequential to largely symbolic:

- **Substantive/Statutory Resolutions:** These have constitutional or legal implications. For example, under Article 61 of the Constitution of India, a resolution is required for the impeachment of the President, needing a special majority.
- **Ratification Resolutions:** Constitutional amendments affecting federal provisions require approval by at least half of the State legislatures through resolutions.
- **Ordinary/Policy Resolutions:** These express the opinion or stance of a legislature on issues such as central laws, governance models, or socio-political concerns (as seen in Jharkhand's case).

Role in Federal Politics and Governance

Despite lacking legal enforceability, resolutions play a significant role in India's federal structure:

- **Political Signalling:** They communicate a State's stance on national policies (e.g., opposition to laws like CAA or UCC).
- **Negotiation Tool:** They can influence Centre–State dialogue and negotiations.
- **Public Accountability:** They bring key issues into legislative debate, increasing transparency and awareness.

In the Jharkhand case, the resolution signals concerns over federal fiscal balance, labour rights, and rural welfare priorities.

Broader Implications

Resolutions highlight how legislatures function beyond law-making—as forums for expressing democratic opinion. While they may not directly change policy, they can:

- Shape public discourse
- Build political pressure
- Influence future legislative or executive decisions

Thus, the Jharkhand Assembly's move is less about immediate legal change and more about asserting a policy position within India's cooperative federal framework.

Focus Area : General Studies- II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice and International relations.

US assets are under Iran attack, but here's why NATO doesn't have to answer Trump's call

The ongoing U.S.–Israel war against Iran, now in its third week, has escalated tensions across West Asia. Donald Trump has urged NATO allies to join efforts, particularly to secure the strategically critical Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly 20% of global oil shipments pass. Trump argues that Europe and China, being heavily dependent on Gulf oil, should share the burden, warning of consequences if allies refuse.



What is NATO? Structure and Core Principle

Formed in 1949, NATO is a 32-member intergovernmental military alliance comprising the U.S., Canada, and primarily European nations. Its core principle is collective defence under Article 5, where an attack on one member is treated as an attack on all. However, NATO is not an automatic war machine—member states retain sovereignty and decide the nature and extent of their participation.

Why NATO is Not Participating as an Alliance

NATO has refrained from entering the conflict due to legal and structural constraints:

- Article 1 mandates peaceful dispute resolution and adherence to UN principles.
- Article 5 applies only in case of direct armed attack on a member state, primarily for defensive purposes.
- Article 6 (Geographical limits) restricts NATO's operational scope to Europe, North America, and parts of the North Atlantic—excluding Iran.
- Thus, the current conflict falls outside NATO's formal mandate.

Current Role: Limited & Indirect Involvement

NATO's involvement remains limited to “enabling support” such as logistics and missile defence. Individual members are acting independently:

- The UK has allowed U.S. use of bases in Cyprus.
- Greece and France have deployed military assets regionally.
- NATO forces have intercepted threats near Turkey.
- However, no collective military response has been authorised, and Article 5 has not been invoked.

Diverging Positions Among Allies

Several European nations have resisted U.S. pressure:

- Germany has emphasised diplomacy, stating “this is not our war.”
- A joint statement by major European powers expressed concern over regional escalation.
- This reflects a broader reluctance to engage in another external conflict, shaped by past experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Trump's Criticism of NATO: Burden Sharing Debate

Trump has long criticised NATO allies for inadequate defence spending. While members are expected to spend 2% of GDP on defence, compliance has historically been uneven.

However, data shows improvement:

- Non-U.S. defence spending rose significantly (2016–2024).
- 18 members met the 2% target in 2024 (up from 4 in 2016).
- Despite this, the U.S. still contributes a major share, fuelling political tensions within the alliance.

The crisis reveals the limits of NATO's collective security model in addressing out-of-area conflicts. Going forward, balancing alliance cohesion, legal mandates, and evolving geopolitical realities will be crucial for NATO's relevance.

Focus Area : GS II - Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Centre clears 'quantum lab' installation at 23 institutions

India has approved 23 institutions to establish quantum teaching laboratories under the National Quantum Mission, with more proposals under evaluation. Launched with a budget of ₹6003.65 crore (2023–2031), the mission aims to develop advanced technologies such as quantum computers (50–1000 qubits), secure communication systems, and high-precision sensors. Among its domains, quantum sensing has emerged as the most practical near-term application—this is where India's Quantum Diamond Microscope becomes significant.

Rising Importance of Quantum Technology

Quantum technology has gained global momentum, with 2025 witnessing increased investments and being declared the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology. However, a key challenge remains its limited real-world applicability, with quantum sensing emerging as the most practical and near-commercial application area.

India's Quantum Diamond Microscope

In this context, India developed its first Quantum Diamond Microscope (QDM) at Indian Institute of Technology Bombay in November 2025. Developed by the P-Quest Lab, this marks India's first patent in quantum sensing and represents a major milestone under the National Quantum Mission.

What is Quantum Sensing?

Quantum sensing refers to the use of quantum mechanical properties—such as entanglement and discrete energy states—to achieve highly precise measurements of physical quantities like magnetic and gravitational fields. QDM is a type of solid-state quantum sensor that uses defects in materials like diamonds for such measurements.

Working Principle of QDM

QDM operates using a Nitrogen Vacancy (NV) centre in a diamond lattice, where a nitrogen atom replaces a carbon atom. This defect exhibits fluorescence when exposed to magnetic fields, allowing detection of extremely small variations. Unlike traditional sensors, QDMs can function at room temperature and use relatively simple setups, often involving lab-grown diamonds.

Applications of QDM

QDM has diverse real-world applications:

- **Geology:** Helps study rock formation and Earth's magnetic history; can improve earthquake modelling
- **Medicine:** Enables highly sensitive brain imaging and neural activity detection, potentially outperforming traditional MRI systems
- **Electronics:** Used in semiconductor testing for fault detection, improving chip efficiency and identifying hardware tampering

Significance for India and Technology Development

The development of QDM highlights a practical breakthrough in quantum technology, unlike more complex areas such as quantum computing. It supports technology translation by bridging the gap between research and real-world use, while also being relatively cost-effective. This can help overcome challenges like the "Valley of Death" in innovation and boost India's capabilities in emerging technologies.



India's Quantum Diamond Microscope strengthens the National Quantum Mission and demonstrates how quantum technologies can move from theoretical research to impactful real-world applications.

Are 40 out of 100 children malnourished in Gujarat?

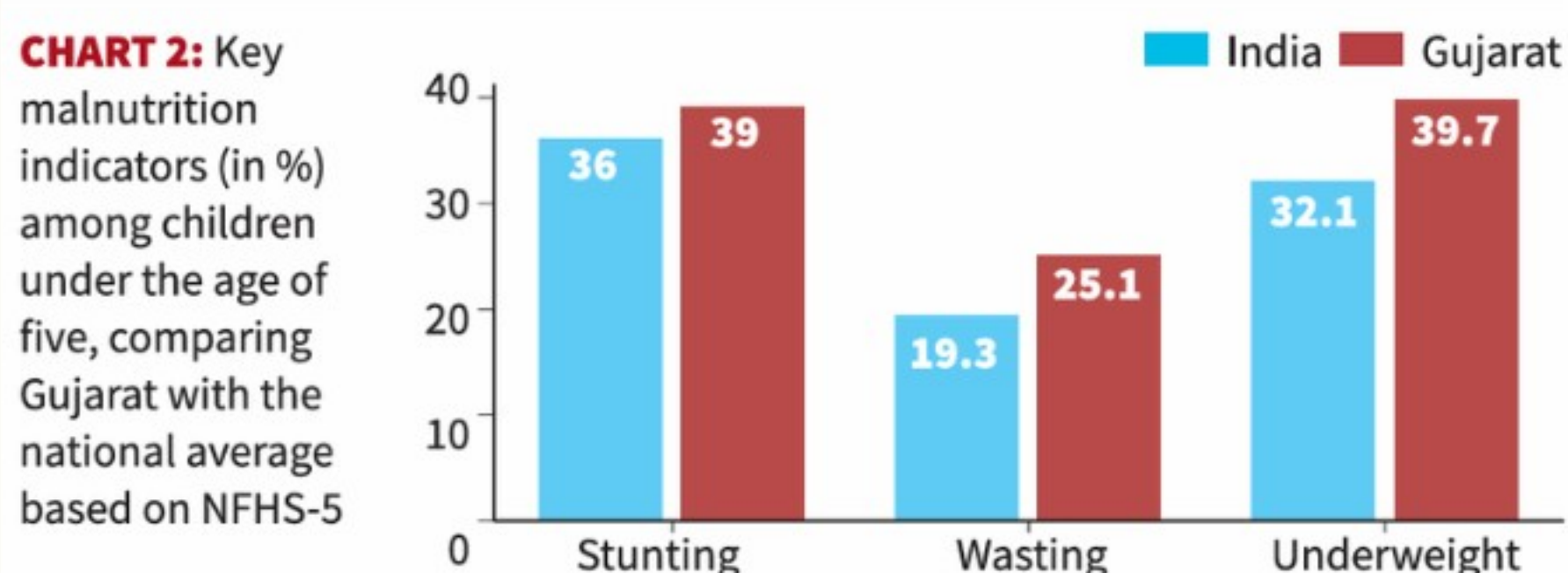
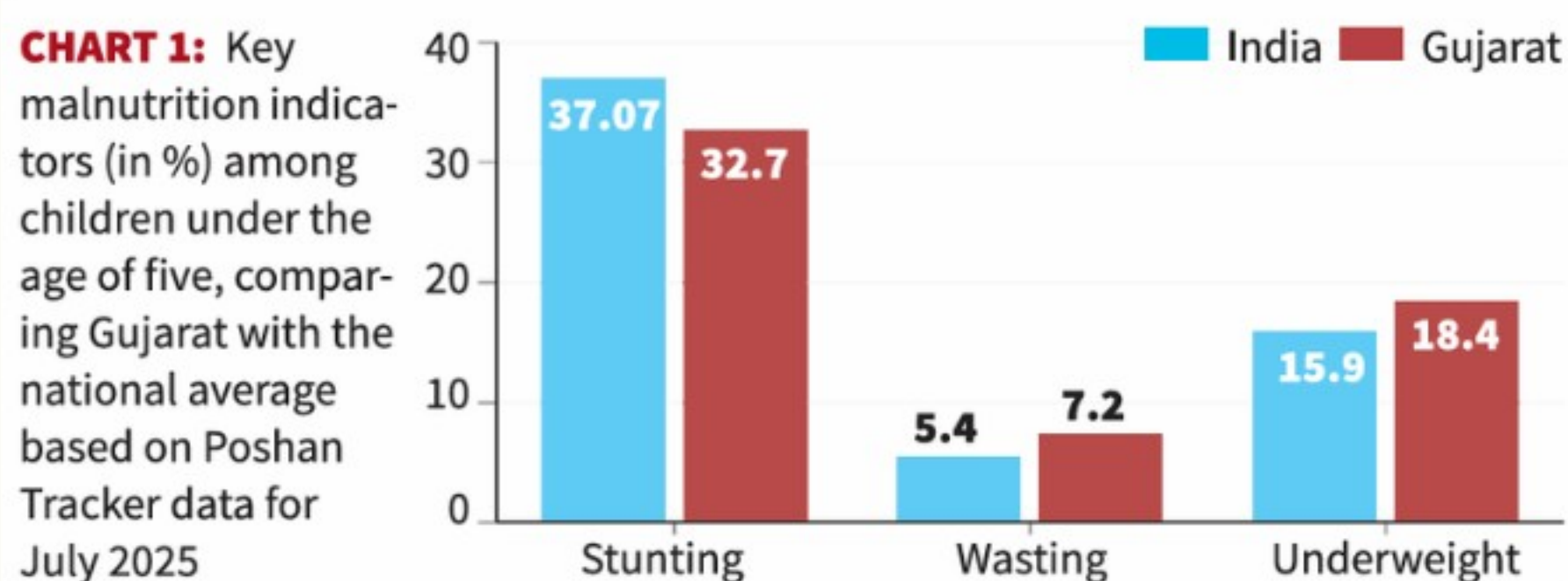
Child malnutrition in Gujarat recently became a subject of debate in the State Legislative Assembly. During discussions on the Women and Child Development Department's budget, differing claims were made regarding the extent of malnutrition among children, bringing attention to the issue and the data used to measure it.

Conflicting Estimates

One side cited data suggesting that around 40% of children are malnourished, based on findings from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5). In contrast, the government referred to data from the Poshan Tracker, which reported a significantly lower figure of 11.4% malnutrition as of early 2026.

Why the Data Differs

The two datasets are not directly comparable because they use different methodologies. NFHS is a sample-based, nationally representative household survey, while Poshan Tracker is a real-time administrative database that records data of children enrolled in anganwadi centres under Mission Poshan 2.0. Thus, they cover different populations and data collection systems.



The debate highlights that differences in data sources can lead to varying interpretations of malnutrition levels. While administrative data suggests improvement, survey-based evidence indicates that malnutrition remains a serious public health concern, especially in vulnerable and tribal regions.

TABLE 3:

Key malnutrition indicators (in %) among children under the age of five, across selected districts of Gujarat based on NFHS-5 with all the districts included identified as tribal districts	District	Stunted	Wasted	Underweight
	Dahod	55.3	27.8	53
	Chhota Udaipur	48.6	28.4	48.1
	Narmada	47.2	23	52.8
	Panchmahal	47.1	35.7	51.9
	Aravali	47.1	29	47.2
	Tapi	41.7	36.6	51.8
	Bharuch	40.9	24.5	45.5
	Banaskantha	39	25.5	44.1
	Valsad	37.8	23.2	34.8
	The Dangs	37.6	40.9	53.1
	Sabarkantha	37	33.1	41
	Navsari	36.8	29	43.6
	Surat	36.1	26	32.5

Limitations of Poshan Tracker Data

Experts highlight concerns about the reliability of Poshan Tracker data. Since it depends on real-time data entry by anganwadi workers, issues such as workload, connectivity problems, and data entry practices may affect accuracy. Additionally, it may not capture children outside the anganwadi system, limiting its completeness.

Understanding Malnutrition Indicators

Malnutrition is not measured as a single figure but through key indicators:

- Stunting (low height for age)
- Wasting (low weight for height)
- Underweight (low weight for age)

Poshan Tracker (July 2025) shows 32.7% stunting, 7.2% wasting, and 18.4% underweight in Gujarat. The State ranks relatively low among Indian States in these indicators.

NFHS Findings & National Comparison

According to NFHS-5, Gujarat reports 39% stunting, 25.1% wasting, and 39.7% underweight among children under five. These figures are close to or higher than national averages in some categories, supporting the claim that a significant proportion of children face malnutrition.

Regional and Social Dimensions

District-level data shows that tribal-dominated regions such as Dahod, Narmada, Panchmahal, and The Dangs have some of the highest malnutrition levels across all indicators. This indicates a higher burden among tribal communities, highlighting regional and socio-economic disparities.

Prelims 2026 Most Probable High-Yield Topics

Newsmaker Species

Studying “Species in News” is important for UPSC Prelims because questions are often framed at the intersection of current affairs and static ecology. Species in news help UPSC test concepts like biodiversity, endemism, conservation status, and ecological significance through real-world examples, making them high-probability areas for direct and elimination-based questions.

Gharials (*Gavialis gangeticus*),

Scientific Name : *Gavialis gangeticus*

Status

- **Listed in Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**
- **Critically Endangered on IUCN Red List**



Features

The Gharial derives its name from the Hindi word “ghara” (pot), referring to the bulbous knob present at the tip of the male’s snout, making it the only clearly sexually dimorphic crocodilian species. It is primarily piscivorous and highly adapted for fish hunting, with a long, narrow snout, sharp interlocking teeth, and a strong, well-muscled neck that enable efficient capture of prey in riverine ecosystems.

Conservation Challenges

River modifications such as dams, barrages, and water extraction degrade its natural habitat by altering water flow and converting rivers into unsuitable environments. Gharials are particularly vulnerable to entanglement in fishing nets, often leading to drowning or deliberate killing. Additionally, sand mining, riverbed cultivation, and egg harvesting disrupt nesting and basking sites, reduce reproductive success, and force habitat abandonment—collectively threatening the long-term survival of the species.

- A recent large-scale survey conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India (2020–2023) across the Ganga River Basin recorded 3,037 individuals of the critically endangered Gharial, marking a significant update on its conservation status in India.
- The survey covered 7,680 km across 22 rivers, with gharials found in 13 rivers, indicating a restricted but surviving distribution.
- The Chambal River hosts the largest population (2,097), followed by the Ghaghara River (463) and Girwa River (158), highlighting these as key conservation strongholds.
- Regions like Ramganga River (within Corbett Tiger Reserve) show very low numbers (48), indicating uneven population distribution and localized vulnerability.
- Despite this recovery trend, the species continues to face severe threats, including illegal sand mining, entanglement in fishing nets, and rising river pollution, which directly impact its habitat and survival.
- The study underscores that gharials are highly habitat-specific and sensitive species, requiring clean water, stable riverbanks, and minimal human disturbance, making them strong indicators of river ecosystem health.
- Conservation recommendations include creation of a dedicated task force, improved inter-agency coordination, awareness campaigns, and use of modern monitoring technologies, with potential for population recovery in rivers like Son, Kosi, and Gandak if ecological conditions improve.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Which of the following leaf modifications occurs/occur in desert areas to inhibit water loss? (2013)

1. Hard and waxy leaves
 2. Tiny leaves or no leaves
 3. Thorns instead of leaves
- Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

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

2) In the grasslands, trees do not replace the grasses as a part of an ecological succession because of (2013)

- (a) insects and fungi
- (b) limited sunlight and paucity of nutrients
- (c) water limits and fire
- d) None of the above

Persistence of Child Marriage and Judicial Response in India



In a significant ruling, the Karnataka High Court refused to quash a criminal case registered under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, despite the couple currently living peacefully. The case involved a 27-year-old man marrying a 16-year-old girl, with legal action initiated against the groom and both families. Justice M. Nagaprasanna emphasised that criminal liability is determined at the time of the offence and cannot be nullified by subsequent harmony in marital life.

The judgment highlights a critical yet under-discussed social reality—continued prevalence of child marriage in parts of India, often normalised within families and communities. The court strongly criticised parental complicity, noting that instead of promoting education and empowerment, families sometimes enable early marriage, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability, gender inequality, and limited socio-economic mobility for young girls.

From a governance perspective, the ruling reinforces the non-negotiable nature of child protection laws and the State's duty to prevent exploitation, regardless of later circumstances. It sends a clear message that social acceptance cannot override legal safeguards, and that leniency in such cases would undermine efforts to eradicate child marriage.

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Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Answer is option (d)

Plants in desert regions exhibit specialized adaptations to minimize water loss and survive in arid conditions. One key modification is the development of hard and waxy leaves, which possess a thick cuticle layer that reduces transpiration by limiting water evaporation. This is commonly seen in xerophytic plants.

Another adaptation is the presence of tiny leaves or complete absence of leaves. Smaller leaves reduce the surface area available for water loss, while some plants, such as cacti, completely lack leaves and instead perform photosynthesis through their green stems, thereby conserving moisture.

Additionally, many desert plants have thorns instead of leaves. Thorns not only reduce water loss by replacing broad leaf surfaces but also provide protection against herbivores. These modifications collectively help plants maintain water balance in extreme heat and scarcity.

Thus, all the given options represent important structural adaptations that enable desert plants to conserve water efficiently, making option (d) the correct answer.



2) Answer is option c

Grasslands are ecosystems where grasses dominate over trees, and this pattern is maintained by a combination of climatic and ecological factors rather than a temporary stage of succession. The most important limiting factor is water availability. Grasslands typically receive moderate rainfall, which is sufficient for grasses but inadequate for the long-term survival and growth of large trees. Trees require deeper and more consistent water supply, which is not available in such regions.

Another crucial factor is fire, which occurs both naturally (due to lightning) and through human activity. Frequent fires destroy young tree saplings before they can mature, while grasses, with their underground root systems, can quickly regenerate after burning. This gives grasses a competitive advantage over trees.

The combined effect of limited water and recurring fires prevents the establishment of forests in grassland regions. Thus, grasslands represent a stable ecological state rather than an intermediate stage leading to forests. These factors ensure that trees do not replace grasses during ecological succession, making option (c) the correct answer.

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