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FROM SCREENS TO SKILLS: INDIA'S NEW CREATIVE ECONOMY MISSION



The Union government has launched three initiatives to strengthen India's media, broadcasting, and digital ecosystem while promoting the "creative" or "orange economy," which refers to industries driven by creativity, culture, technology, and intellectual property. These include a National AI Skilling Initiative implemented through the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies in collaboration with Google and YouTube, the MyWAVES platform for citizen content creation, and the rollout of advanced Electronic Programme Guide and in-built satellite tuners in television sets for enhancing access to DD Free Dish services. These initiatives aim to democratise access to technology, reduce dependency on additional hardware, and enable wider participation in digital content creation.

The significance of these initiatives lies in their potential to boost employment, enhance digital skills, and expand India's cultural and creative industries. The AI skilling programme plans to train around 15,000 youth in two phases, covering both foundational and advanced applications of artificial intelligence, including generative AI tools. This reflects a broader policy push to integrate emerging technologies with creative sectors, improve global competitiveness, and create new economic opportunities. By supporting content creators and strengthening public digital infrastructure, the initiatives also contribute to inclusive growth and the expansion of India's digital economy.

Centre to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contributions by individuals, NGOs, associations, and companies in India. Its primary objective is to ensure that foreign funds do not adversely affect national security, public interest, or political processes. Originally enacted in 1976 and later replaced by the FCRA, 2010 (with amendments in 2020), the Act mandates that organisations must either register under FCRA or obtain prior permission to receive foreign funding.

Key Proposed Amendments

One of the major changes is the provision for appointing a designated authority to take over, manage, or dispose of assets created from foreign funds in cases where an organisation's FCRA registration is suspended, cancelled, or not renewed. Additionally, the definition of "key functionary" is proposed to be expanded beyond office bearers to include directors, trustees, partners, members of governing bodies, and others responsible for management. These key functionaries may also be held directly liable for offences under the Act.

Changes in Enforcement and Legal Provisions

The Bill proposes that any investigation into FCRA-related matters by law enforcement agencies or State governments would require prior approval from the Central Government, thereby centralising oversight. It also seeks to reduce the maximum punishment for certain offences from five years to one year, indicating a shift towards rationalisation of penalties. Further, it introduces fixed timelines for utilisation of funds received under the "prior permission" category, replacing the earlier open-ended provision.

A balanced approach to strengthening the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act framework requires aligning national security concerns with the developmental role of civil society organisations. Regulatory mechanisms must be transparent, predictable, and rule-based so that organisations clearly understand compliance requirements without ambiguity. The introduction of provisions such as asset management by a designated authority and expanded accountability of key functionaries should be accompanied by well-defined guidelines to prevent arbitrary interpretation and ensure procedural fairness. At the same time, ease of compliance should be prioritised through simplified procedures, digital platforms, and time-bound approvals, especially for genuine organisations working in sectors like health and education.



Significance of the Amendments

These changes aim to enhance transparency, accountability, and regulatory control over foreign funding. The introduction of a mechanism to manage assets ensures that resources created through foreign contributions are not misused or left unregulated. Expanding the scope of key functionaries improves accountability by clearly identifying responsible individuals within organisations.

Concerns and Criticisms

At the same time, concerns have been raised regarding increased centralisation and stricter compliance requirements, which may affect the operational autonomy of NGOs. The requirement of prior approval for investigations could potentially delay enforcement actions, while expanded liability provisions may create apprehension among individuals associated with civil society organisations.

Implications for Civil Society and Governance

The amendments reflect an attempt to balance national security and financial transparency with the role of NGOs in development. While stronger regulation may curb misuse of foreign funds, it is equally important to ensure that genuine organisations working in social, educational, and humanitarian sectors are not adversely impacted.

One-third of India's strategic petroleum reserves are empty: Why this matters for fuel security

India's strategic petroleum reserves (SPRs) currently hold about 3.37 million tonnes of crude oil, which is roughly two-thirds of their total storage capacity of 5.33 million tonnes. These reserves are maintained as a buffer against short-term disruptions in global oil supply. At full capacity, the existing reserves can cover approximately 9.5 days of India's crude oil requirements. However, the actual stock levels remain dynamic, as they depend on prevailing market conditions and domestic consumption patterns.

Location and Infrastructure of SPRs

India's SPR infrastructure is spread across three underground cavern facilities located at Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru, and Padur. These facilities are managed by the Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), a specialised agency responsible for building and maintaining crude storage. The underground design enhances safety and reduces vulnerability to external threats.

Concept and Global Context of SPRs

The concept of strategic petroleum reserves emerged after the 1973 oil crisis, highlighting the need for countries to safeguard themselves against supply shocks. Globally, such reserves have been utilised during major disruptions, including wars, natural disasters, and geopolitical crises. Countries like the United States, China, and Japan maintain large reserves, and coordinated releases have been undertaken by members of the International Energy Agency during supply crises.

India's Oil Dependence and Stock Levels

India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports for over 88% of its needs. The International Energy Agency recommends that countries maintain oil reserves equivalent to at least 90 days of net imports. India, currently an associate member, has total oil and fuel storage capacity covering about 74 days, including both strategic and commercial stocks. This is below the recommended threshold, indicating a gap in long-term energy security preparedness.

Impact of Ongoing Geopolitical Developments

Recent geopolitical tensions, particularly in West Asia, have disrupted energy flows and put pressure on India's oil supply chains. Events such as conflicts affecting critical routes like the Strait of Hormuz have highlighted vulnerabilities, as a significant portion of India's crude imports transit through this route. Despite these challenges, India has managed supply through diversification of sources and increased imports from alternative regions.

Expansion Plans for Strategic Reserves

Recognising the need for greater storage capacity, the government has approved the development of additional SPR facilities. These include new sites at Chandikhol and an expansion at Padur, which together will add 6.5 million tonnes of capacity. Further proposals for locations such as Bikaner and Rajkot have been discussed, although final decisions are pending. Expanding these reserves is seen as essential given India's growing energy demand and import dependence.

Commercial and Strategic Significance

Beyond energy security, SPRs also have commercial potential. By storing crude during periods of low prices and releasing it when prices rise, India can better manage economic shocks. Additionally, leasing storage space to foreign oil producers, such as the agreement with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, allows India to integrate more actively into global energy markets while optimising the use of its infrastructure.

The current situation underscores the importance of strengthening India's strategic petroleum reserves as a key component of national energy security. While existing reserves provide a short-term cushion, expanding capacity and improving stock levels are crucial for managing prolonged disruptions. In a volatile global energy environment, robust reserves ensure supply stability and enhance India's strategic resilience.

The evolving diagnostic landscape for tuberculosis

World Health Organization has recently recommended new near point-of-care molecular tests, along with innovations like tongue swab sampling and sputum pooling, marking significant progress in tuberculosis (TB) diagnostics. These developments reflect a transformative decade in TB control, where rapid technological advancements are being actively integrated into public health strategies to accelerate TB elimination.

Shift Towards Technology-Driven Screening

India's TB control efforts, led by the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme, are increasingly leveraging portable chest X-rays combined with artificial intelligence (AI). These tools are deployed through mobile units under initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan, enabling large-scale community screening. AI-assisted X-rays help in early detection, reduce dependence on specialists, and allow screening even in remote areas.

Expanding Access and Reducing Diagnostic Gaps

Earlier, TB diagnosis relied heavily on sputum smear microscopy, which had limited sensitivity. Since 2016, India has scaled up molecular diagnostics such as CBNAAT and indigenous Truenat tests, improving detection accuracy and enabling identification of drug resistance. However, gaps remain in access, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas, where strengthening sample collection and transport systems is essential.



Investing in a strong and decentralised diagnostic system is crucial for TB elimination in India. Early and accurate diagnosis not only improves treatment outcomes but also reduces transmission within communities and lowers out-of-pocket expenditure for patients. A streamlined, evidence-based expansion of diagnostic tools supported by innovation, policy coordination, and capacity building can act as a powerful driver in achieving India's TB elimination goals.

Role of New Diagnostic Innovations

The introduction of near point-of-care nucleic acid amplification tests (POC-NAAT) allows testing at primary healthcare levels without heavy infrastructure. Non-sputum-based methods like tongue swabs are especially beneficial for children and individuals unable to produce sputum. These innovations collectively create a more flexible and patient-friendly diagnostic ecosystem.

Building an Integrated Diagnostic Approach

No single diagnostic tool is sufficient on its own. India is moving towards a "diagnostic toolbox" approach, combining AI-enabled imaging with molecular tests. Optimising this network—deciding which tools to use, where, and in what combination—is critical to ensure timely, affordable, and accessible diagnosis. Reducing turnaround time for test results is particularly important for initiating appropriate treatment early, especially in drug-resistant TB cases.

Key Challenges in TB Diagnosis

Despite progress, several challenges persist. Diagnosing asymptomatic TB cases remains difficult, making symptom-based screening inadequate. TB detection in children is complex due to low bacterial load and difficulty in obtaining samples. Extra-pulmonary TB, which forms a significant share of cases in India, is often misdiagnosed or detected late, leading to higher treatment costs and poorer outcomes.

Research and Innovation Priorities

Future efforts must focus on developing cost-effective biomarkers to identify individuals at high risk of disease progression, improving non-invasive diagnostic tools (such as saliva-based tests), and expanding research on stool-based testing for children. Institutions like the Indian Council of Medical Research play a key role in evaluating new technologies to ensure they are clinically effective, affordable, and scalable.

Prelims 2026 Most Probable High-Yield Topics

Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam - One Hundred and Sixth Amendment Act, 2023

In 2023, Parliament of India passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, "Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam", marking a historic milestone in its national journey to foster equitable representation of women in public life at all levels of the federal structure. This landmark legislation rotationally reserves one-third of all seats for women in the Lower House of Parliament, Lok Sabha, and in all federal State Legislative Assemblies, including Legislative Assembly of National Capital Territory of Delhi, thus institutionalizing representation of women in politics at the highest levels of public decision-making.

features of the Act

Reservation in Lok Sabha (Article 330A)

- The Constitution provides reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha.
- One-third of total seats filled by direct election are to be reserved for women.
- Within SC/ST reserved seats, one-third will be reserved for women belonging to SC/ST categories.

Overall 33% reservation, with internal quota for SC/ST women.

Reservation in State Legislative Assemblies (New Article 332A)

- One-third of total seats in State Assemblies will be reserved for women.
- Within SC/ST reserved seats, one-third will be reserved for women from those categories.

Overall 33% reservation, with internal quota for SC/ST women.



Reservation in Delhi Legislative Assembly (Amendment to Article 239AA)

- Reservation for women is extended to the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi.
- One-third of total seats to be reserved for women.
- Within SC reserved seats, one-third reserved for SC women.

Implementation Clause (334A)

- Reservation will come into effect only after delimitation based on the first Census conducted after the amendment (2023).
- The reservation will initially remain in force for 15 years.
- Parliament can extend the duration beyond this period by law.
- Rotation of reserved seats will occur after each delimitation exercise.

Latest Development

The Union government is considering introducing amendments to fast-track the implementation of the Women's Reservation Act, 2023 by conducting a delimitation exercise based on the 2011 Census instead of waiting for fresh Census data after 2026. This move could enable implementation before the 2029 Lok Sabha elections. The proposal includes increasing the strength of the Lok Sabha from 543 to 816 seats, with 273 seats reserved for women, while maintaining the existing proportional representation of States to address concerns, especially from southern States, about losing political weight. Each State is likely to see roughly a 50% increase in seats, but on a proportional basis. The amendments may also involve expansion of State Assemblies. Since the original Act required a Census followed by delimitation delayed due to COVID-19. This change aims to avoid postponement beyond 2030. As constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority in Parliament, the government has initiated extensive consultations with both Opposition parties and NDA allies to build consensus.

Prelims 2026 Most Probable High-Yield Topics

Prelims model questions

Q. With reference to the reservation of seats for women under the amendment, consider the following statements:

1. One-third of the total seats in the Lok Sabha are reserved for women.
2. One-third of the seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha are reserved for women of those categories.
3. The reservation applies only to Lok Sabha and not to State Legislative Assemblies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

Prelims model questions

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the duration of reservation:

1. The reservation for women is permanent unless repealed.
2. It is initially provided for a period of 15 years.
3. Parliament has the power to extend the reservation beyond this period.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Q. The provisions related to women's reservation in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi are inserted under:

- (a) Article 330A
(b) Article 332A
(c) Article 239AA
(d) Article 334A


Answer: (c)

Q. Which of the following correctly describes the nature of reservation under the amendment?


- (a) Separate reservation for women over and above existing seats
(b) Horizontal reservation cutting across categories
(c) Vertical reservation limited to general category women
(d) Reservation only in nominated seats

Answer: (b)

Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023 – Key Points



33%
Provides **33%** reservation for women in Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and Delhi Legislative Assembly




Introduces **Article 330A** (Lok Sabha) and **Article 332A** (State Assemblies) for reservation


Adds **Article 334A** to specify implementation provisions

Amends **Article 239AA** to extend reservation to Delhi

Within SC/ST reserved seats, **1/3** reserved for SC/ST women

Implementation Depends On:

 **First Census after 2023**

 **Subsequent delimitation exercise**

Reservation will operate for **15 years** (extendable by Parliament)

Rotation of reserved seats after each delimitation

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) With reference to India, consider the following statements: (2021)

1. There is only one citizenship and one domicile.
2. A citizen by birth only can become the Head of State.
3. A foreigner once granted citizenship cannot be deprived of it under any circumstances.

Which of the statements given above is / are correct?

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

2) If a particular area is brought under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India, which one of the following statements best reflects the consequence of it ? (2022)

- (a) This would prevent the transfer of land of tribal people to non-tribal people.
- (b) This would create a local self-governing body in that area.
- (c) This would convert that area into a Union Territory.
- (d) The State having such areas would be declared a Special Category State.

KNOWLEDGE BYTES

Communication Beyond Words: Intentionality in Humans and Animals

Communication is a fundamental feature of all living beings, but its complexity varies across species. For instance, honeybees use the “wobble dance” to convey the location of food sources, which other bees decode to guide their behaviour. Human communication, however, goes a step further by incorporating intentionality—the ability to shape another individual’s thoughts or actions by considering what they already know. This is evident in everyday situations, such as using gestures to request something, where signals are directed toward an attentive audience and adjusted based on their response. Interestingly, studies suggest that this ability is not entirely unique to humans. Apes, for example, demonstrate goal-directed communication by using and modifying gestures depending on whether their needs are understood, indicating a basic awareness of others’ knowledge.

Elephants provide even more compelling evidence of sophisticated communication and social cognition. Living in complex social groups, they display emotional intelligence, such as mourning their dead and maintaining long-term social bonds. Their communication involves a variety of gestures, many of which require the recipient’s attention, highlighting intentional signalling. Experimental studies in Zimbabwe have shown that elephants can direct gestures toward humans to obtain food and even persist or modify their signals if their needs are not fully met. In India, the long-standing relationship between elephants and mahouts further illustrates this depth of communication, where gestures, touch, and vocal cues are used effectively. Research has also shown that elephants produce distinct vocalisations when interacting with humans compared to other elephants, reinforcing the idea that intentional and adaptive communication is not limited to humans alone.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) Correct Answer: (a) 1 only

This question tests conceptual clarity regarding citizenship provisions in India under the Constitution and the Citizenship Act, 1955.

Statement 1 is correct. India follows the principle of single citizenship, unlike countries such as the United States which have dual citizenship (national and state-level). In India, every individual is only a citizen of India, irrespective of the state or Union Territory they reside in. Additionally, the idea of single domicile ensures uniformity in legal and civil rights across the country, reinforcing national unity and integration.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The Constitution of India does not restrict the office of the President (Head of State) only to citizens by birth. Any individual who is a citizen of India, whether by birth, descent, registration, or naturalisation, is eligible to become the President, provided other qualifications (such as age and eligibility for Lok Sabha membership) are met. Thus, naturalised citizens are not excluded.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Citizenship in India is not absolute. Under the provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955, a person who has acquired Indian citizenship (especially through registration or naturalisation) can be deprived of it under specific conditions. These include cases where citizenship was obtained by fraud, misrepresentation, or concealment of facts, or if the individual acts in a manner prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India.

Thus, only Statement 1 is correct.

2) Correct Answer: (a)

The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in states (excluding the Northeast, which comes under the Sixth Schedule). Its primary objective is to protect tribal interests, especially land and resources, from exploitation.

Option (a) best reflects this consequence. Under the Fifth Schedule, the Governor is empowered to make regulations for peace and good governance in Scheduled Areas. This includes the authority to prohibit or restrict the transfer of land from tribal communities to non-tribals, thereby safeguarding tribal land ownership and preventing alienation.

Option (b) is incorrect because the Fifth Schedule itself does not directly create local self-governing bodies. However, through the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA), provisions of Part IX (Panchayats) are extended with modifications. PESA empowers Gram Sabhas with significant authority, including control over minor forest produce, land acquisition consultation, and preservation of customs.

Options (c) and (d) are clearly incorrect. The Fifth Schedule does not convert areas into Union Territories, nor does it grant Special Category State status.

Thus, while PESA strengthens grassroots governance, the core constitutional consequence of the Fifth Schedule is protection of tribal land and resources, making option (a) the most accurate.

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