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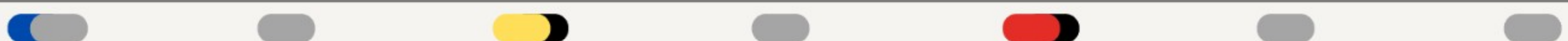
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The UAE's exit from OPEC, and its possible impact

The United Arab Emirates's decision to exit Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and the broader OPEC+ from May 1 marks a significant shift in global energy geopolitics amid disruptions caused by the US-Iran war. The move highlights growing tensions in West Asia and reflects a broader trend of countries prioritising domestic economic interests and production autonomy over coordinated cartel mechanisms. Such a development could weaken collective supply management, potentially increasing volatility in global crude oil prices and undermining the effectiveness of producer alliances. It also signals evolving regional power dynamics and strategic recalibrations among major energy exporters. For import-dependent economies like India, this raises concerns regarding inflation, current account stability, and long-term energy security, underscoring the wider economic implications of geopolitical shifts in global oil markets.

(Read the full report on Page 4.)



The RTE Act and the idea of social inclusion

In a recent judgment, the Supreme Court of India reaffirmed the significance of **Section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education Act 2009**, which mandates **25% reservation for economically weaker and disadvantaged groups** in private schools. The Court emphasised its role in enabling social integration and equality of opportunity.

Constitutional Vision: Equality through Shared Spaces

Section 12(1)(c) operationalises the constitutional principle of equality of status by creating inclusive classrooms where children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds learn together. It reflects a deliberate strategy to break social barriers and reduce inequality through education.

Misconceptions and Policy Clarification

The provision is often misinterpreted as promoting private schooling or diluting the state's responsibility toward public education. However, it complements the state's duty by integrating private schools into the broader educational ecosystem. The decline in government school enrolment predates the RTE Act and is linked to structural issues such as infrastructure and quality concerns.

Impact and Evidence from Implementation

Since its implementation, over five million children have benefited, with retention rates exceeding 90%. Studies show that mixed classrooms foster pro-social behaviour, reduce discrimination, and enhance social cohesion without negatively affecting academic outcomes. Students also gain access to social capital, peer networks, and broader aspirations.

ALL ABOUT RTE ACT

■ It guarantees free and compulsory education at a neighbourhood school to children in the age group of 6 to 14 years (Classes I to VIII). It applies to all states except J&K

■ It was passed by Parliament on August 6, 2009, and came into effect on April 1, 2010

■ With the passage of the Act, India became one of 135 countries in the world that make education the fundamental right of every child

■ The Act also provides for 25 per cent reservation in

private schools for children from economically weaker sections

■ It prohibits all unrecognised schools from practice (gives them three years to meet basic standards defined under the Act), and makes provisions for no donation or capitation fees and no interview of the child or parent for admission

■ It provides that no child shall be held back, expelled, or required to pass a Board examination until the completion of elementary education

Socio-economic Implications

The provision has transformative potential for disadvantaged families by **improving educational access and upward mobility**. Beyond academics, it expands children's social exposure and confidence, contributing to long-term human capital development and social mobility.

"The child of a multi-millionaire or even of a Judge of the Supreme Court of India to sit in the same classroom and at the same bench as the child of an autorickshaw driver or a street vendor"

Supreme Court on Section 12(1)(c) of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009

Governance and Administrative Reforms

Improved digital admission systems, monitoring frameworks, and MIS platforms in states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Delhi have enhanced transparency and access. Strengthening enforcement, ensuring timely reimbursements, and eliminating hidden costs are critical for better outcomes.

Section 12(1)(c) represents a crucial instrument for achieving social integration through education. Its success depends not on policy intent alone but on robust implementation, ensuring that the constitutional promise of equality translates into lived reality for all children.

The tragedy of recurring Rohingya refugee death

A fishing trawler carrying 250–280 people, including Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals, capsized in the Andaman Sea while heading to Malaysia, with around 250 feared dead or missing. The incident highlights the growing humanitarian crisis linked to unsafe maritime migration routes in South and Southeast Asia.



Background: Rohingya Crisis and Statelessness

The Rohingya, a Muslim minority from Myanmar's Rakhine State, were rendered stateless under the Myanmar Citizenship Law 1982. Following the 2017 violence, over 700,000 refugees fled to Bangladesh, joining earlier displaced populations. Today, over one million Rohingya live in overcrowded camps in Cox's Bazar with limited access to education, livelihoods, and basic services.

Drivers of Risky Sea Migration

Worsening living conditions, including funding cuts by agencies like United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and lack of economic opportunities, have pushed refugees toward dangerous sea journeys. Smuggling networks exploit their vulnerability, offering passage to Malaysia via overcrowded and unseaworthy boats along a 1,500-nautical-mile route.

Scale and Trends of Maritime Deaths

Rohingya sea crossings have become increasingly deadly. Nearly 900 people died or went missing in 2025 alone, with over 2,800 departures recorded in early 2026. These journeys often involve prolonged exposure to harsh conditions, with survivors reporting days at sea without adequate food, water, or safety measures.

The crisis underscores the urgent need for regional cooperation, legal frameworks for refugee protection, and humanitarian interventions. Strengthening rescue mechanisms, addressing root causes in Myanmar, and ensuring sustainable support for host countries are critical to preventing further tragedies. The Rohingya maritime crisis reflects a complex interplay of statelessness, conflict, and governance gaps. Without coordinated regional and international responses, such humanitarian disasters are likely to persist, highlighting the need for a rules-based and rights-oriented refugee management framework.

Comparative Perspective: Mediterranean vs Andaman

While the Mediterranean migration crisis has witnessed around 28,000 deaths since 2014, Europe has developed relatively structured responses. Initiatives such as Operation Mare Nostrum and Operation Sophia, along with legal frameworks and NGO involvement, provide coordinated rescue and asylum systems. In contrast, Southeast Asia lacks institutional mechanisms, leading to ad hoc and delayed responses.

Governance Vacuum & Regional Challenges

South and Southeast Asia face a governance gap in refugee protection. Countries like India, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Malaysia are not signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, limiting legal safeguards. Regional bodies such as Association of Southeast Asian Nations have struggled due to non-interference norms and internal divisions, weakening collective action.

Security and Geopolitical Dimensions

Ongoing conflict in Myanmar, including the rise of armed groups like the Arakan Army, continues to drive displacement. The lack of safe repatriation pathways and regional instability further exacerbates migration pressures, creating a protracted humanitarian crisis.

The UAE's exit from OPEC, and its possible impact on global oil prices

Established in 1960, OPEC was created to coordinate petroleum policies and counter Western dominance in oil pricing. It functions like a “**central bank**” for oil markets by regulating supply through **production quotas**. OPEC+ (since 2016), which includes major producers like **Russia**, accounts for about **40% of global oil output** and **60% of traded petroleum**, giving it substantial influence over global energy markets.

UAE's Position within OPEC

The UAE joined OPEC in 1967 and has been a key contributor to the group's spare production capacity. However, OPEC-imposed quotas have often **restricted the UAE from utilising its full production potential**, limiting revenue maximisation despite large-scale investments in oil infrastructure.

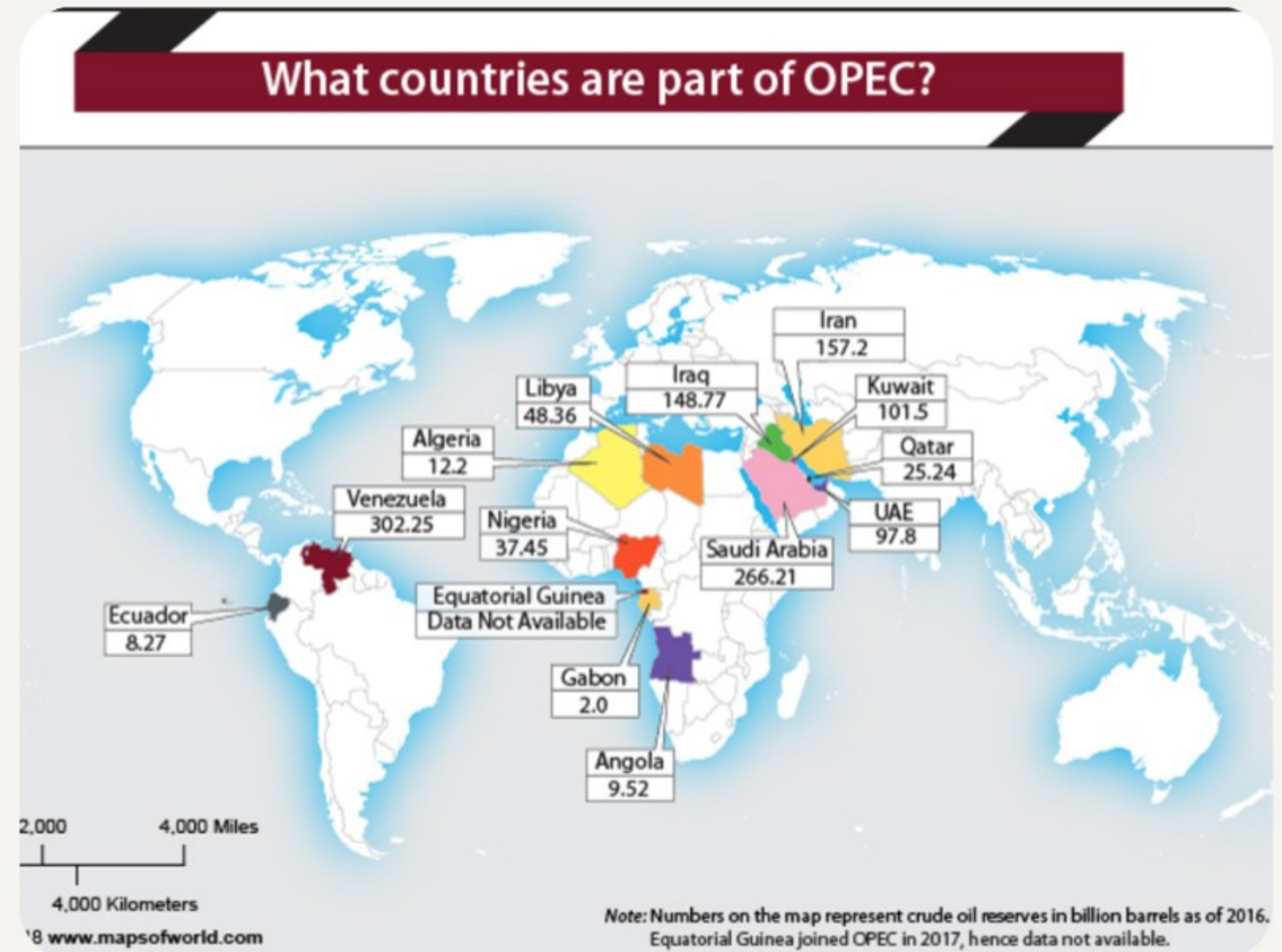
Geopolitical Trigger: Impact of the Iran War

The ongoing conflict has heightened regional insecurity, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, a critical route for global oil transport. Disruptions to shipping and attacks on oil infrastructure have exposed vulnerabilities. Additionally, OPEC's consensus-based structure, including Iran as a member, constrains the UAE's ability to independently respond to security and export challenges.

Economic Drivers: Production and Diversification Strategy

The UAE aims to expand crude production capacity to 5 million barrels per day by 2027, supported by major investments from Abu Dhabi National Oil Company. Exiting OPEC allows it to bypass quotas and maximise output. Paradoxically, increasing oil revenues is seen as essential to fund its transition toward a diversified, knowledge-based economy.

The UAE's withdrawal from OPEC marks a significant shift in global energy governance, driven by both geopolitical instability and economic ambition. Its long-term impact will depend on how global markets adjust and whether OPEC can maintain cohesion in an increasingly fragmented energy order.



Market Implications: Oil Prices and Volatility

The UAE's exit weakens OPEC's collective control over supply, potentially increasing competition and global oil supply. This could exert downward pressure on oil prices and increase volatility. For oil-importing countries like India, lower prices may offer short-term economic benefits, though instability in supply chains remains a concern.

Strategic and International Implications

The move signals a shift toward strategic autonomy in energy policy and reflects changing alliances in West Asia. It may encourage other members, such as Saudi Arabia, to reconsider quota commitments. The development also underscores declining cohesion within OPEC and evolving global energy geopolitics.

Governance and Policy Dimensions

The exit highlights tensions between collective resource management and national economic priorities. It raises questions about the future relevance of OPEC in a rapidly changing energy landscape marked by geopolitical conflicts, energy transition pressures, and shifting supply-demand dynamics.

The Indian EXPRESS

In the AAP crisis, a larger waning

The defection of seven Aam Aadmi Party Rajya Sabha MPs to the Bharatiya Janata Party reflects three interconnected dynamics in Indian politics. First, it highlights the internal trajectory of AAP, whose early idealism and rapid rise were accompanied by increasing centralisation of leadership and organisational weaknesses, eventually contributing to its political decline despite governance successes in Delhi. Second, it underscores the broader context of political dominance by the ruling party since 2014, marked by asymmetric resource power and the perceived use of investigative agencies to exert pressure on Opposition leaders, encouraging defections and weakening rival formations. Third, it points to the structural fragility of the Opposition space, where lack of cohesion, competing interests, and absence of a common programme have limited its ability to effectively counterbalance the ruling party. While moments of unity have yielded results, the episode illustrates the need for institutional resilience, internal reform, and strategic coordination within the Opposition to sustain a competitive democratic framework.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

Discuss how political defections and the operation of the anti-defection law affect the functioning of parliamentary democracy in India. In this context, examine the challenges faced by Opposition parties in maintaining cohesion and effectiveness.



Battle of wills

The conflict between the United States and Iran has escalated into a strategic standoff centred on the Strait of Hormuz, with Iran restricting maritime traffic and the U.S. maintaining a naval blockade of Iranian ports, leading to stalled diplomacy. While indirect engagement continues through Pakistan, both sides remain entrenched, with the U.S. relying on economic pressure and Iran linking negotiations to broader regional concerns. Despite heightened tensions, a ceasefire announced in early April has largely held, indicating a mutual reluctance to escalate into full-scale conflict, given the limited strategic gains from prolonged military action and its global economic repercussions. The disruption of critical shipping routes has amplified economic risks, underscoring the high stakes of continued confrontation. A viable pathway forward lies in phased de-escalation, beginning with reciprocal measures such as lifting blockades and reopening maritime routes, which could rebuild trust and create conditions for substantive negotiations, including on Iran's nuclear programme.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

"Maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz play a critical role in global geopolitics and energy security."

In the context of the ongoing U.S.–Iran tensions, analyse how control over such chokepoints influences diplomacy, conflict dynamics, and the global economy.

thehindu **businessline.**

TUESDAY - MARCH 31, 2026

Fuel for thought

The push to expand flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs), capable of running on up to 100% ethanol, reflects efforts to reduce crude oil imports, with ethanol blending already delivering significant foreign exchange savings and lower emissions relative to petrol. However, scaling ethanol production raises trade-offs, particularly the diversion of food crops such as sugarcane, rice and maize, with proposals to reallocate food grains like broken rice highlighting tensions between energy and food security. While maize is less water-intensive, its expanding cultivation may displace pulses and millets, and the overall resource intensity of ethanol—land, water, fertilisers and lower energy efficiency compared to petrol—limits its long-term viability. Second-generation ethanol derived from agricultural waste offers a more sustainable pathway but requires greater scaling. Given that solar-powered electric vehicles are significantly more energy-efficient and battery technologies are improving, ethanol-based fuels may serve as a transitional component rather than a primary solution. A coherent policy framework balancing EV adoption with residue-based ethanol production is essential to ensure both environmental sustainability and economic efficiency.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

"While ethanol blending and flex-fuel vehicles are promoted as solutions for enhancing energy security in India, they also raise concerns related to food security, resource use, and overall efficiency." Critically examine the advantages and limitations of ethanol-based fuels in India's energy transition.

CITU knocks on ILO's door over 'suppression' of workers' rights

The Delhi unit of Centre of Indian Trade Unions has filed a complaint with the International Labour Organization, alleging widespread violations of workers' rights in Noida and Greater Noida. The complaint has been submitted to the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association, citing suppression of protests and denial of basic labour rights.

Key Allegations: Suppression of Trade Union Rights

The complaint highlights violations of fundamental rights such as freedom of association, right to organise, collective bargaining, and peaceful assembly. It alleges coercive state actions including mass arrests, use of force, sealing of union offices, and criminalisation of labour protests during recent worker mobilisations over wages and working conditions.

Socio-economic Context of Labour Unrest

Workers protested against stagnant wages, long working hours, and inadequate overtime pay amid rising living costs in the Delhi-NCR region. Minimum wages for unskilled workers (₹11,314) were reportedly insufficient for subsistence, aggravating discontent. Economic pressures, including inflation and labour policy changes, contributed to large-scale demonstrations.

Legal and Institutional Framework: ILO Norms

India is a member of the ILO and is bound by the **ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 1998**, which mandates **respect for core labour rights**, including freedom of association and collective bargaining. However, India has not ratified key conventions such as **Convention No. 87 (Freedom of Association)** and **Convention No. 98 (Collective Bargaining)**, though it has ratified six other core conventions related to forced labour, child labour, and discrimination.

The episode underscores the tension between economic growth and labour rights in India's industrial landscape. Ensuring compliance with international standards, strengthening institutional accountability, and safeguarding workers' rights are essential for sustainable and inclusive industrial development.



Core ILO conventions

# 29	Forced Labour (1930)
# 105	Abolition of Forced Labour (1957)
# 87	Freedom of Association and the Protection of the Right to Organize (1948)
# 98	Right to organize and collective bargaining (1949)
# 138	Minimum Age Convention (1973)
# 182	Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999)
# 100	Equal Remuneration (1951)
# 111	Anti-discrimination - Employment and Occupation (1958)

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Governance and Constitutional Dimensions

The issue raises concerns about compliance with international labour standards and domestic labour laws. Allegations of **denial of due process, lack of independent inquiry, and suppression of peaceful protests** point to governance challenges in balancing industrial order with workers' rights.

Implications: Labour Rights and Industrial Relations

Such incidents can weaken **collective bargaining mechanisms**, erode trust between workers and employers, and impact industrial harmony. International scrutiny through the ILO may affect India's global image regarding labour standards, with potential implications for trade relations and investment climate.

Demands and Corrective Measures

CITU has urged the ILO to recommend immediate release of detained workers, withdrawal of criminal cases, restoration of union rights, and establishment of an independent judicial inquiry into alleged excesses. It also calls for strict adherence to labour laws and prevention of future violations.

CSIP SCHOLARSHIP GUIDE

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2 Days to go - 2 model questions

1. With reference to the Swadeshi Movement, consider the following statements:

- (i) It was launched in response to the Partition of Bengal in 1905.
 - (ii) It promoted the boycott of foreign goods and encouraged indigenous industries.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) (i) only
 - (b) (ii) only
 - (c) Both (i) and (ii)
 - (d) Neither (i) nor (ii)



2. With reference to Non-Performing Assets, consider the following statements:

- (i) It refers to loans where interest or principal repayment is overdue for a specified period.
 - (ii) A higher level of NPAs improves the profitability of banks.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) (i) only
 - (b) (ii) only
 - (c) Both (i) and (ii)
 - (d) Neither (i) nor (ii)

Answers to the Previous Day's Questions

- 1.(a) (i) only The Durand Line was established in 1893, but it separates Pakistan and Afghanistan—not India and Afghanistan.
2. (a) (i) only Article 32 allows direct access to the Supreme Court; it is not suspended in all circumstances during an Emergency.
- 3.(a) (i) only El Niño involves warming of Pacific waters and typically weakens, not strengthens, the Indian monsoon.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Who among the following rulers in ancient India had assumed the titles 'Mattavilasa', 'Vichitrachitta' and 'Gunabhara'?

- (a) Mahendravarman I
- (b) Simhavishnu
- (c) Narasimhavarman I
- (d) Simhavarman

2) Fa-hien (Faxian), the Chinese pilgrim, travelled to India during the reign of

- (a) Samudragupta
- (b) Chandragupta II
- (c) Kumaragupta I
- (d) Skandagupta



Samudragupta



Chandragupta II



Kumaragupta I



Skandagupta



WONDERS OF INDIA

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Lambasingi -

- Lambasingi is a small village located in the Chintapalli Mandal of Andhra Pradesh, situated in the Eastern Ghats.
- It lies at an altitude of about 1000 metres above mean sea level and is around 100 km from Visakhapatnam.
- Popularly known as the "Kashmir of Andhra Pradesh", it is noted for its cool climate, especially during December to February.

Climatic Significance

- Unique for South India due to occasional snowfall/frost conditions in winter
- Gained prominence after sub-zero temperatures recorded in 2012
- Represents a rare micro-climatic zone in peninsular India

Physical & Economic Features

- Characterised by hills, valleys, waterfalls, and dense vegetation
- Rich in biodiversity due to its location in the Eastern Ghats
- Known for plantation agriculture:



Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) The correct answer is (a)
Mahendravarman I



Mahendravarman I (600 – 630 A.D.)

Mahendravarman I was a significant ruler of the Pallava dynasty. The long-drawn Pallava – Chalukya Conflict began during his period. Pulakesin II marched against the Pallavas and captured the northern part of their kingdom. Although a Pallava inscription refers to the victory of Mahendravarman I at Pullalur, he was not able to recover the lost territory.

Mahendravarman I was a **follower of Jainism** in the early part of his career. He was converted to Saivism by the influence of the Saiva saint, **Thirunavukkarasar** alias Appar. He built a Siva temple at Tiruvadi.

He assumed a number of titles like **Gunabhara, Satyasandha, Chettakari (builder of temples) Chitrakarapuli, Vichitrachitta and Mattavilasa.**

He was a great builder of cave temples. The **Mandagappattu inscription** hails him as **Vichitrachitta** who constructed a temple for Brahma, Vishnu and Siva without the use of bricks, timber, metal and mortar.

His rock-cut temples are found in a number of places like **Vallam, Mahendravadi, Dalavanur, Pallavaram, Mandagappattu and Tiruchirappalli.** He had also authored the Sanskrit work **Mattavilasa Prahasanam.**

His title **Chitrakarapuli** reveals his talents in painting. He is also regarded as an expert in music. The music inscription at **Kudumianmalai** is ascribed to him.

2) Answer is option b

- Faxian (Fa-Hien), a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, visited India during the reign of Chandragupta II between 399–414 CE.
- His primary objective was to collect original Buddhist scriptures (especially Vinaya texts) and study them at authentic centres in India, the birthplace of Buddhism.
- He travelled extensively across major centres like Pataliputra and other prominent seats of Buddhist learning.
- His work, Foguoji, is a first-hand travel account of India during the Gupta period.
- It serves both as a historical and literary document, offering insights into multiple dimensions of society.
- His accounts describe a stable and prosperous empire under Gupta rule.
- He also notes mild punishments and efficient governance.

“At the sound of the gong, three thousand priests assemble to eat. When they enter the refectory, their demeanor is grave and ceremonious; they sit down in regular orders; they all keep silence; they make no clatter with their bowls and they do not call out to the attendants to serve more food, but only make sign with their hands” (Legge, 18)

-- Fa-hien describing a monastery in India (Fifth century A.D.)

