



NATIONAL Page 2



Greater public participation vital: SC on defining Aravalli hills

THE HINDU :
26-05-2026

INTERNATIONAL Page 8



Trump now ties deal with Iran to Abraham Accords

THE INDIAN EXPRESS :
26-05-2026

ECONOMICS Page 9



IIP to track output of rare earth minerals, gas & water supply

THE HINDU :
26-05-2026

New Inclusion



**PYQ
COMPASS**
UPSC PREVIOUS YEARS QUESTIONS

Practice questions

A dedicated section featuring UPSC-style Prelims and Mains practice questions based on the major issues, concepts, and debates discussed in today's newspaper.

EDITORIALS DECODED FOR UPSC



Baby bait

Incentives for having more children will keep poorer women out of workforce



Kerala Vigil Against Viral Threats offers tested tools to counter EBOLA



Crushing problem

Duty hikes to discourage cooking oil use avoidable

Snapshot

In today's Pala Civil Times, you will find articles exploring diverse themes such as environmental conservation, population strategy, multilateral diplomacy, and disease preparedness in the contemporary world. The Supreme Court's advisory to ensure wider public participation in the proposed Aravalli expert committee highlights the importance of placing people at the centre of environmental governance and policy-making. At the same time, the discussion on Kerala's public health response to Nipah underlines how timely intervention, surveillance, and coordinated action can help contain dangerous infectious diseases.

The International page examines the U.S. push to expand diplomatic engagement between Israel and Arab states while tracing the evolution of the Abraham Accords, which continue to remain an important framework in West Asian diplomacy and regional normalization efforts.

The edition also analyses India's growing vulnerability to extreme heatwaves from a climate and policy perspective, focusing on their social, economic, and public health implications. After a thorough reading, readers are encouraged to supplement these discussions with their own observations, ideas, and analytical perspectives on each topic.

Greater public participation vital: SC on defining Aravalli hills

The Aravalli Ranges are among India's oldest geological formations, stretching from Delhi through Haryana, Rajasthan, and into Gujarat. Historically, they have been recognized as a natural barrier against northern desertification and a protector of biodiversity and water recharge.

Initial Forest Survey and Supreme Court Intervention (2010–2011)

Following a 2010 Supreme Court order, the task of mapping mining areas in the Aravalli region of Rajasthan was assigned to the Forest Survey of India (FSI). FSI independently prepared a detailed delineation of the hill system using digitised contour data and remote sensing techniques. In 2011, the FSI submitted a mapped boundary for the Aravalli hills in **15 Rajasthan districts** using a scientifically evolved **3-degree slope criterion**, intended to identify ecologically connected hill formation.



Revised estimate by technical committee

Supreme Court, in May 2024, directed the constitution of a committee comprising government officials and technical experts to evolve a uniform definition of the Aravalli Hills and ranges. The committee submitted its report in October 2025 and recommended defining the Aravalli as landforms having an elevation of 100 metres or more above local relief, along with hill clusters located within 500 metres of each other.

Supreme Court Judgment and Subsequent Reconsideration (2025)

Analysis based on FSI data from 2011 indicated that a large number of ecologically significant hills and districts could be excluded from protection if the 2024 classification was used. According to the committee's definition only 37 districts were recognised, potentially excluding several historically and ecologically important regions. In November 2025, the Supreme Court accepted a committee's definition of the Aravalli Hills based on a 100-metre elevation criterion and temporarily banned fresh mining leases in Aravalli regions. However, concerns emerged that the definition could exclude a large number of ecologically sensitive hill formations. Observing the ecological risk, the Court later kept its judgment in abeyance in December 2025 and ordered a broader scientific reassessment of the issue.

Latest development

In 2026, the Supreme Court initiated the process of constituting a new high-powered expert committee to undertake a comprehensive reassessment of the Aravalli definition. The Court clarified that the committee would function under its direct supervision and include experts from multiple disciplines such as environmental science, forestry, geology, and regulated mining. The Bench also emphasised wider stakeholder consultations and public participation to ensure a balanced and scientifically robust framework.

Practice questions

Q.) With reference to the regulatory protection of the Aravalli Hills, consider the following statements:

1. The original delineation of the Aravalli Hills by the Forest Survey of India relied primarily on slope-based geomorphological analysis rather than elevation alone.
2. The MoEF&CC committee report accepted by the Supreme Court in November 2025 significantly expanded the number of hill formations eligible for regulatory protection in Rajasthan.
3. The proposed expert committee is expected to examine both the scientific definition of the Aravalli and the framework governing permissible developmental and mining activities.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q.) Mineral resources are fundamental to the country's economy and these are exploited by mining. Why is mining considered an environmental hazard? Explain the remedial measures required to reduce the environmental hazard due to mining. (GS III - Conservation - 2025)

From black to grey

The latest Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report, 2024 shows that India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined to 1.9, below the replacement level of 2.1. Birth rates are steadily falling while life expectancy is increasing, indicating India's transition from a phase of rapid population growth to gradual ageing. The trend has major implications for demographic dividend, labour force availability, social security, healthcare systems, regional disparities, and long-term economic planning.

STATIC CORE LINKAGE

Total Fertility Rate (TFR) : Average number of children expected to be born to a woman during her reproductive years

Replacement Level Fertility : TFR required to maintain stable population size; generally 2.1

Crude Birth Rate (CBR) : Number of live births per 1,000 population in a year

Crude Death Rate (CDR) : Number of deaths per 1,000 population in a year

Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) : Deaths of infants below 1 year per 1,000 live births

Demographic Dividend : Economic growth potential arising from a larger working-age population

Ageing Population : Rising proportion of elderly persons due to lower fertility and higher life expectancy

Dependency Ratio : Ratio of dependent population (young + elderly) to working-age population

Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India : Conducts SRS and demographic data collection

Why Fertility is Falling in India?

- Urbanisation and rising living costs
- Higher female education and workforce participation
- Better access to healthcare and contraception
- Declining infant mortality leading to preference for smaller families



Opportunities for India

- Over 65% of India's population is below 35 years.
- Large workforce can support economic growth, innovation, manufacturing, and services.
- Young population provides scope for skilling, entrepreneurship, and digital economy expansion.



PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q.) Consider the following countries :

1. Italy
2. Japan
3. Nigeria
4. South Korea
5. South Africa

Which of the above countries are frequently mentioned in the media for their low birth rates, aging population or declining population ?

- a) 1, 2 and 4
- b) 1, 3 and 5
- c) 2 and 4 only
- d) 3 and 5 only

RELEVANCE

GS III: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Practice questions

Q.) Consider the following statements regarding demographic trends mentioned in recent population data:

1. India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has fallen below the replacement level fertility.
2. India's median age is lower than that of China.
3. India currently faces a shrinking workforce due to a rapidly ageing population.
4. India's Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has shown improvement in recent years.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

India's response to heat crisis will define its future

India is witnessing increasingly severe heatwaves driven by long-term climate warming and the developing El Niño conditions, which are raising temperatures and increasing the likelihood of a weak monsoon. Inland regions are experiencing extreme dry heat, while rising night-time temperatures are reducing the body's ability to recover from heat stress. The crisis now extends beyond weather into a broader challenge involving public health, labour productivity, water availability, agriculture, and economic stability.

Rising Vulnerability of Coastal Communities

Coastal regions face an additional danger from rising humidity and **wet-bulb temperatures, where the body's cooling mechanism through sweating becomes ineffective.** Even comparatively lower temperatures can become physiologically dangerous under humid conditions. Coastal communities such as fishers, construction workers, and informal labourers remain highly vulnerable because prolonged exposure to moist heat causes dehydration, exhaustion, and health risks that often go underreported compared to conventional heatwave deaths.



Economic and Social Consequences

The impacts are most severe for economically vulnerable populations including **outdoor workers, slum dwellers, agricultural labourers, and elderly citizens** who lack access to cooling infrastructure. Heat stress is reducing labour productivity, affecting incomes, increasing electricity demand, and worsening water scarcity and agricultural losses. Studies indicate that rising temperatures may significantly affect India's GDP growth, employment generation, and long-term food security if adaptation measures remain inadequate.

Adaptation and Future Preparedness

Heat Action Plans and early warning systems alone are insufficient without deeper structural adaptation. Long-term measures such as urban greening, cool roofs, reflective construction materials, wetland protection, regulated outdoor work timings, and climate-resilient urban planning are increasingly necessary. AI-based forecasting, local vulnerability mapping, and community-level warning systems are also emerging as important tools to improve preparedness and reduce future climate-related risks.

PYQ Compass



UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.

Q.) The World Bank warned that India could become one of the first places where wet-bulb temperatures routinely exceed 35°C. Which of the following statements best reflect(s) the implication of the above-said report? (2025)

- I. Peninsular India will most likely suffer from flooding, tropical cyclones and droughts.
- II. The survival of animals including humans will be affected as shedding of their body heat through perspiration becomes difficult.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- (a) I only
- (b) II only
- (c) Both I and II
- (d) Neither I nor II

Practice questions

Q.) With reference to the growing heatwave crisis in India, consider the following statements:

1. Wet-bulb temperature refers to the combined effect of heat and humidity on the human body's cooling capacity.
2. El Niño conditions are generally associated with strengthening of monsoon circulation over India.
3. Rising night-time temperatures can increase heat-related health risks by reducing physiological recovery from daytime heat stress.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

RELEVANCE

GS II : Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Baby bait

Andhra Pradesh has proposed a new set of incentives encouraging families to have three or more children, marking a departure from India's long-standing emphasis on population stabilisation. The move is linked to concerns over the State's rapidly declining fertility rate, which has fallen to around 1.5, well below the replacement level of 2.1. The government fears that continued demographic decline could result in an ageing population, a shrinking workforce, and a rising old-age dependency burden in the coming decades.



Socio-Economic Challenges and Limits of Fertility Incentives

The discussion highlights that declining fertility is closely linked to rising living costs, delayed access to stable employment, urbanisation, higher educational aspirations, and increasing child-rearing expenses. International and Indian experiences suggest that short-term financial incentives generally produce limited and temporary increases in fertility unless supported by broader social infrastructure. Countries such as France and the Nordic nations were relatively more successful due to long-term investments in universal childcare, parental leave, flexible employment, and public education systems.

Proposed Incentives and Policy Measures

The proposed measures include one-time cash incentives for third and fourth children, monthly financial assistance for five years, free education up to 18 years, longer maternity leave, work-from-home support for mothers, and expanded childcare and Anganwadi assistance. The State also plans enhanced support through schemes such as 'Thaliki Vandanam'. The policy reflects an attempt to address demographic ageing while simultaneously increasing women's labour force participation.

Concerns Regarding Equity, Sustainability and Governance

Concerns have also been raised that financial incentives may disproportionately influence economically vulnerable households without guaranteeing adequate long-term support for child development. The policy could additionally create tensions with goals related to women's employment, urban congestion, waste management, and demographic pressures linked to population-based delimitation.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q.) The total fertility rate in an economy is defined as (2024):
 (a) the number of children born per 1000 people in the population in a year.
 (b) the number of children born to a couple in their lifetime in a given population.
 (c) the birth rate minus death rate.
 (d) the average number of live births a woman would have by the end of her child-bearing age.

Practice questions

Q.) With reference to recent population policy measures proposed by Andhra Pradesh, consider the following statements:

1. The State has proposed incentives for families with three or more children in response to concerns regarding ageing population and declining fertility rates.
2. Replacement level fertility refers to the fertility rate required to maintain a stable population size over time.
3. International experience suggests that one-time cash incentives help improve fertility rates while supplementing economic growth.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

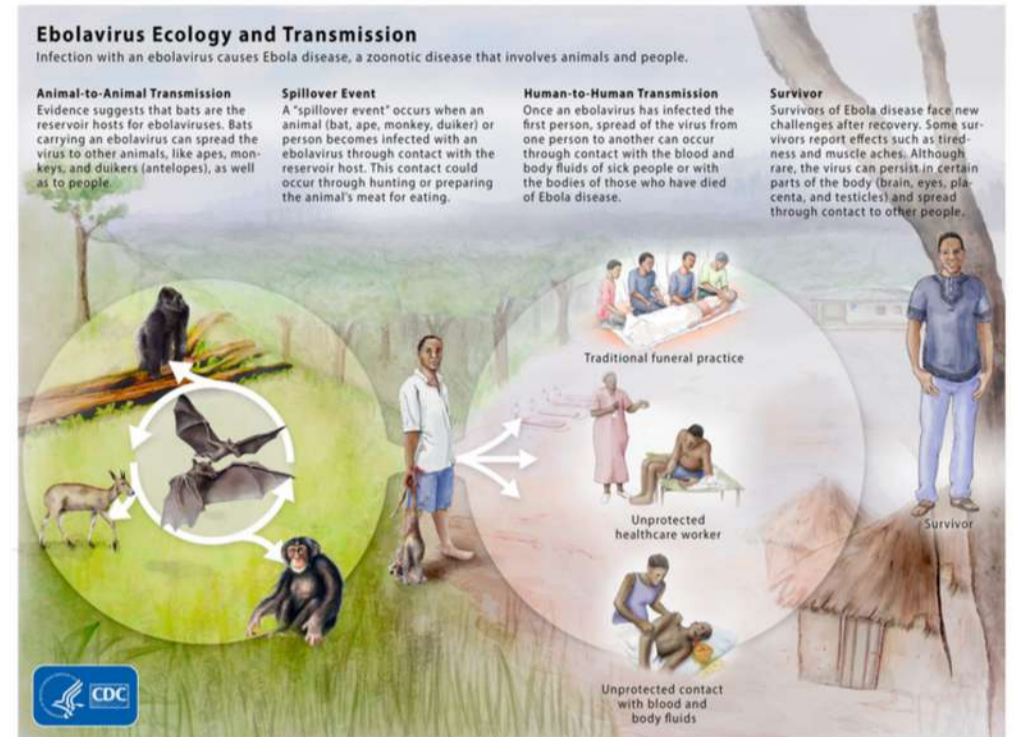
RELEVANCE : GS II : Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Kerala Vigil Against Viral Threats offers tested tools to counter EBOLA

A Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) has been declared following the outbreak of the Ebola virus in Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. The outbreak involves the Bundibugyo strain, which carries a high fatality rate and currently lacks an approved vaccine or targeted treatment. Delayed detection, due to early symptoms resembling common flu, has raised concerns about wider transmission and revived fears of large-scale pandemic disruptions similar to Covid-19.

India's Preparedness & Public Health Response

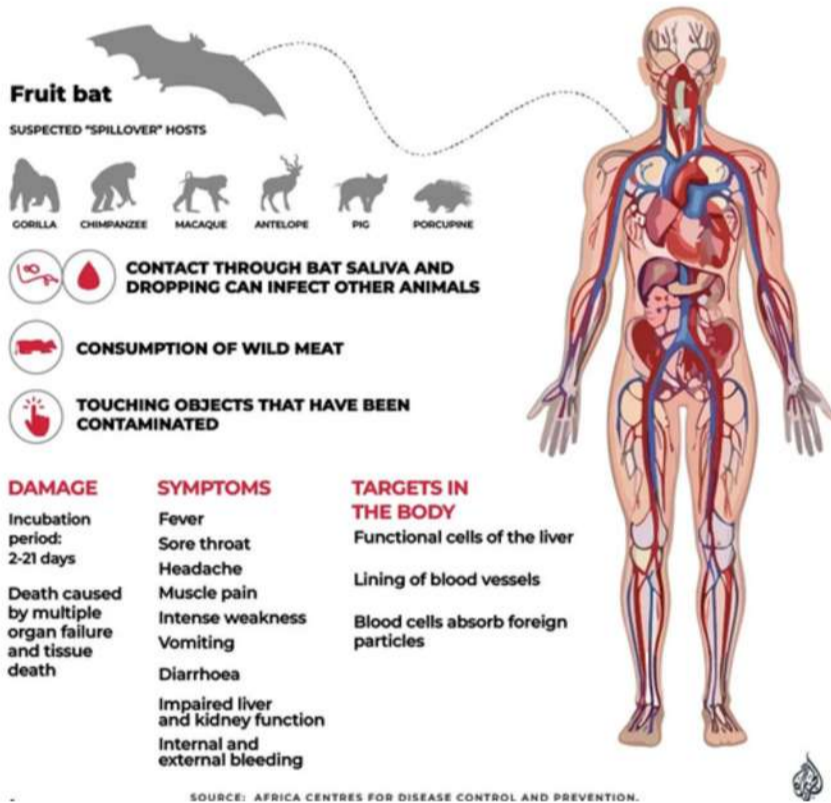
India has adopted a precautionary approach by strengthening airport surveillance, hospital preparedness, laboratory testing capacity, and rapid response systems. The government has also postponed the India-Africa Forum Summit and issued travel advisories for affected regions, including South Sudan. The response reflects lessons drawn from India's Covid-19 management and from Kerala's successful containment strategies during Nipah outbreaks, particularly through surveillance, contact tracing, isolation protocols, and public communication.



Ebola virus disease

Ebola is notorious for causing severe internal and external bleeding by attacking blood vessels. First identified in 1976, most outbreaks have occurred in parts of Africa, killing at least 15,000 people.

According to the WHO, it is thought that fruit bats are natural hosts of the Ebola virus.



Broader Public Health & Global Governance Concerns

The Ebola outbreak, coming after recent zoonotic disease incidents such as Hantavirus outbreaks, highlights the growing threat posed by emerging infectious diseases and the continued vulnerability of global health systems. It underlines the importance of sustained epidemiological surveillance, scientific research, emergency readiness, and coordinated international response mechanisms.

WHO advisory

The World Health Organization has emphasised that countries must strengthen preparedness capacities under the International Health Regulations framework to ensure early detection, rapid reporting, and effective management of public health emergencies.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q.) COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented devastation worldwide. However, technological advancements are being availed readily to win over the crisis. Give an account of how technology was sought to aid management of the pandemic.
 (GS III – Science and Technology – 2020)

RELEVANCE

GS II : Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Practice questions

With reference to recent concerns regarding the Ebola outbreak, consider the following statements:

1. The recent Ebola outbreak in Africa involves the Bundibugyo strain, for which no approved vaccine or targeted treatment currently exists.
2. The World Health Organization declares a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) only for diseases with confirmed global transmission across continents.
3. Experiences from zoonotic disease management, including Nipah containment in Kerala, highlight the importance of rapid vaccine development in epidemic control.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Crushing problem

India is witnessing a sharp rise in edible oil prices due to increasing global prices, supply disruptions, and high import dependence. Consumer Price Index (CPI) data showed significant inflation in oils and fats, directly affecting household budgets because cooking oil is an essential daily consumption item across income groups. Since India imports more than 60 per cent of its edible oil requirement, domestic prices remain highly vulnerable to international market fluctuations and currency depreciation.

Global Supply Pressures & Import Dependence

International edible oil prices have risen because major palm oil producers such as Malaysia and Indonesia increased biodiesel blending mandates, reducing export availability. At the same time, higher fertilizer prices, freight costs, and shipping disruptions linked to the Iran conflict have pushed up sunflower and soybean oil prices. The weakening of the Indian rupee has further increased import costs, worsening inflationary pressure on consumers.



Why High Prices Hurt Poorer Households More

Sharp increases in cooking oil prices disproportionately affect lower-income households because edible oil is a basic nutritional necessity rather than a discretionary product. While affluent consumers may absorb higher prices more easily, poorer households may reduce essential consumption, affecting nutritional intake and food security. Therefore, the argument that higher prices may improve public health by reducing oil consumption overlooks the unequal economic burden across social groups.

TOP 10 PALM OIL IMPORTING COUNTRIES FOR 2024



Limitations of Current Government Measures

The government attempted to address the issue through higher Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for oilseeds and changes in import duties. However, higher MSPs did not significantly improve domestic oilseed production, as many farmers shifted towards crops such as maize due to assured demand from ethanol production. Similarly, reducing duties on crude edible oils while maintaining high duties on refined oils failed to reduce import dependence, with edible oil imports continuing to rise.

Long-Term Policy Direction

In the short term, rationalising customs duties on refined edible oils may help reduce pressure on household consumption costs. In the long run, India needs to strengthen domestic oilseed production by making crops such as mustard, sunflower, sesame, and coconut more economically attractive to farmers. Reducing excessive dependence on imported palm oil through better crop incentives, productivity improvements, and diversification of edible oil sources is essential for long-term food and economic security.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q.) With reference to 'palm oil', consider the following statements:

1. The palm oil tree is native to Southeast Asia.
2. The palm oil is a raw material for some industries producing lipstick and perfumes.
3. The palm oil can be used to produce biodiesel.

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

Practice questions

Q.) With reference to the recent rise in edible oil prices in India, consider the following statements:

1. India depends heavily on imports to meet its edible oil requirements.
2. Expansion of biodiesel mandates in major palm oil-producing countries can affect global edible oil prices.
3. Increasing Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for oilseeds automatically ensures higher domestic oilseed production.
4. Depreciation of the Indian rupee can increase the cost of edible oil imports.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

RELEVANCE

GS III : Major crops-cropping patterns; farm subsidies and minimum support prices

Trump now ties deal with Iran to Abraham Accords

U.S. President Donald Trump recently called for more Arab and Muslim-majority nations to join the Abraham Accords as part of a broader regional diplomatic framework involving Israel. He stated that countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan should join the framework, while linking the expansion of the accords to ongoing regional diplomatic efforts involving Iran and West Asian security issues.

What are the Abraham Accords?

The Abraham Accords are a series of diplomatic agreements brokered by the United States in 2020 during Trump's first presidential term to normalize relations between Israel and several Arab countries. The agreements marked a major shift in West Asian geopolitics by moving away from decades of Arab-Israeli hostility towards cooperation in diplomacy, trade, security, and technology. The accords were presented as a framework to promote peace, regional stability, economic engagement, and strategic coordination in the Middle East and North Africa.

Why were the Accords Formed?

Several Arab states viewed normalization with Israel as an opportunity to strengthen economic cooperation, access advanced technology, and deepen ties with the United States. At the same time, a shared concern regarding Iran's regional influence and nuclear programme encouraged greater security coordination among participating countries. For Israel, the accords represented a significant diplomatic breakthrough by expanding formal recognition within the Arab world without waiting for a final resolution of the Palestinian issue.

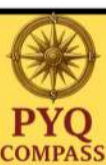
Evolution of the Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords initially began in 2020 with the normalization agreements between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. This was followed by similar arrangements involving Sudan and Morocco later in the same year. Over time, additional countries such as Kazakhstan expressed willingness to join the framework. While countries like Egypt and Jordan already had long-standing peace treaties with Israel prior to the accords, recent diplomatic efforts have focused on encouraging wider regional participation, especially from influential states such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The accords are now viewed as an evolving platform for diplomatic normalization, economic integration, and regional security cooperation in West Asia.



PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q.) Consider the following statements (2023) :
 Statement-I: Israel has established diplomatic relations with some Arab States. Statement-II: The 'Arab Peace Initiative' mediated by Saudi Arabia was signed by Israel and Arab League.
 Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I
 (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
 (c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
 (d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

Practice questions

Q.) With reference to the Abraham Accords, consider the following statements:

1. The Abraham Accords were brokered by the United States in 2020 to normalize relations between Israel and certain Arab countries.
2. The agreements were influenced in part by shared concerns regarding Iran's regional influence and nuclear programme.
3. Egypt and Jordan established diplomatic relations with Israel for the first time through the Abraham Accords.
4. Expansion of the accords has been viewed as part of broader efforts toward regional diplomatic and security cooperation in West Asia.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

RELEVANCE

GS II : Bilateral, regional and global groupings involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

IIP to track output of rare earth minerals, gas & water supply

The Government will release a revised Index of Industrial Production (IIP) series on 1 June 2026 with 2022–23 as the new base year, replacing the existing 2011–12 series. The updated index expands industrial coverage to sectors such as rare earth minerals, gas supply, and waste management while aligning with the new NIC-2025 classification system. The revision aims to improve the accuracy, granularity, and contemporary relevance of India's industrial growth measurement.

STATIC CORE LINKAGE

What is IIP?

Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is a composite indicator measuring short-term changes in industrial output

Compiled by : Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Frequency : Monthly

Purpose : Tracks industrial growth trends and economic activity

Current Release Timeline : Released within 42 days of reference month

Features of the revised IIP

- **New base year :** The revised IIP series shall have base year as 2022–23
- **Expands industrial coverage :** includes minor minerals, rare earth minerals, gas supply, and waste management; also introducing separate sub-indices for renewable energy and different categories of minerals.
- **Revised Product Basket and Classification :** Product Basket : Expanded to 1,042 products classified into 463 item groups. This is aligned with National Industrial Classification Framework (NIC-2025)
- **Geometric Mean Method:** Adopted to ensure smoother and statistically consistent linking between the old 2011–12 series and the new 2022–23 series.
- **Greater Sectoral Granularity:** Separate sub-indices for renewable energy and rare earth minerals improve sector-specific policy analysis and industrial monitoring.
- **Dynamic Factory Panel:** Newly commissioned factories can now be added while permanently closed units may be removed to maintain representativeness of industrial production data.
- **International Standards Compliance:** India's IIP release timeline follows data dissemination norms prescribed by the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q.) Explain the difference between computing methodology of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) before the year 2015 and after the year 2015. (GS III – Indian Economy – 2021, 10 Marks)

Practice questions

Q.) With reference to the revised Index of Industrial Production (IIP) series, consider the following statements:

1. The revised series has base year 2022–23 instead of 2011–2012.
2. The revised series broadens industrial coverage by incorporating sectors such as rare earth minerals and waste management activities.
3. The updated IIP framework separately tracks electricity generated from renewable and non-renewable sources.
4. The revised IIP series has been aligned with the National Statistical Classification (NSC)-2025 framework.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

RELEVANCE

GS III : Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth.

Practice Questions and answers

Q.) Consider the following statements regarding demographic trends mentioned in recent population data:

1. India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has fallen below the replacement level fertility.
2. India's median age is lower than that of China.
3. India currently faces a shrinking workforce due to a rapidly ageing population.
4. India's Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has shown improvement in recent years.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Statement 1: Correct — India's TFR has declined to 1.9, below the replacement level of 2.1.

Statement 2: Correct — India's median age (~29 years) is significantly lower than that of China (~40 years).

Statement 3: Incorrect — India still retains a large working-age population and demographic dividend; shrinking workforce is a future concern, not a current reality.

Statement 4: Correct — IMR has improved and declined to 24.

Q.) With reference to the regulatory protection of the Aravalli Hills, consider the following statements:

- The original delineation of the Aravalli Hills by the Forest Survey of India relied primarily on slope-based geomorphological analysis rather than elevation alone.
- The MoEF&CC committee report accepted by the Supreme Court in November 2025 significantly expanded the number of hill formations eligible for regulatory protection in Rajasthan.
- The proposed expert committee is expected to examine both the scientific definition of the Aravalli and the framework governing permissible developmental and mining activities.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans : (a) 1 and 3 only

Statement 1 is correct : Forest Survey of India had originally mapped the Aravalli Hills using Survey of India topographic sheets, digitised contour data, and a 3-degree slope criterion. Therefore, the delineation was based mainly on geomorphological and slope analysis rather than only on elevation.

Statement 2 is incorrect : The controversy surrounding the later committee definition arose from concerns that the 100-metre elevation criterion could exclude many ecologically sensitive hill formations from legal protection. Critics argued that only a limited number of hills in Rajasthan would satisfy the threshold, thereby weakening environmental safeguards and increasing the risk of unregulated mining.

Statement 3 is correct : The proposed expert committee has been tasked not only with scientifically redefining the Aravalli Hills, but also with examining permissible developmental activities, regulated mining, and the broader environmental governance framework for the region.

Practice Questions and answers

Q.) With reference to the revised Index of Industrial Production (IIP) series, consider the following statements:

1. The revised series has base year 2022–23 instead of 2011–2012.
2. The revised series broadens industrial coverage by incorporating sectors such as rare earth minerals and waste management activities.
3. The updated IIP framework separately tracks electricity generated from renewable and non-renewable sources.
4. The revised IIP series has been aligned with the National Statistical Classification (NSC)–2025 framework.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Statement 1 is correct : The revised Index of Industrial Production (IIP) series adopts 2022–23 as the new base year, replacing the earlier 2011–12 series. Base-year revision is periodically undertaken to reflect structural changes in the economy and industrial production patterns.

Statement 2 is correct : The revised series expands industrial coverage by including sectors such as rare earth minerals, gas supply, water supply, sewerage, and waste management activities. This broadens the representativeness of the index in line with emerging sectors of the economy.

Statement 3 is correct : The updated framework introduces separate sub-indices for electricity generated from renewable and non-renewable sources, thereby improving sectoral granularity and industrial monitoring.

Statement 4 is incorrect : The revised IIP series is aligned with the National Industrial Classification (NIC)–2025 framework and not the “National Statistical Classification (NSC)–2025” framework.

Q.) With reference to recent concerns regarding the Ebola outbreak, consider the following statements:

1. The recent Ebola outbreak in Africa involves the Bundibugyo strain, for which no approved vaccine or targeted treatment currently exists.
2. The World Health Organization declares a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) only for diseases with confirmed global transmission across continents.
3. Experiences from zoonotic disease management, including Nipah containment in Kerala, highlight the importance of rapid vaccine development in epidemic control.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans : (a) 1 only

Statement 1 is correct : Recent Ebola outbreak involves the Bundibugyo strain, which reportedly has no approved vaccine or targeted treatment at present.

Statement 2 is incorrect : A Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) may be declared by WHO when an outbreak poses a serious international public-health risk requiring coordinated global response, even if worldwide spread has not yet occurred.

Statement 3 is incorrect : Kerala’s Nipah management highlighted the importance of surveillance, contact tracing, and isolation protocols, rather than rapid vaccine development as the primary tool of epidemic control.

Practice Questions and answers

Q.) With reference to recent population policy measures proposed by Andhra Pradesh, consider the following statements:

1. The State has proposed incentives for families with three or more children in response to concerns regarding ageing population and declining fertility rates.
2. Replacement level fertility refers to the fertility rate required to maintain a stable population size over time.
3. International experience suggests that one-time cash incentives help improve fertility rates while supplementing economic growth.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans : (a) 1 and 2 only

Statement 1 is correct : Andhra Pradesh has proposed incentives for families with three or more children due to concerns over declining fertility rates, rapid demographic ageing, and the possibility of a shrinking workforce in the future.

Statement 2 is correct : Replacement level fertility refers to the fertility rate required for a population to replace itself across generations without long-term population decline. It is generally considered to be around 2.1.

Statement 3 is incorrect : Evidence from India and several other countries indicates that one-time cash incentives alone rarely produce substantial or sustained increases in fertility rates. Long-term improvements in fertility outcomes are usually associated with broader social support systems such as childcare infrastructure, parental leave, flexible employment conditions, and public welfare support.

Q.) With reference to the growing heatwave crisis in India, consider the following:

1. Wet-bulb temperature refers to the combined effect of heat and humidity on the human body's cooling capacity.
2. El Niño conditions are generally associated with strengthening of monsoon circulation over India.
3. Rising night-time temperatures can increase heat-related health risks by reducing physiological recovery from daytime heat stress.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans : (a) 1 and 3 only

Statement 1 is correct : Wet-bulb temperature measures the combined effect of heat and humidity on the human body's cooling mechanism. Under highly humid conditions, sweat evaporation becomes less effective, increasing physiological heat stress even when actual air temperature may appear comparatively lower.

Statement 2 is incorrect : El Niño conditions are generally associated with weakening of monsoon circulation over India. They often contribute to hotter and drier summer conditions and may increase the probability of deficient monsoon rainfall.

Statement 3 is correct : Rising night-time temperatures reduce the body's ability to recover from daytime heat exposure. Continuous heat stress without sufficient cooling during the night increases health risks, particularly for elderly individuals, outdoor workers, and economically vulnerable populations living in poorly ventilated conditions.

Practice Questions and answers

Q.) Q.) With reference to the Abraham Accords, consider the following statements:

- 1.The Abraham Accords were brokered by the United States in 2020 to normalize relations between Israel and certain Arab countries.
- 2.The agreements were influenced in part by shared concerns regarding Iran's regional influence and nuclear programme.
- 3.Egypt and Jordan established diplomatic relations with Israel for the first time through the Abraham Accords.
- 4.Expansion of the accords has been viewed as part of broader efforts toward regional diplomatic and security cooperation in West Asia.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Statement 1 is correct : Abraham Accords were brokered by the United States in 2020 during the presidency of Donald Trump to normalize diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab countries.

Statement 2 is correct : One of the important geopolitical factors behind the accords was the shared concern among participating countries regarding Iran's regional influence and nuclear programme.

Statement 3 is incorrect : Egypt and Jordan had already established formal diplomatic relations and peace treaties with Israel prior to the Abraham Accords. They were therefore not first-time normalization participants under the framework.

Statement 4 is correct : The accords are increasingly viewed as part of a broader regional framework involving diplomatic normalization, economic cooperation, and strategic coordination in West Asia.

Q.) With reference to the recent rise in edible oil prices in India, consider the following statements:

- 1.India depends heavily on imports to meet its edible oil requirements.
- 2.Expansion of biodiesel mandates in major palm oil-producing countries can affect global edible oil prices.
- 3.Increasing Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for oilseeds automatically ensures higher domestic oilseed production.
- 4.Depreciation of the Indian rupee can increase the cost of edible oil imports.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only

Statement 1 is correct : India imports more than 60 per cent of its edible oil requirement, making domestic prices highly sensitive to international market conditions.

Statement 2 is correct : Major palm oil producers such as Malaysia and Indonesia have tightened biodiesel blending mandates, reducing export availability and contributing to higher global palm oil prices.

Statement 3 is incorrect : Higher MSPs alone do not necessarily guarantee increased oilseed production. Farmers may shift to alternative crops offering better profitability or assured market demand, such as maize linked to ethanol production.

Statement 4 is correct : Depreciation of the Indian rupee raises the cost of imports by making foreign purchases more expensive in domestic currency terms, thereby contributing to higher edible oil prices in India.