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P2. NATIONAL

50 OTT platforms disabled over the last two years - Examines the challenges of ensuring access, retention and equal opportunities for children with disabilities within India's education system.

P3. HEALTH

Building resilience to protect elderly from climate stressors - Climate change disproportionately affects older persons by intensifying health, social and economic vulnerabilities, underscoring the need for age-inclusive climate resilience and disaster management.

P4. WORLD

International waterways must remain safe and unimpeded: S. Jaishankar - India reaffirmed its commitment to maritime security, regional stability, peaceful conflict resolution and international law while outlining its diplomatic priorities in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

Editor's Note

In the latest edition of Pala Civil Times, we explore a diverse range of contemporary developments shaping India's governance, economy, environment and foreign policy. Our discussions begin with the evolving regulatory framework governing OTT platforms, examining how India is strengthening digital content regulation while balancing accountability and the growth of its digital ecosystem. We also analyse how climate change is emerging as a major challenge for India's ageing population, highlighting the need for age-inclusive climate resilience and social protection.

In the Decoded Editorials section, we examine the changing nature of Assam's flood patterns, exploring how geographical processes, extreme weather events and institutional challenges are reshaping disaster vulnerability in the State. We also discuss the revised Index of Core Industries (ICI) and understand how its updated methodology, revised weights and expanded sectoral coverage provide a more representative picture of India's industrial economy.

Our International Affairs section analyses India's interventions at the East Asia Summit and ASEAN Regional Forum, with particular emphasis on maritime security, freedom of navigation, regional stability and India's diplomatic approach to contemporary geopolitical conflicts. In the Economy section, we explain the recent liberalisation of FDI norms for inventory-based e-commerce exports, highlighting its significance for MSMEs, exports and India's integration with global markets.

Students are encouraged to approach each topic with an analytical mindset, connecting current developments with their constitutional, economic, environmental and international dimensions.

Happy Reading!

P7. ECONOMICS

Government eases FDI rules for e-commerce companies aimed at export - India has liberalised FDI norms for export-oriented inventory-based e-commerce to enhance MSME competitiveness, simplify compliance and expand access to global markets.

Editorials Decoded

The Indian EXPRESS

Floods shift course. State response is static

The changing pattern of floods in Assam highlights how geographical processes, extreme weather and institutional gaps are reshaping disaster vulnerability and flood management.

THE HINDU

Core upgrade

The revised Index of Core Industries modernises India's leading industrial indicator through an updated base year, improved methodology and expanded sectoral coverage, making it more representative of the present-day economy.

50 OTT platforms disabled over the last two years

India has strengthened oversight of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms to **curb the dissemination of obscene, sexually explicit and other unlawful digital content**. In July 2026, the Union Government informed Parliament that 50 OTT platforms had been disabled over the previous two years for violating provisions of the **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000**, the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**, and other applicable laws. The measures reflect an increasing emphasis on ensuring accountability, user safety and legal compliance in India's expanding digital entertainment ecosystem.

Legal Framework Governing OTT Platforms

- **The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media, Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, notified under the IT Act, 2000**, prescribe a **Code of Ethics** for digital news publishers and OTT platforms.
- Intermediaries must exercise due diligence and address complaints relating to unlawful digital content.
- Recent amendments require intermediaries to remove unlawful content within **three hours** of receiving a court order or a reasoned government direction.
- Under **Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act,** intermediaries lose safe harbour protection if they fail to expeditiously remove or disable access to unlawful content after due notice.

Penal Provisions and Enforcement Measures

- **Section 67 of the IT Act** prescribes **punishment for publishing** or transmitting obscene electronic content, while **Sections 67A and 67B** provide **enhanced penalties** for sexually explicit material and Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), respectively.
- Section 294 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, criminalises the production, sale, distribution, import and public exhibition of obscene materials, including electronic content.
- **Section 4 of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986**, prohibits indecent representation of women.
- Enforcement actions included blocking 18 OTT platforms in 2024, 25 platforms in 2025, and five additional platforms in 2026, along with associated websites, applications and social media accounts.

Regulatory Significance and Emerging Trends

- The regulatory measures seek to strengthen compliance with digital content laws and promote a safer online environment.
- Authorities have acted against digital intermediaries facilitating access to unlawful content, including material related to **Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material (CSEAM) (**In July 2026, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) directed Meta to disable the advertisements and content promoting and facilitating access to Child Sexual Exploitative & Abuse Material on Instagram.)
- The scale of enforcement highlights the government's focus on monitoring high-reach digital platforms and responding to public complaints and institutional references.

Implications

As India's digital content ecosystem continues to expand, regulation of OTT platforms is expected to become more structured and enforcement-oriented. Future efforts are likely to focus on consistent implementation of the IT Act and the IT Rules, 2021, timely removal of unlawful content, adherence to the prescribed Code of Ethics, and stronger cooperation between the government and digital intermediaries. Balancing innovation in digital media with legal accountability and user protection will remain central to the evolving regulatory framework.

PYQ Compass

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

Q. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has to address the challenges faced by children in the digital era. Examine the existing policies and suggest measures the Commission can initiate to tackle the issue. (GS II : 2025)

RELEVANCE

GS II : Indian Polity

Building resilience to protect elderly from climate stressors

Climate change affects populations unevenly, with its impacts shaped by factors such as age, gender and economic status. Older persons constitute one of the most vulnerable groups due to their greater exposure to health, social and economic risks arising from climate-related events. As India's elderly population continues to grow, climate resilience must increasingly incorporate age-sensitive approaches that protect the health, dignity, mobility and livelihoods of senior citizens while strengthening their capacity to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Climate Risks Faced by Older Persons

- Climate change affects older persons through both sudden shocks (floods, cyclones and extreme weather) and slow-onset stresses such as rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, drought, water scarcity and environmental degradation.
- ***These hazards aggravate chronic illnesses, increase mortality risk, reduce mobility and raise long-term care requirements.***
- Common impacts include heat stress, respiratory ailments, disrupted sleep, mental distress and interruptions in access to medicines and healthcare during disasters.
- Migration and changing family structures can increase social isolation, further affecting mental well-being and resilience.

Factors Shaping Vulnerability and Resilience

- ***India's elderly population is projected to increase from 149 million in 2022 to about 347 million by 2050***, expanding the number of people exposed to climate-related risks.
- Vulnerability is intensified by ***living alone, poverty, financial dependence, disability, poor health, insecure housing and residence in hazard-prone areas.***
- Risk is determined by the interaction of multiple disadvantages, including ***age, gender, widowhood, disability, poverty, social isolation and local environmental conditions.***
- Repeated exposure to climate hazards weakens recovery capacity and reduces long-term resilience among older persons.

Building Age-Responsive Climate Resilience

- **Household preparedness** should include ***food and water storage, stronger shelters, savings, disaster planning and livelihood diversification***, supported by family and community networks.
- Communities can enhance resilience through ***neighbour check-ins, volunteer networks, community shelters, relocation support and age-inclusive early warning systems.***
- Policy priorities include ***climate-resilient healthcare, expanded social protection, livelihood assistance, disaster preparedness, climate-resilient housing and stronger community-based care systems.***
- Public services should become more age-friendly by addressing barriers such as poor health, limited education, digital exclusion, long waiting times and inadequate support during service delivery.

Way Forward

An ageing population requires climate adaptation strategies that move beyond hazard-centred disaster management towards people-centred resilience. Integrating climate adaptation with healthy ageing, social protection and disaster risk reduction can reduce vulnerabilities and improve long-term well-being. Achieving this requires stronger institutional coordination, improved data systems, accessible public services and targeted interventions for the most vulnerable older persons, ensuring that climate resilience remains inclusive and equitable for all.

PYQ Compass

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

Q. Despite comprehensive policies for equity and social justice, underprivileged sections are not yet getting the full benefits of affirmative action envisaged by the Constitution. Comment. (GS I - Indian Society - 2024)

RELEVANCE

GS III: Environment; Disaster Management.

International waterways must remain safe and unimpeded: S. Jaishankar

At the 21st East Asia Summit (EAS) and the 33rd ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Manila, India outlined its positions on major regional and global issues amid an increasingly uncertain international environment. The discussions covered maritime security, the West Asia crisis, the conflict in Myanmar, terrorism, cybercrime, Indo-Pacific stability and regional diplomacy, reflecting India's emphasis on dialogue, international law and cooperative regional engagement.

India's Maritime and Regional Security Priorities

- India stressed that international maritime channels must remain safe, unimpeded and fully consistent with international law.
- It stated that attacks on seafarers, civilian shipping and maritime infrastructure cannot be accepted under any circumstances.
- India supports a substantive, effective and legally binding Code of Conduct (CoC) for the South China Sea, fully compliant with UNCLOS 1982.
- The country reiterated its commitment to **ASEAN centrality, regional stability and a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific.**

India's Position on Regional Conflicts and Emerging Challenges

- India called for dialogue and diplomacy to address the conflict in the Persian Gulf.
- It supported a political solution to the ongoing conflict in Myanmar and expressed support for ASEAN-led efforts.
- India reaffirmed its policy of zero tolerance for terrorism, emphasising that acts of terrorism must have consequences.
- It also called for collective action against cyberscam centres and highlighted the impact of multiple conflicts on energy, food and health security, particularly for the Global South.
- On the Israel–Palestine issue, India reiterated support for a two-state solution.

RELEVANCE

GS-II: International Relations

Diplomatic Engagements and Regional Responses

- India announced that it will host the Seventh EAS Conference on Maritime Security Cooperation in Kochi.
- It will also organise an EAS Maritime Heritage Festival in Lothal.
- The Ministry of External Affairs rejected Pakistan's remarks on Kashmir and the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), describing them as baseless and unwarranted.
- India stated that Pakistan had used a multilateral forum to spread disinformation and divert attention from its record of sponsoring cross-border terrorism.
- India has kept the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance since the April 20, 2025 Pahalgam terror attack. (***Refer The Pala Civil Times 21 July 2026***)

Way Forward

India's interventions at these forums reflected a consistent diplomatic approach centred on peaceful conflict resolution, adherence to international law, maritime security and regional cooperation. Simultaneously, India maintained firm positions on terrorism and bilateral issues while reaffirming its commitment to ASEAN-led regional processes. The discussions underscore India's effort to balance strategic security, diplomatic engagement and regional stability in an increasingly volatile global order.

PYQ Compass

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

PYQ COMPASS

Q. With respect to the South China sea, maritime territorial disputes and rising tension affirm the need for safeguarding maritime security to ensure freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region. In this context, discuss the bilateral issues between India and China. (GS II – 2014)

Core upgrade (The Hindu : 24-07-2026)

The Office of Economic Adviser (OEA), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has launched the revised Index of Core Industries (ICI) series with base year 2022–23, replacing the earlier 2011–12 series. ICI is a monthly indicator measuring the production performance of India's core infrastructure sectors and serves as an early indicator of industrial activity and overall economic health. The adoption of the revised 2022–23 base year modernises the index, making it more representative of India's evolving industrial structure through updated sectoral coverage, revised methodology and recalibrated weights.

Key Features & Structure of ICI

- The latest ICI measures monthly production performance of **nine core industries** that together form the backbone of industrial growth.
- Covers **Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilisers, Steel, Cement, Electricity and Iron Ore(newly added).**
- Compiled by the Office of Economic Adviser (OEA), DPIIT, and released every month.
- Functions as a leading indicator for assessing industrial performance and broader economic activity.
- The revised series adopts 2022–23 as the base year, replacing the 2011–12 series.

INDEX OF CORE INDUSTRIES (ICI)
BASE YEAR 2022-23

Sector	Weight (%)
1. Coal	5.596
2. Natural Gas	3.841
3. Crude Oil	7.430
4. Refinery Products	22.572
5. Fertilizers	2.731
6. Steel	17.584
7. Cement	4.410
8. Electricity	30.932
9. Iron Ore	4.905
Overall Index	100.000

Recent Development

- Iron Ore has been added as the ninth core industry, recognising its importance in industrial production.
- Steel Index is now based on gross production, ensuring consistency with the revised Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- Coal Index includes only Raw Coal, excluding Coal Middling and Washed Coal to eliminate double counting.
- Sectoral weights have been revised; **Electricity now accounts for over 30%**, while **Coal (≈5.6%)** and **Natural Gas (≈3.8%)** have seen significant reductions.
- The first release under the revised series recorded 5% growth in June 2026, the highest in five months.

RELEVANCE

GS III : Indian Economy

Significance and Challenges

- The revised methodology improves the accuracy and representativeness of India's industrial statistics.
- Higher weight for Electricity reflects growing industrial demand, digital infrastructure and expansion of renewable energy.
- June 2026 growth was partly driven by a statistical base effect, especially in Iron Ore and Electricity, requiring cautious interpretation.
- Persistent contraction in Crude Oil and Natural Gas production highlights structural challenges in domestic energy security.
- The revision has revived calls for consolidating ICI and WPI under MoSPI to strengthen statistical governance and institutional coherence.

Way Forward

The revised ICI represents a significant improvement in India's macroeconomic statistical framework by better reflecting the country's current industrial structure and eliminating earlier methodological distortions. As a key leading indicator, it will support more informed policymaking, economic forecasting and infrastructure planning.

PYQ Compass

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

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Explain the difference between computing methodology of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) before the year 2015 and after the year 2015.

Floods shift course. State response is static (Indian Express : 24-07-2026)

Assam experiences recurrent flooding during the monsoon, but the 2026 floods revealed a changing pattern of vulnerability. Districts in Upper Assam, located away from the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, witnessed unprecedented devastation after floodwaters from Nagaland entered the region. The disaster highlights how ***evolving flood behaviour, combined with changing climatic conditions, is exposing new areas to risk*** and testing the preparedness of existing flood management systems.

Changing Nature of the Floods

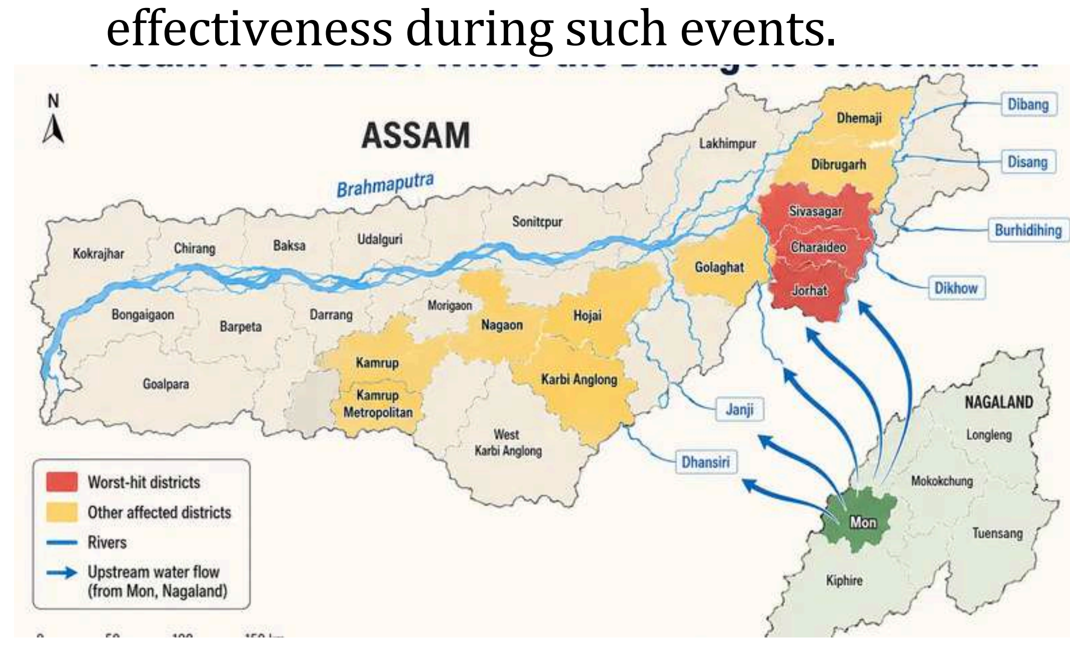
- Upper Assam districts such as Sivasagar, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat suffered unprecedented damage.
- Floodwaters originating from Nagaland's Mon district overtopped embankments before spreading across open terrain into the Brahmaputra.
- More than 20 people lost their lives within 24 hours, illustrating the rapid escalation of the disaster.
- The state government described the event as one for which "no one could have been prepared," reflecting the exceptional scale of the floods.

Geographical Drivers of the Disaster

- After entering the relatively flat Assam valley, the Brahmaputra slows down, causing **large-scale sediment deposition**.
- Continuous sediment accumulation has gradually raised the riverbed, reducing the river's capacity to contain floodwaters.
- Upper Assam is therefore becoming increasingly vulnerable to floods that were earlier associated mainly with downstream regions.
- ***The river's tendency to shift its course limits the long-term effectiveness of confining it through embankments alone.***

Governance Concerns & Institutional Gaps

- Extreme rainfall in Nagaland's Mon district, combined with already saturated slopes, triggered landslides and downstream flooding.
- The disaster demonstrates the need to treat rivers as shared ecological systems rather than isolated state-level concerns.
- Effective flood management requires timely warning systems and coordinated action across neighbouring states.
- The Brahmaputra Board has been constrained by staff shortages and inadequate technical capacity, limiting its effectiveness during such events.



Way Forward

The floods illustrate how geographical processes and increasingly intense weather events are reshaping flood risks in Assam. The disaster also exposes the limitations of relying primarily on embankments and reactive responses. Strengthening institutional coordination, improving preparedness and revitalising existing river management mechanisms will be essential to reduce future losses as extreme weather events become more frequent.

PYQ Compass

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

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Which of the following is/are tributary/tributaries of Brahmaputra? (2016)
1. Dibang
2. Kameng
3. Lohit

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 1 only b) 2 and 3 only c) 1 and 3 only d) 1, 2 and 3

RELEVANCE ***GS Paper I: Physical Geography—Geophysical phenomena***

Government eases FDI rules for e-commerce companies aimed at export

India has permitted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the inventory-based model of e-commerce exclusively for the export of domestically manufactured goods. The policy shift seeks to strengthen India's export ecosystem by reducing compliance burdens on exporters, particularly Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and by improving their access to global markets. The measure also reflects India's efforts to enhance export competitiveness amid evolving international trade regulations and changing global market conditions.

Policy Framework and Key Provisions

- FDI is now permitted in the inventory-based e-commerce model exclusively for exports of goods manufactured in India.
- The policy is implemented in accordance with the **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023**, the **Handbook of Procedures (HBP) and the Foreign Exchange Management (Export of Goods & Services) Regulations, 2015,** as amended.
- **Under the inventory-based model, e-commerce entities own inventory and sell products directly to consumers**.
- In contrast, under **the marketplace model**, the e-commerce entity functions only as a digital platform connecting buyers and sellers, with **100% FDI permitted under the automatic route.**
- Restrictions applicable to inventory-based e-commerce continue for domestic retail operations and have been relaxed only for exports.

Rationale and Expected Benefits

- The reform aims to reduce compliance requirements by enabling large e-commerce entities to manage documentation, testing, labelling and export procedures on behalf of MSMEs.
- Large platforms can help manufacturers comply with emerging international traceability requirements, including **Digital Product Passport (DPP)** regulations in the European Union which require digital records spanning the entire lifecycle of a product.
- Predictive demand analysis and established global distribution networks can improve market access for Indian manufacturers.
- The policy is expected to increase the participation of MSMEs in cross-border e-commerce by lowering procedural barriers and facilitating connections with international buyers.

Emerging Concerns and Future Outlook

- Monitoring separate inventories for export and domestic sales may become difficult, potentially leading to demands for extending the inventory-based model to domestic e-commerce.
- The clarification improves policy certainty by distinguishing export-oriented inventory operations from domestic retail regulations.
- India's e-commerce exports remain significantly below their potential despite favourable market opportunities and are constrained by compliance-related challenges.
- Experts advocate a dedicated e-commerce export policy to replace the existing fragmented regulatory framework and support sustained export growth.

Way Forward

The relaxation of FDI norms for export-oriented inventory-based e-commerce marks a significant policy initiative to strengthen India's export competitiveness while easing compliance burdens on MSMEs. By enabling larger e-commerce entities to support exporters in meeting international standards, the reform can broaden global market access for Indian products. Its long-term success, however, will depend on effective implementation, regulatory oversight and the development of a comprehensive policy framework that sustains export growth while preserving safeguards for domestic e-commerce.

PYQ Compass

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

Q. An e-commerce revenue model where the seller has control over pricing but doesn't keep products in stock and instead transfers customer orders and shipment details to a third-party supplier, who then ships the goods directly to the customer, is called: (2026)
(a) Dropshipping Model
(b) Affiliate Revenue Model
(c) Transaction Fee Revenue Model
(d) Agency Revenue Model

RELEVANCE ***GS III : Indian Economy***

PYQ Compass

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

Q. An e-commerce revenue model where the seller has control over pricing but doesn't keep products in stock and instead transfers customer orders and shipment details to a third-party supplier, who then ships the goods directly to the customer, is called: (2026)
(a) Dropshipping Model
(b) Affiliate Revenue Model
(c) Transaction Fee Revenue Model
(d) Agency Revenue Model

Ans : a
In dropshipping, the seller acts as a storefront or "merchant of record". They maintain control over the retail pricing and profit margins but outsource all warehousing, inventory management, and shipping logistics to a third-party manufacturer or wholesaler. Key Advantages
Low Startup Costs: Sellers do not need to buy products in bulk or rent warehouses, minimizing upfront capital and inventory risk.
Scalability: The seller can easily test and offer a wide variety of products without managing the physical logistics of fulfillment.
Hence option (a) is the correct answer.

Q. Which of the following is/are tributary/tributaries of Brahmaputra? (2016)
1. Dibang
2. Kameng
3. Lohit
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
a) 1 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : Tributaries of Brahmaputra - Dibang River, Lohit River, Dhansiri River, Kolong River, Kameng River, Manas River, Raidak River, Jaldhaka River, Teesta River, Subansiri River.

The Brahmaputra, one of the largest rivers of the world, has its origin in the Chemayungdung glacier of the Kailash range near the Mansarovar lake. From here, it traverses eastward longitudinally for a distance of nearly 1,200 km in a dry and flat region of southern Tibet, where it is known as the Tsangpo, which means 'the purifier.' The Rango Tsangpo is the major right bank tributary of this river in Tibet. It emerges as a turbulent and dynamic river after carving out a deep gorge in the Central Himalayas near Namcha Barwa (7,755 m). The river emerges from the foothills under the name of Siang or Dihang. It enters India west of Sadiya town in Arunachal Pradesh. Flowing southwest, it receives its main left bank tributaries, viz., Dibang or Sikang and Lohit; thereafter, it is known as the Brahmaputra. The Brahmaputra receives numerous tributaries in its 750 km long journey through the Assam valley. In Bangladesh, the Tista joins it on its right bank from where the river is known as the Jamuna. It finally merges with the river Padma, which falls in the Bay of Bengal. The Brahmaputra is well-known for floods, channel shifting and bank erosion. This is due to the fact that most of its tributaries are large, and bring large quantity of sediments owing to heavy rainfall in its catchment area.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. With reference to the revised Index of Core Industries (ICI), consider the following statements:

1. The revised ICI has adopted 2022–23 as the new base year.
2. Iron Ore has been added as a new core industry under the revised series.
3. The revised series is compiled by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a

The revised Index of Core Industries has changed its base year from 2011–12 to 2022–23. Updating the base year ensures that the index better reflects the present structure of the Indian economy, changes in industrial production, and evolving consumption and production patterns.

The revised ICI has expanded from eight to nine core industries with the inclusion of Iron Ore. The sector has been included because of its critical role in industrial production, particularly as the primary raw material for the steel industry.

The Index of Core Industries is compiled and released by the Office of Economic Adviser (OEA) under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Q. With reference to the regulation of OTT platforms, consider the following statements:

1. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 prescribe a Code of Ethics for OTT platforms.
2. Under Section 79 of the Information Technology Act, intermediaries enjoy unconditional safe harbour protection.
3. Recent amendments require intermediaries to remove unlawful content within three hours upon receipt of specified legal directions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 and 3 only
b) 2 only
c) 1 and 2 only
d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: a

The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, notified under the Information Technology Act, 2000, provide the principal regulatory framework for digital intermediaries, digital news publishers and OTT platforms.

Section 79 of the Information Technology Act provides conditional, not unconditional, safe harbour protection to intermediaries.

The recent amendments to the IT Rules, 2021 require intermediaries, including social media platforms and other digital intermediaries, to remove or disable access to unlawful content within three hours after receiving a court order, or a reasoned intimation from the Central Government or an authorised agency.