

P2. NATIONAL



Centre extends PM-Kisan for four more years, allocates ₹3.15 lakh cr. - PM-KISAN is India's flagship Direct Benefit Transfer scheme that provides annual income support to eligible farmer families and has been extended till 2030-31 with a ₹3.15 lakh crore outlay.

P3. NATIONAL



Cabinet approves scheme to promote 'floating' solar plants - The PM SSY promotes floating solar power on reservoirs with battery storage support to utilise India's estimated 102 GW floating solar potential while overcoming land constraints.

P4. WORLD



Spain's PM blames trafficking gangs as 60,000 cross into Ceuta in a day - Ceuta's strategic location makes it a recurring flashpoint for irregular migration, humanitarian crises and Spain-Morocco diplomatic engagement.

P7. ECONOMICS



SC upholds NCLAT order setting aside CCI's ₹301.6-cr. Grasim fine - The Supreme Court upheld the NCLAT decision requiring the CCI to rehear the Grasim-VSF case, reaffirming procedural fairness in competition law while drawing attention to the importance of the viscose staple fibre industry.

Editor's Note

As we enter the eighth month of the year, Pala Civil Times is introducing a unique addition to our daily edition — the **Brain Booster Explainer**. This page is designed to help readers develop an in-depth understanding of one important topic from recent current affairs each day, offering a more comprehensive analysis that complements our popular Brain Booster page.

For this issue, we have brought together a diverse set of topics. Within the national section, we focus on the continuation of the PM-KISAN scheme and the Government's new initiative to promote floating solar power, both of which hold significant potential to shape India's long-term development agenda. We also examine the ongoing debate over the proposed Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) notification for the Western Ghats and the latest developments concerning competition regulation in the viscose staple fibre (VSF) sector. Our international section covers the recent humanitarian crisis in Ceuta, the Spanish enclave that has once again emerged as a flashpoint in global migration politics.

The Decoded Editorials explore India's evolving nutrition challenge, where persistent undernutrition now coexists with rising obesity and lifestyle-related diseases, highlighting the need for informed public health interventions and healthier dietary choices. As these themes have direct links with previous years' UPSC questions and continue to remain relevant for future examinations, we encourage readers to go beyond the headlines and develop a deeper conceptual understanding of each issue.

Happy Reading!

Editorials Decoded

The Indian EXPRESS

A tough road to Hamas disarmament



The latest Israel-Hamas peace initiative links Hamas's disarmament, Israeli military withdrawal and transitional governance in Gaza, but implementation remains constrained by political, security and humanitarian challenges.

THE HINDU

A Healthy Tax



India is facing a nutrition transition where declining undernutrition coincides with rising obesity and non-communicable diseases, necessitating integrated nutrition, regulatory and public health interventions.

Centre extends PM-Kisan for four more years, allocates ₹3.15 lakh cr.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) is a Central Sector income support scheme that provides eligible farmer families with ₹6,000 annually through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Launched in February 2019, the scheme aims to strengthen farmers' financial security by providing timely and transparent income support for agricultural needs. The recent extension of the scheme until 2030–31 reflects its continuing importance in promoting agricultural investment, rural livelihoods and inclusive economic development.

Scheme Framework and Latest Continuation

- **Extension Approved:** Continued from 2026–27 to 2030–31 with an outlay of ₹3.15 lakh crore.
- **Income Support:** Eligible farmer families receive ₹6,000 annually through DBT.
- **Direct Transfers:** Over ₹4.47 lakh crore transferred through 23 instalments since launch.
- **Recent Instalment:** The 23rd instalment benefited over 9.49 crore farmers, releasing more than ₹18,984 crore.
- **Transparent Delivery:** Assistance is credited directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts through the DBT system.



Coverage and Contribution

- **Large Beneficiary Base:** More than 11 crore farmers have benefited under the scheme.
- **Women's Participation:** Women farmers have received over ₹1.06 lakh crore, with nearly one in four beneficiaries being women.
- **Agricultural Investment:** Assistance supports expenditure on seeds, fertilisers, irrigation, machinery and other farm inputs.
- **Budgetary Support:** The Union Budget 2025–26 allocated ₹3.71 lakh crore for food and fertiliser subsidies, while over ₹3.46 lakh crore had been disbursed to PM-KISAN beneficiaries by January 2025.
- **Rural Demand:** Annual income support contributed to strengthening rural consumption and demand.

RELEVANCE

GS III - Agriculture

Significance and Developmental Implications

- **Income Stability:** Provides predictable financial support to farming households.
- **Agricultural Productivity:** Enables timely investment in essential agricultural inputs.
- **Reduced Informal Borrowing:** Lowers dependence on informal credit sources for seasonal expenses.
- **Social Inclusion:** Broad beneficiary coverage, including women farmers, supports inclusive rural development and complements poverty reduction efforts.
- **Growth Linkages:** The scheme depends on sustained economic growth for fiscal resources while helping translate growth into wider rural welfare through direct income support.

Way Forward

The proceedings reflect an effort to balance the state's responsibility to maintain public order with the protection of citizens' right to peaceful protest. Rather than endorsing either unrestricted police powers or an absolute prohibition on pellet guns, the Court favoured scrutiny based on legality, proportionality, and compliance with prescribed procedures. The emphasis on accountability, evidence preservation, and improved police preparedness indicates a policy direction that seeks both effective law enforcement and protection of civil liberties.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. Under the Kisan Credit Card scheme, short term credit support is given to farmers for which of the following purposes? (2020)

1. Working capital for maintenance of farm assets
2. Purchase of combine harvesters, tractors and mini trucks
3. Consumption households requirements of farm
4. Post-harvest expenses
5. Construction of family house and setting up of village cold storage facility

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Cabinet approves scheme to promote 'floating' solar plants

The **Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana** is a **Central Government initiative** to promote **floating solar power projects on reservoirs and other inland water bodies**. Approved with a **financial outlay of ₹5,070 crore**, the scheme seeks to **develop 5,000 MW of floating solar capacity by 2030–31**. It addresses major constraints faced by conventional solar parks, particularly land acquisition, while supporting India's transition towards cleaner and geographically diversified renewable energy generation.

Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana: Key Features

- **Objective:** Promote 5,000 MW of floating solar capacity by 2030–31.
- **Financial Support:** Central Financial Assistance up to ₹1 crore per MW.
- **Implementation:** Executed by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI).
- **Battery Integration:** Projects must include battery storage equal to at least two hours, creating about 10,000 MWh of storage.
- **Diversified Deployment:** Encourages installations on reservoirs and water bodies, especially in States with limited land availability.

Floating Solar Potential and Current Status

- **National Potential:** NISE estimates about 102.18 GW of floating solar potential.
- **Present Capacity:** India has only about 0.7 GW of installed floating solar capacity.
- **Assessment Method:** Potential estimated using six geospatial filters including reservoir size, water availability, depth, solar irradiance, and proximity to roads and substations.
- **Largest Potential States:** Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha and Telangana account for most of the feasible capacity.
- **Flagship Project:** Omkareshwar Floating Solar Park in Madhya Pradesh has 278 MW installed capacity, with plans to expand to 600 MW.

Significance and Emerging Challenges

- **Land Neutral Development:** Reduces dependence on large land parcels required for ground-mounted solar plants.
- **Geographical Diversification:** Expands solar development beyond Rajasthan and Gujarat into reservoir-rich States.
- **Grid Stability:** Mandatory battery storage helps meet peak demand and reduces renewable energy curtailment.
- **Lower Rehabilitation Issues:** Minimises displacement and rehabilitation costs associated with land acquisition.
- **Implementation Challenges:** Higher upfront costs, engineering issues such as anchoring, buoyancy, waterproofing and cable durability require technological improvements.



Way Forward

Floating solar power offers an important pathway for expanding India's renewable energy capacity without increasing pressure on land resources. The Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana seeks to accelerate this transition through financial incentives, mandatory energy storage and wider geographical deployment. Successful implementation can strengthen energy security, improve renewable integration into the grid and unlock a significant share of India's estimated floating solar potential.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. Consider the following statements: (2022)

1. Gujarat has the largest solar park in India.
2. Kerala has a fully solar powered International Airport.
3. Goa has the largest floating solar photovoltaic project in India.

Which of the statements given below is/are correct?

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

RELEVANCE

GS III : Infrastructure: Energy

WORLD

Spain's PM blames Ceuta migrant influx on criminal networks manipulating recent court ruling

Ceuta is a Spanish territory located on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa and, together with Melilla, forms the European Union's only land border with Africa. Its strategic location has made it a major transit point for migrants seeking entry into Europe. The recent large-scale migration into Ceuta has highlighted the challenges of managing irregular migration while balancing humanitarian responsibilities, border security and diplomatic relations between Spain and Morocco.

Ceuta: Strategic Location & Migration Drivers

- **Unique Geography:** Ceuta and Melilla are Spain's territories in North Africa and constitute the EU's only land borders with Africa.
- **Gateway to Europe:** Migrants view Ceuta as one of the shortest routes into Europe from Africa.
- **Trafficking Networks:** Human trafficking groups allegedly spread misleading claims regarding asylum and deportation rules, encouraging mass crossings.
- **Judicial Trigger:** A Spanish Supreme Court ruling on migrants arriving by sea was reportedly misinterpreted as protection from immediate deportation.
- **Socio-economic Push Factors:** Conflict, poverty and economic hardship continue to drive migration towards Europe.



Recent Crisis and Institutional Response

- **Mass Influx:** Around 60,000 migrants entered Ceuta within two days, creating severe humanitarian pressures.
- **Humanitarian Impact:** At least 67 deaths occurred, while thousands sought food, shelter and assistance.
- **Large-scale Returns:** More than 48,000 migrants subsequently crossed back into Morocco.
- **Spanish Response:** Spain attributed the surge to trafficking networks and described it as a challenge to its territorial integrity.
- **Legal Debate:** The crisis renewed discussions on asylum procedures, summary returns and legal safeguards for migrants arriving by sea.

Significance and Emerging Challenges

- **Border Security:** Ceuta remains one of Europe's most heavily fortified external borders with extensive surveillance and physical barriers.
- **Humanitarian Concerns:** Overcrowding, migrant safety and protection of vulnerable individuals remain major challenges.
- **Spain–Morocco Relations:** Migration management continues to influence bilateral relations, alongside broader disagreements including Western Sahara.
- **Domestic Political Debate:** The crisis intensified differences over immigration policy, border control and pathways to legal residency.
- **European Relevance:** Events in Ceuta demonstrate the broader challenge of balancing effective border management with humanitarian obligations across the European Union.

Implications

The Ceuta migration crisis illustrates how geography, legal developments, trafficking networks and regional diplomacy can combine to produce sudden migration emergencies. While strengthened border management remains important, durable solutions require effective cooperation, accurate information dissemination and humanitarian protection. The episode reflects the continuing challenge of balancing national security with international responsibilities towards migrants and asylum seekers.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. Consider the following pairs: (2018)

Region sometimes mentioned in news	Country
------------------------------------	---------

- | | |
|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Catalonia | Spain |
| 2. Crimea | Hungary |
| 3. Mindanao | Philippines |
| 4. Oromia | Nigeria |

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

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

A healthy tax (The Hindu : 01-08-2026)

India's nutritional landscape is undergoing a significant transition. While improvements in maternal and child health indicators have reduced stunting and severe wasting, the rapid rise in overweight, obesity and diet-related metabolic disorders has emerged as a major public health concern. Recent policy recommendations advocating healthier food choices, front-of-pack nutrition labelling and regulation of unhealthy foods reflect a shift towards addressing the growing burden of non-communicable diseases alongside the continuing challenge of undernutrition.

NFHS-6: Major Nutrition and Health Trends

- **Maternal Health:** Institutional deliveries, antenatal care and skilled birth attendance recorded further improvement.
- **Child Nutrition:** Stunting declined from 35.5% to 29.3%, while severe wasting reduced from 7.7% to 5.2%.
- **Population Indicators:** Contraceptive prevalence improved, unmet need declined and Total Fertility Rate remained stable at 2.0.
- **Nutrition Shift:** Overweight and obesity increased to 30.7% among women and 27.3% among men aged 15–49 years.



Emerging Policy Responses to Overnutrition

- **Front-of-Pack Labelling:** Parliamentary Standing Committee recommended mandatory labels identifying packaged foods high in sugar.
- **Infant Nutrition:** Recommendation to disclose sugar content in baby foods to discourage early excessive sugar consumption.
- **Health Tax:** The Let's Fix Our Food consortium proposed taxing foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS).
- **Healthy Food Environment:** Recommendations include healthier school food environments and stricter regulation of unhealthy food advertising.
- **Institutional Initiative:** The consortium is led by ICMR–National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR–NIN) with participation from several national and international institutions.

RELEVANCE

GS II : Issues Relating to Health

Significance and Emerging Challenges

- **Dual Burden of Malnutrition:** India must simultaneously reduce undernutrition and tackle rapidly increasing obesity.
- **Rising NCD Risk:** Increasing obesity and higher blood sugar levels indicate growing vulnerability to chronic non-communicable diseases.
- **Consumer Awareness:** Nutrition labelling can promote informed food choices and healthier dietary behaviour.
- **Regulatory Importance:** Fiscal and marketing measures may discourage excessive consumption of unhealthy foods, particularly among children.
- **Implementation Challenge:** Achieving healthier diets requires coordinated action involving public health, food regulation, education and consumer awareness.

Way Forward

India's nutrition agenda is evolving from addressing food deficiency alone to promoting healthy dietary practices across all age groups. While improvements in maternal and child health indicators demonstrate progress, rising obesity and metabolic disorders require a comprehensive public health response. Combining nutrition education, transparent food labelling, healthier food environments and appropriate regulatory measures can help sustain gains against undernutrition while limiting the growing burden of diet-related diseases.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. How do you account for the growing fast food industries given that there are increased health concerns in modern society? Illustrate your answer with the Indian experience. (GS I – 2025)

A tough road to Hamas disarmament (Indian Express : 01-08-2026)

The Israel–Hamas conflict is rooted in the long-standing Israeli–Palestinian dispute over territory, governance and security in the region between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The October 2023 Hamas attack and the subsequent war have intensified humanitarian suffering and regional instability. The latest peace initiative seeks to end hostilities through Hamas's disarmament, Israeli military withdrawal and the creation of a transitional governance structure in Gaza, although implementation remains uncertain.



Conflict Background and Hamas

- **Long-standing Dispute:** The conflict reflects decades of territorial, political and religious disagreements between Israelis and Palestinians.
- **Hamas:** An armed Palestinian group that continues to view armed resistance as central to its political legitimacy.
- **October 2023 Attack:** Hamas launched attacks on Israel, triggering a large-scale military conflict.
- **Humanitarian Impact:** The conflict has caused extensive casualties, displacement and destruction in Gaza.
- **Continuing Instability:** Despite ceasefire arrangements, both sides continue to report violations.

Latest Peace Plan and Recent Developments

- **Twenty-Point Peace Plan:** Announced by the United States to end the conflict through phased implementation.
- **First Phase:** Includes cessation of hostilities, partial Israeli military withdrawal, increased humanitarian aid, hostage release by Hamas and release of Palestinian prisoners by Israel.
- **Second Phase:** Requires Hamas to disarm, establish a transitional government in Gaza and deploy an international stabilisation force.
- **Governance Proposal:** Hamas has proposed transferring its weapons to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), a technocratic body supervised by the proposed Board of Peace.
- **Implementation Status:** Hamas has not disarmed, Israeli withdrawal has not occurred, the NCAG has not assumed governance and the stabilisation force has yet to materialise.

RELEVANCE GS II - Fundamental Rights.

Significance and Emerging Challenges

- **Sequencing Dispute:** Hamas seeks Israeli withdrawal before disarmament, whereas Israel insists on complete demilitarisation before withdrawal.
- **Political Constraints:** Divergent positions within Israel's political leadership complicate implementation of the peace plan.
- **Humanitarian Concerns:** Continued restrictions on humanitarian assistance have prolonged severe civilian hardship in Gaza.
- **International Cooperation:** Limited participation in the proposed Board of Peace has slowed implementation.
- **Peace Prospects:** Sustainable peace depends on mutual compliance with commitments, effective governance arrangements and uninterrupted humanitarian relief.

Way Forward

The latest peace initiative represents an attempt to transition from armed conflict to political and administrative stabilisation in Gaza. However, disagreements over security guarantees, sequencing of commitments and governance arrangements continue to impede progress. While negotiations remain uncertain, ensuring humanitarian access and reducing civilian suffering remain immediate priorities alongside efforts to achieve a durable political settlement.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. The term “two state solution” is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of

- China
- Israel
- Iraq
- Yemen

SC upholds NCLAT order setting aside CCI's ₹301.6-cr. Grasim fine

The Supreme Court upheld the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) decision setting aside a ₹301.6 crore penalty imposed on Grasim Industries by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) over alleged abuse of dominance in the viscose staple fibre (VSF) market. The judgment does not decide the merits of the allegations but emphasises that regulatory decisions must follow principles of procedural fairness by providing affected parties an opportunity to respond whenever the regulator departs from its investigation findings.

Institutional Framework

- **Competition Commission of India (CCI):** Fair trade regulator that penalised Grasim for alleged abuse of dominant position in the VSF market.
- **Director General (DG):** Investigation wing of the CCI whose findings formed the basis of the proceedings.
- **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT):** Appellate authority over CCI orders; set aside the penalty and remanded the matter.
- **Supreme Court:** Upheld the NCLAT order and dismissed the CCI's appeal.



Case Developments and Viscose Staple Fibre (VSF)

- **CCI Allegations:** Accused Grasim of discriminatory pricing, imposing supplementary obligations and seeking buyers' consumption details.
- **NCLAT Finding:** Held that when the CCI disagrees with the DG, it must notify and hear the opposite party before passing an adverse order.
- **Fresh Hearing:** The matter was remanded to the CCI for a time-bound reconsideration without commenting on the merits.
- **About VSF:** Viscose staple fibre is a biodegradable, semi-synthetic cellulosic fibre manufactured from wood pulp cellulose.
- **Applications:** Widely used in apparel, home textiles and non-woven hygiene products, and commonly blended with cotton, polyester or linen.

RELEVANCE

GS II - Appointment to Constitutional Posts

Significance and Emerging Concerns

- **Procedural Fairness:** Reinforces the right to be heard before regulatory action where investigation findings are altered.
- **Regulatory Credibility:** Transparent decision-making strengthens confidence in competition enforcement.
- **Market Competition:** Fair enforcement promotes non-discriminatory pricing and competitive market practices.
- **Industrial Importance:** VSF is among the world's most widely used textile fibres with extensive industrial applications.
- **Sustainability Challenge:** Although derived from natural cellulose and biodegradable, VSF manufacturing can raise environmental concerns if chemical processing is not properly managed.

Way Forward

The Grasim-VSF case underscores that effective competition regulation requires both robust market oversight and adherence to due process. While allegations of abuse of dominance must be examined rigorously, procedural safeguards remain essential for fair adjudication. The fresh hearing directed by the courts preserves regulatory accountability while ensuring that enforcement actions are based on transparent and legally sustainable processes.

PYQ Compass

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



Q. Each year a large amount of plant material, cellulose, is deposited on the surface of Planet Earth. What are the natural processes this cellulose undergoes before yielding carbon dioxide, water and other end products?

ECOLOGY

Western Ghats conservation with science and dialogue

The Western Ghats are one of India's richest biodiversity regions, extending across six coastal States and containing numerous protected areas recognised as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. To conserve this fragile ecosystem, the Government initiated the process of declaring Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs), where developmental activities would be regulated under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. However, concerns regarding livelihoods, agriculture and local development have delayed the finalisation of the notification, making it both an environmental and governance challenge.

Institutional Framework & Case Background

- **WGEEP (2010):** Chaired by Madhav Gadgil, it recommended declaring 142 talukas across 44 districts as ESA and classifying them into three Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZs).
- **Kasturirangan Committee (2012):** Reviewed the proposal and reduced the regulated area to 37% of the Western Ghats, limiting restrictions mainly to ecologically sensitive natural landscapes.
- **Draft Notifications:** Based on the revised recommendations, the MoEF&CC issued the first draft notification in 2014.
- **Expert Review (2022):** A committee headed by Sanjay Kumar was constituted to examine concerns raised by stakeholder States.
- **Current Status:** Between 2015 and 2026, five draft notifications were issued, and the expert panel's tenure has been extended by another year following the expiry of the latest draft.

Stakeholder Concerns and Recent Developments

- **State-wise Position:** Gujarat and Goa have broadly agreed to finalisation, Maharashtra has sought a fresh review, while discussions continue with Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- **Phased Implementation:** The 2024 draft notification introduced the possibility of a phased rollout or State-wise finalisation.
- **Karnataka's Concerns:** The State opposes the proposal due to its perceived impact on agriculture, plantations, mining and infrastructure, with around 20,668 sq. km proposed under ESA.
- **Local Community Issues:** Concerns include rehabilitation, restrictions on forest produce collection, agricultural practices and rejection of certain forest rights claims.
- **Mapping Issues:** Communities argue that satellite imagery cannot accurately distinguish plantations from natural forests and seek greater field-based verification.

RELEVANCE

GS III : Environment and Biodiversity Conservation

Significance and Emerging Concerns

- **Biodiversity Conservation:** ESA notification seeks to protect ecologically fragile landscapes and internationally recognised biodiversity hotspots.
- **Legal Protection:** Notification under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 would provide a statutory framework for regulating environmentally harmful activities.
- **Livelihood Concerns:** Conservation measures must adequately address the interests of farmers, plantation owners, forest-dependent communities and indigenous populations.
- **Participatory Governance:** Greater stakeholder consultation and transparent field verification can improve public confidence in the notification process.
- **Ecological Imperative:** Delayed conservation may weaken long-term ecological resilience, as ecosystems extend beyond administrative and political boundaries.

Way Forward

The Western Ghats ESA proposal represents an effort to reconcile environmental conservation with sustainable livelihoods. While protecting biodiversity remains essential, long-term success depends on addressing genuine local concerns through dialogue, scientific assessment and participatory decision-making. A balanced approach that combines ecological protection with social acceptance can strengthen both environmental governance and sustainable development in the Western Ghats.

PYQ Compass

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



- Q. 'Gadgil Committee Report' and 'Kasturirangan Committee Report', sometimes seen in the news, are related to: (2016)
- Constitutional reforms
 - Ganga Action Plan
 - Linking of rivers
 - Protection of Western Ghats

PYQ Compass

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



Q. Under the Kisan Credit Card scheme, short term credit support is given to farmers for which of the following purposes? (2020)

1. Working capital for maintenance of farm assets
2. Purchase of combine harvesters, tractors and mini trucks
3. Consumption households requirements of farm
4. Post-harvest expenses
5. Construction of family house and setting up of village cold storage facility

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans : b

Kisan Credit Card Scheme: In order to ensure that all eligible farmers are provided with hassle free and timely credit for their agricultural operation, Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme was introduced in 1998–99. The main objectives of the scheme are to meet the short term credit requirements for cultivation of crops, post harvest expenses, produce marketing loan, consumption requirements of farmer household, working capital for maintenance of farm assets and activities allied to agriculture like dairy animals, inland fishery, etc., and investment credit requirement for agriculture and allied activities like pump sets, sprayers, dairy animals, etc.

Q. Consider the following statements: (2022)

1. Gujarat has the largest solar park in India.
2. Kerala has a fully solar powered International Airport.
3. Goa has the largest floating solar photovoltaic project in India.

Which of the statements given below is/are correct?

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

Ans : b

Statement 1: Gujarat has the largest solar park in India. This statement is incorrect. Gujarat does have a large solar park, but Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh currently has the largest solar park in India, called the Pavagada Solar Park.

Statement 2: Kerala has a fully solar-powered International Airport. This statement is correct. Cochin International Airport in Kerala is the world's first fully solar powered airport, which is a significant achievement in renewable energy.

Statement 3: Goa has the largest floating solar photovoltaic project in India. This statement is incorrect. While Goa has a floating solar project, the largest floating solar project in India is in Telangana at the Srisailem Reservoir.

Thus, the correct answer is b) 2 only.



Q. Consider the following pairs: (2018)

Region sometimes mentioned in news

Country

1. Catalonia

Spain

2. Crimea

Hungary

3. Mindanao

Philippines

4. Oromia

Nigeria

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

a) 1, 2 and 3

b) 3 and 4 only

c) 1 and 3 only

d) 2 and 4 only

Ans : C

Catalonia, a region in northeastern Spain, has been in the news due to its push for independence. Mindanao is an island in the Philippines that has experienced insurgency issues and peace negotiations. Crimea is incorrectly paired with Hungary; it is located in Ukraine and was annexed by Russia in 2014, causing international disputes. Oromia is incorrectly matched with Nigeria; it is a region in Ethiopia associated with political and ethnic unrest.

Q. The term “two state solution” is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of

a) China

b) Israel

c) Iraq

d) Yemen

Ans : b

Two state solution is the preferred solution adopted for the Arablsrael conflict by creation of states of Israel and Palestine.

Q. 'Gadgil Committee Report' and 'Kasturirangan Committee Report', sometimes seen in the news, are related to: (2016)

a) Constitutional reforms

b) Ganga Action Plan

c) Linking of rivers

d) Protection of Western Ghats

Ans : d

Both the Gadgil Committee Report and the Kasturirangan Committee Report are related to the protection of the Western Ghats.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. With reference to the proposed Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) notification for the Western Ghats, consider the following statements:

1. The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) was chaired by Madhav Gadgil.
2. The Kasturirangan Committee recommended expanding the regulated area beyond the recommendations of the WGEEP.
3. The proposed ESA notification is intended to be issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: a) 1 and 3 only

Statement 1 – Correct: The WGEEP was constituted in 2010 under the chairmanship of Madhav Gadgil.

Statement 2 – Incorrect: The Kasturirangan Committee reduced the regulated area to about 37% of the Western Ghats by focusing on ecologically sensitive natural landscapes.

Statement 3 – Correct: The ESA notification is proposed under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, providing legal protection to the identified areas.

Q. With reference to Ceuta, consider the following statements:

1. Ceuta is a Spanish territory located on the African mainland.
2. Together with Melilla, it forms the European Union's only land border with Africa.
3. Morocco officially recognises Ceuta as an integral part of Spain.

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) 1 and 2 only

Statement 1 – Correct: Ceuta is a Spanish enclave on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa.

Statement 2 – Correct: Ceuta and Melilla together constitute the EU's only land borders with Africa.

Statement 3 – Incorrect: Morocco does not officially recognise Ceuta and Melilla as Spanish territories.

Samudra Manthan – National Offshore Exploration Scheme

The Union Cabinet has approved Samudra Manthan, the National Offshore Exploration Scheme, with an outlay of ₹84,084 crore up to FY 2030–31. It is India's most ambitious offshore hydrocarbon exploration programme aimed at boosting domestic oil and gas production, reducing import dependence and strengthening long-term energy security.

What is Samudra Manthan?

- Samudra Manthan is a Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) designed to accelerate offshore oil and gas exploration, particularly in India's deepwater and ultra-deepwater basins.
- The scheme seeks to de-risk offshore exploration through government financial support, encourage greater participation by public and private companies, and build long-term domestic capabilities across the offshore exploration and production value chain.
- It marks the transition from recent policy reforms in the hydrocarbon sector to mission-mode implementation for achieving energy security and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Why is the Scheme Needed?

- India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and spends nearly USD 144 billion (about ₹13 lakh crore) annually on crude oil imports.
- Domestic energy demand is expected to rise steadily, making greater domestic hydrocarbon production strategically important.
- Existing oil and gas fields naturally decline by 6–7% every year, making continuous exploration and new discoveries essential.
- Offshore exploration is highly capital-intensive and involves long gestation periods of 5–10 years, requiring government support to attract investment.
- Most of India's untapped hydrocarbon potential now lies beneath the sea, particularly in deepwater and ultra-deepwater regions.

BRAIN BOOSTERS
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04-08-2026

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Samudra Manthan

Why in news? The Union Cabinet has approved Samudra Manthan, the National Offshore Exploration Scheme, with an outlay of ₹84,084 crore up to FY 2030–31.

- Samudra Manthan is a Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) designed to accelerate offshore oil and gas exploration, particularly in India's deepwater and ultra-deepwater basins.
- The scheme seeks to **de-risk offshore exploration** through government financial support, **encourage greater participation by public and private companies**, and build long-term domestic capabilities across the offshore exploration and production value chain.
- It marks the transition towards mission-mode implementation for achieving energy security and Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and spends nearly USD 144 billion (about ₹13 lakh crore) annually on crude oil imports.

Major Components of the Scheme

- The total outlay of ₹84,084 crore has been allocated across four major components:
- ₹43,200 crore for drilling 60 deepwater exploration wells, with government support of up to 50% of eligible drilling cost or ₹675 crore per well.
- ₹28,534 crore for large-scale offshore seismic data acquisition to improve geological understanding and reduce exploration risk.
- ₹10,000 crore for developing common offshore infrastructure hubs to facilitate commercialisation of future discoveries.
- ₹2,000 crore for establishing Oil and Gas Manufacturing and Services Zones to promote domestic manufacturing, localisation of critical equipment and development of indigenous service capabilities.

Significance

- Samudra Manthan represents India's largest-ever government-backed offshore exploration initiative.
- By sharing exploration risks, the scheme is expected to stimulate greater private investment in high-risk deepwater exploration.
- Improved seismic data and drilling activity can reduce geological uncertainty and increase the probability of major hydrocarbon discoveries.
- Development of offshore infrastructure and manufacturing zones will strengthen India's domestic energy ecosystem while creating employment, technology development and industrial growth.