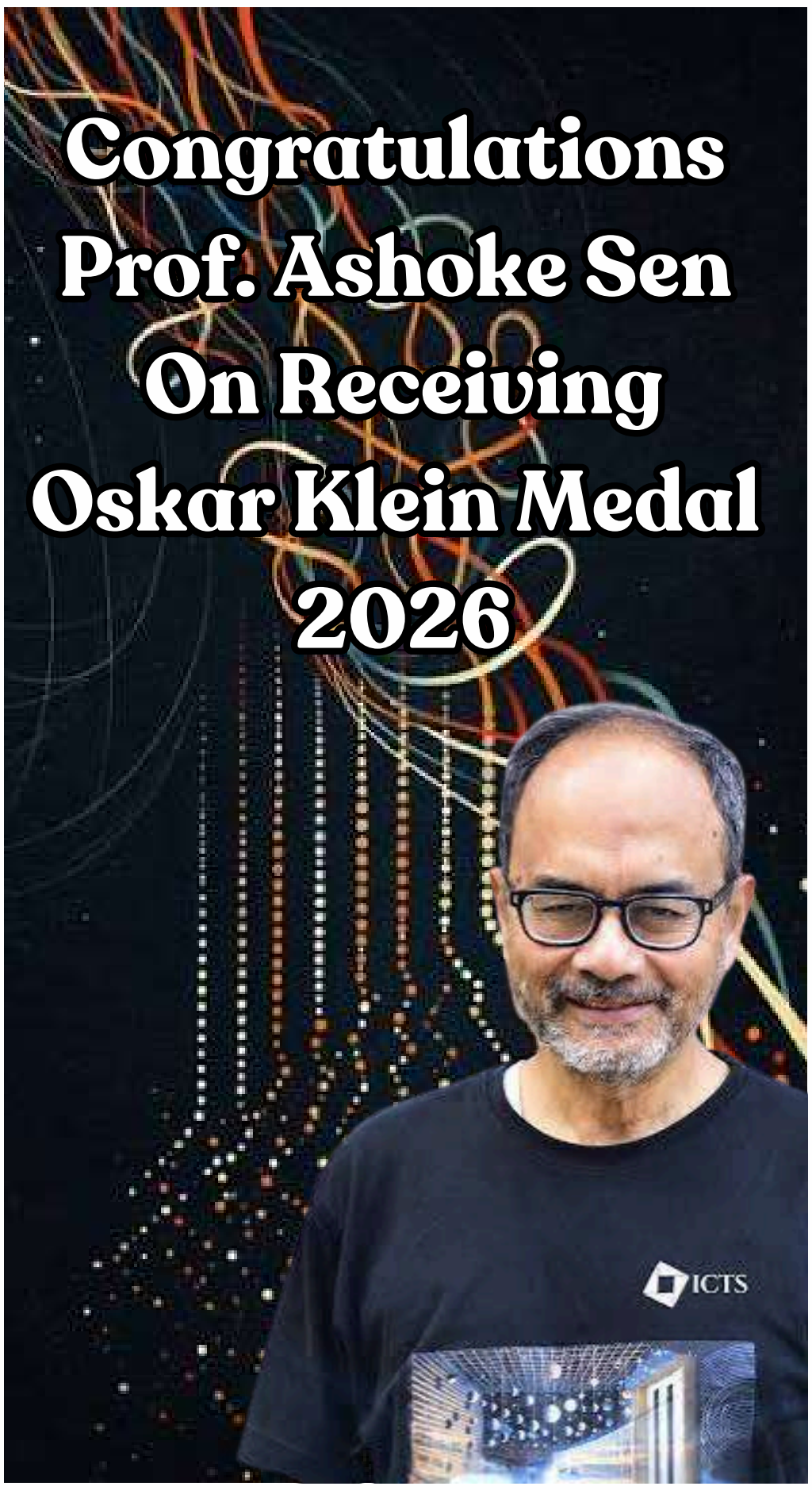
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Editor's Note

As another week draws to a close, today's edition of the Pala Civil Times moves beyond conventional coverage of national and international affairs to offer a more integrated understanding of recent developments.

To begin with, the national affairs section examines the use of preventive powers to maintain public order, drawing on the recent protest and related detentions. Moving to the international arena, we explore how Exercise Rummy marks a significant development in United Kingdom–France nuclear cooperation, bringing two nuclear-armed states together for a coordinated military exercise while retaining independent nuclear decision-making. The edition also examines allegations concerning Pakistan's attempts to access India's strategic information and their implications for national security.

Our Editorial Decoder turns to the Reserve Bank of India's challenges in maintaining economic stability amid external conflicts, the threat of El Niño and supply-chain disruptions. Meanwhile, the science section highlights physicist Ashoke Sen, the first Indian recipient of the prestigious Oskar Klein Medal, recognising his contributions to string theory and theoretical physics.

Together, these diverse topics offer students a broader perspective on the interconnected political, strategic, economic and scientific developments shaping the contemporary world. We hope this edition encourages informed thinking and a deeper understanding of the issues that matter.

Happy reading!

P7. SCIENCE



Ashoke Sen Wins the 2026 Oskar Klein Medal

Highlights Ashoke Sen's recognition as the first Indian recipient of the 2026 Oskar Klein Medal for his contributions to string theory and theoretical physics.

Editorials Decoded

THE HINDU

The Indian EXPRESS



In the crossfire: on India and the Saudi-Houthi conflict

Examines the escalation of fighting between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthis, its impact on Indian nationals through casualties, maritime attacks and travel disruptions.



The problem is inflation's second-round effects

Analyses the challenges facing the Reserve Bank of India in maintaining economic stability amid external conflicts, El Niño risks and supply-chain disruptions.

Delhi High Court on Peace Bonds under the BNSS: Preventive Powers and Procedural Safeguards

The Delhi High Court on October 23, 2026, rejected a petition by All India Students' Association (AISA) president Neha Bora challenging a police notice requiring her to execute a peace bond. However, it directed the Special Executive Magistrate (SEM) to provide her with all relevant materials and consider when the bond should be furnished. The case highlights the balance between preventive policing and procedural fairness.

What is the legal basis for demanding a peace bond?

Section 126 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023: It empowers an Executive Magistrate to require a person to show cause why they should not execute a bond for keeping the peace when there is sufficient ground to believe that the person may breach peace or disturb public tranquillity.

Preventive purpose: The provision seeks to prevent anticipated disturbances rather than punish an offence already committed. The bond period cannot exceed one year.

Earlier legal provision: Section 126 of the BNSS corresponds to Section 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973.

What were the facts and the High Court's directions?

Police notice: Issued on October 17, 2026, under Section 126 of the BNSS, it asked Bora to appear before the SEM and explain why she should not furnish a personal bond of ₹10,000 with one surety.

Background: Bora had been taken into preventive detention on October 16 while travelling to join the 'Lehra Do Tiranga' march organised by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP). She was released the following day.

Petition rejected: The High Court declined to entertain her writ petition at that stage but directed the SEM to furnish all relevant materials to her.

Procedural safeguard: Before passing an order, the SEM must consider whether the bond should be furnished at the outset or during the enquiry. Bora's counsel alleged that the notice had been issued without independent application of mind, while the Delhi Police maintained that sufficient material supported it.

What is the significance of the case?

Preventive powers and liberty: Preventive measures can help maintain public order, but their use must be supported by sufficient grounds and follow the prescribed procedure.

Fair proceedings: Access to relevant materials enables the person concerned to understand and respond to the allegations.

Judicial oversight: The case highlights the role of courts in ensuring that preventive powers are exercised with procedural fairness.

Way forward

Executive Magistrates should independently assess the material before initiating proceedings, communicate the grounds clearly and provide a meaningful opportunity to respond. Preventive powers should be exercised proportionately, with appropriate safeguards against arbitrary action.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Consider the following statements: (2023)
1. According to the Constitution of India, the Central Government has a duty to protect States from internal disturbances.
2. The Constitution of India exempts the States from providing legal counsel to person being held for preventive detention
3. According to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002, confession of the accused before the police cannot be used as evidence.
How many of the above statements are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Operation Firewall-2026: Pakistan-Linked Espionage and Indian Naval Security

The alleged Pakistan-linked espionage network uncovered by Andhra Pradesh's Counter Intelligence Cell (CIC) highlights the growing threat of digital honey-trapping to India's national security. The investigation focuses on attempts to obtain sensitive naval intelligence, particularly concerning the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) at Visakhapatnam. The case underscores the need to strengthen counter-intelligence, cybersecurity and operational security within the armed forces.

How did the espionage network operate?

Detection and investigation: Unusual international communication patterns and suspicious WhatsApp One-Time Password (OTP) sharing led investigators to examine a suspected espionage network. The operation involved coordination between the Andhra Pradesh CIC, central intelligence agencies and security units across 10 States.

Digital honey-trapping: Alleged Pakistani Intelligence Operatives (PIOs) used fictitious online identities to establish personal relationships with defence personnel. Romantic interactions, compromising content and monetary inducements were reportedly used to cultivate potential sources.

Information extraction: Operatives allegedly sought details about naval vessel and submarine movements, commanding officers, sensitive installations and operational schedules. Seemingly minor details could be combined to construct a broader picture of military capabilities and deployment patterns.

Suspected network: Eighteen individuals, including 13 naval personnel, were identified as suspects, and two people were arrested at the time of reporting. Investigators are examining alleged links to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), financial transactions and possible artificial intelligence-generated identities.

Why is the Eastern Naval Command a strategic target?

Strategic naval assets: Visakhapatnam hosts the Eastern Naval Command and facilities associated with India's nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines. Information about these assets could expose critical elements of India's maritime and nuclear deterrence.

Operational vulnerability: Photographs, vessel schedules, logistics records and personnel movements can help adversaries identify deployment patterns, assess operational capabilities and monitor naval assets.

Historical precedent: The 2019 Operation Dolphin's Nose exposed another alleged espionage network targeting the Eastern Naval Command. The similarities highlight the persistent threat posed by human intelligence gathering and the exploitation of vulnerable personnel.

Evolving technological threats: Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), deepfakes and fabricated online profiles can make impersonation more convincing, complicating the identification of foreign intelligence operatives.

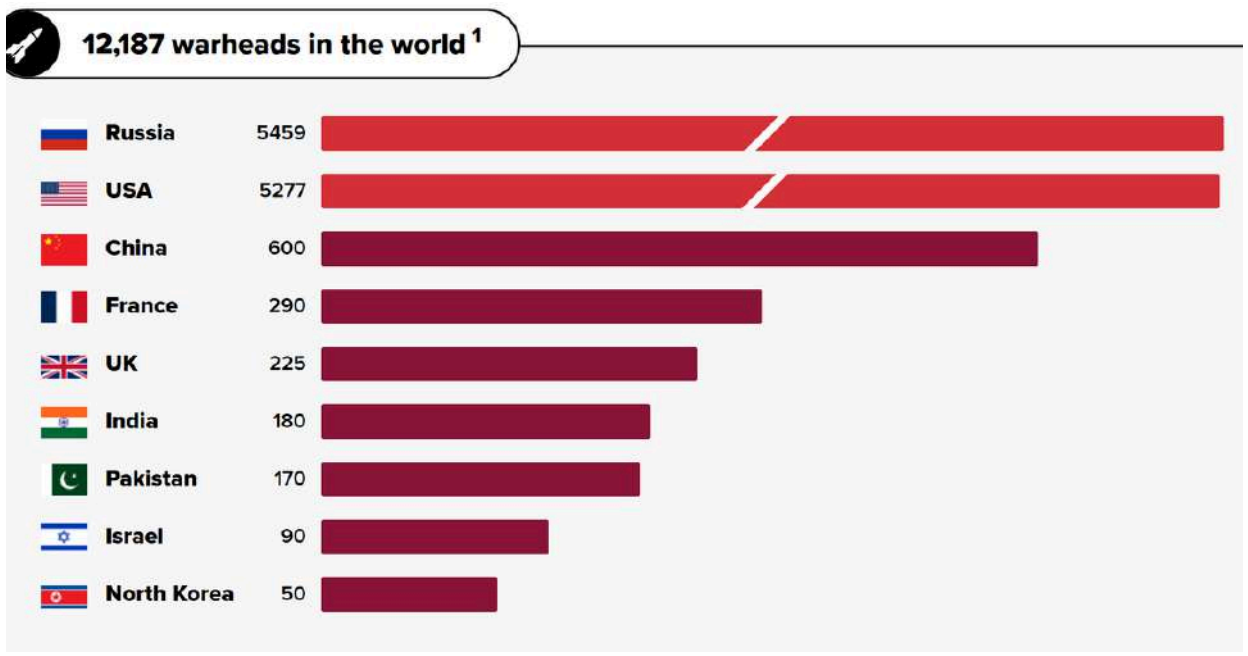
Key takeaway: *Operation Firewall-2026 illustrates how social engineering and digital deception can exploit human vulnerabilities to threaten national security. Protecting sensitive military information requires not only technological safeguards but also personnel vigilance, effective counter-intelligence and strict operational discipline.*

PYQ COMPASS

Q. What are the internal security challenges being faced by India? Give out the role of Central Intelligence and Investigative Agencies tasked to counter such threats. (GS III - 2023)

UK–France Joint Nuclear Exercise: Strategic Deterrence and Global Nuclear Risks

The United Kingdom and France conducted Exercise Rummy in October 2026, marking their first joint exercise simulating a nuclear strike involving British Typhoon and French Rafale fighter aircraft. Although no nuclear weapons were used, it highlights the growing importance of nuclear deterrence and the catastrophic consequences of any actual nuclear conflict.



What was the significance of Exercise Rummy?

Joint military coordination: Conducted over the Mediterranean Sea on October 20–21, 2026, the exercise involved French Rafale aircraft simulating a nuclear strike mission, escorted by British Royal Air Force (RAF) Typhoon fighters.

Strengthening European deterrence: The exercise demonstrated the two countries' ability to coordinate their military activities and reinforce their response to potential security threats.

Closer bilateral cooperation: The exercise builds on the UK–France defence partnership under the Northwood Declaration and the refreshed Lancaster House Agreement.

Independent nuclear capabilities: Both countries retain sovereign nuclear forces and independent national decision-making. *The exercise did not involve actual nuclear weapons or establish a joint nuclear command.*

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Recently, India signed a deal known as 'Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field' with which of the following countries?

a) Japan
b) Russia
c) The United Kingdom
d) The United States of America

Why do nuclear weapons remain a major global concern?

Scale of destruction: Nuclear explosions cause devastating blast damage, extreme heat and radiation exposure. Their effects include immediate civilian casualties, long-term illnesses such as cancer and persistent environmental contamination.

Global food security: Even a limited nuclear conflict could disrupt climate systems and agricultural production, threatening food supplies and increasing the risk of widespread famine.

Growing nuclear arsenals: The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimated that nine nuclear-armed states possessed approximately 12,187 warheads in January 2026. Russia and the United States accounted for around 83% of the global military stockpile.

What is the way forward?

Strengthen arms control: Nuclear-armed states should pursue meaningful disarmament negotiations, preserve strategic communication channels and strengthen confidence-building measures.

Reduce escalation risks: Clear communication, crisis-management mechanisms and safeguards against accidental or unauthorised launches are essential.

Balance deterrence with disarmament: While states may regard nuclear deterrence as a security guarantee, long-term international stability requires reducing nuclear risks and advancing nuclear disarmament.

The problem is inflation's second-round effects

India's rising food inflation could intensify if a strengthening El Niño disrupts agricultural production. The resulting supply-side pressures may complicate the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) efforts to control inflation through monetary tightening, while also exposing vulnerabilities in food security and distribution.

How can El Niño intensify food inflation?

Agricultural production: El Niño can disrupt rainfall patterns and raise temperatures, affecting crop yields. India reportedly experienced a 13% rainfall shortfall during the June–September period in 2026.

Rabi crop risks: Low reservoir levels may reduce soil moisture, while higher winter temperatures could adversely affect wheat production. A poor Rabi harvest could tighten domestic food supplies.

Global price pressures: Supply disruptions across food-producing regions can increase international prices of cereals, vegetable oils and other agricultural commodities, particularly affecting import-dependent developing economies.

Fertiliser constraints: Disruptions to fertiliser supplies through the Strait of Hormuz could increase input costs and put further pressure on agricultural production and food prices.

Key takeaway: El Niño can turn a climatic shock into an agricultural supply crisis, intensify food inflation and complicate RBI's monetary policy decisions.
India needs to strengthen climate-resilient agriculture, improve reservoir and irrigation management, diversify crop production and maintain adequate foodgrain buffers. Efficient public distribution, targeted support for vulnerable households and diversified fertiliser supply chains can reduce the impact of price shocks.

How could this affect India's inflation and monetary policy?

Generalisation of inflation: Rising food prices could spread price pressures across the economy. The RBI has already observed an increase in the share of Consumer Price Index (CPI) commodities recording inflation above 4%, from 20% in March to 37% in August.

Inflation expectations: Persistent food and energy price increases could influence household expectations and encourage businesses to raise prices, creating second-round inflationary effects.

Monetary policy dilemma: Supply-side inflation cannot be resolved directly through higher interest rates. However, the RBI may maintain a tighter monetary stance if price pressures become widespread and inflation expectations rise, potentially affecting economic growth.

Why does India remain vulnerable despite adequate food production?

Production versus access: Adequate national foodgrain stocks do not guarantee food security for everyone. High prices, unequal purchasing power and regional differences in availability can restrict access to nutritious food.

Regional disparities: States such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu depend on food supplies from other producing states, making them vulnerable to disruptions in inter-state supply and rising transportation costs.

Nutritional insecurity: Food inflation can make healthy diets unaffordable for vulnerable households, worsening hidden hunger even when aggregate foodgrain availability remains sufficient.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. What are the causes of persistent high food inflation in India? Comment on the effectiveness of the monetary policy of the RBI to control this type of inflation. (GS III - 2024)

In the crossfire: on India and the Saudi–Houthi conflict

The escalation of the Saudi–Houthi conflict threatens regional stability, maritime security and the safety of Indians living and travelling in West Asia. Houthi attacks on Saudi infrastructure have exposed the kingdom's security vulnerabilities, while flight disruptions and attacks near the Red Sea have created new challenges for India's evacuation efforts and diplomatic balancing.

What are the causes and recent developments in the conflict?

Origins of the conflict: The conflict intensified after the Houthis captured Yemen's capital, Sana'a, in 2014. Saudi Arabia intervened militarily in 2015 to support Yemen's internationally recognised government and dislodge the Houthis.

Failure of military intervention: Years of Saudi air strikes failed to defeat the Houthis, who consolidated their territorial control and strengthened their military capabilities.

Renewed hostilities: The 2022 ceasefire collapsed in July 2026 following renewed confrontations involving Saudi-backed forces and an Iranian flight carrying a Houthi delegation. The Houthis subsequently targeted Saudi infrastructure and intensified military operations.

Strategic significance: Houthi control of Yemen's Red Sea coastline and advances around the Bab el-Mandeb Strait threaten a critical international shipping route connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden.

Why is the conflict significant for India?

Safety of Indian nationals: Indians form Saudi Arabia's largest expatriate community. Attacks have killed and injured Indian nationals, while flight disruptions have stranded thousands of pilgrims.

Maritime and energy security: Threats to Red Sea shipping could disrupt global trade and oil supplies, increasing transportation costs and risks to India's energy security.

Diplomatic challenges: India has condemned Houthi attacks and expressed solidarity with Saudi Arabia. However, regional stability also requires diplomatic engagement with Iran and other regional powers.

Regional instability: A wider confrontation involving Iran, the United States and Israel could intensify attacks on Gulf infrastructure, complicating India's efforts to protect its citizens and economic interests.

What should India's response be?

Protect Indian nationals: India should prioritise the evacuation of stranded pilgrims, strengthen consular coordination and prepare contingency plans for further escalation.

Promote diplomatic engagement: India should work with Saudi Arabia, Iran and other regional countries to encourage de-escalation and a negotiated settlement.

Safeguard maritime interests: India should strengthen maritime risk monitoring and emergency preparedness to protect shipping and reduce disruptions to trade and energy supplies.

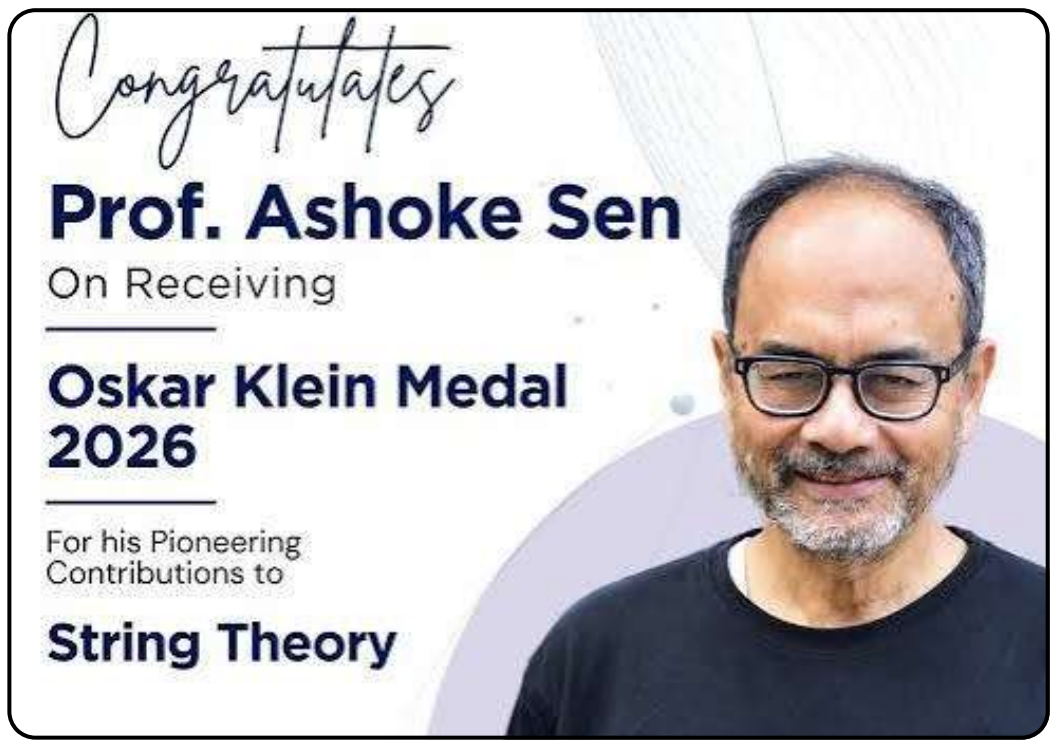
The Saudi–Houthi conflict demonstrates how prolonged regional conflicts can threaten Indian nationals, global shipping and energy security. India needs a combination of evacuation preparedness, maritime vigilance and balanced diplomacy to safeguard its interests in West Asia.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. "India's global diaspora acts as a living bridge, as a critical economic factor and knowledge network in transforming cultural heritage into geopolitical influence and strategic leverage worldwide." Critically examine this statement (GS II - 2026)

Ashoke Sen Wins the 2026 Oskar Klein Medal

Renowned Indian theoretical physicist Ashoke Sen has become the first Indian to receive the Oskar Klein Medal, awarded for 2026 in recognition of his pioneering contributions to string theory and modern theoretical physics.



In recognition of his contributions to theoretical physics, Ashoke Sen has received several prestigious national and international honours, including the Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics (2012), the Dirac Medal (2014), the Padma Shri (2001) and the Padma Bhushan (2013). His achievements also include the Infosys Prize in Mathematical Sciences (2009), the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize (1994) and the ICTP Prize (1989). The 2026 Oskar Klein Medal adds to this distinguished record.

What is the significance of the Oskar Klein Medal?

Prestigious international honour: Established in 1988, the medal is awarded annually by Stockholm University and the Nobel Committee for Physics of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Previous recipients include Stephen Hawking, Peter Higgs and Steven Weinberg.

Recognition of scientific excellence: Sen's award recognises his work on S-duality, black hole entropy and string field theory, which has helped shape modern string theory.

What are Ashoke Sen's major contributions to physics?

String theory: His research explores how string theory could help reconcile quantum theory with gravity and advance the search for a unified understanding of fundamental particles and forces.

S-duality: His work on strong–weak coupling duality helped explain connections between different formulations of string theory.

Black hole entropy: His contributions to the precise counting of black hole microstates have advanced the understanding of black hole entropy.

String field theory: His research has contributed to the mathematical foundations and development of modern string theory.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. The terms 'Event Horizon', 'Singularity', 'String Theory' and 'Standard Model' are sometimes seen in the news in the context of: (2017)

a) Observation and understanding of the Universe

b) Study of the solar and the lunar eclipses

c) Placing satellites in the orbit of the Earth

d) Origin and evolution of living organisms on the earth

String Theory: A Brief Overview

What is string theory? String theory proposes that fundamental particles are not zero-dimensional points but tiny, one-dimensional vibrating strings. Different vibrational patterns may correspond to different particles and their properties.

A unified theory of nature: It seeks to reconcile quantum mechanics with Einstein's general theory of relativity and potentially explain all four fundamental forces: gravity, electromagnetism, the strong nuclear force and the weak nuclear force.

Strings, branes and extra dimensions: Strings can be open, with two ends, or closed, forming loops. The theory also proposes additional spatial dimensions that may be compactified, or curled up, making them difficult to detect.

Supersymmetry: Superstring theory incorporates a proposed relationship between two fundamental classes of particles: bosons, associated with force-carrying roles, and fermions, associated with matter.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. Recently, India signed a deal known as 'Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field' with which of the following countries?
a) Japan
b) Russia
c) The United Kingdom
d) The United States of America

Ans : b
India signs Action Plan with the Russian Federation. Back. "Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field". The two countries intent to develop a project of six nuclear power units of Russian design at a new site in India, further enhance cooperation in the third countries and bring in new perspective nuclear technologies together with joint construction of nuclear power plants. According to the document, for the new nuclear project in India Russia will offer the evolutionary VVER generation "3+" technical solutions and will increase the level of Indian industry's involvement and localization. This is state of art nuclear reactor technology in the world.

Q. Consider the following statements: (2023)
1. According to the Constitution of India, the Central Government has a duty to protect States from internal disturbances.
2. The Constitution of India exempts the States from providing legal counsel to person being held for preventive detention
3. According to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002, confession of the accused before the police cannot be used as evidence.
How many of the above statements are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Ans : a
Statement 1 is correct: As per Article 355 of the Constitution, the Central Government has a duty to protect States from external aggression and internal disturbances.
Statement 2 is incorrect: The Constitution does not exempt states from providing legal counsel to persons held under preventive detention. Article 22 ensures certain protections, including legal aid, for such persons.
Statement 3 is incorrect: Under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), 2002, a confession made before a police officer of a certain rank could be used as evidence in court. This provision was controversial and led to the repeal of POTA in 2004.

PYQ COMPASS

Q. The terms 'Event Horizon', 'Singularity', 'String Theory' and 'Standard Model' are sometimes seen in the news in the context of: (2017)
a) Observation and understanding of the Universe
b) Study of the solar and the lunar eclipses
c) Placing satellites in the orbit of the Earth
d) Origin and evolution of living organisms on the earth

Ans : a
The terms relate to various aspects of theoretical physics and cosmology: Event Horizon: Refers to the boundary around a black hole beyond which nothing, not even light, can escape. It is crucial for studying black holes and their properties.
Singularity: A point at the center of a black hole where gravity is so intense that space and time break down, and known laws of physics cease to apply.
String Theory: A theoretical framework that attempts to unify all fundamental forces of nature by proposing that particles are not point-like but rather tiny vibrating strings.
Standard Model: A theory in particle physics that describes the fundamental particles (quarks, leptons, bosons) and their interactions, excluding gravity.
All these terms contribute to our observation and understanding of the universe, addressing fundamental questions about its structure, behavior, and origins.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. Ashoke Sen received the 2026 Oskar Klein Medal. Which area of theoretical physics is most closely associated with his pioneering research?
(a) Experimental nuclear physics
(b) Theoretical physics and string theory
(c) Atmospheric physics
(d) Medical physics

Answer: (b) Theoretical physics and string theory
Explanation: Ashoke Sen is known for his contributions to string theory, including S-duality, black hole entropy and string field theory. String theory proposes that fundamental particles arise from different vibrational states of tiny strings. It offers a possible framework for understanding gravity within quantum physics.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q. Section 126 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, primarily deals with:
(a) Punishment for organised crime
(b) Security for keeping peace in other cases
(c) Investigation of offences against the State
(d) Procedure for conducting criminal appeals

Answer: (b) Security for keeping peace in other cases
Section 126 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, empowers an Executive Magistrate to require a person to show cause why they should not execute a bond to keep the peace when sufficient grounds indicate a possible breach of peace or disturbance of public tranquillity. This is a preventive measure, not a punishment for an offence already committed. The provision corresponds to Section 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973. The bond may be required for a period of up to one year.

Q. Which of the following statements about Exercise Rummy is correct?
(a) It established a single joint nuclear command for the United Kingdom and France.
(b) It involved the actual use of nuclear weapons during combat.
(c) It demonstrated closer coordination while both countries retained independent nuclear forces and national decision-making.
(d) It required France to transfer control of its nuclear arsenal to the United Kingdom.
Answer: (c) It demonstrated closer coordination while both countries retained independent nuclear forces and national decision-making.
Exercise Rummy, conducted by the United Kingdom and France in October 2026, involved Royal Air Force Typhoon fighters and French Rafale aircraft in a simulated nuclear strike exercise over the Mediterranean. No actual nuclear weapons were used. The exercise strengthened military coordination and demonstrated closer cooperation in nuclear deterrence. However, both countries retained their independent nuclear forces and national decision-making authority. It did not establish a unified nuclear command or transfer control of either country's nuclear arsenal to the other.