



UPSC CIVIL SERVICES MAINS 2026 · SOLVED

General Studies Paper II

Model Answers

Every question of the paper written on 22 August 2026, answered in full: the examiner's demand decoded first, then a structured answer with dated figures and a source list in which each entry is marked primary or secondary.

20

QUESTIONS

20

ANSWERED

250

MARKS

3 hrs

DURATION

INSIDE

- The examiner's demand decoded before every answer
- A full model answer, with its real word count against the paper's limit
- Value additions that earn marks, and the mistakes that lose them
- Sources under every answer, each marked primary or secondary
- The dated current-affairs trail behind the question



Bharat Choudhary

Editor · BharatNotes and Ujiyari



BharatNotes

Syllabus-wise notes,
solved papers, answer keys



Ujiyari

Daily current affairs
and editorial analysis

FOREWORD

Why this document exists

On 22 August 2026 a few lakh candidates sat down to answer 20 questions in three hours. By evening the paper was everywhere and the answers were nowhere, because the Union Public Service Commission does not release model answers for the Mains examination and never has. What fills that gap is usually written fast, sourced thinly and never corrected.

This is the alternative I wanted when I was preparing. Every question in this paper is answered here in full. Each one opens with the examiner's demand decoded, because most marks are lost to a misread directive rather than to weak content, and *analyse*, *examine* and *comment* are not interchangeable. After the answer come the additions that earn marks and the mistakes that lose them.

On sourcing

Every source under every answer is labelled **primary** or **secondary**, so you can see at a glance whether you are reading the issuing authority or somebody's account of it. Where a document exists but its host could not be reached, it is cited in full rather than pointed at a URL that may not resolve. No link here was invented to satisfy a format. Where two official figures disagree, both appear with the basis of each. Where a widely repeated quotation could not be traced to a primary source, the page says so and tells you not to use it.

On length, honestly

These answers run longer than the exam allows, often two to three times longer on the 150-word questions, and each one prints its real word count against the limit so you can see by how much. That is deliberate. A study answer has to carry the reasoning, the alternatives and the sourcing that a three-hour answer leaves out. The exam-length answer is already inside it: the bold lead-in of each paragraph is the skeleton you would actually write, and the bullets under it are the material you would pick two of. Practise the compression. Do not reproduce the length.

On the two sites

This paper was written by an examiner reading the same year you were. Questions came from the Kalpakkam reactor, an amendment passed in March, a judgment delivered in May. So under each answer, where a question grew out of a story, you will find the dated coverage on **Ujiyari**, which is where the year is tracked, alongside the chapter on **BharatNotes**, which is where the syllabus lives. Static preparation without the year is out of date; current affairs without the framework is trivia. The two sites exist as a pair for that reason.

Use this to audit your own answer; not to replace it. Compare the structure, the sourcing and the balance of argument, then write your own and have it evaluated. That is the only part of this that actually raises a score.



Bharat Choudhary

Editor, BharatNotes and Ujiyari

27 August 2026

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Five things worth knowing before you read

1. **Read the demand line first.** Most marks are lost to a misread directive, not to weak content. Each question opens with what the examiner actually asked for.
2. **Treat the answer as a skeleton with muscle.** Copying it into a test verbatim will not help. Internalise the structure, the data anchors and the balance of argument.
3. **Mind the word count, ours and yours.** Every answer prints its real length against the paper's limit. They run longer on purpose; the bold lead-in of each paragraph is the exam-length skeleton.
4. **Follow the source links.** The Budget, Economic Survey, PIB, RBI and ministry documents named under each answer are where the numbers came from, and are worth reading on their own.
5. **Use the current-affairs trail.** Where a question grew out of a story from the year, the dated Ujjiyari coverage is listed so you can see how it built up.

CONTENTS

All 20 questions

Q	THEME	MARKS	WORDS
1	Fundamental rights — privacy and identity	10	150
2	Social justice — women's political representation	10	150
3	Parliament — Speaker and anti-defection	10	150
4	Elections — franchise and electoral rolls	10	150
5	Constitutional bodies — NCSC and NCST	10	150
6	Social justice — tribal development policy	10	150
7	Health and welfare — malnutrition	10	150
8	Governance — civil services structure	10	150
9	International relations — Indo-Pacific maritime security	10	150
10	International relations — plurilateral groupings	10	150
11	Federalism — office of the Governor	15	250
12	Judiciary — judicial law-making	15	250
13	Federalism — diversity and dispute resolution	15	250
14	Comparative government — separation of powers	15	250
15	Democracy — interest representation and money in politics	15	250
16	Governance — transparency and accountability	15	250

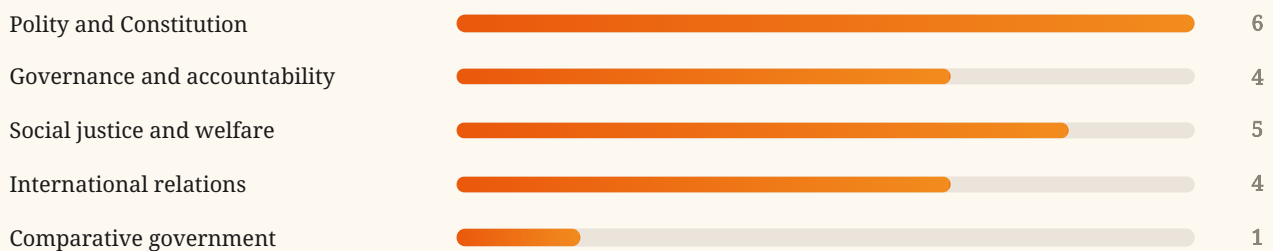
Q	THEME	MARKS	WORDS
17	Welfare state — rights-based entitlements and fiscal capacity	15	250
18	Education policy — welfare obligation or strategic investment	15	250
19	International relations — diaspora diplomacy	15	250
20	International relations — China, connectivity and the neighbourhood	15	250

PAPER ANALYSIS

What this paper actually tested

GS Paper II in 2026 was the most current of the four papers, and it punished anyone revising from last year's notes. Four questions turned on developments of the previous eighteen months: the 2026 amendment to the Transgender Persons Act, the Supreme Court's advisory opinion of November 2025 on the Governor's assent, the SIR judgment of May 2026 on electoral rolls and citizenship, and the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill in April 2026, which is the live context for women's reservation. Polity was framed institutionally rather than descriptively, asking whether the Speaker's office has become vulnerable and whether the NCSC and NCST have enforcement power, both of which need a design argument rather than a list of provisions. Governance and social justice ran on the same pattern: malnutrition as an equity and governance failure, rights-based welfare against fiscal capacity, education as welfare or investment. International relations was unusually specific, naming IPMDA rather than the Quad, and asking for the strategic implications of the BRI for South Asia rather than for a description of it. Across the paper the reward went to answers that could name a statute, a judgment or a date, and the penalty to answers that could only name a theme.

WHERE THE 20 QUESTIONS FELL



1

10 marks

150 words

Fundamental rights — privacy and identity

Right to privacy relating to self-identity is very dear to every human being and well protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. In this context, examine the effect of the amendment in 2026, to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.

Syllabus: Indian Constitution — significant provisions; mechanisms and institutions for the protection of vulnerable sections

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

The question hands you the constitutional test in its own first sentence: privacy of self-identity under Article 21. Your job is to apply that test to a specific, very recent statutory change. This is not a general essay on transgender rights, and it is not an opinion piece. Set out what the 2026 amendment changed, then measure each change against NALSA and Puttaswamy.

- Establish the constitutional baseline first: NALSA (2014) on self-identification, Puttaswamy (2017) on informational and decisional privacy.
- State precisely what the 2026 amendment altered, with dates, and do it neutrally.
- Then apply the test, change by change, and close with the proportionality question, which is where the marks are.

MODEL ANSWER

408 words · paper allows 150

The constitutional baseline. In *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014) the Supreme Court recognised transgender persons as a third gender and held that gender identity is an element of dignity under Article 21, resting on **self-determination rather than surgery or medical certification**. *Justice K. S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017) then located both **decisional privacy**, the freedom to make intimate choices about one's own body and identity, and **informational privacy**, control over personal data, within Article 21. A restriction on either must satisfy the proportionality test: legality, a legitimate aim, rational connection, necessity, and a balancing of interests.

What the 2026 amendment did. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on 24 March 2026 and the Rajya Sabha on 25 March 2026, received assent on 30 March 2026, and came into force on 25 May 2026. Its principal changes are that it **replaces the open definition** of a transgender person in the 2019 Act with an enumerated list of socio-cultural groups together with persons with intersex variations, **omits the right to self-perceived gender identity**, makes **medical scrutiny a prerequisite** for legal recognition, and requires medical institutions performing gender-affirming procedures to **report to the District Magistrate**.

Applying the constitutional test

- **Decisional privacy.** Substituting medical scrutiny for self-perception reverses the core of NALSA. Identity ceases to be self-declared and becomes state-certified, which is precisely what the 2014 judgment held Article 21 forbids.
- **Informational privacy.** Mandatory disclosure of gender-affirming treatment to a District Magistrate transfers sensitive personal health data without the individual's consent. Puttaswamy treats health data as requiring the highest protection, and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 is built on a consent architecture that this reporting duty bypasses.

- **Equality and over- and under-inclusion.** A closed list of named communities excludes persons who fall outside those categories yet experience the same discrimination, raising an Article 14 question of manifest arbitrariness.
- **The proportionality question.** The state's stated aims, preventing misuse of certification and of reservation-type benefits, are legitimate. What is contestable is *necessity*: whether a less restrictive measure, verification of documents rather than of bodies, would serve the same aim, and whether the harm to dignity is proportionate to the mischief addressed.

Conclusion. The amendment is not a marginal procedural change; it shifts the statutory foundation from self-identification to external validation, and it is on that shift, not on the fact of regulation, that its constitutional fate under Article 21 will turn.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Name both precedents precisely: NALSA v. Union of India (2014) 5 SCC 438 for self-identification and Puttaswamy (2017) 10 SCC 1 for privacy, including the four-part proportionality standard.
- Note the sequence of dates for the amendment — passed 24 and 25 March 2026, assented 30 March 2026, in force 25 May 2026 — because an answer with the legislative timeline reads as informed rather than impressionistic.
- The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 is the sharpest supporting argument on the reporting requirement, and very few answers will connect the two statutes.
- Yogyakarta Principles on the application of international human rights law to sexual orientation and gender identity give the comparative frame if you have room.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing a general answer on transgender welfare schemes. The question is a constitutional one about a specific 2026 amendment.
- Assuming the amendment strengthened rights because amendments usually do. The direction of this one is restrictive, and getting that backwards is fatal.
- Omitting the state's side. A balanced answer states the legitimate aim before testing necessity.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 — bare Act (India Code)
<https://www.indiacode.nic.in/>

PRIMARY Supreme Court of India — judgment search for NALSA (2014) and Puttaswamy (2017)
<https://www.sci.gov.in/>

SECONDARY PRS Legislative Research — Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026
<https://prsindia.org/billtrack>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Transgender Amendment Bill passed
<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/03/26/transgender-amendment-bill/>

Transgender Bill 2026 in the Lok Sabha
<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/03/25/transgender-bill-2026-lok-sabha/>

Editorial: the amendment, rights and dignity
<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/04/hindu-transgender-amendment-rights-dignity/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Fundamental rights

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/fundamental-rights/

Landmark judgments

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/landmark-judgments/

2

10 marks

150 words

Social justice — women's political representation

“Women as a class neither belong to a minority group nor are they regarded as forming a backward class.” In the light of this statement, discuss the evolution of women's reservation from local bodies to Parliament.

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

The quoted sentence is a **legal characterisation**, not decoration: because women are neither a minority nor a backward class, their reservation could not ride on Articles 15(4) or 16(4) and required amendments of its own. Use that to explain why local-body reservation came easily and parliamentary reservation took three decades. Then bring the story up to 2026.

- Unpack the quotation first — it explains the constitutional route that had to be taken, and it is the hinge of the whole answer.
- Trace the evolution in order: 73rd and 74th Amendments, the failed Bills of 1996 to 2008, the 106th Amendment of 2023.
- Finish with the 2026 development, which is what separates a current answer from a stale one.

MODEL ANSWER

409 words · paper allows 150

Why the quotation matters. Women are not a religious or linguistic minority under Articles 29 and 30, and the Supreme Court has not treated them as a backward class under Articles 15(4) and 16(4).

Reservation for women therefore could not be read into the existing enabling provisions; it needed **express constitutional amendment** each time. That single point explains the entire trajectory below.

Local bodies: the easy step. The **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, 1992** inserted Articles 243D and 243T reserving not less than one-third of seats, and of chairperson posts, for women in panchayats and municipalities. Because these created a new tier, the reservation could be built into its design rather than displacing sitting members. Most states have since raised the share to 50 per cent. The consequences have been studied and are real: a large body of research finds that women *pradhans* shift spending towards water, sanitation and children, though *sarpanch pati* proxy leadership remains a documented problem.

Parliament: three decades of failure. The 81st Amendment Bill (1996) and successors in 1998, 1999 and 2008 all lapsed. The obstacles were the demand for a quota-within-quota for OBC and minority women, resistance from parties whose sitting members would lose seats, and the objection that rotation of reserved constituencies destroys incumbency and accountability.

The 106th Amendment, 2023. The *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam* inserted Articles 330A, 332A and 239AA(2)(b) reserving one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies and the Delhi Assembly for women, with reservation within the seats already reserved for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Crucially, it made commencement **conditional on a census and a delimitation exercise thereafter**, so the right was enacted but deferred.

2026: the deferral becomes the issue. The government moved the **Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026** to break that dependence by allowing delimitation on the 2011 census and raising the maximum strength of the Lok Sabha to 850. It was **defeated in the Lok Sabha in April 2026**, failing to reach the two-thirds of members present and voting required by Article 368, and the accompanying Delimitation Bill, 2026 consequently lapsed.

Assessment. The evolution runs from the local, where reservation was structurally easy and has been transformative, to the national, where it is constitutionally secured but operationally suspended. The unresolved question is no longer whether women should be represented but **which census, which delimitation, and at whose expense**, and April 2026 showed that this is now a federal question as much as a gender one.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Cite the Articles, not just the amendment numbers: 243D and 243T (1992), and 330A, 332A and 239AA(2)(b) inserted by the 106th Amendment, 2023.
- The April 2026 defeat is the freshest and most decisive fact available on this question, and the reason it failed — Article 368's two-thirds of members present and voting — is worth stating.
- The quota-within-quota demand for OBC women is the substantive objection that has never been resolved, and the caste enumeration in Census 2027 will make it sharper, not easier.
- Rotation of reserved constituencies is criticised on the ground that it removes the incentive to build a constituency record; the 106th Amendment leaves rotation to a future law.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Ignoring the quotation and writing a generic answer on women's empowerment. The sentence is a legal proposition and the examiner expects it to be engaged.
- Saying that one-third reservation in Parliament is now in force. It is enacted but its commencement is conditional and, as of August 2026, unfulfilled.
- Confusing the 106th Amendment (2023) with the 73rd and 74th (1992).

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023 — Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam
<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

SECONDARY PRS Legislative Research — The Delimitation Bill, 2026 and the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026
<https://prsindia.org/billtrack/the-delimitation-bill-2026>

PRIMARY Constitution of India — Articles 243D, 243T, 330A, 332A and 368
<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Delimitation, 816 seats and women's reservation
<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/04/06/delimitation-lok-sabha-816-seats-women-reservation/>

Decoupling women's reservation from delimitation
<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/1e-women-reservation-delimitation-decouple-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Amendments, schedules and special provisions

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/amendment-schedules-special-provisions/

Women's rights and the legal framework

bharatnotes.com/subjects/social-justice/vulnerable-sections/women-rights-legal-framework/

3

10 marks

150 words

Parliament — Speaker and anti-defection

Examine whether the constitutional office of the Lok Sabha Speaker has become vulnerable to partisan politics under the current anti-defection regime. What institutional changes are required to ensure the neutrality of the Lok Sabha Speaker in managing a polarised House?

Syllabus: Parliament and State Legislatures — structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers and privileges

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Two explicit parts: **examine** whether the office has become vulnerable, and then prescribe **institutional changes**. Both halves carry marks. The reform half must be institutional, not exhortation about better conduct.

- Identify the structural source of the vulnerability, which is that the Speaker is a partisan-elected office given a judicial function with no fixed timeline.
- Evidence it with the case law on delay and with the fact that the Speaker's own tenure depends on the majority.
- Give reforms in an ordered list, each attributable to a committee, a judgment or a comparative practice, and be honest that the cleanest reform requires a constitutional amendment.

MODEL ANSWER

492 words · paper allows 150

The structural problem. The Speaker is elected by the House, which in practice means by the majority party, and ordinarily remains a member of that party. The **Tenth Schedule** then makes this same office the sole adjudicator of disqualification petitions against legislators, most often from the very parties contesting for power. A partisan office has been handed a judicial function. *Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu* (1992) upheld the Schedule but held that the Speaker acts as a **tribunal** in this role and is subject to judicial review, which is an admission that the risk is real.

The evidence of vulnerability

- **Delay as a weapon.** The Tenth Schedule prescribes no time limit. A Speaker can keep a petition pending until the House's term or the political arithmetic changes, so inaction becomes a decision. In *Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly* (2020) the Supreme Court said such petitions should ordinarily be decided within three months, and it has since had to reiterate that direction, which tells you how well the first one worked.
- **Split and merger decisions.** Recognising which faction is the real party is now the decisive act in a defection contest, and it is made by an officeholder with a stake in the outcome.
- **Tenure.** Unlike the British Speaker, the Indian Speaker does not sever party ties on election and usually seeks re-election on a party ticket, so future political prospects remain tied to party goodwill.

- **Management of a polarised House.** Selection of business, admission of adjournment motions, recognition of the Opposition and mass suspensions are all discretionary, and each has become contested.

Institutional changes required

1. **Move adjudication out of the chair.** Vest Tenth Schedule decisions in the President or Governor acting on the binding advice of the Election Commission, on the analogy of Articles 103 and 192, as the **Dinesh Goswami Committee (1990)**, the **Law Commission's 170th Report (1999)** and the **2nd ARC** have variously recommended. Alternatively create a permanent tribunal headed by a retired judge. Either route needs a constitutional amendment.
2. **A statutory time limit.** Write the three-month rule into the Tenth Schedule itself, with a default consequence for inaction, so that delay is no longer costless.
3. **Sever the party tie.** Adopt the Westminster convention that the Speaker resigns from the party on election and, by inter-party agreement, is not opposed at the next election.
4. **Insulate the removal power.** The Speaker's vulnerability to a removal motion under Article 94 cuts both ways and needs a higher threshold if the office is to be genuinely independent.
5. **Rule-based conduct of business.** A guaranteed number of Opposition days, a rule-bound framework for suspensions, and reference of most Bills to Standing Committees reduce the discretion available to be criticised.

Conclusion. The office is not vulnerable because of the individuals who occupy it; it is vulnerable because the Constitution asks a political officeholder to perform a judicial function without a clock. Fix the design and the conduct will follow.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Kihoto Hollohan (1992) is the load-bearing case: it upheld the Tenth Schedule, struck down the provision barring judicial review, and characterised the Speaker as a tribunal.
- Naming the reform sources — Dinesh Goswami Committee 1990, Law Commission 170th Report 1999, National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution 2002, 2nd ARC — turns a wish list into a sourced set of recommendations.
- The UK convention that the Speaker is unopposed at the next general election is the specific comparative practice worth citing, rather than a vague reference to Westminster.
- The 91st Amendment, 2003, deleted the split provision of the Tenth Schedule and left only merger, which is why faction-recognition disputes now turn on the two-thirds merger test.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing only about anti-defection and forgetting the second half of the question on managing a polarised House.
- Offering reforms that are only moral appeals. The question says *institutional changes*.
- Claiming the Speaker's decision is immune from judicial review. Kihoto Hollohan held the opposite.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Constitution of India — Tenth Schedule and Articles 93, 94, 103 and 192

<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

PRIMARY Supreme Court of India — judgment search (Kihoto Hollohan 1992; Keisham Meghachandra Singh 2020)

<https://www.sci.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Law Commission of India, 170th Report, Reform of the Electoral Laws, 1999

<https://lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Anti-defection reform, 2026

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/ie-anti-defection-reform-2026/>

The Tenth Schedule revisited

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/th-anti-defection-tenth-schedule-2026/>

Legislation tracker — Anti-Defection Law, 1985

<https://uiyari.com/legislation/anti-defection-law-1985/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Anti-defection, PIL and tribunals

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/anti-defection-pil-tribunals/

Parliamentary oversight and the CAG

bharatnotes.com/subjects/governance/governance-framework/parliamentary-oversight-cag/

4

10 marks

150 words

Elections — franchise and electoral rolls

Is the right to vote a fundamental right? Discuss the position of the Election Commission of India while undertaking the revision of electoral rolls. Can it also examine the question of citizenship of voters?

Syllabus: Salient features of the Representation of People's Act; appointment and powers of constitutional bodies

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Three distinct questions in one, and each needs its own answer: the **juridical character of the right to vote**, the ECI's **position when revising rolls**, and whether it may **examine citizenship**. The third is the live one, settled by a 2026 judgment, and an answer that stops at the first two is incomplete.

- Answer the first question with the case law and the standard classification, statutory right, constitutional right, or fundamental right.
- Set out the ECI's legal basis for revision under Article 324 and the Representation of the People Act, 1950.
- Handle citizenship carefully, drawing the distinction the Supreme Court itself drew in May 2026 between eligibility for the roll and status under the Citizenship Act.

MODEL ANSWER

471 words · paper allows 150

Is the right to vote a fundamental right? The orthodox position is that it is **not**. In *N. P. Ponnuswami* (1952) and *Jyoti Basu v. Debi Ghosal* (1982) the Supreme Court held the right to vote to be a **statutory right**, conferred by Section 62 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and not a fundamental or

common law right. Article 326 guarantees adult suffrage as a *constitutional* mandate for the composition of the House, and Article 325 forbids exclusion from the roll on grounds of religion, race, caste or sex. Later benches have complicated the picture: *PUCL v. Union of India* (2003) located the right to know a candidate's antecedents in Article 19(1)(a), and in *Kuldip Nayar* (2006) and *Raj Bala* (2015) judges have described voting variously as a constitutional right and as a facet of expression. The workable statement is that the **right to vote is statutory in origin, constitutional in status, and its exercise carries a fundamental-rights dimension under Articles 19(1)(a) and 14.**

The ECI's position when revising rolls. Article 324 vests the superintendence, direction and control of elections, including the preparation of electoral rolls, in the Election Commission. The **Representation of the People Act, 1950** and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 supply the machinery for intensive, summary and special revision. Preparing an accurate roll is not incidental to a free and fair election; it is its precondition, since both wrongful inclusion and wrongful exclusion distort the result.

Can it examine citizenship? Citizenship under Article 326 and Section 16 of the 1950 Act is a **qualification** for enrolment, so the Commission necessarily forms a view on it. On **27 May 2026** the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls and drew the crucial line: the ECI may examine citizenship **for the limited purpose of deciding eligibility for inclusion in the roll**, and that determination does not amount to a final declaration of citizenship status, which remains for the competent authority under the Citizenship Act, 1955. Exclusion from a roll is therefore not denationalisation.

The safeguards that make this workable. Because the consequence of error is disenfranchisement, the process must carry due-process guarantees: notice and hearing before deletion, a reasoned order, appeal under Sections 24 of the 1950 Act, the burden of proof placed on the authority rather than the elector, and published, auditable data. The Bihar exercise, in which a large number of electors were deleted, is the reason these safeguards are the operative question rather than an academic one.

Conclusion. The right to vote is not a fundamental right in the classical sense, but its denial engages Articles 14 and 19(1)(a). The Commission is competent to test citizenship as an electoral qualification and no further. The constitutional risk lies not in the power but in the procedure.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Sequence the case law: Ponnuswami (1952), Jyoti Basu (1982), PUCL (2003), Kuldip Nayar (2006), Raj Bala (2015) — the progression itself is the argument.
- Separate Article 325 (no exclusion on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex) from Article 326 (adult suffrage), because answers routinely swap them.
- The 27 May 2026 SIR judgment's distinction between electoral eligibility and citizenship status is the single most examinable point in this question.
- Section 62 of the RP Act, 1951 confers the right to vote; Section 16 of the RP Act, 1950 deals with disqualification for registration. Citing the right Act matters.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Answering only the first sub-question. There are three, and the third is the current one.
- Asserting flatly that voting is a fundamental right. That is contrary to the leading authority and will be marked down.
- Treating exclusion from the electoral roll as equivalent to a finding of foreign nationality. The Court expressly rejected that equivalence.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY The Representation of the People Act, 1950 — bare Act (India Code)

<https://www.indiacode.nic.in/>

PRIMARY Election Commission of India — electoral roll revision, manuals and instructions

<https://www.eci.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Supreme Court of India — judgment search (Special Intensive Revision, 2026)

<https://www.sci.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Constitution of India — Articles 324, 325 and 326

<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Supreme Court upholds the ECI's SIR of electoral rolls

<https://uiyari.com/daily/2026/05/27/sc-upholds-eci-sir-electoral-rolls-2026/>

SIR and the citizenship question in West Bengal

<https://uiyari.com/daily/2026/07/19/sc-west-bengal-sir-citizenship-2026/>

Editorial: clean and transparent electoral rolls

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/th-electoral-rolls-clean-transparent-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Electoral systems and reforms

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/electoral-systems-reforms/

Model Code of Conduct and the election process

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/model-code-of-conduct-election-process/

5

10 marks

150 words

Constitutional bodies — NCSC and NCST

Do constitutional bodies like the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) possess adequate enforcement powers to secure substantive social equality? Suggest measures to enhance their institutional effectiveness.

Syllabus: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

A yes-or-no question about **enforcement power**, followed by a reform prescription. The distinction that carries the answer is between *investigative* powers, which these Commissions have, and *enforcement* powers, which they largely lack. Say that early and build on it.

- Set out the constitutional basis and the powers actually conferred, including the civil-court powers, so the answer is accurate about what they can do.
- Then show precisely where the chain breaks: recommendations are not binding, and reports depend on executive and legislative follow-through.
- Give reforms that are specific and feasible, distinguishing those needing amendment from those needing only administrative will.

MODEL ANSWER

466 words · paper allows 150

What they are. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes are **constitutional bodies** under Articles 338 and 338A, created in their present form by the 65th Amendment (1990) and the 89th Amendment (2003) respectively. They investigate and monitor safeguards, inquire into specific complaints, advise on planning for socio-economic development, and report annually to the President, whose reports are laid before Parliament along with a memorandum on action taken.

What powers they actually have. While investigating, each Commission has **all the powers of a civil court trying a suit**: summoning and enforcing attendance, examining on oath, requisitioning public records, receiving evidence on affidavit and issuing commissions. The Union and the States are constitutionally required to **consult** them on all major policy matters affecting SCs and STs.

Where the chain breaks

- **Recommendations do not bind.** The Commissions can find a violation and recommend a remedy; they cannot compel compliance, impose a penalty, or award compensation as of right.
- **The consultation duty is unenforced.** Governments routinely legislate and frame policy without meaningful reference, and there is no consequence for omission.
- **Reports arrive late.** Annual reports are frequently tabled years after the period they cover, by which time the action-taken memorandum is an archival exercise.
- **Capacity.** Prolonged vacancies in the chair and membership, thin research staff and small regional offices mean a caseload of individual grievances crowds out systemic monitoring.
- **Overlap without coordination.** Their remit intersects with the NHRC, the National Commission for Backward Classes, the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act machinery and Special Courts, with no clear referral protocol.

Measures to enhance effectiveness

1. **Make specified recommendations binding, or reasoned rejection compulsory.** A government departing from a recommendation should have to record reasons and table them, which converts advice into accountable advice without turning a Commission into a court.
2. **Statutory timelines.** A fixed period for the government to act on a recommendation and for reports to be tabled after submission.
3. **Transparent, collegium-style appointment** with fixed tenure and a bar on post-retirement political appointment, to secure independence and end long vacancies.
4. **Dedicated capacity:** a permanent secretariat with domain research, a data unit publishing disaggregated conviction and disposal rates, and functioning state-level offices.
5. **Sharper focus on structural discrimination,** manual scavenging, land alienation, forest rights under PESA and the Forest Rights Act, 2006, and atrocity case attrition, rather than only individual service grievances.
6. **Real-time monitoring** through public dashboards on the Prevention of Atrocities Act, since the deterrent value of these Commissions lies in visibility as much as in adjudication.

Verdict. Their powers of inquiry are substantial; their powers of enforcement are not. The gap is deliberate, but a constitutional guardian of substantive equality whose findings can be ignored without cost is under-designed for the task Articles 338 and 338A set it.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Get the amendments right: the 65th Amendment, 1990 created the multi-member NCSC-ST; the 89th Amendment, 2003 bifurcated it into NCSC (Article 338) and NCST (Article 338A) with effect from 2004.
- The civil-court powers under clause (8) of Article 338 are what most answers miss, and citing them shows you know these bodies are not merely advisory in procedure.
- Substantive equality is the phrase in the question; connect it to Articles 15(4), 16(4), 17, 46 and 335 rather than leaving it abstract.
- The parallel National Commission for Backward Classes became a constitutional body under Article 338B by the 102nd Amendment, 2018 — a useful comparison for design.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Calling them statutory bodies. Both are constitutional.
- Saying they have no powers at all. They have civil-court powers of inquiry; what they lack is enforcement.
- Reform suggestions that amount to more funds and more staff. The question asks for institutional effectiveness.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Constitution of India — Articles 338, 338A and 338B

<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

PRIMARY National Commission for Scheduled Castes — mandate, powers and annual reports

<https://ncsc.nic.in/>

PRIMARY National Commission for Scheduled Tribes — mandate and reports

<https://ncst.nic.in/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Constitutional bodies

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/constitutional-bodies/

Dalit rights, SC and ST

bharatnotes.com/subjects/social-justice/vulnerable-sections/dalit-rights-sc-st/

6

10 marks

150 words

Social justice — tribal development policy

Does India's tribal development policy reflect the aspirations for a socially grounded and equity-based governance? Justify your answer.

Syllabus: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; issues relating to development and management of social sector

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Justify your answer makes this a verdict question. Take a position and defend it against the two standards the question names: *socially grounded* (does policy proceed from tribal institutions and worldview) and *equity-based* (does it close outcome gaps). A balanced verdict, mostly yes in law and design, weaker in implementation, is defensible if argued.

- Separate the two standards explicitly and test policy against each, because they can diverge.

- Give the enabling architecture fairly, since it is genuinely substantial, then the implementation record.
- Anchor the verdict in the tension the question implies, between rights-based self-governance and delivery-based welfare.

MODEL ANSWER

412 words · paper allows 150

The architecture is, on paper, among the most socially grounded in the world.

- The Constitution itself provides differentiated governance: the **Fifth Schedule** with Governor's powers and Tribes Advisory Councils, the **Sixth Schedule** with Autonomous District Councils in the north-east, and Article 244 read with Articles 15(4), 16(4), 46, 275(1) and 342.
- **PESA, 1996** vests the Gram Sabha in Scheduled Areas with authority over minor forest produce, land alienation, minor water bodies and consultation before acquisition, taking custom as the starting point of law rather than an exception to it.
- The **Forest Rights Act, 2006** is explicitly restitutive. Its preamble recognises "historical injustice", and it creates individual forest rights and, more radically, **community forest resource rights** managed by the Gram Sabha.
- Delivery schemes follow: the Tribal Sub-Plan and its successor Development Action Plan, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, MSP for minor forest produce and Van Dhan Kendras, **PM-JANMAN (2023)** for particularly vulnerable tribal groups and the **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (2024)** for saturation coverage of tribal villages.

Where it falls short of its own aspiration

- **Consent is diluted into consultation.** PESA's promise of Gram Sabha authority over acquisition has repeatedly yielded to project clearance; *Samatha* (1997) and the *Niyamgiri* Gram Sabha decision (2013) are celebrated precisely because they are exceptions.
- **Community forest rights lag far behind individual titles.** The transformative part of the FRA is the least implemented part, and rejection of claims without reasons remains common.
- **Displacement.** Tribal communities remain heavily over-represented among those displaced by dams, mines and infrastructure relative to their share of population, and rehabilitation has historically been compensation for land rather than restoration of livelihood.
- **Outcome gaps persist** in nutrition, maternal health, school completion and income, and are widest for particularly vulnerable tribal groups.
- **Institutional weakness.** Tribes Advisory Councils are largely dormant, the Governor's Fifth Schedule powers are seldom used, and NCST recommendations are not binding.
- **Categorical mismatch.** Scheduling is a state-wise list, so migrant and urban tribal populations, and denotified and nomadic communities, fall between categories.

Verdict. India's tribal policy is genuinely socially grounded in its **statutory design**, in that PESA and the FRA start from the Gram Sabha and from historical injustice rather than from welfare delivery. It is only partly equity-based in its **outcomes**, because the rights-recognising half is under-implemented while the scheme-delivering half is well-funded. The aspiration is met in law and missed in practice, and the corrective is not a new scheme but enforcement of the two statutes already on the books.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The distinction between individual forest rights and community forest resource rights under the FRA is the sharpest analytical point available here.
- *Samatha v. State of Andhra Pradesh* (1997) on transfer of land in Scheduled Areas, and the *Niyamgiri Gram Sabha* consultations following *Orissa Mining Corporation v. MoEF* (2013), are the two judicial anchors.
- Cite the newest programmes with their years — PM-JANMAN (2023) for PVTGs and Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (2024) — to show currency.
- The Xaxa Committee (2014) report on the socio-economic, health and educational status of tribal communities is the standard official diagnosis and few answers name it.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Listing schemes without ever testing them against the two standards in the question.
- Treating tribal communities as a single undifferentiated group. PVTGs, Sixth Schedule communities and denotified tribes face different problems.
- Confusing the Fifth Schedule (Scheduled Areas, mainland) with the Sixth Schedule (Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram).

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 — Ministry of Tribal Affairs

<https://tribal.nic.in/FRA.aspx>

PRIMARY The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 — Ministry of Panchayati Raj

<https://panchayat.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Ministry of Tribal Affairs — schemes including PM-JANMAN and Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan

<https://tribal.nic.in/>

PRIMARY Constitution of India — Articles 244, 275, 338A and the Fifth and Sixth Schedules

<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Scheme page — PM-JANMAN

<https://ujiyari.com/schemes/pm-janman/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Tribal issues and PVTGs

bharatnotes.com/subjects/social-justice/vulnerable-sections/tribal-issues-pvtgs/

7

10 marks

150 words

Health and welfare — malnutrition

Malnutrition in India is not merely a public health concern; it is also a challenge of social equity, human development and effective welfare governance. Discuss.

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of health, education and human resources

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

The statement asks you to move malnutrition out of the health ministry and into three other frames: **social equity, human development and welfare governance**. Structure the answer on those three, and use the health data only as the evidence base, not as the argument.

- Open with the data so the scale is established, then declare the three frames you will use.
- Under equity, disaggregate: caste, tribe, wealth quintile, gender, region. Under human development, use the lifecycle and economic-cost argument. Under governance, discuss convergence and delivery failure.
- Conclude with what would actually shift the numbers, which is rarely more food and usually water, sanitation, maternal nutrition and female education.

MODEL ANSWER

423 words · paper allows 150

The scale. NFHS-5 (2019-21) records **35.5 per cent of children under five as stunted, 19.3 per cent wasted and 32.1 per cent underweight**, each an improvement on NFHS-4 but each still very high, and **57 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 anaemic**, a figure that worsened. India simultaneously carries rising childhood overweight, the double burden.

As a question of social equity. The averages conceal the point. Undernutrition is consistently highest among Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste children, in the lowest wealth quintile, among children of mothers with no schooling, and in a belt of central and eastern states. Anaemia in adolescent girls reflects intra-household food allocation and early marriage rather than food scarcity; a low-birth-weight baby born to an undernourished mother inherits the deficit before its first meal. Malnutrition is therefore the biological record of social inequality, which is exactly the statement's claim.

As a question of human development. Stunting before the age of two is largely irreversible, and it depresses cognitive development, school performance and adult productivity. In Sen's terms it destroys capability, not merely wellbeing: a stunted child's range of achievable lives narrows permanently. The macroeconomic cost is the demographic dividend, since a workforce shaped by early-childhood undernutrition cannot deliver the productivity that the age structure promises.

As a question of welfare governance. India does not lack programmes. **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, PM POSHAN** for school meals, the **National Food Security Act, 2013** covering about two-thirds of the population, and Jal Jeevan Mission and Swachh Bharat on the sanitation side all exist. The failures are governance failures:

- **Convergence.** Nutrition outcomes are produced jointly by food, water, sanitation, health and women's education, but these sit in separate ministries with separate targets.
- **Delivery.** Anganwadi worker vacancies and honorarium levels, supply-chain gaps in take-home rations, and quality rather than coverage of the ICDS remain the binding constraints.

- **Measurement.** Growth monitoring must be timely and honest to be useful; digitisation through Poshan Tracker helps only if the underlying weighing and recording is real.
- **Targeting.** Migrants, urban informal households and the newly poor fall outside ration portability in practice even where One Nation One Ration Card exists in principle.

Conclusion. Treating malnutrition as a health problem produces supplementary feeding. Treating it as a problem of equity, capability and governance produces the interventions that actually move the indicators: maternal nutrition and adolescent health, sanitation and safe water, female schooling, and convergent district-level accountability. The statement is not rhetorical; it is a diagnosis of why decades of feeding programmes have moved the numbers so slowly.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Quote NFHS-5 exactly — stunting 35.5, wasting 19.3, underweight 32.1 per cent, and anaemia among women at 57 per cent — and note that anaemia worsened between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 while the child indicators improved.
- The first 1000 days window, from conception to the second birthday, is the standard framing and it explains why maternal nutrition matters more than child feeding alone.
- Coffey and Spears' argument that open defecation and population density explain part of India's stunting excess over sub-Saharan Africa is the non-obvious point that lifts this answer.
- Note the Global Hunger Index controversy: India disputes its methodology, particularly the weight given to the undernourishment estimate, so cite NFHS rather than GHI for domestic claims.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Listing nutrition schemes as the body of the answer. The question is about why the problem persists despite them.
- Ignoring anaemia and maternal nutrition, which is where India's record is worst.
- Using Global Hunger Index rankings as the primary evidence when a national survey exists.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) 2019-21, India Report — IIPS and MoHFW
<https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-fr375-dhs-final-reports.cfm>

PRIMARY Poshan Tracker, Ministry of Women and Child Development — real-time monitoring of Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0
<https://poshantracker.in/>

PRIMARY The National Food Security Act, 2013 — Department of Food and Public Distribution
<https://dfpd.gov.in/nfsa-act.htm>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Concept page — double burden of malnutrition
<https://ujiyari.com/terms/double-burden-of-malnutrition/>

Scheme page — Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0
<https://ujiyari.com/schemes/saksham-anganwadi-and-poshan-20-mission-poshan-20/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Food and nutrition security

bharatnotes.com/subjects/social-justice/welfare-social-sector/food-nutrition-security/

Health policy

bharatnotes.com/subjects/social-justice/welfare-social-sector/health-policy/

8

10 marks

150 words

Governance — civil services structure

Analyse the advantages and limitations of the generalist structure of the Indian Civil Services in contemporary governance.

Syllabus: Role of civil services in a democracy

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Analyse advantages and limitations of one specific design feature, the **generalist** structure. The trap is drifting into general civil service reform. Keep every paragraph tied to the generalist-versus-specialist axis, and let *contemporary governance* set the standard against which you judge.

- Define what generalist actually means in the Indian system — recruitment without domain prerequisite, frequent inter-sectoral transfer, and district experience as formation.
- Give advantages that are genuinely consequences of generalism, not of the civil service in general.
- For limitations, use the complexity of contemporary policy domains, then close with a synthesis rather than a choice between the two models.

MODEL ANSWER

395 words · paper allows 150

The Indian higher civil service recruits without a domain qualification, trains for general administration, and rotates officers across unrelated sectors. Whether that design still fits is a live question in an age of financial regulation, climate policy and artificial intelligence.

The advantages

- **Coordination and a whole-of-government view.** Real problems, urban flooding, a pandemic, an ethnic conflict, do not respect departmental boundaries. An officer who has served in revenue, health and finance can convene specialists that no single specialist could.
- **The district as formation.** Early field posting exposes officers to the actual conditions of implementation and to the people policy affects, which is why Indian policy documents are usually more implementation-literate than they would otherwise be.
- **Neutrality and the public interest.** Not being socialised into a single profession's orthodoxy makes it easier to weigh competing expert claims, which is the essence of policy as opposed to technical judgement.
- **Flexibility and continuity.** A cadre transferable at short notice allows the state to staff a crisis, a new mission or an under-served region quickly.

- **Democratic accountability.** Generalists mediate between elected representatives and technical agencies, translating political mandate into administrative action.

The limitations

- **Depth deficit in technical domains.** Regulating derivatives, negotiating at the WTO, framing data protection or spectrum policy demands sustained expertise; a two-year tenure cannot build it.
- **Tenure instability.** Frequent and often politically motivated transfers destroy institutional memory. The Supreme Court's direction in *T. S. R. Subramanian v. Union of India* (2013) for fixed minimum tenure and a Civil Services Board was a response to precisely this.
- **Seniority over merit.** Empanelment and posting driven by seniority weaken the link between demonstrated competence in a domain and appointment to it.
- **Weak market for expertise.** The closed career structure limits inflow of outside talent, which is what the lateral entry experiment was designed to address, and it also limits outflow and return.
- **Generalist supervision of specialists** breeds friction with engineering, medical, forest and scientific services and can devalue technical advice.

The synthesis, not the choice. The 2nd ARC and the Surinder Nath and Hota Committees converged on **specialisation within a generalist frame**: domain assignment in mid-career, longer tenures in the chosen domain, mid-career competence assessment for empanelment, and lateral entry at senior levels for scarce skills. The generalist's coordinating capacity remains indispensable; what has to end is the assumption that any officer can run any ministry at short notice.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- T. S. R. Subramanian v. Union of India (2013) is the case to name for fixed tenure, a Civil Services Board and recording of oral instructions.
- The 2nd ARC's 10th Report, Refurbishing of Personnel Administration, and the Hota Committee (2004) and Surinder Nath Committee (2003) on domain assignment are the sourced reform recommendations.
- Mission Karmayogi, the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building launched in 2020, is the current competency-framework answer to the depth deficit.
- Note the honest counterpoint on lateral entry: it addresses expertise but raises questions about representation and reservation, which is why it has been contested.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing a general essay on civil service reform, corruption and political interference. The axis here is generalist versus specialist.
- Treating specialisation as an unqualified good. Technical capture and tunnel vision are real costs.
- Offering only criticism. The question asks for advantages first.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Second Administrative Reforms Commission, 10th Report — Refurbishing of Personnel Administration
<https://darpg.gov.in/arc-reports>

PRIMARY Department of Personnel and Training — civil services rules and cadre management
<https://dopt.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Mission Karmayogi — National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building
<https://igotkarmayogi.gov.in/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

National Civil Services Day 2026

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/04/21/national-civil-services-day-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Role of the civil services

bharatnotes.com/subjects/governance/governance-framework/role-civil-services/

Civil services reform

bharatnotes.com/subjects/governance/governance-framework/civil-services-reform/

9

10 marks

150 words

International relations — Indo-Pacific maritime security

“IPMDA (Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness) bridges the gap between India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision and the Quad's collective Indo-Pacific strategy.” Make a critical assessment of the statement focusing on IPMDA.

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Critical assessment focusing on IPMDA of a bridging claim. Three moves: explain what IPMDA does technically, show how it connects SAGAR's development-and-security vision to the Quad's strategic project, then test the claim's weak points. The instruction *focusing on IPMDA* means the Quad and SAGAR are context, not subject.

- Explain IPMDA concretely, because most answers describe it vaguely and lose the technical marks.
- Show the bridge working in both directions: SAGAR gets capability and reach, the Quad gets a non-military public good acceptable to non-aligned partners.
- Then criticise: data-sharing limits, absorption capacity of recipients, ASEAN wariness, and the gap between awareness and enforcement.

MODEL ANSWER

485 words · paper allows 150

What IPMDA is. Announced at the **Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo in May 2022**, the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness fuses **commercial satellite radio-frequency data, synthetic aperture radar and automatic identification system feeds** to give partner states a near-real-time picture of their own waters, including vessels that have switched off their transponders. It is delivered not as a new institution but through existing regional nodes: the **Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region at Gurugram**, the IFC in Singapore, and the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency. Its declared targets are illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, dark shipping, trafficking and disaster response. India has also acquired **SeaVision** capability from the United States for this cooperation, and the Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting in New Delhi on **26 May 2026** announced an **Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration**, proposed by India and focused initially on the Indian Ocean.

How it bridges SAGAR and the Quad

- **SAGAR (2015)** frames India as a net security provider and capacity-builder for smaller Indian Ocean states, with development and security treated together. IPMDA gives that framing a concrete deliverable: a small littoral state gains surveillance of its exclusive economic zone without buying satellites.
- **The Quad's** difficulty has been that its strategic purpose is read as containment, which many regional states will not join. A capability that protects fisheries and coastal livelihoods is a **public good**, and it lets partners cooperate without signing up to a bloc.
- India's location and its IFC-IOR make it the natural hub, so IPMDA advances Indian centrality and Quad reach in the same act. That is the sense in which the bridging claim is fair.

Where the claim is overstated

- **Awareness is not enforcement.** Knowing that a vessel is fishing illegally does not stop it. Most partner states lack the patrol craft, fuel budgets and legal machinery to act on the picture, so the initiative can end at a dashboard.
- **Data is commercial and filtered.** Reliance on commercial providers, and the absence of classified military intelligence, is what makes IPMDA politically acceptable, but it also caps its operational value and creates dependence on private vendors.
- **ASEAN centrality and hedging.** Several South-East Asian states are careful not to appear inside a Quad framework, so uptake is uneven and often quiet.
- **India's own posture.** India resists the Quad becoming a military alliance and maintains its strategic autonomy, so the bridge carries only as much weight as India will let it.
- **Absorption and interoperability.** Small navies and coast guards need training, bandwidth and analysts, and capacity-building has lagged the technology.

Assessment. The statement is accurate in **conception** and partial in **effect**. IPMDA is the clearest instance of the Quad delivering a non-military public good, and it does align SAGAR's capacity-building instinct with the Quad's Indo-Pacific strategy. But a bridge is judged by what crosses it. Until partner states can act on the picture they receive, IPMDA narrows an information gap rather than a power gap.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Get the provenance right: announced at the Tokyo Quad Leaders' Summit, May 2022, and extended by the Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration announced at the Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting in New Delhi on 26 May 2026, an initiative India proposed.
- Naming the three fusion nodes — IFC-IOR Gurugram, IFC Singapore, FFA in the Solomon Islands — is the detail that shows real familiarity.
- The technical trio of RF data, SAR and AIS, and the point that dark vessels are found precisely by the mismatch between them, is the mechanism most answers omit.
- Connect to India's wider maritime architecture: SAGAR (2015), the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (2019), MAHASAGAR and the Colombo Security Conclave.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing a general Quad answer. The question says *focusing on IPMDA*.
- Describing IPMDA as a military or intelligence-sharing arrangement. It is deliberately built on commercial, unclassified data.
- Accepting the bridging claim without testing it, when the directive is *critical assessment*.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Ministry of External Affairs — Quad Leaders' Summit and Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting documents
<https://www.mea.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Information Fusion Centre — Indian Ocean Region, Indian Navy, Gurugram (established 2018), the Indian node for IPMDA data fusion

PRIMARY Ministry of External Affairs — Indo-Pacific Division and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative
https://www.mea.gov.in/indo_pacific.htm

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

IPMDA and maritime domain awareness, 2026
<https://uijyari.com/editorials/2026/08/th-ipmda-maritime-domain-awareness-2026/>

Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting outcomes, New Delhi
<https://uijyari.com/daily/2026/05/26/quad-fm-meeting-outcomes-critical-minerals-imsc-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Indo-Pacific, Quad and ASEAN
bharatnotes.com/subjects/international-relations/global-relations/indo-pacific-quad-asean/

Maritime and coastal security
bharatnotes.com/subjects/security/internal-security/maritime-coastal-security/

10

10 marks

150 words

International relations — plurilateral groupings

“BRICS acts as a powerful counterweight in global governance, actively amplifying the voice and influence of the Global South.” Explain the role of BRICS in projecting itself as an alternative to other groupings.

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Explain the role of BRICS in projecting itself as an *alternative*. The answer needs the institutional record, not adjectives, and it must engage with the internal contradictions, since an explanation that treats BRICS as coherent is not credible. India's 2026 chairmanship is the obvious hook and should be used.

- Establish what BRICS now is, in membership terms, because the group has changed shape recently and precision here signals currency.
- Give the counterweight function through concrete instruments — the NDB, the CRA, local-currency settlement, coordinated positions on reform.
- Then the limits: internal rivalry, China's weight, the absence of a common currency, and the question of whether expansion has diluted coherence. Close on India's chairmanship.

MODEL ANSWER

504 words · paper allows 150

What BRICS is now. From Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the group expanded from 2024 to eleven members with the addition of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and **Indonesia, which joined as a full member in January 2025.** A partner-country category was created

in 2025 covering ten further states. **India assumed the chairmanship on 1 January 2026** and hosts the summit in New Delhi.

How it functions as a counterweight

- **Institution-building outside the Bretton Woods system.** The **New Development Bank** (Fortaleza, 2014) lends for infrastructure and sustainable development with equal founding shareholding rather than quota-weighted voting, and the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement** offers a liquidity backstop that reduces reliance on the IMF.
- **Reform advocacy with numbers behind it.** BRICS provides a standing platform to press for IMF quota realignment, World Bank leadership reform, UN Security Council reform and a functioning WTO appellate body, and it speaks for a bloc whose combined output and population are large enough to make the demand awkward to ignore.
- **De-risking the dollar.** Local-currency trade settlement, NDB lending in national currencies and payment-system linkages reduce exposure to sanctions and to dollar liquidity cycles. This is de-risking, not de-dollarisation, and the distinction matters.
- **Agenda-setting for the Global South.** Climate finance and the demand that developed countries meet their obligations, technology transfer, food and energy security, and reform of credit-rating and debt-restructuring practice are pressed here more directly than in the G20.
- **A non-Western forum that is not anti-Western by charter.** Members retain relationships across blocs, which is precisely what makes membership attractive to hedging states.

Where the alternative claim weakens

- **Internal contradictions.** India and China are the group's two largest members and also strategic rivals with an unsettled border; Egypt and Ethiopia, and Saudi Arabia and Iran, bring their own frictions.
- **Asymmetry.** China's economy dwarfs the rest, and there is a persistent concern that BRICS institutions could become instruments of Chinese influence rather than of collective bargaining.
- **No common currency, and no realistic path to one,** given divergent monetary regimes and capital-account arrangements. Statements to the contrary are political signalling.
- **Enlargement versus coherence.** Expanding to eleven members with ten partners widens representation but makes consensus harder, and the group's own priority has shifted to integrating existing members rather than admitting more.
- **Delivery gap.** NDB lending remains small next to the World Bank, and sanctions exposure has complicated its operations.

India's position and the 2026 chairmanship. India uses BRICS for multipolarity and Global South leadership while resisting any framing of the group as anti-Western, since it is simultaneously in the Quad and negotiating with Western partners. Its chairmanship theme emphasises resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability, and its practical aim is institutional consolidation.

Conclusion. BRICS is best understood not as an alternative *order* but as an alternative *option*: it has built real institutions and given the Global South negotiating leverage, while lacking the cohesion, the common currency and the security architecture that a genuine systemic alternative would require. Its value to India lies in exactly that limitation.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Precision on membership is the easiest mark here: eleven members after Indonesia joined in January 2025, plus a partner-country category created in 2025.
- Name the two institutions with their founding details: the New Development Bank agreed at Fortaleza in 2014 and headquartered in Shanghai, and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement.
- Distinguish de-dollarisation from local-currency settlement. Conflating them is the commonest analytical error on BRICS questions.
- India's chairmanship began on 1 January 2026 with the New Delhi summit, and ministerial meetings through 2026 have run across environment, tourism and communications — evidence the chairmanship is operational, not notional.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Using the old five-member figure, or getting the expansion year wrong.
- Claiming BRICS is launching a common currency. No such decision exists.
- Presenting BRICS as internally united, which no serious assessment supports.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Ministry of External Affairs — BRICS: membership, summits and India's 2026 chairmanship
<https://www.mea.gov.in/aboutbrics.htm>

PRIMARY Ministry of External Affairs — BRICS summit and ministerial documents
<https://www.mea.gov.in/>

PRIMARY New Development Bank — about, membership and lending
<https://www.ndb.int/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

BRICS environment ministers, New Delhi statement
<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/08/18/brics-environment-ministers-new-delhi-statement-2026/>

BRICS tourism — Jaipur Declaration
<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/08/21/brics-tourism-jaipur-declaration-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

BRICS and the New Development Bank
bharatnotes.com/subjects/international-relations/global-relations/brics-new-development-bank/

G20 and multilateral governance
bharatnotes.com/subjects/international-relations/global-relations/g20-multilateral-governance/

11

15 marks

250 words

Federalism — office of the Governor

Discuss the position of the Governor in the federal polity of India. What is the nature of his power while giving assent to a bill passed by the State Legislature? Is he bound by the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers in all his functions?

Syllabus: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States; separation of powers

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Three sub-questions, each carrying marks: the Governor's **position** in the federal scheme, the **nature of the assent power** under Article 200, and the **limits of the aid-and-advice rule**. The second and third have both been authoritatively restated since November 2025, so a pre-2025 answer will read as out of date.

- Fix the position first: appointed, not elected, holding office during pleasure, and therefore structurally caught between Union and State.
- On assent, set out the four options in Article 200 and then state what the Supreme Court's advisory opinion of 20 November 2025 held about timelines, deemed assent and justiciability.
- On aid and advice, distinguish the general rule under Article 163(1) from the genuine exceptions, and name them.

MODEL ANSWER

585 words · paper allows 250

Position in the federal scheme. The Governor is appointed by the President under Article 155, holds office during the President's pleasure under Article 156, and is at once the constitutional head of the State executive and the Union's representative in the State. That dual character is the source of every controversy about the office. The **Sarkaria Commission (1988)** and the **Punchhi Commission (2010)** both recommended appointment in consultation with the Chief Minister, a fixed tenure removable only for proven misbehaviour, and eminent persons detached from active politics; none has been implemented. In *S. R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) the Court subjected the Governor's Article 356 report to judicial review, which remains the most important structural check.

The nature of the assent power. Article 200 gives the Governor four courses on a Bill presented to him: assent, withhold assent, return a non-Money Bill for reconsideration (after which, if passed again, he **shall not** withhold assent), or reserve it for the President. In its advisory opinion on the Presidential Reference delivered on **20 November 2025**, a five-judge Constitution Bench held that:

- there is **no judicially imposed timeline** binding the Governor or the President under Articles 200 and 201;
- the concept of **deemed assent does not exist** in the Constitution, so a court cannot declare a Bill to have become law by the passage of time;
- decisions under Articles 200 and 201 are, as a rule, **not justiciable**; and, importantly for the States,
- Article 200 **does not permit withholding assent simpliciter**: withholding is inextricably tied to the obligation to return the Bill to the legislature with a message.

The practical effect is that the Governor cannot sit on a Bill in the sense of killing it silently by refusal, but the remedy for prolonged inaction is political and constitutional rather than a court-ordered clock.

This opinion supersedes the timelines that had been prescribed in the Tamil Nadu Governor's case earlier in 2025.

Is he bound by the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers? As a rule, yes. Article 163(1) makes the Council of Ministers the Governor's aid and advice "except in so far as he is by or under this Constitution required to exercise his functions or any of them in his discretion". *Samsher Singh v. State of Punjab* (1974) settled that the Governor is a constitutional head who acts on advice, and that discretion is the exception. The genuine exceptions are narrow:

- reservation of a Bill for the President under Article 200, and the second proviso where a Bill derogates from the powers of the High Court;
- the report under Article 356 on failure of constitutional machinery;
- functions as administrator of an adjoining Union Territory;
- special responsibilities under Article 371A for Nagaland, 371C for Manipur and comparable provisions, and the Sixth Schedule functions;
- the residual situations where no Council of Ministers can advise, appointing a Chief Minister in a hung house, or dismissing a ministry that has demonstrably lost majority.

Even in these, discretion is not personal preference. *Nabam Rebia* (2016) held that Article 163 does not give the Governor a general discretionary power, and the Court has repeatedly insisted that a majority is tested on the floor of the House, not in Raj Bhavan.

Assessment. The office is constitutionally sound and politically contested. The 2025 opinion restores textual discipline, no deemed assent, no judicial timetable, but it also throws the burden back on convention and on the appointment process, which is exactly where Sarkaria and Punchhi said the reform had to happen.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Cite the advisory opinion by date and effect: 20 November 2025, on a Presidential Reference under Article 143, holding that there are no judicially imposed timelines and no deemed assent, and that withholding assent cannot stand alone.
- The precise textual point that the first proviso to Article 200 obliges the Governor to return a Bill with a message, and that he shall not withhold assent if it is passed again, is the strongest single line available on this question.
- *Samsher Singh* (1974), *Shamsher's* ratio on the constitutional head, and *Nabam Rebia* (2016) on the absence of general discretion, are the two authorities that frame the third sub-question.
- Both the Sarkaria and Punchhi Commissions recommended deleting the doctrine of pleasure in practice through fixed tenure; naming both, with years, marks an informed answer.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing that the Supreme Court has fixed a three-month deadline for the Governor. That position did not survive the November 2025 advisory opinion.
- Claiming the Governor has wide discretionary powers under Article 163. The rule is aid and advice; discretion is the enumerated exception.
- Answering only the first sub-question on the Governor's position and neglecting assent and aid-and-advice.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Constitution of India — Articles 153 to 163, 200, 201, 356 and 371A to 371J

<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

PRIMARY Supreme Court of India — In re Assent, Withholding or Reservation of Bills, advisory opinion of 20 November 2025

<https://www.sci.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Commission on Centre-State Relations (Punchhi Commission), Report, 2010 — Inter-State Council Secretariat

<https://interstatecouncil.gov.in/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Governor's discretion and constitutional morality in Tamil Nadu

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/05/ie-governor-discretion-tamil-nadu-constitutional-morality/>

Concept page — Governor's discretionary powers

<https://ujiyari.com/terms/governor-discretionary-powers/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Governor's discretionary powers

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/governor-discretionary-powers/

Centre-State relations and inter-state disputes

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/centre-state-relations-interstate-disputes/

12

15 marks

250 words

Judiciary — judicial law-making

What is meant by judicial legislation? In this context, discuss the verdicts of the apex court allowing “passive euthanasia” and a “living will”.

Syllabus: Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary; separation of powers

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Define the concept, then use the euthanasia line of cases as the **illustration** of it. The trap is to write a medical-ethics answer. The question is about the judiciary making law in the absence of legislation, and the euthanasia cases are the vehicle.

- Define judicial legislation and distinguish it from interpretation, locating the power in Articles 141 and 142.
- Narrate the euthanasia line as a sequence, because each case did something the previous one did not.
- Assess: what justified the Court acting, and what the costs of legislating by judgment are. Note that Parliament still has not legislated.

MODEL ANSWER

522 words · paper allows 250

What judicial legislation means. Courts interpret law; when they fill a legislative vacuum with binding, prospective, general rules, they legislate. Article 141 makes the law declared by the Supreme Court binding on all courts, and Article 142 empowers it to pass any order necessary for **complete justice**. Together these permit the Court to lay down a code that operates until Parliament acts, as it did in *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan* (1997) on workplace sexual harassment, guidelines that governed for

sixteen years until the 2013 Act. Judicial legislation is thus not a usurpation in itself; it is a gap-filling device whose legitimacy depends on the gap being real and the intrusion being temporary.

The euthanasia line of cases

- ***Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab (1996)*** held that the right to life under Article 21 does not include a right to die, overruling *P. Rathinam*, but it recognised that the right to live with dignity extends to a **dignified process of death**. That sentence became the doctrinal seed.
- ***Aruna Ramchandra Shanbaug v. Union of India (2011)*** refused active euthanasia but permitted **passive euthanasia**, the withdrawal or withholding of life-sustaining treatment, in a patient in a permanent vegetative state, and laid down a procedure requiring approval of the concerned High Court. This was frank judicial law-making: no statute authorised it.
- ***Common Cause v. Union of India (2018)*** went further. A Constitution Bench held that the right to die with dignity is a facet of Article 21, recognised the **advance medical directive or living will**, and laid down a detailed procedure for its execution, custody and implementation, including two witnesses, countersignature by a Judicial Magistrate, and two medical boards.
- **January 2023 modification.** Finding the 2018 machinery unworkable in practice, the Court modified its own guidelines: the advance directive must be signed before two witnesses and attested by a **notary or gazetted officer**, the requirement of a Judicial Magistrate's countersignature was removed, and the composition and timelines of the medical boards were simplified.

Assessment

- **The case for the Court.** Parliament had legislated nothing. The Law Commission had recommended a statute in its 196th and 241st Reports and none followed. Patients and doctors faced criminal exposure under provisions on attempt to suicide and culpable homicide with no lawful path. Where inaction produces indignity, Article 142 is the designed remedy.
- **The case against.** A judgment cannot appropriate funds, build palliative-care capacity, license hospitals or create a registry. The 2023 modification is itself evidence of the limitation: courts legislate without the consultation, drafting expertise and pilot testing that legislatures possess, and must then repair their own handiwork by litigation.
- **The unfinished business.** As of August 2026 India still has no statute on end-of-life care. Judicial legislation was meant to be an interim measure and has become the permanent regime, which is the real criticism, and it lies against Parliament rather than the Court.

Conclusion. The euthanasia cases show judicial legislation at its most defensible, a genuine vacuum, a dignity interest under Article 21, and an express constitutional power. They also show its limits: a right recognised by judgment remains procedurally fragile until the legislature converts it into administrable law.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Sequence the four moments with dates: Gian Kaur 1996, Aruna Shanbaug 2011, Common Cause 2018, modification January 2023. The sequence is the argument.
- The single most examinable detail is what the 2023 order changed: notary or gazetted officer in place of a Judicial Magistrate's countersignature.
- Vishaka (1997) and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 are the model of judicial legislation being replaced by statute; euthanasia is the counter-example where replacement never came.
- Distinguish passive euthanasia, permitted, from active euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, which remain unlawful in India.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Turning this into an ethics answer about the morality of euthanasia. The demand is constitutional.
- Saying the Supreme Court legalised euthanasia. It permitted passive euthanasia only, subject to procedure.
- Missing the 2023 modification, which is precisely the detail that distinguishes a current answer.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Supreme Court of India — judgment search (Gian Kaur 1996; Aruna Shanbaug 2011; Common Cause 2018)

<https://www.sci.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Constitution of India — Articles 21, 141 and 142

<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

PRIMARY Law Commission of India — 196th and 241st Reports on medical treatment of terminally ill patients and passive euthanasia

<https://lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Passive euthanasia and the advance directive

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/01/19/passive-euthanasia-advance-directive/>

Passive euthanasia — the Harish Rana case

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/03/15/passive-euthanasia-harish-rana/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Judiciary

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/judiciary/

Landmark judgments

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/landmark-judgments/

13

15 marks

250 words

Federalism — diversity and dispute resolution

How far has the Indian federal framework been successful in accommodating regional and cultural diversities? Highlight the role of asymmetric federalism and suggest measures to make dispute resolution mechanisms more effective.

Syllabus: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States; issues and challenges of the federal structure

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Three parts: **how far** the federal framework has accommodated diversity, the **role of asymmetric federalism**, and **measures** for dispute resolution. The middle part is the specialist one; an answer that treats asymmetry as a passing example will lose the marks that separate the band.

- Give the verdict early, then evidence it, since *how far* is a scaled question.
- Treat asymmetry systematically: constitutional asymmetry, fiscal asymmetry and political asymmetry, each with named provisions.
- Make the dispute-resolution measures concrete, institution by institution, and be specific about what is broken in each.

MODEL ANSWER

552 words · paper allows 250

The verdict, stated first. Measured against the comparative record, India's federal framework has accommodated regional and cultural diversity remarkably well: no linguistic secession succeeded, most armed regional movements ended in accords and elections, and the Union has survived transitions no other post-colonial federation of comparable diversity managed. It has done so less through symmetry than through **calibrated unevenness**.

Where accommodation has worked

- **Linguistic reorganisation** from 1956 converted the most dangerous cleavage into an administrative principle, and the three-language formula defused the imposition question.
- **Constitutional protection of culture** under Articles 29 and 30, and recognition of 22 languages in the Eighth Schedule.
- **Accords as a technique:** Mizo (1986), Assam (1985), Punjab (1985), and the later Bodo settlements converted insurgency into electoral politics, in Mizoram durably.
- **Local self-government** through the 73rd and 74th Amendments, and the Sixth Schedule's Autonomous District Councils for tribal areas in the north-east.

Asymmetric federalism as the mechanism

- **Constitutional asymmetry.** Articles 371A to 371J give differentiated arrangements for Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Sikkim, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka, protecting customary law, land and local institutions. The Sixth Schedule goes further, giving Councils legislative and judicial powers over land, forests and customary law. Article 370 was the largest instance until its abrogation in 2019.
- **Fiscal asymmetry.** The Finance Commission's horizontal devolution weights income distance most heavily, so poorer states receive more per capita; special assistance, north-eastern allocations and the

erstwhile special category status operate in the same direction.

- **Political and administrative asymmetry.** Union Territories with and without legislatures, the special position of Delhi under Article 239AA, and inner-line permit regimes create graded arrangements within one federation.

Asymmetry is thus not an untidy exception; it is the **technology of accommodation**. Its risk is resentment: states outside the special arrangements read them as favouritism, and demands for equal treatment or for new special status recur.

Where it strains, and the measures needed

1. **Inter-state river water disputes.** Tribunals under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 have taken decades. The 2002 amendment set time limits that are routinely exceeded, and the proposal for a **single permanent tribunal with benches and a dispute resolution committee** should be enacted and staffed, with a national water data framework so that the facts are not themselves in dispute.
2. **The Inter-State Council.** Article 263 provides a forum that meets rarely. It should have a fixed calendar, a permanent secretariat with research capacity, and a mandate to pre-clear centrally sponsored scheme design. **Zonal Councils** should be revived for the same purpose regionally.
3. **Fiscal disputes.** Cesses and surcharges shrink the divisible pool; GST compensation, delayed devolution and centrally sponsored scheme conditionalities are the recurring grievances. A statutory GST dispute settlement mechanism, contemplated in Article 279A(11), remains unconstituted and should be.
4. **The Governor's office.** Selection through consultation with the Chief Minister and fixed tenure, as Sarkaria and Punchhi recommended, would remove the most persistent source of Centre-State friction.
5. **Legislative federalism.** Greater use of Article 252 (legislation by consent) and prior consultation on Concurrent List subjects, education and now data being the sharpest instances.

Conclusion. India accommodates diversity well in the design and unevenly in the operation. The instruments that need repair are not constitutional but institutional: a tribunal that decides, a council that meets, and a fiscal settlement that is predictable.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The framing of asymmetry into three types, constitutional, fiscal and political, is what lifts this answer above a list of Article 371 clauses.
- Article 279A(11) contemplates a GST dispute settlement mechanism that has never been set up; very few answers know this and it is exactly on point.
- Cite the 2002 amendment to the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act for the one-year and three-year timelines, and the pending proposal for a single standing tribunal.
- Watts and Stepan on holding-together federations and on multinational federalism give the comparative vocabulary if you want to signal reading.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Listing Articles 371A to 371J without explaining what asymmetry does for accommodation.
- Ignoring fiscal federalism, which is where the live friction now is.
- Prescribing measures without naming the institution that would implement them.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Constitution of India — Articles 244, 263, 279A, 371A to 371J and the Sixth Schedule
<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

PRIMARY Inter-State Council Secretariat — reports of the Sarkaria and Punchhi Commissions and Council proceedings
<https://interstatecouncil.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Ministry of Jal Shakti — Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 and tribunals
<https://jalshakti-dowr.gov.in/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

MMDR Bill, mining and federalism
<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/bs-mmdr-bill-mining-federalism-2026/>

MGNREGA funding and fiscal federalism
<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/fe-mgnrega-vb-g-ram-g-funding-federalism-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Federalism and the Constitution
bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/federalism-and-constitution/

Inter-State Council and zonal councils
bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/inter-state-council-zonal-councils/

14

15 marks

250 words

Comparative government — separation of powers

Examine how the separation of powers is practised in India compared to the rigid presidential model of the United States of America. In this context, compare the actual authority of the Indian Prime Minister with that of the President of the USA.

Syllabus: Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Two linked tasks: how separation of powers **works in India compared with the rigid US model**, and a comparison of the **actual authority** of the Prime Minister with the US President. The word *actual* is the instruction: compare real power, not formal designation.

- State the structural difference in one line, fusion versus separation, then show how India nonetheless achieves functional separation.
- Compare the PM and the President on the axes that determine real power: legislative control, tenure security, appointments, war and treaty powers, and judicial constraint.
- Resolve with the paradox: the Indian PM with a majority is in some respects more powerful domestically than the US President, and considerably weaker in others.

MODEL ANSWER

545 words · paper allows 250

The structural difference. The United States practises a **rigid** separation: the President is separately elected, cannot sit in Congress, serves a fixed four-year term, and Congress cannot remove him except by

impeachment. India inherited the Westminster **fusion** of powers: the executive is drawn from and is continuously responsible to the legislature under Article 75(3).

How India still achieves separation. India does not follow Montesquieu strictly, but the Supreme Court in *Ram Jawaya Kapur v. State of Punjab* (1955) held that the Constitution observes separation in a **broad, functional** sense, and in *Kesavananda Bharati* (1973) and *Indira Nehru Gandhi v. Raj Narain* (1975) separation of powers was recognised as part of the **basic structure**. The working mechanisms are:

- **Article 50** directing separation of the judiciary from the executive in the public services;
- **Articles 121 and 211** barring discussion in legislatures of a judge's conduct, and **Articles 122 and 212** barring courts from inquiring into legislative proceedings on grounds of irregularity;
- **judicial review** of both legislative and executive action, which the US model also has but which in India extends to constitutional amendments through the basic structure doctrine;
- **Article 361** immunities, and the checks embedded in impeachment and removal procedures.

Comparing actual authority

Axis	Indian Prime Minister	US President
Source of office	Leader of the majority in the Lok Sabha; no separate popular mandate	Separately elected through the Electoral College; independent mandate
Legislative control	Ordinarily commands the majority, so the legislative agenda usually passes; with the anti-defection law, party discipline is enforced by threat of disqualification	Faces a Congress that may be controlled by the opposing party; cannot count on his own party's votes
Tenure security	Holds office only while the majority holds; falls on a no-confidence motion	Fixed four-year term; removable only by impeachment and conviction
Cabinet	Ministers are legislators and political principals in their own right; the Cabinet is a body of colleagues	Secretaries are appointees who cannot sit in Congress and serve at pleasure
Appointments	Extensive, but judicial appointments run through the collegium after the NJAC was struck down in 2015	Nominates judges for life, subject to Senate confirmation
War and treaties	Executive power to conclude treaties; ratification does not require legislative approval, though Article 253 legislation may be needed to implement	Treaties need two-thirds of the Senate; war powers formally rest with Congress though practice has expanded presidential latitude
Emergency	Articles 352, 356 and 360 confer far-reaching, if now judicially constrained, powers	No comparable constitutional emergency architecture

The paradox. A Prime Minister with a stable single-party majority is, on the domestic legislative axis, **more powerful** than a US President, because fusion plus anti-defection means the executive controls the legislature rather than negotiating with it. On the axes of **tenure and independence** the President is stronger, because he cannot be voted out mid-term and does not depend on legislative confidence. In coalition conditions the Indian position reverses sharply: the same office becomes a broker rather than a chief.

Conclusion. India's separation of powers is functional rather than structural, and its real check is not the legislature, which the executive usually controls, but the judiciary and the federal division of powers.

The US separates institutions and forces them to share power; India fuses them and relies on review, federalism and periodic elections to prevent concentration.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Ram Jawaya Kapur (1955) for functional separation, and Kesavananda (1973) with Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narain (1975) for separation of powers as basic structure, are the three citations this question wants.
- The anti-defection law as a *cause* of prime ministerial dominance over the legislature is the non-obvious analytical point and very few answers make it.
- The NJAC judgment (2015) restoring the collegium is the right example for the appointments axis, and it contrasts sharply with Senate confirmation.
- Note the coalition qualification explicitly; it is what makes the comparison honest rather than a caricature.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing that India has no separation of powers. It has functional separation and the doctrine is part of the basic structure.
- Comparing the Indian President with the US President. The question asks about the Prime Minister.
- Ignoring the word *actual* and comparing formal constitutional texts only.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Constitution of India — Articles 50, 53, 74, 75, 121, 122, 211, 212, 253 and 361
<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

PRIMARY Supreme Court of India — judgment search (Ram Jawaya Kapur 1955; Kesavananda Bharati 1973; NJAC 2015)
<https://www.sci.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Constitution of the United States — Articles I, II and III (National Archives)
<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Comparative constitutional schemes

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/comparative-constitutional-schemes/

Constitutional morality and basic structure

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/constitutional-morality-basic-structure/

15

15 marks

250 words

Democracy — interest representation and money in politics

To what extent do pressure groups, social movements and corporate lobbies deepen pluralistic democracy in India by representing excluded interests? Analyse whether the growing convergence of corporate wealth and political power poses a threat to the autonomy of formal democratic institutions.

Syllabus: Role of pressure groups and formal or informal associations in the polity

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Two connected questions. First, **to what extent** three different kinds of actor deepen pluralism, and they are not equivalent, so treat them separately. Second, whether the convergence of corporate wealth and political power threatens institutional autonomy. The 2024 electoral bonds judgment is the central evidence for the second.

- Distinguish the three actors by what they represent and how they access power, since lumping them together is the main analytical failure here.
- Give the pluralist case with real Indian examples of excluded interests actually being represented.
- Then the critique, using regulatory capture, unequal access and the electoral bonds record, and conclude with remedies.

MODEL ANSWER

491 words · paper allows 250

Three actors, not one. Pressure groups are organised interests seeking influence without contesting power; social movements mobilise the excluded outside institutional channels; corporate lobbies are pressure groups with disproportionate resources and privileged access. Pluralist theory treats competition among them as healthy. Whether Indian practice matches the theory depends on which of the three you are looking at.

Where they deepen pluralism

- **Social movements have delivered rights the party system did not.** The MKSS campaign in Rajasthan produced the **Right to Information Act, 2005**; the Right to Food campaign fed into the **National Food Security Act, 2013**; the Narmada Bachao Andolan changed rehabilitation policy and the terms of the displacement debate; the Chipko and forest-rights movements shaped the **Forest Rights Act, 2006**. These are excluded interests converted into statute.
- **Occupational and identity-based associations** — farmer unions, trade unions, caste federations, professional bodies — aggregate demands that would otherwise be invisible between elections, and give continuity to representation.
- **Expertise and scrutiny.** Industry bodies supply technical input to regulation; civil society organisations such as ADR supply the electoral disclosure data that courts and voters use.
- **Constitutional grounding.** Article 19(1)(c) protects association, and the Directive Principles envisage participatory governance, so this activity is not extra-constitutional but constitutionally contemplated.

Where the convergence of wealth and power becomes a threat

- **Opaque political finance.** The **Electoral Bonds Scheme** was struck down unanimously on **15 February 2024** in *Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India* as violating the voter's right to

information under Article 19(1)(a). The Court also invalidated the 2017 amendment to **Section 182 of the Companies Act, 2013**, which had removed the ceiling on corporate donations, previously 7.5 per cent of average net profits of the preceding three years, and had ended the requirement to disclose party-wise contributions in profit and loss accounts. Unlimited anonymous corporate funding, the Court held, is incompatible with free and fair elections.

- **Unequal access.** Lobbying in India is **unregulated**: there is no register of lobbyists, no disclosure of meetings, and no cooling-off framework, so influence is exercised without a trail.
- **Regulatory capture and the revolving door** between regulators and regulated industries in telecom, finance, mining and pharmaceuticals.
- **Media ownership.** Cross-holdings between corporate groups and news organisations narrow the range of scrutiny that formal institutions face.
- **Asymmetric treatment.** Corporate access is legally frictionless while civil society faces FCRA restrictions and licence cancellation, so the playing field between kinds of association is itself tilted.

Assessment and remedies. Social movements have genuinely deepened Indian democracy; corporate lobbies have deepened only the representation of those already represented. The threat to institutional autonomy is therefore not from association as such but from **unregulated, resource-weighted, invisible access**. The corrective agenda is specific: a statutory lobbying-disclosure regime, transparent political finance with a cap and full disclosure, state funding options as recommended by the Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998) and the Law Commission's 255th Report (2015), enforceable conflict-of-interest and cooling-off rules for regulators, and even-handed treatment of corporate and civil society associations.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The electoral bonds judgment of 15 February 2024 is the anchor: it struck down the scheme, the Companies Act amendment removing the 7.5 per cent cap, and the related amendments to the RP Act and the Income Tax Act.
- MKSS to the RTI Act, and the Right to Food campaign to the NFSA, are the two cleanest examples of a movement converting into statute.
- The Indrajit Gupta Committee (1998) on state funding of elections and the Law Commission's 255th Report (2015) on electoral reform are the sourced reform recommendations.
- Note the asymmetry between corporate access and FCRA-constrained civil society; it is the fairness point most answers miss.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Treating pressure groups, social movements and corporate lobbies as interchangeable. The question deliberately names three.
- Getting the electoral bonds ratio wrong. It rested on the voter's right to information under Article 19(1)(a), not on corruption as such.
- Concluding that all lobbying should be banned, rather than regulated and disclosed.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Supreme Court of India — judgment search, Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India (electoral bonds, 15 February 2024)

<https://www.sci.gov.in/>

PRIMARY The Companies Act, 2013, Section 182 — bare Act (India Code)

<https://www.indiacode.nic.in/>

PRIMARY Law Commission of India, 255th Report on Electoral Reforms, 2015

<https://lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/>

PRIMARY Election Commission of India — political party contribution and expenditure reports

<https://www.eci.gov.in/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

FCRA amendment: control, not transparency

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/ie-fcra-amendment-bill-control-not-transparency-2026/>

A decade of GeM and procurement transparency

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/ie-gem-decade-procurement-transparency-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Pressure groups and NGOs

bharatnotes.com/subjects/governance/governance-framework/pressure-groups-ngos/

Electoral systems and reforms

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/electoral-systems-reforms/

16

15 marks

250 words

Governance — transparency and accountability

“Transparency and accountability in governance are not about controlling corruption but about creating the trust of stakeholders in the policy process by following the Rule of Law and Participatory Governance.” Comment.

Syllabus: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability; citizens charters

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Comment on a statement that makes a specific claim about *purpose*: transparency is about building trust through rule of law and participation, not merely about catching the corrupt. Agree with the reframing, but show you understand the anti-corruption function too, and then test whether Indian practice matches the trust-building standard.

- Accept the reframing and explain why the anti-corruption view is too narrow, using the idea of legitimacy and compliance.
- Take rule of law and participatory governance as the two named pillars and give the Indian instruments under each.
- Assess where the instruments are being weakened, and end on what trust actually requires.

MODEL ANSWER

530 words · paper allows 250

Why the reframing is right. If transparency existed only to catch the corrupt, it would be an audit function and could be delegated to auditors. Its larger purpose is **legitimacy**. A stakeholder who can see how a decision was made, on what rule, with what evidence, and who was heard, will accept an adverse decision; one who cannot, will contest it, evade it or exit. Trust reduces the cost of governing, because voluntary compliance is cheaper than enforcement. Rothstein's and Fukuyama's work on state capacity makes the same point: impartial, visible administration produces generalised trust, and generalised trust is itself an economic asset.

The Rule of Law pillar

- **Legality and reasons.** Administrative action must have a legal basis and, since *Maneka Gandhi* (1978), must be fair and non-arbitrary. The duty to give reasons is what makes a decision reviewable and therefore trustworthy.
- **The Right to Information Act, 2005** converts information from a favour into a right, with Section 4 requiring **suo motu** disclosure so that citizens need not ask.
- **Institutions of accountability.** The CAG under Article 148, the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, the Central Vigilance Commission, and the Prevention of Corruption Act as amended in 2018.
- **Predictability.** Pre-legislative consultation policy, published rules, and standard operating procedures reduce discretion, which is where both corruption and distrust originate.

The Participatory Governance pillar

- **Constitutional participation** through the Gram Sabha under Article 243A, PESA in Scheduled Areas, and ward committees under the 74th Amendment.
- **Social audit**, made statutory under MGNREGA, is the most successful Indian instance of citizens auditing the state; Andhra Pradesh's social audit units are the model.
- **Citizens' charters and service guarantees.** Several states have Right to Public Services Acts with time limits and penalties for default, giving the charter teeth it originally lacked.
- **Deliberative planning**, of which Kerala's People's Plan Campaign remains the outstanding example.
- **Digital transparency:** e-procurement through GeM, published beneficiary lists, and open data portals, which change the default from disclosure-on-request to disclosure-by-design.

Where Indian practice falls short of the claim

- **The RTI has been weakened at the edges.** The RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019 gave the Union government power to fix the tenure and terms of Information Commissioners, and Section 44(3) of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 amended Section 8(1)(j) to broaden the personal-information exemption. Prolonged vacancies in Information Commissions and large pendency compound the effect.
- **Whistleblower protection is unoperationalised.** The Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014 has not been meaningfully brought into force.
- **Participation is often ritual.** Public hearings under EIA and Gram Sabha consultations are frequently held to satisfy a procedural requirement rather than to shape a decision.
- **Transparency without comprehension.** Publishing a dataset is not the same as making it intelligible, which is where the trust dividend is actually lost.

Comment. The statement is correct and its implication is demanding. Trust is produced not by disclosure alone but by **reasoned decisions, honoured timelines, real consultation and visible consequences for default**. On that test India has built an impressive statutory architecture and has, in the past decade, allowed some of its keystones to erode. The anti-corruption benefit follows from trust-building governance; it is a by-product, not the purpose, which is precisely what the statement says.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Section 4 of the RTI Act on suo motu disclosure is the provision that matches the statement's emphasis on trust rather than on catching wrongdoing, and it is under-used in answers.
- Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act, 2023 amending Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act is the most current and contested transparency development, and naming it shows currency.
- State Right to Public Services Acts, with time limits and penalties, are the example that shows a citizens' charter with enforcement, and Andhra Pradesh's MGNREGA social audit units the example of citizen audit that works.
- The 2nd ARC's 1st, 4th and 12th Reports (RTI, Ethics in Governance, Citizen Centric Administration) are the correct official references.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing a general anti-corruption answer, which is exactly what the statement asks you to move beyond.
- Listing transparency laws without connecting any of them to trust or to participation.
- Ignoring the recent dilutions, which is where a *comment* answer demonstrates judgement.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY The Right to Information Act, 2005 — bare Act (India Code)

<https://www.indiacode.nic.in/>

PRIMARY Second Administrative Reforms Commission — 1st Report (RTI), 4th Report (Ethics in Governance), 12th Report (Citizen Centric Administration)

<https://darpg.gov.in/arc-reports>

PRIMARY The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 — MeitY

<https://www.meity.gov.in/data-protection-framework>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Procurement transparency after a decade of GeM

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/ie-gem-decade-procurement-transparency-2026/>

Medical transparency and public trust

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/th-medical-transparency-trust-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Governance and transparency

bharatnotes.com/subjects/governance/governance-framework/governance-transparency/

RTI and e-governance

bharatnotes.com/subjects/governance/governance-framework/rti-e-governance/

17

15 marks

250 words

Welfare state — rights-based entitlements and fiscal capacity

Can the constitutional mandate of rights-based welfare be effectively realised in the context of non-integrated governance and minimal public investment? Examine.

Syllabus: Welfare schemes; issues relating to development and management of social sector or services

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Examine a conditional question: *can* rights-based welfare be realised given two named constraints, fragmented governance and low public investment. Do not answer with a list of welfare schemes. Answer by testing the constraints, and then say what would have to change for the answer to be yes.

- Establish what rights-based welfare means and how it differs from discretionary schemes, since the distinction drives the whole answer.
- Test each constraint with data, being careful to date the expenditure figures.
- Conclude with a qualified answer and the conditions attached, which is what *examine* rewards.

MODEL ANSWER

546 words · paper allows 250

What rights-based welfare means. A rights-based entitlement is claimable, justiciable and not contingent on budgetary convenience. India built an unusual amount of it: the **Right to Education Act, 2009** under Article 21A, **MGNREGA, 2005** guaranteeing a hundred days of work with an unemployment allowance, the **National Food Security Act, 2013** covering roughly two-thirds of the population, and the **Forest Rights Act, 2006**. This architecture rests on Article 21 as expanded from *Francis Coralie Mullin* onwards, and on the Directive Principles converted into obligation.

Constraint one: minimal public investment. The Economic Survey 2025-26 records general government expenditure on **education at 2.7 per cent of GDP** in FY26 budget estimates, down from 2.9 per cent in FY20 and flat since FY22, and **health at about 1.8 per cent**, up from 1.4 per cent over the same period. Both remain far below the long-standing domestic targets of 6 per cent for education and 2.5 per cent for health, and below comparator averages. The consequences follow directly: high out-of-pocket health spending, teacher and health-worker vacancies, and entitlements that exist on paper while the facility that must deliver them is understaffed. A right without a funded delivery system is a right to litigate.

Constraint two: non-integrated governance. The determinants of a single outcome sit in different ministries and different tiers. Nutrition depends on food, water, sanitation, health and women's education; learning depends on nutrition, attendance and teacher supply. Add to that:

- **Vertical fragmentation.** Rights are legislated centrally and delivered by states and local bodies whose fiscal capacity varies enormously, while cesses and surcharges shrink the divisible pool.
- **Unfunded devolution.** The 73rd and 74th Amendments transferred functions without commensurate funds and functionaries, so the tier closest to the citizen is the weakest.
- **Data silos.** Separate registries per scheme prevent a household-level view, so convergence is impossible even when intended.
- **Grievance redress.** Without an accessible, time-bound remedy, a statutory entitlement is unenforceable for exactly the people it was written for.

So can it be realised? Partly, and unevenly, which is what the record shows. MGNREGA demonstrably provided a floor during the pandemic; NFSA and portability under One Nation One Ration Card protected consumption; RTE raised enrolment to near-universal even as learning outcomes lagged. These are real achievements delivered under both constraints. But the pattern is that rights-based programmes deliver **coverage** and fail on **quality**, because coverage can be legislated and quality has to be financed and managed.

What would make the answer yes

1. **Raise and protect social-sector spending**, with a medium-term expenditure framework so that entitlements are not squeezed by fiscal cycles.
2. **Integrate at the district**, with a single accountable authority, pooled untied funds and a common household registry, rather than integrating at the ministry.
3. **Fund the local tier**, implementing State Finance Commission recommendations, so that delivery capacity matches delivery responsibility.
4. **Make redress real**: statutory timelines, default penalties, and social audit extended beyond MGNREGA.
5. **Shift measurement from outlay to outcome**, publishing learning levels, stunting and out-of-pocket expenditure rather than expenditure and enrolment.

Conclusion. The constitutional mandate is not defeated by these constraints, but it is capped by them. India has proved it can legislate rights at scale; realising them requires the unglamorous work of financing, convergence and local capacity, none of which a statute can supply by itself.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Date the expenditure figures to the Economic Survey 2025-26 and give the direction of travel: education at 2.7 per cent of GDP in FY26 BE, down from 2.9 per cent in FY20; health at about 1.8 per cent, up from 1.4 per cent.
- The distinction between coverage, which rights-based law delivers, and quality, which it does not, is the analytical spine of this answer.
- Cite the constitutional grounding precisely: Article 21A for education, and Article 21 as expanded in Francis Coralie Mullin (1981) and Olga Tellis (1985) for livelihood and dignity.
- Note that cesses and surcharges are outside the divisible pool, which is why central revenue growth does not automatically improve state delivery capacity.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Listing welfare schemes. The question is about whether the constitutional mandate can be realised under two named constraints.
- Quoting the 6 per cent education target as if it were current achievement.
- Concluding with an unqualified yes or no. The honest answer is conditional, and the conditions are the marks.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Economic Survey 2025-26 — social sector chapter, Ministry of Finance
<https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicsurvey/>

PRIMARY The National Food Security Act, 2013 — Department of Food and Public Distribution
<https://dfpd.gov.in/nfsa-act.htm>

PRIMARY Ministry of Rural Development — MGNREGA, entitlements and social audit
<https://nrega.nic.in/>

PRIMARY Constitution of India — Articles 21, 21A and Part IV
<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

From rights-holders to beneficiaries

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/06/dte-welfare-rights-holders-to-beneficiaries-2026/>

CAG on Ladki Bahin and welfare fiscal strain

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/th-cag-ladki-bahin-welfare-fiscal-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Welfare scheme performance

bharatnotes.com/subjects/social-justice/welfare-social-sector/welfare-scheme-performance/

Directive Principles

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/directive-principles/

18

15 marks

250 words

Education policy — welfare obligation or strategic investment

Should education be treated primarily as a welfare obligation of the state or as a strategic investment for building a globally competitive, knowledge-driven nation? Critically evaluate.

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of social sector or services relating to education

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

A framed either-or that you should refuse, but on reasoned grounds. **Critically evaluate** means show what each framing gets right, what each does badly when it governs policy alone, and then supply the synthesis with evidence rather than as a platitude.

- Set out each case seriously on its own terms; a strawman of either position weakens the evaluation.
- Show the policy consequences of adopting each framing exclusively, because that is where the two genuinely differ.
- Give the synthesis with concrete implications for financing, curriculum and stage of education.

MODEL ANSWER

544 words · paper allows 250

The case for education as a welfare obligation. Education is a **constitutional duty**, not a policy option: Article 21A and the Right to Education Act, 2009 make elementary education a fundamental right, and Article 45 as amended and Article 46 extend the obligation to early childhood care and to weaker sections. It is also the primary instrument of social mobility in a society stratified by caste, gender and

region, and it produces public goods, civic competence, public health, lower fertility, that markets under-supply because the returns are diffuse. On this framing the state's duty runs to the last child, and cost-per-outcome is the wrong question to ask of a right.

The case for education as strategic investment. Human capital is the binding constraint on growth. The demographic dividend is realised only through skills; the East Asian record, Korea and Singapore in particular, shows deliberate, state-led investment in education converting a poor economy into a technological one within a generation. Research capacity determines whether a country sets standards or imports them, and India's gross expenditure on research and development, at well under 1 per cent of GDP, is where that argument bites hardest.

What each framing does badly on its own

- **Welfare-only** tends to measure success by inputs and enrolment. India achieved near-universal enrolment under RTE while ASER and NAS surveys continued to record large numbers of children unable to read a Class II text in Class V. Access without learning is the characteristic failure of the welfare framing.
- **Investment-only** concentrates resources on the visible and the returnable: elite institutions, employable skills, English-medium urban schooling. It underfunds early childhood education, where the social return is highest and the private return least appropriable, and it treats humanities, arts and foundational literacy as residual. It also risks reducing citizens to workforce inputs, which is a poor foundation for a democracy.

The evidence that forces a synthesis. The two framings do not compete on the ground. Foundational literacy and numeracy, which the welfare framing demands, is the precondition for every skill the investment framing wants. The **NEP 2020** is built on that recognition: the NIPUN Bharat mission for foundational learning, a 5+3+3+4 structure that brings early childhood into the school system, vocational exposure from the middle stage, multidisciplinary higher education, and the Anusandhan National Research Foundation for research capacity. And the fiscal reality binds both: general government expenditure on education stood at about **2.7 per cent of GDP in FY26 budget estimates**, against the 6 per cent target that has been restated since the Kothari Commission of 1966 and repeated in NEP 2020.

Evaluation. The dichotomy is false but not harmless, because it maps onto a real allocative choice. The defensible position is a **stage-differentiated** one:

- Up to foundational and elementary stage, education is a **right**, financed as an obligation, measured by learning outcomes and delivered universally.
- At secondary and vocational stage, it is a **shared** project, with the state financing access and industry shaping content.
- At higher education and research, it is a **strategic investment**, requiring autonomy, competitive funding and tolerance of failure, with equity secured through scholarships rather than through uniformity.

Treating the whole system as welfare produces enrolment without learning; treating it as investment produces excellence without inclusion. India has, at different times, done both.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Anchor the funding gap: about 2.7 per cent of GDP in FY26 against the 6 per cent target first recommended by the Kothari Commission (1964-66) and reaffirmed in NEP 2020 — a sixty-year unmet target is a striking fact.
- ASER and the National Achievement Survey are the correct evidence for the learning-outcomes critique; naming them beats a vague reference to poor quality.
- NIPUN Bharat, the 5+3+3+4 structure and the Anusandhan National Research Foundation are the NEP instruments that map onto the three stages of the synthesis.
- Amartya Sen's capability framing, education as the expansion of substantive freedom, is the theoretical bridge between the two positions and belongs in the conclusion, not the introduction.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Choosing one side and defending it flatly. The directive is *critically evaluate*.
- Reciting NEP 2020 provisions as the body of the answer instead of using them as evidence.
- Ignoring the fiscal reality, which is what makes the choice a real one rather than a rhetorical one.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY National Education Policy 2020 — Ministry of Education

<https://www.education.gov.in/nep/about-nep>

PRIMARY Economic Survey 2025-26 — social sector chapter, Ministry of Finance

<https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicsurvey/>

PRIMARY The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 — Ministry of Education

<https://www.education.gov.in/rte>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

India as an education hub and higher-education investment

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/03/india-education-hub-higher-education-investment/>

Centralised education policy and federalism

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/ht-centralised-education-policy-federalism-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Education and the NEP

bharatnotes.com/subjects/social-justice/welfare-social-sector/education-nep/

19

15 marks

250 words

International relations — diaspora diplomacy

“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.

Syllabus: Indian diaspora; effect of policies of developed and developing countries on India's interests

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Critically examine a claim that packs three assertions into one sentence: living bridge, economic factor, and heritage converted into geopolitical influence. Test each. The third is the weakest and is where the critical half of the answer lives.

- Break the statement into its three claims and address them in order.
- Use precise, dated economic figures, and be careful to name which measure you are quoting, since remittance statistics come in more than one form.
- Devote real space to the limits: the diaspora is not an instrument, it is heterogeneous, and its political visibility abroad can cost India as well as gain.

MODEL ANSWER

540 words · paper allows 250

Claim one: the living bridge. This is the strongest of the three. India has the world's largest overseas population; the Ministry of External Affairs counted roughly **35.4 million** persons of Indian origin and non-resident Indians as of May 2024, spread across the Gulf, North America, the United Kingdom, Africa, South-East Asia and the Caribbean. The state has institutionalised the connection through Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, the OCI card, the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awards and Indian Community Welfare Funds, and, in the Gulf, through labour mobility agreements and the e-Migrate system.

Claim two: the economic factor. Also strong, and quantifiable, though the figures must be named carefully because two different measures circulate. On the Reserve Bank's balance-of-payments series, **net private transfers reached a record of about USD 144.8 billion in 2025-26**, up from about USD 124.6 billion in 2024-25; on the narrower measure of personal remittance receipts, inflows were reported at about **USD 135 billion in 2024-25**. Both are provisional and they are not the same quantity, which is why the basis should always be stated. Either way India is the world's largest recipient. These flows are counter-cyclical, they finance a large part of the trade deficit and support the current account, and at the household level they fund education, health and housing in Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. Beyond remittances, the diaspora supplies foreign direct investment, philanthropy, and the reputational capital that helped build India's IT services export sector.

Claim three: heritage converted into geopolitical influence. Here the statement overreaches, and the critical examination belongs mostly here.

- **What is true.** Yoga, Ayurveda, cinema, cuisine and festivals have become recognisable global goods, and diaspora professionals in technology, medicine, finance and academia carry that recognition. Community mobilisation has demonstrably shaped debate on issues such as the civil nuclear agreement in the United States, and Indian-origin figures now hold high office in several democracies.

- **What is not.** Cultural familiarity is **not** leverage. An Indian-origin head of government represents that country's interests, not India's, and expecting otherwise is a category error that has embarrassed Indian commentary more than once. The diaspora is also deeply heterogeneous by period of migration, class, region, religion and legal status: an indentured-descent community in the Caribbean, a Gulf construction worker on a temporary visa, and a Silicon Valley executive share almost no political interest.
- **The costs.** Diaspora political activism exports Indian domestic cleavages abroad, and incidents involving Khalistan-related activism in Canada and the United Kingdom have strained bilateral relations rather than eased them. Visible ethnic mobilisation can also trigger host-society backlash, and immigration politics in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia now constrains what any Indian government can obtain.
- **Vulnerability.** Gulf dependence exposes India to nationalisation of workforces, oil-price cycles and conflict; welfare protection for low-wage migrants remains the weakest part of India's diaspora policy, and the strongest moral claim on it.

Assessment. The diaspora is unambiguously a bridge and unambiguously an economic asset. It is an **influence multiplier rather than an instrument of influence**: it lowers the cost of India's international engagement without being controllable by India. A policy that recognises this will invest in migrant welfare, portable skills and social security agreements, and will stop treating cultural affinity as a substitute for statecraft.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Name the measure whenever quoting remittances: net private transfers on the RBI balance-of-payments series (about USD 144.8 billion in 2025-26, provisional) against personal remittance receipts (about USD 135 billion in 2024-25). Distinguishing them is exactly the kind of precision that scores.
- The MEA figure of roughly 35.4 million overseas Indians as of May 2024, split between NRIs and PIOs, is the standard official count.
- Joseph Nye's soft power and Robert Putnam's two-level games give the theoretical language; the Khalistan-related strain with Canada gives the counter-evidence.
- Social security agreements and totalisation, which prevent double contributions for Indian workers abroad, are the concrete policy ask that few answers mention.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Celebrating diaspora achievement without examining the claim, which forfeits the *critically* half.
- Treating Indian-origin politicians abroad as Indian assets.
- Quoting a remittance figure without stating the year and the measure. Two different official numbers are in circulation.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Ministry of External Affairs — population of overseas Indians, country-wise

<https://www.mea.gov.in/overseas-indian-affairs.htm>

PRIMARY Reserve Bank of India — Balance of Payments statistics and private transfer receipts

<https://www.rbi.org.in/>

PRIMARY Ministry of External Affairs — Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and Indian Community Welfare Fund

<https://www.mea.gov.in/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

India's record remittances and the Gulf-to-West shift

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/06/11/india-record-remittances-gulf-west-shift/>

The Indian diaspora in Australia

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/th-indian-diaspora-australia-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Diaspora, soft power and cultural diplomacy

bharatnotes.com/subjects/international-relations/global-relations/diaspora-soft-power-cultural-diplomacy/

20

15 marks

250 words

International relations — China, connectivity and the neighbourhood

“China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has transformed South Asia from a regional space into a theatre of great power competition.” Analyse the strategic implications of the BRI for India's security and regional influence in South Asia.

Syllabus: India and its neighbourhood; effect of policies of developed and developing countries on India's interests

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Analyse the strategic implications of the BRI for two specific things: India's **security** and India's **regional influence**. Keep them separate, because they are different problems with different answers, and finish with India's response, which is what converts analysis into a policy answer.

- Accept the premise briefly and evidence it country by country, since South Asia is the unit the question names.
- Split implications into security and influence, and resist merging them.
- Close with India's counter-strategy, honestly assessed, including where it has worked and where it has not.

MODEL ANSWER

574 words · paper allows 250

The premise is well founded. Since 2013 the Belt and Road Initiative has given China an infrastructure, financing and, increasingly, a political presence in every South Asian state except Bhutan and India. CPEC, the initiative's flagship, runs from Kashgar to Gwadar. **Sri Lanka** leased Hambantota port to a Chinese firm for 99 years in 2017 after failing to service the debt on it. **Nepal, Bangladesh, the Maldives** and **Pakistan** have all taken major Chinese-financed projects. A region that was previously an Indian sphere by default has become contested.

Implications for India's security

- **Sovereignty.** CPEC traverses Gilgit-Baltistan, territory India claims, which is the formal and consistent basis of India's refusal to endorse the BRI at successive SCO and Belt and Road forums.
- **Two-front encirclement.** Port and logistics access at Gwadar, Hambantota, Chittagong and in the Maldives, together with People's Liberation Army Navy deployments and survey vessels in the Indian Ocean, extends Chinese naval reach into India's primary operating area.

- **Dual-use ambiguity.** Commercial ports with deep-water berths, and telecom and surveillance infrastructure, are convertible; the security problem is not present intent but future optionality.
- **Continental pressure.** Roads, rail and tunnels across the Himalayan frontier improve Chinese force projection and logistics, which the post-2020 Ladakh standoff made concrete.
- **Debt as leverage.** Where a neighbour's fiscal position depends on Chinese refinancing, its votes, port access and security choices become negotiable.

Implications for India's regional influence

- **Loss of monopoly.** India was previously the default partner for infrastructure and balance-of-payments support in the neighbourhood. It is now one option among two, which raises the price of Indian influence and gives smaller states real bargaining power.
- **Domestic politics abroad.** Elections in Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives now turn partly on the India-versus-China axis, so Indian influence is hostage to the electoral cycles of its neighbours, as the India Out campaign in the Maldives showed.
- **Speed and conditionality.** Chinese project delivery has often been faster and less conditional, while Indian projects have a record of delay. Perception of reliability, not capability, is the deficit.
- **Institutional erosion.** SAARC is moribund, which weakens the multilateral setting where India's weight would tell, and pushes India towards BIMSTEC and bilateral arrangements.

India's response, honestly assessed

- **Non-participation with a stated reason,** which has held and has given India a principled position on sovereignty and on debt sustainability.
- **Alternative connectivity:** **Chabahar** in Iran, with a long-term agreement for the Shahid Beheshti terminal signed in 2024, bypassing Pakistan to Afghanistan and Central Asia; the **International North-South Transport Corridor**; and the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor** announced at the G20 New Delhi Summit in September 2023, whose progress has been complicated by West Asian conflict.
- **Neighbourhood First and delivery:** cross-border energy trade and grid connectivity with Nepal and Bangladesh, the Sri Lanka financial rescue of 2022, which was decisive and remembered, and lines of credit and community projects.
- **Maritime and plurilateral balancing:** SAGAR, the Colombo Security Conclave, the Quad and IPMDA, which address the sea-lane dimension directly.

Assessment. The BRI has not encircled India, but it has ended India's structural advantage in its own neighbourhood and converted South Asia into a market for influence. The implication is that India cannot compete by objecting; it can compete only by **delivering on time, financing sustainably, and offering terms a small state prefers.** Where India has done that, in Sri Lanka in 2022 and in Bangladesh's power sector, its position has improved. Where projects have slipped, no amount of historical affinity has substituted.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The Hambantota 99-year lease of 2017 is the canonical debt-to-asset example, but note the scholarly caveat that the debt-trap framing is contested and that Sri Lanka's crisis had substantial domestic causes.
- India's objection to the BRI is territorial and specific, CPEC through Gilgit-Baltistan, and stating it that precisely is better than a general sovereignty argument.
- IMEC, announced at the G20 New Delhi Summit in September 2023, and the 2024 long-term Chabahar agreement, are the two current counter-connectivity anchors.
- Bhutan is the one South Asian state outside the BRI and without diplomatic relations with China, which is worth a clause for precision.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Merging security and influence into one undifferentiated section when the question names both.
- Presenting the string of pearls as established military basing. Most facilities are commercial with dual-use potential, and overstating this weakens credibility.
- Omitting India's own response, which is where the answer becomes policy-relevant rather than descriptive.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Ministry of External Affairs — India's position on the Belt and Road Initiative and connectivity principles
<https://www.mea.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Ministry of External Affairs — India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, G20 New Delhi Summit 2023 documents
<https://www.mea.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways — Chabahar port, Shahid Beheshti terminal agreement
<https://shipmin.gov.in/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Indo-Pacific: the G-minus-2 strategy
<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/ie-indo-pacific-g-minus-2-strategy-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

India-China relations
bharatnotes.com/subjects/international-relations/global-relations/india-china-relations/

Neighbourhood First, SAARC and BIMSTEC
bharatnotes.com/subjects/international-relations/global-relations/india-neighbourhood-first-saarc-bimstec/

Two sites, one preparation

Static syllabus on one, the moving year on the other. Mains rewards a candidate who can put a dated fact inside a settled framework, which is why these are built as a pair rather than as one site trying to do both jobs badly.



BharatNotes
THE SYLLABUS

Syllabus-wise notes for GS I to IV and Essay, NCERT chapter notes for classes 6 to 12, and solved papers.

- Solved Prelims 2026 GS1 and CSAT answer keys
- Mains previous-year questions, 2013 to 2024
- Subject chapters, mapping and revision series
- Free, no login, no paywall

bharatnotes.com



Ujiyari
THE YEAR

Daily current affairs, editorial analysis and the dated trail behind the questions this paper actually asked.

- Daily notes with audio and PDF
- Editorial analysis from the major dailies
- Schemes, legislation and reports trackers
- Monthly and yearly compilations

ujiyari.com

The rest of this series

Essay Paper 8 topics · 250 marks

General Studies Paper III 20 Qs · 250 marks

Prelims 2026 — GS1 answer key 100 MCQs

General Studies Paper I 20 Qs · 250 marks

General Studies Paper IV 12 Qs · 250 marks

Corrections

Material corrections are published on the page and this file is reissued. Always check the date on the cover against the page.

Plain-text version

Every paper also has a plain-text view for screen readers and offline reading, at the same address with /raw/ on the end.

Written by

Bharat Choudhary, editor of both sites. Questions, corrections and disagreements are welcome through the contact page.

Please read. UPSC does not publish model answers for the Mains examination and never has. Nothing in this document is an official key. These are model answers written by the editor: one defensible way to write the paper, offered so that you can compare structure and sourcing against your own. Facts carry an as-of date and a named source, and where a figure is contested, provisional or untraceable the page says so rather than rounding it off. Corrections are published at bharatnotes.com/mains/2026/gs2/ and this file is reissued when they are material.

© 2026 Bharat Choudhary. Free to download, print and share for personal study. Not for resale or commercial redistribution.