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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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I. NISAR to Revolutionize Earth Observation with Precision and Global Data Access

• What is NISAR?

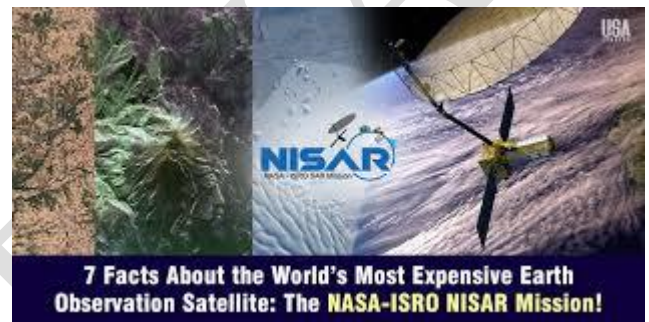
NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) is a joint Earth observation satellite developed by NASA and ISRO. It is the world's first satellite to use **dual-frequency synthetic aperture radars (SAR)**—L-band (NASA) and S-band (ISRO)—on a single platform, allowing for high-resolution, all-weather, day-and-night imaging of Earth's land and ice surfaces.

• Key Features and Technological Milestones

- Launched aboard **GSLV-F16**, this was the first time an ISRO GSLV rocket placed a satellite in **Sun-synchronous Polar Orbit**
- The mission used **indigenous cryogenic technology** and is a sign of India's rising self-reliance in high-end space systems
- The satellite will revisit every location on Earth every 12 days, offering near real-time monitoring

• Applications and Strategic Impact

- NISAR's data will aid in **disaster management, climate change tracking, glacier monitoring, agricultural productivity, and seismic activity monitoring**
- The mission marks a shift towards using space-based technology in **aviation safety, shipping and maritime navigation, urban infrastructure, and coastal zone management**
- Open-access policy for NISAR data promotes transparency, inclusive research, and **international scientific cooperation**, especially with developing nations



• Indo-US Strategic Collaboration

- Seen as a “scientific handshake” between the world's two largest democracies, NISAR strengthens **bilateral space and technology diplomacy**
- NASA contributed major instruments like the L-band radar and GPS system, while ISRO provided the S-band radar, launch vehicle (GSLV-F16), and the I-3K spacecraft bus
- Joint funding exceeds **\$1.5 billion**, showcasing deep trust and investment in science for mutual and global benefit

• Ministerial Acknowledgement and Policy Context

- Dr. Jitendra Singh praised the mission for transforming India's space programme from **utility-based missions to knowledge-driven global science partnerships**
- Under PM Narendra Modi's leadership, missions like Chandrayaan and NISAR reflect India's commitment to **scientific advancement and global environmental stewardship**

Key Concepts and Legal/Policy Frameworks:

- **Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR):** A form of radar used to create two-dimensional or 3D reconstructions of landscapes
- **Sun-synchronous Orbit:** A near-polar orbit that allows the satellite to pass over the same part of the Earth at roughly the same local solar time
- **Open-access data policy:** Enables wider dissemination of scientific data, crucial for informed policy making in disaster preparedness, urban planning, and climate mitigation
- Linked to **Article 51 (Promotion of international peace and cooperation)** of the Indian Constitution, reflecting India's peaceful and cooperative approach in space



Conclusion and UPSC Relevance:

NISAR is not merely a scientific mission but a geopolitical and developmental tool. It reflects India's growing stature in space diplomacy and technological capability. The mission is a major leap in India's use of space for **climate resilience, global scientific cooperation, and evidence-based policy making**. For UPSC aspirants, this topic links to **GS Paper 2 (International Relations), GS Paper 3 (Science & Tech, Environment), and Essay Paper** themes like sustainable development and global partnerships.

2. Technology to Reduce Coal Mining Pollution

• Regulatory Framework and Environmental Clearances

All coal mining operations in India require multiple statutory clearances including Environmental Clearance (EC), Forest Clearance, Consent to Operate, and Groundwater Clearance. These are granted under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986** and EIA Notification, 2006. The **Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC)** under MoEF&CC scrutinizes environmental impacts on air, water, forest, and biodiversity before approving mining projects. **Environmental Management Plans (EMP)** and **Mine Closure Plans** are mandatory to ensure environmental safeguards like dust and noise control, biodiversity conservation, and post-mining land use restoration.

• Technological Interventions and Policy Measures

For coal-fired power plants, advanced technologies are being used to reduce air, water, and soil pollution in line with national sustainability goals. Additionally, the government issued **comprehensive Mine Closure Guidelines (2025)** that emphasize livelihood restoration, land reclamation, skill development, and ecosystem rehabilitation post-mining. Coal PSUs like CIL, NTPC, and DVC are actively investing in **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** activities in mining regions such as Jharkhand and Odisha.



• Coal and Lignite Gasification Promotion

The government is aggressively promoting **coal and lignite gasification** through several initiatives:

- ₹8,500 crore incentive scheme for PSUs and private players
- Introduction of a new sub-sector under the **Non-Regulated Sector (NRS)** linkage auction policy
- Rebate of 50% in revenue share during coal auctions for projects using $\geq 10\%$ of coal for gasification
- Floor price benefits and waivers on **Technology Transfer (ToT)** from land-border-sharing countries
- Focus on producing **syngas** to diversify energy use and reduce pollution

• Inclusive Development and Community Engagement

Coal mining projects follow structured **land acquisition and rehabilitation** processes with mandatory stakeholder consultations. Reclaimed lands are being transformed into **eco-parks, tourism hubs, water reservoirs**, and used for **afforestation** and **pisciculture**. These efforts enhance green cover, improve water access, and create alternative livelihoods. Initiatives such as **Saoner Eco Park** are successful models of ecological and economic revitalization.

• Key Definitions and Legal Provisions

- **Environmental Clearance (EC):** A statutory approval for projects after assessment of environmental impact
- **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):** A process to evaluate the potential environmental consequences of a proposed project



- **Coal Gasification:** A process that converts coal into syngas ($\text{CO} + \text{H}_2$), which can be used for power generation or chemical manufacturing
- Relevant laws: **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, Forest Conservation Act, 1980, Water and Air Acts, Land Acquisition Act, 2013** (for R&R)

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

India's coal sector is undergoing a transformation by integrating technological advancements, ecological restoration, and inclusive development. The use of gasification and sustainable closure guidelines signals a move towards greener energy policies, even while coal remains central to India's energy mix. For UPSC aspirants, this topic is relevant for **GS Paper 3 (Environment, Energy, Technology)**, **GS Paper 2 (Governance and Policy Implementation)**, and **Essay Paper** under themes like environmental governance, sustainable development, and just transition in energy.

3. Launching of Sanchar Mitra Scheme

- **Objective and Vision of the Scheme**

The **Sanchar Mitra Scheme** aims to empower India's youth by involving them as digital awareness ambassadors. The initiative seeks to foster **responsible telecom usage**, enhance **digital literacy**, and prevent **telecom-related frauds** by mobilizing students to conduct awareness drives in communities, public spaces, and educational institutions.

- **Eligibility and Implementation Framework**

The scheme is open to students from **technical institutes** offering programs in **telecom, electronics, computer science, cybersecurity**, etc., who voluntarily participate. It is being implemented **nationwide** through **Licensed Service Areas (LSAs)**, which are the field offices of the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** responsible for coordinating outreach with technical institutes.



- **Training and Skill Development Opportunities**

Selected **Sanchar Mitras** will undergo training in key areas such as **cybersecurity, emerging telecom technologies, telecom policies and regulations**, and **digital safety**. They will also gain exposure to **R&D projects, policy frameworks of ITU (International Telecommunication Union)**, **technical conferences**, and **industry-led innovation**, supporting the larger national agenda of building a telecom-skilled workforce.

- **Strategic Goals and Broader Impact**

The scheme aligns with India's broader vision of becoming a global hub for **telecom research, development, and manufacturing** by nurturing a technologically aware and motivated youth population. It also strengthens citizen engagement in **digital safety**, ensuring participatory governance in the era of rapid digitization.

- **Key Definitions and Legal-Policy Frameworks**

- **Cybersecurity:** Protection of internet-connected systems from cyber threats and unauthorized access
- **Telecom Fraud:** Illegitimate activities such as phishing, SIM cloning, or identity theft using telecom networks
- **Policy Backing:** The initiative aligns with the **National Digital Communications Policy, 2018**, and



broader objectives under **Digital India Mission**

- Constitutionally, the scheme promotes **Article 51A(h)** (duty to develop scientific temper and spirit of inquiry) and **Article 38(2)** (promotion of welfare and minimizing inequalities)

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The Sanchar Mitra Scheme is a significant step towards digital empowerment, cyber awareness, and capacity-building in the telecom sector. It promotes youth engagement in public policy, encourages safe use of technology, and aligns with national development priorities. For UPSC aspirants, this topic is relevant under **GS Paper 2 (Governance, Government Schemes)**, **GS Paper 3 (Science & Tech, Cybersecurity, IT policy)**, and **Essay Paper** covering digital empowerment, youth participation, and citizen-centric governance.

4. Scheme for Women Cooperatives

- **Objective and Focus of the Schemes**

The **National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)** has launched two exclusive schemes—**Swayamshakti Sahakar Yojna** and **Nandini Sahakar**—to empower **women cooperatives** by improving access to financial services, supporting entrepreneurship, and promoting sustainable livelihoods. These schemes aim to make women economically self-reliant in line with the vision of **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

- **Swayamshakti Sahakar Yojna: Financial Empowerment and Livelihoods**

This scheme facilitates **affordable, reliable, and cost-effective loans** to women Self Help Groups (SHGs), PACS, DCCBs, StCBs, and cooperative federations. It supports **socio-economic activities** and enables access to adequate bank credit, with a focus on **poverty reduction and livelihood creation** through collective enterprise.

- **Nandini Sahakar: Enterprise Development and Capacity Building**

Nandini Sahakar supports **business-model-based activities** by women cooperatives across sectors (except urban housing). It offers **project formulation, capacity development, interest subvention, and financial assistance** to promote entrepreneurship, business planning, and cooperative governance.

- **Financial Assistance and Impact**

Over the last three years (2022–2025), **Rs. 3504.4 crore** has been disbursed to women cooperatives across various states. Major beneficiaries include Andhra Pradesh (Rs. 3185.24 crore) and Telangana (Rs. 295.11 crore). Financial support has also been extended for **infrastructure projects** worth Rs. 2.37 crore during the same period, signifying focused investment in cooperative infrastructure for women.

- **Key Definitions and Legal Frameworks**

- **Cooperative Society:** A voluntary organization of individuals united for a common economic goal based on principles of mutual help and democratic management
- **Self Help Groups (SHGs):** Informal associations of people who come together to address common problems through savings and credit
- NCDC operates under the **National Cooperative Development Corporation Act, 1962**
- Supports the objectives of the **97th Constitutional Amendment Act**, which gave constitutional status to cooperatives (Part IXB, Articles 243ZH to 243ZT)





- Aligns with **Article 15(3)** (State can make special provisions for women) and **Directive Principles** promoting equality and livelihood opportunities (Articles 38, 39, 43)

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The schemes by NCDC reflect a **targeted gender-inclusive economic policy** by promoting women-led cooperatives through financial, technical, and capacity-building support. It enhances women's participation in the formal economy and strengthens the rural credit structure. For UPSC aspirants, this topic is highly relevant for **GS Paper 2 (Governance, Schemes for vulnerable sections, Women Empowerment)**, **GS Paper 3 (Inclusive Growth, Economy)**, and **Essay Paper** under themes like gender equity, financial inclusion, and cooperative federalism.

5. INS Satpura Arrives in Singapore for SIMBEX-25

- **Overview of SIMBEX-25 and India-Singapore Naval Relations**

The **32nd edition of the Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX-25)** is being held in Singapore with the arrival of **INS Satpura**. It marks another milestone in the **enduring naval partnership** between the Indian Navy and the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN), reflecting a shared vision for a stable Indo-Pacific.

- **Structure and Components of the Exercise**

SIMBEX-25 includes two major phases:

- **Harbour Phase** – features Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEEs), operational-level discussions, and shipboard familiarisation, promoting doctrinal alignment and technical exchange
- **Sea Phase** – involves complex and high-end naval operations including **air defence drills, cross-deck helicopter operations, VBSS (Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure) operations, precision targeting, and maneuvering exercises**, focusing on **interoperability and joint preparedness**

- **Strategic and Diplomatic Significance**

The exercise aligns with India's '**Act East Policy**' and '**MAHASAGAR Vision**', reinforcing India's maritime engagement with Southeast Asian nations. It underlines growing **strategic trust, defence diplomacy, and military-to-military cooperation** in the Indo-Pacific—especially vital amid regional security dynamics and increasing Chinese influence.



- **Operational Goals and Capacity Building**

SIMBEX enhances **inter-navy coordination, mutual learning, and regional maritime domain awareness**. The professional interactions also foster **doctrinal evolution, technological interoperability**, and joint readiness to address maritime threats like piracy, illegal trafficking, and regional instability.

- **Key Definitions and Legal/Policy Frameworks**

- **MAHASAGAR Vision:** India's Indo-Pacific maritime outreach policy aimed at maritime security, partnerships, and regional capacity building
- **VBSS Operations:** Maritime interdiction tactics used to search and seize vessels suspected of illegal activities
- Linked to **UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea)** which supports free and open seas



- Reinforces India's constitutional commitment under **Article 51(c)** to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in dealings among nations

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

SIMBEX-25 reflects India's strategic maritime diplomacy and commitment to regional security in the Indo-Pacific. It also supports India's defense preparedness, technological upgradation, and international military cooperation goals. This topic is important for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations)**, **GS Paper 3 (Security, Maritime Security, Defence Preparedness)**, and **Essay Paper** under themes like India's Act East Policy, Indo-Pacific strategy, and maritime diplomacy.

6. Sectors Identified for Investment in North East

- **Investment Push through Rising Northeast Investors Summit 2025**

The **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER)** organized the **Rising Northeast Investors Summit 2025** to boost **trade and investment** in the North Eastern Region. The summit identified **nine key sectors** for targeted investment:

1. Tourism and Hospitality
2. Agro-Food Processing & allied sectors
3. Textiles, Handloom and Handicrafts
4. Healthcare
5. Education and Skill Development
6. IT/ITeS
7. Entertainment & Sports
8. Infrastructure and Logistics
9. Energy



- **Institutional Mechanisms to Facilitate Investments**

All North Eastern States have implemented investor-friendly measures including:

- **Single Window Clearance Systems**
- **Investment Promotion Agencies**
- **Creation of Land Banks**
- **State-specific Incentives for Investors**
- **Appointment of Nodal Officers** for MoU facilitation and implementation

The **MDoNER** conducts regular reviews with state governments to monitor progress on the **grounding of MoUs** (Memorandums of Understanding).

- **Focus on Green and Sustainable Industries**

To protect the ecologically sensitive region, investment is being directed towards **low-carbon technologies** and **green industries**. The priority is given to environmentally sustainable projects that do not have hazardous impacts and promote **eco-friendly development**. This aligns with India's commitments under **SDG-13 (Climate Action)** and **SDG-15 (Life on Land)**.

- **Economic Development with Ecological Integrity**

The states aim to achieve economic growth while **preserving ecological balance**, respecting the North East's fragile environment, rich biodiversity, and tribal heritage. Emphasis is placed on



ensuring that infrastructure and industrial development projects **adhere to environmental norms**, and support **community livelihoods**.

- **Key Definitions and Legal-Policy Context**

- **Green Industries:** Sectors whose operations have a minimal environmental footprint and support sustainable use of resources
- **Single Window Clearance:** A system that allows investors to obtain all regulatory approvals and services through a single platform
- Aligned with **Article 48A** of the Constitution (protection and improvement of the environment) and **Fifth Schedule provisions** (protection of tribal interests)
- Supported by national policies such as the **National Environment Policy**, **Industrial Policy for the North East Region**, and **Act East Policy**

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

This investment initiative demonstrates a balanced approach towards regional development and environmental conservation. By identifying strategic sectors and enforcing ecological safeguards, the North East is being positioned as a hub for green and inclusive growth. For UPSC aspirants, this topic is relevant under **GS Paper 2 (Governance, Government Policies for Vulnerable Regions)**, **GS Paper 3 (Environment, Investment & Infrastructure)**, and **Essay Paper** under themes like regional development, sustainable growth, and cooperative federalism.

7. US Imposes 25% Tariff on Indian Imports – India Focuses on Bilateral Trade Agreement

- **US Imposes 25% Tariff on Indian Goods**

Former US President **Donald Trump** has announced a **25% tariff** on Indian imports, citing India's **high tariff barriers**, **non-monetary trade restrictions**, and **close ties with Russia**. The tariff also includes an additional penalty, and is likely to impact Indian exports such as **apparel**, **auto components**, **leather goods**, and **processed food**. Trump criticized India's trade policies as "obnoxious" and "strenuous," claiming they have historically hurt US-India trade balance.

- **India's Cautious Diplomatic Response**

The **Union Commerce Ministry** clarified that India is not retaliating immediately and remains focused on concluding a **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)** with the US. The government is **studying the implications** of the tariff decision while affirming its commitment to **protecting farmers, MSMEs, and entrepreneurs**. India emphasized the importance of a **balanced and mutually beneficial trade framework**.

- **Sticking Points in Trade Negotiations**

Ongoing negotiations between India and the US have faced roadblocks, especially over **agricultural market access**, **dairy trade**, and **genetically modified (GM) food imports**. India has remained firm on **not opening sensitive sectors** to foreign corporations, citing **food security**, **livelihood protection**, and **health concerns**.

TRADE TIF

Trump's statement signals a hardening of US stance, linking trade directly with foreign policy positions, particularly India's continued engagement with Russia.

India's top export categories to the US

Goods	Exports by India to US (in \$ billion), 2024	US's share in total exports (in %)	Weighted-average tariff on India (in %), old
Smartphones, electronic products	14.4	35.8	0.4
Pharmaceuticals	12.7	54.5	0.0
Diamonds, gold and products	11.9	40	2.1
Machinery & mechanical appliances	7.1	21.8	1.3
Organic chemicals	3.6	17.3	4.0
Petroleum products	3.2	4.3	6.9
Textiles	3.1	51.3	9.0
Iron or steel articles	2.8	28.1	1.7
Vehicles and parts	2.8	12.7	1.0
Fish and crustaceans	2.0	32.6	0.0

Source: Global Trade Research Initiative

TARIFF IMPACT

INDIA is assessing its options and reviewing implications of the duty

IT is expected to hit sectors like apparel, auto and leather goods

A US delegation is scheduled to visit New Delhi from 25 August

PARAS JAIN/MINT



- **Wider Global Trade Context**

The US, under the Trump administration, has been reshaping its global trade policies. It has recently signed trade agreements with **EU and Japan**, both accepting a **15% US import tariff**. The US's unilateral imposition of higher tariffs signals a more **protectionist approach** in global trade, which may strain **World Trade Organization (WTO)** norms and multilateralism.

- **Relevant Definitions and Constitutional/Legal Aspects**

- **Tariff:** A tax imposed on imported goods to protect domestic industries or raise revenue.
- **Non-monetary trade barriers:** Regulatory restrictions like quotas, licensing, or standards that hinder trade without involving taxes.
- **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA):** A deal between two countries to facilitate trade by reducing tariffs and trade barriers.
- Relevant provisions include **Article 301 to 307** of the Constitution (regulation of trade and commerce) and India's commitments under **WTO agreements**. The government's trade policy must also align with the **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP)** and the **Customs Tariff Act, 1975**.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

This development underlines the **geopolitical-economic interplay** in global trade and the emerging **protectionist trends**. For India, it tests the ability to balance **strategic partnerships**, **domestic sector interests**, and **diplomatic resilience**. UPSC aspirants should focus on this issue from the lens of **GS Paper 2 (International Relations, India-US ties)**, **GS Paper 3 (External Sector, Trade Policy)**, and **Essay Paper** on themes like globalization, trade protectionism, and diplomacy under economic stress.

8. US Tariffs Cloud Outlook for Indian Exports and GDP Growth

Key Highlights:

- **Imposition of 25% US Tariff on Indian Exports:**

Beginning 1st August, the US under President Trump has imposed a 25% tariff on Indian exports, citing high Indian tariffs, non-monetary trade barriers, and India's continuing oil and defence ties with Russia. This move comes despite India enjoying a significant trade surplus with the US.

- **Impact on Indian Export Sectors and Trade Surplus:**

Key sectors like apparel, auto components, leather, and food exports are expected to be affected. India's goods trade surplus with the US was **\$41.18 billion in FY25**, up from \$35.33 billion in FY24. Total exports stood at \$86.51 billion while imports were \$45.33 billion.



- **Uncertainty Over Additional Penalty and Supply Chain Disruption:**

A potential penalty related to India's purchases from sanctioned Russia creates uncertainty in pricing and landed cost estimations. Exporters and US importers face difficulties in planning due to the lack of clarity on quantum and categories of tariffs.

- **Comparison with ASEAN Countries:**

While India faces a flat 25% tariff, countries like Vietnam (duty cut to <20%), Indonesia (from 32% to 19%) and the Philippines (down to 19%) secured softer deals via early negotiations, despite competing in similar labour-intensive export categories.



- **GDP Impact and Economic Outlook:**

Economists like Madan Sabnavis and Aditi Nayar estimate a slowdown in GDP growth. The projected range of **6.4%-6.6%** may tilt towards the lower end due to this trade disruption, particularly if sectors like pharmaceuticals (30% exports to the US) come under new tariffs.

Additional Key Points:

- **Definition – Trade Deficit:**

It refers to a situation where a country imports more goods and services than it exports. The US cites its trade deficit with India as a key reason for the tariff imposition.

- **Constitutional and Legal Angle:**

Though trade policy is under Union List (Entry 41 – "Trade and commerce with foreign countries"), India must balance external sovereignty with WTO rules and bilateral agreements under Article 253 (legislation for implementing international agreements).

- **India's Policy Stand:**

India has not retaliated yet and continues to focus on a **mutually beneficial Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)** with the US, similar to its approach with recent FTAs like the India-UK CEPA.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance:

The imposition of unilateral tariffs by the US poses challenges to India's export competitiveness and macroeconomic stability. It reflects broader geopolitical and economic tensions including India's strategic autonomy in foreign policy. For UPSC, this issue intersects with topics in **International Relations (GS-2)**, **Indian Economy (GS-3)**, **India-US relations**, and **external sector vulnerabilities**, making it important for both Prelims (trade data) and Mains (analytical understanding of economic diplomacy and strategic interests).

9. India Post Integrating Services with ONDC and GeM

Key Highlights:

- **India Post to Join ONDC and GeM Platforms:**

India Post is in the process of integrating its services with **ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce)** and the **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)**. This aims to expand digital accessibility and allow the postal department to effectively compete with private logistics providers.

- **Boost to Digital Logistics and Government Procurement:**

Integration with ONDC will enable India Post to offer logistics and last-mile delivery for small merchants across the country, while GeM integration will make India Post a procurement option for various government departments and PSUs, improving its institutional relevance.

- **Strengthening Public Sector Capabilities:**

The move is part of the government's broader strategy to modernize public sector entities and align them with **Digital India** goals. It will allow India Post to transition from a traditional postal service to a tech-enabled logistics and commerce player.





- **Definition – ONDC and GeM:**

- **ONDC** is a government-backed digital platform that enables equal access to all e-commerce players and reduces monopolistic practices.
- **GeM (Government e-Marketplace)** is an online procurement platform for government departments to acquire goods and services transparently.

- **Ministerial Oversight and Policy Support:**

The update was presented to the **Minister of State for Communications, Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar**, indicating high-level policy attention and strategic importance. The move aligns with the Ministry's vision for digital transformation in communication services.

Constitutional & Legal Context:

- Under the **Union List (Entry 31)**, posts and telegraphs fall under the jurisdiction of the central government.
- The **Indian Post Office Act, 1898**, governs postal services but is under review for modernization.
- Integration with ONDC and GeM is part of the government's executive policy under Article 73, which empowers the Union to undertake initiatives in matters under the Union List.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance:

The integration of India Post with ONDC and GeM reflects a shift towards **digitally empowered governance** and **public sector modernization**. It enhances public service delivery, supports MSMEs through better logistics, and reduces reliance on private platforms. For UPSC, this topic is relevant under **GS-2 (Governance and E-Governance Initiatives)**, **GS-3 (Digital Economy and Infrastructure)**, and **GS Mains Essay (Public Sector Reforms and Innovation)**. Aspirants should also relate it to **Digital India**, **Atmanirbhar Bharat**, and inclusive economic growth.

10. India's Police Must Get Out of Dirty Harry's Shadow

1. The Two Models of Policing

- The article contrasts two policing visions:
 - *Sherlock Holmes model*: Evidence-based, logical, patient investigation focused on truth and justice.
 - *Dirty Harry model*: Intimidation, forced confessions, and disregard for legal norms; prioritizes speed over accuracy.
- India's current policing often mirrors the Dirty Harry approach, leading to violence, injustice, and societal distrust.



2. Custodial Violence: A Deep-rooted Structural Problem

- Custodial torture and deaths are systemic: 687 custodial deaths occurred between 2018–2023, with highest numbers in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.
- Most victims are from marginalized communities — Dalits, tribals, migrants, and the poor — making this a caste-class injustice issue.



- Violence often occurs outside police stations, away from CCTV surveillance — in vans, abandoned buildings, and remote locations.

3. Legal and Constitutional Safeguards Ignored

- Supreme Court in *D.K. Basu vs State of West Bengal (1996)* issued guidelines to prevent custodial torture.
- *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)* reaffirmed the right to dignity and bodily autonomy as part of Article 21 (Right to Life).
- *Law Commission's 273rd Report (2017)* recommended a standalone anti-torture law — yet, no such law has been enacted.
- India remains a non-ratifying signatory to the *United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT)*.

4. Scientific and International Evidence Against Torture

- Torture impairs memory and cognition, often leading to false confessions, as proven in Shane O'Mara's *Why Torture Doesn't Work* (2015).
- Case studies:
 - CIA's torture post-9/11 failed to yield actionable intelligence.
 - Innocence Project in the US overturned 375+ wrongful convictions, many based on coerced confessions.
 - In India, Ajith Kumar confessed falsely under extreme duress.
- Nations like the UK, Norway, and Canada have adopted the PEACE model (Preparation, Engage, Account, Closure, Evaluation), which uses non-coercive, rapport-based techniques and has improved justice delivery.

5. Need for a Policing Paradigm Shift

- Custodial torture stems from inadequate police training, institutional apathy, public indifference, and lack of accountability.
- Emphasizes the need to shift from force-driven policing to investigative professionalism.
- Advocates for zero tolerance to custodial abuse, ratification of UNCAT, and implementation of the PEACE model across India.

Key Definitions and Provisions

- **Custodial Death:** Death of an individual while in police custody, often due to torture or neglect.
- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty):** Protects life and dignity; violated by custodial torture.
- **PEACE Model:** A humane, scientific model of police interrogation that emphasizes rapport-building over coercion.
- **DK Basu Guidelines:** Mandates procedures like arrest memos, informing relatives, medical examination, and CCTV use to prevent custodial violence.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

India must break away from the shadow of coercive policing and embrace professional, humane, and



evidence-driven models like Sherlock Holmes'. Reforms must prioritize human dignity, constitutional rights, and scientific best practices.

UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper II (Governance, Constitution, Judiciary):** Topics on rule of law, custodial reforms, fundamental rights, international treaties.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics, Integrity, and Aptitude):** Human dignity, ethical policing, professionalism.
- **Essay Paper:** Justice vs Expediency, Human Rights in Law Enforcement.
- **Interview:** Police reforms, handling custodial violence, public accountability mechanisms.

11. Boosting the Capacity of Legal Aid Systems in India

1. Legal Aid Coverage and Ground Realities

- Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 mandates free legal aid to ~80% of India's population, targeting the economically weaker sections, persons in custody, and vulnerable groups.
- Despite the mandate, only **15.50 lakh beneficiaries** were reached in 2023–24, a modest figure given India's population size.
- Legal aid clinics are operational in courts, prisons, and villages, but **one clinic serves 163 villages** on average, highlighting underreach.

2. Budgetary Allocation and Utilization Challenges

- Legal aid receives **less than 1% of India's total justice budget**. Funds come from States and the Centre through NALSA (National Legal Services Authority).
- From 2017–18 to 2022–23, States nearly **doubled their legal aid budgets** (₹394 crore to ₹866 crore), but **NALSA's funds dropped** from ₹207 crore to ₹169 crore.
- Utilization of NALSA funds declined from **75% to 59%**, affected by restrictions on spending categories without prior approval.



3. Para-Legal Volunteers (PLVs) and Their Shrinking Role

- PLVs play a crucial role in legal awareness and dispute resolution, but their number **fell by 38%** between 2019 and 2024.
- **Deployment and honorarium are major issues:** only 14,000 out of 53,000 trained PLVs were deployed in 2023–24. Most states pay honoraria **below minimum wages**, with Kerala being the highest (₹750/day).

4. Legal Aid Defence Counsel Scheme (LADC)

- Introduced in 2022, **LADC is a Central Sector Scheme** focusing exclusively on defending accused persons (public defender model).
- Currently operational in **610 out of 670 districts**, with a budget of ₹200 crore in 2023–24 (fully utilised), but reduced to ₹147.9 crore in 2024–25.



- Intended to **supplement the traditional assigned counsel system**, but it's still in early stages of implementation.

5. Key Issues and Structural Constraints

- Legal aid suffers from **inconsistent service quality, lack of accountability, and poor public trust**.
- Low fiscal prioritization and poor fund utilisation **cripple frontline delivery systems** such as PLVs and awareness efforts.
- National average **per capita spending on legal aid is only ₹6**, with many large states like UP, Bihar, and WB spending even less.

6. Constitutional and Legal Backing

- **Article 39A** of the Indian Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy) directs the State to ensure free legal aid to promote justice.
- **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** institutionalized the legal aid system by creating NALSA and SLSAs.
- **Access to justice** is considered part of **Article 21** (Right to Life) by Supreme Court interpretations.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

India's legal aid system is a vital pillar for ensuring **inclusive and accessible justice**. Despite constitutional and statutory support, ground realities reveal **a gap between vision and execution**. Addressing resource shortages, improving service quality, and building public trust are critical for realizing **Article 39A's mandate**.

UPSC Relevance: Important for GS Paper 2 (Governance, Constitution, Welfare Schemes), GS Paper 4 (Ethics – Justice), and Essay topics on access to justice, judicial reforms, or legal empowerment.

12. Restoring Mangroves: A Vital Step for India's Coastal Security

Key Highlights:

- **Ecological Importance of Mangroves**

Mangroves are forested wetlands with salt-tolerant trees that form a buffer between land and sea.

They protect coastal regions from natural disasters like cyclones, tidal surges, and erosion.

They are vital carbon sinks, storing "blue carbon" in their roots and soils, thus mitigating climate change.

Mangroves serve as breeding grounds for fish, mollusks, crustaceans, and migratory birds, preserving biodiversity.

- **Threats and Degradation**

Rapid urbanisation, aquaculture expansion, industrial pollution, and climate change are major threats.

Globally, over 50% of mangrove ecosystems risk collapse by 2050 (IUCN report).

In India, mangrove ecosystems are facing constant pressure, especially in rapidly developing coastal cities.

- **Restoration Efforts in India**

Tamil Nadu: Under the Green Tamil Nadu Mission, mangrove cover has doubled from 4,500 to





9,000 hectares (2021–24). Projects include Pattuvanachi estuary and Kazhipattur Canal restoration using scientific planning and community engagement.

Mumbai: A \$1.2 million partnership between Amazon, BMC, and NGOs focuses on Thane Creek restoration. It combines mangrove planting (3.75 lakh saplings), waste removal (150 tonnes), and women's employment.

Gujarat: Leads nationally with 23.6% of India's mangrove cover. Under the 'Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes' (MISHTI), it planted 19,000 hectares in 2 years—well ahead of the national target.

- **Policy and Institutional Mechanisms**

MISHTI Scheme (2023): Launched on World Environment Day to promote mangrove plantation along India's coastlines.

National Coastal Mission under the Ministry of Environment focuses on holistic coastal zone management including ecosystem conservation.

Disaster Management Act, 2005 and **Environment Protection Act, 1986** indirectly support mangrove protection by mandating risk reduction and environmental safeguards.

- **Definitions and Concepts**

- *Blue Carbon:* Carbon captured by oceanic and coastal ecosystems like mangroves, salt marshes, and seagrasses.
- *Ecosystem Restoration:* Process of assisting the recovery of degraded ecosystems to improve biodiversity, ecological services, and human well-being.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance:

India's mangrove restoration success reflects a strong synergy between community participation, government schemes, scientific innovation, and corporate partnerships. As climate risks increase, mangroves are crucial to India's disaster resilience, biodiversity conservation, and coastal livelihoods. For UPSC, this topic is highly relevant for **GS Paper 3 (Environment, Disaster Management, Conservation)** and **Essay**, and aligns with **SDGs (13: Climate Action, 14: Life Below Water, 15: Life on Land)** and India's *Panchamrit climate commitments*.

13. UN in Urgent Talks on COP30 Summit Costs

1. Background and Context

COP30 (Conference of the Parties) is the 2025 UN Climate Change Conference scheduled in November in Belém, Brazil, a city located in the Amazon rainforest.

The summit is crucial for global negotiations on climate action under the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change).

Over 45,000 delegates from nearly every country are expected to attend.

2. Core Issue – Accommodation Crisis

Skyrocketing hotel prices in Belém have raised concerns about equitable participation.

Accommodation rates are reportedly as high as \$700/night, while the UN's subsistence allowance for poorer nations is \$149/day.

There is a severe shortage of affordable hotel rooms (only 18,000 beds available), prompting Brazil to secure cruise ships and additional low-cost housing.





3. Developing Countries' Concerns

African and other developing nations fear reduced participation due to unaffordable logistics.

The African Group of Negotiators demanded reassurances from Brazil to avoid excluding poorer nations from critical climate discussions.

They emphasized not reducing delegation sizes, as full participation is essential for representing vulnerable countries' interests.

4. UN and Host Nation Response

The UNFCCC held an emergency “COP Bureau” meeting on July 29 to address the issue.

Brazil committed to presenting solutions by August 11, including the provision of cruise ships and capped accommodation costs at \$220/night.

Still, this remains above the UN-provided allowance for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

5. Implications for Global Climate Negotiations

Some developed nations like the Netherlands and Poland have also considered reducing their delegations.

This logistical bottleneck threatens to undermine inclusivity and fairness, both of which are central to UNFCCC negotiations.

If not resolved, participation from smaller or climate-vulnerable nations could be severely impacted, compromising the legitimacy of decisions taken at COP30.

6. Legal and Institutional Provisions

- The UNFCCC is the parent treaty under which COPs are held; it mandates inclusive participation.
- The **Paris Agreement (2015)**, adopted under COP21, emphasized equity and common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), which could be affected by limited developing nation representation.
- The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), stress global cooperation, which logistical exclusion contradicts.

Key Terms

- *COP (Conference of the Parties)*: The supreme decision-making body of the UNFCCC.
- *UNFCCC*: An international environmental treaty adopted in 1992 to combat climate change through national GHG reduction commitments.
- *Subsistence Allowance*: A daily monetary support provided by UN bodies to enable participation of LDCs in international conferences.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The COP30 logistical crisis reveals how non-environmental factors like affordability and infrastructure can influence global climate policy-making.

This situation underscores the importance of equitable participation in multilateral platforms for climate justice and legitimacy.

This topic is highly relevant for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations – Multilateral Forums and Agreements)** and **GS Paper 3 (Environment and Climate Change)**, and can be used in **Essay** and **Ethics** as a case study on global equity and governance.