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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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Table of Contents

1. Micro forest Initiative at PM SHRI Navodaya Vidyalaya

Summary & Key Highlights

- **Micro forest and Ecological Learning Space:** Secretary Shri Sanjay Kumar inaugurated a micro forest (Fruit Orchard and Pollinator Park) developed under Special Campaign 5.0 at PM SHRI Navodaya Vidyalaya, Gautam Buddh Nagar. The project transformed over 3,200 sq. metres of barren land into a vibrant ecological learning space, housing over 500 fruit-bearing trees and 350+ pollinator-friendly plants, thereby enhancing biodiversity and microclimate.

- **Mission LiFE and Eco Clubs:** The initiative is a model for 'Eco Clubs for Mission LiFE,' which are operational in over 9.23 lakh schools. These clubs promote hands-on, experiential learning aligned with the seven themes of Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) as part of environmental sensitisation.

- **Alignment with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** The microforest and associated activities embody the NEP 2020's vision of extending learning beyond textbooks to real-world experiences, fostering joyful, nature-connected learning, human values, and holistic development.

- **Swachhata and E-waste Management:** The Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSEL) focused on 'Swachhata efficiency' and 'environmental stewardship' under Special Campaign 5.0, conducting over 6.16 lakh swachhata campaigns and an E-waste Collection Drive (collecting over 4,000 kg of e-waste).

- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Linkage:** The project aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting green learning environments and experiential nature-based learning, and SDG 13 (Climate Action) by promoting climate action and enhancing biodiversity.

- **Scaling Up:** The initiative is planned to be scaled up across other Navodaya Vidyalayas, Kendriya Vidyalayas, and schools nationwide, underscoring DoSEL's commitment to advancing environmental awareness and sustainable practices.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Micro forest:** A small, dense, native forest created using specific afforestation techniques (like the Miyawaki method, though not explicitly mentioned here) to maximise growth in a limited area.

- **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment):** A global mass movement led by India to nudge individual and collective action towards adopting and promoting environment-friendly behaviours and sustainable lifestyles.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A: Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP)** states that the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.

- **Article 51A(g): Fundamental Duty** states that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures.

- **The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Provides a framework for the central government to protect and improve the quality of the environment, and prevent, control, and abate environmental pollution.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

This initiative is a pragmatic example of integrating environmental stewardship and experiential learning within the school curriculum, directly addressing the goals of **Mission LiFE** and the **NEP 2020**. For the UPSC CSE, it serves as an excellent case study for:

1. **GSIII (Environment & Ecology):** Practical implementation of sustainable development, biodiversity enhancement, and green initiatives (Microforests, E-waste management).

2. **GSII (Governance/Social Justice):** Role of education (NEP 2020) and government campaigns (Special Campaign 5.0) in promoting environmental awareness, citizenship, and achieving SDGs.

2. Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025: Higher Education Overhaul
Summary & Key Highlights

- **Unified Apex Body:** The Bill proposes the creation of the **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA)**, a 12-member apex body, to overhaul India's higher education regulatory framework. This is in alignment with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** vision of 'light but tight' regulation.

- **Subsuming Existing Regulators:** The VBSA Bill seeks to subsume the functions of the three major regulators: the **University Grants Commission (UGC)**, the **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)**, and the **National Council for Teachers' Education (NCTE)**, thereby replacing multiple regulators with a unified structure.

- **Three Functional Councils:** The VBSA will operate through three specialised, distinct councils, each with up to 14 members, to separate the core functions:

  - **Viksit Bharat Viniyaman Parishad (Regulatory):** Focuses on institutional regulation and governance.

  - **Viksit Bharat Gunvatta Parishad (Accreditation):** Supervises the independent ecosystem for institutional and program accreditation.

  - **Viksit Bharat Manak Parishad (Standards):** Determines academic standards, qualifications framework, and learning outcomes.

- **Separation of Funding and Regulation:** A major shift is the proposal that the UGC's grants-disbursal function will be performed "through mechanisms devised by the Ministry of Education." This aims to delink financial control from academic regulation to prevent conflicts of interest and reduce micromanagement, a key principle of NEP 2020.

- **Scope and Penalties:** The Bill will apply to most Central and State universities, colleges, and HEIs, including technical and teacher education, but excludes medical and legal education. It proposes steep, graded penalties (fines starting from ₹10lakh to ₹75lakh and possible closure) for non-compliance, aiming to curb substandard and fake institutions.

- **Focus on Outcomes and Autonomy:** The core objective is to shift the focus from a permission-based system (input) to an outcome-based system (quality, research, and employability), and to facilitate autonomy for high-performing institutions in a graded manner. It also develops a roadmap for integrating 'Bharatiya knowledge' and promoting internationalisation.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA):** The proposed single, unified, overarching commission intended to be the apex regulator for most higher education in India.

- **Light but Tight Regulation:** A regulatory philosophy, envisioned by NEP 2020, which suggests minimal but effective and transparent control, focusing on institutional integrity, quality, and outcomes rather than excessive bureaucratic compliance.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Entry 66 of Union List (Schedule VII):** Union List gives the Parliament exclusive power to legislate on "Co-ordination and determination of standards in institutions for higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions." This entry forms the basis for the Central Government's regulatory power over higher education standards.

- **Entry 25 of Concurrent List (Schedule VII):** The Concurrent List includes "Education, including technical education, medical education and universities," allowing both the Centre and the States to legislate on the subject. The Bill's centralising tendency is a point of debate regarding the federal balance in education.

- **UGC Act, 1956/AICTE Act, 1987/NCTE Act, 1993:** The VBSA Bill proposes the repeal of these Acts and the dissolution of the respective bodies, marking the end of the existing fragmented regulatory system.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025, represents the most significant structural reform in Indian higher education since Independence, directly implementing a core recommendation of the NEP 2020. For the UPSC CSE, it is critically relevant for:

1. **GSII (Governance & Social Justice):** Analyzing institutional reforms, the role of statutory bodies, the concept of 'minimum government, maximum governance,' and the ongoing debate on federalism in the context of the Concurrent List.

2. **GSII & GSIII (Education Policy/Human Resource):** Evaluating the paradigm shift from a multiple-regulator, input-focused system to a single, outcome-focused structure and its likely impact on academic quality, research, and India's aspiration to become a global education hub (**SDG 4: Quality Education**).

3. Karnataka's Roadmap for Disaster Loss Mitigation by 2030
Summary & Key Highlights

- **Ambitious Reduction Target:** Karnataka has set an aggressive goal to cut cumulative losses from natural disasters by **75% by 2030**, establishing a clear time-bound target for disaster risk reduction (DRR). The baseline for this target is the significant loss of over ₹1.22lakh crore incurred between 2015 and 2021, with agriculture bearing the brunt (₹1.02 lakh crore loss).

- **KSDRR Roadmap 2025-30:** The roadmap, prepared by the Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA), aims for a "disaster-resilient Karnataka" by focusing on reducing mortalities,

economic loss, and casualties. It represents a paradigm shift from a reactive, relief-centric approach to a proactive, mitigation-focused one.

- **Alignment with Sendai Framework:** This State-level action is a tangible step toward achieving the goals of the global **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030**, particularly its core target of substantially reducing disaster damage to critical infrastructure and economic losses.

- **Vulnerability Profile and Multi-Hazard Approach:** The roadmap preparation involved drawing up a comprehensive vulnerability profile: 80% of the state's area is prone to drought, 22% to moderate earthquake risk, and 24% to cyclones/heavy winds. The strategy covers a range of hazards, including human-induced disasters like road and industrial accidents.

- **Integrated and Department-Wise Action Plan:** The plan prescribes short-term (2025-26), medium-term (2025-28), and long-term (2025-30) priorities. It mandates all departments, districts, and gram panchayats to prepare **Disaster Management Plans** with baseline data by 2026. A key financial recommendation is the potential imposition of a **'green tax'** to fund resilience measures.

- **Focus on Financial Protection:** The roadmap includes developing policies for **insuring public and private properties** against extreme weather events, which is crucial for reducing direct economic loss and promoting resilient recovery (a key element of the Sendai Framework).

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):** The concept and practice of systematically analyzing and managing the causal factors of disasters, including reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events.

- **Sendai Framework for DRR (2015–2030):** A non-binding agreement adopted by UN member states, including India, which sets four priority action areas and seven global targets for preventing new and reducing existing disaster risks.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Disaster Management Act, 2005 (Central Law):** Provides the statutory and institutional framework for disaster management in India. It mandates the creation of the **State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA)** (the KSDMA in this case), the State Executive Committee (SEC), and District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) to adopt a holistic and integrated approach to disaster management.

- **Concurrent List (Entry 23):** Though not directly mentioned, the subject of social security and social insurance is in the Concurrent List, making both the Union and State governments responsible for disaster-related rehabilitation and financial protection measures.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Karnataka's Disaster Risk Reduction Roadmap is a leading State-level initiative that demonstrates the mainstreaming of DRR into development planning, moving beyond a post-disaster response. For the UPSC CSE, this topic is vital for:

1. **GSIII (Disaster Management):** Illustrates the implementation of the **Sendai Framework's goals** and the provisions of the **Disaster Management Act, 2005** at the State and local levels. It's a key example of "Disaster Mitigation" strategies.

2. **GSII (Governance/Policy):** Highlights the role of a State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) in setting time-bound, outcome-based targets and the importance of inter-departmental coordination in governance.

4. Judicial Scrutiny and Free Speech in the Digital Age
Summary & Key Highlights

- **Judicial Expansion of Scope (The *Allahbadia* Case):** The Supreme Court's *Ranveer Allahbadia vs Union of India* proceedings raised concerns by expanding the case's scope—originally challenging FIRs for obscene content—to examine the necessity of new regulatory measures for online content that is "offensive to well-known moral standards of our society."

- **Suggestion for New Regulatory Body:** The Court suggested the creation of **neutral, autonomous bodies** to regulate online content, deeming existing self-styled bodies insufficient. It also urged the government to publish draft guidelines and invite public comments, potentially encroaching upon the Legislative domain.

- **Separation of Powers Concern (Judicial Overreach):** The article highlights the concern of judicial overreach, arguing that identifying the problems and requiring new laws for content regulation falls primarily within the domain of the **Legislature (Parliament)**, not the **Judiciary**, citing the *Common Cause vs Union of India* (2008) caution against solving legislative problems.

- **Conflict with Constitutional Guarantees (Article 19(2)):** The proposed suggestions for new, potentially stringent regulations conflict with the Supreme Court's own ruling in *Kaushal Kishor* (2023), which categorically held that the grounds for restriction under **Article 19(2)** (Sovereignty, Security, Public Order, etc.) are **exhaustive**, and no additional restrictions can be imposed.

- **Pre-Censorship vs. Regulation:** There is a cautionary reminder from the *Sahara India* (2012) case, where the Court emphasized that **pre-censorship of the media must be avoided at all costs** and restraint should only be a "last resort" satisfying a high threshold of reasonableness, highlighting the thin line between necessary regulation and unlawful restraint.

- **Existing Legal Framework and International Comparison:** India already has laws like **Sections 66, 67, 66E, and 66F of the IT Act, 2000** and the **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** (which already impose prior restraint). Most major democracies (EU's Digital Services Act, UK's Online Safety Act) focus on **content removal protocols and post-facto penalties**, not broad pre-censorship or statutory gags.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Prior Restraint:** Governmental action that prohibits speech or expression before it can take place. In the context of media, it often means pre-censorship, which is generally disfavoured in democracies.

- **Judicial Overreach:** A controversial concept where the Judiciary is perceived to have assumed roles and functions that constitutionally belong to the Executive or the Legislature.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 19(1)(a):** Guarantees the fundamental right to **freedom of speech and expression** to all citizens.

- **Article 19(2):** Lays down the **only grounds** upon which reasonable restrictions on the right under Article 19(1)(a) can be imposed (e.g., sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to an offence).

- **Section 66F of the IT Act, 2000:** Penalizes acts of **Cyber Terrorism**, highlighting that serious online offences are already covered under existing law.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The ongoing judicial proceedings concerning online content regulation are crucial for examining the delicate balance between safeguarding free speech and curbing harmful digital content. For the UPSC CSE, this issue is highly relevant for:

1. **GSII (Constitution, Polity, and Governance):** It is a live case study on the **doctrine of Separation of Powers** (Judiciary vs. Legislature), the scope of **judicial review**, and the interpretation of **Fundamental Rights** (specifically Article 19(1)(a) and 19(2)).

2. **GSIII (Security & Science/Technology):** The challenge of regulating the digital space, the efficacy of existing cyber laws, and the comparison of India's approach with global standards (e.g., EU's Digital Services Act).

5. India-Ethiopia Relations: A Strategic Partnership in the Horn of Africa
Summary & Key Highlights

- **Ethiopia's Strategic Importance:** Ethiopia, the headquarters of the **African Union (AU)** and one of Africa's fastest-growing economies (109million population), holds pivotal strategic and economic interest for India. Its positioning in the **Horn of Africa**, role as a regional anchor of stability, substantial manufacturing base, and potential as a **renewable-energy powerhouse** (hydropower) make it a key African state.

- **Pillars of Deep Bilateral Ties (Education & Defence):**
  - **Education:** India has long supported Ethiopia's education system (teachers, professors) and remains a key partner. Ethiopia was the pilot for the **Pan-African e-Network project** (2007) and sends the **largest number of African PhD students** to India, highlighting strong educational cooperation.

- o **Defence:** Cooperation, which began with the establishment of the **Harar Military Academy in 1956**, is being revitalised through a new **MoU and Joint Defence Cooperation Committee**. India is well-positioned to supply competitively priced, modern equipment to replace Ethiopia's aging Soviet-era systems.

- **Economic Cooperation and Investment Shift:** Indian private investment has surpassed $4billion, largely catalysed by Indian **Lines of Credit (LOCs)** under the **IDEAS** program. While past investments were in agriculture, the new frontier is **mining** (gold, critical minerals, and rare earth elements) to secure supplies for India's renewable energy and semiconductor sectors.

- **Key Challenges and Future Focus:** Bilateral growth is constrained by Ethiopia's internal issues like foreign exchange availability, inconsistent regulations, and taxation concerns. To boost private sector engagement, India needs to update the **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)** and the **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)**. Ethiopia must address investor bottlenecks.

- **Multilateral Alignment and Trade Advantages:** The partnership is boosted by Ethiopia's new membership in **BRICS**, along with cooperation on G-20 and South-South frameworks. Indian enterprises can leverage Ethiopia as a hub to access the wider **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, benefiting from India's existing **duty-free tariff preference scheme** for Ethiopian exports.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Horn of Africa:** The large peninsula and geopolitical region in Northeast Africa that includes Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia, often characterized by strategic waterways and geopolitical rivalry.

- **Pan-African e-Network Project:** An Indian government initiative launched in 2009 to share its expertise in education and medicine with African countries through tele-education and tele-medicine services.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions (Related to International Relations and Trade)

- **Article 51 (Directive Principle of State Policy):** Directs the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honourable relations between nations, and encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration. This forms the ethical and constitutional basis for India's foreign policy and development cooperation (e.g., LOCs, IDEAS).

- **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA):** A bilateral agreement between two countries (e.g., India and Ethiopia) aimed at preventing income earned in one country by a resident of the other from being taxed in both countries, thereby encouraging foreign investment.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The India-Ethiopia relationship is poised for a strategic shift, moving from development assistance and education to a partnership focused on critical minerals, defence exports, and multilateral cooperation (BRICS). This is highly relevant for the UPSC CSE in:

1. **GSII (International Relations):** It is a crucial case study in India's **"Look Africa" policy** and **South-South Cooperation**, highlighting the diplomatic and strategic role of the Horn of Africa.

2. **GSIII (Economy & Security):** Demonstrates strategies for **securing critical mineral supply chains** (Mining co-operation) and leveraging **defence exports** as an instrument of foreign policy, while also analyzing the impact of multilateral forums like BRICS and AfCFTA on bilateral trade and investment.

6. Satellite Monitoring of Landfill Methane: A Climate Smart Solution

Summary & Key Highlights

- **Methane as a Climate Hotspot:** Methane (CH_4), generated by decomposing organic waste in landfills, is a potent Short-Lived Climate Pollutant (SLCP), with a Global Warming Potential (GWP) that is approximately **84 times** more potent than carbon dioxide (CO_2) over a 20-year period. The waste sector contributes about **15% to 20%** of India's total methane emissions, offering the fastest path to immediate climate gains.

- **Shift from Modeling to Satellite Observation:** Historically, India relied on imprecise, aggregated models for emissions estimates. Now, advancements in satellite technology (e.g., ISRO's studies, CarbonMapper's Tanager) provide **fine-resolution detection** (down to a few square meters), allowing the identification of specific, high-emitting hotspots like Pirana (Ahmedabad), Deonar (Mumbai), and Ghazipur (Delhi).

- **Significant Data Discrepancy:** Satellite observations reveal a massive data gap: actual landfill emissions can significantly exceed model-based predictions. For example, satellite data show emissions from just two Delhi dumpsites (Ghazipur and Bhalswa) almost equal the entire solid waste sector's theoretical footprint in the 2018 inventory.

- **Judicial and Policy Action:** The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has taken *suo motu* cognizance of the satellite findings, establishing committees to conduct ground-level investigations at flagged dumpsites and imposing significant penalties on states for non-compliance with Solid Waste Management Rules.

- **Integrated Feedback Loop (Space-to-Ground):** The core strategy involves creating a robust feedback loop: **Satellite Detection** identifies hotspots/leaks, **Ground Teams** conduct immediate investigation and targeted mitigation (e.g., repairing gas collection failures or illegal dumping), and **Standardised Data Sharing** integrates insights into planning.

- **Co-benefits and Policy Alignment:** Methane management offers dual benefits: reducing a potent greenhouse gas and providing a valuable fuel source. Schemes like **GOBAR-Dhan** already promote the conversion of bio-waste into Bio-CNG (Compressed Natural Gas), demonstrating the economic viability of integrated waste management.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Methane (CH_4):** An invisible, potent greenhouse gas produced during the anaerobic decomposition of organic waste in landfills; a primary target for climate change mitigation due to its high GWP in the short term.

- **Short-Lived Climate Pollutant (SLCP):** Climate forcing agents (${CH}_\text{Black Carbon}$, Tropospheric Ozone) that remain in the atmosphere for a shorter time than CO_2 but have a disproportionately large warming effect.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010:** Established the NGT with jurisdiction over environmental issues, providing a statutory body with *suo motu* powers to ensure effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection, including the enforcement of the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016**.

- **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016:** Mandate the segregation of waste at the source (wet, dry, and domestic hazardous waste) and provide for the proper management and disposal of municipal solid waste, including the collection of landfill gas (methane) and its use for energy generation.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The convergence of satellite-based remote sensing with environmental enforcement (NGT) and national clean-up missions (Swachh Bharat Mission, GOBAR-Dhan) presents a transformative model for climate action and urban governance. For the UPSC CSE, this topic is critical for:

1. **GSIII (Environment, Ecology & Security):** Understanding the science of climate change (SLCPs/Methane), the role of technology (Space/IT) in environmental monitoring, and the institutional framework for waste-to-energy projects.

2. **GSII (Governance/Policy):** Analyzing the effectiveness of the NGT's role in enforcing environmental compliance, the concept of **co-benefits** in national schemes, and the challenge of coordinating data between Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and regulatory agencies.

7. NCBC's Recommendation to Exclude 35 Communities from West Bengal OBC List
Summary & Key Highlights

- **Exclusion Recommendation by NCBC (2025):** The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), under the chairmanship of Hansraj Gangaram Ahir (tenure ended Dec 2025), recommended the exclusion of **35 communities** (mostly Muslim) from the Central list of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) for West Bengal.

- **Targeted Communities and Initial Inclusion:** The 35 communities were part of a batch of 37 communities (35 Muslim, two non-Muslim: Devanga and Gangot) added to the Central OBC list in 2014, based on the erstwhile NCBC's 2011 recommendation. The initial inclusion was based on findings of **social, educational, and economic backwardness** (menial jobs, high drop-out rates, and perceived discrimination, even within the Muslim faith).

- **Contradictory Stances & Allegations:** The current NCBC's decision is a reversal of the 2011 stance, which had dismissed allegations of "political angle" and accepted the State Commission's findings. The current scrutiny is based on the suspicion that the initial inclusion was motivated by **"religion over backwardness"** and used for "Muslim-appeasement," a view also reflected in the Calcutta High Court's May 2024 striking down of similar inclusions in the State OBC list.

- **Judicial and Legislative Overlap:** The issue is simultaneously being heard by the **Supreme Court**, which stayed the Calcutta High Court order and has sought **quantifiable data** on the backwardness and lack of representation of these communities from the State government. This highlights a conflict between the Judiciary, the NCBC, and the State government.

- **Procedural Change Post-Constitutional Amendment:** Any change to the Central OBC list now requires an amendment brought through **Parliament** for notification by the **President of India**. This procedure, mandated by the **Constitution (102nd) Amendment Act, 2018**, supersedes the earlier executive power to notify lists, adding a layer of legislative scrutiny to the NCBC's recommendation.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Other Backward Classes (OBCs):** A collective classification in India for castes that are socially and educationally disadvantaged, entitling them to affirmative action measures, such as reservations in public employment and education.

- **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC):** A constitutional body established under Article 338B to examine complaints and advise the Central Government regarding the inclusion and exclusion of communities in the Central OBC list.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 15(4) and 16(4):** Enable the State to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens (SEBCs) or for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.

- **Article 338B:** Confers **constitutional status** on the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), outlining its composition, mandate, and functions, including the duty to advise the Central Government on the socio-educational status of backward classes.

- **Constitution (102nd) Amendment Act, 2018:** Gave constitutional status to the NCBC. Post-2018, the power to notify the Central List of SEBCs vests with the President after receiving advice from the NCBC, and any changes must be made by Parliament (via an amendment to the list).

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The NCBC's recommendation and the subsequent legal and political scrutiny underscore the contentious nature of reservation policy and the challenge of balancing affirmative action with constitutional principles. This issue is highly relevant for the UPSC CSE in:

1. **GSII (Constitution, Polity & Governance):** It's a key case study on the working of a **Constitutional Body (NCBC)**, the implications of the **102nd Amendment Act**, the principles of **social and educational backwardness** as distinct from religious identity for reservation, and the role of judicial review.

2. **GSII (Social Justice):** Analyzing the intersection of **caste and religion** in determining backwardness, the socio-economic status of marginalized sections of the Muslim community (referencing the Sachar/Mishra Committees), and the implementation challenges of reservation policies.

8. CII Proposals for Investment-Led Growth in Union Budget 2026-27

Summary & Key Highlights

- **Capital Expenditure (Capex) Push:** CII recommends sustaining public investment momentum by increasing **Central capital expenditure by 12%** and capex support to **States by 10%** in FY27. Public capex is seen as the key driver of post-pandemic recovery, *crowding in* private investment.

- **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) 2.0:** Proposal for launching a monumental **₹150 lakh crore National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) 2.0** for the period **2026–32**. This aims to provide a multi-year, long-term certainty to investors and developers with a clear list of ready-to-start Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects.

- **Tax Incentives for Private Investment:** To spur fresh private capital formation and technology upgrade, CII suggests reinstating **accelerated depreciation benefits** (especially for

MSMEs/manufacturing) and offering **incremental tax credits/compliance relaxations** for firms achieving significant new investment or production milestones, ensuring these benefits do not trigger Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) obligations.

- **Strengthening Investment Institutions and Foreign Capital:** CII proposes institutional reforms to align investment with national priorities:

    o Forming a **Sovereign Investment Strategy Council (SIFC)** to strengthen the **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)**.

    o Establishing an **NRI Investment Promotion Fund** (a government-private holding company with up to 49% government stake) to channel NRI/FPI/Institutional capital into infrastructure and emerging sectors.

- **Fiscal Policy Reform:** Advocating for enhanced fiscal stability and resilience by replacing rigid annual deficit targets with an **economic-cycle-based public debt framework**. This allows for counter-cyclical flexibility during global shocks while maintaining medium-term debt sustainability.

- **Ease of Global Capital Access:** Recommendations include simplifying **External Commercial Borrowing (ECB)** norms (higher limits, longer tenures, partial risk cover) and implementing a **single-window clearance** mechanism with a **deemed approval within 60-90 days** for large Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) proposals to boost predictability.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Capital Expenditure (Capex):** Money spent by the government (or a company) to acquire or maintain physical assets such as infrastructure, machinery, or buildings. It is non-recurring and generates future economic benefits.

- **Crowding In:** The phenomenon where increased public investment in infrastructure or key sectors stimulates or facilitates a larger volume of private investment, as opposed to *crowding out* private investment.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 112 (Annual Financial Statement):** The basis of the Union Budget, which must present an estimate of receipts and expenditure (including Capital Expenditure) of the Government of India for that year to Parliament.

- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003:** The current statutory framework that sets targets for fiscal deficit, revenue deficit, and government debt. The CII proposal for an **economic-cycle-based public debt framework** would necessitate significant amendments to the FRBM Act to incorporate flexibility.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The CII's proposals provide a comprehensive roadmap aimed at shifting India's growth engine firmly toward investment, leveraging both public infrastructure spending and private/foreign capital mobilization. For the UPSC CSE, this is highly relevant for:

1. **GSIII (Indian Economy and Budgeting):** Analyzing the role of **Fiscal Policy** in driving growth, the concept of **crowding-in** private investment via public capex, the mechanisms for financing infrastructure (NIP 2.0, NIIF), and the need for **fiscal flexibility** in the context of the FRBM Act.

2. **GSIII (Infrastructure and Investment Models):** Understanding the institutional reforms (SIFC, NRI Fund, single-window clearance) proposed to improve the business environment and attract long-term capital, which are vital for achieving the vision of *Viksit Bharat*.

🚁 Indian Navy Commissions Second MH-60R Helicopter Squadron (INAS 335)

Summary & Key Highlights

- **Commissioning of INAS 335 (Ospreys):** The Indian Navy is commissioning its second squadron of the advanced Multi-Role Helicopter (MRH), **MH-60R Seahawk**, designated as **INAS 335 (Ospreys)**, at **INS Hansa, Goa**. This follows the commissioning of the first squadron at Kochi in March last year.

- **Modernisation and Capability Boost:** The event marks a significant milestone in the Navy's ongoing modernisation and is a major boost to its integral aviation capabilities. The MH-60R is a versatile platform capable of effectively addressing both **conventional and asymmetric threats** across the maritime domain.

- **MH-60R Platform Superiority:** The MH-60R is equipped with **advanced weapons, state-of-the-art sensors, and an avionics suite**. Its primary roles include Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW), Anti-Surface Warfare (ASuW), Search and Rescue (SAR), and Electronic Warfare (EW).

- **Enhancing Blue-Water Capabilities:** The induction of the MH-60R helicopters is crucial for strengthening India's **blue-water capabilities**—the ability to project power far from its coast. These platforms extend the Navy's operational reach and enable sustained naval operations, especially by deploying on frontline warships (frigates, destroyers).

- **Reinforcing Maritime Presence in IOR:** The deployment of these Seahawk helicopters in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** will significantly reinforce the Indian Navy's maritime presence and enhance its ability to deter potential threats and secure Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), aligning with India's policy of being the net security provider in the region.

- **MH-60R Acquisition Context:** The MH-60R helicopters are being acquired from the **United States (US)** under a government-to-government Foreign Military Sales (FMS) agreement, highlighting the growing defence cooperation between India and the US, and diversification of India's defence procurement.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **MH-60R Seahawk:** A modern, multi-mission naval helicopter manufactured by Lockheed Martin/Sikorsky (US), considered the world's most advanced maritime helicopter.

- **Blue-Water Navy:** A naval force capable of operating globally, over the deep waters of open oceans, and projecting force away from the country's own coastline.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Entry 2 of the Union List (Schedule VII):** Pertains to **Naval, military and air forces**, placing the ultimate responsibility for the defence and security of the nation, including the modernization of the Indian Navy, with the Union government (Ministry of Defence).

- **The Indian Navy Act, 1957:** Provides the legislative framework for the constitution, governance, command, and discipline of the Indian Navy, under which all such naval assets and operational units (squadrons) are commissioned and deployed.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The commissioning of INAS 335 marks a major step towards achieving self-reliance and technological superiority in naval aviation, critical for securing India's growing strategic interests in the IOR. For the UPSC CSE, this event is important for:

1. **GSIII (Security):** Understanding the **modernisation of the Indian Navy**, the significance of **maritime security** (ASW, ASuW capabilities), and India's role as a net security provider in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.

2. **GSII (International Relations/Defence Cooperation):** Analyzing the implications of India's defence partnerships, particularly the **Indo-US defence ties** and the strategic importance of high-technology acquisitions (FMS route) for India's geopolitical posture.

9. Indian Navy Commissions Second MH-60R Helicopter Squadron (INAS 335)
Summary & Key Highlights

- **Commissioning of INAS 335 (Ospreys):** The Indian Navy is commissioning its second squadron of the advanced Multi-Role Helicopter (MRH), **MH-60R Seahawk**, designated as **INAS 335 (Ospreys)**, at **INS Hansa, Goa**. This follows the commissioning of the first squadron (INAS 334) at Kochi, marking a rapid and crucial phase of naval aviation modernization.

- **Versatile Multi-Mission Platform:** The MH-60R is considered the world's most advanced maritime helicopter. It is a highly versatile platform equipped with advanced sensors (e.g., active sonar, multi-mode radar, FLIR) and weapons (Mark 54 torpedoes, Hellfire missiles), making it effective for **Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW)** and **Anti-Surface Warfare (ASuW)**, along with Search and Rescue (SAR) and surveillance.

- **Enhancing Blue-Water Capabilities:** The induction of the MH-60R helicopters is crucial for strengthening India's **blue-water capabilities**—the ability to project power far from its coast. These platforms extend the Navy's operational reach and are designed to operate from frontline ships (frigates, destroyers) and aircraft carriers, significantly boosting operational readiness and fleet support.

- **Reinforcing Maritime Presence in IOR:** The deployment of these "submarine-hunting" Seahawks in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** will reinforce the Indian Navy's maritime presence, deter potential threats (like increased Chinese submarine activity), and contribute to maintaining a secure and stable environment in this strategically vital region.

- **Acquisition via FMS and Strategic Partnership:** The MH-60R helicopters are being acquired from the **United States (US)** under a government-to-government **Foreign Military Sales (FMS)** agreement (24 helicopters in total), highlighting the deepening **Indo-US strategic defence partnership** and India's commitment to accessing advanced military technology.

- **Addressing Security Gaps:** The MH-60R replaces aging Sea King 42/42A helicopters, filling a critical operational void in the Navy's ASW capability that is essential for countering both conventional and asymmetric threats in the maritime domain.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **MH-60R Seahawk:** A modern, multi-mission naval helicopter manufactured by Lockheed Martin/Sikorsky (US), vital for ASW and ASuW roles.

- **Blue-Water Navy:** A naval force capable of sustained operations globally, across the deep waters of open oceans, and projecting force away from the country's own coastline.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Entry 2 of the Union List (Schedule VII):** Pertains to **Naval, military and air forces**, placing the ultimate responsibility for the defence and security of the nation, including the modernization of the Indian Navy, with the Union government.

- **The Indian Navy Act, 1957:** Provides the legislative framework for the constitution, governance, command, and discipline of the Indian Navy, under which all such naval assets and operational units (squadrons) are commissioned and deployed.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The commissioning of INAS 335 is a pivotal moment that signifies India's commitment to becoming a dominant maritime power, emphasizing high-technology integration for enhanced operational reach and deterrence in the IOR. For the UPSC CSE, this event is critical for:

1. **GSIII (Security):** Understanding the **modernisation of the Indian Navy**, the significance of **maritime security** (especially ASW capabilities against potential threats), and the role of the IOR in India's strategic policy.

2. **GSII (International Relations/Defence Cooperation):** Analyzing the implications of the **Indo-US defence ties** and the strategic importance of high-technology acquisitions (FMS route) for India's geopolitical posture and its goal to be a "net security provider."

10. Blue Economy Leap: Investment Opportunities in Lakshadweep Fisheries
Summary & Key Highlights

- **Untapped Fisheries Potential:** Lakshadweep, India's only coral island chain, possesses a vast **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** of approximately **400,000 sq. km** (nearly 20% of India's EEZ) and a lagoon area of **4,200 sq. km**. The estimated tuna potential is **one lakh tonnes**, but current production is only around **15,000 tonnes**, indicating immense untapped potential.

- **Focus on High-Value and Export-Oriented Tuna:** Investment is being sought for the entire tuna value chain: deep-sea fishing, modern processing, canning, and exports. The region's traditional, sustainable fishing practices (pole and line) make it ideal for **Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) eco-labelling**, which can secure premium pricing and access to high-end global markets with a brand identity like "Lakshadweep Sustainable Tuna."

- **Seaweed Cultivation Cluster:** Lakshadweep has been notified as a dedicated **Seaweed Cluster** under the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**. The vast lagoon area is conducive to offshore farming, biomass processing, and manufacturing of bioproducts (food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics). The Administration is developing a leasing policy to facilitate private sector offshore farming.

- **Mariculture and Ornamental Fisheries:** Opportunities exist in:

    o **Offshore Cage Farming:** Leveraging the large EEZ for sustainable mariculture of species like sea bass and pompano, supported by successful pilot projects in other states.

    o **Ornamental Fisheries:** The rich biodiversity of nearly **300 species** suitable for the aquarium trade makes it an ideal location for establishing marine ornamental hatcheries and integrated rearing units to reduce dependence on wild-caught species.

- **Policy Facilitation and Investment Attraction:** The first-ever Investors' Meet in Lakshadweep generated strong interest, envisaging over **₹500 crore** worth of investment proposals. To streamline and expedite project implementation, the UT Administration is developing a **single-window system** for smooth approvals.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):** A sea zone over which a sovereign country has special rights regarding the exploration and use of marine resources, including energy production from water and wind.

- **Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Certification:** A global, science-based voluntary eco-labelling program for wild-capture fisheries that meet an international standard for sustainable fishing, ensuring traceability and stock health.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **The Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976:** This Act legally defines India's maritime zones, including the EEZ (up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline), within which Lakshadweep's massive fishing potential is situated.

- **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY):** A flagship scheme under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, focusing on the sustainable and responsible development of the fisheries sector with a total investment of over ₹20,050 crore (for five years, FY21 to FY25), supporting activities like deep-sea fishing, seaweed cultivation, and infrastructure development.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The focus on developing Lakshadweep's blue economy signifies a strategic shift toward utilizing India's vast marine resources for economic growth, employment generation, and enhancing exports. This topic is critical for the UPSC CSE in:

1. **GSIII (Indian Economy & Environment):** Analyzing the scope and implementation of the **Blue Economy**, the role of **PMMSY** in economic development, the importance of **sustainable fishing** practices (MSC certification), and the environmental co-benefits of **seaweed cultivation** (carbon sequestration).

2. **GSII (Governance/Geopolitics):** Understanding the strategic importance of Union Territories like Lakshadweep, the role of government-led initiatives (Investors' Meet, single-window system) in promoting investment, and its significance in India's overall **maritime and security strategy** in the Arabian Sea.