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**VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY
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STUDY CENTRE**

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 17/08/2026 (MONDAY)



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Table of Contents

1. Parliamentary Functioning During Monsoon Session 2026.....	2
2. National Framework for Strengthening of ITDAs and ITDPs.....	3
3. Hexavalent Chromium Contamination of Groundwater in Uttar Pradesh.....	5
4. Producer Price Index (PPI) for Government Contract Price Escalation	6
5. Mahadayi River Diversion and Environmental Concerns.....	7
6. Gendered Division of Unpaid Domestic Work in India	9
7. Delimitation and the Federal Dilemma of Lok Sabha Representation	10
8. Census 2027: Data Confidentiality, Self-Enumeration and Enumeration Challenges	12
9. Rat-Hole Coal Mining and Environmental Governance in Meghalaya	14
10. Government Quick Response Teams to Counter Fake Social Media Content.....	15



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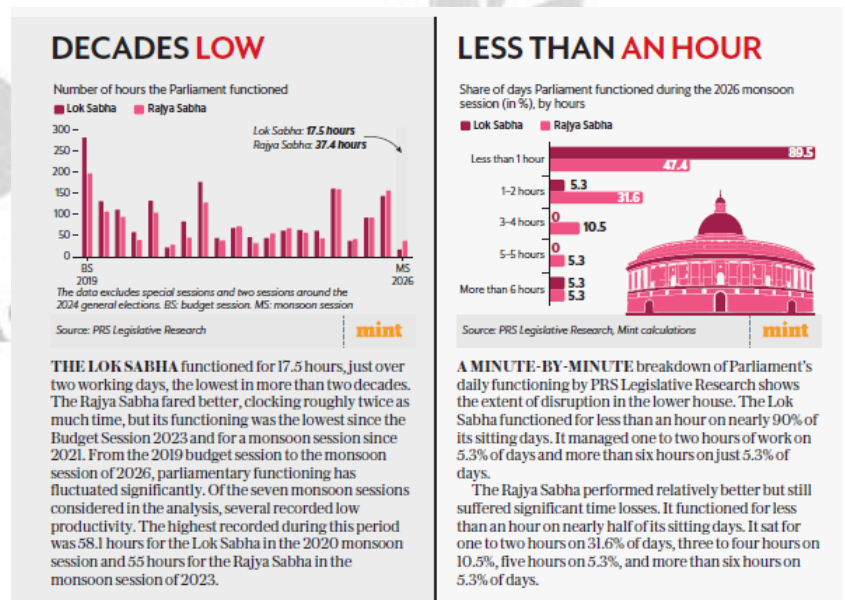
1. Parliamentary Functioning During Monsoon Session 2026

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Low Parliamentary Productivity:** The Monsoon Session, held from 20 July to 13 August 2026, witnessed severe disruptions. The Lok Sabha functioned for only **17.5 hours**, its lowest in more than two decades, while the Rajya Sabha functioned for about **37.4 hours**.
- **Bills Passed Amid Limited Debate:** Despite reduced working hours, the Lok Sabha passed **12 bills**, with **11 of them passed in the same session**. Most were cleared within minutes and through voice votes, raising concerns regarding the depth of legislative scrutiny.
- **Question Hour Severely Affected:** The Lok Sabha conducted Question Hour for only **9 minutes**, while the Rajya Sabha managed about **2 hours**. Only **1% of starred questions in the Lok Sabha and 6% in the Rajya Sabha** received oral answers.
- **Decline in Committee Scrutiny:** Only **21% of bills introduced in the 18th Lok Sabha** had been referred to parliamentary committees, compared with 28% in the 16th Lok Sabha and 16% in the 17th Lok Sabha. Parliamentary committees provide detailed, non-partisan scrutiny of proposed legislation.
- **Major Bills and Issues:** Important legislation included amendments concerning unfair means in public examinations, national honour, tribunals, cooperative development, MSMEs, taxation, minerals and birth and death registration. The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment received comparatively greater discussion.
- **Efficiency vs Parliamentary Scrutiny:** The session highlights a central democratic dilemma: a high rate of legislative output does not necessarily indicate effective parliamentary functioning. Frequent disruptions, reduced debate and limited committee examination can weaken transparency and legislative accountability.

Essential Definitions

- **Question Hour:** The period during a parliamentary sitting when MPs question ministers on matters of public importance and government functioning.
- **Starred Question:** A question for which an MP seeks an oral answer, allowing supplementary questions.
- **Parliamentary Committee:** A smaller body of MPs constituted to examine legislation, expenditure, policies and other matters in greater detail.
- **Voice Vote:** A voting procedure in which members indicate approval or rejection orally without a recorded individual vote.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 79:** Establishes Parliament consisting of the President, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.



- **Article 85:** Provides for summoning, prorogation and dissolution of Parliament, subject to constitutional requirements.
- **Article 93:** Provides for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha.
- **Article 105:** Guarantees parliamentary privileges, including freedom of speech in Parliament.
- **Article 107:** Deals with the introduction and passage of Bills.
- **Article 118:** Empowers each House to make rules regulating its procedure and conduct of business.
- **Article 122:** Courts generally cannot question parliamentary proceedings on grounds of procedural irregularity.

Conclusion

The Monsoon Session 2026 demonstrates that **legislative productivity must be assessed not merely by the number of bills passed, but also by the quality of debate, scrutiny and accountability**. Strengthening committee examination, protecting Question Hour and ensuring constructive participation by both government and opposition are essential for a healthy parliamentary democracy.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Articles 79, 85, 93, 105, 107, 118 and 122; Question Hour; starred questions; parliamentary committees; legislative procedure.
- **Mains:** GS-II—Parliamentary democracy, legislative accountability, parliamentary scrutiny, opposition's role, disruptions and institutional reforms.

2. National Framework for Strengthening of ITDAs and ITDPs

Key Highlights & Summary

- **New Reform Roadmap:** On 15 August 2026, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs released the **National Framework for Strengthening of ITDAs and ITDPs** along with **Operational Guidelines**, aimed at improving last-mile delivery of tribal development programmes. The exercise was based on consultations and field-level assessments across tribal development institutions.
- **Role of ITDAs/ITDPs:** Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) and Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) function as important field-level mechanisms for implementing tribal development programmes and coordinating government interventions in tribal-concentration areas. Historically, ITDPs emerged as an institutional strategy for focused tribal development under the Tribal Sub-Plan approach.
- **Evidence-Based Institutional Reform:** The framework introduces a common assessment methodology covering institutional domains such as planning, convergence, digital governance, monitoring and capacity building. Institutions are expected to identify gaps and prepare **Performance Improvement Roadmaps** suited to local conditions.
- **Convergence and Outcome-Based Governance:** The framework seeks to integrate schemes and departments rather than functioning through isolated programme implementation. It emphasises real-time data, rankings, outcome monitoring and saturation of entitlements, drawing lessons from the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) and Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP).





- **Focus on Institutional Capacity:** Proposed reforms include improved fund-flow mechanisms, stronger technical manpower, regular Governing Council meetings and greater participation of **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**. The objective is to make tribal development institutions more accountable, responsive and capable of executing projects effectively.
- **Link with Major Tribal Initiatives:** The reform architecture gains importance in the context of **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA)** and **PM-JANMAN**, which seek to improve access to infrastructure, basic services and socio-economic opportunities among tribal communities, particularly vulnerable tribal groups.

Essential Definitions

- **ITDA:** Integrated Tribal Development Agency, an institutional mechanism for administering and coordinating tribal development interventions in designated areas.
- **ITDP:** Integrated Tribal Development Project, generally covering one or more development blocks with significant Scheduled Tribe concentration.
- **Convergence:** Coordinated implementation of multiple schemes, departments and resources to achieve common development outcomes.
- **Saturation Approach:** Ensuring that all eligible beneficiaries receive the intended government services or entitlements rather than targeting only a limited proportion.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 244(1):** Provides for the administration of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in areas covered by the **Fifth Schedule**.
- **Fifth Schedule:** Provides a special administrative framework for Scheduled Areas outside the Sixth Schedule areas of the Northeast. It includes provisions relating to the Governor, Tribes Advisory Councils and administration of Scheduled Areas.
- **Article 275(1):** Enables grants-in-aid from the Union to States for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and improving administration in Scheduled Areas.
- **PESA Act, 1996:** Extends Panchayati Raj provisions to Scheduled Areas with modifications and strengthens the role of Gram Sabhas in local self-governance.
- **Forest Rights Act, 2006:** Recognises forest rights of eligible Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers and has important implications for tribal livelihoods and community resource governance.

Conclusion

The strengthening of ITDAs and ITDPs represents a shift from fragmented scheme implementation towards **institution-led, data-driven and outcome-oriented tribal development**. Its success will depend on adequate finances, technical capacity, effective inter-departmental convergence and meaningful participation of tribal communities and local institutions.

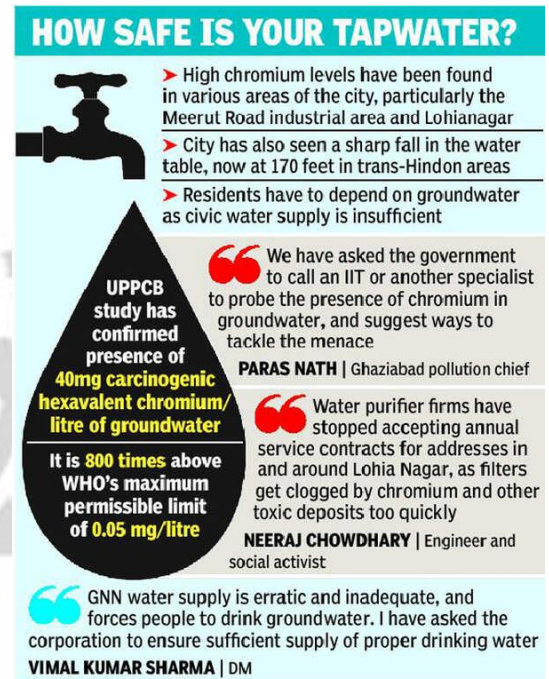
UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** ITDA/ITDP, Fifth Schedule, Article 244, Article 275(1), PESA, FRA, DAJGUA and PM-JANMAN.
- **Mains GS-II:** Tribal governance, decentralisation, PESA and constitutional safeguards.
- **Mains GS-III:** Inclusive development, tribal livelihoods, institutional capacity and last-mile service delivery.

3. Hexavalent Chromium Contamination of Groundwater in Uttar Pradesh

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Industrial Pollution of Groundwater:** Groundwater in parts of **Fatehpur, Kanpur Dehat and Kanpur Nagar districts of Uttar Pradesh** has reportedly been contaminated with **hexavalent chromium [Cr(VI)]**, linked to decades of industrial waste dumping and inadequate waste management.
- **Why Cr(VI) Matters:** Chromium occurs in different oxidation states, notably Cr(III) and Cr(VI). **Hexavalent chromium is considerably more toxic** and has been identified as carcinogenic, making contamination of drinking-water sources a serious public-health concern.
- **Industrial Sources:** Chromium compounds are used in activities such as **metal plating, tanning, pigments and other manufacturing processes**. Improper disposal of industrial effluents can allow contaminants to migrate through soil into groundwater and aquifers.
- **Long-Term and Hidden Risk:** Groundwater contamination is particularly difficult to address because pollutants can remain underground and spread through aquifer systems. Unlike visible surface pollution, contamination may remain undetected until it affects drinking-water sources.
- **Health and Livelihood Impacts:** Long-term exposure to Cr(VI) can pose serious health risks. Communities dependent on contaminated hand pumps and wells face greater vulnerability, particularly where alternative safe drinking-water sources are unavailable. The issue also highlights the need for regular monitoring and source-based pollution control.
- **Need for Remediation:** Effective response requires **polluter identification, containment of contaminated sites, scientific groundwater mapping, treatment of industrial effluents, safe drinking-water supply and remediation of polluted aquifers**. Prevention is generally preferable to attempting to restore severely contaminated groundwater after decades of pollution.



Essential Definitions

- **Hexavalent Chromium [Cr(VI)]:** Chromium in the +6 oxidation state; a highly reactive form associated with significant toxic and carcinogenic risks.
- **Groundwater:** Water stored beneath the Earth's surface in soil pores, fractures and permeable geological formations.
- **Aquifer:** A geological formation capable of storing and transmitting groundwater.
- **Industrial Effluent:** Liquid waste discharged from industrial activities that may contain chemical pollutants.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 21:** The Supreme Court has interpreted the right to life to include the right to a clean and healthy environment.



- **Article 48A:** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.
- **Article 51A(g):** Makes protection and improvement of the natural environment a Fundamental Duty of citizens.
- **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974:** Provides the statutory framework for preventing and controlling water pollution and establishes pollution control boards.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Empowers the Central Government to prescribe environmental quality and pollutant-discharge standards and regulate hazardous substances.

Conclusion

The chromium crisis in Uttar Pradesh illustrates how **unregulated industrial pollution can convert groundwater, a critical common resource, into a long-term public-health liability**. Stronger enforcement, continuous monitoring, scientific remediation and reliable alternative drinking-water supplies are essential for sustainable groundwater governance.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Cr(VI), groundwater, aquifer, industrial effluents, Water Act 1974, Environment Protection Act 1986, Articles 21, 48A and 51A(g).
- **Mains GS-III:** Environmental pollution, groundwater management, industrialisation and public health, hazardous waste management, sustainable resource governance.

4. Producer Price Index (PPI) for Government Contract Price Escalation

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Shift Towards PPI:** The Finance Ministry has advised ministries and departments to consider using the **Producer Price Index (PPI)** instead of the **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** for price-escalation and adjustment clauses in future government procurement and infrastructure contracts. This reflects a move towards an index that more closely captures price movements at the producer level.
- **India's New PPI Framework:** The Office of the Economic Adviser under DPIIT introduced the new PPI series with **base year 2022-23** in June 2026, alongside the revised WPI series. The new statistical framework includes an Output PPI, a Trial Input PPI and Service Producer Price Indices.
- **Why PPI Over WPI?:** PPI measures changes in prices received by producers for their output and can provide a more direct measure of producer-level price movements. The official PPI Working Group noted that WPI can involve **multiple counting** because intermediate transactions may be captured at different stages of production. This can affect its suitability for some contractual applications.
- **Government Contract Escalation:** Price-escalation clauses protect contractors from sharp changes in input costs during long-duration projects. Linking escalation to an appropriate price index can distribute inflation-related risks more transparently between the government and contractor.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND
PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

— Do You Know? —

Does India have a Producer Price Index (PPI) for deflating the current price estimates of GDP?

- No, presently, India does not have PPI.
- However, the prices collected in the existing WPI series are the ex-factory prices, which do not contain the transport charges and taxes.
- Hence, WPI conceptually matches with the prices of commodities considered for Producer Price Index (PPI).
- The only difference lies in inclusion of exports in PPI.

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- **Coverage and Modernisation:** The new PPI framework covers major sectors including **Agriculture, Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity** through Output PPI, while Service PPIs cover selected services. Trial Input PPI is being compiled experimentally for manufacturing.
- **Broader Economic Significance:** Adoption of PPI can improve the measurement of producer-level inflation, strengthen evidence-based contract management and bring India's price statistics closer to international practices. However, its effectiveness will depend on wider sectoral coverage, reliable data collection and consistent methodology.

Essential Definitions

- **Producer Price Index (PPI):** An index measuring changes over time in prices received by domestic producers for their goods or services.
- **Wholesale Price Index (WPI):** An index tracking price movements of goods at the wholesale/bulk transaction stage.
- **Price Escalation Clause:** A contractual provision allowing the contract price to be adjusted when specified input prices change during execution.
- **Base Year:** A reference year whose price structure is used for comparison while calculating an index.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Collection of Statistics Act, 2008:** Provides the statutory framework for collection of specified economic and industrial statistics by the government.
- **Government Procurement Framework:** Price-adjustment provisions in public contracts are governed primarily through applicable procurement rules, tender conditions and contractual terms rather than a specific constitutional provision.
- **Article 282:** Enables the Union or States to make grants for public purposes, providing a broad constitutional basis for public expenditure, subject to applicable laws and procedures.

Conclusion

The move towards PPI-based escalation represents an important step in **modernising India's price-statistics architecture and improving risk allocation in long-term government contracts**. A producer-focused index can make contractual adjustments more closely reflect actual economic conditions faced by producers.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** PPI, WPI, CPI, base year 2022-23, Output PPI, Input PPI, Service PPI, Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT.
- **Mains GS-III:** Inflation measurement, public procurement, economic statistics, infrastructure contracts, risk-sharing and institutional reforms.

5. Mahadayi River Diversion and Environmental Concerns

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Mahadayi River Dispute:** The Mahadayi, also known as **Mandovi/Mhadei**, is an inter-State river shared by **Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra**. The Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal was constituted in 2010 to adjudicate the dispute over sharing and utilisation of its waters. The Tribunal delivered its report and decision in 2018.

- **Kalasa-Banduri Project:** Karnataka has proposed diversion of Mahadayi tributaries through the **Kalasa-Banduri project**, primarily to augment drinking-water supply in parts of north Karnataka. Goa has opposed diversion, citing possible impacts on downstream flows, drinking-water security and freshwater ecosystems.
- **Environmental Clearance Issue:** The Union government has stated that there is **no proposal from Karnataka seeking Environmental Clearance (EC) for diversion of the Mahadayi river** for the projects in question. Therefore, the present issue concerns both inter-State water allocation and the environmental consequences of any proposed diversion.
- **Ecological Significance:** The Mahadayi basin supports forests, freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity, particularly in the Western Ghats. Changes in river flows can affect downstream ecosystems, groundwater recharge, wetlands and freshwater availability. Hence, **basin-level ecological assessment** is important before major interventions.
- **Cumulative Impact Assessment:** A **Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA)** examines the combined environmental consequences of multiple projects within a river basin, rather than assessing each project in isolation. For ecologically sensitive basins, such assessment can provide a more realistic picture of carrying capacity and downstream impacts.
- **Balancing Development and Ecology:** The dispute illustrates the challenge of balancing drinking-water needs, inter-State water rights and ecological sustainability. Scientific hydrological data, transparent environmental appraisal, downstream-flow requirements and cooperative federalism are essential for resolving such conflicts.



Essential Definitions

- **Environmental Clearance (EC):** Regulatory approval required for specified projects before undertaking activities covered under the applicable environmental-clearance framework.
- **Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA):** Assessment of the combined environmental impacts of multiple existing and proposed activities within a defined geographical or ecological system.
- **Inter-State River:** A river whose basin or course extends across more than one State, potentially creating competing claims over its utilisation.
- **Ecological Flow (E-flow):** The quantity, timing and quality of freshwater flows required to maintain river ecosystems and their dependent communities.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 262:** Parliament may provide for adjudication of disputes relating to waters of inter-State rivers and river valleys and may exclude the jurisdiction of courts over such disputes.
- **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** Provides for constitution of tribunals for adjudication of inter-State water disputes. Section 4 provides for constitution of a Water Disputes Tribunal when the statutory conditions are met.
- **EIA Notification, 2006:** Specified projects, including relevant river-valley projects, require prior Environmental Clearance. The process includes **screening, scoping, public consultation and appraisal**.



- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Provides the statutory basis for the EIA framework and empowers the Union Government to take measures for environmental protection.
- **Articles 48A and 51A(g):** The former directs the State to protect and improve the environment, while the latter places a corresponding environmental duty on citizens.

Conclusion

The Mahadayi issue demonstrates that river-water disputes cannot be viewed solely through the lens of water allocation. **Hydrological sustainability, ecological flows, environmental clearance and downstream rights** must form part of an integrated river-basin approach. Cooperative federalism supported by credible scientific assessment remains crucial.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Mahadayi/Mandovi/Mhadei, Kalasa-Banduri project, Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal, Article 262, Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, EIA Notification 2006, ecological flows and CIA.
- **Mains GS-II:** Inter-State water disputes, federalism and cooperative federalism.
- **Mains GS-III:** Western Ghats, environmental impact assessment, river-basin management, biodiversity and sustainable development.

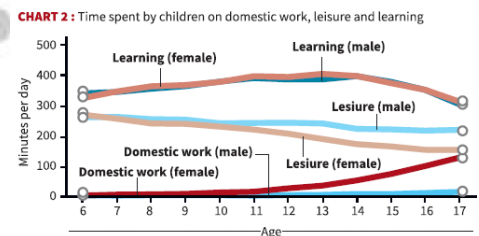
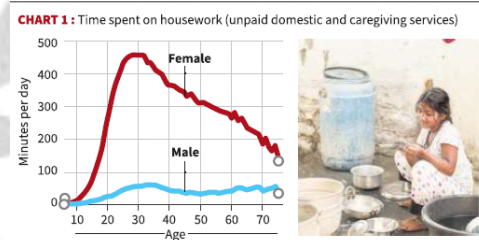
6. Gendered Division of Unpaid Domestic Work in India

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Early Gender Conditioning:** Recent analysis based on the **Time Use Survey** highlights that the gender gap in unpaid domestic work begins during childhood. Girls increasingly spend time on household chores from around the age of 10, while boys devote substantially less time to such activities.
- **Sharp Rise with Age:** Women's time spent on household work rises through adolescence and adulthood, reaching nearly **460 minutes a day around the age of 30**. This indicates how domestic responsibilities can accumulate during the prime working-age years.
- **Unequal Distribution of Care Work:** The official Time Use Survey 2024 found that women participating in unpaid domestic services spent an average of **289 minutes per day**, compared with **88 minutes for men**. Women also spent more time on unpaid caregiving for household members.
- **Impact on Education and Employment:** Early exposure to domestic responsibilities can reduce girls' leisure, learning and skill-development time. In adulthood, disproportionate unpaid care work can constrain women's labour-force participation, career progression, entrepreneurship and economic independence.
- **Invisible Economic Contribution:** Unpaid cooking, cleaning, childcare, eldercare, fetching water and other household activities generate substantial social and economic value but are generally outside conventional GDP calculations. Time Use Surveys therefore help reveal the **care economy** and the gendered allocation of time.

Disproportionate burden

The data for the charts were sourced from India's Time Use Survey (2025) and the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI)





- **Policy Challenge:** Gender equality requires more than increasing female employment. It requires **redistribution of unpaid care work**, accessible childcare, improved basic services, flexible workplaces, behavioural change and greater participation of men in household responsibilities.

Essential Definitions

- **Unpaid Domestic Work:** Household activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing, shopping and household maintenance performed without direct monetary remuneration.
- **Unpaid Care Work:** Unpaid activities involving care or assistance to children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities or other household members.
- **Time Poverty:** A condition in which excessive time commitments, particularly unpaid work, leave inadequate time for education, employment, leisure or personal development.
- **Care Economy:** The economic and social system involving paid and unpaid activities required to provide care and sustain households and communities.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 14:** Guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws.
- **Article 15:** Prohibits discrimination on grounds including sex and permits special provisions for women and children.
- **Article 16:** Guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment.
- **Article 39(d):** Directs the State to secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- **Article 42:** Directs the State to secure just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.
- **Article 51A(e):** Calls upon citizens to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- **Code on Social Security, 2020:** Consolidates social-security provisions and includes provisions relating to maternity benefits, nursing breaks and crèche facilities.

Conclusion

The unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work is not merely a household issue; it is a **development, gender equality and economic participation issue**. Recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work is essential for converting India's demographic potential into meaningful and inclusive human development.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Time Use Survey, unpaid domestic work, unpaid caregiving, time poverty, care economy, Articles 14, 15, 16, 39(d), 42 and 51A(e).
- **Mains GS-I:** Women, gender roles and social empowerment.
- **Mains GS-II:** Constitutional safeguards, welfare policies and social justice.
- **Mains GS-III:** Female labour-force participation, human capital and inclusive economic growth.

7. Delimitation and the Federal Dilemma of Lok Sabha Representation

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Tamil Nadu's Resolution:** The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly has urged the Union government to retain the present **543 Lok Sabha seats and their existing State-wise distribution**, while maintaining the current broad **2.2:1 Lok Sabha–Rajya Sabha ratio**. It has also sought



implementation of **one-third reservation for women from 2029 without making it conditional on a future delimitation exercise.**

- **What is Delimitation?** Delimitation is the process of determining the number and boundaries of territorial constituencies for elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. It seeks to ensure broadly equal representation while considering geographical and administrative factors.
- **Population vs Federal Balance:** The constitutional principle of representation based on population creates a dilemma. States that achieved greater success in population stabilisation could potentially lose relative parliamentary representation if seats are redistributed solely according to present population. Conversely, continued freezing of seats can result in significant differences in the population represented by individual MPs.
- **Constitutional Freeze: The 42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976)** froze the allocation of Lok Sabha seats among States based on the 1971 Census. The **84th Amendment (2001)** extended this freeze until the first census after 2026. Thus, delimitation after the freeze raises important questions of democratic equality, federalism and political representation.
- **2026 Delimitation Proposal:** The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 proposed increasing the constitutional maximum strength of the Lok Sabha from **550 to 850**, including up to 815 members from States and 35 from Union Territories. The Bill, however, was voted down in the Lok Sabha for want of the required special majority. A 50% increase in the present elected strength would also alter the relative size of the Rajya Sabha.
- **Way Forward:** A balanced approach should reconcile **“one person, one vote, one value”** with federal equity. Any future delimitation should involve broad political consultation, transparent criteria, protection of federal representation and adequate institutional capacity for meaningful parliamentary debate.

Table 1: Value of vote of each citizen based on estimated population as of 2026

State	Number of seats at present	Projected population as of 2026 (in crore)	Projected population per Lok Sabha seat (in lakh)	Value of 1 vote*
Uttar Pradesh	80	25.7	32.1	0.56
Bihar	40	13.5	33.8	0.53
Rajasthan	25	8.4	33.6	0.54
Madhya Pradesh	29	9.1	31.4	0.57
Tamil Nadu	39	7.8	20	0.9
Andhra Pradesh + Telangana	42	9.3	22.1	0.81
Kerala	20	3.6	18	1
Karnataka	28	6.9	24.6	0.73
Punjab	13	3.2	24.6	0.73
Himachal Pradesh	4	0.8	20	0.9
Uttarakhand	5	1.2	24	0.75

* Kerala calculated as 1 and States' values derived on this base

Table 2: If the number of seats is increased to 848 based on 2026 projected population

(Based on research paper of Milan Vaishnav and Jamie Hinton, for the Carnegie endowment)

State	Number of seats at present	Projected number of seats	Existing proportion	Revised proportion
Uttar Pradesh	80	143	14.7%	16.9%
Bihar	40	79	7.4%	9.3%
Rajasthan	25	50	4.6%	5.9%
Madhya Pradesh	29	52	5.3%	6.1%
Tamil Nadu	39	49	7.2%	5.8%
Andhra Pradesh + Telangana	42	54	7.7%	6.4%
Kerala	20	20	3.7%	2.4%
Karnataka	28	41	5.2%	4.8%
Punjab	13	18	2.4%	2.1%
Himachal Pradesh	4	4	0.7%	0.5%
Uttarakhand	5	7	0.9%	0.8%
Total	543	848		

Essential Definitions

- **Delimitation:** Readjustment of the territorial constituencies and, where constitutionally authorised, allocation of seats following population changes.
- **One Person, One Vote, One Value:** Democratic principle that each citizen's vote should have broadly equal weight in determining representation.
- **Federalism:** A system in which constitutional powers and political representation are distributed between different levels of government.
- **Representative Equality:** The principle that constituencies should contain reasonably comparable populations so that citizens receive broadly equal political representation.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 81:** Deals with the composition of the Lok Sabha and principles governing allocation of seats among States.

- **Article 82:** Provides for readjustment of Lok Sabha seats and division of States into territorial constituencies after each census, subject to constitutional provisions.
- **Article 170:** Provides for composition and territorial constituencies of State Legislative Assemblies and their readjustment.
- **Articles 330 and 332:** Provide reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
- **106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023:** Provides for approximately one-third reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, with its implementation linked to the delimitation exercise following the relevant census.
- **Delimitation Commission:** An independent statutory body constituted under an Act of Parliament to undertake delimitation. Its orders have a high degree of finality and generally cannot be challenged in court on ordinary grounds.

Conclusion

Delimitation is not merely a mathematical exercise; it affects the **political balance between States, democratic equality and the functioning of Indian federalism**. The challenge is to correct disparities in representation without penalising States that successfully pursued population stabilisation. A consensus-driven and constitutionally grounded approach is therefore essential.

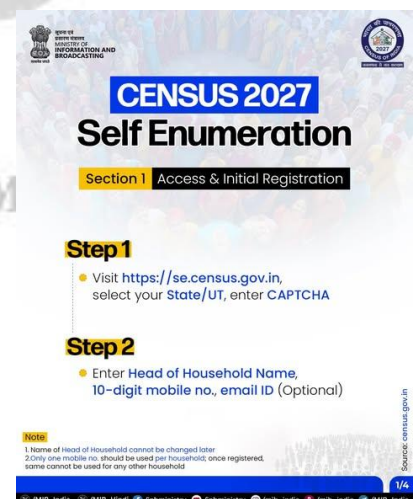
UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Articles 81, 82, 170, 330, 332; 42nd, 84th and 106th Constitutional Amendments; Delimitation Commission; 1971 Census; Lok Sabha–Rajya Sabha composition.
- **Mains GS-II:** Delimitation, federalism, electoral reforms, representation, women's political participation and Centre-State relations.

8. Census 2027: Data Confidentiality, Self-Enumeration and Enumeration Challenges

Key Highlights & Summary

- Census 2027 and New Data Dimensions:** The Census 2027 exercise will collect a wider range of demographic and socio-economic information than the 2011 Census, including details relating to household characteristics, migration, education, employment and other population attributes. The exercise is particularly significant for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh after major constitutional and administrative changes in recent years.
- Confidentiality of Census Data:** According to the Census authorities, personal information collected during enumeration is protected under the **Census Act, 1948**. Enumerators are not seeking private or confidential financial information such as bank-account details. Identity-related information will be collected only where it is available and required under the questionnaire.
- Self-Enumeration:** Census 2027 introduces **self-enumeration**, allowing eligible residents to provide information through an online portal before the house-to-house enumeration phase. This can improve participation, reduce enumerator burden and facilitate faster data collection, particularly where physical access is difficult.





- **Geographical and Demographic Challenges:** Enumeration in **mountainous, border, tribal and snow-bound regions** presents logistical difficulties. Seasonal migration and nomadic populations further complicate population counting. In regions such as Ladakh, dispersed settlements and difficult terrain require specialised enumeration strategies.
- **Importance for Governance:** Census data forms the foundation for planning and allocation of public resources. Accurate information on population distribution, migration, housing, education, employment and social characteristics can improve evidence-based policymaking and welfare delivery.
- **Cybersecurity and Digital Trust:** Greater use of digital platforms creates both opportunities and risks. Citizens must distinguish the official census process from fraudulent attempts to obtain personal information. Data security, authentication and public awareness are therefore essential to maintain confidence in digital enumeration.

Essential Definitions

- **Census:** A systematic enumeration of the population along with collection of specified demographic, social and economic characteristics.
- **Self-Enumeration:** A process through which individuals or households provide their census information electronically before conventional enumerator-based enumeration.
- **House Listing:** The preliminary stage of census operations involving listing of residential structures and households and collection of specified housing-related information.
- **Nomadic Population:** Communities that move periodically rather than residing permanently at a single location.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Census Act, 1948:** Provides the statutory framework for conducting population censuses in India and contains provisions relating to census operations, duties of persons involved and confidentiality of census records.
- **Article 246:** Read with the Seventh Schedule, places **Census and population statistics** under the Union domain through the Union List.
- **Union List, Entry 69:** Specifically relates to census and statistics for the purpose of matters in the Union List.
- **Right to Privacy:** Personal information collected during state exercises must be handled consistently with constitutional privacy principles, including the safeguards recognised under **Article 21**.

Conclusion

Census 2027 represents an important transition towards **technology-enabled, comprehensive and more responsive population enumeration**. Its success will depend on data confidentiality, cybersecurity, accurate inclusion of vulnerable and mobile populations, and effective coordination between technology and field-level enumeration.

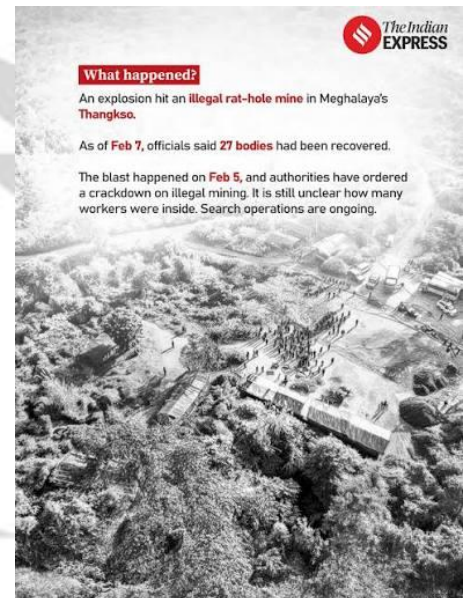
UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Census Act, 1948; Census; self-enumeration; House Listing; Union List Entry 69; Article 246; Article 21; demographic data.
- **Mains GS-I:** Population and demographic trends, migration and regional disparities.
- **Mains GS-II:** Privacy, governance, digital public administration and evidence-based policymaking.
- **Mains GS-III:** Digital governance, cybersecurity and data protection.

9. Rat-Hole Coal Mining and Environmental Governance in Meghalaya

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Policy Gap in Mine Closure:** A High Court-constituted committee has flagged Meghalaya's delay in adopting a comprehensive policy for closing and securing abandoned or illegally operated **rat-hole coal mines**. The absence of a clear closure mechanism creates continuing risks to workers, livestock and local communities.
- **Nature of Rat-Hole Mining:** Rat-hole mining involves extraction of coal through extremely narrow and often poorly ventilated tunnels, where miners crawl or squeeze through passages to reach coal seams. It has been particularly associated with Meghalaya's coal-bearing areas.
- **Serious Safety Risks:** Deep and unstable underground tunnels, inadequate ventilation, flooding and lack of protective infrastructure make such mines highly hazardous. Past accidents and deaths have highlighted the human cost of unregulated mining.
- **Environmental Consequences:** Unscientific coal mining can cause **acid mine drainage**, groundwater contamination, soil degradation, deforestation and damage to rivers and aquatic ecosystems. Meghalaya's limestone-rich and highly rain-fed terrain can amplify downstream ecological impacts.
- **Mine Closure and Restoration:** The issue is not limited to stopping illegal mining. Effective governance requires **mine inventory, scientific closure, fencing, reclamation, land restoration, water treatment, worker rehabilitation and continuous monitoring**. Pending mine-closure proposals therefore require time-bound implementation.
- **Governance Challenge:** The Meghalaya case illustrates the tension between traditional land and resource rights, livelihoods, environmental protection and regulatory oversight. Sustainable mining requires coordination among the State government, district authorities, autonomous councils, pollution-control institutions and local communities.



Essential Definitions

- **Rat-Hole Mining:** A mining method involving narrow tunnels or pits that are often too small for conventional mechanised mining and require workers to enter individually.
- **Acid Mine Drainage:** Acidic water generated when sulphide-bearing minerals exposed during mining react with oxygen and water, potentially mobilising toxic metals.
- **Mine Closure:** Planned cessation of mining operations followed by measures for worker safety, environmental restoration, land reclamation and post-closure monitoring.
- **Mine Reclamation:** Restoration of disturbed mining land to a stable and environmentally usable condition.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957:** Provides the principal legal framework for regulation of mineral development and mining operations in India.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Provides broad powers to regulate activities causing environmental degradation and supports environmental standards and safeguards.



- **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974:** Provides for prevention and control of water pollution through regulatory mechanisms and pollution-control boards.
- **National Green Tribunal:** The NGT has played an important role in addressing environmental concerns associated with unscientific and hazardous coal mining in Meghalaya.
- **Sixth Schedule:** Meghalaya's tribal areas are governed under the Sixth Schedule framework, under which Autonomous District Councils have important powers relating to land and local administration. Mining governance therefore involves an important interface between constitutional autonomy and environmental regulation.

Conclusion

The Meghalaya rat-hole mining issue demonstrates that **environmental governance cannot end with prohibition or suspension of mining**. Scientific mine closure, ecological restoration, worker rehabilitation and strict enforcement are equally important. A transparent, time-bound closure policy can help reconcile livelihood concerns with environmental and safety imperatives.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Rat-hole mining, acid mine drainage, mine closure, MMDR Act 1957, Environment Protection Act 1986, NGT, Sixth Schedule and Autonomous District Councils.
- **Mains GS-II:** Environmental governance, tribal administration, constitutional autonomy and Centre-State institutional coordination.
- **Mains GS-III:** Mining, environmental degradation, occupational safety, sustainable development and ecological restoration.

10. Government Quick Response Teams to Counter Fake Social Media Content

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Quick Response Teams (QRTs):** Government departments are constituting specialised **Quick Response Teams** to identify, verify and respond promptly to fake, misleading and false content circulating on social media. The initiative seeks to strengthen government communication in the digital environment.
- **Core Functions:** QRTs will continuously monitor social-media content concerning departmental policies, schemes, programmes, decisions and announcements. They are expected to scrutinise suspicious claims, coordinate internally and issue timely clarifications.
- **Countering Misinformation:** The initiative addresses the growing challenge of **misinformation, disinformation and misleading digital content**, which can undermine public trust, create panic and distort citizens' understanding of government policies.
- **Inter-Departmental Coordination:** Departments such as **Power, Agriculture and Commerce** have already constituted QRTs. The teams will also coordinate with the **PIB Fact Check Unit**, enabling verification and dissemination of factual information through official channels.
- **Constructive Digital Engagement:** The approach goes beyond merely removing false information. It emphasises timely public communication and constructive engagement so that citizens receive authoritative information before rumours gain wider circulation.
- **Governance Significance:** Effective digital communication has become an important component of **responsive and transparent governance**. However, fact-checking mechanisms must operate with



accuracy, institutional accountability and respect for constitutional freedoms, particularly freedom of speech and expression.

Essential Definitions

- **Misinformation:** False or inaccurate information shared without necessarily intending to cause harm.
- **Disinformation:** False or manipulated information deliberately created or circulated to deceive or cause harm.
- **Fake Content:** Fabricated, manipulated or deceptively presented information that misrepresents facts.
- **Fact-Checking:** The systematic process of verifying claims against reliable evidence and authoritative information.
- **Quick Response Team (QRT):** A specialised team designed to rapidly identify, assess, coordinate and respond to emerging information-related issues.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 19(1)(a):** Guarantees freedom of speech and expression, which also covers communication through digital platforms, subject to reasonable restrictions.
- **Article 19(2):** Permits reasonable restrictions on speech on specified grounds, including sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, public order, decency, morality and defamation.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Provides the principal statutory framework governing several aspects of electronic communication and cyber activities.
- **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:** Establish due-diligence and grievance-redressal obligations for intermediaries and provide a framework for digital content governance.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023:** Establishes a framework for processing digital personal data while seeking to balance data protection with legitimate uses of digital information.

Conclusion

The creation of QRTs reflects the growing importance of **real-time government communication in combating misinformation**. Their effectiveness will depend on rapid verification, credible evidence, transparent communication and coordination across departments, while ensuring that legitimate criticism and freedom of expression are not unnecessarily restricted.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** QRTs, misinformation, disinformation, PIB Fact Check Unit, IT Act 2000, IT Rules 2021, DPDP Act 2023, Articles 19(1)(a) and 19(2).
- **Mains GS-II:** E-governance, transparency, freedom of speech, digital communication and accountability.
- **Mains GS-III:** Cybersecurity, social-media governance, misinformation and emerging digital threats.