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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY MCQ'S

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 08/10/2026 (THURSDAY)

- **Static mcq's**
- **Current Affairs mcq's**
- **Mains Practice Questions**



9972258970 & 9740702455

#317/A SKB Arcade, D. Subbaiah Road,
Ramaswamy Circle, Mysuru-570004

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM STATIC PART

1. Consider the following statements regarding the Later Mauryan period:

1. The weakening of central authority after Ashoka contributed to the emergence of political fragmentation, but the Mauryan administrative framework did not disappear immediately with the decline of imperial power.
2. The succession of Ashoka by relatively weak rulers, by itself, adequately explains the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire, since regional, economic and administrative factors had no significant role in the process.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Both one and two
(d) Neither one nor two

Answer: (a) Only one

Explanation:

Statement 1 is **correct**. The decline of the Mauryan Empire was a gradual process rather than an instantaneous collapse. After Ashoka, the empire witnessed weakening central authority, succession difficulties and the growing autonomy of provincial and regional forces. The administrative machinery established under the Mauryas could not simply vanish overnight; rather, its effectiveness diminished as imperial control weakened.

Statement 2 is **incorrect**. This statement uses the word **"by itself"** and then completely excludes structural factors. The decline of the Mauryan Empire cannot be explained solely by the personality or weakness of post-Ashokan rulers. Factors such as:

- succession disputes,
- weakening of central control,
- provincial assertion of autonomy,
- administrative and fiscal pressures,
- the enormous geographical extent of the empire, and
- possible weakening of political cohesion

also need to be considered.

A particularly important analytical point is that **political decline and administrative disappearance are not identical processes**. A large empire can lose effective central authority while many of its institutions, administrative practices and political traditions continue to influence successor states.

The question therefore tests whether the aspirant falls into the **single-cause explanation trap**. UPSC may use words such as *"exclusively", "solely", "by itself"* to distinguish a broadly correct historical proposition from an excessively deterministic one.

2. Which one of the following best explains why a region may qualify as a biodiversity hotspot even though it does not necessarily contain the world's largest absolute number of species?

(a) Because hotspot identification depends primarily on the total number of species present, irrespective of their geographical restriction or habitat loss.
(b) Because the hotspot concept gives particular importance to high levels of **endemism combined with substantial loss of original habitat**, thereby identifying areas of exceptional conservation priority.
(c) Because every geographically isolated ecosystem with high species richness is automatically classified as a biodiversity hotspot.
(d) Because biodiversity hotspots are identified exclusively on the basis of the number of threatened animal species occurring in a region.

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

The concept of a **biodiversity hotspot** is fundamentally a **conservation-priority concept**, not merely a species-richness ranking.

A hotspot is characterised by two broad criteria:

1. **High endemism**, particularly of vascular plants; and
2. **Severe loss of original habitat**.

Thus, a region may not possess the greatest absolute species richness globally but may still be exceptionally important because it contains species found **nowhere else on Earth** while simultaneously facing substantial habitat destruction.

Option (a) is incorrect because species richness alone is insufficient.

Option (c) is incorrect because geographical isolation and species richness do not automatically make an area a hotspot.

Option (d) is incorrect because the hotspot framework is not based exclusively on threatened animal species; plant endemism and habitat loss are fundamental components.

The conceptual distinction is important:

Species-rich area ≠ necessarily biodiversity hotspot.

A hotspot attempts to identify areas where **irreplaceability and vulnerability intersect**. Consequently, conservation resources can be prioritised where the loss of habitat could result in disproportionate and irreversible biodiversity loss.

3. Consider the following statements regarding the Human Development Index (HDI):

1. A country can record an improvement in its HDI without experiencing a proportionate increase in its per capita income, provided that other dimensions of human development improve sufficiently.
2. HDI treats income as an end in itself and therefore measures the standard of living exclusively through national income rather than through education and health outcomes.
3. A higher HDI necessarily means that the country has achieved an equitable distribution of income and has eliminated multidimensional deprivation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Answer: (a) Only one

Explanation:

Statement 1 is **correct**.

HDI is a **composite measure** incorporating three broad dimensions:

- a long and healthy life,
- knowledge/education, and
- a decent standard of living.

Therefore, improvement in education and health outcomes can contribute to an improvement in HDI even if income growth is relatively modest.

Statement 2 is **incorrect**.

This is a classic conceptual trap. HDI was developed specifically to move beyond purely income-based measures of development. Income is included as one dimension, but HDI also incorporates indicators relating to **health and education**.

The underlying development perspective is that **income provides the means to achieve well-being but is not identical to well-being itself**.

Statement 3 is also **incorrect**.

HDI is an average measure and does not directly reveal the distribution of development within a country. Two countries can have similar HDI values while exhibiting very different:

- income inequalities,
- gender disparities,
- regional disparities,
- access to services, and
- levels of multidimensional deprivation.

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This is why the broader human-development framework also uses measures such as the **Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)** and other complementary indicators.

The UPSC trap here is the word **"necessarily"**. A high average human-development outcome does not automatically imply equality.

Hence, the correct answer is **(a) Only one**.

4. Consider the following statements regarding the Attorney General of India:

1. The Attorney General is appointed by the President and must be qualified to be appointed as a Judge of the Supreme Court.
2. The Attorney General has a constitutional right to vote in either House of Parliament by virtue of possessing the right to speak and participate in parliamentary proceedings.
3. The Attorney General may take part in the proceedings of Parliament and its committees, but does not become a member of Parliament merely by virtue of holding the office.
4. Since the Attorney General is the highest law officer of the Union, every legal opinion given by the Attorney General is constitutionally binding on the Union Government.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) All four

Answer: (b) Only two

Explanation:

Statement 1 is **correct**.

Under **Article 76 of the Constitution**, the Attorney General of India is appointed by the President. The person must possess the qualifications necessary for appointment as a **Judge of the Supreme Court**. The Attorney General is the highest law officer of the Union.

Statement 2 is **incorrect**.

This is a highly important constitutional distinction.

The Attorney General has the **right to speak and take part in the proceedings of either House of Parliament**, as well as proceedings of joint sittings and parliamentary committees of which he may be named a member. However, the Attorney General **does not have the right to vote** merely by virtue of this constitutional position.

Thus:

Right to participate ≠ right to vote.

Statement 3 is **correct**.

The Attorney General is not automatically a Member of Parliament. Article 88 gives the Attorney General the right to participate in parliamentary proceedings without conferring voting rights.

Statement 4 is **incorrect**.

The Attorney General's legal advice is authoritative and constitutionally significant, but it should not be confused with a **judicial order or constitutionally binding adjudication**. The Attorney General is the government's principal legal adviser, but courts retain the ultimate constitutional authority to interpret the law.

The question therefore tests three distinctions:

- **constitutional office vs parliamentary membership;**

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- **right to speak vs right to vote; and**
- **legal advice vs binding judicial determination.**

Hence, only Statements 1 and 3 are correct.

5. Assertion – Reason type:

Assertion (A): Temperate cyclones generally move from west to east across the middle latitudes and are capable of producing significant changes in weather over a large area.

Reason I: They are commonly associated with the interaction of contrasting air masses along fronts, particularly where warm and cold air masses meet.

Reason II: Their eastward movement is related to the prevailing westerlies that dominate the middle latitudes.

Which one of the following is correct?

(a) Both Reason I and Reason II are correct, and both explain the Assertion
(b) Both Reason I and Reason II are correct, but only one of them explains the Assertion
(c) Reason I is correct, but Reason II is incorrect
(d) Reason I is incorrect, but Reason II is correct

Answer: (a)

Explanation:

The Assertion is **correct**.

Temperate cyclones, also called **mid-latitude or extratropical cyclones**, generally develop and move across the middle latitudes. They can influence very large areas and bring substantial changes in:

- temperature,
- pressure,
- cloud cover,
- wind direction,
- rainfall and snowfall.

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Reason I is correct and directly explains their formation.

Temperate cyclones are fundamentally associated with the interaction of contrasting air masses. Along a **front**, especially the polar front, warm and cold air masses interact. Instability along this boundary can initiate cyclonic development.

Therefore, the existence of contrasting air masses explains **why these cyclones develop**.

Reason II is also correct and explains their general direction of movement.

The middle latitudes are dominated by the **westerlies**, which generally move atmospheric systems from west towards east. Consequently, temperate cyclones generally travel eastward, although their actual trajectories can vary because of upper-air circulation, pressure patterns and topography.

Thus, the two reasons explain **different aspects of the Assertion**:

- Reason I → explains their **formation and frontal structure**.
- Reason II → explains their **general west-to-east movement**.

This distinction is crucial. The two reasons are not redundant; together they provide the atmospheric mechanism behind both the **origin and movement** of temperate cyclones.

Therefore, **(a)** is the correct answer.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. Consider the following statements regarding SLINEX-26:

1. It is a bilateral maritime exercise between India and Sri Lanka, and its present edition includes both harbour and sea phases aimed at enhancing operational interoperability.
2. Although hosted by India, the exercise is conducted under the operational command of the Southern Naval Command because its principal focus is maritime cooperation in the waters surrounding Sri Lanka.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Both one and two
(d) Neither one nor two

Answer: (a) Only one

Explanation:

Statement 1 is **correct**.

SLINEX is the bilateral maritime exercise between the **Indian Navy and Sri Lanka Navy**. SLINEX-26 is the **13th edition** and is being hosted by India at **Visakhapatnam**. The exercise follows a two-phase structure comprising a **Harbour Phase followed by a Sea Phase**. Its objectives include improving tactical communications, coordinated naval manoeuvres, maritime interdiction, search-and-rescue operations and broader interoperability.

Statement 2 is **incorrect**.

The trap lies in the command structure. SLINEX-26 is being conducted at Visakhapatnam under the operational command of the **Eastern Naval Command (ENC)** of the Indian Navy, not the Southern Naval Command.

The question is deliberately designed to exploit a geographical intuition: because Sri Lanka lies south of India and maritime cooperation involves the Indian Ocean, a candidate may automatically associate the exercise with the Southern Naval Command.

However, **location of the partner country ≠ command of the exercise**.

The exercise also goes beyond conventional naval manoeuvres. Its contemporary significance includes cooperation against **piracy, trafficking, irregular migration and other non-traditional maritime threats**, along with HADR cooperation. It is aligned with India's **SAGAR** and **MAHASAGAR** frameworks.

Therefore, only Statement 1 is correct.

2. With reference to the LPG biometric authentication framework, which one of the following is the most accurate interpretation?

(a) Biometric authentication is required for every LPG purchase, and failure to authenticate permanently prevents the consumer from obtaining a domestic LPG cylinder.
(b) Biometric authentication is primarily a condition for continuing to receive the government-regulated/subsidised benefit; an unverified consumer may still purchase LPG at the applicable non-subsidised market price.
(c) Biometric authentication transfers the responsibility of subsidy disbursement from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to UIDAI.
(d) Consumers who opt out of biometric authentication automatically lose their LPG connection and must obtain a new connection after fresh KYC verification.

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

The key distinction is between **access to LPG itself** and **eligibility for the subsidised/regulated benefit**.

From **1 October 2026**, biometric authentication becomes mandatory for eligibility for the LPG subsidy. However, an unverified consumer is **not necessarily prohibited from purchasing a cylinder**. The consumer can continue to purchase LPG but at the applicable **full/non-subsidised market price**.

Authentication can be completed through several channels, including:

- Oil Marketing Company mobile applications using **UIDAI face authentication**;
- during doorstep delivery; or
- at the local LPG distributorship.

There is also a **digital opt-out mechanism**, through which consumers unwilling to undergo biometric authentication can continue purchasing LPG at non-subsidised prices.

Hence, option (a) is too absolute because failure to authenticate does not mean that the consumer becomes completely unable to buy LPG.

Option (c) is incorrect because UIDAI authentication technology does not mean that UIDAI becomes the agency administering the LPG subsidy. The framework is administered by the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**.

Option (d) is also incorrect because opting out does not automatically terminate the LPG connection.

The deeper UPSC concept is **conditional welfare access**: authentication is being used to improve targeting and reduce leakages without completely denying access to the underlying commodity.

3. Consider the following statements regarding the East Sea, also widely known internationally as the Sea of Japan:

1. It is a semi-enclosed marginal sea of the western Pacific Ocean and is bordered by Japan, the Korean Peninsula and Russia.
2. Its relatively restricted water exchange with surrounding seas is partly associated with narrow connecting straits.
3. The sea is uniformly shallow because its semi-enclosed character prevents the formation of deep marine basins.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Answer: (b) Only two

Explanation:

Statement 1 is **correct**.

The East Sea/Sea of Japan is a **semi-enclosed marginal sea of the northwestern Pacific**. It lies between the Asian mainland and the Japanese archipelago and is bordered by **Japan, South Korea, North Korea and Russia**.

Statement 2 is **correct**.

One of its distinctive geographical characteristics is its relatively restricted connection with surrounding waters. It communicates through several relatively narrow and shallow straits, including the **Korea/Tsushima Strait, Tsugaru Strait, La Pérouse Strait and Tatar Strait**. These influence the exchange of water between the basin and neighbouring seas.

Statement 3 is **incorrect**.

This is the deliberate geographical inversion.

The East Sea is **not uniformly shallow**. In fact, it is a comparatively deep marine basin with an average depth of around **1,752 metres** and contains major deep basins including the **Japan Basin, Yamato Basin and Tsushima Basin**.

Its semi-enclosed character therefore does not imply shallowness.

Another important physical-geography feature is the interaction between **warm and cold currents**. The warm Tsushima Current encounters colder waters, contributing to productive frontal zones. The sea also contains a distinct cold, oxygen-rich deep-water mass.

Thus, the correct combination is Statements **1 and 2 only**.

The UPSC trap is the assumption:

Semi-enclosed sea = shallow sea.

This is not universally valid. Basin morphology, tectonic history and depth structure must be considered independently of the degree of enclosure.

4. Consider the following statements:

1. Tulu belongs to the Southern Dravidian linguistic group and is treated in the Census framework as a distinct non-scheduled language rather than merely a dialect of Kannada.
2. The historical Tigalari script is associated with Tulu's manuscript tradition, while contemporary written and administrative usage has also involved the Kannada script.
3. Granting a language administrative recognition by a State automatically places that language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Answer: (b) Only two

Explanation:

Statement 1 is **correct**.

Tulu is a **Southern Dravidian language** predominantly associated with the cultural region of **Tulu Nadu**, covering primarily Dakshina Kannada and Udupi in Karnataka and extending into northern Kasaragod in Kerala. The source identifies it as a distinct **non-scheduled language**, rather than simply a dialect of Kannada.

Statement 2 is **correct**.

Tulu has a significant historical script tradition associated with **Tigalari**, which has been used for manuscripts in Tulu and Sanskrit. In modern usage, Kannada has also become important for written and administrative communication involving Tulu.

This is an important cultural distinction:

Language identity and script identity are not necessarily identical.

A language may have a historical indigenous script while also using another script extensively in contemporary administration or publishing.

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Statement 3 is **incorrect**.

This is the constitutional trap.

Recognition or administrative use of a language by a **State** does not automatically place that language in the **Eighth Schedule** of the Constitution.

The Eighth Schedule concerns constitutionally recognised scheduled languages, while **Article 345** empowers a State Legislature to adopt one or more languages used in the State, or Hindi, for the official purposes of the State.

Furthermore, the source notes an important procedural nuance: Karnataka's existing Official Language Act recognises Kannada as the State's official language, so giving Tulu comparable statutory official-language status would require appropriate **legislative action**, not merely a Cabinet decision.

Therefore, only Statements 1 and 2 are correct.

5. Consider the following statements regarding the Houthis:

1. The Houthis emerged from the Zaidi Shia milieu of northern Yemen and are also known as Ansar Allah.
2. Their strategic relevance is partly derived from Yemen's location along the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb maritime gateway.
3. The Houthis originated as a maritime trading community controlling the principal ports on the southern Arabian coast before becoming a political-military movement.
4. Their geographical significance is confined largely to Yemen's internal politics because Yemen's position does not directly affect major international maritime routes.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) All four

Answer: (b) Only two

Explanation:

Statement 1 is **correct**.

The Houthis, officially known as **Ansar Allah**, emerged from the **Zaidi Shia** milieu of northern Yemen. Their origins lie in a religious-cultural revivalist movement that developed into a political and military organisation. They subsequently became a major de facto governing and military force in northern Yemen.

Statement 2 is **correct**.

Their strategic significance cannot be understood only through Yemeni domestic politics. Yemen occupies a highly important position around the **Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait**, one of the world's major maritime chokepoints connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and, ultimately, the wider Indian Ocean.

Consequently, instability involving actors controlling or operating along Yemen's Red Sea coast can have consequences for:

- maritime trade,
- shipping security,
- energy transportation,
- insurance costs,
- naval deployments, and
- global supply chains.

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Statement 3 is **incorrect**.

The Houthis did not originate as a maritime trading community controlling southern Arabian ports. Their origins lie in **northern Yemen's Zaidi religious and political environment**. Insights IAS

Statement 4 is also **incorrect**.

It is precisely Yemen's geographical position that gives the Houthi issue international significance. The **Bab el-Mandeb** connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, making developments there relevant to global maritime commerce.

The source specifically reports Houthi military advances along Yemen's Red Sea coast, including **Mayun (Perim) Island** in the Bab el-Mandeb and the port of **Mokha**. Insights IAS

Thus, Statements **1 and 2 only** are correct.

6. Map-Based Question

A mountain system is being considered with reference to the following geographical clues:

1. It forms one of the major mountain systems of **Central Asia**.
2. It extends across territories associated with **China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan**, with its broader regional system also linked to other Central Asian states.
3. It is closely associated geographically with the **Taklamakan Basin** and the broader interior drainage systems of Central Asia.
4. Its western extensions form an important physical-geographical transition toward the mountain systems of Central Asia.

Which one of the following mountain ranges best fits the description?

(a) Tian Shan
(b) Kunlun
(c) Altai
(d) Hindu Kush

Answer: (a) Tian Shan

Explanation:

The correct answer is **Tian Shan**.

The **Tian Shan**, meaning "Mountains of Heaven," is one of the major mountain systems of Central Asia. It extends broadly across **China and Central Asian countries including Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan**, with the mountain system forming a major component of the physical geography of the region.

Its geographical importance becomes clearer when considered in relation to neighbouring physiographic units.

The **Tarim Basin and Taklamakan Desert** lie to the south of major Tian Shan ranges in Xinjiang, while other Central Asian mountain systems and basins surround its western and northern sectors.

Why are the other options incorrect?

Kunlun — (b):
The Kunlun Mountains lie predominantly along the northern margin of the **Tibetan Plateau** and form an important barrier between the Tibetan region and the Tarim Basin. Although geographically close to the Tian Shan, they are a distinct mountain system.

Altai — (c):
The Altai Mountains lie farther to the north and form a major mountain system around the convergence of

China, Mongolia, Russia and Kazakhstan. They are not the principal mountain range associated with the southern margin of the Central Asian interior around the Tarim Basin.

Hindu Kush — (d):
The Hindu Kush is principally associated with **Afghanistan and northern Pakistan**, extending toward Central Asia, but it is geographically distinct from the Tian Shan.

A useful mental map for UPSC is:

Tian Shan → north of Tarim Basin/Taklamakan → Central Asia

while

Kunlun → south of Tarim Basin → northern Tibetan Plateau.

This distinction is particularly important because both Tian Shan and Kunlun occur around the **Xinjiang–Central Asian–Tibetan transition zone**, making them frequent map-based traps.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

GS Paper I — Art & Culture

Q1. "The evolution of Indian temple architecture demonstrates that cultural traditions are not static inheritances but continuously evolving systems shaped by technology, patronage, geography and interaction between different regions." Examine with suitable examples.
(15 Marks, 250 Words)

Sample Answer

Indian temple architecture is often classified into **Nagara, Dravida and Vesara** traditions. However, these categories should not be understood as rigid compartments. The architectural history of India reveals continuous experimentation, adaptation and interaction among regional traditions.

Architecture as an evolving cultural system

The **Nagara tradition** developed predominantly in northern India and is characterised broadly by a curvilinear *shikhara* over the sanctum. The temples of **Khajuraho**, particularly the Kandariya Mahadeva temple, illustrate the elaboration of this form through increasingly complex vertical compositions.

The **Dravida tradition**, dominant in southern India, developed the pyramidal *vimana*, enclosed temple complexes and monumental gateways. The **Brihadisvara Temple at Thanjavur**, built under the Cholas, demonstrates how architectural form became an expression of royal authority, religious patronage and technological capability.

The **Deccan**, however, demonstrates why rigid classification can be misleading. Temples at **Pattadakal** reveal interaction between northern and southern architectural forms. This illustrates how cultural boundaries were porous rather than impermeable.

Factors shaping architectural evolution

First, geography:
Availability of stone, climatic conditions and regional construction traditions influenced architectural forms. The material possibilities of the Deccan, for instance, facilitated distinctive experimentation.

Second, political patronage:
Temples became instruments through which rulers projected legitimacy. The scale of Chola temples demonstrates the relationship between political power, religious patronage and monumental construction.

Third, technological advancement:
Improved knowledge of stone cutting, structural engineering and spatial planning allowed increasingly ambitious structures.

Fourth, cultural interaction:
Architectural ideas travelled through political expansion, pilgrimage networks, artisans and merchant communities. Consequently, regional traditions borrowed, adapted and transformed external elements.

Fifth, changing ritual requirements:
The temple gradually evolved from a relatively focused sacred structure into an elaborate institutional complex containing mandapas, subsidiary shrines, corridors and gateways.

Critical dimension

Temple architecture therefore cannot be interpreted merely as religious construction. Temples were simultaneously:

- centres of ritual;
- institutions of patronage;
- employers of artisans;
- repositories of artistic traditions;
- centres of economic activity; and
- symbols of political sovereignty.

Conclusion

Indian temple architecture demonstrates the principle of **"continuity through adaptation."** Its regional diversity is not evidence of fragmentation but of a civilisation capable of absorbing new influences while preserving core traditions. Hence, Indian architectural history is better understood as a **dynamic dialogue between tradition, technology, geography and political power**, rather than as a sequence of isolated architectural styles.

GS Paper II — India and BRICS

Q2. "For India, BRICS is simultaneously an instrument of Global South diplomacy, a platform for economic cooperation and a means of influencing the emerging multipolar order; yet its internal diversity limits its ability to become a coherent geopolitical bloc." Critically examine.
(15 Marks, 250 Words)

Sample Answer

BRICS has evolved from an economic grouping of emerging economies into an important platform for discussions on **global governance, development finance and the voice of the Global South**. For India, its importance extends beyond economics.

BRICS as an instrument of India's strategic diplomacy

First, BRICS enables India to advocate **reform of global institutions**. Existing institutions such as the UN Security Council, IMF and World Bank reflect an international order substantially shaped by the geopolitical realities of the twentieth century. India's participation in BRICS strengthens its argument for greater representation of developing and emerging economies.

Second, BRICS provides India with a platform for **Global South diplomacy**. It enables New Delhi to articulate concerns involving development finance, technology access, food and energy security and greater equity in global decision-making.

Third, the **New Development Bank** represents an alternative source of development finance and demonstrates the possibility of strengthening institutions outside traditional Western-led financial architecture.

Economic significance

BRICS can expand:

- trade and investment;
- development financing;
- local-currency and payment-system discussions;
- infrastructure cooperation;
- technology collaboration; and
- energy cooperation.

For India, greater economic engagement with emerging economies can diversify external economic relationships.

Strategic significance

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BRICS also gives India diplomatic space in a world increasingly characterised by **multipolarity**.

However, India does not view BRICS as an alliance comparable to NATO.

Its membership includes states with significantly different political systems, economic interests and geopolitical priorities. India has simultaneously deepened relationships with the **United States, Europe, Japan, Australia and other partners** through arrangements such as the Quad.

Consequently, India seeks **strategic autonomy rather than bloc politics**.

Major limitations

The internal diversity of BRICS creates serious constraints.

China and India have unresolved strategic tensions. Russia's confrontation with the West has also created geopolitical divisions within the grouping. Expanded membership further increases diversity of interests.

Moreover, economic complementarities do not automatically translate into political consensus.

Therefore, BRICS is unlikely to function as a tightly integrated geopolitical alliance. Its greater utility lies in **issue-based cooperation and institutional reform**.

Conclusion

For India, BRICS is best understood as a **platform rather than a bloc**. Its value lies in expanding India's diplomatic options, strengthening the voice of developing countries and promoting a more representative global order, while India's simultaneous engagement with Western and Indo-Pacific institutions preserves strategic flexibility. This **multi-alignment with strategic autonomy** is likely to remain India's most practical approach to BRICS.

GS Paper III — AI vs Jobs

Q3. "The central economic question posed by Artificial Intelligence is not whether machines will replace humans, but whether productivity gains from AI will generate sufficient new tasks, occupations and incomes to compensate for labour displacement." Discuss in the Indian context. **(15 Marks, 250 Words)**

Sample Answer

Artificial Intelligence is fundamentally changing the relationship between **technology, labour and productivity**. The simplistic proposition that "AI will destroy jobs" overlooks the fact that AI generally affects **tasks within occupations**, rather than eliminating entire occupations instantaneously.

The ILO's refined assessment finds that roughly **one in four workers globally are in occupations with some degree of Generative AI exposure**, but most jobs are more likely to be transformed than completely eliminated because human inputs remain necessary.

Why AI can displace labour

AI can automate repetitive cognitive tasks involving:

- data processing;
- routine documentation;
- basic coding;
- customer support;
- translation;
- content generation; and
- certain analytical functions.

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This can reduce demand for some categories of labour, particularly where tasks are standardised and easily digitised.

The impact may be particularly significant for **entry-level white-collar employment**, because young workers often perform routine tasks that traditionally served as stepping stones into professional careers. Recent ILO research highlights risks to employment opportunities for younger workers and possible deterioration in job quality even where large-scale displacement remains limited.

Why AI can create employment

Technology also creates new tasks.

AI requires:

- data specialists;
- AI engineers;
- model evaluators;
- cybersecurity professionals;
- AI governance experts;
- domain-specific AI trainers; and
- professionals capable of integrating AI into existing workflows.

More importantly, AI can increase worker productivity. If lower production costs stimulate demand, firms may expand output, creating employment elsewhere.

The Indian dimension

India faces a distinctive challenge because of its enormous young workforce and large services sector.

The opportunity lies in using AI to move from **labour arbitrage to productivity arbitrage**. Indian firms can use AI to increase the sophistication of IT services, healthcare, education, financial services and manufacturing.

However, the transition may widen inequality between workers who possess digital and cognitive skills and those who do not.

Therefore, policy must focus on:

1. AI and digital literacy;
2. large-scale reskilling;
3. apprenticeship-based learning;
4. industry-linked higher education;
5. social-security mechanisms for displaced workers;
6. strengthening foundational education; and
7. ensuring affordable digital infrastructure.

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The ILO's recent work also emphasises that AI adoption is increasing demand for **cognitive, socio-emotional, digital and AI-related skills**, making adaptability increasingly important.

Conclusion

AI should therefore be viewed neither as an inevitable **job destroyer** nor as an automatic **job creator**. Its ultimate employment impact depends upon institutions, skill formation, investment, demand conditions and distribution of productivity gains.

For India, the objective should be **"AI augmentation before AI substitution"**—using technology to raise the productivity and capabilities of workers while preparing those whose tasks become obsolete for new forms of employment.

4. GS Paper IV — Ethics

Q4. A district administration introduces an AI-based system to identify beneficiaries who may be receiving welfare benefits fraudulently. The system substantially improves detection of irregularities. However, an internal audit reveals that it disproportionately flags applications from certain economically backward communities because historical administrative data used to train the system contained structural biases.

The District Magistrate is asked to continue using the system because discontinuing it could result in significant leakage of public funds.

(a) Identify the ethical dilemmas involved.
(b) What ethical principles should guide the District Magistrate?
(c) Suggest a course of action that balances efficiency, fairness and accountability.
(20 Marks, 300 Words)

Sample Answer

The case represents a conflict between **administrative efficiency and distributive justice**, intensified by the opacity and potential bias of algorithmic decision-making.

Ethical dilemmas

1. Efficiency vs fairness:
The AI system improves detection of fraudulent claims, thereby protecting public resources. However, systematic bias may cause deserving citizens to be wrongly excluded.

2. Equality vs historical discrimination:
If historical administrative data contains structural discrimination, an algorithm trained on that data can reproduce or amplify existing inequalities.

3. Transparency vs technological complexity:
Citizens may be unable to understand why their applications were flagged.

4. Accountability:
A crucial ethical question arises: who is responsible when an algorithm produces an unjust outcome—the software developer, department, officer or institution?

5. Public interest vs individual rights:
Preventing leakage serves the public interest, but cannot justify arbitrary denial of legitimate welfare entitlements.

Ethical principles required

The District Magistrate should rely upon:

- **justice and fairness**;
- **non-discrimination**;

- **transparency**;
- **accountability**;
- **compassion**;
- **objectivity**; and
- **respect for human dignity**.

Administrative efficiency is an ethical value, but it cannot override fundamental fairness.

Course of action

I would **not immediately discontinue the system**, because doing so would eliminate a potentially valuable anti-fraud mechanism. Nor would I permit it to make final decisions autonomously.

Instead, I would adopt a **human-in-the-loop model**.

First, conduct an independent **algorithmic bias audit** to identify whether particular communities are disproportionately flagged and whether the disparity has legitimate explanatory variables.

Second, classify the AI output as a **risk indicator rather than proof of fraud**. No beneficiary should lose entitlement solely because an algorithm has generated a high-risk score.

Third, introduce a transparent **human review and appeal mechanism**.

Fourth, anonymised statistical monitoring should continuously measure false positives across social and geographical groups.

Fifth, the training dataset should be improved by correcting historical biases, and the algorithm should be periodically revalidated.

Finally, the administration should publish basic information about the system's purpose, safeguards and grievance-redress mechanism without compromising cybersecurity or personal privacy.

Conclusion

The ethical principle should be:

Technology may assist administrative judgment, but it should not replace institutional responsibility.

A welfare state cannot justify excluding genuine beneficiaries merely because an algorithm is statistically efficient. The appropriate approach is therefore **responsible AI—combining technological efficiency with human oversight, procedural fairness, transparency and accountability**.

Current Affairs — GS Paper III

Q5. The WMO's State of Global Water Resources 2025 Report highlights declining terrestrial water storage, persistent groundwater depletion, abnormal river flows and continuing glacier mass loss.

"India's water crisis is increasingly becoming a problem of managing variability and ecological buffers rather than merely a problem of physical water scarcity." Discuss.
(15 Marks, 250 Words)

Sample Answer

The **State of Global Water Resources 2025**, published by the World Meteorological Organization, presents water security increasingly as a problem of **variability, declining natural storage and weakening hydrological buffers**. The report states that 2025 was one of the driest years for global river discharge in 35 years, while terrestrial water storage has shown a persistent decline since around 2014–16.

For India, this has particularly serious implications because agriculture, drinking water and industry remain heavily dependent upon groundwater and seasonal river flows.

From scarcity to variability

India does not simply face a shortage of water. It faces the paradox of **simultaneous floods and droughts**.

Monsoon rainfall is highly seasonal and spatially uneven. Increasing climatic variability can produce intense rainfall over short periods while leaving insufficient water stored for the dry season.

Thus, the policy problem is shifting from:

“How much water falls?”

to:

“How much water can be safely stored, recharged and made available when required?”

Groundwater as a hidden buffer

Groundwater has traditionally acted as a natural buffer against rainfall variability.

However, persistent extraction—particularly for irrigation—can convert a temporary meteorological drought into a prolonged hydrological crisis.

The WMO report identifies persistent groundwater deficits in parts of India during 2022–25, with northwestern India among areas experiencing widespread below-normal to much-below-normal groundwater conditions.

This creates a vicious cycle:

groundwater depletion → greater irrigation vulnerability → higher extraction during drought → further depletion.

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Glacier and snow dependence

The Himalayan cryosphere represents another important natural buffer.

Glaciers regulate seasonal flows in Himalayan river systems. Their retreat can initially increase meltwater availability in some circumstances but ultimately reduces long-term storage once glacier mass declines sufficiently.

Globally, glaciers lost approximately **408 ±132 gigatonnes of mass in 2025**, marking the fourth consecutive year in which every major glaciated region recorded net ice loss.

This has implications for India's long-term water security.

Need for a new water-management paradigm

India therefore requires a shift from **supply augmentation alone to integrated water-resource management**.

Key measures include:

- aquifer mapping and managed aquifer recharge;
- crop diversification away from highly water-intensive crops in stressed regions;
- micro-irrigation;
- wastewater treatment and reuse;
- restoration of wetlands;
- watershed development;
- urban rainwater harvesting;
- real-time hydrological monitoring;
- glacier and snow observation; and
- stronger river-basin institutions.

The WMO also stresses the importance of **shared data, shared standards and shared early warning systems**, particularly because river basins and glaciers frequently transcend political boundaries.

Conclusion

India's emerging water challenge is therefore not simply **"too little water"**. It is a combination of **high variability, over-extraction, declining natural storage and inadequate institutional coordination**.

The policy objective should be to rebuild the hydrological "savings account" through groundwater recharge, ecological restoration and demand management. In this sense, India's water security will depend less on continuously finding **new sources of water** and more on **protecting and efficiently managing the natural buffers that already exist**.

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