

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

30th December 2025



India – New Zealand Free Trade Agreement



30th December 2025

CONTEXT: The recent free trade agreement between India – New Zealand is in line with the India's stance for leveraging its position and promoting realignments through bilateral engagements and FTAs.

India - New Zealand FTA

Market Access & Tariffs

- Zero duty on 100% of Indian exports to New Zealand
- India to liberalise tariffs on 95% of imports from New Zealand
- 57% of New Zealand products duty-free from Day One

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

- \$20 billion FDI commitment by New Zealand
- Investment timeline of 15 years with claw back mechanism
- FDI across 118 sectors

Services & Skill Mobility

- · Focus on skill mobility and services trade
- Opportunities in IT, engineering, healthcare, education, construction
- Support for Indian chefs, yoga instructors, music teachers

Traditional Knowledge & Soft Power

- First-ever provision for Ayurveda, Yoga, and traditional medicine
- · Boost to India's soft power diplomacy

Youth, Students & Professionals

- Easier mobility for youth, students, and professionals
- Work permits up to 20 hours per week during studies
- Extended post-study work visas

MSMEs & Employment Generation

- Support to labour-intensive sectors -Benefits MSMEs in textiles, leather, footwear, gems & jewellery, engineering goods.
- Boost to processed food exports Expands India's Agri-export footprint.



- 1. Strategic Realignment of Trade Partners
- 2. FTAs as Flexible Platforms (Beyond WTO)
- 3. Alignment with Domestic Development Goals
- 4. Learning from the Past Failures
- 5. Geopolitical and Strategic Considerations
- 6. Response to U.S. Trade Uncertainty
- 7. Slow Progress in Indo-U.S. Trade Talks
- 8. Improving India's Investment Image

Status

- Diplomatic and Strategic Engagement –
 Democratic values, Rule of Law , Free open and rule based Indo Pacific
- Trade and Commerce Growing at modest pace
- People-to-People and Diaspora Linkages Cultural and socio-economic bridge



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Scope India- New Zealand Bi-lateral Trade □ Economic and Commercial Potential New Zealand is India's second largest □ Strategic and Regional Imperatives trading partner in OCEANIA □ Educational and Cultural Bridges Environmental sustainability Challenges: □ Tariff Asymmetries Merchandise Merchandise Trade **Export** ☐ Trade volume is small and uneven □ Agricultural Sensitivities **USD 1.3 billion USD 711 million** Domestic Political Pressures (2024-25)(2024-25)□ Geopolitical Competition

Export USD 634 million (2024)49% 1 (Over the year) 32% **1** (Over the year) 13% 🕇 (Over the year) **Way Forward:** ☐ Learn from past FTAs with limited gains: Earlier trade agreements delivered modest outcomes; lessons must guide India-NZ implementation. trade pact Strengthen domestic competitiveness -Indian industry must become cost-efficient India-NZ goods trade India's key exports and productivity-driven to benefit from the ■Export ■ Import Apr-Oct FY26 FTA. Product \$ million

Meet global standards and quality norms -Compliance with international benchmarks is essential for export acceptance. ☐ Ensure robust Rules of Origin (RoO) -Prevent misuse of the FTA through third-country routing of goods. Clearly define anti-dumping safeguards Protect domestic industries from unfairly FTA aim cheap imports. Promote trade flows. □ Protect sensitive sectors and MSMEs investment linkages Calibrated safeguards are needed to shield Strengthen Address goods vulnerable industries while integrating supply market access chain Resolve tariff. globally. resilience Align domestic sectors with global markets

- Reforms should prepare industries for

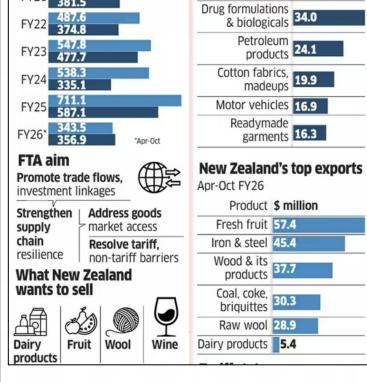
international competition, not isolation.

Development (R&D) - Innovation and

improving quality and competitiveness.

☐ Increase investment in Research &

technology upgradation are key to





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- Focus on long-term export capability, not short-term tariff gains - Sustainable trade success depends on structural improvements at home.
- Leveraging Multilateral and Quad Frameworks - India and New Zealand can synergise their cooperation within broader multilateral forums (e.g., WTO, IORA) and regional architectures to amplify impact on global trade and security

Mains Practice Question

Q. Free trade agreements are the new go to mechanism in India's goal to become global economic hub. Discuss the statement while analyzing the recently concluded India – New Zealand free trade agreement.

(250 words, 15 Marks)



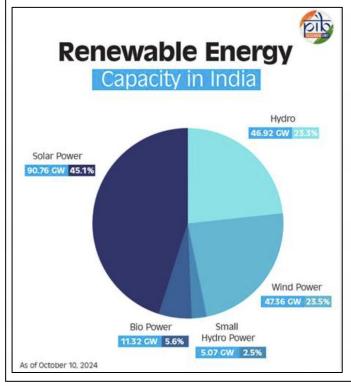
Tapping India's Clean Energy Potential

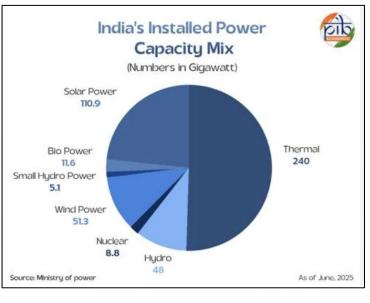


30th December 2025

CONTEXT: India's clean energy transition shows strong momentum in solar manufacturing and investment, but faces bottlenecks in upstream supply chains, grid infrastructure, financial stability, and green hydrogen viability.

India's Goal India's road to 'net zero' by 2070 Key overall targets Reducing emission intensity of GDP by 45% by 2030, compared to 2005 level. Renewables > Raising the share of non-fossil fuel based generation capacity to 50% by 2030. **Electric Vehicles** Increasing carbon sink coverage by 2.5-3.0bn tonnes of CO2 equivalent, by 2030. Reduce projected carbon emissions by 1 bn Green Hydrogen tonnes from 2021 till 2030. Key initiative specific targets **Biofuel** 5000 20% 500GW Carbon Capture MMTPA CBG & Storage plants with green Ho Carbon Credit ethanol renewables blending target targeted by production production Trading by 2025 2030 target of target by 15MMTPA by 2030 2023-24





Tapping India's Clean Energy Potential



30th December 2025

CONTEXT: India's clean energy transition shows strong momentum in solar manufacturing and investment, but faces bottlenecks in upstream supply chains, grid infrastructure, financial stability, and green hydrogen viability.

Positive Momentum – In clean energy Transition

Reduction in Dependence on Chinese Imports (solar modules and cells)

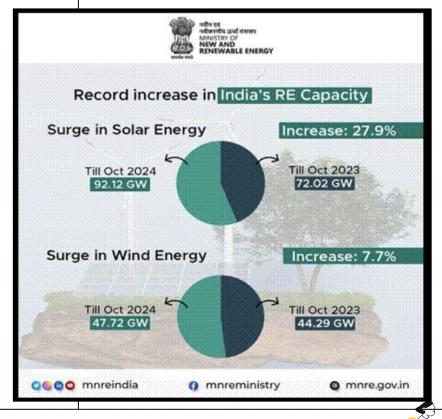
- In 2024, Indian firms added 25.3 GW of module manufacturing capacity, nearly doubling national capacity.
 Move Towards Higher-Value Technology
- Adoption of TOPCon (Tunnel Oxide Passivated Contact) solar cells.

Strong Investment Momentum

- \$3.4 billion FDI in clean energy in first 9 months of FY 2025.
- Accounts for over 80% of total power-sector FDI.
- Competitive bidding making renewables among the cheapest power sources.
 Drivers of Investor Interest
- □ Large-scale demand
- Clear government commitment to clean energy
- ☐ Long-term growth potential

Challenges - Clean Energy Transition

- 1. Land Availability and Local Opposition
- 2. Intermittency and Grid Balancing Issues
- 3. Inadequate Transmission and Storage Infrastructure
- 4. Financial Stress and Contract renegotiations
- 5. Weak Domestic Supply Chains for Critical Minerals
- 6. Limited Upstream Manufacturing and Recycling Ecosystem
- 7. DISCOM Resistance to Decentralised Energy
- 8. Socio-Economic Impact on Coal-Dependent Regions
- 9. Logistical and Institutional Bottlenecks
- 10. Chicken and Egg dilemma



Tapping India's Clean Energy Potential



30th December 2025

CONTEXT: India's clean energy transition shows strong momentum in solar manufacturing and investment, but faces bottlenecks in upstream supply chains, grid infrastructure, financial stability, and green hydrogen viability.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen Manufacturing Ecosystem
- Focus on polysilicon and wafer manufacturing
- Deepen domestic value chains
- Ensure Contractual Sanctity
- Enforce PPAs strictly
- Avoid retrospective policy changes
- Expand Transmission in Parallel
- Generation and transmission planning must be synchronised
- · Clear compensation framework for curtailment

Challenge / Area	Way Forward / Actions
Land Availability & Social Acceptance	Use wastelands, rooftops, agrivoltaics; ensure local employment & revenue sharing
Grid & Transmission Constraints	Align transmission with generation; reduce curtailment; improve forecasting
Energy Storage & Round-the-Clock Power	Promote battery & pumped storage for intermittency management
Financial Stress of DISCOMs	Improve payment discipline; reduce political interference
Domestic Manufacturing & Mineral Security	Develop upstream supply chains; reduce import dependence
Recycling & Circular Economy	Develop solar/battery recycling and waste management
Socio-Economic Transition for Coal Regions	Reskill workforce; diversify regional economy
Address the Dilemma	Scale up production; create assured demand

Mains Practice Question

Q. "Examine the key challenges facing India's clean energy transition. Suggest measures, including government schemes and institutional mechanisms, to overcome these challenges." (15 marks / 250 words)



Nations Flag Indian Rabies Vaccine



30th December 2025

SYLLABUS: G.S. 2: Health

Newspaper: Indian Express Page No: 9

Decoding The news

THE AUSTRALIAN health department recently urged citizens who may have received a rabies shot in India to check if they needed additional replacement doses. The UK and the US also released advisories.

The messages stem from concerns about potentially counterfeit batches of the vaccine Abhayrab — manufactured by the Human Biologicals Institute, a key division of the PSU Indian Immunologicals — circulating in India since 2023.

This raised an alarm because rabies, once it develops, is nearly 100% fatal. The viral infection is transmitted through the saliva of infected animals, leading to symptoms ranging from fever and nausea to excessive salivation, hallucinations, and partial paralysis. However, post-exposure vaccination can prevent it.

The WHO estimates that India accounts for nearly 36% of global rabies deaths.

An expert who was aware of the matter said the products were "seized and tested, including in the government's Central Drug Testing Laboratory in Kasauli, which tests all vaccines before they are released in the Indian market. The test report, in fact, found the vaccines to contain the genuine product. What this essentially means is that the outer package of the product was changed to divert the government supply to the open market."

Dr Sudarshan explained that the WHO vaccination schedule requires that people receive at least three doses of the intramuscular vaccine or two doses of the intradermal vaccine with an immunoglobulin given on the day of the animal bite. For those immunised previously, only two booster doses are needed.

Dr Sudarshan said, "In rare cases, rabies might happen despite vaccination if the wound has not been cleaned properly and on time. If the bite happens in a nerve-rich area and sends the virus directly into the nervous system, the infection may occur."



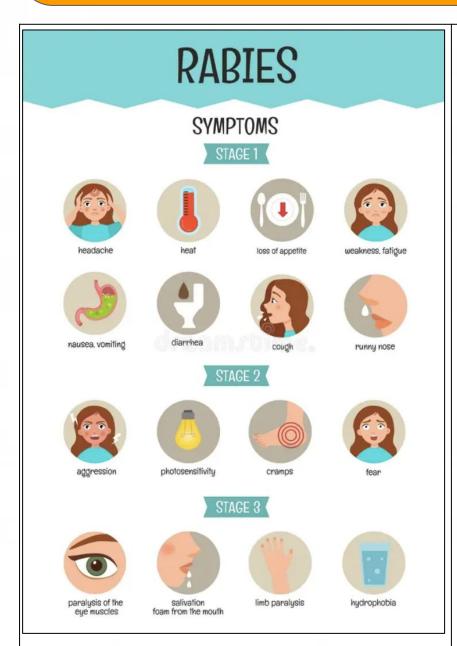
Nations Flag Indian Rabies Vaccine



30th December 2025

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Newspaper: Indian Express Page No: 9



Rabies

- Rabies is a vaccine-preventable, zoonotic, viral disease.
- It is caused by the Rabies virus (RABV) which affects the central nervous system.
- Rabies infects mammals, including dogs, cats, livestock and wildlife.
- Transmission: Via saliva, usually through bites, scratches, or direct contact with mucosa (e.g. eyes, mouth, or open wounds).
- Two forms:
- Furious rabies: It is characterized by hyperactivity and hallucinations.
- Paralytic rabies: It is characterized by paralysis and coma



INSV Kaundinya



30th December 2025

SYLLABUS: Prelims: Recent developments (History)

Newspaper: The Hindu Page No: 12

INSV Kaundinya

- Stitched sailing vessel built using traditional techniques Wooden planks are stitched together using coconut coir rope and sealed with natural resins
- Inspiration 5th century CE ship depicted in the paintings of Ajanta Caves
- Voyage Porbandar (Gujrat) Muscat (Oman)
- Tripartite agreement Ministry of Culture, the Indian Navy and Hodi Innovations
- Aim India's efforts to rediscover and revive indigenous knowledge systems.
- Significance in structure (element evoking the rich maritime traditions of ancient India.)
- The sails display motifs of the Gandabherunda and the Sun
- Bow bears a sculpted Simha Yali
- Symbolic **Harappan style stone anchor** adorns her deck, each
- Kaundinya The Indian mariner who sailed across the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia





55 Tiger Dead In MP this Year



30th December 2025

<u>SYLLABUS</u>: GS 3: Environment conservation

Newspaper: The Indian Express Page No: 07

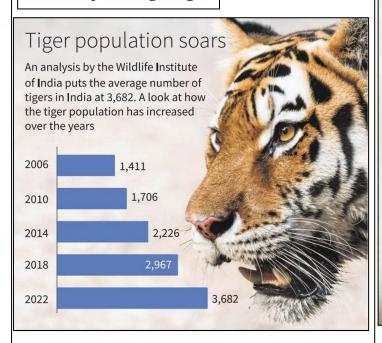
Decoding The news

ANOTHER TIGER death in Madhya Pradesh has brought the fatalities this year in the state to 55, the highest since Project Tiger was launched in 1973.

Last year saw 46 tiger deaths, while the preceding three years recorded 45, 43 and 34 big cat casualties respectively.

Officials estimate that 11 of the 55 tiger deaths this year were due to unnatural causes. Of these, an estimated eight were killed by electrocution, largely from illegal traps laid by villagers to protect crops from wild animals.

Forest department officials maintain that a majority of the deaths were due to natural causes and are a consequence of an expanding tiger population. According to senior officials, increased territorial conflicts, age-related mortality and disease are expected outcomes in a landscape with higher tiger



<u>Tiger</u>

- IUCN Endangered
- WLPA 1972 Schedule I
- CITES Appendix I

Project Tiger

- Launched 1973
- Type Centrally sponsored scheme
- Strategy 'Core- Buffer'
- Ministry Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate change
- Administered / Management National Tiger Conservation Authority.
- NTCA Statutory body- 2006 WLPA 1972





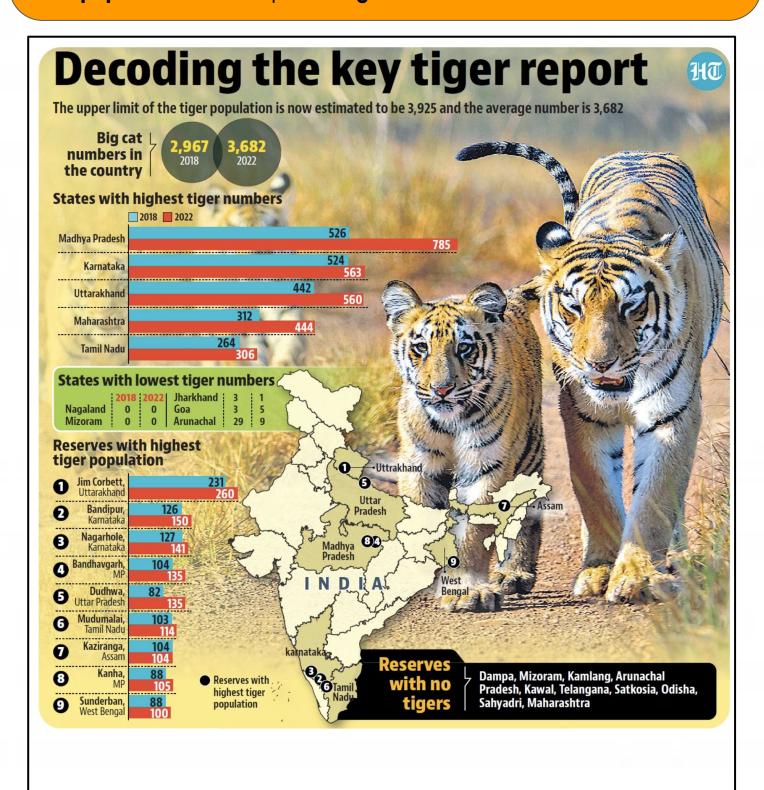
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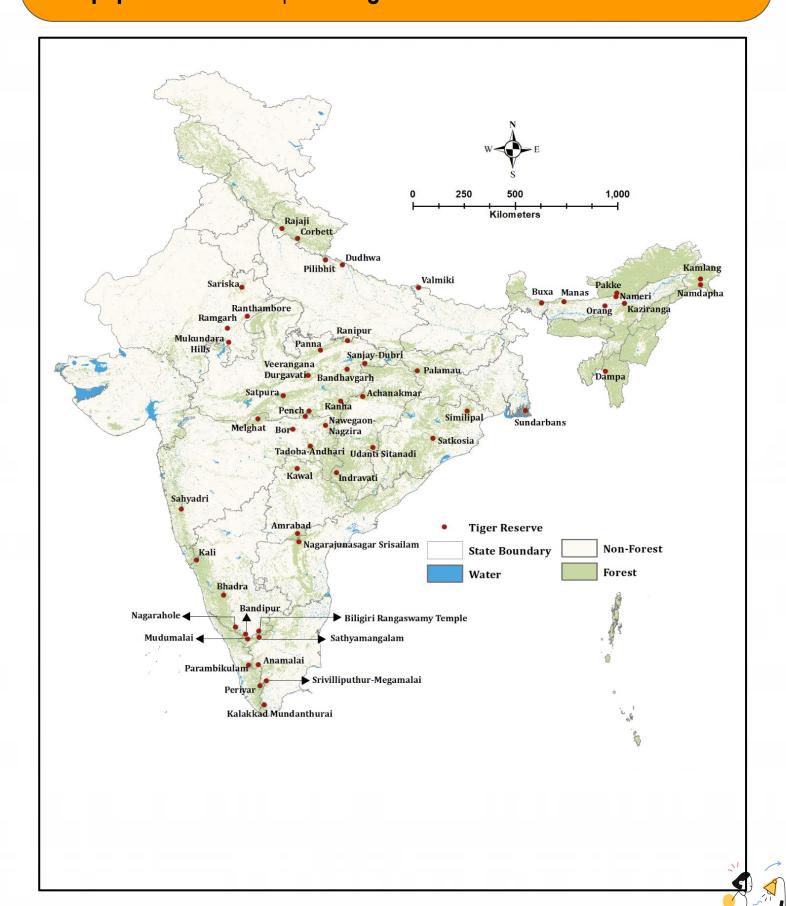
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30th December 2025

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55 Tiger Dead In MP this Year



30th December 2025

<u>SYLLABUS</u>: GS 3: Environment conservation Newspaper: The Indian Express Page No: 07

Tiger Reserve	District(s)	Major River(s) / Water Bodies
Kanha Tiger Reserve	Mandla, Balaghat	Seasonal Streams
Pench Tiger Reserve	Seoni (also extends into Chhindwara & Maharashtra)	Pench River
Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve	Katni/Shahdol areas)	Johilla River, Umrar River, Damnar River, Charanganga, other streams (drain toward Son River)
Satpura Tiger Reserve	Narmadapuram (Hoshangabad)	Tawa River (including Tawa Reservoir)
Panna Tiger Reserve	Panna (also Chhatarpur region)	Ken River
Sanjay-Dubri Tiger Reserve	Sidhi & Shahdol	Gopad, Banas, Mawai, Mahan, Kodmar, Umrari, etc.
Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve	Damoh & Sagar (also Narasinghpur region)	Durgavati streams / tributaries (no single major river documented)
Ratapani Tiger Reserve	Raisen & Sehore	Barna Reservoir / Barna basin (associated water bodies); Kolar Dam catchment
Madhav Tiger Reserve		Sind River (flows along eastern boundary)



SC stays 100 m Rule for Aravalli



30th December 2025

SYLLABUS: GS 3: Environmental Pollution and Degradation

Newspaper: The Indian express **Page No:** 01

Decoding The news

THE SUPREME Court Monday directed that its November 20, 2025 judgment, accepting the 100-metre height definition for the Aravalli hills as recommended by a government committee, "be kept in abeyance" until a high-powered panel of domain experts undertakes a comprehensive assessment of the committee's report.

<u> Aravalli Hills</u>

- One of the oldest fold mountain systems in the world
- Highly eroded Residual / relict mountain
- **Direction:** Southwest to Northeast
- States Covered
- 1) Gujarat
- 2) Rajasthan
- 3) Haryana
- 4) Delhi
 - Highest Peak Guru Shikhar; Height: 1,722
 m; Mount Abu, Rajasthan
 - Climatic Significance -
- Climatic divide: East: Semi-arid to sub-humid; West: Arid (Thar Desert)
- □ Barrier to south-west monsoon winds
- Economic & Mineral Importance
- Rich in metallic and non-metallic minerals: Copper (Khetri); Zinc, lead; Marble (Makrana)

The order succinctly placed issues of both inclusion and exclusion on the proposed HPEC's plate by asking it to:

Mark specific areas that fall within the scope of 100-metre height definition and analyse if sustainable or regulated mining in those areas — "notwithstanding regulatory oversight" — would have adverse ecological impact; and also mark specific hills that would not make the 100-metre cut and assess if such exclusions will lead to their "eventual erasure or degradation, thereby compromising the overall ecological integrity of the Aravalli range.

River	Flows Through	
Luni	Rajasthan → Rann of Kachchh	
Banas	Rajasthan → tributary of Chambal	
Sahibi	Rajasthan → Haryana → drains near Yamuna basin	
Sabarmati	Rajasthan → Gujarat → Arabian Sea	

Ecological Importance

- Prevents eastward expansion of Thar
 Desert
- Recharge zone for groundwater aquifers
- Hosts tropical dry deciduous forests
- Biodiversity hotspots: leopards, hyenas,
 bird species



CAT Quashes BrahMos DG appointment



30th December 2025

SYLLABUS: GS 2: Quasi Judicial Bodies

Newspaper: The Indian express Page No: 05

CAT's Hyderabad bench quashes BrahMos DG Joshi's appointment

Express News Service New Delhi, December 29

THE HYDERABAD bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) on Monday quashed the appointment of Jaiteerth R Joshi as Director General of the Indo-Russian venture BrahMos.

Setting aside the November 25, 2024, order appointing him, abench of Judicial Member Lata Baswaraj Patne and Administrative Member Varun Sindhu Kul Kaumudi, said "there is manifest arbitrariness in the decision of the respondents (Centre, Chairman DRDO and others) in appointing" him to the post.

The Tribunal said that "no

The Tribunal said that "no doubt, as per the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure)..., the Secretary DDR&D (Directorate of Defence Research and Development of the South Standard South Standard South Standard South South South Standard South So

The bench said,
"there is manifest
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Chairman DRDO
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appointing" him to
the post

opment) and Chairman DRDO can approve one of the names in the panel submitted by the Selection Committee for appointment to the position of Director General. However, it does not mean that the said authority can ignore the entire service record of the other scientists included in the panel".

It said, "the SOP also pro-

vides that, in exceptional circumstances, the Secretary DDR&D and Chairman DRDO may exercise his discretionary powers for the said appointment. But, in the instant case, no such exception has been shown to appoint the 5th respondent (Joshi) ignoring the candidature of the applicant. As held by the Hon'ble High Court of Andhra Pradesh (Govt of Andhra Pradesh (Govt of Andhra Pradesh v. P Gautam Kumar, IPS, 2012)...absolute discretion of power of an authority is inconsistent with the principles of Constitutional governance."

The decision came on a plea by Sivasubramaniam Nambi Naidu, a Distinguished Scientist, with DRDO, who was one of the three shortlisted for the position.

The order said Naidu "had completed a 6-year residency period by 2023 as Outstanding Scientist, having been appointed as Scientist (Grade) 'H' (this being one of the qualitative requirements for appointment as DG) in August 2017. Whereas, the 5th respondent did not complete the said residency period as Outstanding Scientist, as he was appointed as Scientist 'H' in July 2023... we are surprised to note the 5th respondent with only about one year experience as Scientist 'H' has been appointed to the post of DG Brahmos."

Tribunal noted that "though both the 5th respondent and the applicant have got equal marks of 80, the candidature of the applicant, being a Distinguished Scientist, would put him on a higher pedestal and we fail to understand how the 5th respondent, who is not eligible to become a Distinguished Scientist, has been preferred."

Central Administrative Tribunal

- Based on recommendations Law Commission (1958) and the Administrative Reforms Commission (1969)
- Established Article 323-A of the Indian Constitution - Administrative Tribunals Act of 1985
- Issues related Recruitment, service conditions, and grievances for over 215 central government bodies
- Composition: Chairperson,
 Vice-Chairperson, and Members,
 appointed by the President of India
- Selection committee Chief Justice of India or a nominee, a senior Supreme Court judge, and a Ministry representative

- Chairperson: Sitting or retired High Court judge, appointed for a five-year term or until reaching the age of 65
- Bench 19 principal benches Consist of one Judicial Member and one Administrative Member
- It operates on principles of natural justice, allowing flexibility
- Appeal High Courts
- It possesses High Court-like powers in contempt proceedings and can establish its own procedural rules
- Exclusion Armed forces personnel,
 Supreme Court
 employees, and Parliament staff



Daily Quiz



30th December 2025

Q 1. With reference to the proposed India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement, consider the following statements:

- India has agreed to provide zero-duty market access to all exports originating from New Zealand.
- New Zealand has committed to invest
 USD 20 billion in India over 15 years across
 118 sectors, with a claw-back mechanism.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Q2. With reference to India's commitments towards Net Zero emissions, consider the following statements:

- India has committed to achieving Net-Zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2070.
- India aims to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030, compared to the 2010 level.
- India aims to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent by 2040.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

Answer: a

Q3. With reference to Rabies, consider the following statements:

- Rabies is a vaccine-preventable, zoonotic viral disease that affects the central nervous system of mammals.
- 2. Rabies leads to hyperactivity and hallucinations in all infected individuals.

Which of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

Q4. With reference to Project Tiger, consider the following statements:

- 1. Project Tiger was launched in 1973 as a central sector scheme.
- 2. Project Tiger is administered by the National Tiger Conservation Authority .
- 3. The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body constituted in 2006 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All three
- d) None

Answer: a

Q5. Consider the following pairs

S.No.	Tiger Reserve	Major Rivers
1.	Kanha Tiger Reserve	Ken River
2.	Pench Tiger Reserve	Johilla River
3.	Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve	Charan Ganga River
4.	Satpura Tiger Reserve	Tawa River

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) Only Three
- d) All Four

Answer: b





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