



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

6th September 2025

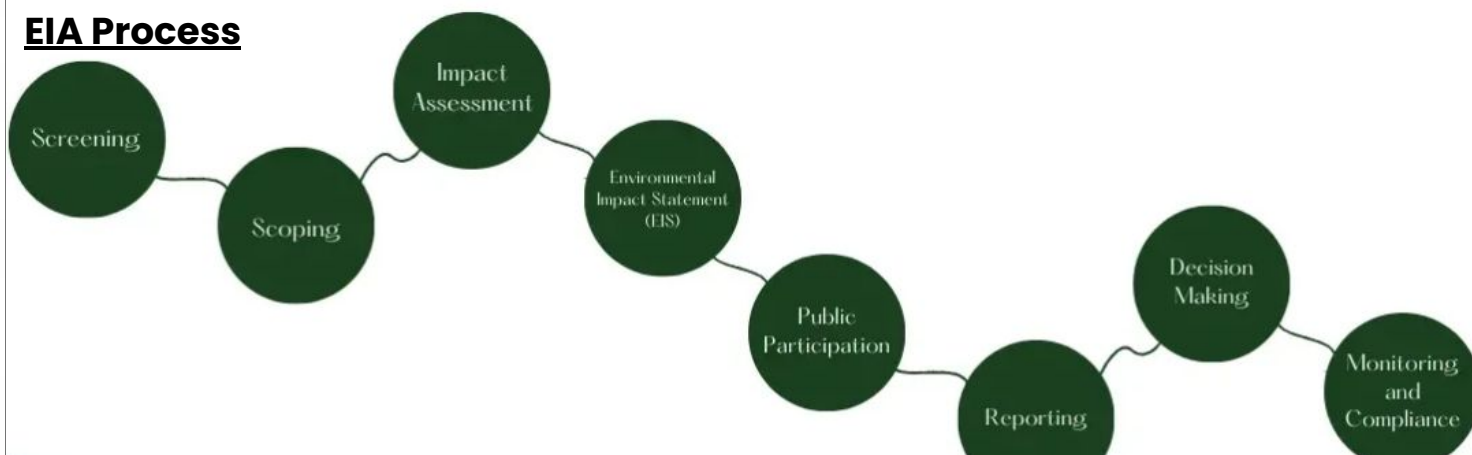


EIA & Environment Audit Rules

6th September, 2025

CONTEXT: Audit rules allow the monitoring to go beyond the remit of State Pollution Control Boards.

EIA Process



Impact of Constitution on EIA

- Initial Constitutional Gap
- 42nd Amendment (1976)
 - Article 48A
 - Article 51A(g)
- Expansive Judicial Interpretation
 - Article 21
- Balancing Rights: Article 19(1)(g)
- Implementation of International Law: Article 253
- Doctrines
 - Precautionary Principle
 - Sustainable Development
 - Public Trust Doctrine

EIA: Analysis of Regulations

EIA Notification 1994

- Mandated EC for listed projects
- Impact Assessment Agency
- Major Flaws (Govindarajan Committee):
 - Cumbersome & Slow
 - Poor Quality EIAs
 - Investment-based Criteria

Amendments to 1994 Notification

- Strengthening
 - a. Public Hearings (1997)
 - b. Location-sensitive clauses
- Dilution: 2002 Amendment

EIA Notification 2006 (Major Overhaul):

- Decentralization: Category A and Category B projects
- Improved Process
- Critical Shortcomings:
 - Weak Public Participation
 - No Post-Monitoring
 - Reliance on Proponent Ethics

EIA Notification 2009:

- Enhanced Transparency
- Refined Categorization

Persistent Issues:

- Politicization of Committees
- Lack of Cumulative Assessment
- Inadequate Health Impact Studies
- Case Study: Char Dham Project

Draft EIA Notification 2020:

- Ex-Post-Facto Clearance
- Erosion of Public Participation:
 - Strategic Exemption



EIA & Environment Audit Rules

6th September, 2025

CONTEXT: Audit rules allow the monitoring to go beyond the remit of State Pollution Control Boards.

- Capacity Enhancement
- Reporting Violations
- Diluted Compliance
- Mass Exemptions

Judicial Approach

- **Narmada Bachao Andolan v. UOI (Sardar Sarovar Dam, 2000)**
 - Balancing Test
 - Conditional Construction
 - Monitoring Mandate
- **K.M. Chinnappa v. UOI (Kudremukh Mining, 2002)**
 - EIA Mandatory
- **M.C. Mehta v. UOI (Taj Corridor Case, 2003)**
 - Zero Tolerance for Violations
 - Ex-Post Facto Scrutiny
- **M.C. Mehta v. UOI (Aravalli Mining, 2004 & 2009)**
 - Precautionary Principle
 - Sustainable Development Test
- **Lafarge Umiam Mining v. UOI (Meghalaya Mining, 2011)**
 - Call for a National Regulator
- **Deepak Kumar v. State of Haryana (Sand Mining, 2012)**
 - EC for Minor Minerals Mandated
- **Sundarrajan v. UOI (Kudankulam Nuclear Plant, 2013)**
 - Safety Overrides Public Opposition

- **Alaknanda Hydro Power Co. v. Anuj Joshi (Srinagar Dam, 2013)**
 - Prospective Application of EIA
 - Moratorium Imposed
- **Sterlite Industries v. UOI (Tuticorin Plant, 2013)**
 - Validity of Old Clearances
 - No Retrospective Application
- **Orissa Mining Corp. v. MoEF (Vedanta/Niyamgiri Hills, 2013)**
 - Tribal Rights Paramount
 - Forest Rights Act Compliance
- **Alembic Pharmaceuticals v. Rohit Prajapati (2020)**
 - Ex-Post Facto EC Illegal
 - Principle of Proportionality

International Principles

- Stockholm Declaration (1972): Principle 21
- Brundtland Report (1987)
- Rio Declaration (1992): Principle 17
- Agenda 21 (1992)
- World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002)
- Earth Summit 2012 (Rio+20)

International Instruments

- Espoo Convention (1991)
- UNCLOS (1982): Article 206
- Paris Agreement (2015)

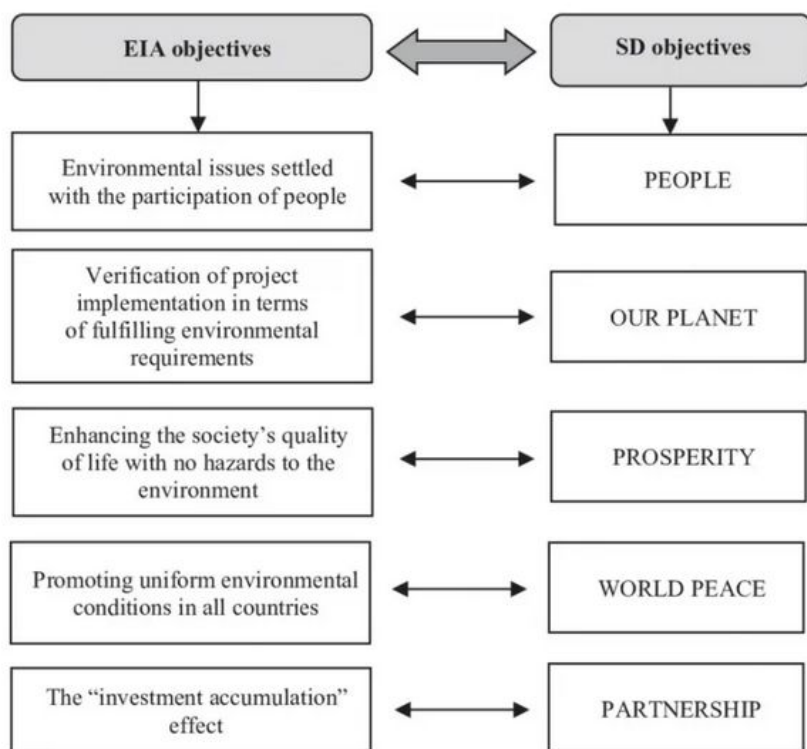


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EIA & Environment Audit Rules

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EIA's Role in Sustainable Development



Audit Rules 2025

- 2 tiered system of auditors
 - Certified Environment Auditor
 - Registered Environment Auditor
- Roles and responsibilities of Registered Environment Auditors
 - sampling and analysis of emissions, effluents

- Report any violations or non-compliance
- Compute environment compensation
- verification activities related to the Green Credit Registry
- Audit report

- Environment Audit Designated Agency
- Certification and Registration of Environment Auditors
- Code of Conduct

Suggestions

- Independent regulatory body
- Transparency in public consultation
- Integrate SIA, CIA
- Post monitoring mechanism
- Accountability of authorities
- Comprehensive legislation

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Discuss the evolution of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) framework in India. Analyze the role of the judiciary in shaping EIA norms, and suggest measures to strengthen the EIA process to ensure sustainable development.



Opening up the Nuclear Sector

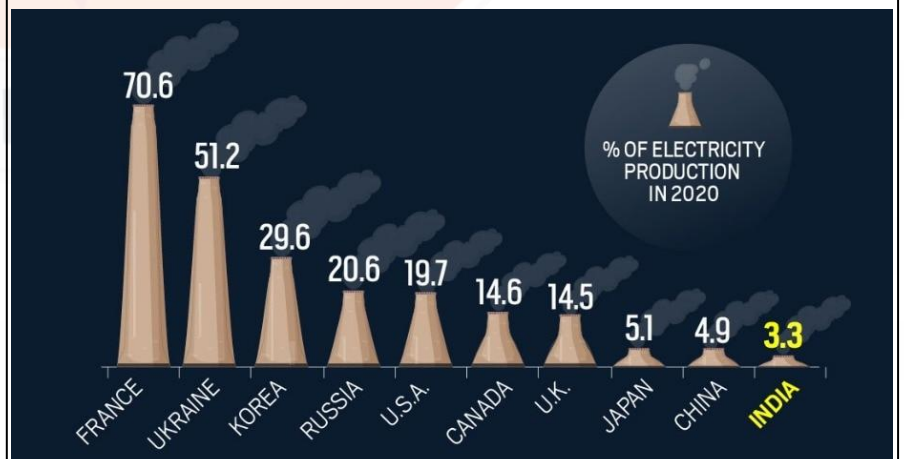
CONTEXT: Govt aims to liberalise the nuclear energy sector.

Nuclear: Sources



Why Nuclear Power?

- HDI
- Diversify sources
- Energy security
- GHG
- Costs are location-independent
- Solar/Wind: Intermittent, not base-load capable
- Balancing costs
- External Costs (environmental, health impacts)
- Target 100 GW by 2047

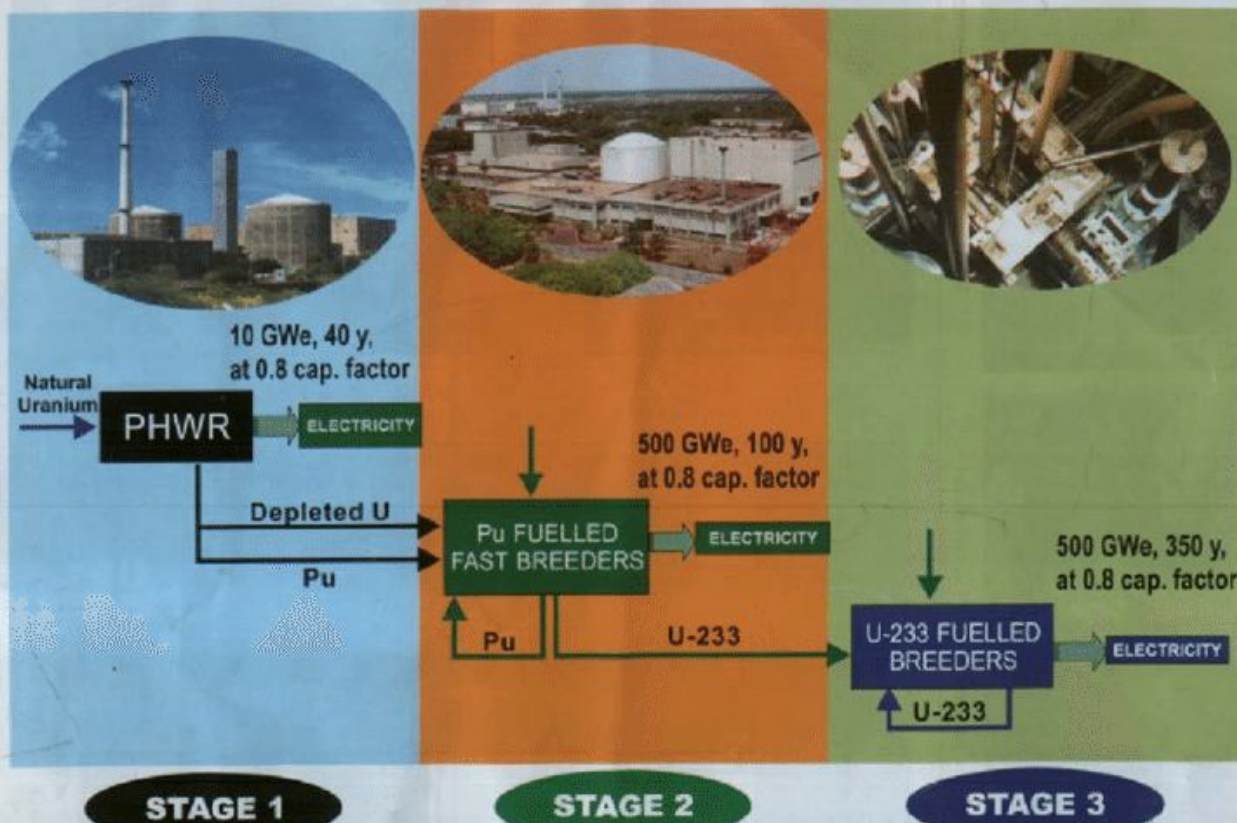


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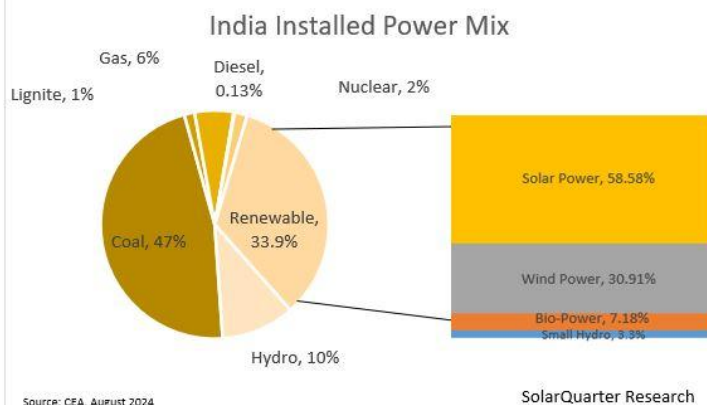
Opening up the Nuclear Sector

CONTEXT: Govt aims to liberalise the nuclear energy sector.

Three Stages of Indian Nuclear Power Programme



Kalpakkam has the unique distinction of being the only place in the world, where all the three fissile isotopes viz., U-235 [MAPS], Pu-239 [FBTR] & U-233 [KAMINI] are used as fuel in reactors.



Opening up the Nuclear Sector

Unlocking private investment

- Section 17 of the CLNDA
- International Comparison
 - France, UK, Japan: assign absolute but capped liability
 - U.S. Price-Anderson Act (1957)
- Concerns
 - AERB independence, resources



Opening up the Nuclear Sector

6th September, 2025

CONTEXT: Govt aims to liberalise the nuclear energy sector.

- liberalisation could dilute safety standards
- Who pays when things go wrong?
 - i. 1,500 cr operator liability
 - ii. 2,300 cr govt-funded insurance pool

The need for quality has been specifically flagged in the second and third rung of equipment suppliers that, in turn, provide inputs to Tier-1 suppliers such as L&T, Bharat Forge, Godrej & Boyce and Walchandnagar Industries. These suppliers fabricate core equipment such as calandrias, end shields, moderator heat exchangers, dump tanks, fuel magazines etc, but de-

pend on hundreds of smaller input providers. Alongside this, the global players have also flagged the need for a robust cybersecurity protocol. They have cited potential risks including loss of control over vital information that can possibly impact nuclear plant operations and hold plant operators hostage in the event of a cyber attack.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

pliers, in India, the problem being flagged pertains to Tier-2 suppliers and below, especially given new reactor types that are likely to be taken up. Also, though the civil nuclear programme has expertise in manufacturing smaller reactor types, it is almost entirely based on its mainstay Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor technology (PHWR). PHWRs are based on

Quality Upgradation Templates

There are multiple national templates for quality upgrades. In Japan, there was a national push to expand its nuclear

text to quality and cost overruns in the capital-intensive nuclear sector, especially with regard to equipment supplies. Finland's long-delayed Olkiluoto-3 EPR nuclear reactor that was connected to the Finnish power grid for the first time in March 2022, a good 12 years after its planned

In India, the AERB — the country's nuclear regulator — primarily focuses on design certifications, while the quality aspects of equipment supplies are largely handled by the operator, which is currently the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL). While NPCIL has a strong safety record, characterised by no radiological accidents across 238 reactor-years of operation, the new technologi-

China rolled out a comprehensive nuclear quality assurance programme focused on a regulatory framework aligned with international standards and national conditions, overseen by its National Nuclear Safety Administration. This entailed de-



6th September, 2025

Opening up the Nuclear Sector

CONTEXT: Govt aims to liberalise the nuclear energy sector.

Challenges Persist

- **International Collab**
 - Tarapur BWRs (US Collaboration, 1960s)
 - Rajasthan PHWRs (Canadian Collaboration)
- **Foreign Reactor Imports & Liability**
 - Kudankulam (Russia) Delays: 13+ years
 - Post-2008 Nuclear Deal Challenges
 - i. Liability Law (2010):
 - Supplier liability clause deterred vendors
 - NPCIL had to waive clauses for Kakrapar-3
- **Fuel Cycle & Reprocessing**
 - Front-End - Uranium Low-grade deposits (~0.15%)
 - Waste Management

- i. Low-volume high-level waste
- ii. Deep geological repositories preferred for long-term disposal

- **Safety**
- **Stalled Projects**
 - Bankruptcies - AP1000 (USA)
 - Initial capital
 - Land Acquisition
- **Cheaper Alternatives**
- **Human Resources**
 - Training: BARC/NPCIL programs
 - Underutilization

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Discuss the role of nuclear power in meeting India's growing energy demands and climate commitments. Examine the challenges associated with greater private sector participation in India's nuclear energy sector.



6th September, 2025

SYLLABUS: GS Paper 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests;

Newspaper: The Hindu; **Page No :** 8

Concerns for India Due to USA's Rent-Seeking Behaviour

- Punitive Tariff Hikes
- Economic Coercion as Policy
- Direct Targeting of Strategic Partnerships
- Erosion of Trust and Reliability
- Pressure to make a binary choice
- Stalled Trade Negotiations
- Forced Diversification
- Vulnerability of Key Sectors
- Undermining of Global South Leadership
- Challenges to Hedging Strategy

Challenges for India in a "Multipolar World"

- **Unpredictability and Instability**
 - Constant recalibration of relationships
 - Permutations of alliances
- **Erosion of Reliable Partnerships**
 - No "cosy certainty"
- **The Myth of Multilateralism**
 - Reality: multilateralism is receding
- **Risk of a Solitary Existence**
 - "Strategic autonomy" ~ navigating challenges alone
- **Position as a Secondary Power**
 - Vulnerability to pressure

Strategic autonomy refers to a nation's ability to make sovereign decisions in foreign policy and defence without being constrained by external pressures or alliance obligations. It is not synonymous with isolationism or neutrality. Rather, it implies flexibility, independence and the capacity to engage with multiple powers on one's own terms. For India, the concept has deep historical roots, going back to colonial subjugation and free India's determination never to let anybody else decide our place in the world for us. From Nehru's non-alignment during the Cold War to the Modi government's "multi-alignment" in the current era, successive governments have sought to preserve India's freedom of action while adapting to changing geopolitical realities. In theory, strategic autonomy offers a middle path between rigid bloc politics and passive disengagement. In practice, it

India's relationship with the United States has deepened dramatically over the past two decades. From defence cooperation and intelligence sharing to joint military exercises and technology transfers, the strategic partnership has matured. The Quad grouping (Australia, Japan India, the U.S.), Indo-Pacific dialogues, the incipient I2U2 (India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the U.S.) and India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), and shared concerns over China's rise have further



6th September, 2025

Strategic Autonomy in a Multipolar World

SYLLABUS: GS Paper 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests;

Newspaper: The Hindu; **Page No :** 8

Ties with Beijing and Moscow

China presents a more complex challenge. The border clashes with India of 2020 shattered illusions of benign coexistence, and tensions remain high despite diplomatic overtures. Yet, China is also one of India's largest trading partners, a key player in regional institutions, and a competitor whose actions shape the strategic environment. India's approach is one of cautious engagement and firm deterrence. It strengthens border infrastructure, deepens ties with Indo-Pacific partners, and invests in indigenous defence capabilities. At the same time, it participates in multilateral forums such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, where China plays a leading role – a difficult but necessary balancing act.

Strategic autonomy here means resisting both confrontation and capitulation. It means asserting sovereignty and refusing to be another country's counterweight to a rising China, while

diplomacy with a spine – assertive, pragmatic, and unapologetically Indian, seeking to be “non-West” without being “anti-West”. This stance resonates across the Global South, where many rising and middle powers concerned with peace and stability in their own regions, are choosing to safeguard their geopolitical and economic interests rather than be swept into the vortex of great-power rivalries. They seek agency, not alignment; voice, not vassalage.

Moreover, in a world of cyber threats, Artificial Intelligence warfare and space competition, autonomy must extend beyond traditional domains. It must encompass data sovereignty, digital infrastructure and supply chain security.

India's relationship with Russia is rooted in Cold War solidarity, defence cooperation and shared strategic interests. Despite Moscow's growing closeness to Beijing and Russia's global isolation following the Ukraine conflict, India has maintained its ties – buying oil, importing weapons, and engaging diplomatically. This has drawn criticism from western capitals, but India has stood firm. Its relationship with Russia is historical, multidimensional and not subject to external veto. It continues to diversify its military imports, invest in indigenous production and explore new partnerships, but without abandoning old ones. Strategic autonomy here is about refusing to choose sides in a binary contest, and, instead, crafting a foreign policy that reflects India's unique geography, history and aspirations.



Why Punjab keeps flooding

6th September, 2025

SYLLABUS: GS Paper 3: Disaster and Disaster Management

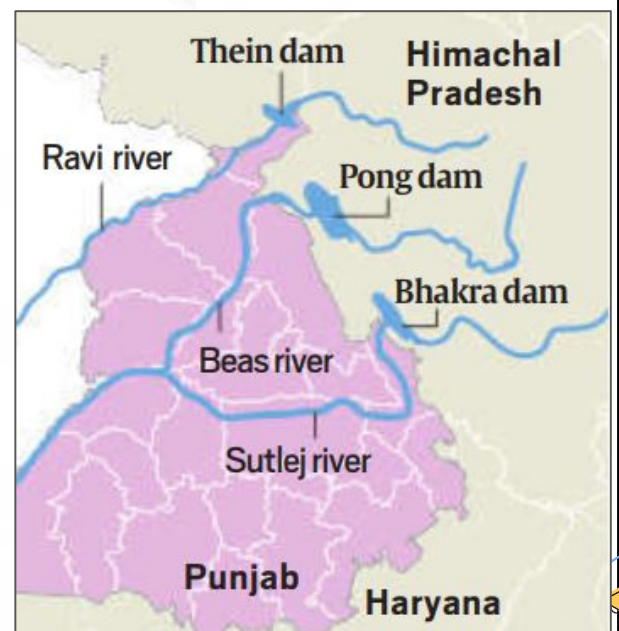
Newspaper : The Indian Express; **Page No :** 16

Why Punjab Keeps Getting Flooded

- **Natural Geography**
 - "land of rivers" (3 perennial + Ghaggar)
 - i. Alluvium
 - ii. 20% wheat, 12% rice
 - Heavy rainfall in upstream catchment areas
- **Extreme Rainfall Events**
 - Heavy monsoon overwhelm defenses
 - Upstream states and Punjab excess rainfall >45% this year
- **Dam Management Issues**
 - Upstream dams (Bhakra, Pong, Thein) water release
 - Perceived lack of "flood cushion"
 - Reservoirs kept too high for irrigation and power – no buffer
 - Sudden, large-volume water releases without timely warnings
 - Coordination between dam operators and state officials
- **Inadequate Infrastructure**
 - Earthen embankments (*dhussi bundhs*) breached
 - Illegal mining weaken the structural integrity
 - Lack of investment in desilting, flood defense
- **Governance and Institutional Challenges**
 - Centralized control of key dams (BBMB) with a primary mandate for irrigation/power



- Reactive approach; "wake up only after floods"
- Lack of communication between different departments within Punjab (e.g., barrage gates not opened on time)



Mineral Exploration Exemptions

SYLLABUS: GS Paper 3: Indian Economy; Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment;
Newspaper: The Indian Express; **Page No :** 7

National Mineral Policy 2019

Governance

- Promote domestic industry
- Fair, transparent, and equitable allocation
- EoDB – simpler, time-bound clearances
- Prevent illegal mining – e-governance and IT-enabled monitoring
- National authority for mineral development and coordination

Exploration & Data

- Private sector participation
- Focus on critical, strategic, and deep-seated minerals
- Incentivize exploration through Right of First Refusal
- National Mineral Inventory

Mining Operations

- Zero-waste mining, Mining technology
- Dedicated mineral corridors

Sustainability

- Ecologically fragile areas as 'no-go' zones for mining
- Use of renewable energy
- Scientific mine closure and land reclamation
- Shared inheritance held in trust for future generations

Social Responsibility

- Comprehensive Relief & Rehabilitation for project-affected
- Devolution of mining benefits through DMFs
- Protect the interests of tribal

Economic & Fiscal Measures

- FDI, Export policy
- Status of industry
- Benchmark fiscal regimes (royalties, taxes) with global standards
- Financing for exploration

THE UNION environment ministry's forest advisory committee (FAC) has approved requests to allow more bore holes to be drilled on forest land for mineral exploration activity without seeking clearance under the Van Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan Adhiniyam, 1980, as per ministry documents.

While granting the relaxation, the ministry directed to ensure there should be minimum impact of the drilling and other associated activities on wildlife. It said the survey and exploration activities, including drilling, shall be limited from 9 am to 5.30 pm to align with the diurnal pattern of wildlife. It added that the bore holes should be plugged with cement immediately after completion of all bore hole related activities.

"Impacts can occur on the riparian ecosystems if water is blocked and abstracted from the forested stream, it can result into discharge of oil and grease into the natural water stream which can have negative impacts on aquatic wildlife species," the minutes noted.

The FAC also stated that the SOP for mineral exploration in forest areas is to be followed. The SOP stated no drilling will be allowed within high-sensitivity areas to protect ecological hotspots. The



Mineral Exploration Exemptions

6th September, 2025

SYLLABUS: GS Paper 3: Indian Economy; Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment;
Newspaper: The Indian Express; **Page No:** 7

- **T.M. Pai Foundation v. Union of India**
 - No quotas on privately operated schools
- **P.A. Inamdar v. State of Maharashtra**
 - No reservation
 - Autonomy
- **Article 15(5)**
- **Ashok Kumar Thakur v. Union of India**
 - Legitimacy of affirmative action
- **Indian Medical Association v. Union Of India And Others**
 - Coexistence of Merit & Social Justice
 - Substantive Equality
- **Pramati Educational & Cultural Trust vs Union of India**
 - Article 15(5) valid

²[(5) Nothing in this article or in sub-clause (g) of clause (1) of article 19 shall prevent the State from making any special provision, by law, for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in so far as such special provisions relate to their admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State, other than the minority educational institutions referred to in clause (1) of article 30.]

Gautam cited a parliamentary committee report to argue that students from disadvantaged communities are underrepresented in private universities, with only 0.89% of their students from SC communities, 0.53% from Scheduled Tribes, and 11.16% from OBC communities.

Standing Committee on Education's report to Parliament on August 20 unanimously recommended that the government pass a law implementing Article 15(5) of the Constitution.



ESTIC to replace Science Congress

6th September, 2025

SYLLABUS: GS Paper 3: Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology

Newspaper: The Hindu; **Page No :** 11

Indian Science Congress

- annual gathering of researchers
- Organized by ISCA
 - Professional body under DST
- First meeting - 1914
 - at Asiatic Society, Calcutta - founded by Sir William Jones
- 14 sections including Agriculture and Forestry Sciences, Earth System Sciences, Engineering Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Medical Sciences

The ESTIC may 'replace' the Indian Science Congress, the oldest congregation of scientists in India, with a rich history predating Independence. Over

In 2024 and this year, the Science Congress was not held due to a spat between the DST and the ISCA's executive body over the organisation of the event. The DST has said that it would no longer fund the ISCA.

The inaugural ESTIC will be held at the Bharat Mandapam here from November 3-4. All the



6th September, 2025

Q1. Regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process in India, consider the following statements:

1. Environment Audit Rules, 2025, establish a four-tier system of auditors.
2. The process of EIA was formally introduced in India in 1994.
3. Public consultation is a mandatory step in all categories of projects under EIA.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 2 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) 2 and 3 only

Answer: a

Q2. Regarding India's 3-Stage Nuclear Power Programme, consider the following statements:

1. Stage II involves Fast Breeder Reactors using plutonium fuel.
2. Stage III is based on the conversion of Thorium-232 to Uranium-233 for energy generation.

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: c

Q3. Regarding the National Mineral Policy, 2019, consider the following statements:

1. It identifies ecologically fragile areas as "no-go" zones for mining.
2. It proposes District Mineral Foundations for the devolution of mining benefits.
3. It allows private sector participation in exploration, with the Right of First Refusal.

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

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

Answer: c

Q4. Regarding the judicial pronouncements on reservations and education in India, consider the following pairs:

1. T.M. Pai Foundation v. Union of India (2002) – No quotas in private unaided institutions
2. P.A. Inamdar v. State of Maharashtra (2005) – Upheld State reservations in private institutions
3. Ashok Kumar Thakur v. Union of India (2008) – Legitimacy of affirmative action under Article 15(5)
4. Pramati Educational & Cultural Trust v. Union of India (2014) – Article 15(5) held valid for private institutions

How many of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Answer: c

Q5. Regarding the Indian Science Congress, consider the following statements:

1. It is a bi-annual gathering of researchers.
2. The Indian Science Congress Association is a professional body functioning under the Department of Science and Technology.
3. The first meeting was held in 1914 at the Asiatic Society, Calcutta.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 1 only
- c) 2 only
- d) 2 and 3 only

Answer: d





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