



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

14th March 2026



CONTEXT: Standing committee on Housing and Urban affairs has recommended creation of a High-level expert committee to assess India's urban infrastructure requirements.

Cities as Engines of Growth

- **Contribution to GDP:** *Economic Survey 2025-26* -
 - **World Bank** - Urban areas contributing almost **70% to GDP (2036)**
 - doubling city size typically **boosts productivity by 12%** in India.
- **Emergence of Regional Clusters and Satellite Cities:**
 - **Delhi NCR (regions like Noida and Greater Noida) and Bengaluru's** peripheral towns have seen economic spillover, transforming surrounding areas into dynamic business hubs.
- **Innovation Ecosystems:**
 - *Hyderabad's Genome Valley*, home to 200+ biotech firms.
 - Pune, Hyderabad, and Chennai are developing thriving ecosystems for R&D and startups.
- **Service-led Economic Growth in Metro Cities:** *Bengaluru, Delhi, and Hyderabad.*
- **Infrastructure Development Driving Regional Connectivity:**
 - **Economic Survey 2025-26:** As of 2025, around 1,036 km of Metro/RRTS are operational across around 24 cities, with further corridors under construction.

Foreign investment: India's FDI hits 3-year high; Maharashtra leads with \$19.6 billion

TOI Business Desk / TIMESOFINDIA.COM / Updated: Jun 08, 2025, 15:11 IST



Maharashtra and Karnataka have become leading destinations for foreign investment in India, attracting 51% of the nation's total FDI during the 2024-25 financial year. Maharashtra topped the list with \$19.6 billion, followed by Karnataka with \$6.62 billion. This surge is attributed to improved infrastructure, making India an increasingly attractive destination for FDI, which rose by 14% to \$81.04 billion.

Constraints that prevent Indian cities from fully realising agglomeration-led growth:

- **Governance Deficit:** Cities lack agency
 - *Indian cities raise less than 0.6% of GDP in own-source revenues*, borrow negligibly, and depend overwhelmingly on intergovernmental transfers
 - **multi-layered governance structures:** Urban Local Bodies, Development Authorities, State line departments and Parastatal agencies.
- **Land as dead capital:** *assets that are unable to function as productive capital*
 - **low floor space index:** constraining vertical development and forcing spatial expansion outward rather than upward.
 - unclear land titles, compounded by fragmentation and opaque records.
- **Mobility:** Transportation functions as their bloodstream, spine, and muscles, facilitating the flow of people, goods, and ideas, establishing structure, and supporting productive activity.
 - **Centre for Science and Environment:** Delhi's congestion troubles states that an unskilled worker stands to lose between **₹7,200 - ₹19,600 per year** due to congestion.



In 2024, commuters in Bengaluru, Mumbai, and New Delhi lost **117 hours**, **103 hours**, and **76 hours**, respectively during rush hour.



CONTEXT: Standing committee on Housing and Urban affairs has recommended creation of a High-level expert committee to assess India's urban infrastructure requirements.

- **A growing dependence on private vehicles:** Our roads have been utilised as storage for low-occupancy vehicles instead of facilitating movement for people.
- **Waste management:**
 - segregation at source, waste processing and dumpsite remediation lag behind.
- **Informality:**
 - **Conventional urban policy** has often treated informality as a **transient phenomenon** that arises from planning and governance failures, and as something that **must be eliminated as cities modernise.**
 - Slums, informal work and unregistered enterprises absorb excess labour, provide low-cost housing near jobs, and serve urban consumption and production needs that formal systems often fail to meet.

Steps taken

- **Land:** Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme, Bhu-aadhaar, **Karnataka** government's transition towards issuing digital land records under its ambitious **Bhu Suraksha scheme.**
- **Mobility:**
 - **Expansion of mass rapid transit: 2025,** ~1,036 km of Metro/RRTS are operational across around 24 cities, with further corridors under construction.
 - **PM e Bus Sewa:** to strengthen city bus operations with **10,000 e buses** on a PPP model.
- **Waste Management**

- **Smart Cities Mission:** launched in June 2015, represents one of India's most ambitious efforts to modernise urban infrastructure and improve the quality of life across a range of municipal services.
 - 90% of the roughly 8,067 projects completed.
- **PMAY-U, 2.0: 122 lakh houses** have been sanctioned, of which **96.02 lakh** have been completed as of 24.11.2025.
- **PM SVANidhi:** Letter of Recommendation valid identification for street vendors.

Government measures have made significant progress in waste management



Door-to door collection of MSW: negligible in 2014-15; covers 98% of urban wards in 2024-25



2.5 lakh waste collection vehicles nationwide



GPS-enabled vehicles and integrated command centres in many cities to monitor collection routes



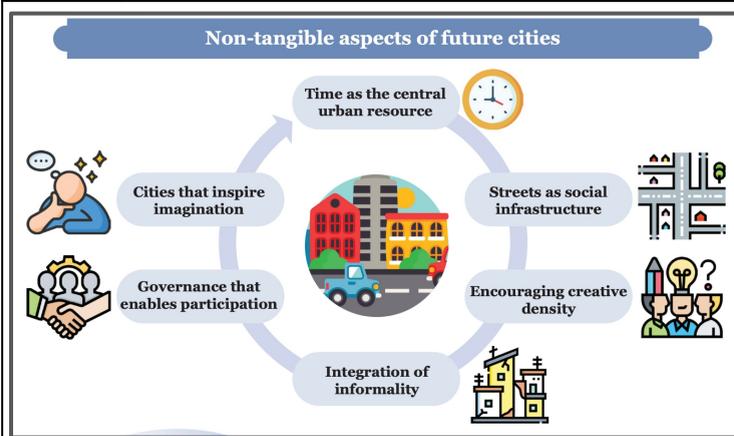
Waste processing: 2014-15 – 16%
2024-25 – 80%

Way Ahead

- **Guiding principle:** design cities to prioritise the movement of people, not vehicles.
 - high-capacity public transport as the backbone; safe, reliable first and last-mile access.
 - Augment and digitise bus fleets & Green Mobility Credit Facility.
- **Waste Management:** Indore – “Do Bin Har Din” campaign, reinforcing segregation practices.



CONTEXT: Standing committee on Housing and Urban affairs has recommended creation of a High-level expert committee to assess India's urban infrastructure requirements.



Mains Practise Question

Ques. "Urbanisation in India is often described as 'messy and unplanned'. Examine the key challenges arising from rapid urbanisation in India. Evaluate the measures taken by the government and suggest reforms for sustainable urban development."

(15 Marks, 250 words)

Changing the attitude of the public towards Waste Management – The case of Indore



Paid menstrual leave may hurt women's careers: SC



CONTEXT: Supreme court expressed apprehensions regarding making paid menstrual leave a legal right.

Menstrual leave policy: It is a policy that allows **female employees or students** to take **paid leaves** when they are experiencing **menstrual pain or discomfort**.

Status:

- **Bihar's** policy was introduced in **1992**, allowing women employees **two days of paid menstrual leave** every month.
- **Kerala in 2023:** issued an order granting menstrual leave for students in **all State-run higher education institutions**.
- **Zomato:** 10-day paid period leave per year in **2020**.
- **Swiggy** have also followed suit.
- **Spain** has become the **first European country** to pass a legislation granting paid menstrual leave to workers.
 - Women have the right to **three days of menstrual leave per month**, which can be **expanded to five days**.
- *Japan, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan, South Korea, Zambia, South Korea and Vietnam* also have menstrual policies in place.

Need for Menstrual Leave Policy in India:

- **Fulfillment of Constitutional Mandates:**
 - **Article 15(3):** Permits **special provisions for women**, countering claims of discrimination against men who can't avail menstrual leave.
 - **Article 42:** Mandates the state to **ensure "just and humane conditions of work"** and "maternity relief."
 - **Article 21:** Right to Dignified Life.
- **Breaking Gender Stereotypes:** taboos associated with menstruation such as being 'dirty' and 'impure'.

- **Productivity and Retention: IMF:** equal participation of women in the workforce will increase India's **GDP by 27%**.
- **Mitigates presenteeism:** *lost productivity* that occurs when **employees are not fully functioning in the workplace** due to illness, injury or other such conditions.
 - alleviate the mental stress associated with managing work responsibilities while dealing with painful physical symptoms.
- **Reducing female Dropouts:** government schools in rural India caused by the lack of clean toilets, sanitary pads.

Challenges related to menstrual leave:

- **Non availment of leaves due shame and cultural taboos:**
 - Mere **0.9% of women** in the workforce **avail menstrual leave days in Japan**.
- **Reinforcement of stereotypes:**
 - "women as being weaker or needing special treatment"
 - women being determined by their biology after struggling to be seen as humans beyond their reproductive organs.
- **Disincentive women employment opportunities:** strengthen the glass ceiling around women's promotion prospects.
- **Implementation in informal sector:**
 - Informal workers, Freelancers and gig workers often **lack traditional employee benefits**, making it difficult to extend benefits.

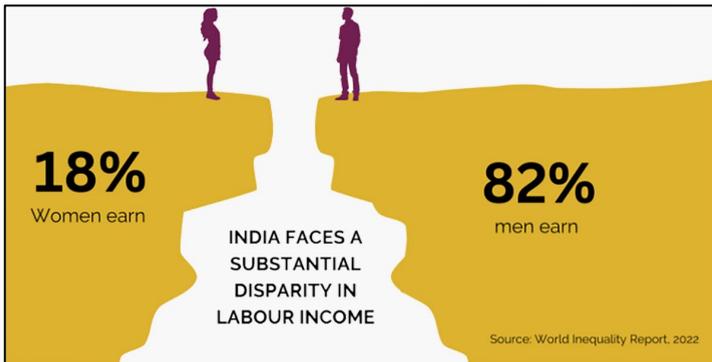


Paid menstrual leave may hurt women's careers: SC



CONTEXT: Supreme court expressed apprehensions regarding making paid menstrual leave a legal right.

- **Widen the gender gap:** Economic Survey 2018 - India has one of the largest gender gap in median earnings of full-time employees.



Way Ahead:

- **Addressing the primary issues first:** lack of proper sanitary facilities in schools and informal sector workplaces.
- **Seek Alternatives which offer flexibility:**
 - work from home during menstruation, customized work schedules, Incorporating Adequate Rest Breaks etc.
- **Creating an inclusive workplace environment:** provide menstrual hygiene products in office spaces like *sanitary pads, tampons, heating pads, etc.*
 - Scotland Period Products (Free Provision) Bill was introduced to create a universal right to free period products for everyone in Scotland.

- **Destigmatizing menstruation** through education and awareness campaigns.
- **Incentivising Menstrual Leave Policies:** *tax exemptions to companies offering it.*
- **Reconsider healthy work culture:** by creating sick, parental, and vacation leave policies that are responsive to worker needs

Mains Practise Question

Ques. "The debate around menstrual leave in workplaces raises important questions about gender equality, health rights, and labour participation. Examine the arguments for and against the introduction of menstrual leave policies in India."

(15 Marks, 250 words)



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Current events of International importance
Newspaper: The Hindu; **Page Number :** 8

Ahead of a crucial meeting of countries in Geneva this month where they must agree on a rule book, accompanying the so-called 'Pandemic Agreement,' India has found common cause with a coalition of developing countries – called the Group for Equity – that says developing countries that share pathogen materials and genetic sequence data must receive fair, concrete, and legally enforceable benefits in return.

About Global Pandemic Agreement

- **WHO's** Pandemic Agreement was adopted by the **World Health Assembly** on **May 20, 2025**. (78th World Health Assembly)
- Developed in **response to the COVID-19 pandemic**, which revealed significant **gaps and inequality** in the world's ability to prevent and respond to health emergencies, prompting nations to take action.
- **Aim:** To create a **legally binding international instrument** on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.
- Once adopted, the next step was for an **Intergovernmental Working Group** on the Pandemic Agreement to negotiate the details of the **Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing system**.
- Once adopted by the **World Health Assembly**, expected to be May 2026.
- The agreement will **officially enter into force 30 days after 60 countries** have ratified it.

- **'Equity group' insists:** those who commercialise products derived from Pathogen Access, pay a percentage of annual revenue back into the system.
- **Non-monetary benefits:**
 - reserve a percentage of real-time production of pandemic products for WHO (with at least 10% donated).
 - **grant non-exclusive licences** to developing country manufacturers during **emergencies**.
 - make products available at affordable or **not-for-profit prices**.
- **European Union:** suggests a preference for a more "voluntary" nature to such agreements.
 - Manufacturers are encouraged, rather than compelled, to enter into legally binding contracts with WHO.
 - **EU agrees with a 10% donation**

World Health Assembly (WHA)

- The World Health Assembly (WHA) is the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO).
- It is composed of delegates from all WHO Member States.
- The Assembly meets annually to determine policies, approve budgets, and review work programs.
- The assembly is held at Geneva, Switzerland.

Functions

- Sets WHO's policies and priorities.
- Appoints the Director-General of WHO.
- Approves WHO's budget and work programs.
- Adopts international treaties and agreements under Article 19 of the WHO Constitution.
- Monitors global health trends and coordinates international responses.



SYLLABUS: Prelims: International Groupings
Newspaper: The Indian Express; **Page Number :** 1

About BRICS

- ❖ **About:** The acronym '**BRIC**' was coined by British economist **Jim O'Neill** in **2001** to represent the emerging economies of **Brazil, Russia, India, and China**.
 - **BRIC** began functioning as a formal group during the **G-8 Outreach Summit** in **2006**, held its **first summit** in **Russia in 2009**, and became **BRICS** with the inclusion of **South Africa** in **2010**.
- ❖ **Members:**
 - **Initial members** were **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**.
 - **New Members: 2024** – **Iran, UAE, Egypt, and Ethiopia** joined the group while **Indonesia** joined in 2025.
 - **Saudi Arabia** has not yet **formalised** its BRICS membership, while **Argentina**, initially expected to join in 2024, later **opted out**.
- ❖ **Significance:**
 - **BRICS** accounts for **46%** of the **world's population** and **36%** of **global GDP**.

Key Initiatives of BRICS

- ❖ **New Development Bank (2014):**
 - **multilateral development bank** established to mobilising resources for **infrastructure and sustainable development projects** in *emerging markets and developing countries*.

- **Fortaleza in 2014**, and the Bank **started operations in 2015**.
- **Headquarters:** Shanghai, China
- **Founding members:** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa.
- **New members:** Bangladesh (2021), UAE (2021), Egypt (2023), Algeria (2025).
- The membership is open to **members of the United Nations**.
- **Founding members:** maintain at least **55%** combined voting power.
- **Contingent Reserve Arrangement:**
 - **Established in 2015** to provide financial support to member countries that **face balance of payments difficulties** due to short-term liquidity pressures.
 - The CRA's total lending capacity is **\$100 billion**.



14th March 2026

SYLLABUS : Prelims: Environment

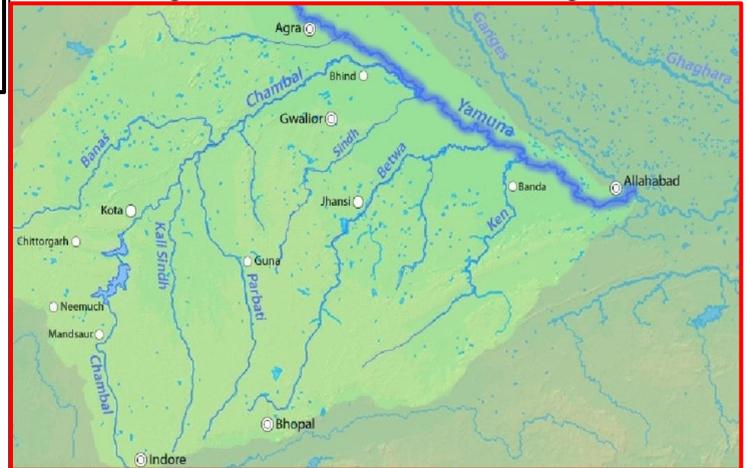
Newspaper: The Hindu; **Page Number :** 10

About National Chambal Sanctuary:

- National Chambal Sanctuary, also called the National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary, is a 5,400 sq . km tri-state protected riverine sanctuary along 425 km length of the Chambal River and ravines.
- Location: It lies at the tri-junction of three states Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- The main focus of the sanctuary is to protect the critically endangered Gharial, Red-crowned roof turtle & endangered Ganges dolphin.
- Chambal supports the largest population of Gharials in the wild.
- It is listed as an important bird area (IBA).
- Topography: The topography is full of ravines, hills & sandy beaches.
- Vegetation: It is part of the Kathiar-Gir dry deciduous forest ecoregion.
- Other Fauna:
 - Other animals which are also in the Threatened category like mugger crocodile, smooth-coated otters, Striped Hyena & Indian wolves are also found here.
 - Chambal River support 8 out of 26 rare species of turtle family like Indian narrow-headed soft shell turtle, three- striped roof turtle & crowned river turtle.
 - Mammals are also seen, which include Sambhar deer, Neel Gai (blue bull), Indian gazelle, Rhesus Monkey, Hanuman Langur, Indian grey & small Asian mongoose, Bengal Fox etc.

About Chambal River

- It is one of the **tributaries of the Yamuna River** and the **most pollution-free river** in India.
- **Originates** at the **Singar Chouri peak** on the northern slopes of the **Vindhya mountains**.
- On its south, east and west, the basin is **bounded by the Vindhyan mountain ranges** and on the northwest by the **Aravallis**.
- **Tributaries:** Banas, Kali Sindh, Parbati.
- **Major Dams:** Gandhi Sagar Dam, Rana Pratap Sagar Dam, Jawahar Sagar Dam, and Kota Barrage.



SYLLABUS : Prelims: Economy
Newspaper: The Hindu; **Page Number :** 6

Base Effect:

If **last year's inflation was very high** (a high base), even a moderate price increase this year results in a **lower percentage inflation rate**.

- **Case 1:** The **price index of January 2016** is 110 and that of **January 2017** is 120.
- **Inflation of Jan 2017** = $(120-110)/110 * 100$ which comes out to be **9.09%**.
- **Case 2:** The **price index for March 2017** is 180 and that of **March 2018** is 190.
- **Inflation of March 2018** = $(190-180)/180 * 100$ which comes out to be **5.55%**.

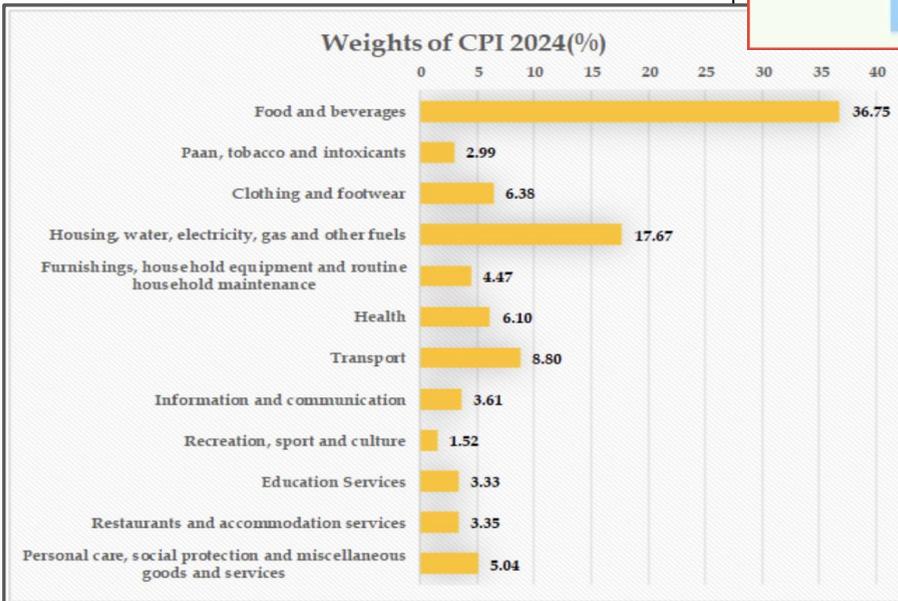
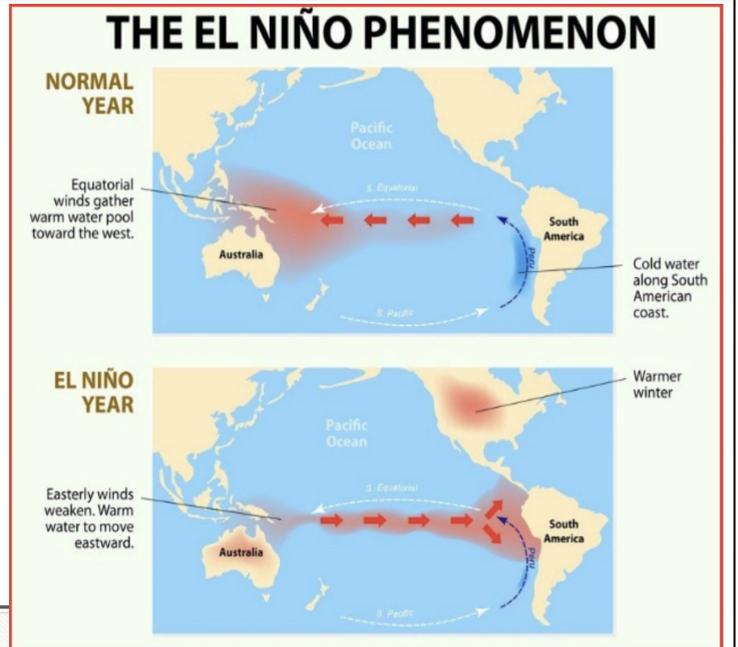
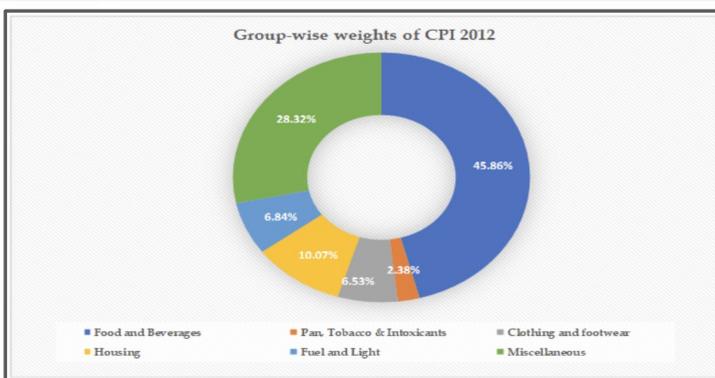
Changes in CPI Series

- **Changed Base year: from 2012 to 2024** using Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023-24.
 - to ensure that the index remains **representative of current household consumption patterns**, price structures, and the evolving nature of the Indian economy.
- **Adoption of International COICOP - 2018 Framework: 12 Divisions in place of 6 Groups** in accordance to **Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose, 2018:**
 - Classification of items according to its usage
 - Ensures global comparability of India's CPI
 - Enables more granular dissemination of indices and inflation rates

- **Revised Weights:**
- **Revision of Item Basket and Coverage:**
 - **Goods items** are increased from 259 to 308
 - **Services items** are increased from 40 to 50
 - **New Additions:** Rural housing, Online media service provider/Streaming services, value added dairy products, Barley & its product, Pen-drive & External Hard disk, Attendant, Babysitter and Exercise equipment
 - **Items Removed:** VCR/VCD/DVD player and hiring charges, Radio, Tape recorder, Clothing second-hand, CD/DVD audio/video cassettes and Coir/rope
- **Price Collection Methodology and Digitalisation:**
- Physical market price collection continues to form the backbone of CPI compilation. However, to reflect changing purchasing behaviour, the CPI 2024 series supplement traditional collection with alternative data sources:
- E-commerce prices introduced as an additional market in 12 large towns (population exceeding 25 lakhs)
- Online sources for select services such as airfares and OTT subscriptions
- Administrative data for standardized services such as rail fares, postal charges and fuel prices



SYLLABUS : Prelims: Economy
Newspaper: The Hindu; Page Number : 6

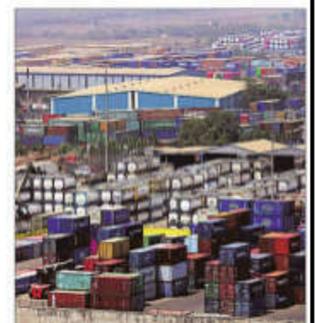


• LOOMING THREAT ON IMPORTS

OVER 40% of India's rough diamonds came from West Asia in FY25, which are processed in diamond cutting and polishing hubs before being exported

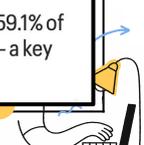
THE COUNTRY imported 68.5% of its limestone and 62.1% gypsum needs from West Asia. Both minerals are crucial for the construction ecosystem

IT IMPORTED 65.8% of its sulphur needs from West Asia, used to produce sulphuric acid, an essential input for fertilisers and several chemical industries



REUTERS PHOTO

INDIA ALSO imported 59.1% of its direct reduced iron — a key input in steelmaking



SYLLABUS : Prelims: Economy
Newspaper: The Hindu; **Page Number :** 1

Types of Parliamentary Grants

Supplementary Demand for Grants

- It is raised when the expenditure exceeds the Parliament-authorized amount for that year.
- Parliament must pass this before the end of the financial year.

Additional Grant

- It is raised if additional expenditure is needed upon an unanticipated new service that budget year.

Excess Grant

- It is granted when money is already spent on any service during a financial year over the amount granted for that service in the budget for that year.
- The Lok Sabha votes on it after the financial year.
- Before that, they must be approved by the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament.

Vote of Credit

- It is granted for an unexpected demand on account of the service's magnitude or indefinite character.
- It is like a blank cheque given to the Executive by the Lok Sabha.

Exceptional Grant

- It is granted for a particular purpose and forms no part of the current service of any financial year.

Token Grant

- It is granted for the re-appropriation of available funds without additional expenditure.

What are the Related Constitutional Provisions?

- **Article 115** pertains to supplementary, additional or excess grants.
- **Article 116** of the Constitution pertains to Votes on account, Votes of credit and exceptional grants.

PYQ (2012)

Q. Which of the following are the **methods of Parliamentary control over public finance in India?**

1. Placing Annual Financial Statement before the Parliament
2. Withdrawal of moneys from Consolidated Fund of India only after passing the Appropriation Bill
3. Provisions of supplementary grants and vote-on-account
4. A periodic or at least a mid-year review of programme of the Government against macroeconomic forecasts and expenditure by a **Parliamentary Budget Office**.
5. Introducing Finance Bill in the Parliament

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (c) 3, 4 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5



Q1. With reference to the WHO Pandemic Agreement, consider the following statements:

1. The Pandemic Agreement was adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2025.
2. The agreement aims to create a legally binding international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.
3. The agreement entered into force immediately after its adoption by the World Health Assembly.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: a

Q2. With reference to BRICS, consider the following statements:

1. The acronym 'BRIC' was coined by economist Jim O'Neill in 2001 to refer to the emerging economies of Bangladesh, Russia, India, and China.
2. South Africa joined the grouping in 2010, after which the group came to be known as BRICS.
3. Iran, UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia and Indonesia joined BRICS between 2024 and 2025.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: b

Q3. With reference to the National Chambal Sanctuary, consider the following statements:

1. It is located across the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
2. It was established primarily for the conservation of the Gharial.
3. The sanctuary is situated along the Chambal River, which is a tributary of the Yamuna River.

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

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

Answer: c

Q4. With reference to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) series in India, consider the following statements:

1. The base year of the CPI series has been revised from 2012 to 2024 using the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023–24.
2. In the revised CPI basket, the number of goods items has increased while service items have been reduced.
3. The CPI 2024 series incorporates e-commerce prices and selected online service prices along with traditional market price collection.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: a

Q5. Match List I (Type of Grant) with List II (Description):

List I	List II
A. Supplementary Grant	1. Granted for re-appropriation of funds without additional expenditure
B. Excess Grant	2. Granted when expenditure exceeds the amount authorised for a service during a financial year
C. Vote of Credit	3. Granted for an unexpected demand due to the magnitude or indefinite character of a service
D. Token Grant	4. Granted when expenditure has already exceeded the amount voted in the budget

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- a) A-2, B-4, C-3, D-1
- b) A-4, B-2, C-3, D-1
- c) A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4
- d) A-1, B-4, C-2, D-3

Answer: a





VAJIRAM & RAVI

Institute for IAS Examination

A unit of Vajiram & Ravi IAS Study Centre LLP

9-B, Bada Bazar Marg, Old Rajinder Nagar,
New Delhi - 110060 • Ph.: 41007400, 41007500

New No. 62, P Block, 6th Avenue, Anna Nagar,
Chennai - 600040 • Ph.: 044-4330-2121

Visit us at : www.vajiramandravi.com