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The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

8th April 2026



Records on Caste Census Decision is outside RTI ambit



CONTEXT: The Union government has stated that records of the Inter-Ministerial deliberations, inputs, and suggestions referred to in making the decision to enumerate caste in the 2027 Census are exempt from Right to Information Act, 2005.

- **Census:**

- It is the total process of collecting, compiling, analyzing and disseminating **demographic, economic and social data of all persons** in a country at a specific period of time.
- In India is **conducted at regular intervals of 10 years**.
- **Under Article 246** of the Constitution, the Census is a Union subject.
- **Legal Backing:** Census is backed by the Census Act 1948.

- **Caste Census:**

- It involves the systematic recording of **individuals' caste identities** during a **national census**.
- It aims to gather data on the **socio-economic status, education levels, and other demographic details** of various caste groups within the population.
- **Legal Backing:** Caste Census is not backed by any particular specific statute. Central govt by notification may provide for collection of caste data.

- **Every Census in independent India from 1951 to 2011** has published data on

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but not on other castes.

- **Before that, every Census until 1931** had data on caste. Thus, the most recent caste data available is from 1931 Census.

- **Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC):**

- It was conducted in based on the **recommendations of Group of Ministers** headed by then **Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee in 2010**.
- It was done **outside of the purview of Census exercise**.
- However the *findings were never made public* due to concerns about data accuracy & consistency.

- **Caste Survey:**

- Since only the Union govt has the power to conduct census, several state governments like **Bihar, Karnataka, Telangana** have already conducted caste surveys to ascertain the social and economic status of different castes for better policy making.
- **Legal Backing:** No statutory backing.



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Need for a Caste Census

- **Evidence-based Policymaking**
 - While data exists for SCs and STs, there is no reliable, updated national data on OBCs.
- **Rationalization of reservation:** current policies are based on the last caste census which was conducted in 1931.
 - e.g. Denotified, Nomadic & Semi-Nomadic Tribes.
 - **Bihar's 2023 caste survey found OBCs and EBCs make up over 63% of the state's population**, fueling calls for national-level caste data to guide policy decisions on reservations and social welfare.
- **Sub-Categorization Within Broad Groups:**
 - Detailed data enables the sub-categorization of OBCs, as recommended by the Rohini Commission (2017), to ensure equitable distribution of reservation benefits.
- **Better targeting of Government welfare schemes:**
 - Under the National Food Security Act, 83.92% of the population of Bihar. **Bihar caste survey:** in Bihar alone, 22.6 million persons have

- been excluded from this benefit.

- **Fulfilment of constitutional mandate:**

Article 340

- NCBC also urged the government to collect data on the population of OBCs as part of Census of India 2021 exercise.

Challenges:

- **Caste based political mobilisation:** May lead to "competitive backwardness", where groups seek lower status for benefits.
- **Hardening of caste identities may hamper growth of national integration**
- **Opens Pandora Box:**
 - For instance, Patels, Gujjars, Jats and other castes are demanding reservations.
- **Administrative and Logistical Complexities:**
 - India has thousands of castes and sub-castes, with significant regional variations in nomenclature and classification.
 - For instance, **classification issues** a caste listed as OBC in one state may be unrecognized in another (e.g., Jats in Haryana vs. Uttar Pradesh).
- **Lack of Uniform Definition:** same caste is spelt in different ways in different states. Also one caste may be extremely backward in one state and can be backward in the other state.



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Caste Census: Way Ahead

- **Standardized Classification:** Develop a clear and standardized list of castes and sub-castes.
 - **A comprehensive national directory of castes:** Registrar General of India and Census Commissioner must consult with academics, caste groups, political parties, and the public to finalize this list.
- **Comprehensive Training:** to avoid duplication and spelling errors - AI and Big Data Analytics can be used to minimize errors.
- **Ensuring Data Accuracy and Reliability:**
 - Implement mechanisms for data verification at multiple levels to minimize errors and inconsistencies.
- **Data Sensitivity:** Ensure that strong data protection laws and protocols are in place to safeguard the collected information.
- **Ensuring Fair Usage and Avoiding Political Misuse:**
 - as a tool for inclusive development, not vote-bank politics

Mains Practise Question

“Discuss the rationale behind conducting a caste census in India. Examine the potential benefits and challenges associated with it, and suggest a balanced approach for its implementation.”

(15 Marks, 250 words)



India Bangladesh Relations: Evolving Dynamics



CONTEXT: Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman arrived in Delhi on Tuesday.

Significance of Bangladesh For India

- **Geo-strategic:**
 - sharing a 4,096 km border (**India's Longest border**) and 54 transboundary rivers.
 - Bangladesh provides the **shortest land and port access**, to North-East India making Dhaka a strategic partner in regional connectivity.
- **Economic:**
 - Bangladesh is **India's biggest trade partner in South Asia**.
 - India is the **second biggest trade partner** of Bangladesh in Asia.
 - Bilateral trade stands at **USD 14.01 billion (2023-24)**.
 - vital for India to achieve its "vision of becoming a \$5 trillion economy".
- **Security and Border Management:**
 - Anti-India terror groups were dismantled under Sheikh Hasina "**Golden Chapter**" (2009-2024).
 - **BSF-Bangladesh Border Guard coordination** reduced cross-border crimes.
 - **Joint exercises:** Exercise Sampriti (Army) and Exercise Bongosagar (Navy).
 - **Land Boundary Agreement, 2015** settled enclave disputes.
- **International Cooperation:** *BIMSTEC*, SAARC, BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal), IORA.
- **Connectivity and Infrastructure:**
 - **Akhaura-Agartala rail link:** first train to run from the northeastern region to Bangladesh.
 - **Khulna-Mongla Port rail line**
 - **Maitri Setu over the Feni River** (connecting Sabroom in India's Tripura state with Ramgarh in Bangladesh)
 - **Agreement for the usage of Chittagong and Mongla Ports** for Indian cargo.
- **Water and River Cooperation:**
 - **Ganga Water Treaty, 1996:** guides water-sharing
 - **Joint Rivers Commission:** manages floods, irrigation, and data sharing. Cooperation continues across 54 rivers.
- **Medical Cooperation:** Bangladesh accounts for over 35% of India's medical tourists, through medical visa facilitation, hospital collaboration, and telemedicine services.
- **Cultural and People-to-People Ties:** Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre and the Indian Cultural Centre in Dhaka.



India Bangladesh Relations: Evolving Dynamics



CONTEXT: Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman arrived in Delhi on Tuesday.



Emerging Challenges

- **Political Transition:** Student-led protests in 2024 led to Sheikh Hasina's exit and the establishment of an **interim government led by Muhammad Yunus**.
 - **remarks – like describing Northeast India as "landlocked"**
 - greater Chinese trade ties with northeastern India, using Bangladesh ports
- **Attacks on minorities:** The ethnic attacks on Bangla-speaking Hindus in Bangladesh and the attacks on Bangladeshi's in India.
- **Geopolitical Balancing:** Bangladesh **Nationalist Party** has historically advocated a **policy of "Look East" (towards China)** and **closer ties with the Islamic world (including Pakistan)** to balance India's influence.
- **Impact on connectivity projects:**

- include the **Akhaura–Agartala** cross-border rail link, the **Khulna–Mongla** port line, and the **Dhaka–Tongi–Joydebpur** expansion.
- Survey work on five other proposed links has also been paused.

— BBC

Dipu Das: The lynching of a Hindu man in Bangladesh that shocked the world

The morning before he died, Dipu Chandra Das left home at first light, stepping out of his tin-sheet house in Bangladesh's Mymensingh city,...

Bangladeshi Hindu rights activist exposes over 1,000 Islamist atrocities on Hindus at UNHCR

Bangladeshi Hindu rights activist Dipan Mitra highlighted incidents of atrocities against Bangladeshi Hindus at the hands of Islamists at UN...

5 Dec 2025

India halts Rs 50 billion rail projects in Bangladesh over security fears

24 Apr 2025 | Min Read | CW Team

- **The "India Out" Sentiment:** Anti-India rhetoric remains potent in university campuses and student movements.
 - Even if not explicitly stated in the BNP manifesto, this sentiment limits the new government's ability to be seen as "friendly" to India.
- **Transshipment Facility Withdrawal:** India revoked Bangladesh's right to ship exports through Indian ports citing congestion; Dhaka saw it as damaging to trade competitiveness.
- **Extradition Tension:** The interim government has sought Hasina's extradition from India – causing diplomatic discomfort.



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India ends transshipment facility for Bangladesh exports, cites congestion

Facility withdrawn as logistical delays, higher costs were hindering Indian exports and creating backlogs, says MEA; move comes after Bangladesh outreach to China, comments on trade ties with northeast

Updated - April 09, 2025 10:32 pm IST - New Delhi



The Times of India

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> › world › articleshow

Resurgent BNP seems set to press extradition demand

13 Feb 2026 — The return of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to power in Bangladesh has brought back into focus Dhaka's demand for the extradition ... [Read more](#)

Way ahead

- **De-hyphenation from Awami League:**

India should shift from regime-to-regime deals to people-to-people connect. Engaging with the BNP and the broader Bangladeshi civil society is essential to restore public goodwill.

- Easing visa regimes for medical tourism and education can act as a soft power bridge.

- **Pragmatic Engagement:** High-level visits (potentially by the PM) could be offered to confer international legitimacy to the new regime.

- **Economic Interdependence as a Stabilising Tool:**

- Continued Indian supply of cotton yarn, power, and essential commodities can stabilise Bangladesh's economy while reinforcing interdependence & **cooperative behaviour.**

- **CEPA & LDC Graduation:** As Bangladesh graduates from the **Least Developed Country status in 2026**, (become a Developing Country) it will lose duty-free access to Western markets.

- India can fast-track the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement to offer duty-free access to the massive Indian market, acting as an **economic cushion contingent on political stability.**

- **Establish Clear "Red Lines":**

communicate its non-negotiables to the new government:

- **Protection of Minorities**
- **No Hostile Assets like Chinese developments at Mongla and Payra ports** must not evolve into **dual-use facilities** (e.g., submarine docking) that threaten the Eastern Naval Command.



India Bangladesh Relations: Evolving Dynamics

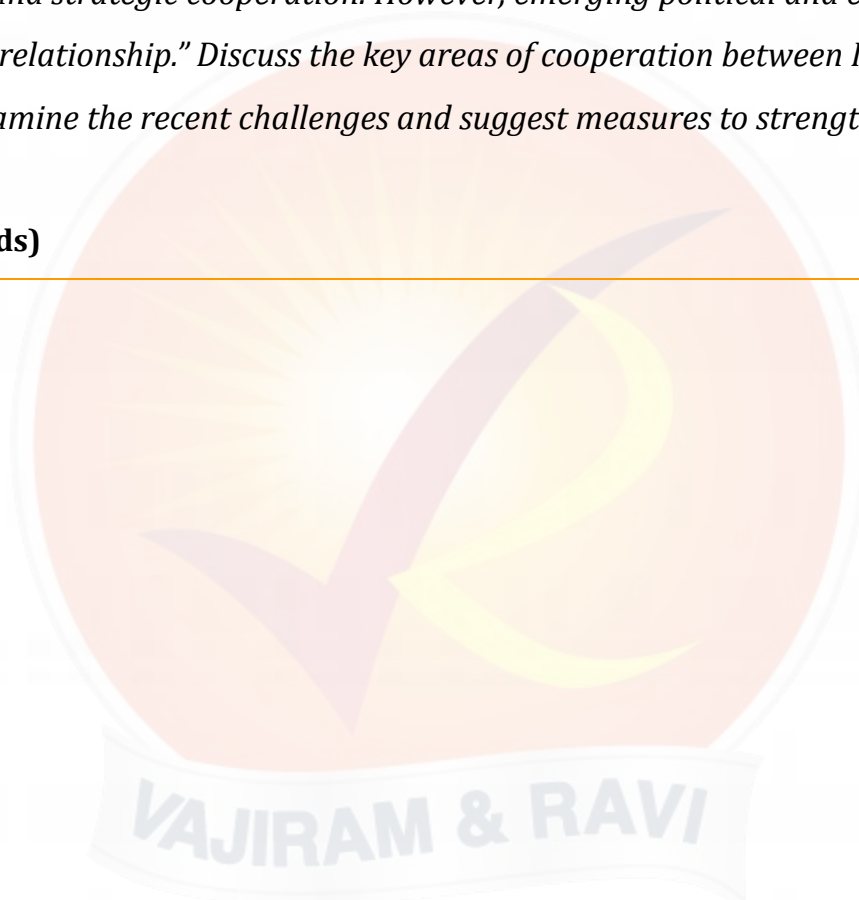


CONTEXT: Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman arrived in Delhi on Tuesday.

Mains Practise Question

“India–Bangladesh relations have evolved into a multifaceted partnership encompassing connectivity, trade, and strategic cooperation. However, emerging political and economic challenges continue to test this relationship.” Discuss the key areas of cooperation between India and Bangladesh. Also examine the recent challenges and suggest measures to strengthen bilateral ties.”

(15 Marks, 250 words)



Kalpakkam nuclear reactor attains criticality



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Science and Technology
Newspaper : The Indian express; **Page No :** 15

Three-stage nuclear power programme

- It was **formulated by Homi Bhabha in the 1950s** to secure the country's **long term energy independence**.
- India has mastered over the **pressurised heavy water reactor** technology, or reactors that **use natural uranium as fuel** and **heavy water (deuterium oxide)** as coolant and moderator.
- **Two other technologies are a work-in-progress:**
 - atomic reactors called fast breeders
 - thorium-based nuclear reactors
- These **three technologies (PHWRs-FBRs-Thorium reactors)**, progressing in series, make up **India's ambitious three-stage nuclear power programme**.
- **Aim:** pathway to **utilising India's abundant thorium reserves** found in:
 - **coastal and inland placer sands** on the beaches of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

- **Inland riverine sands** of Jharkhand and West Bengal – to generate electricity.
- Thorium is particularly attractive for India, as it has only around 1–2% of the global uranium reserves, but **one of the largest shares of global thorium reserves**.

Stage I – Pressurized Heavy Water Reactor:

- **Natural uranium fuelled** pressurized heavy water reactors produce **electricity** while generating **plutonium-239 as by-product**.
- **Natural uranium** contains **only 0.7% of the fissile isotope uranium-235**.
- Most of the remaining **99.3% is uranium-238** which is **not fissile** but can be **converted in a reactor** to the **fissile isotope plutonium-239**.

Stage II – Fast Breeder Reactor:

- It would use **plutonium-239, recovered** by reprocessing spent fuel from the first stage, and **natural uranium**.



Kalpakkam nuclear reactor attains criticality



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Science and Technology
Newspaper : The Indian express; **Page No :** 15

- **plutonium-239** undergoes fission to produce energy, while the **uranium-238** present in the fuel **transmutes to additional plutonium-239.**
- **Why should Uranium-238 be transmuted to Plutonium-239?**
 - Uranium-235 and Plutonium-239 can sustain a chain reaction. But Uranium-238 cannot sustain a chain reaction.
 - So it is transmuted to Plutonium-239.
- **But Why U-238 and not U-235?**
 - Natural uranium contains **only 0.7% of the fissile isotope uranium-235.** Most of the remaining 99.3% is uranium-238.
 - Once the **inventory of plutonium-239 is built up thorium can be introduced as a blanket material** in the reactor and transmuted to uranium-233 for use in the third stage.

Stage III – Thorium Based Reactors:

- involves a self-sustaining series of **thorium-232-uranium-233** fuelled reactors.
- Thermal breeder reactor, which in principle **can be refueled using only naturally occurring thorium.**

Summary: Thorium itself is **not a fissile material**, and thus **cannot undergo fission to produce energy.**

- Instead, it **must be transmuted to uranium-233** in a reactor fueled by other fissile materials **[plutonium-239 or uranium-235].**
- The **first two stages**, natural uranium-fueled heavy water reactors and plutonium-fueled fast breeder reactors, are intended to **generate sufficient fissile material from India's limited uranium resources**, so that all its vast thorium reserves can be fully utilized in the third stage of thermal breeder reactors.



Kalpakkam nuclear reactor attains criticality



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Science and Technology
Newspaper : The Indian express; **Page No :** 15

Kalpakkam FBR

- Recently, vital **second stage of India's three-stage nuclear programme** got a boost.
 - country's **first indigenous Fast Breeder Reactor** at Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu attaining criticality..
 - **Attaining criticality:** means the initiation of a **self-sustaining nuclear fission reaction** that will eventually lead to the generation of power by the 500-megawatt electric.
 - each fission event in the core now releases a sufficient number of neutrons to sustain an ongoing series of reactions.

- It will initially **use uranium-plutonium mixed oxide (MOX) fuel**, with a **'blanket' of a Uranium isotope (U238)** around the fuel core that will undergo **nuclear transmutation** to produce more fuel – *therefore, the name 'breeder'*.
 - **Nuclear transmutation** involves the conversion of a chemical element or isotope into another chemical element, with the **numbers of protons or neutrons** in the nucleus of the atom undergoing a change.

About the News

- Fast reactors are essentially **designed to produce more fuel than they consume.**
- **Relevance:** Once commissioned, India will be the **second country** after Russia to have a commercial operating FBR.



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Polity

Newspaper : The Hindu; Page No : 01

- The doctrine of “essentiality” was **invented by a seven-judge Bench** of the Supreme Court in the **‘Shirur Mutt’ case in 1954**.
 - The court held that the **term “religion” will cover all rituals and practices** “integral” to a religion, and **took upon itself the responsibility of determining** the essential and non-essential practices of a religion.
- **How courts decide essentiality?**
 - Over the years, courts have been **inconsistent on this question**
 - religious texts to determine essentiality
 - empirical behaviour of followers
 - whether the practice existed at the time the religion originated.
- **When this doctrine comes into picture?**
 - **Article 25–28** – freedom of religion with some reasonable restrictions.
 - The **Indian model of secularism** also provides for **state’s intervention** in religion to ensure freedom of religion.
 - When the exercise of **religious practices came in conflict with other fundamental rights** guaranteed under the constitution.

SC begins review of 2018 Sabarimala judgment

“How can the courts then examine the essentiality of religious practices of a denomination which does not otherwise offend public order, morality, and health?” Mr. Mehta asked the top court.

The focal point of the reference is how far the courts can use their plenary powers to judicially review religious practices considered “essential or core” in the name of ushering in social reform.

The Union government argued whether the judges had the expertise to decide if a ritual or a manner of devotion was merely superstition or an essential religious practice.

“The courts would first have to decide if it is a religious practice by interpreting the religious texts concerned. These texts require examination by religious scholars to understand what actually was meant at the time it was written. That is impossible for a court to do,” Mr. Mehta submitted.

The 2018 judgment had upheld the right of women to enter the Sabarimala temple while rejecting the argument that not allowing women of menstruating age inside was an ancient custom essential to the nature of the deity, Lord Ayyappa in the Naishtika Brahmachari form, presiding at the shrine.

“Can the attribute of a deity [Naishtika Brahmachari] be judicially reviewed?” the top law officer queried.



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Polity

Newspaper : The Hindu; Page No : 01

26. Freedom to manage religious affairs

Subject to public order, morality and health, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right—

- (a) to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes;
- (b) to manage its own affairs in matters of religion;
- (c) to own and acquire movable and immovable property; and
- (d) to administer such property in accordance with law.

2004

Commissioner of Police v Acharya Jagadisharananda Avadhuta

The Court applied the test of essential religious practices in deciding whether the Tandava Dance was an essential rite of the Ananda Marga Faith as held by the High Court. Though the Ananda Marga faith was founded in 1955, the Tandava dance was introduced to its followers in 1966 and was prescribed as an essential religious practice in the Carya Carya in 1986. Despite this scriptural injunction, the Court in its majority opinion held that the Tandava Dance was not an essential practice of the Ananda Marga faith. The Court observed that in order to determine whether or not a particular practice is an essential part of religion, the test must be whether the absence of the practice itself fundamentally alters the religion.

2017

Shayara Bano v Union of India

Rejecting the argument that the practice of Triple Talaq was an essential practice under Islam, the Supreme Court held that it was not an essential practice and could not be offered constitutional protection under Article 25. The Court held that it was against the basic tenets of the Quran and thus violative of the Shariat. A practice that is merely permitted or not prohibited by a religion cannot be considered an essential or positive tenet sanctioned by that particular religion. Triple Talaq is only a form of talaq which is permissible in law, but at the same time, stated to be sinful by the very Hanafi School which tolerates it. Therefore, this would not form part of any essential religious practice as the fundamental nature of the Islamic religion, as seen through an Indian Sunni Muslim's eyes, will not change without this practice.

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Why Artemis II crew went farther from Earth than anyone before



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Science and Technology
Newspaper : The Indian Express; **Page No : 15**

- Artemis Mission is a **lunar mission to establish the first long-term presence** on the Moon.
- It will **send astronauts around the Moon**, marking humanity's return to crewed deep-space exploration **since Apollo 17 (1972)**.
- **NASA partnered with three space agencies:** the European Space Agency (ESA), the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and Canadian Space Agency (CSA).
- **Artemis mission is divided into four parts:** Artemis I, Artemis II, Artemis III, and Artemis IV.
 - The missions are part of NASA's vision to **develop its 'Moon Base'**.
- **Artemis I:** It is the **first uncrewed flight test** of the **Orion spacecraft and Space Launch System rocket** around the moon.
 - **Orion Spacecraft:** is a partially reusable crewed spacecraft used in NASA's Artemis program.
 - **Space Launch System Rocket:** is a **super heavy-lift expendable** launch vehicle developed by NASA.
 - An **expendable launch vehicle** is a launch vehicle that can be **launched only once**, after which its components are either destroyed during re-entry or discarded in space.
- It will be the **first crewed flight test** around the moon since **Apollo 17 (1972)**.
- The crewed Orion spacecraft will **perform a flyby test** (no landing) and return to Earth.
- First crewed Artemis mission, **bridging the gap between test flight (Artemis I) and lunar landing (Artemis III)**.
- **Four astronauts will take a 10-day flight** around the moon and back to Earth, testing systems ahead of the Artemis 3 mission, which aims to deliver astronauts to the lunar surface by 2028.
- It intends to place the **first woman and non-white person** on the moon.
-



Why Artemis II crew went farther from Earth than anyone before



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Science and Technology
Newspaper : The Indian Express; **Page No :** 15

- **Primary agenda:** to prove that the Orion spacecraft—and its European Service Module—can safely sustain human life in the harsh radiation and isolation of deep space.
- Artemis II has **travelled 252,756 miles** (406,771 kilometers) **away from Earth**, but setting this record is not the mission's main objective.
- The record **before this was the 4,00,171 km** travelled by **Apollo-13 in 1970**.
- Artemis II is **not a landing mission**.
- Instead, it is a highly regulated flyby designed to **test the limits of the Orion spacecraft**.
- **While earlier missions like Apollo 8** followed a **"circular lunar orbit"** dictating that the crew fire their engines to **maintain a fixed distance from the lunar surface**.
- The **Orion spacecraft is flying an elliptical "free-return trajectory."**
 - ◆ This path **relies on the Moon's gravity** to naturally slingshot the spacecraft back toward Earth.
- **How does the 'free-return trajectory' work?**
- **What makes this flight plan attractive?**
 - This **looping, figure-eight route** acts as an uncompromised, passive safety mechanism.
 - It ensures that in the **event of an engine failure**, the crew **does not find itself stranded** in deep space.
 - **It is exceptionally fuel-efficient:** Entering a circular lunar orbit requires a massive, fuel-heavy deceleration burn to get caught in the Moon's gravity,

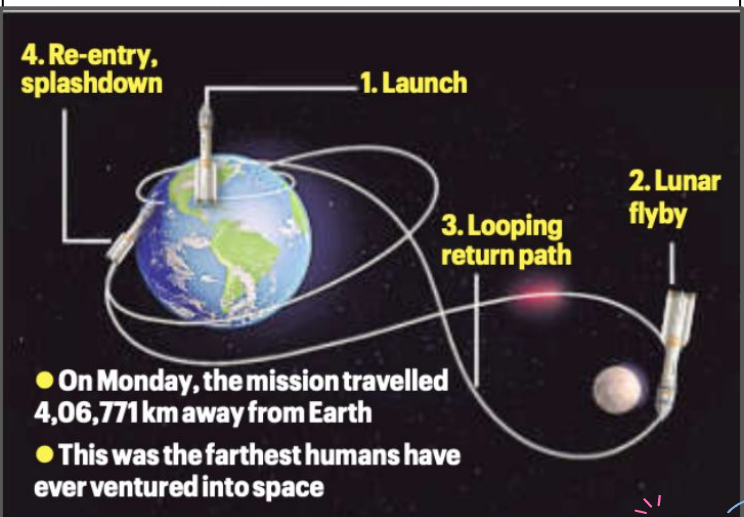
How does the 'free-return trajectory' work?

Prioritising crew safety and fuel efficiency, this free-return trajectory is executed in two phases:

High-Earth orbit: Rather than aiming directly for the Moon, Orion pushed into an elliptical path around Earth, stretching outward to roughly 74,000 km. This afforded the crew a 42-hour window to conduct critical checks on the environmental control and life support systems. Should any system have failed here, the spacecraft remained within Earth's gravitational pull, allowing an abort and splashdown within hours.

Lunar slingshot: Once cleared for deep space, Orion was pushed toward the Moon by the European Service Module, aiming for a point roughly 10,300 km beyond the lunar far side. This allowed the Moon's gravity to act as a tether, catching the spacecraft and whipping it around the far side, back toward Earth's atmosphere.

- followed days later by an equally massive acceleration burn to break free.
 - Orion's utilisation of gravity to change direction conserves critical propellant.
- This **lighter fuel requirement reduced the overall mass the Space Launch System rocket** had to lift off the pad, while ensuring the spacecraft retained a **reserve of propellant for potential emergencies**.



Highest Venezuelan crude purchase in last 6 years



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Economy

Newspaper : The Indian Express; Page No : 13

- Venezuelan crude other than being bottom-heavy, also has high viscosity and a high acid number.
- **Higher viscosity** indicates a potential **resistance to flow**.
 - *co-blended with other lighter crude* to the extent of 10-15% and then processed.
- **Heavy** because it is **thicker and denser** than the lighter crude oil grades.
 - can be processed on a sustained basis by **only a handful of Indian refineries**, (Reliance's Jamnagar) constraining system-wide intake.
- **Acid number** is used to determine the acidity and the **chemical mix** existing naturally in the oil - would result in corroding.
 - Venezuelan crude contains high metal and nitrogen content.



- **Venezuelan oil "heavy sour crude"**: heavy because it is thicker and denser than the lighter crude oil grades, and **sour because of its high sulphur content**.
- **SBI Research: India's import fuel bill could decline by \$3 billion** should they move to Venezuela.



Highest Venezuelan crude purchase in last 6 years



SYLLABUS: Prelims: Economy

Newspaper : The Indian Express; Page No : 13

Decoding the News

- **Major river & water body:**
 - Orinoco river (empties in Atlantic ocean)
 - Rio Negro (drains in amazon river)
 - Lake Maracaibo (Largest lake in South America)
- **World's highest waterfall – Angel Falls** is located in the Guiana Highlands.

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SYLLABUS: Prelims: Art & Culture

Newspaper : The Hindu; Page No : 1

- **History:**

- The **origins** of the Kumbh Mela are rooted in **Hindu mythology**.
- According to the **Samudra Manthan** (churning of the ocean) story in the ancient Hindu scriptures, the **gods (Devas) and demons (Asuras) fought over the Amrit** (nectar of immortality).
- During this celestial battle, **drops of the nectar fell at four locations—Prayagraj** (confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna, and the mythical invisible Saraswati), **Haridwar** (Ganges) , **Ujjain** (Shipra), **and Nashik** (Godavari) —where the Kumbh Mela is now held, with the Maha Kumbh occurring once every **144 years** at **Prayagraj**.
- Historically, the Maha Kumbh Mela has been referenced since ancient times, with records dating back to the **Maurya** and **Gupta periods**.
- It received royal patronage from various dynasties, including the **Mughals**, and was **documented** by **colonial administrators** like James Prinsep.
- Recognized by **UNESCO** as an **intangible cultural heritage in 2017**, the Kumbh Mela symbolizes India's enduring traditions, fostering unity, spirituality, and cultural exchange among millions worldwide.

- The **timing** of each Kumbh Mela is determined by the **astrological positions** of the **Sun, Moon, and Jupiter**, believed to signal an auspicious period for spiritual cleansing and self-enlightenment.
- **Different Types of Kumbh:**
 - The **Kumbh Mela** is celebrated **4 times over a course of 12 years**.
 - At **Haridwar and Prayagraj**, **Ardh-Kumbh** Mela is held **every 6th year**.
 - The **Maha Kumbh Mela** is celebrated at Prayag after 144 years (after 12 'Purna Kumbh Melas').
 - **Maagh Kumbh** is celebrated **every year** in the month of **Maagh (Jan-Feb)** in **Prayagraj**.
- **Kumbh 2019 Created 3 Guinness World Records:**
 - Largest traffic and crowd management plan.
 - The biggest painting exercise of public sites under the **Paint My City Scheme**.
 - Biggest sanitation and waste disposal mechanism.



Q1. With reference to the fuel cycles in India's Three-Stage Nuclear Power Programme, consider the following statements:

1. Stage I uses Natural Uranium to produce electricity and yields Plutonium-239 as a byproduct.
2. Stage II uses a core of Plutonium-239 to breed Uranium-233 from a blanket of Thorium-232.
3. Stage III is designed to use Thorium-232 directly as a primary fissile fuel to sustain a spontaneous chain reaction.

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

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

Answer: b

Q2. With reference to the specific phases of the Artemis program, consider the following statements:

1. Artemis I was a crewed orbital mission designed to test the life support systems of the Orion spacecraft in deep space.
2. Artemis II aims to land the first woman and the first person of colour on the lunar surface.
3. Artemis III will utilise a Human Landing System provided by a commercial partner to ferry astronauts from lunar orbit to the South Pole.

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

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

Answer: a

Q3. Consider the following statements:

Statement I: Even if a religious practice is proven to be 'essential and integral' to a religion, it is not completely immune from State intervention.

Statement II: Article 25(2) empowers the State to make laws providing for social welfare and reform.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- a) Statement I is correct, but Statement II is incorrect
- b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct, and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I.
- c) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct, and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I.
- d) Statement I is incorrect, but Statement II is correct.

Answer: b

Q4. With reference to the characteristics of Venezuelan crude oil, consider the following statements:

1. It is globally classified as 'Heavy Sweet Crude' because of its high density and remarkably low sulphur content.
2. The crude possesses a high acid number, which acts as a natural anti-corrosive agent during the refining process.
3. Its high viscosity indicates that it has a very low resistance to flow, making pipeline transportation highly efficient.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) None of the above

Answer: d

Q5. Consider the following pairs of Kumbh Mela locations and their corresponding rivers:

Location	River
1. Haridwar	Ganga
2. Ujjain	Shipra
3. Nashik	Godavari
4. Prayagraj	Narmada

How many pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Answer: c





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