

Today's Prelims Topics

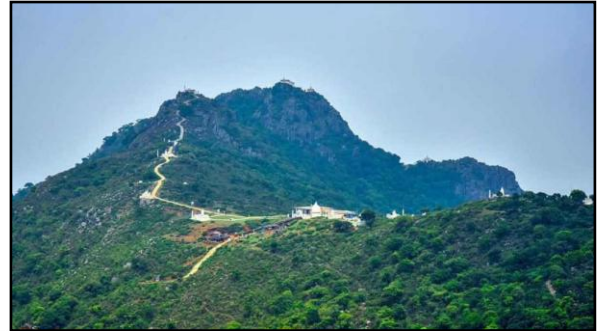
Marang Buru / Parasnath Hill

Context

Jharkhand High Court ordered a ban on liquor and meat on Parasnath Hill to respect Jain sentiments amid complaints of violations during tribal festivals.

About Parasnath Hills

- **Parasnath Hill** is the **highest peak** in **Jharkhand (1,365 m)**, located in the **Giridih district**.
- It is a **sacred site** for **Jains** and a **holy place** for the tribal **Santhal community**.
- The hill is part of the **Parasnath Wildlife Sanctuary**, which is a **protected area**.



Religious & Cultural Importance

- **Jainism:**
 - Considered the most **sacred pilgrimage site (Shri Sammed Shikharji)** for **Jains**.
 - Believed to be the place where **20 out of 24 Tirthankaras** attained **Moksha**.
 - Numerous **Jain temples and shrines** are present on the hill.
- **Santhal Tribe:**
 - Recognizes **Marang Buru ("Great Mountain")** as a **sacred site** for their religious practices and venue of the **Sendra festival**.
 - Conducts an annual **festival and rituals** at the site.
 - The site holds spiritual and cultural importance for the tribal community.

Source: The Hindu:

Jnanpith Award

Context

President Droupadi Murmu conferred the 58th Jnanpith Award (2025).

About Jnanpith Award

- **Instituted:** 1961
- **By:** Bharatiya Jnanpith
- **Significance:** India's highest literary honor
- **Frequency:** Conferred annually
- **Eligibility:** Indian authors writing in the languages listed in the **Eighth Schedule** of the Indian Constitution.
- **Award Components:**
 - Citation plaque
 - Cash prize of **Rs.11 lakh**
 - **Bronze replica** of the goddess **Saraswati**
- **Recent Recipients: 2025 (58th Jnanpith Award):**
 - **Gulzar:** Renowned poet-lyricist.
 - **Jagadguru Rambhadracharya:** Esteemed Sanskrit scholar and Hindu spiritual leader.



Source: [PIB: PRESIDENT OF INDIA PRESENTS 58TH JNANPITH AWARD](#)



Rajon ki Baoli

Context

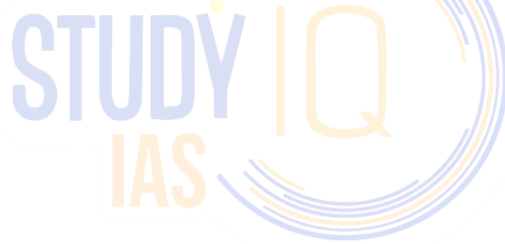
The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** completed the conservation of **Rajon ki Baoli**.

About Rajon Ki Baoli

- **Type:** Stepwell (Baoli)
- **Period:** Lodhi-era, built in the **16th century**
- **Location:** Mehrauli Archaeological Park, New Delhi
- **Built by:** Daulat Khan (a noble of Sikandar Lodi's court).
- **Architectural Features:**
 - Consists arched corridors on each side.
 - Made using **traditional lime plaster and mortar**.
 - The complex also has a **mosque, a tomb, and a chhatri (pavilion)**.
 - Exhibits a **blend of functional architecture and Indo-Islamic design**.
 - Originally built to serve as a **water reservoir** for local residents and travelers.
 - The name "**Rajon**" refers to the masons (raj mistris), **not royalty**.



Source: [The Hindu: ASI completes conservation work in Lodhi-era stepwell](#)



Shingles Vaccine and Dementia Risk

Context

A recent study from **Wales**, published in *The Lancet Healthy Longevity*, found that the shingles vaccine is associated with a significantly **lower risk of developing dementia**.

What is Dementia?

- Dementia is a group of conditions characterized by **impairment of at least two brain functions**, such as **memory loss and judgment**.
- **Alzheimer's** disease is the most common form.
- Currently, there are **no effective vaccines or cures** for most forms of dementia.

What is Shingles?

- **Cause:** Caused by the **varicella-zoster virus**, the same virus that causes **chickenpox**.
 - After chickenpox, the virus remains dormant in **nerve cells** and can reactivate later.
- **Symptoms:** **Painful rash** is the most common symptom.
 - Typically appears as a **stripe of blisters** on one side of the body (usually torso).
 - Other symptoms may include **itching, burning, or tingling sensations** before the rash appears.
- **Transmission:** Shingles itself is **not contagious**, but the virus can **spread** to someone who hasn't had chickenpox.
 - Spread occurs via **direct contact with fluid** from shingles blisters or **inhalation of virus particles**.
- **Complications:**
 - **Postherpetic neuralgia (PHN):** Persistent pain even after the rash heals.
 - If near the eye: Can cause **vision loss**.
 - Rarely: May lead to **facial paralysis** or **brain inflammation** (encephalitis).
- **Mostly Found in:**
 - Common in people **over 50 years of age**.
 - Increased risk in those with **weakened immune systems** (e.g., HIV, cancer, organ transplant patients).
- **Prevention:** **Shingles vaccine** (e.g., Shingrix) helps prevent reactivation of the virus.
 - Recommended for **adults 50+ years** or younger adults with **immunocompromised conditions**.
 - Antiviral medications (e.g., **acyclovir, valacyclovir**) to shorten duration.
 - Pain management with **analgesics, topical creams, or nerve-blocking medications**.

SHINGLES VACCINE & THE HEART

A South Korean study, which looked at insurance data of more than 1.2 million people, was published in the *European Heart Journal* earlier this month. For those inoculated with the live zoster vaccine, it found the risk of:

- A major cardiovascular event was 26% lower;
- Heart failure was 26% lower;
- Stroke was 24% lower;
- Heart attack was 22% lower; and
- Clotting disorder was 22% lower.

These impacts were more pronounced in men, people under the age of 60 years, and those with unhealthy lifestyles. Previous studies have shown that a shingles infection increased the risk of conditions like heart attack and heart failure as much by as two times.

Source: [Indian Express: Shingles Vaccine and Lower Dementia Risks](#)

Renaming of Places in India

Context

Bihar Government approved a proposal to rename Gaya city as 'Gaya Jee' due to its historical and religious significance.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Entry 5, State List – Schedule VII:** States have the power to alter names of places (cities, towns, villages).
- **Article 3 (for states & UTs):** Only Parliament can alter the name, boundaries, or area of a State or Union Territory.
 - Does not apply to renaming of cities/towns — that falls under state jurisdiction.
- **Approval by the Union Government: As per Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) guidelines:**
 - Proposals for renaming must be sent by the State Government.
 - Final approval comes from the MHA, after consultations with:
 - Survey of India
 - Department of Posts
 - Registrar General of India
 - Ministry of Railways

Recent Examples of Renaming

Old Name	New Name	State	Year
Allahabad	Prayagraj	Uttar Pradesh	2018
Faizabad	Ayodhya	Uttar Pradesh	2018
Gurgaon	Gurugram	Haryana	2016
Mughalsarai	Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay Nagar	Uttar Pradesh	2018

Source: [The Hindu: Bihar Government approved to rename Gaya city as 'Gaya Jee'](#)

Samudrayaan Mission

Context

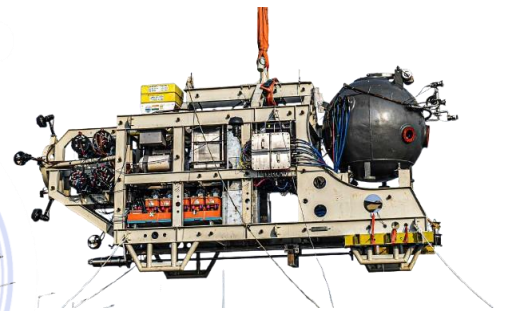
'Samudrayaan' mission is expected to be launched by the end of 2026.

About Samudrayaan Mission

- **Samudrayaan** is a key initiative under the **Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)**.
- It aims to explore ocean depths of up to **6,000 meters** using a **manned submersible vehicle** named '**Matsya 6000**'.
- India will join the elite group of countries — **U.S., Russia, China, France, and Japan** — that have conducted successful crewed deep-sea missions.
- **Objectives and Opportunities**
 - Enhance **India's capabilities in deep-sea research**.
 - Enable **assessment of living and non-living ocean resources**.
 - Strengthen **ocean observation systems**.
 - Explore the potential for **deep-sea tourism** in the future.

About MATSYA 6000

- A **4th-generation, self-propelled, human-rated deep-ocean submersible**.
- Being developed by the **National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai**.
- Has successfully completed **wet testing**.
- Endurance:
 - **12 hours** during normal missions.
 - Up to **96 hours** in emergency situations.



About Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- **Launched** in 2021, with a **5-year completion target**.
- **Purpose:** To explore deep-ocean resources and develop indigenous technologies for sustainable utilization.
- Supports **India's Blue Economy goals**.

Source: [The Hindustan Times: 'Samudrayaan': India's first manned deep ocean mission to be launched by 2026 end](#)

Editorial Summary

Rising Hypertension Among Young Generation

Context

Contrary to past assumptions, high blood pressure is no longer restricted to older adults — it's increasingly affecting children and adolescents in India.

What is Meant By Hypertension?

- Blood pressure refers to the force with which blood pushes against the walls of the arteries, which are the body's major blood vessels.
- Hypertension, or high blood pressure, occurs when this force is consistently too high.
- A person is considered hypertensive if:
 - Systolic blood pressure is ≥ 140 mmHg, or
 - Diastolic blood pressure is ≥ 90 mmHg, or
 - The person is taking **anti-hypertensive medication** to control their blood pressure.

Need to Control Hypertension Among Teens

- **Alarming Statistics:**
 - **CNNS (2016–18):** 7.3% of Indian adolescents had hypertensive BP levels; 9.1% in urban areas.
 - **NFHS-5:** 12% of teens (15–19 years) had elevated blood pressure.
- **Delayed Detection:** Most adolescents are unaware of their condition until adulthood, by which time health complications may already be underway.
- **Long-Term Risks:** Unchecked adolescent hypertension increases the likelihood of cardiovascular diseases, kidney damage, and stroke later in life.

Concerns Associated with the Rise in Teen Hypertension

- **Rising Childhood Obesity:** Increasing body mass index (BMI) due to poor diets and sedentary lifestyles is a major risk factor.
- **Sedentary Digital Lifestyle:** Reduced outdoor activity and screen-heavy routines limit physical exercise necessary to regulate blood pressure.
- **High Salt Intake:** Adolescents consume over **8 grams of salt daily** — nearly **double** the WHO's adult recommendation.
 - Major sources: processed snacks, junk food, and salty street foods.
- **Early Habit Formation:** Kids develop a taste for high-salt, high-fat foods early, disliking healthier alternatives.
 - These preferences become hard-wired, increasing future risk.

Way Forward to Improve the Situation

- **Strengthen PM POSHAN's Nutritional Goals:** Incorporate **fresh, regionally-inspired menus** with reduced salt and oil.
 - Focus on **diversity and seasonal produce**.
- **Promote Food Literacy in Schools:** Introduce **nutrition education** similar to Japan's *ShoKuiku* model.
 - Teach students about the **origins and impacts of food choices**.

Japan's Steps (ShoKuiku Model)

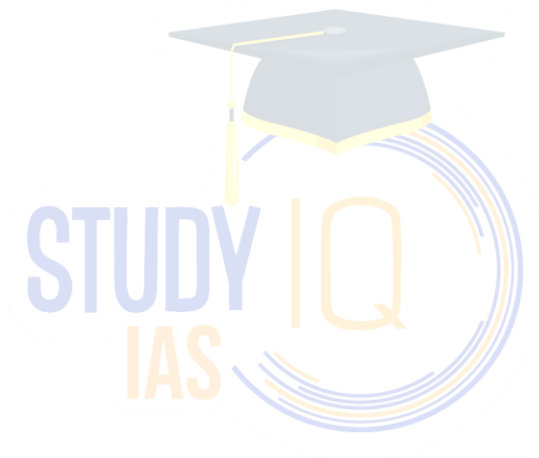
- Introduced ShoKuiku law in 2005 to promote food education and healthy eating habits.
- Children help plan, serve, and eat meals together, learning nutrition and food origins hands-on.

Vietnam's Steps

- Adopted Japan's model in 2012 with Ajinomoto to develop a school meal project.
- Created tools for balanced menus, nutrition education, and model kitchens in schools.

- **Reduce Salt in Packaged Foods:** Enforce **mandatory front-of-pack labelling**.
 - Limit **marketing of junk food** to children.
- **Make Physical Activity Non-Negotiable:** Ensure physical exercise is part of daily school routine.
 - Promote **games, yoga, and sports** participation.
- **Early Screening and Awareness:** Conduct **regular BP monitoring** and **BMI checks** in schools.
 - Create awareness campaigns among parents and teachers.
- **Collaborate with Local Communities:** Involve **parents, Anganwadi workers, and local NGOs** to sustain healthy habits at home.
 - Encourage **kitchen gardens** in schools for hands-on learning.

Source: [The Hindu: Raising healthy hearts: reimagining school nutrition to tackle childhood hypertension](#)



The paradox of the approach to the Manipur issue

Context

The conflict in Manipur has now continued for two years, and a political solution still seems far away, with no clear end in sight.

Current Situation in Manipur

- **Two years of ongoing ethnic violence** between Meitei and Kuki-Zomi-Hmar communities, resulting in over **250 deaths** and **thousands displaced**.
- Internally displaced people are living in **sub-human relief camps**, with little progress in restoring normalcy.
- Ethnic divisions have hardened, and a **political settlement remains elusive**.
- Armed militia and insurgent groups are **increasingly active**, with law and order **outsourced** to valley-based armed groups in some areas.

Government's Stance

- The **central government has not prioritised** Manipur's crisis at the national level.
- Despite the **scale of tragedy**, PM Modi has **not visited the state** or presented a detailed roadmap.
- National security framing has been selectively applied — more attention is given to **external security threats** like Pakistan than **internal conflicts** like Manipur.

Steps Taken by Government

Buffer zones created by paramilitary forces to separate warring communities.

- **Operation All-Clear (2004)** had flushed out insurgents, but its gains are now undermined.
- Imposition of **President's Rule (Feb 2025)** after the BJP-led state government collapsed.
- Arms collection drives with **deadlines for surrender** of looted weapons.
- Efforts to **fence the India-Myanmar border** and revoke the **Free Movement Regime** to curb cross-border insurgency.

Shortfalls of These Measures

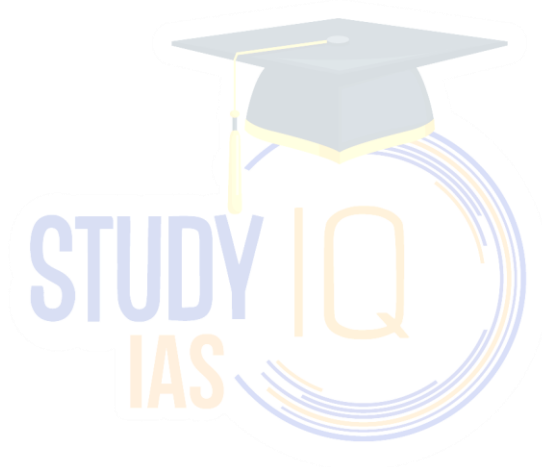
- **Security narrative misused** to target specific ethnic groups (e.g., exaggerated threats of Kuki militants).
- **Valley-based insurgent groups (VBIGs)** have strengthened and often act with impunity.
- **Weapon recovery incomplete**: Only around 4,000 out of 6,020 stolen arms returned; many are outdated or symbolic.
- Fencing and militarisation may worsen alienation and **antagonise border communities** like the Nagas and Mizos.
- Policy appears driven more by **political optics** than substantive peacebuilding or institution strengthening.

Way Forward

- **Political Engagement**: Initiate **inclusive dialogue** involving both Meitei and Kuki-Zomi-Hmar groups under a neutral facilitator.
- **Restore Trust in State Institutions**: Rebuild the legitimacy of police and administration by ensuring impartial law enforcement.
- **De-escalate Militarisation**: Focus on **de-weaponisation**, intelligence-based counterinsurgency, and **community policing**.
- **Rethink National Security Lens**: Move beyond a security-only view to a **humanitarian and governance-based approach**.
- **Rehabilitate and Resettle IDPs**: With dignity, infrastructure, and psychological support.

- **Act East Synergy:** Align border policies with Act East vision, respecting local ethnic realities and cross-border ties.

Source: [The Hindu: The paradox of the approach to the Manipur issue](#)



Gendered Nutrition Inequality

Context

India's free foodgrain for 800 million highlights persistent malnutrition, with women and girls remaining the most neglected victims.

Nature of Nutritional Gender Inequality

- **Disproportionate Malnutrition Rates:** NFHS-5 data shows **57% of women (15–49 years)** are anaemic, compared to **26% of men**.
- **Underweight Prevalence:** Around **18.7% of women** are underweight, with a significant disparity compared to men.
- **Intra-household Food Disparity:** Cultural norms often lead to **women and girls eating least and last** in the family.
- **Resource Utilization Gap:** Despite large investments (₹24,000 crore for POSHAN 2.0 in 2022–23), only **69% of funds were used**, with minimal improvement in women's nutrition.
- **Lack of Agency:** Nearly **49% of women lack control over their earnings**, affecting their ability to prioritize health and nutrition.

Impacts of Nutritional Gender Inequality

- **Maternal and Child Health:** Malnourished mothers lead to **low birth weight, stunted growth, and infant mortality**.
- **Reduced Productivity:** Poor nutrition affects **women's work capacity and economic participation**.
- **Intergenerational Cycle of Malnutrition:** Undernourished girls become **malnourished mothers**, perpetuating the cycle.
- **Health System Burden:** Anaemia and malnutrition contribute to **increased disease burden and healthcare costs**.
- **Gender Inequality Reinforcement:** Poor nutrition reflects and reinforces **women's lower socio-economic status**.

Way Forward: Tackling Nutritional Inequality

- **Link Nutrition with Empowerment:** Set **targets for women's income and decision-making power** alongside anaemia and stunting reduction.
 - Promote **skill training, credit access, and job placement** through Anganwadi centres.
- **Improve Programme Delivery:** Strengthen **inter-departmental convergence** (health, nutrition, livelihoods) in malnutrition-prone areas.
 - Ensure **full utilization of POSHAN 2.0 funds** with outcome tracking.
- **Enhance Quality of Employment:** Move beyond participation to ensure **secure, fair-paying, and dignified jobs for women**.
 - Bridge **gender wage gaps** and support **female entrepreneurship**.
- **Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC):** Address deep-rooted biases that prioritize **men's food and health** over women's.
 - Promote **nutrition literacy**, especially around **women's specific dietary needs**.
- **Strengthen Grassroots Implementation:** Empower Anganwadi workers to become **multi-service facilitators** – nutrition, health, livelihood.
 - Involve **community-based women's groups** (e.g. SHGs) in monitoring and delivery.

Source: [The Hindu: The ingredient to turn around nutrition outcomes](#)

Trump, Syria & Middle East

Context

US President and the de facto President of Syria Ahmad al-Sharaa, in the presence of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have met recently.

Why Trump Joining Hands With Syria

- **Assad's Exit Created a Window of Opportunity:** With **Bashar al-Assad ousted** and replaced by **Ahmad al-Sharaa**, Trump sees an opportunity to reset relations.
 - The sanctions were largely targeted at the Assad regime. With its fall, Trump can justify lifting sanctions without appearing to compromise on American values.
- **Moderate and Stable Leadership Under Al-Sharaa:** Al-Sharaa, despite his **jihadi past**, has rebranded himself as a **moderate leader**, integrating militias and promoting national unity.
 - His administration avoids ideological extremism and appears open to **regional and international engagement**, including recognizing Israel.
- **Trump's Doctrine: Regional Ownership of Conflicts:** Trump prefers **reducing American military and financial involvement** in Middle Eastern conflicts.
 - By encouraging **regional powers (Saudi, Qatar, Turkey)** to lead Syria's reconstruction, Trump shifts responsibility while still benefiting geopolitically and economically.
- **Trade Over Ideology:** Trump's diplomacy is **trade-centric**. The Gulf states have promised hundreds of billions in deals with the U.S., including real estate, aviation, arms, and technology.
 - The lifting of sanctions on Syria facilitates Gulf states' investments in Syrian reconstruction, which indirectly benefits U.S. business interests.
- **Counterbalancing Iran Through Engagement:** Reintegrating Syria into the regional framework under a non-Iranian-aligned leader like Al-Sharaa helps **reduce Iranian influence**.
 - Lifting sanctions is also part of a broader regional recalibration, possibly linked to a **nuclear deal with Iran**.
- **Downplaying Israel's Concerns:** Trump appears willing to **sideline Israeli objections** if they conflict with broader regional realignment and trade opportunities.
 - Despite Netanyahu's opposition, Trump proceeded with arms deals with Turkey and reengagement with Syria.

Implications of Trump's Tilt Towards Syria

- **Geopolitical Realignment in the Middle East:** Syria's reintegration under Al-Sharaa could lead to a **new regional order** involving Saudi, Qatar, Turkey — with **reduced U.S. military involvement**.
 - Traditional alliances (like U.S.–Israel) may become **more transactional and less value-driven**.
- **Weakened Leverage on Human Rights and Democracy:** Lifting sanctions without strong conditions may **undermine the U.S. position on human rights**, especially given Al-Sharaa's militant past.
 - Sets a precedent that **economic pragmatism can override past terrorist affiliations**.
- **Empowered Gulf States:** Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE will play a **larger role in shaping post-war Syria**, increasing their regional influence.
 - This could either **stabilize the region** or **fuel new power struggles** depending on how rivalries are managed.
- **Turkey-U.S. Reconciliation:** The U.S. seems to be **re-engaging with Turkey**, despite past tensions over the S-400 and Kurdish issues.
 - Could restore Turkey's role in NATO defense initiatives like the F-35 program.
- **Reduced Risk of U.S. Military Escalation:** Trump's decision aligns with a **broader retreat from interventionism** in Syria and Iraq.

- May allow the U.S. to focus on **great power competition (China, Russia)** instead of Middle Eastern entanglements.
- **Israel's Strategic Isolation:** If U.S. prioritizes trade and regional peace over Israel's security concerns, **Israel may feel isolated**, especially regarding Iran and Syria.
 - Could push Israel to act **unilaterally** in defending its interests.

Source: [Indian Express: Trump, Syria & the Middle East](#)

