Today's Prelims Topics

e-Sakshaya

Context
The Tamil Nadu Police will soon launch a mobile app called **e-Sakshya**, developed by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

About the e-Sakshya App
- **Purpose**: To help Tamil Nadu police personnel collect **mandatory audio-visual evidence**, upload photos, and generate secure, time-stamped SID packets during investigations.
- **Developed by**: **Union Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- **Implemented through**: **State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB)**, Tamil Nadu.
- **Key Features**:
  - Capture and upload **audio-visual evidence**.
  - Upload **photographs of crime scenes/witnesses**.
  - Generate **SID packets** (Secure, Geo-tagged, Time-stamped evidence with hash verification).
  - Generate **certificates with timestamps**.
- **Objective**:
  - To **strengthen the chain of custody**.
  - Ensure **admissibility of evidence in court**.
- **Usage**:
  - Used by all **investigation officers**.
  - Officers have been **trained** in using the app.
- **Legal Compliance**:
  - Complies with **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023**.
  - Evidence must be linked with **FIR, GD, and CNR numbers**.
- **Backup Protocol** (when app unavailable):
  - **Part-A Certificate**: Issued by the police or videographer.
  - **Part-B Certificate**: Issued by an expert under **Section 329** of BNSS.
- **Technology Used**:
  - **Blockchain**: To ensure data **integrity and trustworthiness**.
- **Integration**:
  - Evidence is uploaded to the **ICJS/Sakshya portal**.
  - **Courts and magistrates** can access evidence online.

Source: TheHindu

Onge tribe

Context
For the **first time**, children from the **Onge tribe** in **Little Andaman** have successfully **cleared the Class 10 exam**.

About the Onge Tribe
- **B**elonging to the **Negrito racial stock**.
- **Habitat**: They inhabit **Little Andaman Island**.
- **Lifestyle**: Traditionally **semi-nomadic**, the Onges depend entirely on **nature for food**, such as hunting and gathering.
- **Religion**:
  - Follow **simple animism**.
  - No ceremonial worship or propitiation practices.
  - Believe in various spirits—of the **woods, sea, disease, storms, and ancestors**.
- **Language**: The Onge people speak their **own language**, which has **no written script**.
- **Cultural Traits**:
  - **White teeth** are seen as a **symbol of death**.
  - To avoid this, they chew bark to **redden their teeth**.
  - Decorate their **bodies and faces** with **white and ochre clay**, especially during special occasions.
- **Government Resettlement**: Currently live in a **reserved area in Dugong Creek**, a small part of their original territory.

Recently in News

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration recently set up a **Van Dhan Vikas Kendra** for the Onge tribe at Dugong Creek **under Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyay Maha Abhiyan** to make them self-sustainable through coconut-based products.

Source: TheHindu

Kashi Declaration

Context
The Youth Spiritual Summit, themed **"Nasha Mukt Yuva for Viksit Bharat"**, concluded in Varanasi with over 600 youth leaders and 120 spiritual organizations adopting the **Kashi Declaration.**

What is the Kashi Declaration?
The **Kashi Declaration** is a key outcome of the **Youth Spiritual Summit** held in Varanasi in July 2025. It is a **collective spiritual and social commitment** adopted by youth leaders and spiritual organizations to build a **drug-free, value-driven India** by the year **2047**.

Key Highlights of the Kashi Declaration
- **Vision**: To create a **Nasha Mukt Yuva (Drug-Free Youth)** as the foundation for a **Viksit Bharat (Developed India)** by 2047.
- **Five-Year Roadmap**: It lays out a **5-year action plan** to:
    - Mobilize spiritual leaders and institutions.
    - Engage youth through values-based education.
    - Promote awareness against drug abuse.
- **Collective Commitment**: Signed and supported by:
    - Over **600 youth leaders**.
    - Around **120 spiritual organizations** from across India.
- **Multi-Dimensional Approach**:
    - Use of **spiritual practices** (like meditation, yoga, and moral teachings).
    - Encourage **community engagement**, mentorship, and positive peer influence.
- **Alignment with National Goals**:
    - Complements Government of India's **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan**.
    - Reinforces the goal of building a **morally conscious and healthy youth population**.

Source: PIB

Mangal Pandey

Context

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi today paid tribute to the great **freedom fighter Mangal Pandey on his birth anniversary.**

About Mangal Pandey

- Mangal Pandey is regarded as a **pioneer of India's First War of Independence** in 1857, also called the **Sepoy Mutiny**.
- He is remembered as a **symbol of resistance** against British colonial rule.
- Born on **July 19, 1827**, near **Faizabad** in present-day **Uttar Pradesh**.
- Joined the **British East India Company's army** in **1849**.
- Served as a **sepoy in the 6th Company** of the **34th Bengal Native Infantry** stationed at **Barrackpore**.
- He rebelled against the introduction of **cartridges greased with cow and pig fat**, which violated the **religious beliefs of Hindu and Muslim soldiers**.
- On **March 29, 1857**, he attacked and fired upon his **Senior Sergeant Major**.
- His actions sparked outrage and inspired other soldiers and civilians to **rise in rebellion** across India.
- Mangal Pandey was **arrested, tried in a court-martial**, and **executed by hanging on April 8, 1857** at **Lal Bagan, Barrackpore**.
- Following the incident, his regiment was **disbanded**, similar to the **19th Infantry at Berhampore**.
- He remains a **national hero**, remembered for his **courage and sacrifice** in India's freedom struggle.

Source: PIB

INS Sandhayak

Context

INS Sandhayak made its **maiden port call at Port Klang, Malaysia** to boost **hydrographic cooperation** between India and Malaysia.

About INS Sandhayak

- **Class & Commissioning**:
  - First ship of the **indigenously designed Sandhayak-class** hydrographic survey vessels.
  - **Commissioned in February 2024**.
- **Builder**:
  - Constructed by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata**.
- **Primary Role**:
  - Designed to conduct **coastal and deep-water hydrographic surveys**.
  - Supports **port and harbour development**, and identifies **navigational channels and routes**.
- **Operational Area**:
  - Can operate up to India's **maritime limits**, including the **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** and **extended continental shelf**.
- **Secondary Roles**:
  - Offers **limited defence capability**.
  - Can function as a **hospital ship** during wartime or humanitarian crises.
  - Capable of **Search and Rescue (SAR)** missions with **onboard helicopter and medical facilities**.
- **Technological Features**:
  - Equipped with:
    - **Data Acquisition and Processing System**
    - **Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV)**
    - **Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV)**
    - **Digital Side-Scan Sonar**
    - **DGPS Long-Range Positioning Systems**

Source: PIB

Why govt has exempted 78% of coal-based thermal plants

Context
The Environment Ministry on July 11 exempted the majority of India's coal-based thermal plants from installing Flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) devices that are designed to remove sulphur dioxide (SO2) emissions

What Has the Government Done to Address the SO2 Emission Over the Years?
● **2015: Emission Norms Introduced:** First-ever emission norms for SO_2 and other pollutants were notified for coal-based thermal plants.
   ○ All such plants were required to install FGD systems by **December 2017**.
● **Multiple Extensions Given:** The deadline was **extended four times** due to:
   ○ High installation costs
   ○ Technical challenges
   ○ Possibility of power supply disruption
   ○ Risk of increased electricity tariffs
● **2021: Categorization of Plants for Compliance:** To manage the transition better, the Centre categorized 596 thermal units into three groups:

Category	Location	Compliance Deadline
A	Within 10 km of NCR or million-plus cities	2022
B	Within 10 km of critically polluted or non-attainment cities	2023
C	All remaining plants	2024

● **Category C** had nearly 78% of all thermal plant units.
● **2024-25: Further Relaxations:** On **July 11, 2024**, the government issued new norms:
   ○ **Category C** plants exempted from installing FGD altogether.
   ○ **Category A** must comply by **December 2027**.
   ○ **Category B** to be assessed on a **case-by-case basis**.
   ○ Plants retiring before **December 2030** can get exemptions by submitting an undertaking.
Source: Indian Express

Editorial Summary

India can reframe the Artificial Intelligence debate

Context

The 2026 AI Impact Summit in New Delhi offers India a chance to bridge global divides, promote inclusive innovation, and lead efforts in shaping responsible, equitable, and people-centric AI governance

Shortfalls in Advancements of AI Regulation

- **Geopolitical Fragmentation:** AI cooperation is being derailed by global rivalries—e.g., U.S. and U.K. rejecting the Paris AI Summit's final text while China supported it.
  - This splintering undermines the creation of a unified global AI governance framework.
- **Exclusion of the Global South:** Previous summits lacked adequate representation from developing countries. Half of humanity was "missing" from high-level engagements.
  - This limits the diversity of perspectives and the applicability of AI solutions for global challenges.
- **Lack of Common Safety Protocols:** Despite calls for red-teaming and stress-testing AI models, there's no unified global checklist or safety standards.
  - Fragmented safety institutions reduce trust and increase risk of unsafe AI deployment.
- **Inequitable AI Resources & Infrastructure:** Access to compute power, datasets, and foundational models is concentrated in tech hubs of the Global North (California, Beijing).
  - Developing nations lack cloud credits, language datasets, and funding to keep pace.
- **Regulatory Confusion:** Nations are either over-regulating (EU), under-regulating (US), or centralizing control (China), creating uncertainty for developers and users in middle-income countries.
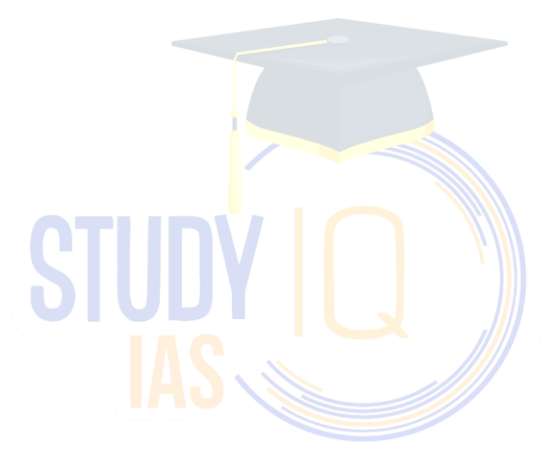
Opportunities for India

- **Bridge Between Divided Powers:** India has diplomatic credibility and strategic neutrality to mediate between polarized blocs (U.S.–China, West–Global South).
- **Digital Public Infrastructure as a Model:** India's Aadhaar, UPI, and MyGov showcase how digital tools can be inclusive, scalable, and transparent.
  - This experience offers a credible framework for global AI deployment in public welfare.
- **Champion of Global South Interests:** India can mobilize developing nations, bring their voices to the table, and push for equity in data access, model development, and AI education.
- **AI for Billions Fund & Language Innovation:** India can push for a development-oriented AI fund and promote indigenous language models (multilingual challenge).
  - This fosters cultural inclusivity and expands AI's global usability.
- **Voluntary, Balanced Regulation:** India can propose a middle-path: a voluntary code of conduct rooted in openness, transparency, and accountability—less intrusive than EU regulation, more structured than US self-regulation.

How India Can Lead in the Global AI Discourse

- **Host the Most Inclusive AI Summit Yet:** Ensure wide participation across continents and stakeholder groups—governments, startups, academia, civil society.
- **Launch an AI Pledge & Scorecard Framework:** Get each country/organization to commit to 1–2 tangible, inclusive AI goals with transparent, trackable report cards after 12 months.
- **Initiate the Global AI Safety Collaborative:** Build a shared safety protocol repository: red-team scripts, bias evaluation tools, compute-disclosure guidelines, and incident reporting templates.

- **Push for Public-Centric AI Innovation:** Encourage open-source models, AI for rural education, health translations in local languages, and small-scale innovations in agriculture and climate resilience.
- **Champion an AI-for-Good Narrative:** Reframe the AI discourse from fear of existential risk and corporate control to opportunity for equitable development, sustainability, and empowerment.

Source: The Hindu

Diverting Temple Funds for Building Colleges

Context

- Recently, a political controversy erupted in Tamil Nadu on the issue of diverting temple funds for building colleges.
  - This highlights a 200-year-old legal and social justice model that regulates secular aspects of religion, rooted in colonial-era legislation and strengthened by anti-caste reforms in South India.

Background of the Social Justice Model in Temple Regulation

- **Colonial Legislative Origins:** Began with the **Religious Endowment and Escheats Regulation, 1817** by the East India Company to regulate secular aspects of religious endowments.
  - Even after Queen Victoria's 1858 proclamation to stay away from religious affairs, in **Madras Presidency**, the British retained oversight over temple finances and land — not rituals — to maintain order and revenue.
- **Justice Party and Hindu Religious Endowments Act (1925):** Post-1920, the **Justice Party**, driven by anti-caste and rationalist ideologies, enacted laws regulating temple administration and enabled the diversion of surplus temple funds for **secular welfare purposes**, such as education.
  - This became the **foundation for state control over religious institutions** in Tamil Nadu and parts of South India.
- **Codification in Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, 1959:** Allowed use of **surplus temple funds** (after temple needs are met) for welfare activities, including colleges and education.
  - The law is backed by **constitutional validation** and judicial endorsement.
- **Temples as Socio-Cultural Institutions:** Historically (Chola, Vijayanagara eras), temples were **not just religious sites**, but hubs for education, welfare, and community life. This supports the argument for educational use of temple funds as **restoration of original purpose**.
- **Social Justice and Anti-Caste Legacy:** Self-Respect Movement pushed for **democratizing temple access** and **appointing non-Brahmin priests**.
  - Today, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have appointed priests from **backward classes**, symbolizing **inclusive reform** under state oversight.

Key Issues Raised in the Current Controversy

- **Political Polarization Around Religion and Fund Usage:** Critics argue that **diverting temple funds for secular purposes violates religious autonomy**, triggering communal and political sentiments.
- **Misunderstanding of Legal Provisions:** Many are unaware that **Section 36 and 66 of the 1959 Act** explicitly allow such diversions with safeguards like surplus-only usage and commissioner approval.
- **Selective Outrage and Identity Politics:** The issue is often weaponized for **electoral gains**, rather than discussed in the legal-historical-social context it belongs to.
- **Undermining of Social Justice Legacy:** Rolling back government oversight would **threaten inclusive reforms** like temple entry for Dalits and priesthood diversity.
- **Need for Transparency and Accountability:** Concerns exist about **how surplus is calculated**, how decisions are made, and **public access to fund-use data**.

Way Forward

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Educate citizens about the **historical and legal legitimacy** of temple fund usage for public welfare to counter disinformation.
- **Ensure Transparency in Fund Utilization:** Regularly **publish audit reports**, invite public scrutiny, and clarify what counts as "surplus".

- **Strengthen Institutional Oversight:** Empower autonomous **Temple Boards or Committees** with representation from all communities to guide fund use.
- **Focus on Purpose-Linked Usage:** Ensure funds support activities that **align with the temple's traditional roles**, like education, cultural preservation, and social welfare.
- **Avoid Blanket Privatization or Deregulation:** Removing government oversight risks returning control to **caste or community elites**, reversing decades of **democratization and access**.
- **Promote a National Dialogue on Religious Endowments:** Use the Tamil Nadu model to initiate wider discussions across states for a **balanced, inclusive, and accountable** religious institutional framework.
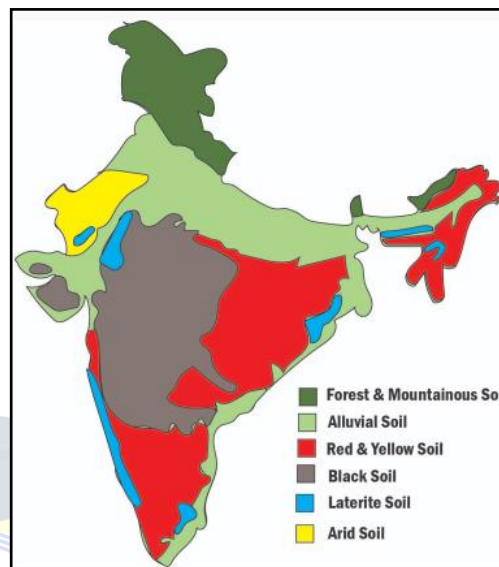
Source: [The Hindu](#)

Soils of India

Context

India has transformed from food-deficient to a global rice exporter with massive food security programs, yet soil degradation threatens nutritional quality, demanding urgent reforms in soil health and nutrient management.

Achievements of India in Food Security and Nutrition

- **From Food Aid to Global Leader**: India, once reliant on U.S. food aid under PL-480 in the 1960s, is now the **world's largest rice exporter**, with 20.2 million tonnes exported in FY25.
- **Massive Food Distribution Programme**: The **PM-Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)** is the **largest food security programme globally**, providing free rice or wheat to over **800 million people** monthly.
- **Decline in Extreme Poverty**: The population below $3/day (PPP) has dropped from **27.1% in 2011** to **5.3% in 2022**, showing significant poverty reduction.

Forest & Mountainous Soil
Alluvial Soil
Red & Yellow Soil
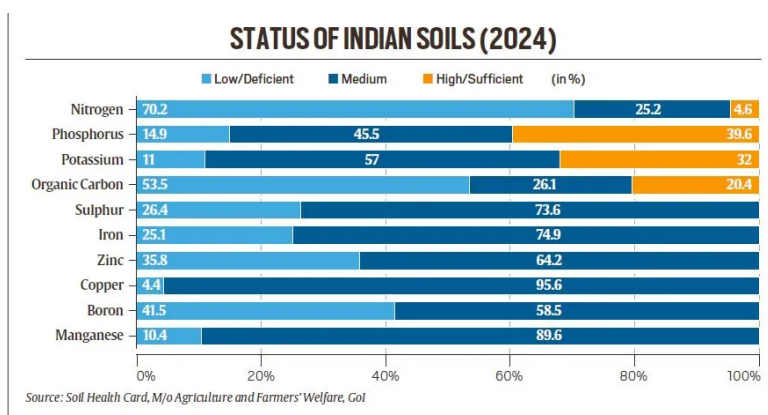Black Soil
Laterite Soil
Arid Soil

Importance of Soil Health

- **Foundation of Nutritional Security**: Soil quality directly affects the **nutritional content** of crops — poor soil leads to nutrient-deficient food and contributes to **hidden hunger**.
- **Public Health Link**: Deficient soils (e.g., lacking zinc) result in **malnourished crops**, leading to **child stunting, poor cognitive development**, and lifelong health issues.
- **Environmental and Climate Impact**: Soil organic carbon (SOC) governs water retention and nutrient use efficiency. Poor soil health leads to **lower crop yields**, **pollution**, and increased **greenhouse gas emissions**.

Major Issues with Indian Soils

- **Severe Nutrient Deficiency**:
  - Less than **5% soils** have adequate **nitrogen**,
  - Only **40%** sufficient in **phosphate**,
  - **32%** sufficient in **potash**,
  - Only **20%** have adequate **SOC**.

STATUS OF INDIAN SOILS (2024)

Low/Deficient Medium High/Sufficient (in %)

	Low/Deficient	Medium	High/Sufficient
Nitrogen	70.2	25.2	4.6
Phosphorus	14.9	45.5	39.6
Potassium	11	57	32
Organic Carbon	53.5	26.1	20.4
Sulphur	26.4	73.6	
Iron	25.1	74.9	
Zinc	35.8	64.2	
Copper	4.4	95.6	
Boron	41.5	58.5	
Manganese	10.4	89.6	

Source: Soil Health Card, M/o Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, GoI

- **Micronutrient Deficiency**: Widespread **zinc**, **iron**, **sulphur**, and **boron** deficiency across soils — affecting crop nutrition and human health.
- **Imbalanced Fertiliser Use**: States like **Punjab** and **Telangana** show excessive **nitrogen use** (+61%, +54%) but **underuse phosphorus and potassium** (up to -89%).
- **Fertiliser Inefficiency and Pollution**: **Only 35–40%** of urea nitrogen is absorbed by crops.

○ Rest is lost to air (as **nitrous oxide**, a potent GHG) or water (causing **nitrate contamination**).
● **Declining Fertiliser Efficiency**: The **fertiliser-to-grain response ratio** has fallen from **1:10 in the 1970s** to **1:2.7 in 2015**, showing diminishing returns from inputs.

Solutions
● **Scientific Soil Management: Soil Health Card Scheme** must be expanded and rigorously implemented to enable **data-driven nutrient application**.
   ○ Promote **region-specific, crop-specific fertilisation plans**, avoiding one-size-fits-all methods.
● **Balance Macronutrients and Micronutrients:** Ensure **rational N-P-K usage**, avoiding overuse of nitrogen and underuse of phosphorus and potassium.
   ○ Increase focus on **micronutrients** like zinc, boron, and iron through **fortified fertilisers**.
● **Promote Organic Carbon Restoration:** Enhance **Soil Organic Carbon (SOC)** through– **Crop residue management, Green manuring, Bio-fertilisers, Reduced tillage.**
   ○ Aim for **SOC levels of 1.5–2%** (as per Rattan Lal), higher than the current IISS benchmark.
● **Reform Fertiliser Use and Policy:** Shift from **granular urea** to **liquid/precision-based nitrogen delivery**.
   ○ Use **coated urea and nitrification inhibitors** to reduce nitrogen loss.
   ○ **Tighten monitoring and prevent fertiliser diversion** to non-agricultural use and neighbouring countries.
● **Collaborate with Knowledge Partners:** Partnerships like **ICRIER–OCP Nutricrops** should be scaled up to bring **global R&D** to Indian farms for **region-specific solutions**.
● **Treat Soil Health as a Public Health Issue:** Connect **agricultural reform with nutrition policy**, recognizing that **healthy soils produce healthy citizens**.
Source: Indian Express