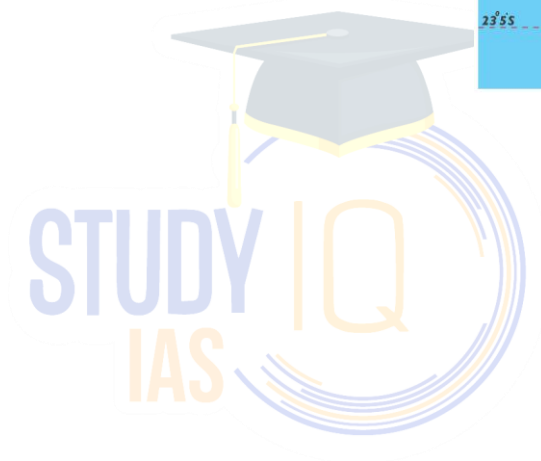# Today's Prelims Topics

Burkina Faso

Context
Jihadist violence in Burkina Faso has severely reduced cotton production.

About Burkina Faso
- **Location:** Landlocked country in **Western Africa**.
  - Straddles the **Prime Meridian**, with territories in both the **Eastern** and **Western Hemispheres**.
- **Borders: Mali** (north & west), **Niger** (east), **Benin** (southeast), **Togo**, **Ghana**, and **Ivory Coast** (south).
- **Capital**: Ouagadougou
- **Geography**
  - Predominantly **savannahs**, **plateaus**, and **low mountains** (southwest).
  - Northern region (**Sahel**) is **arid and desert-like**.

Source: TheHindu

Dhirio

Context

Goa MLAs have demanded the legalisation of dhirio.

About Dhirio

- **Bullfighting**, locally known as *dhirio* or *dhiri*, is considered an integral part of Goa's cultural heritage.
- Traditionally associated with post-harvest celebrations and local church feasts.
- **Traditional Venues**
  - Held in **paddy fields** and **football grounds** of Goa.
  - Village shepherds often brought their bulls for the contests.

- **Fight Process**
  - Begins with **two bulls dashing at each other** and locking horns.
  - Bulls head-butt and repeatedly charge and retreat.
  - Trainers provoke and encourage the bulls from behind.
- **Historical Roots:** The practice has been a part of Goan tradition for generations, dating back to the Portuguese era.
- **Legal Ban:** In **1997**, the High Court directed Goa to ban **all forms of animal fights**, including *dhirio*.

Source: IndianExpress

OCI

Context
India has tightened OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) norms.

OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) Scheme
- Launched in **2005** under the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2005**.
- Designed for people of Indian origin living abroad, except those who have ever been a citizen of **Pakistan** or **Bangladesh**.

Current Rules for OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) Cardholders
- **Eligibility Rules**
  - Must be a person of Indian origin or their descendant (up to great-grandchild).
  - Spouses of Indian citizens or OCI cardholders are eligible (if marriage subsists for at least 2 years).
  - Citizens of **Pakistan** or **Bangladesh**, or those who ever held these citizenships, are **not eligible**.
- **Restrictions**
  - No right to vote in Indian elections.
  - Cannot hold constitutional or government posts.
  - Cannot buy agricultural or plantation land in India.
- **Grounds for Cancellation (Section 7D of Citizenship Act)**
  - Obtaining OCI by fraud or misrepresentation.
  - Showing disaffection towards the Indian Constitution.
  - Conviction and imprisonment for **two years or more** within five years of registration.
  - Acts against the sovereignty, integrity, or security of India.
  - **New Rule (2024–25)**: Allowing cancellation of OCI status if the holder is convicted and sentenced to at least two years in prison—or even if formally charge-sheeted in a case punishable by seven years or more.

Source: HindustanTimes

Consumer Price Index

Context
India's retail inflation in July plunged to an 8-year low of 1.55%.

Retail Inflation in July
● **Headline CPI Inflation**: Retail inflation dropped to **1.55% in July 2025**, marking an **eight-year low**—the lowest since **June 2017**.
● **Food Inflation (CFPI)**: Recorded **–1.76%**, entering **deflation** territory and hitting its lowest level since **January 2019**.
● **Price Movements in Key Food Categories**:
   ○ **Vegetables** prices plummeted **–20.69%** in July (versus –19% in June).
   ○ **Pulses** prices dropped **–13.76%** (compared to –11.76% in June).
● **Rural and Urban Inflation Rates**:
   ○ **Rural CPI inflation**: **1.18%**.
   ○ **Urban CPI inflation**: **2.05%**.
● **Comparison with Previous Periods**: June's retail inflation was around **2.1%**, and July 2024 saw **3.54%**. The July 2025 print of **1.55%** significantly lowered the trend.
● **Broader Economic Implications**: The drop has offered **relief to consumers**, though it's **squeezing farmers' incomes** due to sharply falling food prices.

About CPI (Consumer Price Index)
● **Meaning**: Measures the change over time in the general price level of goods and services that households purchase for consumption.
● **Significance**:
   ○ Key macroeconomic indicator of inflation.
   ○ Used for inflation targeting by governments and central banks.
   ○ Acts as a deflator in national accounts.
   ○ Basis for indexing dearness allowance for employees.
● **Published by**: Central Statistical Office (CSO) on the **12th of every month**.
● **Components**: Four national-level CPI indices:
   ○ CPI for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW)
   ○ CPI for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL)
   ○ CPI for Rural Labourers (CPI-RL)
   ○ CPI for Urban Non-Manual Employees (CPI-UNME)
● **Base year**: 2012.
Source: TheHindu

India's first private constellation of EO satellites

Context
India is in the news for setting up its **first private constellation of Earth Observation (EO) satellites under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model**, led by the PixxelSpace India consortium.

India's First Private EO Satellite Constellation under PPP Model
- **What is it?**
  - Landmark initiative to deploy 12 advanced Earth Observation (EO) satellites.
  - Built and operated by private sector in partnership with the government.
- **Companies Involved**
  - **Lead Partner:** PixxelSpace India.
  - **Consortium Members:** Piersight Space, Satsure Analytics India, Dhruva Space.
- **Aims**
  - Provide high-resolution, indigenous satellite data for both national and global use.
  - Strengthen India's space-based monitoring in crucial sectors.
  - Reduce dependence on foreign EO data and ensure data security & sovereignty.
- **Key Features**
  - **Investment:** ₹1,200 crore from private sector over 5 years.
  - **Constellation Size:** 12 state-of-the-art EO satellites.
  - **Applications:** Climate change monitoring, disaster management, agriculture analytics, marine surveillance, national security, urban planning.
  - **Global Reach:** Serve international demand for geospatial intelligence.
  - **Data Output:** Provide Analysis Ready Data (ARD) and Value-Added Services (VAS).
  - **PPP Model:** First-ever EO satellite constellation under IN-SPACe's private sector promotion framework.

About PixxelSpace India
- Bengaluru-based space tech startup specializing in hyperspectral imaging satellites.
- **Headquarters:** Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- **Founded:** 2019.
- **Core Focus:** Build a global hyperspectral EO satellite network for precise, high-quality geospatial insights.

Source: TheHindu

Bandipur National Park

Context
Amid increase in the number of tourists, the forest department has decided to install CCTV cameras along a 20 km stretch inside Bandipur National Park.

About Bandipur National Park
- A **national park and tiger reserve.**
- **Location:** Lies in Chamarajanagar district, Karnataka.
- **Establishment:**
  - Established in **1931** as *Venugopala Wildlife Park* (covering 90 km²) by the Maharaja of Mysore.
  - Declared a **Tiger Reserve in 1973** under *Project Tiger*.
  - Included in the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve in 1986**.
- It **shares its boundary** with **3** other National parks namely N**agarahole National Park, Wayanad National Park and Mudumalai National park.**
- National Highway 766 (Kozhikode in Kerala to Kollegal in Karnataka) cuts through the **core area of Bandipur.**

Facts
- **Karnataka has 5 Tiger Reserves:** Bandipur, Bhadra, Nagarahole, Dandeli-Anshi and Biligiriranganatha Swamy Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserves.
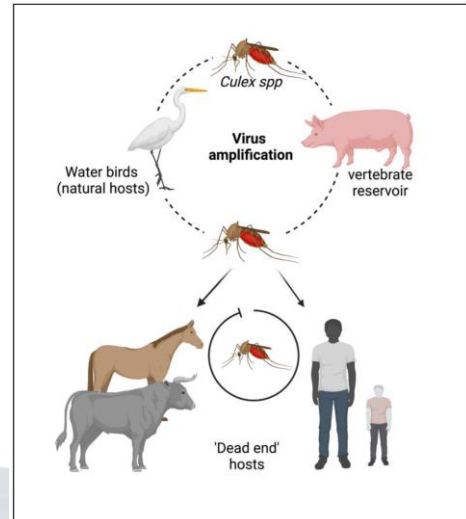

Source: New Indian Express

Japanese Encephalitis

Context
Japanese Encephalitis vaccination expanded in Tamil Nadu.

About it
- **What it is:** A **viral disease** caused by the Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV), belonging to the *Flavivirus* genus (same family as dengue and yellow fever).
  - It primarily affects the **central nervous system** and can cause inflammation of the brain (encephalitis).
- **Transmission:** Spread through the bite of infected **Culex mosquitoes** (mainly *Culex tritaeniorhynchus*).
  - Humans are **accidental hosts**; the main virus cycle occurs between **mosquitoes, pigs, and wading birds**.
- **Geographic Spread:** Found in many parts of **South and Southeast Asia** and the **Western Pacific**.
  - In India, it is **endemic** in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu.
- **Symptoms:** Most infections are **asymptomatic or mild** (fever, headache).
  - Severe cases may cause **high fever, neck stiffness, seizures, coma, and brain inflammation**, with risk of death or permanent neurological damage.
- **Prevention and Control: Vaccination** is the most effective preventive measure.
  - Vector control (reducing mosquito breeding in paddy fields, water bodies).
  - Protecting pigs from mosquito exposure, as they act as amplifying hosts.
  - Public awareness and early diagnosis.

News in Short

Hostile Activity Watch Kernel (HAWK)
News? Tamil Nadu launches HAWK to combat wildlife crimes. **What it is?** ● It is a real-time crime management platform to tackle forest and wildlife crimes. ● Developed by the **Karnataka Forest Department** in collaboration with the **Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)** and **NTT Data**. **Source: New Indian Express**

Editorial Summary

UAVs/UCAVs A Strategic Necessity

Context
- The evolution of warfare in the 21st century has been marked by the increasing role of **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)** and **Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs)**.
  - The Second Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (2020) and Operation Sindoor (2025) highlighted the decisive shift from drones as reconnaissance tools to **precision strike platforms**.
  - For India, with its vast and contested borders, drones are no longer optional but a strategic necessity.

Challenges for India
- **Limited Fleet and Capability Gaps:** Existing Israeli systems (Harop and Heron) are useful but outdated.
  - Current platforms are inadequate for high-altitude surveillance along the China and Pakistan borders.
- **Dependence on Imports:** India recently procured 31 MQ-9B Reapers from the U.S. but remains dependent on foreign suppliers.
  - Indigenous systems are still in early stages and lack cutting-edge technology.
- **Geopolitical Constraints:** Israel, a key partner, is preoccupied in West Asia.
  - Adversarial relations with Türkiye and China prevent reliance on their drone technology.
- **Global Competition:** U.S. export capacity is limited due to MTCR restrictions, holding only **8% of global drone exports (2023)**.
  - China and Türkiye have already emerged as cost-effective leaders in UAV exports.
- **Domestic Barriers:** Bureaucratic red tape and dominance of PSUs slow innovation.
  - Private-sector participation and R&D investment remain limited.

Opportunities for India
- **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** Like India, Indo-Pacific nations (Vietnam, Philippines, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea) face Chinese "gray-zone" tactics in disputed waters.
  - Indian-designed UAVs for surveillance and deterrence could find ready markets.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Joint ventures and technology-sharing with like-minded partners (e.g., Israel, European nations, Quad members) can boost domestic capabilities.
- **Indigenous Defence Manufacturing:** Leveraging initiatives like *Make in India* and *iDEX* (Innovations for Defence Excellence) can foster a strong UAV ecosystem.
  - Integration of AI, data analytics, and long-range strike capability in indigenous drones.
- **Regional Influence through Drone Diplomacy:** Supplying drones to Indo-Pacific nations could counter Türkiye's growing influence.
  - Enhances India's role as a net security provider in the region.
- **Dual-use Technology Development:** Innovations in UAVs can benefit not just defence but also disaster relief, agriculture, and border management.

Conclusion
The rise of drones marks a paradigm shift in warfare. For India, they are essential for both **defence preparedness** and **regional strategic outreach**. While dependence on imports continues, the current global vacuum in UAV supply — especially in the Indo-Pacific — presents an opportunity. By combining domestic innovation with strategic partnerships, India can not only secure its own borders but also emerge as a **leading UAV supplier in Asia**, reinforcing its position as a key player in the regional security architecture.
Source: The Hindu

The ceding of academic freedom in universities

Context
Academic freedom in India faces growing constraints.

Importance of Academic Freedom
- **Knowledge creation:** Questioning existing knowledge is the basis of scientific and social progress.
- **Democratic function:** Universities act as conscience-keepers, holding governments accountable through informed critique.
- **Innovation and economy:** Free research fosters science, technology, and policy solutions, contributing to economic growth.
- **Social development:** Open debates and diverse perspectives enrich society and nurture responsible citizens.

Challenges in India
- **Curriculum control:** Prescribed syllabi and exclusion of certain readings limit independent teaching and learning.
- **Research restrictions:** Funding often directed by government councils, discouraging unconventional or critical research.
- **Suppression of dissent:** Student/faculty discussions critical of ruling governments often face administrative or legal action.
- **Intrusive regulations:** Duty-leave undertakings for faculty to avoid "anti-government" activity even abroad curtail freedoms.
- **Private universities under pressure:** Risk-averse managements silence dissenting voices to avoid political displeasure.
- **Over-regulation by UGC and legislation:** Excessive bureaucratic control undermines financial and administrative autonomy.

Global Parallels
- **Restricted freedom:** Argentina, Hungary, Türkiye – elected governments curbing universities.
- **Authoritarian regimes:** China, Russia, Vietnam – strict control, especially over social sciences.
- **Democracies under pressure:** U.S. – funding cuts and policy curbs threaten long-standing academic freedom.

Way Forward: Safeguarding Autonomy and Accountability
- **Reform regulatory structures:** Replace rigid controls of UGC with frameworks ensuring academic, financial, and administrative autonomy.
- **Peer-based research funding:** Allocate resources through transparent, independent peer review, not political discretion.
- **Institutional governance reforms:** Empower faculty senates and boards, reduce government interference.
- **Encourage diversity:** Allow curricular freedom and foster interdisciplinary approaches rather than one-size-fits-all models.
- **Accountability mechanisms:** University rankings, external audits, and student feedback to ensure responsible use of resources.
- **Protect dissent:** Guarantee constitutional freedoms within campuses, ensuring universities remain safe spaces for debate.

Source: The Hindu