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## Prelims Exam Topics

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### AWADH AND ITS ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS

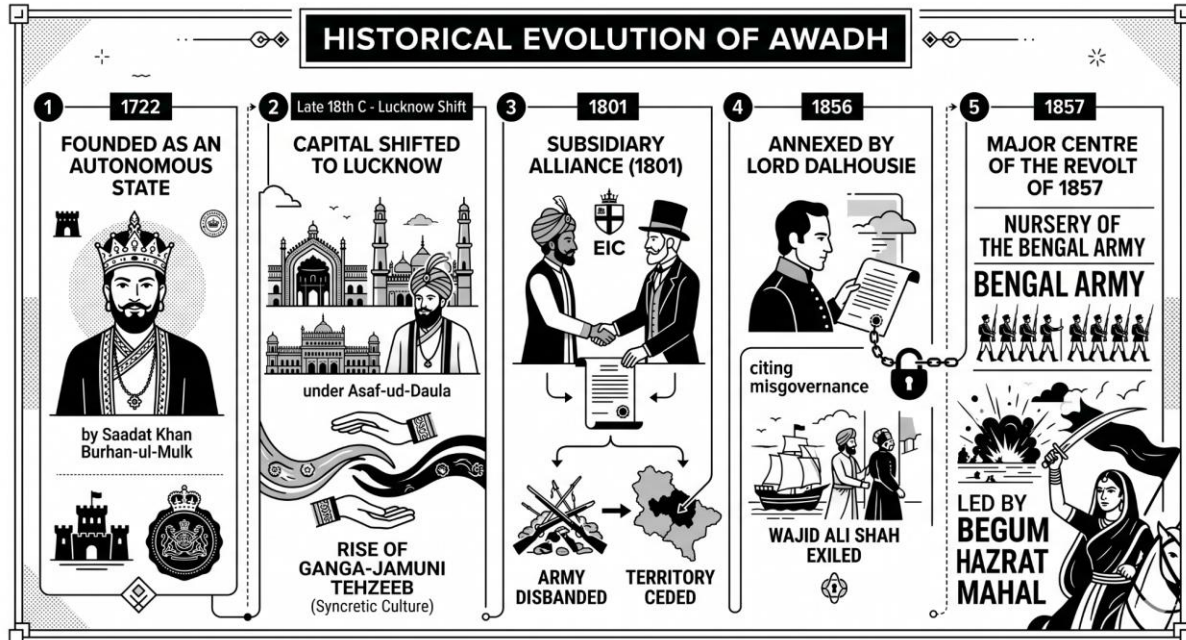
#### Context

A recent CAG report has drawn attention to many monuments in Uttar Pradesh that have faced extensive encroachment. Heritage conservationists fear that without immediate intervention, the composite, syncretic legacy of Awadh will be lost.

#### Architectural landmarks of Awadh

The architecture of Awadh, primarily centered in Lucknow, is a unique blend of Mughal, Persian, and European styles, known for its use of brick and lime plaster (stucco) rather than sandstone or marble.

- **Bara Imambara (Asafi Imambara):** Built by Asaf-ud-Daula in 1784 as a famine relief project, its central hall is one of the world's largest arched constructions without any external support from beams or pillars.
- **Bhulbhulaiya (The Labyrinth):** Located above the Bara Imambara, this intricate network of nearly 1,000 identical corridors was designed to support the massive weight of the main hall's ceiling while providing a defensive vantage point.
- **Rumi Darwaza:** Often called the Turkish Gate, this 60-foot tall structure was modeled after the Bab-i-Humayun in Istanbul; it serves as the grand entrance to the old city of Lucknow and showcases distinctive Awadhi floral motifs.
- **Chattar Manzil (Umbrella Palace):** Named for its "chattri" (umbrella-shaped) gilded domes, this palace served as the residence for the Nawabs and their wives, featuring a blend of Indo-European architecture and underground rooms (*tykhanas*) for cooling.
- **The Residency:** A complex of buildings that served as the residence of the British Political Representative; it is historically significant as the site of the prolonged **Siege of Lucknow** during the 1857 Revolt, with its ruins preserved as a memorial.



## ECINET INITIATIVE

### Context

The Election Commission of India has introduced the ECINET initiative.

### Key features of ECINET

- ECINET is an **integrated digital platform** being developed by the ECI to consolidate more than 40 existing web and mobile applications into one seamless and user-friendly system.
- **Single sign-on facility** where users will be able to access multiple services through one login credential, reducing complexity and confusion.
- **Multi-device accessibility** to function smoothly across desktops, laptops, and smartphones.
- **User-friendly interface** aimed at enhancing ease of use and navigation.
- **Strong security framework** to ensure reliability, safety, and operational efficiency.
  - Only authorised election officials will be permitted to upload or modify data, while statutory forms will remain the final authority in case of inconsistencies.
- **Wide national coverage** to support nearly 100 crore voters along with the broader electoral administration across India
- **Real-time availability of information** to provide stakeholders with timely access to authenticated election-related data.

## SAKSHAT PANCHAYAT NETRI ABHIYAAN

### Context

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched the “Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan” in March 2025 during a National Workshop of Women Elected Representatives (WERs) of Panchayati Raj Institutions in New Delhi.

### Key Features of the Initiative

- Capacity-building programme for Women Elected Representatives (PRIs)
- Enhances leadership, governance, and independent decision-making
- Promotes active role in grassroots governance and local planning
- Addresses “proxy Sarpanch” practice
- Provides customised training modules for women leaders
- A “Primer on Law Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices” introduced to strengthen awareness regarding women’s rights and legal safeguards.

## FAKE INDIAN CURRENCY NOTES(FICN)

### Context

Nearly a decade after the 2016 demonetisation, the latest ‘**Crime in India**’ report 2024 reveals that fake currency remains a major challenge, with over **₹54.61 crore in counterfeit notes seized this year**.

### Key Data on Fake Currency:

- **Massive Total Seizures:** A total of **₹638 crore** worth of fake currency has been seized since 2017, with 2022 seeing a massive peak of ₹382.6 crore.
- **Denomination Trends:** Seizures of new ₹500 notes in 2024 were four times higher than in 2016, indicating that counterfeiters have successfully replicated the new series.
- **Geographic Concentration:** Gujarat is the primary hotspot, accounting for ₹355.72 crore—more than 50% of the country’s total seizures between 2017 and 2024.
- **Currency in Circulation (CiC):** Despite digital pushes, CiC has surged by 137% to ₹42.12 lakh crore as of May 2026, compared to ₹17.74 lakh crore in November 2016.

### Legal and Regulatory Frameworks for FICN

- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:** The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, introduced strict provisions to combat FICNs by criminalising not only the act of counterfeiting but also possession, distribution, and facilitation.

- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967:** Under UAPA, 1967, the production, smuggling, or circulation of high-quality counterfeit Indian paper currency, coin, or any other material intended to destabilise the economy or threaten the security of India is classified as a "terrorist act."
- **RBI Act, 1934:** Changes to banknote security features or designs are introduced under Section 25 of the RBI Act, 1934, as part of measures to reduce counterfeiting
- **Banking Regulation Act, 1949:** RBI's Master Direction on Counterfeit Notes has been issued in exercise of powers conferred under Section 35A and Section 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

### **Institutional & Enforcement Mechanisms**

- **FICN Coordination Group (FCORD):** FICN Coordination Group (FCORD) has been formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Terror Funding and Fake Currency (TFFC) Cell — NIA**

### **Role of RBI**

- The RBI's approach to FICN control operates on three fronts simultaneously:
- **Public awareness** (Know Your Banknotes, Paisa Bolta Hai, Feel-See-Tilt, awareness camps).
- **Institutional infrastructure** (FNV Cells, Nodal Officers, machine-based detection mandates), and
- **Research & design** (Currency R&D Centre, periodic security feature upgrades).

## **FERMENTED ORGANIC MANURE (FOM)**

### **Context**

India proposes a **10% mandatory blending of FOM with conventional fertilizers by 2030** to boost soil health and cut expenses, **starting with 1% in 2026-27.**

### **What is Fermented Organic Manure**

- **Fermented Organic Manure (FOM)** is a nutrient-rich, pathogen-free soil conditioner produced by breaking down organic materials such as animal dung, crop residues, and kitchen waste using microbial fermentation.
- It is a stabilized, slow-release fertilizer that enhances soil health, increases microbial activity, and improves nutrient uptake compared to raw manure

### **Implementation Strategies**

- The Indian Biogas Association recommends

- Starting with a 1% blend in 2026-27, scaling up to 10% by 2029-30.
- The application of FOM should be based on local soil carbon levels and specific crop needs.
- The initiative aims for a 10% mandatory blend to be integrated into government schemes.

### Benefits of Blending

- **Cost Savings:** According to a study, blending fermented organic manure (FOM) with chemical fertilizers can reduce fertilizer import costs by up to \$2 billion annually.
- **Improved Soil Health:** Combining both improves soil structure, water retention, and carbon levels (currently low, around 0.4% in India).
- **Increased Yields:** Studies show that combining organic manure with chemical fertilizers is effective for improving crop yields in low-fertility soils.

## INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION (IORA)

### Context:

IORA came into focus as India prepares to chair the grouping amid growing maritime security concerns in the Indian Ocean region.

### About IORA

- Established in **1997** to promote regional cooperation among Indian Ocean countries.
- **It has 23 member states:** Australia, Bangladesh, the Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- It has **12 dialogue partners** (including the U.S., China, and the EU).
- **IORA Secretariat :** Mauritius and is headed by a fixed term Secretary-General.
- **Current Chair:** India chair for the 2025–2027 term.
- **Focus areas include:**
  - Maritime safety and security
  - Trade and investment facilitation
  - Disaster risk management
  - Fisheries management
  - Academic and cultural exchanges

- Blue economy development
- **Note:** IORA Charter excludes **bilateral disputes and contentious political issues** from formal deliberations.
- **India and IORA:** India views IORA as important for its **MAHASAGAR vision, Indo-Pacific strategy and maritime security interests**. Pakistan is not a member of IORA.
- **Upcoming Events:** India will host several IORA meetings leading up to the **2027 IORA Summit** marking the organisation's **30th anniversary**.

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER VISIT TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

### Context

The External Affairs Minister visited Trinidad and Tobago as part of India's outreach to Caribbean nations.

### Key Decisions Taken During the Visit

- **8 MoUs signed** in sectors like tourism, renewable energy (solarisation), healthcare, vector control, infrastructure and Ayurveda.

### Diaspora & Cultural Engagement

- **Archival Cooperation Agreement** between National Archives to trace **Girmitiya ancestry** (*diaspora linkage*)
- Launch of **heritage projects at Nelson Island** (*historic arrival site of indentured Indians*)
- Plan to establish **Girmitiya Studies Centre** (*research on indentured labour history*)
- Emphasis on expanding **OCI eligibility** (**up to 6th generation**)

### Sectoral Cooperation Expansion

- Focus on **healthcare, pharmaceuticals, infrastructure, security, forensics and digital transformation**
- Strengthening cooperation in **Global South forums and CARICOM engagement**



## India–Trinidad & Tobago Relations

- **Historical Linkages:** First Indian indentured labourers arrived in **1845** via ship “**Fatel Razack**” (*start of diaspora connection*).
  - Now Indian-origin population constitutes **about 40–45% of T&T population**
- **Diplomatic Relations**
  - Formal diplomatic ties established in **1962** (*post-independence engagement*)
  - Regular **high-level visits and multilateral engagement (Caribbean Community (CARICOM))**
- **Economic Relations:** Trade agreement grants **MFN status (1997)**
- **Digital & Technology Cooperation:** Adoption of **UPI-based payment system** (*first in Caribbean*)
- **Cultural & People-to-People Ties:** Presence of **Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Cultural Cooperation (MGICC)**. Strong cultural exchange through **yoga, Hindi promotion, ICCR programmes**

### About Girmitiya

- **Meaning:** Indian indentured labourers taken by the British under labour “agreements” (*‘girmit’ derived from ‘agreement’*)
- **Period:** Migration occurred mainly during the 19th–early 20th century after abolition of slavery.
- **Destinations:** Sent to colonies such as Mauritius, Fiji, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana.
- **Origin in India:** Most labourers came from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and northern India.
- **Occupation:** Worked mainly in sugarcane plantations under harsh conditions.
- **Trinidad Connection:** Around 143,000 Indians migrated to Trinidad between 1845–1917.

## HOMOGENEOUS ACCRETION

### Context

A study in Nature Astronomy suggests Earth formed mainly from inner solar system material, supporting **homogeneous accretion**.

## Findings of the Study

- **Core Finding:** Earth’s isotopic composition closely matches **non-carbonaceous bodies**.
  - **Non-carbonaceous bodies** are rocky inner solar system materials with lower volatile content
- **Method Used:** Researchers analysed 10 isotopic fingerprint systems from meteorites using **Bayesian latent factor analysis** (*advanced statistical method*).
  - **Isotopic Fingerprints** are unique isotope ratios in rocks and meteorites that are used to trace the **origin of planetary materials**.
- **Earlier Assumptions vs New Findings**
  - Earlier studies suggested Earth may contain **6–40% outer solar system material**; the new study suggests only minimal contribution.
  - Earlier theories supported mixed reservoirs; new study suggests a **uniform inner solar system reservoir**- a pro-cess called **homo-gen-eous accre-tion**.
- **Prediction for Other Planets:** Mercury and Venus likely formed through similar processes.

## INDIA–SOUTH KOREA DEFENCE COOPERATION

### Context

India and South Korea announced the launch of the Korea-India **Defence Accelerator (KIND-X)** during the 2026 bilateral summit.

### About KIND-X (Korea-India Defence Accelerator)

- **Purpose:** Acts as a “defence innovation bridge” linking startups, industries, investors, universities and defence ecosystems of both countries.
- **Expected Leadership:** Likely led by South Korea’s **DAPA** and India’s **Defence Innovation**



**Organisation (DIO).**

- **Objectives:** Promotes defence innovation, co-development, co-production and joint R&D in emerging technologies.
- **Potential Areas:** AI-enabled military systems, autonomous weapons, robotics, satellites, ISR systems, defence semiconductors and critical minerals.
- **Industrial Linkages:** Connects South Korean innovation hubs (*Changwon, Daejeon, Gumi*) with Indian defence corridors (*Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bengaluru, Hyderabad*).
- **Strategic Importance:** Supports India’s **Defence Vision 2047** and South Korea’s **Defence Innovation 4.0** strategy.

**Similar Defence Innovation Initiatives of India**

Initiative	Partner Country	Purpose
INDUS-X	United States	India–US defence innovation bridge for startups, AI, ISR and co-development
FRIND-X	France	India–France defence startup and innovation collaboration platform

**PLACES IN NEWS: CANARY ISLANDS (SPAIN)**

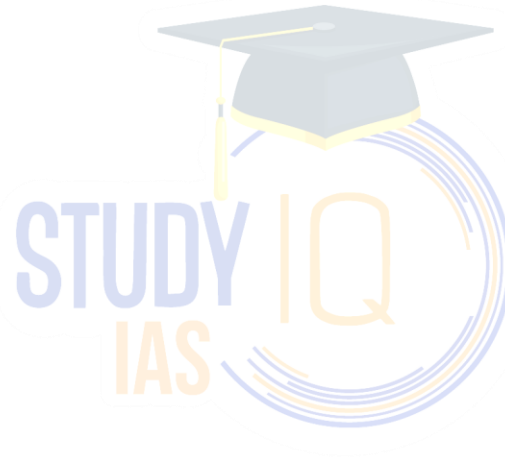
**Context**

Spain coordinated evacuation and quarantine operations for passengers from a hantavirus-affected cruise ship near Tenerife.

**About the Canary Islands**



- **Location:** An autonomous archipelago of Spain located in the **Atlantic Ocean**, off the northwestern coast of Africa near Morocco.
- **Political Status:** An autonomous community of Spain with two provincial capitals — **Santa Cruz de Tenerife** and **Las Palmas de Gran Canaria**.
- **Major Islands:** Main islands include **Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, La Palma, La Gomera and El Hierro**.
  - **Tenerife:** Largest and most populous island of the archipelago; location of the **Port of Granadilla de Abona** used during the evacuation operation.
- **Geographical Features:** Volcanic islands formed due to hotspot volcanism; dominated by rugged terrain and volcanic peaks.
- **Highest Peak:** Home to **Mount Teide** on Tenerife, the highest peak in Spain and one of the world's largest volcanic structures.



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## Mains Exam Topics

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### GOVERNOR'S ROLE IN A HUNG ASSEMBLY

#### Context

After TVK emerged as the single largest party in the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, the Governor sought letters from 118 MLAs before inviting C. Joseph Vijay to form the government

#### Introduction to hung assembly

##### About hung assembly:

- A hung Assembly arises when no political party or alliance secures a clear majority in the Legislative Assembly after elections.
- In such situations, the Governor plays a crucial constitutional role in ensuring the formation of a stable government while preserving democratic and constitutional principles.

##### In such circumstances:

- Government formation becomes uncertain.
- Coalition-building and support from independents become important.
- The Governor must decide whom to invite to form the government.

#### Exploring Possibilities of Government Formation

- **Consultation with Political Parties:** In a hung Assembly, the Governor may consult political parties, seek information regarding alliances and verify support from independent MLAs to identify whether a stable majority government can be formed.
- **Reasonable Time for Majority Formation:** The Governor may allow parties some time to build alliances and demonstrate legislative support.
  - However the Governor cannot delay indefinitely because prolonged uncertainty may encourage political defections, horse-trading and instability.
- **Power to Dissolve the Assembly:** Under Article 174(2)(b), the Governor may recommend dissolution of the Assembly if no stable government can be formed.
  - The Supreme Court in the **B. R. Kapur case and Rameshwar Prasad case** recognised this constitutional power.
- **Recommendation of President's Rule:** If all possibilities of government formation fail, the Governor may recommend President's Rule under Article 356, but it is considered as an exceptional measure.

- **Order of Preference in Government Formation:**

- **First Preference:** The Sarkaria Commission recommended that priority should be given to a pre-election alliance that commands majority support to provide greater political stability.
- **Second Preference:** If no alliance has a majority, the Governor may invite the single largest party which demonstrates majority support through alliances, support letters and backing from independents.
- **Third Preference:** Post-Poll Alliances: If neither a pre-poll alliance nor the largest party secures majority support, the Governor may consider post-election coalitions.

### Growing Concerns Regarding Governor's Discretion

- **Delays in Inviting Parties to Form Government:** Governors are sometimes accused of unnecessarily delaying the invitation to political parties despite clear claims of majority support, leading to political uncertainty.
  - **Eg: In the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections,** the Governor sought physical letters of support before inviting the single largest party leader to form the government.
- **Allegations of Political Bias:** Critics argue that Governors may favour the ruling party at the Centre while exercising discretionary powers in States governed by opposition parties
- **Misuse of Recommendation for President's Rule:** Concerns arise when Governors recommend President's Rule without fully exploring possibilities of government formation.
  - **Eg: In the Rameshwar Prasad case (Bihar, 2005),** the Supreme Court criticised premature dissolution of the Assembly.
- **Delay in Conducting Floor Tests:** Postponing floor tests can create opportunities for defections, horse-trading, and political manipulation.
  - **Eg: In the Karnataka crisis (2018),** the Supreme Court reduced the time for the floor test from 15 days to 24 hours.
- **Expansion of Discretion Beyond Constitutional Limits:** Excessive reliance on personal satisfaction rather than legislative testing may weaken democratic principles and federalism.
  - **Eg: The Supreme Court in the S. R. Bommai case** emphasised that the majority should be tested on the Assembly floor, not determined solely by the Governor.

### Way Forward

- **Codify Clear Guidelines:** India should consider a legally binding framework and uniform procedures for hung Assembly situations

- **Ensure Time-Bound Floor Tests:** Floor tests should be conducted quickly to prevent instability and reduce misuse of discretion
- **Strengthen Constitutional Neutrality:** Governors should function strictly as Constitutional heads, neutral arbiters rather than political actors.
- **Reduce Scope for Arbitrary Delays:** The Supreme Court's jurisprudence increasingly supports immediate legislative testing of majority and limited subjective discretion

