Prelims Exam Topics

DHABALESWAR TEMPLE

Context

The **President of India** recently offered prayers at the **Dhabaleswar Temple** during her visit to **Odisha**.

About Dhabaleswar Temple

- **Nature: Dhabaleswar Temple** is an ancient **Hindu temple** dedicated to **Lord Shiva**.
- **Location:** It is situated on an **island in the Mahanadi River** near **Cuttack, Odisha**.
- **History:** The temple dates back to the **10th–11th century CE**, with its original structure attributed to the **Somavamshi dynasty** under **King Yayati Keshari**; the present structure was later rebuilt by **King Bir Kishore of Khurda** around **1232 CE**.
- **Architecture:** Built in the **Kalinga style**, the temple is primarily constructed of **sandstone** and features a **square sanctum** with a **pyramidal superstructure**.
- **Temple Complex:** The complex includes **smaller shrines**, a **Jagamohan (assembly hall)** adorned with intricate carvings of animals, birds, and mythological figures, and walls embellished with sculptures of deities.
- **Distinctive Feature:** The temple is noted for its **two-tiered terracotta-tiled roof** and a **marble-paved raised platform** surrounding the main shrine.

HIMALAYAN SEROW

Context

The **Himalayan Serow** has recently been recorded in the **Dalhousie Forest Division of Himachal Pradesh** for the first time in nearly **20 years**.

About Himalayan Serow

- **Nature:** The **Himalayan Serow** is a **shy, forest-dwelling mountain ungulate**, often described as resembling a cross between a **goat, donkey, cow, and pig**.
- **Distribution:** It is found across the **eastern, central, and western Himalayas**, typically at elevations of **2,000–4,000 m**, but is absent from the **Trans-Himalayan region**.
- **Habitat:** It inhabits **steep, rugged forested slopes** and is classified as a **subspecies of the Mainland Serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis*)**.

- **Diet:** It is a **herbivore**, feeding mainly on grasses, leaves, shoots, and shrubs.
- **Conservation status:** It is listed as **Near Threatened** on the **IUCN Red List**, included in **CITES Appendix I**, and protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.

ADYAR RIVER

Context

The **Tamil Nadu Government** recently reviewed restoration and cleaning works along the **Adyar River** to improve river health and local civic infrastructure.

About Adyar River

- **Nature:** The **Adyar River** is one of the **three major rivers flowing through Chennai**, Tamil Nadu.
- **Origin & Mouth:** It originates near **Chembarambakkam Lake** in **Kanchipuram district** and drains into the **Bay of Bengal** through the **Adyar Estuary**.
- **Estuary & Creek:** Near its mouth, it forms the **Adyar Creek**, a **tidal backwater** created by sandbar formation, and the ecologically rich **Adyar Estuary**.

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS (ALS)

Context

A recent global review found that occupational exposure to pesticides may significantly increase the risk of developing Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).

About Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

- **Nature:** Progressive **neurodegenerative disorder** damaging **upper and lower motor neurons**, causing progressive **muscle weakness** and **paralysis**; also known as **Lou Gehrig's disease**.
- **Cause:** Largely **unknown**; most cases are **sporadic**, while a small proportion are **inherited**.
- **Symptoms: Muscle twitching**, **limb weakness**, **slurred speech**, and **difficulty swallowing**, progressing to impaired **movement**, **speech**, **eating**, and **breathing**.
- **Treatment: No cure** or reversal of motor neuron damage; therapies can **slow progression**, **improve quality of life**, and **extend survival**.

MULLAPERIYAR DAM

Context

The **Kerala Government** recently opposed **Tamil Nadu's proposal to raise the water level of the Mullaperiyar Dam**, reviving the long-standing inter-state dispute over the dam's safety and operation.

About Mullaperiyar Dam

- **Nature: Mullaperiyar Dam** is a **masonry gravity dam** built across the **Periyar River** at the confluence of the **Mullayar and Periyar rivers**.
- **Location:** It is situated at **Thekkady** in **Idukki district, Kerala**, at an elevation of about **881 m** in the **Cardamom Hills of the Western Ghats**.
- **Purpose:** The dam diverts water from the **Periyar River basin** to the **Vaigai River basin** in Tamil Nadu, benefiting the districts of **Theni, Madurai, Sivaganga, and Ramanathapuram**.
- **Structure:** Built using **limestone and surkhi mortar**.
- **Administration:** Although located in **Kerala**, the dam is **operated and maintained by Tamil Nadu** under a **999-year lease agreement** signed during the British period; it is surrounded by the **Periyar National Park**.

GOBARDHAN SCHEME

Context

The **Union Cabinet** recently approved the **GOBARdhan (Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan) Scheme** to promote **Compressed Biogas (CBG)** production and strengthen India's circular bioeconomy.

About GOBARdhan Scheme

- **Nature: GOBARdhan** is a **National Circular Bioenergy Scheme** aimed at converting **organic waste into Compressed Biogas (CBG)** and other value-added products.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It is implemented by the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG)**.
- **Objective:** To expand domestic **CBG production**, promote waste-to-energy infrastructure, attract private investment, and establish CBG as a key component of India's energy mix from **FY 2026–27 to FY 2035–36**.

- **CBG Promotion:** Mandates **CBG blending obligations** for **City Gas Distribution (CGD)** entities, supported by an **administered pricing framework** for assured offtake.
- **Financial & Infrastructure Support:** Provides **capital assistance**, **credit guarantee support**, and promotes **pipeline connectivity** linking CBG plants with trunk pipelines and CGD networks.

AGNI-4 MISSILE

Context

Agni-4, India's indigenously developed **medium-range ballistic missile**, was recently **successfully test-fired** from the **Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha**.

About Agni-4 Missile

- **Nature: Agni-4** is an **indigenously developed Medium-Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM)** forming part of India's strategic missile arsenal.
- **Developed By:** It is developed by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** and operated by the **Strategic Forces Command** (SFC).
- **Role:** It is designed to deliver **strategic payloads** and strengthen India's **credible minimum deterrence** capability.
- **Range & Propulsion:** It is a **two-stage, surface-to-surface ballistic missile** powered by **solid-fuel rocket motors**, with a strike range of up to **4,000 km**.
- **Launch & Payload:** The missile is launched from a **road-mobile launcher** and can carry a **payload of up to 1,000 kg**.
- **Guidance System:** Equipped with a **Ring Laser Gyroscope-based Inertial Navigation System (RINS)** and a **Micro Navigation System (MINGS)**, it has a **Circular Error Probable (CEP) of less than 100 metres**, ensuring high targeting accuracy.

PAKAL DUL HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

Context

A recent industrial dispute involving workers at the **Pakal Dul Hydroelectric Project** in **Kishtwar, Jammu & Kashmir**, was resolved amicably.

About Pakal Dul Hydroelectric Project

- **Nature: Pakal Dul** is a **1,000 MW run-of-the-river hydroelectric project** under construction in **Kishtwar district, Jammu & Kashmir**.
- **Location:** The project is being developed on the **Marusudar River**, a major **tributary of the Chenab River**.

NBFC-UPPER LAYER (NBFC-UL)

Context

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** classified **Tata Sons Ltd.** as a **Non-Banking Financial Company–Upper Layer (NBFC-UL)** for **2026–27**, while its application for NBFC de-registration remains under examination.

About NBFC-Upper Layer (NBFC-UL)

- **Nature: NBFC-Upper Layer (NBFC-UL)** comprises **large, systemically important Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** that are subject to **enhanced prudential and governance regulations** under the RBI's **Scale Based Regulation (SBR)** framework.
- **Classification:** Standalone **NBFCs with assets of ₹1 lakh crore or more** qualify for the Upper Layer; once classified, they remain in this category for a **minimum of five years**.
- **Objective:** To strengthen the regulation of systemically important NBFCs and safeguard the stability of India's financial system.
- **Enhanced Regulatory Norms:** NBFC-UL entities must comply with **higher capital adequacy requirements**, **Common Equity Tier-1 (CET-1) norms**, stronger corporate governance standards, higher provisioning, and enhanced disclosure requirements.
- **Mandatory Listing:** Private NBFC-ULs are generally required to **list their shares on stock exchanges within three years** of classification to improve transparency and market discipline.
- **Scale Based Regulation (SBR):** RBI classifies NBFCs into **Base Layer (BL), Middle Layer (ML), Upper Layer (UL), and Top Layer (TL)** based on their **size, complexity, and systemic importance**.

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION (RDI) FUND

Context

A recent investigation raised concerns over the **selection process** under the **₹1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund**, after several funded companies were found to have investment links with members of the selection committees.

About Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund

- **Nature:** The **RDI Fund** is a **Government of India initiative** that provides **long-term, low-cost financing** to promote **deep-tech research, innovation, and commercialization**.
- **Administered By:** The fund is housed under the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)**, with implementation through designated **Second-Level Fund Managers (SLFMs)** such as the **Technology Development Board (TDB)** and **Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)**.
- **Objective:** To strengthen India's **deep-tech ecosystem**, reduce dependence on imported critical technologies, and accelerate the commercialization of indigenous innovations.
- **Financial Support:** Offers **collateral-free soft loans** covering up to **50% of project cost**, with **low interest rates (about 2–4%)** and a repayment period of up to **15 years**.
- **Priority Sectors:** Supports innovations in **Artificial Intelligence, quantum technologies, semiconductors, defence, space, robotics, clean energy, and digital healthcare**.
- **Eligibility & Selection:** Funding is available to **Eligible Technology Entities (ETEs)** with technologies at **Technology Readiness Level (TRL)-4 or above**, and proposals are evaluated on **scientific merit, technological feasibility, financial viability, and commercial potential**.

SARVOTTAM JEEVAN RAKSHA PADAK

Context

The **Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways** recently conferred the **Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak** on **12 rat-hole miners** for their exceptional role in a life-saving rescue operation.

About Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak

- **Nature:** The **Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak** is the **highest civilian life-saving award** in the **Jeevan Raksha Padak** series, conferred for acts of **exceptional courage in saving human lives** under conditions of extreme personal risk.

- **Administered By:** It is administered by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
- **History:** Instituted in **1961**, the award forms part of the **three-tier Jeevan Raksha Padak** series comprising **Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak, Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak, and Jeevan Raksha Padak**.
- **Eligibility:** Open to **all citizens**, including members of the **Armed Forces, CAPFs, and Police**, provided the act of bravery is performed **beyond the normal call of duty**.
- **Award Components:** Recipients receive a **medal, certificate, miniature medal**, and a **lump-sum cash award of ₹2 lakh**; the award may also be **conferred posthumously**.
- **Selection Process:** Recommendations from **States, Union Territories, and Central Ministries** are scrutinised by a **high-level committee** before receiving the **President's approval**.

Mains Exam Topics

MONEY BILL

Context

The **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026**, passed as a **Money Bill**, seeks to raise the sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court from **34 to 38 judges, including the CJI**, while its classification as a Money Bill has renewed concerns over the use of the route to **limit Rajya Sabha's substantive legislative scrutiny**.

How has the Money Bill route diluted bicameralism to symbolic participation?

- **Asymmetric Legislative Power:** Rajya Sabha can only recommend amendments to a Money Bill, while Lok Sabha may accept or reject them, making the Upper House **consultative rather than co-legislative**.
    - **Eg:** Lok Sabha can pass a Money Bill even after rejecting every recommendation of Rajya Sabha.
- **Time-Bound Scrutiny:** Rajya Sabha has only **14 days** to consider a Money Bill, sharply constraining deliberation compared with the ordinary legislative process.
    - **Eg:** Complex fiscal legislation receives a constitutionally compressed window for Upper House scrutiny.
- **Silence as Passage:** If Rajya Sabha does not return the Bill within 14 days, it is **deemed passed in the form approved by Lok Sabha**, making even complete non-engagement legally equivalent to passage.
    - **Eg:** The government need not secure Rajya Sabha's approval for the Bill to become law.
- **Strategic Circumvention:** The Money Bill route creates an **executive incentive to embed non-fiscal reforms within fiscal legislation**, particularly when the government lacks a majority in Rajya Sabha, thereby bypassing the Upper House.
    - **Eg:** *Finance Act, 2017* altered the framework governing tribunals through Part XIV, whose Money Bill classification was subsequently challenged in *Rojer Mathew*.
- **Federal Voice Weakening:** Restricting Rajya Sabha's role weakens the **federal dimension of parliamentary scrutiny**, since the Upper House institutionally represents the States.
    - **Eg:** State representatives cannot substantively amend a measure once it validly enters the Money Bill route.

- **Certification as a Bicameralism Gatekeeper:** The Speaker's Money Bill certification determines whether a Bill follows the ordinary bicameral process or the **Lok Sabha-dominant procedure under Article 109**, making certification consequential to the substantive legislative power of Rajya Sabha.
    - **Eg:** Certification of the *Aadhaar Act, 2016* as a Money Bill became central to the constitutional challenge over whether its provisions fell within Article 110.
- **Unsettled Judicial Boundary:** The absence of a definitive judicial test for determining the permissible scope of a Money Bill leaves unresolved when **Lok Sabha's fiscal primacy can legitimately displace Rajya Sabha's substantive legislative role**.

How does Money Bill certification expose the limits of Speaker-led constitutional safeguards?

- **Concentrated Gatekeeping:** The Speaker's certification determines whether Rajya Sabha retains **substantive legislative power** or is reduced to a recommendatory role, making a single certification decision consequential for bicameralism.
    - **Eg:** Certification of the *Aadhaar Act, 2016* as a Money Bill subjected it to the restricted procedure under Article 109.
- **Limited Parliamentary Correction:** Once certified, **Rajya Sabha has no intra-parliamentary mechanism to overturn the classification** and can only recommend amendments, allowing the Speaker's determination to stand despite Upper House objections.
- **Circumvention Incentive:** Because **Rajya Sabha's objections carry no binding force even when raised**, governments lacking an Upper House majority acquire an incentive to test the outer limits of Article 110.
    - **Eg:** The *Finance Act, 2017* was enacted as a Money Bill despite containing provisions restructuring tribunals, prompting a constitutional challenge.
- **Textual Ambiguity:** The broad language of Article 110, particularly the distinction between matters **specified in Article 110(1)** and provisions merely incidental to them, creates room for disagreement over what can legitimately enter the Money Bill route.
    - **Eg:** In *Rojer Mathew*, the Supreme Court questioned whether **Part XIV of the Finance Act, 2017**, dealing with tribunals, could satisfy the constitutional requirements of a Money Bill.
- **Delayed Judicial Correction:** Judicial review provides an **external check**, but referral of the certification question to a larger Bench means the constitutional boundary may be clarified only after the disputed legislation has already passed, weakening the safeguard's **timeliness**.

Way Forward

- **Narrow Article 110:** Adopt a **strict, substantive test** limiting Money Bills to legislation whose primary and essential provisions fall within Article 110, preventing incidental provisions from becoming a route for wider legislative reform.
- **Institutionalise Certification Review:** Establish a **pre-legislative constitutional scrutiny mechanism** within Parliament, such as examination by the Rules Committee/Presiding Officers' Conference, to flag questionable Money Bill classifications before introduction.
- **Strengthen Rajya Sabha's Voice:** Where substantial non-fiscal provisions are included, provide a mechanism for **independent reconsideration of classification** so that Rajya Sabha's substantive legislative role cannot be displaced merely through certification.
- **Ensure Expeditious Judicial Review:** Develop an **expedited constitutional review mechanism** for disputed Money Bill certifications so that courts can determine the classification before legislation is substantially implemented.
- **Preserve Speaker's Neutrality:** Strengthen conventions requiring **reasoned certification** demonstrating how every substantive provision satisfies Article 110, thereby making the Speaker's constitutional discretion more transparent and reviewable.