

TODAY'S NEWS

Curated Insights from 'The Hindu' Newspaper

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Enhancing oversight

The GST Council could do more to smoothen the tax regime

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, entrusted with overseeing the seven-year-old indirect tax regime, is slated to meet on September 9. This would be its second sitting in under three months, after a nine-month pause. The Council, whose parities are the Union Finance Minister with States' representatives are critical for resolving taxpayer challenges and setting broader policy direction, ought to meet regularly at such frequency. A key expectation from the upcoming meet revolves around the much-awaited review of GST's complex, multiple rate structure. In June, the Council resolved to take stock of the progress made on this front by a ministerial group (GoM) appointed in 2021, and deliberate on the path forward. However, going by State Ministers' recent submissions to the GoM, progress is likely to be slow and arduous, with most members signalling an aversion to shake things up when revenues are healthy. Ideally, the Council should at least set a time line for concluding the group's deliberations and judge it to come up with a couple of alternatives for the revamped rate structure if consensus is difficult to attain. These could then be deliberated over by the Council, possibly with some public feedback incorporated. Beyond the broader revamp, the Council could also be briefed this time on the feasibility of reviewing the 18% GST levy on individual goods and services such as health insurance and life cover, that have attracted attention recently within and outside Parliament. These have been assessed by officials in the past too, without resulting in any change in stance. The inclusion of items such as electricity, petroleum and alcohol into the GST net, something that industry and economists have been advocating for years, may be even more tricky. States gave up a bit of taxation power for the GST's rollout, and are unlikely to be amenable to yielding further space, particularly as quite a few States' ties with the Centre are "contentious", as former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian recently pointed out. While it will be instructive to see the direction the Council takes on these issues, greater monitoring of the nitty-gritty of GST's day-to-day functioning is needed as well. Revenue trends remain healthy with about 10% growth this fiscal but the pace of refunds to taxpayers has been unusually uneven. Net GST receipts rose under 7% in three of the last five months, but jumped about 15% in months when refunds dropped sharply. The Council must not overlook such details, though they may seem relatively obscure in the bigger picture. This could help prevent ungainly twists for industry, be it registration or refund challenges, or the spectre of confusion created by recent large tax demands on IT majors.

Overview of the Upcoming GST Council Meeting

- The **GST Council** is set to meet on September 9, marking its second meeting in less than three months after a nine-month gap. The Council plays a crucial role in addressing **taxpayer challenges** and shaping **policy directions** under India's indirect tax regime.

Key Expectations and Challenges

- **Review of GST Rate Structure:** A primary expectation from the meeting is the long-awaited review of the GST's complex, **multiple-rate structure**. The Council had resolved in June to assess progress made by a ministerial group (GoM) appointed in 2021, but progress has been slow. State Ministers have shown reluctance to alter the structure amidst healthy revenue inflows.

- **Proposed Reforms and Timeline:** The Council should ideally set a **timeline** for concluding the GoM's discussions and consider alternatives for a revamped rate structure. **Public feedback** could also be incorporated into the deliberations.

- **Review of GST Levy on Specific Goods and Services:** The feasibility of reviewing the 18% GST on goods like **health insurance** and **life cover**, which have recently gained attention, may be discussed.

Inclusion of New Items in GST

- **Electricity, Petroleum, and Alcohol:** The inclusion of these items into the GST net **remains contentious**. States, having already ceded substantial taxation powers, are unlikely to concede further, especially amid strained relations with the Centre.

Monitoring GST's Functioning

- **Revenue Trends and Refund Challenges:** Although revenue growth is healthy, the uneven pace of refunds has created fluctuations in net GST receipts. The Council must address these operational details to prevent issues for the industry, including registration and refund challenges.

Conclusion

- The upcoming meeting holds significant potential for shaping the future direction of GST in India, but much will depend on the Council's ability to address both the **broader policy challenges** and the **day-to-day operational issues** that affect taxpayers.

Exam	Relevance
UPSC	Paper II - Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice, and International Relations: Understanding the functioning of the GST Council is essential for topics related to fiscal federalism , cooperative federalism , and the interplay between the Union and State governments. The meeting's discussions on taxation powers and the inclusion of items like electricity, petroleum, and alcohol into the GST net are relevant to the challenges of federalism in India. Additionally, the review of GST's rate structure touches upon important issues of economic governance and policy-making .
BPSC	General Studies Paper II - Indian Polity and Economy: The article is relevant for understanding fiscal policies and tax administration in India, with a specific focus on how the GST Council influences the economic relationship between the Centre and States . The discussion around the inclusion of new items into GST is crucial for understanding State-Centre relations and the dynamics of federalism , which are key topics in this paper. The GST's impact on economic activities in Bihar and the challenges related to tax administration are also important considerations.

Another escalation

The drone attacks in Manipur call for an overhaul of the government's approach

In a significant deterioration of an already fraught situation in Manipur, two persons were killed and at least nine were injured in a bomb attack using drones in villages in the Meitei-majority Imphal West district. The perpetrators are believed to be Kuki-Zo militants. Kuki-Zo groups and partisans have claimed that the attacks were in retaliation to an attempt by Meitei vigilante and insurgent groups to "ambush" Kuki-Zo people in the area. While this claim remains unproven, the use of drones – a tactic employed by pro-democracy insurgents in Myanmar against the junta – points to a dangerous escalation of the ethnic conflict in the State. Coming in the wake of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's assertion that a peace resolution will be achieved in six months, the dastardly attacks could indicate that they are either a deliberate ploy to heighten tensions or just another reminder that ethnic hostilities remain entrenched. That insurgents could use sophisticated drones to attack civilians also suggests a glaring intelligence failure and the inability of the security forces to ensure that the militants are contained. The government has ordered police combing operations but this will not be enough. Unless there is a strong measure to disarm the various groups in the valley and the hills, the situation could exacerbate further.

For nearly 16 months, both the Union and State governments have been content with using security forces to maintain law and order through the creation of buffer zones between the hills and the valley and for the political status quo to remain intact. Repeated violence and the inability of both governments led by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to work out any breakthrough that will allow for even a dialogue between civil society representatives from these communities suggest that this policy is a failed one. There is little doubt left any more that the hardening of ethnic identities among the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities is a consequence of the failure of the policies pursued by the Union and State governments. Neither Prime Minister Narendra Modi nor Mr. Singh has changed tack since the setback faced by the BJP in the 2024 general election, when it lost both the Lok Sabha constituencies in the State. The Centre continues to ignore critiques of its lackadaisical approach, while Mr. Singh is hell-bent on remaining in power despite his incompetence and a distinct lack of confidence evinced by both communities. While the fresh attacks call for security forces to calibrate a strong response, a concomitant change in approach and leadership in the State is a must for a chance to be given to peace.

Escalation of Violence in Manipur

- **Recent Drone Attack:** In a significant escalation of ethnic conflict in Manipur, a bomb attack using drones in the **Meitei**-majority Imphal West district resulted in two deaths and at least nine injuries. The perpetrators are believed to be **Kuki-Zo militants**, who allegedly retaliated against an attempted ambush by Meitei vigilante and insurgent groups, though this claim remains unproven.

Concerns Over Escalation and Security Failures

- **Dangerous Escalation:** The use of drones, a tactic similar to those used by pro-democracy insurgents in Myanmar, indicates a dangerous escalation in the ongoing ethnic conflict. This incident **raises concerns** about the **effectiveness of the security forces** and highlights a **significant intelligence failure** in preventing such attacks.
- **Government's Response:** The government has initiated **police combing** operations, but this is considered **insufficient**. There is a **pressing need** for stronger measures **to disarm the various groups** in the region to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

Policy Failures and Political Implications

- **Failed Policy Approach:** For 16 months, both the Union and State governments have relied on security forces to maintain law and order, creating buffer zones between the hills and the valley. However, repeated violence and the **lack of dialogue** between the **Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities** suggest that this approach has failed.
- **Political Inaction:** The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has not made any significant changes in its policy despite setbacks in the 2024 general election, where it lost both Lok Sabha constituencies in Manipur. The Centre's lackadaisical approach and Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's insistence on retaining power have contributed to the ongoing conflict.

UPSC Relevance

The escalation of violence in Manipur, particularly with the use of drones, is highly relevant for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam**, particularly in areas related to **internal security, governance, and ethnic conflicts**. The following key points should be noted:

- **Internal Security:** The use of drones by militants marks a new and dangerous trend in insurgent tactics, which could be linked to the broader issue of **security challenges** in border regions and insurgency-affected areas.
- **Governance and Policy Failures:** The ongoing violence highlights the **limitations of the current policy approach** in Manipur, underscoring the need for effective governance and conflict resolution strategies.
- **Political Science & International Relations (PSIR):** The involvement of tactics similar to those used by insurgents in neighboring Myanmar indicates a regional dimension to the conflict, which is relevant for understanding **India's internal security** in the context of its international relations.

Call for Change in Leadership and Approach

- **Need for Leadership Change:** The fresh attacks underscore the necessity for a strong response from security forces, but more importantly, a change in leadership and approach in the State is crucial to creating an opportunity for peace.

Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and India's Engagement with Africa

Dealings at a China-Africa forum that India must track

In the wake of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) 2024, the world is watching India's role in Africa. The forum, which is the largest of its kind, is being held in Beijing. The event comes at a time when India's relations with Africa are becoming increasingly important. The forum is a platform for India to showcase its economic and technological capabilities to African nations. It is also an opportunity for India to discuss its foreign policy and its role in the world. The forum is expected to be a success, and it will be a significant event in India's history.



Ajit Mishra

As India prepares to enter the scene of the forum, it is important to understand the context of the forum. The forum is a platform for India to showcase its economic and technological capabilities to African nations. It is also an opportunity for India to discuss its foreign policy and its role in the world. The forum is expected to be a success, and it will be a significant event in India's history.

Advancing priorities at FOCAC 2024
In the economic front, progress on budgetary and infrastructure projects is being tracked. The forum is a platform for India to showcase its economic and technological capabilities to African nations. It is also an opportunity for India to discuss its foreign policy and its role in the world. The forum is expected to be a success, and it will be a significant event in India's history.

China and African debt: lessons for India
The forum is a platform for India to showcase its economic and technological capabilities to African nations. It is also an opportunity for India to discuss its foreign policy and its role in the world. The forum is expected to be a success, and it will be a significant event in India's history.

FOCAC 2024 and African Challenges

- The **ninth edition** of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is scheduled from September 4-6, 2024, in Beijing.
- African nations face significant challenges, including **high inflation, currency depreciation, heavy debt burdens, and geopolitical conflicts**.
- African leaders exhibit signs of **'summit fatigue'** due to multiple recent Africa+1 summits.

African Ownership and Strategic Thinking

- The success of FOCAC for Africa depends on Africa's **ability to set its agenda and take greater ownership of strategic planning**.
- There is a **knowledge asymmetry** as African governments lack the capacity and political will to understand China's strategies fully.
- African negotiators often find themselves at a disadvantage, leading to China driving the agenda.

African Priorities at FOCAC 2024

- Economic focus includes the **modest progress** on China's goal to import \$300 billion worth of goods from Africa between 2022-24, with trade primarily dominated by **raw materials**.
- Key priorities include **developing sustainable agriculture, green energy, and industrial development** to move up the value chain and ensure economic growth.
- Chronic **electricity shortages** and **environmental challenges** hamper industrial development.

China's Role in African Debt and Lessons for India

- China plays a complex role in African debt sustainability, accounting for 12% of Africa's public and private debt.
- Concerns over China's debt practices, including opacity and lack of transparency.
- African countries aim to develop a coherent strategy towards China and **prioritize trade facilitation over aid**.

India's Engagement with Africa: Key Lessons

- India should emphasize **continuity** in its engagement with Africa, including holding the next India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV).
- **Strengthening African economies' integration into global value chains** and **supporting industrialization** are critical areas where India can play a central role.
- Encouraging greater **Indian private sector participation**, innovative **financing solutions**, and **technology** use are essential for bolstering India-Africa relations.

Conclusion

- African countries are increasingly taking ownership of their strategic direction, demanding accountability from their governments, and repositioning the continent as an investment destination.
- Lessons from how African leaders engage with China under FOCAC can be crucial for enhancing India's partnership with Africa.

Exam	Paper	Relevance
UPSC	General Studies Paper II	The discussion on the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is highly relevant for the topic of International Relations , particularly in the context of India's foreign policy and its engagement with Africa. The article sheds light on how African countries are reassessing their strategic relationships with China, which provides insights into India's diplomatic and economic strategies in the region. Additionally, the focus on green energy and industrial development is crucial for understanding how international cooperation can contribute to sustainable growth in developing regions like Africa.



Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024

The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill is knotty

On August 1, 2024, the central government introduced the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha. Focusing on the wake of climate-induced disasters, the Bill shows much evidence of a further continuation of an already heavily-centralised Disaster Management Act, 2005. This Act, in its current form, already mandates the creation of many authorities and committees at the national, state and district levels. The proposed Bill further provides statutory status to pre-existing organisations such as the National Crisis Management Committee and a High Level Committee, comprising the Chhota of action to be followed in case of disasters. A representation of this top-down approach is seen when there is a delayed response to disasters, antithetical to the intent and purpose of the Act. The Bill claims to strengthen the working of the National Disaster Management Authority and the State Disaster Management Authorities to prepare State and national level plans. It also establishes an Urban Disaster Management Authority for State capitals and cities with municipal corporations. However, this intended decentralisation of functions without the necessary financial devolution creates more problems than it solves.



Pratibha Lalit
a research fellow at the VJI Centre for Legal Policy, where she works on issues concerning urban governance.



Sneha Priya Yennapa
a senior research fellow and lead on Karnataka team at the VJI Centre for Legal Policy.

the disaster relief funds from the NDRF were directed to Tamil Nadu and disbursed much later to Karnataka.

In the backdrop of a looming climate crisis, there is a need to revisit the very idea of disasters under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

Restricted definition of 'disaster'
On July 25, 2024, the Minister of State of Science, Technology and Earth Sciences, in response to questions posed in the Lok Sabha, said that the government is currently not planning to classify heatwaves as a notified disaster under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. This statement occurs with the observations of the 15th Finance Commission which did not find merit in expanding the scope of notified disasters. The notified list of disasters eligible for assistance under the National Disaster Response Fund-State Disaster Response Fund are cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloud burst, pest attack, frost and cold wave.

This strict iteration of what constitutes a "disaster" in the times of climate change marks a sharp departure from the global narrative. Globally, there is enough consensus to classify heatwaves as climate-related disasters, given their ramifications on ecosystems and human health. According to the India Meteorological Department data, India had 236 heatwave days which is the highest number of heatwave days in almost 11 years. Being heatwave days along with 10,055 human deaths due to heat or stroke in the making for the country.

disasters under the Act restrict the inclusion of climate-induced disasters such as heatwaves which display regional variability and gradation specific to a geographical area. For example, a normal summer temperature of 40°C in several north Indian States may classify as heatwave conditions in the Himalayas. The definition, however, is also not inclusive enough to be able to interpret a prolonged heatwave episode to be considered as a natural disaster even if its impacts are akin to an actual disaster such as floods in terms of the loss of human life. This poses a problem as the very nature of climate-induced disasters is non-progressive in the sense of a traditional disaster under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and the proposed Bill. The incoherence is exacerbated by the localised nature and impact of climate-induced disasters.

Relevant issues
However, some questions are still valid. Is the proposed Bill apt to tackle contemporary challenges arising due to the disproportionate power dynamics between the central and State governments? Do States have to largely depend on the central government for the disbursement of funds if the Bill claims to be an improved version of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, it does very little in learning from the failures encountered during the implementation of the Act while dealing with past disasters. There is a need to revisit the Centre's efforts in addressing the issue of financial preparedness when it comes to the management of and response to disasters. The conversation should not revolve around whether the Centre or State is responsible for the loss of lives in Wagmad, Kerala. But what is that can be done to manage disasters and predict their future occurrence. After all, a blame game will only move away from resolving the true spirit of cooperative federalism.

Introduction and Centralisation Concerns

- **Centralisation:** The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, introduced on August 1, 2024, further centralizes disaster management, complicating the chain of action by providing **statutory status** to pre-existing organizations like the **National Crisis Management Committee**.
- **Delayed Response:** This centralisation may lead to delayed disaster responses, undermining the purpose of the Act.

Issues with Financial Devolution

- **Decentralisation Without Resources:** Although the Bill proposes strengthening national and State disaster management plans and establishing Urban Disaster Management Authorities, the **lack of financial devolution** could create more problems than solutions.

Dilution of the National Disaster Response Fund

- **Funds Allocation:** The Bill dilutes the National Disaster Response Fund by **removing specific purposes** for fund usage, which could lead to delayed disaster relief, as previously seen in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Restricted Definition of 'Disaster'

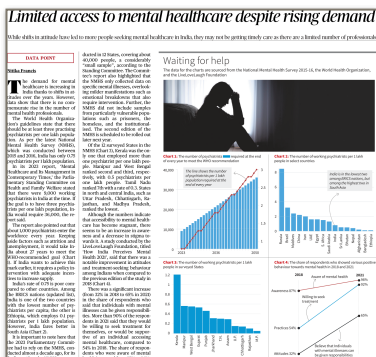
- **Exclusion of Heatwaves:** The government's decision **not to classify heatwaves** as a disaster under the Act, despite increasing heatwave days and fatalities, contradicts global trends.
- **Static Definition:** The **narrow definition** of disasters in the Act **fails to accommodate climate-induced disasters** like heatwaves, which vary regionally.

Exam	Relevance
GS Paper II	Governance and Federalism: The Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024 highlights issues related to the centralization of power and its impact on cooperative federalism . Questions could focus on the balance of power between the Centre and States in disaster management and the implications of centralization on governance.
GS Paper III	Disaster Management and Climate Change: The Bill's approach to defining and managing disasters, especially in the context of climate-induced disasters like heatwaves, is crucial. Discussions on the adequacy of the existing legal framework and its ability to address the challenges posed by climate change could be a focal point.
Essay	Governance and Climate Change: The themes of centralization vs. decentralization and the role of government in managing climate-induced disasters can be explored in essays related to governance, disaster management, and the environment.
Interview	Current Affairs and Critical Analysis: The ongoing debates around the Bill provide an opportunity to discuss the broader implications of disaster management policies in India, including the role of federalism , financial preparedness, and the challenges posed by climate change.

Relevant Issues and Federalism Concerns

- **Central-State Power Dynamics:** The Bill **does not address the disproportionate power** between central and State governments, particularly in fund disbursement.
- **Need for Cooperative Federalism:** The Bill's failure to learn from past experiences highlights the need for better financial preparedness and cooperative federalism, focusing on managing and predicting disasters rather than engaging in blame games.

Mental Healthcare in India



Increasing Demand vs. Limited Supply

- **Growing Demand:** India is experiencing an increased demand for mental healthcare due to evolving attitudes towards mental health.
- **Limited Supply:** According to the latest **National Mental Health Survey (NMHS)** conducted between 2015 and 2016, India has only **0.75 psychiatrists per 1 lakh population**, falling short of the **World Health Organization's** recommended ratio of **three psychiatrists per 1 lakh population**.

Current Workforce and Future Needs

- **Current Statistics:** As of the 2023 report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare, there are 9,000 working psychiatrists in India. To meet the WHO's guideline, the country **needs 36,000 psychiatrists**.
- **Future Projection:** With about 1,000 new psychiatrists entering the workforce annually, it would take approximately 27 years to achieve the recommended ratio, highlighting the need for policy interventions and incentives to expedite this process.

Comparative Analysis

- **Global Comparison:** India has a lower rate of psychiatrists compared to other BRICS nations. However, India performs better compared to some South Asian countries.

Category	Details
Increasing Demand vs. Limited Supply	The rising need for mental healthcare versus the insufficient number of psychiatrists highlights crucial areas for policy intervention and system improvements.
Current Workforce and Future Needs	With a shortfall in psychiatrists and slow annual growth, the challenge of meeting WHO standards necessitates focused healthcare policy and planning.
Comparative Analysis	India's psychiatrist ratio compared to other nations provides context for evaluating its healthcare system's performance and needs.
Data Limitations	The outdated and limited scope of the current data underscores the necessity for updated surveys to better inform policy decisions.
Regional Disparities	Significant differences in psychiatrist distribution across states highlight issues in regional healthcare access and planning.
Increased Awareness	Improved public attitudes towards mental health indicate progress in societal understanding and treatment-seeking behaviors.

GS Paper II: Health and Family Welfare

Data Limitations

- **Survey Limitations:** The 2023 Parliamentary Committee report is based on NMHS data from 2015-2016, which is outdated and limited. The NMHS only covered specific mental illnesses and excluded vulnerable populations such as prisoners and the homeless.
- **Upcoming Survey:** The second edition of NMHS is expected next year, which may provide more comprehensive and updated data.

Regional Disparities

- **State-wise Distribution:** Kerala is the **only state** with **more than one psychiatrist per 1 lakh population**. Manipur and West Bengal have rates of 0.5, while Tamil Nadu has 0.3. Northern and central states, like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, have the lowest rates.

Increased Awareness

- **Changing Attitudes:** There has been a **notable improvement** in attitudes towards mental health. The **LiveLoveLaugh Foundation's 2021** study indicates a significant increase in the acceptance of individuals with mental illnesses and a greater willingness to seek mental healthcare compared to 2018.
- **Awareness Growth:** Awareness of mental health has increased from 87% in 2018 to 96% in 2021, and willingness to seek treatment has risen from 54% to over 90%.



Germany's Bundestag Downsizing: A 2025 Reform Overview



Background of the Judgment

On July 30, Germany's federal constitutional court upheld the government's decision to **downsize the Bundestag** from 2025. The Bundestag, currently the largest parliament among democratically elected assemblies with 736 deputies, has seen continuous enlargement due to Germany's complex electoral system and party fragmentation.

Electoral System Overview

Germany uses a **mixed-member proportional representation** system. Voters cast two votes:

- **First Vote:** Directly elects candidates from constituencies (299 seats).
- **Second Vote:** Chooses political parties (299 seats), determining the proportionate strength of parties in the Bundestag.

Seats are allocated based on a combination of direct constituency wins and proportional representation from the second votes.

Reasons for Increased Legislators

The increase in Bundestag members has been driven by:

- **Overhang Seats:** Larger parties often retain more seats than proportional votes entitle them to, creating extra seats.
- **Balance Seats:** To ensure equal suffrage, balance seats were introduced for smaller parties, leading to further increases in Bundestag size.

Aspect	Details	UPSC Relevance
Electoral System	Germany's mixed-member proportional representation system involves two votes for each voter.	Understanding electoral systems is crucial for questions related to political science and comparative politics .

Government's Proposed Change

On March 17, 2023, legislation was enacted to cap the Bundestag size at **630 representatives** from 2025. Key changes include:

- **Scrapping Overhang and Balance Seats:** The new structure will eliminate these seats and reduce the weight of candidate seats.
- **New Allocation Rule:** Parties winning more direct seats than their second vote share allows **will not automatically receive those extra seats**.

Criticism and Opposition

The new measure has faced criticism for lacking a broad consultative process. The opposition CDU has indicated that it will reverse the law if it returns to power.

Mixed-Member Proportional Representation

Example Scenario (Imagine a country with 10 parliamentary seats and three main parties: Party A, Party B, and Party C.)

Step	Details
First Vote (Direct Vote)	Voters elect a local candidate from their constituency. There are 10 constituencies, so 10 local representatives are directly elected.
Second Vote (Party Vote)	Voters also cast a second vote for a political party. This vote determines the overall proportion of seats each party should have in parliament.

Voting Results

Party	Let Direct Seats Won (First Vote)	Let Proportional Seats (Second Vote)	Expected Seats
Party A	6	40% of votes	4
Party B	3	40% of votes	4
Party C	1	20% of votes	2

Adjusting for Proportional Representation

Party	Seats Won	Should Have (Proportional)	Imbalance
Party A	6	4	+2
Party B	3	4	-1
Party C	1	2	-1

Balancing the Seats

Party	Additional Seats Given	Final Seat Distribution	Proportional Alignment
Party A	0	6	Above Proportional Share
Party B	1	4	Matches Proportional Share
Party C	1	2	Matches Proportional Share

Key Takeaway

The Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) system ensures that the **overall composition of parliament** reflects the **proportion of votes** each party received. Even though **Party A** won more direct seats, the system adds extra seats to **Party B** and **Party C** to make the final seat distribution align more closely with the proportional votes, ensuring **fair representation**.

"Unified Lending Interface (ULI): Revolutionizing Credit Access for Farmers and MSMEs"

What is the Unified Lending Interface by the RBI?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced the introduction of a new technology platform called the Unified Lending Interface (ULI), developed by the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub in Bengaluru. ULI is part of RBI's strategy to create digital public infrastructure in India, aimed at facilitating frictionless credit for farmers and MSME borrowers.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced the introduction of a new technology platform called the Unified Lending Interface (ULI), developed by the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub in Bengaluru. ULI is part of RBI's strategy to create digital public infrastructure in India, aimed at facilitating frictionless credit for farmers and MSME borrowers.

What is ULI?

ULI is a platform that enables the seamless flow of a customer's digitized financial and non-financial data from multiple data providers to lenders. This system allows for easier credit underwriting and streamlines the borrowing process for a wide range of customers. The platform uses standardised Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), reducing the complexity of technical integrations and speeding up the credit appraisal process, especially for smaller and rural borrowers without a credit history.

Benefits of ULI

- Seamless Access to Data:** ULI allows lenders to access customer data from various sources, including government databases (e.g., land records) and satellite imagery, through standardized APIs.
- Faster Credit Appraisal:** By integrating data into a single platform, ULI reduces the time taken for credit appraisals, making it quicker and easier for borrowers to secure loans.
- Support for First-Time Loan Seekers:** ULI provides digital credit information, making it possible for first-time borrowers without a credit history to obtain loans.
- Access for Tenant Farmers:** ULI can enable tenant farmers, who often lack land titles, to access agricultural credit by verifying their identity through the end use of funds.

Exam	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Government Schemes & Initiatives: Understanding the ULI as part of RBI's digital public infrastructure strategy.
UPSC Mains	<ul style="list-style-type: none">GS Paper 2 (Governance): ULI's role in enhancing credit accessibility, especially for rural and MSME sectors.GS Paper 3 (Economy): The impact of digital platforms on financial inclusion, agricultural credit, and MSMEs.
Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Discussion on the importance of digital infrastructure in financial inclusion and rural development.Implications of RBI's ULI on the future of banking and credit delivery in India.

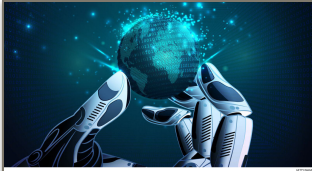
How ULI Works

ULI facilitates access to data about a loan applicant's economic activities and financial condition through a single platform. Lenders can fetch data from multiple sources, such as land records and milk cooperatives, to make informed lending decisions. This system allows for automated decision-making, enabling loans to be sanctioned and disbursed within minutes.

Background and Development of ULI

The RBI announced the setting up of a Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit on August 10, 2023, which is now branded as ULI. The idea emerged from the need to have a single point of access for all data required for credit appraisal in the digital age. The concept was first tested through a pilot project for the digitalisation of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans in September 2022, which showed promising results.

The Evolution of AI Assistants: From Basic AI to Advanced Cognitive AI Agents and Their Implications



Do AI agents foretell the next wave of autonomy or liability?

Recent progress in artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics has led to a new wave of autonomy and liability. These are the challenges that AI agents and robots will face as they become more advanced and capable of performing complex tasks. This article explores the implications of AI agents and robots on society and the legal system.

AI agents and robots are becoming increasingly common in our lives. They are used in a wide range of applications, from customer service to healthcare. As they become more advanced, they will be able to perform tasks that were previously only possible for humans. This raises the question of whether AI agents and robots should be held liable for their actions.

There are several challenges that AI agents and robots will face as they become more advanced. One of the most significant challenges is the issue of liability. If an AI agent or robot causes harm, who is responsible? The manufacturer? The programmer? The user? This is a complex question that will need to be addressed in the future.

Another challenge is the issue of autonomy. AI agents and robots are designed to perform tasks autonomously, but this raises the question of whether they should be allowed to make decisions on their own. This is a particularly challenging issue because it involves the potential for AI agents and robots to make decisions that are not in the best interests of humans.

Finally, there is the issue of privacy. AI agents and robots are often designed to collect and analyze data about their users. This raises the question of whether this data should be shared with third parties and how it should be protected.

As AI agents and robots continue to advance, it is clear that we will need to address these challenges in order to ensure that they are used in a way that is safe and beneficial to society.

AI Assistants and AI Agents

AI assistants like Siri and Alexa have evolved into more advanced entities known as AI Agents (AIAs). AIAs are categorised into three types:

- 1. Reactive Agents:** First-generation AI agents that respond to specific commands *based on predefined rules* but *lack learning capabilities*.
- 2. Learning Agents:** These agents improve over time through experience, leveraging *machine learning* for better pattern detection and data analysis.
- 3. Cognitive Agents:** The most advanced, *capable of reasoning, analyzing, and planning* by learning from their environment. They use techniques like natural language processing, computer vision, and deep learning to perform complex tasks.

Capabilities of Cognitive AIAs

Cognitive AIAs can perform multiple tasks autonomously and integrate with the Internet of Things (IoT) to analyze real-time data. They can understand human speech, perform tasks requiring multiple proficiencies, and personalize responses based on user preferences.

Applications and Examples: AIAs are being used in various industries, from *warehouse management* and *autonomous vehicles* to *financial investments* and *healthcare*. For instance, a Bengaluru-based startup launched an AIA for warehouse operations, and tools like Orby AI automate repetitive tasks.

Exam	Topic	Relevance
UPSC Prelims	Science and Technology: Developments in AI and Robotics	Questions related to AI technologies , their evolution, and applications in various sectors can be expected. Understanding the differences between AI assistants and AI agents is crucial.
UPSC Mains	GS Paper III: Science and Technology - Developments and their Applications and Effects	The article provides insights into the technological advancements in AI , particularly cognitive AI agents, and their implications. This is important for discussing the role of AI in economic and social development.
UPSC Mains	GS Paper III: Security Challenges and their Management	The challenges posed by AIAs , including accountability, liability , and the potential for misuse by malicious actors, are crucial for discussing the security implications of AI technologies.
UPSC Mains	GS Paper IV: Ethics - Technology and Ethics	The ethical considerations of AIAs , such as their impact on human autonomy, privacy , and the responsibility of developers , are relevant for discussions on the ethical use of technology.
Essay Paper	Technology and Society: Impact of AI on Society	The article offers material for an essay on the impact of AI on society, particularly focusing on the balance between technological advancement and ethical concerns .

Challenges and Risks

The rise of cognitive AIAs raises concerns about *accountability, liability, and user vulnerability*. Since AIAs can learn and adapt, they must be designed to prioritize user safety, privacy, and autonomy. There are also significant legal and ethical challenges, such as defining the liability of AIAs' actions, especially when manipulated by malicious actors.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

AIAs currently *lack legal recognition* of agency, making their makers or service providers potentially liable for their actions. Legal scholars argue for holding companies accountable for the risks posed by AIAs, emphasizing the need for nuanced regulation. As AIAs are deployed in more sectors, a comprehensive approach to responsibility and liability is essential.

In summary, while AIAs offer significant advancements in technology and efficiency, they also present complex challenges that require careful consideration of legal, ethical, and safety issues.

Zyklon B

Zyklon B was a cyanide-based pesticide used by the **Nazis** during the Holocaust for mass extermination. Originally developed as a disinfectant and pest control agent, it became infamous when it was repurposed for use in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and other concentration camps during World War II.

When exposed to air, Zyklon B **released** hydrogen cyanide gas, which was highly toxic and lethal. The Nazis used it as part of their "Final Solution" to systematically kill millions of Jews, Romani people, political prisoners, and others they deemed undesirable. The first use of Zyklon B for mass murder occurred on **September 3, 1941**, marking a dark and tragic moment in history.

Why in News?

- **Anniversary of First Use:** September 3, 2024, marks the 83rd anniversary of the first use of Zyklon B by the Nazis to kill prisoners at the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1941.
- **Historical Significance:** The date is a stark reminder of the atrocities committed during the Holocaust and serves as an important day for reflecting on the consequences of hate and extremism.
- **Educational Remembrance:** Various organizations and institutions use this anniversary to educate the public about the Holocaust, the dangers of totalitarian regimes, and the importance of preserving human rights.
- **Memorial Events:** Commemorative events and discussions are held to honor the victims and ensure that such tragedies are never forgotten or repeated.



AI technology is increasingly being used to handle customer interactions in multiple languages, potentially reducing the need for staff with specific language skills. While there are concerns that AI might lead to job losses, historical trends suggest that **technology often enhances productivity and creates new job opportunities**. The impact of AI on employment is mixed, with some jobs being replaced while others are transformed or created. AI can streamline tasks and improve efficiency, potentially freeing workers to focus on more creative and complex roles.



The formation of **Parliamentary Standing Committees** has been delayed due to disagreements between the Union government and Opposition over chairmanships. The Congress wants to lead key committees like External Affairs and Defence but has been offered different ones. The process has stalled for three months since the election results.

Note: There are 24 such committees, with 16 under the Lok Sabha and 8 under the Rajya Sabha.

Advocates are pushing for the use of regional languages in High Court proceedings to make justice more accessible. Currently, only four High Courts in India use Hindi. Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud highlighted the struggle of citizens who do not understand English, noting that many countries conduct legal proceedings in regional languages. While **Article 348(1)** of the Indian Constitution mandates English for High Court proceedings, **Article 348(2)** allows for regional languages with presidential consent. Proposals from several states to use regional languages have been considered but not accepted, partly due to concerns about language proficiency among judges and lawyers.

Use of regional languages in HCs remains limited

Seiham Rocky Singh
NEW DELHI

In a growing movement to make justice accessible, lawyers and experts are increasingly advocating for the use of regional languages in High Court proceedings, where English remains the official language. Out of 25 High Courts, only four – Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar – are allowed to use Hindi in their proceedings. In July, Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, while addressing a convocation function at Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University in Lucknow, remarked that while judges and lawyers are familiar with English, many common citizens who bring their cases to court struggle to understand the legal process. The Chief Justice also stated that in many countries, both legal education and proceedings are conducted in the regional language. This practice ensures that all citizens can access the legal system and aspire to become lawyers and judges. As it stands, Article 348 (1) of the Indian Constitution mandates that all proceedings in the Supreme Court and High Courts be conducted in English, unless Parliament decides otherwise. Meanwhile, Article 348(2) allows the Governor of a State to authorize the use of Hindi or any other official language in the State's High Court, provided the President consents. Despite these constitutional provisions, the use of regional languages in High Courts remains limited. The issue was recently raised by MPs Dharmastha Veerendra Hegde and Tejasi Sarga before the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, respectively. In questions to the Minister of Law and Justice, they inquired about the steps taken or proposed to promote the use of local languages in court practices, procedures, and arguments. Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal responded that the government had previously received proposals from Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Karnataka to permit the use of regional language in the proceedings of their High Courts. The Chief Justice of India was consulted on these proposals and, in 2012, after thorough deliberation with other judges, decided not to accept them. One primary concern is the impact on judges and lawyers who are not proficient in regional languages. Senior advocate Sarjay Hegde acknowledged this issue, citing an instance in the Bihar High Court where a lawyer insisted on speaking in Hindi, but the judge, unfamiliar with the language, faced difficulties. "There are such problems, but they are generally few and far between. These issues can be resolved through understanding between the Bar and the Bench," he said.

Cabinet okays seven schemes for farmers worth ₹14,235 crore

Digital Agriculture Mission among initiatives to get nod; schemes to boost nutritional security and livestock production also approved

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Monday approved seven schemes for the agriculture sector with a total outlay of ₹14,235.30 crore, the most important among them being the 'Digital Agriculture Mission' (DAM).

The DAM is a consolidated database on a single platform linking multiple databases and platforms from different Union Territories and States, as well as Ministries and Departments. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the decisions demonstrate the Centre's commitment to increase the use of technology in the agriculture sector and said it will benefit farmers.

The DAM has total outlay of ₹2,817 crore. It comprises an 'Agri Stack', which will function as a registry of farmers, village land maps and crops; the 'Krishi Decision Support System' to create a comprehensive geospatial set-up to unify remote sensing-based information on



Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan addresses a press briefing at the National Media Centre in New Delhi on Monday. ANI

crops, soil, weather and water resources; and 'Soil Profile Mapping' to create detailed soil-profile maps on a 1:10,000 scale for about 142 million hectares of agricultural land.

The Cabinet also approved the 'Crop Science for Food and Nutritional Security' with a total outlay of ₹3,979 crore. "The initiative will prepare farmers for climate resilience and provide for food security by 2047," the Centre said. For strengthening agricultural education, management and social sciences, the Cabinet has cleared another scheme with a total outlay of ₹2,291 crore. The Centre said the scheme is to prepare agriculture students and researchers for current challenges. Another decision is 'Sustainable Livestock Health and Production' with an outlay of ₹1,293.30 crore to promote tropical, sub-tropical, and temperate horticulture crops: root, tuber, bulbous and arid crops; and vegetable, horticulture, and mushroom crops. Additionally, Krishi Vigyan Kendras will get ₹1,202 crore while ₹1.15 crore will be spent on 'Natural Resource Management'.

The Union Cabinet has **approved** seven agricultural schemes totalling ₹14,235.30 crore.

Key among them is the ₹2,817 crore **Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM)**, which includes an **Agri Stack** for farmer data, **Krishi Decision Support System** for geospatial information, and **Soil Profile Mapping**. Other schemes include:

- **Crop Science for Food and Nutritional Security:** ₹3,979 crore
- **Strengthening Agricultural Education:** ₹2,291 crore
- **Sustainable Livestock Health and Production:** ₹1,702 crore
- **Sustainable Development of Horticulture:** ₹1,129.30 crore
- **Krishi Vigyan Kendras:** ₹1,202 crore
- **Natural Resource Management:** ₹1,115 crore

These initiatives aim to enhance technology use, climate resilience, and productivity in agriculture.



Scientists are researching ways to grow cocoa indoors

Climate change is threatening cocoa production, vital for chocolate, due to its impact on rainforests and weather patterns. To address this, companies are exploring **alternative methods** of growing cocoa or creating substitutes. Notably:

- **California Cultured** is **growing cocoa in cell cultures**, reducing maturation time from months to a week and minimizing resource use.
- Research and innovation are focused on cultivating cocoa in less traditional regions like Northern California and Israel.
- Cocoa substitutes made from ingredients like oats or carob are also being developed.

The **global demand for chocolate** is high, with U.S. sales exceeding \$25 billion in 2023, driving efforts to stabilize supply through lab-grown cocoa and alternatives.

"News Highlights: Key Updates in Brief"

Governance

- The Supreme Court of India is reviewing the **legality and fairness of demolishing homes** of crime suspects or their relatives. The Court questioned whether such actions, often seen as public retribution, are legally permissible. Senior advocates have urged the Court to prevent "**bulldozer justice**," while Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta argued that demolitions are conducted according to municipal laws and not as retaliation. The Court plans to establish uniform guidelines for demolitions and will consider the petitioners' suggestions. The case was triggered by recent controversial demolitions in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Economy

- Chief Economic Adviser **V. Anantha Nageswaran** has expressed concerns about the **excessive financialisation** of the economy, particularly the dominance of financial markets in public policy, which could **jeopardise macroeconomic stability**. He highlighted that India's stock market capitalization is about 140% of GDP, which, while currently growth-enhancing, could lead to issues similar to those faced by advanced economies, such as high levels of public and private debt, dependence on asset-price inflation, and rising inequality.
- Former RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya emphasized the need to reduce tariffs and dismantle large conglomerates in India. He urged the government to avoid protectionist policies to foster competition, enabling Indian companies to become global players and offering consumers competitive prices. Acharya suggested that the concentration of wealth and business power in the hands of big conglomerates, who are benefiting from tariff barriers, should be reduced. He argued that these conglomerates are making super profits without investing in innovation to meet global competition. Acharya called for opening up domestic manufacturing to overseas companies to drive competition and innovation.
- **Manufacturing Activity Decline in August:** Manufacturing activity in India declined to a three-month low in August, according to the HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), which dropped to 57.5 from 58.1 in July. The slowdown was attributed to a reduction in new orders, with the slowest growth in seven months, and the weakest export performance of 2024.
- **Expanding Beyond Traditional Markets:** Indian IT firms, traditionally focused on the U.S. and Europe, are increasingly targeting new regions like Latin America (LATAM) and Africa to reduce their dependence on North America and Europe. This shift is driven by factors such as nearshoring benefits, competitive wages, and a growing pool of skilled IT professionals in LATAM.
- **Russia** has proposed that **India** use its **alternative financial messaging system** for rupee-rouble trade settlements, as Russian banks are banned from SWIFT due to Western sanctions. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) finds the proposal feasible but ongoing discussions are needed, considering diplomatic sensitivities. This follows an agreement between Prime Minister Modi and President Putin to enhance trade in national currencies.
- The **Supreme Court** has established a **five-member committee**, led by former Punjab and Haryana High Court judge **Justice Nawab Singh**, to address the grievances of farmers protesting at the Shambhu border between Punjab and Haryana. The committee is directed to meet within a week. The Court urged farmers to avoid politicizing the issue and to clear the blockade to ease public hardship. The committee may consult Professor B.R. Kamboj, Vice-Chancellor of Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, for expert advice.

International

- **PM Modi** is visiting **Brunei** and **Singapore** to boost trade and tech ties. In Brunei, he'll meet Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and sign a space cooperation MoU. In Singapore, he'll meet PM Lawrence Wong and sign agreements on various sectors. The trip aims to enhance bilateral relations and address trade agreements. **Note:** Modi's visit marks the first bilateral visit by an Indian PM to **Brunei**
- **Bangladesh's** interim government wants to restart negotiations with India on the **Teesta water-sharing treaty**, which was stalled due to objections from West Bengal. Advisor Syeda Rizwana Hasan suggested considering international legal frameworks if talks fail. She also highlighted the need for better flood management and early warning systems, as only eight of the 54 shared rivers have agreements.
- **Sweden's** Public Health Agency has advised against screen time for children under two, limits of one hour per day for ages two to five, and a maximum of two to three hours daily for teens aged 13 to 18. The recommendations aim to address concerns about excessive screen use impacting sleep, physical activity, and mental health.

Science and Technology

- The **National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NIAB)** is leveraging Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) and genotyping to **conserve indigenous cattle breeds** and **enhance breed purity**. They are developing **vaccines and diagnostics** to combat livestock diseases like **brucellosis** and improving animal health. NIAB's research aligns with the **BioE3 policy**, aiming to advance bio-manufacturing and transform the livestock economy. Key projects include creating **bio-scaffolds**, a 3D model for bovine tuberculosis, and exploring bacteriophages as antibiotic alternatives.

Internal Security

- The **first Joint Commanders Conference (JCC)** in **Lucknow** will review detailed plans for **Integrated Theatre Commands** and present recommendations to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The conference will focus on creating **three theatre commands** and setting up four new **Joint Logistics Nodes (JLNs)** at Leh, Siliguri, Sullur, and Prayagraj. The JLNs aim to enhance integrated logistics and resource utilization. The JCC, themed "**Sashakt aur Surakshit Bharat**," will be inaugurated by General Anil Chauhan and will address internal process reforms and cross-staffing between Services.
- The **Cabinet Committee on Security** has approved the procurement of 240 **AL-31FP aero-engines** for **Su-30MKI aircraft** from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) at a cost exceeding ₹26,000 crore. The engines, with over 54% indigenous content, will be delivered over eight years, starting after one year. HAL's Koraput division will manufacture the engines, which will support the operational needs of the Indian Air Force's Su-30MKI fleet.

Sports

- On Monday at the **Paralympics**, **Sumit Antil** successfully defended his F64 javelin title with a record throw, while **Nitesh Kumar** won his first SL3 badminton title. Additionally, Indian athletes secured **three silver** and **two bronze** medals.



State Specific

- Changes to the BJP's **Subhadra Yojana** in **Odisha** have stirred controversy. Initially, it promised ₹50,000 over two years to all women. The revised criteria now restrict benefits to women aged 21-60 and extend the payout to five years. Exclusions include those receiving significant aid, income taxpayers, large landowners, elected officials, and car owners. Opposition parties claim the new criteria betray women by limiting eligibility and reducing benefits.

BPSC POINT

Practice Mains Question

1. The proposed Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024, further centralizes disaster management functions, which may lead to delayed responses during emergencies. Critically analyze the implications of such centralisation on disaster management in India, particularly in the context of climate-induced disasters like heatwaves. (Answer in 250 words)
2. Discuss the concept of vernacular feminism and its significance in empowering women within traditional and patriarchal societies. How does vernacular feminism differ from global feminist movements in terms of approach and impact? (Answer in 250 words)
3. Analyze the impact of India's shortage of mental health professionals on the accessibility and quality of mental healthcare. Discuss the challenges and suggest policy measures that could effectively address this issue. (Answer in 250 words)
4. The evolution of AI assistants, particularly cognitive AI agents, presents significant opportunities for enhancing productivity and personalization but also raises complex ethical and legal challenges. Discuss the potential risks associated with cognitive AI agents and suggest regulatory measures to address these challenges while promoting innovation in AI technologies. (Answer in 250 words)

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Practice Prelims Question

1. Consider the following statements regarding the mental healthcare system in India:

1. The National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) conducted between 2015 and 2016 indicates that India has 0.75 psychiatrists per 1 lakh population, which is below the World Health Organization's recommended ratio.
2. The 2023 report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare states that India needs 36,000 psychiatrists to meet the WHO guideline, given the current workforce of 9,000 psychiatrists.
3. Kerala is the only state in India with more than one psychiatrist per 1 lakh population, while states like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have the lowest rates.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- A) 1 and 2 only
- B) 2 and 3 only
- C) 1 and 3 only
- D) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: D) 1, 2, and 3

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1:** Correct. The National Mental Health Survey (NMHS), conducted between 2015 and 2016, indicates that India has 0.75 psychiatrists per 1 lakh population. This figure is below the World Health Organization's recommended ratio of three psychiatrists per 1 lakh population, highlighting a significant shortfall in mental health professionals.
2. **Statement 2:** Correct. According to the 2023 report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare, India currently has 9,000 psychiatrists. To meet the WHO guideline of three psychiatrists per 1 lakh population, India

would need a total of 36,000 psychiatrists. With the current rate of 1,000 new psychiatrists entering the workforce annually, it would take about 27 years to reach the recommended ratio, indicating the need for urgent policy interventions.

3. **Statement 3:** Correct. Kerala is indeed the only state in India with more than one psychiatrist per 1 lakh population. States such as Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have some of the lowest rates of psychiatrists per 1 lakh population, illustrating significant regional disparities in mental healthcare availability.

2. The first Joint Commanders Conference (JCC) scheduled to be held in Lucknow will address several key issues related to the Indian Armed Forces. Which of the following statements accurately describe the focus and outcomes expected from this conference?

A) The JCC will review detailed plans for the creation of Integrated Theatre Commands, including recommendations for three new theatre commands.

B) The conference will also present plans for setting up new Joint Logistics Nodes (JLNs) in Leh, Siliguri, Sular, and Prayagraj to enhance integrated logistics.

C) The theme of the conference is "Sashakt aur Surakshit Bharat: Transforming the Armed Forces," reflecting its emphasis on improving the operational efficiency of the military.

Which of the above statements are correct?

1. A and B only
2. B and C only
3. A and C only
4. All of the above

Answer: 4) All of the above

Explanation:

1. **Statement A:** The JCC will review plans for Integrated Theatre Commands, including recommendations for creating three major commands.

- **True:** The conference will discuss the establishment of three theatre commands (land and maritime).

2. **Statement B:** It will also present plans for new JLN in Leh, Siliguri, Suler, and Prayagraj to improve logistics.

- **True:** The conference will review plans for these new JLN to enhance integrated logistics.

3. **Statement C:** The conference theme is “Sashakt aur Surakshit Bharat: Transforming the Armed Forces.”

- **True:** The theme reflects the focus on transforming and improving military operations.

BPSC POINT

End of Summary

This marks the end of today's summary from *The Hindu*. We trust this has added value to your exam preparation. Keep engaging with current affairs to sharpen your insights and strengthen your knowledge. We'll be back tomorrow with more updates to guide you on your path to success.

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