Xtracts
Daily Current Affairs · 4 Issues · PYQ Connections

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Mission X for UPSC

D01 GS-I Indian Heritage & Culture

12th-Century Chola Bronze Idols of Nataraja and Sivakami Unearthed in Nagapattinam

Excavating at a depth of about one metre in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, the State Department of Archaeology has recovered bronze-alloy idols of Nataraja and his consort Sivakami — the department's first bronze find in its own excavations. Iconography and ornamentation date the pair to the 12th century CE, when Nagapattinam was a thriving Chola port, manufacturing centre and temple town.

110cm	82cm	~1 Metre	12th Cent.	Lost-Wax
NATARAJA HEIGHT	SIVAKAMI HEIGHT	EXCAVATION DEPTH	CHOLA DATING	CASTING METHOD

PRELIMS RELEVANCE	MAINS RELEVANCE	ETHICS RELEVANCE
★★★★★	★★☆☆☆	★☆☆☆☆

PRELIMS TRIGGER

- Nataraja is shown in the four-armed **Ananda Tandava** ("dance of bliss"); Sivakami is two-armed, in the **Tribhanga** pose — pose terminology is a recurring Prelims trap.
- Chola "bronzes" (9th–13th century) were mostly copper, with some brass, cast by the **cire-perdue (lost-wax)** process.
- Nagapattinam was a major Chola-era port and temple town; the idols may have been buried for safekeeping during invasions.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-I GS-II

The find adds fresh material for metallurgical dating and iconographic study of Chola bronze-casting, and reinforces Nagapattinam's place as a port and shrine town under the Cholas. **GS-II | Heritage Protection:** it also feeds the governance debate around the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972, and the Tamil Nadu Idol Wing's continuing fight against temple-idol theft and smuggling — now extended to safeguarding fresh finds before they even reach a shrine. Key themes: lost-wax metallurgy, state archaeology departments vs. the ASI, antiquity smuggling and repatriation, the Chola temple economy.

ETHICS LENS

"Should a chance archaeological find always be handed to the state, even when it could fetch a fortune on the black market?" The labourers and contractors who physically unearth such finds face a daily temptation to divert a single idol worth crores, while the law demands immediate, uncompensated surrender. ***GS-IV Value: Integrity*** *— the internal, often unrewarded choice to do right when no one is watching and the deterrent is weak.*

PYQ CONNECT · **UPSC 2013** VERIFIED

In the context of cultural history of India, a pose in dance and dramatics called 'Tribhanga' has been a favourite of Indian artists from ancient times till today. Which one of the following statements best describes this pose?

(a) One leg is bent, and the body is slightly but oppositely curved at waist and neck

(b) Facial expressions, hand gestures and make-up are combined to symbolise certain epic or historic characters

(c) Movements of body, face and hands are used to express oneself or to tell a story

(d) A little smile, slightly curved waist and certain hand gestures are emphasised to express the feelings of love or eroticism

Answer: (a). Today's Sivakami idol is explicitly described as standing in the Tribhanga pose — the exact concept this question tests.

D02 GS-II Welfare Schemes

Centre Notifies National Social Security Board for Unorganised, Gig and Platform Workers

The Ministry of Labour & Employment has notified the National Social Security Board under the Code on Social Security, bringing unorganised, gig and platform workers under one statutory umbrella. Chaired by the Union Labour Minister, the Board must meet at least thrice a year and will recommend, monitor and review welfare schemes for India's fast-growing app-based workforce.

3x/yr	Code on SS	1st	6	2020
MIN. BOARD MEETINGS	LEGAL BASIS	UNIFIED GIG BOARD	CORE FUNCTIONS	CODE ENACTED

PRELIMS RELEVANCE	MAINS RELEVANCE	ETHICS RELEVANCE
★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★☆☆

PRELIMS TRIGGER

- The Board draws authority from the **Code on Social Security, 2020**, which consolidated nine earlier labour laws, including the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008.
- Composition is tripartite-plus: Central/State government representatives, aggregator companies, employers, workers' unions, and gig & platform associations.
- Procedural rules for the Board's functioning are to be separately prescribed by the Central Government.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-II GS-III

The Board formalises India's response to the gig economy's social-protection gap — platform workers have long fallen outside the EPF/ESI net built for formal employees. **GS-III | Inclusive Growth & Employment:** it sits alongside e-Shram registration and the Code's aggregator-funded contribution model as the government's main lever for extending welfare to a workforce projected to grow sharply through the decade. Key themes: portability of benefits across employers, aggregator-funded social security fund, tripartite board design, unorganised-sector welfare architecture.

ETHICS LENS

"Does a company's convenience in calling its workers 'partners' excuse it from the duties of an employer?" Gig platforms built their economics on treating delivery and ride-hailing workers as independent contractors, shifting the cost of insurance, injury and old age away from the firm and onto the worker and the state. ***GS-IV Value: Justice (distributive)*** *— the obligation to ensure risk and reward in an employment relationship are not entirely one-sided.*

PYQ CONNECT · **UPSC 2021** VERIFIED

With reference to casual workers employed in India, consider the following statements: 1. All casual workers are entitled for Employees Provident Fund coverage. 2. All casual workers are entitled for regular working hours and overtime payment. 3. The government can by a notification specify that an establishment or industry shall pay wages only through its bank account. 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: (b). Casual workers' partial, conditional access to social security is the same fault line the new Board is meant to close for gig and platform workers.

D03 GS-III Science & Technology

ISRO Launches NVS-03 to Reinforce India's NavIC Satellite Navigation System

ISRO's GSLV-F18 placed the 2,232 kg NVS-03 satellite — the third second-generation NavIC satellite and twelfth in the IRNSS series — into a geosynchronous transfer orbit from Sriharikota. The satellite carries an indigenous rubidium atomic clock, adds a civilian L1 signal for mass-market devices, and is built for a 12-year mission life.

2,232 kg	GSLV-F18	12 Yrs	L1/L5/S	7
SATELLITE MASS	LAUNCH VEHICLE	MISSION LIFE	SIGNAL BANDS	IRNSS SATS IN ORBIT

PRELIMS RELEVANCE	MAINS RELEVANCE	ETHICS RELEVANCE
★★★★★	★★★☆☆	★☆☆☆☆

PRELIMS TRIGGER

- NVS-03 is also called **IRNSS-1L** — the 3rd satellite of the second-generation NVS series, after NVS-01 and NVS-02.
- NavIC (IRNSS) covers India plus about **1,500 km** beyond its borders — a classic Prelims trap figure, often confused with "5,500 sq. km."
- NVS-03 carries an **indigenous Rubidium atomic clock** built by the Space Applications Centre, restoring a capability lost when earlier satellites' imported clocks failed in orbit.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-III

NVS-03 keeps India's push for strategic and civilian autonomy in satellite navigation on schedule, reducing long-term dependence on GPS/GLONASS for defence and for mass-market uses such as fleet tracking and smartphone positioning. **GS-III | Indigenisation of Technology:** the onboard atomic clock is the clearest marker of this shift, after earlier NVS satellites had to fly with imported clocks when domestic units initially underperformed. Key themes: NavIC vs. GPS/Galileo, dual-use civil-military space technology, import substitution in critical components, India's rising GSLV launch cadence.

ETHICS LENS

"Should a nation spend scarce public money building its own satellite navigation system when global alternatives already exist for free?" NavIC's defence utility — precision strikes, troop movement, disaster response in blackout zones — cannot rely on a foreign-controlled system that could be degraded during a conflict, yet the opportunity cost of that insurance is real for a country still battling poverty. ***GS-IV Value: Public interest*** *— weighing a long-horizon national-security good against more immediately felt welfare needs.*

PYQ CONNECT · **UPSC 2018** VERIFIED

With reference to the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), consider the following statements: 1. IRNSS has three satellites in geostationary and four satellites in geosynchronous orbits. 2. IRNSS covers the entire India and about 5500 sq. km beyond its borders. 3. India will have its own satellite navigation system with full global coverage by the middle of 2021. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only | (b) 1 and 2 only | (c) 2 and 3 only | (d) None

Answer: (a). NavIC's real coverage is ~1,500 km beyond India's borders, and it stays regional — not global — by design, even as NVS-03 strengthens the constellation.

D04 GS-III Disaster Management

Glacial Lake Outburst in Bhutan Triggers Flash-Flood Alert Across Assam and North Bengal

Shintaphu Lake in Bhutan's Gasa district burst on 30 October, releasing roughly 7.4 million cubic metres of water into the Mo Chhu–Sankosh river system. India's Central Water Commission issued flood warnings for Dhubri in Assam and for Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri and the Darjeeling hills in West Bengal, as authorities began evacuations along the Sankosh.

7.4 Mn m³	17	6–8 Hrs	2,000+	30–50%
WATER RELEASED	BHUTAN'S DANGER LAKES	FLOOD TRANSIT TIME	MAPPED IHR GLACIAL LAKES	HINDU-KUSH LAKE GROWTH/30YR

PRELIMS RELEVANCE	MAINS RELEVANCE	ETHICS RELEVANCE
★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★☆☆

PRELIMS TRIGGER

- The **Sankosh** is a major tributary of the Brahmaputra — alongside Dibang, Lohit, Kameng, Subansiri, Manas and Teesta — a classic "tributaries of the Brahmaputra" Prelims list.
- A GLOF occurs when a moraine- or ice-dammed glacial lake breaches suddenly; triggers include heavy rain, cloudbursts, earthquakes, avalanches and landslides.
- Rising Himalayan temperatures are swelling the number and size of such proglacial lakes across the Hindu Kush Himalaya, including over 2,000 mapped lakes in the Indian Himalayan Region.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-III GS-II

The flood is a reminder that Himalayan disaster risk does not stop at a border — Bhutan's glacial lakes threaten Indian districts hours downstream, much as the 2023 South Lhonak outburst devastated Sikkim's Teesta valley. **GS-II | India's Neighbourhood:** it strengthens the case for a standing India–Bhutan early-warning and data-sharing mechanism on glacial lake levels, similar to existing flood-forecasting arrangements with Nepal and Bangladesh. Key themes: transboundary disaster cooperation, the Central Water Commission's flood-forecasting network, climate-linked Himalayan hazard, India–Bhutan hydropower exposure (the Punatsangchhu project).

ETHICS LENS

"Who owes a warning to a village that sits downstream of another country's melting glacier?" The residents of Dhubri or Alipurduar did nothing to create the risk bearing down on them from a lake they cannot see and a government they cannot vote for, yet their safety depends entirely on how quickly Bhutan's and India's agencies choose to talk to each other. ***GS-IV Value: Compassion / duty of care*** *— the obligation to protect the vulnerable even when the source of danger, and the duty to warn, crosses a political boundary.*

PYQ CONNECT · **UPSC 2016** VERIFIED

Which of the following is/are tributary/tributaries of Brahmaputra? 1. Dibang 2. Kameng 3. Lohit Select the correct answer using the code given below.

(a) 1 only | (b) 2 and 3 only | (c) 1 and 3 only | **(d) 1, 2 and 3**

Answer: (d). All three are genuine Brahmaputra tributaries — and so, on the same list, is the Sankosh: the very river now carrying Bhutan's floodwater into Assam.

🧠 Memory Lab

Rapid revision · High-retention formats · Today's key concepts

SUNDAY · 01 NOV 2026

✕ XTRACTS IN 30 SECONDS

1. **Chola Bronzes, Reborn** — 12th-century Nataraja–Sivakami idols surface in Nagapattinam, the Tamil Nadu Archaeology Department's first-ever bronze find.
2. **One Board, Every Gig Worker** — the Centre notifies the National Social Security Board, pulling unorganised, gig and platform workers under one welfare umbrella.
3. **NavIC Gets Stronger** — GSLV-F18 places NVS-03 in orbit, adding a 12-year lifespan and an indigenous atomic clock to India's satnav fleet.
4. **Bhutan's Flood, Assam's Alert** — a glacial lake burst in Gasa sends a flash flood racing toward Dhubri and North Bengal within hours.

🔥 NUMBERS TO REMEMBER

110cm NATARAJA IDOL HEIGHT	**7** IRNSS SATELLITES NOW IN ORBIT	**7.4 Mn m³** WATER IN BHUTAN GLOF
1,500 km NAVIC COVERAGE BEYOND BORDER	**3x/yr** SOCIAL SECURITY BOARD MEETINGS	**12th Cent.** CHOLA IDOLS' DATING
17 BHUTAN'S DANGEROUS GLACIAL LAKES	**12 Yrs** NVS-03 MISSION LIFE	**6–8 Hrs** GLOF FLOOD TRANSIT TO INDIA

🟣 ETHICS QUICK REFERENCE

ISSUE 01 — CHOLA BRONZES

A labourer who unearths a crore-worth idol must surrender it on the spot, with no finder's share. **Value: Integrity.**

ISSUE 02 — GIG WORKERS' BOARD

Platforms built growth by calling workers "partners" instead of employees. **Value: Distributive Justice.**

ISSUE 03 — NVS-03

India funds its own satellite navigation system instead of relying on free global alternatives. **Value: Public Interest.**

ISSUE 04 — BHUTAN GLOF

Indian villages downstream had no say in the risk building up behind a foreign glacier. **Value: Duty of Care.**

QUICK CONTEXT

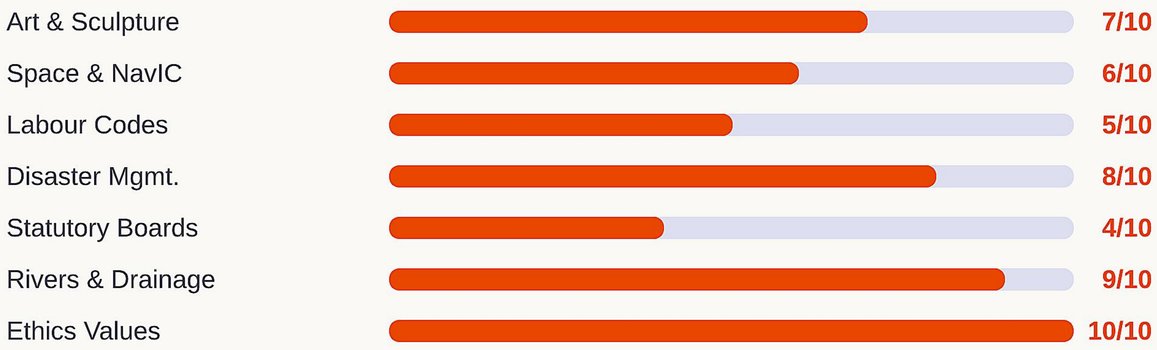
Punatsangchhu Hydropower Project

The India–Bhutan joint-venture hydropower project on the Mo Chhu was flagged as exposed to the GLOF's sudden discharge — a reminder that Bhutan's hydropower exports, India's largest energy tie with Bhutan, sit directly in the path of Himalayan glacial risk.

◎ QUICK REVISION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Nataraja (Ananda Tandava) is four-armed; Sivakami (Tribhanga) is two-armed — both dated to the Chola 12th century.
- ☐ Chola bronzes used cire-perdue (lost-wax) casting; mostly copper despite being called "bronzes."
- ☐ National Social Security Board notified under the Code on Social Security; chaired by the Union Labour Minister.
- ☐ The Board must meet at least 3 times a year; covers unorganised, gig and platform workers.
- ☐ NVS-03 = IRNSS-1L, the 3rd NVS-series satellite, launched on GSLV-F18 from Sriharikota.
- ☐ NavIC/IRNSS covers India plus ~1,500 km beyond its borders — not "5,500 sq km," a known trap.
- ☐ Bhutan's Shintaphu Lake GLOF flowed via Mo Chhu → Sankosh → Brahmaputra (Assam).
- ☐ Sankosh joins Dibang, Lohit, Kameng, Subansiri, Manas and Teesta as a Brahmaputra tributary.

📊 PYQ FREQUENCY — 10-YEAR VIEW





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t.me/MissionXUPSC · +91 79025 80728