MISSION X
UPSC MENTORSHIP & GUIDANCE PROGRAM

Xtracts

Daily Current Affairs · 4 Issues · PYQ Connections

11 NOV 2026
Mission X for UPSC

ISSUE 01 GS-I Ancient India · Art & Culture

ASI Moves to Protect Bihar's Buddhist-Era 'Raniwas Mound'

The ASI's Patna Circle has pursued protected status for the Raniwas Mound in East Champaran, Bihar, for nearly four years. A preliminary Gazette notification now proposes declaring it a monument of national importance — recognising a monastic structure first surveyed in 1861, next to the world's largest Buddhist stupa.

1.63 acres	~4 yrs	1861	E. Champaran	Near Kesaria
SITE AREA	ASI PURSUIT	CUNNINGHAM SURVEY	DISTRICT, BIHAR	WORLD'S LARGEST STUPA

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

PRELIMS TRIGGER

- Location: East Champaran district, Bihar — northeast of the Kesaria Buddha Stupa, the world's largest Buddhist stupa.
- Alexander Cunningham (1861) found a colossal Buddha figure and monastic cells here — suggesting a Vihara, not a Chaitya.
- A 2018 excavation trench revealed walled rooms, a pillared veranda and a courtyard of a monastic complex.
- Protection process: preliminary Gazette notice → public-objection window → ASI evaluation → final notification.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-I GS-II

Heritage protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958 depends on a slow, multi-step notification process; the four-year gap between Raniwas Mound's 2018 excavation and its 2026 preliminary notice illustrates how unprotected sites remain exposed to neglect or local development pressure while paperwork catches up with the archaeology. **GS-II | Heritage Governance:** The episode also underlines Bihar's under-explored Buddhist archaeological landscape as an asset for India's cultural diplomacy with Buddhist-majority nations. **Key themes:** AMASR Act · Buddhist archaeology · monument-notification delays · heritage diplomacy.

ETHICS LENS

"Who gets to decide when the past is 'important enough' to protect?" The nearly four-year gap between ASI's excavation findings and the first Gazette notice reflects a recurring tension in Indian heritage governance: local, state-owned sites often stay invisible to a slow central bureaucracy, risking irreversible loss in the interim. ***GS-IV Value: Stewardship — the duty of public institutions to safeguard shared heritage for future generations, even when formal recognition lags behind the urgency of preservation.***

PYQ CONNECT · **Buddhist Monuments** UPSC 2013

Some Buddhist rock-cut caves are called Chaityas, while others are called Viharas. What is the difference between the two?

(a) Vihara is a place of worship, while Chaitya is the dwelling place of the monks

(b) Chaitya is a place of worship, while Vihara is the dwelling place of the monks

(c) Chaitya is the stupa at the far end of the cave, while Vihara is the hall axial to it

(d) There is no material difference between the two

Answer: (b) — Cunningham's 1861 survey described Raniwas Mound's remains as a possible Vihara (monastery with monk cells), not a Chaitya (worship hall) — precisely the distinction this PYQ tests.

ISSUE 02 GS-II Digital Governance · IT Act

Centre Weighs Narrowing 'Safe Harbour' for Algorithm-Driven Platforms

The government is examining whether to withdraw blanket Section 79 immunity from social media platforms that use algorithms to rank, promote or suppress content, while separately weighing a fast-track route for users to seek direct removal of deepfakes and non-consensual content.

Sec. 79	5 Nov	8 Oct	<18	Pre-draft
IT ACT, 2000	REPORT DATE	MEITY ADVISORY	AGE CITED IN DEBATE	STAGE OF PROPOSAL

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

PRELIMS TRIGGER

- Section 79 gives intermediaries conditional immunity for third-party content, lost if they fail due diligence or abet unlawful acts.
- The proposal targets platforms that algorithmically rank, promote or suppress content — plain peer-to-peer messaging may be exempt.
- A separate idea: let users directly flag deepfakes or non-consensual content to platforms, bypassing a police complaint or court order.
- Any change needs an IT Act amendment; discussions remain pre-draft, ahead of formal stakeholder consultation.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-II GS-III

The debate revives the Shreya Singhal (2015) framework on intermediary liability and free speech, now applied to algorithmic curation rather than passive hosting; treating ranking algorithms as active editorial choices could justify narrower immunity, but over-broad liability risks pushing platforms toward pre-emptive shadow-banning of contentious political speech and journalism. **GS-III | Digital Economy:** Any IT Act amendment will also have to sit alongside the DPDP Act, 2023's data-fiduciary duties, since both regimes now govern how platforms handle user content and data. **Key themes:** Intermediary liability · free speech vs. regulation · platform accountability · data-protection overlap.

ETHICS LENS

"Should a platform be judged by what it hosts, or by what it chooses to show?" Treating algorithmic curation as an active editorial choice raises a hard line-drawing problem: the same ranking logic that could suppress a genuine deepfake also has the power to quietly bury inconvenient journalism or protest content, without the transparency a formal takedown order would require. ***GS-IV Value: Accountability — the principle that power to shape what millions see must carry a traceable, reviewable duty of care, not remain a discretionary, opaque algorithmic choice.***

PYQ CONNECT · **Digital Rights** UPSC 2021

'Right to Privacy' is protected under which Article of the Constitution of India?

(a) Article 15

(b) Article 19

(c) Article 21

(d) Article 29

Answer: (c) Article 21 — the Puttaswamy (2017) ruling that grounded privacy in Article 21 is the same constitutional anchor now invoked for a user's right to swift removal of non-consensual content from platforms.

ISSUE 03 GS-III Science & Technology · Samudrayaan

MATSYA-6000 Clears Unmanned Trials, Nears India’s First Deep-Sea Dive

India’s indigenous, fourth-generation deep-ocean submersible MATSYA-6000 completed unmanned trials at Kattupalli, Tamil Nadu, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences’ Samudrayaan project — clearing the way for advanced testing ahead of a planned crewed dive to explore deep-sea minerals and marine biodiversity.

6,000 m	3	2.1 m	NIOT-built	Kattupalli
DESIGN DEPTH	CREW CAPACITY	HULL DIAMETER	INDIGENOUS BUILDER	TRIAL SITE, TN

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

PRELIMS TRIGGER

- MATSYA-6000: India’s fourth-generation human submersible, indigenously designed and built by NIOT.
- Carries 3 crew in a 2.1-metre spherical hull; rated to a design depth of 6,000 metres.
- Built under the Samudrayaan project, part of India’s Deep Ocean Mission for deep-sea minerals and marine biodiversity.
- Unmanned trials (flotation, stability, ballast) cleared at L&T Shipyard, Kattupalli — next: advanced manned testing.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-III

Samudrayaan positions India among a handful of nations with crewed deep-ocean submersible capability, crucial for mapping the polymetallic-nodule fields in India’s licensed 75,000 sq km block in the Central Indian Ocean Basin. **GS-III | Blue Economy:** Beyond minerals, this deep-sea capability supports India’s Blue Economy goals of assessing fishery resources and seabed ecosystems, while raising environmental-governance questions about future commercial mining under the International Seabed Authority framework. **Key themes:** Deep Ocean Mission · Samudrayaan · Blue Economy · polymetallic nodules.

ETHICS LENS

“Should India mine the deep sea before fully understanding what lives there?” Deep-ocean ecosystems in the Central Indian Ocean Basin remain poorly catalogued even as India builds the capability to reach and extract from them; advancing extraction technology faster than baseline biodiversity science risks locking in exploitation before anyone can measure what is lost. ***GS-IV Value: Precautionary Principle — acting with restraint under scientific uncertainty, so irreversible harm to an unmapped ecosystem is never treated as an acceptable cost of progress.***

PYQ CONNECT · **Deep Ocean Mission** UPSC 2021

Consider the following statements: 1. The Global Ocean Commission grants licences for seabed exploration and mining in international waters. 2. India has received licences for seabed mineral exploration in international waters. 3. ‘Rare earth minerals’ are present on the seafloor in international waters. Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 2 and 3 only — it is the International Seabed Authority, not a ‘Global Ocean Commission’, that licensed India’s 75,000 sq km Central Indian Ocean Basin block — the same block MATSYA-6000 is being built to explore.

ISSUE 04 GS-III Environment · Climate Diplomacy

India Presses Developed Nations on Climate Finance at COP31

At COP31 in Antalya, India’s opening statement — delivered by MoEFCC Secretary Narendra Bhooshan — urged developed countries to meet their Paris Agreement climate-finance obligations, invoking equity and CBDR-RC, and warned that global warming crossing 1.5°C makes a fair, implementation-focused outcome urgent for the Global South.

COP31	Antalya	Art. 9.1	1.5°C	CBDR-RC
UNFCCC EDITION	HOST CITY, TÜRKIYE	PARIS AGREEMENT CLAUSE	WARMING THRESHOLD	PRINCIPLE INVOKED

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

PRELIMS TRIGGER

- COP31, the 31st UNFCCC Conference of Parties, is being held in Antalya, Türkiye, under the theme ‘COP of Implementation’.
- India’s statement cited Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement, which obliges developed countries to provide financial resources to developing countries.
- India invoked equity and CBDR-RC — Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities.
- India flagged concern that global warming is crossing the Paris Agreement’s aspirational 1.5°C threshold.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-III GS-II

India’s statement reasserts a long-standing developing-world position: that public climate finance from historically high emitters is a treaty obligation under Article 9.1, not charity — a stance consistent with India’s line from COP21 through COP30. **GS-II | International Relations:** As a leading voice for the Global South at UNFCCC negotiations, India frames the finance gap as a test of multilateral good faith, tying it to the credibility of rules-based climate governance and to its own just-transition and adaptation priorities. **Key themes:** Paris Agreement Article 9.1 · CBDR-RC · climate finance · Global South leadership.

ETHICS LENS

“Is a promise of climate finance an act of charity, or a debt being repaid?” Industrialised nations contributed the overwhelming share of cumulative emissions now driving the 1.5°C overshoot, while adaptation costs fall hardest on nations that contributed least; India’s invocation of CBDR-RC reframes climate finance as an obligation proportionate to historical responsibility and present capability, not voluntary generosity. ***GS-IV Value: Distributive Justice — allocating the burdens and benefits of a shared global problem in proportion to responsibility and capacity, rather than treating all nations as equally obligated.***

PYQ CONNECT · **Paris Agreement** UPSC 2016

With reference to the agreement at the UNFCCC Meeting in Paris in 2015, which of the following statements is/are correct? 1. The agreement was signed by all the member countries of the UN, and it will go into effect in 2017. 2. The agreement aims to limit greenhouse gas emissions so that the rise in average global temperature by the end of this century does not exceed 2°C or even 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. 3. Developed countries acknowledged their historical responsibility in global warming and committed to donate $1000 billion a year from 2020 to help developing countries to cope with climate change.

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

Answer: (b) 2 only — only the 1.5°C ambition is accurate; the $1000bn/year pledge was never part of the Paris Agreement, which is exactly why India is still pressing, a decade on at COP31, for developed nations to ‘fulfil’ finance obligations the treaty never concretely quantified.

🧠 Memory Lab

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

DAY 4 · 11 NOV 2026

✕ XTRACTS IN 30 SECONDS

1. Raniwas Mound — ASI pushes to protect a Buddhist-era monastic site in Bihar’s East Champaran, near the Kesaria stupa.

2. Safe Harbour Review — Centre weighs narrower IT Act immunity for algorithm-driven social media platforms.

3. MATSYA-6000 — India’s deep-ocean submersible clears unmanned trials under the Samudrayaan project.

4. COP31 Climate Finance — India presses developed nations to honour Paris Agreement finance obligations in Antalya.

🔥 NUMBERS TO REMEMBER

6,000 m MATSYA-6000 DESIGN DEPTH	**2.1 m** SUBMERSIBLE HULL DIAMETER	**3** CREW CAPACITY, MATSYA-6000
1.63 ac. RANIWAS MOUND SITE AREA	**~4 yrs** ASI’S PURSUIT OF PROTECTION	**1861** CUNNINGHAM’S FIRST SURVEY
75,000 km² INDIA’S CIOB EXPLORATION BLOCK	**1.5°C** PARIS AGREEMENT WARMING LIMIT	**31st** COP EDITION (COP31, ANTALYA)

🔹 ETHICS QUICK REFERENCE

ISSUE 01 — STEWARDSHIP

ASI’s four-year notification delay for Raniwas Mound tests how seriously public institutions treat intergenerational duty. **Value: Stewardship.**

ISSUE 02 — ACCOUNTABILITY

Narrowing safe harbour for algorithmic platforms asks who answers for what an algorithm chooses to show. **Value: Accountability.**

ISSUE 03 — PRECAUTION

Deep-sea extraction capability is outpacing deep-sea biodiversity science in the Central Indian Ocean Basin. **Value: Precautionary Principle.**

ISSUE 04 — DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

India’s COP31 finance demand reframes climate aid as repayment proportional to historical emissions. **Value: Distributive Justice.**

ALSO IN THE NEWS

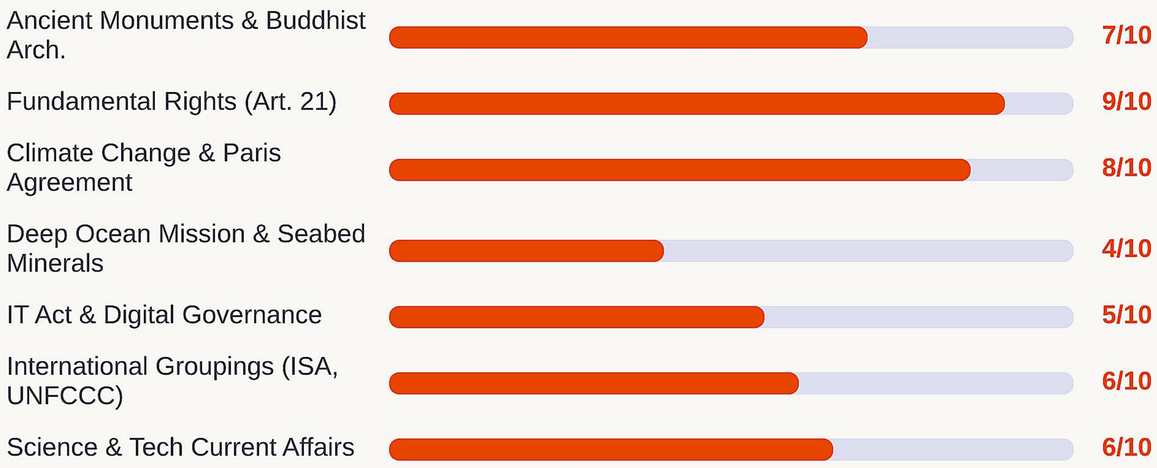
India Re-elected ISA President (3rd Term)

India secured a third consecutive term as President of the International Solar Alliance, with France continuing as Co-President — reinforcing India’s renewable-energy diplomacy alongside its COP31 positioning.

◎ QUICK REVISION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Raniwas Mound lies in East Champaran, Bihar, near the Kesaria Buddha Stupa — the world’s largest Buddhist stupa.
- ☐ A Vihara is a monks’ dwelling; a Chaitya is a hall of worship with a stupa at its far end.
- ☐ Section 79, IT Act 2000 gives intermediaries conditional immunity, lost on failed due diligence.
- ☐ Right to Privacy is a Fundamental Right under Article 21 (K.S. Puttaswamy, 2017).
- ☐ MATSYA-6000 is NIOT’s 4th-generation submersible, rated to 6,000 m, built under Samudrayaan.
- ☐ India holds a 75,000 sq km polymetallic-nodule exploration licence from the International Seabed Authority in the Central Indian Ocean Basin.
- ☐ The Paris Agreement (COP21, 2015) targets limiting warming to well below 2°C, preferably 1.5°C.
- ☐ Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement obliges developed countries to provide financial resources to developing countries.

📊 PYQ FREQUENCY — 10-YEAR VIEW



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