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ISSUE 01 GS-I Modern Indian History

# National Education Day 2026: India Honours Maulana Azad's Vision for Mass Education

On 11 November, India observed the 19th National Education Day, marking the birth anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, independent India's first Education Minister. The Ministry of Education used the day to reaffirm its focus on equitable access, quality learning and skilling — tracing a direct line to institutions such as the UGC and IIT Kharagpur that Azad helped establish in the republic's first decade.

| 1888–1958 | 1947–58 | 1953 | 1951 | 19th |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| AZAD'S LIFESPAN | EDUCATION MINISTER TENURE | UGC LAUNCHED (ACT 1956) | IIT KHARAGPUR FOUNDED | EDITION SINCE 2008 |

| PRELIMS RELEVANCE | MAINS RELEVANCE | ETHICS RELEVANCE |
|---|---|---|
| ★★★★☆ | ★★★★☆ | ★★☆☆☆ |

## PRELIMS TRIGGER

- Maulana Abul Kalam Azad served as independent India's first Education Minister (1947–1958).
- National Education Day has been observed on 11 November every year since 2008, Azad's birth anniversary.
- The University Grants Commission (UGC) was set up in 1953 and received statutory status via the UGC Act, 1956.
- IIT Kharagpur, India's first Indian Institute of Technology, was established in 1951 during Azad's tenure.
- Azad also presided over the Indian National Congress at its 1923 Delhi session, its youngest president at the time.

## MAINS CONNECTION

GS-I GS-II

Azad's vision of free, compulsory and equitable education remains the backbone of India's human-capital story eight decades on. **GS-II | Education & Skill Development**: the Ministry of Education's current emphasis on foundational literacy, vocational training and skilling under the National Education Policy 2020 directly extends Azad's original agenda of universal access and technical education. Key themes: institution-building, UGC & higher-education regulation, free and compulsory education, vocational/skill training, National Education Policy 2020.

## ETHICS LENS

*"Is a leader's legacy measured by the laws they pass, or by the institutions that outlive them?" Azad chose quiet, long-horizon institution-building — the UGC, IIT Kharagpur, the national cultural academies — over the more visible rewards of populist politics, a tension between immediate political credit and durable nation-building that rarely benefits the office-holder in their own lifetime.* ***GS-IV Value: Stewardship — prioritising durable public institutions over short-term credit or visibility, so benefits accrue to future generations rather than the office-holder's own tenure.***

This year's theme traces to a Prelims question on 19th-century education reform — **Wood's Despatch** PRELIMS 2018

Regarding Wood's Despatch, which of the following statements are true? 1. Grants-in-Aid system was introduced. 2. Establishment of universities was recommended. 3. English as a medium of instruction at all levels of education was recommended.

**(a) 1 and 2 only** (b) 2 and 3 only

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

**Correct: (a) 1 and 2 only.** Wood's Despatch (1854), the 'Magna Carta of English Education in India', introduced the grants-in-aid system and recommended universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras — English was promoted only for higher education, not at all levels, making Statement 3 incorrect. These are the direct institutional ancestors Azad built on when he set up the UGC in 1953.

ISSUE 02 GS-II Welfare Schemes

# Swachh Survekshan 2025–26: President Confers Awards as India's Sanitation Ranking Turns Ten

On 11 November 2026, the President conferred the Swachh Survekshan 2025–26 awards at Vigyan Bhawan, marking the tenth edition of India's annual, data-driven ranking of Urban Local Bodies under the Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban. What began in 2016 as a 73-city pilot now spans over 4,751 cities, scored on 43 indicators that for the first time weight citizen feedback, river-fronts, heritage sites and school-level behaviour change.

| 10th | 4,751+ | 43 | 70 → 191 | 11% → 38% |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| EDITION SINCE 2016 | CITIES RANKED | INDICATORS, 10 AREAS | MENTOR → MENTEE CITIES | SANITATION ACCESS GAIN |

| PRELIMS RELEVANCE | MAINS RELEVANCE | ETHICS RELEVANCE |
|---|---|---|
| ★★★★★ | ★★★★☆ | ★★★☆☆ |

## PRELIMS TRIGGER

- Swachh Survekshan is conducted under the Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban, administered by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- The first survey (2016) covered only 73 cities; the 2025–26 edition covers over 4,751 Urban Local Bodies.
- The survey uses 43 indicators across 10 broad assessment areas, verified by GPS-enabled digital tools and over 3,000 trained assessors.
- 'Swachh Shehar Jodi', launched 27 September 2025, pairs 70 mentor cities with 191 mentee cities across 33 States/UTs for peer learning.
- Mentee cities improved most on access to sanitation (11% to 38%), while source segregation of waste remained weakest at just 30%.

## MAINS CONNECTION

GS-II GS-I

Swachh Survekshan is less a cleanliness contest than a governance-accountability tool — ranking creates a reputational incentive for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to perform, reinforcing the 74th Constitutional Amendment's vision of empowered, answerable local government. **GS-I | Urbanisation**: the survey's growth from 73 to 4,751+ cities also tracks India's rapid, uneven urban expansion, making sanitation infrastructure a frontline indicator of urban governance capacity. Key themes: Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban, 74th Constitutional Amendment & ULB accountability, data-driven governance as a policy tool, peer-learning mentorship ('Swachh Shehar Jodi'), solid-waste segregation at source.

## ETHICS LENS

*"Should a city's sanitation ranking reward visible cleanliness, or the harder, invisible work of segregating waste at the source?" Ranking systems create incentives to optimise for what is measured and visible — swept streets, painted walls — over what is structurally harder but more consequential, such as household-level waste segregation, which Survekshan data shows is still the weakest link at just 30%.* ***GS-IV Value: Integrity in public service — resisting the temptation to optimise for the metric rather than the mission, so sanitation reform targets genuine health outcomes, not just a better rank.***

A 2022 Prelims question tested exactly this urban-sanitation institutional landscape PRELIMS 2022

Consider the following statements: 1. The India Sanitation Coalition is a platform to promote sustainable sanitation and is funded by the Government of India and the World Health Organization. 2. The National Institute of Urban Affairs is an apex body of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in Government of India and provides innovative solutions to address the challenges of Urban India. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2 **(d) Neither 1 nor 2**

**Correct: (d) Neither 1 nor 2.** The India Sanitation Coalition (launched 2015 at FICCI) is a multi-stakeholder platform, not WHO-funded; the National Institute of Urban Affairs (1976) is an autonomous think-tank attached to — not the apex body of — MoHUA, the same Ministry that today runs Swachh Survekshan and Swachh Shehar Jodi.

ISSUE 03 GS-III Environment & Biodiversity

# Supreme Court Resists Pinning Delhi's Smog Solely on Stubble Burning

Hearing the ongoing M.C. Mehta air-pollution matter on 11 November 2026, a Supreme Court bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi pushed back against blaming farmers alone for Delhi-NCR's toxic air, pointing to the 2020 COVID lockdown — when stubble burning continued but Delhi's sky stayed clear — as evidence that other sources drive the crisis. The bench floated a government procurement or MSP-style mechanism so farmers could sell residue instead of burning it, a suggestion the Bhartiya Kisan Sangh welcomed.

| M.C. Mehta | CJI Surya Kant | 2020 Lockdown | MSP Model | Punjab & Haryana |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CASE: LEGAL VEHICLE | PRESIDING BENCH | CITED PRECEDENT | PROPOSED FIX | STATES IN FOCUS |

| PRELIMS RELEVANCE | MAINS RELEVANCE | ETHICS RELEVANCE |
|---|---|---|
| ★★★★☆ | ★★★★★ | ★★★★☆ |

## PRELIMS TRIGGER

- The Supreme Court's oversight of Delhi-NCR air pollution runs through the long-pending *M.C. Mehta vs Union of India* litigation.
- The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in NCR and Adjoining Areas coordinates anti-pollution action across Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, UP and Rajasthan.
- GRAP (Graded Response Action Plan) stages are invoked based on India's Air Quality Index, which factors in PM2.5, PM10, SO2, NO2, CO, O3, NH3 and Pb.
- Burning of crop/biomass residue releases carbon monoxide, methane, ozone precursors and sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere, besides particulate matter.
- The CAQM derives its authority from the Commission for Air Quality Management Act, 2021; the older Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act dates to 1981.

## MAINS CONNECTION

GS-III GS-II

The Court's reluctance to frame stubble burning as the sole culprit reflects a deeper structural puzzle: Delhi's airshed is shaped by vehicular emissions, industrial combustion, construction dust and seasonal meteorology as much as by agricultural fires in Punjab and Haryana, making any single-sector fix inadequate. **GS-II | Centre–State Coordination**: because residue is burnt upstream but smog is borne largely by Delhi, the episode is a recurring test of cooperative federalism and of statutory bodies like the CAQM that must coordinate across state lines. Key themes: GRAP and CAQM, Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1981, residue management and MSP-linked incentives, judicial oversight of environmental governance, cooperative federalism.

## ETHICS LENS

*"Is it fair to penalise a farmer for burning stubble when no affordable alternative has been made available to them?" Criminalising stubble burning without fixing the economics of residue removal — baling, in-situ decomposition or biomass-plant offtake all cost money the average Punjab or Haryana farmer does not have — shifts the burden of a shared, multi-source pollution crisis onto its most visible but least powerful contributor.* ***GS-IV Value: Distributive justice — matching obligation to capacity, so enforcement is paired with genuine economic support rather than falling disproportionately on those least able to bear it.***

A direct-hit 2019 question on exactly this pollutant profile — PRELIMS 2019

Consider the following: 1. Carbon monoxide 2. Methane 3. Ozone 4. Sulphur dioxide. Which of the above are released into the atmosphere due to the burning of crop/biomass residue?

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1 and 4 only
**(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4**

**Correct: (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4.** Burning crop residue releases CO, CH4, ozone precursors and SO2 — plus CO2, particulate matter and VOCs — precisely the pollutant load the Supreme Court is now weighing against Delhi's other, non-agricultural pollution sources.

ISSUE 04 GS-II International Relations

# At COP31 in Antalya, India Presses Developed Nations to Pay Up on Climate Finance

In India's opening statement at COP31 in Antalya, Türkiye on 10 November 2026, Narendra Bhooshan, Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, invoked Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement to demand that developed countries finally meet their climate-finance obligations to the developing world. India framed equity and the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR-RC) as more urgent than ever as warming nears the 1.5°C threshold, backing the presidency's call for a 'COP of Implementation'.

| COP31 | Antalya, Türkiye | Article 9.1 | CBDR-RC | 1.5°C |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31ST UNFCCC SESSION | HOST CITY | PARIS AGREEMENT CLAUSE | EQUITY PRINCIPLE | WARMING THRESHOLD |

| PRELIMS RELEVANCE | MAINS RELEVANCE | ETHICS RELEVANCE |
|---|---|---|
| ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ | ★★★★☆ |

## PRELIMS TRIGGER

- COP31, the 31st Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC, is being held in Antalya, Türkiye in November 2026.
- Article 9 of the Paris Agreement (2015) obligates developed-country parties to provide financial resources to assist developing countries with mitigation and adaptation.
- CBDR-RC (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities) is a founding principle of the UNFCCC (1992).
- The Paris Agreement was adopted at COP21 (2015) and entered into force on 4 November 2016 — not 2017, a frequently tested Prelims trap.
- The USD 100 billion/year climate finance goal for developing countries was set under the Cancun Agreements (2010), not the Paris Agreement itself.

## MAINS CONNECTION

GS-II GS-III

India's COP31 position restates a long-standing North–South fault line in climate negotiations: developing countries argue that historical emitters must fund the transition they made unavoidable, while developed nations increasingly resist binding finance commitments amid their own fiscal pressures. **GS-III | Climate Change & Environment**: India's emphasis on adaptation finance, not just mitigation, reflects the lived reality of a monsoon-dependent, climate-vulnerable economy where loss-and-damage is already a budgetary line item, not a future risk. Key themes: UNFCCC & CBDR-RC, Paris Agreement Article 9 (finance) and Article 6 (carbon markets), Loss and Damage, Just Transition, India's multilateral climate diplomacy.

## ETHICS LENS

*"Should nations that industrialised first bear a permanently greater duty to fund climate action, even a century after the fact?" CBDR-RC asks the world to treat historical emitters and newly-industrialising economies differently, fair as a matter of cumulative responsibility but creating friction as today's largest annual emitters are no longer only the old industrial powers — testing how long a principle rooted in history should keep shaping who pays.* ***GS-IV Value: Historical & intergenerational justice — honouring obligations created by past benefit even when the parties bearing the cost today did not personally capture that benefit.***

A 2016 question on the Paris Agreement's own terms — including a commonly misremembered finance figure — PRELIMS 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

**Correct: (b) 2 only.** The Paris Agreement actually entered into force on 4 November 2016, not 2017; and the $100 billion/year finance goal — not $1000 billion — traces to the 2010 Cancun Agreements, not Paris. Only the 1.5°C/2°C temperature goal is accurate — exactly the gap India is pressing developed nations to close at COP31.

# 🧠 Memory Lab

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

THURSDAY · 12 NOV 2026

## ✕ XTRACTS IN 30 SECONDS

**01. National Education Day** — 19th edition since 2008; honours Maulana Azad, India’s first Education Minister (1947–58), architect of the UGC (1953) and IIT Kharagpur (1951).

**02. Swachh Survekshan 2025–26** — 10th edition; President conferred awards at Vigyan Bhawan; survey now covers 4,751+ cities across 43 indicators.

**03. SC on Stubble Burning** — CJI Surya Kant’s bench resists blaming farmers alone for Delhi-NCR smog; floats an MSP-style fix for residue.

**04. COP31 Climate Finance** — India invokes Paris Agreement Article 9.1 at the Antalya summit, pressing developed nations on finance under CBDR-RC.

## 🔥 NUMBERS TO REMEMBER

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1953** UGC ESTABLISHED | **1951** IIT KHARAGPUR FOUNDED | **19th** NATIONAL EDUCATION DAY EDITION |
| **4,751+** CITIES IN SWACHH SURVEKSHAN | **43** SURVEKSHAN INDICATORS | **70 → 191** MENTOR→MENTEE CITIES |
| **31st** COP EDITION (ANTALYA) | **4 Nov 2016** PARIS AGREEMENT IN FORCE | **$100 bn/yr** CANCUN FINANCE GOAL |

## 🟣 ETHICS QUICK REFERENCE

### ISSUE 01 — STEWARDSHIP

Azad prioritised durable institutions (UGC, IITs) over visible political credit. **Value: Stewardship.**

### ISSUE 02 — INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC SERVICE

Sanitation rankings risk rewarding visible cleanliness over hard, invisible segregation work. **Value: Integrity in public service.**

### ISSUE 03 — DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

Enforcement against stubble burning without affordable alternatives burdens the least powerful actor. **Value: Distributive justice.**

### ISSUE 04 — HISTORICAL & INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

CBDR-RC asks nations to answer today for emissions from a century ago. **Value: Historical/intergenerational justice.**

### WHY THIS MATTERS

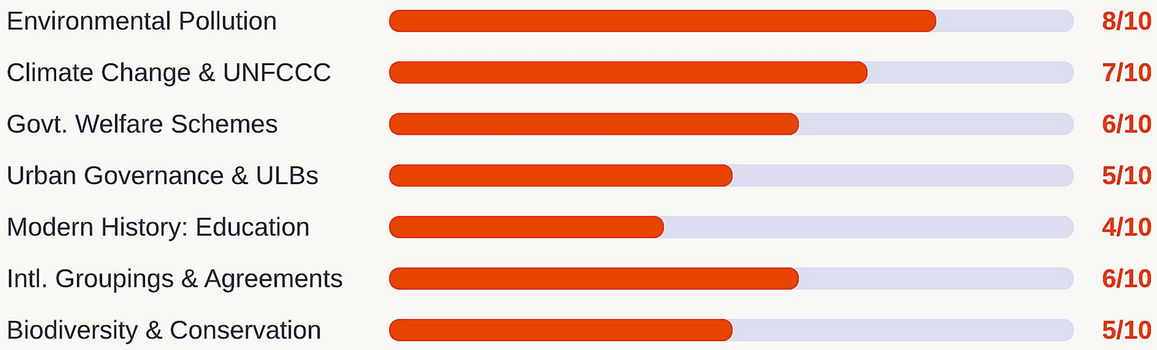
**A Common Ethical Thread**

Today’s four stories share one throughline: public power — whether a minister’s legacy, a city’s rank, a court’s enforcement, or a nation’s climate duty — is judged not by its most visible symbol, but by who bears its quietest costs.

## ◎ QUICK REVISION CHECKLIST

- ☐ National Education Day — 11 November, since 2008; Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India’s first Education Minister (1947–58).
- ☐ UGC set up in 1953, statutory status via the UGC Act, 1956; IIT Kharagpur founded 1951.
- ☐ Swachh Survekshan 2025–26 — 10th edition, 4,751+ ULBs, 43 indicators across 10 assessment areas.
- ☐ Swachh Shehar Jodi (27 Sep 2025) — 70 mentor cities paired with 191 mentee cities across 33 States/UTs.
- ☐ SC hearing (M.C. Mehta case) — CJI Surya Kant & Justice Joymalya Bagchi question sole blame on Punjab/Haryana stubble burning.
- ☐ Crop residue burning releases CO, CH4, ozone precursors and SO2 (2019 Prelims pollutant list).
- ☐ COP31 — 31st UNFCCC COP, Antalya, Türkiye; India invokes Paris Agreement Article 9.1 on finance.
- ☐ Paris Agreement entered into force 4 Nov 2016 (not 2017); the $100 bn/yr finance goal is from the Cancun Agreements (2010), not Paris.

## 📊 PYQ FREQUENCY — 10-YEAR VIEW





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