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Mission X for UPSC

ISSUE 01 GS-I Indian Society

Kerala's Kurumba Tribe Flags Language Survival Fears Amid Census

As India's ongoing Census moves through Kerala's Attappady valley, concern is growing over the survival of the Kurumba language — a scriptless, orally-transmitted Southern Dravidian tongue spoken across 19 forest settlements (Oors) inside the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The Attappady Kurumbas, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group known as the Palu Kurumba, are distinct from the Alu Kurumba of the Nilgiris, and their language's institutional invisibility highlights a wider challenge facing India's smallest tribal tongues.

19	75	18+1	Dravidian	Nilgiri
FOREST SETTLEMENTS	PVTGS IN INDIA	STATES & UT	LANGUAGE FAMILY	BIOSPHERE RESERVE

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

⚡ PRELIMS TRIGGER

- PVTG criteria (Dhebar Commission, 1973): pre-agricultural technology, stagnant/declining population, extremely low literacy, subsistence economy.
- 75 PVTGs are officially notified across 18 States and 1 Union Territory (Andaman & Nicobar Islands).
- Kurumba belongs to the Southern Dravidian language family and has no script of its own — it survives only orally.
- Attappady lies within the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, India's first Biosphere Reserve (notified 1986).

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-I | Indian Society GS-II | Social Justice

The resurfacing of concerns over the Kurumba language's survival during the ongoing Census enumeration is a reminder of how an enumeration exercise doubles as a moment of visibility for India's smallest and most isolated communities. As a PVTG, the Kurumbas sit at the sharpest end of India's tribal diversity — their oral-only, script-less language is a marker of a distinct cultural inheritance that development, migration and mainstream schooling can erode within a generation.
GS-II | Social Justice: Census data on language and PVTG status directly feeds into welfare targeting — habitat rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and PVTG-specific development plans — so undercounting or mischaracterising these groups weakens the policy case for their protection.
Key themes: PVTG criteria & constitutional safeguards, language endangerment & documentation, Census as a tool of visibility, Forest Rights Act habitat rights.

⚖ ETHICS LENS

"Whose responsibility is it to keep a community's only language from disappearing — the community's, or the state's?" The Kurumba language survives purely through speech, carried across generations inside 19 small forest settlements; once a scriptless tongue loses enough daily speakers, no archive can fully recover it, and the loss falls hardest on a community that already has the least institutional voice to demand its own preservation. ***GS-IV Value: Compassion and justice towards the vulnerable*** *— recognising that a numerically tiny, voiceless community's cultural survival deserves active state support, not just passive enumeration.*

PYQ CONNECT

UPSC 2019

Consider the following statements about Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India: 1. PVTGs reside in 18 States and one Union Territory. 2. A stagnant or declining population is one of the criteria for determining PVTG status. 3. There are 95 PVTGs officially notified in the country so far. 4. Irular and Konda Reddi tribes are included in the list of PVTGs. Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (c). Statement 3 is false — only 75 PVTGs are officially notified, not 95 — a figure worth double-checking whenever a PVTG story like today's Kurumba report is in the news.

ISSUE 02 GS-II e-Governance

KVS Launches AI-Powered Digital Dashboard, Parent App and Alumni Portal

Union Education Minister Pralhad Joshi launched three in-house digital platforms built by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan's own IT Services Cell: the AI-integrated Vidya Samiksha Kendra with its "Samiksha" bot for monitoring attendance, results and facilities; the KVS Samvaad parent-connect app for tracking academic progress and applying for certificates online; and an Alumni Connect Portal for mentorship. The Ministry says the initiatives embody NEP 2020's technology-for-governance vision and extend Digital India into one of India's largest central school networks.

3	AI	NEP 2020	12 Nov	In-House
NEW PLATFORMS	"SAMIKSHA" BOT	POLICY ALIGNMENT	LAUNCH DATE	BUILT BY KVS IT CELL

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

⚡ PRELIMS TRIGGER

- Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) functions under the Ministry of Education, primarily serving children of central government and defence employees in transferable jobs.
- NEP 2020 explicitly calls for technology to be used for assessment, planning and management — the stated basis for KVS's new AI dashboard.
- The Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK) model was pioneered by Gujarat as the first State to build one for school performance monitoring.
- All three KVS platforms were developed in-house by its own IT Services Cell, in the spirit of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-II | e-Governance GS-III | Science & Technology

KVS's move to put attendance, results and facilities data behind one AI-reviewed dashboard is a textbook case of NEP 2020's push for technology-enabled planning and assessment translating into on-ground practice inside one of India's largest school networks. The Samvaad app's shift of certificate requests and leave applications online also fits the wider e-governance goal of cutting paperwork and physical school visits for parents.
GS-III | Science & Technology: the "Samiksha" AI bot, which flags data gaps and recommends corrective action, is an early example of AI embedded directly into routine public-service monitoring — raising both the opportunity of early-warning on learning gaps and the governance question of how much human oversight such automated flags still need.
Key themes: NEP 2020 and technology integration, e-governance & last-mile service delivery, AI in public administration, Digital India in school governance.

⚖ ETHICS LENS

"Does monitoring teachers and schools in near real time build accountability, or does it create a culture of fear that undermines the trust a classroom needs?" An AI bot that flags "gaps" in attendance and results can sharpen early intervention, but applied without care it can also reduce teaching to a metric to be gamed, and shift anxiety onto schools least equipped to respond quickly. ***GS-IV Value: Objectivity balanced with empathy*** *— using data-driven oversight as a tool for support rather than as a blunt instrument of blame.*

PYQ CONNECT

UPSC 2018

Which of the following is/are the aims of "Digital India" Plan of the Government of India? 1. Formation of India's own Internet companies like China did. 2. Establish a policy framework to encourage overseas multinational corporations that collect Big Data to build their large data centres within our national geographical boundaries. 3. Connect many of our villages to the Internet and bring Wi-Fi to many of our schools, public places and major tourist centres. Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: (b). Digital India's stated aims centre on connectivity and digital literacy — not building domestic tech monopolies or incentivising foreign data localisation — and KVS's new dashboard and parent app are a current, concrete instance of that connectivity-and-literacy aim in practice.

ISSUE 03 GS-III Indian Economy

Retail Inflation Hits 24-Month High of 6.09%, Breaches RBI's Upper Limit

India's retail inflation climbed to 6.09% in October 2026 — a 24-month high — breaching the Reserve Bank of India's 6% upper tolerance limit for the first time under the revised CPI (2024=100) series, as food inflation surged to 8.94%. Food and beverages, which now carry close to 36.75% weight in the new CPI basket, drove the spike, putting fresh pressure on the Monetary Policy Committee ahead of its December review.

6.09%	8.94%	24-Month	6%	2024=100
CPI INFLATION, OCT'26	FOOD INFLATION	HIGH	RBI UPPER TOLERANCE	NEW CPI BASE YEAR

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

⚡ PRELIMS TRIGGER

- CPI (Combined) is released monthly by the National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI); the base year has now been revised to 2024=100.
- RBI's flexible inflation target is 4%, with a tolerance band of 2–6%, mandated under Section 45ZA of the RBI Act, 1934.
- Food and beverages carry the single largest weight (≈36.75%) in the new CPI basket.
- WPI (Wholesale Price Index), by contrast, is released by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and excludes services altogether.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-III | Indian Economy GS-III | Govt Budgeting

October's 6.09% print is no mere statistic for an aspirant — it is the first time since the CPI's 2024=100 rebasing that headline inflation has breached the RBI's upper tolerance band, putting the Monetary Policy Committee's December review under real scrutiny over whether to hold or hike rates even as growth concerns persist.
GS-III | Govt Budgeting: a persistent food-price shock also raises the fiscal question of whether food subsidy allocations (e.g. under the NFSA/PDS) need augmenting mid-year to cushion vulnerable households from the sharper-than-headline food inflation.
Key themes: flexible inflation targeting framework, CPI vs WPI distinction, the MPC's growth-versus-price-stability dilemma, disproportionate burden of food inflation on poorer households.

⚖ ETHICS LENS

"When inflation is the same number for everyone, is its burden really shared equally?" Food and beverages carry the single largest weight in the CPI basket precisely because they claim the largest share of a poor household's spending — so an 8.94% rise in food prices does far more damage to a daily-wage family's real income than to a salaried household's, even though both read the same headline rate. ***GS-IV Value: Distributive justice and empathy*** *— designing an economic response that protects those for whom price rises are not an inconvenience but a threat to basic sustenance.*

PYQ CONNECT

UPSC 2020

Consider the following statements: 1. The weightage of food in Consumer Price Index (CPI) is higher than that in Wholesale Price Index (WPI). 2. The WPI does not capture changes in the prices of services, which CPI does. 3. The Reserve Bank of India has now adopted WPI as its key measure of inflation and to decide on changing the key policy rates. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a). RBI's inflation target is CPI-based, not WPI-based (Statement 3 is false) — which is exactly why October's 6.09% CPI print, not the WPI print, is what is pressuring the MPC today.

ISSUE 04 GS-III Security & Disaster Management

170-Strong Indian Contingent Departs for 12th Mitra Shakti Exercise in Sri Lanka

A 170-member Indian Defence Forces contingent, drawn mainly from a battalion of the Rajputana Rifles with Indian Air Force personnel, departed on 13 November for the 12th edition of Exercise Mitra Shakti, India's bilateral counter-terrorism exercise with Sri Lanka. The 14-day drill, running till 26 November at the Army Training School in Maduru Oya, will rehearse joint counter-terrorism operations — from urban patrolling to combined-arms assaults on fortified positions — under a United Nations mandate.

12th	170	14 Days	Maduru Oya	UN Mandate
EDITION	TROOPS DEPLOYED	DURATION	EXERCISE LOCATION	COUNTER-TERROR OPS

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

⚡ PRELIMS TRIGGER

- Exercise Mitra Shakti is an annual bilateral India–Sri Lanka Army exercise hosted alternately in each country; 2026 is its 12th edition.
- The 2026 Indian contingent (170 personnel) is drawn mainly from a battalion of the Rajputana Rifles, with participation from the Indian Air Force.
- Training is held at the Army Training School, Maduru Oya, Sri Lanka, with its counter-terrorism operations conducted under a United Nations mandate.
- SLINEX is India's parallel bilateral naval exercise with Sri Lanka — do not confuse the two while revising.

MAINS CONNECTION

GS-III | Security & Disaster Management GS-II | International Relations

Mitra Shakti's twelfth run deepens military interoperability between India and Sri Lanka at a time when New Delhi is positioning itself as the preferred security partner in the Indian Ocean Region under its Neighbourhood First and SAGAR frameworks — a posture that matters given the strategic interest extra-regional powers continue to show in Sri Lanka's ports and infrastructure.
GS-II | International Relations: regular, institutionalised defence exercises like this one are a quieter but steadier instrument of neighbourhood diplomacy than high-visibility summits, building trust and standard operating procedures that outlast any single government on either side.
Key themes: Neighbourhood First policy, India as a net security provider in the IOR, counter-terrorism cooperation, UN-mandated training standards.

⚖ ETHICS LENS

"Can a nation train for counter-terrorism under international mandate without the exercise itself becoming an instrument of power projection rather than genuine capability-building?" Mitra Shakti's stated goal is reciprocal — Indian and Sri Lankan troops drilling together to professionalise joint responses to terrorism — but bilateral military exercises always sit at the intersection of capability-building and strategic signalling, and keeping the former honest requires restraint from using shared training as leverage in the relationship. ***GS-IV Value: Integrity in international cooperation*** *— honouring the stated security purpose of joint training rather than instrumentalising it for unstated strategic ends.*

PYQ CONNECT

UPSC 2024

Which of the following statements about Exercise Mitra Shakti-2023 are correct? 1. This was a joint military exercise between India and Bangladesh. 2. It commenced in Aundh (Pune). 3. Joint response during counter-terrorism operations was a goal of this exercise. 4. The Indian Air Force was a part of this exercise. Select the answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: (d). Statement 1 is false — Mitra Shakti is with Sri Lanka, not Bangladesh. The 2023 edition was hosted in India at Aundh, Pune; today's 12th edition flips to Sri Lanka's Maduru Oya, with the IAF again taking part.

🧠 Memory Lab

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

SATURDAY · 14 NOV 2026

✕ XTRACTS IN 30 SECONDS

1. Kurumba Census Concern — Kerala's Attappady PVTG flags risk to its scriptless, oral-only language as Census enumeration proceeds.

2. KVS Goes Digital — Three in-house AI/digital platforms launched to modernise Kendriya Vidyalaya governance under NEP 2020.

3. Inflation Breaches RBI Band — October CPI hits 6.09%, a 24-month high, crossing the RBI's 6% upper tolerance limit.

4. Mitra Shakti Departs — 170 Indian troops leave for the 12th India–Sri Lanka counter-terrorism exercise.

🔥 NUMBERS TO REMEMBER

6.09% RETAIL INFLATION, OCT 2026	**8.94%** FOOD INFLATION, OCT 2026	**6%** RBI'S UPPER CPI TOLERANCE
170 TROOPS IN MITRA SHAKTI 2026	**12th** EDITION OF MITRA SHAKTI	**14 Days** DURATION, 13–26 NOV
19 KURUMBA FOREST SETTLEMENTS	**75** PVTGS NOTIFIED IN INDIA	**3** NEW DIGITAL PLATFORMS, KVS

🟣 ETHICS QUICK REFERENCE

ISSUE 01 — TRIBAL RIGHTS

The Kurumba language survives purely through speech across 19 settlements; its loss falls hardest on a voiceless community. **Value: Compassion and justice towards the vulnerable.**

ISSUE 02 — GOVERNANCE TECH

AI monitoring of schools can sharpen accountability or breed a culture of fear if used without care. **Value: Objectivity balanced with empathy.**

ISSUE 03 — ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The same 8.94% food inflation print hurts a daily-wage family far more than a salaried one. **Value: Distributive justice and empathy.**

ISSUE 04 — INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Joint training exercises must stay honest capability-building, not disguised strategic leverage. **Value: Integrity in international cooperation.**

QUICK NOTE

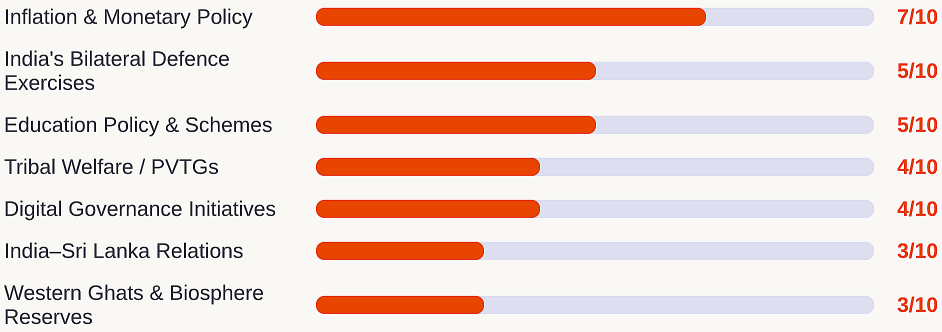
PVTG vs. Scheduled Tribe

Every PVTG is a Scheduled Tribe, but not every Scheduled Tribe is a PVTG — PVTG status additionally requires pre-agricultural technology, stagnant/declining population, extremely low literacy and a subsistence economy (Dhebar Commission criteria).

◎ QUICK REVISION CHECKLIST

- ☐ PVTGs: 75 groups, across 18 States + 1 UT (Andaman & Nicobar Islands).
- ☐ Kurumba of Attappady: 19 Oors (forest settlements); Palu Kurumba ≠ Alu Kurumba of the Nilgiris.
- ☐ CPI (2024=100): food & beverages weight ≈36.75%; Oct 2026 print = 6.09%, a 24-month high.
- ☐ RBI's flexible inflation target = 4% ± 2% band (Section 45ZA, RBI Act) — upper band just breached.
- ☐ Mitra Shakti 2026 = 12th edition, India–Sri Lanka, UN-mandated counter-terror drills at Maduru Oya.
- ☐ 170-member Indian contingent (mainly Rajputana Rifles) departed 13 Nov for a 14-day exercise.
- ☐ KVS launched 3 digital platforms: Vidya Samiksha Kendra (AI bot "Samiksha"), Samvaad Parent App, Alumni Connect Portal.
- ☐ KVS digital push aligns with NEP 2020 + Digital India; built in-house by KVS HQ's IT Services Cell.

📊 PYQ FREQUENCY — 10-YEAR VIEW



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