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CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout

11th November 2026



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Unsustainable River Sand Mining

CONTEXT: A SC-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC), has recommended that India progressively phase out unsustainable sand extraction from active river channels within 3 years.

Understanding River Sand Mining

- **Extraction of sand and sediments** from riverbeds, riverbanks and floodplains for construction and other commercial purposes.
- Demand:
  - Sand is a key raw material for concrete, mortar, roads and other infrastructure.
- **Natural replenishment:** Rivers transport sediments from upstream areas to downstream.
  - Sustainable extraction must account for this natural sediment budget.
- **Unsustainable mining:** Occurs when extraction exceeds the rate of natural sediment replenishment or causes unacceptable ecological damage.
- **Why is river sand preferred?**
  - Suitable grain size and texture for construction.
  - Widely available in many river systems.
  - Established supply chains and construction practices.



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11th November 2026

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Why Is Sand Mining Difficult to Regulate in India?

- **High demand:** Rapid urbanisation and infrastructure expansion.
- **Illegal mining networks:** Mining beyond permitted quantities, extraction from prohibited areas and unauthorised transportation.
- **Weak monitoring:** Limited manpower, inadequate surveillance and poor coordination among departments.
- **Political and administrative influence:** Local economic interests and illegal networks can undermine enforcement.
- **Data deficiency:** India lacks a comprehensive and reliable national database quantifying the volume and value of illegally extracted river sand.
- **Inter-state coordination:** Rivers often flow across multiple states, making coordinated regulation essential.

SC Panel's Recommendations: A Three-Year Roadmap

- The CEC has proposed a shift from regulating unsustainable extraction alone towards developing alternative construction-material sources.

A. Phase out unsustainable river sand mining

- Prepare a time-bound roadmap to progressively phase out unsustainable extraction over three years.
- Develop adequate alternative sources.

B. Promote alternative materials

- Manufactured sand (M-sand): Produced by crushing and processing suitable rocks.
- Reservoir sediment: Recover usable sand from dams and reservoirs.
- Recycled construction and demolition waste.

C. Digital monitoring and traceability

- Introduce secure electronic transit permits.
- Use unique QR codes, barcodes or RFID-based identification.
- Develop digital monitoring systems to track:
  - Permitted extraction quantities.
  - Actual extraction.
  - Transit permits.
  - End-use of minerals.

D. National desilting framework

- Prepare a comprehensive national framework identifying sediment availability and technically recoverable quantities.
- Establish environmental safeguards.
- Ensure coordination with the Central Water Commission, National Dam Safety Authority, MoEFCC and State Governments.

Desilting of Dams: Turning a Challenge into an Opportunity

What is desilting?

- Removal of accumulated sediment from reservoirs, dams and other water-storage structures.
- Accumulated sediments can reduce the effective storage capacity of reservoirs over time.



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11th November 2026

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Why is desilting important?

- Restores reservoir storage capacity.
- Can improve reservoir-management efficiency.
- May recover usable sand and other construction materials.
- Can support irrigation, drinking-water supply and hydropower management.

Challenges in reservoir desilting

- Not all accumulated sediment is usable construction sand.
- Extraction and transportation can be expensive.
- Removal can disturb aquatic habitats and downstream sediment flows.
- Total accumulated sediment cannot be equated with technically recoverable or commercially usable sand.

Key findings highlighted by the CEC

- Of 439 reservoirs assessed, gross storage lost to sedimentation averaged **19.24%**.
- 23 reservoirs had lost more than half their storage capacity.
- **Gobind Sagar reservoir**, behind the Bhakra Dam, had reportedly shrunk around 26%.
- The committee recommended assessing storage of dams more than 15 years old that have not been systematically desilted.

Manufactured Sand and Other Alternatives

A. Manufactured Sand (M-sand)

- Produced by crushing and processing suitable rocks into sand-sized particles.
- Can substitute natural river sand in concrete and other construction applications when it meets relevant BIS specifications.
- Reduces dependence on riverbed extraction.

B. Recycled Construction and Demolition Waste

- Concrete and masonry waste can be processed into reusable construction aggregates.
- Promotes a circular economy and reduces pressure on natural resources.
- Requires segregation, processing infrastructure and quality certification.

C. Reservoir sediment

- Can provide an additional source of construction material where sediment quality and environmental conditions permit.
- Requires scientific assessment of recoverable quantities.



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Constitutional and Institutional Framework

Important laws and institutions

- **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957:** Provides the broader framework for regulation of minerals.
- **EPA, 1986:** Provides the framework for environmental protection and regulation.
- **Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines, 2016**.
- **Enforcement and Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining, 2020:** Strengthen monitoring, enforcement and sustainable management.
- **Central Empowered Committee:** Assists the SC in examining environmental compliance and related issues.
- **CWC:** Plays an important role in reservoir monitoring, water-resource assessment and technical evaluation.

Constitutional provisions

- **Entry 23, State List:** Regulation of mines and mineral development, subject to Union control under Entry 54 of the Union List.
- **Entry 17, State List:** Water, subject to Entry 56 of the Union List.
- **Article 48A:** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.
- **Article 51A(g):** Makes environmental protection a fundamental duty of citizens.
- **Article 21:** The right to life has been judicially interpreted to include the right to a healthy environment.

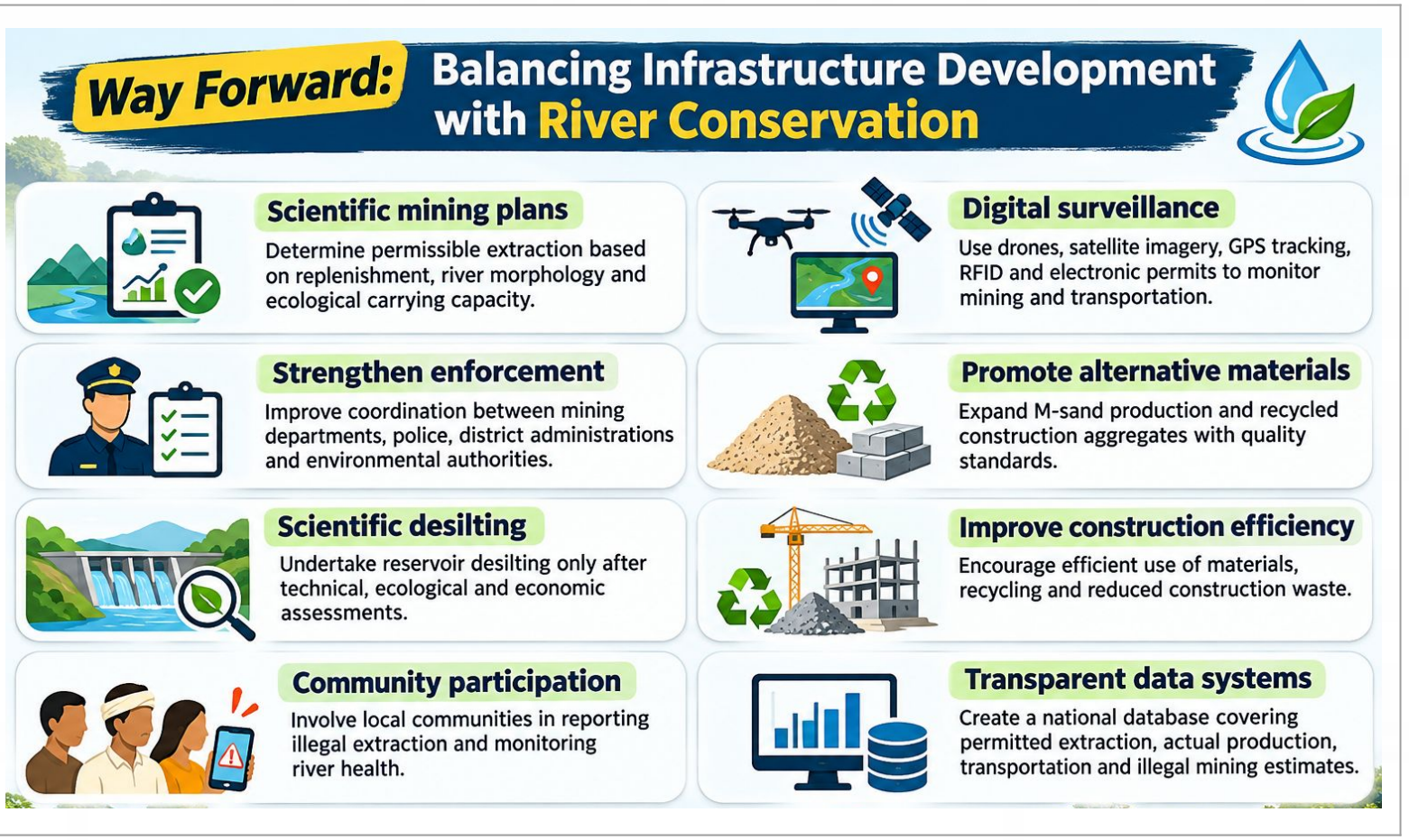


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11th November 2026

Unsustainable River Sand Mining

CONTEXT: A SC-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC), has recommended that India progressively phase out unsustainable sand extraction from active river channels within 3 years.



Mains Practice Question

"Unsustainable river sand mining represents a growing conflict between infrastructure development and ecological conservation in India." Examine its environmental consequences and suggest measures for sustainable sand management.

(15 marks, 250 words)

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11th November 2026

Uniform Civil Code

CONTEXT: After Uttarakhand, several states looking forward to implement the Uniform Civil Code.

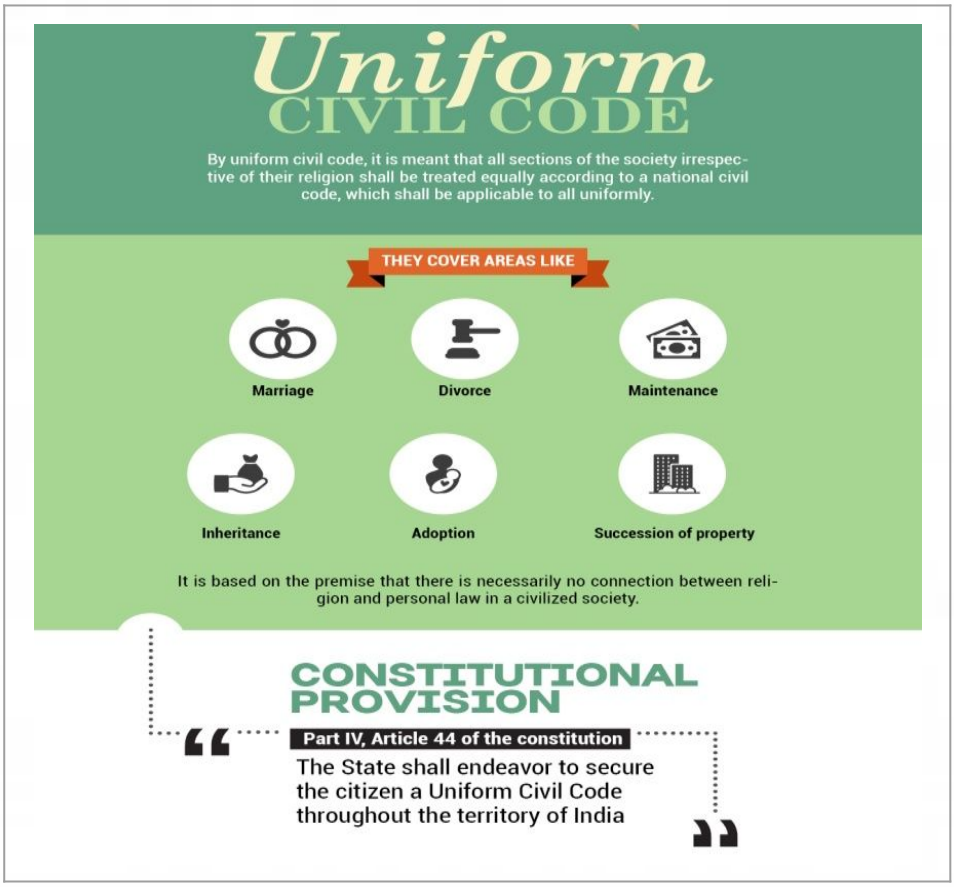
Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

- UCC = One common set of civil laws for all citizens covering:
  - Marriage
  - Divorce
  - Adoption
  - Inheritance
- Replaces religion-based personal laws
- **Objective**:
  - Promote equality, secularism, national integration
  - Ensure gender justice

Historical Background

- During Constituent Assembly debates:
  - **K.M. Munshi**: Advocated UCC for national unity and secularism, noting even Hindu communities' concerns.
  - **Muslim leaders** argued that UCC violated religious freedom and would cause disharmony.
  - **B. R. Ambedkar supported UCC**
  - Made it a Directive Principle (not enforceable)

- Reason:
  - Social sensitivity
  - Need for gradual reform



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Uniform Civil Code

CONTEXT: After Uttarakhand, several states looking forward to implement the Uniform Civil Code.

Constitutional Basis

- **Article 44 (DPSP)** → State shall endeavour to secure UCC
- Linked with:
  - **Article 14** → Equality
  - **Article 15** → Non-discrimination
  - **Article 25** → Freedom of religion
- Key Debate: Equality vs Religious Freedom

Concurrent List

- **Personal laws on marriage, divorce, and succession are under Entry 5 of the Concurrent List.**
- **It empowered both the Centre and States to legislate upon them.**

Current Situation in India:

- **Hindu Personal Laws:**
  - The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
  - Hindu Succession Act, 1956
  - The term 'Hindu' also includes Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists for these laws.
- **Muslim Personal Law:**
  - It is not codified per se but is based on religious texts
  - Certain aspects of these are expressly recognised in the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937
- **Christian Personal Laws:**
  - The Indian Christian Marriages Act of 1872.
- **Special Marriage Law:**
  - More 'secular' laws which disregard religion altogether, such as the Special Marriage Act of 1954.

Exceptions to Personal Laws:

- Under **Article 371**, the Constitution makes certain exceptions to family law for the states of Assam,Nagaland,Mizoram, etc., to protect distinct regional identities.
- **UCC applicable:**
  - Only **Goa** has a form of UCC (Goa Civil Code)
  - **Uttarakhand** passed UCC law (first state post-independence)
  - However, other states like Assam, Gujarat and MP are exploring the feasibility

Important Judgments:

- **Shah Bano Case (1985)**
  - Right of a Muslim woman to claim maintenance
- **Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India (1995)**
  - A Hindu husband cannot convert to Islam and marry another woman
- **Shayara Bano v. Union of India (2017)**
  - The practice of triple talaq is unconstitutional
  - Violative of Article 14 (equality) & dignity of women
  - Led to enactment of Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019



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11th November 2026

Uniform Civil Code

CONTEXT: After Uttarakhand, several states looking forward to implement the Uniform Civil Code.

Arguments in Favour of UCC

1) Equality & Justice	Removes discrimination (especially gender-based)
2) National Integration	Promotes unity → "One Nation, One Law"
3) Secularism	True secularism = state neutrality in personal laws
4) Simplification of Laws	Reduces complexity of multiple legal systems
5) Women Empowerment	Ends discriminatory practices: Polygamy Unequal inheritance
6) Many countries have UCC	Like France & USA

Arguments Against of UCC

1) Threat to Diversity	India = multicultural society
2) Religious Freedom Concerns	Article 25 protections
3) Minority Insecurity	Fear of majoritarian imposition
4) Practical Challenges	Drafting acceptable code difficult
5) Complexity of Implementation	Drafting, Coding, harmonising and rationalising
6) Politicisation	Used as political tool rather than reform May lead to Communal violence

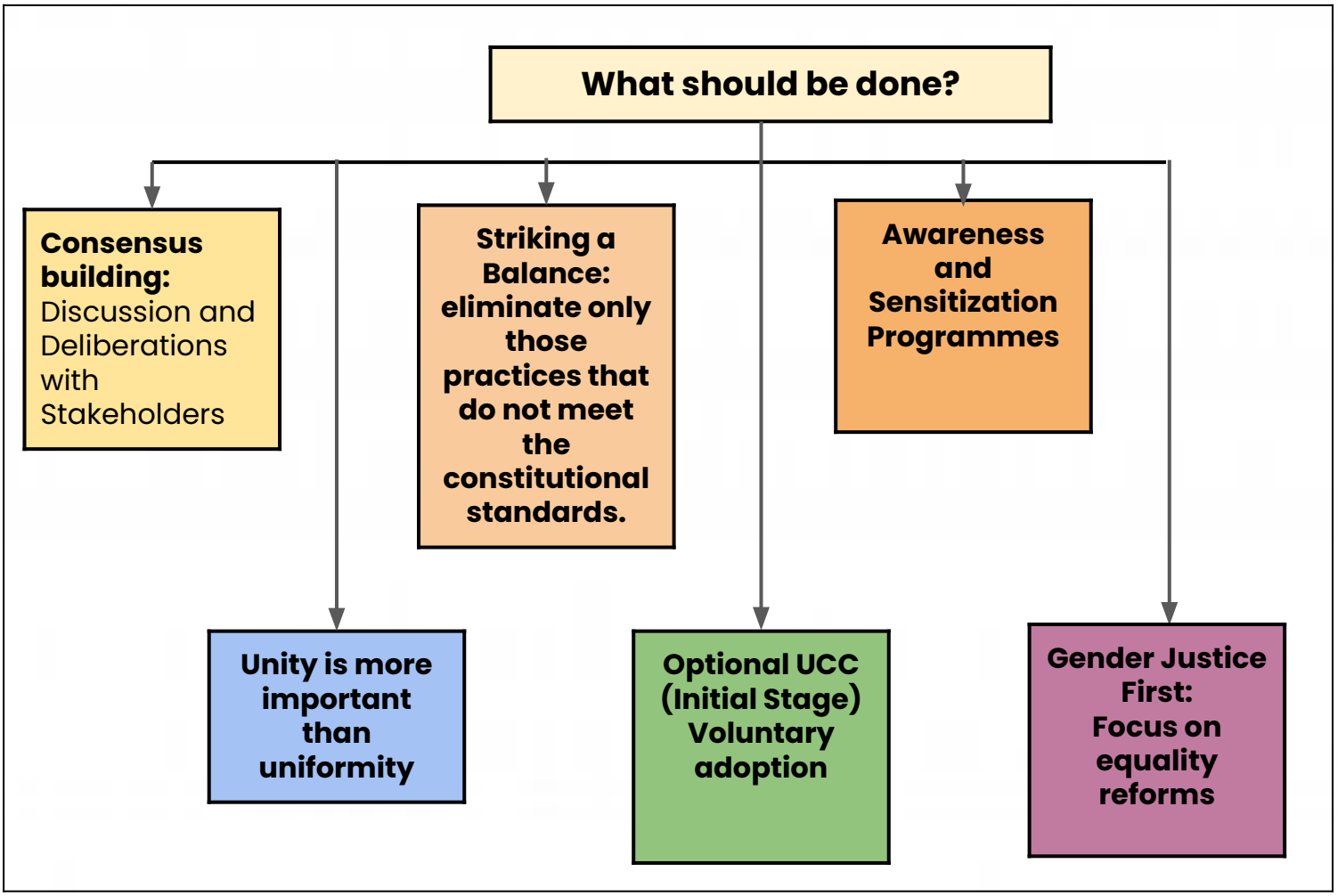


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Uniform Civil Code

CONTEXT: After Uttarakhand, several states looking forward to implement the Uniform Civil Code.



Mains Practice Question

Discuss whether Uniform Civil Code is necessary for achieving gender justice in India.

(10 marks, 150 words)



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11th November 2026

Mains Value Addition

Newspaper : The Hindu **Page Number : 7**

More Women Work but in Informal Job

- **Rising participation, poor job quality**: Women's workforce participation has increased, but much of the growth is concentrated in informal, low-paid and insecure employment.
- **Feminisation of agriculture**: Women increasingly dominate agricultural work as men migrate towards non-farm employment.
- **Unpaid care economy**: Women continue to shoulder disproportionate responsibility for domestic work and childcare, limiting access to paid employment.
- **Time poverty**: Indian women spend around 3.7 hours daily on domestic work, nearly one hour more than men.
- **Gender wage gap**: Women's earnings remain significantly lower, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing and informal sectors.
- **Occupational segregation**: Women remain concentrated in low-productivity sectors and informal self-employment.
- **Care economy as infrastructure**: Affordable childcare, crèches, paid maternity benefits and shared parental leave can improve women's workforce participation.
- **Gender-responsive urban planning**: Safe transport, working women's hostels and workplace facilities can improve labour-market access.

Indicator	Data
Working women (2017→2025)	104→201 million
Female worker population ratio	22% → 38%
Rural women in agriculture (2017→2025)	70.7%→73.3%
Rural women's weekly work (2025)	34 hours
Urban women's weekly work (2025)	45 hours



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11th November 2026

Capital Gains Tax

SYLLABUS : PRELIMS : Economy

Newspaper : The Hindu **Page Number : 13**

Capital Gains

- Profit earned from the sale or transfer of a capital asset.
- Classified into STCG and LTCG.

- **Short-Term Capital Gains (STCG):**
  - Profit from selling an asset held for a short duration.
  - Listed Equity Shares: Holding period of 12 months or less.
  - Tax Rate: 20%.
  - Applies to listed equity shares, equity-oriented mutual funds and units of business trusts.
- **Long-Term Capital Gains (LTCG):**
  - Profit from selling an asset held for a longer duration.
  - Listed Equity Shares: Holding period of more than 12 months.
  - Tax Rate: 12.5%.
  - Exemption Limit: First ₹1.25 lakh of eligible LTCG in a financial year is exempt.
- **Holding Period for Different Assets:**
  - Listed equity shares - 12 months.
  - Unlisted equity shares - 24 months.
  - Immovable property - 24 months.
  - Debt mutual funds acquired on or after 1 April 2023 - Generally treated as STCG irrespective of holding period.

Securities Transaction Tax (STT):

- Tax levied on the purchase and sale of specified securities.
- Introduced in 2004.
- Governed by the Finance (No. 2) Act, 2004.
- Collected through recognised stock exchanges or other prescribed intermediaries.
- Paid by buyers and/or sellers depending on the transaction.

Exam Traps

- Listed equity shares become long-term assets after holding them for 24 months → WRONG
- STCG on listed equity shares subject to STT is taxed at 12.5% → WRONG
- LTCG exemption is ₹1 lakh → WRONG
- STT and capital gains tax are the same tax → WRONG
- STT is levied only on the seller and never on the buyer → WRONG



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11th November 2026

CBI

SYLLABUS : PRELIMS : Polity

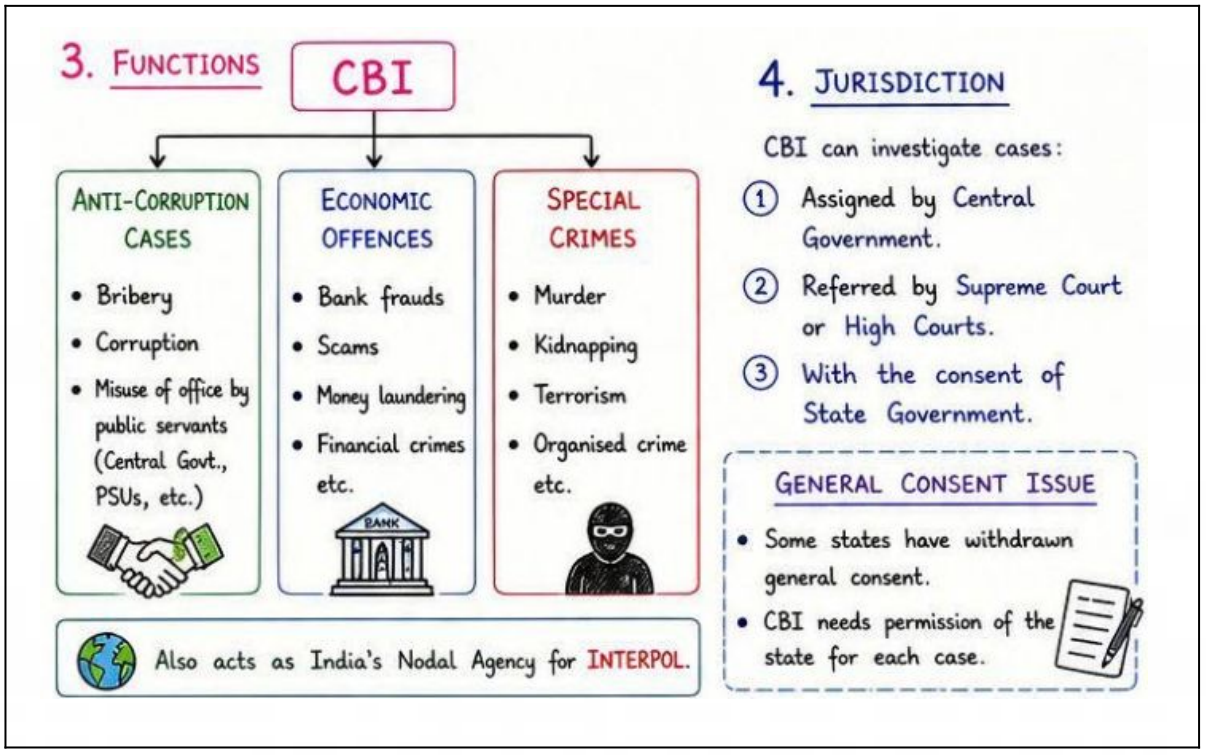
Newspaper : The Hindu **Page Number : 4**

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

- Established in **1963** on recommendation of **Santhanam Committee** on Prevention of Corruption (1962-64).
- It is India's **premier investigating agency**
  - Investigating serious crimes, corruption, and economic offences
- Ministry: **Ministry of Personnel**, Pension & Public Grievances.
- Status: **Non-statutory** and **Non-constitutional** body. It is governed by Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946.
- Coordinates investigation on behalf of Interpol Member countries.
- Headed by a **Director** who is **appointed by a high-level committee** consisting of:
  - PM (Chairperson)
  - LoP in Lok Sabha
  - CJI or a nominee

Exam Traps

- CBI was established under a separate CBI Act, 1963 → WRONG
- CBI is a constitutional body → WRONG
- CBI functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs → WRONG
- State Government consent is never required for CBI investigations in States → WRONG
- High Courts and the Supreme Court require State Government consent to order a CBI investigation → WRONG



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11th November 2026

Booker Prize 2026

SYLLABUS : PRELIMS : Polity

Newspaper : The Hindu **Page Number : 14**

Booker Prize 2026

- Winner:
  - The End of Everything
  - Author: M. John Harrison
  - Nationality: British
- Award:
  - Established in **1969**.
  - Originally known as the **Booker–McConnell Prize**.
  - Renamed the Man Booker Prize in 2002.
  - Became the **Booker Prize in 2019**.
- Awarding Organisation:
  - Booker Prize Foundation.
- Eligibility:
  - Best work of long-form fiction.
  - Written in English.
  - Published in the UK or Ireland.
  - Open to authors of any nationality.
- Prize Money:
  - Winner → £50,000.
  - Each shortlisted author → £2,500.
- Important Distinction:
  - **Booker Prize** → Fiction originally written in English.
  - **International Booker Prize** → Fiction translated into English.
- Booker Prize Laureates from India and Indian-Origin Writers
  - **VS Naipaul** for Free State
  - **Salman Rushdie** for Midnight's Children
  - **Arundhati Roy** for The God of Small Things
  - **Kiran Desai** for The Inheritance of Loss (2006),
  - **Aravind Adiga** for The White Tiger (2008)

Exam Traps

- Booker Prize is awarded only to British authors → WRONG
- Booker Prize recognises works originally written in any language → WRONG
- The prize is restricted to poetry and drama → WRONG
- International Booker Prize is meant for books originally written in English → WRONG



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11th November 2026

IPO

SYLLABUS : PRELIMS : Economy

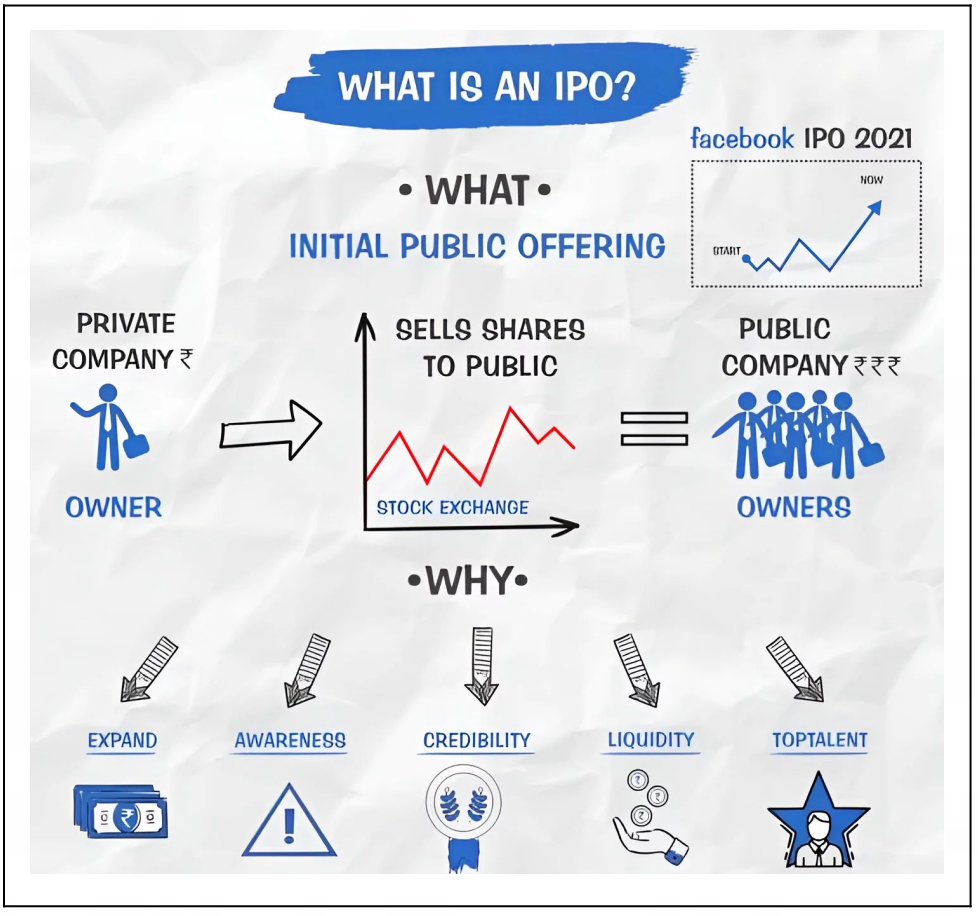
Newspaper : Indian Express **Page Number : 13**

IPO (Initial Public Offering)

- First time a private company offers shares to the public
- Company becomes publicly listed on stock exchange like BSE/NSE.
- **Purpose of IPO**
  - Raise capital for New projects
  - Provide exit route to early investors
  - Improve: Visibility & Credibility of company
- Regulator in India - **SEBI**

Types of IPO

- **Fresh Issue**
  - New shares issued
  - Money goes to company
- **Offer for Sale (OFS)**
  - Existing shareholders sell shares
  - Money goes to selling shareholders



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IPO

SYLLABUS : PRELIMS : Economy

Newspaper : Indian Express **Page Number : 13**

Pricing Methods

- Fixed Price Issue
  - Price decided in advance
- Book Building Process
  - Price discovered through bidding
  - Has price band - floor & cap (e.g. ₹100–₹120)

Key Terms

- **DRHP** (Draft Red Herring Prospectus)
  - Submitted to SEBI before IPO approval
- **RHP** (Red Herring Prospectus)
  - Final document (without final price)

Categories of Investors

- **QIB** (Qualified Institutional Buyers) → 50% reservation
- **NII** (Non-Institutional Investors) → 15%
- **Retail** Investors → 35%
  - Retail limit: Investment up to ₹2 lakh

Risks in IPO

- No historical market performance
- Overvaluation risk
- Market volatility
- Information Gap

Exam Traps

- IPO means government selling shares → WRONG
- Only profitable companies can launch IPO → WRONG
- IPO price always fixed → WRONG
- SEBI issues shares → WRONG
- SEBI doesn't allow Confidential or "secret" pre-filings → WRONG



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11th November 2026

Daily Quiz

Q1. With reference to river sand mining in India, consider the following statements:

1. Sustainable sand extraction requires consideration of the natural sediment replenishment rate of a river.
2. Excessive sand extraction can increase riverbank erosion and alter the natural river profile.
3. Sand mining has no significant impact on groundwater availability because riverbeds and groundwater systems are independent of each other.
4. Excessive sand mining near bridges can weaken their foundations.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: b

Q2. With reference to the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India, consider the following statements:

1. Article 44 directs the State to endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for citizens.
2. Article 44 is a Fundamental Right enforceable by courts.
3. Personal laws relating to marriage, divorce and succession fall under Entry 5 of the Concurrent List.
4. Both Parliament and State Legislatures can legislate on subjects in the Concurrent List, subject to constitutional provisions.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) Only one
b) Only two
c) Only three
d) All four

Answer: c

Q3. With reference to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), consider the following statements:

1. The CBI was established in 1963 on the recommendation of the Santhanam Committee.
2. It is a constitutional body established directly under the Constitution of India.
3. It derives its investigative powers from the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.
4. It functions under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: b

Q4. With reference to capital gains taxation in India, consider the following statements:

1. Listed equity shares are treated as long-term capital assets if held for more than 12 months.
2. Unlisted equity shares and immovable property are generally treated as long-term capital assets if held for more than 24 months.

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

Answer: c

Q5. With reference to Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) in India, consider the following statements:

1. In a fresh issue of shares, the proceeds are received by the issuing company.
2. In an Offer for Sale (OFS), existing shareholders sell their shares and receive the proceeds.
3. A company must necessarily be profitable to launch an IPO.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) Only one
b) Only two
c) Only three
d) All four

Answer: b





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