VAJIRAM & RAVI

Institute for IAS Examination

The Analyst

CURRENT AFFAIRS **Handout**

25th August 2026

The Analyst Handout

25th August 2026

Evolving India- US Relations

CONTEXT: H1B Visa fee hike

Why in News?

- Proposed $103,265 H-1B fee
- Potential impact on Indian professionals/IT sector
- Growing debate over skilled migration

Why the US matters to India?

- Major trading and investment partner
- Critical technology ecosystem
- Defence partnership
- Indo-Pacific convergence
- Education & human capital
- Indian diaspora

Evolution of India–US relations?

- Cold War estrangement
- Post-1991 rapprochement
- 2005 Civil Nuclear Deal
- Strategic partnership
- Indo-Pacific convergence
- Present phase: **strategic convergence + transactional friction**

Major friction points

- H-1B restrictions
- Tariffs/trade barriers
- Market access
- Agriculture

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Evolving India- US Relations

CONTEXT: H1B Visa fee hike

- Digital taxation
- Immigration
- Russia/Ukraine and India's strategic autonomy
- Iran-related issues
- US pressure on India's defence/energy choices

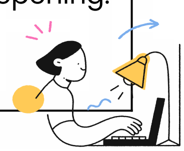
Way forward

- Move from transactional bargaining → institutionalised strategic partnership
- Protect skilled mobility
- Expand technology co-development
- Diversify economic relationship
- Strengthen defence-industrial cooperation
- Manage differences without allowing them to contaminate strategic convergence
- Preserve India's strategic autonomy

Mains Practice Question

India–US relations have evolved into a broad-based partnership extending beyond defence and trade to encompass technology, energy, space, health, climate action and global governance." Examine the key drivers of this expanding partnership and the challenges that may constrain its further deepening.

(15 marks, 250 words)



Labour Welfare and Industrial Relations

CONTEXT: SC redefines “Industry”

Context

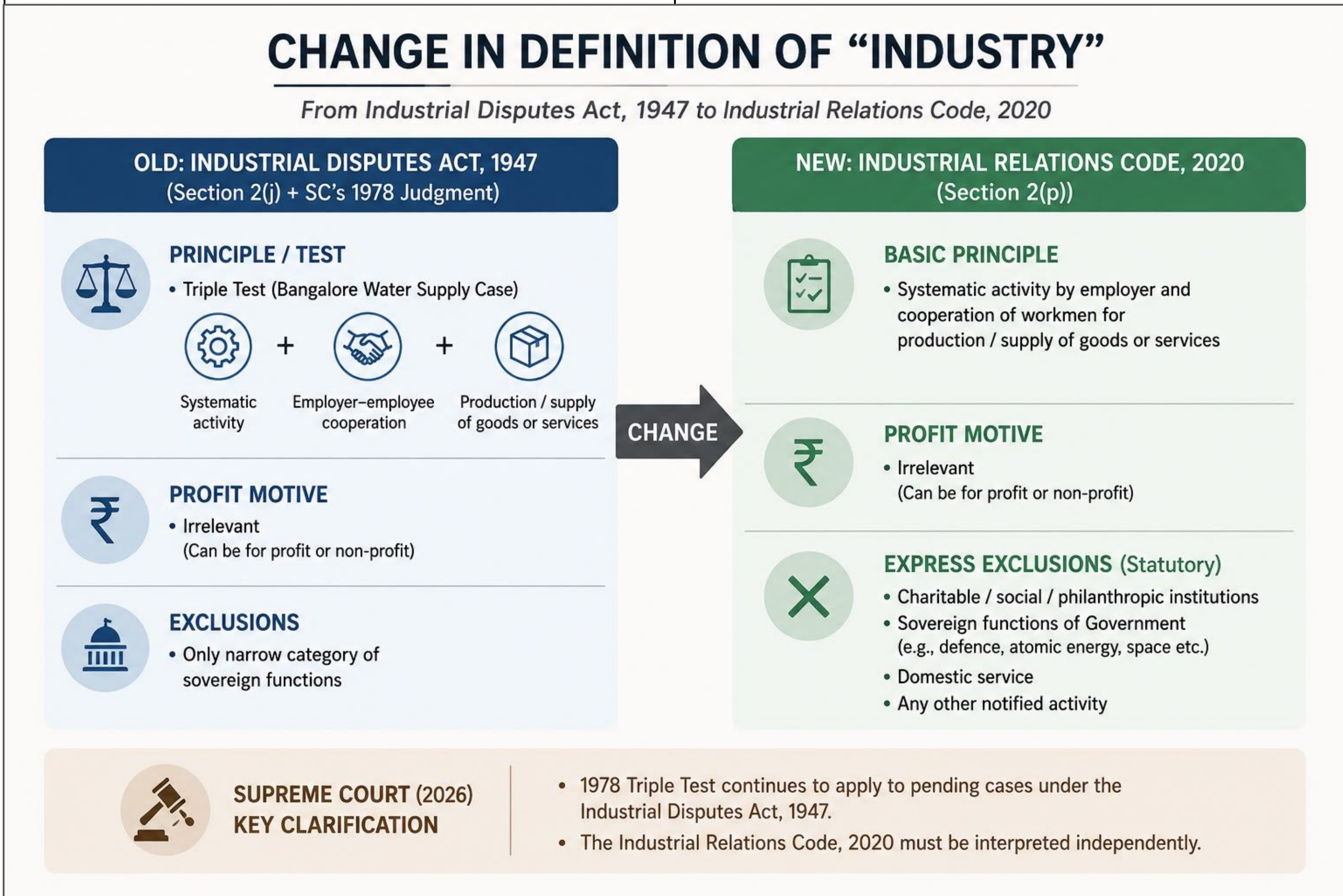
- **SC Constitution Bench judgment** on scope of **“industry”**
- Re-examination of **Bangalore Water Supply (1978)** jurisprudence
- **Industrial Relations Code, 2020** → new statutory framework.

Constitutional Foundation

- **Social justice**
- **Article 21:** Dignity
- **Article 23:** Forced labour
- **Article 39:** Livelihood + Equal pay
- **Article 41:** Right to work
- **Article 42:** Humane work conditions
- **Article 43:** Living wage
- **Article 43A:** Worker participation

Key Jurisprudence

- ***Bangalore Water Supply & Sewerage Board v. R. Rajappa (1978):***
  - Broad interpretation of “industry”
  - Triple Test
  - Profit motive not essential
- ***State of U.P. v. Jai Bir Singh / 2026 Constitution Bench***
  - retained the relevance of the **1978 framework for the repealed ID Act**, while holding that the **Industrial Relations Code, 2020 must be interpreted independently**.



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Labour Welfare and Industrial Relations

CONTEXT: SC redefines "Industry"

- ***Randhir Singh v. Union of India (1982)***
    - Recognised **"equal pay for equal work"**
- ***People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India (1982):***
    - forced labour
- ***Consumer Education & Research Centre v. Union of India (1995)***
    - workers' right to health and medical care
- ***Municipal Corporation of Delhi v. Female Workers (Muster Roll) (2000)***
- ***Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India (1984)***

Women & Labour Welfare

- Female LFPR
- Wage inequality
- Occupational segregation
- Workplace safety
- Maternity protection
- Care economy
- Childcare
- **Safe employment → Higher participation**
- **Protection → Enabling equality**

Labour Welfare & Productivity

- **Healthy workforce → Productivity**
- Skill retention
- Lower absenteeism

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Labour Welfare and Industrial Relations

CONTEXT: SC redefines "Industry"

- Worker motivation
- Human capital
- Higher wages + productivity
- **Labour welfare as productive investment**
- **Cheap labour → Productive labour**

Implementation Challenges:

- **Centre–State coordination**
- **Enforcement capacity**
- **MSME compliance**
- **Worker awareness/access**
- **Regulatory transition**
- **Law–implementation gap**

Way Forward

- **Worker-centric protection**
- **Flexicurity**
- Portable social security
- Universal social protection
- Stronger collective bargaining
- Labour formalisation
- Industry-linked skilling
- Apprenticeships
- Women-friendly workplaces
- AI-era reskilling
- Effective labour administration

Mains Practice Question

"Despite comprehensive labour-law reforms, significant implementation gaps continue to constrain labour welfare in India." Discuss.
(10 marks, 150 words)

Government Steps / Legislation

Labour Welfare in India

4 LABOUR CODES
Simplification and rationalisation of 29 central labour laws.

CODE ON SOCIAL SECURITY, 2020
Universal social security for all workers including gig and platform workers.

CODE ON WAGES, 2019
Ensures timely payment, minimum wages and equal remuneration.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CODE, 2020
Regulates trade unions, industrial disputes, standing orders, retrenchment and closure.

OSH & WORKING CONDITIONS CODE, 2020
Ensures safe, healthy and humane working conditions.

MAJOR SCHEMES
PM-SYM (social security for workers) • E-Shram Portal • Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana • Skill India • NAPS

MAINS VALUE ADDITION

Newspaper: The Hindu , **Page No.** 6

• ECONOMICS

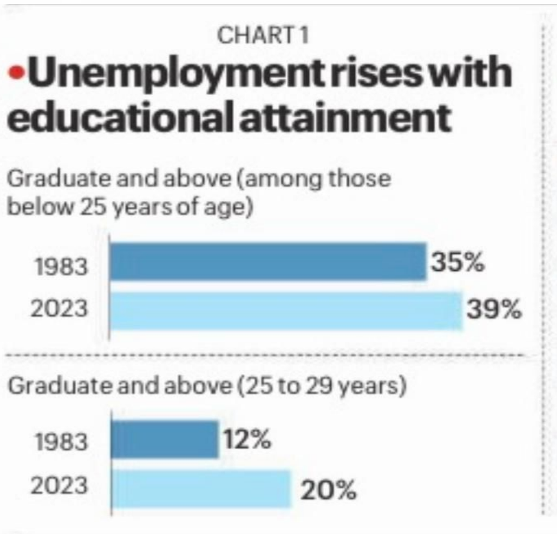
The other 'NEET' that India needs to address

The fact is youth unemployment has a household cost

- **14.8%** — unemployment among 15–29-year-olds (PLFS 2025)
- **29.4%** — unemployment among 19–28-year-olds
- **40.1%** — tertiary-educated youth who are NEET
- **20.8%** — households with a tertiary-educated youth having at least one unemployed youth
- **58%** — unemployed tertiary-educated youth searching for work for **>1 year**
- **10.9%** — unemployed tertiary-educated youth searching for **>2 years**
- **₹1,087/month** — lower average household consumption where an educated youth is unemployed
- **1.5 vs 2** — average earning members in households with vs without unemployed educated youth
- **14.4%** — households with unemployed educated youth having **no active earner**
- **39.5%** — households dependent on a **single earner**
- **62.5%** — households where **no earning member has a regular salaried job**
- **NEET** — youth **Not in Employment, Education or Training**
- **UER limitation** — excludes discouraged workers outside the labour force
- **Post-2030** — India's working-age population share expected to begin declining
- **Core paradox** — rising educational attainment ≠ proportional employment absorption
- **Employment challenge** — quantity **+** quality of jobs
- **School-to-work transition** — education → employability → productive employment
- **Gender dimension** — low labour-force participation alongside unemployment
- **Emerging challenge** — AI and technological change may disrupt entry-level jobs
- **Demographic risk** — demographic dividend → demographic pressure if employment fails to keep pace

MAINS VALUE ADDITION

Newspaper: The Hindu , **Page No.** 6



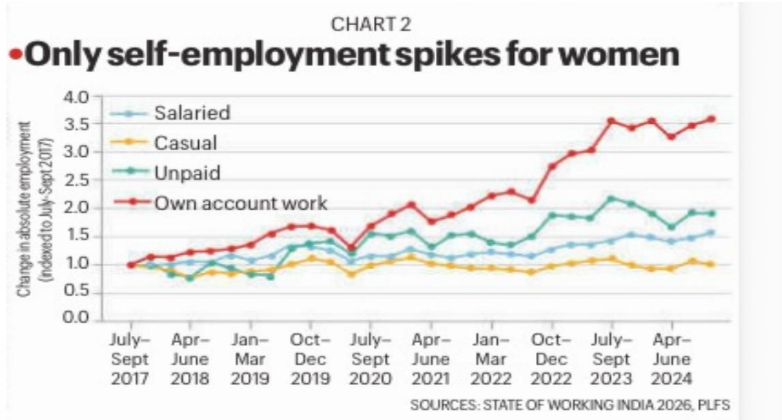


TABLE 1

Size of workforce

(in millions)

Year	Male	Female	Total
2017-18	338	94	433
2018-19	343	97	440
2019-20	357	122	480
2020-21	357	126	483
2021-22	363	126	490
2022-23	349	128	477
2023-24	387	186	573
2025 (Jan-Dec)	416	206	616

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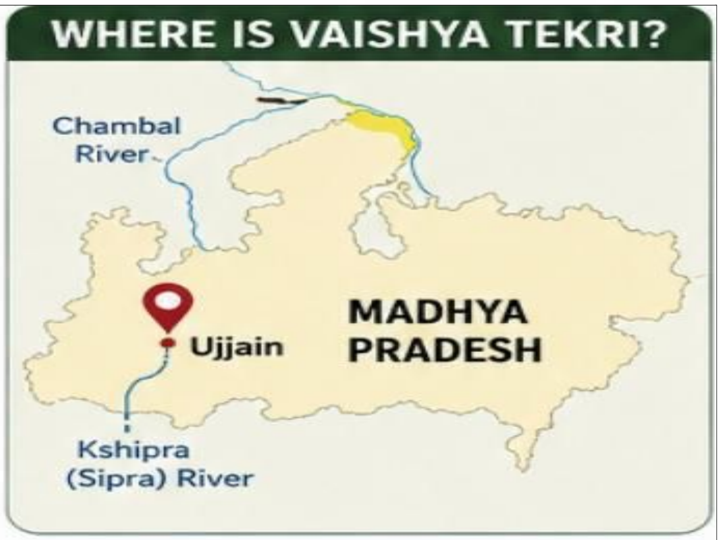
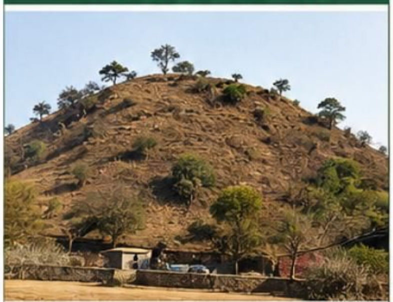
Vaishya Tekri Mound

Syllabus: Prelims: History
Newspaper: Indian Express, **Page No.** 13

- **Location:** Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh
- **Ancient name:** Ujjayini
- **Ancient kingdom:** Avanti Mahajanapada; capital at Ujjain
- **River:** Kshipra (Sipra); tributary of Chambal
- **Ancient significance:** Major urban, commercial and administrative centre
- **Mauryan association:** Ujjain; Ashoka associated with governorship/viceroyalty
- **Ashoka–Devi tradition:** Devi of Vidisha; associated with Ashoka's journey to Ujjain
- **Ashoka's children:** Mahinda and Sanghamitta; traditional association with spread of Buddhism to Sri Lanka
- **Vaishya Tekri:** Large Buddhist stupa/mound; probable Mauryan-period association
- **First excavation:** 1938–39; Archaeological Department of erstwhile Gwalior State
- **Excavation finds:** Large bricks; punch-marked coins
- **Estimated dimensions:** ~350 ft base diameter; ~100 ft height
- **Sanchi Great Stupa:** ~54 ft height; ~120 ft diameter
- **Ashokan attribution:** Not conclusively established; fresh archaeological investigation required
- **Associated mound:** Kumbhar/Kumhar Tekri
- **Archaeological significance:** Early Buddhism; Ujjain–Malwa region
- **Sanchi distinction:** Sanchi — UNESCO World Heritage Site; Vaishya Tekri — archaeological mound under investigation
- **Historical significance:** Archaeological evidence for testing literary/traditional accounts of Ashoka and Buddhism in Ujjain



VAISHYA TEKRI MOUND



- **Estimated Height:** ~100 feet
- **Estimated Base Diameter:** ~350 feet
- **Compared to Sanchi Stupa:** ~54 feet high
- **First Excavation:** 1938–39
- **Current Status:** Fresh excavations and scientific investigation underway

EXCAVATION FINDS (1938–39)

These findings indicate Mauryan period but do not conclusively prove Ashokan patronage.

VAISHYA TEKRI vs GREAT STUPA, SANCHI

Feature	Vaishya Tekri, Ujjain	Great Stupa, Sanchi
Location	Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh	Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh
Association	Mauryan/Buddhist; Ashokan link traditional/probable	Began under Ashoka
Recorded Height	~100 feet (est.)	~54 feet
Recorded Base Diameter	~350 feet (est.)	~120 feet (est.)
Excavation	1938–39; renewed investigation	Extensively excavated and studied
Significance	Potentially very large Mauryan-period stupa	Major surviving Buddhist monument; UNESCO WHS

NCDC Act

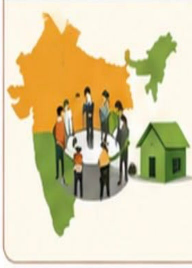
Syllabus: Prelims: Polity
Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No.** 4

- **Principal legislation:** National Co-operative Development Corporation Act, 1962
- **NCDC established:** 1963, under the NCDC Act, 1962
- **Nodal ministry:** Ministry of Cooperation, Government of India
- **Statutory status:** Statutory corporation
- **Core mandate:** Planning, promoting and financing **co-operative development**
- **New definition:** "Co-operative development" — planning, promoting and financing programmes, directly or through intermediary entities, for co-operative societies
- **Financial assistance:** Direct **loans and grants** to co-operative societies and entities engaged in co-operative development
- **Share capital:** NCDC may participate in share capital of co-operatives/entities engaged in co-operative development, **with Central Government approval**
- **Funding condition:** Assistance to non-cooperative entities must be utilised for **co-operative societies**
- **Foodstuffs:** Definition expanded to include **processed food, other edible products** and notified food items
- **Industrial goods:** Geographical restriction requiring eligible activities to be located in **rural areas removed**
- **Crafts:** Definition expanded from rural crafts to include **handicrafts and other crafts**
- **Credit information:** NCDC empowered to **collect and furnish credit/other information** to specified authorities and financial institutions
- **Multi-State Co-operative Societies reference:** Updated from **MSCS Act, 1984 → MSCS Act, 2002**
- **Commencement:** Effective from a date notified by the **Central Government in the Official Gazette**
- **Cooperatives — constitutional subject: Entry 32, State List, Seventh Schedule** — incorporation, regulation and winding-up of co-operative societies, subject to constitutional qualifications
- **Constitutional recognition: 97th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2011** — Article 19(1)(c), Article 43B and **Part IXB** relating to co-operative societies
- **Federal issue:** State-level co-operatives fall primarily within the **State List**, while NCDC is a **Central statutory corporation** providing financial/developmental assistance

KEY CHANGES AT A GLANCE

Earlier (Pre-Amendment)	After Amendment (2026)
Aid limited to agriculture, agri-based rural industries & rural infrastructure	Aid can extend to non-agricultural sectors
Cooperatives to be based only in rural areas	No such restriction; rural area condition removed
Limited Central intervention	Expanded Central powers to intervene directly
No power to take shares of cooperative societies	Power to take shares and directly intervene in cooperatives

COOPERATIVES – CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION



Subject	Cooperatives
Location in Constitution	State List
Entry No.	Entry 32, List II (Seventh Schedule)
Implication	States have primary power to legislate on cooperatives

UPI

Syllabus: Prelims: Economy
Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No.** 13

- **Developed by:** National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)
- **Regulatory oversight:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Underlying infrastructure:** Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) infrastructure
- **Nature:** Instant, interoperable, 24×7 digital payment system
- **Core functionality:** Bank-account-to-bank-account fund transfer
- **Transaction modes:** Person-to-Person (P2P); Person-to-Merchant (P2M)
- **Payment identifiers:** UPI ID/VPA; mobile number; account number + IFSC; other supported identifiers
- **Authentication:** Two-factor authentication; UPI PIN
- **Key feature:** Multiple bank accounts can be linked through a **single UPI application**

- **Payment mechanism: Push** payments + **Pull/request** payments
- **Merchant payments:** QR-code and intent-based payments supported
- **Interoperability:** Banks, participating UPI apps and payment service providers operate on a common interoperable framework
- **FY2025–26 volume: 24,161.69 crore transactions**
- **FY2025–26 value: ₹314 lakh crore**
- **FY2025–26 daily average: ~66 crore transactions**; ~₹0.86 lakh crore daily value
- **Global position: ~49% of global real-time payment transaction volume**; UPI operates in **11 countries**.

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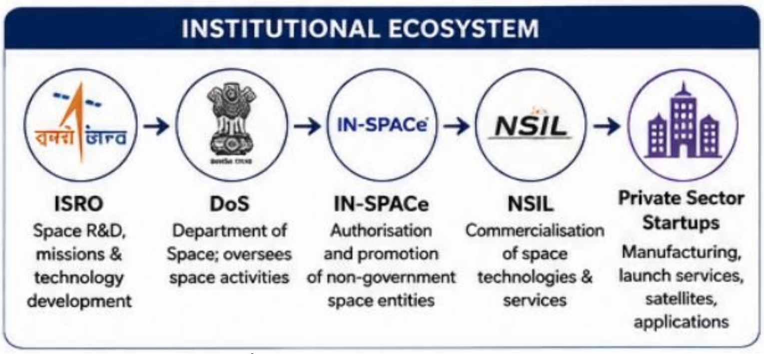
ISRO

Syllabus: Prelims: Science

Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No.** 11



- **Policy framework:** Indian Space Policy, 2023 — framework for participation of **government entities, NGEs/private sector and startups** in space activities.
- **Private space ecosystem: 440+ space startups** reported in 2026.
- **Private rocket milestone: Vikram-1 — Skyroot Aerospace**; privately developed Indian rocket that reached orbit in July 2026.
- **Launch ambition: 50 launches/year**; greater private-sector manufacturing and launch capacity.
- **Primary spaceport: Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR), Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh**.
- **Sriharikota launch vehicles: PSLV, LVM3**; major human-spaceflight launch activities.
- **Second spaceport: Kulasekarapattinam, Tamil Nadu**; focused particularly on the **small-launch sector**.
- **Gaganyaan:** India's **human spaceflight programme**; objective — indigenous human spaceflight capability to **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)**.
- **Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS):** Indian space station; **first module targeted by 2028; full station by 2035**; planned in **Low Earth Orbit**.
- **Indian Moon landing: Indian astronaut on the Moon targeted by 2040** under Space Vision 2047.
- **Chandrayaan-4:** Planned lunar mission involving **lunar sample return** and technologies for returning to Earth after lunar landing.
- **Chandrayaan-3: First country to soft-land near the Moon's south polar region — India**; lander — *Vikram*; rover — *Pragyan*.

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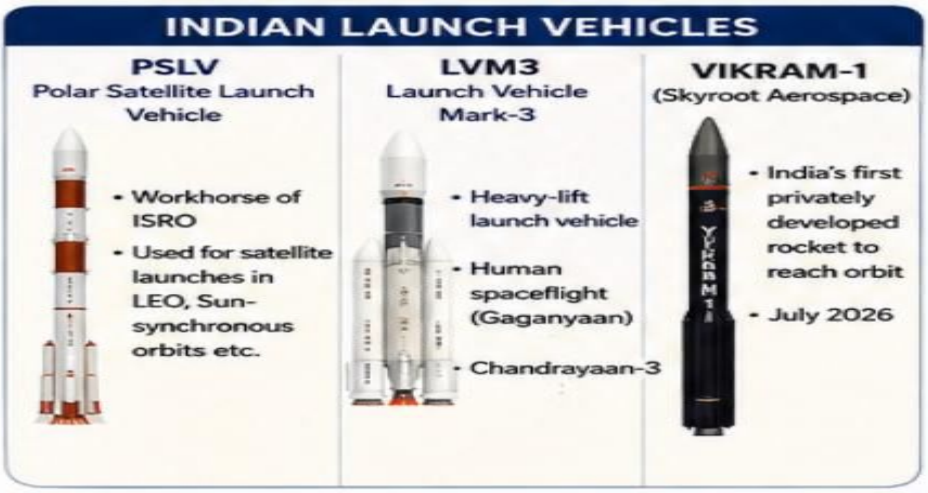
ISRO

Syllabus: Prelims: Science
Newspaper: The Hindu, **Page No.** 11



KEY TARGETS (SPACE VISION 2047)

- **Gaganyaan** – Indigenous human spaceflight capability to LEO
- **Bharatiya Antariksh Station** – By 2035
- **Indian on the Moon** – By 2040
- **50 Launches / Year** – Greater private participation and manufacturing
- **$44 Billion Space Economy** – By 2030

MAJOR MISSIONS & PROGRAMMES

Gaganyaan	India's human spaceflight programme; objective – indigenous human spaceflight capability to LEO.	
Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS)	First module targeted by 2028; full station by 2035; planned in Low Earth Orbit.	
Indian Moon Landing	Indian astronaut on the Moon targeted by 2040 (Space Vision 2047).	
Chandrayaan-3	First country to soft-land near the Moon's south polar region – India; lander – Vikram; rover – Pragyan.	
Chandrayaan-4	Planned lunar mission involving lunar sample return and technologies for returning to Earth after lunar landing.	
Future Planetary Missions	Venus Orbiter Mission (VOM); future missions to Moon, Venus and Mars.	

Daily Quiz

Q1. With reference to Ujjain in ancient India, consider the following statements:

1. Ujjain, known as Ujjayini in ancient times, was the capital of the Avanti Mahajanapada.
2. The city is situated on the banks of the Kshipra River, a tributary of the Chambal.
3. Ashoka is traditionally associated with having served as the governor of Ujjain during his father's reign.
4. Vaishya Tekri, an important Buddhist archaeological site near Ujjain, has yielded evidence such as large bricks and punch-marked coins associated with the Mauryan period.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: d

Q2. Regarding the National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC), consider the following statements:

1. The NCDC was established as a statutory corporation under the National Co-operative Development Corporation Act, 1962.
2. The NCDC can provide loans and grants directly to co-operative societies as well as entities engaged in co-operative development.
3. The NCDC can participate in the share capital of co-operative societies or other entities engaged in co-operative development, subject to the approval of the Central Government.

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

a) Only One
b) Only Two
c) All Three
d) None

Answer: c

Q3. Regarding the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), consider the following statements:

1. UPI was developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and operates under the regulatory oversight of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
2. UPI uses the Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) infrastructure and enables instant, interoperable fund transfers on a 24×7 basis.
3. UPI permits a user to link multiple bank accounts through a single UPI application and supports both person-to-person and person-to-merchant transactions.
4. UPI transactions can only be initiated using a UPI ID or Virtual Payment Address (VPA), and cannot be made using other identifiers such as a mobile number or bank account details.

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

a) Only One
b) Only Two
c) Only Three
d) All Four

Answer: c

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding India's space programme:

1. Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota is India's primary spaceport and is used for launching vehicles such as PSLV and LVM3.
2. The Kulasekarapattinam spaceport in Tamil Nadu is being developed primarily to cater to the small-launch vehicle segment.
3. The Bharatiya Antariksh Station is planned to be established in Low Earth Orbit, with its first module targeted for 2028.
4. India has set a target of landing an Indian astronaut on the Moon by 2040 as part of its long-term space vision.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: d

Q5. With reference to the labour codes recently introduced in India, consider the following statements:

1. The four Labour Codes seek to consolidate 29 existing Central labour laws.
2. The Code on Wages, 2019 provides for a statutory minimum wage applicable to all employees.
3. The Industrial Relations Code, 2020 recognises fixed-term employment as a form of employment.

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: d

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