

The Hindu UPSC Notes — 19 Sept 2025

Comprehensive coverage with Traps + Key Terms for Prelims and Mains preparation



Saudi-Pakistan Defence Pact

News: Report highlights a draft Saudi Arabia-Pakistan defence pact stating "any aggression against one would be treated as an attack on both"; Pakistan Embassy said some reports "misreported" the arrangement.

India's West Asia policy faces a complex balancing act between traditional allies (like Saudi Arabia) and strategic partners, with potential shifts in regional dynamics and impacts on its energy security.

India's bilateral defense cooperation with UAE and Saudi Arabia typically focuses on training, joint exercises, and defense trade, generally avoiding collective defense clauses unlike the reported Saudi-Pakistan pact.

A Saudi-Pakistan defense pact could significantly alter the regional security architecture, potentially intensifying existing rivalries or creating new geopolitical alignments, particularly concerning Iran and other Gulf states.

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- Not a NATO-style treaty: no automatic Article-5 clone unless pact explicitly codifies it (trap).
- Distinguish from existing bilateral training/arms deals in the region.

Key Terms

Collective Defence: Clause where attack on one triggers joint response.



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- Pakistan has a history of close military and economic ties with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, often providing security assistance and military personnel in exchange for financial aid and oil.
- This pact could strengthen an emerging China-Pakistan-Saudi axis, leveraging China's growing influence in the Middle East and its "all-weather friendship" with Pakistan, potentially challenging established power structures.
- The development highlights the continuous need for India to calibrate its "Look West" policy (engaging the Middle East) alongside its "Act East" policy, navigating complex regional geopolitics to secure its strategic interests.

India's First Reaction: "Studying the Pact"

News: MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) said India is studying the Saudi-Pakistan defence pact reports.

India pursues a multi-alignment strategy in West Asia, fostering strong ties with diverse regional powers, including both Saudi Arabia and Iran, to secure its strategic interests.

Maintaining a delicate balance in relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran is a cornerstone of India's foreign policy, essential for regional stability and India's energy security.

Energy security heavily influences India's foreign policy, particularly its engagements in the West Asian region, as a significant portion of its oil and gas imports originate there.

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- MEA comments = policy signalling, not formal recognition.
- Watch for implications on West Asia outreach and defence partnerships.

Key Terms

MEA: Union ministry managing foreign policy & consular affairs.

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- Diplomatic language serves as a crucial tool for conveying policy signals and navigating complex international relations, often implying more than what is overtly stated.
- The large Indian diaspora in Gulf nations plays a vital role in strengthening bilateral ties through remittances, cultural exchange, and people-to-people connections, influencing foreign policy.
- India's commitment to strategic autonomy guides its foreign policy decisions, allowing it to navigate a changing geopolitical landscape and pursue national interests independently, without being tied to specific blocs.



U.S. Revokes Visas of Indian Executives

News: U.S. Embassy in New Delhi said visas of some Indian executives were revoked over alleged fentanyl-precursor shipments routed via "free trade zones."

Free Trade Zones offer economic benefits but also present significant security challenges due to potential misuse for illicit trans-shipment.

India and the U.S. maintain strong bilateral cooperation, including intelligence sharing and coordinated enforcement, to combat narcotics trade.

Allegations of illicit chemical routing can severely impact the reputation and export market access of India's vital pharmaceutical industry.

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- Visa revocation ≠ criminal conviction (trap).
- Free Trade Zones (FTZs) can be misused for trans-shipment.

Key Terms

Fentanyl Precursors: Chemicals used to synthesize the opioid fentanyl.



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- Global drug trafficking involves complex networks; India actively monitors its supply chains to prevent illicit trade.
- Robust regulatory frameworks are essential for controlling chemical exports, particularly those with dual-use potential as drug precursors.
- Effective international cooperation, including treaties and joint operations, is vital for strengthening global drug control mechanisms.



U.S. to Revoke Chabahar Sanctions Waiver

News: U.S. to revoke the 2018 IFCA (Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act) waiver for Chabahar Port, effective Sept 29, 2025; impact on India's connectivity plans.

Chabahar Port is strategically vital for India to access Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan.

The port is a critical component of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), enhancing regional trade connectivity.

Sanctions directly impact India's ability to use Chabahar for trade and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

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- Chabahar ≠ part of CAATSA waiver; this is an IFCA exception (trap).
- India signed a 10-year lease in May 2024 (investment already made).

Key Terms

IFCA Waiver : U.S. carve-out permitting activities otherwise sanctionable.

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- India's engagement with Iran, including energy imports, is often complicated by U.S. sanctions.
- New Delhi consistently seeks to balance its strategic partnership with the U.S. against its geopolitical and economic interests in the region.
- The INSTC aims to reduce transit time and cost for trade between India, Russia, Iran, Europe, and Central Asia.



CJI on "True Secularism" & Khajuraho PIL

News: CJI B.R. Gavai clarified that remarks in a Khajuraho Vishnu-idol PIL were contextual; court cannot order changes at a protected monument under ASI.

The Indian judiciary upholds a 'positive' secularism, distinct from the Western 'separation of church and state,' where the state treats all religions equally and intervenes to ensure religious equality.

Protected monuments, especially those under ASI, are subject to stringent conservation laws that often create tension with evolving religious practices or claims of worship.

Achieving a delicate balance between facilitating religious freedom and adhering to archaeological preservation principles is a recurring challenge in India's heritage management.

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- World Heritage Sites under ASI protection = strict limits on interventions.
- Oral observations ≠ binding order (trap).

Key Terms

ASI (Archaeological Survey of India): Agency managing protected monuments.

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- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is responsible for archaeological research and the protection, preservation, and maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance.
- India, as a signatory to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, has an international obligation to protect its sites like Khajuraho, ensuring their outstanding universal value is maintained.
- Articles 25-28 of the Indian Constitution guarantee freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion, while the Preamble declares India a 'secular' republic.



Army Scales Up Drones & Counter-Drones

News: Indian Army accelerating drone induction; COAS Gen. Upendra Dwivedi reviewed a facility at Likabali (Arunachal Pradesh); goal: make every soldier a drone operator.

Drones are transforming modern warfare by enhancing surveillance, reconnaissance, and precision strike capabilities. India's defence modernization prioritizes integrating advanced technologies like drones for enhanced operational readiness and self-reliance. Drones significantly improve border surveillance in challenging terrains like the Himalayas, detecting infiltrations and monitoring remote areas.

Prelims Pointers & Traps

- Training hubs include IMA (Dehradun), Infantry School (Mhow), OTA (Chennai).
- Distinguish loitering munitions vs. ISR drones (trap).

Key Terms

Counter-UAS: Systems to detect, jam, or defeat hostile drones.

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- The push for indigenous drone development strengthens India's strategic autonomy and reduces reliance on foreign military hardware.
- Training every soldier as a drone operator reflects a shift towards decentralized technological warfare and enhanced battlefield awareness.
- Drones provide a cost-effective solution against numerically superior adversaries, enabling asymmetric warfare advantages.

Delhi Court Sets Aside Ex-Parte "Gag Order"

News: A Delhi district judge held the Sept 6 ex-parte injunction against journalists in the Adani Enterprises defamation suit unsustainable; lack of hearing noted.

Press freedom in India is enshrined in Article 19(1)(a) but is subject to reasonable restrictions, including defamation laws, creating a legal tension. Due process in civil litigation ensures fair treatment through established legal procedures, including proper notice and an opportunity to be heard, crucial for protecting rights. Achieving a balance between an individual's right to protect their reputation and the public's interest in receiving information is a complex legal challenge.

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- Ex-parte orders require strict necessity (trap).
- Intermediaries can be asked to remove content only per due process.

Key Terms

Ex-parte Injunction: Temporary order without hearing the opposite party.



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- Judicial restraint emphasizes courts deferring to legislative and executive branches, particularly in matters of media regulation, to avoid overreach.
- Media scrutiny is vital for ensuring corporate accountability, exposing potential misconduct, and informing the public about business practices and their impact.
- Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, a fundamental right critical for a democratic society.

NCST Forms Panel on 2005 Duties

News: NCST (National Commission for Scheduled Tribes) set up an internal committee + 3 sub-committees to operationalise eight additional duties notified in 2005 (e.g., minor forest produce, PESA).

Constitutional provisions like Articles 338A, 244, and the Fifth/Sixth Schedules protect tribal rights and ensure their welfare. Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is a critical source for tribal livelihoods, providing food, medicine, and income through sustainable collection practices. The Fifth Schedule applies to tribal areas in 10 states, while the Sixth Schedule covers specific tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram, granting them greater autonomy.

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- Earlier annual reports noted staff/fund constraints; now moving to a report on discharge.
- Don't confuse NCST with NCSC (trap).

Key Terms

PESA, 1996: Extends Panchayats to Scheduled Areas with tribal safeguards.

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- Implementation of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) often faces challenges such as lack of awareness, insufficient resource devolution, and poor institutional capacity.
- Key institutional mechanisms for tribal welfare include the NCST, Tribal Advisory Councils, and various government schemes focusing on education, health, and economic development.
- Decentralised governance in tribal areas, primarily through PESA, aims to empower Gram Sabhas with significant control over local resources and development activities.

SC Fines Delhi PWD on Manual Cleaning

News: Supreme Court imposed ₹5 lakh penalty on Delhi PWD for violation of orders against manual sewer cleaning near the court.

Manual scavenging is a profound social evil with a strong legal framework in place to prohibit it. The Supreme Court's action underscores the importance of upholding the dignity of labour, a core constitutional value. This issue also highlights critical aspects of urban sanitation and public health management.

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- Manual scavenging is banned; mechanised cleaning mandated.
- Liability can flow to contracting departments (trap).

Key Terms

PWD: State works dept. handling construction/maintenance.



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- Judicial activism in social reform
- Implementation of anti-manual scavenging laws
- Technology adoption in sanitation sector



EPFO Launches "Passbook Lite" + Annexure-K Online

News: EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation) rolled out Passbook Lite (summary view) and enabled online Annexure-K (transfer certificate).

EPFO's digital initiatives, like Passbook Lite, exemplify digital governance leveraging technology to enhance public service delivery, transparency, and citizen engagement.

As a defined-contribution social security scheme, EPFO plays a crucial role in labor welfare, helping employees save for retirement.

Innovations like 'Passbook Lite' enhance financial inclusion by providing easier access to financial information and services for a wider population.

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- Reduces dual-login frictions; detailed view remains on full passbook portal.
- PF = long-term defined-contribution social security.

Key Terms

Annexure-K: Statement enabling EPF transfer between accounts.



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- India's social security reforms aim to expand coverage and streamline benefits.
- Simplifying compliance contributes to 'Ease of Doing Business' efforts.
- EPFO primarily covers the organized sector, highlighting disparities with the unorganized sector.

PM Modi Calls Nepal PM Karki

News: PM Modi said India's support for Nepal's political steps is "steadfast"; both leaders satisfied with mutual understanding.

The India-Nepal relationship is characterized by an open border, shared culture, and common security interests, but also faces challenges like border disputes and economic imbalances.

India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy prioritizes friendly relations and development cooperation with immediate neighbors, including Nepal, through aid, infrastructure projects, and diplomatic engagement.

Deep-rooted cultural and civilizational ties, including shared religious practices, linguistic similarities, and historical connections, form the bedrock of India-Nepal relations.

Prelims Pointers & Traps

- India-Nepal ties framed by 1947-50 treaties, open border, hydropower links.
- Don't conflate domestic Nepal events with treaty changes (trap).

Key Terms

Diplomatic Readout: Official summary of leader-level calls/meetings.

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- Cross-border connectivity is fostered through various projects, including integrated check posts, railways, and energy transmission lines, facilitating trade and people-to-people contact.
- Significant hydropower potential in Nepal, particularly from rivers like the Mahakali, offers opportunities for mutual energy benefits and joint projects between India and Nepal.
- China's increasing economic and strategic engagement in Nepal is a growing geopolitical factor, influencing regional dynamics and India's foreign policy approach.

Heavy Rain: Uttarakhand (Chamoli) & Hyderabad

Uttarakhand News: At least 4 deaths, 50+ missing after heavy downpour in Chamoli; massive damage reported.

Hyderabad News: Intense rain led to water-logging; videos show a man washed away in a flooded nala; GHMC rescue efforts.

Climate change increases the frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall events globally, including cloudbursts and flash floods in India.

Mountainous regions like Uttarakhand are highly susceptible to landslides, flash floods, and debris flows during heavy rains due to unstable geology and steep slopes.

Rapid urbanization, encroachment on natural drainage systems (nalas), and inadequate infrastructure contribute significantly to urban flooding, as seen in Hyderabad.

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- Char Dham/Himalayan zone = Landslide-prone; IMD colour codes apply.
- Urban flooding = drainage + encroachment issues (trap).

Key Terms

Cloudburst: Very high rainfall in a short period over a small area.

Nala: Urban storm-water drain.



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- Effective early warning systems (EWS) using meteorological data and localized alerts are crucial for timely evacuation and minimizing casualties.
- Building resilient infrastructure, including improved drainage, flood-resistant construction, and slope stabilization, is essential to mitigate damage.
- The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) are critical for search and rescue operations and relief distribution.



Electoral Disputes: Rahul Gandhi vs ECI

Electoral integrity relies on accurate and updated voter rolls, which are crucial for free and fair elections, preventing voter suppression or fraudulent voting.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is a constitutional body responsible for conducting elections, and its independence from executive influence is vital for its credibility and impartiality.

Maintaining accurate voter lists is challenging due to factors like frequent population movement, data entry errors, proper execution of deletion procedures (e.g., Form 7), and continuous vigilance against malpractices.

News: Rahul alleged CEC shielding wrongdoers over Aland (Karnataka) deletions; ECI termed the charges "baseless and incorrect."

Karnataka CEO Response: State CEO said all data in the Aland case was handed to police on Sept 6, 2023.

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- Form-7 is for deletion (not addition/correction).
- ECI supervises; execution via state machinery & BLOs.
- CEO = state election authority under ECI superintendence.

Key Terms

BLO (Booth Level Officer): Field agent for roll management.

CEO: Chief Electoral Officer (State).



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- Democratic governance requires a careful balance between political accountability of elected officials and the institutional autonomy of bodies like the ECI to ensure fair processes without political interference.
- Technology, such as Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and digital voter registration, enhances efficiency but also introduces new challenges related to data security, transparency, and public trust in electoral processes.
- Ongoing electoral reforms aim to strengthen democratic governance by enhancing transparency, reducing malpractices, ensuring inclusivity, and increasing voter participation in the electoral system.

Assam: **FIR** over **BJP** Video During **BTC** Polls

Assam Congress filed an **FIR** over a **BJP** social-media video ahead of **BTC** (Bodoland Territorial Council) polls.

The incident highlights the importance of the **Model Code of Conduct** in elections and the growing need for **social media regulation** in electoral contexts.

Furthermore, understanding the role of **autonomous councils** and **tribal self-governance** is crucial, as the Bodoland Territorial Council operates under the **Sixth Schedule**.

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- **BTC** = **Sixth Schedule** body; **model code** sensitivities apply.
- **FIR** is under **CrPC §154** (trap: not a court order).

Key Terms

Sixth Schedule: Autonomy for tribal areas (Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram).

Bonus: Micro-Snippets

- Rajura, Maharashtra "**voter fraud**" probe: Officials cite four qualifying dates; bogus names flagged; probe progress questioned.
- Minister on Great Nicobar: Critique of "**negative politics**" on the project.



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- **Federal structure** and **special provisions**
- **Ethnic conflicts** and **political solutions**
- **Development vs environmental concerns** (Great Nicobar)