



The Hindu **UPSC Notes** —

22 Sept 2025

(with **Traps** + **Key Terms**)



International Relations & **Economy**

White House clarifies H-1B fee is a 'one-time' charge for new applicants

News: The White House has clarified that the new \$100,000 H-1B visa fee is a one-time payment applicable only to fresh applicants in the next lottery cycle. It is not an annual fee, and it does not apply to renewals or current visa holders. This announcement has eased fears that triggered a surge in last-minute flights to the U.S. by Indian professionals.

Prelims Pointers & Traps

- **Trap 1: Annual vs. One-Time Payment:** Do not confuse the H-1B fee as an annual charge. It is explicitly a one-time payment for new applicants only, contrary to initial misleading reports and the initial confusion caused by the U.S. Commerce Secretary's statement.
- **Trap 2: Scope of Applicability:** Avoid the assumption that the new fee applies to all H-1B visa holders or renewals. It is strictly for fresh applicants in the next lottery cycle, not existing visa holders, those temporarily outside the U.S., or those applying for renewals.
- **Pointer: Political Stance:** Note that Indian opposition parties criticized the Modi government's perceived lack of firm stance against the U.S. policy, framing it as "strong-arm tactics" and "bullying." This indicates the political sensitivity of the issue.

Key Terms

- **One-Time Fee:** A charge that is paid only once, as opposed to a recurring annual fee.
- **Lottery Cycle:** The period during which the U.S. government accepts H-1B petitions and conducts a lottery to select applicants due to high demand.
- **Proclamation:** An official, formal public announcement by a head of state.

International Relations & Geopolitics

U.K., Canada, Australia recognize Palestinian state

News: In a major foreign policy shift, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia have formally recognized the State of Palestine. This makes them the first G-7 countries to take the step, which comes ahead of the UN General Assembly session and is seen as a response to international pressure over the war in Gaza.

Context

The move aims to revive the two-state solution. Over 140 of the 193 UN member states already recognize Palestine.

India's Position

The Congress party pointed out that India formally recognized Palestine back in November 1988, criticizing the current government's policy as one of "moral cowardice".

Opposition

The U.S. and Israel strongly oppose the move. Israeli PM Netanyahu called it an "absurd reward for terrorism".

Prelims Traps

- "First G-7 Countries" Misconception: Do not conflate this with the entire G-7 bloc recognizing Palestine. Only the UK, Canada, and Australia have done so among the G-7.
- Number of Recognitions: While over 140 UN member states recognize Palestine, UPSC aspirants might confuse this with the number of G-7 or developed Western nations, which is significantly lower.
- India's Recognition Date: Remember India's formal recognition of Palestine was in November 1988, not a recent event. Questions might try to trick you into believing it's a contemporary decision.
- "Two-State Solution": Understand the core components and historical context of the two-state solution. Be wary of questions that oversimplify or misrepresent the solution's implications.
- Distinction between Recognition and UN Membership: Recognize that state recognition by individual countries is distinct from Palestine's status within the United Nations, which is currently a non-member observer state.

Key Terms

State Recognition

A unilateral political act by a country that acknowledges another political entity as a sovereign state.

Prelims Trap:

- State vs. Government Recognition: Confuse recognition of a 'state' (which is permanent) with recognition of a 'government' (which can change).
- Unilateral vs. International Law: Assume state recognition is always an international legal obligation rather than a political act by individual states.
- De Jure vs. De Facto: Mix up 'de jure' (legal/formal) recognition with 'de facto' (factual/practical) recognition.

Two-State Solution

A proposed framework to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by establishing an independent State of Palestine alongside Israel.

Prelims Trap:

- Exclusive Solution: Assume it is the only proposed resolution; other models like a one-state solution or conferederation are also debated.
- Universal Acceptance: Overlook that not all parties or international actors fully support or agree on the specifics of the two-state solution.
- Historical Conflation: Confuse the two-state solution framework with specific historical peace accords (e.g., Oslo Accords), which are steps towards or attempts at it.

Balfour Declaration (1917)

A public statement by the British government during WWI announcing support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.

Prelims Trap:

- Incorrect Date/Year: Mix up 1917 with other significant dates in the region's history.
- Sole Mandate: Misunderstand it as the sole basis for the British Mandate for Palestine; it was one of several contributing factors.
- "National Home" vs. "State": Assume the declaration explicitly promised a 'Jewish state' rather than a 'national home', which was deliberately less definitive.
- Exclusivity: Forget the clause protecting the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.



Polity & Constitution

Governor's Assent & Article 200: SC Hears Presidential Reference

News: The **Supreme Court** is hearing a **Presidential reference** on the interpretation of **Articles 200 and 201** of the **Constitution**, **focusing on whether a timeline can be fixed for Governors to decide on bills** passed by state legislatures.

Prelims Pointers & Traps

Article 200 Options

When a **bill** is presented, the **Governor** has four **options**: (a) **give assent**, (b) **withhold assent**, (c) **return the bill for reconsideration**, or (d) **reserve the bill for the President's consideration**.

- **Confusion: Governor's Discretion**

A **common trap** is assuming the **Governor** has **broad discretionary powers** in assenting to **bills**. While they have options, the **Supreme Court** has **clarified their discretion is limited and generally bound by the advice** of the **Council of Ministers**, especially regarding **ordinary bills**.

- **Mixing up Commission Recommendations**

Candidates often **confuse the recommendations** of the **Sarkaria Commission** and **Punchhi Commission** regarding **timelines**. Remember, **Sarkaria focused on the President's decision** on **reserved bills**, while **Punchhi addressed the Governor's timeline** for **assent**.

Key Recommendations: The **Sarkaria Commission** recommended a **six-month maximum period** for the **President** to decide on **reserved bills**, while the **Punchhi Commission** recommended a **six-month timeline** for the **Governor**.

Discretion vs. Advice

The **Governor** is **generally required to act on the advice** of the **Council of Ministers**. The **discretion** to **reserve a bill** for the **President** is to be **used only in rare cases** of "**patent unconstitutionality**".

- **Misconception: Withholding vs. Returning**

Many **conflate** '**withholding assent**' with '**returning a bill for reconsideration**'. **Withholding assent effectively kills the bill**, whereas **returning it allows the legislature to reconsider and pass it again**. The **Governor** is **not explicitly mandated to assent even if passed again** (unlike the **President** with **Central bills**).

- **Scope of "Patent Unconstitutionality"**

The term "**patent unconstitutionality**" for **reserving a bill** is a **high bar**. It implies an **obvious and clear violation**, not just a policy disagreement. This is a **critical nuance** often overlooked.



Economy & Taxation

PM terms GST 2.0 a 'festival of savings'; Congress flags concerns

News: As the new two-slab Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime rolled out, PM Narendra Modi called it a "bachat utsav" (festival of savings) and a step towards 'aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance). The Congress criticized the reforms as inadequate, highlighting the unresolved demand from states for an extension of GST compensation.

01

New Structure

The GST regime has been simplified from a four-slab system to primarily two slabs (5% and 18%), with a 40% slab remaining for luxury and sin goods.

02

PM's Vision

The PM linked the reforms and resulting lower prices to the need to adopt 'swadeshi' (indigenous) goods to boost MSMEs.

03

Opposition's Stand

The Congress argues the reforms don't address key issues for MSMEs and sectors like textiles and tourism, and that states need compensation for another five years.

Prelims Pointers & Traps

Prelims Traps

GST Slabs Confusion

Do not assume the GST system is *exclusively* a two-slab structure. While primarily 5% and 18%, a 40% slab still exists for specific luxury and sin goods, making it a multi-slab system overall.

GST Compensation Tenure

The original GST compensation period for states was for five years (2017-2022). Do not confuse this with the Congress's *demand* for an additional five-year extension, which is a political stance, not a current legal provision.

'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' Link

The PM's mention of 'aatmanirbharta' is tied to the *potential outcome* of lower prices encouraging domestic goods, not a direct structural change within GST itself to promote self-reliance. Understand the indirect linkage.

MSME Sector Impact

While GST simplification aims to help MSMEs, be aware that the opposition argues it doesn't fully resolve *all* key issues for the sector. Avoid assuming a complete resolution of MSME challenges through these reforms alone.

Polity & Elections

EC pushes for nationwide Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

News: The Election Commission (EC) has directed State Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) to be prepared for a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls by September 30. This indicates a potential nationwide rollout of the voter list clean-up exercise in October-November.

Prelims Pointers & Traps

- **Base Year for Revision:** The last SIR conducted in a state will serve as the cut-off date and base document for the new revision. For example, the 2003 voter list is being used for the ongoing SIR in Bihar.
- **State Preparedness:** Most states had their last SIR between 2002 and 2004. CEOs have been asked to keep the voter lists from their last SIR ready for mapping.
- **Context:** The move comes as several states like Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal are due for Assembly elections in 2026.
- **Trap: ECI vs. State Election Commissions:** Do not confuse the Election Commission (ECI), which conducts SIR for Parliament and State Assembly elections, with State Election Commissions (SECs) that deal with local body (Panchayat/Municipality) elections. Electoral rolls for local elections are prepared by SECs, often based on ECI's rolls but with their own revisions.
- **Trap: SIR vs. Annual Revision:** SIR is a more intensive, targeted, and comprehensive exercise than the usual annual summary revision. UPSC might try to conflate the two processes or suggest SIR is a routine annual affair.
- **Trap: Cut-off Date Misconception:** The "last SIR" serves as the foundational base for the new revision, not necessarily the most recent annual summary revision. The specific year (e.g., 2003 for Bihar) is crucial.
- **Trap: Misinterpreting 'Nationwide Rollout':** While a nationwide *preparedness* is directed, the actual intensive revision might be phased or prioritized based on upcoming elections, rather than a simultaneous conduct across all states.

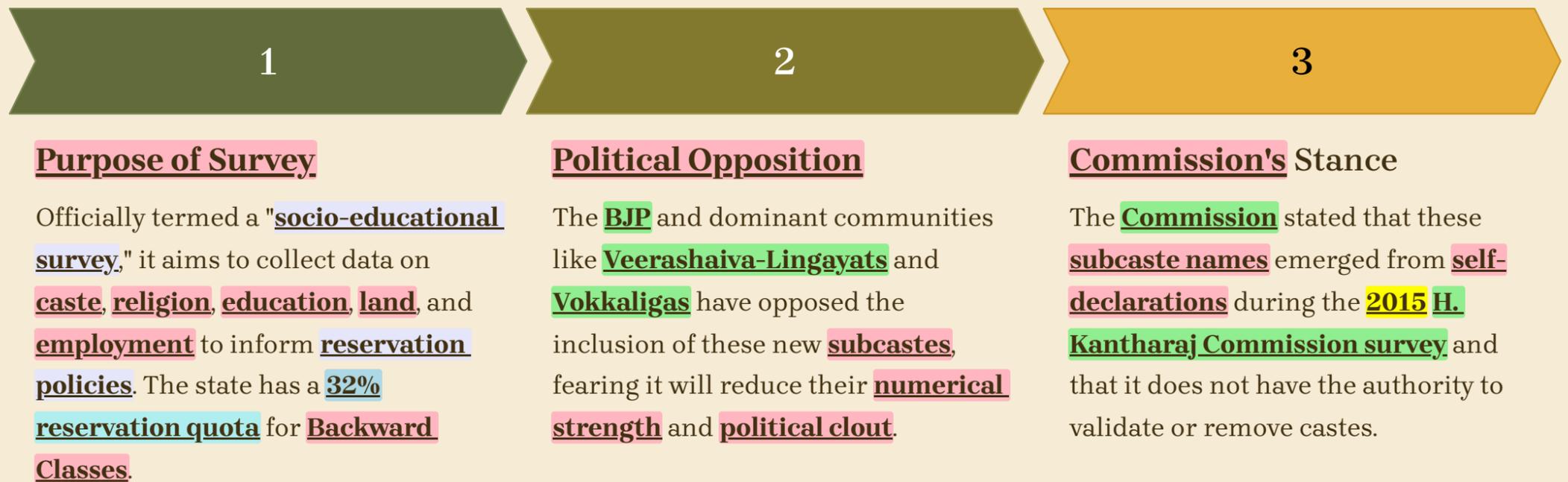
Key Terms

- **SIR (Special Intensive Revision):** A targeted and time-bound process conducted by the EC to comprehensively update and clean up electoral rolls, beyond the usual annual summary revision.
- **Electoral Roll:** An official list of all individuals who are registered and eligible to vote in a particular jurisdiction.
- **Chief Electoral Officer (CEO):** The senior officer in a state responsible for supervising the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections.

Polity & Social Justice

Karnataka caste survey commences amid controversy over subcastes

News: The socio-economic and educational survey in Karnataka commences today, but the state's Backward Classes Commission will "mask" 33 Christian subcastes (e.g., 'Lingayat Christian', 'Vokkaliga Christian') from the survey's mobile application following a political uproar.



Prelims Traps

- **Caste Census** vs. **Socio-Economic Survey**: Do not confuse the Karnataka survey, which is a state-specific socio-economic and educational survey, with a national 'Caste Census'. The last comprehensive Caste Census for the whole of British India was in 1931. Modern surveys, like this one, are often for specific policy formulation.
- **Purpose of the Survey**: Understand that the primary purpose of such surveys is typically to collect data for informing reservation policies and ensuring equitable distribution of resources, not just general population enumeration.
- **Role of Backward Classes Commissions**: Remember that State Backward Classes Commissions primarily identify and recommend castes for inclusion or exclusion in state lists. The power to notify or amend these lists generally rests with the President (for Central lists) or Governor (for State lists) after consultation. Commissions usually do not have the direct authority to 'validate' or 'remove' castes from official lists themselves.
- **Constitutional Provisions for Reservations**: Be clear on the constitutional articles related to reservations (e.g., Articles 15(4), 15(5), 16(4) for socially and educationally backward classes). This issue directly ties into these provisions.
- **"Dominant Castes"** Concept: The opposition from dominant communities like Veerashaiva-Lingayats and Vokkaligas often arises from concerns over the re-evaluation of their numerical strength, which could impact their share in reservation benefits or political representation.
- **Subcaste Recognition**: The controversy over "masking" Christian subcastes highlights the complexity of caste identification and the sensitive nature of sub-caste affiliations, especially when religious conversions are involved.



Defence & Technology

IAF to retire legendary MiG-21 fighter jets

News: The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** will officially retire its **MiG-21 fighter jets** on **September 26**, ending nearly **six decades** of service for **India's first supersonic fighter**.

Prelims Pointers & Traps

Induction & Legacy

First inducted in **1963**, the **MiG-21** was the **backbone of the IAF** for decades, with **over 700 units** of different variants serving the force. Its **first squadron (No. 28)** was nicknamed the "**First Supersonics**".

Impact on Force Strength

The phasing out of **MiG-21** squadrons will temporarily dip the **IAF's** combat strength to **29 squadrons**.

1

2

3

Key Combat Roles

The aircraft played crucial roles in the **1965** and **1971 wars**, the **1999 Kargil conflict**, and the **2019 Balakot air strikes**. **Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman** shot down a **Pakistani F-16** from a **MiG-21** in **2019**.

Trap: Indigenous vs. Acquired

Do not confuse the **MiG-21** as **India's first indigenously developed supersonic fighter**. It was **India's first supersonic fighter**, but it was **acquired from the Soviet Union**, not domestically produced from scratch.

Trap: Misleading Dates/Numbers

Pay close attention to specific dates: **Induction (1963)** vs. **Retirement (September 26, 2024)** - assumed from "ending nearly **six decades of service**" in **2024**). Do not mix up the **number of units (over 700)** with the **current squadron strength (temporarily dipping to 29)**.

Trap: Conflated Historical Events

While the **MiG-21** participated in multiple conflicts, remember that the **specific event** of **Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman** shooting down a **Pakistani F-16** occurred in **2019** and involved a **MiG-21**. Avoid attributing this to **earlier wars or different aircraft**.

Trap: Purpose of Retirement

The retirement primarily addresses concerns about the **aircraft's aging fleet** and **safety record**, not a **complete lack of supersonic capabilities in the IAF**. **India** continues to induct **modern supersonic fighters** like the **Rafale** and **LCA Tejas**.



Science & Technology

India's National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)

News: **India's supercomputing capabilities** are being advanced under the **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)**, which was launched in **2015** to build a network of **high-performance computing facilities**.

Prelims Pointers

- **Implementing Agencies:** The **NSM** is jointly implemented by the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** and the **Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY)**, through **C-DAC (Pune)** and the **Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru**.
- **Indigenous Development:** The mission spurred the development of the **indigenous PARAM series of supercomputers** by **C-DAC**, starting with **PARAM 8000** in **1991**. It now focuses on **indigenous hardware** like the **Rudra server**.
- **Current Fastest:** **India's** fastest **supercomputer** is **AIRAWAT-PSAI**, located at **C-DAC, Pune**, which is ranked among the **top 100** globally. Key applications include **weather forecasting (monsoon modelling)** and **climate research**.

Prelims Traps

- **Implementing Agencies:** Don't confuse the primary implementing agencies (**DST** & **MeitY**) with the executing agencies (**C-DAC** & **IISc**).
- **First Supercomputer:** **PARAM 8000 (1991)** was **India's first indigenously built supercomputer** by **C-DAC**; avoid mixing it up with other initial **supercomputing** efforts or subsequent **PARAM models**.
- **AIRAWAT-PSAI Ranking:** Remember **AIRAWAT-PSAI** is **India's** fastest and is in the global **top 100**, not necessarily **top 10**. Also, it's primarily at **C-DAC, Pune**.
- **NSM Launch Year:** Be careful not to confuse the **NSM's** launch year (**2015**) with the operational dates of specific **supercomputers** or other related government initiatives.
- **Mission Scope:** **NSM** is focused on building a network and ecosystem for **high-performance computing**, not just individual **supercomputers**.

Key Terms

- **Supercomputer:** A computer with a **high level of performance** compared to a general-purpose computer, measured in **FLOPS (floating-point operations per second)**.
- **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM):** A government initiative to create a powerful **supercomputing infrastructure** for **academic and research institutions** across **India**.
- **C-DAC: Centre for Development of Advanced Computing,** an **autonomous scientific society** of **MeitY** involved in **R&D in IT and electronics**.



More Headlines in Brief

Polity: 'Stateless' Man & Ladakh Demands

Citizenship Case

The **Madras High Court** has granted **interim relief** to a **man** born and raised in **India** to **Sri Lankan refugee parents** but declared **stateless**. His case is complicated by the **1986 amendment** to the **Citizenship Act**.

Ladakh Demands

Protests in **Ladakh** continue for **Statehood** and inclusion in the **Sixth Schedule**. **Leaders fear** that without the **protections** of **Article 370**, **outsiders** and **big industries** will **occupy their land** and **take over businesses**.

Prelims Trap: Constitutional Provisions

When studying **citizenship**, differentiate between **Constitutional Articles (5-11)** and the **Citizenship Act, 1955**, along with its **various amendments** (e.g., **1986, 2003, 2015, CAA 2019**). The **1986 amendment** **significantly restricted** **'citizenship by birth'**.

For **Ladakh**, understand why the **Sixth Schedule** is demanded over the **Fifth Schedule** for **tribal areas**, and the **implications** of the **abrogation of Article 370** on its **special status** compared to **states**.

Governance & Security

Academic Paywalls

The **Delhi High Court's** **order to block free access sites** like **Sci-Hub** and **Libgen** has sparked a **debate** on the **right to access knowledge**, especially for **researchers** in the **Global South**.

Ganja Trafficking

An **investigation reveals** that **Rayalaseema youth** are **increasingly involved in trafficking ganja** from the **Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) region**, with **Tirupati** serving as a **major logistics hub** for **distribution to southern cities**.

Prelims Trap: Key Legal Acts & Geography

In cases of **academic access**, distinguish between **Copyright Act, 1957**, **Right to Knowledge**, and the **concept of Open Access**. Understand **India's stance** on **international treaties** like the **Berne Convention** and **TRIPS Agreement**.

For **drug trafficking**, know the **key provisions** of the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985**. Be **precise** about **geographical areas** like the **Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) region** as **specific trafficking routes** are **common traps**.

Quick Prelims Snippets (All-in-One)

- **H-1B Visa Fee: One-time, New Applicants**

Clarified as a **one-time \$100,000 charge** for **new applicants only**, not an **annual fee**.

 **Prelims Trap:**

Do not confuse the **one-time nature** of this fee or its application to **new applicants only** with an **annual charge** or fee for **all existing/renewing visas**. Misremembering these **specific conditions** is a **common pitfall**.

- **Palestine Recognition: Global & Indian Stance**

UK, Canada, and **Australia** formally recognize the **State of Palestine**. **India** did so in **1988**.

 **Prelims Trap:**

Be careful not to conflate **India's historical recognition (1988)** with **recent moves by other nations**. A common mistake is assuming **India's recognition** is a **recent development** or confusing the **dates of recognition by different countries**.

- **Governor's Assent: SC Review of Article 200**

The **Supreme Court** is hearing a **Presidential reference** on fixing **timelines** for **Governors** to act on **bills** under **Article 200**.

 **Prelims Trap:**

Understand that the debate is about **fixing timelines** for the **Governor's assent**, not about questioning the **Governor's power to withhold assent or reserve bills**. Also, remember **Article 200** specifically deals with the **Governor's assent**, not the **President's**.

- **GST 2.0: Simplified Two-Slab Regime**

New simplified two-slab GST regime (5% & 18%) rolled out.

 **Prelims Trap:**

Ensure you know the **specific new slab rates (5% & 18%)** and that this is a **simplified two-slab system**, differentiating it from **previous multi-slab structures**. Also, be aware this is "**GST 2.0**", implying a **revision**, not the **original implementation**.

- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR): Voter List Clean-up**

EC directs states to be ready for a **nationwide voter list clean-up** by **Sept 30**.

 **Prelims Trap:**

Remember that **SIR** is a **voter list clean-up initiative** by the **Election Commission**, focusing on **accuracy and readiness for elections**. Don't confuse it with **electoral reforms** or **voter registration drives** alone; its primary purpose here is "**revision**" and "**clean-up**".

- **Karnataka Caste Survey: Controversial Subcastes**

Begins with **33 controversial Christian subcastes "masked"** in the app.

 **Prelims Trap:**

The **key trap** here is the **specific detail** of "**33 controversial Christian subcastes**" being "**masked**", highlighting the **sensitivity and complexities of caste-based data collection**. **UPSC** often tests **specific, contentious details** of **surveys or policies**.

- **MiG-21 Retirement: End of an Era**

The **IAF's first supersonic fighter**, inducted in **1963**, will be officially retired on **Sept 26**.

 **Prelims Trap:**

Note the **MiG-21's historical significance** as the **IAF's first supersonic fighter** and its **long service record** since **1963**. A trap might be confusing its **induction year** or its "**first supersonic**" status with **other fighter aircraft**.

- **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM): Key Implementers & Fastest Supercomputer**

Launched in **2015**, implemented by **C-DAC** and **IISc**. **India's fastest** is **AIRAWAT-PSAI**.

 **Prelims Trap:**

Crucial details to remember are the **launch year (2015)**, the **implementing agencies (C-DAC and IISc)**, and the **name of India's fastest supercomputer (AIRAWAT-PSAI)**. **Mixing up these facts**, especially the **names or dates**, is a **common error**.

- **Data Point: 18th Lok Sabha & Young MPs**

The **18th Lok Sabha** is the "**oldest**" yet, with a **declining share of young MPs (25-40 years old)**.

 **Prelims Trap:**

The **core trap** is the **trend**: the **18th Lok Sabha** being the "**oldest**" with a ***declining* share of young MPs**. Do not assume an **increasing trend of young representation**, or confuse the **specific age bracket (25-40 years)** for "**young MPs**".