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IMPORTANT INSIGHTS

India's Poverty Decline Exposes a Wider Prosperity Gap, Highlighting the Need for Secure Jobs and Sustainable Wage Growth

Recent Developments:

- The **World Bank's October 2026 Poverty and Equity Brief** highlights India's substantial progress in reducing monetary poverty while identifying the continuing gap between poverty alleviation and economic prosperity.
- Between 2011 and 2023, approximately **496 million people moved above the lower-middle-income poverty threshold**, while extreme poverty declined from 27.1% to 2.6%.
- However, nearly **80% of India's population remained below the upper-middle-income poverty threshold of $8.30 per person per day** in 2023, indicating that a large section of the population continues to face economic vulnerability.
- The findings highlight an important development challenge: economic growth and poverty reduction must translate into **productive employment, rising real wages, occupational security and improved living standards** to achieve inclusive prosperity.

1. India's Progress in Poverty Reduction:

- India has recorded substantial improvements in monetary and multidimensional poverty through economic growth, social protection programmes, improved access to basic services and expanding economic opportunities.

Decline in Monetary Poverty:

- According to the World Bank's October 2026 Poverty and Equity Brief, the proportion of people living below the **extreme poverty line of $3 per person per day (2021 PPP)** declined from 27.1% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2023.
- Poverty measured against the **lower-middle-income country (LMIC) threshold of $4.20 per person per day** declined from 57.7% to 16.1% during the same period, lifting an estimated 496 million people above this threshold.
- The reduction reflects improvements in household consumption, employment opportunities, particularly women's employment, and social transfers, including food subsidies.

Decline in Multidimensional Poverty:

- Monetary poverty does not capture all dimensions of deprivation; therefore, the **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)** assesses overlapping disadvantages in health, education and living standards.
- India's national multidimensional poverty estimates have declined considerably, while the global MPI published by UNDP and OPHI recorded a reduction from **53.8% in 2005–06 to 16.4% in 2019–21**.
- Improvements in sanitation, electricity, drinking water, housing, nutrition and educational access have contributed to reducing non-monetary deprivation.

2. Understanding the Prosperity Gap:

- The **Prosperity Gap** is a World Bank indicator that measures how far a society's income distribution is from a globally defined prosperity standard of **$28 per person per day in 2021 PPP terms**.
- It measures the average factor by which individual incomes would need to change to reach this benchmark, rather than simply calculating the difference between average national income and the threshold.
- The indicator is **distribution-sensitive**, assigning greater weight to income improvements among poorer individuals than among wealthier individuals.

Poverty Threshold versus Prosperity Standard:

- The World Bank uses different international poverty lines according to countries' income classifications, whereas the $28 prosperity standard provides a broader benchmark for assessing shared prosperity.
- India's income distribution in 2023 illustrates the gap between poverty reduction and prosperity:
  - **$3 per day:** 2.6% of the population remained below the extreme poverty threshold.
  - **$4.20 per day:** 16.1% remained below the lower-middle-income poverty threshold.
  - **$8.30 per day:** Approximately 80% remained below the upper-middle-income poverty threshold.
- Nearly **64% of the population fell between $4.20 and $8.30 per day**, demonstrating that escaping extreme poverty does not necessarily ensure financial security or a comfortable standard of living.
- The prosperity gap therefore provides a broader perspective on **income distribution, economic vulnerability and the quality of development**.

3. Labour Market Challenges: The Major Constraint on Prosperity:

- Poverty reduction is closely associated with improvements in household consumption, but durable prosperity requires access to **productive, adequately paid and secure employment**.
- India's labour market continues to face structural challenges involving informality, insufficient regular employment, youth unemployment and inadequate wage growth.

Informal Employment and Job Quality:

- According to the **India Employment Report 2024**, prepared by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Institute for Human Development (IHD), approximately 90.3% of India's workforce was informally employed in 2022.
- Informal employment often involves inadequate social security, uncertain earnings, limited contractual protection and weak access to employment-related benefits.
- **Self-employment accounted for approximately 55.8% of total employment in 2022**, reflecting the importance of independent and household-based economic activities.
- According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), the proportion of workers in regular wage or salaried employment increased from 22.4% in 2024 to 23.6% in 2025, indicating a gradual but limited improvement in employment quality.

Rising Youth Unemployment:

- Youth unemployment remains a major challenge despite improvements in educational attainment and skill development.
- The youth unemployment rate among individuals aged 15–29 increased from 14.6% in April–June 2025 to **15.9% in April–June 2026**, according to the quarterly PLFS estimates based on Current Weekly Status.
- Educated youth constitute a disproportionately large share of unemployed young people, reflecting the mismatch between educational qualifications, occupational skills and available employment opportunities.

- The ILO has also highlighted the substantial proportion of young people, particularly women, who are **not in employment, education or training (NEET)**.

Distress-Driven Employment:

- An increase in employment does not necessarily indicate an improvement in economic well-being because people may enter low-productivity activities when adequate employment opportunities are unavailable.
- The rising proportion of unpaid family helpers, from 12.41% in 2017–18 to 17.10% in 2023–24 in the supplied PLFS series, indicates the importance of examining employment quality alongside employment quantity.
- Such work may provide household livelihood support without ensuring independent earnings, social protection or occupational mobility.

4. Human Capital Markets and the Education–Employment Mismatch:

- **Human capital** refers to the knowledge, skills, health and productive capabilities that improve an individual's economic and social opportunities.
- Households increasingly invest in private education, coaching, vocational training and healthcare to improve their future economic prospects.
- However, private human capital markets often involve information asymmetry because consumers cannot easily assess the actual quality of educational and healthcare services before purchasing them.
- High expenditure on education does not automatically translate into employability, particularly when curricula lack practical skills, industry exposure and alignment with labour-market requirements.
- This creates a dual challenge involving unequal access to quality services and weak conversion of human capital investment into productive employment.

5. Stagnant Real Wages and Household Economic Insecurity:

- **Real wages** represent the purchasing power of earnings after adjusting for inflation and provide a better measure of workers' economic well-being than nominal wages.
- The India Employment Report 2024 highlighted a decline in the average real monthly earnings of regular salaried workers from approximately ₹12,100 in 2012 to ₹10,925 in 2022.
- Weak real wage growth restricts household consumption, savings, investment in education and healthcare, and the ability to withstand economic shocks.
- Consequently, employment without adequate remuneration may fail to provide a pathway towards economic security and upward social mobility.

6. Policy Measures and the Way Forward:

- **Employment-intensive economic growth:** Promote labour-intensive manufacturing, textiles, food processing, tourism and construction to expand productive employment opportunities.
- **Formalisation of employment:** Encourage formal job creation through better regulatory compliance, simplified business procedures, social security coverage and access to institutional finance for MSMEs.
- **Skill development and employability:** Strengthen vocational education, apprenticeships, industry–academia partnerships and demand-driven skill training under initiatives such as Skill India.
- **Improving human capital:** Enhance the quality, affordability and accountability of public and private education and healthcare services to ensure that household investments generate measurable benefits.
- **Women's economic participation:** Improve access to childcare, safe transportation, flexible employment arrangements and equal remuneration to expand women's participation in productive economic activities.
- **Social protection:** Strengthen access to health insurance, pensions, maternity benefits and employment-related security, particularly for informal and gig workers.

- **Productivity and wage growth:** Promote technological upgrading, labour productivity, collective bargaining and decent working conditions to support sustainable improvements in real wages.
- **Evidence-based policymaking:** Use PLFS, household consumption surveys and multidimensional poverty indicators to evaluate not only employment creation but also income distribution, job security and living standards.

Conclusion:

- India's achievement in reducing extreme poverty represents significant progress in economic and social development. However, the persistence of widespread income vulnerability demonstrates that **poverty alleviation and prosperity are fundamentally different development objectives**.
- The principal challenge is to convert economic growth into productive employment, higher real wages, quality human capital and adequate social protection.
- Achieving the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047** requires a transition from poverty reduction towards inclusive, employment-intensive and sustainable prosperity, ensuring that economic growth improves the actual living conditions of ordinary citizens.

Value Addition for UPSC:

- **GS Paper II:** Poverty alleviation, social justice, health, education and vulnerable sections.
- **GS Paper III:** Inclusive growth, employment generation, human capital, labour reforms, income inequality and skill development.
- **GS Paper I:** Poverty, population dynamics, demographic dividend and social empowerment.
- **Important Reports:** World Bank Poverty and Equity Brief, World Bank Poverty, Prosperity and Planet Report 2026, India Employment Report 2024 (ILO–IHD), Periodic Labour Force Survey and Global Multidimensional Poverty Index.
- **Important Concepts:** Prosperity Gap, Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), real wages, informal employment, labour productivity, human capital markets and NEET population.
- **SDG Linkages:** SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).
- **Mains-ready Argument:** Poverty reduction establishes a minimum economic foundation, but inclusive prosperity requires decent employment, rising real wages, equitable access to human capital and protection against economic vulnerability.

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Double-Fortified Salt as an Anaemia Control Strategy Raises Concerns over Safety, Effectiveness and India's Salt-Reduction Goals

Recent Developments:

- India's persistent **anaemia burden** has renewed discussions on using **Double-Fortified Salt (DFS)** containing iron and iodine as a population-level nutritional intervention.
- Although salt fortification can deliver essential micronutrients through a commonly consumed food item, concerns regarding iron absorption, excessive iron exposure, unequal nutritional benefits and compatibility with sodium-reduction objectives have raised questions about universal implementation.
- The policy debate highlights the need to balance **food fortification, targeted supplementation, dietary diversification and public health safety** in India's strategy to combat anaemia.

1. Understanding Double-Fortified Salt (DFS):

- **Double-Fortified Salt** is edible salt fortified with two essential micronutrients, iron, which supports haemoglobin formation, and iodine, which is necessary for thyroid hormone production and normal brain development.
- Salt provides an effective fortification vehicle because it is consumed by almost every household, allowing micronutrients to reach large populations without requiring substantial changes in dietary habits.
- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has prescribed fortification standards for DFS:
    - **Iron:** 850–1100 parts per million, using ferrous sulphate or ferrous fumarate.
    - **Iodine:** 15–30 parts per million at the distribution and retail level, using potassium iodate.
- DFS is intended to address simultaneous iron and iodine deficiencies, but its effectiveness depends on consumption patterns, nutrient bioavailability and quality control.

2. Concerns Regarding Universal Implementation of DFS:

Conflict with Salt-Reduction Objectives:

- The **World Health Organization recommends less than 5 grams of salt per day** for adults, equivalent to less than 2 grams of sodium, to reduce hypertension and cardiovascular disease risks.
- India faces a growing burden of hypertension and other non-communicable diseases, making population-level sodium reduction an important public health priority.
- Since DFS delivers iron through salt consumption, reducing salt intake may also reduce the quantity of iron delivered through this particular fortification vehicle.
- Fortification must therefore improve micronutrient intake without encouraging excessive salt consumption or weakening sodium-reduction campaigns.

Unequal Distribution of Iron:

- Salt consumption varies according to age, dietary habits and household food distribution, meaning iron delivery through DFS may not correspond to individual nutritional requirements.
- Adult men may consume more salt than women and children in certain settings, potentially limiting the nutritional benefits for vulnerable groups with higher anaemia prevalence.
- Universal fortification may consequently expose some populations to unnecessary iron while failing to adequately address deficiencies among others.

Risk of Excessive Iron Exposure:

- Excessive iron accumulation can promote **oxidative stress** and tissue damage, particularly in individuals with conditions associated with impaired iron regulation or repeated blood transfusions.
- Individuals with iron-loading disorders, including transfusion-dependent thalassaemia, require particular caution regarding unnecessary iron exposure.
- Iron supplementation and fortification also require careful assessment in malaria-endemic settings and areas with high infection burdens, particularly where healthcare and sanitation facilities are inadequate.

Cumulative Iron Exposure:

- Iron is already delivered through several public nutrition programmes, including fortified rice distributed through the **Public Distribution System, PM POSHAN and Integrated Child Development Services**, alongside iron and folic acid supplementation.
- Introducing DFS without assessing existing dietary intake and supplementation may increase cumulative iron exposure, particularly among children and adolescents.

- Fortification policies therefore require coordination across nutrition programmes to avoid unnecessary overlapping interventions.

Limited Iron Bioavailability:

- DFS generally contains **non-haem iron**, whose absorption is influenced by dietary composition and physiological conditions.
- Phytates in cereals, millets and pulses, polyphenols in tea and coffee, and calcium can reduce iron absorption when consumed together.
- Infections and inflammation increase the production of **hepcidin**, a hormone that restricts intestinal iron absorption and iron release from body stores.
- Consequently, the nutritional benefits of DFS may remain limited in populations where poor dietary diversity, infections and inflammation are widespread.

3. Understanding Anaemia:

- **Anaemia** is a condition in which the haemoglobin concentration in blood falls below the normal level, reducing the oxygen-carrying capacity of blood and limiting oxygen delivery to body tissues.
- **Iron deficiency** is a major cause of anaemia, but other causes include vitamin B12 and folate deficiencies, infections, inflammation, blood loss and inherited haemoglobin disorders.
- According to the World Health Organization's 2024 guidelines, commonly applicable haemoglobin thresholds include:
    - **Non-pregnant women aged 15–65 years:** Below 12 grams per decilitre.
    - **Men aged 15–65 years:** Below 13 grams per decilitre.
    - **Children aged 24–59 months:** Below 11 grams per decilitre.
    - **Pregnant women:** The threshold varies by trimester, ranging from 10.5 to 11 grams per decilitre.
- According to **NFHS-5 (2019–21)**, 67.1% of children aged 6–59 months and 57% of women aged 15–49 years were anaemic. Among adolescent girls aged 15–19 years, the prevalence was 59.1%.
- Anaemia prevalence was not included in the published NFHS-6 fact sheets, creating a challenge for directly tracking changes against NFHS-5 estimates.

4. Impacts of Anaemia:

- **Health:** Anaemia causes fatigue, weakness and reduced physical capacity while increasing maternal and child health risks, particularly during pregnancy.
- **Cognitive development:** Iron deficiency can impair learning, memory, concentration and childhood neurological development.
- **Economic productivity:** Reduced physical capacity and work efficiency lower labour productivity and household earning potential.
- **Social development:** Maternal anaemia and childhood nutritional deficiencies can contribute to intergenerational malnutrition and poor quality of life.
- **Human development:** Anaemia weakens India's demographic dividend and adversely affects **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)** and **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)**.

5. India's Strategy: Anaemia Mukt Bharat:

- The Government launched **Anaemia Mukt Bharat (AMB)** in 2018 under the National Health Mission to reduce anaemia through a life-cycle approach covering children, adolescents and women.
- The programme follows the **6×6×6 framework**, consisting of 6 beneficiary groups, 6 interventions and 6 institutional mechanisms.

Six Major Interventions:

- **Iron and Folic Acid supplementation:** Provide preventive iron and folic acid supplements according to age, gender and physiological requirements.
- **Periodic deworming:** Conduct deworming interventions to reduce intestinal worm infections that contribute to nutritional deficiencies and blood loss.
- **Behaviour Change Communication:** Promote dietary diversification, iron-rich foods, appropriate infant feeding, supplementation compliance and delayed umbilical cord clamping.
- **Testing and treatment:** Strengthen anaemia screening through digital haemoglobin measurement and provide treatment according to the severity and underlying cause.
- **Food fortification:** Provide iron and folic acid-fortified foods through government-supported nutrition programmes.
- **Addressing non-nutritional causes:** Strengthen screening and treatment of malaria, haemoglobinopathies and fluorosis in endemic regions.

6. Challenges in India's Anaemia Control Strategy:

- **Low supplementation compliance:** Gastrointestinal side effects, including nausea, constipation and abdominal discomfort, discourage regular consumption of iron and folic acid supplements.
- **Inadequate diagnosis:** Screening often focuses on haemoglobin levels, while access to ferritin, vitamin B12 and inflammation-related testing remains limited.
- **Poor dietary diversity:** Nutritious and diverse diets remain unaffordable for many households, particularly vulnerable populations.
- **Fragmented interventions:** Multiple programmes deliver iron through supplements and fortified foods without consistently assessing cumulative exposure and individual nutritional requirements.
- **Weak outcome monitoring:** Monitoring often emphasises the number of tablets distributed and tests conducted rather than improvements in haemoglobin, iron status and overall health.

7. Way Forward:

- **Evidence-based fortification:** Conduct monitored district-level DFS pilot programmes before wider implementation, assessing haemoglobin, ferritin, inflammation markers and adverse effects.
- **Targeted interventions:** Prioritise vulnerable groups and individuals with diagnosed deficiencies, select appropriate iron compounds according to local dietary conditions and avoid unnecessary iron exposure.
- **Improved diagnostic capacity:** Expand access to ferritin and vitamin B12 testing and establish treatment protocols based on the underlying cause of anaemia rather than assuming that every case results from iron deficiency.
- **Addressing social determinants:** Improve food affordability and dietary diversity while strengthening sanitation, deworming and malaria control; address adolescent undernutrition, early marriage and maternal health.
- **Outcome-based monitoring:** Measure improvements in haemoglobin and iron status, assess adverse effects and establish district-level accountability for nutritional outcomes.
- **Integrated public health policy:** Ensure that anaemia-control interventions complement iodisation, sodium reduction, maternal healthcare and broader nutrition programmes without creating conflicting health objectives.

Conclusion:

- Double-Fortified Salt offers a potentially useful approach to addressing iron and iodine deficiencies through a commonly consumed food vehicle. However, its effectiveness depends on iron bioavailability, dietary patterns, population requirements and appropriate monitoring.

- **Universal fortification alone cannot eliminate anaemia**, particularly when deficiencies arise from infections, inflammation, vitamin deficiencies, inherited disorders and poor dietary diversity.
- India needs an evidence-based and targeted anaemia-control strategy that combines appropriate supplementation, safe food fortification, improved diagnostics, dietary diversification and stronger public health services.

Value Addition for UPSC:

- **GS Paper II:** Public health, healthcare delivery, vulnerable sections, maternal and child health and government welfare interventions.
- **GS Paper III:** Food processing, food fortification, agricultural diversification, nutrition security and human capital development.
- **Important Reports and Surveys:** NFHS-5, National Family Health Survey-6, Anaemia Mukt Bharat Operational Guidelines, WHO Guidelines on Haemoglobin Cut-offs (2024) and Dietary Guidelines for Indians (2024).
- **Important Institutions:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, National Health Mission, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, Indian Council of Medical Research and World Health Organization.
- **Important Concepts:** Double-Fortified Salt, non-haem iron, iron bioavailability, hepcidin, ferritin, haemoglobinopathies and micronutrient fortification.
- **SDG Linkages:** SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).
- **Mains-ready Argument:** Anaemia is not merely a nutritional deficiency but a multidimensional public health challenge requiring convergence between nutrition security, healthcare delivery, sanitation, dietary diversity and evidence-based food fortification.

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Democratic Victory in US Midterm Elections Reshapes Congressional Power and Creates New Strategic Considerations for India-US Relations

Recent Developments:

- The **3 November 2026 US midterm elections** resulted in a major political shift, with the Democratic Party securing control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, ending Republican control of Congress.
- The results represent a significant setback for President **Donald Trump**, as opposition control of both legislative chambers will strengthen congressional oversight of his administration during the remaining two years of his presidential term.
- The outcome may influence US policies concerning international trade, tariffs, immigration, sanctions and military engagements, creating new strategic considerations for India.
- However, the election does not immediately transfer legislative control. The newly elected Congress will assume office in **January 2027**, while the existing Republican-controlled Congress continues during the transition period.

1. Understanding US Midterm Elections:

- **Midterm elections** are federal legislative elections conducted halfway through a US President's four-year term. They determine the political composition of Congress without directly electing a President.

- The elections are important because the party controlling Congress exercises considerable influence over legislation, public expenditure, executive appointments and government oversight.

Process of US Midterm Elections:

- **House of Representatives:** All 435 voting seats are contested every two years through single-member congressional districts. Representatives serve two-year terms.
- **Senate:** Approximately one-third of the 100 Senate seats are contested every two years through staggered elections. Senators serve six-year terms, with 33 or 34 regular seats generally contested in each election cycle, alongside occasional special elections.
- **State and local elections:** Midterm elections may coincide with gubernatorial elections, state legislative contests, attorney general elections and local referendums. In 2026, 36 states held gubernatorial elections.
- **Indirect assessment of presidential performance:** Voters use midterm elections to express their approval or dissatisfaction with the incumbent administration's economic management, legislative priorities and foreign policy.
- **Federal legislative control:** The results determine which political party controls the two chambers of Congress for the next legislative term.

Significance of the 2026 Results:

- Democrats gained control of both chambers, providing them with greater authority over congressional committees, legislative proceedings and executive oversight.
- The outcome reflects voter dissatisfaction concerning inflation, the cost of living, tariffs, the Iran conflict and concerns regarding governance.
- The results create a **divided government**, in which the President belongs to one political party while the opposition controls both legislative chambers.

2. How Midterm Results Affect Presidential Powers:

- The US Constitution establishes a system of **separation of powers and checks and balances**, under which the President cannot exercise unrestricted authority over national policymaking.

Legislative and Financial Constraints:

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- **Legislative obstruction:** Opposition control of Congress allows Democrats to influence committee chairmanships, legislative calendars and parliamentary proceedings, potentially obstructing the President's domestic legislative agenda.
- **Power of the Purse:** Under Article I of the US Constitution, revenue bills originate in the House of Representatives, while federal appropriations require congressional approval. Congress can restrict discretionary expenditure and impose conditions on government funding.
- **Executive oversight:** Congressional committees can conduct investigations, summon administration officials, issue subpoenas and examine executive decisions, subject to constitutional and legal limitations.
- **Senate confirmation powers:** The Senate exercises advice-and-consent authority over important presidential appointments, including federal judges, ambassadors and senior executive officials.

Foreign Policy and National Security Constraints:

- **Treaty ratification:** Under Article II, the President negotiates treaties, but their ratification requires the approval of two-thirds of Senators present. However, executive agreements can be concluded without the same Senate ratification process.

- **Sanctions legislation:** Congress can enact binding sanctions laws, impose reporting requirements and restrict presidential waiver authorities, although the President retains significant executive powers in foreign policy.
- **War powers:** Congress possesses constitutional powers relating to declarations of war and military funding, while the President serves as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.
- **Presidential veto:** The President can veto congressional legislation, and Congress requires a two-thirds majority in both chambers to override the veto.

3. Comparison of US and Indian Electoral Systems:

Feature	United States	India
System of Government	Presidential republic with separation of powers between the executive and legislature.	Parliamentary democracy with a fusion of executive and legislative powers.
Head of State and Government	The President serves as both Head of State and Head of Government.	The President is the constitutional Head of State, while the Prime Minister is the Head of Government.
Midterm Elections	Congressional elections occur every two years, including institutionalised midterm elections.	No fixed midterm election cycle; early Lok Sabha elections may occur following premature dissolution.
Lower House	House of Representatives has 435 voting seats, with two-year terms.	Lok Sabha has 543 elected seats, with a normal five-year term.
Upper House	Senate has 100 members, with two representatives from each state and six-year terms.	Rajya Sabha has a maximum strength of 250 members, including nominated members, with a normal elected strength of 233 and six-year terms.
Voting System	Predominantly First-Past-The-Post (FPTP), with some jurisdictions using ranked-choice voting.	First-Past-The-Post system for direct elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
Upper House Representation	Equal representation of all states, irrespective of population.	Representation of states broadly according to population, with 12 nominated members.
Election Management	Decentralised administration through state and local election authorities under federal and state laws.	Election Commission of India independently supervises elections under Article 324 of the Constitution.

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Key Constitutional Differences:

- **Executive accountability:** The US President is not dependent on legislative confidence for continuation in office, whereas India's Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha under Article 75(3).
- **Tenure and dissolution:** The US Congress follows fixed constitutional terms, whereas the Lok Sabha can be dissolved before completing its normal tenure.
- **Upper House continuity:** The US Senate is a continuing chamber, with approximately one-third of its members retiring every two years. The Rajya Sabha is also a permanent House, with one-third of its members retiring every two years.

4. Implications of the 2026 Results for India:

India-US Trade and Tariff Relations:

- Democratic control of Congress may increase scrutiny of the Trump administration's tariff policies, creating opportunities for greater transparency and predictability in bilateral trade negotiations.

- The India-US **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)** negotiations have faced difficulties over agricultural market access, tariffs, regulatory barriers and India's imports of Russian oil.
- A February 2026 interim trade framework established a basis for negotiations, but the agreement remained unfinished amid differences between the two countries.
- However, congressional control does not automatically remove existing tariffs because the President retains significant authority under US trade legislation.

Energy Security and Persian Gulf Stability:

- Congressional scrutiny of military expenditure and foreign military engagements may increase pressure on the administration to justify its involvement in the Iran conflict.
- Any reduction in hostilities around the **Strait of Hormuz** would benefit India's energy security by protecting crude oil, liquefied natural gas and fertiliser shipments.
- India also has interests in protecting Indian seafarers, maritime trade routes and the stability of the wider Persian Gulf region.

Russian Oil and Secondary Sanctions:

- The **Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, 2026** provides a legislative framework for additional sanctions and duties relating to Russian and Iranian economic activities.
- The President retains statutory waiver powers under the legislation, subject to prescribed reporting and certification requirements.
- India must continue diplomatic engagement with both political parties in Washington to protect its energy interests and minimise the possibility of punitive trade measures arising from its Russian oil imports.

Immigration and Indian Diaspora:

- Greater congressional oversight may create opportunities for debate on immigration policies, skilled-worker mobility and the economic contribution of immigrant communities.
- Indian professionals and the Indian-American diaspora have significant interests in policies concerning specialised employment visas, family-based immigration and anti-immigrant measures.
- However, Democratic control does not automatically reverse restrictive immigration policies because the executive retains substantial authority over immigration enforcement.

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Strategic and Defence Cooperation:

- India-US cooperation in defence technology, maritime security, intelligence sharing and the Indo-Pacific remains supported by broader strategic interests.
- Congressional oversight may influence defence appropriations, arms transfers and the implementation of bilateral strategic initiatives.
- India should maintain bipartisan engagement with American lawmakers to ensure continuity in defence and technology partnerships despite changes in domestic political control.

5. Way Forward for India:

- **Bipartisan diplomatic engagement:** Strengthen engagement with both Democratic and Republican lawmakers, congressional committees and influential policy institutions rather than relying exclusively on executive-level relationships.
- **Trade diversification:** Accelerate negotiations on mutually beneficial trade arrangements while diversifying export markets and reducing excessive dependence on any single trading partner.

- **Energy security:** Diversify crude oil and gas suppliers, strengthen strategic petroleum reserves and protect maritime supply chains against geopolitical disruptions.
- **Strategic autonomy:** Maintain independent foreign policy decisions while expanding cooperation with the United States on shared strategic and economic interests.
- **Diaspora protection:** Engage with congressional representatives to safeguard the interests of Indian professionals, students and the wider Indian-American community.
- **Institutional partnerships:** Strengthen cooperation in defence manufacturing, critical technologies, semiconductors, artificial intelligence and resilient supply chains.

Conclusion:

- The 2026 US midterm elections have strengthened institutional checks on the American executive by transferring control of both congressional chambers to the Democratic Party.
- For India, the outcome creates opportunities for greater scrutiny of US trade, sanctions and foreign policy decisions, but it does not guarantee an immediate change in the Trump administration's policy direction.
- India's response should focus on **bipartisan diplomacy, strategic autonomy, economic diversification and institutional cooperation** to maintain a stable and mutually beneficial India-US partnership.

Value Addition for UPSC:

- **GS Paper II:** India-US bilateral relations, international institutions, diaspora, foreign policy and changing global power equations.
- **GS Paper III:** Energy security, international trade, tariffs, defence technology and supply-chain resilience.
- **Important Constitutional Provisions:** US Constitution Article I (legislative powers and revenue bills), Article II (presidential powers and treaty-making), India's Article 75(3) (collective responsibility of the Council of Ministers) and Article 324 (Election Commission of India).
- **Important Concepts:** Midterm elections, divided government, separation of powers, checks and balances, power of the purse, executive agreements and secondary sanctions.
- **Important Strategic Frameworks:** Indo-Pacific strategy, India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, defence cooperation and critical and emerging technology cooperation.
- **Mains-ready Argument:** Changes in the political composition of foreign legislatures can influence bilateral relations through institutional oversight, budgetary control and legislative scrutiny, making sustained bipartisan diplomacy essential for protecting India's long-term strategic interests.

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VISTAR Scheme Seeks to Modernise India's Statistical System Through Digitalisation, AI and Decentralised Data Generation

Recent Developments:

- On **4 November 2026**, the Union Cabinet approved the **Viksit Bharat Initiative for Statistical Transformation, Analytics & Research (VISTAR)** as a Central Sector Scheme for **FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31**.
- The scheme has a total financial outlay of **₹4,371.10 crore** and aims to modernise India's official statistical architecture through digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), data harmonisation and improved statistical capacity across States and Union Territories.

- MoSPI proposes conducting **59 surveys during the 16th Finance Commission cycle**, compared with 43 major surveys conducted previously. The scheme also provides for the **8th Economic Census** and the development of more granular district-level and city-level statistics.

1. Understanding the VISTAR Scheme:

- **VISTAR** is designed to establish a dynamic, real-time and future-ready official statistical system capable of generating timely, reliable, detailed and interoperable datasets for evidence-based policymaking.
- The scheme encompasses the statistical and data-management activities of the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** and aligns with the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.
- Its major objectives include:
    - Improving the **timeliness, accuracy and granularity** of official statistics, particularly at district and local levels.
    - Integrating digital technologies, AI and ML into statistical operations, including data processing, validation and analysis.
    - Improving **interoperability and harmonisation** so that datasets generated by different institutions can be used together.
    - Strengthening methodological research, national data governance and the capacity of State statistical systems.
    - Supporting more responsive policy decisions through improved data availability and targeted statistical interventions.

2. Major Components of the VISTAR Scheme:

A. Comprehensive Statistical Operations and Strengthening of Ecosystem:

- **Expansion of national surveys:** MoSPI proposes conducting 59 surveys during the 16th Finance Commission cycle, compared with 43 major surveys conducted previously, to address critical data gaps across sectors.
- **Digital transformation:** The component emphasises end-to-end digitalisation of statistical processes and the integration of AI and ML into regular workflows, primarily for data processing, validation and analysis.
- **Development of new economic indicators:** MoSPI plans to introduce:
    - **Headline Index of Services Production:** A proposed indicator to measure changes in the output of the services sector.
    - **Index of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises:** A proposed measure to improve the assessment of economic activity in the unincorporated sector.
- **Data harmonisation and interoperability:** The scheme will promote data cataloguing, machine readability, common sharing protocols, interoperability and privacy-by-design principles to reduce data silos and duplication across government institutions.
- **Use of alternative data sources:** Mobile-phone data, retail scanner information and e-commerce data will complement conventional surveys, help fill statistical gaps and reduce the burden on survey respondents.
- **Research and capacity building:** The initiative also envisages student internships and research proposals from academic and research institutions to strengthen statistical research and develop skilled human resources.

B. Support for Statistical Strengthening (SSS):

- **Financial assistance to States and UTs:** The Centre will provide funds to State and Union Territory Governments under a redesigned, deliverable-linked framework known as **SSS 2.0**.

- **Strengthening decentralised statistical capacity:** The component seeks to improve the ability of States to generate high-quality, disaggregated data at district and other sub-State levels, develop indigenous data-processing capabilities and integrate statistical evidence into local policymaking.
- **Expansion of sub-State estimates:** MoSPI will provide technical support to generate district-level estimates and estimates for cities with populations of **one million or more** through major national surveys.
- **Important surveys covered:**
    - **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS):** Provides information on employment, unemployment and labour-force participation.
    - **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES):** Generates information on household consumption patterns and expenditure.
    - **Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE):** Collects information on the economic and operational characteristics of unincorporated non-agricultural establishments in manufacturing, trade and services, excluding construction.
- **Improved sub-State economic measurement:** The component will support the compilation of **State and District Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** estimates and State-level **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**.

C. Economic Census:

- **8th Economic Census:** MoSPI will conduct the 8th Economic Census in collaboration with State and Union Territory Governments.
- **Coverage:** It will collect detailed information on non-farm establishments, their economic activities and the workers employed by them, extending data coverage up to the **Gram Panchayat and municipal ward levels**.
- **Assessment of the unorganised sector:** The census will provide a more comprehensive picture of the geographical distribution, nature and employment characteristics of non-farm economic establishments.
- **National Statistical Business Register (NSBR):** Economic Census data will serve as the baseline for developing a National Statistical Business Register, which can facilitate targeted enterprise surveys and evidence-based policy interventions.
- **GDP estimation:** Improved information on establishments and their activities will help assess the contribution of the unorganised sector to national and sub-national GDP.

3. Significance of the VISTAR Scheme:

- **Evidence-based governance:** Reliable and timely statistics enable governments to identify development gaps, assess programme outcomes and allocate public resources according to measurable needs.
- **Inclusive and decentralised planning:** District-level and city-level estimates can help identify regional disparities that may remain concealed in national or State averages, improving the targeting of welfare and development interventions.
- **Better measurement of employment and consumption:** Expanded PLFS, HCES and ASUSE estimates can strengthen the evidence base for employment policy, poverty assessment, consumption analysis and social-sector planning.
- **Formalisation and understanding of the economy:** Better coverage of non-farm establishments can improve understanding of the unorganised sector, which plays an important role in employment generation and economic activity.
- **Improved economic forecasting:** New services-sector and unincorporated-enterprise indicators can help policymakers monitor economic trends beyond conventional industrial and agricultural indicators.
- **Administrative efficiency:** Interoperable datasets and digital statistical processes can reduce duplication, improve data-sharing and support faster policy responses.
- **Research and innovation:** Collaboration with academic institutions and researchers can strengthen statistical methodologies and encourage the development of indigenous analytical capabilities.

4. Challenges and Way Forward:

- **Data quality and representativeness:** Alternative data sources may contain selection bias, uneven coverage and measurement errors; therefore, they must be validated and used alongside scientifically designed surveys.
- **Privacy and data protection:** The integration of mobile, scanner and e-commerce data requires robust safeguards, purpose limitation, anonymisation and secure data-sharing protocols.
- **Digital divide:** Differences in technological infrastructure and skilled personnel across States and districts may affect the quality and consistency of statistical outputs.
- **Institutional coordination:** Effective implementation requires coordination among MoSPI, State statistical departments, local governments, survey agencies and other data-generating institutions.
- **Methodological consistency:** Common definitions, classifications, sampling standards and estimation methods are necessary to ensure comparability across States, districts and different time periods.
- **AI accountability:** AI-driven statistical processes must remain transparent, auditable and subject to human oversight to prevent algorithmic errors from influencing official estimates.
- **Outcome-based implementation:** Deliverable-linked financial assistance should be accompanied by measurable indicators relating to data quality, publication timelines, geographical coverage and institutional capacity.

5. Conclusion:

- VISTAR represents an important step towards building a **modern, integrated and decentralised official statistical system** in India. Its success will depend not merely on increasing the volume of data but on ensuring its accuracy, comparability, accessibility, privacy and practical use in public policy. A robust statistical ecosystem can strengthen democratic accountability, improve public-service delivery and support the evidence-based planning required for **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions, transparency and accountability, institutional capacity and evidence-based governance.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian economy, employment, economic growth, industrial production, unorganised sector and application of technology in governance.
- **Important institutions:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), National Statistical Office (NSO) and State Directorates of Economics and Statistics.
- **Important statistical concepts:** Data granularity, interoperability, data harmonisation, administrative data, alternative data sources, statistical bias and evidence-based policymaking.
- **Relevant Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).
- **Mains-ready argument:** "Reliable statistics are the foundation of effective governance because the quality of public policy depends on the quality, timeliness and representativeness of the data used to formulate and evaluate it."

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Agnipath Scheme Revised to Offer Additional Service and a Further Pathway to Regular Enrolment for Agniveers

Recent Developments:

- On **4 November 2026**, the Union Cabinet approved a major revision to the **Agnipath Scheme**, allowing the 75% of Agniveers who are not selected for regular service after their initial four-year engagement to undertake an additional **two-year engagement period**.
- The existing provision of selecting **25% of Agniveers on merit** for regular employment after four years will continue. The remaining 75% will be offered the additional engagement, subject to their willingness.
- After completing six years of service, these Agniveers will be offered an opportunity for enrolment as regular soldiers, subject to their willingness and fulfilment of prescribed selection criteria.
- The extended engagement will provide **higher remuneration, an enhanced Seva Nidhi package and seniority benefits**. The reform follows a four-year assessment of Agniveers by the three Armed Services.

1. Understanding the Agnipath Scheme:

About the Agnipath Scheme:

- The **Agnipath Scheme** was introduced on **14 June 2022** as a short-term recruitment policy for the **Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force**. It is also commonly referred to as the **Tour of Duty Scheme**.
- Under the scheme, eligible Indian youth are recruited as **Agniveers** for an initial engagement period of four years, including training.
- The scheme applies to personnel below officer rank, with recruitment conducted under the respective service laws and regulations.
- **Age Limit:** Candidates between **17.5 and 21 years** are eligible under the original scheme.
- **Recruitment and retention:** After completing four years, the original framework provided for the selection of up to **25% of each batch** for regular military service, based on merit and organisational requirements. The remaining 75% were to be released from service.

Pay, Allowances and Other Benefits:

- Agniveers receive a customised monthly package, along with applicable allowances, including risk and hardship allowances wherever admissible.

Year of Service	Monthly Package	In-hand Amount (70%)	Monthly Contribution to Corpus (30%)
First year	₹30,000	₹21,000	₹9,000
Second year	₹33,000	₹23,100	₹9,900
Third year	₹36,500	₹25,580	₹10,950
Fourth year	₹40,000	₹28,000	₹12,000

- **Agniveer Corpus Fund:** Agniveers contribute 30% of their monthly customised package to the corpus fund, and the Government of India makes an equivalent contribution.
- **Seva Nidhi Package:** On completion of the original four-year engagement, an Agniveer receives the accumulated corpus, comprising personal and government contributions and applicable interest. The indicative amount is approximately **₹11.71 lakh**, including interest, and is exempt from income tax.
- **Life Insurance:** Agniveers receive non-contributory life insurance cover of **₹48 lakh** during their engagement period.
- **Social Security:** Under the original arrangement, Agniveers are not entitled to pensionary benefits or gratuity for their four-year engagement. They are also not covered by the Army Group Insurance Fund benefits applicable to regular personnel.

Objectives of the Scheme:

- To provide Indian youth with an opportunity to serve in the Armed Forces for a limited period.
- To create a **younger, fitter and technologically equipped military workforce** capable of responding to emerging security challenges.
- To reduce the average age profile of the Armed Forces and improve their operational preparedness.
- To develop disciplined, skilled and motivated young individuals who can contribute to the civilian workforce after their military engagement.

2. Major Changes in the Revised Agnipath Framework:

First Stage: Selection After Four Years:

- The existing provision of selecting the **top 25% of Agniveers** for regular employment after their initial four-year engagement will continue.
- Selection will be based on merit, individual performance and the manpower requirements of the respective Armed Services.

Second Stage: Additional Two-Year Engagement:

- The remaining **75% of Agniveers** will be offered an additional two-year engagement period, subject to their willingness.
- This will extend their total period of engagement from four to **six years**.
- The extended engagement will carry higher remuneration, an enhanced Seva Nidhi package and seniority-related benefits.
- After completing the additional two years, Agniveers will be offered an opportunity to join the regular cadre, subject to their willingness and fulfilment of prescribed selection criteria.
- The revised arrangement therefore creates a potential pathway to regular military service for all Agniveers, although regular enrolment is conditional rather than automatic.

3. Selection Criteria for Regular Enrolment:

- Regular enrolment after the additional engagement period will depend on objective performance assessments and the organisational requirements of the Armed Services.
- The selection process will consider the following parameters:
    - **Physical Fitness:** Ability to meet the prescribed physical and medical standards required for military service.
    - **Adaptability:** Ability to adjust to military responsibilities, operational conditions and changing security requirements.
    - **Discipline:** Maintenance of military discipline, professional conduct and standards of service.
    - **Performance:** Overall performance, military skills and effectiveness during the engagement period.
    - **Vigilance Record:** Absence of vigilance-related cases and maintenance of integrity.
    - **Organisational Requirements:** Availability of vacancies, manpower requirements and operational needs of the respective Services.
- Chief of Defence Staff **General N. S. Raja Subramani** stated that the three Services maintained a centralised database to monitor Agniveers' performance, with annual performance reviews forming part of the assessment process.
- The detailed selection criteria will be applied to determine eligibility for regular enrolment after the extended engagement.

4. Government's Rationale Behind the Reform:

- The decision follows a detailed four-year assessment of the Agnipath Scheme by the three Armed Services, incorporating performance evaluations, operational requirements and organisational feedback.
- According to the Ministry of Defence, Agniveers have demonstrated positive performance in:
  - **Physical Fitness and Preparedness:** High levels of physical fitness, military readiness and discipline.
  - **Motivation and Morale:** Strong motivation, morale and competitive spirit during service.
  - **Technological Proficiency:** Improved technical skills and adaptability to modern military technologies.
  - **Skills and Education:** Enhancement of professional skills and educational qualifications during service.
- The government also highlighted the wider geographical coverage of recruitment, a more standardised and transparent selection process, and the opening of several branches of the Armed Forces to women.
- The revised framework seeks to balance two objectives: maintaining a **young military profile** while retaining trained personnel with valuable operational experience.
- The additional engagement period is intended to align the aspirations of Agniveers with the operational requirements and organisational efficiency of the Armed Forces.

5. Implications for the Armed Forces:

Retention of Experienced Personnel:

- The original four-year exit provision limited the period for which trained Agniveers could serve before leaving the Armed Forces.
- The additional two years will enable the Services to retain trained personnel for a longer period, improve continuity and make better use of the resources invested in their training.

Maintaining a Younger Military Profile:

- The initial four-year engagement under the Agnipath Scheme remains unchanged, and the scheme itself has not been withdrawn.
- The revised arrangement provides greater flexibility in manpower management while retaining the objective of maintaining a younger military workforce.

Competitive Performance and Merit-Based Selection:

- The possibility of regular enrolment after six years is expected to encourage Agniveers to maintain high standards of physical fitness, discipline, military skills and professional performance.
- The two-stage selection process will allow the Armed Forces to assess personnel over a longer period before making regular enrolment decisions.

Career Continuity and Organisational Efficiency:

- The extension provides an additional period of military employment and a further opportunity to enter the regular cadre.
- Agniveers who are not eventually enrolled in regular service will leave after the extended engagement with an enhanced Seva Nidhi package and the benefits prescribed under the revised framework.
- The arrangement may improve personnel continuity, reduce the loss of trained manpower and strengthen the experience base of military units.

6. Challenges and Way Forward:

- **Military Manpower Planning:** The Armed Forces must balance the retention of experienced personnel with the objective of maintaining a young age profile and appropriate rank structures.
- **Transparent Selection:** Clearly defined performance standards, medical requirements and selection procedures are essential to ensure fairness and minimise grievances.
- **Training and Resource Allocation:** Retaining a larger proportion of Agniveers for six years will require adjustments in training, accommodation, equipment and administrative expenditure.
- **Career Security:** Agniveers who do not enter regular service after six years will still require effective transition support, recognised skill certification and access to civilian employment opportunities.
- **Seniority and Promotion:** Clear rules regarding seniority, promotion prospects and service conditions are necessary to maintain cohesion between personnel entering the regular cadre at different stages.
- **Operational Effectiveness:** The revised framework should be periodically evaluated against measurable indicators such as combat readiness, retention of trained personnel, unit cohesion and long-term manpower requirements.
- **Institutional Review:** Regular assessments involving the three Services, the Ministry of Defence and relevant stakeholders can help identify implementation gaps and ensure that the revised framework remains responsive to changing security requirements.

7. Conclusion:

- The revision of the Agnipath Scheme represents a significant adjustment in India's military recruitment and manpower management policy. By introducing an additional two-year engagement and a further pathway to regular enrolment, the government seeks to combine a youthful military profile with the retention of trained and experienced personnel. Its success will depend on transparent selection, effective career-transition support and the ability to maintain operational readiness, organisational cohesion and long-term human resource efficiency.

Value Addition for UPSC:

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions, institutional accountability, public administration and transparency in selection procedures.
- **GS Paper III:** Internal security, defence preparedness, modernisation of the Armed Forces, human resource management and technological advancement in defence.
- **Important Constitutional Provision: Article 33** empowers Parliament to restrict or abrogate the fundamental rights of members of the Armed Forces and other specified services to ensure the proper discharge of their duties and maintenance of discipline.
- **Important Institutions:** Ministry of Defence, Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and Chief of Defence Staff.
- **Important Concepts:** Military manpower management, combat readiness, force modernisation, merit-based recruitment, military-civilian transition and organisational efficiency.
- **Relevant Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).
- **Mains-ready Argument:** "Defence recruitment policy must balance the need for a young and technologically capable military with institutional experience, career predictability and operational continuity. The revised Agnipath framework seeks to address this balance through a longer engagement period and a conditional pathway to regular service."

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QUESTIONS

1. With reference to India's employment landscape as highlighted in the India Employment Report 2024 and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data, consider the following statements:

(1) Self-employment constitutes the majority share of total employment in India.

(2) An increase in the proportion of unpaid family helpers reflects a positive structural shift towards formalization.

(3) Over 90% of India's workforce continues to be engaged in informal employment.

(4) Regular wage or salaried employment accounts for more than half of the total working population in India.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(A) 1 and 3 only

(B) 2 and 4 only

(C) 1, 2 and 3 only

(D) 1, 3 and 4 only

2. With reference to the biochemical and physiological barriers affecting non-haem iron absorption from Double-Fortified Salt (DFS), consider the following statements:

(1) High concentrations of dietary phytates in cereals and polyphenols in tea/coffee inhibit non-haem iron absorption.

(2) Systemic inflammation and chronic infections trigger an increase in hepcidin production, which restricts intestinal iron absorption.

(3) Simultaneous consumption of calcium-rich foods enhances the bioavailability of non-haem iron in the human gut.

(4) Hepcidin facilitates the accelerated release of stored iron from macrophages into the bloodstream during systemic infections.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(A) 2 and 3 only

(B) 1, 2 and 4 only

(C) 1 and 2 only

(D) 1, 3 and 4 only

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3. With reference to the comparative structural dynamics of the US Senate and the Indian Rajya Sabha, consider the following statements:

(1) Both the US Senate and the Indian Rajya Sabha are permanent continuing chambers not subject to complete dissolution.

(2) Members of both the US Senate and the Indian Rajya Sabha serve fixed terms of six years with one-third of members retiring every two years.

(3) Both chambers allocate seats to constituent states strictly in direct proportion to state population sizes.

(4) The US Senate exercises exclusive advice-and-consent powers over executive appointments, whereas the Rajya Sabha possesses no such constitutional veto over union executive appointments.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(A) 1 and 3 only

(B) 1, 2 and 4 only

(C) 2 and 4 only

(D) 1, 2, 3 and 4

4. Given below are two statements, one labeled as Assertion (A) and the other as Reason (R):

Assertion (A): Direct integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms into official statistical processing without human oversight can undermine public trust in official national estimates.

Reason (R): AI models can introduce algorithmic bias and un-auditable opacity if machine learning models lack transparency and interpretability standards.

Select the correct answer:

(A) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.

(B) Both A and R are true, but R is NOT the correct explanation of A.

(C) A is true, but R is false.

(D) A is false, but R is true.

5. With reference to the revised Agnipath framework approved for the Indian Armed Forces, consider the following statements:

(1) The initial engagement period for all Agniveers entering the scheme remains four years, inclusive of the initial training duration.

(2) The selection of the top 25% of Agniveers for regular cadre absorption after four years is automatic based on completing the initial tenure without disciplinary infractions.

(3) The remaining 75% of Agniveers who complete their four-year tenure are offered an additional two-year engagement, subject to personal willingness and service requirements.

(4) Completion of the extended six-year engagement grants Agniveers a mandatory right to absorption into the regular military cadre.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(A) 2 and 4 only

(B) 1, 2 and 3 only

(C) 1, 3 and 4 only

(D) 1 and 3 only

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ANSWER KEY

1 – Answer (A), 2 – Answer (C), 3 – Answer (B), 4 – Answer (A), 5 – Answer (D)

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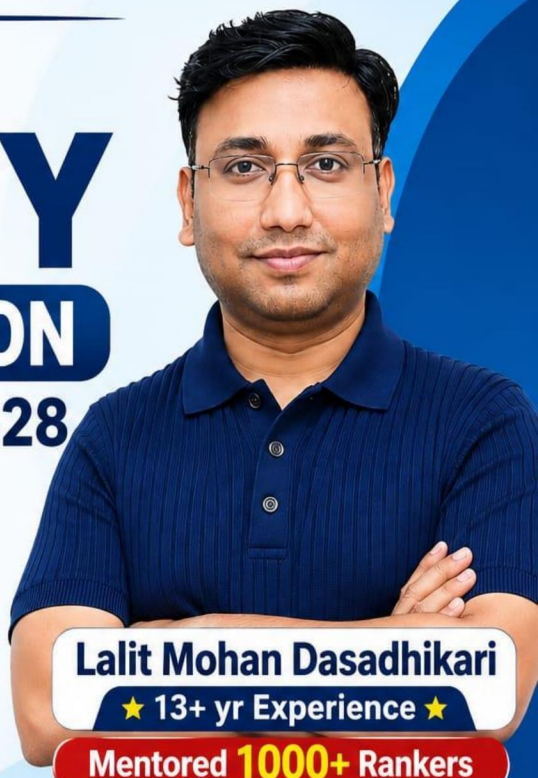
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