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IMPORTANT INSIGHTS

Glaw Lake Becomes India's 101st Ramsar Site, Strengthening Wetland Conservation and International Ecological Commitments

Recent Developments:

- **Glaw Lake in Arunachal Pradesh** has been designated as **India's 101st Ramsar Site**, becoming the **first Wetland of International Importance** in the state under the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**.
- The addition has increased India's **Ramsar Site network** from **26 sites in 2014** to **101 sites in 2026**, reflecting the country's growing commitment towards **wetland conservation, biodiversity protection, and climate resilience**.

About Glaw Lake:

Location:

- **Glaw Lake** is a **pristine freshwater lake** situated inside the **Kamlang Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary** in **Lohit district, Arunachal Pradesh**, within the **Eastern Himalayas**.
- The lake forms part of a **high-altitude Himalayan wetland ecosystem** that supports diverse flora and fauna.

Physical Features:

- The lake is **fed by perennial mountain streams**, ensuring year-round freshwater availability.
- Dense natural forests surrounding the lake help maintain its **hydrological balance, water quality, and ecological integrity**.
- The catchment area remains largely undisturbed, enhancing the lake's conservation value.

Biodiversity:

- The wetland and its catchment support **more than 150 tree species** and **49 orchid species**, making it an important **biodiversity hotspot**.
- The ecosystem provides habitat for numerous **birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, insects, and other Himalayan wildlife**.
- The lake contributes to the ecological connectivity of the **Kamlang Tiger Reserve landscape**.

Significance:

- The Ramsar designation will strengthen **wetland conservation, scientific management, and international recognition**.
- The lake will contribute to **biodiversity conservation, water security, carbon sequestration, climate change adaptation, and disaster resilience**.
- The recognition is expected to support **community-based conservation, sustainable livelihoods, ecotourism, and improved wetland governance**.

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands:

Introduction:

- The **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is the world's first global treaty dedicated exclusively to the **conservation and wise use of wetlands**.
- The Convention was **adopted on 2 February 1971** at **Ramsar, Iran**, and entered into force on **21 December 1975**.
- **India became a Contracting Party on 1 February 1982**.
- The **Ramsar Secretariat** is located at **Gland, Switzerland**, and is hosted by the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**.

Objectives:

- To promote the **conservation, restoration, and wise use** of wetlands.
- To maintain the **ecological character** of wetlands.
- To strengthen **international cooperation**, particularly for **transboundary wetlands** and **migratory species**.
- To integrate wetlands into **national planning, water resource management, and sustainable development**.
- To enhance **public awareness, research, and capacity building** for wetland conservation.

Three Pillars of the Convention:

- **Wise Use of Wetlands:** Promote sustainable management through policies, legislation, scientific planning, and community participation.
- **Designation of Ramsar Sites:** Identify and effectively manage wetlands of international importance.
- **International Cooperation:** Encourage collaboration on shared wetlands, river basins, migratory species, scientific research, and technical assistance.

International Organization Partners (IOPs):

- **BirdLife International**
- **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**
- **International Water Management Institute (IWMI)**
- **Wetlands International**
- **WWF International**

Wetlands:

Definition:

- Wetlands are areas where **water permanently or seasonally covers the land**, creating ecosystems that support specialized plant and animal communities.
- Under the Ramsar Convention, wetlands include both **natural** and **human-made** ecosystems.

Types of Wetlands Covered under Ramsar:

- **Natural Wetlands:** Lakes, rivers, marshes, swamps, peatlands, floodplains, estuaries, deltas, mangroves, coral reefs, lagoons, mudflats, underground aquifers, oases.

- **Human-made Wetlands:** Reservoirs, rice fields, fish ponds, salt pans, irrigation canals, wastewater treatment ponds.

Importance of Wetlands:

- Wetlands conserve **biodiversity** by providing habitat for numerous species.
- Wetlands regulate the **hydrological cycle** through groundwater recharge, water storage, and flood moderation.
- Wetlands improve **water quality** by filtering sediments, nutrients, and pollutants.
- Wetlands function as major **carbon sinks**, contributing to **climate change mitigation**.
- Wetlands support **food security, fisheries, agriculture, ecotourism, and livelihoods**.
- Wetlands reduce the impacts of **floods, droughts, and coastal storms**, improving climate resilience.

Major Threats:

- Urbanization and infrastructure expansion.
- Agricultural encroachment and land-use change.
- Pollution from industrial, domestic, and agricultural sources.
- Invasive alien species.
- Overexploitation of natural resources.
- Climate change, altered hydrological regimes, and habitat fragmentation.

Ramsar Site Selection Criteria:

Ecological Criteria:

- The wetland represents a **rare, unique, or representative** wetland type.
- The wetland supports **threatened, endangered, or critically endangered** species.
- The wetland maintains important **ecological communities**.

Species-based Criteria:

- The wetland supports significant populations of **waterbirds**.
- The wetland provides habitat during **breeding, migration, wintering**, or other critical life-cycle stages.
- The wetland plays an important role in sustaining **fish diversity, spawning grounds, and aquatic food webs**.

Ramsar Sites in India:

Current Status:

- India currently has **101 Ramsar Sites**, the **highest number in Asia**.
- Ramsar Sites are distributed across diverse ecosystems, including **high-altitude lakes, floodplain wetlands, coastal lagoons, mangroves, reservoirs, and bird sanctuaries**.

Importance for India:

- Ramsar recognition improves **international visibility** of important wetlands.
- It encourages **scientific monitoring, integrated management, and community participation**.

- It strengthens India's commitments under the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, and **climate action frameworks**.

Montreux Record:

Overview:

- The **Montreux Record** is a register of Ramsar Sites where the **ecological character has changed**, is changing, or is likely to change because of human activities or other threats.
- The Record helps prioritize **technical assistance, monitoring, and restoration efforts**.

Indian Ramsar Sites in the Montreux Record:

- **Keoladeo National Park**, Rajasthan.
- **Loktak Lake**, Manipur.

Related Government Initiatives:

National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA):

- NPCA is the central umbrella programme for the conservation and integrated management of **lakes and wetlands**.

Amrit Dharohar Scheme:

- The scheme promotes **community participation, nature-based livelihoods, ecotourism, and conservation of Ramsar Sites** while enhancing local income generation.

Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017:

- The Rules provide the legal framework for **identification, notification, protection, and sustainable management** of wetlands in India.

National Wetland Inventory and Assessment (NWIA):

- Conducted by **ISRO**, the programme maps and monitors wetlands using **remote sensing and GIS technologies**.

Challenges in Wetland Conservation:

Ecological Challenges:

- Habitat degradation and biodiversity loss.
- Hydrological alterations caused by dams and diversions.
- Sedimentation, eutrophication, and pollution.

Governance Challenges:

- Weak enforcement of environmental regulations.

- Fragmented institutional coordination.
- Limited ecological monitoring and scientific data.
- Conflicts between development priorities and conservation needs.

Way Forward:

Integrated Conservation Strategy:

- Strengthen **catchment area management** and **ecosystem-based conservation**.
- Enhance **community-led wetland governance** and livelihood diversification.
- Promote **scientific monitoring, remote sensing, and early warning systems**.
- Improve **inter-state and international cooperation** for transboundary wetland management.
- Integrate wetlands into **climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and river basin planning**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Facts:

- **World Wetlands Day: 2 February** (marks the adoption of the Ramsar Convention in 1971).
- **Convention Adopted: 2 February 1971**, Ramsar, Iran.
- **Convention Entered into Force: 21 December 1975**.
- **India Joined: 1 February 1982**.
- **Ramsar Secretariat: Gland, Switzerland**.
- **India's Ramsar Sites (2026): 101, the highest in Asia**.
- **First Ramsar Site of Arunachal Pradesh: Glaw Lake**.

Critical Minerals Emerge as Strategic Resources Driving Energy Security, Industrial Competitiveness and National Economic Sovereignty

Recent Developments:

- **Critical Minerals** have emerged as a major strategic concern amid intensifying global competition over mineral supply chains, with countries prioritising **resource security, processing capacity, and resilient value chains**.
- The **International Energy Agency (IEA)** in its **Global Critical Minerals Outlook 2026** highlighted rising **supply concentration, declining investments, and export restrictions**, increasing global vulnerabilities in mineral supply chains.
- **China's** tightening control over **Rare Earth Elements (REEs)** and export licensing measures has accelerated efforts by major economies to diversify mineral sourcing and reduce strategic dependence.
- Against this backdrop, **India** is accelerating implementation of the **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)**, strengthening overseas acquisitions, expanding domestic processing, and deepening strategic partnerships to secure critical mineral supplies.

Summary:

- **Critical Minerals** have become the foundation of the **clean energy transition**, **advanced manufacturing**, **digital technologies**, and **national security**, making them central to geopolitical competition.
- India is adopting a comprehensive **Mine-to-Market Strategy** through **domestic exploration**, **international partnerships**, **processing infrastructure**, **recycling**, and **strategic stockpiling** to achieve **Net Zero** and **Viksit Bharat 2047** objectives.

What are Critical Minerals?

Meaning and Characteristics:

- **Critical Minerals** are **non-fuel metallic** or **non-metallic minerals** that are indispensable for modern technologies, industrial production, and strategic sectors.
- There is **no universally accepted definition** of Critical Minerals, as every country identifies them based on **economic importance**, **supply risk**, **import dependence**, and **availability of substitutes**.
- They are termed **critical** because any disruption in their supply can significantly affect a country's **economic growth**, **industrial production**, **energy transition**, **technological leadership**, and **national security**.

Critical Minerals Identified by India:

- The **Ministry of Mines** has identified **30 Critical Minerals** for India through an Expert Committee.
- Major minerals include **Lithium**, **Cobalt**, **Nickel**, **Copper**, **Graphite**, **Rare Earth Elements (REEs)**, **Molybdenum**, **Niobium**, **Vanadium**, **Titanium**, **Tin**, **Tungsten**, and **Silicon**.

Strategic Importance of Critical Minerals:

Foundation of Clean Energy Transition:

- **Critical Minerals** constitute the backbone of **Electric Vehicles (EVs)**, **Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)**, **Solar Power**, **Wind Energy**, **Green Hydrogen**, and modern electricity grids.
- The transition towards **low-carbon economies** under the **Paris Agreement (2015)** and national **Net Zero** commitments has substantially increased global demand for these minerals.

Role in Renewable Energy Technologies:

- **Lithium**, **Nickel**, **Cobalt**, and **Graphite** are essential for manufacturing **Lithium-ion Batteries** used in EVs and grid-scale energy storage.
- **Silicon**, **Tellurium**, **Gallium**, and **Indium** are widely used in **Photovoltaic (Solar) Cells**.
- **Neodymium** and **Dysprosium** are indispensable for **Permanent Magnets** used in high-efficiency **Wind Turbines** and electric motors.
- **Copper** remains the most important conductor for **electricity transmission**, renewable energy infrastructure, and charging networks.

Supporting India's Energy Transition:

- **NITI Aayog** estimates that India's cumulative requirement of **Critical Energy Transition Minerals (CETMs)** could reach nearly **169 million tonnes** by **2070**, around **51%** higher than the Current Policy Scenario.

- Availability of these minerals will determine the pace of India's **renewable energy expansion, electric mobility, and energy security**.

Driving Emerging Technologies:

- Critical Minerals are indispensable for **Semiconductors, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum Computing, Advanced Electronics, Telecommunications, Space Technologies, and Robotics**.
- They support manufacturing of **high-performance chips, data centres, 5G infrastructure, and next-generation electronic devices**.

National Security and Defence:

- Modern defence systems require specialised alloys and rare earth magnets for **fighter aircraft, missiles, radars, satellites, precision-guided weapons, and electronic warfare systems**.
- Secure mineral supplies are therefore essential for **strategic autonomy, defence preparedness, and technological sovereignty**.

Economic and Industrial Importance:

- Critical Minerals strengthen **manufacturing competitiveness, industrial diversification, high-value exports, and global supply chain integration**.
- Reliable mineral supplies reduce external vulnerabilities while supporting **Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, and advanced manufacturing ecosystems**.

Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- Critical Minerals directly support:
 - **SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy.**
 - **SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.**
 - **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production.**
 - **SDG 13 – Climate Action.**
- However, mineral extraction must follow **environmentally sustainable, socially responsible, and resource-efficient** mining practices.

Growing Geopolitical Importance:

- Export restrictions, resource nationalism, trade controls, and concentrated processing capacity have transformed Critical Minerals into strategic geopolitical assets often described as the **"New Oil"** of the clean energy era.
- The **IEA Global Critical Minerals Outlook 2026** notes that mineral security is now central to **energy security, economic security, and industrial resilience**.

Major Critical Minerals and Their Availability in India:

Critical Mineral

Major Reserves / Occurrence in India

Lithium

Karnataka, Jammu & Kashmir

Cobalt & Nickel

Odisha, Jharkhand, generally associated with copper ores

Rare Earth Elements (REEs)

Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Kerala, Gujarat, Rajasthan

Graphite

Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu

Copper

Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand

How Geopolitics is Reshaping Critical Mineral Supply Chains:***Weaponisation of Mineral Supply Chains:***

- Countries possessing dominant control over mining or refining are increasingly using **Critical Minerals** as instruments of **geo-economic influence**.
- China's export licensing requirements for **Rare Earth Elements** highlighted the strategic vulnerability of countries dependent on a few suppliers.

Supply Chain Concentration:

- According to the **IEA Global Critical Minerals Outlook 2026**, refining of many critical minerals remains concentrated in a few countries, increasing risks associated with geopolitical tensions, trade restrictions, and supply disruptions.
- China continues to dominate global refining of **Rare Earth Elements, Graphite, Lithium Chemicals, and Cobalt**, creating significant supply vulnerabilities.

Rise of Friendshoring and Alliance Economy:

- Major economies are shifting towards **Friendshoring**, under which mineral supply chains are developed among trusted strategic partners rather than depending upon a single dominant supplier.
- Initiatives such as the **Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)**, **EU Critical Raw Materials Act**, **US-Australia Compact**, and **Quad Critical Minerals Initiative** reflect this emerging strategy.

Traditional Geopolitical Conflicts Affecting Energy Transition:

- Critical mineral supply chains are increasingly exposed to **maritime chokepoints, regional conflicts, and trade disruptions**.
- The **IEA** noted that disruptions in sulphur supplies and export restrictions increased refining costs, highlighting growing vulnerabilities in global mineral processing.

Shift Towards Supply Chain Diversification:

- Countries are adopting **China+1 Strategies** by expanding domestic mining, investing in overseas mineral assets, promoting recycling, and building diversified supply chains with trusted partners.
- Mineral security is increasingly viewed as a prerequisite for **energy transition, industrial competitiveness, and economic resilience**.
-

Global Approaches to Critical Mineral Security:

Country / Bloc Approach

China

Dominates mining, refining, processing, exports, and uses mineral supply chains as an instrument of geoeconomic influence.

United States

Promotes **Friendshoring**, strategic alliances, domestic processing, overseas investments, and diversified supply chains.

European Union

Focuses on strategic autonomy through domestic extraction, recycling, refining, and reducing dependence on single suppliers.

Australia

Utilises abundant reserves while expanding downstream processing and partnerships with trusted economies.

Japan

Secures overseas mining assets, long-term contracts, strategic stockpiles, and resource diplomacy.

India

Pursues an integrated **Mine-to-Market Strategy** through domestic exploration, overseas acquisitions, value addition, recycling, and resilient international partnerships.

India's Initiatives to Strengthen Critical Mineral Security:

National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM):

- The **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)** was launched in **2025** and is being implemented from **FY 2024–25 to FY 2030–31** to develop the complete **Mine-to-Market Value Chain** for Critical Minerals.
- The Mission focuses on **exploration, mining, beneficiation, processing, recycling, research & development (R&D), human resource development, strategic stockpiling, and global partnerships**, thereby reducing India's long-term import dependence.

MMDR Act Amendment, 2023:

- The **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2023** empowered the **Central Government** to auction **24** of the **30 identified Critical Minerals**, accelerating private participation, exploration, and domestic production.
- The amendment aims to improve **ease of doing business**, attract investment, and strengthen India's mineral security.

International Cooperation:

- India signed the **India–US Critical Minerals and Rare Earths Framework (2026)** to strengthen **secure, trusted, and diversified** Critical Mineral supply chains.
- India is also expanding bilateral cooperation with **Australia, Argentina, Chile, Namibia, Brazil**, and several **African countries** for exploration, mining, processing, and technology transfer.

KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Limited):

- **KABIL** is a joint venture of **National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO)**, **Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL)**, and **Mineral Exploration and Consultancy Limited (MECL)**.
- It secures overseas Critical Mineral assets through **exploration, acquisition, joint ventures, and long-term supply agreements**, thereby reducing India's dependence on imported raw materials.

Pax Silica Initiative (2026):

- India joined the **US-led Pax Silica Initiative** to strengthen trusted supply chains for **Critical Minerals, Semiconductors, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Advanced Manufacturing**.
- The initiative promotes resilient value chains while reducing dependence on highly concentrated suppliers.

Quad Critical Minerals Initiative (2025):

- The **Quad Critical Minerals Initiative** brings together **India, Australia, Japan, and the United States** to build secure and diversified Critical Mineral supply chains.
- The initiative proposes mobilisation of nearly **USD 20 billion** for **mining, processing, recycling, and technology development**.

Rare Earth Corridors:

- The **Union Budget 2026–27** proposed **Rare Earth Corridors** in **Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu** to strengthen domestic **processing, value addition, and downstream manufacturing**.
- These corridors aim to reduce dependence on imported **Rare Earth Magnets** and strengthen indigenous industrial capabilities.

Recycling and Circular Economy:

- India is promoting **urban mining, battery recycling, electronic waste recovery, and resource efficiency** to recover valuable Critical Minerals from end-of-life products.
- Recycling is expected to become a major secondary source of Critical Minerals while reducing environmental impacts.

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Challenges to India's Critical Mineral Security:***High Import Dependence:***

- India remains heavily dependent on imports for several Critical Minerals, making supply chains vulnerable to **geopolitical tensions, trade restrictions, and price volatility**.
- **Lithium** is almost entirely imported, **Cobalt** is largely sourced from the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, **Nickel** mainly from **Indonesia**, while **Rare Earth Magnets** are predominantly imported from **China**.

Limited Domestic Processing Capacity:

- Despite possessing mineral resources, India has limited capacity for **battery-grade lithium chemicals, high-purity graphite, rare earth separation, advanced smelting, and chemical refining**.
- Nearly **70–90%** of global value addition occurs at the processing stage, making domestic capability essential for strategic autonomy.

China's Midstream Dominance:

- China refines more than **90%** of global **Rare Earth Elements** and **Graphite**, around **75%** of **Cobalt**, and nearly **70%** of **Lithium Chemicals**.
- This concentration enables China to exercise significant influence over global Critical Mineral supply chains through export restrictions and processing controls.

Inadequate Exploration:

- Mineral exploration in India remains largely **reconnaissance-based** and relatively shallow, whereas Critical Minerals generally occur in **deep-seated geological formations**.
- Advanced technologies such as **airborne geophysical surveys**, **hyperspectral imaging**, **3D geological modelling**, and **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** require wider adoption.

Environmental and Social Concerns:

- Mining activities may result in **deforestation**, **water pollution**, **land degradation**, **loss of biodiversity**, and **community displacement** if not managed sustainably.
- Balancing **mineral security** with **environmental conservation** and **social justice** remains a major policy challenge.

Investment and Technology Constraints:

- Critical Mineral projects involve **high exploration risks**, **long gestation periods**, **capital-intensive processing facilities**, and **technology-intensive refining**, limiting private sector participation.

Way Forward:***Strengthen Domestic Exploration:***

- Accelerate **deep-seated mineral exploration** through **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, **airborne geophysical surveys**, **hyperspectral mapping**, **3D geological modelling**, and advanced mineral exploration technologies.
- Expand geological surveys under the **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)** while improving accessibility of geological data.

Develop Processing and Refining Ecosystem:

- Establish domestic facilities for **battery-grade lithium**, **nickel**, **cobalt**, and **rare earth refining** through fiscal incentives, **Production Linked Incentive (PLI)** support, and **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**.
- Develop integrated **Mine-to-Market Value Chains** to maximise domestic value addition.

Diversify Overseas Mineral Sources:

- Secure long-term mineral supplies through **KABIL**, strategic investments, and joint ventures in resource-rich countries such as **Australia**, **Argentina**, **Chile**, **Namibia**, and African nations.
- Reduce dependence on any single supplier by expanding diversified sourcing strategies.

Promote Circular Economy:

- Scale up **battery recycling, electronic waste management, urban mining, and resource recovery** to reduce primary mineral demand and strengthen supply resilience.
- Encourage research on **substitute materials and resource-efficient technologies**.

Improve Ease of Mining:

- Streamline **environmental and forest clearances**, strengthen risk-sharing mechanisms, improve logistics, and create a stable regulatory environment to attract private investment.
- Strengthen collaboration among **government, industry, research institutions, and international partners**.

Strengthen Strategic Stockpiles and Partnerships:

- Develop national stockpiles of strategically important minerals to manage short-term supply disruptions.
- Expand cooperation through the **Quad, India-US Framework, Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)**, and other trusted international platforms.

Conclusion:

- **Critical Minerals** have become central to the global transition towards **clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and strategic technologies**, making secure supply chains an important component of economic and national security.
- India's long-term mineral security will depend upon successfully integrating **domestic exploration, processing capacity, technology development, international resource partnerships, recycling, and sustainable mining practices**.
- Transitioning from a supplier of **raw ores** to a global hub for **high-value mineral processing, advanced materials, and circular resource management** will strengthen **Atmanirbhar Bharat**, support **Net Zero** commitments, and accelerate the journey towards **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Facts:

- **Ministry Responsible:** Ministry of Mines.
- **Critical Minerals identified by India:** 30.
- **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM):** 2025.
- **Implementation Period:** FY 2024–25 to FY 2030–31.
- **MMDR Amendment:** 2023.
- **KABIL Full Form:** Khanij Bidesh India Limited.
- **Quad Members:** India, Australia, Japan, United States.
- **IEA Outlook 2026:** Highlights increasing **supply concentration, processing dominance, and geopolitical vulnerabilities** in Critical Mineral supply chains.

Prelims Focus:

- **Lithium:** Electric vehicle batteries, energy storage.
- **Cobalt:** Lithium-ion battery cathodes, aerospace alloys.
- **Nickel:** Battery manufacturing, stainless steel.
- **Copper:** Electrical transmission, renewable energy infrastructure.

- **Graphite:** Battery anodes, refractories.
- **Rare Earth Elements (REEs):** Permanent magnets, electronics, defence equipment, wind turbines.

Mains Enrichment:

- **Critical Minerals** are increasingly recognised as the "New Oil" because control over their extraction, processing, and supply chains is becoming as strategically important as control over fossil fuels was during the twentieth century.
- India's strategy must shift from "Mine-to-Export" towards "Mine-to-Market", integrating **exploration, processing, manufacturing, innovation, and recycling** to build resilient and globally competitive Critical Mineral value chains.
- **Sustainable mineral security** should combine **resource efficiency, environmentally responsible mining, community participation, technological innovation, and international cooperation** to ensure long-term economic resilience and strategic autonomy.

Supreme Court Strengthens India's Institutional Response Against Digital Arrest Scams Through Coordinated Banking, Cybercrime and Telecom Reforms

Recent Developments:

- The **Supreme Court** has issued a comprehensive set of directions to the **Union Government, States/UTs, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** and **telecom authorities** to strengthen the institutional response against **Digital Arrest Scams**.
- The Court directed the **RBI** to prepare a uniform **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** for banks to identify **Mule Accounts**, temporarily hold suspicious transactions, strengthen grievance redressal and facilitate restoration of defrauded money.
- The Court also directed all **States and Union Territories** to operationalise the **e-Zero FIR** mechanism and strengthen **State Cyber Crime Coordination Centres** for faster investigation and recovery of cyber fraud losses.

Digital Arrest Scam:

Meaning:

- A **Digital Arrest Scam** is a sophisticated **cyber-enabled financial fraud** in which fraudsters impersonate officials of agencies such as the **Police, Central Bureau of Investigation, Enforcement Directorate, Customs Department** or other government authorities to extort money from victims.
- The fraud exploits **fear, psychological pressure, identity theft, forged official documents** and **real-time digital communication** to convince victims that they are under legal investigation or imminent arrest.
- Although the term **Digital Arrest** has become widely used, **no provision under Indian law permits any authority to place a person under "digital arrest" through telephone or video calls.**

Key Features:

- **Cross-border cybercrime, identity impersonation, financial fraud, social engineering and money laundering** are integrated into a single organised criminal operation.
- Fraud networks generally operate through **multiple bank accounts, telecommunication infrastructure, fake identities, digital payment platforms and international financial channels**, making investigation more complex.

How the Digital Arrest Scam Operates:***Modus Operandi:***

- Fraudsters initiate contact through **mobile calls, internet calls, video conferencing applications, instant messaging platforms or social media** while impersonating officials from investigative or regulatory agencies.
- Victims are falsely informed that they are linked to offences such as **money laundering, drug trafficking, parcel fraud, tax evasion, identity theft or terror financing**, creating immediate fear of criminal prosecution.
- Victims are instructed to remain under continuous **audio or video surveillance**, prohibited from contacting family members or lawyers and threatened with immediate arrest if they fail to cooperate.
- Criminals circulate forged **court orders, arrest warrants, government notifications, identity cards and agency documents** to create an illusion of legal authenticity.
- Victims are ultimately coerced into transferring money to designated bank accounts under the false assurance that the amount will be verified, secured or refunded after investigation.

Role of Mule Accounts:***Meaning:***

- **Mule Accounts** are bank accounts used to receive, layer and transfer fraudulently obtained money on behalf of organised cybercriminals.

Functions:

- They conceal the original source and destination of illegal funds by routing money through multiple banking layers.
- They facilitate **money laundering**, delay investigation and complicate tracing of financial transactions across jurisdictions.
- They are frequently opened using **stolen identities, forged documents, fake Know Your Customer records** or unsuspecting individuals recruited for financial incentives.
- They constitute one of the most critical operational components of organised **cyber-enabled financial fraud**.

Legal and Institutional Framework Against Cyber Financial Fraud:***Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre:***

- **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** functions under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** as the national nodal agency for prevention, detection, investigation and coordination of cybercrime.
- It facilitates intelligence sharing, cyber forensic support, capacity building, public awareness, cybercrime analytics and coordination among **Law Enforcement Agencies**.

National Cybercrime Reporting Portal:

- The **National Cybercrime Reporting Portal** enables citizens to report cyber offences through a unified online platform.
- Complaints related to financial cyber fraud are integrated with banking institutions and law enforcement agencies to enable rapid preventive action.

National Cybercrime Helpline 1930:

- The **1930 Helpline** provides immediate reporting of cyber-enabled financial fraud and enables authorities to quickly initiate fund freezing and transaction tracking before money exits the banking system.

Reserve Bank of India:

- The **Reserve Bank of India** regulates banking institutions through prudential norms relating to suspicious transactions, fraud risk management, customer protection and banking supervision.
- It also coordinates with financial institutions for temporary account restrictions, transaction monitoring and restoration of fraudulently transferred funds.

e-Zero FIR Mechanism:

- **e-Zero FIR** enables registration of cyber financial crime cases electronically **irrespective of territorial jurisdiction**, thereby reducing procedural delays during the critical early stages of investigation.
- The mechanism integrates the **National Cybercrime Reporting Portal, Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems** and police investigation systems for faster conversion of complaints into criminal cases.

State Cyber Crime Coordination Centres:

- These institutions coordinate cybercrime investigation, digital forensics, intelligence sharing, banking coordination and prosecution at the State level while supporting district cybercrime units.

Supreme Court's Suo Motu Intervention:***Background:***

- The **Supreme Court** initiated **suo motu proceedings** in **November 2025** after an elderly couple from **Ambala, Haryana** lost approximately **₹1.05 crore** in a digital arrest scam.
- Fraudsters allegedly used forged orders purportedly issued by the **Supreme Court, Bombay High Court** and **Enforcement Directorate** to deceive the victims and obtain large financial transfers.

Why Judicial Intervention Became Necessary:

- Rapid growth in organised cyber fraud exposed significant gaps in inter-agency coordination, banking response, victim compensation and recovery of defrauded money.
- The Court recognised that effective prevention requires coordinated action by **financial regulators, telecom authorities, law enforcement agencies, State Governments** and the **Union Government**, rather than isolated institutional responses.

Why Digital Arrest Scams Have Emerged as a Major Governance Challenge:

Governance Perspective:

- Digital arrest scams undermine **public trust**, **financial inclusion**, **digital governance** and **citizen confidence** in online public services.
- The fraud ecosystem exploits rapid expansion of **digital payments**, **online banking**, **mobile connectivity** and **digital identity systems**, requiring equally advanced institutional safeguards.

Economic and National Security Perspective:

- Large-scale cyber fraud contributes to **money laundering**, **organised crime financing**, **cross-border financial crime** and illicit capital movement.
- Increasing digital dependence makes cyber resilience an essential component of **economic security**, **financial stability** and **national security**.

Supreme Court's Key Directions:

Standard Operating Procedure for Banks:

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has been directed to prepare and circulate a uniform **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** within **four weeks** for all scheduled banks to ensure a coordinated response against **Digital Arrest Scams**.
- The **SOP** shall provide for **temporary debit holds** on suspicious transactions, immediate identification of **Mule Accounts**, standardised reporting procedures and uniform action across the banking system.
- The framework shall also incorporate a **Grievance Redressal Mechanism**, **Money Restoration Module**, customer awareness measures and procedures for inter-bank coordination.
- A copy of the **SOP** shall be furnished to the **Registrars General of all High Courts** to facilitate uniform implementation by judicial authorities.

e-Zero FIR and State Coordination:

- All **States** and **Union Territories** have been directed to operationalise the **e-Zero FIR** mechanism in consultation with the **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)**.
- States have also been directed to establish and fully operationalise **State Cyber Crime Coordination Centres** for effective investigation, intelligence sharing and inter-agency coordination.
- The Court noted that the **e-Zero FIR** mechanism is operational in **19 States**, whereas only **14 States** have formally notified **State Cyber Crime Coordination Centres**, highlighting the need for nationwide implementation.

Grievance Redressal and Money Restoration:

- States and **Union Territories** have been directed to establish **Grievance Redressal** and **Money Restoration** mechanisms in accordance with the **Ministry of Home Affairs** guidelines.
- **Registrars General of High Courts** shall ensure that courts and adjudicating authorities dealing with frozen bank accounts are informed about these mechanisms.
- Victims should ordinarily utilise the institutional grievance mechanism before pursuing other legal remedies, although statutory remedies shall remain available.

- All adjudicating authorities, including the **Reserve Bank of India, Banking Ombudsmen, Consumer Commissions** and courts, have been directed to ensure expeditious disbursement of recovered money to victims.

Victim Compensation Framework:

- The **Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC)** has been directed to examine a comprehensive **Shared Liability and Victim Compensation Framework** for cyber-enabled financial fraud.
- The Committee has also been asked to examine rationalisation of the existing **₹10 crore** threshold for **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** investigation by permitting aggregation of multiple frauds committed by the same organised criminal network.

Telecom Measures:

- The Court directed the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, the **Department of Telecommunications** and **I4C** to examine technological safeguards, including **time-based restrictions** on suspicious **audio** and **video calls** used in digital arrest scams.
- The Court also took note of the notification of the **Telecommunications (Radio Equipment Possession Authorisation) Rules, 2025** and the proposed **Telecommunications (User Identification) Rules, 2025**, which seek to strengthen identity verification and telecom security.

Progress Report Reviewed by the Supreme Court:

Declining Number of Complaints:

- Data placed before the Court by **I4C** indicated that complaints relating to **Digital Arrest Scams** on the **National Cybercrime Reporting Portal** declined from **1,23,672** in **2024** to **58,239** in **2025**.
- Up to **30 June 2026**, **16,377** complaints had been reported, indicating improving institutional response while highlighting the continuing need for vigilance.

Money Restoration Mechanism:

- A **Data Sharing Memorandum of Understanding** between the **Reserve Bank Innovation Hub** and **I4C** was executed on **11 May 2026** to improve coordination in fund recovery.
- The **Money Restoration Mechanism Portal** presently includes **57 banks**, covering all **36 States and Union Territories**.
- Authorities successfully restored money in **36,290** cases involving approximately **₹18.05 crore**, demonstrating improved institutional capacity for victim assistance.

Central Bureau of Investigation Action:

- The **Central Bureau of Investigation** has registered multiple **Digital Arrest Scam** cases involving organised criminal syndicates.
- In one major investigation, the agency identified **238 victims**, traced transactions through **67 first-layer bank accounts**, uncovered fraud involving nearly **₹80 crore** and conducted searches across **93 locations** in **16 States**.

Significance of the Supreme Court Directions:

Strengthening Victim-Centric Governance:

- The directions institutionalise **victim protection, speedy grievance redressal, money restoration** and the development of a structured compensation framework.
- Uniform procedures are expected to reduce procedural delays and improve citizen confidence in digital governance.

Strengthening Banking Supervision:

- Early identification of **Mule Accounts** and temporary freezing of suspicious transactions can significantly reduce financial losses before fraudulent funds are layered or transferred abroad.
- Standardised banking procedures improve coordination among financial institutions and law enforcement agencies.

Improving Criminal Justice Administration:

- Nationwide implementation of **e-Zero FIR** and dedicated cybercrime coordination centres can accelerate investigation, evidence preservation and prosecution.
- Greater institutional coordination reduces jurisdictional delays in cybercrime investigation.

Enhancing National Cyber Security:

- Coordinated action involving the **RBI, I4C, CBI, State Governments, telecom authorities** and financial institutions strengthens India's cyber resilience against organised financial crime.
- Public awareness initiatives complement regulatory measures by reducing citizens' vulnerability to cyber-enabled social engineering attacks.

Challenges:

Operational Challenges:

- Cybercriminals continuously adopt new technologies, encrypted communication platforms, artificial intelligence tools and cross-border financial channels, making detection increasingly difficult.
- Delays in reporting fraud significantly reduce the possibility of freezing or recovering stolen funds.

Institutional Challenges:

- Uneven implementation of cybercrime infrastructure across States affects investigation quality and response time.
- Limited cyber forensic capacity, shortage of trained investigators and jurisdictional complexities continue to constrain enforcement.

International Challenges:

- Cross-border cybercrime networks exploit multiple jurisdictions, shell entities, cryptocurrency platforms and foreign banking systems, requiring stronger international cooperation and information sharing.

Way Forward:

Strengthening Institutional Capacity:

- Expand cyber forensic laboratories, specialised investigation units and continuous capacity building for police, prosecutors, banking officials and judicial officers.
- Ensure nationwide operationalisation of **e-Zero FIR**, **State Cyber Crime Coordination Centres** and integrated digital investigation platforms.

Technology-Driven Prevention:

- Deploy **Artificial Intelligence**, **Machine Learning**, behavioural analytics and real-time transaction monitoring for early detection of suspicious financial activity.
- Strengthen secure **Digital Public Infrastructure** through improved identity verification, fraud analytics and telecom safeguards.

Citizen Awareness:

- Conduct sustained nationwide awareness campaigns emphasising that **no law enforcement agency conducts "digital arrests" through telephone or video calls**.
- Encourage immediate reporting through the **National Cybercrime Helpline 1930** and the **National Cybercrime Reporting Portal** immediately after any suspected fraud.

Conclusion:

- **Digital Arrest Scams** represent an evolving form of organised cyber-enabled financial crime that threatens citizen security, financial stability and trust in digital governance.
- The Supreme Court's directions establish a coordinated framework integrating **banking regulation**, **cybercrime investigation**, **telecommunication safeguards**, **victim compensation** and **inter-agency cooperation**.
- Sustained institutional coordination, technological innovation, robust cyber security infrastructure and continuous public awareness will be essential to build a resilient and secure digital ecosystem.

Value Addition for UPSC:

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Important Facts:

- **Nodal Agency:** Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C).
- **Administrative Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **National Cybercrime Helpline:** 1930.
- **Reporting Platform:** National Cybercrime Reporting Portal.
- **Banking Regulator:** Reserve Bank of India.
- **Key Judicial Innovation:** e-Zero FIR for cyber-enabled financial fraud.

Prelims Facts:

- **Digital Arrest** has **no legal recognition** under Indian law.
- **Mule Accounts** are bank accounts used to receive, transfer and launder proceeds of cyber fraud.
- **e-Zero FIR** enables registration of cybercrime complaints without territorial jurisdiction constraints.

Supreme Court Extends Criminal Protection Against Domestic Cruelty to Eligible Live-in Relationships Under Equality Principles

Recent Developments:

- The **Supreme Court**, in a judgment delivered by **Justice Sanjay Karol** and **Justice N. Kotiswar Singh**, held that criminal protection against **domestic cruelty** under **Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code** shall extend to women in certain **live-in relationships** that are **in the nature of marriage** and supported by an **intent to marry**. The ruling is expected to apply to **Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**, which replaced **Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code**.
- The Court adopted a **purposive interpretation** of criminal law, observing that legal protection against domestic cruelty must evolve with changing social realities while remaining consistent with the constitutional guarantee of **equality under Article 14**.

Legal Background:

Position under the Earlier Law:

- **Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code**, now replaced by **Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**, criminalises **cruelty** committed by a **husband** or his relatives against a woman.
- Since the statutory language referred specifically to a **husband**, criminal protection was traditionally confined to **legally valid marriages**.
- Through judicial interpretation, the **Supreme Court** had gradually extended protection to women induced into **void** or **voidable marriages**, preventing accused persons from escaping criminal liability merely because the marriage lacked legal validity.

Case that Led to the Judgment:

- The accused sought quashing of criminal proceedings by arguing that his marriage with the complainant was legally invalid because an earlier marriage was still subsisting.
- The **Karnataka High Court** rejected the contention, holding that a person who induces a woman to believe she is lawfully married cannot evade criminal liability solely because the marriage is legally void.
- The appeal before the **Supreme Court** provided an opportunity to examine whether similar protection should extend beyond invalid marriages to eligible **live-in relationships**.

Supreme Court's Interpretation:

Purposive Interpretation of Criminal Law:

- The Court held that the objective of the provision is to prevent **domestic cruelty** rather than merely regulate legal marital status.
- The judgment recognised that **live-in relationships** have become an accepted social reality and that criminal law should respond to changing family structures.
- The Court observed that denying criminal protection solely because a woman is not formally married bears **no rational nexus** with the legislative objective of preventing domestic cruelty.

- Such exclusion was held to be inconsistent with the constitutional guarantee of **equality under Article 14**, requiring the law to be interpreted in a manner consistent with constitutional values.

Application under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita:

- Since the **Indian Penal Code** has been replaced by the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**, the same reasoning is expected to govern **Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**, which substantially corresponds to the earlier provision relating to cruelty by husband or relatives.

Conditions for Protection in Live-in Relationships:

Relationship in the Nature of Marriage:

- The Court relied upon the established judicial concept of a **relationship in the nature of marriage**, which is narrower than every live-in relationship.
- Relevant indicators include:
 - **Shared financial arrangements, common household, stable domestic life, continuing intimate relationship, public representation as spouses.**
- These factors collectively demonstrate a relationship substantially resembling marriage rather than a casual or temporary arrangement.

Intent to Marry as an Additional Requirement:

- The Court introduced **intent to marry** as an additional qualifying requirement for invoking criminal protection.
- A relationship satisfying only the characteristics of cohabitation, without a genuine intention to marry, cannot automatically attract criminal liability under **Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**.
- According to the Court, only relationships that closely approximate marriage in both substance and intention deserve similar criminal law protection.

Burden of Proof:

- The initial burden of establishing the existence of an **intent to marry** lies upon the woman seeking criminal protection.
- The judgment intentionally leaves determination of such intent to judicial appreciation of facts and evidence in individual cases rather than prescribing rigid statutory parameters.

Relationship with the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:

Why Existing Civil Protection Was Not Considered Sufficient:

- The Court rejected the argument that women in live-in relationships already receive adequate protection under the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005**.
- It clarified that the two statutes operate in fundamentally different legal domains.

Difference between the Two Laws:

- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:**
 - Civil remedies, **protection orders, residence rights, maintenance, compensation.**
- **Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita:**

- Criminal liability, **punishment, deterrence, prosecution.**
- The Court held that equating civil remedies with criminal protection would incorrectly dilute the legislative purpose behind criminal sanctions.

Constitutional Significance:

Equality and Social Justice:

- The judgment reinforces **Article 14** by ensuring that protection against domestic cruelty is not denied solely because of the absence of formal marriage.
- It reflects the constitutional principle that similarly situated individuals should receive equal legal protection where the underlying harm remains identical.

Living Constitution Doctrine:

- The decision illustrates the doctrine of a **living Constitution**, under which statutory interpretation evolves alongside changing social realities while remaining faithful to constitutional values.
- The judgment represents another example of purposive constitutional interpretation in family and criminal law.

Challenges and Concerns:

Evidentiary Issues:

- Demonstrating **intent to marry** is inherently subjective and may generate inconsistent judicial outcomes.
- Courts will need to rely upon documentary evidence, conduct of parties, communications, financial arrangements, and surrounding circumstances.

Potential Misuse and Judicial Safeguards:

- Criminal provisions concerning domestic cruelty have historically raised concerns regarding misuse.
- At the same time, courts have consistently maintained that procedural safeguards cannot undermine genuine protection for victims of domestic abuse.
- Future litigation is likely to further clarify the evidentiary standards governing the new requirement of **intent to marry**.

Conclusion:

- The judgment significantly expands criminal law protection against **domestic cruelty** by recognising that violence and abuse are not confined to legally valid marriages.
- By extending protection to qualifying **live-in relationships** possessing an **intent to marry**, the **Supreme Court** has aligned criminal jurisprudence with evolving social realities while grounding its reasoning in constitutional equality.
- The practical implementation of the ruling will largely depend upon the judicial development of clear evidentiary standards for establishing the required **intent to marry**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 14:** Equality before law and equal protection of laws.
- **Article 15(3):** Special provisions for women.
- **Article 21:** Right to life and dignity.

Important Statutory Provisions:

- **Section 85, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita:** Cruelty by husband or relatives of husband.
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** Civil protection for women facing domestic violence, including relationships in the nature of marriage.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023:** Replaced the **Indian Penal Code** with effect from **1 July 2024**.

Mains Answer Enrichment:

- **GS-II:** Judiciary, Constitutional Interpretation, Gender Justice, Fundamental Rights, Social Justice.
- **GS-I:** Changing Family Structures, Women Issues, Social Transformation.
- **Essay:** Constitutional Morality, Living Constitution, Gender Equality, Law and Social Change.

Supreme Court Examines Constitutional Validity of CAPF General Administration Act, 2026 Amid Cadre–Deputation Dispute

Recent Developments:

- The **Supreme Court** has issued notice to the **Union Government** on petitions filed by serving **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)** officers challenging the constitutional validity of the **Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Act, 2026**.
- The petitions argue that the Act substantially dilutes the **2025 Supreme Court judgment**, which had recognised **CAPF Group A officers** as **Organised Group 'A' Services (OGAS)** and directed phased reduction of **IPS deputation** up to the rank of **Inspector General (IG)**.

Background of the Issue:

2025 Supreme Court Judgment:

- The **Supreme Court** directed the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** to phase out **IPS deputation** up to the rank of **Inspector General (IG)** within **two years**, enabling regular cadre officers to receive time-bound promotions.
- The Court also granted **Organised Group 'A' Services (OGAS)** status to **CAPF Group A officers**, thereby making them eligible for structured cadre management, career progression and service benefits similar to the **IAS, IPS and IFS**.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs'** review petition was dismissed in **October 2025**, making the judgment final. Subsequently, retired officers filed contempt proceedings alleging continued appointment of **IPS officers** in senior CAPF posts.

About the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs):

- The **Central Armed Police Forces** function under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, while recruitment of **Group A officers** is conducted through the **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)**.
- The five CAPFs include:
 - **Border Security Force (BSF)**: Guards the **India–Pakistan** and **India–Bangladesh** borders.
 - **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)**: Performs **internal security**, **counter-insurgency**, **Left Wing Extremism** operations and law-and-order duties.
 - **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)**: Protects **critical infrastructure**, **airports** and strategic public sector establishments.
 - **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**: Guards the **India–China** border.
 - **Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)**: Secures the **India–Nepal** and **India–Bhutan** borders.

Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Act, 2026:

Major Provisions:

- The Act establishes a **uniform statutory framework** governing **recruitment**, **promotion**, **deputation** and **service conditions** of **Group A Gazetted Officers** from **Assistant Commandant** to **Director General (DG)** across all CAPFs.
- It authorises the **Ministry of Home Affairs** to frame service rules that prevail over any inconsistent law, administrative order or judicial direction.
- The Act also statutorily provides for **IPS deputation** by reserving:
 - **50% of Inspector General (IG)** posts.
 - At least **67% of Additional Director General (ADG)** posts.
 - **100% of Special Director General (SDG)** and **Director General (DG)** posts for deputed **IPS officers**.

Government's Rationale:

Reasons for the Legislation:

- The Government maintains that **CAPFs** perform national security functions requiring continuous coordination with **State Police** and **State Governments**, making **IPS leadership** operationally necessary.
- It argues that a **common legal framework** replaces fragmented service rules across different CAPFs, thereby improving administrative uniformity and strengthening India's internal security architecture.
- According to the Government, the Act enhances coordination among **CAPFs**, **State Police** and the **Union Government** without altering the operational role of individual forces.

Concerns Raised by CAPF Officers:

Career Progression and Service Conditions:

- **Career stagnation:** Regular **CAPF cadre officers** argue that extensive **IPS deputation** to senior posts significantly delays their promotions, with many **Assistant Commandants** serving **15–16 years** before receiving their first promotion.
- **Operational imbalance:** Officers contend that they lead **counter-insurgency**, **border management** and **internal security** operations, bear the highest operational risks and casualties, while many deputed **IPS officers** join only at senior supervisory levels.

- **Human resource concerns:** Officer associations have highlighted increasing instances of **voluntary retirement, low morale** and **psychological stress**, attributing them partly to prolonged career stagnation and limited promotional opportunities.
- **Non-Functional Upgradation (NFU):** Despite receiving **Organised Group 'A' Services (OGAS)** status, officers argue that **NFU** benefits available to several other **Central Group 'A' Services** have not been implemented adequately for **CAPFs**.
- **Pay disparity:** Officers also point to disparities in **pay progression, allowances** and career advancement compared to similarly placed **Central Civil Services**.

Constitutional and Administrative Issues:

Judicial Independence and Separation of Powers:

- Petitioners contend that the Act effectively overrides the **2025 Supreme Court judgment**, thereby raising concerns regarding **judicial authority** and the **separation of powers**.
- Critics argue that continued statutory preference for **IPS deputation** weakens the objective of recognising **CAPF officers** as an independent organised service with a distinct promotional hierarchy.
- The matter also raises broader questions regarding the balance between **legislative competence, judicial interpretation** and **executive discretion** in service administration.

Way Forward:

Institutional Reforms:

- **Time-bound cadre reviews:** Conduct regular cadre reviews and fully implement **Organised Group 'A' Services (OGAS)** benefits to remove promotional bottlenecks and ensure predictable career progression.
- **Balanced deputation policy:** Maintain a calibrated **IPS deputation** policy while gradually increasing the representation of experienced **CAPF cadre officers** in senior leadership positions.
- **Capacity building:** Expand joint training programmes at the **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA)** and **CAPF academies** to improve operational coordination and strategic leadership.
- **Transparent Human Resource Management:** Develop objective, merit-based promotion policies, strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms and improve welfare measures to enhance morale and organisational efficiency.
- **Institutional coordination:** Continue strengthening coordination between **CAPFs, State Police, Intelligence Agencies** and the **Ministry of Home Affairs** while preserving the operational identity of each force.

Conclusion:

- The dispute over the **Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Act, 2026** reflects the broader challenge of balancing **operational efficiency, cadre autonomy, career progression** and **national security requirements**.
- The final judicial outcome is likely to shape the future administrative structure of **CAPFs**, clarify the scope of **IPS deputation** and define the implementation of **Organised Group 'A' Services (OGAS)** within India's internal security framework.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 14:** Equality before law and equal protection of laws.
- **Article 16:** Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.
- **Article 309:** Recruitment and conditions of service of persons serving the Union or the States.
- **Article 312:** Creation and regulation of **All India Services**.

Important Institutions:

- **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA):** Cadre-controlling authority for **CAPFs** and the **Indian Police Service (IPS)**.
- **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC):** Conducts recruitment for **Group 'A' CAPF Officers**.
- **Central Armed Police Forces:** **BSF, CRPF, CISE, ITBP and SSB.**



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QUESTIONS

1. Consider the following spatial and ecological attributes:

- (1) Located in the Eastern Himalayan region.
- (2) Situated in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.
- (3) Nestled within the Kamlang Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary.

Which wetland/protected area in India is characterized by all of the above features?

- (A) Deepor Beel
- (B) Glaw Lake
- (C) Loktak Lake
- (D) Rudrasagar Lake

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

Assertion (A): The middle segment ("the missing middle") of the critical mineral supply chain represents the primary vulnerability for India's strategic autonomy in clean energy.

Reason (R): India refines over 90% of global rare earth elements domestically but lacks raw extraction facilities in its coastal monazite belts.

Which one of the following options is correct?

- (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.

3. With reference to the operational mechanics and characteristics of 'Mule Accounts' in cyber-enabled financial frauds, consider the following statements:

- (1) They are bank accounts used primarily to receive and route fraudulently obtained money.
- (2) They assist fraudsters in obscuring the money trail by layering funds across multiple accounts.
- (3) They are invariably established using genuine, verified identity proof of the ultimate beneficiary.
- (4) They serve as a critical operational node for laundering proceeds from cyber crimes like digital arrest scams.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (A) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (B) 1 and 3 only

(C) 2, 3 and 4 only

(D) 1, 2, 3 and 4

4. With reference to the Supreme Court's ruling on extending protection against domestic cruelty to live-in relationships, consider the following statements:

(1) The judgment was delivered by a bench comprising Justices Sanjay Karol and N Kotiswar Singh.

(2) The ruling extends criminal protection under Section 498A IPC to corresponding provisions under Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

(3) The initial burden of proof to establish the "intent to marry" rests on the female partner seeking protection under the law.

(4) The Supreme Court held that the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 completely substitutes the need for criminal prosecution under Section 498A for live-in partners.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(A) 2, 3 and 4 only

(B) 1 and 4 only

(C) 1, 2 and 3 only

(D) 1, 2, 3 and 4

5. Consider the following security forces:

(1) Border Security Force (BSF)

(2) Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)

(3) Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

(4) Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)

(5) Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

How many of the above forces are components of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)?

(A) Only two

(B) Only three

(C) Only four

(D) All five

ANSWER KEY

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



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