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TABLE OF CONTENT

- **India's Diaspora Dividend: From Remittance Dependence to Long-Term Capital, Knowledge and Strategic Development Partnerships:** *Diaspora Diplomacy / Remittances / Foreign Capital / Knowledge Transfer / Development Partnerships (GS-II)*
- **India Strengthens Cyber-Physical Systems Ecosystem Through Indigenous Technologies, Innovation Hubs, Talent Development and Technology Commercialisation:** *Cyber-Physical Systems / Indigenous Technology / Innovation Ecosystem / Skill Development / Technology Commercialisation (GS-III)*
- **Indian Statistical Institute Bill 2026 Seeks Modern Legal Framework While Strengthening Parliamentary Oversight of Statistical Education and Research:** *Statistical Governance / Legislative Framework / Parliamentary Oversight / Higher Education / Research Ecosystem (GS-II)*
- **Supreme Court Invokes Article 142 to Quash NEET-UG Protest FIRs, Reinforcing Complete Justice and Constitutional Protection of Peaceful Dissent:** *Article 142 / Judicial Activism / Fundamental Rights / Right to Peaceful Protest / Constitutional Governance (GS-II)*
- **Supreme Court Seeks Centre's View on Totaliser Machines to Protect Voter Secrecy and Prevent Booth-Wise Profiling:** *Electoral Reforms / Voter Secrecy / Totaliser Machines / Electoral Integrity / Democratic Governance (GS-II)*

IMPORTANT INSIGHTS

India's Diaspora Dividend: From Remittance Dependence to Long-Term Capital, Knowledge and Strategic Development Partnerships

Recent Developments:

- India's global **diaspora**, numbering over **35 million**, is increasingly being viewed as a potential source of **long-term capital, knowledge and global networks**, rather than merely as a source of remittances.
- India reportedly received **\$143.6 billion in remittances in FY26**, reinforcing its position as the world's largest remittance recipient. Recent external-sector data also show the continuing importance of private transfer receipts from overseas Indians in supporting India's balance of payments.
- India's growing financial-market depth, expanding digital infrastructure and stronger macroeconomic fundamentals are creating new opportunities for **diaspora investment** in equities, debt instruments, infrastructure, startups and productive sectors.
- The recent strengthening of foreign-currency inflows and India's foreign-exchange reserves also demonstrates the continuing strategic importance of overseas Indian capital for external-sector stability.

Understanding the Indian Diaspora:

Meaning and Composition:

- The **Indian diaspora** broadly includes **Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs)** living across different countries.
- The Ministry of External Affairs maintains country-wise data on the overseas Indian population, reflecting the geographical diversity and global spread of Indian-origin communities.
- Unlike many countries whose overseas communities are concentrated in limited regions, the Indian diaspora is spread across **North America, Europe, the Gulf region, Africa, Southeast Asia and Oceania**, giving India extensive social and economic linkages.

Diaspora as India's Strategic Asset:

- The diaspora represents a form of **economic, intellectual and diplomatic capital**, connecting India with global markets, institutions, technologies and investment networks.
- Its contribution extends beyond financial transfers to **entrepreneurship, innovation, philanthropy, knowledge transfer, cultural influence and economic diplomacy**.
- The challenge before India is therefore to transform the diaspora relationship from primarily **sentimental and remittance-based engagement** into a structured framework for sustained development partnership.

From Remittances to Long-Term Investment:

Traditional Role of Remittances:

- Remittances have historically strengthened India's **household consumption, foreign-exchange availability and balance-of-payments position**.
- Unlike volatile portfolio flows, remittances are generally considered relatively stable because they are closely linked with household and family obligations.

- Remittance income can improve household welfare by supporting **education, healthcare, housing and consumption**, particularly in migrant-sending regions.

Emerging Structural Transformation:

- The next stage of diaspora engagement involves converting a part of overseas Indian savings into **long-term productive investment** within India.
- Diaspora investment can move beyond traditional preferences such as **real estate, gold and bank deposits** towards equities, debt instruments, startups, infrastructure and renewable energy.
- Such a transition would be significant because **remittances primarily support income and consumption**, whereas productive investment can contribute directly to **capital formation, employment generation and economic capacity**.

Why India Is Becoming More Attractive to Diaspora Investors:

Strong Macroeconomic Fundamentals:

- India remains among the world's largest economies and continues to be one of the fastest-growing major economies, strengthening its attractiveness as a long-term investment destination.
- High **foreign-exchange reserves** provide an important buffer against external shocks, exchange-rate pressures and sudden capital outflows.
- Continued emphasis on **inflation management and fiscal consolidation** improves macroeconomic credibility and reduces uncertainty for long-term investors.
- A stronger and better-capitalised banking system compared with the previous decade has improved financial-sector resilience.

Reform-Oriented Growth Environment:

- Structural reforms have improved the investment ecosystem through measures such as the **Goods and Services Tax, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, Production-Linked Incentive Scheme and Digital Public Infrastructure**.
- These reforms seek to improve market integration, enhance credit discipline, strengthen manufacturing competitiveness and reduce transaction costs.
- For diaspora investors, policy continuity and institutional credibility are particularly important because investment decisions are often made across different legal and regulatory jurisdictions.

Deepening and Diversification of Financial Markets:

Expansion of Investment Opportunities:

- India's financial markets have expanded significantly in terms of **market capitalisation, investor participation, mutual funds and institutional depth**.
- Mutual funds and systematic investment plans have widened domestic participation, reducing excessive dependence on foreign capital for equity-market development.
- Diaspora investors can increasingly access a diversified range of instruments, including **equities, bonds, mutual funds, REITs, InvITs, alternative investment funds and startup investments**.

Importance for Infrastructure Financing:

- **REITs and InvITs** can provide diaspora investors with opportunities to participate in income-generating real estate and infrastructure assets.
- Such instruments can potentially channel overseas savings towards roads, energy infrastructure, commercial assets and other productive sectors.
- This is particularly relevant for India because infrastructure development requires large volumes of **patient, long-term capital**.

Digital Public Infrastructure and Cross-Border Investment:

Reducing Transaction Costs:

- India's **Digital Public Infrastructure** can reduce information asymmetry and transaction costs by improving identity verification, documentation and financial connectivity.
- Platforms and frameworks such as **Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker and the Account Aggregator ecosystem** demonstrate India's growing capacity for interoperable digital governance.
- Simplified digital onboarding and **e-KYC mechanisms** can make investment processes more convenient for geographically dispersed investors, although cross-border regulatory compliance continues to require careful institutional coordination.

Role of Financial Regulators:

- Institutions such as the **Reserve Bank of India, Securities and Exchange Board of India and International Financial Services Centres Authority** are important for strengthening market confidence and regulatory governance.
- The continued development of **GIFT IFSC** can provide an institutional bridge between India's domestic economy and global financial markets.
- A transparent and predictable regulatory environment is essential because diaspora investors compare Indian opportunities with investment alternatives available in their countries of residence.

Beyond Capital: Knowledge, Networks and Innovation:

Human Capital and Technology Transfer:

- The Indian diaspora includes **entrepreneurs, scientists, technology professionals, academics, corporate leaders and investors**, creating opportunities for knowledge transfer.
- Diaspora networks can connect Indian enterprises with **global supply chains, advanced technologies, venture capital and international markets**.
- Returning professionals and diaspora-led collaborations can strengthen India's innovation ecosystem through **research partnerships, startup mentorship and technology commercialisation**.

Entrepreneurship and Startup Ecosystem:

- Diaspora investors can provide not only capital but also **market access, managerial expertise and global business networks**.
- This can be particularly valuable for Indian startups seeking international expansion and access to overseas customers.
- Policies should therefore encourage diaspora participation in **venture capital, research-intensive enterprises and emerging technology sectors**.

Geographical Broadening of the Diaspora Dividend:

Potential of Tier II and Tier III Cities:

- Diaspora-linked investment should not remain concentrated only in major metropolitan centres.
- **Tier II and Tier III cities** can attract diaspora capital into manufacturing, education, healthcare, tourism, logistics and renewable-energy projects.
- Such geographically distributed investment can support **balanced regional development** and reduce excessive concentration of economic opportunities.
- State governments can create targeted diaspora investment facilitation mechanisms based on local economic strengths and development requirements.

Challenges and Constraints:

Regulatory and Procedural Barriers:

- Complex taxation rules, documentation requirements and differing regulatory frameworks can discourage potential diaspora investors.
- Compliance requirements across countries may create additional costs, particularly for small and medium-sized investors.
- Differences in financial regulations, residency status and investment eligibility require clearer and more predictable investor guidance.

Trust and Information Gaps:

- Overseas investors may face information asymmetry regarding local projects, governance standards and investment risks.
- Concerns regarding bureaucratic delays, contract enforcement and policy uncertainty can discourage long-term investment.
- Diaspora investment must therefore be supported by **strong investor protection, transparent disclosure and effective grievance-redress mechanisms**.

Way Forward:

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Create a Comprehensive Diaspora Investment Framework:

- India should develop a coordinated framework integrating **diaspora engagement, investment facilitation, financial regulation and state-level development priorities**.
- A single-window digital interface could simplify information access while ensuring compliance with relevant financial and legal regulations.

Promote Long-Term and Productive Investment:

- Policy incentives should encourage investment in **infrastructure, manufacturing, renewable energy, innovation and employment-intensive sectors**, rather than only speculative assets.
- Carefully designed diaspora-focused financial instruments could mobilise long-term capital while maintaining transparency and financial sustainability.

Strengthen Institutional Engagement:

- **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas**, celebrated on 9 January, provides an important platform for engagement between overseas Indians, policymakers and stakeholders.
- Such platforms should increasingly focus on measurable outcomes, including investment partnerships, technology collaborations and knowledge-sharing networks.
- The **Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award**, the highest honour conferred on overseas Indians, also recognises contributions that strengthen India's international standing and links with overseas communities.

Improve Regulatory Predictability:

- Simplified procedures, stable taxation policies and faster dispute resolution can improve investor confidence.
- Digital systems should reduce unnecessary procedural friction without compromising **financial integrity, investor protection and anti-money-laundering safeguards**.

Conclusion:

- India's diaspora is undergoing a potential transition from being primarily a **remittance source** to becoming a long-term participant in India's development and growth.
- The combination of **macroeconomic stability, deeper financial markets, digital public infrastructure and global diaspora networks** creates an opportunity to mobilise capital, expertise and technology simultaneously.
- However, the true diaspora dividend will depend on India's ability to convert emotional and cultural connections into **trust-based, transparent and productive economic partnerships**.
- A sustained policy focus on regulatory clarity, institutional engagement and productive investment can transform the Indian diaspora into an important pillar of **Viksit Bharat and India's long-term economic resilience**.

Value Addition for UPSC:***Possible Mains Question:***

- “The Indian diaspora has traditionally been viewed as a major source of remittances. Discuss its emerging role as a source of investment, technology and strategic capital for India's development.”

India Strengthens Cyber-Physical Systems Ecosystem Through Indigenous Technologies, Innovation Hubs, Talent Development and Technology Commercialisation

Recent Developments:

- The Government has highlighted the growing importance of **Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS)** in building a technology-driven future and strengthening India's capabilities in emerging and strategic technologies.
- The **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** is implementing the **National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS)**, which was launched in **2018** with a total outlay of **₹3,660 crore for nine years** to strengthen India's capabilities in emerging cyber-physical technologies.

- As of **August 2026**, the mission had enabled **1,146 technologies**, contributed to **1,329 technology products**, incubated **1,136 start-ups and spin-offs**, generated more than **24,000 jobs**, and established **200 international collaborations**.
- The Government has established **25 Technology Innovation Hubs (TIHs)** across premier academic institutions, while **four high-performing TIHs were selected in 2025 as Technology Translation Research Parks (TTRPs)** to accelerate the movement of indigenous technologies from laboratories towards deployment and commercialisation.
- **BharatGen**, supported under NM-ICPS, represents an important effort to develop **sovereign, multilingual and multimodal Artificial Intelligence capabilities** suited to Indian languages, culture and contexts.

Understanding Cyber-Physical Systems:

Meaning and Core Concept:

- **Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS)** are intelligent systems that integrate the **physical world with digital computing systems** through sensors, software, communication networks, computing capabilities and actuators.
- CPS enables machines and infrastructure to **sense real-world conditions, process information, make decisions and perform physical actions** with limited or automated human intervention.
- Unlike conventional information systems that primarily process digital information, CPS creates a close interaction between **computation, communication and physical processes**.

Basic Working Mechanism:

- CPS generally functions through a continuous **sense–analyse–decide–act feedback loop**, allowing digital systems to respond dynamically to changing physical conditions.
 - **Sensors** collect real-time information from the physical environment, including temperature, movement, pressure, location or other relevant parameters.
 - **Computing systems and software** process the collected data using algorithms, data analytics and, increasingly, Artificial Intelligence.
 - **Communication networks** enable the exchange of information among devices, computing systems and control centres.
 - **Actuators** convert digital decisions into physical actions, such as controlling machinery, adjusting temperature, changing direction or activating safety mechanisms.
- This continuous feedback mechanism enables systems to become **intelligent, connected, adaptive and responsive**.

Major Applications of Cyber-Physical Systems:

Autonomous Transportation:

- Autonomous vehicles use **sensors, cameras, computing systems, communication technologies and Artificial Intelligence** to understand their surroundings and navigate with reduced human intervention.
- CPS can also support intelligent traffic management, connected vehicles and safer transportation infrastructure.

Smart Manufacturing and Industry 4.0:

- Smart factories use CPS for **real-time monitoring, predictive maintenance, automation and optimisation of industrial processes**.

- The integration of machines, sensors and data systems can improve productivity, reduce downtime and enable more efficient resource utilisation.

Healthcare and Medical Technologies:

- Intelligent medical devices can continuously monitor patients and transmit relevant information to healthcare providers.
- CPS can support **remote monitoring, medical robotics, precision healthcare and timely clinical interventions**, although reliability and data protection remain critical concerns.

Smart Infrastructure and Buildings:

- CPS can regulate **lighting, temperature, energy consumption and security systems** according to real-time environmental conditions.
- Smart infrastructure can improve energy efficiency and support sustainable urban development.

Agriculture, Mining and Other Sectors:

- CPS-based technologies can support precision agriculture through **sensor-based monitoring, automated decision-making and resource optimisation**.
- Mining applications can improve worker safety and operational efficiency through remote monitoring, autonomous systems and intelligent data analysis.
- The NM-ICPS ecosystem is developing solutions across sectors such as **agriculture, healthcare, mining, cybersecurity, advanced communication and positioning technologies**.

National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems:

Institutional Framework:

- NM-ICPS is implemented by the **Department of Science and Technology under the Ministry of Science and Technology**.
- The mission was approved by the Union Cabinet in **2018** with an outlay of **₹3,660 crore**, and its current implementation framework covers a period of **nine years**.
- The mission seeks to establish a comprehensive national ecosystem connecting **academia, industry, government agencies, start-ups, entrepreneurs, investors and international organisations**.

Technology Domains Covered:

- NM-ICPS focuses on emerging and interdisciplinary technologies such as **Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Internet of Things, Internet of Everything, Data Analytics, Robotics and Autonomous Systems, Cybersecurity and Quantum Technologies**.
- The interdisciplinary approach is important because emerging technologies increasingly require convergence between **computer science, engineering, physical sciences, mathematics and domain-specific knowledge**.

Objectives and Innovation Ecosystem:

From Research to Commercialisation:

- NM-ICPS supports the complete technology lifecycle, including **research and development, translational research, technology development, prototype creation, product development, start-up incubation and commercialisation**.
- The mission therefore seeks to address a major weakness often associated with research ecosystems, namely the gap between **laboratory-level innovation and market-ready technology**.

National Priority Solutions:

- The mission works with relevant government departments and stakeholders to identify national technology requirements and develop sector-specific solutions.
- CPS technologies can address challenges related to **health, agriculture, energy, environment, education, strategic sectors, security and Industry 4.0**.

Technology Innovation Hubs:

Structure and Functions:

- Under NM-ICPS, **25 Technology Innovation Hubs (TIHs)** have been established in reputed academic and research institutions across India.
- Each TIH functions as an independent **Section 8 company** within its host institution and focuses on specific emerging technology verticals.
- The TIHs undertake activities under four broad categories: **Technology Development, Human Resource Development and Skill Development, Innovation and Start-up Development, and International Collaboration**.

Role in India's Innovation Ecosystem:

- TIHs create a bridge between **academic research and real-world technological applications**.
- They develop technology platforms, support prototypes and products, nurture technology-based start-ups and collaborate with government agencies to address national challenges.
- Their broader objective is to create a technology lifecycle extending from **knowledge generation to technology development, translation and commercialisation**.

Technology Translation Research Parks:

Purpose and Recent Expansion:

- In **2025**, four high-performing TIHs were selected and supported as **Technology Translation Research Parks (TTRPs)** to accelerate the deployment and commercialisation of promising CPS technologies.
- The selected TTRPs focus on strategically important technology domains:
 - **IIT Kanpur, Cybersecurity**
 - **IISc Bengaluru, Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Systems**
 - **IIT (ISM) Dhanbad, Mining Technologies**
 - **IIT Indore, Digital Healthcare**

Significance of Technology Translation:

- TTRPs seek to reduce the gap between **research outputs and deployable commercial technologies**.
- They can strengthen India's capacity to convert scientific research into products, enterprises and scalable solutions.
- Effective technology translation is particularly important for building indigenous capabilities in strategically sensitive technologies and reducing excessive dependence on imported technologies.

Achievements of NM-ICPS:

Technology and Product Development:

- As of **August 2026**, NM-ICPS had enabled **1,146 technologies** and contributed to the development of **1,329 technology products** across multiple sectors.
- These technologies span areas including **agriculture, healthcare, mining, cybersecurity, advanced communication and positioning systems**.

Human Resource and Skill Development:

- The **CHANAKYA Fellowship Programme** supports undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral and postdoctoral researchers working on real-world CPS challenges.
- As of August 2026, the mission had awarded **5,824 fellowships** and provided skill-development training to more than **2.46 lakh professionals**, strengthening India's specialised technology talent base.

Start-ups and Employment:

- The mission had incubated **1,136 start-ups and spin-offs** by August 2026, contributing to more than **24,000 jobs**.
- This demonstrates the importance of public research support in promoting **deep-tech entrepreneurship and research-based enterprise creation**.

International Collaboration:

- NM-ICPS had established **200 international collaborations** by August 2026, strengthening India's integration with global research and innovation networks.
- International collaboration can provide access to advanced research, specialised expertise and global technology ecosystems while indigenous capability-building remains essential for strategic autonomy.

BharatGen and Sovereign Artificial Intelligence:

Purpose and Institutional Support:

- **BharatGen**, supported under NM-ICPS, aims to develop **sovereign Artificial Intelligence capabilities** suited to India's linguistic, cultural and developmental requirements.
- The initiative is led by **IIT Bombay and a consortium of academic institutions**, while the Government has provided support for developing a suite of multilingual and multimodal generative Artificial Intelligence technologies.

Importance for India's Digital Future:

- BharatGen focuses on developing technologies involving **text, speech and vision-language interaction**, enabling Artificial Intelligence systems to operate across India's linguistic diversity.
- Its broader significance lies in reducing dependence on technologies trained primarily on foreign languages and contexts.
- Sovereign Artificial Intelligence can strengthen India's capabilities in **language technologies, public-service delivery, knowledge access and strategic technological autonomy**.

Significance of CPS for India:

Technological Sovereignty and Strategic Autonomy:

- Indigenous CPS capabilities can reduce dependence on imported technologies in strategically important sectors.
- Technologies involving Artificial Intelligence, robotics, cybersecurity and communication infrastructure increasingly have implications for **economic competitiveness and national security**.

Economic Growth and Industrial Competitiveness:

- CPS can improve productivity by enabling **automation, predictive maintenance, intelligent manufacturing and efficient resource management**.
- Its integration with Industry 4.0 can strengthen India's manufacturing competitiveness and support high-value technology-intensive industries.

Public Service Delivery and Sustainable Development:

- CPS can improve the efficiency of agriculture, healthcare, transportation, energy and urban infrastructure.
- Intelligent systems can contribute to better resource management, lower operational costs and improved service delivery when supported by reliable infrastructure and institutional capacity.

Challenges and Concerns:

Cybersecurity and System Vulnerability:

- CPS connects digital networks with physical infrastructure, making cyberattacks potentially capable of causing **real-world physical disruption**.
- Protection of critical infrastructure therefore requires robust cybersecurity standards, resilient system architecture and continuous threat monitoring.

Data Privacy and Governance:

- CPS systems generate large volumes of personal, industrial and environmental data.
- Strong governance frameworks are necessary to ensure **data protection, responsible data use and accountability**.

Skills and Research Gaps:

- CPS requires interdisciplinary expertise combining computing, engineering and domain knowledge.

- India must strengthen advanced research capacity and specialised human resources to remain competitive in rapidly evolving technology domains.

Technology Translation and Commercialisation:

- Research achievements do not automatically result in commercially successful products.
- Adequate financing, testing facilities, industry partnerships, standards and market access are necessary to convert prototypes into scalable technologies.

Way Forward:

Strengthen the Research–Industry–Government Interface:

- India should deepen collaboration among **academic institutions, industry, start-ups and government agencies** to ensure that research addresses practical national requirements.

Develop Trusted and Secure CPS Infrastructure:

- Security-by-design principles should be integrated into CPS technologies from the earliest stages of development.
- Standards, testing mechanisms and certification frameworks should be strengthened for technologies used in critical sectors.

Promote Indigenous Technology Commercialisation:

- TTRPs and TIHs should receive sustained support for **prototype testing, technology validation, intellectual property management and commercialisation**.
- Public procurement and appropriate regulatory frameworks can help promising indigenous technologies achieve early deployment.

Build Future-Ready Human Capital:

- Higher education and skill-development programmes should promote interdisciplinary learning across **Artificial Intelligence, robotics, cybersecurity, data science and engineering**.
- Industry-linked training and research fellowships can strengthen the pipeline of specialised technology professionals.

Conclusion:

- **Cyber-Physical Systems represent a major stage in technological evolution**, integrating digital intelligence directly with machines, infrastructure and real-world physical processes.
- Through NM-ICPS, India is developing an integrated ecosystem involving research institutions, innovation hubs, researchers, start-ups, industry and international partners.
- The growing focus on **technology translation, commercialisation, indigenous innovation and sovereign Artificial Intelligence** can help India move from technology adoption towards technology creation.
- However, India must simultaneously address cybersecurity, privacy, skills, standards and commercialisation challenges to ensure that CPS development supports a **secure, inclusive, innovative and technologically self-reliant Viksit Bharat**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Possible Mains Question:

- “Cyber-Physical Systems are transforming the relationship between digital technologies and the physical world. Examine the significance of the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems in strengthening India's technological capabilities and strategic autonomy.”

Indian Statistical Institute Bill 2026 Seeks Modern Legal Framework While Strengthening Parliamentary Oversight of Statistical Education and Research

Recent Developments:

- The **Indian Statistical Institute Bill, 2026** has been referred to the **Department-Related Standing Committee on Finance** for detailed examination, providing an opportunity for parliamentary scrutiny of its institutional, administrative, academic and financial provisions.
- The Bill seeks to **repeal and replace the Indian Statistical Institute Act, 1959**, and establish a contemporary statutory framework for the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.
- The proposed framework seeks to provide ISI with a more structured institutional governance system while retaining its **not-for-profit character** and academic orientation.

Indian Statistical Institute: Historical Background:

Origin and Evolution:

- The **Indian Statistical Institute** was founded by **Professor P. C. Mahalanobis** in **Kolkata** in **1931**, becoming an important centre for statistical research, education and training in India.
- Parliament accorded ISI the status of an **Institution of National Importance** in **1959** through the Indian Statistical Institute Act, 1959.
- ISI has historically contributed to the development of **statistical science, mathematical statistics, quantitative economics, data analysis and statistical applications** in India.

Importance for India:

- Statistical institutions are important for evidence-based policymaking because reliable data supports **economic planning, public expenditure, social-sector interventions and evaluation of government programmes**.
- ISI's role extends beyond academic instruction because advanced statistical methods contribute to **official statistics, scientific research, industry, economics and public policy**.

Indian Statistical Institute Bill, 2026: Key Provisions:

Incorporation as a Corporate Body:

- The Bill proposes to convert ISI into a **corporate body and not-for-profit legal entity**, providing it with a distinct statutory institutional structure.
- At present, ISI is registered as a society under the **West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961**, while the proposed legislation seeks to establish its legal status directly through Parliament.

Visitor of the Institute:

- The **President of India** will be the **Visitor** of the Institute under the proposed framework.
- The Visitor's role provides an institutional mechanism for oversight within the governance architecture of an Institution of National Importance.

Board of Governors:

- The **Board of Governors** will function as the principal policy-making and executive body of ISI.
- Its functions will include determining institutional policies, approving budgets and development plans, establishing departments and facilities, setting up centres of study, granting degrees and academic distinctions, creating posts subject to prescribed approval, framing regulations and undertaking periodic performance reviews.
- The **Chairperson of the Board** will be a distinguished person from academia, industry, education, public policy, statistical sciences, allied sciences or another relevant field.
- The Chairperson will be **nominated by the Visitor on the recommendation of the Central Government**.

Academic Council:

- The Bill proposes an **Academic Council as the principal academic body** responsible for matters relating to courses, admissions, examinations and evaluation.
- Such an institutional arrangement is intended to provide a dedicated mechanism for maintaining academic standards and coordinating educational functions.

Finance Committee:

- A **Finance Committee** will scrutinise the accounts and expenditure of the Institute.
- Financial oversight is significant for ensuring **fiscal discipline, institutional accountability and transparent utilisation of public resources**.

Management Councils:

- A **Management Council** will be established for each centre of the Institute to exercise general superintendence and control over the affairs of the respective centre.
- The provision is intended to support effective administration of an institution operating through multiple specialised centres.

Director:

- The Board will appoint a **Director as the Chief Executive Officer**, subject to the prior approval of the Visitor.

- The Director will be responsible for implementing decisions of the **Board of Governors and Academic Council**, thereby providing an executive link between institutional policy and day-to-day implementation.

Why a New Legal Framework Matters:

Institutional Governance:

- The proposed legislation seeks to replace an older statutory framework with a governance structure containing clearly identified authorities, including the **Visitor, Board of Governors, Academic Council, Finance Committee, Management Councils and Director**.
- Clearly defined institutional responsibilities can reduce administrative ambiguity and strengthen accountability.

Academic Autonomy and Excellence:

- A dedicated statutory framework can support ISI's continued development as a leading institution for **statistics, mathematical sciences, data analysis and interdisciplinary research**.
- Academic institutions working in advanced quantitative fields require institutional mechanisms capable of responding to rapidly changing research priorities and technological developments.

Research and Innovation:

- Statistical science has become increasingly important with the growth of **Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Big Data, econometrics and computational methods**.
- A strong national institution in statistical sciences can contribute to India's capabilities in data-driven research, evidence-based governance and technological innovation.

Parliamentary Standing Committees:

Meaning and Purpose:

- **Parliamentary Standing Committees** are permanent parliamentary committees that undertake detailed examination of legislation, government functioning, financial matters and policy issues within their respective jurisdictions.
- Unlike **ad hoc committees**, Standing Committees continue to function on a continuing basis, although their membership is generally reconstituted periodically.

Department-Related Standing Committees:

- The system of **Department-Related Standing Committees** was introduced in 1993 to strengthen parliamentary scrutiny and executive accountability.
- There are currently **24 Department-Related Standing Committees**, each consisting of **31 members**, including **21 members from the Lok Sabha** and **10 members from the Rajya Sabha**.
- Their members are nominated by the **Speaker of the Lok Sabha** and the **Chairman of the Rajya Sabha**, respectively, and their term does not exceed **1 year**.

Role in Legislative Scrutiny:

- Department-Related Standing Committees examine Bills referred to them by the **Speaker of the Lok Sabha or the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha** and submit reports containing their observations and recommendations.
- They can examine the **general principles and clauses of referred Bills**, enabling more specialised and detailed legislative scrutiny than may be possible during floor debates.
- The committees also examine **Demands for Grants, annual reports and national basic long-term policy documents** falling within their jurisdiction when referred to them.

Finance Committee and the ISI Bill:

- The **Standing Committee on Finance** is one of the 24 Department-Related Standing Committees and covers the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** within its jurisdiction.
- Its jurisdiction therefore provides an institutional basis for examining legislation concerning statistical institutions and related governmental responsibilities.
- The referral of the ISI Bill to the committee can facilitate examination of its **governance structure, financial provisions, institutional accountability and implications for statistical education and research**.

Significance for Governance and Public Policy:

Evidence-Based Policymaking:

- High-quality statistics enable governments to identify development gaps, allocate resources and assess the effectiveness of public policies.
- Strong statistical institutions therefore contribute to **evidence-based governance and outcome-oriented policymaking**.

Statistical Capacity and Data Ecosystem:

- India's expanding digital economy and increasing availability of administrative and real-time datasets require advanced capabilities in **statistical modelling, data interpretation, quality assurance and quantitative analysis**.
- Strengthening specialised statistical education can contribute to the availability of skilled professionals for government, academia, industry and research institutions.

National Development:

- Reliable statistical capacity supports measurement of **poverty, employment, economic growth, inflation, health, education, agriculture and other development indicators**.
- Institutions such as ISI can contribute to improving India's ability to generate and interpret quantitative evidence for national development.

Issues for Parliamentary Examination:

Institutional Autonomy and Accountability:

- The new governance structure should maintain an appropriate balance between **institutional autonomy, governmental oversight and parliamentary accountability**.

- Academic and research institutions require sufficient autonomy to preserve scholarly independence while remaining accountable for public resources.

Financial Sustainability:

- The proposed framework should ensure adequate and predictable funding for **research, infrastructure, faculty development, student support and advanced statistical computing.**
- Financial mechanisms should promote both accountability and the long-term research capacity of the Institute.

Academic and Administrative Balance:

- The institutional structure should avoid excessive administrative centralisation while ensuring effective coordination among the Board, Academic Council, Director and individual centres.
- Clear separation of academic and administrative responsibilities can strengthen institutional efficiency.

Way Forward:

Strengthen Institutional Autonomy:

- The statutory framework should preserve **academic freedom, research autonomy and merit-based decision-making** while maintaining appropriate public accountability.

Modernise Statistical Education:

- ISI should expand interdisciplinary programmes connecting statistics with **Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, economics, public policy, computational science and emerging data technologies.**

Strengthen Public Statistical Capacity:

- Greater collaboration among ISI, government statistical agencies, universities and research institutions can strengthen India's broader **official statistical ecosystem.**

Promote Data Literacy and Evidence-Based Governance:

- Statistical institutions should contribute to improving data literacy among policymakers and public institutions so that quantitative evidence is appropriately interpreted and used.

Conclusion:

- The **Indian Statistical Institute Bill, 2026** seeks to provide a modern statutory and governance framework for an institution that has played a foundational role in India's statistical and quantitative sciences.
- Its referral to the **Department-Related Standing Committee on Finance** highlights the importance of detailed parliamentary scrutiny of legislation governing institutions of national significance.
- The Bill's success will ultimately depend on maintaining an appropriate balance among **academic autonomy, institutional accountability, financial sustainability and research excellence.**
- A strengthened ISI can contribute to India's transition towards **data-driven governance, evidence-based policymaking and a knowledge-intensive economy.**

Value Addition for UPSC:

Important Constitutional and Parliamentary Concepts:

- **Parliamentary Committees:** They enable detailed legislative and executive scrutiny and strengthen the principle of **legislative oversight over the executive**.
- **Department-Related Standing Committees:** They provide specialised scrutiny of **Bills, Demands for Grants, annual reports and policy documents** within their jurisdiction.

Prelims Facts:

- **ISI founded:** 1931.
- **Founder:** Professor P. C. Mahalanobis.
- **Institution of National Importance:** 1959.
- **Proposed legislation:** Indian Statistical Institute Bill, 2026.
- **Standing Committee examining the Bill:** Department-Related Standing Committee on Finance.
- **Department-Related Standing Committees introduced:** 1993.
- **Current number of Department-Related Standing Committees:** 24.
- **Membership of each Department-Related Standing Committee:** 31 members, comprising 21 from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha.

Supreme Court Invokes Article 142 to Quash NEET-UG Protest FIRs, Reinforcing Complete Justice and Constitutional Protection of Peaceful Dissent

Recent Developments:

- On **1 September 2026**, the Supreme Court invoked its extraordinary powers under **Article 142** to quash FIRs arising from student protests against irregularities in the **NEET-UG 2026** examination.
- The three-judge Bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana considered applications moved by the Delhi Police and governments of several States seeking closure of criminal proceedings arising from protests held between **20 July and 25 July 2026**.
- The Court held that the case was appropriate for exercising Article 142 because many young protesters had participated **bona fide in peaceful demonstrations**, and continuation of criminal proceedings could adversely affect their future prospects.
- The Court directed that other FIRs concerning the same incidents, including those not formally brought before it, should not be pursued or investigated and should be treated as closed.
- However, the Court permitted the authorities to register fresh FIRs against **2,873 individuals** identified as having serious criminal antecedents, particularly where investigation was necessary concerning bodily harm or destruction of public property.
- The Union Government also undertook to formulate, in consultation with States and Union Territories, a **pan-India compensation policy** for families of students who died by suicide in connection with the NEET-UG 2026 examination within **90 days**.

Understanding Article 142:

Constitutional Basis:

- **Article 142(1)** empowers the Supreme Court to pass any decree or order necessary for doing “**complete justice**” in any cause or matter pending before it, and such orders are enforceable throughout India.
- Article 142(2) additionally enables the Supreme Court, subject to parliamentary law, to exercise powers relating to securing attendance, discovery or production of documents, and investigation or punishment of contempt of itself.
- The provision therefore gives the Supreme Court a **wide remedial jurisdiction** intended to address situations where ordinary legal remedies may be inadequate to achieve complete justice.

Nature and Limits of the Power:

- Article 142 is an **extraordinary constitutional power**, but it is not an unlimited or arbitrary judicial power.
- In **Prem Chand Garg v. Excise Commissioner, U.P. (1962)**, the Supreme Court held that Article 142 cannot be used to make an order inconsistent with constitutional provisions or fundamental rights.
- The Court has subsequently emphasised that Article 142 cannot be used to **supplant substantive law** or create a legal regime contrary to express statutory provisions.
- Thus, the constitutional philosophy underlying Article 142 is **equitable and complete justice within constitutional boundaries**, rather than unrestricted judicial law-making.

Article 142 and the NEET-UG Protest Case:

Why the Supreme Court Intervened:

- The Court considered the **future prospects of young protesters** who had participated in peaceful demonstrations and recognised that criminal proceedings could impose long-term consequences disproportionate to their participation in the protests.
- The decision also reflected the principle that **mere participation in a peaceful protest does not automatically constitute a criminal offence**, while individuals responsible for serious violence or property destruction cannot claim blanket protection.
- The distinction between peaceful participation and serious criminal conduct demonstrates an attempt to balance **individual liberty, public order and accountability**.

Directions Issued by the Court:

- The Supreme Court **quashed the FIRs** placed before it and directed closure of other FIRs relating to the same protest incidents between 20 July and 25 July 2026.
- States and Union Territories were directed not to register fresh FIRs concerning the same incidents, except in circumstances specifically permitted by the Court.
- The authorities retained the ability to proceed against **2,873 persons** identified as having serious criminal antecedents.
- The Union Government was directed to formulate a **nationwide compensation mechanism** for affected families within 90 days.
- The Court also clarified that its directions were based on the **peculiar facts and circumstances of the case** and should not automatically be treated as a binding precedent.

Fundamental Rights and Right to Protest:

Constitutional Protection:

- Peaceful protest derives constitutional protection primarily from **Article 19(1)(a)**, which guarantees freedom of speech and expression, and **Article 19(1)(b)**, which guarantees the right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
- These rights are not absolute. Article 19 permits reasonable restrictions on specified constitutional grounds, including **sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, public order and morality**.
- Therefore, democratic protest occupies an important position in constitutional governance, but it must remain consistent with public order and other legal limitations.

Balancing Liberty and Public Order:

- The NEET-UG case demonstrates the constitutional challenge of distinguishing between **legitimate dissent** and unlawful conduct occurring during a demonstration.
- A blanket criminalisation of peaceful participation may have a chilling effect on democratic expression, whereas immunity for violence or destruction of public property could undermine the rule of law.
- Article 142 allowed the Court to craft a case-specific remedy that attempted to protect peaceful protesters while preserving the possibility of criminal investigation against persons associated with serious offences.

Landmark Uses of Article 142:

Ayodhya Case, 2019:

- In the **Ayodhya judgment**, the Supreme Court exercised Article 142 while directing the creation of a scheme for the construction of a Ram temple and ordering allotment of suitable alternative land to the Sunni Central Waqf Board for a mosque.
- The case demonstrates the use of Article 142 for implementing a comprehensive remedy in a dispute involving complex constitutional, legal and social dimensions.

Bhopal Gas Tragedy:

- In the **Union Carbide litigation**, the Supreme Court used its extraordinary jurisdiction to facilitate a comprehensive settlement involving **US\$470 million** in compensation for victims of the Bhopal gas disaster.
- The case remains important for understanding the breadth of Article 142 and its relationship with constitutional rights and statutory law.

Highway Liquor Case, 2016:

- In **State of Tamil Nadu v. K. Balu**, the Supreme Court directed States and Union Territories to prohibit liquor shops within **500 metres** of national and State highways, citing road safety and the need to address drunken driving.
- The directions illustrate how Article 142 can be used to address a public-interest problem where the Court considers comprehensive directions necessary for effective justice.

Chandigarh Mayor Election Case, 2024:

- In **Kuldeep Kumar v. U.T. Chandigarh**, the Supreme Court set aside the mayoral election result after finding that eight votes in favour of Kuldeep Kumar had been improperly invalidated.

- The Court declared Kuldeep Kumar the validly elected mayor rather than ordering an entirely new election, thereby using Article 142 to preserve the integrity of the electoral process.
- The judgment emphasised that **free and fair elections form part of the basic structure of the Constitution**, making the case an important example of Article 142 protecting democratic processes.

Significance for Indian Polity and Governance:

Strengthening Constitutionalism:

- Article 142 enables the Supreme Court to address exceptional situations where strict application of ordinary remedies may leave substantial injustice unresolved.
- Its exercise in the NEET-UG protest matter reinforces the principle that **constitutional remedies must remain sensitive to individual liberty and proportionality**.

Protection of Democratic Dissent:

- Peaceful protest is an important mechanism through which citizens communicate grievances to the State.
- The decision reinforces the idea that criminal law should distinguish between **peaceful democratic participation and genuine criminal conduct**.

Judicial Accountability and Restraint:

- Because Article 142 provides exceptionally broad remedial powers, its exercise requires **judicial restraint, reasoned justification and constitutional discipline**.
- Excessive reliance on Article 142 could raise concerns regarding separation of powers if judicial directions effectively replace legislative policy-making.

Concerns and Challenges:

Risk of Judicial Overreach:

- Critics may argue that frequent use of Article 142 could expand judicial discretion beyond the traditional boundaries of adjudication.
- The constitutional balance requires the judiciary to remedy injustice without routinely assuming functions constitutionally assigned to the legislature or executive.

Consistency and Predictability:

- Case-specific remedies may create uncertainty if similar situations receive substantially different treatment.
- The Supreme Court's clarification that the NEET-UG directions were based on the **peculiar facts and circumstances** reduces the possibility of automatically treating the order as a general rule.

Accountability for Misuse of Criminal Law:

- The case also raises the broader governance question of how authorities should ensure that FIRs are registered on the basis of credible evidence and that peaceful democratic activity is not unnecessarily criminalised.

Way Forward:

- Authorities should develop clear operational guidelines distinguishing **peaceful protest, civil disobedience, public-order violations and serious criminal offences**.
- Law-enforcement agencies should ensure that criminal proceedings are based on evidence and individual culpability rather than merely on participation in a demonstration.
- Courts should continue applying Article 142 with **constitutional restraint, proportionality and case-specific reasoning**.
- The State should strengthen institutional mechanisms for addressing examination-related grievances so that students have accessible and credible avenues for seeking administrative and judicial remedies.
- Parliamentary and judicial oversight should encourage accountability while preserving the legitimate space required for **democratic dissent**.

Conclusion:

- The Supreme Court's September 2026 decision demonstrates the continuing significance of **Article 142 as a constitutional safety valve** for achieving complete justice in exceptional circumstances.
- By protecting young protesters from the long-term consequences of FIRs while permitting action against persons associated with serious criminal conduct, the Court attempted to balance **individual liberty, public order and rule of law**.
- The broader constitutional lesson is that Article 142 is most legitimate when used not as a substitute for legislation but as a carefully reasoned instrument for correcting exceptional injustice within the framework of the Constitution.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Prelims Facts:

- **Article 142:** Power of the Supreme Court to do **complete justice** in matters pending before it.
- **Article 19(1)(a):** Freedom of speech and expression.
- **Article 19(1)(b):** Right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
- **Prem Chand Garg case:** Article 142 cannot be exercised contrary to fundamental rights.
- **NEET-UG 2026 protest case:** FIRs relating to specified protests between **20 July and 25 July 2026** were quashed.
- **2,873 persons:** Exception made for persons identified as having serious criminal antecedents.
- **90 days:** Time given for formulation of a pan-India compensation mechanism for eligible affected families.

Possible Mains Question:

“Article 142 empowers the Supreme Court to do complete justice, but its exercise is subject to constitutional limitations. Discuss with reference to the Supreme Court’s decision concerning FIRs against NEET-UG protesters.”

Supreme Court Seeks Centre's View on Totaliser Machines to Protect Voter Secrecy and Prevent Booth-Wise Profiling

Recent Developments:

- On **1 September 2026**, the Supreme Court asked the Union Government to examine the feasibility of introducing **totaliser machines** for counting votes recorded through Electronic Voting Machines, with the objective of protecting the secrecy of voting patterns at individual polling stations.
- A three-judge Bench comprising **Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V. Mohana** is hearing petitions seeking a shift from booth-wise counting towards aggregation of votes from multiple polling stations.
- The petitioners argued that revealing booth-wise results can enable political actors to identify localities that supported or opposed them, potentially exposing voters to **intimidation, discrimination or post-election victimisation**.
- The Court observed that **secrecy of voting is fundamental to free and fair elections** and asked the Centre to clarify its position, including the legal, logistical and financial implications of introducing totalisers.
- The Election Commission has previously proposed the use of totalisers, including proposals sent to the Government in **2008 and 2014**, but the proposal has not yet resulted in their regular statutory adoption.

What is a Totaliser?:

Meaning and Function:

- A **totaliser** is an electronic interface that combines the votes recorded in multiple Electronic Voting Machines before the candidate-wise result of individual machines is disclosed.
- The Election Commission has considered a system capable of connecting up to **14 Control Units** and producing an aggregated candidate-wise total, thereby preventing the identification of the voting pattern of a particular polling station.
- Under the existing system, votes are counted **polling-station-wise**, whereas a totaliser would permit **cluster-wise aggregation**, thereby reducing the granularity of publicly available voting data.
- The principal objective is not to alter the number of votes received by any candidate but to prevent the disclosure of **booth-level voting preferences**.
- The technology is associated with India's indigenous electronic voting ecosystem developed by **Bharat Electronics Limited** and **Electronics Corporation of India Limited**, the two public-sector undertakings responsible for manufacturing EVMs and VVPAT systems under Election Commission guidance.

Why is a Totaliser Important?:

- Booth-wise counting can reveal the political preference of a geographically identifiable group of voters, particularly in areas where a polling station corresponds closely to a village, locality or neighbourhood.
- Such information may potentially facilitate **post-election profiling or victimisation**, especially where political competition is highly localised.
- A totaliser would pool votes from several polling stations before candidate-wise disclosure, making it substantially harder to determine how any particular booth voted.
- The Election Commission itself had earlier stated that totaliser-based counting could prevent **intimidation and post-election victimisation of electors**.

Understanding Electronic Voting Machines:

Structure and Working:

- An **Electronic Voting Machine** is an electronic device used to record and count votes cast during elections.
- EVMs were first used experimentally in **1982** in the by-election to the **Parur Assembly Constituency of Kerala**, covering 50 polling stations.
- An EVM consists principally of a **Control Unit** and a **Ballot Unit**, connected through a cable.
- The **Control Unit** remains with the authorised polling official and controls the voting process, while the **Ballot Unit** is placed inside the voting compartment where the elector records the vote.
- The Ballot Unit becomes operational after the polling official activates the voting process through the Control Unit.
- India subsequently expanded the use of EVMs nationally, and EVMs were used in all **543 Lok Sabha constituencies in the 2004 General Election**.

Security and Transparency Measures:

- EVMs used by the Election Commission are **stand-alone and non-networked machines**, operating independently through power packs or batteries.
- Each Ballot Unit, Control Unit and VVPAT carries a **unique identification number**, while the machines undergo randomisation and verification before deployment.
- After polling, EVMs are sealed in the presence of polling agents and stored in **strong rooms** protected by security arrangements, with candidates' representatives permitted to monitor the storage process.
- The total number of votes recorded at a polling station is documented through **Form 17C**, a key mechanism for maintaining an auditable record of votes polled.

Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail:

Purpose and Mechanism:

- **Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail** provides a physical paper trail through which an elector can verify that the vote recorded electronically corresponds to the chosen candidate.
- After the elector presses the candidate button, the VVPAT generates a printed slip containing relevant candidate information and symbol, which remains visible through a transparent window for approximately **7 seconds** before dropping into a sealed compartment.
- The system therefore creates an additional verification layer between **vote casting, electronic recording and vote counting**.

Evolution of VVPAT:

- The idea of VVPAT emerged in **2010**, while its first electoral use took place in the **Noksen Assembly Constituency of Nagaland in 2013**.
- The legal framework was introduced through amendments to the **Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961**, notified on **14 August 2013**.
- The Supreme Court's decision in **Dr. Subramanian Swamy v. Election Commission of India, 2013** supported the introduction of a paper trail to enhance transparency and voter confidence.
- Following the Supreme Court's **2019 directions**, VVPAT slips from **5 randomly selected polling stations in each Assembly Constituency or Assembly Segment** are mandatorily verified against the corresponding Control Unit results.

- During the **2019 Lok Sabha elections**, VVPATs were deployed at every polling station, making it the first Indian general election in which all polling stations were equipped with EVM-VVPAT systems. The Election Commission reported the availability of approximately **17.40 lakh VVPAT units** for the election.

Totaliser versus Existing Counting System:

Existing Booth-Wise Counting:

- Under the existing arrangement, the Control Unit of each EVM is counted separately and its candidate-wise result is recorded against the corresponding polling station.
- This process provides a high level of **granular electoral information**, allowing political parties and candidates to analyse voting patterns at the polling-station level.
- However, the same granularity can potentially reveal the political preference of geographically identifiable groups.

Totaliser-Based Counting:

- A totaliser would combine votes from multiple EVMs before revealing candidate-wise totals, thereby preserving the overall result while reducing the disclosure of individual booth preferences.
- The system would therefore seek to balance **electoral transparency** with **ballot secrecy**.
- Importantly, aggregation would not prevent the final constituency-level result from being determined; it would only alter the level at which intermediate voting data becomes visible.

Legal and Institutional Issues:

Need for Regulatory Changes:

- The present counting framework is governed by election laws and rules that provide for polling-station-wise handling of EVM results.
- Introducing totalisers may therefore require amendments to the **Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961**, along with corresponding administrative and procedural changes.
- The Election Commission has indicated that changes in the applicable rules require action by the Central Government in consultation with the Commission.

Transparency versus Secrecy:

- The central policy question is whether greater aggregation of voting data would strengthen **voter privacy** without weakening the transparency and auditability of elections.
- Critics of the proposal have raised concerns regarding the ability to independently cross-check aggregated results with polling-station records such as **Form 17C**.
- A carefully designed framework could preserve detailed records for auditing while restricting unnecessary public disclosure of booth-specific candidate-wise results.

Role of the Election Commission:

- The Election Commission has historically supported the principle behind totalisers and had proposed their introduction through electoral-rule amendments.
- At the same time, implementation requires consideration of **technical feasibility, statutory authority, administrative logistics, financial costs and audit mechanisms**.

- The present Supreme Court proceedings therefore concern not merely a technological device but the broader design of India's **electoral transparency and voter-protection framework**.

Significance for Indian Democracy:

Protection of Secrecy of Ballot:

- The secrecy of voting is essential because electors should be able to exercise their franchise without fear of retaliation based on their political choice.
- Totalisers could strengthen this principle by preventing the direct association of candidate-wise results with particular polling stations.

Reducing Electoral Victimisation:

- In highly localised electoral environments, knowledge of booth-wise voting patterns could potentially be used to identify communities or localities that supported a particular candidate.
- Aggregation could reduce the possibility of **post-election intimidation, discrimination or political retaliation**.

Balancing Transparency and Privacy:

- Democratic elections require both **transparent counting** and **confidential voting**.
- Excessive secrecy in counting may undermine public confidence, while excessive disclosure of granular voting data may weaken ballot secrecy.
- The totaliser debate therefore illustrates the constitutional and institutional challenge of achieving an appropriate balance between **accountability, transparency and voter privacy**.

Challenges in Introducing Totalisers:

Auditability and Verification:

- Any totaliser mechanism must allow election authorities and authorised stakeholders to verify that the aggregated result accurately corresponds to the underlying EVM records.
- The system should retain adequate audit trails without unnecessarily exposing booth-specific political preferences.

Legal and Administrative Preparedness:

- Adoption would require clear statutory rules, standard operating procedures, technical certification, staff training and mechanisms for resolving discrepancies.
- The Government must also assess the **financial and logistical implications** of deploying totalisers across different categories of elections.

Maintaining Public Confidence:

- Electoral reforms must be accompanied by transparent communication so that voters, candidates and political parties understand how aggregation works.
- The reform should strengthen, rather than weaken, public confidence in the **integrity of election results**.

Way Forward:

- The Government should undertake a comprehensive assessment involving the **Election Commission, technical experts, political parties and election-law specialists** before taking a final decision.
- A phased or **selective deployment** could be considered in constituencies or areas where there is a demonstrable risk of voter intimidation or post-election victimisation, consistent with earlier electoral-reform discussions.
- Any totaliser framework should preserve **Form 17C-based auditability**, independent verification and secure custody of EVMs while limiting unnecessary disclosure of booth-level voting preferences.
- The legal framework should clearly distinguish between information necessary for **electoral accountability** and information whose public disclosure may compromise **voter secrecy**.
- Technological reforms should ultimately be evaluated according to three principles: **accuracy of counting, transparency of verification and confidentiality of voter choice**.

Conclusion:

- The Supreme Court's September **2026** intervention has revived a long-standing electoral-reform proposal aimed at reconciling **booth-level counting with the constitutional importance of ballot secrecy**.
- A totaliser would not change the votes cast or the final electoral outcome; rather, it would alter the manner in which candidate-wise voting information is aggregated and disclosed.
- The broader issue is therefore one of **institutional design**: India must maintain transparent and verifiable elections while ensuring that citizens can exercise their franchise without fear of political profiling or retaliation.
- A carefully regulated totaliser mechanism, supported by robust audit trails and clear statutory safeguards, could contribute to a more **privacy-conscious and voter-centric electoral system**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Prelims Facts:

- **Totaliser:** Device proposed for aggregating votes from multiple EVM Control Units before candidate-wise results are disclosed.
- **Aggregation Capacity:** The Election Commission has considered a totaliser capable of combining results from up to **14 EVM Control Units**.
- **First EVM Use:** **1982**, Parur Assembly Constituency, Kerala.
- **First VVPAT Use:** **2013**, Noksen Assembly Constituency, Nagaland.
- **VVPAT Legal Framework:** Introduced on **14 August 2013** through amendments to the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.
- **2019 Lok Sabha Election:** VVPATs were deployed at **all polling stations**.
- **Mandatory VVPAT Verification:** VVPAT slips from **5 randomly selected polling stations** are verified in each Assembly Constituency or Assembly Segment, as applicable.
- **Key Record:** **Form 17C** records the total votes polled at a polling station and supports the audit trail.

QUESTIONS

1. With reference to the Indian diaspora and their economic engagement with India, consider the following statements:

- (1) Remittances are generally considered more volatile than portfolio flows because they depend heavily on international market conditions.
- (2) The Indian diaspora comprises Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs).
- (3) Transitioning from remittance reliance to productive investments like equities and startups directly enhances national physical capital formation.
- (4) Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) are granted voting rights in Indian Parliamentary elections provided they hold a valid Indian passport.

Options:

- (A) 1, 2 and 3
- (B) 2 and 3
- (C) 1 and 4
- (D) 2, 3 and 4

2. Consider the following statements regarding the structural framework of the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS):

- (1) The mission was approved with a total outlay of ₹3,660 crore covering an implementation period of nine years.
- (2) Technology Translation Research Parks (TTRPs) were established to transition basic theoretical research directly into early-stage laboratory prototypes.
- (3) The BharatGen initiative under NM-ICPS focuses on building sovereign, multilingual, and multimodal generative AI capabilities.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (A) 1 and 3 only
- (B) 1 and 2 only
- (C) 2 and 3 only
- (D) 1, 2 and 3

3. Consider the following statements regarding the legal and administrative framework proposed in the Indian Statistical Institute Bill, 2026:

- (1) The Bill seeks to repeal and replace the Indian Statistical Institute Act, 1959.
- (2) Under the new Bill, the Indian Statistical Institute will continue to be registered as a society under West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961.
- (3) The Chairperson of the Board of Governors is nominated by the Visitor based on recommendations of the Central Government.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (A) 1 and 2 only
- (B) 2 and 3 only
- (C) 1 and 3 only
- (D) 1, 2 and 3

4. Consider the following statements regarding the scope and limitations of Article 142 of the Constitution of India:

- (1) Powers under Article 142(1) allow the Supreme Court to pass orders enforceable throughout the territory of India.
- (2) Article 142(2) grants the Supreme Court power to secure document discovery and punish for contempt of itself, subject to parliamentary law.
- (3) In *Prem Chand Garg v. Excise Commissioner, U.P.* (1962), the Supreme Court ruled that Article 142 can be used to override fundamental rights if needed for social equity.
- (4) Orders passed strictly under Article 142 automatically create a binding statutory precedent that overrides express legislative enactments across all High Courts.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (A) Only one
- (B) Only two
- (C) Only three
- (D) All four

5. Given below are two statements regarding electoral counting procedures and administrative accountability:

Statement 1: The introduction of totalisers for vote counting requires amendments to the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.

Statement 2: The Election Commission of India possesses independent constitutional authority under Article 324 to amend electoral rules without Central Government notification.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (A) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, and Statement 2 is the correct explanation for Statement 1.
- (B) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, but Statement 2 is NOT the correct explanation for Statement 1.
- (C) Statement 1 is correct, but Statement 2 is incorrect.
- (D) Statement 1 is incorrect, but Statement 2 is correct.

ANSWER KEY

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



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