







Daily CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Offline Centre Location:

SCO 173-174, Sector 17C, Chandigarh





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The world's longest banana infructescence is found in the forests of the Andaman Islands



 A species of wild banana, Musa indandamanensis, endemic to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, has set a world record with an infructescence (fruit bunch axis) measuring 4.2 metres, the longest ever recorded among banana species globally.

About the Musa indandamanensis:

 Musa indandamanensis is a wild banana species that is endemic to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

- It was first discovered in 2012 near the Krishna Nala reserve forest in Little Andaman and officially described in 2014.
- The species was later rediscovered in Campbell Bay, located in the Nicobar Islands.
- The discovery was led by Dr. Lal Ji Singh, Head of the Botanical Survey of India's Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre. Due to its limited natural range and habitat vulnerability, it is listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN.

Features:

- The species holds the world record for the longest banana inflorescence, measuring 4.2 metres. The plant typically reaches a height of about 11 metres, with stem girth varying by location: under 100 cm in Little Andaman and around 110 cm in Campbell Bay.
- It bears golden-yellow to orange fruits, which ripen into a goldenorange pulp containing many irregular-shaped seeds.
- The plant thrives in moist tropical forests, typically near waterfalls and streams.
- It is considered a valuable genetic resource for developing droughtresistant, disease-tolerant, and high-yielding banana varieties.
- Specimens are showcased in botanical institutions such as the Indian Museum in Kolkata and the Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre.
- For ex-situ conservation, saplings have been planted in botanical gardens in Howrah, Prayagraj, and Port Blair.





[UPSC 2016] Recently, our scientists have discovered a new and distinct species of banana plant which attains a height of about 11 metres and has orange-coloured fruit pulp. In which part of India has it been discovered?

Options: (a) Andaman Islands

- (b) Anaimalai Forests
- (c) Maikala Hills
- (d) Tropical rainforests of the northeast

Answer a





India-Pakistan ceasefire

- After three days of intense hostilities, India and Pakistan reached an "understanding" to stop all military action and firing.
- Eighteen days after a terror attack in Pahalgam, J&K, triggered an Indian military strike and four days of intense conflict with Pakistan, both nuclear-armed nations agreed to cease hostilities and halt military action from 5 pm on May 10.



Ceasefire Bilaterally Agreed, Punitive Measures Unaffected

- Official sources emphasised that the decision was a bilateral agreement, not mediated by any third party.
- India clarified that the ceasefire would not impact the punitive actions taken in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.



India-Pakistan Conflict

 The recent India-Pakistan military confrontation, the most intense in 20 years, has concluded. However, the nature of engagement between the two countries has shifted significantly.

India Redefines Terms of Engagement

- Since 2014, India has moved to dismantle the framework that allowed Pakistan to exploit nuclear deterrence and cross-border terrorism.
- Crossing the LoC post-Uri (2016)
- Striking deep into Pakistan during Balakot (2019)
- Revoking J&K's special status
- Attacking terror camps in West Punjab (2025)
- Suspending the Indus Waters Treaty.



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Diplomatic Opportunities

- Past ceasefires and backchannel negotiations (e.g., 2004–2007, 2021) have failed due to political instability in Pakistan and internal military-civilian rifts.
- The rise of Gen. Asim Munir in 2022 hardened Pakistan's stance and derailed earlier initiatives.
- India's broader national power has increased, but military superiority over Pakistan remains limited.
 Achieving operational dominance is crucial for treating terrorism as an "act of war" and deterring future provocations.
- India may need to build links with Pakistani civil society and political elements to reduce military dominance and promote peace.

Role of us

- US President Donald Trump claimed credit for brokering the ceasefire after overnight negotiations.
- Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Vice President JD Vance engaged with senior Indian and Pakistani leaders. Rubio said both nations agreed to begin broader talks at a neutral venue, a claim India later refuted.



 Despite US claims, Indian officials emphasised that the ceasefire was a bilateral understanding with no foreign mediation, consistent with the 1972 Simla Agreement.

Question: Regarding the most recent India-Pakistan ceasefire agreement (May 2025), consider the following statements:

- 1. The ceasefire was mediated by the United States through highlevel negotiations involving both Indian and Pakistani leadership.
- 2.India explicitly stated that the ceasefire would not alter or roll back its punitive measures in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.
- 3. The ceasefire marks a strategic reversal of India's recent posture of crossing the Line of Control and conducting deep strikes inside Pakistan.
- 4.The ceasefire agreement is consistent with the principles of the Simla Agreement (1972), particularly regarding bilateralism.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 and 3 only B. 2 and 4 only C. 1, 2, and 4 only D. 1, 3, and 4 only

Answer: B. 2 and 4 only

Explanation:

• Statement 1 - Incorrect: While the U.S. claimed involvement, India officially denied any foreign mediation, asserting that the ceasefire was bilaterally agreed.



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- Statement 2 Correct: India clarified that its punitive measures post-Pahalgam would remain unaffected by the ceasefire.
- Statement 3 Incorrect: India's recent strategic posture has been assertive (e.g., Balakot, West Punjab strikes), and the ceasefire does not imply a reversal.
- **Statement 4 Correct:** The insistence on bilateralism aligns with the Simla Agreement, which rejects third-party mediation.

Question: The 2025 India-Pakistan ceasefire, described as the most intense military confrontation in two decades, reflects both a continuity and a shift in India's strategic doctrine vis-à-vis Pakistan. In light of this, critically examine the evolving nature of India's deterrence posture, the role of bilateralism in conflict resolution, and the challenges of sustaining peace in a nuclearised South Asian context. (250 words)





Centre plans revision of 'safe harbour' clause in IT Act

 The government of India is reconsidering the concept of safe harbour for social media platforms, citing growing concerns about fake news online, cyber fraud, and Al-generated deepfakes.



About Safe Harbour

- Safe harbour is a legal concept that protects online intermediaries (websites/platforms hosting usergenerated content) from criminal liability for third-party content.
- It forms a key safeguard in promoting innovation and shielding platforms from being punished for content they did not create.

In the U.S., this is covered under Section 230 of the Communications Act of 1934, introduced in 1996.

In India, Section 79 of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, provides similar protection to intermediaries.

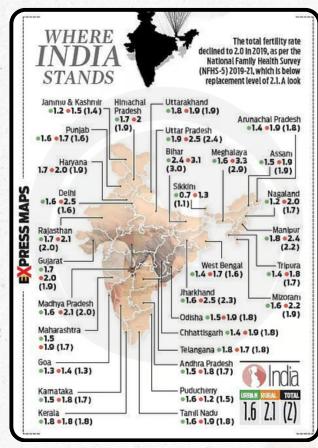
Limitations of safe harbour in India:

 Protection is conditional: If intermediaries receive "actual knowledge" of illegal content (via court order or government notification), they must act swiftly to remove it, else lose protection under Section 79. Notable case: In 2004, the head of eBay India was arrested over a child sexual abuse material listing.





India's Total Fertility Rate at 2.0: Demographic Dividend



- The Total Fertility Rate in India remains at 2.0; Bihar records the highest count, and Bengal the lowest. The Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2021, released by the Registrar General of India (RGI), presents a crucial snapshot of India's demographic transition.
- It confirms that the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), the average number of children born to a woman in her lifetime, stood at 2.0 in 2021, the same as 2020

Highlights:

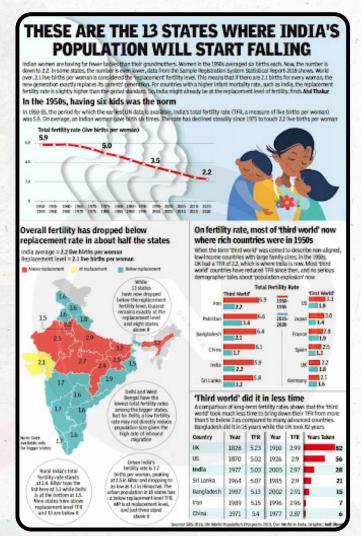
- National Average (2021): 2.0
- Highest: Bihar (3.0)
- Lowest: West Bengal and Delhi (1.4) each)

Age Composition Trends:

- 0–14 age group: Down from 41.2% (1971) to 24.8% (2021)
- 15–59 (working-age): Up from 53.4% to 66.2%
- 60+ (elderly): Up from 6% to 9%, with 65+ alone rising from 5.3% to 5.9%

States with the Highest **Elderly Populations**

 Kerala (14.4%), Tamil Nadu (12.9%), Himachal Pradesh (12.3%)





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Implications

- Demographic Dividend: India is currently in a "demographic sweet spot," with over 66% of its population in the working-age group (15–59). However, the declining TFR signals a shrinking base of future workers, and this window may close within two decades.
- Emerging Demographic Divide: States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, with higher TFRs, will continue to grow rapidly, whereas southern and some eastern states with sub-replacement fertility may see population stagnation or decline, posing inter-state resource and representation challenges.
- Ageing Population: Kerala and Tamil Nadu are entering a phase similar to that of ageing societies in East Asia and Europe. This implies greater healthcare costs, pension burdens, and the need for elderly care infrastructure.
- Policy. While the 2024 interim
 Budget proposed a high-power
 committee to tackle "population
 growth," the SRS data suggests
 the real challenge is population
 ageing and regional imbalance,
 not an uncontrolled rise.
- Census Delay & Data Gaps India has not conducted a Census since 2011. Without updated population data, evidence-based policymaking remains hampered. The SRS provides estimates, but cannot replace the granularity and accuracy of a Census.

Conclusion

- India is experiencing an advanced demographic transition, evident in its falling TFR, delayed marriage age, and rising elderly population.
- While policymakers continue to frame concerns in terms of overpopulation, the real challenge is managing the post-replacementlevel dynamics, ensuring social security, labour force participation, and inter-generational equity in a rapidly changing demographic landscape.



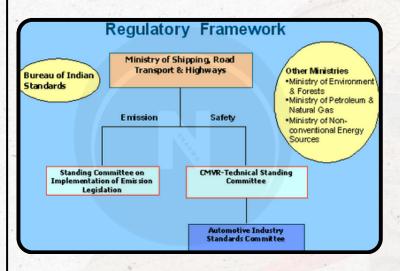


Regulatory Framework in India

 IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:

Platforms must appoint:

- A Nodal Officer, A Grievance Officer (resident in India),
- Periodically submit reports of complaints they receive on content, and the action taken against them for this.
- IT Amendment Rules, 2023:
- Fact Check Unit: Empowered Press Information Bureau's Fact Check Unit to label content as "fake news", leading to possible removal of safe harbour.
- Legal challenge: Comedian Kunal Kamra and others challenged the amendment in the Bombay High Court, for exceeding its authority and not following due process. The Bombay HC ruled in his favour, and the case is being appealed by the government.



Non-compliance by platforms:

- Allegations that platforms (e.g., Twitter/X) are:
- Flouting Indian laws, delaying takedowns, and ignoring government orders without prior user notice.
- This includes ongoing litigation involving X (Twitter) in the Karnataka High Court.
- Need for proactive moderation: The government seeks amendments to ensure social media companies proactively address fake news, Al deepfakes, cyber frauds, and other online harms

Conclusion: This is a significant development in the cybersecurity and governance domain, and closely tied to debates on intermediary liability, free speech, and digital regulation.

Q. Regarding the proposed revision of the 'safe harbour' clause under the Information Technology Act, 2000, consider the following statements:

- 1.The doctrine of "actual knowledge" under Section 79 of the IT Act was introduced via a Supreme Court judgment that read down the scope of intermediary liability.
- 2. The IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code)
 Amendment Rules, 2023, provide statutory backing to the PIB's Fact Check Unit, empowering it to issue binding takedown orders.
- 3. Any loss of safe harbour protection automatically renders an intermediary criminally liable for all user-generated content on its platform, irrespective of intent or action taken.





4. India's safe harbour framework under Section 79 draws inspiration from the U.S. Communications Decency Act, but applies stricter conditionalities for retaining protection.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 4 only B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1, 2 and 4 only

D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Correct Answer: A. 1 and 4 only

Explanation:

- Statement 1 Correct: The concept of "actual knowledge" was clarified by the Supreme Court in Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015), which held that intermediaries are only required to act upon content flagged by a court order or government notification.
- Statement 2 Incorrect: The PIB Fact Check Unit has been authorised under executive rules, but its authority is under legal challenge and lacks statutory (i.e., Parliamentary) backing. It can lead to content takedowns but not through binding statutory law—hence, not purely legislative.
- Statement 3 Incorrect: Loss of safe harbour does not automatically impose criminal liability; it removes immunity, making the platform vulnerable to being prosecuted or sued under other applicable laws. Liability is not automatic and must be established based on facts.

• Statement 4 Correct: India's Section 79, like the U.S. Section 230, protects intermediaries but imposes more proactive due diligence obligations, including takedown processes and local compliance officers.

Q. Concerning the recent Sample Registration System (SRS) 2021 report, consider the following statements:

- 1. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in India has fallen below the replacement level for the first time since independence.
- 2. Kerala has the lowest TFR among all Indian states.
- 3. The share of the elderly population (60+) has been increasing consistently since 1971, while the proportion of the population in the 0–14 age group has declined.
- 4. The SRS survey provides decadal population census data collected from over 88,000 villages and urban units.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 3 only

B. 3 only

C. 2 and 4 only

D. 1, 3 and 4 only

Correct Answer: B. 3 only

Explanation:

• Statement 1 – Incorrect: India reached the replacement level TFR of 2.1 in 2019, so this is not the first time it has fallen below.



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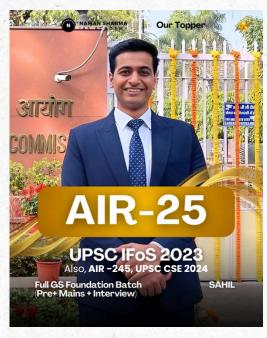
- Statement 2 Incorrect: Kerala has a low TFR (1.5), but Delhi and West Bengal have the lowest (1.4).
- Statement 3 Correct: According to SRS data, there has been a consistent rise in elderly population and a decline in the 0–14 age group since 1971.
- Statement 4 Incorrect: The SRS is an annual demographic survey, not a decennial census. Also, it covers 8,842 sample units, not 88,000.



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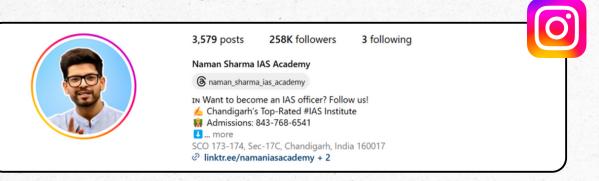
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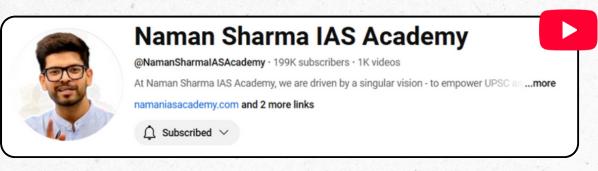






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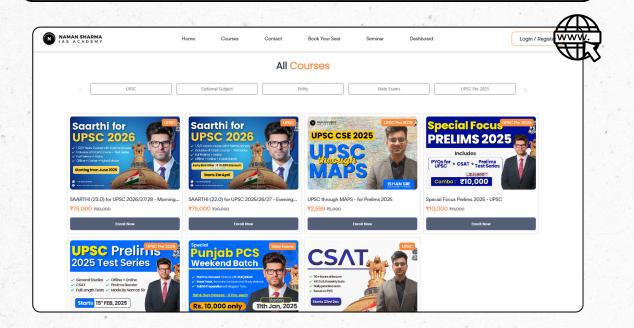






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