

SECTION 1: POLITY & GOVERNANCE (GS PAPER 2)

1. Regulation of Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)

- **Statutory Basis & Registration:** Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act (RP Act), 1951 lays down the requirements for registering a political party with the Election Commission of India (ECI).
- **Current Status & "Letter Pad" Parties:** India has over 2,800 RUPPs, but only around 750 contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Parties that maintain registration without contesting are termed "letter pad parties". Six Gujarat-based RUPPs received approximately ₹1,700 crore in donations in FY 2023–24 while fielding only 15 candidates combined, exceeding the ₹1,480 crore collected by five nationally recognised parties (excluding the BJP) combined.
- **Financial Privileges & Tax Exemption:**
 - **Tax Exemption:** Donations to registered political parties are exempt under Section 12 of the Income Tax Act, 2025.
 - **Disclosure Threshold:** Under Section 29C of the RP Act, failure to submit annual audit reports itemising donor details above ₹20,000 results in the loss of income tax exemption.
 - **Cash Donation Cap:** Donations above ₹2,000 must be accepted solely via banking channels (cheque or bank transfer).
 - **Electoral Privileges:** RUPPs get a common symbol for contesting Lok Sabha and Assembly elections and are permitted 20 star campaigners.
- **Legal Position on Deregistration:**
 - In *Indian National Congress v. Institute of Social Welfare and Others* (2002), the Supreme Court ruled that the ECI has no statutory power under the RP Act to deregister a political party.
 - **Narrow Exceptions:** Deregistration is allowed only if registration was obtained by fraud, if the party ceases allegiance to the Constitution, or if it is declared unlawful by the Central Government.
 - **Note:** Delisting inactive parties by ECI notifications does not legally remove them from the official statutory register.
- **Proposed Reforms:**
 - **Law Commission (255th Report):** Recommended empowering ECI to deregister parties failing to contest elections for 10 consecutive years.
 - **ECI Proposals:** Proposed linking tax exemption to winning seats or securing a minimum vote percentage (e.g., the 1% vote threshold used for common symbol allocation).

2. Governance Architecture of Ladakh

- Background: Following the J&K Reorganisation in 2019, Ladakh was carved out as a Union Territory without a legislature. Demands for statehood, Sixth Schedule inclusion, and legislative representation led to negotiations involving the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA).
- Proposed *Sui Generis* Model:
 - The Central Government has proposed a unique (*sui generis*) elected body carrying legislative, executive, and financial powers under Article 371 of the Constitution.
 - This structure is neither Statehood nor a standard UT with a legislature, requiring a formal Constitutional Amendment. Members would be directly elected from territorial constituencies.
- Existing Governance Tier: The Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDC) operate under the LAHDC Act, 1995 (enacted by J&K Assembly). Separate hill councils function for Leh (est. 1995) and Kargil (est. 2003) to manage local land allotment, planning, and village administration.

SECTION 2: ECONOMY, FINANCIAL TECH & ENVIRONMENT (GS PAPER 3)

3. SEBI & RBI "Demat 2.0" Pilot for Corporate Bond Tokenisation

- Context & Objective: The RBI and SEBI jointly launched the Demat 2.0 pilot project to test distributed ledger technology (DLT) for tokenising corporate bonds and settling trades in Wholesale Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC).
 - Core Technological Shift:
 - Demat 1.0 (Depositories Act, 1996): Converted physical share certificates into electronic entries but left payment settlement on separate banking rails.
 - Demat 2.0: Integrates both the security leg (bond token) and cash leg (CBDC) onto a single unified ledger, executing instantaneous Delivery versus Payment (DvP) via smart contracts and eliminating settlement counterparty risk.
 - Key Institutional Stakeholders: Depositories (CDSL, NSDL), Stock Exchanges (BSE, NSE), Major Banks (HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, SBI, Axis Bank), and NPCI. Initial pilot trades include a ₹500 crore corporate bond issue by Larsen & Toubro.
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4. Blue Economy Policy & Marine Frameworks

- Definition: Sustainable utilization of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving ocean ecosystem health. India's draft Blue Economy policy frames the ocean as the 6th dimension of national growth.
- India's Maritime Footprint: ~11,000 km coastline and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of ~2 million sq km (extending up to 200 nautical miles under UNCLOS).
- Flagship Pillars:
 1. Deep Ocean Mission (Ministry of Earth Sciences): Deep-sea exploration, survey of seabed minerals/polymetallic nodules, and the Samudrayaan manned submersible project.
 2. Sagarmala Programme (Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways): Port-led development, port modernization, coastal shipping, and inland waterways.
 3. Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY): Harnessing fisheries potential, aquaculture expansion, and fisher welfare.

5. Hydrological Dynamics & Bihar Flooding

- The Deficit Flood Paradox: Bihar experienced widespread flooding across 14 districts in 2026 despite recording a 27% seasonal rainfall deficit (601.1 mm received vs normal).
- Hydrological Mechanism (Backwater Effect):
 - Inverted Sequence: Typically, northern tributaries entering from Nepal (Bagmati, Kamla, Kosi, Gandak) rise first. In 2026, intense rainfall in UP (Allahabad/Varanasi region) caused the main stem of the Ganga to swell first.
 - Backwater Effect: High stage/water levels in the main stem (Ganga) blocked the discharge of tributaries (Gandak, Punpun), forcing tributary runoff to overflow across local floodplains without local rainfall.
- Barrage & Embankment Challenges:
 - Opening all 36 gates of the Valmikinagar Barrage on the Gandak failed to alleviate flooding due to the downstream backwater bottleneck on the Ganga.
 - Embankment Limitations: Over 3,730 km of river embankments protect ~3,600 sq km, but heavy siltation lifts riverbeds relative to adjacent land, increasing catastrophic breach risk (e.g., 2008 Kosi breach at Kusaha) and causing persistent waterlogging behind embankment walls.

- Farakka Barrage Context: Commissioned in 1975 in Murshidabad district (West Bengal) on the Ganga to divert water into a feeder canal for the Bhagirathi-Hooghly system to flush silt for Kolkata Port. The 30-year 1996 India-Bangladesh Farakka Water Sharing Treaty expires in December 2026.

SECTION 3: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SECURITY (GS PAPER 2 & 3)

6. BRICS Geopolitical & Institutional Architecture

- Evolution: Coined in 2001 (Goldman Sachs); formalised in 2006 (BRIC); first summit at Yekaterinburg in 2009; South Africa joined in 2010. Expanded in 2024 (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE). Indonesia became the 11th full member (and 1st Southeast Asian member) in January 2025.
- Economic Weight: Controls ~36.8%–37% of global GDP (PPP) (surpassing G7's <29%), ~45% of world population, and ~42% of global oil production.
- Core Financial Institutions:
 - New Development Bank (NDB): Formed via 2014 Fortaleza Agreement (operational 2015, HQ Shanghai). The 5 founding members hold equal capital and voting rights. Non-founder members admitted: Bangladesh, UAE, Egypt, and Algeria.
 - Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA): \$100 billion treaty-based currency swap facility providing short-term liquidity support during balance-of-payments crises.
 - Alternative Payment Rails: Development of BRICS Pay (linking UPI, SPFS, CIPS, Pix) and bilateral trade settlements via Special Rupee Vostro Accounts.

7. Bilateral & Regional Security Highlights

- ASEAN-India Relations: ASEAN established in 1967 via the Bangkok Declaration (10 member states). India became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner in 1992, Full Dialogue Partner in 1996, and Comprehensive Strategic Partner in 2022. Major connectivity projects: Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway.
- Exercise Samudra Laksamana: 4th edition of the bilateral naval exercise between India and Malaysia held at Lumut, Malaysia (Royal Malaysian Navy main base on the west coast facing the Strait of Malacca) featuring INS Mysore (Delhi-class guided-missile destroyer).

- India-Morocco Defence Cooperation: Inaugural Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting held in New Delhi (September 2026) under a September 2025 MoU. Both nations mark 70 years of diplomatic relations in 2027 (est. 1957).
- IAEA & Iran Nuclear Safeguards: IAEA Board of Governors voted (23 out of 35) to report Iran to the UN Security Council over non-cooperation with undeclared uranium trace investigations. IAEA was set up in 1957 ("Atoms for Peace") in Vienna. Non-nuclear weapon states party to NPT sign Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements, while the Additional Protocol grants expanded inspector access.
- India-Sri Lanka Defence MoUs: Signed three key agreements: (1) Upgradation of L70 40mm anti-aircraft guns for Sri Lanka Air Force, (2) National Cadet Corps (NCC) cooperation, and (3) National Defence College (NDC) cooperation.
- India-Japan Defence Partnership: Implementation of UNICORN (integrated communications antenna system in a single composite mast to reduce radar cross-section, co-developed with Bharat Electronics Limited). Bilateral exercises: Veer Guardian (air force fighter deployment), JIMEX (naval), and Dharma Guardian (army). Upgraded to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership in 2014; signed the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) in 2020.

MCQS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs) in India:

1. Registration of a political party is executed under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
2. Under Section 29C of the RP Act, 1951, RUPPs are required to submit details of individual contributions exceeding ₹20,000 to retain income tax exemption.

Political parties can accept cash donations up to ₹10,000 without violating provisions under the Income Tax framework. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
3. (d) 1, 2, and 3

Q2. With reference to the Election Commission of India (ECI) and political party regulation, consider the following statements:

1. In *Indian National Congress v. Institute of Social Welfare* (2002), the Supreme Court held that the ECI has no explicit statutory power to deregister a political party under the RP Act, 1951.

2. The Law Commission's 255th Report recommended empowering the ECI to deregister political parties that fail to contest elections for ten consecutive years.

Delisting an inactive party by an ECI notification automatically strips it of its statutory registration under Section 29A of the RP Act. Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

3. (d) 1, 2, and 3

Q3. Which of the following constitutional routes is being discussed by the Union Home Ministry to create a unique (*sui generis*) elected body with legislative, executive, and financial powers for the Union Territory of Ladakh?

(a) Sixth Schedule under Article 244(2)

(b) Special provisions under Article 371

(c) Article 239AA

(d) Fifth Schedule under Article 244(1)

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the "Demat 2.0" pilot project launched by SEBI and RBI:

1. Demat 1.0 was backed by the Depositories Act, 1996 to convert physical shares into electronic entries while keeping payment settlement on separate banking rails.
2. Demat 2.0 tokenises corporate bonds and settles cash transfers simultaneously using Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) on a single distributed ledger.

Demat 2.0 eliminates counterparty settlement risk through automated smart contract execution of Delivery versus Payment (DvP). Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

3. (d) 1, 2, and 3

Q5. With reference to India's marine policies and Blue Economy initiatives, consider the following pairings:

1. Deep Ocean Mission — Ministry of Earth Sciences
2. Sagarmala Programme — Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

Samudrayaan — Manned submersible for deep-sea exploration How many of the above pairs are correctly matched? (a) Only one pair

(b) Only two pairs

- (c) All three pairs
3. (d) None

Q6. In the context of disaster management and river hydrology in Eastern India, what does the term "backwater effect" best describe?

- (a) Reversal of ocean tides forcing saltwater into inland estuarine deltaic systems.
(b) High water level in a main river stem holding back tributary discharge and spreading water across tributary floodplains.
(c) Seepage of river water through defective earthen embankments into adjoining agricultural zones.
(d) Accumulation of heavy silt on riverbeds reducing reservoir storage capacity.

Q7. Statement-I: The Farakka Barrage was built across the Ganga River primarily to impound a massive storage reservoir for flood control in Bihar.

Statement-II: A barrage regulates and diverts river flow through gates rather than creating a large storage impoundment behind it.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements? (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I

- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct but Statement-II is NOT the correct explanation for Statement-I
(c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
(d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

Q8. Consider the following statements regarding the BRICS grouping:

1. Indonesia became the 11th full member of BRICS in January 2025, making it the first Southeast Asian nation to join the bloc.
2. The BRICS grouping currently accounts for a larger share of global GDP measured at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) than the G7 grouping.

The original acronym "BRIC" was formalised as an official leaders' summit format at the New Delhi Summit in 2006. Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only

- (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
3. (d) 1, 2, and 3

Q9. With reference to the New Development Bank (NDB) established by BRICS, consider the following statements:

1. The agreement establishing the NDB was signed during the 2014 BRICS Summit at Fortaleza, Brazil.

2. Headquartered in Shanghai, the founding members hold weighted voting rights based on their financial contribution to the initial capital.

Non-BRICS founding countries such as Bangladesh and the UAE have been admitted as members of the NDB. Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

3. (d) 1, 2, and 3

Q10. Which of the following connectivity projects form part of the regional cooperation between India and ASEAN member countries?

1. Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project
2. India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway

Agartala-Akhaura Rail Line Select the correct answer using the code given below: (a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

3. (d) 1, 2, and 3

Q11. Consider the following pairs of Bilateral Military/Naval Exercises and Partner Countries:

1. Exercise Samudra Laksamana — Malaysia
2. Exercise Varuna — France

Exercise Dharma Guardian — Japan How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched? (a) Only one pair

(b) Only two pairs

(c) All three pairs

3. (d) None

Q12. Consider the following statements regarding India-Morocco bilateral relations:

1. The inaugural Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting between India and Morocco was held in New Delhi in September 2026.
2. Morocco is located in North-West Africa, bordering the strategic Strait of Gibraltar.

India and Morocco established formal diplomatic ties in the year 1991 following the end of the Cold War. Which of the statements given above is/are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

- (c) 1 only
3. (d) 1, 2, and 3

Q13. With reference to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), consider the following statements:

1. The IAEA was established in 1957 as an autonomous organization within the United Nations system following the "Atoms for Peace" initiative.
2. Non-nuclear-weapon states party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) are required to conclude Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements with the IAEA.

The Additional Protocol allows IAEA inspectors expanded rights of access to information and sites to verify undeclared nuclear materials. Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only

- (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
3. (d) 1, 2, and 3

Q14. During the high-level bilateral defence visit between India and Sri Lanka, which of the following equipment/institutional fields were covered under the signed MoUs?

1. Upgradation of L70 anti-aircraft guns for the Sri Lanka Air Force
2. Cooperation between the National Cadet Corps (NCC) of both nations

Institutional ties between the respective National Defence Colleges (NDC) Select the correct answer using the code given below: (a) 1 and 2 only

- (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
3. (d) 1, 2, and 3

Q15. Consider the following statements regarding India-Japan defence and technology cooperation:

1. UNICORN is an integrated communications antenna system housed within a composite mast that reduces a warship's radar signature.
2. Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) is involved in the co-development of UNICORN masts with Japan.

Exercise Veer Guardian marked the first time Japanese fighter aircraft participated in air exercises on Indian soil. Which of the statements given above are correct? (a) 1 and 2 only

- (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
3. (d) 1, 2, and 3

Answer Key & Detailed Explanations

Q1. Answer: (a)

- Explanation:
 - Statement 1 is correct: Registration of political parties is governed under Section 29A of the RP Act, 1951.
 - Statement 2 is correct: Section 29C of the RP Act mandates disclosing donor details for contributions above ₹20,000; failure to do so results in forfeiture of tax benefits.
 - Statement 3 is incorrect: Under the Income Tax Act framework, political parties can accept cash donations only up to ₹2,000. Any contribution above ₹2,000 must be made via cheque, bank transfer, or electronic banking channels.

Q2. Answer: (a)

- Explanation:
 - Statement 1 is correct: In *Indian National Congress v. Institute of Social Welfare (2002)*, the Supreme Court ruled that the ECI lacks express statutory authority under the RP Act to deregister political parties (except for fraud, unconstitutional conduct, or statutory ban).
 - Statement 2 is correct: Law Commission's 255th report recommended statutory amendments allowing ECI to deregister parties failing to contest for 10 consecutive years.
 - Statement 3 is incorrect: Delisting inactive parties via ECI notification removes them from active electoral lists but does not constitute legal deregistration from the statutory register maintained under Section 29A.

Q3. Answer: (b)

- Explanation:
 - Correct Option (b): Discussions between the Union Home Ministry and Ladakh bodies (LAB/KDA) focus on constructing a *sui generis* body with legislative, executive, and financial powers under Article 371 of the Constitution, which will require a Constitutional Amendment. Article 239AA pertains to Delhi, while Sixth/Fifth Schedules carry distinct tribal administration frameworks.

Q4. Answer: (d)

- Explanation:

- All statements (1, 2, and 3) are correct: Demat 1.0 (Depositories Act, 1996) digitised physical equity/bond holdings but left payment settlements on separate banking rails, creating settlement lag. Demat 2.0 combines security tokenisation and Wholesale CBDC cash settlement onto a single DLT ledger. Smart contracts automate Delivery versus Payment (DvP), eliminating counterparty risks.
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Q5. Answer: (c)

- Explanation:
 - All three pairs are correctly matched:
 - Pair 1: Deep Ocean Mission is under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
 - Pair 2: Sagarmala Programme is driven by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
 - Pair 3: Samudrayaan is India's flagship manned submersible for deep-ocean exploration.
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Q6. Answer: (b)

- Explanation:
 - Correct Option (b): A backwater effect occurs when a high water stage in a main river (e.g., Ganga) holds back the natural discharge of its tributaries (e.g., Gandak, Punpun), forcing tributary flow to back up and flood surrounding floodplains without local rainfall.
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Q7. Answer: (d)

- Explanation:
 - Statement-I is incorrect: The Farakka Barrage was built in 1975 to divert a portion of Ganga's water via a feeder canal into the Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system to flush silt and preserve navigability for Kolkata Port—not for flood control or impounding a reservoir in Bihar.
 - Statement-II is correct: A barrage is a structure built with gates to regulate and divert river flow, unlike a dam which impounds a large storage reservoir behind it.
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Q8. Answer: (a)

- Explanation:
 - Statement 1 is correct: Indonesia became a full member of BRICS in January 2025, becoming the 11th full member and first Southeast Asian nation in the grouping.

- Statement 2 is correct: The 11-member BRICS accounts for ~36.8%–37% of global GDP on a Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) basis, exceeding the G7's share of <29%.
 - Statement 3 is incorrect: "BRIC" began as a foreign ministers' dialogue in 2006 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. The first formal Leaders' Summit was held at Yekaterinburg, Russia in 2009.
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Q9. Answer: (b)

- Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct: NDB was established by the Fortaleza Agreement signed at the 2014 BRICS Summit.
 - Statement 2 is incorrect: NDB is headquartered in Shanghai, but the founding members subscribed equal capital and hold equal shareholding and voting rights, unlike the weighted voting system of the World Bank/IMF.
 - Statement 3 is correct: Non-founder nations (such as Bangladesh, UAE, Egypt, and Algeria) have been admitted as NDB members.
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Q10. Answer: (a)

- Explanation:

- Statements 1 and 2 are correct: Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (Myanmar) and India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway are premier connectivity projects linking India with ASEAN nations.
 - Statement 3 is incorrect: The Agartala-Akhaura Rail Line connects India and Bangladesh (a South Asian bilateral project, not an ASEAN connectivity initiative).
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Q11. Answer: (c)

- Explanation:

- All three pairs are correctly matched:
 - Pair 1: Exercise Samudra Laksamana is a bilateral naval exercise between India and Malaysia.
 - Pair 2: Exercise Varuna is the bilateral naval exercise between India and France.
 - Pair 3: Exercise Dharma Guardian is the bilateral army exercise between India and Japan.
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Q12. Answer: (a)

- Explanation:

- Statements 1 and 2 are correct: The inaugural Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting was held in New Delhi in September 2026 under a September 2025 MoU. Morocco sits in North-West Africa bordering the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Strait of Gibraltar.
 - Statement 3 is incorrect: Diplomatic relations between India and Morocco were established in 1957 (they mark 70 years of diplomatic ties in 2027).
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Q13. Answer: (d)

- Explanation:
 - All statements (1, 2, and 3) are correct: IAEA was established in 1957 following Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech. Non-nuclear weapon states under NPT must execute Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements. The Additional Protocol provides IAEA inspectors enhanced access to undeclared sites and information to prevent nuclear material diversion.
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Q14. Answer: (d)

- Explanation:
 - All items (1, 2, and 3) are correct: During the defence ministerial visit to Sri Lanka, three MoUs were signed covering: (1) Upgradation of L70 40mm anti-aircraft guns for Sri Lanka Air Force, (2) Youth cadet training cooperation between National Cadet Corps (NCC), and (3) Professional military education ties between National Defence Colleges (NDC).
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Q15. Answer: (d)

- Explanation:
 - All statements (1, 2, and 3) are correct: UNICORN is an integrated communications antenna system housed within a single composite mast that minimizes a warship's radar cross-section. BEL signed an MoU in 2024 for co-development of UNICORN masts. Exercise Veer Guardian marked the maiden participation of Japanese fighter jets in exercises hosted on Indian soil.