NOVEMBER 2026

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1. Polity & Governance (GS Paper II): Electoral Reforms & ECI Accountability

Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls: The SIR is a time-bound, door-to-door re-enumeration where every voter completes a fresh form to rebuild the register from scratch rather than merely updating existing entries.

Statutory Authority vs. Centralised Digital Systems: Under the **Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RPA)**, statutory authority to add or delete names rests strictly with the local **Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)**. However, the nationwide rollout of the **ECINET** and **ERONET** digital platforms centralised operational control in New Delhi, restricting local ERO discretion and initially leaving software without options to reverse wrongful deletions (e.g., in Goa, where 90 of 97 deletions examined under Supreme Court direction were found incorrect).

Disenfranchisement Concerns & Disparity: The gap between registered voters and India's adult population widened from **2 crore to 15 crore** following the SIR. Concessions and procedural rollbacks (such as allowing excluded voters to submit enumeration forms with declarations rather than **Form 6**, and permitting address updates via **Form 8**) applied only across seven States where the SIR remained active, leaving voters in completed States (encompassing ~75% of India, including Bihar, West Bengal, and Karnataka) without equivalent administrative remedies.

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2. Environment & Ecology (GS Paper III): Campus Infrastructure & EIA Mandates

Prior Environmental Clearance (EC) for Campuses: Under the **Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006** (promulgated under Section 3 of the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**), educational buildings exceeding **20,000 square metres** of built-up area are statutorily required to obtain prior EC before starting construction.

Judicial History of Exemptions:

The Union Government's December 2014 exemption for schools, colleges, and hostels was quashed by the Kerala High Court in March 2024.

A subsequent blanket exemption issued in January 2025 was stayed and quashed by the Supreme Court in August 2025 (Vanashakti challenge).

In **Vanashakti v. Union of India (July 29, 2026)**, the Supreme Court ruled that prior EC is non-negotiable and barred fresh applications under post-facto regularisation routes (2017 Notification and 2021 Office Memorandum), though it permitted the government to formulate a tailored statutory scheme for eligible non-compliant categories involving overriding public interest.

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3. Public Health & Pollution (GS Paper III): Air Quality Governance

Public Health Burden: According to the State of Global Air 2025 report, air pollution caused over **two million deaths** in India in 2023. Furthermore, The Lancet Planetary Health estimated economic losses from air pollution at **1.36% of India's GDP** in 2019.

Structural Imbalances in NCAP Spending: The **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)** (launched in 2019) has faced financing mismatches. A January 2026 assessment by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) revealed that **68%** of NCAP expenditure was absorbed by road dust management (mitigating coarse PM10), while transport received **14%**, waste management/biomass received **12%**, and lethal combustion sources (industrial and domestic fuels driving toxic fine **PM2.5**) received under **1%** each.

Regulatory Standards: India's annual ambient PM2.5 threshold of **40 µg/m³** is eight times more lenient than the **World Health Organization (WHO)** annual guideline of **5 µg/m³**.

COVID-19 Policy Parallels: Reorienting air pollution from a "seasonal inconvenience" managed by reactive Graded Response Action Plans (GRAP) to an emergency public health issue requires inter-ministerial coordination, dedicated health surveillance platforms linking hospital admissions to pollution levels, and outcome-oriented budgeting.

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4. Water Governance & Urban Ecology (GS Paper III): Yamuna Basin Restoration

Holistic Basin Governance: The Supreme Court directed that the **Yamuna River** must be governed as a single, contiguous ecological system across basin States and Union Territories, establishing jurisdiction-wise answerability and ordering the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** to formulate a penalty liability framework for defaulting officials and polluters.

Limitations of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs): Delhi's 37 STPs consistently fail to comply with prescribed effluent discharge standards. Even treated effluent is frequently rendered useless because it discharges into unlined common drains bearing raw sewage from unsewered municipal settlements.

Environmental Flows vs. Involuntary Displacement: River revival requires adequate dilution through environmental flows and the clearance of encroached floodplains; however, judicial doctrine mandates that floodplain restoration must integrate dignified rehabilitation schemes to avert humanitarian displacement of the urban poor.

Statutory Footing of CPCB: Established in **September 1974** under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**, the CPCB later acquired enforcement mandates under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981** under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

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5. Energy Transition & Climate Pledges (GS Paper III): COP29 & Grid Reliability

International Climate Finance: At **COP29 in Baku (2024)**, nations agreed on a climate finance target of up to **$300 billion annually by 2035** for developing nations, alongside calls to mobilise **$1.3 trillion annually** across blended public and private sources.

Domestic Energy Milestones: India achieved **300.5 GW** of non-fossil installed electricity capacity by July 2026, advancing toward its target of **500 GW by 2030**. The statutory Renewable Consumption Obligation mandates designated entities to procure **43.33%** of power from renewables by 2029–30.

Grid Integration & Storage Deficits: Power demand is growing at **6.4% per annum** (IEA projections), creating risks of carbon "traplock" if firm power needs are unmet. Intermittent solar generation requires grid balancing and storage; to support this, the Cabinet approved the **Green Energy Corridor Phase III** in September 2026 to evacuate up to 135 GW of clean power and fund 50 GWh of battery storage. Other flagship interventions include the **PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana** (1 crore solar rooftops) and **PM-KUSUM** (solar agricultural pumps).

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6. Energy Security & Infrastructure (GS Paper III): Base-Load Strains & Coal Stocks

Shift in Thermal Power Planning: After the National Electricity Plan (2017–22) limited thermal expansion to ongoing builds, rising demand and storage gaps prompted the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) to recommend **105 to 150 GW** of fresh coal-fired thermal capacity by 2035, well beyond the 97 GW previously planned.

Base-Load Vulnerability & Spot Markets: Thermal generation carries the non-solar evening peak demand. Drawdowns reduced domestic coal inventories from ~55 million tonnes (MT) in April to **20.79 MT** by mid-November (against a normative baseline of 59 MT), pushing plant storage down by 66%.

Exchange Distortions: Distribution companies in multiple states turned to bilateral short-term tenders on the **DEEP portal** (Discovery of Efficient Electricity Price), where discovered tariffs reached **Rs 19–20 per unit**, exceeding power exchange day-ahead price caps of **Rs 10 per unit** (tariffs up to Rs 20/unit are permitted only in the **High Price Day-Ahead Market / HP-DAM**). National grid frequency dipped below the statutory lower operating boundary of **49.9 Hz**.

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7. Industrial Policy & Trade (GS Paper III): Export Promotion Mission (EPM)

Institutional Architecture: The Union Cabinet approved the **Export Promotion Mission (EPM)** (November 2025) with an allocation of **Rs 25,060 crore** spanning 2025–26 to 2030–31.

Dual Interventions: Operates through **Niryat Protsahan** (direct financial assistance) and **Niryat Disha** (non-financial market access, quality compliance, and logistics facilitation).

Market Access Support (MAS) Liberalisation:

Eligibility turnover ceiling raised substantially from **Rs 75 lakh** to **Rs 50 crore**, widening access for mid-sized MSMEs.

Airfare subsidies for international buyer-seller meets and trade fairs increased up to **95%** for micro and small exporters and **80%** for other eligible exporters.

Minimum membership duration with Export Promotion Councils reduced from 6 months to 3 months.

Non-Tariff Barriers: Complemented by the **TRACE** (Trade Regulations, Accreditation and Compliance Enablement) program to help domestic manufacturers achieve certification against technical barriers to trade.

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8. Care Economy & Social Statistics (GS Paper I & III): Women's Unpaid Care Work

Statistical Reforms by MoSPI: The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is incorporating dedicated modules on unpaid domestic and care work into the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)**.

Divergence Across Surveys: The standard Labour Force Survey measures employment but overlooks time-use trade-offs; the **Time Use Survey (TUS)** tracks daily time allocation but classifies only broad sectors under the **National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2008** without capturing detailed occupations or constraints on employed women.

Labour Trends & Gender Disparities:

Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) (aged 15+) expanded from 30% (2019–20) to **40% in 2025**.

Wide rural-urban disparity: rural female participation stands at **45.9%**, whereas urban participation lags at **27.7%**.

Time poverty: Indian women commit an average of **363 minutes daily** to unpaid care work compared to **123 minutes** for men.

Gender wage penalty: Women earn approximately **61%** of men's hourly earnings when excluding unpaid labour, plummeting to **32%** when unpaid hours are accounted for.

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MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, consider the following statements:

1. It derives its statutory authority from Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
2. Under the notification, educational and institutional buildings having a built-up area of more than 20,000 square metres require prior Environmental Clearance.
3. Category A projects are appraised by the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), while Category B projects are appraised by the Central Expert Appraisal Committee.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):

1. It was formulated with an overarching objective to shift air pollution management toward mission-mode implementation across Indian cities.
2. According to recent independent assessments of NCAP funds, more than half of the total expenditure was allocated toward road dust mitigation rather than industrial and vehicular emissions.
3. India's current annual ambient air quality standard for PM2.5 is aligned with the World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guidelines.

How many of the above statements are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Q3. In the context of the Indian power sector, the term "HP-DAM" recently seen in the news refers to:
(a) A dedicated hydro-power allocation mechanism for Himalayan states
(b) A high-efficiency supercritical thermal boiler technology mandated by the Central Electricity Authority
(c) A specialized power exchange market segment permitting electricity trading up to an elevated price cap of Rs 20 per unit
(d) A dynamic dam safety monitoring network deployed across inter-state river basins

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Q4. With reference to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), consider the following statements:

1. It was established as a statutory body under the provisions of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
2. It provides technical and advisory services to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
3. It performs the coordination of activities of State Pollution Control Boards across the country.

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

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding the Export Promotion Mission (EPM):

The mission functions through two primary pillars: Niryat Protsahan for financial assistance and Niryat Disha for non-financial facilitation.

Under the Market Access Support (MAS) initiative, the export turnover ceiling for eligible exporters has been enhanced to Rs 50 crore.

The TRACE initiative under the mission is primarily intended to assist MSMEs in meeting international technical standards and non-tariff regulations.

How many of the above statements are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Q6. Under the Representation of the People Act, 1950, who among the following is statutorily empowered to make additions, deletions, and corrections in the electoral roll of an assembly constituency?
(a) Chief Electoral Officer of the State
(b) Electoral Registration Officer of the Constituency
(c) Returning Officer of the Constituency
(d) Chief Election Commissioner of India

Q7. Consider the following pairs regarding government energy transition initiatives:

Initiative	Objective / Feature
1. PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana	Rooftop solar installations targeting one crore households
2. Green Energy Corridor Phase III	Evacuation of renewable capacity along with dedicated grid battery storage funding
3. PM-KUSUM	Solarisation of agricultural pumps and generation from farm lands

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?
(a) Only one pair
(b) Only two pairs
(c) All three pairs
(d) None of the pairs

Q8. With reference to the measurement of employment and care work in India, consider the following statements:

Both the Time Use Survey (TUS) and the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) classify economic activities based on the National Industrial Classification (NIC).

As per recent PLFS estimates, the female labour force participation rate in urban areas is higher than that in rural areas.

The Time Use Survey records detailed occupational classifications along with daily time logs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q9. At the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) held in Baku, what specific annual climate finance target was agreed upon to be provided to developing countries by 2035?
(a) $100 billion per year
(b) $300 billion per year
(c) $500 billion per year
(d) $1.3 trillion per year

Q10. With reference to the Indian power transmission and distribution system, consider the following statements:

The standard operating frequency band of the Indian national electricity grid mandates a lower operating boundary limit of 49.9 Hz.
The DEEP portal is an electronic initiative under the Ministry of Power designed for the discovery of efficient electricity prices through reverse bidding.
Base-load power in India is predominantly supplied through grid-scale solar and wind generation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q11. In the context of environmental jurisprudence in India, the landmark Vanashakti v. Union of India judgment delivered by the Supreme Court primarily settled the law concerning:

(a) Mandatory penal liability for discharge of untreated municipal sewage into wetlands

(b) Stringency of prior Environmental Clearance and validity of ex-post facto regularisation windows

(c) Compulsory allocation of corporate social responsibility funds toward compensatory afforestation

(d) Inter-state sharing of environmental flows during non-monsoon lean seasons

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Q12. Consider the following statements regarding electoral processes in India:

Rule 21A of the electoral rules allows the election authorities to rectify inadvertent mistakes in the electoral rolls.

Form 7 under election administration is used by voters for intimating inter-state residence relocation.

Form 8 is officially prescribed for filing objections against the proposed inclusion of a name in the electoral roll.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 2 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q13. With reference to water quality and sewage infrastructure in Delhi, consider the following statements:

Delhi's operational sewage treatment plants consistently meet prescribed environmental discharge norms.

A key reason for persistent river pollution is that treated wastewater from treatment plants often re-enters drains transporting untreated municipal waste.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q14. The term "Traplock" in contemporary climate and energy policy discourse refers to:

(a) The mechanical failure of pumped storage hydroelectric dam sluice gates during flash floods

(b) Long-term lock-in into carbon-intensive infrastructure to meet surging base electricity demand

(c) The accumulation of unspent funds released under Finance Commission green grants

(d) The legal embargo on regularising encroached settlements in river floodplains

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Q15. Consider the following statements regarding the Renewable Consumption Obligation (RCO) in India:

It legally mandates specified distribution licensees and designated consumers to consume a set percentage of electricity from renewable energy sources.

Under prevailing national trajectories, the renewable consumption obligation mandates entities to draw over 43% of their electricity from renewables by 2029–30.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

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Answer Key & Explanations

Question No.	Correct Option
Q1	(a)
Q2	(b)
Q3	(c)
Q4	(b)
Q5	(c)
Q6	(b)
Q7	(c)
Q8	(a)
Q9	(b)
Q10	(a)
Q11	(b)
Q12	(a)
Q13	(b)
Q14	(b)
Q15	(c)

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Detailed Explanations

Q1 Answer: (a)

Statements 1 & 2 are correct: The EIA Notification, 2006 is issued under Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Buildings and construction projects with built-up area exceeding 20,000 sq metres, including educational campuses, mandate prior EC.

Statement 3 is incorrect: Under the EIA mechanism, **Category A** projects are appraised at the Central level by the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC), whereas **Category B** projects are appraised at the State level by the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA).

Q2 Answer: (b)

Statement 1 is correct: NCAP was introduced in 2019 to execute targeted, mission-mode air pollution abatement in Indian cities.

Statement 2 is correct: CREA's study (January 2026) revealed that 68% of NCAP spending was devoted to road dust control (PM10), with combustion sources like industry and household fuel receiving under 1% each.

Statement 3 is incorrect: India's annual PM2.5 standard is **40 µg/m³**, which is eight times higher than the WHO guideline of **5 µg/m³**.

Q3 Answer: (c)

Explanation: The High Price Day-Ahead Market (HP-DAM) is a specialized segment on Indian power exchanges where high-variable-cost generators are permitted to bid up to **Rs 20 per unit**, whereas regular spot exchange segments have a price cap of **Rs 10 per unit**.

Q4 Answer: (b)

Statement 1 is incorrect: The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) was constituted in September 1974 under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**, not the Air Act.

Statements 2 & 3 are correct: Powers and functions under the Air Act were entrusted later in 1981; it provides technical services to MoEFCC and coordinates State Pollution Control Boards.

Q5 Answer: (c)

All three statements are correct: EPM comprises Niryat Protsahan (financial aid) and Niryat Disha (non-financial facilitation). The turnover ceiling for Market Access Support (MAS) was raised from Rs 75 lakh to Rs 50 crore, and TRACE focuses on accreditation and technical compliance against foreign non-tariff barriers.

Q6 Answer: (b)

Explanation: Under the Representation of the People Act, 1950, the statutory authority to add or delete names from an electoral roll resides exclusively with the local **Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)**.

Q7 Answer: (c)

All three pairs are correctly matched: PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana aims at rooftop solar for 1 crore households. Green Energy Corridor Phase III evacuates 135 GW RE and funds 50 GWh battery storage. PM-KUSUM supports farmers replacing diesel pumps with solar energy.

Q8 Answer: (a)

Statement 1 is correct: Both TUS and PLFS refer to the National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2008.

Statement 2 is incorrect: Female labour force participation in rural areas (45.9%) is higher than in urban areas (27.7%).

Statement 3 is incorrect: TUS categorises only broad industrial sectors and does not record occupational classifications.

Q9 Answer: (b)

Explanation: At COP29 in Baku, donor countries agreed on up to **$300 billion per year by 2035** for developing nations, alongside an aspirational broader goal to mobilise $1.3 trillion annually from public and private sources.

Q10 Answer: (a)

Statements 1 & 2 are correct: Grid India mandates a lower frequency limit of 49.9 Hz. The DEEP portal is used by the Ministry of Power for discovery of efficient electricity prices through tenders.

Statement 3 is incorrect: Base-load power running round-the-clock in India is predominantly supplied by coal-based thermal plants, whereas solar and wind provide intermittent power.

Q11 Answer: (b)

Explanation: In Vanashakti v. Union of India (July 2026), the Supreme Court reaffirmed that prior EC under the EIA Notification is mandatory and closed fresh applications under retrospective violation regularisation windows.

Q12 Answer: (a)

Statement 1 is correct: Rule 21A of the electoral rules enables the Election Commission to correct its own errors.

Statements 2 & 3 are incorrect: Form 7 is prescribed for submitting objections to inclusions/deletions, whereas Form 8 is used for updating address and residence details.

Q13 Answer: (b)

Statement 1 is incorrect: Delhi's 37 STPs consistently fail to meet prescribed effluent discharge standards.

Statement 2 is correct: Treated effluent is often re-polluted because it discharges into open common drains carrying untreated sewage.

Q14 Answer: (b)

Explanation: "Traplock" describes meeting surging immediate power demand with fossil-fuel-based generation, locking the country into carbon pollution for decades.

Q15 Answer: (c)

Both statements are correct: The Renewable Consumption Obligation (RCO) legally binds designated distribution companies and consumers to draw clean power, mandating that **43.33%** of electricity come from renewable sources by 2029–30