1. Debate over Legal Immunity to CEC and Election Commissioners

Context & Issue: Section 16 of the **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Terms of Office) Act, 2023** grants a **lifelong bar** on civil and criminal proceedings against serving and former CECs and ECs for acts "taken or purported to be taken" in official duties. The Supreme Court has issued notice to the Union Government on a petition by the **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** challenging this immunity.

Constitutional & Legal Concerns:

Article 14 (Equality Before Law): Article 14 forms part of the **basic structure of the Constitution**. It permits classification only on **intelligible differentia** with a rational nexus to the objective. Granting an absolute, lifelong shield to election officers violates equality before the law.

Comparison with Constitutional Offices: Under **Article 361**, the President and Governors enjoy immunity from criminal proceedings and arrest only **during their term of office** (civil suits require two months' notice). **Articles 105 & 194** grant parliamentary privileges primarily for acts inside the Houses during a session. Independent offices like Judges, CAG, Lokpal, and Information Commissioners do **not** possess lifelong unconditional immunity.

Procedural Flaw: The immunity clause was added on the day the Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha without being mentioned in the Statement of Objects and Reasons.

Selection Committee Framework (CEC & EC Act, 2023): The President appoints the CEC and ECs on the recommendation of a three-member Selection Committee consisting of the **Prime Minister**, a **nominated Cabinet Minister**, and the **Leader of Opposition** in the Lok Sabha. (Note: The Supreme Court judgment in Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India, 2023 had included the Chief Justice of India on the panel, but the 2023 Act excluded the CJI, which remains under legal challenge).

Way Forward: Replace blanket lifelong immunity with protection restricted to acts done in **good faith**, coupled with a prior sanction requirement under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.

---

2. Electoral Roll Management & Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

Context & Findings: A Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Telangana placed approximately **73 lakh voters** on the **Absent, Shifted, Dead, Duplicate (ASDD)** deletion list. However, fewer than six lakh electors applied for re-enrolment.

Mechanism & Failure Points:

Enumeration vs. ASDD: Door-to-door verification by **Booth Level Officers (BLOs)** requires at least three house visits. Electors not verified are placed on the ASDD list.

Automated Deletions & AI Flags: The **ERONET** app utilized artificial intelligence to flag similar demographic details or photographs.

Automated notices citing logical discrepancies were issued without adequate human verification by Electoral Registration Officers (EROs).

Procedural Hurdles: Wrongly deleted voters were instructed to fill **Form 6** (meant for new electors) rather than being restored directly. **Form 7** objections were also weaponized for bulk deletions.

Key Ratio: India's standard **Elector-to-Population (E/P) ratio** normally ranges between **67% and 73%**.

---

3. Undertrial Reform, Free Legal Aid & NALSA

Context & Global Ranking: Over **75% of prisoners in India are undertrials** (held before trial), ranking India **fourth in the world** by undertrial share.

Empirical Evidence (Maharashtra Legal Aid Study): An evaluation of legal aid initiatives run by Prayas (TISS) and the Fair Trial Fellowship (NLU Delhi) across eight Maharashtra prisons revealed that structured legal aid increased bail success to **84%,** compared to the district court average of **26%**.

Key Impact: Legal aid cuts procedural frictions (filing pleas, coordinating sureties, document gathering). However, help often arrives late—participants spent an average of **171 days** in jail before receiving assistance.

Back to Basics — Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987:

Constitutional Mandate: Enacted to give effect to **Article 39A** (Directive Principle of State Policy for Equal Justice and Free Legal Aid); took effect on **November 9, 1995**.

Structure: Three-tier framework—National Legal Services Authority (**NALSA**), State Legal Services Authorities (**SLSA**), and District Legal

Services Authorities (**DLSA**). The **Chief Justice of India** serves as the **Patron-in-Chief** of NALSA.

Entitlement (Section 12): Entitles persons **in custody**, women, children, SC/ST members, and victims of human trafficking or industrial disasters to free legal services.

Theme 2: International Relations & Strategic Affairs (GS Paper 2)

1. Contest for Non-Permanent Seat on the UN Security Council (2028–29)

Context: India has launched its bid for a non-permanent UNSC seat for **2028–29** (elections in June 2027). Unlike past consensus wins, this seat is contested by **Tajikistan**, a first-time candidate from the **Asia-Pacific Group**.

UNSC Election Rules:

Structure: 10 elected non-permanent seats serving two-year terms.

Majority Requirement: A candidate must secure a **two-thirds majority** of members present and voting in the UN General Assembly (at least **129 out of 193 votes**).

India's UNSC Track Record:

India has served **eight terms** as a non-permanent member (1950–51, 1967–68, 1972–73, 1977–78, 1984–85, 1991–92, 2011–12, 2021–22).

Past Contested Losses: India lost twice—to **Pakistan in 1975** and to **Japan in 1996**.

Record Margins: Won with 187 of 191 votes in 2010 and 184 of 192 votes in 2020.

Strategic Challenges: Small Global South nations often favor first-time candidates. Tajikistan is backed by Central Asian nations and the 57-member **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**. Additionally, India maintains military/medical footprint ties in Tajikistan at **Ayni Air Base** and **Farkhor Hospital**.

---

2. India–U.S. Bilateral Relations & Unilateral Pressure

Friction Points:

Immigration & PERM Suspension: The U.S. suspended the **Permanent Labour Certification (PERM)** programme for major IT firms (Infosys, TCS, Wipro, Cognizant, HCL). Indian nationals account for over **70% of approved H-1B petitions** annually.

Trade & Sanctions: Trade surplus of **$33.8 billion** in favor of India on >$140 billion total bilateral trade. Friction over U.S. demands for dairy/agriculture market access and U.S. sanctions targeting buyers of Russian crude oil.

Key Institutional Mechanisms & Defense Frameworks:

Foundational Agreements: LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA, and GSOMIA enable military logistics, secure communications, and geospatial data sharing.

STA-1 Status: Granted **Strategic Trade Authorization Tier 1** status in 2018 to ease high-technology exports to India.

COMPACT Initiative (2025): "Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology" launched **Mission 500** targeting **$500 billion in bilateral trade by 2030**.

iCET & INDUS-X: Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (2023) and India-U.S. Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (2023) aimed at defense innovation and co-production.

Theme 3: Indian Economy & Energy Security (GS Paper 3 / GS Paper 2)

1. India's Export Surge and Trade Deficit Structural Friction

Export Trends: Merchandise exports grew by **23% to $44.4 billion** in September, reaching **$259 billion** for the first half (April–September) of the financial year.

Drivers: Engineering and Electronics Goods crossed **$100 billion** in H1, making up **nearly half of all non-oil merchandise exports**.

Macroeconomic Concerns:

China Trade Deficit: Merchandise trade deficit with China widened to **$68.9 billion** in April–September (up from $54.4 billion year-on-year) due to heavy reliance on imported electronic components.

Current Account Deficit (CAD): Expanding trade deficit and lower invisible receipts (services, remittances, investment income) pressuring the CAD.

Rupee Exchange Rate: A depreciated rupee aids export price competitiveness, though the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) intervenes in FX markets primarily to curb excess volatility rather than target a specific exchange rate level.

---

2. Crude Oil Import Concentration & Price Premiums

Import Concentration: Over **two-thirds (68%+)** of India's crude oil imports come from just three nations: **Russia (~44%)**, **United Arab Emirates (17.4%)**, and the **United States (5.1%)**.

Cost Dynamics: While Russian crude discounts have diminished, U.S. crude imports carry a heavy premium—costing an average of **$810.6 per tonne** compared to India's overall average crude import price of **$640 per tonne**.

Geopolitical & Tariff Risks: U.S. legislative actions allow up to **100% tariffs** on exports to the U.S. from major purchasers of Russian oil and gas. Strategic exposure is heightened by West Asian maritime bottlenecks such as the **Strait of Hormuz**.

Theme 4: Science & Technology and Defence Indigenization (GS Paper 3)

1. Induction of INS Samarthak (Multi-Purpose Vessel)

Context: The Indian Navy commissioned **INS Samarthak**, its first dedicated, privately built **Multi-Purpose Vessel (MPV)**, built by **Larsen & Toubro (L&T)** at **Karwar**.

Functional Role: Serves as a dedicated **sea trial and testing platform** to validate indigenous sensors, weapons, and systems produced by Indian industry before integrating them into frontline warships. Secondary roles include offshore patrolling, maritime surveillance, and disaster relief.

Indigenization Footprint:

- Built under the **Buy (Indian)** procurement category.
- Boasts over **75% indigenous content**.

Marks a shift toward private sector participation in warship construction beyond traditional Defense Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) like Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (MDL) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE).

Base Location: Commissioned at **Karwar**, home to **INS Kadamba**, undergoing major expansion under **Project Seabird**.

OCTOBER 2026

CALL/WHATSAPP - 8999069628

15 UPSC-Style Practice MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023, consider the following statements:

Section 16 of the Act grants a lifelong immunity to serving and former Chief Election Commissioners against civil and criminal proceedings for official acts.

Under Article 361 of the Constitution, the President and Governors enjoy absolute lifelong immunity from both civil and criminal proceedings even after demitting office.

The selection panel for appointing the CEC and ECs consists of the Prime Minister, a Union Cabinet Minister, and the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

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

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 and legal aid in India:

The Act was enacted to give effect to Article 39A of the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Under Section 12 of the Act, all persons in custody, regardless of their income level, are entitled to free legal services.

The Chief Justice of India serves as the Patron-in-Chief of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

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

Q3. Regarding electoral roll revisions and Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in India, consider the following statements:

Electors who are not verified during door-to-door enumeration visits by Booth Level Officers are placed on the ASDD (Absent, Shifted, Dead, Duplicate) list.

ERONET is a digital portal used by the Election Commission of India for automated electoral roll management.

An existing voter wrongly deleted from the electoral roll must fill Form 7 to apply for re-enrolment.

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

Q4. With reference to the non-permanent seats of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), consider the following statements:

A candidate country requires a simple majority of members present and voting in the UN General Assembly to secure a seat.

Non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis, with the Asia-Pacific Group allocated two seats out of ten.

India has served as a non-permanent member of the UNSC for eight terms in the past.

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. In the context of India's foreign policy and defense infrastructure, where are the Ayni Air Base and Farkhor Medical Facility located?

(a) Kyrgyzstan
(b) Tajikistan
(c) Kazakhstan
(d) Uzbekistan

Q6. Consider the following pairs of India–U.S. bilateral initiatives/frameworks and their primary domains:

COMPACT: Defence Acceleration Ecosystem for technology startups

STA-1: High-technology trade authorization status equivalent to NATO allies

PERM: Permanent Labour Certification for U.S. employer-sponsored green cards

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

Q7. Which of the following commodity groups currently accounts for nearly half of India's total non-oil merchandise exports?

(a) Gems & Jewellery and Textiles
(b) Engineering Goods and Electronics Goods
(c) Agricultural Produce and Marine Products
(d) Basic Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals

Q8. With reference to India's international trade balance, which of the following are classified under "Invisible Earnings" in the Current Account Balance?

1. Remittances from Indian workers abroad
2. Software and IT service exports
3. Earnings from physical merchandise goods exports
4. Profit and dividend income on foreign investments

Select the correct answer using the code given below: (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q9. With reference to India's crude oil import profile, consider the following statements:

1. Over two-thirds of India's total crude oil imports are concentrated among three nations: Russia, the UAE, and the USA.
2. In recent trade cycles, crude oil imported from the United States was supplied to India at a price lower than India's average global crude import price.

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

Q10. Consider the following statements regarding INS Samarthak, recently inducted into the Indian Navy:

It is the first Multi-Purpose Vessel (MPV) built by a private sector shipyard for the Indian Navy.

Its primary operational role is to serve as a floating test platform to trial and evaluate indigenous naval sensors and weapons at sea.

It was built by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) under the 'Buy (Indian)' procurement category with over 75% indigenous content.

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

Q11. Project Seabird is associated with the development and expansion of which of the following naval bases?

(a) INS Hansa, Goa
(b) INS Kadamba, Karwar
(c) INS Kattabomman, Tirunelveli
(d) INS Rajali, Arakkonam

Q12. Article 14 of the Constitution allows differential treatment of individuals or groups by law provided which of the following conditions are met?

The classification must be founded on an intelligible differentia.

The differentia must have a rational relation/nexus to the object sought to be achieved by the statute.

Select the correct answer using the code given below: (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q13. In which of the following years did India lose elections for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council?

1975

1996

2010

2020

Select the correct answer using the code given below: (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 4 only
(d) 3 and 4 only

Q14. With reference to the Reserve Bank of India's operations in the Foreign Exchange (FX) market, consider the following statements:

The stated objective of RBI intervention in the foreign exchange market is to contain excess volatility rather than target a specific exchange rate for the Rupee.

A depreciating rupee generally increases the import bill for crude oil while enhancing the price competitiveness of Indian exports abroad.

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

Q15. Under Article 361 of the Constitution of India, which of the following protections is available to the President or Governor during their term of office?

No criminal proceedings whatsoever can be instituted or continued against them in any court during their term.

No process for the arrest or imprisonment of the President or Governor can issue from any court during their term.

Civil proceedings in respect of personal acts require a prior written notice of two months before filing.

Select the correct answer using the code given below: (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

OCTOBER 2026

CALL/WHATSAPP - 8999069628

Answer Key & Explanations

Q1. Correct Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct: Section 16 of the CEC & EC Act, 2023 grants lifelong civil and criminal immunity to serving/former CECs and ECs for acts taken or purported to be taken in official duties.

Statement 2 is incorrect: Under Article 361, the President and Governors enjoy immunity from criminal proceedings and arrest **only during their term of office**. It is not a permanent, lifelong immunity after leaving office.

Statement 3 is correct: Under the 2023 Act, the Selection Committee comprises the Prime Minister, a Union Cabinet Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

Q2. Correct Answer: (d)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct: The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 was enacted to fulfill the Directive Principle enshrined under Article 39A.

Statement 2 is correct: Under Section 12 of the Act, persons in custody are entitled to free legal services regardless of financial means.

Statement 3 is correct: The Chief Justice of India serves as the Patron-in-Chief of NALSA.

Q3. Correct Answer: (a)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct: Unverified voters during BLO door-to-door visits are placed on the Absent, Shifted, Dead, Duplicate (ASDD) list.

Statement 2 is correct: ERONET is the official roll management application used by the ECI.

Statement 3 is incorrect: Form 7 is used for filing **objections/deletions** against a name, whereas Form 6 is used for **new voter enrolment**. Restoring wrongly deleted electors required filling Form 6, which was criticized as inappropriate for existing voters.

Q4. Correct Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is incorrect: Securing a non-permanent UNSC seat requires a **two-thirds majority** of UNGA members present and voting (at least 129 out of 193 votes).

Statement 2 is correct: The 10 elected seats rotate among regional groups; the Asia-Pacific Group is assigned 2 seats.

Statement 3 is correct: India has previously served 8 non-permanent terms on the UNSC.

Q5. Correct Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Tajikistan hosts the Ayni Air Base and Farkhor Medical Facility utilized by Indian defense personnel.

Q6. Correct Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Pair 1 is incorrectly matched: COMPACT (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology) is a trade and economic initiative targeting $500 billion in trade by 2030 (Mission 500). INDUS-X is the Defense Acceleration Ecosystem.

Pair 2 is correctly matched: STA-1 grants India high-tech export clearance equivalent to NATO allies.

Pair 3 is correctly matched: PERM (Permanent Labour Certification) is the mandatory labor certification step for U.S. green cards.

Q7. Correct Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Engineering Goods and Electronics Goods together crossed $100 billion in H1, making up almost half of India's non-oil merchandise exports.

Q8. Correct Answer: (a)

Explanation:

Invisible earnings on the current account comprise services exports (e.g., IT/software), net remittances, and investment income (profits, dividends, interest). Physical merchandise goods exports are part of the **visible merchandise trade account**, not invisibles.

Q9. Correct Answer: (a)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct: Russia (~44%), the UAE (17.4%), and the USA (5.1%) account for over two-thirds of India's crude oil imports.

Statement 2 is incorrect: U.S. crude oil was imported at a steep **premium** $(810.6 per tonne) compared to India's average import price ($640 per tonne).

Q10. Correct Answer: (d)

Explanation:

All three statements are correct: INS Samarthak is the first Multi-Purpose Vessel (MPV) built by L&T (a private yard) at Karwar. It is specifically built to trial and validate indigenous naval equipment at sea under the 'Buy (Indian)' category with >75% local content.

Q11. Correct Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Project Seabird is the major naval infrastructure expansion project located at **INS Kadamba, Karwar**.

Q12. Correct Answer: (c)

Explanation:

Both statements represent the classic constitutional doctrine of **reasonable classification** under Article 14: (1) Intelligible differentia, and (2) Rational nexus to the statutory objective.

Q13. Correct Answer: (a)

Explanation:

India lost elections for the UNSC non-permanent seat twice: to **Pakistan in 1975** and to **Japan in 1996**. (In 2010 and 2020, India won with record margins).

Q14. Correct Answer: (c)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct: RBI's policy is to intervene in foreign exchange markets to curb excess volatility rather than target fixed currency rates.

Statement 2 is correct: A weaker rupee increases import costs for dollar-denominated oil while making exported Indian products cheaper in foreign markets.

Q15. Correct Answer: (d)

Explanation:

Under Article 361, during their term of office: (1) No criminal proceedings can be instituted/continued, (2) No process for arrest or imprisonment can be issued, and (3) Civil suits for personal acts require a 2-month prior written notice