CURRENT AFFAIRS — 30 SEPTEMBER 2026

Wednesday, 30 September 2026 • Asia/Kolkata (IST) • Prelims + Mains GS-wise digest

StudyForGS.com

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR UPSC CSE

TODAY AT A GLANCE — 10 THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Edible oils: BCD on crude palm & soybean oil cut **10% → 5%**; crude sunflower **0%** (from **24 Sep**).
- Net FDI in **July 2026** at **US$ 7.35 bn** — highest monthly figure in **5 years**.
- Sulphur prices near **$1,050/tonne**; ~**90%** of India's imports come from **West Asia**.
- **₹75 crore** BioE3 grant for a **100 TPA** PLA bio-plastic R&D facility at **Kumbhi (UP)**.
- Japan asks India to fast-track **UNICORN** stealth-mast co-development.
- First **PRAMAAN (IFWCS)** certificates: **APFDC** (33,000 ha) and an **Odisha bamboo farmer**.
- SC: cancer-drug MRP ~**10x** trade price is '**broad daylight dacoity**'.
- Pakistan chairs **SCO** till **31 Aug 2027**; Indian delegation attends Islamabad meet.
- Literacy **81.1% (PLFS 2025)**; **10 States/UTs** fully literate under **ULLAS**.
- India **31st** of 110 in **WEF TTDI 2026**; **Japan** ranks 1st.

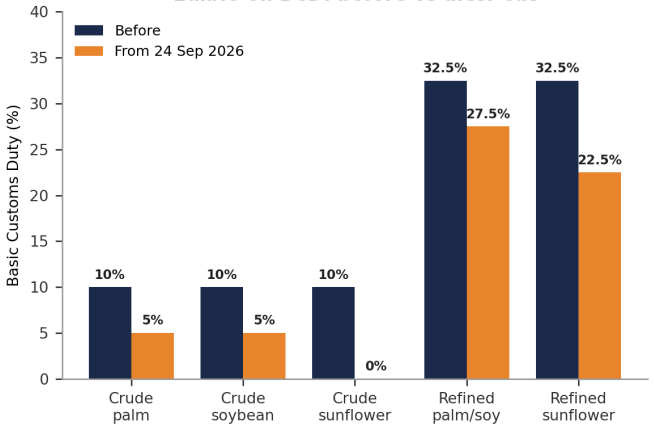
SECTION A | GS-III: SCIENCE & TECH • ECONOMY • SECURITY • ENVIRONMENT

Centre slashes import duty on edible oils ahead of festive season

[ECONOMY] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** — Indian economy: inflation, food processing, agri-trade; **Prelims**: customs duty, AIDC, NMEO-Oilseeds.
Context	Effective **24 September 2026**, the Centre cut the **Basic Customs Duty (BCD)** on crude and refined edible oils to cool prices, which have risen nearly **20% year-on-year**, before the **Sept–Nov festive** demand peak.
Key Facts	■ Crude **palm & soybean oil**: BCD **10% → 5%**; effective duty (with cess) **16.5% → 11%**. ■ Crude **sunflower oil**: BCD **10% → 0%**; effective duty now **5.5%**. ■ Refined palm & soybean: **32.5% → 27.5%**; refined sunflower: **32.5% → 22.5%**. ■ India imports nearly **two-thirds** of its vegetable-oil needs — mainly from **Indonesia, Malaysia, Argentina, Russia** and **Ukraine**.
Way Fwd	Balance consumer relief with farmers' interest — retain a wide crude–refined duty gap and accelerate the **National Mission on Edible Oils-Oilseeds**.
Concept	**Differential duty** (low on crude, high on refined) protects domestic refining value-addition. **NMEO-Oilseeds (2024–31)** targets self-reliance; **NMEO-Oil Palm (2021)** focuses on the **North-East** and **A&N Islands**.

Edible-oil BCD: before vs after cut

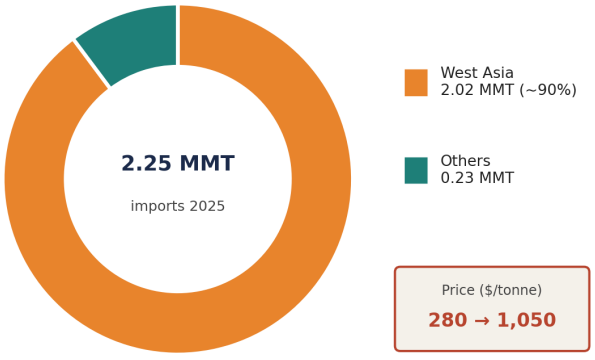


Sulphur price shock threatens phosphatic fertiliser supply

[ECONOMY] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** — Agricultural inputs, fertiliser subsidy, energy–food nexus; **Prelims**: sulphur uses, DAP/SSP, NBS.
Context	Conflicts in **Russia–Ukraine** and **West Asia** have hit oil & gas output — the main source of **sulphur** — pushing prices from about **$280/tonne (July 2025)** to over **$1,050/tonne (July 2026)**.
Key Facts	■ About **92%** of global sulphur is a **by-product of oil & gas processing**. ■ India imported **2.25 MMT** in 2025, of which ~**90% (2.02 MMT)** came from **West Asia**; import bill rose ~**2.5x** to **$638 million**. ■ **Russia** has curbed sulphur exports and **China** has restricted sulphuric-acid exports. ■ Sulphuric acid converts **rock phosphate** into **DAP & SSP**; nickel processing for **EV batteries** adds to global demand.
Way Fwd	Diversify suppliers, build strategic buffer stocks, raise sulphur recovery from refineries & smelters, and factor input costs into **NBS** rates.
Concept	**Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS, 2010)** covers **P&K** fertilisers. Sulphur is a **secondary nutrient**; widespread soil S-deficiency led to **sulphur-coated urea (Urea Gold)**.

India's sulphur imports by source (2025)



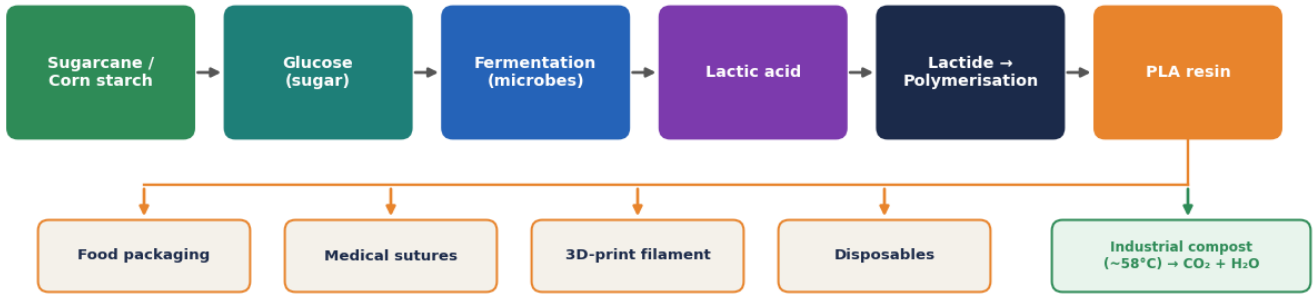
BioE3 push: ₹75-crore grant for India's PLA bio-plastic R&D facility

[SCI-TECH] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** — Biotechnology, plastic pollution, industrial policy; **Prelims**: PLA, BioE3, BIRAC.
Context	**Balrampur Chini Mills (BCML)** received a **₹75 crore** grant through **BIRAC** under the **BioE3 policy** for a **100 tonne-per-annum** PLA and co-polymer R&D facility at **Kumbhi, Uttar Pradesh**.

Key Facts	■ **Polylactic Acid (PLA)** is a bio-based, **compostable** thermoplastic made from **corn starch or sugarcane**. ■ Process chain: sugar → **fermentation** → **lactic acid** → lactide → **polymerisation** → PLA. ■ Uses: food packaging, **medical sutures**, **3D-printing** filaments and disposables. ■ Complements BCML's planned commercial plant, pitched as **India's first integrated PLA facility**.
Way Fwd	Scale up **industrial composting**, frame clear bioplastic labelling/certification norms and align with the **Plastic Waste Management Rules**.
Concept	**BioE3 (2024)** = Biotechnology for **Economy, Environment & Employment**. **BIRAC** is a not-for-profit PSU under the **Department of Biotechnology**. PLA degrades mainly under **industrial composting** (~58°C), not in open soil.

PLA value chain — ₹75 crore BIRAC grant (BioE3) • 100 TPA R&D facility, Kumbhi (UP)



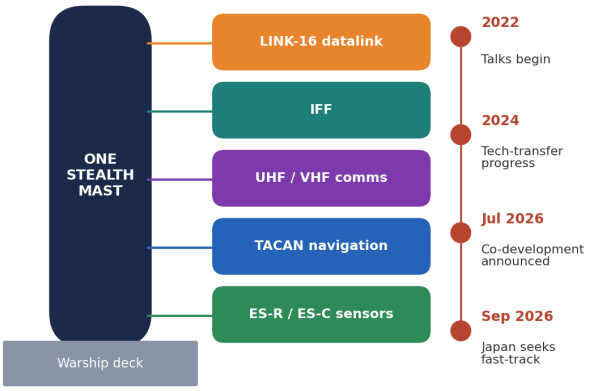
Visual — PLA value chain (linked to: BioE3 push: ₹75-crore grant for India's PLA bio-plastic R&D facility)

Japan urges India to fast-track UNICORN naval stealth-mast project

[DEFENCE] **COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2/GS3**

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** — Defence technology & indigenisation; **GS2** — India–Japan ties, Quad; **Prelims**: UNICORN, Mogami-class.
Context	Japan has asked India to speed up internal approvals for **UNICORN**, announced during PM **Sanae Takaichi's** India visit in **July 2026** — the **first-ever India-Japan defence co-development project**.
Key Facts	■ **UNICORN = Unified Complex Radio Antenna**: a single integrated mast housing many antennas (**LINK-16, IFF, UHF, TACAN**) to cut **radar cross-section**. ■ Fitted on Japan's **Mogami-class frigates**; Japanese partners include **NEC** and **Yokohama Rubber**. ■ Indian Navy plans a UNICORN derivative for its **next-generation warships**. ■ Japan cites **China's military spending** and **Russia–North Korea** cooperation as drivers.
Way Fwd	Clear approvals quickly, secure real **technology transfer** and **Make in India** content, and dovetail with the **2+2 dialogue** and Quad maritime agenda.
Concept	India–Japan **Special Strategic & Global Partnership (2014)**; logistics pact **ACSA (2020)**; exercises **JIMEX** (navy), **Dharma Guardian** (army), **Malabar** (Quad navies).

UNICORN — Unified Complex Radio Antenna



Aim: lower radar cross-section • Used on Japan's Mogami-class frigates

India's first PRAMAAN certificates for sustainable forestry issued

[ENVIRONMENT] **COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3**

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** — Conservation, forest governance, trade & sustainability; **Prelims**: IFWCS, IIFM, NABCB.
Context	Union Environment Minister **Bhupender Yadav** handed over the first certificates under **PRAMAAN**, the **Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS)**, to promote **deforestation-free** timber sourcing.
Key Facts	■ Recipients: **Andhra Pradesh Forest Development Corporation** (**33,000 ha** of plantations) and an **Odisha bamboo farmer**. ■ Scheme launched by **MoEFCC** in **December 2023**; operated by **IIFM, Bhopal**. ■ Three streams: **Forest Management**, **Trees Outside Forests** and **Chain of Custody**. ■ Audits by bodies accredited by **NABCB** (under the **Quality Council of India**); standard linked to the **National Working Plan Code 2023**.
Way Fwd	Seek international mutual recognition so exporters can meet norms such as the **EU Deforestation Regulation**, and extend coverage to **SHGs** and tribal agroforestry.
Concept	**Forest certification** = third-party verification of sustainable forest management. **PRAMAAN** = Programme for Recognition and Accreditation of sustainable Management practices for Agroforestry And Natural forestry resources.

Study: degraded ancient grasslands never regrow the same way

[ENVIRONMENT] **COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3**

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** — Ecology, restoration, carbon sinks; **GS1** — Biomes; **Prelims**: savannas, grassland ecosystems.
Context	A study in **PNAS** covering **742 plant species** across **Indian, Australian and Brazilian savannas** and **US prairies** found that old-growth grasslands, once degraded, do **not return** to their original composition even after **a century**.
Key Facts	■ Secondary grasslands host **taller, resource-acquisitive** species instead of slow-growing, deep-rooted ancient flora. ■ Altered **soil nutrients and pH** block the return of original species. ■ Grasslands store about **one-third of terrestrial carbon**, mostly **below ground**. ■ Warns against labelling grasslands as '**wastelands**' for plantations or solar parks.
Way Fwd	Protect intact **old-growth grasslands** first, revise wasteland classifications, and restore with native species under India's **land-restoration** pledge.

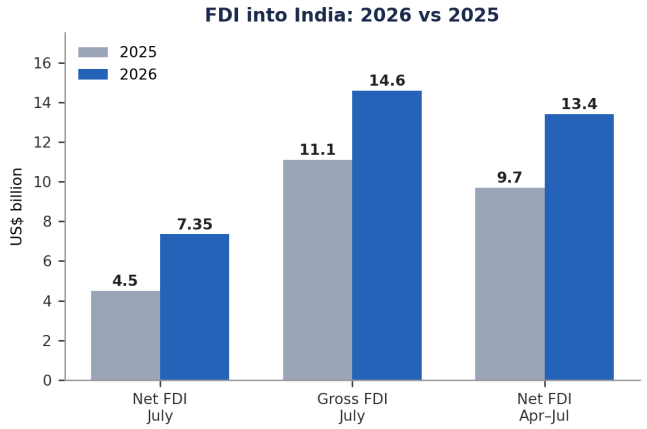
Concept	**Old-growth grassland** = ancient, stable ecosystem, not an early stage of forest succession. Indian examples: **Banni (Gujarat), Shola grasslands (W. Ghats), Terai**, Deccan plateau — habitat of the **Great Indian Bustard**. India's restoration target: **26 Mha by 2030**.

SECTION B | KEY ECONOMY DATA POINT OF THE DAY

NET FDI INFLOWS INTO INDIA, JULY 2026

US$ 7.35 bn

Highest monthly net FDI in **5 years**, up **64%** from **$4.5 bn** in July 2025. Gross inflows **$14.6 bn**. April–July FY27 net FDI **$13.4 bn** vs **$9.7 bn** a year ago (**+38%**). **Mauritius, UAE and US ≈ 70%** of equity inflows; communication, financial and computer services led.



SECTION C | GS-II: GOVERNANCE • POLITY • HEALTH • INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS • SOCIETY

Supreme Court flags steep mark-ups on essential and cancer drugs

[HEALTH] **COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2**

Syllabus Linkage	**GS2** — Health, Article 21, regulatory bodies; **GS3** — pharma pricing; **Prelims**: DPCO 2013, NPPA, NLEM.
Context	Hearing **Kishan Chand Jain v. Union of India**, a Bench of **Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta** called MRPs far above trade prices '**broad daylight dacoity**', flagging the burden on patients and on **Ayushman Bharat**.
Key Facts	■ A cancer drug with a **price-to-retailer of ~₹2,700** carried an **MRP of ₹27,000** — a ~**10x (900%)** mark-up. ■ **DPCO 2013** caps only **scheduled (NLEM)** drugs — about **18%** of medicines; ~**82%** non-scheduled drugs face only a **10% annual MRP-hike** cap. ■ A non-scheduled statin cost ~**₹214/strip** vs ~**₹70** for a price-controlled combination. ■ Court also flagged private hospitals forcing purchases from **in-house pharmacies**; Centre cited **Jan Aushadhi Kendras**.
Way Fwd	Extend **Trade Margin Rationalisation** (applied to **42 anti-cancer drugs** in **2019**) to more non-scheduled drugs, scale up Jan Aushadhi and mandate transparent hospital-pharmacy pricing.
Concept	**NPPA (1997)** fixes and monitors prices under the **DPCO**, issued under the **Essential Commodities Act, 1955**. **NLEM 2022** lists **384** medicines. Right to health is read into **Article 21**; **Article 47** (DPSP) — duty to improve public health.

India attends SCO meeting in Islamabad under Pakistan's chairship

[IR] **COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS2**

Syllabus Linkage	**GS2** — Regional groupings, India–Pakistan, Central Asia; **Prelims**: SCO members, RATS.
Context	An Indian delegation led by a **Joint Secretary** attended an SCO planning meeting in **Islamabad**. Pakistan holds the SCO chair from **1 September 2026 to 31 August 2027** and will host the grouping's top summit in **2027**.
Key Facts	■ India attends all SCO meetings despite minimal ties with Pakistan; EAM visited Islamabad for the **SCO Heads of Government meet (Oct 2024)**. ■ SCO has **10 members**: China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, **Belarus (2024)**, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. ■ India–Pakistan frictions resurfaced at the **UNGA** over Kashmir; **Türkiye** is seeking a closer SCO role. ■ EAM **S. Jaishankar**: with the US and China in competitive mode, nations must **de-risk and diversify** partnerships.
Way Fwd	Use SCO for counter-terrorism (**RATS**) and Central Asian connectivity while insisting on **zero tolerance for cross-border terrorism**.
Concept	**SCO** founded **2001** (from the **Shanghai Five**, 1996); Secretariat **Beijing**; **RATS** HQ **Tashkent**. India & Pakistan became full members in **2017**; India chaired SCO in **2023**.



Visual — Drug-pricing mind-map (linked to: Supreme Court flags steep mark-ups on essential and cancer drugs)

Literacy for All: India at 81.1% as ULLAS nears its target

[SOCIETY] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS1/GS2

Syllabus Linkage	**GS2** — Education, welfare schemes; **GS1** — Social empowerment; **Prelims**: ULLAS, NIPUN Bharat, PLFS.
Context	Official data show literacy rising from **18.32% (1951 Census)** to **74.04% (2011)** and **81.1% (PLFS 2025)**; **10 States/UTs** have been declared **fully literate** under **ULLAS** during 2024–26.
Key Facts	■ **ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram (2022–27)**: outlay **₹1,037.90 crore**, target **5 crore** learners aged **15+**; **4.03 crore** registered. ■ Fully literate: **Ladakh, Mizoram, Goa, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh**, Chandigarh, A&N Islands, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, J&K. ■ PLFS 2025: urban **89%**, rural **77.4%**; rural female literacy only **70.3%** — the key gap. ■ **NIPUN Bharat (2021)** targets foundational literacy & numeracy by **2026–27**; higher-education GER ~**30%** vs NEP goal of **50% by 2035**.
Way Fwd	Focus on rural women and SC/ST pockets; bundle literacy with **digital & financial literacy** and skilling for **Viksit Bharat @2047**.
Concept	**Literate** (Census) = a person aged **7+** who can read & write with understanding in any language. **Article 21A** (**86th Amendment, 2002**) — free & compulsory education for **6–14**; **SDG 4** — quality education.

WEF Travel & Tourism Development Index 2026: India climbs to 31st

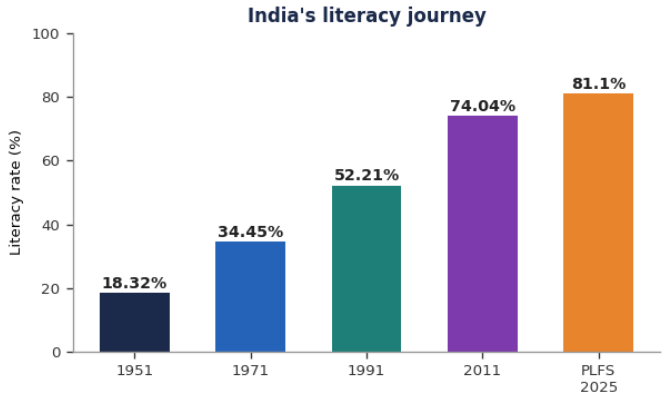
[REPORT] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

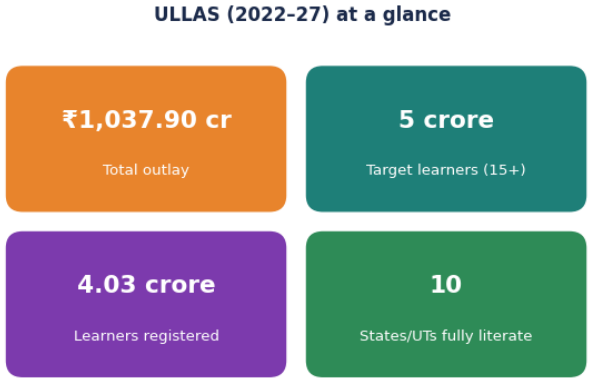
Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** — Services sector, infrastructure, employment; **Prelims**: indices and their publishers.
Context	The biennial **TTDI 2026** of the **World Economic Forum** ranks India **31st of 110 economies**, a gain of about **nine places** over the previous edition; **Japan** tops the list.
Key Facts	■ Top 5: **Japan, USA, Spain, Australia, France**. ■ India's strengths: **price competitiveness**, **cultural & natural resources**, well-distributed demand; among **top 10** for World Heritage cultural sites. ■ Weak spots: **workforce skills**, **environmental sustainability** and tourism-infrastructure quality. ■ **101 of 110** economies improved their scores between 2024 and 2026.
Way Fwd	Skill the hospitality workforce, develop **Swadesh Darshan 2.0** destinations sustainably and improve last-mile connectivity.
Concept	**TTDI** is **biennial** and succeeded the **Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI)** from **2021**. Tourism is a labour-intensive service — key for **employment** and **forex** earnings.

Status of Policing in India Report 2026: digital-fraud victims left stranded

[REPORT] COMMON: Prelims + Mains GS3

Syllabus Linkage	**GS3** — Cyber security, internal security; **GS2** — Police reforms; **Prelims**: I4C, 1930 helpline.
Context	The **Status of Policing in India Report (SPIR) 2026**, a survey of **8,306 people across 16 States**, finds most victims of **digital financial fraud** recover little or nothing.
Key Facts	■ **72%** of victims recovered **no money**; only **51%** filed a formal complaint. ■ **27%** of those with registered complaints reported **paying bribes**; bribe-payers recovered money about **3x** more often. ■ Poor victims were **4x** more likely to pay bribes; **42%** found case registration difficult. ■ Official crime data: cybercrime cases rose **17.9%** — **86,420 (2023) → 1,01,928 (2024)**.
Way Fwd	Enforce time-bound **bank-police coordination** and refunds, professionalise cyber cells and expand awareness among high-exposure users.
Concept	**Police** and **Public Order** are **State List** subjects (**Seventh Schedule**). **I4C** (under **MHA**) runs the **1930** helpline and the national cybercrime reporting portal; offences under **IT Act, 2000** (Sec. 43, 66).





Visual — Literacy & ULLAS dashboard (linked to: Literacy for All: India at 81.1% as ULLAS nears its target)

SECTION D | PRELIMS RAPID-FIRE

TERM / TOPIC	QUICK FACT
Pashudhan Bima Portal	Launched by the **Dept. of Animal Husbandry & Dairying** for digital livestock insurance under the **National Livestock Mission**; in Hindi, English + **11 regional languages**.
KAZIND 2026	India–Kazakhstan joint military exercise at **Oskemen, Kazakhstan** (**28 Sep–11 Oct 2026**); focus on **counter-terrorism** and drone (UAS) ops.
Begonia rajvikramanii	New begonia species from **Rosemala forests, Kollam (Kerala)** in the **Western Ghats**; grows on wet rocky cliffs.

Modhera Sun Temple	Built under **Solanki** king **Bhimadeva I** (early 11th century) in **Mehsana, Gujarat**; Maru-Gurjara style with **Surya Kund**.
Bodhana Sivanandan	Became the **youngest-ever Woman Grandmaster** (age **11**) at the **46th Chess Olympiad, Samarkand**.
Blue bond	**Sagarmala Finance Corporation** launched a **₹600 crore**, **10-year** blue bond to fund port & maritime projects.

SECTION E | PRACTICE CORNER — PRELIMS MCQs + MAINS QUESTION

Q1. With reference to Polylactic Acid (PLA), consider the following statements: 1. It is produced by fermentation of plant-derived sugars followed by polymerisation. 2. It readily biodegrades in open soil and seawater within a few weeks. 3. BIRAC, which funds bio-innovation, functions under the Department of Biotechnology. 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

Answer: (b) — PLA is made by fermenting sugars into **lactic acid** and polymerising it (1 correct). It degrades mainly under **industrial composting** conditions (~58°C), not quickly in soil or seawater (2 wrong). **BIRAC** is a PSU under the **Department of Biotechnology** (3 correct).

Q2. Consider the following statements about the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO): 1. Belarus is its most recent full member. 2. Its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is headquartered in Tashkent. 3. India has never held the SCO chairmanship. Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Answer: (b) — **Belarus** joined in **2024** as the 10th member (1 correct). **RATS** is based in **Tashkent** (2 correct). India chaired the SCO in **2023** and hosted a virtual summit (3 wrong).

MAINS PRACTICE (GS2)

Unregulated trade margins on non-scheduled medicines undermine the right to health. Critically examine India's drug price regulation framework and suggest reforms. (250 words, GS2)

Hint: Intro: SC's '**broad daylight dacoity**' remark (~**10x** mark-up). Body: **DPCO 2013**/**NPPA**/**NLEM** coverage (~**18%**), 10% MRP-hike rule for non-scheduled drugs, **Trade Margin Rationalisation (2019)**, hospital pharmacies, **Ayushman Bharat** costs; counterpoints — R&D incentives, supply. Way forward: wider TMR, **Jan Aushadhi**, generic prescription, transparent pricing. Conclude with **Article 21**/**47**.

★ **ONE-LINE REVISION:** Edible-oil duty cut (24 Sep) + net FDI 5-year high (**$7.35 bn**, July) + sulphur shock (**$1,050/t**) + SC on **10x** drug mark-ups + **PRAMAAN** and **BioE3-PLA** = today's must-revise set.

Compiled & simplified by the StudyForGS.com Research Team
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