UPSC Current Affairs

Sunday, 22 November 2026 · Sources: PIB and The Hindu · 20 items

Paper	Items	Top headlines
GS1	2	Indian team reaches Dhaka ahead of Ganga Water Treaty's expi; 'Lathi haregi-Laptop jitega': Akhilesh coins slogan aimed at
GS2	17	Sri Lanka's organised crime bill gets Supreme Court nod; Iran says allies China, Russia oppose change in nuclear doct
GS3	1	Reverse policies, stop tax sops for rich: Trade unions, farm

Every item links to its original source: tap a headline or the Source line to open the full article on thehindu.com or the press release on pib.gov.in. The Hindu text here is only the short RSS excerpt.

GS Paper I: Heritage, Culture, History, Geography & Society

GEOGRAPHY

Indian team reaches Dhaka ahead of Ganga Water Treaty's expiry

HIGH IMPORTANCE · Both · Geography, Governance & Social Justice, International Relations

• An Indian delegation visited Dhaka for Joint River Commission (JRC) meetings ahead of the impending expiry of the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty.
• The Joint Committee meets on November 22-23, amid procedural questions regarding the Commission's mandate to negotiate treaty renewal.

Why it matters for India and UPSC

Transboundary water agreements with Bangladesh are central to India's Neighbourhood First policy, regional security, and federal coordination with riparian states like West Bengal.
• **International relations:** Negotiating the treaty's extension is crucial to maintaining strategic ties with Dhaka amid changing domestic political dynamics in Bangladesh.
• **Governance & polity:** Water is a State subject under Entry 17 of List II, making domestic political consensus with riparian states such as West Bengal essential for bilateral pacts.
• **Geography & disasters:** Flow management at Farakka affects lean-season siltation, navigability of Kolkata Port, and downstream agricultural salinity in southwestern Bangladesh.

Prelims pointers

• Ganga Water Treaty: Signed in 1996 between India and Bangladesh to share surface water of the Ganga at Farakka Barrage for a 30-year duration (expiring in 2026).
• Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (JRC): Established in 1972 to address shared water resources and flood management.

Static connect: Ganga Water Sharing Treaty (1996)

• Signed in December 1996 by Prime Ministers H.D. Deve Gowda and Sheikh Hasina for a period of 30 years.
• Establishes a water-sharing formula during the lean season (January 1 to May 31) measured at the Farakka Barrage.
• Operates alongside the bilateral Joint Rivers Commission established in 1972.
UPSC angle: Frequently referenced in India-Bangladesh relations, water-sharing disputes, and Neighbourhood First policy.

Mains angle

Examine the geopolitical, hydrological, and federal complexities involved in the renewal of the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty between India and Bangladesh (GS Paper II).

Practice question

The impending renewal of the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty presents critical challenges for transboundary water governance and India's neighbourhood diplomacy. Discuss.

Source: The Hindu, National, 21 Nov 2026 ·
https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indian-team-reaches-dhaka-ahead-of-ganga-water-trea

ALSO IN THE NEWS (LOWER PRIORITY)

• ‘Lathi haregi-Laptop jitega’: Akhilesh coins slogan aimed at youth, pushing development pitch (The Hindu, National, 21 Nov 2026)

GS Paper II: Polity, Governance, Social Justice & IR

GOVERNANCE & SOCIAL JUSTICE

COP31 extends into overtime in Turkiye meeting

HIGH IMPORTANCE · Both · Governance & Social Justice, Environment & Ecology

• COP31 negotiations in Turkiye extended into overtime due to deep consensus impasses.
• The primary standoff involves a division between European countries pushing for timelines to phase out fossil fuels and developing nations resisting without adequate transition support.
• UNFCCC procedural rules require every single clause of the final text to be agreed upon by consensus across all participant countries.

Why it matters for India and UPSC

Directly impacts India's energy transition trajectory, climate diplomacy, and economic balance between decarbonisation and developmental imperatives.
• **International relations:** Exemplifies geopolitical polarization between developed nations and the Global South over climate justice and historical emissions.
• **Economy:** An aggressive fossil fuel phase-out timeline without adequate climate finance and technology transfer poses severe risks to energy security in developing economies.
• **Environment:** Consensus deadlocks hamper international momentum required to limit global average temperature rise within Paris Agreement thresholds.

Prelims pointers

• Decision-making at UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (COP) operates on the principle of consensus among all party nations.
• The Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) is a foundational UNFCCC principle.

Static connect: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

• Adopted at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to combat dangerous human interference with the climate system.
• The supreme decision-making body is the Conference of the Parties (COP), which meets annually.
• Embeds the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC).
UPSC angle: A perennial core theme in both UPSC Prelims and Mains (GS-3 Environment).

Mains angle

North-South climate diplomacy divisions and the dispute over fossil fuel phase-out timelines versus development needs (GS Paper 3).

Practice question

The ongoing deadlock between developed and developing nations over the timeline to phase out fossil fuels highlights structural inequities in global climate governance. Discuss in light of the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR).

Source: The Hindu, Environment, 21 Nov 2026 ·
https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/cop31-extends-into-overtime-in-tu

Why a shortage of clinical psychologists in Keralam govt hospitals is leaving people with intellectual disabilities waiting for certificates

MEDIUM IMPORTANCE · Both · Governance & Social Justice

• Kerala faces an acute shortage of clinical psychologists, with only 22 serving across government and medical college hospitals to conduct IQ tests.
• The deficit has caused extensive delays in issuing disability certificates to around 80,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities recorded in the State.

Why it matters for India and UPSC

Highlights systemic gaps in public healthcare infrastructure that prevent marginalized populations from accessing legally mandated welfare schemes.
• **Governance & polity:** Administrative deficiencies and human resource shortages directly impede the delivery of welfare services to persons with disabilities.
• **Society:** Delays in disability certification perpetuate social exclusion and deny institutional care to persons with intellectual challenges.

Prelims pointers

• Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 recognizes intellectual disability as a specified category for certification and statutory benefits.

Static connect: Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

• Replaced the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 to fulfill commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
• Increased the number of recognized disability categories from 7 to 21, explicitly covering intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorders.
• Mandates a minimum 4% reservation in government jobs for benchmark disabilities.
UPSC angle: Relevant for statutory provisions, vulnerable sections, and social justice in GS Paper II.

Mains angle

Analyze how institutional bottlenecks in disability certification hinder the implementation of welfare entitlements under the RPwD Act, 2016 (GS Paper II).

Source: The Hindu, Health, 21 Nov 2026 · https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/why-a-shortage-of-clinical-psychologists-in-

Strain-specific Ebola jab trials to start in DR Congo next week: WHO

MEDIUM IMPORTANCE · Prelims · Governance & Social Justice

• WHO announced the start of strain-specific Ebola vaccine trials in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
• DR Congo has confirmed 5,568 deaths out of 11,376 cases in its worst-ever Ebola outbreak.

Why it matters for India and UPSC

Highlights the persistent threat of high-fatality emerging infectious zoonoses and the importance of clinical trials for global pandemic preparedness.
• **Science & tech:** Underlines the role of strain-specific vaccines in combating rapidly mutating, lethal viral pathogens.
• **Governance & polity:** Highlights international health governance roles played by the WHO in managing public health emergencies of international concern.

Prelims pointers

• Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a severe, often fatal illness caused by the Ebola virus, transmitted via contact with bodily fluids.
• Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family are considered natural hosts of the Ebola virus.

Static connect: Ebola Virus Disease

• First discovered in 1976 near the Ebola River in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo.
• Transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads through human-to-human transmission via direct contact.
• Characterised as a severe viral haemorrhagic fever with a high case fatality rate.
UPSC angle: Frequently relevant under Science & Technology and public health threats in Prelims.

Mains angle

Global public health challenges posed by zoonotic viral outbreaks and preparedness of international surveillance mechanisms (GS Paper 3).

Source: The Hindu, Health, 21 Nov 2026 · https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/strain-specific-ebola-jab-trials-to-start-in-dr-c

Virginia child dies as measles outbreak in U.S. worsens

MEDIUM IMPORTANCE · Prelims · Governance & Social Justice, International Relations, Internal Security

• A fatal measles case in Virginia reflects a worsening national outbreak in the United States.
• The ongoing spread has caused the United States to lose its measles elimination status after 26 years.

Why it matters for India and UPSC

Shows how declining vaccination compliance can reverse public health achievements even in advanced healthcare systems, offering lessons for India's immunisation drives.
• **Governance & polity:** Demonstrates the necessity of sustained public health messaging and robust coverage under universal immunisation initiatives like Mission Indradhanush.
• **Society:** Underscores social risks stemming from vaccine hesitancy and health misinformation spreading through modern media.

Prelims pointers

• Measles is a highly contagious, airborne infectious disease caused by a virus in the paramyxovirus family.
• Measles elimination is defined by the absence of endemic transmission in a defined geographical area for 12 months or more.

Static connect: Measles and Universal Immunisation

• Measles is prevented through the MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) vaccine.
• In India, Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination is part of the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).
• Herd immunity for measles typically requires around 95% population vaccination coverage.
UPSC angle: Core topic under diseases, immunisation drives, and public health in General Science.

Mains angle

Impact of vaccine hesitancy on the resurgence of preventable infectious diseases globally (GS Paper 2).
Source: The Hindu, Health, 21 Nov 2026 · https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/virginia-child-dies-as-measles-outbreak-in-us-wor

Keralam girl develops kidney ailment after ‘using’ fairness cream promoted on social media

MEDIUM IMPORTANCE · Both · Governance & Social Justice

• A 17-year-old girl in Kerala developed a kidney ailment linked to a social-media-promoted fairness cream.
• Medical testing detected severe mercury toxicity, with the cosmetic containing 12,500 ppm of mercury against the permissible standard of less than 1 ppm.

Why it matters for India and UPSC

Points to severe public health risks from unregulated cosmetic sales on online platforms and lax enforcement of safety limits on heavy metals.
• **Governance & polity:** Demands stricter enforcement under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules against adulterated personal care products.
• **Science & tech:** Exemplifies heavy metal toxicity mechanisms where bioaccumulative toxins directly cause organ failure like nephrotic syndrome.

Prelims pointers

• Permissible limit for mercury in cosmetics in India is less than 1 part per million (ppm).
• Mercury poisoning causes severe nephrotoxicity, neurological damage, and peripheral neuropathy.

Static connect: Minamata Convention on Mercury

• It is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury.
• Adopted in 2013 and entered into force in 2017; India is a party to the convention.
• Specifies phase-out dates for the manufacture, import, and export of cosmetics containing mercury above 1 ppm.
UPSC angle: Regularly tested convention under environment and chemical pollution in Prelims and Mains.

Mains angle

Public health hazards of unregulated cosmetics and the need for strict enforcement of consumer protection laws in digital commerce (GS Paper 2).
Source: The Hindu, Health, 21 Nov 2026 · https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/keralam-girl-develops-kidney-ailment-after-u

At least 13 dead after consuming spurious liquor, over 300 hospitalised in Manipur

MEDIUM IMPORTANCE · Both · Governance & Social Justice, Economy, Reports & Indices

• At least 13 people died and over 300 were hospitalised in Manipur following the consumption of spurious liquor.
• Affected individuals presented to hospitals with acute symptoms including dizziness, severe abdominal pain, and related complications.

Why it matters for India and UPSC

Highlights recurrent regulatory and law enforcement breakdowns leading to mass casualties from toxic informal alcohol markets.
• **Governance & polity:** Exposes weak surveillance by state excise and police departments in curbing black-market hooch distribution.
• **Society:** Reflects the socio-economic vulnerabilities of lower-income communities disproportionately affected by adulterated alcohol.

Prelims pointers

• Spurious liquor tragedies typically involve poisoning by methanol (methyl alcohol), which is metabolised into toxic formic acid.
• Article 47 of the Constitution directs the State to endeavour to bring about prohibition of intoxicating drinks harmful to health.

Static connect: Article 47 of the Constitution

• Part of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) in Part IV.
• Directs the State to raise the level of nutrition, standard of living, and improve public health.
• Specifically mentions prohibiting intoxicating drinks and drugs that are injurious to health.
UPSC angle: Directly links to DPSP applications, public health, and state excise governance.

Mains angle

Governance failure in regulating illicit alcohol and the implementation challenges of Directive Principles under Article 47 (GS Paper 2).

Source: The Hindu, Health, 21 Nov 2026 · https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/manipur/liquor-tragedy-manipur-death-toll-updates/a

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Iran says allies China, Russia oppose change in nuclear doctrine

MEDIUM IMPORTANCE · Both · International Relations

• Iran stated that allies China and Russia oppose any change in its nuclear doctrine.
• Iran has barred the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) from inspecting its nuclear sites, citing security concerns and agency inaction on strikes against its facilities.

Why it matters for India and UPSC

Developments around Iran's nuclear posture directly affect security in West Asia, which is vital for India's diaspora, energy imports, and the Chabahar Port project.
• **International relations:** Instability in West Asia risks disrupting India's crude supplies and regional transit corridors like INSTC and Chabahar.
• **Economy:** Heightened geopolitical friction in the Persian Gulf threatens global oil supply lines and spikes import bills for India.

Prelims pointers

• International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA): An autonomous intergovernmental organization within the UN system, headquartered in Vienna, acting as the global nuclear inspectorate.

Static connect: International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

• Established in 1957 as 'Atoms for Peace' within the United Nations family.
• Headquartered in Vienna, Austria.
• Reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.
UPSC angle: Frequently asked in Prelims regarding international organizations and nuclear safeguards.

Mains angle

Examine how escalating friction between Iran and the IAEA impacts West Asian stability and India's energy security and regional connectivity projects (GS Paper II).

Source: The Hindu, International, 21 Nov 2026 ·
https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/iran-says-allies-china-russia-oppose-change-in

POLITY & CONSTITUTION

Is forfeiting copies of a book the right way to handle ‘objectionable content’?

HIGH IMPORTANCE · Both · Polity & Constitution, Environment & Ecology, Ethics & Integrity

• The issue discusses legal standards and necessity around forfeiting copies of books containing 'objectionable content'.
• Constitutional grounds permitting the banning or forfeiture of publications include national security, public order, and public morality.
• Debates examine the balance between state regulatory power and the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

Why it matters for India and UPSC

Crucial for understanding the fine legal line between safeguarding public order and upholding the core fundamental right to free expression.
• **Governance & polity:** Tests the application of judicial doctrines like proportionality to executive actions banning literature.
• **Ethics:** Involves ethical dilemmas surrounding state paternalism, intellectual freedom, and societal morality.

Prelims pointers

• Freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution.
• Reasonable restrictions on speech under Article 19(2) include sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the State, public order, and decency or morality.

Static connect: Article 19(2) Reasonable Restrictions

• Article 19(1)(a) confers freedom of speech and expression to all Indian citizens.
• Article 19(2) enumerates grounds for restriction including public order, decency or morality, and security of the State.
• Section 95 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) empowers State governments to declare certain publications forfeited.
UPSC angle: Frequently examined in Mains regarding fundamental freedoms versus executive state censorship.

Mains angle

Scrutiny of state powers to ban or forfeit publications against the touchstone of reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) (GS Paper 2).

Practice question

Examine the constitutional safeguards governing the forfeiture and banning of books in India. Does executive overreach in restricting publications undermine the essence of Article 19(1)(a)?

Source: The Hindu, National, 21 Nov 2026 · https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/is-forfieting-copies-of-a-book-the-right-

Ladakh records 70% turnout in first panchayat polls since Union Territory formation

MEDIUM IMPORTANCE · Both · Polity & Constitution

• Ladakh held its first local body elections since becoming a Union Territory in 2019.
• The UT recorded a 70.03% turnout in panchayat elections and 52.4% in municipal council polls.
• Several villages boycotted the elections amid ongoing local concerns and protests regarding regional autonomy.

Why it matters for India and UPSC

Demonstrates grassroots democratic processes in a newly carved, strategically vital frontier Union Territory facing demands for political safeguards.
• **Governance & polity:** Highlights the functioning of democratic local self-government institutions despite the absence of an elected legislative assembly in Ladakh.
• **Internal security:** Ensuring political inclusion and addressing local discontent is vital for stability in this border region facing external security pressures.

Prelims pointers

• Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 created the Union Territory of Ladakh without a legislative assembly.
• Part IX of the Constitution governs Panchayati Raj Institutions, applied to UTs via presidential notifications.

Static connect: Democratic Decentralisation in Union Territories

• Article 239 allows the President to administer UTs through an Administrator or Lieutenant Governor.
• The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts institutionalised local self-governments in rural and urban areas.
• Article 243L provides for the application of Panchayati Raj provisions to Union Territories.
UPSC angle: Directly links to local governance, federal structure, and administration of Union Territories in GS-2.

Mains angle

Democratic decentralisation and grassroots participation in strategically sensitive Union Territories (GS Paper 2).
Source: The Hindu, National, 21 Nov 2026 · https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/ladakh/ladakh-municipal-and-panchayat-elections/art

---

ALSO IN THE NEWS (LOWER PRIORITY)

• Sri Lanka's organised crime bill gets Supreme Court nod (The Hindu, International, 21 Nov 2026)
• European Union proposes tax on Big Tech to boost budget (The Hindu, International, 21 Nov 2026)
• Zelenskiy says China summit was ‘very unsuccessful’ for Russia (The Hindu, International, 21 Nov 2026)
• Ballistic missile attack on Zelenskyy's hometown kills 2 (The Hindu, International, 21 Nov 2026)
• Finland detects drone attack on Russian cargo ship in Baltic (The Hindu, International, 21 Nov 2026)
• Municipal staff transfers to move online by Tamil Nadu govt., with vacancies displayed on portal (The Hindu, National, 21 Nov 2026)
• Odisha government orders inquiry into foreign visits by former CM Naveen Patnaik, aide Pandian (The Hindu, National, 21 Nov 2026)
• Israeli strike kills three in vehicle distributing aid in Gaza, witnesses say (The Hindu, International, 21 Nov 2026)

GS Paper III: Economy, Environment, S&T, Security & DM

ALSO IN THE NEWS (LOWER PRIORITY)

• Reverse policies, stop tax sops for rich: Trade unions, farm outfits to PM Modi (The Hindu, National, 21 Nov 2026)