



US–Israel Attack on Iran (2026): GEOPOLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Background of the Conflict

- Joint military strikes by the United States and Israel targeted Iranian nuclear and missile facilities in early 2026.
- The strikes intensified tensions in West Asia and raised fears of a wider regional conflict.
- Iran responded with missile threats, proxy mobilisation, and warnings of disrupting maritime trade routes.

Strategic Geography – Strait of Hormuz

- Located between Iran and Oman, connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea.
- Around one-fifth of global oil trade passes through this chokepoint.
- Any disruption affects global energy markets and shipping routes.

Iran's Strategic Approach (Asymmetric Strategy)

- Iran uses indirect strategies rather than conventional large-scale warfare.
- Threat of closing or disrupting the Strait of Hormuz to pressure global economies.
- Support to regional proxy groups in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq and Syria.
- Cyber warfare and missile deterrence.

US Military Presence in the Gulf

- Major US bases are located in Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.
- Iran could target these bases using missiles or proxy forces during escalation.



Dollar Dominance & Sanctions

- The US uses financial tools such as sanctions and restrictions on international banking systems.
- Countries trading with sanctioned states risk secondary sanctions.
- This has encouraged some countries to explore alternatives to dollar-based trade.

Impact on India

- Energy Security Risk: India imports nearly 85–90% of its crude oil, and a large share comes from West Asian countries such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait. Instability in the region directly affects India's energy security.
- Dependence on Strait of Hormuz: Nearly 35–50% of India's crude oil imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, making India vulnerable to disruptions in this key maritime chokepoint.

- Inflationary Pressure: Rising global crude oil prices can increase fuel prices in India, leading to higher inflation, increased fiscal deficit, and a widening current account deficit (CAD).
- Trade Disruptions: West Asia is one of India's major trading partners. Regional conflicts may disrupt shipping routes, logistics, and exports to Gulf countries.
- Shipping and Insurance Costs: War-risk insurance premiums for ships increase during conflicts, raising transportation costs and affecting global supply chains.
- Global Oil Price Volatility: Escalation in the Gulf region can trigger sharp spikes in global oil prices, significantly impacting energy-importing economies like India.
- Diaspora Concerns: Nearly 9–10 million Indians live and work in Gulf countries, making the safety of the Indian diaspora a major policy concern.
- Impact on Rupee and Economy: Higher oil import bills weaken the Indian rupee and increase import costs, which may slow economic growth.
- Strategic Petroleum Reserves: India may rely on Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) to stabilize domestic supply during disruptions.
- Naval Security Measures: India may strengthen naval surveillance and maritime security operations in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean Region.

Chabahar Port and India

- Strategic Connectivity Project: Chabahar Port in Iran provides India direct access to Afghanistan and Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan.
- Alternative Trade Route: The port enables India to circumvent Pakistan's land routes and improve regional connectivity.
- Part of INSTC: Chabahar is linked to the

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a 7,200 km multimodal trade corridor connecting India with Iran, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.

- Counterbalance to Gwadar Port: Chabahar serves as a strategic counter to Pakistan–China’s Gwadar Port under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
- Indian Investment: India has invested significantly in developing Chabahar Port and related infrastructure.
- Long-Term Agreement: India and Iran signed a long-term agreement for the operation and development of the port.
- Sanctions Exemption: The United States has previously granted sanctions exemptions for Chabahar due to its importance for Afghan trade.
- Gateway for Afghanistan Trade: Afghanistan increasingly uses Chabahar for international trade, reducing dependence on Pakistani ports.
- Strategic Importance During Conflict: Regional instability could affect India’s connectivity investments and logistics operations at Chabahar.
- Link West Policy: Chabahar strengthens India’s Link West Policy and engagement with West Asia and Central Asia.

Energy Diversification Strategy of India

- India is diversifying crude imports from Russia, the United States, Brazil and African countries to reduce dependence on West Asia.
- India increased imports of discounted Russian crude following global geopolitical shifts.
- India is investing in renewable energy, green hydrogen and ethanol blending to reduce long-term oil dependency.
- Diversified energy sources enhance India’s energy security and strategic autonomy.

Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR)

- Strategic Petroleum Reserves store crude oil for emergency situations and supply disruptions.
- Major storage facilities are located at Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), Mangaluru (Karnataka), and Padur (Karnataka).
- These reserves can support national fuel requirements during temporary supply disruptions.
- India is planning expansion under Phase-II of SPR to strengthen energy security.

Expansion : Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) –

- Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) are emergency crude oil storage facilities to ensure energy security during supply



disruptions.

- Managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Existing SPR Capacity

- Visakhapatnam – 1.33 MMT
- Mangaluru – 1.5 MMT
- Padur – 2.5 MMT
- Total: 5.33 MMT

Expansion Plans (2021 Approval)

- Chandikhol – 4 MMT
- Padur (Expansion) – 2.5 MMT
- Total new capacity: 6.5 MMT

Model

- Developed under Public–Private Partnership (PPP) (commercial-cum-strategic storage).

Budget 2026–27

- 200 crore allocated for Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR).

India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

- IMEC was announced during the G20 Summit 2023 in New Delhi.
- The corridor aims to connect India, the Middle East and Europe through ports, railways and digital infrastructure.
- It is considered a strategic alternative to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- The corridor can reduce transportation time and strengthen India’s trade connectivity with Europe and West Asia.

Maritime Security and Naval Strategy

- India has increased naval patrols in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean Region to secure vital sea lanes.



- The Indian Navy conducts escort missions and anti-piracy operations to protect merchant vessels.
- Important maritime chokepoints include Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb and Strait of Malacca.
- Protecting Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) is critical for India’s trade and energy security.

India’s Strategic Autonomy in Foreign Policy

- India follows a policy of strategic autonomy in international relations.
- India maintains balanced relations with the United States, Israel, Iran and Gulf countries.
- This balanced diplomacy helps protect India’s economic interests, energy security and diaspora welfare.

Russia–China Factor

- Both countries maintain strategic relations with Iran.
- They support multipolar global order and alternative trade systems.

Possible Global Consequences

- Regional war in West Asia.
- Rise in global oil prices and inflation.
- Emergence of new geopolitical alliances.

India’s Strategic Response

- Maintaining strategic autonomy in foreign policy.
- Diversifying energy imports from multiple regions.
- Strengthening naval presence and maritime security.
- Continuing engagement in connectivity projects such as Chabahar.

Conclusion

The US–Israel–Iran tensions highlight the strategic importance of West Asia and key maritime chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz for global energy security. For India, the crisis has implications for oil supplies, regional stability, and strategic projects like the Chabahar Port. Therefore, India must pursue a balanced and pragmatic approach by maintaining strategic autonomy, diversifying energy sources, and strengthening diplomatic engagement to protect its long-term national interests.

PYQ Prelims

Q. Which of the following countries border the Strait of Hormuz?

- (a) Iran and Oman
- (b) Iran and Saudi Arabia
- (c) UAE and Qatar
- (d) Oman and Yemen

Correct Answer: (a) Iran and Oman

Hormuz Halt: India Boosts Russian Oil Imports

Why in News

- Rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia have disrupted oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz.
- Due to uncertainty in this route, India is considering increasing crude oil imports from Russia to maintain energy supply stability.

Strait of Hormuz – Strategic Importance

- The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most important oil transit chokepoints.
- It connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
- Around one-fifth of global petroleum and LNG trade passes through this narrow sea route.
- Nearly 15–20 million barrels of crude oil move through this strait every day.
- Major oil exporters using this route include Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE, Kuwait and Iran.

Reasons for the Disruption

- Growing geopolitical tensions involving Iran, Israel and the United States.
- Increased security risks for oil tankers moving through the strait.
- Insurance costs for shipping companies increased due to security threats.
- Some shipping firms temporarily halted or delayed shipments.

Importance of the Strait for India

- India is the third-largest consumer of crude oil in the world.
- India imports more than 85–88% of its crude oil requirement.
- Around half of India's crude imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz.
- Major suppliers through this route include Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait.

India's Response



- India is increasing imports of discounted Russian crude oil to offset possible supply disruptions.
- Russia can redirect oil supplies to Asian markets including India.
- India is diversifying energy imports from regions such as the United States, West Africa and Latin America.
- India maintains strategic petroleum reserves to manage temporary supply shocks.

Impact on India

- Possible rise in crude oil prices and energy costs.
- Increased inflation and pressure on India's import bill.
- Possible impact on current account deficit.
- LPG supply may be affected because a large share of India's LPG imports come from Gulf countries.
- A large share of India's LNG imports also move through this route.

Global Oil Market Impact

- Any disruption in the Strait of Hormuz can cause a sharp increase in global oil prices.
- Energy analysts warn oil prices could

cross 100 dollars per barrel if disruptions continue.

Why Complete Closure is Unlikely

- Gulf countries depend heavily on oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz.
- Iran also depends on this route for exporting its own oil.
- Closing the strait would harm the economies of all regional actors.

Broader Strategic Implications

- Highlights vulnerability of global energy supply chains.
- Encourages countries like India to diversify energy imports.
- Strengthens the importance of strategic petroleum reserves.
- Promotes investment in renewable energy and alternative fuel sources.
- Emphasizes maritime security and protection of global sea lanes.

Conclusion

- The Strait of Hormuz crisis shows how geopolitical tensions can disrupt global energy supply chains. For India, which depends heavily on imported oil, such disruptions pose serious economic risks. Increasing Russian oil imports and diversifying suppliers may provide short-term relief, but long-term energy security will depend on diversification, strategic reserves and expansion of renewable energy.

PYQ 2017

Q. With reference to the 'Strait of Malacca', which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It connects the South China Sea and the Andaman Sea.
2. It lies between Indonesia and Malaysia.
3. It is one of the busiest shipping routes in the world.

Answer: All statements are correct.

INDIA-ISRAEL RELATIONS:

India-Israel relations continue to deepen, highlighted by **PM Modi's February 25-26, 2026 state visit to Israel**, where he addressed the Knesset and received the first-ever 'Speaker of the Knesset Medal' for strengthening ties. This elevated the partnership to **"Special Strategic Partnership for Peace, Innovation & Prosperity,"** with new pacts on FTA, UPI & AI.

Overview

- India-Israel relations have strengthened significantly, marked by high-level visits and strategic pacts.
- The partnership now covers defence, technology, agriculture, and trade.
- Bilateral ties have evolved from tactical engagement to a comprehensive strategic alliance.

Historical Background

- India recognized Israel in 1950 but delayed full diplomatic relations until 1992.
- Delay was due to Cold War alignments, Non-Aligned Movement considerations, and solidarity with Palestine.
- Full diplomatic relations established in 1992.
- Post-1992 ties expanded particularly in defence and agriculture sectors.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2017 visit to Israel marked a historic shift and formalized the de-hyphenation of India's Israel policy from the Palestine issue.
- Key milestones include the creation of the I2U2 grouping (India, Israel, UAE, USA) in 2022.
- Connectivity initiatives such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) further strengthened strategic cooperation.

Recent Developments (2026)

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's February 2026 state visit elevated ties to a 'Special Strategic Partnership for Peace, Innovation & Prosperity'.
- First India-Israel Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations concluded.
- New Memorandums of Understanding signed in multiple sectors including digital payments, labour mobility, artificial intelligence in education, and cyber security.
- UPI digital payments integration discussions initiated.
- Labour mobility agreements include



Indian nurses, caregivers, and manufacturing workforce deployment in Israel.

- AI collaboration expanded in education and skill development sectors.
- A new Cyber Security Centre of Excellence established.
- Defence cooperation deepened with joint drone and missile development projects.
- Bilateral trade target set at 20 billion USD by 2030.

Pillars of Cooperation

- Defence cooperation
- Trade and economic engagement
- Agriculture and water management
- Science, technology and innovation partnerships

Defence Cooperation

- India is Israel's largest defence buyer with defence deals exceeding 10 billion USD.
- Key procurements include Heron TP drones, Spike anti-tank guided missiles, Barak-8 air defence systems, and Phalcon AWACS.
- Joint ventures include strategic investments such as Haifa Port operations by the Adani Group.

- Regular military interactions including naval exercises like IN-ION.
- Growing emphasis on co-development and co-production aligned with India's Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.
- Collaboration in advanced systems including Akash-NG missile development.

Trade & Economic Relations

- Bilateral trade reached approximately 3.75 billion USD in FY 2024-25.
- India exports gems, chemicals, and other manufactured goods.
- India imports electronics, diamonds, and advanced technology components from Israel.
- Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA) signed in 2025 to promote foreign direct investment.
- India-Israel Industrial R&D Fund (I4F) supports more than 50 joint innovation projects.
- Emerging sectors of collaboration include semiconductor manufacturing and electric vehicles.

Agriculture & Water Cooperation

- Israel supports Indian agriculture through technology transfer and knowledge sharing.
- 43 Centres of Excellence established

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RBI SWITCH AUCTION OF GOVERNMENT SECURITIES (G-SECS)



Overview

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a Rs 25,000 crore switch auction of Government Securities (G-Secs) on February 26, 2026.
- Objective: Manage debt maturity and reduce redemption pressure in FY27.
- This auction follows two prior switch operations totaling Rs 84,804 crore.
- The strategy involves shifting short-term bonds nearing maturity to new long-term bonds maturing beyond FY32.
- This helps smooth the government's debt maturity profile, reduce refinancing risk, and support fiscal stability.
- The operation takes place in the context of the Union Government's budgeted gross market borrowings of Rs 17.2 lakh crore.

Concepts

- Redemption Pressure: Financial burden on the government due to large volumes of bonds maturing in a particular fiscal year, requiring repayment or refinancing simultaneously.

- Switch Auction Mechanism: A debt management tool used by RBI where short-term government bonds are exchanged for longer-term securities, postponing repayment obligations.
- Scale and Timing: The operation specifically targets FY27 maturities worth Rs 5.47 lakh crore, extending them to bonds maturing beyond FY32 to ensure better fiscal cash flow management without immediate liquidity requirements.

Auction Mechanism & Operational Details

- The auction follows a multiple price-based bidding mechanism.
- Bids are submitted through the RBI's e-Kuber platform.
- Participants submit bids specifying the amount of source securities (short-term bonds) and price quotes for destination securities (long-term bonds).
- Minimum bid size is Rs 10,000 and bids must be placed in multiples of Rs 10,000.

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across India for modern agricultural practices.

- These centres have trained over one lakh farmers in drip irrigation, horticulture, and precision farming.
- Water cooperation strengthened through the 2016 bilateral Water MoU.
- Collaboration includes desalination technology and wastewater recycling systems.
- These technologies are particularly important for water-stressed regions of India.

Science, Technology and Innovation

- New Memorandums of Understanding signed in artificial intelligence, space technology, and cyber security.
- Space cooperation includes technology collaboration related to India's Gaganyaan mission.
- Cyber cooperation includes establishment of a dedicated Cyber Security Centre of Excellence.
- Strong people-to-people connections including approximately 50,000 Indian students and workers in Israel.
- Policy discussions including the Yashpal Committee recommendations

encourage reverse migration of skilled talent.

Strategic Importance

- For India: strengthens West Asia policy balance and strategic autonomy.
- Helps counter the China-Pakistan strategic axis in defence technology cooperation.
- Israel supports India's aspiration for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.
- Evacuation operations such as Operation Ajay (2023 Gaza evacuation) and Operation Sindhu (2025) demonstrate strong bilateral trust.
- For Israel: India acts as a democratic strategic partner in Asia.
- India provides labour support in sectors facing shortages in Israel after the October 7, 2023 security crisis.

Challenges Ahead

- Geopolitical balancing: India maintains strong ties with Iran, including the Chabahar Port project, while Israel strongly opposes Iran.
- Palestine issue: India continues to support humanitarian assistance to Gaza and advocates a two-state solution.
- Diplomatic balancing required in UN voting patterns.

- Domestic challenges include intellectual property concerns affecting advanced technology transfer.
- Some Israeli equipment faced criticism during domestic protests in India (e.g., farm protests 2020-21).
- Regional instability including Hamas-Hezbollah tensions could affect supply chains and strategic cooperation.

Conclusion

India-Israel ties exemplify pragmatic diplomacy, blending security, tech innovation, agri-modernization, and economic synergy. PM Modi's 2026 visit and Knesset Medal honour signal deeper ties via FTA, AI, UPI pacts. Balancing Palestine-Iran relations is vital for longevity, fitting India's multi-alignment strategy seamlessly.

PYQ – 2018

Q: The term 'two-state solution' is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of -

Options:

- (a) China
- (b) Israel
- (c) Iraq
- (d) Yemen.

Answer: (b) Israel.



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- Retail investors can participate through RBI Retail Direct platform or through stock exchanges using non-competitive bidding.
- Example: A recent switch auction took place on March 2, 2026, between 10:30 AM and 11:30 AM, with settlement scheduled for March 4, 2026.

Switch Ratio

- The cut-off is determined using a price ratio between source securities (short-term bonds) and destination securities (long-term bonds).
- Bids quoted at or above the determined ratio are accepted in the auction.

Broader Policy Context

- Switch auctions are a part of RBI's broader public debt management strategy conducted on behalf of the Government of India.
- They complement other liquidity management operations such as repo operations and dollar-rupee swaps.
- However, unlike liquidity operations, switch auctions focus specifically on restructuring the maturity profile of government debt rather than injecting liquidity.

Conclusion

RBI's switch auctions represent proactive public debt management. They are crucial for understanding the monetary-fiscal interface in India. For Civil Services Examination preparation, they illustrate how the government and RBI coordinate to ensure sustainable public finances and avoid maturity concentration risks.

PYQ 2023

Q. Which of the following activities of Reserve Bank of India is considered to be part of 'Sterilisation'?

- Conducting 'Open Market Operations'
- Oversight of settlement and payment systems
- Debt and cash management for Central and State Governments
- Regulating the functions of Non-banking Financial Institutions

Answer: (a)

India–Sweden Technology & Artificial Intelligence Corridor (SITAC)



Background

- India and Sweden signed a Statement of Intent at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 to strengthen cooperation in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital technologies.
- The agreement launches the Sweden-India Technology and Artificial Intelligence Corridor (SITAC) as the central platform for collaboration between the two countries.
- SITAC aims to connect governments, businesses, startups, and academic institutions from India and Sweden for joint AI development and technology cooperation.

Partnership Structure

- The initiative is led by the IndiaAI Mission from India and Business Sweden from the Swedish side.
- The partnership focuses on developing and deploying AI solutions that create measurable industrial and societal impact.
- Both countries share common priorities in using AI for economic growth, innovation, sustainable development, and responsible risk management.

SITAC Collaboration Activities

- SITAC will act as a bridge connecting the AI ecosystems of India and Sweden.
- Planned initiatives include conferences, workshops, and technology exchange programmes between stakeholders of both nations.
- Delegations will undertake field visits to innovation hubs, research institutions, and technology centers.
- There will be dialogue platforms involving companies, investors, research communities, and policymakers.
- The corridor will support joint innovation platforms that encourage collaborative research, development projects, and funding opportunities.

Strategic Benefits

- India benefits from Sweden's strengths in advanced industrial technology, research capabilities, and responsible AI governance frameworks.
- Sweden gains access to India's large-scale compute infrastructure, vast data resources, and highly skilled technology talent pool.

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Gaganyaan Mission

Background

- Gaganyaan is India's first human spaceflight programme by ISRO.
- Objective: Demonstrate capability to send humans to Low Earth Orbit (~400 km) and bring them back safely.
- Crew of 3 astronauts will stay in space for about 3 days.
- India will become the 4th country after USA, Russia and China to achieve human spaceflight capability.

Mission Plan

- Total 3 missions: 2 uncrewed missions and 1 manned mission.
- Uncrewed flights will test life-support systems, crew module performance, re-entry and recovery.

Launch Vehicle

- Launch vehicle: LVM3 (earlier GSLV Mk-III).
- Human-rated version designed

with enhanced safety and reliability.

Technologies

- Orbital Module (Crew Module + Service Module).
- Crew Escape System for emergency abort.
- Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS).
- Sea recovery system after re-entry.

Important Components

- Vyommitra humanoid robot used in uncrewed missions to simulate astronaut conditions.
- Astronaut training supported by international partners.

MoU & International Cooperation

- India signed cooperation agreements with Israel to strengthen collaboration in space technology and research.
- Focus areas include satellite technology, innovation, and joint

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- The collaboration supports the development of inclusive and practical AI applications for industries, startups, and research institutions in both countries.L.

Relevance for Governance & Technology Policy

- The SITAC initiative highlights India's approach to international technological partnerships in emerging fields such as Artificial Intelligence.
- It demonstrates how bilateral cooperation can combine technological expertise, data ecosystems, and research capacity to create global innovation networks.
- For Civil Services aspirants, this partnership illustrates the intersection of foreign policy, digital economy strategy, science diplomacy, and

technological governance.

Union Budget 2026–27: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Allocation :

- 1,000 crore allocated for the IndiaAI Mission in Union Budget 2026–27.
- Allocation is lower than ₹2,000 crore in FY 2025–26, due to under-utilisation of earlier funds.
- Funds will support:
 - ▶▶ AI research and innovation
 - ▶▶ AI compute infrastructure & datasets
 - ▶▶ Development of indigenous AI models and startups.
 - ▶▶ Additional initiatives:
 - ▶▶ 250 crore for AI Centres of Excellence.
 - ▶▶ 100 crore for AI in education initiatives

Prelims Practice Question

Q. With reference to recent international collaborations in Artificial Intelligence, consider the following statements:

1. SITAC is a corridor established between India and Sweden to promote cooperation in technology and Artificial Intelligence.
2. SITAC connects only large corporations and does not involve startups or academic institutions.
3. The initiative was announced under the IndiaAI Mission during the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Correct Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

GI-TAGGED

KARBI ANGLONG GINGER



Context

- The first export consignment of GI-tagged Karbi Anglong Ginger was officially flagged off for London, highlighting its growing international demand.

Karbi Anglong Ginger

- Karbi Anglong Ginger is an organically cultivated spice grown in the hill district of Karbi Anglong in Assam.
- It is mainly cultivated by tribal communities using traditional agricultural practices.

Cultivation

- The ginger is cultivated using traditional farming techniques such as Jhum cultivation (shifting cultivation).
- It is also grown using the Tila method, a traditional hill farming practice followed by tribal communities.



Qualities

- The ginger is known for its strong aroma and high pungency.
- It has medicinal benefits and is widely used in traditional remedies.
- It also has a longer shelf life compared to many other ginger varieties.

Varieties

- Two main varieties of Karbi Anglong Ginger are grown in the region:
 - Aizol – Low fibre content and primarily exported to international markets.
 - Nadia – High fibre content and mainly sold in the domestic market.

GI Status

- Karbi Anglong Ginger received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2015.
- The GI tag helps protect the authenticity and unique characteristics of the product linked to its geographical origin.

About Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

- A Geographical Indication (GI) is a legal recognition given to products originating from a specific geographical territory.
- The product must possess qualities, reputation, or characteristics that are essentially attributable to its place of origin.

Legal Basis

- In India, GI tags are governed by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
- The Act came into force in 2003.

International Alignment

- The legislation was enacted to comply with the TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement under the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Nodal Authority

- The Geographical Indications Registry located in Chennai grants GI tags in India.
- It functions under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- DPIIT operates under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

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research between space agencies.

- International cooperation supports development of advanced technologies relevant to missions like Gaganyaan.

Significance

- Strengthens India's strategic and technological capabilities in space.
- Encourages scientific research in micro-gravity.
- Boosts space industry, startups and global cooperation.

PYQ 2016

Q. The mission Chandrayaan-1 was launched by which of the following rockets?

- PSLV-C11
- GSLV-Mk III
- PSLV-C25
- GSLV-F06

Answer: A. PSLV-C11

Context

- According to reports in The Times of India (TOI), a rare Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewitti*) was sighted for the first time at Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh.
- The sighting is significant because the species has a very restricted distribution in central India and is rarely observed.



About Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewitti*)

- Forest Owlet is an endemic owl species of India, meaning it is found only in the Indian subcontinent.
- The species was rediscovered in 1997 after being presumed extinct for more than 100 years.

Physical Appearance

- It is a small-sized owl species.
- It has an unspotted crown which helps distinguish it from other owl species.
- It possesses a distinct white throat collar.
- The wings and tail are heavily banded, giving it a characteristic striped appearance.

Behaviour

- Unlike most owl species that are nocturnal, the Forest Owlet is diurnal (active during the day).

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PROJECT CHEETAH

Context

- Nine cheetahs from Botswana arrived at Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh under Project Cheetah.
- This marks the third batch of African cheetahs translocated to India.

Project Cheetah

- The **world's first inter-continental translocation of a large carnivore** was successfully completed with **20 African cheetahs brought to India from Namibia and South Africa during 2022–23**.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the first eight cheetahs at Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh, on 17 September 2022, marking the official launch of Project Cheetah.
- **As of December 2025, India has a total of 30 cheetahs, consisting of:**
 - **12 adults**
 - **9 sub-adults**
 - **9 cubs**
- The population includes **11 founder cheetahs brought from Africa and 19 individuals born in India**.
- **Mukhi, the first cheetah cub born on Indian soil**, has become a mother to **five healthy cubs**, representing a major milestone in the success of the reintroduction programme.
- To support conservation and community participation, **over 450 "Cheetah Mitras"** have been appointed in villages surrounding the cheetah habitat.
- The project has generated **around 380 direct employment opportunities** for local communities.
- As part of community-based conservation, **5% of eco-tourism revenue from Kuno National Park is being shared**



with local communities.

- India aims to establish a **self-sustaining metapopulation of 60–70 cheetahs by 2032**.
- The long-term plan involves creating **a cheetah landscape of approximate-**

ly **17,000 km² across multiple protected areas**.

- **Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh** has been prepared as the **next site for cheetah reintroduction under the project**.

Previous Translocations

- First batch: 8 cheetahs were translocated from Namibia in 2022.
- Second batch: 12 cheetahs were translocated from South Africa in 2023.
- The Botswana batch represents the third international relocation under the programme.

Current Population Status

- With the addition of six females and three males from Botswana, India's total cheetah population has reached 48.
- Kuno National Park currently houses 45 cheetahs.
- Among them are 28 cubs born in India, indicating successful breeding after reintroduction.

Other Locations

- Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh currently hosts 3 translocated adult cheetahs.

About Project Cheetah

- Project Cheetah is India's flagship wildlife conservation programme aimed at reintroducing cheetahs into the wild.
- The species was officially declared extinct in India in 1952.
- The project seeks to restore grassland ecosystems and enhance biodiversity.

Global Significance

- Project Cheetah represents the world's first intercontinental translocation of a large wild carnivore.

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- While hunting, it shows rapid side-to-side tail flicking behaviour, a distinctive identification feature.

Habitat Preference

- The species primarily inhabits dry deciduous forests.
- It prefers forests dominated by teak trees.
- Its habitat usually consists of an open canopy with dense undergrowth which supports prey availability.

Distribution

- The Forest Owlet has a very restricted and fragmented distribution in

central India.
• It is mainly found in the following states: Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Ecological Role

- The Forest Owlet functions as an important understory predator in forest ecosystems.
- It regulates populations of small mammals, reptiles and large insects.
- This helps maintain ecological balance in dry deciduous forest ecosystems.



Threats

- Habitat degradation due to illegal logging.
- Forest fires affecting dry deciduous forest habitats.
- Agricultural expansion leading to habitat fragmentation.
- Loss of mature teak forests required for nesting and hunting.

Conservation Status

- IUCN Red List: Endangered
- CITES: Appendix I
- Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (India): Schedule I (highest level of legal protection)