

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

Friday : 03 July, 2026

Edition : International Table of Contents

Page 01 Syllabus: GS II :International Relations / Preliminary Examination	Free Indo-Pacific priority for India, Japan: PM
Page 03 Syllabus : GS III : Science and Tech/ Preliminary Examination	Vikram-1, India's first-ever privately developed orbital rocket, gears up for launch
Page 07 Syllabus: GS III : Science and Tech/ Preliminary Examination	Can space oncology revolutionise cancer treatment?
Page 08 Syllabus : GS III : Science and Tech/ Preliminary Examination	A hold on AI : AI holds scientific promise, but it should not unfold unchecked
Page 08: Editorial Analysis Syllabus : GS II : Indian Polity	The right to a fair trial at the crossroads

Page 01: GS II : International Relations/ Preliminary Examination

Recently, the visit of Japan's newly appointed Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi to India has propelled the India-Japan strategic and economic partnership to a new summit. Amidst the current global geopolitical instability (such as the West Asia crisis and rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific), the Prime Ministers of both nations highlighted a "Free, Prosperous, and Rules-based Indo-Pacific" region as their shared priority. During this visit, historic agreements were signed in sectors like defense, technology, and energy security, reflecting a 'perfect alignment' between the two countries.

Free Indo-Pacific priority for India, Japan: PM

Both countries are 'perfectly aligned', Japanese PM says and stresses on 'strategic cooperation'

Countries seal at least 129 MoUs on technology, investment and AI; Japan may invest \$1 trillion

Modi praises deal over defence tech for maritime security; Takaichi expresses concern over Gulf

Saurabh Trivedi
Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

A "free and rules-based Indo-Pacific" is a common priority for India and Japan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday while welcoming his Japanese counterpart, Sanae Takaichi. Mr. Modi said India and Japan would jointly develop technologies that would help in maintaining maritime security and "regional peace".

"India and Japan are among the biggest economies of the world. A free, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific is our shared priority. We will jointly pave the way for peace, stability and progress for the entire region," Mr. Modi said.

"In the field of defence, India and Japan have done the first agreement for co-development of projects. This agreement on naval radio antenna will open a new chapter of defence technology partnership. Now, we will jointly develop such technologies that will help in maintaining regional peace, maritime security, and strengthen rules-based order," Mr. Modi added.

Maritime security
Ms. Takaichi, who arrived in New Delhi on July 1 for her first visit to India as Prime Minister, renewed her call for an updated free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) and emphasised the need for "strategic cooperation". She said that the two countries were "perfectly aligned".



Boosting ties: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Japanese counterpart Sanae Takaichi in New Delhi. SHV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Mr. Modi and Ms. Takaichi attended an economic session in which Indian and Japanese companies sealed 129 memoranda of understanding on technology, investment, and artificial intelligence.

According to a document shared by the External Affairs Ministry, Japan is on track to invest \$1 trillion across States, including Haryana, Odisha, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and those in the northeastern region.

Ms. Takaichi highlighted the importance of maritime security as the key to maintaining regional stability in the Indo-Pacific.

"Expansion of maritime security is especially important for regional peace and stability," Ms. Takaichi said, highlighting the harmony between Japan's call for FOIP and the Government of India's emphasis on ocean as a "shared space" that can sustain economic growth and safeguard sovereignty.

"In the midst of international affairs in disarray, the establishment of such an inter-complementary cooperative relationship has become ever more important," she stated.

She expressed concern about the situation in the Gulf region, where at least 31 Japanese vessels remain stranded near the Strait of Hormuz.

Defence cooperation
The two sides also announced deepening of bilateral defence cooperation through joint military exercises, particularly naval exercises in the Indian Ocean and expanding Maritime Domain Awareness.

Interacting with the media on Thursday evening, Japanese officials said that bilateral cooperation in defence equipment and technology was progressing through industry agreements. They emphasised that the defence technologies being exported were intended for "defence purposes and not for warfare".

The two sides highlighted the need to collaborate in addressing energy security needs against the backdrop of the disruption in the Persian Gulf region and supported the idea of "strategic stockpiling of crude oil" to serve bilateral requirements. Japan is diversifying energy suppliers in the backdrop of the crisis in West Asia, said Japanese officials.

Key Analysis Points

A. Strategic & Security Cooperation

- **First Defense Co-development Agreement:** The two nations signed their first-ever agreement for the co-development of a Naval Radio Antenna. This marks a historic milestone in the India-Japan defense technology partnership.
- **Maritime Security and FOIP:** Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP). A perfect synergy was observed between Japan's FOIP concept and India's 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision.
- **Military Exercises and Expansion of MDA:** An agreement was reached to deepen joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean and to expand the scope of 'Maritime Domain Awareness' (MDA).
- **Peaceful Defense Export:** Japanese officials clarified that the defense technologies exported to India are intended "for defense purposes and not for war," aligning with Japan's pacifist policy.

B. Economic & Technical Partnership

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Daily News Analysis

- **Signing of 129 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs):** Indian and Japanese companies inked 129 agreements spanning Artificial Intelligence (AI), advanced technology, and investment.
- **Massive \$1 Trillion Investment:** According to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan is on track to invest \$1 trillion (one lakh crore dollars) across various Indian states, including Haryana, Odisha, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and the North-Eastern states.
- **Development of North-East India:** Special focus has been given to the North-Eastern region in this investment, which is strategically vital for India's 'Act East Policy' and Japan's connectivity priorities.

C. Global Geopolitics & Energy Security

- **Strait of Hormuz Crisis:** The Japanese Prime Minister expressed deep concern over the situation in the Gulf region, where approximately 31 Japanese ships are stranded near the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Diversification of Energy Suppliers:** In view of the disruptions caused by the West Asia crisis, Japan is diversifying its energy sources and views India as a reliable partner.
- **Strategic Stockpiling of Crude Oil:** Both sides supported cooperation on the strategic stockpiling of crude oil to meet bilateral requirements, which will strengthen the energy security of both nations.

Significance for India

- **Countering Chinese Aggression:** Robust defense ties with Japan are absolutely essential for India to balance China's growing influence and aggressive posture in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Boosting 'Make in India':** The co-development of defense equipment will infuse new technology and strength into India's domestic defense manufacturing sector.
- **Economic Growth and Infrastructure:** The \$1 trillion investment can prove to be a game-changer for developing world-class infrastructure, generating employment, and fostering technological advancement (especially in the AI sector) in India.

Way Forward

- **Time-bound Implementation of Agreements:** To translate the 129 signed MoUs and investment proposals into reality on the ground, both countries must overcome administrative and bureaucratic hurdles.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** To reduce dependence on China in critical areas like semiconductor technology and advanced materials, both nations should further strengthen the 'Supply Chain Resilience Initiative' (SCRI).
- **Coordination at Multilateral Forums:** India and Japan must work closely at forums like the QUAD and G-20 to champion the voice of the Global South.

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Conclusion

In conclusion, the partnership between India and Japan is not confined merely to the bilateral interests of the two nations; rather, it has become the pivot of stability for the entire Indo-Pacific region. As the Japanese Prime Minister remarked that both countries are "perfectly aligned" amidst global disorder, it demonstrates that this 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'—built on the triad of defense, economy, and energy security—will play a defining role in maintaining a rules-based global order in the times to come.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: Consider the following statements regarding India-Japan relations—

1. Both India and Japan support the concept of a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP).
2. India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative is based on maritime cooperation and regional security.
3. The underlying spirit of both FOIP and SAGAR is to promote a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.

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

Ans: (d)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: Briefly describe the key features of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. (10Marks, 150Words)

Page 03:GS III : Science and Tech / Preliminary Examination

Inaugurating a new era of privatization and commercialization in the Indian Space Sector, India's first privately developed orbital-class rocket, '**Vikram-1**', is fully prepared for its maiden test flight. This debut test flight mission, announced by Hyderabad-based space-tech startup Skyroot Aerospace, has been named '**Mission Aagaman**' (The Arrival). The launch window has been scheduled between July 12 and August 4, 2026. All stages of the rocket have been successfully integrated at the launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

Vikram-1, India's first-ever privately developed orbital rocket, gears up for launch

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

India's first privately developed orbital-class rocket is all set for its maiden launch.

On Thursday, private space launch company Skyroot Aerospace, based in Hyderabad, announced that the launch window for Vikram-1's first test flight, named Mission Aagaman, is between July 12 and August 4.

It said that Test Flight-1 is targeted for no earlier than July 12, subject to the completion of assembly and testing operations at the launch site at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in



Vikram-1 sits on a launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

Sriharikota, as well as weather, safety and range clearance. The launch window extends till August 4.

The company said that Mission Aagaman, meaning 'the arrival', marks its

second mission following the successful suborbital flight of Vikram-S, the first private rocket to reach space from Indian soil, on November 18, 2022.

It said that this would be a partially commercial flight, with the company planning to commence full commercial flights after one or two successful demonstrations to orbit.

All stages of the Skyroot's Vikram-1 have been successfully integrated and stacked at the launch pad. The mission will gather critical data across propulsion, stage separation, guidance, navigation, control and overall vehicle performance.

Key Points & Analysis

1. Mission 'Aagaman' and Features of Vikram-1

- **Orbital-Class Rocket:** 'Vikram-1' is a multi-stage orbital rocket, meaning it possesses the capability to place satellites into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- **Private Sector Milestone:** This stands as India's first orbital rocket to be fully designed, developed, and assembled entirely by the private sector.

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Daily News Analysis

- **Payload and Commercial Nature:** This flight will be 'partially commercial'. Skyroot plans to initiate full commercial flights following one or two successful demonstration flights, which will enhance India's share in the global small satellite launch market.

2. Track Record of Skyroot Aerospace

- **Success of Vikram-S:** 'Mission Aagaman' represents Skyroot's second major milestone. Previously, on November 18, 2022, the company scripted history by successfully launching India's first private suborbital rocket named '**Vikram-S**'.
- **Access to Space:** Vikram-S was the first private rocket from Indian soil to reach space (crossing the Kármán line), establishing the necessary technological foundation for the larger and more complex orbital mission of Vikram-1.

3. Core Technical Objectives of the Test Flight

The primary objective of this maiden test flight is not merely deploying a satellite into orbit, but gathering live data regarding the rocket's real-time performance. This mission will validate the following systems:

- **Propulsion:** Measuring the actual capacity, thrust, and pressure parameters of the rocket engines.
- **Stage Separation:** Verification of the timely and safe detachment of the rocket's individual stages during its flight profile in space.
- **Guidance, Navigation, and Control (GNC):** Testing the precision of the software and sensors controlling the rocket's pre-determined trajectory and stability.

4. Significance for India's Space Economy

- **Reducing the Burden on ISRO:** The entry of private entities will allow ISRO to shift its primary focus away from routine commercial satellite launches, enabling it to concentrate on deep space missions (such as Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan, and the upcoming Bharatiya Antariksh Station) and advanced scientific research.
- **Cost Effectiveness:** The development of private launch vehicles is expected to drastically lower satellite launch costs. Startups like Skyroot can offer rapid, cost-effective, 'on-demand' launch services to put satellites into orbit.
- **Emerging as a Global Hub:** Supported by regulatory bodies like IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre), the Indian private sector is moving forward to become a leading player in the global aerospace market, supplementing India's current \$13 billion space economy.

Conclusion

The upcoming launch of the Vikram-1 rocket is not just the success story of a single enterprise; rather, it is a living testament to the objectives of the **Indian Space Policy 2023**, which was formulated to foster private participation in the space sector. The title 'Mission Aagaman' is entirely apt, as it heralds the 'arrival' of India's private industries into the global commercial space

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

arena. A successful validation flight will establish India as the most attractive, reliable, and cost-effective global hub for small and nano-satellite launches.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: Consider the following statements regarding 'Vikram-1'—

1. It is India's first private sector-developed orbital-class rocket.
2. It has been developed to place satellites into Low Earth Orbit.
3. It has been developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Select the correct answer using the codes given below—

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

Ans: d)

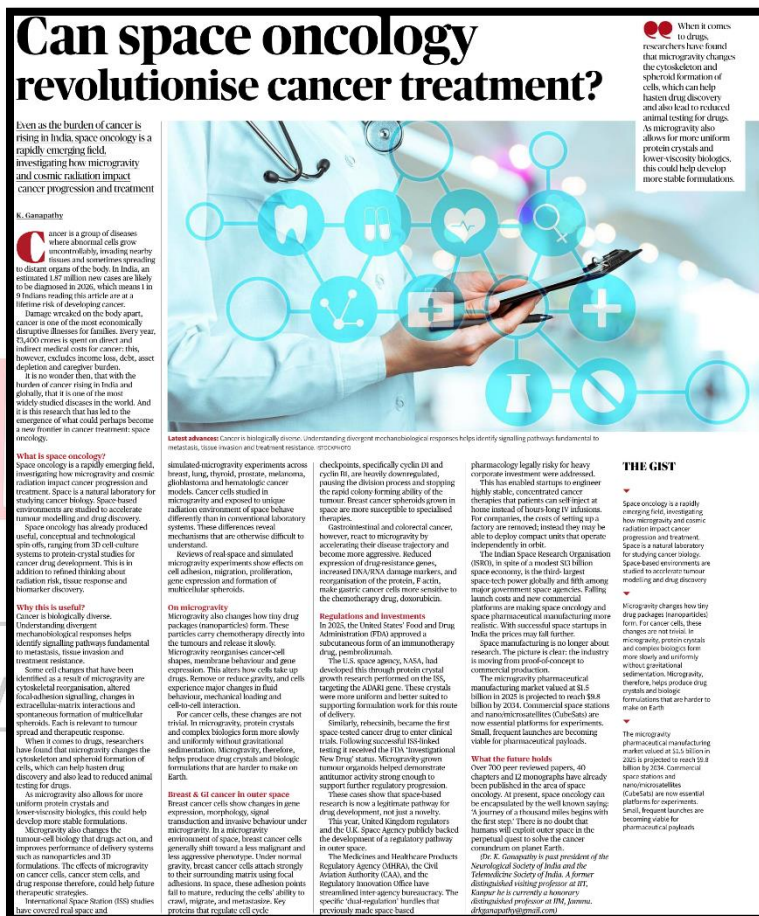
UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: How has the Indian Space Policy, 2023 transformed the role of private companies in the space sector? Critically examine. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

www.lakshyaacademy.co | www.lakshyaaiasacademy.com

Page 07 : GS III : Science and Tech / Preliminary Examination

The burden of cancer continues to rise both in India and globally (with an estimated 1.87 million new cases in India in 2026). Amidst this severe health crisis, **'Space Oncology'** has emerged as a novel and revolutionary frontier in medical science. This field primarily studies how the unique environment of space—specifically **'microgravity'** and **'cosmic radiation'**—affects the growth, spread (metastasis), and drug responsiveness of cancer cells. This research holds the potential to completely transform cancer treatment methodologies on Earth.



Key Points & Analysis

1. Socio-Economic Burden of Cancer

- **High Risk:** According to data, 1 in every 9 Indians is at risk of developing cancer during their lifetime.
- **Economic Devastation:** Approximately ₹3,400 crore is spent annually in India on the direct and indirect treatment of cancer. This figure does not even account for income loss, debt traps, asset depletion, and the severe mental and financial toll inflicted on caregivers.

2. What is Space Oncology and Why is it Useful? (Core Concept & Utility)

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Daily News Analysis

- **Space as a Natural Laboratory:** Due to gravity on Earth, cells grow in a 2D (two-dimensional) monolayer. However, in the microgravity of space, they naturally develop into 3D (three-dimensional) multicellular spheroids and **tumour organoids**. This closely mimics the actual internal environment of a tumor inside the human body.
- **Alteration in Cell Structure:** Microgravity triggers the reorganization of the cancer cells' **cytoskeleton** (cellular skeleton) and alters their capacity for focal-adhesion (the ability to bind with each other).
- **Reduction in Animal Testing:** The tumor models developed in space are so precise that testing drugs on them can significantly reduce the necessity for animal testing on Earth, thereby accelerating the pace of drug discovery.

3. Impact of Microgravity on Specific Cancers

- **Breast Cancer:** Breast cancer cells exhibit less aggressive and **less malignant** behavior in space. The absence of gravity prevents their adhesion points from maturing, which reduces their ability to crawl and spread (metastasis) through the body. Furthermore, the levels of proteins regulating cell division (Cyclin D1 and Cyclin B1) decrease, halting tumor progression.
- **Gastrointestinal (GI) and Colorectal Cancer:** Conversely, these cells become more aggressive in space. However, due to a lack of drug-resistant genes and the structural reorganization of the F-actin protein, these cells become exceptionally sensitive to the chemotherapy drug '**Doxorubicin**'.

4. Drug Discovery and Space Manufacturing

- **Uniform Crystals and Nanoparticles:** On Earth, gravity causes sedimentation (settling of particles) in liquids. The absence of sedimentation in space enables the manufacturing of highly pure, uniform, and **lower-viscosity** protein crystals and nanoparticles.
- **Success Stories:**
 - **Pembrolizumab:** Based on protein crystal research conducted by NASA on the International Space Station (ISS), the US FDA in 2025 approved the subcutaneous (under-the-skin injection) form of this immunotherapy drug. This allowed patients the convenience of self-injecting at home rather than undergoing hours of IV drips.
 - **Rebecsinib:** This became the first anti-cancer drug tested in space to be granted 'Investigational New Drug' status by the FDA.

5. Global Regulatory Reforms and Market Potential

- **Resolving Dual Regulatory Hurdles:** The United Kingdom (UK) eliminated legal risks for 'Space Pharmacology' this year by streamlining the bureaucracy between its space and health agencies (MHRA and CAA).
- **Market Size:** The microgravity-based drug manufacturing market, which stood at \$1.5 billion in 2025, is projected to reach **\$9.8 billion by 2034**. The industry is now transitioning beyond mere research toward commercial production via '**CubeSats**' and commercial space stations.

6. Opportunities for India and ISRO

- Boasting a \$13 billion space economy, **ISRO** is the third-largest space-tech power globally.

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Daily News Analysis

- Driven by a continuous reduction in launch costs in India and a robust space startup ecosystem, the country is well-positioned to become a global hub for commercial drug manufacturing in space and space oncology.

Conclusion

Space oncology is no longer just a scientific curiosity; it has become a legitimate and practical pathway for global cancer research. By leveraging space's microgravity, scientists are developing life-saving drugs and formulations that were fundamentally impossible to manufacture on Earth.

For India, with the Gaganyaan mission and the planned development of the future **Bharatiya Antariksh Station**, this is the most opportune time to integrate space oncology and bio-manufacturing into its national space vision. This 'cosmic journey' of the medical world brings a new ray of hope to millions of cancer patients back on Earth.



UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: Consider the following statements regarding 'Space Oncology'—

1. It studies the effect of the space environment on cancer cells.
2. It utilizes microgravity and cosmic radiation in cancer research.
3. Its objective is solely to study cancer occurring in astronauts.

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

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: What is Space Oncology? Briefly describe its utility in cancer research. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Page 08 : GS III : Science and Tech / Preliminary Examination

The initial report of the **UN Independent International Scientific Panel on AI** has highlighted critical global concerns arising from the unregulated proliferation of and rapid investment in Artificial Intelligence technologies. The core message of the report is that while AI possesses an immense potential to transform scientific research, it must not be allowed to evolve without any oversight, checks, or control. This analysis delves into the growing global divides caused by AI, its socio-economic hazards, and the protective challenges faced by developing countries (Global South).

Key Points & Analysis

1. The North-South Divide (Global Divide)

- **Unequal Distribution of Benefits:** The primary benefits of the proliferation of advanced AI models are expected to be cornered by developed countries (Global North), while poor and developing nations (Global South) are falling behind in this race.
- **Regulatory Challenge:** The greatest challenge before developing nations is their lack of capacity or technical expertise to regulate the complex and advanced AI models being developed by a handful of Western or Chinese corporations.
- **Corporate Monopoly:** Emerging countries are left with only two choices: either try to enter this AI race through massive capital investments or accept the decisions of select global tech giants (Big Tech) that currently control AI access and utilization.

2. Core Requisites to Become an AI Power

According to the article, for a country to become an influential voice in the AI landscape, it requires three primary resources, all of which are severely limited in developing countries:

- **Abundant Electricity:** AI data centers require massive amounts of energy to run operations and train complex models.
- **Highly Capitalized Firms:** Corporations with the financial muscle to retain scarce global AI talent by offering extraordinarily high compensation.
- **Aggressive Drive to Overcome Policy Barriers:** A hyper-competitive persistence to constantly push boundaries, rendering technical capabilities from just the previous month obsolete.

A hold on AI

AI holds scientific promise, but it should not unfold unchecked

The UN's Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI drives at a few fault lines in the rapid investment into and proliferation of AI technologies: the Global South-Global North divide, with the latter poised to take the lion's share of the benefits of the diffusion of advanced AI models in different industries; and the challenge poorer countries face in regulating models far more advanced than what their own AI ecosystems can develop. These divides force emerging countries to choose between capital-intensive undertakings to get a seat at the table, or to accept the hand dealt to them by the half-dozen companies whose decisions shape AI access and use. These divisions are all the more urgent when seen in the light of what makes a country a voice that matters in AI: abundant electricity, highly capitalised firms that employ scarce talent with high salaries, and a drive to plow through policy resistance with a competitive zeal to outdo last month's capabilities. While the report highlights AI technologies' transformative potential in scientific research, its development is far more rapid than that of social media – an industry that had time to act responsibly yet deformed public discourse and affected democracies, even as people were more or less able to tell what was going on in real time. It is unclear whether individual countries, even China or the U.S., have enough power to meaningfully arrest how AI develops.

AI firms acting irresponsibly have already caused harms that would not be tolerated in any other industry. AI models have ensnared teenagers and adults in parasocial fantasies that have sometimes turned fatal; they have flattened the world wide web, grievously injuring the news media's ability to deploy resources in their respective missions to inform the public; they have unleashed an epidemic of deepfakes, undermining trust in the written word and images alike; and they have deeply intertwined their promises of Artificial General Intelligence with global financial systems, with possible catastrophic economic consequences. The most important task for governments is how to hold these firms to account when needed, as taking a backseat on this conversation – even if industry leaders ignore the Global South's concerns – carries far greater costs. India has already experienced the cost of not asserting itself in the technology development of the decade: even as Anthropic's Mythos and Fable held out the tantalising promise of securing vast cyber systems, the U.S. pulled access, leaving the firms that had these models to ponder the risk of a different model succeeding at attacking their infrastructure. There is a limit to visions of AI as a geostrategic asset; much needs to be done to address its potential for broad damage.

3. Rapid Growth Trajectory and Limits of Sovereignty

- **Social Media vs. AI:** The social media industry had ample time to act responsibly, yet it distorted public discourse and impacted democracies. In stark contrast, AI is evolving at a velocity far exceeding that of social media.
- **Crisis of Sovereignty:** The current scenario has become so complex that it remains unclear whether even powerful nations like the United States or China possess sufficient authority to meaningfully halt or steer the direction of AI development.

4. Harms of Unchecked AI

According to the report, unchecked AI has already inflicted several severe social and economic harms:

- **Psychological and Fatal Impacts:** AI models have trapped adults and adolescents alike in webs of 'parasocial fantasies' (imaginary AI-driven relationships), which have occasionally proven to be life-threatening.
- **Damage to the Media and News Industry:** The unilateral scraping and use of internet data by AI entities has severely crippled the financial viability of credible news media and compromised their capacity to inform the public.
- **Proliferation of Deepfakes:** The deepfake epidemic has systematically eroded societal trust in both the written word and visual imagery.
- **Systemic Risks to Financial Systems:** The promises of 'Artificial General Intelligence' (AGI) made by AI firms have been so deeply integrated into global financial networks that any sudden correction or crash in the AI market could trigger a catastrophic economic recession.

5. Lessons and Geopolitical Limitations for India

- **Risk of Strategic Dependency:** India has already paid a price for not being self-reliant in AI technology. For instance, when models like Anthropic's 'Mythos' and 'Fable' promised to secure massive cybersecurity systems, the US restricted India's access to them. Consequently, Indian firms were left vulnerable to infrastructure-level cyberattacks.
- **Limitations as a Geostategic Asset:** Viewing AI merely as a geopolitical weapon or a strategic asset is insufficient. To counter its pervasive and destructive risks, governments must urgently institute stringent global regulations.

Conclusion

The cost of governments remaining passive spectators or taking a backseat regarding AI development could be prohibitively high. This is not merely a technological advancement; it is a profound socio-economic shift that is recalibrating the global balance of power.

For nations like India, raising a strong voice in global AI policy formulation is imperative to avert **technological colonialism**. To ensure that the benefits of AI reach all of humanity while mitigating its existential threats, there is an urgent need for a strict,

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

transparent, and **Global Regulatory Framework** that binds technological evolution firmly within the boundaries of human welfare.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: What is the major risk associated with 'Deepfake' technology?

- (a) Reduction in internet speed
- (b) Decline in the credibility of digital content and social trust
- (c) Reduction in data storage capacity
- (d) Increase in the number of cyberattacks only

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: What do you understand by Artificial Intelligence (AI) governance? Explain the need for it. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

The right to a fair trial at the crossroads

When, earlier this year, the Supreme Court of India denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi Riots cases (while granting bail to five other individuals in the same case), one key question that arose was this: "how long is too long" for people to be kept in jail without being found guilty of an offence? At the time of the Court's judgment, Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam had spent more than five years in jail without trial; at the time of writing, that period is approaching six years.

Bail, delay, and rights

In its own prior judgments, the Court had noted that an extended delay in trial would trigger an accused's right to personal liberty under Article 21. Thus, even though the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) has strict requirements for delay, these statutory restrictions could not override the constitutional (and indeed, human) right to personal liberty.

However, in denying bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, another Bench of the Court noted that a delay in the trial could not create an iron-clad right to bail, but would have to be weighed against other factors such as the gravity of the offence and which of the parties was "responsible" for the delay. With respect, these observations appear to miss the point. Issues such as the gravity of an offence are factors used to determine, in the first instance, whether or not a case for bail is made out. To then invoke the gravity of the offence—which, at the stage of bail, is only an allegation made by the state—to override the question of delay essentially creates a sliding scale under which certain individuals can be kept in jail for decades simply because they have been "accused" of grave offences.

Indeed, this has happened: people accused under the UAPA have been kept in jail for more than two decades before eventually being acquitted, with the best years of their lives robbed from them. Indeed, the very fact that this has happened on more than one occasion ought to have given the Court pause.

Nor does the argument that the accused themselves might be responsible for delaying the trial hold any water. Whatever applications an accused (or, for that matter, the state) may make,



Gautam Bhatia
Delhi-based lawyer

ultimately it is the judge who controls the courtroom and the pace of the trial, and it is the judge upon whom the ultimate responsibility rests to ensure that trials are completed within a reasonable timeframe.

Indeed, it was clear that the Court itself recognised some of these issues when, in a rare move, another two-judge Bench recently openly criticised the Delhi Riots bail rejection as being contrary to established precedent and reiterated the fundamental principle that, under a Constitution committed to the rule of law, individuals cannot be incarcerated indefinitely without a trial.

In response, and in another case, the Delhi Riots Bench "referred" this question to the Chief Justice to constitute a larger Bench to resolve. With respect, the very fact that the Supreme Court is effectively debating whether people who have spent more than half a decade in jail (the amount of time that another famous political prisoner, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, did) should or should not be released, is a cause for consternation.

Bail and legal inconsistency

In the meantime, at the level of the trial court and the High Courts, conflict and inconsistency in judicial decisions continue to persist. Recently, the High Court of Delhi (correctly) granted bail to the Kashmiri human rights activist, Khurram Parvez, who had been incarcerated for more than four years without trial. This length of time in prison without trial weighed heavily with the High Court in deciding to grant bail. What is curious, however, is that the judge who (correctly) granted Khurram Parvez bail had denied bail in the Delhi Riots cases the previous year, when the accused in that case had already spent more than four years in jail. Nor is this the only instance of the same judge speaking with different judicial voices: in the Delhi Riots cases themselves, on the same underlying facts, the same judge delivered opposing bail judgments a year apart.

It is trite to say that no case is identical to the other. On an issue as basic as pre-trial incarceration, repeated inconsistencies across cases and courts undermine the rule of law and, ultimately, damage the cause of fundamental

rights and individual liberty. These questions assume particular significance because laws such as the UAPA, in particular, have an undeniably political character, and it has been demonstrated across the world that states are only too happy to interpret these laws in a way that blurs the line between political dissent and what the law defines as "terrorism". Recent attempts in the United Kingdom and the United States around dissent linked to Israel's genocide in Palestine are examples of this.

What the judiciary must ensure

In such a context, it becomes particularly important for the judiciary to ensure that such laws are not weaponised. While legal interpretation is subjective, one thing is – and should be – crystal clear: that the state cannot keep people behind bars for years without trial. It makes a mockery of having a system based on the rule of law, and one that – to use the old adage – entrenches the process as the punishment.

It is unclear whether – or when – the Court's larger Bench will opine on the issue. In the meantime, however, there remain contentious UAPA cases, where individuals continue to be imprisoned without trial, and their time spent in custody continues to increase with no resolution in sight. Indeed, one such case is that of Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, the last two individuals among the accused student activists who remain in custody in the "Delhi Riots cases". After the denial of bail by the Supreme Court, the case is once again coming up before the trial court this week; in the meantime, five years in prison have turned into six, and the cost – both to the lives of the imprisoned individuals and to the rule of law – has continued to become steeper.

Ultimately, therefore, this issue is both about individual human lives and about our commitment as a society to human and democratic values. As these cases continue to arise, the courts will once again have an opportunity to reaffirm these values, whether in individual bail cases before trial courts or when it comes to laying down the law before the Court. It is to be hoped that this happens, and that the cycle of endless imprisonment without trial is broken.

As proceedings in the 2020 Delhi Riots cases show, endless imprisonment without trial raises urgent questions about liberty and justice

GS Paper II: Indian Polity

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions: Explain the significance of the right to a 'speedy trial' under Article 21. (15 Marks, 250 Words)

Context : The recent judicial pronouncements regarding the bail pleas of Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots cases have raised a profound constitutional question before India's Criminal Justice System: "For how long can an accused be incarcerated without conviction?" Currently, these accused individuals have spent nearly six years in prison without the trial even commencing. This analysis critically examines prolonged pre-trial incarceration under the 'Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act' (UAPA), judicial inconsistencies, and its subsequent impact on Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) of the Constitution.

Key Points & Analysis

1. Article 21 vs. Statutory Restrictions of UAPA

- **Constitutional Supremacy:** The Supreme Court, in several historical rulings, has unequivocally established that an extended delay in trial violates an accused's right to personal liberty under Article 21. The apex court previously held that no matter how stringent the statutory restrictions on bail are within laws like UAPA, they cannot override fundamental/constitutional rights.
- **The Judiciary's Recent Contradictory Stance:** However, while denying bail in the Delhi riots case, a bench recently observed that a delay in trial does not automatically translate into an 'iron-clad right' to bail. The court emphasized the need to weigh countervailing factors, such as the gravity of the offense and determining which party is responsible for the delay.

2. The Myth of the "Gravity of Offence" Argument

- **Allegation vs. Conviction:** The author posits that at the stage of considering bail, the 'gravity of offense' is merely an 'allegation' leveled by the state (police). If the undeniable fact of trial delay is ignored solely based on the severity of the charges, it creates a dangerous sliding scale.
- **Process as Punishment:** History bears witness to the fact that numerous individuals accused under UAPA have spent up to two decades (20 years) in prison, only to be eventually acquitted as 'innocent'. The most productive years of their lives were effectively stripped away due to this statutory anomaly.
- **Control Over the Pace of Trial:** To argue that the accused is entirely responsible for delaying the trial is fundamentally flawed. Ultimate control over the courtroom environment and the velocity of the trial rests firmly with the judge, not with the accused or the prosecution.

3. Judicial Inconsistency & Rule of Law

- **Conflicting Orders on Similar Facts:** There is immense unpredictability within the judiciary on this subject. For instance, the Delhi High Court (rightly) granted bail to Kashmiri human rights activist Khurram Parvez, who had been detained for over four years without a trial. Paradoxically, the same judge had denied bail to the accused in the Delhi riots cases during the preceding year, despite them having completed a similar four-year period in incarceration.

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai - 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Daily News Analysis

- **Erosion of the Rule of Law:** Disparate and inconsistent judicial orders passed by courts on sensitive matters concerning fundamental human rights and personal liberty severely weaken the credibility of the 'Rule of Law'.

4. The Blurry Line Between Dissent and Terrorism

- **Political Undercurrents:** Anti-terror legislation like UAPA is inherently political in its execution. Globally, it has been observed that the State frequently blurs the fine line between legitimate political dissent and actual 'terrorism' to weaponize these laws against critics.
- **Global Precedents:** The author highlights contemporary global parallels, pointing out the deployment of stringent laws in countries like the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) to suppress mass protests and dissent surrounding the Israel-Palestine issue.

5. Core Responsibility of the Judiciary

- **Preventing the Weaponisation of Laws:** In the current era, the primary responsibility of the judiciary is to act as a counter-majoritarian institution and ensure that these draconian laws are not weaponized by the State.
- **Reference to a Larger Bench:** To resolve this ongoing judicial gridlock, the Supreme Court has referred the matter to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) for the constitution of a larger bench. According to the author, the fact that the apex court is engaging in endless debates over such a foundational human right is itself a matter of concern for democratic values.

Conclusion

Aim, Think & Achieve

This issue extends far beyond the immediate question of bail for a few specific individuals; rather, it serves as a litmus test for our collective commitment to human rights and the rule of law as a democratic society. The 'Presumption of Innocence'—the principle that a person is considered innocent until proven guilty—remains the bedrock of our criminal jurisprudence.

If the State succeeds in keeping a citizen behind bars for years without even commencing a trial, it represents a failure of justice. The judiciary must urgently formulate definitive guidelines stating that a delay in trial beyond a specified threshold must mandatorily entitle the accused to bail, ensuring that the legal process itself does not mutate into a cruel punishment.