

SHIVOM ERA IAS ACADEMY

Excellence in Civil Services Preparation · Agra, Uttar Pradesh

UPSC CIVIL SERVICES MAINS EXAMINATION

GENERAL STUDIES — PAPER III

Time Allowed: 3 Hours

Maximum Marks: 250

Total Questions: 20

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

1. There are 20 questions printed in English.
2. All questions are compulsory.
3. Marks carried by each question are indicated against it.
4. Section A: 10 questions x 10 marks = 100 marks (Answer in ~150 words).
5. Section B: 10 questions x 15 marks = 150 marks (Answer in ~250 words).
6. Word limits should be strictly adhered to.
7. Do not write anything outside the answer box.

SECTION A — SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS (10 Marks each | ~150 words)

Q1.

India's growth story is often described as 'jobless growth.' Critically examine the structural reasons for the disconnect between GDP growth and employment generation, and suggest policy interventions to make growth more inclusive.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q2.

The Minimum Support Price (MSP) mechanism has become both a lifeline and a liability for Indian agriculture. Critically analyze its economic distortions and examine whether a legal guarantee for MSP is a viable solution.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q3.

PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan aims to transform India's infrastructure landscape through multimodal connectivity. Examine its objectives, implementation challenges, and potential impact on economic competitiveness.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q4.

India's semiconductor mission reflects the recognition that chip dependency is a strategic vulnerability. Examine the significance of semiconductor self-reliance for India's economic and national security objectives.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q5.

ISRO's evolution from a modest space programme to a global launch services provider reflects India's strategic and scientific ambitions. Examine the dual-use nature of space technology and its implications for India's defence and diplomacy.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q6.

Wetlands in India are disappearing at an alarming rate despite legal protections. Examine the ecological services provided by wetlands and critically evaluate the effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention and domestic legislation in their conservation.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q7.

India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement reflect an ambitious but contested climate commitment. Examine the tension between India's development imperatives and its international climate obligations.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q8.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) marks a paradigm shift from reactive disaster management to proactive risk reduction. Evaluate India's progress in aligning its disaster governance with Sendai priorities.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q9.

Left Wing Extremism in India has declined in geographic spread but persists in its socio-economic roots. Critically examine the multi-pronged strategy needed to address both the symptom and the cause of Naxalism.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q10.

Cyberspace has emerged as the fifth domain of warfare. Examine the nature of cyber threats faced by India and critically evaluate the adequacy of India's cybersecurity architecture and legal framework.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

SECTION B — LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS (15 Marks each | ~250 words)

Q11.

India's fiscal federalism is under stress — GST compensation disputes, rising centrally sponsored schemes, and shrinking State fiscal space reflect a tilt toward fiscal centralization. Critically examine the implications for cooperative federalism and suggest reforms to rebalance Centre-State financial relations.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q12.

Indian agriculture faces the triple challenge of low productivity, high input costs, and climate vulnerability. Critically examine how digital agriculture, precision farming, and agri-value chain reforms can transform the sector, while addressing the risks of technology-driven exclusion of small farmers.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q13.

India's logistics sector suffers from high costs and inefficiency relative to global benchmarks, undermining export competitiveness. Critically examine the structural bottlenecks in India's logistics ecosystem and evaluate the National Logistics Policy 2022 as a reform framework.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q14.

Artificial Intelligence presents both transformative opportunities and existential risks for India. Critically examine AI's potential to accelerate development across sectors while analyzing the regulatory, ethical, and employment challenges that must be addressed to harness it responsibly.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q15.

India's defence indigenization push through initiatives like 'Make in India' in defence and the negative import list has yielded mixed results. Critically examine the progress, structural constraints, and strategic imperative of achieving self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q16.

Biodiversity loss in India is occurring at multiple levels — genetic, species, and ecosystem — driven by habitat destruction, invasive species, and climate change. Critically examine the adequacy of India's legal and institutional framework for biodiversity conservation in light of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022).

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q17.

India's energy transition toward renewables is both an ecological necessity and an economic opportunity, yet it is fraught with challenges of grid stability, financing, and social equity. Critically examine the roadmap for India's energy transition and assess whether the 500 GW renewable target by 2030 is achievable.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q18.

Urban flooding has become an annual crisis in Indian cities, exposing the failure of urban planning, drainage infrastructure, and disaster preparedness. Critically examine the systemic causes of urban flooding and evaluate the effectiveness of existing policy responses including Smart Cities and AMRUT missions.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q19.

Radicalization and terrorism in India operate through both physical and virtual networks, with social media playing an increasingly central role in recruitment and propaganda. Critically examine the evolving nature of the terrorism threat in India and assess the adequacy of the counter-terrorism legal and institutional framework.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q20.

India's border management faces asymmetric challenges on its northern and western frontiers — from grey-zone warfare and infrastructure competition with China to cross-border terrorism from Pakistan. Critically examine India's integrated border management strategy and identify key gaps that require urgent policy attention.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

— END OF QUESTION PAPER —

MODEL ANSWER OUTLINES (Selected Questions)

Q12 — Digital Agriculture & Small Farmer Risks (15 marks)

- Context: 86% of India's farmers are small/marginal; average holding 1.1 hectare
- Triple challenge: productivity gap, input cost inflation, climate shocks
- Digital interventions: AgriStack, PM-KISAN, e-NAM, Kisan Drones, soil health cards
- Precision farming: satellite imagery, IoT sensors, AI-based advisory — cost barriers for small farmers
- Value chain reforms: FPOs, contract farming (Model Act 2018), cold chain infrastructure
- Risk of exclusion: digital divide, land record digitization gaps, credit access inequality
- Conclusion: Technology must be democratized through FPOs and cooperative models to be inclusive

Q17 — India's Energy Transition (15 marks)

- Current energy mix: coal ~50% of electricity; renewables ~43% installed capacity (2024)
- 500 GW target by 2030: requires adding ~250 GW in 6 years — ambitious but partially on track
- Grid stability challenge: intermittency of solar/wind; need for storage (BESS, pumped hydro)
- Financing: Green bonds, International Solar Alliance, but gap between public and private investment
- Social equity: displacement of coal workers; just transition imperative
- Critical gaps: transmission infrastructure, land acquisition for solar parks, domestic manufacturing of cells
- Conclusion: Transition feasible with policy consistency, but equity and grid integration must be central

Q14 — Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities & Risks (15 marks)

- AI opportunity: healthcare diagnostics, precision agriculture, judicial efficiency, fintech
- India's AI advantage: data pool, STEM talent, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)
- Regulatory challenge: absence of comprehensive AI law; Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 a start
- Ethical concerns: algorithmic bias, surveillance risk, deepfakes, autonomous weapons
- Employment disruption: ILO estimates 300M jobs at risk globally; India's service sector vulnerable
- Global governance: India's role in AI governance at G20, UN AI Advisory Body
- Conclusion: India needs a national AI strategy balancing innovation with guardrails

EXAMINER'S NOTE — What Earns 7+ / 10

Strong INTRODUCTION that frames the economic/security/environmental tension in the question.

Use DATA and SCHEMES: GDP figures, policy names, targets, international agreements.

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS: economic + environmental + social + governance angles.

Cite RECENT EVENTS (post-2022): new policies, international frameworks, incidents.

FORWARD-LOOKING CONCLUSION: specific, actionable recommendations — not vague platitudes.

For security questions: distinguish symptoms from root causes; avoid jingoism.