

LUKMAAN IAS

General Studies Paper I — Indian Heritage & Culture, History and Geography of the World & Society

PYQ Trend Analysis & 2026 Expected Topics/Questions

15 Syllabus Sub-topics | 2013–2025 | UPSC Civil Services Mains

Topic-wise Popularity Ranking (2013–2025)

Ranked in descending order of frequency across 2013–2025, with approximate percentage share of all classified questions.

Rank	Syllabus Sub-topic	Qs (2013–25)	Share
1	Distribution of natural resources & factors for industry location	40	15.9%
2	Indian culture — Art Forms, Literature, Architecture	30	12.0%
3	Physical geography — geomorphology, climatology, oceanography	26	10.4%
4	Modern Indian History — British-period events, personalities, issues	25	10.0%
5	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism	20	8.0%
6	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India	18	7.2%
7	History of the World (18th century onwards)	15	6.0%
8	Important geophysical phenomena & changing geographical features	13	5.2%
8	The Freedom Struggle — stages and contributors	13	5.2%
10	Role of women and women's organizations	11	4.4%
11	Effects of globalization on Indian society	10	4.0%
12	Post-Independence consolidation and reorganization	9	3.6%
13	Poverty and developmental issues	8	3.2%
13	Urbanization — problems and remedies	8	3.2%
15	Population and associated issues	5	2.0%

Section-level aggregation: Geography ≈ 32%, Society ≈ 32%, History ≈ 25%, Culture ≈ 12% of all questions. Population and associated issues is the single thinnest sub-topic in the entire paper (only 5 questions in 13 years); classical dance/music forms within Culture have almost never been directly tested.

Most Expected Topics for 2026, in Order of Priority

This priority order blends the 13-year frequency pattern above with concrete 2025–26 developments (see Section 6) most likely to be shaped into 2026 Mains questions.

Priority	Expected Topic	Sub-theme
1	UNESCO World Heritage inscriptions — Maratha Military Landscapes & Sarnath (India's 44th/45th sites)	Culture
2	Archaeological controversies — Keeladi excavation standoff & Sangam-era chronology	Culture
3	Temple, rock-cut and regional architecture — recurring core theme (Chandella, Harappan, Chola)	Culture
4	Bhakti-Sufi syncretism and medieval religious art/literature	Culture
5	New heritage infrastructure — Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum & natural-heritage tentative list	Culture
6	500th anniversary of the First Battle of Panipat — Mughal Empire's founding and legacy	History
7	50th anniversary of the Emergency — constitutional safeguards and civil liberties	History
8	NCERT textbook revisions and medieval-history historiography debate	History
9	City/place renaming politics — historical memory and public nomenclature	History
10	World History — French Revolution, World Wars and decolonization (recurring core)	History
11	Caste Census 2027 — first caste enumeration since 1931	Society
12	Women's Reservation Act — delimitation linkage and the 131st Amendment Bill's defeat	Society
13	Waqf (Amendment) Act — secularism and minority-rights litigation	Society
14	Forest Rights Act vs. Forest Conservation Act — tribal displacement tension	Society
15	Urbanization, migration and ageing — Smart Cities completion, migrant climate stress, demographic transition	Society
16	Distribution of natural resources — critical minerals/rare earths in Northeast India	Geography
17	Climate-driven geomorphological change — Arctic ice loss, Thwaites Glacier, sea-level rise	Geography
18	Geophysical hazards — Kamchatka earthquake, global volcanic activity, tsunami risk	Geography
19	Transboundary river disputes — Indus Waters Treaty abeyance, Cauvery/Krishna disputes	Geography
20	New technology in geographic/location planning — AI, drones, GIS/RS applications	Geography

Sub-theme-wise Most Expected Topics

The same expected topics, organised under the four GS-I sub-themes for focused revision.

1. Culture

- UNESCO World Heritage inscriptions — Maratha Military Landscapes & Sarnath
- Keeladi excavation standoff & Sangam-era chronology
- Temple, rock-cut and regional architecture (Chandella, Harappan, Chola)
- Bhakti-Sufi syncretism in medieval art and literature
- Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum & natural-heritage tentative list

2. History

- 500th anniversary of the First Battle of Panipat — Mughal legacy
- 50th anniversary of the Emergency — constitutional safeguards
- NCERT textbook revisions and historiography debates
- City/place renaming politics and historical memory
- World History — French Revolution, World Wars, decolonization

3. Society

- Caste Census 2027 — first caste enumeration since 1931
- Women's Reservation Act — delimitation linkage, 131st Amendment Bill's defeat
- Waqf (Amendment) Act — secularism and minority rights
- Forest Rights Act vs. Forest Conservation Act — tribal displacement
- Urbanization, migration and India's ageing population

4. Geography

- Critical minerals/rare earths — India's shifting resource geography
- Arctic/Antarctic ice loss and sea-level rise
- Geophysical hazards — earthquakes, volcanic activity, tsunamis
- Transboundary river disputes — Indus Waters Treaty, Cauvery/Krishna
- AI, drones and GIS/RS in locational and areal planning

5. Most Expected Questions for Mains 2026

Original model questions in UPSC's characteristic idiom, framed from the trend and sub-theme analysis above — illustrative of likely question construction, not leaked or verbatim UPSC questions.

Culture

1. "Serial UNESCO nominations reflect India's shift from monument-centric to landscape-centric heritage conservation." Discuss with reference to recent inscriptions. *[15 marks]*
2. Discuss the significance of the Sangam-age excavations at Keeladi for understanding early urbanization in South India. *[15 marks]*
3. Examine the syncretic traditions in medieval Indian art and architecture, with reference to the Bhakti and Sufi movements. *[15 marks]*

History

4. "The Battle of Panipat (1526) was less a single military victory than the beginning of a new administrative and cultural synthesis in India." Discuss. *[15 marks]*
5. Examine the circumstances leading to the imposition of Emergency in 1975 and its lasting impact on India's constitutional safeguards. *[15 marks]*
6. Discuss the debates around revising history textbooks in India and their implications for historical memory. *[10 marks]*

Society

7. Examine the significance of including caste enumeration in Census 2027 for India's welfare and reservation policies. *[15 marks]*
8. Discuss the tension between forest-conservation objectives and tribal rights under the Forest Rights Act. *[15 marks]*
9. "India's demographic transition presents both a dividend and a looming ageing challenge." Discuss. *[15 marks]*

Geography

10. Examine the changing geography of India's critical mineral resources and its implications for import dependence. *[15 marks]*
11. Discuss the causes and consequences of accelerating glacier and ice-sheet loss in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. *[15 marks]*
12. "River-water disputes are as much about federalism as about geography." Discuss with reference to recent Indian examples. *[10 marks]*

6. Current-Affairs Pipeline: August 2025 – August 2026

Major dated developments most likely to feed 2026 Mains questions, organised by sub-theme. GS-I is less news-driven than GS-II/III, but heritage inscriptions, historical anniversaries, social-legislation rulings and geophysical events regularly become question pegs. Coverage is reliable through approximately mid-2026; a final news scan closer to the exam is recommended for the last 1–2 months.

1. Culture

- **Jul 2025** — Maratha Military Landscapes of India — a serial site of 12 forts (11 in Maharashtra, 1 in Tamil Nadu) — inscribed as India's 44th UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **Jul 2026** — Ancient Buddhist Site, Sarnath — inscribed as India's 45th World Heritage Site, marking the location of Buddha's first sermon.
- **Sept 2025** — India's UNESCO Tentative List expanded to 69 sites with 7 new natural-heritage entries (Deccan Traps, St. Mary's Island, Meghalayan Age Caves) — a shift toward geological/natural heritage.
- **Jan 2026** — Living Root Bridges of Meghalaya ('Jingkieng Jri') nominated to UNESCO — indigenous bio-engineered heritage architecture.
- **2025 (ongoing)** — Keeladi excavation report standoff — ASI sought revisions to the Sangam-era (8th century BCE–3rd century CE) dating; archaeologist K. Amarnath Ramakrishna refused, becoming a Centre-Tamil Nadu historiography flashpoint.
- **2025** — New ASI excavation finds — Sheshashayi Vishnu sculpture and a 2,000-year-old brick structure at Gottiprolu (AP); megalithic burial complex near Malampuzha dam, Palakkad (Kerala).
- **Ongoing; 1st gallery end-2026** — Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum under construction at Central Vista — themed on 5,000 years of Indian civilisation, planned as the world's largest museum.

2. History

- **Jun 2025** — 50th anniversary of the Emergency (1975-77), marked as 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' — renewed focus on Article 352, press censorship, and the 44th Amendment's restoration of judicial review.
- **Apr 2026** — 500th anniversary of the First Battle of Panipat (1526) — Babur's defeat of Ibrahim Lodi, ending the Delhi Sultanate and founding the Mughal Empire.

- **2025-26** — NCERT Class 7/8 textbook overhaul removes Delhi Sultanate/Mughal chapters from Class 7 and reframes Babur/Akbar/Aurangzeb with emphasis on 'brutality' — live historiography and curriculum debate.
- **Mar 2025** — Aurangzeb-tomb controversy and Nagpur communal violence — protests demanding removal of Aurangzeb's tomb triggered rioting, linking historical-memory politics to communal law and order.
- **2025-26** — City/place-renaming push — UP considering renaming 12 cities linked to Muslim rulers (Aligarh resolution passed); Bihar's Gaya→'Gaya Jee'; VHP petition to rename Delhi as 'Indraprastha.'
- **Apr 2025 (approved)** — Caste Census — first since 1931 — Cabinet approval links back to the 1931 Census and the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) precedent.

3. Society

- **Oct 2026-Mar 2027** — Census 2027 schedule finalised — two phases, first caste-inclusive census since 1931; parallel SECC-style field surveys nearly complete by late 2025.
- **Apr 2026** — Constitution (131st Amendment)/Delimitation Bill, 2026 — sought to implement women's reservation using 2011 census data — defeated in the Lok Sabha, pushing implementation past the 2029 general election.
- **Sept 2025** — Supreme Court's interim verdict on the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 stays the '5-years practising Muslim' clause pending final hearing — a live secularism/minority-rights case.
- **2025 (ongoing)** — Forest Rights Act vs. Forest Conservation Act tension — 1.8 million+ FRA claims rejected nationally; SC rulings (e.g., Sugra Adiwasi v. Pathranand) address the FRA-FCA conflict on tribal land rights.
- **2025-26** — India Ageing Report (UNFPA/IIPS) — elderly population projected to rise from 149 million (2022) to 347 million by 2050, outnumbering children by 2046.
- **2025-26** — Migrant workers and urban climate stress — studies show urban heat cutting migrant labour productivity ~10%; a new National Migration Survey (2026-27) announced to replace outdated 2007-08 data.
- **2025** — Smart Cities Mission nears completion — 94% of projects done as of May 2025, though repeatedly extended past its original 2020 deadline.

4. Geography

- **Jul 2025** — Kamchatka earthquake (Mw 8.8) — sixth-largest instrumentally recorded earthquake ever, triggering Pacific-wide tsunami warnings and 1.9 million evacuations in Japan.
- **Mar 2025; Aug 2025** — Deadly earthquake year — Myanmar (Mw ~7.7-7.9, ~5,400+ deaths) and Afghanistan's Kunar Province (Mw 6.0, 2,200+ deaths) — illustrate how shallow moderate quakes in dense areas can be deadlier than larger offshore ones.
- **Mar 2026** — Tonga earthquake (M7.5) along the Pacific 'Ring of Fire' Tonga Trench subduction zone.
- **2025-26** — Global volcanic activity — 71 confirmed eruptions from 63 volcanoes in 2025, including Mount Etna, Kanlaon (Philippines) and Iceland's Reykjanes Peninsula.
- **Aug 2025** — Alaska glacier-retreat tsunami — South Sawyer Glacier's retreat triggered a landslide-generated tsunami in Tracy Arm fjord, a direct climate-driven geohazard case.
- **2025** — NOAA Arctic Report Card — Arctic sea ice saw its largest year-on-year winter decline on record; Greenland Ice Sheet lost 129 billion tons; Arctic glacier ice-loss rate has tripled since the 1990s.
- **Nov 2025** — Thwaites ('Doomsday') Glacier's Eastern Ice Shelf likely to break up in 2026 per British Antarctic Survey — implicated in potential West Antarctic Ice Sheet collapse and up to 4m of sea-level rise.

- **Since Apr 2025** — Indus Waters Treaty held 'in abeyance' by India post-Pahalgam attack; a Permanent Court of Arbitration award held the treaty provides no unilateral-suspension mechanism — a major transboundary river dispute.
- **2025-26** — Interstate river disputes — Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal extended to July 2026; SC directs a new tribunal for the Tamil Nadu-Karnataka Pennaiyar dispute.
- **2025** — Critical minerals/rare earths — GSI identifies rare-earth deposits in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya; National Critical Minerals Mission (₹16,300 crore) approved to cut import dependence.

7. Current-Affairs-Pegged Expected Questions

Questions tied directly to the named 2025–26 developments in Section 6 — the highest-probability, most specific question set in this report.

Culture

13. Discuss the significance of the Maratha Military Landscapes' inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. *[10 marks]*
14. Examine the controversy surrounding the Keeladi excavation report and its implications for Centre-State relations in matters of historical research. *[10 marks]*

History

15. "The 50th anniversary of the Emergency is a reminder of the fragility of constitutional safeguards." Discuss. *[15 marks]*
16. Examine the ongoing debate over renaming cities and places associated with medieval rulers in India. *[10 marks]*

Society

17. Discuss the implications of the Supreme Court's interim verdict on the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 for the balance between religious autonomy and state regulation. *[15 marks]*
18. Examine the reasons for the failure of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and its impact on the timeline for women's political representation. *[15 marks]*

Geography

19. Discuss the causes and global implications of the 2025 Kamchatka earthquake and associated tsunami warnings. *[10 marks]*
20. Examine the significance of India's decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance from a river-geography and transboundary-cooperation perspective. *[15 marks]*

8. Key Caveats

- This analysis is a preparation aid, not a guarantee — UPSC frequently innovates question framing even on recurring themes; treat 'expected topics' as priority areas for depth of preparation, not spot-guessing.
- 2013–2024 sub-topic counts rely on a single primary compilation, cross-checked internally but not independently re-verified against a second compiler for every year; the 2025 paper, by contrast, is triple-sourced and high-confidence.
- Population and associated issues, and classical dance/music within Culture, are the thinnest sub-topics in the dataset (5 and 1 questions respectively across 13 years) — their low rank should prompt lighter, not zero, preparation given their small sample size.
- The current-affairs pipeline (Section 6) is current through approximately mid-2026; developments in the final 1–2 months before the exam, and any last-mile UNESCO or Supreme Court developments close to 'today,' should be checked separately.