

LUKMAAN IAS

General Studies Paper III — Technology, Economy, Environment, Security & Disaster Management

PYQ Trend Analysis & 2026 Expected Topics/Questions

21 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	Conservation, environmental pollution/degradation, EIA	56	19.6%
2	Indian Economy — planning, growth, employment	23	8.1%
3	Major crops/cropping patterns, irrigation, marketing, e-tech for farmers	22	7.7%
4	Science & Technology developments/applications	19	6.7%
5	IT, space, robotics, nanotech, biotech, IPR	18	6.3%
6	Farm subsidies, MSP, PDS, food security, buffer stocks	17	6.0%
7	Security challenges in border areas; organized crime-terrorism links	16	5.6%
8	Disaster and disaster management	15	5.3%
9	Communication networks, media/cyber security	14	4.9%
10	Government Budgeting	12	4.2%
11	Infrastructure — energy, ports, roads, airports, railways	11	3.9%
12	Inclusive growth and issues arising from it	10	3.5%
13	Achievements of Indians in S&T; indigenization of technology	9	3.2%
14	Land reforms in India	7	2.5%
14	Effects of liberalization; industrial policy/growth	7	2.5%
14	Development-extremism linkages (LWE)	7	2.5%
17	Food processing industries	6	2.1%
17	Role of external state/non-state actors in internal security	6	2.1%
19	Investment models (PPP etc.)	5	1.8%
20	Security forces/agencies and their mandate	3	1.1%
21	Money laundering and its prevention	2	0.7%

Section-level aggregation: Economy (sub-topics 1–10) $\approx$ 42% of all questions, Environment & Ecology $\approx$ 20%, Internal Security (sub-topics 16–21 combined) $\approx$ 17%, Science & Technology $\approx$ 16%, Disaster Management $\approx$ 5%. Money laundering and 'security forces' mandate' are the thinnest sub-topics in the entire paper — only 2 and $\sim$ 3 questions respectively in 13 years.

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	GST 2.0 — rate rationalization and its fiscal-federalism impact	Economy
2	Union Budget 2026-27 — fiscal consolidation vs. capital expenditure	Economy
3	India-US trade deal — tariff relief vs. the Russia-oil trade-off	Economy
4	India-EU FTA and India-UK CETA — trade diversification strategy	Economy
5	PLI scheme review / "PLI 2.0" — industrial-policy effectiveness	Economy
6	Employment and PLFS 2025 — jobless growth, gender gap in workforce	Economy
7	Agriculture distress — MSP, groundwater depletion, PDS reform (SARTHAK-PDS)	Economy
8	Semiconductor Mission — India's electronics/chip manufacturing push	Science & Tech
9	AI governance — India's light-touch regulatory model vs. global approaches	Science & Tech
10	Nuclear energy reform — SHANTI Act, private-sector entry, SMR mission	Science & Tech
11	Space programme — Gaganyaan delays, Chandrayaan-4, Bharatiya Antariksh Station	Science & Tech
12	COP30 outcomes and India's updated NDC targets (2031-35)	Environment
13	EIA reform and the Supreme Court's Vanashakti verdict — clearance-process centralization	Environment
14	Forest Conservation Act dilution vs. Forest Rights Act implementation gaps	Environment
15	Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2026 — extended producer responsibility	Environment
16	2025 monsoon disasters (Punjab floods, Himalayan cloudbursts) — dam-management gaps	Disaster Mgmt
17	Disaster resilience and heatwave governance — Sendai review, Heat Action Plans	Disaster Mgmt
18	LWE "elimination" claim — critical evaluation of ground reality	Internal Security
19	Deepfake/AI-content regulation and cybersecurity — IT Rules Amendment 2026	Internal Security
20	Border security and Agnipath review — LAC normalization, Op Sindoor's lessons	Internal Security

Sub-theme-wise Most Expected Topics

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

1. Economy

- GST 2.0 rate rationalization and its fiscal-federalism impact
- Union Budget 2026-27 — fiscal consolidation vs. capital expenditure
- India-US/EU/UK trade agreements — strategic trade diversification
- PLI scheme review and "Industrial Policy 2.0"
- Employment — jobless growth, gender gap, PLFS trends

- Agriculture distress — MSP, groundwater depletion, PDS reform

2. Science & Technology

- Semiconductor Mission — electronics-manufacturing self-reliance
- AI governance — India's regulatory philosophy vs. global models
- Nuclear energy reform — SHANTI Act, SMRs, private-sector entry
- Space programme — Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan-4, Bharatiya Antariksh Station
- Quantum Mission milestones and India's rising innovation ranking

3. Environment & Ecology

- COP30 outcomes and India's updated NDC targets
- EIA reform and the Vanashakti verdict — clearance-process centralization
- Forest Conservation Act dilution vs. Forest Rights Act gaps
- Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2026 — EPR expansion
- Wetlands conservation — India's 100-Ramsar-site milestone

4. Disaster Management

- 2025 monsoon disasters — dam-management and early-warning gaps
- Heatwave governance — Heat Action Plans, Sendai Framework review
- Urban flood resilience — funding and drainage-infrastructure reform
- Landslide-forecasting infrastructure — GSI's National Landslide Forecasting Centre

5. Internal Security

- LWE "elimination" claim — critical evaluation
- Deepfake/AI-content regulation and India's cybersecurity strategy
- Money laundering and PMLA jurisprudence — ED's powers vs. due process
- Border security — LAC normalization, India-Bangladesh tensions
- Agnipath review — retention-rate debate after Operation Sindoor
- Northeast insurgency — status of peace accords

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.

Economy

1. "GST 2.0's rate rationalization boosts consumption but tests cooperative federalism." Discuss. *[15 marks]*
2. Examine the trade-offs between fiscal consolidation and capital expenditure in India's recent Union Budgets. *[15 marks]*
3. Discuss the effectiveness of the Production Linked Incentive scheme in achieving India's industrial-policy objectives. *[15 marks]*

Science & Technology

4. Examine India's regulatory approach to Artificial Intelligence governance and compare it with global models. *[15 marks]*
5. Discuss the significance of opening India's nuclear energy sector to private participation for the country's energy security. *[15 marks]*
6. "Space exploration reflects both India's scientific ambition and its constraints." Discuss with reference to recent human-spaceflight and lunar-mission timelines. *[15 marks]*

Environment & Ecology

7. Examine the outcomes of COP30 and their implications for India's climate-finance and adaptation goals. *[15 marks]*
8. "Dilution of environmental clearance processes undermines the very purpose of environmental impact assessment." Critically examine. *[15 marks]*
9. Discuss the tension between forest-conservation objectives and the implementation of the Forest Rights Act in India. *[15 marks]*

Disaster Management

10. Examine the role of dam-management and reservoir-operation policies in exacerbating flood disasters in India. *[15 marks]*
11. Discuss the shift from reactive to proactive disaster governance in India, with reference to early-warning systems and Heat Action Plans. *[15 marks]*
12. "Urban flooding is as much a governance failure as a natural hazard." Discuss. *[10 marks]*

Internal Security

13. Critically examine the government's claim of having eliminated Left-Wing Extremism and assess the ground realities. *[15 marks]*
14. Discuss the challenges in regulating deepfakes and synthetically generated content in India's cybersecurity framework. *[15 marks]*
15. Examine the evolving jurisprudence on the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and its implications for due process. *[15 marks]*

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

Major dated developments most likely to feed 2026 Mains questions, organised by sub-theme. Coverage is reliable through approximately mid-2026; a final news scan closer to the exam is recommended for the last 1–2 months.

1. Economy

- **Feb 2026** — Union Budget 2026-27 launched India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, a ₹10,000-crore Biopharma SHAKTI scheme, five regional Medical Hubs (PPP model), and a ₹10,000-crore SME Growth Fund; debt-to-GDP projected to fall to 55.6%.
- **Sept 2025** — GST Council collapsed the four-slab structure into two slabs (5%/18%) plus a 40% "de-merit" rate; estimated revenue loss ~₹48,000 crore, but expected to add 20-30 bps to FY26 GDP via consumption.

- **Feb 2025-Jun 2026** — RBI's easing cycle cut the repo rate cumulatively by 125 bps to 5.25%, raising the FY26 growth projection to 7.4% amid ~1.7% inflation.
- **Sept 2025** — PLFS data: unemployment (15+) at 5.2%, youth unemployment at 9.9% with ~25% of youth in NEET category; LFPR gender gap remains wide (male 79.1% vs. female 40%).
- **Jan 2026** — Economic Survey 2025-26 describes a "Goldilocks moment" — high growth plus historic low inflation — themed "Pushing the Growth Frontier."
- **Feb 2026** — India-US trade deal cuts US reciprocal tariffs from 50% to 18%, contingent on India curbing Russian oil purchases.
- **Jan 2026** — India-EU FTA concluded at the New Delhi summit — 90.7% of India's exports to the EU to become duty-free.
- **Jul 2025 (signed); Jul 2026 (in force)** — India-UK CETA gives 99% of Indian tariff lines duty-free access to the UK.
- **2025-26** — PLI cumulative investment crosses ₹2.16 lakh crore with 14.39 lakh jobs created; mobile-phone PLI's tenure ends March 2026, prompting talk of "PLI 2.0."
- **2025-26** — Kharif/Rabi MSP hikes announced; SARTHAK-PDS scheme approved (₹25,530 crore through FY31) for PDS automation; ONORC now covers ~81 crore beneficiaries.

2. Science & Technology

- **2026-27 (fluid)** — Gaganyaan's uncrewed G1 test flight, targeted for end-2026, may slip to 2027 per ISRO's own chairman; first crewed flight now expected 2027.
- **2028 (planned)** — Chandrayaan-4 (approved 2023, ₹2,104 crore) targets a five-module sample-return mission from the Moon's south pole (Mons Mouton).
- **2028-2035** — Bharatiya Antariksh Station's first module (BAS-01) targeted for 2028; full station operational by 2035.
- **Nov 2025** — MeitY released voluntary, principles-based AI governance guidelines relying on existing laws (IT Act, DPDPA) rather than a horizontal AI statute — a deliberate contrast to the EU's AI Act.
- **Dec 2025** — SHANTI Act, 2025 passed, opening nuclear power generation and equipment manufacture to private companies for the first time; Nuclear Energy Mission targets 5 indigenous SMRs by 2033.
- **2024-26** — BioE3 Policy rollout — 11 proposal calls issued by April 2026 across six thematic areas; India's bioeconomy reached \$195.3 billion in 2025 (target \$300 billion by 2030).
- **Nov 2025-Apr 2026** — National Quantum Mission achieves a 1,000-km secure quantum communication milestone, far ahead of its original roadmap; Amaravati Quantum Valley launched Feb 2026.
- **2025** — India climbed to 38th rank in the Global Innovation Index 2025, up from 66th in 2019.

3. Environment & Ecology

- **Nov 2025** — COP30 (Belém) adopted the "Belém Package" — no explicit fossil-fuel phase-out roadmap, but established a Just Transition Mechanism and a call to triple adaptation finance to ~\$120 billion/year by 2035.
- **Mar 2026** — India's updated NDC (2031-35) approved by Cabinet: 47% emissions-intensity reduction from 2005 levels, 60% non-fossil power capacity by 2035 (already at 52.57% by Feb 2026).
- **Jan 2025 (amendment); 2026 (SC/draft reform)** — EIA Notification amendment exempting large construction projects from clearance was struck down in *Vanashakti v. Union of India*; a March 2026 draft now proposes centralized SAEIA/SCEIA bodies, raising centralization concerns.

- **Jan 2026** — Forest Conservation Act guideline amendment permits commercial plantations on forest land without prior safeguards; Forest Rights Act claims remain 15-22% unsettled in leading states.
- **Mar 2026** — Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2026 mandate rising recycled-content minimums and bring raw-material suppliers under EPR-style regulation for the first time.
- **Jun 2026** — India reached 100 Ramsar wetland sites on World Environment Day, up from 89 in early 2025.
- **Oct 2025** — Delhi conducted India's first artificial-rain cloud-seeding trials to combat winter smog, alongside continued GRAP restrictions.

4. Disaster Management

- **Aug-Sept 2025** — Punjab's worst floods since 1988 — ~1,400 villages across 13 districts affected, driven by extreme rainfall combined with large dam releases (Bhakra, Pong, Ranjit Sagar) — raising reservoir-operation policy questions.
- **Aug 2025** — Uttarakhand (Dharali/Uttarkashi) flash flood and Kishtwar (J&K) cloudburst (68 dead) — hazard-attribution debate (cloudburst vs. GLOF vs. glacier collapse).
- **Sept 2025** — Cumulative monsoon impact: ~2 million people across 2,050 villages affected in north India; 3,87,898 displaced, 48 confirmed dead.
- **Oct 2025** — Cyclone Montha made landfall near Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh — a test case for coastal early-warning and evacuation systems.
- **2025-26** — Repeated heatwaves (48°C in Rajasthan, 455 deaths in 2025) prompted expanded district-level, colour-coded early warnings and Heat Action Plans now active in 23 states.
- **2025-26** — GSI set up a National Landslide Forecasting Centre in Kolkata, with the Bhusanket portal and Bhooskhalan app for real-time forecasting.
- **2025** — India committed roughly \$300 million to an urban-resilience fund for Mumbai, Chennai, Ahmedabad and Gurugram to restore water bodies and modernize drainage.

5. Internal Security

- **Mar 2026** — Government declared India "Naxal-free," meeting its March 2026 LWE-elimination target — a claim disputed by some analysts as political framing rather than ground reality.
- **May 2025 (with ongoing fallout)** — Operation Sindoor — strikes on terror camps in Pakistan/PoK after the Pahalgam attack; ceasefire reached within days; Indus Waters Treaty held in abeyance pending Pakistan's action against cross-border terrorism.
- **2025-26** — India-China LAC — Depsang-Demchok disengagement completed; ~75% of disengagement issues resolved; talks shifting toward de-escalation modalities.
- **Aug 2025-Mar 2026** — India-Bangladesh border tensions continue over border killings/smuggling and Sheikh Hasina's asylum in India following her death sentence.
- **Feb 2026** — IT Rules Amendment 2026 introduces India's first dedicated deepfake regulatory framework — a 3-hour takedown deadline and mandatory labelling for synthetically generated content.
- **2025** — Supreme Court rulings (Sarla Gupta v. ED and related cases) tighten due-process safeguards on ED's arrest powers under the PMLA, even as the Act's core validity stands.
- **2025-26** — Northeast peace processes continue — ULFA accord implementation, NSCN(K)-Niki ceasefire extended, fresh Suspension of Operations agreement with Manipur's UPF/KNO.
- **2026** — Agnipath scheme under review as the 2023 batch nears the end of its term — Army/Air Force seek to raise retention from 25% toward ~50%, citing Operation Sindoor's operational lessons.

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.

Economy

16. Discuss the rationale and expected economic impact of the GST 2.0 rate rationalization implemented in September 2025. *[15 marks]*
17. Examine the significance of India's Fiscal Health Index and its role in strengthening fiscal federalism. *[10 marks]*

Science & Technology

18. Discuss the objectives of the SHANTI Act, 2025 in opening India's nuclear sector to private investment. *[10 marks]*
19. Examine the reasons behind repeated delays in India's Gaganyaan human-spaceflight programme. *[15 marks]*

Environment & Ecology

20. Discuss India's updated Nationally Determined Contribution targets for 2031-2035 and the challenges in achieving them. *[15 marks]*
21. Examine the Supreme Court's verdict in Vanashakti v. Union of India and its implications for environmental clearance processes. *[10 marks]*

Disaster Management

22. Discuss the lessons for disaster governance from the 2025 Punjab floods and Himalayan cloudburst events. *[15 marks]*
23. Examine the significance of India's Heat Action Plans in addressing the growing frequency of heatwaves. *[10 marks]*

Internal Security

24. Discuss the implications of the IT Rules Amendment 2026 for regulating deepfakes and synthetic media in India. *[10 marks]*
25. Examine the debate around Agniveer retention rates in light of operational lessons from Operation Sindoor. *[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.
- The LWE 'elimination' declaration (March 2026) and the exact tariff percentages in the India-US trade deal are both contested/variably reported in sources — treat these as claims to be critically examined in an answer, not settled facts to state uncritically.
- Sub-topic counts for 2013–2019 rely on a secondary compilation (marks/word-count data was largely unavailable for that period in the source used); your own Lukmaan baseline, where it has real marks data for those years, should be treated as the more authoritative source for exact marks in 2013–2019.

- Money laundering (2 questions in 13 years) and security-forces'-mandate content (embedded in broader questions, never standalone) are the thinnest, lowest-confidence sub-topics — treat their low rank with some caution rather than as a signal to skip them entirely, especially given money laundering's rising real-world salience (crypto, hawala).
- The current-affairs pipeline (Section 6) is current through approximately mid-2026; developments in the final 1–2 months before the exam are not captured and should be checked separately.