

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS IN ENGLISH

SPECIAL FOR UPSC & GPSC EXAMINATION

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The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

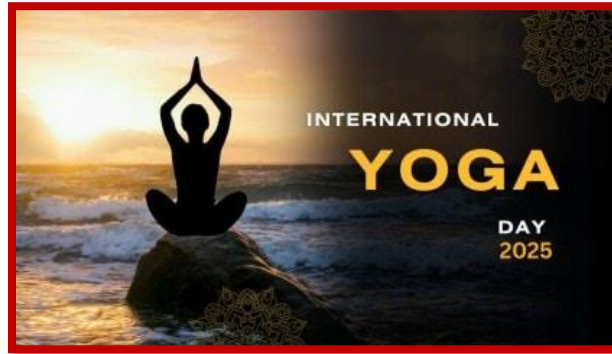
Saturday, 21 June, 2025

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Important Day: International Yoga Day

Observed every year on June 21, International Yoga Day aims to spread awareness about the numerous benefits of yoga for physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. The day celebrates yoga as an invaluable part of India's cultural heritage and promotes its role in achieving a balanced and harmonious life.



Background:

- The idea for a global day dedicated to yoga was proposed by India in 2014 during the 69th United Nations General Assembly. The proposal received widespread support and led to the UN declaring 21st June as the International Day of Yoga.
- The first observance took place in 2015 under the theme "Yoga for Harmony and Peace".

Why June 21?

- June 21 marks the Summer Solstice, the longest day in the Northern Hemisphere. In yogic tradition, it is considered a time of heightened spiritual energy and is symbolically linked with growth, inner transformation, and enlightenment.
- Global Acceptance:
 - In 2016, UNESCO recognized yoga as an element of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledges yoga as a valuable practice in preventing and managing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and has included it in its Global Action Plan (2018–2030).
 - The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, categorized yoga as a priority discipline in 2015 to promote it through structured sports frameworks.

Understanding Yoga:

- The word 'Yoga' originates from the Sanskrit root 'Yuj', meaning to unite or join, representing the connection between the body, mind, and spirit.
- Yoga has historical roots in Indus Valley Civilization (evident from seals showing meditative postures) and is mentioned in ancient Vedic texts. The foundational principles were codified in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras around the 2nd century BCE.
- It also forms one of the six classical schools of Indian philosophy (Shad Darshanas).

Modern-Day Importance:

- Yoga has gained global popularity due to its holistic health benefits. It enhances physical flexibility, reduces stress, sharpens focus, and boosts immunity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, yoga emerged as a significant tool for mental resilience and emotional balance.

India's Efforts to Promote Yoga:

- **M-Yoga App:** Developed in partnership with WHO for global access to yoga training in multiple languages.
- **Educational Integration:** Launch of yoga-based vocational and professional courses.
- **National Campaigns:** Integration of yoga in the Fit India Movement and other wellness initiatives to encourage active lifestyles.

International Yoga Day

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Global Acceptance:

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- WHO acknowledges yoga in preventing and managing non-communicable diseases (NCDs)
- Categorized as a priority discipline by India's Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in 2015

Understanding Yoga:

- Gained worldwide popularity for enhancing physical flexibility and reducing stress
- Recognized for boosting immunity during COVID-19 pandemic

Modern-Day Importance:

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 - Educational and vocational

India's Efforts to Promote Yoga

- M-Yoga App for global training access
- Educational and vocational integration
- Fit India Movement national campaigns

UPSC PrelimsPractice Question

Ques : Consider the following statements regarding International Day of Yoga:

1. The proposal for International Yoga Day was introduced by India in the United Nations General Assembly in 2014.
2. The first International Yoga Day was celebrated with the theme "Yoga for Health and Wellness".
3. June 21 was chosen because it is the summer solstice, the longest day in the Southern Hemisphere.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans : a)

Page 01: GS 2 : International Relations

Amid intensifying military exchanges between Israel and Iran, Iran has stated it will only reconsider diplomacy if Israel halts its aggression and is held accountable. This statement followed high-level talks in Geneva involving Iran and European powers concerning the nuclear impasse.

Will consider diplomacy if 'aggression' stops: Iran

Tehran backs continuation of talks if the aggressor is held accountable for its crimes, Iran Foreign Minister says after meeting his European counterparts in Geneva; Israel and Iran continue strikes

Reuters

JERUSALEM/DUBAI
WASHINGTON

Tehran is ready to "consider diplomacy" again only once Israel's "aggression is stopped", Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said following talks in Geneva with his European counterparts on Iran's nuclear programme on Friday.

"Iran is ready to consider diplomacy once again and once the aggression is stopped and the aggressor is held accountable for the crimes committed...We support the continuation of discussion with Britain, France, Germany and the European Union and express our readiness to meet again in the near future," Mr. Araghchi told presspersons following the talks in Geneva.

European powers on Friday urged Iran to continue diplomacy with the U.S. to find a solution in the stand-off over its nuclear programme as Israel keeps up its bombardment of the Islamic Republic.

At least 19 people were injured in the northern Israeli port city of Haifa as Iran fired a fresh barrage of missiles on Friday afternoon, authorities said.

Iran gives a nod

"The good result today is that we leave the room with the impression that the Iranian side is ready to further discuss all the important questions," said German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl in a statement alongside his



On the boil: Iranians gather for an anti-Israel rally next to a replica of the Dome of the Rock mosque in Tehran on Friday. AFP

British, French and EU counterparts after talks with Mr. Araghchi. "It is of great importance that the United States takes part in these negotiations and the solution," he added.

The statement read by all four top diplomats in their native languages after the talks expressed hope for further progress but did not make any mention of a breakthrough in the talks in Geneva.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said it carried out a fresh wave of attacks on Iran on Friday, targeting missile launchers in the southwest of the country.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy said: "We are keen to continue ongoing discussions and negotiations with Iran, and we urge Iran to continue their talks with the United States." He added: "This is

a perilous moment, and it is hugely important that we don't see regional escalation of this conflict."

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said there "can be no definitive solution through military means to the Iran nuclear problem. Military operations can delay it but they cannot eliminate it".

After Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not rule out killing supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Mr. Barrot also warned: "It is illusory and dangerous to want to impose a regime change from the outside. It is up to the people to decide their own destiny."

"We invited the Iranian Minister to consider negotiations with all sides, including the United States, without awaiting the cessation of strikes, which we al-

so hope for," he said.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said for her part: "Today the regional escalation benefits no-one. We must keep the discussions open."

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency said earlier that the Iranian delegation "emphasised that Iran has not left the negotiating table".

Israel began its campaign on Friday last week, saying the operation was aimed at halting Tehran from obtaining an atomic bomb, an ambition Iran denies having.

Iranian strikes launched in response have also caused damage in Israel. (With inputs from AP)

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'STILL NOT TOO LATE'

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Key Developments:

1. Iran's Conditional Offer for Diplomacy:

- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi signaled openness to renewed diplomatic talks, but only after Israeli strikes cease.
- Iran continues to deny intentions to build a nuclear bomb, despite Israeli allegations.

2. European Diplomatic Efforts:

- The foreign ministers of Germany, France, UK, and the EU met Iran's delegation in Geneva.
- They urged continuation of talks with the U.S., warning against regional military escalation.
- While hopeful, the talks did not yield a breakthrough.

3. Regional Escalation:

- Iran launched missile strikes on Haifa, injuring civilians.
- Israel responded with airstrikes on Iranian missile bases.
- This tit-for-tat military exchange heightens the risk of broader conflict in the Middle East.

4. Global Concerns:

- French FM Jean-Noel Barrot cautioned against military solutions to Iran's nuclear programme, stressing that regime change cannot be externally imposed.
- EU's Kaja Kallas warned that regional instability benefits no one and called for diplomatic engagement.

5. Iran's Stand:

- Iran insists it has not withdrawn from the negotiation table.
- However, it demands accountability and cessation of attacks before returning to full talks.

Key Analytical Angles:

- Challenges of diplomacy during active military conflict
- Role of regional and global powers in conflict de-escalation
- Limitations of military approaches in resolving nuclear stand-offs
- Implications for global non-proliferation efforts (e.g., JCPOA deadlock)
- Humanitarian consequences and risks of escalation in densely populated regions

JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)

Also known as: Iran Nuclear Deal

What is JCPOA?

It is a nuclear agreement signed in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 countries:

- **P5:** United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China
- **+1:** Germany
- Also **endorsed by the European Union (EU)**

Purpose:

To prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons in exchange for lifting economic sanctions.

Key Provisions:

- **Iran agreed to:**
 - Limit uranium enrichment to 3.67% (well below weapons-grade level)
 - Reduce its number of centrifuges to ~5,000
 - Cap uranium stockpile to 300 kg
 - Allow IAEA inspections at declared nuclear sites
- **In return, global powers agreed to:**
 - Lift nuclear-related economic sanctions
 - Allow Iran to resume oil exports and access foreign assets

Timeline & Developments:

- **2015:** Agreement signed
- **2018:** USA under President Trump unilaterally withdrew from the deal, reimposing sanctions
- **Post-2018:** Iran gradually began breaching JCPOA limits
- **2021–2023:** Attempts to revive the deal through negotiations in Vienna, but no formal restoration achieved
- **2024–2025:** Tensions continue; Iran has enriched uranium beyond JCPOA limits

Significance:

- **Non-Proliferation:** Aimed at preventing a nuclear-armed Iran
- **West Asia Stability:** JCPOA was seen as a diplomatic success in de-escalating regional tensions
- **Global Diplomacy:** Its collapse has raised questions over the credibility of multilateral agreements

India's Perspective:

- **Energy Security:** India imports oil from Iran; JCPOA facilitated smoother trade
- **Chabahar Port Project:** Sanctions relief allowed India to engage with Iran for regional connectivity
- **Strategic Balancing:** India seeks to balance relations with Iran, USA, and Gulf states

Conclusion:

The Iran-Israel conflict represents a serious diplomatic and security challenge. While Europe and the US seek renewed negotiations, trust deficits and continued strikes obstruct progress. A peaceful resolution hinges on sustained dialogue, regional cooperation, and strategic restraint from all parties involved.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: In the context of the Iran-Israel conflict, diplomacy remains both essential and elusive. Discuss the role of multilateral diplomacy in resolving modern regional conflicts. **(250 words)**

Page : 04 :GS 2 : Polity & Governance

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Odisha to mark the first anniversary of the BJP-led State government, inaugurated projects worth ₹19,000 crore, and made a significant political statement by declining an invitation from U.S. President Donald Trump in favour of domestic commitments.

Declined Trump's invitation in order to visit Odisha: PM

Modi unveils 105 projects worth ₹19,000 cr; visit to the land of Lord Jagannath to mark the first anniversary of the BJP govt. in the State is more important than U.S. trip, he says at public rally

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

P rime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said he had politely declined an invitation from U.S. President Donald Trump to visit Washington, citing a prior commitment to visit Odisha.

Addressing a public rally in Bhubaneswar to mark the completion of one year of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Odisha, Mr. Modi said, "Two days ago, while I was in Canada for the G7 Summit, U.S. President Donald Trump called me. He said, 'Since you are already in Canada, why not return via Washington?' He invited me to sit together, have a meal, and hold discussions."

"He personally took the initiative to extend this invitation, and I thanked him for it. But I told him that my visit to the land of Lord Jagannath was more important. I humbly declined the invitation. It is your love and devotion for Lord Jagannath that brought me here," he said.

Dedicating and laying the foundation for 105 projects worth almost ₹19,000



Celebrating a milestone: Narendra Modi greets supporters as he arrives at the Janata Maidan in Bhubaneswar on Friday to mark the anniversary of the BJP government in the State. BISWARANJAN ROUT

crore for Odisha on the occasion of completion of a year of the Mohan Majhi government, Mr. Modi said, "This year is not about completion of one year for the government, but about establishment of good governance. This year has been dedicated to public service and people's trust."

"People saw the development model of Congress for decades after Independence. In Congress governments, there was neither good governance

nor was life easy for people. Stalling the developments and engaging in massive corruption were part of the Congress's development model," he said.

Development model

"Now, for the past few years, the country has been witnessing the BJP's development model. In the last decade, there have been States where the BJP formed government for the first time. A new era of socio-economic transforma-

tion began," said Mr. Modi.

At the public meeting, Mr. Majhi said, "In the past one year, we have been able to touch the lives of everyone in the State. We have been able to fulfil our commitments by giving hiked input subsidy in paddy procurement, including Odisha in Ayushman Bharat, launching new educational infrastructure through Godabarish model schools in every panchayat and providing 28,346 new jobs in the government sector."

Key Highlights of the Visit:

- PM Modi unveiled and laid the foundation for 105 developmental projects, with an investment of nearly ₹19,000 crore.
- He emphasized Odisha's cultural and religious importance, particularly highlighting Lord Jagannath, to reinforce emotional and regional connect.
- Publicly mentioned declining Trump's invitation, projecting the primacy of domestic governance over international diplomacy.

Political and Administrative Significance:

- **Symbolism of Federal Prioritization:** By skipping a high-profile international visit, the PM reaffirmed commitment to cooperative federalism and regional outreach, especially in newly governed BJP states like Odisha.
- **Narrative of Governance Shift:** Modi compared the Congress-era governance model with the BJP's model, accusing the former of inefficiency and corruption while projecting the BJP model as development-oriented and people-centric.
- The PM framed the first year of the Odisha BJP government not as routine governance, but as a paradigm shift towards "people's trust and good governance".

Strategic Messaging:

- The event served as a strategic political platform to consolidate BJP's position in a historically non-BJP state by blending developmental claims with cultural-religious symbolism.
- Reinforces BJP's double engine government narrative (same party at Centre and State = faster development).
- Counters regional parties (like BJD in Odisha) by showing performance-based governance and outreach.

Developmental Highlights in Odisha:

- Input subsidy hike in paddy procurement (important for farmers' welfare and rural economy).
- Integration into Ayushman Bharat scheme, improving healthcare access.
- Launch of new educational initiatives like Godabarish model schools in every panchayat.
- Creation of over 28,000 government jobs in one year.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the significance of regional outreach by the Union Government in newly formed State governments. How does it impact governance, political stability, and Centre-State relations? (250 Words)

Page 05 : GS 3 : Science and Technology

The Axiom-4 mission to the International Space Station (ISS), involving Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, has been postponed again due to safety reviews following recent repairs in the Russian segment of the ISS and previous technical issues with the Falcon-9 rocket. The mission is historic for India as it marks a renewed participation in human spaceflight on a global stage.

Key Details:

- **Mission Crew:**
 - **Commander:** Peggy Whitson (Former NASA astronaut, Axiom Space)
 - **Pilot:** Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla (India)
 - **Mission Specialists:** ESA astronauts from Poland and Hungary
- **Mission Objective:**
 - A 14-day commercial mission to the ISS aimed at advancing private space travel, research, and international collaboration.
 - Symbolically marks the resurgence of human spaceflight missions for India, Poland, and Hungary.
- **Delays & Technical Issues:**
 - Originally scheduled for May 29, but postponed multiple times (June 8, 10, 11, and 22).
 - **Reasons included:**
 - Leak in the Falcon-9 booster (liquid oxygen during re-entry in a prior mission)
 - Repairs in the Zvezda service module (Russian segment of the ISS)
 - Weather constraints during launch window
- **NASA's Caution:**
 - Due to the interconnected systems of the ISS, additional crew introduction requires rigorous safety evaluations.
 - NASA and Axiom Space are reviewing data to ensure orbital stability, crew safety, and readiness of life-support systems.

Shubhanshu Shukla's Axiom-4 mission to the ISS put off again

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

NASA has put off Sunday's launch of the Axiom-4 mission carrying Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla and three others to the International Space Station, saying it required additional time to evaluate operations on the orbital lab after the recent repairs in its Russian section.



Shubhanshu Shukla

The Axiom-4 mission was targeting a June 22 launch after being put off multiple times due to a leak in the boosters of SpaceX's Falcon-9 rocket, inclement weather in the ascent trajectory and leaks in the aft-most section of Zvezda service module.

The space agency needs additional time to continue evaluating the International Space Station operations after recent repair work in the aft (back) most segment of the orbital laboratory's Zvezda service module, it said.

Because of the space station's interconnected and interdependent systems, NASA wants to ensure the station is ready for additional crew members, and the agency is taking the time necessary to review data, Axiom Space said in a statement.

Former NASA astronaut and director of human spaceflight at Axiom Space, Peggy Whitson, will com-

mand the commercial mission, while Group Captain Shukla will serve as the pilot. The two mission specialists are European Space Agency (ESA) project astronaut Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski of Poland and Tibor Kapu of Hungary.

The 14-day mission will "realise the return" to human spaceflight for India, Poland and Hungary.

The astronauts were originally scheduled for lift-off on May 29, which was put off to June 8, June 10 and June 11, when SpaceX, the providers of the launch rocket and the space capsule, detected a liquid oxygen leak in the Falcon-9 rocket. At a pre-launch press conference on June 10, SpaceX vice-president William Gerstenmaier said engineers had detected a liquid oxygen leak on the Falcon-9 booster during the re-entry phase of its previous mission that was not fully repaired during refurbishment.

Significance for India:

- **Revives Human Spaceflight Participation:** Marks the first time an Indian astronaut is flying to the ISS in a private/commercial capacity – a milestone for India's space diplomacy and astronaut training.
- **Supports India's Gaganyaan Ambitions:** Enhances India's experience and visibility ahead of ISRO's Gaganyaan mission, offering exposure to international training, hardware, and life sciences in microgravity.
- **Global Collaboration:** Reinforces India's growing engagement in global space partnerships beyond traditional bilateral frameworks, involving private players like Axiom Space and SpaceX.
- **Private Sector in Space:** Reflects the expanding commercialization of space missions, a trend reshaping future space research, tourism, and industry-led exploration.

Challenges Highlighted:

- **Technical Complexity:** Even advanced launch providers like SpaceX face delays, highlighting the critical importance of precision and safety in space missions.
- **Dependency on ISS Systems:** The interconnected international nature of the ISS means a fault in one segment (e.g., Russian module) affects all operations.
- **Need for Patience and Risk Mitigation:** Shows that space missions, especially with human crew, are highly sensitive and subject to unpredictable variables.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Discuss the implications of India's participation in international commercial human spaceflight missions for its indigenous space programme and foreign policy. **(250 Words)**

India's core sector growth fell to a 9-month low of 0.7% in May 2025, indicating a slowdown in industrial activity.

Core sector growth slows to 9-month low of 0.7% in May on oil, gas, fertilizers

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Growth in the eight core sectors slowed to a nine-month low of 0.7% on contractions in crude oil, natural gas, fertiliser and electricity sectors.

The Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) for May, released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, was last lower in August 2024 when it contracted 1.4%. The pace of growth also marks two consecutive months of slowing growth in the index.

The eight core industries make up about 40% of the overall Index of Industrial Production (IIP).



Key exceptions: Notably, the steel sector saw growth accelerating to 6.7% in May from 4.4% in April though on a high base. AFP

Within the ICI, crude oil sector contracted 1.8% in May, the fifth consecutive month of contraction on falling global crude oil prices. Refinery products grew

1.1% against a contraction of 4.5% in April. The natural gas sector contracted by 3.6%, the 11th consecutive month of contraction.

The contraction in the

natural gas sector is linked with the performance of the fertiliser sector, the biggest consumer of natural gas, which contracted 5.9% against a contraction of 4.2% in April.

The electricity sector contracted 5.8% mainly on coal sector's subdued growth of 2.8%, which is down from the 3.5% growth seen in April. Notably, the steel sector growth accelerated to 6.7% from 4.4% in April. This was also on a high base of 8.9% in May 2024. The cement sector saw a robust growth of 9.2% although this was on a low base as the sector had contracted 0.6% in May last year.

What is the Core Sector?

- The Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) tracks the output of 8 key industries that form ~40% of the IIP:
 1. Coal
 2. Crude Oil
 3. Natural Gas
 4. Refinery Products
 5. Fertilizers
 6. Steel
 7. Cement
 8. Electricity

What Led to the Slowdown?

Core Sector Growth in May 2025

Output of the eight core sectors rose 0,7% year-on-year

Negative growth



CRUDE OIL
-1,8%



NATURAL GAS
-3,6%



FERTILIZERS
-5,9%



ELECTRICITY
-5,8%

Growth



STEEL
6,7%



CEMENT
9,2%



REFINERY
PRODUCTS
1,1%



COAL
2,8%

- **Crude Oil:** Contracted 1.8% (5th straight month) – due to lower global oil prices.
- **Natural Gas:** Contracted 3.6% (11th straight month) – impacting and impacted by the fertilizer sector.
- **Fertilizers:** Fell by 5.9%, showing declining production and demand.
- **Electricity:** Fell 5.8%, linked to sluggish coal growth (only 2.8% vs 3.5% in April).

Positive Trends:

- **Steel:** Rose to 6.7% (up from 4.4% in April), despite high base of 8.9% in May 2024.
- **Cement:** Strong growth of 9.2%, but on a low base (-0.6% in May last year).
- **Refinery Products:** Recovered to 1.1% growth after a 4.5% contraction in April.

Prelims Pointers:

- The ICI is released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (not MoSPI).
- It is a lead indicator of industrial performance.
- A slowdown in core sectors can drag overall IIP, impact GDP, and reduce investment sentiment.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Consider the following statements regarding the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI):

1. The ICI is compiled and released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
2. The eight core industries constitute approximately 40% weight in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
3. Natural Gas is one of the eight core industries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans : b)

Page : 06 Editorial Analysis

Lighting the spark in U.K.-India cultural relations

May was a month of magical bonanza for United Kingdom-India relations. The long-anticipated Free Trade Agreement was ratified by both Prime Ministers, and it was another milestone that illuminated a different but equally significant dimension of their partnership: culture.

On May 2, U.K. Secretary of State for Culture, Rt Hon Lisa Nandy, and India's Minister for Culture, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, signed the Programme of Cultural Cooperation (POCC). This landmark agreement promises to light up the cultural corridor between the two nations, reaffirming their shared creative spirit.

The POCC outlines five programme areas: digital technologies for culture, exhibitions and collections, performances and events, cultural property, and sustainability. These themes directly support the creative economy, a core sector driving the U.K. government's industrial strategy. This agreement signals a shared commitment to cross-cultural collaboration and economic growth.

Before arriving in Delhi to sign the POCC, Ms. Nandy, the first Labour Cabinet Minister of Indian heritage, was the highest-ranking international delegate at the World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) Summit, held in Mumbai. In her keynote, she powerfully highlighted the collaborative potential of the India-U.K. cultural and creative industries, sustainable by nature and an employment multiplier.

The growth of the creative arts sector

Globally, the creative arts sector is rapidly growing, projected to reach 10% of global GDP by 2030. At the G-20 New Delhi Leaders' Summit in 2023, global leaders unanimously called for greater investment in the sector. India hosting WAVES for the first time underscored its commitment, resulting in significant business deals and international agreements.

The POCC between India and the U.K. builds on this momentum. It brings together the Indian Ministry of Culture, the U.K. government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport



Alison Barrett

MBE, is the Country Director India at the British Council

The Programme of Cultural Cooperation between the two countries is built on themes that support the creative economy

and the British Council in India, alongside major U.K. cultural institutions – including Arts Council England, the British Library, the British Museum, the Natural History Museum, and the Science Museum Group. With over 1,700 accredited museums in the U.K., the scope for partnerships with their Indian counterparts is tremendous, especially around leveraging digital technology for sharing cultural experiences and heritage.

At its core, the POCC signals hope: the creative economy can foster a more inclusive future, encompassing tech-driven sectors such as gaming, digital content, film, OTT, television and more – creating opportunities for skilled workers and innovators.

That is great news for India. With its deep cultural heritage, cutting-edge technology, skilled artisan base, and the world's largest youth population, India is uniquely positioned to lead. India's creative economy, valued at \$35 billion, employs nearly 8% of its workforce, second only to agriculture. According to the Asian Development Bank's report (2022), 'Creative India: Tapping the Full Potential', six of India's top 10 creative hubs – from Badgam in Jammu and Kashmir to Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu – are in non-metro regions. This shows India's diverse cultural heritage. India, with over 300 universities and 3,000 colleges offering courses in design, arts, and architecture, is nurturing a global creative workforce.

A role for the U.K.

In 2023, during India's G-20 presidency, the U.K. played a pivotal role in supporting the cultural agenda. Artistic partnerships, creative project grants, and year-long cultural exchanges, such as Wales in India, which culminated at the 2024 Hornbill Festival in Nagaland, furthered that agenda bilaterally, redefining India-U.K. cultural ties and building lasting bonds.

Why do these global partnerships matter so much?

First, the creative economy is evolving rapidly. It faces challenges including skilled labour shortage. To meet this, we need sustained investment in education, vocational training and

apprenticeships. International collaborations can help empower creative professionals with global competencies and best practices.

Second, emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and augmented reality and virtual reality (AR/VR) are transforming the sector. As the British Council's recent report, Arts and Technologies in India: Reimagining the Future argues, it is time to integrate it into India's creative education framework. Cultural exchange and cross-border partnerships can support professionals in navigating this digital shift.

India's creative canvas is expanding, driven by cultural wealth, youth potential, and a bold vision. Prime Minister Narendra Modi envisions India as a global creative hub – and with a three-pronged approach focused on education, skills, and international collaboration, we are well on our way. But it will require sustained cooperation between government, industry and academia to make that vision a reality.

Businesses and projects

Indian companies, too, are doing their bit. Take Royal Enfield, the iconic U.K.-India motorcycle brand, which is working in the Himalayas through its Social Mission. In partnership with UNESCO, it is helping to safeguard intangible cultural heritage and working with over 580 artisans through its textile conservation project, The Himalayan Knot. This initiative not only preserves sustainable textile traditions but also creates new market linkages for craft communities. Ms. Nandy heard this story first hand at the reception hosted in her honour by British High Commissioner Lindy Cameron and this writer in Delhi, where the Serendipity Arts Festival's Birmingham chapter was also launched – a moving reminder of how businesses can be storytellers too.

What truly binds the U.K. and India together are their people and their stories. In a world grappling with conflict and uncertainty, culture and creativity remain among the most time-tested healers of relations between people and nations. And in that, we have every reason to celebrate – and invest in – the creative spark that unites us.

Paper 02: Internaional Relations

UPSC Mains Practice Question: The creative economy is emerging as a major pillar of socio-economic development. Examine the role of international collaborations in supporting India's creative sector. (250 words)

Context :

The signing of the Programme of Cultural Cooperation (POCC) between India and the United Kingdom in May 2025 marks a significant step in institutionalizing their cultural ties and boosting the creative economy as a strategic sector of bilateral cooperation.

Key Developments:

- The POCC was signed between the U.K. Secretary of State for Culture and India's Minister for Culture, focusing on five areas:
 - Digital technologies for culture
 - Exhibitions and collections
 - Performances and events
 - Cultural property
 - Sustainability
- This agreement supports the U.K.'s industrial strategy, which prioritizes creative sectors as a source of economic growth, employment, and innovation.
- The signing was aligned with major events such as India's hosting of the WAVES Summit (World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit) and builds upon the momentum of the G20 New Delhi Declaration, which called for greater investment in creative industries.

Strategic Significance:

1. Strengthening Soft Power Diplomacy:

- Culture becomes a non-contentious but influential domain of diplomacy, enhancing people-to-people ties.
- U.K. and India build mutual visibility in areas like design, digital arts, film, music, and museums.

2. Creative Economy as Growth Engine:

- India's creative economy is valued at \$35 billion, employing nearly 8% of the workforce (second only to agriculture).
- Non-metro creative hubs (e.g., Badgam, Tiruppur) reflect India's cultural and regional diversity as an economic asset.
- This aligns with India's vision of becoming a global creative hub, driven by youth and technology.

3. Education, Skills, and Collaboration:

- Over 300 universities and 3,000 colleges in India offer courses in creative disciplines.
- Integration of AI, AR/VR, and digital platforms is essential to modernize the creative workforce.

- International collaboration, like with the British Council and U.K. museums, can enhance capacity building and global exposure.

4. Private Sector and Heritage Conservation:

- Projects like Royal Enfield's Himalayan Knot with UNESCO show how businesses can support craft livelihoods, preserve cultural heritage, and foster sustainable development.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- The creative sector faces shortages in skilled labour, requiring focused investments in vocational education and industry-academia partnerships.
- Technology is disrupting traditional models — India needs policy support to adapt to digital transitions in content, distribution, and preservation.
- Success depends on long-term commitment from governments, institutions, and private enterprises.

Conclusion:

The India-U.K. Programme of Cultural Cooperation marks a strategic step in using culture and creativity as tools of diplomacy and economic growth. With India's rich heritage and growing creative economy, such partnerships can drive innovation, employment, and global cultural leadership. Sustained collaboration and investment in skills, technology, and education will be key to realizing this vision.