PSIR & GS 1,2,3 & 4

Daily Brief



Amit Pratap Singh
PSIR Optional · ForumIAS

Issue 185 · 25 November 2026

Five readings from the day's newspapers, journals and think tanks, read in full and marked up: context, facts, the author's argument and the UPSC questions.

1

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THE HINDU

Who pays for climate change is a federal question

States bear climate costs but lack the powers and resources to respond

Published - November 25, 2026 12:16 am IST

MUKUND P. UNNY

2

The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

OPINION

SAD-BJP alliance returns in a Punjab of shifting politics, deepening crisis

The challenge before this alliance would be how far it is able to credibly promise agrarian security and economic transformation

3

The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

The civilisational state: How the SCO forum reflects a shift in global politics

India hosted the first SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum in New Delhi. How countries are using shared history, culture and philosophical traditions to shape foreign policy — and can this approach bridge geopolitical divides?

4

Saturday, 28 November, 2026

The Statesman

HOME INDIA WORLD BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT OPINION LAW LIFESTYLE DAINIK STATESMAN MORE EPAPER

Opinion

Unfinished Struggle

The Shenzhen summit of November 19 was a spectacular display of high diplomacy, with Donald Trump, Xi Jinping, and Vladimir Putin appearing on the same stage.

SHIBASHIS CHATTERJEE | New Delhi | November 25, 2026 8:16 am

5

Firstpost.

TRENDING | Jensen Huang reinstated Sheikh Hasina return WhatsApp advisory Bigfoot files International Emmy Awards

Asia Power Index: The G2.5 world is here, but India's neighbourhood continues to trouble it

Asia's power ledger is bearing out the G2.5 thesis and India's place in it. Pakistan's creep up the table, though, deserves more attention



← the sources we sweep every morning

1. **Who pays for climate disasters** *The Hindu*
2. **The SAD-BJP alliance returns in Punjab** *The Indian Express*
3. **The civilisational state and the SCO** *The Indian Express*
4. **Shenzhen and the weaker states** *The Statesman*
5. **India in the Asia Power Index** *Firstpost*

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Who pays for climate disasters

The Hindu · *Mukund P. Unny*
25 November 2026

PSIR Paper I, Part B, Topic 7
Federalism: Constitutional provisions; changing nature of centre-state relations; integrationist tendencies and regional aspirations; inter-state disputes.
GS Paper II, GS Paper III



Search Chennai 28°C Weather News THE HINDU

Who pays for climate change is a federal question

States bear climate costs but lack the powers and resources to respond

Published – November 25, 2026 12:16 am IST

MUKUND P. UNNY

In the 1990s, several U.S. States sued the tobacco companies to hold them accountable for the health hazards of cigarettes. This litigation led to a 1998 Master Settlement Agreement, under which the companies committed at least $206 billion over 25 years as compensation for the harmful effects of cigarettes. Inspired by the famous tobacco litigation case of the 1990s, a small county called Boulder in Colorado, U.S., initiated a major litigation under the State law, in 2018, to fix liability on major oil and gas companies for the impact of climate change.

The suit claimed compensation for recovering the costs of coping with wildfires, floods and heat by building a case on public nuisance and consumer protection. In May 2025, the Colorado Supreme Court allowed the suit to proceed, holding that federal law did not pre-empt Boulder's claims for damages under State law.

Context

India's main laws on pollution, the environment and disaster management were made by Parliament. Article 253 lets Parliament legislate on any subject, including those in the State List, to implement an international agreement.

The States bear the cost when landslides and floods strike. After the 2024 Wayanad landslides, Union assistance for rehabilitation came as a 50-year interest-free loan, not a grant. The United States Supreme Court recently heard a case on whether State law can make oil companies pay for climate damage. Mukund P. Unny asks the same question of Indian federalism.

Facts

1. M.K. Ranjitsinh vs Union of India (2024): the Supreme Court recognised a right against the adverse effects of climate change under Articles 14 and 21.
2. Article 270(1) keeps cesses outside the pool of taxes shared with States. The Clean Environment Cess on coal, raised to ₹400 a tonne in 2016, went entirely to the Union.

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Who pays for climate disasters

Analytical crux

The governments that bear the costs of climate disasters are not the ones that control the climate policy. Once climate change is framed as a treaty obligation, the Union can claim the entire field, and it has also kept the revenue that climate policy generates. The way forward lies in sharing both the authority and the burden: disaster relief as grants, not loans, and levies on fossil fuels shared with the States.

Worth quoting

> *"India must decide, before the next major disaster, who pays for it."*
>
> — Mukund P. Unny

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper I, 2015: Identify the contested areas in Centre-State relations in India.

GS Paper II, 2025: Examine the evolving pattern of Centre-State financial relations in the context of planned development in India. How far have the recent reforms impacted the fiscal federalism in India?

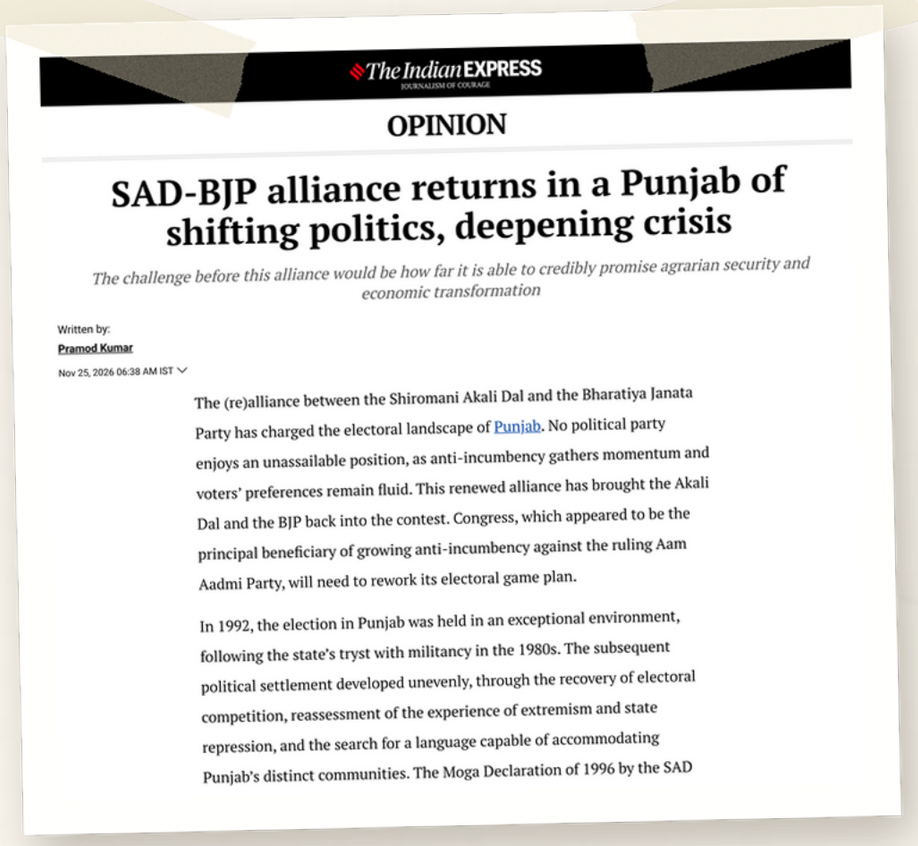
— APS

Article (2) of 5

The SAD-BJP alliance returns in Punjab

The Indian Express · *Pramod Kumar*
24 November 2026

PSIR Paper I, Part B, Topic 10
Party System: National and regional political parties, ideological and social bases of parties; patterns of coalition politics; Pressure groups, trends in electoral behaviour; changing socio-economic profile of Legislators. Also Topic 9
Caste, Religion and Ethnicity in Indian Politics.
GS Paper II


The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

OPINION

SAD-BJP alliance returns in a Punjab of shifting politics, deepening crisis

The challenge before this alliance would be how far it is able to credibly promise agrarian security and economic transformation

Written by:
Pramod Kumar
Nov 25, 2026 06:38 AM IST

The (re)alliance between the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Bharatiya Janata Party has charged the electoral landscape of Punjab. No political party enjoys an unassailable position, as anti-incumbency gathers momentum and voters' preferences remain fluid. This renewed alliance has brought the Akali Dal and the BJP back into the contest. Congress, which appeared to be the principal beneficiary of growing anti-incumbency against the ruling Aam Aadmi Party, will need to rework its electoral game plan.

In 1992, the election in Punjab was held in an exceptional environment, following the state's tryst with militancy in the 1980s. The subsequent political settlement developed unevenly, through the recovery of electoral competition, reassessment of the experience of extremism and state repression, and the search for a language capable of accommodating Punjab's distinct communities. The Moga Declaration of 1996 by the SAD

Context

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have renewed their alliance in Punjab for 2027. They first allied before polling in 1997, after the militancy of the 1980s, and won in 1997, 2007 and 2012. In 2022 the Aam Aadmi Party won a historic majority.

Pramod Kumar sets the alliance against the 'political grammar' that Punjab built after 1992. He argues that the BJP misread that grammar after 2017 and weakened the moderate SAD.

Facts

1. Moga Declaration (1996), by the SAD: it articulated Punjab's shift after militancy, in which its claims came to be expressed as concerns of Punjabis, not of Sikhs or Hindus alone.
2. Between 1967 and 1980 the Akalis and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh formed four post-election coalitions. The SAD-BJP pre-poll alliance began in 1997.

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The SAD-BJP alliance returns in Punjab

Analytical crux

Punjab's post-1992 political grammar rested on three commitments: to build alliances before asking for votes, to express Punjab's demands in the name of all Punjabis, and to keep radical violence and excessive state force outside ordinary politics. The BJP misread this grammar, seeking Sikh support principally by weakening the moderate SAD. When moderate Sikh politics weakens, the vacuum may be filled by radical politics: radicals must never be allowed to occupy moderate political space.

Worth quoting

> *"The first target of radical politics has invariably been moderate leadership."*
>
> — Pramod Kumar

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper I, 2022: How far is it correct that the regional parties have strengthened Indian democracy and federal system? Substantiate your answer with suitable examples.

PSIR Paper I, 2026: When there are multiple stakeholders of power, conversation and consensus become the natural ingredients of governance. Analyze with respect to coalition politics.

— APS

Article (3) of 5

The civilisational state and the SCO


The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

The civilisational state: How the SCO forum reflects a shift in global politics

India hosted the first SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum in New Delhi. How countries are using shared history, culture and philosophical traditions to shape foreign policy — and can this approach bridge geopolitical divides?

Written by: **Capt Anurag Bisen, Raj Kumar Sharma**
9 min read Updated: Nov 25, 2026 12:32 PM IST

India hosted the inaugural Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Civilisational Dialogue Forum in New Delhi between November 20 and 22. The initiative reflects a growing trend in international relations to highlight civilisational identity and values as an effort to restore sanity and order in a strife-torn world.

The summit, proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the SCO Summit in Tianjin in September 2025, aims to strengthen cultural ties and people-to-people exchanges among SCO countries. The forum comes even as geopolitical tensions, competing international orders and the weakening of multilateral institutions are reshaping global politics.

The Indian Express · *Capt. Anurag Bisen (retd.) and Raj Kumar Sharma*
25 November 2026

PSIR Paper II, Part B, Topic 1
Indian Foreign Policy: Determinants of foreign policy; institutions of policy-making; continuity and change. Also Topic 8
Recent developments in Indian Foreign policy: vision of a new world order.
GS Paper II

Context

India hosted the first Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Civilisational Dialogue Forum in New Delhi from 20 to 22 November. The Prime Minister had proposed it at the SCO Summit in Tianjin in September 2025.

A ‘civilisational state’ is a country that explains its identity by a long historical, religious and cultural inheritance, and not only by territory, citizenship and political institutions. Bisen and Sharma show how China, Russia, Turkey and the United States use the idea in foreign policy, what India gains from it, and where it reaches its limits.

Facts

1. Lucian W. Pye introduced the term ‘civilisational state’ in his 1990 Foreign Affairs essay, China: Erratic State, Frustrated Society.
2. Russia’s 2023 Foreign Policy Concept describes the country as a unique state-civilisation and a vast Eurasian and Euro-Pacific power.

Article (3) of 5

The civilisational state and the SCO

Analytical crux

Civilisational values provide an alternative framework for countries to coexist despite differences, and they complement strategic autonomy. Rather than replacing conventional geopolitics, civilisational diplomacy adds a historical and cultural dimension in the pursuit of national interests. However, governments may selectively interpret history to claim cultural superiority, and shared Buddhist heritage has not prevented strategic rivalry between India and China. The challenge is to ensure that civilisational identity becomes a source of dialogue rather than division.

Worth quoting

> *"Civilisational connections cannot substitute for political negotiations, economic cooperation or established international institutions."*
>
> — Anurag Bisen and Raj Kumar Sharma

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper II, 2021: Explain the philosophical foundations of India's foreign policy.

PSIR Paper II, 2022: Discuss India's vision of a New World order in the 21st century.

— APS

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Shenzhen and the weaker states

The Statesman · *Shibashis Chatterjee*
25 November 2026

PSIR Paper II, Part A, Topic 7
Changing International Political Order. Also Topic 9
United Nations: Envisaged role and actual record; specialized UN agencies
aims and functioning; need for UN reforms.
GS Paper II

The Statesman

OPINION

Unfinished Struggle

Shibashis Chatterjee · November 25, 2026

The Shenzhen summit of November 19 was a spectacular display of high diplomacy, with Donald Trump, Xi Jinping, and Vladimir Putin appearing on the same stage. The declaration adopted at the summit's close reasserted familiar principles, from reforming the United Nations to stable energy supplies, sovereign immunity, and reducing nuclear risk. However, it produced no resolution of ongoing conflicts, no disarmament agreement, and no mechanism for realising its goals.

Shenzhen mattered because it showed the disjunction between an increasingly multipolar international system and a still highly unequal distribution of international authority. The Summit is usually described by great power equations and consequences. Yet, it prompts three related issues of concern, all of which shed light on this disjunction ~ first, hierarchy and indignity; second, sovereignty and exception; and third, justice and voice.

thestatesman.com · typeset from the article text

Context

On 19 November, Donald Trump, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin appeared together at a summit in Shenzhen. Its declaration restated principles on reforming the United Nations, stable energy supplies, sovereign immunity and nuclear risk. It resolved no conflict, produced no disarmament agreement and created no mechanism.

Shibashis Chatterjee, who teaches at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, asks what a summit of three great powers means for the weaker states that are left out of it, and for India's own policy of promoting multipolarity.

Article (4) of 5

Shenzhen and the weaker states

Analytical crux

Shenzhen showed the disjunction between a multipolar system and an unequal distribution of international authority: more multipolar does not necessarily mean more democratic. Adding a few more states to the Security Council will redistribute privilege rather than democratise it. India's policy has greater legitimacy if it aims to marry power with justice.

Worth quoting

> *"For small and weak states, sovereignty is a means of defending their independence; for large and powerful states, it is used to defend their immunity."*
>
> — Shibashis Chatterjee

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper II, 2020: Critically examine the role of India in shaping the emerging world order.

GS Paper II, 2025: "The reform process in the United Nations remains unresolved, because of the delicate imbalance of East and West and entanglement of the USA vs. Russo-Chinese alliance." Examine and critically evaluate the East-West policy confrontations in this regard.

— APS

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India in the Asia Power Index

Firstpost · *Hindol Sengupta*
24 November 2026



Firstpost

OPINION

Asia Power Index: The G2.5 world is here, but India's neighbourhood continues to trouble it

Asia's power ledger is bearing out the G2.5 thesis and India's place in it. Pakistan's creep up the table, though, deserves more attention

Hindol Sengupta · Nov 24, 2026, 11:34:29 IST

Stare at the Lowy Institute's 2026 Asia Power Index chart for a while and the outline of the new world order starts to show itself. Two long bars sit at the top: the United States at 78.9 and China at 73.6. Some distance below them, in a tier of its own, is India at 40.5. Then the chart falls away sharply to a crowd of thirteen "middle powers", with Japan at their head on 38.6.

firstpost.com · typeset from the article text

PSIR Paper II, Part A, Topic 6
Key concepts in International Relations: National interest, Security and power; Balance of power and deterrence; Transnational actors and collective security; World capitalist economy and globalisation. Also Paper II, Part B, Topic 5 India and the Global Centres of Power: USA, EU, Japan, China and Russia.
GS Paper II

Context

The Lowy Institute's annual Asia Power Index scores countries on measures such as economic and military capability and diplomatic and cultural influence. Its 2026 edition places India alone in a tier between the two superpowers and thirteen 'middle powers'.

Hindol Sengupta argued last year that the world is 'G2.5': China has joined the United States at the top, and India is the third pivot. He reads the new index as support for that thesis, and sets out where India remains weak.

Facts

1. Lowy Asia Power Index 2026: United States 78.9, China 73.6, India 40.5. The United States leads China by 5.3 points, the smallest lead since the index began in 2018.
2. India crossed Lowy's 40-point threshold for a 'major power' in 2025. In 2026 its diplomatic influence stands at 70.3, against 26.4 for economic capability.

Article (5) of 5

India in the Asia Power Index

Analytical crux

At the top, Asia is bipolar; who tips the balance is increasingly India, the only country going up the chart in the space between the two superpowers and everyone else. But a pole resting on diplomacy and culture is brittle: India's diplomatic score is almost three times its economic capability score. What will carry India towards 50 is factories, exports and homegrown technology, not more summits.

Worth quoting

"A swing state keeps its freedom to swing only as long as its borders are quiet and its region reasonably stable."

— Hindol Sengupta

Asked in UPSC

PSIR Paper II, 2025: For India, a multipolar world order would also mean a multipolar Asia. Comment.

PSIR Paper II, 2026: India has adopted multi-alignment to fulfill its core values and interests in International relations. Discuss.

— APS

PSIR Optional · Cohort 9

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5 Rewrite — Rewrite and submit again. The rewrite is checked once more.

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