

Editorial of the Day – 18.05.2026

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1. One-Horse Races Are No Triumph for Democracy (TH)

GS Paper II – Indian Polity and Governance

Topic – Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Salient features of the Representation of the People Act; Election Commission of India.

Sub-Topic – Electoral Integrity, Role of the Election Commission (Article 324), Level Playing Field, and Voter Disenfranchisement.

1. Introduction

The core thesis of the article posits that elections alone do not constitute a democracy; meaningful, fair, and rigorous political contestation is what gives democracy its substance. Using analogies from corporate strategy and cricket, the author argues that a "one-horse race" or an uncontested victory undermines democratic legitimacy. True democratic governance requires an unyielding commitment to a level playing field and an uncompromisingly neutral referee—the Election Commission of India (ECI).

2. The Philosophy of Contestation and Democratic Legitimacy

The Corporate and Sports Analogy – Just as dominant business monopolies stagnate without market competition, and legendary batsmen prove their mettle only against formidable bowling attacks, democracy thrives exclusively when tested by robust political rivals.

The Hemoglobin of Democracy – Competition allows citizens to operationalize the precept of "rule by the people" by giving them the practical leverage to "fire" underperforming incumbents and elect viable alternatives, liberating the electorate from the "TINA" (There Is No Alternative) trap.

Plebiscitary Autocracy vs. True Democracy – The author invokes political scientist Robert Dahl, who characterized political systems that feature high voter turnout/participation but low contestation (e.g., single-party states or predetermined races) as "plebiscitary autocracies" rather than genuine democracies.

The Psychology of the Loser – Healthy competition gives defeated candidates and their supporters the rational hope that they can win a future contest. This psychological assurance is what drives them to accept peaceful transitions of power—one of the healthiest achievements of any electoral democracy.

3. Statutory Imperfections – The Representation of the People Act, 1951

The Paradox of Section 53(2) – The author points out a structural flaw in Section 53(2) of the RPA, 1951, which legally provides for declaring "unopposed" winners if the number of contesting candidates is equal to or less than the number of seats to be filled.

The "Walkover" Phenomenon – This provision allows a candidate to become a people's representative without a single citizen actually casting a vote in their Favor. The author asserts that this structural walkover "kills" both the active game of elections and the foundational spirit of democratic mandates.

Mandate vs. Mere Power – Winning power without a contest yields raw authority, but it fails to deliver a genuine democratic mandate, which requires an active endorsement by the electorate through a competitive, fair process.

4. Case Study – The West Bengal Assembly Electoral Roll Anomalies

The article shifts from theory to a detailed analysis of systemic irregularities during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal –

Massive Constituency-Wise Deletions – Data analysis revealed that constituency-wise deletions of electors exceeded the actual victory margins in several areas, implying that the targeted removal of voters could have directly altered election outcomes.

The "Under Adjudication" Crisis – Instead of utilizing routine, gradual revision processes to remove permanently shifted, deceased, or duplicate entries, over 60 lakh electors were abruptly categorized under "under adjudication" due to their alleged ineligibility under Article 326 (which defines universal adult suffrage and voter qualifications).

The Lightning Exercise – Following a June 2025 ECI directive (modeled after a similar exercise in Bihar), over 700 judicial officers hastily appointed by the Supreme Court of India conducted a rapid marathon to dispose of these cases within an incredibly short timeframe.

Mass Disenfranchisement – This rapid adjudication resulted in the deletion of 27.16 lakh electors from the rolls. The author notes that neither after the Bihar SIR nor during the subsequent phases in West Bengal did the ECI release public figures clarifying the specific legal parameters under which these individuals failed to meet Article 326 eligibility criteria.

5. Comparative Analysis – Assam vs. West Bengal

The author highlights a glaring institutional double standard regarding voter data transparency between Assam and West Bengal –

The Assam Precedent – Years prior, when the ECI placed certain voters under the doubtful ("D-voter") category in Assam, no official aggregate data was placed in the public domain to confirm whether those citizens' voting rights were eventually restored or left in limbo.

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) Irony – The core irony lies in the fact that while the NRC process in Assam formally classified over 19 lakh people as "non-citizens," their voting rights remained legally unaffected at the time. Conversely, in the West Bengal instance, the ECI completely excluded 27 lakh individuals from the live voting process based on arbitrary "logical discrepancies," even though they had not been stripped of citizenship through any constitutional process.

6. Institutional Scrutiny of the Election Commission of India

The author directly questions the ECI's administrative neutrality, structural superintendence, and operational decisions, posing several critical questions –

The Indelible Taint – The engineering of a system that allowed for the mass deletion of 27 lakh voters under the ECI's active "superintendence" compromises the sanctity of its foundational slogan – *"No voter to be left behind."*

The "Logical Discrepancy" Tool – The author questions how the ECI could mandate the use of an unverified algorithmic tool that manufactured wide discrepancies in voter lists, thereby allowing third-party systems to usurp the legitimate statutory functions of local Electoral Registration Officers (EROs).

Premature Schedules – The author questions why the ECI announced a rigid national election schedule when it was fully aware that its core, mandatory task—finalizing clean, indisputable electoral rolls—was far from complete.

Abdicating Legal Provisions – The ECI chose to ignore existing legal provisions that allow existing, older electoral rolls to remain valid for voters whose status is still "under adjudication" due to a lack of processing time.

Failure to Seek Judicial Deferral – Rather than approaching the Supreme Court to request a brief delay to systematically sort through the 27 lakh disputed voters, the ECI chose to suspend their constitutional voting rights entirely—a move the author terms "inexplicable and unfortunate."

7. Conclusion and the Broader Warning

The article concludes with a warning regarding the future of the Indian republic. As political rivals face gradual elimination or systemic weakening across state and national arenas, India risks entering a phase of "victories without a fight." When the umpire or referee begins to behave like an active participant or an "extra" on the field, the entire democratic experiment is compromised. High-profile,

structural slogans like "One Nation, One Election" or the theoretical push for an "Opposition-must Bharat" (Opposition-free India) work against the core concept of healthy contestation. Without political competition, elections become empty rituals, striking at the very roots of the nation's democratic character.

Source - <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/one-horse-races-are-no-triumph-for-democracy/article70991099.ece>

Question

"An election without robust contestation and absolute institutional neutrality transforms a democracy into a plebiscitary autocracy. Critically analyse this statement in light of recent debates surrounding the integrity of electoral rolls and the statutory powers of the Election Commission of India." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

Introduction -

1. Define the distinction between procedural democracy (merely holding regular elections) and substantive democracy (characterized by genuine competition, a level playing field, and institutional fairness).
2. Reference the concept of "plebiscitary autocracy" where high voter turnout masks a lack of real political choice.

The Critical Importance of Contestation & The Neutral Umpire -

1. Explain that meaningful competition gives legitimacy to the winner and instils hope in the loser, which ensures the peaceful transition of power.
2. Highlight Article 324, which vests the superintendence, direction, and control of elections in the ECI, making absolute neutrality an explicit constitutional requirement.

Systemic Deficiencies and Operational Concerns (The Critical Analysis) -

Statutory Loopholes - Discuss Section 53(2) of the RPA, 1951, which permits uncontested walkovers, depriving citizens of their right to vote.

Electoral Roll Discrepancies - Analyse how rapid, technology-driven administrative actions (such as the sudden "under adjudication" status and deletion of 27 lakh voters in West Bengal) can lead to mass disenfranchisement without due process.

Data Opacity - Note the lack of public data regarding the restoration of rights for flagged voters (as seen in Assam and West Bengal), which erodes public trust.

Algorithmic Vulnerability - Point out that over-relying on automated tools to identify "logical discrepancies" can bypass the statutory oversight of local Electoral Registration Officers (EROs).

Way Forward -

1. Implement strict judicial or independent audits of electoral roll deletions, especially when they occur close to election announcements.
2. Introduce guidelines to ensure that voters marked for adjudication can cast provisional ballots, preventing bureaucratic delays from stripping them of their constitutional rights.
3. Strengthen the inner-party democratic framework to ensure a constant supply of viable opposition voices.

Conclusion -

Conclude that numbers and logistics alone do not make an election successful. The enduring strength of India's democracy depends on protecting the right to contest and maintaining the ECI as a transparent, neutral guardian of the ballot box.

Source - <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/one-horse-races-are-no-triumph-for-democracy/article70991099.ece>

2. The Challenge for India's Renewables Surge – Storage (IE)

GS Paper III – Indian Economy / Infrastructure / Science and Technology

Topic – Infrastructure – Energy; Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Sub-Topic – Renewable Energy Integration, Energy Storage Systems (ESS), Grid Stability, and Supply Chain Vulnerabilities (Lithium Dependency).

1. Introduction

As India rapidly expands its renewable energy footprint—with green sources accounting for over 53% 283GW of its total installed capacity—the power grid faces a structural crisis – intermittency. Solar power generation (which alone contributes over \$150 \text{ GW} \\$) drops to absolute zero after sunset, while wind energy fluctuates wildly based on weather patterns. This creates a severe time-mismatch between when electricity is generated and when consumer demand peaks. Without robust energy storage infrastructure to save surplus power during high-generation periods and discharge it during peak deficits, grid stability is fundamentally threatened.

2. Core Technological Architecture – Dominant and Emerging Storage Modalities

The article details several prominent technologies being deployed or explored globally to capture and release electricity on demand –

A. Pumped Hydro Storage (PHS) – Mechanical/Gravitational Dominance

Mechanism – Uses surplus electricity during off-peak hours to pump water from a lower reservoir to an elevated higher reservoir.

Discharge – When grid demand peaks, the stored water is released downhill through high-capacity hydro turbines, instantly generating electricity.

Status – It stands alongside BESS as one of the two most widely deployed storage technologies globally.

B. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) – Electrochemical Efficiency

Mechanism – Captures excess green electricity and stores it chemically within modular battery packs, which later discharge power seamlessly back into the grid during shortages.

Dominant Chemistry – **Lithium-iron-phosphate (LFP)** cells are the global industry standard due to their falling production costs, high round-trip efficiency, and long operational life.

C. Alternative and Emerging Storage Solutions

Concentrating Solar-Thermal Storage Systems – Deploys extensive mirror arrays to capture and focus intense sunlight onto a central receiver. The heat is absorbed by storage materials like molten salt and later used to generate steam to drive power turbines.

Compressed-Air Energy Storage Systems – Utilizes surplus power to compress atmospheric air and store it at high pressure within secure underground caverns or storage tanks. This compressed air is released to spin generation turbines during peak demand.

Flywheel Energy Storage Systems – Stores energy mechanically as rotational kinetic energy by spinning a heavy rotor at extremely high speeds. Known for delivering near-instantaneous bursts of power, flywheels are critical for maintaining real-time grid frequency stability.

Gravity Energy Storage Systems – Uses excess power to mechanically lift high-density weights to elevated positions. When power is required, the weights are lowered, converting gravitational potential energy back into electricity via linked generators.

3. India's Installed Capacity and Future Projections (2035–36)

A critical widening gap exists between India's rapid addition of renewable generation capacity and its parallel deployment of storage systems. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has outlined an ambitious roadmap to bridge this gap –

Technology Domain	Current Installed Capacity (2026)	CEA Projected Target (By 2035–36)	Total Energy Capacity
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Pumped Hydro Storage (PHS)	7.2 GW	94{GW}	567GWh
Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)	0.2 GW	80 GW	321GWh
Aggregate Capacity Metrics	~7.47 GW	174GW	888GWh}

The 4-to-6 Hour Operational Window – The top power planning agency emphasizes that integrating storage facilities capable of sustaining supply for 4 to 6 hours will become non-negotiable beyond 2030 to manage longer periods without sun or wind.

4. Infrastructure Pipelines and Project Execution Status

To achieve these long-term targets, the government has initialized a massive, multi-tiered project pipeline –

PHS Pipeline Status –

1. 13,120MW 78,720MWh of PHS capacity is actively under construction.
2. An additional 9,580MW 57,480MWh has received formal regulatory concurrence and awaits immediate construction deployment.
3. Projects totalling nearly 75,000MW are currently undergoing preliminary survey and field investigation stages.

BESS Pipeline Status –

1. 10,658.94MW 28,739.32MWh of battery capacity is under active construction.
2. Projects representing 22,347.15MW 69,836.70MWh are localized at the crucial competitive tendering stage.

5. Strategic Challenges and Supply Chain Vulnerabilities

The rapid scale-up of India's storage infrastructure faces deep geopolitical and economic risks –

Import Dependency – India suffers from a severe, concentrated reliance on imports for its battery systems, currently importing 75–80% of its lithium-ion cells.

Value Chain Concentration – Lithium-ion cells account for roughly 80% of the total cost of a grid-scale battery storage system.

Geopolitical Vulnerability – The CEA highlights that a single Asian country dominates 75–80% of global battery manufacturing, exposing India to trade frictions, price volatility, and supply chain bottlenecks.

6. Global Energy Storage Landscape

Global Capacity Benchmarks – According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), global installed PHS capacity stands at approximately \$160 \text{GW}\$. In 2025 alone, 108GW of new battery storage capacity was added worldwide—a staggering 40% increase over the previous year.

Geopolitical Leadership Matrix – * **China** – Leads the world with nearly \$66 \text{GW}\$ of installed storage capacity, dominating the battery supply chain by accounting for nearly 60% of all global additions in 2025.

1. Japan & United States – Hold secondary positions with 21.8GW and 18.9GW respectively.
2. Europe – Collectives account for approximately 28 GW of pumped hydro capacity.

7. Way Forward

Securing Raw Material Supply Chains – Diversifying raw mineral access through overseas mining acquisitions (via KABIL) and creating a domestic recycling ecosystem for electronic waste.

Accelerating Domestic Manufacturing – Aggressively scaling up the Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to manufacture lithium and alternative cells within India.

Streamlining Financial Tenders – Standardizing battery storage purchase agreements to provide long-term revenue visibility for private investors and developers.

Upgrading Grid Operational Software – Integrating advanced machine learning and AI forecasting tools into load dispatch centres to seamlessly coordinate storage discharge with real-time demand fluctuations.

Conclusion

India's target of transitioning to a clean energy future cannot be achieved by expanding generation capacity alone; it requires a parallel expansion in energy storage infrastructure. While the country's upcoming project pipelines are vast, over-reliance on imported lithium-ion cell components presents a clear strategic vulnerability. To ensure long-term energy security, India must combine physical grid integration with aggressive domestic manufacturing and cell diversification, turning storage from a bottleneck into an asset.

Source - <https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-indian-express/20260518/282011858999718>

Question

"While India's aggressive expansion of renewable energy generation has bypassed global benchmarks, its path to a clean energy transition is fundamentally bottlenecked by grid-scale storage infrastructure. Critically evaluate the technological options available to India to achieve grid stability and the strategic risks associated with its green energy supply chain." (250 Words, 15 Marks)

1. Introduction

India's renewable energy capacity has crossed a milestone, accounting for over 53% 283 GW of its total installed power mix. However, because solar and wind energy are inherently intermittent, generation often fails to align with peak demand curves. This creates an urgent requirement for a parallel expansion in grid-scale energy storage systems (ESS) to prevent grid destabilization.

2. Technological Options for Grid Stability – Merits and Demerits

India is pursuing a dual-track storage strategy, supplemented by emerging technologies –

Pumped Hydro Storage (PHS) – Consists of pumping water to an elevated reservoir during surplus hours and releasing it downhill through turbines during peak deficits.

1. Merit – Excellent for large-scale, long-duration (4 to 6 hours) base-load balancing.
2. Demerit – High gestation periods, heavy capital requirement, and environmental/land acquisition challenges.

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) – Utilizes electrochemical cells, predominantly Lithium-Iron-Phosphate (LFP) chemistry, to instantly capture and discharge power.

1. Merit – Rapid deployment, high round-trip efficiency, and exceptional real-time grid frequency regulation.
2. Demerit – Shorter operational lifespan compared to hydro assets and highly prone to supply chain shocks.

Alternative Paradigms – Technologies like Flywheel systems (for short-term frequency management) and Mechanical Gravity storage are being explored but are yet to achieve commercial grid-scale viability in India.

3. Strategic Risks in the Green Supply Chain (The Critical Assessment)

An evaluation of India's storage ambitions highlights a deep vulnerability –

Asymmetric Import Dependence – BESS deployment is heavily reliant on external supply chains, with India importing 75–80% of its lithium-ion cells.

Geopolitical Monopoly – A single country, China, controls nearly 60% of global battery additions and 75–80% of global cell manufacturing.

The "Value" Concentration – Because cells constitute up to 80% of the total cost of a grid-scale battery project, India risks swapping its historical dependency on West Asian fossil fuels for an equally dangerous dependency on East Asian critical mineral monopolies.

4. Way Forward

To secure its clean energy transition, India must execute a synchronized domestic strategy –

Accelerating the ACC-PLI Scheme – Aggressively scaling the Advanced Chemistry Cell Production Linked Incentive to manufacture batteries domestically.

Diversifying Mineral Access – Securing long-term lithium, cobalt, and nickel mining assets abroad through state joint ventures like KABIL.

Tapping the PHS Pipeline – Streamlining clearances for the 13,120MW of pumped hydro capacity currently under construction to reduce immediate reliance on imported batteries.

Conclusion

Critically evaluating India's renewable energy surge reveals that adding generation capacity without building matching storage infrastructure is unsustainable. While the Central Electricity Authority's target of 174GW of integrated storage by 2035–36 is directionally correct, India's ultimate success will depend on its ability to build an indigenous, secure supply chain. Strategic self-reliance must match administrative scale to ensure the national power grid remains stable, secure, and sovereign.

Source – <https://www.pressreader.com/india/the-indian-express/20260518/282011858999718>

3. Why Conversion Cases Like TCS Nashik Persist? (TP)

General Studies Paper – General Studies Paper I – Indian Society and Communalism

Topic – Fundamental Rights and secularism

Sub-Topic – Role of education in nation-building

Introduction

The article examines recurring communal tensions surrounding educational institutions in regions like Nashik and traces their roots to historical memories, religious identity politics, and unresolved social mistrust. It argues that controversies over conversion are not isolated incidents but manifestations of deeper anxieties linked to Partition, communal mobilisation, educational control, and identity-based politics in India.

1. Background of Conversion-Related Controversies

Educational Institutions and Religious Identity

1. Several disputes emerge around minority-run educational institutions accused of promoting religious conversion.

TCS Nashik Incident Context

1. The article links the Nashik case with wider debates on missionary institutions, cultural influence, and communal sensitivities.

Political and Social Polarisation

1. Conversion-related issues are often amplified within charged political environments.

2. Historical Roots of Communal Suspicion

Legacy of Partition

1. The trauma of Partition continues to influence Hindu-Muslim relations and public perceptions.

Colonial-Era Religious Mobilisation

1. Colonial policies often deepened communal identities and competitive religious politics.

Historical Memory and Identity

1. Communities continue to carry inherited narratives of victimhood, mistrust, and insecurity.

3. Religious Conversion Debate in India

Constitutional Protection

1. Article 25 guarantees freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice, and propagate religion.

Concerns Regarding Coercion

1. Critics argue that conversion through inducement, coercion, or exploitation of vulnerability should be prevented.

Debate on Voluntary Conversion

1. Supporters emphasise individual liberty and freedom of belief.

4. Educational Institutions as Social Spaces

Role in Socialisation

1. Schools and colleges shape cultural attitudes, civic values, and inter-community interaction.

Minority Educational Rights

1. Article 30 provides minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions.

Perception Challenges

1. Minority institutions are sometimes viewed through the lens of communal suspicion rather than educational contribution.

5. Rise of Identity Politics

Politicisation of Religious Issues

1. Conversion debates are frequently used for electoral mobilisation and ideological polarisation.

Community-Based Mobilisation

1. Religious identity increasingly influences public discourse and social alignment.

Social Fragmentation

1. Excessive identity politics weakens trust and social cohesion.

6. Impact on Social Harmony

Communal Polarisation

1. Repeated controversies deepen mistrust among communities.

Fear and Insecurity

1. Minority communities may feel targeted or socially isolated.

Weakening of Constitutional Values

1. Persistent communal conflict undermines secularism and fraternity.

7. Importance of Constitutional Secularism

Indian Model of Secularism

1. India follows principled equidistance rather than strict separation between religion and state.

Respect for Diversity

1. The Constitution protects pluralism and coexistence among communities.

Balancing Rights and Public Order

1. The state must protect both religious freedom and social harmony.

8. Need for Inter-Community Dialogue

Building Mutual Trust

1. Dialogue between communities can reduce misconceptions and hostility.

Importance of Local Social Leadership

1. Civil society, educators, and community leaders play a major role in maintaining harmony.

Preventing Radicalisation

1. Inclusive engagement reduces the possibility of communal extremism.

9. Role of Education in Nation-Building

Promoting Constitutional Values

1. Educational institutions should strengthen tolerance, critical thinking, and civic responsibility.

Shared Historical Understanding

1. Balanced teaching of history can reduce inherited prejudices.

Encouraging Social Integration

1. Education can act as a bridge between diverse communities.

10. Challenges Before India

Spread of Misinformation

1. Social media amplifies rumours and communal narratives rapidly.

Weak Institutional Trust

1. Communities often distrust state institutions and opposing groups.

Political Exploitation of Identity

1. Electoral incentives sometimes encourage polarisation instead of reconciliation.

11. Way Forward

Strengthen Constitutional Literacy

1. Citizens should better understand rights, secularism, and pluralism.

Ensure Transparent Investigations

1. Allegations of coercive conversion should be examined through lawful and impartial procedures.

Promote Inclusive Education

1. Institutions should encourage interfaith understanding and social integration.

Encourage Community Dialogue

1. Regular engagement between religious and civic groups can reduce tensions.

Resist Communal Polarisation

1. Political and media discourse should avoid inflammatory narratives.

Conclusion

Conversion-related controversies persist because they are linked not only to religion but also to historical memory, identity politics, and social mistrust. India's long-term stability depends on strengthening constitutional secularism, promoting dialogue, and nurturing mutual respect among communities.

Source - <https://dailypioneer.com/news/why-conversion-cases-like-tcs-nashik-persist>

Question

Q. "Religious conversion controversies in India reflect deeper challenges of identity politics and social mistrust." Discuss in the context of constitutional secularism. (250 words)

Introduction

Religious conversion debates in India are closely connected with constitutional rights, communal relations, and identity politics. Incidents involving educational or religious institutions often reflect wider social anxieties and historical mistrust.

Causes Behind Conversion Controversies

1. Historical memories of Partition and communal conflict continue to shape public perceptions.
2. Religious identity is increasingly politicised for electoral mobilisation.
3. Allegations of coercive or inducement-based conversion create social tensions.
4. Social media amplifies communal narratives and misinformation rapidly.

Constitutional Perspective

1. Article 25 guarantees freedom of conscience and the right to propagate religion.
2. Article 30 protects minority educational institutions.
3. Indian secularism aims to balance religious freedom with public order and harmony.

Impact on Society

1. Repeated controversies deepen communal polarisation and mistrust.
2. Minority communities may experience insecurity and alienation.
3. Social cohesion and constitutional fraternity are weakened.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen constitutional literacy and interfaith dialogue.
2. Ensure impartial investigations into allegations of coercion.
3. Promote inclusive and value-based education.
4. Prevent political exploitation of communal issues.

Conclusion

India's pluralistic democracy requires balancing religious freedom with social harmony. Long-term peace depends on constitutional morality, mutual trust, and sustained efforts toward inclusive nation-building.

Source - <https://dailypioneer.com/news/why-conversion-cases-like-tcs-nashik-persist>

4. Nalanda And India's Civilisational Renaissance (TS)

General Studies Paper – General Studies Paper I – Indian Culture

Topic – Indian culture and heritage

Sub-Topic – Globalisation and civilisational outreach

Introduction

The article reflects on the revival of Nalanda University and links it with India's broader civilisational resurgence. It argues that India's development should not be limited only to economic growth or technological advancement but must also reconnect with its ancient knowledge traditions, cultural confidence, and ethical worldview. The rebuilding of Nalanda symbolises India's attempt to revive a knowledge-based civilisation rooted in inclusiveness, learning, and global cooperation.

1. Historical Importance of Nalanda

Ancient Centre of Learning

1. Nalanda University was founded in the 5th century CE during the Gupta period.
2. It emerged as one of the world's earliest residential universities.

International Academic Hub

1. Students and scholars came from China, Korea, Tibet, Persia, and Southeast Asia.
2. It represented India's global intellectual influence in ancient times.

Multidisciplinary Knowledge Tradition

1. Nalanda taught philosophy, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, grammar, and Buddhist studies.
2. It symbolised open intellectual inquiry and academic excellence.

2. Destruction and Decline

Invasion and Destruction

1. Nalanda was destroyed during the invasions led by Bakhtiyar Khilji in the 12th century.

Loss of Knowledge Networks

The destruction represented not only physical damage but also disruption of India's global knowledge systems.

Civilisational Setback

1. India gradually lost its central role in global intellectual leadership.

3. Revival of Nalanda University

Modern Nalanda Initiative

1. Nalanda University was re-established in Bihar in the 21st century with international cooperation.

International Participation

1. Several Asian countries supported the project, reflecting Nalanda's historical internationalism.

Symbol of Civilisational Renewal

1. The revival signifies India's attempt to reconnect with its intellectual and cultural heritage.

4. Civilisational State and Cultural Confidence

Rediscovery of Indian Identity

1. The article highlights the importance of recovering confidence in India's civilisational strengths.

Beyond Colonial Narratives

1. India's traditional knowledge systems were often neglected during colonial and post-colonial periods.

Cultural Continuity

1. Civilisations survive through continuity of values, institutions, and knowledge traditions.

5. Knowledge as India's Soft Power

Education Diplomacy

1. Institutions like Nalanda strengthen India's educational and cultural diplomacy.

Global South Leadership

1. India can offer an alternative development and knowledge model rooted in inclusiveness and sustainability.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

1. The ancient Indian idea of "the world is one family" strengthens India's soft power projection.

6. Ancient Wisdom and Modern Development

Integration of Tradition and Technology

1. India's growth model should combine scientific advancement with ethical and cultural foundations.

Sustainable Development Perspective

1. Traditional Indian thought emphasised harmony between humans, society, and nature.

Knowledge Economy

1. Modern economies increasingly depend on innovation, research, and intellectual capital.

7. Role of Digital Transformation

India's Technological Achievements

1. Digital public infrastructure such as UPI and Aadhaar demonstrates India's innovation capacity.

Democratisation of Access

1. Technology can help expand educational access and knowledge sharing.

Bridging Ancient and Modern

1. India can combine digital infrastructure with civilisational values to create inclusive development models.

8. Challenges in Building Knowledge Leadership

Quality of Higher Education

1. Indian universities still face issues related to research quality and global rankings.

Brain Drain

1. Many talented students continue to migrate abroad for higher education and research opportunities.

Limited Research Ecosystem

1. Investment in research and innovation remains relatively low compared to advanced economies.

9. India's Emerging Global Role

Civilisational Diplomacy

1. India increasingly projects itself as a civilisation-state rather than merely a post-colonial nation-state.

Strategic Cultural Outreach

1. Cultural institutions, yoga, Ayurveda, Buddhism, and educational partnerships enhance India's influence.

Multipolar World Order

1. India seeks a larger role in shaping global governance and intellectual discourse.

10. Way Forward

Strengthen Higher Education

1. India must invest heavily in universities, research ecosystems, and faculty development.

Promote Indigenous Knowledge Systems

1. Traditional knowledge should be integrated with modern scientific inquiry.

Expand International Academic Collaboration

1. India should attract global scholars and students through world-class institutions.

Encourage Research and Innovation

1. Long-term investment in R&D and interdisciplinary education is essential.

Build Cultural Confidence

1. Development should include intellectual, ethical, and cultural dimensions alongside economic growth.

Conclusion

The revival of Nalanda symbolises more than the reconstruction of an ancient university. It represents India's attempt to reclaim its role as a global centre of knowledge, dialogue, and civilisational leadership by combining ancient wisdom with modern innovation.

Source - <https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/old-and-the-new-1503595061.html>

Question

Q. "The revival of Nalanda reflects India's attempt to combine civilisational heritage with modern global aspirations." Discuss. (250 words)

Introduction

Nalanda University symbolised India's ancient intellectual leadership and cultural openness. Its modern revival reflects India's effort to reconnect with its civilisational heritage while projecting itself as a global knowledge power.

Significance of Nalanda Revival

1. Nalanda represents India's ancient tradition of higher learning and international academic exchange.
2. Its revival strengthens India's cultural diplomacy and soft power.
3. It reflects the idea of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" and India's civilisational worldview.
4. The initiative combines historical identity with contemporary educational aspirations.

Relevance for Modern India

1. Knowledge economies increasingly depend on innovation and research ecosystems.
2. India can integrate traditional knowledge with modern science and technology.
3. Institutions like Nalanda can strengthen regional cooperation and global academic partnerships.
4. Cultural confidence can complement economic and technological progress.

Challenges

1. Indian universities face issues related to funding, research quality, and global competitiveness.
2. Brain drains and weak research infrastructure remain major concerns.

Conclusion

The revival of Nalanda represents India's aspiration to emerge not merely as an economic power but as a knowledge-based civilisation capable of contributing ethically, intellectually, and culturally to the modern world.

Source - <https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/old-and-the-new-1503595061.html>