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1. Industrial Production Growth & IIP Revision (GS Paper III: Indian Economy)

Context:

India's industrial output accelerated to a five-month high of 5.1% in May 2026, while the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) revised the new IIP series by replacing WPI with the Producer Price Index (PPI) for selected value-based outputs.

What is the Index of Industrial Production (IIP)?

- **Definition & Purpose:** A macroeconomic indicator measuring short-term volume changes in industrial production.
- **Released by:** National Statistical Office (NSO), MoSPI.
- **Frequency:** Compiled and released monthly.
- **Major Sectors:** Broadly tracks Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity.
- **Updated Base Year:** Recalibrated to 2022–23.

Key Changes in the Revised IIP Series

- **Deflator Shift:** Discontinued Wholesale Price Index (WPI) in favor of the Producer Price Index (PPI) for value-based outputs.
- **Data Upgrade:** Incorporated updated data sources to capture modern economic activities.
- **Rationale & Impact:** Rectifies price distortions at the factory gate; expected to lead to revisions in national GDP data.

Highlights of Industrial Performance (May 2026)

- **Overall Growth:** Quickened to a five-month high of 5.1%.
- **Manufacturing Sector:** Expanded by 5.5%; consumer durables rose 7.2% (led by auto/electronics), while non-durables grew 3.6%.
- **Electricity & Mining:** Electricity grew 9.9% (two-year high due to heatwaves); mining contracted 1.6% (fifth consecutive contraction).

Economic Significance

- Serves as a vital core indicator of real industrial activity.
- Reflects a strong revival in consumer demand and investment metrics.
- Critically shapes central bank monetary choices and government fiscal planning.

Challenges

- Persistent, deep structural weakness and contraction in mining output.
- Inherent data comparability friction following frequent methodology adjustments.
- High reliance on external variables like delayed monsoons and climate shocks.

Way Forward

- Standardize high-quality, real-time data pipelines to prevent statistical lag.
- Implement rapid policy interventions to revive the declining mining sector.
- Boost manufacturing competitiveness by strengthening infrastructure and technology integration.
- Broaden PPI expansion across all sectors to ensure precise economic deflation.

2. Critical Wings, Critical Risks: Saving the White-rumped Vulture (GS Paper III – Environment)

Context:

A captive-bred, radio-tagged White-rumped Vulture released in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) was recently electrocuted by a power line, highlighting critical gaps in species reintroduction and habitat safety.



About the White-rumped Vulture

- **Scientific Name:** *Gyps bengalensis*.
- **Status:** IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered; CITES: Appendix II; Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I.
- **Distribution & Role:** Found across India; MTR holds South India's last sizeable population. Functions as an apex scavenger preventing pathogen outbreaks.

Conservation Efforts in India

- **Programmes:** Captive breeding and reintroduction driven by BNHS and State Forest Departments.
- **Infrastructure:** Vulture Conservation Breeding Centres (VCBCs) established to rescue population numbers.
- **Telemetry:** Radio-tagging deployed to evaluate post-release landscape adaptation, foraging behavior, and fitness.

Key Challenges

- **Infrastructure Hazards:** Fatal electrocution from uninsulated power distribution lines crossing key habitats.
- **Toxicity:** Continued threat from toxic veterinary NSAIDs (e.g., Diclofenac) in livestock carcasses.
- **Acclimatisation Obstacles:** High exploratory disorientation, low post-release survival, and localized food scarcity.

Significance for Biodiversity Conservation

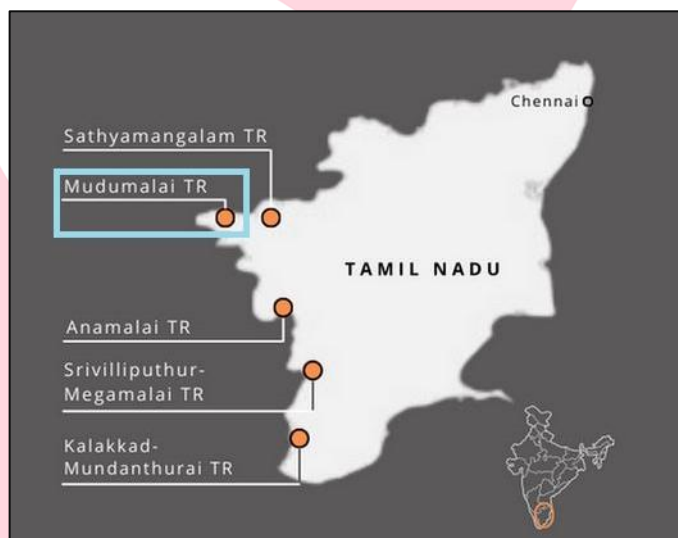
- Proves that species reintroduction success depends entirely on securing a hazard-free receiving environment.
- Showcases the vital need for high-resolution post-release telemetry to address behavioural stress.
- Offers empirical benchmarks to modify future macro-level raptor recovery blueprints.

Way Forward

- Retrofit power grids with mandatory insulation and bunch-cabling in avian corridors.
- Build strict cross-border forest coordination corridors for uninterrupted telemetry tracking.
- Eradicate toxic veterinary formulations from local pharmacies via rigorous drug tracking.
- Implement community-led carcass monitoring and establish safe vulture feeding zones.

About Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR):

- **Strategic Tri-Junction:** At the Nilgiris tri-junction of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala, anchoring India's first Biosphere Reserve (1986).
- **Ecological Corridor:** Connects Western and Eastern Ghats, linking Wayanad (Kerala) and Bandipur (Karnataka) seamlessly.
- **Riverine Lifeline:** Moyar River and tributaries drain the core, sustaining dry-season ecology and forming natural boundaries.
- **Forest Mosaic:** Tropical moist to dry deciduous, thorn scrub, elephant grass, and giant bamboo create diverse habitats.
- **Flagship Fauna:** Dense tiger–elephant populations with 260+ bird species, including Malabar endemics like hornbill and trogon.



3. Artificial Intelligence: Transformative Power, Systemic Risks {GS Paper III (Science & Technology)}

Context:

The rapid global proliferation of Artificial Intelligence across sectors has intensified critical debates surrounding its massive economic disruptions, power concentration, and systemic ethical risks, necessitating robust regulation.

AI: A Transformative Technology

- **Definition:** Algorithms trained on vast datasets utilizing statistical relationships to simulate human-like text and pattern recognition.
- **Impact:** Accelerates real-time industrial productivity, optimizes resource allocation, and scales cross-sector public delivery innovation.

Major Risks Associated with AI

- **Cognitive Disruption:** Displaces specialized intellectual tasks, triggering complex, painful transitions in employment markets.
- **Resource Concentration:** Extreme capital intensity risks turning computing infrastructure into exclusive, coercive geopolitical chokepoints.
- **Artificial Wisdom:** Over-reliance on synthetic information lacking human context, empirical judgment, or verified domain expertise.
- **Systemic Vulnerabilities:** Exacerbates persuasive misinformation, deepfakes, structural data biases, and algorithmic weaponization.

Need for Responsible AI Governance

- **Liability Architecture:** Enforces legal accountability frameworks equivalent to traditional consumer or pharmaceutical manufacturing.
- **Ethical Guardrails:** Institutionalizes absolute transparency, algorithmic explainability, and human-in-the-loop oversight.
- **Global Safeguards:** Mandates non-proliferation treaties enabling technical kill-switches for hazardous frontier models.

India's Approach to AI

- Driven by the comprehensive IndiaAI Mission to advance secure, independent sovereign computing infrastructure.
- Integrates automated processing into existing Digital Public Infrastructure for inclusive, trustworthy citizen service delivery.

Way Forward

- Establish harmonized, risk-proportionate international regulatory standards.
- Mandate verifiable cryptographic watermarking for synthetic content.
- Accelerate public-private investments in cognitive upskilling.
- Enforce institutional accountability via statutory AI product liability.

4. Preventive Detention & Property Liability: West Bengal's New Laws Under Scrutiny {GS Paper II (Polity & Governance)}

Context:

The West Bengal Assembly passed two legislations providing for the preventive detention of "anti-socials" for up to a year and mandating compensation for damaging public or private property, triggering intense constitutional debates.

Key Provisions of the Bills

- **Detention:** Empowers the administration to detain individuals deemed dangerous to the community for up to one year to prevent future anti-social activity.
- **Advisory Board:** Mandates case scrutiny within three weeks by a board led by a current or former High Court judge.
- **Legal Bar:** Restricts a detainee's ordinary right to representation by a legal practitioner before the Board.
- **Property Damage:** Imposes strict financial liability and compensation recovery directly from individuals accused of destroying assets.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **Article 22:** Dictates procedural parameters for preventive detention laws while prescribing minimal safeguards for detainees.
- **Legislative Competence:** States derive authority from Entry 1 (Public Order) of List II of the Seventh Schedule.
- **Due Process:** Demands a rigorous institutional balance between individual fundamental freedoms and collective security.

Significance

- Strengthens law and order by checking institutionalized political violence and mob anarchy.
- Deters systemic vandalism during political protests, safeguarding expensive public infrastructure.

Concerns

- **Civil Liberties:** Expanding executive power via District Magistrates raises fears of arbitrary detention and political vendetta.
- **Natural Justice:** Restricting legal representation before the Advisory Board compromises fair trial standards.
- **Chilling Effect:** Sweeping definitions risk criminalizing peaceful dissent, democratic assemblies, and student-led movements.

Way Forward

- **Constitutional Adherence:** Ensure strict conformity with apex court guidelines on personal liberty.
- **Judicial Oversight:** Institutionalize robust, independent judicial review mechanisms to prevent administrative overreach.
- **Proportionality:** Enforce clear evidentiary thresholds before establishing financial liabilities for property damage.
- **Rights Protection:** Balance urgent public order directives with democratic speech and dissent safeguards.

5. NIIF Boost: Catalysing India's Infrastructure Future {GS Paper III (Economy & Infrastructure)}

Context:

The Union Cabinet recently approved an additional ₹30,000 crore Government investment in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) to back new infrastructure-focused funds and bolster long-term infrastructure financing.

About the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund

- **(NIIF) Establishment:** Founded in 2015 as a Category II Alternative Investment Fund (AIF).
- **Objective:** To mobilize long-term capital for essential infrastructure and key economic sectors.
- **Ownership:** A sovereign-backed platform with the Government of India serving as the anchor investor, possessing a 49% share.
- **Fund Types:** At present, it oversees the Master Fund, Private Markets Fund, Strategic Opportunities Fund, and bilateral initiatives such as the India-Japan Fund.

Key Features of the Recent Cabinet Approval

- **Capital Commitment:** Increases the overall Government capital commitment in the NIIF to ₹60,000 crore.
- **NIIF Infrastructure Fund II:** Introduces a successor to its primary master fund, aiming for a target corpus of approximately ₹30,000 crore.
- **Focus Sectors:** Aims at essential asset classes such as transportation, energy, digital networks, urban infrastructure, and e-mobility.
- **Strategic Growth:** Strengthens the catalytic capital model by utilizing government equity to bolster new bilateral and strategic investment funds.

Significance

- Mobilises vital long-term patient finance for capital-intensive core projects. Crowds in major domestic and global institutional investors, including sovereign wealth and pension funds.
- Actively bridges India's massive infrastructure financing gap, spurring sustained economic growth and employment.
- Revitalises the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) ecosystem by providing robust institutional backing.

Challenges

- Infrastructure assets face inherently prolonged gestation periods.
- Unpredictable regulatory bottlenecks and complex land acquisition hurdles severely strain project viability.
- Persistent macroeconomic volatility and currency risks can dampen aggressive foreign capital participation.
- Requires significant acceleration in private sector participation beyond government-backed guarantees.

Way Forward

- Expand institutional investor participation through innovative, structured risk-sharing mechanisms.
- Strengthen pre-project preparation and establish centralized, time-bound governance clearances.
- Enhance regulatory and policy certainty to secure predictable long-term capital yields.
- Prioritize sustainable, climate-resilient, and green infrastructure asset pipelines.
- Synchronise targeted NIIF investments directly with national initiatives like the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) and PM GatiShakti.