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Headlines:

- Pellet Guns as Part of Graded Police Response
- Artificial Intelligence as India's Next Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)
- Supreme Court on Post Facto Environmental Clearances
- SHANTI: India's Maritime Security Framework for the Bay of Bengal
- Index of Industrial Production (IIP): June 2026



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1. Pellet Guns as Part of Graded Police Response

GS Paper II: Polity & Governance, GS Paper III: Internal Security, GS Paper IV: Ethics

Why in News?

The Supreme Court observed that existing police rules permit the use of pellet guns as part of a graded response in exceptional circumstances, while hearing a petition seeking a ban on their use against civilian assemblies.

Key Highlights

- The Court observed that, under existing police rules, pellet guns may be used only in exceptional situations as part of a graded response to escalating violence.
- It declined to impose a blanket ban, stating that it would instead examine cases involving arbitrary or indiscriminate use of pellet guns in violation of prescribed crowd-control protocols.
- The petitioners were directed to amend their plea to specifically challenge the rules permitting pellet guns, rather than seeking a general prohibition.
- The Union Government was asked to place on record the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing police response to unlawful assemblies.

Supreme Court's Observations

- The State should respond to peaceful student protests with restraint and non-violence, and not with brutality.
- The Court noted that peaceful protests may, in certain situations, be hijacked by disruptive elements, requiring law enforcement agencies to be prepared for varying levels of public disorder.
- It emphasised that crowd-control measures must follow a graded response, with force being escalated progressively according to the level of threat.
- The Court indicated that the use of force must adhere to the constitutional principles of necessity, proportionality and reasonableness, ensuring that only the minimum force necessary is employed.
- It suggested equipping police personnel with protective gear (helmets, shields and body armour) so that they can better assess situations before resorting to force.

Constitutional Dimensions

- **Article 19(1)(a):** Freedom of speech and expression.
- **Article 19(1)(b):** Right to assemble peacefully and without arms.
- **Articles 19(2) & 19(3):** Permit reasonable restrictions on these rights in the interest of public order, sovereignty and integrity of India.
- **Article 21:** Right to life and personal liberty, requiring that State action be fair, just and reasonable.

- The case highlights the need to balance public order and internal security with the protection of civil liberties and human rights.

Challenges

- Risk of excessive or indiscriminate use of pellet guns leading to serious injuries and human rights concerns.
- Lack of transparent and uniform SOPs across States for crowd-control measures.
- Balancing public order with citizens' Fundamental Rights, particularly the right to peaceful protest.

Way Forward

- Ensure strict adherence to the principles of necessity, proportionality and graded use of force in crowd management.
- Strengthen training, accountability mechanisms and standardised SOPs for police personnel.
- Prioritise non-lethal alternatives, protective gear, negotiation and de-escalation techniques before resorting to force.

2. Artificial Intelligence as India's Next Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

GS Paper II: Governance, GS Paper III: Science & Technology

Artificial Intelligence as India's Next Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

Why in News?

An editorial highlighted the need to leverage India's successful Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) model to make Artificial Intelligence (AI) affordable, accessible and interoperable, positioning AI as the next frontier of inclusive digital transformation.

India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

India has built a globally recognised DPI stack, comprising:

- Aadhaar: Universal digital identity platform.
- UPI: Low-cost, interoperable digital payments ecosystem.
- DEPA (Account Aggregator): Consent-based data sharing framework.
- Combined with affordable internet, DPI has accelerated financial inclusion, Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), digital governance, and startup-led innovation.

Why AI as the Next Digital Public Infrastructure?

- AI is emerging as a foundational digital infrastructure capable of transforming governance, healthcare, education, agriculture and industry.
- Affordable, interoperable AI can democratise access to knowledge, improve public service delivery and enhance productivity across sectors.
- However, Indian startups remain dependent on foreign proprietary AI models, raising concerns over digital sovereignty, high costs and technological dependence.

India's AI Ecosystem

IndiaAI Mission (₹10,372 crore) aims to strengthen India's AI ecosystem through affordable compute infrastructure, innovation and public-private partnerships.

- Over 38,000 GPUs have been onboarded, with plans to scale to 1 lakh GPUs.
- Supports startups, researchers and academia through subsidised access to AI compute and promotes indigenous AI capabilities.

Significance

- Strengthens digital sovereignty by reducing dependence on foreign AI ecosystems.
- Promotes innovation, startups and MSMEs through affordable AI infrastructure.
- Enhances governance through AI-enabled public service delivery.
- Supports inclusive growth through Indic language AI, benefiting education, healthcare, agriculture and citizen services.

Challenges

- Dependence on foreign foundation models and cloud infrastructure.
- Limited AI compute capacity, semiconductor ecosystem and high energy requirements.
- Concerns relating to data governance, privacy, AI safety and ethical use.
- Digital divide and shortage of AI-skilled workforce.

Way Forward

- Develop indigenous and open-source AI foundation models, particularly for Indic languages.
- Expand AI compute infrastructure through public-private partnerships and reliable energy supply.
- Promote interoperable AI platforms, responsible AI governance and robust data protection.
- Leverage AI to strengthen education, healthcare, agriculture, justice delivery and citizen-centric governance, ensuring affordable, inclusive and trustworthy AI access.

3. Supreme Court on Post Facto Environmental Clearances

GS Paper II: Polity, GS Paper III: Environment

Why in News?

The Supreme Court quashed the 2021 Office Memorandum permitting post facto environmental clearances, while observing that any future mechanism for dealing with such violations must be framed through a valid statutory framework under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

What is Post Facto Environmental Clearance?

- It refers to granting environmental clearance after a project has commenced construction or become operational, instead of obtaining Prior Environmental Clearance (PEC) as mandated under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006.

Supreme Court's Observations

- Prior Environmental Clearance (PEC) remains the cornerstone of India's environmental regulatory framework.
- Administrative instructions, such as an Office Memorandum, cannot override statutory environmental requirements.
- Any future framework for addressing environmental violations must have a statutory basis and conform to the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- The judgment reiterates the need to balance developmental imperatives with environmental sustainability.

Concerns

- Granting post facto clearances may dilute the precautionary principle, which seeks to prevent environmental harm before it occurs.
- Post facto approvals may undermine the preventive objective of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) by assessing environmental impacts only after project execution has begun.
- Environmental damage to forests, wetlands, biodiversity and fragile ecosystems may become irreversible before scientific appraisal.
- Routine regularisation of violations could weaken the credibility of the EIA framework and reduce regulatory compliance.
- Monetary penalties alone may not adequately deter environmental violations or ensure ecological accountability.

Way Forward

- Ensure strict compliance with the EIA Notification, 2006 by mandating Prior Environmental Clearance (PEC) before project commencement.
- Strengthen environmental monitoring, transparency, public consultation and institutional capacity of appraisal authorities.
- Promote scientific, technology-enabled monitoring and robust compliance mechanisms to detect violations at an early stage.
- Enforce stricter compliance and accountability to discourage routine post facto regularisation of environmental violations.
- Uphold the principles of sustainable development, balancing economic growth with ecological conservation and inter-generational equity.

4. SHANTI: India's Maritime Security Framework for the Bay of Bengal

GS Paper II: International Relations, GS Paper III: Security

Why in News?

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar introduced SHANTI (Securing Holistic Advancement through Norms, Trust and Integrity) while launching India's candidature for the UN Security Council (2028–29).
- The framework seeks to strengthen rules-based, trust-driven maritime cooperation, with the Bay of Bengal envisaged as its first area of implementation.

Evolution of India's Maritime Vision

- **SAGAR (2015):** Security and Growth for All in the Region—focused on cooperative maritime security and inclusive regional development.
- **MAHASAGAR (2025):** Expanded India's maritime vision to the wider Indo-Pacific and the Global South, recognising the interconnected nature of regional security.
- **SHANTI (2026):** Provides a normative framework based on norms, trust and integrity to strengthen governance of shared maritime spaces.
- SHANTI complements India's evolving maritime vision by promoting cooperation based on shared principles, mutual trust and institutional collaboration, rather than strategic competition.

Why the Bay of Bengal?

- Serves as a strategic bridge between South and Southeast Asia, supporting India's Act East Policy.

- Acts as a vital maritime gateway linking the eastern Indian Ocean with the wider Indo-Pacific.
- Provides access to the strategically significant Malacca Strait, a major global trade and energy corridor.
- Home to BIMSTEC, making it a natural platform for regional cooperation.
- Faces common transboundary challenges, including cyclones, illegal fishing, marine pollution, coastal erosion, climate change, cyber threats and supply-chain disruptions.

Significance of SHANTI

- Promotes rules-based maritime governance and trust-based regional cooperation.
- Strengthens collaboration in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), maritime law enforcement and environmental resilience.
- Supports the Blue Economy through the sustainable use of marine resources.
- Encourages capacity building, information sharing and institutional cooperation among littoral states.
- Reinforces India's role as a preferred security partner and first responder in the Indian Ocean Region.

Challenges

- Institutional fragmentation and overlapping regional mechanisms limit coordinated maritime governance.
- Growing geopolitical competition in the Bay of Bengal.
- Rising non-traditional security threats, including climate-induced disasters, illegal fishing, maritime crime, cyber threats and supply-chain vulnerabilities.
- Need for stronger Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and information-sharing mechanisms.

Way Forward

- Institutionalise SHANTI through existing regional platforms such as BIMSTEC to avoid duplication of mechanisms.
- Strengthen BIMSTEC-led maritime cooperation, including joint exercises, maritime law enforcement and coordinated disaster response.
- Enhance Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and operationalise White Shipping Information Sharing arrangements.
- Promote sustainable Blue Economy initiatives, resilient coastal infrastructure and climate adaptation.
- Foster rules-based, inclusive and trust-driven maritime governance to ensure a secure, stable and resilient Bay of Bengal and strengthen cooperation across the wider Indo-Pacific.

5. Index of Industrial Production (IIP): June 2026

GS Paper III: Indian Economy, Industrial Growth, Manufacturing, Infrastructure, Economic Development

Why in News?

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) recorded 7.3% year-on-year growth in June 2026, the highest in 23 months, indicating resilience in India's industrial sector despite global uncertainties and a deficient monsoon.

What is the Index of Industrial Production (IIP)?

- IIP is a monthly indicator that measures the growth in the volume of industrial production across key sectors of the economy.
- It is compiled and released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- It serves as a key indicator for assessing the performance of the industrial sector and overall economic activity.

Growth Drivers

- Strong performance of the manufacturing sector provided the primary impetus to industrial growth.
- Rising merchandise exports and resilient domestic demand boosted manufacturing output.
- Sustained public capital expenditure (CapEx) supported robust growth in the capital goods sector, reflecting continued investment in productive capacity.
- Higher electricity demand during heatwave conditions contributed to increased industrial activity.
- A favourable base effect also supported the higher year-on-year growth rate.

Key Highlights

- Overall IIP growth reached 7.3%, marking the highest level in nearly two years.
- Manufacturing recorded robust growth, supported by improved domestic consumption and export demand.
- Consumer durables registered sustained growth, indicating resilient urban consumption.
- Capital goods continued to record double-digit growth, reflecting sustained investment and capacity creation.
- The electricity sector recorded strong growth, driven by increased power demand during heatwave conditions.

- The mining sector returned to positive growth after four months of contraction.

Challenges

- A deficient monsoon may weaken rural demand and consumer spending in the coming months.
- Global uncertainties, including West Asia tensions and volatile crude oil prices, could affect industrial activity.
- Export demand remains vulnerable to slowing global economic conditions.
- Sustaining private investment amid persistent external headwinds remains a challenge.

Economic Significance

- Reflects the health of India's industrial sector and serves as a leading indicator of economic activity.
- Supports employment generation, investment, manufacturing competitiveness and overall GDP growth.
- Sustained CapEx-led growth can crowd in private investment, strengthen industrial capacity and improve long-term economic resilience.

Way Forward

- Sustain public capital expenditure while encouraging greater private investment in infrastructure and manufacturing.
- Strengthen rural demand through higher agricultural productivity, employment generation and income support.
- Enhance export competitiveness through improved logistics, infrastructure and market diversification.
- Accelerate reforms to improve the ease of doing business, innovation and manufacturing competitiveness, ensuring sustainable industrial growth.

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