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Headlines:

- Prorogation of the Lok Sabha: Understanding Parliamentary Procedure
- Supreme Court Refines the ‘Triple Test’ for Defining ‘Industry’
- Core Sector Growth Moderates Amid Mixed Industrial Signals
- AI-Powered Public Platform for Equitable Access to Test Preparation
- Rural–Urban Divide in Female Labour Force Participation

1. Prorogation of the Lok Sabha: Understanding Parliamentary Procedure

GS Paper: GS-II — Indian Polity & Constitution

Why in News?

- A 10-day gap between the Lok Sabha being adjourned sine die on August 13 and its prorogation has triggered debate over parliamentary practice and the timing of prorogation.
- The issue has brought renewed attention to the constitutional distinction between adjournment, prorogation and dissolution.

Constitutional Framework

- Article 85(2): The President may:
  - Prorogue either or both Houses of Parliament.
  - Dissolve the Lok Sabha.
- Under Article 74, the President exercises these powers on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- Prorogation normally follows adjournment sine die, but it can take place even while the House is sitting or after it has been adjourned.
- The interval between adjournment sine die and prorogation is largely governed by parliamentary practice and convention, rather than a constitutionally prescribed number of days.

Parliamentary Procedures

- **Adjournment:** Suspension of a sitting of the House; the session continues.
- **Adjournment sine die:** Termination of a sitting without fixing a date for the next sitting.
- **Prorogation:** Formal termination of a session by the President.
- **Dissolution:** Ends the tenure of the Lok Sabha; the Rajya Sabha, being a permanent House, is not dissolved.

Effect on Bills

- Prorogation does not cause pending Bills to lapse.
- On dissolution of Lok Sabha, a Bill pending in Lok Sabha generally lapses.
- A Bill passed by Lok Sabha and pending in Rajya Sabha also generally lapses.
- A Bill pending in Rajya Sabha but not passed by Lok Sabha does not lapse merely because Lok Sabha is dissolved.

Significance

- Highlights the importance of parliamentary conventions alongside constitutional provisions.

- Helps distinguish the formal termination of a session from the termination of the Lok Sabha itself.
- The episode underscores the importance of understanding the President's constitutional role in the functioning and continuity of Parliament.

Prorogation ≠ Adjournment ≠ Dissolution: Prorogation can occur even when the House is not sitting, while dissolution applies only to the Lok Sabha and brings its legislative life to an end.

2. Supreme Court Refines the 'Triple Test' for Defining 'Industry'

GS Paper: GS-II — Judiciary, Governance & Labour Rights, GS-III — Labour & Employment

Why in News?

- A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on August 20, 2026, revisited the landmark Bangalore Water Supply & Sewerage Board v. A. Rajappa (1978) ruling on the meaning of "industry" under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.
- The Court held that the essential framework of the 1978 Triple Test has stood the test of time, while certain aspects require refinement. The refined formulation will operate prospectively.

The 'Triple Test' — 1978

- Under Section 2(j) of the Industrial Disputes Act, an activity was broadly considered an industry when it involved:
- Systematic activity;
  - Employer–employee cooperation; and
  - Production or distribution of goods/services to satisfy human wants.
  - Profit motive was irrelevant; the focus was on the nature of the activity and its employment relationship.

Key Refinement by the Court

- The majority retained the core framework but introduced limiting principles to prevent an excessively broad interpretation.
- The activity must have a commercial character or bear an analogy to trade and business, helping distinguish organised economic activity from purely personal, domestic or non-systematic activities.
- Thus, the judgment seeks to balance the beneficial purpose of labour legislation with the need for a workable definition of "industry".

Applicability to Existing and New Law

- Pending disputes under the repealed Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 will continue to be governed by the 1978 framework.

- The judgment is not an interpretive anchor for the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 (IRC); the definition of "industry" under the new Code has been left open for separate consideration.
- This reflects the principle that a new statutory framework must be interpreted in light of its own text, context and legislative scheme.

Judicial & Labour-Governance Significance

- Demonstrates stare decisis, while recognising that larger Benches can revisit and refine earlier precedents.
- The definition of "industry" determines the reach of industrial dispute resolution and labour-law protections.
- A broad but principled definition seeks to balance worker protection, employer interests and industrial peace.

3. Core Sector Growth Moderates Amid Mixed Industrial Signals

GS Paper: GS-III — Indian Economy, Industrial Growth, Infrastructure & Energy Security

Why in News?

- India's Index of Core Industries (ICI) grew by 5.4% in July 2026, moderating from 6.0% in June (final).
- Cumulative growth during April–July 2026 stood at 4.3%, compared with 1.5% during the corresponding period of the previous year.

Sectoral Trends

- **High growth:** Iron ore (29.5%), cement (13.1%), electricity (9%) and coal (7.6%).
- **Moderate growth:** Steel (2.9%) and refinery products (2.7%).
- **Contraction:** Crude oil, natural gas and fertilisers remained in negative territory.
- Persistent weakness in domestic crude oil and natural gas production highlights concerns over energy import dependence.

Revised Index of Core Industries

- The ICI has been revised with 2022–23 as the new base year, replacing 2011–12.
- The number of core sectors has increased from 8 to 9, with iron ore added as the ninth sector.
- Electricity carries the highest weight (30.93%), followed by refinery products (22.57%) and steel (17.58%).
- The ICI serves as an important indicator of industrial and infrastructure activity and is closely linked to broader trends in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

Interpreting Industrial Growth

- Strong year-on-year growth in some sectors needs to be assessed against the base effect.
- For instance, iron ore grew 29.5% in July, but the corresponding period last year had witnessed a sharp contraction.
- Thus, high YoY growth does not necessarily indicate equally strong underlying momentum.

Economic Implications

- Weak domestic production of crude oil and natural gas can increase import dependence and external vulnerability.
- Higher energy costs can transmit into inflation, production costs and the current account.
- Moderating industrial activity could potentially weigh on investment, employment and growth, although the ICI alone cannot establish a broad-based slowdown in domestic demand.

Way Forward

- **Revive domestic demand:** Strengthen public capital expenditure, targeted consumption support and faster implementation of infrastructure projects to sustain industrial demand.
- **Reduce energy vulnerability:** Accelerate domestic exploration, renewable-energy deployment, storage capacity and energy-efficiency measures to reduce dependence on imported hydrocarbons.
- **Deepen manufacturing competitiveness:** Improve logistics, ease of doing business, technology adoption and access to finance to strengthen private investment and diversify industrial growth.

4. AI-Powered Public Platform for Equitable Access to Test Preparation

GS Paper: GS-II — Education, Governance & Social Justice, GS-III — Artificial Intelligence & Digital Technology

Why in News?

- A proposal has called for an AI-enabled public platform for free JEE and NEET preparation, aimed at reducing dependence on expensive private coaching and improving equitable access to quality learning.

- India's test-preparation market was estimated at $14.8 billion in FY26 and is projected to reach $23–26 billion by FY30, highlighting the scale of the coaching ecosystem.

AI for Personalised Learning

- AI tutors can provide 24×7 doubt resolution, adaptive practice, diagnostic assessments and personalised learning pathways.
- AI can identify individual learning gaps and recommend suitable content, while complementing rather than replacing teachers and mentors.
- Its major advantage lies in providing low-cost, scalable and personalised academic support.

Digital Public Infrastructure Approach

- The proposed model can follow an open-network architecture, with the government providing the digital rails, interoperability and trust layer, while public and private providers compete on content and mentoring.
- This approach draws from the principles underlying UPI and ONDC—open protocols, multiple service providers and reduced vendor lock-in.
- Platforms such as DIKSHA and SATHEE can provide a foundation for expanding digital educational access.

Equity and Inclusion

- Free, data-light and downloadable resources can expand access for rural, low-income and underserved students.
- School computer labs, Common Service Centres and offline resources can complement smartphone-based learning and address the digital divide.

Challenges

- AI hallucinations, algorithmic bias and data-privacy risks can affect educational quality and student autonomy.
- AI-generated content requires human validation, curriculum alignment and continuous evaluation to prevent misinformation and pedagogical errors.
- Excessive dependence on AI may weaken teacher–student interaction, mentoring and critical thinking.

Way Forward

- Establish open, interoperable education infrastructure with portability of learning records and content.
- Create independent quality-assurance, accreditation and AI-safety mechanisms for educational providers and AI tutors.

- Combine AI-enabled learning with teachers, peer learning and offline delivery to ensure inclusive and effective education.

5. Rural–Urban Divide in Female Labour Force Participation

GS Paper: GS-III — Employment, Inclusive Growth & Human Resources, GS-I — Women & Social Issues

Why in News?

- The PLFS 2025 shows a significant rise in the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) among persons aged 15 years and above, from 30% in 2019–20 to 40% in 2025.
- The increase was sharper in rural areas (33% to 45.9%) than in urban areas (23.3% to 27.7%), highlighting persistent rural–urban differences.

Understanding FLFPR

- **FLFPR:** Percentage of women aged 15 years and above who are working or seeking/available for work.
- It measures participation in the labour force, not merely whether women are currently employed.
- **FLFPR ≠ employment rate:** A rise in participation does not necessarily indicate a proportional rise in actual employment or job quality.

Key Trends

- Rural female labour-force participation has increased substantially faster than urban participation.
- Significant inter-State variations exist in both the level of FLFPR and the pace of improvement.
- Average Annual Percentage Point (AAPP) change measures the pace of improvement but must be assessed alongside the baseline FLFPR to avoid misleading comparisons.
- The sharper rural increase warrants closer examination of the nature, quality and sectors of employment contributing to the rise.

Quality of Women's Employment

- Higher FLFPR is not synonymous with better-quality employment, particularly where gains are concentrated in informal, unpaid or low-productivity work.
- Urban women continue to face barriers related to care responsibilities, safety and mobility, occupational segregation and skill mismatch.
- Rural women may face limited access to formal, non-farm and productive employment opportunities.

Developmental Significance

- Higher female participation can strengthen household incomes, productivity, human capital and India's demographic dividend.
- Sustained improvement requires shifting women from low-productivity and unpaid work towards formal, non-farm and higher-productivity employment as India undergoes structural transformation.
- Greater economic participation can enhance women's economic agency and household decision-making.

Challenges

- **Informality and unpaid work:** A significant share of women's work remains informal, unpaid or low-productivity, limiting earnings, social security and career progression.
- **Care and mobility constraints:** Unequal care responsibilities, inadequate childcare, unsafe transport and workplace safety concerns restrict women's ability to enter and remain in paid employment.
- **Skill and job mismatch:** Limited access to market-relevant skills, suitable non-farm jobs and formal employment opportunities can prevent rising labour-force participation from translating into productive employment.

Way Forward

- Expand safe transport, childcare, flexible work arrangements and workplace safety.
- Promote skills, women-led enterprises and non-farm employment aligned with local and emerging labour-market demand.
- Strengthen formalisation, social security, equal-pay enforcement and access to productive assets and credit to convert higher participation into decent employment.