PadhAI

Daily PIB Summary

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1. PM VIDYALAXMI SCHEME

I. PM Vidyalaxmi offers:
   A. **Collateral-free and guarantor-free education loans**.
   B. A **fully digital application process** through a unified portal.
   C. **Credit guarantee** support for eligible loans.
   D. **Interest subvention** for eligible students from lower-income families.

II. It supports admissions based on **merit** in identified Quality Higher Education Institutions (QHEIs).

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

Objective

The scheme seeks to:

- Increase access to quality higher education.
- Reduce financial barriers.
- Promote equitable educational opportunities.
- Improve the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education.

KEY FEATURES OF PM VIDYALAXMI

Eligibility

Students must:

- Be **Indian nationals**.
- Secure admission through **merit-based selection or competitive examinations**.
- Obtain admission in an identified **Quality Higher Education Institution (QHEI)**.
- Students admitted through **management quota or similar quotas are generally not eligible** under the scheme.

Eligible Institutions

- The scheme covers identified **Quality Higher Education Institutions**, including institutions selected based on **NIRF rankings** and eligible Central and State Government institutions.
- The list is updated periodically by the Department of Higher Education.

Education Loan

I. Need-based finance for eligible educational expenses.

II. **No collateral security or third-party guarantor**.

III. Covers:
   A. Tuition fees.
   B. Hostel charges.
   C. Books and equipment.
   D. Laptop (where applicable).
   E. Other approved academic expenses.

Credit Guarantee

- Loans **up to ₹7.5 lakh** are backed by a **75% Government credit guarantee**, encouraging banks to lend without collateral.

Interest Subvention

Eligible students may receive interest support during the **moratorium period (course duration + one year)**:

- **Annual family income up to ₹4.5 lakh:** Higher interest support as per applicable Central Government norms.
- **Annual family income above ₹4.5 lakh and up to ₹8 lakh: 3% interest subvention** on eligible education loans up to ₹10 lakh during the moratorium period.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Students can apply through the official unified portal:

- Register online.

- Fill a common loan application.
- Upload documents.
- Choose a participating bank.
- Track application status digitally.

SIGNIFICANCE

Educational

- Expands access to quality higher education.
- Encourages merit-based admissions.

Social

- Supports students from economically weaker families.
- Promotes educational equity.

Economic

- Develops skilled human resources.
- Contributes to India's knowledge economy.

Governance

- Simplifies education loan processing through a single digital platform.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Scheme:** PM Vidyalaxmi.
- **Type:** Central Sector Scheme.
- **Implementing Ministry:** Ministry of Education (Department of Higher Education).
- **Major Benefit:** Collateral-free and guarantor-free education loans.
- **Credit Guarantee:** 75% Government guarantee for eligible loans up to ₹7.5 lakh.
- **Interest Benefit:** Up to 3% interest subvention for eligible students with annual family income up to ₹8 lakh (subject to scheme norms).
- **Application Mode:** Fully digital through the PM Vidyalaxmi portal.
- **Strategic Importance:** Improves access to higher education, promotes financial inclusion, and strengthens India's human capital.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Scheme Type:** Central Sector Scheme.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Education.
- **Target Group:** Meritorious students admitted to identified Quality Higher Education Institutions (QHEIs).
- **Loan Security:** No collateral and no guarantor required.
- **Credit Guarantee: 75%** Government guarantee for eligible loans up to **₹7.5 lakh**.
- **Interest Subvention:** Available for eligible students with annual family income up to **₹8 lakh**, subject to scheme guidelines.
- **Moratorium Period:** Course duration plus **one year**.
- **Institution Selection:** Based on notified Quality Higher Education Institutions, including eligible **NIRF-ranked** institutions.
- **Portal:** Unified digital platform for education loan applications across participating banks.

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the PM Vidyalaxmi Scheme:

1. It provides collateral-free and guarantor-free education loans to eligible meritorious students.
2. Students admitted through merit-based selection in identified Quality Higher Education Institutions are eligible.
3. Eligible education loans up to **₹7.5 lakh** receive a **75% Government credit guarantee**.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)

2. RELEASE OF SUB-SECTORAL TRIAL INDEX OF SERVICES PRODUCTION (ISP) FOR MAY 2026 (BASE YEAR 2024–25)

I. The **Index of Services Production (ISP)** is a **monthly indicator** measuring production trends in the organised services sector.

II. The trial index:
   A. Tracks performance across **19 service sub-sectors**.
   B. Covers around **two-thirds of the Gross Value Added (GVA)** of the services sector.
   C. Uses **2024–25 as the base year**.

III. The index is expected to become an important tool for:
   A. Monitoring economic activity.
   B. Policy formulation.
   C. Business decision-making.
   D. Short-term economic forecasting.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

Why was ISP introduced?

India already publishes:

- **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** – for industry.
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** – for inflation.
- However, until now there was **no monthly production index** for the services sector, despite services contributing the largest share of India's economy.

The ISP fills this important data gap.

WHAT IS THE INDEX OF SERVICES PRODUCTION (ISP)?

- The ISP is a **high-frequency economic indicator** that measures changes in the output of selected organised service industries over time.

Objectives

- Monitor monthly service sector performance.
- Improve economic policy formulation.
- Complement the Index of Industrial Production.
- Provide timely data on economic momentum.
- Strengthen national statistical systems.

COVERAGE OF THE ISP

The trial index covers **19 organised service sub-sectors**, including:

- Transport.
- Warehousing.
- Information technology and computer services.
- Financial services.
- Professional services.
- Administrative services.
- Real estate-related services.
- Accommodation and food services.
- Other market services.

Some sectors such as **health and education are presently excluded** from the trial series because of data limitations.

BASE YEAR: 2024–25

The **base year** serves as the reference year against which future production levels are compared.

Changing the base year helps:

- Reflect structural changes in the economy.
- Improve data accuracy.
- Capture emerging sectors.
- Better represent current production patterns.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ISP

Economic Policy

- Helps governments assess short-term economic trends.
- Supports evidence-based policymaking.

Business

- Assists investors and businesses in understanding sectoral performance.
- Provides an early signal of changes in economic activity.

Statistics

- Complements GDP estimates and the IIP.
- Improves the quality of official economic statistics.

SIGNIFICANCE

Economic

- Better measurement of India's largest economic sector.
- Enables timely assessment of services-led growth.

Governance

- Supports fiscal and monetary policy decisions.
- Improves economic planning.

Research

- Provides richer datasets for economists and analysts.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Indicator:** Index of Services Production (ISP).
- **Released By:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- **Reference Month:** May 2026.
- **Base Year:** 2024–25.
- **Coverage:** 19 organised service sub-sectors, representing about two-thirds of service-sector GVA.
- **Purpose:** High-frequency monitoring of service-sector production.
- **Strategic Importance:** Complements the IIP and strengthens India's economic statistics.
- **Challenges:** Limited data availability in certain service sectors and methodological complexity.
- **Way Forward:** Expand coverage, improve administrative data sources, and progressively include additional service industries.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

I. **MoSPI:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
II. **ISP:** Index of Services Production—India's first monthly production index for the organised services sector.
III. **Base Year: 2024–25**.
IV. **Purpose:** Measures short-term changes in services production.
V. **IIP:** Index of Industrial Production measures industrial output in mining, manufacturing, and electricity.
VI. **GDP vs GVA:**
   A. **GVA (Gross Value Added):** Measures value created by producers.
   B. **GDP = GVA + Taxes on products - Subsidies on products.**
VII. **Services Sector:** Contributes **more than half of India's GDP/GVA**, making it the largest sector of the economy.

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the Index of Services Production (ISP):

1. It is released by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.
2. It is a **high-frequency monthly indicator** to measure the production of the organised services sector.
3. The trial series for 2026 uses **2024–25** as the base year.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)

3. PARLIAMENT QUESTION: FUND DISBURSED / UTILIZED UNDER THE ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (ANRF)

I. The Government has been progressively operationalising the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)** to:
   A. Promote high-quality scientific research.
   B. Encourage innovation across disciplines.
   C. Strengthen academia–industry collaboration.
   D. Enhance research infrastructure.

II. Parliament was informed about:
   A. Funds allocated.
   B. Funds disbursed.
   C. Utilisation status.
   D. Measures for effective implementation and monitoring.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)

- Established under the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation Act, 2023**.
- It replaces the proposed **National Research Foundation (NRF)** envisaged under the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology.

Vision

To create a **strong research and innovation ecosystem** by supporting research across:

- Natural sciences.
- Engineering and technology.
- Social sciences.
- Humanities.
- Agriculture.
- Health sciences.
- Interdisciplinary research.

OBJECTIVES OF ANRF

- Promote a culture of research and innovation.
- Provide competitive research funding.
- Strengthen research capacity in universities.
- Encourage private sector participation in research.
- Improve collaboration between academia, industry, and government.
- Enhance India's global competitiveness in science and technology.

FUNDING UNDER ANRF

The Foundation supports:

- Research projects.
- Centres of Excellence.
- Infrastructure development.
- Innovation ecosystems.
- Capacity building.
- Young researchers and early-career scientists.
- Industry-linked research initiatives.

Funds are released based on:

- Approved projects.

- Institutional capacity.
- Programme guidelines.
- Periodic monitoring and utilisation certificates.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

President of ANRF

- **Prime Minister of India**

Governing Board

Includes representatives from:

- Government.
- Academia.
- Industry.
- Scientific institutions.
- Research organisations.

SIGNIFICANCE

Scientific

- Promotes world-class research.
- Encourages interdisciplinary innovation.

Educational

- Strengthens research culture in universities.
- Supports faculty and student researchers.

Economic

- Drives innovation-led economic growth.
- Encourages technology development and commercialisation.

Strategic

- Supports India's vision of becoming a **global knowledge economy**.
- Enhances self-reliance in critical technologies under **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

CHALLENGES

- Ensuring equitable distribution of research funding.
- Strengthening research capacity in State universities.
- Increasing private sector investment in R&D.
- Improving timely utilisation and monitoring of grants.
- Reducing regional disparities in research infrastructure.

WAY FORWARD

- Expand competitive grant opportunities.
- Encourage greater industry participation.
- Strengthen research infrastructure in emerging institutions.
- Improve digital monitoring of fund utilisation.
- Foster international research collaborations.
- Promote outcome-based evaluation of funded projects.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Institution:** Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).
- **Established Through:** ANRF Act, 2023.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Department of Science and Technology.
- **Objective:** Promote research, innovation, and scientific excellence.
- **Focus Areas:** Competitive funding, university research, industry collaboration, and interdisciplinary research.
- **Strategic Importance:** Supports India's transition to a knowledge-driven and innovation-led economy.
- **Challenges:** Funding efficiency, research quality, institutional capacity, and private sector participation.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **ANRF: Anusandhan National Research Foundation**.
- **Established Under: Anusandhan National Research Foundation Act, 2023**.
- **Nodal Department: Department of Science and Technology (DST)**.
- **Parent Ministry: Ministry of Science and Technology**.
- **Policy Basis:** Recommended under the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- **President of ANRF: Prime Minister of India**.

- **Major Objective:** Strengthen research and innovation across higher educational institutions and research organisations.
- **Research Coverage:** Natural sciences, engineering, social sciences, humanities, agriculture, medicine, and interdisciplinary research.
- **NEP 2020:** Emphasises research, multidisciplinary education, innovation, and internationalisation of higher education.
- **R&D:** Research and Development, essential for technological advancement, economic competitiveness, and scientific progress.

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF):

1. The ANRF was established under the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation Act, 2023**.
2. The **Department of Science and Technology** is the nodal department for ANRF.
3. The **Prime Minister of India** serves as the President of ANRF.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)

4. PARLIAMENT QUESTION: RADIOACTIVE WASTES

I. India follows a **closed nuclear fuel cycle**, in which valuable materials from spent nuclear fuel are recovered and reused.
II. Radioactive waste is:
   A. Classified based on its radioactivity level.
   B. Treated and conditioned before storage or disposal.
   C. Managed under stringent oversight by the **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB)**.
III. The objective is to protect:
   A. Human health.
   B. Workers.
   C. The public.
   D. The environment.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

What is Radioactive Waste?

- Radioactive waste refers to materials containing **radioactive substances** that are no longer useful and require careful management because they emit **ionising radiation**.

Major Sources

- Nuclear power plants.
- Nuclear fuel reprocessing.
- Research reactors.

- Medical applications (radiotherapy, nuclear medicine).
- Industrial radiography.
- Scientific research laboratories.

CLASSIFICATION OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Category	Characteristics	Examples
Low-Level Waste (LLW)	Low radioactivity; short-lived	Protective clothing, laboratory waste, filters
Intermediate-Level Waste (ILW)	Higher radioactivity; requires shielding	Reactor components, resins, sludges
High-Level Waste (HLW)	Highly radioactive; generates heat	Waste from reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel

RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

Closed Nuclear Fuel Cycle

India follows a **closed fuel cycle**, which involves:

- Reprocessing spent fuel.
- Recovering usable uranium and plutonium.
- Recycling fuel for further use.
- Reducing the quantity of high-level waste requiring disposal.

Waste Management Process

Segregation

Waste is separated according to:

- Radioactivity.
- Physical state.
- Half-life.

Treatment

Processes include:

- Volume reduction.
- Chemical treatment.
- Decontamination.
- Immobilisation.

Conditioning

- Waste is converted into stable forms suitable for storage and disposal.

Storage and Disposal

- Low- and intermediate-level waste is disposed of in engineered near-surface disposal facilities.
- High-level waste is first stored safely to allow radioactive decay and heat reduction before long-term disposal.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB)

I. Established in **1983**.
II. Responsible for regulating:
   A. Radiation safety.
   B. Nuclear safety.
   C. Radioactive waste management.

Functions

- Licensing.
- Inspection.
- Safety standards.
- Monitoring compliance.

Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)

I. Overall responsibility for India's nuclear programme.
II. Oversees:
   A. Nuclear power.
   B. Fuel cycle activities.
   C. Research and development.
   D. Waste management.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Atomic Energy Act, 1962

Provides for:

- Development and control of atomic energy.
- Safe handling of radioactive materials.

- Radiation protection.

INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

I. Headquarters: **Vienna, Austria**.
II. Promotes:
    A. Safe and peaceful use of nuclear technology.
    B. International nuclear safety standards.
    C. Radioactive waste management guidelines.

India follows IAEA safety principles in managing radioactive waste.

SIGNIFICANCE

Environmental

- Prevents contamination of soil, air, and water.
- Protects ecosystems.

Health

- Minimises radiation exposure.
- Safeguards workers and nearby communities.

Energy Security

- Supports sustainable nuclear power generation.
- Enables efficient utilisation of nuclear fuel.

Strategic

- Strengthens India's civil nuclear programme.
- Builds confidence in nuclear energy as a clean energy source.

CHALLENGES

- Long-term management of high-level waste.
- Public perception regarding nuclear safety.
- High infrastructure and monitoring costs.
- Need for continuous technological advancement.

WAY FORWARD

- Strengthen research in advanced waste disposal technologies.
- Expand geological disposal research.
- Enhance public awareness and transparency.
- Continue adherence to international safety standards.
- Improve monitoring using advanced digital technologies.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Nodal Department:** Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).
- **Regulator:** Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB).
- **Legal Framework:** Atomic Energy Act, 1962.
- **Waste Categories:** Low-Level, Intermediate-Level, and High-Level Waste.
- **Fuel Cycle:** India follows a **closed nuclear fuel cycle**.
- **Strategic Importance:** Ensures safe utilisation of nuclear energy while protecting public health and the environment.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Atomic Energy Act, 1962:** Governs the development, control, and safe use of atomic energy in India.
- **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE):** Established in **1954**; responsible for India's nuclear energy programme.
- **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB):** Established in **1983** to regulate nuclear and radiation safety.
- **BARC: Bhabha Atomic Research Centre**, Mumbai—the premier nuclear research institution under the DAE.
- **Closed Nuclear Fuel Cycle:** Involves reprocessing spent nuclear fuel to recover usable fissile materials for reuse.
- **Spent Nuclear Fuel:** Used nuclear reactor fuel that is removed from a reactor after its useful life.
- **High-Level Waste (HLW):** Highly radioactive waste requiring cooling, shielding, and long-term management.

- **IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency**, headquartered in **Vienna, Austria**.
- **Three-Stage Nuclear Power Programme:** India's long-term strategy involving natural uranium, fast breeder reactors, and thorium-based reactors.

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding radioactive waste management in India:

1. India follows a **closed nuclear fuel cycle**, allowing recovery and reuse of valuable nuclear materials.
2. The **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB)** regulates nuclear and radiation safety in India.
3. The **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** is headquartered in **Vienna, Austria**.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)

5. COAL EXCHANGE RULES

I. The Coal Exchange Rules provide the legal framework for setting up and regulating a **Coal Exchange** in India.
II. The exchange will facilitate:
   A. Transparent buying and selling of coal.
   B. Efficient price discovery.
   C. Wider participation of buyers and sellers.
   D. Improved logistics and supply chain efficiency.
III. The reforms complement the Government's broader agenda of **commercial coal mining** and enhancing private sector participation.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

Coal Sector in India

Coal remains India's primary source of energy and is widely used for:

- Electricity generation.
- Steel production.
- Cement manufacturing.
- Fertiliser production.
- Various industrial processes.

India possesses the **fifth-largest coal reserves** in the world and is among the largest producers and consumers of coal.

WHAT IS A COAL EXCHANGE?

A **Coal Exchange** is an organised electronic trading platform where:

- Coal producers.
- Commercial miners.
- Coal importers.
- Consumers.
- Traders.

can buy and sell coal through transparent market-based mechanisms.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COAL EXCHANGE RULES

- Improve transparency in coal trading.
- Enable competitive market-based pricing.
- Increase efficiency in coal allocation.
- Reduce transaction costs.
- Promote ease of doing business.
- Encourage private investment in the coal sector.

KEY FEATURES OF THE RULES

Electronic Trading Platform

- Online trading mechanism.
- Transparent bidding process.
- Standardised contracts.

Price Discovery

- Prices determined through market demand and supply.
- Reduces dependence on administrative pricing.

Market Participants

Eligible participants may include:

- Coal mining companies.
- Commercial miners.
- Power producers.
- Steel companies.
- Cement manufacturers.
- Other industrial consumers.

Regulatory Oversight

The Rules provide for:

- Registration of market participants.
- Operational standards.
- Market surveillance.
- Dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Compliance requirements.

RELATED REFORMS IN THE COAL SECTOR

Commercial Coal Mining

- Introduced in **2020**.
- Allows private companies to mine and sell coal commercially without end-use restrictions.

Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015

- Governs allocation and auction of coal mines.
- Ensures transparent allocation.

Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act, 1957

- Facilitates acquisition of land for coal mining.

SIGNIFICANCE

Economic

- Improves efficiency of coal markets.
- Encourages investment.
- Enhances competition.

Energy Security

- Ensures better availability of coal.
- Strengthens domestic supply chains.

Governance

- Promotes transparency.
- Reduces information asymmetry.
- Supports digital governance.

Industrial Growth

- Benefits power, steel, cement, and manufacturing sectors through more efficient coal procurement.

CHALLENGES

- Developing robust trading infrastructure.
- Ensuring participation by all stakeholders.
- Managing price volatility.
- Integrating logistics and transportation systems.
- Maintaining regulatory oversight and market integrity.

WAY FORWARD

- Expand digital trading infrastructure.
- Integrate rail and logistics information with the exchange.
- Promote standardised coal quality certification.
- Encourage wider participation from commercial miners.
- Strengthen market surveillance and consumer protection.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Rules:** Coal Exchange Rules.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Coal.
- **Purpose:** Establish an organised and transparent coal trading platform.

- **Major Benefits:** Competitive pricing, efficient allocation, transparency, and improved market efficiency.
- **Supporting Reforms:** Commercial coal mining, transparent coal block auctions, and digital governance.
- **Strategic Importance:** Enhances India's energy security and supports the vision of an efficient and competitive coal market.

PRELIMS BOOSTER BOX

- **Ministry of Coal:** Responsible for the administration and development of India's coal sector.
- **Coal India Limited (CIL):** A **Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE)** and the world's largest coal-producing company.
- **Commercial Coal Mining:** Introduced in **2020**, allowing private companies to mine and sell coal without end-use restrictions.
- **Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015:** Provides for transparent allocation of coal mines through auctions.
- **Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act, 1957:** Enables acquisition of land for coal mining and related activities.
- **National Coal Index (NCI):** A price index published by the Ministry of Coal to reflect changes in coal prices in India.
- **Major Coal Types:** Anthracite, Bituminous, Sub-bituminous, and Lignite.
- **Largest Coal-Producing State:** Odisha (followed by Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand in recent years).
- **Largest Consumer of Coal:** The **power sector**, particularly thermal power generation.

PadhAI-GENERATED UPSC MCQ

Consider the following statements regarding the Coal Exchange Rules:

1. They seek to establish an organised electronic platform for transparent coal trading.
2. One of their objectives is to facilitate market-based price discovery for coal.
3. The Ministry of Coal is the nodal ministry responsible for implementing these rules.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d)