

DAILY NEWS

ANALYSIS



11th April

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DNA Quiz

Playlist Link:

What to Read: <https://bit.ly/3FYdutC>

Daily News Analysis: <https://bit.ly/4ge9BgF>

EXPLAINED

1. WHY THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO MAKE COAL A 'CRITICAL MINERAL'

Relevance: Distribution of Key Natural Resources across the world (GS1)

Backdrop: Trump designated coal as a “mineral” and directed officials to explore whether it qualifies as a “critical mineral” to revive the coal industry (peaked in 2008), support manufacturing (especially steel), and address the energy needs of emerging technologies like AI.

Classification of Coal as a Critical Mineral

- **Legal Definitions:**
 - ♦ **Critical Material:** A non-fuel essential material with high supply risk.
 - ♦ **Critical Mineral:** Broadly includes any essential material with a disrupted supply chain.
 - ♦ **Rare Earth Minerals:** comprise 17 elements—15 lanthanides plus scandium and yttrium. They are moderately abundant but rarely found in economically viable concentrations.
- **International Perspective:**
- The EU already lists coal as a critical raw material.
 - ♦ In India, a NITI Aayog report also recommended classifying **coking coal** as a critical mineral for supply chain resilience.
- ♦ **Environmental Concerns**
- **Justification for Rollback:** Trump's order argues that emissions regulations are burdensome and that control technologies are not yet commercially viable.
- **Expert Warnings:** - Overreliance on coal without investing in **carbon capture or emissions abatement** could jeopardize national and global **net-zero targets**.

What are critical minerals and their criteria:

Critical minerals are essential for a country's **economic development and national security**, and their lack of availability or concentration in **a few geographical locations** can lead to supply chain vulnerabilities.

In November 2022 identified 30 critical minerals, with 24 included in Part D of Schedule I of Mines and Minerals Development and Regulation Act, 1957 (MMDR Act, 1957).

Antimony	Beryllium	Bismuth	Cobalt	Copper	Gallium
Germanium	Graphite	Hafnium	Indium	Lithium	Molybdenum
Niobium	Nickel	PGE	Phosphorous	Potash	REE
Rhenium	Silicon	Strontium	Tantalum	Tellurium	Tin
Titanium	Tungsten	Vanadium	Zirconium	Selenium	Cadmium

Their application

- **Tech Backbone:** Critical minerals are essential for modern devices like phones, EVs, solar panels, and medical tech.
- **Green Energy:** They power renewable technologies vital for global Net Zero goals—solar, wind, batteries, and semiconductors.
- **Future Economy:** Minerals like lithium, cobalt, and rare earths drive the green and digital economy.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Securing these minerals reduces import dependence and supports long-term national planning.

Provisions for critical minerals in India

National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)

- Launched in 2025 to establish a robust framework for self-reliance in the critical mineral sector.**
- Geological Survey of India (GSI) has been tasked with conducting 1,200 exploration projects from 2024-25 to 2030-31.**



MMDR Act Amended (2023): To boost exploration and mining of critical minerals.

GSI Exploration Projects:

- 368 projects undertaken in the last 3 years.
- 195 ongoing in FY 2024–25.

- 227 planned for FY 2025–26.
- **S&T PRISM Program (2023):**

Promotion of Research and Innovation in Startups and MSMEs in Mining

Ministry of Mines

To fund start-ups and MSMEs for R&D and commercialization in the mineral sector.

Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) -

- A joint venture company With equity contributions from
 - ♦ National Aluminium Company Ltd (NALCO)
 - ♦ Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL)
 - ♦ Mineral Exploration Company Ltd (MECL)
- Primary objective - to identify and acquire overseas mineral assets.
 - ♦ Focus is on critical and strategic minerals such as Lithium, Cobalt, and others.
 - ♦ The aim is to ensure supply-side assurance for these important minerals.
 - ♦ Acquired 15,703 hectares in Argentina for Lithium exploration and mining.
- Overall Objective: Strengthen India's critical mineral supply chain and encourage local industry development.

2. CENTRE TO PAY MORE FOR PM - POSHAN SCHEME IN SCHOOLS

Relevance: Government Schemes (GS II)

Backdrop: Centre to pay more for PM-POSHAN scheme in schools

In the news

1. Revised Material Cost (Effective May 1, 2025)

- ♦ **Increase:** Material cost enhanced by **9.5%** based on the inflation index.
- ♦ **Additional Burden:** ₹954 crore extra cost to the exchequer for FY 2025–26.
- ♦ **New Daily Material Cost:**
 - **Bal Vatikas & Primary Schools:** ₹6.19 → ₹6.78
 - **Upper Primary Schools:** ₹9.29 → ₹10.17

2. State/UT Contributions

- ♦ The mentioned rates are **minimum mandatory rates**.
- ♦ States/UTs are **free to contribute more** than the prescribed share.

- ♦ Some States/UTs already contribute **additional funds** to enhance meal nutrition.

3. Prescribed Meal Components

• Prescribed Meal Components

School Type	Pulses (gm)	Vegetables (gm)	Oil (gm)
Bal Vatikas & Primary Schools	20	50	5
Upper Primary Schools	30	75	7.5

4. Scheme Coverage & Support

- ♦ **Beneficiaries:** 11.2 crore students in **Bal Vatikas & Classes 1–8**
- ♦ **Institutions Covered:** 10.36 lakh government and aided schools
- ♦ **Meal Type:** One **hot-cooked meal** served daily

5. Central Government Support

- ♦ **Foodgrains Supplied:** 26 lakh tonnes/year via **Food Corporation of India (FCI)**
- ♦ **Financial Responsibilities (Centre):**
 - **100% cost** of foodgrains (approx. ₹9,000 crore/year subsidy)
 - **100% transportation cost** from FCI depot to schools

About the scheme

POSHAN (Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman)

- Formerly known as the **National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools**, the scheme was **renamed as Pradhan Mantri POSHAN Scheme in September 2021**.
- **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**
- **Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India** is the nodal ministry. Its aims at providing **one hot cooked meal** to students studying in **Balvatika (pre-primary)** and **Classes I to VIII in Government and Government-aided schools** on all working days.
- The primary goal of the scheme is to offer **nutritional support** and to **boost school attendance and participation**, particularly among children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

PM POSHAN - allocation

- ₹12500 crores allocated in - 2025-26 budget

Challenges and concerns for the scheme

- **Nutritional Gaps:** Majority of meals **fail to meet** mandated calorie and protein standards; e.g., Odisha saw a **396 kcal shortfall**.

- **Poor infrastructure** (kitchens, water, storage) and **unqualified staff** reduce meal quality.
- **Coverage Gaps:** Nearly **25% disparity** between enrolled students and those receiving meals (e.g., 13 crore enrolled vs. 9.8 crore covered in 2016–17). **Large states** like Rajasthan, Uttarakhand lag; **Northeast & Chhattisgarh** perform better.
- **Fund Mismanagement:** 42% of states **overspend their budget share**, indicating **inefficient financial management** affecting meal consistency.
- **Alarming Malnutrition:** Among adolescent girls: **55.6% malnourished**, highlighting continued nutritional deficiencies despite the scheme.

3. RANA EXTRADITED; NIA ARRESTS

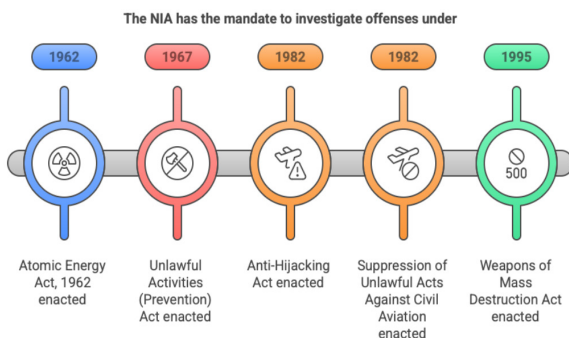
Relevance: GS2/Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

Backdrop: Rana extradited; NIA arrests him

About the NIA

- Central counter-terrorism law enforcement agency.
- Empowered to investigate and prosecute offenses affecting the sovereignty, integrity, and security of India. Constituted under the **NIA Act, 2008**
- Functional from **January 1, 2009**.
- Under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**

Mandate and Jurisdiction



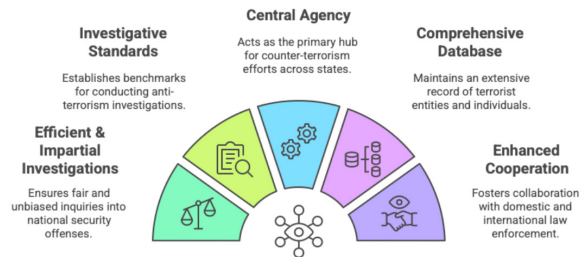
The NIA (Amendment) Act, 2019

Added following to mandate of NIA

- Human trafficking
- Counterfeit currency
- Cyberterrorism
- Attacks on Indian diplomatic missions abroad

NIA now has **extra-territorial jurisdiction**, allowing it to investigate offenses committed **outside India** that affect Indian citizens or interests.

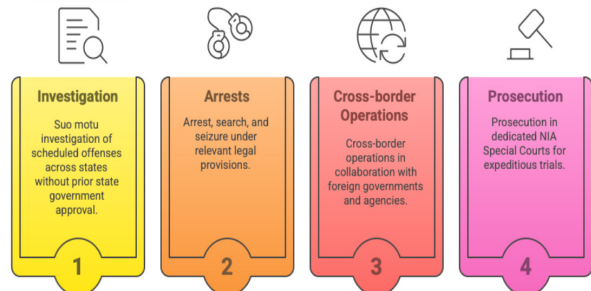
Objectives



Roles and Responsibilities



Powers



4. RTI ACT AMENDMENT

Relevance : GS II/Important aspects of governance, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

Backdrop: RTI Act Amendment won't cut transparency : Minister

Allegations against the recent amendments include:

- Weakening transparency
- Shielding corruption,
- Undermining citizens' right to hold the government accountable.

DPDP Act vs RTI Act – Key Issue:

- **Over 120 INDIA bloc leaders** have urged the Centre to **repeal Section 44(3)** of the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act**, claiming it **dilutes the RTI Act**.

Concerns:

- **Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act overrides section 8 (1)(j) of RTI Act** disallowing such disclosures even if public interest is involved.
- Removes the provision under Section 8 of RTI Act-
 - ♦ The provision that *"information which cannot be denied to Parliament or State legislature shall not be denied to any person"* is now omitted.

Section 8 of RTI Act 2005

- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, there shall be no obligation to give any citizen,—
- (j) information which relates to personal information the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual unless the Central Public Information Officer or the State Public Information Officer or the appellate authority, as the case may be, is satisfied that the larger public interest justifies the disclosure of such information
- (2) Notwithstanding anything in the Official Secrets Act, 1923 (19 of 1923) nor any of the exemptions permissible in accordance with sub - section (1), a public authority may allow access to information, if public interest in disclosure outweighs the harm to the protected interests.

Provided that the information which cannot be denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature shall not be denied to any person.

Exempted Information under RTI

- **Sections 8(1) & 9:** List information **exempt from disclosure** (e.g. national security, personal info, court-prohibited data).
- **Section 8(2):** Allows disclosure if **public interest outweighs harm**.
- **Section 8(3):** Most exemptions lapse **after 20 years**, except for sensitive cases (e.g. national security, foreign relations).

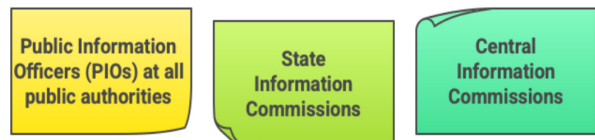
DPDP Act - Section 44(3)

In section 8 of the Right to Information Act, 2005, in sub-section (1), for clause (j), the following clause shall be substituted, namely:—

"(j) information which relates to personal information;"..

Section 3 DPDP ACT, 2023**Subject to the provisions of this Act, it shall**

- apply to the processing of digital personal data within the territory of India where the personal data is collected—
 - in digital form; or
 - in non-digital form and digitised subsequently;
- also apply to processing of digital personal data outside the territory of India, if such processing is in connection with any activity related to offering of goods or services to Data Principals within the territory of India;
- not apply to—
 - personal data processed by an individual for any personal or domestic purpose; and
 - personal data that is made or caused to be made publicly available by—
 - the Data Principal to whom such personal data relates; or
 - any other person who is under an obligation under any law for the time being in force in India to make such personal data publicly available.

• **Institutional framework:****Past Amendments to RTI Act****RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019**

- **Term of Office:**
 - ♦ Fixed 5-year term for CICs and ICs removed;
 - ♦ tenure now to be decided by the **Central Government**.
- **Salary & Service Conditions:** Earlier, salaries matched those of Election Commissioners. Now, **the Centre will decide** salaries, allowances, and service conditions of CICs/ICs (both Central and State).

Concerns with Respect to RTI

- **Non-compliance and Delays:** Rising number of pending appeals/complaints
- **Backlog of Cases (as of June 30, 2024):** In 2024 complaints backlog crosses 4 lakh mark
 - ♦ **CIC:** 22,774 cases pending
 - ♦ **Maharashtra SIC:** 1,08,641 (highest)
 - ♦ **Karnataka:** 50,000

- ♦ **Tamil Nadu:** 41,241
- ♦ **Chhattisgarh:** 25,317
- **Vacancies in Information Commissions**
- **Defunct Commissions:** 7 SICs were non-functional during the past year; **4 remain defunct** — *Jharkhand, Telangana, Goa, Tripura*.
- **CIC Understaffed:** The **Central Information Commission (CIC)** has had only **3 commissioners** (including the Chief) for nearly a year.
- **Intimidation and Attacks on Activists:** Several RTI activists have faced **threats, violence**, or even **murder**.

DECODED

5. DROP THE PIECEMEAL WAYS TO SOCIAL SECURITY FOR WORKERS

Relevance: Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections (GS II)

Backdrop: As India strives to make its workforce 'future ready', robust social protection systems that can withstand workforce and sectoral changes need to be in place.

PYQ

- Q.** How globalization has led to the reduction of employment in the formal sector of the Indian economy? Is increased informalization detrimental to the development of the country? (2016)

In the news

Current Initiatives for Gig Workers

- India is moving towards establishing **social security for online/app-based gig workers**.

A **central scheme is awaiting Cabinet approval**: Proposed benefits include:

- **Health coverage** under Ayushman Bharat.
- **Registration on the eShram portal** for access to various welfare schemes.
- A **transaction-based pension policy** with a **Universal Account Number (UAN)** to track earnings and enable platform-wise contributions.
- **Significance of the Pension Scheme**
- Recognizes the **non-traditional employment nature** of gig work.

- Acknowledges **multiple employer relationships**.
- Ensures **shared responsibility** for worker welfare across platforms.
- Marks progress in including informal workers who are **typically excluded** from social security

Gig workers - definition : **Gig workers** are individuals who undertake **temporary or flexible jobs**, often outside the realm of traditional full-time employment.

According to the **NITI Aayog Report (2022)**, gig workers operate **beyond the conventional employer-employee framework** and are broadly categorized into two groups: **platform workers** and **non-platform workers**.

- **Platform workers** rely on **digital platforms** and algorithm-based systems (such as Uber or Amazon) to connect with customers and secure assignments.
- In contrast, **non-platform workers** engage in **offline, technology-independent work** such as in **construction, daily wage labor, and other forms of casual employment**.

Social Protection System - India's Approach

- Reactive approach - lack of proactiveness
- There's a **need to reimagine** the framework to keep up with evolving work categories.
- India has **not ratified** the ILO's **Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)**.

However, The Code on Social Security has been framed

- ♦ Ambiguous definitions
- ♦ Diluted protections
- ♦ Implementation issues

Social Security Code, 2020

- Passed by Parliament in **September 2020**, along with three other labour codes:
 - ♦ **Code on Wages (2019)**
 - ♦ **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (2020)**
 - ♦ **Industrial Relations Code (2020)** These codes are based on the **Second National Commission on Labour (2002)**.
- The Code **consolidates 8 central labour laws**, aiming to extend **social security to informal workers**, including **gig and platform workers**.
- **Welfare Boards: Gaps in Execution**
- The system relies heavily on **welfare boards**, which have:
 - ♦ A history of **ineffective implementation**
 - ♦ Large unused funds (e.g., 70,744.16 crore of construction workers' welfare cess)

- ♦ Delayed payments (e.g., 221.8 crore in Tamil Nadu)
- ♦ Non-functional or underperforming boards (e.g., Kerala: only 5/16 effective)

Shortcomings in Current Measures

1. Problems with Incremental and Fragmented Approaches

- Current approach provides **piecemeal, segmented support** (e.g., beedi workers, gig workers).
- Fragmented Administration:**
 - Multiple administering agencies lead to high compliance costs for companies and beneficiaries.**
 - Overlapping policies and laws add to inefficiency**
- Impacts -**
 - Creating artificial distinctions** between types of informal workers
 - Leaving out vulnerable categories** due to arbitrary eligibility criteria.
 - Over-reliance on gig work** to formalize informal labour may be unrealistic.
- Limited Coverage: A large portion of the population, especially in the unorganised/informal sector, remains uncovered.**
- No clear roadmap exists for the future inclusion of these sectors under a unified system.**

- Lack of Worker Participation:** Social assistance programmes involve minimal participation from workers in decision-making processes.
- Absence of Rights-Based Approach:** Social security is not treated as a legal right, making it vulnerable to dilution without compensation for workers.
- Loss of Benefits Due to Migration:** Migrant workers from the unorganised sector often lose their contributions, affecting their entitled benefits.
- Inefficient Worker Identification:** The system for identifying and registering informal sector workers is unstructured and inconsistent.

The Way Forward: Universal Social Protection

- ♦ India needs **robust, adaptable systems** for a future-ready workforce.
- ♦ Proposed approach:
 - ♦ Use the **Code's mandates as a minimum baseline.**
 - ♦ Build upon them for **inclusive, universal, and accessible social protection.**

- ♦ Ensure **no worker is left behind**, regardless of their employment classification.

Social security measures for workers

• Constitutional Framework

- Articles in the constitution which distinctly relate to social security issues.



Legal Framework

- The Employee's Compensation Act, 1923 also known as The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923
 - The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948
 - The Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952
 - The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972
 - Enactment of the two Legislations relating to the Welfare of Construction Workers in the Year 1996
 - The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005*
 - Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008
 - Domestic Workers Act, 2008
 - Pension Fund Regulatory Development Authority Act, 2014
 - The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

Schemes

- National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)
- **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana (PM-SYM) (Old Age Protection)**
- **National Pension Scheme for Traders and The Self-employed Persons (NPS)**
- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Yojana (PMJJBY)**
- **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)**
- **Atal Pension Yojana**
- **National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC)**
- **Self Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers**

== PRACTICE QUESTION ==

- Q.** As India strives to make its workforce 'future ready', it is crucial to create robust social protection systems that can withstand workforce and sectoral changes. Discuss (15 marks, 250 words)

== DNA QUIZ ==

- Q1.** Recently, there has been a concern over the short supply of a group of elements called 'rare earth metals'. Why? (2012)

1. China, which is the largest producer of these elements, has imposed some restrictions on their export.
2. Other than China, Australia, Canada and Chile, these elements are not found in any country.
3. Rare earth metals are essential for the manufacture of various kinds of electronic items and there is a growing demand for these elements.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

- Q2.** Consider the following statements:

1. Rare earth elements are those minerals which are essential for economic development and national security of a country.
2. The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) amendment Act 2023 banned export of all critical minerals.
3. The KABIL initiative involves provision for overseas acquisition of mineral resources.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

- Q3.** Which of the following are the objectives of 'National Nutrition Mission'?

1. To create awareness relating to malnutrition among pregnant women and lactating mothers.
2. To reduce the incidence of anaemia among young children, adolescent girls and women.
3. To promote the consumption of millets, coarse cereals and unpolished rice.
4. To promote the consumption of poultry eggs.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (d) 3 and 4 only

- Q4.** Consider the following statements about the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) Scheme:

1. It was previously known as the National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools.
2. Ministry of Education is nodal agency
3. It is a Central sector scheme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

- Q5.** Consider the following statement with reference to National Investigation Agency(NIA)

1. NIA can do suo motu investigation of scheduled offenses across states without prior state government approval
2. NIA Empowered to investigate and prosecute offenses affecting the sovereignty, integrity, and security of India. Constituted under the NIA Act, 2008.

Which of the following statements is/are correct ?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q. Consider the following statement

1. Right to Information (RTI) is a fundamental right explicitly mentioned under Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution.
2. In K.S. Puttaswamy v Union of India, Supreme Court held that right to informational privacy as fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution

Which of the following statements is/are correct ?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q6. Consider the following statement

3. Right to Information (RTI) is a fundamental right explicitly mentioned under Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution.
4. In K.S. Puttaswamy v Union of India, Supreme Court held that right to informational privacy as fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution

Which of the following statements is/are correct ?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answers:

Q1	C	Q2	B	Q3	A	Q4	A	Q5	B	Q6	B
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