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## PRACTICE QUESTIONS



Note:

1. Click on Practice question box to access 10 Prelims questions along with detailed solution
2. Click on IN NEWS (₹) to access the original article of the news

## Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025

### IN NEWS :

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MeitY**) released the **Draft Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules**, operationalizing the DPDP Act, 2023.

### What is the DPDP Act, 2023 ?

- India's legal framework designed to **safeguard personal data** and ensure it is shared **only with user consent**.
- The Act protects **individual privacy** in the digital era and fosters India's digital economy.

### Key Stakeholders under the DPDP Act, 2023 :

- **Data Principal (DP) - The Data Owner:**
  - The Data Principal refers to **individuals or entities** whose personal data is to be safeguarded.
  - They must **provide explicit written consent** for the collection and processing of their data, clearly specifying its intended purpose.
  - Data Principals retain the **right to withdraw** their consent or restrict its usage at any time.
- **Data Fiduciary - The Data Handler:**
  - Entities responsible for **collecting, storing, and sharing data**.

- A Data Fiduciary also functions as a "**Consent Manager**," facilitating the Data Principal's ability to provide, manage, review, or withdraw consent via an accessible and transparent platform.
  - The Central Government has the authority to designate any **Data Fiduciary or class of Data Fiduciaries** as **Significant Data Fiduciaries** based on their systemic importance and the volume of data handled.
- **Data Processor - The Data Operator:** An entity that processes data on behalf of a **Data Fiduciary**.
  - **Data Protection Officer (DPO) - Compliance Oversight:**
    - A DPO is an individual appointed by a **Data Fiduciary** to ensure compliance with the provisions of the DPDP Act.
    - The DPO acts as the **point of contact for both regulatory authorities** and Data Principals regarding data protection practices.

### Key Features of the DPDP Act, 2023 :

- **Right to Data Protection:** Empowers individuals (Data Principals) to access, correct, and erase personal data.
- **Data Processing and Consent:** Requires explicit consent for data collection and processing, ensuring clarity in consent forms.
- **Data Localisation:** Mandates sensitive personal data to be stored and processed within India, strengthening security and law enforcement.

- **Regulatory Authority:** Establishes the **Data Protection Board of India (DPBI)** to handle compliance, adjudicate disputes, and manage grievances.
- **Data Breach Notification:** Organisations must notify individuals and the DPBI of any data breach promptly.
- **Fines and Penalties:** Penalties for non-compliance range from **₹10,000 to ₹250 crores**, depending on the severity of the violation.
- **Applicability:** Applies to the processing of digital personal data collected both within and outside India, provided the data belongs to Indian residents.

## What are the Draft DPDP Rules, 2025 ?

- The draft rules **operationalize the provisions of the DPDP Act** and aim to balance privacy rights with the digital economy's growth.

## Key Features of the Draft Rules :

- **Data Transfer:** Allows cross-border transfer of personal data to countries approved by the government.
- **Citizen-Centric Rights:** Grants users the ability to **demand data erasure, appoint digital nominees**, and manage their data through simplified mechanisms.
- **Data Retention and Erasure:**
  - Data can be retained for up to three years after the last user interaction or the rules' effective date, whichever is later.

- Data Fiduciaries (entities processing data) must notify users at least 48 hours before data erasure.
- **Digital-First Approach:** Establishes a "digital by design" philosophy. Consent mechanisms, grievance redressal and the functioning of the Data Protection Board are all envisaged as "born digital", to ensure Ease of Living and Ease of Doing Business
- **Graded Responsibilities:**
  - **Startups and MSMEs:** Lower compliance requirements.
  - **Significant Data Fiduciaries (SDFs):** Higher obligations for large platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Amazon.
- **Consent Managers:**
  - Handle user consent and data privacy management.
  - Must be India-based companies with a minimum net worth of ₹2 crores.
- **Data Protection Board of India (DPBI):** Functions as a quasi-judicial authority with civil court powers to adjudicate data-related complaints.

### Positive Aspects of the Rules :

- **Principles-Based Framework:** Unlike the European Union's prescriptive GDPR, the DPDP rules emphasize simplicity and clarity, reducing consent fatigue.
- **Industry-Specific Flexibility:** Educational institutions, healthcare providers, and child-care centres enjoy exemptions from certain data processing restrictions to meet specific operational needs.

- **User Empowerment:** Clear provisions for users to exercise their rights, such as **data correction, erasure, and grievance redressal**, without overly complex procedures.
- **Balancing Innovation and Regulation:** Provides autonomy to businesses, encouraging innovation while safeguarding user data.

### Areas of Concern :

- **Data Localisation Challenges:** Mandatory localisation for Significant Data Fiduciaries could **deter investment and lead to regulatory arbitrage**, where smaller entities exploit lighter data transfer rules.
- **Ambiguities in Rules:**
  - Lack of clarity on handling excessive or unfounded user requests for information.
  - No clear limits on government access to sensitive business data, raising concerns about misuse and protection of trade secrets.
- **Lack of Independence in DPBI:** The selection process for DPBI members lacks transparency, raising concerns about its autonomy from government influence.
- **Procedural Gaps:** Absence of clear timelines for data breach notifications and specific standards for consent notices.

## Way Forward :

- **Ensuring Compliance:**

- Businesses must see data protection not just as a legal obligation but as a crucial aspect of reputation and continuity.

- **Moving Beyond Consent Mechanisms:**

- Develop privacy frameworks that reduce reliance on notice-and-consent, especially in public spaces like malls and airports.

- **Refining Draft Rules:**

- Public consultations should focus on addressing ambiguities and preserving flexibility while balancing innovation, economic growth, and individual rights.

- **Focus on Procedural Integrity:**

- Establish clear guidelines on how DPBI will operate to ensure fair and unbiased adjudication.

## 02: EDITORIAL

### Declining Fertility Levels

#### IN NEWS :

- Kerala, which has consistently **reported the lowest maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in India**, is now witnessing a rise in Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR).
- The increase is attributed to declining fertility levels, despite the State's near 100% institutional delivery rate.

#### Maternal Mortality Trends in Kerala :

- **Current MMR:** According to the **2018-20 Sample Registration System (SRS) report**, Kerala's MMR is **19 per 1 lakh live births**, the lowest in India.
- **Decline in Births:**
  - Kerala's annual births have dropped significantly, from an average of 5-5.5 lakh to 3.93 lakh according to the latest data of the Economics and Statistics Department of the State.
  - This drop in the denominator (live births) has artificially pushed up the MMR, even without an actual spike in maternal deaths.
- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR):**
  - Kerala achieved the **replacement level fertility rate of 2.1 in 1987-88**.
  - The TFR fell below replacement levels in 1991 and currently stands at 1.46 (2021). It may further decline to 1.35 with the latest data.

## Causes of Rising MMR in Kerala :

- **Demographic Transition:**

- A rapidly ageing population and **shrinking reproductive-age group** have led to fewer births.
- The reproductive-age population (15-49 years) in Kerala dropped from 93.3 lakh in 2011 to an estimated 92.2 lakh in 2021.
- Kerala's fertility rates are unlikely to bounce back, reflecting **irreversible demographic trends**.

- **Higher Maternal Age at Childbirth:**

- **Increasing age of marriage and delayed childbearing** are resulting in more high-risk pregnancies.

- **Impact of Migration:**

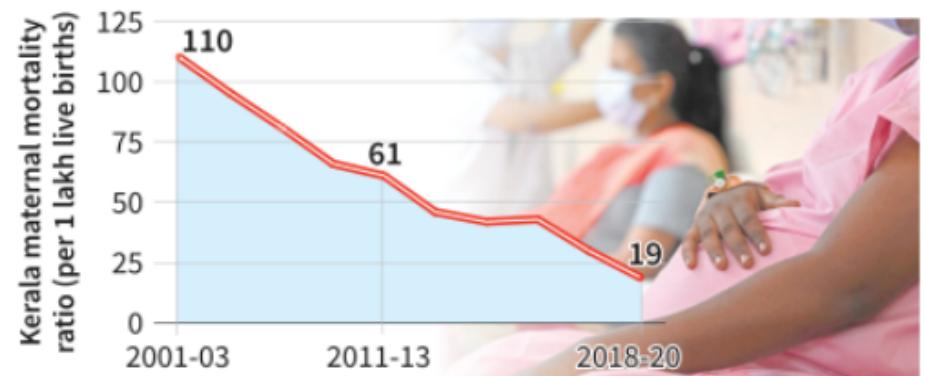
- A significant portion of the reproductive-age population is **migrating abroad for education or employment**, further contributing to declining births.

- **COVID-19 Impact:**

- During the pandemic, many pregnant women succumbed to the virus, temporarily affecting maternal health statistics.

## A worrying trend

Kerala's MMR is beginning to climb now because of fewer child births than ever in the State



Source: Sample Registration System bulletin of Registrar General of India

## Implications of Declining Fertility Rates in Kerala :



- **Social and Economic Impact:**

- Shrinking young workforce due to low fertility rates and migration could affect the economy.
- An aging population will **place a heavy burden** on healthcare and welfare systems.

- **Demographic Challenges:**

- The proportion of elderly people is projected to surpass that of children in the next decade.
- Care and welfare issues for the elderly will become more pronounced.

- **Policy Implications:**

- The State needs to **address fertility decline** and ensure better maternal health management.
- Accurate data collection on live births and abortions is essential for informed policymaking.

## National and Global Trends in Maternal Mortality :

- **India's Progress:**

- As per the UN Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group (MMEIG), India's **MMR decreased from 384 in 2000 to 103 in 2020.**
- India's average annual reduction rate (6.36%) was three times the global rate (2.07%).

- **Global MMR:** Declined from 339 (2000) to 223 (2020).

- **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA):**
  - Provides assured **antenatal care to all pregnant women** on the 9th of every month.
  - Extended PMSMA focuses on high-risk pregnancies and incentivizes additional antenatal visits.
- **Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN):** Ensures respectful and quality healthcare for women and newborns at no cost.
- **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK):** Offers free deliveries (including cesarean) in public health institutions, along with free transport, medicines, and diet for pregnant women.
- **LaQshya Programme:** Focuses on improving the quality of care in **labor rooms and maternity operation theatres.**
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):**
  - Provides financial incentives to pregnant women to offset wage loss and encourage safe deliveries.
  - Maternity benefits extended to the second child if it is a girl, to promote gender equality.
- **Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0:** Provides supplementary nutrition to pregnant and lactating women.

- **Focus on High-Risk Pregnancies:** Intensify efforts to identify and manage high-risk pregnancies through targeted antenatal care.
- **Promote Early Marriage and Childbearing:** Raise awareness about the risks associated with delayed pregnancies and encourage early family planning.
- **Address Migration and Fertility Trends:**
  - Study how migration and foreign childbirths impact Kerala's demographics.
  - Provide incentives to retain young couples and encourage childbirth within the State.
- **Strengthen Maternal Health Infrastructure:** Expand healthcare services and facilities to cater to older mothers and high-risk pregnancies.
- **Comprehensive Data Collection:**
  - Ensure timely and accurate reporting of live births and maternal health indicators.
  - Conduct in-depth studies on the impact of demographic changes on maternal health.

# 03: PRELIMS VITAL

## Kumbh Mela

### IN NEWS :

- The **Maha Kumbh Mela**, one of the world's largest religious gatherings, is currently being held in **Prayagraj**. This ancient pilgrimage attracts millions of devotees, who take a ritual dip in the sacred rivers to cleanse their sins and gain spiritual merit.
- Over 35 crore people are expected to attend the event.

### What is the Kumbh Mela ?

- The Kumbh Mela is a grand Hindu pilgrimage and festival, held periodically in four cities: **Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik**.
- It is celebrated based on the relative positions of the Sun, Moon, and Jupiter and alternates between the **Maha Kumbh (every 12 years)** and the **Ardh Kumbh (every 6 years)**

### Mythological Origin of Kumbh Mela :

- The festival traces its roots to the story of the **Samudra Manthan** (churning of the ocean) by the Devas (gods) and Asuras (demons).
- During the churning, the pot of **amrita** (elixir of immortality) emerged, which was carried away by **Jayant**, the son of Indra, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Asuras.

- As Jayant fled, drops of amrita fell at four locations:
  - **Haridwar** (Ganga River)
  - **Prayagraj** (confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati)
  - **Ujjain** (Kshipra River)
  - **Nashik-Trimbakeshwar** (Godavari River).
- Hence, Kumbh Mela is celebrated at these sites to commemorate this event.

### Historical Origins :

- **Scriptural Mentions:**
  - Some trace the festival to the **Skanda Purana**, but direct references to Kumbh Mela are debated.
  - The **Rig Veda** reportedly contains verses extolling the benefits of bathing during Kumbh.
  - **Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang):** A 7th-century Chinese traveler, mentioned a grand fair in Prayag, believed to be an early form of the Kumbh Mela.
- **Adi Shankaracharya:** It is widely believed that **Adi Shankaracharya** formalized the tradition of organizing periodic Kumbh gatherings, promoting religious discourse and societal unity.
- **Post-1857 Rebranding:** Some historians suggest that after the **1857 Revolt**, Prayagraj's traditional **Magh Mela** was rebranded as Kumbh to avoid colonial interference.

## Impact on Society and Culture :

- **Social Unification:** The Mela fosters unity by bringing together people from different walks of life.
- **Religious Dissemination:** A platform for *religious discourse* and *spiritual teachings* by ascetics and scholars.
- **Cultural Preservation:** Kumbh Mela plays a vital role in preserving India's *religious and cultural heritage*.

**The Kumbh Mela is classified as -**

- The Purna Kumbh Mela occurs every 12 years at a given site.
- The Ardh Kumbh Mela occurs approx every 6 years between the 2 melas at Allahabad and Haridwar.
- The Maha Kumbh which occurs every 12 purna kumbh melas i.e. after every 144 years.



Kumbh Places and Rivers	
Haridwar	Ganga
Prayagraj	Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati
Trimbak-Nashik	Godavari
Ujjain	Shipra

**The Kumbh Mela**

# 04: ENVIRONMENT

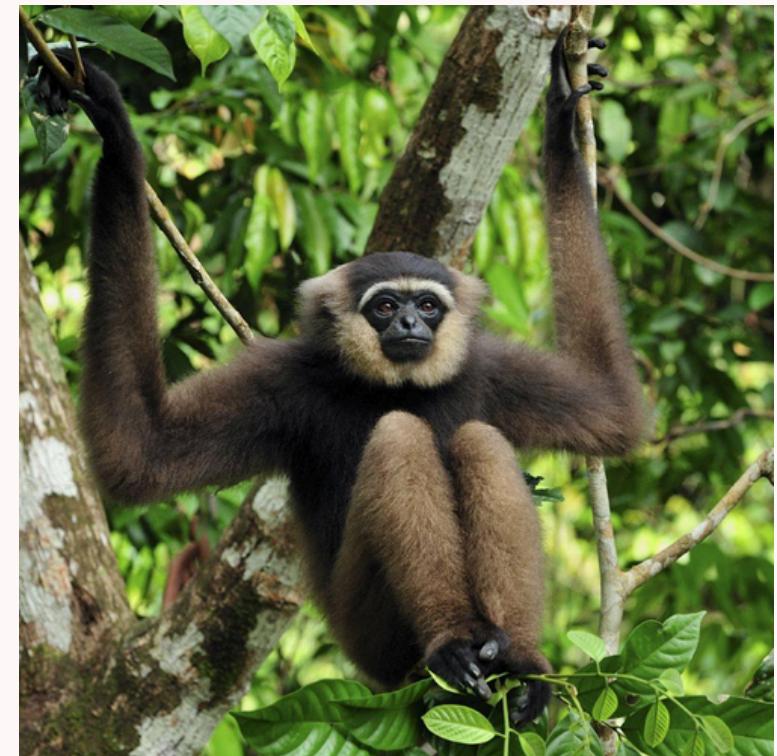
## Hoolock Gibbon

### IN NEWS :

- The Centre's wildlife panel has approved a proposal to carry out oil and gas exploration in the ecosensitive zone of the Hoollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam's Jorhat district.

### What is Hoolock Gibbon ?

- A species of gibbon native to eastern Bangladesh, Northeast India, and Southwest China.
- Two types:** Western Hoolock Gibbon and Eastern Hoolock Gibbon.
- Hoolock Gibbons primarily inhabit subtropical and tropical forests, particularly in Assam's **Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- Classified as **Endangered** due to **habitat loss, fragmentation** and hunting. **Deforestation and human encroachment** are major threats to their survival.
- Only ape found in India and are arboreal.



# Debate on Development vs Environmental Protection :



## • Argument for Development:

- **National Interest:** Oil and gas, are often in the national interest, contributing to economic growth, energy security, and job creation.
- **Economic Growth:** Revenue generated aiding in the development of local infrastructure, healthcare, education.
- **Technological Advancements** allows for minimal environmental disruption.
- Job Creation and Energy Independence.

## • Argument for Environmental Protection:

- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Essential for preserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological balance.
- **Irreversible Damage:** Once disrupted, natural habitats often take decades to recover.
- **Sustainable Development**
- **Human-Wildlife Conflict:** Projects that encroach on wildlife habitats increase the risk of human-wildlife conflict

## Way Forward

Compensatory Afforestation

Wildlife Corridors

Environmental Impact Assessments

Adopt Green Technology

