

The Hindu EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

18th April 2025

**PREPARE FOR BANK (PO/ CLERK), SSC, UPSC,
State PSC, CAT, CTET, RAILWAY EXAMS, CDS,
TET, NDA/AIRFORCE, NET and all Govt.
Exams**

1. Vetting (जांच)

- **Meaning:** The process of examining or evaluating someone or something thoroughly.
- **Synonyms:** Screening, scrutiny, examination
- **Antonyms:** Overlooking, ignoring, neglecting
- **Example:** The committee is vetting the applications to select the most suitable candidate.

2. Impoverished (वंचित)

- **Meaning:** Lacking in quality, strength, or resources.
- **Synonyms:** Deprived, deficient, meager, barren
- **Antonyms:** Enriched, abundant, prosperous
- **Example:** The scholarship about how AI impacts strategic affairs is still severely impoverished, lacking depth and diversity.

3. Concede (स्वीकार करना)

- **Meaning:** Admit that something is true or valid after first denying or resisting it.
- **Synonyms:** Admit, acknowledge, accept
- **Antonyms:** Deny, dispute, contradict
- **Example:** The company had to concede that the product was faulty after numerous complaints.

4. Annihilation (पूर्ण विनाश)

- **Meaning: Complete destruction or obliteration.**
- **Synonyms: Destruction, eradication, extinction**
- **Antonyms: Survival, existence, preservation**
- **Example: MAD implies mutual annihilation as a consequence of nuclear warfare.**

5. Overt (सुस्पष्ट / प्रकट)

- **Meaning:** Done or shown openly; not secret or hidden.
- **Synonyms:** Open, obvious, blatant
- **Antonyms:** Covert, hidden, concealed
- **Example:** The endorsement of sabotage could justify overt military action against rival AI programs.

6. Nix (रद्द करना)

- **Meaning:** To reject or cancel something.
- **Synonyms:** Cancel, veto, reject
- **Antonyms:** Approve, allow, endorse
- **Example:** The White House plans to nix most science funding for NASA's research programs.

7. Sabotage (तोड़फोड़ करना)

- **Meaning:** Deliberately destroying or obstructing something for political or military advantage.
- **Synonyms:** Subversion, damage, wrecking
- **Antonyms:** Support, aid, assistance
- **Example:** The paper endorses sabotage as a strategic measure, which could justify military interventions.

8. Proliferation (तेजी से फैलाव)

- **Meaning:** A rapid increase in number or spread.
- **Synonyms:** Expansion, escalation, multiplication
- **Antonyms:** Decline, decrease, reduction
- **Example:** The idea of AI non-proliferation aims to restrict the uncontrolled spread of dangerous AI technologies.

9. Prognostication (पूर्वानुमान)

- **Meaning:** A forecast or prediction of a future event.
- **Synonyms:** Prediction, forecast, prophecy
- **Antonyms:** Retrospection, recollection
- **Example:** The paper is to its credit seated in its prognostications about signs of life on exoplanets.

10. Recalcitrant (अवज्ञाकारी / दमनकारी)

- **Meaning:** Stubbornly refusing to obey rules or orders.
- **Synonyms:** Disobedient, resistant, defiant
- **Antonyms:** Obedient, compliant, submissive
- **Example:** Recalcitrant states might disregard AI non-proliferation rules, risking global security.

VOCABULARY

One-word substitute:

1. A word, phrase, or number that reads the same backward as forward (e.g., madam, 121):

Palindrome

2. A rapid and continuous discharge of firearms or a series of loud sounds:

Fusillade

3. A sum of money or other payment demanded or paid for the release of a captive:

Ransom

4. Easily shaped or influenced; capable of being molded or changed:

Malleable

VOCABULARY

Phrasal Verbs:

1. Stick around

Meaning - to stay in a place for a while.

2. Take back

Meaning - to retract a statement or take responsibility for a mistake.

3. Think up

Meaning - to invent or imagine something.

4. Wade through

Meaning - to struggle through something difficult, often a large amount of information.

VOCABULARY

Idioms & Phrases

1. As white as a sheet

Meaning: Looking very pale, often due to fear or shock.

2. Paint the town red

Meaning: To celebrate in a lively, enthusiastic way, often by going out.

3. In a brown study

Meaning: Deeply absorbed in thought, often looking gloomy or worried.

VOCABULARY

4. Born to the purple

Meaning: Belonging to a royal or noble family.

5. Worth its weight in gold

Meaning: Extremely valuable or useful.

Article for Reading

**Life unknown: on
science and research
freedom**

The University of Cambridge issued a press release regarding a paper co-authored by one of its scientists that reported an exoplanet called K2-18b may be habitable, with the misleading headline, “Strongest hints yet of biological activity outside the solar system”. The paper, published on April 17, made headlines because astronomers have been interested for some time in this exoplanet’s peculiar surface physiochemistry. The paper is to its credit sedate in its prognostications: the authors have reported detecting the presence of dimethyl sulphide or dimethyl disulphide in K2-18b’s atmosphere; the former is considered a sign of life on the earth and could be on the exoplanet. Independent scientists and the paper’s authors have called for dispassionate efforts to refine the data and reduce uncertainties as well as to double-check the implications.

If the history of the search for biomarkers on other planets both within and without the solar system is any guide, there is no guarantee that the findings will not be overturned. The cosmos still harbours too many mysteries for us to not be surprised by new information awaiting discovery. Research of this nature — initiated by curiosity and a pursuit of the unknown — has sometimes been overtaken by hype. Unfortunately, it faces another threat today: funding cuts of the type U.S. President Donald Trump has unleashed in his country. After downsizing or cancelling grants issued via the National Institutes of Health, Mr. Trump began holding entire universities hostage: drawdown DEI initiatives and rein in student protests or forgo federal funding, he seemed to say. The institutions affected count some of the world's best in their ranks and the funding withheld, a non-trivial fraction of that spent on certain subjects worldwide.

Earlier this month, the White House's budget proposal for the 2026 fiscal revealed its plans to cut National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration funding by 27%, nix most spending for science at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, and halve NASA's earth-science budget. The essential programme is to control the practice and pursuit of science that does not align with Republican state ideology.

Curiosity-driven research, such as that concerned with the possibility of extraterrestrial life, both proves universities' freedom to explore the unknown and fulfils the innate curiosity of humankind. However, the Trump government's policies leave whatever research freedom that remains very precious yet also more vulnerable to misinformation and ideological capture, and the world itself more short-sighted.

Summary

The passage discusses a recent paper coauthored by a University of Cambridge scientist about the potential habitability of exoplanet K2-18b. While the scientific paper cautiously reports the detection of dimethyl sulphide — a possible biosignature — media coverage exaggerated the findings, suggesting signs of extraterrestrial life. Scientists have urged careful validation of the data. The passage then shifts to concerns about declining support for scientific research, particularly in the U.S. under Donald Trump's administration. It criticizes funding cuts to agencies like NASA and NOAA and argues that politically driven decisions threaten curiosity-driven research, scientific freedom, and progress.

Tone:

The tone is critical, concerned, and reflective. It critically evaluates media sensationalism and political interference in science while reflecting on the importance of open-ended, curiosity-driven research in expanding human knowledge.

Reading Comprehension

Based on the above passage, answer the following questions:

Question 1:

What is the primary concern expressed about the Trump administration's impact on scientific research?

- A. It has increased funding for corporate-led space missions**
- B. It seeks to align scientific exploration strictly with Republican ideology**
- C. It focuses funding exclusively on biomedical research**
- D. It encourages only curiosity-driven projects over applied research**
- E. None of the above**

Question 2:

Why do the authors urge a cautious interpretation of dimethyl sulphide's presence on K2-18b?

- A. Because the presence of the molecule has never been confirmed on exoplanets before**
- B. Because such molecules can only be generated through artificial processes**
- C. Because past biomarkers have often led to inconclusive or overturned results**
- D. Because K2-18b lacks atmospheric conditions that support this molecule**
- E. None of the above**

Question 3:

What, according to the author, is the dual vulnerability that curiosity-driven research faces today?

- A. A lack of trained professionals and public interest**
- B. Interference from religious institutions and bureaucrats**
- C. Climate change and lack of collaboration between nations**
- D. Misinformation and ideological capture due to shrinking academic freedom**
- E. None of the above**

Article for Skimming

**A closer look at
strategic affairs and
the AI factor**

The concerns about an artificial intelligence (AI) arms race have become increasingly frequent. There is speculation about how long it would take for researchers to develop artificial general intelligence or AGI, that refers to AI that can outperform human cognitive abilities and is hypothetically capable of finding solutions to problems outside of merely what it has been trained to know. While many people are writing about AI and its new and evolving capabilities, the scholarship about how AI impacts strategic affairs is still severely impoverished. A recent paper by Eric Schmidt, the former CEO of Google, Dan Hendrycks, and Alexandr Wang, the CEO of Scale AI, has been a high-profile contribution to this conversation. Still, some of its analysis seems inadequate. Whether AGI is on the horizon or not is a heated debate in itself, but arguably Schmidt, Hendrycks and Wang are right in that if AGI does become a reality, states need to equip themselves to handle security threats and competition.

Moreover, as a commentary on the paper points out, the idea of AI non-proliferation makes an important argument focused on preventing potentially dangerous technologies from falling into the hands of the wrong actors. However, some of the mechanisms they prescribe are worth questioning, and one of the central tenets of their paper — the idea that AI is comparable to nuclear weapons — falls short. The authors propose the idea of MAIM: Mutual Assured AI Malfunction, which functions similarly to the idea of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). MAD is a condition akin to a stalemate that can exist between two nuclear-armed states that posits that a nuclear attack by one state would result in a counterattack of at least the same magnitude, which would lead to their mutual destruction. The comparison is flawed, since MAD is a condition of mutual annihilation that comes from deploying nuclear weapons, whereas MAIM serves as a strategy of deterrence to prevent the wrong actors from developing superintelligent AI.

This comparison can have dangerous implications for the way states draft policies. The underlying assumption that states can destroy each other's AI projects as they would try to do with physical weapons infrastructure does not account for the fact that AI projects are, by and large, much more diffused than any nuclear projects in terms of infrastructure and have individuals across different places contributing to them. Attempting to destroy a project of a terrorist group or rogue state could have many unintended consequences, including unnecessary escalation. The paper argues for the preemptive destruction of 'rogue' AI projects, but states do not have perfect surveillance and intelligence capabilities. Additionally, the idea of MAIM for deterrence and the endorsement of sabotage of enemy technologies as a strategic action can be used as a justification for overt military action.

Question 4:

What core issue is highlighted in the comparison between AI and nuclear weapons in terms of infrastructure?

- A. AI infrastructure is regulated by more global agencies than nuclear weapons.**
- B. Nuclear infrastructure is more easily concealed than AI labs.**
- C. AI development infrastructure is significantly more dispersed and decentralized.**
- D. Nuclear infrastructure relies on open-source technology.**
- E. None of the above**

Question 5:

What does the passage primarily suggest about the current state of academic work regarding AI and its strategic impact?

- A. It is rapidly developing and deeply insightful.**
- B. It lacks depth and comprehensive analysis.**
- C. It is largely focused on ethical questions only.**
- D. It is dominated by engineers rather than policymakers.**
- E. None of the above**

Today's Descriptive Question

Precis Writing:

Original Text:

The FinTech (Financial Technology) industry has revolutionized the way financial services are delivered, making them more accessible, efficient, and customer-centric. In India and globally, digital wallets, online lending platforms, robo-advisors, and blockchain-based services have grown rapidly. However, the industry faces several challenges that hinder its growth and long-term sustainability. One of the primary concerns is regulatory uncertainty. FinTech operates at the intersection of finance and technology, both of which are heavily regulated sectors. Rapid innovation often outpaces the ability of regulators to keep up, leading to a lack of clear guidelines. Frequent changes in compliance requirements—like data protection laws, KYC norms, and digital lending guidelines—create hurdles for FinTech startups and investors.

Cybersecurity and data privacy also pose significant threats. FinTech firms handle vast amounts of sensitive financial data, making them attractive targets for cyberattacks. Any breach can erode customer trust and invite legal consequences. Ensuring robust cybersecurity infrastructure while maintaining seamless user experience is a constant balancing act. Access to funding is another issue, especially for early-stage FinTech startups. Economic uncertainty, tightening monetary policies, and investor caution post the "startup bubble" have made it harder for many firms to raise capital. This slows down innovation and scalability. Moreover, customer trust and adoption remain key challenges. Many users, especially in rural or less digitally literate populations, still prefer traditional banks due to concerns over the reliability of digital services. Building user confidence requires consistent performance, transparency, and effective grievance redressal systems.

Finally, the lack of digital infrastructure in certain regions, especially Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, limits the reach of FinTech solutions. Poor internet connectivity, low smartphone penetration, and digital illiteracy prevent the sector from achieving truly inclusive financial access.

Despite these challenges, the FinTech industry continues to evolve with support from governments, regulatory bodies, and private stakeholders. Addressing these issues is essential for the sector to fulfill its promise of transforming financial services and promoting inclusive economic growth.

Precis:

The FinTech industry has transformed financial services but faces significant challenges. These include regulatory uncertainty, cybersecurity risks, and limited access to funding. Building consumer trust, especially among digitally less-aware populations, and addressing infrastructure gaps in smaller towns further hinder growth. Overcoming these hurdles is vital for FinTech to expand sustainably and enhance financial inclusion across regions.

- **You are feeling unwell and need to take three days off work. Write an email to your supervisor applying for medical leave.**

To:@gmail.com

Subject: Request for Medical Leave (April 17–19)

Dear [Supervisor's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. I am feeling unwell and, after consulting a doctor, have been advised to take rest for a few days. I would like to request medical leave from April 17 to April 19 to focus on recovery.

I will ensure that any urgent work is handed over appropriately and will catch up on pending tasks upon my return. Please let me know if any formal documentation or further information is required.

Thank you for your understanding.

**Best regards,
[Your Name]**

Match the column

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. As white as a sheet | A. To celebrate in a lively, enthusiastic way |
| 2. Paint the town red | B. Extremely valuable or useful |
| 3. In a brown study | C. Belonging to a royal or noble family |
| 4. Born to the purple | D. Looking very pale |
| 5. Worth its weight in gold | E. Deeply absorbed in thought |

Answer:

1-d

2-a

3-e

4-c

5-b

Vocabulary

1. Vetting:
2. Impoverished:
3. Concede:
4. Annihilation:
5. Overt:
6. Nix:
7. Sabotage:
8. Proliferation:
9. Prognostication:
10. Recalcitrant:

Rc ans

1.

Ans: B

Explanation:

"The essential programme is to control the practice and pursuit of science that does not align with Republican state ideology."

This indicates that political ideology is dictating funding and scientific priorities.

Why the other options are incorrect:

A. Incorrect – There is no mention of corporate-led space missions or increased funding for them.

C. Incorrect – The NIH has faced grant cancellations, not focused expansion:
"downsizing or cancelling grants issued via the National Institutes of Health..."

D. Incorrect – Curiosity-driven research is threatened, not prioritized.

2.

Ans: C

Explanation:

"If the history of the search for biomarkers... is any guide, there is no guarantee that the findings will not be overturned."

This highlights a cautious historical perspective on interpreting biosignatures like dimethyl sulphide.

Why the other options are incorrect:

A. Incorrect – The novelty of detection is not the issue; the issue is reliability of such claims.

B. Incorrect – Dimethyl sulphide is produced by life on Earth, not only through artificial means:

"...dimethyl sulphide... is considered a sign of life on the earth..."

D. Incorrect – The passage doesn't discuss atmospheric incompatibility.

3.

Ans: D

Explanation:

"...research freedom that remains very precious yet also more vulnerable to misinformation and ideological capture..."

This shows the twofold vulnerability: susceptibility to misinformation and ideological interference.

Why the other options are incorrect:

A. Incorrect – The passage makes no mention of professional shortages or public apathy.

B. Incorrect – The ideological interference referenced is political, not religious.

C. Incorrect – No mention of climate change or international cooperation in this context.

4.

Ans: C

Explanation:

The passage emphasizes that unlike nuclear weapons, AI projects are spread out across many contributors and locations, making them harder to monitor or target.

Reference:

“AI projects are, by and large, much more diffused than any nuclear projects in terms of infrastructure and have individuals across different places contributing to them.”

Why the other options are incorrect:

A: There's no mention of regulatory oversight in terms of agencies.

B: The concealability of nuclear vs AI labs isn't discussed.

D: Nuclear infrastructure being open-source is incorrect and not mentioned.

4.

Ans: C

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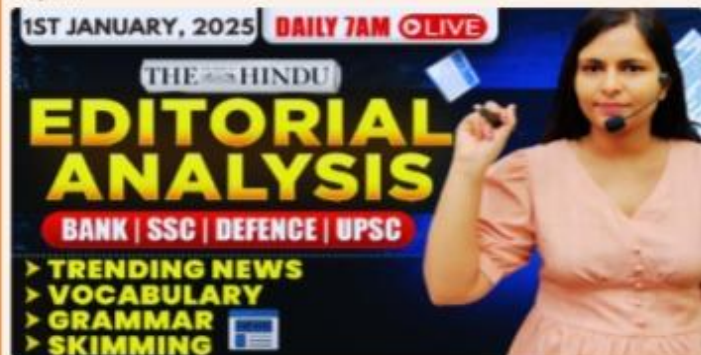
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Perfection Class: Debunking English Grammar Myths I

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